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The Nigerian Senate.

Valentine's Day: Guidelines for Celebrating Love with Caution, Safety, and No Regrets

By Martha Gwary

Valentine's Day, marked every February 14, is traditionally a celebration of love, affection and togetherness. Across Nigeria and many parts of the world, the day is observed with the exchange of gifts, romantic outings and social gatherings. However, the festivities increasingly come with security concerns that call for caution and responsible celebration.

A Rise in Criminal Activities

In recent years, Valentine's Day has coincided with a rise in criminal activities in Nigeria and beyond. Law enforcement agencies and security experts note that the period often records cases of ritual killings, abductions, rape, armed robbery and road accidents.

Internationally, similar trends have been observed, with reports of gun violence, incidents of drinking and driving and sexual assaults during Valentine-related celebrations.

In Nigeria, the season has been particularly linked to ritual-related crimes, as desperate individuals exploit the symbolism of love to lure unsuspecting victims. Young women have, in some cases, fallen prey to abduction or sexual assault after accepting invitations from strangers or acquaintances

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Senate Approves Electronic Result Transmission: What it Means for Nigeria's Electoral Process

- INEC currently lacks the capacity to conduct e-voting - Senate
- The framework provides an additional layer of transparency and verification

By Tawheed Yakub

The Senate has approved the electronic transmission of election results as part of ongoing amendments to Nigeria's Electoral Act, marking a significant development

in the country's electoral reform efforts ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Explanation

Electronic transmission of election results refers to the process of uploading vote counts

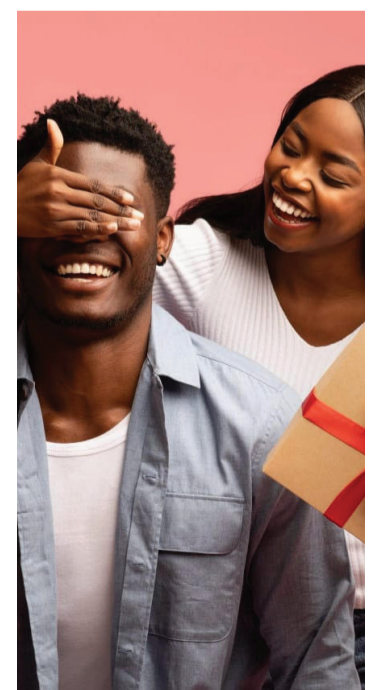
from polling units directly into a central digital platform immediately after ballots are counted and official result sheets are completed and signed. In Nigeria's case, this involves the Independent National Electoral

Commission's (INEC) Result Viewing (IReV) portal, which allows polling unit results to be uploaded and viewed online.

The system is designed to complement the existing manual process by

creating a digital record of results at the point of origin, thereby reducing delays, limiting opportunities for manipulation during collation, improving

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Couple

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THE MADA TRIBE: EXPLORING THE ROCKY HILL DWELLERS AND SKILLED FARMERS OF NASARAWA STATE



THIS LIFE! >>16

NIGERIA HAS UNDERGONE NEGATIVE CHANGES FROM WHAT IT ONCE WAS — SENIOR LECTURER, DR SAFANA



Neptune World

You can't cross the sea merely by standing and staring at the water

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

It always seems impossible until it's done

NELSON MANDELA



PICTURE OF THE DAY

Lt. General Olusegun Obasanjo, Colonel Muhammadu Buhari, and Colonel Shehu Musa Yar'Adua at a Federal Executive Council meeting in Dodan Barracks, observing prayers for the late Head of State, General Murtala Mohammed. General Murtala Mohammed was assassinated on Friday, February 13, 1976, during a failed coup attempt in Lagos. He lost his life alongside his Aide-de-Camp, Lt. Akintunde Akinsehinwa. On that same day, the Military Governor of Kwara State, Colonel Ibrahim Taiwo, was also killed in Ilorin in connection with the abortive coup. A defining moment in Nigeria's military and political history one that reshaped the nation's leadership.

RANDOM FACTS

Mind-blowing innovation facts

The smartphone is more powerful than early supercomputers: The phone in your pocket has more computing power than the computers used to send astronauts to the moon in 1969.

Artificial Intelligence can now create new proteins: Scientists use AI to design proteins that never existed before, helping to develop medicines faster and potentially cure diseases.

3D printing is building houses: Entire homes can now be printed layer by layer using large 3D printers, reducing construction time

and costs. Self-healing materials exist: Some materials can repair cracks or damage automatically, inspired by how human skin heals itself.

Solar energy keeps getting cheaper: The cost of solar power has dropped dramatically over the past decade, making renewable energy more accessible worldwide.

Robots are performing delicate surgeries: Advanced robotic systems assist surgeons with precision that can reduce human error and improve recovery times.



The Legend of Lozen: A woman's courageous struggle to protect and sustain her people

She was hunted across the desert, her people starving, the cavalry closing in with rifles and hunger for blood.

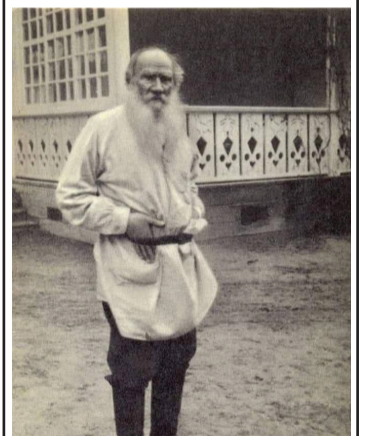
Then, in 1880, Lozen—warrior, prophet, and sister of Victorio—did the unthinkable: she led the last of the Apache through miles of burning land, with no food, no water, and soldiers at every turn.

Born near the Black Range Mountains, Lozen was more than a fighter—she was a seer, said to feel the direction of the enemy just by lifting her hands to the wind. Her courage wasn't forged in battle, but in the endless struggle to keep her people alive. It wasn't just a flight from death; it was a march of defiance. Lozen rode with mothers, children, and the wounded,



guiding them through canyons and across rivers swollen with rain. When they were surrounded, she fought beside the men, her rifle steady, her resolve unshaken. She carried a child on her back, prayed between gunfire, and still found strength to lead. Each mile she bought with blood and endurance, her faith, the only map she trusted. Even when hope thinned to dust, she never stopped riding. When she was finally captured, the

Army thought her spirit would break. But Lozen's legend didn't die behind prison walls. Among her people, she became the echo of survival itself—a woman who defied the empire that tried to erase her, who rode through fire for the ones who couldn't. Her story asks the same question that haunts every survivor of the frontier: How far would you go to protect those you love?



Why great Russian writer Leo Tolstoy refused the 1907 Nobel Prize in Literature

At the age of 78, the great Russian writer Leo Tolstoy declined consideration for the Nobel Prize in Literature, firmly convinced of the moral harm of money.

When the Russian Academy of Sciences nominated him, Tolstoy wrote to his Finnish friend and translator Arvid Järnefelt, asking him to intercede with the Swedish Academy to award the prize to someone else.

Järnefelt — surprised but loyal — fulfilled the unusual request. As a result, the 1907 prize went to the relatively unknown Italian poet Giosuè Carducci. Tolstoy later said that his refusal spared him the heavy burden of deciding what to do with such a large sum of money. He believed that "in money itself, in the very possession of it, there is something immoral."

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NEWS

Senate Approves Electronic Result Transmission: What it Means for Nigeria's Electoral Process

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accuracy in data transfer, and strengthening public confidence through near real-time access to polling unit outcomes.

Not a Replacement for Physical Voting

It does not replace physical voting, counting, or the use of paper result forms, but provides an additional layer of transparency and verification.

The Senate's decision follows sustained public debate over the credibility of Nigeria's electoral process, with civil society groups, political parties and other stakeholders calling for reforms aimed at enhancing transparency, speed and accountability in the reporting of election outcomes.

The approved provision empowers INEC to transmit polling unit results electronically while also retaining a manual collation option where electronic transmission is not feasible due to technical or network challenges.

The Role of Presiding Officers

Under the approved framework, presiding officers at polling units will be authorised to upload results electronically after votes are counted and result forms are signed.

The electronic upload will serve as an official digital record of polling unit outcomes.

However, in areas where connectivity issues or technological failures occur, results may still be transmitted manually in line with existing procedures.

Mixed Reactions

The conditional nature of the provision has generated mixed reactions. Supporters argue that electronic transmission will reduce opportunities for manipulation as results move from polling units to collation centres and will enhance public trust in the electoral system. Critics, however, have expressed concern that allowing manual fallback could weaken the reform if not strictly regulated. The Senate's version of the amendment must now be harmonised with that of the House of Representatives before a final bill is transmitted to the President for assent.

Senate's Clarification

The Senate has clarified that the electronic transmission of election results in real time does not translate to e-voting as being peddled in some quarters, adding that INEC currently lacks the capacity to conduct e-voting.

The upper chamber further clarified that the INEC Result Viewing



Polling unit results will be uploaded and viewed online

Portal (IReV) "is not an e-voting platform, but a platform for when the election results that have been manually counted and declared at the polling units are uploaded and publicised." Chairman, Senate Ad-hoc Panel to Review

the 2026 Electoral Bill, Adeniyi Adegbonmire, made the clarifications in an interview, explaining the difference between the electronic transmission of election results in real time and the e-voting system.

The Senate had constituted the ad hoc

panel to review the report of its Committee on Electoral Matters, harmonise divergent views and address grey areas identified during the exercise. It also appointed Adegbonmire to lead the seven-man panel.

As preparations for the

2027 general elections gather momentum, attention will focus on how the new framework is finalised and implemented, and whether it will significantly strengthen the credibility and transparency of Nigeria's electoral process.

Valentine's Day: Guidelines for Celebrating Love with Caution, Safety, and No Regrets

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promising extravagant dates or gifts.

Hotels, short-let apartments and nightclubs, which experience increased patronage during the period, have also featured in reports of rape, theft and violent altercations.

Road safety remains another major concern. Increased travel, nighttime movements and alcohol/drug consumption have contributed to fatal accidents on highways during Valentine's celebrations.

Abroad, authorities in some countries similarly issue security advisories, citing heightened risks of gun violence, domestic disputes and traffic accidents linked to excessive revelry.

Meaningful Celebration with Safety

Despite these challenges, Valentine's Day can still be celebrated meaningfully and safely. Security-conscious celebration begins with choosing public, well-lit and familiar locations rather than secluded spots.

Informing trusted friends or family members of one's plans and movements, especially for first-time meetings, is strongly advised.

Experts also warn against trusting strangers too quickly, particularly those met online.

Social Media Exploitation

Criminals are known to exploit social media and dating platforms during festive periods, making caution essential. Accepting expensive gifts or private invitations without proper verification may expose individuals to danger.

Moderation is key to staying safe. Avoiding excessive



Valentine's Day gifts.

alcohol intake reduces the risk of accidents, violence and poor judgment. Motorists are urged to observe traffic rules, avoid driving under the influence and minimise night journeys where possible.

Parents and guardians are encouraged to engage young people in conversations about personal safety, consent and peer pressure during the season. Meanwhile, increased police patrols around entertainment centres and major roads should be supported through public cooperation.

Ultimately, Valentine's Day should reflect love in its truest form — care, respect and responsibility. In a time of growing security concerns, celebrating with caution is not a limitation but a wise choice. After all, protecting life and dignity remains the greatest expression of love.

NEWS

BY ABDULLAHI HARUNA



Kugbo terminal

Commissioned bus terminals will begin operations after FEC approval - Wike

Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, has said that the three Bus and Taxi Terminals constructed by the FCT Administration (FCTA) will be put to public use once the Public Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement for their operations and management is approved by the Federal Executive Council (FEC).

Wike gave the assurance after he inspected some ongoing road projects in Abuja on Thursday. Recall that the FCT Administration had in 2024 began the construction of three bus terminals – one each in

Kugbo, Mabushi and the Central Business District (CBD). The three terminals were awarded at a cost of N51 billion. The Kugbo and Mabushi terminals have been completed and inaugurated in June 2025 to celebrate Tinubu's second year in office, while the one in the CBD was at the completion stage. However, the completed terminals have remained un-operational since inauguration in June 2025. The Minister explained that the terminals have not taken off because the qualified operators must be approved by the FEC, adding

that the contract was beyond ministerial approval. He said that the procurement process had successfully passed through the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP). "After building the terminals, we said we are not going to allow the Transport Secretariat to run it. It will be handled by private individuals who have the competence. "It's not as easy as we thought. It requires FEC's approval, but I am confident that at the next FEC, the contracts will be presented for approval. So, we believe in the next FEC meeting,

it will be approved and once that is done, then we will hit the road," he said. Wike had disclosed during the inauguration of the completed terminals that additional terminals would be constructed in Gwagwalada, Bwari and Kuje Area Councils of FCT. He explained that the bus and taxi terminals marked a significant milestone in FCTA's efforts to modernise transportation infrastructure in the territory. Wike added that the FCTA was also addressing the issue of indiscriminate parking on the roads.

NELFUND clears University of Abuja of student loan misappropriation

The Nigerian Education Loan Fund (NELFUND) on Friday responded to recent media reports alleging the diversion of student loan funds at the University of Abuja, stating that there is no verified evidence to support the claims. In a statement issued by its Director of Strategic Communications, Oseyemi Oluwatuyi, the Fund stated that it had taken note of the allegations circulating in the media but clarified that no established proof exists to suggest that the University of Abuja diverted, misappropriated, or unlawfully withheld its disbursements. "NELFUND wishes to state clearly that, as of this moment, there is no verified evidence before the Fund establishing that the University of Abuja has diverted, misappropriated,

or unlawfully withheld NELFUND disbursements," the statement partly read. The Fund explained that it operates a structured disbursement and reconciliation framework in line with its statutory mandate. According to the statement, funds are released through established institutional channels, with compliance mechanisms in place to ensure accountability and transparency. "NELFUND operates a structured disbursement and reconciliation framework in line with its statutory mandate. Funds are released through established institutional channels, and compliance mechanisms are in place to ensure accountability and transparency," the statement continued.

The agency noted that when concerns arise regarding the timelines for crediting student accounts or institutional reconciliation processes, it engages directly with the relevant institution to clarify and resolve such matters administratively and in accordance with due process. "Where concerns arise regarding timelines of crediting student accounts or institutional reconciliation processes, NELFUND engages directly with the relevant institution to clarify and resolve such matters administratively and in accordance with due process," the statement added. The Fund stressed that media allegations should not be regarded as confirmed findings, emphasising its reliance on verified documentation and formal audit procedures. "It

is important to emphasise that allegations reported in the media do not constitute established findings. "NELFUND remains committed to relying strictly on verified documentation, formal reconciliation procedures, and audit mechanisms in addressing any issues relating to its disbursement processes," the statement further noted. Reaffirming its mandate, the Fund said it remains committed to protecting the interests of eligible Nigerian students and ensuring that all disbursements comply with the law. "NELFUND will continue to work collaboratively with all partner institutions to uphold transparency, accountability, and the integrity of the student loan programme," it stated.

INEC schedules 2027 presidential election for February 20

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has released the timetable for the 2027 General Elections. INEC Chairman, Professor Joash Amupitan, released the timetable at a press briefing in Abuja, on Friday. He said that while the Presidential and National Assembly elections would hold on February 20, 2027, governorship and state assembly elections would take place on March 6, 2027.

Amupitan said the commission was fully prepared for the exercise. "By virtue of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended, the tenure of the President, the Vice-President, the Governors, and Deputy Governors of states, except Anambra State, Bayelsa State, Edo State, Imo State, will expire on the 28th day of May, 2027.

"Membership of the National and State Assemblies will stand dissolved on the 8th day of June, 2021.

"Pursuant to Section 76(2), 116(2), 132(2), and 178(2) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended, elections to the said offices shall hold not earlier than 150 days, and not later than 30 days, before the expiration of the term of office of the holders.

"This action we are taking today is pursuant to the provisions of the Constitution of Nigeria, and in particular, Section 28, subsection 1 of the Electoral Act, 2022, which mandates the Commission to publish the notice of election not later than 360 days before the date appointed for the election," he said.

Reaffirming INEC's independence, the Chairman stated: "Let me reiterate that the authority and power to publish the date of election is that of the Independent National Electoral Commission.

"The 2027 general election will hold nationwide for the following offices: President and Vice-President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; Governors and Deputy Governors of the states of the Federation, except those states I had mentioned; members of the Senate; members of the House of Representatives; and members of the Houses of Assembly of states.

"Therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred on the Commission by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended, and the Electoral Act of 2022, and all other powers enabling it in that behalf, the Commission hereby sets in motion the electoral process for the 2027 general election, and fixes the date of the 2027 general election as follows: Presielection and National Assembly election will come on the 20th February, 2027; Governorship and State Houses of Assembly will be on the 6th March, 2027.

"The detailed timetable and schedule of activities have been uploaded to the Commission's website this morning, and have been circulated to registered political parties and relevant stakeholders.

"All the 36 Resident Electoral Commissioners and that of the FCT are hereby directed to publish the notices in each constituency in respect of which an election is to be held."

"These dates reflect our commitment to ensuring that our electoral processes are transparent, credible, and adhere to the provisions of our laws," he added.

He added: "In accordance with the approved timetable and schedule of activities, primaries will be conducted within the statutory period stipulated by law.



Amupitan

OUR HEART

Sad notes on the golden jubilee of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT)

The story of Abuja assuming its present-day status as the Capital Territory effectively began in January, 1976, when the then military regime under the late General Murtala Ramat Muhammed issued a decree on the change of the nation's seat of power from the coastal city of Lagos to a more centrally located territory in the hinterland.

A seven-member panel under Justice Akinola Aguda was constituted in 1975 to look for a suitable location in the country to serve as the new capital city of the country. Out of about thirty-three options examined, the panel concluded on Abuja. Besides its perception of Abuja to be at the heart of the country and therefore, most suitable for the location of the new federal capital, the panel also took cognisance of what it considered to be the sparse population of the area.

Hovering over the area without undertaking the painstaking task of on-the-ground physical examination, Akinola Aguda and others on his panel, concluded that the future federal capital territory was also, more or less, a "no man's land", a virgin piece of land right from Genesis. That was erroneous.

Under the alluring, thick forests, hills, mountains and valleys, were several clusters of human communities and settlements that, by their population strength and other demographics, qualified to be identified as towns. Settlements such as Garki, Karshi, Gwagwalada, Gwagwa, Bwari, Nyanya and Kuje were, comparatively, thriving agricultural and related commercial hubs.

