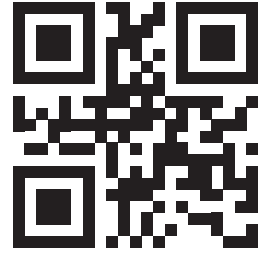




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# CELEBRATING NIGERIA @6



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## Commentary: The NGF as Intervener-in-Chief

**T**he NGF has turned a new leaf in its interventionist engagements in the country. Ministries, Departments and Agencies, as well as other service-spirited outfits and even corporate organisations are beginning to take full advantage of the convening power of the Nigeria Governors' Forum, NGF, with a view to solving some of the knotty technical gridlocks that appear to drive a wedge in public service or governance, in the country.

International donor agencies have long identified this potential in the NGF and capitalised on it.

Once described as a pressure group that was purportedly created by the subnational leaderships to check the overarching influence of the presidency on governance, the NGF management, under the leadership of its various Chairmen and the Director

General, Mr Asishana Bayo Okauru, have driven the Forum to the heart of governance, becoming a credible and reliable change agent that is known for providing solutions to things that impede progress, at the subnational level.

Clearly, the NGF is a quasi-governmental agency. The NGF Secretariat leaves politics strictly to politicians and concentrates on governance. The NGF has, over time, made great inroads in resolving issues relating to the minimum wage, security situation in the country, tax matters and the economy, Polio and other health interventions, the logjam that encumbered medical practice and the conditions of service of the Nigeria Association of Resident Doctors NARD, the recent increase in the pump price of fuel and tariffs on electricity in the

country, among others.

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) on learning of the hike on fuel and electricity objected to it and threatened to shut down the country. Governors intervened and today, the population is enjoying the calm before the storm. In fact, the NLC President, Comrade Ayuba Waba had mentioned that if the Federal Government had involved the NGF in the negotiations earlier than it happened all the tension that the matter had generated would have been avoided.

This is basically because the NGF was only able to negotiate a two-week window which expires this week. The NGF was also at the heart of the fight against the Corona Virus pandemic, Covid19. Apart from forming part of the Presidential Task Force on Covid19 the NGF was also the first port of call



when the coalition against covid19 CACOVID sought to intervene. This simply means that the dependability of the NGF is fast becoming legendary.

The NGF had also engaged with the NNPC to ensure that additional funds were remitted to the national coffers by the petroleum giant. The Forum's handling of the Paris Club refunds and the distribution of palliatives all point to the fact that NGF has acquired the strength to deal with critical administrative matters in a fair and equitable way that is embraced by all its members regardless of party affiliation.

The NGF has invested valuable energy into ensuring that partisanship is de-emphasised amongst governors and a tradition of service provision for the citizenry, within the ambits of global best practices are lauded. The NGF also gives its full and undivided attention to help states get by.

This has led to the expansion of certain critical desks in the Forum, which enhance service delivery such as the IGR Help Desk, the Human Capital Development intervention office, States

Fiscal Transparency Accountability and Sustainability Program for Results, SIFTAS, among others. These and others like them have occasioned the recruitment of highly qualified professionals like the Health and Agric Advisors to compliment the ordinary staff of the Forum, who by all standards are also professionals in various fields of endeavour.

A few months ago the United Nations invited the NGF to partner in the struggle to curb sexual and gender based violence which was becoming rampant since the Covid19 lockdown. The governors responded with resounding enthusiasm, domesticating certain extant laws in their states, and imposing stringent punishment on offenders. Its technical committee has also been attending all relevant meetings to unify the strategy for consolidating on already made gains across agencies.

Last week the Committee of Vice Chancellors, CVC, approached the NGF to intervene in its quest to reform tertiary education in the country. The reason for this cannot be far-fetched.

The NGF has become the stabilizing agency, anywhere a deadlock rears its ugly head.

Among the prayer of the CVC, Professor Aboki, who led the delegation to the NGF Secretariat said 7 major areas requiring urgent intervention, are critical some of which include a conversation around the sharing of Internally Generated Revenue; The University Laws and Acts; A broad and sincere conversation about the state of tertiary education in Nigeria among others.

University sports and entertainment; A conversation on how to adopt the Peer Review Mechanism of the NGF into the universities for healthy competition; A compendium of past VCs as the Committee intends to celebrate 60 years of university leadership in 2022; and a courtesy visit of the leadership of the NGF and the Committee of Vice Chancellors. These requests are coming because all the interventions of the NGF in both public and private endeavours are verily being translated into workable conversations at all levels.





## KWARA ACTIVELY TAKING THE LEAD ON GENDER INCLUSION, SAYS ABDULRAZAQ

**O**n behalf of the people and government of Kwara State, I welcome all of you to this historic event. It is our first annual Gender Equality Conference in Kwara State. This gathering reaffirms our commitment to gender parity, women protection, empowerment and inclusion.

It is no coincidence that this event is happening on our Independence Day. The conference is timed to galvanize global opinions around the agenda for women in Africa.

We set out to offer a strong platform to state and non-state actors alike to discuss domestic, bilateral and multilateral strategies to increase women's participation in our societies. True to that, we are joined at this conference by some of the strongest voices in the clamour for better opportunities for women in Africa. Kwara State is actively taking the lead in the campaign for gender inclusion because we are convinced that a society works better

and grows faster when no one is denied equal opportunities to succeed. And we have no regret pursuing this noble cause.

We have not only appointed 56 percent female cabinet in Kwara, we have ensured that around 50 percent of the new permanent secretaries are women who merited the positions. Similarly, top government positions across Grade-A MDAs are held by very accomplished women. This has been done to give voice to the women and drive inclusion. We also look forward to assisting our women to make inroads into elective offices.

We are also doing so much on the economic plain to empower women and inspire hope in the girl child. 70 percent of beneficiaries of our TraderMoni are women, while indigent, old women are also prioritised in the soon-to-begin safety net programme for the elderly called Owo Arugbo. The administration has also recently received some grants from the Dangote Foundation for

16,000 women.

Similarly, in support of our women, I am glad to inform you that the CBN has approved the distribution of 200,000 noiler dual-purpose chickens to 10,000 rural women across Kwara State under the Bank's and the Ministry of Agriculture's Noiler Chicken Expansion Scheme.

I must add that there are downsides also. But they are not enough to deter us from doing what is right and just.

As I have mentioned recently however, gender inclusion would gain wider acceptance if various political leaders and government institutions have something to lose if they shut the door against women. For this reason, I call on development partners to make gender inclusion a condition for states actors to access certain support.

I once again welcome you all to this conference, and wish you a very fruitful deliberation.

# INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD



### Why was International Day of The Girl created?

International Day Of The Girl exists to recognize girls' rights and the unique challenges girls face all over the world. The day aims to shed light on all the reasons we, as a global society, need to address the challenges, biases, dangers, and injustices young girls deal with all over the world—with particular focus on parts of the globe where child marriage is widely practiced, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, and North Africa.

International Day Of The Girl is meant to promote the empowerment of young girls everywhere, while also advocating for the attainment of their basic human rights, like education and bodily autonomy.

### Why is International Day of the Girl such a big deal?

There are 1.1 billion girls alive today who could grow up to change the world if they're simply given access to things like secondary education, proper nutrition, and family planning services.

In fact, experts from the Brookings Institution believe

secondary education for girls could be the most successful and cost-effective investment against climate change.

Research shows that educated girls are less likely to contract HIV, and when women are educated, there ends up being more jobs for everyone. According to the Malala Fund, if all girls attended school for 12 years, low and middle income countries could add \$92 billion to their economies annually. Plus, when nations make sure to educate all of their children instead of just the boys, they cut their risk of war by 50 percent.

In reality, though, over 130 million girls are out of school worldwide. With the exception of China, one in three girls is married in the developing world before reaching their 18th birthday—which means 47,700 girls are coerced into underage marriages on a daily basis.

At least 500 million women and girls lack a private place to change their sanitary protection—a fact which leads to reproductive tract infections and fewer girls in school.

**T**hey may not have a voice or influence, but you and I do. In any small way that we Can, let us help to correct this dangerous

anomaly, by sharing the following information. Perhaps it might get to someone who can influence where you cannot; or even get to the girl child one way or the other.



**CALL! DUTY!**

## GENDER JUSTICE SERIES WITH NIGERIAN FIRST LADIES

OCTOBER 11, 2020 - INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD



**MARTHA UDOM EMMANUEL**  
Akwa Ibom State (SS)



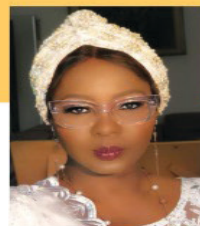
**BISI FAYEMI**  
Ekiti State (SW)



**CHIOMA UZODIMMA**  
Imo State (SE)



**ZAINAB SHINKAFI BAGUDU**  
Kebbi State (NW)



**OLUFOLAKE ABDULRAZAQ**  
Kwara State (NC)



**ANNA DARIUS ISHAKU**  
Taraba State (NE)





# KWARA'S YOUNG WOMEN ARE INNOVATORS, SAYS AMINA MOHAMMED

Being a speech delivered by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Amina Mohammed on the occasion of Nigeria's 60th Independence Anniversary and inauguration of the first annual conference on Gender Equality by Kwara State Governor, His Excellency, Abdulrahman Abdulrazak.

Your Excellencies, friends, ladies and gentlemen.

I'm pleased to share a message with you today as we mark 60 years of Nigeria's Independence.

It is fitting that Kwara State has chosen to commemorate this occasion by inaugurating the first annual conference on Gender Equality.

I would like to commend His Excellency, my brother, Governor Abdulrahman Abdulrazak for his trailblazing efforts in appointing a Gender Parity Cabinet.

This is significant to deepening democracy and setting an example for the rest of Nigeria, and indeed, the world. Women's equal representation is not just a right in itself, it is a proven road to sustainable economic gains.

There's ample global evidence that when women are in power, their governance supports the wellbeing of entire populations in line with the values of fairness, equality, peace and human rights.

This has become abundantly clear as we face the COVID-19 crisis. Women across the globe are rising for all, and as the example of Kwara State shows, there's no shortage of capable and talented leaders like Gbemi Saraki who is currently serving as the Hon-ourable Minister of Transport; Sarah Jubril, who has contributed to Nigeria's political development, and Joana Kolo, youngest serving Commissioner in Kwara State.

Going forward, we must expand efforts to provide equal opportunity and equal space for women at decision-making tables.

As we focus on recovering from this global crisis, and strive to build resilient and inclusive societies, women's equal participation in all spheres of life must be a priority.

This includes targeted investments and supporting women-owned businesses and harnessing women's capacity in building sustainable green economies; women in politics and the banking sector, and strengthening public institutions.

In the private sector, we urgently need to address the barriers

that hinder women's progression into the executive level, including unequal pay, workplace discrimination and harassment.

We must continue to ensure that our health systems are adequately funded to ensure that women seeking health services are and those who make up the majority of frontline workers have their health and livelihoods protected.

These investments must be backed by gender-responsive budgeting and robust gender sensitive policies that mandate women's equal and fair participation in society. This is the only way we can ensure the integrity of our institutions and democracy.

It has been 25 years since Nigerian women joined other women delegations to demand gender equality. We must be ready to support the next generation of girls in the areas of education and entrepreneurship. and entrenched women's financial independence make for stronger, more resilient communities.

This is especially

important as we look to bolster the economy in the post COVID-19 recovery process.

Kwara's young women are innovating everything – from technology hubs and cosmetic brand to catering businesses and social enterprise. They are today and tomorrow's leaders. I urge all of us to stand behind them in realizing their potential, free from fear of violence and with full confidence in their abilities.

The United Nations is committed to supporting the efforts of Nigeria in this regard and in that spirit of partnership, I wish you successful deliberations today and send special greetings to all my mothers, daughters and sisters of Kwara State.

Thank You!



Amina Mohammed



# COMMITTEE OF VICE CHANCELLORS (CVC) SEEKS NGF-INTERVENTION TO REVAMP UNIS

The Nigeria Governors' Forum last week sat with the Committee of Vice Chancellors (CVC) at the NGF Secretariat in a physical meeting, the first between the two groups.

