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Grazing Ban Autonomy

and the National Question



Open Grazing Ban, Fuel Price Hike And Judicial Autonomy

This edition of the Executive Summary carries with it some memorabilia, both good and bad. The activities of the Forum's secretariat, for the month, thus remind one of the Italian epic spaghetti movies, starring Clint Eastwood, the Good, the bad and the ugly.

To many the meeting of the country's southern governors was an affront to the Nigeria Governors' Forum, NGF. But nothing can be farther from the truth. The Forum is desirous and indeed encourages the proliferation of regional secretariats for improved governance. A few years ago, in fact, the Director General of the NGF, Mr Asishana B Okauru was in Enugu State, accompanied by a few of his staff, to inaugurate the South East Governors' Forum secretariat.

As things stand today, there are several regional governors' fora including Development Agency for Western Nigeria, DAWN, North East Governors' Forum, Northern States Governors' Forum among others. These are fora for the sole purposes of discussing common issues at these separate levels. There also those that are substantially heavy on politics like the Progressive Governors Forum, PGF, and the PDP Governors' Forum. In all of these, the Nigeria Governors' Forum is the umbrella body to which all governors belong.

Its States' Peer Review Mechanism, SPRM, is a flagship item that brings governors, regardless of political affiliation to share experiences and learn from one another. So when a former president, Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan said that the NGF was the only legitimate platform to resolve issues of national importance, he was right. However, that does not deny other regional governors their inalienable right to assemble and discuss other issues that directly affect them.

So, when the southern governors collectively banned open grazing, as part of their Asaba proclamation, it was followed with unbridled criticism, albeit from uninformed quarters. Many considered it a crack in the Nigeria Governors' Forum, forgetting that even the Chairman of the NGF, Dr John Kayode Fayemi, himself a southern governor, endorsed the Asaba Proclamation.

Open grazing is archaic. Its ban is long overdue, and the governors were well in their right to ban it. And when the presidency joined issue with

the governors it was, misadvisedly, encroaching in their (Governors) areas of responsibility considering that Nigeria is a federation.

It is true that southern grasslands beginning from Edo State to Anambra, Rivers and around and about to Lagos, Ekiti, Osun and Ondo are lush green and attractive to cattle and the herdsmen that rear them. But these indelible images of free grasslands belie the facts. They are other people's patrimonies and have been held in awe for centuries. Much of these areas are, today, degraded by overgrazing. Spaces where lush, waving grasses once flourished have been turned into killing fields. The consequence of this is that compatriots have been turned into adversaries because of cattle. Hundreds of small communities whose sustenance depended on farming have been dispossessed of their farmlands and made to seek alternative means of livelihoods. Southern governors are right to halt that ugly drift.

The NGF has discussed with the ministry of agriculture on how an alternative to open grazing can be introduced and domesticated. Ranching is the answer and conservationists, and investors should key into this magical option to restore peace in the country.

Apart from peace, from how grazing animals are managed, ranchers can consistently double and depending on the conditions and methodologies adopted, quadruple their livestock capacity over time. More cattle per acre would be the result of this revolution.

That is the good. The bad and the ugly is domiciled in the quest for autonomy by the legislature and judiciaries at the subnational level, and the untruth that has pervaded the country that governors have endorsed N380/litre as their solution for the deregulation of petroleum products. The autonomy of the legislature and judiciary is a constitutional matter, that governors have never stood against. But it is far from contiguous as most public policy analysts see it, just because it is enshrined in the constitution.

The 36 states have each its peculiarities which must be addressed, in order, to usher in a seamless operational template for such autonomy to be granted. This has to do with the financial power of states and the assumption that once autonomous the legislature and judiciary in the states can do as they please. A committee of three

governors, all of them former leaders of the legislature (namely, Governors and Rt Honourables Tambuwal, Masari and Lalong of Sokoto, Katsina and Plateau states respectively are bringing their experiences to bear on the conversation. In this edition of the Executive Summary, both the Chairman of the NGF Dr John Kayode Fayemi and the Vice Chairman of the Forum Rt Hon Aminu Waziri Tambuwal have weighed-in on the question of financial autonomy for the legislature and the judiciary at the subnational level. It is the bad.

It is not the bad because it is bad. But because it has caused pain and anguish in the wrong quarters. In their quest for autonomy, for the two arms of government, members of the public, some completely oblivious of the issues have turned governors into their fall guy. Without listening to the ongoing conversation, they have simply derided governors and called them enemy of the state. The Chairman himself, Dr John Kayode Fayemi told me last week, that the public have decidedly hated governors for no reason. I thanked him for admitting it to me.

And now, the ugly. Governors did not endorse the N380/litre of petrol as was unfortunately reported by certain members of the NGF Press Corps. Spewing from what appeared to be an oversight by the NGF IT team, which did not immediately remove all media representatives from the meeting before a governor began his presentation of his committee report to his colleagues, some members of the NGF Press Corps listened into the presentation of the Governors on a research conducted by a committee comprising of some governors, the CBN Governor and DG of the Debt Management Office where the causes and effects of our national destitution and how to mitigate them were tabled. Instead of the media team to report what they snooped correctly and thus curry the trust that should exist between the Forum and the media team they went for the acquisition of cheap headlines and by-lines which, destroyed, in quantitative terms, the trust that ordinarily should have been solidified and cemented between the NGF and its press team^{54y}. This ugly -003D[i] occurrence also killed the media team's argument for a demand for transparency by allowing them listen in whenever the governors meet. The press corps shot itself in the foot.



NGF Pays Tribute to Late COAS, Gen. Attahiru, Condoles With Family

As tributes continue to pour in for the late Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Ibrahim Attahiru, who died in a plane crash at the Kaduna International Airport on Friday evening, the Nigeria Governors' Forum has condoled with his family and other crew members involved in the accident.

In a press statement, the NGF, through its Chairman and Governor of Ekiti State, John Kayode Fayemi, said the late General was a fine soldier and the governors were still in shock and disbelief over the unfortunate incident.

"The Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) received with deep shock and utter disbelief the death of the



Late COAS, Gen. Attahiru

Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Attahiru, who was appointed Chief of Army Staff on 26th January, 2021 by President Muhammadu Buhari.

"He was an exemplary soldier whose zeal, dedication and professionalism inspired his men in the on-

going war against terrorism and to secure the peace and stability of the nation.

"Already, all well-meaning Nigerians are enjoying a renewed confidence in the army, while the soldiers themselves are showing appreciation for their leaderships' encouraging impetus in boosting their morale on the battlefields.

"Our thoughts are with the families of the entire crew members and others on the entourage of the Chief who lost their lives in the unfortunate plane crash.

"They were worthy and dedicated soldiers who devotedly fought for our country on the battlefield. May the souls of these he-

roses rest in peace.

As Governors, we will miss the gallant soldiers. We pray for the repose of their gentle souls in the highest recesses of Jinnatul Fiddausi, hoping that their contributions to bringing peace back to the lives of

our people do not go in vain.

"We also pray Allah (SWT) to grant late General Ibrahim Attahiru's family and the families of all involved the fortitude to bear this great loss to the country at large," Fayemi said.



Gov. Fayemi at the funeral

Controversy

Pantami: Northern Governors Forum Raises Alarm Over Plan To Smear It

The Northern States Governor's Forum said it has uncovered a clandestine attempt by a shadow group to engage in a smear campaign against the forum, as well as its Chairman and Governor of Plateau State, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong.

In a media statement released by the forum, it said it was repulsed by the campaign to drag it into a matter it has remained neutral, to the extent of printing and circulating posters.

"The Northern Governors Forum expresses disgust over campaign of calumny in which the group has gone,

to the extent of printing and circulating posters to the effect that it is supporting the Minister of Communication Technology and Digital Economy, Dr. Isa Pantami over some statements he is said to have made in the past.

"The uncovered plan shows that those behind the propaganda publication have political interests that are bent on dragging the forum into the controversy by widely circulating the posters on social media and pasting same across the country with a view to tarnishing the image of the body and its members.

"For the avoidance of

doubt, the forum wishes to state that it has no intention of being dragged into the matter, as the minister has provided his response to the issue which does not need the validation or denial of the forum.

According to a statement which was signed by spokesman to the governor, Dr. Makut Simon Macham, members of the public are advised to beware of the antics of such sponsored mischief makers and should therefore disregard such propaganda posters, which only intend to serve the selfish interests of those behind them.

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NEWS FROM THE STATES

Lagos, Ogun Sign Partnership Establishing Joint Development Commission

Governor Dapo Abiodun of Ogun State and his Lagos State counterpart, Babajide Sanwo-Olu have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Lagos-Ogun Joint Development Commission.

The signing of the MoU, which took place at the Marquee of the Presidential Lodge, Abeokuta, was witnessed by top government functionaries from the two states, traditional rulers, federal and state lawmakers, and captains of industry.

Speaking at the event, Governor Abiodun said that the official launch of the Joint Development Commission will further initiate and accelerate more projects necessary to aid ease of doing business, movement of people, goods and services, as well as increase industrialization along all the border communities and ensure a wholesome development of the two states.

He noted that the signing of an "historic Memorandum of Understanding" took cognizance of what had been envisioned, leading to the establishment of the Prof. Akin Mabogunje's Committee on Redeployment of Lagos Megacity Region Plan between 2005 and 2006.

According to Abiodun, the Joint Development Commission would forge a common alliance between the two states, to jointly tackle issues bordering on security, sanitation, traffic



Governors Babajide Sanwo-Olu and Dapo Abiodun in a COVID-19 greeting to symbolise the signing of MOU between their respective states

and transportation, waste management, water supply, land use planning, infrastructure development and maintenance, urban renewal and slum upgrading, for the mutual benefit of the people and the generality of Nigerians.

While saying that the MoU is a culmination of various efforts by state and non-state actors who have seen beyond the geographical delineation of Lagos and Ogun, the governor added that the synergy would focus more on social-economic development areas such as infrastructure development; revenue and taxation; trade and investment; resolution of boundary disputes; agriculture and food security among others.

"This MoU, is therefore a manifestation of the common dream that the nation's largest economy and

the nation's industrial capital are forging because both are deliberate, focused and methodical to governance.

Again, I must thank my brother governor, His Excellency Babajide Sanwo-Olu for his own cooperation, enthusiasm and support for this initiative.

"Before now, together, we had jointly written, formally to President Muhammadu Buhari to release the Lagos-Ota-Abeokuta and the Ikorodu-Sagamu Roads for us to jointly reconstruct. Another manifestation of our working together is the Adiyin Water Works that, though, is in Ogun State, supplying water to the people of Lagos State. And will also be supplying water to Ogun State.

"If we jointly do this, there will be development which will continue to increase employment gener-

ation, poverty alleviation and food security", he stated.

Abiodun, however, called on the private sector to support and collaborate with the governments in the success story of the Lagos-Ogun Joint Development Commission, "so that the enduring development we all crave for in Lagos and Ogun States can be more guaranteed."

Earlier in his remark, Governor Sanwo-Olu noted that the emergence of Lagos as a megacity with a population of over 22 million people has made it expedient for greater synergy with other States, especially Ogun for sustainable socioeconomic development.

He described the Memorandum of Understanding as a "game changer" that will transform the urban agglomeration that Lagos State has become.

"In light of current global practices in managing megacities, it has become obvious that the best way to accelerate socioeconomic development in Lagos and Ogun States is by embracing a more collaborative approach for growth, development, and urban sustainability.

"The Joint Memorandum of Understanding is a sustainable development agenda under which Lagos and Ogun States will combine resources to meet our present socio-economic needs and prepare for the future.

"Our commitment to ensuring that Lagos becomes a 21st century economy makes it imperative for us to strategically collaborate with our closest neighbour, Ogun State, for the joint development of our states, the continued growth of our cities and the co-creation of value that encompasses good governance and urban regeneration". Sanwo-Olu stated.

The Lagos State governor further assured that the stipulations of the Joint Memorandum of Understanding will be meticulously implemented, submitting "the next step is to establish a Joint Committee that will implement the terms of the Joint Memorandum of Understanding until we are able to formally establish a Joint

Development Commission with the approval of the Lagos and Ogun States Houses of Assembly".



“working assiduously, for extraneous interests whose game plan stands at variance with the expectations of genuine lovers of peaceful coexistence among all the peoples whose ethnic extractions are indigenous to Nigeria.

Akeredolu in the statement in Akure, Ondo state and signed by his Senior Special Adviser on Special Duties and Strategy, Dr Doyin Odebowale, said that “Mr Garba must disclose, this day, the real motive(s) of those he serves, as they are definitely not the President’s.