However, the fate and fortunes of the indigenous peoples began to change, for the worse, in correlation with progress in the evolution of the new federal capital territory. New infrastructures implied massive displacements of age-long habitats of households and families, traditional institutions and economies.

The present-day airport, glistening hotels, secretariats, skyscrapers, housing estates and similar mesmerising architectural spectacles, were erected on the ruins of what had been the pivots of a people's social and economic activities for time immemorial.

The emergence and development of new districts, Maitama and Asokoro for example, resulted from the uprooting and relocation of entire communities from their ancestral homes, symbols and relics of their history, culture and communal living: markets, cemeteries, shrines, or places of worship.

Similar to the experiences of the Amerindians, the native populations of the Americas, the increasing wave of people into the territory has had the effect of obscuring the visibility of the indigenous people of Abuja. They have been receding into oblivion as they are pushed away from

the city's limelight.

What the government offers as compensation for lands taken from the natives, is paltry and a far cry from the declared purpose of resettlements. Usually, poorly constructed resettlement homes are, in their sizes, reminiscent of the "matchbox houses" of Soweto and other ghettos in apartheid South Africa. They are inadequate in number and do not reflect the cultural patterns of residential homes of the indigenes.

In other words, through the official policy of government and the actions of settler populations, the establishment of Abuja as Nigeria's capital city, has led to the gradual but, steady obliteration of the Gbagyi, the Bassa, the Gwandara, the Koro and the other indigenous ethnic groups in the territory's demographics.

It is paradoxical as it is weird for instance, that fifty years later, no indigene of Abuja has ever been appointed as FCT Minister. In elective positions, the majority of persons who have won elections as the FCT Representatives in the Senate are non-indigenes of the territory.

In the extant political scenario in the area, while most of those aspiring to be council chairmen and councillors of the six area councils are non-indigenes, the sitting House member of Bwari/AMAC federal constituency, is of the settler community. This is illustrative of the weak economic powers of the indigenous politicians vis-à-vis those of the settler elements.

The inevitable deduction from the unfolding reality is that, slowly but steadily, reminiscent of the fate of the natives of the USA, Canada and Australia, the Abuja indigenous peoples are facing the grim prospects of being completely wiped out in the social, economic and political schemes of territory.

Perhaps, nothing patently illustrates the gloomy fate of the original inhabitants of the FCT as the nonchalance or, eerie silence of all the relevant authorities on the recent occasion of the 50th anniversary of the birth of Abuja as the nation's capital city.

It was ideally, a golden jubilee that should have been marked by pomp and pageantry. But it was complete silence from all the quarters that should have rolled out the drums. What turned out as a celebration of the occasion was a poorly attended symposium in the now, nondescript Abuja Centre for Arts and Culture, by an association of the Gbagyi ethnic people.

The 50th anniversary of the birth of Abuja, should however, be an occasion that pricks the conscience of the rest of the nation to the plight of the indigenous people of the FCT. They have been wronged. They have been pillaged. They have been severely assaulted. It is time for Nigeria to begin the process of penance and atonement.

Conscious political empowerment strategies must be fashioned by the nation's political leadership to ameliorate the level of exclusion, incapacitation and deprivation of the indigenes of the FCT in the social, economic and political schemes of the country. That is calling for something akin to the restitutive American Marshall Plan in the aftermath of the Second World War. The succeeding generations of the Gbagyi, the Koro, the Bassa and the Gwandara may not be as complacent or meek as their foreparents.

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Yobe Focal Person's Office empowers 100 women through skills acquisition programme



Beneficiaries

The Office of the Focal Person, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), Yobe State, has

launched a competency-based skills acquisition programme to empower young women across the

state. The initiative is in line with the economic

empowerment drive of the administration of His Excellency, Hon. Mai Mala Buni.

Under the leadership of Abubakar Adamu Fika, the MSME Focal Office has successfully trained and graduated the first batch of 100 young women in Fashion Design, Computer Applications, Catering Services, Throw Pillow Production, and Bedsheet Making.

The scheme equips participants with practical, hands-on skills to promote entrepreneurship, self-reliance, and improved employability among underserved youth.

A second batch of 100 young women is currently undergoing training, further demonstrating the state government's commitment to inclusive growth and sustainable livelihood development

Adamawa government allocates land for airstrip project in Mubi



Gov. Fintiri

Adamawa State government has approved land for the Federal Ministry of Aviation and

Aerospace Development for the construction of an airstrip in Mubi. The development

was confirmed by the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Auwal Tukur, after a

meeting with a delegation from the ministry, which visited the area for an on-the-spot assessment.

The SSG explained that although there was an existing airstrip in the area, it had been encroached upon, necessitating the allocation of new land for the project.

While highlighting the importance of the proposed airstrip to residents of the Mubi axis and neighbouring Cameroon, Tukur called on the ministry to fully utilise the allocated land, expressing optimism that the facility could eventually be upgraded to a full-fledged airport in view of the rapid development in the area.

The leader of the delegation, Samuel Mzekwe, said the team was in the state to inspect and assess the site and forward the collected data to the Minister of Aviation for further action toward the actualisation of the project.

The delegation comprised officials of the ministry and its affiliated agencies.

Police arrest two suspected human traffickers in Bauchi

The Bauchi State Police Command has arrested two suspects in connection with alleged human trafficking and related offences in the state.

In a statement issued on Friday, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Nafiu Abubakar, said the E Divisional Police Headquarters was investigating a case involving criminal conspiracy, human trafficking, assault, extortion and defamation.

"A complainant, Ebere Wilson, 20, of Wuntin Dada, reported that she was assaulted and had her mobile phone, a blue Tecno Spark 4, confiscated by Gloria Joseph on February 11, 2026," the statement partly read.

Habib said investigations revealed that Joseph allegedly conspired with Light Mandis to lure Wilson and her friend, Mercy, to Ghana for prostitution.

The command's spokesman added that the case had been transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department for further

investigation.

He also noted that the Commissioner of Police, Sani-Omolori Aliyu, had directed that the suspects be charged in court upon completion of the investigation.

Human trafficking remains a significant concern in Bauchi State, with the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons reporting continued cases involving both internal trafficking and trafficking across borders. The agency has highlighted that traffickers often exploit poverty and false promises of employment to lure victims, particularly women and young people.

In the past year, NAP TIP recorded at least 37 human trafficking cases in Bauchi State, indicating the scale of the challenge at the local level.

The agency has secured convictions against traffickers and carries out awareness campaigns to educate communities on the dangers of trafficking.



Police

NORTH-EAST

BY IBRAHEEM EL-TAFSEER

Damaturu–Biu Road: Traders, drivers, decry deteriorating condition, economic slowdown

While much of the discourse around the dilapidated 134-kilometre Damaturu–Buni-Yadi–Biu federal highway has focused on the security threats it poses, traders, farmers, motorists and passengers are raising a different alarm, the road's decay is slowly suffocating the regional economy and cutting off communities from life-sustaining markets.

A media tour of the strategic artery on Wednesday, undertaken by journalists, revealed not just a security crisis but an unfolding economic disaster.

During the tour, our correspondent conducted interviews with some of the road users. For Abdullahi Umar, a trader who has used the Buni-Gari to Biu route for two decades, the road represents something more fundamental than infrastructure; it is the difference between feeding his family and watching his livelihood rot by the roadside. "This road is our lifeline," Umar told Neptune Prime. "It is the only channel through which we move millet, maize, and vegetables from our farms to markets in Damaturu, Biu, and beyond. But now, what should take two hours takes half a day."

Umar explained that the road serves as a critical logistics corridor linking five states; Yobe, Borno, Gombe, Adamawa, and Taraba,



Bad road

facilitating the movement of agricultural produce from rural farming communities to urban consumption centres. "We have been managing this road for 20 years because we have no choice. But managing is not living. If this road dies, we die with it," he said. Commercial drivers, who form the backbone of the informal transport system in the region, explained that they are caught between the need to earn a living and the reality of watching their vehicles, often their only assets, break down beyond repair.

Ali Hassan, who has driven on the Damaturu-Biu route for six years, described the road

as a "vehicle killer." "The potholes are not just holes, they are craters. They swallow tyres, destroy shock absorbers, and break axles," Hassan said. "I spend more time repairing my vehicle than driving it. Some of my colleagues have abandoned the trade entirely because they cannot afford the maintenance costs." Abdullahi Hussaini, another driver with seven years' experience on the Biu–Buni-Yadi–Damaturu route, said the economic toll extends beyond drivers to the passengers and communities they serve.

"This is not just about our livelihood. It is about the thousands of people who depend on us to move their goods, visit their families, access hospitals, and attend schools. When

the road fails, everything fails," Hussaini said.

Adama Ibrahim, a passenger travelling from Maiduguri-Damaturu to Gombe, said she is aware of the risks but has no viable alternative.

"The longer route is safer, yes. But it is also more expensive and not everyone can afford it. For many of us, this broken road is the only road," she said.

Her words highlight a painful reality, for ordinary citizens in the North East, poverty and poor infrastructure have created a trap from which there is no easy escape.

Security challenges along the road remain grave, with military sources confirming daily patrols to clear improvised explosive devices (IEDs) buried by insurgents.

Troops neutralise terrorists in Borno, rescue victims



Troops

The Nigerian Army says its troops have killed 16 ISWAP terrorists during an offensive against insurgents in the Komala axis of Konduga LGA in Borno State.

The soldiers, under the North-East Joint Task Force Operation HADIN KAI (OPHK), also rescued 11 kidnap victims along the Buratai-Kamuya road and the Chibok–Damboa axis of the state.

The development was shared in a statement issued by Sani Uba, the media information officer of the North-East Joint Task Force, and shared on the army's X page.

He said the troops "have significantly degraded terrorist capabilities, disrupted their logistics, and reaffirmed OPHK's unwavering commitment to dismantling terrorist networks across the North East region". Speaking about the operation, Uba said ISWAP terrorists had, on February 5, 2026, a few minutes before midnight, carried out "a failed attack" on a forward operating base (FOB) in Auno. The assault was thwarted with "disciplined firepower and tactical precision". On February 9, 2026, troops, alongside members of the civilian Joint

Task Force, launched "a bold counter-offensive" along the Komala axis in Konduga LGA. "The troops engaged the retreating terrorists up to the Gidan Kaji axis, neutralising sixteen (16) terrorists and forcing scores to flee in disarray with severe injuries. Equally, troops recovered over twenty (20) bicycles, a large cache of logistic items, weapons, and other supplies critical to terrorist operations," the statement added. "In a further blow to terrorist logistics nodes, troops arrested suspected ISWAP logistics suppliers conveying a large

quantity of drugs meant for terrorists around the Bukarti axis same day."

Uba also said on the same day, troops foiled a terrorist kidnap attempt and rescued the victims. "After detection of terrorist activities, troops swiftly pursued, compelling the terrorists to abandon their victims and withdraw into the bushes. Two (2) victims, Malam Idris Adamu and Malam Muhammadu Safiyanu, were rescued and safely reunited with families in Buratai," he said.

"Furthermore, in response to a distress call along the Chibok–Damboa axis on 9 February 2026, troops rescued nine kidnapped victims successfully."

The statement said the successes "underscore OPHK's continued commitment in support of humanitarian efforts and protection of civilians".

Gombe trains 420 committee members on effective management of public schools

The Gombe State Government, through the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), has trained 420 School-based Management Committee (SBMC) members to strengthen community participation, accountability and grassroots governance in public basic schools.

Speaking during a tour of the four-day capacity-building programme in Gombe Central, the director of Social Mobilisation, SUBEB Gombe, Mohammed Saje Daud, said the goal is to ensure that every public school has a functional committee capable of supporting effective school management.

The training is the final phase of the programme, marking the completion of the statewide exercise, which has moved through Gombe North and Gombe South Senatorial zones.

"This is the final phase of the training. Having already conducted two similar sessions in other senatorial districts. By the end of this training, God willing, we will achieve our target. From what we have seen here, the participants are people of integrity, elders in their communities, ready to learn and ready to cascade the training to others who could not attend," he said.

The director noted that a key component of the programme is the step-down training model, which requires participants to return to their communities and train other SBMC members not physically present at the workshop. "We expect them to organise in-house training when they return to their schools so that everyone will be on the same page," he said.

He attributed the successful rollout of the programme to the consistent payment of counterpart funding by the state government.



Public school

CUSTOMS

BY ABDULLAHI HARUNA

Customs commended for achievements in revenue generation, enforcement



Customs personnel

Good Governance and Accountability Watchdogs have commended the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS) for what they described as historic achievements in revenue generation and enforcement, following the Service's record of over 7.2 trillion revenue in 2025.

Addressing a press conference, the group, led by its Coordinator, Comrade Zakari Hashim said the figure represents the highest revenue performance in the history of the NCS and one of the most significant across Africa, attributing the feat to

leadership reforms, innovation, and improved institutional discipline.

The watchdogs praised the Comptroller-General of Customs, Bashir Adewale Adeniyi, for what they called visionary and reform-driven leadership, noting that the Service has become more transparent, accountable, and result-oriented under his watch. According to the group, the performance of the Customs Service aligns with the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, which places emphasis on improved governance, enhanced security,

and revenue mobilisation to support national development. They also highlighted the impact of the Customs Management System (CMS), known as B'Odogwu, describing it as a major digital reform that has strengthened monitoring, blocked revenue leakages, improved compliance, and reduced corruption within the Service. "The implementation of the CMS has significantly enhanced transparency and efficiency in public revenue administration," the group said.

Beyond revenue generation,

the Tin Can Island Area Command of the NCS was commended for its operational success in intercepting 2,366 packs of Cannabis Indica, valued at over 4.7 billion.

They praised the professionalism of Customs officers and the seamless collaboration with the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), to which the seized narcotics were handed over for further investigation.

The group said the seizure underscores the Service's commitment to combating drug trafficking, transnational

crime, and economic sabotage, while safeguarding public health and national security. Special commendation was also extended to officers and men of the Tin Can Island Command for their role in implementing the Comptroller-General's reform agenda, noting the strategic importance of the command in trade facilitation, port security, and revenue mobilisation.

They further acknowledged ongoing nationwide efforts by the NCS to curb smuggling, strengthen border security, and prevent the importation of prohibited and substandard

goods, actions they said continue to protect local industries and the economy.

Expressing confidence in the leadership of the current Customs management, the group said it expects even stronger performance in 2026 and pledged its continued support for reform-oriented and innovation-driven policies of the Service.

Hashim called on citizens and stakeholders to support the operations of the Nigerian Customs Service in the interest of economic stability, national security, and institutional integrity.

Comptroller-General of Customs commissions sports facility in Lagos

The Western Marine Command of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), Lagos, has reaffirmed its commitment to community engagement and youth empowerment with the commissioning of the Wale Adeniyi Sports Arena (WASA) in Ibafo, Lagos.

The facility, executed as a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative of the Command, was formally inaugurated by the Comptroller-General of Customs (CGC), Dr Bashir Adewale Adeniyi, who described the project as a strategic investment in preventive security and sustainable peace.

Addressing officers, community leaders, and other stakeholders at the ceremony, Adeniyi said the arena represents far more than a recreational centre.

"This facility, which includes a football pitch, basketball court, and table tennis board, is a symbol of our commitment to community partnership, youth empowerment, and preventive security.

"Sustainable security cannot rely

on enforcement alone; it must be built on inclusion, opportunity, and positive engagement," he stated.

The CGC emphasised that sports serve as a powerful tool for promoting discipline, unity, and leadership development, noting that structured recreational platforms for young people help reduce exposure to crime, drug abuse, and other social vices.

"When we create platforms that inspire young people, we reduce vulnerabilities and strengthen our communities. Customs is not only about revenue generation and border protection; it is also about responsible corporate citizenship and national development," Adeniyi added before formally declaring the arena open.

Earlier in his welcome address, the Controller of the Western Marine Command, P.N. Ntadi, said the project reflects the Service's belief that security must combine enforcement with prevention.

"Today is not merely about unveiling a sports facility. It is about purpose. It is about people.

It is about investing in peace and preserving a legacy of service," Ntadi said.

He explained that the arena is named in honour of Wale Adeniyi, a former National Public Relations Officer of the Nigeria Customs Service, in recognition of his professionalism, grassroots engagement, and dedication to duty.

According to Ntadi, naming the facility after Adeniyi is intended to immortalise exemplary service and inspire younger officers and community members alike.

He added that the initiative is designed to take youths off the streets and channel their energy into constructive activities, stressing that sports instil discipline, teamwork, resilience, and respect for rules and values that align with the ethos of the Nigeria Customs Service.

With the commissioning of WASA, the NCS has signalled a broader approach to security, one that combines border protection with youth engagement and community development.



CGC Adeniyi during the commissioning ceremony.

PRIME PHOTOS

BY MERCY ADAJE
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Yobe State Governor Mai Mala Buni has commissioned a world-class Biomedical Science Research and Training Centre (BioRTC) with equipment worth 10billion Naira. The facility is aimed at strengthening healthcare and scientific research in Yobe State.



A photograph of General Yakubu Gowon test-driving the first car to roll off the Peugeot Automobile Nigeria assembly plant, PAN 1, in Kakuri, Kaduna, 1974 - 1975.



Nafisat Olanike Balogun becomes the first female Nigerian Customs pilot. From working as a flight operations officer and cabin crew member to becoming the first female Customs pilot. She earned her pilot wings in December 2024, marking a historic milestone in the Custom Service. Her story stands as a symbol of progress for women in aviation and security across Africa.



A photograph of Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto and Premier of Northern Nigeria, alongside the Emir of Zazzau, Malam Muhammadu Aminu, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations during an official diplomatic engagement.

PRIME10MENT

BY MERCY ADAJE
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I make films for intellectual audiences — Nigerian filmmaker Kunle Afolayan

Nigerian filmmaker Kunle Afolayan has sparked fresh debate within the film industry after declaring that his movies are primarily made for “intellectuals,” a comment he shared on Instagram amid criticism over his newly released Anikulapo series.

The award-winning director made the statement while addressing reactions to the project, which has drawn mixed reviews from online audiences.

Some viewers praised the series for its cultural depth and layered storytelling, while others argued that its pacing and themes may not appeal to mainstream tastes. According to Afolayan, his approach to filmmaking has always centred on stories that challenge the mind rather than simply chasing trends.