After the introductions, the CVC expressed a desire to invite the Governors to lend their weight behind them (CVC) to tackle issues plaguing Universities in the country. During the courtesy visit, the CVC tabled a picture of the situation of tertiary institutions in Nigeria before the NGF and expressed its preparedness for a proper and sincere conversation on the matter.

The head of the delegation, Professor Yakubu Aboki Ochefu, thanked the DG of the NGF, Mr A.B. Okauru, ahead of the

opportunity to Speak to the Forum while noting that the conversation on how to revamp the universities is long overdue.

He explained that the Committee has 7 major areas requiring urgent intervention, critical of which include a conversation around the sharing of Internally Generated Revenue; The University Laws and Acts; A broad and sincere conversation about the state of tertiary education in Nigeria among others.

University sports and entertainment; A conversation on how to adopt the Peer Review Mechanism of the NGF into the universities for healthy competition; A compendium of past VCs as the Committee intends to celebrate 60 years of university leadership in 2022; and a courtesy visit of the leadership of the NGF and the Com-

mittee of Vice Chancellors.

In his response, the DG thanked the delegation for their presentation. He said that after listening to contributions from everyone, it is apparent that universities cannot thrive without a sustainable environment.

Mr. Okauru however expressed eagerness to work with the Committee and promised to escalate the conversation to the Governors.

The Committee responded by promising to send in a proper presentation to the DG, who in turn, assured them that he would discuss with the Chairman of the NGF Dr John Kayode Fayemi, Governor of Ekiti State, to put their proposal on the agenda of the NGF meeting at the Governors' earliest convenience.



DG NGF, A.B. OKAURU with the head of delegation of the Committee of Vice Chancellors (CVC), Professor Yakubu Aboki Ochefu, when the latter paid a visit to the NGF Secretariat in Abuja.

## THE TEAM

### Director-General

Asishana B OKAURU

### Executive Director (Fin & Admin)

Abubakar JIBIA

### Executive Director (Res & Str)

Abdullateef SHITTU

### Head Media Public Affairs

Abdulrazaque BELLO-BARKINDO

### Snr. Publications Officer

Halima S. AHMED

### NGF Health Advisor

Dr. Ahmad ABDULWAHAB

### Agric Economist

Bunmi AKANBI

### Researchers

Abdulaziz OLORUNISHOLA

### IT

Bassi HEMAN

Ubong ESSIEN

### Senior Economist

David NABENA

### Photography

Saeed SANUSI

Legal Advise: Chijioke CHUKU



# There's Every Reason To Celebrate Nigeria – Ganduje

## Courtesies;

It is with much joy and pride that I join you to celebrate the 60th anniversary of our nation's independence. Reflecting on our journey in the last 60 years as a nation, there is every reason to give thanks and praises to the Almighty Allah who, in His infinite mercy, has kept us together in spite of our challenges. We all need one another to survive as no part of Nigeria can do it all alone and still wield or command the kind of influence that Nigeria currently enjoys in the comity of nations.

I wish to use this opportunity to make a passionate appeal, more than ever before, that we must renew our belief in Nigeria and play our parts diligently.

At this trying and 2 challenging time, we must aggregate our strength and be united in focus to make our nation stronger.

I extend hearty congratulations to all Nigerians on this day we justifiably celebrate the collective energies and sacrifices of our forebears that led to this joyous moment. We are

celebrating the birth of our nation at this time when the global community is ravaged by the COVID-19 global pandemic that is bringing in its wake deaths and economic difficulties, and is spreading fear and panic throughout the world.

While we have taken appropriate measures in tackling the pandemic, which insha Allah, will be controlled, we all have a responsibility to take measures to help ourselves and each other by practicing basic personal hygiene. I also urge you all to engage in fervent prayers and particularly the clergy in churches and mosques as well as traditional authorities against the pandemic and to keep our state and the nation safe.

Fellow citizens, in the last five years of democratic governance, Kano has gone from being a representation of urban condition to a widely referred specimen of effective leadership and a reference point for infrastructure development in the country.

Even in the face of the prevailing pandemic,

we have kept faith with the people of the state with a clear vision and commitment to the policy of pioneering in all facets of development.

It is now 16 months into this administration's second tenure in office and occasions such as this present an opportunity to thank God for our country and to report to you, on our journey so far.

We remain committed to serving you and fulfilling our promises to delivering dividends of democracy through improved social services, boosting of agriculture, adequate water supply, provision of qualitative education, health-care, as well as infrastructure development.

I want to assure Fellow citizens that despite the numerous challenges especially with regard to state of the economy, we have managed to make significant strides towards implementing our development agenda to ensuring that Kano people enjoy dividends of democracy.

This administration has demonstrated commitment to ensure the implementation of the Free and Compulsory Primary and Secondary





Education Policy which I promised during our inauguration as well as the integration of Almajiri schools in the state.

Already, we have commenced direct funding of our primary and secondary schools, while we are completing arrangements to enroll indigenous Almajirai 4 pupils into the newly established 15 Tsangaya Model Schools under the conventional educational system. I would also like to say here that we are pioneers in the implementation of the Ruga Settlement which is a project aimed at tackling the issue of herdsmen/Fulani, and has been a challenge that mitigated the efforts of our security systems.

We have commissioned the first batch of 25 housing units of RUGA settlement project out of the 200 units earmarked for construction at Dansoshiya Forest in Kiru local government of the state. This administration is also allocated thousands of hectares of land at Falgore forest and expended over N318 million for the construction of a Military Training Area. There has also been collaboration with the various arms of law enforcement agencies, particularly the Army and the Police in this direction. They have been provided with logistics and equipment and set up a Police Anti-Cattle Rustling Squad, Ambush Squad and Tactical Observation points along the forest.

We have also adopted measures aimed at combating crimes in the state through the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) where the sum of over N400 million was expended for the construction of an Advanced Communication System at Bompai Police Command, Kano; while the sum of over N100 million was also expended for the establishment of a Tracking System 5 at the state headquarters of the Department of State Service (DSS). My Fellow citizens of Kano, this administration is also committed to the completion of all ongoing road and other critical infrastructure projects in both urban and rural areas of the state to pave way for efficient traffic flow for enhanced business and economic activities.

The ongoing construction of the multi-million naira world standard Kano Cancer Treatment Centre is in progress, while as part of effort to bring about even development to all parts of the state, construction works are also continuing for the upgrade of 400 bed capacity hospitals in each of the headquarters of the four created Emirates. Contract worth over N3.2 billion has been awarded for the supply

of medical equipment, furniture, Information and Communication (ICT) equipment and deployment of hospital management software at the four upgraded health facilities. We are also constructing road networks in the Emirate headquarters to ensure rapid development as part of effort to creating small towns just as Kano inch towards its Megacity status. We have also concluded arrangement for a multi-billion naira Bus Rapid Transportation (BRT) programme in Kano metropolis in furtherance of effort to ensure urban regeneration and sustainable transportation.

The 6th programme is a high-quality bus-based public transport system designed to deliver fast, comfortable and cost effective services at metro-level capacities. Already, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed for the supply of 100 buses, some of which have already arrived the country for the project. In consideration of Kano as centre of commerce and North's industrial hub, we have established the state Hydroelectric Development Company (KHEDCO) to generate power and manage the state-owned Independent Power Project (IPP).

While part of the project at Tiga Dam has reached completion stage, the Challawa Dam project, which has been subjected to a review, construction work would soon be started. The project is designed to generate an estimated 7.2 megawatts of electricity for a start and is expected to impact positively in the conservation of monetary resource being expended by the state in servicing electricity bills as it involves some key state public utility establishments.

The project will also use water from Hadejia Jama'are River Basin Development Authority to supply energy to the small-scale industries at Sharada, Challawa and Bompai Industrial Estates during the day time, while the two water treatment plants at Tamburawa and Challawa will supply power to street lights in the night in order to improve security situation in the state.

Let me assure you that given the relative peace being enjoyed

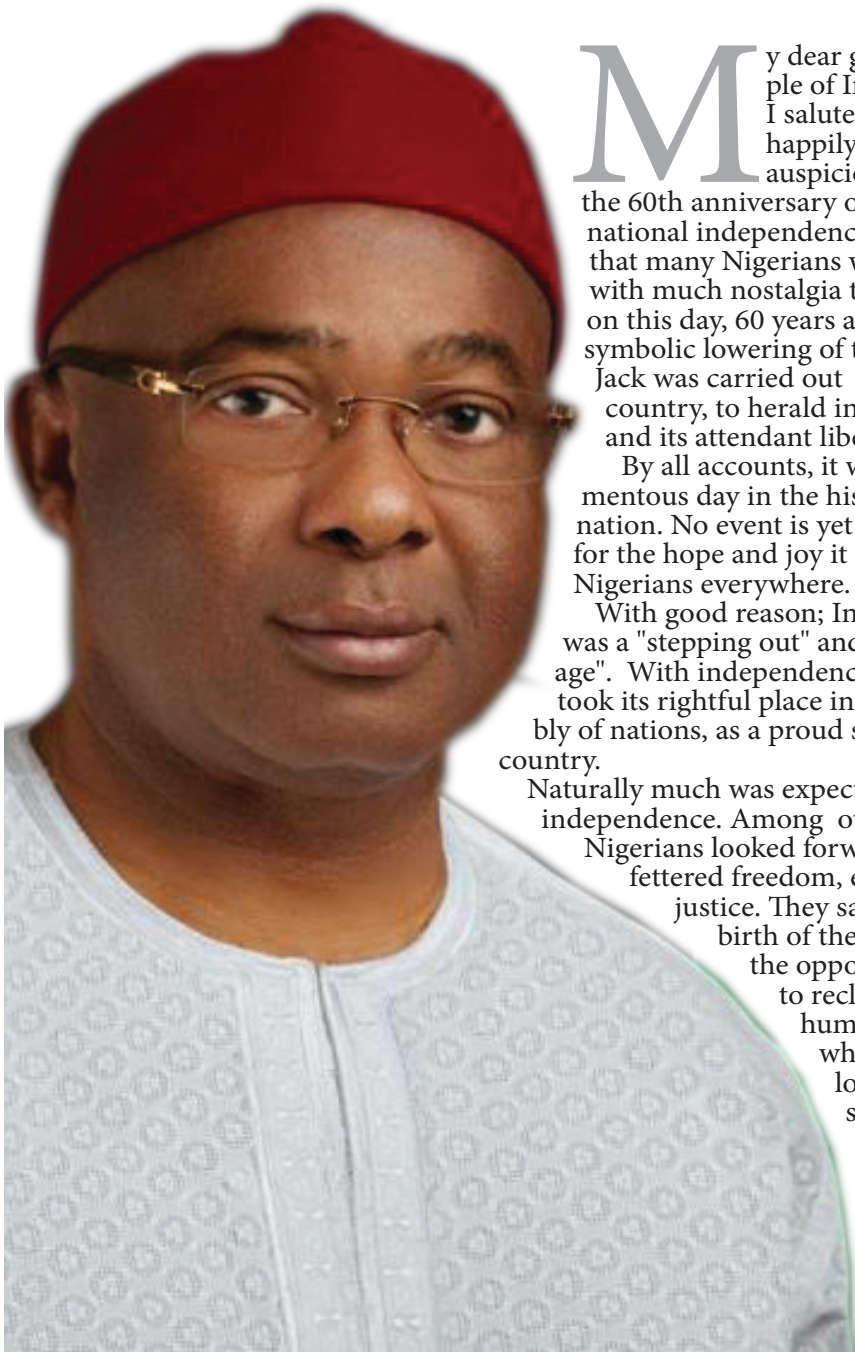
in the state, these deliberate measures are beginning to produce immense results and Kano state is now a first-choice destination for conferences, seminars/workshops, tourism and investment. The implementation of these programmes/policies are geared towards building befitting infrastructures and other facilities for future megacity.

