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WEEKEND



U.S sends ground troops to Nigeria

Hours After US Ground Troops' Arrival, Dozens Killed As Terrorists Attack Kwara

- The attack began on Tuesday and continued to Wednesday
- Residents call for stronger surveillance, improved intelligence sharing

By Abdullahi Haruna

On Tuesday, February 3 2026, heavily armed terrorists attacked and killed over 100 residents in Woro, a remote community in Kaiama Local Government Area of Kwara State.

The assailants, suspected to be Boko Haram terrorists, destroyed homes and livelihoods in an attack that lasted several hours.

Government confirms casualty

The Kwara State government confirmed the

attack, saying 75 people have been certified dead. But residents say the casualty could be much higher. The assault came weeks after the group reportedly sent a letter to the district head of Woro, Salihu Umar, notifying him of

their intention to visit the community for [radical] preaching. Woro is located on the fringes of Kainji National Park, a vast forest reserve covering about 5,341 square kilometres. The area has increasingly

become a hideout for armed groups, including Boko Haram and Ansaru—locally known as Mamuda. While Ansaru has operated in the area since around

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Nigeria's Public Transport Gap: Daily Struggles, Fatigue, and Dangerous Journeys

By Martha Gwary

Every morning, long before offices open and factories hum to life, millions of Nigerians embark on a quiet struggle that rarely makes headlines. It is the daily commute — a ritual of uncertainty, exhaustion and risk — endured in silence by workers whose only aim is to arrive at their jobs on time and alive. In cities such as Abuja, Lagos, Port Harcourt and Ibadan, the journey to work has become an ordeal shaped by the absence of an efficient public transport system. Although the provision of safe, affordable and reliable transportation is a core responsibility of government, the vacuum left by years of neglect has forced ordinary Nigerians to pay the price — financially, physically and psychologically. For many workers, commuting now consumes a disproportionate share of their income. With no functional mass transit system, they depend on private commercial buses, taxis and motorcycles whose fares rise arbitrarily with fuel prices, scarcity of vehicles or even the time of day. A journey that once cost a few hundred naira can now swallow a significant part of a worker's daily wage, leaving households to cut back on food, healthcare and education.

A Daily Struggle

Beyond cost is the daily struggle to find a vehicle at all. At dawn, thousands gather at bus stops and makeshift motor parks, jostling for limited spaces. Tempers flare, dignity is bruised, and lateness becomes inevitable. Workers arrive at their offices already drained, having fought a battle simply to get there.

The insecurity attached to this daily movement is perhaps the most troubling aspect. Commuters are increasingly exposed to criminals who exploit overcrowded buses, poorly lit parks and isolated routes. Incidents of robbery, assault and abduction during early-morning

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HERITAGE >>13

THE ENDURING RELEVANCE OF EGGON TRADITIONAL NORMS DESPITE COLONIALISM AND MODERNISATION



THIS LIFE! >>16

I GREW UP LEARNING THAT HAPPINESS DOES NOT DEPEND ON WEALTH OR LUXURY — BUSINESSWOMAN AISHA ISHAKU



Passenger

NeptuneWorld

The only way to deal with an unfree world is to become so absolutely free that your very existence is an act of rebellion

ALBERT CAMUS

I am not African because I was born in Africa but because Africa was born in me

KWAME NKRUMAH



PICTURE OF THE DAY

A photograph of General Yakubu Gowon commissioning the Kainji Dam hydroelectric power project in Niger State in February 1969. The dam was designed for the installation of 12 turbines, but only 8 were installed, thereby reducing its generating capacity. Kainji Dam is a major hydroelectric dam located on the River Niger in Niger State, north-western Nigeria. Completed in 1968, it was built primarily to generate electricity and support Nigeria's growing energy needs. The dam created Kainji Lake, one of the largest man-made lakes in Africa, which also supports fishing, irrigation, and transportation activities. Operated by the Kainji Hydropower Station, the facility plays an important role in Nigeria's national power supply, although challenges such as aging infrastructure and fluctuating water levels sometimes affect its output. Beyond power generation, the dam has contributed to regional development, tourism, and biodiversity, especially through the nearby Kainji Lake National Park.

RANDOM FACTS

Interesting facts about constellations

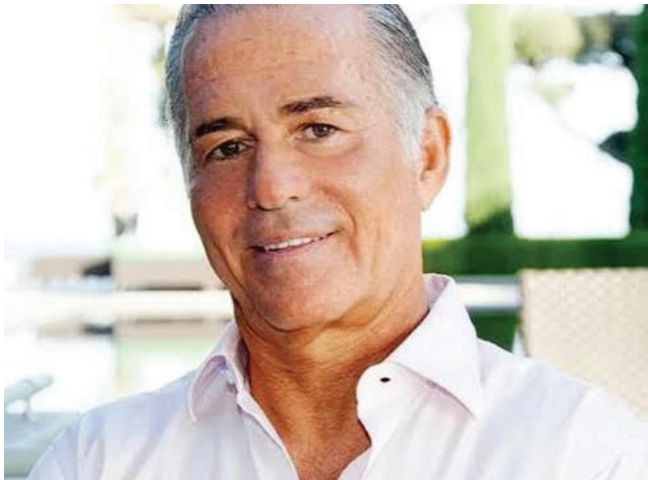
There are 88 officially recognised constellations in the night sky. Ancient people used constellations as maps for navigation, especially sailors travelling at night. The stars in a constellation only appear close together, in reality, they can be millions of light-years apart. Many constellations are named after animals, mythological characters, and objects, such as Orion the Hunter and Leo the Lion. Different cultures created different stories and meanings for the same star patterns.

The zodiac constellations are linked to astrology and follow the Sun's apparent path across the sky. Some constellations are visible only in certain seasons because of Earth's movement around the Sun. Constellations help astronomers locate stars, planets, and galaxies more easily. The North Star (Polaris), found in the constellation Ursa Minor, helps determine true north. Light from some stars in constellations has been travelling for thousands



Billionaire dies during penis enlargement procedure in Paris

Belgian-Israeli diamond tycoon Ehud Arye Laniado, 65, has died during a cosmetic procedure in Paris, prompting a high-profile court ruling that has seen two surgeons banned from medical practice and handed suspended prison sentences. Laniado, founder of Omega Diamonds and a prominent figure in the global gemstone trade, suffered a fatal heart attack while undergoing a penis enlargement operation at the Saint-Honoré-Ponthieu clinic in the French capital in March 2019. Although the procedure itself was initially linked to his collapse, investigators later ruled the injection wasn't the direct cause of death. A subsequent autopsy showed that Laniado died from cardiac hypertrophy and complications likely worsened by substances found in his system, including performance-enhancing and



erectile dysfunction drugs. A Paris court recently delivered its verdict in the case, sentencing the lead surgeon — identified as Guy H. — to 15 months in prison with his licence suspended, and imposing a 12-month suspended sentence on an assistant surgeon. Both practitioners were handed lifetime bans from practising medicine and fined €50,000 and €20,000 respectively. Prosecutors had initially examined the possibility of manslaughter. Still, they later downgraded the charges to include failure to assist a person in danger, drug-related offences, and practising medicine without a valid licence.

The court also uncovered significant professional irregularities at the clinic, including an assistant surgeon who was not registered with the French Medical Association and lacked recognised qualifications to practise in the country. Laniado was well known in elite circles, having once sold the rare 12.03-carat Blue Moon of Josephine diamond for a record price. Despite his success in the gemstone industry, his pursuit of cosmetic enhancement ended tragically and reignited discussion about the risks of elective procedures and unregulated clinic practices.



Dele Giwa: An unresolved case, yet a legacy that endures

Some voices become dangerous not because they shout, but because they tell the truth clearly. Born in 1947, Dele Giwa was a fearless Nigerian journalist and co-founder of Newswatch magazine. At a time when silence was safer, he chose investigation, accountability, and courage. His writing challenged power and expanded the boundaries of press freedom in Nigeria. In October 1986, Giwa lost his life after a parcel bomb was delivered to his home an incident that sent shockwaves through the nation and forever changed conversations around journalism, safety, and freedom of expression in Nigeria. Decades later, his case remains unresolved, but his legacy endures as a reminder of the price truth can demand and the role of the press in a fragile democracy.

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NEWS

Hours After US Ground Troops' Arrival, Dozens Killed As Terrorists Attack Kwara

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2020, Boko Haram fighters moved into the forest in July last year. Residents narrate horrifying ordeal. According to residents of Woro and a community leader in Kaiama, the attack began around 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday and continued into the early hours of Wednesday. The terrorists stormed the village, opening fire, setting houses ablaze, and abducting an unspecified number of women and children. Reuters earlier quoted a local politician, Sa'idu Ahmed, as estimating the death toll at 40, noting that more bodies were likely to be found. By Wednesday evening, however, the figure had risen sharply. A community leader in Kaiama, who requested anonymity because he was not authorised to speak publicly, said the attackers had written to the district head of Woro months earlier. The letter, he said, informed the district head of the group's intention to "come and preach" in the community. According to the leader, who is also a member of the Kwara State Emirate Council, the district head forwarded the letter to the council in Ilorin, which subsequently requested the deployment of soldiers to Woro. A team of soldiers was sent, he said, but withdrew later when no attack occurred.

Killings and Abductions
Instead, the fighters reportedly moved to Baburasa, a neighbouring community about 20 kilometres from Woro. The Woro attack comes barely a month after Boko Haram fighters under the command of Malam Sadiku attacked Kasuwan Daji in neighbouring Niger State, killing more than 30 people and abducting women and children. The same faction was also responsible for the abduction of over 300 students from St Mary's Catholic School in Papiri, Niger State. The Sadiku faction of Boko Haram has operated in the Alawa forest reserve from where it attacked neighbouring villages like Alawa, Basa and Kurebe, among others. Although the group has moved to the Kainji axis, it left behind a humanitarian crisis. Sources, including ex-members of the group, said that the group left its former stronghold due to sustained military aerial bombardment and infighting with Dogo Gide, a notorious bandit leader.

Deepening Insecurity
Nigeria continues to grapple with deepening insecurity across several regions, as banditry, terrorism, kidnapping, and communal violence place increasing pressure on communities and security agencies. From the North-West to parts of the Middle Belt, attacks on civilians, transportation routes, and rural settlements have heightened fears and raised concerns about the country's



Terrorists destroy homes and livelihoods in Kwara State

long-term stability.

United States Military
Recent developments have drawn attention to reports of United States military involvement through the arrival of American ground personnel in Nigeria, aimed primarily at strengthening intelligence cooperation, counter-terrorism support, and training partnerships with regional forces. The Nigerian Defence

Headquarters described the deployments as advisory or collaborative rather than combat operations. The presence of the ground troops reflects growing international concern over expanding extremist networks in the Sahel and neighbouring regions that could affect the country's security landscape. Rising attacks signal a shifting security pattern,

where criminal and armed groups appear increasingly mobile, exploiting porous borders and local vulnerabilities.

A Call for Urgent Action
Residents and local authorities have called for stronger surveillance, improved intelligence sharing, and faster response from security agencies to prevent further escalation. Security analysts argue

that addressing Nigeria's insecurity requires a combination of military strategy, community engagement, economic development, and regional cooperation. Strengthening local policing structures, tackling unemployment, and improving governance are often highlighted as essential long-term measures alongside immediate security operations.

Nigeria's Public Transport Gap: Daily Struggles, Fatigue, and Dangerous Journeys

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or late-night commutes have become distressingly common. For many Nigerians, the journey to work feels like an act of courage rather than routine.

One Step Forward, Two Backward
In the Federal Capital Territory, the irony is striking. The government has invested heavily in infrastructure such as the modern motor parks built in places like Kugbo and other parts of Abuja. These facilities, designed to bring order and comfort to urban transportation, stand as visible symbols of intent. Yet, they remain largely underutilised for their true purpose because there are no government-owned buses to operate from them on a large scale. Instead, commuters still rely on

private operators who dictate fares and routes with little regulation. The absence of a coordinated public bus system means that these modern parks do not translate into relief for the average worker. They are structures without a system — impressive in appearance, ineffective in impact.

Health and Financial Consequences
The consequences of this failure ripple across the economy. Productivity suffers when workers spend hours stuck in traffic or stranded at bus stops. Health deteriorates under the strain of long, stressful commutes. Family life is disrupted as parents leave home before dawn and return late at night, exhausted and frustrated. Yet, Nigerians endure. They queue, they squeeze, they



Traffic congestion

negotiate fares, and they pray for safety — all in silence.

Endurance isn't Acceptance
This quiet endurance should not be mistaken for acceptance. It is a symptom of resilience stretched to its limits. A functional public transport system is not a luxury; it is a necessity for economic growth, social stability and human dignity. Until government moves beyond building structures to providing services — affordable buses, regulated routes and secure commuting options — the silent commute will continue to define the daily lives of Nigerian workers. And every morning, as the sun rises over crowded bus stops, the nation's workforce will keep moving, quietly bearing a burden they should never have had to carry alone.

NEWS

BY ABDULLAHI HARUNA



Police

Police arrest landlady for poisoning tenant's 3-year-old son

The Ondo State Police Command has arrested a woman, Nafisat Lateef, for allegedly poisoning a three-year-old boy at Omifon community in Odigbo Local Government Area. The state Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Abayomi Jimoh, disclosed the arrest in a statement on Friday, noting that the victim is the child of her tenant. According to Jimoh, the 40-year-old suspect

allegedly committed the offence on Tuesday following an argument with the victim's mother, identified as Rofiat. The suspect reportedly gave the child a liquid substance suspected to be poisonous. Jimoh said: "The incident occurred on Tuesday, 4th February 2026, at about 8:30 am, when the suspect allegedly gave the victim identified as Abdulrasheed, a liquid substance suspected to be poisonous. The

act was reportedly carried out following a misunderstanding between the complainant and the suspect, who is the complainant's landlady. "Shortly after consuming the substance, the child began vomiting and was immediately rushed to a nearby hospital, where he received medical attention. "The police detectives, during a swift and intelligence-led operation,

arrested the suspect." He added that detectives recovered the liquid substance suspected to be poison during the investigation. "The suspect is currently in police custody and has made useful statements," Jimoh noted. The police have commenced a full investigation, and the case will be charged in court upon conclusion of the inquiry.

Police bust criminal syndicate in Abuja, recover stolen items

The Federal Capital Territory Police Command has arrested nine members of a suspected armed robbery syndicate operating within Abuja and its environs. The police also recovered stolen vehicles and several household items during the operation. Confirming the development, the Police Public Relations Officer, FCT Command, SP Josephine Adeh, said the suspects were arrested following a robbery incident in Jikwoyi. "On January 18, 2026, armed robbers invaded a residence in Jikwoyi and carted away valuables, cash and a Toyota Corolla," she said. Adeh explained that operatives of the Scorpion Squad launched

an intelligence-led investigation after the incident. She disclosed that the suspects were tracked to Nasarawa State, where they were arrested on January 26 while planning another attack in Asokoro. "Items recovered include laptops, generators, televisions, vehicles and other exhibits," she added. The police spokesperson said investigations revealed that the suspects sold stolen vehicles in Kaduna and Kano. "They sold the vehicles for between N550,000 and N650,000," she said. Adeh noted that efforts were ongoing to arrest receivers of the stolen items. She added that the suspects would be charged in court after investigations.



Criminals

JOHESU suspends 8-month nationwide strike

The Joint Health Sector Unions (JOHESU) has suspended its nationwide strike, 84 days after the industrial action began. The union called off the strike at the end of its expanded national executive council (NEC) emergency meeting held in Abuja on Friday. The meeting was convened to review the outcomes of the federal government-JOHESU conciliation meeting held on Thursday at the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment headquarters. The union embarked on an indefinite nationwide strike on November 15, 2025, over what it called the federal government's persistent failure to implement the adjusted consolidated health salary structure (CONHESS) and resolve longstanding welfare and systemic issues affecting health workers. In a communique issued after the

meeting, JOHESU said the strike has been suspended to "allow for the implementation of the FG-JOHESU Terms of Settlements". "After exhaustive deliberations and review of the terms of settlement of the conciliation meeting, the expanded NEC session voted unanimously to suspend the ongoing indefinite nationwide strike action to allow for the implementation of the FG-JOHESU terms of settlement," the communique reads. "While appreciating the masses for their understanding throughout the period of the industrial action, we appeal to consumers of health that a recurring infliction of injustice and a huge trust deficit necessitated this unfortunate and avoidable JOHESU nationwide strike and hope that the Federal Government as well as other state governments show both sensitivity and responsibility

in ensuring Nigerians avoid this depth of suffering in the foreseeable future." JOHESU said there were two review sessions during the strike on January 15 and 22 with the Federal Ministry of Health, aimed at resolving the trade dispute. The union said its leadership presented a proposal at the January 22 meeting, following the expanded NEC deliberation, while the Ministry of Health also made a counterproposal. "The third meeting was the emergency conciliation meeting convened on February 5, 2026, arising from the 14-day ultimatum issued by the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC) and the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) to the FG on the implementation of the adjustment of CONHESS," the communique said. JOHESU said it was agreed that the "budgetary allocation to take

care of the implementation of the adjustment of CONHESS must form a cardinal part and projection of the 2026 Appropriation Act, and that the "NO WORK, NO PAY" directive would be withdrawn and the January 2026 salaries of JOHESU members be paid immediately." According to the communique, it was also agreed that no member of JOHESU who participated in the strike would be victimised or sanctioned. Members of JOHESU include the Medical and Health Workers' Union of Nigeria (MHWUN), the Nigerian Union of Allied Health Professionals (NUAHP), the Senior Staff Association of Universities (SSAU), Teaching Hospitals, Research Institutes and Associated Institutions (THRIA), and the Non-Academic Staff Union of Educational and Associated Institutions (NSSUEAI).



Medical staff

OUR HEART

Enhancing performance through reforms in the Nigerian Customs Service

In his address at the just concluded 2026 edition of the World Customs Day held in Abuja, the Secretary General of the World Customs Organisation, WCO, Ian Sanders emphasised the critical role of Customs services in national and international developments:

“Strong and well equipped Customs administrations are indispensable to national and international security, public health, environmental protection, trade facilitations and the integrity of the global supply chain.”

Since his appointment in October, 2023 as the Comptroller General of the nation’s Customs Service, Dr Bashir Adewale Adeniyi has been striving towards attaining new heights in the nation’s customs administration through the adoption of a raft of reforms.

Dr Bashir Adewale Adeniyi, the Comptroller General of the Nigeria Customs Service, explained at the global platform of customs administrations, that the unfolding chain of reforms in the service in Nigeria, were “designed to ensure that Customs continues to protect the society while facilitating legitimate trade in an increasingly complex global supply environment.”

Some of the reforms earlier introduced under Dr Bashir Adeniyi include improved welfare package for officers and men of the service which has, expectedly, enhanced performance and reduced the tendencies towards compromising professional standards and ethics.

