

Our Nigeria

Out of Many, One (e pluribus unum)

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**Buhari Subdued Boko Haram,
give APC another chance-
Gen. Buratai**

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CONTENTS

06	WITHDRAWAL LIMIT: ALL GOVT PAYMENTS MUST BE CASHLESS FROM MARCH - NFIU		
07	ZULUM VISITS INDIAN UNIVERSITY, EXPLORES PARTNERSHIP ON LECTURERS' TRAINING, OTHERS	26	TINUBU GOT IT RIGHT ON TERRITORIES RECLAIMED BY BUHARI- BURATAI
08	ZULUM GRADUATES FIRST SET OF BENEFICIARIES OF WOMEN SKILLS ACQUISITION CENTRE	29	FOOD SECURITY: EXPERT CHARGES YOUTH TO EMBRACE AGRICULTURE TO IMPROVE FOOD PRODUCTION, ECONOMY.
10	DUMPING ME WILL END YOUR POLITICAL CAREERS, ATIKU WARNS WIKE, OTHERS	30	NATIONAL UNITY, EQUITY PANACEA TO NIGERIA'S MYRIAD CHALLENGES- IBM HARUNA
12	HOW EXPENSIVE IS THE WIKE CONUNDRUM TO PDP'S PRESIDENTIAL CHANCES?	34	APPRAISING OPERATIONAL SUCCESSES OF THE MILITARY IN 2022
14	WILL OBI BE IN DISTANCE THIRD OR CANDIDATE TO BEAT IN 2023 ELECTION?	36	SECURITY
16	WHAT GEN. FARUQ YAHAYA IS DOING	38	ECONOMY
18	COMMITMENT, TRUSTWORTHINESS BEDROCK OF GOMBE RIFAN ANCHOR BORROWER'S SUCCESS- SANI	40	BUNI'S COMMERCIAL DRIVE THROUGH ULTRA-MODERN MARKETS' CONSTRUCTION
		42	TIME TO PROSECUTE HON. GUDAJI KAZAURE
		44	ENTERTAINMENT
		46	ANALYSIS
		48	BOOK LUNCH
		50	SPORTS

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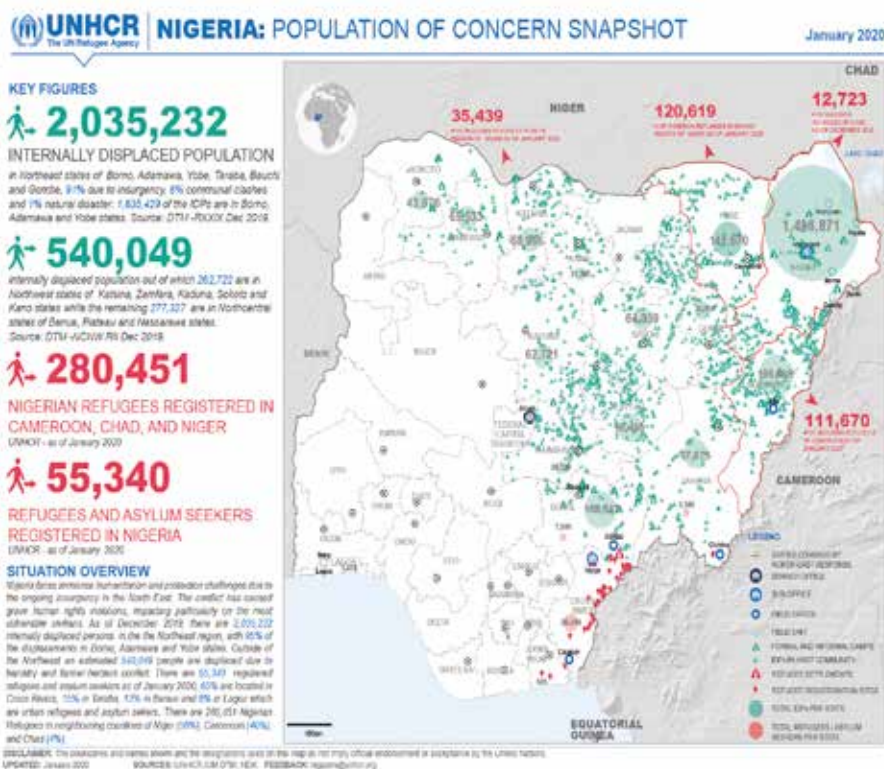
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What Is Naira Scarcity, Anyway?



It is no longer news that Nigeria has been engulfed in a never-heard-before cash shortage that surpasses the experience of 1972, as citizens who have dutifully deposited their old naira notes following the Central Bank of Nigeria's directives are finding it difficult, and infact, next to impossible to access the new naira notes, to enable them go about their daily activities.

It could be recalled that on the 22nd of October 2022, the CBN Governor, Godwin Emefiele, announced the change into new currencies of the three highest denominations of the Naira N200, N500 and N1000. Emefiele claimed in his speech that there were problems with the currency that had an impact on the CBN and the nation.

Among other things, he brought up the public's hoarding of banknotes, the scarcity of clean and fit banknotes, the danger of fake money, and, most importantly, the global practice of central banks revamping the currency every five to eight years. He remarked that the Naira had not undergone a redesign in twenty years, and the justifications did appear to be valid. Nigerians also

regarded the reform as a method to stop fraud, specifically vote-buying, which is made essential with money that could have been saved as elections drew near.

The naira redesign is not solely to blame for the cash shortage. According to reports, since the CBN governor took office in 2014, the value of the Naira has fallen by 70%. The dual currency system and current forex policies have caused the Naira to consistently depreciate against the dollar, reaching a high of nearly N800 per dollar at one time last year. Without much of a fight, Nigeria's economy has collapsed due to a decline in the overworked crude oil sector and a decrease in foreign investments, prompting many worried Nigerians to call for Emefiele's dismissal.

The recent cash shortage is especially upsetting because better planning could have been done. For starters, a nation the size of ours with millions of residents shouldn't rush to make decisions without considering the whole range of potential effects across all social strata. The current state of affairs has been nothing short of agonizing

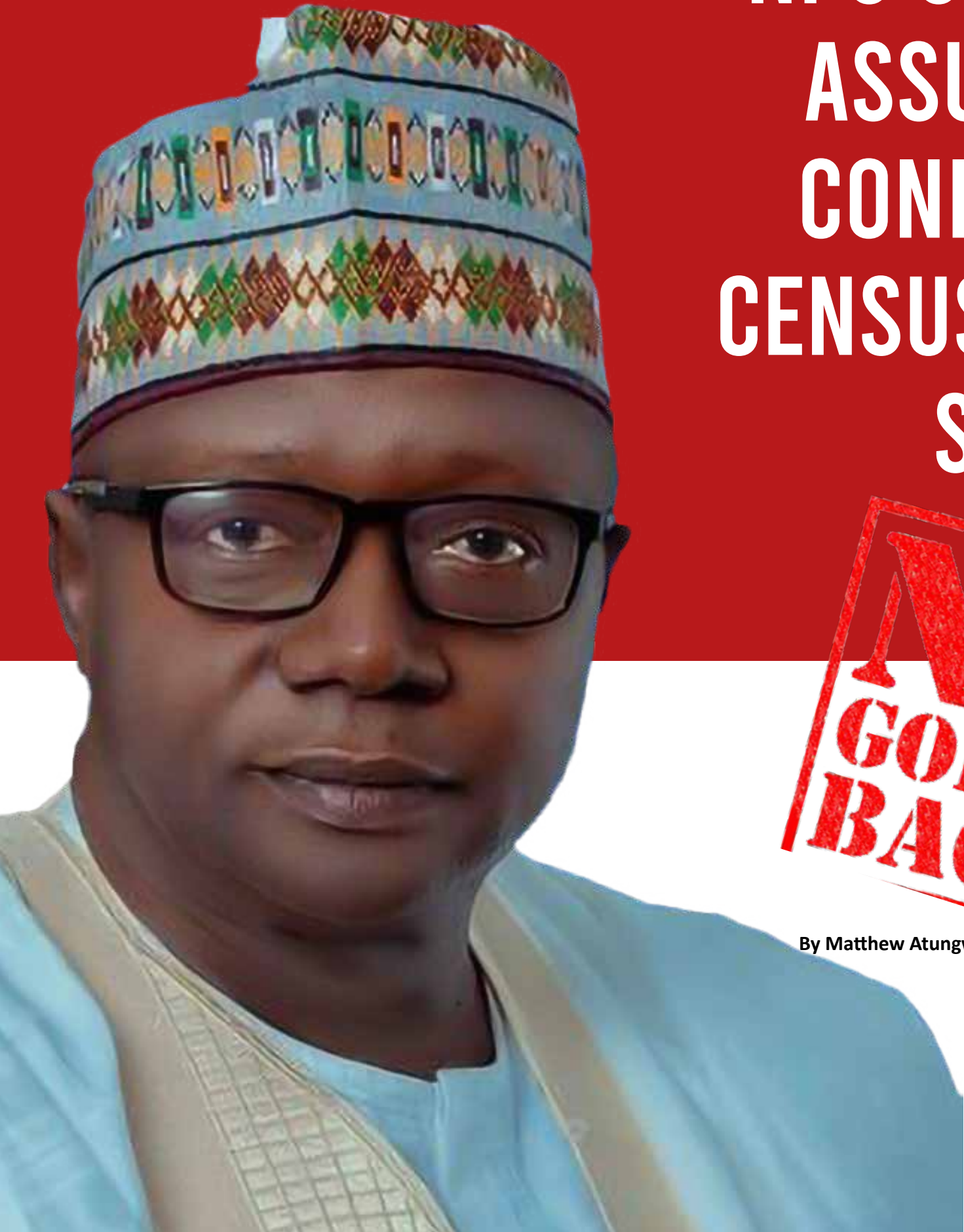
and mentally taxing, with multiple documented occurrences portraying a dissatisfied nation on the verge of further destruction.

Fair enough, some state governments, including Kaduna, Zamfara, and Kogi, showed concerns by instituting a suit against the Federal Government at the Supreme Court. They urged the Supreme Court to grant them an interim injunction stopping the Federal Government either by itself or acting through the CBN, the commercial banks or its agents from carrying out its plan of ending the timeframe within which the now older versions of the 200, 500 and 1000 denominations of the Naira may no longer be legal tender on February 10, 2023.

Luckily, on Wednesday, February 8, 2023, the Supreme Court granted their prayer by issuing an interim injunction restraining the Federal Government from suspending the acceptance of the old Naira notes on the February 10, 2023, deadline. It is hoped that with the Supreme Court judgement, things will return to normal, and Nigerians shall have unlimited access to their money again.

NEWS

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**NO
GOIN
BACK**

By Matthew Atungwu

CHAIRMAN ES OF CT OF N 2023, YS



The Chairman of the National Population Commission, Alhaji Nasir Kwarra, has stated that there will be no going back on the conduct of the 2023 Population and Housing Census.

He assured that everything had been put in place to ensure the success of the exercise and urged all stakeholders, civil society organisations, development partners, and governments at all levels to give the exercise their full support to ensure its success.

The Chairman, speaking at the Benue State Stakeholders Summit on the Population and Housing Census, which was organised by the NPC in collaboration with the Benue State government, reiterated that the Commission would conduct a technology-driven exercise to achieve the best results.

He noted that “preparation for the conduct of the 2023 census has reached a point of no return; we have reach a point where we cannot jettison the exercise.

“We have done the digital mapping and we have done the census pre-test and everything was successful. We therefore want to assure Nigerians that the figures that will come out at the end of the exercise will be the exact figures.”

The Chairman commended President Muhammadu Buhari for his commitment to conducting a successful population census despite the country’s challenges. He also praised Governor Samuel Ortom for his support

of the exercise, saying that his commitment demonstrated that the Governor understood the importance of demographic data in the development of a state, “which is why I urge Benue people to present themselves to be counted.”

Also, Governor Sameul Ortom, who declared the Summit open, stated that the meeting provided traditional rulers and stakeholders with necessary information to help them better support the exercise.

“The people must braze up to ensure the success of the exercise

in Benue state because census plays

“We have done the digital mapping and we have done the census pre-test and everything was successful. We therefore want to assure Nigerians that the figures that will come out at the end of the exercise will be the exact figures”

important roles during several considerations and posterity will not forgive us if it is discovered that while here we did not play our roles well and we are shortchanged,” the Governor said, urging the people of the state to deemphasize politics and support the conduct of the exercise. As a result, the census is a serious matter that should be treated as such.”

The Governor praised President Buhari for making it a priority, despite the upcoming elections, to conduct the country’s census in the same year.

On her part, the NPC Federal Commissioner for Benue state, Mrs. Patricia Kupchi, said the commission was on track to deliver the best

population census to Nigerians. “The conduct of population census is a massive exercise, so all stakeholders must work together to ensure its success,” she said. In Benue state, we will conduct an accurate, reliable, and acceptable census. To that end, the Commission is conducting digital, transparent, and scientific census preparations. “And the census is being conducted in three stages, namely, pre-enumeration, enumeration and post enumeration stages.”

Mrs. Kupchi stated that the Commission had already made significant progress ahead of the exercise, which began with the Enumeration Area Demarcation, EAD. She stated that the Summit provided the commission with the opportunity to rally traditional rulers and stakeholders in support of a successful census in the state.

She explained that the trainees would scale down the training to the Local Government Areas, or LGAs, with Enumerators and Supervisors being trained in preparation for the census.

According to her, “the Training Plan provides a clear understanding of what must happen to meet the training requirements that have been defined. As such, it is important that functionaries are trained in the knowledge and skills required to support their responsibilities, the processes, and technology to be used during the census.

“In a digital census, it is imperative that a digitally skilled workforce is utilized, thus, a mixed training program for the 2023 PHC which includes self-learning study, online virtual training with monitored

simulated hands-on and in-person classroom training was designed.” She explained that “the quality of the personnel for the 2023 PHC has a great impact on the outcome of the census. Therefore, the need to properly train the facilitators who will, in turn, train the supervisors and the enumerators at the local government level cannot be overemphasized.

“For the next ten days, participants

“*In preparation for the 2023 census, the Commission has introduced new technologies such as CensusPAD and CSPro to ensure that the 2023 Population and Housing Census is credible, reliable and acceptable.*”

at this first level of state training will re-evaluate the skills and practical demonstrations of operations in the field with the overall effort to deliver a truly scientific credible and acceptable 2023 Census. Thus, the conduct of the training of facilitators is our strategy of making sure that the journey we make towards the next census is strong and error-proof.

“For us in the Commission, getting the 2023 PHC right is not just an option but an absolute necessity in our quest to deliver a credible, reliable, acceptable and verifiable 2023 census. The Commission will leave no stone unturned to ensure that the 2023 census is carried out meticulously, professionally, and scientifically.”

According to her, the commission had introduced new technologies in the forthcoming census exercise

to make it the most credible, reliable and acceptable in history. “In preparation for the 2023 census, the Commission has introduced new technologies such as CensusPAD and CSPro to ensure that the 2023 Population and Housing Census is credible, reliable and acceptable.

“The geospatial and infrastructure data, as well as the enumeration form, shall be uploaded on the tablets, also called Personal Digital Assistant (PDA), which are ultra-portable computers that can run a variety of software programs. Based on the above, the data collection in the 2023 Population and Housing Census shall be through Computer Assisted Personal Interviews, CAPI.

“To ensure that the 2023 Census does not lose focus in view of predetermined objectives and processes, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) instruments have been developed to assess the extent to which objectives are being met or not and whether the processes are being adhered to or not.

“The Commission wishes to assure Nigerians and the international community of its readiness to conduct a credible, reliable, and acceptable 2023 Population and Housing Census.”

The Tor Tiv, HRM Ochiviri Prof. James Ayatse, the Ochi’Idoma, HRM Dr. Elaigwu Odogbo, the State Chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria, CAN, Rev. Akpen Leva, representatives of Local Government Chairmen, and others who spoke at the event promised to work closely with the NPC to ensure the success of the upcoming census.

CBN cashless policy infringes human rights, Constitution, says Ndume

By Auwal Umar

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Army, Senator Mohammed Ali Ndume, has said the Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) cashless policy has infringed on human rights and the 1999 Constitution of the country.

He said that the federal government doesn't have the infrastructure to carry out the CBN's cashless policy in all 774 local councils.

Ndume said this while talking to reporters at the Government Reservation Area (GRA) residence in Maiduguri. He is the senator for Borno South Senatorial District.

He lamented the printing of only N300 billion of the redesigned N200, N500, and N1,000 notes as opposed to the N2.03 trillion mopped up, or 75 percent of the N2.7 trillion held

by the people.

"The situation on the ground has gotten worse in many states, including the Northeast where Boko Haram is fighting," he said.

