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BY SAKINAT ABUBAKAR MUSA, ABUJA

In a significant move towards ensuring international justice, 14 countries have formally pledged to comply with the International Criminal Court's (ICC) arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant. The ICC issued the warrants in response to allegations of war crimes during the ongoing Gaza crisis.

The nations that have expressed their readiness to act include:

Netherlands, Italy, Belgium, Ireland, Norway, Jordan, South Africa, Spain, France, Austria, Colombia, Switzerland, Sweden, and Türkiye.

Commitment to Upholding Justice

Officials from these countries have underscored their dedication to the rule of law.

The Dutch Foreign Minister stated unequivocally, "If Netanyahu or Gallant enter our territory, they will

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L-R: UNICEF Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa, Mohamed Fall; UN Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Durable Solution, Robert Piper and Vice-President Kashim Shettima during the launch of State Action Plans on Durable Solutions to Internal Displacement at the Presidential Villa in Abuja, recently.

14 Countries Commit to Enforcing ICC Arrest Warrants for Netanyahu, Gallant

Continued from cover

be apprehended in accordance with ICC mandates.”

In his reaction, Ireland’s Foreign Minister remarked, “The devastation in Gaza is a grave violation of human rights. The ICC’s actions provide a pathway to accountability.”

South Africa echoed this sentiment, reiterating its commitment to standing against impunity. President Gustavo Petro of Colombia added, “The ICC’s ruling is a necessary step in addressing grave injustices.”

Similarly, the Mayor of Dearborn, Michigan, announced readiness to act on the ICC’s arrest warrants. “Dearborn will arrest Netanyahu and Gallant if they step within Dearborn City limits. Other cities should declare the same. Our president may not take action, but city leaders can ensure Netanyahu and other war criminals are not welcome to travel freely across the United States.”

In his statement, the Irish Prime Minister said, “The situation in Gaza could not be more desperate; it is an affront to humanity and can not be allowed to continue a moment longer.”

Gustavo Petro, the Colombian President, who in anger said, “Netanyahu is genocidal,” stated that arresting such leaders is logi-

cal, “because the ICC says so, and the ruling must be obeyed.”

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau affirmed, “We will abide by all the regulations and rulings of the international courts.”

“Fourteen long months into the occupying regime’s genocidal campaign in #Gaza, marked by the most harrowing atrocities, the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber I finally issued arrest warrants for the two top criminals #Netanyahu and #Gallant,” Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei wrote on X.

The European Union’s foreign policy chief has stated that warrants by the International Criminal Court are binding for all of the bloc’s states. “The members, the states who signed the Rome Convention, are obliged to implement the decision of the court. It is not optional,” he said, speaking at a conference in Cyprus.

The UK government also promised to comply with any arrest warrants issued by the ICC, while US President Joe Biden called the ICC warrants against Israeli leaders “outrageous,”

Implications of the ICC Warrant

Now that the ICC has issued an arrest warrant

against Israel’s prime minister, it signifies that anyone still supporting what Israel is doing is an accomplice in crimes against humanity—a criminal.

The coming months will reveal whether this pivotal moment leads to tangible progress in international justice or further challenges to the enforcement of global legal frameworks.

US Veto on Gaza Ceasefire Resolution Sparks Global Outrage

Meanwhile, the United States has faced criticism for its veto of a United Nations Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. The resolution, supported by 14 other Council members, aimed to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in the region.

Condemnation from China and Russia

China’s UN envoy criticised the US stance, stating, “The veto has extinguished the last glimmers of hope for the people of Gaza.” Russia’s representative accused the US of enabling further bloodshed: “By blocking the ceasefire, you have acknowledged your responsibility for the ongoing civilian casualties.”

Palestinian Reaction and

Why Chidimma Adetshina is quitting pageantry

Chidimma Adetshina, who made history as the first runner-up at the Miss Universe 2024 pageant in Mexico City, has announced her decision to retire from the world of beauty pageantry.

In an interview with BBC Pidgin, the 23-year-old explained her reasons for stepping away from the spotlight after achieving one of the highest accolades in the industry.

“I am putting pageant to bed right now,” Adetshina shared, as she discussed her desire to focus on her education and other personal goals. “I want to explore my potential beyond the pageant world, including runway modelling and acting,” she continued, revealing that her new focus is on self-discovery and growth in different creative fields.

The decision, she confirmed in a video message, is permanent. “I feel like I did my best. I made myself proud, I made Nigeria proud, and I outdid myself,” she said,

reflecting on her accomplishments. However, she also admitted that the pageant experience was a traumatic one, one she did not wish to revisit. “It’s something I’m going to have to put behind me,” she stated, even though it will remain a cherished part of her journey.

Adetshina took to social media on Tuesday, November 19, 2024, to express her emotions.

She wrote, “I came, I saw, and I shook the universe. Returning home as Miss Universe First Runner-Up and Miss Universe Africa & Oceania. I’m filled with immense gratitude for Nigeria and Africa for believing in me and helping me reclaim my dreams. This is what it truly means for dreams to come true.

“A heartfelt thank you to Silverbird Group, Chichi Nation, and everyone who has supported me on this incredible journey. Your recognition means the world. God bless you all,” she said.

Implications

Palestinian envoys expressed deep disappointment, describing the veto as “a betrayal of international justice and humanity.”

A Dark Alliance: Whither America?

The Israel lobby has significantly influenced US foreign policy, leading to disastrous consequences in the Middle East. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has been indicted for crimes against humanity and war crimes, has been the driving force behind US-backed wars in the region. For 30 years, the Israel lobby has induced the US to fight wars on Israel’s behalf, designed to prevent the emergence of a Palestinian state.

The consequences of these wars have been catastrophic, with all the countries attacked by the US or its proxies now lying in ruins. The Israel lobby’s control over US foreign policy is evi-

dent in the placement of hardline backers of Israel in key national security posts. This has led to a series of US-led wars, including those in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Lebanon. Netanyahu’s approach is to overthrow foreign governments that oppose Israel’s domination and recreate the map of a “New Middle East” without a Palestinian state.

The real issue facing the US administration is not defending Israel from its neighbours but defending the US from the Israel lobby. The lobby’s influence has led to a loss of US sovereignty and has resulted in policies that benefit Israel at the expense of American interests. As noted in *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* by John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, the Israel lobby has a far-reaching impact on America’s posture throughout the Middle East, and its influence must be addressed to restore US sovereignty.



Obasanjo, Atiku, Shettima grace Kwankwaso's daughter's wedding in Kano

Kano State was abuzz on Saturday as prominent Nigerian leaders, including former President Olusegun Obasanjo, former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, and Vice President Kashim Shettima, graced the wedding of Fatima of Dr. Aisha Kwankwaso, daughter of former Kano State Governor, Engr. Rabiu Musa Kwank-

waso. The ceremony, which showcased Kano's rich cultural heritage, took place at the historic Emir's Palace.

The groom, Fahad Dahiru Mangal, is the son of prominent business magnate Dahiru Mangal. The couple's union attracted a host of dignitaries from across Nigeria. Among them were Kano State Governor Abba Kabir

Yusuf, his deputy Aminu Abdusalam Gwarzo, Defence Minister Badaru Abubakar, Steel Minister Prince Shuaibu Abubakar, and former Senate President Dr. Bukola Saraki.

Prominent political figures such as the former National Chairman of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Alhaji Adamu Mu'azu,

Governors Dikko Radda of Katsina, and Sen. Adamu Aliero also joined the festivities. Other ex-governors present included Ahmed Makarfi of Kaduna, Mahmud Shinkafi of Zamfara, Isah Yuguda of Bauchi, Victor Attah of Akwa Ibom, and Lucky Igbiniedion of Edo.

The wedding proceedings, led by the Chief Imam of Kano, Prof. Sani Zaharaddeen, commenced at approximately 12:15 p.m. Vice President Shettima, who represented the groom, presented a dowry of N1 million to Governor Kabir Yusuf, who stood in for the bride. The ceremony featured prayers for the couple's unity and happiness.

The occasion also saw the presence of senators such as Abdul Ningi, Dino Melaye, and Rufai Hanga, alongside members of the National and State Assemblies, diplomats, and captains of industry. Hundreds of Kano residents turned out to witness the high-profile event.



L-R: Chairman Committee on Health Institutions, Hon Amos Magaji, The Representing of the Speaker House of Representative, Hon, Martins Oke, Deputy Chairman of the Committee, Hon, Adesola Adedayo, member of the Committee Hon, Hassan Shehu Hassan During the One-day Public Hearing on 16 Health Related Bill, by members House of Representative, Committee on Health Institutions, held at the National Assembly in Abuja

Yobe's Usman shines as Ebenezer triumphs at Senive Royal Chess tournament

A thrilling clash of wits unfolded at the prestigious Senive Royal Restaurant in City Park, Abuja, as Olugbenga Ebenezer Bamidele from Ekiti State claimed victory in the Royal Chess Masters Club tournament. Bamidele's exceptional strategic skills earned him the coveted Winner's Cup, while Usman Abdullahi Bida from Yobe State shone throughout the competition, securing the Runner-Up position after a fiercely contested final.

From the very beginning, the competition left no room for error. The single-elimination format in the preliminary rounds tested every player's precision, as each match was critical to advancing.

The stakes heightened as the Final Eight entered the double-elimination phase, where players were given a second chance to prove their worth. Despite the increased pressure, it was Bamidele's consistent focus and tactical brilliance that propelled him to the top.

Bamidele's victory was a testament to his skill, while Bida's determination and resilience throughout the tournament earned him the second-place finish, making both players worthy contenders in this exciting chess battle.

Military air strike targeting bandits 'mistakenly' bombs Katsina village

Tragedy reportedly struck in Katsina State, Northwest Nigeria, as multiple casualties are reported following an accidental bombing by the Nigerian Air Force.

The incident reportedly occurred in Shawu village, Ruwan Godiya district, Faskari Local Government Area, on Thursday morning.

According to an eyewitness, the air strike was intended to target bandits in the area but mistakenly hit the community, SaharaReporters gathered.

The exact number of fatalities and injuries is yet to be confirmed.

Salihu Bamle Bakatsine, a resident of Katsina State, broke the news of the accidental bombing on his X

handle.

He said, "A moment ago, Nigeria Airforce mistakenly bombarded the Shawu community, several people are now confirmed dead and many others injured.

Shawu community is under Ruwan Godiya district, Faskari LGA, Katsina State.

"May the Almighty have mercy on those who lost their lives, grant healing to the injured and bring ease in the future."

The state commissioner for internal security, Dr Nasiru Mu'azu, confirmed that there was a bombing in the area but said it was not accidental.

According to him, it was a precision strike targeted at terrorists and not civil-

ians.

"Whoever told you that the attack was accidental lied. The bomb was dropped on purpose, terrorists were the target.

"Make no mistake about this, the Nigerian military is highly professional in its operations; they strike after surveillance and then get the coordinate of their target before striking."

"You see, Shawu has become notorious for harbouring bandits and other forms of terrorists, that's why the area was targeted," Mu'azu added.

In the same vein, the Faskari Local Government Council chairman, Musa Ado Faskari said, "The airstrike was precise because bandits have in-

filtrated the community."

When asked about the fate of innocent citizens living in the Shawu, he said, "It's unfortunate that it has happened, but the truth is that there's just no alternative to this. After all, the majority of good people have left Shawu because of the heavy presence of bandits."

"Let me tell you, all around, when kidnapping for ransom is carried out, you'll always get to hear that the plan was hatched in Shawu," Ado said.

Regarding fatalities, the local council chairman said, "Four deaths were recorded."

"As for the wounded, we're still sorting things out to determine their numbers," he added.



NEWS

12-year-old Nigerian genius invents air filter, acquires \$11.5m funding

Eniola Shokunbi, a 12-year-old Nigerian from Connecticut, USA, has designed an air filter to reduce the spread of airborne diseases in US schools.

The design targets creating low-cost air filters for classrooms. The Connecticut State Bond Commission approved \$11.5 million in funding for the design.

In her fifth grade at Commodore MacDonough STEM Academy in Middletown, they were tasked with creating a solution to enhance safety in schools during potential future pandemics.

Therefore, to combat airborne viruses like COVID-19, she developed a simple but effective air filter system.

Design

Shokunbi's air filter design showcases both innovation and cost-effectiveness. The unit is constructed using a simple combination of components: a box fan, four furnace filters, duct tape, and cardboard.

This ingenious assembly results in a remarkably low production cost of approximately \$60 per unit. This makes it a highly affordable alternative to commercial air purifiers.

Eniola Shokunbi said: "The air goes through all the sides, and it comes out of the top.

So it filters in and out."

With support from scientists at the University of Connecticut, UConn, Shokunbi's design underwent rigorous testing.

The Environmental Protection Agency, EPA, confirmed that the device effectively eliminates over 99% of

airborne viruses, showcasing its potential to significantly improve classroom safety.

The recent approval by the State Bond Commission allocates \$11.5 million for the implementation of these air filters across Connecticut schools.



L-R: President and Chairman of Council CIS Mr. Oluropo Dada, Past President CIS Mr. Adedapo Adekoje, Past President CIS Mr. Oladipo Aina and Director General Securities and Exchange Commission Dr. Emomotimi Agama during the investiture of the SEC DG as a Fellow of CIS at the 28th Stockbrokers Conference in Ibadan recently.

Minimum Wage: No going back on Dec 1 deadline – NLC

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) has reaffirmed its ultimatum to state governors, insisting that the December 1, 2024, deadline for implementing the new minimum wage remains unchanged.

The confirmation came from the NLC's Head of Protocol and Public Relations, Benson Upah, in a text message to journalists in Abuja.

"Yes, the ultimatum still stands. Nothing has changed," Upah stated, reiterating the union's resolve to ensure compliance with the directive.

Several state governments are making last-minute efforts to meet the deadline.

In Sokoto State, Deputy Governor Alhaji Idris Gobir held a meeting with the state chapter of the NLC and urged them to submit their proposal for wage adjustments. The state NLC Chairman, Abdullahi Jungul, commended the government's proactive approach, assuring civil servants of swift progress.

Dangote refinery cuts petrol price for marketers

The Dangote Petroleum Refinery has announced a reduction in the price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS), also known as petrol, for oil marketers. The new price is 970 per litre, down from the previously set 990 ex-depot price announced earlier this month.

In a statement released on Sunday, Anthony Chiejina, the Chief Branding and Commu-

nications Officer of Dangote Group, revealed that this decision is a gesture of gratitude towards Nigerians for their ongoing support in the successful realization of the refinery. The company also expressed appreciation for the government's support in fostering domestic enterprise.

"This reduction is a way of saying thank you to the gov-

ernment and to the people of Nigeria for their unflinching support," the statement read. "It is also aimed at encouraging the continued growth of local businesses and ensuring a more stable energy sector."

The new price cut is expected to benefit marketers by saving them 20 for every litre of petrol purchased from the refinery, located in the Ibeju-Le-

kki area of Lagos State. This comes at a crucial time as Nigeria faces challenges related to fuel supply and pricing.

Dangote Refinery has assured the public that the price reduction will not come at the expense of the quality of the petrol supplied. The company emphasized that it remains committed to producing high-quality, environ-

mentally friendly, and sustainable petroleum products.

Additionally, Dangote Refinery assured Nigerians that its production capacity would continue to ramp up to meet the country's fuel needs and eliminate any fears of a fuel supply shortfall.

The announcement comes shortly after reports indicating that Dangote Refinery and other local refineries have struggled to secure adequate supplies of crude oil, a key factor in domestic production.

Governor Buni approves N70,000 minimum wage for Yobe civil servants

Yobe State Governor, Mai Mala Buni, has approved the implementation of a N70,000 minimum wage for state civil servants, effective December 2024.

