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**Zulum
Launches
Rep Talba's
Palliatives
To 1,500
Constituents**

Story on Page 4

APC Ward Chairmen Pledge Support For Ondo Guber Female Aspirant, Funmilayo Waheed-Adekojo **P.5**

BVAS: APC Threatens To Withdraw From Oyo LG Polls

Story on Page 5

NDLEA Apprehends Vietnam Bound Bizman With 1.45kg Cocaine **P.2**

*Recovers large quantities in Lagos, Kogi, Ogun, Kano, Abia

Again, Over 10,000 Northerners Stranded As Abia Govt Demolishes Lokpanta Cattle Market

- Allege it's a ploy to expel Northerners from South East
- Development days after Ugwuoba Cattle Market was levelled in Enugu
- Market leader says Abia govt alleged insecurity for reason of demolition



From L-R: Permanent Secretary Ministry of Business, Innovation and Technology Kaduna State, Dr. Yusuf Saleh, President of Kaduna Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture (KADCCIMA), Esv. Ishaya Idi and representative of President of Coalition of Northern States Chambers of Commerce, Alhaji Dalhatu Abubakar by President of Katsina State, Chamber of Commerce, Dr. Nura Iliyas during the closing ceremony of the 45th Kaduna International Trade Fair in Kaduna. Photo: BASHIR BELLO DOLLARS

Katsina Police Places N50m Bounty On 2 Wanted Terrorists **P.4**

OGP Group Raises Concerns Over N4.2 Billion Palliatives for SMEs, Vulnerable Persons In Kaduna

*Ask Governor Uba Sani to answer 12 questions **P.2**

3-yr Old Dies, Million Naira Property Consumed In Lagos Inferno

Customs Service Approves 90-day Window For Payment Of Duty On Improperly Imported Vehicles **P.3**

By: JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

A week after the Ugwuoba Cattle Market in Enugu was levelled, over 10 thousand traders of Northern extraction are at the moment, stranded, following the unexpected demolition of the popular Lokpanta Cattle Market in Abia State at the weekend. Confirming the development to New Nigerian yesterday, Chairman Lokpanta Cattle Market, Alh Saleh Dudu said that those affected are stranded on the streets.

He explained that the market was established by Senator Orji Kalu the then Governor of Abia State in 1999.

According to him, they were only handed a one-week notice before the bulldozers moved in.

"Senator Orji Kalu the then Governor of Abia State built Lokpanta Cattle Market, a ruga settlement in the state, when he was governor of Abia State, he built the Lokpanta Cattle Market as a source of revenue for Abia State.

"This development took place Between 1999 and

Continued on Page 4

Anambra, Taraba Chapters Frown At Masterminds Of SWAN Crisis **P.22**

*Pledge unalloyed support to President Isaiah Benjamin
*Task president on convening Full Council Meeting

We Must All Protect Nigeria From Ruin, Tompolo

*He's a true national patriot - NUJ President, Isiguzo **P.3**

NDLEA Apprehends Vietnam Bound Bizman With 1.45kg Cocaine

**Recovers large quantities in Lagos, Kogi, Ogun, Kano, Abia*

By: RAYMOND TEDUNJAYE, Lagos
A Vietnam bound businessman has been nabbed by operatives of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) over alleged possession of 1.45 kilogram.

This occurred, just as operatives of the agency also recovered large quantities of assorted illicit drugs in different states across the country.

The 40- yrs old Vietnam bound businessman, identified as Ejike Chibuke Solomon was said to have been arrested at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport (NAIA) Abuja.

The Director of Media and Advocacy of the Agency, Femi Babafemi made the disclosure in a statement yesterday.

According to the statement, the suspect concealed the drug in his luggage while attempting to board an Ethiopia Airlines flight number 950 to Vietnam via Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from Nigeria.

Babafemi stated that Ejike was arrested at the Abuja airport on Saturday 2nd March 2024 after NDLEA officers subjected him to a thorough search, and in the process, the illicit substance was discovered concealed, factory fitted, in his bag.

The NDLEA spokesperson added that, the suspect, in his statement claimed he was on a business trip to Vietnam.

Meanwhile, operatives of a special unit of the Agency on Friday 1st March swooped on members of a syndicate that deals in methamphetamine, cocaine and heroin in their hideouts in parts of Lagos.

The operatives assigned for the operation raided the home of Esimone Amachukwu Christopher at 14 Arochukwu street, Ejigbo, where 10.012 kilograms of methamphetamine was found in

possession of his associate, 40-year-old Evelyn Nneka Okem. Esimone is currently at large.

Babafemi explained that while the Ejigbo operation was going on, another set of officers were simultaneously busy in the residence of another member of the syndicate, 45-year-old Ebele Edwin Iwuegbunam, located at Plot 1604 Close D, 4th Avenue, Festac town, Lagos where they arrested him and recovered 429.5grams of cocaine and 7 kilograms of heroin.

The statement further read: "In Kogi state, NDLEA officers on a stop and search operation along Okene-Lokoja-Abuja expressway on Friday 1st March intercepted a commercial bus marked GRM 347XA (Borno) conveying 28 compressed blocks of cannabis sativa weighing 11kg; 100 bottles of codeine-based cough syrup and 500 tablets of diazepam, all concealed in three plastic drums covered with cattle fats, heading to Jos Plateau state.

"While operatives in Ogun state on Thursday 29th February recovered 169kg consignment of cannabis abandoned in a truck at Sagamu tollgate, their counterparts in Lagos seized 25 cartons of tramadol containing 325,000 pills in Ikeja the previous day Wednesday 28th Feb.

"Same day, a suspect, Abdullahi Garba Khalil, 42, and 2,745,000 capsules of pregabalin recovered from him at Singer market, Sabon Gari area of Kano were handed over to the Kano state command of NDLEA by the Department of State Security, DSS.

"In the same vein, the 243 Recce Battalion, Nigerian Army, Badagry on Saturday 2nd March transferred 27 sacks

of cannabis sativa weighing 1,110kg recovered at a coastal community, Ajido by soldiers, to the Seme Special Area Command of NDLEA. A suspect, Hassan Muhammad, 34, was on Saturday 2nd March arrested with 44,950 pills of tramadol at Moranti area of Borno state by NDLEA operatives.

"In Abia state, NDLEA operatives on Thursday 28th Feb raided a drug joint at Cemetery Barracks, Aba, where Ifeanyi Uche, 37, was arrested with different quantities of cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine.

"Another raid was carried out at the abandoned Eyimba Hotel, Ogor Hill, Aba, where illicit substances were seized and suspects arrested on Friday 1st March".

According to the NDLEA spokesperson, the various commands of the Agency across the country continued with the War Against Drug Abuse (WADA) advocacy campaign in the past week.

Some of them include: WADA sensitisation lecture for students and teachers of Fobin Primary and Secondary School, Idiroko, Seme, Lagos; Army Barracks Grammar School, Mokola, Ibadan, Oyo state; State Model Secondary School, Awka, Anambra state; Government Girls Secondary School, Okumgba-Ama, Ogoloma, Okrika, Rivers state and leaders and residents of



The Vietnam bound nabbed by NDLEA

Lapan community, Gombe state, among others.

The Chairman/Chief Executive Officer of NDLEA, Brig. Gen. Mohamed Buba Marwa (Rtd) commended the officers and men of the NAIA, Abia, Ogun, Kogi, Lagos, Seme, Borno and Kano Commands of the Agency as well as those of the Special Unit for their outstanding feats in the past week.

OGP Group Raises Concerns Over N4.2 Billion Palliatives for SMEs, Vulnerable Persons In Kaduna

**Ask Governor Uba Sani to answer 12 questions*

By: ALEX UANGBAOJE, Kaduna

A head of planned distribution of N4.2 billion palliatives for 4,200 SMEs and other identified vulnerable persons and groups in Kaduna, citizens in the state has raised concerns and requested the state government to provide an answer before embarking on the distribution.

The citizens concern was captured in a position paper titled, "Enhancing Transparency and Accountability during the Planned N4.2 billion Palliatives for 4,200 SMEs and Other Identified Vulnerable Persons/Groups", signed by Sumayya Abdullahi, CS Co-Chair, Technical Working Group on Strengthening Social Protection Systems, OGP Kaduna.

Kaduna State Governor, Senator Uba Sani, in an interview on February 19, 2024, announced a planned distribution of 4.2 billion worth of palliatives to 4,200

SMEs and other identified Vulnerable Persons/Groups in the state.

According to the OGP group which includes civil society organizations, media and academia in Kaduna, it has become imperative for the state governor to provide an answer to the questions raised because of the previous experiences of palliative implementation in the state.

The questions are as follows: "What is the percentage distribution of the total amount for SMEs and vulnerable groups?"

"Will the palliative be in monetary form or types of machinery, especially for target SMEs?"

"Is there existing data on SMEs in the state, and what strategy will be used to identify and map out benefitting SMEs?"

"What is the percentage distribution for administrative costs and direct beneficiaries?"

"Will the palliative be distributed as a loan or grant; and if loans, would it be a

collateral or non-collateral loan?"

"Who are the key partners in charge of the implementation: identification, enrolment, distribution and tracking of the process?"

"What measures are being put in place to ensure inclusivity, fairness and transparency in the distribution?"

"What sort of SMEs are potential beneficiaries - registered or unregistered SMEs, existing or startups?"

"Is there a specific percentage allocation in terms of gender to ensure equity and inclusion?"

"What per cent of the vulnerable population will be allocated for Persons with Disabilities?"

"What is the targeting mechanism that will be used?"

"Will the database of the beneficiaries be made available on request for external verification and evaluation?"

They noted that as concerned citizens,

advocates and co-creators of the OGP commitments, they are expressing their pleasure in the development knowing that it holds the great potential to improve the living conditions of many and curb the current biting effect of hunger and poverty in the state.

"In view of the above, We call for the implementation of transparent processes in the identification of target beneficiaries, sectors, and gender in the distribution of palliative relief. This includes public disclosure of beneficiary lists and distribution schedules.

"We request the inclusion of accountability mechanisms working on social protection in the implementation committee to ensure that palliative distribution is conducted fairly, equitably, and accountably. This includes accountability in the disbursement approach, persons to collaborate and clearly stated roles to ensure a seamless

Continued on Page 7

Customs Service Approves 90-day Window For Payment Of Duty On Improperly Imported Vehicles

By Amos Tauna, Kaduna & JABIRUA. HASSAN, Kano

The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), under the directives of the Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, has announced a 90-day window for regularizing import duties on specific categories of vehicles. It is meant to comply and streamline import processes. A statement by the National Public Relations Officer of the

Nigeria Customs Service, Chief Superintendent of Customs Abdullahi Maiwada, yesterday, said, "This initiative applies solely to vehicles imported into Nigeria where the requisite customs duty has not been fulfilled or vehicles detained due to undervaluation.

"While we strive for inclusivity, it is important to clarify that vehicles seized and condemned will not be released under this arrangement and shall be

forfeited to the Federal Government in accordance with extant regulations."

He added that all vehicle owners, Importers/Agents seeking to regularize import duties on their vehicles are required to apply to the Zonal Coordinators (Zones A, B, C, D) and CAC FCT Command, saying that they must submit the necessary available documents and process Vreg in line with the Federal Ministry of Finance directives for the

registration of imported motor vehicles.

The statement explained that valuation and assessment of the vehicles would be carried out using the VIN valuation method, with import Duty and a 25% penalty shall be paid in tandem with the import guidelines, procedures, and documentation requirements for used vehicles under the Destination Inspection Scheme in Nigeria (2013) and the Nigeria Customs Service Act

2023.

It added that duty payments must be made using the Procedure Code specifically created for this exercise.

"This initiative reflects our unwavering commitment to facilitating compliance. We encourage all stakeholders to capitalize on this opportunity within the stipulated timeframe," the statement explained.

We Must All Protect Nigeria From Ruin, Tompolo

**He's a true national patriot - NUJ President, Isiguzo*

By: UTEBOR PETER, Asaba

The national leadership of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Saturday, March 2, 2024, etched a milestone in the annals of the 69 year old union, when it conferred one of the highest honours on a deserving national patriot, Chairman of Tantita Security Services Nigeria Ltd (TSSNL), High Chief Government Ekpemupolo alias Tompolo.

The NUJ Meritorious Award was presented by the national president, Chief (Dr) Chris Isiguzo at Oporoza, headquarters of the Gbaramatu Kingdom in Warri South West Local Government Area of Delta State. The award, according to Dr Isiguzo, was in recognition of Tompolo's outstanding contributions to the security of oil and gas infrastructure by curtailing oil theft and pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta.

Speaking further, Tompolo, who's reputed not to have a Nigerian passport, in his modesty, disclosed that: "I don't have any other place, except Nigeria. Nigeria is the only country I have, so we must all join hands to protect and move Nigeria forward.

"Our economy is in dire need of survival so we cannot fold our hands and allow some persons to sabotage the nation's economy because of greed."

Earlier in the ceremony that witnessed the NUJ National, Zonal and State leaderships led by the NUJ national president, Chief Isiguzo, said the pen-pushers arrived at conferring the meritorious award on Tompolo at the last NUJ NEC meeting and National Security Conference in Abuja after a meticulous deliberation on his activities and successes in tackling economic sabotage head-on.