Ndume added that soldiers on the frontlines of Sambisa Forest and the Lake Chad region cannot get cash from the Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) to buy food from their daily N5,000 allowances.

"The apex bank's policy of not giving out cash is having a big effect on military operations in the Northeast," he said, adding that a soldier was about to be killed because he got to the ATM booth before anyone else and took out cash.

He claimed that the people had suffered the most because they were unable to access money deposited

with commercial banks to meet their basic needs.

"The cashless policy has violated the basic human rights of our people because they can't meet their daily basic needs," he said.

He says, though, that the CBN policy goes against the 1999 Constitution because the country doesn't have the infrastructure to put the cashless policy in place.

He stated that people's inability to access their money in banks will continue to have an impact on their welfare, including basic necessities.

He, therefore, called on the CBN to provide the military and other security agencies with emergency cash on the forest and lake frontlines in the Northeast.



Earthquake kills thousands in Turkey, Syria, Newborn baby rescued

The 7.8 magnitude earthquake in Southeastern Turkey and Northwestern Syria claimed more than 11,000 lives.

Over 17,000 buildings collapsed in the incident rendering many residents of the affected areas homeless.

Experts Described the incident as one of the strongest earthquakes to hit the region in a century as the incident woke residents from their beds at around 4 am sending tremors as far away as Lebanon and Israel.

The earthquake, which hit near the town of Gaziantep, was closely followed by numerous aftershocks - including one quake which was almost as large as the first.

The first earthquake was big - it registered as 7.8, classified as "major" on the official magnitude scale. It broke along about 100km (62 miles) of the fault line, causing serious damage to buildings near the fault.

Prof Joanna Faure Walker, head of the Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction at University College London, said: "Of the deadliest earthquakes in any given year, only two in the last 10 years have been of equivalent magnitude, and four in the previous 10 years."

This saddening incident occurred in the early hours of Monday 6th January 2023 when people were inside and sleeping.

Experts revealed that the sturdiness of the buildings in the affected areas is also a factor.

Dr Carmen Solana, a reader in volcanology and risk communication at the University of Portsmouth, says: "The resistant infrastructure is unfortunately patchy in South Turkey and especially Syria, so saving lives mostly relies on response.

The cause of the earthquake is still unknown but many experts evaluate what might be the cause and other

earth issues which might be the major cause.

Narrating how earthquake happens, A scholar said, "Earth's crust is made up of separate bits, called plates, that nestle alongside each other.

"These plates often try to move but are prevented by the friction of rubbing up against an adjoining one. But sometimes the pressure builds until one plate suddenly jerks across, causing the surface to move.

"In this case, it was the Arabian plate moving northwards and grinding against the Anatolian plate.

"Friction from the plates has been responsible for very damaging earthquakes in the past.

"On 13 August 1822, it caused an earthquake registering 7.4 in magnitude, significantly less than the 7.8 magnitudes recorded on Monday.

"Even so, the 19th Century earthquake resulted in immense damage to towns in the area, with



7,000 deaths recorded in the city of Aleppo alone. Damaging aftershocks continued for nearly a year.”

Also a seismologist from Durham university Jenny Jenkins while explaining the cause of the quake said “ This area of Turkey is prone to earthquakes as it lies at the intersection of three of the tectonic plates that make up the Earth’s crust: the Anatolian, Arabian and African plates. Arabia is moving northwards into Europe, causing the Anatolian plate (which Turkey sits on) to be pushed out westwards.

“The movement of the tectonic plates builds up pressure on fault zones at their boundaries. It is the sudden release of this pressure that causes earthquakes and ground shaking.

“This latest earthquake is likely to have happened on one of the major faults that mark the boundaries between the Anatolian and Arabian plates: either the East Anatolian fault or the Dead Sea Transform fault. These are both “strike-slip faults”,

which means they accommodate some motion of plates moving past each other.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan who visited the disaster zone in his country said “it’s not possible to prepare for disasters of this magnitude” following criticism from citizens on the response of officials to the incident.

He urged residents to be calm following their critics saying things will get better with the efforts of the rescue team and the help of foreign nations.

The earthquake despite its damage shows how ready world powers and other nations are ready to offer help to nations like Turkey who need urgent assistance across the world.

The UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak spoke to Turkey’s President Erdogan to reiterate the UK’s commitment to helping.

He said “We will continue to provide all the support that is asked of us,” he said during his weekly Prime

Minister’s Questions session.

Also, The EU confirmed it will send €3.5m (£3.1m) in aid to Syria.

The announcement comes after Syria officially asked for assistance under a scheme designed to support countries hit by natural disasters by activating the EU’s Civil Protection Mechanism.

The bloc has also announced an initial €3m (£2.7m) in aid to Turkey after the country activated the EU’s Civil Protection Mechanism.

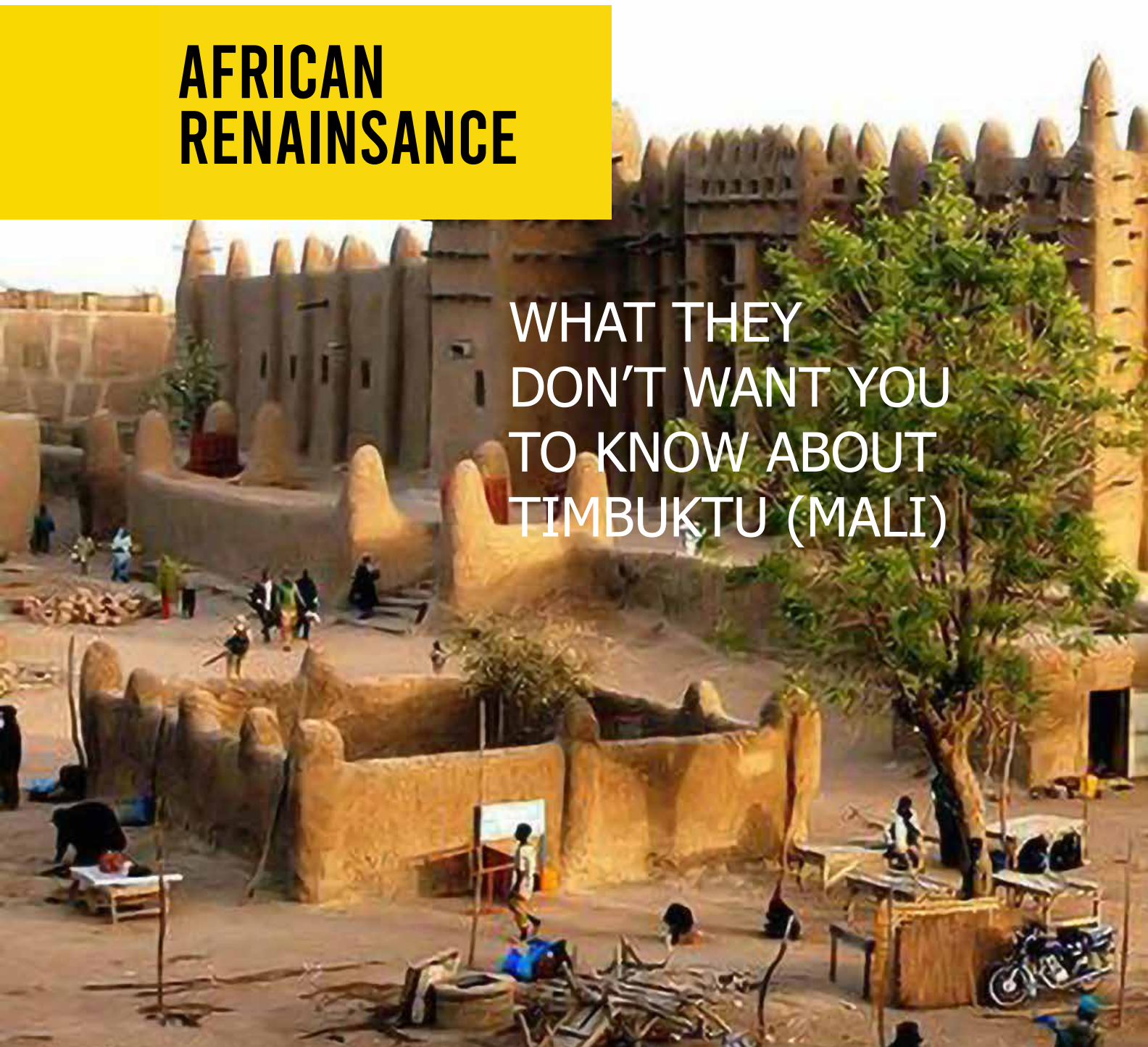
Other countries including Iraq, Iran, Jordan, UAE and Egypt sent their rescue team to Syria.

Bashar al-Assad’s government has requested help from the international community, including the European Union.

With help of other nations, Turkey and Syria rescue teams, many victims were pulled out of the rubble including a family of six, a 5-year-old girl, a newborn baby and former Newcastle player Christian Atsu

AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

WHAT THEY DON'T WANT YOU TO KNOW ABOUT TIMBUKTU (MALI)



Did you know that in the 14th century, the city of Timbuktu was 5 times larger than London?

And even that it was then the richest city in the world?

Nearly 200 years before Columbus, Malian sailors land in America!

Timbuktu, located in Africa, was once considered one of the greatest cities in the world. It was renowned for its impressive artistry, splendid architecture, advanced science, and

rich history. It was a vibrant center of learning, culture and trade. Unfortunately, it has now fallen into disrepair, but its legacy as an impressive city lives on.

In the 14th century, the city of Timbuktu in Mali had a population that was five times higher than that of medieval London. This meant that it had 115,000 people living in it.

Because of its highly developed intellectual culture, Timbuktu was recently referred to by National

Geographic as the “Paris” of the medieval world. Professor Henry Louis Gates estimates that there were 25,000 students attending the institution.

In West Africa, there are a lot of old families, and a lot of those old families have private library collections that extend back hundreds of years. Both Chinguetti and Oudane, which are both located in Mauritania, have a combined total of 3,450 handwritten medieval books.



It is estimated that the city of Timbuktu contains a total of 6,000 more books. Some of them can be traced back to the eighth century A.D. A little more than 11,000 volumes are held in private collections across the country of Niger.

Last but not least, there were around 700,000 books that have been preserved in Timbuktu but the insurgents and terrorists destroyed everything. Mande, Suqi, Peul, and Sudani are the languages that were used to write them. The

topics covered in the texts include astronomy, mathematics, medicine, and poetry as well as legal and legal theory.

This work, which was written in the 14th century, is considered to be the very first encyclopedia. The concept of an encyclopedia did not originate in Europe until the 18th century.

In the 16th century, a library that consisted of a collection of one thousand and six hundred books was regarded to be on the smaller

side for a West African scholar. Professor Ahmed Baba from Timbuktu boasted that his library was the smallest of all his friends' libraries despite the fact that he only owned 1,600 books.

Michael Palin, in his television series "Around the Sahara," mentioned these ancient manuscripts when he stated that the imam of Timbuktu "holds a library of scientific literature which plainly demonstrate the planets orbiting the sun."



KCCN, Goethe-Institut, British Council and Other Foreign Cultural Organisations in Nigeria

Jerry Adesewo



Barely every Embassy in Nigeria have a cultural desk, manned by a Cultural Attache. Some have the cultural desks, and in addition, an independent cultural agency, saddled strategically with the responsibilities of promoting the country's cultural heritage in Nigeria, and fostering cultural exchange between Nigeria and other nations. They also offer facilities for events and activities that promote arts, music, dance, literature, and other creative and cultural expressions. Today, more than a dozen of such organisations, operates in Nigeria. These cultural centres are an important component of international diplomacy.

British Council

The British Council is a cultural organization that was established in 1934 with the aim of building relationships and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries through cultural and educational programs. They operate in over 100 countries and have a presence in Nigeria. The British Council first opened its doors in Nigeria 79 years ago with the opening of its first library located in Marina in the old exhibition hall, known as British Council House.

The British Council's activities include offering English language courses, arts programs, education and examination services, and cultural exchanges. They also provide training and professional development opportunities for teachers and cultural professionals. The organization works with local partners to offer programs that are relevant to the communities they serve and aim to promote intercultural understanding and foster international collaboration in arts, education, and culture.

One of the most recent legacy project of the British Council's cultural programming is the Lagos Theatre Festival, which it established five (5) years ago, and has become a major activities on the cultural map of Lagos, and Nigeria, which has become one of the most sought-after festival in Nigeria today, especially by young theatre makers. This is in addition to many funding

opportunities, locally and globally, for cultural projects.

Goethe-Institut Nigeria (GIN)

Just last year, the German international cultural agency, Goethe Institut, celebrated its 60th anniversary of operation in Nigeria. A celebration that bears witness to Goethe's massive impact on Nigeria's cultural landscape.

In Nigeria, the Goethe-Institut operates as a cultural center and offers a range of programs and services designed to foster intercultural dialogue and understanding between Nigeria and Germany. These include German language courses, exhibitions, concerts, film screenings, literary events, and workshops in areas such as music, art and theatre. Additionally, the institute supports cultural exchange programs between Nigerian and German artists, researchers, and other cultural professionals. The Goethe-Institut also collaborates with universities, cultural organizations, and other stakeholders in Nigeria to promote mutual understanding and exchange of ideas and knowledge.

Goethe-Institut Nigeria, under its 'Support and Connect' initiative, has offered funding and technical supports to scores of cultural projects by individuals and cultural organisations, coverage a wide-range of artistic ventures such as theatre, music, literature, festivals, visual arts, contemporary dance, documentary film, photography, and such other initiatives by young Nigerian artists. This initiative also provides travel grants to artists to attend festivals and other cultural projects in German. This is in addition to other tailor made support system by the GIN and of course the German-Institut International.

Korean Cultural Centre Nigeria (KCCN)

Personally, the Korean Cultural Centre, located on the second floor of Rivers house in Abuja, has been more like home to me, since I walk through their doors in May 2010, when the centre was officially opened to the public, as part of

activities celebrating 30 years of bilateral relations between Nigeria and Korea.

There are close to 40 Korean Cultural Centres worldwide. Among them, KCCN is the first-ever Korean Cultural Centre in Africa, working hard to promote Korean culture throughout Africa and by extension, support the growth of the creative and cultural industry in Nigeria through various initiatives. .

KCC Nigeria has hosted various small and large cultural events such as K-POP Dance Competition, Taekwondo Competition, Korean Cultural Festival, Korean Film Festival, Korean Drawing Competition for Schools, Korean Quiz Competition for Schools, Taekwondo Championships, Korea Love Days, and for nine (years), it funded the annual Korea-Nigeria Poetry Feast, an annual poetry competition in commemoration of the World Poetry Day.

Alliance Francaise Nigeria

The French Cultural Centre, as it used to be popularly known is one of the prime cultural organisations operating in Nigeria. is a local non-profit organisation led by an elected committee of members and an executive director, with the support of the Embassy of France in Nigeria, like the British Council, with branches, in many major Nigerian cities, like: Jos, Lagos, Abuja, Kaduna, kano, maiduguri, Ilorin and Ibadan.

While it's aim is to promote the French language and culture around the world. In Nigeria, the Alliance Française has been instrumental in promoting cultural exchange between France and Nigeria. The organization has facilitated cultural events such as film screenings, theater performances, and exhibitions, showcasing the diversity of French culture and allowing Nigerians to gain exposure to different aspects of French life. For instance, its centre in Abuja has played host to many cultural events, and still does, having recently signed a memorandum of understanding between her and another Nigerian cultural hub, Mambaah Cafe.

American Spaces in Nigeria and the

Public Affairs Unit

The US government has made a huge contribution to Nigeria's cultural landscape, promoting cultural exchange and understanding, supporting arts and education programs, and strengthening ties between the two countries. Most of these activities are discharged through various American institutions in Nigeria like United State AID (USAID), the Public Affairs Unit of the United State Embassy, and the American Spaces, which has close to 20 locations in Nigeria.

The Embassy has facilitated cultural exchanges between the United States and Nigeria, bringing over American artists, musicians, poets, and other cultural leaders to Nigeria to engage with local audiences, and taking Nigerian artists, musicians, writers, and other cultural practitioners and leaders to the United States for further engagement. These exchanges have exposed Nigerian audiences to new forms of artistic expression and increased cultural understanding between the two countries.

In a few days from now, in what could pass as one of United States of America's legacy cultural intervention in Nigeria, as part of activities commemorating the Black history Month, a production of August Wilson's 'Piano Lesson', will show in Abuja on February 10. This is an annual project funded by the US Embassy and delivered by the Theatre Department of the Ahmadu Bello University.

The Chinese Cultural Centre

In 2013, about a years after the Nigerian Cultural centre in Beijing was launched, a magnicie structure in the Wuse area of Abuja was commissioned by the Nigerian Minister of Culture, Chief Edem Duke. That structures was the Chinese Cultural Centre, which joined the growing list of foreign cultural centres in Nigeria.

