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US President Donald Trump



Chinese President Xi Jinping

China says it's ready to fight 'any type of war' with US

BY UJI A. ILIYASU

China has warned the US it is ready to fight "any type" of war after hitting back at President Donald Trump's mounting trade tariffs.

The world's top two economies have edged closer to a trade war after Trump slapped more tariffs on all Chinese goods. China quickly retaliated imposing 10-15% tariffs on US farm products. "If war is what the US

wants, be it a tariff war, a trade war or any other type of war, we're ready to fight till the end," China's embassy said on X, reposting a line from a government statement on Tuesday.

It is some of the strongest rhetoric so far from China since Trump became president and comes as leaders gathered in Beijing for the annual National People's Congress.

On Wednesday, China's Premier Li Qiang

announced that China would again boost its defence spending by 7.2% this year and warned that "changes unseen in a century were unfolding across the world at a faster pace." This increase was expected and matches the figure announced last year. Leaders in Beijing are trying to send a message to people in China that they are confident the country's economy can grow, even with the threat of a trade war.

China has been keen to portray an image of being a stable, peaceful country in contrast to the US, which Beijing accuses of being embroiled in wars in the Middle East and Ukraine. China may also hope to capitalise on Trump's actions relating to US allies such as Canada and Mexico, which have also been hit by tariffs, and will not want to ramp up the rhetoric too far to scare off potential new global

partners. The Premier's speech in Beijing on Wednesday emphasised that China would continue to open up and hoped to attract more foreign investments. China has, in the past emphasised that it is ready to go to war. Last October, President Xi called for troops to strengthen their preparedness for war

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NIGERIANS SMILE, HOARDERS LAMENT AS FOOD PRICES CRASH BY 40% IN 3 MONTHS

BY CARA GIFT LUCKSON

Nigerian consumers heaved a sigh of relief as prices of food items continue to nosedive. While the masses bask in the euphoria of a crash in food prices, traders who have hoarded grains are bemoaning the 40 per cent drop in prices between December and March 2025.

From November to December, many traders bought grains for storage, intending to resell when prices rose by February to March, as has been the norm in the last two years of this administration.

Unfortunately for them, grain prices have continued to decline. For instance, a 50kg bag of beans that was sold between N100,000 and N140,000 has dropped to N75,000-N87,000.

Rice, which cost around N114,000 in December, is now about N52,000 in some places. Also, a 50kg bag of soya beans dropped from N120,000 to N60,000, sorghum from N140,000 to about N45,000-N50,000, millet from N70,000 to N40,000, and maize from N120,000 to N45,000.

For tubers, 120 pieces of yam, which sold for about N300,000 last year, are now sold between N180,000 and N19000.

Traders from FCT Markets, lamented their predicament, saying they took loans to

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AFIZERE PEOPLE: KEEPERS OF A RICH CULTURAL LEGACY AND RESILIENT TRADITIONS



OLDIES >>16

I ADVISE CIVIL SERVANTS TO START A BUSINESS BEFORE RETIREMENT - BALARABE MUSA GWAGWARWA



Kyari

Neptune World

In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.

Albert Einstein

The only way to succeed is to be bold and take action, even when you are afraid.

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

PICTURE OF THE DAY

Late Professor Emeritus Umaru Shehu was a renowned Nigerian academic, scholar, and healthcare professional, best known for his contributions to medical education and research in Nigeria. Born on 8th December 1930 in Maiduguri, Borno State, he became a trailblazer in medical academia. He died on 2nd October 2023, at the age of 92.

Photo Credit: Facebook



UP&DOWN



Tazewell makes history as 1st Black man to win Oscar for costume design

Costume designer Paul Tazewell has etched his name in the history books, becoming the first Black man to win an Academy Award for Best Costume Design. The seasoned designer took home the award at the 97th Oscars on Sunday for his breathtaking work on 'Wicked'. This win marks his first Oscar victory and second nomination after previously being recognised for 'West Side Story', directed by Steven Spielberg. During his acceptance speech, the crowd rose to their feet, honouring his achievement with a standing ovation. "I'm the first Black man to receive the costume design award," he declared, soaking in the moment. "I'm so proud of this." Speaking backstage, Tazewell described the win as the peak of his career, reflecting on the struggles he faced in an industry where he had no Black male role model to look up to.

RANDOMFACTS

Major Bulama Biu: First Regimental Sergeant Major of NDA

Major Bulama Biu was born on the 15th of March 1934 in Biu, Borno State. After his formal elementary school education, he went through a middle school education. His military career began on 5th February 1952 when he was enlisted into the army. He was trained in Kaduna and served in the Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF).

When Queen Elizabeth II visited Nigeria, she promoted him to the rank of Corporal because he was the best-dressed young soldier at the parade.

Bulama was a corporal at 44 Battalion Kaduna during the battalion field exercise (range, infiltration, and intuition). He became the overall best soldier of the exercise. This earned him a promotion to the rank of Sergeant.

His successful mission to Congo to rescue a British officer earned him a promotion to the rank of Staff Sergeant.

His hard work and dedication to duties were so obvious that he was appointed in 1964 as the first Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) of the Nigerian Defence Academy.

He trained Regular Courses 1 to 21 Cadet Officers of distinguished character.

For his hard work and dedication to duty at the Academy, he was commissioned to the rank of Captain and posted to Depot Nigeria Army Training School Zaria in 1977. He became the Officer-in-Charge of the Nigerian Drill School.

In recognition of his loyalty and dedicated service to the nation, Captain Bulama Biu was honoured with the national award of Member of the Order of Niger (MON) in 1982 by then-Nigerian president Alhaji Shehu Shagari.

He was promoted to the rank of Major and posted to the current Nigerian Army School of Infantry (NASI) Jaji as Commanding Officer-in-charge of Drill.

He earned many Military Decorations/Awards amongst which are the Nigerian Independence Medal, Congo Medal, Civil War Medal, Long Service and Good Conduct by Queen Elizabeth II and Member of the Order of Niger (MON)

Maj Biu retired from the army in 1987 at the rank of Major after serving for thirty-eight (38) years.

His last deployment was to the Nigeria Army School of Infantry Jaji, where he was the Commanding Officer (Chief Instructor) of Drill Win.

Source: Histfeed

FUN PUZZLE
Find The Hidden Words

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
H	E	L	O	K	T	R	Q	N	
S	T	A	Y	M	Q	O	U	N	S
S	T	R	O	N	G	S	V	H	P
S	T	A	Y	P	W	F	L	X	U
P	O	S	I	T	I	V	E	B	C
A	N	D	R	X	C	V	Y	G	D
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Woman lands in prison for smuggling SDR135,900 Saudi Riyals into Nigeria

A Federal High Court in Kano has sentenced one Hauwa Abdullahi Ibrahim to prison for smuggling an undeclared sum of \$1,154,900 and SDR135,900 Saudi Riyals into Nigeria from Saudi Arabia. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Kano Zonal Directorate, secured her conviction after she pleaded guilty to a two-count charge of money laundering before Justice S. M. Shuaibu. EFCC spokesperson Dele Oyewale said she was apprehended at Malam Aminu Kano International Airport by officers of the Nigeria Customs Service. She failed to declare the large sum of money as required by law, leading to her immediate arrest. Following her arrest, the Nigeria Customs Service handed her over to the EFCC for further investigation and prosecution. The EFCC subsequently charged Ibrahim in court with two counts of money laundering under Section 3(3) of the Money Laundering (Prevention and Prohibition) Act, 2022.

NEWS

China says it's ready to fight 'any type of war' with US

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

as they held military drills around the self-governing island of Taiwan. But there is a difference between military preparedness and a readiness to go to war.

Beijing is to increase military spending by more than 7 per cent this year. The Chinese embassy in Washington quoted a foreign ministry statement in English from the previous day, which also accused the US of blaming China for the influx of the drug fentanyl.

"The fentanyl issue is a flimsy excuse to raise US tariffs on Chinese imports," the foreign ministry spokesperson said.

"Intimidation does not scare us. Bullying does not work on us. Pressuring, coercion or threats are not the right way of dealing with China," he added.

The US-China relationship is always one of the most contentious in the world. This post on X has been widely shared and could be used by the China hawks in Trump's cabinet as evidence that Beijing is Washington's biggest foreign policy and economic threat.

Officials in Beijing had been hopeful that US-China relations under Trump could get off to a more cordial start after he invited Xi to his inauguration. Trump also said the two leaders had "a great phone call" just a few days before he entered the White House.

There were reports that the two leaders were due to have another call last month. That did not happen.

Xi had already been battling persistently low consumption, a property crisis and unemployment.

China has pledged to pump billions of dollars into its ailing economy and its leaders unveiled the plan as thousands of delegates attend the National People's Congress, a rubber-stamp parliament, which passes decisions already made behind closed doors.

China has the world's second-largest military budget at \$245bn but it is far smaller than that of the US. Beijing spends 1.6 per cent of GDP on its military, far less than the US or Russia, according to the Stockholm International

Peace Research Institute. However, analysts believe China downplays how much it spends on defence.

How Trump sparked the tariff war

The US-China trade war was sparked by President Donald Trump's administration in 2018, with the imposition of tariffs on Chinese goods. The initial tariffs targeted Chinese products worth \$50 billion, which led to China retaliating with tariffs on US agricultural goods, such as soybeans, wheat, and corn.

The trade tensions escalated over the years, with both countries imposing additional tariffs on each other's goods. The US accused China of unfair trade practices, including intellectual property theft and forced technology transfer, while China argued that the US was trying to stifle its economic growth and development.

Key events in the US-China tariff war

In March 2018, Trump announces tariffs on Chinese steel and aluminum imports; in April 2018, China retaliates with tariffs on US

agricultural goods; in May 2019, the US increased tariffs on Chinese goods from 10 per cent to 25 per cent; in January 2020, the US and China sign a phase-one trade deal, which includes provisions for China to increase purchases of US goods and strengthen intellectual property protections.

The trade war has had significant implications for the global economy, including increased costs for businesses and consumers, disrupted supply chains, and decreased economic growth.

US-China 2nd tariff war

Donald Trump's second presidency in 2025 marked the beginning of a new tariff war. On March 4, 2025, Trump imposed 25 per cent tariffs on most Canadian and Mexican imports, and raised the tariff on Chinese imports to 20 per cent. This move sparked immediate retaliation from Canada and China, with Canada imposing phased levies on \$107 billion worth of US goods and China imposing tariffs of up to 15 per cent on US goods,

mainly targeting American agricultural shipments.

Trump's decision to impose tariffs was aimed at protecting America's steel and aluminum industries, which he believed were being harmed by unfair trade practices and global excess capacity. The tariffs were also intended to generate revenue and create domestic manufacturing jobs.

Implications on global economy

The tariff war has significant implications for the global economy, including increased costs for businesses and consumers, disrupted supply chains, and decreased economic growth. The move has also been criticized by other countries, with the European Commission spokesman, Olof Gill, stating that the tariffs threaten to disrupt global trade and hurt economic partners.

Trump's war destined to fail. Trump's trade war against China is destined to fail because Washington cannot dictate terms to China because Chinese economy is too diversified

to be affected by adversity in few sectors.

It is worthy of note that China's exports rose 7.1 per cent to \$3.5 trillion in 2024 with the US accounting for just \$524.6 billion, per the General Administration of Customs; the share of Global South countries and regions in China's exports (\$1.67 trillion) has surpassed that of the top industrialised nations (\$1.4 trillion);

global South countries and regions account for nearly half of its total trade volume, or \$2.8 trillion: China trades with 150+ economies, and its total goods trade grew 5% year-on-year to \$6.1 trillion in 2024. Also ASEAN has remained Beijing's largest trade partner for five consecutive years.

In all, conflict between two nuclear powers, such as the United States and China, would have catastrophic consequences for the world. The implications of such a conflict would be far-reaching and devastating, affecting not only the two nations involved but also the global community.

Source: GeopoliticsLive

Nigerians smile, hoarders lament as food prices crash by 40% in 3 months

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

buy bags of grains in December, hoping that prices would rise by the end of January, which did not happen.

They said, "In December 2023, we bought bags of maize for N60,000, and by March, when prices went up, we sold them for around N120,000 and made lots of money. But this year, we were hoping that prices would go up. Now, we have tied our money down because maize is selling for less than what we bought in December."

In 2025, Nigeria experienced a notable decline in food prices, marking a significant shift in the agricultural and economic landscape of the country. This report explores the causes, implications, and potential future trends associated with this decrease in food prices.

In early 2025, average food prices dropped by approximately 35-40 per cent compared to the previous year. Key staples

such as rice, maize, and cassava saw substantial price reductions, providing relief to consumers nationwide.

The decline in food prices contributed to improved food security for many households, reducing the overall cost of living and increasing access to essential nutrition.

Causes of falling food prices

Adoption of modern agricultural practices, including improved seed varieties and efficient irrigation methods, led to higher crop yields.

The federal and state governments implemented successful agricultural policies aimed at boosting local production, such as providing subsidies and support for farmers.

Investments in rural infrastructure, such as roads and storage facilities, reduced post-harvest losses and improved market access for farmers too.

Furthermore, enhanced logistics and distribution networks facilitated easier transport of goods, decreasing transportation costs and time.



A food market in FCT

Favourable weather conditions

In 2025, weather patterns shifted favourably, leading to better rainfall distribution during critical growing seasons, further enhancing crop production. Also, relaxation of import

restrictions on certain food products allowed for increased availability and competition in the market, contributing to price decreases.

Global market Influence

Global food supply chains saw improved production levels, with a slight decrease in international prices, impacting local market prices positively.

Implications of falling food prices

The price drop provided significant relief to low-income families, enhancing purchasing power and enabling better nutrition, especially in urban and rural

areas.

Lower food prices led to an increase in overall food consumption, fostering better dietary diversity and health among the population.

While consumers benefit, some farmers express concerns about declining profit margins. Continuous advances in productivity are necessary to ensure that farmers remain economically viable.

The falling food prices in Nigeria in 2025 reflect a combination of increased agricultural productivity, improved supply chain dynamics, and favourable market conditions. While the decline presents substantial benefits for consumers and rural economies, ongoing attention is needed to ensure that farmers can sustainably thrive in a changing economic environment.

NEWS

BY MARYAM SULAIMAN
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For 50 years, we were spending money of generations yet unborn – Tinubu

President Bola Tinubu on Thursday articulated the rationale behind his administration's economic reforms, saying the primary motive was protecting the interests of future generations, whose funds had been spent in the past 50 years.

"For 50 years, Nigeria was spending money of generations yet unborn and servicing the West coast of our subregion with fuel. It was getting difficult to plan for our children's future," he said.

The President stated this at the State House in Abuja while receiving a delegation of former National Assembly colleagues from the aborted Third Republic, during which he served as a Senator representing Lagos West.

The President while highlighting the challenges faced at the beginning of his administration, especially economic and social issues, expressed his gratitude for the delegation's support in addressing these difficulties:

"We faced serious headwinds when I took over, very challenging times. Nigeria would have been bankrupt if we had not taken the actions that we took, and we had to prevent the economy's collapse.

President Tinubu declared that the administration had been able to stem the tide and expressed appreciation to Nigerians for their collective support in turning things around.

"Today, we are sitting pretty on a good foundation. We have reversed the problem; the Exchange rate is stabilising. Food prices are coming down, especially during Ramadan. We will have light at the end of the tunnel."

He said firm adherence to democratic tenets is the best route to economic, social, and political development.

"I am happy that you are holding to your belief in democracy. I thank you for keeping faith and remembering how we started. Some people missed the ball.

"Some leadership failed, but we kept the faith with our democratic beliefs and freedom and the right to aspire to the highest office in the land. I am benefitting from it."

Emmanuel Nwaka, who spoke on behalf of the group, expressed his delight at some of the programmes that the Tinubu administration had implemented, especially the Nigerian Education Loan Fund (NELFUND) and the Nigerian Consumer Credit Corporation (CREDICORP) and at what the two organisations were offering Nigerians.

"I appreciate you for what you are giving to students because the student population is the largest demographic in the country. I've spoken with many of them, and many have benefited from it.

"And the next one is the CREDICORP. That's a major way of fighting corruption. You see a young man, you come out of school, you want to buy a car, you have to put down cash, you want to buy a house, and you are not married, but with the CREDICORP, you can get things done. I'm following their activities; we are delighted," he said.



President Tinubu

Inmates are dying in custodial detention due to poor feeding - Panel

Several inmates are said to be dying in the custody of the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS) due to poor feeding and high levels of food racketeering in the detention facilities.

Secretary of the Independent Investigative Panel on the Alleged Corruption, Abuse of Power, Torture, Cruel, Inhumane and Degrading Treatment of Inmates Against the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS), Dr. Uju Agomoh, said prisoners were starving because "in all of the facilities we went to during our inspection visit as a panel, during the last week of February (2024), there was none we saw food up to the approved weekly standards by the agency. So, the stock they are supposed to have for at least seven days, as is the practice, is not being implemented.

"This is about being open to knowing where

the problem is because many inmates are dying because of lack of food. I have been going to correctional centres for more than 30 years, but I have never seen what we see these days. There have always been problems, but it has never been the way it is now."

The secretary explained that the panel aimed to improve efficiency in the NCoS, adding that transparency was critical to the work at hand.