My Fellow citizens, while we do not engage in making promises, I want to express our commitment to continue to deliver more in the remaining three years of this administration. As we celebrate today, I enjoin you all to remain steadfast and hopeful for a better tomorrow. The future of our state is certainly brighter than anyone can imagine. Let us therefore forge a common front to defend our hard earned freedom by being purposeful, focused and disciplined. I would like to express the gratitude of our administration for your unflinching support which has in no small measure strengthened our resolve and commitment to serve you better. Thank you for your kind attention and God bless you all.





# THERE'S SO MUCH TO CHEER ABOUT – UZODINMA



**M**y dear good people of Imo State, I salute you most happily on this auspicious date of the 60th anniversary of our our national independence. I believe that many Nigerians will recall with much nostalgia that it was on this day, 60 years ago, that the symbolic lowering of the Union Jack was carried out in our dear country, to herald independence and its attendant liberty.

By all accounts, it was a momentous day in the history of the nation. No event is yet to equal it for the hope and joy it evoked in Nigerians everywhere.

With good reason; Independence was a "stepping out" and "coming of age". With independence our nation took its rightful place in the assembly of nations, as a proud sovereign country.

Naturally much was expected from independence. Among other rights, Nigerians looked forward to unfettered freedom, equity and justice. They saw in the birth of the new nation the opportunity to reclaim their human dignity, which the colonialist had suppressed for decades. The euphoria of independence was exhilarating and

Nigerians gloried in their new status.

Sixty years afterward, some of that shine have worn off naturally. Yet the charter of liberty of citizenship, enshrined in the sovereign rights of nations, remain the same.

Challenges persist and they seem to grow by the day. Some of the challenges have been daunting and sometimes call to question our belief in Nigeria and trust in the nation.

As the years passed, the onerous task of governance appears to have dented our national pride and dwarfed our expectations. No doubt the journey so far has been rough, tough and daunting, but Nigeria still holds a great promise

The negatives on the Nigerian development index may be astounding. For instance ethnic, religious and political divisions persist with increasing virulence. Civil tension ravages the country with bloodletting from terrorist activities, banditry and other criminal activities.

In addition corrosive corruption in all facets of society makes governance more herculean. A horrendous civil war and serial military rule in the short span of sixty years has not helped matters either.

In spite of these obvious draw backs, there is so much to cheer about Nigeria. That is what we should be celebrating today. We should be celebrating the sacrifices of our founding fathers which gave birth to the Nigerian nation. We should be celebrating the resilience and unwavering commitment of our country men and women to project Nigeria, which has kept this country together inspite of all odds.

Sixty years in the life of a nation may not be much, but it is for us Nigerians. So much has happened within Sixty years to tell us that God loves our country. It is



worth celebrating that in spite of every scary twists and turns, Nigeria has remained one indivisible nation, to the glory of God.

This auspicious occasion of our 60th independence anniversary therefore calls for our re-dedication to the lofty ideals of nationhood. It calls for a recommitment to project Nigeria. It enjoins us to do only those things that promote the unity and peaceful co-existence of all Nigerians.

We must awaken the spirit in us that says we can overcome our present challenges and build for generations to come, enduring foundations, for a united and more progressive nation than we have at the moment. This is the message of independence.

This is also the grand vision of my administration in Imo State. Coming into office barely nine months ago, we encountered a microcosm of systemic corruption and disruption in the public sector. We met monumental payroll fraud in the system. We met a disoriented and disarticulated civil service and a very sorry State of infrastructural provisions.

Today to the glory of God, we have made impressive strides

in addressing the rot. The payroll system has been cleansed and automated. The civil service, through massive injection of training programmes and provision of basic needs, have been revived and repositioned for greater productivity. Decayed infrastructures are being revived. All said, today, Imo State is on the move and looking up, to the glory of God.

As we mark our 60th independence anniversary, I call on all Nigerians to join President Muhammadu Buhari in saying no to corruption and support his administration which is working assiduously to remedy the mistakes of the past.

I have no doubt in my mind that President Buhari means well for our nation and that the foundations he has laid in the economic and social sectors will go a long way in getting our country out of the woods. I am also confident that the president's measured strategies in the fight against insecurity will ultimately restore peace in the land.

As we celebrate Nigeria's independence anniversary today, I use the opportunity to congratulate Mr President for providing transparent leadership and to salute all Nigerians for their enviable resilience in keeping faith with project Nigeria.



# Oyetola sues for peace, unity, perseverance

**A**s we celebrate the 60th Independence Anniversary of the Nigeria, I congratulate Mr. President, Muhammadu Buhari, the Government and People of Nigeria. Ours have been 60 years of opportunities, landmarks and challenges. But we have overcome the centrifugal forces of a civil war, political impasse, insecurity issues and economic upheavals through resilience, shared values and collective will as a people.

We have in the last 21 years shaken off political uncertainties and run unbroken democracy. During these years, we have spoken as one people and given to ourselves self-government and nurtured the tenets of democracy. We have, in the process, proved our mettle as a nation under the prevailing circumstances. This should convince us that we have what it takes to survive our current challenges and come out stronger and better.

Going forward, we must live in love as one people under God and continue to always employ dialogue, especially at these challenging times to achieve the peace, unity, national integration and prosperity that we desire as a nation.

Let us continue to find and employ new ways to talk and collaborate to build a strong, united, indivisible and prosperous Nigeria.

I felicitate the People of

Osun on this historic event and I thank you all for always championing the cause of peace, unity and progress for the development of our dear State. Your collective resolve is the foundation for our government's on-going equitable and sustainable socio-economic and infrastructure development.

The Development Agenda on which we anchor our government has provided solutions to our challenges in all spheres, building our critical sectors – health, education, economy, agriculture and infrastructure – to put us on the lane of prosperity, progress and sustainable development.

As part of the Federating Units of the nation, we shall continue to responsibly pursue ends that will achieve the vision and dream of our fatherland.

Our enormous population and abundant resources are our strength and source of global respect. We should persistently engage to find better ways to convert these enormous potential to local and international advantage for the good of the people and the nation.

Let's always be guided by the motto of our nation, Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress at all times, as those pillars will make the country perform its responsibilities to the people and compete in a globalised world.





# NIGERIA STILL A WORK IN PROGRESS, SAYS AYADE



Dear compatriots,  
Today marks yet another anniversary of our nationhood. Exactly 60 years today, the springboard on which we attained our sovereignty was launched. It opened a horizon of hope and aspirations.

We remember today the lofty dreams and visions bequeathed to us by our founding fathers. It was a vision firmly anchored on greatness.

And I dare say that even though we are still a distant from fully attaining those dreams, our optimism has, however, remained unwavering and unquenchable.

Even though the journey of our nationhood has been punctuated by a many lows, its foundation occasionally challenged, we are, however, consoled by the many highs that have bonded us a people.

And in our diversity, we have trudged on with an uncanny stubbornness and resilience.

That we as a people are witnesses to the survival of our nation is worthy of celebration.

In the words of Abhijit Nasker, "in the very depth of your heart lies the almanac of world building." I say to you here, therefore, that nation building is not a one-step movement.

It is a marathon that requires a collective and collaborative effort between leaders and the led.

At a time in history, many of today's first world countries were work in progress. We may be 60 years old today, there is no doubt that ours is still a work in progress.

If as a nation, we allow the pains of yesterday eclipse our joy of today and the budding promise of tomorrow, our voyage into our future may become steeped in shallows and miseries. This, we can ill-afford.

We must, therefore, realise that despite our temporary limitations and difficulties, Nigeria remains the Pearl of Africa and the becon of the black race.

I urge you, dear compatriots, to always gaze into the future to see hope. And in doing that, we must demphasize our fault lines and rather embrace those things that unite us.

We are one family woven together in love and brotherhood. So, to borrow from the words of Benjamin Franklin, "we must all hang together or assuredly, we will all hang separately."

And I know for sure that it was not the wish nor the desire of our founding fathers that we hang separately.

So, as we celebrate today's 60th anniversary, let us do so with sober reflection of our yesterday, our today and our tomorrow and with joy in our that we shall overcome as a people.



# OUR CURRENT CHALLENGES WILL SOON BE HISTORY – LALONG



## PROTOCOLS

1. Fellow compatriots, it is with immense joy that I address you on this auspicious day. A day that marks sixty years since Nigeria's journey as a sovereign entity began. Certainly, the day calls for celebration as well as deep reflection on how we have fared so far.

2. Indeed, the last 60 years of our journey to nationhood have not been without some challenges. Nevertheless, it is heartwarming to know that we have made great achievements as a people having weathered the storm to forge a common destiny for ourselves.

3. Our ability to always bounce back, even

stronger, each time we are knocked over by socio-political or economic trials speaks volume about our abiding faith, hope, resilience and determination to keep a date with destiny.

4. Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, you will agree with me that at the dawn of independence in 1960, those aspects of our public life that united us as a people were more pronounced and better appreciated than those that seemed to have appealed to our sectional or primordial interests today.

5. Presently, the story of Nigeria may not reflect what our founding fathers had in mind when they fought for independence, but I firmly believe that the present challenges confronting us as a country is a passing phase that is crucial to building a virile, peaceful and united country at the long run.

6. We must therefore not despair but rather see this as a clarion call to deploy our human and material resources for the common good of Nigeria. As we "think" and "act Plateau", we must also think and act Nigeria! It is the only country we have and nobody can develop it for us or better than us.

7. As you are already aware, the first cardinal objective of the RESCUE Administration in Plateau State is to ensure "Peace, Security and Good Governance". The choice of this policy thrust was deliberate.

8. It was conceived with the aim of tackling head-on the myriad of security challenges and civil unrests that characterized the better part of the last decades in the State. When we

came on board, we came with a pre-conceived mindset to end the violence and break the conflict trap.

9. It was against this background that we established the Plateau Peace Building Agency as well as took several other steps to arrest the vicious cycle of violence that militated against the socio-economic development of our people.

10. The fundamental role of the Peace Building Agency is to engage with long standing issues of conflict while also acting proactively to de-escalate tension through the facilitation of systematic dialogue between conflict parties or communities.

11. It is the earnest desire of our administration to bequeath an enduring legacy of a stable and prosperous Plateau by the end of our term in office. To achieve this objective, the Peace Building Agency has enjoyed the support of government and partner organisations in its operations.

12. This has endeared the Peace Agency to a wide range of stakeholders. It has also accorded it the needed impetus to leverage on its expertise and sense of neutrality to build consensus over thorny and often divisive issues of conflict within its few years of existence.

13. That is why today, Plateau State is gradually regaining its status as the choice destination for visitors, investors and residents from within and outside the country. Just this Monday, we flagged off the inaugural flight by Max Air from Abuja to Jos which testifies to the confidence that is being rebuilt in our State.

14. Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, certainly more needs to be done and that is why we chose this auspicious event of the commemoration of the country's Diamond independence anniversary to rub minds on ways to further deepen the peace in our dear State.

15. Although we now enjoy substantial Peace, we are not living under the illusion that all the conflict issues in Plateau state have completely been resolved. On the contrary, we are very much aware of the security threats emanating from the legacies of decades of violence which are being exploited by the mer-

**AS YOU ARE ALREADY AWARE, THE FIRST CARDINAL OBJECTIVE OF THE RESCUE ADMINISTRATION IN PLATEAU STATE IS TO ENSURE "PEACE, SECURITY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE"**



chants of evil to create chaos at all cost and at the expense of the lives of innocent citizens.

16. As a government, we have vowed that we will never budge in our duty towards protecting the lives and properties of our people. No amount of blackmail and desperation will deter us from this task. We have drawn the battle line with criminals and together with security agencies remain steadfast in securing our State.

17. This explains why for example, arrests have already been made over the recent incidences relating to killing of a Traditional Ruler in Foron District, Barkin Ladi LGA; the Killing of a DSS operative in Shendam; as well as the killing of 5 people in Vwang District of Jos South Local Government among others. These perpetrators and their sponsors will soon be brought before the law.

18. The choice of today's roundtable discussion: "Building Peaceful, Safer and Secure Communities in Plateau State" could not have come at a better time. This is because the goal of achieving a stable, peaceful and prosperous society is one that calls for the cooperation and continuous collaboration of all and sundry.

