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Zulum Distributes Food Palliatives To 52,500 Families In Southern Borno

*Disburses N100m to 2,000 youth, women farmers in Biu

By ; SADIQ
ABUBAKAR,
Maiduguri

Borno State
Governor,
Babagana Umara
Zulum, supervised the
distribution of food aid to
over 52,500 families in
seven local government
areas of Southern Borno to
alleviate the hardship
caused by inflation and the
current economic
problems bedeviling the
country.

The distribution took place
yesterday at the Biu

Township Stadium.

The benefiting local
government areas include,
Biu, Shani, Chibok,
Askira-Uba, Kwaya
Kusar, Bayo and Hawul.

"This morning, we are in
Biu to provide palliatives
to 52,500 vulnerable
families in southern
Borno. This is in
continuation of our efforts
to provide food and non-
food items to the less
privileged in society,"
Zulum said.

"We have not consistently
given food items to people

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Governor, Babagana Umara Zulum, supervised the distribution of food aid to over 52,500 families

**CSOs, Lawyers Warn
EFCC Boss, Say Many
Contradictions In
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*Allege persecution

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**Delta Killings: Angry
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**Budget Padding: Suspending Sen Ningi Craziest
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*Says Senators making it more difficult for Nigerians to trust them

**Fraudsters Plotting To Defraud Retired
Judicial Officers, NJC Raises Alarm**

*Asks retired judicial officers to disregard phone calls demanding
money to fast track payment of benefits

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TY Buratai Foundation Extends Condolences To Oyo State, Ibadanland Over Passing Of Olubadan

By; ISAAC ODEH, Kaduna

In a heartfelt gesture of condolence and respect, the TY Buratai Humanity Care Foundation (TYBHCF) has extended its sympathy to the Oyo State Government, Olubadan-in-Council, the Oyo State Traditional Council, and the people of Ibadanland following the passing of the 42nd Olubadan of Ibadanland, His Imperial Majesty, Oba Dr. Mohood

Lekan Balogun, Alli Okunmade II.

The Chairman of the foundation, Amb Ibrahim Dahiru Danfulani (Sadaukin Garkuwan Keffi), conveyed the foundation's deep sorrow in a statement that was shared with the press.

"The Foundation's Grand Patron, His Excellency, Ambassador Lt Gen Tukur Yusufu Buratai (Rtd) CFR, former Chief of Army Staff Aare Akinrogun of Ibadanland,

expressed shock at the news and offered prayers for the peaceful repose of Oba Balogun's soul. He also acknowledged the late monarch's enduring legacy as a symbol of royal excellence and accomplishment," it said. The statement further expressed the foundation's condolences to the immediate family of Oba Balogun, the Olubadan-in-Council, the Oyo State Traditional Council, and the entire people of

Ibadanland during this period of mourning.

"The TYBHCF stands in solidarity with all those affected by the loss of a revered leader and pillar of the people.

"As the kingdom grieves the passing of a significant figure, the Foundation's message of condolence serves as a reminder of the shared sense of loss and the enduring legacy of Oba Dr. Mohood Lekan Balogun," it said.



TY Buratai and Late Olubadan of Ibadanland, Oba Dr. Mohood Lekan Balogun, Alli Okunmade II.

Unknown Gunmen In Military Uniform, Attack Delta Community, Two Dead, Others Injured

By UTEBOR PETER, Asaba

Suspected hoodlums alleged to be members of Okoloba Community in Bomadi Local Government Area of Delta State, fully dressed in military uniforms have reportedly attacked

Okuama Community in Ughelli South Local Government Area, both of Delta State, leaving two dead in the deadly mission. Sources said, "It was gathered that the trouble started in the early hours of Thursday March 14, 2024,

when two speed boats belonging to Okuama indigenes were attacked by the hoodlums armed with sophisticated weapons.

"The boys escaped for their lives.

Not satisfied, the gunmen besieged and laid ambush on the community later in the afternoon of same day, before opening fire on the members of community.

"It was gathered that two indigenes of Okuama community died in the process.

"It was reliably learnt that four others sustained varying degrees of injuries and were rushed to an undisclosed hospital for medical treatment.

"It was also gathered that miffed by the ugly development, Okuama repelled the suspected Okoloba Indigenes on

military camouflage, leaving undisclosed number dead on the spot.

Another source said, "We understand that there are issues between the community indigenes and the military but destroying the entire community is not the way to go!

"We are calling on His Excellency, Rt Hon Sheriff Oborewori and the Delta State Government to arrest this crisis immediately.

"Painfully, innocent women and children are being killed."

According to feelers on Friday March 15, 2024, "the suspected Okoloba Indigenes have mobilized from the Warri axis with gunboats for a fresh attack on Okuama community."

Meanwhile, the State Commissioner for Information, Dr. Ifeanyi Osuoza, in his maiden Post Exco briefing, on Thursday February 8, 2024, in Government House, Asaba, informed journalists that there was a security council meeting where the issue was discussed and that government was doing everything to restore peace.

As at press time, efforts to get confirmation from the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Edefe Bright, proved abortive.

Probe Allegations of Budget Padding Not Suspending Ningi, Rescue Movement For New Nigeria Tells Senate

By; MIKE ODEH JAMES, Kaduna

The Rescue Movement For New Nigeria, also known as Rescue The Vulnerable Initiative, has described as terrible, the allegation by Senator Abdul Ningi that about N3 trillion was padded into the 2024 Appropriation Bill.

The group insisted that there should be detail probe to unravel the truth and bring to book anyone found culpable instead of rushing to suspend Senator Ningi that raised the issue publicly.

This was disclosed in a statement made available to newsmen in Kaduna by the group's National Director, Media and Publicity, Rev Emmanuel Olorunmagba, as the group lamented the situation saying, "at this time that our nation is passing through terrible economic downturn, when we are supposed to be

hearing of drastic cut down in the cost of governance that have been highly extravagance, and what is saved from such cut down focused on fighting hunger; but unfortunately we are hearing of budget padding to the tune of whooping three trillion naira (N3 trillion) and again that some Lawmakers were allocated whooping five hundred million naira (N500 million).

"Instead of such weighty allegation to be thoroughly investigated, the Senate rushed to suspend Senator Ningi. Thus, many Nigerians are now seeing the speedy suspension as intimidation to suppress the weighty allegation".

Senator Ningi was so categorical in his statement as he declared that, 'in the course of our perusing the budget, which Onanuga seems to have dwelt on, I said we have established beyond reasonable

doubt, about N25 trillion so far has nexus: that means, there is money, and then there is project and then there is location. Money, project, location! But we are yet to ascertain N3 trillions of that budget. We have established the N3 trillions in that budget, but have not establish the project and its location. I am not afraid of anything, anything, I believe there is one God and I believe power is transient. I am not scared of any issue like suspension."

This allegation is not only very empathetic, but it is so specific and categorical. Thus, "sweeping such under carpet while hunger is ravaging the ordinary Nigerians is the height of insensitivity".

Nigerians deserve to know the truth and appropriate actions should be taken to adequately address the issue except the

power that be want to deliberately taken the masses for fools."

The group also noted the alarming rate of escalation of insecurity in the Northern part of Nigeria resulting in mass abduction in Borno, Niger, Plateau and kidnapping of pupils and staff from schools in the southern part of Kaduna State.

"We are calling on the governors, especially in Northern states of Nigeria to be more proactive and beef up security the more in their states, using the huge security votes they are allocated effectively and corporate towards interstate security network.

*The situation is getting too much and we cannot continue have a nation where bandit are more powerful than the State", he concluded.

IHR Urges FG To Take Stand On 2024 Hajj Forex Policy



By; JABIRU A. HASSAN, Kano

Independent Hajj Reporters (IHR), a faith based Civil Society Organization (CSO) has said that the seemingly slow progress being recorded in pre-Hajj pilgrims' preparations and documentation ahead this year's holy pilgrimage calls for concern.

IHR in a statement signed by its national coordinator, Ibrahim Muhammed on Friday, said Nigeria's intending pilgrims are very apprehensive as to what will become of their intention to fulfill the Fifth Pillar of Islam owing to ongoing slow pace of developments.

"For example, with less than 60 days to the commencement of airlift of pilgrims to Saudi Arabia, NAHCON is yet to execute some vital pre Hajj operational plans, due to its inability to have a clear clarification on governments forex transactions benchmark for this year's hajj – a policy that has been previously implemented for both Christian and Muslim pilgrims in the country," the CSO said.

IHR also said it is aware that government has extended the same intervention to Christian pilgrims late last year. "As at today, no single pilgrim have been enrolled in Saudi Arabia's hajj E-track system because NAHCON is yet to affect the needed financial obligations in the portal.

"Most importantly, Saudi Arabia has commenced issuance of visa to intending pilgrims from all hajj participating countries on 1st of March – signaling the beginning of the end of visa processes for anyone who wish to participate in 2024 – NAHCON is yet to kick start visa process," IHR said.

The CSO further reminded all concerned that Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Hajj and Umrah 2024 Hajj Calendar is being

implemented accordingly and therefore calls on the Federal Government and NAHCON to be wary of the negative effects of further delays.

According to the calendar as released by the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, the Visa issuing portal which was opened for all countries on March 1, will be closed on 29th of April.

The Calendar also shows that the first batch of pilgrims are expected to arrive Saudi Arabia on 9th of May 2024 – 55 days from today. "While we acknowledge that government procedures are geared towards preventing anomaly in the system, Nigerian authorities should understand that Hajj is a unique exercise that is guided strictly by Saudi Arabian Hajj and Umrah calendar.

"Any delay caused by Nigerian Government's bureaucracies can only affect Nigerian pilgrims or prevent them from participating in Hajj.

"The day of Arafat cannot be altered nor can Nigeria's peculiar internal affairs affect the commencement and closing date of important pre hajj activities like: visa processing, payment to Saudi Hajj service providers, airlift of pilgrims, movement of pilgrims to Masha'ir, and purchase of slots by airlines to airlifts intending pilgrims from Nigeria to Saudi Arabia.

IHR said it is important to understand that each intending pilgrim to this year's Hajj has paid a minimum of N4.7 million to cater for their services during the hajj.

Therefore, we urge the federal government to immediately take appropriate actions to either fulfill its promises or renege on hajj forex transaction to enable Hajj authorities in Nigeria and Saudi Arabia implements necessary pre hajj preparations for our dear pilgrims who has paid their fees to fulfill the fifth pillar of Islam, IHR said.

Delta Killings: Angry Soldiers Allegedly React, Burn Down Several Houses In Delta

By; UTEBOR PETER, Asaba

In a reaction to the killing of 16 soldiers by unknown gunmen in a Delta, several houses in Okuama community have been allegedly burnt down by men of the Nigeria Army in Ughelli South Local Government Area of Delta State.

There are strong allegations that some angry soldiers may have perpetrated the act after their colleagues were killed.

Meanwhile, manhunt for the killers is still ongoing and some arrests have also

been made by the soldiers, led by the General Officer Commanding 6 Division Nigerian Army, Major General Jamal Abdussalam.

Residents of the coastal community are said to have fled to neighboring Ughelli for fear of a reprisal by the soldiers who have been patrolling the creeks.

Other sources confirmed that, several houses in the coastal and rustic Okuama community, in Bomadi LGA of the state, were on fire, hours after 16 military personnel on a peacekeeping mission

were killed.

