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■ Says Nigeria's unity must not be compromised



Akpabio breaking fast with Muslim colleagues

**Religion Cannot Divide Us  
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\*5 victims buried by river side as  
residents cry to Gov Makinde for help

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By: BASHIR BELLO  
DOLLARS, Abuja

Former Deputy  
National Publicity  
Secretary of the  
ruling All Progressives  
Congress (APC) Hon.  
Yekini Nabena, has  
declared that if Former  
President Muhammadu  
Buhari could complete his  
8-year term in office, no  
mega or merger plot will  
unseat President Bola  
Ahmed Tinubu in 2027.  
The prominent APC

chieftain also declared that  
no political coup in the  
National Assembly will  
remove the incumbent  
President of the Senate,  
Senator Godswill Akpabio  
as the Chairman.

There have been talks of  
merger and mega party  
among the opposition  
parties and some  
prominent members of the  
APC in the recent time.

Reacting to the  
development through a  
statement he signed

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**3 Day Old Baby,  
Nursing Mother  
Held In Hospital  
Over N300,000  
Delivery Bill**

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\*Appeals to Makinde, others for assistance

**Police In Kaduna  
Fails Robbery  
Attempt, Seizes  
AK47 Rifle,  
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## Deputy Police Commissioner Allegedly Commits Suicide, Remains Found Hanging In His Room

By; BAYO AKAMO, Ibadan

**A** Deputy Police Commissioner of the Force Criminal and Investigation Department, Alagbon, Lagos State, DCP Gbolahan Oyedemi has reportedly committed suicide in his private house in Ogbomoso, his country home.

New Nigerian gathered that the late DCP who was a one time Aide De Camp to former Governor of Oyo State, late Otunba Adebayo Alao-Akala was found dead hanging in his private house in Ogbomoso.

Late DCP Oyedemi was said to have on arrival in Ogbomoso for the Easter celebration, reportedly asked his aides at the weekend to go to their various towns to celebrate Easter with their family members.

A source said the dead body of DCP Oyedemi was found hanging in his house on Monday as the former ADC stays alone whenever he comes home

for Easter celebrations.

The source said, "Yes, he committed suicide. His body was found hanging in his house yesterday (Monday). He stays alone, and he normally comes home for Easter celebrations.

"This time, he told his aides to go and celebrate with their family members in their various homes. Only God knows what could have prompted him to commit suicide."

The Police Public Relations Officer of FCID, Alagbon, DSP Eguaioje Funmilayo, confirmed Oyedemi's death, saying, the circumstances surrounding his death were still sketchy.

"No one can tell specifically what the cause of his death is until an investigation is carried out. There is no official statement from the Inspector General of Police yet.

"So, I won't be able to tell you anything about it for now. No official statement is approved by the IG," she added.

## 3 Day Old Baby, Nursing Mother Held In Hospital Over N300,000 Delivery Bill

\*Appeals to Makinde, others for assistance

By; BAYO AKAMO, Ibadan

**A** nursing mother, Adenike Samuel and her three day old baby are presently held in an hospital in Ibadan over inability to pay delivery bill of N300,000.

It was learnt that the

nursing mother was reportedly discharged by Montana Medical Centre, Challenge Ibadan' on Monday April 1, but was asked to stay back with the baby for not settling the delivery bill to the hospital,

The nursing mother disclosed that her total

## Caleb Danladi Foundation CEO Receives Best NGO Community Support Award Of Excellence

By ; A C H A D U GABRIEL, Kaduna

**T**he founder and CEO Caleb Danladi Foundation, Mr. Caleb Danladi Bako has received an award of excellence as the best NGO on Community Support in Ham Land, Jaba LGA of Kaduna State.

He was presented with the award by Ham Community Development Association during the most rewarding and colourful event marking Tuk Ham Annual Festival held in Kwoi, Jaba LGA of the state.

In a speech, at the event, Kaduna State Government applauded People of Jaba Local Government Area for a successful and peaceful celebration of the 2024 Tuk Ham annual festival aimed at promoting unity, love and peaceful coexistence.

The State Deputy Governor, Dr. Hadiza Sabuwa Balarabe made the commendation, while

speaking at the 2024 Tuk Ham held in Kwoi area of Jaba LG of the state.

The deputy governor who was represented by the Administrator, Kafanchan Municipal Authority, Mrs Phibi Sukai Yayi, said the festival is in line with the current administration's policy to promote culture as a way of enhancing social interaction among the divers ethnic groups in the state for peace and security of the citizens

In a message to the occasion, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Dr Abbas Tajuddeen said promoting cultural heritage of any society will in no small way, enhance socioeconomic growth of not only that particular society, but the state and nation at large.

While responding to the request made by the Ham people seeking for the change of the name of Jaba Local Government Area to Ham Local Government Area, the Speaker who

was represented by member representing Soba at the National Assembly, Alhaji Suleiman Yahaya Richifa, assured them of the House' readiness to work towards actualizing their request as already presented at the floor of the House by their representative in the Green Chamber.

The Kpok Ham, Danladi Gyat Maude, also in a remark, thanked all sons and daughters of Ham land for their contributions to the development of the chieftdom and appealed for the provision of more social amenities that would improve living standard of the people.

Earlier, the president, Ham Development Association, Reverend Jerry Andrew who emphasized the need for the change of the name of LGA, also advocated that Nok village, as the seat of the oldest Nok Terracotta Civilization, be made a choice tourism attraction center for the socioeconomic

development of Kaduna and the nation at large.

While commending the Ham nation for the successful celebration, the LG Administrator, Mrs Byack George, called on the Kaduna State Government to find a way of harnessing the reach culture of the divers ethnic groups across the three geopolitical zones of the state.

The highpoint of the event aimed at promoting unity, love and peaceful coexistence, include traditional dances, presentation of awards and the unveiling of the 2024 Tir Ham (Miss Ham).

Some other award recipients which also include member representing Jaba in the National Assembly, Amos Gwamna Magaji and a philanthropist, Caleb Danladi Bako, thanked the Ham people for recognizing them and described the award as a moral booster towards doing more.



CEO Caleb Danladi Foundation (middle) in interview with media

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## Nigerian Railway Generates N1.7bn In Fourth Quarter Of 2023 - NBS

By; AMOS TAUNA, Kaduna

**T**he National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has said that the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) generated N1.07bn as revenue from passengers in Q4 of 2023.

It is contained in the NBS Rail Transportation Data for Q4 2023 released in Abuja on Monday.

According to the News Agency of

Nigeria, the report showed a figure of 7.51 per cent decreased compared with the N1.15bn generated in Q4 of 2022.

It further explained that the revenue from goods/cargoes swelled by 169.16 per cent to N423.22m from N157.23m generated in the same period of the previous year.

Other receipts, according to the data grew by 3.02 per cent from the N382.17m recorded in Q4 2022 to N393.72m

recorded in Q4 2023.

According to the report, "the number of rail transport passengers in Q4 2023 declined by 49.73 per cent to 672,198 instead of 1,337,108 in the prior period." It explained that on an annual basis, the number of rail transport passengers decreased by 32.08 per cent, from 3,212,948 recorded in 2022 to 2,182,388 recorded in 2023, saying that the revenue

received from passengers declined by 2.64 per cent in 2023 from the N4.55bn recorded in 2022 to N4.43bn in 2023.

The National Bureau of Statistics stated that the volume of cargo and revenue from cargo in 2023 increased by 102.04 per cent and 144.32 per cent respectively, compared with 2022.



# Religion Cannot Divide Us - Senate President Akpabio

## \*Breaks Fast (iftar) With Muslim Colleagues

By; BAYO AKAMO, Ibadan

President of the Senate, Senator Godswill Akpabio has charged Nigerians to continue to work together as brothers and sisters of the one Almighty God, for the benefit of our dear country.

Senator Akpabio who said this on Monday evening at Iftar (breaking of fast) with his Muslim Senators also attended by some Senators who are of the Christian faith in Abuja declared that as Nigerians, "Religion cannot divide us".

The Senate President maintained that it was not a mere coincidence that the Christian Lenten and Muslim Ramadan periods came up again same time, adding that it was to show that even though Muslims and Christians have different religions, they both have only one God, the Supreme God.

"I want to congratulate all of us for breaking fast today and thank Almighty Allah for keeping us alive to see this day and pray that He will continue to protect us and continue to look after our health, look after our families through

this Ramadan period and also use this opportunity to congratulate you on the Easter celebration", he said

The Senate President added, "It is not a coincidence that God is merging the fasting of the moslems and that of Christians together. This is about the second or third time it is happening. The intention is to show that we may have different religions, but we have only one God and that God is the Supreme God that looks after all of us".

"So to the glory of God, the invitation was for those of us who are still around. Those who have not yet gone to Saudi Arabia particularly for these last 10 days of Ramadan, that we should meet and break the fast together.

Senator Akpabio stressed, "And of course, we also invited the Christian Senators to come. For them, it's a celebration of the Easter period. Coming together is all that we need. We need to continue to work together as brothers and sisters of the one Almighty God, for the benefit of our dear country. Religion cannot divide us.

"No matter the turmoil, no

matter the political disagreement, even families do disagree. But we must bear one thing in mind, that we are serving humanity and we are serving humanity through Almighty God and that one day, we shall leave this world to go and account for our deeds while we were on earth. I think that is the guiding principle.

"For every human being, there is a time to be born. There is a time to go. And this period of Ramadan, this period of Easter, reconnect us with God so that we know that we are not in this world for nothing. He sends us here for a purpose and that purpose is to live in peace with one another, love one another, pray together, work for one another to ensure progress for humanity. So, on departing, we would have left legacies, an imprint that yes, we were here and others will take over from us. My prayer tonight is that God should enable us to leave a better future for all Nigerians."

The Deputy Senate President, Barau Jibrin while responding on behalf of other Senators present lauded the Senate

President for inviting them to have Iftar with him.

"We are really grateful. This invitation is a demonstration of the care that you have for all Senators of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. We all know you as a very caring leader, someone who cares about the welfare of all Senators. This invitation has reinforced what we know about you. There is an adage in Hausa language that says: Inviting you to come is more delicious than the food", he said

Senator Jibrin added, "So when we heard about the invitation, we were very happy that you have us in mind and that you are very caring. So we thank you very much.

"May the Almighty Allah continue to be our guide, continue to support us as we work with the Executive arm of government to face the challenges we have and by the grace of God, we are going to change our challenges to prosperity. Within a short time by the grace of God, this country will become a land of eldorado'.

## DSS Arraigns 4 For Terrorising Students Community In Lokoja

By; ADAMA JOHN, Lokoja

Chief Magistrate Court in Lokoja has remanded three suspected thieves known for terrorising students communities of Adakolo, Felele, Bassa Village and Crusher suburb areas of Lokoja, Kogi State capital.

They were arrested in connection with the recent attacks on the students populated communities and dispossessing them of their valuables such as smart phones, computers and other items.

The suspects, Abbas Salisu, Gimba Ibrahim and Mamud Lawal Kwara who had earlier confessed to have stolen 33 phones were arraigned by the Department of State Service before the Chief Magistrate Court in Lokoja yesterday.

The Prosecution counsel, Olanrewaju Yahaya filed a four count charge bothering on criminal conspiracy, theft of phones valued at one million Naira, dishonestly receiving stolen properties and belonging to a gang of thieves that were stealing the belongings of Students of Kogi State Polytechnic and Federal University Lokoja before the Chief Magistrate Court.

He urged the court to remand the accused persons at the Koton Karfe Medium Custodian centre pending the investigation and hearing of the Case.

After pleading not guilty to the charges, the trial Chief Magistrate, Abdullahi Mopah remanded the suspects in Koto Karfe custodial centre and adjourned the case till 9th of May, 2024 for hearing.

Similarly, the Chief Magistrate Court has remanded one Austin Obaje in Koton- Karfe Medium Correctional Centre for alleged impersonation, extortion and fraud.

Obaje was dragged before the Chief Magistrate Court for allegedly and consistently using the name of Department of State Services to defraud the unsuspecting public.

Obaje was arraigned before the Court on charges of fraud by obtained the sum of three hundred thousand Naira (N300,000) from Dr. Simeon Oyigun Omakoji under the false pretence that he was sent by the State Director, State Security Service, Mr Tosin Ajayi.

Austin was also said to have committed an extortion by deliberately putting one Dr. Simeon Oyigun Omakoji, in fear of death to wit that the Immediate Past Governor of Kogi State, Alhaji Yahaya Bello has sent Assassins and Kidnappers to eliminate him.

The Defence Counsel, William Alewo urged the court to grant the defendant bail to enable him prepare to defend his case, noting that the accused will not jump the bail or interfere in the investigation.

The Chief Magistrate Abdullahi Mopah in ruling remanded the accused person in the Custody of Koton Karfe Correctional centre and adjourned the case till 9th May 2024 for hearing and continuation.

## 3 Day Old Baby, Nursing Mother Held In Hospital Over N300,000 Delivery Bill

delivery bill was N400,000 but that her husband, said to be an Okada rider, was only able to pay N100,000. She stressed that Governor Seyi Makinde as well as other well meaning Nigerians should bail her and the three-day old baby out from the hospital by assisting in settling the remaining balance of N300,000.

"The bill amounted to that because I gave birth through Caesarian Section (CS). I am a tailor. I had two children already before this pregnancy came but I never knew I was pregnant until the scan which showed that I was

carrying a baby", she said. The Nursing mother added "Anybody that is touched by our condition can reach and assist us through my account numbers: Eco Bank, 3880058997, Adenike Babalola, Opa y 9042924437, Adenike Babalola. My telephone number is 09042924437." Husband of the nursing mother, Happiness Samuel, an 'Okada' rider from Cross Rivers State, said it would be extremely difficult for him to raise the remaining balance due to the economic challenges in the country.



Akpabio breaking fast with Muslim colleagues



# 2027: No Machination Can Stop Tinubu's 8 Years, Akpabio's Senate Presidency - Nabena

## ■ Says Nigeria's unity must not be compromised

yesterday in Abuja, Nabena expressed optimism that, "The 2027 presidential election will come and go but the President will remain in the South and President Bola Tinubu, by God's grace, will continue his good job."

According to the vocal Bayelsa born APC chieftain, the South and the North must support President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to succeed in his Renewed Hope Agenda because the country belong to all of us and Nigeria is one, not only on paper or mouth but in reality. Nigeria's unity must not be compromised.

The statement said: "If former President Muhammadu Buhari could complete his eight years in office, by the grace of God Almighty the incumbent President Bola Tinubu will do the same, not even the talk of mega party or merger can stop him. The South must also complete the 8 years political arrangement and President Bola Tinubu will do that for the South.

