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# NEPTUNE PRIME



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**WEEKEND**

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## GOV. BUNI EMERGES CHAIRMAN OF NEWLY CONSTITUTED APC 7-MAN COMMITTEE

BY CARA GIFT LUCKSON

Yobe State Governor, Mai Mala Buni Gov. Buni emerges chairman of newly constituted APC 7-man committee The All Progressives Congress (APC) has taken a significant step towards strengthening its internal structures by constituting a seven-member committee to oversee the expansion of the party's National Executive Committee (NEC). His Excellency Governor Mai Mala Buni CON, former Chairman of the Caretaker Extraordinary Convention Planning Committee (CECPC), has been appointed to chair the committee. According to a statement by Yusuf Ali, Senior Special Assistant Digital and Strategic Communications to Yobe State Governor, APC spokesperson, Felix Morka, announced the development after the NEC meeting held at the party's national secretariat in Abuja. He explained that the committee, under Governor Buni's leadership, will establish the criteria for onboarding new members into the NEC, a move aimed at accommodating more stakeholders and fostering inclusivity within the party. Governor Buni's appointment to lead this crucial committee underscores the party's confidence in his leadership and reformist credentials. As the former Chairman of the Caretaker Extraordinary Convention Planning

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## Why Japa syndrome will continue

BY UJI A. ILIYASU, ABUJA

Following the second coming of President Donald Trump of the United States of America and his avowed promise to deport illegal migrants in America to their countries of origin to realise his "America First" dream, Has Nigeria prepared to receive and ameriolate the resultant pains that will follow, the deportation of it's nationals in US? This has been of great concern not just to Nigerian nationals in the U.S. but also to family members in Nigeria who depend on them as their breadwinner. Nigerians are curious to appreciate the emotional and financial distress the deportation could cause, particularly for families who

rely on remittances from these individuals to cover essential expenses like school fees and family upkeep. One of the questions that need answer is that will the migrants be given ample time to handle their assets or will they just be bundled into planes and repatriated? It will really be traumatic, especially for those who have not committed any violent crime. The deported individuals, it has been reported, would be flown to Lagos, where Nigerian authorities are expected to receive and process them. The Federal Government, though has reiterated its commitment to protect the rights of its citizens abroad while collaborating with international partners to

address immigration-related challenges. The unfolding events will substantiate government's will to protect it's nationals abroad or at home. **Donald Trump's promise** The 47th president of America, Donald Trump, had promised to decimate American communities by targeting immigrants who are already contributing members of American society and blocking new immigrants from coming lawfully to the United States. Trump has made clear that he would double down on what he did during his first presidency, without regard for the law, decency, or commonsense. Indeed, Trump has promised to be far more aggressive in his second term, emboldened by close advisers, like Stephen

Miller, to launch a "shock-and-awe blitz" of executive orders and actions that will target millions of immigrants and their families and threaten the freedom and security of everyone in the United States. "Trump will unleash the vast arsenal of federal powers to implement the most spectacular migration crackdown," Miller told The New York Times in November 2023. **Mass deportation** A central promise of Trump's 2024 campaign is to "carry out the largest domestic deportation operation in American history" once in office. In one of his campaigns. Trump said, "Illegal immigration affects the lives of all Americans; illegal immigration hurts American

workers; burdens American taxpayers; and undermines public safety; and places enormous strain on local schools, hospitals, and communities in general, taking precious resources away from the poorest Americans who need them most. Illegal immigration costs our country billions and billions of dollars each year. "There's a limit to how many people a nation can responsibly absorb into their societies. Every day, above and beyond our existing lawful admission programmes, roughly 1,500 to 2,000 people try crossing our borders illegally, Trump said.

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EDO PEOPLE: KEEPERS OF A MAJESTIC HERITAGE AND VIBRANT TRADITIONS



OLDIES >>16

I PAID ONLY N3,000 FOR HAJJ, LIFE WAS EASY, NO HARDSHIPS, NO FEAR --ALH. ISA MAI MAI



# Neptune World

The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing

Socrates

The man dies in all who keep silent in the face of tyranny

Wole Soyinka

## PICTURE OF THE DAY

14-year-old Husna Rabiu Alhassan from Yobe State designed Masjid Haram in Saudi Arabia. She dreams of studying architecture at the Federal Polytechnic Damaturu, while Ify Husnah Ibrahim, Director of Culture, Yobe State Ministry of Information looks on.

Photo Credit: Facebook



## UP&DOWN



### Two men in court for stealing 18-carat gold toilet

The one-of-a-kind 18-carat gold toilet was swiped in under five minutes from Blenheim Palace, the sprawling English country mansion where British wartime leader Winston Churchill was born, in the predawn hours of Sept. 14, 2019, a prosecutor told jurors.

Attorney Julian Christopher said in his opening statement in Oxford Crown Court that it was an "audacious raid." One of three men on trial in the case of the purloined potty was involved in stealing it and the other two helped to sell the spoils.

The toilet has never been recovered but is believed to have been cut up and sold.

The satirical work, titled "America" by Italian conceptual artist Maurizio Cattelan, poked fun at excessive wealth. It weighed just over 215 pounds (98 kilograms) and was insured for 4.8 million pounds (\$6 million).

## RANDOMFACTS

1. Komodo dragons can have so-called virgin births. As well as mating with males, the species is parthenogenetic: in other words, the females can lay fertile eggs without any input from males. This will only reproduce identical young, but for the species to continue to adapt, it needs to mate.
2. Gender is determined genetically in mammals and birds, but for many reptiles it is the temperature at which the eggs are incubated that governs whether they will hatch as males or females. For bearded dragons, though, it is neither one nor the other – or, rather, a bit of both. These spiny Australian lizards start off genetically male or female. However, a genetic male incubated at a temperature above 32°C becomes a fully functional female.
3. There's a frog that can fly. The Wallace's flying frog - one of the weirdest frogs in the world - glides using its huge webbed feet, which enable it to control its descent and even steer in mid-air.
4. Flamingos are pink on the inside, not just the outside. These flamboyant birds are adapted to collect and metabolise carotenoid pigments – the chemicals found in algae, crustaceans and microscopic plant materials that form tones of orange, red, yellow and pink. Though the pink colouration is most obvious in a flamingo's plumage, the carotenoids also impregnate the bird's tissues, skin, blood and even egg yolk.
5. A chicken once lived for 18 months without a head. When a chicken's head is chopped off, the severed nerves send impulses to the muscles of the legs and wings, which can cause the remainder of the bird to run around in a flap. Usually this lasts seconds, but in 1945 in the US, a bird dubbed 'Miracle Mike the Headless Chicken' famously lived 18 months after its head was removed.
6. Octopuses die after giving birth, while parents sacrifice much for their offspring, few routinely give up their lives. But such is the destiny of a female octopus: tending her eggs is the last thing she'll do. In a gloriously tragic act of self-sacrifice, she stops eating and dies of starvation before the young hatch. She might even hasten her demise by actively ripping off parts of her own body.
7. Snails have teeth, lots of them - around 14,000 to be precise. The teeth are set in a jaw called a radula.
8. Hippos can't swim and instead they sink in water and run along the river bottom. However, as mammals, hippos have lungs just like humans, and therefore can't breathe underwater - they can only last about five minutes between breaths. They are able to breathe air while being almost entirely submerged, due to high-set nostrils that protrude out of the water. These can be sealed when the animals need to dive.

**FUN PUZZLE**  
Find The Hidden Words

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
H	E	L	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



### Couple ends marriage after 58 hours nonstop kissing to break Guinness Record

A once besotted couple who broke the world record for the longest kiss have sadly revealed they're no longer together. Ekkachai Tiranarat and his wife Laksana, from Thailand, kept their lips locked for a whopping 58 hours and 35 minutes, breaking the Guinness World Record in 2013.

But speaking on new BBC Sounds podcast, Witness History, Ekkachai revealed the couple split but says he remains 'very proud' of the record.

He explained the competition's stringent rules included sustaining the kiss during toilet trips and having to pass water between each other's mouths, which he claims made the experience far from enjoyable. "I am very proud. It was a once in a lifetime experience," he told host Megan Jones on the podcast. "We spent a long time together and I'm trying to remember the good memories and that we did this together."

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# NEWS

## Why Japa syndrome will continue

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Why Nigerians must seek greener pastures

The "Japa syndrome," a colloquial term referring to the mass exodus of Nigerians seeking better opportunities abroad, has become a pressing concern in recent years. While some may attribute this phenomenon to a lack of patriotism or a desire to abandon one's homeland, the reality is far more complex.

Lack of opportunities and support

Nigeria's economic and socio-political landscape has failed to provide adequate opportunities and support for its citizens. The country's struggling economy, coupled with rampant corruption and mismanagement, has led to limited job opportunities.

Nigerians face intense competition for scarce job openings, with many reserved army of graduates and professionals unable to find employment.

Also worthy of note is that entrepreneurs and small business owners are stifled by excessive taxation, making it difficult to operate and grow their businesses.

Inadequate infrastructure, including poor roads, unreliable electricity, and limited access to clean water, hinders economic growth and development.

The absence of opportunities and support has led to a significant brain drain, or what is referred to as Japa syndrome. with many of Nigeria's brightest minds and most talented individuals seeking greener pastures abroad. This talent flight has severe consequences on the homeland economy.

Nigeria's business environment is notoriously challenging, with citizens shouldering the burden of providing essential facilities and services to operate their businesses. This harsh reality has far-reaching consequences for business-minded Nigerians, affecting their productivity, profitability, and overall

wellbeing.

The unreliable power supply in Nigeria forces businesses to rely on generators, solar energy, and other alternative sources. This increases operational costs. The cost of fueling generators, maintaining solar panels, and purchasing alternative energy sources eats into profit margins.

Nigerian businesses struggle to compete with international counterparts who enjoy reliable and affordable energy. The lack of access to clean water and sanitation facilities compels businesses to drill boreholes and install water treatment systems. This adds to operational expenses. The cost of drilling boreholes, purchasing water treatment equipment, and maintaining these systems is substantial and at the end added to the operating costs that are at end shifted to consumers.

Nigeria's inadequate infrastructure, including roads, transportation, and storage facilities, hinders proper functioning of business

operations.

Nigerian businesses must contend with high transportation costs, congested roads, and inadequate storage facilities. Inefficient logistics and supply chain management lead to wasted time, resources, and opportunities

Medical professionals in Nigeria often operate in under-equipped hospitals, lacking essential medical supplies and equipment. This compromises healthcare quality. Inadequate facilities and equipment hinder the delivery of quality healthcare services.

**Consequences on Nigerian economy**

These include loss of expertise in professional landscape. Nigeria loses the skills, knowledge, and expertise of its citizens, which could have been leveraged to drive the much needed development and growth.

The departure of talented individuals stifles innovation and creativity, as they take their ideas and entrepreneurial

spirit abroad.

Also, the brain drain contributes to economic stagnation, as Nigeria fails to retain the human capital necessary to drive growth and development.

**The allure of foreign opportunities**

In contrast to the challenges faced at home, foreign countries offer better job prospects.

Developed economies provide a wider range of job opportunities, with better pay and working conditions.

Also foreign countries offer access to high-quality education and training, enabling individuals to acquire new skills and knowledge.

Furthermore, developed economies provide a higher standard of living, with access to better healthcare, infrastructure, and social services.

**Structural defects**

The Japa syndrome is a symptom of deeper structural issues in Nigeria. Rather than trying to prevent Nigerians

from leaving, the government and private sector should focus on creating an enabling environment that encourages citizens to stay and contribute to the country's development. Although the Japa syndrome is not always a bad idea.

**Foreign remittances swell GNP**

Nigerians living in the US and Europe send significant remittances back home, which contribute substantially to Nigeria's economy. According to the World Bank, Nigeria received over \$25 billion in remittances in 2020, making it one of the largest recipients of remittances in the world.

Technology transfer and knowledge sharing

Nigerian professionals in the US and Europe acquire valuable skills, expertise, and knowledge that can be transferred back to Nigeria. Many of these individuals return to Nigeria or collaborate

with Nigerian businesses, sharing their expertise and contributing to the country's development.

## Gov. Buni emerges chairman of newly constituted APC 7-man committee

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Committee (CEPC), Governor Buni played a pivotal role in stabilising the APC during a challenging period, culminating in a successful national convention and a smooth leadership transition. READ ALSO: Gov. Buni unanimously endorsed as Chairman Lake Chad Basin Governors' Forum During the meeting, the NEC passed a vote of confidence in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration and the National Chairman,

Dr Abdullahi Ganduje. Mr. Morka highlighted the recognition of their efforts in fostering party unity and steering the nation toward progress. "NEC also passed a vote of confidence on our National Chairman, Dr Abdullahi Ganduje, for the remarkable successes he has achieved in holding the party together and creating avenues for collaboration among members," Morka said. The NEC also approved the party's audited financial statements and budget, reflecting its commitment to

transparency. The meeting, which was the first under President Tinubu's leadership, was attended by Vice President Kashim Shettima, Senate President Godswill Akpabio, Speaker of the House of Representatives Abbas Tajudeen, Governors, and other key stakeholders. Governor Buni's leadership of this committee signals the APC's determination to build on his legacy of reform and inclusiveness, ensuring the party remains united and formidable ahead of future challenges.



## Woman sues IVF clinic for implanting wrong embryo

STORY BY DAJEN COMFORT YAKUBU

A 38-year-old woman, has sued an IVF clinic after the wrong embryo was implanted in her, resulting in her birthing another family's baby.

The suit, filed Tuesday, Feb. 18, in Georgia state court, alleges that Krystena Murray "unknowingly and unwillingly carried a child through pregnancy who was not biologically related to her," something she learned only once she delivered the baby boy.

The suit added that after this shocking discovery,

Murray had to give custody of the baby to his biological parents five months later, adding to her trauma.

Murray, a wedding photographer who lives in Savannah, had decided to conceive and raise a child with the help of a sperm donor through Coastal Fertility Specialists, which operates in vitro fertilisation clinics in South Carolina and Georgia.

The lawsuit says that Murray selected a sperm donor who resembled her: the donor was white with dirty blond hair and blue eyes.

Coastal Fertility

transferred an embryo to Murray in 2023, but when she gave birth in December of that year, Murray immediately "knew something was very wrong," the lawsuit says, because the boy that she delivered was a "dark-skinned, African American baby."

Speaking on Tuesday at a News conference, Murray stated that she was instantly terrified that the baby would be taken from her.

According to the lawsuit, she knew she had to tell the clinic, so in February 2024, Murray's attorney

informed Coastal Fertility Specialists.

The clinic then identified and contacted the baby's biological parents, who are not named in the lawsuit.

They confirmed through a DNA test of their own that the child was theirs, then sued for custody, the legal complaint says.

Murray voluntarily handed over the baby to his biological parents in court on an agonising day.

She is now suing the clinic for negligence, among other allegations, and seeks damages and a jury trial.



# NEWS

BY KASIM ISA MUHAMMAD  
Kasimisa@neptuneprime.com.ng

## Akapbio is punishing me because I refused to sleep with him – Senator Natasha

Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan (PDP, Kogi Central) has alleged that Senate President Godswill Akpabio sexually harassed her.

The lawmaker who has dominated the headlines over her spat with the senate president made the claim on ARISE TV, on Friday.

If it will be recalled that the Kogi Senator had a heated argument with Akpabio after discovering that her seat was changed without her consent.

She was subsequently referred to the Committee on Ethics, Privileges, and Public Petitions, for disciplinary review.

Chaired by Senator Neda Imaseun (LP, Edo South), the committee was given two weeks to report back on its findings.

This followed a voice vote after lawmakers revisited the controversy surrounding the issue, with lawmakers underpinning the need to uphold parliamentary rules and decorum.

Akpoti-Uduaghan had filed a ₦100.3 billion fundamental human rights suit against Akpabio.

In her interview on Friday, the lawmaker said she had evidence against Akpabio, stating that her husband is also a witness.