This landmark decision was announced in a memo signed by the governor, following rec-

ommendations from the state government's Committee on Minimum Wage.

The committee advised reconciling local government finances to ensure a smooth transition for local government councils from the existing salary struc-

ture to the newly approved minimum wage. The reconciliation process is nearing completion and will soon pave the way for local government employees to benefit from the improved wage structure.

The state government has called on civil ser-

vants to reciprocate this gesture by committing to enhanced service delivery for the benefit of Yobe residents.

The announcement was made by Mamman Mohammed, Director-General of Press and Media Affairs to the Govern-

OYELEYE

I, formerly known as Oyeleye Olutayo Olabidemi, now wish to be known as Oyeleye Emmanuel Olabidemi. All former documents remain valid.



Crux of the furore over the tax reform bills

On the 3rd of September, 2024, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu presented to the National Assembly, a total of four Executive Bills collectively known as the new tax reform bills.

The making of the bills followed the president's acceptance of the recommendations of the Taiwo Oyedele-led presidential committee earlier set up by the president on fiscal and tax reforms.

The bills are, the Nigeria Tax Bill which establishes a fiscal framework for taxation; the Tax Administration Bill, that provides a legal framework for tax administration; the Nigeria Revenue Service that is proposed to replace the Federal Inland Revenue Service, FIRS, and the Joint Revenue Board, to serve as a tax tribunal and ombudsman.

The bills have since generated a whirlwind of controversy as officials and supporters of the government's spin doctors tackle the avalanche of interests and voices opposed to it. Significantly, opponents of the bills cut across a broad-spectrum of interests in the country.

The first poignant indication that the bills would not have a smooth sail, came from the National Economic Council, NEC. In a communique read by Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo state, at the end of its monthly session on the 1st November, 2024, the Council recommended the withholding of the bills to allow for wider consultation and consensus building.

Obsessed with his mission of successful delivery of the bills, President Tinubu ignored the advice of the Council, headed by Vice President Kashim Shettima, and pressed ahead to present the bills to the National Assembly.

In addition to the variegated interests assailing aspects of one or the other of each of the four bills, the body of governors of the northern states, and a raft of prominent figures and groups in the region, are vociferously opposed to aspects of the bill that seek to alter the extant sharing formula of the revenue from the

Value Added Tax, VAT.

The North's opposition to the proposed new VAT sharing formula is hinged on the provision for the principle of derivation. According to the reform Bill, 60% of the VAT revenue will be shared among the states on the basis of derivation; 20%, population and, 20%, equality. Its advocates hail it as a "progressive move at enthroneing equity and fairness in the distribution of resources among the states."

A government spokesperson puts it thus: "Most importantly, VAT revenue for the purpose derivation will no longer be attributed to the place of remittance which is usually the headquarters of companies, but attributed to the actual locations or states of consumption of goods and services. Lagos, Rivers and Oyo were hitherto favoured by the old formula."

The Northern Elders Forum, NEF, the northern governors, regardless of partisan affiliation, majority of the legislators, traditional rulers and the other elites of the region, are refusing to be cajoled or hoodwinked into rolling out the drums and singing the praises of the President. They are unanimous in their view that the tax reform bills, especially those aspects regarding VAT, is a poisoned chalice. Or, a guiled, stealthy dagger aimed at the heart of the North.

According to the NEF's Professor Ango Abdullahi, "It is a move to further marginalise the North's resource potential, It was conceived in bad faith, poorly packaged, and a palpable threat to our unity and national cohesion."

In addition to their openly declared opposition to the bills, the northern governors are also said to have subterraneously threatened to scuttle the re-election of the region's national legislators in support of the bills. In his trademark forthrightness, Senator Abdul Ningi, has also warned: "If these bills pass through the National Assembly, there will be consequences. Many will pay the price for their indifference, lack of patriotism and outright unreponsiveness."

We at Neptune Prime cannot see the logical grounds to disagree with the position of the northern leaders on the issue of VAT in the context of the president's proposed tax reform bills. In our view, a critical, even cursory analysis of the so-called new sharing formula of the VAT reveals very clearly that, the north is grossly disadvantaged.

Yes, the newly introduced derivation principle stipulates that the 60% share to the states will no longer be based on the location of the companies, industries or, service providers but, on the volume of consumption of the states. How will that be beneficial to the north, given comparatively, the region's high poverty level and the resultant low level of consumption of the goods and services from which VAT revenues are derived?

While the paltry 20% provided by the bill on equality of states will actually peter to insignificant sums when spread across the states, the remaining 20% due to the host states where companies from which VAT revenues are derived, simply translates to imply that Lagos, Rivers and Oyo earn the greater chunk.

Thus, at the end of the day, the south in general and Lagos, Oyo and Rivers in particular will be receiving far greater than they are currently getting from VAT. Conversely, the North will be getting far less from VAT if, the bills as they are, see the light of day as Acts.

We are of the standpoint that the President should hearken to the admonition of NEC, to put the process of the bills on hold, until after a wide ranging consultation and consensus building.

In the alternative, we believe that the law makers at the National Assembly will be alive to their salient responsibility of legislating for the superior interest of peace and prosperity of the country. Given the momentous opposition against the bill, we are of the strong opinion that all concerned must exercise restraint and caution in driving the process of its passage into law. "Let the sleeping dogs lie", goes the old adage.

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PDP Govs ask Tinubu to review economic policies



L-R: Chairman Committee on Health Institutions, Hon Amos Magaji, The Representing of the Speaker House of Representative, Hon, Martins Oke, Deputy Chairman of the Committee, Hon, Adesola Adedayo, member of the Committee Hon, Hassan Shehu Hassan During the One-day Public Hearing on 16 Health Related Bill, by members House of Representative, Committee on Health Institutions, held at the National Assembly in Abuja

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Governors' Forum has urged President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to reassess the economic policies implemented by his administration, which they argue have significantly worsened the living conditions of Nigerians.

Meeting in Jos, Plateau State, the governors voiced their concerns over the fiscal and macroeconomic reforms enacted under the All Progressives Congress (APC)-led Federal Government. These include the removal of fuel subsidies and the floating of the naira, policies that have contributed to a surge in the cost of living.

Bauchi State Governor Bala

Mohammed, who chairs the forum, articulated their position:

“The forum empathises with Nigerians who are groaning under the oppressive economic hardship hoisted on the nation by the policies and decisions of the APC-led Federal Government. We call on the president to urgently review both macroeconomic and fiscal policies to address the welfare and well-being of Nigerians.”

The PDP governors pledged to implement strategies that would alleviate the suffering of citizens in their respective states, focusing on development and progress.

“All PDP governors will

continue to aggressively pursue policies and programmes that will reduce hardship and ensure progress and development,” Governor Mohammed added.

The forum also addressed the recent governorship elections in Edo and Ondo States, describing them as a “rape of democracy.” They accused the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) of manipulating results in Edo State in favour of the APC candidate, despite the PDP candidate, Asue Ighodalo, allegedly winning the majority of lawful votes.

Similarly, they claimed that vote-buying and result manipulation marred the Ondo elec-

tions. They called on the judiciary to uphold democracy and urged the National Assembly to amend electoral laws to prevent such occurrences in the future.

“The forum calls on the judiciary to save Nigerian democracy and the National Assembly to strengthen electoral laws to make it difficult for institutional sabotage of the will of the people,” Governor Mohammed said.

Addressing the lingering leadership crisis within the PDP, the governors advocated for a National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting to be convened by February 2025. They stressed the importance of extensive consultations with party stakeholders to resolve internal disputes and foster unity.

The one-day meeting was attended by six PDP governors from Bauchi, Zamfara, Taraba, Adamawa, Oyo, and Plateau States. Delta and Enugu States sent their deputy governors, while the governors of Rivers, Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, and Osun States were notably absent.

This meeting highlights the PDP governors' determination to address both national and internal challenges, reaffirming their commitment to the welfare of Nigerians and the restoration of democratic integrity.

Nigeria saves \$20bn by removing subsidies
— *Wale Edun*

The Federal Government says it has saved \$20 billion by removing petrol subsidy and adopting market-based foreign exchange pricing.

The Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun, made this disclosure at an event in Abuja marking the first 100 days in office of Esther Walsio-Jack, Head of the Civil Service of the Federation.

According to him, the two subsidies were costing the country five percent of the Gross Domestic Product, GDP.

“When there was a subsidy on PMS and on foreign exchange, they collectively cost five percent of GDP. Assuming GDP was \$400 billion on average, five percent of that is \$20 billion — funds that could now go into infrastructure, health, social services, and education,” he said.

The minister further noted that the savings are being redirected into developmental projects.

“The real change is that no one can wake up and target cheap funding or forex from the Central Bank to enrich themselves without adding value.

“Similarly, profiteering from the inefficient petrol subsidy regime is no longer possible,” he added.

President Bola Tinubu announced the end of the petrol subsidy regime on May 29. However, by August 19, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Limited revealed that the federal government owed it 7.8 trillion for under-recovery, despite earlier denials of any subsidy reintroduction.

FG confirms arrest of Simon Ekpa by Finnish authorities on terrorism charges

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has confirmed the arrest of Mr Simon Ekpa, a Nigerian-Finnish citizen and prominent leader of the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), on Thursday by the Finnish authorities.

The ministry disclosed this in a statement by Kimiebi Ebienu, the acting spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on Friday in Abuja.

He said that Ekpa was arrested on charges of inciting terrorism and promoting violence.

Ekpa, a Finnish politician and Biafran political activist, was reported to have in 2022 declared

activation of Biafra Government in exile and himself leader in 2023 while in exile.

“The ministry wishes to confirm the arrest of Ekpa, a Nigerian-Finnish citizen and prominent leader of the proscribed IPOB, by Finnish authorities on Thursday, Nov. 21.

READ ALSO: DHQ hails Simon Ekpa's arrest in Finland, seeks extradition to Nigeria

“He was charged with inciting terrorism and promoting violence. The Finnish District Court of Päijät-Häme ruled to detain him on probable cause for publicly inciting crimes with ter-

rorist intent.

“The Finnish authorities alleged that Ekpa used social media platforms to spread separatist propaganda, incite violence, and encourage illegal actions, which had caused significant disruptions in the South-East of Nigeria.

“Finnish investigators had also linked him to incidents of violence in Nigeria, which were believed to have been fueled by his online activities.

“The arrest of Ekpa follows sustained diplomatic pressure by the Nigerian government on Finland, to take action against

his activities, linked to violence and instability in the South-East of Nigeria.”

It explained that the request for action featured during high-level engagements between the two countries.

It described the arrest of Ekpa as a significant development in tackling the activities of IPOB and neutralising the influence of transnational actors, and their impact on national security.

“The ministry will continue to monitor the legal proceedings and provide further updates as the case progresses,” he said.



Happy Birthday to a Meticulous Governor

We celebrate an extraordinary leader and a beacon of hope, His Excellency, Mai Mala Buni, the Executive Governor of Yobe State.

With your visionary leadership and unwavering commitment, you have transformed the landscape of governance in Yobe State, fostering peace, progress, and sustainable development. Your dedication to empowering the people and enhancing every sector of the state's economy stands as a testament to your exceptional qualities and selfless service.

On behalf of the good people of Yobe East, I extend my warmest birthday wishes to Your Excellency. As you mark this special day, we pray that Almighty Allah continues to bless you with good health, wisdom, and strength to achieve even greater milestones for the benefit of humanity.

Happy Birthday, Your Excellency!



**Distinguished Senator
Mustapha Musa Senator,
Yobe East.**





OPINION

Security Sector: Olagunju, Dare and nepotism in appointments

BY YUSHAU A. SHUAIB

Lasisi Olagunju, an esteemed columnist renowned for his incisive and thought-provoking writing, has long captivated readers with his ability to intertwine Yoruba folktales, historical references, and literary insight. His articles often critically examine Nigeria's political and social landscape uniquely. Yet, even admirers like myself, a friend of over two decades, occasionally find ourselves questioning some of his more provocative viewpoints.

Armed with a First-Class degree in English Studies and a PhD in political communication, Olagunju skillfully employs proverbs and allegorical storytelling to enrich his narratives, often embedding subtle hints that resonate with discerning readers capable of reading between the lines.

However, one area that has at times troubled me during our discussions is his candid and at times excessive criticism of Northern Nigeria, which often extends to former President Buhari. Olagunju's thematic collection of essays titled *Cowries of Blood* offers a poignant glimpse into his perspective on the Arewa region.

In his recent column, *In Defence of Nepotism*, Olagunju recounts a conversation with a northern friend (he didn't say I am the one) who criticised President Bola Tinubu for nepotistic appointments favouring the Yoruba. Olagunju counters this by asserting that the majority of key security appointments under Tinubu are held by northerners. His analysis appears to be informed by recent data from Sunday Dare, the newly appointed Presidential Adviser on Public Communication and Orientation. This data claims that strategic security roles are predominantly occupied by northerners, thereby challenging allegations of ethnic favouritism toward the Yoruba.

While Olagunju and Dare invoke the term "key and strategic positions" to bolster their arguments, they should note that certain statutory lead agencies hold far more critical operational and mandated significance than others.

For example, Dare's analysis is not without its flaws. It raises eyebrows when he includes the two Defence Ministers, Muhammad Badaru and Bello Matawalle, as northern heads of agencies responsible for supervising the Army, Navy, and Air Force, yet omits the Minister of Interior, Dr. Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo from the Southwest, who oversees pivotal security agencies such as the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Immigration, Prison and the Fire Services as well as the board in charge of recruitments and promotions in those agencies.

Additionally, Dare, a former Minister of Youth and Sports, makes a confusing classification by listing the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) as security agencies led by northerners. Haba! This stretch of the concept of security agencies beyond their traditional confines further fuels scepticism regarding the credibility of his claims.

While Dare's narrative may appear disingenuous, Olagunju's assertion that Nigeria is geopolitically divided into three regions: South, West, and North is laughable.

Emerging analyses, such as a recent report by PRNigeria, present a more nuanced view of security leadership distribution across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones: Northwest, Northeast, Northcentral, Southwest, Southeast, and South-South.

Olagunju's perspectives on nepotism extend beyond mere data analysis. He argues that nepotism, often viewed negatively, can be a pragmatic strategy for leaders navigating Nigeria's complex ethno-regional landscape. He traces the pattern of regional favouritism in appointments back to previous administrations.

A particularly striking claim from Olagunju posits that former President Olusegun Obasanjo strategically appointed primarily Southern and Northern Christians to sensitive security positions to mitigate perceived threats to his administration.

Olagunju notes, "Obasanjo had three Inspectors-General of Police, and all three were from his western region (Yoruba). His DG SSS from 1999 to 2007 was Colonel Kayode Are, his Abeokuta kinsman. For the army, Obasanjo, a Southern Christian, in eight years, had four gentlemen as his Chief of Army Staff. He started in 1999 with Victor Malu, a Christian from the North; then he moved south and picked Alexander Ogomudia, a Southern minority. After two years and two months, Obasanjo took the position back to the North but did not give it to those who might use it to injure him. He picked Martin Luther Agwai, a Southern Kaduna minority Christian. Three years later, he went south again and selected Andrew Owoye Azazi, another Southern minority. He was deliberate about what he did, mixing his nationalist broth with condiments of small nepotism here and a little altruism there. The Obasanjo experience ended

almost twenty years ago. This is the age of reason, with an apology to Thomas Paine. The gloves are off."

However, as Olagunju emphasises this troubling narrative, it raises pertinent questions: Are Northern Muslims seen as potential threats capable of undermining any sitting president? Does this atmosphere of distrust underpin Tinubu's preference for predominantly Yoruba Christian leadership within critical security agencies?