He noted that feedback from scholars, critics and viewers who appreciate deeper narratives continues to influence the direction of his work.

Known for titles such as October 1, Citation, Anikulapo and Ijobon, the filmmaker has built a reputation for visually detailed productions that blend history, culture and social commentary.

Industry observers say his latest remarks reflect a long-standing commitment to cinematic storytelling that prioritises artistic depth.

His comments have since divided opinion across social media. Supporters argue that Nollywood needs filmmakers who push creative boundaries and elevate cultural storytelling.

At the same time, critics believe positioning films as for intellectuals could alienate a wider audience that drives the industry’s commercial success.



Afolayan

Britney Spears secures \$200 million deal in sale of entire music catalogue



Spears

Pop icon Britney Spears has sold the rights to her entire music catalogue in a deal reportedly worth about \$200 million (£146 million), according to media reports.

The 44-year-old singer is said to have finalised the agreement with independent music

publisher Primary Wave on December 30.

However, details of the transaction, including the exact value, have not been publicly disclosed. Spears, one of the world’s best-selling female artists, rose to global fame with chart-topping hits such as ‘Baby One More Time’,

‘Oops!... I Did It Again’, ‘Toxic’, and ‘Gimme More’.

Since her debut in 1999, she has released nine studio albums and sold more than 150 million records worldwide.

In January 2024, the Grammy Award-winning singer said she would “never return to the music industry.”

Her most recent musical release was a 2022 duet with British music legend Elton John.

Primary Wave, founded two decades ago by music executive Lawrence

Mestel, has built a reputation for acquiring high-profile music assets. The company previously secured rights linked to the estates of The

Notorious B.I.G., Prince and Whitney Houston. Spears now joins a growing list of major artists who have recently sold their music catalogues.

Bruce Springsteen sold his catalogue to Sony in 2021 in a deal valued at \$500 million, while Justin Bieber reportedly struck a \$200 million agreement with Hipgnosis Songs

Capital in 2023. Other artists, including Justin Timberlake and Shakira, have also entered similar deals. The sale comes amid significant personal milestones for Spears. In 2021, she successfully ended a 13-year conservatorship that placed her personal and financial affairs under the control of her father. The legal arrangement had sparked widespread public debate and the global #FreeBritney movement. In 2023, Spears released her memoir, ‘The Woman in Me,’ detailing her experiences under conservatorship and her journey toward independence. Her ex-husband, Kevin Federline, also published a memoir titled ‘You Thought You Knew’ at the end of 2025. The acquisition marks another major addition to Primary Wave’s expanding portfolio and underscores a continuing trend of legacy artists monetising their music catalogues in high-value deals.

Family debunks rumours of legendary actor Pete Edochie’s death

The internet was recently thrown into a frenzy following rumours on social media alleging that veteran Nollywood actor Pete Edochie had passed away.

However, the legendary actor’s family has swiftly debunked the viral claims. Speaking on behalf of the family, Pete’s eldest son, Leo Edochie, addressed the rumours in a video posted on his Instagram page, stating, “The news is a lie from the pit of hell.”

“I’ve been receiving text messages and calls over the nonsense post by some people that our father, Chief Pete Edochie, is dead. It is a lie from the pit of hell.”

“Our father is alive, hale and hearty. And if you wish someone dead, two things usually happen.



Edochie

NEPTUNE PRIME BUSINESS

BY FATIMA MOHAMMED TYANDE
(Student at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Faculty of Law)

MARKET SURVEY



Prices of essential food items fluctuate in Zaria markets

The prices of major grains are drastically reducing at the beginning of 2026 in many parts of the country. The costs of food items that are daily necessities in many Nigerian homes like beans, rice, maize, flour, etc, have decreased in the past few weeks.

But in Zaria, Kaduna State, prices of food items have been fluctuating since the start of 2026. According to a recent market survey, a popular rice brand commonly used in Zaria, known as Gerawa, has witnessed a slight increase in price.

Malam Bello, a small shop owner and farmer, said the price which was formerly N53,000 had increased to N54,000.

Another popular rice brand found in the market, the Thailand imported rice, which was once sold at the range of N57,000 now goes for N64,000.

The trader said the Nigerian local rice which was once sold at N27,000 per bag is now being sold at the range of N35,000.

He attributed the recent development to the fact that Zaria is not a grain-producing area. However, Zaria is popularly known for cheap vegetables like tomatoes, bell pepper, habanero Pepper, onions, etc.

Malam Bello further expressed concerns towards the increase in the costs of those vegetables as well. He said "In our farm, we once

sold a basket of habanero pepper at 1000 naira. We sold a large bag of it at 8000 naira. But now the price has increased to 15,000 naira. Not to talk of tomatoes and especially onions.

He said the reason for the unexpected high prices is due to the hike in petroleum prices. Petroleum was sold at 830 per liter but now it's being sold at 940 per litre.

The high prices of food items in Nigeria have been a lingering concern for the masses. Experts have emphasised the importance of affordable food, being a daily requirement for human survival. They condemn the scenario where food becomes an overpriced luxury for the common man and low-



income earners. Traders, students, and civil servants are lamenting the high costs of eating healthy meals in Nigeria. Customers have expressed frustration over fluctuating prices daily, they keep wondering whether the prices are

declining or increasing. However, customers have confirmed that prices are no longer as high as they used to be during the peak of fuel subsidy removal. Despite the shallow relief, many Nigerian households struggle to afford decent

meals daily. Consumers urged governments at all levels to step up with initiatives and agricultural projects that will help ease the burdens on citizens and provide a lasting solution to the food crisis in the country.

MILESTONE

BY TAWHEED YAKUB

Green Growth CEO, Maryam Abdulmalik, appointed to National FarmerMoni Technical Working Group

Green Growth International Limited has announced the appointment of its Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Maryam Abdulmalik, as a Member of the FarmerMoni Technical Working Group (TWG) under the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP) of the National Social Investment Programme Agency (NSIPA).

The Technical Working Group provides strategic direction, technical guidance, and policy support for the implementation of the FarmerMoni Programme — a flagship federal initiative designed to expand financial access for smallholder farmers, stimulate rural enterprise, and strengthen agricultural productivity across Nigeria.

Maryam Abdulmalik's appointment is a recognition of her leadership in agribusiness development, climate-smart agriculture, enterprise-based farmer support systems, and inclusive economic growth.

Under her leadership, Green Growth International has continued to champion scalable models that empower farmers, women, and youth while promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

Commenting on the appointment, Abdulmalik stated: "This opportunity represents both a privilege and a responsibility to contribute to national efforts aimed at strengthening farmer resilience, improving access to finance, and building a more inclusive agricultural economy. Green Growth International remains

committed to supporting initiatives that create measurable and lasting impact across rural communities."

Her inclusion in the TWG further reinforces Green Growth International Limited's emergence as a trusted institutional partner in Nigeria's agricultural transformation agenda and positions the organisation within high-level policy and implementation conversations shaping the future of farmer financing.

Abdulmalik will also attend the official flag-off ceremony of the 2026 Dry/Wet Season Farming Programme in Abuja, marking the nationwide commencement of programme activities.

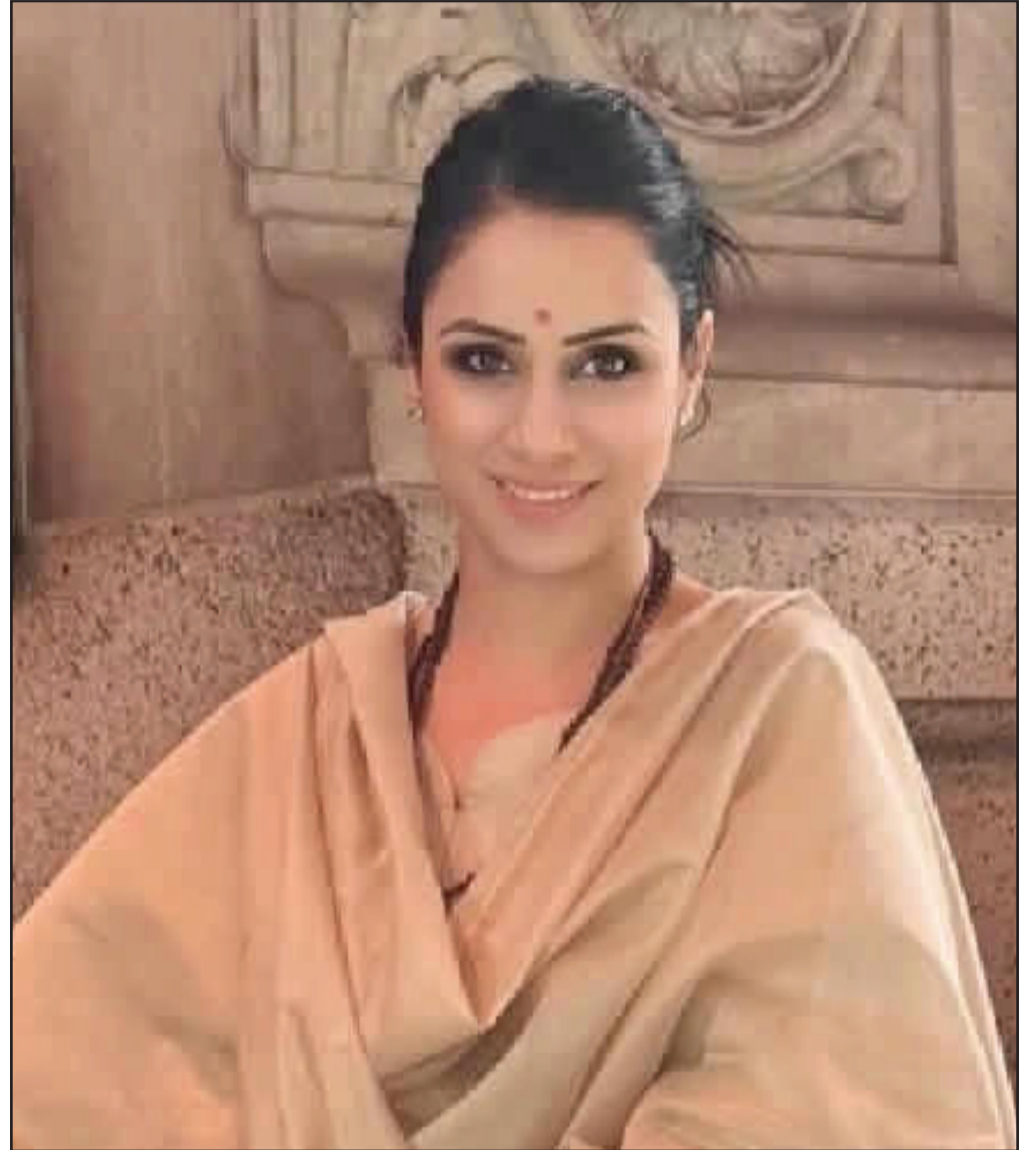
About Green Growth International Limited

Green Growth International Limited is an agribusiness and enterprise development company focused on commodity systems, climate resilience, farmer capacity building, and sustainable economic empowerment.

The organisation works with public and private sector partners to design and implement scalable solutions that enhance productivity, expand opportunity, and strengthen food systems.

Media Contact:

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Email: greengrowthagribusiness@gmail.com



Nagi

Female educator wins \$1 million Global Teacher Prize award

An Indian teacher, Rouble Nagi, has won the \$1 million Global Teacher Prize. She was announced the winner at the World Government Summit in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, an annual event that attracts leaders from across the globe, held on Thursday.

The GEMS Education Global Teacher Prize is a Varkey Foundation initiative organised in collaboration with UNESCO. Now in its tenth year, it recognises exceptional teachers who have made an outstanding contribution to the profession.

Rouble defeated nine others on the top 10 final shortlist, including Adeola Akinsulure (Nigeria), Alfonso Filippone (Italy), Ana Revuelta (Spain), and Colleen O'Rourke (Australia). Other finalists were Ewa Drobek (Poland), Gloria Cisneros (Argentina), Jasmyn Wright (United States), Joshue Paternina (Colombia), and Timothy Stiven (USA).

Starting with a project in a Mumbai slum, Rouble is renowned for transforming neglected walls into hundreds of vibrant, open-air learning centres. For over two decades, her Rouble Nagi Art Foundation has established more than 800 learning centres across India, giving children who never attended school the chance to access structured learning.

She also paints murals that teach literacy, science, mathematics, history, hygiene, environmental awareness, and social responsibility. She travels across the country to work directly with children and mentor teachers, recruiting and training more than 600 volunteer and paid educators.

Accepting the award, Rouble said the prize was an honour for herself and for India. She recalled starting 24 years ago with 30 children in a small workshop and now reaching over a million children. "I think every step has just motivated me, inspired me to take every child in India to school," she said.

"When I was a child, it was my dream to see every child in school, and now, fulfilling that for as many as we can reach is a very humbling experience."

She plans to use the prize money to expand RNAF, including improving infrastructure, training local educators, and creating a 'Skilling Institute' offering vocational courses and digital literacy programmes.

Rouble joins a list of previous winners that includes Mansour Al Mansour (Saudi Arabia), Sister Zeph (Pakistan), Keisha Thorpe (United States), Ranjitsinh Disale (India), Peter Tabichi (Kenya), Andria Zafirakou (United Kingdom), Maggie MacDonnell (Canada), Hanan Al Hroub (Palestine), and Nancie Atwell (United States).

Akinsulure, the only African on the top ten, expressed gratitude at being ranked among the world's best teachers from more than 5,000 applicants. The 41-year-old teaches Biology at Omole Senior Grammar School, Ikeja, Lagos.

Sunny Varkey, founder of the Global Teacher Prize, GEMS Education, and the Varkey Foundation, described Rouble's work as a reminder that "teachers are the most powerful force for progress in our world."

He said, "Rouble Nagi represents the very best of teaching – courage, creativity, compassion, and an unwavering belief in every child's potential. By bringing education to the most marginalised communities, she has not only changed individual lives but strengthened families and communities."

He added, "Her teaching model addresses the profound challenges of India's urban slums, including poverty, irregular attendance, inadequate infrastructure, and social barriers such as child labour and early marriage. By offering flexible schedules, vocational skills, and creative learning using recycled materials, she ensures children gain confidence, critical thinking, and academic success. Her programmes have reduced dropout rates by over 50 per cent, improved literacy and numeracy, and transformed community attitudes toward education."



Abdulmalik

HERITAGE

BY TAWHEED YAKUB

The Mada Tribe: Exploring the rocky hill dwellers and skilled farmers of Nasarawa State

The Mada people of Nigeria are a culturally vibrant and historically rooted ethnic group, known for their strong communal bonds, moral discipline, and rich ancestral heritage preserved across generations. Renowned for resilience, integrity, and a deep respect for tradition, the Mada have sustained their cultural identity despite colonial administration, religious change, urban migration, and the influence of modern civilisation.

They are predominantly found in Nasarawa State, particularly in Akwanga, Kokona, Nasarawa Eggon, and neighbouring communities, occupying a landscape characterised by rocky hills, savannah vegetation, and fertile farmlands.

These geographical features have influenced their farming system, settlement patterns, defensive strategies in earlier times, and collective lifestyle.

Over time, the Mada people have played a significant role in the social, political, and economic development of the Middle Belt, preserving values that emphasise respect for elders, communal cooperation, accountability, and unity.

Historical Background and Origin

Mada history is largely preserved through oral tradition, clan narratives, ancestral lineage accounts,



and folklore passed down by elders.

Linguistically, the Mada language belongs to the Niger-Congo language family and shares historical and cultural ties with neighbouring Middle Belt ethnic groups.

Traditionally, the Mada people lived in hilltop and clustered settlements organised around extended families and clans. These settlements offered protection in times of inter-tribal conflict and strengthened cooperation in farming, defence, and social life.

The Mada maintained relationships with neighbouring groups such as the Eggon, Gwandara, Hausa, and Tiv through trade, intermarriage, and cultural exchange, while maintaining a distinct identity.

Leadership was structured around traditional rulers, clan heads, and councils of elders who oversaw land administration, dispute



resolution, marriage arrangements, religious rites, and community welfare.

Although colonial rule altered aspects of governance, traditional institutions remain respected and influential within Mada communities today.

Culture and Tradition

Mada culture is strongly communal and structured

around family and clan relationships. Social roles are clearly defined, with elders serving as custodians of wisdom and youth expected to uphold moral standards and communal responsibility. Communal labour, particularly during farming seasons and house construction, is a key feature of Mada society. Cooperation

and solidarity are highly valued.

The Mada language remains central to identity, expressed through proverbs, folktales, praise poetry, songs, and ritual communication.

Oral tradition serves as a vehicle for transmitting ethics, bravery, honesty, and respect for authority. Today, Christianity is predominant among the Mada, alongside Islam and traces of indigenous spiritual beliefs. While religion has influenced social life, many cultural practices continue to coexist with modern faith traditions.

Traditional music, drumming, dance performances, and symbolic attire remain important during festivals and ceremonies, reinforcing unity and moral upbringing.

Marriage Customs

Marriage among the Mada is regarded as a sacred covenant that unites not only a man and woman but also their extended families and clans.

The marriage process typically involves formal family introductions, negotiations conducted by elders, agreement on bride price (which may include livestock, farm produce, or symbolic items), blessings, and moral instruction to the couple.

Ceremonies are marked by traditional music, dance, feasting, and community participation.

While polygamy existed traditionally, religious and economic changes have reduced its prevalence. Modern Mada marriages often combine traditional rites with Christian, Islamic, or civil wedding ceremonies, reflecting adaptation without total abandonment of heritage.

Socio-Economic Life

Agriculture remains central to the Mada way of life. The people cultivate crops such as yams, millet, guinea corn, maize, cassava, rice, and

vegetables.

Animal husbandry, petty trading, craftsmanship, and local industries have historically supported livelihoods.

In contemporary times, Mada men and women are actively engaged in education, civil service, business, healthcare, politics, and other professional fields, contributing meaningfully to Nasarawa State and Nigeria while preserving cultural connections.

Modern Times

Like many indigenous communities, the Mada face challenges including youth migration to urban centres, gradual language decline, economic pressures, land disputes, and cultural transformation.

However, cultural associations, traditional councils, churches, mosques, and community festivals continue to promote Mada heritage. Efforts to document oral history and encourage the use of the Mada language among younger generations are ongoing, reflecting a determination to sustain identity amid change.

