



**HUMANIST**  
TWO YOUNG MEN WITH  
BROKEN LEGS, SPINAL  
CORD INJURY, APPEAL  
FOR HELP >17

**HISTORICITI**  
MYSTERIES OF  
LONELIEST PLACES ON  
EARTH, WORLD'S MOST  
ISOLATED HOUSE>14

**MILESTONE**  
13-YEAR-OLD GOMBE GIRL, GYMNAST  
MUNYAL KWAIRANGA, WINS 3  
MEDALS AT NATIONAL  
YOUTH GAMES>12



# Neptune Prime WEEKEND

...redefining journalism for development

www.neptuneprime.com.ng

Vol. 1 No. 3 | 11-12:01:2025



The government's gesture to reward these generals is undeniable. They have served the nation, faced challenges, and upheld national defence. But let's consider the facts: these benefits come in a country where:

133 million Nigerians live in multidimensional poverty.

Over 30 million young people are unemployed.

A litre of fuel costs more than a day's wage for many.

For a retired general to enjoy luxury while a soldier on the battlefield struggles with inadequate equipment and unpaid allowances feels like a bitter irony. Is this reward or extravagance?

### Security Challenges: A Job Left Unfinished

The retiring generals leave behind a nation still grappling with insurgency, banditry, and kidnappings. Boko Haram's terror reigns in the North-East, bandits run rampant in the North-West, and kidnappers profit in the South. Despite years of strategic leadership, the insecurity persists.

Meanwhile, the troops on the frontlines—those who risk their lives daily—are often under-equipped, underpaid, and unsupported. How can the military effectively defend the nation when morale is low and resources are lacking?

### Nation of Contrasts

In stark contrast to the retired generals' comfortable futures, ordinary Nigerians face brutal economic realities:

Inflation is skyrocketing, leaving basic goods unaffordable.

Food aid distribution has turned into chaos, with stampedes claiming lives.

Desperate citizens are turning to crime just to survive.

While generals enjoy foreign medical allowances, thousands of Nigerians die daily from preventable diseases due to poor healthcare infrastructure. The gaps in privilege and poverty have never been wider.

### BudgIT Criticises Tinubu Over Lavish Retirement Package for Generals

BudgIT, a socio-accountability organisation, has raised concerns about Nigeria's proposed 2025 budget and President Tinubu's recent announcement of luxurious retirement packages for military generals. The group has flagged several omissions and inconsistencies in the budget and warned of the demoralising

## Retired Generals Enjoying Luxury While Nigerians Struggle in Reality >3

BY SAKINAT MUSA ABUBAKAR

Nigeria's senior military generals are stepping into retirement, leaving behind decades of service and moving into lives of comfort and privilege. They depart with perks that could

rival royalty—bulletproof SUVs, foreign medical allowances, and domestic staff. But while these packages seem fitting for their years of service, they starkly contrast with the harsh realities faced by millions of Nigerians.

This tale of two worlds—one of luxury and

the other of despair—is the reality of modern Nigeria. For many citizens, the thought of a bulletproof SUV or access to quality healthcare is more fantasy than reality.

### Lavish Benefits or Necessary Rewards?

HERITAGE >>13

THE DISTINCT CULTURE OF  
TANGALE PEOPLE 350 YEARS AFTER  
MIGRATING FROM YEMEN



OLDIES >>16

NIGERIAN GOV'T MUST PAY ATTENTION  
TO THE SUFFERINGS OF ITS PEOPLE –  
FORMER RECTOR, BUKAR ABUBAKAR



# Neptune World

It is not the strongest of the species or the most intelligent who will survive, but those who can best manage change.  
- CHARLES DARWIN

I know from experience that criticisms, even apparently destructive criticisms, are helpful to government.  
- LATEEF JAKAND

## PICTURE OF THE DAY

Fishing Is A Viable Economic Activity In The Nguru Wetland Of Yobe State, Nigeria.

PHOTO CREDIT: Google



## UP&DOWN



### Plate of peeled bananas appear monthly at UK road junction

Residents of Nottinghamshire, England have been left puzzled by the mysterious appearance of plates filled with peeled bananas left by the side of a road every month for over a year.

The phenomenon occurs on the second day of each month in 2024, when a plate of bananas is found on a street corner in Beeston, across from a local church.

The mystery began over a year ago at the intersection of Abbey Road and Wensor Avenue, and its purpose remains unclear. A local resident, Clare Short, discovered the pattern and noticed the bananas were consistently placed on the second day of each month.

## RANDOMFACTS

20 Nigerian words added to Oxford Dictionary

The Oxford English Dictionary has expanded its lexicon with 20 Nigerian words and expressions in its latest update.

The newly added entries include popular terms like "japa," "agbero," "eba," "419," and "abi," among others.

These words, deeply rooted in the everyday lives of Nigerians, highlight the influence of Pidgin English, street slang, and cultural expressions that are increasingly gaining global recognition.

Notably, some of the words, such as "japa" and "jand," appear as both nouns and verbs in the dictionary.

Pronunciation guides have also been provided to assist non-Nigerians in accurately articulating the words.

Here is the complete list of Nigerian words added to the OED:

- 419
- abi
- adire
- agbero
- area boy
- cross-carpet
- cross-carpeting
- eba
- Edo
- gele
- jand (noun, verb)
- janded (adjective)
- Japa (noun, verb)
- Kanuri
- Kobo
- Naija
- suya
- Yahoo
- yahoo boy
- Yarn Dust

**FUN PUZZLE**  
Find The Hidden Words

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

**FOR ADVERT  
PLACEMENT AND  
ENQUIRIES  
CONTACT US AT:**

ABUJA  
**Faizatu:** +2349029880064

YOBE  
**Ahmed:** +2349029880064  
**Faizatu:** +2349029880064

KANO  
**Ahmed:** +2349029880064  
**Faizatu:** +2349029880064



### Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV): What to know, how it affects you

There has been a sharp rise in cases of Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) across northern Chinese provinces, with a significant impact on children.

The virus, which has been causing overcrowded hospital waiting rooms, is drawing comparisons to the early days of COVID-19 due to its rapid spread.

Reports indicate that cases have risen noticeably in the past few weeks, surpassing levels seen at the same time last year.

HMPV typically presents with cold-like symptoms, including a cough, runny nose or nasal congestion, sore throat, and fever, which usually resolves within about five days.

More severe symptoms, such as bronchitis, bronchiolitis, and pneumonia, can occur with infections like HMPV (Human Metapneumovirus), causing sufferers to experience shortness of breath, severe cough, or wheezing.

Experts are advising caution when it comes to flu-like symptoms, due to concerns that they may be caused by HMPV. Professor John Tregoning, a vaccine immunology expert at Imperial College London, explained that HMPV shares similar symptoms.

# NEWS

## Retired Generals Enjoying Luxury While Nigerians Struggle in Reality > 1

effects of the extravagant provisions for retiring generals.

### \*Missing Budget Details\*

BudgIT revealed that the proposed 2025 federal budget excludes funding for critical projects like the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Road and lacks breakdowns for major ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs), including:

National Judicial Council: N341.63 billion.

TETFUND: N940.5 billion.

Budgets for over 60 government-owned enterprises (GOEs), such as the Nigeria Ports Authority, Nigeria Customs Service, and NIMASA.

### \*What Are Our Priorities?\*

It's clear the government values the service of its elites, but what about the masses? When a government spends billions on retirement perks but can not adequately fund healthcare, education, and security for its citizens, priorities must be questioned.

If we're honest, Nigeria's real battle isn't just against insecurity—it's against inequality, corruption, and misplaced priorities.

This isn't about denying the retired generals their due rewards; it's about creating balance. Why can't a government that provides bulletproof SUVs for retirees also ensure that soldiers have the equipment they need? Why can't foreign medical allowances for generals be matched with investments in local hospitals?

The nation must focus on sustainable solutions for its people:

Invest in local industries to create jobs.

Improve healthcare systems to reduce preventable deaths.

Equip the military adequately to tackle insecurity.

### \*Luxury for a Few, Suffering for Many\*

The retirement of Nigeria's senior generals highlights the luxury of the few against the hardship of the many. Their service deserves respect, but the government must recognise that a nation can not thrive if the majority of its people are left behind.

As these generals enjoy lives of comfort, millions of Nigerians continue to fight their own battles—against poverty, hunger, and insecurity. True leadership lies not in rewarding a select few but in building a nation where everyone can thrive.

Until then, Nigeria remains a country where luxury and misery live side by side, each reminding the other of the glaring inequalities that must be addressed.



## FG to receive \$52.88m linked to ex-minister Diezani



Madueke

The Federal Government of Nigeria is set to receive \$52.88 million in recovered Galactica assets tied to former Minister of Petroleum, Diezani Alison-Madueke, from the United States.

The Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Lateef Fagbemi, announced this during the formal signing ceremony of the asset agreement between Nigeria and the U.S. in Abuja on Friday.

Fagbemi revealed that \$50 million of the funds will be directed through the World Bank to support rural electrification projects, while the remaining \$2 million will go to the

International Institute of Justice to enhance the justice system and strengthen anti-corruption efforts.

"This marks a significant milestone in the collaboration between Nigeria and the United States to combat corruption and uphold the rule of law," Fagbemi said, highlighting it as part of President Bola Tinubu's strategy to address corruption.

Meanwhile, U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria, Richard Mills, urged the Ministry of Justice to ensure proper monitoring and effective utilization of the recovered funds to maximize their impact on Nigerians.

## NEWS



## Troops eliminate notorious bandit leader, Ba o-ba o

Men of Nigerian joint security forces have neutralised notorious banditry leader known as “Ba o-ba o” along with his fighters in Batsari forest within Batsari Local Government Area of Katsina State.

The operations were carried out by the troops of the Nigerian Army, the Police, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, NSCDC, and local vigilante – CWC.

A notorious bandit leader responsible for violent attacks and

kidnappings that terrorized a number of communities in Katsina State, Ba o-ba o had been in the crosshairs of security agencies for a while.

His death is considered a major breakthrough in efforts to combat banditry in the area.

A local community leader said, “This is a big victory for our community. We are thankful for the sacrifices and efforts of the security forces in bringing peace to our region.”

## School teacher sent to Kirikiri Prison for assaulting pupil

The Lagos State Police Command has reiterated its zero tolerance for any form of assault following the arrest of a teacher caught assaulting a pupil.

The incident, which went viral on social media, shows Stella Nwadiogo, a 45-year-old teacher, striking and slapping a three-year-old child for reportedly struggling to write the number 7.

Nwadiogo was arraigned in Magistrate Court 1 in Ogba on January 9, 2025, where she faced charges of indecent treatment and child assault. She pleaded not guilty to the charges.

Chief Magistrate O. Kushanu granted her bail at N200,000 with two sureties of the same amount.

She has subsequently been remanded in the Kirikiri maximum prison, till February 18, when the case will be heard again.



## Young lovers fake own kidnap, collect N2m ransom from parents

Two individuals have been arrested by the Delta State Police for faking their kidnap to extort money from the lady’s parents. The lady, who orchestrated the crime, successfully collected two million naira from her parents.

The couple, consisting of the lady and her boyfriend, were apprehended in Adaba following an intelligence-led operation by the police.

Confirming the arrest, the State Police PRO, SP Bright Edafe, explained to journalists on Wednesday, January 8, that the duo was arrested after a thorough investigation by the Special Anti-Kidnapping and Cyber-Crime Squad led by CSP Labe Joseph.

“The command received a complaint on January 2, 2025, from Mrs Oliko Joy, who reported that her daughter, Princess, had left home on December 30, 2024, and had not returned.

“The following day, the family received a call demanding a ransom of ₦2 million for her release. The Commissioner of Police immediately directed the Special Squad to ensure the victim’s safe rescue and arrest the suspect.

