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AFRICAN WORLD NEWS



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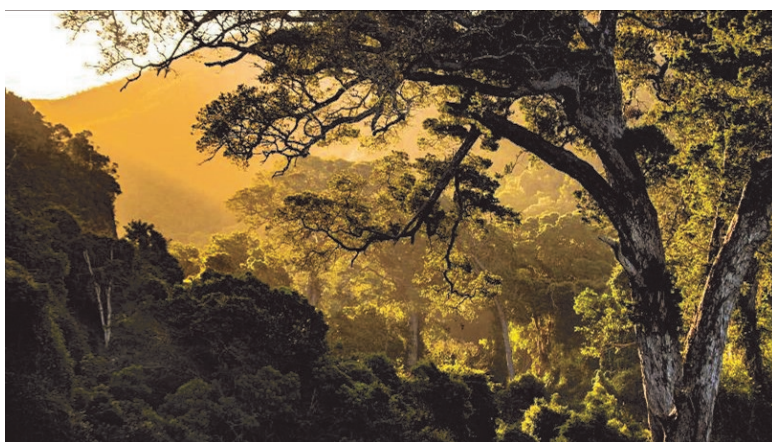


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Ethiopia sets world tree-planting record

In a historic move for the east African nation, Ethiopia has this week announced a tree-planting initiative, via UN Environment, to outdo virtually any other country in the world. Based initially at the Gulele Botanical Garden in the capital of Addis Ababa, volunteers began planting 350 million trees spanning right across the country. In just 12 hours, the world record was broken, in an admirable attempt to combat the effects of deforestation and climate change. By fulfilling the tree-planting record, the country is surpassing its Green Legacy goal, conceived by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, of planting 200 million trees in a day at over 1,000 sites.



The last country to attempt such a feat was India, who have been reigning champions since 2016 when they planted 49.3 million trees in just one day, involving 800,000 volunteers. Equally, back in 2018, China announced plans to plant forests covering an area roughly the size of Ireland and the UK, one of the least forested countries in Europe (13% according to Forest Research), spent £5.7 million to develop a new northern forest in 2018. Could the trend of countries competing to plant the most saplings be catching on?

Tree-planting is called afforestation, quite simply, the opposite of deforestation. Many studies, including one conducted by American scientific journal PNAS in 2017, have documented that restoring forests in their natural

forms is one of, if not the single most, efficient answer to improving global warming. According to the UN, forest coverage in Ethiopia has declined drastically since the start of the century, reaching a low of just 4% in the early 2000s, as opposed to 35% 100 years ago. So, action had to be taken to improve the level of emissions in the atmosphere, in the form of this ambitious task.

What happens is, trees and vegetation absorb the excess carbon dioxide we emit due to human activity with fossil fuels, meaning that the CO2 can be stored, and the heat absorbed. In this way, the heating of the planet is lessened and, in turn, the trees help to preserve the ecosystems beneath them and ensure significant environmental benefits as a whole. For instance, encouraging rainfall, providing clean water, reducing air pollution, and improving the livelihoods for local

people in surrounding areas. Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo, Director of UN Environment's Africa Office explains in an official statement:

"Afforestation is the most effective climate change solution to date and with the new record set by Ethiopia, other African nations should move with speed and challenge the status quo."

"Africa has what it takes to spearhead this global push and as the most affected and vulnerable continent, climate change mitigation must be the top-most priority in the coming days. We at UN Environment are taking the lead in helping to build capacity for nations and people to apply themselves to afforestation and climate change mitigation strategies."

'Cape to Cairo' project coordinators die in crash

Two South African pilots behind a project that saw teenage students fly a homemade aircraft across Africa have been killed in a plane crash in western Tanzania.

Des Werner and Werner Froneman were in a support plane following the teenagers that went down in Tabora region.

They were accompanying a team who had just flown a four-seater Sling 4 plane from Cape Town to Cairo.

They had been expected to land back in South Africa on Monday. Tanzania authorities said the plane went down on Saturday after take-off from Tabora airport.

The pilots sent a distress signal about engine failure before disappearing from radar, according to the Tanzania Civil Aviation Authority.

The plane was completely destroyed with only a few parts recovered, local authorities said.

It was owned by U Dream Global, an organisation founded by 17-year-old Megan Werner, Des Werner's daughter.

"Cape to Cairo Challenge is devastated to report that there has been an accident of the flight support aircraft and that the Project Directors, Des Werner and Werner Froneman, have lost their lives. No-one else was involved in the accident," U Dream Global said in a statement on Facebook.



Cape to Cairo project managers died in crash

The four-seater Sling 4 plane flown by the teenagers was assembled by a group of 20 students from vastly different backgrounds.

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Thousands march in Kenya for cancer awareness

Cancer patients and carers are calling on Kenya's government to declare the illness a "national disaster" and provide extra funds.

Protesters took to the streets of the capital, Nairobi, in matching T-shirts that read Act on Cancer Today.