"The South will not fight each other again for other region to benefit, the era of division in the Southern Nigeria is gone for good. The Almighty God will perfect President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's health and grant him wisdom to take the country to the promised land.

"The same goes to the President of the Senate, Senator Godswill Akpabio, by



**President Tinubu**

God's grace, he will also complete his term as the Chairman of the National Assembly in ground style, no threat, no blackmail or political machination will do otherwise.

"It must be placed on record that we Nigerians from the South are satisfied

with the level of representation we are getting from our distinguished representatives in the National Assembly and we have passed a vote of confidence on them for standing tall."

While reacting to the recent move by some prominent APC leaders hobnobbing

with some opposition figures to float a mega party or form merger, Nabena said: "Again, we must also tell the plotters of mega party and those ones thinking of merger that we are not afraid of any.

"The 2027 presidential election will come and go but the President will remain in the South and President Bola Tinubu, by God's grace, will continue his good job. I so much hopeful that even before the next election, the results of the ongoing reforms will be evidenced even to the blind, and those plotting mega party or merger will not have option than to accept defeat before the election.

"For now, former governor Nasir el-Rufai can go ahead with his idea of mega party but we are also waiting for them. A state Malam El-rufai left as a governor less than a year ago can no longer pay salaries. So, some of this remarkable marks shall speak against them at the appropriate time but I think

the time has come for the evil ones to be exposed and I believe the Almighty God will expose them more and He will fight our fight and definitely victory shall be ours."

## End Of Road For Iceland Cult Leader As Akwa Ibom Court Sentences Him To Death \*Kindred jubilate

By: PATRICK TITUS, Uyo

A 48-year old Udobong Stephen Adiahaunwa, a suspected leader of Iceland cult group known to have been terrorising Idung Ntuk Umah in Oruk Anam Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State with his gang, has been sentenced to death.

Adiahaunwa, a father of two and brother to the late village head of Idung Ntuk Umah, Chief Stephen Gabriel Adiahaunwa, was condemned by the State High Court sitting in Uyo yesterday.

The court presided over by Justice Gabriel Ette was delivering a judgment on a four-count charge of conspiracy, armed robbery and terrorism levelled against the convict by the state, a case that started from the High Court, Oruk Anam and later transferred to Uyo Judicial Division.

The particulars of the case show that Udobong Stephen Adiahaunwa who was earlier banned from his village because of his atrocities, stormed the community on December 29, 2009 with his gang dressed like SARS Police operatives and whisked away one Friday Jackson Joe in a Hilux

vehicle to an unknown location and has not been found till today.

Again, on February 28, 2019, Udobong, a primary five dropout, was said to have brought cultists in Police uniforms to his community and robbed the treasurer of the village, Mr. Ediom Sunday Udoidio of N970,000 being the proceeds from the sales of the community palm fruits.

As if that was not enough, on April 29, 2021, he again imported cultists in Army uniform and robbed the Village Palm Estate Treasurer, Mr. Ubong William Henry of N850,000 being the money the Idung Ntuk Umah realised from sales of palm fruits.

It is also on record that on June 5, 2020, the convicted armed robber returned to his village with members of his secret cult and forcefully initiated teenagers into the group, forcing many to flee from the village while others continue to live in fear.

Udobong was arrested and detained at Akwa Ibom State Police Command's Headquarters, Ikot Akpan Abia but was released, prompting the community to

petition the Assistant Inspector General of Police, Zone 6 Headquarters, Calabar.

In June, 2020, the convict was arrested by operatives of the Zonal Criminal Investigation Department, Zone 6 Headquarters, but was granted bail and he disappeared with his surety.

While in his hideout, he sued the complainant and the Police for breaching his fundamental rights and was rearrested on December 4, 2020 and charged to court.

In an hour judgment, the trial judge, Justice Gabriel Ette found Udobong Stephen Adiahaunwa guilty of conspiring with his gang members now at large and robbing his victims and sentenced him to death by hanging.

"From the totality of my findings, I find as a fact that the prosecution has proved counts 1, 2 and 3 against the defendant beyond reasonable doubt. I find the defendant guilty and convict him accordingly.

"COUNT 1: the sentence of this Court upon you, Udobong Stephen Adiahaunwa

in Count 1 of the charge is seven year imprisonment.

"COUNT 2: The sentence of this Court upon you is that you be hanged upon your neck until you be dead and may the Lord have mercy upon your soul.

"COUNT 3: The sentence of this Court upon you is that you be hanged upon your neck until you be dead and may the Lord have mercy upon your soul." Justice Gabriel Ette held.

The judgment day attracted the complainants and other indigenes of Idung Ntuk Umah who filled the Courtroom to the brim, forcing the authorities to lock the entrance to the Court premises which is a stone's throw from the Government House, Uyo

The Idung Ntuk Umah community celebrated the condemnation of a man they described as "a terror and a nightmare to his community" and applauded Justice Gabriel Ette for his erudite judgement in restoring the confidence of the people in the judiciary.



# Kogi Youth Caution EFCC Against 'Enemies Of State' Fighting Selfish Battles

By: ADEBOYE ADO, Akure

Youth from Kogi State yesterday, declared that they have decided not to fold their arms and allow those they described as desperate politicians continue to drag the name of an otherwise great state in the mud.

The youth, from the three senatorial districts of the state, under the aegis of Kogi Independent Youths Association, particularly cautioned the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to be wary of politicians who they said, meant no good for Kogi State but are out to use the commission to achieve selfish objectives detrimental to the wellbeing and unity the state had enjoyed in the past years.

They made these remarks, after an emergency leadership meeting, in Abuja, insisting that, as critical stakeholders, they had decided not to keep quiet but to warn all embittered politicians in the state to stop portraying its image in a bad light before the whole world.

Comrade Mohammed Abdulrazaq, from Igalamela Local Government Area of Kogi State, who spoke on behalf of the youths, stressed that they would not allow



"embittered politicians" to turn Kogi State into an ethnic enclave of crisis and would employ every legal means to protect the integrity of the state.

The youths, however, said they were confident that the current leadership of the EFCC would not fall for the antics of the said politicians and would also not allow themselves to be used as a tool to achieve the selfish interests of a few embittered people.

The Kogi Independent Youths Association is made up of about 500 registered members, mainly graduates, with

thousands of nominal members and supporters across all the 21 local government areas of the state.

Abdulrazaq said, "We will not wait to gather money for a proper press conference because this is a very important issue. We believe we must use every means at our disposal to speak up, defend the truth, expose the real enemies of Kogi State and warn them to change their ways.

"We are here to caution the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, to advise them that they must be wary of those

individuals whose intentions are not noble and who are out there to use the Commission as a tool to fight their political battles.

"There are some desperate Kogi politicians who are hell bent on using the EFCC to fight and achieve their selfish political interests and we, as youths of Kogi State, we must not keep quiet because an injury to one is an injury to all."

In between solidarity songs, the youths stated, "We must not keep quiet on this for a man who has done well for Kogi State.

We know and they know that the immediate past Governor of Kogi State, Alhaji Yahaya Bello, has done well in the area of infrastructure. We know and they know that the former Governor of Kogi State, Alhaji Yahaya Bello, has done well in the area of youth empowerment, youth inclusion and women inclusion in politics as far as Kogi State is concerned.

"We know and they know that former Governor Yahaya Bello has done well in the area of education, also lifting the face of our institutions in

Kogi State. And when he needs a rest now, after serving Kogi State diligently for eight years, we cannot pay him back with this bad coin.

"This is why we are here today to condemn some Kogi State politicians, desperate Kogi State politicians, embittered Kogi State politicians, who feel they can divide the state along ethnic lines. We are saying Kogi State is one and we are one united people. We will not allow them to turn Kogi State into an ethnic enclave of crisis.

"We must stand as youths to fight against this. We are critical stakeholders in the present and future of Kogi State. We are not just leaders of tomorrow but the champions of the change today that is critical to the development process. Of course, if our leaders in the state are quiet on this, we will not remain quiet.

"So we are cautioning and warning all the embittered politicians of Kogi State to stop portraying the image of Kogi State in a bad light in the face of the whole world. Kogi State is not like that and we must also ensure that we maintain the name and integrity of our dear state."

"If all our demands fall on deaf ears, we will be left with no option than to utilise all legal means to drive home our demands," they declared.

# Police In Kaduna Foils Robbery Attempt, Seizes AK47 Rifle, Arrest Suspect

By: AMOSTAUNA, Kaduna

The Kaduna State Police Command, has made a significant breakthrough in crime prevention and detection with the arrest of an armed robbery suspect and the subsequent recovery of his operation weaponry.

The command's spokesman, ASP Mansir Hassan, in a statement in Kaduna yesterday, said, "According to a report received from the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) of Maraban Jos Division, on March 24, 2024 at about 2030 hours, acting on credible intelligence

Police operatives arrested one Salim Aliyu, a 22 years old resident of Badarawa Kwaru in Kaduna North, Kaduna State in possession of one AK47 rifle with Breach No. 01585, along with three rounds of 7.62 x 39mm live ammunition."

The statement added, "other items recovered from the said suspect includes; a Nigerian Immigration Service camouflage singlet and face cap, a sharp knife, a flier, a desert handbag, a wallet containing a First Bank ATM card and a complimentary card belonging to a Brigadier General of the

Nigerian army."

During interrogation, the statement explained that Aliyu confessed to being on a robbery mission to Maraban Jos.

It said that the successful operation underscores the Kaduna State Police Command's unwavering commitment to maintaining law and order in the state.

CP Ali Audu Dabigi, according to the statement, commended the swift action of the officers involved and reiterated the command's determination to rid the state of criminal elements.



The apprehended suspect



# Residents In Fear Over Alleged Mysterious Death Of 9 Persons In Ibadan

\*5 victims buried by river side as residents cry to Gov Makinde for help

By: **BAYO AKAMO, Ibadan**

The people of Gege area in Ibadan South West Local Government Area of Oyo State are now living in fear over the increasing rate of death at a ditch within the Gege River in the area.

Residents in the area yesterday, raised alarm with a Save Our Souls message to Gov Seyi Makinde to visit the area and see things for himself to avert more deaths in the River

New Nigerian gathered that no fewer than nine persons have reportedly died in the ditch with most of them said to be youth.

Our investigations revealed that the Gege River reportedly has a deep ditch behind the popular Gege Meat Market covered with refuse and wastes, making unsuspecting passers-by to unknowingly take it for a level point only to get drowned in the ditch.

It was learnt that the dead bodies of victims of the mysterious deaths are always seen back at the surface of the river three or four days after been trapped.

Sources in the area said about nine people had fallen victim of the deadly ditch with five of them reportedly buried by the riverside.

The ditch according to sources was few years covered by a former House of Representatives member from the area, but has since suffered neglect by successive lawmakers from the area.

Our sources stressed that during the visit of a former Chairman of Ibadan West Local Council Development Area (LCDA), into the spot, few minutes after his arrival with his team, the dead body of a young girl trapped inside the river three earlier was suddenly sighted floating on the river.

A resident in the area, Mr Omotosho Saheed disclosed that the problem in the area started when drainage was constructed in the middle of the river in 2012, adding, "Before then, there was no problem. The drainage didn't cover the width and length of the river hence whenever there was heavy rainfall water dug the front of the drainage and created a deep gully like hole.

" This deep hole has become a danger point over the years, claiming so many lives. So we the residents have demarcated the danger zone but most passers by may not understand the reason behind the demarcation especially late in the evening or early in the morning because it was done with cellophane tape. Our appeal is to the government to come to our aid. The government should help us do proper channelization".

Speaking, Miss Akinade Kehinde said she was born in Gege Area and has been living there since, saying, "the problem started some years ago, when it was discovered that there was a deep hole inside the river that is as deep as a Storey building. "As



Gege Riverside

young as I am I have witnessed the burial of some victims by the river side".

"Our appeal goes to Governor Seyi Makinde to please help us remove the dilapidated concrete in the middle of the river, close up the ditch and ensure free flow of water as a first step. Then he should help do proper channelization like it has been done for Ogunpa River", she said

Another resident, Alhaja Mujidatu while speaking urged Gov Makinde to come to the rescue of the people of Gege area, saying, "Our Governor should come to our aid. As a

mother it is very sad to be witnessing death of young and agile men in this River.

"We voted for Governor Makinde and now that we have problem, he should reciprocate by helping us out. Let him visit us, we will tell him, what is happening. God bless our Governor", She said.

Also speaking, Mr Omotosho Saheed disclosed that the problem started when drainage was constructed in the middle of the river in 2012, adding, "Before then, there was no problem. The drainage didn't cover the width and length of the river hence

whenever there was heavy rainfall water dug the front of the drainage and created a deep gully like hole.

" This deep hole has become a danger point over the years, claiming so many lives. So we the residents have demarcated the danger zone but most passers by may not understand the reason behind the demarcation especially late in the evening or early in the morning because it was done with cellophane tape. Our appeal is to the government to come to our aid. The government should help us do proper channelization"

## Reps Vow To Recover Two Helicopters Sold To Private Individuals By Former NCAT Rector

By: **BASHIR BELLO DOLLARS, Abuja**

The House of Representatives has vowed to recover two BELL Helicopters belonging to Nigeria College of Aviation Technology (NCAT) Zaria, sold to private individuals in 2023.

Chairman of the House Committee on Public Assets, Hon. Ademorin Kuye, issued the notice in Abuja during the resumed investigative hearing into the sale of the two helicopters.

Hon. Kuye, and other members expressed concern over the sale of the two helicopters to private individuals, also queried the rationale behind the sale of the helicopters that were almost brand new while the college was left with no helicopter for training.

While responding to inquiries made by the lawmakers, the acting NCAT Rector, Mr. Shaka Imalighwe, said that though he was the Deputy Rector of the College at the time the helicopters were sold,

he disclosed that he was not part of the team or committee that facilitated the sales of the helicopters, while the General Manager of one of the buyers, Blue Horns Aviation said he does not know the whereabouts of the helicopter. The committee thereafter, summoned the Minister of Aviation, the immediate past Minister of Aviation Hadi Sirika and the immediate past Rector of the college, Alkali Modibbo in order to explain their roles in the unfortunate sale of the helicopters.





# Sunusi Bature Bags Nigeria's 2024 Outstanding Spokesperson Of Year

By, JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

The Director General of Media and Publicity to the Governor of Kano State, Sunusi Bature Dawakin Tofa, has been honoured with the prestigious Most Outstanding Spokesperson Award by the Nigeria Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Information.