He said Tompolo has set the pace

in securing Nigeria from the throes of economic insecurity in the Niger Delta region, urging the media, other security operatives and agencies as well as other Nigerians to rally round him.

"Somebody had risen to the occasion and gathered an array of young men who have taken it upon themselves to help this country continue to survive as a peaceful nation, united and continue to fend for its people.

"And that is the man that has, to a very large extent, substantially, helped us address the issue of crude oil theft.

"That is one thing that has occupied our national life over time. But by his commitment, dedication and diligence, Nigeria, as a country, had, to a very large extent, reduced the activities of men of the underworld who have consistently engaged in pilfering, taking our common patrimony for their gains.

"NUJ, having assessed the activities of TSSNL, we decided that we must accord the necessary recognition to the man who carries the flag, birthed this organization, who has exceptionally distinguished himself, and who has been celebrated by Nigerians across all walks of life.

"NUJ is an institution that is distinguished; when we look at the different realms of governance, we have the First



Estate of the Realm, the Second Estate of the Realm, and the Third Estate of the Realm; all talking about the Executive, Legislature and the Judiciary.

"But there is a realm that Nigerians now look up to and if this realm collapses, Nigeria will collapse. This realm is the oxygen of democratic governance; it is the reason Nigeria is still operating and why we are enjoying peace and harmony and that is the media.

"Therefore, this important realm has come to the Oporoza Community in Gbaramatu Kingdom to honour a distinguished son of the Niger Delta; a general in his own right who has distinguished himself, ensures and maintains an appreciable level of internal security.

"We have come to confer on him, the Internal Security Meritorious Award of the Nigeria Union of Journalists.

"In the course of the national security conference, only one award had been approved and it is being conferred on Dr

Government Ekpemupolo," Chief Isiguzo enthused.

Isiguzo continued: "I'm also excited that I'm doing this after 61 years of the existence of the NUJ, this award is coming up at this time.

"It is not just an honour to Tompolo but also an honour to me too. It is an honour to all of us and what that means is that the issue of insecurity is not just the responsibility of government but of every Nigerian.

"Wherever you are, your contribution to ensuring their tranquillity, peace and harmony, is without blemish and doubt.

"When you provide information, and intelligence to security operatives and agencies, you have contributed in a certain percentage to reducing the problem of insecurity in the land. "So, it is a collective responsibility, and all hands must be on deck to ensure we address our problems.

"If Nigeria is peaceful, every part of the country, including your household, will be peaceful and

that will give birth to development and progress.

"It will take our country from a third-world country to perhaps, a second-world country or who knows, maybe a first-world country. It is possible and it can happen in our time."

He enjoined journalists to keep contributing their quota by sharing Intel with security agencies and operatives in order to engender tranquillity, peace, harmony and progress in the country.

Dignitaries at the colourful award ceremony that witnessed hospitality and dance entertainment by Ijaw women, included National Secretary of the NUJ, Comrade Shuaibu Leman, private secretary to immediate past governor of Delta, Hillary Ibegbulem, Speaker of Bayelsa House of Assembly, as well as members of the Delta Online Publishers Forum (DOPF) who also inducted the distinguished national patriot into the Niger Delta Hall of Fame.

Again, Over 10,000 Northerners Stranded As Abia Govt Demolishes Lokpanta Cattle Market

- **Allege it's a ploy to expel Northerners from South East**
- **Development days after Ugwuoba Cattle Market was levelled in Enugu**
- **Market leader says Abia govt alleged insecurity for reason of demolition**

2007 when the state was faced with financial challenges, the cattle market which was situated then at the Umuahia city center before relocating to Lokpanta serve as internally generated revenue market for the state.

"And in establishing the market he said it is not for only Hausa people even with 85% of population in the cattle market but all Abians and Igbo will come and engage in the cattle business," he told New

Nigerian.

He explained that however, "within the year 2022, there were rumours from the state government about security issues within our domain in the market with we knew nothing about it because we don't have security issues with us at the market.

"This even lead to a problem between the people the state and Senator Orji Kalu because he is the one that built the market and named it

'Rugga' in Hausa language, and Senator Orji kalu took to his Social Media handle to use it as a campaign issue used to blackmail him.

"The Senator posted, 'Let us stop talking about me establishing Lokpanta Cattle Market. I built the cattle market in Lokpanta and I have no regrets doing it. If there is a problem with the cattle market today, there are two governors after me and they could have reviewed the situation if it is bad for

the state. I did it to yield revenue for the state and it is still yielding revenue.' he quoted the Senator.

He explained that the Senator advised those who want to make the matter a campaign issue to verify the revenue that accrued to the state from the market. "Let them disclose the revenue being made there and such revenue will be used for many things in the state, at least to check security if such revenue does not go into private pockets. I am the senator

Zulum Launches Rep Talba's Palliatives To 1,500 Constituents

By; SADIQ ABUBAKAR, Maiduguri

Borno State Governor, Babagana Umara Zulum, has launched a distribution of palliatives provided by the member representing Marte, Monguno and Nganzai at the House of Representatives, Engr Bukar Talba, yesterday.

Governor Zulum who is on the entourage of Mr President to Qatar was represented by the Deputy Governor, Umar Usman Kadafur, at the occasion.

Over 1,500 constituents from three local government areas of Marte, Monguno, and Nganzai benefited from the distribution which took place at the state mechanical workshop. Each of the three local government councils has 500 people that received a bag of rice, a bag of maize and N20,000 cash.

Speaking at the occasion, Governor Zulum commended the

lawmaker for his effort in alleviating the suffering of the people in his constituency.

Delivering his address, Engr Bukar Talba expressed his gratitude to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Vice President Kashim Shettima and Governor Babagana Umara Zulum for being role models and for providing the leadership required for the development of the country.

In their separate remarks, Borno State APC chairman, Bello Ayuba, and the senator representing northern Borno, Barrister Mohammed Tahir Monguno, described the lawmaker's gesture as unprecedented.

Secretary to Borno State Government, Hon. Bukar Tijjani, Head of Service, Barrister Mallam Fannami, members of the House of Assembly, state, commissioners and many top government officials attended the occasion.



Victims watching the demolition in amazement

Katsina Police Places N50m Bounty On 2 Wanted Terrorists

By; SULAIMAN AHMED MISAU, Katsina

Katsina State Police Command has announced a reward of fifty million naira (N50,000,000:00) to any individual who provides valuable information that will lead to the arrest of two (2) bandits' kingpins popularly known as Modi Modi and Jan Kare operating in Kankara and Safana local government areas of the state.

A statement by the Public Relations Officer (PPRO) of the Command, Assistant

Superintendent of Police (ASP), Abubakar Sadiq Aliyu assured that, the safety and well-being of the residents of the state are of paramount importance, and the Katsina State Government and Katsina State Police Command, as well as other sister security agencies in the state, are committed to taking decisive action against criminal elements that threaten the peace and stability of the inhabitants of the state.

He said "This reward serves as a testament to our dedication to ensuring justice prevails, as

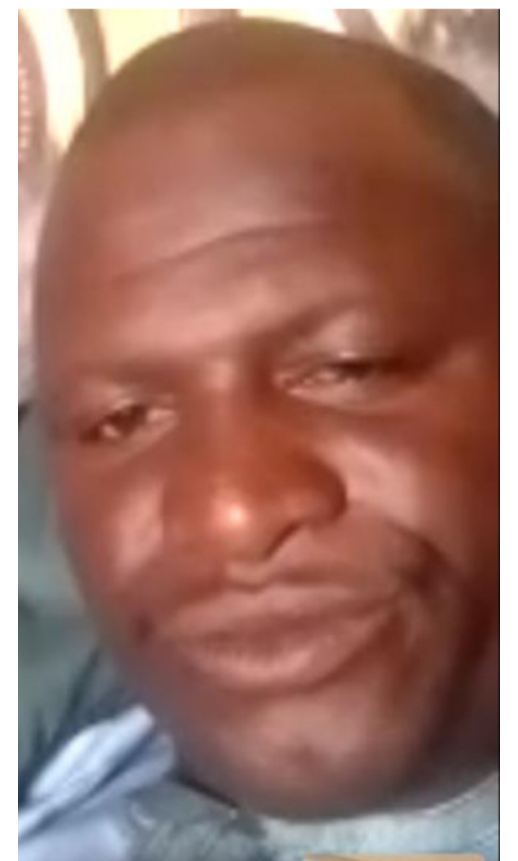
the issue of security is a collective responsibility."

Accordingly, he said, "This initiative aims to enhance security operations in our dear State and combat the activities of these criminal elements. The identity of the informant and the information provided will be kept strictly confidential to ensure their safety and protection."

Therefore, he emphasized that, "all concerned citizens are encouraged to come forward with any relevant details that could assist the security agencies in

apprehending the masterminds behind these heinous crimes of Kidnapping and Banditry. "Together, we can make our state safer for all residents," he added.

ASP Sadiq Aliyu stated that, "for any inquiry or to provide information, please contact the command headquarters or the nearest security agency's headquarters or call the following numbers 07015142112 08023871144. Let us unite in our efforts to ensure peace and security for all residents of Katsina State."



Wanted bandit, Modi Modi

APC Ward Chairmen Pledge Support For Ondo Guber Female Aspirant, Funmilayo Waheed-Adekojo

By: ADEBOYE ADO, Akure

The All Progressives Congress (APC) Ward Chairmen of Akoko North East Local Government Area of Ondo, have pledged support for the gubernatorial aspiration of Mrs. Funmilayo Waheed-Adekojo.

The chairmen threw their weight behind the only female aspirant yesterday, after she (Funmilayo) met with them in Ikare-Akoko in Akoko North East Local

Government Area of the State.

Speaking at the meeting, the Chairman of Ilepa ward one, Hon. Rafiu Yakubu, who expressed optimism that the aspirant would emerge as the candidate of the ruling party, described Funmilayo as a human whose heart is filled with the milk of human kindness.

Yakubu said, "I am optimistic that Funmilayo Waheed-Adekojo will clinch the All Progressives

Congress (APC) ticket. With her proven track record of dedication, integrity, and effective leadership, we are hopeful she will emerge as the candidate of our great party.

"It would indeed be a historic moment for Ondo State to have a capable woman at the helm of governance, bringing fresh perspectives and driving positive change for all citizens.

In her reaction, Funmilayo extolled the Chairmen for

their sincere support, stating confidently that there is no modicum of doubt in her ambition to pilot the affairs of the state. "With the support of our party members and the trust of the electorate, I have no doubt that I will emerge as the candidate to lead our great party to victory. Together, we will chart a path of progress and prosperity for all our people".

"Thank you for your unwavering support and belief in our shared mission", she said.



BVAS: APC Threatens To Withdraw From Oyo LG Polls

By: BAYO AKAMO, Ibadan

The All Progressives Congress (APC) in Oyo State yesterday, threatened to withdraw all its candidates from the next local government elections in the state.

APC in a statement by its Publicity Secretary, Olawale Sadare said it is ready to withdraw from the election should the Oyo State Independent Electoral Commission (OYSIEC) fail to guarantee the usage of Bi-modal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) for the poll.

In the statement, APC alleged OYSIEC of playing "game of deceit" over the need to deploy BVAS machines for the April polls and also show the whole world that it was

not out to do the bidding of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) as it happened the last time when candidates of other parties were denied their earned victory particularly in Ido and Ibarapa East local government councils.

According to the party, "We have watched with dismay the lip service being paid, by OYSIEC, to the issue of BVAS required for the smooth conduct of the poll".

"The commission is apparently under pressure to jettison the usage of BVAS because the ruling PDP is averse to it even as the powers-that-be in the state are prepared to compromise the April poll in their bid to ensure all the candidates of the PDP win at all cost", it said.

APC added, "It is a height

of insincerity on the part of OYSIEC to hide the status of any request made to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on the release of the machines for the planned poll even as we have been reliably informed that INEC does not have any reason to turn down such request if properly and genuinely made".

"Apart from the fact that the devices are owned by Nigerians, INEC is committed to the conduct of credible elections and the Commission is ever ready to assist the cause within and outside Nigeria. Oyo APC took a bold decision to field candidates in this election basically for two reasons; to deepen our democracy at the grassroots level and also to rescue the third tier

of government which has been rendered useless by the current PDP administration".

Oyo APC stressed, "As a matter of fact, we have observed that the Chairman of OYSIEC might not be able to be fair to all parties as he is wont to do for obvious reasons. The fact that the PDP elements are averse to BVAS is responsible for the failure of OYSIEC to announce to the world that the machines would be used for the election".

"At this juncture, we are stating it categorically that Oyo APC would not be a party to any sham or charade and should the election body fail to guarantee the usage of BVAS for the April poll, they should count us out."

Benue Inauguration Of Probe Panels Ploy To Shield Failure From Public Scrutiny - PDP

By: ARCHIBONG ESUENE Makurdi

The main opposition Party in Benue State, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) had said that the constitution of two panels by the state governor, Rev Fr Hyacinth Alia, to probe the administration of his predecessor, Chief Samuel Ortom, is nothing but a deliberate ploy to shield from public scrutiny the serial failures associated with his administration.