Similarly, all cadres of the service have been undergoing various training programmes and courses within and outside the country. This is geared towards increased exposure to latest global standards in digitisation and general application of technology in customs operations.

Taking cognisance of the fact that, “effective trade facilitation requires fully coordinated port ecosystem”, the Comptroller General stated that part of the reforms is also to strengthen partnerships with other government agencies, terminal operators, shipping lines, brokers, financial institutions and international bodies such as the World Customs Organisation, WCO.

In furtherance to its reforms agenda, the NCS formally launched the Time Release Study, TRS, on the occasion of the World Customs Day. The TRS initiative is fashioned to streamline trade processes, reduce cargo delays at ports, boost economic growth and increase trade volumes.

The use of the TRS removes bottle necks in port operations, thereby, drastically reducing idle periods or wasted moments “caused by fragmented scheduling, manual documentation and poor coordination which significantly prolongs clearance times.”

The TRS shortens time, strengthens supply chain integrity while aligning operations of the Nigerian Customs with global best practices. The initiative is as well, in line with the ease-of-doing business agenda of the federal government, and enhances Nigeria’s competitiveness under the African Continental Free Trade Area, ACFTA.

CGC Bashir Adeniyi announced at the gathering, a long list of the benefits of the



reforms to the service. These include a phenomenal year-on-year increase in revenue generation of the service from 6.1 trillion Naira in 2024 to 7.28 trillion Naira in 2025. For the year 2025, the service exceeded its revenue target of 6.58 trillion Naira by 697 billion Naira.

Under the framework of the reforms, the service also recorded new heights in its other statutory responsibilities of protecting the society while facilitating trade. Its officers

across the ports, disrupted the flow of multiple criminal supply chains in narcotics, counterfeit medicines, arms, wildlife products and other prohibited items “before they reached Nigerian communities”.

In all, Dr Bashir Adeniyi announced that the service made a total of 2,500 seizures with an aggregate value of over 59 billion Naira. There is no gainsaying that, “Such interventions helped prevent addiction, unsafe medical treatment, violent crimes and environmental damage.”

The pertinent point to note is that the impressive gains by the Customs Service in the preceding three years “were not by arbitrary enforcement or increased pressure on compliant traders but by improved compliance, better use of data analysis, digital tools, and disciplined enforcement, supported by closer engagement with the private sector.”

The reforms also emphasises reliance on risk management; non intrusive inspection; post clearance and data analytics rather than physical presence alone; synchronised inspection; improved gate coordination and better cooperation among port ecosystem.

The unfolding reforms in the Nigerian Customs administration is a welcome development which hopefully, will endure beyond the tenure of its Architect in the person of Dr Bashir Adewale Adeniyi. For so many years, the Customs Service had had the unflattering image of being a nest of corruption and sleaze.

The Nigerian Customs Service must be recalibrated and refocused to be more effective in discharging its statutory responsibilities of protecting the society against harmful and criminal activities at the nation’s ports and across the borders while also facilitating international trade and generating revenue to the government.

As evident in its phenomenal revenue generation in recent times, the Customs Service, without arbitrariness, has the capacity of a veritable source of revenue to the national coffers. This function can only be effectively preformed if the service is properly equipped in line with prevailing global standards. It also demands a highly trained and motivated personnel.

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NORTH-EAST

BY GIFT LUCKSON
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Fire outbreak razes houses in Gombe residential community

A fire outbreak in Tumfure Quarters, Gombe State, has gutted a two-bedroom flat and a three-bedroom detached residential building.

This was disclosed in a statement signed by the Public Relations Officer of the Federal Fire Service, Gombe State Command, ASF Bashir Muazu.

Muazu said the fire was promptly brought under control due to the swift response and professionalism of firefighters at the scene.

No casualties were recorded.

“Our firefighters responded swiftly to the distress call and were able to confine the fire to the affected buildings. Their timely intervention prevented the blaze from spreading to nearby structures,” Muazu said.

He disclosed that preliminary assessments indicate that property valued at approximately N25 million was successfully saved, while the estimated loss stood at about N5 million.

Muazu also acknowledged the support received from



Fire outbreak

sister agencies.

“We appreciate the collaboration of the Gombe State Fire Service and security personnel from the Tumfure Divisional Police Station, whose support ensured a safe and coordinated operation,” he added.

The service urged residents to prioritise fire safety measures in their homes.

“We advise members of the public to regularly inspect and maintain their electrical installations, avoid practices that could trigger fire outbreaks, and keep basic firefighting equipment within reach.

Prevention remains the most effective way to reduce fire incidents,” Muazu stated.

The incident occurred barely a day after fire razed parts of a popular Kano market, also known as Singa Market.

According to reports, the fire damaged sections of the busy market.

Taraba gov't launches seed production initiative to boost food security



Gov. Kefas

Taraba State Governor, Agbu Kefas, has launched the Taraba

Seed Production Limited as part of efforts to transform agricultural

productivity and strengthen food security in the state.

Kefas, while launching the seed production in Lau, said it is aimed at strengthening food security in the state.

According to him, Taraba Seed Production aims to produce hybrid seedlings for farmers and represents a major step toward strengthening the national agricultural value chain by ensuring farmers' access to high-quality, certified, and climate-resilient seeds.

Kefas further stated that the initiative forms part of his administration's unwavering commitment to the socio-economic development of Taraba State.

He also disclosed plans to construct the road leading to Lau as part of efforts to open up the area for economic growth and improved access.

The governor urged the people of the area to actively participate in the programme and safeguard the project to ensure its sustainability.

Over 32,000 Yobe schoolgirls receive N1.3 billion in education grants

In a major push to advance girls' education, Yobe State Governor Mai Mala Buni has inaugurated the disbursement of N1.295 billion in scholastic grants to 32,382 adolescent girls across the state.

The launch ceremony, held on Tuesday at the Government House Event Centre in Damaturu, is a cornerstone of the state's Adolescent Girls' Initiative for Learning and Empowerment (AGILE) project.

The programme targets female students from low-income families, providing each beneficiary with a ₦4,000 conditional cash transfer per term to directly support their schooling.

Addressing state officials and community leaders, Governor Buni framed the initiative as a critical investment in the state's future.

He explained that the financial support is designed to reduce dropout rates, ease the burden on families, and allow girls to concentrate on their studies without economic distraction.

“This is not merely financial assistance; it is an investment in our daughters' futures and in the prosperity of Yobe State,” the governor stated.

He encouraged recipients to use the funds responsibly for their educational development and to remain committed to their academic goals.

Governor Buni also praised the State Ministry of Basic Education and the AGILE project coordinators for their role in implementing the programme and urged them to maintain rigorous oversight to ensure its continued success.

The AGILE grants are conditional, meaning they are linked to regular school attendance and enrollment, a strategy proven to boost educational performance and create pathways toward greater economic opportunity for young women.



Schoolgirls

NORTH-EAST

BY IBRAHEEM EL-TAFSEER

Gov. Buni commits to completing 38 health centres, underscores Yobe’s healthcare achievements



Gov. Buni

Governor Mai Mala Buni has announced a major push to complete primary healthcare infrastructure across Yobe State, promising to construct the remaining 38 Primary Health Care Centres (PHCs) in the state’s unserved wards. The governor made the declaration on Sunday during the grand finale of the 2026 Machina Cultural Festival (MACUF). He said this commitment follows the successful completion of 143 PHCs, bringing the state closer to its goal of having a functional health centre in each of its

178 political wards. Governor Buni seized the platform to trumpet a significant achievement as Yobe State’s recent first-place ranking in primary healthcare delivery nationwide. He attributed this success to the dedication of the state’s health workers. “All these achievements are a result of the commitment and dedication of the healthcare providers in the state,” said Buni. Governor Buni stated, “We received 1.2 million dollars as a reward for this achievement and promised to build

primary health care centres across all 178 wards. “So far, we have constructed 140, with 38 remaining, and we will soon commence their construction,” he added. Highlighting a holistic approach to healthcare, the Governor emphasised that buildings alone are insufficient. “It is not enough to build a health care centre without equipment or to build a hospital without staff. “To this end, this administration has recruited and deployed approximately 3,000 medical personnel to man the newly built facilities,” he added. Beyond healthcare, Governor Buni outlined progressive interventions in agriculture. He revealed that the state’s empowerment scheme is expanding, with plans to support 50 individuals per ward this year. According to him, this follows the assistance provided to 30 people per ward last year and 40 per ward two years prior. The governor framed the massive cultural gathering as a testament to the restored peace in Yobe State. “Everyone here can attest that this gathering in

Machina is a sign that peace has been restored in the state,” he said, urging continued prayers for sustained peace across Nigeria. He expressed gratitude for the successful conclusion of MACUF 2026 and hoped for its continuation in the following year. Earlier, the Emir of Machina, Alhaji Dr Bashir Albishir Bukar Machina, welcomed guests from “far and near” and prayed for their safe journeys home. The festival attracted a high-profile gathering, including the Speaker of the Yobe State House of Assembly, former Senate President Ahmad Ibrahim Lawan, members of the National Assembly, and traditional rulers from Yobe, other parts of Nigeria, and the Niger Republic. Before the MACUF events, Governor Buni undertook an inspection tour in the region. He commissioned Rugar Barabe, a residential estate in Nguru built by philanthropist Alhaji Balarabe Abdullahi. His tour also included an assessment of the Laminu Primary Health Care Centre, a sesame processing factory, and the ongoing construction of a modern market in Machina.

FG launches emergency food, nutrition intervention in Borno



Beneficiaries

The Federal Government on Thursday flagged off the distribution of palliatives comprising food and non-food items to thousands of residents, including women, children, and the elderly, in Borno State. Speaking during the flag-off ceremony in Maiduguri, the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Bernard Doro, said the initiative stemmed from the Presidential

Emergency Food and Nutrition Intervention Programme, aimed at supporting residents of the 10 most humanitarian-affected states in Northern Nigeria. The minister stated that the FG approved and mobilised food items such as rice, beans, millet, maize, garri, groundnuts, groundnut oil, palm oil, brown sugar, tomato paste, seasoning cubes, salt, as well as assorted essential medicines for the

exercise. “I am honoured to be in Maiduguri today, a city that symbolises courage and resilience, to flag off the distribution of the Presidential Emergency Food and Nutrition Intervention in 10 states, including our dear Borno State. “Today’s intervention is a decisive step. It is not just emergency relief; it is a deliberate and coordinated effort to stabilise communities and restore hope. “Access to adequate and nutritious food is a fundamental human right, and this programme affirms our commitment to humanitarian assistance and poverty reduction,” Doro said. He further noted that Nigeria has faced multiple challenges in recent times, including conflict, climate impacts, and economic pressures, which have disrupted livelihoods and deepened vulnerability. “In response, the Federal Government under the leadership of His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, has prioritised urgent action to address hunger and strengthen food security, especially for the most vulnerable populations,” he said. According to him, the presidential intervention covers the 10 most humanitarian-affected states in Northern Nigeria: Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, Benue, Niger, Plateau, Katsina, Zamfara, Sokoto, and Kebbi. He explained that nationwide, the Federal Government approved the distribution of items including rice, beans, millet, maize, garri, groundnuts, groundnut oil, palm oil, brown sugar, tomato paste, seasoning cubes, salt, and assorted essential medicines.

“Specifically, Borno State has been allocated 8,565 bags each of 25kg millet, rice, and maize; 8,565 units of 10-litre groundnut oil; 1,429 cartons of four-litre palm oil; 8,565 units of four-kilogram brown sugar; 171 cartons of tomato paste; 611 cartons of seasoning cubes; 107 bags of 20kg salt; and assorted essential items,” the minister said. Doro maintained that the initiative reflects the Federal Government’s seriousness in addressing food security, nutrition stabilisation, and humanitarian protection. “To the people of Borno State, I commend your strength and perseverance. This support is designed to provide immediate relief to households affected by conflict, displacement, and economic hardship,” he said. He urged strict adherence to equity and accountability in the distribution process, stressing that priority should be given to the elderly, children, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups. Also speaking, the Acting Governor of Borno State, Umar Kadam, commended the FG for the intervention and assured residents that the items would be distributed transparently. “We assure all stakeholders that these items will be distributed fairly and transparently to the intended beneficiaries. “I appreciate the Honourable Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, as well as all implementing partners, humanitarian agencies, and security personnel whose continued dedication and sacrifices have helped improve the lives of our people,” Kadam said.

Police nab two terrorists logistics suppliers in Bauchi

Police in Bauchi State have disrupted what they described as a critical logistics supply line to bandits with the arrest of two young men allegedly ferrying fuel to bandits in Mansur, a community in Alkaleri local government area of the State. The suspects, Ayuba Ahmadu and Danlami Ayuba, both 25 years old, were arrested with a staggering 560 litres of fuel intended for bandits operating in the area. Addressing journalists at the Bauchi State Police Command headquarters, the command’s spokesperson, SP Nafi’u Habib, said the arrest followed sustained intelligence-led operations aimed at cutting off supplies to criminal groups. According to him, each suspect was intercepted on a Honda motorcycle, with 280 litres of fuel

loaded in containers, raising immediate suspicion. “During interrogation, the suspects confessed to selling fuel and other logistics to bandits,” SP Habib disclosed, adding that the operation underscored the command’s determination to dismantle the support networks that keep bandits operational. The police said investigations were ongoing to track down other collaborators, warning that anyone aiding or abetting criminal elements will face the full weight of the law. The arrest comes amid intensified efforts by security agencies to choke the flow of supplies to bandit groups, a strategy authorities believed is key to restoring peace in affected communities.



Police

CUSTOMS

BY ABDULLAHI HARUNA

Nigeria Customs showcases digital platforms at 2026 WCO conference in Abu Dhabi



Customs officials

Nigeria has showcased its Customs modernisation efforts at the 2026 World Customs Organisation (WCO) Technology Conference and Exhibition in Abu Dhabi, reaffirming its commitment to technology-driven border management and international cooperation. The Comptroller-General of Customs, Adewale Adeniyi, disclosed this during the conference at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre, according to a statement by the National Public Relations Officer (NPRO) for the Nigeria Customs Service, Abdullahi Maiwada. Speaking during a panel,

Adeniyi emphasised the importance of international collaboration, enhanced data exchange, and intelligence-led enforcement in addressing cross-border crime and trade risks.

“Diversion of goods in transit is a global challenge that requires coordinated Customs-to-Customs cooperation,” he said. Nigeria also showcased its indigenous B’Odogwu digital platform and other Trade Modernisation Project solutions aimed at strengthening border security, facilitating legitimate trade and aligning Customs operations with global best practices.



Murtala Muhammed Airport Lagos

Lagos Airport Customs Command exceeds annual revenue target by 13 per cent

The Murtala Muhammed Airport Lagos command of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) generated N202.9 billion in revenue in 2025, a 13% increase from the N181.01 billion recorded in 2024. The figure covers collections made between January and December 2025, according to the command.

The Customs Area Controller, Comptroller G.A. Otunla, said the Command exceeded its annual revenue target by 13 per cent, achieving 113 per cent performance for the year. He attributed the growth to improved trader compliance, stronger monitoring of import

transactions, early detection of irregularities, and deliberate efforts to block revenue leakages. “This achievement is the result of improved compliance by traders, effective monitoring of import transactions, timely detection of irregularities, and sustained efforts to curb revenue leakages,”

Comptroller Otunla said. The Murtala Muhammed Area Command oversees Customs operations at Nigeria’s busiest international airport, handling high-value cargo, passenger baggage, and time-sensitive imports. Comptroller Otunla praised the dedication of officers and collaboration

with other security and regulatory agencies operating at the airport. He also acknowledged the role of compliant traders and licensed customs agents. “The cooperation of sister agencies, the dedication of our officers, and the support of compliant traders and licensed Customs agents

were key to this outstanding performance,” he said. The Customs boss reaffirmed the Command’s commitment to transparency, accountability, and sustained stakeholder engagement. According to him, the goal is to align revenue generation with the Nigeria Customs Service’s broader mandate of trade facilitation.

PRIME PHOTOS

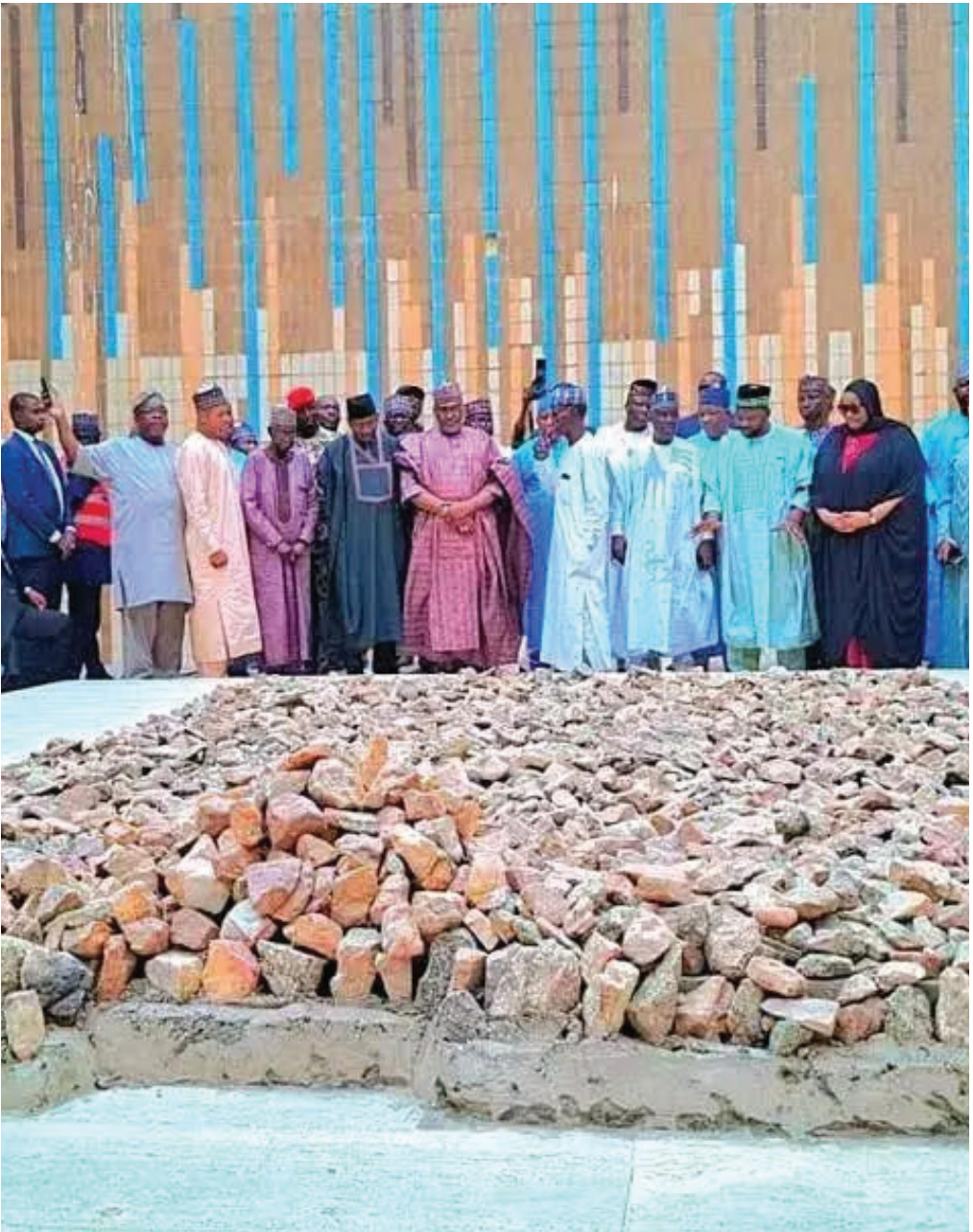
BY MERCY ADAJE
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A photograph of General Olusegun Obasanjo saluting the body of Head of State, General Murtala Mohammed, lying in a coffin during its journey to Kano, February 1976.