Mr. Dawakin Tofa was selected for this esteemed award in recognition of his instrumental role in promoting not only the positive image of the Kano State Governor and his giant strides, but for effectively showcasing the only NNPP ruling state in Nigeria.

The Jury Sub-Committee of the National Spokespersons Awards, established by the NIPR and the ministry, deemed Sunusi as a deserving recipient of the 2024 Spokesperson of the (Executive Arm Category) among the array of spokespersons representing the executive arm of the government in Nigeria which include the Spokespersons to the President, Vice President, Ministers and other Extraministerial Department and Agencies.

The award ceremony took place at the International Conference Centre Abuja with eleven categories of

various awards after the maiden National Spokespersons Summit 2024 declared open by the Vice President Sen. Kashim Shettima.

In the award citation, Mr. Sunusi was hailed as an unwavering proponent of non-violent communicator, renowned for his extensive network and adept delivery of practices with clarity in objectives, strategic framing of engagements with his audience.

His profound impact and effectiveness in perception and reputation management are highly commendable.

A graduate of Mass Communication from University of Maiduguri, Sabature as he is popularly known, is a holder of three masters degrees in various fields of human endeavours from Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Bayero University and the Robert Kennedy College, Switzerland.

Upon the announcement of Sunusi as the award recipient, a thunderous applause erupted, and attendees rushed



to join him on the podium in celebration of his achievement as one of the youngest senior PR experts triumphing from the northern region of the country.

In his acceptance speech, Sunusi showcased his bunch of appreciation to his principal and dedicated this prestigious award to the Governor of Kano State, Alhaji Abba Kabir Yusuf.

In a short statement issued via his Facebook account, the 2024 Spokesperson of the year said, "the rousing welcome by my principal H.E Abba Kabir Yusuf after receiving this award was so exciting, thank you Your Excellency for the opportunity to serve as your spokesperson in the last six years."





# Unilorin Goes Tough, Expels 19 Students

By **BILIQIS ONAOLAPO OLAJUMOKE, Ilorin**

University of Ilorin, Kwara State has approved expulsion and rustication for 19 students, including six final year students of the institution, said to have been involved in various offences.

In a statement by the Director Corporate Affairs of the school, Kunle Akogun, the approval of expulsion/rustication of the affected students by the Vice Chancellor, Wahab Egbewole (SAN) was sequel to the recommendations of the Students' Disciplinary Committee at its 220th/221st meeting.

The statement said that the affected students were penalized for offences ranging from misconduct, theft, examination malpractice, hostel bed-space racketeering and extortion, beating a fellow student, admission racketeering, extortion and assault.

It also said that penalties for the offences committed by the students included rustication for either one semester or one academic session, including expulsion.

The affected students were in various academic levels such as 100, 200, 300 and 400 Levels.

Those affected are;

Adebayo Adeleke  
Fac./Dept.: Arts/ Performing Arts  
Matric No.: 19/15CF012  
Level: 400

Offence: Misconduct  
Penalty: Rustication for one Academic Session

Hassan Hanan Adebola  
Fac./Dept.: Arts/History and International Studies  
Matric No.: 22/15CA126  
Level: 100

Offence: Misconduct  
Penalty: Rustication for one Academic Session

Amatokwu Evans  
Fac./Dept.: Education/Art Education

Matric No.: 20/250D079  
Level: 200

Offence: Theft  
Penalty: Expulsion  
Ayodele Samuel Koseunti  
Fac./Dept.: Arts/History and International Studies  
Matric No.: 19/15CA097  
Level: 400

Offence: Misconduct  
Penalty: Rustication for one Semester

Toki Opeyemi Ayomide  
Fac./Dept.: Arts/History and International Studies  
Matric No.: 19/15CA269  
Level: 400

Offence: Misconduct  
Penalty: Rustication for one Semester

Makinde Usman Ayomide  
Fac./Dept.: Arts/Linguistic and Nigeria Languages  
Matric No.: 21/15CB165  
Level: 200

Offence: Misconduct  
Penalty: Rustication for one Semester

Nwachukwu Chinedu Joshua  
Fac./Dept.: Life Sciences/Biochemistry  
Matric No.: 17/55EH116  
Level: 400

Offence: Examination Malpractice  
Penalty: Expulsion

Onibiyo Eniola Gideon  
Fac./Dept.: Arts/History and International Studies  
Matric No.: 19/15CA230  
Level: 400

Offence: Misconduct  
Penalty: Rustication for one Academic Session

Oshinboluro Temitope Joshua  
Fac./Dept.: Physical Sciences/Mathematics  
Matric No.: 19/56EB106  
Level: 400

Offence: Hostel Bedspace Racketeering and Extortion  
Penalty: Expulsion

Sulaimon Mayowa  
Fac./Dept.: Life Sciences/Biochemistry  
Matric No.: 20/55EH201  
Level: 200

Offence: Examination



Malpractice  
Penalty: Expulsion  
Badmus Rasheedat Ajoke  
Fac./Dept.: Physical Sciences/Chemistry  
Matric No.: 20/56EE068  
Level: 200

Offence: Beating a Fellow Student  
Penalty: Rustication for one Semester

Afolayan Damilola  
Fac./Dept: Mathematics/Physical Sciences  
Matric No: 22/56EB036  
Level: 100

Offence: Bedspace Racketeering  
Decision: Rustication for One Semester

Ajibola Oluwaseyi Temiloluwa  
Fac. /Dept: Water Resources & Environmental Engineering /Engineering & Technology  
Matric No: 21/30GQ010  
Level: 200

Offence: Bedspace Racketeering

Decision: Rustication for One Academic Session  
Akorede Isiaka Nifemi  
Fac./Dept: Mathematics/Physical Sciences  
Matric No: 22/56EB036  
Level: 100

Offence: Bedspace Racketeering  
Decision: Rustication for One Semester

Bolanta Taiye Zainab  
Fac. /Dept: Industrial Relations and Personnel Management/Engineering & Technology  
Matric No: 21/66RP072  
Level: 200

Offence: Bedspace Racketeering  
Decision: Rustication for One Semester

Elegede Favour Emmanuel  
Fac. /Dept: Physiology /Basic Medical Science  
Matric No: 21/46K1B065  
Level: 200

Offence: Admission Racketeering & Extortion

Decision: Rustication for one semester  
Ojelabi Ibukunoluwa Micheal  
Fac. /Dept: Anatomy /Basic Medical Science  
Matric No: 20/46KA108  
Level: 300

Offence: Admission Racketeering & Extortion  
Decision: Rustication for one semester

Okeke Ruth Chinecherem  
Fac./Dept: Performing Arts/Arts  
Matric No: 21/15CF167  
Level: 200

Offence: Assault  
Decision: Rustication for One Semester

Okanle Oluwatimileyin Samuel  
Fac. /Dept: Physiotherapy/Basic Clinical Science  
Matric No: 20/46KA108  
Level: 300

Offence: Admission Racketeering & Extortion  
Decision: Expulsion

# 13 Killed, Two Escape From Road Mishap In Kogi

By **ADAMA JOHN, Lokoja**

The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) said on Monday, that 13 persons died while two were injured in an auto crash in Kogi.

The Sector Commander, Federal Road Safety Corps in Kogi State, Mr Samuel Oyedeji, Kogi told journalists that the sad incident occurred around 7: 30pm on Sunday.

According to him, the sad incident involving a commercial Sharon Bus and an articulated Cement truck occurred by Obajana Market on Obajana -Lokoja

Road in Lokoja Local Government Area of the state.

The sector commander said that the Sharon bus had parked behind a truck around the market for passengers for snappy shopping, when the ill-fated cement truck failed brake and rammed into it from the rear.

"And that as soon as the truck rammed into the bus, it immediately burst into flame and burnt virtually all the passengers inside it"

"Also burnt were the bus, two trucks and a motorcycle", said the Sector commander,

adding that the bus was reportedly heading to Abuja from the southern part of the country.

"Our personnel, who were on rescue operations with Red Cross Nigeria and Police officers, couldn't save the situation due to the fierceness of the fire" the commander regretted.

"But the charred remains of the affected persons were collected while the two injured persons have been taken to Fisayo Hospital, Obajana for medical attention.

Mr. Oyedeji expressed worries that no

hospital in Kogi agreed to take the charred bodies for keep, which might force the authorities to give them a mass burial if no relation comes around for collection in no distant time.

The sector commander, who described the incident as "very sad and unfortunate", cautioned motorists against speeding and poor maintenance of their vehicles.

Accordingly, he advised that motorists should always check their vehicles to ensure road worthiness before sprawling them into journeys to avoid road mishap.



## Easter: Imbibe Virtues Of Jesus Christ, Alao Urges Christians

*\*Felicitates Gov Makinde, Christian leaders*

By; BAYO AKAMO, Ibadan

**A**chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Oyo State, Engr Oyedele Alao (aka Allow Alao) has charged Christians to imbibe virtues of Jesus Christ. Engr Alao stated this in a statement he personally signed to felicitate with Gov Seyi Makinde and the entire Christians and their leaders in Oyo state.

The APC Chieftain pointed out that Christian community all over the world should celebrate the commemoration of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ by imbibing the virtues of tolerance, sacrifice and love as exemplified by Jesus Christ.

He stressed that it is important for them to use the period to seek the face of God and work towards a peaceful and progressive state, stating that the season calls for reflection on the sacrifices that Christ made and the new life that His resurrection represents.

"I want to sincerely congratulate the Christian faithful in our dear state particularly Governor Makinde and all Christian leaders, for witnessing another celebration of Easter," he said.

Engr Alao added, "It is my belief that the Christian faithful will not forget the essence of the season which is to love one another, so they must put aside their differences and come together in unity, just as Christ's resurrection brought together people from all walks of life."

"They must continue to seek the face of God and work together towards



Engineer Alao

building a society where peace, unity, and progress thrive. Thus we all owe it a duty to continue to demonstrate love and kindness towards one another.

"Wishing the people of Oyo state a spiritually rewarding Easter celebration, the Asiwaju of Irokoland urged them to intensify prayers for the

success of the administrations of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Governor Makinde.

"There is no doubt that the country and the state presently are facing challenges, however with the support and prayer of all most especially during this season, we would certainly overcome".

## Police Rescues 28 Abducted Girls In Katsina

By; SULAIMAN AHMED MISAU, Katsina

**K**atsina State Police Command has confirmed the rescue of twenty - eight (28) girls abducted in Kasai Village of Batsari Local Government Area of the state.

The Command Public Relations Officer, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP), Abubakar Sadiq Aliyu in a statement announced the successful efforts made under the state Police Commissioner Aliyu Abubakar Musa to rescue the victims.

He said it was on April 1, 2024, at about 1030 hours the twenty-eight (28) girls who went to the outskirts of Kasai village, Batsari Local Government Area with intent to fetch firewood abducted by kidnappers.

Upon receipt of the report, he said the State Police Commissioner CP Aliyu Abubakar Musa swiftly deployed operatives to the scene, tasked with the unhurt rescue of the victims.

"Thanks to the unwavering efforts and increased pressure exerted by the

command, the victims, who were held against their will, have now regained freedom and are safe and sound," he reiterated.

Accordingly, the collaborative effort of the dedicated rescue team, in conjunction with the strategic approach taken by the command, resulted in the release of all the abducted victims.

The PPRO explained that, the abductors, "following the escalation of pressure and the concerted actions of the command in collaboration with all relevant security stakeholders in the state, ultimately released all the victims on the same day at about 2240 hours."

ASP Sadiq Aliyu emphasized that, "This success is a testament to the perseverance and commitment of the command as well as everyone involved in the operation. Efforts to ensure the safety and security of the community and the state will continue unabated."

He assured that, further development would be communicated as the investigation proceeds.

## Kaduna South Reps Member, Mai Kero, Greets Christian Faithful At Easter

*\*Urges them to pray for Nigeria*

By; JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

**T**he Deputy Chairman House Committee on Host Communities and Member Representing Kaduna South Federal Constituency, Malam Abdulkarim Hussaini Ahmed (Mai Kero) has rejoice with the Christian faithful particularly, his constituents on the occasion of Easter celebration which signifies the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

He charged the Christian faithful in Kaduna South Federal Constituency to seize the opportunity of the Easter to showcase the good virtues of Jesus Christ at the end of this Lenten season.

In a statement issued to

journalists in Kaduna on Monday by his Special Assistant on Media and Communications, Sharifudeen Ibrahim Muhammad (Dan Jarida), Hon. Mai Kero enjoined the Christian faithful to coexist with non Christians peacefully as brothers and sisters, in other to fight the common enemy.

He described the season as a season of love, tolerance, sacrifice and reaching out to the less privileged as exhibited by the Jesus Christ.

Hon. Mai Kero, appealed to the Christian community to pray for him, and all those in position of leadership to have a successful tenure in office while doling out dividends of democracy.

The Hon. Member prayed



to God to give Kaduna South, Kaduna State and Nigeria as a whole long

lasting peace and sustainable development.

## NUJ Congratulates Rev Mother Esther Ajayi On Birthday

By; AYO OJEDOKUN, Lagos

**T**he Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Lagos State Council has joined all Nigerians and the rest of the world in celebrating the birthday of Rev. Mother Esther Abimbola Ajayi, Founder, Love of Christ Generation Church C&S.

According to the council chairman, Comrade, Adeleye Ajayi, "it is our prayer that the Lord will prosper your Ministry, grant you long life and bless you tremendously.

"The Lord will bless you more because you are

touching the lives of millions of people and the Bible says, "God loves a cheerful giver".

"We can recall the generous contributions you made to NUJ. You took the giant stride and completed our Secretariat in Alausa, Ikeja, Lagos, to the Glory of God. The Almighty God will reward you abundantly in several ways.

"In Jesus Name, you will celebrate many decades of birthdays in sound health and wealth. You will never lack In Jesus Name. Concluded, Adeleye Ajayi."





# COMMUNITY FOCUS

## Kaduna Ethnic Group Harps On Unity Through Culture

By: AUSTINE AGBO EMMANUEL, Kaduna

**E**thnic group, the Gbagyi people living in Kaduna state have said that culture remain a uniting force that can tame the menace of rising division among residents of Kaduna State. This is as the group in their numbers, stormed Kaduna on Monday to celebrate what they called "Akavulu Nya," their cultural heritage that seeks to promote love, peace and unity, through singing and dancing.

Gbagyi is an ethnic group found predominantly in central Nigeria, with an estimated population figure put at 5.8 million, according to the 2006 population census, spread across Kaduna, Niger, Nasarawa and the Federal Capital Territory. (FCT)

Speaking at the event in Kaduna on Monday, the Host-Organizer, Mr. Nathaniel Alkali said the idea is to foster peaceful coexistence among the Gbagyi people even as peace remains the universal craving of every society.