Ceremonies and Cultural Practices

Mada ceremonies symbolise unity, spirituality, and ancestral respect.

Important events include harvest festivals, naming ceremonies, marriage rites, funerals, communal labour gatherings, and elder-led reconciliation meetings.

These cultural practices reinforce values such as diligence, respect, courage, social harmony, and collective responsibility.

From the rocky hills of Akwanga and surrounding communities to urban centres across Nigeria, the Mada people continue to demonstrate that tradition and modernity can coexist, sustaining a proud legacy built on resilience, unity, and cultural depth.



HISTORICITI

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



Tripoli, Libya: An ancient city shaped by religion, power, and enduring civilisation

Tripoli is an ancient city with an echo of culture. It carries stories that live across its long-lasting history. With many places of heritage, it bears the footprints of colonisation, Islamic architecture, and centuries of civilisation. Location and Population Tripoli, the capital and largest city of Libya, lies on the Mediterranean coast in the country's northwest.

With a population of about 1.2 million people, it serves as Libya's political, cultural, and economic centre.
Ancient Echoes

The Romans left their mark with the Arch of Marcus Aurelius and the grand theatre that once entertained thousands. These monuments remind readers of Tripoli's role as a vital Mediterranean hub.

Later, Islamic dynasties and Uthman rulers added mosques and palaces, while Italian colonisers introduced European-style buildings, weaving together a mosaic of influences that still define the city today.

Landmarks of Legacy
Walking through Tripoli, the past rises from its stones. The Red Castle, a fortress by the sea,

embodies centuries of defence and heritage. The Gurgi Mosque and Karamanli Mosque reflect Uthman artistry and devotion, while the Tripoli Cathedral, built during Italian rule, stands as a reminder of colonial influence and cultural diversity.

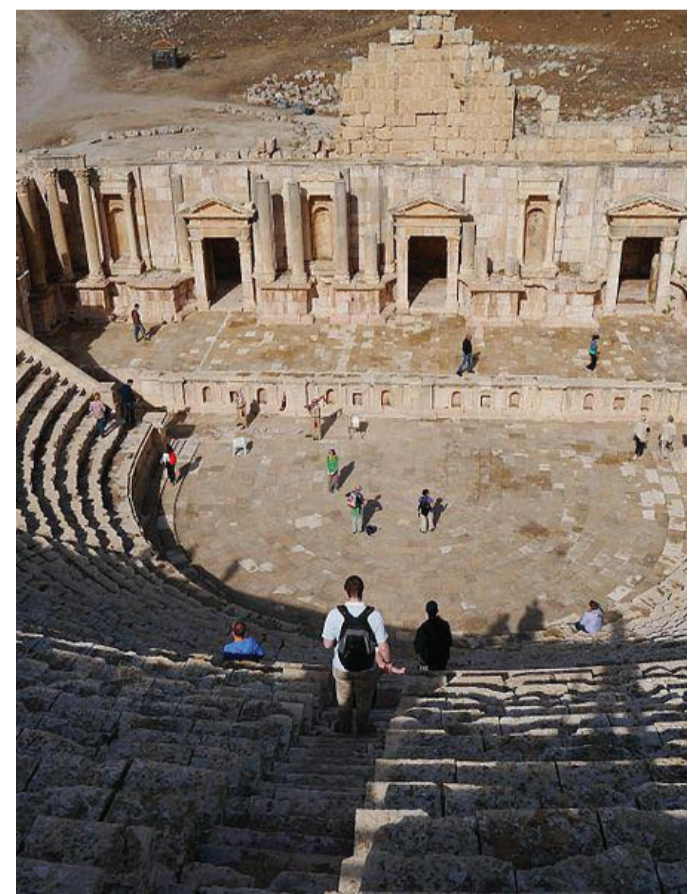
The Living Medina
The Medina, or Old Town,

is a living museum of winding streets, vibrant bazaars, and Uthman-era houses. Here, the scent of spices mingles with the hum of daily life. The National Museum of Libya, housed in the Red Castle, preserves artefacts from Roman, Greek, and Islamic civilisations, while the bustling Souq al-Jum'a offers textiles, crafts, and local produce that capture the spirit of Libyan tradition.

The Gaddafi Era
Tripoli's modern identity

is inseparable from Muammar Gaddafi, who ruled Libya for over four decades. His rise to power in 1969 turned the city into the political stage of his regime. Green Square became the site of his fiery speeches and military parades, while monuments and government buildings reflected his ideology.

A City Shaped by Time
Today, Tripoli stands as a place where Roman arches whisper of empire, Uthman mosques echo with faith, and modern squares recall political drama. For travellers, it offers architectural wonders, cultural experiences, and a deeper understanding of Libya's journey through time.



ROOTS

BY GIFT LUCKSON
GiftLuckson@neptuneprime.com.ng

The legacy of Eliza Moore, one of America's last survivors of slavery

Eliza Moore (June 27, 1843 – January 21, 1948) was one of the last living African Americans proven to have been born into slavery in the United States.

Lineage

Her father's name was Judge Moore and Eliza was his only child, whom he had in his old age. Moore was born a slave in Montgomery County, Alabama, in 1843. She is considered by many historians as the last certifiable African American ex-slave in America. Moore is the only person to date whose claim can be supported due to the availability of adequate documentation.

Enslavers

During the American Civil War, Moore was reportedly enslaved by Dr Taylor, according to B. E. Bolser of Mt. Meigs, Alabama. She married Asbury Moore, who was also an enslaved person, and they went to the Gilchrist Place in Cordova, Alabama, together as sharecroppers after the war. Eliza and Asbury had two children together, Asbury died in 1943 and was also said to be more than 100 years old. Eliza died five years after her husband's death.

Death in Freedom

It is reported that Eliza Moore had been living on Gilchrist Place for about 65 or 70

years as a free woman at the time of her death in 1948.

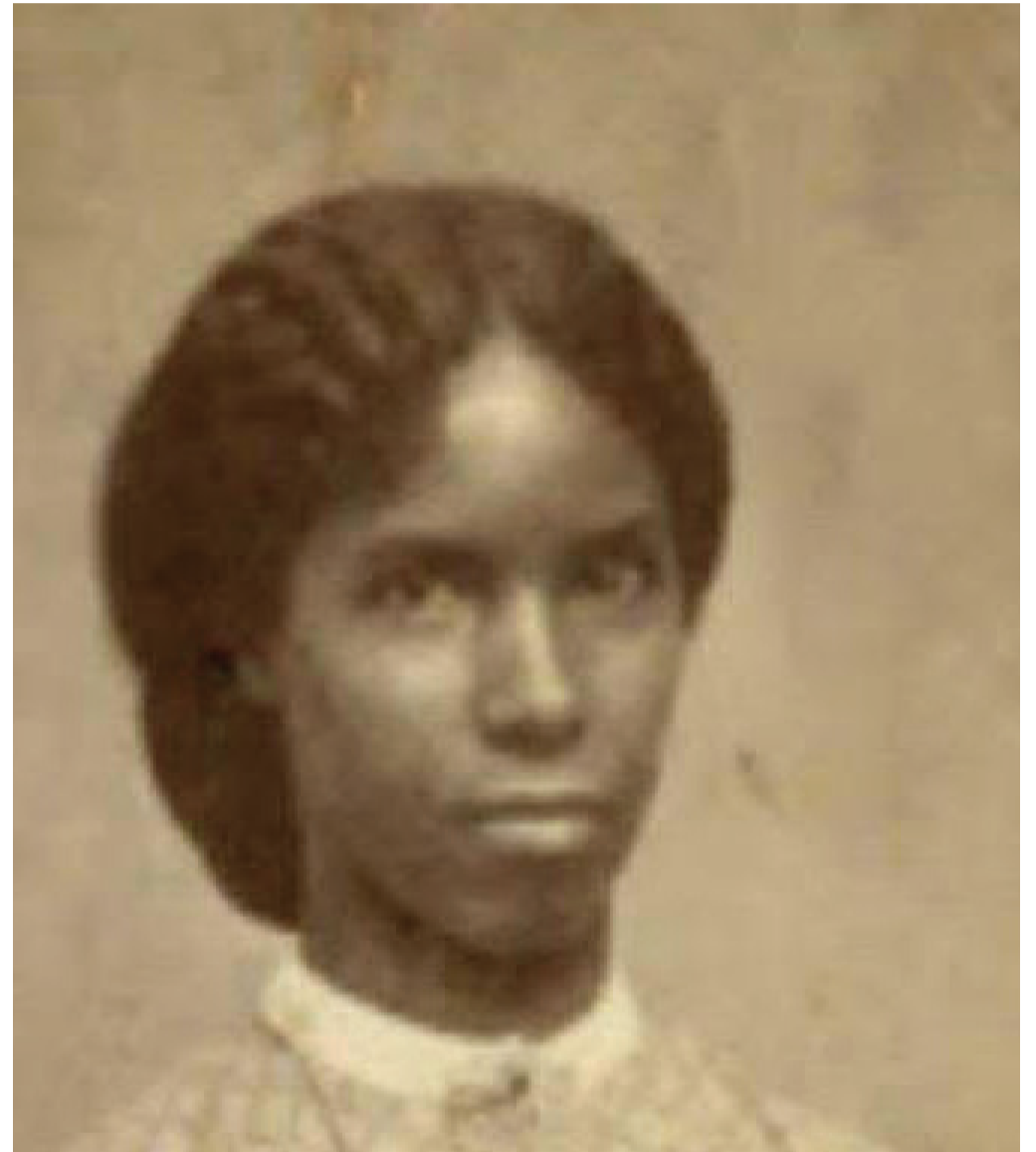
Eliza Moore died at the age of 104 on January 21, 1948, at a home of a Charlie Brown Jr. on the Gilchrist Place in Montgomery County.

Slavery in the United States

The legal institution of human chattel slavery, comprising the enslavement primarily of Africans and African Americans, was prevalent in the United States of America from its founding in 1776 until 1865, predominantly in the South. Slavery was found throughout European colonisation in the Americas. From 1526, during the early colonial period, it was practised in what became Britain's colonies, including the Thirteen Colonies that formed the United States.

Under the law, children were born into slavery, and an enslaved person was treated as property that could be bought, sold, or given away. Slavery persisted in about half of U.S. states until abolition in 1865, and issues concerning slavery seeped into every aspect of national politics, economics, and social customs.

In the decades following the end of Reconstruction in 1877, many of slavery's economic and social functions were continued through segregation, sharecropping, and convict leasing. Involuntary servitude as a punishment for crime remains legal.



THIS LIFE!

BY ASMA'U YAHAYA MUSTAPHA (Student at Al-Qalam University, Katsina)

Nigeria has undergone negative changes from what it once was — Senior Lecturer, Dr Safana



Dr Safana

In a world where success often comes with compromise, Dr Suleiman Ibrahim Safana, a senior lecturer in the English Department at Al-Qalam University, stands out as a beacon of integrity, dedication, and

achievement.

Dr Safana, a PhD holder, shared his inspiring journey with Neptune Prime, reflecting on his life, career, and perspectives on Nigeria. He attended primary and secondary schools in Zaria,

Kaduna State, before moving on to Isa Kaita College of Education, where he graduated with a first-class NCE in English Geography. He later earned his B. A in English, followed by an M.A and a PhD at Bayero

University, Kano. Today, he dedicates himself to academic excellence at Al-Qalam University, nurturing the next generation of scholars. While reflecting on the nation's transformations, Dr Safana noted, "The

Nigeria we knew yesterday is not the same as what we see today, everything has changed, and unfortunately, many of these changes are negative. Things have been turned upside down."

Yet, amidst challenges, his message to young Nigerians remains clear and unwavering: integrity and mindset are key.

"Young people should change their mindset. They should be good Nigerians, maintain their integrity, and work toward creating a better environment for future generations," he advised.

Dr Safana also offered encouragement to students pursuing their dreams. "You are here as a student, doing what is expected of you. Keep it up," he said.

His words underscore the value of hard work, perseverance, and ethical conduct as the foundation for personal and national growth.

Through his journey, Dr Safana exemplifies the power of dedication, continuous learning, and moral fortitude. His story serves as a reminder that achievement is not measured merely by titles or degrees, but by the positive impact one leaves on society.

Neptune Prime: Please can you introduce yourself?

Dr Safana: My name is Suleiman Ibrahim Safana from the English Department here at Al-Qalam University. I am a PhD holder and a senior lecturer.

Neptune Prime: Can you briefly tell us about your life journey and academic career?

Dr Safana: I want to encourage students like you to keep doing what is expected of you. From what I know, you are on the right path, and I advise you to remain consistent and focused.

Neptune Prime: Is there anything else you would like to share?

Dr Safana: I want to encourage students like you to keep doing what is expected of you. From what I know, you are on the right path, and I advise you to remain consistent and focused.

Dr Safana: Like every other person, I attended primary and secondary school. I obtained a First Class NCE in English and Geography from Isa Kaita College of Education. I later earned my B. A in English, my M.A, and my PhD from Bayero University, Kano. I am currently a full-time academic at Al-Qalam University.

Neptune Prime: How would you describe Nigeria when you were younger compared to what it is today?

Dr Safana: The Nigeria we knew in the past is not the same Nigeria we are experiencing today. Everything has changed and, unfortunately, many of these changes are negative rather than positive.

Neptune Prime: What advice would you give to young Nigerians today?

Dr Safana: Young people need to change their mindset. What is happening in the country today is not encouraging, but they should remain good Nigerians, maintain their integrity, and work towards creating a better environment and a better nation for future generations.

Neptune Prime: Is there anything else you would like to share?

Dr Safana: I want to encourage students like you to keep doing what is expected of you. From what I know, you are on the right path, and I advise you to remain consistent and focused.

Young people should change their mindset. They should be good Nigerians, maintain their integrity, and work toward creating a better environment for future generations



HUMANIST

BY JAMEEL LAWAN YAKASAI



“We drink and bathe in poisoned water daily,” villagers lament as gas leak contaminates river

For over one year, residents of Oshie and neighbouring Akinima communities in Rivers State have battled the impact of a gas leak from an Oando underwater pipeline that has contaminated their only source of water.

Yet daily life continues along the riverbank: children bathe and wash kitchen utensils; women soak cassava for fufu; fishermen cast their nets — all in what residents fear may be slowly poisoning them.

“We are really worried. After drinking the water, both children and adults feel sick. This is our experience. We are resorting to buying sachet water now. Ordinarily, water from the river was blessed water which God gave us. But now we cannot drink it.” Those were the painful words of 59-year-old Mrs Ngozi

Ididie, an indigene of Oshie community in Ahoada West Local Government Area of Rivers State, as she stood helplessly by the Orashi River — the same river that once sustained her people.

A recent visit to the riverside enclave revealed a disturbing scene that threatens the lives of thousands of residents. Pipes and excavated areas were observed, particularly on the Oshie side, suggesting that fresh pipelines may be laid or old ones replaced. Some old pipelines were also seen lying on the surface, unburied.

At a point about 80 metres from the bank, the river bubbles continuously — a visible sign of the leak beneath. A thin film of hydrocarbon floats on the surface, even as sacks of fermenting cassava sit half-

submerged at the waterfront. The communities’ repeated pleas, residents lamented, appear to have fallen on deaf ears, with the oil company allegedly unresponsive to their plight. For over one year, the leakage has continued to pollute the river, leading to reported cases of gastroenteritis, skin rashes, and other health challenges among the people.

The Paramount Ruler of Oshie community, His Royal Highness Patrick Miller, expressed deep frustration over what he described as prolonged neglect.

He said: “The gas leakage in the river has been there for over a year. We informed the Nigerian Agip Oil Company when they were in charge. And now Oando is on board. Nothing has been done. This

gas has been bubbling, leaking into our water.

“The hazards we are facing are many. The Orashi River is our only source of drinking water. Our women soak cassava in that water for our survival. As they pound the cassava, it used to be very white. But since this incident, when they soak and pound it, it becomes black and useless.

“That’s where we fish for our livelihood. Our fishermen don’t catch fish as they used to before. Once in a while, you see dead fish floating on the river. This thing is affecting our livelihood. Our health is affected; we have talked, and nobody cares to listen to us. He continued: “There have been a lot of complaints about gastroenteritis; people complain of vomiting and stooling unexpectedly.

We don’t know where it is coming from. There are also many cases of skin rashes in my community, which were not common before, because we bathe in the river. We are worried. Something has to be done.

“They should come and provide portable water for the affected communities and pay compensation, because we have spent a lot of money on medication, buying fish and sachet water. That is our stand for today.”

President of the Engenni Youth Assembly, Onem Okenya, on his part, accused the company of ignoring the plight of the people. Environmental advocates also lent their voices to the outcry. The Environmental Defenders Network, EDEN, through its Deputy Executive

Director, Mr Alagoa Morris, who led a team to the affected communities, called for urgent intervention.

He said: “The government should provide support to the affected communities and ensure access to clean water and healthcare services. Oando should compensate the affected communities for the damage caused to their environment and livelihoods.” He also urged the Nigerian National Petroleum Company, the Rivers State Ministry of Environment, and the Federal Ministry of Environment to act swiftly. While operators of the facility could not be reached for comment, the people of Oshie and Akinima communities continue to live between thirst and fear, hoping their cries will finally be heard.

FEATURES



Akintunde

Nigeria as a killing field

By **Kazeem Akintunde**

Nigerians once again, woke up to the sad news of the gruesome murder of over 160 men, women, and children in Woro and Nuku communities in Kaiama Local Government area of Kwara State last week. The attackers, numbering over 100, who came from the neighbouring Kainji Lake National Park, were on a mission that was purely to maim and destroy the entire community. The sin for which the targeted community had to pay the heavy price for was their temerity to report the terrorists' activities to security operatives. Earlier this year, locals of the community got news from the terrorists, said to be led by one Sadiku, that they would be coming to the community to preach their brand of Islam. In Woro, where over 90 per cent of the population are Muslim, however, believed that the type of preaching being spread by the terror group was alien to them. The matter was reported to security agents by the village head, Alhaji Saliyu Bio Umar.

That became their undoing, as the terrorist group got wind of the move and decided to teach the people a lesson. On Tuesday last week, just a little after 6pm, the terror group struck, killing everybody on sight and razing the entire community to the ground. Although the village head escaped, his family, consisting of his two wives and several of his children were murdered in cold blood. His palace and most of the buildings in the community were set on fire.