The Centre immediately opened its doors to Nigerians interested in learning Mandarin, the Chinese language, which is the most spoken indigenous language in the world. Like the other cultural organisations,

CCCN has been at the forefront of promoting Chinese culture in Nigeria, through various artistic and cultural interventions, and collaborations with Nigerian artists and government institutions.

The center is equipped with a multi-function hall, gallery, experience hub, library and classrooms which are available for all kinds of activities and cultural events. Several cultural activities and training programs are held at the center, including arts exhibitions, concerts and documentaries movies on Chinese culture which are screened at regular intervals, to promote understandings of the Chinese culture.

In its almost ten years of establishment, the center is dedicated itself to promoting Chinese culture and strengthening cultural exchanges between her and Nigeria, through varying categories of partnerships and funding interventions.

Spain, Sweden, Italy, Japan and Others

There are many other interventions, though without independent cultural organisations as enumerated. However, the likes of Netherlands Embassy, Spanish Embassy, Norwegian Embassy, Italian Embassy, Japanese Embassy, Australian High Commission and the India High Commission among others, might not have cultural centres in Nigeria, what they do have is a very active culture/information desk, through which they have supported one form of cultural and educational activities or the other.

The Cultural Diplomacy Initiative between the Swedish Embassy and Arojah Royal Theatre, the Art of Friendship initiative by the Italian Embassy in Nigeria, the Direct Aid Project of the Australian High Commission, the annual Haiku Poetry Contest and animation film festival/workshop of the Japanese Embassy, among others, are some of the contribution that these foreign missions has made to Nigeria's cultural landscape.



Gombe 2023: Mailantarki tasks youths, others on peaceful polls

By Matthew Eloyi

The governorship candidate of the New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP) in Gombe State, Khamisu Ah-med Mailantarki, has again urged youths and residents of the state to conduct themselves in a calm and peaceful manner during the forthcoming general elections.

Mailantarki stated this while speaking at the NNPP campaign rally in Kumo, the headquarters of Akko Local Government Area (LGA) of the state. He equally called on the youths to reject politicians and parties sponsoring thuggery in the state.

According to him, Gombe state is already going through a lot and the situation demands everyone especially the youths to rethink and focuses on what needs to be done for a better Gombe.

In his words, "We must reject them

and give them back their weapons and ask them to take the weapons to their children to come out and fight for them. We already have our weapons which are our thumbs and Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) which we will be using to bring them down.

"We have to focus on providing job opportunities for our youths, work on the agricultural sector, our education, health, and others which I am here for. The provision of fertilizer and every other good thing are now histories in Gombe, almost all the developments that we have in Gombe are all from the previous governments and nothing to show from this current administration, therefore, we all have to come together and wrestle for our state."

Mailantarki who had been appealing for calm and peaceful conduct before, during, and after the 2013 general elections, also urged

residents in the state to look beyond the party and vote for credible candidates with the capacity to change the look of things in the state.

"We cannot continue to look at our parents and children going through a lot to sponsor our youths and children to school due to the lack of scholarships, I assure you that we are committed to addressing this and other challenges bedeviling our state," Mailantarki who had promised to pay for external examinations include the West African Examination Council (WAEC), Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) and the National Examination Council (NECO) for students in the Gombe stated.

He equally called on registered voters in the state to go and collect their PVCs, shun aparty on election day, and come out en-masse and vote for NNPP at all levels.



Politics: 2023 Presidential Election:

BATTLE OF THE RICH OR THE MESSIAH

As the 2023 Presidential election gets near, the fate of Nigeria as a nation is believed to be in the hands of the electorate to choose the candidate of their choice who will not only end insurgency, and economic hardship amidst other challenges but give Nigerians a government they can call their own through true democracy.

With the quest for a total

turnaround for the nation after the election, it is believed that Nigerians will look beyond money politics to vote for competence, experience, and true democracy in line with the manifesto of the presidential candidates.

With the serious economic challenges from fuel scarcity, Naira scarcity and poverty will Nigerian seek the messiah or



vote for the highest bidder in the coming election?

A foremost legal luminary, Afe Babalola said that Nigeria's forthcoming presidential election slated for February 25 will be won by the highest spender and not the best candidates among the contenders.

He expressed worry that the 2023 general elections will be conducted under the 1999 constitution against his advice, saying the poll will only reproduce those, who

He said, "It is not who can make a difference that will win this election, I repeat, it is not the person who has all it takes – age, health, education, and patriotism, that will win the election; the winner of this election I can bet it, is going to be the person who has made money in this country.

"It is the person who has the money that will win," the legal icon added

Odunayo Odeja X-rays views of Nigerians ahead of the election.

observed in the last 6 months, especially right now (with the present economic crisis), I would say a quest for a messiah is taking an unquestionable lead.

There is a grey area, however; the average electorate wants a messiah who can also give them "bread". Whatever uniqueness attached to THE Messiah, I'm afraid the same reasons they yearn for a messiah are the same thing pushing them towards money

Amina Abdullahi: The money bag who are desperate for power will not let the electorate decides. That's the reason why they are crying fowl & suddenly their language has changed to naira redesign is causing hardship to

Elizabeth Ofubu:

Nigeria is already in a very sorry state and has also become a laughing stock to other nations, at the moment, I don't even think we have an active government. For me, I feel like the quest for a messiah is what should lead the forthcoming election because aside from needing a serious flush of governance, we need a responsible and responsive

one that would bring an end to the misfortunes and unfortunate events that have been going on in the country. At this point, it is beyond money politics, every Nigerian is frustrated, tired and angry, we need to eradicate every mindset of allowing the best bidder without an adequate vision or a proper solution to the country's crisis.

James Ajulo: I'm presently at Yewa

North, Ogun State on a campaign train. And from what I have

“There is a grey area, however; the average electorate wants a messiah who can also give them “bread”. Whatever uniqueness attached to THE Messiah, I’m afraid the same reasons they yearn for a messiah are the same thing pushing them towards money”

Nigerians & is targeted at them. So they do not know hardship is in the land before..... psychopath does not have emotion.

But I still believe, we need a messiah & God will answer our prayers.

Ahmed Yusuf: I believe Nigerians are leopards and they don't change their spots. Nigerians will continue to vote for stomach infrastructure and tribal/religious lines.

Yinusa Musa: The Quest for a Messiah is now but the majority of the population that seeks a Messiah is Hungry and waiting to pounce on the next available

have brought Nigeria to a sordid state.

■ POLITICS

option to get a meal on the table for themselves.

This is where the Money Politics comes, they make things unbearable for the poor then come out on Election day to share the cash. Now the Hungry Nigerian will be left with the option of choosing food or the future ahead of him which is not guaranteed to him, your guess will be as good as mine as what the choice of a Hungry man will be.

Until we begin to sensitize people on social media, re-orientating them and making them see reasons beyond the kind of Politics they have practised all along, The quest for a Messiah continues until we get the Messiah.

Let the quest for Messiah start from me and you and let it live within us from our attitude and by talking to the next person around us who doesn't understand how the new system we are trying to build will shape our destiny and that of our unborn kids.

Gloria Adeyemi: Money bag politics has come to stay in Nigeria except if the electorate can speak to their conscience for a positive change. The so-called politicians have capitalised on the poverty level of the electorate and so they give them stipends like #2000, #5000, a rubber of rice, and semo and extort their political rights.

Electorates, on the other hand, denied their conscience and sell their birthright to take all this and suffer for 4, or 8 years. The only solution to this political evil is for the electorate to make one person, one vote count irrespective of the political deceit.

Funny enough the thugs employed by the politicians are children, and relatives of the poor electorate while their children are all abroad and when they get to the position they forget they suffer for the next 4 or 8 years. So let us reject

the money and defend our rights through a vote.

Sola Filani: With the current situation of Nigeria I do not believe money is our priority anymore rather the quest for a true messiah who can calm the storm of the country, however, who among the aspirants can be the saviour? that's our fear and major concern because most of them are in the interest of their pocket, not the citizens.

How can we curtail this incessant recurrence of bad leadership government when individuals play a major role by sensitizing their

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The 2023 general election is not going to change or be different from other elections, it's still going to be won by the rich, structural and popular majority parties nothing is going to change, no messiah anywhere.”

immediate community starting from the family; the smallest unit in society? Erasing the selfish habit and mentality that exists in us.

Tosin Kolawole: Nigeria is longing for Messiah but with these different unknown strategies of fuel scarcity and inflation, I think Nigerians have begun to lose guard and lose their gardening ways to survive the present situation. But it will be better and best to stay focused and fight for the Messiah we need.

Funbi Kolade: Hmmm who is the messiah among them?

Three of them are thieves.
PDP is out the candidate is from the north the way the Fulanis are

dealing with us here is very bad just imagine we don't have a say even on our land, last week they raid my brother's farm and about 4 arches and destroyed the cassava and cut the plantains not only his farm with other farms that are there too just imagine another Fulani comes in as the president that means we are finished

To Labour Party, that man has nothing to give us someone who owed doctors as a governor 88months' salary, Someone that can not manage a state how will he manage a whole country, he is also a drug dealer and into human trafficking, so if he becomes our president, human trafficking will be rampant then who will be safe?

Now to Emi Lokan, Mr corruption himself, he is physically sick drugs are controlling him, and a man full of deceit, he has nothing to offer he just wants to be there because of the title and he is ready to do anything to get there

Olorunsanumi Olowookere:

The 2023 general election is not going to change or be different from other elections, it's still going to be won by the rich, structural and popular majority parties nothing is going to change, no messiah anywhere.

Tolulope Oyeboode:

The 2023 election will go down in history as one that united the common man to reclaim the sovereignty vested in them by the constitution, it will no longer be the usual alignment where the highest bidder takes all. The dynamics are changing, the old political template of ascending power is being shattered, the money bags will lose their potency and the people of Nigeria will elect a leader who will turn the country's fortunes around. Messiah? Not exactly, but a true leader who is passionate to lead right.

Atsuwete Oluwasegun Toristeju:

The 2023 Elections in Nigeria seems to have been one the most talked about election in the history of elections in Nigeria, not because the system has changed, but because for the first time, a perceived new threat in the form of a Labour Party candidate is here. (PETER OBI)

So I have listened to people talk about this election like it's one table tennis game of thereabout.

The 2023 Election is characterized by two sects of people- those who are the social media electorate and those who are the silent political actors

THE SOCIAL MEDIA ELECTORATE

trust me these guys more than half of the number here don't have a PVC and the other half that got theirs will not be caught in the stress for too long to risk standing or maybe the little challenges our poor electorate system brings. (violence, vote buying and waiting)

The SILENT POLITICAL ACTORS

These guys have something to beat their chest for, they will risk anything to get the results rolling in.

Poverty has always been a tool in the hands of politicians. The big question to ask is, today is our economy friendly?

Are Nigerians having a good time with life?

The answer is best known to you.

Just in case you shy away from the

answers, Nigerians are suffering

So the elections will be massively polarized and influenced by vote buying. The winner of the 2023 Election is MONEY, not the people's will.

Muhammad Mufta: I think with this present situation, money won't work because the new note is not yet in circulation. I hope people will vote their conscience. I pray we get it right this time around.

Adeola Ojo

The highest spender will win the election and I have some facts to buttress this point.

I think with this present situation, money won't work because the new note is not yet in circulation. I hope people will vote their conscience. I pray we get it right this time around.

Unbalanced country: We all know that recently the country is not balanced is very open to us all that no

one will be given money now and reject it because of the present situation in the country finds herself.

No messiah somewhere: Among all the 2023 contestants, let's just be plain to ourselves none of them is a messiah to save us from all this trouble we found ourselves in; none of them has a good agenda for the movement of the country, a sick country needs a healthy leader but it was a shame that the so-called candidates are sick as well.

Money Politics: The key to election winning in Nigeria is money. The citizens don't care who you are or what you have to do for them when you attain the post, what they are after is your money. Despite this scarcity of naira, to them is not scarce, we the masses suffer for this while they wait for the right

time to use our weakness against us and that is money.

Sophia Awaiko

In as much as over 70 per cent of the Nigeria population is living in poverty, we have grown to the point where we don't need their peanuts to vote for them, we have to choose a leader who is intentional about the common man, a leader who is not going there because of his selfish reasons, a leader who wants to see the nation grow.

So yes, the lead for this coming election is THE QUEST FOR A MESSIAH

Adedara Toyosi

It is a difficult one to say but it's going to be a little bit of both. Nigeria is hot right now and the most important thing in human survival is food. When people are hungry and suffering, they don't care who is in power. The truth is that some Nigerians have seen a whole #10,000 as their money for a long time. Everyone knows that the way Nigeria can be better is for us to have capable and excellent leaders, but what are the chances of a better Nigeria for a very poor man and his family? He needs to eat. He needs to feed his kids even for a few days. He asks himself if I don't collect this money, what assurances do I have that this person I am voting for will be different from the past and present generations? None.

It is high time we vote for the right leaders but it is a difficult choice to make for a wretched Nigerian not to collect money and sell their votes.

With all the divergent views of Nigerians across the nation, it is difficult to predict the choice of Nigerians it is hoped that residents of this country will vote for the change they crave for.



2023: Has there been Changed Narrative in Nigerian Political Propaganda Strategies?

By Collins Mbakwe

Since the advent of democracy in Nigeria, electioneering campaigns and politicking have been characterized by certain features which are peculiar to Nigerian politics and that of some other African countries. One thing that can hardly be removed from politics all over the world is propaganda.

Propaganda is simply a scientific tool used by an individual or a group to shape the public perception of a person or a product. Mariam Webster, an American online English dictionary, says propaganda is ideas or statements that are often false or exaggerated and spread to help a cause, a political leader, a government, etc.

“Propaganda is the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist,” said Garth Jowett, a communications professor at the University of Houston in the United States.

Employing the right propaganda techniques opens a chance to winning the election. Sadly, the majority of the propaganda techniques that have characterized Nigerian politics are crude ones. Campaigns in Nigeria since 1999 have hardly been issue-based as we



saw in the 1960s.

However, with the impact of the chichi ObiMovement, some of the crude strategies have started to disappear, as the masses can no longer be convinced by such strategies. With Peter Obi, who

enjoys the wide support of the youths, in the race, there has been some sort of paradigm shift.

Politics is a game of persuasion. It is the psychological warfare of winning people's hearts to do the bidding of an individual or a group. But propaganda is a major tool

politicians employ to fight political and psychological battles. It is a smart way to tell people black is white and make them believe it. Little wonder, propaganda can hardly be removed from politics.

At the moment, election merchants are at the peak of displaying their propagandistic prowess ahead of the forthcoming general elections. From rebranding and marketing their candidates to pushing narratives, political parties do their best to be on top of their games.

It is no longer the survival of the fittest; it is, of course, the survival of the smartest. And being the best in the arts of propaganda could skyrocket the chances of winning the polls in the peoples' minds which may, in turn, translate to election victory.



With the build-up to the 2023 general elections, one of the crude propaganda strategies that have disappeared is the one where Nigerian politicians would parade themselves as humility-personified.

In the previous elections, you would see them eating with the poor in some slums, riding on bicycles on the streets, and eating corn and bean cakes on the streets, not without their busy with their cameras. All to deceive the masses elicit love, and acceptance from the people.

But, currently, it is clear that Obi has partly brought back the issue-based politics, and has become an eye-opener to Nigerian electorates, who now get pissed off by such cheap, deceptive scenes of politicians eating on the streets or kissing babies at some local hospitals.

Nevertheless, the propaganda strategy when politicians are stereotypical of an individual or a political group still holds sway. When they use this strategy, their agenda is mostly to promote an awful perception of their opponents to arouse public rejection. In most cases, these politicians use simple terminologies to label or give a negative description of an individual or group.

On January 7, 2023, for instance, Bola Tinubu, the presidential candidate of the All Progressive Congress (APC), described Atiku Abukar of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) as “Mr. Sell Everything” and called Peter Obi of the Labour Party “Mr. Stingy”

“My people, you cannot entrust your future or that of our nation to Mr. Sell Everything, Atiku, or Mr. Stingy, Obi,” Mr. Tinubu said during APC’s rally in Ondo State. And in the same pattern but positively, he described himself as “Mr. Progressive Good Governance Tinubu”, asking Nigerians to trust him. Propagandists often use this method to dodge fact-based opinions on public issues to tame and name their opponents so the public can see them in a bad light.

Another strategy that is still in use by politicians in Nigeria is, being good at using words. Good politicians are users of words. As James Humes, a renowned presidential speechwriter, once said, “The art of communication is the language of leadership.” The masterful use of words can sway

audiences or electorates to keep less focused on important matters. It is a manipulative strategy to distract listeners using glad words, euphemisms, and oversimplifying complex matters.