Pointing out that it is dangerous to starve inmates because ginger can lead to aggression, Agomoh said in all the facilities that the panel visited, it gathered that those supplying food to the custodial facilities were officers-in-charge who maximised profit to the detriment of a functional system.

"First, the quantity that is provided is small, second this drive of profit-making worsens the process. The officers in charge are one of the checks and



Inmates in a custodian centre

2025 Hajj: Max Air to airlift Kano, Jigawa pilgrims



Nigerian Pilgrims

The National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) has approved Max Air to airlift intending pilgrims from Kano and Jigawa for the 2025 Hajj pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia.

This decision was confirmed by the Director General of the Kano State Pilgrims Welfare Board, Alhaji Lamin Rabi'u Danbappa, following a stakeholders' meeting and the signing of an agreement with airlines at NAHCON headquarters in Abuja.

Expressing his satisfaction with the extensive preparations, Danbappa assured that all necessary arrangements had been made to ensure a smooth

and comfortable journey for the pilgrims. He also urged those who have not yet submitted their international passports to do so promptly before the deadline to avoid any delays.

The Board reassures Kano State pilgrims of a seamless experience both at home and in Saudi Arabia.

Also, the Director-General of the Jigawa State Pilgrims Welfare Board, Alhaji Ahmed Labbo, announced this in a statement signed by the Board's spokesman, Mr Habibu Yusuf, on Thursday in Dutse.

"NAHCON has officially

appointed Max Air as the designated airline for airlifting Jigawa State pilgrims to Saudi Arabia for the 2025 Hajj," Labbo stated. He explained that the decision followed a management meeting and the signing of an agreement with airlines at NAHCON headquarters in Abuja. Labbo expressed satisfaction with NAHCON's extensive preparations and assured that all necessary arrangements had been made for a smooth journey for the pilgrims. He added that the travelling bags and uniforms for the state's intending pilgrims are ready for collection.

OUR HEART

Time to defuse the ticking bomb in Rivers state

The latent but, hitherto smoothed differences between governor Siminalayi Fubara and his predecessor, Chief Nyesome Wike, erupted soon after the exchange of the baton of leadership of the oil rich state between the two erstwhile political allies and friends. Before 29th May, 2023, Fubara as the Accountant General was a long time confidant and a key member of the kitchen cabinet during the two term governorship of Nyesome Wike, 2015 to 2023.

To ensure the emergence of Fubara, first, as the PDP flag bearer and later, as the winner of the 2023 Rivers gubernatorial race, Nyesome Wike had went the extra mile, removing all impediments by bending all the rules, trampling and stepping on toes of other powerful contenders. He was envisaging and perfecting the scenario of a godfather and a godson after his exit from the throne.

Rambunctious, boisterous and Machiavellian in the game of power, Nyesome Wike pulled out all the lethal arsenal in his political war chest as soon as, it dawned on him that Fubara would not play the dumb, servile puppet. He went full blast, deploying his awesome and political assets, reinforced with his position of FCT Minister, in the ensuing ferocious battle with Fubara. He found an army of loyal foot soldiers in 27 of the 31 members of the state House of Assembly. Without pretences as to their ultimate goal, the House of Assembly, under Speaker Martins Amaewhule, made straight for the governor's jugular, by explicitly, scheming to impeach him. The mass decamping of the 27 legislators, from the PDP to the APC was one of the loudest open antagonistic actions that thoroughly rattled the governor. He was jerked to the reality of the dangers staring him in the face.

Defying several efforts at brokering a truce, including those made by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the Wike-Fubara conflict escalated to frightening heights with echoes reaching all parts of the country and beyond. It invariably, got to the law courts, spanning the High Courts through the Courts of Appeal to the Supreme Court which delivered its historic verdicts on three of the four issues of disputes last Monday, 28th February, 2025.

On the premise that, the litigants

did not "provide any iota or, shred of evidence" to prove that, the 27 legislators had legally and conclusiveness, defected from the PDP to the APC, the Supreme Court recognised the embattled lawmakers as legitimate members of the state House of Assembly, with Amaewhule as Speaker. Describing the pro Fubara four-member House as, "improperly constituted", the Court ordered the government to re-submit its 2025 budget to the Amaewhule-led parliament for scrutiny and passage. Humiliating and dampening of the spirit and pride

The nation's apex court also sacked all the local government councillors and chairmen elected under the administration of Fubara in December last year, on the ground of breaches of sections of the extant Electoral Act. No doubt, the most shattering of its epochal verdicts, the Supreme Court directed the Central Bank and the Accountant General of the Federation, to immediately, stop the monthly Federal Allocations to the Rivers state government.

In response to the unfavourable gale of verdicts, governor Fubara has since broken away from his usual demeanour of a calm and reticent personality. He has been talking tough with, warning of, "reactions from the youths of Rivers state", if, push comes to shove. The pertinent, subtle threat embedded in the governor's message, cannot be lost on discerning minds.

On their part, the Amaewhule led legislators have been strutting around and thumbing their chest as a triumphant Army at the end of a battle. Such an unabashed haughtiness, audacity and, impunity. This is manifest in the flurry of orders, ultimatums and directives that they have since been issuing in crude and condescending language, to the governor and his appointees. Patently, the ultimate objective of the Nyesome Wike's proxy warriors, is the immediate impeachment of Siminilayi Fubara.

Many temperate and bellicose voices in the region and beyond, have either been calling for caution or making inflammatory remarks. These include the combustible Ijaw Youth Council, IYC, the moderate but latently volatile Ijaw National Congress, INC, the vociferous Ann-Kio Briggs and, the militant Mujahid Asari Dekibo. With bullets already flying around in parts of the state, there have also been several threats from shadowy groups to the nation's oil production sector.

There is a palpable thick and ominous storm hovering over Rivers state. The fire that had been smouldering in the last few months, is apparently, threatening to explode to a huge conflagration. The bomb that had been ticking all the while, looks like it will detonate sooner than later, if it is not urgently defused.

As it is, Rivers state, besides being one of the geese that lay the nation's golden eggs, is historically, politically and culturally, the nerve centre of the Niger Delta region. When it breezes the entire region catches cold. President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and all that have the moral, statutory and political authority, must immediately join in averting what, clearly, appears to be an emerging catastrophe.

The nation cannot afford and should not, remain complacent all because, of the ego of a megalomaniac or, for a mundane and transient political goal.

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Maiduguri Int'l Airport

Tinubu approves upgrade of Maiduguri Airport to international status

President Bola Tinubu has approved the upgrade of the Maiduguri Airport, Borno State, to international status. The Special Adviser to the President on Media and Public Communications, Sunday Dare, announced this on Thursday via his verified X handle, @SundayDareSD. Dare said the latest approval concludes the establishment of at least one international

airport across the country's six geopolitical zones. He wrote, "President Tinubu has approved the upgrade of the Maiduguri Airport to the status of an International airport. "This completes the round of international airports across the country with each geo-political zone having an airport."

Nigeria has a handful of

international airports that serve as key gateways to the country, facilitating travel, trade, and tourism.

The major ones include Murtala Muhammed International Airport in Lagos, Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport in Abuja, Port Harcourt International Airport, Akanu Ibiam International Airport in Enugu, Malam Aminu

Kano International Airport in Kano, and, more recently, Victor Attah International Airport in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

These airports handle both passenger and cargo flights, with MMIA being the busiest and the primary hub for international air traffic. In a related development, Dare also announced the official takeoff of the African

Aviation and Aerospace University in Abuja.

"Equally, the African Aviation and Aerospace University, AAAU, takes off in Abuja," he stated. The specialised institution, he said, will advance aviation and aerospace education, positioning Nigeria as a key player in the sector within Africa.

Bauchi becomes 1st state to pass sanitary pad bill

The Bauchi State House of Assembly has passed a bill to establish sanitary pad banks in schools, correctional facilities, and community centres throughout the state.

The Chairman of the House Committee on Health, Mr Lawal Dauda, presented the bill at Wednesday's plenary. Dauda emphasised that the free sanitary pad banks would address menstrual hygiene management challenges and reduce absenteeism in schools. "This initiative will also improve hygiene for indigent adolescent girls, women, and female inmates during their menstrual periods," he said. According to Dauda, Bauchi State is the first in the country to pass such a bill.

"This pioneering legislation aims to tackle menstrual hygiene management issues and promote women's development in the state," he added.

The Speaker of the House, Mr Abubakar Suleiman, congratulated the state and other partners for their tireless efforts in advocating for the passage of the bill.

Suleiman assured that the bill would have a positive impact on indigent adolescent girls and women who could not afford sanitary pads.

In response to the passage of the bill, the Executive Director of ASHH Foundation, Mrs Comfort Attah, expressed gratitude to the state government, the legislature, and partner organisations for their efforts.

However, she reminded that while the bill's passage was a significant milestone, it would not be fully implemented until the governor signed it into law.

Police, vigilante clash over food debtor in Taraba

Personnel of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria, VGN, Taraba State Command, and officers of the Nigeria Police Force reportedly clashed at Owoniyi Motor Park, Roadblock, Jalingo.

Speaking to journalists in the state, Muniru Bello Abubakar, the State Operations Commandant of VGN, narrated that the VGN has an operational office around the motor park, with their men stationed there to intervene in issues when necessary and restore normalcy.

"On this account, a lady who sells food reported to the VGN office at the park that a man ate her food and refused to pay.

"So, the lady was asked to call the man in question so the issue could be addressed calmly instead of causing public embarrassment.

"The lady later reported back that the man insulted her. A vigilante personnel then decided to intervene, but when he approached the man, the man grabbed his collar and pulled him," Abubakar stated.

He added that the man then mobilised his friends in an attempt to burn down the VGN office at the park. In response, the vigilante personnel called the State Commandant to explain the situation and was advised not to react in a way that would escalate the matter beyond control.

However, the VGN was able to single out the man who was instigating the tension,



Police/vigilante

apprehended him, and took him to their office. Shortly after, officers of the Nigeria Police arrived at the scene. Upon hearing what had happened, the police arrested a member of the vigilante group and put him in their van, stating that he would only be released if the detained man (the offender) was freed," Abubakar said.

The situation reportedly became dramatic as both law enforcement groups, who share

the same mission, clashed over the offender.

"While still in contention, the head of police operations ordered that the detained vigilante member be released. However, as they were leaving the scene in their van, the police fired two bullets, one of which grazed a vigilante personnel on his right foot," he added.

Meanwhile, the man who refused to pay for his food was said to have been handed over to the police at the time of filing this report.

Expressing sadness over the incident, the State Operations Commandant of the VGN said the organisation had reported the matter to the relevant authorities, emphasising concerns over the police's involvement in such an incident where they were expected to collaborate and resolve issues rather than escalate them.



Mohammed

NORTH-EAST

BY DAJEN COMFORT YAKUBU
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Yahaya

Gombe approves N1 bn for solar street light projects

The Gombe State Government has approved N1.15 billion for the installation of solar street lights and infrastructure development projects in three local government areas of the state.

Malam Mahmood Yusuf, Director-General, Joint Project Development Agency, stated this at a news conference in Gombe, the state capital. He said the Joint Project Council (JPC) meeting chaired by Governor Inuwa Yahaya, approved the projects to align with his vision for infrastructure

development.

Yusuf listed the projects to include the installation of solar street lights on newly constructed roads in Kumo at the total cost of N740 million; fencing of the NALDA market and installation of solar street lights at Kwadon area of Yamaltu/Deba, costing N362 million.

He said that N47 million has been approved for the expansion of the grains market and construction of six public toilets in Billiri.

Yusuf said that the N112 million grain market

project was approved in 2024, but reviewed upward to N159 million to provide six additional toilets.

The director said the council also approved the deployment of GOSTEC and Operation Hattara personnel to scale surveillance in schools and cemeteries in the state.

He said the measure was sequel to complaints over spate of theft in public buildings by the ALGON Chairman, Sani Haruna.

“The council has resolved to implement stricter security measures by deploying GOSTEC and Operation Hattara to enhance surveillance. The scope of Operation Hattara would be expanded to cover all the 11 LGAs,” he said.

Also, Fatima-Binta Bello, Chairperson,

Shongom Local Government Council, expressed readiness to consolidate on Yahaya’s achievements in education and health sectors.

She stressed the need to strengthen human resources through recruitment of qualified personnel to address manpower gaps and enhance quality service delivery, especially at primary healthcare and basic education level.

Similarly, Ahmad Wali, Chairman, Kwami LGC, said the council had initiated resurvey and remapping of grazing reserves and cattle routes to check farmer/herder clashes.

He warned that anyone found encroaching cattle routes and grazing lands would be sanctioned.

Gov. Buni appoints 200 youths as SAs, focal persons

Yobe State Governor, Mai Mala Buni has approved the appointment of over 200 youths as focal persons, senior special assistants, special assistants, and technical assistants on media.

Governor Buni said the appointments reflects his commitment to promoting youth inclusion in the administration and leveraging their innovative ideas to enhance the government’s communication strategies.

Senior Special Assistant Digital and Strategic Communications to the Governor, Malam Yusuf Ali, said that the appointments reflect the administration’s resolve to provide opportunities for young talents to contribute to the development of Yobe State.

According to him, this unprecedented appointment serves as another testament to Governor Buni’s leadership style, which prioritises inclusion, innovation, and human capital development.

He said that the appointees were expected to assume their responsibilities immediately, bringing fresh energy and ideas to the administration’s media and communication efforts.

Yobe gov’t disburses 1,500 bags of rice to teachers

Yobe State Governor, Mai Mala Buni, has allocated 1,500 bags of rice for distribution to teachers in the state as Ramadan gift.

The Executive Secretary of the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), Goje Mohammed, handed the food items to the Head of Service, Alhaji Tonga Betara, for onward distribution to junior civil servants.

According to him, priority will be given to teachers under the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), the Teaching Service Board (TSB), and the Science and Technical Education Board (STEB).

At the handover ceremony, Alhaji Tonga Betara Bularafa expressed gratitude to Governor Mai Mala Buni for his continuous support of civil servants, particularly junior staff. Tonga urged beneficiaries to reciprocate the gesture by demonstrating increased dedication and commitment to their duties.

He also commended the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) for ensuring equitable distribution of palliatives across the state.

Highlight of the event was the symbolic presentation of the Ramadan food basket to representatives of TSB and SUBEB in the state.

Tango assured that the distribution process would be transparent and fair to ensure the intended beneficiaries receive their share.

The teachers expressed happiness and gratitude to Governor Buni for his efforts to assist them during this holy month of Ramadan.

They also appealed to the Head of Civil Service (HoS), Tango Betara Bularafa, to supervise the distribution of the food items judiciously without any tribalism or political affiliation.

Bauchi begins sensitisation as measles cases reach 218

The Bauchi State Government has raised concerns over the increasing prevalence of measles in the state.

The Executive Chairman of the Bauchi State Primary Healthcare Board, Dr. Rilwanu Mohammed, expressed concern over the development during a one-day sensitisation programme on the importance of the Measles-Rubella (MR) vaccine.

Mohammed disclosed that Bauchi State recorded over 218 cases of measles between January and March 2025.

He explained that the programme was organised to educate the wives of local government chairmen in preparation for the upcoming vaccination exercise scheduled for October. “Measles and Rubella are two deadly diseases that must be tackled with full commitment. This is why the Federal Ministry of Health has introduced new vaccines to address them,” Mohammed stated.

He further revealed that the vaccination campaign would be conducted under the auspices of the Forum of Nigerian Governors’ Spouses, adding that the initiative would facilitate the work of healthcare personnel administering the vaccines.

“We are already familiar with the measles vaccine in the country. What makes this initiative different is the addition of the Rubella vaccine,” he clarified.

“This is a collective fight, which is why governors’ spouses are taking the lead in driving awareness ahead of the vaccination exercise.”

Speaking at the event, Bauchi State First Lady, Aisha Mohammed, who convened the sensitisation programme, assured that women would play a crucial role in ensuring the success of the new Measles-Rubella vaccination campaign.

She explained that women’s involvement in disease prevention was a key reason they were targeted for the



A child being vaccinated in Bauchi

awareness drive.

“The introduction of the Measles-Rubella vaccine marks a significant milestone in our efforts to protect children from these life-threatening diseases,” she said. She further warned that the consequences of these infections, particularly for young children and pregnant women, could lead to severe complications such as blindness and mental health issues.

CUSTOMS & NEMA

BY MARYAM SULAIMAN
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NCS reaffirms commitment to interagency collaboration amid disagreement with FAAN officials at MMAC NAHCO Shed

The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) has addressed a recent incident at the Murtala Muhammed Airport Cargo (MMAC) NAHCO Shed, involving a disagreement with Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) officials over equipment movement and seating arrangements.

The incident, which occurred on 6 March 2025, highlighted a miscommunication that temporarily disrupted operations.

In a statement, the NCS emphasized its dedication to inter-agency collaboration and compliance with the World Customs Organisation's (WCO) Safe Framework of Standards. This framework advocates strong partnerships between Customs, other government agencies, and businesses to ensure trade facilitation, regulatory compliance, and national economic growth. The NCS reaffirmed that the Nigerian Aviation Handling Company Plc (NAHCO) and Skyway Aviation Handling Company Plc (SAHCO) Import and Export Warehouses, as licensed Customs Bonded Warehouses, operate in strict accordance with Section 122 of the Nigeria Customs Service Act, 2023.