To this end, the party has therefore, vowed to stand by the immediate past governor of the state, Chief Samuel Ortom throughout the period of the probe.

The PDP expressed this in a statement signed by its publicity secretary, Chief Bemgba Iortyom, and made available to newsmen in Makurdi.

Governor Alia had constituted two commission of Inquiries to investigate income and expenditure of former Governor Samuel Ortom's administration and Chief Ortom, has therefore, expressed his readiness to submit himself before any lawful process as will require him to give account of his stewardship.

According to Iortyom, the PDP recognizes the place of probity and accountability as necessary components of good governance, and, "will stand by its leader, Chief Ortom, through this process of stock-taking, if that is actually what it will be.

"In what may be interpreted as a lack of confidence in the Benue Judicial family, Governor Alia selected two justices from outside the state to head the two panels which are vested with separate mandates to probe into the assets and finances of the state during the era of the Ortom administration from May 29, 2015 to May 28, 2023.

"Nevertheless, the party raises questions as to the timing of the probe exercise, coming at a time Governor Alia's table is already full with issues of insecurity and allegations of monumental corruption taking place under his watch.

"PDP recalls that only last week, the governor issued a 14 days ultimatum to Fulani herdsmen who have instreamed into the state with thousands of cattle to leave, however, there was no clear statement on the consequences for non compliance with the ultimatum.

"Today marks the 8th day into that ultimatum and if anything, the herders have intensified their influx into the state coming in larger numbers and with larger herds of livestock, thereby, deepening insecurity and putting to greater jeopardy the survival of the people who depend on the land for basic sustenance."

The party also noted allegations of massive corruption taking place at the Bureau of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, where allegations of sharp practices have been exposed in the form of illegal deductions and remittances from the accounts of the 23 local government councils into private accounts of certain officials of government and some suspected cronies of the governor. PDP noted with sadness that those allegations of mismanagement of taxpayers monies by the Alia government are such that, "an alleged N20 billion out of N50 billion belonging to the 23 LG councils has been deducted into illegal accounts, and this hints loudly at the reason why Governor Alia had gone to the extremities of disregarding series of court orders to sack the lawful councils and put in their place his selected cronies as caretaker chairmen.

"Also of grave concern are the allegations that an estimated close to N300 million was deducted from the local government funds monthly purportedly to feed and cater for the IDPs in the state, yet it is not anywhere known that the Alia government has any programme in place for the IDPs."

PDP cautionee Governor Alia against trifling with the security and well-being of the people of the state whom he swore on oath to serve, and must resist the temptation to indulge in vendetta and smokescreens while insecurity and poverty pose an increasingly monstrous existential threat to the people.

The party also called on the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), ICPC, DSS and the Presidency to ensure that those officials of the Alia administration fingered in the alleged grand theft of local government funds in the state are brought to book.

2,213 Benefit As Zamfara Gov't Concludes Third Phase Free Medical Outreach

By; IMRANA ABDULLAHI, Kaduna

Zamfara State Government has concluded the third phase of its free modified outreach programme, treating 2,213 individuals. The Special Modified Medical Outreach Programme began in July last year, providing free medical services to individuals with cataract extraction, groin swellings such as hernias and hydroceles, vesicovaginal fistula repairs, and health education.

A statement by the Spokesperson of the Zamfara Governor, Sulaiman Bala Idris,

disclosed that 2,213 persons were treated during the free outreach's first, second and third phases.

According to him, the third phase of the free outreach lasted between the 23rd and 25th of February 2024. The statement said: "Governor Lawal's administration launched a free modified medical outreach program to provide medical assistance to vulnerable individuals in need. The program offers free medical treatment for people suffering from common surgical conditions such as cataracts, hernias, hydroceles, and

vesicovaginal fistula repairs.

"Besides medical assistance, the program educates citizens about the importance of maintaining good health and wellness. This initiative is a positive step towards improving the overall health and well-being of the community.

"The Outreach program has so far treated 2,213 persons using tele-screening to provide specialist care to patients from rural and semi-urban areas, covering the 14 local government areas of the State. This approach has enabled patients in

remote locations to receive the medical attention they need from qualified professionals.

"The three phases have so far operated cases include 876 Groin Swellings & Lumps/Special, 931 Cataract Extraction/others, and 84 Vesico-vaginal/rectal fistula (VVF).

"The dedicated centres for the outreach are General Hospital Gusau, King Fahad General Hospital, Yariman Bakura Specialist Hospital, and all special cases would be referred to the Federal Medical Centre in Gusau.

Minister Says 92m Nigerians Lack Access To Electricity

By; AMOS TAUNA, Kaduna

The Federal Government, on Friday, said that about 92 million Nigerians lack access to electricity from the national grid.

The Minister of Power, Chief Adebayo Adedun, made the disclosure at the closing ceremony of the 7th Nigeria International Energy Summit in Abuja.

Experts and industry players energy, described the poor generation and supplies between 3,000 and 4,000 megawatts of grid electricity to over 200 million citizens across the country, as not acceptable. The Minister explained that though adequate access to energy by citizens had been a challenge globally, about 40 per cent of people in Nigeria were currently affected.

He noted that access to electricity is undeniably a fundamental requirement for socio-economic development, saying that it is a pleasure to see so many dedicated individuals and experts gathered in the hall to discuss strategies and solutions for bridging energy access gap.

In recent years, he explained that significant progress has been made globally in improving access to electricity, stressing that a substantial portion of the world population still face challenges in obtaining

reliable and affordable electricity.

He added, "Here in Nigeria it is estimated that a whopping 92 million people are still suffering from energy poverty, which is over 40 per cent of our estimated population."

He called for cooperation by stakeholders to tackle the challenge, as the government alone would not be able to handle the situation, adding that it is the collective responsibility to address this issue, as it has far reaching implications for poverty alleviation, healthcare, education and overall improvement in the quality of lives including the reduction of youth unemployment in the society.

According to him, electricity from the national grid may not get to every remote area, saying that such locations could be served with power from renewable energy sources. He urged stakeholders to work together to bridge the energy access gap by ensuring that electricity becomes a reality for all irrespective of our geographical location or socio-economic status.

He appealed to Nigerians to exercise patience with the Federal Government, stressing that they (Nigerians) must give them time to address these issues, so that they can achieve an enduring and sustainable energy.



Red Line Rail: Lagos Govt Thanks FG On Track Sharing Agreement, CCECC

By; MATTHEW UKACHUNWA Lagos

Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has thanked the Federal Government (FG) for allowing the Red Line Rail of the Lagos Rail Mass Transit (LRMT) to share tracks with Nigerian Railway Corporation's (NRC) service lines from Lagos to Ibadan.

The governor expressed the gratitude in Lagos on Thursday at the commissioning of the Red Line Rail by President Bola

Tinubu.

"We thank former President Goodluck Jonathan for signing-off on the track sharing agreement, and the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) for providing us with the cooperation and support," Sanwo-Olu said.

The Lagos State leader also acknowledged the project contractor, China Civil Engineering

Construction Corporation (CCECC) and its Chairman, Mr. Jason Zhang, for completing and

delivering the project on deadline.

Sanwo-Olu, in addition, appreciated the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) for the invaluable support the apex bank rendered on the rail infrastructure.

The Lagos Rail Mass Transit Red Line is a 37-kilometre modern engineering infrastructure that stretches from Agbado in Ogun State to the National Arts Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos.

"The segment we inaugurate today spans an impressive 27 kilometres from Agbado to

Oyingbo, featuring state-of-the-art stations at Agbado, Iju, Agege, Ikeja, Oshodi, Mushin, Yaba and Oyingbo," Sanwo-Olu explained. "We started construction in mid-2020, and I am happy that our administration has been able to complete it."

He pointed out that in year 2003, President Bola Tinubu who was then the governor of Lagos State established the Lagos Metropolitan Area Transport Authority (LAMATA) to coordinate and oversee transport

policies and programme's in Lagos State, and to deliver intermodal integrated transport system that would allow seamless movement of people and fuel the economic growth of the state.

The governor declared that Lagos State has a Strategic Transport Master Plan (STMP) "that outlines what the integrated rail system should look like: six rail lines, one monorail, 14 BRT corridors, over 20 water routes, and a vast network of major and inner roads.

Gombe Set To Receive VP Shettima As He Launches Outsource To Nigeria Initiative

***OTNI To Create 2,000 Job Opportunities for Gombe Youths in Line with Governor Inuwa's Vision**



VP Shettima

By: JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

Gombe State is set to host the Vice President of Nigeria, Sen. Kashim Shettima, on Monday, March 4, 2024.

According to a statement signed by the Director-General (Press Affairs)

Government House Gombe, Ismaila Uba Misilli, made available on Saturday, VP Shettima will be in Gombe to launch the Outsource To Nigeria Initiative (OTNI) and commission the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) Centre.

The BPO center, the first in the Northeast sub-region and the biggest of its kind in Nigeria, is set to provide not less than 2,000 job opportunities to the vibrant and talented youth population of Gombe state in line with the visionary leadership of Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya.

With the BPO center now established in Gombe, located at the Amina Mohammed Skills Acquisition Centre along Gombe-Biu Bypass, the state is poised to become a hub for outsourcing services, leveraging the skills and potential of its

youths.

OTNI is a catalyst for change in the business process and technology-enabled outsourcing sector, and the fastest route to job security for the teeming youths in Gombe State and Nigeria at large. By keying into this initiative, the Inuwa Yahaya led administration has further demonstrated its commitment to providing sustainable employment opportunities and empowering the youths to contribute meaningfully to the state's development and progress.

Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya extends his sincere appreciation to His Excellency, Vice President Kashim Shettima, for his support and commitment to the economic development of Gombe State and Nigeria as a whole, as he looks forward to receiving the VP and other guests.

The unveiling ceremony takes place at the International Conference Center along Gombe-Bauchi road by 9:am and will be graced by key stakeholders from the public and private sectors within and outside the country.

Oyo/Osun Customs Seizes N1.7bn Fake Drugs, Generates N12.4bn - Area Comptroller

**Vows to ensure total enforcement of FG policy on border closure*

By: BAYO AKAMO, Ibadan

The Oyo/Osun Command of the Nigeria Customs Service has seized fake pharmaceuticals, comprising Augmentin tablets, Ampiclox and Amoxicillin capsules with Duty Paid Value of N1,739,000,000.00.

This was disclosed on Thursday by the Area Controller, Oyo/Osun Area Command of the Nigeria Customs Service, Dr Ben Oramalugo at the 2024 second press conference of the command held at the its headquarters in Ibadan.

He maintained that the command during the period covering February 1 through 27, 2024, also collected the sum of N5,664,295,751.15.

According to Dr Oramalugo, when added to N6,824,954,338.96 already collected for the period of January 2024, the cumulative sum of

N12,489,250,090.11 had been collected so far for the 2024 fiscal year.

"Today, I will like to reflect on the revenue and anti-smuggling activities of our Command for the month of February, particularly in light of the ongoing food security and economic challenges facing our nation. During the period covering February 1-27, 2024, the Oyo/Osun Area Command collected the sum of N5,664,295,751.15", he said.

The Customs Area Controller added, "When added to the sum of N6,824,954,338.96 already collected for the period of January 2024, the cumulative sum of N12,489,250,090.11 was collected so far for the fiscal year of 2024,"

"Despite the prevailing economic challenges, Command's officers have worked diligently to ensure the collection of customs duties and taxes

in accordance with the mandate of the Nigeria Customs Service. The revenue generated thus far reflects the command's commitment to contributing towards the economic stability of our nation".

He pointed out that among other seizures made by the command are 345 (50kg) bags of foreign parboiled rice with DPV of N24,218,000.00; 344 (25 litres) kegs Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) with DPV of N5,728,500.00; four wraps (4 kilograms) of Cannabis Sativa with DPV of N126,000.00, and 1,309 pieces of used tyres with DPV of N70,140,000.00.

Dr Oramalugo gave other contraband seized by the Command as 34 cartons and five bottles of foreign wine with DPV of N6,231,206.00; 40 bottles (five litres) and 21 bottles (one litre) with DPV of N1,760,000.00 and N99,

225.00, respectively. The command also said that it seized 45 sacks and eight sacks/nine bales of used clothing and shoes with DPV of N42,720,000.

Speaking further, he declared that with the emerging economic challenges and increased attempts to compromise the integrity of Nigeria's borders, the command anti-smuggling activities had been strategically positioned to ensure total enforcement of the Federal Government's policy on border closure.

Dr Oramalugo expressed his appreciation to the Comptroller General of Customs, Basir Adeniyi and his management team for supporting the command towards the realisation of enhanced performance and achievement of the core mandate of the service within Oyo and Osun states.



Oyo/Osun Customs Area Comptroller at the Press briefing in Ibadan

OGP Group Raises Concerns Over N4.2 Billion Palliatives for SMEs, Vulnerable Persons In Kaduna

process. We request that partners be responsible and accountable to ensure transparency. We request a mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of the disbursement process.

"We advocate for an update of the Social Register of the State Operations Coordinating Unit (SOCU) to ensure that the right population benefits: with adequate gender inclusion, inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), and indigent members of the state. If there is an existing list of SMEs in the state, we pray that this list be updated to ensure that enterprises that are no longer in existence are taken out to make room for existing potential beneficiaries.