19. You have been invited here today as community stakeholders to assess the current level of peace and social cohesion in the state with a view to develop a common agenda and understanding for mitigating against the risk of violence as well as deepening peace through community partnership and cooperation.

20. Using the theme of the 60th Independence Celebration which is "Together We shall Be", we have the opportunity at this roundtable to discuss and explore pathways in which the State Government can work with you and other critical stakeholders to entrench the ideals of sustainable peace.

21. We must work together to promote positive relations characterized by mutual respect where cultural diversity is celebrated and people can live, learn and socialize together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance in all communities.

22. Let me again use this moment to commend all those who have dedicated their time and resources into building the peace we are currently enjoying across the state. Your efforts and sacrifices over the years have greatly impacted our communities and have helped in no-small measure in consolidating the gains we have recorded within the last five years.



23. Moving forward, the Government will continue to work with you and all other stakeholders to mitigate violence through an inclusive and community-driven processes devoid of ethno-religious or political considerations.

24. Nigeria and indeed our dear State are faced with enormous developmental challenges which have been compounded by COVID-19 pandemic that has ravaged the world. If there is a time that we need to be united, this is the moment.

25. Let me use this opportunity to specially thank our Key note Speaker Professor, Danny McCain who has devoted much of his writing, teachings and programs to promoting peace

and harmonious co-existence in Plateau state.

26. Finally, in the spirit of Nigeria's Diamond Celebrations and in exercise of the powers conferred on me under section 212 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic as amended, and on the recommendation of the State Advisory Council on Prerogative of Mercy, I hereby grant pardon to the following convicted persons for good behaviour.

i. Obinna John, initially sentenced to Death by hanging. Having served 8 years, his death sentence has been commuted to 21 years imprisonment.

ii. Lengka Kurji, earlier sentenced to 36 months imprisonment, having served 2 years and 9 months, has been granted absolute pardon.

iii. Buhari Abubakar, initially sentenced to 4 years imprisonment, having served 2 years and 10 months, has been granted absolute pardon.

iv. David Luka initially sentenced to 3 years imprisonment, having served 2 years and 11 months, is hereby granted absolute pardon.

v. Ya'u Bala initially sentenced to 3 years imprisonment, having served 2 years 8 months has also been granted absolute pardon.

27. It is hoped that the affected persons will take advantage of this opportunity to chart a new course for themselves and work for the progress of the nation.

28. On this note and with great pleasure, I officially declare this event open and wishing you all a Happy 60th Independence Celebrations.

# AS

**A GOVERNMENT, WE  
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OUR PEOPLE**

## NGF Commiserates with Zulum; says attack on one is attack on all

The Chairman of the Nigeria Governors' Forum and Governor of Ekiti State, Dr John Kayode Fayemi recently visited Governor of Borno State, Professor Babagana Umara Zulum in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital, to demonstrate solidarity and commiserate with him on the recent attacks on his convoy.

The Forum also assisted the government and people of Borno State with N100m.

Governor Fayemi was accompanied on the trip by the Governor of Sokoto State

and Chairman of the PDP Governors' Forum, Rt Hon Aminu Waziri Tambuwal, the Chairman of the Progressive Governors' Forum, Senator Abubakar Atiku Bagudu and the Governor of Plateau State and Chairman of the Northern Governors' Forum, Rt Hon Simon Bako Lalong.

During the visit, Dr Fayemi emphasised that Nigeria owes the Borno people a duty to end this insurgency and nip it in the bud. The Ekiti State Governor described how Gov Zulum attempted to dissuade them from visiting his state but the Chairman of the NGF

insisted that it is not just a duty but the most realistic thing to do because "an attack against one is an attack against all", to which the Government House Maiduguri erupted in a thunderous applause.

The NGF Chairman announced a donation of one hundred million Naira to the Government and people of Borno State from the NGF before handing the cheque over to the Borno Governor.

Responding the Borno State Governor thanked the NGF for its kind gesture, saying it is not the amount of money but the gesture behind the

donation that matters. He thanked the NGF on behalf of the Borno people, saying it goes further to explain the dire condition into which the insurgency had thrown the Borno people.

Gov Zulum, who spoke in a sombre mood, explained that he would not be deterred from pursuing his goals of emancipating his people because, according to him, "security and development are two sides of the same coin", arguing that Borno "people had been forced to be unproductive and depend on aid."

Painting a very gory picture of the situation of the population in Borno, Zulum narrated that the Chad Basin employs about 10 million people, the Sambisa Grazing Reserve and the Mandara Mountains employ 3million people but no one is farming there because the insurgents have made these places inaccessible to the people.

He further stated that more than 800,000 people are resident in Monguno and all of them are under the age of 20, yet all of that population is lying idle, making them susceptible to going astray if nothing is done to engage them positively.

Below are pictures from the visit:



**To those who claim Governors have been silent on the FSARS issue, we spoke long before others jumped on it. And we have continued to work behind the scenes**

**—Governor John Kayode Fayemi on Twitter**



**Governors Aminun Tambuwal, Simon Lalong and Kayode Fayemi during the visit in Borno**



**NGF Chairman and Governor of Ekiti State, Dr John Kayode Fayemi (left), being welcomed by Deputy Governor of Borno state, Umar Kadafur**



**NGF Deputy Chairman and Governor of Sokoto State, Hon Aminu Tambuwal being welcomed by Borno Deputy Governor, Umar Kadafur**



**L-R: Governors Kayode Fayemi, Babagana Zulum, Aminu Tamduwal and Simon Lalong, during the NGF solidarity visit to Maiduguri**



**Governor Aminu Tambuwal (left), Kayode Fayemi (middle) and Simon Lalong (right) greet their welcomers at Government House, Maiduguri.**



**L-R: Governors Aminu Tambuwal; Kayode Fayemi; Deputy Governor Umar Kadafur and Governor Simon Lalong, at the airport on arrival in Borno**



**Governor Simon Lalong (left) exchanges pleasantries with Deputy Governor Umar Kadafur of Borno.**



**Governors Babagana Zulum (2nd left) and Kayode Fayemi (2nd right) exchange goodwill during of the visit; with them are Governors Aminu Tambuwal (1st left) and Simon Lalong (1st Right)**



**NGF Delegates led by Dr. Kayode Fayemi, in a meeting with Borno Governor, Prof. Babagana Zulum and members of his cabinet, during the NGF visit.**





# TOWARDS THE LAND OF OUR DREAMS

litical, social and cultural development of our great country. What originated as a fishing village on an island has metamorphosed into a thriving seaport and megacity.

Lagos is no longer the nation's political capital, but it is undoubtedly its business and financial engine-room. Indeed, it is West Africa's commercial nerve centre. Lagos contributes 30% of Nigeria's GDP and holds no less than 80% of the country's industrial capacity. This is quite remarkable, considering the fact that Lagos is home to 10% of Nigeria's 200 million+ population on a landmass representing less than 1% of our great Nation.

Realizing early that long-term investment in critical infrastructure is an intrinsic part of economic development, Lagos pioneered many key projects, such as the early rail transit system, which yielded a corresponding growth in urbanization along the line of the railway on which the towns, such as Ebute-Metta, Yaba, Surulere, Ijora, Ikeja and Agege, sprouted. We witnessed the population boom of the 1970s as a result of the growth in the oil

industry. This signaled a paradigm shift in our history – a period which opened up our coastal city with the influx of thousands of people seeking greener pastures and jobs in the oil industry as well as the construction of a social housing programme. It was the crystallization of an idea that would go on to define the very essence of life in the sprawling metropolis – the hot chase for “The Lagos Dream”.

As far back as the 80s, with rising unemployment statistics, we had understood the need to maximize the opportunities inherent in a city-state such as ours by diversifying the abundant economic potential and harnessing human capital for better growth. The road to actualizing this was a dedicated will to develop alternate industries in agriculture, technology, hospitality and entertainment, among others, as well as in the informal sector. Our founding vision of a megacity in which there are opportunities for all, regardless of race and colour, remains strong.

Today, a population of over 21 million residents is evidence of the unprece-



Sanwo-Olu

**N**IGERIA is 60- despite all that she has been through as a nation. For some, it is a time to hit the street in colorful dresses for a carnival to exhibit what many a critic have described as our proclivity for flamboyance. To others, it is a time to get on our knees, thank The Almighty for bringing us this far as a united nation and, thereafter, reflect on our tortuous journey to adulthood.

How have we fared?

Have we disappointed our forefathers? Are we more purposeful as we were at Independence? Are our youths happy? Are the elders smiling? What is the state of our infrastructure? Are we proud of our democracy? Is the world leaving us behind? How long will our teething problems last? When will our security challenges abate? When are we going to fully recover from the terrible effects of COVID-19 that has dealt our world a lethal blow? These are some of the many questions on my mind

as I reflected on Nigeria's Diamond Anniversary.

It all began here at the old Race Course, Tafawa Balewa Square on that rainy October 1, 1960 morning. Lagos served as the cradle of our sovereignty and the capital of Nigeria as a protectorate, then a republic (from 1914 to 1991). The unique topography of Lagos - its islands, sandbars and lagoons; our heterogeneous nature as a town that is the melting pot of cultures – has positioned our state for its leadership role in the economic, po-



**L-R: Lagos Deputy Governor, Dr. Obafemi Hamzat; Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu and his wife Dr. (Mrs) Ibijoke with school children at the "Independence Day Conversation with Nigeria's Future Diamonds" at Lagos House, Marina, on Thursday, October 1, 2020.**

dent rate at which Africa's largest city is growing. Our urban footprints in the last 60 years provide a window into the urbanization of Lagos, illustrating a story of the social, economic, environmental and political factors that have reciprocally shaped our city. Research suggests that these changes may be nothing compared to what we will witness in the next 60 years. Maintaining the current growth and migration rates, Lagos could become the world's largest metropolis, home to 85 or 100 million people.

How are we poised to further steer Nigeria through the next decades of her independence? We must look to the foundational pillars which define good governance in any democracy. Our administration condensed this to six cardinal indices of development particular to Lagos State, yet adaptable to any city of the world, namely: Traffic Management and Transportation; Health and Environment; Education and Technology; Making Lagos a 21st Century Economy; Entertainment and Tourism; Security and Governance. These are encapsulated in the acronym T.H.E.M.E.S. Agenda for a Greater Lagos.

What do you see when you close your eyes and imagine the Nigeria of the future, say 5, 10, 20, 50, 60 or even 100 years from now? This is the question I ask myself daily in the discharge of my duties and in implementing policies which are designed

to be adapted for a world beyond our present circumstances and realities. The litmus test for any course of action is to objectively answer whether a policy would be of benefit to our children and generations yet unborn.

Afro-futurism is a concept that is largely shaping developments around the continent, Nigeria inclusive. In our quest for a semblance of what a utopian African society would look like (our very own Wakanda if you like), Lagos is making monumental strides in the transport and housing sectors. These are the two behemoths which often pose great challenges to a city with a sprawling population such as ours. Some of the priorities of my administration are solutions which accommodate people and move them efficiently from one place to another, significantly reducing lost productivity time associated with current commute challenges.

The Lagos Light Rail system is one of such projects which will redefine our commuting experience and overhaul the entire transport system. Gleaning lessons from the railway operations of old and infusing ultra-modern technology, this will open up Lagos like never before, easing the movement of people and goods within the metropolis. We are in the final phase of delivering the 27km Blue Line, which connects Marina in the heart of the city with Okokomaiko on the

outskirts. It is set for test-run in December 2021. This will pave the way for the Red Line from Agbado-Marina and six other planned routes, which are part of our transport masterplan. The future of transportation is the ability to connect from opposite sides of the mainland to Lagos Island in minutes. This will not only positively impact the ease of doing business within Lagos, but promote enhanced interstate commerce with better opportunities for all.

We are making the most of our unique topography by investing aggressively in an operational water transport system. Commuters are being ferried across Lagos waterways along various routes, comprising Ikorodu, Ebute-Ero, Apapa, CMS, Ikoyi and Ajah, with LAGFERRY services. We launched 14 boats earlier this year and are set to double the fleet by the end of first quarter of 2021. We extended the campaign to safety of passengers by removing water hyacinth from the water channels and creating navigation routes through the use of directional balls. These are all geared towards easing the pressure on our roads.

