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Insecurity: Convene Cluster Meetings To Curb Upsurge In Kidnapping, Afenifere Tasks Tinubu

■ Decries focus of kidnappers on defenseless, innocent school children



Governor Uba Sani yesterday, hosted the Hon. Minister of State for Education, Dr Yusuf Tanko at Sir Kashim Ibrahim House, the Minister and his entourage were in Kadua to sympathise with the governor following the unfortunate incident of the kidnapping of school children at Kuriga Village,

By: BAYO AKAMO,
Ibadan

The Pan-Yoruba socio-cultural and political organization, Afenifere yesterday, tasked President Bola Tinubu to convene cluster meetings with various communities to curb the upsurge in the incidents of kidnapping in various parts of the country, Afenifere in a statement by its National Publicity Secretary, Comrade Jare Ajayi said at the meetings, stakeholders should be

reminded of the risks and destructions that kidnapping and terrorism are causing them.

According to Afenifere, the time has come for the authorities at various levels in the country to put an end to the incidents of kidnapping in Nigeria, adding that the recent occurrence elicits greater concerns because of the focus by the kidnappers on defenseless and innocent school children.

While stressing that the abductions of school children raises a lot of

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NEN Slams United Nigerians In Diaspora Over Calls For INEC Chair Resignation

By; ISAAC ODEH, Kaduna

The call for the resignation of Professor Mahmoud Yakubu, Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), by the United Nigerians in the Diaspora (UND) has sparked a strong reaction from the Northern Emancipation Network (NEN).

In a statement issued by its chairman, Suleiman Abba, the NEN condemned the UND's threat of street protests in major cities around the world as outrageous, unpatriotic, and lacking in substance.

The NEN strongly condemned the attacks on Professor Yakubu, whom they said led INEC to conduct credible elections in 2023 and highlighted the importance of these elections in ensuring the victory of popular will over desperate attempts to subvert it.

"The elections, under Yakubu's leadership, offered hope for a better future for Nigeria- one without the threat of Boko Haram and bandits, where the youth have access to education, skills, and job opportunities, and where corruption is tackled head-on," it said.

NEN expressed concerns that the targeting of Professor Yakubu and the disrespect shown towards him could potentially lead to national crisis and even the breakup of the country.

"It is crucial to recognize and appreciate the efforts of individuals like Professor Yakubu who

work tirelessly to uphold democracy and ensure free and fair elections.

"Attacking those who are dedicated to serving the country and its people is not only unjust but also poses a serious threat to the stability and unity of the nation.

"It is imperative that we support and protect individuals like Professor Yakubu who are committed to promoting democracy and good governance in Nigeria.

"It is important to note that Nigeria is a sovereign nation and should not be influenced by the empty threats of individuals who seek to undermine its democratic institutions. The NEN has labelled the members of the UND as fugitives who have little to no interest in the progress and development of Nigeria.

"It is clear that these individuals are not contributing constructively to the political landscape of Nigeria and are instead hiding behind the veil of international diplomacy to further their own agenda," it said.

Abba's statement highlighted, "the need for these so-called fugitives to return to Nigeria and actively participate in the political process in order to effect positive change.

"It is easy to criticize from afar, but true patriotism involves actively engaging in the democratic process and



INEC Chairman

working towards the betterment of one's country. The NEN is calling on these individuals to put their words into action and work towards building a better Nigeria, rather than resorting to empty threats and protests.

"Furthermore, the NEN emphasizes the importance of unity among Nigerians, both at home and in the diaspora. Divisive actions and rhetoric only serve to further polarize the nation and hinder progress. It is imperative that all Nigerians come together in a spirit of cooperation and solidarity in order to overcome the challenges facing the country.

"The NEN's reaction to the UND's renewed calls for the resignation of the

INEC Chairman sends a clear message that such actions are not in the best interest of Nigeria. Constructive engagement and dialogue are key to resolving differences and building a better future for the nation. It is time for all Nigerians, both at home and abroad, to work together towards a common goal of national unity and progress.

"The NEN's warning about the repercussions of undermining such individuals should serve as a wake-up call for all stakeholders to prioritize the preservation of peace and unity in the country. It is only by working together and respecting the rule of law that Nigeria can truly progress and fulfill its immense potential," it stressed.

AYCF Faults Calls For Street Protest Seeking INEC Chair Resignation

By; JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

The recent threats of street protests in major cities around the world by the United Nigerians in the Diaspora (UND) to call for the resignation of Professor Mahmoud Yakubu, Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), have agitated the Arewa Youth Consultative Forum.

AYCF president general, Yerima Shettima said in a statement that the threat is nothing but a sponsored heinous plot to undermine the gains recorded by INEC and the democratic stability attained by Nigeria, saying this malicious attempt must be vehemently resisted.

"This orchestrated campaign also appears to be part of a wider clandestine plot to discredit Nigerian institutions and reverse the populist tendencies of the Bola Tinubu administration. It is imperative that we stand against any efforts to destabilize our democracy and tarnish the reputation of those working tirelessly to ensure free and fair elections..

"It is also concerning that certain individuals in the Diaspora are using the platform provided by foreign countries to propagate hate and incite discontent against Nigeria," it said.

The Arewa Youth Consultative Forum condemned the behavior and called on the international community not to allow their spaces to be used for such nefarious purposes.

"Countries like the United Kingdom and the United States have laws in place to prohibit hate speech and incitement of violence, and it is surprising that they have not taken action against the threats made by UND.

"As a sovereign country, Nigeria has always maintained friendly and supportive relationships with its international partners. However, the actions of UND are seen as unpatriotic and aimed at destabilizing the peace and unity of Nigeria.

"In the UK, the Criminal Justice and Public Order

Act 1994 clearly prohibits anyone from causing alarm or distress by using threatening, abusive, or insulting words or behavior. Similarly, the US laws, as seen in the case of Brandenburg v. Ohio, forbid speech that incites imminent lawless action.

"The actions of UND clearly falls within the purview of these laws, yet no action has been taken by the authorities in these countries. If the tables were turned, and a US citizen were to call for mass protests against the US on Nigerian soil, the outrage would be palpable. Nigeria would not tolerate such behavior, and the US would vehemently react," it said.

AYCF said that it is therefore, disappointing that Nigeria's international partners have allowed their territories to be used as a launching pad for such a campaign against Nigeria.

"It is imperative that the international community upholds the principles of friendship and mutual respect between nations. Allowing hate speech and incitement against a sovereign country like Nigeria goes against the spirit of diplomacy and international cooperation. Nigeria has always been a loyal friend to its partners, and it is disheartening to see this loyalty not reciprocated in times of need," the statement pointed out.

The Arewa Youth Consultative Forum called on the international community to take a stand against the threats made by UND and to uphold the principles of peace, unity, and mutual respect.

"Nigeria deserves the support and protection of its international partners, and it is essential that they take action to prevent the spread of hate speech and incitement of violence on their territories.

"Therefore, it is crucial for all Nigerians, both at home and in the diaspora, to remain vigilant and united in denouncing such malicious acts that seek to undermine the progress of our nation. We must uphold the values of democracy, transparency, and accountability, and reject any attempts to sow division and chaos within our society.

Insecurity: One Feared Dead, Vehicles Burnt As Hoodlums Attack Ebonyi Hotel

By; M K P U M A ENYINNA, Abakaliki

Following the rising spate of insecurity, one person has been reportedly killed by unidentified gunmen in a hotel around Ezzamgbo junction axis in Ohaukwu

Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.

While confirming the incident, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Joshua Ukandu on Monday, said the gunmen attacked a hotel located around Ezzamgbo

junction on Sunday night, which led to unfortunate killing of one person.

According to the Police spokesperson, several vehicles were set ablaze in the hotel by the gunmen during the attack.

He said that the police has

swung into action, to unravel those behind the attack and therefore called on the people to go about their normal businesses as police authorities are on top of the matter.

Fear Grips UNTH Enugu Workers As GunMen Invade Premises, Kidnap Female Director, Security Man

By; **KELVIN OKPARA, Enugu**

Fear has gripped workers of the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital (UNTH), Ituku Ozalla, and environs, following the invasion of its premises yesterday morning by suspected kidnapers, who allegedly abducted a female Director (name withheld)

in one of the departments and a private security man. It was gathered that the kidnapers opened fire on the SUG vehicle of the director while driving to work, which forced her to stop, after which the gunmen whisked her away alongside the security man to unknown destination.

Our correspondent reports that the ugly incident has

thrown workers of the hospital located along the insecured Enugu-Port Harcourt express way in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State into fear.

It would be recalled that some medical doctors serving at the hospital were about two years ago, kidnapped by unknown gunmen who later released them after allegedly

collecting huge ransom.

Efforts by our reporter to speak with the State Police Command on the development failed, as its spokesman, DSP Daniel Ndukwe, did not pick the calls put across to his phone, neither did he reply the SMS sent to him.

As at the time of filling this report, the hospital leadership is yet to make any statement on the incident.

Bodija Explosion: Over N177m Spent On Accommodation, Feeding, Medical Bills Of Victims - Oyo Govt

**Says victims well catered for*

By; **BAYO A KAMO, Ibadan**

Oyo State Government on Monday, declared that contrary to insinuations that it has abandoned welfare of victims of Bodija explosion in Ibadan, it has committed over N160 million on their accommodation and feeding alone

The State Commissioner for Information, Prince Dotun Oyelade who made this known in a statement said the state government has also picked up a medical bill of over N17 million while those still in hospitals are being actively catered for."

Prince Oyelade while debunking the insinuation maintained that "the rumour is unfair and unnecessary", adding that ever since the January 16

explosion, "government has been spending between 15 and 20 million naira weekly on accommodation and feeding for the victims in the past eight weeks".

"As we speak, government has spent over N160 million on accommodation and feeding alone for the victims who were immediately accommodated at the Hotels and the 38 of them still residing in the various hotels," he said.

The Commissioner added, "In the same vein, government has picked up a medical bill of over N17 million while those still in hospitals are being actively catered for."

Prince Oyelade pointed out that 7 decent hotels, some in highbrow areas, are being used to accommodate victims of

the unfortunate incident, adding "N2 million is spent weekly, amounting to N16 million in eight weeks, for security operatives to protect the property left behind by the victims."

Commenting on the rumour that some of the victims were ejected from their hotels, saying, "One of the hotels at Idi-Ape informed their occupants that they would like to fumigate their premises and the State government took it upon itself to immediately arrange transportation for the explosion victims to be accommodated in another hotel at Jericho together with members of their families'.

Emphasizing that Government does not think "making an issue of fumigating a facility is the correct thing to do because

such exercise is routine and the prerogative of the hotel owners", he noted that on the accusation that victims meals have been reduced to one, "government sees this as equally spurious because many hotels provide complimentary breakfast, and most of our wards go out in the day time, hence, government's decision to provide dinner".

The commissioner stressed that government is humbled by the gratitude and understanding shown by the victims and the populace alike who see the genuineness of government spending millions of naira to protect the property left behind by the victims including the large sums of money spent on their medical bills, accommodation and feeding so far.

