

# The Executive

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SUMMARY



*Duchess and woman of substance*

*Also Inside*

*Beauty & Brains*

## NGF'S ALLY PATE, HEADS GAVI



## *The Naira has danced its waltz*

**T**he Naira has danced its waltz in Nigeria. A once disregarded currency returned so strong that it became scarcer than the United States' dollar. It also turned many things upside-down. One of our experts called it a currency of unlimited jurisdiction. All the tremor and tribulations can be captured in one breadth through the words and actions of the urban jungle.

On Abuja roads, beggars sat with EarPods listening to music and hoping the most willing will cast a buck their way. Policemen no longer remember that your boys are here, knowing fully that only few people had cash.

Travelers paid, by transfer, their bus fares, days ahead of their estimated date of departure and waited until it drops to go to the park. Petrol attendants received your cash, sold it to the next man on line through their own PoS, and then returned again to the same circle.

The king of them all is the Point-of-Sale (PoS) guy. Those have constituted a law on themselves. She or he presides over the most brazen offense ever with impunity. They sell you money, transferred for you or even lent you the PoS machine, all at a fee well out of the world.

The above scenario ushers in a turning point in Nigerian life. Electronic trading has also whittled down the known Nigerian shenanigans where each service was accompanied by a bribe, a gratification or an extortion. The funny thing in all of this is that Government took over the exercise and the Governors' Forum aptly described it as a "currency confiscation."

The Naira by now had danced its waltz.

The Naira redesign stories are served side-by-side with the personality profiles of two women and one man, all medical practitioners.

Dr Janet David Ekpenyong, Commissioner for Health in Cross Rivers state is featured alongside Dr Zainab Shinkafi-Bagudu, the First Lady of Kebbi State. These are phenomenal women whose stories can inspire the girl child to reach for the high heavens. The male, now sitting pretty on top of the vaccine world is Nigerian. Dr Mohammed Ali Pate, who has just been appointed the CEO of GAVI the Global Vaccine Alliance. There was a grand occasion for the new CEO, where the crème-de-la-crème of the medical sector in Nigeria joined other close friends and associates to throw a party for Pate.

Amidst banter and the clinking of glasses, they prepared for his assumption of office half-a-year ahead. One hundred guests gathered to offer their goodwill to the professional health administrator. Governor, Dr. Victor Ikpeazu of Abia State who professes that the study of Biochemistry is his first academic love is also featured. You can also reexamine the tales of the impact of the Naira redesign from all nooks and crannies of Nigeria in words and pictures. Enjoy.

As icing on the cake, we also present to you another strong ally of the NGF, a professor of virology and Chairman BIOVACCINE Nig Ltd, who had worked very closely with the NGF during the pandemic, Prof Oyewale Tomori, sounding an alarm on measures against the Marburg disease.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS



6-10

COVER STORY

## NGF'S ALLY PATE, HEADS GAVI

02

COMMENTARY:  
THE NAIRA HAS DANCED  
ITS WALTZ

04

NAIRA SCARCITY: ZULUM DIRECTS  
GOVT HOSPITALS TO GIVE PATIENTS  
FREE DRUGS

05

KANO GOVT CONFIRMS  
OUTBREAK OF  
DIPHTHERIA IN 13 LGAS



11

NGF REACTS TO GAVI'S  
NEW CEO FOR THE WAY  
FORWARD



12

PROFILE  
BEAUTY & BRAINS: DR.  
(MRS.) JANET DAVID  
EKPENYONG



13-14

MARBURG DISEASE:  
PROF. TOMORI URGES FG TO  
ENHANCE SURVEILLANCE IN  
NIGERIA



15

MENINGITIS:  
OUTBREAK KILLS 38  
PERSONS IN JIGAWA



16

\$1.3B NEEDED FOR  
HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE  
FOR 6 MILLION PEOPLE IN  
NORTHEAST NIGERIA - UN