It would be recalled that, Tukur Gusau, the Director of Information at the Defence Headquarters, in a statement on Saturday, said the military personnel — comprising a lieutenant colonel, two majors, one captain, and 12 soldiers — were killed by youth on Thursday.

"The troops of 181 Amphibious Battalion, Bomadi Local Government Area of Delta State, while on a peace mission to Okuama community in Bomadi LGA of Delta State were surrounded by some

community youths and killed on Thursday, 14 March 2024," Gusau said.

"The unfortunate incident occurred when the troops responded to a distress call after the communal crisis between the Okuama and Okoloba communities both in Delta State.

Latest reports say 14 of the "beheaded" corpses have been recovered, with the entrails of some ripped out.

Many residents of the community have also fled, for fear of reprisal attacks from military personnel, sources added.

Budget Padding Allegation: Stop Eating Away Nigeria's Future, National Youth Alliance Tells Senate

*Demands full investigation

*Says Nimgi should be celebrated, not suspended

By; ISAAC ODEH, Kaduna

Worried about the alleged padding of Nigeria's 2024 Budget to the tune of about three trillion Naira, the National Youth Alliance (NYA) has warned the 10th Senate to stop toying with Nigeria's future with such extravagance.

This was contained in a statement signed by the SA Media and Publicity to

the NYA President, Ambassador Aliyu Bin Abbas, Okpani Jacob Onjewu Dickson, made available to newsmen in Kaduna on Saturday March 16, 2024.

"The news of the alleged budget padding by the Senate, as revealed by Senator Abdul Nimgi is worrisome and calls for discreet investigation.

"This is because, if true, such vagrant abuse of office is dangerous and

portends danger for the future of our great country," it said.

According to the statement, NYA said that instead of hastily suspending Senator Nimgi amid the raging controversy, the Senate should have instead, ordered a thorough investigation into the incident

"Senator Nimgi at this point in time, should be

celebrated by all Nigerians, especially the youth, whose future he is protecting by exposing the gross abuse of office by presumably Distinguished Lawmakers," it said.

NYA therefore, charged Nigerian youth to be devoid of political, ethnic or religious sentiments, to rise in patriotism and demand full investigation into the allegation of padding.

Zulum Distributes Food Palliatives To 52,500 Families In Southern Borno

***Disburses N100m to 2,000 youth, women farmers in Biu**

in southern Borno because they are not deeply affected by the insurgency. However, due to the current hike in food prices, the government has decided to come in and support the people with food aid", the governor added.

"Each beneficiary will collect 25 kg bag of rice and 25 kg bag of maize," Governor Zulum stated.

In Biu Local Government Area, 17,500 families each got a bag of rice and a bag of maize. 5,000 families benefited from Shani, Bayo, Kwaya Kusar and Hawul local government areas, while in Askira-Uba and Chibok, respectively, 7,500 families received Zulum's food palliatives.

*Disburses N100m to 2,000 youth, women farmers

Meanwhile, Governor Babagana Umara Zulum disbursed over N100m to 2,000 youth and women to support them in cultivating their farmlands.

"In addition to the food distribution, we are giving out N100m grant to 2,000 beneficiaries, each receiving N50,000. This grant is for them to use in cultivating their farmlands," the governor reiterated.

"We hope the money will help them in their farming activities", he stated.

Speaking at the ceremony, Deputy Governor of Borno, Umar Usman Kadafur, who hails from Biu, urged beneficiaries to make good use of the food gesture and grant provided by the governor.

The occasion was attended by Borno APC Chairman, Bello Ayuba, Senator Mohammed Ali Ndume, House of Representatives member, Engr Bukar Talba, Deputy Speaker of Borno Assembly, Abdullahi Musa Askira, and members of the House of Assembly representing the benefiting constituencies among other government officials.



Kaduna Conference 2024: Only Disciplined Leadership Can Make Nigeria Progress - Mikati

By: JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

For Nigeria to make any headway out of the present economic and other challenges it is facing, Citizens must be disciplined, before becoming leaders that can make positive impact.

This was submitted by Dr. Shuaibu Idris Mikati, while delivering a keynote address at the 2024 Kaduna Leadership Conference, organised by the Institute of Leadership Assessment and Development (ILAD), held at the Kaduna State University (KASU) at the weekend.

Mikati, a former gubernatorial aspirant in Kaduna State and a successful Lagos based businessman, blamed the woes Nigeria is passing through on indiscipline.

He explained that if citizens are disciplined, the country would produce credible leadership, that will earn it its pride of place in the comity of nations.

In his remarks, Vice President of ILAD, Professor Silas Linus Lamela also advised Nigerians to always be self disciplined if they want to attain Leadership positions.

The President of Nigeria Volleyball Federation (NVBF), Engineer Musa Nimrod in his remarks, wants prominent Nigerians to always exhibit quality leadership in their dealings with others.

Musa Nimrod made the call in after he and other personalities were conferred with Doctoral Fellow at the Leadership Conference of the Institute of Leadership Assessment and Development (ILAD).

The Volleyball administrator who was represented by Professor Simon Katung, commended the institute for recognising their contributions towards the growth and development of the country, and called on the fellows to be of best behaviour now that they have become role models in the society.

The Director General of ILAD, Dr Baba Adamu said the institute is not just a collection of like-minded professionals, but a family that thrives on collaboration, mentorship and the pursuit of excellence.

The leadership conferment are usually issued to distinguished Nigerians who have displayed exceptional leadership qualities within and outside the country.

Chief Judge of Kaduna State, Justice Tukur Mu'azu Aliyu, Dr Umar Musa Abubakar and Dr Jerry Adams, Executive Chairman, Internal Revenue Service, Kaduna State were also among the distinguished Nigerians conferred with the Honourary Doctorate Awards by ILAD.

Others are, Registrar/CEO, Community Health Practitioners Registration Board of Nigeria, Dr. Idris Bashir, Chairman Kaduna State Local Government Service Board, Professor Aminu LADAN Sharehu, Commandant Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) Major General John O. Ochai, Director General Kaduna State Urban Planning and Development Authority (KASUPDA), Dr. Ismail, Umar Dikko, Counsellor to Executive Governor of Kaduna State on Land Matters, Dr. Bulus Audu and others.





WHO

WHO Trains 240 Clinicians On Basic Mental Healthcare In North East

By: JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

The World Health Organisation (WHO) with support from the European Union has trained 240 clinicians including medical doctors, nurses, midwives and Community Health Extension Workers (CHEWs) on Basic Mental Healthcare in the three North Eastern states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe.

W.H.O Interim Emergency Manager for Northeast Health Emergencies Response, Dr. Kumshida Balami who declared the training opened in Damaturu the Yobe state capital, pledged to build capacity of healthcare workers in the Northeastern states as well as equip them with the necessary supports that would improve their health status.

"This particular training is in support of the ministries of health across the three states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe.

"WHO is training about 240 Clinicians which include Medical Doctors, Nurses, Midwives and Community Health Extension Workers to be able to increase the access to mental healthcare at the primary healthcare level.

"As you can see the participants are so excited to contribute to their communities in terms of providing basic and counselling communication on stress

disorder and be able to care for basic health issues like epilepsy, seizure disorder, alcohol use and drug abuse including techniques in handling stigma in the community" she said.

On his part, the Executive Secretary of the Yobe State Primary Healthcare Management Board, Dr. Babagana Kundi Machina represented by the Director Human Resource Management, Mohammed Kyari Usman said the training organized by the WHO will no doubt strengthen the capacity of the healthcare workers in the state especially at the primary healthcare level. The training which is also to discuss extensively on the mental health and psycho-social support as one of the pillars of supporting the lingering cerebrospinal meningitis in the state, is aimed to build the capacity of the healthcare workers to provide basic psycho-social support for the families of affected victims.

In Yobe State about 78 participants drawn across the 17 local government areas attended the workshop.

One of the participants revealed that the training will enhance their capacity to address the challenges of mental health disorder in their communities.

The other two states of Adamawa and Borno concurrently hold the same training in their various state capitals.

Nigerian Tech Prodigy Aims To Transform Radio Broadcasting With Gistoneer App

By: JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

In the ever-evolving world of technology, young innovators like Aliyu Aminu are paving the way for a new wave of possibilities.

Aminu, a talented software developer from Nigeria, has recently developed an application that is set to revolutionize the way Radio Stations, preachers, and other content creators across Africa share their programs with their followers.

This groundbreaking application, named Gistoneer, allows users to post copies of their mp3-format programs after airing, ensuring that nobody misses out on their favorite shows.

During a presentation in Kaduna, Aminu highlighted the key features of Gistoneer and how it can benefit various users. Not only can Radio Stations and preachers use the app to distribute their programs, but artists can also utilize it to sell exclusive content and interact with their fans.

Additionally, Gistoneer offers a platform for all users to share their favorite photos, audios, videos,

create playlists, and engage in chat with friends and family.

According to Aminu, Gistoneer is a game-changing application that empowers content creators, artists, and everyday users to connect with their audience in new and innovative ways.

By combining user-friendly features with the potential for monetization, Gistoneer is set to revolutionize the digital content landscape in Africa and beyond. With the Creator Funds Dashboard offering a unique opportunity for creators to earn revenue, Gistoneer is not just a platform for sharing content but a catalyst for success and growth in the digital age.

He explained that GISTONEER came to offer; mp3, mp4, images sharing and real-time chatting services.

However, the emphasis is on mp3 and music free mp3, mp4, and images sharing social networking services, intending not to limit the services to music but to a broader range.

One of the most enticing aspects of Gistoneer is the Creator Fund, a feature that rewards users who

have built a substantial following. If an account reaches 10,000 followers and their contents receive 100,000 views in the past 30 days, the Creator Funds Dashboard is activated for them.

This dashboard opens up opportunities for users to make money through their Gistoneer contents, providing a potential revenue stream for content creators.

The Creator Fund within Gistoneer is a unique opportunity for users to monetize their content and capitalize on their growing popularity.

The revenue generated through the Creator Fund is calculated based on the frequency of Gistoneer contents and can vary from user to user.

This incentivizes users to consistently upload engaging and valuable content to attract followers and increase their earning potential.

Gistoneer allows users to post copies of their mp3-format programs after airing for their followers to listen to or download afterwards. This means that fans can always stay connected with their favorite programs and

content, even if they were unable to tune in during the initial broadcast.

With just a few clicks, users can access and enjoy a wide range of content, from radio shows to exclusive artist releases.

"What sets Gistoneer apart is the opportunity it provides for content creators to reach a wider audience and potentially monetize their work.

Artists can use the platform to sell their exclusive content and attract new fans, while also sharing free content to connect with their existing followers.

This feature not only enhances the artist-fan relationship but also opens up new revenue streams for creators.

Moreover, Gistoneer is not limited to just professional content creators.

Everyday users can also take advantage of the platform to share their favorite photos, audios, and videos with friends and family. The application also includes features like creating playlists and chatting with loved ones, making it a versatile tool for personal and social use.



Police Arrests Two Kidnap Suspects, 4 Others Over Cult Related Activities In Delta

By: UTEBOR PETER Asaba

The Police in Delta State has arrested two kidnap suspects identified simply as Peter Idogor, (24) and Emmanuel Sunday, (19) both of them are natives of Evwreni, Ughelli North Local Government Area of the state.

The suspects had been linked to the kidnap of a man in Orerokpe on October 10, last year by a gang of three armed men. The gang later contacted the family of the victim and demanded five million Naira ransom.