According to Sapoboxie, a propaganda and public relations website, this strategy uses important-sounding “glad words” with little or no real meaning. High-sounding words are also seen as “glittering generalities” that cannot be proved or disproved.

The Nigerian politicians of the moment that comes to mind regarding the ability to manipulate people with fantastic use of words are Peter Obi, the presidential candidate of the Labour Party, and Yemi Osinbajo, the Vice-President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Mr. Osinbajo, a law professor, had been widely glorified for speeches that made Nigerians less critical of complex issues battling their lives.

At the APC presidential primary election, for instance, Mr. Osinbajo stole the show when he delivered a speech widely applauded by many Nigerians, including those against his presidential ambition.

If the masterful use of words solely won elections, Mr. Osinbajo could have been declared the winner of the presidential primary of the APC. He delivered a speech that raised the hope of the delegates and listeners across Nigeria.

The hypnotizing words of Mr. Osinbajo could make the people less concerned about asking questions about how he intended to achieve all his campaign promises.

Nigerian masses have learned the hard way. Nevertheless, it is a thing of joy that they have now learned to pay little or no attention to the crude propaganda strategies of politicians. They now focus more on the politicians’ records and vision for Nigeria, going forward.



The Nigerian Navy under Admiral Gambo: The officer with the Midas touch

BY Dr MS Abubakar

Commending deserving people is not only the ethical thing to do, but it also motivates leaders to improve service delivery. Recognizing and appreciating hard work requires commending deserving people. It recognizes exceptional service. Leaders can motivate employees by commending their work. Leaders and followers benefit from praise. It can motivate and inspire leaders. It can also assist leaders to develop trust with their teams by making them feel valued and appreciated.

By motivating leaders to excel, recognition can improve service. Leaders are more inclined to work hard and improve when recognized. Leaders will be more motivated to serve their people well, improving service delivery.

Vice Admiral Gambo is an exemplary leader, whose tenure has seen the Nigerian navy undergo a radical transformation. His success can only be attributed to his 'Midas touch', which has enabled him to implement innovative reforms, modernize resources and attract

the necessary funding. His ability to recognize the needs of the Nigerian navy, as well as his drive to make the changes necessary to ensure its success, are qualities that have made him an invaluable asset to the nation.

The Nigerian Navy experienced a period of stagnation until the appointment of Vice Admiral Gambo in 2018, who has been instrumental in reinvigorating the service. Under his leadership, the Nigerian Navy has seen vast improvements in its operations, capabilities, and



personnel, becoming a model for other armed forces in the region. Vice Admiral Gambo's dedication to the revitalization of the Nigerian Navy has ushered in an era of renewed pride and service excellence, making it a leader in its field.

Vice Admiral Gambo is an exemplary leader in the Nigerian Navy, demonstrating transformative leadership that has been essential to his success as Chief of Naval Staff. His ability to motivate and inspire those under his command,

to create an environment of trust, integrity, and respect, and to foster a culture of innovation and progress has earned him widespread admiration. He is an inspiring leader who encourages others to strive for excellence while demonstrating a commitment to the highest ethical standards. Vice Admiral Gambo's exemplary leadership has been key to his success in the Nigerian Navy and the success of the entire organization.

Vice Admiral Gambo has demonstrated exemplary leadership in managing the Nigerian

Navy's limited resources. He has implemented fiscal discipline, which has allowed the Navy to make the most of its available funds, resulting in improved efficiency and effectiveness. His keen understanding of resource constraints has enabled him to craft creative solutions to make the most out of the limited resources. Gambo's prudent management of resources and adherence to fiscal discipline has been essential in helping the Nigerian Navy make good use of its scarce resources. Our courageous warriors have



been making consistent forward progress in the Northeast Theater of Operations, and the results have been nothing but positive. One victory after another has been achieved there. In addition to the acquisition of platforms and equipment to prosecute the war, as well as training exercises for troops who are now fully acquainted with the nature of asymmetric warfare, the introduction of homemade solutions to the problem of countering insurgency has been one of the most significant developments. Following a prolonged campaign by the military to root out remnants who still hibernate in some parts of the northeast, more than 83,000 terrorists have turned themselves

into troops today in various locations across the country.

In the Northwest region of the

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*Our courageous warriors
 have been making consistent
 forward progress in the
 Northeast Theater of
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 ”

country, where bandits held sway for some time, displacing villages, killing innocent civilians, and

kidnapping for ransom, we see a drift in the situation for the better as the military through their onslaught have taken down so many bandits leaders and their collaborators that the once troubled region now has its sanity restored. This is because the military has taken down so many bandits leaders and their collaborators that the situation in the Northwest.

All of this has been feasible as a result of the cooperation that already exists among the various security services and the huge assistance that is being provided by President Muhammadu Buhari.

I would want to applaud the Nigerian Navy under Vice Admiral Zubairu Awwal Gambo, whose dynamism and pragmatism have improved the operational scene. A recent visit to the Baga road fish market in Maiduguri revealed that business has completely resumed, with vendors from all across the country coming for trading purposes. This was made possible by the presence of the Navy's elite Special Operations Forces (SOFs) and the Nigerian Navy's elite Special Boat Service – which is unparalleled among SOFs in Africa – at the Lake Chad basin, who have eradicated all terrorists from the region. Now that Baga in Borno State is secure, people are fishing. The Nigerian Navy has continued to thwart the efforts of economic saboteurs in the fight against pirates throughout Nigeria's coastal seas. Local and international pirates are now being prosecuted in court.

I venture to say that the Nigerian Navy has undoubtedly grown to be a formidable force among navies in Africa and around the world. The Nigerian Navy's primary duty is to protect the nation's maritime environment, which spans about 84,000 square nautical miles, including the entire Gulf of Guinea (GoG), which is about 574,800 square nautical miles and stretches 2,874nm from Senegal to Angola. Over time, the Nigerian Navy has developed, placing it in a stronger

position to manage maritime crises, ensure Nigeria's maritime security, and fend off other threats coming from its nearby marine regions. This has included the purchase and introduction of cutting-edge platforms to give the Navy the tools it needs to safeguard Nigeria's maritime domain. Along the nation's coastline and in the Gulf of Guinea, these efforts have produced notable outcomes, such as Nigeria's removal from the International Maritime Bureau's list of piracy-prone nations, which is a noteworthy accomplishment.

Operation DAKATAR DA BARAWO, which aims to completely put an end to all sorts of criminal activities in the nation's maritime domain, was launched by the Nigerian Navy in January 2021. The Nigerian Navy has made a lot of progress on this operation so far. The Naval Outpost Onisha and the Forward Operating Bases Fomoso, Eskravos, Igbokoda, and Bonny, as well as the Pathfinder, Delta, Jubilee, Soroh, and Lugard of the Navy, have all actively participated in this crucial operation. The operation limited economic criminals' range of movement between April and October 2022 and stopped oil thefts worth over N30 billion.

The Nigerian Navy has made great efforts to safeguard our waterways. Smuggling, illicit unreported and unregulated fishing (IUUF), hostage-taking, insurgency, and human and narcotics trafficking have all decreased significantly, according to records. The most recent piracy report from the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) noted a dramatic decrease in piracy in Nigerian seas and the GoG due to the ongoing operations and exercises the Navy has continually conducted against the multiple maritime illegalities.

Reviewing the Nigerian Navy's operation over the past few months showed that over 216 illegal

refineries, with about 3,000 metal storage tanks and over 150 large wooden boats, were destroyed. In addition, oil thieves were denied over 40 million liters, or about 270,000 barrels of crude oil, and just under 20 million liters of illegally refined AGO, which would have been the amount that they had been trying to steal.

The recent introduction of the Nigerian Navy ship KADA is one of the homegrown solutions used by the Nigerian Navy to make sure it can project the naval strength needed to confront the challenges of the twenty-first century.

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The recent introduction of the Nigerian Navy ship KADA is one of the homegrown solutions used by the Nigerian Navy to make sure it can project the naval strength needed to confront the challenges of the twenty-first century.
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The use of cutting-edge technology, such as the Navy's Falcon Eye surveillance system, which was launched in July 2021, has added to the triumphs of the Nigerian Navy. Due to this, the Nigerian Navy is now able to successfully tackle all types of maritime crime within its sphere of influence. Given that the country's hydrocarbon resources—which account for 55% of its GDP and 95% of its export profits, constituting around 70% of the government's revenue—are largely located in this area, maintaining the protection of Nigeria's maritime domain is essential to the nation's economic existence. Over three billion barrels of Nigerian crude oil have not been stolen thanks to the Falcon Eye Surveillance system in the past four years. The lives and livelihoods of the communities most impacted by maritime-related

crimes are also improved by putting an end to these criminal activities.

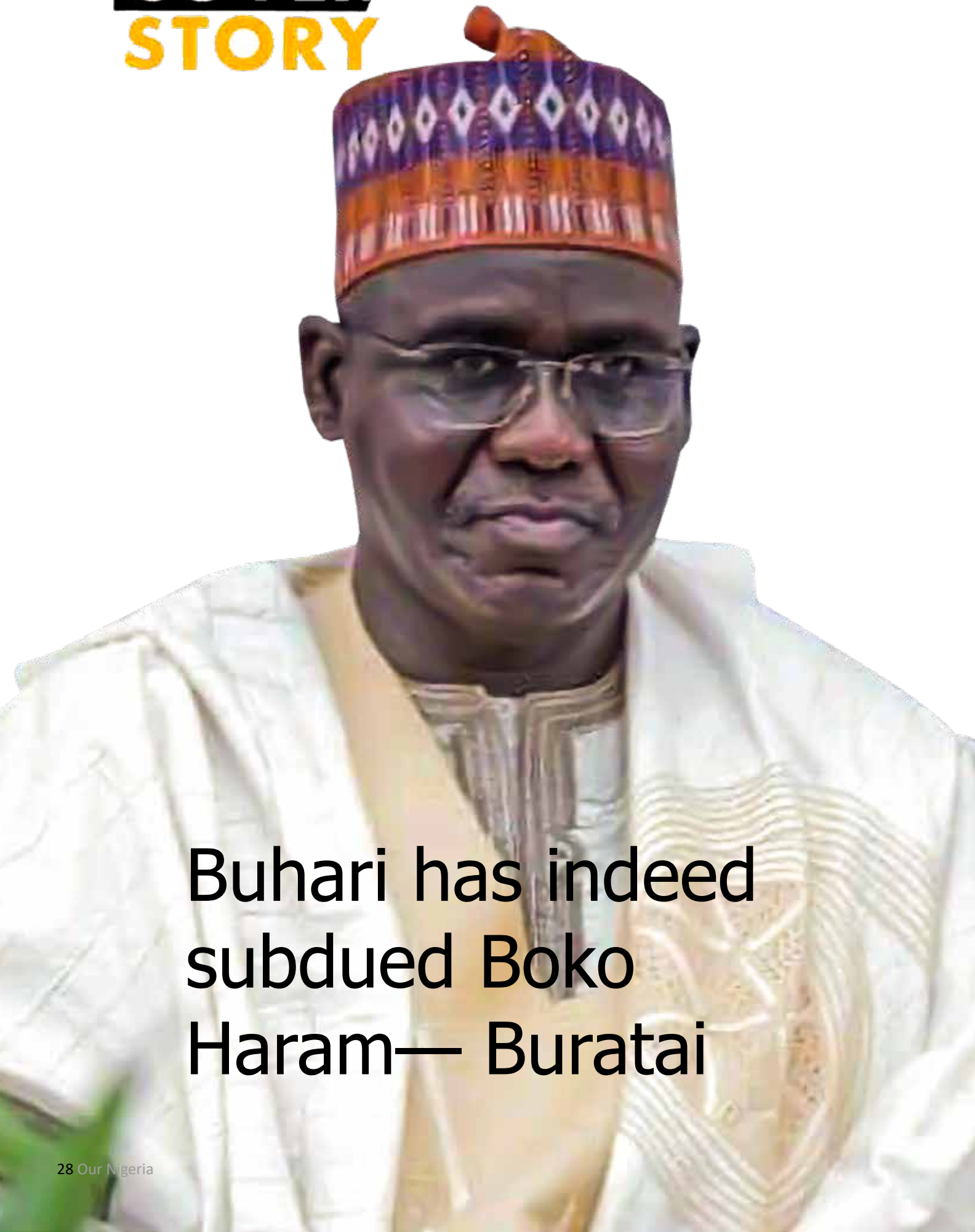
The chief of naval staff, in my opinion, is a quiet achiever who has changed the way things are done. His style is wholly distinctive. Vice Admiral Gambo, the chief of the naval staff, has started many projects since being appointed, including these.

Just barely two years after he assumed command as CNS, the Nigerian maritime is now safer and Nigeria's global rating has improved. We now have a revitalized and more efficient navy. Admiral Gambo's commitment to training and retraining greatly benefited the navy and its officers and personnel. His efforts ensured that everyone was proficient in their responsibilities and duties, making them better equipped to handle the complexities of naval life. The quality of personnel improved drastically as a result of Admiral Gambo's dedication to training and retraining, allowing the navy to reach new heights.

I'll venture to state that the Nigerian Navy has advanced significantly in its operational actions since it was founded, thanks in large part to Vice Admiral Auwal Zubairu Gambo's active leadership.

I thank him on behalf of all Nigerians for his assistance as the nation struggles economically and faces several violent threats. We also thank the officers and crew of the Nigerian Navy for their proactive efforts to safeguard the maritime security of the nation. We will always be grateful to President Muhammadu Buhari for his ongoing support of the Nigerian Navy and Armed Forces in their efforts to achieve their full potential. For the Nigerian Armed Forces to successfully combat the threats presented by criminal elements, I would like to make this plea to all Nigerians.

COVER STORY



Buhari has indeed
subdued Boko
Haram— Buratai

President Muhammad Buhari in his 2015 inaugural speech promised to subdue Boko Haram insurgency. Do you think he has kept to that promise?

When he assumed power in May 2015, he was resolute in his determination to extinguish Boko Haram terrorism and restore peace in Nigeria. The president came fully prepared with all the right information about the root causes of the insurgency and terrorism. He rightly said that “an eccentric and unorthodox preacher with a tiny following was given posthumous fame and a following by his extrajudicial murder at the hands of the police. Since then, through official bungling, negligence, complacency, or collusion, Boko Haram became a terrifying force, taking tens of thousands of lives and capturing several towns and villages, covering swathes of Nigerian sovereign territory.”

And this is the true picture or summary of the Boko Haram armed insurrection. The murder of Muhammad Yusuf by the police was clearly extrajudicial. Negligence, complacency, and collusion with the proponents and strategic leaders of the Boko Haram insurgency for selfish reasons caused the insurgency to degenerate into a full blown nightmare. In that statement, the President made it clear that there were lapses in the way our police operate. That notwithstanding, he also made it clear that the methods used by members of the sect qualified them to be labelled as mindless and godless human beings. He also told Nigerians and the international community that the terrorists were not true Muslims. President Buhari, therefore, came on board with a clear-cut strategy to subdue the Boko Haram insurgency and restore peace to the North-East region and Nigeria in general.

The President said, “The command center will be relocated to Maiduguri and remain until Boko Haram is completely subdued.” The point I am trying to make is that he used the word “subdued,” and I say this with every sense of responsibility that the Buhari administration had subdued the Boko Haram insurgency and

terrorism.

As his premier chief of army staff, and as the longest one that served under him for that matter, I think I owe it a duty to Nigerians and the whole world to say it as it is. The president subdued Boko Haram. Greater details will be revealed in my memoir in the future. How did he do it, and what are the parameters or yardsticks to ascertain the veracity or otherwise of this assertion? They are what I intend to address in my memoir.

Now, I do not know who drafted that inaugural speech for the president, but I believe it will go down in history as one of the most inspiring inaugural speeches in the history

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The command center will be relocated to Maiduguri and remain until Boko Haram is completely subdued

”

of Nigeria. It was painstakingly and meticulously written from a well-informed perspective. The choice of the word “subdue” was unique and very apt to my mind.

What made you think that the insurgents and terrorists did not succeed?

This is where most Nigerians get it wrong because they think victory over Boko Haram terrorists means a total cessation of hostilities. Total cessation of hostilities will happen only when the terrorist group agrees to forsake their ideology, embrace democracy, respect our constitution, and cling to peace. To such people, I will say that they need to understand what insurgency is, its rationale and modus operandi, and, of course, its complexities and peculiarities. They will have to counterbalance this with the principles of human rights. According to world-renowned scholar on terrorism, Philip H. Gordon, “Victory in the war on terror will not mean the end of terrorism, the end of tyranny, or the end of evil, utopian goals that have all been articulated at one time or another.