NCS maintains that the facilities remain under its control as mandated by Section 127 of the Act.

According to the statement, Comptroller-General of Customs, Bashir Adewale Adeniyi, MFR, reiterated the Service's commitment to fostering inter-agency cooperation and maintaining smooth



CGC Bashir Adewale Adeniyi

operations within Customs-controlled areas. The NCS assured stakeholders that efforts are underway to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

In its closing remarks, the NCS urged

all parties to prioritize mutual respect, adherence to due process, and a cooperative spirit to sustain economic growth and ensure seamless cargo operations.

The statement, issued by Assistant

Comptroller of Customs Abdullahi Maiwada, reaffirms the NCS's mandate to facilitate trade, enforce regulations, and safeguard national security.

Officials of FCT Emergency Management Agency visits DG NEMA

In a bid to strengthen collaboration in disaster management, a delegation from the Federal Capital Territory Emergency Management Agency (FCT SEMA), led by its Director General, Engr. Abdulrahman Mohammed, paid a courtesy visit to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) headquarters.

The team was warmly received by the Director General of NEMA, Mrs. Zubaida Umar, who was represented by the Director of Planning, Research, and Forecasting, Mr. Onimode Bandele. Other key members of NEMA present at the meeting included the Special Assistant to the DG Hajia Rakiya Bello, Director of Relief and Rehabilitation, Usur Abdullahi, Director of Disaster Risk Reduction, Idris Mohammed, Director of Finance, Aminu Boyi, and Assistant Director of Search and Rescue, Lydia Wagami.

During the meeting, Engr. Abdulrahman Mohammed commended NEMA for its continued support of FCT SEMA and emphasized the need for greater collaboration. He strongly advocated for the passage of a law to legally establish FCT SEMA, ensuring that the agency could function effectively with a clear legal mandate. Additionally, he called for more stakeholder meetings to enhance

disaster preparedness and coordination among emergency response agencies.

In response, Mr. Onimode Bandele, on behalf of NEMA's Director General, welcomed the FCT SEMA delegation and expressed appreciation for their visit. He acknowledged the crucial role of FCT SEMA and assured them that NEMA would work closely with the National Assembly Committee on Emergency Management to facilitate the passage of the necessary legislation. He further encouraged FCT SEMA to utilize NEMA's Hazard Risk Analysis document to identify potential risks and develop strategic mitigation measures. Mr. Onimode also assured the delegation that NEMA would take the lead in an advocacy meeting, in collaboration with FCT SEMA, to engage with the Honorable Minister of the FCT, Nyesom Wike, on the agency's legal backing and operational needs.

In his remarks, Azeez Kadiri, Deputy Director of Administration at FCT SEMA, expressed gratitude to NEMA for its unwavering support in enhancing emergency response efforts within the FCT.

The meeting concluded with the presentation of souvenirs, symbolising the commitment to continued partnership between the two organisations.



Zubaida Umar, DG NEMA

PRIME PHOTOS

BY MARYA MUMAR
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Admiral Yoghurt, Yola, Adamawa State



Nigeria's biggest truck transit park in Potiskum, Yobe State



Dr. Amina Umar Giade from Bauchi emerged best graduating student of Dental Surgery (BDS) at Bayero University Kano.



Grace Garba from Adamawa makes history as the first female air warrant officer in the Nigerian Air Force.

PRIME10MENT

From Dajen Comfort Yakubu
ComfortDajen@neptuneprime.com.ng

“I have not forgiven,” Kannywood actress shocks the internet during Ramadan

Kano - A prominent actress in the Hausa film industry, Kannywood, Hadiza Aliyu Gabon has shocked the internet after announcing the sighting of the Ramadan moon.

Hadiza Gabon attracted the attention of her followers on social media when she posted that she would not forgive anyone who took responsibility for her, even though the fasting month has ended.

The actress's comments came after this year's Ramadan fasting month began following the sighting of the crescent moon last night, Friday, February 28.

His Holiness the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar III, has announced that the moon has been sighted, making today, Saturday, March 1, 2025, the first day of Ramadan.

However, while Muslims, especially in Northern Nigeria, are sending messages to each other asking for forgiveness before the start of the fast, Hadiza Gabon says she is not giving up.

In a message she posted, Kannywood actress, Hadiza Aliyu Gabon

stated:

“There is no mention of the month of fasting; whatever you say or do about me, may Allah grant me my due.

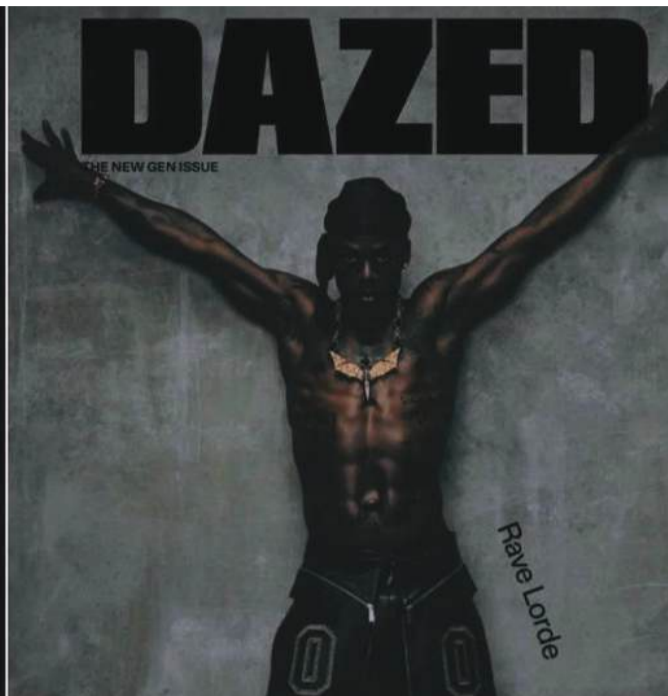
“Whoever knows that I have insulted him, I have done nothing to him. May God do to him what he did to me.”

This has attracted the attention of many of her followers, with some supporting her decision to forgive everyone, while others find it inappropriate.

Mahmoud Kitchen says: “Is it true that you don't want God to forgive you for your sins? We don't know if you have any sins, so you are not guilty of anything in the sight of God.” “The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

The best among you is the one who is patient, and the best patience is to forgive what has been done to you or what has been done to you. Allah has promised to reward the patient.”

The Shehu of Tiktok said “Allah is sufficient for a brief time.” Adamsy Celebrity said, “You're on the right track.”



Rema graces Dazed Magazine Cover for the second time

Nigerian Afrobeats sensation Divine Ikubor, popularly known as Rema, has once again captured global attention as he features on the cover of 'Dazed Magazine' for the second time.

The music star, celebrated for

his unique sound and artistic expression, appears on the fourth cover of the 'Dazed Newgen' issue, where he delves into the deeper inspirations behind his music.

In this edition, Rema explores his

creative process, highlighting the ancestral influences that shape his sound and artistry.

Additionally, he reflects on his symbolic connection with bats, which he believes represent his unique artistic persona.

His return to 'Dazed Magazine' further cements his status as a leading force in the Afrobeats.

This latest recognition adds to Rema's growing list of international magazine covers, including 'Schön, I-D, Clash,' and 'FADER'.

Funke Akindele's Everybody Loves Jennifa Breaks records With a Staggering N1.88bn Gross

Funke Akindele's *Everybody Loves Jennifa* smashes records with a staggering N1.88 Billion gross. Funke Akindele's *Everybody Loves Jennifa* Breaks records with a staggering N1.88 Billion box office gross.

Funke Akindele has done it again! Her latest blockbuster, *Everybody Loves Jennifa*, has cemented its place in Nollywood history, breaking records with an incredible N1.88 billion at the Nigerian box office.

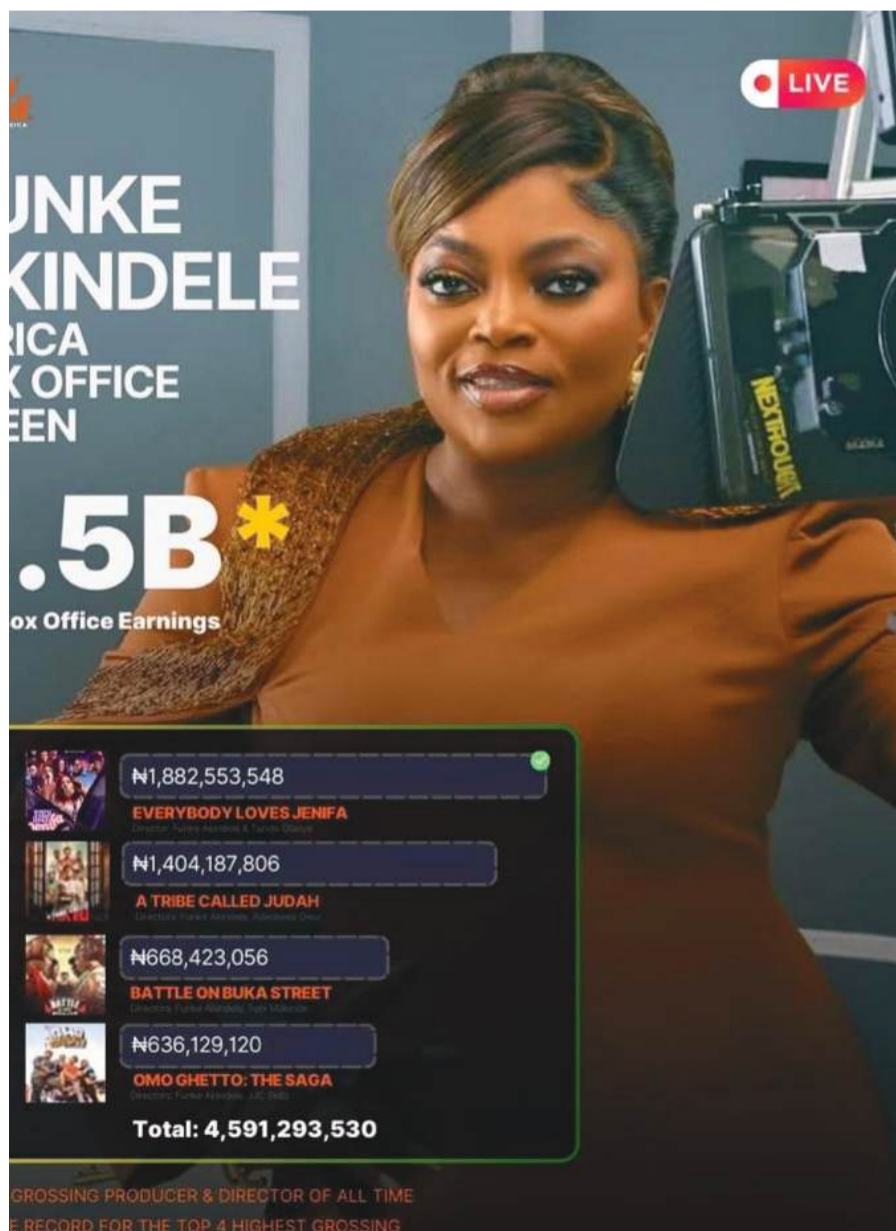
The film, which continues the legacy of the beloved *Jenifa* franchise, dominated cinemas week after week, securing the No. 1 spot for seven consecutive weekends and becoming one of the highest-grossing Nollywood films ever.

A record-breaking box office run

Since its release, *Everybody Loves Jennifa* has drawn massive audiences, delivering an outstanding performance at the box office. Here's a breakdown of its impressive earnings: Total Gross: N1.88 Billion and counting! And the No. 1 Movie in Nigeria for 7 weekends. These are the weekend performance highlights.

Dec 6 - 12: N16.8M (Pre-release)
Dec 13 - 15: N190.4M (N207.1M Total)
Dec 20 - 22: N157.5M (N364.6M Total)
Dec 27 - 29: N250M (N614.6M Total)
Jan 17 - 19: N53.4M (N668M Total)
Jan 24 - 26: N40.7M (N708.7M Total)
Jan 31 - Feb 2: N26.5M (N735.2M Total)
Feb 7 - 9: N13.1M (N748.3M Total)
Feb 14 - 16: N13.2M (N761.5M Total)
Feb 21 - 23: N6.8M (N768.3M Total)

Nollywood's box office powerhouse With this achievement, Funke Akindele further solidifies her status as Nollywood's most bankable filmmaker. *Everybody Loves Jennifa* follows the success of her previous films like *Battle on Buka Street* and *Omo Ghetto: The Saga*, which also shattered records. Akindele's ability to blend comedy, drama, and relatable storytelling has proven to be a winning formula, attracting audiences in droves.



NEPTUNE PRIME BUSINESS

MARKET SURVEY

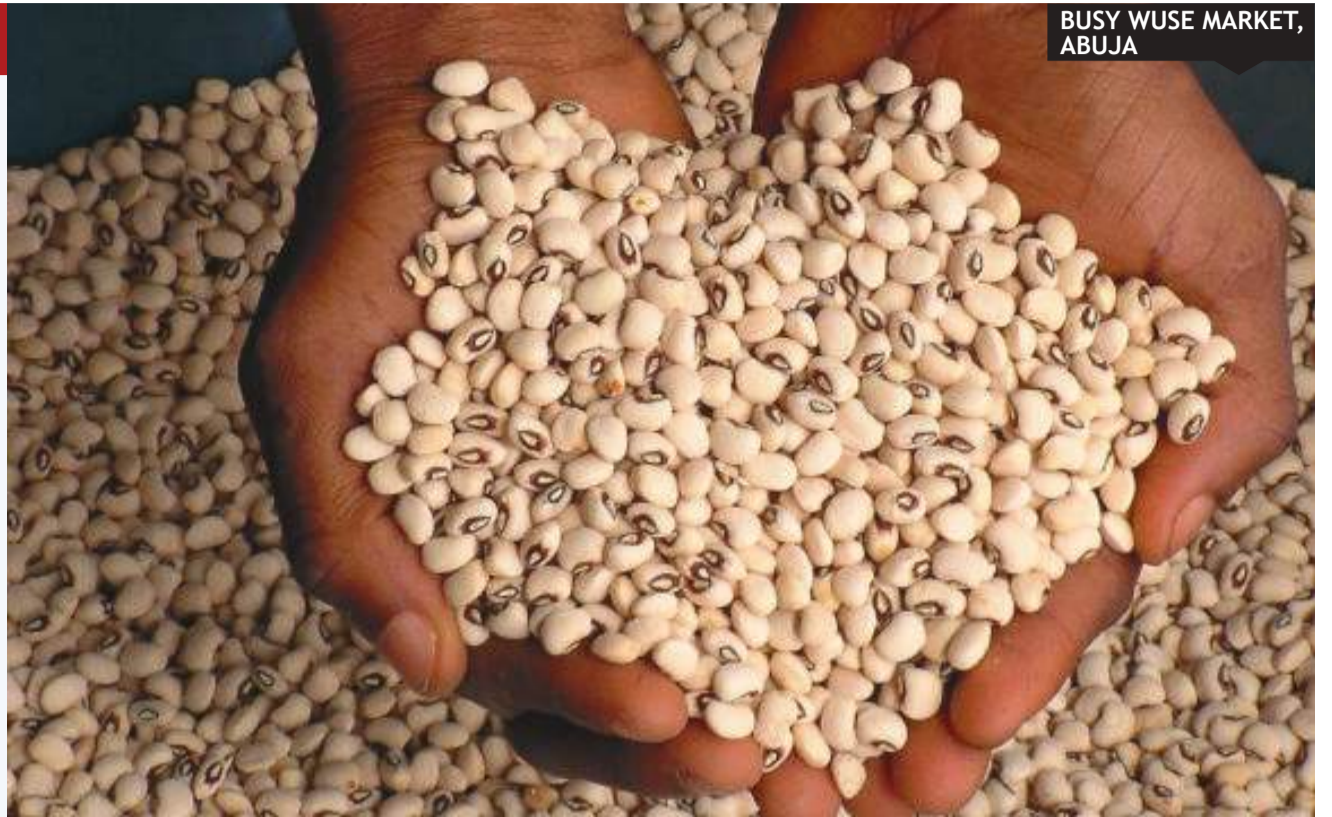
Market Survey; Utako Ultra modern market, Abuja

Report from Aisha Auyo, Abuja

- Red beans N2500 per mudu
- White beans N2000 per mudu
- Kampala beans N3000 per mudu
- Millet N1200 per mudu
- Maize N1200 per mudu
- Soybeans N1700 per mudu
- Hibiscus / Zobo N1000 per mudu
- Groundnut/Peanut N2800 per mudu
- Dry ginger N14000 per mudu
- Clove/ Kaninfar N18000 per mudu
- Attaruhu pepper N9500 per basket
- Tomatoes N4500 per Basket
- Tattasai N5000 per basket
- Shambo N5000 per basket
- Lemon N8000 per mudu
- Onions N8000 per Basket
- Irish potatoes N11000 per basket
- Sweet potato N3000 per basket
- Local chicken N7000 per piece
- Broilers N7000 per piece
- Beef N6500 per kilo



Note: Abuja Mudu is half the size of real mudu



MILESTONE

BY AYANDA NGWANE,
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Omonuwa M. Eichie, a Pan-African humanitarian, serial entrepreneur, and business consultant

Omonuwa M. Eichie, is a Pan-African humanitarian, serial entrepreneur, and business consultant with over 26 years of experience.