Despite being a Muslim, President Tinubu has entrusted the most influential security and economic positions predominantly to Yoruba Christians from the Southwest. Notable examples include the Acting Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Olufemi Oluyode; Inspector General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun; Director General of the DSS, Adeola Ajayi; and EFCC Chairman, Olanipekun Olukayede, who all lead front-line agencies in military, security, intelligence, and anti-corruption efforts.

Similarly, key national economic positions are held by Yoruba Christians from the South-West, such as the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Yemi Cardoso; the powerful Chairman of the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), Zacch Adedegbe; and the Minister of Finance

and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun.

Olagunju's analysis deepens when he alludes to the power dynamics within Tinubu's administration. He provocatively suggests uncertainty surrounding who truly holds power, whether it is President Tinubu, his wife Remi Tinubu, an ordained senior pastor in the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), or even their son and close associates.

This observation leads to a broader concern about the direction of Nigeria's democracy. Could this also reflect the agitation of Yoruba Muslims who feel underrepresented in Tinubu's administration?

Olagunju further predicts impending leadership changes, particularly regarding the next Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) chairman. He argues that Tinubu's choice is likely to reflect home-region bias, echoing the missteps of previous leaders. He warns that unlike President Goodluck Jonathan, who appointed a non-regional INEC chairman to his detriment, Tinubu will likely prioritise regional loyalty in this critical appointment in 2025.

The implications of nepotism in Nigeria's leadership are profound. Every moment a leader prioritises ethnicity over competence is a moment that edges the nation closer to instability. If certain groups are deemed untrustworthy for critical appointments, how can they, in turn, trust the administration with their votes?

Ultimately, every moment spent fostering nepotism over competence distances Nigeria from effective governance. Leaders must embrace inclusivity and meritocracy to nurture trust and collaboration among all regions and ethnicities. Only then can Nigeria aspire to realise its full potential as a united nation.

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Despite being a Muslim, President Tinubu has entrusted the most influential security and economic positions predominantly to Yoruba Christians from the Southwest



Multiple Blows to a Reactive North: Emilokan na your mate?, by Barrister Shettima Danazumi

Northern States are gradually losing a significant portion of their shares of FAAC allocation, which is undoubtedly the biggest source of their revenue. Local Government Funds, Fiscal Reform Bills, dividends from the NLNG shares, and today, the National Lottery. All these were part of the pool that made up the monthly national cake distribution known as the Federal Accounts and Allocation Committee.

These developments are not surprising to any student of development. We all saw it coming.

Early this year, the Supreme Court in a suit filed by the Federal Government scrapped the States and Local Government joint account, which before then entrusted local government funds in the hands of their respective States.

In another case, the Supreme Court also agreed with the argument of the AGF and held that NNPC's stake in the NLNG, which remits a huge revenue to the Government annually, unlike the NNPC itself, actually belongs to the Federal Government alone and not the entire Federation. Those billions of dollars accrued to NNPC from NLNG annually are not to be shared anymore with the States as part of FAAC.

Similarly, VAT rev-

enue, a chunk part of the non-oil revenue, currently being shared based on equity, derivation and population formula amongst FG, States and Local Government will, if the Emilokan's Executive Bill succeeds at the National Assembly, now be shared based on derivation or consumption or both. Either way, I don't see how the north can benefit from it. I will get to the reason shortly.

Then came today, another blow in a Suit initiated by Lagos State Government, that revenues accrued to the Federation through the National Lottery Commission from regulation and royalties of lottery and other online games is in reality within the Residual Legislative List, exclusive to States to regulate and generate revenues from.

I believe there may be more of these seemingly harsh interpretations of the law in the nearest future. Because that is what the Constitution actually contemplated.

If you put these chain of events together, you would only come to one conclusion: that full federalism is taking a crude shape in the country, against the wish of everyone. Had we, northerners, been thoughtful and proactive, we would have prepared for this time. We would have confronted the issue of restructuring with strat-

egy rather than our usual rejectionist attitude to achieve it on our terms and put a timeline for gradual implementation in order to minimise its impact. With our sell-out NASS members, who either do not appreciate where all this is headed or they have been bought to look away, it's only a matter of time. Allah ya ji kan Senator Sule Yaro Gandi and the rest of his contemporary visionaries and patriots.

What should we expect now? Our FAAC reliant states will receive shorter allocation. If VAT is to be shared based on derivation, then most of the corporate headquarters of businesses where the remittance of VAT takes place are far away from the north. What if it's to be shared based on consumption? The follow-up question is: How do you determine the end users when you don't have the data to prove

where it is consumed? Even if this data exists, most of our businesses in the north, including Kano State, are not formal businesses, so their distributors are in Lagos and other Southern States. Our traders are running away from institutionalisation of corporate governance framework in their businesses that will give them the capacity to deal with manufacturers and wholesalers directly in order to properly document their dealerships. We are simply traders.

Lottery is worse because the majority of our states think the whole business is haram. But wait, is it not double standard that you are operating a secular state, collecting VAT revenue generated from breweries and royalties from casinos, including the lottery for all these years while still believing it's haram? At least, it would soon be over, and we

shall stick with halal revenues.

To make a long story short, the North must wake up on issues of governance and development. The culture of electing clueless governors, the dominance of corrupt and soulless political class must end. We must pay more attention to our manpower and skills development policies, reform our education systems, because that's what all these boil down to: EDUCATION!

Our youth must stop social media praise-singing and political psychophancy and embrace education and skill acquisition. Our businesses must also adopt corporate governance, innovation, and be more industrious and forward-thinking.

Because Emilokan is not your mate.

Barrister Danazumi writes from Abuja.

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Our youth must stop social media praise-singing and political psychophancy and embrace education and skill acquisition. Our businesses must also adopt corporate governance, innovation, and be more industrious and forward-thinking



Governor Mai Mala Buni: Celebrating Your Excellency at 57

Your Excellency,

Today, we celebrate not just another year of your life, but the immense difference your leadership has made in countless lives. At 57, your journey has been one of vision, compassion, and unwavering dedication to the well-being of our people. Through initiatives like the Solution to Internally Displaced and Host Communities (SOLID) Project, you have shown a deep commitment to restoring hope and dignity to the most vulnerable, embodying the spirit of selfless service.

Your tireless efforts to build a brighter, more inclusive Yobe State inspire us to dream bigger and work harder. On this special day, we pray for your continued strength, wisdom, and health, as you remain a beacon of hope and a source of transformation for our community. May the coming year bring you fulfilment and divine blessings in abundance.

Happy Birthday, Your Excellency!



Signed: Suleiman Dauda
State Project Coordinator, SOLID Project.





The North & The Creation of New Vista of Opportunities

BY MOHMOOD TUDE HASSAN

Let's state from the onset that, for Northern Nigeria, blame time is over.

So also is being casual, laid-back and complacent about the reality of under development of the North. Neither is merely complaining and throwing up allegations of any good any more.

The gruesome state of affairs in Northern Nigeria is a depressing reality that cannot be wished away and should not be tolerated nor accepted any longer.

Eyeball to eyeball, the North must come to terms with the fact that across all indices, it has derailed and it has no one to hold responsible but itself. To think otherwise, is to be in a costly denial and self-deception.

Expecting help from elsewhere, would be delusional.

Too many things do not add up. The figures are bad.

Between the 3 geopolitical zones of the North, are domiciled Nigeria's largest spread of human capital, land mass, arable agricultural resource and vast deposits of untouched raw solid minerals.

There's also the recent huge oil find on the Kolmani oil field in North East Nigeria.

Yet so far, the North grapples with an insane level of poverty. 87% of those stuck in multi-dimensional poverty in Nigeria, are in the North.

The disproportionate number of Nigeria's 24million out-of-school children, are in the North. 80% of Nigeria's uncultivated arable land, is in the North. The mass of the people in the North struggle to feed, and are faced with an alarming state of food insecurity.

The North lacks purchasing power being an economy limited in real growth and investment capital and that is preponderantly, peasant and subsistent with decayed infrastructure, ruined industries while a large legion of Youths lack competitive skills, education and lay around begging on streets across the country.

Vast parts of the region lack even the most basic social amenities, least of all, functional healthcare, and simple feeder roads. Clean water and basic sanitation is a mirage.

Despite having a robust natural hydro-carbon resource in the form of Mambila, shiroro, and

other other renewal alternatives, the North remains the region where the negative effects of energy deficits, is worst felt.

A case in point was the recent nearly two weeks of total blackout that further strangled the marginal micro-businesses in the region. How explainable is it the whole of the North runs on two power plants attached to the National grid?

Practically, all major factories in the North, are either grounded or at verge of collapsing while the few that are of strategic economic and national industrial-security significance, are suffering unexplainable official neglect like the Akaokuta steel complex, the Itakpe iron ore company, Kaduna textile, Steyr Motors, are all comatose.

Kolmani oil field started like a beacon of light. Now it's almost cold like a mogue.

Amidst these, the North perpetuates the toga of educationally disadvantaged and bears the disgraceful label of an unproductive leech on the Federal Treasury when in reality, it is the viable and virile potential of Nigeria.

Lately, palliatives and crumps from the stables of Northern elites, have become a convenient but disdainful populist recourse that have not and cannot replace a more purpose-driven delivery of good governance.

All these are not without consequences.

Today, Arewa carries the stain of being an unsafe region; banditry, kidnappings, excessive hate, cult-like misbehaviour of men and groups who stab one another at the slightest differences.

Youths that are drug and porn addicts, rapists, killer herdsmen, illicit arms dealers, informants and merchants of deaths.

The youths that are supposed to be galvanized in solidarity, are busy digging graves for one another. A new cell of terrorists has recently sprung up; lakurawa.

Openly, the North watches how drugs are coming in tons, illiteracy escalating through negligence, extremism growing through ideology, immorality growing through so-called entertainment and new media, yet there is no single developmental agenda for the region that is regionally recognized and implemented by various governments across the region on Agriculture, Health, Education, Industry, Technology and most impor-

tantly Security.

The region is shattered with no recognized leadership.

Politics and hate is rubbishing the North so much that it cannot even defend itself from itself.

Politicians drive and peddle antics of self-hate, animosity, greed, disruptive envy and constantly do everything to tarnish, discredit or clamp down one another.

For political ambition and affiliation, or for the pecks of official patronage, many hold back in the face of injustice and mis-governance so as not to be labeled irredentists arewa loyalists or diehards!.

Condescending attitude and disrespect, is rife among same or different religion, ethnic groups and communities.

Traditional rulers are diminished in status, now more like relics, out dated, out smarted and good only for platitude and ceremonials.

So-called elders are held down by unnecessary ego and torn apart by dangerous disagreements among themselves while clerics of the two dominant faiths, Islam and Christianity, have turned into mere ideological separatists and divisive agents of narrow political interests.

Ethnic bigots with tribesman mindset and religious marabouts are now agents of distrust and destruction, especially in the North central, claiming they do not feel part of the North.

As these persist, the North is caught up in religious disorientation.

The North is becoming the

biggest enemy to itself. The image of the region is faltered. It's indeed sad that the North has found itself in a spiral circle of human misery, poverty, insecurity and exclusion from concrete developmental processes.

Who raises a daring finger whenever the sanctity of Northern institutions are rubbished?

The North is far short of platforms to articulate and amplify its true concerns and narratives in the national space.

Some that make efforts like the Arewa Consultative Forum, Coalition of Northern Groups, are whittled down by the same ills of envy and destructive pull down syndrome.

The sudden rash of emotions against seeming systematic alienation and being negatively affected by the current state of affairs of the nation, is like crying over spilled milk..the North is its own greatest undoing.

The North must accept the reality that it squandered and over indulged itself in serial missed opportunities.

The North created its own misfortunes but should appreciate that it is possible to create new vistas of opportunities.

Getting back on track with dignity, glory and prosperity to a desired future, is not a lost course. The North needs to save itself by itself. The time to start is now.

Worse case scenario is to reset to the point the late Sardauna left off as ground zero to relaunch the region into eminence with a resolute goal of frog-leaping into being among the best of developed regions in the world.

Therein lies the import of the Arewa Media Committee of select professionals, inaugurated thursday in Kaduna, November 21st. It is a significant step that is part of a re-awakening to re-define the narratives and properly situate the trajectory of the North, setting a clear and definite agenda within the context of mainstream pan-Nigeria.

The Initiative underscores the emerging realization that policy choices of the North, going forward, must be intentional, pragmatic, realistic, and strategic.

So also must the implementation frameworks, be dynamic and consistent, planned and dogged, uncompromising and unrelenting.

It is expected the Committee would set the tone and pace of robust and sustained conversations that adequately engage, interrogate and define the narratives around northern agenda within the pan-Nigerian space beyond occasional comments of mere cosmetic appeal.

An immediate task is to rekindle the intellectual vibrancy of the North in a way that brings about the strategic convergence of well articulated and sustainable policies, resource optimization and purpose in the pursuit of prosperity for northern Nigeria aligned to overall national development.

Yes, there have been squandered opportunities but it possible to create new vistas of opportunities.

Mahmood Tunde Hassan PhD writes from Abuja. mbhtunde@gmail.com



It is expected the Committee would set the tone and pace of robust and sustained conversations that adequately engage, interrogate and define the narratives around northern agenda within the pan-Nigerian space beyond occasional comments of mere cosmetic appeal



THE HUMANIST

How my sister was abandoned by medical staff after an unsuccessful C-section – *Woman*

BY BARRISTER HAFSATU
ALIYU MUYE, MINNA

In Minna, capital city of Niger state, Balira Ishaku, middle aged and pregnant, was taken to a primary health centre located in the heart of the city. Her case was that she was manifesting signs of labour even at only seven months of pregnancy.

According to the account given to Hafsatu Aleeyu of Neptune Prime, by Fadila Gambo, Balira's elder sister, the visit to the primary health centre turned out to be the beginning of a long and excruciating heartrending mortal journey for her younger sister.

At the primary health centre at Peter Sarki road, medical personnel told them that the symptoms that Balira was showing were not those of labour but of different ailments. On the basis of their prognosis, they went ahead to keep her on admission for three days, during which she was given certain medications that included drip infusions.

However, back home and after her three days of hospital admission, she continued to experience severe pain while still manifesting all the signs of a woman in labour. The trauma was heightening and desperate. Her sister and husband, Malam Ishaku Haruna, a labourer, who engages on the hewing of wood (mai farkare as they are called in the Hausa language), as a means of livelihood, decided to try a bigger hospital.

Unlike the observation, diagnosis, and treatment at the primary health centre, doctors at the Minna General hospital diagnosed the existence of pregnancy and recommended emergency delivery through the caesarian section. Her husband and sister ran helter-skelter to scrounge for the sixty-five thousand Naira bill required for the surgery. After days on admission, the operation was finally performed, and a baby girl was delivered prematurely.

Though the operation was as such successful, the travails of

Barila took a more frightening dimension. Her abdomen was becoming bloated and swollen. Besides that problem, the baby, as a premature birth, needed to be kept in an incubator. Of course, there was no way that Barila's husband and her sister could have paid the sum of money demanded to keep the baby in the life-saving device.

Due to their inability to pay the bill for the use of the incubator, they were advised to keep the child warm by wrapping her up in purely cotton fabrics. Also, besides her deteriorating condition, Balira who, for six days, was kept incommunicado in an isolation ward, could not be breastfeeding her baby. Therefore, in place of the mother's natural breast milk, a special baby formula was recommended by the nurses.