Russian President, Vladimir Putin, at the age of 5 with his mom Maria Ivanova in July 1958.



The North East Development Commission (NEDC) has completed the rehabilitation of the tomb complex of Nigeria's first Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, in Bauchi State.



A photograph showing Head of State Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon sharing a meal with Eastern Region Military Governor Lt. Col. Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu during the Aburi Peace Talks in Ghana in January 1967. The calm scene marked the last serious attempt to prevent Nigeria's civil war.

PRIME10MENT

BY MERCY ADAJE
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Stop chasing Grammys, build your own platforms - Cobhams Asuquo to Nigerian artists

Nigerian musician and producer Cobhams Asuquo has called for deeper reflection on Nigeria's relationship with the Grammy Awards, questioning whether the country is investing too much emotional and cultural value in an institution that does not belong to it.

Commenting on the backlash over Nigerian artists losing at the Grammys, Asuquo said the conversation requires honest introspection rather than outrage.

He suggested that Nigerians may be placing excessive hope in a system that ultimately serves American interests.

He questioned whether the excitement around the Grammys benefits Nigerians as much as it benefits the host country, pointing out that African artists and fans spend heavily to attend the ceremony in Los Angeles.

According to him, the pattern often involves anticipation built around nominations, only for expectations to be dashed when the final results are announced.

"When we show up, we show out. We rent hotels, buy drinks, buy clothes, we do all of these things. Then it's like a carrot is dangling in front of us, and then the carrot goes away."

Asuquo argued that rather than chasing validation from foreign institutions, Nigeria should focus on building its own global-standard platforms.

He compared the Grammys to American sporting events like the Super Bowl, noting that such events are primarily national institutions that others aspire to participate in, not control.

"We need to grow something that is ours," he said, adding that Nigeria should create cultural platforms strong enough to attract global attention on its own terms.

His comments come amid backlash from Nigerians following the 68th Grammy Awards, held on February 1 at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles.

The controversy was sparked by South African singer Tyla's win in the Best African Music Performance category.

Tyla beat Nigerian heavyweights Davido, Burna Boy and Ayra Starr to clinch the award, a result that triggered widespread criticism on social media.

Many Nigerians questioned the criteria used by the Recording Academy and accused it of misunderstanding African music and its cultural contexts.

The category itself, introduced in 2024, has remained a point of contention, with fans arguing that it lumps diverse African sounds into a single bracket while favouring artists with global pop appeal over those rooted in local genres.

Despite the backlash, the 2026 Grammys also marked a historic moment for African music. Afrobeat pioneer Fela Anikulapo-Kuti was honoured with a posthumous award, becoming the first African artist to receive such recognition.

A respected songwriter, producer and film composer, Asuquo has worked with artists such as Asa, Bez and Tiwa Savage, and is widely regarded as one of Nigeria's most technically accomplished music professionals.

He has also composed scores for films and television and is known for advocating inclusion in the creative industry.



Asuquo

EFCC arrests Kannywood actress Samha Inuwa for Naira abuse



Samha Inuwa

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has arrested Kannywood actress Samha Inuwa over alleged abuse of the Nigerian currency.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, EFCC's spokesperson, Dele Oyewale, said operatives of the commission's Kano Zonal Directorate apprehended the actress after a video circulated on social media showing her allegedly using naira notes to wipe her nose.

Mr Oyewale said the commission traced Ms Inuwa following the viral clip and subsequently took her into custody for questioning.

"She was seen in a viral video cleaning her nose with naira notes. The commission swung into action, traced and arrested her to answer questions," the statement said.

The EFCC also said she would be charged in court upon the conclusion of investigations.

Section 21(1) of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Act, 2007, prohibits the spraying, stamping, mutilation, or abuse of the naira.

Also, Section 21(3) of the Act prescribes penalties, including fines and imprisonment, for

offenders. The commission has in recent months intensified enforcement of the law, particularly against individuals accused of abusing the currency at social events or in online content.

Since 2024, many prominent individuals have been arrested, faced prosecution and convicted for naira abuse.

In December 2025, Judge Ahmad Mahmud of the Federal High Court in Sokoto convicted three individuals — Ahmad Abdullahi Buhari, Jamilu Bello, and Yasir Muhammad Bala — for naira mutilation.

The defendants pleaded guilty to charges of spraying and tampering with naira notes at social gatherings.

The court sentenced them to one year imprisonment on various counts, with options of N100,000 fines.

The judge also directed them to depose to affidavits of good behaviour and undertake community sensitisation campaigns under EFCC supervision.

Similarly, Kano-based TikTok influencer Murja Kunya was re-arrested in March 2025 after allegedly jumping administrative bail granted over a Naira abuse case.

The EFCC has repeatedly warned that it will continue to prosecute individuals who abuse the national currency, stressing that such acts undermine the integrity of the naira.

In April 2024, the Federal High Court in Lagos, on Friday, sentenced Bobrisky, whose real name is Idris Okunne, to six months in jail without an option of fine for Naira abuse.

The judge, Abimbola Awogboro, imposed the sentence after the controversial crossdresser pleaded guilty to the alleged offences.

Earlier in February 2024, the Federal High Court in Lagos similarly convicted an actress, Oluwadarasimi Omoseyin, of spraying and stepping on new naira notes at a wedding in Lagos.

Ms Omoseyin was apprehended on 1 February, following the viral circulation of a video clip showing her spraying new Naira notes at a wedding in Lekki, Lagos State, on 28 January.

On 2 February, the trial judge, Chukwujekwu Aneke, sentenced Ms Omoseyin to six months' imprisonment, but with the option of a N300,000 fine.

Dancing on social media to promote films is unprofessional — Nollywood actress Omotola

Nollywood actress Omotola Jalade-Ekeinde has strongly criticised the growing industry expectation for actors to perform dance routines on social media to promote their films, labelling the practice as "unprofessional".

The 47-year-old acclaimed actress voiced her concerns during a recent interview on the eSplash show.

She clarified that while she enjoys dancing personally, the issue arises when it transforms from a choice into a compulsory mandate.

She argued that dancing should not become a standard requirement for movie promotion, stressing that actors are not content creators.

"I dance. I'm sure a lot of us love to dance too. But the problem is when you're dancing not because you want to, but because you have to," she said.

"There is nothing wrong with you promoting your movie and dancing and having fun with it. But when it becomes a chore. When it becomes 'this is what you have to do' to sell a movie, it is not professional."

Omotola argued that the trend reflects a broader misunderstanding within Nollywood about the distinct roles required for cinematic success. She emphasised that the core job



Omotola

of an actor is to perform, not to shoulder the entire burden of marketing a project.

"I already done the project. I should go around, talk about the project, and let the people whose job is to distribute handle the advertising. That's how it's done in better climes," she said.

She further expressed that forcing actors into what she described as "demeaning" promotional activities can be exhausting and unsustainable, particularly for those managing multiple projects simultaneously.

Drawing a contrast with Hollywood's ecosystem, Omotola

noted that many top actors maintain minimal or no social media presence, yet their films achieve global success.

"We are not content creators. There are people whose job is," she said.

"In the United States, for example, there are actors who are not even on Instagram. You would never find a Daniel Day-Lewis on social media. They are actors—they come, do their job, and leave."

Omotola's remarks follow similar observations made by filmmaker Kunle Afolayan and media mogul Mo Abudu during a panel at the recent Lagos Business of Film Summit.

Abudu had stated she could not promote movies the same way stars like Funke Akindele and Toyin Abraham do.

Afolayan's remarks, in particular, sparked a public backlash from Akindele, who has built a highly successful brand through energetic and direct social media engagement with her audience.

Critics interpreted his comments as dismissive of her effective promotional style.

Akindele responded by affirming that every creator is free to develop their own strategy, famously adding that "the sky is big enough for everyone to fly."

NEPTUNE PRIME BUSINESS

MARKET SURVEY



Cost of grains and other food commodities in Bauchi

Residents of Danbam Local Government Area in Bauchi State have expressed relief as the prices of key food commodities such as maize, millet, beans, and sorghum recorded significant reductions this week. The fall in grain prices comes at a time when many households have been struggling with the high cost of living. According to traders at the Danbam grain market, the price of old maize now sells between N37,000 and N39,000 per bag, while new maize has dropped further, trading between N30,000 and N31,000. Millet has also seen a price fall, with old millet ranging from N31,000 to N33,000 and new millet selling for as low as N25,000 to N26,000.

In the beans market, a bag of white beans (large size) is being sold between N65,000 and N73,000, while red beans (large size) range from N73,000 to N86,000 depending on quality. Other staple

crops, such as sorghum, are now selling between N30,000 and N31,000, while processed rice is priced between N35,000 and N37,000.

However, some commodities remain costly. A bag of groundnuts is priced between N120,000 and N125,000, while melon sells between N44,000 and N52,000 depending on the variety. Local dried hibiscus flower, popularly known as zobo, remains relatively affordable at N20,000 to N21,000 per bag. Meanwhile, premium-quality rice is priced at about N126,000 per bag, reflecting persisting high demand and processing costs.

For many buyers, the recent price cuts are a welcome development. "Last year, it was difficult for an average family to buy even half a bag of maize, but now we can see some relief," said Musa Abdullahi, a farmer and father of five. "The drop in millet and maize, especially, is helping households who rely on

thes

Women traders in local food stalls also confirmed that the reduced prices have encouraged more purchases, boosting sales. Grain traders attributed the price drop to the ongoing harvest season, which has increased the supply of newly harvested crops. "Farmers have started bringing in large quantities of maize and millet from the farms, so naturally prices are coming down," explained trader Aisha Ibrahim. "It is good for business because more people can now afford to buy, even though our profit margins are smaller."

Another trader, however, expressed concerns about future fluctuations. "Groundnut and beans are still on the high side," said Alhaji Sule. "If transportation costs and insecurity in farming areas continue, prices may rise again later." The new pricing at the Danbam Market remains a source of relief for both households and small-scale retailers.



MILESTONE

BY TAWHEED YAKUB

Michelle Nkamankeng makes history as Africa's youngest published author

Michelle Nkamankeng, born around 2008 in Johannesburg, South Africa, is recognised as the youngest published author in Africa and among the top 10 youngest authors worldwide.

At an age when most children are playing with toys or watching cartoons, Michelle made history by publishing her first novel at just seven years old.

Her debut book, *Waiting for the Waves*, tells the story of a young girl named Titi who overcomes her fear of ocean waves with her family's encouragement. Michelle revealed in interviews that her inspiration for writing came from a desire to tell children's stories from a child's perspective, noting that most books are written by adults.

Michelle began reading around the age of four and started writing her own stories by six.

Her early love of storytelling has since developed

into a series of books, including *The Little Girl Who Believes in Herself*, *The Little Mouse*, and *The Golden Ring*, with more titles in development.

Beyond writing, Michelle is a motivational speaker and literacy advocate. She founded the Michelle Nkamankeng Foundation to promote reading and provide books to children, especially in underserved communities.

Her achievements have earned her national recognition, including awards such as the Ubuntu Youth Diplomacy Award and the Mbokodo Girl Child of Promise Award.

Michelle continues to inspire young readers and writers across Africa, proving that age is no barrier to creativity and global impact in literature.

Abuja teacher emerges winner of Malta Teacher of the Year competition

Serah Yusuf of Wisdom International School of Excellence (WISE), Tudun Wada, Lugbe, Abuja, has emerged the winner of the 11th Malta Teacher of the Year Competition.

The grand finale took place in Lagos, where Yusuf received a cash prize of N10 million, an all-expense-paid overseas training programme, and a N30 million school infrastructure project to be executed in her honour by the Nigerian Breweries-Felix Ohiwerei Education Trust Fund.

The first runner-up, Adeola Akinsulure of Omole Senior Grammar School, Lagos, was awarded N5 million, while the second runner-up, Chibuzor Amariwa of Deeper Life High School, Yola, received N3 million while 24 state champions also received N1 million each.

Speaking at the event, the Lagos State governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, commended the initiative for elevating the teaching profession.

Represented by the commissioner for Commerce, Cooperative, Trade and Investment, Folashade Ambrose-Medebem, the governor described the competition as a contribution to nation-building and applauded the Education Trust Fund for its continued investment in teachers and schools.

The Minister of State for Education, Prof. Suwaiba Ahmad, praised the programme as a strong example of public-private collaboration in recognising educators.

She said teachers remain central to national growth and development.

Nigerian Breweries Managing Director, Thibaut Boidin, said the competition celebrates the teaching profession and its transformative role in society.

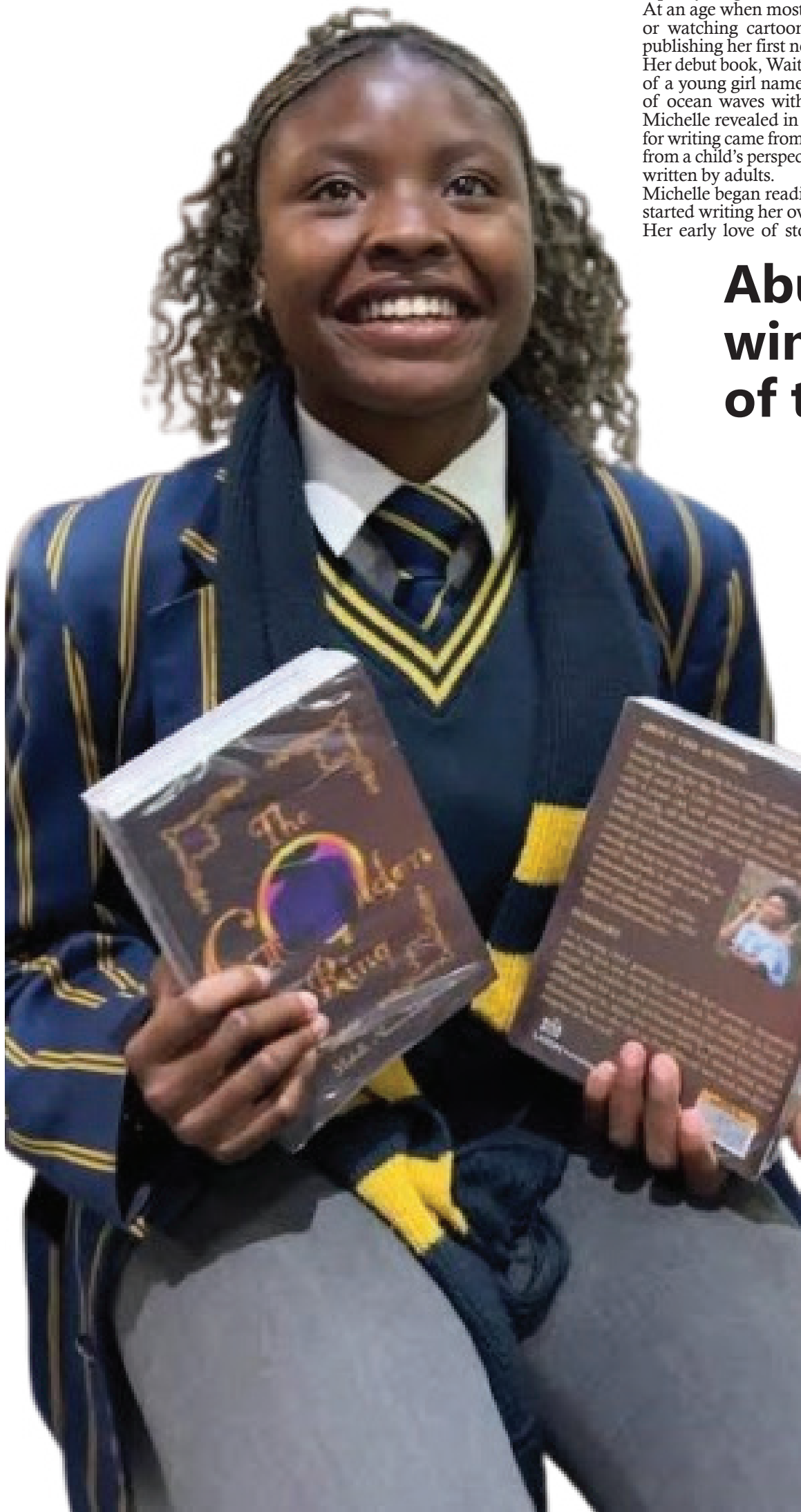
He noted its growing impact on school infrastructure, learning tools, and professional recognition.

Corporate Affairs Director, Uzodinma Odenigbo, disclosed that the 2025 edition recorded over 2,000 entries — the highest in the competition's history.

He attributed the turnout to increased trust from teachers and thanked partners and stakeholders for supporting registration efforts.

In her acceptance speech, Yusuf expressed appreciation for the recognition and said the award would inspire her to expand her work, especially in underserved communities.

She dedicated the award to children living in slum areas.



Michelle



HERITAGE

BY TAWHEED YAKUB

The enduring relevance of Eggon traditional norms despite colonialism and modernisation

The Eggon people of Nigeria are a resilient and culturally rich ethnic group, renowned for their deep sense of community, strong moral values, and enduring traditions passed down through generations. Known for hard work, discipline, and social harmony, the Eggon have maintained a strong cultural identity despite migration, colonial influence, religious change, and the pressures of modern life.

They are predominantly found in Nasarawa State, especially in Lafia, Akwanga, Nasarawa Eggon, and surrounding areas, occupying a landscape of rolling hills, rocky outcrops, and fertile plains.

These environments have shaped their agricultural practices, settlement patterns, and communal lifestyle.

Over centuries, the Eggon people have contributed significantly to the cultural, social, and economic development of the Middle Belt region, holding firmly to traditions that emphasise respect for elders, collective responsibility, and unity.

Historical Background and Origin

Eggon history is preserved mainly through oral traditions, folktales, clan histories, and ancestral narratives. Linguistically, the Eggon language belongs to the Benue-Congo branch of the Niger-Congo language family, linking them to other



Middle Belt ethnic groups. Traditionally, the Eggon lived in compact hill and plain settlements organised around clans and extended families. These settlements offered security and promoted cooperation in farming, defence, and social life.