The fire was still burning on Wednesday when the State Governor, AbdulRahman Abdulrazaq, paid a condolence visit to the community and the Emir of Kaiama. On Thursday, a distraught Abdulrazaq headed for Abuja, where he met with and briefed President Bola Tinubu on the destruction and mindless killings in his state. President Tinubu has ordered the deployment of soldiers and other security agencies to the state, particularly the affected communities. A mass burial has been conducted for most of the deceased while the survivors and citizens of a perplexed nation is again, forced to dust themselves off and move on in stoic silence.

Nigeria has, rather unfortunately, become a killing field. We no longer place any value on human life. It is now so easy to kill or get killed. Thomas Hobbes, an English philosopher, in his famous book, "Leviathan" (1651), argued that without a sovereign power and social contract, life would be a constant struggle for survival, characterized by fear and violence. According to him, life in such a state would be "poor, nasty, brutish, and short." It was to avoid

such a doomed prophesy that we gave consent for some amongst us to lead. In their leadership, they would guarantee the protection of life and property for us all. However, in spite of the fact that we have elected leaders, death is so cheap and common in Nigeria now. It is both worrisome and scary.

That you are within the four walls of your own home does not guarantee your safety anymore. In the now popular street 'lingo' in the country, Nigeria has happened to the people of Woro and Nuku. It could be any of us at any time. This is why the citizens have a popular prayer almost turned greeting that "may Nigeria not happen to us". How sad! Death is now so cheap that is being hawked by mindless terrorists across the country. Whether it is the Mamuda terror group, their cousins, the Lakurawa, or their big brother, the Boko Haram group that carried out the killings in Woro and Nuku on the pretext that their activities were reported to security agents, they should be told that they are not practicing Islam as prescribed by Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). They are children of hate and they would meet their Waterloo on the Day of Judgment.

Islam is a religion of peace, and whosoever deviates from that path should not be regarded as a true Muslim. The Qur'an strictly forbids forcing one's religious beliefs on others, and even more so, it abhors the killing of an innocent soul, equating it to the killing of all humanity. It describes the intentional murder of a believer as a grave sin deserving hellfire while emphasizing the sanctity of every individual life. Qur'an 5:32 states that: "Whoever slays a human being unless it be (in punishment) for murder or for spreading corruption (sedition) on earth, it shall be as though he had slain all of mankind..." The Qur'an elevates the value of each human life, stressing that harming an innocent person is a profound violation against God and humanity - a deed so severe that it can't overshadow other sins except worshipping the creation over the Creator.

The Bible also condemns the killing of an innocent soul, often referring to it as the "shedding of innocent blood" and labelling it as an abomination to God. Proverbs 6: 16-17 lists: "hands that shed innocent blood" as one of the seven things the Lord finds detestable. Again, Exodus 23: 7 commands: "Do not kill the innocent and the righteous, for I will not justify the wicked". In Deuteronomy 27: 25, a formal curse is pronounced on anyone who accepts payment to kill an innocent person.

If the two religions that we so much believe in could be this explicit on

why human life should be sacred, I wonder how we find it so easy to kill a fellow human being. If the intention is to convert others into your religion, which, in itself, is prohibited, should it then be to the extent of taking their life?

It begs to be emphasized that Islam has expressly stated that there is no compulsion in religion to those hiding behind the banner of religion to perpetrate crime. The Qur'an explicitly prohibits forcing anyone to accept the faith. Belief must stem from free will, sincerity, and personal conviction, not coercion. Quran 2: 256 stated that: "There is no compulsion in religion: true guidance has become distinct from error." In Qur'an 10:99, it is stated thus: "If your Lord had so willed, all who are on earth would have believed, all of them entirely. So, would you then compel people until they become believers?" This verse highlights that even God chose not to force belief on humanity, providing free will to choose instead. Qur'an 109:1-6 also stated: "To you be your way, and to me, mine". This chapter underscores a principle of coexistence and mutual respect for different beliefs. The responsibility of Muslims is to convey the message of Islam with kindness, wisdom, and good manners, leaving the ultimate choice of belief to the individual.

I have gone to this extent simply to show that the true believers are those who fear God and His Commands and show their respect to Him through perfect character to His creation, as exemplified by our holy Prophet Muhammad SAW and all the Prophets and Messengers that preceded him and preached the same message of love and peaceful coexistence. Those who are on a mission to kill are not doing so in the name of any religion. They are children of hate and they should be condemned by all well-meaning individuals in the society. Those supporting them or who are sympathetic to their cause are not doing any faith or humanity any good. This is the time for all of us to come together and rid the land of killers hiding under the cover of religion.

From what has been pieced together so far, the assailants in Woro were apparently not "bandits", which often connote an ethnic definition. State authorities have linked the massacre to doctrinal excesses on the part of a "Boko Haram faction". That group was said to have fanned out of the Kainji Lake National Park. It means that a very active faction of Boko Haram has taken advantage of the manner that our national parks seem to have transitioned into ungoverned spaces in recent years.

In the past couple of months, the Office of the National Security Adviser has actively worked on the training and equipping of forest rangers for Nigeria's national parks. However, there is a national imperative to rethink the budgeting for national parks as well as their security. These are genuine national treasures that were a product of patriotic thinking and execution when they were created in the 1970s.

Today, they are ghost institutions in many instances. They are not properly budgeted for, and until recently, they were not effectively policed. They became sanctuaries for the likes of Boko Haram and other non-state actors who live outside of a lawful relationship with the state and civil society.

Kwara state is in a particularly difficult situation. It is the location of the Kainji Lake National Park, the Old Oyo National Park, which is not far

from the Kamuku National Park, and it is also home to very expansive, very difficult to govern, natural forested regions of Kwara North, in the Baruten, Kaiama, and into the Edu, and Moro local government areas. While Abdulrazaq was on a condolence visit to the two communities, he was on the road for more than six hours. Yet, these are same territories within the same state. While Tinubu has approved the deployment of a military battalion to that part of Kwara State, now is the time for the Federal Government to take charge of all the forests in the country. Even though it may be expensive, no part of Nigeria should be left as ungoverned spaces. Once there is an expanse of land left unattended to, criminal elements are always ready to take advantage of such areas to perpetrate their criminality.

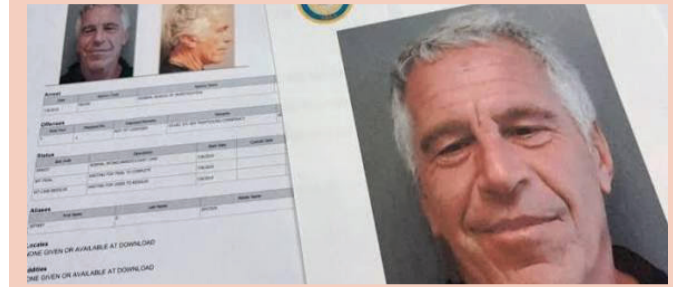
The people in vulnerable communities need the reassurance of visible security presence with regular route assessment patrols; territorial surveys; area dominance exercises; forest patrols, etc. These will help to properly target the non-state actors that violently attack residents of vulnerable communities. They will then, hopefully, be neutralised, captured, or eliminated. That will impose the peace that can allow peasant communities and pastoralists to go back to their livelihoods.

Again, government needs to pay closer attention to the needs and aspirations of Nigeria's youths. Our neoliberal capitalism has transferred public wealth into the hands of private individuals in a string of dubious privatisation programmes that didn't improve national productive forces. Indeed, our bizarre form of capitalism is not creating the jobs to absorb millions of young people who are frustrated and angry, and have become the reserve army of a hopeless underclass available for recruitment by different non-state groups.

If we don't create a caring society that works for the young people who constitute the majority of our population today while we continue to prioritize elite privileges, our country will not stop the harvest of emboldened criminality, the type that led to the massacre of so many innocent people in the Woro community. Benue, Kogi, Borno, Sokoto, Niger, Katsina, Kano, and several others states in the North have had their fair share of mass killings and terrorists' attacks, and it is high time that the government finds a lasting solution to the madness. Innocent souls of thousands of our people that have been killed in the last 15 years are enough. While the Federal Government seems helpless and has invited help from outside the country, which should be commended, it is time for us as a nation to identify the root cause of the problem, which is that we pay little attention to education in the North and we have allowed religion to hold the masses down for several decades. Once we get it right in ensuring that all children of school ages are in the classrooms, we create jobs for our teeming youths, and enhance security across our borders and communities, insecurity and terrorists' activities in the North would be significantly curtailed. We cannot have over 10 million children out of school and be going about business as usual. We are only toying with the future of our nation by sitting on kegs of gunpowder.

Again, politicians must address multi-dimensional poverty in the land. If the poor are hungry, they would eventually come for the rich.

The other Epsteins out there



Epstein

By **Abdulrazaq Magaji**

The death of Jeffrey Epstein in 2019 did not end a scandal; rather, it merely froze one name that hovered in the imagination of the public. Epstein's case, if truth be told, remains a signature for elite impunity, sexual exploitation, and a justice system that bends when wealth and influence combine to apply pressure. Yet focusing on Epstein alone risks comforting ourselves with a dangerous illusion that he was an aberration. He was not.

The harder truth is that there are "other Epsteins" out there. They may be less famous and less exposed, but they operate unhindered within the same permissive structures that allowed Epsteins crimes to flourish.

Another uncomfortable truth is that, Epstein's notoriety lay not only in the abuse he committed but in the ecosystem that stoutly protected him. This ecosystem, mainly money, connections, silence, and intimidation, exists in many societies and thrives wherever power is concentrated and accountability is weak. Another sad fact is that whenever the spotlight fixates on one villain, the system that produced him momentarily fades into the background, intact and barely unscathed.

At the heart of the problem is asymmetry of power. Epstein preyed on young girls and women who lacked resources, legal support, or social standing. This imbalance is not unique. Across industries, be it entertainment, sports, religion, education, or politics, there are powerful figures who control access to opportunity. Where ambition meets vulnerability, exploitation becomes possible and normal. The names change, the settings differ, but the mechanics remain the same. Equally troubling is the role of enablers. Epstein did not act in isolation. There were staff who recruited, institutions that ignored red flags, lawyers who negotiated lenient deals, and social circles that asked no questions. Silence was purchased, fear was cultivated, and reputations were laundered through philanthropy and proximity to respectability. This pattern is familiar because predators rarely operate alone; they rely on a chain of complicity, both active and passive.

The media and public opinion also play an ambivalent role. Yes, investigative journalism was crucial in exposing Epstein, yet for years, rumours were dismissed as gossip, victims were disbelieved, and stories were buried. This could not have been accidental, because powerful individuals often weaponise defamation threats, influence advertisers, or leverage political

ties to suppress scrutiny. This goes on to say that whenever the press blinks, predators develop the energy to advance.

Then there is the legal system. In 2008, Epstein made a plea bargain, widely criticised then as scandalously lenient. That plea bargain was a red flag that sent a clear message that justice is negotiable. Such outcomes erode trust and embolden abusers. They signal that consequences are for the powerless, while the well-connected can bargain their way out. The existence of "other Epsteins out there" cannot be separated from this two-tiered justice.

Globalisation adds another layer. Wealth and mobility allow predators to cross borders unnoticed or unchecked, exploit jurisdictional gaps, and hide assets. Private planes, shell companies, and exclusive enclaves are not merely luxuries but effective tools in the hands of the "other Epsteins out there. When accountability stops at national boundaries, abuse does not.

What, then, should be done? First, we must resist the temptation of catharsis through singular villains. Accountability must be systemic, and that means independent prosecutors, transparent plea negotiations, and penalties that reflect the gravity of crimes, regardless of the clout and status of individuals involved. It will also mean protecting whistleblowers and victims, funding investigative journalism, and ensuring that civil settlements do not become instruments of silence.

Equally important is that, institutions must be compelled to act. In this regard, mandatory reporting, external audits, and real consequences for cover-ups are essential. Without enforcing codes of conduct, they at best remain public relations, not protection.

Then it is necessary for society to confront its own complicity. The culture of deference to wealth and celebrity, fostered by the wrong-headed assumption that success equals virtue, creates fertile ground for abuse. Moving forward, scepticism, rather than being dismissed as cynicism, should be considered a civic duty.

All said and done, "the other Epsteins out there" will not be unmasked by chasing conspiracy alone or by recycling outrage. Rather, they will be uncovered by strengthening institutions, levelling the legal field, and really listening to those who have the least power and the most to lose.

Epstein's name should be a grave warning and not treated as a mere full stop.

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SPORTS

BY MUHAMMAD KUKURI,
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Africa School Games.

Nigeria inaugurates LOC for second Africa School Games

Nigeria has inaugurated a 28-member Local Organising Committee (LOC), for the successful hosting of the second edition of the Africa School Games. The committee was inaugurated on Tuesday by the Chairman of the

National Sports Commission, Shehu Dikko, who assured members of the LOC that the government is prepared to give them the support they need to succeed. In his inaugural speech, Chairman of the LOC, Lanre Abari, pledged the commitment of the

committee to organise and deliver an Africa School Games that will reflect the position of Nigeria as Giants of Africa. Also inaugurated on Tuesday, was the Nigerian Federation of American Football (NFAF) with Babajide Akeredolu as President

of the Federation. The Nigerian Federation of American Football is comprised of twenty-one Board members, appointed to drive the advancement of American Football in Nigeria, while also leveraging the social impact of the sport to boost Nigeria's GDP.

Osimhen joins Ronaldo, Messi, Mbappe on IFFHS top scorers list

Victor Osimhen has been named among the world's most prolific international goalscorers of the current decade alongside Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappe by the International Federation of Football History and Statistics. The Super Eagles striker made the podium for the Top Scorers of National Teams in the third decade of the 21st century (2021-2030) rankings, placing him in the elite category with some of football's biggest names. Osimhen currently sits joint 14th on the list with Serbia's Aleksandar Mitrovic, with both players recording 27 international goals since 2021. The achievement highlights the Galatasaray forward's elite consistency and places him firmly among the most prolific finishers in world football during the period under review. A breakdown of his numbers shows steady production

across the decade. He scored five goals in 2021, repeated that total in 2022 and 2023, added three in 2024, and exploded for nine goals in 2025, his most productive year yet. At the summit of the IFFHS rankings is Norway's Erling Haaland, who has scored 49 international goals since 2021, ahead of England captain Harry Kane on 46 and Argentina legend Lionel Messi on 44. Cristiano Ronaldo follows closely with 41 goals for Portugal, while France's Kylian Mbappe has 39. Also featuring prominently are the Netherlands' Memphis Depay and Iran's Mehdi Taremi on 34 each, Belgium's Romelu Lukaku and Senegal's Sadio Mane on 32, and Son Heung-min on 28 for South Korea. Beyond the decade statistics, Osimhen's overall impact for Nigeria continues to grow. Since making his Super Eagles debut in 2017, he has scored



Osimhen

35 goals in 51 appearances, establishing himself as the country's second-highest goalscorer of all time. Now Nigeria's vice-captain, the 27-year-old has already overtaken greats such as Yakubu Aiyegbeni, Segun Odegbami, Obafemi Martins and Ikechukwu Uche. Only the legendary Rashidi Yekini remains ahead of him, by just two goals. In 2025, Osimhen was the joint-fifth highest scorer worldwide in all competitions with a total of 46 goals for both his club and country. This made him the top African scorer of the year and represented the highest single-year tally for an African player since 2019. The 2023 African Footballer of the Year has so far collected two AFCON bronze medals and one silver, but the continental title continues to elude him. With the 2027 tournament set to be hosted by Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, Osimhen will be eager to turn individual milestones into international glory for Nigeria.

Eric Chelle aims to become first African coach of Real Madrid

The head coach of the Super Eagles, Eric Chelle, has revealed that his long-term ambition is to become the first African to manage Spanish giants Real Madrid. The Malian-born tactician shared his vision while speaking on RMC Sport's After Afrique podcast, which was posted on Monday. The former Valenciennes player said leading the Madrid-based club represents the pinnacle of his professional dreams as he continues to build his reputation on the global football stage. "My dream is to become the first African coach to manage Real Madrid," Eric Chelle said. Chelle's profile has risen significantly following Nigeria's impressive campaign at the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) in Morocco, where the Super Eagles finished third. The team enjoyed a strong run, winning all but one of their matches during the tournament. During the interview, Chelle also revisited key moments from the AFCON campaign, including reported squad management issues and tensions involving Ademola Lookman and Victor Osimhen. He addressed discussions around the widely publicised "water bottle" incident from the 2023 AFCON, when he was in charge of Mali, an episode that earned him the nickname "Waterman" after he collapsed near the touchline during a dramatic quarter-final loss to the Ivory Coast. Clarifying the incident, Chelle explained that it stemmed from a serious medical condition. Speaking on the podcast, he said, "I was feeling faint." He revealed that he had been battling atrial fibrillation throughout the tournament. "During the preparation for the AFCON, I suffered from atrial fibrillation. My heart was beating at 200 beats per minute all the time," Chelle said.



Chelle

SALUTE TO SERVICE

BY MERCY ADAJE
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Major General Mohammed Shuwa: The tragic end of a disciplined and courageous military officer

Major General Mohammed Shuwa OFR, was born on 1 September 1939 in Masharte, Borno State. He is regarded among the most distinguished officers in the history of the Nigerian Army.

He was the first General Officer Commanding of the Nigerian Army's 1st Division and played a defining role during the Nigerian Civil War.

His life, marked by discipline, courage, and public service, came to a tragic end on 2 November 2012 when he was assassinated in Maiduguri by suspected Boko Haram insurgents.

Shuwa's early years were shaped by a strong educational foundation. He began his education at Kala Elementary School between 1946 and 1947, then moved to Bama Central Elementary School from 1948 to 1950.

He continued at Bornu Middle School from 1950 to 1952 before gaining admission into Barewa College, Zaria, where he studied from 1952 to 1957.

At Barewa College, he shared classrooms with several future national figures, including Murtala Muhammed, who would later become Nigeria's Head of State.

The institution was renowned for producing leaders who would shape Nigeria's political and military trajectory.

On 19 September 1958, Shuwa enlisted in the Nigerian Army alongside contemporaries such as Murtala Muhammed, Illiya Bisalla, and Ibrahim Haruna. He began his officer training at the Regular Officers Special Training School in Teshie, Ghana, and later proceeded to the Royal Military Acad-



Shuwa

emy, Sandhurst, in the United Kingdom.