His career is driven by a commitment to innovation, cultural enrichment, and the empowerment of African communities. He has founded several companies and organisations that reflect these values, aiming to redefine business solutions and celebrate African heritage on a global scale.

Business Ventures

FulcrumBizOps
(fulcrumbizops.com)

A leading business consulting and BPO company, FulcrumBizOps delivers comprehensive and tailored services to businesses of all sizes. They prioritise a client-centric approach, innovation, and excellence, ensuring that their solutions enhance operational efficiency and drive growth.

AfriArt Space (afriartspace.com)

This premier platform champions the celebration and commercialisation of African art. Serving as a vital cultural hub, AfriArt Space promotes artists, curators, and galleries, facilitating financial sustainability and expanding the global market for African art.

Concierge234
(concierge234.ng)

Leveraging cutting-edge technology, Concierge234 offers a seamless, comprehensive luxury lifestyle management and concierge platform. They specialise in providing high-end, personalised services accessible worldwide, connecting suppliers with a global clientele and ensuring quality and responsiveness that exceed global standards.

Fulcrum Courses
(fulcrumcourse.com)

A dynamic online learning platform tailored specifically for Africans, both in the diaspora and at home. Fulcrum Courses empowers educators by providing a space to share knowledge and earn income, while enabling lifelong learning and professional development for students and workers alike.

DigibizOp (digibizop.com)

An advanced digital platform designed to connect businesses with a vast network of top-tier professionals offering high-quality digital services remotely. DigibizOp enables clients to efficiently enhance their operations, access specialised skills on demand, and drive business innovation from anywhere in the world.

Urafat (urafat.c0.za)

Urafat stands for "Urban African Attires" and it combines African designs, styles, and prints with urban fashion trends, Urafat creates a dynamic online clothing

brand. Our garments are expressions of identity, connection, and cultural celebration in the modern urban landscape.

Afrikins

A pioneering platform dedicated to fostering African kinship and enhancing cultural pride both on the continent and among the diaspora. Afrikins utilises advanced technology to unite Africans globally, empowering them to initiate and participate in transformative projects that address key socio-economic challenges.

Objective

My overarching objective is to harness technology and innovation to drive business success and make a positive impact in Africa. I aim to change the narrative that Africa is a third-world continent with substandard services and goods. By leveraging our rich natural and human resources, we can lead the world in various sectors. I believe in owning

our narrative and correcting misconceptions by telling our own stories, showcasing our wealth in minerals, culture, and community values. Unity and collaboration are key to building businesses that benefit Africa and its people.

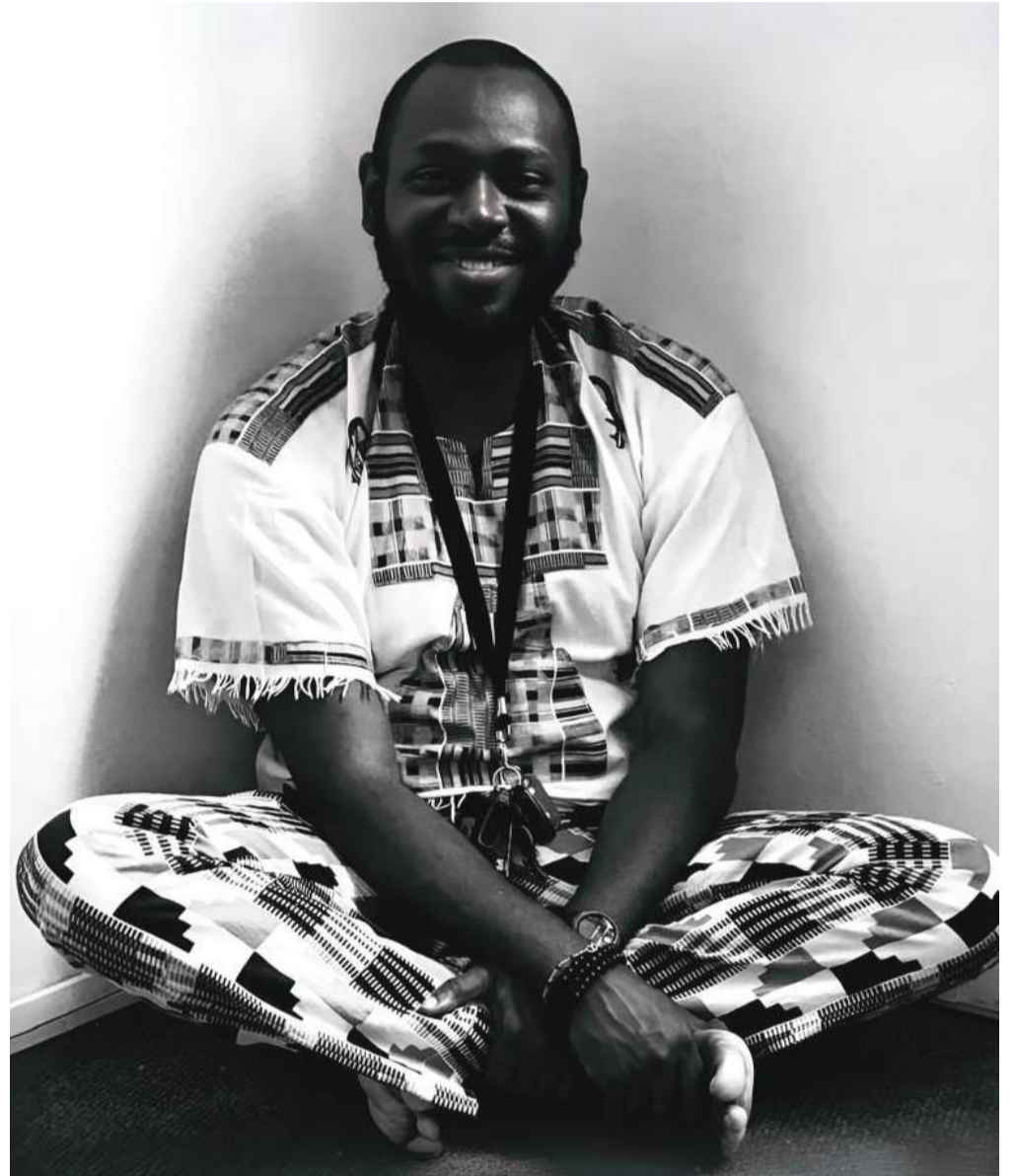
The African Future and Collaboration in My Industries

Africa's future is promising, especially when we embrace collaboration across various sectors. In business consulting, art, luxury services, online education, digital services, fashion, and cultural platforms, there is immense potential for growth and innovation. By working together, sharing knowledge, and leveraging our diverse talents, we can create sustainable solutions that address our unique challenges and opportunities. This collaborative approach will not only elevate our industries but also contribute to the socio-economic development of the continent.

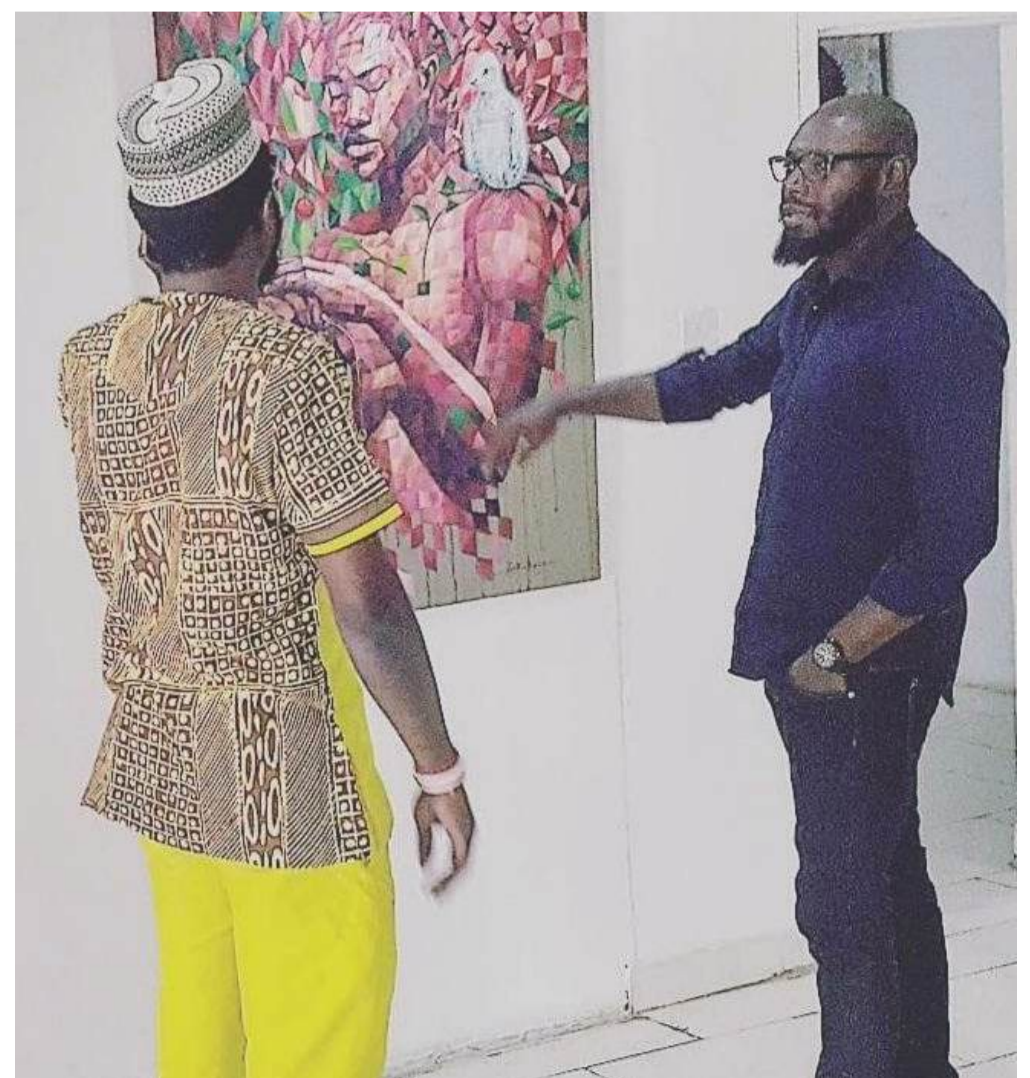
Quotes



Eichie



Eichie



Comrade, Omonuwa Eichie with one of his Artists in the Studio

HERITAGE

BY MARIYA SHUAIBU SULEIMAN
Mariya Shuaibu@neptuneprime.com.ng

Afizere People: Keepers of a Rich Cultural Legacy and Resilient Traditions



Nestled in the captivating landscapes of Plateau State, Nigeria, is a remarkable ethnic group known as the Afizere people, also referred to as the Jarawa. With a unique heritage that spans centuries, the Afizere have upheld their customs, beliefs, and traditions while navigating the complexities of modern society. Their history is one of resilience, cultural pride, and a deep connection to their ancestral land.

This article delves into the origin, governance, marriage customs, festivals, local cuisine, and other essential aspects of the Afizere people, painting a vivid picture of this fascinating community.

Origins and Migration History

The Afizere people are believed to be one of the indigenous ethnic groups of the Jos Plateau. Oral traditions suggest that they migrated from the Shere Hills region, a rugged mountainous terrain that has long served as their ancestral homeland. The name "Jarawa" was given to them by neighboring communities, meaning "people of the river" or "river dwellers".

Historical accounts indicate that the Afizere were among the earliest settlers in the Jos Plateau, arriving long before the influx of other ethnic groups. As an agrarian society, they thrived in the fertile highlands, cultivating crops and domesticating animals. The Jos Plateau provided them with security, fresh water, and ample agricultural land, making it a strategic settlement for survival and growth.

Over time, the Afizere interacted with Hausa, Berom, Anaguta, and Fulani communities, leading to cultural exchanges and occasional conflicts. Despite external influences, the Afizere have retained their identity, language, and core traditions. Today, they predominantly reside in Jos East, Jos North, and Jos South Local Government Areas of Plateau State, with smaller populations in Bauchi State.

Language and Identity

The Afizere people speak Izere, a unique language belonging to the Benue-Congo language family. While Hausa and English are widely spoken due to inter-ethnic interactions and formal education, Izere remains a critical marker of their identity.

Elders and cultural organizations have launched initiatives to preserve the Izere language, especially among younger generations. Schools in Afizere communities incorporate Izere teachings into their

curriculum, and cultural festivals serve as platforms for reinforcing linguistic pride.

Traditional Governance and Leadership Structure

Afizere society operates under a structured monarchical system, with traditional rulers overseeing the administration of their people. At the apex of leadership is the Agwom Izere, the paramount ruler and custodian of Afizere customs and traditions.

The Agwom Izere's role includes:

Mediating disputes and ensuring justice.

Preserving historical traditions and cultural heritage.

Promoting development and unity among the people.

Acting as a bridge between the Afizere people and governmental authorities.

Below the Agwom Izere, the community is further organized into clans, each headed by a clan chief. These local leaders play an essential role in governance, ensuring that traditions are respected and passed down through generations.

Cultural Practices and Traditions

Folklore and Oral Traditions

The Afizere people have a rich tradition of storytelling, where elders pass down folktales, proverbs, and myths that convey moral lessons. Some tales explain the origins of their people, while others offer wisdom about bravery, honesty, and communal living.

One popular myth among the Afizere is the Legend of the River Guardians, which speaks of ancestral spirits protecting their land from invaders. Such stories are narrated during moonlit nights, often accompanied by traditional flute melodies.

Marriage Rites and Family Life

Marriage is a sacred institution among the Afizere, symbolizing unity between families and clans. The process follows elaborate steps:

1. Introduction Ceremony (Iku Nzem)

The groom's family formally visits the bride's family to declare their intention. This gathering involves elders from both sides, who discuss the background and compatibility of the couple.

2. Bride Price Negotiation (Iku Vwo)

A critical aspect of Afizere marriages is the payment of bride price, which symbolizes respect and commitment. The items typically include:

Livestock (goats or cows)

Bags of millet and maize

Traditional fabric and beads

Money (symbolic, not exploitative)

The bride price is not seen as a commercial transaction but as a way to honor the bride's family.

3. Traditional Wedding Ceremony (Iku Da)

The wedding day is a grand celebration, featuring:

Traditional music and dance performances.

The bride adorned in intricate beaded attire, reflecting Afizere heritage.

A feast of local delicacies such as tuwo and miyan kuka.

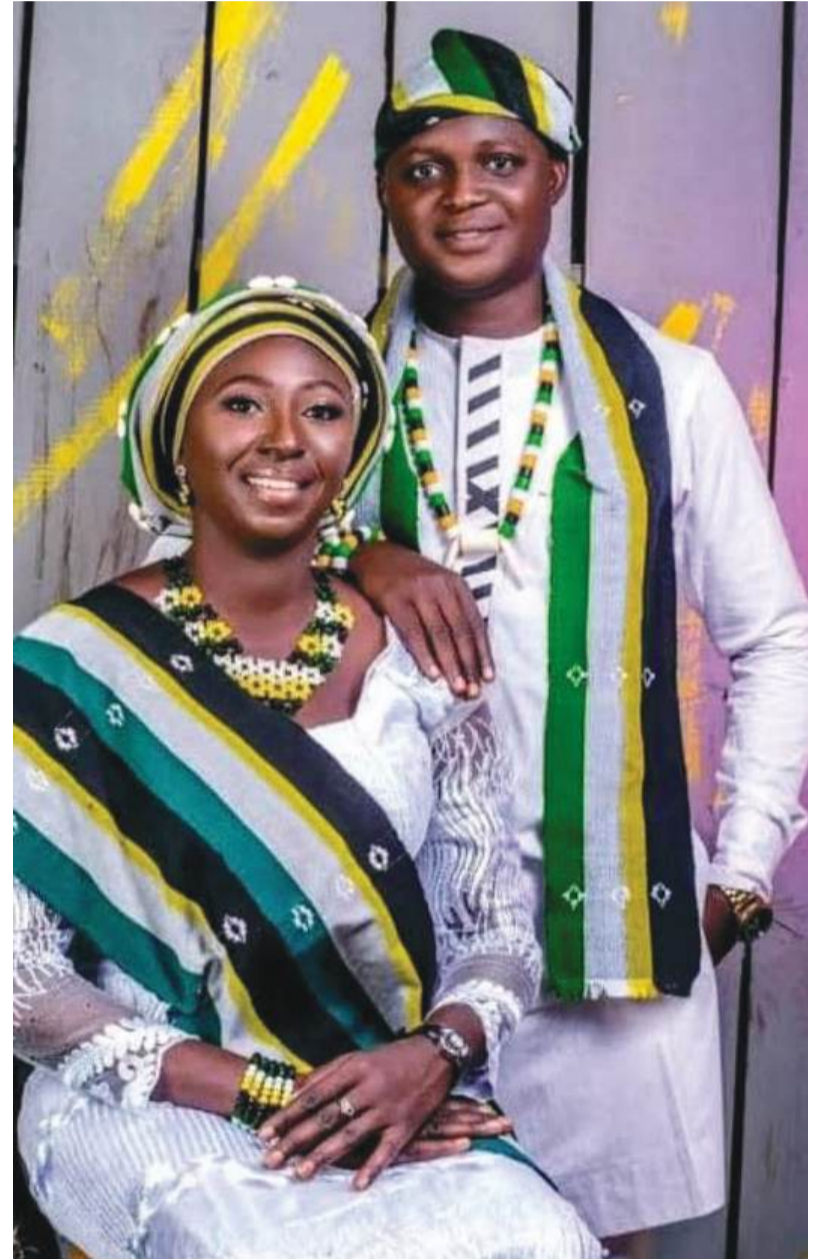
After the ceremony, the bride undergoes a rites of passage process, where elder women educate her on family life, child-rearing, and cultural values.