They say long delays caused by a lack of accessible and affordable treatment mean many patients' conditions worsen.

Three recent high-profile deaths drew attention to cancer in Kenya which has 35 oncologists for 40 million people.

This means there are more than 3,000 cancer cases for each oncologist in Kenya, compared to less than 150 in the US and China, according to the Journal of Global Oncology.

For cancer patients living outside big cities like Mombasa and Nairobi, there are few hospitals equipped to deal with their specific needs. Last month saw the cancer-related deaths of Bob Collymore, CEO of telecoms giant Safaricom, and politicians Joyce Laboso and Ken Okoth.

Around 30,000 people die from cancer every year in Kenya, the government says. Like many other developing countries, the increasing number of cancer patients is putting additional strain on health services.

Chemotherapy is not generally available in the public health service, according to the World Health Organization.

The government has pledged to set up more chemotherapy and radiotherapy centres across the nation, but for many Kenyans the treatment in the private sector is far too expensive.

Those who can afford it sometimes prefer to travel abroad for treatment, with many going to India.

Screening for cancer is often happening too late, say patients, and getting a diagnosis can be a challenge.

"At first the hospital told me they didn't know what I was suffering from," Joan Wangare, a pancreatic cancer survivor, told the BBC.

"But I thank God that, because I started the treatment early, I was able to overcome it."



Speaker Pelosi says seeing slave site was transformative



Why Nigeria banned a pro-Iranian Islamic group

Nigeria's government has taken the controversial decision to ban a pro-Iranian Shia group, accusing it of unleashing violence and being an "enemy of the state".

The Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) is challenging the ban, arguing that it is a peaceful movement which has, in fact, borne the brunt of state-orchestrated violence.

These developments have raised fears of oil-rich Nigeria becoming the latest battleground in the conflict between the world's two main Muslim sects, Shia and Sunni. On Monday, a court in Kaduna in northern Nigeria, ruled that the group's founder and leader Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky - who has been in police detention since 2015 - should be allowed to travel to India to receive medical treatment. He has been suffering minor strokes and is reported to be losing his sight.

What is the IMN?

Formed about four decades ago, it advocates the creation of an Iranian-style Islamic state in Nigeria. It was heavily influenced by the Iranian revolution, which saw Ayatollah Khomeini take power in 1979 after the overthrow of the US-allied Shah in a popular uprising. Khomeini remains the group's main inspiration: IMN supporters first pledge allegiance to him at their gatherings, and then to their local leader, Sheikh Zakzaky. The IMN views itself as a government, and Sheikh Zakzaky as the only legitimate source of authority in Nigeria. It does not recognise the authority of the Nigerian government, and views its leaders - both Muslims and Christians - as corrupt and ungodly.

US House of Representatives speaker Nancy Pelosi says it was transformative to visit the slave site of Ghana from which many Africans were shipped away to the Americas more than 400 years ago.

Speaking in Ghana's parliament on her recent trip to the continent, the speaker said that the Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo's declaration that 2019 was the "Year of Return" for Africans in the diaspora was a "wonderful" gesture.

While in Ghana, Pelosi and other members of the U.S. Congress discussed "regional security, sustainable and inclusive development and the challenges of climate crisis."

Members of the delegation included the House Majority Whip James Clyburn, chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus Karen Bass and representatives Barbara Lee and John Lewis.

Pelosi is also visit ed the Cape Coast and Elmina Castles to observe the anniversary of the first enslaved Africans being shipped to

America.

"I consider this to be a fitting and proper way to commemorate the 400th year since the enslaved people were forced to leave their homeland and sent in bondage to the New World," said Clyburn.

"I seek to pay homage to the sacrifices of our African ancestors and honor the contributions they made to building the United States of America."

Bass said: "On this delegation, 12 members of the Congressional Black Caucus will return to the African continent as members of the United States Congress. We have come so far but we still have so far to go."

Among the history being made on this trip, I am very much also looking forward to witnessing the first woman Speaker of the United States House of Representatives address the Ghanaian parliament."



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The life and times of Fela Anikulapo Kuti as we remember his 80th posthumous birthday in upcoming FelaBRATIONS!

It would be 20 years this month since the legend and creator of the Afrobeat genre Fela Anikulapo Kuti passed. He was a mere 58 years old.

Since his passing, Nigeria and indeed the world has never been the same, for Fela gave us the verbage to describe our condition as Africans, as well the temerity to find answers to the developmental issues that continue to face the continent. He was a musician alright, and not a politician; but Fela was considered beyond his years.

A fighter for human rights and justice, I first saw Fela Kuti perform, like many of his adoring fans did, at his enormously popular club called the African Shrine in Lagos. That was in 1979. It would take ten more years to catch up with him, this time as a freelance journalist in New Orleans, where he would perform two nights at the historic Tiptipinnas Lounge. It was as close as I could get to him, in a dressing room that he loathed and didn't hesitate, as usual, to lambaste whoever was responsible for leading him into such a dungeon – a ramshackle back room filled with graffiti and smelling like a hobbled, dingy annex to the city's oldest nightclub. "Look where they have brought us in to perform. What kind of place is this?" he quipped.