Terrorism, after all (to say nothing of tyranny and evil), has been around for a long time and will never go away entirely. From the Zealots in the first century and to the Red Brigades, ... the Irish Republican Army, the Tamil Tigers, and others in more recent times, terrorism has been a tactic used by the weak in an effort to produce political change. Like violent crime, deadly disease, and other scourges, it can be reduced and contained. But it cannot be totally eliminated. This is a critical point, because the goal of ending terrorism entirely is not only unrealistic but also counterproductive—just as is the pursuit of other utopian goals.

Gordon went on to further explain in his book that victory in the war against terrorism, means not the complete elimination of any possible terrorist threat—pursuing that goal will almost certainly lead to more terrorism, not less—but rather the reduction of the risk of terrorism to such a level that it does not significantly affect average citizens’ daily lives, preoccupy their thoughts, or provoke overreaction. At that point, even the terrorists will realize their violence is futile. Keeping this vision of victory in mind will not only avert considerable pain, expense, and trouble; it will also guide leaders toward the policies that will bring such a victory about

Many Nigerians believe that the military is not doing enough to secure the country, and the security situation has deteriorated. People are now afraid to travel by car. Is it possible for a ragtag and untrained group to defeat the Nigerian military in battle?

First of all, let me correct you by saying you got it wrong when you said many Nigerians are complaining that the military is not doing enough; you got it wrong! On the contrary, many Nigerians appreciate the military. It is only those who don’t see anything good in the country that don’t appreciate the effort of the government in terms of dealing with insecurity across the country. What the Nigerian military confronted and subdued is an insurgency with an international collaboration and support. It’s what Mali is facing that

despite the presence of Operation BARKHANE and the United Nations peacekeeping, Mali couldn't cope. At the moment, the Russians have been summoned to come and assist Mali to tackle the jihadists. But the Nigerian military has subdued the insurgents, terrorists and jihadists; the northeast region is now calm and very stable. All the local government area councils that were hitherto under the control of Boko Haram have been reclaimed and people displaced from these areas have since gone back to their localities. You say rag tag group; for your information, Boko Haram which started as a rag tag group had been armed with sophisticated weapons and financed from their international collaborators. They have evolved into a sophisticated terrorists group that knows how to make use of modern techniques of warfare to cause mayhem. And don't forget that it is always easy to destroy. One criminal person with a Kalashnikov in his hand can cause great destruction in a community that can attract headlines. Anyone who knows the history of guerilla warfare will tell you that fighting that kind of warfare is complicated because there are no clear defined rules of engagement, territory and identification of the enemy. Nevertheless, whatever it is, Nigerian the military dealt with them to the extent that the 2022 World Terrorism Index recorded that the major improvement achieved in countering terrorism in Sub Saharan Africa and the entire world was because of the efforts of Nigeria and then Mozambique.

What are some of the reasons that make you say the Nigerian government has defeated Boko Haram?

It is expedient to mention here that internally displaced persons taking refuge in various camps in the city of Maiduguri have now been moved back to their home towns: Konduga, Bama, Gwoza, Monguno, Kukawa and Dikwa, just to name a few. Over 20,000 hostages were rescued through various commando style raids and rescue missions by the Army. The Nigerian

Army and the Nigerian Airforce under Operation LAFIY DOLE now Operation HADIN KAI were also able to identify, monitor, and eliminate top Boko Haram commanders with the support of President Buhari. Furthermore, I need not to say it hear that over 100,000 insurgents have surrendered to the government, and many more are coming out.

Your assumption as COAS in 2015 reinvigorated counterinsurgency operations in Nigeria. What was the secret?

The people of the North-East realized that the president was passionate about restoring peace and stability to Borno State and the entire North-East region of the country. Winning the hearts and minds of the local population was a major event that turned the tables against the insurgents because it saw the emergence of a re-invigorated joint

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The military is basically charged with the use of kinetic approaches in dealing with terrorists and bandits

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civil-military operations task force, which is a joint task force composed of military operations formations from more than one service. A central coordination unit was created civil and humanitarian activities. It assists the joint force commander in humanitarian or nation-assistance operations, theater campaigns, or civil-military operations occurring concurrently.

How would you characterize the country's fight against terrorism since you left office as COAS?

Thumbs up to the military especially Operation HADIN KAI. They are doing a great job. This is why the terrorists have been surrendering to the government. Over 100,000 have surrendered and many more are coming out.

What words of comfort do you have for the Nigerian people in the face of the country's insecurity?

I don't think I have a word of comfort of determination and sacrifice. Let them be resilient and never succumb to the threats of the insurgents and terrorists. What the terrorists want is to instill fear in the minds of people so much so that the people will be afraid to go to their farms, to businesses and send their children to school. We must all take a stand and show that we are not with the insurgents and the terrorists. What the military is doing is fighting for the safety of the people; the military is there to protect and defend the people. The military is not just fighting the terrorists on their own; they are there because of the people. This war is a people's war, and not just a military thing. Therefore, we must all get involved. Be resilient, provide timely and credible intelligence, and avoid any action or group that will disrupt the peace. We have a duty to ensure that we entrench peace right from our homes. We must also know what every member of our community is engaged in.

The war against terrorism has been on for over a decade, your state Borno has been ravaged and some are calling for a change of tactics. What's your take on this as a military veteran?

Who are those calling for a change of tactics? It is easy for people to sit down and criticize but I can assure you that the military is always evaluating and changing their tactics to adopt to new challenges posed by the insurgents and terrorist. This is why the insurgents and the terrorists got defeated. Instead of meaningless and incessant criticism that is capable of killing morale of the troops and their commanders, I will encourage locals to support the military with credible and timely information, and prayers.

What are your thoughts on the current military's tactics for combating terrorism and banditry in the country?

The military is basically charged with the use of kinetic approaches in dealing with terrorists and bandits.

And so far so good they are doing well although I will say more effort need to put be in the fight against the bandits. But counterinsurgency operations also involve non-kinetic components which the military has been using to prosecute this counterinsurgency operation.

What is your take on the current military's tactics in decimating banditry and terrorism in the country?

I'll say, let them maintain it and keep up the aggressive assaults. Additionally, collaboration and synergy with other sister agencies is crucial. They must avoid being distracted and keep their attention on their task.

How would you describe the fight against terrorism in the country since you left office as the COAS? Well, you must understand that the military is not a one man show; even when I was in service, I worked with a team, and I am happy to say that many of them are still in service. The current CDS and the COAS served under me as Theater Commander of OP LAFIYA DOLE now OP HADIN KAI. By and large, I will say that they are doing well. Whatever little success we were able to achieve during my tenure, we did it together; it was a collective effort.

The 2023 general election is just by the corner; what advice do you have for the military to ensure a hit-free poll as far as security is concerned? They must stick to their constitutional role and remain apolitical. I understand that the military may be called in to assist the civil police at some point, but only when things are about to get out of hand. I think the electorate must not succumb to fear or intimidation; they should come out and exercise their civic duty. At the same time, all of us must be vigilant; if you see something suspicious, try to say something to the right authorities.

There is the story of your long connection to President Buhari, beginning with his deployment as Military Governor of North East State. Can you help us recall this and its culmination during your

time as Force Commander of MNJTF and COAS?

Yes, President Buhari and I have come a long way because destiny connected us in 1975, when he was the military governor of Borno State and I was a Form One student at Borno Teacher's College Maiduguri. He used to come to the school in the evenings to watch us play football. When I was running off the pitch to get the ball after hitting the ball so hard that it knocked down one of my classmates, the then-Colonel Buhari said to me, "You this boy! The army is what suits you best."

One thing led to another, and I was transferred to Teacher's College

“Thumbs up to the military especially Operation HADIN KAI. They are doing a great job. This is why the terrorists have been surrendering to the government. Over 100,000 have surrendered and many more are coming out.”

Potiskum, while then--Col Buhari left Borno to serve as Petroleum Minister in the government of General Olusegun Obasanjo. I finished Teacher's College, taught in a primary school at Buratai, studied at Borno College of Basic Studies, Maiduguri, and then enlisted into the NDA in 1981. I got commissioned in December 1983 and heard that Major General Buhari the new Head of State. I proceeded to 26 Battalion in Elele, Rivers State, I also met with him in 1996 in his when he served this meritoriously served this country as Chairman of Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF). I accompanied my boss then Brigadier General Gabriel Kpamber who was the PSO to the Head of State. I was his staff officer. The office of the PSO to the Head of State coordinated the approval of the establishment of PTF for the Armed Forces. The first chairman for the Armed Forces was Major General Unimna. Then we had a

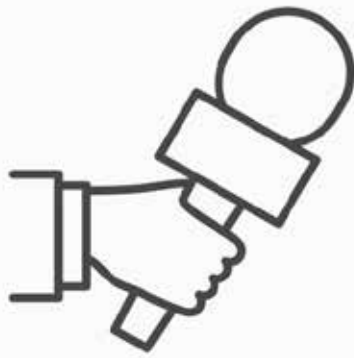
great historic reunion in 2015 when he visited Ndjamena as the newly democratically elected President of Nigeria. At that time, I was the Force Commander, MNJTF. When he returned to Nigeria and wanted to appoint his service chiefs, he appointed me as the 20th COAS. So he has been my leader and mentor in the past, now, and always.

What advice is best for the young officers and soldiers on the frontlines of service to the nation?

I have written and published a book known as Thoughts and Principles on Leadership. I am recommending it to all military officers to read. But that notwithstanding, my candid advice to young officers and soldiers is to remember the seven core Army values: their unit, the Army, God, and country. They must remain patriotic and keep on developing their skills and improving their competence.

What is your take about dialogue, negotiations and mediation?

You must understand that I am now a civilian who has ventured into diplomacy and politics. Some of my perspectives have changed. For example, when I was in service as COAS, my constitutional mandate was to use kinetic power to deal with the insurgents so as to protect the lives, properties and safeguard the territorial integrity of Nigerians. It was not my duty or responsibility to suggest, initiate or partake in dialogue or negotiations with terrorists and bandits. But the military can force the terrorists, bandits, insurgents to surrender and accept negotiated terms favorable to the legitimate authority which is the government. I tell you towards the last half of 2020 the bandits were calling for negotiations through some prominent individuals. This was a result of the pressure mounted on the bandits. Many of their fighters, collaborators, logistic suppliers and informants were either neutralized, captured or had escaped out of the country for safety. Much more details will be coming out in my memoir in the future by the grace of God.



INTERVIEW



Negligence, poor supervision, quackery major causes of building collapse- Expert

Building collapse has become a major concern in the construction industry as it becomes reoccurring issue across the nation with little or no attention to it as it claims many lives.

Gradually, building collapse is becoming a norm in Nigerian cities, though, building collapse is not new

worldwide. However, the continued rate at which buildings collapse in Nigeria (some under construction) is now very alarming.

Too much blood is being spilt needlessly in Nigeria's building industry for all sorts of reasons that even professionals in the sector recognise as avoidable.

In the past four decades, statistics show that over 460 buildings have collapsed in the country at an increasing rate yearly; this requires drastic actions to curb the menace. It is not until another building collapsed and several people died that we should start looking for a solution.



But in 2022 no fewer than 61 buildings collapsed across the nation.

According to the report by the Building Collapse Prevention Guild (BCPG), out of these structural failures, Lagos State recorded 20 incidents, representing 48.7 per cent of the entire cases in 2022.

Some of the incidents include the residential development at Hotoro, Unguwar Gabas, behind Chula filling station, Tauroumi, Kano State; Anglican Primary School 1, Ayetoro Ajegunle, Lagos; church development at Iragbo community

in Badagry, Lagos State; residential development at Road 5 Extension Avenue in Umuguma Owerri, Imo State; development at Oribanwa Town, Ibeju-Lekki, Lagos State; development at Chief Elmore street behind Ideal Supermarket, Bogije Bus Stop, Ibeju-Lekki, Lagos; residential development at 32 Ibadan Street Ebute Metta, Lagos; residential development at Chris Igadi Street, off Ago Palace Way, opposite Kilimanjaro/AP, filling station, Lagos; residential development at Sanusi street, Somolu-Lagos; among others.

Lagos State is at the top of the table with 322 incidents in 48 years,

followed by Anambra -20; Oyo -19; Abuja -18; Kano-17; Ogun -12; Delta -12; Ondo -11; Abia -11; Rivers -10; Enugu -9; Kwara -7; Imo -7; Plateau -7; Kaduna -6; Edo -6; Osun -6; Ebonyi -5; Jigawa -5; Cross River -4; Benue -3; Adamawa -3; Niger -3; Ekiti -2; Akwa-Ibom -2; Nasarawa -2; Zamfara -1; Kebbi -1; Sokoto -1; Bauchi -1; Kogi -2; Katsina -1; Borno -1; Taraba -1; Yobe -1; Bayelsa -1 and Gombe -1.

Lagos State accounts for 60 per cent of the incidents across Nigeria.

Despite the high number of budding collapses recorded last year, 2023 has recorded 2 major disasters which claimed lives.

In Rivers state, three persons lost their lives when a building under construction caved in along Isi Ewu road, Nbodo Community in Ikwerre Local Government Area of the state.

It was gathered that the dead victims were labourers working at the site of the two-storey building when the incident occurred.

Also in Abuja, At least two people were confirmed dead after a two-storey building collapsed.

According to the officials, Twenty-one people have been rescued alive and are responding to treatment residents and passersby joined a team of emergency and aid workers who searched through the rubble looking for survivors which helped in saving many lives in the collapse.

Following the incident, the Minister of the FCT, Mallam Muhammad Bello, ordered the arrest of officers of the Federal Housing Authority, and the developer of a collapsed three-story building in Abuja.

The Coordinator, of Abuja Metropolitan Management Council, Umar Shuaibu, disclosed this to journalists during a briefing on Saturday.

Shuaibu said the minister directed the arrest of the FHA officials and developer, following the death of three persons trapped under the

INTERVIEW

rubble.

He said, "Henceforth, the FCT Minister, Mallam Muhammadu Bello, has directed the security agencies to arrest the following and charge them for the manslaughter of those who lost their lives in this building collapse incident.

"They are The FHA officer in charge of granting the development permit; the FHA officer saddled with monitoring the development; the developer of the plot; the engineer supervising the development for the developer."

Shuaibu added that the FCTA had assigned the Gwarinpa Estate to the FHA, to ensure strict compliance with the Abuja Master Plan, and its development and monitoring.

He, however, said that the administration through findings noted violations in the location, building plan control, and development monitoring by the FHA, adding that findings revealed the incapacity of the authority to handle development control.

"Our preliminary findings suggest that there were breaches in the location, building plan approval, control and monitoring of the development by the FHA, with glaring criminal tendencies by the developer, and or his representative during the construction activities.

This shows the negligence of monitoring agencies and ministries of government to ensure proper protocols and principles are followed to safeguard the lives of workers and intending users of the structures.

Speaking on the causes of building collapse in Nigeria civil Engineer Muhammad Abubakar Abdulkareem who said there are protocols to be followed condemned the negligence of site Engineers.

He said some Engineers do try to cut costs as a result of hikes in building materials and the failure of government agencies saddled with the monitoring duties all contribute to this bad trend.

"In building or construction

generally, it has different stages and any professional managing the site must follow the specifications of what is been given to him.

"Before you commence a site there used to be other checks like the soil scientist has to come in and give us the texture and the quality of the soil, so when this is not done already, you don't know the strength of the soil this constitutes to the problem propound to cause building collapse.

"Many site managers do cut cost against what they are supposed to do and irregular supervision from the government agency taking care of the project."

Abdul Kareem who highlighted some of the duties of the government agencies said professionals should know their jobs without monitoring but the negligence of many sites Engineers cut many lives short.

He said corruption of some government officials in taking bribes to approve illegal structures also contributed to the building collapse in Nigeria.

"The government will give you specifications so you are meant to work following the specifications of the materials to be used, for example, rod, the cement ratio and every other thing. I don't think you should have such a problem as a professional in the building industry without being supervised, but usually, it is the negligence of the professionals.

"One of the major problems is the monetary aspect some are trying to cut Corners some things like the cement ratio and at the end of the day causes bulky damages to the site. so honestly, we are having that problem all over Nigeria. our regulatory bodies like the council of regulations of engineers have been doing their best equally to make sure that everything is been done properly, but we still go outside the moderation and do what is not supposed to be done."

He added that clients that seek quacks are also accomplices saying

many of the quacks in the business charge lesser money which make them more appealing to clients in giving them the job.

"You cannot be a fully fortified professional and do something out of your profession for any reason and why is it so? because the owner of the project is trying to cut the cost to make more money then you employ a quack then you pay less instead of paying the proper fee you should pay to a qualified professional, so you choose to go for a quack.

"The Nigerian government and all the bodies, the Nigerian society of engineers and other building societies, the council of registration of builders and others need to sit down, collaborate and work effectively because the speed of building collapse in Nigeria now is getting out of hand, in every two to three month you find a building collapse which is not proper."