Nathaniel further stressed that the program is one of the platforms to get people's attention and encourage them to

tow the path of peace, unity and love, adding that there can be no sane society without love for each other.

"We are here to celebrate the Gbagyi culture and to showcase the culture to the world as a peace and loving culture that we are. We make the event to be called Akavulu Nya, which is one of the Gbagyi people when it comes to cultural dance in different ways.

"We are trying to address peace and unity. We want people to come together and feel the love of one another as this will foster peaceful coexistence among the Gbagyi people. In one way or the other we all need that place amongst us. This is the best place to get people's attention and encourage them to tow the path of peace, unity and love.

"We did the event last year and we are back again this year. It's going to still happen next year and we hope it gets bigger by next year." Nathaniel said.

Speaking with newsmen shortly after the event, one of the participants and popular Gospel Minister, Friday Jibo said the program is apt, coming in a time where Nigerians are passing through a lot of difficulties.



Jibo further reiterated that until people value their cultural heritage and embrace one another as brothers and sisters, it will be very difficult to have a united country that can stand and fight a just course that

can champion development. He called on the people to celebrate each other in love so as to bring the best out of them.





## Sponsoring Malicious Attacks On Defense Minister Not In Interest of Zamfara People, Group Warns

By ; O S A A C ODEH, Kaduna

In a swift reaction to a mischievous publication in one online news platform accusing a former Governor of Zamfara State and current Minister of Defense (State), Muhammed Bello Matawalle, of giving Ramadan palliatives to some bandits in the state, a group in Gusau, Zamfara State, Zamfara Progressive Development Forum (ZAPDEF) has condemned the allegation in strong terms, describing it as "dirty politics" allegedly by unscrupulous supporters of Governor Dauda Lawal. This was contained in a statement signed by its Secretary General, Engr Lawal Usman Magami (Garuwan Sarkin Yaki), made available on Friday March 29, 2024.

According to the statement, the die-hard political jobbers who are behind the unpopular allegation are only doing so to tarnish the image of Dauda's processor for cheap and temporary political gain which is against the interest of Zamfara people.

"We have been following with kin interest the sociopolitical landscape of Zamfara State in recent times and we are not happy with the political dimension the security situation in that part of the Northwest Nigerian is



taking especially the name calling and unnecessary blackmail and propaganda against one of the sons of the land, a former governor of the state and current Minister of Defense (State), Muhammed Bello Matawalle. "With his support to the success so far recorded in the ongoing fight against insecurity challenges bedeviling the state through military operations and intervention, Minister Matawalle should have been appreciated rather than being castigated or maligned by the suspected divisive agents of Zamfara state government through hired writers hiding under a mushroom online news platform in the name of political witch hunt and mischief," the statement said.

It explained that Hon Matawalle was known by the Zamfara people a long time before now as a good leader who sacrificed much in ensuring the

success of the fight against insecurity and political unity and cohesion.

"He will never allow sentiment or hatred to becloud his sense of judgment on the issue of security in the state especially now as Minister of State Defense.

"We wonder why such sponsored lies and propaganda in the holy month of Ramadan just to discredit him because of political differences and his active closeness with the government of the day at the central.

"It is important to add that playing politics and propaganda with the issue of insecurity in the state is destroying good efforts and genuine commitment to redeem the state and its people from these bandits who are projecting the state in a bad light before national and international communities.

"We therefore, see this unfortunate development as unfair, biased, and injustice to accuse him of such a callous allegation of

supporting anything Nathan than peaceful and secure Zamfara State and the Country as a whole," it said.

They also urged Governor Dauda Lawal to fear God, provide good governance to the electorate and stop sponsoring malicious campaigns by way of financing such teleguided writers just because he does not like the leadership of All Progressives Congress (APC) and what it represents.

"Mr. Governor, we urge you to match your words with actions in solving escalating challenges of insecurity, hunger, and generally poor governance. Leave Hon Matawalle alone in person, collaborate with the federal government as you openly promised to Zamfara people and other genuine stakeholders to restore lasting peace to Zamfara communities. Enough of media propaganda," the statement said.

## Chartered Institute Of Personnel Management Of Kaduna Elects New Exco

By ; F U N M I ADERINTO, Kaduna

Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria (CIPM) Kaduna State Branch has elected new executive to pilot the affairs of the institute.

The election by CIPM members and delegated which is the apex regulatory body for Human Resource Practices in Nigeria established by Act 58 of 1992, represents part of the Annual General Meeting held on March 28, 2024.

Mr. Ogungbuyi Ajibola Emmanuel ACIPM of Annuels Consulting (Chartered Human Resource Managers, leads the new exco as chairman, with overwhelming votes of over 85 per cent of the total cast, defeating his close rival, Alhaji R.O. Adewara MCIPM (Director of Finance/Admin) of Railway Properties Ltd a subsidiary of Railway Corporation of Nigeria.

Other elected exco include, Amina Yahaya Bello - Asst Secretary/PRO, Dr. Ramatu Muhammad - Vice Chairperson, Linda Edmond -Ex-Officio and T.W. Yakubu - IPC.

In his acceptance speech, the new state chairman, Pastor Ogungbuyi Emmanuel thanked the Almighty God for his emergence and all the delegates/members for their overwhelming support for his nominations culminating in his election.

He also expressed gratitude to the immediate past exco led by Mrs.

Tsukunda Wulfu Yakubu ACIPM, who according to him, has done a great job for the branch along with her team. He promised to build on the legacies of his predecessor.

Pastor Ogungbuyi Ajibola Emmanuel also appreciated the support of CIPM National Headquarters for their support of the branch and the electioneering process. He appreciated the sportsmanship and spirit displayed by his co aspirant and asked him to join him to take the branch to the next level.

In his words, "Now that the election is over, it is time to get to work " promising to keep his campaign promises along with his other executive members.

The Annual General Meeting where the new leadership emerged, was attended by members/delegates from different industries within the state, including; the Bank of Agriculture (BOA) which produced the immediate past Chairperson the person of Mrs Tsukunda Wulfu Yakubu ACIPM (Head Corporate Services BOA), Kaduna Electricity Distribution Company which also produced the immediate past Vice Chairperson, Mrs Adeola Adepegba ACIPM and also Executive Council Member, (Head HR Kaduna Electric), PAN Nigeria Plc, which also produced the immediate past Branch Secretary, Mr Abdulkadir Yinusa (Head Corporate Services PAN Nigeria Plc) and a host of other





# Kwara wins NIPR's Excellence In Corporate Governance Awards

By; BILIQIS ONAOLAPO  
OLAJUMOKE, Ilorin

**K**wara State Government has emerged as the winner of the Excellence in Corporate Governance Awards at the Nigeria Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) National Spokespersons Awards 2024 in Abuja.

Tied to the several achievements of Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq (CON), especially his responsiveness, public carriage and preferences for pro-masses policies and programmes, the award was announced on Wednesday night at the NIPR Awards in Abuja.

It was received on behalf of the Government by Honourable Commissioner for Communications Mrs Bola Olukoju.

In a reaction to the award on Wednesday night, Senior Adviser and Counsellor to the Governor Alhaji Saadu Salahu thanked the NIPR for the special

recognition accorded to the government of Governor AbdulRazaq.

He said the Governor has lived the NIPR's ideals of excellence, empathy, and engagement of professionals in his handling of state matters.

The National Spokespersons' Awards is the highest honors celebrating outstanding spokespersons and brands in corporate communications, public affairs, politics, media, advocacy, and other domains in Nigeria who have demonstrated outstanding eloquence, integrity, and effectiveness in their roles as spokespeople.

The awards, which held as part of the National Spokespersons



Summit, was organised by the NIPR in partnership with Image

Merchants Promotion Limited (IMPR), publishers of the PR

Nigeria, Economic Confidential, and Spokespersons' Digest.

# Why Water Law Is Not implemented In Akwa Ibom State

By; PATRICK TITUS, Uyo

**O**ver a year since the former Governor, Mr. Udom Emmanuel had signed the Akwa Ibom State Water Bill into Law, its implementation is yet to commence in the state, even as the 2025 deadline of ensuring Open Defecation Free (ODF) in Nigeria is few months away.

Recall the former President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari had in 2019, signed into law Executive Order 009, mandating all sectors in Nigeria to be open defecation free by 2025.

Following the order, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) sponsored Civil Society Organization under the aegis of African Human Development Center (AHDC) in conjunction with relevant ministries and agencies in Akwa Ibom had developed Water and Sanitation Hygiene (WASH) Policies, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework and Open Defecation Free (ODF) Roadmap.

The AHDC, which has Prof

Gabriel Umoh as the Chief Executive Officer with support from USAID since carried out advocacy programs urging the state government to domesticate the Executive Order 009.

Finding revealed that during the State Executive Council (Exco) meeting held on May 3, 2023 presided by the then Governor Udom Emmanuel, the Commissioner for Lands and Water Resources presented a Memo for Akwa Ibom State Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), M&E framework and ODF roadmap for discussion and approval by the Exco but it was referred for further discussion.

Expectedly, the current Commissioner for Water Resources and Sanitation, Mrs Enobong Mbobo was to present the memo again at Exco meeting but over nine months gone into the administration, the documents have not been presented for discussion and approval by the Exco.

This development is in spite of repeated to the Commissioner to give the documents the

necessary concern as the implementation of Water Law, approval of a Policy framework, and achieving an Open Defecation Free (ODF) Roadmap would be highly significant for the sustainable development of Akwa Ibom State.

Efforts to seek the Commissioner's comment on the matter have not been possible as she neither grant appointment nor response to calls to her phone.

According to Umoh, in a recent release he made available to New Nigerian in Uyo, stated that the approval of the WASH policy Framework would lead to sustainable development, improved quality of life, and a healthier environment for the residents of Akwa Ibom State.

He called on the state Governor, Pastor Pastor Umo Eno to take action on their advocacy by domesticating the Executive Order 009 of the federal government which mandated all sectors in the country to be open defecation free by 2025.

"We are here to support the Akwa

Ibom state government to reform WASH sector. Water and Sanitation Hygiene (WASH) has numerous impacts on all facets of life including health, Education, Agriculture etc. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has provided the content for us to work to reform the WASH sector in the state.

"So we started the practical implementation of the project in February 2002, our objective is to create awareness about the water, sanitation and hygiene situation of Akwa Ibom state, push for development and approval of WASH policy M&E framework by state executive council, and also get the council to approve the ODF Roadmap because we can't continue to work without accessing our selves to know if we are doing well on the nature of our intervention.

"We urged the Ministry of Water Resources and other ministries related to the WASH activities and MDAs like Akwa Ibom Water Company Ltd, AKRUWATSAN, Ministry of

Land, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Education etc to join hands to ensure we achieve this goals.

"Recall that the immediate past state Governor, Mr. Udom Emmanuel had signed the water bill into Law on 30th December 2022, so all we are seeking is Implementation of the law to be approved by the state council.

"Akwa Ibom State WASH Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, the State ODF Roadmap are necessary supporting documents to give effect to the Implementation of the Water Law.

"And the approval of these important documents is crucial and we want to use this opportunity to call on the Akwa Ibom State Executive Council, to give approval to these documents without further delay. "We hope that the State Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation will give sufficient push to get the State Executive to approve the documents." The Project Director explained.



# COAS Reiterates Willingness To Motivate Troops, Reposition Nigerian Army To Achieve Mandate

By: SADIQABUBAKAR, Maiduguri

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt. Gen. T. A. Lagbaja has reiterated his commitment and determination to transform the Nigerian Army into a well-trained, equipped and highly motivated force towards achieving our constitutional responsibilities.

He also said that he has so far, ensured the implementation of quality training and provision of equipment towards combating the myriads of security threats confronting the nation. In line with his leadership philosophy.

The COAS stated this on Monday during Easter Luncheon celebration for troops of operation Hadin Kai jointly organized by the Theater Command Headquarters JTF North East Operation Hadin Kai and 7 Division Nigerian Army, Maimalari Cantonment Maiduguri was represented by the Theater Commander, Operation Hadin Kai North East JTF Command, Maj. Gen. Waheedi Shaibu.

He added that, "It gives me great pleasure to felicitate with officers, soldiers, and civilian staff of the Nigerian Army, as well as our family members, on the occasion of Easter Celebration 2024. This year's Easter Celebration is unique in that it coincides with the Ramadan fast.

"Hence, it allows Christians and Muslims alike to reflect on God's abundant grace on our nation, Nigeria and reminds us of

the duties and sacrifices we must make towards God, humanity, and our beloved country.

"It also provides an opportunity to appreciate the love of God displayed through the sacrifices of our Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of mankind. The Lenten period characterized by self-denial, abstinence, prayers, and almsgiving, which heralded the Easter Celebration.

"It further reminds us of the sacrifices, sometimes supreme, that officers and men of the Nigerian Army make to ensure that our territorial integrity is preserved at all times. I, therefore, congratulate officers and soldiers of the Nigerian Army for witnessing the Year 2024 Easter Celebration.

While urging all to continue to espouse the values and virtues of love, peace, and sacrifice in the discharge of our constitutional responsibilities, COAS said, "under my leadership, the Nigerian Army has continued to record tremendous successes in various operations at home and abroad.

"You all can attest to our achievements so far, especially in the ongoing Operation HADIN KAI in the North East and other internal security operations nationwide. As we continue to push towards the final onslaught on the adversaries troubling our nation.

"I assure you that the welfare of officers and soldiers, including training and provision of the needed equipment, will always be prioritized to enable us to discharge our constitutional responsibilities effectively.

"Let me use this opportunity to acknowledge and thank you, my officers and soldiers, for your doggedness in tackling the numerous security challenges bedeviling us as a Nation," Lagbaja said. COAS further commended the troops for their doggedness and sacrifices saying, "You have displayed much commitment, courage, resilience, and professionalism.

"For this, I say well done and charge you not to rest on your oars until we have eliminated all forms of threat to our country. While still grieving the recent unwarranted and gruesome murder of our colleagues in Okuama Community of Delta State, which occurred on 14 March 2024.

"I urge you all to remain steadfast, diligent, and committed to the discharge of our constitutional responsibilities. I encourage you to continue to pray for the repose of the souls of our departed colleagues who paid the supreme price for the noble cause of keeping our beloved country safe," Lagbaja said.

COAS also said, "I will continue to prioritize the welfare of our officers, soldiers, and families, including those of

our departed colleagues. I, therefore, charge you all to use this Easter Celebration to offer prayers against all forms of negative forces militating against the peace and progress of our dear nation.