We recently flagged off the 13.68km long BRT corridor from Oshodi-Abule Egba, which has drastically reduced travel time from an average two hours during peak periods to approximately 30 minutes. This is in addition to an upgraded e-ticketing system, which will be integrated into the BRT, LAGFERRY and Light Rail services. Acknowledging the need for partnership in meeting the demand for commuting services, we have engaged ride-hailing companies to develop regulatory guidelines which meet this demand and prioritize safety of passengers. These are all aimed at improving the public commuting experience and increasing productivity of an average Lagosian.

Occupying just 0.38% of Nigeria's land mass and one-third of that figure under water, it would seem the odds are stacked against us in housing. With our sight set firmly on the future, we are developing Lagos Homes housing projects in many parts of our dear state. Some have been delivered in Ikorodu, Igando, Lekki and Badagry. Besides, we are implementing policies which make the creation of housing solutions easier, but we are not oblivious of the limitations of the government to solely reverse the housing deficit. We are continu-



ously seeking partnership with the private sector and real estate developers to jointly address this problem.

One such venture is the Eko Atlantic City, a mega real estate project which challenges our perceptions of what is possible in the realm of city architecture. Popularly referred to as the “Great Wall of Lagos”, this entirely new coastal city being developed on land reclaimed from the Atlantic Ocean will become home to a quarter of a million people and provide 150,000 with jobs. This template will set the stage for us to join the league of smart cities; this would have been inconceivable decades ago.

Our commitment to providing sustainable energy and affordable power is challenging the traditional stereotypes. A few months ago, the Lagos State Government launched an innovation challenge (Lagos Smart Meter Hackathon), which is leveraging the tech community to find crowdsourced solutions to our metering gap through locally developed prototypes for prepaid meters. Similar initiatives aimed at accelerating the pace of technological advancement are constantly incubated through dedicated programmes at the Eko Innovation Center.

In the same vein, we expanded the Olu-sosun landfill, one of Africa’s largest dumpsites, by 42 acres to accommodate increased activity and plans to harness energy from the natural gases which build up there. This is one example of the ways in which Lagos applies homegrown solutions to problems, in this case waste management.

To Lagosians, I cannot overstate the crucial roles we all have to play as individuals in the achievement of the Lagos of our dream. We rely on you, because you are our greatest resource –the demographic dividend which is only payable when our young, vibrant workforce exert their full capacities to driving economic growth.

When I close my eyes and think of Nigeria of the future, it is one that has largely been influenced by the advancements we make here in Lagos. And so, my imagination is filled with the endless possibilities of an intermodal transport system that optimizes the use of road, rail and water as well as intracity aerial modes of transport. I see the fantastic buildings that will dominate the city’s skyline as we continuously build up and also our coastline with the advent of floating cities.

But, most especially, I see you: the creative, passionate, resilient people, who will make

**Sanwo-Olu**

these dreams come true with your output and advancement in commerce, industrialization, service delivery and commitment to excellence.

I see a Lagos that becomes a net exporter of talents with ambassadors whose names reverberate from all corners of the world. Our art and fashion gracing the runways of coveted shows and adorning the closets of icons; a pristine environment devoid of pollution and white sand beaches that will be the toast of the tourism industry; our Afro-fusion music and Nollywood works driving global conversations, dominating the screens of an enthralled audience from Sydney to California, Amsterdam and Mumbai. Ever present in my mind’s eye are upscaled levels of export production and much needed foreign exchange from the industrious merchants of the international markets at Ladipo or Balogun; and the sophisticated

innovations that pop out of Yaba, our own Silicon Valley.

Encompassing these socio-economic advancements is the infectious warmth of our people and their boundless energy, their calmness in the organized buzz that characterizes our city and, perhaps most importantly, a cohesive security infrastructure that promotes peace.

I refuse to accept that this is all the fruit of my fertile imagination. No. I truly believe in our inherent power to advance the course of Lagos and, by extension, Nigeria’s path towards realistic dreams. Adapting the lingo that has come to be associated with another metropolitan city, I make bold to say that “You can make it here, and win everywhere”.



# Nigeria

## The Past, Present and Way Forward

As our country, Nigeria, turns 60, it is a great milestone which calls for both celebrations and sober reflections. I wish to salute the doggedness and indomitable spirit of our founding fathers, who labored strenuously and expended the energies of their youth to ensure the birth of a new nation on October 1, 1960. Through the collective efforts and struggles of our founding fathers, the indomitable Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the ebullient Sir Ahmadu Bello, the graceful Alhaji Tafawa Balewa, and the sage, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and their other notable compatriots, Nigeria achieved independence from British colonial domination. On this special occasion of the nation's Diamond jubilee, we acknowledge the sacrifices of these founding leaders who gave us a hope for the future; a future that we could be proud of.

On behalf of the PDP Governors' Forum, I congratulate the good people of Nigeria for this achievement. It is certainly a thing of joy that in spite of the challenges the nation has faced and the centrifugal forces that have been at play in these past years, our common heritage,

Nigeria, to the glory of Almighty God, has remained intact. Our nation has gone through tough times and terrible difficulties which on many occasions brought her close to the edge of the precipice. But God, in His infinite mercies, has always pulled her back.

Within only six years of her existence as a new nation, Nigeria witnessed a bloody coup d'état that abruptly terminated the life of the new Republic and ushered in a military regime. This was followed by a counter coup and eventually a brutal civil war in which brothers were pitched against each other. Nigeria survived the war and subsequent counter coups that led to prolonged military rule in the country. These cataclysmic events shook the country to her foundations. That the nation pulled through these calamitous and momentous events could only be by the grace of divine Providence.

In the aftermath of these developments, the country has made progress in several areas of human endeavours from our modest beginnings in 1960. The progress is evident in the fields of education and human capital development, industrialisation



Tambuwal

and manufacturing, agriculture, diplomacy, health and human services, sports development, culture and tourism, and infrastructural development and in many other areas. Specifically, the nation has witnessed an exponential rise in the number of tertiary institutions and graduates. Through the strategy of import substitution and backward integration, had made not too impressive attempts of industrialisation in different parts of the country to grow our economy and provide employment to our people. In the field of diplomacy, the policy of concentric rings which makes Africa the centre-piece of our foreign policy ensured that Nigeria played a leading role in the decolonisation of Africa and liberation of Southern Africa in particular. Nigeria has won laurels in continental and global

sporting competitions. In the area of infrastructure, we have built a brand new capital city in Abuja, the centre of unity, in addition to several highways, airports, sea ports and railway lines. The country has indeed made tangible progress. Indeed, the salient attributes that unite us are more numerous than the orchestrated factors that divide us.

The most remarkable of the nation's achievement in the last sixty years is the attainment and consolidation of democratic political culture since 1999. It is gratifying to note that after many years of repressive rule under the military, the country has continued to enjoy an uninterrupted civilian democratic dispensation in the last 21 years. Without this period, the country has also witnessed a polit-

ical transition from a civilian to a civilian government and from a ruling political party to an opposition party. These are commendable achievements that deserve celebrations.

In spite of these enviable strides, the reality on the ground today is neither cheering nor palatable. The nation appears to be on the reverse gear. With the current state of affairs in our country, it would appear that we are living on past glory. It is indeed sad to observe that the great promise and potentials which Nigeria represented at inception in 1960 have remained largely unfulfilled, mainly as a result of poor leadership, politics of prebendalism, ethno-religious dichotomies, unabating corruption in low and high places, lack of patriotism and social distrust amongst many other factors.



The Nigerian condition has continued to worsen with the prevalent social dichotomies widening the country's existing fault-lines; and thereby posing great challenges to the quest for national integration and inter-ethnic unity and social harmony. It cannot be a measure of development that there is a mushrooming of ethnic and regional organizations and local militias competing with the State for attention. Today, Nigeria has to contend with herders-farmers clashes, banditry, terrorism, cultism, kidnappings for ransom, and agitations for self-determinations and militancy which have tended to drive a wedge in the chords that hold us together as one united people. Such indices do not bode well for the future of our dear country. The trend must not be allowed to continue.

In the last five years, under the APC-controlled administration, Nigeria has continued on the downward slide into extreme decay, with the country displacing India as the poverty capital of the world, with an estimated 87 million Nigerians living on less than \$1.9 US Dollars a day (Brookings Institute 2018). We as leaders must strive harder to make sure that poverty is minimised in all parts of the country.

This is even made worse by the fact that in 2019 Nigeria ranked 93rd out of 117 qualifying countries with a score of 27.9 below Guinea and Mali in the Global Hunger index.

It is also regrettable



**Tambuwal**

to note that the Buhari-led APC administration has plunged Nigeria deeper into the debt trap after the country had exited from its initial debt burden from the London and Paris Clubs under the PDP-led administration. It is indeed sad to observe that Nigeria's external debt hit a 16 year high of \$27 billion in December 2019, just higher than the \$20.8 billion in external level as at 2005 when Nigeria exited from the club of its foreign creditors. Any loan acquired that is not directly tied to meaningful infrastructure that can help Nigeria progress should not be taken.

Our country under this same administration has also scored high on the global terrorism index, reaching an all-time high of 9.01% in 2016 and 8.6 in 2018 on the global terrorism index from an all-time low of 6.31% in 2010 to 7.9% in 2012 during

the period the PDP was in power. This unfortunate situation has placed our nation in the league of countries deeply wrecked by terrorism such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Syria etc.

We feel the pains of Nigerians in the North East and North West and other parts of the country who are victims of terror in our land. It is indeed glaringly clear that the Boko Haram terrorists and other bandits have continued to make lives difficult for Nigerians in these areas putting a big lie to the APC-led Federal Government's claim that Boko-Haram has been defeated. This Government has failed Nigerians on issues of security and the general welfare and wellbeing of our people.

We, as leaders have a bounden responsibility to ensure that the current slide to atrophy is apprehended. There is no doubt that the

country appears to be more divided today than ever before as result of divisive policies being pursued by the APC-led administration. This has given rise to increasing clamour within the polity for another look on how Nigeria is governed. As leaders, we must rise to the challenge.

What is the way forward? With the current myriad of challenges and the unprecedented opportunities presented by a growing educated and youthful population, the advent of the 3rd and 4th industrial revolution, it is time for leadership that will answer the yearnings of the millions of Nigerians who labour every single day for our great country. We must unite and give hope to the aspirations of the next generation. We cannot continue to plead indifference or remain helpless in the face of the challenges confronting

us as a people. Nigeria is our common heritage. We must not allow the worsening social contradictions to destroy our country. At 60, we have indeed come of age. And we are optimistic that the nation can be rescued from the current slide. Given the evident social discontent within the polity, there is a need for a national conversation on the way forward for our beloved but beleaguered nation. In this conversation, modernisation of our economy to meet the challenges of technology, innovation is of crucial importance.

It is through such a national conversation or dialogue that we can find realistic and acceptable solutions to the problems that have continued to pose a threat to peaceful coexistence and national unity. I wish to appreciate what the National Assembly has done over the years in the alteration of the Constitution to strengthen our democracy. Given the magnitude of the problems in our polity today, the efforts of the National Assembly, should be enriched by the participation of relevant stakeholders. We need a national dialogue among the various groups and leaders in Nigeria to discuss and further agree on how to continue to make Nigeria a better place for all.

In spite of everything, all hope is not lost. At 60, Nigeria is still a work in progress. Working together, we can reposition her for greatness. As we mark this milestone in the life of our nation, I urge all Nigerians to rededicate themselves to the service of the fatherland. Happy Independence Day. And may God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.



# IT'S A TIME FOR SOBER REFLECTIONS –BAGUDU

**M**y dear people of Kebbi state, Assalamu Alaikum!  
As you are fully aware Kebbi State is one of the states in the country that suffered flood disaster. The geographical location of the state and its topographical nature put us at disadvantage. The 250 km FADAMA plain rice producing belt was flooded by the overflow of River Rima and where the River Rima joins river Niger is about 312km, and on both sides of it are rice with other crops which were all flooded.