He called on Engineers and contractors to adhere strictly to the ethics of their profession and follow due processes in putting an end to building collapse in Nigeria.

"My advice to any practising engineer or builder is to take preventive measures and do what he is supposed to do, go along with the specifications of the materials given to you in the building and let's obey every process of the building to the soil text up to the end of the building, let not cut cost and let's go for good materials proper materials and finally, in such a very serious project don't engage quacks, it is a very big problem and challenges to us, we should be very serious.

"The regulatory bodies overall should equally be available on each site before the process commence, I think when we get this done it will help our economy because when we talk about the economy of the country, it is just part of this building that everybody can make up the economy of a country, so when you have the building collapse it means you are depicting our economy."



Farmers want early distribution of inputs to boost production

Some farmers in Gombe have called for early distribution of inputs to encourage crop production in the country.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the Nigeria Meteorological Agency (NiMet) in its 2023 Flood Outlook predicted early rainfall and dry spell in parts of the country.

The agency also advised state governments to adopt flood mitigation measures and urged farmers to plant early.

A cross section of the farmers, who spoke in Gombe said that early distribution of fertilisers, seeds and other inputs would enable them to plan ahead of the wet season.

A farmer, Adamu Muhammadu said early arrival of the rain would be good if only it would be consistent.

He advised farmers to exercise caution while planting to avoid incurring losses.

"I advise farmers to be careful not to rush to cultivate their farmlands without stocking inputs.

"I appeal to governments at all levels to see the prediction as a reason to provide support to the farmers," he said.

Abdul Deba, a farmer from Kwadom community in Deba Local Government Area of Gombe State, said the weather prediction availed farmers opportunities to prepare their farmlands on good time.

Deba, however, said it was not ideal for farmers to cultivate their crops early as doing so might have negative consequences.

"Farmers must be careful; the rainfall in Gombe is no longer predictable, so early rain does not mean early

planting," he said.

Rabiu Isiaka, an onion grower from Dogon Ruwa community, said the prediction would not propel him to make any hasty decisions.

The farmer said he had been cultivating vegetables during dry season for five years, and urged the Gombe government to accord premium to extension services, to increase yields per hectre and boost production.

Adamu Musa, a large-scale rice farmer from Lubo community said early assistance to farmers in the state would enable farmers plant early, adding that many farmers were facing issues of funding to get necessary inputs to cultivate their farmlands.

Musa said food security would not be achieved without inputs support to farmers in the state and country.



Multinational maritime operation improving security in Gulf of Guinea- CNS

By Auwal Ahmad Umar

Vice Adm. Awwal Gambo, the Chief of Naval Staff (CNS), declared on Friday that the 2023 Gulf of Guinea multinational maritime exercise known as “Obangame Express” was a great success.

Gambo made this statement during the exercise’s review at the Admiralty Conference Centre on Victoria Island in Lagos’ Naval Dockyard.

An annual maritime exercise for naval commands in the Gulf of Guinea is called Obangame Express. It was designed to promote marital safety and security in support of

the Yaoundé Code of Conduct and started on January 27 with 32 participating countries.

In order to combat piracy, armed robbery, and illegal maritime activities in West and Central Africa, the governments of countries in and around the Gulf of Guinea signed the Yaoundé code of conduct in June 2013.

According to Gambo, the maritime exercise that brought together foreign partners also enhanced competencies through collaboration. “The exercise revealed clear salient points and critical observations,

which are appropriate, pertinent, and will continue to be helpful for enhancing future exercises.

“For example, we are expecting to conduct Exercise Aman later in the year and lessons learnt from Ex -Obangame will be applied in this exercise.

“I appreciate the diligence of our indefatigable observers for a great job and also commend the level of preparedness for the exercise, which manifested in commendable performances,” the CNS said.

Gambo also commended partner



nations that dispatched ships that participated in the sea exercise, particularly the U.S. and Spain. He said that the participation of their ships enhanced capacity development and facilitated safe, more secured and enabling maritime environment for socio-economic activities to thrive within the Gulf of Guinea.

"I specifically acknowledge our U.S. partners, particularly the African Command towards encouraging and bolstering regional cooperation and collaboration.

"They have helped in the

establishment of the regional maritime domain awareness facilities in coastal states across the Gulf of Guinea, and sustained capacity through the facility's training school at Apapa, Lagos.

"These are absolute powerful testimonies to the steadfast commitment of the U.S. Government to enhancing maritime security across board," the CNS said.

Gambo added that these efforts facilitated the integration of relations of the Navies, aimed at achieving holistic and sustainable maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea.

He said that the magnitude of most maritime threats and their interconnectedness, coupled with the diversity of impacts, demanded collaborative framed responses.

"This is important because no single Navy or coast guard can do it alone. "Lessons from this exercise will be developed into collaborative actions that will support strategic initiative to enhance collective preparedness to successfully curb emerging maritime challenges in the Gulf of Guinea and beyond.

"I also appreciate our Nigerian Navy



participants that contributed in making the exercise a huge success,” Gambo said.

In his remarks, the Deputy Commander, US AFRICOM, Lt Gen Kirk Smith expressed satisfaction with the energy brought to bear by all the participating nations adding that “multi partners coming together and understanding shared challenges” are vital in exercise of this magnitude.

“In the last two days of my involvement in the exercise, I have seen of the Nigerian Navy the capacity, professionalism your forces exhibited not only in the exercise but everyday as regional leaders, I understand the importance of the Nigerian Navy. Attention to every little detail is what makes us professional.”

“What you heard today is a great example of multiple partners

coming together and understanding shared challenges, and shared opportunities,” said Smith.

“*The exercise revealed clear salient points and critical observations, which are appropriate, pertinent, and will continue to be helpful for enhancing future exercises*”

“Precision is what makes us perfect, attention to every little detail is what makes us professional. The most important part is what we learn from the exercise to make us better for the next time that we come together.”

U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Calvin Foster, director of Maritime Partnership at U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa, also accompanied Smith during his visit to Nigeria for the closing of exercise OE23. While in Lagos, Smith and Foster met with Nigerian leaders at the Joint Maritime Security Training Center, Western Naval Command, Naval Air Base Ojo, and the Special Boat Squadron.

The tour provided a comprehensive review of the multi-faceted approach Nigeria, and other partner nations, are taking in the region’s maritime security domain.

Earlier, the Flag Officer Commanding (FOC), Western Naval Command, Rear Admiral Yakubu Wambai was happy with the high standards of the exercise and applauded every nation that participated.

On his part, in his debrief as the Chief Observer, Naval Doctrine Command, Capt I.P. Udoudoh explained some



pitfalls and challenges during the exercise, adding that the objective was to enhance regional cooperation with other internal navies and maritime stakeholders.

Exercise Obamgame is the largest maritime exercise in Africa and the 2023 edition had 32 nations participated with 20 African countries and 12 foreign allies nations. A total of 900 personnel were involved in the one-week sea exercise.

A comprehensive roster of events elevated this year's exercise. Ashore, armed forces from the Benin, Nigeria, Togo, and the U.S., alongside international law enforcement agencies, conducted expertise exchanges on forensics collection, combat defensive tactics, first aid at the JMSTC. At the Lagos-area Maritime Operations Center, a multi-national team exchanged lessons on the monitoring and reporting of suspicious vessels at sea, and the communication network of maritime assets against transnational threats. At sea, the participants conducted training in countering the trafficking of persons, narcotics, illegal fishing, and piracy, as well as Visit, Board,

Search and Seizure simulations – all while maintaining communication and working in concert with partner and allied ships.

In conjunction with the operational training, the exercise featured developments with the Women, Peace and Security initiative, and multiple concerts by the U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa (NAVEUR-NAVAF) Band. Notably, the NAVEUR-NAVAF Band was hosted by Chief Dr. Nike Davies-Okundaye, an internationally-acclaimed Nigerian artist, Channels TV, an internationally-syndicated news program, and the University of Lagos.

Conducted by U.S. Naval Forces Africa (NAVAF) and sponsored by U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), OE23 is designed to improve regional cooperation, information-sharing practices, and tactical interdiction expertise to enhance the collective capabilities of participating nations to counter Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated (IUU) fishing and other sea-based illicit activity.

The participating nations during OE23 included Angola, Belgium,

Benin, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Canada, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Denmark, France, Gabon, The Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Italy, Liberia, Morocco, Namibia, Netherlands, Nigeria, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Congo, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Spain, Togo, and the United States. Also participated were the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).

For more than 80 years, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-U.S. Naval Forces Africa (NAVEUR-NAVAF) has forged strategic relationships with allies and partners, leveraging a foundation of shared values to preserve security and stability.

Headquartered in Naples, Italy, NAVEUR-NAVAF operates U.S. naval forces in the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) and U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) areas of responsibility. U.S. Sixth Fleet is permanently assigned to NAVEUR-NAVAF, and employs maritime forces through the full spectrum of joint and naval operations.

Economic Naira redesign: A multi-perspective narration for Nigerians

Nigerians are literally dealing with a cash shortage. Banks are overrun with irate clients demanding money, angry Nigerians are jamming ATMs trying to withdraw cash, and some people spend the entire day trying to get a few Naira notes to pay bills. In order to raise some cash, some POS operators have charged customers between 15% and 20%. The majority of Nigerians are stranded because the bank transfer apps need to be fixed and the majority cannot send or receive money transfers. Demand for Naira notes is high, and only a select few can obtain the recently redesigned notes. People are adjusting to the chaos that has taken over the world.

However, this puts a tremendous amount of strain on Nigeria's already precarious sociopolitical and economic conditions, which is gradually approaching a breaking point. Videos of people's reactions in different parts of Nigeria are all over social media, and they all show the pervasive rage, frustration, and hardship people are experiencing. All of these events are taking place at a time when political activity is at an all-time high ahead of the general elections in 2023, with various permutations, intrigues, and strategies being used by political parties and candidates to win over voters. If not checked, it is a recipe for chaos even if that wasn't the intention. The Naira redesign's political effects are clear, but its implications—both intended and unintended—are still being felt.

Politics and money are comparable to the Sesame twins. Politics influence how money is distributed, and money enables politics. Money in politics can be both a force for good and an enemy at the same time. Politics respond whenever money is threatened in any way. The impact of the Naira redesign on society, the



economy, and politics has been the subject of heated debate in politics. Demonetization has become the focal point of Nigeria's monetary policy, and the Buhari administration and CBN are orchestrating it. The real meaning is lost in the apparent continuation of the CBN's efforts to move towards a cashless economy that is more reliant on technology than it is on the use of antiquated fiat currency, however, the real meaning is lost in translation, and people need clarification.

Is this an effort to redesign the naira, a cash swap, or a strategy for sound currency management that combats inflation and eradicates fake currency and cash accumulated for nefarious political activities? Or is it a combination of all of these things? Everyone has a different understanding of the events and how they should be understood, leading to ambiguous and contradictory

interpretations of what is happening. Was the CBN effective in explaining to the public the aims, objectives, methodology, and intended effects of this policy? How was this policy presented in the media, and how were Nigerians to understand it? Is the CBN's new policy politically motivated as the general election of 2023 approaches? If we are to comprehend, these issues should be taken into account.

We can learn from other countries' recent currency redesign initiatives and from their results. Recently, the currencies of the UK and India underwent changes. However, I'll use India as an example since it is obviously a developing country similar to Nigeria rather than the UK. The two highest-denomination currency notes in circulation in the nation, the Rs 1,000 and Rs 500, were ordered to be removed from circulation by Prime Minister

Narendra Modi in 2016. The press referred to the strategy as “demonetization” and hailed it as Modi’s genius against “black money.” It was a big, risky move in terms of economic experiments. An abrupt financial shock of this magnitude had never happened before anywhere in the world. The activity, however, did not prove to be a key determinant of the outcome of Indian elections that year.

Will this exercise, unlike the case in India, have more significant political ramifications, some unintended, that could affect the outcome of the elections or stifle our democracy? Let’s look at five ways that the redesign of the Naira will impact our politics this year.

First, it will rationally end vote buying and other financial incentives given to voters, INEC employees, or election entrepreneurs looking to rig the results. Some claim that this policy is a genius move on the part of the government to combat vote buying and strike a blow against electoral fraud. The window for rigging has shrunk significantly with the introduction of BVAS and INEC’s commitment to conducting a free and fair election. The only real room for election rigging is vote buying. It could be argued that some candidates and political parties have saved money for this. This abrupt Naira redesign and exchange may have prevented people from using their saved funds to bribe INEC officials and buy votes.

According to statistics provided by the CBN, more than 80% of the country’s currency is believed to be kept outside of bank vaults and possibly in private vaults by corrupt members of the elite class who are engaged in criminal activity and who would be unable to explain the source of such significant sums of money if brought to a bank. Some Nigerians commend CBN for developing such a strong plan during such a crucial period in the nation when new leaders are elected. By 2023, this policy will probably ensure that no money will be offered to voters or organisations to influence their choice of candidate.

Though they believe the implementation was done at the wrong time, some Nigerians are

lamenting their lot in life due to the hardship this new Naira design kerfuffle is causing in the nation. Elections pose a serious logistical challenge and a high-risk investment. President Buhari, in his wisdom, has decided that the current generation of Nigerians must also go through the trauma of an emergency currency change, similar to what the older generation went through in 1984, as a parting gift to the majority of Nigerians. His plan, then as now, was to use it to apprehend treasury robbers who would then be compelled to divulge their stolen funds. The issue back then, as it is now, is that whatever the approach’s merits are, there is massive collateral damage among the masses.

Second, the Naira redesign halts the flow of illegal funds used for political activities, particularly the proceeds of financial crime and money laundering. Cash is frequently used to facilitate illegal and criminal activity because it is difficult to track. We are aware of corrupt government officials who hide millions of Naira in their homes because they are afraid to deposit it in the bank for fear of being discovered. During elections, these illegal funds always find their way into the system and are used for a variety of illegal activities. In a cashless society, it is difficult for kidnappers and drug dealers to conduct their business. A friend of mine informed me that because of Nigeria’s recent cash shortage, the number of kidnappings has decreased. There is a direct correlation between the ease of moving cash and kidnapping and banditry, especially in the North East and South East.

Third, the Naira redesign has stifled economic activity and increased financial strain on citizens. At this crucial juncture of the general election, this could fuel resentment towards the government and the ruling party and prove costly. Voters who are experiencing economic hardship are prone to supporting the opposition and punishing the ruling party. Both Greece and Italy experienced this. Macroeconomic policy experiments are therefore uncommon, especially during an election year. It goes without saying that it won’t aid the ruling party in elections. This policy has caused division within APC. Some people believe that the APC presidential

candidate and his team are being undercut by the policy.

Others contend that the APC-led administration ought to have waited until after the elections before implementing the policy that has caused unrest among the populace because it gives the opposition an electoral campaign advantage. Selling the APC is difficult for the party and candidates due to the tripartite issue of runaway inflation, economic hardship, and the current Naira redesign crisis. Nearly three weeks before the election, the opposition might be having a field day and milking the self-inflicted, APC-induced problems.

Fourth, the crisis surrounding the Naira redesign is making already painful inflationary trends worse. Given that cash shortages should have a deflationary rather than an inflationary tendency, this may seem paradoxical. The combination of additional inflationary factors in the context of the Nigerian economy, however, makes this case unique. The high cost of food, fuel, and other necessities is indicative of these inflationary tendencies, which are so potent that the naira redesign crises have not slowed them down. In addition, the cost of cash is high, which drives up the cost of goods and services and maintains inflation. A good mix of inflation and election season is definitely not one that exists.

Fifth, the Naira redesign crisis is alienating the populace, which could result in an increase in rage and frustration, a string of protests, and social unrest when combined with fuel scarcity and pervasive insecurity. This might put the public’s peace in danger and ultimately cause the elections to be cancelled. Some contend that the power brokers are directing the crises in order to annul the elections and appoint an interim national government. As absurd as it may sound, any display of public unhappiness and contempt, especially closer to the election, could bring about these predicted doomsday scenarios.

It’s time to control the Naira crises’ excesses, deal with both the intended and unintended effects, and give Nigeria’s electorate a chance to cast their votes according to their moral convictions and choose leaders who will improve their lives.

Fuel Scarcity, New Naira Notes: Untold hardship of Nigerians

CBN BEGS NIGERIANS, PROMISES TO END POS 'EXTRA' CHARGES

By Matthew Atungwu

As the scarcity of Premium Motor Spirit, also known as petrol gets worst, most traders were forced to close their doors in order to avoid collecting the old notes, which were still widely in circulation.

This advancement was brought about by the redesign of the N1000, N500, and N200 notes. After the new deadline, the old notes will no longer be legally accepted for transactions. Nigerians have swarmed banks and markets across the country, while reports of scarcity have paralyzed businesses and many people's normal daily activities.