17-18

GOVERNORS' FORUM,  
THE NAIRA AND ITS  
ENEMIES



19

VIOLENCE NOT SOLUTION TO  
NAIRA SHORTAGE DIFFICULTY  
- SANWO-OLU



20-21

BIOCHEMISTRY  
REMAINS MY FIRST  
ACADEMIC LOVE  
- IKPEAZU



22-24

MONEY, MAN, AND  
NAIRA IN NIGERIA:  
ON THE CURRENT STATE  
OF THE NATION AND THE  
CURRENCY CRISES



25

FG'S CASHLESS POLICY:  
IMPACT AND MISERY  
AMONG NIGERIANS



26-28

DUCHESS AND WOMAN  
OF SUBSTANCE

29

WOMAN SETS SELF ABLAZE  
OVER INABILITY TO PAY  
N70,000 LOAN



30

OYO GOVT, FRENCH SIGN  
MOU ON EDUCATION, HEALTH  
DEVELOPMENT



31

CASH CRISES: BAYELSA  
GOVT ASKS CBN TO  
MAKE NEW NOTES  
AVAILABLE



32

OYEBANJI LAUNCHES EKITI  
DIGITAL SKILL ACADEMY,  
DISTRIBUTES LAPTOP  
COMPUTERS TO 100  
YOUTHS



33

JIGAWA GOVT VOWS  
TO ENFORCE SUPREME  
COURT ORDER ON NAIRA  
REDESIGN



34

KEBBI GOVERNMENT  
RELEASES FOOD ITEMS  
AS PALLIATIVES TO 21  
LGAS



35

EL-RUFAI DEFIES BUHARI IN  
BROADCAST, ORDERS USE OF  
ALL NAIRA NOTES IN KADUNA

36

COMMUNIQUE

37

UMAHI SUSPENDS EBUBEAGU,  
INAUGURATES 2 NEW  
VIGILANTE GROUPS



38

HOPE RISES FOR POWER  
AND WATER SUPPLY AS  
KANO POWER PLANT  
COMES ALIVE



39

NASENI BEGINS  
CONSTRUCTION OF SKILLS  
ACQUISITION CENTRE IN  
KEBBI STATE





# NAIRA SCARCITY

## Zulum directs govt hospitals to give patients free drugs

**B**orno State Governor, Babagana Zulum has directed the release of drugs worth N300 million and other medical supplies to government hospitals for free distribution to patients most of whom were facing difficulties in making payments due to scarcity of new and old naira notes.

The Commissioner for Health and Human Services, Prof. Mohammed Arab, made this known while unveiling the drugs in Maiduguri.

Arab said that the supplies included drugs for prevalent illnesses, maternal delivery kits and other medical essentials.

The commissioner directed medical directors and principal medical officers of public healthcare centres in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council and Jere Local Government to prepare procedural papers to receive their allocations for immediate deployment of the drugs and other supplies.

Arab said that the drugs must be given free to patients that have no money at hand or those that have problem in accessing their funds to pay their service.

He said: "Officials will rely on patients to be honest because as Zulum noted. We know some people may have money and still demand free drugs by pretending they have none.

"We cannot refuse those in need because of a few dishonest people," he said.

Arab on behalf of health workers across the state, thanked Zulum for coming to the aid of patients at a critical period, a move which he described as "humane".

On his part, The Medical Director of the State Specialist Hospital, Dr. Baba Shehu Mohammed, who's spoke on behalf of other health officials, said they were happier than the patients to benefit, because they normally feel pained seeing patients being unable to pay for diagnoses or buy drugs after prescriptions.

The unveiling of the free drugs was witnessed by The Medical Directors and Principal Medical Officers in charge of Mohammed Shuwa Memorial Hospital, Umaru Shehu Ultra Modern Hospital, Maryam Abatcha Women and



Children Hospital, Eye Hospital, Dental Hospital and Molai General Hospital, amongst others .

Meanwhile, the Commissioner has said the Borno State Ministry of Health was liaising with the Borno State Board of Internal Revenue with the state's Board of Internal Revenue which is responsible for all collections of payments in public hospitals, and the First Bank Plc which is the financial institution involved with the payment issues, towards providing more POS (point of sale) machines at public hospitals across Borno State.

“Officials will rely on patients to be honest because as Zulum noted. We know some people may have money and still demand free drugs by pretending they have none



## KANO GOVT

# confirms outbreak of Diphtheria in 13 LGAs



Gov. Ganduje

**T**he state commissioner for Health, Dr Aminu Tsanyawa, stated this at a briefing on Diphtheria and Lassa fever outbreaks in the state.

He said that 100 suspected cases have been recorded out of which three have died.

"As at 20th of January 2023 we we have recorded 100 suspected cases from 13 local government areas.

"Ungogo, Nassarawa, Bichi, Dala, Dawakin Tofa, Dawakin Kudu, Fagge, Gwale, Kano Municipal, Kumbotso, Kiru, Rano, and Gwarzo.

"Out of the 100 suspected cases, eight were confirmed, while we are awaiting more results.

"We have lost three lives among the eight confirmed cases."

Tsanyawa said currently 27 patients were on admission receiving treatment while 41 have been managed and discharged.

The commissioner noted that on Jan. 10, the public Health Emergency operation center received a report of suspected case of Lassa fever

from Muhammad Abdullahi Wase Teaching Hospital, Kano.