She said she had printed screenshots of conversations between her and Akpabio, challenging the Department of State Services (DSS) to extract details of their conversation “because he was always calling me on

WhatsApp.”

She said: “My issue with Akpabio started on 8th of December, 2023 when myself and my husband visited Akwa Ibom for Senator Akpabio’s birthday. Akpabio was showing me around his house and was holding my hands with my husband following behind us when he said, he wants me to come and be spending special moments in his house. My husband heard him and later told me not to travel abroad alone or be with the Senate President alone.

“In February, I wanted to move a motion for the investigation on the ills of the corrupt practice in a Ajaokuta steel company. I listed that motion five times. It was the sixth time that it was listed on the order paper that was approved. Many senators can testify to that.

“Before the motion made the order paper, I went to the Senate President in his office, and I said, Senate President, you know how important this Ajaokuta Steel Company is to me, you know how important it is to my people and to Nigerians. I’ve noticed that you have stepped down



Senator Natasha

this motion’. As a matter of fact, a number of senators told me to see him and plead with him so that he would take it. I was like, ‘sir, please, why can’t you take this motion? It’s very important’ Then, it was listed the third time and stepped down.

“He then said, ‘Natasha, I’m the Chief presiding officer of the Senate, you can enjoy a whole lot if you take care of me. Make me happy’. At that point, I said, ‘Sir, I’ll pretend that I didn’t hear this’. He said, ‘well, the ball is in your court’. I left his office

## PenCom imposes N14bn fine on 911 employers over late pension payments

The National Pension Commission (PenCom) has imposed a fine of N14.3 billion on 911 employers for failing to remit pension contributions on time. The Commission disclosed this in its latest report, adding that it also recovered N13.83 billion as outstanding pension contributions from the employers.

It will be recalled that Section 92(2) of the Pension Reform Act, PRA 2014, empowers PenCom to appoint Recovery Agents to review employers’ pension records and ascertain their outstanding pension liabilities.

The report stated: “Since the commencement of the recovery exercise in June 2012, significant milestones in recoveries of unremitted pension contributions have been made. As of December 2024, a total of N28.187 billion has been successfully recovered from 911 employers. This amount comprises ₦13.829 billion as outstanding pension contributions and ₦14.348 billion in penalties for late remittances.

“In 2023, from the commencement of the recovery exercise in June 2012 to 31 December 2023, a total sum of ₦25.447 billion comprising principal contributions (₦12.929 billion) and penalties (₦12.517 billion) was recovered from defaulting employers.”

According to PenCom, 41 Recovery Agents were engaged and assigned to various employers for the exercise.

PenCom stated: “In addition, the Recovery Agents are required to present introductory letters issued by PenCom and addressed to the specific employer before commencing the exercise.

The key responsibilities of the Recovery Agents include reviewing the records of the employers and determining outstanding pension liabilities from January 2005; Computing the penalty on outstanding pension contributions; serving demand letters on defaulting employers requesting for remittance of outstanding pension contributions with penalty after obtaining a ‘no objection’ from PenCom and obtaining evidence of remittance of outstanding pension contributions/ penalty into the employees’ Retirement Savings Accounts.

“The National Pension Commission (PenCom) continues to enforce the provisions of the Pension Reform Act (PRA) 2014 to safeguard the pension rights of employees.

Under Section 92(2) of the PRA 2014, the Commission is empowered to appoint Recovery Agents to review employers’ pension records and ascertain their outstanding pension liabilities.”



## NEDC donates Ramadan aid to 1,900 Yobe households

As the holy month of Ramadan approaches, the North-East Development Commission (NEDC) has launched a large-scale food distribution programme aimed at supporting 1,900 vulnerable households across nine Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Yobe State. Speaking during the official handover ceremony in Damaturu on Wednesday, the NEDC State Coordinator, Professor Ali Ibrahim Abbas, emphasised that the initiative primarily targets internally displaced persons, farming communities affected by the Boko Haram insurgency, and Persons with Disabilities. “The NEDC, under the directive of our Managing Director, Mohammed G. Alkali, is committed to complementing the Yobe State Government’s efforts in alleviating hardship, especially as the fasting period nears. This intervention is part of our broader strategy to support communities in need across the region,” Abbas stated. The Yobe State Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, Dr Mairo Amshi, lauded the commission’s timely intervention, describing it as a fundamental step in addressing food insecurity among vulnerable groups. She commended the NEDC’s consistent collaboration with the state government, particularly through her ministry. “We

deeply appreciate the NEDC’s management for their dedication and for fostering a productive partnership with the state. This intervention will go a long way in easing the burden on many struggling households,” Amshi remarked.

She officially handed over the food items to the Chairman of the Yobe State Commission for Persons with Disabilities, Alhaji Bura Gabai, for equitable distribution among beneficiaries. In his response, Alhaji Gabai expressed gratitude for the support and acknowledged the proactive role of the state government under Governor Mai Mala Buni in establishing a commission dedicated to addressing the needs of persons with disabilities. Similarly, key stakeholders, including the Executive Secretary of the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), the NEDC Focal Person, and the Executive Chairman of Yusufari Local Government, speaking on behalf of other LGAs, commended the commission’s intervention, while stressing the importance of sustained efforts in providing relief to communities affected by conflict and economic hardship. Neptune Prime reports that the NEDC’s food distribution programme is expected to continue in other parts of the state as part of broader efforts to cushion the economic impact of insecurity and displacement on vulnerable populations.



# OUR HEART

## Between NAFDAC and the merchants of counterfeit drugs

The National Food and Drug Administration Control, NAFDAC, has recently, increased the tempo of operations in furtherance of its four-year programme of eradicating fake and counterfeit medical products in the country, 2023 to 2027. Penultimate week, the agency swooped on the open drug markets located at Idumota, Lagos, the Bridge Head market, Onitsha in Anambra state and, the Ariaria and the Eziukwu markets in Aba, Abia state.

The NAFDAC Director General, Professor Mojisola Adeyeye, told newsmen in Abuja that eighty-seven truckloads of banned, expired and substandard drugs and other medicinal products were impounded by her agency at the end of the day.

A total of 11,000 shops, consisting of, 4,000 in Onitsha; 3, 027 in Lagos and, 4,000 in the two drug markets in Aba, were sealed by the agency. The four markets are the hub for the distribution of over 80% of medications in the country.

The NAFDAC Chief Executive believes that, sanitising the drug business in these markets, will lead to “ridding the country of substantial quantity of falsified and unregistered drugs.”

While the drug regulatory agency was being applauded by a broad-spectrum of citizens, Chief Peter Obi, made a rather, weird and shocking remark in his response. The presidential candidate of the Labour Party in the 2023 elections, berated the agency for, “putting businesses in jeopardy by closing sections of the Onitsha Bridge market not involved in trade in medicines.”

In a subtle, crisp and apt response, Professor Adeyeye, declared : “What we are doing in Lagos, Aba and Onitsha should not be politicised. We are protecting lives, not destroying trade. We cannot prioritise trade over human lives.” We at Neptune Prime, are in consonance with this position.

What is more, NAFDAC reported that, it uncovered, in the course of the operations, prohibited drugs hidden

inside plumbing materials shops at the Onitsha Bridge Head market. Also found at the same market were “two trailer loads of unregistered narcotics as well as, tramadol, trafadol and analgin among other banned and counterfeit drugs in sealed warehouses and shops.”

At Idumota Open Drug market, NAFDAC said, it found expired antiretroviral drugs donated by the United States Agency for International Development, USAID. That is just as it said, it shockingly found that vaccines were stored in unventilated buildings instead of refrigerators while, “controlled substances and condoms due for destruction since 2022 were also discovered.” The NAFDAC DG put the estimated sum of the seizures at above One Trillion Naira.

By its feats at the three markets, NAFDAC has succeeded in stopping

one trillion Naira worth of fake and counterfeit drugs from going into circulation. The disruptions to the nefarious activities at the open drug markets in Aba, Onitsha and Idumota, which account for 80% of the drug markets in the country, will go a long way in mitigating a scourge that has pervaded the country over the years.

The recent activities of NAFDAC indicated that the agency can go far in the performance of its statutory responsibility of fighting the menace of fake and counterfeit medical products, if given all the needed support.

Presently, the agency is understaffed and, especially in dire need of qualified manpower. To enhance the crusade against the smuggling of banned and fake drugs, the government must also take urgent measures to improve security surveillance at all the entry points into the country.

Very pertinently, the government must seriously address issues of the security and safety of officials of the agency. The strident reports of threats to the lives of the agency’s officials, particularly that of its Chief Executive, should not be taken with levity. This is in the light of the fact that, operators of illicit drug cartels all over the world, regard officials of drug law enforcement agencies as mortal foes.

In the instance of the country, not too long ago, a child of an officer of the agency in Kano, was kidnapped, ostensibly because, the said officer is known for his diligence in the performance of his duty. Way back in 2003, a DG of the agency, late Professor Dora Akunyili narrowly escaped death from the bullets of assassins. Professor Adeyeye, like the late Professor Akunyili, is a patriot who is single-mindedly committed to the service of the nation.

We subscribe to the view that, criminals must not be allowed to think that the state lacks the capacity or, “the will to protect its critical functionaries.” Otherwise, “impunity will reign supreme and all the nation’s institutions will collapse under the weight of fear and intimidation.”

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Mallam Mukhtar Umar Mai Iyali Nguru

## Retired But Not Tired: A life journey of Malam Mukhtar Umar Mai Iyali Nguru. He described life in 70s and 80s, says present life incomparable

**Sir could you share more about yourself -specifically your Biography?**

I'm Mukhtar Umar Mai Iyali I'm from Nguru Local government area of Yobe state. I'm an Nguru indigene. I did all my primary school, secondary school, and tertiary education in the former Borno State, which is now Yobe State. After Yobe State was created and separated from Borno State, I continued my education here. I was a nurse, and now I'm a retired civil servant. I worked with the state government of Borno State. During the old Borno State, I worked in places like Munguno. Later, when Yobe State was created, we returned here to Yobe State and continued our service.

I stayed in places like Gashua and Potiskum. Finally, I came to reside here in Nguru, where we were later absorbed into the Federal Medical Center in Nguru. I finished my service there in Nguru. I have ten children with two wives.

**How would you compare life in the 70s and 80s to the present day in Nigeria?**

Frankly speaking, it's incomparable. I started my early education in the 70s,

when everything was free. We were given books, pencils, and everything related to our schooling for free.

Even when we went to secondary school, we were fed for free, given transfer money to return to our parents, and even pocket money to spend at home when we arrived. During that time, I remember we ate well in school. They gave us rice, yam, and everything. Unfortunately, what I received in school back then, I cannot afford in my home now. For example, I hardly eat yam once a week now. Back then, in school, we even wasted food. So, you see, life cannot be compared.

At that time, when I was in the teaching hospital—I graduated from the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital—we were given allowances, and those allowances were enough to cover everything. We were given about 100 Naira, and out of that, we only used 45 Naira to buy our meals. With the remaining money, we bought clothes and other necessities. Our parents didn't have to worry about us; we didn't ask them for anything. The school provided everything, even washing our uniforms. We ate well, drank well, and had

recreational facilities.

We had a common room, a badminton area, a football field, and a table tennis court. Everything was available, and we had no problems. But now, life is very miserable. You can never compare it to life in the 70s, 80s, or even 90s.

**How would you contrast military rule and democratic governance in terms of developmental progress?**

Frankly speaking, the military regime, even though we are in a democratic system now, achieved more developmental projects than the current political regime. I remember most of our secondary schools were built by military governors during that time. For example, during the rule of Musa Usman and the head of state, not Buhari, but the first one, Yakubu Gowon, most secondary school buildings were constructed by these leaders in various states. Here in Yobe, it was Musa Usman who initiated many of these projects. These buildings were later used as tertiary institutions. Some of them are still in use today.

Although some of our early civilian governors, like Governor Goni, tried their best. He built many secondary schools and

other infrastructure during his time. Back then, government properties were not vandalized, and public funds were not misused. They were used wisely. So, frankly speaking, the military governors achieved more developmental projects than the current political regime. Okay, now, regarding child upbringing, how would you compare child-rearing practices from those days to current trends?

Back then, I remember when we were young, anyone in the community—not just your father or brother—could correct you if you were doing something wrong. Even if they were not related to you, they could ask you to stop, and you would obey. But nowadays, even parents struggle to control their children. Some parents cannot stop their children from engaging in bad behavior. This is partly because parents today are unable to cater to their children's needs as effectively as before. When we were young, our parents took care of all our problems and provided for everything we needed. I remember my father used to give us money to keep in our boxes, and we could spend it without asking anyone. But

now, I cannot do the same for my children, even though I try my best. Life has become very hard.

The kind of clothes I wore back then, I cannot afford to buy for my children now. The difference is stark. Life is much more difficult today. I am now a retired civil servant. If life were as good as it used to be, I would be at home resting instead of teaching again. Although I find pleasure in teaching and am here to help my people and our children, the reality is that life is tough.

**How do you assess the value of the naira in the 60s, 70s, 80s, and now?**

Honestly, you cannot even compare it. Not long ago, during Obasanjo's military regime in the 70s, 80s, or even the 90s, the naira had much more value. Back then, we could afford so much more with less money. Our parents, nowadays, cannot cater to their children's needs as they used to. When we were young, our parents took care of all our problems. Anything we needed, our parents provided it. I sometimes remember my father. He used to give us

money to keep in our boxes and spend as we pleased. We didn't need to ask anyone for anything. But now, look at my children—I cannot do the same for them. Even though I'm trying my best, I know I cannot provide for them in the same way. The kind of clothes I wore back then, I cannot afford to buy for my children now. Why? Because of the differences in life today. Life is very, very hard nowadays. I am now a retired civil servant. If life were so good, why would I have returned to teaching? Although I find pleasure in teaching and am here to help my community and our children, if life were better, I would have been at home resting by now. I was here, and the economy was just picking up. I'm telling you, from my salary, I used to contribute N50,000 monthly. Six of us contributed, and I used that money to pay for my house.

I built my house with that money. Now, is there any civil servant who can afford to build a house today when the cost has risen to N8.17 million? How can you compare that? Back in 2017, I paid N300,000 to build my house, but now it costs over N8 million. Is there any civil servant who can pay that amount now unless they are stealing government money? **Considering these issues, sir, what would you propose as the way forward for Nigeria?**

Yes, there are many things that can bring about change in this country. Frankly speaking, we need to revisit our constitution and review some of its provisions. There are many things in the constitution that need to be revised, as they have contributed to our current problems.

Secondly, we need to address the issue of petroleum subsidies. The subsidy system must be reversed because most of the problems in this country now stem from the rising cost of fuel. People cannot afford to feed their families. If you cannot feed your household, how can you cater to your children, whether they are already born or yet to be born?

You cannot provide for them at all. Currently, I am a retired civil servant with 10 children.

Out of these 10, only two have graduated. The other eight are still struggling.

This year alone, three of my children have gained admission to the university.

If not for the savings I've managed to set aside, how would a retired civil servant like me, earning only N100,000 as a pension, be able to take care of three children, including two who are already in university? Two are already there, and now three more are coming. How much will I spend? Their registration fees alone are not less than N150,000 each.

One is ₦190,000, another is ₦170,000, and that's excluding hostel fees. How much is that in total? Plus, I've already settled the fees for the two who are already in school. You see, life is very, very difficult for us, especially retired civil servants. Our pensions have not been increased. Thankfully, the state government has done something for its retirees, but for those of us in the federal government, nothing has been increased in our pensions. Nothing at all. So, you cannot even compare the situation.

## NORTH-EAST

BY DAJEN COMFORT YAKUBU  
ComfortDajen@neptuneprime.com.ng

## Army intensifies efforts to end human trafficking in Taraba

The Commander of the 6 Brigade, Nigerian Army, and Sector 3 Operation Whirl Stroke (OPWS), Brigadier General Kingsley Chidiebere Uwa, has reiterated the brigade's commitment to fighting human trafficking and other crimes in Taraba State. General Uwa made the affirmation in Jalingo during

a courtesy visit by the Commander of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), Taraba State Command, Amos Gambo Bako. The visit is aimed at strengthening collaboration between both agencies in tackling human trafficking

within the state.