Selling Of Palliatives: Borno APC Suspends Executive, 3 Others

By; **SADIQ ABUBAKAR, Maiduguri**

The Borno State Chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC) has suspended four members, including a state executive member, the ward chairman of Old Maiduguri, the ward secretary of Old Maiduguri, and a ward

executive member, for trading food palliatives approved by Zulum for vulnerable families.

Ali Kaka, Adam Ajiya, Mala Mohammed, and Usman Bukar, who are currently in the custody of the Nigerian Police CID, are accused of selling the palliatives token, which allows families to benefit from the governor's intervention, for personal

gains.

According to a statement released by Borno's APC secretary, the four executive members should remain suspended pending the outcome of the party's disciplinary committee investigation.

The statement quoted the party secretary as saying, "The State Working Committee of the All Progressives Congress

(APC) Borno State Chapter, in its meeting held on March 10, 2024, unanimously suspended a state exco member and three others as executive members of the party for gross misconduct."

The statement continued, "This decision has been made in accordance with the provisions of Article 21 of the party's Constitution."

Nigeria Blessed With Everything, Has No Reason To Suffer - CAN

**Says greed secretly killing Nigeria*

By: **AUSTINE EMMANUEL, Kaduna**

Christian Association of Nigeria, (CAN)

Kaduna State Chapter has appealed to political leaders and citizens to embrace liberality against greed, which was described as a silent menace killing the country. The CAN Chairman, Kaduna state Rev. Caleb Ma'aji made the appeal in Kaduna, on the occasion of his 54th birthday anniversary, said Nigeria is blessed with everything and has no reason to suffer.

Rev. Ma'aji who lamented the state of the country, asserted that Nigeria has been plunged into the current economic realities on the grounds of greed, adding that both leaders and the downtrodden are fighting for their personal gain without minding the implication of their actions on the destiny of others.

Speaking on the need for Nigerians to retrace their steps back to God and the good old days where everybody lived together as family, the CAN chairman remarked that life is transient and as such people must learn to live their life with eternity in view so as to have a glorious end.

"One thing I know is that life is transient, life is temporal. But even though this life is transient, it is an

opportunity for us to prepare ourselves for eternity. We must live as wise people especially as we grow older. Our life should be tailored through meeting with our creator which obviously every man must come face to face with Him.

"God has so much blessed and chosen Nigeria. He has blessed us with everything we need both human, materials, resources and even immaterial but it is utilizing it inappropriately and wrongly that is causing us the pains that we are going through today.

"There is no fear of God in the lives of the leaders and there is equally greed on the path of the followership. When God is not allowed to be in the centre of everything that has to do with us and our lives, we are certainly prone to have crisis, chaos and suffering.

"When leadership leads with the fear of God and the followers also follow with the fear of God, that is when we will have progress and with every sense of sincerity, the better for all of us. But when everybody is just fighting for their own, then Nigerians are bound to suffer.

"The leadership of this country must have the fear of God because the way they live, one day they will be accountable to God.

Life, power and position are all transient. They all come and with time, they will go away but one thing is sure, the accountability to God is unshakable, we cannot compromise it and we cannot negotiate it." The cleric said.



Reverend Ma'aji

Ramadan: Time To Renew Our Relationship With Almighty Allah, Touch Lives Of Less Privileged - Uba Sani

By; FUNMI ADERINTO, Kaduna

Governor of Kaduna State, Senator Uba Sani on Monday, felicitated the Muslim faithful in the state, Nigeria and across the globe on the commencement of the glorious month of Ramadan.

Governor Uba Sani said Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam.

"It is a time for sober reflection, generosity, self-denial and empathy. It is a time to touch the lives of the poor, vulnerable and underserved across the world.

"I urge us to seize the opportunity of this Ramadan period to renew our relationship with

Almighty Allah. Our disengagement from our creator is responsible for most of the ills in our respective countries.

"For us in Nigeria, the Ramadan period affords us the opportunity to reflect on the huge economic and security challenges facing our country, work as a collective to fashion effective strategies, and seek Allah's guidance and intervention. With fervent prayers, all things are possible.

"I wish the good people of Kaduna State a glorious Ramadan. May the spirit of this holy month stay in our hearts and illuminate our souls.

Ramadan Mubarak," he said.

African Guarantee Fund Hosts Green Finance Conference

By; AMOS TAUNA, Kaduna

Plans have been concluded by the African Guarantee Fund (AGF), in collaboration with the Nordic Development Fund (NDF), to host the 9th Edition of the Green Finance Conference and Trainings in Lagos, Nigeria, from March 12 to 15, 2024.

Organised by AGF and sponsored by NDF, the Green Finance Conference, is a crucial response to the challenges posed by climate change within the framework of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Franck Adjagba, the AGF Group Director of Business Development, noted that the conference aims to facilitate increased financing for low-carbon development with a focus on providing enhanced

expertise to African countries.

The conference, according to him, holds paramount significance for financial institutions as it realistically analyses existing opportunities and proposes practical solutions to address financing for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) committed to green growth and climate-resilient development.

"We are establishing a significant collaboration with banks to secure funding for environmentally friendly micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Nigeria," he explained.

The AGF Group Director of Business Development, said that the goal is to ease the financial support for green businesses in the country.

According to him, Nigeria plays a pivotal role in global climate discussions and contributes significantly to shaping AGF's objectives of enabling the country to tailor its strategies towards global discourse on climate-related matters.'

Ramadan 2024: Pray For Repositioning Of Nigeria's Economy, Security - PDP Chieftain, Abidikugu

**Felicitates Muslims, Olubadan on 2nd coronation anniversary*

By; BAYO AKAMO, Ibadan

People's Democratic Party, (PDP) Chieftain in Oyo State, Dr Kazeem Adesina Abidikugu on Monday, charged Muslims in the country to pray for the repositioning of Nigeria's economy and security.

Dr Abidikugu who gave the charge in a message to felicitate Muslims in Ibadan and Oyo State on this year's Ramadan fasting, also congratulated the Olubadan of Ibadanland, Oba Mohood Olalekan Balogun on his second year coronation anniversary.

He emphasized that during the fasting period, Muslims should endeavour to pray for Nigeria, Oyo State and the leaders both at the federal and at the state level.

The PDP House of Representatives aspirant for Ibadan South East / North East Federal Constituency in the 2023 general elections, stressed the need for Muslims to remember the purpose of Ramadan, "a month in which it is believed that the Holy Qur'an was sent down from heaven as a

guidance for men and women, a declaration of direction and a means of salvation.

"As Muslims as you observe a strict fast from dawn until sunset, I implore you to pray for our dear country, Nigeria, our state, Oyo state and our leaders both at the Federal and at the state level. In particular, I want us to use the period of Ramadan to

pray for the repositioning of our country's economy and security", he said.

Dr Abidikugu added, "Let me also use the occasion of the Ramadan to appreciate the good work being done by our Governor, Engr. Seyi Makinde and our leader and PDP Deputy National Chairman (South), Ambassador Taofeek Arapaja for the wisdom Allah has granted them to continue to pilot

the affairs of our great party, the PDP.'

"I wish all our Muslim brothers and sisters, a peaceful and blessed Ramadan".

The United Kingdom based Psychiatric Consultant, congratulated the Olubadan and the entire Ibadan Indigenes and residents on the occasion of the Olubadan's second coronation anniversary.

He stressed that the fact that the anniversary coincided with the beginning of Ramadan, is a sign that Allah has blessed the anniversary.

Dr Abidikugu said the period of the present Olubadan has brought immense peace to Ibadan land, calling on Almighty Allah to give the Olubadan good health and wisdom to continue to pilot the affairs of Ibadanland.



Dr. Abidikugu

Food Security: Value Seeds Commissions Genetic Laboratory In Zaria

**Says its first of kind in West Africa*

By; SANI ALIYU, Zaria

Value Seeds Limited has commissioned a genetic Laboratory in Zaria with the aim of enhancing food production in the country.

Speaking at the flag off ceremony, the president

of the company, Sir. George Zangir said that the aim of the gesture is to enhance food production in Nigeria. Zangir said the genetic laboratory will serve as a research and training facility so that farmers will meet their aspirations.

He noted that the genetic

laboratory will help immensely in ensuring up to date seeds are provided for enhanced food production.

Earlier, the acting Director General National Seeds Council of Nigeria, Dr. Khalid Ishiaku commended the company for establishing the

laboratory.

Also in her remarks, the Vice President Value Seeds Limited, Cassandra George said the laboratory is the first of its kind in West African Sub region.

She reassured the commitment of the company in providing modern seeds to farmers



Insecurity: Convene Cluster Meetings To Curb Upsurge In Kidnapping, Afenifere Tasks Tinubu

■ Decries focus of kidnappers on defenseless, innocent school children

concern, it noted, "It is a fact that illiteracy level in Nigeria, particularly in the North, is very high. When those who summoned courage to go to school are being traumatized, they and their parents can be highly discouraged from going to school".

The Pan-Yoruba socio-cultural and political organization pointed out that "the implication of a large illiterate population

is too obvious to merit reiterating", as "Some returning kidnap victims asserted that the timing of abductions should be a pointer to the motive of the abductors"

It emphasized that the recent occurrence elicits greater concern because of the focus by the kidnappers on defenseless and innocent school children.

" Reports have it that last

week Wednesday, some terrorists seized some women and children who were searching for firewood. The victims were from one of the camps for displaced persons (IDP) in Borno State. Information about it did not filter out on time because local mobile telephone lines had reportedly been destroyed", it said

Afenifere added, " The

following day, 287 children, aged between eight and 15, and some teachers, were reportedly abducted by gunmen from a school in Kuriga, Kaduna State'.

"These incidents occurred as the nation soberly prepares to mark 10th anniversary of the abduction of secondary school girls in Chibok in April, 2014"

CNPP, CSOs Insist On Thorough Investigation Of N3trn 2024 Budget Padding Allegation

*Says Senator Jeriagbe's Revelation A Clue To Corruption in the Senate

By: JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

Conference Of Nigeria Political Parties (CNPP) and over 75 allied civil society organisations under the umbrella of the National Civil Society Organisations Against Inept Leaders, have insisted on thorough and independent investigation of the alleged 2024 budget padding by Senator Abdul Ningi despite the suspension of the Senator for three months, saying that their 14-day ultimatum stands.

In their statement jointly signed by the Deputy National Publicity Secretary of CNPP, Comrade James Ezema, and the National Secretary of the coalition of CSOs,

Alhaji Ali Abacha, the bodies noted that the Senate plenary yesterday was "obviously teleguided to an obvious scripted end."

They also noted that, "in the cause of the debate on the budget padding allegation, the Senator representing Cross River North Senatorial District, Senator Jarigbe Agom Jarigbe made a shocking disclosure that ranking Senators received as high as N500 million from the 2024 budget, saying, "All of us are culpable. Some so-called Senior Senators here got 500 million Naira each from the 2024 Budget, I am a ranking Senator and I didn't get anything. No Senator has a right to accuse Senator Ningi.

"Even though Senator Jarigbe's mic was abruptly shut down and the floor of the Senate immediately became rowdy, the revelation shows that there is more happening in the Senate than Nigerians know. Senator Jarigbe's revelation is indeed a clue to corruption in the Senate under the current leadership.