But more thrilled by the idea of a possible interview than his annoyance with Tiptipinnas's dilapidating ambiance, I quickly asked for one on a radio station I worked for at the time. He declined due to timing, but told me he would be available to talk to me for print at his hotel, which meant I could publish his comments in any of the newspapers I was stringing for in the city. Thrilled, I was! However, I never had the opportunity to publish his views in the New Orleans press because I left the city for good to live in Houston the same day Fela and his band concluded their tour in the Louisiana town. Coincidentally, we met again in Houston because it was going to be one of his next dates a few days after I left New Orleans. Another point to note is that, because of my love for Fela's musicianship, I decided to treat him and his band to a hearty Nigerian meal in New Orleans, dipping into my meager earnings to cook fufu and egusi soup (laced with fish and hen parts) for more than twenty of them. I thought they would enjoy the little delicacy having being away from Nigeria for at least a month touring the world. They were quite appreciative, though some of them were shoved their way through the line as if in a hurry to quench their hunger. They gave themselves an enthusiastic helping of the Nigerian staple. Fela was very peeved when told his entourage stressed through the queue to the food cauldron.

"Stupid," he called one of them, as he brought everyone to order. Fela himself liked the meal and had a good portion.

"Remember I am not a gentleman," he said jokingly, a reference to his much-acclaimed tune *Gentleman* – lampooning Africans who abandon the mores of their native origins for European colonial etiquette. I must say I was absolutely impressed by the humility and free-spiritedness with which he succumbed to a surprise dinner from a man he was meeting for the first time and whose only connection to him was that he hailed from his country. Most mega stars and celebrities would have squirmed or showed signs of unrestrained apprehension and timidity at anyone they had just stumbled into. But Fela understood quite well that it was an African thing to be honoured in that fashion.

Meanwhile, I quickly seized the opportunity of an interview with him, engaging him for two hours on his music, lifestyle, women, politics, and just about everything he had done since his Anglican-priest father and pace-setting revolutionary mother gave birth to him on October 15, 1938. He asked me to bring him whatever amount of marijuana I could give him as a present on my way to his hotel suite. I showed reluctance on that, telling him I couldn't

guarantee finding it because I don't smoke. It



would have been unethical as a reporter, not to mention my own aversion to cannabis. Knowing full well how much he loved to smoke the drug, Fela gracefully sensed and accepted my position, and then said: "you look like a nice person, and it would not matter if you bring it or not. I just want us to talk so you can understand where I'm coming from with my music and message."

If you thought he was a disorganized, brain-warped and pot-smoking radical bordering on lunacy and without affection for the things he espouses in his music, think again. Fela was as organized in thought as his Afrobeat invention; a keenly sharp individual who took note of every detail he discussed with you. At the end of our interview, for example, he told me he was very impressed when I told him in a straightforward manner that I could not oblige to his request. "I wish most of our so-called politicians were straightforward in Africa. It will be the best place to live on earth," he chided. For so many years, his candour and constructive criticisms won him adoring fans, and it was easy to see why. "People used to dance to my music while at the same time listen to the message in the music; I believe music without a message or African philosophy is not my style. That's not what I am about. "This is why music is about feelings and the senses," Fela explained, noting that he was aware that "some of my fans say that I have allowed the message to overshadow and dominate the elements of my music. But you see, my brother, both have always been present in my music, but what is probably not there so much as before is the fast pace to make you dance as fast. But what you must understand is that ...the bastards who are our so-called leaders have become stronger in their wicked ways. So also I have no choice but to increase the volume of my noise against these soldiers and corrupt politicians," he said.

Some of the releases criticized as lacking luster with the step include *Look and Laugh*, *Perambulator*, *Teacher Don't Teach Me Nonsense*, *Beasts of No Nation*, and *ODOO*; all of them suffused with great delivery of subversive messages but considered by many not to be of major partying value like *Shakara*, *Lady*, *No Bread*, and many others in the classic genre.

Vintage Fela bopped, weaved, entertained in regal fashion, lectured and danced. He goaded people in authority because he felt it would be an effective tool to correct a whole lot of discrepancies in modern African societies, "not because I hate authority but because power should be used to help your people". Twice he said, he thought of committing suicide because he felt there was really nothing to live for as an ambitious African, and also because he felt he was fighting alone without much support from the Nigerian frightful masses. "After all I have had the opportunity to swim in money but I chose not to because money cannot be a man's central focus in life," he said.