At the cost of N18,000 Naira per a tin of the recommended formula, the traumatised parents of the unfortunate baby were only able to afford one tin before resorting to feeding her with an adult powdered milk. Some kind-hearted, breastfeeding women visiting other patients in the same ward were also assisting by offering to breastfeed the child, in spite of the advice of the hospital staff against the gesture.

While the baby was, thankfully, coping with her condition, the mother's condition, on the other hand, was degenerating by the day. The swelling and bloating of Barila's abdomen were increasing in size, as was her heart-piercing groans of pains. It got to a point that the sutures used in stitching her up after the caesarian section all got ruptured.

That rupture resulted in a gaping hole that revealed the inside of her abdomen, such as intestines and all other organs in the human internal lower cavity. Soon afterwards, the opening turned out to be a chanel of uncontrolled streams of repugnant human wastes such as faeces, urine, mucus, blood, and others. Unable to be feeding as usual,

she was naturally shrinking and rapidly losing weight.

To make for the deficiencies in her intake of vital nutrients, she was advised to go on a daily meal of fish and milk. That obviously was a tall order. Fortunately, however, help unexpectedly came from a citizen of Niger Republic resident in Minna who heard and was moved by her pathetic plight. The Good Samaritan offered to be providing the daily meal of fish and milk.

While the Good Samaritan from Niger kept to his promise for as long as Barila needed the succour, she was, alas, not to do so for too long. Firstly, the meal of fish and milk appeared to be increasing the swelling of her abdomen. Secondly, she was soon to cease requiring any kinds of food or earthly requirements.

Barila's pathetic condition was further compounded by a repulsive stench that was oozing out of her body. To close up the gaping and festering wound, doctors said she needed another surgery at the cost of sixty-five thousand Naira.

Her condition was degenerating, but the thoroughly drained and exhausted Barila's sister and husband were determined to do all within their powers to keep her alive. However, they did not know how to go about sourcing for the money. They had already sold almost every bit of her scant belongings made up of clothing and kitchen wares. Again, relief fortunately came their way from a neighbour who offered to pay

the sixty-five thousand Naira bill.

Consequent on the payment of the money, Barila was rolled into the theatre for a second surgery. But, like her experience with the first one, her condition was getting worse rather than abating. Her tommy kept on swelling, and the resultant pain was getting more severe.

Adding "salt into injury" as the saying goes in the Nigerian parlance, the hospital staff, doctors and nurses and ward attendants, became aloof, withdrawn and openly spiteful. Obviously aimed at keeping "an eye sore" away from their sights, the now Barila, who had become more like a vegetable, was transferred to the "old hospital", the derelict and abandoned former health facility that gave way to the present Minna General hospital.

Abandoned and despirited, stricken and overwhelmed by disease and poverty, Barila, looking very distant and unconnected to her environment was continually mumbling gibberish unintelligent words. Her intermittent shrills and cries were those of someone in utter, indescribable pain. Her equally flustered husband, Ishaku Haruna and her despondent sister, Fadila Gambo had visibly given up all hope and patience and those caring for her had resigned to fate and were only hoping and praying for divine mercy and miracles.

Her prayers and those of her husband and sister for a divine intervention soon came to

pass. In the early hours of last Monday, Barila Ishaku Haruna gave up the ghost and thus, the termination of all her torments on planet earth.

With her transition, painful and pathetic as it came, Barila has also forever gone beyond the malevolent attitude of the sadistic, wicked health officials who, instead of being tender, kind and compassionate, delight in adding to the pains and agony of the poor and helpless patients. Barila for one, would never be there for their condescending scoffs, scorns and other forms of cold, inhumane treatments.

As it is, Barila is simply one of the several multitudes of the nation's mounting population of the "wretched of the earth." They daily suffer her sort of fate on account of abject poverty, and also because, they are living in corruption and mediocrity. As manifested in the two health institutions where Barila had gone in search of remedies for her ailments, the nation's health system, especially for the poor, has collapsed, virtually irretrievably. Sad.

Reacting to the audio of the narration of Fadila Gambo aired broadcast by Neptune Prime, a Sokoto-based veteran journalist, Malam Abu Shekara, angrily remarked:

"Allah Ya isa! Heartless beasts making helpless poor people pay for their incompetence and corruption." Very true indeed.

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Allah Ya isa! Heartless beasts making helpless poor people pay for their incompetence and corruption



Buni @57

Happy Birthday, Your Excellency

The All Progressives Congress (APC) family in Yobe State, under the leadership of its State Party Chairman, Alhaji Mohammed Gadaka, Madakin Gudi, joins thousands of well-wishers in celebrating the birthday of His Excellency, Honourable Mai Mala Buni, CON, the Executive Governor of Yobe State.

Your Excellency, your unwavering commitment to the progress and development of Yobe State has earned you admiration and respect. Your exceptional leadership and dedication to improving the lives of the people continue to inspire us all.

On this special day, we pray for Allah's continued guidance, good health, wisdom, and success in all your endeavours. May this new year of your life bring greater achievements and lasting joy.

Happy Birthday, Sir!

Signed:
Alhaji Mohammed Gadaka, Madakin Gudi
APC State Party Chairman, Yobe State.





Congratulations @57: **Governor Mai Mala Buni**



Happy 57th birthday to a remarkable leader, His Excellency, Governor Mai Mala Buni! Your visionary leadership has transformed Yobe State, bringing progress, unity, and hope to our people.

Your commitment to excellence in governance has set a standard for others to follow, and your legacy will continue to inspire generations. On this special day, I pray that Almighty Allah grants you continued strength, good health, and wisdom to achieve even greater milestones.

Happy Birthday, Your Excellency! May your journey ahead be filled with joy, success, and blessings.

Signed,
Honourable Tijjani Zanna Zakaria
Member, House of Representatives
Former Speaker, Yobe State House of Assembly.





Public trillions in private pockets

BY OLUSEGUN ADENIYI

In July last year, the federal government established a task force comprised of the EFCC, ICPC, NFIU and the Federal Ministry of Justice to recover N5.7 trillion owed to the Assets Management Corporation of Nigeria (AMCON). The government also proposed an amendment to the AMCON Act to strengthen its institutional capacity. Although conceived as a stabilizing tool for financial institutions, AMCON has become an enormous burden to the economy. More than N3 trillion of its debt was owed by just 20 debtors, according to AMCON Chairman, Muiz Banire. For the uninitiated, that is public money used to defray bank loans taken by private citizens who refuse to pay back. And the commission has at different times advertised the names of some of these fat cats.

Questions must be raised as to why it was so easy for these private citizens to corner for themselves humongous sums of money that belong to the public. More disturbing is that Nigerians hardly pay attention to this aspect of what ails us, believing that only those elected or appointed into public offices can be accused of fiddling with our common patrimony. That explains why, for instance, a man whose multibillion Naira debt led to the liquidation of a bank that sent hundreds of people out of jobs would be considered a more honest Nigerian than the low-level public official or civil servant who embezzled a million Naira and is being chased by operatives of the anti-graft agencies! The corporate thief could receive national honours, bag chieftaincy titles, be bestowed with awards, including doctorate degrees from our universities, and can also contest and become a governor, senator or perhaps one day, President of Nigeria!

While I have no problem with the attention focused on public sector graft, neglecting private sector infractions has allowed bad behaviour to fester. And we are all victims. In 2005, I gave the proceeds from my book, 'The Last 100 Days of Abacha' to my wife to manage. She invested the money, buying shares in several quoted companies that eventually collapsed. The promoter of one of those companies is now a politician, perennially contesting election to be governor of his state with the N6 million stolen from me! I know many families that were ruined by people who made good from the shares purchased in their companies that are now history.

In 2014, Dr. Hussaini Abdu, then Country Director for ActionAid (he currently holds a similar position in PLAN International), invited me to join a team of five members to research the relationship between

poverty and corruption in Nigeria. The team was chaired by Professor Etanibi Alemika, currently a member of the Prof Itse Sagay-led Presidential Advisory Committee Against Corruption (PACAC). Other members of the ActionAid research team included Professor Dung Pan Sha of the Political Science Department, University of Jos; Ms Ayo Obe, a legal practitioner and a trustee of the Brussels-based International Crisis Group (ICG) as well as Malam Yunusa Z. Ya'u, former Bayero University, Kano don and Executive Director, Center for Information and Development.

For eight weeks, we reviewed corruption indicators in Nigeria such as inflation/diversion of budgetary allocations, demand and supply of bribes, unauthorized variation of contracts, payment for jobs either not done or poorly executed, overpayment of salaries and allowances to staff (including non-existent ones called 'ghosts'), brazen diversion of government revenue, violation of procurement regulations, non-payment/underpayment of tax by private sector operators etc. In the course of our interactions, my argument was that private sector corruption fuels poverty considerably in Nigeria, especially when this sector, according to Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, "accounts for well over 90 per cent of our GDP".

In his book, 'The Private Sector as Culprit and Victim of Corruption in Africa', Leonce Ndikumana, a Professor in the Department of Economics and Political Economy Research Institute (PERI), University of Massachusetts, Amherst, argues that corruption in the private sector is as invidious as that of the public sector because of its impact. When extraordinary ill-gotten wealth is captured by the private sector in an environment such as we have in Nigeria today, according to Transparency International, "income inequality is increased and a state's governing capacity is reduced, particularly when it comes to attending to the needs of the poor."

For some inexplicable reason, not much literature exists for understanding the private sector in Nigeria, especially from the perspective of insiders. Most of the books by operators reveal nothing. But on my arrival in Abuja on Monday from the United States, I received an autographed copy of the memoir by former Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer of the Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC), Mr Ganiyu Ogunleye. Not only is the narrative refreshingly different, it has helped me to enjoy the mandatory one-week isolation period prescribed by the efficient Dr Chikwe Ihekweazu-led Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). In the 646-page book, 'The Embattled

Bank Regulator', Ogunleye reveals a lot about the private sector in our country and how several operators have been enabled, even empowered, by those who were supposed to regulate their activities. And Ogunleye is in a position to know.

Fresh from the University of Ibadan as a graduate of Economics, Ogunleye joined the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in September 1974. After serving in different departments, he rose to the position of CBN Director of Banking Supervision in 1992. Seven years later, he was appointed the NDIC Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer. He served in that capacity for two terms of five years until he retired in 2009. He was also at some point Chairman, Committee of Bank Supervisors in West and Central Africa. So, what is reflected in Ogunleye's memoir is a 35-year experience in the Nigerian financial sector regulatory environment.

One of the key chapters in the book is on WEMA Bank, titled 'Affront on Regulatory Mandate'. It captures in detail the fight between NDIC and the board of the bank that was originally established in 1945 by the late Chief Matthew Agbonmagbe Okupe (father of Dr Doyin Okupe) as Agbonmagbe Bank before the military government of the old Western Nigeria took it over in 1969. I am sure some of the prominent people whose (alleged) roles were highlighted will respond because Ogunleye didn't pull his punches. Names were also mentioned in other key chapters, including 'Merger Without Due Diligence' (on Spring Bank); 'A Mirage for Depositors' (on Savannah Bank) and 'Government Intrigues' which highlights behind-the-scenes power-play involving principal characters in Aso Rock, CBN, Ministry of Finance etc at different times.

Ogunleye particularly took on the 2004 banking consolidation exercise by then CBN Governor, Professor

Chukwuma Soludo. He disagrees with President Olusegun Obasanjo's rationale for Soludo's appointment: "While the economy was going down and people were losing their jobs and livelihoods, banks were declaring obscene profits and were increasing in number. I was grossly disturbed and dissatisfied with the report I got about the banking industry. The Central Bank Governor, Joseph Sanusi saw my point of view but as a commercial banker, his sympathy was, by my reckoning, more for the banks and his former colleagues than for the economy. After Sanusi retired, I had to look for a candidate outside the banking industry."

Ogunleye does not give Soludo much credit for the banking consolidation and in fact, it makes imputations about regulatory capture under the latter's stewardship. Discerning readers may, however, argue that Ogunleye is only justifying the apparent failure of Joseph Sanusi who incidentally wrote the foreword to the book.

But what is clear from the narrative is the challenge of regulation in the Nigerian financial sector. Ogunleye prescribes that regulators must pay attention to market conduct "while the existing laws "require, as a matter of urgency, a major review or repeal and re-enactment. Similarly, there is a need for a financial sector masterplan."

With interesting anecdotes, including an account of the day he witnessed board members of a bank engaging one another in physical combat, Ogunleye concluded that his encounter with various stakeholders in the financial sector reveals that a regulator must possess at least four attributes which he classified as 4Cs: Character, Competence, Courage and Commitment. Without these attributes, according to Ogunleye, it would be difficult for any regulator to effectively execute the assigned mandate.

In the end, what comes out clearly from Ogunleye's memoir is that we need reform in the financial sector. But it goes beyond drafting another master plan. A clear absence of the rule of law encourages the impunity we witness. People who owe billions of Naira go about flaunting ill-gotten wealth without question. With reports that most of these 'bad debts' were collected and shared with bankers who then looked the other way, we need to reform the criminal justice system that is rigged in favour of the rich yet very harsh against the poor.

While Ogunleye's rich memoir is on the financial sector, the lesson is the same for other areas of our national life if we are to deepen the private sector in Nigeria. Aside from the CBN, other apex regulators include Nigeria Insurance (NAICOM), Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), National Pension Commission (PENCOM), Nigeria Communications Commission (NCC), Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) etc. Their basic role is always to promote and protect public interest. But when they are 'captured', they become tools in the hands of private interests they are meant to oversee. We witness a lot of that in Nigeria.

Interestingly, the capture of a regulator, according to Scott Hempling, adjunct professor at Georgetown University Law Center who teaches courses on public utility law and regulatory litigation, is characterized by the regulator's attitude, not the regulated entity's actions. "A regulator is 'captured' when he is in a constant state of 'being persuaded': persuaded based on a persuader's identity rather than an argument's merits. Regulatory capture is reflected in a surplus of passivity and reactivity, and a deficit of curiosity and creativity. It is evidenced by a body of commission decisions or non-decisions—about resources, procedures, priorities, and policies, where what the regulated entity wants has more influence than what the public interest requires." These actions and inactions—which militate against the enthronement of a level-playing field for all operators—Hempling says, "feed a forest where private interest trees grow tall, while the public's needs stay small."

That, and the burgeoning absence of competence—where a regulator simply does not understand the basic tenets of the field being regulated and reduces the office to a mere administrative award of favours and contracts—is a challenge. Across the board in Nigeria today, people are found in positions that are way above their intellectual capacity. That is why many of our regulators fail to see how the import of a decision or non-decision can affect the state of an industry five years down the line. It also explains AMCON's N5.7 trillion debt and the continuous decline of the nation's collective wealth.

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While the economy was going down and people were losing their jobs and livelihoods, banks were declaring obscene profits and were increasing in number



Happy birthday to His Excellency, Governor Mai Mala Buni



On this splendid occasion marking your birthday, I, Honourable Lawan Shettima Ali, humbly extend my profound felicitations to Your Excellency, Mai Mala Buni, the illustrious Governor of Yobe State.

Your Excellency, your tenure has been nothing short of transformative, a beacon of hope illuminating the path of progress for our dear state. Through your dynamic leadership, Yobe has ascended to new heights in education, healthcare, and infrastructural development, embodying the aspirations of our people.

As you commemorate this remarkable milestone, I fervently pray for the Almighty to bestow upon you boundless wisdom, enduring strength, and divine favour to continue steering Yobe State towards unparalleled greatness. May your legacy as a visionary leader resonate for generations to come.

Happy Birthday, Your Excellency! May your life be adorned with countless blessings and monumental triumphs.