"We call for establishing a real-time feedback mechanism to allow

beneficiaries to report grievances, provide feedback, and seek redress for any issues encountered during the identification, selection and distribution process. This can be achieved through the creation of a platform or an app, (like the Eyes and Ears App), whereby citizens can track implementation, and send complaints or other feedback on the programme. If this is done, the platform can be used as a sustainability tool for subsequent government intervention programmes. This will go a long way in fostering inclusion, transparency, accountability, and responsiveness in aid delivery.

"Transparency in palliative distribution is essential to uphold principles of fairness, equity, and accountability,

thereby improving the economic and financial stability of citizens in the state. These milestones from the social protection commitment, including tracking and disseminating government/partners' spending on Social Protection programs, and monitoring social protection programs and interventions for inclusion, transparency, and accountability, serve as guiding pillars for our advocacy.

"By collaborating to address our concerns and prayers outlined in this position paper, we aim to ensure that interventions reach their intended beneficiaries, thereby fostering public trust in the governance of the state and advancing the well-being of our citizens." The paper stated.

Doctoring Oronsanye's Report Will Be Counterproductive, Ohaneze Youth Warn

*Pledges support to Tinubu-led govt

By: KELVIN OKPARA, Enugu

The apex Igbo socio cultural organization Ohaneze Ndigbo Youth Council Worldwide has warned against any attempt by those it referred to as fifth columnists to doctor the recommendations of the Steven Oronsanye's Report, saying such negative action if allowed will be counter productive

to the nation.

The group said that the directive by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for the implementation of the Oronsaye Report was received with delight by a vast majority of Nigerians, Ohanaeze Ndigbo Youth Council Worldwide inclusive.

A statement of press briefing by the National president of the group, Mazi Okwu Nnabuike

made available to our Correspondent Friday in Enugu ssys: "We have always advocated that the cost of governance be curtailed amid the dwindling economic fortunes of the country.

"However, we are taken aback by a recent doctored report planted by fifth columnists, in which they listed the Project Development Institute, PRODA,

Enugu, as one of the agencies of government to be merged or scrapped.

"We received this with great consternation and shock considering the clear provisions of the Oronsaye Report, as well as the report by the then Secretary to the Government of the Federation, which formed the Government White Paper.

"The SGF report titled:

"RE: RESTRUCTURING & RATIONALISATION OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PARASTATALS, COMMISSIONS AND AGENCIES", clearly provides in Item D that: "The Government accepts the recommendation that: a) NASENI and NCAM be merged but with the exclusion of FIIRO and PRODA."

"With the above, one then wonders the intent and drive of those behind the list being circulated in the media space.

"A little look into history shows that PRODA was a creation of the defunct East Central State Government. It was created through an edict in 1971.

"It was charged with the broad function of generating and catalysing industrialization by carrying out industrial research from the laboratory stage to the pilot plant stage and by rendering consultancy services to the Governments, industries and individuals.

"PRODA is one of the oldest research institutions under the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology.

"When the East Central State was split in 1976, the Federal Government recognized the need not to balkanize PRODA by the emerging states and hence took it over as a Federal Government Research Institute.

"Ever since then, PRODA has evolved under different leaderships, experiencing neglect from one time to the other.

"However, within the last few years, like a human being who miraculously came out of coma, PRODA again became a cynosure of all eyes, with a lot of reforms being initiated to take it back to the glory days.

"Without mincing words, it is clear that the same people who held PRODA down over the years are at it again. This time, they

want to kill it completely for a reason best known to them, but definitely not in national interest.

"Their only interest is that anything associated with Ndigbo must not be allowed to survive. These are people who feel that the civil war has not ended and that anything sited in Igbo land must be emasculated. They profess one Nigeria but their actions show a totally different thing.

"They tend to forget that PRODA is not serving Igboland but the nation, and has been clearly positioned to take research and development to another level.

"Nigeria is a nation that totally depends on importation without producing anything, and this is the bane of the economy. Under such circumstances, an agency like PRODA deserves all the attention and funding it can get.

"We, therefore, warn those doctoring the Oronsaye Report to keep PRODA away from their evil agenda, as any attempt to implement the compromised version would not augur well. Enough of this humiliation and insult to the sensibilities of Ndigbo.

"The Ohanaeze Ndigbo Youth Council gave President Bola Tinubu their total support during the presidential election and would want the president to succeed. However, he should be wary of those planting seeds of discord and working hard to discredit the government.

"We urge Mr President to discard the doctored report and stick with the original version as contained in the SGF's letter, dated April 8, 2014.

The group added "We once more reaffirm our unflinching support to Mr President as he navigates the country out of the present economic crisis. Indeed, this administration shall succeed to the shame of naysayers."



Ambassador Ajadi (left) with Primate Ayodele in a composite photo

NNPP Chieftain Ajadi To Primate Ayodele: Leave Politics To Politicians

*Cautions him over statement On Edo Governorship Election

By: BAYO AKAMO, Ibadan

Chieftain of the New Nigeria People's Party, (NNPP), Ambassador Olufemi Ajadi Oguntoyinbo on Saturday, cautioned the Leader of INRI Evangelical Spiritual Church, Primate Elijah Ayodele over his comment on the coming Edo State governorship poll.

Ambassador Ajadi in a statement, frowned at Primate Ayodele's purported comment on NNPP gubernatorial candidate in Edo State, Azembe Arena that he will not make any significant

success in the September Governorship election.

The NNPP chieftain stressed that he was shocked at the utterances of Primate Ayodele, adding that he should concentrate on his church work and leave politics to politicians or he should drop the garb of evangelism and join politics.

Wondering how Primate Ayodele was concerned about the NNPP candidate, saying, "is that part of his spiritual work? Our candidate has not come to you to solicit for help whether spiritual or financial, while narrowing

down on Azembe.

"Why don't you concentrate on your spiritual work. Why are you dabbling into politics? How much time have you spent in uplifting the spiritual lives of your church members", he said. Ambassador Ajadi added, "Is that what God sent you to tell Nigerians that are suffering under the present government. You will do well to keep to your job as a spiritual person. If you drag yourself into politics, you will be dragged in the mud and you won't have any more respect.

"As a spiritual leader, there are avalanche of works to

do, but you leave that and concentrate on our candidate. How does it concern you, if he loses his money? Did God send you to tell him that? I will also call on members of his church to call him to order. NNPP is a new movement and is daily receiving members from other parties due to its laudable programmes.

"A statement or whatever from the likes of Primate Ayodele will not deter us in bringing succour to the suffering Nigerians starting from Kano and Edo State this year's September.

Representative of Aliko Dangote, Special Adviser Special Projects & Strategy Relations, Hajiya Fatima Wali-Abdulrahman with President of Kaduna Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture (KADCCIMA), Esv. Ishaya Idi among others VIP's during the Dangote Spacial Day at the 45th Kaduna International Trade Fair. **Photo: Bashir Bello Dollars**



3-yr Old Dies, Million Naira Property Consumed In Lagos Inferno

By; RAYMOND TEDUNJAYE, Lagos

It was a sad weekend in Ejiabo area of Lagos as a 3-year old and property estimated at several millions of Naira perished in a fire accident that occurred in the area.

The inferno, according to reports, broke out at No 5, Olorunsogo Street, Ejiabo at about 11.10pm on Saturday, where the boy got burnt completely.

Our correspondent gathered that the fire was caused by a lit candle, which melted in the building containing 10 rooms.

The spokesperson of the Lagos State Police Command SP Benjamin Hundeyin while confirming the incident said the fire was put out by a team of firefighters.

He disclosed that the corpse of the deceased was taken away by men of the Lagos State Ambulance service, while the area is being monitored and put under control by police operatives.

"It was reported that the fire was caused by a candle that was lit which later melted in one of the rooms. The room caught fire and it spread to the other 10 rooms in the compound. as



The affected property

a result of the fire, One child named Micheal 'M' 3 years old son of one Ayo 'M' got burnt completely.

" Also properties worth millions got burnt in the inferno. a combined team

of police officers from the division, fire fighters and lagos state ambulance services visited the scene and the fire was later put out by the firefighters.

" The remains of the boy

were taken away by the Lagos Ambulance Service. The area is being monitored while situation is under control. Investigation is ongoing."

Adamawa Records Lassa Fever Case

By; TINA PHINEAS, Yola

The Adamawa State Ministry of Health and Human Services, has confirmed an outbreak of "Lassa Fever" in the state after an NYSC member from Damare Orientation Camp tested positive.

A statement signed by the Permanent Secretary in the ministry, Pharm Zirra, Mathias Bubanani said the confirmation followed the release of an investigation on a sample taken from her by the National Reference Laboratory (NRL) Abuja, when she was suspected to have presented symptoms similar to that of the fever (Lassa) by health workers in Modibbo Adama University Teaching Hospital, Yola.

The statement called on the general public not to

panic, but to take precautionary measures by adhering to personal hygiene as the Fintiri administration in collaboration with all state domiciled health facilities and agencies, NGOs and partners are working hard to prevent the spread of the disease.

" while contact tracing/isolations are going on, the general public are hereby advised to take necessary precautions by adhering to ensure good hygiene and sanitation habits, avoid unnecessary contacts, proper storage of left over foods and food items in order to prevent rats infestation, report to Health officers in your community those suspected to have manifested symptoms similar to those of Lassa

BUK Ranks 5th Best Institution After 2024 Universities Assessment - Vice Chancellor

**Graduates 11,284*

By; JABIRU A. HASSAN, Kano

The Vice Chancellor, Bayero University Kano has announced that the institution is ranked number five after the 2024 universities assessment and ranked second in terms of international outlook. He disclosed this at the 38th convocation on Saturday, where the university graduated 11,284 in 18 faculties, reassuring that the institution would continue to maintain status quo with optimum results.

During the ceremony, 180 students received

first class honours, and conferred higher degrees and post graduate diplomas on 5,432 graduands who completed their studies at the university.

The convocation was graced by the Minister of Education, Professor Tahir Mamman, the Senate President, Godswil Akphabio, while the deputy Senate President, Senator Barau I. Jibrin and the president of the African Development Bank, Akinwumi Adesina were conferred with Doctorate degrees for their contributions to the development of education.

Minister Says 92m Nigerians Lack Access To Electricity

By; AMOS TAUNA, Kaduna

The Federal Government, on Friday, said that about 92 million Nigerians lack access to electricity from the national grid.

The Minister of Power, Chief Adebayo Adedun, made the disclosure at the closing ceremony of the 7th Nigeria International Energy Summit in Abuja. Experts and industry players energy, described the poor generation and supplies between 3,000 and 4,000 megawatts of grid electricity to over 200 million citizens across the country, as not acceptable. The Minister explained that though adequate access to energy by

citizens had been a challenge globally, about 40 per cent of people in Nigeria were currently affected.

He noted that access to electricity is undeniably a fundamental requirement for socio-economic development, saying that it is a pleasure to see so many dedicated individuals and experts gathered in the hall to discuss strategies and solutions for bridging energy access gap.

In recent years, he explained that significant progress has been made globally in improving access to electricity, stressing that a substantial portion of the world population still face challenges in obtaining reliable and affordable

electricity.

He added, "Here in Nigeria it is estimated that a whopping 92 million people are still suffering from energy poverty, which is over 40 per cent of our estimated population." He called for cooperation by stakeholders to tackle the challenge, as the government alone would not be able to handle the situation, adding that it is the collective responsibility to address this issue, as it has far reaching implications for poverty alleviation, healthcare, education and overall improvement in the quality of lives including the reduction of youth unemployment in the society.

According to him,

electricity from the national grid may not get to every remote area, saying that such locations could be served with power from renewable energy sources.

He urged stakeholders to work together to bridge the energy access gap by ensuring that electricity becomes a reality for all irrespective of our geographical location or socio-economic status.

He appealed to Nigerians to exercise patience with the Federal Government, stressing that they (Nigerians) must give them time to address these issues, so that they can achieve an enduring and sustainable energy.

Zulum Launches Rep Talba's Palliatives To 1,500 Constituents

By: SADIQABUBAKAR, Maiduguri

Borno State Governor, Babagana Umara Zulum, has launched a distribution of palliatives provided by the member representing Marte, Monguno and Nganzai at the House of Representatives, Engr Bukar Talba, yesterday.

Governor Zulum who is on the entourage of Mr President to Qatar was represented by the Deputy Governor, Umar Usman

Kadafur, at the occasion.

Over 1,500 constituents from three local government areas of Marte, Monguno, and Nganzai benefited from the distribution which took place at the state mechanical workshop.

Each of the three local government councils has 500 people that received a bag of rice, a bag of maize and N20,000 cash.

Speaking at the occasion, Governor

Zulum commended the lawmaker for his effort in alleviating the suffering of the people in his constituency.

Delivering his address, Engr Bukar Talba expressed his gratitude to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Vice President Kashim Shettima and Governor Babagana Umara Zulum for being role models and for providing the leadership required for the development of the country.

In their separate remarks, Borno State

APC chairman, Bello Ayuba, and the senator representing northern Borno, Barrister Mohammed Tahir Monguno, described the lawmaker's gesture as unprecedented.