The Eggon interacted historically with neighbouring groups such as the Alago, Mada, Tiv, and Hausa, engaging in trade, cultural exchange, and intermarriage while preserving a distinct Eggon identity.

Leadership was traditionally vested in clan heads, elders, and ritual leaders, respected for wisdom, integrity, and experience. They regulated land use, marriage customs, dispute resolution, farming



seasons, and communal obligations. Despite the impact of colonial administration, these traditional institutions remain relevant today.

Culture and Tradition

Eggon culture is communal, disciplined, and value-driven. Life centres on family, clan, and village, with clearly defined responsibilities for men, women, youth, and elders. Cooperation in farming,

house building, ceremonies, and communal labour is a defining feature of Eggon society.

The Eggon language plays a central role in identity, expressed through proverbs, songs, storytelling, and ritual expressions.

Oral traditions preserve history, ethics, and social conduct, emphasising honesty, bravery, hospitality, respect for elders, and loyalty to the community.

Today, Christianity is predominant, alongside Islam and remnants of traditional beliefs. These faiths often coexist with cultural customs. A common belief among the Eggon is that a person's strength is rooted in family and community.

Cultural expressions include traditional music, drumming, flute performances, festivals, dances, and symbolic attire, all reinforcing unity, discipline, and moral upbringing.

Marriage Customs

Among the Eggon, marriage is regarded as a sacred social institution, binding not just individuals but entire families and clans.

Marriage processes involve family introductions, negotiations led by elders, bride price (often in farm produce, livestock, or symbolic items), blessings, and moral instruction for the couple. Ceremonies are marked by music, dance, and communal feasting.

Polygamy existed traditionally but has declined due to religious influence and economic

realities. Today, marriages often combine traditional rites with Christian, Islamic, or civil ceremonies, reflecting cultural continuity and modern adaptation.

Socio-Economic Life

Agriculture remains the backbone of Eggon livelihoods. The people are skilled farmers, cultivating yam, guinea corn, maize, millet, cassava, rice, beans, and vegetables.

Livestock rearing, trading, pottery, blacksmithing, and weaving also form part of traditional economic life.

In modern times, Eggon men and women are active in education, civil service, politics, healthcare, entrepreneurship, and religious leadership, contributing meaningfully to Nasarawa State and Nigeria at large while remaining connected to their roots.

Modern Times

Like many indigenous communities, the Eggon face challenges such as urban migration, language decline among youth, land pressure, economic hardship, and cultural erosion. However, they continue to preserve their identity through cultural festivals, churches, mosques, traditional councils, community associations, and youth organisations.

Efforts to promote the Eggon language, document oral history, and celebrate cultural heritage remain strong.

Ceremonies and Cultural Practices

Eggon ceremonies reflect faith, unity, and respect for ancestry.

Key events include harvest celebrations, naming ceremonies, marriages, funerals, communal labour days, festivals, and elder-led conflict resolution gatherings. These practices reinforce values of hard work, respect, courage, cooperation, and social responsibility.

From the hills and plains of Nasarawa to modern cities across Nigeria, the Eggon people continue to demonstrate that tradition and modern life can coexist, sustaining a proud legacy built on resilience, unity, and cultural strength.



HISTORICITI

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

Luxor: The timeless artistic capital of ancient Egypt

Luxor is more than a city of ruins, it is a living testament to human ingenuity, where architecture, civilisation, and hidden stories converge along the Nile. Once Thebes, the

beating heart of Egypt's New Kingdom, Luxor embodies the ambition of Pharaohs and the artistry of a people who believed their monuments could defy time itself. Architectural Innovation:

Engineering Eternity Luxor's temples and tombs were not merely built, they were engineered with precision that still astonishes modern architects. The Hypostyle Hall at Karnak,

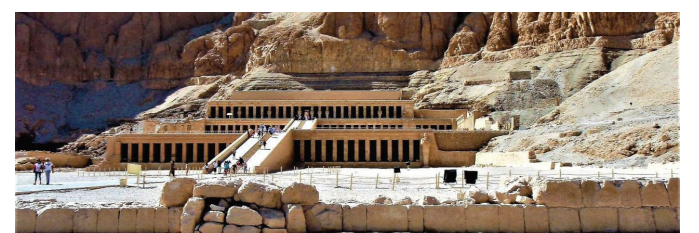
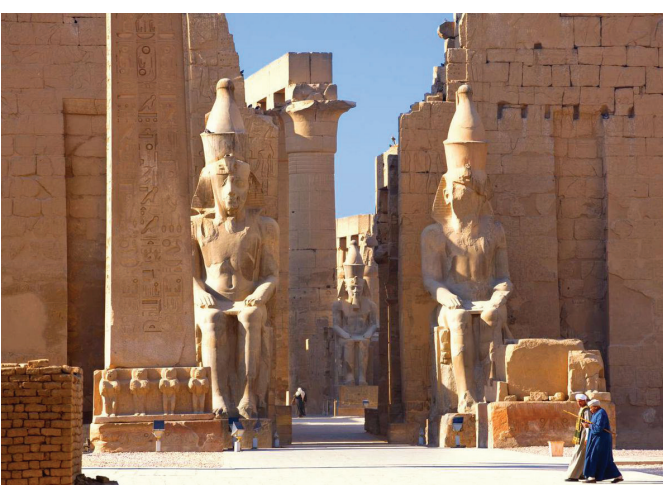
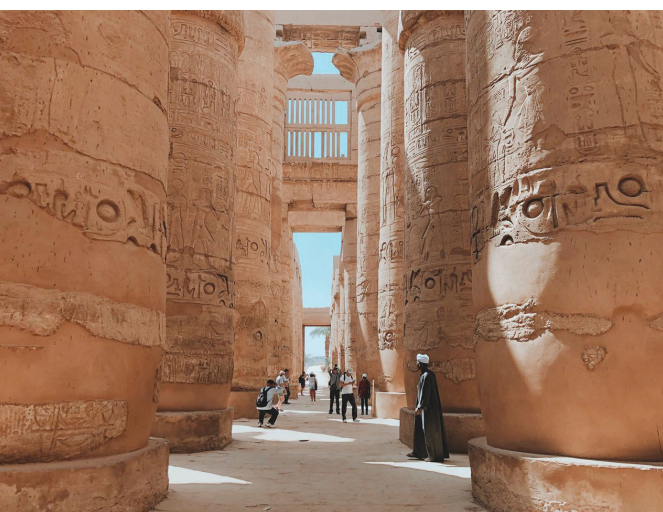
with its 21-meter-high columns, was designed to mimic a papyrus swamp, symbolising creation itself. Its alignment with the solstices ensured that sunlight illuminated sacred spaces at key

moments of the year, blending astronomy with architecture. The Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari is another marvel: terraces carved into cliffs, ramps connecting levels, and colonnades that harmonise with the desert backdrop. This integration of natural landscape and monumental design was revolutionary, influencing later architectural traditions across the Mediterranean. Even tombs in the Valley of the Kings reveal innovation, hidden entrances, complex passageways, and painted ceilings that map the stars, reflecting both security concerns and cosmic symbolism. Civilisation: The Beating Heart of the New Kingdom Luxor was not just a religious capital, it

was the centre of a thriving civilisation. Thebes became the hub of diplomacy, art, and wealth during Egypt's imperial zenith. Tribute from Nubia, Syria, and Mesopotamia flowed into its temples, funding colossal projects and sustaining a cosmopolitan society. Priests of Amun wielded immense power here, rivaling Pharaohs themselves. Luxor's monuments thus reflect not only royal ambition but also the balance of political and spiritual authority in Egyptian civilisation.

Living Legacy

Today, Luxor continues to inspire. Hot-air balloons rise over temples at sunrise, Nile cruises retrace ancient routes, and festivals celebrate Egypt's heritage. For Egyptians, Luxor is not just a tourist site, it is a symbol of resilience, artistry, and national pride, where civilisation's achievements remain etched in stone.



ROOTS

BY GIFT LUCKSON
GiftLuckson@neptuneprime.com.ng

Outlasting Slavery: How George Freeman Bragg Jr. became a force for racial justice

George Freeman Bragg Jr. (1863–1940) was a pioneering African American priest, journalist, and social activist who became a central figure in the Episcopal Church and the fight for civil rights in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Born into slavery in Warrenton, North Carolina, Bragg rose to become a formidable voice for racial equality and a leading historian of the Black presence within the Episcopal Church.

Early Life and Journalism

Bragg grew up in Petersburg, Virginia, where he was heavily influenced by his grandmother, a founder of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church for Negroes. His early career was defined by his tenacity:

- The “Not Humble Enough” Incident: In 1880, he was expelled from the Theological School for Negroes (later Bishop Payne Divinity School) because his rector claimed he was “not humble enough.”
- The Petersburg Lancet: Following his expulsion, he founded The Petersburg Lancet in 1882 at just 19 years old. The weekly newspaper became a powerful platform for Black political issues and civil rights during the Jim Crow era.

Ministry and Leadership

Despite his earlier setback, Bragg re-entered the seminary and was ordained as a priest in 1888, becoming only the twelfth Black priest in the history of the Episcopal Church in the U.S.

St. James Episcopal Church: In 1891, he became the rector of St. James in Baltimore,

the oldest Black Episcopal congregation in the South. He served there for 49 years, transforming it into a self-supporting powerhouse.

Advocacy for Black Bishops: He was a leader in the Conference of Church Workers Among Colored People, where he lobbied tirelessly for the election of Black bishops to provide the community with its own leadership.

Social Activism and Historical Work

Bragg was a “bridge” between different eras of Black activism. He was a close associate of both Booker T. Washington (helping found the Committee of Twelve) and W.E.B. Du Bois (as a founding member of the Niagara Movement, the precursor to the NAACP).

The Historiographer: He is perhaps best known as the first major historian of Black Episcopalians. His seminal work, History of the Afro-American Group of the Episcopal Church (1922), remains a primary source for scholars today.

Community Building: In 1899, he established the Maryland Home for Friendless Colored Children, providing a sanctuary and foster care for Black orphans in Baltimore.

Key Contributions

Beyond ministry and scholarship, George Freeman Bragg was involved in social advocacy, promoting education, racial uplift, and greater inclusion within religious institutions. His work helped inspire future generations and contributed to broader discussions about equality and representation within American society. He passed away in 1940, leaving behind a legacy as a spiritual leader, historian, and champion for African American heritage and progress.



THIS LIFE!

BY MARYAM SALEH ISA (Student at Yobe State University Damaturu)

I grew up learning that happiness does not depend on wealth or luxury — Businesswoman Aisha Ishaku



Aisha Ishaku

Aisha Ishaku is a proud mother and accomplished businesswoman who grew up in Damaturu, the capital of Yobe State. Born in 1970, she has lived through the social, cultural, and economic transformations that have shaped her community over the years. From an early age, Aisha learned the values of resilience, hard work, and perseverance, which later became the foundation of her entrepreneurial journey.

In this exclusive interview with Neptune Prime's correspondents, Aisha opens up about her personal life, the challenges she overcame, and the lessons she continues to share with the younger generation, encouraging them to pursue their dreams with courage and determination.

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

Aisha Ishaku: My childhood was filled with joy and simplicity, the kind of life many people today might not understand because times have changed so much. We lived in an environment where happiness depended

not on wealth or luxury, but on togetherness, community, and the little things that made life worthwhile. Though we sometimes faced small challenges, such as food scarcity or struggling to meet other basic needs, we never allowed those issues to overshadow the warmth of family life. Everyone shared what they had, and there was always laughter in the home. I grew up appreciating little blessings, like playing freely with my peers, enjoying meals prepared by my mother, and learning the virtues of respect and discipline from my father. Looking back, I see that my childhood was not only joyful but also a foundation for the person I became later in life.

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

Aisha Ishaku: Some of my happiest memories revolve around the love and support I received from my parents. Whenever I faced even the smallest financial challenge or personal difficulty, I could

always turn to either my father or my mother for comfort. They never made me feel like my worries were too small or unimportant. I remember my mother's reassuring words and my father's quiet but firm guidance; their care taught me that family is a safe place. Those moments of affection, understanding, and protection remain etched in my heart. Even today, as I think back to my younger years, I feel a deep longing for that environment of unconditional love. I realise now that it was not about the money or material things they gave me, but the sense of belonging and comfort that made those memories so precious.

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

Aisha Ishaku: Compared to the hardships I see young people facing today, I had very few challenges growing up. Life was easier, the cost of living was manageable, and there was more honesty

and kindness in society. However, the little challenges I did face, such as times when food was scarce or when resources were stretched thin, taught me resilience. They helped me realise that life is not always smooth, but that difficulties come to make us stronger. Those experiences prepared me to face the present reality, where challenges are far greater and demand more patience and faith. They shaped my outlook by reminding me that no situation is permanent and that with trust in God, perseverance, and contentment, one can overcome almost anything.

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

Aisha Ishaku: Every young person must understand that values are the compass of life. Without values, it is easy to be misled by the temptations of the world. I believe young people should live by responsibility, taking

charge of their actions and decisions without blaming others. They should remain calm, especially when life becomes difficult, because panic and anger often lead to mistakes. Most importantly, they should obey and respect their elders, for there is wisdom in listening to those who have walked the path before them. I also encourage young people to find something productive to do for survival. Idleness is dangerous, and it makes one vulnerable to bad influences. Whether it is business, education, or learning a skill, productivity ensures self-reliance. These principles, if followed with sincerity, can guide young people toward success and peace of mind.

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

Aisha Ishaku: If I had the chance to relive my youth, I would embrace it with greater awareness of how valuable and fleeting that stage of life is. Youth is a golden period, often taken for granted until it is gone. I would cherish it more, enjoying the freedom from heavy responsibilities and appreciating the simple joys of those years. Most importantly, I would dedicate myself fully to education. Though I received some schooling, I now understand how fundamental education is for independence, confidence, and survival in today's world. Knowledge opens doors and provides opportunities that hard work alone may not achieve. If I could go back, I would seize every opportunity to study harder and push myself to go further academically, because I now see how education shapes not just folks, but entire communities.

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

Aisha Ishaku: My advice to young people is to accept failure and disappointment as natural parts of life's journey. Nobody succeeds all the time, and setbacks are not the end but the beginning of new lessons. I believe strongly that both failure and success are part of God's plan and destiny for each individual. If something does not go as planned, it does not mean life has ended, it simply means Allah has a better way or a different path in store. Patience and contentment are key in such moments. Instead

of sinking into despair, young people should see failure as a chance to learn and grow stronger. With faith, they will realise that every hardship carries a hidden blessing. Life is a test, and every disappointment is an opportunity to rely more on God and to discover resilience within oneself.

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

Aisha Ishaku: Throughout my life, I have admired leaders who worked tirelessly for the welfare of their people. Two who stand out are Bukar Abba Ibrahim, the late Governor of Yobe State, and Muhammadu Buhari, the former President of Nigeria. These men were not perfect, but they demonstrated sincerity, hard work, and sympathy for the masses. Bukar Abba Ibrahim, for instance, was known for being close to the people; he lived among them and understood their struggles. Muhammadu Buhari, despite criticism, showed fairness and respect in his dealings, especially in fighting corruption and trying to uplift the nation. What inspired me about such leaders was not just their policies, but their character, leaders who were approachable, humble, and genuinely concerned about justice. These are the kinds of leaders whose examples should be studied and remembered.

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

Aisha Ishaku: Good leaders must be guided by values rather than by selfish interests. The most important qualities, in my opinion, are selflessness, patience, and resilience. Selflessness ensures that a leader puts the needs of the people above personal gain. Patience allows leaders to handle complex situations without rushing into harmful decisions, while resilience helps them endure criticism and challenges without losing focus. A leader should also have empathy, the ability to feel the pains of the people and act with compassion.

Honesty and transparency are equally important because they build trust between the leader and the citizens. Without these qualities, leadership becomes a tool for exploitation rather than service. True leaders should be servants, not masters, of their people.

Those experiences prepared me to face the present reality, where challenges are far greater and demand more patience and faith



HUMANIST

BY JAMEEL LAWAN YAKASAI



Victim

Calls for justice grow after woman burns 17-year-old maid with hot pressing iron

The Anambra State Government has assured that justice will be served in the case of an alleged attack on JSS3 student Miracle Amah of Community Secondary School, Agulu, by her guardian, Mrs Osinachi Edeh. The News Agency of Nigeria reported that the incident occurred on Tuesday in Anaocha Local Government Area and came to light on Wednesday, February 4, when Amah arrived at school with fresh burns all over her body. School authorities promptly invited

the guardian for questioning. It was earlier reported that the Anambra State Police Command had taken into custody 29-year-old Edeh, who allegedly abused and inflicted serious injuries on the 17-year-old girl, reportedly her house help in Awka. The student was reported to have narrated the incident to her teacher, saying: "I used my aunt's phone to call my cousin, but accidentally dialled the wrong number. I did not know that my aunt overheard the call and accused me of calling a male friend. "When I tried to explain, she refused

to believe me and later told another relative that I had started keeping boyfriends. She threatened me with a knife to force me to confess that I have a boyfriend. "When I insisted on being innocent, she heated up a pressing iron and inflicted burns on my face, breasts and other parts of my body." Reacting to the incident in an interview on Thursday in Awka, the Commissioner for Education, Prof. Ngozi Chuma-Udeh, gave assurance that justice would be served in the matter. Chuma-Udeh reaffirmed the



government's commitment to child protection, adding that the incident would not be swept under the carpet. According to her, the safety and welfare of children remain a priority of the Gov.

Chukwuma Soludo's administration. She vowed that the suspect would be made to face the full weight of the law if found culpable. "The state government will not tolerate the abuse of

children under any circumstances," the commissioner said. The state Police Command has since waded into the case with Edeh's detention, while investigations into the case are ongoing.

FEATURES

Mai Mala Buni: APC strategist and statesman

By Abubakar Hassan Gimba

In the dynamic and often turbulent world of Nigerian politics, few figures have shown the combination of strategic acumen, organisational skill, and loyal party service as consistently as Hon. Mai Mala Buni. From rising through the ranks of party administration to becoming a key figure in the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), Buni's trajectory reflects not only his dedication to his home state of Yobe, but also to national political stability and the strategic cohesion of the party.

Today, Buni occupies several important leadership roles within the APC, roles that place him at the heart of the party's preparations for future conventions and elections. His steady elevation speaks to a reputation for competence, reliability, and the ability to navigate complex political terrain. Based on his record, many believe he is poised for yet more responsibility within the party's hierarchy, perhaps even a national leadership duty.

APC Leadership Roles: A Look at Buni's Current Responsibilities

As of early 2026, Buni continues to play a critical role in APC organisational affairs beyond his responsibilities as Governor of Yobe State, a position he has held since 2019. In addition to state governance, he is deeply involved in party strategy and coordination at the national level.