"We, therefore, insist that the budget padding allegation and the revelation by Senator Jeriagbe must be independently investigated if the Senate can come clear on the matter.

"It is unacceptable for the President of the Senate to seat as Chairman of an investigative plenary where allegation against

him was being debated.

"Nigerians saw how interested Senators moved here and there at the senate chamber while the President of the Senate, Senator Godswill Akpabio rose to read some senate rules empowering him to mute any senator speaking at plenary at his own whims and caprices.

"We are resolute that the only way for the senate to come clean on the budget padding allegation is after an independent probe has been carried out, especially in view of the Senator Jeriagbe's disclosure and our 14-day ultimatum for the Senate to step aside for independent probe stands", the CNPP and the CSOs coalition said.

Gov Ododo Mourns Ex-ACF Chairman, Aduku



By: ADAMA JOHN, Lokoja

Kogi State Governor, Ahmed Usman Ododo has expressed sorrow over the death of the immediate past chairman of the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), Arc. Gabriel Yakubu Aduku who passed on in the early hours of Monday.

A statement by the Special Adviser on Media to the Governor, Ismaila Isah, said that Ododo described Arc. Aduku, a one time Minister of State for Health, as a frontline politician and a respected community leader who contributed immensely to the development of Kogi State and Nigeria.

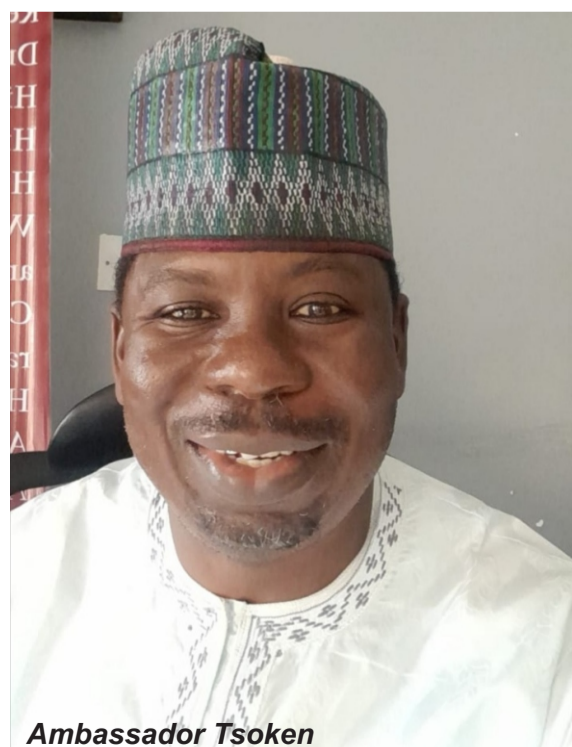
The governor noted that Arc. Aduku was an uncommon politician whose intellectual abilities and political acumen impacted the political landscape of Kogi State and Nigeria at large.

A lamenting Ododo described the death of Arc. Aduku as a major loss to

the people of Kogi State who have been deprived of the wisdom and guidance of a man whose vast experience in different spheres of life would remain a point of reference for the younger generation. "The late Arc. Aduku who was the President of the Nigerian Institute of Architects until his death, was a consummate professional whose experience inspired many Kogites and Nigerians across generations," the statement added.

Governor Ododo commiserated with the family of the late Octogenarian and the people of the state for the irreparable loss and prayed for the peaceful repose of the soul of the late politician.

Chief Gabriel Aduku was born on Thursday February 3, 1944 in Anyigba, Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State and died at the age of 80 in the United States of America.



Ambassador Tsoken

Reducing Cost Of Governance: APC-IGG Expresses Optimism Over Tinubu's Policies

By: JABIRU A. HASSAN, Kano

The National President of the APC Initiative For Good Governance (APC-IGG), Ambassador Musa Mohammed Tsoken has expressed optimism that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's governance policy would

yield positive results for a better Nigeria.

He expressed this in a message to the people of Nigeria, while reacting to the present administration's policy on the reduction of the cost of governance, where he applauded President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for initiating changes that would make the

country better.

Ambassador Musa Tsoken said that, "from what the present administration is doing, Nigerians would soon realize that our president is trying his best to save this great nation from being harsh to its citizens and I am certain that in the near future, Nigeria would be sweet and a real domain for every

citizen".

Ambassador Musa Mohammed Tsoken on behalf of the national executives of the APC-IGG, the zonal coordinators, states, local government and wards leaders called for more prayers from all citizens for peace and unity and development.

Fintiri Flags-off Disbursement of N50,000 Cash Grants To 10,000 Micro-business Owner Across Adamawa

By; TINA PHINEAS, Yola

In his efforts to empower entrepreneurs to thrive in a competitive marketplace, Governor, Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri of Adamawa State has flagged-off the disbursement of cash grants of N50,000 to 10,000 micro-business owners in the state.

According to him, the empowerment programme is a significant milestone of his administration's commitment to uplifting the socio-economic status of the people and foster inclusive growth across all sectors of the economy in the state.

Fintiri explained that the disbursement was done through the state government's Poverty Alleviation and Wealth Creation Agency (PAWECA) established to liberate the state from poverty and empower citizens of the state with skills.

"As a government, we recognise that micro-businesses form the backbone of our local communities, driving innovation, creating employment opportunities, and contributing to the overall prosperity of our people and our dear state.



Gov Fintiri

"The decision to allocate these cash grants stems from our unwavering dedication to alleviating poverty and empowering our entrepreneurs to thrive in a competitive marketplace. By providing direct financial assistance to 10,000 micro-business owners, we aim to catalyse their growth, enhance their productivity, and enable them to scale-up their ventures to new heights.

"We understand the challenges faced by micro-business owners, from limited access to capital to lack of resources and infrastructure," he said

The Fresh Air Governor

maintained that these cash grants are not merely handouts, but strategic investments in the future of Adamawa State, adding that they represent a tangible expression of our belief in the entrepreneurial spirit of our people and our commitment to creating an enabling environment for business success.

Speaking at the occasion, the Commissioner for Entrepreneurship Development, James Iliya said the Fintiri Business Wallet has touched all nooks and crannies of the state.

He appreciated the governor for fulfilling his campaign promise which

he noted will boost the economy of the state

Earlier, Head of PAWECA, Haj Aisha Baja Bello described the beneficiaries as future entrepreneurs of the state appreciating the Governor for the rare opportunity to serve humanity

She said the 10,000 beneficiary were drawn from across the 226 wards of the

state, highlighting achievements of the Governor and urging the beneficiaries to reciprocate by being prudent and productive

In his goodwill message, Speaker of the State Assembly, Rt. Hon. Bathiya Wesley commended the foresight of the governor in reaching out to the downtrodden urging him not to relent

Speaking on behalf of the beneficiaries, Eunice Kiliyobas described Governor Fintiri as a man of his words, who is determined to empower those in need promising to make judicious use of the resources.

Benue Police Command Arrests Suspected Gun Manufacturers

By; ARCHIBONG ESUENE, Makurdi

As part of efforts to clamp down on proliferation of fire arms in Benue State, the State Police Command has intensified intelligence gathering on arm manufacturers, leading to the arrest of a suspected gun manufacturer.

In an interview with newsmen in Makurdi, the Benue State capital, the Police Commissioner, Emmanuel Adesina said a team of Operation Zenda JTF invaded an arm manufacturing hideout at Amahundu, Nanev, Kwande Local Government Area and arrested the suspects.

The commissioner further said that the following persons were arrested, Terfa aka "Gadafi" 24 yrs Aondonaugen Tse-aa 36 yrs and Torkuma Iorlaha 27 years.

Others are, Hangeior Atim 25 years Tyav Terwase 35 years, Gundu Gbagbogum 50

years,

Terwase Shimashan 20 years and Terese Terver aka "Gbatiir" 18 years.

According to the Benue State Police Commissioner, the suspects are all of various addresses in Kwande Local Government Area and Adinga Ramseydihno 33 years from Republic of Cameroon.

He said the suspects confessed to be involved in manufacturing, local sales and export of arms.

Exhibits recovered from them include; eight (8) Barretta pistols under fabrication, one (1) fabricated AK47 rifle, ten (10) AK47 live ammunition, five (5) Barretta Pistol ammunition, four (4) welding gas cylinders and other fabricating materials. The Benue State Police boss pointed out that Investigation is ongoing to unravel the source of their raw material and other possible hideouts.

Keep Off Waterways Or Be Punished, Navy Commander Warns Pirates

By; PATRICK TITUS, Uyo

The Commander, Nigerian Navy, NNS Jubilee, Ikot Abasi in Akwa Ibom State, Commodore Martins Fakrogha has warned sea pirates and their sponsors to keep off the territorial waterways as the Command under his watch is committed to ensuring a safer maritime highway in the state.

Commodore Fakrogha stated this when members of the Correspondents' Chapel of NUJ, Akwa Ibom State Council visited the command on a courtesy visit last week.

He said that the charge as handed to the Command by the Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice Admiral

Emmanuel Ogalla was to ensure a zero tolerance of any form of criminality on the Nation's waterways.

Fakrogha's warning came on the heels of the reported criminal activities of sea pirates, who frequently carried out attacks, maimed and sometimes killed the fishermen on Akwa Ibom waterways and carted away their valuables at gunpoint.

Promising to end menace, Commodore Fakrogha sounded a warning, "A new sheriff is in town, sea pirates and their sponsors should be careful. When I catch them, I will deal with them in accordance with the law. We don't take rubbish from

anybody. Whoever they are getting their backing from will also not escape the full wrath of the law. This actually is coming as a directive from Chief of the Naval Staff who has told us that he has zero tolerance for any form of criminality in our waterways." The Commander warned.

The NNS Jubilee Commander, who regretted that the sea pirates live in the up land among the inhabitants, take care of their businesses but go to high sea to rob the unsuspecting fishermen and other waterways users, called on members of the public to volunteer information to enable officers of the Command

to bring them to book in line with the law.

On the waterways, he said that the Command has mapped out strategies to unsettle the sea pirates to ensure the fishermen and others doing legitimate businesses on the waterways are protected.

Among the strategies, he said include regular patrol of the waterways, providing escorts to vessels doing businesses on the waterways on demand, routine stop and search of each vessel to ascertain what vessel is being used for as well as maintaining robust collaboration with ship and boat owners for better surveillance on the sea.

He commended the Correspondents' Chapel members for coming to partner with the command to effectively propagate its activities.

"With this collaboration and this partnership, I want to believe that whenever we call you, you will please respond to us because from time to time, we will definitely call you." Comdore Fakrogha assured.

Earlier, the chairman of the Correspondents' Chapel, Comrade Basse Anthony represented by the Vice Chairman, Comrade Isaiah Eka told the Commander that the visit was for members to familiarize with him, and foster a robust

Kano Governor Inaugurates Environmental Sanitation Equipment

*Assures of healthy environment

By; JABIRU A. HASSAN, Kano

Kano State Governor, Engineer Abba Kabir Yusuf has inaugurated environmental sanitation equipment to actualize his government's determination to enhance healthy environment. Speaking at the inaugural ceremony, Governor Yusuf announced that his administration would continue to provide all the

necessary support that would facilitate waste disposal and routine environmental sanitation in the Kano metropolis and at the rural areas.