He said that a team was deployed to investigate, sample was taken for laboratory test and three days later the result turned positive for Lassa fever.

"10 samples were taken from the high-risk contacts of the index case, 3 become positive making a total of 4 cases which is currently managed at Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital isolation center," Tsanyawa said.

The commissioner maintained that Kano state government had activated Kwanar Dawaki isolation center for isolating the Lassa fever cases.

He added that medical personnel have been trained and transferred to the isolation center where drugs and consumables were propositioned and is fully functional.

He pointed out that the state would conduct a Routine immunisation campaign to the affected local government areas. (NAN)

## Sanwo-Olu pays medical bills of 8,000 Lagos residents



Sanwo-Olu

**A**bout 8,000 residents in Lagos have benefitted from a free medical outreach programme sponsored by Gov. Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State.

Dr Oreoluwa Finnih, Senior Special Assistant to the Lagos State Governor on Health, said this in a statement signed by Tunbosun Ogunbanwo, Director, Public Affairs, in the state Ministry of Health.

Finnih said the free medical programme organised at the behest of the governor was to improve access to quality and efficient health care delivery at the grassroots.

According to her, it is also to achieve universal health coverage, particularly in communities with less significant health coverage.

Finnih said that 30,000 people residing in rural, riverine and hard-to-reach communities would be reached with free basic health care services during the pilot phase of the ongoing programme which started in 2022.

Finnih listed areas visited as Oshodi-Isolo, Mushin, Alaba-Rago in Ojo, Oyingbo market in Mainland; riverine communities including Ibeshe in Amuwo-Odofin, Badagry, Eti-Osa and Epe.

# NGF's ally *Pate*, heads GAVI

The appointment of Professor Mohammed Ali Pate, a strong ally of the Nigeria Governors' Forum as the Chief Executive officer of the Global Vaccine Alliance giant GAVI has raised expectations in the health sector in Nigeria. Experts in the health sector say the appointment of Prof. Muhammad Ali Pate as the incoming Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance stomachs humongous promise for Nigeria's health sector. They said the health system will benefit a lot with Pate at the helm of affairs at Gavi, just as the rest of Africa and the world will benefit from his wealth of experience.

When the Gavi Board announced the appointment of Pate as the incoming CEO of the organisation, the chairman of Gavi did not simply unveil Mohammed Ali Pate, but spoke of the extensive recruitment.

According to the statement, Pate, who served as Nigeria's Minister of State for Health between 2011 and 2013, will officially take over on 3 August 2023 from Dr Seth Berkley, who will step down after 12 years leading the Alliance.

A proven global health leader with experience at the national and international levels, Pate was selected following a yearlong recruitment process personally overseen by the Chair of the Gavi Board, Professor José Manuel Barroso, and is expected to bring a wealth of experience to the role.

A medical doctor trained in both internal medicine and infectious diseases, Pate, who has an MBA from Duke University in the United States, will lead Gavi as it continues its work to support routine immunization, outbreak response and COVID-19 vaccinations around the world.

As Nigeria's Minister of State for health, he led a flagship initiative to revive routine vaccinations and primary health care, chaired a presidential taskforce to eradicate polio and introduced new vaccines into the country.

While serving as Global Director for Health, Nutrition and Population of the World Bank and Director of the Global Financing Facility at the World Bank between 2019 and 2021, he led the Bank's \$18 billion COVID-19 global health response and represented the Bank on various boards, including those of Gavi, the Global Fund, CEPI and UNAIDS. He is currently the Julio Frenk Professor of Public Health Leadership at Harvard Chan School of Public Health and has served on several health-focused boards and expert panels.

Commenting on the appointment, Prof Barroso said: "Dr Muhammad Ali Pate stood out in a field of world-class candidates. With his knowledge and experience of both national immunization programming and international emergency response and global finance,

I am confident that Gavi will continue to build on its vision and mission, as well as navigate the many challenges and opportunities we will face."

In a response, Pate, whose appointment was confirmed at an extraordinary meeting of the Gavi Board, said: "I'm deeply honored to be joining Gavi as its incoming CEO.

Gavi is one of the most impactful organizations in global health, a testament to the great work of the Alliance partners and Secretariat staff. It will be my privilege to lead it, building on the work of Dr Seth Berkley, and continue to support countries to scale up critical routine immunization programs, reach more zero-dose children, expand access to new vaccines, transform primary health care systems, and help fight outbreaks and future pandemics."