Festivals and Cultural Celebrations

1. The Asharuwa Festival

The Asharuwa dance festival is a major event among the Afizere, marked by flute melodies, rhythmic drumming, and energetic dancing. It serves as a means of storytelling, cultural expression, and community bonding.

2. Afizere New Yam Festival



PERGAMON: An ancient city with scientific, cultural-religious importance

Pergamum, also spelt Pergamon, is a famous archaeological site in present-day Turkey which developed under the Attalid dynasty following the death of Alexander the Great.

Pergamon was founded in the 3rd century BC as the capital of the Attalid dynasty. Located in the Aegean Region, the heart of the Antique World, and at the crossroads between Europe and the Middle East, it became an important cultural, scientific and political centre.

The creation of the capital on top of Kale Hill set the scene for the city. High steep sloping terrain and the Bakırçay Plain were integrated into the urban plan. The exceptional composition of monuments includes the extremely steep theatre, the lengthy stoa, a three-terraced Gymnasium, the Great Altar of Pergamon, the tumuli, pressured water pipelines, the city walls, and the Kybele Sanctuary which was perfectly aligned with Kale Hill.

As the Attalid capital, Pergamon was the protector of cities in the Hellenistic Period. It had political and artistic power and built up a very intense relationship with its contemporary civilisations. The dynasty founded one of the largest libraries in Pergamon,

and the rivalry between the three Hellenistic dynasties caused the Attalid Dynasty to create the famous sculpture school.

Roman takeover

After the city was passed to the Romans in 133 BC, Pergamon became a metropolis and was the capital of the Roman Province of Asia during the Roman imperial period. The Romans maintained the already existing structures of the Hellenistic Period while adding new functions as a cultural and imperial cult centre of the empire.

Consequently, during the Roman Period, many important structures were built or further developed, including the Asclepion Sanctuary, a well-known healing centre whose sacred spring still flows; the Roman Theatre; one of the largest Roman amphitheatres; a great aqueduct; the Trajan Temple and the Serapeum.

During the Byzantine Period due to the relocation of the trade roads and political centres from the Aegean Region to northwest Anatolia, especially to Istanbul (Constantinople), Pergamon was transformed from a major Hellenistic and Roman centre into a middle-sized town and continued its cultural-religious importance as home to one of

the Seven Churches of Asia. Pergamon now preserves and presents this transformation.

The Ottomans and urbanisation

After the arrival of the Ottomans, Pergamon experienced one more cultural adjustment, which is especially evident on the Bakırçay Plain. The Ottomans provided the city with all necessary urban structures, such as mosques, baths, bridges, khans, bedestens (covered bazaars), arastas (Ottoman markets) and water systems overlaying the Roman and Byzantine settlement layers.

The superimposition of all these different periods and cultures through continuous habitation in Pergamon finds its reflection in Pergamon's urban form and architecture as continuities, formations, transformations and losses due to the material existence and use of space by different eras and cultures. The re-use of structures by later cultures is particularly demonstrated by the Church of St. John, formerly part of the Serapeum, a sanctuary dedicated by the Romans to an Egyptian deity. It subsequently became an Ottoman Mosque as well as incorporating a Jewish Synagogue.

From the 3rd century BC onwards, the city was encircled

by a ring of grave mounds of various sizes, which demonstrated Pergamon's claim to the plain of Bakırçay. In addition to grave mounds, there were sanctuaries, such as the Kybele Sanctuary at Kapıkaya, sited on prominent hills and mountain peaks in the area surrounding the city.

Pergamon is a testimony to the unique and integrated aesthetic achievement of civilization. It incorporates Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman structures, reflecting Paganism, Christianity, Judaism and Islam; preserving their cultural features within the historical landscape.

Important historical record

Pergamon is associated with important people, schools, ideas and traditions concerning art, architecture, planning, religion and science. The Pergamon sculpture school contributed to the 'Pergamon style'.

The Kybele Cult represents a continual tradition and belief in Anatolia. Due to the consequent settling of Romans in Anatolia, following the transfer of the Kybele cult idol to Rome by Pergamon's Attalid king and the subsequent inheritance by Rome of Pergamon due to Attalid bequest in 133 BC, Pergamon



is directly associated with the creation of an eastern Roman empire.

The continual religious use of the Temple of Serapis, which was first constructed as a temple during the Roman period, converted and used as a church during the late Roman and Byzantine periods, while one of its rotunda was used as a synagogue, and then continued to be used but as a mosque beginning from 13th century onwards, is an example of the continuity of use for religious purposes at a particular place.

The physician, surgeon and philosopher Galen was trained in Pergamon, and his works were disseminated from there. Worthy

of mention is also the tradition of production of Parchment specific to Pergamon.

Integrity

Today, the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Pergamum is open to visitors and has a small archaeological museum in Berlin, containing a selection of the artefacts excavated from the site in the 1880s.

Pergamon and its Multi-layered Cultural Landscape contains all the elements necessary to express Outstanding Universal Value, including view lines between the Kybele sanctuary at Kapıkaya and the acropolis, and between the burial mounds and the acropolis, and does not suffer from neglect.



ROOTS

BY GIFT LUCKSON
GiftLuckson@neptuneprime.com.ng

Ottobah Cugoano: From slavery to the messiah of slaves

Ottobah Cugoano was an African slave born Quobna Ottobah Cugoano in 1757 to a Fante family Agimaque (Ajumako) in the Gold Coast (modern-day Ghana). He was later known as John Stuart. He was sold into slavery at the age of thirteen and shipped to Grenada in the West Indies.

Before his death, Cugoano was a British abolitionist and activist.

Slavery

At the age of 13, Cugoano was kidnapped with a group of other children and sold into slavery, they were later transported from Cape Coast on a slave ship to Grenada.

He worked on a plantation in the Lesser Antilles until he was purchased in 1772 by Alexander Campbell, a Scottish plantation owner, who took him into his household.

Emancipation and Liberation Movement for other slaves

Late in 1772, Campbell took Cugoano with him on a visit to England where Cugoano was able to secure his freedom. On 20 August 1773, he was baptised at St James's Church, Piccadilly, as "John Stuart – a Black, aged 16 Years"

In 1784, Cugoano was employed as a servant by the artists Richard Cosway and his wife, Maria, where he became acquainted with several prominent British political and cultural figures as a result, including the poet William Blake and the Prince of Wales.

Together with Olaudah Equiano and other educated Africans living in Britain, Cugoano became active in the Sons of Africa, an abolitionist group whose members wrote frequently to the newspapers of the day, condemning the

practice of slavery.

Unlike other African writers before him, Cugoano, it seems, found it 'impossible to emphasize the personal at the expense of the political.'

He wrote not to tell the story of his 'bondage and freedom' or 'to fashion a public persona.' Instead, he mastered the English language to articulate an alternative stream of thought in confronting racist discourses about Africans and the human trafficking of its people.

A saviour of other slaves

Cugoano's earliest known writing, however, is a letter he sent to the Prince of Wales in 1786, urging him to "consider the Case of the poor Africans who are most barbarously captured and unlawfully carried away from their own country and cruelly enslaved by many under the British Government".

This was Cugoano's first act of moral suasion and served as an introduction to his book published the following year in July 1787. An abridged version was published in 1791, addressed explicitly to his "Countrymen and brother Sufferers."

In 1786, he played a key role in the case of Henry Demane, a kidnapped black man who was to be shipped back to the West Indies. Cugoano contacted Granville Sharp, a well-known abolitionist, who was able to have Demane removed from the ship before it sailed.

In 1787, possibly with the help of his friend Equiano, Cugoano published an abolitionist work entitled *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*.

By now a devout Christian, his work was informed by Cugoano's religious belief, and he used arguments around Christianity and global economics and politics for this cause.

The work called for the abolition of slavery and the immediate emancipation of all enslaved people. It argues that an enslaved person must escape from slavery and that force should be used to prevent further enslavement. Cugoano devoted pages to his own first-hand experience, describing how he had been betrayed by African slave traders who had sold him and other children to European traders.

He vividly recalled his exact worth, being equal to that of a gun, cloth and some lead. The work was immensely popular, being reprinted three times and translated into French.

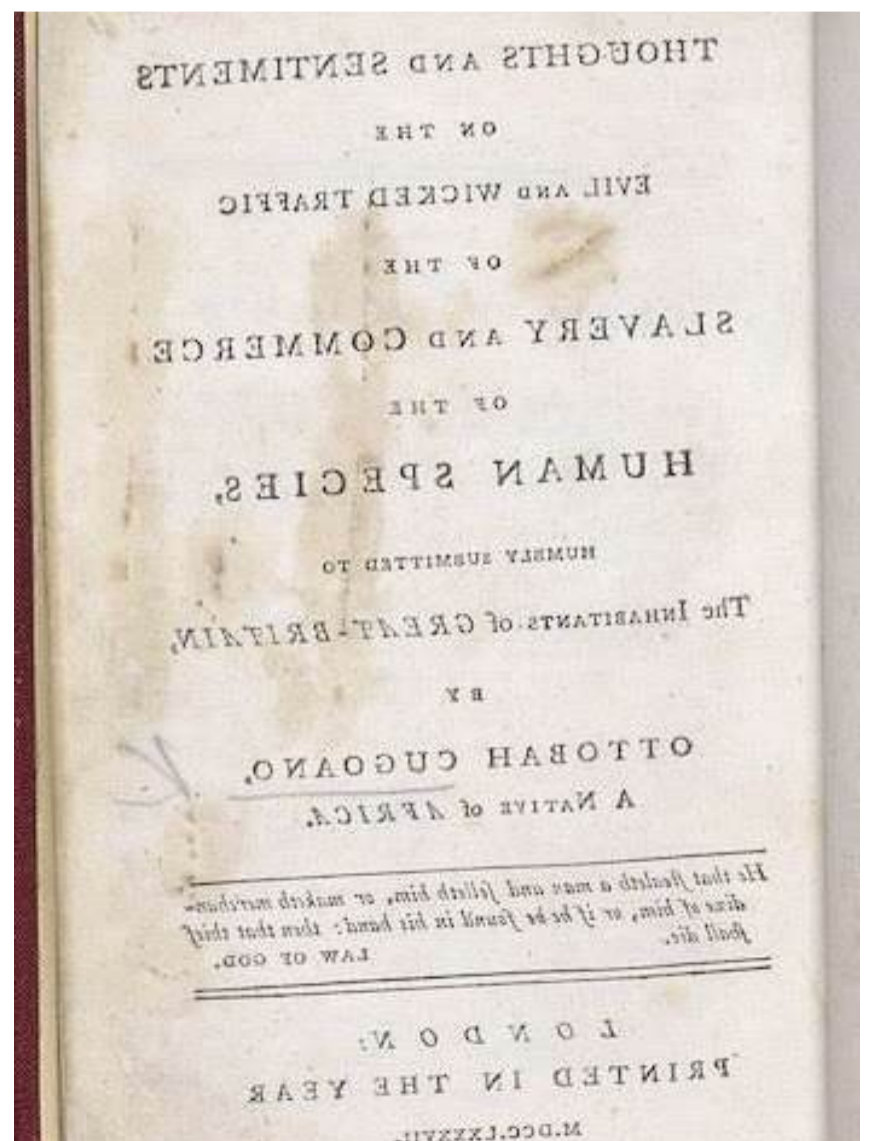
Further travels and death

In 1791, Cugoano moved with the Cosways to 12 Queen Street in Mayfair. His last known letter, written in 1791, mentions travelling to "upwards of fifty places" to promote the book and that he found that "complexion is a predominant prejudice".

Cugoano wished to travel to Nova Scotia to recruit settlers for the proposed free colony of African Britons in Sierra Leone but it is not known if he did so. After 1791, Cugoano disappeared from historical record and was said to have likely died in 1791 or 1792.

Commemoration

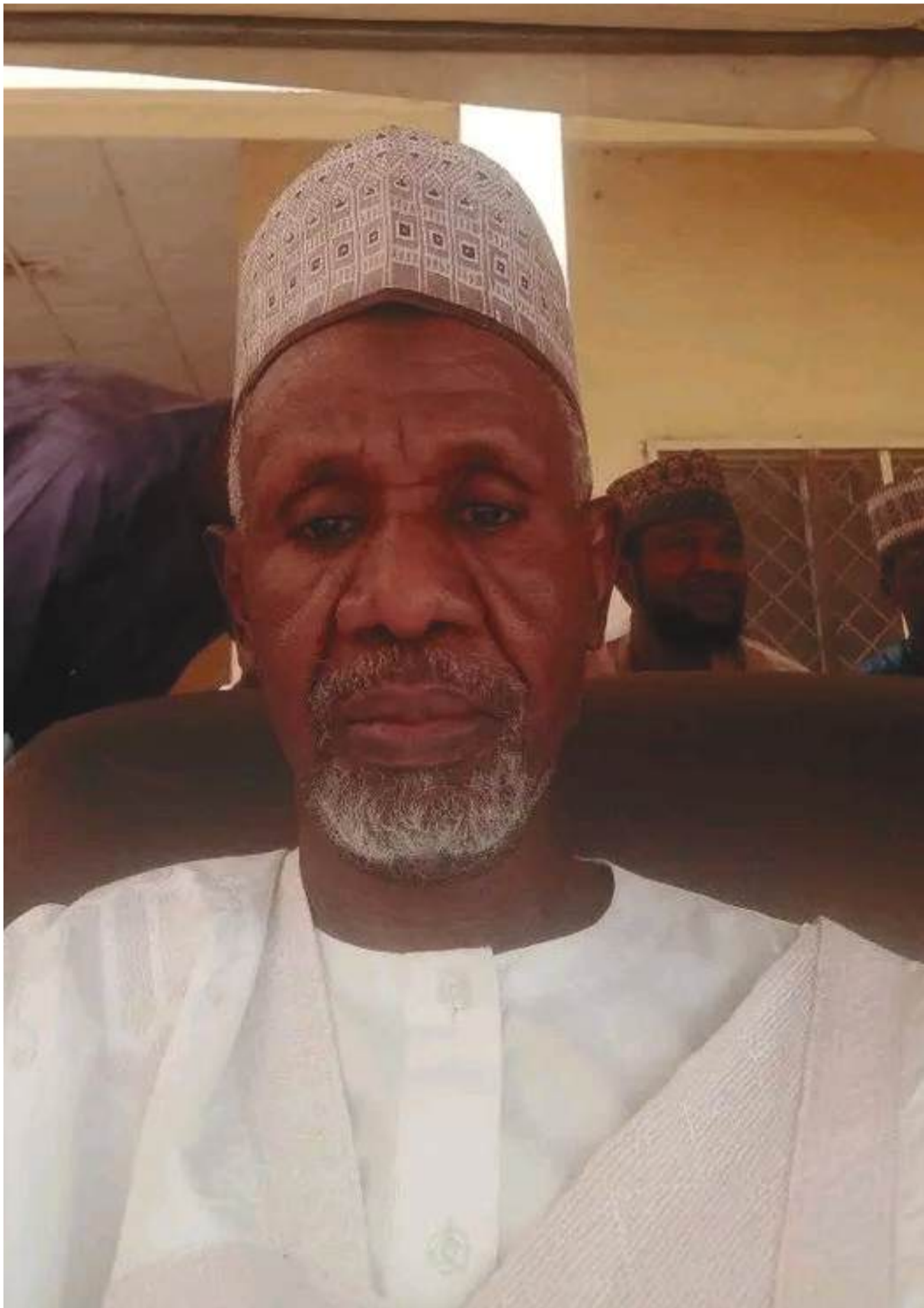
In November 2020, an English Heritage blue plaque honouring Cugoano was unveiled at Schomberg House in Pall Mall, London, where he had lived and worked with the Cosways from 1784 to 1791.



Cugoano's abolitionist work in 1787

OLDIES

I advise civil servants to start a business before retirement – Balarabe Musa Gwagwarwa



Balarabe Musa Gwagwarwa

BY JAMEEL YAKASAI

Retirement anxiety is a common phenomenon among Nigerian civil servants. As retirement approaches, many civil servants are filled with apprehension and uncertainty. This is because after decades of dedicated service, the thought of leaving the familiar routine and steady income can be daunting.

The fear of retirement stems from various concerns, including, but not limited to financial insecurity. They are anxious to see if their pension and gratuity can be sufficient to sustain them. Without the usual

monthly salaries and allowances due to loss of job titles responsibilities they think hard time awaits them. They think they may not have access to quality healthcare and wellbeing as well as social support.

