



-(R-L) DR Jonny Ihebereme, Director Public Health Care, Imo State; Dr. Anthony Igwe director medical services and Dr Augustine Okeji, State Epidemiologist at the scene yesterday....
PHOTOS: Chris Nwobi



Imo State Governor, Owelle Rochas Okorocha during a sympathy visit to the Njoku family in Umuakuru Government Area over death of 9 members of their relations. With him are the only survival relations, Traditional Ruler of Umuakuru Autonomous Community HRH EZE Cyril Njoku.

N5b fraud: Court adjourns Kalu's trial to Dec. 3

MEBRIM UCHECHUKWU, Abuja

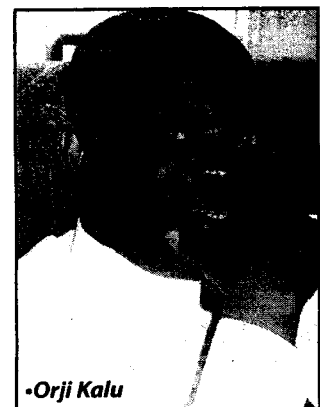
A FEDERAL high court in Abuja yesterday adjourned to December 3, 2012 the proceedings in the trial of former governor of Abia State, Chief Orji Uzor Kalu.

Orji was charged to court by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission on July 27, 2007 before a federal high court in Abuja on a 107 count charge of money laundering, official corruption and criminal diversion of public funds amounting to about N5 billion.

The trial Judge Justice Adamu Bello granted the long adjournment to await the outcome of Kalu's appeal filed against the judgment of the Court of Appeal on the matter now pending before the Supreme Court.

Having failed to get his charge quashed by the appeal court in Abuja, the former Chief Executive of Abia State is now praying the apex court to quash the money laundering charges brought against him by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

On the killings in the country, Kalu while speaking to journalists at the federal high court in Abuja yesterday expressed worries over the mindless killings in the country called on President Goodluck Jonathan to use the full powers of the president and protect Nigerians from the incessant killings.



Orji Kalu

He was responding to the recent killings in Jos Plateau State involving Chairman, Senate Committee on Health, Daylop Datong Gyang and Majority leader of Plateau State House of Assembly, Gyang Fulani.

Kalu said the primary duty of government is to protect the lives and property of citizens and the president cannot afford to fail in his duty to protect the lives of Nigerians who voted massively for him.

In addition, he said, 'Things are going down in the country by the day and it is the duty of government to stand up and live to its expectations. Nigerians are being killed everyday and this are Nigerians, not Chadians and the primary duty of government is to protect lives and property of citizens and if that is not done, I don't know.'

'Considering the huge amount of money government has pumped into security, I don't think it is justifiable because I have not seen a commiserating result. When we were there and all these types of mayhem came up, the former president Chief Olusegun Obasanjo and the governors put up so many strategies to stop them.'

'I believe Mr. President should stand up and deal with the situation. He is our president and he has the powers to deal with the situation. This should not continue because those who have been killed are human beings and not animals. I mean a lot of people have died and we are not in a war situation.'

'This administration should work out a strategy that would give justice and protect the people because like I said, the primary duty of government is to protect life and property. A president cannot be helpless; he has all the powers to deal with the situation. He has executive powers to deal with any situation at hand. I think President Jonathan was misquoted to say he was helpless, he can never be helpless because no president in the world can claim to be helpless.'

IMO State Commissioner for Health, Dr. Obi Njoku has ordered for autopsies on seven members of a family and their two in-laws, who died in Emekuku, near Owerri, on Sunday.

Njoku said at a news conference in Owerri yesterday that the cause of the deaths of the family members had yet to be determined but stressed that the deaths were not natural.

He, however, advised the people to remain calm till the results of the analyses were released.

The commissioner said he had set up a five-member committee headed by the Director of Public Health, Dr. Johnny Ihebereme, who would liaise with Federal Medical Centre (FMC), Owerri, to conduct the autopsies to determine the actual cause of the deaths.