In his remarks, Bako called for enhanced cooperation between NAPTIP and the Nigerian Army, particularly in intelligence sharing, security operations, and public awareness campaigns.

He also stressed the need for synergy to ensure that human trafficking networks do not thrive in Taraba.

While responding, Brigadier General Uwa commended NAPTIP's efforts and assured

the agency of the brigade's full support.

He reaffirmed the Nigerian Army's commitment to working closely with security agencies to dismantle human trafficking syndicates and other criminal activities.

Highlighting the importance of inter-agency cooperation, General Uwa pledged that the 6 Brigade would continue to support initiatives that enhance peace and security in the state.

## Gombe gov't supports security agencies with 50 operational vehicles

Gombe State Governor, Muhammadu Yahaya, has donated 50 operational vehicles to security agencies in the state to enhance their capacity to combat crime.

The donation was announced during the second Gombe State Security Summit, held at the International Conference Centre in the state.

The summit brought together key stakeholders to discuss and propose solutions to insecurity challenges facing the state and the North-East region.

Governor Yahaya, while making the announcement, stated: "As part of our ongoing efforts to enhance security in Gombe State, I am pleased to announce the donation of 50 operational vehicles to various security agencies operating within the state. This gesture is aimed at bolstering their capacity to combat crime, ensure peace, and maintain stability across our communities." Emphasising the importance of collective action, the governor called for collaboration among security agencies, traditional and community leaders, religious leaders, civil society organisations, the media, and the private sector to address security challenges effectively.

The General Officer Commanding, 3 Division of the Nigerian Army, Maj. Gen. Folusho Oyinola, commended the governor for prioritising security, describing Gombe as "one of the most peaceful states in Nigeria." The summit featured expert presentations, including discussions by Gen. Abdulrasheed Aliyu (retd.) and AIG Zubairu Mu'azu (retd.) on the role of technology and intelligence in security operations and the importance of community policing in enhancing local security.

## Bauchi closes all schools for 2025 Ramadan fast

The Bauchi State Government, through the Ministry of Education, has announced the closure of all schools in the state in preparation for the five-week-long 2025 Ramadan fast.

The announcement is contained in the approved school calendar for the 2024-2025 academic session in the state.

Speaking with the News Agency of Nigeria in Bauchi on Friday, the Information Officer, Ministry of Education, Mr Jalaludeen Maina, said the holiday had already been incorporated in the calendar long before now.

He explained that the closure would take effect from March 1 to April 5.

Maina said the closure affected all the institutions of learning, which includes all public and private primary, Junior and secondary schools, as well as higher institutions of learning in the state.

"Yes, we are closing all our schools and this is included in our 2024-2025 approved calendar for the academic session that our students are not going to do the Ramadan fasting while in school.

"The five-week holiday is for Ramadan fasting, and immediately after the fasting, they will resume and continue with their academics," he said.

Meanwhile, some parents in the state have lamented that the development would adversely be impacted on their children's educational progress.

Mrs Sunita Joseph, who expressed frustration at the development, emphasised that the period was too long.

"Why would Ramadan break be too long like this? The children may have even started forgetting what they had learned before the break," she said.

Ismail Raji, called on the state government to reconsider the decision, adding that it could further encourage out of school children syndrome.

Mohammed Isa, who frowned at the development, reminded the state government that the state had the highest number of out-of-school children.



Bauchi Gov. Bala Mohammed



Gov. Inuwa

# CUSTOMS & NEMA

BY MARYAM SULAIMAN  
MaryamSulaiman@neptuneprime.com.ng

## Customs Management engages newly promoted comptrollers in 5-day leadership retreat

The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) has organised a Leadership Retreat for its newly promoted Comptrollers to equip them with the necessary skills for effective service delivery.

The retreat, a collaboration between the Department of Human Resources Development and the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), started on Tuesday, 18 February 2025, at the Ahmad Makarfi Hall of the Nigeria Customs Command and Staff College, Gwagwalada, Abuja.

Declaring the retreat open, the Comptroller-General of Customs (CGC), Adewale Adeniyi, delivered a lecture titled "The Strategic Environment and Effective Service Delivery in the Nigeria Customs Service."

He highlighted the responsibilities that come with the new rank, stressing that Comptrollers must see themselves as key decision-makers responsible for driving policy implementation at various command levels.

"You have moved to this particular stage in service—more or less, you are now operating at the management level. For all you know, this is the last promotable rank you get, and because we interact with other members of society, you must know your roles at that level." CGC Adeniyi told the participants.

Adeniyi charged the newly promoted Comptrollers to take a keen interest in the welfare of their subordinates, emphasising that leadership requires technical expertise and a deep sense of responsibility toward their officers.

He further urged them to uphold the integrity of the Service by protecting its interests and ensuring that their decisions align with Customs' mandate.

"You have to be interested in the welfare of your staff members. You also have a duty to protect the interests and dignity of the Service. In addition, you must prioritise continuous training and capacity-building programmes for officers and men under your command." He added.

In his remarks, the Commander of TRADOC, Deputy Comptroller-General of Customs (DCG) Sulaiman Chiroma, highlighted the significance of the retreat in shaping the leadership abilities of the newly promoted officers.

He expressed gratitude to the CGC for facilitating the training, describing it as a strategic



Customs officials inspecting the seized weapons

investment in the future of the Service.

"This retreat is designed to sharpen your leadership skills and enhance your ability to navigate the complexities of modern Customs operations. As Comptrollers, you are pivotal in promoting trade facilitation, revenue generation, and economic growth. This training will give you the tools to effectively meet those responsibilities." DCG Chiroma stated.

Meanwhile, the National Public Relations Officer of the Nigeria Customs Service, Assistant Comptroller Abdullahi Maiwada, delivered a lecture on Stakeholder Management, Media Relations, and Employee Engagement.

He explained the importance of effective

communication in fostering strong relationships with external and internal stakeholders.

Maiwada urged the Comptrollers to cultivate a proactive approach in dealing with the media and the public, ensuring that information about Customs activities is communicated clearly and accurately.

He also emphasised the need for maintaining a positive working relationship with employees, as effective leadership depends on trust, motivation, and collaboration.

Other resource persons who presented lectures during the retreat include: Deputy Comptroller-General of Customs in-charge of Human Resources Development, DCG Greg Itotoh, who took the newly promoted Comptrollers on Team Building, ACG Isah Umar in-charge of

Headquarters who spoke about Integrity and Transparency.

Others were Prof. Hamid Sulaiman, who delivered a lecture on Public Policy Management and Leadership Challenges; Comptroller Naf'iu Isyaku, who presented a lecture on Customs Import and Export Process and Procedure, amongst other resource persons who delivered engaging topics aimed to enhance the efficiency of the new promoted Comptrollers in managing various Customs formations.

Meanwhile, the fifth day of the retreat focused on leadership ethics, stakeholder engagement, and national security, where Comptroller Haniel Hadison, in charge of Special Duties at the Service's Headquarters, delivered a lecture on "Regimentation in the Nigeria Customs Service."

## Zamfara market explosion: NEMA confirms 4 deaths, 50 injured

NEMA (National Emergency Management Agency) has confirmed a tragic incident in Zamfara State's Talata Mafara market, where an explosion on Tuesday resulted in four fatalities and left 50 people injured.

In a statement, yesterday, NEMA's Director General, Mrs. Zubaida Umar, said the agency swiftly deployed a rescue team from its Sokoto Operations Office to respond to the incident.

Preliminary findings revealed that the explosion, which was caused by fire, destroyed shops and stalls in the market.

Eyewitnesses claimed that the explosion was triggered by a cigarette butt carelessly discarded, igniting combustible materials in the market.

Among the injured, 46 people were taken to Usman Dan Fodio University Teaching Hospital, Sokoto, where they are receiving treatment in orthopedics, surgery, ICU burn unit and ENT departments.

NEMA said it was working closely with the Zamfara State Emergency Management Agency and other relevant authorities to provide support to victims.

Emergency response efforts were ongoing to assist affected traders and prevent further casualties, the agency noted.





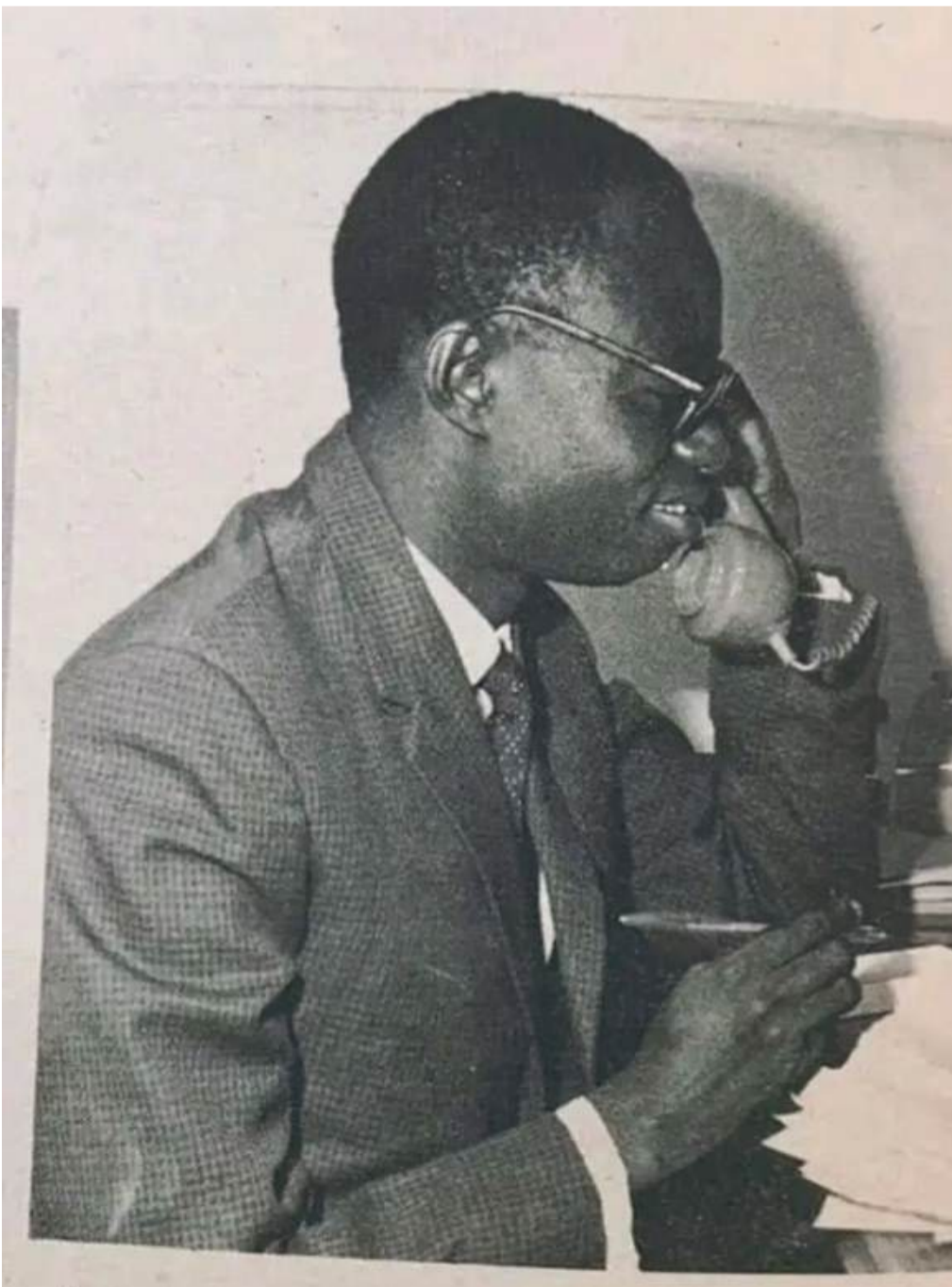
# PRIME PHOTOS BY MARYA MUMAR MaryamUmar@neptuneprime.com.ng



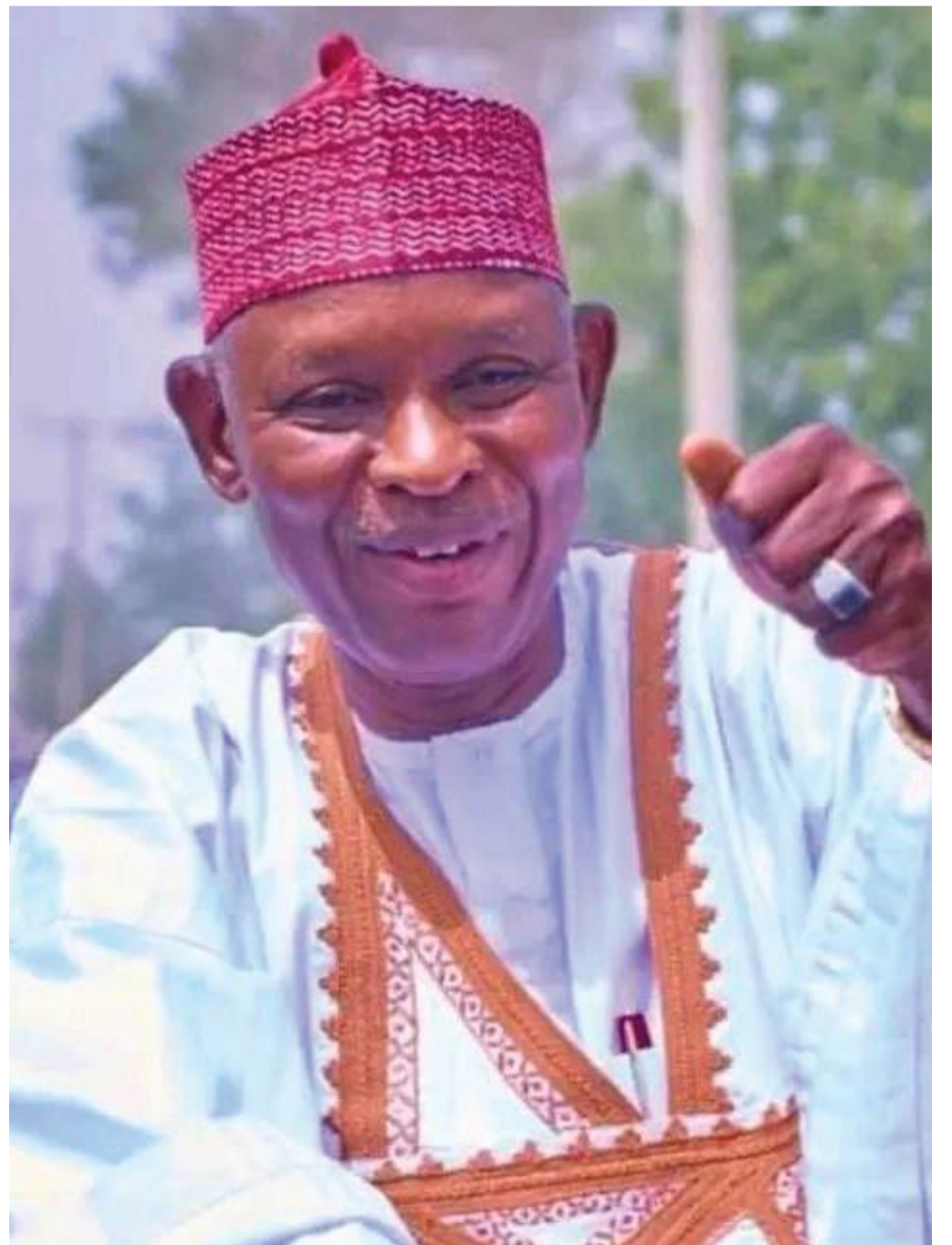
Free 2025 UTME registration of 300 candidates launched in Yorro LGA, Taraba State, by Hon. Mrs Martina Anthony, to support Gov. Agbu Kefas' reforms in education



Kano State Government launches 12 shuttle buses for students in tertiary institutions



Late Adamu Ciroma, the only Nigerian who studied History but served as CBN Governor (1975-1977); Minister of Finance (1999-2003)



Governor Abba Kabir Yusuf of Kano State has been named as the African Governor of the Year for Good Governance at the 14th African Leadership Magazine (ALM) Persons of the Year 2025 ceremony in Casablanca, Morocco.