Commenting on Pate's appointment, Berkley said: "Leading Gavi and helping the Alliance to continually surpass itself in terms of saving lives, protecting children and supporting countries during global health emergencies has been the greatest honour of my career. I am proud and humbled to have been part of what the Alliance has achieved, and I am confident in its future under Muhammad's leadership: having worked with him during his time as Minister and at the World Bank, I know he understands intimately the landscape we work in and will be uncompromising in his drive for public health equity."

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance is a public-private



Prof. Pate

partnership that helps vaccinate half the world's children against some of the world's deadliest diseases. Since its inception in 2000, Gavi has helped to immunize a whole generation – over 981 million children – and prevented more than 16.2 million future deaths, helping to halve child mortality in 73 lower-income countries.

Gavi also plays a key role in improving global health security by supporting health systems as well as funding global stockpiles for Ebola, cholera, meningococcal and yellow fever vaccines. After two decades of progress, Gavi is now focused on protecting the next generation, above all the zero-dose children who have not received even a single vaccine shot. The Vaccine Alliance employs innovative finance and the latest technology – from drones to biometrics – to save millions more lives, prevent outbreaks before they can spread and help countries on the road to self-sufficiency.

Gavi is a co-convenor of COVAX, the vaccines pillar of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, together with the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF.

The Vaccine Alliance brings together developing country and donor governments, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the World Bank, the vaccine industry, technical agencies, civil society, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other private sector partners.

Pate served as Nigeria's minister of state for health between 2011 and 2013. "During his time as the executive director of the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA), between 2008 and 2011, he introduced the midwives service scheme, which increased skilled birth attendants in rural areas and reduced infant and maternal mortality.

"Pate also pushed for the use of technology such as mobile health to improve healthcare delivery and empower patients. He also established a global coalition of public and private partners to support health system improvement as the minister of state for

health. Prof Pate has worked in all spheres of public health and will replicate the same in Gavi."

Chair of the Gavi Board, Professor José Manuel Barroso, said Pate was selected following a yearlong recruitment process and will bring a wealth of experience to the role. The Minister of Health, Dr Osagie Ehanire, says with the appointment, Pate becomes the first African and Nigerian to hold the position.

Speaking during a celebration dinner in honour of Pate in Abuja, organised by his friends and associates, the minister said Pate as CEO of Gavi would help improve Nigeria's chances of local production of vaccines. He said, "With Prof Pate as Gavi CEO, in charge of GAVI Vaccine Alliance, our chances are again improved to support the capacity to manufacture vaccines."

According to him, President Muhammadu Buhari had since during the COVID-19 pandemic declared vaccine manufacturing a national security agenda.

He said, "Many people here will recall the agony we suffered when the COVID-19 vaccines were first released, those who produced these vaccines were taking care of themselves without leaving any room for Africa and that was when the president declared vaccine manufacturing a national security item.

While saying that Pate was the best person for the role considering his pedigree and accomplishments, he called on him to support the country's ambition to manufacture vaccines locally. Ehanire said the sitting CEO, Dr Seth Berkley helped Nigeria by supplying the country COVID-19 vaccines during the pandemic such that the country no longer lacks vaccines adding that Nigeria still wants to develop her strategy for vaccine production as a matter of urgency.

The minister added that Pate's appointment is a validation of the global confidence in the processes Nigeria has put in place and strides it has recorded.

Sen. Ibrahim Oloriegbe, the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, said with Pate at the helm of affairs of Gavi, Nigeria has an opportunity to back Pate to support immunisation in Nigeria.

He said, "We need to put more resources into



L-R: Emir of Dass, Professor Mohammed Ali Pate and a guest



The celebration cake



immunisation. Yes, we are developing, we are a beneficiary of Gavi but as a country we must prioritise immunisation, once we do that our future is assured. We can have the vaccines via local manufacturing, but we have to deliver the vaccines to the last mile. We need to strengthen our health system, particularly the primary healthcare system.

“Therefore it is an opportunity that we have with a Nigerian in Gavi. And one of the best things we can do for him is to put more resources and emphasis into health generally, particularly on the primary health care system and most specifically immunisation.

“This government has very few months to leave but there is still an opportunity to start from now to increase commitments to vaccines to primary healthcare because we have Pate in Gavi. Because if Pate is working in Gavi for the world, and Nigeria is lagging, Pate is not working. So, we should make Pate succeed by doing more in the country.

“The various partners working in Nigeria should also increase their commitments because we have a Nigerian in Gavi. So let us work collaboratively with UNICEF, the World Health Organisation (WHO), Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and others particularly as we will have a change of government in May. So it is an opportunity to increase our commitments so that the future of Nigerian

children will be better.”