Responding, Ihebereme

said the committee would liaise with FMC, Owerri, to conduct a thorough investigation, adding that the food remnant

in the deceased persons' house and also look into the possibility of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Mr Pascal Njoku, his

Death of 9 f not natu

How FG spent \$3m in 2011 to stop Nigerians from making babies

CHAIRMAN, National Population Commission (NPC), Mr Festus Odimegwu yesterday said the Federal Government spent over three million dollars for the purchase of family planning commodities in 2011.

The chairman, who made the statement at a news conference in commemoration of the 2012 World Population Day in Yola on Monday, said it was in line with the Federal Government's activity on community based family planning.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the World Population Day celebration comes up on July 11 every year.

Odimegwu, who was represented by the state's Director of the Commission, Mallam Shehu Ahmed, said the present administration had also taken a bold step towards better government involvement in family planning services.

He said government, at all levels should ensure the availability and accessibility of affordable family planning services to all couples and individuals who voluntarily asked for them.

The Chairman said the theme of this year's celebration was 'Universal Access to Reproductive Health Services'.

Odimegwu explained

that the Federal Government, through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), was making effort to reduce child mortality and improve maternal health.

'The focus is therefore on family planning, maternal health, sexuality education and HIV/AIDS prevention services.'

He explained that the 2008 Nigeria Demographic Health Survey revealed that 23 per cent of women in Nigeria aged between 15 and 19

were already mothers or were pregnant with their first child.

He said 75 out of every 1,000 children die before their first birthday, while 40 out of 1,000 children die before the age of one month and 35 out of 1,000 between one and 12 months.

Odimegwu said it was worrisome that the maternal mortality ratio in the country currently was put at 545 per 100,000 live births, while 52,900 women and girls die every year

from pregnancy related causes.

'For every woman that dies, at least 20 others suffer morbidities such as obstetrics fistula, infections and disabilities.'

'A lot has to be done, the reproductive health situation in the country demands a lot more holistic intervention.'

Odimegwu said more attention needs to be paid to access to voluntary family planning services.

7 feared dead, 5 injured in Anambra cultural festival

ALPHONSUS NWEZE

ABOUT seven persons were said to have lost their lives, while five others sustained various degrees of injuries when violence erupted during the weekend at the end of a week-long ceremonies marking the end of this year's annual Nwafor cultural festival of Ogidi community in Idemili North Local Government Area of Anambra State.

According to sources three of the victims were alleged to have been stabbed to death, during a clash between the followers of two rival masquerades, while four others were knocked down by hit-and-run drivers who were trying to escape from the terror of

masquerades who invaded the whole roads and streets of Ogidi, just as some other victims ran into on-coming vehicles, out of sheer drunkenness.

The annual cultural festival, during which male youths are initiated into masquerade cult, is regarded as the most important ceremony among Ogidi indigenes, irrespective of age, social, religious and economic status.

The celebration is also marked with heavy dancing, merry-making and cultural display by masquerades and dancing troupes, but often marred by violence, theft and display of immorality by youths who often take undue advantage of the occasion to perpetrate all forms of crime.

Our sources said that last Sunday's event began with masquerade display and visitations by relatives and friends but later turned violent and bloody when hoodlums and various rival masquerade groups allegedly barricaded the roads and embarked on extortion of monies from motorists and robbing spectators.

Confirming the incident with newsmen Monday, the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) Ogidi, Mr. Kanayo Uzuegbu and the Anambra State Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Emeka Chukwuemeka, said that only one person was reportedly killed by a hit-and-run driver, adding that police were deployed to maintain peace while the festival lasted.

Family members burial - Imo Govt

wife and five children as well as their two in-laws died on Sunday after the burial of Njoku's mother on Saturday.

Meanwhile, Imo state Governor, Owele Rochas Anayo Okorocho, has ordered a probe to unravel the circumstances behind

the mysterious death of the family members.

Okorocho also visited the compound where Mr. Paschal Nnadi and eight other members of his family perished in sleep on Saturday night.

He expressed shock and over the incident even as he commiserated with the entire community

and members of Nnadi's extended family.

Okorocho said his visit to the compound is to demonstrate the concern of government and good people of the state over the tragedy.