The statement is entitled “Mr Garba Shehu; On the Trail of An Agent Provocateur”.

“He cannot continue to hide under some opaque, omnibus, and dubious directives to create confusion in the polity. The easy recourse to mendacious up-pity in pushing a barely disguised pernicious agendum is well understood.

“The declaration that the recommendations of the Minister of Agriculture, Al-haji Sabo Nanono, a mere political appointee like Garba Shehu, are now the “lasting solutions” which eluded all the elected representatives of the people of the Southern part of the country, exposes this man as a pitiable messenger who does not seem to understand the limits of his relevance and charge.

The statement reads “Mr Garba Shehu just released a press statement purporting to represent the position of President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, on the farmer-herder “clashes” and what he termed as “Deep Rooted Solutions to the herdsmen attacks”.

“He also attributed a unilateral decision to the President who “clears the way



Southern Governors

for ranching and revival of forest reserves” as part of the “permanent solution to the frequent clashes between them, as well as the associated problem of the gun-wielding “killer-herdsmen”.

“Anyone who has been following the utterances of this man, as well as his fellow travelers on the self-deluding, mendacious but potentially dangerous itinerary to anarchy cannot but conclude that he works, assiduously, for extraneous interests whose game plan stands at variance with the expectations of genuine lovers of peaceful coexistence among all the peoples whose ethnic extractions are indigenous to Nigeria.

“Mr Garba contends that their announcement is of questionable legality”, referring to the 17 Governors of the Southern States, but the decision of certain elements to take the ancestral lands of other people to settle their kinsmen, including the “gun-wielding” “killer herds-

men” and their families, and provide “veterinary clinics, water points for animals, and facilities for herders and their families including schooling through these rehabilitated reserves” for which “the Federal Government is making far-reaching and practical changes allowing for different communities to co-exist side-by-side”, does not appear to him as a comprehensive plan for land grabbing, a precursor to internal colonialism.

“He wants to “revive forest reserves” but seems particularly uninterested in the current position of the same law, that he and his cohorts often misinterpret to serve parochialism and greed. Governors no longer have powers over the lands in their territories.

“They must take instructions from appointees of the Federal Government on such matters.

“It is superfluous, and that is being charitable, for anyone to remind us of the constitutional right of bona

fide citizens to enjoy rights and freedoms within every one of our 36 States (and FCT)-regardless of their state of birth and residence”.

“There has never been any contention on this provision. It is clear that Mr Garba seems to have issues understanding the difference between licentious criminality and qualified rights under our law.

“It is our duty to continually nudge him off his current state of cognitive dissonance. His pronouncement betrays dubiety and mischief.

“Most traditional families in Nigeria have occupations. Pastoralism is not an exception. Any ethnic group still trapped in anachronism may be assisted to embrace modernity.

“Dispossessing communities of their ancestral lands, encouraging denizens of the forests to overrun lands belonging to other people and forcing alien bands of migrants on the local populace to live “side-by-side” with

other communities cannot be for the purpose of animal husbandry.

“It raises suspicion on a grand, deliberate, persistent, and insidious design to use naked force to subjugate the real owners of the land. Mr Garba Shehu is a major supporter of the current pervasive anarchy in the land.

“May we warn Mr Garba Shehu and his cohorts to desist from hurling insults at the elected representatives of the people.

“He lacks the authority to make policy statements for the Federal Government, unless directed, expressly. His acts are clearly those of an agent provocateur. Other closet dreamers, aspirers to colonial fantasies, must be weaned off their delusion. Akeredolu declared that “No inch of the space delineated and known, currently, as South West, and indeed the whole South, will be ceded to a band of invaders masquerading as herdsmen under any guise.



In this edition of Governors Connect with the Youth Population and Road to A Violence-Free Nigeria, we feature the Governor of Niger State, His Excellency, Abubakar Bello.

In this interview with the NGF Media, he talks about his love and passion for the youthful population and how the state is evolving new strategies to change their lives and mindset. Concerning the alarming rate of insecurity across the country, Governor Bello also said that the time for State Police is now.

The Nigerians Governors Forum has evolved into arbiter of sorts, resolving national issues and bridging relationships between Nigeria and the outside world.

From the EndSARS protests to the minimum wage imbroglio, and even the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). How does this pivotal role make you feel?

We are glad to contribute our quota at the subnational, national and even international level. Bridging gaps and fostering international relations have been our watchword because we want to deliver quality leadership to Nigerians. In recent years, the Forum has grown in reputation and what you find is international donor agencies and international partners like the World Bank and even the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation using the NGF to deliver their services to Nigerians.

We are often worried however, about skirmishes that tend to disrupt the peace and sustainable development like the #EndSARS protests. Though it was a worthy cause, it was hijacked by unscrupulous elements to cause untold hardship and mayhem in the society.

Do you see that protest as a vote of no confidence in the present leadership of the country generally?

I won't say it's a vote of no confidence because everything happens for a reason. When you come up with a protest and you give five demands and the government accepts your demands, then it has come to something.

At that point it is a win-win situation. If you sit down with the government and with the leadership to dialogue on this earlier, the protests wouldn't have been necessary. I have this policy that sometimes you push for something but you don't push too deep, because



WE'RE EVOLVING NEW STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF OUR YOUTHS
– SANI BELLO



in the end when you push too deep, you lose everything. But I think going forward, it is a good lesson for all of us and I am not against any protest, rather as a matter of fact, when people think they have been shortchanged, there is nothing wrong with a peaceful protest.

I have never been against any peaceful protest in my state, even when there is a protest or I have a notice for a protest I will seek advice from different quarters and my reaction is always let them protest because as a leader you also get firsthand information directly because sometimes people you work with won't tell you the truth.

But what I don't like about protests is when it is not managed properly and hoodlums hijack it to cause anarchy.

We now live in an age where because of the economy, young people doing nothing want to leverage on such situations to create mayhem. Like I said earlier, we have learned our lessons from the protests and we are moving forward.

The remote causes of the unrests are still very much prevalent in our society today; out of school children, unemployment, and injustice generally. Now when you look at the situation, what will you say you are doing to arrest some of these issues in Niger State particularly?

All the problems you mentioned did not happen in one day; The situation started many years ago but unfortunately attention was not paid to it.

Check in my state or especially up North, the population is increasing at an alarming rate, and when you see the number of youths on the streets doing nothing, it's really very scary; so even as a government we have our limitations and that is why the Ministry for Youth Affairs was created.

Though they are trying very hard to see what they can do for most of the youths, it's not possible to reach everyone. I usually classify them into two groups: We have those ones that are in tertiary institu-

tions and then you have those ones that are doing nothing.

Some of them have taken to thuggery as a means of survival and all these are things we really have to watch out for. We have organized student unions and they from time-to-time protest for good reasons even though sometimes their demands are unrealistic.

Sometimes they make lots of demands that when you see it, you say wow!! Where do I start from? So, I guess again where you try to manage the situation, to do your best so that you don't say no to everything, you have to try to do whatever you can.

This reminds me of the loan scheme for youths in Niger State in 2019. Are you satisfied with how it turned out?

You know, was actually talking about this loan a few weeks ago. I was planning to invite the Director General of the agency concerned. The idea of this loan is to support young people that want to go into small scale enterprise and the CBN was generous enough to provide this fund. I agree it is a loan facility and not a grant but you know in politics there are stakeholders so even as a governor you have to respect your stakeholders, unfortunately it wasn't managed properly because, most of the beneficiaries' saw it as their own dividends of democracy. They thought it is their own national cake, so funds that should have been returned as at when due for many others to benefit refused to do so.

I had a very difficult time trying to explain to them, so at the moment what I have done is get the list of everyone and they have to payback so that other people can benefit from it.

This is more critical considering that you have many graduates and very view vacancies for jobs even in private offices.

Mind you, the COVID-19 pandemic has also made a lot of companies to lay off their staffs or slash their salaries. As a matter of social responsibility, you see most states have a lot of staff they don't need. So, the program is a very important program I wish people will take it



Are you going to re-package the programme, going forward?

Yes, we cannot just fold our arms and allow this very important scheme lose its impact. I tell you what, the easiest way to eliminate poverty is when you have a lot of people doing something and it must definitely have effect on the economy. When you have a lot of people engaged in one form of activity or business such people will in turn engage several others and before you know it, thousands of people would have been gainfully employed.

Honestly, we have to pay a lot more attention to this problem of poverty amongst our people. A solid structure to manage poverty needs to be in place and that is what we are doing.

How do you think we can address the security challenges we are facing in the country. The numerical strength of our security operatives, poor training, less weapons are pointers to the inevitability of state police. Shouldn't this spur us into quickening its actualization?

I think the police are overwhelmed by the rising population in the country. Take Niger State for example, in some Local governments or some border towns, Niger State being 76000 kilometers and the largest state in the country, it is quite hard to police the entire state.

We have vast forests so there is inadequate manpower when it comes to policing. That is why I was happy when it came up. We really cannot do without state police.

So, as it is, we in the meantime deploy the local vigilantes virtually in every community just to support the police. They work hand in hand with the police so the time has come for us to also provide them with equipment.

Sometimes we need police but we still have to stop and ask ourselves do they really have the needed equipment?

Why is it easier to find the resources to deal with the effect, rather than tackle the root causes?

Well, you will look at your budget and it depends on what is passed at the National Assembly. And sometimes even when you have a fairer budget it also depends on the availability of cash. As you know,

budget is just a statement. I don't know what happened, but we used to have a better police system even though then, we the population was less. In the past, you see a village or town with only one policeman exerting enough authority then and they were effective, but these days such things won't happen.

This is also because our values have degenerated, so I won't blame it on training alone but I think its manpower. Government has to do something by providing and equipping every police man. Imagine a situation where a police officer has to buy his own uniform? How much do they even earn?

I think the motivation and morale of the police is low. Most of them you see on the streets are not even proud wearing the uniform; they are just in it to earn a living.

To be a policeman, you have to have some kind of passion, it must be something you want to do; what we have now is someone is forced to go into the police because he has tried and there is nothing else to do, so you won't get the best, coupled with the fact that he is not getting paid or the right protective gadgets.

I will tell you something, in this battle against bandits, I found our vigilantes very effective even though they work hand to hand with the police. I have a very good Police Commissioner. What I noticed also is that the vigilantes are ready to die because they are defending their communities and their families so when it has to be someone from outside, his commitment will be less, he will not want to die for a cause that is not his.

So, even though the vigilantes are not armed as the police or bandits, they confront bandits and in a lot of cases they send them back. So, imagine if the vigilantes are now properly trained, you won't see any bandit.

Recently, you complained about some traditional rulers from your domain that you suspected were complicit in some incidents of banditry to which you vowed to investigate and deal with those found wanting. What do you make of this situation?

It is very disturbing. Just before this development, I had thought we should move coordination to the lowest level because they know themselves; the

seriously.

Is it still ongoing?

Yes, it is still on at the moment. In fact, we are trying to approach the CBN just as we are also trying to change our strategy to ensure the scheme works better.



vigilante, and the police know everyone and every traditional ruler should have audit of everyone in his domain so that when strangers come into your territory you are aware, who they are visiting and when they leave but that is in the past.

Overtime I don't know what happened as these bandits came in. Initially, they were not from the Niger state, usually they will come in from other places operate and go back but I started getting worried when we found out that some of the locals have started joining them because of monetary gains and it was becoming a huge business and you know anything that involves banditry gets messy.

I became even more troubled when in the cause of our investigation, we found out that some of the traditional rulers, a few of them were serving as informants to these criminals. Some Police officers were also becoming involved. We know we are in trouble because when a village head begins to serve as informants to bandits. We need to work harder to check this menace

If a good village head has some powers, you will see that he is able to police the place. The problem is the size of the state as we have people coming in hundreds to settle here. What they do is when they come, they will go to the village head and say we are here for fishing purposes and agriculture so give us land and the village head either genuinely or for some other reasons will allocate land and after some time they become strong and that is when you start getting new sets.

The usual sets you have bandits you have people that have different ideas or religion they start sending the wrong signal to people. So, if you are a village head and you connive with bandits to attack your village or kill your people then you are not a village head. So, we are taking this matter seriously and like I said, we have made some arrests and investigations are still on. Once we establish that they were involved, we won't hesitate to deal with them properly according to the law.

Some of your colleagues are moving to scrap the bogus severance package for former Governors and their deputies as a way of cutting down the cost

of governance. Is this something you are also considering?

I don't object to that. In any case, we have started looking at the different packages and honestly in Niger State, it is not too high, but then as we have more and more former governors, former deputy governors, former speakers, deputy speakers, former permanent secretaries; when you look at the packages it will get to a point where it becomes too much.