"Our entire culture as a people," Fela opined, "is

not progressing. We do not do enough research in medicine, the arts, and in the spirit, and I tell you, my brother, we can achieve great things if we think correctly. African people have the soul and spirit to do anything. It's like football. We must develop our own way of playing soccer. African man must dance with the ball. That's our rhythm," he joked. On a serious note, he said, "If others choose to do as we do, that's okay, but we must develop our own style instead of following what everybody does. Look at Egypt. I am talking about ancient Egypt. That was Blackism. Look at those achievements", he sermonized. As an inventor, he said he could relate perfectly to the creative juices that flow through every human being but that these musings have remained dormant as a result of fright and "leadership breakdown in Africa".

Those who did not have the opportunity to sit down and talk with Fela, but had an earful of his lyrical compositions would think the self-styled chief priest was racially motivated. Of course not; otherwise how do you explain the fact that one of his best friends, and one-time band member who insisted on understudying the Afrobeat superstar, was the white British renowned drummer Ginger Baker. "I simply used certain examples of our colonial past to drive home some hard facts, and particularly because Britain and America or white people in general have become an integral part of our history as a people. I believe in my Blackness," Fela stressed, "and I have studied it, and if a man is first not proud of himself how can he be proud of others. I just want my people to progress like other people. And there's nothing wrong with that." Whether you agree with him or not one thing is clear: Fela matters today because he gave us the language to describe ourselves, as "zombies", as "shakara" people, as "kpansa kpansa", as "authority stealing", as "BBC" (Big Blind Country), as "Alhaji...means that you are a Stranger in your own land", as "dem-all-crazy" ("Democracy"), as "Mattress", as "Jenku-oku", as "Follow-follow", as "yellow fever", as "beasts of no nation", and so on. He predicted a lot of things and events that have come to pass like the magic words of a prophet.

Fela told us in 1976 in his song *Army Arrangement* that people everywhere are so fed up with politicians that they will either have to revolt en masse or bodyguards will take on the unenviable task by helping citizens assassinate their bad heads of government. It happened in 1980 with the assassination of Anwar Sadat of Egypt at the hands of his security detail. The recent revolution that befell Sadat's protégé Hosni Mubarak is further evidence of Fela's predictions; not to mention Tunisia's president Ben Ali who fled the country after an uprising early this year. Libya's Col Muammar Gadhafi has faced a similar challenge.

Fela also said in the same song that "one day go be one day for those wey dey steal money for government". Translated, it reads like this: "one day shall come when Africa's corrupt leaders, no matter how powerful they think they are, will be held to account in public". Since Fela's death in 1997, Nigeria's powerful elite was shaken up when for the first time a civilian government headed by Olusegun Obasanjo (himself a member of the elite) commissioned an anti-graft agency called Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (the dreaded EFCC) headed by a no-nonsense lawyer-police officer, who probed high-ranking public officials alleged to have committed egregious financial crimes against the state. Their net included a disgraced police boss Tafa Balogun who stole millions of dollars. He was sacked summarily and jailed. He was also forced to pay back millions of dollars of his loot. What the EFCC did on Balogun in 2005 was an absolute coup of immense proportions because no one in Nigeria thought that a big man could be so humiliated in a country where the huff and puff of an influential figure was enough to send the average citizen squirming. This was the hope Fela provided us in his songs. They were songs of freedom of sorts.

News of the AFRICAN World

France to speed up return of stolen artifacts to Benin Republic



Returning African artifacts stolen by Europeans and colonizers remains a hot-button issue in Europe-Africa relations — one that gained traction last November when French President Emmanuel Macron announced the return of 26 historic artifacts to Benin.

On Thursday, French Culture Minister Franck Riester said France, one of the biggest thieves, will go ahead with the restitution without waiting for a new law to enshrine it. He said France will consider similar demands from other countries.

Europe is believed to house about 90 percent of Africa's cultural heritage. Benin was the first country to formally ask France to give back the artifacts.

Jose Pliya, who heads Benin's National Heritage and Tourism Development Agency, NAPT, welcomes their pending return — though he says Benin now has to find a place to put them.

"From our side, we are aware the condition to receive these pieces is not really there," he said. "Why? Because we have museums ... but they are suffering. A lot of waste and mismanagement [in] the past."

The artifacts include thrones and statues taken in 1892 during a French colonial war against what was then the Kingdom of Dahomey.

Benin is restoring and building museums, and training curators to properly house these and other fragile objects. Pliya says this initiative will take months. But he believes harnessing his country's rich culture can bring major job and development dividends.

"Benin is very rich in terms of culture. We want to transform this culture into resources. And one way is tourism," he said.

France's restitution move has intensified pressure on other European governments to do likewise — and given hope to other African countries. Hailu Zeleke, conservation chief at Ethiopia's Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage, says a number of Ethiopian artifacts are housed in Britain as well as Italy.

"We hope the British also respond the same as the French," Zeleke said. "We hope that things are changing ... to return our heritage to Africa, to their homeland."

Other experts believe cultural development delivers payoffs such as less migration to Europe and greater stability.