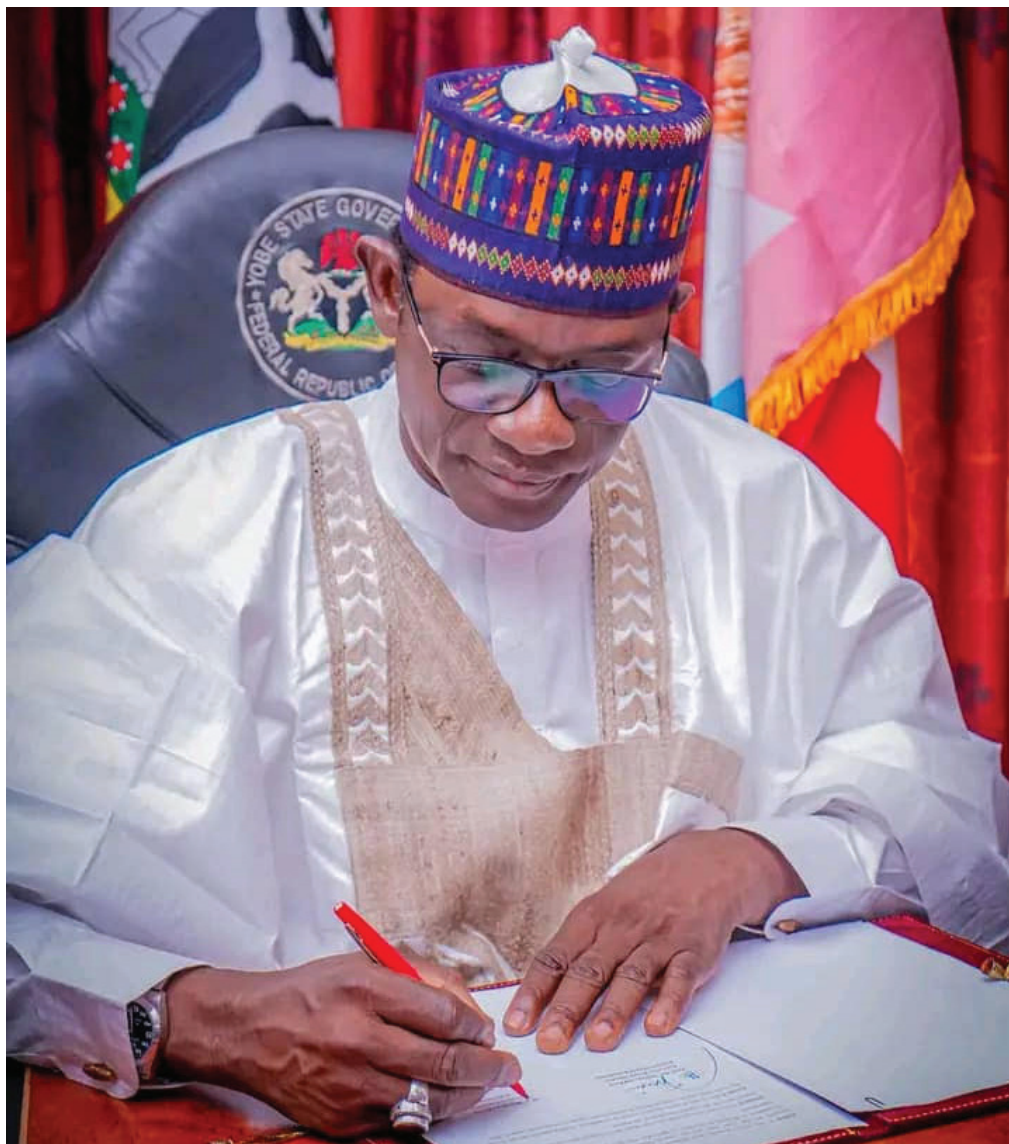
Most notably, he has been appointed Secretary of the APC Central Coordination Committee for the 2026 National Convention. This powerful committee, consisting of 73 members, led by Imo State Governor Hope Uzodinma, is tasked with planning and steering the party's next national convention, the event that will determine future leadership and structure for the APC. In this committee, Buni serves as Secretary, a role central to organisational alignment and communication across federal, state, and grassroots levels.

Beyond this, Buni also serves as Chairman of the APC Strategy, Conflict Resolution and Mobilisation Committee, a key body aimed at strengthening internal party cohesion, resolving friction among members, and positioning the APC for success as it heads toward general elections. Additionally, he leads the party's Committee for the Review of the APC Constitution and the Expansion of the National Executive Committee (NEC), an initiative fundamental to ensuring that the party's foundational structures are up to date, inclusive, and capable of navigating Nigeria's evolving political landscape.

Taken together, these roles place Buni at the core of APC's strategic planning and institutional reforms not merely as a member, but as a key architect and implementer of organisational priorities.

From Party Organiser to National Figure

Buni's political journey in the APC spans years of diligent service. He previously served as National Secretary of the APC, a role in which he helped



Gov. Buni

manage the party's administrative apparatus during pivotal periods of consolidation and growth. Later, following internal turmoil within the APC in 2020, he was appointed Chairman of the APC Caretaker/Caretaker Extraordinary Convention Planning Committee (CEPC) a position in which he led the party through a transitional phase and worked to restore organisational stability.

These experiences have given Buni a unique dual perspective: he understands both the nuts-and-bolts work of maintaining a mass political party and the larger strategic challenges of keeping competing interests aligned. It's a rare combination in Nigerian politics, where party factions often drift apart under pressure.

Balancing Governance and Party Leadership

What distinguishes Buni from many politicians who seek party prominence is his ability to deliver as a state governor while simultaneously navigating national party terrain. Under his leadership, Yobe State has seen notable achievements in governance, infrastructure, public service reform, and cultural development efforts that have reinforced his reputation as a leader committed to both political organisation and human development.

This dual capacity, to manage both governance tasks and party-building responsibilities, makes Buni a valuable asset to the APC. Instead of being siloed in committee rooms in Abuja, he brings the practical perspective of an executive governor to national party strategy. That blend of

experience is often a prerequisite for higher office and broader responsibility.

Seen as a Bridge-Builder and Consensus Champion

Throughout his political career, Buni has been recognised for his reconciliatory style and ability to bring divergent voices together, an increasingly valuable quality within a multi-ethnic, multi-faith country like Nigeria. During his tenure as APC interim chairman, he was credited with reuniting aggrieved party members, smoothing intra-party fractures, and facilitating defections from rival parties, actions that strengthened the APC's national coalition.

These are precisely the skills needed in Nigeria's current political era, where fragmentation, factionalism, and regional tensions often characterise party dynamics. A leader who can mediate conflict, negotiate compromise, and forge consensus is an invaluable strategic resource.

A Profile Poised for Greater Responsibility

With the 2027 general elections approaching, Nigeria's political landscape is entering a critical phase. Parties are consolidating support, identifying key strategic goals, and positioning leaders for roles beyond their current mandates. In this context, Buni's portfolio within the APC places him among the cohort of leaders actively shaping the party's direction.

While it is too early to definitively predict future appointments or office holdings, Buni's increasingly prominent strategic roles suggest that he is well-positioned for elevated responsibility. His track

record suggests a leader who rises to the occasion, adjusts to the demands of changing political environments, and delivers measurable outcomes for the organisations he serves.

A Strategic Asset for the APC and Nigeria

From the local councils of Gujba to the nerve centre of national APC strategy, Mai Mala Buni's political ascent offers a compelling narrative about leadership grounded in service, adaptability, and strategic foresight. His current roles in the APC, particularly as Secretary of the National Convention Central Coordination Committee and as chair of several critical strategic committees, highlight his importance within the party at a time of transition and preparation.

Buni's path demonstrates that effective political leadership is not just about ambition, but about reliability, organisational discipline, and the capacity to build bridges across factions and regions. These are the qualities that often define statesmen, and they are precisely why many observers believe that Buni is ready for responsibilities that extend even beyond his already substantial portfolio.

As Nigeria's political future unfolds, figures like Mai Mala Buni, seasoned in both governance and party leadership, will be watched closely by colleagues, constituents, and political analysts alike. Whether steering economic development in Yobe or shaping APC's national agenda, his influence continues to grow, poised for whatever new chapter comes next.

The North Must Hold the Centre: A strategic imperative

By Engr. Bello Gwarzo Abdullahi, FNSE

The discourse presented by Ambassador Usman Sarki on the existential challenges confronting Northern Nigeria—rising insecurity, educational stagnation, and entrenched poverty—offers a sobering yet necessary roadmap for the region. His core thesis is both timely and compelling: the North's survival lies not in the seductive rhetoric of secession or isolation, but in the deliberate, disciplined act of holding the centre through internal renewal and institutional responsibility.

Nigeria's unity is under sustained strain. Yet, as Sarki rightly argues, normalising "exit-thinking" in a fragile, pluralistic society is a dangerous gamble. History repeatedly demonstrates that nations collapse not for lack of resources, but when separatist impulses are indulged while advocates of unity are dismissed as naïve.

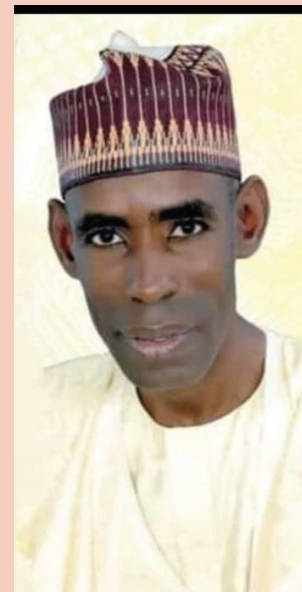
The North's vast geography, ethnic diversity, and deep economic interdependence are inseparably woven into Nigeria's fabric. Any attempt at fragmentation would therefore be catastrophic in scale and consequence.

The Sudanese experience offers a cautionary tale. The secession of South Sudan did not deliver peace or prosperity. Instead, it produced two weakened states burdened by unresolved border disputes, oil-transit conflicts, and chronic internal instability. Governance failures were not solved; they were merely replicated across smaller, more volatile political units. This is the harsh reality of fragmentation: it shrinks territories but magnifies vulnerabilities.

Ambassador Sarki frames Northern commitment to the federation not as an act of fear, but as a strategic choice. Holding the centre is not passive loyalty; it is active responsibility. It requires the North to look inward and confront its structural deficiencies.

Archaic systems of patronage must give way to a culture of performance. Education must be rebuilt, institutions strengthened, and security professionalised. These are not merely regional aspirations; they are preconditions for a functional Nigerian state.

There is precedent for such transformation. The economic revitalisation of the American South in the mid-twentieth century illustrates what is possible when a historically disadvantaged region shifts from dependence on patronage to sustained investment in human capital, infrastructure, and enterprise. Once perceived as a national burden, the American South repositioned itself as a major engine of growth.



Engr. Gwarzo

The lesson is clear: regional renewal, anchored in education and productivity, can fundamentally alter national trajectories.

Sarki also cautions against treating "survival beyond Nigeria" as a credible alternative. Entertaining such notions weakens the moral foundation of the federation. Nigeria does not need more regions contemplating exit; it needs regions competing to make exit unnecessary. The current crisis is institutional, not sectional. If the North were to fragment while its governance architecture remains weak, it would simply export its existing failures into a smaller, more exposed political space.

True reform lies in the practical realisation of fiscal federalism and genuine local government autonomy. These would empower the North to harness its immense agricultural and mineral endowments, stimulate rural economies, and create jobs at scale—without dismantling the sovereign state.


With land, labour, and natural resources in abundance, the North possesses all the fundamentals required for prosperity, provided leadership prioritises competence over connections and productivity over patronage.

Ultimately, Nigeria's unity will not be preserved by slogans or ceremonial "Federal Character" quotas. It will be secured through visible, measurable regional renewal. Imagining survival is a useful intellectual exercise; holding the centre is the real test of statesmanship. It demands disciplined restraint, institutional reform, and long-term thinking.

The North must lead by example—demonstrating that a secure, educated, and economically productive region is the strongest pillar of a united Nigeria. By fixing itself, the North does not merely save its own future; it safeguards the federation.

By Engr. Bello Gwarzo Abdullahi, FNSE.

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SPORTS

BY MUHAMMAD KUKURI,
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Egypt clinch 10th African handball title with victory over Tunisia



Champions

Egypt's national handball team won the African Men's Handball Championship on Saturday 31 January after beating Tunisia 37-24 in the final, played in Kigali, Rwanda.

After the win, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi congratulated the team in a post on his official Facebook page, praising the players and staff for their achievement and for making Egyptians proud. The President stated that the accomplishment showcases determination and persistence, underscoring Egypt's status as one of the leading handball nations in Africa and across the globe. He also voiced his pride in the team and wished them success in the years ahead. The Pharaohs were in control from the start of the match. They finished the first half ahead 17-10 and continued their strong performance in the second half, increasing the gap and securing a comfortable win. With this victory, Egypt claimed their 10th African title and their fourth in a row, equaling Tunisia as the most successful team in the tournament's history. On their way to the final, Egypt defeated Cape Verde 32-26 in the semi-finals. Tunisia reached the final after beating Algeria 33-24. In the group stage, Egypt finished top of Group I with six points and ended the main round with a huge 48-22 win over Nigeria. Cape Verde won the bronze medal after defeating Algeria 29-23 in the third-place match. Egypt, Tunisia, Angola, Cape Verde and Algeria all qualified for the 2027 IHF World Men's Handball Championship in Germany.

Ademola Lookman scores on debut appearance for new Atletico Madrid

Ademola Lookman has opened his goalscoring account on his debut as new Atletico Madrid player on Thursday. The winger scored in the 37th-minute for his new Spanish La Liga club in its 5-0 drubbing of Real Betis in their Copa del Rey quarter-final clash. Lookman also provided an assist in the match. The 28-year-old, who sealed a €35 million transfer to Atletico from Atalanta on Monday, was thrown into the fire by coach Diego Simeone, and immediately repaid the faith with the best goal of the night. Lookman collected a cross-field pass in the box following a counter attack, expertly took out two defenders with his dribbling, and tucked in a shot at the goalkeeper's near post to hand Atletico a 3-0 lead at halftime in Betis. The goal is Lookman's 100th career goal on the night he made his first appearance for his seventh club as a professional. He also scored on his debut for his third consecutive club, following on from his fast start at RB Salzburg and Atalanta. Lookman and Atletico Madrid advanced into the semi-final of a competition the club has not won in 12 years. The capital club will know its opponent on Friday.



Lookman

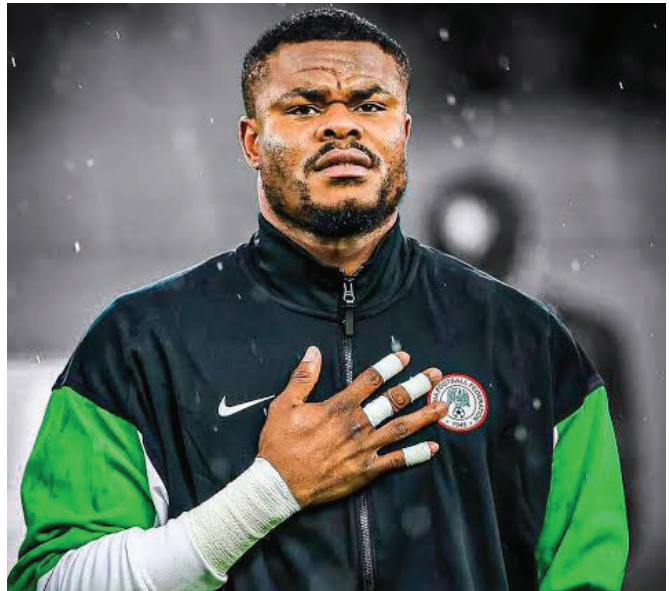
Chippa United grants Nwabali's request to leave after four years

Super Eagles goalkeeper, Stanley Nwabali, has parted ways with South African club Chippa United after four years, the club confirmed on Thursday. In a statement, Chippa United said Nwabali requested to leave the club despite signing a three-year contract extension in 2024, adding that it had agreed to grant his release. The statement partly reads: "Chippa United Football Club confirms that Stanley Nwabali has formally submitted a request to

depart club. After careful consideration, the club has agreed to grant his release. "We would like to sincerely thank Stanley Nwabali for the years of service, commitment, and professionalism he has shown during his time at Chippa United Football Club. His contribution to the club will always be appreciated," the club said. Reacting to his exit, Nwabali took to Instagram on Thursday, sharing a video alongside an emotional farewell message in which he

thanked his teammates, coaches, fans and the club's leadership. He wrote: "It was more than a family. To my lovely teammates, dear coaches, amazing fans and best chairman in the world. As I stand here to say farewell, but more than a goodbye, I want to say thank you. The memories we've shared, the hard fought victories, the setbacks we turned into lessons, the laughs and the tears are moments I will carry with me forever. "I leave with a heart full of gratitude and a lifetime of

cherished memories. This isn't just a farewell, it's an appreciation for every moment you've given me. The lessons I've learned here will stay with me forever, and even though I may not wear the shirt anymore, a part of me will always remain with this club. "To the club chairman, thank you for being such a father figure to me. Thank you for the honour of letting me be part of this story. I wish you all success and happiness in the seasons ahead. "Thank you — and farewell. Until we meet again."



Nwabali

SALUTE TO SERVICE

BY MERCY ADAJE
MercyAdaje@neptuneprime.com.ng

Lt. Gen. Gibson Sanda Jalo's journey from traditional authority to military discipline, dedication

Lieutenant General Gibson Sanda Jalo CFR, FSS, was one of the quiet but deeply influential figures in Nigeria's military history.

Born on March 1, 1939, in Demsa, in what was then Adamawa Province of British Northern Nigeria, he grew up within the royal household of the Batta people.

His father, Chief Zaro Kpanti, widely known as Hama Batta, was a paramount ruler, while his mother was Kukulu Laiyatu Jalo. From this background of traditional authority and discipline, Jalo developed a strong sense of duty that would shape his life's path.

His early education took him through Numan Elementary School between 1946 and 1950, followed by Yola Middle School from 1951 to 1952.

He later attended Keffi Government College in Nassarawa Province from 1953 to 1958, a school that produced many notable Nigerians of his generation. Jalo remained proud of his Keffi years and stayed active in the Keffi Old Boys Association.

Among his classmates were future national figures such as Wantaregh Paul Iyorpuu Unongo and Dr Nuhu Andeyaba, men who, like him, would go on to leave lasting marks on the

country.

Jalo entered military service on 20 September 1959 when he enlisted in the Infantry Corps of the Royal Nigerian Military Force. He was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant on 4 November 1960 after completing his training at the Regular Officers' Training School in Teshie, Ghana.

In the same year, he further redefined his skills at the Royal Military Academy, now known as the Mons Officer Cadet School in Aldershot, United Kingdom. These formative years laid a solid professional foundation for a career that would span more than two decades.

In his early postings, Jalo steadily rose through the ranks, serving as a Platoon Commander, Battalion Adjutant, Company Commander, and eventually Battalion Commander between 1960 and 1967.