Secretary to Borno State Government, Hon. Bukar Tijjani, Head of Service, Barrister Mallam Fannami, members of the House of Assembly, state commissioners and many top government officials attended the occasion.



Kaduna Dep Gov Attends Nzem Berom Cultural Festival

By: FUNMIADERINTO, Kaduna

The Deputy Governor of Kaduna State, Dr. Hadiza Sabuwa Balarabe, at the weekend, attended the 2024 Nzem Berom Cultural Festival Aboro in Sanga Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

There were displays of cultural dances and heritages at the festival, and a special Berom traditional recognition for the Deputy Governor of Kaduna State.

In attendance were representative of the Deputy Governor of Plateau State, Ngo Josephine Chungdum Piyo, Commissioner Human services and Social Development Custodian of Creative Arts & Culture Kaduna State, Mrs. Rabi Salisu, Commissioner of Kafanchan Municipal Authority, Mrs. Phoebe Sukai and Commissioner of Business Innovation and Technology, Mrs. Patience Fakai.

Also spotted, were, Commissioner of Human Services and Social Development, Mrs Rabi Salusi; Executive Secretary, Audit Service Board, Alh. Mohammed Bashir Umar; traditional rulers and title holders from Kaduna and Plateau States; Special Adviser to the Governor of Kaduna State on Chieftaincy Matters, Alh. Mukhtar Ibrahim, Jarman Zazzau and many other public officers.



Thousands Of Opposition Parties Members Decamp To APC In Ebonyi

By; M K P U M A
ENYINNA, Abakaliki

Thousands of All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), Labour Party (LP) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) members in Umuezeoka Community, Ezza North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, at the weekend, defected to the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) in the state.

Members of opposition parties in the state have been defecting to the APC

since after the Supreme Court judgement, which affirmed the election of Governor Francis Nwifuru.

In the momentous occasion, Dr. Okulegu Bethran Enyim, former Chairman of the Ebonyi State Secondary Education Board and the immediate past Director-General of the 2023 PDP Campaign Council in Ezza North LGA, led over two thousand persons, belonging to his formidable team from Umuezeoka ward to join

the ranks of the All Progressive Congress (APC).

Receiving the decampees, the state party chairman, Chief Okoro Emeagha, who welcomed Dr. Okulegu into the APC fold among others, assured them of the party's commitment to accommodating all Ebonyi people under Governor Nwifuru's leadership, emphasizing the governor's dedication to the welfare of Ebonyi citizens.

The event also saw the

inclusion of prominent members of Dr. Okulegu's 'Fire Team' into the APC, including Aloysius Nweke (Ogbanshiege) and Sunday Otubo, among others, marking a significant shift in Ebonyi politics.

He opined that the interest of the governor is to unite and develop the state and that he needs everybody to work together as partners in progress.

He assured the defectors of equal attention in the scheme of things like old members.



Jessica Bartholomew Executive Secretary CS-SUNN

CS-SUNN Calls On Gombe Govt To Extend Maternity Leave For Nursing Mothers To Six Months

By; ABUBAKAR RABILU, Gombe

A Non governmental organization, non-profit-making coalition that is dedicated to transforming Nigeria into a country where every citizen enjoys food security and nutrition, the Civil Society Scaling up Nutrition in Nigeria (CS-SUNN) in collaboration with UNICEF has called on the Gombe State Government to extend maternity leave.

The call was made during a media round table meeting on the increased investment in nutrition to scale-up quality nutrition services' project.

The executive secretary CS-SUNN, Jessica Bartholomew suggested the establishment of nutrition departments in all the ministries, department and agencies, and advocated for timely release of funds as that will assist them in implementing their activities in Gombe State.

She added that the consequences of malnutrition are far-reaching, affecting the health and development of individuals, communities and the nation at large.

She also said stunting in particular, is linked to adverse outcomes such as poor brain and cognitive development, diminished educational attainment, and reduced productivity in adulthood.

According to her, the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS 2018) shows that 51.2% of children under five are stunted, 30.4 % underweight, and 7.8 % wasted in Gombe State.

She said that these figures are not just numbers, adding that they represent the lives of Nigerian children and underscore the urgency for concerted efforts to address malnutrition.

She therefore, said the absence of dedicated nutrition departments in the state further deepens this challenge, resulting in a decentralization of leadership and responsibility for policies, planning, programming, advocacy, and monitoring related to nutrition across various sectors.

In addition, the conducive environment for safeguarding maternity protection and entitlements, essential for nurturing and enriching breastfeeding practices, encounters challenges.

She added that the CS-SUNN stresses the critical need to reinforce efforts towards ensuring that every infant in Gombe can enjoy healthier and more prosperous lives. Attaining this objective requires the implementation of maternity entitlements, including a six-month paid maternity leave, and the creation of workplace childcare facilities.

In the face of these challenges, CS-SUNN is implementing the 'Increased Investment to Scale-Up Quality Nutrition Services' project in Gombe State. In collaboration with UNICEF, this inaugural media roundtable hosted by the Gombe State Chapter of CS-SUNN highlights the critical need for increased investments, timely releases and effective utilization of allocated funds for nutrition programming in Gombe.

Saying that the project further seeks to advocate for the extension of paid maternity leave from four to six months.

The NGO also tasked the media on effective and heightened reporting of nutrition issues to stimulate policy and decision makers to take action towards curbing malnutrition in Gombe. "We will continually equip the media with relevant information for thorough and

Miyetti Allah To Tinubu: Order Arrest Of Igboho Over Yoruba Nation Agitation, Threat To Fulani

By; BAYO AKAMO, Ibadan

The Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) at the weekend, asked President Bola Tinubu to order the arrest of Chief Sunday Adeyemo Igboho for allegedly agitating for a Yoruba nation.

Miyetti Allah in a statement by its National President, Baba Othman Ngelzarma stressed that

the Yoruba Nation agitator should be subjected to same legal prosecution as Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra, (IPOB).

"We call on the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (GCFR) and relevant security agencies to arrest and prosecute Sunday Igboho for making this unlawful

statement that amounts to treason because he is asking for the actualisation of Oduduwa nation", he said.

Miyetti Allah National President added, "His statements are unlawful. If Nnamdi Kanu will be held behind bars for a similar offence, we see no reason why Sunday Igboho will be allowed to go scot-free without being arrested and prosecuted."

Baba Othman Ngelzarma

in the statement quoted Chief Adeyemo Igboho of saying "This is our domain. We should save ourselves from Fulani. We should put security in all Yoruba land. We did not need to wait for anybody including the government. If we really mean business, we should not wait for the government or else Fulani will carry all our lands. We should be united. Which farms do we have again in Yoruba land? Can we go to farm now?"

Guaranteeing Quality Assurance In Education, Gov Umo Eno Perspective

By PATRICK TITUS

Education is known globally to be the bedrock of any society; the most cherished legacy to bequeath on a people and the main determinant of a society's collective future. No doubt, the new economy today is the knowledge economy.

It is the best antidote to poverty, unemployment, superstition and other manifestations of the underdevelopment.

In Akwa Ibom State, like in other states in Nigeria, various administrations have made efforts to address the teething challenges facing public education system, so as to change the narrative where it is perceived that, the worst private school is better than the best public school. This perception may be true in spite of governments' huge investments such as regular payment of teachers who are all professionals unlike in some private schools, where the numbers of teachers employed are untrained.

The perception thus, makes learning in private schools most sought after by the well-to-do class in the society for their children education, while the other class send their children to public schools because they cannot afford the cost.

Findings revealed that despite government investments such as regular payment of teachers salary and other incentives, as in the case of Akwa Ibom State, where government provides free and compulsory education from primary to secondary school levels, pays subvention to schools' heads for the running of the schools, and yearly payment of WAEC enrollment fees, most of these schools still don't worth the salt due to lack of effective supervision and monitoring, quality control and assurance as well as the political will of ensuring that the system meets the need.

Former governor of the state, His Excellency, Obong Victor Attah once said, "Education in Nigeria and in all the states is either without a purpose or only designed, as in colonial times, to produce people to meet job needs in the economy. Educational plans either do not exist or are not followed at all. Thus, although

education at the primary level is supposed to be universal and free, the reality is a different matter."

Giving thought to these contexts, his avowed commitment and determination to make the difference and change the narrative in the education system in Akwa Ibom State as a critical sector and the pivotal role it will play in his vision to pilot the State into a Golden Era, that the Governor, His Excellency, Pastor Umo Eno entered into a social contract with Akwa Ibomites when he assumed office as the 5th democratically elected governor of the state, and the 9th after creation.

On July 24, 2023 at Ibom Icon Hotel & Golf Resorts, Uyo, during the Akwa Ibom Dialogue and formal launch of The ARISE Agenda, Governor Eno in his 27 paragraphs' speech, declared his administration commitment to rejig the education sector and make it worth its salt. This, he said, "We shall build model schools, remodel dilapidated school structures, prioritize training and the retraining of teachers, promote improved learning standards, and privatize vocational and technical education."

The ARISE Agenda is a detailed and well-articulated governance document, an economic blueprint of Gov Umo Eno. Recall during the launch, the former Minister of Budget and National Planning- Distinguished Senator Udoma Udo Udoma was the Chairman on the occasion. Other policy experts who were invited, lent their expertise in distilling and deepening the layers of the document.

Gov Eno governance charter and commitment to reposition the education sector in the state for excellence according to him, is to give Akwa Ibom students what they need to compete favourably with their contemporaries within and outside Nigeria. This implies that his administration will put in place a new school system that will raise global leaders of tomorrow in public administration, science and technology.

A system that will among others, inculcate learning and skills that will promote productive citizenship, economic well-being and technical consciousness, and to strengthen the self-identity of the



indigenes of the state, their self worth and pride in a competitive federation and the world at large.

To set the ball rolling, the Governor initiated an idea and moved in to build 10 model primary schools, one in each of the 10 ten federal constituencies that constitute Akwa Ibom State. Uyo federal constituency was picked for the pilot scheme with the age-long Christ The King Primary School located on Wellington Bassey being favoured. It is now called remodeled Christ The King Primary School.

Wearing the look of the master edifices in the heart of Uyo, the school has 20 class rooms, teachers quarters, head master's office with conference hall, staff room, general hall, library, solar power system to ensure constant electricity supply, borehole with overhead tank, two playgrounds (one for pupils below four years, another for older ones) and clinic

among other facilities.

While it is now ready for inauguration within few days, remodeling works ongoing in selected primary schools in the remaining nine federal constituencies. This again, is heartwarming to the people of the state as it will provide a serene learning environment for our tomorrow's leaders, better incentives as the state government has also procured school uniforms to be distributed to own primary schools across the state.

With such best possible learning environment, and new way of teachers motivation, it is expected that increase in the enrollment of pupils in public primary schools will increase.

At the secondary schools level, the state government had signed pact with London Borough of Southwark, United Kingdom to commence exchange programmes in education with 31 students selected from public secondary schools across the 31 local government areas of the state already examine to travel to UK for the programme. To join in the oversee training are some principals selected from public schools in the state

According the State's Commissioner for Information, Comrade Ini Ememobong, the partnership between Akwa Ibom state and the Borough of Southwark is aimed at providing new opportunities for people of both spaces in different sectors.

The two governments entered into the partnership when Akwa Ibom State Governor, Pastor Umo Eno, played host to a delegation from the Southwark Council, led by the Mayor, Mr. Michael Situ at Government House, Uyo.

The delegation were in the State to finalize arrangements for the exchange programme and other mutually beneficial ventures in areas of education, business, sports and tourism.

Welcoming the Mayor and his entourage to the State, Governor described Situ's visit as a demonstration of integrity and commitment to the exchange deal and



To be continued

Navy Intercepts Ghanaian Vessel Over Alleged Crude Oil Theft

***Arrests 13 crew members, Ghanaian, 12 Nigerians**

By; RAYMOND TEDUNJAYE, Lagos

Officers of the Nigerian Navy Ship (NNS) Beecroft under the strategic leadership of Commodore Kolawole Olumide Oguntuga and Maritime Component Commander Operation AWATSE have intercepted a Ghanaian vessel loaded with crude oil suspected to be stolen product.

Thirteen crew members, a Ghanaian and 12 Nigerians were said to be on board the ship named Motor Tanker Sweet MIRI at the time of the interception.

The Base Information Officer NNS BEECROFT Lieutenant Hussaini Ibrahim made the disclosure in a statement over the weekend.

The Flag Officer Commanding (FOC), Western Naval Command, Rear Admiral MB Hassan stated that the vessel has been a vessel of interest to the Nigerian Navy and she is being arrested on suspicion of crude oil theft.

According to the statement, the Flag Officer Commanding (FOC), Western Naval Command, Rear Admiral MB

Hassan stated that the vessel has been a vessel of interest to the Nigerian Navy and she is being arrested on suspicion of crude oil theft.

This, he said necessitated the deployment of Nigerian Navy Ship ABA to investigate the vessel adding that subsequently, she was found carrying products suspected to be crude oil.

"Thereafter, NNS SOKOTO

was deployed to double up the search and interdict the vessel. On arrival, it was discovered that she was carrying about 2 million liters of suspected product without approval," said.