The governor added that, "Our objective is to enhance full environmental sanitation in our state in order to ensure that our environment is healthy, especially at present when the globe is taking measures to make livelihood more secured.



Kuriga Abduction: Education Minister, NSCDC Commandant, UNICEF Visit Uba Sani

By ; F U N M I
ADERINTO, Kaduna

Governor of Kaduna State, Senator Uba Sani yesterday, hosted the Honourable Minister of State for Education, Dr Yusuf Tanko at the Council Chambers of Sir Kashim Ibrahim House. The Honourable Minister and his entourage were in Government House for a sympathy visit to the Governor and the good people of Kaduna State following the unfortunate incident of the kidnapping of school children at Kuriga Village, Chikun Local government in Kaduna. The governor also hosted National Commandant of

the Nigerian Civil Defence Corps, Dr Ahmed Abubakar Audi at Sir Kashim Ibrahim House, Kaduna to commiserate with the Kaduna State Government following the unfortunate incident of the kidnapping of school children at Kuriga Village. He also received a delegation from UNICEF at the council chambers of Sir Kashim Ibrahim House. The UNICEF delegation, led by Dr Gerida Birukila came to Government House to sympathise with the Kaduna State Government and offer a hand of support following the unfortunate incident of the kidnapping of school children at Kuriga Village.



Family Business: Military Discovers Gun Making Factory In Delta

**Arrests 8 family members*

By; UTEBOR PETER,
Asaba

The 63 Brigade of the Nigerian Army in Asaba has discovered a weapons manufacturing factory in Onicha Olona, Aniocha North Local Government Area of Delta State.

Nigerian Army discovered the gun manufacturing factory with the capacity to produce over ten guns in a week

Briefing newsmen at the illegal arms factory, the Commander 63 Brigade, Brigadier General Ugochukwu Unachukwu, disclosed this at Onicha Olona in Aniocha North yesterday morning.

According to Brigadier General Ugochukwu Unachukwu, "eight suspects involved in the family business including the mastermind of the operation, his father, mother and sister were among those arrested at the factory.

The arms factory located in a forest has a surveillance post, a generating set connected from a remote location, an oven for melting of iron and a



The Commander 63 Brigade, Brigadier General Ugochukwu Unachukwu, at the forest briefing newsmen

cache of arms and ammunition.

While briefing newsmen on the arrest, the Commander 63 Brigade, Brigadier General Ugochukwu Unachukwu said that, "the army had recovered items for the manufacturing of improvised explosive devices IEDs including shrapnels, detonators and the container.

"The activities of the suspects was a major contributor to

insecurity in the region and the country.

"In this axis, it is only IPOB and Eastern Security Network that uses improvised explosive devices and even drones.

"A normal AK-47 magazine carries 30 rounds, but this man is modifying AK-47 magazine to carry 60 rounds.

"Anybody that is involved in act of insurgency that is

against the peace and stability of Nigeria, we will get to you." He said.

The prime suspect, 22 year old Emmanuel Eboka, admitted to have rented some of the arms to criminal elements for set fees.

According to him, "When I repair it for them I don't charge them, they just give me whatever is in their mind. I don't charge them.

"My daddy said I should leave his veranda, because he is not comfortable with me being around his veranda that is why I shifted to this side (the forest)."

On his part, his parents Mrs and Mrs Isioma and Angela Eboka, acknowledged they were aware of the illegal activities of their son, but denied any knowledge that he was providing arms and ammunition to criminals.



The cache of arms and ammunition discovered by the Army.



COMMUNITY FOCUS

Otukpo Elders Visit FUSHO, Pledge Total Support To Prof Ujah

By: ARCHIBONG ESUENE, Makurdi

To cement the already existing cordial relationship between the Federal University of Health Sciences, Otukpo Benue State and the host community, the elders of Otukpo District paid a courtesy visit to the institution, pledging their full support to Prof. Innocent Ujah-led management team.

In the same vein, the Otukpo District Elders commended the Federal government for the establishment of the first Federal Medical University in Idoma land, which according to them, has impacted positively on the development of Idoma land.

The team which was led by his Royal Highness, the Ochi Otukpo, Dr. John Eimonye, said the Elders of the land were in FUSHO to cement the existing harmonious relationship between the federal institution and the host community for the progress of Idoma land in particular and Benue State in general.

The Royal Father who spoke briefly before handing over to the official spokesman of the Otukpo District Elders, who is the immediate past Deputy Governor of Benue State, Engr. Benson Abounu, commended the visionary leadership of the pioneer Vice Chancellor, Prof. Innocent Ujah and his management team and promised the full support of the traditional institution and entire Otukpo District to support the university.

Speaking on behalf of the group, the former Deputy Governor, Engr. Benson Abounu acknowledged the enormous contributions of Professor Ujah to the development of medical profession, not only in Idoma land, but in Nigeria, having known him for over three decades.

He further said that the visit apart from cementing the existing relationship, is also to assuage any ill feelings especially with the reaction of Okpoga Olotuta

(Okpoga Development Community - ODC) over the unfortunate recent development, "what is paramount to us and the entire Idoma land is service and not sentiments".

The former deputy governor while vehemently debunking the negative impression that Otukpo community is unfriendly to the VC and his management team, said, "Otukpo as a people has never been against you, consequently when the youth go wrong, it is our duty to correct them and call them to order, They are still your children and I would want you to look at them as such."

Engr. Abounu who strongly condemned any unruly act against constituted authority, when there are proper channels to register grievances, said, "protest does not yield any positive result. If they have approached me or any of the elders here with their intentions or grudges, I think constructive dialogue with the management would have been the best way out because I know the VC very well and for what he stands for."

"In fact, I knew the VC since 1976 and I have been in constant touch with you. I know your character, and your behavior. I know that you are a goal getter, therefore, starting a university is not an easy thing and I am convinced that with you at the helm of affairs, the university will take off very well. Today, I think I have been proved right."

The elders commended the VC for the achievement recorded within a short period, especially the peaceful academic session and massive infrastructural development both at the temporary and permanent site, which has drastically transformed the socio economic activities of the host communities.

Responding, the VC Prof. Innocent Ujah expressed gratitude for the visit by the Otukpo District Elders,

He described Otukpo LGA as a home of



peace for not only the Idomas, but to every other Nigerian who has a good reason to visit.

Prof. Ujah told his guest that FUSHO is the first Federal University of Health Science in Nigeria and fastest growing because of the commitment of the principal pioneer management and staff. The VC who appealed for the entire Idoma land and Benue State to jealously guide the university, commended the efforts of the former Senate President, Senator David Alechenu Mark and the Federal Government for establishing the first specialist university of health in the state. According to Prof. Ujah, there is no perfection in life and urged stakeholders to embrace peace and dialogue as the management has achieved a lot in the last three years which he listed, the ongoing construction of Senate and Administrative building, College of Medicine, Faculty of Sciences, student hostels, Department of Physics and Microbiology, principal officers quarters, perimeter fencing and gate house.

Prof. Ujah disclosed that the remedial programme at the GRA campus of the university is aimed at addressing deficiencies particularly among students from the host community in sciences as part of their corporate social responsibilities apart from the employment as the university is a specialized medical university.

"I am sure that we are doing our best in that direction, but if our best is not enough, then we would put it into prayers so that it can be better because there is no perfection in life. I am very happy with Otada and Akpachi communities of the take off campus because they have been peaceful and hospitable".

The Ochi Otukpo, Dr John Eimonye was accompanied by the first class ruler of Otukpo/Ohimini, Chief Emmanuel Akochi, and former Deputy Governor, Engr. Benson Abounu, Prof. Okwoli Amali, Chief Owoicho Anyebe, Dr Innocent Ekoja and Chief Inalegwu among others.



Actively Participate In Politics, Gidan Yanchi Tells Kaduna Women

By; ISAAC ODEH, Kaduna

Women in Kaduna State have been urged to embrace and participate actively in politics, to ensure credible representation at all elective positions. The charge was handed out at a one day event organised by Gidan Yanci Fellows of Kaduna State, as part of activities to mark the 2024 International Women's Day (IWD). The IWD event with the theme, "invest in women" was held at the Yandy Tech on March 9, with the sub theme, "Accelerate progress." The event was targeted at celebrating women, while sensitizing them on the need to get involved in governance and decision making at

the grassroots. The participants at the event were over 30 persons, with majorly women. It was held in partnership with Governance For All Initiative and to commemorate the special day. During the event, there were break out sessions on political participation and financial literacy for women. The event ended with closing remarks from both programme leads of the Gidan Yanci Fellowship Kaduna, Miss Grace Hosea and Mr Mohammed Yayandi who urged women to take the lead and actively participate in politics, governance and decision making especially at the grassroots.



Borno First Lady Distributes N150m, Food Items To Vulnerable Families

***Zulum assures Borno women of increased access to livelihood**

By: SADIQ ABUBAKAR, Maiduguri

The First Lady of Borno State, Dr Falmata Babagana Umara Zulum, on Friday, celebrated the International Women's Day by distributing N150m cash and food items to 3,000 vulnerable women.

The International Women's Day (IWD) is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity.

This year's (2024) theme, "Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress", aims for gender equality and the well-being of women in all aspects of life.

Each of about 3,000 beneficiaries selected across the 27 local government areas of Borno received N50,000 cash, one bag of rice, one carton of macaroni and a gallon of five litres cooking oil.

"I am humbled and very excited today that 3,000 women pitched from all the 27 Local Government Areas of Borno State will be empowered with N50,000 each, a bag of 25kg rice, a carton of macaroni and a gallon of 5 litres of cooking oil," Dr Falmata Zulum said.

Meanwhile, Governor Babagana Umara Zulum has assured the women in the state of his administration's commitment to providing accessible livelihood sources to make them self-reliant as well as

contribute to the economic development of the state.

He said the Borno State Government would prioritise engaging women to learn vocational skills to enhance their livelihood.

"Let me assure you that my administration will continue to extend support to the women. We would, in addition to the five mega vocational institutes, provide more opportunities for women to engage in vocational education so that they can be self-reliant rather than receive handouts," Zulum stated.

He added, "What we are planning is not always to give rice and cash to our women, but empower you to stand on

your own."

"In this part of the world, women's development is key. Most of our women in the last ten years suffered unimaginable hardship. The terrorists destroyed their belongings, their husbands were killed, and they were traumatised. Therefore, women need to earn their livelihood by themselves," Zulum said.

The governor who promised to strengthen girl-child education, congratulate Borno women on the occasion of International Women's Day.

"We will prioritise the girl child's education because education is the bedrock for any meaningful development," Zulum assured.



New Media



Borno First Lady Distributes N150m, Food Items To Vulnerable Families

*Zulum assures Borno women of increased access to livelihood



Inauguration: Khatamul Anbiya Institute Of Islamic Science Marks Milestone In Kano

By; IMRANA ABDULLAHI,
Kaduna

The Khatamul Anbiya Institute of Islamic Science has been inaugurated in Kano.

The inauguration ceremony occurred on Saturday, March 9, 2024, at the school campus in the Nasarawa local government area of Kano State.