Also the thought of boredom and disengagement is foreboding. How will they occupy their time and maintain a sense of purpose? But for Balarabe Musa Gwagwarwa, the song is different.

These concerns are valid, but with proper planning, support, and a positive mindset, Nigerian civil servants can navigate this transition and enjoy a fulfilling post-

retirement life.

Balarabe Musa Gwagwarwa, a retired government employee from Kano State, shared his post-retirement experiences with Jameel Yakasai, Kano correspondent of Neptune Prime.

NP: Where did you serve?

I served at Kano State Censor Board. After serving for 28 years at the Board, I retired in 2016.

NP: What do you do after retirement?

Initially, I ventured into poultry farming but faced challenges, particularly with “Birds Fluid.” However, I have since recovered and now focusing on creating engaging content on social media, which has become my passion.

NP: At what Grade Level did you retire?

I retired at Grade Level 09 due to being reverted from level 12. Ironically, it was the same month I was due for promotion to level 13. But Alhamdulillah, I accept my fate.

NP: How many years did you work for Kano Censor Board?

I worked there for about 28 years at the Censorship Board in Kano State.

NP: When did you retire?

I retired from service in 2016 as I have earlier said. After retirement, I started raising poultry and livestock. However, I had a break during the “Birds Fluid” period. But I am now doing a little bit more because I am also doing social media stuffs and creating contents which is now my strongest point.

NP: What has been your relationship with your family?

I am grateful to Allah for not facing difficulties with my family after retirement. I attribute this to my good relationship with them, especially my son Musa, whom I consider my best friend. My story highlights the importance of maintaining a strong family bonds and exploring new interests after retirement.

NP: Why did you retire voluntarily?

I retired because then there was nothing new in my social life. So I needed to explore other areas.

NP: Tell us more

I had been able to continue my services for a full time without any problems or the thought of retiring. Now I have found great peace and tranquility after retirement. Alhamdulillah.

NP: Apart from farming, and social media content creation, what else do you do?

Besides these, I am also a professional broadcaster, presenting TV and radio programmes, and appearing in Kannywood dramas and films.

NP: Have you got your gratuities?

Regarding my right to gratuity, I have no problem. I left on time, since I was among the 182 who voluntarily retired from service. The government fulfilled its promise to pay us within a month, even though other promises it had made at the time were not fulfilled.

NP: Did you fear, as some civil servants do, life after retirement?

I did not feel any fear or anxiety when retirement approached, because I knew that my retirement would come, even if I did not retire on my own, death would come.

NP: What is your advice to civil servants on retirement?

I advise employees, especially government employees, to continue to work honestly and with integrity, and to start thinking about starting a business before their retirement, so that they can have their hands full because the monthly allowance or pension will not be enough for them.

I am grateful to Allah for not facing difficulties with my family after retirement

HUMANIST

BY IBRAHEEM EL-TAFSEER
(IbrahimSabo@neptuneprime.com.ng)

A Life in Peril: Hauwa Adamu's desperate cry for help

Hauwa Adamu, a three-and-a-half-year-old girl from Tandari area, Potiskum, Yobe State, is battling a severe and persistent boil on her navel. For over three agonising months, Hauwa has endured immense pain, discomfort, and distress, leaving her in a painful condition.

Hauwa's mother said the girl's ordeal began suddenly when she woke up one day complaining of severe pains in her upper abdomen. Rushed to Potiskum Specialist Hospital, Hauwa received initial treatment, but the doctors soon revealed that the hospital lacked the specialised expertise to address her condition. The family was then advised to seek further treatment at either the Yobe State University Teaching Hospital in Damaturu or the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital. Unfortunately, Hauwa's family is beset by poverty, rendering them unable to afford the costly journey to either the Yobe State University Teaching Hospital or the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital. As a result, the young girl's condition continues to worsen, with the boil growing larger and more painful by the day. Heartbreakingly, Hauwa remains at home, devoid of the medical attention she desperately needs, simply due to her family's inability to cover the expenses.

We urgently appeal to the government, philanthropists, caregivers, civil society organisations, and individuals with a heart for humanity to come to Hauwa's aid. Your assistance, whether financial, medical, or logistical, can make a significant difference in saving this young girl's life. We implore you to join hands with us in providing Hauwa with the necessary medical care and attention she desperately needs.

Together, we can help alleviate her suffering and give her a chance to live a healthy and fulfilling life. As we conclude this appeal, we remain hopeful



Hauwa Adamu

that Hauwa's plight will touch the hearts of compassionate individuals and organisations. Time is of the essence, and every minute counts in saving this young girl's life.

We appeal to anyone willing to lend a helping hand to contact Hauwa's guardian, Muhammad Abdul, on: **08148871924** or **08025608283** for more information on how to assist.

Together, let us rally around Hauwa and give her the chance to live a life free from pain and suffering.

FEATURES

Ramadan: Reducing school hours better than total closure



School children in northern Nigeria

BY HAMZAT IBRAHIM

The recent decision by the governments of Katsina, Kebbi, Kano, and Bauchi states to shut down private schools for Ramadan has sparked controversy, especially considering the already high percentage of out-of-school children in these states.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Bauchi has the highest percentage of children without access to education at 54%, followed by Kebbi (45%), Katsina (38%), and Kano (35%). With an average of 44% of children deprived of schooling in these states—10 percentage points above the national average—education advocates argue that a total shutdown may worsen an already dire situation.

Rather than closing schools entirely, state governments could reduce school hours to accommodate fasting students while maintaining academic activities.

This approach would allow pupils to observe Ramadan without sacrificing their education, ensuring that learning continues in a modified but effective

manner.

The Northern climate and school adaptations

It is worth noting that northern Nigeria is known for its hot weather conditions, with temperatures often exceeding 40°C during the dry season.

Despite these extreme conditions, schools remain open, with adjustments such as early closing times, shaded classrooms, and hydration breaks to protect students. If such measures can be implemented for harsh weather, a similar strategy could be used during Ramadan.

Schools could start earlier in the day and close before noon, giving students ample time for rest and religious observances.

Precedents of school closures during Ramadan

This is not the first time northern states have shut down schools during Ramadan. In previous years, some states have adjusted academic calendars to align with the holy month, either by extending term breaks or closing schools entirely.

However, these decisions often come at a cost,

especially for students preparing for national examinations like the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and the National Examinations Council (NECO) exams. Prolonged closures disrupt learning progress, leaving students unprepared for critical assessments.

For instance, in 2023, some northern states implemented a mid-term break during Ramadan instead of a full closure, allowing students to balance their studies with religious obligations.

This approach proved effective in maintaining educational continuity while respecting cultural and religious traditions. The Katsina and Bauchi directives

The Katsina State government's recent directive, enforced by the Hisbah Board, mandates the closure of all private schools during Ramadan, with penalties for non-compliance.

Similarly, Bauchi State has imposed a five-week break, disrupting the second-term academic calendar.

While these directives are intended to support religious observance, critics argue that they disproportionately affect children who are already educationally disadvantaged.

Striking a balance

A balanced approach would be to shorten school hours rather than impose a total closure. This would allow children to continue learning while observing their faith.

Additionally, incorporating Islamic studies into morning sessions could enrich students' understanding of Ramadan while ensuring that core subjects are not neglected.

With education playing a crucial role in national development, policymakers must consider long-term consequences before implementing broad shutdowns.

By adopting flexible school schedules instead of outright closures, state governments can uphold religious traditions without further exacerbating the educational crisis in northern Nigeria.

Opposition political parties and the imperative of a cohesive approach to political strategy

BY BELLO GWARZO ABDULLAHI

Situations often dictate the responses of individuals and groups to various issues, be they social, economic, political, or religious in nature. Politics is a serious endeavour, requiring strategic alliances and resolute action. The opposition political parties consistently encounter significant obstacles that challenge their ability to make a substantial impact in elections. However, shifts in political dynamics present a valuable opportunity to confront these challenges.

Reflect on the 2015 defeat of the then ruling party, the PDP. What is essential is a steadfast sense of resilience combined with robust strategies. The opposition must awaken from their inertia and confront difficulties head-on. In established democracies, the opposition serves as watchdogs, ensuring that the ruling party fulfills its governance responsibilities diligently. Approaching the 2027 elections, there is a looming concern of a one-party state unless measures are taken to address the current situation. The disarray among opposition parties is contributing to this undesirable scenario. Hence, it is imperative for opposition parties to formulate a coherent political strategy. Without a unified approach, they risk diluting their message, confusing voters, and ultimately undermining their endeavours.

The success of opposition parties hinges on their ability to synchronize their activities; otherwise, conflicting messages may prevail, leading to disarray and diminished credibility. Conversely, through a cohesive strategy, opposition parties can present a consolidated front that is more appealing to voters, showcasing a clear alternative to the ruling party's policies. Moreover, a coherent political strategy enables opposition parties to leverage their collective resources and strengths more effectively.

By pooling their expertise, funding, and grassroots support, opposition parties can mount a more robust challenge to the ruling party's dominance. This collaborative approach also allows them to synchronize their efforts in crucial areas such as policy development, campaign messaging, and voter outreach. The significance of a unified political strategy cannot be overstated in today's political landscape. By working collaboratively towards a shared goal, opposition parties can enhance their visibility, credibility, and electoral prospects. Only through unity and coordination can they aspire to effectively challenge the status quo and present a compelling alternative to voters. The time for action is now, as time waits for no one.

A closer examination of the 2023 presidential election results reveals intriguing trends that could favor the opposition if they can organize themselves effectively. For instance, the President garnered 62.5% of his total votes from the North and 37.5% from the South. In the North, nearly half of the votes—49.6%—originated in the North West.

Further analysis shows that the South West contributed 79% of the total votes from the South to the President. While the North West region heavily supported the APC in the past, recent indications suggest a decline in the party's popularity. This shift in voter sentiment presents an opportunity for the opposition to gain traction in the region by addressing key issues that resonate with the local population.

The political landscape in Lagos State, the President's stronghold, remains uncertain, while in Osun, his ancestral base, the PDP holds sway. In the South-South and South-East, the LP emerged victorious. The current situation in Rivers State also presents an opportunity for the opposition. It is evident that the opposition stands to make progress by navigating these regional complexities and presenting a united front in the upcoming elections.

As the political landscape evolves, the importance of strategic alliances, effective communication, and inclusive leadership cannot be overstated. Building consensus among diverse stakeholders, utilizing technology for voter outreach, and tackling pressing socio-economic challenges are crucial strategies that the opposition must prioritize to expand their support base and appeal to a broader range of voters.

The future of Nigerian politics depends on the opposition's ability to seize these opportunities and mobilize support across diverse regions and demographics, ultimately shaping the country's democratic landscape.



SPORTS

BY MUHAMMAD KUKURI,
MuhammadKukuri@neptuneprime.com.ng

Walsh alleges 'corruption' played role in defeat

Michaela Walsh has alleged "corruption" played a role in her unanimous decision defeat at the World Boxing Championships by Serbia's Andjela Brankovic.

Home fighter Brankovic was unanimously awarded the opening round and claimed a 4-1 split decision in the final round by the judges of the 58kg contest, while Belfast boxer Walsh forced a 3-2 split decision in the second.

Overall, sixth seed Brankovic was awarded the win by all five judges. Belfast fighter Walsh, 31, posted on her Instagram, external that her "dream was stolen" and she refuses "to let corruption define my story".

"I stepped into the ring at the World Championships against hometown boxer and dominated the fight," she said.

"It was clear as day. Yet somehow, the decision went against me." The Irish Athletic Boxing Association (IABA) boycotted both the previous men's and women's amateur World Championships in 2023 in protest over the way the sport is governed by the International Boxing Association (IBA).

In October, member clubs of the IABA voted to remove any references of the IBA from its constitution, although it remains a member to compete at its events.

Both the IBA and IABA have been contacted for comment in relation to Walsh's comments and the bout with Brankovic.

The future of amateur boxing at the Olympics had been in doubt after the International Olympic Committee (IOC) stripped the IBA of its status as the sport's world governing body in 2023 after it failed to meet reforms following its 2019 suspension over governance issues and alleged corruption.

However, the sport's inclusion in the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles was boosted in February after the breakaway World Boxing was provisionally recognised by the IOC.

In her post, two-time Olympian Walsh said decisions have "real consequences" for the fighters and added it was something she "cannot accept".

"This sport is my livelihood, my passion, my life. Decisions like this have real consequences - funding cut, years of sacrifice overlooked, and dreams stolen in plain sight," she added.

"Do they not understand what we put into this? The blood, sweat and tears?"

"But let me be clear: this was a victory. I refuse to let corruption define my story.

"I will rise again, I will fight again, and I will be the champion I know I am."



Michaela Walsh



Man Utd stadium

Man Utd announces construction of new 100,000-seat stadium

Manchester United on Tuesday announced plans to build a new 100,000-capacity stadium that co-owner Jim Ratcliffe said would be the "world's greatest" football ground.

The Premier League club have been examining whether to redevelop their historic Old Trafford home or build a new

stadium in the same area. United have now confirmed their "intention to pursue a new 100,000-seater stadium as the centrepiece of the regeneration of the Old Trafford area" as they throw their "support behind the government's growth agenda.

Scaled models and conceptual

images for how the new Old Trafford and surrounding area could look were revealed on Tuesday at the London headquarters of architects Foster + Partners, appointed in September to design the stadium district.

"Today marks the start of an incredibly exciting journey to

the delivery of what will be the world's greatest football stadium, at the centre of a regenerated Old Trafford," Ratcliffe said.

"Our current stadium has served us brilliantly for the past 115 years, but it has fallen behind the best arenas in world sport."

Neymar back for Brazil after 16-month absence for World Cup qualifiers

Neymar has been recalled to the Brazil national team by coach Dorival Junior, following an 18-month injury layoff.

He will join the squad for the upcoming 2026 World Cup qualifiers against Colombia and Argentina.

Neymar started Brazil's first four qualifying games but went off injured in a defeat to Uruguay in October 2023, his last appearance for the five-time world champions.

Brazil have struggled in South American World Cup qualifying.

After 12 of the 18 rounds, they are fifth in the 10-nation group.

But the top six are guaranteed places in the World Cup and Brazil are five points ahead of Bolivia in seventh.

Neymar returns for qualifiers against Colombia on March 21 and world champions Argentina five days later.

Brazil's top scorer with 79 goals said last month next year's World Cup is going to

be his last. He will be 34 by the time the competition in the USA, Canada and Mexico, kicks off.

Neymar scored for the first time in over 14 months last Sunday with his first goal for Santos since his return to his boyhood club at the start of the month.

The 33-year-old helped Santos beat fourth division Agua Santa 3-1 in a Sao Paulo state championship match.

Neymar, who failed to score in his first three games with Santos, stepped up to slot home a penalty in the 14th minute.

It was his 137th goal in 229 appearances for the club he has returned to after leaving them in 2013 for Barcelona.

It was also his first goal for anyone since October 3, 2023 when he was playing for Al Hilal against Nassaji Mazandaran in the Asian Champions League.

He terminated his contract with the Saudi club at the end of January to return home.



Neymar

FAMILY DYNAMICS & CUISINES

• WITH

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

Moringa Salad recipe, by Auyo's Cuisines

Ingredients for moringa salad

A bunch of moringa leaves
Kuli powder
Seasoning
Black pepper and clove
Pinch salt
Ground pepper
2-3 large tomatoes
1 large onion
Green pepper
Oil
Sugar
Boiled egg
Method
To make the kuli powder, combine the kuli, salt, seasoning, spices, and Barkono pepper and grind till it's smooth.
In a clean pot, boil water and wash the

moringa leaves. Add the washed moringa leaves to the boiling water and let it steam for 30 to 40 minutes.

Drain moringa and let it cool. Wash and cut the tomatoes, onions, and green pepper.

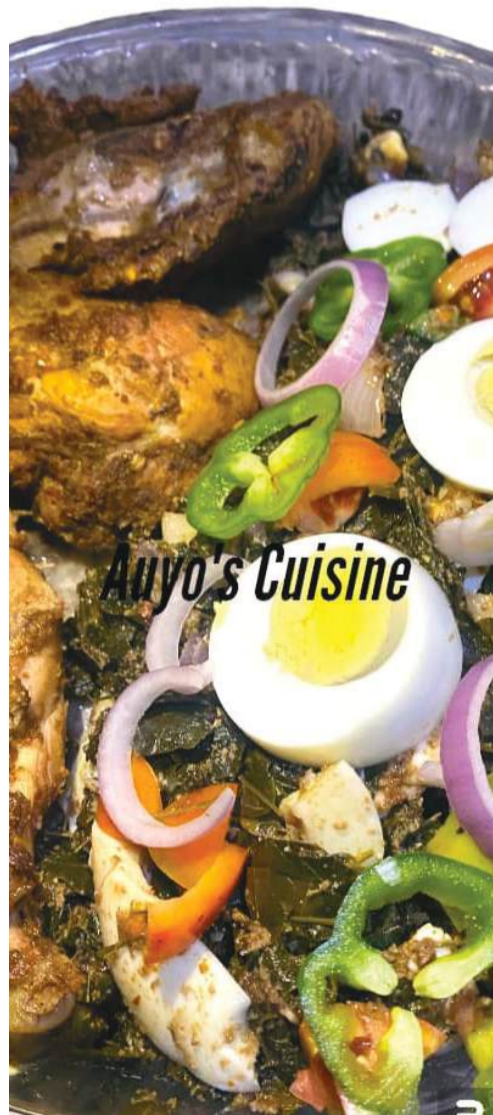
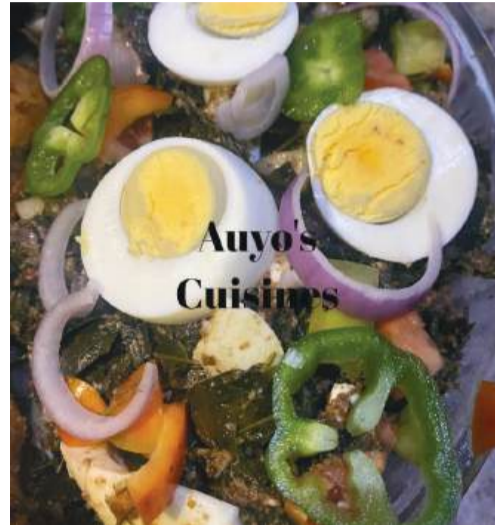
In a large bowl, combine the veggies with the steamed moringa and the kuli kuli powder

Add a pinch of sugar and a few drops of oil.