The FOC further disclosed that, in line with the directive of Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS), Vice Admiral EI Ogalla, the ship is opened for other agencies to



The arrested vessel

come and take samples and carry out their own independent investigations to find out the culpability of the vessel.

The FOC also said that the vessel is owned by a Ghanaian and registered in Ghana by a Ghanaian company.

He added that, on 25 February 2024, the vessel was observed to have switched off its Automatic

Identification System to avoid detection. The vessel was arrested 174 nautical miles of the coast of Nigeria, approximately 320 kilometers, heading to Benin in the same vein, while giving update on the earlier arrested Motor Tanker VINNALARIS, the FOC said that, the CNS has instructed that the investigations of all arrested vessels should be

conducted beyond the level of crew.

In this regard, the FOC has extended the investigation to uncover the kingpins.

He finally appreciated the efforts of DSS for assisting the Nigerian Navy in conducting investigations when matters of crude oil theft are brought to them.

Kaduna Citizens Forum Condemns Coup Rumours, Solicits Support For Tinubu, CDS

By; EMMANUELAGBO, Kaduna

Civil Society Groups under the auspices of Kaduna Citizens Forum, (KCF) has called on Nigerians to rally support for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's led administration and the Chief of Defence Staff, General Christopher Musa.

The Convener, Director Privilege Magazine and Communications, Victor Bobai, Northwest Coordinator, Nigeria Youth Project, Nuhu Suleiman Makarfi, Market Women Rep, Mama Mai Shinkafa Kawo, Student's Union, Halima Mohammed and KCF stakeholder, Hussein Modibo Kachia, made the call in a world press conference held in Kaduna on Saturday, said National unity must be prioritized against ethnic, religious and regional sentiments.

It would be recalled that the Nigerian Army earlier this week, denied claims of a coup plot, urged the public to disregard the information as false and untrue.

Addressing newsmen on what the group tagged, "issues of serious concern," the group demanded a more transparent, accountable, and efficient operations from government at all levels, stressing that it is doorway to the building of public trust that can lead to sustainable growth and development, in a more robust economy.



The group which stressed that coup d'etat is never an option, reiterated that they have carefully examined the activities of General Christopher Musa, as Chief of Defense Staff and can confidently affirmed that he is doing everything humanly possible in ensuring the security and protection of Nigeria and its neighboring West African states.

"In recent times, there have been rumblings of discontent and calls for coup d'etat or war in our beloved country. We stand here today to firmly denounce such calls and urge all Nigerians to unite around their President and constituted authorities.

"In response to the insidious attempts to undermine General Musa's leadership, we are pleased to announce that public opinion

polls will be conducted across Nigeria. These surveys aim to gauge the confidence of the population in the men and women of the Nigeria Armed Forces for their dedication and hard work in defending the unity of our country.

"We must prioritize national unity and work towards fostering harmony among all ethnic, religious, and regional groups within our diverse nation. It is also crucial to promote inclusivity and create an environment where all citizens feel valued and have equal opportunities to contribute to the development of our country. Upholding the rule of law is equally essential for ensuring justice, protecting the rights of citizens, and maintaining a fair and just society.

"President Tinubu, Governor Uba Sani, and General Christopher Musa are all dedicated to implementing positive reforms that will rebuild and strengthen Nigeria as a nation. Supporting them means supporting a brighter future for all Nigerians.

"Governor Uba Sani has shown great leadership and inclusiveness in his governance of Kaduna state, and supporting him means supporting good governance and excellence in service delivery. It is important for Kaduna residents to rally behind him for continued progress and development in the state." KCF said.

Shettima Visits Buhari In Daura, Katsina, Pays Homage To Emirs

*Assures insecurity would soon be over

By: SULAIMAN AHMED MISAU, Katsina

Vice President Kashim Shettima was in Daura for a private visit to the former President Muhammadu Buhari where they held a meeting behind closed doors for about an hour.

Vice President Shettima told Journalists immediately after the meeting that, he was in Daura to pay homage to the former President and discuss some issues of

Paramount importance.

Shettima who arrived Umaru Musa Yar'adua International Airport onboard a Presidential Jet (Nigerian Air Force) at noon, was received by Governor Dikko Umar Radda, his Deputy Honourable Faruk Lawal, Speaker State House of Assembly, Honourable Nasiru Yahya Daura, Chief of Staff to the Governor, APC Chairman, Members of the State Executive Council and politicians.

On arrival at the airport, the Vice

President was accompanied to Daura by Governor Radda and his Deputy Honourable Jobe.

However, Vice President Shettima disclosed that, the "Federal Government is also aware of the security challenges being faced not only in Katsina and efforts are being made to bring sanity and get rid of the problem."

The Vice President later paid homage to the Emir of Daura Alhaji Faruq Umar Faruq and that of Katsina Alhaji

Abdulummini Kabir Usman.

The Vice President was in company of some Ministers and notably Personalities with includes:- Minister of Budget and economic planning, Alhaji Atiku Bagudu, his agriculture counterpart alongside the Deputy Chief of Staff to the President, Office of the Vice President and the renowned politician and former Governor of Imo State, Rochas Okorocha among others.



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Aaron Bushnell: No Sacrifice Greater Than Laying Down His Life

By Owei Lakemfa

JUST 25. I mean Aaron Bushnell, a soldier of humanity. Inside his United States Air Force uniform, he wore the conscience of sacrifice for a people he may never have met. He was trained by the most powerful military in the world to obey the last order. But he was not going to obey the order of the US Commander-in-Chief, President Joe Biden, an elderly grandfather making excuses for the continuous massacre of Palestinian babies and children, even in hospitals where they seek medical care. As a principled soldier, the last order Bushnell was willing to obey, was that of his conscience.

I had thought that after colonial Germany, from 1904 to 1907, wiped out half of the Namibian people; the Turks between 1915 and 1923 exterminated 1.5 Armenians; Hitlerite Germany, exterminated six million Jews; Belgium under Leopold II massacred 15 million Congolese; and the 1994 Rwandan genocide, humanity would never again allow genocide. But with one going on today in the Palestine, I am convinced that a large section of humankind has lost its soul.

He was not going to sit by, watching genocide visited on a people, not by aliens, but by their neighbours whose past knew genocide. He was not going to be part of an establishment which at every turn and corner, blocked the urgent ceasefire, necessary to save tens of thousands of lives. As a soldier, he knew that unless decisive steps are taken, these figures would easily climb to hundreds of thousands sent to avoidable early graves.

What greater love can a human have than to sacrifice his life for others? On Sunday, February 25, 2024, at approximately 12:58pm local time, the Development Operations engineer of the United States Air Force, donned the uniform of his service and walked smartly to the Israeli Embassy. As he did so, he said: "...Aaron Bushnell, I am an active duty member of the United States Air Force. And I will no longer be complicit in genocide. I am about to engage in an extreme act of protest but compared to what people have been experiencing in Palestine, in the hands of their colonisers, is not extreme at all. This is what our ruling class has decided will be normal."

When he got to the embassy gates, he doused himself in inflammable liquid and set himself ablaze, shouting continuously: "Free Palestine! Free Palestine!! Free Palestine!!!"

As a first responder security man tried

to put off the flames, rather than help, an obvious secret service agent, merely trained his gun at the burning Bushnell. This prompted the former to shout: "I don't need guns, I need fire extinguisher!" In this brief moment, we see two species of human beings: a conscientious one, intent on saving life, and a conscienceless secret service agent ready to shoot a dying man engulfed in flames.

The flames that extinguished the life of young Bushnell were in the United States, but they were seen all over the world. They were flames of love for humanity. It was a symbolic act, but worth far more than the combined rhetoric of those sitting in the White House, Downing Street, Elysee Palace, Bellevue Palace or the comfortable chambers of the United Nations.

Amongst those who remain human, is Netherlands Deputy Ambassador, Angelique Eijpe. She, after 21 years in service, including in Gaza, resigned in protest against the Dutch government's support for the genocide in the Palestine. She tried to dialogue with government officials under Prime Minister Mark Rutte, but failed. She participated in weekly sit-ins by civil servants of the Foreign Affairs Ministry, expressing dissent against the government's policies in the Palestine. But little or nothing was achieved. So, Eijpe decided to resign.

I will not put it past people who have lost their humanity, to claim that Bushnell was a psychiatric case. Such persons cannot understand how a person could sacrifice his life this way. Their Biblical progenitors would have blamed Jesus Christ for needlessly losing his life for the helpless and defenceless, and standing up against the Israeli establishment.

This explains why US Secret Service Spokesperson, Joe Routh, told the press that the security services responded to what appeared as "an individual that was experiencing a possible medical/mental health emergency". But it was not Bushnell that was in a mental health emergency, it is the millions of human beings that stand by watching genocide perpetrated before their very eyes.

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half of the Namibian people; the Turks between 1915 and 1923 exterminated 1.5 Armenians; Hitlerite Germany, exterminated six million Jews; Belgium under Leopold II massacred 15 million Congolese; and the 1994 Rwandan genocide, humanity would never again allow genocide. But with one going on today in the Palestine, I am convinced that a large section of humankind has lost its soul.

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Bushnell's sacrifice reminds me of that by John Brown, who on Sunday, October 16, 1859, decided to strike a blow for enslaved Black peoples who were regarded as no higher than mules. Brown lost his two sons in that battle while he himself was captured.

She said of her resignation letter: "I wrote about the moral standing we have lost in the Netherlands. For example, the government has refused to define what's going on as war crimes or potential war crimes. We have abstained twice in the UN General Assembly where it comes to voting for a cease-fire. We are here in The Hague, the capital of peace and justice, and our credibility has really suffered an extreme blow. Some civil servants in the US and Europe are taking a stand against their governments' support for

Israel's war in Gaza. Several have resigned because they no longer feel able to implement government policies they disagree with."

One of the most courageous steps taken by a country to stop this genocide was that by South Africa under President Cyril Ramaphosa. Where the Apartheid Zionists in Israel were being protected by the US and some European countries, South Africa dragged a yelling Israel to the International Court of Justice. The international court in January 2024 gave an interim ruling ordering Israel to stop its acts of genocide, including the wilful destruction of hospitals and homes, and allow humanitarian assistance to be provided the civil populace. But like an international outlaw protected by a powerful mafia, Israel has continued to ignore the ruling and common sense.

Bushnell's sacrifice reminds me of that by John Brown, who on Sunday, October 16, 1859, decided to strike a blow for enslaved Black peoples who were regarded as no higher than mules. Brown lost his two sons in that battle while he himself was captured.

The seriously injured Brown was brought to court in a stretcher and sentenced within one week. But he scored a moral victory over the lynch mob that tried him and the establishment that put them in place. On being sentenced to death, he told the court: "I see a book kissed here which is the Bible, and which teaches me all things; that I would have men do unto me, so must I do unto them. I endeavoured to act up to that instruction. I fought for the poor; and I say I was right." History proved the saintly John Brown right. That same history, will prove Aaron Bushnell right.

May his soul rest in power.

Culled from National Record.

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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
1" x 1 Col	6,072.00	455.40	6,527.40	4,083.42	306.26	4,389.68

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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 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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	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

Mr President, Salary Hike Won't Resolve The Present Hunger

By: HASSAN GIMBA

These days, the words dominating the air are “hunger” and “protest”. And that, we are told, is because of two others – “dollar” and “salary”. Unfortunately, those capitalising on the latter two words to push for the first two words hardly mention the words “production” and “security” which are fuelled by justice and fairness. And there can be no justice without the rule of law.

I suspect some behind-the-scenes push regarding cries of hunger and a subtle mobilisation for protests that would engulf the entire country. While not discounting the fact that there is massive hunger in town, it is not entirely true that this government caused it.

We grew up regaled with stories of hunger or famine hitting the lands that some people dug into the underground storage of ants to salvage grains. Or people eating wild leaves or even raw calabash plants. Yet there were no protests.

Under the Shehu Shagari administration, the powerful Umaru Dikko, minister of transport, and chairman of the Committee on Rice Importation, once told us when confronted by “cries” of hunger that there was no hunger in Nigeria “because no one was yet eating from the dustbin”, and that Nigerians ought to be grateful as the government was paying salaries without borrowing. There was no protest, either.

I still recall a viral audio of a renowned Sheikh, Malam Qalarawi, complaining in the 80s that the dead were better than the living because the cost of petrol was ₦3 (yes, three naira) and torchlight battery formerly 80 kobo was somewhere around ₦1. And he threw in a puncher: “Ga basir”, meaning people suffering from haemorrhoids. Who does not have it now? Yet, there were no protests.

We have had periods when even essential commodities were proportioned and rationed and people flogged while struggling for their share, yet there were no protests.

To be honest, there has never been a time in our history when there was no hunger. Perhaps the exceptions were that there were some positive factors in the society that made the hunger and deprivation of yesteryears more tolerable.

In the first place, no hope was misplaced because hard work paid off.

People were educated almost free and health care delivery was functional and affordable. Crime was something read about and people felt secure while the judiciary was a sanctuary for the justice seeker.

Everyone was hopeful that their tomorrow would be better because they had seen those before them getting fair treatment and getting their just rewards.