# PRIME10MENT

From Dajen Comfort Yakubu  
ComfortDajen@neptuneprime.com.ng

## Misguided Feminism: A call for thoughtful leadership in northern Nigeria

The recent interview with popular Kannywood actress Nafisa Abdullahi has ignited a heated debate across the social landscape of northern Nigeria, capturing the attention of various commentators, particularly on social media. In her comments, Nafisa made a bold assertion, claiming she is in complete control of her body and mind, and no external pressure will sway her from dressing or presenting herself as she chooses. While many regard Nafisa as a rising icon in the realm of feminism, others view her stance as a challenge to societal norms, often overlooking moral values and even biological realities that define the differences between men and women.

However, I firmly believe that Nafisa and those who share her views are fundamentally misguided. Our bodies are not commodities to be paraded for public admiration. We are not here merely to fulfil some visual pleasure or as adornments for others' gaze. Instead, we are human beings endowed with dignity and

deserving of respect. As the saying goes, "Modesty is the garment of wisdom," and our attire should reflect the strength of our character, not just the shapes of our bodies. Some may view Nafisa's perspective as a rallying cry for women's rights, but we must question: at what cost? Feminism, when reduced to a struggle for the right to dress indecently or act without moral constraints, becomes an empty movement. True feminism should not undermine the fundamental principles of respect, but rather empower women to pursue their dreams, shape their futures, and contribute meaningfully to society. Yet, today, far too many feminists have turned their movement into a celebration of physicality and superficiality, often at the expense of deeper issues that affect women—such as access to education, healthcare, and opportunities for economic advancement.

"Not all that glitters is gold," and the so-called "empowerment" that comes from making oneself a spectacle for public approval is



Nafisa

she must ask herself whether these choices empower women or diminish their potential. Are they fostering respect, or are they merely setting up an unrealistic, unsustainable standard that undermines the integrity of the feminist movement?

The case of Nafisa is also emblematic of a broader issue in modern-day feminism: the movement has become entangled with other societal problems, including the normalisation of self-objectification. This is particularly damaging in northern Nigeria, where the pressures of social norms and expectations are often at odds with personal freedoms. It is one thing to advocate for women's rights but another to ignore the vital cultural and moral fabric that holds communities together. The old adage, "When you are in Rome, do as the Romans do," speaks to the importance of understanding context and respecting traditions that shape our societies.

Furthermore, it is essential to note that the modern feminist movement has, in many ways, become an outlet for personal grievances—whether stemming from personal insecurity or trauma. In some cases, it's a response to physical abuse, neglect, or toxic home environments. Unfortunately, this mindset often distorts the movement into focusing on external appearance and aggressive defiance rather than internal healing and social harmony. Feminists like Nafisa who endorse such ideologies must ask themselves: Are we fighting for the right to make healthy, empowered choices, or are we simply reacting to our wounds?

## Nollywood actress Ini Edo loses father

Nollywood actress Ini Edo has announced the passing of her father.

Sharing the heartbreaking news on her Instagram page on Monday evening, Edo described her late father as her greatest cheerleader and first love, expressing the deep void his loss has left in her heart.

"This post has been the

hardest to make... I have lost my greatest cheerleader... My beloved father, my first love... The heavens have gained an angel. You will forever remain in my heart. Rest on, King," she wrote. Fans and colleagues have flooded her comment section with messages of support and condolences for the grieving actress.

fleeing at best. Our communities need leaders who inspire change through actions that address real problems, not through empty displays of vanity. Nafisa and her supporters must realise that feminism was never about endorsing self-destructive behaviours but

advancing equality and opportunity for women, especially in the most critical areas—health, education, and justice.

Moreover, the widespread glorification of such behaviours leads to a dangerous distortion of the feminist narrative. In the

pursuit of gender equality, many have lost sight of the core values that have guided humanity for centuries. As the Yoruba proverb says, "A child whose mother does not discipline will be disciplined by the world." While Nafisa may feel empowered by her choices,

## Take Ozempic so you can go blind - Tacha blasts critics of her new trim look

Tacha responded to those who criticised her new look in another video she posted on social media.

Former Big Brother Naija housemate, Tacha Akide, has lashed out at those criticising her new trim look, which she debuted on social media earlier this week. The reality TV star, who relocated to the UK recently, shared a video on social media where she looked considerably slimmer.

This transformation caught the attention of fans, and they let it rip with reactions from both sides of the divide. While some appeared impressed by the new look, others not so much as they suggested she attained the new look with medication (Ozempic).

Tacha responded to those who criticised her new look in another video she posted on social media.

She criticised her critics for consistently and blatantly refusing to credit her for any milestone she achieved. She noted that her critics habitually link anything she achieves to everything else but herself.

Refusing to mince words, Tacha ripped into her critics before she eventually suggested they jumped on the same medication (Ozempic) they believe she used to attain her new trim body.



Tacha



Inie Edo

# NEPTUNE PRIME BUSINESS

## MARKET SURVEY

### SURVEY: Funtua Market, Katsina State

By Ibraheem El-Tafseer

1. Maize: N50,000 – N55,000

2. Second-time Corn: N50,000 – N54,000

3. White Beans: N90,000 – N95,000

4. Soybeans: N72,000 – N75,000

Prices vary based on stock condition, market supply, and demand fluctuations.

Elephant Market – Thursday, 13/02/2025

1. Maize (Masara): N50,000 – N52,000

2. Sorghum (Dawa): N50,000 – N51,000

3. Soybeans: N78,000 – N80,000

4. White Beans (Zapa): N93,000 – N95,000

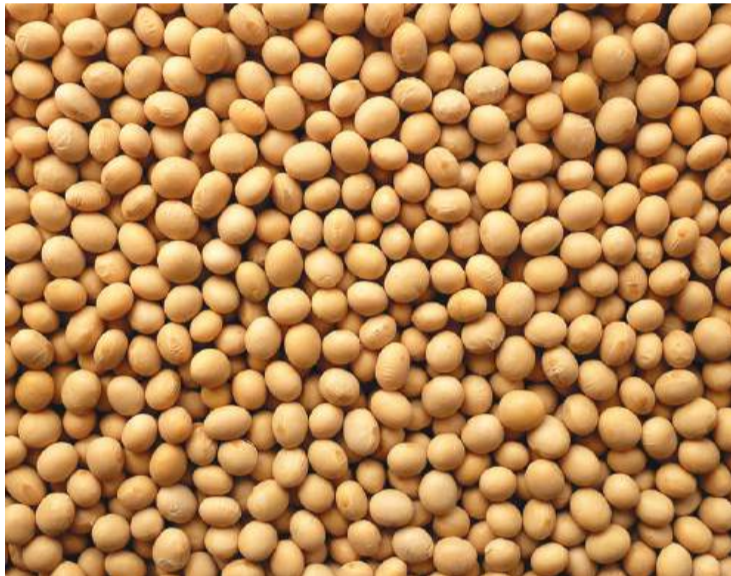
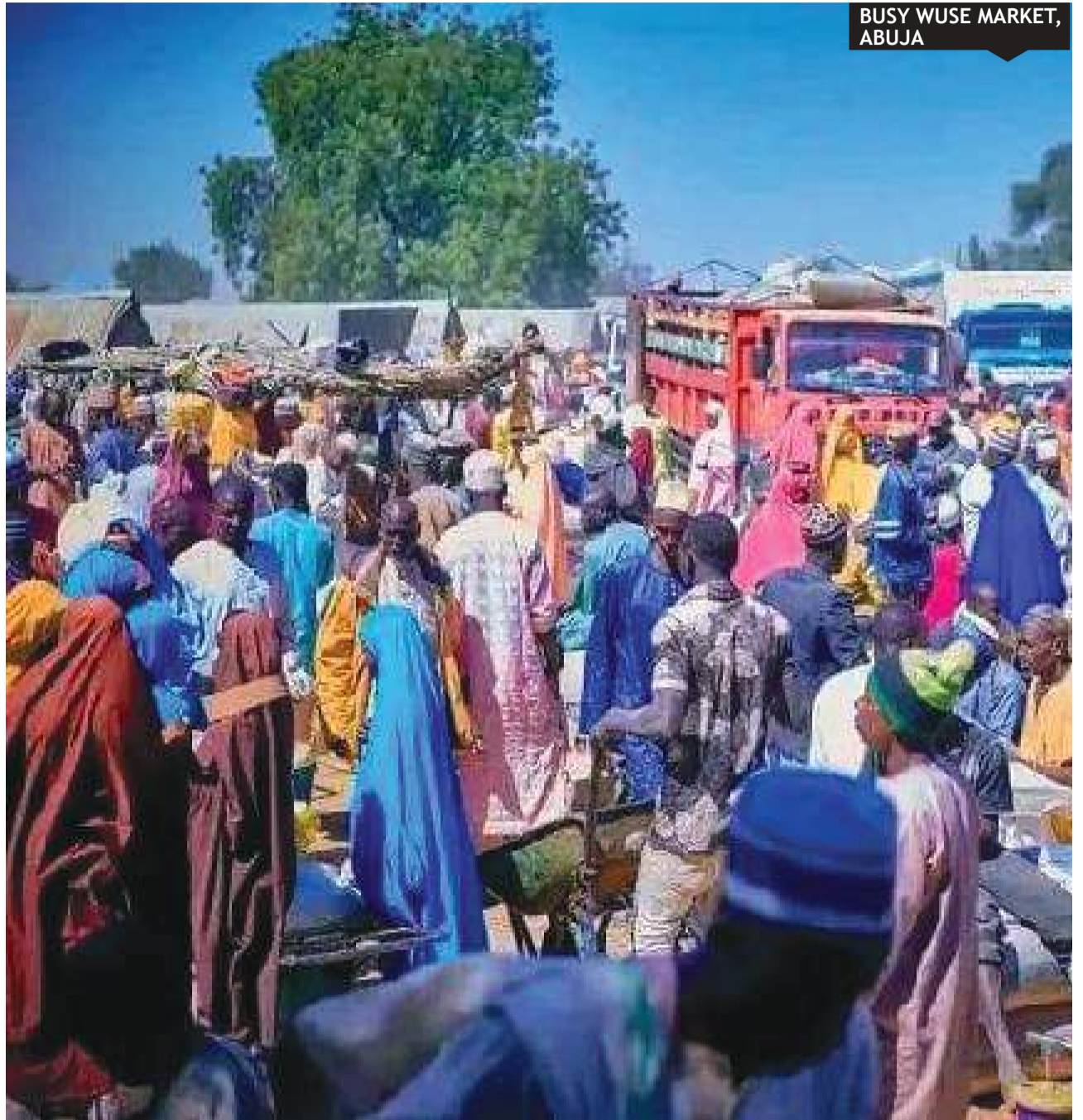
5. White Beans (Egyptian variety): N90,000 – N93,000

6. White Beans (Premium grade): N113,000 – N114,000

7. Rice: N52,000 – N55,000

8. Millet (Gero): 63,000 – N64,000

BUSY WUSE MARKET, ABUJA



# MILESTONE

BY AYANDA NGWANE,  
AyandaNgwane@neptuneprime.com.ng

## Chief (Dr.) Dennis Brutu Otuario: A visionary leader transforming the Presidential Amnesty Programme

Dr. Dennis Otuario, appointed by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on 24 March 2024, as the Administrator of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP), has brought unprecedented reforms and achievements to the programme within his first year in office.

As the Ibe-Uyadonwei of Gbaramatu Kingdom, Dr. Otuario's leadership has been instrumental in repositioning the PAP for greater service delivery to the Niger Delta people.

**Education and experience**  
Otuario holds a PhD in Comparative Politics & Development Studies, an MSc in Public Administration, and a BSc in Education. His extensive experience spans multiple sectors, including infrastructure development, security, environmental remediation, and oil and gas. He has served as a top-level executive at the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and as Chief Protocol Officer to the Chairman of the Delta State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (DESOPADEC).

### Leadership and Achievements

Otuaro's leadership traits were evident during his university days when he was involved in student activism. He has successfully navigated the political terrain, securing support from various stakeholders to execute projects and initiatives. His company, Owelle Global Resources, has thrived in the Logistics and Consultancy sector, with excellent records in programme execution and project support.

### Recognition and Personal Life

The PAP boss was conferred with the chieftaincy title of Ibe Uyadonwei of Gbaramatu Kingdom at 30. He is married to Mrs. Ebimoboere Otuario, whom he credits for his successes. Otuario is driven by his desire to see the Niger Delta region accorded its deserved place in the Nigerian project, with a vision for improved infrastructure, industries, schools, and healthcare facilities.

PAP: One year of stellar reforms and transformational leadership Dr. Otuario's tenure as Administrator of the Presidential Amnesty

Programme (PAP) has ushered in a period of strategic reforms aimed at improving efficiency, transparency, and overall impact. Over the past year, PAP has recorded significant progress in data management, education, vocational training, stakeholder engagement, and administrative efficiency. These accomplishments underscore Dr. Otuario's dedication to ensuring that PAP remains a vital tool for sustainable peace and development in the Niger Delta.

### Advancing Educational Opportunities

Under Otuario's leadership, the Education Department successfully deployed 1,554 onshore students to institutions for the 2024/2025 academic session, alongside 10 offshore students in the UK, USA, and Canada. Graduation milestones were equally significant, with 316 onshore students completing their programmes, including 41 Nigerian Law School graduates, and 10 offshore students earning their degrees.

To ensure effective monitoring, verification exercises covered 1,594 students across 69 institutions. Facility inspections were conducted at six universities, and five new institutional partnerships were initiated to enhance academic standards. Gender representation was balanced, with 744 male and 850 female students supported. State representation saw 37.2% of beneficiaries from Bayelsa, 18.7% from Delta, and 19.2% from Ondo.

Cost efficiency measures led to the identification of 16 absconded or withdrawn students, saving PAP over 41 million naira in tuition and allowances. Additionally, financial commitments were fulfilled with 1.16 billion naira allocated for offshore education and 1.75 billion naira for onshore tuition and allowances. The department also attended six convocation ceremonies to celebrate graduates' achievements.

Dr Otuario has also been involved in strengthening peace building and stakeholder engagement; expanding vocational training and employment readiness; enhancing communication and

beneficiary support; improving administrative efficiency and staff welfare; and enhancing communication and beneficiary support.

In all as PAP moves forward, Dr. Otuario's leadership remains a beacon of hope for beneficiaries and stakeholders. His emphasis on accountability, skill development, and peace building ensures that the programme continues to be a catalyst for growth in the Niger Delta. With continued focus on education, vocational training, and administrative efficiency, PAP is poised to deliver an even greater impact in the years ahead.



Chief (Dr.) Dennis Brutu Otuario



Dr. Dennis Otuario, left, Administrator, Presidential Amnesty Programme, presenting award letter to a beneficiary of the marine training scholarship of the programme.



Dr Dennis Otuario (left) in a handshake

# HERITAGE

BY UCHECHI DANIEL  
UchechiDaniel@neptuneprime.com.ng

## Edo People: Keepers of a Majestic Heritage and Vibrant Traditions

Deep in the heart of southern Nigeria lies a people whose history is steeped in royalty, artistry, and resilience—the Edo people. As descendants of the legendary Benin Kingdom, their customs, traditions, and way of life continue to captivate and inspire generations. From their breathtaking bronze artifacts to their elaborate marriage rites and flavorful dishes, the Edo people remain a pillar of cultural pride and identity.