120 die in 159 crashes in Oyo

- FRSC

THE Oyo State Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) Command on Monday said a total of 120 people died in 159 road crashes in Oyo State within the first half of the year.

The FRSC Sector Commander, Godwin Ogagaoghene, said this while speaking to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Ibadan.

Ogagaoghene said the crashes, involving a total of 758 people, had occurred at various road points in the state.

He also said 638 people were injured with many of them still recuperating in various health institutions in the state.

The FRSC boss, however, said the data reflected an improvement from the same period in 2011 when 145 people were killed and 730 injured in 179 road crashes.

"There is a 44 per cent drop in the total crash rate as compared to that of this period last year.

The fatality dropped by about 14 per cent while the number of those injured dropped by about 44.4 per cent.

"I believe this improved statistics reflects upon our relentless effort in creating awareness on road safety measures over the last one year," Ogagaoghene said.

He said the command also organised sensitisation seminars with motorists, truck drivers and motorcyclists on road safety measures during the rainy season.

"Motorists are beginning to see the need in obeying traffic laws while also ensuring their vehicles are in good condition before embarking on trips," he said.

My husband took me to a shrine for oath, wife tells court

A HOUSEWIFE in Akure, Elizabeth Bankole, has told an Akure Customary Court that her husband took her to a shrine to take an oath of fidelity.

Elizabeth, mother of three children for her husband, Chief Dimeji Bankole, told the court on Monday that she had remained faithful to her husband of 10 years.

Bankole had approached the court for the dissolution of the marriage.

He accused Elizabeth of extra-marital affairs.

Elizabeth, while giving her evidence before the court, said she could not have any extra marital affair with another man because of the curse placed on her during the visit to the shrine.

According to her, there was never a day she was unfaithful to her husband or engaged in any adulterous act.

She added that she had been faithful as a wife since marrying her husband.

Elizabeth, however, told the court that the man her husband accused her of going out with was a relative who used to stay with her whenever he was in town.

She said that, the man, although late now, was a member of her family and her mother used to send him to her anytime he was in Akure.

She said further that there was never a time she got

pregnant for anybody except her husband, adding that her husband had been telling people that she was pregnant.

In the petition, Bankole accused his wife of constantly threatening his life, being unfriendly, proud and full of hatred for him and his people.

He also accused her of being irresponsible, disrespectful to people and in the habit of raining curses and abuses on him.

Bankole, who begged the court to dissolve the marriage, said he was tired of her and

could no longer live with her.

In his ruling, president of the court, Chief Julius Fabinu, ordered the husband to take his wife to the shrine where the oath was taken to remove the curse on the woman.

He said that became necessary since the court might eventually dissolve the marriage so that the woman could be free of the curse and be able to remarry if she wished.

Fabinu adjourned the matter to July 23 for judgment.

N47.1b theft: Absence of Akingbola's counsel stalls trial

THE trial of a former Managing Director of Intercontinental Bank Plc, Erastus Akingbola, was on Monday stalled due to the absence of his leading counsel from court.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that Akingbola and an associate, Bayo Dada, are standing trial before Justice Habeeb Abiru of an Ikeja High Court in Lagos.

They were charged to court by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) for allegedly stealing N47.1 billion belonging to Intercontinental Bank Plc (now Access Bank).

At the resumed hearing of the case on Monday, three Senior Advocates of Nigeria leading the defence team - Chief Felix Fagbohunbe, Mr Deji Sasegbon and Mr Rickey Tarfa,

were absent.

A defence counsel, Mr Abubakar Shamshudeen, in an application dated July 5, asked the court to cancel the five days earlier fixed for the trial at the instance of the senior advocates.

Shamshudeen said that the duo of Sasegbon and Fagbohunbe were absent in court and would not be able to conduct the defence from Monday to Friday due to "health challenges."

He said that Tarfa did not also have sufficient time to prepare the next defence witness for the trial.

The EFCC prosecutor, Mr Godwin Obla, however, opposed the application for adjournment, describing it as "a deliberate attempt by the defence to stall the trial."