Further to these destructions, the overflows sacked most of the villages and towns along the river bank across Nineteen Local Government Areas within the three emirates (Gwandu, Argungu and Yauri) of the state.

In some areas bridges and roads were either washed away or submerged. In upland Zuru Emirate, some Local Government Areas encountered heavy rain, which destroyed houses, schools, hospitals and lot of other social infrastructures. Virtually, all the Local Government Areas in Kebbi State are affected by the gush of flooding.

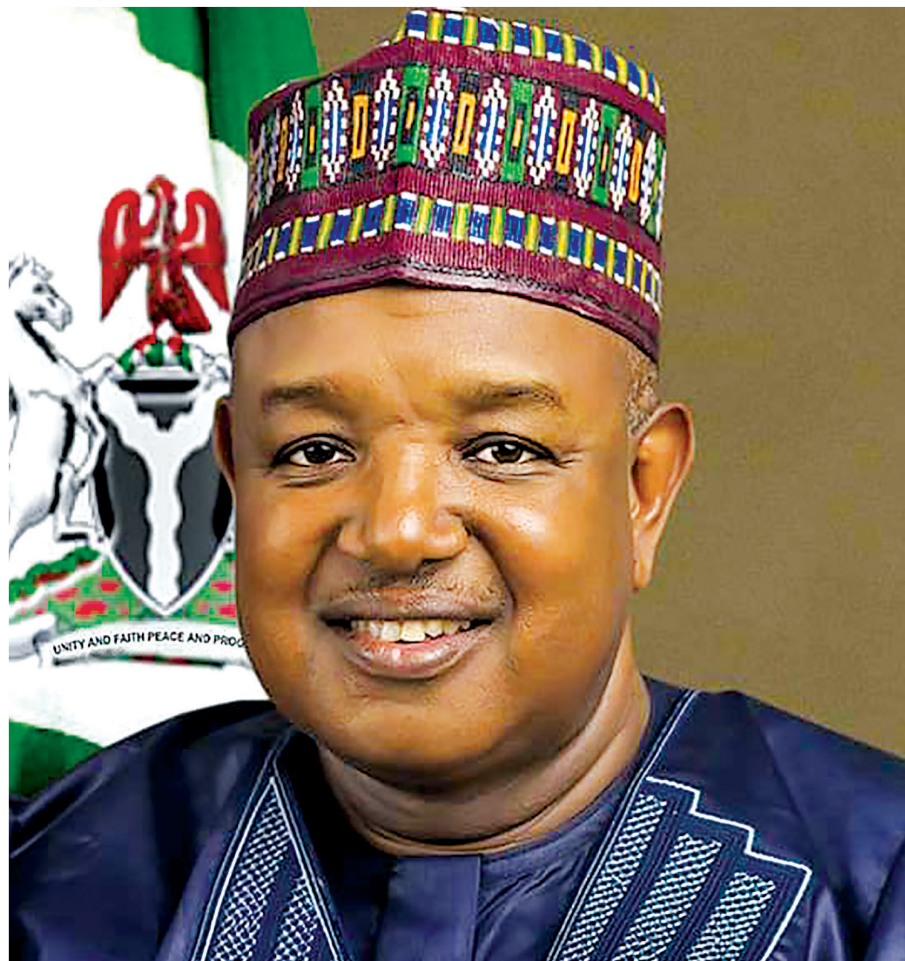
As at now a total of fifty-two thousand nine hundred and fifty-six (52,956) people were accommodated in one hundred and Seventy-five IDPs camp located in various Local Government Councils. However, it should be noted that the figure does not include those displaced persons that squat with their neighbours, relatives and good will spirited individuals in all the areas affected.

The Ministry for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs mobilised chairmen of councils to provide food, mats, blankets, buckets, medicine, mosquito nets and other necessary facilities to the IDPs. Assorted canoes and paddles have been purchased and distributed to the villages for rescue by the Local Councils.

The Kebbi State Emergency Relief Management Agency provided to the displaced persons in all the Local Government Areas four (4) trucks each laden with Rice, Maize, Guinea corn and Millet were given to each of the Local Government that are worst hit by the flood disaster.

Other items distributed as palliative the affected Local Government Areas include blankets, mosquito nets and coil, rubber mats, buckets, plates, spoons, detergent, medications, bathing and washing soaps cooking pots, cooking oil, toiletries and fire woods.

In trying period of this nature and magnitude, a deliberate and conscious efforts is what to do rather than lamenting the losses. The question now should be how do we ensure that we don't miss the planting season, how do we start keeping various animals, how do we help fishing grounds



**Atiku Bagudu**

that are lost. These are all important. These are all elements of our agriculture. Recognition is important, dealing with it is important. We have some experience. It's not novel to us. Even in 2018, there was flooding that affected 14 states, the federal government intervened with N23 billion, seedlings and fertilisers input.

Certainly, this scale is going to be bigger, but I believe with the right sensitisation many of us can support each other to ensure that its effect is minimal.

In terms of what need to be done to curtail future occurrence of the flood in the long-term, I advocate for holistic 'National Drainage Architecture' which is going to cost billions of dollars.

On infrastructural development, like provision of roads network, electrification, construction of bridges, culverts and erosion control projects has continuously received our attention in fulfilment of our campaign promises.

In spite of the economic downturn and numerous other challenges, we have strived and completed bridge on the Suru-Giro, Kao'je-Ilo and the Shema-Bakoshi roads that allows for free vehicular movement, business and other developments that strive in the areas are some of these projects.

Several kilometres of roads have been constructed all over the state.

We have strived to provide more infrastructure in the state capital including critical drainages.

We have re-engineered and put to rest the issue of epileptic power supply across the state. We have completed the Yauri power sub-station that provides power to the people of Kebbi South. The story is different today as over 60 communities have so far benefited from our rural and urban electrification programme in the last five years.

To encourage land and housing ownership, we have allocated 10 hectares of land at Gwandangaji to the Federal Government for its Mass



### Housing Project.

Only last week, we also achieved another stride in housing development when we flag off another mass housing project in partnership with United African Development Programme for the provision of mass housing for the poor and vulnerable across major cities in the state.

In realization of the importance of potable drinking water to the generality of the urban and rural populace, we expanded and renovated all broken down water supply schemes in various parts of the State, and provided motorized, solar operated boreholes as well as hand pumps and procured water treatment chemicals for clean and healthy water to Birnin Kebbi, Zuru, Argungu and Yauri.

As part of its policy to provide decent houses to people of the state, especially the less privileged, the Kebbi State Government has collaborated with African Nations Development Project (ANDP) to provide 5000 of 2-bedroom housing units across the state.

The ground breaking ceremony for the Construction of five thousand houses which I performed on Friday 25th, September, 2020 signalled the commencement of mass housing scheme in the state which the APC administration is religiously committed to achieving.

The houses are to be distributed free to the beneficiaries, especially low-income earners when completed.

As you are aware, the houses are to be built under a robust partnership between Kebbi State Government and the African Nations Development Programme (ANDP) while the Kebbi State Government will provide the expansive land needed for the project and the Programme will provide the funding for the project.

In order to ensure even distribution of housing as well as reduce the housing deficit being experienced in parts of the state, the 5000 housing units will be built in Argungu, Gwandu, Jega and Yauri Emirates.

In an effort to enable cross section of the people of the state to own their houses also, the state government has completed plans to provide 21,000 plots to people so that they can build and own their houses.

I want to assure the good people of Kebbi State that the state government is not unmindful of the increasing demand for houses amongst people. Priority will be given to first time house owners and necessary support be given for private investment in housing to complement the efforts of the government in its quest to providing decent accommodation to people.

The devastation caused by the recent flood disasters across the state had also increased the demand for houses.

At this juncture also, I wish to announce the establishment of Kebbi State Geographic Information System and the appointment of a Director to head the agency with a view to facilitating the issuance of Certificate of Occupancy and other land deeds.

This is done to reduce the bureaucratic bottlenecks associated with possessing land Certificate of Occupancy by registered owners.

Sports is an important tool of physical and mental development especially for the young generation which must be accorded with

the desired attention by government. It is in line with this concept that I performed the ground breaking ceremony for the construction of a whopping Four Million US Dollars FIFA Mini Stadium, in Birnin Kebbi, the State Capital.

The premier project will provide more soccer opportunities for youths, among many other short and long terms benefit of the project.

The flag off of this all-important project in Kebbi is the first of its kind in Nigeria by Football Governing Body, FIFA.

We must commend this new initiative by the FIFA President, Gianni Infantino. We must acknowledge all and sundry who have worked so hard and tirelessly, to ensure the realization of the project.

The project will further enhance the discovery of youths with budding hidden talents in the state, fished out, for mentoring, to enable them to take their rightful places, locally, nationally and internationally.

Since the inception of this administration, Government is unrelenting in its efforts and commitment to turn around the fortunes of sports in the state

Kebbi State is now leading in Nigeria, in beach soccer, the state's Club, Kebbi Fishers, was the only African Team that participated in a global competition, in Turkey, in 2019. It is on record that Kebbi Fishers are now number one in Africa, while it places number 59 in the world, all courtesy of the moral and financial support of this

administration.

As part of our efforts to industrialize and open up the state for investors, we have entered in to agreements with various companies to come to our state and establish industries.

This is aimed at giving opportunities for industries to top in to our enormous agricultural and mineral resources as well as provide employment to our teeming unemployed youths.

So far apart from mega rice mills and small-scale millers, Gafara Tomatoes processing company is today a reality while Dangote rice mill and sugar companies are coming on stream.

The Kebbi State is also expanding the ethanol project by establishing additional farms at Maiyama and Gwandu for the cultivation of cassava.

The Artisanal Gold mining project is today a reality with the continues registration of artisanal miners. We have presented a gold bar to President Muhammadu Buhari as part of our commitment to the project.

In recent times, some parts of the state witnessed an update in activities kid-nappers and benefits.

We are working round the clock with security agencies to ensure security of lives and property all over the state to cooperate with security agencies and report any movement of suspicious elements and avoid taking laws in to their hands.

My fellow citizens, as we celebrate the nation's independence today, let us use the period to pray for the nation and its leaders. This should be a period for sober reflection.

I wish to assure you of my sincere determination to steer the ship of this state to greatness.

Thank you all.



Atiku Bagudu



# Ortom tasks Nigerians on equity, patriotism

**B**enue State Governor, Samuel Ortom has urged Nigerians to uphold the virtues of sincerity, justice and fairness while rejecting impunity, to enable the country realize its full potential as a prosperous nation and the true giant of Africa.

The Governor also admonishes Nigerians to sustain their faith in the unity and capacity of the country to overcome the current security and economic challenges.

He says what the nation needs at this time are men and women of honour and integrity who can stand for the rule of law and promote the values as well as the dream of the nation's founding fathers.

The Governor states that the grace of Almighty God has guided Nigeria out of challenges and threats to its corporate existence, and expresses optimism that the same God will continue to steer the ship of the country away from doom.

He states that only sustained synergy between the Federal Government and states, as well as other stakeholders can lead to victory against terrorism and other criminal acts in parts of the country.

The Governor reaffirms the commitment of the Benue State Government to addressing development challenges of the state by making the agriculture value chain a priority so as to engage young people in productive ventures.

He thanks Benue people for the support given to his administration in the last five years and pledges to reciprocate the goodwill with



Ortom

impressive performance as he is already doing.

Governor Ortom says his administration will sustain the tempo of providing development projects in all parts of the state.

He points out the domestication of the Pensions Law last year and the recent signing of the Health Insurance Scheme which gave rise to the establishment of the State Health Insurance Agency as some of the policies put in place by his administration to positively impact on the lives of the people.

The Governor wishes the people of Benue State and other Nigerians a peaceful Independence celebration.