### A Legacy Rooted in Greatness

The Edo people trace their origins to the great Benin Kingdom, one of Africa's most sophisticated civilizations, which flourished from the 11th century. The kingdom was renowned for its advanced political system, military strength, and artistic excellence, particularly in bronze and ivory works.

At the heart of Edo culture is the revered Oba of Benin, a monarch whose influence extends beyond governance to spiritual leadership. To this day, the Oba remains the custodian of Edo traditions, presiding over cultural and religious ceremonies that keep the people connected to their past. The Benin Royal Palace, a UNESCO-recognized heritage site, stands as a testament to the kingdom's grandeur, showcasing centuries-old artifacts that tell the story of a once-thriving empire.

### A People of Distinct Elegance and Creativity

The Edo people are renowned for their elaborate traditional attire, which reflects nobility and beauty. Women often wear intricately styled "okuku" hairstyles adorned with coral beads, a symbol of wealth and status. Their outfits, made from richly woven fabrics, are complemented by beaded necklaces, bracelets, and anklets. Men, on the other hand, dress in flowing white garments and colorful striped wrappers, with coral bead crowns signifying royalty or nobility.

Art is deeply embedded in Edo culture. The world-famous Benin Bronzes, dating back to the 13th century, remain some of the most exquisite metalworks ever created. These bronze plaques and sculptures, once stolen during colonial invasions, are now being reclaimed by the Edo people, reaffirming their deep connection to their artistic heritage.

### Love, Marriage, and Family Life

Marriage in Edo culture is not just the union of two individuals but the merging of families and communities. The process is rich with rituals and symbolism, beginning with the groom's family visiting the bride's home to seek her hand in marriage.

One of the most fascinating aspects of an Edo traditional wedding is the "veiling ceremony," where multiple women, covered in wrappers, are presented before the groom. He must correctly identify his bride, a moment filled with suspense and excitement. Once he succeeds, the bride sits on the lap of an elder from the groom's family, signifying her acceptance into her new home.

The bride price, which historically included gold, livestock, and coral beads, has evolved but still holds deep cultural significance. After the formalities, the wedding transforms into a lively celebration filled with music, drumming, and energetic dances that last deep into the night.

### A Taste of Edo: The Culinary Treasures

Edo cuisine is a fusion of rich flavors, nutritious ingredients, and age-old cooking techniques. Some of the most cherished

Edo dishes include:

**Owo Soup** – A deliciously thick, reddish soup made from palm oil, potash, and smoked fish, best eaten with starch or yam.

**Black Soup** – A medicinally rich dish made from blended bitter leaves and spices, known for its health benefits and deep, earthy taste.

**Ogbono Soup** – A thick, hearty soup prepared with wild mango seeds, fish, and assorted meats, often served with pounded yam or eba.

**Ukodo** – A spicy yam and pepper soup dish, often enjoyed during cold weather or festive occasions.

Food is not just nourishment for the Edo people; it is a symbol of hospitality, community, and tradition, often shared generously during festivals and family gatherings.

### Preserving the Edo Identity

Despite modern influences, the Edo people have remained deeply connected to their roots. Festivals like the Igue Festival serve as an annual ritual of renewal and thanksgiving to the gods and ancestors. The event is marked by colorful processions, masquerade performances, and elaborate sacrifices to ensure prosperity and protection.

Language preservation is also key, as the Edo language continues to be spoken and taught in schools across Edo State. Storytelling remains a cherished tradition, passing down myths, folktales, and proverbs that teach wisdom and morality.

### \*A Culture That Stands the Test of Time\*

The Edo people are more than just bearers of an ancient legacy; they are a vibrant and resilient community that continues to shape Nigeria's cultural and artistic landscape. Their traditions, deeply embedded in history, serve as a reminder of their regal past and an inspiration for future generations.



## HISTORICITI

BY MARIYA SHUAIBU, Suleiman  
MariyaShuaibu@neptuneprime.com.ng

# Jericho, Palestine – Over 11,000 Years Old: A Glimpse into History

Jericho, a city nestled in the West Bank, Palestine, holds a unique and significant place in the annals of history. Known as one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, Jericho is a living testament to human civilization's early beginnings. With evidence of settlement dating back over 11,000 years, this ancient city offers an unparalleled glimpse into the development of human societies long before the advent of written records.

## \*The Ancient Beginnings of Jericho\*

Jericho's history stretches back to the Neolithic period, making it an archaeological treasure trove for historians and researchers alike. The city's earliest known settlements were established around 9,000 BCE, during a time when humans were transitioning from nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyles to more settled, agricultural communities. This marked a profound shift in human society, one that laid the foundations for the development of cities and civilizations.

The most significant evidence of Jericho's ancient past is the ruins of Tell es-Sultan, an archaeological site that reveals Jericho's early urbanization. Excavations at this site have uncovered a wealth of artifacts, including remnants of round, mud-brick homes, tools, pottery, and human burials. Perhaps the most iconic discovery from Jericho is the ancient city's fortifications, which include a massive stone wall and a watchtower, dating back to around 8,000 BCE. These structures suggest that Jericho was one of the first cities to engage in organized defense, signifying its importance in early human society.

## \*The Wall and the Watchtower: Early Urban Defenses\*

One of Jericho's most remarkable features is its impressive wall, which was built to protect the settlement from potential invaders. The wall, which stood about 4.5 meters tall, was an extraordinary feat of engineering for its time. Surrounding the city, the wall may have served as both a protective measure and a status symbol, demonstrating the growing complexity of Jericho's social structure. The watchtower, located near the wall, is also a critical part of the city's defenses. Standing at nearly 8 meters tall, this tower would have allowed the city's inhabitants to monitor the surrounding area for threats.

These early defensive structures are an indication

of the city's significance, not only in the region but also in the development of human civilization. The existence of such structures during this era points to a level of social organization and foresight that was remarkable for its time.

## \*Jericho and the Development of Agriculture\*

In addition to its role as an early urban center, Jericho also played a crucial part in the development of agriculture. The fertile land surrounding the city, thanks to its proximity to the Jordan River, made it an ideal location for the cultivation of crops. Evidence suggests that the inhabitants of Jericho were among the first to cultivate plants like wheat and barley, which were vital for the establishment of settled agricultural societies. The domestication of animals, particularly goats and sheep, further contributed to the city's growth.

Jericho's agricultural success helped establish a sustainable lifestyle, allowing its inhabitants



to stay in one place and build more complex social structures. This shift towards agricultural living would later become a key factor in the rise of larger civilizations in the Near East and beyond.

## \*Jericho's Cultural and Religious Significance\*

Jericho's importance extends beyond its role as an early urban center and agricultural hub. Over millennia, the city has played a significant role in religious and cultural traditions, particularly in the Judeo-Christian tradition. In the Bible, Jericho is famously known as the site of the Battle of Jericho, where the walls of the city are said to have collapsed after the Israelites, led by Joshua, circled the city and blew their trumpets. This event, as described in the Book of Joshua, has become an iconic moment in religious history.

The city's spiritual significance is also reflected in its numerous sacred sites. One of the most notable religious landmarks in Jericho is the Monastery of Saint George, located in the nearby Wadi Qelt. This ancient Greek Orthodox monastery, carved into the cliffs, is a place of pilgrimage for many Christians and holds significant religious and historical value.

## \*The Legacy of Jericho\*

Today, Jericho stands as a symbol of resilience and continuity. Despite the challenges it has faced throughout its long history—ranging from

conquests by different empires to modern-day political struggles—the city continues to thrive and remains a vibrant center of culture and history.

Modern Jericho is a small but bustling town, attracting visitors from around the world who come to witness its rich archaeological sites and learn about its ancient past. The city's enduring legacy as one of the oldest continuously inhabited places on Earth offers invaluable insights into the rise of human civilization. It serves as a bridge between the past and the present, where visitors can connect with the origins of humanity, explore early advances in agriculture and urban development, and reflect on the broader cultural and spiritual significance of this ancient city.

## \*Conclusion\*

Jericho, Palestine, is not just a city—it is a living testament to humanity's ancient origins and a profound reminder of the deep roots that shape our present and future. With a history that spans more than 11,000 years, Jericho is one of the most significant archaeological and historical sites in the world, offering unparalleled insights into early human civilization, agriculture, religion, and social organization. As we look toward the future, Jericho remains a powerful symbol of continuity and the enduring connection between humanity and its ancient past.

# ROOTS

BY GIFT LUCKSON  
GiftLuckson@neptuneprime.com.ng

## The bravery of warrior Queen Yaa Asantewaa against slavery in Africa

Yaa Asantewaa (1840 – 17 October 1921) was the Queen Mother of Ejisu in the Ashanti Empire, now part of modern-day Ghana. Her story exemplifies courage, resilience and doggedness in the Gold Coast of the ancient Ashanti Empire of West Africa. She is a legendary woman who broke protocols and accomplished feats only men were known to do.

Yaa Asantewaa was fearless and relentless in her quest. She is the true Amazon who, via her persistence, brought British colonialism in the Ashanti Empire to a standstill. She fought for what she believed and gained prominence causing the profound change that was needed.

### The emergence of Queen Yaa Asantewaa

The land of Ashanti was a prosperous empire known for its beautiful river sides and vast gold mines. Situated in West Africa, it was a land filled with prosperity. It also had the most skilled warriors ever known. Its king at one time was Osei Tutu, a leader vast in the administrative and military governance of his region. Gold was in abundance in the territories. It was so common that even the poor used it as adornment for their clothes and possessions.

Yaa Asantewaa was born in Besease, the daughter of Kwaku Ampoma and Ata Po. Her brother, Afrane Panin, became the chief of Edweso, a nearby community. During her childhood, she cultivated crops on the land around Boankra. She entered a polygamous marriage with a man from Kumasi, with whom she had a daughter.

### Legend of the Golden Stool

It was during the reign of Osei Tutu that the legend of the Golden Stool began. The Golden Stool was no ordinary stool. It was said to have fallen on the lap of Osei Tutu to signify his right to the throne. Every successive king would need to possess the Golden Stool as proof of the divine backing of the gods on his ascension. The Golden Stool was a sacred emblem of power, and the people of Ashanti honoured its existence.

The Ashanti Kingdom was so rich and influential that they went into business with the French, the British, and the Dutch. In exchange for slaves, which they sold in high volumes, they received firearms and other qualitative goods that were rare in the region.

### The beginning of misery

Things eventually fell apart when the British decided to colonise the Ashanti Empire seeing its vast wealth and influence. The Ashanti people fought vigorously to maintain their stance, but the British conquered them, unseating their king and positioning themselves as colonial masters over the Ashanti Empire.

### Queen Yaa Asantewaa remains fearless despite adversity

Yaa Asantewaa was born into a family of warriors, and from a young age, she displayed qualities of leadership and determination.

After her brother, Nana Akwasi Afrane Okpase became King, he appointed her as Queen Mother and gatekeeper of the Golden Stool, a revered symbol of the Ashanti.

As the Queen Mother, she was the king's adviser and protector of his interests. As custodian of the Golden Stool, she was the

mouthpiece of the gods and an intermediate between them and the inhabitants of the Ashanti Empire.

After the death of her brother, Yaa Asantewaa took over as regent of her region Ejisu-Juaben district of the Ashanti Empire. At this time the British had defeated the then king of Ashanti, Prempeh I who had fought valiantly to keep the British out of his lands.

He told them clearly that the Ashanti did not need their protection or sovereignty. His statement and disregard of the regency of the Queen of England and Britain led to a war where Ashanti was defeated and the king and prominent members of his government were exiled to Seychelles.

### Ascension of British colonists

The then-British governor-general ordered the Golden Stool, the symbol of the Ashanti Empire to be handed over to him. It was their pride and joy. The Golden Stool was a heritage passed from father to child as they ascended the throne. It was also regarded as a deity, consulted by the high priest when matters arose concerning governance. It was the heartbeat of the Empire and the British wanted it because they understood its significance and essence. Anyone who possessed the Golden Stool held supremacy over the Ashanti Empire.

At a secret meeting that night by the remaining members of Prempeh I cabinet, an argument ensued. The meeting's agenda was to make plans on how to bring the king back from exile. Some members wanted the Golden Stool to be handed to the British. They had accepted defeat.



# OLDIES

BY KASIM ISA MUHAMMAD

KasimIsa@neptuneprime.com.ng

## I paid only N3,000 for Hajj, life was easy, no hardships, no fear --Alh. Isa Mai Mai



Alhaji Isa Mai Mai

By Kasim Isa Muhammad

Alhaji Isa Mai Mai is a businessman, a farmer, and a philanthropist. Over the course of his life, he has experienced different moments, each shaping his perspective and contributions to society.

Born in 1945, Mai Mai shares thoughtful advice with younger generations, leaders, and more. In this interview, he opens up about his childhood, the challenges and the lessons he has learned throughout his life.

**NP: Childhood Memories: Can you tell us about your childhood?** My name is Alhaji Isa Mai Mai, and I was born in Potiskum in the year 1945. I spent a significant part of my childhood in the Gadaka area of Fika local government area. My father hailed from the Kade area, which is also within Fika LGA. Growing up, I was so dedicated in Islamic education, which I pursued in Potiskum and some parts of Fika.

During this time, I acquired a wealth of knowledge about Islam and the Holy Qur'an. My childhood was mixed by simplicity and perseverance. Life was not as fast-paced as it is today, and there was an exceeding sense of togetherness among families and neighbours. We relied on one another, and the values of respect, humility, and hardwork were instilled in us from a very young age. I remember playing with my peers in the evenings after school, engaging in traditional games, and listening to stories from elders, which were not only entertaining but also educational.

**NP: How has life changed for you compared to when you were younger? What are some of the biggest differences you've noticed?** Life was truly wonderful during my younger years. Everything seemed easier, and there was a sense of stability and peace that is hard to come by these days. The economy was relatively good, and people could afford basic necessities without much struggle. There was no widespread insecurity, and communities lived in harmony. Sometimes, when I reflect on those times, I feel a gargantuan sense of nostalgia and even shed tears, remembering how peaceful and fulfilling life was.

For instance, when I performed my first Hajj about 50 years ago, I spent only N3,000 for everything—travel, accommodation, and other expenses. At that time, the naira was even stronger than the dollar, and the cost of living was manageable.

However, things have changed drastically over the years. Today, life

has become increasingly difficult for many people. The economy is in terrible state, and the value of the naira has plummeted. What troubles me the most is the issue of insecurity. People are being killed daily, and kidnappings have become widespread. The activities of Boko Haram, bandits, and other criminal elements have made life unbearable for many Nigerians. Families are living in constant fear, and the peace we once enjoyed is now a distant memory.

**NP: You lived through a time of military rule in our country. Can you share with us your experiences during that period? How did it affect you and your family?**

I lived through all the military regimes that ruled Nigeria, and my experiences during that time were a mix of both good and bad. On one hand, there was a sense of peace and order across the country during military rule. The economy was relatively stable, and there was no widespread insecurity as we see today. I am aware of the civil war that occurred, but even during that turbulent period, the military maintained a certain level of control.

In many ways, I believe that life under military rule was better than what we are experiencing under democracy today. For example, during the administration of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, many notable developments took place, including the creation of new states, the establishment of hospitals, and the construction of schools. These initiatives contributed to the development of the country.

On the other hand, military rule also had its shortcomings. The lack of political freedom and the suppression of dissent were significant issues. Nonetheless, some of the policies implemented during military rule have contributed to the challenges we face today. For instance, the mismanagement of resources and the lack of accountability have had long-term negative effects on the country. While we faced a lot of bottlenecks, I believe that Nigeria made huge progress under military rule, and I often find myself comparing the relative peace and stability of that era to the current state of affairs.

**-NP: What was it like transitioning from a military government to a democratic one? Did you notice any significant changes?**

The transition from military rule to democracy was not an easy process. It was fraught with massive challenges and sacrifices. Many vibrant and promising folks lost their lives during this period, including the renowned businessman and politician, MKO Abiola. His death was a great loss to the nation, and it reveals the difficulties

associated with the transition to democracy.