During the Nigerian Civil War, he played a significant operational role. He served first as Second in Command of the Second Division and later as its Division Commander, leading troops during some of the most decisive phases of the conflict between 1967 and 1970. His wartime experience cemented his reputation as a calm and capable field officer.



Jalo

After the war, Jalo moved into senior command and strategic roles. He served as Garrison Commander in Lagos, Deputy Commandant of the Nigerian Defence Academy in Kaduna,

and later became Commandant of the Academy itself between 1975 and 1977. He succeeded Brigadier General Illiya Bisalla in that role and was later succeeded by

Brigadier General E S Armah. From there, he was appointed General Officer Commanding of the Third Infantry Division in Jos, which later became the Third Armoured Division, before rising to Deputy Chief of Army Staff in 1979.

In April 1980, Jalo reached one of the highest points of his career when he was appointed Chief of Army Staff, a position he held until October 1981. He was then appointed the second Chief of Defence Staff of Nigeria, serving from 1981 to 1983. In this role, he followed Lieutenant General Ipoola Alani Akinrinade and was later succeeded by General Domkat Bali.

During these years, he was also a member of the Supreme Military Council and the National Defence Council, placing him at the heart of national decision-making. At one point in the 1970s, he briefly served as Acting Military Governor of Lagos State.

Alongside his command responsibilities, Jalo held important staff and ceremonial roles. He served as Aide de Camp to the British General Officer Commanding of the Royal Nigerian Army in the early 1960s and later as Adjutant of the First Battalion of the Nigerian Army.

His professional education included advanced training at the Joint Services Staff College in Latimer House, Buckinghamshire, and the National Defence College in India, reflecting the breadth of his military exposure.

Lieutenant General Jalo retired voluntarily from the Nigerian

Army on 3 January 1984. His Certificate of Military Service was formally issued on 7 March 1984 by the then Chief of Army Staff, Major General Ibrahim Babangida.

Retirement did not mark the end of his public engagement. He moved into the private sector, where he held several high-level positions, including Chairman of Société Bancaire Nigeria Limited, Chairman of Mix and Bake Flour Mills Limited, Non-Executive Director of Union Bank of Nigeria Plc, Chairman of Sea Trucks Group Nigeria, and Chairman of Jason Oilfield Ventures Limited.

He also continued to contribute to national development efforts. Jalo was appointed a member of the Traditional Rulers and Leaders of Thought Committee and later served as Chairman of the Sub Committee on Solid Minerals under Nigeria's Vision 2010 programme.

In recognition of his service to the nation, he was awarded several honours, including the Commander of the Federal Republic and the Force Service Star.

Beyond uniforms and boardrooms, Jalo was a sportsman at heart. He enjoyed field hockey and football and earned the affectionate nickname "7 Miles" on the football pitch during his younger days.

He passed away in London, United Kingdom, on 10 January 2000, leaving behind the legacy of a soldier, leader, and statesman whose life reflected both discipline and quiet dedication to Nigeria.

Major General Abdul One Mohammed: A distinguished officer, seasoned administrator, and "Commander of Peace"

Major General Abdul One Mohammed (also known as Abdul Aziz One Mohammed) was a prominent Nigerian military officer and administrator known for his leadership in both domestic governance and international peacekeeping. Born on February 15, 1948, in Akuyam, Misau, Bauchi State, he attended the Nigerian Military School, Zaria (1962–1966) and the Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna (1966–1969).

Name Origin
The name "Abdul One" originated during his school days to distinguish him from another student with the same name;

he maintained the moniker throughout his military career as it was reflected in his official documents. He was the Military Governor of Borno State, appointed by General Ibrahim Babangida. He served as the military governor from December 1987 to December 1989. ECOMOG Leadership: In 1997, he was posted to the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) as Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff, overseeing major peacekeeping operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone. He was the Deputy Defence Attaché at the

Nigerian Embassy in Moscow (1986–1988). He was the Brigade Commander of the 34 Self-Propelled Artillery Brigade and the Military Secretary of the Nigerian Army. **Legacy and Reputation**
"The Silent Enforcer": He was widely respected as a "Commander of Peace" who enforced stability during turbulent periods in West Africa. He was married with six children. He is frequently distinguished from Major General Abdullahi Mohammed, who served as Nigeria's first Presidential Chief of Staff and died in late 2025.



Abdul

SOCIALS/FASHION

BY FARIDA ABBA

QUICK
STATISTICS
ON FASHION

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

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

23%
Nigerians women replaces panties with tight!

78%
of Nigerians patronise native attires

78%
patronise nature attires

79%
of Nigerians can't live without jeans

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

79%
of Nigerians patronise can't dress without jeans

TO FEATURE ON OUR FASHION/SOCIAL PAGE!
You can send your pictures to neptuneprime2233@gmail.com

Fashion has a way of revisiting its greatest hits and this season, the maxi skirt is making a bold, elegant return. After years of short hemlines and micro trends, the fashion world is finally embracing the flow, femininity, and timeless appeal of the maxi. It's not just a comeback, it's a redefinition of effortless glamour.

A Bold Comeback
The maxi skirt has officially stepped back into the spotlight, reclaiming its place as a wardrobe essential. Long, sweeping, and dramatically elegant, it offers the perfect blend of comfort and sophistication. As fashion circles move towards more fluid and comfortable silhouettes, the maxi's return feels both nostalgic and necessary. It's the piece that lets you glide through the day stylishly, and without trying too hard.

From the 70s to Now: A Vintage Revival
Once a defining piece of 1970s bohemian fashion, the maxi skirt was a symbol of free-spirited femininity and rebellion against rigid dress codes. Today's revival borrows that same energy but updates it for the modern woman. Think: cleaner lines, structured fabrics, and elevated styling. The spirit remains the same, but now it's sleeker, bolder, and more adaptable to any wardrobe.

Street Style's New Favourite Silhouette
From New York to Lagos, the maxi is making a comeback in street style once again. Fashion influencers are pairing denim maxis with leather jackets, or opting for flowy, sheer versions that catch every breeze. Whether styled with chunky boots or crisp sneakers, the maxi skirt proves it can work for coffee runs, art galleries, or rooftop parties. It's the skirt that makes you feel dressed up even when you're not trying to be.

Runway and Real Life
Designers have clearly taken note of the maxi's return. Runways from Paris to Milan have featured reinterpretations from iconic houses like Dior, Chlo  , Valentino, and Stella McCartney. On the catwalk, they've been styled with tailored blazers, crop tops, and oversized knits, showing that the maxi can seamlessly transition from workwear to eveningwear. It's elegance reimagined for real life.

Styling the Maxi: Casual Meets Classy
One reason the maxi skirt is winning hearts again is its endless styling potential. Want a laid-back vibe? Pair a flowy maxi with a tucked-in t-shirt and sneakers. Need something classy? Swap the shirt for a silk blouse and add strappy heels. Even an oversized sweater instantly turns cosy when worn with a high-waisted maxi. Its ability to shift from casual to elegant is unmatched.

Fabrics That Flow and Shine
This comeback isn't just about the cut; it's also about the fabric. Designers are experimenting with everything from crisp cottons and breezy chiffons to bold leather and metallic finishes. Denim maxis bring structure and edge, while satin versions whisper luxury. The variety of textures means there's a maxi for every season; light for summer, layered for fall, and dramatic for the holidays.

Prints, Pleats, and Personality
Maxi skirts have become a blank canvas for creativity. Soft pleats add movement and grace; bold prints make a statement; and solid hues radiate quiet confidence. Whether you prefer boho florals, edgy animal prints, or minimalist monochrome, the maxi lets your personality shine through your style choices.

Celebrity Endorsements: Style Icons Leading the Trend
As with any trend resurgence, celebrities are playing a major role in bringing the maxi back. Zendaya has been spotted in sleek black maxis paired with corset tops, while Rihanna opts for oversized denim versions with bold accessories. Bella Hadid leans toward vintage-inspired, low-waisted designs. Each interpretation proves the same point, the maxi skirt is universally flattering and endlessly expressive.

The Maxi Skirt for Every Body
Perhaps the best thing about the maxi's comeback is its inclusivity. Unlike restrictive cuts or ultra-short trends, the maxi embraces every body type with grace. Its flowing design highlights curves without clinging and gives

Maxi Skirts: A perfect blend of glamour and comfort



movement to every step. It's proof that fashion can be freeing stylish, yet comfortable; trendy, yet timeless.

Why Effortless Glamour Always Wins
At its core, the maxi skirt represents what fashion is truly about: self-expression without sacrifice. It allows for movement, comfort, and sophistication all at once. Whether you wear it to brunch, a business meeting, or an evening outing, it exudes an effortless glamour that never fades. Trends may come and go, but the maxi skirt reminds us that true style always flows gracefully, confidently, and eternally. In essence, the maxi skirt's return isn't just about nostalgia; it's about evolution. It celebrates femininity, versatility, and the kind of effortless beauty that stands the test of time.

TECHWORLD

BY MUHAMMAD KUKURI
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GAMESCIENE

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

GADGETADDICT

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

web update

AI detects more breast cancer cases during trial phase

In a landmark medical development, Artificial Intelligence helps doctors spot more cases of breast cancer when reading routine scans, a world-first trial found on Friday.

The results suggest countries should roll out programmes taking advantage of AI's scanning power to ease the workload of short-staffed radiologists, the Swedish lead researchers said. Well before the release of ChatGPT in 2022 raised global awareness about AI, scientists had been testing out the technology's capacity to read medical scans.

But the new study published in The Lancet medical journal marks the first completed randomised controlled trial — the gold standard for this kind of research — looking at AI-supported breast cancer screening.

The trial involved more than 100,000 women who received routine breast cancer scans across Sweden in 2021 and 2022.

They were randomly sorted into two groups. In one, a single radiologist was assisted by an AI system to check the scans.

The other followed the standard European method, which requires two radiologists to read the scans.

Nine percent more cancer cases were spotted in the AI group compared to the control group. Over the following two years, those in the AI group also had a 12 percent lower rate of being diagnosed with cancer between routine scans, which are known as interval cancers and can be particularly dangerous.

The improvement was consistent across different ages and levels of breast density, which can be risk factors.

The rate of false positives was similar in both groups.

Senior study author Kristina Lang of Sweden's Lund University said that "widely rolling out AI-supported mammography in breast cancer screening programmes could help reduce workload pressures amongst radiologists, as well as helping to detect more cancers at an early stage".

But this must be done "cautiously" and with "continuous monitoring", she said in a statement.

Jean-Philippe Masson, head of the French National Federation of Radiologists, told AFP that "the radiologist's eye and experience must correct the AI's diagnosis".

"Sometimes the AI tool will have seen a change in breast tissue that is not actually cancer," he added.

The use of AI by radiologists is still in its "infancy" in France because these systems are expensive — and prone to overdiagnosis, Masson warned.

Stephen Duffy, emeritus professor of cancer screening at Queen Mary University of London who was not involved in the study, said it provided further evidence that AI-assisted cancer screening is safe.

But he warned that the "reduction in interval cancers following screening in the AI group is not significant".

He urged another follow-up of the trial's participants to see if the control group "catches up".

Interim results from the trial, published in 2023, showed that AI nearly halved the time radiologists spent reading scans.



27 African varsities, stakeholders, prepare for AI Summit in Nigeria

A total of 27 African universities and other key stakeholders in technology and education are set to participate in a three-day Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Education Summit scheduled to be held in Lagos from 18 February to 20, 2026.

VarsityMentor, a leading non-profit organisation, is organising the summit focused on empowering university students, as part of a broader strategic mandate funded by the GenAI in CS Education Consortium created by the University of San Diego.

In a press release titled "Reimagine Computer Science Education", the founder of VarsityMentor and Google UX Researcher, Obinna Anya, said, "This upcoming summit marks a strategic evolution for VarsityMentor, which is deepening the proven precedent set by its two previous large-scale conferences.

Those earlier events focused specifically on student empowerment and professional readiness; this current mandate shifts the focus upstream to the institutional level, ensuring that the very foundations of African computer science education are aligned with the AI-driven future."

Designed to bridge the digital gap across the continent,

the summit aims to position African universities at the forefront of the rapidly evolving AI landscape while modernising Computer Science curricula to meet the demands of an AI-driven future.

Academic faculty from multiple African universities will converge with visionary technology professionals, founders and policy actors to deliberate on how best to embed generative AI, ethics and systems thinking into university-level education.

Regarding the summit's objective, Anya said the initiative is driven by a vision to reposition African graduates as global innovators rather than passive users of technology.

He said, "Our vision is to raise a new generation of African graduates who are not just consumers of technology, but the architects of the global AI revolution."

"The summit will be anchored in three core objectives: curriculum co-creation through hands-on design sessions, in which faculty members and industry leaders will jointly redesign Computer Science modules to incorporate AI-driven development and ethical considerations.

"Others are policy alignment through engagement with Ministries of Education



across African countries to ensure new educational standards are scalable and nationally recognised; and talent pipeline development to create direct links between universities and Africa's growing technology ecosystem to support internships and job placements," Anya said.

According to the media consultant to VarsityMentor, Sir Peter Osamgbi, the summit will attract computer science faculty, curriculum leads, department heads, Ministry of Education representatives and CS education innovators from universities across Nigeria,

Ghana, South Africa, Kenya, Malawi and Ethiopia.

The event will also feature a panel session, hosted by Valerie Ehimhen, a technical programme manager at Google Quantum AI and co-founder of the PETGA Initiative, with prominent technology founders.

Also commenting on the importance of technical depth, Adekunle Adeyemo, a software engineer and long-time global lead of the Africans@Google employee resource group, underscored the need for strong infrastructure and reliability in education.

He noted that scaling Africa's tech ecosystem requires more than access to new tools; it requires a solid foundation in systems-level thinking and reliability

Nigerian entrepreneur launches AI platform for African students, migrants

A UK-based Nigerian technology entrepreneur, Matthew Akinpelu, has launched a digital platform designed to support African students and skilled migrants seeking education and employment opportunities abroad.

Akinpelu said the platform was developed in response to challenges he encountered after relocating from Nigeria to the United Kingdom, including limited access to clear information on study options, career pathways, and immigration requirements.

According to him, many international students and migrants struggle with fragmented guidance and complex processes when transitioning into foreign education and labour systems. He said existing institutional support services often provide general advice that does not adequately address visa restrictions, financial pressures,



Akinpelu

or long-term career planning for migrants.

The entrepreneur explained that the platform, ISCANET, uses artificial intelligence to provide structured guidance on career

readiness and employability within visa-regulated job markets.

He said the platform was formally launched in 2024 following research and pilot

programmes.

As demand increased among African students seeking to study overseas, Akinpelu said a second platform, AfriApply, was introduced to provide information on international education opportunities and application processes.

He said the platforms were designed to complement existing advisory services by reducing misinformation and improving users' understanding of available pathways.

However, Akinpelu noted that operating across multiple countries presents challenges, particularly due to frequent changes in immigration policies and the need to ensure accurate and responsible use of technology-based guidance systems. He said future efforts would focus on improving data accuracy, adapting to policy changes, and expanding access to information for African students and migrants.

Akinpelu disclosed that the platforms have recorded more than 15,000 registered users from over 60 countries.

He added that users include international students seeking employment after graduation and skilled migrants exploring long-term career opportunities abroad.

WORLD NEWS

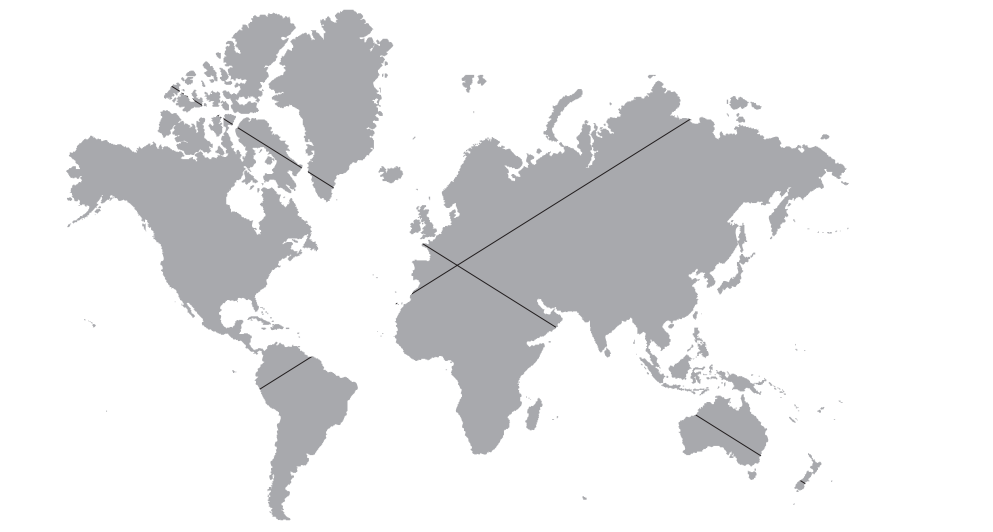
BY ABDULLAHI HARUNA

Republic of Congo, Angola, Namibia accept UK migrants amid visa pressure

Three African countries have agreed to accept the return of their nationals from the United Kingdom after the British government threatened to impose visa restrictions and other diplomatic penalties, marking a significant shift in London’s push to tighten migration enforcement. UK officials confirmed that the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Angola and Namibia have now committed to cooperating with the return of migrants who have no legal right to remain in the UK or who have completed prison sentences for criminal offences. The agreements follow months of stalled negotiations and growing frustration within the UK government over low deportation rates. The breakthrough came after the UK Home Secretary, Shabana Mahmood, warned that countries refusing to cooperate on migrant returns could face limits on visa access, including slower processing times and restrictions affecting diplomats and government officials. In the case of the DRC, the UK temporarily suspended preferential visa arrangements for senior officials, a move that officials say helped accelerate negotiations. British authorities estimate that the agreements could enable the removal of up to 3,000 migrants who have exhausted legal avenues to stay in the UK. While the number represents a small fraction of the overall migrant population, the Home Office says the move is aimed at clearing long-standing backlogs and reinforcing the credibility of the immigration system. A Home Office spokesperson said the agreements demonstrate that “firm but fair diplomacy delivers results”, adding that the UK would continue to pursue similar arrangements with other countries where cooperation has been limited. The spokesperson stressed that all returns would be carried out in line with international law and human rights obligations. The issue of migrant returns has become increasingly sensitive in the UK, where irregular migration and asylum processing delays remain major political concerns. Successive governments have struggled to remove failed asylum seekers due to legal challenges and the refusal of some countries to accept their citizens back. Critics, however, argue that the strategy risks straining diplomatic relations with African nations and could unfairly penalise students, professionals and families seeking legitimate travel to the UK. Human rights organisations have also urged the government to ensure that returnees are not exposed to persecution or unsafe conditions upon arrival. Officials in the affected African countries have so far offered limited public comment, though diplomatic sources say the agreements were reached after assurances over phased returns, documentation support and reintegration considerations. The UK government has signalled that it may extend visa-related pressure to other countries if cooperation does not improve, underscoring a tougher approach to migration enforcement as political pressure mounts at home.