In July 1961, he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant, joining the growing corps of Nigerian officers who would soon inherit command of the nation's armed forces after inde-

pendence.

During the Nigerian Civil War from 1967 to 1970, Shuwa commanded the 1st Division of the Nigerian Army. His leadership during the conflict

was firm and strategic.

He notably opposed the planned river assault on Onitsha championed by Murtala Muhammed, an operation that proved costly and controversial. Historical accounts suggest that their disagreement became so intense that it nearly resulted in a physical confrontation, reflecting the high tensions and divergent tactical views within the military command at the time.

Shuwa also played a significant role in one of the war's most symbolic moments. He informed General Yakubu Gowon, then Head of State, about the death of Major Kaduna Nzeogwu in Nsukka. Nzeogwu, a central figure in the January 1966 coup, had aligned with Biafran forces during the war.

Despite the circumstances, Gowon ordered that Nzeogwu's body be transported to Kaduna and accorded full military honours.

The gesture underscored the complexity of loyalties and the enduring bonds among officers who had once served to-

gether.

Following the war, Shuwa continued to serve Nigeria in both military and civil capacities. From 1975 to 1979, he held the position of Federal Commissioner for Trade and Works, contributing to national development during a critical post war reconstruction period.

He retired from the Nigerian Army on 1 October 1979, the day the military formally handed over power to the civilian administration of President Shehu Shagari.

In retirement, Shuwa remained a respected elder statesman, particularly in northern Nigeria.

His assassination on 2 November 2012 in Maiduguri shocked the nation and symbolised the painful realities of insurgency in the region he once served with distinction.

His death marked the passing of one of Nigeria's most respected soldiers, a man whose career spanned the formative and turbulent decades of the nation's history.

Joshua Mamman Madaki: Honouring a life of military service, political engagement, and national contribution

Joshua Mamman Madaki was one of the notable military officers who transitioned into public service during Nigeria's era of military governance. Born on 6 July 1947 in Manchok, Kaura Local Government Area of present-day Kaduna State, Madaki's early life reflected discipline, education, and a steady path toward national service. He received his secondary education at St. Paul's College, Wusasa, an institution known for shaping many prominent Nigerians. Madaki later joined the Nigerian Army and was part of the fourth intake of the Nigerian Defence Academy, a generation that would go on to play significant roles in the country's military and political history. His military career steadily advanced, earning him key command responsibilities during a turbulent period in Nigeria's governance. During the military coup



Madaki

of 27 August 1985 that brought Major General Ibrahim Babangida to power, Lieutenant Colonel Madaki was the commanding officer of the 6th Guards Battalion based at Bonny Camp in Lagos. His unit was placed on standby on Lagos Island and tasked with securing the eastern approaches to Victoria Island, a stra-

tegic assignment that underscored the trust placed in him. Following the success of the coup, Madaki was promoted and appointed Commander of the Brigade of Guards. In December 1987, Babangida elevated him to the rank of Colonel and appointed him Military Governor of Bauchi State. Madaki

later became Military Governor of Plateau State, serving from August 1990 to January 1992. His tenure in Plateau State coincided with a sensitive period marked by communal tensions. During the 1991 national census, disputes involving the Dong, Tudun Wada, and Kabong communities in Jos North dis-

rupted census activities in those areas. In response, Colonel Madaki established a judicial commission to investigate the ownership and status of the affected communities, an effort aimed at restoring order and clarity. After retiring from the Nigerian Army, Madaki remained active in national affairs. He joined the National Democratic Coalition, known as NADECO, a pro democracy group that opposed the military regime of General Sani Abacha and called for a return to civilian rule. As Nigeria moved toward the Fourth Republic, Madaki became a member of the People's Democratic Party, reflecting his continued interest in shaping democratic governance. Beyond politics, he also contributed to sports administration. In August 2001, he was appointed President of the Nigeria Rugby Football Association, a role that highlight-

ed his broad interests and leadership beyond military and political spheres. As the 2003 general elections approached, Madaki explored several political platforms in his bid to contest the governorship of Kaduna State. In June 2002, reports emerged that he intended to run under the All People's Party, aligned with the All Nigeria People's Party. By October 2002, he had moved to the Alliance for Democracy, where he continued preparations for the gubernatorial race. Tragically, Joshua Mamman Madaki's life was cut short on 7 May 2003 when he died in a motor accident after one of the tyres of his jeep burst, causing the vehicle to somersault. His death came just weeks before the elections he hoped to contest, bringing an abrupt end to a career marked by military service, political engagement, and national contribution.

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



The boubou is the classic Senegalese robe, worn by both men and women all over West Africa and in West African diasporic communities of Europe and the United States. Sewn from a single piece of fabric, the boubou is usually 59 inches (150 cm) wide and of varying lengths. The most elegant style, the grand boubou, usually employs a piece of fabric 117 inches (300 cm) long and reaches to the ankles.

Traditionally, custom-made in workshops by tailors, the boubou is made by folding the fabric in half, fashioning a neck opening, and sewing the sides halfway up to make flowing sleeves.

For women, the neck is large and rounded; for men, it forms a long V-shape, usually with a large five-sided pocket cutting off the tip of the "V."

A Garment with Variations
The garment and its variations are known by various names in different ethnic groups and languages. It is called kulwu in Kanuri, babban riga in Hausa, boubou or mboubou in Wolof, grand boubou in various French-speaking West African countries, agbada in Yoruba.

The Senegalese boubou, also called grand boubou in French is also known as the Senegalese kaftan. The boubou gown is a classic, loose-fitting garment that's a staple in West African fashion.

Graceful Fashion
Known for its graceful, flowing silhouette, it's a favourite for both everyday wear and special occasions.

The boubou is typically made from a single large piece of fabric, often silk, cotton, or chiffon, draped and sewn to create a wide, airy fit that's both comfortable and regal.

Full-length, wide sleeves, and a relaxed fit that drapes beautifully on the body. It can be plain or heavily embroidered, often with intricate patterns around the neckline and cuffs.

Climate Friendly
The loose fit makes it perfect for hot climates, like in Nigeria, Senegal, and Mali, and it's also a hit in cities like Houston and Dallas, where African diaspora communities love its cool, queen-like flow. Boubou can be styled for casual

Boubou Gown: Flowing elegance from Africa to the world



outings, weddings, religious events, or formal gatherings. It's often paired with a matching headscarf or gele for women, and a cap or kufi for men.

Cultural Significance
It's a symbol of prestige and tradition, often worn by elders, dignitaries, and at important ceremonies. The fabric choice and embroidery can indicate social status or regional identity.

Modern Twists
Designers today are mixing boubou with contemporary fabrics, bold prints, and modern cuts, making it

a global fashion statement. It's popular on runways in Lagos, Paris, and New York, blending African heritage with global

trends. Boubou can be paired with bright, embroidered simple accessories for a standout look, or go

for a minimalist style with neutral colours for everyday chic. It's a flexible piece that fits many moods.



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

TECHWORLD

BY MUHAMMAD KUKURI
MuhammadKukuri@neptuneprime.com.ng

GAMESCIENE

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

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.

AI-driven online attacks could target 30 million Nigerian women, girls by 2030 – Report

Up to 30 million women and girls in Nigeria could face online abuse enabled by generative artificial intelligence by 2030, according to a report by public strategy and media group Gatefield.

The report, based on Nigeria's projected 200 million internet users by 2030, shows that nearly half of women online could be exposed annually to AI-facilitated abuse, including sexualised deepfakes, impersonation and disinformation.

Gatefield, which released the report to mark Safer Internet Day on Tuesday, said direct targeting through coordinated harassment campaigns and deepfake content could affect 30-40 million women and girls each year.

The projections draw from Gatefield's State of Online Harms 2025 report, public data and conservative predictive modelling which found that nearly half of Nigerian internet users experience online harm,

with women accounting for 58 per cent of victims. Gatefield said AI-enabled abuse constitutes structurally violent digital harm that systematically targets women while exploiting both human and technological vulnerabilities.

Research cited by the organisation on Nigerian women affected by non-consensual image sharing showed that nearly 90 per cent experienced depression or suicidal thoughts. Of the 27 women studied, 11 considered suicide and one attempted it.

The report highlighted recent cases involving public figures to demonstrate the scale of the threat. It noted that in 2025, AI-generated nude images of Afrobeats singer Ayra Starr circulated widely across social media platforms, with delayed responses by the platforms. It further cited that Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan of Kogi Central was targeted with deepfake audio and video

recordings following sexual harassment allegations. At the same time, Nollywood actress Kehinde Bankole faced coordinated AI-generated harassment campaigns that digitally altered her images.

"Platforms like X and Grok facilitated abuse through frictionless content generation, delayed moderation and opaque policies," Farida Adamu, Gatefield's insights and analytics lead said. She explained that the problem reflects unsafe product design rather than the actions of isolated bad actors.

Gatefield said Nigeria currently lacks AI-specific legislation, forensic capacity and platform accountability frameworks, warning that the gap leaves women increasingly vulnerable as other jurisdictions adopt stronger regulations.

The organisation referenced measures in the European Union, France, the United States and the



AI

United Kingdom that address non-consensual AI-generated sexual content and platform responsibility. "Without immediate legal frameworks, Nigeria risks the structural exclusion of women from politics, media and culture," Shirley Ewang, Gatefield's advocacy lead said.

Kaduna adopts mobile digital classrooms to enhance technology learning in schools

Kaduna State Governor Uba Sani, has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to expanding digital literacy, fostering innovation, and ensuring equal learning opportunities for all children in the state. Speaking at the launch of the "Class is Open Everywhere" DigiTruck Digital Skills Training Programme on Tuesday, Sani, represented by Gloria Ibrahim, Kaduna Commissioner for Youth Development, promised that no child will be left behind, whether in urban or rural communities.

"Access to technology and the right skills is no longer a luxury but a necessity. Our students must not only be educated, but they must also be equipped," Ibrahim said. DigiTruck, a fully equipped



Gov. Sani

mobile digital classroom, directly, bringing learning to students.

"This ensures that opportunity is not limited by location," she added. The programme will introduce students to basic computing, artificial intelligence fundamentals, digital creativity, and other essential skills.

Ibrahim noted that these skills will define employability, innovation, and leadership in the years ahead. During its stay in Kaduna, the DigiTruck is expected to reach 20 to 30 schools across the three zones, impacting over 1,000 students.

"Hundreds of young people will have their first real interaction with practical technology, and for many, this experience may shape their career paths," she added.

"The future you are preparing for is already here, and this programme is opening the door for you to step into it."

Ibrahim encouraged students to actively participate, explore, and make the most of the opportunity.

web update

NITDA backs Artificial Intelligence-driven transformation at Corporate Affairs Commission

The National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) has thrown its weight behind the Corporate Affairs Commission's (CAC) moves to recalibrate its operations with artificial intelligence-driven transformation.

The Director General of NITDA, Malam Kashifu Inuwa, disclosed this in Abuja when the commission marked its 35th anniversary.

Delivering a goodwill message at the celebration, which was held at the Ladi Kwali Hall of Continental Hotel, Inuwa commended CAC for its uncommon consistency and resilience.

He said it was delightful that while many organisations rise and fall after initial success, CAC has continued on a steady growth trajectory. "We know organisations go up and come down, but some will keep thriving, thriving, and thriving, and today, this is what we are witnessing for CAC," he said.

Reflecting on his early engagement with the commission, the NITDA boss recalled that the Registrar General made organisational transformation a priority from the very start of his leadership, particularly in embracing digital innovation.

According to Inuwa, the current era demands more than basic digitisation, stressing that meaningful transformation can only be achieved through the integration of artificial intelligence into core operations.

"We are in the Artificial Intelligence (AI) era, and the only way to transform today is to embrace and integrate AI into your operations. This is exactly what the Registrar General is doing," he said.

He assured CAC of NITDA's commitment to working closely with the Commission to embed AI across its numerous processes, explaining that the technology would infuse intelligence into workflows, simplify company registration and business management, and strengthen cybersecurity.

"We will make sure you integrate AI into CAC processes. With AI, it will infuse intelligence in everything you do and make things easy for Nigerians to register companies and manage businesses," Inuwa averred.

The NITDA boss further noted that deploying advanced AI tools would help CAC staff stay ahead of fraudsters and curb hacking and fraudulent alterations of company records, while also safeguarding the system through responsible deployment.

"At NITDA, we will make sure you deploy ethical and responsible AI in your operations, with the right guardrails in place," he assured.

He further described CAC's digital reforms as bold and impactful, noting that the Commission has reduced company registration timelines from several months to as little as 24 hours.

He added that further integration of AI would enhance name search and reservation, automate filings, improve corporate governance, and significantly reduce fraud.



CAC

WORLD NEWS

BY ABDULLAHI HARUNA

Japan seizes Chinese vessel after inspection standoff

Authorities in Japan say they have seized a Chinese fishing vessel that allegedly attempted to escape after being ordered to halt for inspection, a development likely to add strain to already fragile ties with China.

According to Japan's fisheries agency, the boat was operating inside Japan's exclusive economic zone near Nagasaki Prefecture in the southwest when officials moved to intercept it on Thursday.

Inspectors said the captain ignored directives to stop and instead tried to flee, prompting authorities to detain the vessel.

The agency confirmed that 11 people were on board. The captain, identified as a 47-year-old Chinese national, was arrested. Japanese media described the craft as a high-capacity "tiger net" fishing boat.

It is the first seizure of a Chinese fishing vessel by the agency since 2022. Beijing had not publicly responded at the time of the announcement.

Speaking on Friday, Minoru Kihara said Japan would continue firm enforcement measures to curb illegal fishing by foreign boats.

The maritime incident comes against the backdrop of worsening diplomatic relations. In November, Sanae Takaichi angered Beijing after suggesting Tokyo could intervene militarily if China attempted to take Taiwan by force.

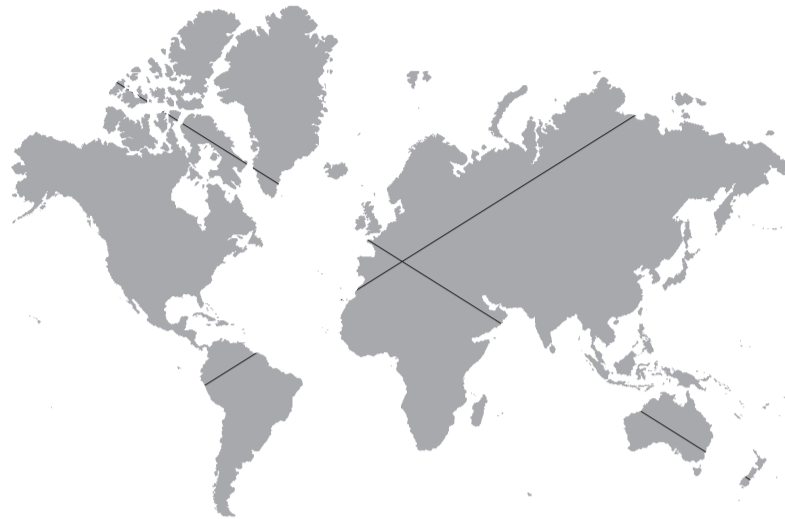
China, which regards Taiwan as its territory, condemned the remarks as unacceptable, summoned Japan's ambassador and advised its citizens to reconsider travel and study plans in Japan. The dispute contributed to a drop in Chinese tourism and pressure on Japanese retail and travel-linked stocks.

As tensions mounted toward the end of 2025, Beijing repeatedly urged Takaichi to withdraw her comments, warning Japan to avoid actions it said could inflame the situation.

Cultural exchanges have also felt the impact, with performances by Japanese artists cancelled and some film releases delayed.



Vessels



Victim

Father shoots daughter after argument over Trump, gun rights

A British woman who was shot dead by her father while visiting his home in Texas had argued with him about US President Donald Trump earlier that day, an inquest has heard.

Lucy Harrison, from Warrington in Cheshire, was shot in the chest on 10 January 2025 in Prosper, near Dallas. Police in the town investigated the 23-year-old's death as possible manslaughter but no criminal case was brought against Kris Harrison after a grand jury in Collin County declined to indict him.

An inquest into Lucy Harrison's death opened earlier at Cheshire Coroner's Court, where her boyfriend Sam Littler described the "big argument" about Trump, who was preparing to be inaugurated for his second term of office.

Littler, who travelled to the US with Lucy Harrison for the holiday, said she would often become upset with her father when he spoke about owning a gun.

The inquest also heard how Kris Harrison, who moved to the United States when his daughter was a child, had previously been to rehab for alcohol addiction.

Kris Harrison, who did not attend the inquest, admitted in a statement sent to the court that he had relapsed on the day of the shooting and had drunk

about 500ml of white wine.

Littler said on the morning of 10 January his partner had asked her father during the Trump row: "How would you feel if I was the girl in that situation and I'd been sexually assaulted?"

Kris Harrison had replied that he had two other daughters who lived with him so it would not upset him that much.

Littler said Lucy became "quite upset" and ran upstairs. He told the court that later that day, about half an hour before they were due to leave to go to the airport, Lucy had been in the kitchen when her father took her by the hand and led her into his ground-floor bedroom.

Littler said he heard a loud bang about 15 seconds later and then Kris Harrison screamed for his wife, Heather.

Littler said: "I remember running into the room and Lucy was lying on the floor near the entrance to the bathroom and Kris was just screaming, just sort of nonsense."

The statement from Kris Harrison said he and his daughter had been watching a news item on gun crime when he told her he had a gun and asked her if she wanted to see it.

They went into the bedroom so he could show her a Glock 9mm semi-automatic handgun which he kept in the bedside cabinet.

Harrison said he had bought the gun



Voters

Bangladesh Nationalist Party secures victory in landmark post-uprising election

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party has emerged with a sweeping majority in the country's first national election since the youth-led unrest widely described as the Gen Z uprising.

Preliminary results released by election officials show the opposition party dominating parliamentary seats across much of the country, a dramatic shift in the political landscape following months of protests and demands for reforms.

Party leaders hailed the outcome as a mandate for change, promising to focus on economic recovery, governance reforms, and national reconciliation after a turbulent period marked by demonstrations and political tension.

Voter turnout was reported to be strong in many districts, with long queues forming early as citizens sought to shape the direction of the nation after the upheaval. The victory positions the BNP to lead the next government and begin negotiations on forming an administration expected to confront pressing issues ranging from inflation to institutional reforms.

a couple of years before because he wanted a "sense of security" for his family.

