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that believes in fairness, equity, justice

2024: World Bank Predicts Insecurity In 7 Nigerian States

■ Says food security threatened by conflicts



Vice President, Kashim Shettima carrying one of the IDPs babies during the visit.

VP Shettima, Governor Mutfwang, NSA Visit
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*Mutfwang visits survivors in JUTH

By AMOS TAUNA,
Kaduna

The World Bank has predicted that persistent insecurity, armed conflict, and deteriorating livelihoods will continue to affect local government areas in Borno, Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto, Yobe, Zamfara states, and the far north of Adamawa State in Nigeria until May 2024.

A report said that poor macroeconomic conditions are restricting access to agricultural inputs in the affected states and it is set to affect cereal production in the country.

The global bank in its latest 'Food Security Update' noted that estimated cereal production for the 2023/24 crop year is expected to be 76.5 million tonnes in West and Central Africa that is a two per cent decrease from the previous season, but a

three per cent rise from the average for the last five years.

The report said that Chad, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria are expected to contribute the most to the decline.

According to Bretton Woods institution, "Projections indicate a decline in production from last year in Chad, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria. This decrease is attributed to dry spells during the growing season and insecurity that limited access to cropland in Chad, Mali, and Niger and to poor macroeconomic conditions that have restricted access to agricultural inputs in Nigeria."

It also noted that most of the sub-region's areas will remain in the minimally food insecure (category from November to May 2024, some areas are classified as stressed and some in crisis.

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Southern Kaduna
Has Vast Tourism
Potentials **PAGE 12**
- Deputy Gov

Governor Yusuf Mourns Ex-Speaker Ghali Umar Na'Abba

**Describes the deceased as a true democrat*



By; JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

Kano State Governor, Alhaji Abba Kabir Yusuf has commiserated the family and entire people of the state over the death of a former Speaker, House of Representatives, Alhaji Ghali Umar Na'Abba who passed away in the early hours of Wednesday December 27, 2023.

In a condolence message issued by his spokesperson, Sanusi Bature Dawakin Tofa, the governor described the deceased as a true democrat, who worked relentlessly to ensure the thriving of democracy, good governance, respect for rule of law and championing the cause of the common man.

"We received with deepest shock, the death of our brother Rt. Hon. Ghali Umar Na'Abba in the wee hours of today, the former Speaker who died at the age of 65, was a complete gentleman, a true democrat whose

contributions to the sustenance of democracy in the country was appreciated and cherished by all."

The governor added that his death has created a wide vacuum difficult to fill not only in the extended Na'Abba family and Kano state but in the entire country as his contributions in strengthening democracy in Nigeria and beyond would continue to be remembered and commended.

"On behalf of the Government and good people of Kano State, we wish to extend our heartfelt condolences to his family, political associates, national assembly and good people of Kano.

"May the Almighty Allah to grant his soul eternal rest, Jannatul Firdausi be his final abode and may HE give the family fortitude to bear the irreparable loss," Governor Abba prayed.

Adamawa Born Female Graduate Sets Record In Kwara, Graduated As Overall Best

By; TOM GARBA, Yola

An Adamawa born female graduate has set a record in Kwara, graduating as overall best at convocation recently, of Al-Hikmah University, Kwara State announced the academy prowess of Ibrahim Nafisa Abdulmumuni as the best-graduating student of the 2023 class from the Department of Animal Science, Faculty of Agriculture Science.

Nafisa who hails from Song Local Government Area of Adamawa State graduated with a CGPA of 4:90 and the Vice Chancellor, Professor Noah Yusuf extolled the academy queen.

The VC while pouring out praise on her, said Nafisa is an excellent person, and the young woman has emerged as the overall best amidst over one thousand graduating students.

He said Nafisa is the academy queen, her emergence was timely and quite significant when the federal government of Nigeria has declared a state of emergency in

agriculture.

Professor Noah emphasised on encouraging the federal government to put more efforts into agriculture to ensure food security in the country, using the likes of Nafisa.

The views of many commentators revealed that Nafisa is an exceptional woman with exceptional talent.

One Abdullateef Olatunji said her magnetic brain is beyond her contemporaries to compete with since in a male dominated environment and academic conscious state, she became the overall best.

According to him, the likes of Nafisa should not be left on the streets roaming about as other first class graduates.

He advised that the Adamawa State Government, the federal government and the minister of education should sponsor general to acquire more knowledge in the interest of the nation. "Thank God the Minister



of Education, Professor Mamman Tahir is from Adamawa State, they should save our country from food insecurity by training the likes of Nafisa to get more knowledge and save us all from starvation. "There is hunger in the land, the only solution by

the federal government is to rely on agriculture as the major employer of labour to save the situation, since we have the massive arable land in every state and intellectuals like Nafisa to man the system," Abdullateef said.

Governor Yusuf Mourns Ex-Speaker Ghali Umar Na'Abba

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Prayers Offered By Ulamas Responsible For Reduction In Insecurity - Katsina Governor

By; SULAIMAN AHMED MISAU, Katsina

Governor Dikko Umaru Radda of Katsina State said the gradual reduction of security challenges in the state is a sign of response from the Almighty Allah on the intense prayers to that effect by Ulamas and entire citizens of the state. Governor Dikko Radda stated this when he hosted a popular young Ethiopian Qur'anic reciter, Sheikh Muhammad Afif Taj at the Presidential Banquet Hall, General Muhammadu Buhari (Government), House Katsina.

Governor Umaru Radda appreciated the contributions of Ulamas towards the victory of his election to date and hopes that they would continue with the prayers for the restoration of peace and stability in the state and the nation in general.

Governor Radda said the dinner was borne out of his respect for people of any age blessed with good memorization of Holy Quran in their heads.

He emphasized that, the State Government would name the Katsina School for the Memorization of the Holy Quran after the Ethiopian Qur'anic reciter. The governor pleaded with Sheikh Afif to relocate to Katsina State to take charge of the school and guide the younger ones on how best to memorize the Holy book.

On the alternative, Governor Radda said the young sheikh should take his time to be paying regular visits to mentor the students of the school.

Governor Dikko Radda said the state government would grant the reciter an honorary citizenship of the state to make his stay comfortable, Sheikh Afif Taj while in

Katsina, led last Friday's Congregational Prayer at Usman Fodio Juma'at Mosque in Modoji Quarters.

In a remark, the Ethiopian Qur'anic Reciter, Sheikh Afif Taj said the dinner was not an honour to him in person, but to the Holy Quran.

He thanked the government and Prominent Ulamas who converged on the dinner venue for the love and hospitality accorded him.

Earlier, the state chief judge, Justice Musa Danladi Abubakar who is also the state chairman organizing committee of the annual Qur'anic recitation competition, spoke at length on the secret behind Quran to mankind and appreciated the young Ethiopian Sheikh who visited Katsina for the graduation of a set of students of an Islamiyya School who memorized the Holy Quran.

Others who spoke include the state Commissioner for Religious Affairs, Malam Ishaq Shehu Dabai, State Chairman of JIBWIS, Sheikh Yakubu Musa Hassan, the Director Zakkat and Waqaf Commission, Dr Ahmed Musa Filin Samji and the Commander Hizba Commission, Dr Abu Ammar.

The rest are the state Chairman Council of Ulamas, Sheikh Nazir Kofar Baru, the Chairma JIBWIS Council of Ulamas, Dr. Nasiru Abdulwahab and Dr. Muneer Sheikh Ja'afaru. Highpoint of the ceremony was the recitation of the Holy Quran by two of the winners of Qur'anic recitation competition, Muhammad Mujitaba Muhammad from Dutsinma and Ibrahim Sani Fada from Safana Local Government Area.

VP Shettima commissions redesigned Kano Governor's Office complex

By; JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

Vice President Kashim Shettima has commissioned the multi-million-Naira redesigned Kano Governor's Office complex at the Government House in Kano on Wednesday.

According to a statement signed by the Director General Media and Publicity Government House, Kano, Sanusi Bature Dawakin Tofa, the edifice included a

redesigned council chamber, an executive conference hall, and a VIP lounge with state of art office facilities.

The complex was constructed by the first Military Administrator of the state, the late Commissioner of Police, Audu Bako, in 1967.

The Vice President was assisted by Gov Abba Yusuf; Speaker of the House of Representatives, Right. Hon. Tajudeen Abbas, Deputy Senate President, Sen. Barau I.

Jibril, Sen. Kawu Sumaila, and Deputy Governor, Aminu Gwarzo.

Shettima commended the political commitment demonstrated by Yusuf to ensure the timely execution of the project.

He noted that the remodelling of the governor's office with state-of-the-art equipment would provide a conducive working atmosphere for the governor and his staffers to operate optimally and be able to provide good

governance in the most efficient manner.

"I congratulate Gov. Yusuf and members of the executive council for a job well done," the Vice President declared

The Vice President, Speaker and Deputy Senate President were in Kano to condole the governor, the good people of Kano and the family of late Right Hon. Ghali Umar Na'abba who died in the early hours of Wednesday.



Social Inclusion: Kano Governor Empowers 2,000 People Living With Disability

*Set to establish PWD Commission in 2024

By; JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

As part of social inclusion strategy aimed at spreading good governance to all category of people, Kano State Governor, Alhaji Abba Kabir Yusuf has today flagged-off the distribution of empowerment package of #20,000 each to 2,000 people living with disability at an event that was held at Coronation hall, Government House.

Delivering his address at the event, Governor Abba Kabir Yusuf said the empowerment programme was informed by the government's desire to assist and support all citizens in the state irrespective of their physical disability,

economic background or social differences.

He added that it is with the ardent believe of his administration that people living with disability take a center stage of his government that needs to be accorded proper care, rehabilitation, sense of belonging and provision of other social amenities for their benefit and that of their families.

In a statement signed by the Director General Media and Publicity Government House,, Kano, Sanusi Bature Dawakin Tofa, made available yesterday, the governor urged the beneficiaries to remain consistent in making positive plans and aspirations to make their lives better and more prosperous as the

government from its side has a lot of programmes and policies to project their lives to better living. The State Deputy Governor, Comrade Aminu Abdussalam Gwarzo, said it is the responsibility of leaders at all levels to cater for the needs of their followers saying what Governor Abba Kabir did was timely in view of current harsh economic situation in the country.

Comrade Aminu Abdussalam Gwarzo called on the leaders of Associations of People Living With Disability to unite themselves and remain committed in serving their members as government is always ready to stand by them to forge ahead.

The beneficiaries were

drawn from eight clusters that include: the blinds, crippled, deaf and dumb, albinos, lepers and spinal cord injury patients across the 44 local government areas of Kano State.

The governor also assured the people living with disabilities that his government is set to establish the PWD Commission in Kano to domesticate the Disabilities Act initiated by the Federal Government.

Earlier in his address, the chairman of PWD in Kano, Engr. Musa Muhammad Shaga appreciated the governor's good gesture for fulfilling his campaign promise on social inclusion through the support to people living with disabilities.

Rev Gbadero Charges Nigerian Leaders To Fear God In Leadership Style

By; SANIALIYU, Zaria

The Bishop of First Baptist Church, Sabon Gari, Zaria, Rev. Isaac Gbadero has called on Nigerian leaders to put fear of God in their leadership style to save the country from any form of violence.

He stated this in his Christmas message, which he said the call became necessary as God directed them to remind leaders on what they should do and what they should avoid.

Gbadero said, the 2023 elections have come and gone, well some might say, not quite, despite the controversies, most of the processes have been concluded.

According to him, in the course of the elections and their aftermath of violence, Nigeria did look like a crime scene.

The Bishop said, "we can't gloss over any of these deep wounds and scars, and we must find healing which is not an easy job for any nation and there are no short cuts to nation building."

"However, the last few years did test our collective resolve to stay united and now, the government must devise strategies for achieving reconciliation which has eluded us," he said.

Reverend Gbadero reminded President Bola Ahmed Tinubu that, "Now, you have what you prayed for, what you dreamt of, what you longed for over twenty years, you have plotted to be our President. For years, you campaigned for a new Nigeria through restructuring or overhauling the defective machinery of the Nigerian state and for years, you fought the military and other forms of dictatorships".

The Bishop said the future

of our country is in your hands. Mr. President, with no excuses before God or the people of Nigeria. Neither God nor history will not forgive you if you fail.

He said the problems of Nigeria are deep seated and they are based on a culture of corruption that has become the foundation stone of governance.

While the evil structures has to be dismantled as Nigeria's problems will not be resolved by palliatives.

"On the killings of Nigerians by whatever name must end now and these senseless killings, abductions, extortions and kidnappings have to end and the sacredness and sanctity of human life restored.

"A culture of compensation to victims must be institutionalized and states must take full responsibility while criminals or those who hide them are fished out.

"There must be a deliberate effort to restore hope on the faces of the poor and vulnerable in our society. We have heard the familiar stories of empty treasuries, and the efforts at investigations.

"I appeal to you all, let us stay the course in hope. God will do great things for our nation, but we each must renew our commitment towards self-examination and repentance.

"Good politics and good politicians can bring about change, but all of these require the commitment and honesty of citizens to be honest at all levels," he said.

He therefore, called on Christians in particular in this season to become real models of our faith, while the call to be a Christian is not a call to join an association or a club.

Sanwo-Olu Urges Nigerians To Be Hopeful Of Greater Prosperity

By; RAYMOND TEDUNJAYE, Lagos

Lagos Governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu has urged Nigerians to remain hopeful of greater prosperity that would be recorded in the country as the current administration of President Bola Tinubu continues to tackle the myriad challenges facing the nation.

The governor spoke on Monday during an interview with journalists after attending a Holy Communion Service at the Cathedral Church of Christ, Marina, Lagos in celebration of Christmas.

Governor Sanwo-Olu, who was accompanied by the First Lady, Dr. Ibijoke Sanwo-Olu, promised to work for Lagos better and faster in his second term in office so as to accelerate developments across the identified areas in his THEMES+ agenda.

He said: "We are at a time as a people when things are indeed at various levels of challenges. Our case is like that of a patient who had been diagnosed with an ailment in the hospital and who had also received some medication but he is now in the process of recovering. And during that recovery process, there would still be pain that would be felt.

"The world has gone through a lot and so it is not peculiar to us alone. So, we are at the recovery stage and it will appear as if we still have a bit of pain here and there. But I can assure us that with all the medications that we have taken with all the policies of the current Federal Government's Renewed Hope agenda, there is light down the tunnel.

"My message to all Lagosians is to remain hopeful. What we are going through is not peculiar to us and I want to assure you that better



times are ahead of us.

"In Lagos, we are thankful to God. We are thankful for what God has done for us. We will continue to remain the commercial and economic nerve center of our country. We will continue to attract investments at the highest level into the country. We would continue to be a beacon of social economic transformation in our country. We will continue to remain the most peaceful part of our country.

"Our government is committed to the Federal Government and the Renewed Hope agenda. And more particularly, we are committed to giving hope to the hopeless. Indeed the rising of Lagos is about us and several things will happen as we enter the new year."

Governor Sanwo-Olu also congratulated President Bola Tinubu and Vice President Kashim Shettima for celebrating their Christmas in Lagos. "We are happy and I want to congratulate Mr. President and Mr. Vice President for coming to Lagos to celebrate Christmas with us. We do not take it for granted. We want to wish them the very

best of Christmas.