To be honest, the earlier we all start trimming some of these, the better. I have no doubt in my mind that if we don't check the costs of governance, it may get to a point where we can't even pay.

But again, you see these packages are backed by law and you know it's difficult to tell the State Assembly to amend laws that will affect them. They are not ready but like I said, sooner or later it must be done because we will get to a point where we cannot pay.

A lot of states are also complaining about paying the federal government's minimum wage. How convenient has it been for you in Niger State?

It is because the overhead cost is quite heavy when compared to the earnings of the state. You know if were in the private sector you can easily downsize but in government you can't easily downsize. When I came onboard in 2015, my Pension Bill was One Hundred and Sixty something a month, now we have a bill of Four Hundred and Fifty Million a month for pensioners. I met a law that allows secondary and primary schools teachers full benefits when they retire and now more and more permanent secretaries are retiring. It is becoming huge to meet up with, honestly.

As a governor, one of the joy, for me is when you do something and you know it has helped someone's life; I mean it is far above anything money can get. What you solely do that you know has changed or impacted on someone.

I have seen communities where boreholes have helped because getting water had been a big challenge, so when you give them boreholes, you have helped a lot. I have seen communities where access roads means everything; I have



done over one hundred and fifty kilometers for rural communities. These are communities that usually from the local government headquarters to other parts may take over seven hours but now with the roads it takes one or two hours to cover. So, if you want to become a governor you should think twice why you want to become a governor.



NEWS FROM THE STATES

How Ugwuanyi Led Rescue Operation At An Accident Scene

Enugu State, Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi recently led rescue operation at an accident scene at Ekulu Bridge, Abakpa Nike, Enugu East Local Government Area, where a petroleum products truck lost control and fell into a ditch.

Prior to the arrival of the governor, the Enugu State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), the Enugu State Fire Service and the Chairman of Enugu East LGA, Hon. Alex Ugwu, had promptly reported to the accident scene to apply safety measures towards safeguarding lives and



Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi giving directives at the scene of the accident

property.

The Enugu State Government, through SEMA and the State Ministry of Works and Infrastructure also provided a crane and manpower for the removal of the vehicle, evacuation of the products and reopening of the road to vehicular traffic and other road users.

The Executive Secretary of SEMA, Barr. Mrs. Nkechi Eneh, who confirmed one causality, urged residents of the area to be calm and law abiding as well as cooperate with the efforts of the state government and the emergency response stakeholders in arresting the situation.

Mrs. Ugwuanyi Flags Off 2021 Child Health Week

The wife of Enugu State Governor, Mrs. Monica Ugochi Ugwuanyi, has tasked mothers to always ensure they take proper record of their children's #immunization, for effective administration of vaccines on them for healthy living.

Mrs. Ugwuanyi gave the advice during the flag off of the 2021 Maternal, New Born and Child Health Week (MNCHW) and Modified Integrated Medical Outreach Programme (MIMOP), held at Uwani Health Centre, Enugu South Local Government Area of the state.

The Enugu First Lady noted that some mothers do forget the scheduled date for immunization of their children, stressing that proper record keeping



Mrs. Ugwuanyi

is essential and a sure way to effectively immunize the kids.

"One advice I want to give is this; let's have a small bag where you keep your children's cards. You will also put in the bag everything concerning the child that you need in the hospital so that even when you are not there, the person taking the

child to the hospital can pick the bag and present the necessary records for urgent medical attention.

"Immediately you get to the hospital, you give them the card so that they know the child's immunization history, because they will ask questions, such as how many immunizations he or she has taken, among others. So, let's try to update our children's immunization card".

Reiterating her call for strict adherence to the #COVID19 protocol, Mrs. Ugwuanyi urged residents of Enugu State to continue to wear their facemasks, wash their hands with soap and running water, maintain social distancing, among other precautionary measures.

Enugu Govt Rehabilitates Intractable Etudo/Awkunanaw Street

The Enugu State Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, in keeping with the directives of Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi, has carried out the rehabilitation of the popular Etudo/Awkunanaw Street, Achara Layout, Enugu South Local Government Area, which was hitherto in a deplorable state.

Governor Ugwuanyi had paid an unscheduled visit to the Etudo/Awkunanaw Street, about six weeks ago, prior to the rehabilitation of the road, to ascertain its true state for immediate intervention, and consequently directed the State Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, to commence procurement for its reconstruction and rehabilitation.

Speaking during the

governor's visit, the Commissioner for Works and Infrastructure, Engr. Greg Nnaji, disclosed that the road was captured in the 2021 budget deliverables as one of the special intervention projects for urgent attention because of its socio-economic importance to residents of the area.

Engr. Nnaji, accompanied by the Deputy Leader of the Enugu State House of Assembly and member representing Enugu South (Rural) Constituency, and the Special Adviser to the Governor on Information, Barr. Steve Oruruo, explained that the governor's visit was in furtherance of his tour of project sites to ensure that the deliverables in the 2021 budget were met.



NEWS FROM THE STATES

Matawalle Launches Zamfara CARES, Inaugurates Economic Committees

Zamfara State Executive Governor, Bello Mohammed Matawalle MON (Shattiman Sakkwato) has launched the state's chapter of Zamfara Covid-19 Action Recovery and Stimulus Programme, known as Cares.

Cares is a stimulus program conceived by the Nigeria Governors Forum and introduced in all the 36 states of the federation as well as the Federal Capital Territory and being implemented with the support of the World Bank.

The programme would be addressed as Zamfara CARES for you Programme, and its motto would be Matawalle Vision 2023.

He said during the inauguration of Zamfara Cares and two other committees that Cares will accomplish its responsibilities through social transfer, livelihood grants, provision of basic structures, support to Medium and Small-Scale Enterprises and ensuring food security.

The Shattiman Sakkwato who noted that armed banditry has threatened food security and the general economic growth of the state expressed confidence that the programme would in addition work with the First Lady's Office to address the issue of malnutrition in the State and also serve as panacea to positive changes and development in the state.

He stated that despite the impediments caused by insecurity and the COVID-19 Pandemic, his administration has made colossal investments in primary, secondary and tertiary education,



Matawalle

healthcare delivery, roads infrastructure, construction of a cargo airport and a variety of other fields with a view to turning around the fortunes of the State.

Accordingly, the program which will be delivered through the three platforms of CSDA, FADAMA, the Ministry of Commerce and State's CARES Coordinating Unit with government interacting through members of the Steering Committee will ensure adequate supervision of the Delivery Platforms to deliver the services that are required.

He further explained that services that CARES will deliver to the common man of Zamfara State are: Livelihood Grants- N3.4 Billion; Food Security - N 3.4 Billion and Job Creation through MSEs - N2 Billion.

The Matawalle Vision 2023 has eminent personalities comprising technocrats and politicians appointed to

execute the onerous assignment with Alhaji Ibrahim Jibo Magayaki, Honourable Commissioner Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning- Chairman.

Ibrahim Abdullahi, Honourable Commissioner Ministry of Agriculture- member; Rabiu Garba, Honourable Commissioner Ministry of Commerce- member; Sufyanu Bashir Yuguda, Honourable Commissioner Ministry of Finance, member; Garba Altine Dauran, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning- member; Kabiru Mohammed Gayari, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Finance- member; Ibrahim Dan Nabirgi, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Agriculture- member; Hamisu Shayau, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Commerce- member; CSDA Chairman- member; and Mukhtar Ibrahim of Ministry of Budget to serve as Secretary.

Zamfara Govt Introduces e-C of O, Revokes Land Titles

His Excellency, the Zamfara State Executive Governor Hon Dr. Bello Mohammed Matawalle MON (Shattiman Sakkwato) today, Thursday May 20th, announced the revocation of all land titles in Zamfara state, directing property owners to go to the state's Geographic Information System (ZAGIS) for recertification of their respective titles with the new policy of granting electronic Certificates.

Matawalle made the announcement at the flag-off of the issuance of the Electronic Certificates of Occupancy which will henceforth be done only by ZAGIS.

He explained that his administration decided on the e-C of O following the corrupt practices and shoddy deals that characterized the manual issuance of C of Os in which unsuspecting property owners were cheated by some fraudulent officers handling the process.

He said land, being the most valuable resource, needs to be carefully guarded against abuse and misuse, noting that under the new system, all e-C of Os to be issued would be strictly based on the extant land use regulations.

The governor added that land certification initialization embraced by his administration is part of his government's efforts

to create a new, technology-driven economy for the twenty-first century.

The governor further said, "all problems associated with land transactions will be resolved with the use of modern technology as the recertification of all land titles will assist in the current fight against banditry and sundry crimes".

He also stated that "owners of all land titles would now have their records available in a secured database; and that the new e-C of Os would also make it easier for financial institutions to check the authenticity of certificates for those who choose to use them as collateral for bank loans."

The Shattiman Sakkwato then urged fresh applicants for all types of land titles to do so through ZAGIS, which is the only Government agency saddled with the responsibility of processing all land titles, assuring those who want to recertify their titles and prospective titleholders that the Zamfara State's e-C of Os is of the highest quality as it is produced by the Nigeria Security Printing and Minting Company bearing all security features that would make the production of its counterfeit impossible.

He urged all landowners to come forward and certify their titles and also to pay their ground rents as and when due.



ACQUIRE BASIC KNOWLEDGE, PLAN YOUR LIFE, UZODINMA ADVISES YOUTHS



Governor Hope Uzodinma

In this edition of Governors Connect with the Youth Population and Road to A Violence-Free Nigeria, we feature the Governor of Imo State, His Excellency, Hope Uzodinma.

In this interview with the NGF Media, he talks about his love and passion for the youthful population and how the state is evolving new strategies to change their lives and mindset, whilst also tasking them to always strive to develop their intellect and bring forth solutions to national problems. Excerpts:

Your Excellency Sir, how do you think we can attain the dialogue we crave for and put an end to calls for disunity?

What do they say? We have a covenant. What governs this country is the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria. Whether it's a perfect document or not, it is still the document that is guiding every Nigerian.

So, what we are saying is, some people just wake up and begin to develop criminal appetite of wanting to have what they cannot afford, otherwise, we have a president, we have a parliament, we have federal executive council.

All these geo-political zones are represented in these houses. What is it that you do better than the president today, that as a position below the president, you should not come up with, either submit to public complaint commission but this attitude of if I'm not the one, let us collapse, is unacceptable but I can tell you, the government is a functional government and all these will soon stop because its politically instigated.

Where do you draw your optimism from Sir, seeing that some of the issues raised are germane?

It is because my sense of sub-clarity tells me that government is not complacent, they'll rise to the oc-

casion.

Are they going to take seriously the present declaration on ranching and open grazing dichotomy?

You see, in Nigeria, people seem to like drama. People just dramatize a lot. If you've been elected a governor, a governor is supposed to be one of the busiest persons today giving the situation we've seen ourselves in. All these blame game should stop. People should carry out comprehensive observations and develop a solution then get to work. If you blame ranching or not ranching, why would a governor in the north begin to say he wants ranching when the state is a desert. The problem in the east is that people claim that the cattle come to their farm, and eat the food crops. Now, there's nothing wrong with ranching but as a governor, you've been elected to develop the state. Do the right thing and solve the problem. Mr. president cannot come from Abuja to solve community problems in Imo state, because I represent the state and I'll solve the problem. Just like I'm meeting with all the herdsmen and farmers in Imo state and we've agreed to live together and that is why I am not tolerating that nonsense (herdsmen killing) in Imo state. I won't tolerate it!! Every Nigerian should choose where he or she will reside and go about his businesses without fear of

molestation irrespective of religion, tribe or group, so for me, I think we should be more serious about carrying out our duties.

What is your opinion on people's belief that the spate of violence is a corporate conspiracy for material or political gains?

If I'm understanding what you're saying, of course you know that in every situation, there are people that want to take undue advantage. For instance, the situation in the country today, our institutions are not as strong as they're meant to be, particularly, our regulatory organisations. We have bright ideas, we have over one thousand men and women occupying positions in the organisation. The positions are not meant for adequate checks and balances, let's start from the medical profession. You go to the hospital. You see everywhere is filled up. Somebody is diagnosed with something different and what kind of treatment is given to him? Out of carelessness, the person dies and the doctors who did this, next minute, goes to the next person, before you know it, the person is dead and I've not heard of any doctor in Nigeria that any organisation, any institution summoned, reprimanded and revoked his license to practice.