Post-coup Sudan: Military, opposition agree on constitution

By Peter Uduehi

African Union has confirmed Sudan's ruling generals and the nation's vociferous opposition leaders have reached "full agreement" on a new constitution. Negotiations have been in effect since the ouster of strongman Omar-al Bashir four months ago in a military coup.

Bashir came to power in 1989, also in a military coup; presiding over the largest country in Africa by 2011 when the south split from the north following 20 years of civil war.

Sudan's ruling military council and the main opposition alliance have agreed on a constitutional declaration to pave the way for a transitional government, the African Union has said.

The agreement between the two sides came on the heels of widespread protests throughout the country by democracy activists averse to military rule.

"I am announcing to the Sudanese, African and international public opinion that the two delegations have fully agreed on the constitutional dec-

laration," Mohamed El Hacem Lebatt, the African Union mediator, told reporters.

Lebatt said talks would resume on Saturday about a formal signing ceremony.

The announcement prompted celebrations on the streets of Sudan's capital Khartoum. Demonstrators waved the national flag, chanting "Civilian! Civilian!" while drivers honked their horns.

The final agreement is meant to usher in a joint military-civilian body to rule the country for three years following the ouster of longtime strongman President Omar al-Bashir in April.

The generals and opposition had previously agreed to form a sovereign council composed of 11 members, five from the military and five

from the opposition, plus one additional civilian agreed to by both sides.

The constitutional declaration empowers the AFC to name the prime minister, giving the coalition two-thirds of the seats in Sudan's Legislative Council, Ibtisam Senhoury, a member of the technical committee that drew up the declaration, said on Saturday.

The remaining third will be taken up by lawmakers nominated by the sovereign council and other political stakeholders, Senhoury said in a press briefing.

As part of the agreement, the military will select the interior and defense ministers, while the head of the judiciary will be selected by the prime minister and the sovereign council, Senhoury said. These positions will be filled as negotiations between the military and civilian leaders continue.

But areas of contention between the civilian and military sides remain, particularly with regard to control over the General Intelligence Service and the Rapid Support Forces, the country's most powerful paramilitary group.

The opposition has accused the two security forces of killing protesters, and has demanded that those responsible be held to account.



FCC leader Ahmed Rabee and Lt Gen Mohamed Hamdan 'Hemeti' hold copies of the Constitutional Declaration during the signing ceremony in Khartoum.

agreements have fully agreed on the constitutional dec-

Here and there

Drone strikes kill dozens in Libya

At least 42 people have died in a drone strike in south-western Libya carried out by the forces of rebel Gen Khalifa Haftar, local officials say.

The strike hit a town hall meeting in the town of Murzuq, reports say.

Gen Haftar's forces - which are based in eastern Libya - say they targeted the town late on Sunday,



Gen. Haftar during a swearing in in 2015

but deny targeting civilians.

The country has been torn by conflict since the fall of long-time leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

The air strike left "42 dead and more than 60 injured, 30 of them critically" at the town hall in Qalaa neighbourhood, where more than 200 people were at a meeting "to settle social differences", council official Ibrahim Omar told AFP news agency.

Local media earlier reported that the strike had hit a wedding party.

The UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) condemned the attack on social media and accused Gen Haftar's forces of carrying it out.

It also urged the UN to "carry out an investigation into the crimes committed by Haftar's militias in Murzuq".

Pro-Haftar media outlets said the attack had targeted Chadian mercenaries, which is how they refer to the Tebu ethnic group which opposes Gen Haftar.

Months of fighting between the GNA and Mr Haftar's forces has claimed more than 1,000 lives since April, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

This is the second time in two months that an air strike thought to be by Gen Haftar's forces has resulted in mass civilian casualties.

Media caption In June, an air strike on a migrant centre outside Tripoli killed 44 people
In June, some 44 people were killed in a migrant detention centre on the outskirts of Tripoli.

His forces seized Murzuq earlier this year as part of an offensive to take control of the oil-producing

south - but they later withdrew.

Who controls Libya?

Only Libya's myriad armed militias really hold sway - nominally backing two centres of political power in the east and west with parallel institutions.

Tripoli administration, the internationally recognised GNA

This is under the leadership of Prime Minister Fayez Sarraj. He arrived in Tripoli in March 2016, four months after a UN-brokered deal to form a unity government, to set up his administration.

Over the last three years he has worked to gain the support of the various militias and politicians, but he has little real power over the whole country or the forces ostensibly under his control.

Tobruk administration, includes the parliament elected in 2014 after disputed elections
When those who held power in Tripoli refused to give it up in 2014, the newly elected MPs moved to the port of Tobruk, 1,000km (600 miles) away, along with the old government.

In 2015 some of these MPs backed the UN deal for a unity government, but the parliament has since refused to recognise it and has been blocking efforts to organise fresh elections because it wants Gen Haftar, who leads a powerful force called the Libyan National Army (LNA), to be guaranteed a senior role in any new set-up.

Who is Gen Khalifa Haftar?