“The operatives conducted an intelligence-driven investigation, leading to the arrest of Prince Atigbi after the ransom was collected,” Edafe said.

Edafe further revealed that Atigbi confessed that he was not kidnapped, but had followed his girlfriend’s instructions to assist with the scam.

## Priest resigns from Catholic Church, embraces traditional religion



Dr Echezona Obiagbaosogu, a former Catholic priest who served for 17 years, has announced his resignation from the priesthood to embrace African Traditional Religion.

Currently a lecturer in African Traditional Religion at Nnamdi Azikiwe University in Awka, Anambra State, Obiagbaosogu shared that he was drawn to African spirituality and the art of rainmaking, which became the focus of his academic research.

After successfully defending his PhD dissertation titled “Rainmaking and Control in Igbo African Medicine,” Obiagbaosogu expressed his belief that Africa’s valuable cultural heritage

had been undermined by colonialism. He revealed that he had spent months studying under a prominent native doctor to learn the craft of rainmaking, aiming to rediscover and preserve the continent’s traditional wisdom.

Obiagbaosogu reflected on his journey, saying, “I have come to realise that my true calling is to serve my people through the ancient traditions of our ancestors.”

He further explained that his interest in spirituality and nature had been shaped by his upbringing—he partly lived with his maternal grandfather, a traditionalist, while his father, though a Christian, still held onto certain traditional beliefs, particularly in the use of medicinal plants.

# OUR HEART

## Commissions by omission

BY ABU SHEKARA

**A**t last, Nigerians might believe, justice is being done for all geopolitical zones of the country. Five regional Development Commissions have been created, with one more in the process of being established. Soon, it is expected, that all parts of Nigeria will have institutional means of recourse concerning their peculiar needs and aspirations.

The oldest Niger Delta Development Commission was created as a response to the environmental hazards of mineral exploitation in the oil-rich zone. Along with the derivation formula, it was for all intents and purposes, a child of necessity and an envisioned solution to the restiveness in the South-South associated with the extraction of petroleum resources.

The creation of the North-East Development Commission was in response to over a decade of Boko Haram insurgency, which devastated the socioeconomic life of scores of communities in the zone, including the state capitals, destroying public facilities and disrupting development in education, health, agriculture, fishing and other economic activities.

A similar situation caused by banditry in the North-West has made it necessary for the same initiative for that part of the country obvious. Thus the North-West Development Commission came into being.

For the South-East, the activities of the secessionist group, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), though not as socially and economically destructive as those of groups in the North, its sociopolitical implications for Nigeria may have in part, been relevant to the establishment of a Development Commission for the zone. The South-West does not share similar security challenges to the three other geopolitical zones but such an agency for the area would still address its peculiar developmental issues and thus the SWDC is one of the four so far set up and already being funded by the Federal Government.

In that vein, the Commission to cater for the North-Central, which experiences the same encumbrance of security challenges as the North-West should have been among the earliest to be instituted. This is considering that one of the functions of the Commissions is, to “identify factors

inhibiting the development of its region” and assist the member-states in the formulation and implementation of policies to ensure a sound and efficient management of the resources of that region”.

The Federal Government budget of 2025 however, has raised questions on the actual motive of creating the Development Commissions. From the breakdown, over ninety per cent of the allocations to the agencies are on salaries and other personnel costs, leaving a paltry portion for any development-oriented expenditure.

Details of the budget proposal show that out of the combined allocation of N4.26 trillion, the Commissions, which are under the new Ministry for Regional Development, will spend about 99.7 per cent of their budgets on personnel costs, with a mere 0.3 per

cent for development projects.

The NDDC has the highest vote of N776.5 billion, almost wholly allocated to salaries. The NWDC is next with N585.9 billion followed by SWDC with N498.4 billion and SEDC N341.3 billion, while the NEDC allocated N290.9 billion, all of whose budgeted funds will virtually be consumed by salaries.

These figures indicate that the huge allocation to the regional bodies will neither impact infrastructure, the economic or social development of the areas nor address the challenges they are experiencing, especially those zones, whose advancement is mitigated by encumbrances like insecurity. This portrays the Commissions as mere tools for the proliferation of posts for political appointments and the dispensing of partisan privileges and patronage.

The North is experiencing unprecedented economic crises, a high rate of poverty and disease and a low level of Western education, a state of affairs exacerbated by the almost daily loss of lives and displacement of hundreds of communities due to the activities of terrorists. Against this backdrop, the region needs solutions to these serious setbacks, instead of pretentious policies motivated by political expediency.

Juxtaposed with the 2025 budgetary allocation to education (N3.52 trillion) and health (N2.48 trillion), the vote of N4.6 billion is sufficient to substantially improve service delivery in these two critical sectors to Nigerians in the jurisdiction of the five establishments and go a long way towards addressing their peculiar problems. If that was the concern, the allocation to NEDC for instance, should not have been the lowest, considering that Borno is just recovering from a massive flood that has extensively destroyed the state's social and economic infrastructure.

For the government to commit such huge resources to the salaries and pecks of appointees while the Commissions themselves are deprived of sufficient funds to benefit the people for whom they are supposed to cater is a misnomer. That is especially true for a government that claims to have concern for discipline and imprudence in the management and appropriation of resources.

*Abu Shekara is a media practitioner based in Sokoto State.*

### EDITORIAL TEAM

Dr Hassan Gimba - CEO Publisher  
 Ayanda Ngwane - Editor-in-Chief  
 Aisha Auyo - Director Content  
 Barr. Hafsat A. Muye - Company Secretary  
 Ayuba Ahmad - Rewrite  
 Gift Luckson - Acting Editor  
 Sakinat Musa - Deputy Editor  
 Fa'izatu Aliyu Doma - Features Editor  
 Maryam Sulaiman - Sports Editor  
 Muhammad Kukuri - Social Media Manager  
 Abubakar Kado - Asst. Social Media Manager  
 Faruk Mohammed - Website Manager  
 Maryam Umar Abdullahi - Editor  
 Sa'adatu Maina - North East Bureau Chief  
 Idris Umar - Reporter (Kaduna)  
 Kasim Isa - Reporter (Yobe)  
 Ibrahim Sabo - Reporter (Yobe)  
 Hamzat Abaga - Reporter (Niger)  
 Uchechi Daniel - Reporter (Lagos)  
 Shafa'atu Dauda - Reporter (Kano)  
 Jamil Yakasai - Reporter (Kano)  
 Dajen Comfort Yakubu - Reporter  
 Janet Aiso - Reporter  
 Victor Itodo Abuh - Reporter Admin.  
 Lilian Hosea - Head of Admin.  
 Mercy Adaje - Office Assistant  
 Aisha Shuaibu - Office Assistant (Yobe)  
 Dauda Muhammad - Security (Yobe)



# NORTH-EAST



## ECOWAS donates cash, food items to 1,000 flood victims in Bauchi

BY ABUBAKAR KADO

Approximately 1,000 vulnerable individuals impacted by the 2024 flood disaster in Bauchi State have received vital support through a multipurpose intervention funded by the ECOWAS Commission.

This was disclosed by the State Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction, Tanko Sununu, at the Grand Finale Ceremony of the Ecowas Emergency Response Project held at the Bauchi Government House on Wednesday.

Represented by the Director of Humanitarian Affairs of the Ministry, Valentine Ezebu, the minister explained that the initiative aims to support the most flood-affected communities in the state.

He noted the Federal Government's dedication through the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction, to alleviating human suffering and fostering recovery for disaster-impacted individuals.

According to him, "The collaboration between ECOWAS Commission and Federal Government of Nigeria underscores the power of regional solidarity in addressing humanitarian challenges and demonstrates

that collective action is the key to overcoming shared challenges.

"The list of the vulnerable population in the six local government areas of Bauchi who benefited from the intervention was provided by the Bauchi State Government and was validated by Nigerian Red Cross Society, the Ministry's implementing partner, to ensure that the most affected

population within these locations are targeted and captured."

On his part, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yusuf Tugga, who was represented by the Head of the Ecowas National Unit of the ministry, Ali Gombe Haruna, highlighted that "The exercise was carried out in conjunction with Nigeria Red Cross Society.

"The Kirfi Local government is the last among communities in Bauchi State affected by the flood to benefit from the humanitarian support."

He expressed the ministry's satisfaction with the contribution of the Bauchi State Government to the programme.

Tugga believes that Nigeria, as a member country of Ecowas and other multilateral associations, enjoys lots of humanitarian support.

Also speaking the Director of Humanitarian and Social Affairs of the Ecowas Commission, Sintiki Tarfa who represented the President of the Ecowas Commission Aliyu Umar Ture said the intervention is a demonstration of support to flood victims in Bauchi State.

Speaking at the event, Bauchi State Governor Bala Mohammed, represented by the Secretary to the State Government Aminu Hammayo noted that the state government had also provided additional support to one hundred and fifty households to address the growing needs of flood victims.

Each beneficiary received a bag of rice, beans, a gallon of vegetable oil, a blanket, a bucket, a mat, and a cash transfer of seventy-five thousand naira.

## Borno State University renamed after first Northern Nigeria governor, Kashim Ibrahim

The Borno State Executive Council has approved the renaming of Borno State University, BOSU, to Kashim Ibrahim University, Maiduguri, in honour of Sir Kashim Ibrahim, the first Governor of Northern Nigeria.

The decision was taken during the first council meeting of 2025, chaired by Governor Babagana Zulum in Maiduguri.

Speaking to newsmen on the development, the Commissioner for Information and Internal Security, Prof. Usman Tar, said that the renaming would take effect after the necessary legislative amendments and notifications to regulatory authorities.

"Council approved that Borno State University shall be renamed Kashim Ibrahim University.

"This decision is subject to legislative processes by the State Ass0

embly to amend the law establishing the university and actions by the Ministry of Education to inform relevant bodies such as the NUC and JAMB," Tar said.

He said that the council approved a comprehensive programme for street naming and house numbering in Maiduguri town and other urban areas as part of the state's urban renewal efforts.

Tar explained that the initiative would involve collaboration with stakeholders, including traditional rulers and federal agencies such as the Nigerian Postal Service.

"Council decided that relevant MDAs will work with stakeholders to develop a naming and numbering template.

"This will ensure that updated names and numbers are reflected on platforms like Google Maps and public records to enhance urban planning and governance," he added.

Earlier while addressing the council members, Zulum expressed appreciation for their commitment and outlined plans to intensify recovery efforts and implement impactful projects in 2025.

"In 2024, my administration made significant progress, and I am committed to achieving even more this year.

"Our focus will remain on post-conflict recovery, urban renewal, and the improvement of citizens' welfare," Zulum said.



Buhari

## Army confirms death of 34 Boko Haram/ISWAP terrorists in Borno

The Defence Headquarters has confirmed that over 34 Boko Haram/ISWAP terrorists were neutralised in a fierce clash with Nigerian troops at Sabon Gari Community in Damboa Local Government Area of Borno State.

The attack, which also resulted in the tragic loss of six soldiers, was confirmed by the Director of Defence Media Operations, Major General Edward Buba, in a statement released on Wednesday.

On January 4, 2025, a group of terrorists mounted on motorcycles and gun trucks launched an attack aimed at retaliating for the recent death of their commanders. However, they were swiftly overwhelmed by joint air and ground forces.

The terrorists had intended to surprise the troops, but a fighting patrol returning to base was able to thwart the assault as soon as it began. A timely reinforcement team, comprising the Civilian Joint Taskforce, vigilantes, and hybrid forces, arrived on the scene and quickly decimated the terrorists. Despite encountering an improvised explosive device that injured the vigilante commander, the reinforcement team helped turn the tide of the battle, with aerial support from Operation Hadin Kai's air component.