At that point, the DPO of Orerokpo, CSP Paul Oboware stepped into the case and mobilised detectives after the suspects.

The victim was later released after an undisclosed ransom was paid. But the police did not relent and last week, precisely Tuesday, March 5, two of the was arrested.

In a statement signed and forwarded to journalists by the state police public relations officer PPRO DSP Edafe Bright, "2217hrs, the DPO Orerokpe ECP Paul Oboware received a distress call about a suspected kidnap of one man (name withheld) by three armed men.

"The kidnapers later contacted the family demanding Five Million Naira ransom.

Upon receipt of the report, the Divisional Police Officer swiftly mobilized and led detectives to the scene of the incident, combed all adjoining streets and bushes in search of hoodlums, and to possibly rescue the victim.

"The victim was later released after an undisclosed ransom was paid.

"Armed with available information, the DPO did not relent and has been on an

intelligence-based investigation since the date of the incident.

The efforts of the command paid off when on 05/03/2024 at about 1700hrs, with the aid of a technically generated intelligence-led investigation, two male suspects namely Peter Idogor, age 24yrs, and Emmanuel Sunday age 19yrs all of Evwreni Community in Ughelli South were arrested.

"These suspects were linked to the kidnap of the victim, and the victim has identified the two suspects.

Meanwhile, investigation is still ongoing as efforts are being intensified to arrest the other fleeing gang members.

"In another development, "On 6/3/2024 at about 2330hrs, operatives of CP - DECOY Squad while acting on credible intelligence about cultist activities, stormed one hotel (name withheld) by Federal College Junction, Asaba.

Upon sighting the operatives, the cultists immediately took to their heels, dispersing towards different directions, but were given a relentless chase by the operatives, during which four of the suspected cultists who were hiding inside the ceiling, were arrested.

"The suspects, all male residents of Asaba, Delta State, include the following: Chigozie Edwin, a 28yrs native of Akpuoga Village in Ujodo LGA of Enugu State; James Prince Chukwuebuka, a 20yrs native of Effiom Village in Ezza North LGA of Ebonyi State; Harmony Mkemjika Ohanebum, a 30yrs native of Okija Town in Ihiala LGA of Anambra State; and Garba Jubril, a 27yrs native of Kogmbotō LGA, Kano State. Following the arrest of these suspects, a thorough



CP Olufemi

search was conducted, and two Barretta Pistols with two rounds of Live Ammunition, a locally made cut-to-size Gun with one live cartridge, and a were recovered from the ceiling. Manhunt for the other fleeing members of the gang is ongoing.

"In light of these achievements, the Police Commissioner, CP Olufemi Abaniwonda warns that engaging in any sort of

criminal activities in Delta State has dire consequences, as he has unequivocally instructed officers of the command to spare no effort in bringing criminals to account for their actions.

"He further stated that the command remains resolute in its commitment to protecting the lives and properties of all Deltans."



Kaduna Committed To Mutually Beneficial Relationship With Indonesian Govt - Uba Sani

By ; FUNMI ADERINTO, Kaduna

Governor of Kaduna State, Senator Uba Sani on Wednesday, assured the Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to Nigeria of the state's commitment to a mutually beneficial relationship between the state and the Indonesian Government.

The governor stated this when he received the Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to Nigeria, H.E. Dr. AVM (Rtd) Usra Hendra Harahap who came to Government House in Kaduna.

According to the governor, they are to explore areas of collaboration with Indonesian companies and state-owned enterprises in different sectors.

"We had fruitful discussions on establishing a solid Indonesian presence in Kaduna State, attracting Indonesian Investors, and forging partnerships in the areas of education, mining, agriculture, health, renewable energy, textile

development, infrastructure development, and tourism.

"We are also seeking support for the development of our Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSMEs), as well as scholarship grants for prospective Kaduna students who are willing to study in Indonesia," he said.

Governor Uba Sani thanked the Ambassador for his visit to Kaduna and assured him of their commitment to a mutually beneficial relationship between the Kaduna State Government and the Indonesian Government.

Meanwhile, Governor Uba Sani also hosted a delegation from the 10th National Assembly, led by the Rt. Honourable Speaker, Dr. Abbas Tajuddeen at the Chambers of Sir Kashim Ibrahim House.

The delegation is in Kaduna on a sympathy visit over the tragic incident where school children were kidnapped in Kuriga Village.



Yahaya Bello: EFCC Executing Political Agenda, Not Fighting Corruption - Kogi Govt

*Insists false, fictitious charges won't stand

*Asks commission to come clean on reasons for baseless political witch-hunt of former Governor, false narrative of missing money.

*Calls on President Tinubu to probe EFCC's activities in Kogi, unveil 'political hawks' writing over ambitious scripts.

By: ADEBOYE ADO, Akure

The Kogi State Government has once again told the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to come clean on the reason behind its unrelenting persecution and media trial of the immediate past Governor of the state, Yahaya Bello, saying that the world would be eager to know why the commission is trying so hard to find what is not missing.

The state government, for the umpteenth time, insisted that its funds were not missing, and called on the EFCC to desist from mentioning the name of Kogi State in its ongoing persecution, allegedly orchestrated by some political actors around the Presidency bent on destroying the image of the former Governor.

"We believe that this ignoble agenda is unknown to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu who trusted those people with power with the hope that they will use it judiciously for the greatness of our nation. Unfortunately, they have decided to use the privileges given to them as tools for political vendetta," the statement, signed by the Commissioner for Information in Kogi State, Kingsley Fanwo, said.

"The amended charges in which the name of the former Governor was mentioned are false, frivolous, fictitious and far from the truth. They are cooked-up charges that signpost their desperation to call a dog a bad name in order to hang it. The intention was to sensationalize the whole scenario and promote a media war against the former Governor and other officials of Government.

"We have seen how low EFCC and its paymasters can go in order to pander to the political agenda of those afraid of the rising profile of Alh. Yahaya Bello," it added.

The state government called on President Bola Tinubu to order a special probe into "what is happening in Kogi State before the EFCC is pushed into being used as a hired gun by political



hawks who are acting a selfish and overambitious script."

It said those who had personal grievances could vent their grievances without dragging the name of Kogi State in the mud, maintaining that Kogi Government "believes in transparency, accountability and probity in line with the trend from 2016."

The statement reads, "As a subnational in the Nigerian nationhood, we wish to express our utmost respect for agencies set up to perform specific functions towards the greatness of Nigeria. The Kogi State Government is also conscientiously committed to the determination of the present administration to stop corruption and fight corruption.

"As an administration, we inherited the zero tolerance for corruption policy from the immediate past administration of His Excellency Alh. Yahaya Bello, CON. From 2016, the Government of Kogi State has

continually strengthened her anti-corruption brakes and bumps to ensure the commonwealth of the people works for the common good of Kogites. This has won the State Government a lot of credible awards from national and international organizations, including the World Bank.

"A few years back, we witnessed a worrisome trend and torrent of witch-hunt by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, unrepentantly striving to force corruption claims on our Government and its officials. The Commission started with claims that it discovered a non-existent fund in an alleged Fixed Deposit Account.

"It eventually shot itself in the foot with a badly scripted skit of conniving with the now discredited Emefiele-led Central Bank to claim the money was returned to the Central Bank. This is the height of witch-hunt and unprovoked attack on the integrity of the Government and

People of Kogi State.

"The desperation of the EFCC to hastily and for glaring political reasons, hound the immediate past Governor on their corruption list is unfortunate and speaks volume on how we reward altruistic leadership in our nation. For the records, we wish to make it clear that Kogi's funds are not missing and that the EFCC is trying so hard to find what is not missing.

"We therefore call on the EFCC to desist from mentioning the name of Kogi State in its ongoing persecution, orchestrated by some political actors in and around the Presidency bent on destroying the image of Alh. Yahaya Bello and Kogi State. We believe that this ignoble agenda is unknown to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu who trusted those people with power with the hope that they will use it judiciously for the greatness of our nation. Unfortunately, they have decided to use the privileges given to them as tools for political

vendetta.

"The amended charges in which the name of the former Governor was mentioned are false, frivolous, fictitious and far from the truth. They are cooked-up charges that signpost their desperation to call a dog a bad name in order to hang it. The intention was to sensationalize the whole scenario and promote a media war against the former Governor and other officials of Government. We have seen how low EFCC and its paymasters can go in order to pander to the political agenda of those afraid of the rising profile of Alh. Yahaya Bello.

"The Kogi State Government wishes to call on Mr President to order a special probe into what is happening in Kogi State before the EFCC is pushed into being used as a hired gun by political hawks who are acting a selfish and overambitious script.

"As a Government, we will continue to support the anti-corruption crusade of the Federal Government, howbeit, such crusade should be based

on the rule of law, purity of conscience and devoid of political scheming. We cannot afford to politicize our fight against corruption. We will continue to have faith in the judiciary to protect our name and integrity.

"Those who have personal grievances can vent their grievances without dragging the name of Kogi State in the mud. Our Government believes in transparency, accountability and probity in line with the trend from 2016.

"We also wish to assure the good people of our State that nothing will be spared to protect the integrity of our Government. Our administration will continue to act in a way that Kogites will be respected wherever they go and for us to retain the respect of our international development partners who have persistently commended our anti-corruption credentials."

Deploy Ground Troops To Rescue Abducted People, Security Analyst Suggests

By; AMOS TAUNA, Kaduna

A security analyst, Bulama Bukarti, has suggested the deployment of ground troops as the best way to rescue schoolchildren in Kaduna and Sokoto states. Bandits on March 8, stormed the LEA Primary and Junior Secondary School, Kuriga in Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna State and abducted students and the principal, Abubakar Isah and on March 9, an unspecified number of Tsangaya students at Gidan Bakuso in Gada Local Government Area of Sokoto State were kidnapped.

Bukarti, during an interview on Channels TV's Politics Today, explained that the first few hours and days after the abductions presented the real opportunity for security agencies to rescue the victims, saying that it is not too late yet.

According to him, paying ransom would exacerbate banditry in the country.

Bukarti believes that Nigeria has the capability and capacity to rescue the children and needs to act

decisively by deploying ground troops.

He said that the areas where the bandits are, are not hidden, stressing that they (bandits) are still using their smart phones while Nigerian security agencies have proven their capacity to deal with terrorists.

He stated that he completely supports the federal government's policy to not pay ransom, as paying ransom would only exacerbate the problem, saying that the more money these violent criminals get, the more weapons and logistics they would stock; and the more people they would abduct and the more terror they would unleash on Nigerians.

"So, the policy of not paying ransom by the federal government is a good one and I welcome it. I hope that the federal government will ensure that no state governor pays ransom whatever the situation," he stressed.

The security analyst said that the federal government needs to work hand in gloves to make sure that the young boys and girls and women are

Fraudsters Plotting To Defraud Retired Judicial Officers, NJC Raises Alarm

**Asks retired judicial officers to disregard phone calls demanding money to fast track payment of benefits*

By; BAYO AKAMO, Ibadan

The National Judicial Council (NJC) yesterday, alerted of an incessant bids by a group of fraudsters to defraud retired judicial officers in Nigeria.

Raising the alarm in a statement in Abuja by its Director of Information, Barrister Soji Oye, NJC claimed that the alleged

fraudsters have been bombarding its retired Judicial officers with phone calls demanding for various sums of money to help them fast track payment of their retirement benefits.