## LOUD WHISPERS

### SHEILA'S BLUES

BY BISI ADELEYE-FAYEMI

**Y**ears ago, I coordinated a documentary project with five other people. It involved shooting footage in six African countries over a period of two weeks. One of the crew members, let me call her Sheila, was married to another member of the team, I will call him David. Obviously, something was wrong with their marriage. It started with them ignoring one another at breakfast or avoiding each other at airport check-ins. Initially I didn't notice, till another colleague brought it to my attention. I decided it was none of my business and stayed out of it. The behaviour of Sheila and David got increasingly bizarre. They would be all lovey dovey one day and the next they were on ice. Our fourth country stop was South Africa. The flight from Johannesburg to Nairobi was four hours, they sat next to one another and did not utter a word. David spoke to us occasionally, but Sheila ignored everyone. When we arrived at the hotel in Nairobi, she left us at the check-in desk and went off to sit in a corner in the hotel lobby.

After dinner that night I called her to one side and asked her if there was a problem. She said no. I asked if she was having problems with David, she said no. I told her she could always come to me if there was something bothering her and she nodded, but did not say anything. I did not probe any further, and I felt a bit of relief because I did not want to get involved in people's personal dramas. I told Dora, another colleague, that we shouldn't worry about their behaviour as long as it did not get in the way of our work. From Nairobi we moved to Kampala, Uganda. The first two days went without incident. The morning of the last day of filming, David joined the rest of us in the restaurant for breakfast. We asked after Sheila and he said she was on her way. We all finished our breakfast and went back to our rooms to get ready for the day. Then there was a loud bang on my door. Dora was standing there, trembling, 'Bisi please come, come.' I rushed after her and she led me to the room where Sheila and David were staying. The room was in cha-



Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi, First lady, Ekiti State

**WE NEEDED TO LEAVE THE HOTEL WITHIN THE NEXT TEN MINUTES FOR OUR RECORDING AND HERE WE WERE IN THE MIDST OF A CRISIS WITH THE FILMING CREW. SHEILA REFUSED TO SAY WHAT THE PROBLEM WAS**

os, there was broken glass everywhere. There were at least five hotel workers in the room, including a Manager, all appealing to Sheila to calm down.

David and Sheila had got into a fight and Sheila attacked him with as many bottles as she could lay her hands on. We needed to leave the hotel within the next ten minutes for our recording and here we were in the midst of a crisis with the filming crew. Sheila refused to say what the problem was. David said she attacked him the minute he walked back into the room from breakfast. Sheila did not deny or confirm anything, she just stood there. It was obvious she was in no condition to go out with us. I certainly did not want both of them with



us in case one triggered the other. I however did not want to leave her on her own. The hotel manager told one of the female workers to stay with her. I silently thanked God that the manager had not called the police. We left for our appointment, but we were all in a state of shock. I had never seen anything like it, and for it to happen to us when we were in a hotel in a foreign country. We finished the shoot for the day. When we got back to the hotel, Sheila was still in her room, she was much calmer. She was however smoking furiously and there were two empty bottles of wine on the table. I asked her if she wanted another room and she insisted that she wanted to be with David. I asked David if that was okay with him and he said yes. We all had dinner together because it was our last night for the documentary shoot. From there, three of us were going to Tanzania and Rwanda for meetings with other women's groups and to take photographs, Sheila, David and the camera man would be going back. Both Sheila and David apologised for all they had put us through.

Sheila told us that she had anger management issues and she did not mean to cause so much trouble. In fairness to David, he never said or did anything in our presence that gave us cause for concern. He did his job well and we knew we would have a good product because of his professionalism. Dora and I talked about the possibility of emotional abuse that was hidden from us, hence Sheila's erratic behaviour. We know only too well the many ways in which men abuse women without having to lay a finger on them. Perhaps this is what Sheila was going through? Since Sheila persistently refused to confide in us, no matter how many times we asked, we felt helpless. Fast forward to two weeks after we all got back home. I was at a meeting when I got a call that Sheila had been arrested. Whatever for? She had flown into a rage and smashed up David's equipment – his cameras, computers, tapes, she destroyed them all and poured water on everything for good measure. David called the police because he did not know what else to do. I rushed down to the police station with two other colleagues and there she was behind the counter. We had to arrange for her bail. When I got home, the memories of what had transpired on the documentary trip flooded back and I started to cry, from a mixture of sadness, anger and frustration. I kept thinking about the broken bottles on the hotel room floor. And the carnage I saw in the home of Sheila and David. I then found myself in the hypocritical situation of begging David to drop the charges of assault and destruction of property. The irony was not lost on anyone. If it had been Sheila who had been attacked and her property destroyed, we would have bayed for David's blood from the mountain tops and we would not have listened to any pleas. I felt

terrible.

When Sheila was released, I had a long conversation with her. She admitted that she needed help and promised to get it. We both cried. She left for the US shortly after and our paths never crossed again. She died five years ago from cancer. When a fuller picture emerged from others who knew her over the years, it seemed that there were unresolved traumas from her adolescent years that led her to abuse drugs and alcohol. The rages were just a symptom of something much deeper. I have had several encounters with women and men suffering from one form of mental health disorder or the other.

None of them shook me as badly as Sheila's case. I pushed myself to learn more. To observe more. To listen. To provide whatever support I can. To refer to places where they can get an accurate diagnosis beyond the need for prayers. I also noted the strong links between gender-based violence and mental health. Sheila's case was not the last experience of this kind I have had. Years later, there was the case of Madele, who has not recovered from finding out that her husband was sleeping with their daughter. She is now a totally different woman. I have written about that experience too. We all know a Sheila. We all know a Madele. We all know a David. We all need to be aware of how complex mental health issues are and how no one is immune. Ranging from having the occasional bad day, to mild depression, clinical depression, phobias, panic attacks, uncontrollable rages and all kinds of anti-social behaviour, we could all find ourselves or people close to us somewhere on the spectrum. There are

many mental illness triggers – genetic disposition, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, domestic violence, bereavement, poverty, substance abuse, and so on. We need to educate ourselves and others. We need our governments to put mental health laws and policies in place, supported with political will and the requisite resources. We all need to make a commitment to be mindful of our physical, emotional and mental health. We also have to stop stigmatizing people with mental health challenges. As we mark World Mental Health Day on October 10th, I hope some of these conversations will take place in public and in private.

**– Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi is a Gender Specialist, Social Entrepreneur and Writer. She is the Founder of [Abovewhispers.com](http://abovewhispers.com), an online community for women. She is the First Lady of Ekiti State, and she can be reached at [BAF@abovewhispers.com](mailto:BAF@abovewhispers.com).**



**Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi, First lady, Ekiti State**



**G**ombe State Governor, Alhaji Muhammad Inuwa Yahaya has met with President Muhammadu Buhari where he made a case for the federal government to mount pressure on the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, NNPC and the Department of Petroleum Resources, DPR to begin the exploration of oil and gas in the State, as well as the Gongola Basin so as to create job opportunities and boost economic activities in the north east sub-region.

Briefing State House Correspondents on the outcome of his meeting with Buhari at the presidential Villa in Abuja, the Governor said since the discovery of oil and gas in Gombe and Bauchi States and by extension the entire Gongola Basin, the people of the area are looking forward with high hopes to the commencement of oil exploration which he noted will provide job opportunities for the people, enhance economic activities and create a launching pad for Gombe to join the league of oil-producing States in the country.

"With the discovery of oil and gas in Gombe and Bauchi states, and specifically, in the whole of Gongola Basin, we seek to get the support of the federal government, so the pressure will be mounted on the Nigerian National Petroleum corporation, NNPC and the DPR for them to see to the fact that the exploitation of oil and gas deposit that is available in Gombe and in fact the wider Gongola Basin is encouraged so that economic activities will be triggered, our people will have jobs and Gombe will join the league of oil producing states."

He also told said that the Dadin Kowa Hydropower has the potential of generating power to be used by the State and the soon to take off Gombe industrial park as well as for irrigation farming. He commended the Federal Ministry of Water Resources for recently awarding the contract through the Transforming Irrigation Management in Nigeria, TRIMMING irrigational facilities.

"Mr President is fully aware that Gombe State is putting up an industrial park which is likely going to take off by the end of the year and with this we hope to attract investors who will come and join us and put up agro allied industries so that the whole value Chain of Agriculture can be harnessed for the benefit of the people."

On his administration's flagship projects of network eleven hundred and Gombe Goes Green 3G, Governor Inuwa Yahaya said prior to his assumption into office as Governor of the State, he recognized that one of the

## Yahaya meets Buhari; seeks speedy exploration of oil, gas in Gongola Basin



President Muhammadu Buhari (left) with Governor Inuwa Yahaya, when the latter visited the preidential villa

fundamental challenges of the people was road inter connectivity to link communities and Local Government headquarters as well as the State capital.

He said it was for this reason that his administration initiated the 'network eleven hundred' to build at least one hundred kilometres of road in each Local Government Area of the State so as to Open up the state for the free movement of human, goods and services.

"You see eighty percent of our people are peasants farmers so if we are able to link them up with the 'network eleven hundred' which intends to put up one hundred kilometres of road in each Local Government Area of the State, we would have succeeded in easing the stress of our people and so far I can say we are doing well because at the moment there are projects going on in all the Local Government areas of the State aiming at achieving the target".

Governor Inuwa Yahaya said the Gombe Goes Green 3G project was borne out of his administration's desire to regenerate the environment which is at the mercy of desertification and poor land utilisation.

He said a lot of the State forest reserves have been depleted due to poor agricultural practices which has become incumbent on his administration to provide vegetational cover through reforestation to protect the soil and provide shade for plants and animals.

"With the Gombe Goes Green project, we aim to achieve two to three things that is by planting trees we have provided engagement to the youth who are already working in conjunction with YES-SO and the economic trees also being planted side by side will be beneficial to the people in the long run".

The Governor said the State has been playing a comforting role housing those fleeing the boko Haram and other crisis within the North East sub-region, describing the development as putting a strain on the State educational, Social and environmental standards.

He said his administration has been in constant touch with the Federal Government on how best to manage issues relating to security in the State in view of the current status of the State which is now home to individuals whose identity and capacity to commit crime is not known.

"Those that have been displaced by insurgency have resettled amongst our people. As far as the issue of displaced persons are concerned, neighbouring Borno and Yobe, we have an arrangement for them to settle with our people,

so we don't have IDPS camps per say. So, the people have acclimatized and have gotten used to living with our people and they are doing very well."

On the recent flood disaster that ravaged most part of the country, Governor Inuwa Yahaya described the case of Gombe as unique in view of its geographical location which situates it in a valley, appealing to the Federal Government to come to the aid of Gombe State in tackling the menace of gullies threatening lives and means of livelihood.

"The issue of recent flood that has been affecting the whole country. Much as we don't have rivers around Gombe but the flood around the river banks of Gongola, which is covering two of the local government areas has equally affected us and also resettlement of most of our people.

"But most importantly, because Gombe is situated between valley and because of poor practices and lack of proper environmental management, gullies have developed.

"You might have seen in the last few weeks, the effect of gully erosion in Gombe state. So, erosional upset has really devastated the lives of our people and has really become a problem and there is need for us to seek support from the federal government.

"As at the moment, there are 200 active gullies in Gombe which has affected the lives and livelihoods of a lot our people. So, we brought that to the notice to Mr. President for him to see how best he could attend and render some help especially from the ministry of environment, and more importantly, through the federal government's understanding with the World Bank via the Nigeria Erosion and Watershed Management Project which Gombe has keyed into.

"Once we are able to get that, we hope our problem of gully erosions will be solved partially if not fully."

On the number of people displaced by flood, the governor remarked that over 3,200 families have been displaced, saying that government is trying to provide them with alternatives.

## Northern Govs celebrate Yahaya @59

**T**he Northern Governors Forum has sent warm felicitations to Governor of Gombe State on the occasion of his 59th birthday.

Chairman of the Forum and Governor of Plateau State, Simon Bako Lalong described Governor Inuwa as a man of excellence and compassion who has brought his progressive ideals to the governance of Gombe State.

Lalong said Governor Inuwa is a man who has demonstrated great commitment to the plight of the poor and vulnerable by initi-



ating programs and projects that continue to lift them out of poverty, illiteracy and health burdens.

He said: "We are proud of his achievements and acknowledge his wonderful contributions within the Northern Governors Forum as we work in synergy to harness the potentials of our region and make the lives of our people better. He is an embodiment of intellect, humility and honesty".