Battle damage assessments revealed the significant impact of the clash: 34 terrorists were killed, and a haul of weapons and ammunition was recovered, including 23 AK-47 rifles and over 200 rounds of 7.62mm special ammunition.

Sadly, the battle came at a cost for the military, with six soldiers killed in action. Their names are being withheld to allow for proper notification of their next of kin. The Defence Headquarters has urged the media to respect this process.

The statement concluded with a reaffirmation of the Nigerian Armed Forces' commitment to ending insurgency and terrorism in the country, with troops remaining steadfast in their mission to defeat the terrorists.



## NORTH-EAST

REGIO ONLINE SERVICES



“Council decided that relevant MDAs will work with stakeholders to develop a naming and numbering template.

“This will ensure that updated names and numbers are reflected on platforms like Google Maps and public records to enhance urban planning and governance,” he added.

Earlier while addressing the council members, Zulum expressed appreciation for their commitment and outlined plans to intensify recovery efforts and implement impactful projects in 2025.

“In 2024, my administration made significant progress, and I am committed to achieving even more this year.

“Our focus will remain on post-conflict recovery, urban renewal, and the improvement of citizens’ welfare,” Zulum said.

The meeting also featured a valedictory session in honour of the outgoing Head of Service, Barrister Malam Fannami, who is set to retire later this month.

The council lauded his dedication and contributions to the state’s development.

## Borno State University renamed after first Northern Nigeria governor, Kashim Ibrahim

The Borno State Executive Council has approved the renaming of Borno State University, BOSU, to Kashim Ibrahim University, Maiduguri, in honour of Sir Kashim Ibrahim, the first Governor of Northern Nigeria.

The decision was taken during the first council meeting of 2025, chaired by Governor Babagana Zulum in Maiduguri.

Speaking to newsmen on the development, the Commissioner for

Information and Internal Security, Prof. Usman Tar, said that the renaming would take effect after the necessary legislative amendments and notifications to regulatory authorities.

“Council approved that Borno State University shall be renamed Kashim Ibrahim University.

“This decision is subject to legislative processes by the State Assembly to amend the law establishing the university and actions by the Ministry of Education

to inform relevant bodies such as the NUC and JAMB,” Tar said.

He said that the council approved a comprehensive programme for street naming and house numbering in Maiduguri town and other urban areas as part of the state’s urban renewal efforts.

Tar explained that the initiative would involve collaboration with stakeholders, including traditional rulers and federal agencies such as the Nigerian Postal Service.

## Gov. Buni purchases 40 tractors to bolster agricultural production

Governor Mai Mala Buni, CON, is making an effort to increase food security in Yobe State with the procurement of 40 brand new Massey Ferguson Tractors to boost productivity.

The Commissioner, Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Honourable Ali Mustapha Goniri, stated that the procurement of the new Tractors aligns with Buni’s food security programme, assuring citizens that Yobe will be well prepared to meet food demands.

It would be recalled that Governor Buni has, last year distributed tractors and other farming equipment worth over N15.3 billion to 5,340 local farmers across the state.

The distributed equipment includes 100 tractors, 300 sets

of ox-drawn ploughs, 1,349 hand-push planters, 530 solar-powered pumps, 3,180 bags of fertilizers, 1,060 knapsack sprayers, 10,600 kg of assorted seeds and 10,600 litres of agrochemicals.

The initiative aims to boost agricultural productivity, ensure food security, and stimulate economic growth in Yobe State.

Governor Buni emphasised the importance of utilising the equipment for its intended purpose and warned against its misuse or sale.

He directed security agencies to monitor and prevent the unauthorised movement of the equipment out of the state.

Beneficiaries have expressed their gratitude, noting that the support has enabled them to expand their farming activities



# CUSTOMS & NEMA



## On the NFF choice of Eric Chelle as the new Head Coach of the Super Eagles

Why is there so much debate surrounding the NFF's decision to appoint Eric, a Malian, as the head coach of the Super Eagles? Is it merely because he is African?

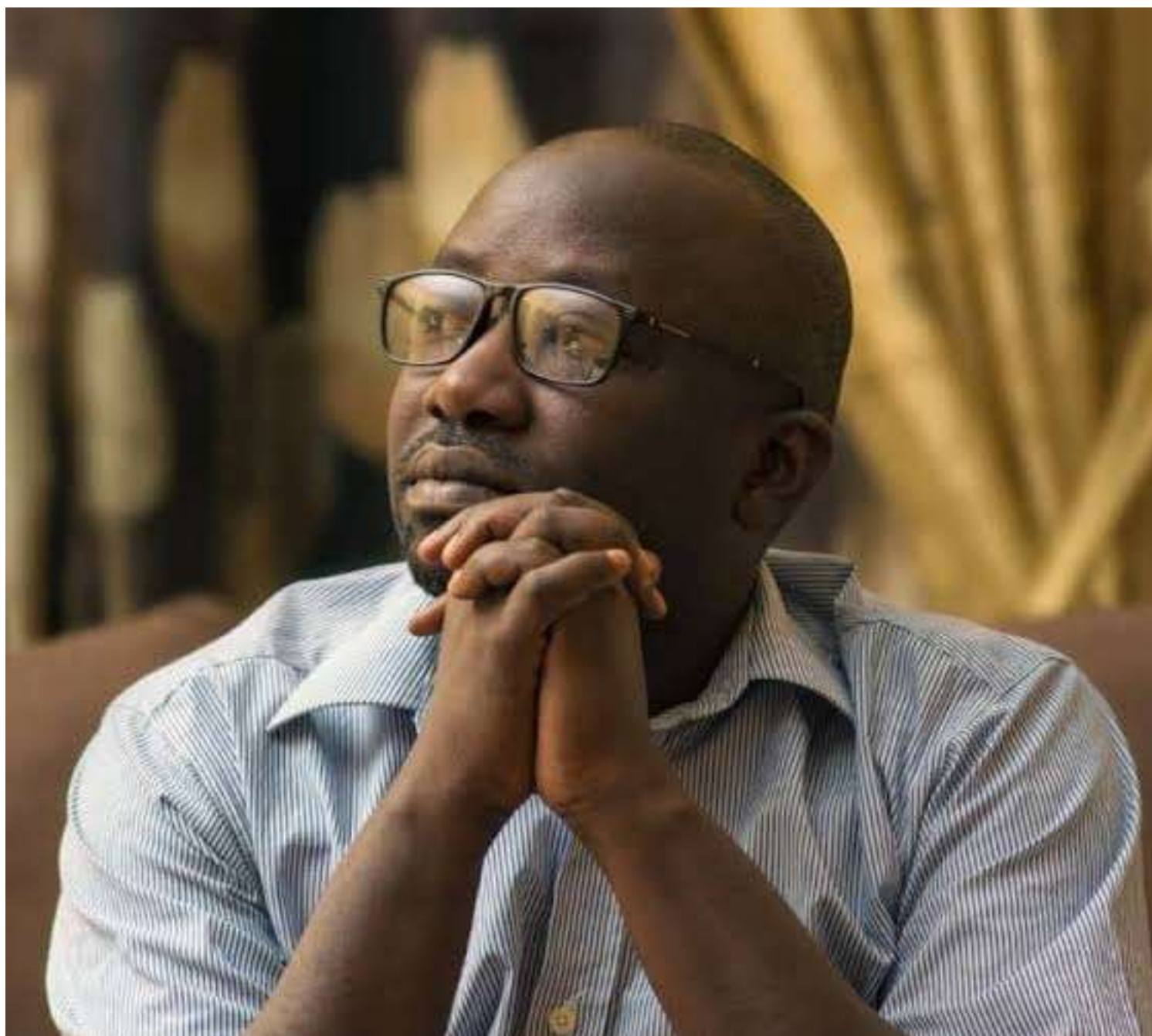
I, for one, am comfortable with Eric Chelle's appointment as coach. Mali's impressive performance at the last AFCON in Ivory Coast, under his guidance, is noteworthy, especially considering they lacked the quality players that the Super Eagles boast.

READ ALSO: NFF appoints new Head Coach for Super Eagles

Let's focus on competence rather than nationality when engaging in disputes, as any country is capable of producing exceptional talent. After all, Amunike and Keshi successfully coached Tanzania and Togo, respectively. Technical expertise and capability are essential skills that can only be acquired through proper training and knowledge, regardless of one's country of origin. Prejudice has no place in achieving excellence.

It is time for us to start leveraging African coaches, as demonstrated by the African coach who won the last AFCON, despite the presence of many foreign coaches in the tournament.

To prove a point, the coach of Ivory Coast, an Ivorian, neutralized José Peseiro from Portugal, who has coached Porto, Sporting CP, and was a former assistant coach at Real Madrid, to achieve a victory in the finals with a better team. Additionally, James Kwesi Appiah, a Ghanaian tactician, recently led Sudan to qualification under difficult circumstances.





# PRIME PHOTOS



Fola David-Tolaram, a Nigerian doctor and artist, broke the Guinness World Record for the world's largest individual drawing, covering 1,004.7 m.

Governor Mai Mala Buni strengthens food production in Yobe with the procurement of 40 brand new Massey Ferguson Tractors to support farmers.



Yobe man gave out five of his daughters' hands in marriage on the same day in Geidam town.



Hafiza Rufaisa from Gombe State became the overall winner (female category) of the national Qur'anic recitation competition in Kebbi and received car and cash gifts.



# PRIME10MENT



## Davido, Wizkid, Tems, top nomination list for 2025 NAACP Awards

BY DAJEN COMFORT YAKUBU

Nigerian music superstars Burna Boy, Davido, Wizkid, and Tems have received nominations for the 2025 National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) Image Awards.

The African superstars will be honoured as indicated in a nomination list for the annual event released by the organisers.

The 56th NAACP Image Award is scheduled to take place on February 22 at the Pasadena Civic Centre, California in the United States.

Burna Boy, alongside American singer Usher, got a nomination for “Outstanding Duo, Group, or Collaboration (Contemporary)” for

their song “Coming Home,” while “Hmmm” by Chris Brown and Davido bagged a nomination for “Outstanding International Song.”

Wizkid is also in contention for the same category for his hit single ‘Piece of My Heart’, featuring American singer Brent Faiyaz. The song also got a nod for the “Best International Song’ category, thus earning Wizkid two nominations.

Ace female singer, Tems was also nominated for the ‘Best International Song’ for ‘Love Me Jeje’ off her debut album “Born in the Wild.”

Ayo Edebiri secured an uncommon feat with five nominations, including “Outstanding Actress in a Comedy Series,” and “Outstanding



Voiceover”, while South African Grammy winner, Tyla got a nod for “Outstanding New Artist.”

The NAACP



Image Awards celebrate outstanding representations and achievements of people of colour in motion pictures,

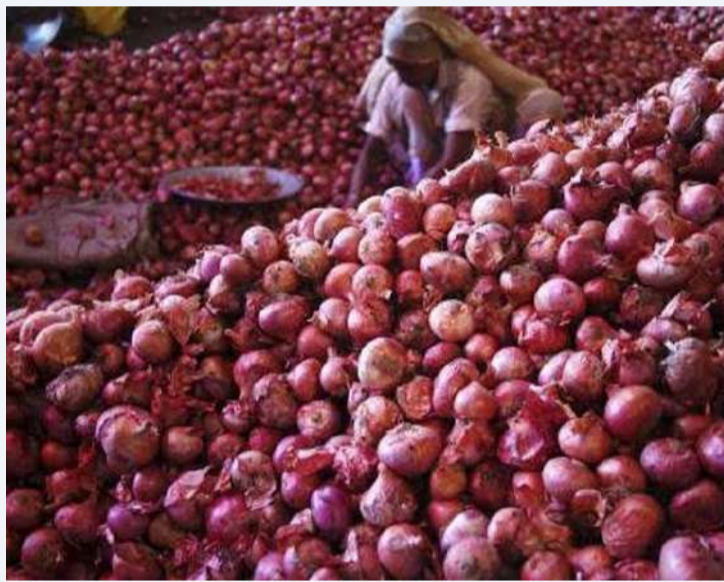
television, music, and literature.