They'll come as an NGO from wherever that there are crises in the north-east and you want to



rent a house you'll use for an office and you're looking for fifteen years lease. Why do you want to stay in the north east for fifteen years as an NGO? It means you are planning and praying that the crisis in the north-east should last for the next fifteen years, now, there's what we call job satisfaction.

Some people are employed or appointed into some positions, not because it's by merit but that's what they want to do and when they get there, as long as you don't enjoy what you do as a profession, you're just there for the gains. This is the secondary aspects of it, all we need now, which I want to use this medium to call for us to sit down as a country to come up with national development plans. It is not about the economy alone, it has to be an all-inclusive plan that will identify the values of various ethnic groups, the attitude of the people potentially available in those areas with an implementation document that must be put in a proper word whether government A or B is in power.

These are the kind of things we should do. I can tell you today that the military are one of the most disciplined people. From what I've seen, the army council is very strong. Some politicians think that what makes unforgettable is for them to be abusing those in authority but democracy and politics itself is what is built around ideology and we don't have it.

I think that we must begin to reduce our interest in complaining and condemning things in Nigeria. If we spend half of the time looking for solutions rather than finding faults, Nigeria would be a better place but for whatever reason, our people are only interested in wanting to know Buhari's daily activities, there's no need for that, so I think we should wake up.

Your excellency, let's assume you are the one directly controlling the security agencies, what would you do differently to maintain security in the state?

Well, from what I've seen, before I came here (you know I came from the senate) and while in the parliament, I was very strong in canvassing for state government to roll with their own police but after I came in here, I now begin to look at the finances of government and how meagre they are. I doubt, with all honesty, the number of states in Nigeria that can handle state policing; they are not up to five but I think to that, even in America, where we took this presidential system of government, we are running a federation. States are federating units. If our economy is robust and strong, even the local government can be granted the necessary tools to fight insecurity. For example, if you go to New York, there's New York police they have federal police, they have the homeland security, they have the CIA. In this business of power management, might is right. If you don't have it, you don't have it, but one of our problems here in Nigeria is, you haven't been served breakfast and yet you're asking for dinner, as for me, whether police is state or federal, do we have effi-



cient policing system? Can we borrow the political will to bring out a budget that will put an effective and functional police force in Nigeria? Populated reasonably by the kind of numbers that will be gotten from the risk assessment solving.

It seems like the society, as well as government rewards violent people while normal people get no attention?

Well, what you see are those that benefits from violence, but have you counted those that died as a result of violence?

Cutting cost for governance, would you encourage other states government to embrace pension for former governors and their deputies.

Not only that, even the pensioners, the civil servants themselves that have retired, carry out biometric caption of every pension. The type of fraud and wastages going on in pension paying systems is very disturbing. The pension law is very clear which is why I don't need to tell any governor what to do. In Nigeria today, by extant regulations, you are not pensionable if you haven't worked for the government for a minimum of ten years, so how will a governor who served

only two terms for eight years allocate pension to himself? It's a violation of the law you swore to protect.

What advise do you have for young people looking up to you for a better life?

I challenge the young people to be of good behaviour, to follow the path of peace, to acquire knowledge because knowledge is the key and then progressing in their careers because they are the leaders of tomorrow but when you choose violence to destroy the country, it means that they'll have no country anymore and when there's no country, you'll be either enslaved or a refugee somewhere. So, I think people should take their destinies in their own hands. Acquire the basic knowledge and plan your life, because if you aren't able to plan your life, you can't plan a local government. If you can't plan a local government, you can't plan a state and if you can't plan a state, you can't plan for a country. So, when you say you're the leaders of tomorrow, there are basic criteria that you must possess to become a leader. I am also urging our leaders to create a formidable succession plan that will also encourage the young ones coming up that there's hope and one day, they'll get to that place.



By Makut Simon

The Bible tells us 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.'

In peacemaking, truth telling and truth seeking are honored, integrity is valued, and trust is given because it is earned, and is a refuge, a safe haven from the incivility and nastiness of conflict.

And so Governor Simon Bako Lalong of Plateau State clocks 58 years on May 5, Lalong's modesty, nature and humility keeps him away from hugging the limelight unlike his more aggressive and socially astute contemporaries.

Governor Lalong has been tirelessly interfacing with relevant individuals, groups and institutions towards restoring the legacies of the founding fathers of the North particularly the legacies of Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto.

Governor Lalong chairs the meeting of Northern Governors Forum in Kaduna. The election of Governor Simon Bako Lalong of Plateau State by his colleagues to succeed the former Borno State Governor, Kashim Shettima, to chair the Nigerian Northern States Governors Forum, did not come to many as a surprise.

This is because he has demonstrated leadership that is forward looking and seeks to unite people and resolve conflicts while pursuing development.

His strides in Plateau state that saw the restoration of peace and accelerated development provided a very good example for the entire Northern States

Lalong: A rare peacemaker on the Plateau



Governor Lalong commissioning a Solar Power Project

to put their trust in him to lead them.

He has liaised seamlessly with President Muhammadu Buhari and other institutions of the Federal Government in pushing the interests of the Northern Region and spearheaded the development of new blueprint for economic revival of the Northern Region.

As Chairman, Northern State's Governors Forum, he has pushed for adoption of community policing by the Northern States, he also spearheaded the adoption

and implementation of the National Livestock Transformation Programme by the Federal Government and Northern states.

Simon Lalong coordinated the Response of the Northern States in the fight against COVID-19, lobbied for the payment of entitlements of employees of New Nigerian Newspapers and mediated in many disputes between various interests and groups in the North, he also facilitated timely intervention and reconciliation among parties on national issues towards restoring

confidence and understanding and spearheaded the final return of Almajiri children to their states of origin.

Gov. Lalong, through the Northern Governors Forum, further assures Nigerians of all ethnic, religious and political persuasions of their constitutional rights to pursue their legitimate businesses wherever they choose within the region and appeal to the people to resist any attempt to lure them into any act that can threaten the peace and tranquility of the region

and the nation at large.

He has incessantly called on citizens to shun and jettison divisive politics, rhetoric and body language so as to ensure sustainable peace in the country.

For the record, Simon Lalong temporarily suspended legal practice to join the political bandwagon in 1998. Under the People's Democratic Party (PDP), he successfully contested the seat of the member of the Plateau State House of Assembly representing his native Shendam Constituency. In October 2000, he



Governor Solomon Lalong inspecting newly installed solar panels

became the speaker of the assembly, occupying that position till the year 2006, following a political storm within the House. The seven years he served as the Speaker of that assembly made him the longest serving speaker of the House in the history of Plateau State. During that period he was two times (2001–2002) elected as the Chairman of the Conference of Speakers of the 36 states of Nigeria. In the year 2015, as the second tenure of the serving Governor of Plateau State, Jonah Jang, neared its end, Lalong joined the contest to succeed Jang. This time, he did so under the All Progressive Congress (APC) political platform. His chances seemed narrow at the beginning, but the capricious nature of politics tipped the balance eventually, favoring him by a slim margin. He was sworn in as the new Governor of Pla-

teau State on May 29, 2015. He was re-elected as the Governor of Plateau State on May 29, 2019.

His swearing in 2015 as the 5th Executive Governor of Plateau State ushered in a new vista of hope and expectations considering the state of affairs in Plateau at that time.

With a genuine need to change the narrative he remains one of those few modest Nigerian personalities quietly serving his country well and without fuss, in a country where the commonest rhetorical question revolves around self-recognition and self-propagation.

In his first term, the Governor's Rescue Mission operated under a 5-Pillar Policy Thrust, namely: Peace, Security and Good Governance; Human Capital Development and Social Welfare; Agriculture and Rural Development; En-

trepreneurship and Industrialization; and Physical Infrastructure and Environment. After re-election in 2019, he streamlined the vision to Peace, Security and Good Governance; Infrastructural Development; and Sustainable Economic Rebirth.

Venturing into partisan politics despite his enormous successes in profession and businesses had been largely informed by the desire to turn things around for his people.

In 2019, the people of Plateau State were impressed with the first term performance and genuine efforts of the Lalong administration that they decided to overwhelmingly take the Rescue Mission to the Next Level by giving the Governor and his Deputy, another four years.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Lalong administration inherited so

many problems and amidst limited resources, high expectations and competing demands, the government settled down for business under the purposeful leadership of Governor Lalong.

Lalong believes and sees politics as call to serve and not to be served. He has a strong view that power should be used for the transformation of the society and development of the people. His view for seeking power is consistent and relentless search for transformational ideas and policies that will transform the lives of the people.

He has touched the lives of his people positively by bringing to them the dividends of democracy.

A man who always thinks much about Nigeria and less of self, Simon Lalong tries as much as possible to impact his wealth, both physical and human, to touch lives. He has used

all means available to him to help the needy, the State and the country at large. He does not discriminate based on religion, sex or tribe.

A bridge builder and a grass root politician who has the capacity to build consensus in the political process and is viewed as a charismatic and strategic leader.

No matter what detractors may want to say, Lalong is a gentleman to the core. His love for the masses is extraordinary, for he is a noble, detribalized and humane Nigerian who worked endlessly for the transition to democracy.

Little wonder other opinions have described him as a behemoth bestriding the political landscape of Nigeria like a colossus.

If within this short time as Governor he has etched indelible imprints in the sands of time to the admiration of his legion of fans and supporters, and become a voice to be reckoned with, then we can rest assured that the future would be greater.

Lalong is convinced that service and passionate desire to positively affect lives are also party of the motivating factors for him joining politics.

Love him or hate him, Simon Lalong has no doubt added colour and sophistication to the celebration of people of quality, achievement, distinction and honour.

Thus, without an iota of doubt, we call on Nigerians to continue to pray for the leaders like Gov. Simon Lalong as they tackle the various challenges facing the nation.

*Makut Simon PhD is Plateau Director of Press



NGF Chairman Dr Kayode Fayemi (right) with the Minister of Labour and Productivity Dr Chris Ngige while NGF DG Mr Asishana B. Okauru and NGF Head of Legal, Chijioke Chuku look on, during a meeting on Judiciary Autonomy in Abuja



Governor Simon Lalong of Plateau State at a meeting with the Labour Minister in his office. With them is NGF DG, A. B. Okauru



The IG of Police receives NGF Chairman when he paid him a courtesy call in his office



The IGP in a discussion with the NGF Chairman and Kebbi Governor Bagudu in his office



L-R: Ngige, Lalong, Eta Enang and NGF DG Okauru



NGF Chairman Dr J. K. Fayemi, being escorted by Minister of Labour Dr Ngige



NGF Chairman, IGP and Progressive Governors Chairman, Atiku Bagudu



NGF Chairman visits Minister of Finance and NP Zainab Shamsuna Ahmed



NGF Chairman delivering a condolence message to the widows of the deceased Military Officers



Yobe Governor and NGF Chairman at the condolence visit



NGF Chairman Dr J. K. Fayemi signing the condolence register for the late COAS



NGF Chairman Dr. J. K. Fayemi during a programme



ASABA DECLARATION

Southern Governors Ban Open Grazing

...Slam Garba Shehu Over Comments

The 17 governors in the Southern part of the country, under the aegis of the Southern Nigeria Governors Forum, have resolved that open grazing of cattle be banned across Southern Nigeria.

The Forum also called on President Muhammadu Buhari to immediately convoke a national parley on restructuring and address the nation over the worsening state of insecurity across the country.

Moreover, the governors expressed very grave concern "on the security challenge currently plaguing the nation and strongly urged President Buhari to address Nigerians on the challenges of insecurity and restore the confidence of our people."

Rising from their meeting at Government House, Asaba Tuesday, the Southern Governors Forum observed that the incursion of armed herders, criminals and bandits into the Southern part of the country had presented a severe security challenge.

In a communiqué jointly signed by 15 governors present at the over four hours crucial meeting, the governors reviewed the situation in the nation, focusing on the current security situation and noted that the "citizens are not able to live their normal lives including pursuing various productive activities leading to a threat to food supply and general security."

They noted that the development and population growth

have put pressure on available land and increased the prospects of conflict between migrating herders and local populations in the South.

"Given this scenario, it becomes imperative to enforce the ban on open grazing in the South (including cattle movement to the South by foot)", the forum restated.

The Southern Nigeria Governors Forum presided by Chief Rotimi Akeredolu, Governor of Ondo State, rather recommended that the federal government should support "WILLING" States to develop alternative and modern livestock management systems.

The governors affirmed that the people of Southern Nigeria remain committed to the unity of Nigeria but on the basis of justice, fairness, equity and oneness and peaceful co-existence between and among its peoples with a focus on the attainment of shared goals for economic development and prosperity.