According to OURNIGERIA News Magazine, some Point of Sale (PoS) operators in Abuja and its outskirts are charging a surcharge for new naira notes. Some of the PoS locations visited either were not dispensing new notes or charged a fee for them.

Some residents in Mararaba, Nyanya, Ado, New Nyanya, and Masaka all on the outskirts of Abuja, told OURNIGERIA News Magazine that some PoS operators charge as much as N300 for N3,000, N500 for

N5,000, and N2000 for N20,000. Petrol is sold at unregulated prices in these areas too, while commuters, households, and businesses continue to lose money and man-hours due to scarcity.

The two-month-long scarcity has increased the cost of living and harmed Nigerian businesses. Many petrol stations sell for as much as N500 per litre, compared to the official N185 per litre pump price. Petrol queues have resurfaced at filling stations in these areas, and other parts of the country, causing hardship for residents and motorists attempting to obtain the product. Due to the scarcity of petrol, many Nigerians have had to resort to the black market, purchasing 10 litres for N7000 in some areas of Abuja.

PoS operators surcharge for new naira notes PoS operators charge customers N100 per new naira note dispenser, while others only mix old and new notes on dispensers.

Many people in Mararaba, Nyanya, Ado, New Nyanya, and Masaka all on the outskirts of Abuja were unable to conduct cash transactions due to the scarcity of the new note, as traders

refused to accept the old notes.

Sanusi Mohammed, a resident, stated that he does not want to conduct any transactions because of the fear of collecting old notes.

"I have to sit at home because I cannot release only the N1000 note I have and collect old notes as charge."

At Mararaba, a resident who simply identified herself as Chinwe said she withdrew N6,000 with N300 after much begging.

"The PoS operator said she will charge N300 for N5,000 and I told her to change my dispenser to N6,000 but the PoS operator insisted I added an additional N150 making N450. I have to get her before she agrees to accept it."

The scarcity is expected to dissipate as President Muhammadu Buhari approved the Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) request to extend the deadline for exchanging old Naira notes for redesigned ones.

A seven-day grace period has also been approved, running from February 10 to February 17, 2023, to allow Nigerians to deposit their old

notes at the CBN after the February deadline when the old currency would have lost its Legal Tender status.

“10-day extension of the deadline from January 31, 2023, to February 10, 2023; to legitimately held by Nigerians and achieve more success in cash swap in our rural communities after which all old notes outside the CBN losses their Legal tender Status.”

While, “A 7-day grace period, beginning on February 10 to February 17, 2023, in compliance with Sections 20(3) and 22 of the CBN Act allowing Nigerians to deposit their old notes at the CBN after the February deadline when the old currency would have lost its Legal Tender status.”

Meanwhile, Godwin Emefiele, Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, has appealed to Nigerians

naira notes in Lagos on Friday. He observed the protests and debates over the difficulty citizens were having in accessing the new notes.

“I understand the agitation and I’m begging in God’s name, we are on our knees begging people to please show understanding. They should be calm.

“In our meetings with the banks, we have told them to set up tents and chairs, give people numbers, which I’m sure some people will say it is old fashioned.

“But at this time that we’re trying to get the currency in circulation amongst everybody, people have to have numbers and they come in under a queueing arrangements that when you come in you get served, if it finishes, just be patient.

“By tomorrow, when you come

the past,” Emefiele said.

On high charges by the Point of Sale agents on every transaction made by their customers, the apex bank governor urged banks to stop the charges on the PoS.

“I am going to be calling a meeting with the banks this evening or by tomorrow, if those charges go to or those charges have been charged through the bank, we are going to have an arrangement with even telcos to see how those charges can actually at this time be stopped.

“Those charges at this time should be stopped. So, if we know whatever you are making that you’re not making because we stopped it, we can collect it somewhere and look for a way to pay you.

“But we don’t want you to continue to create pain on those who want to use alternative channels when they cannot have cash in their pocket.

“We will go into this later this night or even tomorrow, we’re going to call a meeting of both the banks and the mobile networks; at this time nobody should be charged, if you are charged, we will need to know about it.

“But we would want this service to continue to be offered. Whatever it is in terms of volume and number that you have carried out. We will look for away to pay you your money,” he said.

OURNIGERIA News Magazine reports that the redesigned naira notes comprising N200, N500 and N1,000, came into use on Dec. 15, 2022, after they were unveiled by President Muhammadu Buhari on Nov. 23, 2022 in Abuja.

The CBN had earlier fixed Jan. 31 as deadline for the collection of old naira notes, but later extended the time limit to Feb. 10.

The CBN governor had said the extension was to allow Nigerians that had naira legitimately earned and trapped the opportunity to deposit their money for exchange. The governor had ordered banks to load their Automated Teller Machines with the new naira notes to ensure Nigerians had access to them.

for patience, stating that the redesigned notes will circulate and be accessible.

The central bank also promised to eliminate Point of Sale fees as the February 10 deadline for exchanging old naira notes for new ones approaches.

Emefiele made the appeal during a special media briefing on the new

back, they will start from where they stopped, you will not be cheated.

“Let’s just be calm and adopt a good queueing system, the assurance we give is that it will eventually go round.

“Eventually the limits will be raised and eventually the limits will be removed and people will be able to conduct their business transactions in a way that it has always been in



Between Ortom and his failed promises, a tale of bad governance in Benue

By Matthew Atungwu

Governor Samuel Ortom was sworn in as the fifth democratically elected governor of Benue State in 2015, ushering in a new era in the state's politics. The opposition party had defeated the incumbent for the first time.

Indeed, based on campaign promises and the previous government's failure to meet the needs of the Benue people, the Benue people had high hopes that they had installed a government that would serve them. There was a glimmer of hope at the end of the tunnel.

Governor Samuel Ortom had a lengthy resume. Former chairman of Benue State's Guma Local Government Area and secretary of the People's Democratic Party in Benue State. He was later appointed as the PDP's National Auditor. President Goodluck Jonathan appointed him as Minister of State for Trade and Investment and later as Aviation Supervising Minister. He worked as an executive, private sector executive, and cabinet member of the country's highest decision-making body, the Federal Executive

Council.

The people expected the Ortom-led administration to act quickly and unveil concrete, immediate, short and long-term plans to put Benue on a path of prosperity and development. Having overcome all odds to advance from Coca-Cola truck driver to FEC member. Ortom was thought to have adequate preparation and experience.

With Governor Ortom's tenure coming to an end, the Benue people would rather have remained in Egypt than in the paradise Ortom promised them during campaigns and the early days of his government. When the people look back in time, they see a slew of broken promises, suffering, hunger, hardship, and a complete lack of development.

The people of Benue have been more patient with Governor Samuel Ortom than with any other governor in the state's history. Late Apollos Aku, the state's first civilian governor, was heavily criticised despite his development achievements, which are now celebrated. Senator George Akume, who took over after the return to democratic rule in 1999,

faced stiff opposition from former All Peoples Party (APP) chieftain, Wantaregh Paul Unongo, Sen. Daniel Saror, Chief SJI Akure, Hon. Nanevwua Uhondo, and others. Governor Gabriel Suswam, who faced the same challenge at the time, is still widely believed to have lost his reelection bid to Prof. Steve Torkuma Ugbah. This has not been the case for Governor Ortom. The opposition is not strong, maybe because he won as an opposition candidate before later decamping to PDP in the state.

As a result, it is difficult to adequately place the reason for Ortom's glaring inability to attack the state's development headlong other than incompetence and lack of initiative. At the start of his administration, the governor cited reasons ranging from the country's recession, which resulted in a lack of funds, to his nonperformance. In another turn, the governor cited his predecessor's looting of the state treasury as a reason. To demonstrate his disdain for corruption, the governor established a judicial panel of inquiry to investigate the funds accrued to the state during Gabriel Suswam's tenure. The panel determined that

a whopping N107 billion was looted and recommended that another N44 billion be investigated further. Governor Ortom was quoted as saying that if he got N60 billion from the monies looted by the previous administration, he would turn Benue State into a Dubai, UAE.

Benue State's development continued to elude it, despite the governor's flimsy excuses ranging from evil spirits to his godfather's overbearing attitude, among others. Workers' pensions and salaries continued to pile up with no end in sight. Remember how, during one of his campaigns, the governor couldn't stop crying over the plight of the state's workers and pensioners? In front of a stunned congregation, he sobbed uncontrollably. Under Governor Samuel Ortom, sightings of elderly pensioners protesting several months of unpaid pension allowances have become common. In fact, under his administration, pensioners besieged the gate of the government house and slept outside for two weeks in order to demand payment of their pension allowances.

The governor visited several countries, including China, the United States of America, and Brazil, in order to attract foreign investors to the state. This has not produced any results. The Governor's numerous memorandums of understanding (MoUs) signed in numerous countries and with numerous companies have never been fulfilled. There wasn't even one. International organisations and development bodies that had previously operated in the state have left due to the government's inability to pay counterpart funds.

Agriculture, in which Benue State has a comparative advantage, has performed poorly under Governor Samuel Ortom. Except for declaring Fridays as work free days for civil servants to visit farms, there has been no concerted effort to increase food production. Fertilizer, improved seedlings, and herbicides are scarcely available to farmers in the state. There is no mechanised agriculture and no processing facilities. The unfortunate security challenges caused by the herders-

farmers conflict have always been a stumbling block for the governor. Every investigation into the governor's development efforts always leads to security issues being cited as the reason for his inability to work.

Since the Ortom administration took office, not even a small cottage industry has sprouted up in the state. In the state, no dormant industry has been resurrected. During his campaign, however, the governor led the people of Benue to believe that as a former minister of state for Trade and Investment, he would build many industries in the state and open up the state to many more investors. His strong campaign message included the goal of transitioning Benue State from a primarily civil service state to an industrialised state.

The Ortom administration's infrastructure drive has died. Many of the roads started by the governor during his first term and scheduled to be completed in 24 months have yet to be completed. The few kilometres of road that has been built thus far have either become death traps or is dilapidated and pothole ridden. The standard does not correspond to what is available elsewhere and does not reflect a cosmopolitan state like Benue. It excited Benue people that Governor Ortom planned to build a cargo airport, which would expose the state to significant investment. The excitement grew when the Federal government granted the Zaki-Biam yam market international status.

This cargo airport would have made it easier to sell Benue yams on the international market. After the Cargo airport project failed, the governor promised to build an international airport on the land and even included it in the budget. This has also remained a mirage. Many people see Governor Samuel Ortom as simply speaking out against the country's insecurity. All governors before him have established special security operations, such as Operation 'Zenda' under his predecessor. This has not been done by Ortom. One would expect the governor to forge strong ties with neighbouring states

Nassarawa, Kogi, and Taraba, which face similar security threats as Benue, in order to combat criminals who cross into his state.

It is difficult to identify the administration's strong points. The state exudes an unusual sense of hardship. With the state's sole industry, the civil service, emasculated by the government through nonpayment of salaries and pension allowances, life in Benue is indeed difficult. At one point, the federal government's social investment programme appeared to be holding the state's economy together.

Governor Ortom has fought many political battles, including one with his predecessor, Sen. Suswam, when he was first elected. Sen. Akume, his godfather and benefactor, was not spared when he fell out with him in 2018.

At the moment, a cold war exists between the governor and the PDP's national chairman, Dr. Iyorchia Ayu, with the governor accusing the party's national leadership of being incompetent to manage the party's affairs.

The governor appears to be leading his people down an uncertain political path. After refusing to work for his party's presidential candidate, Atiku Abubakar, the governor has secretly declared his support for the labour party's candidate, Mr. Peter Obi. Many political commentators see this as a lack of tact.

As Governor Ortom's term in office comes to an end, it is time for the people of Benue to take stock and reflect on his administration. It is time to examine campaign promises and their level of fulfillment. Posterity will be interested in how many industries he promised to build, how well workers and pensioners fared under him, and how much development he brought to the state.

Most importantly, where he has placed the Tiv people in particular and Benue at large on the country's political space?

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ENTERTAINMENT



2023 Elections: BB Titans, a distraction or a platform for youth empowerment?

By Jennifer Samuel Kuwanta

The long-awaited and addictive reality TV show Big Brother Titans (#BBTitans) is currently being aired while the general elections are drawing closer and this has caused pandemonium amongst Nigerians.

This uproar has been stirred because it clashes with a critical point in Nigeria's history — the 2023 general elections.

The Big Brother Titans (BB Titans) is a joint South African and Nigerian edition of the popular Big Brother Naija (BB Naija) franchise.

The show requires contestants to live in an isolated house and compete for a

large cash prize and other material prizes, at the end of the show by avoiding being evicted from the house by viewers who vote for their favourite housemates to remain in the show.

The winner of the youth-focused

programme will go home with the ultimate prize of \$100,000.

The BB Titans which is taking place in South Africa will run for 72 days — 10 weeks — and end on April 2.

This means the show will be



streaming at the same time the general election will be taking place. The timing of this show has caused a stir and mixed reactions amongst politicians, public figures in the entertainment industry, and many other Nigerians.

Some believe that it will be a source of distraction to the youth ahead of

the general election. While others opined it will in no way affect the elections.

There are many reasons some Nigerians are against the BB Titans show streaming at this moment. In the first place, youths account for the majority of registered voters ahead of the election.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) revealed that there are over 93.4 million registered voters in Nigeria.

In a data analysis by the Cable index, it is revealed Youths aged 18 to 34 make up the majority with a figure of 37,060,399 — representing 39.66 per cent of the voters.



Further breakdown by occupation showed that students lead the list with 26,027,481 — which represents 26.8 per cent of the voters.

Going by the above figures, youths account for the majority of registered voters for the election. In this sense,

the fear that BBTitans could pose a distraction remains valid.

The Big Brother show usually commands a large number of engagements, 90% of which are youths.

This has resulted in a lot of engagements on social media platforms and other channels.

Earlier on, Dr Yunusa Tanko, the Chief Spokesperson of the Labour Party presidential Campaign Committee, (LP-PCC), expressed his displeasure

towards the timing of the Big Brother reality TV show during a press briefing in Enugu.

According to him, it is targeted at distracting youths from casting their votes on election dates.

Tanko alleged that the reality show was being sponsored by one of the major opposition parties, to distract the youths from voting for their choice of candidate.

Tanko said, "The essence of this press conference is to alert the ever-vibrant Nigerian youths of the hidden agenda behind the new reality show tagged: 'The Titans'."

"We have credible information that it's being sponsored by one of the major opposition parties to distract the Nigerian youths from changing the leadership that has placed them in perilous times laced with abject poverty," he said.

He stressed that the information made available to them revealed that the son of one of the presidential candidates in active collaboration with others visited South Africa to hatch this plan.

"As a party with the sole aim of turning our dear country into a place where poverty, unemployment, 'Japa' will be seen as a taboo is being threatened by an opposition that hates the Nigerian youths with passion."

"Big Titan or whatever they may call it will distract the youths from taking what belongs to them now."

"The Big Brother Naija ended not long ago, why the 'Titans' now that we are facing a major election that will determine the future of the Nigerian youths," he queried."

Tanko said that the reality show now was laced with a lot of unforeseen dangers for the youths because their attention would be divided.

"As a party, we are not against reality

shows because it helps the Nigerian youths to break the poverty line but for now, for the common good of all it should be shifted to another convenient date."

"This should be after the general elections must have been concluded."

He said the question Nigerians should be asking the organisers was whether they were truly friends of the political entity known as Nigeria or enemies of progress.

The controversial Nigerian singer, songwriter and actor Charly Boy, whose real name is Charles Chukwuemeka Oputa, urged the youths to be more concerned about

“*The Big Brother Titans (BB Titans) is a joint South African and Nigerian edition of the popular Big Brother Naija (BB Naija) franchise.*”

what bothers them.

Charlyboy in reaction to the criticism raised by concerned Nigerians said, "I expect young people to face what is facing them. Big Brother is not what is doing us."

Another Nigerian had this to say: "The timing is alarming and gives money laundering vibes for the elections." — Martha

Videographer Martha believes that while people are now more politically aware of the need to vote, the BBTitans may be funded by political opposition parties because of the timing.

According to Martha, "Why would they be having to run the whole show now? What happened to

have to do a reunion for the last set? Before a new one begins? And they had to kickstart a new one by January? It doesn't just feel right.

I also believe it's a money laundering avenue for the elections. Any money that is moved at this point would be considered as "sponsor's money", and there will be no trace to find."

On her thoughts of voting for the 2023 elections, Martha sadly can't join the bandwagon of voters this year, as she could not catch up with Permanent Voter's Card (PVC) registrations.

"They should just concentrate on what is facing them, when they finish their voting they can face Big Brother. Voting should be everybody's reality not Big Brother." he added

Other Nigerians, however, argued that the show will not distract youths since it is majorly for entertainment purposes.