The award ceremony for the 2025 edition will broadcast live on BET and CBS, with

the theme, “Our Stories, Our Culture, Our Excellence,” emphasising diversity in the entertainment industry.

## PRIME MOMENT

## MARKET SURVEY



## Customers rejoice as prices of tomatoes, vegetables drop in Yola

BY USMAN IBRAHIM

The prices of grains have increased with about 10 percent while prices of onions, tomatoes and pepper have reduced with about 40 percent in Yola, the Adamawa State capital.

Alhaji Rilwanu Muhammad, grains dealer in Yola Market, confirmed this to our reporter, revealing that there is currently low patronage in the market due to long breaks of Yuletide.

He said a 100Kg bag of unprocessed rice is between N47,000 and N50,000 as against N45,000 during harvest period and a bag of Maize is N55,000 to N60,000.

He said a bag of Millet and Corn is between N60,000 and N62,000.

According to him, if there is good patronage the price might decline more.

Malam Buba Umaru, a trader, said they were now selling a measure of maize at the cost of N1,100 as against N900 during harvest period, Corn is N1,500 as against N1,200 and measure of Red beans is N2,500, white beans is N2,000 as against N2,000 and N2,800 respectively.

Meanwhile, the prices of tomatoes are decreasing due to influx of new harvests produced by dry season farmers in some parts of the country.

Malam Sale Ibrahim, a tomatoes seller, said in the last two weeks a basket of onion was sold at the cost of N13,000 and now is N8,000, a basket of tomatoes sold at N9,000 is now N4,500 while a basket of pepper that was N9,000 has dropped to N4,000.

According to him, currently they are getting supplies from Katsina, Kano, Gombe and Kaduna states and when those farming the product in Adamawa start harvesting, the prices will reduce more.

Mrs Grace David, a customer, expressed gratitude to God for his blessings, considering the high-cost of foodstuff in 2024 when compared with the present situation in 2025.

She appealed to governments at all levels to do the needful in ensuring that the hardship was reduced to the barest minimum and urged businessmen hoarding grains to change their attitude.



PHOTO  
CAPTION  
HERE:

## Sellers count losses, slash prices of chickens after Christmas

BY VICTOR ITODO ABUH

The price of chickens has drastically dropped in many parts of Nigeria, almost two weeks after the Christmas celebrations. Poultry sellers are now counting their losses as they face low demand during the festive season.

Prices that once soared during the holidays are now considerably lower, with a large broiler chicken that was sold for ₦20,000 in major cities like Abuja and Lagos now going for between ₦13,000 and ₦16,000.

In Abuja's Utako market, broilers have dropped from ₦20,000 to ₦16,000, while old layer chickens are now sold at ₦13,500 compared to ₦17,000 in December.

A trader, Samaila in Utako expressed his frustration: "I have to sell them now because the more they are here, the more they are consuming food. The price of feed alone keeps on increasing."

Ayuba Jamilu of Wuse market also commented on the shift in customer behaviour, "By this time last year, I had sold all my chickens, even if they remained, it was the small sizes. This year, even the few that came, only bought one or two at bargain prices."

Similarly, in Maiduguri, chickens that were priced at ₦20,000 are now available for ₦13,000 to ₦15,000, with many sellers struggling to recoup their investments. Seller Adamu Lawan remarked:

"Now, poultry farmers are in a very tight situation trying to recoup their investments. They have slashed prices by almost 40 percent."

In Kano, medium-sized chickens are now being sold for ₦6,000, down from ₦20,000, while local chickens can be found for as low as ₦4,000. However, prices remain high in Lagos, where sellers like Kazeem Amoo and Jamiu cite the continued high cost of poultry feed and transportation as reasons for the price maintenance.

Poultry farmers and traders are urging the government to intervene, citing the economic hardship affecting customer spending and the rising cost of animal production.

# MILESTONE

## 13-year-old Gombe girl wins 3 medals at National Youth Games

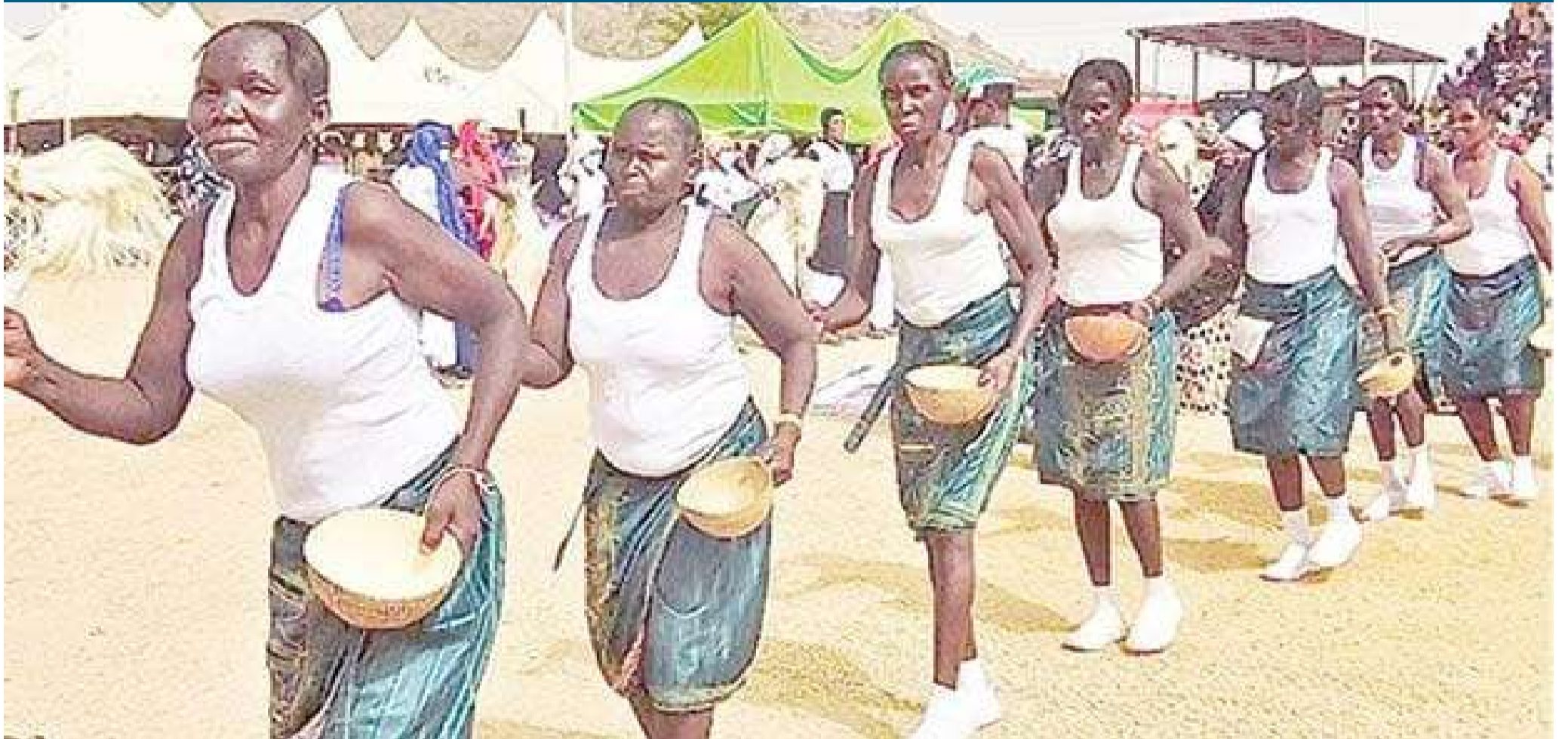
BY MERCY ADAJE

A 13-year-old gymnast, Munyal Kwairanga, has emerged as the overall best, winning three gold medals at the just concluded National Youth Games. Speaking to newsmen after the incredible feat, Kwairanga said her next dream is to represent Nigeria at the Olympics and win more medals. A little setback for Miss Munyal was recorded during the last sports edition when she was denied her medals after competing for Ogun State because of some errors in the registration process. Notwithstanding, resilient Munyal gave it another try, this time representing Gombe State, where she triumphed and claimed three Gold Medals.



# HERITAGE

BY KASIM ISA MUHAMMAD



## The Distinct Culture of Tangale People 350 Years After Migrating From Yemen



The Tangale people, native to Kaltungo, Shongom, and Billiri Local Government Areas of Gombe State, Nigeria, represent a distinct ethnic group with a deep cultural history that stretches over several centuries. Known for their rich traditions, unique customs, and resilient spirit, the Tangale people have settled in this region for over a century. Their journey to the present-day Gombe State is steeped in history and folklore, as they migrated from the Kanem-Bornu Empire. Along with other ethnic groups such as the Bolewa, the Tangale are believed to have originated from Yemen in the southwestern part of the Arabian Peninsula. This migration, which lasted an estimated 350 years, saw them pass through several locations before finally settling in the Gombe State region. Their settlement in this area has given rise to a community that has managed to preserve its traditional practices while also integrating various aspects of modern life.

### Clans of the Tangale People

The Tangale people are made up of seven clans, each of which maintains its own identity and structure. These clans—Tangaltong, Tal, Kalmal, Todi, Banganje, Nathe, and Billiri—form the core of the Tangale chiefdom. Billiri, the most prominent clan, is the seat of the Mai Tangale, the paramount ruler of the entire Tangale people. While each of the seven clans has a chief or head, the Mai Tangale holds the highest position and is responsible for resolving disputes between the clans. This includes important matters such as border issues, conflicts, and deaths. The Mai Tangale is also a custodian of the culture and traditions of the Tangale people. Historically, the position of Mai Tangale has been passed down through a succession of rulers, with the current Mai Tangale, Malam Danladi Sanusi Maiyamba, being the 16th ruler in a line that stretches back to the 19th century.

### Religious Practices and Worldview

The Tangale people's religious practices and

worldview are rooted in traditional beliefs, though they have gradually incorporated elements of Christianity and Islam over time. However, despite the influence of these religions, many Tangale cultural rites and traditions remain firmly rooted in their ancestral customs. Before colonial rule, the Tangale people lived in groupings spread across several hills, providing them with protection and security in the face of frequent tribal wars and inter-ethnic conflicts. These early settlements helped shape the Tangale way of life, fostering a strong sense of community and cultural continuity.

### The Pissi Tangale Festival (Tangale Day)

One of the most significant cultural events that celebrate the Tangale people's identity is the Pissi Tangale festival, also known as Tangale Day. This festival was introduced in 2006 by the 15th Mai Tangale, the late Dr Abdu Buba Maisheru II, as part of efforts to promote the Tangale culture and strengthen unity among the Tangale people both within the region and across the globe. Held on the last Saturday of December each year, the Pissi Tangale festival has become an important occasion for the people to showcase their heritage, technological advancements, and agricultural achievements.

The festival features a vibrant display of agricultural products that remain central to the Tangale economy. The Tangale people are primarily engaged in farming, and the festival serves as a reflection of their strong ties to the land and their ability to sustain themselves through agriculture. Alongside the display of crops, livestock, and traditional foods, the festival also features an exhibition of cultural artefacts, traditional clothing, music, and dance. These activities provide a window into the ancient technological innovations of the Tangale people, many of which were developed long before the arrival of colonial powers in the region. For example, the festival showcases traditional building techniques, as well as tools and other implements used by the Tangale people in their everyday lives.