"We also want to wish all Lagosians the very best this Christmas. We are coming back to say by this time next year, we will all have better reasons and greater joy in our hearts to celebrate," Governor Sanwo-Olu assured Lagos residents.

In his sermon, the Bishop of Lagos Diocese, Rt. Revd. Ifedola Okupevi, said the birth of Jesus is about good news that brought civilisation and changed the history of the world.

He commended President Tinubu and Governor Sanwo-Olu for providing leadership at the federal and state levels and urged governments to provide palliatives for the people and reduce poverty in the country. The Bishop also urged governments to address the issue of exchange rates and work toward reducing the mass exit of Nigerians to foreign countries.

In a related development, Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu last night attended the Christmas Eve Dance of the Yoruba Tennis Club and Island Club respectively at the Lagos Island area of the State.

Governor Sanwo-Olu while speaking at the two foremost clubs in Lagos, appreciated members of the clubs and the entire Lagos residents for re-electing him for another four years as well as electing Asiwaju Bola Tinubu as President of Nigeria.

The Governor who spoke passionately about some of the capital projects commissioned by his administration in 2023, among which were the first phase of the Blue Line Rail, Lagos Rice Mill in Imota, Lekki Deep Sea Port, the first phase of the Lekki-Epe Expressway and three bridges in Yaba, Ebute Metta and Ikeja, said he is committed to delivering good governance and dividends of democracy through the THEMES+ agenda for residents of the State.

He also urged Nigerians not to lose hope based on the current challenges in the country, saying the President Bola Tinubu-led administration is committed to turning around the economic fortune of Nigeria with the Renewed Hope agenda of the Federal Government.

Christmas Day Tragedy: 9 Die, 3 Injured In Osun Road Auto Crash

By; BAYOAKAMO, Ibadan

Nine persons on Monday, Christmas day, lost their lives in an auto crash along the Ikirun/Offa Expressway in Inisa Osun State.

New Nigerian gathered that the driver of the truck said to be traveling from Niger State to Edo State with bags of beans and a

few passengers lost control and veered into the bush.

It was learnt that the persons died on the spot of the accident, while three others sustained serious injuries

Osun State Command of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, (NSCDC) Public Relations Officer, Kehinde Adeleke said the crash occurred

in the early hours of Monday at Yidi Junction, Inisa.

"Today, Monday 25th of December 2023, one Mitsubishi Canter with plate number MNA606SB NIGER carrying bags of beans from Niger state to Benin Edo State was involved in an accident in the early hours, which resulted in the death of nine people out of 12", she said.

Adeleke added, "FRSC officers evacuated and moved the three injured passengers to Orotunde Hospital Ikirun, while the remains of the deceased were deposited at the hospital's morgue.

"Bags of beans and the vehicle involved have been evacuated to Inisa Police Divisional Headquarters."

2024: World Bank Predicts Insecurity In 7 Nigerian States

■ Says food security threatened by conflicts

It added that over the same period (November 2023 to May 2024), Crisis (IPC Phase 3) conditions, mainly caused by persistent insecurity and armed conflict, and deteriorating livelihoods, are projected to affect local government areas in Borno, Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto, Yobe, Zamfara states, and the far north of Adamawa

state in Nigeria.

Other places, according to the report would include places in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, and Niger, pointing out that in its latest update, the World Bank noted that between August and November, many low- and middle-income countries were battling with high inflation.

It stated that information from

the latest month between August and November 2023 for which food price inflation data are available shows high inflation in many low- and middle-income countries, with inflation higher than 5 per cent in 61.9 per cent of low-income countries (no change since the last update two weeks ago), 76.1 per cent of

lower-middle-income countries (3.9-percentage-point decrease), 50.0 per cent of upper-middle-income countries (no change), and 57.4 per cent of high-income countries (2.6-percentage point decrease).

According to the report, most-affected countries are in Africa, North America, Latin America,

South Asia, Europe, and Central Asia. It further highlighted that in real terms, food price inflation has exceeded overall inflation 74 per cent in 167 countries.

It said in November, Nigeria's headline inflation rose to 28.20 per cent, while food inflation soared to 32.84 per cent.

VP Shettima, Governor Mutfwang, NSA Visit IDPs In Bokkos, Commit To Justice, Support For Injured

*Mutfwang visits survivors in JUTH

By: BUHARIB. BELLO, Jos

Vice President, Kashim Shettima and Plateau State Governor, Barr. Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang have visited Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) affected by cruel attacks in Bokkos and Barkin-Ladi Local Government Areas of Plateau State.

Accompanied by National Security Adviser (NSA) Mallam Nuhu Ribadu and top government officials, the leaders addressed the IDPs at Bokkos Mini Stadium, expressing sympathy to the people and government of Plateau State.

They assured that the Federal Government has initiated measures to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The Vice President emphasized the determination of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration to dispense justice, conveying the President's deep sympathy to the affected families.

He lamented the unfortunate incident that marred the joy of Christmas in Plateau and other parts of the nation, stating that the government will not rest until the perpetrators are brought to justice.

"My dear people of Bokkos, we are here to sympathize with you over the recent killings. You are not alone; this government, particularly the President, stands with you. We are here to deliver justice, the path to our collective unity and peace. We will not rest until you all access justice and end the security challenges confronting this state," the Vice President said.

He described the killings as mindless, unfortunate and barbaric and renewed his appeal to the people of Plateau State to remain resilient, trusting on God to overcome the current challenges.

Governor Mutfwang, thanked President



Vice President, Kashim Shettima carrying one of the IDPs babies during the visit.

Bola Ahmed Tinubu for delegating the Vice President, the National Security Adviser and all security Chiefs to come and evaluate all the contending issues afresh, to facilitate continued dialogue and harmonization of ideas in the collective interest of the people of Plateau State.

He said the visit of the Vice President is a demonstration of a strong political will towards ending all forms of insecurity confronting the state.

"We are here to sympathise with you and as governor of this state, my heart is so heavy. But the visit of the Vice President is

a clear demonstration of the political will to deal with the situation; the shedding of blood has to stop."

He added, "We appeal to the Federal Government to fish out the perpetrators of the dastardly act and be made to face the full wrath of the law".

The Vice President, Governor Mutfwang and the National Security Adviser also addressed Plateau elders across religious and party lines and sued for tolerance, peace and unity for the collective growth and development of the people.

Governor Mutfwang later visited injured persons at the Jos University Teaching

Hospital (JUTH) with a view to assessing their conditions for prompt medical response and support. He upset the medical bill of a one Ezekiel Dalyop and Yeipeng who were discharged in the last six months but could not pay their medical bill.

Among those who were part of the visit, included Senator Simon Lalong, Senator Joshua Dariye, Senator Simon Mwadkon, Senator Diket Plang, the Gwom Gwom Jos, Da Jacob Gyang Buba, traditional rulers, Secretary to the Government of Plateau, Arc. Samuel Jatau, Chief of Staff, Engr. Jeremiah Satmak, Commissioners and heads of agencies.

Akwa Ibom First Lady Showers Love On Christmas Baby

By; PATRICK TITUS, Uyo

The Akwa Ibom First Lady, Pastor Patience Umo Eno on Christmas day, extended her milk of human kindness to the family of Mr. Isaac Okon of Ikot Otu Village in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of the state whose new born baby was born on Christmas day.

The gesture came, when the governor's wife, following the age-long tradition of her Excellency's Office by making an early morning visit to General Hospital, Ikot Ekpene, where the baby, was delivered at exactly 00:03am, weighing 3.8kg.

The new baby, a boy has no doubt come with a bundle of joy to his family, even as the First Lady welcomed the boy with love and gift items, describing him as a star baby.

Pastor Patience Eno, while making the presentation, expressed joy and happiness at the safe arrival of the baby and prayed that he would herald God's blessings on the family and the state at large.

"I thank God for the mother of the star baby, for giving birth to a son on a Christmas day which is very significant. I pray that just like God nurtured Jesus Christ His son, made him who He is to the world today, that boy shall also live to fulfill purpose and destiny. He will be a great man like Jesus, God will spare his life, make him a blessing to his family. Every other children given birth to today are all special, God will make them so, their parents will ever celebrate giving birth to them on a day like this, that is my prayer and more for them in Jesus name, Amen." she said.

She offered her congratulations to the parents of the baby, and charged them to bring him up in the way of the Lord and to the benefit of mankind, applauding the Management of the General Hospital for keeping the environment hospitable and clean.

"I want to commend the Management and staff of this hospital, I always like it when I get to the hospital and the hospital smell does not greet me first. It was a long walk but I did not perceive any unpleasant smell, it shows that everyone is working collectively to ensure the environment is conducive."

In her motherly disposition, the First Lady took out time to interact with other nursing mothers' in the maternity ward and as well gave out special gift packages and cash to their babies, wishing the babies and their parents a merry Christmas and a rewarding new year in advance.

The parents of the Christmas baby, Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Okon, on behalf of other parents appreciated the governor's wife for her benevolence and prayed God to bless her.

On her part, the Chief Medical Director of General Hospital, Ikot Ekpene, Dr. Nene Andem thanked Pastor Patience Eno for visiting the hospital and donating to the nursing mothers on a day celebrated globally as the day the Saviour of mankind was born, and prayed God to bless her.

On hand to receive the Governor's wife were the wife of the Transition Chairman Ikot Ekpene Local Government Council and female stakeholders of the area.



SGF Rules Out Future Elective Position As He Marks Birthday

By; ARCHIBONG ESUENE, Makurdi.

Senator Dr. George Akume, former governor of Benue State and Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) has said that he is not interested in elective positions any more.

The immediate past Minister of Special Duties in the administration of President Muhammad Buhari said he has no ambition to run for public office again.

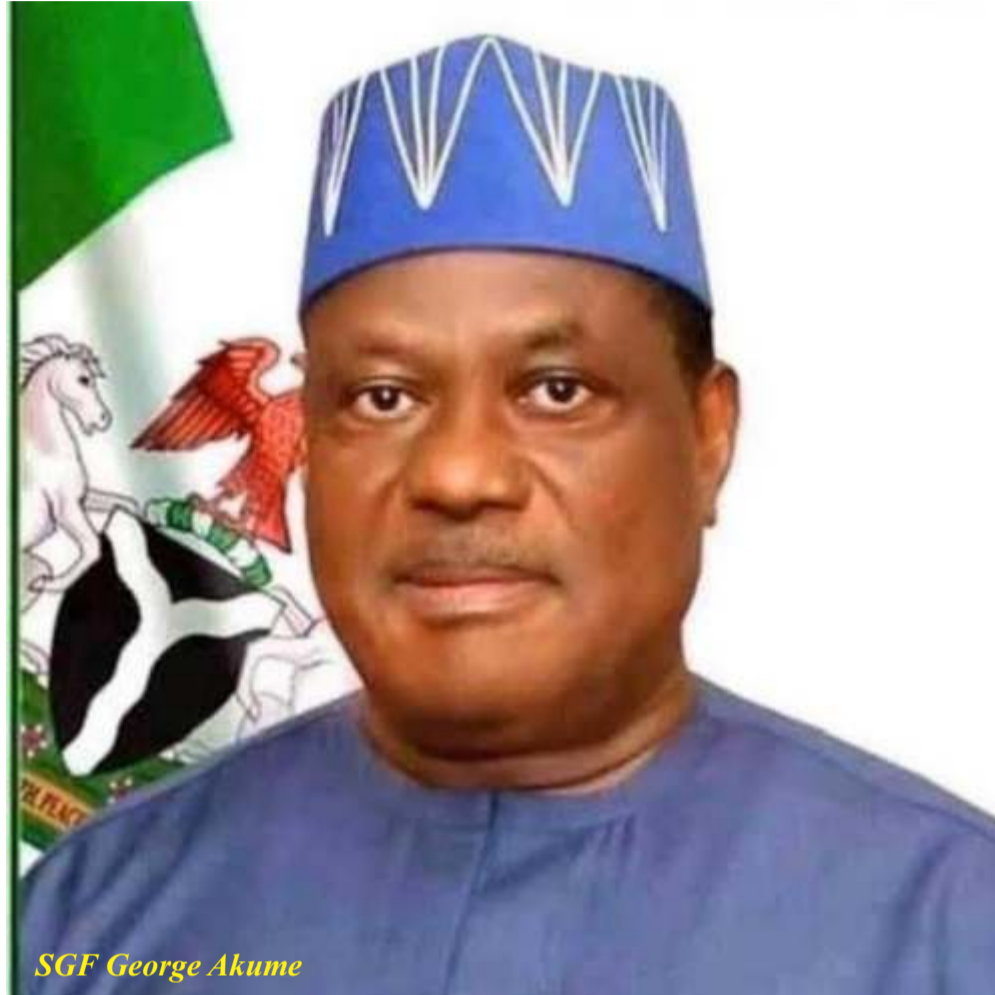
"We have to encourage and give the younger ones a chance," he submitted.

Senator Akume, former governor of Benue State, who was responding to the call by former governor of Jigawa State, Alhaji Ibrahim Saminu Turaki at a colloquium/symposium to mark his 70th-year birthday celebration organized by the Benue State Government, said all that is needed now is collective support for his boss, the president of Nigeria, "President Ahmed Tinubu".

According to the SGF, his principal by his grace and general support of Nigerians will be in 2031 "and I will be 78 and for me, no more".

Sen. Akume despite the alleged cool differences with his state governor, called for support for the government of Rev. Fr. Hyacinth Iormem Alia in the state and to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu at the federal level, saying "They need your prayers and I also need your prayers."

"I implore every one of you in the state to continue to pray for the governor. These are trying times, and I speak as one with the experience of the office of



SGF George Akume

the governor. It is not an easy thing, just be praying and be patient. Remember, your hard work ensured his victory. If he fails you have also failed", the SGF said.

Sen. Akume who recounted that of his over 25 years in politics, he has encountered considerable moments, some, very unpleasant and yet, kept going, sued for tolerance and a looking-forward in hope.

The SGF called on the Benue people and entire Nigerians to trust in the ability of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and to support the Renewed Hope programmes of his administration, noting that tomorrow would certainly be better than today.

"Today may be rough and

tough, but tomorrow will be better than today. Nations are great today because of the sacrifices of their yesterdays. Indeed, tough situations do not require to be tackled with kid gloves. Instant solutions may only serve momentarily", Akume pointed out.

Reacting to the goodwill message by the Vice Chancellor of Benue State University, Prof. Joe Tor Iorapuu, in which he noted the achievements of the SGF in the university, Sen. Akume praised the former governor of Benue State, the late Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu, for making the dream of the state university a reality and laying the foundation on which he built.

The SGF pointed out that, "we should see diversity as

a blessing and manage it very well. Our president recognizes this and is using it to good effect for all to see. Diversity has ensured the greatness of America and other nations. Our diversity must be seen as an asset and not a liability".

In their good will messages, the Vice Chancellor, Federal University of Health Sciences, Otukpo, Prof Innocent Ujah and the Managing Director of Lower Benue Rural Basin Development Authority, Engr Muhammad Adra described the SGF as a man with impeccable records, who will work assiduously for the successful implementation of the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Ahmed Tinubu.