The ceremony commenced with an opening prayer recited by Sayyid Khidir, followed by a recitation of the Holy Qur'an by one of the students.

Engineer Muhammad S. Shuaibu, the Registrar, delivered a keynote speech during the official opening ceremony of the institute, where he emphasized the purpose behind its establishment.

He stated, "today marks a momentous occasion as we gather to celebrate not only the birth of an educational institution but the genesis of a transformative movement-one that endeavors to reshape the narrative surrounding religion, scholarship, and their impact on our beloved nation and humanity at large."

Additionally, he said; "Contrary to this distorted reality, true religion as taught and exemplified by the noble prophet of Islam, as advocates for compassion, tolerance, and mutual respect.

"It is within this troubling context, that the Khatamul Anbiya project was born - a noble initiative conceived by some well-meaning Nigerians burning with the fervor and desire to contribute positively to nation-building through the attainment of peaceful coexistence by the followers of different religious sects.

"The essence of this project lies in the profound idea of imparting the teachings of Islam in all its depth and breadth, with a methodology that emphasizes tolerance, dialogue among civilizations, and mutual respect

for alternative views."

He stressed that; "in undertaking this noble venture, the Khatamul Anbiya project extends its hands of friendship and brotherhood to all well-meaning Nigerians. We therefore, invite you to join us in this noble cause -a journey towards celebrating our individual differences as a source of unity, mutual respect, and a potent instrument for nation-building".

The registrar asserted that their objective would extend beyond that point; they are striving to establish Khatamul Anbiya University, which will compete with other universities.

"It is crucial to recognize that this institution is not an ultimate and a final destination in itself, but a much broader concept and a dynamic work in progress. Our vision extends beyond the confines of an institute, but one aspiring to evolve into a full-fledged university of international repute and standard.

"This future university that is to be known as Khatamul Anbiya University will be a beacon of religious harmony, consistently producing individuals who embody character and learning in the truest Islamic sense of these words," he said.

He emphasized the rationale for establishing the Islamic Institute, stating, "The Khatamul Anbiya Institute of Islamic Sciences stands as a testament to our collective commitment to fostering an environment where education transcends barriers, diversity is celebrated, and the true spirit of Islam guides us all towards a harmonious and prosperous society."

Following his address, the Provost of the Institute, Dr. Shuaibu Muhammad, delivered a speech in Arabic, wherein he underscored the mission behind the establishment of the Institute. Governor Abba Kabir Yusuf of Kano State in his remarks, pledged support for the Institute.



The governor emphasized that the Kano State Government has provided assistance to various institutes of this nature.

This commitment was conveyed by the State Commissioner for Education, Umar Haruna Doguwa, who represented the governor, stating, "I assure this institute that the governor will extend his support. We are undertaking this to assist everyone."

In his speech, the Emir of Kano, Alhaji Aminu Ado Bayero, expressed gratitude for the establishment of the Institute, urging it to persist in educating the students. He stated, "The Institute should continue to educate our children and impart to them the true teachings of Islam, so that they may benefit

themselves and society at large."

The Emir added, "We are very pleased with the mission of the institute. We urge the authorities and affluent individuals to collaborate with the Khatamul Anbiya Institute of Islamic Sciences to achieve this noble objective."

"We also implore the community to enroll their children so they may benefit from this bestowed blessing. We pray for Almighty Allah's support for the mission of the institute."

He conveyed appreciation to those who have contributed and will continue to contribute in the future to establish the University. Additionally, he stressed, "Every day, we embrace all the good deeds that will benefit the people of Kano and the nation as a

whole. We beseech them to ensure that this school belongs to the entire community of this state. All their actions should be guided by righteousness and the principles of the Islamic religion."

Lastly, he bestowed blessings upon the school.

The inauguration ceremony was graced by a multitude of eminent figures, such as His Royal Highness the Emir of Kano, Alhaji Aminu Ado Bayero, the Commissioner for Education of Kano State, Umar Haruna Doguwa, the Director of DSS in Kano State, and the State Police Commissioner, Academicians as well as Districts Heads, among others.

Power: Poor Supply Within Our Franchise Will Soon Be Over - IBEDC *Explains reasons for poor supply

By; BAYOAKAMO, Ibadan

Management of Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company Plc (IBEDC) on Sunday, explained reasons for poor electricity supply within its franchise covering Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Kwara and partly in Kogi, Niger and Ekiti states.

IBEDC Management in statement made available to newsmen in Ibadan however

declared that the poor supply will soon become a thing of the past.

IBEDC Management stressed that the Minister of Power, Chief Adebayo Adedun has taken urgent steps to address the issue of gas supply among others

In the statement, IBEDC Management pointed out that "Several factors" have contributed to the current state of the power supply within its franchise,

resulting in disruptions and inconveniences for residents and businesses

According to the Management, the factors are "the low supply of gas to generating companies (Gencos), scheduled maintenance activities conducted by the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), vandalism and theft of electricity infrastructures and payment apathy from

customers".

"Several factors have contributed to the current state of the power supply within our franchise, resulting in disruptions and inconveniences for residents and businesses. The Management of Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company Plc (IBEDC) would like to communicate these issues to foster understanding and

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Open Letter To President Bola Ahmed Tinubu Of Nigeria

By; **FADURI OLUWADARE JOSEPH**

Your Excellency Mr. President

Today I watched American President as he delivered State of the Union address to the Congress and the American people and I can't think to conclude that a President even at old age this brilliant would lead a great and prosperous nation.

A president who understands the issues, the problems of not just his citizens but knows how to navigate between his own people and the world at large. A president who speaks directly to the soul of the nation and a president who comes with so many positive policies and even in spite of the opposition he faces, still achieved thus much.

This brings me to write this open letter to Nigerian President President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. In as much as I am from the opposition Labour Party (LP), I still want my country to succeed because no doubt even in spite of Republican Party opposition to President Biden, every American still wants their leader to succeed.

I study so much American economy and as we strive so much to follow American system of government, one thing we refuse to follow is American law and order system and reward and punishment that makes America one of the greatest, if not the greatest nation on earth.

On the other hand, our nation has been so much bedeviled with corruption in high places, greed, embezzlement and hence the impact we feel on all sides of the economy that nothing seems to be working.

Many times, few of our leaders have good intentions, but when those intentions get to the implementation stage, they get messed up by corruption. This administration may have started on a wrong note of not properly delivering the Fuel Subsidy policy in its areas of implementation so also with the foreign currency unification policy but if we had sincere leaders and true players in these two sectors of oil and banking sectors, the impact of those failed policies wouldn't have hit us so hard the way it is hitting Nigerians today and to make the matter worst, no one gets punished for failed government policies even when we know they are sabotaged. We apply the full weight of the law to ordinary citizens, but to the political

class, they go scot-free when erred. Many politicians operates as if they are above the law. In our nation, this is why our nation is not moving forward.

There are so many bad eggs in leadership, especially in the two most sensitive ministry of Petroleum and banking: they seem to be above the law, they sabotage government effort to succeed and until we are ready to apply law and order to punish offenders when they do wrong, we won't have a nation and it will keep affecting our progress.

It is only in Nigeria that a minister of Humanitarian services erred and diverted government funds to personal use and after been removed from office we do not hear about it anymore: no punishment and no consequences for her actions has been made public apart from her removal.

People steal so much in government, and all that happens at the end of the day is emotional politics at the top, not applying the full weight of the law to punish offenders when they do. Many bank directors sabotaged the money unification policy to accrue wealth for themselves and their banks, knowing fully well that citizens will suffer, but nothing till today is done to any of them.

Only in Nigeria, people think of self and never thought of the nation at large.

In the light of the above, if this government must succeed, the government must cleanse NNPC of bad eggs and bad players. It must tighten its grip to know the exact production capacity we have by computerized the oil sector.

This government must also intervene in the banking areas by going after bank MDs and CEOs who keep benefiting and subverting government policies in their personal favor and interest. So if this government must



Faduri Oluwadare Joseph

succeed it must uphold the policy of rule of law, law and order etc, to purge itself from bad eggs. This nation cannot succeed if laws are not applied to correct those who sabotage the nation and the economy from time to time.

On insecurity, the level of poverty no doubt is contributory to the high level of insecurity and kidnapping we face in the nation, the war zone Ukraine/Russia, Israel and or Gaza is today safer than our country, especially the northern part of Nigeria. And except the government purge it's securities agencies from within, we won't have a head way in the fight against insecurity and kidnapping in our nation.

We must upgrade our intelligence unit, we must use modern day tools to collect data and intelligence within our nation to be able to correct and put the nation to flourish again so that farmers can return to farm and traders can

freely move from zone to zone.

Finally, this government needs to speak to Nigerian people all the time, not just once in a while, just like the American government speaks to his people almost everyday.

This government must require of its workers, the patriotic mind needed to make a country succeed, and then the citizens can follow suit to do the same. I pray this government is able to turn things around sooner and I wish Nigerians the patience to see the nation become better in their hands. God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

God bless Mr. President
God bless you all, and God bless me.

Signed:
Faduri Oluwadare Joseph,
Former Presidential Aspirant Labour Party (LP)
The Leader
Rescue Movement for New Nigeria.

Ramadan: Crash Prices Of Food Items, National Youth Alliance Urges Govts

By KATO P. LADAN, Kaduna

As Muslim faithful commence the Holy Month of Ramadan on Monday March 11, 2024, the executive at the federal, State and local government levels across Nigeria have been urged to ease the suffering in the land by finding a way to crash the soaring prices of food items.

This was expressed by the National Youth Alliance (NYA) in a statement signed by the SA Media and Publicity to the NYA President, Ambassador Aliyu Bin Abbas, Okpani Jacob Onjewu Dickson, made available on Monday March 11.

"Nigerians are in very difficult times at the moment and several families are finding it difficult to get a meal in a day, due to the inflation that has made prices of food items soar beyond the reach of the common man. "As Ramadan begins, we are worried that if nothing is done, many families would be fasting on empty stomachs," the statement said.

It explained that NYA President is therefore, appealing to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, governors of the 36 states, FCT Minister and chairmen of the 774 local government areas in the country to act fast in finding means to provide cheaper food stuff to Nigerians.

"This Holy Month of Ramadan is special and as such, it is important that no family stays hungry for one day. We are using this opportunity to also call on public spirited individuals and corporate organisations to reach out to the less privileged in this period, knowing that Almighty Allah will bless them abundantly," Ambassador Abbas said.

He congratulated Muslims for witnessing yet another Ramadan, while praying for Allah's Rahama all through the Holy Month.



Ambassador Aliyu Bin Abbas

Students Loan: Inventing A Problem Where None Exists

By Owei Lakemfa

THE STUDENTS Loan Scheme, planned to be floated in the next few weeks, is an ingenious creation of a problem that does not exist. I explained this as the Lead Discussant at the Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA), Branch of the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU), Colloquium on Wednesday, March 6, 2024 in Akure. I had begun my submission by enquiring if a citizen has a fundamental right to be an illiterate. I did not think so, but argued that even if he does, the collective rights of society supersede such an individual right. I pointed out that it is in realisation of the indispensability of education to society, that Chapter Two of the Constitution directs that: "Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy and to this end, Government shall as and when practicable provide free, compulsory and universal primary education; free secondary education; free university education; and free adult literacy programme."