# HISTORICITI

## Mysteries of Loneliest Places on Earth, World's Most Isolated House

BY UCHECHI OJO

In the heart of the Atlantic Ocean, two isolated houses sit like forgotten sentinels, far from the hustle and bustle of modern life. Their eerie desolation has captured the imaginations of adventurers, armchair theorists, and curious onlookers from around the world. Shrouded in mystery, these buildings have sparked outlandish rumours, bizarre theories, and an insatiable thirst for answers. From apocalyptic hideouts to mystical sanctuaries, here's the story of the loneliest places on Earth.

Perched on a verdant hill on Eon Island (also known as Ellidaey), the Ball House stands proudly against the Atlantic's fury. Built nearly a century ago, the white structure's history is as enigmatic as its surroundings. It's so far removed from the nearest land that the only company it keeps is the occasional passing ship. And yet, despite its solitude, the Ball House is far from abandoned. Its existence has ignited a whirlwind of eccentric theories.

Some have suggested that the house was built in preparation for a zombie apocalypse by a billionaire recluse. Others insist it belongs to Icelandic pop icon Björk, while a more grounded rumour posits that it's the haven of a hermit seeking ultimate solitude. But the reality, as it often does, turns out to be much simpler—and far more down to Earth.

In the 1950s, the Ball House was constructed as a hunting lodge by the Hunting Association of Iceland for puffin hunters, offering a warm refuge in an otherwise hostile environment. With no running water or electricity, this rustic retreat is a throwback to a time before modern conveniences. It's a place for those who crave simplicity and an adventure like no other. Getting there is no easy feat: visitors must scale cliffs to reach the lodge, where a cosy interior awaits—complete with a sofa, stove, dining area, and a stack of mattresses in a bedroom.

Despite its lack of luxuries, the Ball House has earned its place in the hearts of visitors. The guestbook is filled with thousands of entries, many from curious travellers who braved the journey to experience the isolation firsthand. YouTube star Ryan Trahan even made a viral video about his stay, calling it "the coolest experience" after sharing a juicy steak with two Icelandic locals.

A few hours' journey away from the Ball House, another



secluded building waits in silence on the tiny Skalmen Islet. Known as the "loneliest islet," Skalmen is so remote and cut off that it doesn't even welcome visitors for much of the year. From May to late July, the island is off-limits, as it serves as a critical breeding ground for seabirds.

The journey to Skalmen is an ordeal in itself: travellers must take two ferries and then endure a four-mile boat ride just to set foot on the island. And when they finally arrive, they're greeted not by a tropical paradise, but by an eerie, weather-beaten lighthouse. It's a far cry from luxury.

But despite its bleak conditions, Skalmen has its allure. The island recently drew two buyers who were willing to fork out £89,000 for their slice of isolation. For those willing to endure its isolation, the island offers the rarest of commodities—complete and utter solitude.

\*What makes these isolated houses so captivating?\*

Perhaps it's the sheer audacity of building something in such remote, unforgiving places. Perhaps it's the romantic notion of escaping everything—social media, traffic, and the demands of modern life. Or maybe it's just the allure of the unknown.



The Kanuri people aren't just preserving their culture—they're inviting the world to marvel at it

# ROOTS

BY: SAKINAT MUSA  
ABUBAKAR & GIFT LUCKSON

## King Jaja of Opobo: From slave boy to powerful ruler



BY GIFT LUCKSON

**K**ing Jaja of Opobo, born Mbanaaso Okwaraozurumbaa, in 1821 in present-day Imo State, Nigeria, was a prominent Igbo monarch and the founder

of Opobo. Captured by slave traders at the age of 12, he was sold into slavery in Bonny, where he adopted the Ijaw-Ibani culture and earned his freedom.

Despite generating significant wealth for Bonny, he was politically blocked from claiming

the throne due to his background as a former slave. Consequently, in 1869, Jaja left with his followers to establish Opobo near Andoni, a strategically positioned town that allowed him to dominate the oil palm trade.

His success in Opobo

caused substantial financial losses for his former British trading partners and led to pleas from Bonny for his return, which he refused. Queen Victoria recognised his influence, formally acknowledging him as King of Opobo in 1873. She also presented him with a sword in Buckingham Palace in 1875 after he supported Britain in the Ashante War. King Jaja of Opobo, the wealthiest and most powerful monarch in the Niger Delta, was ultimately

killed with a cup of tea in 1891.

**Life in captivity**

While in captivity, he was renamed Jubo Jubogha by his first master, Chief Iganipughuma Allison of Bonny, and later resold to Chief Alali who was the head of the Opubo Manilla Pepple Royal House. It was here that the British who couldn't pronounce his name called him "Jaja".

Jaja worked for Chief Alali and ran businesses on the side until he was able to buy his freedom.

He was soon recognised as one of the smartest businessmen in the city and became one of the greatest leaders of the head of Anna Pepple house.

**Power Struggles**

Later on, a power struggle ensued in the houses at Bonny led by Pepple House's High Chief Oko Jumbo which led to the breakaway of a fraction led by Jaja. He established a new settlement which he named Opobo in 1869 where he became King Jaja of Opobo.



# OLDIES

## Nigerian gov't must pay attention to the sufferings of its people – Former Rector, Bukar Abubakar



Abubakar

BY KASIM ISA MUHAMMAD

**B**ukar Abubakar (BA), a distinguished retired civil servant, educator, philanthropist, farmer, and former Rector of the College of Administrative and Business Studies (CABS) in Potiskum Local Government, has made significant contributions to society, particularly in education. In this in-depth interview with *Neptune Prime's* Kasim Isa Muhammad, he reflects on his journey, offering insights into living a meaningful life.

*Neptune Prime:* Can you take us back to your formative years? What was growing up like for you, and what are some of your most treasured memories?

**BA:** I am delighted to reminisce about my childhood. My name is Bukar Abubakar, and I was born in Fika Local Government Area of Yobe State on 20th April 1945. Growing up in a close-knit community, I was surrounded by a loving family and friends who instilled in me the values of hard work, consistency, and compassion.

**BA:** I attended Fika Elementary School from 1953 to 1956. After completing my elementary education, I gained admission to Senior Primary School in Potiskum LGA, where I studied from 1957 to 1959. In 1963, I enrolled at Borno Teachers College in Maiduguri, where I spent five years until 1967. That phase was pivotal in shaping my career as an educator. After graduation, I

was posted to Damboa Primary School in Potiskum as a classroom teacher in 1968. By 1969, I was promoted to Assistant Headmaster in Fika LGA, and in 1970, I became Headmaster at Kukuri, a community in Yobe. Thereafter, in 1971, I secured admission to Advanced Teacher's College Kano, where I graduated in 1974, obtaining my NCE. In 1976, I gained admission to ABU Zaria Faculty of Education, where I read Bachelor of Education in 1979. I did my NYSC in 1980 in what is now called Anambra State.

**NP:** This is impressive, sir. How do you compare education in the past to today?

**BA:** There are vast differences between the education systems of the past and the present. Back then, classes were much smaller. For example, when I joined Potiskum Senior Primary School, there were only 30 students in my class, and the entire school had just 90 students.

**BA:** This made learning more personalised and allowed teachers to form meaningful relationships with their students. The curriculum was more focused, and teaching methods were traditional but effective. Today, classrooms are overcrowded, and the quality of education is often diluted.

**NP:** Nigeria faces many challenges today. What advice do you have for the current leaders?

**BA:** Leaders must listen to the outcries of the people.

The citizens put them in office, and they must bridge the gap between themselves and the populace. Protests, like the one in August, signal discontent with governance. Issues such as hardship, hunger, and the removal of the fuel subsidy are causing widespread suffering, as prices of essential goods continue to soar.

**BA:** Leaders need to demonstrate empathy and work towards an inclusive society where every Nigerian has access to necessities such as food, shelter, healthcare, and education.

**NP:** Wise words indeed. Throughout your career, what challenges did you face, and how did you overcome them?

**BA:** I can confidently say that my challenges were minimal because I stayed away from politics. From 1968 until my retirement as a Rector, I remained focused on teaching and always worked diligently. My dedication to my students ensured that they received a quality education, and that commitment shielded me from many challenges others might face.

**NP:** What lessons have you learned throughout your life?

**BA:** I've learned many lessons, including the importance of patience and embracing differences. As a teacher, I developed the virtues of listening and understanding, as well as recognising that everyone has unique experiences and challenges. I've also learned the value of hard work, dedication, and perseverance. These qualities have been instrumental in my journey from a classroom teacher to a Rector.

**NP:** You've witnessed significant events in Nigeria's history. Can you share some of your experiences?

**BA:** When I started school, Nigeria was still under colonial rule. I have lived through the colonial era, the First Republic, military rule, and the return to democracy. One key observation is that Nigeria thrives with good leadership and collaboration among leaders at all levels.

**BA:** Under military rule, there was price control, better security, and feeding programmes for students, which alleviated hunger and malnutrition. These are policies worth revisiting.

**NP:** How did you balance work and family responsibilities during your career?

**BA:** As a teacher, I had a demanding schedule, but I prioritised my family. I made time for them every morning before school and in the evenings. This involved helping my children with their homework, having meals together, and sharing stories. Balancing work and family requires intentionality and effort.

**NP:** What message would you like to pass on to future generations?

**BA:** Patience is key. I began my career as a classroom teacher and retired as a Rector. Young people should not be in a hurry to achieve success. Hard work and diligence will always be rewarded.

**NP:** How do you spend your free time and relax?

**BA:** I enjoy reading newspapers, watching television, studying religious texts, and spending time with my family. These activities help me unwind and recharge.

(Note for designer: Neptune Prime and subsequently NP should be bold as well as BA)

My dedication to my students ensured that they received a quality education, and that commitment shielded me from many challenges others might face





# HUMANIST

## Two young men with broken legs, spinal cord injury, appeal for help

BY GIFT LUCKSON

Two men from Plateau State are pleading for financial assistance from the general public to undergo medical procedures following a devastating car crash on New Year's Eve.

30-year-old Godwin Luka Mangai from Bokkos local government area and his neighbour, 20-year-old Dapam Dung Dajah from Jos South local government area, narrowly escaped death in a fatal accident involving a Hilux vehicle that claimed the lives of other passengers.

The sad incident occurred on New Year's Eve, 31 December 2024, at Sparkling Junction Jos, Plateau State and has left the two men bedridden and in excruciating pain.

Mangai was rushed to the Jos University Teaching Hospital and Dajah was admitted at Bingham Hospital Jos where they both welcomed 2025 on hospital beds and are currently enduring unspeakable pains and

anguish.

According to reports gathered by Neptune Prime, Mr Mangai is fighting for his life as the accident cracked his spinal cord while Mr Dajah is in critical condition with fractured ribs and broken legs.