Ghali Na'abba, Adieu Great Speaker, Statesman - Uba Sani

By; FUNMI ADERINTO, Kaduna

Governor of Kaduna State, Senator Uba Sani on

Wednesday, said that it is with a heavy heart but total submission to the will of the Almighty Allah, that they received the news of the passing away of a remarkable lawmaker and statesman who fought doggedly for the independence of the legislature and personified the politics of principles.

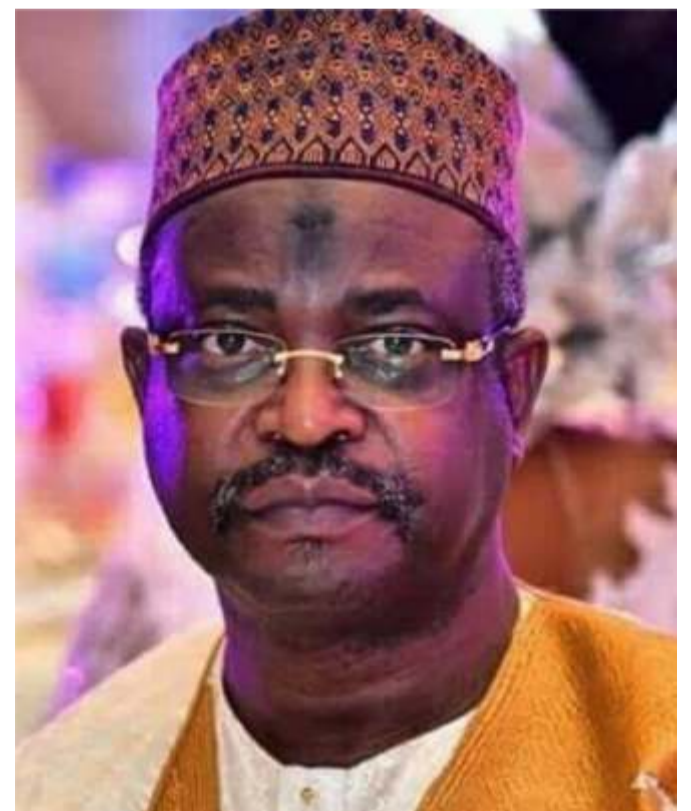
"Rt. Hon. Umar Ghali Na'abba made a mark as Speaker of the House of Representatives. He worked assiduously to advance the frontiers of constitutionalism, fundamental rights and freedoms, and democracy. "He was intellectually engaging, progressive, focused and fearless. Out of office, he took on the role of a public commentator calling

attention to the wrong steps of public officials and warning of dire consequences if we fail to retrace our steps.

"Nigeria has indeed lost an extraordinary public intellectual, lawmaker and Statesman. Rt. Hon. Ghali Na'abba lived a life of impact. He will be sorely missed.

"On behalf of myself, my family and the people of Kaduna State, I wish to extend our heartfelt condolences to the Na'abba Family, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Hon. Tajudeen Yusuf, the government and people of Kano State and all Nigerians.

"We pray fervently for the repose of the gentle soul of Rt. Hon. Umar Ghali Na'abba. May Almighty Allah give the Na'abba Family, the people of Kano State and all Nigerians the fortitude to bear this irreparable loss," he said.



Late Na'aba

Plateau Mourns, Shaken By Evil, Says PDP State Chairman

*Condemns cowardly attack In Bokkos, Mangu, Riyom

By; BUHARI B. BELLO, Jos

The Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Plateau State Chapter, Hon. Chris Hassan said they will stand with the people of

Bokkos, Mangu, Barkiladi and Riyom through the difficult times as they mourn in this season of joy.

The Chairman condemned the cowardly evil attack on innocent citizens in Bokkos, Mangu, Barki-

ladi and Riyom on Christmas Eve.

"It is a criminal act and no justification for the attacked. He called on the security to mobilise, arrest perpetrators and bring them to face the full wrath of the law.

"We are shaken, we are

sad, we are heart broken, but the Lord is our refuge and strength in times of trouble," he said.

The chairman commiserated the affected communities and the Government of Plateau State over the evil attack.



Kaduna Peace Commission Organizes Consultative Dialogue For Peace In Northern Senatorial Zone

By: SANIALIYU, Zaria

Kaduna State Peace Commission had organized a Consultative Dialogue for Peaceful Coexistence and Harmonious Relationship for stakeholders in Northern Senatorial Zone. Speaking at the occasion, the Executive Vice Chairman of the Commission, Saleh B. Momate said Kaduna State is confronted with problems associated with contestations over scarce resources, negative exploitation of ethnic and religious differences and violent crimes, especially kidnapping for ransom, raiding of villages and rustling of cattle. He said, in the Northern Senatorial Zone of the state, these problems have severely affected crops and livestock production, increasing the level of poverty and social instability.

According to him, government has faced head-on the various threats to peaceful coexistence, including provision of support to federal security agencies, engagements with various stakeholders and implementation of robust development programmes

throughout the State.

On its part, the Kaduna State Peace Commission has carried out interventions to address ethno-religious disturbances, resource based disputes among diverse groups such as between farmers and pastoralists and resolution of conflicts through dialogues.

He also said, various stakeholders have been trained on mediation and conflict resolution to deepen the amicable resolution of disputes using non-violent mechanisms.

"It is worthy of commendation to note that amidst these challenges, the diverse communities of the State have remained resilient, cooperating and working together with the Government to address the problems of conflicts and insecurity. Indeed, traditional rulers, Local Government administrations, religious leaders and host of stakeholders are enormously contributing to the maintenance of Peace and security, hence the Northern Senatorial Zone have remained the most peaceful and united part of the State".

Alhaji Saleh B. Momate noted that the Kaduna State Government and the commission will continue to appreciate the support of communities and community institutions,

While enjoining the people of Kaduna State to continue supporting the traditional rulers and according them the needed respect and cooperation in the promotion of peace and harmonious coexistence.

The dialogue convened is to provide platform for elected representatives and leaders of key government institutions including the Commission to listen to the grassroots community leaders as well as to deliberate on what is needed for enduring peace, security and harmonious coexistence.

He said the outcome of the deliberations will certainly enrich the policies and programmes of Governor Uba Sani's led administration in the promotion of peace and security, while also providing guidance to key MDAs on the priorities and range of interventions to pursue in the forthcoming years.

The executive Vice Chairman assured that the commission will continue

to rely on this goodwill in convening similar dialogues in the other Senatorial Zones of the State.

In his message, the Chairman of the occasion and the Emir of Zazzau, Malam Ahmed Bamalli who was represented by the Emir of Lere Engr. Suleiman Umar said the meeting on peace is very important as he give priority to that course.

Emir Bamalli said he is a champion of peace among people with different diversity and beyond.

He charged the participants to find a lasting solutions to the of all forms of violence and advised the commission to involve everybody in order to contribute on the way forward on peace and unity among people.

Both JNI and CAN Kaduna State have advised Government to look back on how people will return their conscious to the olden days that good values and norms were respected.

They also called on government to bring and end to the drugs abuse by the teeming youths that becomes drugs addicts and become threat to the community.

Oluwarotimi Akeredolu: So Long, Dear Colleague - Uba Sani

By: FUNMI ADERINTO, Kaduna

Governor of Kaduna State, Senator Uba Sani on Wednesday, said that with a heavy heart, but total submission to the will of Almighty God, they received the news of the passing away of their beloved colleague, the Governor of Ondo State, Oluwarotimi Odunayo Akeredolu, CON, SAN.

According to him, the great legal mind and progressive made immeasurable contributions to the advancement of the rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights and freedoms in our country. He had the courage of his convictions and stood stoutly in defence of the principles of federalism. "Nigeria has lost a

visionary and inspirational leader who deployed his skills and experiences in the selfless service of the Ondo people and Nigeria. He will be dearly missed.

"On behalf of myself, my family and the people of Kaduna State, I wish to extend our heartfelt condolences to the Akeredolu Family, the government and people of Ondo State, the Chairman of the Nigeria Governors Forum, Abdulrahman Abdulrazaq and all Nigerians. We pray fervently for the repose of the gentle soul of Oluwarotimi Odunayo Akeredolu.

"May Almighty God give the Akeredolu Family, the people of Ondo State and all Nigerians the fortitude to bear this irreparable loss," he said.



Late Governor Akeredolu

Lagos Govt Promotes 267 LASTMA Officers Over Effective Service Delivery

By; RAYMOND TEDUNJAYE, Lagos

The joy of the Christmas season has doubled for at least 267 personnel of the Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA) following the release of their promotion letters by the state government.

The promotion of the officers, who are of junior cadre, was approved and confirmed by the Personnel Management Board on Promotion (Junior Staff Committee).

The General Manager of LASTMA, Mr. Bakare Oki Olalekan disclosed that the promotion of the 267 junior officers by the government is in line with the ongoing strategic repositioning of the agency for a more effective service delivery to the general public particularly motorists.



Mr. Olalekan Bakare Oki, General Manager LASTMA

In a statement by Adebayo Taofiq, Director, Public Affairs and Enlightenment Department of the agency, Bakare Oki confirmed that

while 26 junior officers were promoted from Grade level 05 to 06, 241 others were elevated from Grade Level 06 to 07,

including males and females.

The general manager confirmed further that their general promotion was approved based on good credibility and efficiency in performance on duty.

"The agency will continue to reward diligent, committed and hardworking personnel of the Agency in order to encourage them to do more," he assured.

Bakare Oki maintained that those few bad ones embarrassing the good image of the Agency would be continuously dealt with in accordance with the provisions of civil service rules.

He therefore, urged members of the public particularly motorists to always adhere to every traffic laws and regulations as contained in the Lagos State Traffic Sector Reform Law 2018.

Delta Police Boss Promises Criminals Hard time, Deploys Massive Personnel

By; RAYMOND TEDUNJAYE, Lagos

The Commissioner of Police of Delta State, CP Wale Abass has ordered massive deployment of Police personnel across the length and breadth of the state to provide sufficient security before, during, and after the Yuletide celebration.

This happened, just as he warned anyone with criminal intent to leave the state or risked been squeezed.

He directed that all Area Commanders, Divisional Police Officers, and Tactical Commanders, to deploy their men to guarantee the safety of all state citizens and the success of all the celebration-related events planned.

According to a statement by the Command Spokesperson, DSP Bright Edafe, the Police Commissioner said that the police would be undertaking operations throughout the state, focusing on visible policing at all celebration locations, particularly shopping centers and other

resort areas.

Abass added that the police will focus on special crime awareness and prevention operations, as well as targeting crimes common over the festive season.

He urged members of the public to remain alert and aware of their surroundings at all times to avoid being easy prey for crooks who may want to take advantage of this period, which is typically marked by social gatherings and festivities.

The Delta Police Boss further advised the public to be law-abiding, and also nurture an active participation in community policing, so that they can be instrumental to the police in the fight against crime during the Festive Season and beyond.

"The Commissioner of Police, on behalf of officers and men of the Command, wishes all Deltans and residents of the State a hitch-free celebration.

"He assures that the command is actively ready for the festivities; hence, anyone with criminal intent will be squeezed out of the state," the statement said.

Emefele: Group Blasts Jim Obazee's Report On CBN

By; AMOS TAUNA, Kaduna

The Nigeria Citizens Watch for Good Governance has described the report by the Special Investigator on the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and Related Entities, Jim Obazee, as another one of his cooked and concocted stories aimed at causing controversies and chaos in the country.

The group, in a statement on Wednesday, issued by Mayowa Ajibade, Director, Media and Publicity, noted that it is not the first time Jim Obazee is involved in causing controversies that have been injurious to certain innocent people in the country over his own personal interests, greed and intoxication caused by

the power at his disposal. To begin with, the group asked, "how did Jim Obazee become a special investigator, how independent is he as a special investigator, what criteria were used to appoint him, what are the yardstick for his nomination? Suggesting that the questions are fundamental and need to be addressed because of the previous records of Obazee.

According to the statement, "The same special investigator who was accused of sexual harassment by one of his staff who worked under him for years, an ES who did not get approval before implementing the FRC Code, which was yet to be approved by a board and the same individual who

ordered the hasty suspension of FRC numbers of some bank managers, directors for no just cause and only for the suspension to be lifted after a while?

"It is imperative to state clearly that a man who has had this questionable past is not capable of leading such a sensitive investigation against someone he has been at logger heads with. His neutrality and impartiality are at question given the matter at hand because we are aware he was sacked and out for a revenge mission to settle personal vendetta. Jim Obazee is out for a which hunt."

It observed that the report he submitted to the President is full of flaws, saying that Jim Obazee stated that Mr Emefele

never got approval for the Naira re-design when on the contrary, former President Buhari has made several public statements taking full responsibility for the Naira re-design.

The statement explained that most of the names mentioned in the reports have publicly came out to debunk and reject what was written by Jim Obazee, pointing out that he and his sponsors are so eager to slander, defame and tarnish the reputation of notable Nigerians who have served diligently the nation in their various capacities.

The group called on Nigerians to ignore the findings of Mr Obazee as the report is full of biases and is greatly influenced by the zeal to settle personal scores.



Delta CP Abass



COMMUNITY FOCUS

Aruwan Visits Tudun Biri, Celebrates Christmas With Christian Residents

By; FUNMI ADERINTO, Kaduna

The residents of Tudun Biri on Sunday, received the Kaduna State Commissioner of Internal Security and Home Affairs, Samuel Aruwan who joined Christian Community in Tudun Biri to celebrate Christmas.

The visit was to extend solidarity to the Christian community to celebrate this year's Christmas with them following unfortunate incidents.

The commissioner, joined in harmony and determined resilience to emerge from the depths of tragedy which took place at the community in Kaduna.

Samuel Aruwan was quite moving to be among the people, Muslim and Christian, he has been engaging and working with this community since the unfortunate incident of December 3, 2023.

According to the commissioner who advised them not to lose hope and also to strengthen their faith, he was there for two reasons; first, to attend the Christmas Service at Nagarta Baptist Church, in commemoration of the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The second reason was to further extend the solidarity and support of Governor Uba Sani, the Armed Forces and other critical stakeholders following the incident.

He however, said he also went to explain directly the ongoing work towards fulfilling the promises made by the government.

The commissioner noted the resilience and steadfastness exhibited by children, women, youth and men of the entire community, including their neighbours, are a demonstration of unity, tolerance and togetherness at work for the common good of mankind.

"I am grateful to the Imam and the Pastor for their sterling leadership and submission to the will of God in all that has befallen their people.

Samuel Aruwan said that Tudun Biri's togetherness is a model that should be emulated by other communities.

In a response, the church Reverend Musa Saidu commended the Commissioner and the Kaduna State Government for identifying with the community, he described the visit as a move into right direction.



Engr Mohammed Applauds Sen Lawan For Distribution Of Poverty Alleviation Items

By; JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

In a recent event held in Gashua, Engr Hassan Mohammed Yusufari Dan Madamin Yusufari, the president of TY Buratai Football Academy, has commended Senator Ahmad Ibrahim Lawan, the Senate President of the 9th Assembly, for his efforts in supporting grassroots development. The occasion marked the distribution of poverty

alleviation items to constituents in Gashua Local Government Area.