While wishing him many more years of peace and good health, Governor Lalong urged him to continue to deploy his energy and goodwill towards touching the lives of people in Gombe State, the Northern region and Nigeria as a whole.

# MY BOSS AT 59

BY ISMAILA UBA MISILLI



Gombe State Governor, Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya

It was the Scottish writer, Thomas Carlyle, who famously stated that the history of the world is but the biography of great men, reflecting his belief that heroes shape history through both their personal attributes and divine inspiration. But Carlyle had only popularized 'The great man theory', an idea which explains history via the impact of great men or heroes on society.

For obvious reasons, the above represents a fitting narrative of the life of Gombe State Governor, Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya, as he turns 59 today, 9th October.

As we rejoice with him on this historic day even as we also pay attention to his enviable public service and altruism, we are confronted with the remarkable impact which an individual could make in regenerating society.

And expectedly, politics and governance have dominated his public persona in recent times as many know him mainly as a politician without acknowledging him as an astute technocrat who served for a considerable period

in the old Bauchi State civil service rising to the position of Principal Accountant and later as a trailblazing Commissioner of Finance in the administration of then Governor Danjuma Goje.

For me as a close observer of this ingenious man from Jekadafari ward, we cannot fully evaluate his current standing without recourse to his solid academic background as a brilliant accounting graduate from Ahmadu Bello University and vast experience in both private and public sectors, garnering in the process, a diversified knowledge base which have been most useful in leadership positions especially as Governor of Gombe State.

Since he took over office in 2019, Governor Yahaya has matched effective leadership with a broad vision, imbued with hard work, sacrifice and innovative thinking and thus turning the tide even in a challenging political environment. Everything has, however, worked as planned.

It is important to reckon with the tough

realities he met on assumption of office, a situation which required some realistic stand on the urgent need for reforms, and a basic step that had since led to the expected renewal in the state.

From cleaning the proverbial Augean stable by instituting a pragmatic ethical standard and integrity in the governing process, building requisite institutions, thereby overcoming the profligacy of the past to the spectacular civil service reform and policies and programmes, it was too clear to the governor the right route to foster efficiency and enhance qualitative and result-oriented services to the people of Gombe State. Of course, this became imperative for instilling probity, public accountability and transparency required in any modern administration if government were to be effective and efficient. This is also the basis for public trust in a democracy.

Although he is still running the course of his first term in office, the record of achievements in relation to his campaign promises is giving hope to a greater future he has always said his administration embodies, particularly in the areas of education, health, infrastructure, security, agriculture, water provision, job creation and responding vigorously to the environmental degradation and challenge of climate change in the state.

In achieving on these issues, one strategy he has employed aside some fundamental home-grown development initiatives has been exploring ways and means of creating and strengthening ties with development partners.

Of course, partnership is a strategic step in contemporary development thinking, considering the fact that Gombe is not a rich state in relative terms coupled with the pressing economic and financial challenges even before the Covid-19 pandemic threw most local and international economies off balance with the attendant development constraints.

So far, Governor Yahaya, symbolically, seems in good stead with these partners cutting across multilateral organizations, government agencies, ministries and parastatals as well as renowned foundations and thereby making Gombe State a sort of preferred destination of development partners.

It is noted here that government and governance generally can be enhanced by bringing it into partnership with other critical stakeholders and upholding some basic policies that can encourage public investments. In this regard, the core as the Gombe State experience has shown is that government's involvement in partnerships is predicated on the benefits of strengthening social capital. Issuing from the foregoing are two premises of



interest: that government has the potential to institutionalize sustainable development in ways that few other organizations can manage and that government also has the potential to do this on a large scale. However, there's a caveat here: government must exhibit a sound organization and responsibility to attract partnerships.

This is the propelling force behind Governor Inuwa Yahaya's almost restless engagement with such development partners as the UN, UNICEF, USAID, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Taj Bank, NDE, ECN, Ministries of Agriculture, Environment, Water Resources, Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development and Communication. Among others are the Nigerian Communications Satellite Limited (NIGCOMSAT), Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), SDGs and most recently the Nigerian Airforce.

A common thread binding all these partnerships is that they are crucial in the strategic interest and development concerns of Gombe State and in consonance with the government's central vision of service delivery to the people.

For example, from UNICEF and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, a lot of help had come for the good health of Gombe children, where like in most parts of the country, a vast number are vulnerable but receiving some good attention. Similar collaboration is playing out in the Ministry of Agriculture where Gombe has keyed into all federal government's agricultural programmes and projects for the benefit of farmers and the entire citizenry. Closely related here is the new partnership with the Taj Bank, a non-interest financial institution setting up a branch in Gombe which could boost financial inclusion and unlocking opportunities especially in agricultural development and small scale enterprises.

Collaboration to strengthen social inclusion and protection programme at home, support to strengthen social safety net and poverty reduction had also led Governor Yahaya to the Humanitarian Affairs Minister, the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) and Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), Mr. Edward Kallon and SDGs offices in Abuja respectively where very positive resolutions were made to support the cause of development in Gombe State. The governor was particularly delighted that the office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has thrown its weight behind the state's 10-year (2020-2030) Development Plan and other initiatives aimed

at improving human capital development in the state.

Water as a crucial issue in the state is also on the front burner of collaboration with the Ministry of Water Resources, with specific support to the second Gombe regional water projects which will ensure effective work on the Balanga Dam, extend support to the Dadinko-wa Hydropower project with concomitant effect on the Gombe Industrial Park, urban water supply and improve irrigation farming in the state. Although the ambitious Gombe Goes Green project, now in its second phase, is meant to address the chal-



lenge of desertification especially in the northern parts of the state, more efforts are needed like the collaboration with the Environment ministry to tackle the incessant menace of flooding in the state.

While education as a priority has gotten much attention from the state government with strong collaboration from the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC)/Better Education Service Delivery (BESDA), Gombe State has also keyed into the Federal Government's digital economy policy and strategy to deal with its socio-economic challenges as evident in the recent virtual commissioning of eleven projects executed by the Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy in the state.

And Governor Inuwa Yahaya's relentless quest to build partnership has now assured the birth of the Forward Operation Base (FOB) of

the Nigerian Airforce in Gombe. At a recent visit to the Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Sadique Baba Abubakar at the headquarters of the Nigerian Airforce in Abuja, the air chief assured of the plan to set up school, medical facility and special unit in Gombe as part of the FOB package. An elated Yahaya equally assured the airforce high command of the state's preparedness to receive its men and platforms, noting in particular the relevance of the airforce base in boosting security in the north east.

Clearly Governor Inuwa Yahaya's partnership drive is affirming a good purpose for achieving the needed transformation in governance, social capital and sustainable development. His focused partnerships are addressing the existing gaps in integrating the various dimensions of development and ensuring full commitment from these partners. However, as hinted earlier, partnerships with such a sundry organizations and in particular those from the private sector can only work as we've seen in the Gombe example if there is firm commitment, sound leadership and organization and indeed the expected responsibility. From payment of counterpart funding in some cases to good policies to the critical accountability and transparency, Governor Inuwa Yahaya has demonstrated acute resourcefulness amidst leadership creativity.

Of course, we have to reckon with government's incentives for private sector to contribute to development priorities. It is recognized that the private sector has acted as a contributor to achieve development by mobilizing resources to support sustainable programmes, fostering inclusive economic growth, creating opportunities for employment and serving as a driver for technology and innovation like the Gombe partnership with NIGCOMSAT. Gleaning from the record of achievements in the various partnerships with Gombe State, it presupposes that this is a viable means through which the state could still make greater progress in the quest for rapid development and this is especially so in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic which has ravaged economies with strains on available resources for development purposes. It is hoped that the pivotal good governance structure which had attracted these partnerships will subsist as a paradigm shift of the Inuwa Yahaya-led administration in Gombe State.

***Happy Birthday to a super prudent!  
Misilli is the Senior Special Assistant to Gombe state Governor on Media and Publicity.***



## Gamma e-Solutions visits NGF; seeks intervention on e-learning project

**G**amma e-Solutions Limited, an innovative E-Learning company that uses cutting edge solutions to transform and renovate the traditional methods of learning, recently visited the Nigeria Governors' Forum Secretariat in Abuja to seek assistance on some of their educational projects that would enhance e-learning in the country.

The company representatives, Mr. Ahmed Sirika and Mr. Ibrahim Sulieman, who spoke extensively on the company's background, highlighted their successes and challenges thus far.

They also noted that the intervention of e-Learning would enhance the learning culture in Nigeria and also help put the country on a global scale of educational best practices.

They alluded to their presentation that was delivered to the NGF in 2017, in which they had proposed that their initial intervention be scaled up from one school per geopolitical zone to 10 schools in each state which are to be funded by the Education Intervention Fund (EIF) warehoused at the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) for the provision of E-Learning amongst other things.

They noted further that efforts to get the programme underway have stalled and they will require the political buy-in and influence of the Nigeria Governors' Forum to help drive it through.

Responding to their requests, the Director General of the NGF, Mr A.B. Okauru, advised that the company continually review their strategies to fit into current realities occasioned by the coronavirus

pandemic.

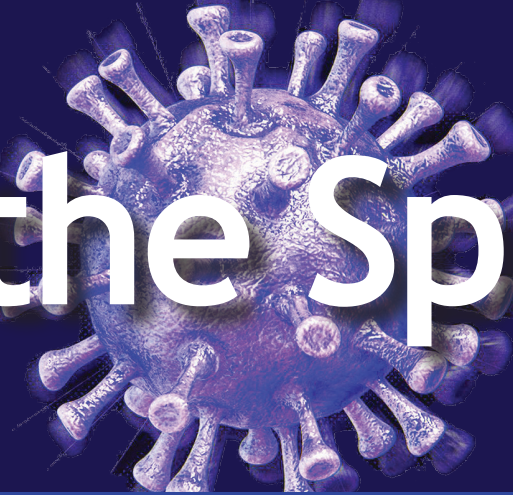
The DG added that the Forum has an Education Desk that can benefit from a partnership with the Company moving forward.

It was agreed that the Secretariat begin engagement with the company leading up to a presentation to the NGF.

Gamma e-learning also requested to share with the NGF secretariat the programme concept note and executive summary, as well as the company's Technical Implementation Action Plan and any other necessary.



# Stop the Spread!



## The Four COVID Personality Types *(spotted at the local grocery store)*

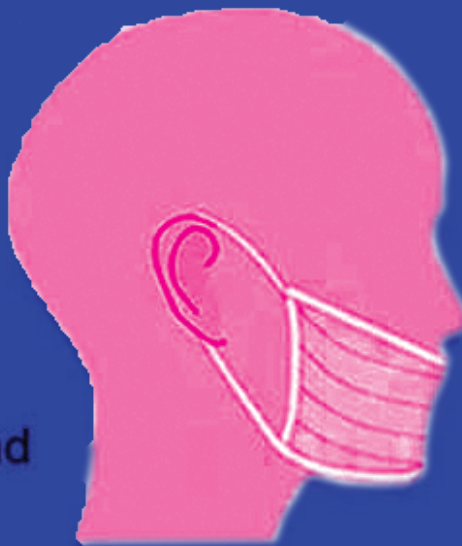
Believes  
in science



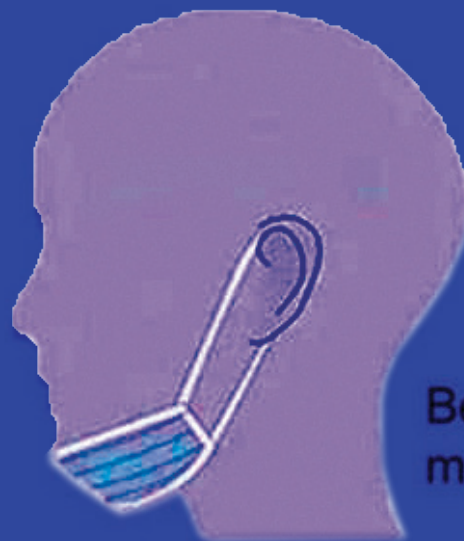
Denies  
science



Doesn't  
understand  
science



Believes in  
magic



# Let's not make it easy for the virus