Yours in service,



Honourable Lawan Shettima Ali
Member, House of Representatives
Federal Republic of Nigeria



HEALTH

World's first IVF baby produces movie to share her story, celebrate pioneers

The world's first IVF baby, Louise Joy Brown, and her birth in 1978 marked a medical breakthrough that changed the face of reproductive science.

Now, decades later, Louise is championing "Joy", a new film that tells the remarkable story of how her life began and the pioneers who made it possible.

ITV disclosed on Thursday that the new film tells the astonishing story of how the three pioneers of IVF battled widespread opposition.

In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) is a medical procedure used to assist individuals and couples struggling with infertility.

Derived from the Latin term in vitro, meaning "in glass," IVF refers to the process of fertilising an egg outside the body in a controlled laboratory environment.

1978 test tube baby—IVF

In 1978, headlines around the globe hailed her as the "test tube baby," though, as Louise points out, it wasn't a test tube but a desiccator bottle used in the groundbreaking process.

"Test tube baby" might have been a catchy headline, but what truly stuck was the awe and controversy surrounding her birth.

Born July 18, 1978, Louise's birth, following a procedure pioneered in Britain, has been lauded among "the most remarkable medical breakthroughs in the 20th century."

Her Instagram bio read, "Louise Joy Brown the world's first #IVF baby. #IVFandProud. #Miracle-

Babies #Infertility #Fertility #IVFis40"

Three IVF heroes, challenges

According to the news agency, the film Joy delves into the decade-long struggle of the trio behind IVF: gynaecologist Patrick Steptoe, scientist Bob Edwards, and embryologist Jean Purdy.

Facing fierce opposition from religious groups, ethical debates, and scientific challenges, they forged a path that brought hope to countless families.

Louise reflected on their legacy during a visit to Bourn Hall, Cambridge, the fertility clinic the pioneers established in 1980.

"You can see their pride in every story of success that followed," she said, her voice tinged with gratitude.

Louise's parents, John and Lesley Brown, became unlikely history-makers alongside her.

"They were working-class people," Louise shared, explaining why they were chosen for the experimental treatment.

Their story highlights the persistent inequalities in IVF access today, with many NHS patients facing lengthy waiting times and soaring costs for private care.

Inspiration: Seven rounds of IVF

Writers Jack Thorne and Rachel Mason, who underwent seven rounds of IVF before welcoming their son, bring a deeply personal perspective to Joy.

"IVF is still not taken seriously enough," Rachel said. "People with fertility

struggles deserve access to medical treatment, but IVF is often dismissed as a luxury or middle-class pursuit."

She pointed to a recent report linking failed IVF cycles to PTSD, underscoring the emotional toll.

The film also aims to correct historical omissions.

At its heart is Jean Purdy, the world's first embryologist, whose critical role in IVF's creation was largely erased from history.

Purdy, who died at 39 of cancer without children of her own, was an essential force in the success of the treatment.

"It's tragic how little recognition she received," said actor Bill Nighy, who plays Patrick Steptoe.

"She worked in a male-dominated field where

fertility science was considered second-class."

By putting Purdy at the forefront, Joy honours her pivotal contributions and celebrates the determination of the many women who underwent early treatments, paving the way for IVF advancements.

"This film isn't just about the science," Louise remarked. "It's about the humanity, the struggles, and the triumphs that brought us here."

For Louise, Joy is more than a film—it's a testament to how far IVF has come and a call to address the disparities that remain.

Decades after her birth made headlines, she hopes it will inspire renewed appreciation for those who helped make the miracle of life possible for so many.

And here she is...
THE LOVELY LOUISE





A Leader of Excellence, Integrity @57

Happy Birthday, Governor Mai Mala Buni

On behalf of the Yobe State House of Assembly, I, Right Honourable Chiroma Buba Mashio, Speaker of the Yobe State House of Assembly, extend our heartfelt and joyous birthday wishes to His Excellency, Governor Mai Mala Buni, CON, a leader whose extraordinary vision, unparalleled dedication, and transformative leadership continue to propel our state to greatness.

Your Excellency, we are profoundly grateful for your remarkable leadership, especially your steadfast commitment to upholding the rule of law and the separation of powers as enshrined in our Constitution. Your integrity, wisdom, and respect for democratic principles have fostered a harmonious and productive relationship between the executive, legislative, and judicial arms of government, ensuring that Yobe State thrives in an atmosphere of justice, cooperation, and prosperity.

As you celebrate this special day, we pray that Allah, in His infinite mercy, continues to grant you boundless strength, divine wisdom, and excellent health. May He bless you with many more years of exceptional leadership, unparalleled success, and continued progress for our beloved Yobe State.

Happy Birthday, Your Excellency! May this new year of your life be filled with magnificent achievements, boundless joy, and Allah's abundant blessings.



Signed:
Right Honourable Chiroma Buba Mashio
Speaker, Yobe State House of Assembly.



EDUTAINMENT

What Is Inside the Calabash? A Timeless Tale of Integrity and Love

"Ohun ti o wa ninu igba kii je ki a le gbe igba lo nigba miran" – What's inside the calabash doesn't allow it to be taken away sometimes.

One breezy afternoon, as the sun cast golden rays across the compound, my grandmother called me to her side. "Mojisola omo mi," she said. "Yes, Maami," I answered, curious about the wisdom she was about to share. She leaned in, her eyes twinkling with a mix of love and sternness.

"Be strong in character," she began. "Let integrity guide your steps. Never yield to cheap blackmail, but above all, let love and humility reign in your heart. Even the devil can not resist love."

Puzzled, I asked, "Ah! Maami, kilode?" – What happened? She smiled and said, "Sit, my child, and listen to this story."

The Tale of the Calabash

There once was a woman, neither wealthy nor poor, who found herself widowed. Alone and vulnerable, she joined a coven to find solace and protection. She had only one child, a daughter who was the epitome of grace – humble, intelligent, and full of love.

In the coven, a time came when every member had to offer their child for atonement. It was now the woman's turn. But she could not bear to harm her beloved daughter, whose kindness and goodness were unmatched.

Pleading with her coven members, she said, "Please, allow me to prepare my child's soul in a calabash. I will leave the house, and you can come for it in my absence." Her colleagues agreed.

On the appointed day, the woman placed her daughter's soul inside a calabash, instructing the girl not to open it but to hand it over to the visitors. With a heavy heart, she left the house.

The daughter, unaware of the contents of the calabash, awaited the guests. When they arrived, she greeted them warmly, knelt to show respect, and offered them water to drink and wash their feet. She quickly prepared a meal of pounded yam, ensuring they were comfortable and satisfied.

When they finished eat-

ing, she brought the calabash, knelt, and handed it to them with the words, "My mother asked me to give this to you."

The visitors exchanged knowing glances and said, "Ohun ti o wa ninu igba ko le je ki a gbe igba lo – what is inside the calabash does not allow it to be taken away." They returned the calabash and left.

When her mother returned, she was astonished to find her daughter alive and well. The girl narrated the events, and with tears streaming down her face,

the woman said, "Keep doing what you do best. Your goodness has saved you."

Lessons from the Calabash

The story speaks volumes about the power of character and the virtues of love and humility. Here are a few reflections:

1. Teach Your Children Well: Are we raising respectful, kind, and hospitable children who embody love and integrity?

2. Preserve Your Heritage: Do our children speak their native languages or understand our cultural values?

3. Start the Rescue Mission: If we notice any gaps in these areas, it's never too late to start correcting them.

The Bible reminds us in Proverbs 16:7, "When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him."

So, let us live in a way that inspires even the hardest hearts to bow to the power of love and integrity.

Have a wonderful day, and remember, "What is inside the calabash matters more than the calabash itself."





POLITICS



PDP Acting National Chairman, Umar Damagum

PDP Lawmakers Raise Alarm Over Alleged Plot To Keep PDP NWC In Office

A coalition of federal opposition lawmakers have accused some Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) governors and 24 state party chairmen of plotting to keep the party's acting National Chairman, Umar Damagum, in office until 2027 to weaken the party.

The lawmakers made the claim during a press conference in Akokwa, Imo State, on Sunday evening.

The spokesman for the group and member representing Ideato North/Ideato South Federal Constituency, Imo State, Ikenga Ugochinyere, said, "Today, our nation is facing different challenges, both economic and political. But there's something that's missing in all these problems, and that's a vibrant and responsive and responsible opposition.

"We have the PDP that's supposed to lead the opposition, but what we have are political charlatans hijack-

ing the heartbeat of the opposition party and turning it into an errand platform for the ruling party

"Some of you called me yesterday after the meeting the governors had in Jos and said it's all over for the PDP. It's very shameful to see what's happening to a party that was founded in 1998 by the great efforts of our founding fathers - the likes of Alex Ekwueme, Adamu Ciroma, Jerry Gana, Atiku Abubakar, Olusegun Obasanjo, and so many others, that came together and ended 16 years of military rule.

"That political party is what these guys are playing Akara with. Umar Damagum and Samuel Anyanwu are now messing up with and forgetting the sacred expectation of Nigerian people."

He alleged that plans had been perfected to prevent the National Executive Committee from selecting a substantive chairman from the North Central zone, as

originally intended.

He added, "They want Umar Damagum to continue to parade himself as the National Chairman and stay in office till 2027 so they can foist on us a weakling that will be a presidential candidate.

"We have impostors among us who have no honour and decency. The ruling party will be laughing at them now that they want to sabotage their own party.

"First, they said there was a Sallah holiday, and they shifted it. Since last year, they kept on shifting the NEC meeting. Till now, there is no NEC meeting. They keep on giving different excuses. The national leaders of PDP are frolicking with APC leaders, going to London, and having meetings with APC leadership."

He accused the party leadership of nurturing a political alliance with the Federal Capital Territory Minister, Mr Nyesom Wike.

Dissatisfied with FG's economic policies, Northern groups team up for 2027 election

The League of Northern Democrats (LND) has reached out to similar other groups in the region, including the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), Northern Elders Forum (NEF) and Middle Belt Forum (MBF), to forge common ground to return power to the region in 2027 presidential election

Addressing members of the ACF on Thursday during their meeting, the Chairman of the LND, Senator Ibrahim Shekarau, said the meeting with other northern groups marked the beginning of a transformative coalition for Northern Nigeria.

Shekarau, who spoke through one of the members of the LND, Ibrahim Isa Bio, a former Minister of Transportation noted that the teaming up required commitment, collaboration and a shared vision from all the groups.

The League of Northern Democrats' visit to ACF came 48 hours after the Forum had faulted the economic policies of President Bola Tinubu's government, saying it lacked a human face.

According to Shekarau, "In our effort to rebuild a stronger Northern Nigeria, I am pleased to inform you that we have also held consultative meetings with the leadership of the Northern Elders Forum and the Middle Belt Forum, and our discussions yielded fruits with agreements in principle to forge a coalition among our four organizations - i.e. ACF, LND, NEF and the Middle Belt Forum. This coalition is not just for today but for the future, a future where Northern Nigeria regains its status as a beacon of progress, culture and leadership in Nigeria!

"This unified front will complete the long-sought

unity of the North.

"The consequence of such a coalition will be profound: political entities such as the PDP, APC, LP, NNPP, SDP, state governors, legislators and even the presidency will be humbled and compelled to support and align with our vision, thus reclaiming the dignity, stability and influence of Northern Nigeria for the benefit of all Nigerians.

"It is both an honour and a privilege to stand before you today on this momentous occasion. I wish to begin by expressing our heartfelt gratitude to the leadership of the Arewa Consultative Forum ACF for providing us with the opportunity to engage in this critical meeting. This marks the beginning of what we hope will be a transformative coalition for Northern Nigeria.

"The challenges facing our region - poverty, insecurity, illiteracy, religious intolerance, disunity and diminishing political influence - are indeed serious. The North is today in an ugly situation.

"Yet, we all know that the situation is reversible. It only requires commitment, collaboration and a shared vision from all of us. In truth, we owe ourselves and the generations behind us the solemn duty to do so. I am convinced that it is the spirit of this duty that has brought us all together today.

"We recognise and deeply appreciate the contributions of the ACF in preserving the values, culture and dignity of the North. Your steadfast dedication and resilience over the years have been a guiding light. In this spirit, the League of Northern Democrats brings fresh perspectives, innovative strategies and a renewed commitment to advancing the interests of our people."



CRIME

Woman gets death penalty for killing 14 friends during vacation



A Thai court has sentenced Sararat Rangsiwuthaporn, 36, to death for the murder of a wealthy friend using cyanide, marking the first conviction in a chilling series of cases where she is ac-

cused of killing 14 friends. Sararat, nicknamed "Am Cyanide" by Thai media, was found guilty of poisoning her friend Siriporn Khanwong, 32, during a trip in April 2023.

The court heard that Sar-

arat spiked Siriporn's food and drink during a Buddhist ritual in Ratchaburi province.

Siriporn collapsed and died shortly after, and her valuables, including her phone and money, were

missing.

Police arrested Sararat following an autopsy that revealed traces of cyanide in Siriporn's body.

Investigators uncovered a pattern of similar deaths dating back to 2015, with one alleged victim surviving.

Sararat is believed to have targeted friends she owed money to, stealing their jewellery and valuables to feed a gambling addiction.

"You got justice, my child. Today, there is justice in this world," said Siriporn's mother, Thongpin Kiatchanasiri, outside the courtroom while holding her daughter's photo. Thongpin also noted that Sararat appeared to smile as the death sentence was read.

Sararat has pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Her former husband, ex-

police officer Vitoon Rangsiwuthaporn, and her lawyer received prison sentences of one year four months, and two years, respectively, for helping Sararat conceal evidence.

In addition to the death penalty, Sararat was ordered to pay Siriporn's family two million baht (\$57,667) in compensation.

Cyanide, a highly lethal poison, deprives cells of oxygen and can cause death within seconds if consumed in large quantities.

Thailand strictly regulates its use, with unauthorised possession punishable by up to two years in prison.

This chilling case has drawn significant attention both in Thailand and internationally, shedding light on the dark and calculated methods behind Sararat's alleged crimes.

Eight boys gang-rape 14-year-old girl, record video to blackmail her

The Ogun State Command of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps has narrated how eight teenagers allegedly gang-raped and filmed a 14-year-old girl in the Ijebu-Mushin area of the state.

The narration was contained in a statement signed by the command's Public Relations Officer, Dyke Ogbonnaya.

Ogbonnaya narrated that the suspects, which included 17-year-old Mathew Omotayo and seven others had taken the victim to a secluded room and had canal knowledge of her without her consent.

He added that the suspects also recorded the scene of the act and had continually used it as blackmail to deter the victim from report-

ing the incident.

He identified the other suspects as "Mojeeb Solomon, male, 16 years; Olamilekan Adefuye, male, 18 years; Damilola Ismail, male, 19 years; Emmanuel George, male, 17 years; Aborisade Paul Ayomide, male, 17 years; Paul Chukwuchebe, male, 19 years; and Lateef Adeoye, male, 16 years."

Ogbonnaya said, "The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, Ogun State Command Headquarters, Abeokuta, has arrested one Matthew Omotayo, male, 17 years and seven other suspected teenagers for alleged conspiracy, sexual abuse, unlawful sexual intercourse, exploitation and assault of a 14-year-old minor (name withheld) at the Ijebu-Mushin, Ijebu East

Local Government Area of Ogun State on Friday, November 15, 2024.

"The alleged suspects, who claimed to be students of St. Anthony Grammar School, Esure, Ijebu-Mushin, Ijebu East Local Government Area of the state, took the said minor without consent to a secluded room and had violent sexual intercourse with her and putting the same event in a video form.