During an interview with the press, Engr Hassan Mohammed expressed his gratitude towards Senator Ahmad Lawan for his generous gesture.

He emphasized the importance of unity between political leaders in Yobe State and encouraged Senator Ahmad Lawan's constituents to continue praying for him and supporting his endeavours.

Engr Hassan Mohammed, while acknowledging the critical moment faced by the people, said that the empowerment initiatives undertaken by Senator Ahmad Lawan has proven to be a lifeline for many.

He highlighted the positive impact these initiatives has on the community, saving people from the clutches of poverty.

Furthermore, Engr Hassan Mohammed urged the beneficiaries of the various empowerment programmes

sponsored by Senator Ahmad Lawan to utilize the funds and tools provided to improve their economic prospects.

He emphasized the need for them to seize the opportunity to enhance their social status and secure a decent livelihood.

The distribution of poverty alleviation items by Senator Ahmad Lawan showcases his commitment to uplifting the lives of his constituents.

His grassroots approach to

politics has garnered appreciation from individuals like Engr Hassan Mohammed, who recognize the positive impact it has on the community.

As Yobe State continues to progress, the unity and support among political leaders, as exemplified by Senator Ahmad Lawan will play a crucial role in driving sustainable development and improving the lives of the people.



Southern Kaduna Has Vast Tourism Potentials - Deputy Gov

By: JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

The Deputy Governor of Kaduna State, Dr. Hadiza Sabuwa Balarabe has expressed optimism that events like the Southern Kaduna Festival have potentials of boosting the vast tourism potentials of the zone

She expressed this in her remarks as special guest of honour at the Maiden Southern Kaduna Festival, in Kafanchan yesterday.

"The tourism potentials of Southern Kaduna is vast, and events like these help to showcase our endowments to the outside world.

"Let us make the most of this unique opportunity to strengthen the bonds that unite us, celebrate the richness of our cultures, and chart a course towards a future characterized by unity, understanding, and collective progress," she said.

According to her, it is with great excitement that she stands before at the occasion of the opening ceremony of the first Southern Kaduna Festival (SKFEST).

"The festival is a wonderful opportunity to showcase the rich cultural heritage of Southern Kaduna and promote intercultural exchange among the people of Southern Kaduna, and between Southern Kaduna and other cultural groups in Kaduna and Nigeria at large.

"This position emphasizes the interconnected nature of every region, asserting that no area can exist in isolation. Presently, there are myriad factors that bind people across the globe, with humanity serving as the ultimate common thread.

"It is in appreciation of these that the Senator Uba-led administration has woven its program of action. The SUSTAIN Agenda, consisting of seven key points, aims to uplift the residents of Kaduna State without regard to geographical location, religious beliefs,



ethnicity, or cultural preferences.

"Senator Uba Sani believes that all lives matter, and this should be our standpoint in Southern Kaduna. We must respect each other in the region and those outside of it, regardless of differences in backgrounds," she said.

She explained that in a world that often emphasizes differences, events such as this provide an invaluable opportunity to recognize and celebrate our shared humanity.

"I would like to take this moment to encourage all participants, spectators, and stakeholders present to embrace the spirit of unity and respect for one another. Let us recognize that diversity is not a challenge but a strength, a source of enrichment that has the power to propel us towards a brighter and more prosperous future.

"This is why I find the theme of this year's celebration, 'Experience Unity, Celebrate Cultures,' very appropriate. It serves as a testament to the rich diversity and the need for harmonious coexistence in Southern Kaduna.

"The goals of this festival are not merely confined to the realms of entertainment and sports but extend far beyond, aiming to foster and promote inter-relations and exchanges between the people of Southern Kaduna and other cultural groups within the state and across Nigeria.

"This pursuit of inclusivity is paramount, given the large number of ethnic groups in this area. The festival will also provide us with the opportunity to tell our story, explaining where we come from and where we hope to go.

"I understand that the Festival encompasses a myriad of creative events,

such as marathons, football tournaments, beauty pageants, cultural parades, fashion shows, musical concerts, traditional wrestling, archery, a festival market, and roundtable discussions.

"This entrepreneurship exemplifies the commitment to showcasing the multifaceted talents and cultural heritage of this great region," she said.

She added that, "As we revel in the festivities and partake in the various activities, let us keep in mind the collective interests of Southern Kaduna. Our strength lies in our ability to come together, appreciate our differences, and work towards a shared vision of progress and prosperity.

"I commend the organizers for their tireless efforts in putting together this spectacular event, and I am confident that the Southern Kaduna Festival will not only provide three days of fun, excitement, and cultural displays but will also serve as a catalyst for economic growth in the state.

"I urge all participants to enjoy the myriad of activities lined up for the festival. I wish you all a wonderful festival."

Earlier in his remarks, Chairman Southern Kaduna Leadership Council (SKLC), Chief Ishaya Dare Akau, said that the purpose of the festival is to bring together their diverse communities, to celebrate shared history, values, and traditions, irrespective of religion, ethnicity, or social background.

"It is an opportunity for us to not only rediscover our roots but also to forge stronger bonds amongst ourselves. For it is in unity that our true strength lies.



Southern Kaduna Has Vast Tourism Potentials - Deputy Gov



"However, the Southern Kaduna Festival goes beyond a mere display of cultural extravaganza. It is a platform that aims to draw the attention of investors and companies, showcasing the vast opportunities that our region has to offer.

"Southern Kaduna, with its fertile soil and favorable weather conditions, is one of the largest producers of ginger in the world. It is time for us to harness this potential and explore the uncharted territories of agricultural development. By investing in our homeland, we can create sustainable jobs for our people and reduce our dependence on the government," he said. Akau said that it is with immense joy and pride that he stands as the Chairman of the Southern Kaduna Leadership Council at the inauguration of the maiden edition of the Southern Kaduna Festival, fondly branded as SKFEST 2023.

"This momentous occasion is not only a celebration of our rich cultural heritage but also a significant step towards uniting the people of Southern Kaduna," he added.

He therefore, urged all the Southern

Kaduna elites and those residing in the diaspora, to think beyond personal gains and consider investing in the development of their homeland.

"This is the place where our roots are deep, and our hearts find solace. Together, we have the power to transform Southern Kaduna into a prosperous hub of economic growth. Let us not simply rely on the government to supplement our efforts, but instead, let us take charge and shape our own destiny.

"Moreover, Southern Kaduna holds immense potential as a prime destination for tourism and hospitality. Our beautiful landscapes, historic landmarks, and welcoming communities have the power to captivate hearts and minds.

"By investing in the tourism sector, we bring not only revenue for the state but also more employment opportunities for our people. It is time for the government to recognize the importance of this industry and heavily invest in its infrastructure development. Let us place Southern Kaduna on the global stage as a must-visit destination that offers a unique experience

and draws visitors from far and wide.

"In conclusion, the Southern Kaduna Festival is not just a celebration of our culture and heritage, but a stepping stone towards a brighter future. It is a call to arms for all Southern Kaduna natives, urging us to come together, appreciate our roots, and invest in the development of our beloved homeland. Let us seize this moment and make Southern Kaduna a shining example of progress, unity, and success. Together, we can build a future that not only honors our past but also empowers our present and ensures a prosperous tomorrow for generations to come," he said.

Also speaking in a welcome address, Chairman, Central Planning Committee of the festival, Rear Admiral Ferguson Bobai, said the journey has not been without its challenges, as time eluded them and threatened to dash their dreams.

"But faith in God and the unwavering dedication of our incredible committees have carried us here today," he disclosed.

He said, "Welcome, welcome to this momentous occasion, the grand opening ceremony of the maiden edition of the Southern Kaduna Festival, affectionately branded SKFEST 2023!

"Today, we gather here with hearts full of excitement and gratitude, for we have triumphed against all odds to bring this remarkable event to life.

"We stand before you now, under the radiant Kaduna sun, as a testament to the boundless power of united efforts, unwavering determination, and divine grace," he said.

He revealed that some skeptics advised us to shift the goalpost, to delay our ambitious endeavor until the year 2024.

"Yet, we dared to dream bigger, trust deeper, and work harder. And here we stand, on this hallowed ground, bathed in the triumph of turning mere sketches into awe-inspiring reality.

"As we embark upon this enchanting journey of SKFEST

2023, let us set aside any fears or reservations. Open your minds and hearts to the splendid array of activities that lie before you. This festival is a cornucopia of delightful experiences, beckoning you to indulge in its irresistible splendor.

"From colloquium that will stimulate your ambiance, to enchanting musical performances that will transport you to another realm, SKFEST 2023 promises to be a tapestry of unforgettable memories.

"Discover the kaleidoscope of Southern Kaduna rich cultural heritage, expressed through traditional dances, captivating beauty pageant, and mouthwatering culinary delights.

Immerse yourself in sports entertaining endeavors, from fascinating game of archery and traditional wrestling to endurance testing marathon and exciting football play-offs. Bask in the laughter and joy of the vibrant carnival parades, as they weave through the streets of Kafanchan, painting smiles on the faces of young and old alike.

"Let us not forget the magnificent display of local craftsmanship, showcasing the skill and ingenuity of our artisans. Adorn yourself with exquisite handmade jewelry, embrace the warmth of meticulously crafted traditional attires, and take home a piece of SKFEST 2023 to cherish forever.

"So, my dear guests and friends, as we begin this maiden edition of SKFEST 2023, let us cast our doubts aside and embrace this extraordinary opportunity. Let us create unforgettable memories, form unbreakable bonds, and revel in the shared pride over the birth of something truly magnificent.

On behalf of the organizing committee, I extend my deepest gratitude to each one of you for gracing this occasion with your presence.

"Together, let us embark on a journey of wonders, celebrating the beauty and diversity of Southern Kaduna. Welcome, oh welcome, to SKFEST 2023! Let the festivities begin!"

The event being held in Kafanchan, holds from December 28 to 30, 2023.



Christmas Celebration At ECWA Theological College Tofa Peaceful - Report

By: JABIRUA. HASSAN, Kano

This year's Christmas festival has been described as peaceful and in a low key mode, where the Christian faithful remained friendly in almost all the places visited by our correspondent in some parts of Kano State.

Although there is an issue in terms of economy that remained a general obstacle surrounding all festivities nowadays, but in Kano, the Christians celebrated with happiness and in a very peaceful manner in all the places visited by New Nigerian respectively.

At the Tofa ECWA Theological College which was established in 1959 and remains one of the biggest theological training centres for pastors and other knowledge across the Northern region since during the inception of missionaries.

Our correspondent observed that the Muslim host community to the college were seen trooping inside the place to celebrate on an invitation by their Christians neighbours which indicated that there is much peaceful coexistence between the two religious faiths.

In their separate remarks, the college's chaplain, Labaran Yohanna and the college's director, Reverend Danjuma Kaladi, disclosed that there is good relationship between the college family and the host community, which



Tofa Muslims Community Dining.

is another landmark opportunity in terms of peace and progress.

They commended the leaders and

Islamic scholars for being much respectful to Christians, which is a clear testimony that peace and unity

would continue to reign in the whole area and reassured that loving one another would be sustained.



A Visitor with his community and our correspondent after Dining



The college director, Chaplain and other to fonctionnaires At the end of the programmes

PANDEF Mourns Akeresolu

By; UTEBOR PETER, Asaba

The National Leader of the Pan Niger Delta Forum (PANDEF), Chief Dr E.K. Clark, the Board of Trustees, the National Executive Committee, the entire members of the organization, and indeed the people of the South-South geopolitical zone, has express total pain over the death of Governor Rotimi Akeredolu, SAN, CON, of Ondo State, which sad event occurred on Wednesday 27th December 2023 at the age of 67.

The leadership described the demise of the immediate past Governor of Ondo State, Rotimi Akeredolu as a colossal loss not only to Ondo, but the country as in general.

This was contained in a statement signed by its National Chairman, Senator Emmanuel Ibok Essien.

PANDEF explained that late Governor Akeredolu's standings as a great Nigerian, includes being lawyer, jurist, public servant and politician, amongst other things.

"PANDEF and indeed the entire Nigerian people will eternally remember his forthright views on issues of constitutional law and national importance, particularly while he held sway as President of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA).

"His critical thoughts on daily affairs and constitutionalism in major ways contributed to the consolidation of our democracy and peaceful coexistence as a people. It is also an ineffaceable fact

that under his watch as Governor, Ondo State became a center point of economic and social development.

"As Chairman of the South-West Governors Forum, Rotimi Akeredolu played critical roles that culminated in the birth of 'Amotekun', a sub-regional security outfit, being the first of its type in our country. This singular initiative, substantially, brought down the spate of kidnapping, killings, and brigandage in the South West zone.

"Aketi' as he was fondly called was a dogged fighter and was an outstanding, strong, and steadfast proponent of the quest for the rotation of the presidency to the Southern part of the country in 2023.

It was his principled stance, along with some Northern Governors, and groups such as the Southern and Middle Belt Forum including PANDEF that ultimately led to the emergence of Bola Ahmed Tinubu as President and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

"It is most painful that Rotimi Akeredolu passed on at this time. We convey our condolences to his wife, the children, the Government, and the people of Ondo State, at large, and indeed the Nigerian federation, over the demise of this colossus; a national public personality of a higher class, whose name will be indelible in the annals of our history and future existence," the statement said.

Katsina Governor Flags Off Dry Season Initiative Farming Programme

By; SULAIMAN AHMED MISAU, Katsina.

Governor Dikko Umaru Radda of Katsina State has flagged off Phase one of the dry season Agricultural Initiative Programme targeted at providing free of charge dry season input to two thousand and forty (2,040) farmers across the 34 local government areas in the state.

The Phase One Programme hinged on readiness to create wealth and increase food security, was launched at Gwaigwaye irrigation site of Dikke Ward in Funtua Local Government Area, where the governor reaffirmed his administration's determination to ensure full revival of agriculture in the state.

Governor Radda emphasized that since the inception of his administration, it has drawn up a roadmap for agricultural development through several initiatives. This he said, is in realisation that farming is one of the important bedrock of economic growth in the society.

Governor Dikko Radda appreciated the Ministry

of Agriculture and that of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, as well as the thirty four local government areas in the state for the initiative that would reduce poverty, create employment and increase revenue base of the state and the nation in general.

According to him, the state government would organize training to boost the capacity of farmers adding that extension officers would remain with the farmers to guide them on the techniques of farming for better results.

Governor Radda directed all the remaining local government chairmen in the state to launch similar program in their respective areas and ensure the items reach genuine farmers regardless of their Political Parties.

Earlier, the Commissioner of Agriculture, Professor Ahmed Mohamed Bakori said two thousand and forty (2,040) farmers from across the thirty four local governments would supported with variety of



Gov Radda

improved vegetable seeds, fertilizer, and pesticide chemicals under the program.

The commissioner remarked that the state government had drilled tube wells at two hundred and four irrigation sites, and provided all the sites with solar-powered water pumping machines, adding that the second phase of the program would be launched next week.

Shedding more light, the state commissioner for local government and chieftaincy affairs Professor Badamasi Lawal Charanci explained that the program was part of the

electioneering campaign promise of the state Governor.