They stated that since the 2022 World Cup and the ongoing English Premier League (EPL) did not affect social media engagement ahead of the election, BBTitans will not be a distraction as most people say.

They also said those concerned that the show will be a distraction are "myopic", adding that if the youths are serious about revamping the nation, the reality programme should not stop them from voting.

Ebuka Obi-Uchendu, the show host of Big Brother Naija/ BB Titans and media personality, also took to his social media platforms to clear the air on recent criticisms of the Big Brother Titans show.

Addressing the issue, during the launch of Big Brother Titans, Ebuka stated that "Nigerian youths are very capable of going out to vote and also coming back to watch whatever they want to watch.

Zikoko, a media outlet captured what some Nigerian youths had to say about this:

"The BBTitans are also at risk of losing viewership during the elections" — Isaac

Isaac as a media practitioner is highly anticipating voting for his favourite candidates in the 2023 elections and doesn't see the show as a distraction.

However, he also wants people to realise that the 2023 elections are not the only program at risk of losing the attention it deserves.

In his opinion, Multichoice (the African broadcasting company hosting the show) would also be aware of the 2023 elections holding and might also be taking a huge business risk by organising the show at this time.

He also feels that the decision was made due to the two countries (Nigeria and South Africa) coming together to host one show.

"People arguing about the BBTitans timing is an agenda that is unreal." — Yinka

For upcoming music artist Yinka, he doesn't see why an election process of 2-4 hours for 2 days will clash with BBTitans.

According to Yinka, "As a voter, I am not going to spend the whole day watching BBTitans. I am also not going to spend all day at the polls. Most of the BBTitan drama happens in the evenings from past seasons. This doesn't coincide with voting which takes place in the morning. The fact that people are taking this agenda and running with it shows that Nigerians are bored and just looking for anything to talk about. It is an agenda that is unreal."

"Big Brother will not distract me from my tasks." — Elizabeth

Big Brother is not the hindrance that people think it is, according to Elizabeth.

In her own words, "I think there's no one that was going to vote that

should be distracted by BBN. I watch BBN and still deliver on my tasks, so this is not even that deep."

Sadly, Elizabeth can't vote due to issues with recapturing her Permanent Voter's Card (PVC).

Asides from linking the reality TV show to the upcoming elections, it is not news that most people, especially parents and the elderly are against the show as they tag it 'immoral' and a waste of time as they fear the impacts it might have on their children and youths in the country.

Adeyeye Ogunwusi, the Ooni of Ife, called for the replacement of the reality show, in 2020.

“
The essence of this press conference is to alert the ever-vibrant Nigerian youths of the hidden agenda behind the new reality show tagged: 'The Titans'
”

Despite all the castigations being made against the show, some individuals see it as impactful and worth engaging in. This is because anyone privileged to go into the house gets the opportunity to network on a wider level and automatically becomes a celebrity. It opens great avenues for housemates, and some become ambassadors.

Others get the opportunity to establish themselves as artists, businessmen and women, and so forth.

The housemates engage in activities that they show to the whole world. These activities take creativity. The housemates must be creative to be able to think out what to do.

This means that the show can spur Nigerian youths to become creative. The opportunities created for those engaging in the Big Brother show are quite vast, as it builds one's confidence, gives exposure, spurs creativity, financially/ materially equips, and broadens one's networking platform amongst others. The platform equally engages and impacts the viewers as it entertains them, taking their minds off the issues and hardship in the country, gives the people a common interest discussion just like football, charges their creativity and helps them aspire for greater heights.

The impact is all dependent on the individual. The ball is in their court to pick the positive parts and learn from them while shunning anything termed negative.

In conclusion, youths in Nigerians can detect what is right for them, this is 'doing the right thing at the right time'. The Big Brother Titans show shouldn't be a distraction preventing the youths from carrying out their civic duties. It can serve as a source of entertainment but always remember to be actively engaged in selecting the right leader for our nation.

Nigerians should educate themselves on who and how to vote for as they go to the polls on February 25 to elect a new president.

A total of 18 candidates will participate in the presidential election.

But four candidates are leading the race for the election.

They include Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP), Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Bola Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC), and Rabiun Kwankwaso of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP).



Manchester City have been charged with alleged breaches of financial rules by the Premier League -

But what are they? How serious are the charges? And how long will this process take? Sky Sports News' chief reporter Kaveh Solhekol explains

What are the charges?

Manchester City have been charged with breaking financial fair play rules around 100 times over a nine-year period, which starts in 2009 and goes on until 2018. You have to bear in mind that, during the period, Man City won the Premier League three times.

The Premier League's financial fair play rules are designed to ensure clubs pretty much spend what they earn. You can get around that potentially by inflating how much you're earning or hiding how much you are spending.

According to the Premier League, Man City allegedly broke the rules over nine seasons. They allegedly didn't provide accurate financial information.

Allegedly, they did not fully disclose the financial remunerations that were made to one of their managers

over a four-year period. The suggestion is that there was a secret contract so one of the managers was getting paid much more than officially stated.

The Premier League also allege Man City didn't comply with UEFA's financial fair play rules over a five-year period. They also allege that Man City have not fully co-operated with the Premier League's investigation.

This is a very serious matter for Man City

Time bar helped Man City during 2020 CAS case - will it work this time?

In the past when they've been investigated by UEFA, Man City have always insisted they have done nothing wrong. In February 2020, they were banned by UEFA from European competition for two seasons and also fined €30m (£26.8m).

What are the possible punishments? According to Premier League rules, it can be a points deduction or even the threat of expulsion from the Premier

League, although I think that would be an extreme punishment.

But, if it was a points deduction, it would be a deduction that would be in the current season, so if they were found guilty in a future season, that's when the points deduction would be applied.

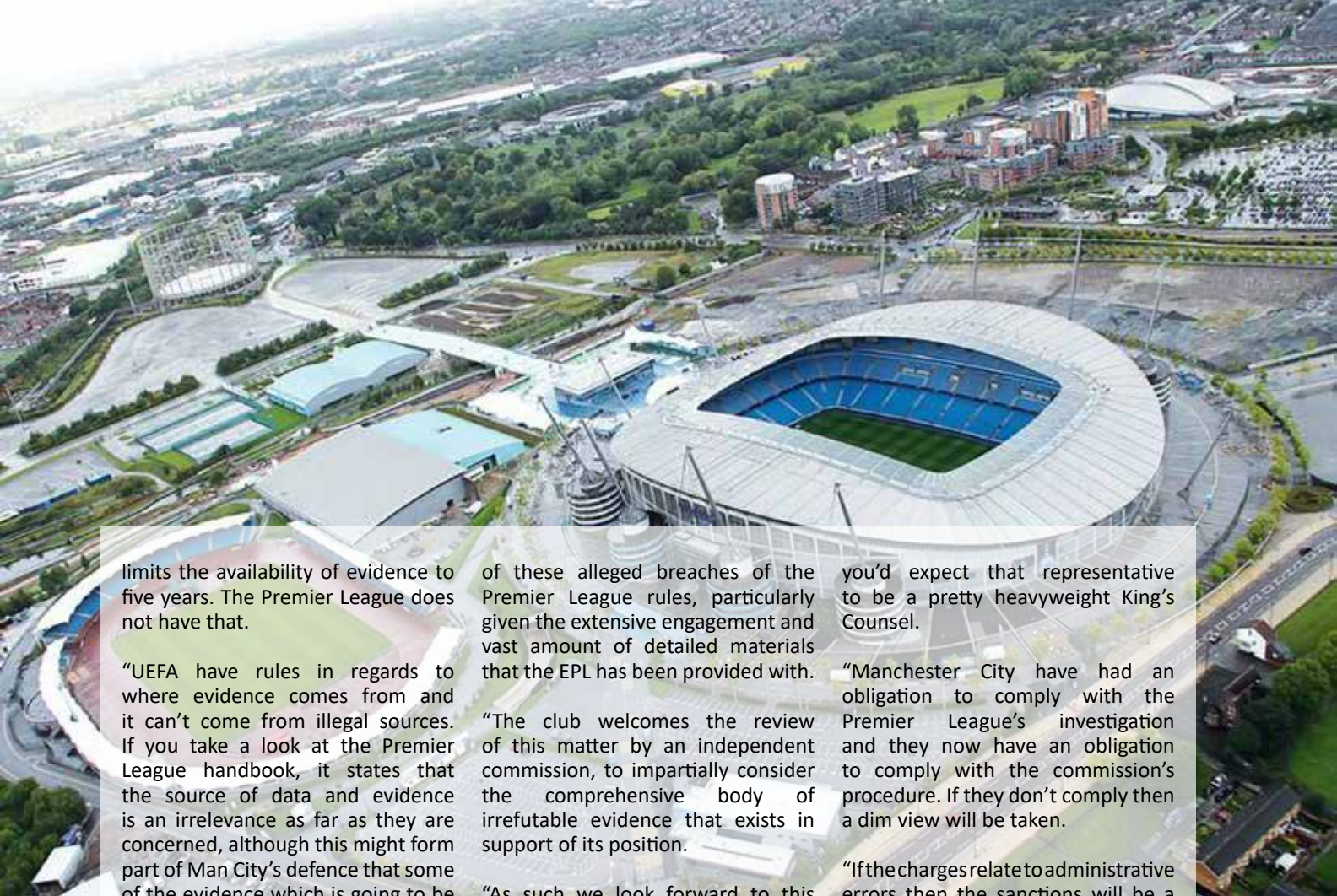
The ban was overturned and the fine was reduced to €10m (£8.9m). At the hearing, the panel found most of the breaches alleged were not established or the time was barred, which effectively means they happened too long ago for UEFA to do anything about them.

Crucially, Premier League rules do not include time bar so when Man City defend themselves, they cannot say these alleged offences took place too long ago for you to be able to do anything about them.

What are the differences between UEFA and Premier League rules?

Football finance expert Kieran Maguire speaking to Sky Sports News:

"The main difference between the Premier League and UEFA is UEFA have a statute of limitations, which



limits the availability of evidence to five years. The Premier League does not have that.

“UEFA have rules in regards to where evidence comes from and it can’t come from illegal sources. If you take a look at the Premier League handbook, it states that the source of data and evidence is an irrelevance as far as they are concerned, although this might form part of Man City’s defence that some of the evidence which is going to be provided by the Premier League has come from inappropriate sources and there is a lack of credibility with that evidence.

“I suspect some of the evidence that is going to be put forward by the Premier League to the independent commission has ultimately come from the Football Leaks, Der Spiegel and the Portuguese hacker because that was quite comprehensive. “It was part of the overall strategy of the Premier League gathering together evidence, especially when they felt it couldn’t necessarily be obtained from the football club itself.”

You have to bear in mind that the only reason this all came to light was five years ago, German outlet Der Spiegel published an investigation which was based on the work of a Portuguese computer hacker Rui Pinto, who had hacked into the email accounts of various football clubs and agents. It was this story that started the UEFA investigation into Man City, which also led to this Premier League investigation.

Man City issued a statement on Monday, which read: “Manchester City FC is surprised by the issuing

of these alleged breaches of the Premier League rules, particularly given the extensive engagement and vast amount of detailed materials that the EPL has been provided with.

“The club welcomes the review of this matter by an independent commission, to impartially consider the comprehensive body of irrefutable evidence that exists in support of its position.

“As such we look forward to this matter being put to rest once and for all.”

Can City appeal?

The independent commission will be formed of three members, who will be selected by Murray Rosen KC, the chair of the Premier League’s judicial panel.

The three-person panel can include any of the 15 members of the judicial panel, as well as non-members.

Once a judgement is made, the Premier League and Man City will be able to appeal - although it cannot be taken to the CAS.

Instead, Rosen would appoint an appeal panel made up of new members. There are currently six members of the Premier League appeal panel.

Who will be on the panel?

Stephen Taylor Heath, JMW head of sports law, speaking to Sky Sports News:

“The commission will have a legal representative on the panel, and

you’d expect that representative to be a pretty heavyweight King’s Counsel.

“Manchester City have had an obligation to comply with the Premier League’s investigation and they now have an obligation to comply with the commission’s procedure. If they don’t comply then a dim view will be taken.

“If the charges relate to administrative errors then the sanctions will be a slap on the wrist. You would think, if the Premier League have taken it this far, they either think there is a case to answer or they’ve simply got to the point where they haven’t been given the answers, and they’re now putting it to a commission to get those answers.”

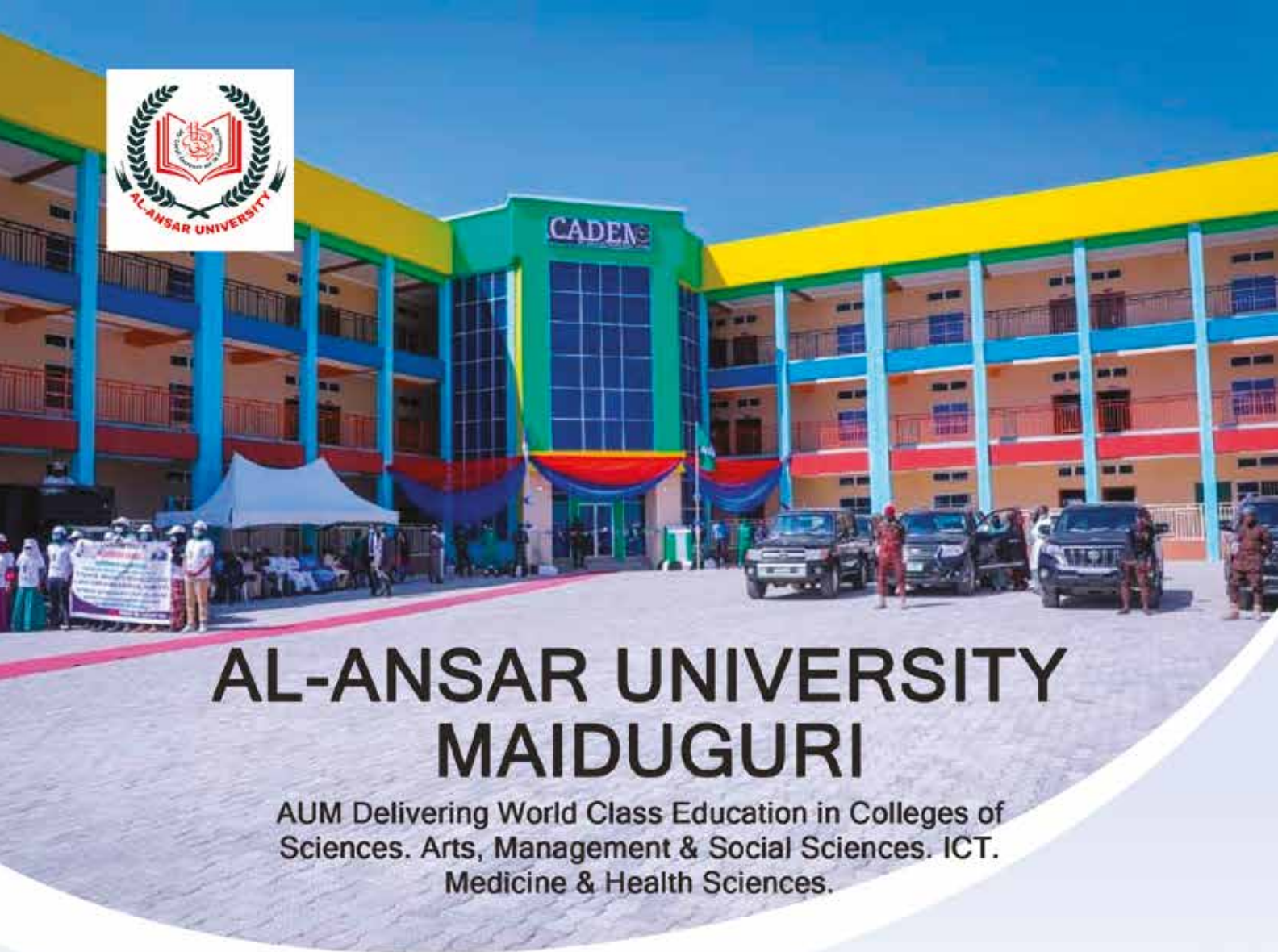
What could the ramifications be for other Premier League clubs?

Football finance expert Kieran Maguire speaking to Sky Sports News:

“If you talk to lawyers, they say it would be difficult for another club to say they lost a title or, perhaps more importantly, access to the Champions League and all the rewards that it brings.

“There was talk just 12 months ago about Burnley and Leeds potentially putting in a claim against Everton with regards to their financial scenario, although that was never crystallised.

“Everybody is going to be watching this with a huge amount of interest and once independent commission makes a judgement, things will move on from there.”



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