But even then, Nigeria was a prosperous nation that was on the march to self-dependency. There were hydro basins scattered around that encouraged dry season farming while our farmers, even though predominantly subsistence farmers, were not short of fertiliser supply and other related Agro-allied inputs. Because of the robust and unhindered agricultural activities in the north, there was an abundance of groundnut, grains, cotton, livestock, etc. and these fed many industries in the food, cosmetics and textile industries.

We had rubber and cocoa plantations that served a lot of local and international manufacturers in the automobile and confectionery industry. There was coal and many others as well.

Now, most of the basins in the north are relics, the livestock are still being walked hundreds of kilometres for pasture, while insecurity has driven our farmers away from tilling the soil.

When Nigeria was facing some economic hiccups, the government of General Olusegun Obasanjo cut down the cost of governance drastically. A leader cannot be talking about improving the economy of his country while taking billions outside its shores to shore up foreign businesses to the detriment of hungry, jobless citizens back home. Among the measures Obasanjo took was the state policy of adopting assembled in Nigeria vehicles, the Peugeot.

In 1972, when the Udoji Commission recommended, among others, a Unified Grading and Salary Structure (UGSS) which embraced all posts in the Civil Service from the lowest to the highest, the naira was stronger than the dollar at about ₦60/\$100. The commission increased the annual minimum wage from ₦312 to ₦720 (from ₦26 to ₦60). ₦720 was the equivalent of \$1200.

As of the time of writing this, \$100 was over ₦150,000! \$1200 will be about ₦1,800,000. What this means is that the Udoji Commission's



Hassan Gimba

*Monday
Column*

minimum wage of ₦60 (\$100 then) had more purchasing power than today's minimum wage of ₦30,000 (\$20 now). Then, just imagine \$100 as a basic monthly salary today! That's ₦150,000.

I have said it before and I will repeat it now: ₦1 million as minimum wage will help no one as long as the naira is weak. Period.

What we need now is not a salary increase, but the strengthening of our currency. Take the case of China. As of January 17, 2024, Shanghai had the highest monthly minimum wage among 31 provinces, with \$370 per month. Germany had €1,584.00 per month as of June 2020. Spain, as of June 2019, had €1,050, Poland €523.09 and Belgium €1,593.81.

And these are countries that are richer than us and have higher GDP.

Now cast your mind back to when the naira was at par with the dollar and assume our minimum wage of ₦30,000 is \$30,000 taking ₦100 to be equal to \$100. Don't you think that is

more than enough?

To print more money just to pay civil servants will no doubt cause inflation, or even hyperinflation, as with Germany after World War II or what we saw in Venezuela and Zimbabwe. The salary gain would be so rubbished that the entire country would regret the increase for less than one per cent of the population.

The best way out is for public service salaries to be uniform, cost governance to be drastically reduced, and for Nigeria to start producing what it eats, wears and drives. And there is no better time to start than now and no better people to start than those running the country.

Then there must be fairness and justice. And security of life, property and investments.

With these in place, Nigeria will leapfrog many countries it is now looking up to.

Hassan Gimba is the Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of Neptune Prime.

Nigerians, Where Is The Outrage?

By Jibrin Ibrahim

I HAVE said this before, one of my greatest fears about the future of Nigeria is our collective loss of the capacity for anger. The political class knows it, they can do what they want and get away with it because we simply note what they are doing, grumble and continue our daily hustle for survival.

It was the Cameroonian author, Prof Celestin Monga, who reminded us in his book, *The Anthropology of Anger: Civil Society and Democracy in Africa*, that the capacity of civil society and citizens in Africa to advance the democratisation agenda of their countries is a function of their ability to express outrage at the destruction of their societies and its assets by selfish ruling classes.

Today, Nigeria is in misery, suffering from a terrible cost of living crisis similar to the one experienced in 1945/1946, and all that happened is a one-day strike to make speeches about promises not kept. The second day of the protest was cancelled because the labour unions were afraid government could get angry and deal with them. That's our lot, we have lost the capacity to really get angry at those messing us up.

The nouns that define how we feel are important indications of our capacity to act. Anger, rage, fury, ire, wrath, resentment and indignation are vital elements in creating human agency and carrying out a real transformation agenda.

Fury denotes our marked displeasure at a particular situation and demonstrates we have not given up and substituted passive sadness for anger. Every week, Nigerians are inundated with news stories about massive corruption and bad governance. The least we can do is show our indignation at how our rulers are ruining our country.

Following the end of the Second World War, the anger of Nigerians at British misrule boiled. Nigeria had a leadership that could channel the anger. Herbert Macaulay, Michael Imoudu and Nnamdi Azikiwe organised a national strike in 1945 and in 1946, toured 153 communities to get the popular mandate to end colonial rule and use Nigerian resources for Nigerian development.

In Kano, Ibadan, Enugu and Lagos, tens of thousands of Nigerians turned up in the "cost of living" demonstrations and the death knell of colonialism was sounded. Herbert Macaulay, the 82-year-old "angry nationalist", died on his way back from

the Kano rally. The British authorities, seeing the anger of the people, were forced to stop making the claims that the nationalist leaders were talking for the elite and not for the masses.

Today, Nigeria is in misery, suffering from a terrible cost of living crisis similar to the one experienced in 1945/1946, and all that happened is a one-day strike to make speeches about promises not kept. The second day of the protest was cancelled because the labour unions were afraid government could get angry and deal with them. That's our lot, we have lost the capacity to really get angry at those messing us up.

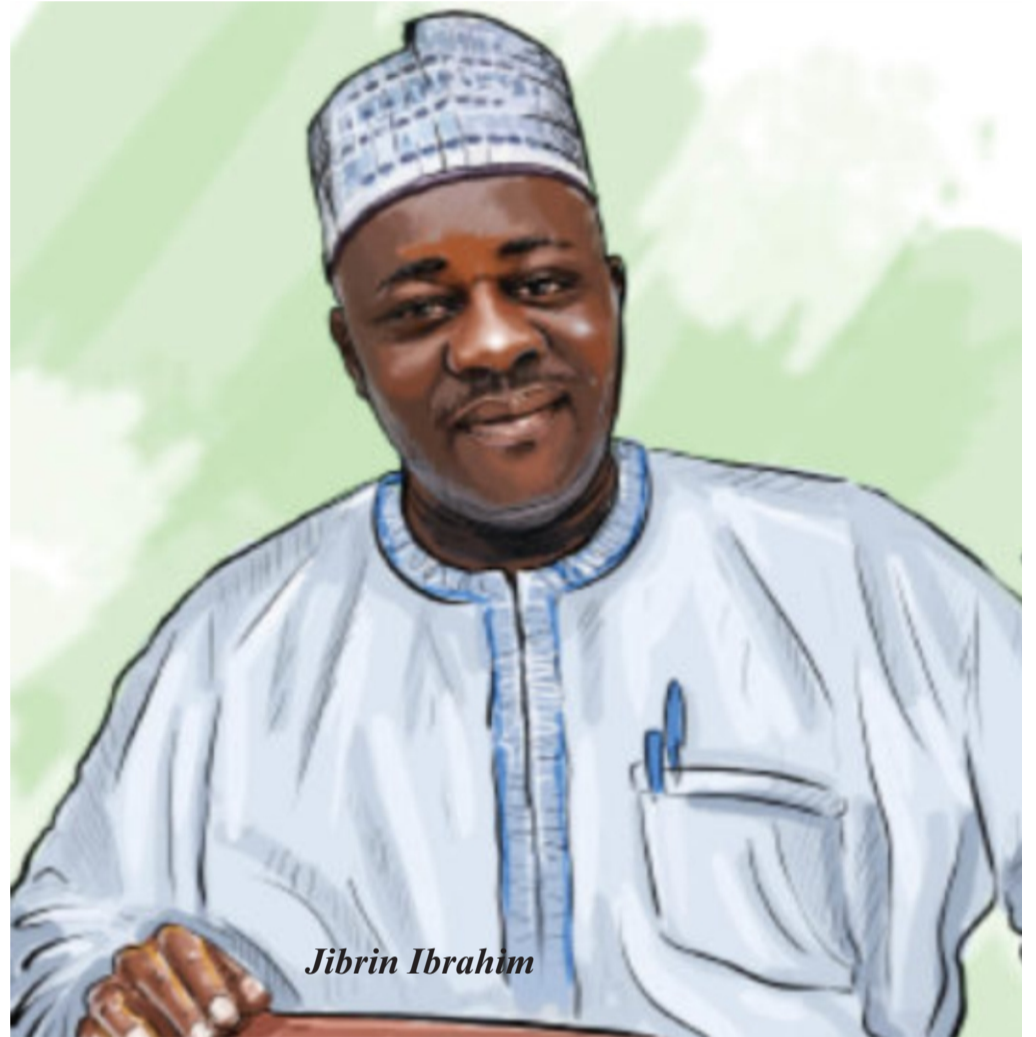
Over the past two decades, no general strike has lasted more than two days. It starts with apparent anger and ends with a whimper signalling some money have changed hands. The government knows the price it has to pay to "settle" a general strike. How can they take citizens seriously knowing the leadership to channel anger into effective results no longer exists?

Every day, there are reports on massive corruption by government officials who simply pocket billions and billions of public money and accountability mechanisms are almost never not activated against them. Nigerians simply watch and wonder at the depth of corruption and simply show no appreciation that these are public resources that could have gone a long way in addressing the crisis faced by the people but are privatised and accumulated by a few.

Today, Nigerians are suffering because they can no longer feed their families as stagnant wages and food inflation makes it impossible for them to get enough to eat. They should have been furious because they know that the decisions to remove fuel subsidy and float the naira were made precisely to produce this outcome. By these acts, Nigerians were guaranteed to suffer extremely high costs for transport, food and other essentials. It is a policy framework aimed at deepening poverty and the suffering of Nigerians.

Today, Nigerian citizens live in deep fear because of the insecurity that defines their daily existence. Millions of farmers can no longer farm their land because gunmen attack and kill them or impose taxes to "allow" them farm because they have the guns. Nigerians cannot travel anymore because they cannot afford the fare or because they are afraid of being kidnapped for ransom.

Nigerians cannot even worship in peace



Jibrin Ibrahim

because they are afraid terrorists could attack and kill them while worshipping in their churches and mosques. Where is the anger that flows from their knowledge that government has constitutional responsibility to provide for their security and welfare and it is simply not doing so?

Increasingly, the rights of the citizens of Nigeria to protest against bad governance, the right to dissent and to freedom of expression as guaranteed by the Constitution is denied, frustrated and challenged by the governing class. Meanwhile, Nigerians continue to watch and wonder. Dear Nigerians, when will we get out of the trap of passive sadness? Where is the anger, rage, fury, ire, wrath, resentment and indignation against bad and irresponsible governance in Nigeria?

Every day, there are reports on massive corruption by government officials who simply pocket billions and billions of public money and accountability mechanisms are almost never not activated against them. Nigerians simply watch and wonder at the depth of corruption and simply show no appreciation that these are public resources that could have gone a long way in addressing the crisis faced by the people but are privatised and accumulated by a few.

In terms of the political process, the electoral choices made by or sought for

by Nigerians are often subverted using money, violence or the courts that specialise these days in removing elected officials chosen by the people and replacing them with people "illegally imposed" by judges who interfere continuously with electoral outcomes. The judiciary which is supposed to be the last hope of the common people is today almost entirely controlled by the political class and the people continue to watch and wonder.

Increasingly, the rights of the citizens of Nigeria to protest against bad governance, the right to dissent and to freedom of expression as guaranteed by the Constitution is denied, frustrated and challenged by the governing class. Meanwhile, Nigerians continue to watch and wonder.

Dear Nigerians, when will we get out of the trap of passive sadness? Where is the anger, rage, fury, ire, wrath, resentment and indignation against bad and irresponsible governance in Nigeria?

Ibrahim is a professor of Political Science and development consultant/expert, and Senior Fellow of the Centre for Democracy and Development. He is also the Chair of the Editorial Board of Abuja-based online newspaper, PREMIUMTIMES. *Culled from National Record.*

Atos to Open MENA HQ with a Sports Technology Centre of Excellence in Saudi Arabia

By; JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

Atos yesterday, announced plans to open a pioneering Sports Technology Centre of Excellence within a newly established Atos MENA HQ in the second quarter of 2024 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Announced at LEAP 2024, the Centre of Excellence will leverage Atos' global track record in providing best-in-class IT services and solutions to global sporting events. The Centre will develop cutting-edge technology applications to benefit athletes, fans and the sports movement in Saudi Arabia.

This pioneering move comes at a time when Saudi Arabia is undergoing a major development in shaping the future of the economy and sport within the Kingdom's "Vision 2030", as it seeks to become a

destination to host the world's most important and prestigious international sporting events.

By establishing its MENA HQ in the Kingdom, Atos will be at the forefront of the digital transformation in Saudi Arabia and the region, fostering a thriving economy and accelerating innovations for local initiatives in the private sector.