However, despite the challenges, the return to democratic governance has brought about some positive changes.

Democracy has given Nigerians more freedom to participate in politics, express their opinions, and contribute to national discourse. People now have the opportunity to elect their leaders and hold them accountable for their actions. This level of political participation was not possible under military rule.

That said, democracy has also brought its own set of problems. Corruption has thrived under democratic governments, and insecurity has become a major issue. Social problems such as unemployment, poverty, and inequality have also worsened. While democracy has its advantages, it is clear that we still have a long way to go in addressing the challenges that come with it.

**NP: What has been the most challenging experience you've faced in your life, and how did you overcome it?**

One of the most challenging experiences I have faced in my life is raising my children. I have 18 children, and providing for them require so much effort and sacrifice. Raising children is not an easy task, especially in a country where the cost of living is high and resources are limited. Ensuring that each child receives a good education, proper healthcare, and moral guidance has been a daunting responsibility. Despite the challenges, I am proud to say that more than 10 of my children are university graduates. Some of them have gone on to achieve great things in their respective fields. For example, I have a son who is a magistrate and another who works as a medical professional. Others are nurses, teachers, and entrepreneurs. Seeing my children succeed and contribute to the development of their communities brings me immense joy and satisfaction. Alhamdulillah, I have been able to overcome these challenges through hardwork, patience, and the grace of Allah.

**NP: What are some of your favourite hobbies or activities to do in your free time? Have you always enjoyed them, or are they something you've developed a passion for later in life?**

In my free time, I enjoy listening to radio stations, particularly BBC Hausa, DW Hausa, and RFI Hausa. These stations provide me with much-needed information about local and international events. I also enjoy watching the news on NTA and other television channels. Staying informed about current affairs is important to me, and it helps me stay connected to the world around me.

These hobbies have been a part of my life for many years. I have always had a keen interest in news and current events, and I find great satisfaction in staying updated on developments both within Nigeria and abroad. Listening to the radio and watching the news also allows me to reflect on the state of the world and the challenges we face as a society.

**NP: What advice would you give to the younger generation based on your life experiences?**

My advice to the younger generation is simple: prioritize education. While we are all aware of the high levels of unemployment in the country, education remains the key to success. It is important for young people to acquire knowledge and skills that will enable them to contribute meaningfully to society. In addition to education, young people should also possess good character. They should be respectful, obedient, and humble. Respect for parents, elders, and authority figures is paramount, as it lays the foundation for a successful and fulfilling life.

I also encourage young people to be patient and persistent. Life is full of challenges, but with hardwork, determination, and faith in Allah, they can overcome any obstacle. It is important to remain focused on one's goals and to never give up, even in the face of adversity.

**NP: How have social norms and values changed over the course of your life? Do you think these changes have been positive or negative?**

Social norms and values have changed significantly over the course of my life. When I was growing up, people looked out for one another, and neighbours were like family. It was not uncommon for someone to offer a part of their house to a stranger in need or for a neighbour to take care of another neighbour's child without expecting anything in return. There was a deep sense of trust and mutual respect among people. However, things have changed dramatically in recent years. People have become more individualistic and materialistic.

The sense of brotherhood that once defined our communities is slowly fading away. Many people are now more concerned with their own interests and less willing to help others.

I believe that life under military rule was better than what we are experiencing under democracy today



# HUMANIST

## Family seeks help as six-year-old boy loses sight after snake bite

By Kasim Isa Muhammad, KasimIsa@neptuneprime.com.ng

A six-year-old boy, Umar Kabir, from the Sabuwar-Abuja neighborhood near NUALFA School in Kankia town, Katsina State, has reportedly lost his sight after being bitten by a snake. The tragic incident went unnoticed for three days, leading to severe complications.

According to medical reports, the venom from the snake bite caused significant damage to the boy's body, ultimately resulting in blindness.

He is currently receiving treatment at the Federal Teaching Hospital, Katsina (formerly FMC), where doctors have expressed confidence that surgery could restore his sight and overall health.

However, the cost of the required is beyond the reach of Umar's family, who are struggling financially. The family is now appealing to kind-hearted individuals and organisations for support to help raise the necessary funds for the boy's treatment.

Dr. Habibu Kamilu Kankia, who is leading efforts to secure assistance for Umar, has urged the public to come to the aid of the young boy before his condition worsens.

For further inquiries or to offer assistance, concerned individuals can reach out via the following contact numbers:

**08062325351 or 0810 080 1254**

**Donations can be made to the following account:**

**Account Name: Habibu Kamilu  
Account Number: 0004903626  
Bank: JA'IZ Bank**



Kabir

# FEATURES

## Why rise in food prices defies spirit of giving in Ramadan

BY UJI A ILIYASU

As we enter the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims around the world engage in fasting, a practice deeply rooted in spirituality and self-discipline. However, one of the most profound aspects of this month extends beyond personal sacrifice; it is an invitation to cultivate generosity.

Therefore, the importance of generosity during Ramadan cannot be overstated, as it enriches the community and reinforces the values of empathy and compassion.

Firstly, fasting serves as a powerful reminder of the struggles faced by those less fortunate. By abstaining from food and drink, we experience hunger, albeit temporarily. This experience fosters a deep sense of empathy for those who suffer from chronic poverty and food insecurity.

In turn, this newfound perspective motivates many to share their resources, whether through monetary donations, food drives, or volunteering time to help others. Acts of generosity not only alleviate the burdens of those in need but also enrich the lives of the givers, fostering a sense of purpose and fulfillment.

Moreover, Ramadan is a time when community bonds are strengthened. Generosity during this month fosters a spirit of unity and cooperation among individuals. Sharing meals, breaking fast together, and extending support to those around us engenders a sense of belonging and togetherness. These actions create lasting connections that extend beyond Ramadan, promoting a culture of caring and mutual support within our communities.

Additionally, generosity during Ramadan aligns with the spiritual teachings found in the Qur'an and the Hadith. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) emphasized the importance of charity, particularly during this blessed month. Such acts are seen not only as a moral duty but also as a means of drawing closer to God.

Engaging in generosity allows individuals to reflect the core tenets of their faith, reinforcing the idea that true devotion is expressed through selflessness and compassion.

In all, as we embark on this sacred month of Ramadan, let us embrace act of generosity. By sharing our blessings and extending our hands to those in need, we not only uplift our communities but also deepen our spiritual connection. In a world often fraught with division and hardship, the act of giving during fasting becomes a powerful demonstration of the strength

of human compassion.

Let us make this Ramadan not just a time of personal reflection, but a celebration of generosity that resonates in our hearts and communities long after the month has passed.

However, it is unfortunate that some Muslim brothers defy these great blessings inherent in Ramadan and moves to reap higher profits on the sale of goods during Ramadan.

**The unacceptable rise in food prices in Ramadan**

As Ramadan approaches, a season of reflection, prayer, and community is upon us. It is a time when Muslims come together to support one another in acts of kindness and generosity.

However, an alarming trend has emerged in recent years: the rising prices of staple foods consumed during Ramadan. This phenomenon is particularly troubling when considering that many of these foods are sold by our own Muslim brothers and sisters.

It is indeed disheartening to witness that during a month dedicated to compassion and charity, the prices of essential food items spike significantly. For many families, these increased costs place an additional burden during a time that should be focused on spirituality and community.

The essence of Ramadan is about solidarity, and it feels contradictory that those who share in this sacred experience would take advantage of one another during this time of heightened piety and generosity. Many of the foods that are integral to the iftar table: dates, bread, fruits, and various meat products, are sourced and sold by local Muslim vendors. It raises a crucial question: why should the prices of these food items soar at a time when the community is meant to come together in support of one another?

Such price hikes not only contradict the values we uphold but also undermine the very fabric of our communities.

It is vital for Muslim business owners to reflect on the principles of fairness, empathy, and ethical conduct that our faith promotes. During Ramadan, we are encouraged to prioritise the welfare of our neighbours and fellow community members. The spirit of giving should not just apply to acts of charity but also to how we conduct our business. Providing affordable prices during this month is not only an act of kindness but also a means of fostering goodwill and strengthening community ties.

As we navigate the challenges of the modern marketplace, we must remain anchored to the values that Ramadan embodies.



Essential fruits for breakfast



Essential fruits for breakfast



# SPORTS

BY MUHAMMAD KUKURI,  
MuhammadKukuri@neptuneprime.com.ng

## AFCON deserves recognition as World Cup, other trophies, says Rio Ferdinand

Former Manchester United defender, Rio Ferdinand has said the Africa Cup Of Nations (AFCON) needs to be given the same prestige as the likes of the World Cup and other major trophy tournament "It should be respected more than it is but what I would say is the lack of resources put into it.. the narrative from the media that comes out is that it is a Mickey Mouse tournament," Ferdinand said during a podcast on Monday.



The 46-year-old's comments come after fellow Englishman and pundit, Jamie Carragher speaking after Liverpool's 2-0 victory over Manchester City on Sunday, felt that Mohamed Salah playing in AFCON was a drawback in his becoming the best player in the world.

According to the Confederation of African Football (CAF), the 2024 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) shattered viewership records, reaching a total of 2.2 billion viewers worldwide This surpassed the viewership of the Super Bowl in the United States, which averaged 123.4 million viewers that same year, a 1.8 billion gap.



## Tsitsipas captures 350th win, advances to Dubai QFs

Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships  
Stefanos Tsitsipas is the 13th active player to earn 350 tour-level wins. Stefanos Tsitsipas earned his 350th tour-level win on Wednesday at the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships, where he overcame Karen Khachanov 7-6(4), 2-6, 6-4 to advance to the quarter-finals. The No. 11 in the PIF ATP Rankings has fond memories in Dubai, having reached finals in 2019 and 2020. Competing at the ATP 500 for the first time in five years, Tsitsipas beat Lorenzo Sonego in the first round and then dug deep against Khachanov to improve his standout Lexus ATP Head2Head record against the 28-year-old to 9-1. Tsitsipas is chasing his first title since he triumphed in Monte-Carlo last April and first on hard courts since

Los Cabos in 2023. In a positive display against Khachanov, the fourth seed won 80 per cent (49/61) of his first-serve points and was the more aggressive in the third set to clinch victory after two hours and 29 minutes. Tsitsipas captured his maiden tour-level win at the ATP Masters 1000 event in Shanghai in 2017. His opponent that day was Khachanov. The 26-year-old has since lifted 11 tour-level trophies, including the Nitto ATP Finals crown in 2019. He is the 13th active player to earn 350 tour-level wins. Tsitsipas will face Matteo Berrettini in the quarter-finals. The Italian defeated Australian Christopher O'Connell 7-6(2), 6-2 to advance after one hour and 32 minutes. Berrettini hit 15 aces and did not face a break point, according to Infosys ATP Stats, to reach his second quarter-final of the season. The World No. 30 enjoyed a run to the last eight in Doha last week.



Tsitsipas

## NiDCOM, Ahmed Musa urge thorough probe of Nigerian footballer's death in Uganda

Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM) and Super Eagles star Ahmed Musa have called for thorough investigation into the death of footballer Abubakar Lawal who allegedly fell to death in Uganda. Lawal was reported dead on Monday with the Ugandan police saying the Sokoto-born player died after falling from a shopping mall. Hours after the sad incident, the Chairman of NiDCOM Abike Dabiri-Erewa described Lawal's death as "suspicious". "This is pathetic and appears suspicious. We demand a thorough investigation. No cover-up at all.

This is so sad!" she wrote in a post on her X handle on Tuesday afternoon. "@nidcom\_gov will ensure and demand a thorough and transparent investigation. May his soul RIP and God give the family the fortitude to bear this loss." Initial reports had indicated that the Nigerian player who features for Viper in the Ugandan league had an accident. But he was later said to have passed on after falling from a balcony. According to Musa, the contradictory reports about Lawal's death call for concern. The footballer wants the Nigerian and Ugandan

authorities to "get justice" for Lawal. "It is saddened to receive the news of Abubakar Lawal. The news was a shocking one which prompted me to ask further questions and clarification. However, we discovered contrary information about his demise; The first one claimed it was an accident, and the second report claimed he fell from a balcony," the former Leicester City player wrote on X Tuesday. "The contradicting reports suggest something suspicious about his demise and I have been in contact with the Nigerian authority and the Nigeria

Football Federation (NFF) calling their attention to this fatal case in Uganda. I am appealing to the Nigerian Government and the NFF to investigate the incident and work with the Ugandan government to get justice for Lawal. Lawal's soul deserves a thorough investigation and justice must be served if anyone is found guilty." The 29-year-old striker had been visiting a Tanzanian friend staying in one of the residential apartments that form part of the mall. The friend told police she had left him alone shortly before the fall.

## World Boxing given IOC recognition as boxing takes step towards 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games

The International Olympic Committee has granted recognition to World Boxing, which is a breakaway from the International Boxing Association; the move leaves the sport closer towards securing a part at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic games. The International Olympic Committee has taken a key step toward retaining boxing on the programme for the Los Angeles Games in 2028 as it recognised a new governing body for the sport. The IOC board granted provisional recognition Wednesday to World Boxing, a group which was founded in 2023 as a breakaway from the long-established but troubled International Boxing Association, and has picked up many former IBA members. The IOC said that World Boxing showed that 62 per cent of boxers from last year's Paris Olympics were affiliated with its members. The IOC added that World Boxing "has demonstrated strong willingness

and effort in enhancing good governance and implementation, to be compliant with the appropriate standards". Former boxing great Gennady Golovkin, who heads the commission tasked with establishing World Boxing as a credible body to run Olympic bouts, said it was an important moment but much work remained. "Receiving provisional Olympic recognition from the IOC is an important achievement and demonstrates that our sport is on the right path. This decision brings us one step closer to our main goal - preserving boxing at the Olympic Games," Golovkin said in a statement. The IOC suspended the IBA in 2019 following long-running disputes over governance, its finances and the integrity of bouts and judging, and took the rare step of banishing it from the Olympic movement entirely in 2023, shortly after the World Boxing breakaway.



Since it was suspended, the IBA and its Russian president Umar Kremlev have continued to feud with the IOC, particularly over the rules on eligibility for women's boxing at the Paris Olympics, with

a focus on gold medallists Imane Khelif and Lin Yu-ting. The IBA said this month it planned to file criminal complaints against the IOC in the United States, France and Switzerland.