If the loan is for only tuition, how will indigent students feed and accommodate themselves in the campuses? How would they buy books and other materials for their studies? How would they carry out necessary research? So, I submitted that the interests of the students and the government do not coincide. Also, the Act disqualifies a loan applicant if "any of the parents had defaulted in respect of students loan or any loan granted the person". This is like visiting the sins of the parents on the children.

So, if education is so fundamental to human existence, and if societies need an educated citizenry to run, why should it not invest in education? Why should the citizen take a loan to be educated?

I took the audience through the trajectory of the loan and my observations. The Students Loans (Access to Higher Education) Act 2023, was signed by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on June 12, 2023, exactly 14 days after he came into office. This gives the impression that the bill was signed in a hurry. On the other hand, it might have been signed on trust since it was introduced by former House of Representatives Speaker, Femi Gbajabamila, the Chief of Staff to the new administration.

The June 12 date was also Democracy Day, marking the commemoration of the June 12, 1993 annulment of the presidential election by the military regime led by General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida. So, did President

Tinubu, who played a role in the de-annulment struggle, see a correlation between democracy and the Students Loan Bill?

The title of the new law, 'The Students Loans (Access to Higher Education) Act 2023', gives the impression that it is meant to grant 'Access to Higher Education' in the country, which is not the case.

Nigerians' access to tertiary education is limited primarily by available admission spaces. This led to the 1978 establishment of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), to manage the admission process. So, the introduction of the loan scheme would not lead to increased admission slots.

Given the fact that, generally, tuition fees are not paid in public tertiary institutions, coupled with the reality that nearly all those who send their wards to tuition fee-paying private universities can afford to do so, it is curious why the Students Loan Scheme is being introduced. This is more so when Section 3 of the Act states that the loan is "only for payment of tuition fees".

My conclusion was that the Tinubu administration intends to introduce tuition fees into public tertiary institutions through the backdoor. I also pointed out that the challenge students face in our tertiary institutions is primarily upkeep. More so with hyperinflation. But the Act forbids students from accessing the loan for anything other than payment of tuition fees that do not exist in public schools.

If the loan is for only tuition, how will indigent students feed and accommodate themselves in the campuses? How would they buy books and other materials for their studies? How would they carry out necessary research? So, I submitted that the interests of the students and the government do not coincide. Also, the Act disqualifies a loan applicant if "any of the parents had defaulted in respect of students loan or any loan granted the person". This is like visiting the sins of the parents on the children.

Another aspect is that the new law grants beneficiaries a two-year post National Youth Service Corps moratorium before the repayment begins. Working beneficiaries who



dodge repayment risk a N500,000 fine or two-year jail or both fine and imprisonment.

"In my days, the loan was for upkeep. There was no tuition fee, nor is there tuition fee today. The intention of the government is quite obvious: that it is going to introduce tuition fees. But there are enough funds in Nigeria to fund education in a country where a single minister could within weeks of being in office, have access to billions of naira. The politicians know how to take care of themselves. It is a class issue; if you don't belong, you are finished."

I pointed out that given the reality of mass unemployment, many beneficiaries are likely to default as unemployed graduates will be unable to repay the loans. I pointed out that in the United States, students loan has become like an albatross. The outstanding debts in 2021 stood at \$1.7 trillion. Secondly, some youths are not getting married because of the burden of the students loan. The sociological implications of this include the promotion of depopulation, burden of single motherhood and increase in absentee fathers. Also, some American youths do not go to college because they want to avoid the loan trap. This partly informs why some developed countries are seeking professionals from the underdeveloped countries to run their system.

I concluded that the scheme may endanger the future of the students and, by extension, society. As alternative, I submitted that government should live up to its responsibility of funding education. This, I pointed out it can do, amongst other ways, by restoring the scholarship and bursary awards to students which used to be provided by all tiers of government.

Professor Bayo Aborishade, while also opposing the scheme, narrated his experience in the scheme in the country before it was abolished in the late 1970s.

"I took a students' loan scheme in 1974. It was N400 per annum. I paid back to the last kobo, but most students never paid back a kobo. Many of them were children of rich Nigerians who had the means, but saw the scheme as free money. On the loans form, they filled fake guarantors, the state never checked, and the loans were never repaid.

"In my days, the loan was for upkeep. There was no tuition fee, nor is there tuition fee today. The intention of the government is quite obvious: that it is going to introduce tuition fees. But there are enough funds in Nigeria to fund education in a country where a single minister could within weeks of being in office, have access to billions of naira. The politicians know how to take care of themselves. It is a class issue; if you don't belong, you are finished."

Dr Olawale Bello, concurred that government is trying to introduce tuition fees, adding that it has commenced the process by pushing the universities to increase sundry fees.

FUTA Vice Chancellor, Professor Adenike Oladiji, said government should not be judged by what people assume are its intentions. She is confident that the Act will be revisited in line with the intentions of government. The FUTA SSSANU, led by Comrade Felix Adunbi, conferred 'Labour Friendly Award' on Ondo State Governor, Lucky Orimisan Aiyedatiwa, who was represented by the state's Head of Service, Bayo Philip. The union also conferred the Labour Activist Award on me.

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FULL PAGE	395,176.32	29,638.22	424,814.54	323,433.00	24,257.48	347,690.48
HALF PAGE	248,970.00	18,672.75	267,642.75	203,175.00	15,238.13	218,413.13
QUARTER PAGE	164,670.00	12,350.25	177,020.25	94,724.44	7,104.33	101,828.77
10" x 6 Col	364,320.00	27,324.00	391,644.00	245,005.20	18,375.39	263,380.59
10" x 5 Col	333,960.00	25,047.00	359,007.00	224,588.11	16,844.11	241,432.22
10" x 4 Col	242,880.00	18,216.00	261,096.00	163,336.80	12,250.26	175,587.06
10" x 3 Col	182,160.00	13,662.00	195,822.00	122,502.60	9,187.70	131,690.30
9" x 6 Col	327,888.00	24,591.60	352,479.60	220,504.68	16,537.85	237,042.53
9" x 5 Col	273,240.00	20,493.00	293,733.00	183,753.90	13,781.54	197,535.44
9" x 4 Col	218,592.00	16,394.40	234,986.40	147,003.12	11,025.23	158,028.35
9" x 3 Col	163,944.00	12,295.80	176,239.80	110,252.34	8,268.93	118,521.27
8" x 6 Col	291,456.00	21,859.20	313,315.20	196,004.16	14,700.31	210,704.47
8" x 5 Col	242,880.00	18,216.00	261,096.00	163,336.80	12,250.26	175,587.06
8" x 4 Col	194,304.00	14,572.80	208,876.80	130,669.44	9,800.21	140,469.65
8" x 3 Col	145,728.00	10,929.60	156,657.60	98,002.08	7,350.16	105,352.24
7" x 6 Col	255,024.00	19,126.80	274,150.80	171,503.64	12,862.77	184,366.41
7" x 5 Col	212,520.00	15,939.00	228,459.00	142,919.70	10,718.98	153,638.68
7" x 4 Col	170,016.00	12,751.20	182,767.20	114,335.76	8,575.18	122,910.94
6" x 6 Col	218,592.00	16,394.40	234,986.40	147,003.12	11,025.23	158,028.35
6" x 5 Col	182,160.00	13,662.00	195,822.00	122,502.60	9,187.70	131,690.30
6" x 4 Col	145,728.00	10,929.60	156,657.60	98,002.08	7,350.16	105,352.24
6" x 3 Col	109,296.00	8,197.20	117,493.20	73,501.56	5,512.62	79,014.18
6" x 2 Col	72,864.00	5,464.80	78,328.80	49,001.04	3,675.08	52,676.12
5" x 5 Col	151,800.00	11,385.00	163,185.00	102,085.50	7,656.41	109,741.91
5" x 4 Col	121,440.00	9,108.00	130,548.00	81,668.40	6,125.13	87,793.53
5" x 3 Col	91,080.00	6,831.00	97,911.00	61,251.30	4,593.85	65,845.15
5" x 2 Col	60,720.00	4,554.00	65,274.00	40,834.20	3,062.57	43,896.77
4" x 6 Col	145,728.00	10,929.60	156,657.60	98,002.08	7,350.16	105,352.24
4" x 5 Col	121,440.00	9,108.00	130,548.00	81,668.40	6,125.13	87,793.53
4" x 4 Col	97,152.00	7,286.40	104,438.40	65,334.72	4,900.10	70,234.82
4" x 3 Col	72,864.00	5,464.80	78,328.80	49,001.04	3,675.08	52,676.12
4" x 2 Col	48,576.00	3,643.20	52,219.20	32,667.36	2,450.05	35,117.41
3" x 3 Col	54,648.00	4,098.60	58,746.60	36,750.78	2,756.31	39,507.09
3" x 2 Col	36,432.00	2,732.40	39,164.40	24,500.52	1,837.54	26,338.06
2" x 2 Col	24,288.00	1,821.60	26,109.60	16,333.68	1,225.03	17,558.71
1" x 1 Col	6,072.00	455.40	6,527.40	4,083.42	306.26	4,389.68

TERMS OF ADVERT PLACEMENT

- All adverts are expected to be in cash or bank draft in favour of New Nigerian Newspaper's Limited.
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- COPY DATE:** for all the Title Heads is three working days for the North and four working days for the South.
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6 COLUMNS			
Depth	38.1 (CM)	Depth -	15 (Inches)
Width	25.4 (CM)	Width -	10 (Inches)

POLITICAL RATE

SPACE	RATE	VAT	TOTAL
FRONT PAGE MAST HEAD EAR PIECE	461,622.86	34,621.71	496,244.57
FRONT PAGE SOLUS	787,474.29	59,060.57	846,534.86
FRONT PAGE STRIP	787,474.29	59,060.57	846,534.86
BACK PAGE EAR PIECE	420,889.54	31,566.72	452,456.26
FULL PAGE (COLOUR)	465,967.54	34,947.57	500,915.11
FULL PAGE (BLACK AND WHITE)	364,037.14	27,302.79	391,339.93
HALF PAGE (COLOUR)	303,285.71	22,746.43	326,032.14
HALF PAGE (BLACK AND WHITE)	247,500.00	18,562.50	266,062.50
QUARTER PAGE (COLOUR)	203,877.14	15,290.79	219,167.93
QUARTER PAGE (BLACK AND WHITE)	111,692.74	8,376.96	120,069.70

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S/NO	SIZE	RATE	VAT	TOTAL
1	Handling for the first 40 copies	120,000.00	9,000.00	129,000.00
2	Per 1000 Copies (1 Page)	28,000.00	2,100.00	30,100.00
3	Per 1000 Copies (Magazine)	50,000.00	3,750.00	53,750.00
4	Per 1000 Copies (Magazine)	80,000.00	6,000.00	86,000.00

CLASSIFIEDS

S/NO	POSITION	SIZE	RATE	VAT	TOTAL
1	Registration of Trustees	3" x 2 Cols	6,857.14	514.29	7,371.43
2	Loss of Documents	2" x 2 Cols	4,400.00	330.00	4,730.00
3	Change of Name	Per Box	2,000.00	-	2,000.00