NJC while dissociating itself from the actions of the alleged fraudsters, tasked retired Judicial officers not to fall victims of the unscrupulous

people.

"The attention of the National Judicial Council has been drawn to the incessant phone calls being made to retired Judicial Officers by some unscrupulous individuals demanding payments to fast track the processing of their retirement benefits", it said.

NJC added, "The National Judicial Council by this medium, informs retired

Judicial Officers and members of the public to disregard such phone calls as NJC would never demand money from any Judicial Officer to fast track the payment of his retirement benefit".

"The public is hereby advised to be wary of and report such calls to the Pension Department of the Council for appropriate action".

CSOs, Lawyers Warn EFCC Boss, Say Many Contradictions In Allegations Against Yahaya Bello

**Allege persecution*

By; ADEBOYE ADO, Akure

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and human rights lawyers have called on the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to save the image of Nigeria by not prioritising political battles that are counterproductive to the robust anti-corruption policy of the President Bola Tinubu administration.

The scores of activists and lawyers, under the broad umbrella of the Committee for The Defence of Democracy and Rule of Law, particularly noted that the seeming fixation of the anti-graft agency on particular targets, fierce media trial and the network of opposition figures publicly displaying their affinity with the Commission on particular matters easily reflected political hatchet jobs that must be discouraged.

The Co-Convener of the Committee, Barrister Kayode Mogbojuri, who spoke on behalf of the over 100 CSOs at a press conference in Abuja on Sunday, said the EFCC could not afford to become a tool of political witchhunt in the hands of every disgruntled politician seeking political retribution against opponents or perceived enemies and advised the helmsman, Ola Olukoyede, to shut out real enemies of the Commission.

"For instance, the way it

(the EFCC) is handling the current corruption allegations against the immediate past Governor of Kogi State, Yahaya Bello, is becoming a case of clear political witchhunt by his political opponents for whom the EFCC seems to be a ready tool to be manipulated into fighting their proxy wars.

"In every country that the fight against corruption has been politicized, corruption has not only thrived but also imploded. Politics and law enforcement should be water and oil that cannot mix," he stated.

The activists said the fact that the ammended charge read that the former Governor committed the said offence sometime in September 2015, when he had not even become Governor, also showed that it was a hurried attempt to nail him without due dilligence, adding that saying it was an error would only compound the embarrassment this had earned for the nation's anti-corruption struggle.

The CSOs also made particular reference to the EFCC's statement that the former Governor was at large, stating that it was the greatest evidence of political persecution, considering the fact that there had been no prior publication that he had been invited.

According to them, the curious statements against the former Governor and the state government, credited to one JS Okutepa SAN, a counsel to the

Social Democratic Party candidate in Kogi State, already gives political colouration to the fresh EFCC allegations.

The CSOs said that their suspicion of political persecution was aroused by the particular elements of EFCC's method of handling the matter in question.

"First, the EFCC is attempting to stand the rule of law on its head by violating a clear Court order that it is yet to vacate by a counter Court order. The High Court of Justice, Lokoja Division has given a restraining order on the EFCC to stay any action either to arrest, prosecute or persecute the former Governor or any of his appointees pending the hearing and determination of the substantive originating motion for the enforcement of his fundamental human rights. "The EFCC may not agree with that order, but it cannot violate it unless the subsisting order is vacated...The question is why the desperation to disobey an unambiguous and subsisting Court order if political persecution is not involved? Corruption cannot fight corruption. There is no greater corruption than disrespecting an express order by a Court of competent jurisdiction," the Activists said.

According to them, the slant of the EFCC's operations, if not checked, could attract unnecessary local and international suspicion as to the real

intentions of the Commission if it becomes obvious that it is tending towards political persecution rather than legal prosecution and trampling on the sacred principles of the rule of law.

The Co-Convener said, "No sensible Nigerian would oppose the fight against corruption considering its horrible effects on the socio-economic wellbeing of the country. It is a phenomenon that must be decisively fought, no doubt. We support the anticorruption drive of the current administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, which has clearly stated and so far demonstrated its total intolerance for corruption of any sort.

"However, the agencies constitutionally charged with fighting corruption must have to avoid fighting corruption with corrupt means of political compromises and means that are against it as this will surely run counterproductive to the robust anti corruption policy of the Tinubu administration."

"We advise the Commission to leave politicking to politicians and concentrate on professionalism and delivery of its constitutional anti-corruption mandate without political pollution which has the potential to make it lose local and international support," the activists concluded.

NNPP Suspends Wards, Local Govts, States Congresses In 13 States

By; BAYO AKAMO, Ibadan

The New Nigeria People's Party, (NNPP) at the weekend, announced the suspension of its wards, local governments and states congresses earlier scheduled to commence on Thursday, March 14, 2024.

NNPP made this known in a notice issued by the party and signed by its Ag. National Chairman, Alhaji Abba Kawu Ali and the National Secretary, Dipo Olayoku.

According to the notice, the decision to suspend the

Congresses was based on the advice of its legal team in an ongoing litigation which it said INEC is a party.

It stressed that new dates for the congresses will be communicated to the stakeholders including the INEC and the Security Agencies.

It would be recalled that NNPP had earlier fixed Wards, Local and state Congresses in 13 states, namely, Oyo, Ogun, Kaduna, Anambra, Zamfara, Katsina, Niger, Rivers, Kwara, Ekiti, Sokoto, Enugu, and Delta.

Budget Padding: Suspending Sen Ningi Craziest Thing I Have Seen - Ex CAN Chairman

*Says Senators making it more difficult for Nigerians to trust them

By: AUSTINE AGBO EMMANUEL, Kaduna

The immediate past chairman, Christian Association of Nigeria, (CAN) and Country Director, Global Peace foundation Nigeria, Rev. Dr. John Joseph Hayab has faulted the Nigerian Senate over the suspension of Senator Abdul Ningi.

It would be recalled that Senator Ningi of the opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP) from Bauchi Central Senatorial District, was suspended last week Tuesday, for three months over the allegations of N3.7trn padding of the 2024 Budget.

Reacting to the incident at a thanksgiving service organised in his honour of for meritorious service as CAN Secretary and Chairman Kaduna State at the weekend in Kaduna, Hayab said that the Nigerian senators have made it more difficult for Nigerians to trust them as leaders.

"What we saw few days ago in the country is like the Senators think that all of us are stupid when there was the issue of budget padding. And the story from every indication shows that all were not right and all they needed to do was to go back to their records and find out what was wrong but they didn't even want to

check their records but busy celebrating and suspending the senator. I think this is the most craziest thing I have ever seen.

"I am disappointed in our Nigerian Senators for thinking that all of us are fools after listening to them and I just wonder that they paid money to air that kind of information to the general public.

"That is the most shameful thing Nigerians have ever heard and nobody is even talking as if we are satisfied. I Rev. Hayab I am not satisfied. I found what happened that day as a disservice to the nation and a big disgrace because how can they spend such hours talking about that. They should have called a press conference and say one of us said this but this is our position not to spend such hours claiming that they can defend themselves. I can tell them that they have made more Nigerians not to trust them and made more Nigerians to see them as corrupt leaders." He said.

Hayab, who also lamented the renewed attacks in some parts of Kaduna State and Nigeria in general, stressed that the Senate should have been more concerned about securing Nigerians and not fighting themselves over an obvious matter.

"I think what our senators need to do is to double their efforts and ensure that Nigerians are secured. They are even the one who exposed themselves on what they shared. I am not sure in my knowledge that legislative work is sharing money. These are the things we do in this country that aid and support corruption and we call it constituency project, It's Constituency



corruption." Hayab added. In his remarks, the lawmaker representing Southern Kaduna Senatorial District, Senator Marshall Katung, who graced the thanksgiving ceremony at the Amazing Grace Baptist Church Gonin Gora, alongside other dignitaries, said Hayab cannot be described in a short term except to say that he is a man of integrity. "He is a man of integrity, a man who is fearless in fighting for his people when he believes in a course. He does not shy away from putting it the way it is. He has patience, integrity, humility and also foresight on issues that concern the people of Southern Kaduna in particular, the people of Kaduna state and Nigeria

in general." Senator Katung said. Other dignitaries present at the event included, the former and current president of the Baptist theological Seminary, Kaduna Rev. Prof Reuben Ishaya and Rev. Prof. Moses Audi respectively, Chairman, Kaduna Baptist Conference, Rev. Dr. Leke Ogundayo, Conference President FCT, Rev. Dr. Raphael Gwana, convention president, Rev. Dr. Ishaya Akanji, former Chairman, Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, (PFN) Apostle Emma Ego Bako, Apostle Emmanuel Kure of Throne Room Ministry Kafanchan, former commissioners, amongst others, all testifying that Hayab is a good man.



Northern Governors Amenable to Non-Kinetic Approach to Tackle Security Challenges, says Inuwa Yahaya

By: JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

The Chairman of Northern States Governors' Forum and Governor of Gombe State has echoed the growing consensus among stakeholders that addressing the complex security challenges plaguing the northern region and Nigeria at large, requires a united front and coordinated action among security forces and government agencies at all levels.

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

Gombe, Ismaila Uba Misilli, dated March 14, 2024, Governor Inuwa made this assertion during a press briefing held after a high-level security meeting involving the 19 Northern Governors, Ministers of Defence, Police Affairs, and Interior, as well as the nation's security chiefs.

The meeting, convened by the National Security Adviser in Abuja, was aimed at strategizing on combating the escalating security threats in the northern region.

Expressing deep concern over the prevailing security situation,

Governor Inuwa reiterated the commitment of northern governors to work closely with security agencies in seeking enduring solutions.

He stressed the need for exploring alternative approaches to achieve better results in combatting security challenges.

"In view of the security situation across the North, we are increasingly concerned and recognize the necessity to deliberate, review, and consider alternative options to improve outcomes," Governor Inuwa stated.

The NSGF Chairman affirmed the readiness of northern governors to complement the kinetic approach advocated by the National Security Adviser with non-kinetic strategies.

He emphasized the importance of combining both approaches to enhance the overall security situation in the country.

"We are open to the kinetic approach proposed by the NSA. Our deliberation with key stakeholders in the security sector has been productive. While acknowledging their commendable efforts, we

recognize the need to adopt a different approach, particularly by integrating non-kinetic methods," Governor Inuwa added.

He emphasized the determination of northern governors to continue working closely with relevant stakeholders to explore innovative strategies and implement effective measures that will help restore peace and stability in the region and across Nigeria.



Borno Govt Applauds Nigerian Immigration Service On Border Security

***Reiterates commitment to provides full support to NIS**

***NIS Assistant Controller General Zone C embarks on two-day working tour in the state**

By: SADIQABUBAKAR, Maiduguri
Borno State Governor, Prof. Babagana Umara Zulum has restated his commitment to enhancing and providing full support to the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) in the state to ensure effective border management and optimal performance for improved peace. The governor stated this on Friday when the Assistant Controller General Zone C, Sunday James in company of State Comptroller and some senior officers of

NIS paid a courtesy visit to Government House Maiduguri. The governor who was represented by his deputy, Umar Usman Kadafur, said, "Borno State which stands on a strategic location is pivotal to engendering effective border security in the country as it borders three neighbouring countries of Niger, Chad and Cameroon." The governor equally pledged to assist the NIS to host its proposed summit in Maiduguri for the North East region, themed, "North East Border Security

Summit" while advising that, the summit should be held in one of the North Eastern states to properly proffer and devise a mechanism and border security solution peculiar to the region. Earlier, the leader of the delegation, Assistant Controller General, Nigerian Immigration Service Zone C, Sunday James poured encomiums on the governor for what he described as, "untiring zeal" to restore permanent peace in the state. He added that, he was in the state to assess the operations of the personnel in the state.