Mix until everything is well incorporated. Garnish with green pepper and boiled egg.

It can be eaten as a meal or served as a salad or side dish.

I served mine with grilled chicken.



WHAT TO KNOW:



True love still exists with Eesher: A Journey of love, humility, and blessings Part 2

Today's episode continues from the previous edition.

Her good character and upbringing were all I cared about. My wife is so quiet and modest that she finds it hard to make financial demands. Before marriage, she never asked for a recharge card. Even during the Lefe preparations, she was very considerate. While I kept adding items, she kept reducing them to save costs. When planning the wedding, I mentioned hiring a caterer to feed my people, but she vehemently opposed it, saying we were her guests and she would handle it. This decision saved me hundreds of thousands of naira, as her family took care of feeding the guests for two days.

Alhamdulillah, after our marriage, we were doing well financially because I was working with an NGO on a five-year contract.

However, after the contract ended, my wife suggested we visit her uncle, who was a serving Minister, in Abuja. When we met and greeted him, my wife shocked everyone by pulling out an envelope from her handbag and handing it to her uncle. She said, "Baba, dan Allah a ba wa mijina aiki. Domin yana da Masters har biyu amma bai da babban aiki." ("Uncle, please help find a job for my husband. He has two master's degrees but no significant job.") The shock wasn't just mine—it was visible on everyone's faces, including the Minister's. Her cousins, who worked as his Special Assistant, Personal Assistant, and Protocol Officer, jokingly said, "Gaskiya dan Kaduna ya iya soyayya" ("This Kaduna guy must know how to win hearts").

Baba collected the envelope (my CV), called the person in charge of appointments, and instructed, "Ayi abin da ya dace" ("Do the needful"). What amazed me most was that my wife hadn't told me her real intention for the trip to Abuja. She knew I might have declined, as I don't like pushing myself into situations where I may not be wanted or risk embarrassment. To my surprise, Baba handed us four bundles of ₦100k notes to fuel the car, along with special gifts for my wife and baby from his wife. Alhamdulillah, my darling wife secured me a white-collar job, and I am incredibly proud and grateful to her. I proudly share this story everywhere because she played a key role in shaping our financial stability.

Currently, she's pursuing her master's degree, and I plan to open a business for her and help her secure a job soon, in sha Allah. What amazes me is that she remains as humble as ever—quiet to a fault, very selective with friends, and completely immaterialistic. She never asks for anything, not even household necessities. I've made it a habit to check the house myself and spoil her with gifts because she deserves it. I pray that Almighty Allah blesses all married couples with happiness and unconditional love. For those yet to get married, I pray you avoid entering marriage with selfish intentions, as it will lead to regret. With pure intentions, you will find the best partner.

Story from an anonymous author

SOCIALS/FASHION

BY JANE AISO
JanetAiso@neptuneprime.com.ng

QUICK STATISTICS ON FASHION

Northern styles captured in Ankara/atampa fabrics

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

Ankara fabric originated in Indonesia, but was introduced to West Africa by Dutch merchants in the 19th century. The fabric is also known as African wax print or Dutch wax print.

African wax print fabric is know as ankara; 100% cloth cotton that's used to make clothing, accessories and other products. It was originally produced in Holland, but now produced in Africa.

Ankara, the vibrant and captivating fabric synonymous with African fashion, has a rich history spanning centuries. Let's delve into the captivating journey of Ankara and discover its origins, evolution, and enduring significance. Ankara, or African wax print fabric or Dutch wax print, is a colourful and patterned textile originating in Indonesia. In the 19th century, Dutch merchants introduced batik fabrics to West Africa as part of their trade routes. However, the local market preferred brighter colours and bolder designs, prompting Dutch manufacturers to adapt their patterns accordingly. This adaptation marked the birth of the distinctive Ankara fabric we know today.

In the mid-20th century, Ankara experienced

a significant resurgence and gained even more tremendous popularity. As African countries gained, independence and cultural pride soared, Ankara became a symbol of African nationalism and a rejection of Western influence. Its vibrant patterns and colours represented a celebration of African heritage, unity, and resilience.

Today, Ankara fabric continues to evolve, with contemporary designs blending traditional patterns with modern influences. It has become a medium for self-expression as designers and individuals experiment with innovative styles and combinations. From clothing to accessories, Ankara has become a staple in fashion, representing the African continent's beauty, diversity, and creativity.

Ankara is not just a fabric; it's a symbol of history, culture, and self-expression. Its origins in Indonesia, adaptation in West Africa, and global popularity reflect the intertwining narratives of diverse cultures. Ankara's journey reminds us that art can transcend borders and create connections, celebrating the beauty and diversity of our shared human experience.



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

TECH WORLD

BY JACK M. GERMAIN

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

Report of TSMC chips made for Huawei "a huge concern", US Commerce nominee says

U.S. President Donald Trump's nominee to a post overseeing export policy for China on Thursday called a report about Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co (2330.TW), opens new tab producing hundreds of thousands of chips for Huawei "a huge concern."

Jeffrey Kessler, Trump's pick for Under Secretary of Commerce for Industry and Security, was asked at his nomination hearing before the Senate Banking Committee about the illegal shipments of chips.

"It's critical to ensure that we have strong enforcement," Kessler said, calling for the Bureau of Industry and Security, which he would oversee, to use "the full scope of enforcement and penalty authorities that it has."

Huawei is on a Commerce Department trade list that essentially bars it from receiving U.S. goods and technology, as well as foreign-made goods like chips from companies like TSMC made with U.S. technology.

In October, research firm TechInsights, a Canadian tech research firm, took apart Huawei's 910B AI processor and found a TSMC chip in it. Huawei's 910B is viewed as the most advanced AI accelerator mass produced by a Chinese company.

TSMC suspended shipments to Sophgo, whose chip matched the one in the Huawei 910B and, in November, as Reuters reported, the Commerce Department ordered TSMC to halt shipments of certain chips to Chinese customers.

TSMC did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

AI in 2025: Generative Tech, Robots, and Emerging Risks

The past year saw artificial intelligence (AI) push the boundaries of what's possible, with industries racing to integrate its capabilities to boost productivity and automate complex tasks.

In 2024, AI advancements accelerated at a pace outstripping previous high-tech innovations, setting the stage for even greater disruption ahead. But with this rapid progress comes a risk: without human oversight, AI's missteps could be just as monumental as its breakthroughs.

Generative and agentic AI are already enhancing users' ability to obtain sophisticated content across various media, while AI-powered health care tools are reshaping diagnostics — outperforming human physicians in certain tasks. These developments signal a looming transformation in health care delivery, with AI poised to play an even bigger role in business and industrial operations.

The power of AI will also birth humanoid agents, noted Anders Indset, author and deep-tech investor in exponential technologies such as AI, quantum technology, health tech, and cybersecurity. As we step into 2025, the technology landscape is rapidly evolving, with a spotlight on humanoid agents.

"This year began with excitement surrounding large language models (LLMs) but is set to end with groundbreaking advancements in autonomous humanoid robots," Indset told TechNewsWorld.

In 2024, the development of robots surged, with innovations that once seemed far off now coming into view. The long-anticipated release of fully autonomous humanoids — previously confined to industrial settings — is approaching, he observed.

The arrival of 2025 brings anticipation for the widespread adoption of AI in robotics, enhanced human-robot interactions, and the rise of robotics-as-a-service (RaaS) models. These will make advanced robotic solutions accessible to more industries, Indset explained, describing the ensuing transformative period for the robotics industry.

"Humanoid agents will reshape our interactions with technology and expand the possibilities for AI applications across different domains," he predicted.

AI's Expanding Role in Cybersecurity and Biosecurity AI will play an increasingly critical role in cyberwarfare,



Robot operating a system

warned Alejandro Rivas-Vasquez, global head of digital forensics and incident response at NCC Group. AI and machine learning (ML) will make cyberwarfare more deadly, with collateral damage outside of conflict zones due to hyper-connectivity, he offered.

Cybersecurity defenses, already a successful tool for digital warriors, will extend beyond protecting digital systems to safeguarding people directly through implantable technology. Neural interfaces, bio-augmentation, authentication chips, and advanced medical implants will revolutionize human interaction with technology.

According to Bobbie Walker, managing consultant at NCC Group, these innovations will also introduce significant risks. "Hackers could exploit neural interfaces to control actions or manipulate perceptions, leading to cognitive manipulation and breaches of personal autonomy. Continuous monitoring of health and behavioral data through implants raises substantial privacy concerns, with risks of misuse by malicious actors or invasive government surveillance," Walker told TechNewsWorld.

To mitigate these risks, new frameworks bridging technology, health care, and privacy regulations will be essential. Walker cautioned that standards for "digital bioethics" and ISO standards for bio-cybersecurity will help define safe practices for integrating technology into the human body while addressing

ethical dilemmas.

"The emerging field of cyber-biosecurity will push us to rethink cybersecurity boundaries, ensuring that technology integrated into our bodies is secure, ethical, and protective of the individuals using it," she added.

According to Walker, early studies on brain-computer interfaces (BCIs) show that adversarial inputs can trick these devices, highlighting the potential for abuse. As implants evolve, the risks of state-sponsored cyberwarfare and privacy breaches grow, emphasizing the need for robust security measures and ethical considerations.

AI-Driven Data Backup Raises Security Concerns

Sebastian Straub, principal solution architect at N2WS, stated that AI advancements better equip organizations to resume operations after natural disasters, power outages, and cyberattacks. AI automation will enhance operational efficiency by addressing human shortcomings.

AI-powered backup automation will reduce the need for administrative intervention to near zero, he explained. AI will learn the intricate patterns of data usage, compliance requirements, and organizational needs. Moreover, AI will become a proactive data management expert, autonomously determining what needs to be backed up and when, including adherence to compliance standards like GDPR, HIPAA, or PCI DSS.

But Straub warned that as this level of AI dominance dramatically transforms disaster recovery processes, errors will occur through the learning process. In 2025, we will see that AI is not a silver bullet. Relying on machines to automate disaster recovery will lead to mistakes.

"There will be unfortunate breaches of trust and compliance violations as

enterprises learn the hard way that humans need to be part of the DR decision-making process," Straub told TechNewsWorld.

AI's Impact on Creativity and Education For many AI users, tools to help improve communication skills are already in steady use. ChatGPT and other AI writing tools will emphasize the value of human writing rather than a workaround for personal language tasks.

Students and communicators will adjust from asking AI writing tools to produce work on their behalf to owning the content creation process from start to finish. They will leverage technology to edit, enhance, or expand original thinking, suggested Eric Wang, VP of AI at plagiarism detection firm Turnitin.

Looking ahead, Wang told TechNewsWorld that writing would be recognized as a critical skill, not just in writing-focused areas of study but also in learning, working, and living environments. This change will manifest as the humanization of technology-enabled fields, roles, and companies.

He sees the role of generative AI shifting, with early-stage usage helping to organize and expand ideas while later stages refine and enhance writing. For educators, AI can identify knowledge gaps early on and later provide transparency to facilitate student engagement.

Hidden Risks of AI-Powered Models According to Michael Lieberman, CTO and co-founder of software development security platform Kusari, AI will become more widespread and challenging to detect. His concern lies with free models hosted on platforms.

"We have already seen cases where some models on these platforms were discovered to be malware. I expect such attacks to increase, though they will likely be more covert. These malicious models may include hidden backdoors or be intentionally trained to behave harmfully in specific scenarios."



Huawei

WORLD NEWS

BY MERCY ADAJE

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US judges order President Trump to reinstate fired workers

Two federal judges have ordered United States President, Donald Trump's administration to temporarily reinstate thousands of probationary federal workers who were recently fired across multiple agencies, AP reported.

The rulings, issued Thursday, found that the terminations were carried out in violation of legal procedures.

In San Francisco, US District Judge William Alsup ruled that the acting director of the Office of Personnel Management, Charles Ezell, did not have the authority to direct the mass layoffs.

Meanwhile, US District Judge James Breder in Baltimore found that the administration failed to follow laws requiring a 60-day notice for large-scale layoffs. Breder's ruling temporarily halted the firings and ordered the reinstatement of workers to their previous positions.

The Trump administration has already appealed Alsup's ruling. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt criticised the court orders, calling them an unconstitutional challenge to the president's authority to manage federal employment.

"The Trump Administration will immediately fight back against this absurd and unconstitutional order," she said in a statement.

The legal action comes after a coalition of labour unions and nonprofit organizations filed lawsuits alleging the firings were unlawful and disrupted government operations, especially in areas like veterans' care and public land management.

These groups argue that the firings were part of a broader effort to reduce the federal workforce without proper oversight.

Alsup's order specifically targeted employees in six agencies, including Veterans Affairs, Agriculture, Defense, Energy, the Interior, and Treasury, instructing them to offer job reinstatement to workers who were let go around mid-February.

The judge expressed frustration with the government's attempt to bypass regulations governing workforce reductions by firing probationary employees, who lack the full protections of civil service workers.

Probationary workers, who are typically newer to their jobs, have been a primary focus of the mass firings. They are often more vulnerable because they cannot appeal terminations.

"These mass-firings of federal workers were not just an attack on government agencies and their ability to function, they were also a direct assault on public lands, wildlife, and the rule of law," said Erik Molvar, executive director of Western Watersheds Project, one of the plaintiffs.



Trump

Trump threatens 200% tariff on European wines, champagnes

President Donald Trump on Thursday threatened to impose a massive tariff on European alcohol in response to the European Union's retaliation against his steel and aluminum tariffs – a tit-for-tat escalation of a trade war that could easily get out of hand.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump said his administration would impose a 200% tariff on alcoholic beverages from the EU unless it rescinds the 50% tariff the European government imposed Wednesday on US spirits.

"If this Tariff is not removed immediately, the U.S. will shortly place a 200% Tariff on all WINES, CHAMPAGNES, & ALCOHOLIC PRODUCTS COMING OUT OF FRANCE AND OTHER E.U. REPRESENTED COUNTRIES," Trump said.

"This will be great for the Wine and Champagne businesses in the U.S."

America's response to Europe's response to America's tariffs in the span of 36 hours shows how trade wars can quickly spiral out of control. After Trump's 25% tariffs on aluminum and steel went into effect on Wednesday, the EU immediately retaliated against what it called an "unjustified" trade action from the Trump administration.

The EU's countermeasures included tariffs on €26 billion (\$28 billion) worth of American goods, including tariffs on boats, bourbon and motorbikes. The measures, which are set to go into effect in April, are "swift and proportionate," the EU said in a statement.

America's spirits industry said it was bracing for pain from the retaliatory tariffs. Now, if the trade spat continues to escalate, US booze makers may need to contend with even more retaliation.

"Of course I will respond" Trump foreshadowed retaliation in an Oval Office meeting Wednesday with Ireland's Taoiseach, Micheál Martin. The president said he would respond to the EU's retaliatory tariffs. On Thursday, Trump called the EU "one of the

most hostile and abusive taxing and tariffing authorities in the World, which was formed for the sole purpose of taking advantage of the United States."

He called the retaliatory tariff it imposed on US bourbon "nasty."

But the problem with retaliation is it invites more retaliation, with no easy way out and no end in sight. Trump has signaled he's not ending his tariff plan anytime soon.

Despite growing pushback from Wall Street, Trump has threatened a wide range of additional tariffs, including reciprocal tariffs scheduled for April 2. Those looming tariffs, if they move forward, could trigger a response from the EU.

"The U.S. doesn't have Free Trade. We have 'Stupid Trade,'" Trump wrote on Truth Social Thursday. "The Entire World is RIPPING US OFF!!!"

American spirits in a slump

The US spirits industry has become a frequent target of retaliatory tariffs in each of Trump's terms. Much of US bourbon and whiskey production is located in states that voted for Trump, including Kentucky and Tennessee.

Canada, for example, recently targeted Kentucky bourbon with tariffs in retaliation for Trump's trade actions and threats against America's northern neighbour. A number of Canadian retailers opted to pull American-made spirits off store shelves in response to Trump's tariffs on Canada.