"The forum also recommended that the federal government should convoke a national dialogue as a matter of urgency in view of widespread agitations among our

various people for greater inclusiveness in existing governance arrangements.

"Review of revenue allocation formula in favour of the sub-national governments and creation of other institutions which legitimately advance our commitment to and practice of true federalism", the governors parley proffered.

"In deference to the sensitivities of our various people, there is a need to review appointments into Federal Government Agencies (including Security Agencies) to reflect the federal character as Nigeria's overall population is heterogeneous," the governors noted.

Meanwhile, the Southern Governors have lambasted the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Media and Publicity, Mallam Garba Shehu, for saying that "their announcement on open grazing is of questionable legality".

Reacting on their behalf, the Chairman of the South West Governors Forum, Rotimi Akeredolu, accused Garba Shehu of creating confusion in the polity by his utterances.

Akeredolu accused Garba Shehu of



“working assiduously, for extraneous interests whose game plan stands at variance with the expectations of genuine lovers of peaceful coexistence among all the peoples whose ethnic extractions are indigenous to Nigeria.

Akeredolu in the statement in Akure, Ondo state and signed by his Senior Special Adviser on Special Duties and Strategy, Dr Doyin Odebowale, said that “Mr Garba must disclose, this day, the real motive(s) of those he serves, as they are definitely not the President’s.

The statement is entitled “Mr Garba Shehu; On the Trail of An Agent Provocateur”.

“He cannot continue to hide under some opaque, omnibus, and dubious directives to create confusion in the polity. The easy recourse to mendacious up-pity in pushing a barely disguised pernicious agendum is well understood.

“The declaration that the recommendations of the Minister of Agriculture, Al-haji Sabo Nanono, a mere political appointee like Garba Shehu, are now the “lasting solutions” which eluded all the elected representatives of the people of the Southern part of the country, exposes this man as a pitiable messenger who does not seem to understand the limits of his relevance and charge.

The statement reads “Mr Garba Shehu just released a press statement purporting to represent the position of President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, on the farmer-herder “clashes” and what he termed as “Deep Rooted Solutions to the herdsmen attacks”.

“He also attributed a unilateral decision to the President who “clears the way



Southern Governors

for ranching and revival of forest reserves” as part of the “permanent solution to the frequent clashes between them, as well as the associated problem of the gun-wielding “killer-herdsmen”.

“Anyone who has been following the utterances of this man, as well as his fellow travelers on the self-deluding, mendacious but potentially dangerous itinerary to anarchy cannot but conclude that he works, assiduously, for extraneous interests whose game plan stands at variance with the expectations of genuine lovers of peaceful coexistence among all the peoples whose ethnic extractions are indigenous to Nigeria.

“Mr Garba contends that their announcement is of questionable legality”, referring to the 17 Governors of the Southern States, but the decision of certain elements to take the ancestral lands of other people to settle their kinsmen, including the “gun-wielding” “killer herds-

men” and their families, and provide “veterinary clinics, water points for animals, and facilities for herders and their families including schooling through these rehabilitated reserves” for which “the Federal Government is making far-reaching and practical changes allowing for different communities to co-exist side-by-side”, does not appear to him as a comprehensive plan for land grabbing, a precursor to internal colonialism.

“He wants to “revive forest reserves” but seems particularly uninterested in the current position of the same law, that he and his cohorts often misinterpret to serve parochialism and greed. Governors no longer have powers over the lands in their territories.

“They must take instructions from appointees of the Federal Government on such matters.

“It is superfluous, and that is being charitable, for anyone to remind us of the constitutional right of bona

fide citizens to enjoy rights and freedoms within every one of our 36 States (and FCT)-regardless of their state of birth and residence”.

“There has never been any contention on this provision. It is clear that Mr Garba seems to have issues understanding the difference between licentious criminality and qualified rights under our law.

“It is our duty to continually nudge him off his current state of cognitive dissonance. His pronouncement betrays dubiety and mischief.

“Most traditional families in Nigeria have occupations. Pastoralism is not an exception. Any ethnic group still trapped in anachronism may be assisted to embrace modernity.

“Dispossessing communities of their ancestral lands, encouraging denizens of the forests to overrun lands belonging to other people and forcing alien bands of migrants on the local populace to live “side-by-side” with

other communities cannot be for the purpose of animal husbandry.

“It raises suspicion on a grand, deliberate, persistent, and insidious design to use naked force to subjugate the real owners of the land. Mr Garba Shehu is a major supporter of the current pervasive anarchy in the land.

“May we warn Mr Garba Shehu and his cohorts to desist from hurling insults at the elected representatives of the people.

“He lacks the authority to make policy statements for the Federal Government, unless directed, expressly. His acts are clearly those of an agent provocateur. Other closet dreamers, aspirers to colonial fantasies, must be weaned off their delusion. Akeredolu declared that “No inch of the space delineated and known, currently, as South West, and indeed the whole South, will be ceded to a band of invaders masquerading as herdsmen under any guise.



NEWS FROM THE STATES

No fewer than 1300 direct job opportunities are to be created for the teeming youths in Akwa Ibom State at the St. Gabriel's Coconut factory when it becomes operational in September this year.

Governor Udom Emmanuel made this known on Friday while inspecting the installation of production lines at the Coconut Factory located in Mkpato Enin, Akwa Ibom State.

Mr Emmanuel who expressed satisfaction at the level of work by the project contractors, VKS, noted that the project will not only employ 1300 jobs for youths, but will also have more than 3000 others employed indirectly.

He said the project will also provide technology transfer from the foreign experts to Akwa Ibom people while boosting the economy in the State.

"If you check some of these units there is a combination of Asian and European technology.

"We still need those Indians because a lot of them will take up training our locals and they will also take part in technology transfer to our locals so our prayer is that the situation in Indian improves so they can be allowed to travel and interact with other people.

"We should be able to troubleshoot certain things, take for example once we are not processing coconut, we should also have a production line that can process palm kernel oil without changing a pan because we are very rich in palm kernels in this region", he added.

The governor assured Akwa Ibom people that his agricultural investments will generate raw materials to feed the factory, hinting that Akwa Palm in Esit Eket will be

A'Ibom Coconut Oil Factory to Generate 1300 Direct Jobs, Says Emmanuel



Akwa Ibom oil factory

re-activated to boost supply at the factory.

While blaming the delay in completion of the project to the outbreak of Covid-19, he called on youths in Mkpato Enin to support government's industrialization programmes and protect the facility against hoodlums and vandals.

Conducting the governor around the Coconut factory, the Principal Consultant, Engr Francis Uwah said, the factory will provide numerous employment opportunities, while other

companies will be attracted towards acquiring the products and the by-products in the factory.

"The by-products will have further processes like the oil will be repackaged into bottles to be sold in shops and supermarkets, packaging companies will come in, the chaff from the shell can be used for fuel and manure, the meat of the coconut can be used to make flour, so many multiplier effects", he noted.

The Architect, VKS construction, Ganze Aydingenc, said the Coconut factory has a capacity of processing 300,000 coconuts per shift which will produce 66 tons in a day from three shift of production, while employing 300 people to work in a shift.

"This factory will produce 300,000 coconuts in a shift and it will produce 22 tons, if you do the three shift it will produce 66tons".

5.1km Road Projects Inaugurated in Oron

The coastal communities of Oron Local Government area came alive recently, when Governor Udom Emmanuel led top government functionaries to inaugurate a network of roads and erosion control projects in the area.

The roads measuring 5.1 kilometers include; 1.8km Murtala Muhammad Way, 800m Customs Road that leads to the Customs beach and 400m Market Square road.

Also commissioned are the 2.1km Oron Highway that connects the area with the main beach, all handled by Wizchino Engineering, a reputable Chinese construction firm.

According to a release by the Chief Press Secretary to the Governor, Mr. Ekerete Udoh,

the roads are part of Governor Emmanuel's promise to tackle the menace of erosion and flooding in Oron and restore the

area to its past glory.

The release further highlighted that the Governor's train will move same day to Mbo where

the construction of NNPC oil and gas solution centre (Ibom Solution Hub) is to be flagged off.

Emmanuel Signs Trade MOU with OGFZA

The Akwa Ibom State Government has signed a memorandum of understanding with the country's Oil and Gas Free Zone Authority, OGFZA, to signal the take off of the Liberty Oil and Gas Free Trade Zone in Ikot Abasi Local Government Area of the State.

This takes off follows the receipt of the first cargo components, establishment of an Immigration office and setting up of a dedicated Customs command, in the free trade zone.

Signing the memorandum on

behalf of the Akwa Ibom State government, Thursday at Government House Uyo, the Secretary to the State Government, Dr. Emmanuel Ekuwem, expressed the deep gratitude of the government and people of the state to President Muhammadu Buhari, for speedy approvals of the project.

Dr Ekuwem who thanked the OGFZA Management for patriotism and commitment towards ensuring the timely take-off of the project, commended Governor Udom Emmanuel, for keeping

faith in the project and assiduously pursuing it to reality.

He described the project as economically viable and laden with opportunities for Nigeria as a nation and the citizens.

The Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Oil and Gas Free Zone Authority, Mr. Umana Umana, who performed the signing on behalf of the federal government agency, said the MoU was a confirmation of the commitments of President Buhari and Governor Emmanuel to the creation of economic opportunities.



NEWS FROM THE STATES

Makinde Swears In Oyo's Elected LG Chairmen

Oyo State Governor Seyi Makinde has sworn in 32 newly elected local government chairmen in the state, with a charge for them to replicate people-oriented policies at the grassroots level.

“To the newly elected and sworn-in Local Government Chairmen, let me state that you have the opportunity to deliver good governance to the people of Oyo State,” the governor was quoted as saying via a statement issued by his spokesman, Taiwo Adisa.

“We cannot over-emphasize the importance of governance at the grassroots. The people of Oyo State must feel your presence by way of development and good governance. Just as they are holding me accountable, they will also hold you accountable. I will, therefore, advise that you replicate the good governance initiatives at the state level at the grassroots level.”

The Peoples Democratic



Gov Makinde at the ceremony

Party (PDP) had won all the 32 Chairmanship seats in the local government election held on Saturday.

The oath of office was administered to the chairmen by the Chief Judge of the state, Justice Munta Abimbo, at an event attended by top government and party functionaries.

Makinde said that he is confident that the election in the remaining local gov-

ernment, Ido Local Government, where the election was rescheduled because of the missing Zenith Labour Party (ZLP) logo on the ballot, will be won by the PDP.

He maintained that the election held on Saturday was free and fair and that it was in line with the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, adding that the people of the state have elected their representatives.

How Special Telephone Lines Are Saving Lives, Curbing Violence In Oyo

The special telephone lines recently reeled out by Oyo State Government for residents to relate with government about the situation of things, especially security and public policies have saved lives of the people and curbed violence in the State.

Oyo State Commissioner for Information, Culture and Tourism, Dr. Wasiu Olatunbosun revealed this while featuring on a live interview programme on the preparation for the 2nd year anniversary of the Seyi Makinde administration at the Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State (BCOS) in Ibadan.

Olatunbosun said a call was received by himself on a particular night last week from Kishi, Irepo Local Government, in which the caller raised an alarm on detection of some unknown individuals lurking around the reserve forest along the town and he immediately contacted necessary security personnel, who sprang into action and apprehended the suspects.

“This is one of the many impacts that this open style of governance has made, those that called to inform us about the suspicious movements were surprised and appreciated the Seyi Makinde government for the opportunity they have to speak on things that they notice in their localities.

“The same has happened

in the education sector, the health sector, the agricultural sector, among others to bring closer, the people and their government.”

The Commissioner noted that the present administration is operating with what we called FAITH, meaning, Fidelity, Accountability, Integrity, Transparency and Hardworking as core values of the government, devoted to serve its people.

Speaking on the prospects awaiting the State Cultural Centre at Mokola in Ibadan, Dr Olatunbosun said the government has opened room for private investors to come in and partner government in repositioning the edifice, that has been long abandoned before the present administration came in.

He said the Seyi Makinde led government is working round the clock to bring the world's attention to many tourists sites in Oyo State, parts of which include the hanging Iyake Lake at Ado_Awaye in Iseyin local government, Twins' Festival at Igboora, Ibarapa Central Local government, Iyamapo Hill at Igbeti, Bower's Tower at Ibadan among others.

Wasiu Olatunbosun, while appreciating the support of the people of Oyo State, sought their prayers and continued backing for the government to deliver more on the expected dividends of democracy.

...Makinde Vows To Provide Conducive Environment For Agric

Oyo State Governor, Seyi Makinde, has vowed to sustain the efforts geared at reviving agriculture and improving the people's standard of living.

