



THE WORLD IN BRIEF

Pistorius pleads not guilty at start of trial

Oscar Pistorius pleaded not guilty Monday to murdering his girlfriend on Valentine's Day last year, marking the start of the Olympian's murder trial that was being broadcast live on TV. The first witness, a neighbor of Pistorius, was called before even an hour had passed.

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Politics

Defections, my challenge as Chair of PDPGF - Akpabio

The challenge is the idea of people thinking that the only way they can aspire is through the opposition. The loss of some of my colleagues who decided to defect to opposition could be something that posed a lot of challenges because no party would like to lose a state governor. But, then, what has happened is democracy in action. The reality is that most of them, their deputies did not go with them and over 90 per cent of their supporters said 'no, we are not going there'. Look at the rally the party is doing everywhere - supporters have come out in large numbers...

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Sports

Eagles can beat Mexico - Onigbinde

A former Super Eagles Head Coach, Adegboye Onigbinde, on Monday said that the Eagles 'has what it takes' to beat Mexico in their upcoming friendly match on Wednesday, in Atlanta, USA. Onigbinde made the remark in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Lagos.

The Super Eagles will play El Tri of Mexico, as part of its buildup for the Brazil 2014 FIFA World Cup.

The former FIFA and CAF instructor added that the Eagles handlers were capable of getting a good result from the friendly.

"I think the technical error

News

Again, Boko Haram massacres 50 in Borno

By Temidayo Akinsuyi (Lagos),
Obas Esiedesa and Rotimi
Akinwumi (Abuja), Bala
Ibrahim (Katsina) and Sunny
Nwankwo (Maiduguri)

FOR THE umpteenth time, apparent defiant members of the Boko Haram terrorist group struck again in the Mafa Local Government area of Borno State on Monday morning, leaving more than 50 people dead in their trail.

Several other victims reportedly sustained injuries from the attack.

This is coming barely two days after the Islamic extremists unleashed deadly attacks on Gombari Viewing Centre in Maiduguri town where many people were killed.

An eyewitness told *Daily Independent* in Maiduguri on Monday that over 70 per cent of the structures of the Mafa Local Government Council were destroyed during the attack which lasted over more than five hours.

He added that dead bodies littered everywhere in the area in the aftermath of the attack.

The eyewitness said also that he saw casualties on both sides of the Boko Haram and security personnel, who had been battling since 8.00 a.m.

A Borno State Permanent Secretary, Mamud Lawan Maina, who hails from the area of the attack was said to have been prevented from going into the town when the battle was still fierce as he was said to have been confused and wanted to get there for his family and relatives that were trapped in the crisis.

The recent wave of violence came amidst widespread criticisms of military handling of the Boko Haram menace following declaration of state of emergency in Borno State by President Goodluck Jonathan since May last year.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Auwal Adam Albani who was killed on February 1 in Zaria, Kaduna State, was assassinated because his ideology was pro-Western while his sermons were against the

ideology of the Boko Haram, seven members of the sect who were paraded in Abuja by the Department of State Services (DSS) said on Monday.

The terrorists, paraded at the DSS National Headquarters, admitted to the crime during open interrogation by newsmen.

The late Islamic cleric was murdered in cold blood along with his wife and son.

The DSS identified one of the killers of Albani as Yakub Abdullahi, an indigene of Bauchi State and the leader of the Boko Haram sect who served until his arrest as its sub-regional commander in Kaduna/Niger zone.

The others are Ibrahim Shuaibu, Bilyaminu Usman, Sahabi Ismail, Umar Farouk, Yasil Ibrahim and Musa Abubakar, the security agency said.

The suspected killers were aged between 22 and 54.

Yakub Abdullahi, 42, admitted openly that he was actively involved in the sect's 2009 insurrection in Maiduguri, but had to flee to Kouseri town in Republic of Cameroon where he relocated to Kano State to organise fleeing members of the sect.

Bilyaminu Usman, a 22-year-old Kaduna indigene, said he joined the sect in 2009 and had actively participated in several armed robbery incidents and killings under the directive of Yakub.

He admitted participating in the killing of the Sheikh, confessing that he emptied the 30 bullets in his Ak-47 gun on the victims.

Yasir Ibrahim, 35-year-old indigene of Kano State, is the only university graduate among the arrested Boko Haram members.

A graduate of English Literature from the Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, said he joined the sect in 2009 while working as Head of Records and Billing Department, Horizon Medical Centre, Wuse Zone 6, Abuja.