Last week, Lawson Whiting, the CEO of Jack Daniel's whiskey maker Brown-Forman, blasted the tariffs, but said the decision to pull spirits off store shelves hurt even more.

The EU's 50% tariffs on American spirits are "deeply disappointing and will severely undercut the successful efforts to rebuild US spirits exports in EU countries," Chris Swonger, CEO of the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States (DISCUS), said in a statement released Wednesday.



Dog

American dog shoots man in bed

An American dog owner was shot by his pet after it jumped on his bed and set off a loaded gun, police said Wednesday.

The man, from Memphis, Tennessee, was asleep beside his female partner when he was shot early Monday morning, escaping with a graze to his left thigh that was treated in the hospital.

The dog – a year-old pit bull named Ore – "got his paw stuck in the trigger guard and ended up hitting the trigger," a police incident report said.

It did not specify the type of weapon fired, and recorded the incident as "accidental injury."

Two years ago, a German Shepherd dog shot and killed a 30-year-old man in Kansas after it stepped on a hunting rifle.

In 2018, a 51-year-old man from Iowa was shot in the leg by his pit bull-Labrador mix.

178 passengers escape death as American plane catches fire

Dozens of passengers were forced to stand on the wing of an American Airlines plane at Denver International Airport as they evacuated the aircraft after one of its engines caught fire Thursday evening, sending thick black smoke billowing into the air. American Airlines Flight 1006, a Boeing 737-800 en route to Dallas-Fort Worth from Colorado Springs with 172 passengers and six crew aboard, diverted to Denver around 5:15 p.m. local time, after the crew reported "engine vibrations," the Federal Aviation Administration said in a statement.

"After landing and while taxiing to the gate an engine caught fire," the statement said. The FAA is investigating.

The plane arrived at gate C38, where it caught fire, a Denver International Airport spokesperson told CNN. The fire was extinguished and all passengers were evacuated, the spokesperson said.

Images from the scene show dozens of passengers exiting the aircraft and standing on the wing as smoke filled the air.

Twelve passengers were taken to the hospital with minor injuries, the Denver Fire Department told CNN.

"We thank our crew members, DEN team and first responders for their quick and decisive action with the safety of everyone on board and on the ground as the priority," American Airlines said in a statement. Video captured by a Montana woman inside the airport waiting for a connecting flight shows a large cloud of smoke emanating from the plane and dozens of passengers running away.

Kristal Leonard, who was flying in from Helena, Montana, told CNN she was waiting inside the Denver International Airport for her connecting flight to Colorado Springs. That is when she looked outside and saw flames and smoke engulfing the plane.

LIVING LEGENDS

BY SA'ADATU MAINA
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Jelani Aliyu, automotive car designer

Jelani Aliyu, born 8 September 1966, is a Nigerian automotive designer who worked for the American car company General Motors (GM). He was a senior creative designer at GM until his appointment as the director general of the National Automotive Design and Development Council (NADDCC) in 2017 by the former Nigerian president Muhammadu Buhari.

Early life and Education

Aliyu was born in 1966 in Kaduna, Nigeria into the family of Alhaji Aliyu Haidar and Hajiya Sharifiyya Hauwa Aliyu, and was the fifth of the seven children in the family who hailed from Dogon-daji in Sokoto State. This fact was why young Aliyu was moved to Sokoto for his education.

He studied at the Sokoto Capital School from 1971 to 1978 and then Federal Government College, Sokoto where he received an outstanding award of the best graduating student in Technical Drawing.

In 1986, Aliyu gained admission to study Architecture at the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. However, Aliyu quickly dropped out from the university when he found out that studying at the university would unlikely give him the opportunity to pursue his dream of becoming a car designer as studying there is not as practical as in the polytechnic and then went on to the Federal Polytechnic Birnin Kebbi in Kebbi State from 1986 to 1988, where he earned an associate degree in Architecture with an award for the Best All-Round Student. While he was there he began seeking admission into design schools in Europe and the U.S. that would lead him to a career in automotive design.

In 1990, Aliyu was sponsored by the Sokoto State Scholarship board to study in the United States at the College for Creative Studies in Detroit to study automotive design. While studying, Aliyu won two prestigious awards from Ford Motor Company and Michelin, US. In 1994, Aliyu got his qualification in automotive



President Barack Obama behind the wheel of Chevy Volt during his tour of the General Motors Auto Plant in Hamtramck, Michigan.

design and immediately joined General Motors team, where he started his design career.

In 1994 after graduating from the College for Creative Studies, Aliyu joined General Motors. At General Motors, Aliyu was the co-designer of the Oldsmobile Bravada, Buick Rendezvous and the Opel Astra and was the lead exterior designer for the Pontiac G6 and the Chevrolet Volt, a hybrid electric vehicle with a sleek arcing roofline.

When speaking about the inspiration for his automotive design career in an interview, Jelani said: I have always loved drawing. These are different things around me, people, objects, plants, also stuff from my imagination. Growing up, I have always loved science fiction, and in the movies, you would see a lot of alien spacecraft and other futuristic things that would inspire me to look beyond.

I also love cars very much, even though then we did not have any Ferraris in Sokoto. However, we

did have magazines in which I saw them, and they inspired me, too. So I put together my love for drawing and cars and decided to be a car designer.

He also said, his inspirations were his parents because they let him decide what he wanted to do. For example, when he went to Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria and decided he did not want to continue there, they

were supportive. They did not insist that he had to remain there.

On the design of Chevrolet Volt, he said;

Look at a tiny leaf, it is only a millimeter thick and yet it is a highly efficient factory... I try to understand nature's efficiency and design and I pulled those concepts and applied them to the Chevrolet Volt.



Jelani Aliyu

Bongos Ikwue, singer, songwriter

Bongos Ikwue, the music legend was born in Otukpo, Benue State, Nigeria, on the 6th of June 1942. In 1956, he attended St. Paul's Secondary school in Zaria, Nigeria, where his friends called him "Forge" because he was always making up (forging) and singing his own songs. In 1962, While at Okene Comprehensive Secondary School, he formed a group called Cubana Boys with two other young boys, after which he headed off to the Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), also in Zaria, Kaduna State, where he studied Business Administration.

While in ABU, he created his own band, called UniBello Brothers and also sang in a folk group, which was made up of university lecturers during which time, a chemistry lecturer, Mrs. Harmony taught him some Irish songs. In 1967 he founded and headed the Groovies band, which became extremely popular in the 1970's through to the 80's.

Many love him for his soulful, folksy songs, the most popular of which includes: Cockcrow At Dawn, Still Searching, Amen, Otachikpokpo and a host of others. His dedication to his music was obvious due to the high quality of the albums he churned out, and due to the sheer elegance and the electrifying energy of his live performances, where the band was always on key, and the musician himself was always true to every note. His ability to stay on the right note is an indicator of his hard work as a musician.

Apart from the raw beauty of his finely honed voice, another thing that set the musical genius apart is his dedication to the promotion of Africa and African values, by his continuous use of his native Idoma language in his songs. He is well loved by a vast majority of Nigerians with a fan base that cuts across language barriers and ethnic tension; he also has an international fan base. This is mainly because Bongos' music genre is not easily deciphered. He is also a master of the African ideals he chooses to express.

Bongos Ikwue was always original; he never tried to imitate any artist, local or international and focused on perfecting his chosen genre. He takes his time in the studio in order to affect the perfect melody for his songs, often rewriting his music until it was exactly right. The icon never rushed to produce any song and it is this conscientiousness that ensured that he produced hit after hit without fail.

Bongos never failed to thrill his audience when he performed live. The man always had enormous stage presence and an uncanny ability to connect with his crowds no matter where he performed. And it seemed people could not get over the thrill of seeing this larger than life artiste appear on stage dressed in down to earth jeans, a nice, simple shirt and practical trainers, with his guitar slung across his shoulders. Bongos Ikwue was indeed in a class of his own. Without warning or an explanation, the music icon hung up his guitar and walked away from it all.

Bongos Ikwue was appointed as the Chairman of the Nigerian Film and Video Censor Board in 2001. He served in this position for several years, playing a key role in shaping the Nigerian film industry.

His contributions to the Nigerian music scene and his work as Chairman of the Nigerian Film and Video Censor Board have left a lasting impact on the country's cultural landscape.



Bongos Ikwue



Pontiac G6 GT Street Edition Convertible Orange Julep

DID YOU KNOW?

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The 6th of October Bridge, Egypt

The Sixth of October Bridge in Egypt is an incredible bridge, so long that it crosses the same river twice.

It took three decades to build, but cost a local government the equivalent of just £3 million.

The 6th of October bridge was first conceived in 1969 by Egyptian president Gamal Abdel-Nasser, who sought to transform Cairo's city streets, which were at the time overwhelmed by a surge in traffic.

Approximately 65,000 cars, buses and motorcycles were traversing city streets in the capital, each one forced into small and poorly equipped highways, with the issue only expected to get worse.

The new bridge was designed to connect the city by joining the banks of the massive, world-famous, River Nile. By the end of its eighth-phase, spanning a nearly 30-year construction period, the completed bridge crossed the river twice in two places.

The bridge provides stunning views of the River Nile. The Arab Contractors firm started the construction in mid-1969 and finished the structure in 1996 - taking a grand total



The 6th of October Bridge, Egypt

of 27 years to complete. The especially lengthy building period was due to the economic downturn experienced in Egypt following a series of conflicts in which the country was involved in the late 20th century. Nevertheless, Cairo

was able to shell out approximately EGP200 million (£3.3 million) to build a massive 22km (13.6 mile) structure that snaked through the city. The finished product crossed the Nile at two points - Downtown Cairo and Mohandiseen - while

reaching across the Nile island of Gezira. Cairo has a dense traffic structure that the bridge partially resolves. The bridge was named so to commemorate the date the Egyptian army crossed the Suez Canal to start the 1973 Arab-Israeli Yom Kippur War.

The project was hailed as a national endeavour and built to include an observatory that would allow locals to look out onto the Nile and the city's many landmarks beyond. Those who cross the bridge today can spot the famed Egyptian Museum, Cairo Tower, and the Maspero

television building during their short trip across the Nile banks.

The final bridge is the longest in Egypt, and while it is primarily used to alleviate traffic congestion, visitors have recommended walking across to take in its views.

Elmina Castle

Elmina Castle, a well fortified castle in Elmina, Ghana, which is the oldest surviving European building in Africa south of the Sahara, was built in 1482 by the Portuguese as a major centre of the transatlantic slave trade.

The Portuguese had begun exploring the West African coast for both trading and Christian missionary purposes in the 15th century. In 1471 they arrived at what was later called the Gold Coast, finding a thriving gold trading economy. They established their own trading outpost, which was subsequently called Elmina, from the Portuguese De Costa da el Mina de Ouro (the Coast of Gold Mines). There they established a friendly and profitable relationship with a powerful local chief they called Caramansa.

In 1482 Caramansa was persuaded to permit the Portuguese to build a fort commanding the harbour to protect the gold trade. The castle, originally known as Castelo de São Jorge da Mina, or St. George of the Mine Castle, was constructed from numbered, prefabricated, granite blocks that were shipped out from Portugal in a fleet of 11 or 12 ships together with 700 soldiers for the garrison.

Many accounts maintain that one of those on the expedition was Christopher Columbus, 10 years before he set sail on his voyage to America.

Elmina later became the centre of Portuguese trade in slaves. The castle became a depot from which enslaved Africans from the interior were sold and shipped to Brazil and other Portuguese colonies.

In the 16th century, the Dutch, the British, and the French took an increasing interest in the West African coast, and the Dutch attacked Elmina several times. In 1637 they successfully bombarded the castle into submission, and Elmina then became the main Dutch Gold Coast centre.

The Dutch greatly enlarged and strengthened the castle in the 1770s, and they converted the chapel for use in



Captive Africans being moved to a ship from Elmina Castle for 8000 miles of transAtlantic journey to Americas.

staging slave auctions. The dungeons, where as many as 200 slaves at a time were held before shipment, can still be seen.

The Middle Passage

Transporting enslaved Africans usually to Brazil or an island in the Caribbean, was notorious for its brutality and for the overcrowded unsanitary conditions on slave ships, in which hundreds of Africans were packed tightly into tiers below decks for a voyage of about 5,000 miles (8,000 km) that could last from a few weeks to several months.

Candles could not burn

The enslaved Africans were typically chained together, and usually the low ceilings did not permit them to sit upright. The heat was intolerable, and the oxygen levels became so low that candles would not burn.

Sexual Abuse

Atrocities and sexual abuse of the enslaved captives were widespread, although their monetary value as slaves perhaps mitigated such treatment.

In all, Elmina castle is where enslaved Africans were chained and shipped through the port of no return to the Americas in subhuman condition.

**SPACE
AVAILABLE**

The Arbiter

BY HASSAN GIMBA
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Lami Fatima Babare (1966-2018): She would have been 59, by Hassan Gimba

This was first published on March 12, 2018, nine days after her death. It is repeated wholly with only a headline change as a posthumous birthday seven years after.

Lami Fatima Babare, my beloved wife, my friend, the mother of my children. Today marks one week of your painful death. When we got married on the 30th of October, 1992, our dream was to grow old together; to live to the age when we will walk about alone in the house with walking sticks after sending all the children on their course, reliving our early love once again, with our grandchildren, great grandchildren and more to give us some fulfilment after the long struggle to prepare our children for their life's journey. But He who created you from my rib for me knew you would leave me in the cold night of 6th of March, just three days after your 52nd birthday.

You sang and danced for me, bringing laughter to my life and our home. You made me excel because I wanted to be your king. My life, too, revolved around you. Everything I did was for you, because of you, or in consideration of you.

You were always there for me; in your eyes I was the father and mother you didn't have. I was your husband, friend and brother too. Your love was genuine and so was your submissiveness to my authority as your husband.

When you were diagnosed with cervical cancer over a year ago, it was a rude shock to us. You knew, we all knew, it was just a matter of time. It became debilitating for the month you remained bedridden as the unmerciful disease ate up your insides.

From Tuesday, 6th of February to Monday, 5th of March when you finally gave up the ghost, it had been from one hospital to another and one surgery after another. Yet you were always full of praise to your creator. I witnessed this because I was always with you, by your side all the days.

I recall when you were to undergo a procedure called Bilateral Nephrostomy in which tubes were inserted into your left and right sides to empty your bowels as your kidneys' functions had been impaired. We held hands by the hospital theatre entrance and your words were 'Allah abun godiya'. You were submissive to His will



Lami

and struggled on, with strength. All of us who saw you were all the time in tears but not a drop of it from your large, beautiful, enchanting eyes. You were a woman with all the attributes of women but your strength was the envy of men, and my source of strength and confidence.

You put up a gallant fight for your life, but death is an inescapable foe. It does its work at the time given to it by the creator. No one escapes their appointed time. You achieved a lot. You made me a man, always a source of comfort to me and a pillow that cushioned my heart.

You gave birth to, and nurtured, six wonderful children, one of whom became a lawyer at 22 while three are at various levels in the university. You have left behind two beautiful grandchildren from your first daughter.

We all will miss you. Your friends

will miss you. Your relations will miss you. Mine will miss you. Your students at FCE (T), Potiskum will miss you.

FCE (T) Potiskum is where you served diligently as a lecturer for 27 years without a query or reprimand of any kind and you rose to become a senior lecturer and deputy director of its remedial programme. You were also a dedicated unionist.

Even though neither the college's management nor the COEASU executive sent a delegation to visit you on your death bed, I know that you have forgiven them because you were large hearted, generous, gentle and forgiving by nature.

I have been in tears since you left me but the tears are not for you; you are in a better realm now. The tears are for me. Your death has opened me up because the foundation on which my life was built was you. I now realise



At an event I organised in Damaturu in 2006



When the kids started coming. Barrister Suleiman on my laps and Habiba (married with two kids) on the laps of Ahmad Gimba (Ba'aba), my junior brother

my home is no longer like home, because you were my home. Because you were there, I could afford to move about in the world in a carefree way, knowing that you got my back. It is now a new era for me. There is no time, but I have to start again. One's first marriage is generally one based on sincere love because it's generally effected by contributions from family and friends. Any other after is because one can. One cannot replicate with any other what one has done with the first wife.

My only regret is that I did not take a photograph with you on your sick bed. There was always a sort of shyness between us; with you sometimes I behaved

like a child in front of his mother. Perhaps I didn't want to think I was taking the pictures as a way of saying good bye. And there was always that reserve of hope, however faint, that anything – positive – could happen with your case.

I also regret not snapping you when you lay lifeless. I touched your face tenderly, closed your slightly parted lips, but it never occurred to me to take that physical snapshot, but that picture will remain indelible in my mind's eyes.

As the curtains are drawn on your worthy, earthly life, a life well spent, I eagerly look to a reunion under the shades of the trees of Paradise so that we continue from where we stopped, where

I will enjoy again the endless laughter from your sweet voice. I know you are there. If your Paradise were under my feet, then you have no problem because I had raised those feet to make way for you the day I married you. It is left for me to do what will make me meet you where you are waiting for me, by living well. Thank God there is a meeting place. If there was none, I wouldn't know how to take what has happened. It would have been too much for my poor heart.

Till we meet there to part no more, my darling wife, in shaa Allah, Lami.

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