Special Position

SPACE	RATE	VAT	TOTAL
FULL W RAPA ROUND	6,750,000.00	506,250.00	7,256,250.00
HALF W RAPA ROUND	4,500,000.00	337,500.00	4,837,500.00
PA GE 2 O R 3	400,000.00	30,000.00	430,000.00
PA GE 4 O R 5	375,000.00	28,125.00	403,125.00
PA GE 6 O R 7	325,000.00	24,375.00	349,375.00
FR ONT PA GE M A S T H E A D E A R P I E C E	215,000.00	16,875.00	231,875.00
FR ONT PA GE S O L U S	312,500.00	23,437.50	335,937.50
FR ONT PA GE S T R I P	375,000.00	28,125.00	403,125.00
B A C K PA GE E A R P I E C E	200,000.00	15,000.00	215,000.00
B A C K PA GE S T R I P	250,000.00	18,750.00	268,750.00
C E N T R E S P R E A D (C O L O U R)	837,500.00	62,812.50	900,312.50
D O U B L E S P R E A D (C O L O U R)	700,000.00	52,500.00	752,500.00
C E N T R E S P R E A D (B L A C K & W H I T E)	575,000.00	43,125.00	618,125.00
D O U B L E S P R E A D (B L A C K & W H I T E)	590,000.00	44,250.00	634,250.00
FR ONT PA GE (10" X 6)	3,250,000.00	243,750.00	3,493,750.00
R O P S T R I P (C O L O U R)	125,000.00	9,375.00	134,375.00
R O P S T R I P (B L A C K & W H I T E)	85,000.00	6,375.00	91,375.00

PROPERTY AND IT, VACANCY, AGRIC, AND EVENTS/EDUCATION RATE

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

Nigeria: Powering Beyond The Immediate

By; ABIODUN KOMOLAFE

Nigeria is at a crossroads and Nigerians are trying to find the responses to an economic crisis and currency turmoil. Of course, all manner of symptoms keep appearing!

Towards the end of February, Governor Biodun Oyebanji unveiled a N12 billion economic relief programme for Ekiti residents. That's in addition to other proactive steps already taken by the governor to mitigate the effects of the fuel subsidy removal and naira floatation by the national government. In Borno State, Governor Babagana Zulum has been putting in a stellar shift even as Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State has also been doing well across the board. Although not a paradise on earth, the 'Centre of Excellence' has a robust revenue base and a very solid social safety net thereby making it violence-free and practically the safest state in Nigeria. And in Abia State, the recent inauguration of the \$800m Geometric Power Plant and the proposed state-wide light rail project have revealed what to expect from the Alex Otti-led government.

With these and other interventions in place, one can safely say that the governors are in the right mode. However, the historical imperative of this time is that men of high intellect and exposure like Oyebanji, Sanwo-Olu, Zulum and Otti should now be at the forefront of redefining the way out of the cultural dysfunction in which Nigeria is currently immersed. That the governors have the human empathy and the intellect to do so is not in doubt. So, why can't they dig deeper into a critical response to the illusion called 'palliative' like the former Governor Lateef Jakande whose direct labour approach to public works projects in Lagos State helped a lot of people to break out of poverty in addition to transfer of skills by participation?

Since social capital is deeper than economic capital, another way of building an aspirational society is by embarking on housing schemes that are directed at civil servants and the urban-middle-class. After all, the Indians and the Vietnamese have shown that the higher the skills of an economy, the higher the productivity. Otherwise, how did Vietnam arrive at having the lowest unit cost of electricity in the world? Well, it is not just that she developed a first-class electricity industry, she also developed world-class institutes! That's why world-class industries like Samsung have found a safe haven in the once war-troubled country. Indeed, that's why Samsung does more than \$65 billion worth of manufacturing exports annually, not from South Korea, its home country, but Vietnam.

Taking advantage of technology from Denmark, let our governors also maximize the opportunities provided by the removal of the power sector from the

Exclusive List. Let them explore all the available human and social capital resources within the country and in the Diaspora to look into the alternative renewable sources of energy.

When one takes a critical look at the terrifying statistics, Ekiti State and the Netherlands have exactly the same land mass. However, the Netherlands is the world's 2nd largest exporter of food and agricultural products. For the Netherlands, the agro-industrial exports fetch her about \$140 billion a year. Impliedly, with the advantage of land mass, there are lots of potentials for a state like Ekiti to transform into an agro-industrial powerhouse.

There was a time when Indians were scattered across the globe, scavenging for survival.

But her situation changed immediately she decided to reach out to the Diaspora Indians. Now, India is the world's 5th largest economy. Today, the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) can match any Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Remember also the Wageningen University and Research as the engine room of the Dutch economy, the power of research that has transformed that small country into its current status. But where are Nigeria's Research Institutes situated? When was the last time the Nigerian government poured money into, say, the University of Ibadan for research works?

Unlike India, the political establishment in Nigeria has defied the thrust of development, as we have accepted it, or as it has been the conventional wisdom since the 1950s. Instead of following the paths of brilliant economists like Karl Gunnar Myrdal and Andre Gunder Frank, the political class in Nigeria has built its economy based on low skills and low wages, thinking that that's the way to have political control. As fate would have it, the chickens have now come home to roost and it is as if the gods are angry!

Tafawa Balewa, Nigeria's first Prime Minister, was right! Balewa didn't see the point of a Federal Ministry of Agriculture. But he reluctantly established it. As a matter of fact, it was the last Ministry to be created in the First Republic; and he didn't call it 'Federal Ministry of Agriculture'. Instead, it debuted as the 'Federal Ministry of Natural Resources and Research', with Alade Lamuye as its first minister. The idea at the time was to use



President Tinubu

the Federal Government money and international aid to establish a fantastic research institute and the products of the research would be given to the regional governments for implementation. Sadly, everything has long been distorted. The last time we heard of the National Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) was when Professor Dotun Philips held court as its Director-General. The more reason posterity will remember Oyebanji for turning Ekiti State University not just into a degree factory but also a well-funded and research-focused institution of higher education. Since nothing happens by chance or faith, the question is: what's to be done? Since one's actions determine one's faith, it behooves educated and enlightened minds like Oyebanji, Sanwo-Olu, Zulum and Otti to favour efforts that tend towards moving away from the low-skill, low-wage labour into a high-skilled economy, which is the only way to get productivity at the optimal and internationally competitive exports. Conventionally, 'palliative' is just an expedient start, not a cure. It is a temporary approach, not a permanent solution.

Nigeria as a country must strive to become an agro-industrial powerhouse, most probably taking after the Dutch model. As I have argued elsewhere, our governors now have an opportunity to link agriculture with technology as most of today's achievements in the sector are technology-propelled. For instance, the Netherlands uses the model of buying grains from the surrounding areas and processing the same into value-added agro-industrial products for

export to other countries. So, what stops states like Ekiti, Lagos, Borno and Enugu from understudying and ... implementing this model?

Our governors must also encourage the creation of Technology Parks. At a time some Nigerians have become crudely selfish and unrepentantly self-centered, only seeking the easy options, the almost-completed Cargo Airport project in Ekiti is an attestation to the fact that the government's policy thrust is in the right direction. However, it is important to quicken the pace because time is of the essence. A state like Ekiti has one fundamental competitive advantage, and that's its human capital resources, both at home and in the Diaspora. Therefore, Oyebanji should explore that intellectual property and turn it into gold; and ditto for the other governors. They should set up government-private sector coordinating bodies to link up their people's capital in the Diaspora and attract Foreign Direct Investments to their states. They need to prove to their brother governors that it is the height of indolence for a governor to practically relocate abroad, walking the streets of London like a teenager on an excursion, pretending to be searching for investors. Whatever is on the ground here will speak to the shape and the size of investments that can be attracted.

May the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, grant us peace in Nigeria!

ABIODUN KOMOLAFE, AMNIM writes from Okenisa Street, Ijebu-Jesa, Osun State and can be reached via; +234 803 361 4419|+234 809 861 4418 | ijebujesa@yahoo.co.uk |

2024 Budget Padding: Northern Senators Putting Blame On Wrong Victim

By; AUWAL AHMED IBRAHIM

The Chairman of the Northern Senators Forum (NSF), rushed to accuse the Senate President, Chief Godswill Akpabio on 2024 Budget padding. Senator Abdul Ningi, the Chairman of the Northern Senators Forum w rushed to the press to blame the Senate President when consultation should be the first thing to do.

The aide and Special Assistant to the Senate President on NGOs and Diaspora, Dr. Jibril Lawal Tafida countered the Northern Senators Forum for not contacting the Senate President before their media outburst to clear the air.

Dr. Tafida expressed dismay on the attitude of the Chairman of the Northern Senators Forum for not working with formalities of verification when there are some people to contact before reaching to the Senate President for accusation.

However, Premium Times had it that one of the senators from the forum said that the projects complained about were probably inserted into the budget by unknown persons while he (the Senate President) was hospitalised during the budgetary process.

The Senate President also explained that the padding may have happened when he was hospitalised.

Surely, there was a time the



Akpabio

Senate President was hospitalised and the Committee on Appropriation is responsible for the budget expenditure allocation in which a Northerner from the Northern Senators Forum is the vice Chairman.

To seek a solution, the Northern Senators Forum may have contacted Senator Ali Ndume, the vice chairman of the Senator Solomon Adeola-led Appropriation Committee before the media onslaught on baseless accusation.

Like what Dr. Jibril Lawal Tafida said, there are many ways to resolve the problem of the senate affairs by not putting blames on

others and making public outrage when Northerners are faced with insecurity problems.

Surely, what the Northern Senators Forum did will not fetch any respect to them, rather than questions on interest in the press conference because they have a Vice Chairman of the Appropriation Committee who was the former Senate President's strong pillar in the Chamber.

As the Senate and the presidency are working in earnest to free abducted students from kidnappers' den the senators should stop distracting the

Senate and the Presidency on things that can be resolved amicably without personal attacks and tarnishing image of the Nigerian senators.

While the Senate President assured the senators of verifying those behind the padding and inquire the reasons for such, the Northern Senators Forum should continue to work towards relieving Northerners of the security problems suffocating the region.

Auwal Ahmed Ibrahim, Goronyo is a political analyst from Kaduna and can be reached via; auwalgoronyo@gmail.com

African Games: Nigerian Female Wrestlers Win Six Gold Medals

By: AYO OJEDOKUN,
Lagos

Team Nigeria recorded a clean sweep of gold medals on Sunday at the ongoing African Games and the six female wrestlers representing the country all won in their various categories.

Mercy Genesis Miesinnei kick-started the gold medals win after winning Mohamed Nada of Egypt 7-0 in 50kg category thereby winning Nigeria's first wrestling gold medal. Christiana Ogunsanya secured the second gold medal for Nigeria in the 53kg women's wrestling event defeating Nogona Bakayoko of Cote D'Ivoire by 11-0 pivotal score.

Not yet over for Nigeria, Adekuoroye Odunayo followed up her own victory in the 57kg category defeating Hassowne of Egypt and Kolawole Omolayo also clinched her own gold medal by winning in the 62kg event winning Askar .O of Egypt.