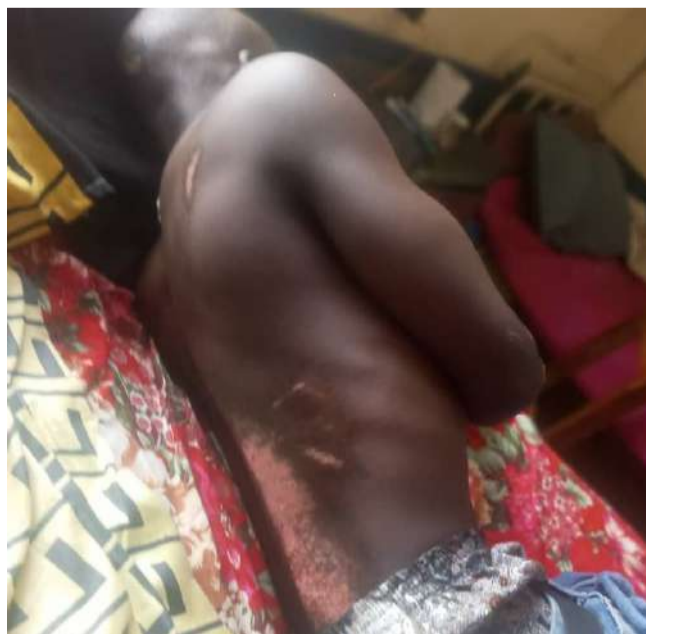
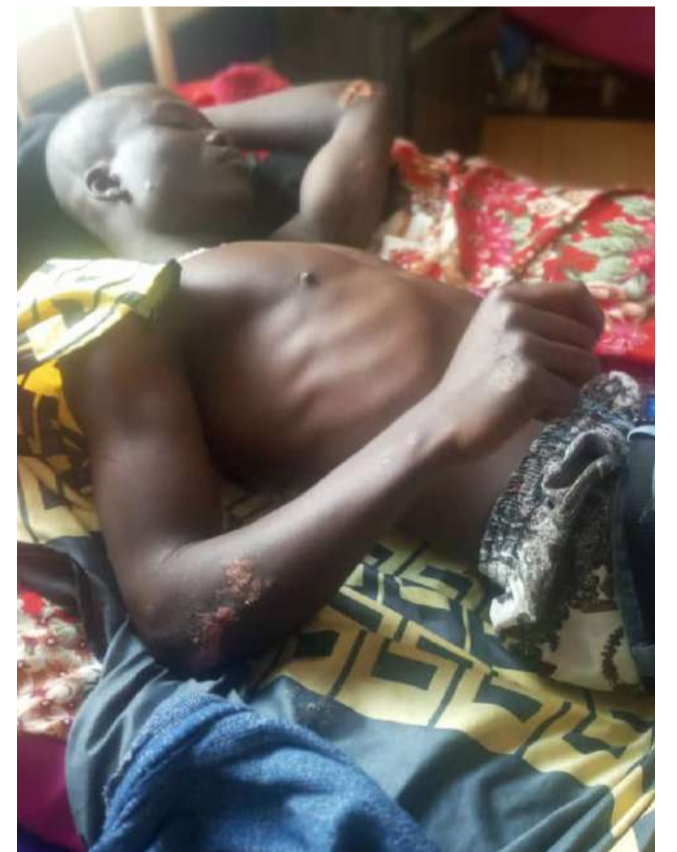
Speaking to Neptune Prime on behalf of their families, Stephen Dung Pam said the young men are in dire need of financial help so they can afford good medical care that will get them back on their feet to continue with their lives.

The victims are pleading with kind-hearted people and well-to-do Nigerians to render a helping hand so they can get their lives back and achieve their dreams in life.

**Contact:**  
07079692881

**Account Details:**  
0002947007  
Kangyang Mary Luka  
Access Bank

3024392559  
Hon. Stephen Dung Pam  
First Bank



# FEATURES

## Commissions by omission

BY ABU SHEKARA

At last, Nigerians might believe, justice is being done for all geopolitical zones of the country. Five regional Development Commissions have been created, with one more in the process of being established. Soon, it is expected, that all parts of Nigeria will have institutional means of recourse concerning their peculiar needs and aspirations.

The oldest Niger Delta Development Commission was created as a response to the environmental hazards of mineral exploitation in the oil-rich zone. Along with the derivation formula, it was for all intents and purposes, a child of necessity and an envisioned solution to the restiveness in the South-South associated with the extraction of petroleum resources.

The creation of the North-East Development Commission was in response to over a decade of Boko Haram insurgency, which devastated the socioeconomic life of scores of communities in the zone, including the state capitals, destroying public facilities and disrupting development in education, health, agriculture, fishing and other economic activities.

A similar situation caused by banditry in the North-West has made it necessary for the same initiative for that part of the country obvious. Thus the North-West Development Commission came into being.

For the South-East, the activities of the secessionist group, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), though not as socially and economically destructive as those of groups in the North, its sociopolitical implications for Nigeria may have in part, been relevant to the establishment of a Development Commission for the zone. The South-West does not share similar security challenges to the three other geopolitical zones but such an agency for the area would still address its peculiar developmental issues and thus the SWDC is one of the four so far set up and already being funded by the Federal Government.

In that vein, the Commission to cater for the North-Central, which experiences the same encumbrance of security challenges as the North-West should have been among the earliest to be instituted. This is considering that one of the functions of the Commissions is, to "identify factors inhibiting the development of its region" and assist the member-states in the formulation and implementation of policies to ensure a sound and efficient management of the resources of that region".

The Federal Government budget of 2025 however, has raised questions on the actual motive of creating the Development Commissions. From the breakdown, over ninety per cent of the allocations to the agencies are on salaries and other



Shekara

personnel costs, leaving a paltry portion for any development-oriented expenditure.

Details of the budget proposal show that out of the combined allocation of N4.26 trillion, the Commissions, which are under the new Ministry for Regional Development, will spend about 99.7 per cent of their budgets on personnel costs, with a mere 0.3 per cent for development projects.

The NDDC has the highest vote of N776.5 billion, almost

wholly allocated to salaries. The NWDC is next with N585.9 billion followed by SWDC with N498.4 billion and SEDC N341.3 billion, while the NEDC allocated N290.9 billion, all of whose budgeted funds will virtually be consumed by salaries.

These figures indicate that the huge allocation to the regional bodies will neither impact infrastructure, the economic or social development of the areas nor address the challenges they

are experiencing, especially those zones, whose advancement is mitigated by encumbrances like insecurity. This portrays the Commissions as mere tools for the proliferation of posts for political appointments and the dispensing of partisan privileges and patronage.

The North is experiencing unprecedented economic crises, a high rate of poverty and disease and a low level of Western education, a state of affairs exacerbated by the almost daily loss of lives and displacement of hundreds of communities due to the activities of terrorists. Against this backdrop, the region needs solutions to these serious setbacks, instead of pretentious policies motivated by political expediency.

Juxtaposed with the 2025 budgetary allocation to education (N3.52 trillion) and health (N2.48 trillion), the vote of N4.6 billion is sufficient to substantially improve service delivery in these two critical sectors to Nigerians in the jurisdiction of the five establishments and go a long way towards addressing their peculiar problems. If that was the concern, the allocation to NEDC for instance, should not have been the lowest, considering that Borno is just recovering from a massive flood that has extensively destroyed the state's social and economic infrastructure.

For the government to commit such huge resources to the salaries and pecks of appointees while the Commissions themselves are deprived of sufficient funds to benefit the people for whom they are supposed to cater is a misnomer. That is especially true for a government that claims to have concern for discipline and imprudence in the management and appropriation of resources.

Abu Shekara is a media practitioner based in Sokoto State.



Isa

## Catalysing Transformation: Revitalising trust in Nigeria's governance and taxation landscape

BY AHMAD SHUAIBU ISA

Dr Hassan Gimba's incisive write-up (Why Nigerians no longer want to pay tax) examines the pressing issues surrounding governance and taxation in Nigeria, shedding light on the escalating distrust towards the government, particularly in the realm of tax collection and utilization. His arguments resonate with the sentiments of countless Nigerians who find themselves burdened by exorbitant taxes without witnessing proportional advancements in infrastructure, services, or public welfare. By leveraging both historical and contemporary examples, Gimba illustrates the significant disconnect between leadership and the everyday citizen, painting a dismal picture of inefficiency, corruption, and mismanagement of public funds.

### Key Points in His Argument:

1. **Eroding Faith in Leadership and Taxation:** Gimba highlights a stark shift from the past when Nigerians were more inclined to pay taxes due to evident benefits—well-maintained roads, functional schools, accessible healthcare, and dependable infrastructure. Today, citizens feel their taxes are either misappropriated or ineffectively utilized, fostering a sense of exploitation. The prevalence of informal tax collection points in markets and motor parks exacerbates feelings of corruption, where funds are siphoned at various stages before reaching the intended authorities.

2. **Neglect of Small Businesses:** Gimba points out the punitive environment faced by small businesses in Nigeria. Instead of fostering growth and resilience within these enterprises, the government imposes taxes without providing essential support—such as infrastructure, security, or power. This leaves small business owners grappling with tax burdens before establishing a stable income, often leading to their demise, despite their significant contributions to the local economy.

3. **Diminishing Public Services Amid Rising Taxes:** Gimba notes the increasing costs associated with public services—like vehicle registration—yet lament inadequate service quality. As fees escalate, Nigerians find themselves receiving fewer services or subpar offerings, intensifying feelings of disillusionment and frustration among the populace.

4. **Leadership and Governance Disparities:** Gimba draws a compelling parallel between Nigeria and Indonesia's governmental response to industry giants like Apple. While Indonesia successfully negotiated significant local investments, Nigeria often capitulates to the demands of foreign corporations, such as Starlink. This portrays a leadership that prioritizes appeasement over citizens' welfare.

5. **Exploitation by Foreign Entities:** The instance of Starlink's price increases, coupled with Nigerians' exploitation, underscores a troubling lack of regulation and oversight in critical sectors. Gimba's critique of the government's inability to advocate for its citizens against foreign entities highlights broader leadership shortcomings.

### Supportive Conclusion

Dr. Gimba articulates the frustrations of many Nigerians who perceive their government as increasingly detached from their needs. His critique identifies mismanaged tax revenues and a lack of development in essential areas—like infrastructure, education, and healthcare—that mirror the lived realities of countless citizens. The government's failure to deliver even fundamental public goods, combined with heightened tax reliance without commensurate value, has engendered a profound sense of mistrust.

### ICIR 2025 budget proposal: Regional commissions to spend 99.7% on salaries

MDAs	Budget	Salary Allocation	Salary to Budget Ratio
North East Development Commission	N297.59bn	N291.0bn	97.8%
Niger Delta Development Commission	N776.53bn	N776.53bn	100%
South West Development Commission	N498.40bn	N498.40bn	100%
North West Development Commission	N585.93bn	N585.93bn	100%
South East Development Commission	N341.27bn	N341.27bn	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>N2.50tn</b>	<b>N2.49tn</b>	<b>99.7%</b>

# SPORTS

## MEET ÉRIC SÉKOU CHELLE: NEW HEAD COACH OF THE SUPER EAGLES

BY MARYAM SULAIMAN & MUHAMMAD KUKURI

The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) Executive Committee has approved the appointment of Éric Sékou Chelle as the new Head Coach of Nigeria's national football team, the Super Eagles.

The decision was formally endorsed by the NFF Executive Committee on January 7, 2025, following the recommendation of the NFF's Technical and Development Sub-Committee during its meeting held in Abuja on January 2, 2025.

The 47-year-old brings a wealth of experience to the role, having managed clubs such as GS Consolat, FC Martigues, Boulogne, and MC Oran.

He also has international coaching experience, having led Mali's senior national team to the quarter-finals of the 2023 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) in Côte d'Ivoire.

During his playing career in France, Chelle represented several clubs, including Martigues, Valenciennes, Lens, Istres, and Chamois Niortais.

Born in Côte d'Ivoire to a French father and a Malian mother, Chelle was eligible to represent Côte d'Ivoire, France, and Mali. He opted for Mali, earning five caps before retiring.

As Mali's head coach from 2022 to 2024, Chelle recorded an impressive 14 wins, five draws, and three losses. His tenure with Mali ended in June 2024.

Chelle's appointment as the new Head Coach of the Super Eagles comes after Finidi George's resignation following disappointing results in the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers.

Chelle's appointment is effective immediately, and his primary task will be to guide Nigeria to secure a spot in the 2026 FIFA World Cup finals.

The crucial Matchday 5 and 6 qualifiers are scheduled for March.



Eric Chelle



## Real Madrid enters Copa del Rey last 16 with 5-0 win over Deportivo Minera

BY MARYAM SULAIMAN & MUHAMMAD KUKURI

Arda Guler netted a brace as Real Madrid secured a commanding 5-0 victory over fourth-tier side Deportivo Minera, advancing to the Copa del Rey last 16.