He said sixty farmers were selected from each of the thirty four local government areas of the state to benefit from the first phase of the program.

On his part, the state Chairman of ALGON Engineer Bello Lawal Yandaki who thanked the state Governor for supporting the program, promised the council Chairmen would closely monitor farmers in their respective areas.

This he said was to ensure full utilisation of the farm input for improved production for food security.

Na'Abba, Akeredolu: Katsina Governor Extends Condolences

By; SULAIMAN AHMED MISAU, Katsina

Governor Dikko Umaru Radda of Katsina State has extended condolences to the Government and People of Kano State over the death of a former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Honourable Ghali Umar Na'Abba.

Governor Dikko Radda also extended his deepest condolences to the government and people of Ondo State following the death of the state Governor Rotimi Akeredolu.

The condolence messages were contained in two separate statements issued in Katsina by the Chief Press Secretary to the Governor, Ibrahim Kaula Mohammed.

On the late former Speaker, Ghali Na'Abba, Governor Radda said he has left a legacy of selfless service to his people, the nation in General and was a "shining star" during President Olusegun Obasanjo's regime.

Late Gali Na'Abba served as Speaker from 1999 to 2003 as a member of

the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and earned a bachelor's degree in Political Science from Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria in 1979 and completed a Postgraduate Programm on Leadership and Good Governance at Harvard University London (United Kingdom) in 2004.

According to the Statement, Governor Radda "shares the sorrow of this loss, offering sympathies to all affected by Ghali Na'Abba's departure the strong connection between the two states is acknowledged, with Governor Radda emphasizing solidarity during this challenging period."

"The Katsina State Government stands by Kano State in mourning Ghali Na'Abba, recognizing his contributions to public service," the statement said.

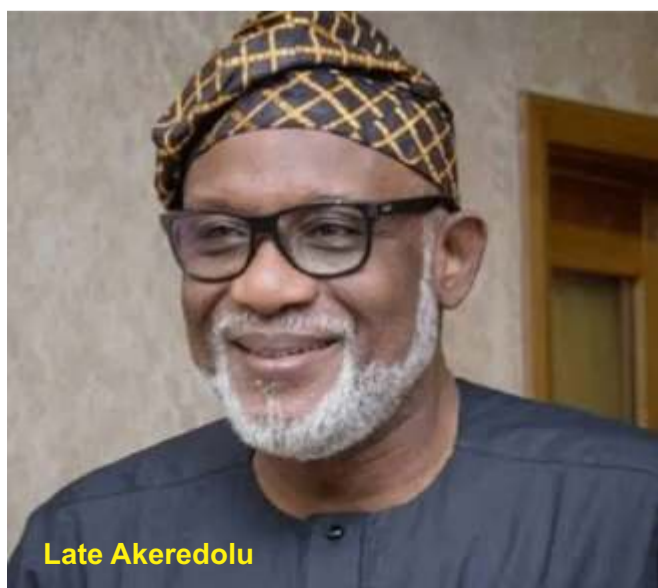
However, the statement said "the Governor extends thoughts and prayers to the grieving families, wishing them strength and solace in cherished memories. Governor Radda asked Allah to grant his soul

eternal rest in Jannatul firdausi."

On the late Governor of Ondo State Late Rotimi Akeredolu, Governor Radda said the death has a profound impact on the Nation and expressed solidarity with the People of Ondo State during this challenging time, emphasizing the shared sense of loss that transcends political boundaries. Governor Dikko Umaru Radda said late Governor Akeredolu's dedication to Public Service and his contributions to the legal Profession and Development of Ondo State would be remembered with respect and gratitude.

In honour of late Governor Akeredolu's legacy, Malam Radda said Katsina State Government joined the nation in mourning, recognizing the void left by his departure.

"The thoughts and prayers of the people of Katsina State are with the bereaved family and the entire Ondo State community," Governor Dikko Umaru Radda emphasized.



Late Akeredolu

Arch Bishop Onyeuwaoma Buries In-Law At 78

**Describes her as a virtuous woman*

By; M K P U M A ENYINNA, Abakaliki

Arch Bishop Onyeuwaoma Omoke of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, has laid his in-law to rest at the age of 78 years, describing her as a virtuous woman and the best mother in-law everyone will ever wish to have.

Arch Bishop Onyeuwaoma disclosed this at Central School Okposi Okwu, during the funeral rites of his mother-in-law, the late Mrs. Hannah John Eze Aja who died at the age of 78 years. He described his mother-in-law as the best woman anybody could associate with, saying that her utmost sense of commitment and dedication to serving God and the well-being of her family members is unimaginable.

According to Onyeuwaoma, a lot of people view death as horrible but in reality, death is one of the things that gives life meaning, saying that his mother-in-law's love for him and their children is unique.

"To everything, there is a season, and time to every purpose under the heaven; a time to be born, and a time to die...Ecc.3:1--2.

"A lot of people view death

as horrible but in reality, death is one of the things that give life meaning, 'Ogoma' As I used to call you, your love for me and my children was beyond measure. For me, you were the best, if I am to have another in-law, I will still come back for you. Words are not enough to describe your qualities," Arch Bishop Onyeuwaoma said. According to her first son, Mr. Aja Eze Aja, while reading her biography, late Mrs. Hannah John Eze Aja (Nee Okereke) was born 78 years ago into the legendary family of Onyiba Okereke Oguduome, famously known as Onyiba Nkachu of Ogoachi Enuegu, Okposi Okwu in Ohaozara Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.

Earlier in his sermon, Rev. John Utum charged Christians to always live a life that will please God as no one knows when he or she will be called home, explaining that death is inevitable to every mortal but where you are going after here, matters a lot since there is a reward for every work on earth.

The burial ceremony was attended by dignitaries from all walks of life including the executive governor of Ebonyi State, Blder Francis Ogbonna Nwifuru, amongst others.

N4.8bn Entitlement: Gov Makinde Threatening To Deal With Us, Sacked Oyo LGs Chairmen Cry Out

By; BAYO AKAMO, Ibadan

Former local government chairmen and councillors in Oyo State sacked by Governor Seyi Makinde in 2019 on Wednesday, raised the alarm that the governor has threatened to deal with them.

Addressing a press conference in Ibadan through the former Chairman, Association of Local Government of Nigeria (ALGON) in the state, Prince Ayodeji Abass-Aleshinloye, the Chairmen alleged that the governor threatened to deal with them in his media chat on Saturday December 23, 2023.

According to the former chairmen, the governor is threatening them over their unpaid entitlement, adding, that he paid only N1.5bn in two batches in 2021 and 2022, out of the N4.8bn he was mandated to pay by the Supreme Court.

The sacked chairmen lamented that rather than obeying the Supreme Court order mandating Oyo State Government to pay them their entitlement, the governor has been busy threatening to deal with them.

"His Excellency Oluseyi Makinde promised to deal with us in his media chart on Saturday 23/12/ 2023. We are not in doubt that His Excellency is the Governor of Oyo, but, we wrongfully assumed that he was elected to govern and not to deal with any of the citizens of the State", he said.

The former ALGON Chairman added, "Surprisingly, His Excellency's priority now is to deal with everyone who is legitimately seeking redress for a perceived wrong. His Excellency promised to deal with the Princes of Ogbomosho and now the Ex LG Chairmen".

"We only hope this act of dealing with us doesn't

include killing any one of us or harming any one of us. We wish to say with all emphasis that we are proud to say that each and every one of us grew up with a training to fear Almighty God, respect the law and to always follow due process".

They pointed out that "the court that ordered His Excellency to pay our money is the Supreme Court of Nigeria and not any other court. So, His Excellency's contention that he is going back to Supreme Court is a clear deception and deliberate misinformation".

On the plight of the sacked Chairmen, Prince Alesinloye disclosed that no fewer than 27 of their members have died in the struggle, stressed that they died as a result of the lack of money to take care of their health challenges owing to non-payment of their entitlements.

"This media briefing is very important as it

concerned the recent media chart by Governor of Oyo state, Engineer Seyi Makinde. We need to address some issues. We have no skeleton in our cupboard. 27 of us that we are in this struggle together with us have died. "I am talking about former Chairmen and Councillors. Some of them could not get money to take care of their health challenges and this resulted into their death. We have been in the struggle since four years ago."

Prince Alesinloye stressed, "Our lawyer is taking every necessary step, we will explore all legal means. We have our own technical advisers too. Our entitlements is N7.2b, they pleaded and we said that we will collect N4.8b in the interest of the state. They only paid N1.5 in two batches. One in 2021 and one in 2022. Since then, they have refused to pay."



Sacked Oyo LGs Chairmen at a Press conference in Ibadan on Wednesday.

Division With SGF Will Create Serious Setback In Benue State - Gov Alia

By; ARCHIBONG ESUENE, Makurdi

Benue State Governor, Reverend Father Hyacinth Alia has challenged all sons and daughters of the state to join hands with him and Senator George Akume to take the state to higher heights as engineering division will only create set back to the state.

Governor Alia who spoke at the 70th birthday celebration reception in honour of Secretary to the Government of the Federal, SGF, senator George Akume held at his country home Wannune, Tarka Local Government Area, Benue State, cautioned seriously against selfish

motivated division.

He further said that those bent on causing division between him and the SGF should note that such attitude would only cause setback to development of Benue as a state and not to either his individual life or that of the SGF.

The Benue State Governor described as unfortunate, the desperation of certain dark forces bent on sowing seeds of discord between him and the SGF who is his leader, "I will like to encourage such people to engage in things that would unit people of the state including her leaders for the State to move forward"

The SGF, Senator Akume according to

the Governor is not only a champion of democracy, "but some one who has devoted his life working for the good of the less privileged, a man known for charity and selflessness. The SGF also believes in assisting people to discover their talents and affirmed that he is a beneficiary of such goodwill".

The governor who expressed appreciation to President Ahmed Tinubu for appointing his leader as the SGF, said Senator Akume is a man of few words and a political encyclopedia quick in finding solutions to complex political problems whenever such situations presented

themselves,

In a remark, Secretary to the Government of the Federation (,SGF,) Senator George Akume said he was overwhelmed by the show of love demonstrated by Nigerians especially President Tinubu, represented at the birthday by his wife, pointed out that he did not take the honour with any small measure.

He called on Nigerians to pray for President Tinubu, the Governor of Benue State, other leaders across the country, explaining that as human beings they might equally make a mistake" but the prayers would help them to do better".

Late Akeredolu Will Never Be Forgotten - New Ondo Governor Ayedatiwa

**Visits family in Ibadan, describes him as an exemplary, courageous leader that believes in fairness, equity, justice*

By; **BAYO AKAMO Ibadan**

Governor Lucky Ayedatiwa of Ondo state yesterday, declared that the late Governor Rotimi Akeredolu (SAN) will never be forgotten because his legacies and impact can be seen and felt across the state and the country. The new Governor of Ondo State said this in Ibadan, when he led members of the Ondo State Executive Council and House of Assembly members to the family of former Governor, Rotimi Akeredolu . at their Jericho, Ibadan residence. Governor Ayedatiwa while emphasizing that the legacies of the late governor will not be eroded, described the late Arakunrin Akeredolu as a courageous leader who stood firm and never took the interest of his people for granted. According to Governor Ayedatiwa the late

Governor Akeredolu was a sincere, courageous, selfless and patriotic leader who fought for his people, championed development and touched many lives.

"We are here as a government under my leadership as the governor of Ondo state on behalf of the people of Ondo state to pay a condolence visit to the immediate and extended family of our former governor, Arakunrin Oluwarotimi Odunayo Akeredolu SAN, who passed on yesterday. We are here in his private home here in Ibadan", he said.

The Ondo State Governor added, "We have to do this because he has always been our leader, a courageous one for that matter, one who has governed Ondo state in the last six and half to seven years, with great courage and with some many legacies he has left behind".

"He is an exemplary leader, a courageous one, a leader that believes in fairness, equity and justice. A Senior Advocate of Nigeria who speaks on national issues so that so that adjustments and proper decisions can be made concerning any issue in Nigeria. So he's known for that, as an activist.

Governor Ayedatiwa noted further, "Today, he's no more and we have to pay him that respect by coming to the family to condone and commiserate with them and we have done that. We pray that God will grant the family the fortitude to bear the irreparable lost. And for those of us that he has left behind, to be able to emulate some of the values, the sterling qualities that he is known for so that we can keep on with the legacies that he has left behind."

The younger brother of the late Governor Akeredolu,

Pastor Kola Akeredolu while receiving the Ondo State team on behalf of the Akeredolu family thanked them delegation for the visit.

Prayers were offered for the Akeredolu family, while Governor Ayedatiwa led others to the signing of the condolence register. Ibadan.

In his tribute, Gov Ayedatiwa described the former governor as a caring and compassionate husband, father and grandfather, adding that it was a rare privilege to have served under his tutelage.

He reiterated that the demise of his late boss is a great loss to Ondo state, the Southwest region and Nigeria at large, stressing that Akeredolu's struggle for a peaceful, fair and just society is one that can never be forgotten in a hurry.

AfCFTA: League Of Ambassadors Commends African Union Commission

**Says Abolishment of visa requirements for Africans laudable*

By ; **M K P U M A ENYINNA, Abakaliki**

Following the courageous decision to abolish visa requirements for citizens of African countries, the President of the League of African Ambassadors, Ambassador Ominyi Nwannebuike has applauded the exemplary actions taken by the Presidents and governments of Rwanda, Gambia, Seychelles, Namibia, and the Republic of Kenya in abolishing visa requirements for Africans, stating that it is a strategic step towards realizing the true essence of the AfCFTA which will boost and stabilize the economy of African countries.

Ambassador Ominyi further explained that this great feat would strengthen African unity and bring economic emancipation to the region.

According to him, It is a testament to the vision of these nations that they recognize the importance of facilitating easy movement within the continent to unlock the enormous economic potential that lies in Africa-to-Africa trade, adding that the removal of visa barriers will not only foster unity but also encourages a seamless flow of ideas, goods, and services that will increase the economic potentials of African countries.

'In alignment with the monumental strides made by the African Union Commission in advancing the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), Amb. Ominyi Nwannebuike, President of the League of African Ambassadors, commends the exemplary actions taken by the Presidents and governments of Rwanda, Gambia, Seychelles, Namibia, and the Republic of Kenya. The courageous decision to abolish visa requirements for citizens of all African countries by these nations is a commendable step

towards realizing the true essence of the AfCFTA.

"It is a testament to the vision of these nations that they recognize the importance of facilitating easy movement within the continent to unlock the enormous economic potential that lies in Africa-to-Africa trade.

'The removal of visa barriers will not only foster unity but also encourage a seamless flow of goods, services, and ideas, fostering economic growth and cooperation among African nations', Ominyi said.

While applauding the actions taken by these nations, he urges the remaining African leaders and heads of African countries to follow suit.

He highlighted the untapped economic opportunities that can be harnessed through the elimination of restrictive visa requirements.

"The League of African Ambassadors, as the umbrella body of Ambassadors and High Commissioners of African countries, is poised to take a proactive role in championing this cause," Ominyi explained.