# FAMILY DYNAMICS & CUISINES

• WITH

• AISHA AUYO,  
• AishaAuyo@Neptuneprime.com.ng

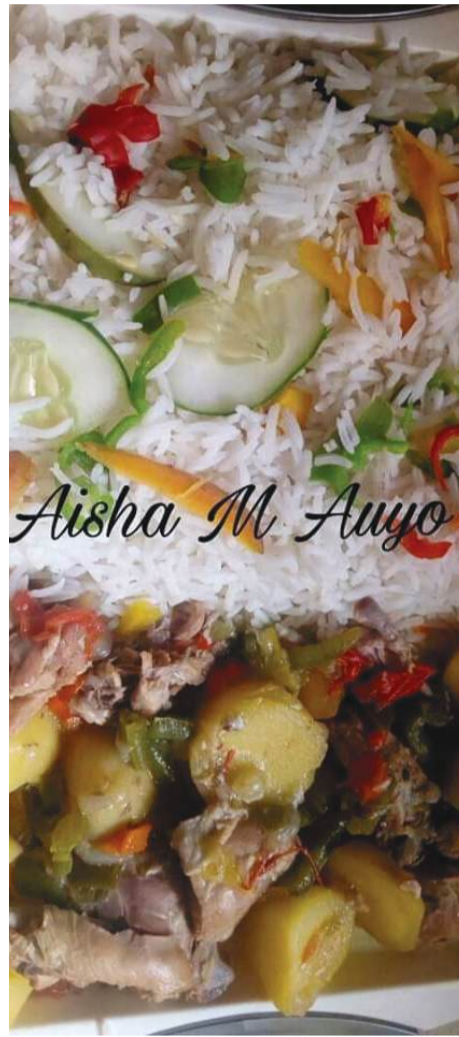
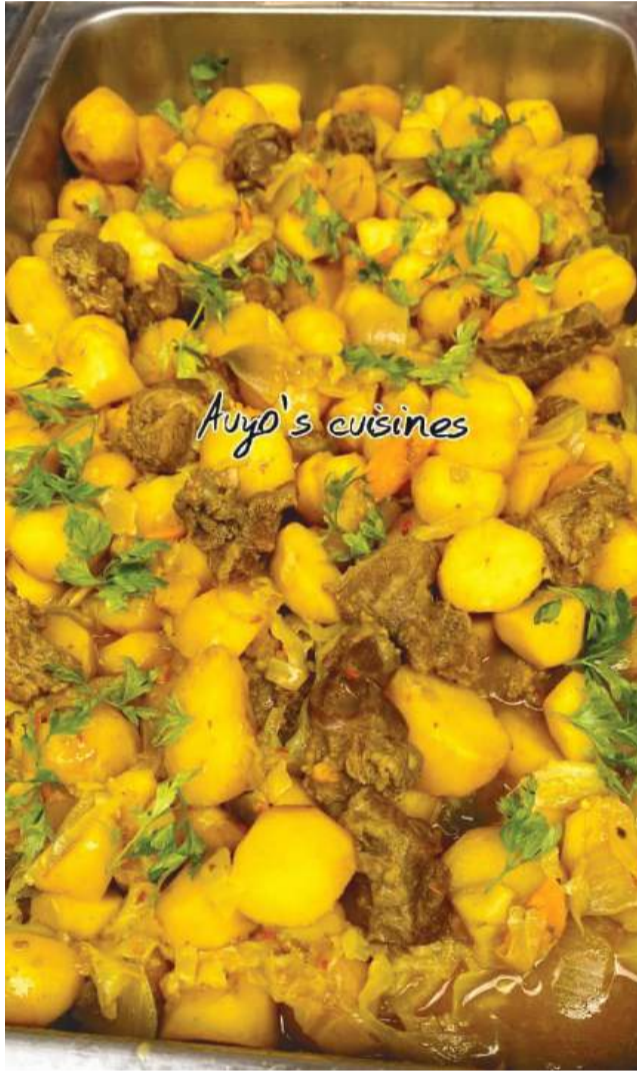
## During my visit to Katsina, two things shocked and impressed me:

1. Warm hospitality: I was warmly received, which confirmed the generosity Katsinawa is known for.

2. Unexpected seriousness: The next day, when I returned to her house, I was taken to meet her uncles. To my surprise, they began asking questions related to marriage engagement—before I had even proposed!

Though unexpected, I appreciated the gesture because I always approach relationships with sincerity and good intentions. Impressed by her character and family, I gladly proceeded with the engagement process. My dad led a delegation to Katsina, and during that first meeting, we got engaged. My family was happy and proud, noting that I had chosen a wife from a family of honor and decency. While dating, she opened up to me about her humble background, mentioning that her father was late and asking me not to expect much from her family. I reassured her, saying I wasn't marrying her father or seeking material things.....

To be continued next week



### WHAT TO KNOW:

- TRUE LOVE STILL EXISTS WITH EESHER: A JOURNEY OF LOVE, HUMILITY, AND BLESSINGS



On this week's episode of Family Dynamics with Eesher, a gentle guy shared his love story with us.

I have been a victim of numerous failed relationships, which I believe were caused by my sincerity. I am an honest and generous guy; when I enter a relationship, my intention is always marriage. Unfortunately, many ladies took advantage of this and ended up disappointing me.

I met my wife during my friend's wedding, Fatiha, in his wife's village. As part of the groom's friends, we were tasked with escorting the bride's friends. Three beautiful young ladies were in my car, and I noticed how other guys were rushing to connect with them. We drove to Kaduna Town for the rest of the events. My two friends each selected a lady, leaving me with the third one: a black beauty who was very quiet, shy, and introverted. She seemed annoyed by my talkative and mischievous nature.

Despite this initial impression, three qualities stood out to me and made me want to pursue a relationship with her:

1. Shyness: When we took them to the Chicken Republic for dinner, the other girls were eating comfortably with their boyfriends, but my girl was too shy to even take a drink. I tactfully asked the restaurant to prepare a takeaway for her, understanding her discomfort.

2. Pragmatism: When I requested her phone number, she declined, saying it wasn't necessary since we would part ways soon and might never meet again. Her realistic approach intrigued me.

3. Modesty: After we dropped them off, while the other guys were chatting casually with their girls, she simply thanked me for the outing, said "Allah ya saka da alheri" (May Allah reward you with goodness), and bade me good night. Initially, her behavior annoyed and embarrassed me, especially seeing my friends interact so freely with their girls. But upon reflection, I realized there was something special about her. I promised myself to be patient and try to connect with her. Through her biological sister (who happened to be my friend's girlfriend), I got her contact. When I requested to visit her in Katsina, she agreed.

# SOCIALS/FASHION

BY JANE AISO  
JanetAiso@neptuneprime.com.ng

## 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

TO FEATURE ON OUR FASHION/SOCIAL PAGE!  
You can send your pictures to JanetAiso@neptuneprime.com.ng  
Call: 0909966777

## Yellow, the colour that represents joy, happiness, positivity in fashion

When Next you're feeling bummed or want to be extra persuasive, be smart about what colour you're pulling out of your closet. Yellow, orange, or other vibrant warm shades are good if you want to feel happier. Yellow clothing represents joy, happiness, positivity, and honour, but can also mean cowardice, childish youthfulness, or caution. It is therefore a colour to only use smartly when it comes to fashion and clothing. Wearing light yellow can also make you look more youthful and healthy.

**The Meaning of the Colour Yellow**  
The psychology of the colour yellow tells us that the colour has traditionally been a symbol of joyfulness, happiness, and energy and is associated with summer months. While on the other hand, it also symbolized caution and cowardice and irritates people in certain shades. Yellow, with its radiant and uplifting nature, has the power to inject energy, happiness, and creativity into our lives. The most powerful of colours is yellow. Yellow is the brightest colour in the visual spectrum and is therefore the easiest colour to notice for

the human eye  
Yellow is considered important because it is often associated with happiness, optimism, energy, creativity, and high visibility, making it a powerful colour for attracting attention and conveying positive emotions. it is also often linked to sunshine and warmth in many cultures. Five key aspects of the yellow colour

**Positive emotions**  
Yellow is widely associated with happiness, joy, and positivity, uplifting mood and promoting optimism.

**Energy and vitality**  
Due to its connection with sunshine, yellow symbolises energy, alertness, and liveliness.

**Creativity and intellect**  
Yellow is often linked to creative thinking, imagination, and mental agility.

**High visibility**  
As one of the brightest colours, yellow stands out easily, making it ideal for warning signs and safety equipment.

**Symbolic meaning:**  
In many cultures, yellow represents concepts like gold, prosperity, and royalty.



# TECH WORLD

BY JANE AISO, JanetAiso@neptuneprime.com.ng

## 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

### Apple faces likely French antitrust fine for privacy tool, sources say

Apple (AAPL.O), opens new tab is facing a likely antitrust fine as the French regulator prepares to rule next month on the company's privacy control tool, two people with direct knowledge of the matter said.

Called App Tracking Transparency (ATT), the feature allows iPhone users to decide which apps can track user activity, helping companies like Meta Platforms' (META.O), opens new tab Facebook and online advertisers tailor ads to users and measure their impact. Digital advertising and mobile gaming companies including Facebook say it has made it more expensive and difficult for brands to advertise on Apple's platforms. The French regulator charged Apple in 2023, saying it was concerned that the company might "abuse its dominant position by implementing discriminatory, non-objective and non-transparent conditions for the use of user data for advertising purposes".

It is expected to issue its decision next month ordering Apple to halt its anti-competitive practice and will likely impose a fine too, the people said, making it the first regulatory veto against the ATT.

French antitrust fines can be as much as 10% of a company's global annual revenue.

"The decision is expected in the spring. But we can't comment any further," the regulator said.

Apple referred to a July 2023 statement in which it said it holds its advertising business to a higher standard of privacy than it requires of any other developer and that it had previously received strong support from the French regulator and privacy watchdog on the goal of the ATT.

The German antitrust authority earlier this month charged Apple with abusing its market power through its app tracking tool and giving itself preferential treatment, putting the company at risk of a hefty fine.

## BOTS now dominate the web, and that's a problem, by John P. Mello Jr

Nearly half the traffic on the internet is generated by automated entities called bots, and a large portion of them pose threats to consumers and businesses on the web.

"Bots can help in creating phishing scams by gaining user's trust and exploiting it for scammers. These scams can have serious implications for the victim, some of which include financial loss, identity theft, and the spread of malware," Christoph C. Cemper, founder of AIPRM, an AI prompt engineering and management company, in Wilmington, Del., said in a statement provided to TechNewsWorld.

"Unfortunately, this is not the only security threat posed by bots," he continued. "They can also damage brand reputations, especially for brands and businesses with popular social media profiles and high engagement rates. By associating a brand with fraudulent and unethical practices, bots can tarnish a brand's reputation and reduce consumer loyalty."

According to the Imperva 2024 Bad Bot Report, bad bot traffic levels have risen for the fifth consecutive year, indicating an alarming trend. It noted the increase is partly driven by the increasing popularity of artificial intelligence (AI) and large learning models (LLMs).

In 2023, bad bots accounted for 32% of all internet traffic — a 1.8% increase from 2022, the report explained. The portion of good bot traffic also increased, albeit slightly less significantly, from 17.3% of all internet traffic in 2022 to 17.6% in 2023. Combined, 49.6% of all internet traffic in 2023 wasn't human, as human traffic levels decreased to 50.4% of all traffic.

"Good bots help index the web for search engines, automate cybersecurity monitoring, and assist customer service through chatbots," explained James McQuiggan, a security awareness advocate at KnowBe4, a security awareness training provider in Clearwater.

"They assist with detecting vulnerabilities, improving IT workflows, and streamlining



procedures online," he told TechNewsWorld. "The trick is knowing what's valuable automation and what's nefarious activity."

### \*Ticket Scalping at Scale\*

Automation and success are driving the growth trends for botnet traffic, explained Thomas Richards, network and red team practice director at Black Duck Software, an applications security company in Burlington, Mass.

"Being able to scale up allows malicious actors to achieve their goals," he told TechNewsWorld. "AI is having an impact by allowing these malicious actors to act more human and automate coding and other tasks. Google, for example, has revealed that Gemini has been used to create malicious things."

"We see this in other everyday experiences as well," he continued, "like the struggle in recent years to get concert tickets to popular events. Scalpers find ways to create users or use compromised accounts to buy tickets faster than a human ever could. They make money by reselling the tickets at a much higher price."

It's easy and profitable to deploy automated attacks, added Stephen Kowski, field CTO at SlashNext, a computer and network security company in Pleasanton.



Criminals are using sophisticated tools to bypass traditional security measures," he told TechNewsWorld. "AI-powered systems make bots more convincing and harder to detect, enabling them to mimic human behavior better and adapt to defensive measures." "The combination of readily available AI tools and the increasing value of stolen data creates perfect conditions for even more advanced bot attacks in the future," he said.

Why Bad Bots Are a Serious Threat David Brauchler, technical director and head of AI and ML security at the NCC Group, a global cybersecurity consultancy, expects non-human internet traffic to continue to grow. "As more devices become internet-connected, SaaS platforms add interconnected functionality, and new vulnerable devices enter the scene, bot-related traffic has had the opportunity to continue increasing its share of network bandwidth," he told TechNewsWorld.



# WORLD NEWS

BY MARYAM SULAIMAN  
MaryamSulaiman@neptuneprime.com.ng



## Woman, 19, dies in dog attack at flat

A 19-year-old woman has died after she was attacked by a dog believed to be an XL bully, police have said.

Two people have been arrested following the attack at about 19:00 GMT on Wednesday at a property on Cobhorn Drive, south Bristol.

Officers confirmed the dog has now been put down. Initial reports suggested it may be an XL bully, but police said it was too early to confirm the breed.

A man and woman, both in their 20s, are in custody after being arrested on suspicion of being in charge of a dog dangerously out of control causing injury resulting in death and possession of a prohibited breed of dog.

The woman's family have been informed and are being supported by a specially trained officer, police said.

A neighbour who lives close to the scene said the woman had only lived in the property a few weeks. "She seemed a lovely girl," said the neighbour, who did not wish to give her name.

"I am still trying to process this. I was up all night awake trying to process this.

"I am shocked. I just can't believe it's happened and she hasn't been there that long."

Referring to the dog owner, the neighbour said: "The moment she walked out the door I could hear her, and I ran over to her and said, 'Are you okay?'"

"She couldn't talk or say a word. It was like she wasn't there because of the shock."

Speaking at a press conference on Thursday, Insp Terry Murphy, from Avon and Somerset Police, called the incident "incredibly rare".

"The circumstances [officers] faced were 'immensely difficult', he said.



## Pope's health improving as he remains in hospital

Pope Francis, who has been battling pneumonia for two weeks, is showing signs of improvement, the Vatican has said in a medical update.

He will remain in hospital due to a complex clinical picture, the Vatican said on Friday morning.

It added the 88-year-old had another "peaceful night" and is "now resting" in Rome's Gemelli Hospital.

Italian news agency Ansa reported that the pontiff was now out of the "critical phase", citing Vatican sources.

The Pope was admitted to hospital on

14 February after experiencing breathing difficulties for several days.

He was first treated for bronchitis before being diagnosed with pneumonia in both lungs.

Then, on 22 February, the Vatican said that the Pope had experienced a respiratory crisis and was in a "critical" condition, but later on Sunday released an update saying that he had "not presented any further respiratory crises".

The following day, the Pope issued a statement asking Catholics to pray for him after he was unable to deliver the traditional Angelus prayer in person for the second week running.



## Japanese woman under investigation for kissing BTS's Jin

A Japanese woman who unexpectedly kissed K-pop boy band BTS's Jin at a fan event last year has found herself under investigation by South Korean police.

Police have called for the woman - who is currently in Japan - to come forward for questioning on charges of sexual harassment in a public space.

The incident happened during the K-pop idol's first public event in Seoul last June, which saw him hug 1,000 fans. Instead of just hugging the star, the woman appeared to have kissed his face, with Jin responding by turning his face away.

The kiss angered other BTS fans, one of whom filed a criminal complaint against her, leading police to launch an investigation.

On 13 June, 2024, the day after he was discharged from the army, Jin, whose real name is Kim Seok-jin, held a fan event where he hugged 1,000 fans and performed songs in front of 3,000 others.

During the three-hour long "hugathon", fans who won the chance to embrace him queued up and went on stage one by one to meet the 33-year-old star.

But one of them caused an uproar when she appeared to kiss Jin's face.

Clips of the moment went viral on the internet. Videos show that Jin, taken aback by the move, tried to turn his head while hugging the woman before quickly moving on to the next fan. Fans could also be seen reacting angrily to her actions. She later wrote on her blog later that she kissed him "on his neck" and "the skin was very soft".

The woman's identity has not been revealed but police added that they had identified her with the assistance from their Japanese counterparts.

The BBC has reached out to BTS' agency HYBE for comment.

## Notorious Mexican drug lord among 29 extradited to US



Mexican drug lord Rafael Caro Quintero is arrested in San Simon. He is wearing a blue shirt, jeans and a beige jacket. He is being held by two officers who have their faces covered. Government of Mexico Mexican drug lord Rafael Caro Quintero was previously arrested in San Simon in July 2022

Mexico has extradited 29 alleged drug cartel members to the United States - including high-profile gang leaders.

Those extradited include notorious drug lord Rafael Caro Quintero who has been wanted by the US for the murder of an American agent 40 years ago.

The move - considered to be of the biggest extraditions in Mexico's history - is seen as a major step in bilateral security relations between the two countries.

It comes after US President Donald Trump threatened to impose tariffs on imports from Mexico earlier this year, accusing it of failing to tackle drug trafficking and mass migration.