First-half goals from Federico Valverde, Eduardo Camavinga and Guler put the much-changed La Liga champions in control at Estadio Cartagonova.

Captain Luka Modric added a fourth early in the second half before Guler claimed his second late on to seal an emphatic third-round success.

Real return to action in just three days when they take on Real Mallorca in the semi-finals of the Spanish Super Cup in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti made 10 changes to his starting XI following Friday's dramatic 2-1 comeback win at Valencia which took his side back to the top of the La Liga table.

Midfielder Valverde was the only player retained, while there were senior debuts for unrelated defenders Lorenzo Aguado and Diego Aguado, with Jude Bellingham, Vinicius Junior and Kylian Mbappé among the substitutes.

Uruguay international Valverde quickly made the most of his inclusion, opening the scoring in the fifth minute by

emphatically volleying into the bottom left corner after Brahim Diaz's centre was only partially cleared by Cristhian Britos.

Cartagena-based Minera, who upset La Liga side Alaves on penalties in the previous round, were three goals down inside half an hour.

Camavinga headed in Fran Garcia's cross from the left to double Real's lead in the 13th minute, before Guler drilled home from just inside the 18-yard area with the aid of a deflection 15 minutes later.

After Diaz hit a post eight minutes into the second period, veteran midfielder Modric stretched the visitors' advantage further.

The 39-year-old exchanged passes with Diaz before curling into the bottom right corner to claim his second goal of the season, having come off the bench to equalise against Valencia.

Vinicius, who was sent off at the Mestalla three days ago, and Mbappe were introduced with 27 minutes remaining.

But it was teenage Turkey international Guler who completed the scoring on an evening when Real registered 33 attempts at goal.

The 19-year-old tapped home two minutes from time after Garcia cut the ball back from the left following a pass from Mbappé.

## 19-year-old Nigerian boy, Yaqub Usman-Malah, signs contract with Portuguese Football Club

BY MARYAM SULAIMAN & MUHAMMAD KUKURI

Brito Sporting Club of Portugal, a football club founded in 1956, has signed an official contract with a United Kingdom-based highly-talented, young Nigeria-born footballer, Yaqub Usman-Malah.

The official unveiling of the young promising footballer was carried out on Saturday, January 4, 2025.

Yaqub, born in Nigeria in 2006, is a budding Nigerian talent with unquantifiable promise and potential.

Before his official contract with Brito Sporting Club of Portugal, he was a student and a trainee player with the Brooke College Football Academy in the United Kingdom.

At Brooke College Football Academy, Yaqub had an impressive goal average of 17 goals in 32 matches with no injuries in 116 training days, culminating in 2, 270 minutes of on-field action.

A clear testimony of his outstanding

performance at the Academy was provided by the lead coach of the Under-17B team Yaqub played with.

The lead coach, Tomasz Wasyluk, described Yaqub as a 'well-liked person' and a role model to his teammates due to his professionalism and unmatched work rate.

The Lead Coach further stated that Yaqub has played in National School Cup competitions against other colleges and programmes in the 2023/2024 session and is a good 'tactical player', 'technically good' and can 'play in multiple positions on the field'.

It is expected that Yaqub will live to the potential and promise identified by Coach Tomasz Wasyluk of the Brooke College Football Academy and achieve greatness in his new club.

"While looking forward to the display of his unarguable skills and boundless stamina, we wish Yaqub a successful career and a place in the halls of football greatness across the globe," Yaqub's father, Mr Usman Malah said in a statement issued to the media on Wednesday 8, 2025.



## FAMILY DYNAMICS &amp; CUISINES

# Potato Salad Recipe

BY AUYO'S CUISINES

**P**otato salad is a delicious and versatile side dish that pairs perfectly with a variety of main meals. Whether served with jollof rice, fried rice, couscous, or your favorite dish, this creamy and refreshing salad is sure to be a crowd-pleaser. Here's a simple recipe to prepare a flavorful potato salad with just a few basic ingredients.

#### Preparation:

1. Peel and wash the potatoes.
2. Boil the potatoes in salted water until soft, then drain and cut them into round slices.
3. Boil the eggs according to the salad quantity, peel them, and cut them into round slices.
4. Prepare the vegetables: Remove the seeds from the green pepper, peel the carrots, and slice the onions and carrots into rounds.
5. Combine: Place all the vegetables into a salad bowl. Add mayonnaise and salad cream.
6. Mix thoroughly to coat the ingredients evenly. Chill the salad in the freezer before serving.

#### Ingredients:

- Irish potatoes
- Green pepper
- Carrots
- Eggs
- Mayonnaise
- Salad cream



#### WHAT TO KNOW:

- A STORY OF BETRAYAL, ABUSE, AND INFIDELITY



BY AISHA MUSA AUYO

On this week's episode of NP's Family Dynamics with Eeasher, a sister seeks our advice on what to do about her husband's betrayal, abuse, and infidelity.

Dear Sis Eeasher,

Three years ago, my husband sent me and my six-month-old child packing. After all that time, he came back begging me to return home. During our separation, he remarried and had a child, but that marriage didn't last, and the lady also left with her child.

Eventually, I decided to give him a second chance, not knowing I was walking into a worse situation. Since my return, he has physically assaulted me three times. On the 24th of December, we argued, and he told me to leave the house with my now three-year-old son at around 8:30 PM. I had no choice but to go to a friend's house to spend the night.

Yesterday, I went back home to pick up my son's clothes, only to find another woman in my matrimonial home—she had spent the night there. Now both my family and his family are pleading with me to forgive him. I am at a loss for words and don't know what to do.

What do you think I should do?

Dear Anonymous,

Your issue is quite tricky as I do not know much about your source of income, level of education, or family background. But I will advise you to prioritise your safety and well-being, set clear boundaries, and seek professional help or counselling to make a decision that's best for you and your child.

Involve a trusted family member or legal support if needed.

Most importantly, pray that Allah SWA guides you in making the best decision.

Best wishes,  
Sis Eeasher

# SOCIALS/FASHION

## QUICK STATISTICS ON FASHION

**99%**  
Of Women are not aware of underskirt or patroning such!

**45%**  
of Women avoid bras due to advanced methods of sewing blouses

**23%**  
Nigerians women replaces panties with tight!

**78%**  
of Nigerians patronise native attires

**78%**  
patronise nature attires

**79%**  
of Nigerians can't live without jeans

**84%**  
of Nigerians still patronise fairly used cloths, bags and shoes

**79%**  
of Nigerians patronise can't dress without jeans



## DAMASK: The return of weaved fabrics in modern fashion trends

BY JANE AISO  
Damask, the heavy silk or linen fabric designs, woven into patterns is gradually taking over the fashion space with innovative styles for both women and men.

Damask is a unique, reversible weaving technique, made with high-quality material like soft yards, silk, fibre, cotton or wool.

Damask is super soft, in most cases, one can feel a kind of squeeze-like feeling when rubbing the fabric.

It is made of various fibres that accordingly give it the final unique characteristics.

The pattern of this glamorous design ranges

from the most delicate floral pattern to such strict geometrical shapes as squares. The damask textiles were first produced in China around 300 BC, it will always remain an ancient weaving technique.

Damask fabric came to Nigeria during the period of colonialism and has endured years with evolving designs considered as part of the Nigerian textile culture.

The fabric is extremely beautiful with many uses, like for home decoration (table, curtain designs, furniture upholstery, covers).

However, it is mostly used for fashion as widely seen in Nigerian

weddings where it is popularly called aso-ebi. It is used to make beautiful shoes and can be seen in bags, handfans and even phone pouches.

Wall coverings like bedroom wallpapers and quality hangers are also made from damask fabric.

Damask is regarded as a high

fashion statement for the affluent because of the well-enduring length and weaving attributes that can stand the taste of time.



TO FEATURE ON OUR FASHION/SOCIAL PAGE!  
You can send your pictures to agimbah@gmail.com  
Call: 09099667777

# TECHWORLD

## GAMESCIENE

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

## GADGETADDICT

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

## web update

### Meta terminates independent fact-checkers for Facebook, Instagram

BY VICTOR ITODO ABUH

Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, is phasing out its reliance on independent fact-checkers, opting instead for a user-driven "community notes" system inspired by X (formerly Twitter).

This change allows users to collaboratively assess the accuracy of posts, marking a significant shift in content moderation.

In a video accompanying a blog post on Tuesday, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg explained the decision, citing concerns about political bias in third-party moderation. "It's time to get back to our roots around free expression," he said.

The move aligns with efforts to improve relations with President-elect Donald Trump ahead of his inauguration later this month. Joel Kaplan, a prominent Republican and Meta's new global affairs chief described the previous fact-checking approach as "well-intentioned" but prone to overreach and censorship.

Trump praised the decision, stating at a news conference, "Meta has come a long way." However, critics argue that the policy shift prioritises political favour over accountability. Ava Lee of Global Witness said, "Zuckerberg's announcement is a blatant attempt to cosy up to the incoming Trump administration - with harmful implications."

Transitioning to Community Notes Since 2016, Meta's fact-checking program relied on independent organisations to verify content flagged as misleading. Posts deemed inaccurate were labelled and downranked in feeds. Now, the new "community notes" system—already implemented on X—will allow users with diverse perspectives to collaboratively add context or corrections to controversial posts.

Initially, this system will launch in the U.S., with Meta confirming no immediate plans to abandon third-party fact-checkers in the UK or EU. While Elon Musk expressed enthusiasm for Meta's adoption of this model, critics like Ian Russell of the UK's Molly Rose Foundation voiced concerns about the potential impact on online safety, particularly regarding content on suicide and self-harm.



## Nigeria police cybercrime unit emerges best in Africa with N8.8bn Bust

BY VICTOR ITODO ABUH

The Nigeria Police Force National Cybercrime Centre (NPF-NCCC) has been recognised as the Best Cybercrime Unit in Africa for 2024 by INTERPOL's Cybercrime Directorate in Singapore.

This prestigious honour comes alongside the unit's remarkable recovery of over ₦8.8 billion, cryptocurrency, and US dollars, all restituted to victims of cybercrime.

In 2024, the NPF-NCCC achieved the following milestones:

Funds Recovered  
 ₦8,821,001,881.80, 115,237.91 USD, and \$84,000.

### Prosecutions

Over 751 individuals involved in cybercrime were arrested and prosecuted.

### Seized Items

Authorities confiscated 685 devices, including 467 mobile phones, 137 laptops, 46 routers, 4 servers, 1 drone, and 4 Starlink devices.

### Properties Confiscated

16 houses, 39 plots of land, 14 land documents, and 26 vehicles used in cybercriminal activities were seized.

The unit also announced the recent arrest of four suspects: Douglass Victor, Egbo Efe Martins, Lucky

Adesunloye, and Ndifreke Joseph Moody, for various cyber-related offences.

Force Public Relations Officer ACP Olumuyiwa Adejobi, who announced on January 7, 2025, highlighted the centre's dedication to combating cybercrime and strengthening national cybersecurity.

The NPF urged Nigerians to remain vigilant online, avoid sharing sensitive information, and adopt responsible cyber practices to reduce vulnerability to cyber threats.

With this recognition and its continued successes, the NPF-NCCC has cemented its role as a leader in the fight against cybercrime across Africa.

## HP unveils AI-powered commercial PCs

HP has unveiled AI-powered PCs and solutions to boost productivity and enhance the future of work.

The company said as the work landscape evolves, so do expectations for technology. HP designed its latest commercial next-gen AI PCs to give professionals the tools for their unique work experiences.

"With HP's newest EliteBooks, fast presentation creation, personalised emails, and a built-in recording studio are possible with a click of a button, with built-in security and intelligence, thanks to Wolf Security.