Migrants



Russia, Ukraine swap prisoners as peace talks reach stalemate



War prisoners

Russia and Ukraine on Thursday carried out a significant prisoner exchange, even as the latest round of peace talks ended without agreement on a ceasefire or political settlement, highlighting both the possibilities and limits of ongoing diplomatic efforts to end the war. The exchange followed two days of negotiations hosted in Abu Dhabi, where delegations from Moscow and Kyiv met separately with U.S. and international mediators. Under the agreement, 314 prisoners of war were released in total, with each side freeing 157 detainees. The swap marks one of the largest humanitarian exchanges in recent months. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy confirmed the return of Ukrainian soldiers, describing the exchange as “an important humanitarian step” and vowing continued efforts to secure the release of all Ukrainians held in captivity. Russian authorities also acknowledged the return of their servicemen, stating that the exchange was conducted through international mediation. Despite the successful swap, the talks failed to deliver progress on key political and military issues, including a ceasefire, territorial control, and long-term security guarantees. Negotiators did not issue a joint communiqué, underscoring the wide gaps that remain between the two sides after nearly four years of conflict. According to officials familiar with the discussions, Russia reiterated demands related to control of

occupied Ukrainian territories, while Ukraine maintained its position that any peace agreement must respect its internationally recognised borders. These opposing stances continue to block meaningful progress toward ending the war. The United States, which played a central mediating role, described the talks as “constructive but inconclusive.” U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff said the prisoner exchange demonstrated that limited cooperation remains possible, even as broader negotiations remain stalled. He added that further dialogue would be necessary to build confidence between the warring parties. Meanwhile, fighting on the ground has continued, with ongoing missile and drone attacks reported in parts of Ukraine and persistent clashes along the front lines. Ukrainian officials warned that continued hostilities risk undermining fragile diplomatic efforts, while Moscow accused Kyiv of refusing to make concessions. International observers say the prisoner exchange offers a rare humanitarian success but caution against viewing it as a sign of imminent peace. Analysts note that similar swaps have occurred throughout the conflict, often without leading to sustained reductions in violence. Western governments have continued to link future sanctions relief for Russia to tangible progress in negotiations, while reaffirming military and economic support for Ukraine. Diplomats say further talks are expected in the coming weeks, though expectations remain low.



Araghchi

Iran, US resume nuclear diplomacy with talks scheduled in Oman

Iran has confirmed that fresh nuclear negotiations with the United States will take place on Friday in Muscat, Oman, signalling a renewed diplomatic push amid heightened regional tensions. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi announced late Wednesday that the talks would begin at 10:00 a.m. local time (06:00 GMT), putting to rest earlier reports that the meeting was in doubt due to disagreements over its format and venue. “I’m grateful to our Omani brothers for making all necessary arrangements,” Araghchi said in a post on social media, acknowledging Oman’s role in facilitating the discussions. Earlier this week, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said he had directed the foreign minister to pursue what he described as “fair and equitable negotiations,” underscoring Tehran’s stated willingness to re-engage diplomatically. Washington has also confirmed its participation in the talks. A White House official, quoted by the Associated Press, said the United States agreed to hold the high-level meeting in Oman rather than Turkiye, which had initially been considered. According to sources familiar with the negotiations, mediators from Qatar, Turkiye, and Egypt have proposed a framework outlining key principles for discussion. These reportedly include a commitment by Iran to significantly curb uranium enrichment, alongside possible restrictions on ballistic missile activities and limits on the arming of Iran’s regional allies. A senior diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the talks, confirmed the outlines of the proposal to Al-Jazeera. The renewed dialogue comes at a tense moment, with the Middle East on edge following reports of a possible US military strike on Iran. US President Donald Trump recently ordered American forces to amass in the Arabian Sea after Iran’s violent crackdown on protesters last month. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Washington intends to raise broader concerns beyond Iran’s nuclear programme, including Tehran’s ballistic missile development, support for proxy groups across the region, and its human rights record. “The leadership of Iran at the clerical level does not reflect the people of Iran,” Rubio told reporters. “I know of no other country where there’s a bigger difference between the people who lead the country and the people who live there.” Iran and the United States have had no formal diplomatic relations since 1980, but have held intermittent talks over the years in an effort to reduce tensions. In June, officials from both countries met in Muscat to discuss reviving a nuclear agreement, but those efforts stalled after Israel launched attacks on Iran, prompting the US to briefly join the conflict by bombing several Iranian nuclear facilities. Friday’s meeting is widely seen as a critical test of whether diplomacy can regain traction amid escalating mistrust and regional instability.

DID YOU KNOW?

BY VIVIAN OKAFOR

Global glaciers are melting at an accelerating rate

Glaciers worldwide are melting at an accelerating rate, losing over 270 billion tonnes of ice annually between 2000 and 2023.

Primarily driven by human-caused global warming, this rapid shrinkage contributes significantly to rising sea levels, threatens freshwater supplies for millions, and increases risks of hazards like glacial floods.

Since 1970, reference glaciers have lost over 27 meters of water equivalent in thickness. Between 2000 and 2023, glacier mass loss averaged 273 billion tonnes per year, equivalent to 0.75 mm of annual sea-level rise.

In Europe, some regions have lost 39% of their glacier ice in just over 20 years, with many Alpine glaciers expected to vanish this century.

The primary driver is rising air and ocean temperatures due to greenhouse gas emissions.

Melting glaciers and ice sheets are the biggest contributors to rising oceans, increasing coastal erosion and storm surges.

Millions of people rely on glacier meltwater for agriculture and consumption, particularly in Asia and South America.

Increased melting raises the risk of glacier lake outburst floods, ice avalanches, and debris flows.

As glaciers disappear, they destroy unique habitats and alter the hydrological cycle.

If greenhouse gas emissions are not significantly reduced, over 70% of the Earth's glaciers could disappear by 2100.

Even with climate action, a substantial portion of the world's ice is already projected to melt before the end of the century.



Rain has a distinct smell

Earthy scent of rain, known as petrichor, is caused by the release of soil-dwelling bacteria compounds (geosmin), plant oils, and ozone when water hits dry ground.

This pleasant aroma, often described as fresh or musky, occurs when raindrops trap air bubbles on the surface, which then shoot upward and release tiny, fragrant aerosols.

The human nose is sensitive to geosmin and can detect it at concentrations as low as 0.4 parts per billion.

Some scientists believe that humans may appreciate the rain scent because ancestors relied on rainy weather for survival.

Camels in the desert also rely on petrichor to locate sources of water such as oases.

The term for the overall scent, coined in 1964, derived from Greek words meaning "stone" and "the fluid that flows in the veins of the gods". A type of alcohol molecule



produced by bacteria (actinomycetes) in the soil that gives the scent its earthy, sometimes fishy, quality. Before the rain arrives, wind can carry ozone,

which has a sharp, slightly sweet smell similar to chlorine, from higher altitudes. The smell is generally stronger after a dry spell, as the oils and compounds

have more time to accumulate on the ground.

When raindrops fall onto porous surfaces, they trap tiny air bubbles that then pop, releasing the scent molecules into the air. This scent is more prominent in rural or suburban areas with soil compared to urban concrete environments.

LIVING LEGENDS

BY AISHA AUYO
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Musa

Ahmed Musa, Legendary Footballer, Philanthropist

Ahmed Musa is more than just a footballer in Nigeria; he is a symbol of humility and the region’s northern Nigeria’s most beloved sports icon. In 2026, he transitioned into a unique dual role that cements his status as a “living legend.” As of early 2026, Ahmed Musa is making history by serving both on and off the pitch for Kano Pillars. He is currently the General Manager of Kano Pillars while remaining an active player in the Nigeria Premier Football

League (NPFL). He has stated that on the pitch, he obeys the coach like any other player, but off the pitch, he manages the club’s strategic revival. In December 2025, Musa officially retired from the Super Eagles after 15 years of service. He left as Nigeria’s most-capped player (111 appearances) and the country’s highest goalscorer in World Cup history (4 goals). Musa’s “legend” status in the North isn’t just about his pace on the wing; it’s about

his deep roots in Jos (where he was born) and Kano. He is famous for “giving back” in tangible ways. He built the Myca-7 Sports Complex in Kano and Kaduna, providing world-class facilities for youth. He is known for personal acts of kindness, such as distributing food and cash to the less privileged during Ramadan and Christmas, and sponsoring the education of hundreds of orphans. Unlike many stars who retire abroad, Musa has repeated-

ly returned to play in the Nigerian league to boost its profile and mentor local talent, proving his “home-grown” heart. He had successful stints at CSKA Moscow (where he won three Russian titles), Leicester City in the Premier League, and Al-Nassr in Saudi Arabia. He was a key part of the 2013 AFCON-winning squad. Nigerians remember him most for his stunning braces against Argentina (2014) and Iceland (2018) on the world stage.

Rema Wakama, Professional Basketball Player, Coach

Rena Wakama is a trailblazing Nigerian professional basketball coach and former player who has become a symbol of excellence in African sports. As of early 2026, she is widely recognised as one of the most successful coaches in the history of the Nigerian women’s national team, D’Tigress. Rena Wakama has shattered several “glass ceilings” in international basketball, she is the first female head coach in history to win back-to-back FIBA Women’s AfroBasket titles (2023 and 2025). Under her leadership at the 2024 Paris Olympics, D’Tigress became the first African basketball team—male or female—to reach the Olympic quarter-finals. Following her historic run in Paris, she was officially named the “Best Coach” of the Olympic tournament by FIBA. In addition to her national duties, she serves as an assistant coach for the Chicago Sky in the WNBA and the head coach for Hive BC. Before coaching, she was a talented guard. She played college basketball at Western Carolina University and represented Nigeria as a player during the 2015 AfroBasket tournament, where the team finished third. She holds a bachelor’s degree in Therapeutic Recreation and an MBA from Manhattan College (2019), where she also began her coaching journey as Director of Basketball Operations and later as an assistant coach. In recognition of her historic contributions to Nigerian sports, she was conferred with the national honour of Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON) by the Nigerian government. Wakama is celebrated not just for her tactical acumen, but also for her resilience. She often emphasises the “Nigerian spirit” and is known for her ability to build team chemistry under tight deadlines, most notably winning her first AfroBasket title in 2023 just weeks after being appointed.



Wakama

ANIMAL WORLD

By Fatima Ma'aji Muhammad
(student at Helwan University, Cairo, Egypt)



The extraordinary intelligence of the Cross River gorilla, Africa's most unique great ape

Deep within the rugged rainforests of Southern Nigeria lives one of the world's most remarkable animals, the Cross River gorilla. Found nowhere else on Earth except Nigeria and a small part of Cameroon, this great ape stands as a rare symbol of strength, intelligence, and natural heritage. The Cross River gorilla is the largest primate in Africa, yet also one of the most elusive. Built with powerful arms, broad chests, and keen awareness, it thrives in steep hills and dense forests where few animals can survive. Feeding mainly on leaves, fruits, and stems, the gorilla plays a vital role in maintaining forest balance by spreading seeds and shaping vegetation. A 2007 study published in the American Journal of Primatology revealed

a surprising behaviour that set this subspecies apart. Researchers observed gorillas throwing sticks and clumps of grass when confronted by humans, an unusual response, as gorillas typically flee and rarely charge. The finding highlighted their intelligence and ability to react deliberately to perceived threats. The species also gained attention through Nyango, the only known Cross River gorilla ever kept in captivity. Her life, and her death on October 10, 2016, briefly brought global focus to a gorilla most people had never heard of. Quiet, resilient, and deeply connected to its forest home, the Cross River gorilla remains one of Nigeria's most extraordinary natural treasures, a silent guardian of the rainforest, watching, adapting, and enduring.



JOKES AND PUZZLES

BY ABDULLAH HARUNA

Jokes



1. I tried to read a book on procrastination...
I'll tell you how it ends later.
2. Why did the phone break up with the charger?
Too many short connections.
3. I told my boss I was late because time is relative.
He said my salary will be absolutely reduced.
4. Why don't secrets last in elevators?
Because they always go up and come down.
5. My brain has two modes:
Overthinking and forgetting why I was overthinking.
6. I started exercising every day...
By running out of patience.
7. Why did the calendar feel depressed?
Its days were numbered.
8. I asked my shadow for advice.
It said, "Stick close to the light."
9. Why don't programmers like nature?
Too many bugs.
10. I gave up on learning how to cook.
Even the smoke alarm tells me I'm bad at it.

Riddle: What has keys but can't open locks?
Answer: A piano.

Riddle: I speak without a mouth and hear without ears. What am I?
Answer: An echo.

Riddle: The more you take, the more you leave behind. What is it?
Answer: Footsteps.

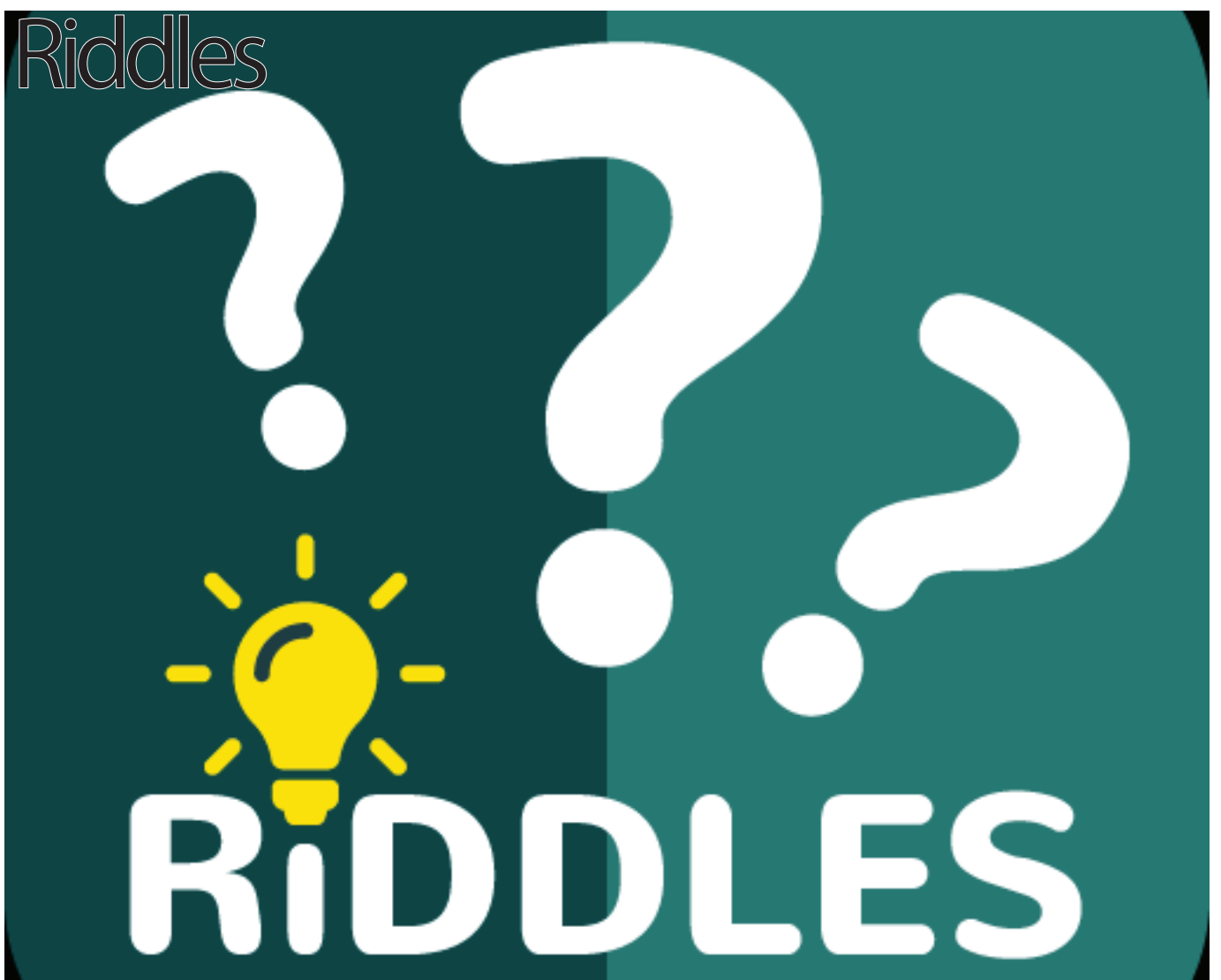
Riddle: What runs but never walks?
Answer: A river.

Riddle: I'm tall when I'm young and short when I'm old. What am I?
Answer: A candle.

Riddle: What can travel around the world while staying in one spot?
Answer: A stamp.



Riddles



Riddle: What has a head, a tail, but no body?
Answer: A coin.

Riddle: What comes once in a minute, twice in a moment, but never in a thousand years?
Answer: The letter M.

Riddle: I go up and down but never move. What am I?
Answer: Stairs.

Riddle: What has many teeth but can't bite?
Answer: A comb.

SPORTS: BEHIND THE SCENES

By Muhammad Kukuri
MuhammadKukuri@neptuneprime.com.ng**Muhammad Ali: The man who weaponised endurance**

While everyone knows Muhammad Ali as the loud, invincible “Greatest” in the ring, one of his most inspiring stories happened behind the scenes, away from the cameras, involving his legendary fight against George Foreman: The Rumble in the Jungle (1974).

At 32, Ali was considered “washed up.” Foreman was a 25-year-old wrecking ball who had destroyed everyone in his path. The world was genuinely afraid Ali might die in the ring.

Behind the scenes in Zaire (now DR Congo), Ali’s camp was frantic. They wanted him to dance and move to avoid Foreman’s power.

But Ali realised something in training: he wasn’t as fast as he used to be. He knew he couldn’t outrun Foreman for 15 rounds.

Instead of panic, he developed a secret mental and physical torture test. In the weeks leading up to the fight, he told his sparring partners to hit him hard directly in the ribs and stomach.

His trainers begged him to stop, but he was “tempering” his body like steel. He practiced leaning back against the ropes so far that his head was out of range. He was preparing to become a human punching bag.