"It is also my sincere hope that the spiritual exercise of the Lenten Season and the lessons learnt will imbue us with greater zeal and dedication to our constitutional duties," COAS said.

He also expressed appreciation to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, for his continuous support to the Nigerian Army and the confidence reposed in me to lead this great Army at this period in our Nation's history.

"I wish to reaffirm our unalloyed loyalty in the defence the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and our fatherland. The Nigerian Army remains committed, determined, and focused on ensuring the total defeat of insurgents, marauding bandits, and all other forms of external and internal aggressions disturbing the peace of the country.

"While urging all officers and soldiers of the Nigerian Army to use the season to pray for our continued successes, I wish our Christian faithful and, indeed, all Nigerian Army personnel and their families a wonderful and Happy Easter Celebration."





# Group Rejects Ebonyi Govt's White Paper, Peace Pact On Ezza- Effium Communal Crisis

By: MKPUMAENYINNA, Abakaliki

A group of natives from crisis ravaged Effium Community in Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, identified as Ezza-Effium Consultative Assembly has rejected contents of the recently signed state government's white paper and peace pact.

A statement signed by Chairman, Ezza-Effium Consultative Assembly, High Chief Aligwe Mathias Chukwuma and the Secretary, Dr. Bernard Orichi made available to journalists, described Retired Bishop Okoro's Peace Panel's reports and recommendations as "total departure and contradiction from the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), which gave every Nigerian full rights of citizenship in any part of the country where he or she has lived for years and has contributed to the economic, infrastructural and social development of the area".

According to the group, the recommendations of the said peace panel and its implementation could better be described as apartheid in the words of the former Vice President of Nigeria, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo (SAN).

The group alleged that contents of the state government's white paper/peace pact are "calculated, organized decimation and diminution of Ezza-Effium personality in particular, and Ezza people in general."

The group also held that the people who signed the peace pact on behalf of Ezza people did that out of compulsion and so did not represent the interest of Ezza-Effium people.

The statement reads: "You are highly welcome to this important press briefing to drive home Ezza-Effium stand on the purported Peace Pact which, according to the Government White Paper Implementation Committee on Effium/Ezza-Effium Crisis, is in consonance with the Report of the Retired Bishop Okoro-led Peace Panel, in which some of our stakeholders were COMPELLED to sign against their free will.

"It is no longer news that there has been a communal war in Effium Community which started in January 2021, as a result of power tussle between two members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers who were also political aids to the former Chairman of Ohaukwu LGA of Ebonyi State, Barr. Clement Odah, which has claimed many lives, destroyed properties worth billions of naira, while millions of people have been rendered homeless.

The war lingered without any practical possible solution in sight, due to the inability of the past State Government, led by Engr. Dave Umahi, to provide genuine road map to peace.

"A Judicial Panel of Inquiry, chaired by a Customary Court of Appeal Judge in the State, Hon. Justice Omaka Elekwa, was constituted, with clergymen, royal fathers and other members. Another Peace Panel, made up of members of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), led by the Anglican Bishop of Abakaliki Diocese, Rt. Rev. Monday Nkwegu, was also constituted.

"The reports and recommendations of these two panels never saw the light of the day and the State Government never gave reasons for not implementing them. The question is, what happened to the reports of these Panels?

"On assumption of office, the incumbent Governor of Ebonyi State, His Excellency, Rt. Hon. Bldr Francis Ogbonna Nwifuru, vowed to bring the war to an end and was already on course to actualize this dream as promised in order to avert further blood bath and save many more innocent men, women and children from going to their early graves. His Excellency immediately swung into action by constituting another Peace Panel with the Emeritus Bishop, Catholic Diocese of Abakaliki, Most Rev. Dr. Michael Okoro as Chairman, Rev. Father Charles Otu as Secretary, Rev. Father Donatus Oluwa Chukwu, who is the Vicar General of Abakaliki Catholic Diocese, and other stakeholders as members.

"When the Retired Bishop Okoro's Peace Panel submitted her report, an implementation committee, chaired by the Attorney General and Commissioner For Justice, Ebonyi State, Dr Ben Uruchi Odoh, was set up by Governor Francis Nwifuru to implement the purported Government White Paper emanating therefrom. Other members of the committee include Rev. Father Godwin Uguru, Rev. Scamb Nwokolo (Chairman, CAN; Ebonyi State), Barr. Roy Umahi, Barr. Albert Aloh (Solicitor General, Ebonyi State), Chief Mathias Adum (Principal Secretary to the Governor), and Justice Ogbunefi of the Ebonyi State High Court.

"The composition of these Committees which were made up of clergymen, their reports and recommendations seem to be a total departure and contradiction of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), which gave every Nigerian full rights of citizenship in any part of the

country where he or she has lived for years and has contributed to the economic, infrastructural and social development of the area.

The implementation committee of Dr Ben Uruchi Odoh said it would implement, to the letter, every recommendation in the White Paper emanating from Retired Bishop Okoro-led Peace Panel report.

"For the purpose of clarity, the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), by virtue of Sections 25-32, defines who a citizen of Nigeria is, inclusive of mode of acquisition of citizenship. More so, the preceding section, which is Section 24, defines the duties of a Nigerian Citizen. Additionally, Chapter IV of the Constitution (as amended) provides for the Fundamental Human Rights of a Nigerian Citizen and human beings living in Nigeria.

"Particular reference is made to Sections 34, 35, 40, 41, 42, 43 and 44 of the Constitution (Supra) which provided for the right to dignity, right to freedom of liberty, right to peaceful assembly and association, right to freedom of movement, right to freedom from discrimination and compulsory acquisition of property, right to acquire and own moveable and immovable property anywhere in Nigeria. All these rights, by virtue of the purported report of the Peace Panel, have been trampled upon against the interest of the Ezza-Effium people, who have lived in Effium community since time immemorial.

"The recommendations of Retired Bishop Okoro's Peace Panel and its implementation could better be described as apartheid in the words of the former Vice President of Nigeria, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo (SAN), in an event in Abuja on Thursday, August 26, 2023. According to him:

.... the country's Constitution gives all Nigerians the right to live and work in any part of Nigeria without molestation and infringement on his or her fundamental rights as enshrined in the Constitution of the federal Republic of Nigeria in which Ebonyi is not exception and will never be. In many quarters, there are feelings of alienation and exclusion. To this point, we must recognize the ways in which we perpetuate institutional discrimination and cause people to see their identities as weapons for procuring opportunity often at the expense of others. We see this whenever Nigerians are denied opportunity on the basis of their state of origin or because they are 'non-indigenes'.

"We see it when a Nigerian that has been resident in a state all his life is suddenly excluded from admission into an educational institution or an employment because he is not considered 'indigene'. All Nigerians have a constitutional right to live, work and enjoy their lives in peace and safety under the law. The classification of Nigerians as 'indigenes' and 'non-indigenes' is a form of apartheid and contradicts our declared aspirations towards equality and unity...

"The report which erroneously posited Ezza-Effium people, who have lived in their God given community since time immemorial, as tenants, is a malicious and misleading report orchestrated by supposed Men of God. What an unprofessional and disreputable contradiction? Perhaps, the purported Peace Panel did not advert her mind to the provisions of our laws and Constitution. This is dangerous and should be discouraged by all well-meaning individuals and Ebonyians in particular.

"From the purported Peace Pact which was described to be in consonance with the Okoro Panel report, it is evidently clear that the Retired Bishop Okoro-led Peace Panel, never wanted to end the crisis in Effium community but to set a dangerous precedent for other parts of Ebonyi State, and even beyond where Ebonyi people of different cultural backgrounds and dialects have been living together as their place of origin. This path, if toed, might lead to more communal crises in Ebonyi State. It is Ezza-Effium today, it could be any other people tomorrow.

"Gentlemen, it is pertinent to note that there are Izzis, Ezzas, Uffiums, and even Ezzamgbos, in Ado and Oju LGAs as well as other parts of Benue State where they enjoy every right of citizenship. Then in Ebonyi State here, Amuda people, who are the same non-Igbo speaking Orrin people as Uffium, were given autonomous community, with a traditional ruler of their own, in Ezza-North LGA; and no Ezza man ever questioned it. Why must everything about Ezza be different in Ebonyi State, where Ezza made superior and supreme sacrifices to be created?

"It is rather ridiculous that we are now regarded as tenants by the purported Peace Pact document, whereas the Uffiums, who are non-Igbo speaking, let alone of Ebonyi State origin, are now described as "landlord" by the same Peace Pact document. This is wrong, in fact and law, and a calculated, organized decimation and diminution of Ezza-Effium personality in particular, and Ezza people in general. We are

simply accommodative and in keeping with the provisions of 1999 Constitution of Nigeria (as amended) which gave all of us equal rights to citizenship.

"The pertinent question is: Does Retired Bishop Okoro-led Peace Panel want to redefine Nigeria Constitution at this point in time? Is the Panel suggesting that it was an error to have given Amuda people autonomy with rights to traditional stool and royalties from any mineral deposit in Ezza North LGA?

"We Ezza-Effium people, therefore, REJECT, in its totality, any Peace Pact or White Paper that tends to deprive us of any of our constitutional rights and privileges in Effium Community, inclusive of the rights over our entitlements, freedoms, lives and properties.

"For emphasis, 'the right to the traditional stool of Effium Community was first enjoyed by Ezza-Effium people even in the colonial era. The British Colonial Government appointed an Ezza-Effium man, Chief Ekuma Omaka (now late), as the first traditional ruler of Effium Community with his Certificate of Recognition, dated 1st September, 1960, and signed by Okon Udo Affia, Minister of State (Chieftaincies and Esterblishments). The said Chief Ekuma Omaka was later succeeded by Chief Leonard Akena (now late), an Uffium man, as the second traditional ruler, on ground of our common understanding of rotational basis between the two tribes of Ezza-Effium and Uffium. Or does the Retired Bishop Okoro-led Peace Panel claim ignorance of this fact?

"It may also interest you, Gentlemen, to know that it was an Ezza-Effium man, Chief Hon. Peter Igwe Eze, who then represented Ishielu East State Constituency in the old Anambra State House of Assembly during the Second Republic, while Rt. Hon. Anselem Nwaigwe (now the Emeritus Chief Judge of Ebonyi State), another Ezza man, succeeded him. Yet, the Peace Pact document still construes Ezza-Effium as tenant, even when we command over 80% of the entire population of Effium Community. Ezza-Effium have 66 polling units, squeezed into One and a half political wards, while Uffium with only 29 polling units have three political wards. It is further gross violation of our fundamental human rights, as guaranteed by the 1999 Constitution (Supra), for the Peace Pact document, or any other document whatsoever, to contemplate giving Ezza-Effium a "New Settlement" with "semi autonomous" status with "village head only"; and denying us right to traditional stool or royalty from mineral resources and other rights in the Community. It is on record that Edict No.9 of 1976 of the old Anambra State gave Ezza-Effium three autonomous communities, namely Umuezeokoha, Umuezeoka and Izzo-Kpakpaji.

"In the light of the above, we hereby make it categorically clear that the so called Ezza-Effium stakeholders who signed the purported Peace Pact document on 14th March, 2024, purportedly on behalf of Ezza-Effium did not represent the interest of the good people of Ezza-Effium, because they neither consulted other stakeholders and elders, nor had our consent to sign. THEY ARE ON THEIR OWN. As we sincerely appreciate the efforts of His Excellency, Rt. Hon. Bldr. Francis Ogbonna Nwifuru to restore peace to Effium community. We wish to restate that we, the Ezza Effium people, want permanent peace, not graveyard peace. We are eager to have enduring peace in Effium community and shall always support any genuine peace initiatives.

"We recommend that the State Government should order ceasefire and direct all residents of Effium Community to return to their homes while issues relating to revenue in the motor park, market places and other things incidental thereto, should be rightly addressed using extant laws. Again, we humbly appeal to His Excellency, the peace-loving Governor, Francis Nwifuru, to revisit the report of Retired Bishop Okoro-led Peace Panel and the Peace Pact document, and any other document relevant thereto, for a more informed and constitutional measures to guarantee restoration of enduring peace to Effium Community.

"We also, most humbly, request His Excellency, the Executive Governor, to use his good offices and kindly activate the long created three autonomous communities for Ezza-Effium to deepen security and development in Effium Community, pursuant to his 'People's Charter of Needs' mantra.

"Finally, we must not forget to express our displeasure with the conduct of all the clergymen involved in this conspiracy to annihilate Ezza-Effium. As we end this briefing, Gentlemen, we also want to most humbly redirect the attention of His Excellency to the former Vice President's speech cited above, which he earlier adumbrated during his visit to Effium Community on 4th April, 2021, that "classifying Nigerians as indigenes, and non-indigenes is apartheid."



# Kaduna Launches FG's Emergency Recovery Intervention Taskforce On Ginger Blight Epidemic



By ; FUNMI ADERINTO, Kàduna

The Deputy Governor of Kaduna State, Dr Hadiza Sabuwa Balarabe has launched the Federal Government Emergency and Recovery Intervention Taskforce on the Ginger Blight Epidemic.

The inauguration was held at the Yar'adua Centre of Murtala Square and was attended by representative of the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Engineer Abubakar Abdullahi, who chairs the Task Force, as well as the Executive Secretary of the National Agriculture Development Fund.

Also included in the task force, is the President of the National Ginger Farmers Association of Nigeria, and ginger farmers from the affected local government areas.

The Commissioner of Agriculture, Murtala Dabo, General Manager of Kaduna Agricultural Development Agency Mohammed Rili, and other senior

government officials from Kaduna State Government were also present.

This task force, which includes members from the Federal Ministry Agriculture and Food Security, Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), National Agriculture Development Fund, Kaduna Agricultural Development Agency, and other stakeholders from the private sector, has been established to investigate and implement preventive, mitigation, and corrective measures to address the epidemic and revitalize the ginger value chain in the affected states.

As the 2024 farming season approaches, the Federal Government Task Force is providing much-needed assistance to the affected farmers who suffered losses due to the 2023 ginger blight epidemic.

This support includes farm inputs like fertilizers, fungicides, herbicides, and other necessary supplies to enable them to cultivate their land in the interim.





# Transformative Power of NDDC Board And Management

By: JEROME-MARIO UTOMI

This piece was inspired by a recent statement credited to Barr Chiedu Ebie, Chairman of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), made to a delegation of Concerned Agbor Citizens (CAC), who were on his Agbor residence to congratulate him on his appointment as well as thank him for the thousands of streetlights that he influenced which currently dots urban and rural communities in Agbor, Ika South Local Government Area of Delta state.

In the referenced declaration, Ebie said in parts; my first task is to ensure that I work harmoniously with the managing director of the commission. We will not be in the news for the wrong reasons.