"According to the narrative of the assaulted minor, she was sexually abused the first time and was recorded and the alleged suspects threatened to upload the video on social media if she did not allow them to have her again which she also consented to until her resolved to report the matter to the Nigeria Security

and Civil Defence Corps Divisional Office at Ijebu-Mushin, Ogun State."

The NSCDC PRO noted that the victim, however, reported the matter after she was allegedly beaten and verbally assaulted by the suspects.

He added that the victim's statement led to the arrest of the teenagers while the victim was made to undergo a medical examination.

Upon conducting a preliminary investigation, Ogbonnaya noted that the command sought a remand order which was granted by a magistrate court sitting in Ijebu.

He continued, "The results of the investigations culminated in the application for a remand order by the state command's legal officer through the Magistrate Court in Ijebu-Mushin,

Ogun State.

"Upon the presentation of the matter by the prosecution counsel with several pieces of evidence, the court ordered a 60-day remand of the eight suspects after which the directives of the Department of Public Prosecutions on the matter should have been out.

"The Hon. Magistrate Sotayo granted the prayer of the civil defence legal officer to remand the suspects pending the outcome of the advice from the DPP, and he thereafter adjourned the matter to January 20, 2025."

Reacting, the Ogun NSCDC commandant, Remilekun Ekundayo, stressed that the command would not tolerate abuse of minors while noting that perpetrators of such acts would be dealt with.



SECURITY



Suspected Kidnappers in police custody

Arrested Algerian confesses to 8 years of arms trafficking in Nigeria

Police in Zamfara State have apprehended a 58-year-old Algerian national accused of cross-border arms trafficking, alongside other suspects linked to criminal activities in the region.

The state's Commissioner of Police, Mohammed Dalijan, disclosed this during a press briefing in Gusau on Tuesday.

He revealed that a series of raids conducted in the past three weeks led to significant recoveries, including 16 AK-47 rifles, a double-barrel gun, and a locally-made pistol sourced from a

suspected arms manufacturer in Jos, Plateau State.

"The command, acting on intelligence, traced and arrested an arms manufacturer in Jos, tracked and arrested a regional arms trafficker from Algeria at the Illela border point," said Dalijan.

He further stated, "The suspected Algerian told the police he has been committing this crime for eight years.

"The suspect supplies arms and ammunition to bandits in all parts of Northwest states. At the point of the arrest, four AK-47s were recovered

from him."

Additional arrests included collaborators supplying motorcycles to bandits, with the recovery of live ammunition and N2.5 million in cash.

Dalijan also confirmed the detention of illegal gold miners, alongside the seizure of several mining excavators, emphasising the ongoing enforcement of the Federal and State government's ban on illegal mining.

This operation underscores the commitment of law enforcement agencies to combat banditry and criminal networks in Zamfara and the Northwest region.

Police capture kidnapper, rescue victim

The Rivers State Police Command has confirmed the arrest of a member of a notorious kidnapping syndicate.

According to newsmen, the suspect, along with his accomplices, kidnapped businessman Maduabuchi Julius at a filling station in Oyigbo Local Government Area.

Confirming the arrest, the PRO of the state command, SP Grace Iringe-Koko, in a statement released on Wednesday, November 20, said:

"On the 17th of November, 2024, at about 2023 hours, operatives of the Command received a distress call from the Command's Control Room indicating that a gang of armed men, numbering about four (4), operating in a black Toyota Corolla car, shot sporadically and kidnapped one Maduabuchi Julius (male) at Sabbath Filling Station, Oyigbo," the statement read.



"Operatives were swiftly mobilized to the scene, and upon sighting the police operatives, the hoodlums drove off. However, they were given a hot chase by the operatives and were subsequently intercepted along Egbu Street, Oyigbo, where a gun duel ensued between the police operatives and the hoodlums.

"The hoodlums could not withstand the police's superior firepower and eventually abandoned the victim and their operational vehicle, with registration number RIVERS PHC 938 AH, before escaping.

Kidnapper arrested after collecting N70m ransom from victims

Troops from the 6 Brigade of the Nigerian Army in Jalingo, Taraba State, have arrested Suleiman Ahmed, a suspect who confessed to kidnapping 20 individuals and extorting 70 million in ransom.

Captain Oni Olubunde, the Acting Assistant Director of Public Relations for the brigade, confirmed that Ahmed, a resident of Bomanda village in Lau LGA, was apprehended on November 12, 2024, during an anti-kidnapping operation in Maraban Abbare, Bomanda, and Karamuke villages.

"The operation was aimed at tackling kidnapping in Lau LGA. During initial questioning, Suleiman Ahmed confessed to kidnapping 20 people and

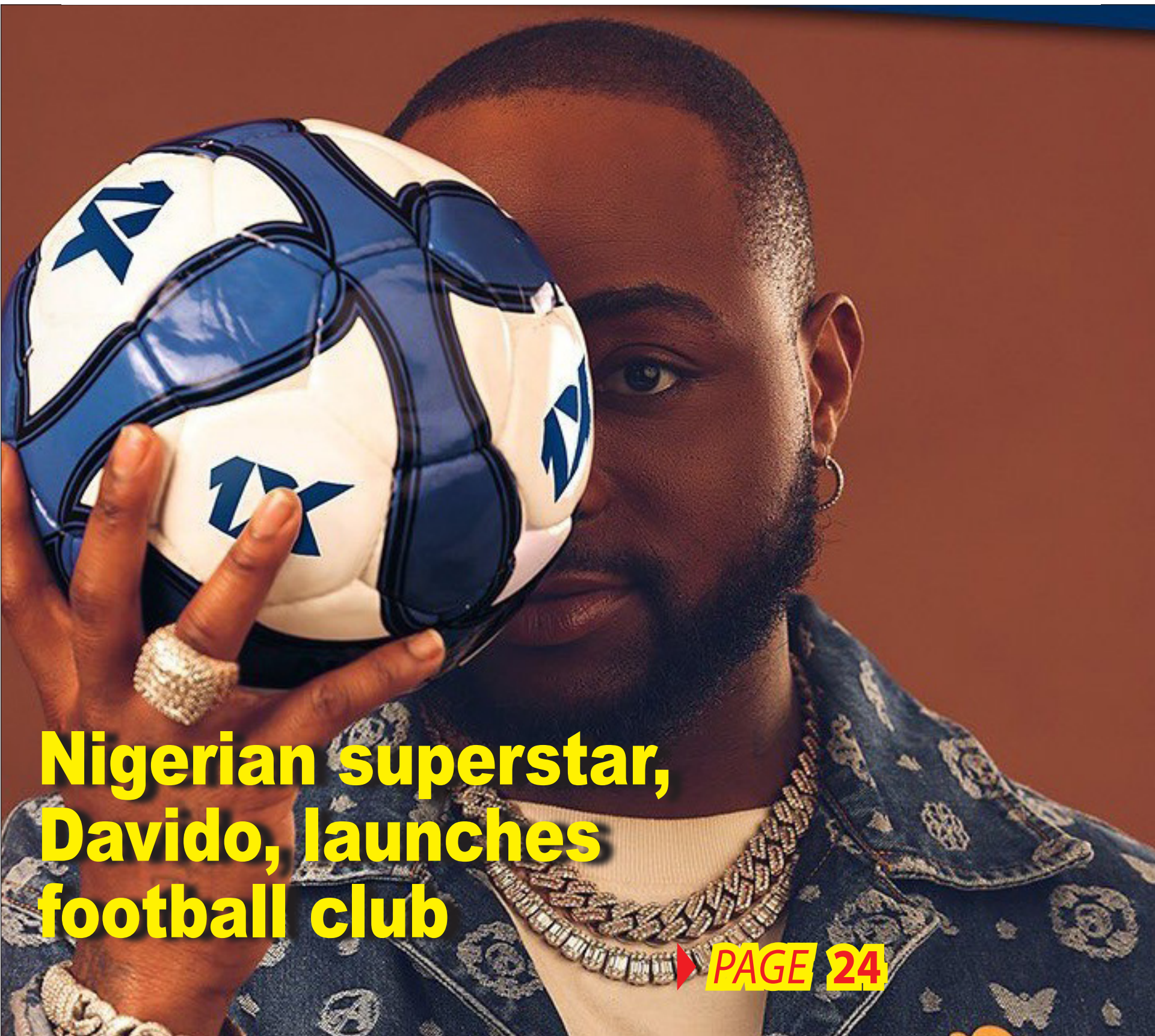
collecting over N70 million in ransom," Captain Oni said.

He added that the suspect also admitted to using an AK-47 rifle in his criminal activities.

"A follow-up operation on November 15 resulted in the recovery of the weapon from a hidden location and the arrest of one of Ahmed's accomplices, Hussaini," Captain Oni said.

He added that the troops also arrested a suspected gunrunner at his home in Mayo Dassa, Lau LGA.

Captain Oni emphasized that the 6 Brigade is committed to ensuring the safety and security of Taraba State residents, intensifying efforts to dismantle criminal networks in the area.



Nigerian superstar, Davido, launches football club

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MILESTONE
Ex-Kebbi First
Lady Dr Zainab
Bagudu becomes
first African
president of UICC
Pg 27



Award-winning Nigerian singer, David Adeleke, popularly known as Davido has expanded his business ventures into sports by launching a football club.

Lagos Liga, a Nigerian premier private football league, announced 30BG Sports Club's unveiling on its Instagram page on Wednesday.

The football league disclosed that the club has been registered to compete in its upcoming season alongside 15 other teams.

"With Davido bringing his energy into Lagos Liga 2024, we have great assurance that if opponents are not careful, there is a timeless promise they could fall because this competition just got risky," the post reads.

Lagos Liga said the

Nigerian superstar, Davido, launches football club



league promises high-stakes matches for non-professional and veteran football players.

The competition is scheduled to begin in December, with a N50 million prize for the winning team.

Why Chidimma Adetshina is quitting pageantry



Chidimma Adetshina, who made history as the first runner-up at the Miss Universe 2024 pageant in Mexico City, has announced her decision to retire from the world of beauty pageantry.

In an interview with BBC Pidgin, the 23-year-old explained her reasons for stepping away from the spotlight after achieving one of the highest accolades in the industry.

"I am putting pageant to bed right now," Adetshina shared, as she discussed her desire to focus on her education and other personal goals. "I want to explore my potential beyond the pageantry world, including runway modelling and acting," she continued, revealing that her new focus is on self-discovery and growth in different creative fields.

The decision, she confirmed in a video message, is permanent. "I feel like I did my best. I made myself proud, I made Nigeria proud, and I outdid myself," she said, reflecting on her accomplishments. However, she also admitted that the pageant experience was a traumatic one, one she did not wish to revisit. "It's something I'm going to have to put behind me," she stated, even though it will remain a cherished part of her journey.

Italy hands over popular singer Rokia Traore to Belgium in child custody dispute



Renowned Malian singer Rokia Traore, arrested in Rome in June over an international child custody dispute, will be handed over to Belgium in the coming days after Italy's highest court rejected her appeal, her lawyer said on Wednesday.

Traore, 50, is one of Africa's best-known

vocalists and a goodwill ambassador for the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR.

"Rokia suffered an injustice. She was arrested without the Belgian criminal court hearing her voice. Now, the battle for Rokia's rights moves to Brussels," lawyer Maddalena Del Re said in a statement to

Reuters.

The lawyer added that Italy's Court of Cassation followed a European Court of Justice ruling in favour of extradition in its decision late on Tuesday.

Traore was arrested on June 20 at Rome's Fiumicino airport under a European arrest warrant. She had been sentenced to two years

in prison in Belgium in Oct. 2023 in connection with a battle over custody of her daughter.

Since her arrest at Fiumicino, she has been in jail in Civitavecchia, near the Italian capital, where she had flown to hold a concert outside Rome's Colosseum.

Lawyer Del Re said the Belgian procedure contradicts Italian constitutional principles and international conventions due to a conviction having been handed down in the defendant's absence.

The singer was first arrested in France in 2020 on a Belgian arrest warrant after failing to follow a court order to hand over her daughter to her Belgian father, the artist's estranged former partner.

Months after she was conditionally released, she flew to Mali on a private flight, defying orders not to leave France until her extradition case was processed. Her daughter lives in Mali.



CUISINES

Step-by-step procedure to make Alkubus, by Auyo's Cuisines



Alkubus originated from the Arabs and the food came into Nigeria when the Arabs started coming into the country. It is made primarily from wheat flour. It is also known as "steam bread" in the English language, and it is mostly consumed by the Hausas in the northern part of Nigeria.

Equipment needed for Alkubus

- Steaming pot
- Nylon, cake container, or moi moi container
- A clean bowl
- A scooping spoon
- A sieve
- Any source of heat such as gas, stove, charcoal, etc.

Ingredients

- 3 cups of wheat
- 2 cups of all-purpose flour
- 2½ cups of water
- ½ tablespoon of salt
- 3 spoons of Vegetable oil
- 2 spoons of yeast
- 1table spoon sugar

Procedures for Making Alkubus

- STEP 1:** Sieve the flour and wheat inside a clean bowl.
- STEP 2:** Add the yeast, sugar, and salt to the bowl
- STEP 3:** Add the water and oil, then mix them to make a paste or dough. The dough should be a little bit thicker than that of

puff-puff.

- STEP 4:** knead the dough for a good fifteen minutes
- STEP 5:** Cover your dough and set it aside. Allow it to rise for about 30 minutes minutes. You will notice that the dough will double its original size when rises fully.
- STEP 6:** Mix thoroughly again to exhaust the air in the dough.
- STEP 7:** Use a little oil to grease your cupcake or moi moi container for easy removal after it's done. Then add the mixture to the desired container. Allow to rise again for about 10 minutes.

- STEP 8:** Place a steamer pot on medium heat and add water inside. Allow it to come to a boil.
- STEP 9:** Arrange the cupcake or moi moi containers inside the steamer pot, cover them with nylon, and allow them to steam for about 30-35 minutes.
- STEP10:** It is properly done when a toothpick is inserted and it comes out dry.
- STEP 11:**Take it down and allow it to cool.
- STEP 12:** Alkubus is best served hot. It can be taken with any soup or stew of choice. I prefer mine with Chicken pepper soup or spin-

ach sauce. It can also be eaten plain with a tea or drink.

Nutritional Benefits of Alkubus

It is found to be one of the healthiest foods of this generation. First, it is made by steaming. In addition to being a major source of starch and energy, wheat also provides substantial amounts of components which are essential or beneficial for health, notably protein, vitamins (notably B vitamins), dietary fibre, and phytochemicals. The wheat flour used to make Alkubus aids digestion prevents weight loss, lowers the risk of heart attack, cleanses your system, and lowers the risk of cancer.



PERISCOPE

Baba Vanga, who foresaw World War II, makes worrisome predictions for 2025

Baba Vanga, a blind Bulgarian clairvoyant who died in 1996, is known for her predictions. Often called the "Nostradamus of the Balkans," she is believed to have predicted major events, such as World War II before they occurred. She is said to have warned about a significant conflict in 2025.

In her predictions, Vanga once cautioned about a major war in Europe in 2025, which could endanger the population and potentially lead to a global apocalypse. Reports suggest she mentioned that Russian President Vladimir Putin would emerge victorious, with Russia dominating the world.

For the future, Vanga claimed that the end of the world would begin in 2025, with humanity entirely wiped out by 5079. She also predicted that Europe would come under Muslim rule by 2043 and that communism would return globally by 2076.

Baba Vanga also foretold that Earth would encounter extraterrestrial beings by 2025, asserting that these beings would make their presence known. This prediction has sparked debates about the existence of aliens and their potential impact on humanity.