Dr Joseph Kigbu, the Chief Executive Officer of Doctors on The Move Africa (DOTMA) and a former member, House of Representatives said stakeholders in Nigeria are excited about Pate's appointment as Gavi boss because of the many gaps in the healthcare delivery system of the country. He said in Nigeria only 31% of children under 23 months have received basic vaccination, according to the National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS 2018). “So we need to work harder to meet our target of 80% in the next four years.”

He said with Pate in Gavi, children in the world's poorest countries would access all requisite vaccines, and no child in Nigeria will be left behind in immunization.

Minister of State for Health, Ekumankama Joseph Nkama, said Dr Pate's had made great accomplishments and innovations that had resulted in a precedence that is being followed at the agencies and ministry where he served.

The Director General, Nigeria Governors Forum (NGF) Secretariat, Asishana Okauru who attended the celebration along with his wife and former Chairman of the FIRS, Ifueko Omoigui-Okauru said, “We will not be where we are today with the gains in the health sector but for Prof Pate.” Mr Okauru said that Pate is now part of a growing population rebranding this country like Ngozi Okonjo



Minister of Health, Dr Osagie Ehanire surrounded by Eunice Damisa, Moji Makanjuola and one other



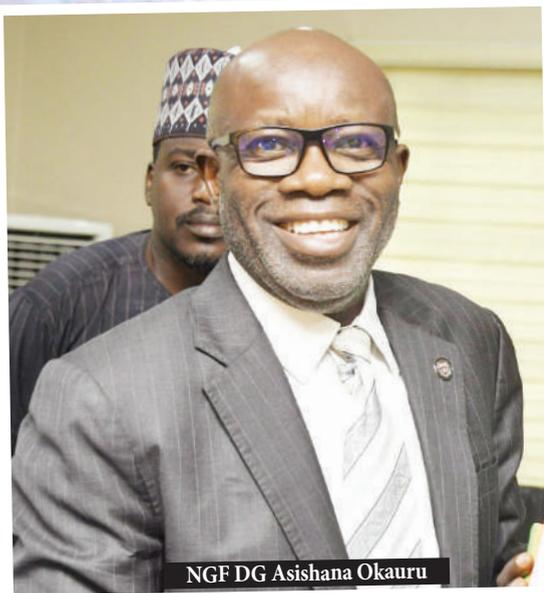
Mrs. Grace Pat Natson and Eunice Damisa



L-R: Eunice Damisa, Dr. Abdulwahab Ahmed, Professor Mohammed Ali Pate and other guests



Muiy Aina of Solina Health and Mrs. Grace Pat Natson in a conversation



NGF DG Asishana Okauru

Iweala, Akinwunmi Adeshina and Amina Mohammed among others, adding that it is now time for Nigeria to increase her investment in the health sector.

The Director General of NAFDAC, Prof. Mojisola Adeyeye, said that good things will come to Nigeria's health sector through Prof Pate because he looks out for quality, and the good for the country.

She said Prof Pate had earlier invited her to Harvard University to let the world know how NAFDAC had attained the WHO's maturity level three benchmark for regulation of medicines and importation of vaccines within four years.

"Pate wants to show Nigeria off. He will not forget Nigeria when it comes to local vaccine manufacturing because he has been part of it," she added.

The chairman of the occasion, Emir of Shonga, Dr Haliru Yahaya who was represented by the Emir of Dass, Alhaji Bilyaminu Usman, said Pate as the CEO of NPHCDA, helped in the uptake of immunisation in the northern parts of the country especially where the vaccine resistance was very high.

He said Pate conceived and set up a committee that brought together the traditional institutions of the country, particularly the northern leaders committee on health that was initially on immunisation.

Earlier, President Muhammadu Buhari while congratulating Pate in a statement issued, by his spokesman, Mallam Garba Shehu, described Pate's rise across racial and other barriers to become the first black/African to lead Gavi as a very important historical moment not only for him personally but Nigeria and Africa as a whole.

He said "Our hope is that Dr Pate will bring his knowledge, expertise and very rich experience in the administration of vaccines and immunisation in Nigeria and many parts of Africa to increase access to vaccines to further reduce the disturbing levels of child mortality on the continent and all over the world as his job requires."