To further bolster the realization of AfCFTA goals, Ominyi stated that the League of African Ambassadors will launch the "Free the Access to Free the Trade" Campaign in 2024.

'This strategic initiative aims to bridge the gap between rhetoric and action by advocating for the removal of visa barriers across the continent. By doing so, the campaign seeks to create an environment that truly reflects the principles of the AfCFTA and enhances the economic integration of African nations.'

He urged African leaders to consider the long-term benefits of a visa-free continent, saying that it is a call to seize the immense economic opportunities that lie within our grasp.



Gov Lucky Ayedatiwa during the condolence visit to late Arakunrin Rotimi Akeredolu family in Ibadan yesterday.

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FULL PAGE	395,176.32	29,638.22	424,814.54	323,433.00	24,257.48	347,690.48
HALF PAGE	248,970.00	18,672.75	267,642.75	203,175.00	15,238.13	218,413.13
QUARTER PAGE	164,670.00	12,350.25	177,020.25	94,724.44	7,104.33	101,828.77
10" x 6 Col	364,320.00	27,324.00	391,644.00	245,005.20	18,375.39	263,380.59
10" x 5 Col	333,960.00	25,047.00	359,007.00	224,588.11	16,844.11	241,432.22
10" x 4 Col	242,880.00	18,216.00	261,096.00	163,336.80	12,250.26	175,587.06
10" x 3 Col	182,160.00	13,662.00	195,822.00	122,502.60	9,187.70	131,690.30
9" x 6 Col	327,888.00	24,591.60	352,479.60	220,504.68	16,537.85	237,042.53
9" x 5 Col	273,240.00	20,493.00	293,733.00	183,753.90	13,781.54	197,535.44
9" x 4 Col	218,592.00	16,394.40	234,986.40	147,003.12	11,025.23	158,028.35
9" x 3 Col	163,944.00	12,295.80	176,239.80	110,252.34	8,268.93	118,521.27
8" x 6 Col	291,456.00	21,859.20	313,315.20	196,004.16	14,700.31	210,704.47
8" x 5 Col	242,880.00	18,216.00	261,096.00	163,336.80	12,250.26	175,587.06
8" x 4 Col	194,304.00	14,572.80	208,876.80	130,669.44	9,800.21	140,469.65
8" x 3 Col	145,728.00	10,929.60	156,657.60	98,002.08	7,350.16	105,352.24
7" x 6 Col	255,024.00	19,126.80	274,150.80	171,503.64	12,862.77	184,366.41
7" x 5 Col	212,520.00	15,939.00	228,459.00	142,919.70	10,718.98	153,638.68
7" x 4 Col	170,016.00	12,751.20	182,767.20	114,335.76	8,575.18	122,910.94
6" x 6 Col	218,592.00	16,394.40	234,986.40	147,003.12	11,025.23	158,028.35
6" x 5 Col	182,160.00	13,662.00	195,822.00	122,502.60	9,187.70	131,690.30
6" x 4 Col	145,728.00	10,929.60	156,657.60	98,002.08	7,350.16	105,352.24
6" x 3 Col	109,296.00	8,197.20	117,493.20	73,501.56	5,512.62	79,014.18
6" x 2 Col	72,864.00	5,464.80	78,328.80	49,001.04	3,675.08	52,676.12
5" x 5 Col	151,800.00	11,385.00	163,185.00	102,085.50	7,656.41	109,741.91
5" x 4 Col	121,440.00	9,108.00	130,548.00	81,668.40	6,125.13	87,793.53
5" x 3 Col	91,080.00	6,831.00	97,911.00	61,251.30	4,593.85	65,845.15
5" x 2 Col	60,720.00	4,554.00	65,274.00	40,834.20	3,062.57	43,896.77
4" x 6 Col	145,728.00	10,929.60	156,657.60	98,002.08	7,350.16	105,352.24
4" x 5 Col	121,440.00	9,108.00	130,548.00	81,668.40	6,125.13	87,793.53
4" x 4 Col	97,152.00	7,286.40	104,438.40	65,334.72	4,900.10	70,234.82
4" x 3 Col	72,864.00	5,464.80	78,328.80	49,001.04	3,675.08	52,676.12
4" x 2 Col	48,576.00	3,643.20	52,219.20	32,667.36	2,450.05	35,117.41
3" x 3 Col	54,648.00	4,098.60	58,746.60	36,750.78	2,756.31	39,507.09
3" x 2 Col	36,432.00	2,732.40	39,164.40	24,500.52	1,837.54	26,338.06
2" x 2 Col	24,288.00	1,821.60	26,109.60	16,333.68	1,225.03	17,558.71
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SPACE	RATE	VAT	TOTAL
FRONT PAGE MAST HEAD EAR PIECE	461,622.86	34,621.71	496,244.57
FRONT PAGE SOLUS	787,474.29	59,060.57	846,534.86
FRONT PAGE STRIP	787,474.29	59,060.57	846,534.86
BACK PAGE EAR PIECE	420,889.54	31,566.72	452,456.26
FULL PAGE (COLOUR)	465,967.54	34,947.57	500,915.11
FULL PAGE (BLACK AND WHITE)	364,037.14	27,302.79	391,339.93
HALF PAGE (COLOUR)	303,285.71	22,746.43	326,032.14
HALF PAGE (BLACK AND WHITE)	247,500.00	18,562.50	266,062.50
QUARTER PAGE (COLOUR)	203,877.14	15,290.79	219,167.93
QUARTER PAGE (BLACK AND WHITE)	111,692.74	8,376.96	120,069.70

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PA GE 2 O R 3	400,000.00	30,000.00	430,000.00
PA GE 4 O R 5	375,000.00	28,125.00	403,125.00
PA GE 6 O R 7	325,000.00	24,375.00	349,375.00
FR ONT PA GE M A S T H E A D E A R P I E C E	215,000.00	16,875.00	231,875.00
FR ONT PA GE S O L U S	312,500.00	23,437.50	335,937.50
FR ONT PA GE S T R I P	375,000.00	28,125.00	403,125.00
B A C K PA GE E A R P I E C E	200,000.00	15,000.00	215,000.00
B A C K PA GE S T R I P	250,000.00	18,750.00	268,750.00
C E N T R E S P R E A D (C O L O U R)	837,500.00	62,812.50	900,312.50
D O U B L E S P R E A D (C O L O U R)	700,000.00	52,500.00	752,500.00
C E N T R E S P R E A D (B L A C K & W H I T E)	575,000.00	43,125.00	618,125.00
D O U B L E S P R E A D (B L A C K & W H I T E)	590,000.00	44,250.00	634,250.00
FR ONT PA GE (10" X 6)	3,250,000.00	243,750.00	3,493,750.00
R O P S T R I P (C O L O U R)	125,000.00	9,375.00	134,375.00
R O P S T R I P (B L A C K & W H I T E)	85,000.00	6,375.00	91,375.00

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SPACE	COLOUR			BLACK AND WHITE		
	RATE	VAT	TOTAL	RATE	VAT	TOTAL
7 X 3	108,571.43	8,142.86	116,714.29	62,857.14	4,714.29	67,571.43
6 X 3	102,857.14	7,714.29	110,571.43	57,142.86	4,285.71	61,428.57
6 X 2	45,428.57	3,407.14	48,835.71	32,285.71	2,421.43	34,707.14
5 X 3	53,428.57	4,007.14	57,435.71	37,428.57	2,807.14	40,235.71
5 X 2	42,571.43	3,192.86	45,764.29	24,857.14	1,864.29	26,721.43
4 X 3	47,714.29	3,578.57	51,292.86	30,571.43	2,292.86	32,864.29
4 X 2	33,142.86	2,485.71	35,628.57	21,714.29	1,628.57	23,342.86
3 X 3	34,571.43	2,592.86	37,164.29	23,142.86	1,735.71	24,878.57
3 X 2	22,857.14	1,714.29	24,571.43	14,285.71	1,071.43	15,357.14
2 X 2	16,000.00	1,200.00	17,200.00	9,142.86	685.71	9,828.57
2 X 1	7,714.28	578.57	8,292.85	4,975.71	373.18	5,348.89



From left: Bishop, Cathedral Church of Christ, Anglican Communion, Marina, Lagos, Rt. Ifedola Gabriel Okupevi; His Wife, Mrs Modupe Okupevi; Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu; Governor wife, Dr. Ibijoke Sanwo-Olu; during the Christmas service of the church in Lagos. Photo: AKINOLAARIYO

APC Chieftain Alao Preaches Love, Compassion

**Felicitates Christians*

By; BAYO AKAMO, Ibadan

The Asiwaju of Irokoland and a chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Oyo State, Engineer Oyedele Hakeem Alao on Monday, felicitated with Christian faithful on the commemoration of the birth of Jesus Christ.

Engr Alao in a message by his media office, while wishing the entire people of the state a memorable Christmas and new year holiday, urged them to take to heart the values for the season such as love, peace, and joy for all mankind.

The APC chieftain stressed that these are values that unify the common humanity in a feast of love, adding that it is important for the people to use the season to appreciate

the mercy of God on them as individuals and the state as a whole.

"I wish all Christian faithful and the entire people of the state a Merry Christmas and a prosperous 2024. I want to call on Christians to emulate the virtues of Christ, who through self-sacrifice brought salvation to humanity", he said.

Engr Alao added, "It is crucial that we remember our closest neighbours because there is no better way for us to celebrate Christmas as a people than showing genuine love, care, compassion and empathy for one another.

"In this season of love, joy and peace, let us not fail to remember those who really wish to celebrate but are constrained in one way or the other by reaching out to them."

Education Remains Bedrock For Development, Prioritize It - Ex Council Boss

By; PATRICK TITUS, Uyo

Education remains the life wire of any nation desirous of development, growth and progress therefore leaders at all levels of governance should priorities it for the benefit of the people.

The remarks was made by the immediate past chairman of Ini Local Government Area of Akwa ibom State, Rt.Hon, Isreal Idaisin during his thanksgiving service on Sunday to thank God for successful tenure in office and celebration of Christmas festival.

Addressing the dignitaries at the event, the former council chairman urged youth to embrace education to enable them have a chance to make a difference in thier lives and society at large.

He said, "I took it as a challenge to establish a primary school in my community which hitherto has none, forcing children to trek for several kilometers daily in search for basic education.

"The school is free for all and I still pay the teachers from my personal resources while awaiting government official taking over of the school, that is one of my personal commitments because of the importance I attached to education. I also encourage our people in tertiary institutions through periodic payment of Bursary"

While thanking God for a successful tenure as council chairman after two terms in office, Idaisin said he did his best



Rt Hon Israel Idaisin, former council boss of Itu LGA

to deliver dividends of democracy across the length and breath of his council area and always conscious of his actions to avoid being disgraced out of office.

"I did my best in office as I see my elevation as divine. Whatever has a beginning must have an end. My greatest fear was not to be disgraced out of office as chairman and I thank Almighty God that I have landed well," he said.

The immediate past chairman also said that the 2023 edition of the carol of nine, which was part of the thanksgiving service was to usher in a period of sober reflection of God's mercies and blessings upon our lives through hymns, songs of praise and thanksgiving as symbolized in the carol of nine lessons.

He highlighted, "We gathered here for a sober reflection of God's blessing upon our lives, the lord shall bless us with open

heavens, the impossibility shall be made possible for the bible says, 'I know the thoughts that I have for you, they are thoughts of good and not evil, that it might take you to an expected end'".

In his exhortation, the Methodist Archbishop of Port Harcourt, Most Rev. Emmanuel Udofia charged politicians and leaders to show exemplary leadership which will ensure that thier activities outlive thier earthly sojourn.

He extolled the sterling leadership qualities of Hon. Isreal Idaisin describing him as a goal getter and a grassroots leader with fear of God, stressing that his era has witnessed unprecedented peace in his area as chairman of the once hostile area.

Reading from Luke 1: 26-33, the Archbishop recalled the sequences surrounding the birth of Jesus Christ and how his birth has brought salvation to mankind adding that Christians must worship God in truth and spirit.

The event which witnessed several Christmas Carol rendition by the choir also had a fundraiser for the new church hall in which several dignataries donated generously.

Some of the prominent Nigerians at the event include the Member representing Ikono/Ini in the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon Emmanuel Ukpog Udoh, Honourary Special Adviser to Akwa ibom Governor, Hon. Emmanuel Basse Ekpeyong, former Chairmen of the council, the clergymen, captains of industry and people from all walks of life.

Senator Lalong Advocates Love, Compassion

By; BUHARI B. BELLO, Jos

Senator Simon Bako Lalong, representing Plateau South Senatorial District at the National Assembly, has advocated more prayers and actions that will further nurture unity, love and compassion among citizens as Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

In a Christmas message, the Senator said the coming of Jesus into the world saved humanity from darkness and condemnation as he illuminated the hearts of men and women with righteousness and salvation.

The former Minister of Labour and Employment said this is the essence of Christmas which should remain paramount as Nigerians join other Christians around the world to celebrate this joyous moment.

Senator Lalong said despite the challenges Nigerians are facing, the message of salvation and love which is central to Christmas, is capable of uniting the citizens to confront issues that have militated against development over the years.

He used the opportunity to reiterate his personal commitment to pursuing national ideals and serving the people with passion, integrity and love always.

The Senator assured his constituents of Plateau South Senatorial District that he will deploy all his experience and contacts towards ensuring that they feel the impact of positive representation during his term at the Red Chambers.

While wishing them a blessed Christmas and a joyous New year ahead, Lalong urged them to continue to pray for Plateau State and the nation at large.

Governor Mutfwang Condemns Recent Attacks In Plateau Communities

***Urges swift action against perpetrators**

By; BUHARI B. BELLO, Jos

Plateau State Governor, Barr Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang, has strongly condemned the recent coordinated attacks on innocent communities in Bokkos, Mangu, and Barkin-Ladi Local Government Areas of the state.

These attacks have resulted in the tragic loss of several lives and destruction of property.

Governor Mutfwang emphasized the resilience of the Plateau people in the face of these unprovoked assaults and called for united efforts to identify and apprehend those responsible for these heinous acts.

In a statement issued in Jos on Tuesday, Governor

Mutfwang reported that more than 20 villages had been displaced, with numerous houses destroyed and millions of naira worth of property lost.

Scores of individuals also sustained gunshot injuries during the attacks.

Expressing gratitude, Governor Mutfwang acknowledged President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for supporting the Nigerian Army in maintaining security.

He also commended the Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Taoreed Lagbaja and the Commander Operation SAFE HAVEN for their commitment to addressing various security challenges facing Plateau and the nation.

Reflecting on the recent

events, Governor Mutfwang stated, "It is disheartening that we have lost numerous lives due to incessant attacks in Mangu, Bokkos, and Barkin-Ladi.

These senseless and unprovoked acts are unnecessary and unjustifiable. I appeal to the sponsors of these attacks to reconsider, as there is nothing to gain from such violence.

The spirit of the Plateau people will not be broken." The governor praised the bravery and sacrifices of security personnel, acknowledging the injuries sustained by some during efforts to secure the affected villages.

He assured of continued collaboration with the Military and other security agencies to address

security challenges, given the limited resources available.