Also, the Federal Government restated its commitment to provide a more conducive environment for thriving agricultural practice.

Makinde stated this while commissioning Africa's first agricultural electronic centre, an innovation provided by Farmkonnnect Agribusiness Nigeria PLC, in Ibadan, Oyo

State.

The Director, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Dr. Marcus Ogunbiyi, said the Federal Government would continue to provide a conducive environment for the private sector to thrive.

The event, held at Basorun area of Ibadan, had lots of dignitaries in and outside the state in attendance. They include the Oyo State Chief of Staff, Chief Bisi Ilaka; the Director General Oyo State Agribusiness De-

velopment Agency, Dr. Debo Akande; Ekiti State Commissioner for Agriculture, Osun State Commissioner for Agriculture, representatives of the federal government, bank officials, investors and others.

Makinde noted that the state government is working tirelessly to revive the agric sector, having strong belief that when fully harnessed and utilised, could accelerate the state economy and also provide millions of jobs for youths in the state.



NEWS FROM THE STATES



L-R: Magajin Garin sokoto, Alhaji Hassan Danbaba; Chairman Ekiti Council of Chiefs, Alawe of Ilawe Ekiti, Oba Adebajji Alabi; Jigawa State Governor, Muhammad Badaru Abubakar; Kebbi state Governor, Senator Abubakar Atiku Bagudu; Ekiti state Governor, Dr Kayode Fayemi; Governor, Central Bank of Nigeria, Godwin Emefiele; Osun State Governor, Adegboyega Oyetola; Ondo State Governor, Rotimi Akeredolu, and Representative of Rice Farmers Association of Nigeria (RIFAN) Victor Korede at the unveiling of Ekiti Rice Pyramid Project and Flag off of 2021 Wet season Rice Cultivation in Ado Ekiti, recently.

Fayemi unveils first rice pyramids in the South-West

The Governor of Ekiti State, John Kayode Fayemi, together with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Governor, Godwin Emefiele, recently flagged off the first rice pyramid in South West, with a vision to finance over three million rice farmers to boost production and improve the agriculture value chain in the country.

This came as the Governors of Ekiti State, Dr Kayode

Akeredolu, Bagudu, Badaru, Oyetola show solidarity

Fayemi, Rotimi Akeredolu (Ondo), Atiku Bagudu (Kebbi), Badaru Abubakar (Jigawa) and Gboyega Oyetola of Osun State, described the rice pyramid programme as a good vision that would reduce import and make Nigeria fully independent in food production.

The CBN Governor said the Anchor Bor-

rowers programme has expanded agriculture production for 21 crops across the States of Nigeria.

Emefiele said over three million farmers were being financed in the production of varieties of products that can improve the economy, provide jobs and increase Nigeria's imports for foreign exchange earnings.

The CBN Governor said he understood that there was the prohibition of land clearing in the South-West, saying some governors have accessed some fund to undertake such policy in their states.

Emefiele maintained all efforts must be geared towards making agriculture attractive to the teeming unemployed youths

and as well support farmers with loans to help production and processing of their products.

Emefiele debunked the widespread impression that some of the agriculture boosting programmes of President Buhari were concentrated in a section of the country.

The CBN Governor clarified that out



NEWS FROM THE STATES

of N700 billion earmarked for the ABP, that more than N300 billion has been disbursed in the Southern part of the country, for the expansion of food production.

Also endorsing the rice production programme, Governor Kayode Fayemi said President Muhammadu Buhari has demonstrated the capacity to tackle poverty and reduce dependence on foreign food by many of his initiatives in the agriculture sector.

Fayemi added that rice clearing, production of seedling and farm Implements at low interest will enhance

the rice value chain from primary producers to processors.

The governor said: "Rice has become the most consumed staple in Nigeria. In the year 2018 alone, Nigeria imported 0.58 trillion worth of rice valued at \$1.65 Billion. The present policy of support for local rice production by President Buhari has contributed immensely to food security in Nigeria. Considering the huge market and high population of Nigeria with the urgent need to eradicate poverty, it has successfully demonstrated the need to look inwards by taking advantage of the available

fertile land, perennial river bodies and human resources for the production of rice.

"One of the policies of the Federal Government towards encouraging agriculture is the CBN Anchor Borrowers Programme. The program was introduced on November 17, 2015, to enhance rice production. The first two (2) years of the program (2015 to 2017) recorded a significant increase in rice production with a resultant decrease in Rice importation. For instance, rice importation from Thailand fell from 644,131 metric tonnes in September 2015 to

20,000 metric tonnes in September 2017, which accounts for a drop of over 90%.

"In the past, Ekiti is recognised as a rice-producing state. We want to change the narrative and restore the lost glory by moving farming from mere subsistent to a profitable business, that was why we are mobilising our farmers to benefit from the Rice Borrowers Programme."

The Chairman, Southwest Governors Forum, Mr Rotimi Ak-eredolu, in his contributions, said Ekiti has always been known for rice production, saying this programme will re-

turn the lost glory and redirect the state to the right path of economic greatness.

The Governor of Kebbi and Co-Chairman, National Council on Food Security, Atiku Bagudu, said the success of the rice production was due to strong collaboration between the federal government, especially CBN and the governors.

Bagudu, who doubles as the Chairman, All Progressives Congress Governors' Forum, Bagudu added that the programme has been police guidance of President Buhari supported by CBN to finance the agribusiness and ensure food security in rice production.

Speaking about the importance of Agriculture, the Governor of Jigawa State, Mohammed Badaru Abubakar, stated that for Nigeria to progress, that it must produce to substitute import.

The Governor of Osun State, Gboyega Oyetola, said the programme will enhance food sufficiency, diversification programme of the government and good security status.

Oyetola appealed to Nigerians to patronise local foods to serve as a morale booster to farmers to be able to produce more.





NEWS FROM THE STATES

Bagudu visits an erosion prone village, directs immediate measures

In a bid to checkmate the gully erosion currently threatening to cut down the road and damage nearby houses, Kebbi State Governor, Abubakar Atiku Bagudu, has visited Sastazai village, in Augie Local Government Area.

The Governor was accompanied among others by the Chairman, Direct Labour Agency, Allhaji Muhammad Bello Dantani, Magajin Rafin Kabi, Alhaji Yusuf Haruna Rashid, Sardau-nan Gwandu, Special Adviser on Power, Augie Local Government Chairman Hon. Lawal Muhammad Yola and

some government officials.

The Governor di-

rected for the repairs of the road and culvert, so as to stop the erosion

from expanding into surrounding houses in the area.



The erosion site visited by Governor Atiku Bagudu

A resident of the area, Alhaji Abubakar and some farmers who were at the scene when the Governor inspected the area, thanked him for his prompt response and appealed to the Governor to assist them with farming inputs as the wet season draws closer.

Bagudu, while assuring the people of his administration's readiness to support farming activities throughout the state, also urged them to use the abundant fertile land in their areas, to engage in massive farming.

The Governor also made a stop over at Yola village, where he condoled with the family of late Ali Usman Addini Yola, who died last Monday, from an undisclosed protracted illness.

The Kebbi State Chapter of Nigeria Labour Congress, NLC, has lauded the agricultural initiatives and efforts of Senator Abubakar Atiku Bagudu, the Vice Chairman, National Food Security Council, for Nigerian workers to benefit from agricultural loans.

The Council has also expressed its willingness to partner with the government, to actualize the objective and facilitate food security in the country.

The commendation was made by the Kebbi

Accolades for Bagudu's agric initiatives

State Chairman of NLC, Comrade Hassan Umar Halidu, shortly after having Ramadan breakfast (iftar), with the Governor and leaders of other unions, on Saturday 1/5/ 2021 at Government House, Birnin Kebbi.

Comrade Hassan said that, the gesture of the Governor would in no small measure promote food security, as envisaged by President Muhammadu Buhari, as well as support the fam-

ilies of workers, even after retirement.

' I have also told our NEC meeting in Abuja what you have started in Kebbi, that civil servants are part and parcel of your program, they are benefitting from Anchor Borrowers Program.

" We appreciate this kind gesture you have shown as the Vice Chairman, National Food Security Council in the country, we want you to make sure that, civil servants of Kebbi State

become number one to benefit from the next agricultural loan before other States," he urged.

According to the NLC Chairman, over 3000 civil servants, who are directly or indirectly farmers, had applied for the loan.

This, he said, would enable them, even after retirement, to contribute their quota to the food security of Nigeria.

The NLC Chairman also appreciated the

untiring efforts of Governor Bagudu, for the development of Kebbi State and welfare of civil servants, as well as citizens of the State in general.

Responding, Senator Abubakar Atiku Bagudu, welcomed the state NLC and TUC leadership, for coming to br

reak Ramadan fast (Iftar), with him and prayed to the Almighty God to accept our prayers, as well as blessed Nigerian workers.



NEWS FROM THE STATES

Kano State Government has provided 500KVA capacity new brand transformer to Mariri-Gado community in Kumbotso Local Government Area.

Presenting the new transformer to the community, the state Commissioner Ministry for Rural and Community Development, Dr Musa Iliyasu Kwankwaso said that the move is part of the state government determination to improve the living standard of people of the state.

Dr Musa Iliyasu Kwankwaso further expressed the state readiness of continues development of rural areas through the provision of basic amenities across the state.

The commissioner then commended the people of the state for their usual support and prayers to the present administration which assisted it to prosper, urging them to maintain the tempo.

Earlier in their separate remarks, the council chairman of Kumbotso local government, Alhaji Hassan

Kano govt provides 500KVA generator to Mariri-Gado Community

Garba Kauye Marawa and the Managing Director Rural Electricity Board Alh. Garba Uba Danbayye Ajingi expressed their happiness for the gesture, further pledged to look into their complaints with a view of addressing them.

In his vote of thanks, the village head of Mariri Gado Alh Saminu Garba Madaki commended governor Abdullahi Umar Ganduje for his commitments to people-oriented projects.

The village head then urged the state government

to rehabilitate their old abandoned road project from Mariri to Juma in Kumbotso local government area and repairs of some faulty transformers to enable their youths boost their local businesses.



Encomiums over Ganduje's Handling of Labour's Demands

Governor Abdullahi Umar Ganduje's mature way of handling labour demands amid insufficient federal allocation and dwindling revenue, has been described as one of the best options in the country, concerning state-labour relation.

This was disclosed by the Chairman of the Kano state Branch of Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Comrade Kabiru Ado Minjibir, during NLC Award Night, held recently in Kano.

"We must use this opportunity to commend His Excellency, the governor, for the maturity exhibited in handling the various challenges posed by the labour, amid insufficient funding from the federal government.

As well as dwindling internally generated revenue (IGR), which may not be dissociated with the socio-economic crisis posed by the COVID-19 pandemic," he said.

Minjibir further appreciated that, "We thank God with the maturity and understanding. What would have happened was averted. And was resolved amicably."

To also show their satisfaction and solidarity to state effort in that direction, with the view to finding more ways for boosting the state economy, NLC Chairman advised that, "We wish to use this opportunity to advise Kano state government to, as a matter of urgent steps, diversify its IGR drive. In order to boost its income. The labour is willing to support the government in this direction."

... Increases Teachers' Length of Service to 40 Years, Retirement 65

To further strengthen ties between the working class and education with sustainable development, governor Abdullahi Umar Ganduje arrives at a fundamental policy for increasing the length of service for teachers in the state from 35 years to 40 years. With the age of retirement moved from 60 years to 65 years of age, for all categories of teachers in the state.

This was disclosed during Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) Award Night, as part of the workers' day celebration, which took place at Open Theatre, Government House, Kano, Saturday, assuring that all the

policies would be sustained.

"The length of service for our teachers has been 35 years, I am glad to inform this gathering that, we have now increased the duration to 40 years," he disclosed.

He started with a reminder that, "You are all aware that federal government has made a pronouncement by increasing the retirement age and the length of service of teachers serving under federal government. So we don't want teachers in Kano state to be left behind."

Arguing that, Kano state teachers were not onlookers, not bench sitters, not cheaters but

teachers, encouraging that, "In order to promote their commitment and motivate our teachers, Kano state has now decided to increase the length of service from 30 years to 35 years. To also increase the retirement age for our teachers from 60 years to 65 years."

He made it categorically clear that, all teachers from primary to secondary schools up to tertiary institutions, would benefit from the new development, adding that, "...this is an innovation that we cherish and it will be sustained."