Gen Haftar, who has been on the Libyan political scene for more than 40 years, was part of the group of officers who, led by Col Gaddafi, seized power from King Idris in 1969.

In the 1980s, Col Gaddafi put Mr Haftar in charge of the Libyan forces involved in the conflict in Chad.

Khalifa Haftar: The Libyan general with big ambitions

But Libya was defeated by the French-backed Chadian forces, and Gen Haftar and 300 of his men were captured in 1987. Gaddafi also disowned him - prompting Gen Haftar to devote the next two decades to toppling the Libyan leader, from exile in the US state of Virginia.

After the start of the uprising against Gaddafi in 2011, Gen Haftar returned to Libya, where he became a key commander of the makeshift rebel force in the east.

Gen Haftar during his swearing-in ceremony as Libya's army chief in 2015

With Gaddafi's downfall, Gen Haftar faded into obscurity until February 2014, when he outlined on TV his plan to save the nation and called on Libyans to rise up against the elected parliament, the General National Congress (GNC).

In May 2014, Gen Haftar launched Operation Dignity against Islamist militants in Benghazi and the east, and in March 2015, Libya's elected parliament, the House of Representatives - which had replaced the GNC - appointed him commander of the LNA.

Nigeria: Flamboyant pastor returns after sex allegation

The return of a flamboyant Nigerian pastor to his church a month after a celebrity photographer accused him of raping her twice, before she turned 18, has sparked outrage.

Biodun Fatoyinbo decided to "step aside" after Busola Dakolo, who is married to popular musician Timi Dakolo, made the allegation.

A women's rights leader said his return was perpetuating impunity.

His Commonwealth of Zion Assembly (Coza) church has refused to comment.

When the accusations emerged in July, Pastor Biodun denied any wrongdoing but said he was taking "leave of absence from the pulpit" because it was the "right thing to do".

The police and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the umbrella organisation of



Christian churches and Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), later opened investigations. Ms Dakolo's allegations, which date from more than 20 years ago, also went viral on social media, with some saying it had triggered Nigeria's #MeToo moment.

But women in socially conservative Nigeria have so far avoided speaking out, fearing a backlash or stigmatisation.

Victims of sexual abuse are usually shamed and accused of putting themselves in a position where they are abused, BBC Women's Affairs reporter in Lagos, Azezat Olaoluwa, says.

Buhari is allergic to criticism

By Adejumo Kabir

From the Premium Times, Nigeria

Mike Ozekhome, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria, has reacted to the arrest of Omoyele Sowore, publisher of Sahara Reporters and activist.

Mr Sowore was arrested by the State Security Service on Saturday, ahead of the nationwide protest expected to start on Monday, in 21 cities.



Despite Mr Sowore's arrest, organisers have vowed to go on with the demonstration seeking decisive solutions to Nigeria's security, economic, educational and healthcare failings.

Mr Sowore's arrest has been condemned by prominent Nigerians including Wole Soyinka and Femi Falana.

The presidency accused those defending his arrest of blackmail.

Speaking on Channels TV Sunday Politics, Mr Ozekhome said the Buhari government is not tolerant of criticism.

"Dancing on the street saying we don't want bad governance, how does that amount to treason? Unreasonable felony?"

"This government is allergic to plurality of voices. This government is allergic to criticism, this government is allergic to opinions. This government should know that Nigeria is a country with many colours.

"You cannot sample opinions. We cannot all sleep on the same bed. This government should learn to be tolerant," he said.

It should be recalled that the Nigeria Police already described the planned protests by as 'treasonable felony and acts of terrorism'. They also vowed to resist the movement.

Speaking on this, Mr Ozekhome said the police force is 'illogical'.

"That allegation is most plural, most damning and most illogical from the government or security

spokespersons.

"What is treason? For the definition of treason, you have to look at Sections 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42 and 43 of the Criminal Code which applies in the Southern part of Nigeria.

"Then you must look at Section 410 of the Penal Code that applies in the Northern part of Nigeria including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. Treason is the act of overthrowing the sovereign government of a state," he argued.

Nigerians had been quick to demand Mr Sowore's release, with several potential demonstrators warning that the 'RevolutionNow' matches would go on whether or not Mr Sowore remained in custody beyond August 5.

Organisers said the government should focus on

addressing the issues that informed the planned demonstration, rather than cracking down on citizens for exercising their rights to speech, association, and assembly.

The protesters said the demand had been broken down into three phases, each of which contains a laundry of critical issues that must be addressed -- failure over which the protest would not cease.

The first is to end anti-people economic policies, second is to end special privileges for the ruling class while the third hands on returning political power and national wealth to the working people.

Swaziland: Public servants can now strike legally

From Swaziland Press

The Industrial Court in Swaziland has ruled that public service workers must make a new application before they can legally strike.

Unions have been in dispute with government over cost of living salary rises. A planned strike in January 2019 was halted because the Government of absolute monarch King Mswati III said it was political and threatened the national interest.