While expressing sympathy for the affected families and communities, Governor Mutfwang urged citizens to stand strong, assuring them that the government is actively working to address the situation.

He called upon the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and Plateau State Emergency Management Agency to swiftly respond to the humanitarian crisis resulting from the attacks.

Governor Mutfwang emphasized the government's commitment by covering the medical expenses of those injured and receiving treatment at the Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH) and other hospitals in the state.

Dawakin Tofa LG Council Felicitates Ganduje @74

By; JABIRU A. HASSAN, Kano

The Executive Chairman of Dawakin Tofa Local Government Council, Honourable Ado Tambai Kwa has felicitated the All Progressives Congress (APC) National Chairman, Dr. Abdullahi Umar Ganduje OFR on his 74th Birthday anniversary with good will prayers.

In his message to the APC national chairman, Ado Tambai described Dr. Ganduje as a great politician who contributed towards Nigeria's development in a democratic process and good governance.

He said that Dr. Abdullahi Umar Ganduje's contribution to democracy has put Nigeria onto a solid political dispensation that actualize resourceful leadership across the three tiers of



government with optimum results.

Honourable Ado Tambai Kwa added that with the many traditional titles he bagged, Dr. Abdullahi Umar Ganduje has become a true nationalist who is working selflessly to promote national unity,

peaceful coexistence and loving one another, despite tribal, religious or sectional differences.

"On behalf of the legislative and executive arms of Dawakin Tofa Local Government Council, our party

members at the local government and wards levels, I congratulate our mentor and leader, Dr. Abdullahi Umar Ganduje OFR, on his 74th anniversary and wish him more progressive years," he concluded.



Senator Lalong

Tinubu's Foreign Policy: Driving Nigeria In A 4-D Wagon

By Owei Lakemfa

AMBASSADOR Yusuf Maitama Tuggar, the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, stepped out on Thursday, December 21, 2023 to explain to Nigerians the four-dimensional space built by the Tinubu administration for the country's foreign policy. Tuggar, 56, a player in the oil and gas industry had in the last six years, been Nigeria's Ambassador to Germany.

This opportunity of a wide audience including the diplomatic community, intellectuals, active and retired public servants to examine the new policy, was provided by the ever thoughtful and visionary Association of Retired Career Ambassadors of Nigeria (ARCAN).

The ARCAN, led by Ambassador John Kayode Shinkaiye, one of the country's greats in African diplomacy, asked me to chair the occasion which had the succinct theme: 'The Foreign Policy Agenda under Tinubu Administration.'

Development, he said, seeks to use diplomacy to: "achieve double digit growth for Nigeria by combining Agriculture, Infrastructure and Industrialisation. Attracting foreign investment in agriculture would help to close the gap between metro and rural areas and a bifurcation that contributes to Nigeria's poor showing on the poverty index."

Ambassador Shinkaiye said ARCAN decided to organise the programme because: "the formulation and execution of the foreign policy of the country is crucial as decisions made in this aspect of the nation's governance have far-reaching implications for Nigeria, the West African region, the African continent, and even beyond."

He said it is therefore important that the new government "sets appropriate priorities and strategies and identify potential challenges that the government may face." The country's foreign policy, he posited, will be shaped by among other things: "a combination of domestic factors and imperatives, regional dynamics and global realities." He added that understanding how these factors can affect issues like security, economic cooperation and foreign relations is very important to the success of the administration.

In my remarks as chairman, I said we must constantly assess and reassess our foreign policy because everything is in flux and nothing should be taken for granted.

Even warfare, I pointed out, has changed: "Fifty-six years ago, it took Israel just six days to defeat the combined armed forces of Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Palestine. In those six days, Israel captured Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, Syria's Golan Heights, the Palestinian Old Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza. Today, a stronger, better

equipped, experienced and technology-driven Israel, fighting just a single Palestinian group, the Hamas, has in 78 days been unable to fully capture Northern Gaza."

I argued that while the 4-D Foreign Policy; Demography, Development, Diaspora and Democracy, are commendable, they need to be thoroughly scrutinised. For instance, should the Diaspora component remain a separate entity or be part of our Foreign Ministry?

The Presidency, I pointed out, is so huge, and the daily, if not hourly challenges it faces, are so enormous, that: "it cannot effectively be the engine room of our foreign policy. That engine room, should be the Ministry of Foreign Affairs."

I posited that building an effective Nigerian foreign policy requires four things. First, ensuring the welfare of Nigerians. Secondly, guaranteeing the security of Nigeria and Nigerians. Thirdly, building a strong economy and currency, and fourthly, defending and promoting the first three.

In conclusion, I suggested the holding of an all-inclusive retreat as was done at the April 1986 All-Nigeria Conference on Foreign Policy in Kuru in which all segments of society participated. I submitted that such a retreat will provide a roadmap with practical recommendations that will guide us, our incoming ambassadors and diplomatic outposts, not just for the next four years, but extending beyond the Tinubu administration.

Minister Tuggar submitted that: "With regards to Nigeria's foreign policy objectives, they exist and remain immovable because they are enshrined in our constitution; they are, in summary, to promote and protect Nigeria's national interest, to promote African integration and support African unity, promote international co-operation for the consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect among all nations and elimination of discrimination in all its manifestations."

Ambassador Olusola Enikanolaiye, the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Foreign Affairs, clarified that the Foreign Ministry is necessarily an extension of the Presidency; the Diaspora cannot be run without the Ministry, and that there is the need for synergy by all with the Foreign Ministry as a co-ordinating agency.

He added that the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Tinubu further



elucidated three objectives: "to protect against all forms of external aggression; promote the best possible outcomes for Nigeria in all engagements with other nations; improve Nigeria's standing and dignity among the comity of Nations."

Tuggar revealed that it is the constitutional provisions and these triple objectives of the Agenda, that were used to construct the 4-D Diplomacy Agenda of the new administration.

In breaking down the Agenda, Tuggar explained: "When we say Democracy, we are referring to a pathway to enhanced peace and stability in Africa and around the world." He said unconstitutional changes in government: "calls for proactive diplomacy in order to reverse the trend and restore peace."

Democracy in global institutions he argued, requires working for Nigeria's permanent membership of the UNSC, G20 and all other relevant groupings where democratic norms, size of population and size of the economy ought to be the yardstick for membership."

Development, he said, seeks to use diplomacy to: "achieve double digit growth for Nigeria by combining Agriculture, Infrastructure and Industrialisation. Attracting foreign investment in agriculture would help to close the gap between metro and rural areas and a bifurcation that contributes to Nigeria's poor showing on the poverty index."

Ambassador Tuggar said we must use the demographic advantage of our youth bulge to generate income and growth, and leapfrog by using: "technology to skip certain stages and fast-track development."

Agary said she had been to a number of Nigerian Missions, and in some cases, the diplomats do not get their allowances on time, sometimes stretching for months. For any foreign policy to succeed, she argued, the diplomats and staff must be adequately, properly and timeously

compensated.

On Diaspora, he said: "Our approach is to ensure that we are not working in silos and I am happy to say that the agencies under the ministry have fully integrated the 4-Ds into their programmes."

Emeritus Professor Anthony Ashiwaju, who pointed out that there is an intersection between development and demography, said foreign policy ought to take a special note of boundaries.

Ambassador Olusola Enikanolaiye, the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Foreign Affairs, clarified that the Foreign Ministry is necessarily an extension of the Presidency; the Diaspora cannot be run without the Ministry, and that there is the need for synergy by all with the Foreign Ministry as a co-ordinating agency.

Dr. Timiebi Koripamo-Agary, Permanent Secretary of Labour under the Obasanjo Presidency and Information and Culture in the Yar'Adua administration, hoped that under the D-4 Foreign Policy Agenda, there would be strong financial support of our foreign missions and embassies. Agary said she had been to a number of Nigerian Missions, and in some cases, the diplomats do not get their allowances on time, sometimes stretching for months. For any foreign policy to succeed, she argued, the diplomats and staff must be adequately, properly and timeously compensated.

Minister Tuggar responded that the funding issue is being addressed and that some days before, the Foreign, Budget and Planning ministries and the Wages and Salaries Commission met on ensuring adequate funding for the foreign Missions. He said security is fundamental to ensuring a good foreign policy but that the failure of the local government system due to interferences by some governors, has seriously affected security in the country.

Arewa Groups Raise Alarm Over Destabilization Plots In Zamfara, Want FG To Deal With Trouble Makers

By; JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

The Arewa Youth Consultative Forum (AYCF) and the Northern Emancipation Network (NEN) has raised the alarm over plans by Zamfara State Governor, Dauda Lawal, to incite instability in the North.

This is even as the groups called on the Federal Government to deal decisively with every trouble maker while appealing to the Supreme Court justices to meticulously consider the facts before them when delivering their verdict.

In a statement issued by the President General of AYCF, Yerima Shettima, the organization disclosed that it has received credible information regarding Governor Lawal's intention to finance protests across the Northern region for personal political gain.

"The AYCF believes that Governor Lawal plans to orchestrate these protests in a bid to tarnish the image of his predecessor, Bello Mohammed Matawalle, and hold him responsible for any ensuing chaos.

The organization is thus calling on the federal government, particularly the Department of Security Services, to closely

monitor the activities of Governor Lawal to prevent any surprises.

"We caution the people of Zamfara to remain vigilant and wary of the direction their government is taking, while also resisting any attempts to incite them into untoward actions," Yerima Shettima said.

The AYCF further revealed that Governor Lawal's tactics are aimed at preempting the forthcoming judgment of the Supreme Court in the Governorship Elections petition involving Matawalle.

As such, the organization has urged the Supreme Court to stand firm, not be intimidated, and ensure the fair and just dispensation of justice.

"We specifically call on the esteemed Justices of the Supreme Court to resolve the disputed 98,000 votes in favor of Matawalle and declare him as the rightful winner of the March 2023 election," emphasized Yerima Shettima.

The AYCF expressed her commitment to promoting peace and stability in the North and urged all stakeholders to work together in ensuring that the region continues to prosper.

In a separate statement, NEN has issued a fervent call to the federal government to take

proactive measures in dealing with any form of dissent or incitement to misconduct that may arise from the outcome of the expected Supreme Court ruling on the Zamfara Governorship appeal.

NEN emphasized the importance of ensuring the stability of the country, urging the government to be prepared and steadfast in the face of any desperate attempts to subvert it.

In a statement issued by the Chairman of NEN, Suleiman Abbah, the group highlighted the fact that the use of Bimodal Voters' Accreditation System (BVAS) in elections is not a mandatory provision of the law. Consequently, the group called on the court to resolve the dispute in favour of Matawalle Bello, recognizing him as the bonafide winner of the election.

The NEN firmly believes that a fair and just ruling in favor of Matawalle Bello will not only promote peace and stability in Zamfara State but will also serve as a remarkable affirmation of the rule of law in Nigeria as a



Shettima Yerima

whole.

The group urged the Supreme Court to prioritize the collective interest of the Nigerian people above any other considerations in its decision-making process. Chairman Suleiman Abbah expressed the importance of upholding the values of democracy, transparency, and justice throughout this legal process.

He affirmed NEN's commitment to supporting and advocating for the preservation of democracy and the well-being of the

Nigerian society, and urged the government to stand firm against troublemakers and protect the stability of the country during this crucial period," he said.

"As the Supreme Court prepares to deliver its verdict on the Zamfara Governorship appeal, the nation looks to the federal government to ensure the enforcement of law and order while dealing strictly with any attempts to disrupt peace or incite misconduct".

JNI Wants Perpetrators Of Plateau Crisis Nailed

By; BUHARI B. BELLO, Jos

The Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI) Plateau State Council, has said that it condemns in totality, the resurgence of violence in Bokkos, Mangu and Barkin Ladi LGAs in the state.

The condemnation was made

by the JNI State Secretary, Dr Salim Musa, in Jos.

"It is unfortunate that this cycle of violence is resurfacing after many spirited efforts by all relevant stakeholders including the government," he said.

The JNI said it extends

condolences to the families of the victims, people of the affected LGA's, and the state.

"We pray for the speedy recovery of the injured victims.

"We call on the communities to take the lead in nurturing and sustaining their peace. An enforced peace is no peace at

all," the group said.

JNI said the security agencies seemed to be overwhelmed by the skirmishes in the communities.

"They need the support of everyone to succeed and bring the perpetrators to justice. It is a collective responsibility for

all to contribute towards sustainable peace," he added.

The Islamic group called on the government to immediately swing into action by providing relief materials to all affected communities in order to ameliorate their sufferings.

Shiites Attend Christmas Service In Zaria, Advocate Unity

By; SANIALIYU, Zaria

Members of Islamic Movement in Nigeria popularly referred to as Shiites have attended Christmas Service at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Hayin Dan Yaro, Samaru, Zaria to strengthen religious harmony and unity among the both faith and other religions.

Prof. Isah-Hassan Enea- Mshelgaru, the leader of the group, said the visit was to celebrate Christmas with Christian brothers at St. Joseph's Catholic Church Samaru, Zaria.

He noted that Christmas is a day for festivity, friendliness and unity; the theme of the visit was, "Renew Hope" for divine unity among Muslims, Christians and other religions.

According to him, the visit to the church by the group for the celebration of Christmas, is to strengthen the relationship between the two faith and foster divine unity.

He said Muslims and Christians are the revealed faith in Nigeria and they account for more than 90 per cent of Nigeria's population, while the

remaining faith are less than the remaining 10 per cent.

"So, when these revealed faith and other religions are united, it means the whole of Nigeria is united," he said.

While speaking on the impact of the visit, Professor Enea-Mshelgaru said as a group, they started the visit to churches more than 25 years ago and since then, there has been much understanding between the group and Christians.

"The visit has reduced the fears and some animosities between the two faiths, they (Christians) are now open to us; we

share sentiments and problems together.

"The visits had so far bridged the existing gaps between us due to the persistent meetings between us," Mshelgaru said.

Earlier, the Pastor, Most Rev. Isak Augustine, commended the Islamic group for the visit and urged them to pay more visits to strengthen religious harmony and unity.

He therefore, prayed for the peace of God to come into Nigeria and salvage the country from myriad socio-economic challenges.

CSO Urges NAHCON, Hajj Operators To Close Ranks For Successful 2024 Hajj

By; JABIRU A HASSAN, Kano

Given the short time, high cost and the low turnout of pilgrims for 2024 Hajj, Independent Hajj Reporters, a civil society that monitors and reports Hajj activities in Nigeria has appealed to the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) and the Private Hajj Operators to quickly find common grounds on the ongoing disagreement over list of approved tour operators. The disagreement if not quickly resolved, may affect the numbers of 2024 intending pilgrims as well as the operational structure in the hajj industry.

IHR gave the advice in a statement signed by its national coordinator Ibrahim Muhammad on Monday and made available to newsmen.

"It will be recalled that NAHCON had released a list of 110 Private Hajj operators screened by the commission for participation in 2024 Hajj. Prior to this, Saudi Arabia has directed all hajj participating countries to reduce the number of Private hajj operators to 10.

"The Saudis later reviewed the number to 40 for Nigeria. NAHCON was compelled to introduce new criteria to trim the 110 companies to 40 with a view to allow others to merge with the approved 40 companies whose names will be forwarded to Saudi Arabia," the CSO said.