For executives, the ultra-slim HP EliteBook Ultra G1i 14-inch Notebook Next-Gen AI PC powers lighting fast decision-making and AI-enhanced

collaboration experiences without sacrificing performance," the firm said.

The HP brand is expected to help supercharge productivity with faster local AI performance driven by up to 48 TOPS of NPU performance, with Intel Core Ultra 5 and 7 processors to spend more time on what matters.

It can create professional-level videos with a built-in recording studio experience. Look and sound like a pro with the world's first AI business notebook with a 9MP camera, dual microphone, quad speaker design, and AI-powered Poly Camera Pro conferencing experiences.

It ensures that virtual interactions are brought to life and more engaging

on a sharp 120 Hz 3K OLED display and the world's largest haptic trackpad on an AI business notebook.

For leaders on the move, HP delivers robust and reliable performance wherever their work takes them with the HP EliteBook X G1i 14-inch Notebook Next-Gen AI PC and HP EliteBook X Flip G1i 14-inch Notebook Next-Gen AI PC.

It also records video demos and creates presentations nearly 2x faster and develops personalised emails 1.3x faster with up to 48 TOPS of NPU performance powered by Intel Core Ultra 5 and 7 processors.

An innovative thermal design with two high-density turbo fans boosts performance to handle tough tasks while staying 10 per cent quieter.



# WORLD NEWS



## Syria's main airport handles first international flights since fall of al-Assad

New Syrian leaders are pushing to restore a sense of normalcy. But Syria remains under a host of international sanctions imposed during the Assad regime.

Syria's main airport handled its first international flights on Tuesday since the fall of the government of former President Bashar al-Assad last month, as the new leaders press to reassert a semblance of normalcy in the war-weary country.

One Qatar Airways plane landed following a direct flight from Doha to the Syrian capital, Damascus. Jordan's Civil Aviation Authority announced that it had also sent an initial flight to Damascus on Tuesday morning as a "message of support" to its northern neighbour, the first trip there by its national carrier in 13 years.

Another flight affiliated with Syria's national carrier took off on Tuesday for the United Arab Emirates carrying 145 passengers, according to Syrian state media.

Videos shared by Syrian media showed people on board waving Syrian flags and singing nationalist songs.



## \*Ireland joins South Africa's genocide case against Israel\*

BY DAJEN COMFORT YAKUBU

Ireland had said it would intervene in the case at the International Court of Justice, arguing that Israel's actions in Gaza amounted to collective punishment.

Ireland has formally joined South Africa's genocide case against Israel, according to a statement on Tuesday from the International Court of Justice.

The filing, made on Monday, comes months after Ireland announced plans to intervene in the case before the United Nations' highest judicial body.

"Ireland, invoking Article 63 of the Statute of the Court, filed in the Registry of the Court a declaration of intervention in the case concerning Application of the Convention on

the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip," the court said in a statement on Tuesday.

South Africa brought its case to the I.C.J. in December 2023, accusing Israel of committing genocide in Gaza. Israel has strongly rejected the allegation, describing South Africa's filing as a "despicable and contemptuous exploitation of the Court."

In an initial ruling in January 2024, the court ordered Israel to restrain its attacks in Gaza, and in May it ordered the country to immediately halt its military offensive in the city of Rafah, in southern Gaza.

The United Nations allows countries to "intervene" in proceedings if they are parties to the United Nations' 1948 Genocide Convention.

## \*Nurse arrested for intentionally inflicting severe injuries on newborn babies\*

A former nurse was arrested for child abuse in connection to a horrifying incident that left three premature babies with "unexplainable fractures" at a Virginia hospital — which has since closed its neonatal intensive care unit, authorities said Friday.

Erin Elizabeth Ann Strotman, 26, was charged with malicious wounding and felony child abuse over the disturbing infant injuries at Hernia Doctors' Hospital in Richmond last month, police said in a press release.

The babies were found with inexplicably broken bones in late November and early December, according to Henrico County Police.

Investigators are probing "dozens of videos from inside the NICU" and "detectives are re-examining the 2023 and 2024 cases as part of this broader investigation," cops said in the press release.

"The Henrico County Police Division is utilising all available resources to ensure a thorough investigation into this matter," the department said.

In December, Dominique and Tori Hackey spoke out about how they were heartbroken to discover their premature baby Noah suddenly couldn't move his leg at the hospital in September 2023.

"It was kind of dislocated. I told the doctor, got some x-rays, and we determined he had a fracture to his leg, so we are going to splint it for the next two weeks, and then she was like do you want to hold him?" Dominique Hickey told WTVR.

"In my mind, I'm like, I don't want them to turn it around on us and say we broke his leg or anything like that so I was like, 'No, we don't want to hold him, we are just going to process this,'" he said.

The hospital is currently no longer accepting babies into the neonatal intensive care unit out of an abundance of caution — and has taken steps to beef up security.

"In late November/December, we discovered that three babies in our Henrico Doctors' Hospital NICU had unexplainable fractures, similar to an incident involving four babies in the summer of 2023," the hospital said in a statement on December 24.

"We initiated a thorough internal investigation, informed the families, notified the proper authorities and regulatory agencies and worked collaboratively with them on their investigations."

A rep said the hospital is "shocked and saddened" by Strotman's arrest, NBC News reported.



## \*Elephant turns violent, injures 20 worshippers during spiritual festival in India\*

More than 20 people were injured, with two in critical condition, when an elephant turned violent during a local religious festival in the southern Indian state of Kerala.

Police said the incident took place at Tirur in Malappuram district, about 350 km north of Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala.

"Early today, at the end of four-day annual festivities at B P Angadi, an elephant turned violent and charged into the crowd in front of it. The elephant grabbed a man by his leg and swung him wildly before flinging him into the crowd.

"The incident triggered panic and a stampede-like

situation in which over 20 people were injured," a police official said.

According to the police, the injured were admitted to a hospital in Kottakkal.

Reports said it took a couple of hours to control the elephant and prevent further damage adding that hundreds of people, including women and children, had gathered at the festival at Tirur.

Television images showed at least five elephants adorned with golden plates at the festival as people in the crowd were filming them with mobile phones. Suddenly, one of the elephants charged into the crowd as the mahout struggled to control it.

ADVERTS  
**SPACE**  
AVAILABLE

## The Arbiter

BY HASSAN GIMBA



# The tiff between me and my friend, Umar Iliya Damagum, by Hassan Gimba

For those who may not know, considering that I am a journalist and he is a politician, the first time I knew Ambassador Umar Iliya Damagum, the Acting National Chairman of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), was in 1977, some 48 years ago.

When God brought us together at Government College Maiduguri, we were both teenagers, eager and ready to dive headlong into the world of adventure. We wanted to survey the world, savour its mysteries, learn from the experience it would offer us, become better humans, and collect the baton from those we saw at its helm.

Five years down the line, we all took our various paths and, pulled by the hands of fate, each went on to fulfil the call of destiny. And like the life of every human, each of us went through various forms of trials, tribulations, and successes that define what we all are today, lending credence to the truism that "man is the sum total of his experiences in life." These experiences have shaped us and contributed significantly to our personal growth.

Although we were in different classes and hostels, our relationship has always been built on mutual respect and openness. Damagum was of sound mind and jovial. He loved jokes and was commendably fiercely independent. Despite his relatively small size, he was his own man and was loyal to his friends and mentors.

From those formative years, Ambassador Damagum has done wonderfully well for himself. His achievements have made those of us who love to say we are GOCOMAID products proud—especially those of us from the 1982 set.

A few weeks ago, though, he got upended over an issue left for him to prove his enemies wrong because whether he likes it or not, believes it or not, acts it or not, it is in public discourse. As a politician of his stature, he cannot escape allegations, false or true, and he cannot wish away criticisms even if he were a political saint. He is in the

kitchen and must be ready to take the heat.

I formed this WhatsApp group four years ago for our college-year mates and did the same for our Shehu Garbai Primary school-year mates. Mates who have not met for years reconnect in these groups, and friendships are rekindled. In the primary school group, some left Maiduguri after General Murtala Mohammed created seven more states in 1976, and some left earlier due to relocation. The WhatsApp group brought us all back together.

Such groups are platforms where mates who fortune is smiling at try, individually or collectively, to pull up those who fortune is snarling at. It is also an avenue where mates can tackle each other for the good of all and society. It is also a place where you can put each other to task and challenge each other for the betterment of one another. It is also a place where you can ask any member, especially a public official whose activities are open to scrutiny by the public, for an explanation because his shame can rub off on other members and even the alma mater.

Therefore, if any of us hear accusations, false or true, against him that contradict what we knew him to be, it is incumbent upon us to bring them to his attention. I also expect the same if he or any of my mates hear of accusations against me that border on unethical deeds. This open communication is crucial for maintaining trust and understanding among us.

So, I brought up an accusation by Dele Adeyanju against the ambassador over his political activities for further clarification. Even though he posted an apology letter by Adeyanju, my friend took offence, accused me of envy, and assured me he would remain PDP chairman whether I liked it or not, a proposition neither beneficial nor harmful to me. I told him I would never have written positively about him on at least two occasions and allowed others to project him beautifully in my newspaper if I was not proud of his achievements.

From a tender age, I have been lucky to realise that envy is not only from the devil but a disease that debilitates the soul and affects the countenance. I also learned long ago that the heart is a good fertiliser, so I planted love rather than hate and jealousy in mine. If I were to envy someone (to imitate), it would be one whose soul, illuminated by knowledge, approaches the throne of the Creator, for at my age now, I am much nearer that side than this. But perhaps he was looking at it from the adjectival prism, hence his protective anger.

But talking about age and inferring jealousy (that was what he meant), I know that if I were to enter politics today, which I would not, I would never come near where Ambassador Damagum has reached. And if he were to enter my profession today, he would enter his grave without acquiring a quarter of what I know. Surely, he may be wealthier, but that may bother only those who worship money and do everything with it in mind.

Again, what would further debunk the perception of jealousy can be derived from an incident when he wanted to contest for the governorship of our state, Yobe, in 2023. We met in Maitama at the house of a senior politician from Yobe, our mutual benefactor. On seeing me, he told him, "Your Excellency, dama ina so na kawo karan Hassan wajen ka..." or "I have wanted to report Hassan to you; he is not supporting my ambition." I did not allow the respected elder to speak but quickly said, "I just saw your intent on Facebook; however, I am already committed to the ambition of Mai Mala."

To be fair to him, he did not pursue it, telling us, "I understand; I know you have come a long way since the days of the Advanced Congress of Democrats (ACD)." We left the matter there, never to be brought up again.

Nonetheless, that did not stop me from calling three of our classmates, Umar Ibrahim Biu, then a director with the

Central Bank; Liman Shettima, chief procurement officer at the University of Maiduguri; and Mohammed Mai Luku, a retired Yobe State auditor, and telling them to call for a meeting of the old boys to drum support for him. I told them I would not attend because I was committed to the Mai Mala project, but "for psychological and solidarity reasons," they should call the meeting. I told them it was the least we could do for him because he had the habit of assembling and entertaining mates in his house.

Yet, I am a journalist. He is a politician. While I am used to probing and prodding for answers, he is used to hedging and surreptitious planning. Nevertheless, at our ages, being grandfathers with stakes in Nigeria, we must unite to strengthen our constitutional democracy. Nigeria, after God, must rank the highest on our list of priorities. It is more so for him because he is at a point in his life where his name can be written in Nigeria's history, either with gold ink or charcoal.

Having said all this, I believe, and I agree, that every man is free to follow his chosen path. Either narrow, bushy, thorny, and challenging but noble, or cruise on the smooth and wide autobahn that is comfortable but perditious. After all, even the God who created us and sent us messengers with truth gifted us the free will to decide which path to ply.

*Hassan Gimba, an ipr, is the publisher and CEO of Neptune Prime.*