Other dignitaries present at the meeting were, the Secretary to the State Government, Hon. Bukar Tijjani, State Controller General, members of the state executive council among other top government functionaries. Highpoint of the event was the presentation of award to Governor Babagana Umara Zulum in recognition of his efforts in ensuring people-driven policies.



Eye Centre Takes Sensitization To NDA, Says 1.4m Nigerians With Glaucoma

By: JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

National Eye Centre on Friday, sensitized at least 500 cadets, officers and staff of the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) Afaka Mando on Glaucoma, stressing that about 1.4million Nigerians are currently affected.

Speaking during the lecture on this year's theme, "Uniting For A Glaucoma Free World" Dr. Hashiya Kana said, "about 1.1 to 1.4 million Nigerians have Glaucoma and the prevalence is about 16.7 among individuals from 40 years and above, while about 70 million cases of Glaucoma are reported globally with projections that 94 million cases will be recorded globally in 2030.

"There are quite a lot of events we celebrate and sensitize people like in Panteka, in schools, in Rigachikun, in Mahuta," Kana maintained.

The representative of the NDA Commandant, Air Vice Marshall SK Aneke who thanked Eye Centre for bringing sensitization to NDA, said, "the eye is one of the key part of the body. For us, we don't joke with medicals, even before you come into the academy, your eyes are checked properly. Glaucoma as we all know, is something that creeps in silently, so we deem it fit to check before it becomes a problem. For a soldier be you Army, Navy or Air Force, you can't identify what you can't see. You can't read what you can't see.

"I am a pilot and I know something you need to press buttons that are very tiny, even in the army, sometimes you need to select coordinates, if you miss a digit, lives will be at stake, so we in the military do not take anything that has to do with the body, medically with the eyes for joke. We thank the Eye Centre in the continuation of our collaboration with them, we want to take this to the next level and this is just the first step in a lot of steps we are going to take." He said.

On his part, Director Administration, Bashir Hussain Muhammad who represented the acting Chief Medical Director, revealed that, "we look at our neighbours and partners who we feel can benefit from this campaign. Actually, v

cadets are being screened before taken into the academy, but in the course of work and age, the eyes need care and that's why we are targeting the aged from 40 years upwards.

"So this year, we chose Nigerian Defense Academy and came with our equipment for screening. This is to ensure early detection, just as the guest lecturer said.

"The main issue in medicine now is prevention, not cure, the cost of cure is too high," he explained.

As part of activities, free consultation and other forms of medication were administered to officers and staff of the the Nigerian Defence Academy.



FUW Honours Ex-SGF Boss Mustapha With Doctorate Degree In Law

Says he is an excellent leader to humanity

By: TOM GARBA, Yola

Immediate past Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Barrister Boss Mustapha CFR NPoM was honored with a Doctorate Degree in Law by the Federal University Wukari (FUW), Taraba State.

The university while reading Mustapha's citation, appreciated him for bringing many physical infrastructure into the school and described him as a boss not only by nomenclature or name, but in all ramifications.

The school's orator extolled Mustapha as a down-to-earth man, a committed Christian who grew through the ranks and file of the law profession as a successful lawyer in the private sector who delved into politics in the late 80s and early 90s, accomplished much and became the SGF. He gave a colorful background of

Mustapha's journey of life as an honest Nigerian, who is straightforward in all his dealings, an intelligent personality, and an excellent man created by God for humanity and deserves to be honoured as a good Nigerian.

The Chancellor, His Royal Highness, Alhaji (Dr) Adamu Baba Yunusa, the Ona of Abaji and Chairman FCT Council of Chiefs, conferred on Mustapha, the Degree of Doctor of Laws (Honoris Causa) Federal University Wukari with the rights and privileges attached thereto. Mustapha in standing ovation and admirations of many political associates, academic Magnus, friends, and well-wishers was decorated and bagged the award for his meritorious service to humanity, especially his contributions to the physical development of FUW. Mustapha alongside former Minister of

Water Resources, Chief Obadiah Ando and His Royal Majesty, Manu Ishaku Ali, Matakhitwen, Aku Uka, the Chairman Taraba State Council of Chiefs, was also honoured with the Degree of Doctor of Letters (Honoris Causa) and Degree of Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) respectively.

Mustapha on the award, responded on behalf of the two respected Nigerians and appreciated the management of FUW as well as the Minister of Education, Professor Mamman Tahir for approving. Earlier, the Vice Chancellor, Professor Jude Samanni Rabo said that with the 6th and 7th combined convocation ceremony for the award of bachelors and higher degrees, the university is gradually achieving its mission of becoming a student's centered and community-engaged institution by providing an

enabling environment that enhances intellectual growth, strong commitment to academics excellence, integrity, and entrepreneurship, creating new knowledge and using ICT and other enabling technologies to solve practical problems.

He said the day was special to him because the university is supporting the developmental aspirations of Nigeria.

He revealed that 3,301 degrees were awarded and 93 higher degrees with 20 postgraduates candidates.

He called on graduated students to show a high sense of character and integrity as good ambassadors of the institution.

Rabo further said projects were commissioned for various departments with a teaching hospital for medical college students.



Kaduna State Assembly: Oversight Function And The Voice Of The Opposition



By: YUSUFISHAKU GOJE

Stumbling on a video clip on the Facebook page of Hon. Henry Marah, Committee Chairman on Information, NGOs and Development Partners of the Kaduna State House of Assembly, a number of questions ran through my mind. Has the opposition finally found its voice? Or was it just playing to the gallery? Why wait until now to ask the germane questions? Why was he the only lone voice addressing the press? Where are his colleagues from the opposition? Has the State Assembly suddenly woken up to its oversight responsibility?

Obviously, the press briefing organized by the Member was not as the House Spokesperson. As it was an outcry of attempts to silence the voice of the opposition on critical issues in the Assembly. While his bold action can be counted as courageous and commendable, one is not unmindful that challenging the status quo comes with political consequences. The current predicament of the suspended Senator Abdul Ningi of Bauchi quickly comes to mind. Similarly, one is also not quick to forget that the

current Speaker and others were suspended in the 9th Assembly for standing up to the then leadership of the House.

The member in his statements raised two germane issues on insecurity. The first being accountability on procurement of drones and the lack of appointment of a substantive Commissioner for the Ministry of Internal Security and Home Affairs. He went further to talk about the funds sunk into the road and water projects without the evident desired results. The issues he raised are not new as civil society actors and residents of the States have been raising. However, it is gratifying that a legislator is bold enough to ask for value for money for the annual budgets appropriated.

The State government has allocated over N37 billion, from 2016 to 2023, for security, formally under the Office of the Secretary to the State Government and now the Ministry for Internal Security & Home Affairs (just for Capital and Overhead Expenditures, minus overhead for 2016). Top investments in technology during the period were the establishment of the Command and Control Centre,

procurement and deployment of drones and creation of Safe City with the procurement and installation of CCTVs.

Hence, like the Member asked, to what extent in terms of cost-benefit have these technologies been successfully deployed to fight the persistent insecurity? Secondly, beyond the calls for State Police, it is important to also ask how well has the Kaduna Vigilante Services been equipped and the welfare of the personnel taken care of. Equally, it is difficult to fathom the justification for not having a substantive Commissioner for the Ministry of Internal Security and Home Affairs almost getting to a year of the administration of Governor Uba Sani and at a time insecurity is intensifying.

Another germane issue raised by the Member is that of road infrastructure and water supply. Although these projects were funded by huge borrowings, many remain uncompleted, if not abandoned. This is disturbing as the burden of the debt is telling on the fiscal sustainability of the State. We serviced our debt last year with about N35 billion and this we are expected to do the same with N25 billion - it could

be more as a result of the volatility of exchange rate. To compound our current predicament, we still face the development challenges these borrowings are meant to address. For instance, the National Bureau Statistics' MPI Survey, 2022, shows that 64% of households in the State are deprived of access to clean drinking water.

Therefore, It is imperative that the leadership of the State Assembly demonstrate that it is not a rubber stamp legislature. Rather than silence the opposition, it should take this opportunity to demonstrate its willingness to perform its oversight function. Starting with setting up an investigative committee in line with the provision of section 128 (sub-section 1 and 2) of the 1999 constitution of FRN (as amended). Also, fact finding reports such as that of Sabiu Sani's 8-man Committee, constituted by the Governor, to determine the status of all ongoing projects across the State should be revisited, appropriate investigative and punitive action taken where necessary.

Goje is an active citizen, civil society actor and OGPenthusiast.

Harmonization: Is FRSC Above The Law

By: BENAUTA

The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) which was statutorily established by the government has been an agency saddled with the enforcement of rules and regulations as well as the management of road accidents and other sundry matters regarding road management.

Recently, indications in the Corps shows that many of its rank and file are gearing up for a showdown with the management of the corps due to its non implementation of a direct federal government directive for them to place their rank and file cadre in line with that of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF)

As a paramilitary outfit of the federal government, it behove on the commission to respect the order issued by the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces and the president of the federal republic of Nigeria, through the office of the Secretary to the Federal Government and Head of Service for such orders to be effected.

It is said that 'nobody, no matter how highly placed is above the law'. The president of any country is not above the law of the land rather he is elected or appointed to protect the law.

And in Nigeria, there are agencies that were created by the laws of the land but lives above the law that created it, Federal Road Safety Corps is one of them.

Presently, the FRSC is one of the agency that prides itself as an elite organization but falls short in many aspects when it comes to obeying government circulars even when it is under the direct supervision of the office of the secretary to the government of the federation with the head of civil service that issues circulars for execution by all MDAs.

The management chose which circulars from government to obey that suits them, and turn blind eyes to the ones that it considers 'WELFARE' circulars that are suppose to improve the morale of staff and increase productivity across board.

For example, when the circular on HND without additional qualification that puts a bar on the career progression of all federal workers came, the FRSC management quickly obeyed and implemented it but when government removed the dichotomy between HND and degrees holders in the public service, it took FRSC management some years to implement it.

Infact it took the courage of a staff of the Corps who wrote an open petition on the management of FRSC vindictive way of promotions for staff that resulted in the implementation of that circular but that is after the damage has been done as staff



were stagnated for up to 10 years on one rank.

One of the burning issue that is quietly and consistently demoralizing the morale of other staff in the Corps is THE HARMONIZATION OF RANKS WITH THAT OF THE NIGERIA POLICE FORCE.

It will be recalled that government through the office of the head of civil service issued a circular directing all Paramilitary agencies to harmonized its ranking structures to align with that of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) in order to bring about uniformity across the different agencies who always collaborate in different operations from time to time. But the FRSC management turned a blind eye to this circular.

While other agencies like the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) have all complied with that circular via circular reference CDCFIB/1001/VOLI/110 dated 16th October, 2020 FRSC has refused to obey that

It should also be noted that :

1. It is only in FRSC that have 3 tier of ranking structure for Marshalls I.e Road Marshall Assistant, Marshall Inspectors and above (RMAs, MIs) and Officers cadre).

2. It is only in FRSC that a three (3) tier of levels 8 can be found as the case may be, which in the public service are not operational in the different cadres.