The crème-de-la-crème of the Nigeria health sector graced the celebration. Among them were Minister of Health Dr Osagie Ehanire, Minister of state for health, Ekumankama Joseph Nkama, UNICEF chief of Health Eduardo Celedes, Sen. Ibrahim Oloriegbe, the Chairman of the Senate Committee, Dr Joseph Kigbu, the Chief Executive Officer of Doctors on The Move Africa (DOTMA), Director General NCDC, Ifedayo Adetifa, Director General NHIA Prof Mohammed Sambo, Executive Director NPHCDA, Faisal Shuaib, Country Director WHO, Walter Kazadi Mulombo, Representative of the World Bank in Nigeria Dr Chubahm Shauhuri, Emir of Shonga Dr Haliru Yahaya, Emir of Dass, Alhaji Bilyaminu Usman, Ahmadu Bello University Alumni, Barewa College Old Boys, International Society of Media in Public Health ( ISMPH), Dr Muiy Aina, public health professional, Solina Director General/ Executive Director of health parastatals, Technical partners and several others too numerous to mention including the health sector officials of the NGF secretariat, led by Dr Ahmad Abdulwahab.

# NGF Reacts to GAVI's New CEO For The Way Forward



Prof. Pate

**D**r Muhammad Ali Pate has been in the center of healthcare in Nigeria. He came into the health sector when he was Executive Director of the National Primary Healthcare Agency (NPHCDA).

From there, he performed very well and became the Minister of State for Health.

He was at Harvard where he was a Professor of the Practice of Public Health Leadership. Fast forward to now, he has become the new CEO of GAVI.

His new appointment comes as no surprise because he has made a big impact in the healthcare system in Nigeria.

While he was at NPHCDA, he made a lot of tremendous achievements. First would be that of Polio eradication. In 2008, there were about 800 polio cases. In 2009, there were 400 cases. By 2010, there were up to as few as 22 cases.

There was therefore an overall 90 percent reduction in

the polio case count in the country.

Also, it was during his tenure that they launched the mid-wife scheme. Mid-wives were recruited from all over the world and were sent to areas where there were few human resources in order to drop the number of maternal deaths in the country.

Dr Pate brought the mid-wives to narrow the gap in terms of human resources.

In 2009, as ED, in order to improve the health system in the country, he called all the state actors to Zamfara State. That was where they had the strategic plan for the country.

A lot of the gains that were produced in the health sector was as a result of that meeting. For example, one being that of the disbursement mechanism for funding of states through GAVI.

At that strategic meeting, they came up with the formula of how the funding should go, the activities to carry out.

Dr Pate also formed the collaboration between the private and public sector.

He brought in key actors in the private sector to support immunisation. This is in addition to traditional leaders who came on board through him. The Northern Traditional Leaders Council was formed during that period. This was significant because back then, polio was worse in the north.

Dr Pate has made many great strides in his previous roles and his new role as CEO of GAVI would certainly prove beneficial to the Nigerian healthcare system.

***In order to discover how the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) reacts to his new appointment and potential partnerships, the Executive Summary held an interview with Dr Avuwa Oteri, the Immunization Officer at the NGF:***

**Dr Muhammad Ali Pate, was appointed the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of GAVI.**

**What do you expect from his appointment?**

From his appointment, Dr Pate would ensure that the right measures are put to place in Nigeria's healthcare system.

Dr Pate knows that as CEO of GAVI, if Nigeria



doesn't get it right, then the whole world would not get it right.

He would therefore push to make sure that the coverage goes up and one of the major tasks that would face him is Nigeria's transition out of its partnership with GAVI which ends in 2028.

By 2028, Nigeria would transition from GAVI. There would then be no more funding from GAVI.

It would be a big task for Dr Pate to convince the government to provide the resources that GAVI is already covering.

He would need to do a lot of collaborations and have major discussions with the government. This would be the Federal and State Government that would need to provide their money to fill the gap of GAVI.

Dr Pate also knows that GAVI has a relationship with the NGF so I'm sure that he would use that platform to push for not just eight states getting support from GAVI but all other states.

He would ensure that more states gain from GAVI. That more states would contribute more to funding the resources that GAVI is funding.

**Dr Pate is celebrated for his giant strides in Nigeria's efforts to eradicate polio and improve regular immunisation. How can NGF partner with him in immunization efforts?**

Dr Pate understands the key role that NGF plays when it comes to primary healthcare in the country. When the Seattle Declaration was made, he was well aware.

For partnerships, I'm sure he has many plans. I'm sure that he will add the private sector because he has that at his fingertips.

Overall, Dr Pate has numerous experiences and I'm sure that he will make a tremendous impact as the CEO of GAVI.

**What are some of the biggest challenges facing primary health care in Nigeria and how do you advise Dr Pate to take it on?**

One of the big challenges would be how Nigeria would transition from GAVI? Dr Pate needs to work hard to make sure that the President, the Governors are all on-board.

That way, by 2028, they would conclude the partnership with GAVI.

Next is that the PHC is fraught with challenges not just in Nigeria but worldwide, especially when it comes to the lower and middle income countries.