Nostradamus, a 16th-century French astrologer, made similar predictions, fore-

seeing significant events around 2025, including a major European conflict. While Baba Vanga predicted extraterrestrial contact and a new energy source, Nostradamus warned of "cruel wars" and a devastating "ancient plague."

Additionally, Vanga predicted severe environmental disasters caused by climate change, such as droughts and wildfires. However, she also foresaw advancements in lab-grown human organs, which could boost life expectancy and address transplant shortages.

Who Is Baba Vanga?

Born in 1911, Baba Vanga, whose full name was Vangeliya Pandeva Gushterova, lost her sight at age 12 after a storm. Following this incident, she reportedly developed precognitive abilities and became famous for her prophecies. Vanga remained in Bulgaria for most of her life and gained recognition for her predictions about global events. She even accurately predicted her death on August 11, 1996.

Some of her notable past predictions include:

- World War II: Foretold devastation and immense loss of life
- Dissolution of the Soviet Union: Predicted the collapse



of the USSR before 1991

- Chernobyl Disaster: Foreseen in 1986
- Stalin's Death: Predicted accurately
- Kursk Submarine Disaster: Mentioned a tragedy involving "Kursk" before 2000
- September 11 Attacks: Predicted "steel birds" attack-

ing America

- 2004 Tsunami: Foreseen devastating Indian Ocean tsunami
- 1985 Earthquake: Predicted an earthquake in Northern Bulgaria

Baba Vanga's past predictions, including significant events like the 9/11 attacks, are said

to have an 85% success rate. Despite scepticism about her predictions, her legacy endures. Critics argue that her prophecies are often vague and open to interpretation, yet they continue to stir discussions about humanity's future amid geopolitical tensions and environmental challenges.



MILESTONE

Ex-Kebbi First Lady Dr Zainab Bagudu becomes first African president of UICC



President Bola Tinubu has congratulated paediatrician and former Kebbi State first lady, Dr Zainab Shinkafi-Bagudu, on her election as president of the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC).

Shinkafi-Bagudu was elected on October 8, as the first African and the fifth woman to lead the global cancer control organisation.

President Tinubu noted

in a statement on Wednesday, issued by Bayo Onanuga, that her election attests to her competence and character and affirmed the enormous talents that abound in Nigeria.

Tinubu described Shinkafi-Bagudu's ascension in the organisation as a landmark achievement and a testament to Nigeria's growing influence in global health leadership.

He recalled her services to Kebbi State and the

country, for which he said Nigeria is deeply grateful.

He also lauded her stewardship as chairperson of the First Ladies Cancer Initiative and her contributions to establishing the Kebbi State Strategic Plan for Cancer Control during her tenure as the first lady.

Shinkafi-Bagudu founded the Medicaid Cancer Foundation, she is also a senior advisor to the coordinating minister of health and social welfare and vice

chairperson of Nigeria's national taskforce on cervical cancer elimination.

The statement noted that through the Federal Ministry of Health and international partnerships, Nigeria has successfully vaccinated 12 million girls against the Human Papillomavirus (HPV), a leading cause of cervical cancer.

According to the statement, the Tinubu-led administration has allocated N37.4 billion to the Federal

Ministry of Health's oncology initiative.

The initiative will facilitate the establishment of six cancer centres across the country within two years, located in teaching hospitals in Benin, Zaria, Katsina, Enugu, Jos and Lagos.

"President Tinubu expresses confidence in Dr. Shinkafi-Bagudu's ability to use her new office and leadership to improve cancer control and global health," the statement added.



ROOTS

"Panya": The journey of the Igbo to Equatorial Guinea – A tale of history, laughter, and 'Panyo'

In the 18th century, the Igbo people embarked on a journey that would lead them far from their homeland, marking the start of an extraordinary chapter in African history. Their destination? Equatorial Guinea. But the story isn't as straightforward as it sounds, and let's just say, there's more to it than just ships sailing across oceans.

It all started with a simple pronunciation problem. You see, Spain had established Equatorial Guinea as a Spanish outpost, calling it Espanol, a name that's become quite familiar to us all. But for the Igbo, "Español" didn't quite roll off the tongue. If you've ever heard a Spaniard, especially an uneducated one, trying to pronounce their own language, you'll know exactly why the Igbo couldn't quite wrap their heads around it.

What they heard, more or less, sounded like "Panyo." And from that moment on, Espanol was transformed into "Panya," and thus, a new name was born. After all, if you've got the "ny" sound in your language, as the Igbo do, what's a little creative distortion? It was a perfect fit.

Now, let's rewind a little. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the Igbo people were not exactly tourists – they were workers. They landed in Equatorial Guinea



to toil on the plantation fields, mostly under the harsh conditions of Spanish rule. They were the backbone of the labour force, making their mark in a land that was already home to various ethnic groups, including the Bubi and Fang.

It didn't take long for the Igbo community to establish itself. In fact, the first large Igbo diaspora outside Nigeria was right there in Panya. It became so popular that almost every Igbo family had a relative working or living there. For the Igbo, it wasn't just about labour – it was about survival, trade, and migration. They went from being farm hands to traders, and the next destination on their list was Fernanda Po (now São Tomé and Príncipe), where they continued working in Portuguese-

owned sugarcane plantations.

The migration wasn't just a solitary affair. It soon caught the attention of neighbouring Efik and Ibibio groups, who also joined the wave of migration. What was initially an Igbo enclave soon became a melting pot of cultures, as the Igbo and their new friends from across the region fused into a community that still exists today in Equatorial Guinea.

While the plantation work was grueling – we're talking hard labour under exploitative conditions, with low wages and the introduction of distractions like liquor and women of "easy virtues" – the Igbo people were nothing if not resilient. Many returned home empty-handed, their bodies

and spirits broken, while others chose to remain, establishing second and third generations of Igbo families in Equatorial Guinea.

Fast forward to today, and the Igbo community is still present in Equatorial Guinea, with a significant population residing on Bioko Island. Although they are a minority in the country of 1.2 million, they remain a strong and proud presence. The Igbo language is recognized, and the community continues to practice their traditions, all while speaking a medley of languages like Pidgin English, Fang, Bubi, and, of course, Igbo.

Now, for a quick detour: This is not about Ebanga. No, this is about the real journey – a history that many may not be aware of, a geography

lesson that stretches beyond the borders of Nigeria to a faraway land where the Igbo, with their resilience and courage, made their mark.

So, the next time you hear someone talk about Panya or struggle to pronounce Espanol, just remember: this isn't just a matter of funny mispronunciations. It's the story of an enduring journey, a testament to the Igbo spirit of survival, adaptation, and the unbreakable will to forge new futures – even in foreign lands. And who knew that a simple slip of the tongue would birth a whole new name in the history of Africa? History, after all, is made of such little moments.

As Kelechi Deca puts it: "This is history and geography class."

And it's a class well worth attending.



FEATURES

World Toilet Day: The urgent need to end open defecation, other sanitation crisis

The United Nations has set aside the 19th of November each year to mark World Toilet Day to raise awareness about the global sanitation crisis and advocate for access to proper sanitation as a fundamental human right.

With this year's theme, "Sanitation for Peace," the day calls attention to the profound impact of toilets on public health, human dignity, and community well-being.

In Nigeria, a country burdened with the world's highest open defecation rate, over 48 million people still lack access to proper sanitation facilities.

This alarming statistic underscores the urgency to address open defecation, a practice that not only compromises human dignity but also fuels the spread of waterborne diseases such as cholera, diarrhoea, and typhoid.

A Community's Journey to Health

Kofar Gabas, a rural community in Kura Local Government Area of Kano State, exemplifies how ending open defecation transforms lives. Until recently, open defecation was a norm in this community.

"We used to think cholera and typhoid were seasonal, just like the rains," said Malama Amina Hussaini, a 45-year-old mother of five.

However, a vigorous sensitisation campaign by local government officials, religious leaders, and sanitation advocates revealed the link between

open defecation and frequent outbreaks of waterborne diseases.

Through collective efforts, including digging latrine pits and establishing sanitation vanguards in all ten wards, Kofar Gabas achieved Open Defecation Free (ODF) status.

The results have been remarkable: a significant decline in cases of cholera and typhoid, healthier children, and cleaner environments. "We no longer prepare for cholera as if it's an inevitable visitor," Malama Amina said, her relief audible.

So far, the push for improved sanitation gained momentum in 2019 when former President Muhammadu Buhari signed Executive Order 009 to end open defecation by 2025. Despite these efforts, progress has been uneven. Out of Nigeria's 774 local government areas, only 135 have been certified ODF. While Jigawa State leads the charge, having achieved ODF status in all its 27 local governments, states like Kano are steadily advancing, with 26 local governments attaining ODF certification.

However, significant gaps remain, schools, markets, and public spaces across the country lack adequate toilet facilities, forcing many to resort to open defecation. For instance, at Tsangaya Model Primary School in Kura, over 1,000 pupils shared just two newly constructed toilets. "It's better than nothing, but it's still inadequate," lamented Malam Garba Sallau Yahaya, the



school's assistant head teacher.

Ending open defecation in Nigeria requires a multifarious approach. Funding remains a significant challenge, with the Minister of Water Resources and Sanitation Joseph Utsev estimating an annual budget of N10 billion to construct the 11.6 million toilets needed to meet the 2030 ODF target.

But building toilets is only part of the solution. Ensuring access to clean water and fostering behavioural change are equally critical.

Reviving the once-effective system of sanitary inspectors, locally known as Duba-Gari in the North, Wole-Wole in the Southwest, and Nwaole-Ala in the Southeast, could also play an important role. These inspectors were instrumental in en-

forcing public hygiene in the past, and their return could reinforce accountability and community engagement.

It is not a problem common to Nigeria alone, about 673 million people practice open defecation, with 4.2 billion lacking safely managed sanitation. The consequences are dire: increased disease burden, environmental degradation, and missed opportunities for economic and social development. Sustainable Development Goal 6, which aims to "ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all," remains off track, according to the United Nations.

Way forward

World Toilet Day serves as a stark reminder of the work that remains. Gov-

ernments, civil society organisations, and individuals must collaborate to ensure every Nigerian has access to safe, dignified sanitation.

Communities must embrace practices that prioritise hygiene, and leaders at all levels must commit to action beyond rhetoric.

There should be intense calls to reflect on the stories of transformation in communities like Kofar Gabas, and the adoption of renewed resolve to end open defecation across Nigeria.

It's not just about building toilets; it's about building healthier, more dignified lives. On this World Toilet Day, the message is clear: sanitation is a right, not a privilege that should be accessible to all.



INTERVIEW

Dr. Fatima Sule Muhd, the brain behind 'Instant Miyar Kuka'

In this week's interview, Neptune Prime brought to you the first woman who took 'Miyar kuka' to the laboratory... Yes!

Dr. Fatima Sule Muhd is a renowned environmental biochemist, academic, and innovator from Yobe State, Nigeria. She earned her PhD in Environmental Biochemistry from Cranfield University, UK, and has extensive experience as a lecturer and researcher at institutions such as Federal Polytechnic Damaturu and Federal University of Health Sciences, Azare. Known for her groundbreaking work in health and food science, she invented 'Instant Miyar Kuka', an upgraded version of the traditional Northern Nigerian soup, enhancing its nutritional value and global appeal. Dr. Fatima is passionate about promoting indigenous crops and ensuring their health benefits are recognized worldwide. Happy reading...

Name, State of Origin, Educational background, and working experience

My name is Dr. Fatima Sule Muhd. I was born in Potiskum, in what was then Borno State (now Yobe State), and raised in Maiduguri. My educational journey began at Kara Primary School, Potiskum, and continued at GGSS Potiskum for my secondary education. I earned a Diploma in Health Education, a BSc in Biochemistry, and a Master's in Health Planning and Management from the University of Maiduguri. Later, I pursued a PhD in Environmental Biochemistry at Cranfield University in the UK, specializing in chemical exposure.

My career started as a Science Teacher with the Yobe State Teaching Service Board, after which I joined the Federal Polytechnic Damaturu as part of its pioneering staff, serving as a Chemistry and Biochemistry Lecturer. I was also among the pioneering staff at the Federal University Gashua. Currently, I am a lecturer at the Federal University of Health Sciences, Azare, where I continue to contribute to health sciences education and research.

I have had the privilege of gaining international exposure in my field. I was an Academic Visitor at King's College London, where I worked with the Exposure Science and Pollution Measurement Team. Additionally, I spent three years in East Africa as part of a special academic intervention program, which broadened my experience and perspective.

Beyond academia, I am actively involved in environmental health initiatives. I serve as a Consultant and Governing Council member of the Environmental Health Council of Nigeria. I am particularly proud to have facilitated the establishment and commissioning of the National Institute of Environmental Health (IEH) in Abuja, a key milestone in advancing public health and environmental safety in Nigeria.

What inspired you to invent 'Instant miyar Kuka'? Of all the things you could invent, why kuka?

Kuka is a staple food in Northern Nigeria, widely consumed in various forms, especially as soup. However, I often wondered why miyar kuka hasn't gained popularity beyond the region. Why do we embrace soups from other cultures more readily than our own? It struck me that the way we traditionally prepare miyar kuka without protein makes it seem like a dish cooked out of necessity or scarcity. It's often given unflattering nicknames like 'karta kafira' or 'gafara ruwa ga kuka na zuwa,' reflecting its association with minimal resources. When more resources are available, people tend to opt for soups like egusi, ewedu, or vegetable-based options.

As a chemical and health scientist, I decided to take on the challenge of reimagining miyar kuka. My goal was to enhance its nutritional profile and elevate it to a globally appealing dish. I went to the lab to analyze the components of kuka

(baobab leaves) and identify ways to improve its health benefits and overall appeal.

Through research funded by Tetfund, which supports projects that boost food quality, availability, and economic growth, I discovered that kuka is rich in essential nutrients like calcium, potassium, magnesium, and iron. In fact, the potassium content in kuka exceeds that found in bananas. This inspired me to transform miyar kuka into a world-class dish that is both healthy and delicious—something that could attract not just Nigerians but people worldwide. My vision is to make 'Kuka' a celebrated global food, valued for its health benefits and versatility.

What are the challenges you encountered while coming up with this product?

The challenges are not very intense. All I know and can remember is the product is accepted. It made me happy and relieved because many people love Kuka and have welcomed the development.

Our readers would like to know about your finished products

Well, the product consisted of locust beans, ginger, peppers, and kuka. For the protein, there are 3 different flavors. Fish flavored, beef flavored, and chicken flavored, depending on one's preference.

How can one prepare miyar kuka with your product?

We made it as simple as it



Dr. Fatima Sule Muhd

can be. Just boil one liter of water with onions; you may decide to add seasoning to taste (We didn't put it in the product because not everyone likes it.) One can add a protein of choice. But note that the product has protein in it. When the water is boiled, add one tablespoon of the kuka mix and stir. This measurement will give you the perfect miyar kuka consistency.

What other indigenous crops have you taken to the next level apart from kuka?

My dream is to see indigenous crops unique to Northern Nigeria widely consumed and appreciated, not just by our people but also beyond our borders. I envision a future where natural, unadulterated snacks and drinks from our region replace imported products at events and in everyday life.

To achieve this, I have developed a range of products using locally sourced crops such as goruba (doum palm fruit), dorawa (African locust beans), sesame, moringa, and hibiscus. These are cleaned, processed,

and packaged as healthy snacks and drinks. Additionally, I have created instant zobo powder, which can be prepared as a tea or a beverage. This product is infused with natural, medicinal herbs and spices, offering both flavor and health benefits.

My goal is to showcase the richness of our indigenous crops and promote their use globally while preserving their natural qualities and boosting their accessibility.

Can we say that your dreams are fulfilled, seeing that one of your products is endorsed and is being sponsored by Tetfund, and You are now in Abuja to showcase your products?