As it is with in the Nigerian Police, a secondary school holder who is recruited on level 3 (constable) and meritoriously puts in 35 years of service can progress and retire as an ASP or SP,

that means the person would have enjoyed 11 promotions while in service.

But in the FRSC, a staff with the same secondary school will only be promoted 5 or 6 times in his entire 35 years of service, what an injustice.

Hitherto, most of the rank and file blame their lack of motivation to the great injustice and injury done to them by the management of the Corps.

Most of their grouse comes from the fact that a Chief Inspector (CI) on level SGL 13 will be answerable to an ARC on SGL 8 while performing joint duties with sister agencies and if years of service are compared, the FRSC staff always lags because the other agencies personal outrank them.

A classic example is that of Marshall Inspectors who, served during the last general election organized by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), where alot of Marshall Inspectors where cowed by many paramilitary organizations by shutting down such personnel despite being having seniority over such officers who according to reports were junior to them in years of service.

Also a hint by some of the officials of the commission revealed that when the present Corps Marshall resumed office, he constituted a panel to look into the issue but which has not either reported to him or is sitting somewhere else among unattended files.

While most rank and file officers are wishing for a better deal with the management, morale continue to be low because most rank and file who had stayed very long in the service continue to grumble because the officers who

superintendent over them are either not not experience to handle particular assignments or just hand over such functions to the Marshalls as they are more experience.

Some pertinent questions that needs to be asked about the harmonization are

1. Is harmonization going to cost the government anything? No! Because the same salaries will be paid to the affected officers as they are already receiving such.

2. Government will rather save a lot of money in recruiting and training of new officers for the corps as the staff already have ample experience on the job with many years of experience

3. Does the FRSC need to recruit more officers in the nearest future? No, as the staff currently are in the bracket of the workforce requirement of the FRSC, government needs only recruit junior staff as the need arises

4. Majority of staff will rather see the commission under the same board with other sister agencies as against being under the office of the SGF which has made the management hell bent on disobeying orders from the federal government despite priding itself as an ISO certified organization

Finally, the morale of the staff is low, this has led to an increase of crashes on our roads as staff who put in 20 years and above and are between levels 10 to 13 are made to carry out orders from inexperienced junior staff of levels 7 and 8 who are even less that 6 yrs and 2 yrs in service.

Government should do something about this issue of harmonization in FRSC before there is total chaos on our roads.

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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
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SPACE	RATE	VAT	TOTAL
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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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3	Change of Name	Per Box	2,000.00	-	2,000.00

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HALF W RAPA ROUND	4,500,000.00	337,500.00	4,837,500.00
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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
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B A C K PA GE E A R P I E C E	200,000.00	15,000.00	215,000.00
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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

Tinubu, Beware The Gathering Clouds (2)



President Tinubu

By: HASSAN GIMBA

Last week, we read how the signs are not looking good for a nation like ours that wants to be reckoned with internationally. We concluded by asking the federal government to look at ways to reduce the cost of governance and the unimaginable take-home pay of political leaders and redirect the excess towards production. And we emphasised that we must become a productive nation that eats, drives and wears what it produces.

We also exhorted anyone genuinely interested in the welfare of workers, and of Nigerians, to proffer solutions that would boost our economy and strengthen our currency and not suggestions that would bastardise our economy and drive the naira's value further down. And that salary increase at the moment will not help the economy.

The federal and state governments must also, as a matter of urgency, resuscitate moribund industries dotted across the landscape so as not to only galvanise production but to improve locally generated revenue. And because millions will get direct and indirect jobs if the moribund industries dotting all over the country become alive, the production of local materials will be boosted as there will be more buyers, leading to more employment.

Government, and here I mean the federal and state governments, must always be truthful and fair to the citizens. They must also make their agencies work. The government must let government function. In almost all cases, it is the government that makes government fail because the actors do everything from a prism of personal gain. Nothing about service anymore. Then there is the Nigerian syndrome of "Do you know who I am?"

I will give you an example. Just recently there was a furore that the Presidential Villa owed the Abuja Electricity Distribution Company ₦923 million, the Nigerian Police owed ₦1.4 billion and the office of the Central Bank Governor, ₦1.6

billion. Put together, the federal government and its agencies were indebted to the tune of ₦47 billion. And, you see, God save any AEDC official who tries to disconnect power from Villa, Police Headquarters or CBN

But every year there is money for the payment of NEPA bills in the government and its agencies' budgetary allocations, so why should the bills accumulate? If the power company has not been paid, where did the appropriated money go? Is the government here not strangulating the electricity company with its hand, yet every day we cry of epileptic power?

It is commendable that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu ordered the immediate payment of the Villa bill; however, is it enough without instituting an investigation into the failure of the Villa bureaucracy to pay its electricity bills despite budgetary provisions? This is the sort of thing that would make Nigerians sit up and take note. Otherwise, it is just the old system: sweep the sleaze under the carpet and let sleeping dogs lie.

Perhaps, because citizens, rightly or wrongly, think those in authority would naturally dip their hands into the treasury, and also scramble (as the Europeans scramble for Africa) over state resources, that is why some of them scramble over any resources close to them. Maybe this is why any warehouse they see, any trailer load of food that enters their 'trap', they pounce on it. And do you blame them when they refuse to pay NEPA bills?

Every day something new is trending. Yesterday it was budget padding; today it is "each senator got ₦500 million." Who knows what tomorrow will bring? The citizens must feel that their interests are also part of the mix. That sense of belonging would automatically bring down the crime rate substantially.

Governance must be accorded the seriousness it deserves. When you go through our budget and the imputed figures, like a template across the MDAs, one would be forgiven to think that governance is a joke and budget



Hassan Gimba

*Monday
Column*

implementation is akin to sharing the national cake within an anointed group.

Justice and fairness must permeate the land. No nation can rid itself of crime as long as its leadership does not go out of its way to give the people a sense of belonging and fairness, and its judiciary fails to give protection to the oppressed. Therefore, leaders at the centre must be exemplary, which will make those in charge of other tiers of government follow suit. It is not enough for a leader to be mouthing platitudes while his actions go contrariwise. This is what is meant by "Change must begin with the leader" where the Brazilian lyricist and author of *The Alchemist*, Paulo Coelho, said, "The world is changed by your example, not by your opinion."

I will never get tired of hammering it - to all who care to listen - what Sheikh Usman Dan Fodiyo wrote in his book, *Bayan Wujub al-Hijrah alal ibad*: that "the death of a thousand good men is not as tragic as having an unfit man in a position of national leadership and that "a kingdom (nation) can endure with unbelief, but it cannot endure with injustice."

To ensure that justice is served, we must strengthen our legal and judicial systems.

We need to reform our laws and improve the capacity and independence of our judges and lawyers. This will earn the system more respect and bring back the trust of the people that has been heavily eroded.

These, and more along this line, are the things our leaders must do to make our country the great nation it is meant to be. Every leader will be proud that under his watch we became a united people and forged ahead to become an industrialised nation.

To stitch the "merely geographical expression" that we currently have, therefore, is a task that must involve all of us. We do not have any other country to call ours. And we cannot afford to see the country put together by God through the British rendered asunder.

Another reason I always look at some Nigerians from the south and north who shout "Let Nigeria be divided" and shudder. Do they know what they are saying? Do they think that that is feasible anymore? Would it be beneficial to all concerned? We will look at this next.

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

Padding As Parliamentary Criminality 101

By Jibrin Ibrahim

THIS WEEK, I'm recycling a title I first used in this column in 2016 following Abdulmumin Jibrin's revelations about padding in the National Assembly. The then chairman of the House Committee on Appropriation had revealed the cesspool of mega-corruption existing in the National Assembly. Mr. Jibrin alleged that the then Speaker Dogara, his deputy, Yusuf Lasun, Chief Whip Ado Doguwa and Minority Leader Leo Ogor attempted to pad the 2016 budget with about N40 billion.

The only change since then has been the extraordinary spike in the amounts involved today, we are speaking of trillions of naira.

Padding has a long history. In 2000, former President Olusegun Obasanjo refused to sign the budget passed by the National Assembly claiming it had been padded with about N2 billion added to the National Assembly budget. The president, at that time, also identified 15 other areas, which he said had not emanated from any MDA and had simply been inserted into the budget and therefore refused to sign. The National Assembly basically threatened to remove the president through impeachment and since Obasanjo succumbed to the blackmail, the amount of padding had been growing exponentially.

Padding, in contemporary Nigerian English, refers to the exercise of legislative might to create new estimates for budgetary expenditure outside the estimates proposed by the Executive. The Constitution gives the Executive the power to propose budget estimates while the Legislature considers and approves them. The assumption is that estimates are based on national programmes and plans carried out by ministries, departments and agencies, which have information on revenues and have developed and costed projects that fit into the general plan.

The National Assembly has however developed an attitude that since they approve the budget, anything they insert therein is legitimate and it is on that basis that padding, i.e. the insertion of projects that have been neither planned nor had their costs estimated, occurs.

There are two forms of padding – the “corrective” and the criminal.

“Corrective” padding refers to an assessment made by the legislators that there is a lack of balance in the allocation of projects and they decide to design and add projects on their own, purportedly to correct the mistake. The problem however is that this “correction” becomes a device to channel all sorts of poorly planned projects to their own “homelands”.

Criminal padding, on the other hand, is the insertion of phantom projects in collaboration with like-minded MDAs with the intention of fraudulently collecting the amounts allocated and sharing the money. Both corrective and criminal padding make nonsense of governance because they create a huge divide between governmental programmes and the budget, which gets completely distorted by insertions and subtractions and empty it of its intended

objectives.

Over the past few years, these committees have completely subverted their mandate by routinely blackmailing MDAs to pay them huge bribes using blackmail threats that they will reveal to the nation the criminality discovered in the said MDAs. Committees that have been acting in this way have directly copied the methods of the mafia and other criminal gangs that engage in research with the sole objective of extortion through blackmail. Of course, they are able to transform oversight into extortion precisely because there is a lot of criminality in the MDAs, which they then join rather than expose.

Padding has a long history. In 2000, former President Olusegun Obasanjo refused to sign the budget passed by the National Assembly claiming it had been padded with about N2 billion added to the National Assembly budget. The president, at that time, also identified 15 other areas, which he said had not emanated from any MDA and had simply been inserted into the budget and therefore refused to sign. The National Assembly basically threatened to remove the president through impeachment and since Obasanjo succumbed to the blackmail, the amount of padding had been growing exponentially.

The late President Yar'Adua also had the same problem when he refused to sign the 2008 budget due to excessive padding but eventually reached a modus vivendi in which the padding was reduced, not removed completely, before he agreed to sign.

Since then, subsequent presidents have simply signed and shut up. BudgetIT has calculated that 7,447 projects worth over 2 trillion naira were inserted into the 2024 budget. It is madness.

Oversight is the second sector that has been criminalised. The National Assembly has powers of oversight and review of the work of MDAs. It is for this purpose that parliamentary committees are constituted in parallel with governmental structures so that such committees can closely monitor the work of these offices and ensure that they operate in accordance with the principles of good governance and the interests of the citizen.

Over the past few years, these committees have completely subverted their mandate by routinely blackmailing MDAs to pay them huge bribes using blackmail threats that they will reveal to the nation the criminality discovered in the said MDAs. Committees that have been acting in this way have directly copied the methods of the mafia and other criminal gangs that engage in research with the sole objective of extortion through blackmail. Of course, they are able to transform oversight into extortion precisely because there is a lot of criminality in the MDAs, which they then join rather than expose.