Dr. Oteri

“

*Dr Pate has made many great strides in his previous roles and his new role as CEO of GAVI would certainly prove beneficial to the Nigerian healthcare system*

Financing for health matters too and there is the need for advocacy there.

In addition, Human Resources for health is also a big challenge.

Right now, we have just 22% of required human resources to carry out effective health services. That means that more work has to be done especially when it comes to training, especially through the production line such as the school of health and technology.

Dr Pate needs to increase the number of people that are trained and he did that through the MSS. He was able to get midwives to join the scheme.

Another challenge is that of governance. Implementation mostly takes place at the local government area in

Nigeria and that is a weak level when it comes to accountability.

Dr Pate will also need to tweak how governance functions in the local government area.

An improvement to be mentioned in the health sector is that some donors are currently thinking of how to provide support directly to the sub-national level.

But they need a platform and that is where NGF will come to play.

There needs to be more done than courtesy visits, people need to be held accountable.

Plus, when it comes to infrastructure, that is also a major challenge to the healthcare system in the country.

I believe that a lot can happen when there is collaboration with the private sector and an increased funding by the government.

What NGF would continue to do is to provide the data that Governors would need to act.

This is important because at the meetings held with the Governors, the scorecard does not tell lies.

The NGF secretariat has the advantage of being able to tell the Governors the ways in which they can improve.

The data is a strong call for action.

**When it comes to vaccination around COVID-19, what were some of the successes? Do you foresee any challenges as there are said to be new variants and how can Nigeria start to prepare now?**

When it comes to the COVID variants, it has dropped. From the last week of December to the first week of January, there were cases that came up but that has not translated to a second round of outbreak.

That does not mean that people are still not on their guard. People are still doing testing, especially those travelling.

However, recently, nobody is wearing masks again and gradually, COVID has respected itself.

Also, a point to note is that coverage has gone up for most of the antigens in the eight (MOU) states especially with the zero dose. It has dropped in most states.

A state like Katsina has over 50 percent drop in zero dose within the first six months.

We believe the partnership NGF currently has with the states has contributed immensely to that success.

## Profile: Beauty & Brains **Dr. (Mrs.)**

# Janet David Ekpenyong

***If you think Dr. Janet enjoyed a meteoric rise to the top, please read the history and trajectory of her brilliance***

**D**r. (Mrs.) Janet David Ekpenyong is a product of Igbinedion University, Okada with Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (M.B.B.S.), Medicine, then proceeded to University of Glasgow, United Kingdom for Master of Public Health (MPH), 2014 – 2015. As a future Health Administrator, she did a course at the University of Washington on Leadership and Health Management in 2016 before adding another course on Prevention and treatment of Infectious Diseases for Nigeria from Southern Medical University, Guangzhou China in 2018. In her continuous quest for knowledge, Dr. Janet Ekpenyong also obtained Certifications and training on Health Financing Policy for Universal Health Coverage, Domestic Resource Mobilization and Public Financial Management (DRM and PFM). Until her appointment on 2nd January, 2020 by His Excellency, Senator Prof Ben Ayade, as the second Director General of Cross River State Primary Healthcare Development Agency (CRSPHDA), she was Health Financing Technical Advisor TB/HIV DRM and PFM Activities

(USAID-Health Policy Plus Project) from August 2019 till date. Before then she has previously worked as Nigeria Senior Health Financing Advisor (Consultant) (USAID-Health Policy Plus Project) August 2019 – September 2019, Operations/Support Personnel SAIL Associates (Chemonics) USAID- Global Supply chain procurement and Supply Management Program April 2019 to June 2019 and Health Financing Technical officer (USAID- Health Finance and Governance Project) as Associates from January 2018 to September 2018. Her meritorious services to Cross River State Government includes being Cross River State Health Financing Consultant for Cross River State Health Insurance Agency from October 2018 – March 2019 and Cross River Primary Health Advisor for Cross River State Primary Health Care Development agency from January 2016 – October 2017. Dr J. D. Ekpenyong is a firm believer and committed fellow to the attainment of Universal Healthcare Coverage by Cross River before 2023. As Director General of CRSPHDA, her desire is to consolidate on the recent gains by the previous leadership of the agency under the watchful

eyes of Dr. Betta Edu and take the agency to even greater heights were Sound Primary Health care services will be made available, accessible and affordable to Cross Riverians and other residents in line with the vision of the Governor His Excellency Senator Prof. Ben Ayade. Dr. (Mrs.) Janet Ekpenyong is passionate about the eradication

of preventable diseases and healthcare delivery to the less privileged in the society. She has extensive voluntary services under her belt. She is happily married to Mr. David Ekpenyong and blessed with kids.