In Swaziland political parties are banned from taking part in elections and groups advocating for democracy are outlawed under the Suppression of Terrorism Act.

Four public service unions calling themselves

the Public Services Associations (PSA) had joined forces to strike. They were the National Public Service and Allied Workers Union (NAPSAWU), Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT), Swaziland Nurses Association (SNA) and the Swaziland Government Accountants Personnel (SNAGAP).

Unions and government are in dispute over cost of living adjustments (COLA) for the year 2017-2018. The Government says it cannot afford to pay and offered a zero percent increase. The result was a deadlock and the matter could not be resolved at the Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration Commission (CMAC).

Ahead of the intended strike the unions issued a press statement that criticised the government for increasing the budget for state security: the Army, Police and Correctional Services. And for increasing recruitment for these services, while decreasing recruitment in other areas such as education, health and public services.

They also called upon every concerned Swazi 'from all walks of life' to support the strike. They also extended their claim for COLA to include the year 2018-2019.

The Attorney-General for the Swazi Government argued this statement was outside the scope of the pay dispute and made the strike a political one. It was against the national interest to allow the strike to go ahead.

The Industrial Court ruled, 'There is no doubt in our minds that a threat to shut down clinics, health centres, hospitals and transport will have or is likely to have the effect of endangering the lives of part of the population at the very least.'

The court said members of the Swaziland Nurses Association were not allowed by law to strike because they were engaged in an essential service.

The Court ruled, 'With regard to the facts of this matter the main issue of the strike is the COLA dispute which is a legitimate demand of the PSA's. The [Ministry of Labour and Social Security] themselves have admitted that the dispute exists only because they are unable to pay same due to the fiscal challenges the Government faces.'

It added, 'We cannot say that the proposed strike is one of a purely political nature.'

It also said that the unions claim for COLA in 2018-2019 had not been included in the original dispute that had been to arbitration and could not be considered.

The Court decided, 'The strike action cannot be allowed to continue in its present form even if the matter now included in the statement is excised and the employees who are part of essential services are excluded. In our view, the Respondents [the unions] would require to issue fresh notices in order to achieve the legal requirements for protected strike.'

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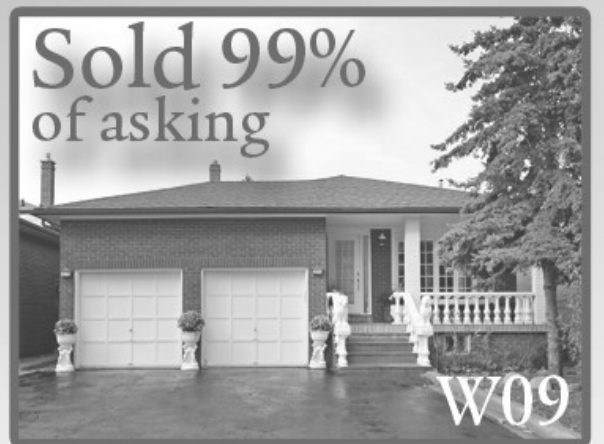
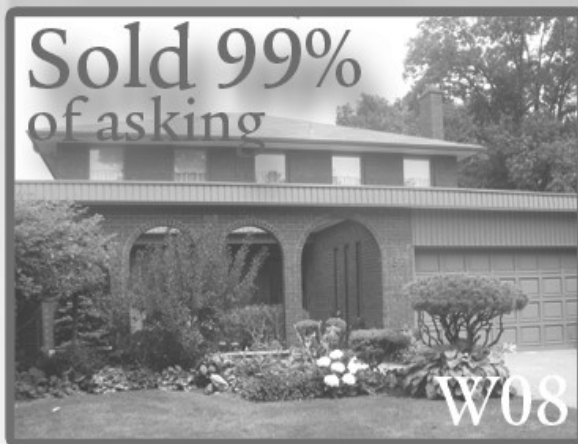
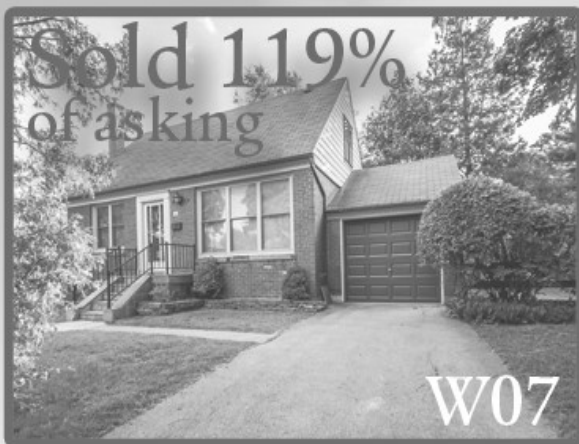
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Algeria are African champions



Algerians celebrate on the streets of Paris

Algeria won the Africa Cup of Nations for the second time as a freak early goal secured a 1-0 win against Senegal in the final in Cairo.