"I must be frank with you; I am getting a richer understanding of my community. This has further exposed me to the nuances and complexities amongst us. I know your expectations from me. I will exceed these benchmarks with your support and prayers. I will always remain dedicated to this job the same way I did in all my past appointments and will always ensure that I do not betray the confidence reposed on me. This, I assure you'

Essentially, while the visits by the concerned citizens may have come and gone, Ebie's insight as captured above explains some silent but salient points. It paints the picture of an authentic personality leading the present board and management of NDDC to rediscover the secret for creating lasting value for the region. His words exposed how his personal humility as the head of the governing board amply sets the stage for the ongoing peace and harmony presently enjoyed at NDDC and engineers the ongoing infrastructural and human capital development in the Niger Delta region.

Even as this transformative leadership prowess in the region is celebrated, this piece must however, underline that the NDDC Chairman's current disposition and burning desire to exceed expectations and make NDDC under his watch not be in the news for the wrong reasons neither came as a surprise nor appears in any way newsy.

The reason is not far-fetched.

Aside from a veiled admission by Niger Deltans of goodwill that Ebie is leading a governing body that firmly recognizes that it is their duty to serve Niger Delta communities and embrace its aspirations, both now and in the future, by assuring the people economic growth, education, health, security, stability, comfort, leisure opportunities and freedom in ways that will allow for the most conducive atmosphere to achieve the targets that will guarantee our welfare and a bright future, Ebie, for those that knows him, is an individual with an understanding that as humans, we must live with the consciousness that every good effort and sincere contribution towards the development of mankind must be vigorously pursued without reserve.

As a former Commissioner of Primary & Basic Education as well as Secretary to the Delta State Government, he demonstrated this fact to the fullest. He creatively and seamlessly managed different people with different



*Barr Chiedu Ebie*

experiences, assumptions, values, belief and habits to their work. And provided direction, protection, orientation, managed conflicts, shaped norms and laced with emotional capacity to tolerate uncertainty, frustrations and pains and raised tough questions without getting anxious himself.

He firmly understands that as a public office holder, he is watched closely, that people are noting every move they make, that their followers are learning a great deal about them and what they really believe in as opposed to what they say. What the award explains is that people's support is the greatest asset public office holders and civil servants enjoy.

Essentially, the current happening at NDDC has again confirmed as true the words of Lee Kuen Yew, former and pioneer Prime Minister of Singapore that we need good people to have good government, for however good the system of government maybe, bad leaders will bring harm to their people'.

Away from the recent commentary by the board Chairman, there are even more compelling reasons to believe that good public leadership qualities domicile in their family.

In my recent but similar essay, I captured an expression by a public affairs analyst where it among other remarks, noted that Chiedu Ebie had an uncle, Mr. Fortune Ebie who was one of the founding architects of modern Nigeria, literally speaking. Mr. Fortune Ebie was the Director of the Federal Housing Authority who planned and executed the building of what still today is the biggest Housing Estate in Nigeria, the FESTAC Housing Estate in Lagos, Nigeria. Fortune Ebie

was the head of the FHA with Brigadier Olu Obasanjo as Minister of Works and Housing and delivered a housing estate that remains even after a half century, the pride of the black man. It was showcased during the First World and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in 1977 and it brought admiration to Nigeria from the rest of the world.

This argument makes more meaning when one commits to mind the fact that Barrister Chiedu Ebie, incumbent Chairman of the board, Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) is the son of late Prof. John C. Ebie, pioneer Chief Medical Director (CMD) of the University of Benin Teaching Hospital UBTH, who passed on to eternal glory some years ago, after showcasing sterling public leadership attributes as head of the health institution established in May, 1973.

Also heartening and a fact the entire Niger Deltans should be proud of is the awareness that the Chairman is not alone in this quest for development of the region via quality delivery of projects. He is ably supported by the agencies management team and board members. They view themselves as Generals in the Army of Nigeria Delta development.

As an illustration, the Rivers State representative on the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) Board, Tony Okocha, during a recent interactive session with stakeholders and contractors at the commission's State Office in Port Harcourt, Rivers State capital, reportedly enjoined contractors executing projects for the agency to return to their various sites and ensure that they meet the required standards for quality

jobs, as there will be no payment for substandard jobs.

Okocha, who insisted that contractors who fail to meet the required specifications would not be paid for the projects, also added that the commission would execute projects and programmes in line with the Renewed Hope Agenda of the President Bola Tinubu-led administration that means well for the people of the Niger Delta region. "I am coming to your sites with my team of competent engineers to assess the work you are doing and if we find the work to be sub-standard, you will have yourself to blame as the current NDDC Board will not compromise on standards."

This transformative ideas and idles that characterizes the board and managements actions and inactions in the past few months have further postured as deserving the call by the Former/pioneer Chairman of the interventionist agency, Chief Onyema Ugo Chukwu, while delivering goodwill message at the recently held retreat in Akwa Ibom state, on the Federal Government and the Minister of Environment to allow the current board and management complete their tenure as 'there were signs of new things happening in NDDC.

Appealing to the Federal Government and the Minister of Niger Delta Development to allow the present NDDC Board to complete its tenure, the elder statesman emphasized on the imperative of amending the NDDC Act to provide for an overlap in the tenure of the members of the Board that ensures continuity.

"The lack of continuity has been a serious problem and a drawback to the development of the Niger Delta region. amending the NDDC Act to stagger the tenure of board members and key officials would indeed help ensure continuity and stability within the organization".

This, according to him, could be achieved by implementing a system where the tenure of members is set at four years, while the Chairman, Managing Director/CEO and Executive Directors serve for five years. This approach would help maintain a level of institutional knowledge and experience within the NDDC, as well as provide a smooth transition of leadership over time. By incorporating these provisions, the NDDC can foster long-term strategic planning and consistent leadership, ultimately contributing to the effective execution of its mandate and objectives." He concluded.

For me, this needs to be done not for political reasons but for the survival of our democracy and development of the region. Niger Deltans must on their part support the ongoing efforts by the board and management to bring a total infrastructural and human capital development of the region to fruition-a responsibility which has taken the nation too long a period to complete.

Utomi is the Programme Cordinator (Media and Public Policy), Social and Economic Justice Advocacy (SEJA), Lagos.



# Bala Aliyu: The Man Of The People And For The People Of Zaria

*"A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way."*

—John C. Maxwell

**A** good person is like a light that shines the way for progress, a good person is as good as the food one eat for health and good living.

Political experts say; a good man who has a good heart plus good values and virtues is a complete human that can be a good leader for all.

The African proverb advises people to align with leaders by examples. Leadership is about qualities, not just qualities but refined qualities that are interested to the young, children and the aged. The true qualities of a leader are not hidden because they shine the day like the sun, and they beam the night like the blue moon, while the qualities cool the heart like a cold soft drinking water at the dawning dew time.

To choose a political leader as a godfather you must x-ray the qualities, identify the values and weigh the impulse to know the person that can give back to the people as you wished.

When I heard the news about the momentous support of the youth of Zaria for a distinguished administrator and an excellence public servants of the people to represent the good people of Zaria Constituency, I conclude that the best moment of progress and development for the youths of Zaria Constituency has come, and, I said the best time for the reputable Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tajudeen Abbas has ripped for him to write a history with a golden pen.

Indeed, this is the time of reciprocating the good gesture, the moment to pay goodness for kindness is arriving, and the history is about to be recorded in an indelible book of Guinness for the Zaria people.

The Bala Aliyu I know, as a master in a working place and as a popular football player had testified to me and many that he is a good person of excellence record and a dynamic administrator of good records that can play the roles of evolving good change in the arena of politics like he did in the pitch. Bala, a respectful fellow among humans with distinguished qualities of all virtues will surely make wonders, overturn the politics of Zaria and attracts gigantic supporters for APC party and for the people that support



**Bala Aliyu**

him.

I only see this coming as a legacy that the speaker will leave as he progresses in his political carrier to the zenith, as we pray.

Bala Aliyu who has been in the service of humanity and God has done a lot for the people, the land, and the people. He was a great footballer who garnished many supporters from Zaria city and beyond the corridors of Nigeria. He is a lifter that helps people to grow and flourish. Bala is a

professional journalist, a certified human relations officer, an entrepreneur in farming that makes the nation green in line to the demands of the government of our time. Bala, a robust administrator works as a Public Relations Manager at National Research Institute For Chemical Technology (NARICT), Zaria Nigeria and Kaduna Polytechnic with suave qualities that enriches him to many levels of promotions.

No doubt, the youths of Zaria

Constituency have a wise thought for deciding to call on Bala Aliyu to contest for the Zaria Constituency at the State House of Assembly membership, and I joined in this good crusade because I know that I will share part of the blessings Allah will incur on those that succeeded on this course, and may Allah make it a reality for us. Amen.

*Auwal Ahmed Ibrahim is a political analyst and writes from Kaduna state. He can be reached via; [auwalgoronyo@gmail.com](mailto:auwalgoronyo@gmail.com)*



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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.
- Series discount is subject to the stipulated number of insertions, and it is payable only at the end of a campaign (to be deducted from balance pay).
- COPY DATE:** for all the Title Heads is three working days for the North and four working days for the South.
- Cancellation of previously booked advert will be accepted in writing within four working days notice, less than 24 hours to the date of publication will attract 25% surcharge.
- Advertisers/Agencies are to provide their Camera ready artwork in electronic copies, in PDF, or JPEG format.
- Advertisers will be surcharged 20% of the applicable rate where artworks are not provided.
- Adverts may not be published if the visuals given are considered too poor as to affect the reproduction.
- Alterations to original order should be conveyed in writing at least 24 hours to desired alteration date.
- Colour guides are to accompany coloured adverts.
- The management of New Nigerian Newspapers Limited reserves the right to reject an advert or any publication in any of its titles where such materials are considered distasteful for public exposure or libelous.

### TECHNICAL DATA

<b>6 COLUMNS</b>			
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

### LOOSE INSERTS

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



# Kaduna Debt Burden: Beyond Politics Of Blame Game, Focusing On The Issues

By: YUSUF ISHAKU GOJE

The Kaduna State 2024 approved budget shows that the incumbent administration will be servicing the State's inherited debt with about N25.4 billion.

However, it also shows that it seeks to borrow another N150.0 billion this year. Out of which N144.3 billion is multilateral and N5.7 billion is bilateral loans. This is about 33% of the total budget of N458.3 billion.

Furthermore, it is higher than the expected Independent Revenue of N120 billion, and Government Share of FAAC of N141 billion. Also, it is N47.2% of the total capital expenditure of N317 billion for the year.

Therefore, in view of the above, to narrow the debate on Kaduna's debt stock into a political war between the camp of the current governor and that of his predecessor is misplaced priority. Available evidence shows that the incumbent Governor, Senator Uba Sani, supported and defended the borrowings that happened under his predecessor. Likewise, as seen in the first paragraph, the 2024 approved budget shows the incumbent Governor, just like his predecessor, has also towed the same path of external borrowing.

More so, the news angle from which the debt issue is being reported by the media and some promoters of the Governor is counterproductive to him. The Governor cannot in any way absolve himself from the borrowings that happened under his predecessor. Keen observers will recall that the Governor was engaged using some of the data on our debt stock, during the gubernatorial campaigns, and he confidently defended the borrowings.

He was even reported before then to have challenged that he should be held responsible if his predecessor failed to effectively utilize the borrowings.

The Governor is in a better position to know that there is nothing new in the figures he reeled out during the meeting with stakeholders on Saturday.

The Fitch Ratings report for 2023 had already warned that, "The 'Vulnerable' risk profile (of the State) reflects a very high risk relative to international peers that Kaduna's ability to cover debt service with its operating balance may weaken unexpectedly over the forecast horizon (2023-2027). This may be due to lower-than-expected revenue, higher-than-expected expenditure, or an unexpected rise in liabilities or debt or debt-service requirements."



Aside from the fact that the incumbent Governor was an influential stakeholder in the last administration, more importantly, government is a continuum. Evidently, that is why the Governor titled his blueprint - SUSTAIN agenda and campaigned to continue and consolidate on the successes of his predecessor. Back to the focus of this write up, firstly, it is commendable that the Governor of Kaduna State through a town-hall meeting updated stakeholders on the state of the fiscal (financial) position of the State. The social contract of nurturing citizens' engagement in the SUSTAIN agenda is one promise being kept so far.

Secondly, in the Governor's speech five germane issues stood out for me

and are not being adequately debated, instead, the focus is on politicizing the debt burden inherited. The key points of public discussion from the Governor's speech should actually be: that there will be monthly deductions of about N7 billion; the State cannot pay salary without borrowing about additional N2 billion to complete the N5 billion wage bill; for some of the projects to be completed, the State will have to spend N115 billion - probably they will be abandoned; the little revenue after payment of salary will be going into rural roads; and there was no clear direction in the speech on how the debt crisis will be addressed - except hoping on the imprecise benevolence of the President and the

Governor's colleagues.

To this end, beyond lamentation and politics of blame game, the only way out for the State government is to review and further reform its revenue generation capacity. Equally, it is important to go beyond the tokenism of dishing out money to micro and small businesses to create the enabling environment to expand the State's revenue base.

Therefore, it is high time the state government convenes a public policy dialogue on revenue generation and ease of doing business for micro and small enterprises.

Lets engage, ask the right questions and hold the government accountable.

*Goje is an active citizen, civil society actor and OGP enthusiast.*



# Political Tsunami In Senegal

By Jibrin Ibrahim

I have been in Senegal as part of the ECOWAS Election Observation Mission led by Professor Ibrahim Gambari and the story of the 2024 polls is a pleasing one.

The Senegalese people have the capacity to throw out ruling presidents when they derail. In other words, they understand the theory of democracy.

Ten days before the 24th March Senegalese presidential election, the 44-year-old candidate, Bassirou Diomaye Faye, was in jail together with his mentor, friend and party leader, Ousmane Sonko. On Tuesday next week, he will be sworn in as President with 54.28% of total votes cast.

Faye's clear first round victory was a shock to the ruling party. Sonko's party was only a decade old and was considered a small party in the Senegalese political landscape. The election, which took place after a last-minute postponement and a whirlwind campaign cut from 21 to 12 days so that it could hold before Sall's term ends on 2nd April, was shrouded in uncertainty. Faye, the presidential candidate of the African Patriots of Senegal for Work, Ethics and Fraternity (PASTEF) party was in jail and was still unknown to the general public just a year ago. However, as soon as people realised his close collaboration with the charismatic party leader, Ousmane Sonko, as party secretary, the slogan sold to the 7.3 million voters made sense and caught on – “Sonko mooy Diomaye, Diomaye mooy Sonko” (“Sonko is Diomaye, Diomaye is Sonko”) in Wolof. President Macky Sall has been jailing all those political actors that he considered a threat to his third term agenda using the judiciary and an evil genius professor of law that the Senegalese call the “Tailleur constitutional”, who has the skills to turn the law to its opposite to service the ambition of his power drunk boss.