The third sector is that of constituency projects. The National Assembly has bamboozled successive presidents into accepting that each and every legislator has the right to a constituency project. The idea is to impress their constituents that they have brought projects to their home

base. While in other jurisdictions, powerful legislators are able to influence the allocation of projects to their constituencies, the practice has been to do so through the party and through the executive.

We must save our legislature. The theory of representative democracy is constructed on the principle of the election of legislators by the people to represent them at the level of law-making. It is this legitimacy derived from the electoral process that gives them the power to map and mould the views and concerns of citizens and constituents into public policy. When, however, legislators put aside the public good and negotiate pecuniary benefits using their constitutional powers as a bargaining tool, they are abusing, rather than exercising, their powers of representation.

It is not normal that each legislator has his or her personal project. Their function is law-making and legislative oversight, not project design. The most worrying aspect of the issue however is that while the constituency projects are supposed to be carried out by MDAs, the legislators have been able to force their way to the execution stage by insisting that contracts for “their” project be given to companies that they bring. By personalising the process, a lot of the projects are actually not implemented and the monies are simply pocketed.

Maybe the most serious element of criminality in the National Assembly is the slush fund. Over the years, we have witnessed the emergence of a huge slush fund for the leadership of the National Assembly. The greatest secret in contemporary Nigeria is the detailed budget of the National Assembly. They became self-accounting and have been getting their allocation directly without having to go through the Ministry of Finance. They make their budget and spend it without any element of transparency and accountability.

It was during the Jonathan Administration that the National Assembly budget, which had been growing since 2000 took a great leap forward. In 2011, the National Assembly increased its budget from about N120 billion to N232.74 billion. Since then, it has continued to grow. The senator representing Cross River North, Agom Jarigbe, on Tuesday, revealed that some ranking senators received N500 million projects allocated for each of them in the 2024 budget. As he was about to present details, the Senate President cut off his microphone. He was supporting allegations of budget padding made against the Senate by the senator representing Bauchi Central Senatorial District, Abdul Ningi. Ningi was suspended for three months for his revelations.

This is where it becomes very disturbing, because they are aware of the criminal nature of their acts, cover up is their approach and they are ready to deny duly



Prof Jibrin Ibrahim

elected members their mandate to represent their constituencies to cover up their actions.

Senate President Akpabio for example has inserted 18 billion naira in the Ministry of Agriculture alone for his constituency. Senator Ningi is not allowed to wonder: “We had a budget of N28 trillion but after our thorough checks, we found out that it was a budget of N25 trillion. How and where did we get the additional N3 trillion from, what are we spending it for?”

We must save our legislature. The theory of representative democracy is constructed on the principle of the election of legislators by the people to represent them at the level of law-making. It is this legitimacy derived from the electoral process that gives them the power to map and mould the views and concerns of citizens and constituents into public policy. When, however, legislators put aside the public good and negotiate pecuniary benefits using their constitutional powers as a bargaining tool, they are abusing, rather than exercising, their powers of representation.

The Nigerian National Assembly today has developed a fairly bad reputation with the public due to criticisms of their perceived selfishness and focus on excessive benefits to themselves. The circle must be broken. The budget is neither for the executive nor for the legislature. The budget is an instrument for the pursuit of the PUBLIC GOOD.

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, PREMIUM TIMES.



COMMUNITY FOCUS

IWD: OBF Partners CAMAC, AILGG To Empower 40 Women In Kaduna Community



By: ALEXUANGBAOJE, Kaduna

As part of activities to mark the International Women's Day (IWD) 2024, Omonola Blessing Foundation (OBF) in partnership with the Center for Media Advocacy for Mother and Child (CAMAC), African Institute for leadership and Good Governance, on Saturday empowered 40 Women in Ugwan Madami Community of Chikun Local Government Area in Kaduna State with skills.

The women who were trained on how to make tea powder, puff-puff snacks and cocktail drinks, expressed happiness, noting that the skills will not only help them become better home makers, but will also help them boost their economic situation.

Women leader in the community, Lami Danbaba, who spoke on behalf of other women, expressed gratitude to the organizers.

According to her, "Today we have being educated on how to be good home makers and skillful which is a good heritage to

pass on to our children.

"Also in regards to the teaching we got on SGBV, honestly most of us don't know this until now. We will definitely take what we have learnt to other women in the community and our children so as to avoid being victims."

IWD is celebrated every 8th March to support and empower women to reach their full potential and reduce gender inequality.

Executive Director of OBF, Omonola Blessing, noted that the theme for the year "Inspire Inclusion" is a call to action where every woman need to establish a goal, know their value and be valued in the society.

She emphasized the need for women in rural communities to be empowered with knowledge on Gender Base Violence, things happenings around them and the roles they need to play in the lives of their children and community at large.

Blessing said it was the alarming report they got in other engagements carried in various communities that lead to the GBV

knowledge empowerment and skills acquisition by the foundation.

She expressed her gratitude to the women's responsiveness which was interactive and engaging.

On her part, Programs Officer of CAMAC, Christie Saidu, said as part of the NGO's vision to meet every necessity required for the survival of every child and woman in the communities, they decided to partner with OBF to commemorate IWD to empower women who are idle to become entrepreneur and get a source of income to support their children and families.

"We are in a generation that women shouldn't be idle but should also contribute to the development of the society.

"So the women who are beneficiaries of the skills acquisition are expected to go and teach whatever they have learnt to other women in their communities either in the churches, community women's meeting or any other gathering of women. With that a lot of women will be

empowered."

Peter Simon, Executive Director for African Institute for leadership and Good Governance, stated that with the current economic situation of Nigeria, women requires skills like this to start up and meet the demand in the society.

He urged the participants to start up a business base in what they have learnt which doesn't required too much capital. Youth leader of Ugwan Madami Community, Joshua Ayuba, appreciated the organizers for the teaching and empowerment carried out in the community.

"With this skill acquisition, most of our women will no longer be idle unlike before. With little funds, they can start up their business. But we are appealing to the community to help sponsor programmes like this so as to empower more women". Ayuba added.

He therefore, charged the participants to make sure they engage themselves with what have been learnt and likewise educate others in the community.

Reps Promises Speed Passage Of Bill, Says Maritime University Lacks Funding

**Commends Tompolo Foundation, others*

By: UTEBOR PETER, Asaba

The House of Representatives Committee on Maritime Safety Education and Administration at the weekend, said that it will do its best to ensure the Nigeria Maritime Academy (NMA) is funded so that it can compete favourably just like other universities outside Nigeria.

The committee members also said the major challenges facing the Nigeria Maritime Academy in Okerenkoko is inadequate funding

The House of Representatives Committee on Maritime Safety, Education and Administration, led by Hon Udua Odudoh disclosed that the bill establishing the Nigeria Maritime University, Okerenkoko in Gbaramatu Kingdom, Warri South-West Local Government Area of Delta State is to be passed into law as quickly as possible.

The chairman of the committee, Uduak Odudoh, made the disclosure, while addressing newsmen shortly after assessing the NMA facilities in Okerenkoko and Kurutie, during an oversight visit by the committee, where he promised that they would expedite action to ensure the passage of the bill.

The Federal Lawmaker said, The bill establishing the Nigeria Maritime University, Okerenkoko in Gbaramatu kingdom, Warri South-West LG is to be passed into law soon.

"The major problem facing the Nigeria Maritime Academy Okerenkoko is

inadequate funding, so we will do our best to ensure the university is funded that the university can also compete favourably just like other universities outside Nigeria.

"We thank the leadership of the host communities for ensuring absolute peace in the area as well as providing a large expanse of land for the University.

"We will also do everything as a parliament and include in our budget the building of a standard clinic in the university because of its distance from the upland.

"The House of Representatives would attend to all the challenges confronting the university.

"The House Committee commends the Tompolo Foundation for contributing over 40 per cent of the development of the institution and thanks the leadership of the host communities for ensuring absolute peace in the area as well as providing a large expanse of land for the university.

"There is no fence and also we will do everything as a parliament to ensure that even in our budget, we will also include the building of standard clinic. Because from upland to this place that we've just gone, it takes more than one hour and if somebody falls sick, you need medical attention, in that place, there is no good medical. But I thank God for the security of this place, you've good security. The security of this place is very attainable for the community, who has ensured that the security is not a challenge for the students

and the staff.

"And so when we go back as a committee, thank God, you know, especially those of my brothers from the northern part of Nigeria who are here for the first time, we would have had many of them, you know, recently they started the Ramadan fasting and so but I want to assure the Vice Chancellor and the people here, we will be coming from time to time, when we go back, we'll look at your budgets.

"When it's necessary we will increase. I will also ensure that we'll reach out to the relevant agency especially. From records in 2022 NIMASA even tried to do some releases, in 2023, there was a great decrease. And So we find out the reason, thank God we have a new DG recently appointed by Mr. President a few days ago and work in collaboration with every other agencies to ensure that the place is founded.

"The major problem of this place is inadequate funding, that. And so we'll do our best to ensure that the place is funded so that they can also compete favourably. Not like other universities outside Nigeria.

"On the bill. Recently, the bill unfortunately passed, and it was passed by the previous house. It was not assented to by Mr. Presidents. And so the bill is now before the Senate from the information available to us, it has passed to second reading and also in the House of Reps.

"And so we are going to work with the speed of light to ensure that, that bill is

passed. And once the bill is passed, also, because the legislature is all about lobbying, we will also ensure that we reach out to relevant people to ensure that the bill is passed into law.

"And so that the university can start very well with its own acts because like Maritime Academy, Oron has it acts and that is why oron is even more found than here, because compulsory constitutionally by the act of NIMASA. They are supposed to remove 5% of your earnings to replace and that is our main source of funding. So we also ensure that the bill is passed as you go back so that every other thing that should come to the university will not be denied," he said.

On his part, The Vice-Chancellor appealed to the Federal Government to build staff houses as well as ensure increased funding for the institution.

"This university was initiated by the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA). We are pleading with them to increase the funding to enable us to have more staff," he said.

Meanwhile, the House Committee had earlier in the day, visited the Pere of Gbaramatu kingdom, Oboro-Gbaraun II, Aketekpe, Agadagba at his annex palace in Warri to intimate him on their oversight visit during which the royal father urged the committee to ensure speedy passage of a bill that established the university and accented to by President Bola Tinubu to become an Act.



Water Technology: Katsina Govt Signs MoU With CEEC

By; SULAIMAN AHMED MISAU, Katsina

Katsina State Government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with China Energy and Engineering Group of Companies (CEEC) and Hydronamics Limited to improve urban water supply and deployment of water technology infrastructure in the state.

Governor Dikko Umaru Radda during the signing ceremony held in his office at General Muhammadu Buhari (Government) House, Katsina directed the commencement of the project with immediate effect to enhance urban water supply and infrastructure tagged: "New Agenda."

Mohammed Kaula, the spokesman of the Governor said in a statement that, during the signing ceremony, Governor Radda expressed his administration's unwavering commitment to achieve significant milestones by the year 2024.

Despite the project's three-year completion period, the Governor emphasized the urgent need for visible improvements within the year and assured full support for its successful execution.