Baghdad Bounedjah's shot took a huge deflection off Salif Sane and looped over goalkeeper Alfred Gomes. Senegal, who have never won the competition, were awarded a penalty for handball in the second half but it was overturned after a VAR review.

Algeria closed out the rest of the game to win their first title since 1990. Senegal's players collapsed on the pitch in tears at the final whistle. Liverpool forward Sadio Mane, who said before the game he would swap his Champions League winners medal for Africa Cup of Nations success, looked disconsolate as Algeria players celebrated around him. "Without the players I am nothing," said Algeria boss Djamel Belmadi.

"They are the main ones. I suppose the staff played its part in guiding the players but they applied the instructions incredibly well." Algeria have gone from failing to get out of the group stage two years ago to winning the tournament Senegal, making only their second appearance in the final since 2002, dominated for large periods but struggled to make the most of their possession. M'Baye Niang was at the centre of two of their best chances as he flashed a fierce drive over the bar just before the break, and rounded keeper Rais M'bolhi early in the second half only to shoot wide from a tight angle.

M'Bolhi also did well to palm over a stinging effort from Youssouf Sabaly. The decisive moment for Senegal was the reversal of the decision to award a penalty on the hour mark.

Ismaila Sarr's cross was blasted straight at Adlene Guedioura's arm, referee Neant Alioum pointed to the spot, but, just as the Senegal players started celebrating the decision, he quickly indicated that a VAR review was under way. After watching the replays on the pitch-side monitor, which clearly showed Guedioura's arm being by his side, Alioum reversed the decision.

Although the decision was correct, the result was harsh on Senegal, with Algeria managing only one shot on goal. Premier League stars fail to shine Both Mane and Mahrez scored three goals in the Africa Cup of Nations The game was billed by many as a battle between Liverpool's Mane and Manchester City's Riyad Mahrez, but both were on the periphery of this encounter.

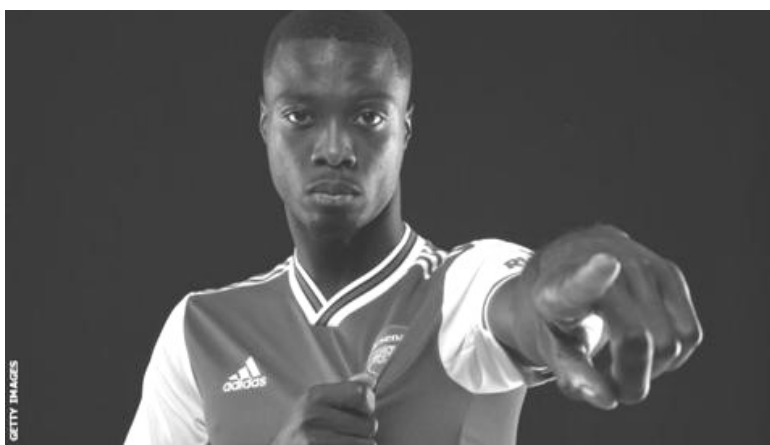
Mahrez's lack of contribution was largely

down to Algeria's defensive approach after taking the lead, but Mane will perhaps be disappointed with his input. He was clearly the player Algeria fans feared most - every touch of the ball was met with boos - but he showed only glimpses of his pace and danger on the ball, possibly showing the signs of fatigue following a long season for club and country.

It is 363 days since Mane began pre-season with Liverpool - and he will only have a couple of weeks rest before the new campaign gets under way on 9 August.

Arsenal confirm winger Pepe of Ivory Coast

Arsenal have signed Ivory Coast winger Nicolas Pepe from Lille for a club record fee of £72m.



The 24-year-old has signed a five-year contract at Emirates Stadium after having a medical on Tuesday. Pepe scored 35 goals in 74 Ligue 1 appearances for Lille, who he joined from Angers in 2017. Being here is very emotional," said Pepe.

"I have come a long way and struggled a lot and so signing for this great club is a big reward." He becomes the fourth most expensive signing in Premier League history after Manchester United duo Paul Pogba (£89m) and Romelu Lukaku (£75m), and Liverpool defender Virgil van Dijk (£75m).

Pepe added: "It was important to make the right decision and I am convinced that Arsenal is the right choice."

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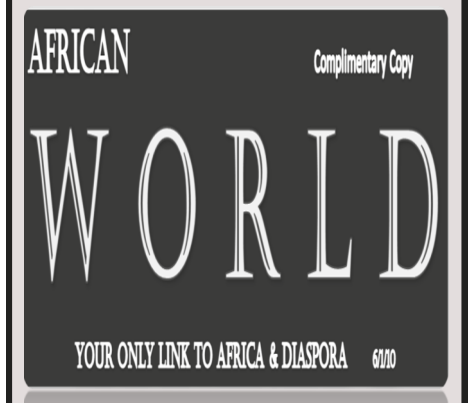
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