Before the duo, Faye and Sonko, were jailed, the son of former President Abdoulaye Wade, Karim, and Khalifa Sall, former Mayor of Dakar, have both been turned into criminals through abuse of the judicial process, removed from the political arena for some time and jailed to teach them a lesson – don't challenge President Macky Sall who is determined to destroy Senegalese democracy.

Both of them, however, remained in the race – Khalifa was able to contest in the presidential election but Karim Wade was disqualified for having a second nationality, French. His dad, who had also tried and failed to get a third term in 2012 was determined that his beloved son Karim must be president. He therefore did a deal with the President, the devil that had blocked him twelve years earlier.

He has above all promised a rupture, disentangling Senegal from French neo-colonialism. France is in deep trouble having lost control in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and now Senegal may be joining the bandwagon. The incoming president is particularly popular among young voters in a country where more than 60% of the

people are under 25 and struggle to find jobs. Faye promised to dedicate more state resources to promote youth employment and address the cost of living crisis the country is facing.

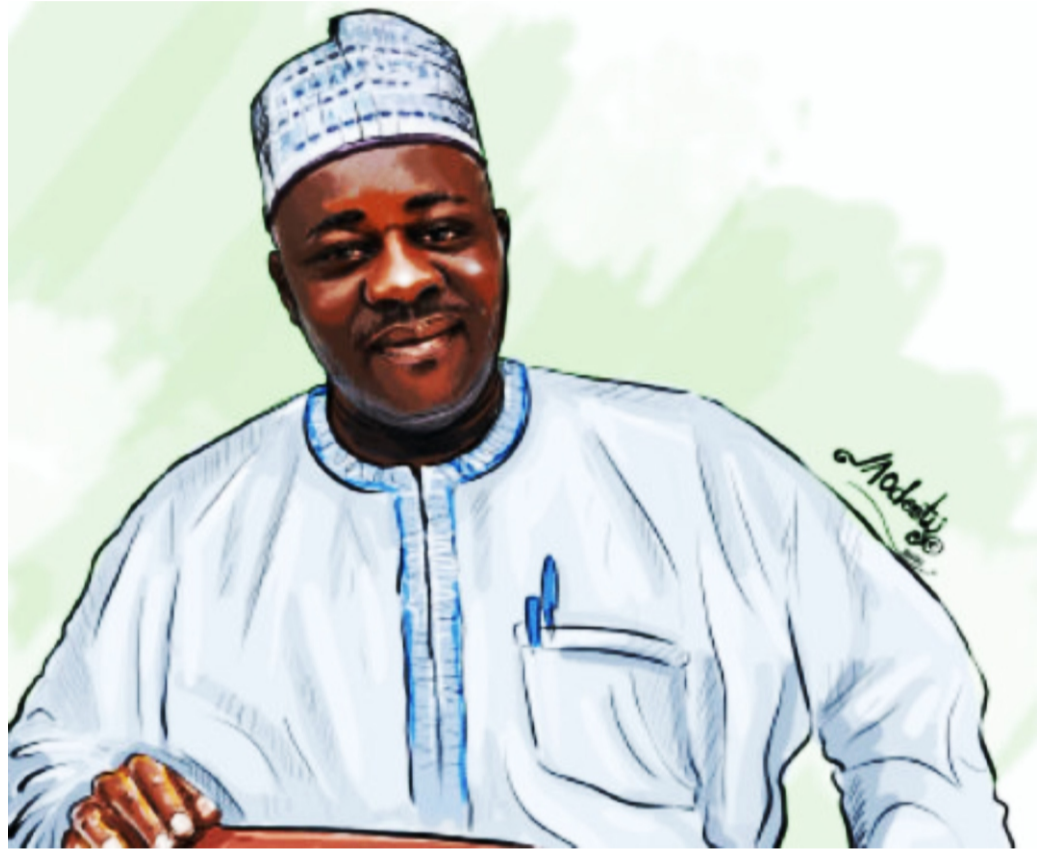
The deal was that the ruling party will work with Wade's supporters to force through an unconstitutional postponement of the presidential election by ten months allowing the President to stay beyond his tenure and creating enough time for Karim Wade to give up his French citizenship and seek the nomination again while President Sall would use the opportunity to re-open the nomination process to change the presidential candidate he had imposed who it has become clear was not capable of winning the election. Trust the devil, the plot failed.

They passed the law through the National Assembly with the required 4/5th absolute majority but to their shock, the normally compliant Constitutional Council threw it out for being in violation of the Constitution. The game was up for Wade and his son so they moved to their next project – revenge against President Macky Sall.

Just thirty hours before the elections, father and son called on their supporters to vote for candidate Faye. This was the final nail on the coffin of President Macky Sall as it helped push the momentum for Faye to get the 50% plus 1 that he needed to win in the first round.

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President Sall got his politics wrong. He invested heavily in importing riot control arms, gear and equipment and created new security services, some without uniforms, to shoot into demonstrating crowds. Police crackdowns on protests buoyed the opposition, as did rising living costs and concerns. His determination to extend his mandate beyond constitutional limits angered Senegalese citizens. As was the case in 2000 when Abdou Diouf was voted out and 2012 when it was Abdoulaye Wade's turn to be voted out, the Senegalese have demonstrated their



Jibrin Ibrahim

capacity to get rid of presidents that have lost their bearing.

Senegal has a tradition of allowing radio and television stations to announce polling station results so about three hours after the elections everyone knew that computations from announcements and party agents indicated a first-round victory for opposition candidate Bassirou Diomaye Faye. The following day, two days before results were announced, both the ruling party candidate, Amadou Ba and President Macky Sall called him, conceded defeat while congratulating him for the victory. The game was up and he would not be in office to steal the massive revenues that would be streaming in from petroleum and gas sells starting later this year.

In his victory speech, Faye promised to focus on political healing following the acrimony generated by President Sall's reckless judicial and physical attacks on his political opponents, getting over 60 people killed while demonstrating against his scheming and jailing over one thousand people for participating in demonstrations. He promised to govern with humility and transparency, the opposite of Macky Sall's traits.

He has above all promised a rupture, disentangling Senegal from French neo-colonialism. France is in deep trouble having lost control in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and now Senegal may be joining the bandwagon. The incoming president is particularly popular among young voters in a country where more than 60% of the people are under 25 and struggle to find jobs. Faye promised to dedicate more state resources to promote youth employment and address the cost of living crisis the country is facing.

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Senegal is set to start exporting oil and gas this year, and Faye has promised a raft of changes including plans to renegotiate oil and gas contracts as the depth of corruption has been very high. Due to Macky Sall's commitment to corruption, the elections, which were originally scheduled for February 25 was shifted on February 3, the eve of the campaign period over flimsy arguments. This decision was unprecedented and brought both internal and international condemnation.

After weeks of back and forth between the different branches of government on a new date, President Sall was forced to announce on March 6, the new date of March 24, which was accepted by the Constitutional Council.

As this episode of the story ends, Macky Sall is widely reported to have made plans to emigrate to a country without extradition agreement with Senegal as the all-powerful finally realises the guilty are afraid and power is never forever.

*Ibrahim is a professor of Political Science and development consultant/expert, and Senior Fellow of the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD). He is also the Chair of the Editorial Board of Abuja-based online newspaper, PREMIUM TIMES.*



# In The Fog Of Uncertainty, Senegal Lights A Fire

By Owei Lakemfa

It is in the genre of fairy tales. A virtually unknown 43-year-old in 2023, makes a Facebook post alleging that Macky Sall, the ubiquitous President of his country, Senegal, was trampling on the fundamental rights of citizens.

His post was in support of jailed opposition leader, Ousmane Sonko, and the manipulation of the judiciary to send him to prison for allegedly colluding with terrorist groups, instigating insurrection and endangering state security.

The man who was sitting in prison while other candidates were campaigning, and whose face was virtually unrecognisable, emerged from the shadows and was given a one-way ticket to the Presidential Palace by the electorate. He received more than 54 per cent of the vote, while Amadou Ba came a distant second with over 35 per cent and, third placed candidate, Aliou Mamadou Dia, won 2.8 per cent. Diomaye said: "By electing me, the Senegalese people have chosen to break with the past. I promise to govern with humility and transparency."

Now, Sall, backed by the power and might of super power, France, was not a man to annoy. For his insolence, Bassirou Diomaye Faye, was seized and thrown into jail like Sonko. It was to intimidate those who opposed the autocrat.

Then, events began to move at a dizzying pace independent of those who sat in prison or the Presidential Palace. Sall was following in the footsteps of fellow French stooge in Africa, Alassane Ouattara of Cote d'Ivoire. The latter is on an unconstitutional and illegal third term in office. However, Sall failed in his bid to run for an unconstitutional third term. He then devised an insidious way to remain in power; simply postpone the presidential election indefinitely. That was his greatest undoing.

Although backed by the Senegalese parliament, state power, external forces and the quiet acquiesce of many West African Presidents, he could not impose his will as power had left the Presidential Palace for the streets. The dictates of the streets as expressed by popular mass protests was that the election must hold and, Sall must leave at the expiration of his tenure on April 2, 2024.

The parliament, bowing to the pressures of the mass, on Wednesday, March 6, 2024, granted amnesty to political detainees. Clearly in order to reduce the electoral chances of Diomaye and give the ruling party candidate and former Prime Minister, Amadou Ba, better chances, Sall did not release the

opposition leaders from prison until Thursday, March 14, that is ten days before the Sunday, March 24, 2024 presidential election. Diomaye was on the ballot as Sonko had been barred. His message to the people was simple: "Diomaye is Sonko".

The campaign against him that he never held any high office, was never a parliamentarian, minister and as such, has zero leadership experience, counted in his favour. He has never been part of the rot that saw Senegal to its underdeveloped and malnourished state. He emerged as a 'Mister Clean'. Who is better to midwife change than a person who has not been part of the rotten past?

The man who was sitting in prison while other candidates were campaigning, and whose face was virtually unrecognisable, emerged from the shadows and was given a one-way ticket to the Presidential Palace by the electorate. He received more than 54 per cent of the vote, while Amadou Ba came a distant second with over 35 per cent and, third placed candidate, Aliou Mamadou Dia, won 2.8 per cent. Diomaye said: "By electing me, the Senegalese people have chosen to break with the past. I promise to govern with humility and transparency."

Diomaye is now set to send President Sall packing for the good of the Senegalese and African people and to the glory of humanity.

Whatever it is, in the fog of uncertainty across Africa, including wars and dictatorship, Senegal has lit a fire to give us some illumination. As it is, Senegal itself has little time as Diomaye's presidency begins on April 2, 2024 heralding a possible new age for Africa.

For me, in order to strengthen democratic principles and make dictatorship unattractive, Sall should be tried for his manifest crimes. First, he endangered Senegal by subverting democracy, including the fundamental rights of the people to freedom of movement and fair hearing. Secondly, he illegally detained people without a right to have their day in court. Thirdly, his government reportedly murdered at least 20 Senegalese for daring to protest against growing dictatorship. Fourthly, he illegally dissolved the opposition, Patriots of Senegal (PASTEF) party. Fifth, for unilaterally, unconstitutionally and illegally postponing the February 25 presidential election. Sixth, for illegally



attempting to extend his presidential tenure by postponing the presidential election and handover date indefinitely.

The Senegalese did not vote for Diomaye, a man they hardly knew or could recognise. Rather, they voted for an idea, for hope and for a desired future. The pathway to that future, according to the Pan Africanist President-elect, include constitutional changes which will separate the judiciary from the executive, drastically reducing the powers of the President, including creating the office of the Vice President. It includes an uncompromising war against corruption and drastic reduction of the 20 per cent unemployment in a population of 17 million.

But the ultimate goal is to snatch the sovereignty of the country from France; a sort of second independence that would transform the flag independence Senegal was given on August 2, 1960, to a real independence that would include economic, financial and social independence from France.

The plan of the emergent powers in Senegal include a currency change from the French-controlled CFA Franc because, as Diomaye argues: "There's no sovereignty if there's no monetary sovereignty." Although the proposed currency transition might have been made easier by the September 16, 2023 decision of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger to exit the Franc and establish a new common currency, the Eco, Senegal would need to be tactical as its funds are in the bowels of the French Central Bank. In the past two decades, West Africans have clamoured for change from the rotten past. In some cases, the change was stalled, in some, it was delivered through the barrel of the gun. However, what Senegal has shown us is that, despite the odds, true change can be delivered through the ballot box. But there is a caveat: as United States

President John Kennedy said on March 13, 1962: "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent change inevitable."

Other plans include renegotiating mining rights as Niger recently did with spectacular economic gains and, revisiting energy contracts as Senegal is set to become an oil-producing country this year.

These are the real issues that would define the Diomaye Presidency; whether it will be a success or a failure like that of Sall. The steps will also determine whether France and its Western allies would allow Senegal develop or try to strangle it by little veiled sanctions, vile propaganda, falsehood, instigation or even coup.

Interestingly, Senegal is the only country in the 16 West African countries that has never witnessed a coup. But faced with real change and a shrinking neo-colony made smaller by the military revolts in Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger Republic, France would do anything to keep Senegal, a subservient neo-colony like Cote d'Ivoire.

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# Nasara FC Win Baptist Maiden Super 8 Unity Soccer Cup

## \*Maranatha claim bronze

## \*organisers pledge to make it annual event

By; JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

Nasara G Maraban Rido have emerged champions of the maiden edition of The First Baptist Church Super 8 Unity Cup Competition, played at the sports complex of Baptist High School, Ungwan Boro Sabon Tasha, Kaduna on Monday April 1, 2024, beating the hosts by a lone goal

In the explosive final, the hosts lost several chances of leveling up after Nasara FC took the lead in the first half, courtesy of Jessy

Pius, shocking the hosts, with he half ending with a lone goal behind the net.

The second half saw both teams attempt scoring, with The First Baptist Church Ibrahim Taiwo Road Kaduna, losing several chances created.

Earlier in the third place match, CAC Koseunti lost 0-1 to Maranatha Baptist Church Ungwan Boro at the same venue in a highly competitive match, with the latter claiming the bronzem

In his remarks, UnderShepherd of The First Baptist Church

Ibrahim Taiwo Road, Reverend Dr. Banjo Ajao assured that it would be an annual event.