To further express the importance, his administration attach-

es to teachers, he maintained that, "Our teachers are our fathers. They are the backbone of sustainable development. Because without education there is no development. Then if we are to sustain our system of education, then their welfare is absolutely necessary."

Reminding, for the discerning minds that, "You could recall some two or three years back, we promoted our teachers and paid them increased salary for their promotion. Which affected the payment of our monthly salaries with over N500m. That is unprecedented."



Governor Okezie Ikpeazu has said that his administration is prepared to forge productive partnerships with the National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure (NASENI) to create an ecosystem for the harnessing and development of the productive capabilities of the people of Abia State.

The Governor stated recently when he received in audience, the Board and Management of the agency led by the Executive Vice Chairman/Chief Executive Officer, Engr. Professor M.S. Haruna.

The Governor made it clear that only path for the economic survival of our country is to embark on an aggressive development of local production of goods and services, and a deliberate national policy for the compulsory consumption of locally produced goods, adding that with the fading prospects of crude oil glob-

Abia Prepared for Productive Partnership With NASENI - Ikpeazu

ally, Nigeria must take hard decisions in this direction.

Governor Ikpeazu expressed delight that NASENI has led the way in the nation's quest for development of indigenous technology through in country fabrication and production of various kinds of goods.

The Governor was particularly delighted that NASENI placed top emphasis on capacity building for their staff in the area of technology transfer and exposing her staff to world class training beyond the shores of the country.

Governor Okezie Ikpeazu assured the NASENI team that he will stand in support of the full implementation of the enabling Act of the Agency including the proposed funding structure of devoting

1% of the Federation Account to the Agency to enable it have enough funds for its ac-

tivities.

This, the Governor said, is very crucial because unless as



Governor Okezie Ikpeazu (right) in a covid-19 greeting with the Executive Vice Chairman/CEO of NASENI, Engr. Prof. M. S. Haruna

a nation we begin to invest in the development of our productive capabilities, our future will remain bleak.

The Governor also assured them that his administration shall be committed to critical collaborations with the agency in the revival and deployment of the abandoned Metallurgical Complex Aba by the Agency as a center of excellence in local engineering.

The Governor also assured the team that the State Government will be willing to provide additional facilities to the agency for the construction of training centers in the State.

Speaking earlier, the Executive Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of NASENI, Engr Professor M S Haruna told the Governor that they were in the State to seek areas of collaboration with the State Government especially in the areas of development of local technology and manufacturing.

Ikpeazu approves two satellite campuses for Abia College

Abia State Governor, Dr Okezie Ikpeazu, has approved the establishment of two satellite campuses by the State College of Education (Technical), Arochuku.

The Provost of the College, Dr Philip Nto, who announced the governor's directive during a solemn assembly session for the staff and students at the weekend, did not, however, disclose the location of the two approved satellite campuses.

He said in view of the prevailing economic situation in the country that has adversely affected the state government's capacity to adequately fund educational institutions, the staff should evolve ways that can make the institution financially self-sustaining, by being more creative and proactive.

The provost, who assured

the students that management would continue to cater for their welfare, said the establishment of the satellite campuses would be one of the ways the college can generate revenue and thus reduce its funding burden on the state government.

He also said through the satellite campuses and marketing of the college to outsiders, students' enrollment and revenue would increase and consequently challenged the staff and students to be more resourceful by doing the needful in this regard.

Expressing optimism that the prevailing global economic challenges would be overcome, the guest preacher at the session, Pastor Henry Wisdom, urged the citizenry to keep praying and have faith in God.

Ikpeazu commissions first computerised vehicle inspection centre in Abia

Governor Okezie Ikpeazu of Abia State recently commissioned the first Computerised Vehicle Inspection Centre in Abia State, with a charge to the operators to make the facility an enabler of transport business growth in the state.

Commissioning the facility in Aba at the weekend, Ikpeazu said the transport business should not be an obstacle to the economic development of the state, adding that with the facility, Abia had joined economically developed states.

Noting that a good transport system would enhance trade and commerce, economic development and investment, he charged

transporters to be good ambassadors of the state.

The governor encouraged all transporters to find time and make their vehicles road-worthy by making use of the facility.

He urged the police and other security agencies to support the facility, while the Ministry of Transport should mount advocacy campaigns on the need for drivers to patronise the facility.

The Permanent Secretary, Abia State Ministry of Transport, Mrs. Ijeoma Okere, thanked the governor for the project, which she described as world-class, and informed that the facility would boost the economy of the state.

With the facility, Abia has joined the league of states with shared commitment to reduce carnage on the roads to the barest minimum, said the Managing Director and Chief

Executive Officer, Abia State Computerised Vehicle Inspection Centre, Aba, Segun Obayendo.

The facility will also operate the Drivers Testing Theory (DTT) to ensure that the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) issues only certified drivers with driving licence.

In line with the governor's mandate, the centre will also provide free diagnostic scans for vehicles as part of the inspection services to the people.



NEWS FROM THE STATES

As part of efforts to contribute to the development of the health sector in Niger State, particularly for the female folks, Governor Abubakar Sani Bello has commissioned a women health centre in Kontagora.

The modern and well-equipped edifice is birthed by the wife of Niger State Governor, Dr. Amina Abubakar Bello through her Raise Foundation, with the support of Mainstream Foundation as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

The centre meant to provide health care services to women affected by Vesico Virgina Fistula (VVF), a disease that causes uncontrolled passage of urine by women due to prolonged labour without access to professional healthcare service, will also avail patients the opportunity to learn skills before reintegrating them to their communities.

Commissioning the centre, Governor Sani Bello said that the establishment of the centre has reduced the burden on the state government, calling for more of such support from other private bodies.

He urged pregnant women to always go for antenatal and ensure they go to clinic or hospital for child birth pointing out that doing so would help eradicate VVF in the State in no distant time.

“We pray that soon we will use this centre as a general health facility because we are hoping that with proper sensitization especially of women in ru-

Gov Sani Bello Commissions Women's Health Centre in Kontagora



Governor Sani Bello commissioning the women's hospital in Kontagora

ral areas, they will go to either the primary health-care or hospital to give birth”, he said.

The Governor gave the assurance that he would support the project and other similar projects put in place by private organisations and commended

Raise Foundation as well as Mainstream Foundation for providing a state of the arts facility.

Dr. Amina, wife of the Governor and founder, Raise Foundation who explained that the project started in 2019 and completed November 2020

was born out of her desire to take care of indigent women affected by VVF.

She said the centre has so far treated 34 patients and presently have 21 patients undergoing treatment.

The wife of the Governor added that a 20-bed

patient hostel has been provided to help the patients recuperate as well as provide them with skills that will empower them and prepare them psychologically, emotionally as well as financially to assist them continue with their lives easily before reintegrating them into the society.

Executive Secretary, Mainstream Foundation, Alh. Siraj Abdullahi said some of their CSR are in the areas of education, health, environment among others adding that their interventions are in all the communities they are located.

Former Nigeria Head of State, General Abubakar Abdulsalami, Col Sani Bello (Rtd), Chairman, Mainstream Energy Solutions Limited were the special guests at the event.

Wives of the Northern Governors Forum, represented by Dr. Zainab Shinkafi Bagudu, representative of the Nigeria Medical Association (NMA), Niger State House of Assembly, Federal Ministry of Health, Medical Women Association of Nigeria (MWAN) were among the groups and institutions that showed their solidarity at the event.

Other dignitaries present at the occasion were former Niger State Chief Judge, Justice Fati Lami Abubakar, Emir of Kagara, Alh. Ahmed Garba, Attahiru II, and the Emir of Kontagora also represented by Engr. Shehu Galadima, the Galadiman Kontagora.



NGF Chairman/Governor Fayemi

NGF Chairman, JKF Ventilates on the controversial Financial Autonomy for the Judiciary and Legislature at Subnational Level

Let me say upfront that if Governors are opposed to judicial and legislative autonomy, my brother, you know that it would not even pass. It is precisely because Governors are not opposed that they allowed it quote and unquote to receive the blessing at the state house of assemblies for that to gather 26 out of 36 states that supported judicial and legislative autonomy.

I am sure you also know that the same did not happen to the local government autonomy and only 10 states assembly voted for that, so it was dead on arrival as a result.

So, the first point to make is that governors are not opposed to judicial and legislative autonomy. Governors are concerned about the modalities for implementation of judicial and legislative autonomy.

We held series of meetings with the parties in question. Representatives of the judiciary, and representatives of the speaker's conference. So, the principle itself is established, we all agreed.

How do we do it, should it be a percentage of

the consolidated revenue fund or should it be a minimum irreducible amount that states commit to. That is the sticky point.

That is the sticky point that has created this delay that you are seeing. What then complicated was the minute Executive Order 10 came on the scene.

Governors were against Executive Order 10 because it contained what I'm sure you as loyalty would be very uncomfortable about in terms of the relationship between Federal Government and the states because if any law says that even in flagrant violation of section 162 of the constitution says that you can just go as an Attorney General into state accounts and remove money, it's going to be a dangerous precedent and it's actually a violation of the constitution and that's why we made the plea to the President that look, let's do this thing.

In principle, we are committed to it. Let us work out the modality without the overbearing

executive order that has come to fall, and the President graciously agreed that we do that, and we have held series of meetings and we have agreed.

However, I think a realization then came into the centre. Look if we do it the way it's been agreed, sometimes, once the revenue of the state drops and you use a percentage, you may get months where the judiciary and legislation may not even get anything and that's where the principle of irreducible minimum came into the picture and we've agreed with all parties.

That is why frankly, I don't know why JUSUN is still on strike because the representatives of the two parties must have also communicated to them just as we have communicated to the minister of labour and employment that we have no issue and the principles have been established and we have agreed the Attorney General of the Federation who is working on it with the various parties, he is fully aware of the position that we hold. So, we are not opposed to that.



Judicial Autonomy:

PERSPECTIVE OF THE NIGERIA GOVERNORS' FORUM

Presented by His Excellency, Rt. Hon. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal, OFR Governor, Sokoto State & Vice Chairman, Nigeria Governors' Forum @The Special Attorney-General's Colloquium in honour of Honourable Justice Ayodeji Simon Daramola, Chief Judge, Ekiti State on Wednesday, 26th May, 2021.

Perhaps nothing has agitated the Nigerian polity in recent times more than the question of autonomy for the judicial and legislative arms of government at the sub-national level. The 4th alteration of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in Section 121(3) provides that:

"Any amount standing to the credit of the – (a) House of Assembly of the State; and (b) Judiciary in the Consolidated revenue Fund of the State shall be paid directly to the said bodies respectively; in the case of the judiciary, such amount shall be paid directly to the heads of the courts concerned.

As Governors of the 36 States under the platform of the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF), let me state very clearly that we are unequivocally committed to the autonomy of the judiciary and the legislature. What we have questioned, (and we have made this known at every opportunity) is the process of implementing the provisions of the Constitution.

As Chief Executives of our respective States, we feel compelled by our Solemn undertaking under Oath to protect and preserve the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (As Amended). The Presidential Executive Order No 10 of 2020 is a unique piece of enactment which we believe deserve highest scrutiny if we must uphold the federal principle which forms a fundamental feature of our Constitution.

This is the basis for our engagements with relevant stakehold-

ers at various levels as well as our participation in the Technical Committee, which was constituted to explore how to implement financial autonomy granted by the Constitution.

However, as Governors, we will be failing in our responsibility if we refuse to draw the attention of the President, stakeholders and the country to grave concerns about the constitutionality of Executive Order No. 10 of 2020. That was the basis of the position that we took on the Executive Order No. 10.

Let me state it clearly that we never questioned the right of Mr. President to issue Executive Orders. We only stated that S.121(3) did not require Presidential Executive Fiat to become implementable. Provisions of the Constitution are self-executing and S.121(3) is not an exception. Any Governor who refuses or neglects to enforce these provisions would be in clear violation of his Oath of Office. S121(3) requires only administrative measures to be implemented.

Ladies and Gentlemen, permit me to highlight some portions of Executive Order #10 that the Governors took exceptions to:

Where there is breach of Section 121 (3) of the Constitution, it is only the Court that can declare deduction at source monies standing to the credit of the Judiciary and Legislature in the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) of the State. As such, the Authorisation to the Accountant General of the Federation to deduct money without having recourse to Court is a violation of State Sovereignty and undermines the constitutional powers



of the Governor as the Chief Executive of the State.

On the Appropriation and Authorisation provision in Section 1 of the Order, the President has no constitutional power to prescribe what allocation should fall under a First Line Charge and the Attorney General of the Federation cannot make laws to enforce an unconstitutional power of Mr. President.