Yes, part of that dream is fulfilled. Instant Kuka is the only product recognized and sponsored. I would like the same for other products. I want to study them in the lab and analyze the chemical components and their usefulness so everyone knows how blessed we are and what we are consuming.

Thank you for your time

Thanks for having me.



Hon. Engr. Muhammad Buba Jajere's Vision for Fika/Fune: Empowering Youth, Education, and Infrastructure Development

In this week's interview, Neptune Prime brought to its readers, Hon. Engr. Muhammad Buba Jajere, the dedicated representative of Fika/Fune Federal Constituency in Yobe State, who entered politics with a heartfelt mission to improve the lives of his people. Happy reading...

Name and position

My name is Muhammadu Buba Jajere; I'm the House of Representative, Fika/Fune Federal constituency, Yobe.

What inspired you to start politics?

The reasons are numerous, but the most important one is my desire to help the people of my state.

What do you hope to achieve in this tenure and position?

My biggest goal in this position is to make life easier for the people of my constituency and Yobe as a whole. I want to make a real impact on their lives and livelihoods and create lasting, positive change.

What are your exact plans for the youth?

The youth are my top priority. My first plan is to ensure that every young person has access to a basic education. I am committed to eradicating illiteracy, as I believe that today's youth are the leaders of tomorrow, and they need education to fulfill that role.

For those who are already educated and hold diplomas, NCEs, or degrees, I aim to help them secure jobs. For those who didn't have the chance to attend school, I plan to support them in establishing businesses.

What are the challenges you faced before and dur-

ing your tenure?

The challenges have been numerous, for obvious reasons. Running under the opposition party, PDP, in Yobe was not an easy task. After winning the election, we also had to face court proceedings. We even had to go through a re-run and win again. But with Allah's help and guidance, we managed to overcome these challenges.

What have you achieved so far in the 16 months you've been in office?

Despite the obstacles we encountered, including a 3-month delay due to the re-run, I'm pleased to say we have achieved a lot so far. We have successfully worked to secure jobs for our youth in the Nigerian Immigration and Civil Defense. Additionally, we initiated bills for the federal government to establish two institutions in our constituency: a School of Agriculture and Forestry in Fika/Fune and a School of Midwifery in Damagun. These bills have passed the second reading, and a public hearing is scheduled in a few weeks before moving on to the third reading.

We have also brought solar lights to villages across the constituency and provided palliatives and food supplies during difficult times.

Currently, we are constructing six new classrooms at Gadaka Government Junior Secondary School. Furthermore, we facilitated the construction of a road in



Hon. Engr. Muhammad Buba Jajere

Damagun, connecting the emir's residence to the state locus.

There are many more projects, but due to time constraints, I'll leave it at that.

What is your advice to the youth of your constituency and others in general?

My advice to the youth is to prioritize education. Whether or not they feel passionate about it, education is essential; it's a vital key to their future. Secondly,

they should learn practical skills—whether in business, trade, plumbing, tiling, sewing, or other areas.

I also urge them to avoid drugs, alcohol, and any form of substance abuse. Intoxication leads to crime and can ultimately ruin their lives and futures.

What are your aspirations for the people who voted for you?

Empowering women and youth is a top priority. We've already initiated these ef-

orts in Fune/Fika, and we intend to expand them across the entire constituency, maintaining a consistent effort.

We also have plans for scholarships across Yobe and, eventually, Nigeria. The portal for scholarship registration will be open soon.

Thank you for giving us time out of your busy schedule

It's the people who brought me here; I will always make time for them.



THE VOICELESS

Help 21-year-old Musa Yakubu fight cancer

Musa Yakubu, a 21-year-old young man, has been battling cancer for over two and a half years. Despite his bravery, he encounters a daunting challenge: lack of financial resources for proper diagnosis and treatment. Striving for Jannah Charity Foundation, his relatives and

friends are rallying together to seek assistance from generous individuals and organisations across the globe. We aim to raise funds for Musa's better diagnosis and proper medication and treatment at a reputable Teaching Hospitals, Yobe State Teaching Hospital Damaturu (YSTH), or Teaching hospital Maiduguri, Borno State.

The Goal:

Ensure Musa receives the medical care he deserves to fight cancer and regain his health.

How You Can Help:

1. Donate generously to support Musa's medical expenses.
2. Share this appeal with your network to spread awareness.

3. Offer words of encouragement and support to Musa and his family.

Donation Information:

Account number 0014736203
ACCOUNT NAME STRIVING FOR JANNAH CHARITY FOUNDATION
Bank Name JAIZ Bank

Contact:

Striving for Jannah Charity Foundation
08133668963
07068195673

Malam Ahmad kafinta (patient's brother)
08133531244
Let's Join Hands to Save Musa!



Yobe State University Teaching Hospital Damaturu
EMERGENCY REFERRAL FORM 1203
Date: 21/10/2024

TO: USTH

Surname: YAKUBU First Name: MUSA Other Name: Ahmad
Address: Dogisium
Age: 20yrs Sex: M Unit Number: 0025429

CLINICAL HISTORY
Developed wound & Swelling involving the toe on right foot & also present leg to popliteal fossa. Not
was due to trauma since about 7 years ago.
It is worse at night due to RFA knee stiffness

CLINICAL FINDINGS: Right knee leg Swollen with joint
like Range of motion at Right knee. knee is at 45°
45° Angle.

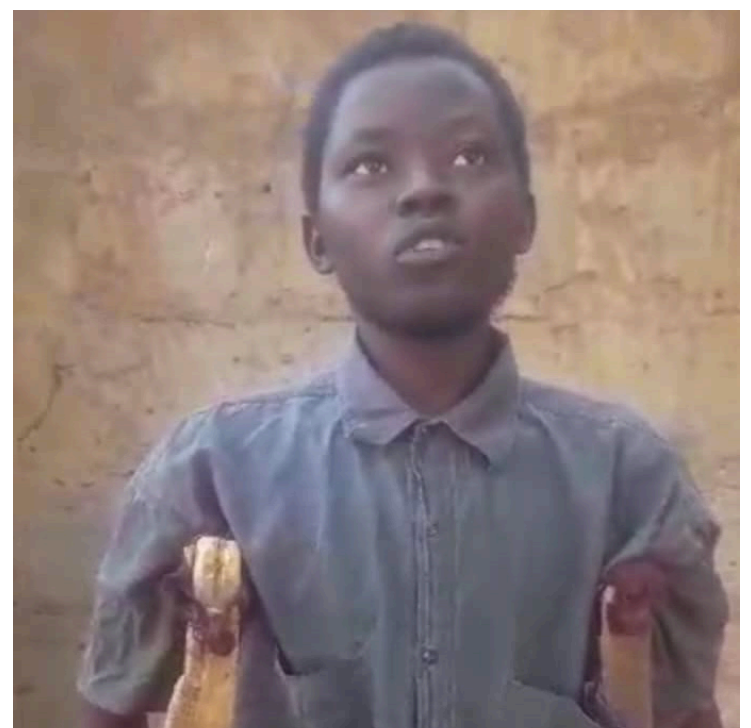
ASSESSMENT/DIAGNOSIS: Right knee Contracture

INVESTIGATIONS: Nil

TREATMENT: Nil

REASON FOR REFERRAL: for Contracture release, fitting & to
also see a Neurologist

Name: _____
This Patient is being referred for further Management





INTERNATIONAL

Iran to launch 'advanced centrifuges' in response to IAEA censure

The Islamic Republic of Iran announced on 22 November plans to activate a "series of new and advanced centrifuges" in response to a resolution adopted by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) a day earlier.

"After the resolution, we immediately started our remedial measures. We will significantly increase enrichment capacity," Behrouz Kamalvandi, spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), said in a televised interview on Friday.

"Our compensatory actions began immediately after this resolution," Kamalvandi added, stressing that Iran's "infrastructure will be strengthened, and security measures will be improved through other actions."

Kamalvandi said the UN nuclear watchdog was informed of the measures Tehran would take in response to the US-backed resolution before IAEA officials had left the Board of Governors' meeting.

A joint statement from the AEOI and the Iranian Foreign Ministry issued on Friday night confirms that "technical and safeguards cooperation with the IAEA will continue, as in the past" and within the framework of agreements made by Iran." The Islamic Republic recently agreed to



an IAEA demand to cap its stock of high-enriched uranium up to only 60 percent purity, well below weapons-grade 90 percent purity.

On Thursday, the IAEA Board of Governors voted 19 to three, with 12 abstentions, to approve a resolution put forth by the US, France, Germany, and the UK ordering Iran to "urgently improve cooperation"

with the agency and requesting a "comprehensive" report into Iran's nuclear activities.

Western media reports say the US-led alliance "hopes" the report, due by spring 2025, "will pressure Iran into negotiations on fresh restrictions on its nuclear activities."

Thursday's session marked the least number of votes in the Board of

Governor resolutions against Iran in the past 21 years. China, Russia, and Burkina Faso voted against the text, diplomats in the meeting said.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi earlier this week condemned efforts by the US-led alliance to pass their fourth resolution since 2020, saying it would "complicate" nuclear talks.

Putin hails Oreshnik missile as unstoppable, orders mass production

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday (November 22) lauded Russia's new hypersonic Oreshnik missile, claiming it is immune to any current interception methods. He announced the commencement of its mass production, a move that is likely to intensify the ongoing conflict with Ukraine.

"I will add that there is no countermeasure to such a missile, no means of intercepting it, in the world today. And I will emphasize once again that we will continue testing this newest system. It is necessary to establish serial production," Putin declared during a televised meeting with his military chiefs.

This hypersonic weapon, launched at Ukraine on Thursday, is reported to have extraordinary capabilities, which Russian authorities have described as unparalleled.

Ukrainian military intelligence revealed chilling details about the Oreshnik missile's strike on the city of Dnipro. According to the Main Directorate of Intelligence (HUR), the mis-



sile reached a speed of 13,000 km/h and completed its journey from As-trakhan to Dnipro in just 15 minutes.

The weapon reportedly carried six warheads, each equipped with six sub-

munitions, and maintained a speed of over Mach 11 during the final phase of its trajectory. Ukrainian authorities have identified the missile's high speed and precision as major challenges to

their defence systems.

"The flight time of this Russian missile...was 15 minutes," the Ukrainian report noted.

In a separate development, Russia confirmed the return of 46 nationals detained in Ukraine. Kursk regional governor Alexei Smirnov said, "The painstaking and lengthy negotiations for the return of our fellow countrymen to their homeland have brought results."

Videos shared by Russia's human rights commissioner, Tatyana Moskalkova, showed families with children and elderly individuals receiving humanitarian aid after their return.

The hypersonic missile's deployment and Putin's call for its mass production mark a new phase in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Analysts warn that this escalation could prompt further tensions between Russia and Western allies of Ukraine.

Meanwhile, global leaders continue to deliberate over effective measures to curb the intensifying violence.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time"
— *Thomas A. Edison.*

The Arbiter

By Hassan Gimba



Last week, while the battle against a new security threat, the Lakurawa, and a £25,000 marriage were shaping national discourse amidst excruciating economic difficulties, an extraordinary gentleman with qualities Nigeria could greatly benefit from celebrated his birthday. Honourable Mai Mala Buni, the Governor of Yobe State, turned 57 last Tuesday. Relatively young, God has entrusted him with leadership.

If it were a fairy tale, his story might have begun with: "Once upon a time, in the not-so-sleepy village of Buni Gari, a child of destiny was born to the industrious family of Alhaji Bukar and Hajiya Khadija."

Born on 19th November 1967—a date that later became International Men's Day, observed by over 57 countries to celebrate men and their sacrifices for family and nation—Buni embodies the values celebrated on this day. Fittingly, the day's liturgical colour is blue, one of Buni's favourite colours.

He is a man who washed his hands clean from an early age and began dining with kings while his peers were still struggling to find their footing.

HBD Buni, the Leader Who Forfeited His Inheritance for Peace (1)

There is a popular saying that some people are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them. Buni is a man blessed with infinite patience, which perhaps inspired God to entrust him with the ability to shoulder the burdens of others, thereby achieving deep empathy over time. Mamman Mohammed, his Director-General of Press and Media Affairs, aptly described him as "a personification of humility, an embodiment of courtesy, a gentleman par excellence, a leader with listening ears and very humane."

His father, a highly successful and wealthy businessman by local standards, passed away when Buni was just 17. His experience epitomised the usual rancour associated with disputes among relatives over estates left behind by prosperous deceased individuals. The family could not resolve the matter, so it was taken to court. Buni bore most of the pressure as the eldest child, as the judge had

to rely on his testimony to shape the judgment. Owing to his close relationship with his father and the high regard his late father held him, his input was needed because it was to play a crucial role in resolving the case.

Maybe we need to know a little about him and why the case rested on him to resolve.

After completing his primary education at Buni Gari Central Primary School in 1979, Buni attended Government Secondary School, Goniri, where he obtained his West African Examination Council Certificate (WAEC) in 1985. What stood out was that as a result, his father purchased a tipper truck and stationed it in Goniri to transport sand and other commodities. The proceeds provided young Buni with a weekly allowance of 5. At that time, 5 was enough to buy a ram and still leave change for snacks and drinks.

Consequently, his 'corner' in the school dormitory became a social hub. According to childhood accounts shared by Mamman



Honourable Mai Mala Buni, the Governor of Yobe State

Mohammed, "his generosity began very early in life. His friends had unrestricted access to his wardrobe, taking clothes, caps, food, and shoes without fearing any complaints from Buni. This generosity made him a magnet for friends, schoolmates, and later, political associates."

Buni was known for reaching out to people beyond his immediate environment and expanding his friendships. Those who know him often say that he never feels fulfilled when there is no one to help or share with. One fellow governor once eulogised him as "Dogo mai hanun kyauta" (the tall man with a generous hand).

Returning to the court case, both sides of the family conflict tried to win him over. On the day of reckoning, with thick silence enveloping the courtroom and expectant eyes on him, he approached the dock and stood attentively as the case was introduced.

It was perhaps during this moment that Buni's habit of listening carefully, digesting what he hears, and weighing his responses thoughtfully was formed. After hearing the arguments, he asked

the judge, "Can a person forfeit their inheritance?"

Upon receiving an affirmative response, Buni calmly declared, "I have forfeited mine."

The courtroom erupted in astonishment, and the judge had to hammer the gavel repeatedly to restore order.

"Young man, do you know what you are saying?" the judge asked.

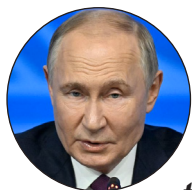
"Yes," Buni replied, "insofar as it will bring peace to our family."

The judge, moved and impressed, said, "Allah Ya yi ma albarka" (May Allah bless you). From that moment, Buni's reputation as a peacemaker was firmly established.

However, this episode alone does not fully encapsulate his extraordinary qualities. Buni is a man blessed with power and wealth—the two most sought-after possessions—yet remains grounded in humility, generosity, and grace. Beyond serving others, he is driven by an unrelenting desire to empower them, as we shall explore further.

Hassan Gimba, anipr, is the publisher and CEO of Neptune Prime.

Do you know?



That Vladimir Putin worked as a KGB foreign intelligence officer for 16 years, rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel.

He knows what he is doing. He knows the gameplay of the West. He has a degree in law and a PhD. in economics, speaks fluent German and English. You can't joke with Putin.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

Kenya bought 50 billion Kenyan Shillings (KES) worth of food crops from April to June 2024, which is approximately 700 billion Naira. Food crops worth 24 billion KES were primarily imported from Tanzania alone.

— Abubakar M. Kareto.