The most inspiring “behind the scenes” moment happened during the fight itself. As Foreman landed thunderous body shots that would have broken other men, Ali leaned into Foreman’s ear and whispered:

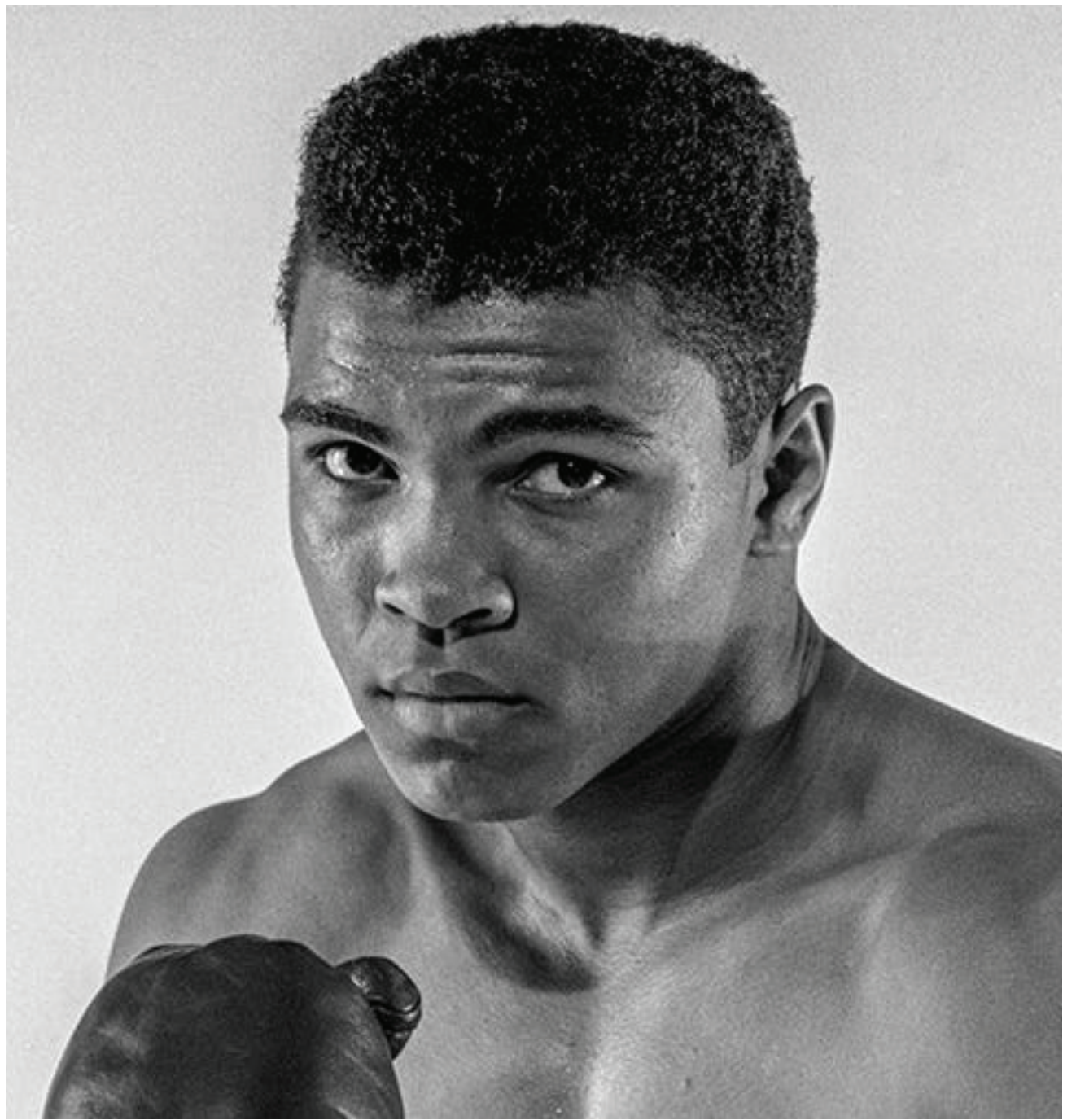
“Is that all you got, George? They told me you could hit. You hit like a sissy.”

Foreman later admitted those whispers broke his spirit. He was throwing every ounce of his soul into his punches, and Ali was mocking him. Ali wasn’t just fighting with his fists; he was out-thinking a giant.

The real “behind the scenes” magic of Ali, however, was his connection to the people. While Foreman stayed in his hotel, Ali walked through the dirt streets of Zaire.

He met with the poor, the sick, and the children. He told them, “I am you. You are me.” He didn’t just win that fight because of the “Rope-a-Dope”; he won because he had convinced an entire nation to pray for him, giving him a spiritual energy that Foreman’s muscles couldn’t match.

Ali

**Unbreakable: Evander Holyfield and the art of professional comebacks**

The story of Evander “The Real Deal” Holyfield is the ultimate testament to the power of persistence over perception.

While Mike Tyson had the aura of terror and Lennox Lewis had the size, Holyfield had something far more dangerous: a heart that refused to acknowledge the word “impossible.”

Holyfield began his career as a Cruiserweight. He cleaned out the division, becoming the undisputed champion, but his true dream was the Heavyweight crown.

The boxing world laughed. At the time, heavyweights were giants. Critics called him a “blown-up Cruiserweight” and insisted his body couldn’t take the punishment of the big men. He didn’t argue with them; he just went to work. He gained 20 pounds of pure muscle through a gruelling, scientific training camp that became the blueprint for modern athletes.

By 1996, many thought Holyfield was finished. He had lost his titles, suffered a heart scare, and was a 25-to-1 underdog against the “Baddest Man on the Planet,” Mike Tyson.

Holyfield’s spirit shines. While the rest of the world was terrified of Tyson’s power, Holyfield’s camp was incredibly calm. Holyfield had spent weeks studying Tyson’s intimidation tactics. He realised that everyone Tyson fought was beaten before the first bell because they were scared to be hit.

Holyfield decided on a radical strategy: He would hit Tyson first.

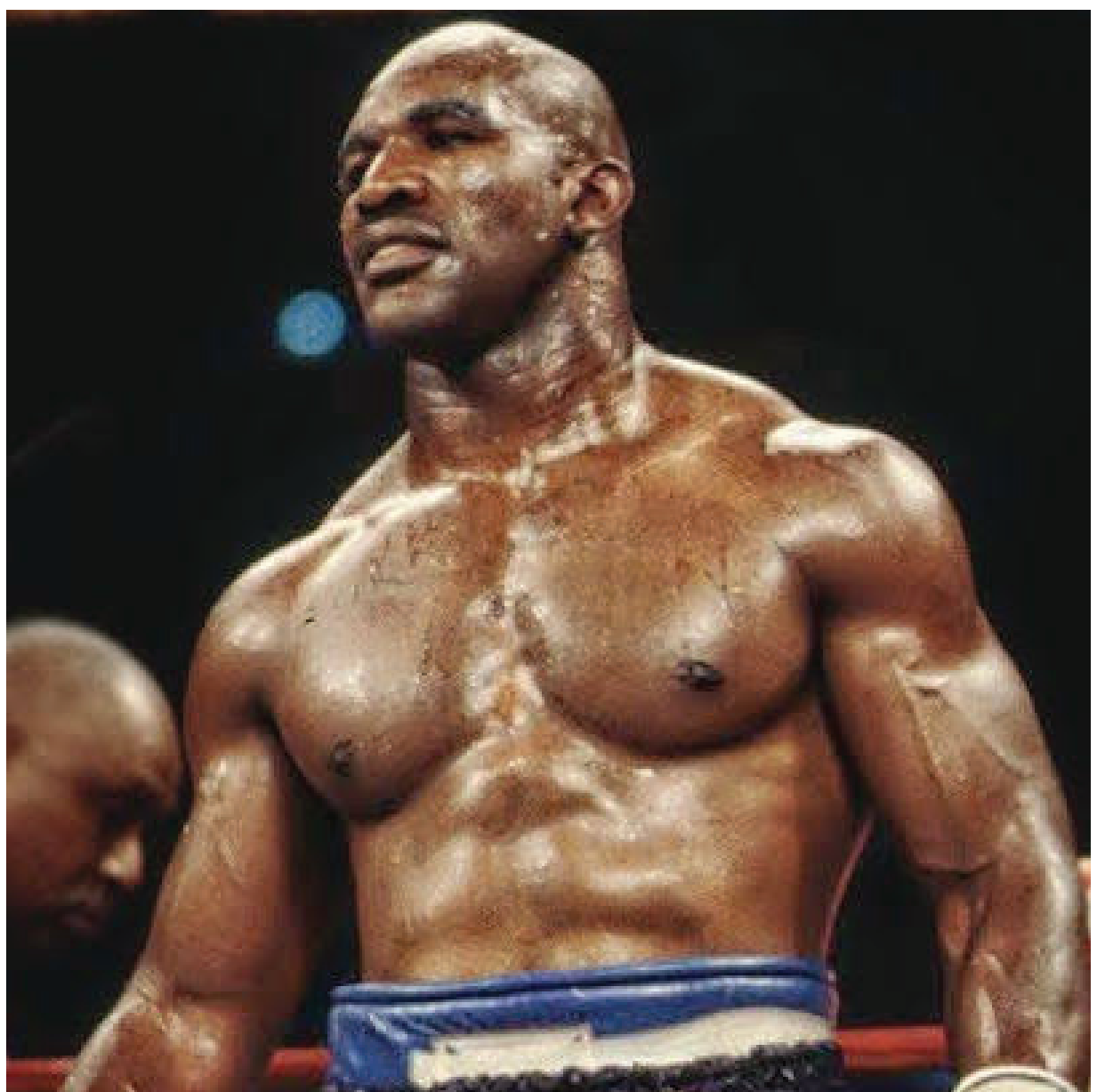
When the fight started, Tyson landed a monstrous right hand. Usually, that was the end. But Holyfield didn’t blink. He pushed Tyson back—something no one had ever done.

In the middle of the chaos, Holyfield was seen smiling. He was in his element. He out-boxed, out-muscled, and eventually stopped Tyson in the 11th round, shocking the entire world.

He didn’t win because he was stronger; he won because he refused to be intimidated.

Everyone remembers the rematch where Tyson bit Holyfield’s ear. It was one of the most shocking moments in sports history. But the most inspiring part of that story is Holyfield’s forgiveness.

Instead of holding a lifelong grudge or letting that moment define him as a victim, Holyfield eventually made peace with Tyson. The two became close friends, even filming commercials together joking about the incident.



Holyfield

BOOKS

BY MUHAMMAD AL-TJANI

Then I Was Guided (13)

CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK

I cried and cried and let myself go as if crushed, and felt a relief that I had never experienced before that day; I felt that I had been in the ranks of al-Husayn's enemies and had suddenly changed sides to be one of his followers who sacrificed themselves for his sake. The speaker was reciting the story of al Hurr, who was one of the commanders in charge of fighting al-Husayn, who stood in the middle of the battlefield shaking like a leaf, and when one of his friends asked him, "Are you afraid of death?" He answered, "No, by Allah, but I am choosing between heaven and hell." Then he kicked his horse and went towards al-Husayn and asked, "Is there a repentance, O son of the Messenger of Allah?"

When I heard that, I could not control myself and fell on the floor crying and felt as if I was in the position of al-Hurr, asking al-Husayn, "Is there repentance, O son of the Messenger of Allah? Forgive me O son of the Messenger of Allah. The voice of the speaker was so moving that people started crying and wailing, and when my friend heard my cries, he embraced me, like a mother embracing her child, and started crying and calling, "O Husayn...O Husayn..." These were moments, during which I learnt that meaning of real crying and felt that my tears washed my heart and body from the inside, and then I understood the meaning of the Messenger's saying: If you knew what I know, you would have laughed little and cried more.

I was depressed throughout the day, although my friend tried to re-assure me and cheer me up by offering me some refreshments, but I had lost my appetite completely. I asked him to repeat the story of the martyrdom of al-Husayn, for I did not know much about it except the fact that our religious leaders told us that the enemies of Islam killed our masters Umar, Uthman and 'Ali, and that the same enemies killed our master al-Husayn; and that is all we knew. In fact we used to celebrate

Ashura, as one of the festival days of Islam; alms were distributed and various types of food were cooked and the young boys went to their elders who gave them money to buy sweets and toys.

However, there are a few customs in some villages during Ashura: people do not light fires or do any kind of work. People do not get married or celebrate a happy occasion. We usually accept them at face value without any explanation given, and strangely enough, our religious leaders talk to us about the greatness of Ashura and how blessed it is.

After that we went to visit the grave of al-Abbas, the brother of al-Husayn. I did not know who he was, but my friend informed me about his bravery. We also met many pious religious leaders whose names I cannot recall in detail, but I can still recall their surnames: Bahr al-Ulum, al-Sayyid al-Hakim, Kashif al Ghita, al-Yasin, al-Tabatabai, al-Feiruzabadi, Asad Haidar, and others, who honoured me with their company.

They are truly pious religious leaders, possessing all the signs of dignity and respect, and the Shi'a population respects them and gives them one fifth of their incomes. Through these donations they manage the affairs of the religious schools, open new schools, establish presses and assist students who come to them from all over the Islamic world. They are independent and not connected in any way with the rulers; unlike our religious leaders who would not do or say anything without the approval of the authorities, who pay their salaries and appoint them, and remove them whenever they want.

It was a new world that I had discovered, or rather, Allah had discovered for me. I started to enjoy it having previously kept away from it, and gradually blended with it after I had opposed it. I gained new ideas from this new world, and it inspired me with the quest for knowledge and research until I reached the desired truth which always comes to mind whenever I read the saying of the prophet:

Then I was Guided



Muhammad al-Tijani al-Samawi

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The sons of Israel were divided into seventy-one groups, and the Christians were divided into seventy two groups, and my people will be divided into seventy-three groups, all of which, except one group will end up in Hell. Here is not the place to talk about the various religions which claim to be the right one and that the rest are wrong, but I am surprised and astonished whenever I read this saying. My surprise and astonishment is not at the saying itself, but at those Muslims who read it and repeat it in their speeches and brush over it without analyzing it or even attempting to find out which the group is going to be saved and which are going to be doomed.

The interesting thing is that each group claims that it is the saved one. At the end of the saying came the following: "Who are they, O Messenger of Allah?" He answered, "Those who follow my path and the path of my Companions." Is there any group that does not adhere to the Book (Qur'an) and Sunnah (the prophetic tradition),

and is there any Islamic group that claims otherwise? If Imams Malik or Abu Hanifah or al-Shafii or Ahmed ibn Hanbel were asked, wouldn't each and every one of them claim that he adheres to the teachings of the Qur'an and the Right Sunnah? These are the Sunni Madhahib, in addition to the various Shi'i-groups, which I had believed at one time to be deviant and corrupt. All of them claim to adhere to the Qur'an and the correct Sunnah which has been handed down through Ahl al-Bayt (the Prophets Family) who knew best about what they were saying. Is it possible that they are all right, as they claim?

This is not possible, because the Prophets saying states the opposite, unless the saying is invented or fabricated. But that is not possible either, because the saying is accepted by both the Shi'a and Sunnis. Is it possible that the saying has no meaning? God forbid that His Messenger (saw) could utter a meaningless and aimless saying, as he only spoke words of wisdom. Therefore we

are left with one possible conclusion: that there is one group which is on the right path and that the rest are wrong. Thus, the saying tends to make one confused and perplexed, but in the meantime it encourages research and study by those who want to be saved.

Because of that, I became doubtful and perplexed after my meeting with the Shi'a, for who knows, they might be saying the truth! So should I not study and investigate? Islam, through the Qur'an and Sunnah ordered me to study, investigate and to compare, and Allah, the Most High said: "And (as for) those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them in Our ways." (Holy Qur'an 29:69)

He also said: "Those who listen to the word then follow the best of it; these are they whom Allah has guided, and those it is who are the men of understanding." (Holy Qur'an 39:18) The Messenger of Allah (saw) said: "Study your religion until it is said that you are mad."

Therefore research and comparison are legal obligations for every responsible person. Having reached this

decision and resolution, and with this promise to myself and my Shi'i friends from Iraq, I embraced them and bade them farewell, full of sorrow since I liked them and they liked me. I felt that I had left dear and faithful friends who had sacrificed their time in order to help me. They did it out of their own choice and asked for nothing except the approval of Allah, Praise be to Him. The Prophet (saw) said, "If Allah chooses you to guide one man (to the right path), then that is worth more than all the riches on earth."

I left Iraq having spent twenty days among the Imams and their followers, and the time had passed like a nice dream from which the sleeper was loathe to awake. I left Iraq feeling sorry for the brevity of this period and sorry to leave dear friends who were full of love for Ahl-al-Bayt. I left Iraq for the Hijaz seeking the House of Allah and the grave of the Master of the First and the Last (saw). I arrived in Jeddah and met my friend al-Basheer, who was very pleased to see me and took me to his home and showed me the highest degree of generosity. We spent the time by going around in his car visiting places, and did the Umrah together, and we spent a few days together full of worshipping and other pious works. I apologized to my friend for being late due to my long stay in Iraq and told him about my new discovery, or rather new faith. He was open minded and well informed, so he said to me, "This is true, for I hear that they have some great learned scholars, but also they have many deviant groups that cause us considerable trouble during the pilgrimage. I asked him, "What are these problems they cause?" He said, "They pray around the graves and enter al-Baqee in groups crying and wailing and they carry with them pieces of stones on which they prostrate themselves; and if they visit the grave of our master al-Hamzah in Uhud, they make up a funeral ceremony, beating their chests and wailing as if al-Hamza had just died."

TO BE CONTINUED

The Arbiter

BY HASSAN GIMBA



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

CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK

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

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

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

They mistake him for the likes of Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu, who plan for survival and arrange backups and options to ensure it. Trump recently reactivated the plane, Domsday, after a 51-year hiatus, and Netanyahu landed in Crete, Greece, with his plane, the Wing of Zion, all in a bid to escape Iranian retaliation. Khamenei and the Iranian leadership do not have options A, B, or C regarding

their survival in the current standoff. It is going to be an all-or-nothing war for them. And to this end, they have all appointed up to ten successors for each so that there would be no leadership vacuum.

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

Israel is applying a lot of pressure on America to attack Iran - to do the “dirty job” for it as it did for Europe, according to Germany’s chancellor, Friedrich Merz, who said Israel was doing a “dirty work for all of us” while defending Israel’s unprovoked attacks on Iran in June last year.

The strategy therein for the Israelites is to come in “when America has weakened Iran” and depleted its ability to fight back. They do not care even if America gets bruised in the process because they will maintain their fake myth of “God’s chosen people of a strong nation that cannot be defeated.”

That would effectively transform it from a regional power and bully into a global power, supplanting America, which Iran might have degraded. And that is also one of Israel’s game plans. It would get an open field to play by its own terms, setting the rules while others are forced to comply. No country in the region would dare speak against or stand up to it again.

Of course, many bogey Jews who love them more than their religion and its founder will clap for them. Yes, they love them more than they love the founder of their religion



Dr Gimba

and his mother. If not, why venerate a people who spit on you, call you an idolator, say your God is burning in human excrement in hell, and his mother is a whore? While Israel has captured the American state, pushing it, using its military as a hammer against cultivated enemies, America previously had international approval, even if flawed, for its actions in Iraq, Libya, and Afghanistan on Israel’s behalf. Now, without UN or global support, America is acting alone, especially since Gulf states have refused it the use of the bases in their territories. This refusal, even by the

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

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

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

Russia must have known this.

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

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

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To be continued