He denied ever discussing it with his daughter before.

He said: "As I lifted the gun to show her I suddenly heard a loud bang. I did not understand what had happened. Lucy immediately fell."

Harrison said he could not recall whether his finger was on the trigger.

He acknowledged he had issues with alcohol in the past and said he "briefly lapsed" on the day of his daughter's death because he was emotional about her leaving.

The inquest heard police officer Luciana Escalera, whose evidence was read, noticed the smell of alcohol on Harrison's breath when he was called to the house after the shooting.

CCTV footage showed he had bought two 500ml cartons of Chardonnay from a 7-Eleven store shortly before 13:00 CST (05:00 GMT) that day.

In a statement issued by his solicitors, Kris Harrison said he "fully accepted" the consequences of his actions.

"There isn't a day I don't feel the weight of that loss, a weight I will carry for the rest of my life," he said.

Coates said her daughter, who worked as a buyer for fashion brand Boohoo, was a "real force of life".

She said: "She cared. She was passionate about things. She loved to have debates about things that meant a lot to her."

The inquest was adjourned until the coroner is expected to deliver her conclusions.

DID YOU KNOW?

BY VIVIAN OKAFOR

Challenger Deep is the deepest place on Earth

The deepest place on Earth is the Challenger Deep, a small, slot-shaped valley in the floor of the Mariana Trench in the western Pacific Ocean, reaching depths of nearly 11,000 meters (\(36,000+\) feet) below sea level.

Located east of the Philippines, it is part of a subduction zone where the Pacific Plate dives beneath the Mariana Plate. Approx. \((10,935)\) to \((10,984)\) meters (\(35,876\)-\((36,037)\) feet), making it deeper than Mount Everest is tall.

The southern end of the Mariana Trench, near the Mariana Islands. Extreme cold, immense pressure (over 8 tons per square inch), and total darkness.

First reached in 1960 by the bathyscaphe Trieste; James Cameron also performed a solo dive in 2012. Despite the extreme conditions, it is part of a U.S. Marine National Monument.

Other extremely deep, nearby trenches include the Tonga Trench and Philippine Trench.

Over many years, the search for and investigation of the location of the maximum depth of the world's oceans has involved many different ves-

sels, and continues into the twenty-first century. The accuracy of determining geographical location, and the beam-width of (multibeam)

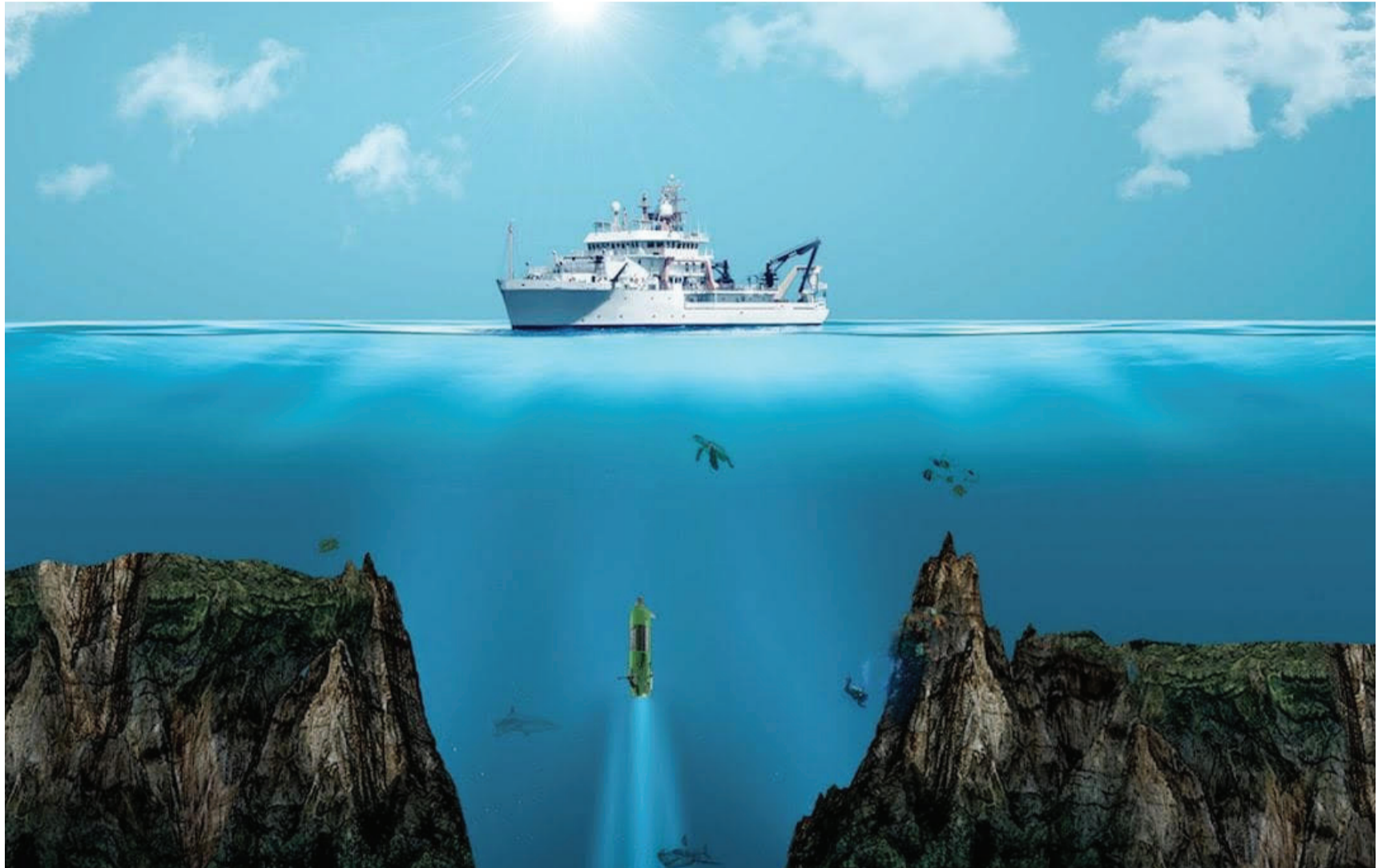
echosounder systems, limits the horizontal and vertical bathymetric sensor resolution that hydrographers can obtain from onsite data.

This is especially important when sounding in deep water, as the resulting footprint of an acoustic pulse gets large once it reaches a distant sea

floor.

Further, sonar operation is affected by variations in sound speed, particularly in the vertical plane. The speed is determined

by the water's bulk modulus, mass, and density. The bulk modulus is affected by temperature, pressure, and dissolved impurities (usually salinity).



Snakes smell with their tongues

Snakes "smell" with their tongues by flicking them out to collect airborne scent particles. These particles are transferred to the Jacobson's organ (vomeronasal organ) in the roof of the mouth, which interprets the scents to identify food, predators, or mates.

The forked tongue aids in determining direction, acting as a "stereo" smell sensor. Particles collected by the forked tongue are delivered to pads on the floor of the mouth, which then convey them to the Jacobson's organ upon closing.

The vomeronasal organ (VNO) is a specialised, highly developed sensory structure in the roof of the mouth that processes chemical signals.

The two tips of the forked tongue allow snakes to detect if a scent is stronger on the right or left, enabling them to track prey or find paths. This mechanism helps snakes navigate, hunt, and avoid danger.

While they have nostrils, their forked tongue and VNO system provide a superior sense of smell for their environment. Other



reptiles, such as lizards, also use a similar mechanism to smell their surroundings. Lizards will flick their

tongues in different patterns to collect odours from the air. Elk and deer will stick their noses up in the air and lift their upper

lips to transfer some molecules inside their mouths. It gives them a kind of "sixth sense" that helps them know their world.

A snake's nose is also important. Like pretty much all animals, snakes need a healthy supply of oxygen to survive. The nostrils

are oxygen's way into the body. Oxygen is really important to animals because it helps them produce fuel for their bodies.

LIVING LEGENDS

BY AISHA AUYO
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Nnaji

Genevieve Nnaji, Actress, Director

Genevieve Nnaji (born 3 May 1979) is a Nigerian actress, producer, and director. She won the Africa Movie Academy Award for Best Actress in a Leading Role in 2005, making her the first actor to win the award.

Nnaji was born in Mbaise, Imo State, located in the Southeast region of Nigeria and grew up in Lagos, Southwest Nigeria. The fourth of eight children, she was raised in a middle-class family; her father worked as an engineer and her mother was a nursery school teacher. She attended Methodist Girls College (Yaba, Lagos), before proceeding to the University of Lagos, where she graduated with a bachelor's degree in creative arts.

While at the university, she began auditioning for acting jobs in Nollywood.

In 2011, she was honoured as a Member of the Order of the Federal Republic by the Nigerian government for her contributions to Nollywood. Her directorial debut movie, *Lionheart*, is the first Netflix film from Nigeria and the first Nigerian submission for the Oscars. The movie was disqualified for having most of its dialogue in English.

After having spent decades in the movie industry, she was profiled alongside some celebrities and business executives in 2020 in two books by the publisher and editor in chief of *Yes International!* magazine, Azuh Arinze.

Nnaji started her act-

ing career as a child actor in the television soap opera *Ripples* at the age of eight. In 1998, at the age of 19 she was introduced into the growing Nigerian film industry with the movie *Most Wanted*. Her subsequent movies include *Last Party*, *Mark of the Beast* and *Ijele*. In 2010, she starred in the film *Ijé: The Journey*. She has starred in over 200 Nollywood movies.

Nnaji, alongside eight other actors known as the G8, Omotola Jalade Ekeinde, Richard Mofe-Damijo, Emeka Ike, Ramsey Nouah, Nkem Owoh, Stella Damasus, and Jim Iyke, was banned in 2004 for charging excessively high fees. In the same year, Nnaji signed a recording

contract with EKB Records; a Ghanaian record label, and released her debut album *One Logologo Line*. It was a mix of R&B, hip-hop and urban music. In 2004, Nnaji was voted the face of Lux. In 2005, she won the Africa Movie Academy Award (AMAA) for Best Actress in a Leading Role, becoming the first actress to win the award. Nnaji has featured in several commercials, including Pronto (beverage) and Omo detergent. In 2004, she became the "Face of Lux" in Nigeria. In 2008, Nnaji launched the clothing line "St. Genevieve", which donates its proceeds to charity. In May 2010, she was appointed as the "Face of MUD" in Nigeria.

Agbani Darego, Former Miss World, Model

Chief Ibiagbanidokibubo Asenite 'Agbani' Darego, MFR (born 22 December 1982) is a Nigerian model and beauty queen who was crowned Miss World 2001.

She was the first black African, the fourth African overall, and the third one to win the title outright (i.e. without benefitting from resignations of higher-ranked contestants, and without dethronements).

Abonnema-native, Darego was born in Lagos as the sixth of eight children. At age two, her family relocated to Port Harcourt where she was raised.

Darego attended Bereton Montessori Nursery and Primary School, and at ten was sent to boarding school in a bid to shield her from her mother who battled breast cancer. Her mother, Inaewo, owned a rice trading business and a clothing boutique, but died two years after her daughter's move to boarding school. Darego has spoken of how the loss prepared her for tough challenges in the future.

As a teenager, Darego longed to be a model, and auditioned for the M-Net Face of Africa modelling competition despite her conservative father's wishes, but was not chosen as a finalist.

Darego attended Federal Government Girls' College, Abuloma. Upon completing her secondary education she attended University of Port Harcourt where she studied Computer Science and Mathematics.

In 2001, Darego was crowned Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria. Contrary to popular belief, Darego did not replace Valerie Peterside after the latter was dethroned; Peterside had competed in rival pageant Miss Nigeria. A few months later Darego was a contestant at Miss Universe, and became the first Nigerian to place among the top 10 semi-finalists, finishing seventh overall.

She was the only top ten contestant to wear a modest mailot as opposed to a revealing bikini during the swimsuit competition.

In November that year, she became the first Indigenous African to claim the Miss World title (Past winners Penelope Coelen and Anneline Kriel, both of South Africa, are of European descent, and Antigone Costanda, who represented Egypt in 1954 is of Greek heritage). Darego's victory was widely welcomed in her home country, and her one-year tenure included goodwill trips and scheduled appearances on behalf of the pageant, and an MFR.

In the aftermath of her win in 2001, Darego was awarded an honorary chieftaincy by the Council of Chiefs of Lagos. At the time of her investiture, she was one of the youngest chiefs in the country.

Due to her busy work schedule, Darego left the University of Port Harcourt, but after moving to New York where she was signed to Next Model Management, Ford Models, and Trump Models, she enrolled with New York University to study Psychology, graduating in May 2012.



Darego

ANIMAL WORLD

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

Beasts of Burden: Exploring the historical importance of donkeys in human civilisation

For thousands of years, donkeys have been close helpers to human beings. Even though they are small and simple animals, they have played a big role in farming, trade, and everyday life in many parts of the world.

The donkey or ass is a domesticated equine. It derives from the African wild ass, *Equus africanus*, and may be classified either as a subspecies thereof, *Equus africanus asinus*, or as a separate species, *Equus asinus*.

Donkeys were first trained and kept by people around 3000 BCE in North Africa, in places that are now called Egypt and Sudan. Old drawings on tomb walls and early writings show donkeys carrying heavy loads, helping farmers on their land, and walking in long trade caravans.

While horses were mostly used by kings and soldiers, donkeys were the animals of common

people. Farmers and traders depended on them to move goods from one place to another. In early societies like Mesopotamia, donkeys helped make trade easier and more organised.

Even though donkeys are smaller than horses, they are very strong and hardworking. They can carry heavy items, about a quarter of their body weight and still walk long distances without getting tired quickly.

Their hard hooves help them walk safely on rocky and dry ground. This made them very useful in desert and dry areas where other animals could not survive easily.

For many centuries, donkeys helped plough fields, carry harvested crops, and transport water and supplies. Big trade routes like the Silk Road and the trans Saharan routes depended on them.

Many cultures see



donkeys as symbols of patience and humility. They are not truly stubborn; they are careful and smart animals. Even today, donkeys are still important in many rural communities around the world.

There are more than 40 million donkeys in the world, mostly in underdeveloped countries. While working donkeys are often associated with those living at or below subsistence, small



numbers of donkeys or asses are kept for breeding, as pets, and for livestock protection in developed countries. An adult male donkey is a jack or jackass, an adult female is a jenny or

jennet, and an immature donkey of either sex is a foal. Jacks are often mated with female horses (mares) to produce mules; the less common hybrid of a male horse (stallion) and jenny is a hinny.

JOKES AND PUZZLES

BY ABDULLAH HARUNA

Jokes



I see food and I eat it.

5. Why did the scarecrow get promoted?
He was outstanding in his field.

6. Why don't skeletons fight each other?
They don't have the guts.

7. What do you call fake spaghetti?
An impasta.

8. Why did the computer go to therapy?
Too many bytes from the past.

9. Why are elevators great at jokes?
They work on many levels.

10. I used to play piano by ear...
Now I use my hands.

11. Why did the bicycle fall over?
It was two-tiered.

12. Why can't your nose be 12 inches long?
Because then it would be a foot.

13. I asked the librarian if the library had books on
paranoia.

She whispered, "They're right behind you."

14. Why did the tomato blush?
It saw the salad dressing.

15. Why don't eggs tell secrets?
They might crack.

16. I once got fired from the calendar factory.
I took a couple of days off.

17. Why did the coffee file a police report?
It got mugged.

18. What do you call a belt made of watches?
A waist of time.

19. Why did the student eat his homework?
The teacher said it was a piece of cake.

20. Why are fish so smart?
They live in schools.

FUN PUZZLE
Find The Hidden Words

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

- Why don't programmers like nature?
It has too many bugs.
- I told my suitcase that there will be no vacation
this year.
Now I'm dealing with emotional baggage.
- Why did the math book look sad?
It had too many problems.
- I started a seafood diet.

Riddles



- What has keys but can't open locks?
A piano.
- What has a heart that doesn't beat?
An artichoke.
- I speak without a mouth and hear
without ears. What am I?
An echo.
- What can travel around the world
while staying in a corner?
A stamp.
- The more you take, the more you
leave behind. What are they?
- What gets wetter the more it dries?
A towel.
- I have branches, but no fruit, trunk
or leaves. What am I?
A bank.
- What has hands but can't clap?
A clock.
- What has many teeth but can't bite?
A comb.
- What runs but never walks?
Water.
- What has an eye but cannot see?
A needle.
- I shave every day, but my beard stays
the same. Who am I?
A barber.
- What goes up but never comes down?
Your age.
- What can fill a room but takes up no
space?
Light.
- If you drop me I crack, if you smile
at me I smile back. What am I?
A mirror.
- What begins with T, ends with T, and
has tea inside?
A teapot.
- What comes once in a minute, twice

- in a moment, but never in a thousand years?
The letter M.
- What belongs to you but other people
use it more than you do?
Your name.

- What has legs but doesn't walk?
A table.
- What is always in front of you but
can't be seen?
The future

SPORTS: BEHIND THE SCENES

By Muhammad Kukuri
MuhammadKukuri@neptuneprime.com.ng**“I still have a few fights left in me,” says former UFC middleweight champion Israel Adesanya to fans**

Nigeria-born, New Zealand-based former two-time UFC middleweight champion, Israel Adesanya, has made an unexpected prediction about his future in the sport.

According to a report on UK website, The Independent, Adesanya recently hinted that he has more fights left than many fans would expect. This is because the former UFC champion is preparing for a tough battle scheduled for March 28, 2026, which will see him take on rising contender Joe Pyfer in the main event of a Fight Night in Seattle, US.

“And the question on most lips is whether Pyfer’s heavy hands will neutralise Adesanya’s slick striking and movement, as well as the experience of the former two-time middleweight champion,” The Independent wrote.

“If Adesanya, 36, can see off Pyfer, 29, he will snap a three-fight losing streak, having gone 1-4 in his last five bouts. Meanwhile, American Pyfer will enter Seattle on a three-fight winning streak, having bounced back well from his sole UFC loss in 2024.

Ahead of next month’s clash with Pyfer, Adesanya talked about his future as a UFC fighter while speaking on his YouTube channel.

However, while many people believe that the Nigerian-born New Zealander might only have a few fights left in him, that may not be the case after all, according to Adesanya himself.