On the Determination of the Budget in Section 2, it is outside the Executive powers of the President to dictate to a State how it should organise its governance and its processes or in the case of the State Legislature, what legislative measures it should take to achieve a particular purpose. A State Government is not obliged to obey unconstitutional directives issued by the President.

On Section 3, it is also beyond the powers of the President to prescribe the establishment of a State Judiciary Budget Committee. The President cannot impose obligations on the functionaries of the State Government without the concurrence of the State Governor. The budget processes outlined in this Section are a violation of State Sovereignty and the federal principle as the President is attempting to expand the provisions of Section 121(3) of the Constitution without following the due process of constitutional amendment.

Section 5 is a directive addressed to the House of Assembly of a State which is an independent arm of the government established by the Constitution and not amenable to the supervisory jurisdiction of Mr. President. Moreover, treating allocations in Appropriation Laws as if they are cast in iron is founded on utopian economic principle which cannot work.

On Section 6, though adequate funding of the Judiciary is necessary, the Presidential directive to make special extraordinary capital allocations for the Judiciary is an unlawful interference in the governance of States as allocations are made based on the needs and priorities of each State and availability of funds. The President cannot dictate to the Governor what it should do within a specific time frame in their budget. It remains the function of the State Legislature to appropriate money and it is after payment to the Judiciary that it becomes the duty of the Head of a Court to manage the resources of the Judiciary until the next allocation is due.

On implementation of the Order under Section 7, the Presidential Implementation

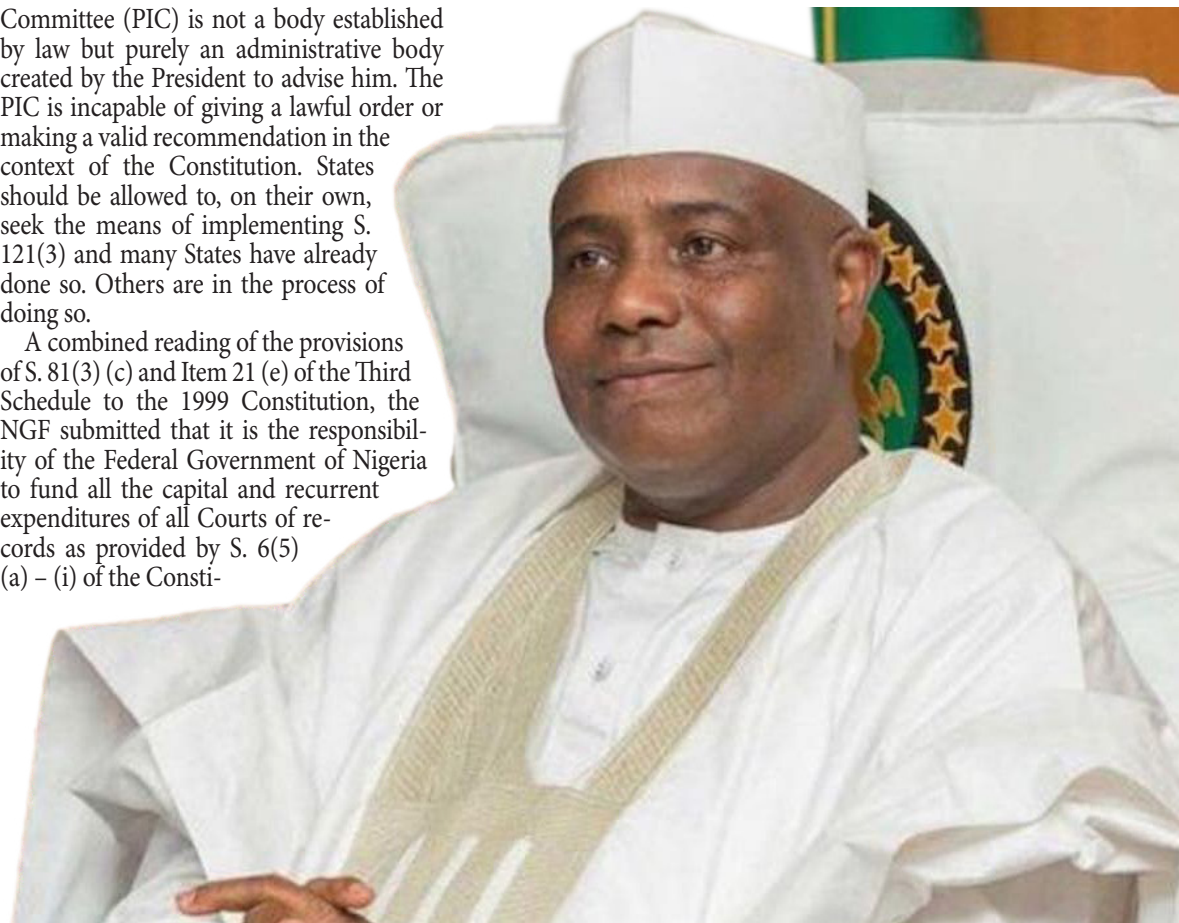
Committee (PIC) is not a body established by law but purely an administrative body created by the President to advise him. The PIC is incapable of giving a lawful order or making a valid recommendation in the context of the Constitution. States should be allowed to, on their own, seek the means of implementing S. 121(3) and many States have already done so. Others are in the process of doing so.

A combined reading of the provisions of S. 81(3) (c) and Item 21 (e) of the Third Schedule to the 1999 Constitution, the NGF submitted that it is the responsibility of the Federal Government of Nigeria to fund all the capital and recurrent expenditures of all Courts of records as provided by S. 6(5) (a) – (i) of the Consti-

tution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (As Amended). What happens in practice is that the Federal Government pays the recurrent expenditure including the salaries of Judges and Khadis and leave States to take care of the capital.

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Finally, the fiscal environment at the Federal level is different from what obtains at the State level. The States have commitments that make it difficult to navigate as comfortably as would otherwise be the case if they had sufficient operational funds. For instance, States cannot independently obtain foreign loans without the involvement of the Federal Government. Such loans must comply with the provisions of the Fiscal Responsibility Act as well as Guidelines of the Federal Debt Management Office (DMO). Meanwhile, the question of legacy loans inherited from preceding administrations have been glossed over. How do we manage this exposure in the context of Executive Order #10?

By way of conclusion, Governors recognize and agree that S. 121(3) must be implemented and enforced. This is exactly why we are in consultation with all the relevant stakeholders including the Chief of Staff to Mr. President, the Office of the Attorney General of the Federation, the Honourable Minister of Labour and Employment, the National Judicial Council (NJC) and the Conference (AGF) of Speakers of the State Legislatures of Nigeria (COSLON). We urge understanding by all parties as we all partners in the governance project of our dear country. We are not insulated from what you are going through and do sincerely feel what you feel.



The Court of Public Opinion

I grew up adoring Michael Jackson. He was a normal but phenomenally talented black kid then, part of The Jackson Five with his brothers. He grew up and started acting strangely – his skin became lighter, his hair longer, his features became Caucasian, his voice did not sound like that of a grown man and he kept monkeys and snakes as pets. Yet his talent and fame kept growing exponentially so all those things could be overlooked.

Then in 1993, he was accused of molesting Jordie Chandler, one of the young boys he was fond of going around with. The vast majority of Michael Jackson fans around the world could not believe this. How could such an icon be involved in something so prurient? There was a predictable media firestorm over this, and by the time the dust cleared, Michael Jackson had settled the case privately with US\$25 million dollars.

According to Michael Jackson, he wanted to move on and did not want the spectacle of a drawn-out court case. Many took this as a sign of his guilt, but since the victim concerned and his parents had accepted the settlement and their testimony could therefore, not be relied upon to pursue a criminal case against Jackson, the case was closed.

The Jordie Chandler Case inspired further investigations into Michael Jackson's lifestyle and what was unearthed was pretty disturbing. People close to him referred to him as a 'Chicken Hawk' a slang for Paedophile, and revealed elaborate and desperate measures to shield the world from the truth of who Michael Jackson really was.

In 2003, Michael Jackson went on trial again for molesting Garvin Arvizo, a cancer survivor he had taken under his wing. Recalling how the first case went in 1993, I knew this was not going anywhere and in 2005, Michael was acquitted of all charges. Michael Jackson was tried by a court of law and won. The case continued to be tried in the Court of Public Opinion till his death.

Regardless of how the criminal case went, the disturbing facts still remain. Michael Jackson slept in the same room and on the same bed with young boys who were his visitors. Over time, five of these boys accused him of masturbating them, showing them pornography and kissing them. Police found pornographic material when they searched his home. The parents of some of the boys received expensive gifts from Michael including homes, cars, jewelry and shopping trips. Michael Jackson died in 2009 as one of the greatest musicians the world has ever known. He, however, epitomized the dark side of the cult of celebrity and how it sucks up everything and everyone in its wake through the use of intimidation, money, and the sacrifice of innocence.

Olanrewaju James, a.k.a Baba Ijesha is no Michael Jackson. He is however, a household name in the Yoruba movie industry. This qualifies him as a local celebrity. Recently allegations of rape and sexual molestation of a minor were made against him. He allegedly raped the minor when she was seven years old. She told no one,

but apparently, it affected her in a number of ways. She only recently confessed her ordeal to her foster mother, another Yoruba entertainer known as Princess. Knowing that she probably might not get him to confess, Princess set up CCTV surveillance and invited Baba Ijesha to her home.

She left the now fourteen-year-old girl alone with him and said she had an errand to run. Baba Ijesha then proceeded to touch the young girl inappropriately, and when he moved his prey to the kitchen where there were no cameras, Princess's 'DIY' team monitoring him swooped in.

beg-

He was shown in a video
giving for mercy.
At least he
admit-
ted



that
he did
something
wrong, though

it is not clear
formally plead guilty to.

exactly what he will

Since then, Baba Ijesha has been cooling his heels in detention. When a statement allegedly from the Police started making the rounds claiming that Baba Ijesha was entitled to bail and would be released within the next twenty-four hours, there was such an outcry that the Lagos State Commissioner of Police gave a Press Conference to update the public on the state of the investigation. Yes, he confirmed, Baba Ijesha might be entitled to bail, but not yet.

The charges were still being drawn up and investigations were ongoing. For now, he is still behind bars. Baba Ijesha will get his day in a court of law. What interests me is what is going on in the Court of Public Opinion.

Over the past week, reading various opinions online and watching one video for or against Baba Ijesha after the other, I have been appalled, infuriated and saddened. I keep asking myself a number of rhetorical questions. Do people know who a minor is? What the sexual abuse of a

minor is? What it means to be the victim of sexual assault and be afraid to tell anyone, not even your parents? Do people know that rapists are not mad men roaming the streets naked? That sexual predators can be men of distinction, pillars of the society?

Do people know how frustrating it is to know that you are not likely to get justice in a case involving someone more powerful or famous than you are? That it is your word against theirs, and 'they' will always have the upper hand? Do you know what you would do to protect your own daughter or to get justice for her? I read and listened to the comments of women about another woman fighting for justice for her daughter and I shivered. Who are we? What have we become?

How come we have such a massive cult of shameless enablers? It is okay to speak up in favour of a friend or professional colleague. It is okay to be a character witness, there is nothing wrong with that. It is however, wrong on so many levels to demonise victims of sexual abuse in any way in order to protect the image of your favourite celebrity. It is not right to minimize the pain another human being feels, their pain does not have to be yours but you can't take it away from them. This is not the first time a celebrity sexual abuse case will drive people crazy and it will not be the last.

Our systems need to make it more difficult for the powerful and well-connected to get away with sexual assault. Now that there is a vigilant 'Me-Too' movement in some parts of the world, especially in the United States, it is unlikely that Michael Jackson would have gotten away with it if he had been tried today. The fact that the police here are painstakingly going through the allegations against Baba Ijesha means we are succeeding in ensuring a level of accountability.

We need to keep up the pressure so that law enforcement agencies and the courts of law can do what is required. Let us encourage victims and their families to speak up. If you are one of those appealing to Princess to 'forgive', I have a suggestion for you. Why don't you send your fourteen-year-old daughter to sleep in a garage overnight, and forgive whoever does anything to her there. If you are one of those shaming the poor girl who has now been abused and traumatized all over again, shame on you.

To all those making videos and posting messages saying, 'I don't support rape, but.....' please stop. If you don't have anything to say to affirm the dignity and the rights of victims, please keep quiet. I stand with Princess and all the mothers of sexual violence victims like her who struggle, often in vain, to seek justice. If you are not willing to stand with her, I plead with you, do not stand in her way.

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STOP THE SPREAD!



Let's not make it easy for the virus