IHR also said some tour operators whose names are on the initial list of 110 released by NAHCON are alleging favouritism - saying some companies among the 40 listed by NAHCON are not qualified for such considerations.

This unproven allegation infuriated NAHCON which later suspended allocating Hajj slots to private tour operators and halted their activities altogether.

In a statement shared by the commission, NAHCON said, "in commitment to transparency and integrity, NAHCON has decided to suspend further activities related to the allocation of Hajj seats to the PTOs for the next 48 hours.

"This decision comes in light of recent accusations leveled by some PTOs unable to meet the required pass mark. The Commission is fully aware that there may be dissenting voices which have expectedly begun to manifest".

In the statement, IHR said, "While we understand the importance of regulatory oversight and compliance as undertaken by NAHCON, we also believe that it is not right for the commission to have publicly suspended the pre hajj activities and allocation of hajj slots to the 40 Tour

Operators irrespective of allegations made by some Tour Operators because doing so amounts to 'admitting' error of judgement in the lists especially given the extremely tight schedules in the 2024 hajj calendar.

"Those who made the allegations could have been isolated and their allocation withheld while allowing others to continue with their 2024 Hajj activities. Tour Operators are allocated 20,000 pilgrims while States Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Boards share 75,000 seats.

"Currently, states are yet to register up to 25,000 pilgrims. Freezing the process of early registering of possible additional 15,000 to 20,000 pilgrims to boost the numbers of 2024 intending pilgrims may not be ideal at this time. Private Hajj Operators has a great role to play due to the low turnout in the registration of pilgrims for 2024 hajj in the states.

"Their clients may not find it difficult to pay the current proposed hajj fare thereby increasing the number of pilgrims if the right marketing strategy is deployed. On the other hand, Private Hajj Operators should also appreciate that the number of companies have been increased to 40 from the initial 10 by Saudi Arabia and they therefore, need to unite ranks instead of raising unnecessary dust.

"They could have written to NAHCON as individuals or under AHUON to raise their observations with verifiable proof. Private Hajj Operators cannot be blaming NAHCON for doing their assigned roles of regulation or making unsubstantiated allegations against their colleagues when they fail to adhere to laid down regulations prescribed by the Apex Hajj Regulatory body in Nigeria.

"However, IHR said it is worried by the recent statement by NAHCON saying that it "will soon conclude investigations into complaints received in response to its call for petitions against any of the Private Tour Operators approved to convey pilgrims for 2024 Hajj under the private sector".

The statement further added that it would be recalled that on 13th of December, NAHCON announced the temporary suspension of Hajj slot allocations to tour operators.

"This decision signaled a commitment to fairness and equity following grievances from certain quarters. Until the inquiry is concluded, NAHCON will withhold further actions, with updates to be communicated publicly once the process is finalized". It added.

Festival: Southern Kaduna Honours Lekwot, Agwai, Kukah, Makarfi, Others

By; AMOS TAUNA, Kaduna

With the take off of the maiden edition of Southern Kaduna Festival 2023 yesterday, the zone has identified prominent sons and daughters, including the late Wazirin Jema'a, Alhaji Aliyu Mohammed and Governor Patrick Ibrahim Yakowa for their sterling contributions in the development of the area.

The Chairman of the Central Planning Committee for the event, Rear Admiral Fergusson Dukas Bobai (rtd), revealed that the reason behind the awards is to give honour to the memories of leaders from the zone and also acknowledge the contributions of leaders, both past and present, in the development of the zone.

According to him, "Starting from Thursday 28 to Saturday 30 December, Southern Kaduna will hold the maiden edition of the Southern Kaduna Festival (SKFES 2023) on the theme: 'Experience Unity, Celebrate Culture'. The opening ceremony shall be declared open by the Deputy Governor, Her Excellency Dr. Hadiza Sabuwa Balarabe.

"The essence of this festival is to celebrate our unity in diversity and bestow awards to deserving sons and daughters, including prominent Nigerians that are not indigenes of the zone, who have contributed to our development as a region. There will also be sporting activities, beauty pageant amongst 57 ethnic nationalities in the zone, among other competition."

The highest award, the Southern Kaduna Grand Commander (SKGC), according to the Chairman of the planning committee, shall be bestowed on the former Military Administrator of old Rivers State, Major-General Zamani Lekwot (rtd), and former Chief of Defence State, General Martin Luther Agwai (rtd), adding that the Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Diocese, Dr Matthew Hassan



Lekwot

Kukah will be awarded. According to the event planners, SKGC posthumous awardees are the late Ibrahim Yakowa who died in a helicopter crash in December 2012, while serving as governor of Kaduna State, saying that another posthumous SKGC recipient is former Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) and Wazirin Jema'a, Alhaji Aliyu Mohammed. Other awardees, according to Bobai, include the former governor of Kaduna State, Alhaji Ahmed Mohamed Makarfi who is to be bestowed with the Southern Kaduna Citizen's Award (SKCA), stressing that Makarfi is reputed to have provided vast infrastructural networks in the zone and granted more chiefdoms to Southern Kaduna ethnic nationalities. To also receive the SKCA award is the former Military Administrator of the state, Col Jafaru Isah, who initiated efforts at granting more chiefdoms to the zone in 1996, while

another recipient of the same SKCA award is Machu Bulus Gwall for his development initiatives, two recipients are billed to also receive the Southern Kaduna service Award (SKSA). They are Chief Michael Hassan Usaini and a retired director in the Ministry of Education, Mr. Simon K. Auta. Speaking on SKFES 2023, Bobai commended Governor Uba Sani for demonstrating early signs of his willingness to ensure every section of the state was carried along in the administration of the state. He emphasized, "So far, Governor Uba Sani has shown impressive signs that he is willing to carry all sections of the state in the administration of the state. His acceptance to attend the closing ceremony of SKFES 2023 on Saturday December 30 clearly indicates that he is committed to the unity of our state." Billed to attend the closing ceremony Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon Tajudeen Abba

who will serve as the Chairman of the Occasion, Governor Sani is to serve as Special Guest of Honour, while Governor Douye Diri of Bayelsa State shall serve as Distinguished Guest of Honour. The Chief of Defence Staff, General Christopher Gwabin Musa is to serve as Guest of Honour, while the Chief Host for the occasion is the senator representing Kaduna South Zone 3, Distinguished Senator Sunday Marshall Katung. Father of the Day is the former governor of Kaduna State, Alhaji Mohammed Makarfi, and Mother of the Day is Mrs. Amina Patrick Yakowa. Royal Fathers of the Day are the 'Oegwam Oegworok' and Vice Chairman, Kaduna State Council of Chiefs, HRH Dr. Ufuwai Bonet, and the Emir of Jema'a, HRH Dr. Alhaji Muhammadu Isa Muhammadu, are among other dignitaries expected to grace the occasion.

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Perpetrators Of
Plateau Crisis Nailed

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Project One Presents Cash Gift To 100 Aged Akungba Residents

By: ADEBOYE ADO, Akure

A renowned national charitable organisation, a foundation known for its philanthropic gestures, Project One, has distributed cash gifts to no fewer than 100 elderly residents of Akungba Akoko, in Akoko South West Local Government Area of Ondo State, at Christmas.

The kindhearted ceremony was held on Wednesday at the Palace of the Alale of Akungba land, Oba Isaac Sunday Adeyeye, Ajimo III.

While celebrating with the joyous beneficiaries, Oba Adeyeye thanked the Management of Project One, an anonymous indigene, for relieving the socio-economic pains of some of the senior citizens, 75 years and above, in the University community.

The first class Monarch also acknowledged that the Foundation has been contributing immensely to the development of the town, and humanity at large, especially in the areas of social welfare, girlchild education and rights.

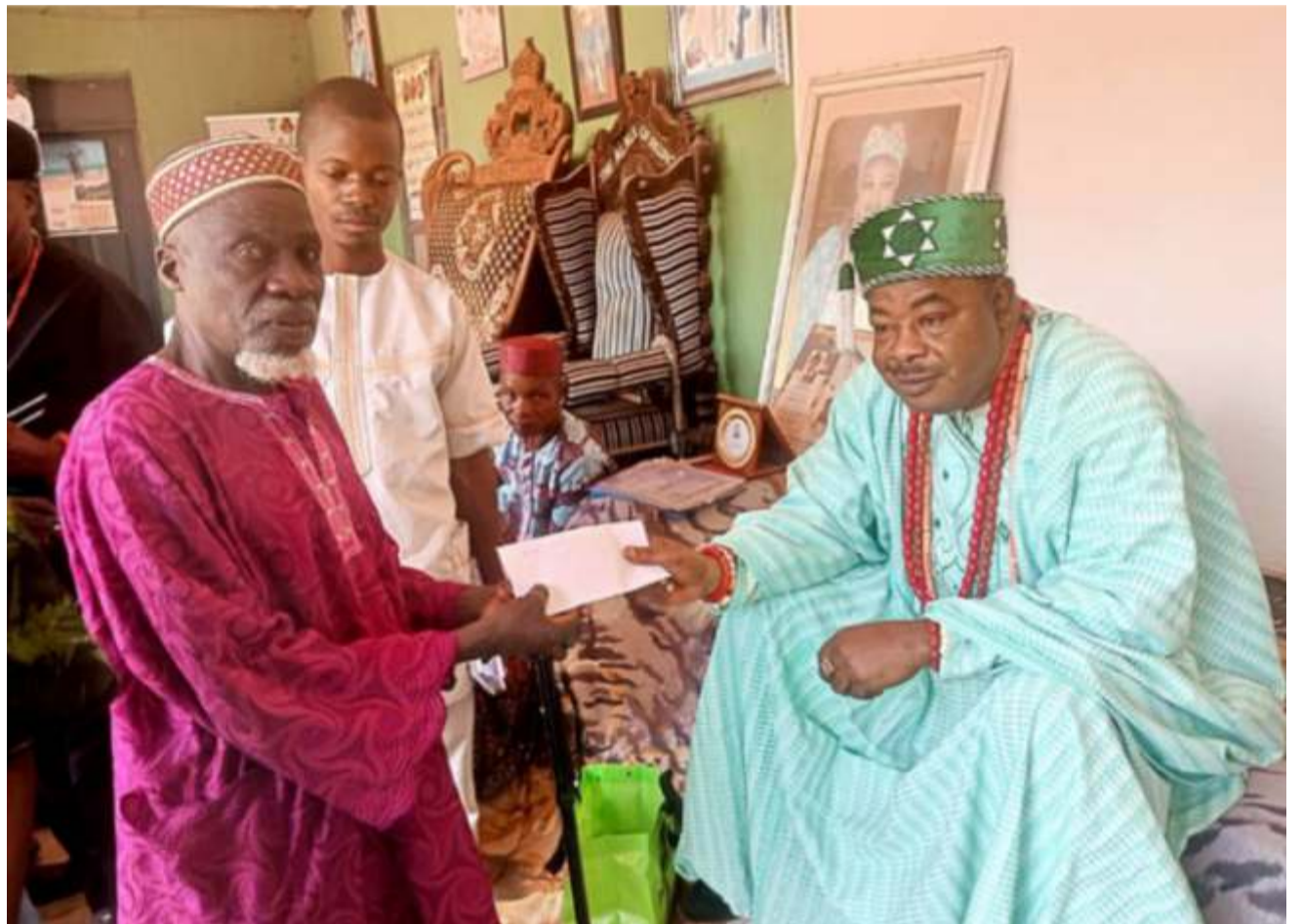
"I express my gratitude and appreciation to the brains behind this remarkable initiative undertaken by Project One in giving cash gifts to more than

100 elderly individuals in Akungba.

"Your Foundation's commitment to making positive impact on the lives of the elderly in our community has not gone unnoticed. The distribution of cash gifts would provide immeasurable joy and relief to the recipients. Your dedication to addressing the needs of the elderly reflects a genuine understanding of the challenges they face, and your action speak volumes about the compassion and empathy embedded in Project One's mission.

"The impact of your outreach goes beyond the monetary aspect. It radiates a sense of community, care, and solidarity that is truly heartwarming. The elderly in our society often face various challenges, and your thoughtful gesture has not only alleviated some of their financial burdens but has also shown them that they are valued and remembered.

"In a world where kindness sometimes feels scarce, Project One stands out as a beacon of compassion. Your organization's



dedication to uplifting the community reflects a commitment to making the world a better place, with one act of kindness at a time.

"Once again, thank you, Project One, for your outstanding contribution to the well-being of

the elderly in Akungba."

HRM seized the opportunity to also call on other well-to-do Nigerians, to emulate the kind-gesture of Project One.

Adding that, Government at all levels cannot fulfill all its promises to brighten the lives of

the citizenry, hence the need for NGOs and philanthropists to help put smiles on people's faces. Two of the beneficiaries, Sadiku Shittu and Agba Samuel, extolled the lofty ideals of the Foundation, and prayed for its growth in leaps and bounds.

Yahaya Bello Mourns Gov. Akeredolu's Demise

By: ADAMA JOHN, Lokoja

Kogi Governor, Alhaji Yahaya Bello has mourned the tragic passing of his Ondo-counterpart and brother, Oluwarotimi Akeredolu (SAN), who died in the wee hours of Wednesday.

In a statement signed by Onogwu Muhammed, Chief Press Secretary to the Governor, Bello described Akeredolu as a preeminent and forward-thinking leader.

Governor Bello also reflected on his transformative impact as the President of the Nigeria Bar Association in 2008.

"Akeredolu's unwavering commitment and dedication in steering the ship of democracy and good governance during

his seven-year tenure as the Governor of Ondo are acknowledged with deep admiration" said Yahaya Bello.

According to him, "this big loss is not only for the Akeredolu family and Ondo State alone but a monumental loss for the entire nation".

Recalling Akeredolu's role as a senior colleague and statesman, Governor Bello emphasised the invaluable wise counsel and kind guidance that significantly contributed to the enhancement of the Governors Forum's leadership and democratic institutions in Nigeria.

"I received the sad news of the death of my elder brother and senior colleague, His Excellency Oluwarotimi Altered Only

(SAN) with a deep sense of grief".

"Akeredolu was not just a senior governor-colleague but also a statesman whose wisdom and kind guidance have profoundly impacted my leadership, in addition to his invaluable contributions specifically in the Governors Forum and the democratic institution in Nigeria over the years" the press statement said.

"This is a great loss to all of us, the people of Ondo State and Nigeria in general. God gives life and takes at His will. May the heavens receive the soul of my brother with the generosity and kindness he showered on humanity over the years," he said.

Governor Bello highlights Akeredolu's stature as one of the eminent figures in

Africa's legal profession, acknowledging his relentless efforts in advancing justice, upholding the rule of law and fortifying democratic institutions in Nigeria.

In a consolatory message, Governor Bello urges the family, friends and colleagues of the late legal luminary to find solace in his exemplary leadership and dedication to the service of humanity, which have undeniably resulted in remarkable progress in our democratic journey as a nation and offered prayers for the peaceful repose of Akeredolu's soul.

Oluwarotimi Odunayo Akeredolu, CON, born on 21 July 1956 in Owo, sadly passed on in the early hours of Wednesday after an illness.