Olympics silver medal champion, Blessing Oburududu and Reuben Hannah Amucheche added two more gold medals in the 68kg and 76kg categories respectively to confirm Nigeria's supremacy in female wrestling at the 13th African Games.

Anuoluwapo Opeyori won

Nigeria's first gold medal following a win over his countryman Godwin Olofua in the final of the men's Badminton Singles. Nigerian citizens resident in Ghana and Nigeria officials at the event cheered the wrestlers during the tournament chanting, "I love my country".

The President of the Nigerian Wrestling Federation, Igali Baraladie Daniel applauded the wonderful performance of the Nigerian female wrestlers and was optimistic they would finish high.

"I've been very impressed with the way they wrestled and I think if they continue in that trajectory Nigeria should be hopeful of many gold medals in the evening", Igali was quoted as saying in a press statement issued on Sunday.

Mr. Igali particularly thanked the Bayelsa State Government for always supporting the activities of the Wrestling Federation.

The wrestling boss has pleaded with President Bola Tinubu to handsomely reward athletes who made the country proud at the African Games the same way he did for the Super Eagles after their second-place finish at the last AFCON tournament in Cote De I'Voire.



Power: Poor Supply Within Our Franchise Will Soon Be Over - IBEDC **Explains reasons for poor supply*

reassure our esteemed customers of our commitment to finding lasting solutions', it said.

IBEDC Management added, "Despite these challenges, we remain optimistic that poor supply will soon become a thing of the past as the Honorable Minister of Power, Chief Adebayo Adelabu has taken urgent steps to address the gas supply issue".

" On energy theft and vandalism, we are currently partnering with security agencies to reduce this vice, however, we urge our customers to remain vigilant, protect electrical infrastructures within their communities and report any suspicious activities promptly".

It stressed, " We are implementing comprehensive measures to improve and strengthen our infrastructure in order to efficiently distribute the power we receive from the grid. We are also urgently exploring alternate sources of power to enable us meet the power supply needed within our franchise".

* One of the primary factors is the low supply of gas to generating companies (Gencos) which has led to a gradual decrease in available generation into the grid. This has

significantly reduced the power available on the transmission grid for onward supply to IBEDC, and in turn, greatly hindered our ability to provide power to customers within our franchise, namely Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Kwara and partly in Kogi, Niger and Ekiti states.

* Secondly, scheduled maintenance activities conducted by the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) in January and March, 2024 necessitated planned outages in specific areas of our network. While these measures are essential for ensuring the long-term reliability of electricity infrastructure, we recognize the inconvenience they may cause and sincerely apologize for any disruptions experienced by our customers.

* Furthermore, vandalism and theft of electricity infrastructures remains a major issue negatively impacting power supply. An example is the unfortunate vandalism of TCN towers in Ogun state in May 2023 which resulted in over 7 months of darkness for many of our valued customers. At IBEDC we are particularly confronted with the escalating cases of vandalism, with over 40 incidents recorded in 2024 alone.

* The theft of valuable assets such as transformer oil, cables

and aluminum conductors pose a significant challenge to our operations, as communities affected are thrown into extended periods of outage depending on the severity of the act. Energy theft through illegal connections, meter bypass and illicit meters are also major issues affecting adequate supply of power to customers, because they result in revenue losses and liquidity problems for the electricity value chain. We have also noticed an alarming upsurge, with over 1,450 identified cases of energy theft between January and February 2024.

" Lastly, payment apathy from customers is a major challenge to adequate supply of power. Unfortunately, across our customer segments we have different mindsets that electricity is a social service and should not be paid for; some only pay part of the bill, while others don't pay because they haven't received their preferred ours of supply. To all our customers, our appeal is simple, please pay for whatever hours of supply you have consumed in addition to the outstanding bills to enable IBEDC survive and become sustainable as this is the guarantee for improved power supply.

13th African Games: Three Nigerians Go Gaga With Gold To 'Weightlift' Nigeria To Second Position On Medal Table



By: JOSEPH ODOEKWU, Accra

Nine gold medals from three Nigeria's weightlifters was enough to make Nigeria climb to the second position of the table as Nigeria now overtake South Africa and Algeria who were initially seated at the second and third positions before Monday gold medals overhaul by Nigerian Weightlifters.

Edidiong Umoafia set the tone in the gold overhaul in the men's category, winning all available gold medals in men's 67kg, 67kg Snatch and 67kg Clean-Jerk. His hat trick of gold lifted Team Nigeria to 10 gold medals before noon as the wait for more accomplishment continued.

In the evening of Monday at the GCB event centre, two of Nigeria's women followed up with Umoafia's earlier

impressive performance as 27-year-old Rafiatu Lawal and 24-year-old Adijat Olarinoye clinched another set of hat tricks each in women category to catapult Nigeria to the second position on the table a few minutes before 8pm Ghanaian time. Rafiatu Lawal won three gold medals in women's 59kg, women's 59kg Snatch and women's 59kg Clean-Jerk, while her compatriot Adijat Olarinoye won another three gold medals in women's 55kg, women's 55kg Snatch and women's 55kg Clean-Jerk.

Favour Agboro settled for two silver medals in men's 61kg and men's 61kg Clean-Jerk and a bronze medal in men's 61kg Snatch, while King Kalu went home with two bronze medals in men's 55kg and men's 55kg Clean-Jerk.

The laudable feat means Nigeria won nine

gold medals on Monday, after winning seven on Sunday through wrestling and Badminton.

This feat which did not just take Nigeria to the second position on the table, but also speaks volume on the need for Nigeria to give adequate and timely attention to the development of individual sport in the country.

Although Nigeria's men wrestlers could not win any gold as a follow up to what their women did on Sunday, they settled for three silver medals and one bronze in their games.

In another positive development, the Flying Eagles of Nigeria yesterday beat the Southern Sudan team at the Accra stadium in men's football, through a late goal which came from a spot kick in the 80th minute to keep Nigeria's hope of

reaching the semifinal alive.

The Flying Eagles will now face Senegal in the final group match on Friday at the Accra stadium, to search for an opportunity to reach the semifinal stage of the tournament.

Meanwhile, Nigeria who are now second on the medal table with 37 medals consisting of 16 gold, 7 silver and 14 bronze medals, now trail runaway 13th African Games medal leaders Egypt, who have 78 medals comprising of 41 gold, 19 silvers and 18 bronze medals.

While Nigeria is aspiring to close the gap between her and Egypt, they are also closely trailed by Algeria and South Africa who have 15 and 12 gold medals respectively as at time of filing this report and anxiously waiting in the 3rd and 4th positions to make an upward move.



13th African Games: SWAN Hails Wrestling, Weightlifting, Badminton, Table Tennis, Other Team Nigeria's Performance

By; JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

The Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN) has thumbed up team Nigeria for outstanding performance so far at the ongoing 13th African Games in Ghana. Speaking through a statement by the Association's Secretary-General, Amb. Ikenna Okonkwo, the SWAN President Isaiah Benjamin particularly hailed Wrestling, Weightlifting, Badminton, Table Tennis and others for making Nigeria proud. Nigeria has so far garnered up to 16 gold medals at the Games which have pushed up its standing to second position on the medals' table at the end official day 4 of the competition. "I'm really excited by the performance of Nigerian athletes so far at the competition. Winning 16

gold medals and others in just two days is not a mean feat. "Truly, they have showed commitment and demonstrated proven patriotism. "Worthy to note are the three athletes who won three gold medals in Weightlifting. Wow! The feeling is extraordinary," he said. He then urged others still competing in the various sports to follow same trend. "I believe that the performance of these athletes will certainly ginger others to step up and ink their names in history," he said. The SWAN President then commended the Minister of Sports Development, Senator John Owan Enoh, for his proactive steps and assurances which lifted the spirit of team Nigeria at the continental event.



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ASKOJ Pays Courtesy Visit On DG Media Kano Govt House, Lauds His Capacity

By; JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

The Association of Kano Online Journalists (ASKOJ), yesterday, paid a courtesy visit to the Director General Media of Kano State Government, Alhaji Sanusi Bature Dawakin-Tofa, in his office.

This was contained in a statement signed by the Chairman ASKOJ, Yakubu Salisu, dated Tuesday March 12, 2024.

While speaking, ASKOJ Chairman, Malam Salisu Yakubu noted that the visit was geared towards cementing the good relationship that has been existing between the association and the DG, even before the coming on board of the present administration of Governor Abba Yusuf Kabir's administration.

Yakubu then lauded the DG's capacity in ensuring his principal, the Governor of Kano



State, Abba Kabir Yusuf is positively represented in the media through his numerous achievements since inception. According to him, Sanusi Bature remains the best man for the job and his the governor was

meticulous in his appointment which has been a very good one. He added that ASKOJ would not relent in propagating the good job of the administration of Governor Abba to not just the people of Kano State, but

Nigeria as a whole. Reacting, the DG commended the professionalism of ASKOJ, adding that good number of its members have been in the struggle with him, especially during the electioneering

campaign of Governor Abba Yusuf Kabir. He then vowed that he will continue to support the association in dispensing its professional responsibilities.

2024 Ramadan: Gov Makinde Calls For Increased Prayers For Nigeria

By; BAYOAKAMO, Ibadan

Oyo State Governor, Engr Seyi Makinde on Sunday, called on Muslims across the country to increase their prayers for Nigeria and Oyo State.

The governor made the call while congratulating Muslim Ummah in the state and across the world on the commencement of the month of Ramadan 1445.

Gov Makinde in the congratulatory message by his Special Adviser (Media), Sulaimon Olanrewaju said there is the need for increased prayers for the country amid the

economic hardship facing the people.

Emphasizing that though leaders in the country have been doing everything to turn the situation around, the governor pointed out that prayers are of greater essence at this time.

"I charge the Muslim Ummah to, as they have always done, pray for our dear State and Nigeria, as we have all come to realise that prayer remains the greatest key for believers to make things happen", he said.

Gov Makinde added, " We do know that our country is in a bit of economic hardship, but while

we continue to look up to the leaders to do the needful, we must also support our hopes with prayers to God."

He further tasked Muslims around the world to demonstrate the lessons of love, kindness and good neighbourliness as taught by Prophet Mohammed, and that those who have enough should remember their neighbours, as more people are going through hard times.

" I also want to charge my Muslim brothers and sisters, especially those who have in abundance, to remember their neighbours and show kindness. It

is my prayer that Allah SWT will reward your acts of worship and accept it as Ibadah."

Describing the holy month as a blessed month in which Allah rewards the worship of the Muslim Ummah, he said, "I felicitate my Muslim brothers and sisters on the occasion of the commencement of the month of Ramadan 1445."

"This is another opportunity offered to us by Allah (SWT) to serve Him and seek His face and I will encourage all and sundry to make good use of the opportunity as always. I charge the Muslim Ummah to, as they

have always done, pray for our dear State and Nigeria, as we have all come to realise that prayer remains the greatest key for believers to make things happen.

"We do know that our country is in a bit of economic hardship, but while we continue to look up to the leaders to do the needful, we must also support our hopes with prayers to God. I also want to charge my Muslim brothers and sisters, especially those who have in abundance, to remember their neighbours and show kindness.