The two AK-47 weapons used in the murder incidents were kept in his house in

Zaria when Shuaibu brought them from Funtua while he also admitted that he was the one who conveyed the assassins, on motorbike to and from the murder scene.

He admitted that the sect hated the late Sheikh because his activities were jeopardising the efforts of the sect.

Musa Abubakar, a 54-year-old Postikun indigene, disclosed that he became an ardent member of the sect since 2011 and a loyalist of Abdullahi.

He admitted being aware of the plot to kill Albani while he also confessed that he served as cleric to the group.

And in Lagos Nigerian women said they will on Thursday stage a nationwide protest to register their displeasure over the Federal Government's handling of the Boko Haram crisis.

The protest, dubbed, 'Mother of all Protests', will see the women wearing black, which symbolises mourning, and march on the streets of Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt and Benin.

President of Women Arise for Change Initiative, Joe Okei-Odumakin, who is the protest coordinator, said more women are indicating interest to join the peaceful protests and that before the protests kick off on Thursday, more states are likely to join.

"Women are having a peaceful walk to mourn all the killings happening in the Northern part of our country Nigeria, especially the recent slaughter of our kids in Yobe, Northern Nigeria. It is not enough to just be running commentaries on social media, or praying in our closets.

"Women and mothers are supposed to be the matrix of society, so we are calling on all women to a peaceful non-political, non-tribal and non-religious walk on Thursday, 6 March, 2014 in Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, Benin and in the Diaspora simultaneously.

"We want to mourn the wanton killings of our kids in Yobe and abduction of our young ladies up North and call on the government to

wade in seriously before we lose more of our next generation," she said.

Okei-Odumakin said women should be concerned about the mass killings going on in the North, East, West or South and that sanity must prevail in the nation.

In Lagos, she said the protest would kicked off at the Lagos Television Ground, Ikeja, at about 8.30 a.m., while the dress code is black T-shirt on black skirts/hijabs/trousers with black ribbons for the wrist.

"These brutal murders cannot be ignored. Activists should organise their women folk and join this walk. It is just a few hours of time but it will make a lasting impact," she said.

She frowned at President Goodluck Jonathan's nationwide broadcast on the centenary celebration a day after 59 children were killed in Yobe State, saying it showed the President did not have conscience.

All Progressives Congress (APC) also spoke on the Boko Haram insurgency, arguing that "the failed attempt" by Presidential aide on social media, Reno Omokri, to link suspended Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Governor, Lamido Sanusi, to the heightened attacks by the Islamic terror group "has shown that the Presidency may be seeking to profit, politically and otherwise, from the insurgency that has dispatched thousands to their early graves".

In a statement in Lagos on Monday by its Interim National Publicity Secretary, Lai Mohammed, the party said Omokri's attempt to push an article he authored into the public domain, using a fake name, was the clearest indication yet that the Presidency has a case to answer and may have been feeding Nigerians with doctored information.

It said the attempt to blame the recent spate of attacks by Boko Haram on Sanusi raises some pertinent questions:

"Is the Presidency trying to gain political mileage from the death of innocents

Nigerians, including school children, whom it could not protect? Could this be why the government has largely treated the insurgency with levity, especially in its early days?

"Does the Presidency know more than it is telling Nigerians on Boko Haram? Is there a government Boko Haram that acts on instructions from some quarters?

"Is anyone in government profiting financially from the battle against Boko Haram that they may be sabotaging efforts to end the insurgency?

"The best way to know the answers to these questions is for the State Security Service to immediately arrest and question Omokri on why he was trying to act by subterfuge to misinform Nigerians, how long he has been engaged in this shameful and irresponsible act, what his connections are, if any, with Boko Haram, and whether or not his handlers, including the President, approve of his chicanery," APC said.

The party said Omokri's dangerous game should be seen within the context of some curious coincidence between several past Boko Haram attacks and certain low moments and/or at critical junctures in the administration of Jonathan, giving the impression of an unseen hands playing the puppeteer.

Giving some instances, APC said the January 20, 2012 deadly attacks in Kano that left about 162 dead occurred at the height of the fuel subsidy protests that shut down the country; the Christmas Day attack in Suleja that killed about 37 people and injured 57 seems to be a distraction from the series of deadly attacks that had rocked the country earlier; the fact that Boko Haram struck within days of Alaeiyeseigha and Diyarbakir amnesty that attracted widespread criticism, and then the resurgence of Boko Haram that coincided with Sanusi's suspension.

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Fuel scarcity: Commuters groan, as transport fares skyrocket