Hamza Yunusa, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Hydronamics, shed light on the project's scope, which includes: the rehabilitation of dams in Gwaigwaye, Jibia, Mashi, and Dutsi, as well as the

construction of new dams in Malumfashi and Katsina.

Additionally, he said the project encompasses the deployment of smart water meters, digital payment systems and leakage detection systems.

According to Hamza Yunusa "It also includes the expansion of distribution systems, transmission mains, and the installation of 66 Megawatts of solar energy equipment in water works across 12 LGAs."

"The energy transition to solar power is aimed at reducing over dependence on the grid, while also reducing cost of water production and distribution," he said.

Managing Director of the State Water Board, Engineer Tukur Hassan Tingilin provided insights into the project's financial aspects, revealing that over 24 billion naira had already been allocated in the 2024 budget.

Engineer Tingilin highlighted the comprehensive nature of the project, covering the rehabilitation of dams and other infrastructures, along with the reconstruction of the State Water Board Headquarters.

The signing of the MOU was witnessed by Alhaji Hamza Suleiman Faskari, the State Commissioner of Water Resources and Honourable Abdullahi Aliyu Turaji, the Principal Private Secretary to the Governor underscoring the collaborative effort to address water challenges in Katsina State.

Celebrating My Birthday At 13th African Games Will Bring Luck To Athletics Says Coach Okon

By; JOSEPH ODOEKWU, Accra

One of Nigeria's ex-internationals, Coach Gabriel Okon has revealed that his birthday which was marked yesterday during a training session will bring luck to athletics when they begin their campaign for medals on Monday at the ongoing African Games taking place in Ghana.

A delighted Okon, disclosed this to this writer in a brief interview at the University of Ghana

Sports Complex, where athletes had a training session this evening.

"I am delighted and this is the first time I am celebrating my birthday in an African country, and I am glad that I am celebrating my birthday once again, during a major competition," Okon stated.

"I remember when I celebrated one of my birthdays during the Melbourne Commonwealth Games in 2006, it was during the

opening ceremony of the games and it was announced there.

"Last year, I celebrated my birthday in Nigeria and this year, it's taking place during the African Games and I'm happy seeing this happen during the African Games.

"I am confident that my birthday which was marked by the team during this training session in Accra, will definitely bring luck to team Nigeria when we start the track and field events on Monday

and we are definitely going to rake in medals," Okon concluded.

Nigeria is currently second on the medal table and they trail runaway Egypt as at time of filing this report.

Athletics which starts on Monday, is one of the sports which Nigeria draws strength from in scooping medals and hopes will be high when the athletes file out on Monday at the ongoing African Games.



Rivers Police Apprehends 2 Suspected Cultists Over Alleged Possession Of Firearm

Local Government Area and resident at Okonkwo in Gambia, Diobu, was arrested alongside his accomplice, Victor Kokoriko, 29, from Sampo, Kolokuma/Opokuma LGA in Bayelsa.

"Ejike confessed to being a leader in the Castle cult group but decided to call it quits after he was restricted from interacting with his pals from a rival cult group, JVC (Junior Vikings Confraternity).

"He was an armourer of Castle and was in possession of a locally made revolver that had been placed in his care by his superior leader in Castle, one Jamil, who he said operates as a meat seller in the local abattoir but coordinates all the activities of the cult group. The gun was handed over to him in October 2022.

"He also intimidated the Police that on several occasions, he had been badly beaten and 'drilled' for associating with friends from JVC, so he decided to cross-carpet to the JVC once and for all.

"After he decided to quit and join JVC, he switched lanes with the revolver still in his possession and refused to return it. This provoked the Castle group, and they launched attacks of gathering spots of the JVCs to recover the revolver, which culminated in the violent confrontations of January 2024.

"The duo was arrested on their way back from demanding royalties on behalf of JVC from dealers in scrap materials inside an area in Gambia they referred to as "bribabo".

"According to Victor, they usually collect these royalties and pay to the 'Doff-man' (treasurer) of the cult, who then gives them a cut for their troubles.

"He also spoke of how they were accosted by the Police in collaboration with the local Diobu vigilante. Victor, who was incarcerated at the Port Harcourt Correctional Centre between 2020 and 2021 for cult-related violence that led to grievous bodily harm to a victim, stated that Ejike received a phone call from a certain Effiong, who was a 'Senior man' (a former

cultist). While he was on the call and distracted, he was apprehended by the Police accompanied by the vigilante. They were searched, and the locally made revolver was recovered from them on the spot.

"They have been cooperative with the Police in the investigations."

Meanwhile, the Commissioner of Police, CP Tunji Disu, has expressed optimism that synergy between the Police and Community-Based Security outfits can yield the desired result of addressing the menace of cultism.

He also commended the Men of the Mile 1 Police Division and the Anti-Cultism Unit for their ingenuity in forging collaborations to achieve results.

The police boss warned cultists and other criminals in the state to steer off crime as the hand of the law was closer to them than they realised.

**Celebrating My Birthday
At 13th African Games
Will Bring Luck To Athletics
Says Coach Okon**

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Hair Stylist, Dispatch Rider In NDLEA Net For Selling Chin-chin Laced With Illicit Drug

By; **RAYMOND TEDUNJAYE, Lagos.**

Operatives of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) have apprehended the duo of a hair stylist and a dispatch rider over alleged selling and distribution of chin-chin laced with illicit drug.

As gathered, the suspects identified as Josephine Odunu, a 20-year-old hair stylist, and Edesemi Ikporo, 30, a dispatch rider were alleged to be selling and distributing the illicit drug-laced chin-chin to school students and at social parties in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state.

The Director Media and Advocacy of the Agency Femi Babafemi who made the revelation in a release on Sunday said the dispatch rider was intercepted by NDLEA officers who were on patrol around Opolo area of Yenagoa on Sunday 10th March 2024 and recovered 200grams of chin-chin produced with cannabis sativa, while he was on a mission to deliver to a buyer.

"A swift follow up operation led to the arrest of the hairdresser, Josephine, who distributes the drugged chin-chin from the salon where she works in Kpansia area of Yenagoa. A search of the salon also led to the recovery of 3.00kilograms bringing the total weight of the illicit substance seized from the duo to 3.2kg.

"Investigations reveal that they distribute the chin-chin often

laced with cannabis and tramadol to students and at birthday parties. While Edesemi handles the delivery to buyers, Josephine is a major distributor to a wanted suspect who produces the drugged chin-chin", Babafemi stated.

In the same vein, NDLEA operatives in Adamawa state on Wednesday 13th March arrested two wanted suspects: Ajim Samuel (aka Boss), 30, and Davidson John Joshua (aka Dantala), 36, while on their way from Onitsha, Anambra state where they had gone to buy a consignment of tramadol containing 14, 428 pills of the opioid which they tucked in the body compartments of their black Honda Civic car marked YLA623 SL.

The suspects, as confirmed by Babafemi were nabbed along Numan-Jalingo road. Also recovered from them were 21grams of cannabis and monetary exhibits totaling N19, 280.

In Osun state, commercial bus driver, Ogunleye Adegoke, 49, was arrested along Gbongan-Ibadan road after NDLEA operatives discovered 2,000 capsules of tramadol, 60 tablets of rohypnol and 10 bottles of codeine syrup concealed in the spare tyre compartment of his vehicle. While a total of 343,000 pills of opioids were seized by NDLEA officers from a suspect, Lawan Abubakar, 33, in Azare town, Katagum, Bauchi state on Friday 15th March, same day the

Nigerian Army transferred a suspect, Muhammadu Rabi'u, 37, with 64,000 pills of tramadol recovered from him to the Bauchi state command of NDLEA. At least, 24kg of cannabis was seized from the driver of a transport company, Ikechukwu Obialo, at Sagamu Interchange, Ogun state by NDLEA operatives on Wednesday 13th March, while in Kano, two suspects: Ali Amadu, 27, and Adamu Hassan, 33, were nabbed with a total of 125.3kg cannabis; 3,400 pills of tramadol; and 30 bottles of codeine syrup. They were arrested on Monday 11th March at Gadar Tamburawa area, and Friday 15th March at Tsamiya Babba, Hotooro respectively.

While 118 kilograms of cannabis were recovered from a warehouse in Masaka area of Nasarawa state on Saturday 16th March, NDLEA operatives in Edo state on Thursday 14th March arrested a suspect, Kole Samuel, 50, with 75kg of same psychoactive substance at market area, Otuo, Owan East LGA. Same day, operatives raided the Oloma-Okpe forest in Akoko Edo LGA where they destroyed 3,944.2075 kilograms of cannabis on 1.577683 hectares of farmland.

With the same vigour, the various commands of the Agency across the country



The suspects

continued the War Against Drug Abuse, WADA, advocacy campaign in the past week. Some of them include: WADA sensitisation lecture for students and teachers of Government Day Secondary School, Michika, Adamawa; students and staff of Nana Aisha Secondary School, Damaturu, Yobe; students of Dee Unique International School, Abesan, Ipaja, Lagos and students and staff of Purple Crown Secondary School, Uwani, Enugu as well as a WADA advocacy visit to the paramount ruler of Alesa-Eleme kingdom, Emperor JD Nkpe 11,

Rivers state.

While commending the officers and men of the Bayelsa, Adamawa, Osun, Bauchi, Nasarawa, Edo, Kano, and Ogun Commands of the Agency for their outstanding feats in the past week, Chairman/Chief Executive Officer of NDLEA, Brig. Gen. Mohamed Buba Marwa (Retd) equally applauded their counterparts in all the commands across the country for intensifying their WADA advocacy lectures thus creating a fair balance between their drug supply reduction and drug demand reduction efforts.

Rivers Police Apprehends 2 Suspected Cultists Over Alleged Possession Of Firearm

By; **RAYMOND TEDUNJAYE, Lagos.**

Two suspected members of a cult group are now cooling their feet in police custody in Rivers State, New Nigerian Newspaper has learnt.

The duo identified as Ejike, 32, native of Omoku in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area and Victor Kokoriko, 29, from Sampo, Kolokuma/Opokuma LGA in Bayelsa were said to have been arrested on February 14, 2024 by police detectives accompanied by local vigilante while in possession of a locally made revolver pistol.

One of the suspects, Ejike Samuel, according to report was a former leader of the Castle (Dey-Bam) cult group and the leading cause of many clashes amongst the notorious groups. The Spokesperson of Rivers State Police Command SP Grace Iringe-Koko made the disclosure in a release on Sunday. She hinted that the suspects have been cooperating with the Police in the its investigations.

It reads, "The Rivers State Police continues to gain ground in its clamp down on cultism in the state with the arrest of the primary suspect

in the violent cult clash that rocked the Diobu axis of Port Harcourt early in 2024.

"Recall that on January 30, 2024, the Gambia/Ayama area of Diobu, Port Harcourt, witnessed a series of destructive clashes between rival cult groups. So violent were the clashes that they left several wounded and millions of Naira lost in damage to property. Several vehicles had their windshields smashed, and shops in the area were damaged and looted as the melee gained momentum, but the men of the Mile 1 Police Division intervened to curb the growing exchanges.

Several suspected cultists were arrested, and the case was transferred to the Anti-Cultism unit, where further investigations were carried out.

"As a fallout of the investigations, seven arrested were charged to court and remanded in the correctional center, Port Harcourt.

"Investigations also revealed that the leading cause of the clashes was one Ejike Samuel, a former leader in the Castle (Dey-Bam) cult group.

"On February 14, 2024, Ejike, a 32-year-old

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