"As President Trump has made clear, cartels are terrorist groups, and this Department of Justice is devoted to destroying cartels and transnational gangs," US Attorney General Pam Bondi said in a statement on Thursday night.

"We will prosecute these criminals to the fullest extent of the law in honour of the brave law enforcement agents who have dedicated their careers - and in some cases, given their lives - to protect innocent people from the scourge of violent cartels," she added.

Reuters Rafael Caro Quintero was escorted by FBI agents after arriving at an airport in New York. Reuters Rafael Caro Quintero was escorted by FBI agents after arriving at an airport in New York

Caro Quintero is one of the founding members of the Guadalajara Cartel and a linchpin in the creation of modern Mexican drug-trafficking.

He was wanted in the US in connection with the torture and murder of a Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agent, Enrique 'Kiki' Camarena, in 1985.

Caro Quintero was arrested at the time and spent 28 years in prison in Mexico before being released in 2013 - much to the anger of the Americans.

But in 2022, aged in his 70s, he was recaptured by the Mexican Navy after a dog found him hiding in bushes.

## LIVING LEGENDS

BY SA'ADATU MAINA  
SaadatuMaina@neptuneprime.com.ng

# Amina Jane Mohammed, UN Deputy Secretary-General

Amina Jane Mohammed was born on 27 June 1961. She is a Nigerian-British diplomat and politician who is serving as the 5th Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Previously, she was Nigerian Minister of Environment from 2015 to 2016, and was a player in the Post-2015 Development Agenda process. She is also Chair of United Nations Sustainable Development Group.

#### Early life and education

Amina Jane Mohammed is Muslim and was born in Liverpool, England, on 27 June 1961 to a Fulani Nigerian veterinarian officer and a British nurse. She is the eldest of five daughters.

Amina Mohammed attended a primary school in Kaduna and Maiduguri in Nigeria and The Buchan School on the Isle of Man.

She further attended Henley Management College in 1989 but she does not hold a formal bachelor's degree.

After she finished her studies, her father demanded she return to Nigeria.

**Career** Between 1981 and 1991, Amina Mohammed worked with Archcon Nigeria, an architectural design firm in association with Norman and Dawbarn United Kingdom. She founded Afri-Projects Consortium in 1991 and served as its Executive Director until



Amina Mohammed

2001.

From 2002 until 2005, Amina Mohammed coordinated the Task Force on Gender and Education for the United Nations Millennium Project.

She later acted as the Senior Special Assistant to the President of Nigeria on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In 2005, she was charged with the coordination of Nigeria's debt relief funds toward the achievement of the MDGs. Her mandate included designing a Virtual Poverty Fund with innovative approaches to poverty reduction, budget coordination and monitoring, as well as providing advice on pertinent

issues regarding poverty, public sector reform and sustainable development.

Amina Mohammed later became the founder and CEO of the Centre for Development Policy Solutions and as an Adjunct Professor for the Master's in Development Practice programme at

Columbia University.

During that time, she served on numerous international advisory boards and panels, including the UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Independent Expert Advisory Group on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development.

She also chaired the Advisory Board of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Global Monitoring Report on Education (GME).

From 2012, Amina Mohammed was a key player in the Post-2015 Development Agenda process, serving as the Special Adviser to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Post-2015 development planning.

In this role, she acted as the link between the Secretary-General, his High Level Panel of Eminent Persons (HLP), and the General Assembly's Open Working Group (OWG), among other stakeholders.

From 2014, she also served on the Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development.

Amina J. Mohammed served as Federal Minister of the Environment in the First Cabinet of President Muhammadu Buhari from November 2015 to February 2017.

During that time, she was Nigeria's representative in the African Union (AU) Reform Steering Committee, chaired by Paul Kagame. She resigned from the Nigerian Federal Executive Council on 24 February 2017.

In 2017, Amina Mohammed was accused by an advocacy group of granting illegal permits to Chinese firms to import endangered Nigerian timber

# Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala GCON, DG WTO

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was born on 13 June 1954. She is a Nigerian

economist, who has been serving as the Director-General of the World

Trade Organisation since March 2021. She is the first woman and first African to lead the World Trade Organisation as Director-General

#### Early life and education

Okonjo-Iweala was born in Ogwashi-Ukwu, Delta State, Nigeria, where her father, Professor Chukwuka Okonjo, was the Obi (king) of the Obahai royal family of Ogwashi-Ukwu in Nigeria.

Okonjo-Iweala briefly attended Queen's School, Enugu; she was later relocated to live and to further her education in St. Anne's School, Molete, Ibadan, Oyo State; and also attended the International School Ibadan, Oyo State.

She arrived in the US in 1973 to study at Harvard University and graduated magna cum laude with an AB in Economics in 1976. She earned a master's degree in city planning in 1978 and obtained her PhD in regional economics and development in 1981 from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She received an international fellowship from the American Association of

University Women (AAUW), which supported her doctoral studies.

#### World Bank

Okonjo-Iweala had a 25-year career at the World Bank in Washington, D.C., as a development economist and rose to the No.2 position of Managing Director, Operations.

As managing director, she had oversight responsibility for the World Bank's \$81 billion operational portfolio in Africa, South Asia, Europe, and Central Asia.

Okonjo-Iweala spearheaded several World Bank initiatives to assist low-income countries during the 2008–2009 food crises and later during the financial crisis.

Okonjo-Iweala served twice as Nigeria's Finance Minister (2003–2006 and 2011–2015) and briefly acted as Foreign Minister in 2006. She was the first woman to hold both positions. During her first term as Finance Minister in the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo, she spearheaded negotiations with the Paris Club that led to the wiping out of US\$30 billion of Nigeria's debt, including the outright cancellation of US\$18 billion. In 2003, she led efforts to improve Nigeria's



Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

macroeconomic management including the implementation of an oil-price based fiscal rule. Revenues accruing above a reference benchmark oil price were saved in a special account, the "Excess Crude Account," which helped to reduce macroeconomic volatility. Okonjo-Iweala was also

instrumental in helping Nigeria obtain its first ever sovereign credit rating (of BB minus) from Fitch Ratings and Standard & Poor's in 2006. She also introduced the practice of publishing the federal, state, and local government shares of revenue from the country's federal account.

That action went a long way in increasing transparency in governance at all levels of government, particularly the sub-national level.

Following her first term as Minister of Finance, she served two months as Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2006. She returned to the World Bank as a Managing Director in

December 2007.

In 2011, Okonjo-Iweala was re-appointed as Minister of Finance in Nigeria with the expanded portfolio of the Coordinating Minister for the Economy by President Goodluck Jonathan.

#### WTO Nomination and appointment

In June 2020, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari nominated Okonjo-Iweala as the country's candidate to be director-general of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). She later advanced to the election's final round and eventually competed with Yoo Myung-hee of Korea.

Ahead of the vote, she received the backing of the European Union for her candidacy. In October 2020, the United States government indicated that it would not back Okonjo-Iweala's candidacy.

The WTO in its formal report said that Okonjo-Iweala "clearly carried the largest support by Members in the final round; and, enjoyed broad support from Members from all levels of development and from all geographic regions and has done so throughout the process."

#### Reappointed DG WTO

In November 2024, she was reappointed to serve her second term as the Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO).



## DID YOU KNOW?

BY DAJEN COMFORT YAKUBU  
ComfortDajen@neptuneprime.com.ng

# The Hanging Gardens of Babylon

The Hanging Gardens of Babylon one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World listed by Hellenic culture. They were described as a remarkable feat of engineering with an ascending series of tiered gardens containing a wide variety of trees, shrubs, and vines, resembling a large green mountain constructed of mud bricks. It was said to have been built in the ancient city of Babylon, near present-day Hillah, Babil province, in Iraq. The Hanging Gardens' name is derived from the Greek word (*kremastós*, lit. 'overhanging'), which has a broader meaning than the modern English word "hanging" and refers to trees being planted on a raised structure such as a terrace.

According to one legend, the Hanging Gardens were built alongside a grand palace known as The Marvel of Mankind, by the Neo-Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar II (who ruled between 605 and 562 BC), for his Median wife, Queen Amytis, because she missed the green hills and valleys of her homeland. This was attested to by the Babylonian priest Berossus, writing in about 290 BC, a description that was later quoted by Josephus.



The hanging valleys of Babylon

The construction of the Hanging Gardens has also been attributed to the legendary queen Semiramis and they have been called the Hanging Gardens of Semiramis as an alternative name. The Hanging

Gardens are the only one of the Seven Wonders whose location has not been definitively established. No extant Babylonian texts mention the gardens and no definitive archaeological evidence has been found in

Babylon. Three theories have been suggested to account for this: first, that the gardens were purely mythical, and the descriptions found in ancient Greek and Roman writings (including those of

Strabo, Diodorus Siculus and Quintus Curtius Rufus) represented a romantic ideal of an eastern garden; second, that they existed in Babylon but were destroyed sometime around the first century AD; and third, that

the legend refers to a well-documented garden that the Assyrian King Sennacherib (704–681 BC) built in his capital city of Nineveh on the River Tigris, near the modern city of Mosul.

## The Lincoln Memorial

The Lincoln Memorial in the United States is a stunning tribute to President Abraham Lincoln, located on the western end of the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

This iconic landmark is a masterpiece of neoclassical architecture, designed by Henry Bacon and featuring a majestic statue of Lincoln by Daniel Chester French. The memorial's design is rich in symbolism, with 36 Doric columns representing the 36 states in the Union at the time of Lincoln's death. The statue of Lincoln itself is an impressive 19 feet tall, carved from Georgia white marble and situated in a grand central chamber. The interior walls are adorned with inscriptions of Lincoln's famous Gettysburg Address and Second Inaugural Address.

This beloved landmark has played host to many historic events, including Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech during the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

Today, the Lincoln Memorial is one of the most visited sites in Washington, D.C., attracting over 7 million visitors annually.

The Lincoln Memorial's significance extends beyond its stunning architecture and historic events. It represents American Values and Democracy. Equality and justice Lincoln's legacy is deeply rooted in the fight against slavery and the pursuit of equality. Democracy and freedom The memorial symbolizes the principles of democracy, freedom, and the American way of life.

National Unity and Healing Reconciliation.

The memorial has served as a site for reconciliation and healing, particularly during times of national crisis.



Lincoln Memorial

# SPACE AVAILABLE

## The Arbiter

BY HASSAN GIMBA  
HassanGimba@neptuneprime.com.ng

# Nigeria should avoid carrying ants in its pants

Things are happening fast, and in an ever-changing world, keeping track of them is becoming increasingly difficult. This is not particular to Nigeria alone, as we have seen many global shifts that may ultimately spell peace for the beleaguered, even though others may have the potential to exacerbate fragile peace. Russia/Ukraine axis may see peace, but Gaza may enter another phase. However, the revelation that the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is a sponsor of many global terrorist activities, including Boko Haram, may help us solve that aspect of our security problem. And who knows, perhaps even banditry and other separatist agitations?

The Donald Trump administration's resolve to stop funding many charities may be a blessing in disguise. We need to wake up from our comforting slumber and find ways to become productive. We must become a nation of producers and innovators. Governments must encourage that, rather than emasculating citizens through taxation, taxing entrepreneurs out of business.

The government should know that a business employing one person is taking one person off the streets and making the community more secure because an unemployed person must survive too. By nature, a living being must try to survive by any means within easy reach. Bad elements look for the unemployed to recruit into their nefarious activities.

For long, there has been a suspicion that foreign funding was fuelling the Boko Haram insurgency, until it was heard (confirmed) from (by) US Congressman Scott Perry when he claimed that USAID funded terrorist bodies such as ISIS and Boko Haram, among others. The Chief of Defence Standards and Evaluations at the Defence Headquarters (DHQ), Major General Adekunle Ariyibi, recently acknowledged this claim when he said foreign collaborators are funding Boko Haram and other terrorists.

Speaking on Channels Television's The Morning Brief, he said that "Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West African Province (ISWAP)'s foreign backing is one reason the war against terrorism has lingered in Nigeria... There's no doubt that this sort of operation cannot be sustainable for the past 15 years without some external

collaboration and assistance." Now, we have been told who that sponsor is.

This has stirred the hornet's nest, with Borno State—the state that has borne the brunt of the brute wickedness of Boko Haram the most—asking for the expulsion of all non-governmental organisations from the state.

The Borno Elders Forum, in a statement signed by Dr Bulama Male Gubio, the forum's secretary, called on the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and other NGOs to leave not only the state but the entire North-East region. It also urged the Nigerian government to allow President Donald Trump to proceed with his investigation into claims made by US Congressman Scott Perry.

Even though Richard Mills Jr., US Ambassador to Nigeria, has said USAID did not fund Boko Haram because the US government was the first country to declare Boko Haram a terrorist group, observers of world events would take his rebuttal with a pinch of salt.

In 2018, the US declared the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) group a terrorist organisation, declaring its leader, Abu Mohammed al-Julani, who was aligned with al-Qaeda, wanted. It placed a \$10m bounty on his arrest. Yet this did not stop the US from funding him to topple President Bashar al-Assad and, thereafter, dropping the reward for his arrest and engaging him in "diplomatic" talks.

It is, however, only the naïve that would remain in delusion regarding the activities of NGOs because of allegations that most of their aid is presented in poisoned chalices. They fuel insurgents who halt farming, then come and offer us "free" food—a characteristic of agents of darkness used by colonial slave masters to keep subjugating people in the Third World and subverting their national interests.

When a patriot like Patrice Lumumba, Murtala Mohammed or Ghaddafi is killed, you do not see a white man close to the scene of the crime; it is always the voice of Jacob and the hand of Esau at work.

NGOs, who are more likely than not agents of covert Western intelligence agencies, know our country—or any country they operate in—and its people better than the government of that country. The amount of data at their disposal, all provided by

indigenous people, is enormous. They pose a danger to a nation beyond our imagination.

Most of those working for them have been conditioned, by design or subterfuge, to be spies against their country and people. Some information they gather may look harmless in isolation, but when combined with others from different sources, it becomes part of a complex jigsaw puzzle. Rearranged and harnessed and in the hands of slave masters, such information can shellac a well-intentioned leader into submission.

This is why it is shocking that, without the conclusions of thorough investigations by our security agencies and the US where the bombshell came from, Nigeria is planning to employ or "absorb" 28,000 staff of USAID, whose average salary for Nigerians in 2025 is ₦5,150,000, or between \$13,000 and \$79,457 per year, depending on position and location. The Minister of Health, Professor Ali Pate, thinks it is a good idea.

In a country where paying the minimum wage of ₦70,000 is a struggle because of lack of funds, how do they plan to pay them? In a country with millions of out-of-school children, with Pate's North-East region accounting for the largest percentage, won't funds be channelled toward that angle to erode the recruitment base of the insurgents funded by the employer of those he now wants to recruit?

The infant mortality rate (IMR) for Nigeria in 2023 was 54.740 deaths per 1000 live births—one of the highest in Africa—with Pate's North-East being the highest in the country. In 2020, the maternal mortality rate in Nigeria was 1,047 deaths per 100,000 live births, more than 10 times higher than the UN's 2030 target of 70 deaths per 100,000. The North-East still leads here.

In Borno State, a third of the over 700 health

facilities have been destroyed, and another third damaged by Boko Haram, whose puppeteers the Federal Ministry of Health wants to "absorb". Only 34 percent are intact, with many lacking basic amenities such as clean water and electricity.

Over 1.2 million people in Borno live without access to healthcare services. According to the Bauchi State Network of Civil Society Organisations, ninety-three percent of healthcare facilities across the 20 local government areas of Bauchi State lack basic water, sanitary, and hygienic facilities. Rather than gathering killer ants and stashing them in the nation's underwear, funds must be judiciously used to solve Nigeria's multidimensional problems, mostly imposed on it by NGOs working for foreign secret services to destabilise and stunt the growth of nations.

Hassan Gimba, anipr, is the CEO/Publisher of Neptune Prime.