He congratulated both teams that reached the final for efforts put in place to make it to the final.

"One thing is necessary, discipline must be in place. If you lose your self discipline, it is not good enough. I want to challenge all teams, know that only one will win the trophy. Do not exhibit spirit of hooliganism, which is not spirit of Christ," he advised.

Speaking further, he said that, "Let me sincerely commend the

sports officials, I pray that the Lord will take you to greater heights".

High point of the closing ceremony was the presentation of trophy to winners, certificates and cash prizes to top three teams.

Nura Isa of The First Baptist Church emerged the Highest Goal Scorer, with three goals, Gabriel Ojo was voted Best Goalkeeper and Banta Emmanuel Yusuf emerged Most Valuable Player (MVP).

A health outreach was also held on the sidelines of the closing

ceremony, where doctors and other medical teams attended to different health issues.

Eight teams that participated are, The First Baptist Church Ibrahim Taiwo Road Kaduna, Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), Koseunti, Maranatha Baptist Church, Nasara Baptist Church, Maraba Rido, ECWA Goodnews Ungwan Maigero, Nasara FC Maraban Rido, Triumphant FC Maraban Rido and CYON St. Peters Catholic Church FC Ungwan Boro.

The competition kicked off on March 16, 2024.





# Quadri Aruna Decries Selective Justice By World Table Tennis

By; JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

Africa's number one Table Tennis player, Quadri Aruna has expressed displeasure over the injustice meted on him by the World Table Tennis, (WTT) for missing two major tournaments.

The African Games' silver medallist revealed that his crime is being an African who has maintained Top 20 in the World.

Aruna in a post on his social media page, quoted as saying, "Two ranking penalties in two consecutive months plus monetary penalty" said such injustice will not be acceptable.

The Commonwealth Silver medallist said, "My first sin is because I was sick with chronic diarrhoea. I was not able to

participate in the World Championships in Korea and I could not get a doctor's report on time while on sick bed.

"My appeal was rejected because I am black, from Nigeria and Africa.

"My second sin is because I decided to represent my club that is paying me a salary: I could not participate in the WTT CHAMPIONSHIP in Korea. Meanwhile, I informed WTT one month before the start of WTT CHAMPIONSHIP in Korea that I had club engagement.

"It's really now a sin to come from Africa, Nigeria and to be a black player and stay in the top 20.

"All of these penalties come from WTT. Such an injustice is totally unacceptable and should not be waived," he queried.



## A'Ibom PDP Strengthens Grassroots Structure, Holds Statewide Wards Congress

By; PATRICK TITUS, Uyo

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Akwa Ibom State Chapter, during Easter holidays, held a statewide wards meeting of elders, stakeholders and members of the party, an efforts described as a deliberate effort geared towards strengthening the party in the state.

The statewide wards meeting followed the directive of the Party leadership in the state for the meeting, to provide ample time for members to deliberate on issues of the party affair at the grassroots.

It was meant to seek more ways to further deepen the roots of PDP in all electoral wards in the state, with Leaders and Government appointees taking time to brief the people on the policies, intervention, programmes and early gains of the PDP administration in the State as superintended by Governor Umo Eno.

At Ibiakpan - Obotim Ward 2, Nsit Ubium Local Government Area, Governor Umo Eno who attended the meeting, explained that the purpose of the ward meetings was to afford the party leadership the opportunity to receive the mass of decampes who have been thronging back to the party lately and to reinforce the party's support base.

In his words, "It's been a good outing. We intend to continue to build up the party, to continue to work for our state and to continue to support our President at the centre.

"We have finished elections and people want to come back. I believe they have seen that the government is responsible, has capacity and they are convince and are coming back of their own volition, without being pushed.

"As a good father and a responsible party,

we have to open our door and everyone together, because Akwa Ibom is a PDP state and from time it has always been. So we need to build up our membership, continue to show capacity and strength in developing our state."

He stated that the ARISE Agenda is on course and soon enough, full implementation of his blueprint will be seen which he pointed are directed at uplifting the people and meeting the needs and aspirations of Akwa Ibomites.

The Speaker Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly, Elder Udeme Otong, while enumerating gains of the current administration thanked his people for staying true to the party and urged them to do more at repositioning the area to draw massive benefits from the ARISE Agenda.

At the Northern Ukanafun Ward 4 venue of the Ward Meeting, the State Chairman of PDP, Rt Hon (Elder) Aniekan Akpan thanked his people and the entire Ukanafun for the support to the party, charging them to consolidate on the party's dominance to gain more democratic dividend.

The Akwa Ibom State PDP helmsman who described Governor Umo Eno as a leader sent by God to Akwa Ibom people at a critical time like this, was full of praises to the Governor for already demonstrating results-oriented commitment in actualising the well-laid out ARISE agenda for the benefit of the people.

The State Chairman lauded Governor Umo Eno for his various initiatives including but not limited to the appointment of over 368 Personal Assistants from the respective Wards of the State, the one-project-per-local government, rural roads, prompt payment of pension and gratuity to retirees and

intervention in food price hike through the Bulk Purchase initiative, amongst others.

At Awa Ward 1, ONNA Local Government Area, immediate past Governor the State, Mr Udom Emmanuel charged faithful of the party to remain steadfast to the ideals of the PDP as PDP remains the most credible platform for the emergence of leaders and pursuit of broad-based nationwide development ends.

At the venue of the meeting for the PDP Ward 7 in Uyo, Secretary to the Akwa Ibom State Government, Prince Enobong Uwah while addressing the highly elated faithful of the Party, appreciated them for their steadfastness in choosing the PDP while also thanking them for their massive support for the Pastor Umo Eno's administration.

Prince Uwah said "For us in Ward 7 and the entire Uyo Local Government, our direction has always been PDP. Today I stand here to assure you that Pastor Umo Eno has already gained the applause of Akwa Ibom people across party lines for the bountiful dividends of Democracy his administration has already brought to the people of Uyo and Akwa Ibomites. Let us therefore increase the bandwidth of our support for this administration"

Similarly, Ward meeting in Uruan, Senator representing Uyo Senatorial District and former Speaker of the Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly, Senator Aniekan Basseyy attended the ward meeting at his home ward, Southern Uruan ward 2, where he rallied support for the ARISE agenda of the present administration of Governor Umo Eno also urged the people of Uruan to get ready to take advantage of the many benefits that the PDP administration in the state has begun to birth in the State.

Addressing the party in Southern Iman Ward 1 and 2, member representing Etinan/Nsit Ibom and Nsit Ubium in the National Assembly, Hon (Obong) Paul Ekpo, re-echoed the position of the party members which made a case for continued engagement at the ward level, adding that the support which saw to the party's victory at the polls should continue for the Governor to succeed.

The meeting which was held the Ibiono Ibom Western Ward 5, the Member Representing Itu/Ibiono Ibom at the House of Representatives, Rt Hon. Ime Okon charged attendees at the meeting to keep faith with the PDP as current realities has shown that it is the only party that is permanently committed to catering to the welfare of citizens.

While at Ibiono Ibom Western Ward 5, the Commissioner for Information, Comrade Ini Ememobong, who joined party faithful in the ward also commended them for their steadfastness and unwavering stance to stay in party, tasking the party faithful to support the vision of Governor Umo Eno which he said is meant to benefit the people.

In Ubium North Ward 3, the political Leader of Uyo Senatorial District Senator Effiong Bob who assured party faithful in the ward of greater days for the PDP in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria, sued for greater commitment for the growth of the party.

Separate remarks by leaders and members of the party show that the state-wide wards meeting which has as its important highlight, the defection of members of other political parties to PDP, was largely successful even as members applaud PDP's now entrenched tradition of having frequent meeting for close engagements at the grassroots level.



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## Quadri Aruna Decries Selective Justice By World Table Tennis

Story on Page 23

## Kaduna Indebtedness: My Advice Was Not Heeded - Shehu Sani

By; AMOS TAUNA, Kaduna

A former federal lawmaker who represented Kaduna Central at the National Assembly, Senator Shehu Sani has said that Kaduna State would not have found itself in the present economic predicament, if his position and advice were heeded.

Senator Shehu Sani said, "I was insulted and bullied for rejecting the \$350 million World Bank loan request by the Kaduna State government under the leadership of former Governor Nasir el-Rufai." Speaking to newsmen in Kaduna on Sunday while

reacting to Governor Uba Sani's lamentation over the huge debt burden of Kaduna State, the former lawmaker noted that has made it difficult to pay workers' salaries, saying that the hour of reckoning has come for every citizen of the state.

According to Shehu Sani, if you look at what he said about the state, there has never been any of his predictions that has not come to pass, saying that today, the state is strangled because of the money it couldn't pay. "If people had heeded what I had said and understood and agreed with me, we couldn't have been where we are today,"

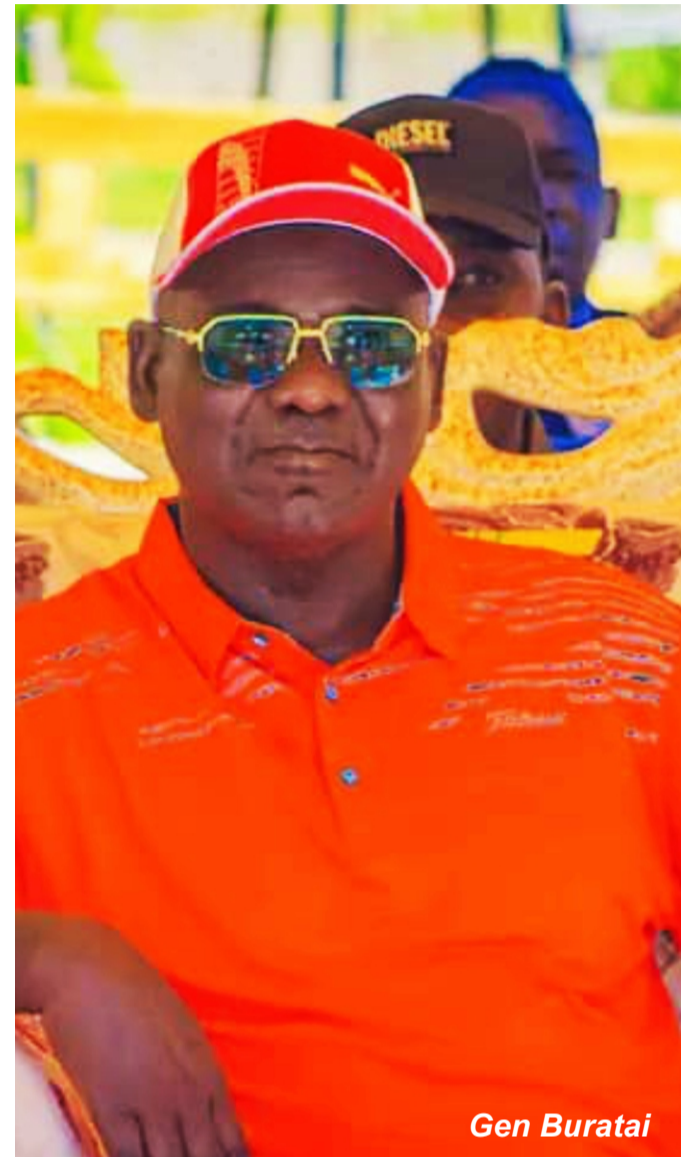
he explained.

Shehu Sani said that the state borrowed \$350 million when the Naira was about N400 to the dollar, lamenting that now the state is going to pay when the Naira is what it is today.

He explained that in 2018, himself and two other senators from Kaduna State namely; Suleiman Hunkuyi (APC, Kaduna North) and Danjuma Laah (PDP Kaduna South) rejected moves by el-Rufai to take a \$350 million World Bank loan, adding that following their rejection of the loan, then Governor el-Rufai in May 2018, while flagging off a

campaign for local government elections, rained curses and insults on Sani, Hunkuyi, and Laah for rejecting the loan and urged the people to shave their beards and heads whenever they visit Kaduna.

He explained that following the inability of himself and Hunkuyi to return to the Senate in 2019, the coast was cleared for el-Rufai, as Senators Uba Sani and Sulaiman Kwari lobbied and facilitated the granting of the loan by the Senate, lamenting that el-Rufai had said he had backed up the loan with pictures of rundown schools.



Gen Buratai

## Zamfara Govt Denies Borrowing N14.26bn

\*Says it was proceeds of N20bn loan floated by previous administration

By; IMRANA ABDULLAHI, Kaduna

Contrary to what is going round on internet and radio stations, Zamfara State Government under the leadership of Governor Dauda Lawal has disclosed that the sum of 14.26 billion was not borrowed, but is part of the proceeds from a 20 billion Naira loan floated by the previous administration.

A statement by the spokesperson of the Zamfara Governor, Sulaiman Bala Idris, revealed that no domestic or external loans have been borrowed since Governor Dauda Lawal took office.

"We would like to clarify the Debt Management Office (DMO) report that the Zamfara State Government borrowed N14.26 billion naira.



"Zamfara State Government has never applied for loans or approached the State Assembly or National

Assembly for such a request.

"It is important to note that the previous Zamfara state government floated a N20

billion bond but failed to collect the total amount.

"The immediate past government received N4 billion naira out of the 20 billion loans requested for the Zamfara cargo airport project, though the funds were not utilized.

"Upon assuming office, we discovered that the payment terms made terminating the bond impossible without incurring a significant loss for the state.

"The balance of N16 billion Naira out of the N20 billion borrowed by the past administration is the N14.26 billion captured by the Debt Management Office (DMO). The value is reduced due to inflation.

"The bond balance, which is still in a government account, has not been used and will be reserved for the airport project."

## Easter: Buratai Foundation Harps On Unity, Brotherliness

By; JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

In a statement released by the TY Buratai Humanity Care Foundation, signed by the Chairman Amb Ibrahim Dahiru Danfulani Sadaukin Garkuwan Keffi and Betara of Biu, the foundation emphasized the importance of unity and support among Nigerians during the Easter season. The Grand Patron of the Foundation, His Excellency Ambassador Lt Gen Tukur Yusufu Buratai (Rtd) CFR, former Chief of Army Staff, conveyed a message urging Nigerians to come together and assist one another in times of need.

The statement highlighted the significance of unity

and solidarity in fostering a stronger and more resilient society.

Furthermore, the Grand Patron encouraged Nigerians to offer prayers and maintain faith in the current administration of His Excellency Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu GCFR.

"This call for support and confidence in the leadership aims to promote a sense of national cohesion and progress.

"The TY Buratai Humanity Care Foundation's Easter message serves as a reminder of the importance of compassion, unity, and support in building a more prosperous and harmonious society for all citizens," the statement said.