Marc Veenturf – CEO Middle East & Turkey at Atos said: "Through the Sports Technology Centre of Excellence, Atos will empower organisations in Saudi Arabia with the technologies needed to thrive in the Kingdom's digital economy. Drawing upon our best-in-class digital tools and IT solutions, the Centre will become the epicentre for major events technology and digital innovation in the region." The MENA HQ and the Centre of Excellence will significantly contribute to both the Kingdom's

Vision 2030 and the National Transformation Program by supporting public sector initiatives, transformation projects, and various giga projects and smart destinations such as Expo 2030 and Saudi Entertainment & Amusement (SEA) Expo. It will leverage Atos' global know-how and experience to serve these global initiatives.

Mutaz Salem – General Manager at Atos said: "Atos will enable Saudi's major projects to become pioneering, future-proof smart destinations rooted in tradition, sport and culture with strong expertise and experience."

Javier Escudero – Commercial Director at Atos Major Events said: "The Atos Sports Technology Centre of Excellence will be located at the heart of Riyadh to provide major events with seamless technology, orchestrating

flawless operations and secure data flow. Our unique track record in sport includes over 25 Asian projects such as the Olympic Games, and Asian, Arab and Gulf Games. Atos innovative solutions will serve as the backbone, enabling organisers to captivate audiences worldwide while ensuring reliability and precision behind the scenes."

Page 1 of 2. Cont/d... Specifically, the Centre will serve as a dynamic business hub hosting a range of activities under the umbrella of "Club Atos". These include keynote sessions, roundtable discussions, technology demonstrations, workshops and networking events. These engagements will provide a platform for industry leaders, event organisers, clients and partners to explore the forefront of digital transformation,

cybersecurity, cloud services, decarbonisation, application modernisation, DevSecOps and edge computing.

Atos is the Worldwide IT Partner of the Olympic and Paralympic Games and is now working on the preparation of the Olympic and Paralympic Games Paris 2024. Atos is also the Official Technology and Digital Services Partner of the European Olympic Committees for the next editions of the European Games until 2027 and the Official Information Technology Partner for UEFA National Team Football until 2030.

Atos is the only international IT services company serving its partners and customers through a dedicated in-house sports and major events division ("Major Events"). To learn more about Atos' solutions for sporting events and major events, visit the Atos website.



Anambra, Taraba Chapters Frown At Masterminds Of SWAN Crisis

**Pledge unalloyed support to President Isaiah Benjamin*

**Task president on convening Full Council Meeting*

By; JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

Members of the Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN), from Anambra and Taraba Chapters have frowned at those they described as willing tools in the hands of detractors to destabilize the association.

They expressed this in separate communiqués issued at their respective congresses held in Awka and Jalingo respectively at the weekend.

Anambra SWAN in a communiqué jointly signed by its Chairman, Chimezie Anaso and Assistant Secretary, Uche Ndeke, dated yesterday, said that "the Congress commended activities of the chapter and encouraged members to continue to do their best as sports journalists.

"The congress frowned at stage-managed crisis in the National Executive Committee of SWAN and condemned the activities of those lending themselves as willing tools to destabilise the association

"The congress reiterated its position as contained in the communiqué issued after the January Congress where it pledged unalloyed loyalty to the total confidence in the presidency of Isaiah Benjamin who was unanimously elected at the 2023 Triennial Delegate Congress Omoku, River State," it said.

The congress described the purported impeachment of Benjamin by some members of

NEC as ludicrous and a joke taken too far.

"The Congress enjoined those spearheading this destructive agenda to have a rethink and retrace their steps or be ready to face the consequences of their ill advised and ill intentioned actions

"The Congress called on the national leadership led by Isaiah Benjamin to intensify and expedite efforts towards the convening of SWAN Full Council as it has become expedient in order to chart a course for addressing these distractions on sustainable basis," the communiqué said.

The congress commended the Anambra sports sector for the success of 2024 and charged the Sports Commission to begin to implement his programme for the year.

Similarly, in their communiqué, Taraba State Chapter from their congress held on Saturday March 2, 2024 at the NUJ Press Centre Jalingo, affirmed full allegiance to SWAN President, Isaiah Benjamin.

This was contained in the communiqué jointly signed by its drafting committee chairman, Kemuel Keke Moses, Mrs. Ruth Nungtso Rimamskwe (Member) and Sani Sulaiman (Secretary), made available on March 3, 2024.

"SWAN Taraba reiterates its full support to the present administration at the national level under the leadership of the President, Mr. Isiah Benjamin, and his exco who was elected by



SWAN President Isaiah Benjamin

the majority of delegates at Omoku in Rivers State.

"The chapter also commends the President for his efforts to ensure that SWAN remains united in spite of unnecessary distractions," it said.

According to Taraba SWAN, "as one family, we are urging the aggrieved members to join hands with Benjamin's administration for the development of the association in Nigeria".

The congress also thanked Taraba State Governor, Dr. Agbu Kefas for his developmental strides that are changing narratives in all sectors of the state.

"SWAN Taraba calls on the

Taraba State Government to revive the State Sports Festival as it has served as an avenue for identifying young talents over the years.

"The association also calls on the Taraba State Ministry of Youths and Sports Development to always synergize with the Taraba State Sports Council to identify talents at the grassroots.

"SWAN reiterates its commitment to supporting the government through adequate publicity of all sporting activities on all media platforms.

"The association again calls on the State Government to revive FC Taraba and Taraba Queen's to bring back the lost glory of the

darling teams," it said.

Taraba SWAN similarly, charged the well-to-do, corporate organizations and religious bodies to invest in sports through sponsorship of competitions in Taraba State.

It harped on the need for the state government to also focus on the development of the Mambilla Altitude Sports Center in Gembu, Sardauna Local Government Area.

"The Association appreciates individuals and corporate organizations in Taraba state who have supported sports in one way or the other and encouraged them to sustain the tempo," it said.

Osun Governor's Cup Enters Semi-Final

**We are discovering great talents - Coach Yomi Elijah*

By ABDULMOMOH

The maiden edition of the Schools Sports Foundation, Osun Governor's Cup has entered the Semi-Final stage with four teams set for what analysts believe will be a fierce battle for slots in the final.

On Thursday, Anglican Grammar School, Ile-Ife mauled Ede Muslim Grammar School, with six unreplied goals. Afolabi Rasheed opened the scoring in the third minute, and Akinola Kehinde and Oyesunbola Iyanuoluwa scored a brace each, before Akinlabi Marvelous crowned it up, to take the goal tally to six against the Ede base School.

In the other quarter-final game on Thursday, Community Grammar School, Iperindo defeated Ansarudeen Grammar School by a lone goal. On Friday, Lanreleke Sports

Academy, became the third team to book a spot in the Semi-Finals after they impressively defeated Inisa Grammar School, by six goals to one. Godspower Mujiri and Promise Oghenero scored a brace each, while Uzoka Richard and Lawal Ibrahim rounded off the game with their goals.

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School, by five goals to three.

Fans favourite Peter Oyeniran scores twice to put his team, Ataoja School Of Science in the Semi-Finals. The Osogbo-based School won Ijebu Ijesa Grammar School, by five goals to three.

It will be Community Grammar School Iperindo against Ataoja School of Science in the first Semi-final pairing. The game will be played on Monday, by 10 am, while Ife Anglican Grammar School will face Lanreleke Sports Academy in the second semifinals by noon on Monday. All games will be played at the Ataoja School Of Science, Osogbo.

The Competition is an initiative of the Schools Sports Foundation, headed by Yomi Elijah, a UK trained Football Coach and former Coach

of Remo Stars, Lobi Stars, ABS FC, and Kogi United and is proudly sponsored by Peculiar Ultimate Concerns, other partners are Olafiranye Sports Foundation, the Osun State Ministry of Education, Ministry of Sports, Osun State Sports Council, Kidzfoot Nigeria and others.

Speaking with the visionary of the tournament, Coach Yomi Elijah of Peculiar Ultimate Concern Limited said he is highly delighted that are discovering great talents in the event.

He revealed that the development is seeing their dreams of many years come true. Yomi Elijah is a British trained coach with and has managed the following club sides, recording great successes at all levels

Winners Emerge In Dambe Warriors Promotional Fight Season 2 In Nasarawa

By: JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

Qualifiers have emerged in the Dambe Warriors promotional Fight season 2 at the Mararaba Nyanya Arena in Karu, Nasarawa State. The sport which attracted top contenders from around the world battling in the middle weight and the light weight categories, saw Bahangon Nyansanda, beating Sararia to advance to the final round, while Salim Zaraki of Algeria defeated Bahagon Alintarara of Nigeria to scale through to the finals as well, which

will be staged in Lagos next month. Speaking shortly after the event, Co-founder of Dambe Warriors, Anthony Ukelekeke said Dambe sport is open to all interested fighters from any part of the world to come and compete. He noted that 12 fighters will feature in the finals were 3 winners will proceed to the season 3 for the ultimate prize. "This is an exciting time for us in Dambe sports, this is a never before seen type of Dambe in combat sports, it is a promotional fight 2, and you could see we

brought a fighter from Algeria to spice up things which he won". "Dambe warriors is the elite of all leagues when it comes to combat sports and you could see that the Algerian fighter Salim won his fight which has never happened. we are happy with what we have seen, and we look forward to achieving more". When asked about funding and if government gives attention to the sport, Mr Anthony said, "We have stakeholders when it comes to public private partnership, when we went to Kano, the

state government supported us with the stadium to host our event, but we are open to conversations" he stated. Meanwhile, an elated Salim Zaraki, while speaking said he feels happy for emerging victorious and expresses love, saying he sees himself now as a Nigerian. The overall winner in each of the categories will go home with the sum of 1million naira. The final is billed for the 3rd of March 2024 in Victoria Island Lagos.



Gowon Is Our Hero, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Cross River Indigenes Say

By; JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

The Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Cross River States (BRAC) coastal aborigines have declared total support for former Nigeria's military Head of State, Gen Yakubu Gowon, stating that he is their hero.

BRAC said they are forever grateful to General Yakubu Gowon for creating BRAC states out of the former Eastern Region Government in line with the yearning and cries of their fathers and mothers.

According to the BRAC communities, Gowon is a hero to them, second to what they described as the Holy Spirit, calling on people urging him to apologize over his role in the civil war to have a rethink.

A statement issued by the General Coordinator of BRAC Coastal Aborigines, Doris McDaniels, in response to calls for Gowon to apologize over his role in the civil war, said some people are just spreading falsehoods about General Yakubu Gowon's peace mission to keep Nigeria united.

"It has been brought to our attention on the recent insults directed at General Yakubu Gowon by Igbo apex groups Ohaneze Ndigbo and Indigenous People of Biafra.

"We are deeply offended by their audacity in demanding an apology from General Gowon for his divine role in leading Nigeria to a peaceful end of the war and delivering the BRAC Coastal areas and her people from the genocidal oppression of the Biafran soldiers, preventing further evacuation of the BRAC people from their ancestral homes of the oil rich coastal areas in anticipation of Biafra winning the war," McDaniels said while urging the Igbo groups to address the atrocities committed by Biafran soldiers on the people of BRAC states, who are the multi-ethnic minority of the former Eastern Region Government.

"We are now known as BRAC: Bayelsa State, Rivers State, Akwa Ibom State and Cross River State.

"We believe that the people talking about Gen Gowon are not telling the truth. They should

speak the truth and hold their warlord, Col Odumegu Ojukwu responsible for starting a spontaneous, ill-prepared war with no strategy and planning, conscripting the BRAC states into his imaginary political Biafra Republic without their permission and consent.

"The Igbo groups know this to be true, but they have chosen to spread falsehoods about General Yakubu Gowon's peace mission to keep Nigeria united.

"We earnestly ask General Gowon to ignore and forgive the false perspective and fabricated version of the Nigerian civil war presented by the groups. We assure him that the people of the BRAC state know the truth and appreciate the timely intervention of his leadership and his war generals and veteran federal troops to usher in peace.

"We are forever grateful to General Yakubu Gowon for creating BRAC states out of the subjugation of the former Eastern Region Government in line with the yearning and cries of our fathers and mothers," the group said.



Yakubu Gowon

Ramadan: Maryam Abacha Tasks Governments On Providing Food Assistance To Less Privileged

By; IMRANA ABDULLAHI, Kaduna

The wife of the late former Head of State of Nigeria, Sani Abacha, Hajia Maryam Abacha has called on governors and other affluent individuals in the country to purchase food items to support the needy, especially during these trying times as the month of Ramadan approaches.

Hajia Maryam made this statement to journalists in Abuja during the commemoration of the first anniversary of her son, Abdullahi's death.

She noted that many people are currently in dire need of help and

called on governors to utilize the additional funds provided by the Federal Government to serve their constituents.

"I urge the government and the general populace to assist the needy. Many people are facing financial difficulties, and although food is available in the market, it is often too expensive for them to afford," she said.

She further emphasized, "I implore the wealthy and the government to extend their support. I understand that the President has allocated significant funds to the governors, which is commendable. It's crucial that

these funds are used appropriately, particularly to purchase food items for distribution to vulnerable individuals within the community.

"Those who are able should lend a helping hand. This principle is inherent in both Islam and Christianity. If we practice these teachings, everyone will benefit."

She concluded by praying to Almighty Allah for ease and well-being for the people of the North, Nigeria, and the world at large, expressing her hope to reach the month of Ramadan in good health.



Maryam Abacha