“Less than 10 fights left” Adesanya told his brother. “What, are you surprised?” When his brother responded, saying that he thought the “Last Stylebender” might only have four or five fights left, the former champion responded: “Who knows? I know it’s less than 10, it can’t be past 10. “So, if I fight now and one more time towards the end of the year maybe, that’s two fights. If I do two fights a year... f***. Next year, I can still fight. 2028 is where I’ll be like... I don’t know yet, I can’t see past 2027. I don’t know.

“I don’t think that far ahead at the moment, but I do glance at it, but I don’t really try to focus on it. I just know I’m on the tail end.

“I can see the finish line. I’ve been seeing the finish line in the distance, but now it’s closer. But who knows at what pace I will get there?”

Adesanya last recorded a win almost three years ago, with the triumph coming back in April 2023, when he knocked out old rival Alex Pereira to regain the UFC middleweight title, avenging his own stoppage loss to the Brazilian from November 2022.



Adesanya

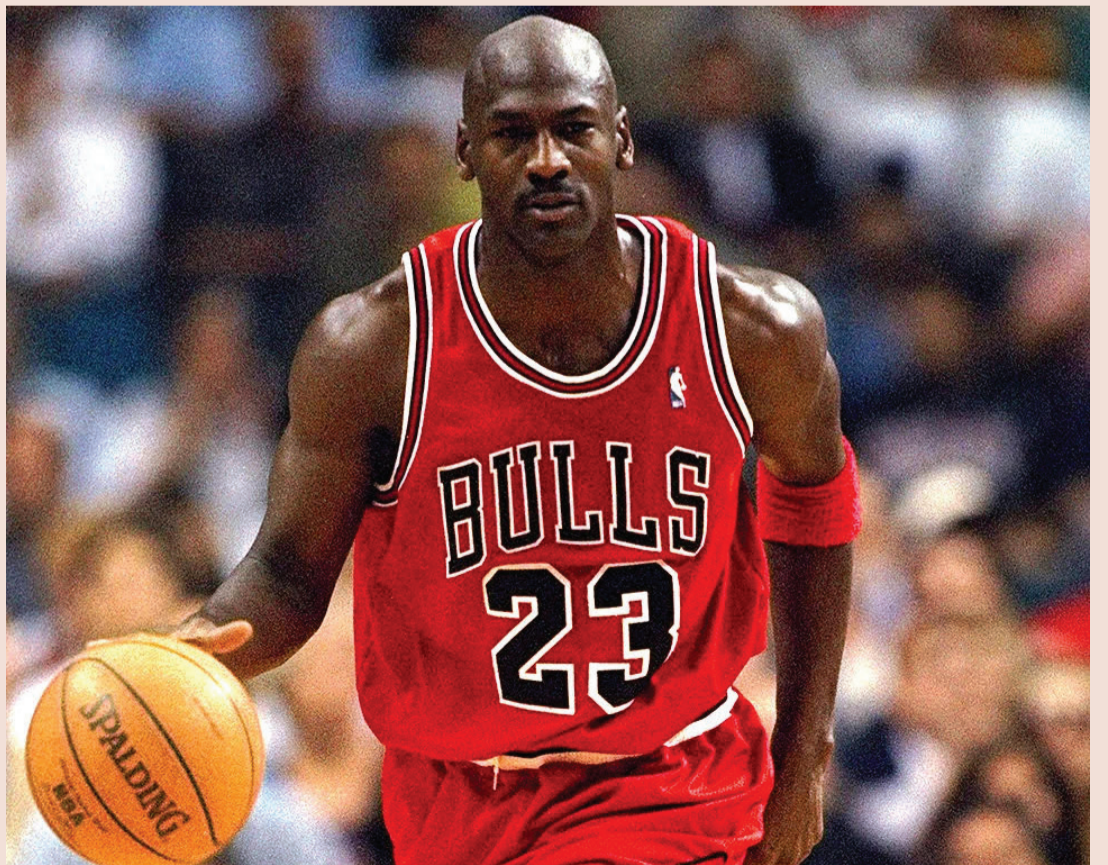
Michael Jordan: Defying setbacks to magnificent greatness

Before becoming one of the greatest basketball players in history, Michael Jordan faced a setback that could have ended his dream early. As a teenager, he was famously cut from his high school varsity basketball team — a moment that crushed him emotionally. Behind the scenes, however, that disappointment became the fuel for his transformation. Jordan would wake up early to train before school, spend extra hours perfecting his shooting, and push himself harder than anyone else on the court.

Coaches and teammates often spoke about his relentless work ethic — staying long after practice ended, repeating drills until exhaustion, and studying opponents obsessively.

What fans saw on the court — the game-winning shots, championships, and iconic moments — were only the visible results of years of unseen discipline, sacrifice, and resilience.

Jordan later described failure not as an obstacle but as a teacher that forced him to improve. His story demonstrates that success is rarely sudden; it is built quietly behind closed doors through consistency, perseverance, and belief in oneself.



Jordan

BOOKS

BY MUHAMMAD AL-TJANI

Then I Was Guided (14)

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 me because of all that, the Saudi government prevented them from visiting the graves."

I laughed and said, "Is it because of that you judge them as being deviant from Islam?" He said, "That and other reasons. They come to visit the Prophets (saw) grave, but at the same time they stand around the graves of Abu Bakr and Umar and curse them, and some of them throw dirt and litter on the graves."

When I heard these allegations I remembered what my father had told me when he came back from the Pilgrimage that they throw dirt on the Prophet's (saw) grave. There is no doubt that my father never saw them with his own eyes because he said, "We noticed some soldiers from the Saudi Army beating a few pilgrims with sticks and when we protested against their humiliating treatment of the pilgrims of the House of Allah, they answered us: These are not Muslims, they are Shi'a who brought dirt to throw on the Prophet's (saw) grave. My father said: We then left them at that, and cursed them and spat at them."

And now I heard from my Saudi friend who was born in al-Medinah al-Munawwarah that they

came to visit the Prophet's (saw) grave but throw dirt on Abu Bakr's and Umar's graves. I became suspicious of the two stories, for I had been on pilgrimage and had seen the blessed room where the graves of Prophet (saw) and Abu Bakr and Umar are locked and nobody could come near them to touch the door or window or indeed to throw anything inside them for two reasons.

Firstly there are no gaps, and secondly there is a strict guard with tough soldiers watching each door, and every one of them carries a whip in his hand to beat the pilgrims who dare to enter the room. It is very likely that some of the Saudi soldiers in their prejudice against the Shi'a accused them with these allegations to justify their aggression towards them or perhaps to provoke other Muslims to fight them and to spread rumors in their countries, that the Shi'a hate the Messenger of Allah and throw dirt on his grave, thus killing two birds with one stone.

A distinguished man whom I trusted told me the following story: We were going around the House of Allah when suddenly a young man suffered a severe pain in his stomach and vomited. The soldiers who were guarding the Black Stone started beating the man and accused him of defiling al-Kaba. He was taken out in a deplorable way then was tried and executed the same day. All these dramatic stories went round in my mind and I thought for a second about the justification of my Saudi friend for blaspheming the Shi'a, but could not find anything apart from the fact that they beat their chests and cry and prostrate themselves on stones, besides the fact that they pray by the graves. I asked myself, "Is this sufficient proof to blaspheme he who believes that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad (saw) is His Servant and His Messenger? And he prays, gives alms, fasts Ramadan, visits the House of Allah on pilgrimage, does good deeds and prevents bad deeds. I did not want to antagonize my friend and to enter into a useless discussion with him so I briefly said, "May Allah enlighten us and enlighten them, and lead us on the right path, and may Allah curse the enemies of Islam and the Muslims."

Every time I went around the House of Allah during al-Umrah, and during my visit to the Blessed Mecca where I found only a few

Then I was Guided



Muhammad al-Tijani al-Samawi

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visitors, I prayed and asked Allah genuinely to open my eyes and to lead me to the truth. I stood by the place of Ibrahim (a.s.) and recited the following verse from the Qur'an:

"And strive hard in (the way of) Allah (such) a striving as is due to Him; He has chosen you and has not laid upon any hardship in religion; the faith of your father Ibrahim; he named you Muslims before and in this, that the Messenger may be a bearer of witness to you, and you may be bearers of witness to the people; therefore keep up prayer and pay the alms and hold fast by Allah, He is your Guardian, how excellent the Guardian and how excellent the Helper." (Holy Qur'an 22:78) Then I started calling our master Ibrahim or rather our forefather Ibrahim, as the Qur'an calls him: "O Father, you, who called us Muslims, your off spring have disagreed after you, some of them became Jews, others Christians and some others became Muslims; and the Jews were divided among themselves into seventy one groups, the Christians were divided into seventy two groups and the Muslims were divided into seventy-three groups; all of them are in darkness, as you told your son

Muhammad (saw) but only one group stayed faithful to your oath. O Father!

Is it the way that Allah wants it to be for His creation, as the fatalists believe, so Allah assigns to each soul its destiny, to be Jewish or Christian or Muslim or atheist or polytheist; or is it for the love of this world and deviation from Allah's commands, that they forget Allah, so that He makes them forget themselves."

I could not make myself believe in fatalism, and that Allah assigns a destiny to each individual, rather I tend to believe that Allah has created us and inspired us to understand what is right and what is wrong, and sent us His messengers to explain the complicated matters and to show us what is right or wrong.

But man fell under the spell of this life's temptation and with all his arrogance, selfishness, ignorance, curiosity, stubbornness, injustice and tyranny deviated from the right path and followed the devil. He distanced himself from the Merciful, so he lost his way, and the Holy Qur'an expressed that in the best way in the words of Allah: "Surely Allah does not do any injustice to men, but men are unjust to themselves."

(Holy Qur'an 10:44) O our father Ibrahim! We cannot blame the Jews nor the Christians for not following the right path after they have been shown the way. Look at this nation which Allah rescued when He sent your son Muhammad (saw) to it, who took it out of the darkness and enlightened it and made it the best nation in the world. It too has been divided into too many warring groups, despite the fact that the Messenger of Allah (saw) has warned them and pressed them until he said, "It is forbidden for a Muslim not to speak to his brother Muslim more than three times."

Whatever happened to this nation which is divided into many small and warring states, some of which do not even know one another. O our father Ibrahim, whatever happened to this nation. It used to be the best nation in the world; it ruled from the East to the West and introduced knowledge and enlightenment to other nations.

Today it has reached a low ebb in its history; its land has been violated and its people have been expelled... Its al-Aqsa Mosque is occupied by a Zionist gang and no one is able to liberate it. If one visits their countries, one

will find nothing except wretched poverty, terminal hunger, barren lands, diseases, bad manners, intellectual and technical backwardness, tyranny, persecution, and dirt. It is enough to compare the toilets in Western Europe to that in our countries, and see how much difference there is in hygiene between the two. It is ironic to find this low level of hygiene in our countries despite the fact that Islam has taught us that "cleanliness is a sign of faith, and dirt is a sign of the devil". Has the faith moved to Europe and the devil come to live in our midst? Why Muslims are frightened to declare their faith even in their own countries!

Why the Muslim cannot even be the master of his own face, since he cannot grow his own beard! The Muslims cannot dress in Islamic costumes, whereas the sinful publicly drink alcohol and commit awful wrongs, and the Muslim cannot even correct them and show them the right way. In fact I have been informed that in some Islamic countries like Egypt or Morocco there are fathers who send their daughters to sell their bodies, out of need and poverty, may there be no power or might but that of Allah the High and the Mighty.

O God why have you abandoned this nation and left it in darkness? No, my God, please forgive me, for it is this nation that abandoned You and chose the devil's path, and you, with all Your wisdom and might said, and Your saying is the truth: "And whoever turns himself away from the remembrance of the Merciful God, We appoint for him a devil, so he becomes his associate." (Holy Qur'an 43:36) There is no doubt that the deterioration of the Islamic nation to this low state of submissiveness and backwardness is a sign of its deviation from the right path, and a small minority or one group among seventy three would not affect the destiny of a whole nation. y 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.

TO BE CONTINUED

The Arbiter

BY HASSAN GIMBA



Iran, Beware the Fangs of January, the Scourge of February, the Ides of March (3)

CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK

Israel's message to one of the intermediaries was that it would not participate in the US attack, and therefore asked Iran not to target it. This request was also met with a negative response from Iran, which explicitly stated that with the start of US military action, Israel would be attacked. This made Netanyahu threaten to attack Iran with a force "1,000 times more than they have known", alluding to the use of nuclear bombs. The US and Europe have been, as part of their propaganda, telling whoever cares to listen that Iran would use the bomb if it had it. The world has now seen who is itching to use it.

Unlike Israel, which has been at constant war, attacking over eight countries last year, Iran has not attacked any country in the past 300 years - except in self-defence. Israel, in 2025 alone, attacked more countries than any other country in the world. It attacked six countries: Palestine, Iran, Lebanon, Qatar, Syria, and Yemen. It also carried out strikes in Tunisian, Maltese and Greek territorial waters on aid flotillas heading for Gaza. According to Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED), an independent conflict monitor, from January 1 to December 5, Israel carried out at least 10,631 attacks, marking one of the broadest geographic military offensives in a single year. This was apart from repeatedly violating the ceasefire entered into in Gaza and Lebanon, except that with Iran.

According to ACLED, in 2025, up to December 5, 2025, Israel attacked Gaza and the occupied West Bank 8,332 times, Lebanon 1,653 times, Iran 379 times, Syria 207 times, Yemen 48 times, Qatar once, Tunisian waters twice, Maltese and Greek waters once each. However, in a conflict, the US would try to keep its key forces, like aircraft carriers, hundreds of kilometres away to avoid Iran's anti-ship missiles. It would also defend its regional bases vigorously. But Iran would rally its regional allies to pressure the US from multiple fronts.

Iran's terrain would be impossible to conquer - an obvious advantage. The

Persians are, of course, technologically advanced and are particularly ahead of everyone else in the realm of asymmetric warfare. The Iranian leadership foresaw the current scenario years ago. It identified the U.S. military's most obvious weaknesses and developed an effective doctrine accordingly: hypersonic missiles, drone swarms, and a light/fast navy. Imagine a squadron of F-18 pilots returning to land on the USS Lincoln, while the carrier is desperately engaged in evasive manoeuvres, under attack from swarms of drones in the air and mini-submarines below. It is not going to work; it just can't work.

But what does the tag team of Trump and Netanyahu want? According to Iran's Foreign Minister, Abbas Araqchi, "The United States' demands that Iran eliminate its stockpile of uranium and commit to zero enrichment are unrealistic. Its demands regarding our missile programme and our support for our allies are non-negotiable. Iran will not subjugate itself to any foreign dictates. We are an independent nation, and we determine our own course."

The terms are clear and hard. Iran is expected to fully abandon its nuclear programme, stop missile development, or produce missiles whose range would not surpass the 500-kilometre range, cut ties with regional armed groups, and accept strict U.S. control and inspections. In return, Washington offers possible sanctions relief and the promise of no military attack. No firm guarantees. No equal ground. Sounds like demands, rather than negotiation - what the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps termed "surrender dressed up as diplomacy".

The demands, when looked at carefully, are all just about Israel and no talk of the Iranian people they want "to help". The lifting of sanctions was "possible", and a 500km cap wouldn't reach Israel. Meanwhile, the US continues to arm Israel to the teeth with deadly weapons. Israel last year attacked Iran, unprovoked, killing scores of



Dr Gimba

its Generals and scientists. Trump once claimed that "all nuclear sites in Iran have been completely destroyed and/or obliterated...it would take years to bring them back into service...", but in contradiction, he now insists that he wants to strike the nation's nuclear sites. His Defence Secretary, Pete Hegseth, also claimed they dealt the "final blow" to Iran's nuke ambitions. But now, just like with Venezuela, the narrative has changed. Iran has responded by offering negotiations under one condition: equal rules for all regional powers. Tehran proposes a nuclear-free Middle East, including restrictions on Israel's weapons. But

America, no doubt at the behest of Israel, has rejected the proposal.

One may ask, what happened to the deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) signed by Iran and the US, UK, France, Russia, China, and Germany, with the explicit intention of preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon while simultaneously reintroducing the regime into the international community. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was to be guaranteed access to inspect and monitor sites, including potentially "undeclared" sites, through a defined dispute-resolution system.

In return, Iran would receive substantial sanctions relief, including the unfreezing of billions of dollars in Iranian assets and foreign currency reserves.

It was the result of true diplomacy, a brilliant and well-constructed attempt by a genuine statesman, Barack Obama, to literally bring traditional adversaries to the table and find a common ground in the pursuit of global peace.

Netanyahu, in particular, aggressively criticised the deal as a "historic mistake" and urged Republicans to oppose the deal during a speech to Congress (while Obama was still President!), and that made Trump withdraw from the deal, calling it "the worst deal ever" in 2018.

The Europeans, Chinese, and Russians attempted to continue the deal without the U.S., but Trump not only reimposed sanctions, he also added new ones. Yet, Iran initially

complied, but after about a year of inaction, it began incrementally breaching the agreement and recommenced enrichment programmes that had been ceased under the deal.

The Siamese twins and the system handling them are aware of what they are doing. They are playing a high-stakes game. Through the collapse of Iran, they aim to achieve three things: corner the world's oil and gas for the US, bring China to its knees, and cut off Russia from the South. That would effectively nip the emerging multipolar world in the bud, and the world would come under the hegemon's dictatorship, with everyone else an underling.

While they are doing all they can to isolate Iran internationally through the cancellation of invitations to international events and destroy its economy through sanctions, Iran must muster efforts to counter that, especially from an economic perspective. It can no longer rely on the old idea of rules-based order. Recent events in Gaza, more especially, and unilateral actions against international law by the Siamese twins and their tag team leaders have shown that the rules-based international order is false and transnational institutions have failed to stand by their principles and, therefore, lost relevance.

Iran may need to consider adopting the Chinese currency, even if only for a limited period. It is strong and cannot be bastardised the way America and the West bastardised that of Iran.

Yet all that Trump is doing is American policy; it does not matter whether the President is a Democrat or a Republican. Trump is just being too obvious. Call it crude, unpolished, insensitive, or by whatever name, that's the aim of America, the Tiger, and Israel; the tail that wags it. It's their policy. They are just being desperate now because the writing is on the wall: it is the desperation of a dying empire - the last kicks of a dying horse. *Hassan Gimba is the Publisher and CEO of Neptune Prime.*

Concluded