# Marburg Disease

## Prof. Tomori urges FG to enhance surveillance in Nigeria



**T**he Chairman, BIOVACCINE Nigeria Ltd. (BVNL), Prof. Oyewale Tomori, has urged the Federal Government to enhance surveillance in the country now that Marburg disease has arrived in Equatorial Guinea and possibly Cameroon.

Tomori, a professor of virology and former vice-chancellor of the Redeemer's University, Ede, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) that there was need for enhanced disease surveillance activities in the country.

NAN reports that like Ebola, the Marburg virus originated in bats and spreads via close contact with the bodily fluids of infected people, or surfaces, like contaminated bed sheets.

Tomori said while Marburg disease was not as frequently reported as Ebola, it could cause an

outbreak with high death rate.

He said African fruit bats were the reservoirs of the Marburg virus and could be transmitted to people from infected bats through their urine and/or excreter.

"There have been reports of infection of workers in mines inhabited by these bats or tourists visiting caves housing hundreds and thousands of these bats," he explained.

He said given the proximity of Equatorial Guinea to Nigeria (the distance from Malabo to Calabar is 144 km), and the porous borders at the likely port of entry, it was urgent for the country to intensify disease surveillance activities.

"In addition to heightened surveillance, Nigeria needs to fine-tune her laboratory services to more effectively, accurately, and timely confirm the agents





of the thousands of suspected hemorrhagic fevers we report annually.

“For example, in the past five years, our laboratory system has been able to provide a definitive diagnosis for about 10 per cent of all reported suspected Lassa fever hemorrhagic fever cases.

“One is left in confusion about the pathogens responsible for the remaining thousands of suspected hemorrhagic fever cases that are discarded undiagnosed annually,” he explained.

According to him, another reason for the intensification of surveillance is that serological studies have revealed evidence of past infections in Nigeria with Marburg or a Marburg-related virus.

He cited instances such as: TOMORI, O. Fabiyi, a., Sorungbe, A., Smith, A. (1988). Viral haemorrhagic fever antibodies in Nigeria. *Am. J. Trop. Med. Hyg.* 38(3): 407-410.

The professor of virology said the Marburg virus disease was a form of hemorrhagic fever that could affect the body's organs and cause bleeding.

He noted that it was a highly infectious disease with a case fatality rate ranging from 23 per cent to 90 per cent.

“In the 2004 Angola outbreak, Marburg disease killed 227 (90 per cent) of 252 people infected.

“In 2008, an American returning from Uganda was retroactively diagnosed with the illness after recovery.

“In 2022, there were two Marburg deaths of the three reported cases in Ghana.

He said the Marburg virus was a zoonotic virus that along with the six species of Ebola virus, comprised the filovirus family.

“The rare virus was first identified in 1967 after it caused

simultaneous outbreaks of disease in laboratories in Marburg, Germany, and Belgrade, (now Serbia).

“Thirty-one people who were exposed to the virus while working with tissues of infected monkeys became ill, and seven died,” he explained.

He said the monkeys were imported from Uganda, and that of the 16 Marburg outbreaks of varying magnitude reported between 1967 and 2023, eight episodes originated or were associated with Uganda.

“Other countries reporting Marburg outbreaks include Zimbabwe/ South Africa, Kenya, DR Congo, Guinea, and Ghana. There was a case of Marburg infection in a laboratory accident in Russia in 1990.

“Expatriate travellers visiting Uganda were responsible for Marburg importations into the USA and Netherlands in 2008,” he narrated.

Tomori said the incubation period for the disease was from two days to three weeks. “Symptoms begin abruptly, with an intense fever and headache.

“A few days after the onset, many patients experience vomiting, diarrhoea, and stomach pain for up to a week.

“Severe cases are accompanied by bleeding within the first week. Some patients vomit blood or pass it in their stool. Patients also bleed from their gums, nose, and genitalia.

“The disease can spread to the nervous system, causing patients to become confused, irritable and aggressive,” he said.

Most fatal cases lasted just over a week, noting that deaths were typically accompanied by severe blood loss and shock.

He explained that there was currently no cure or specific treatment for Marburg disease, while adding that survival improved when patients were provided early with supportive care with rehydration and symptomatic treatment.

He said there was a range of drug and blood therapies to treat the disease under development.

Meanwhile, The World Health Organisation (WHO) said earlier on Tuesday that it was increasing its epidemiological surveillance in Equatorial Guinea.

The country has so far reported nine deaths as well as 16 suspected cases of Marburg virus disease, with symptoms including fever, fatigue, and blood-stained vomit and diarrhoea, according to the WHO.

Equatorial Guinea has also quarantined more than 200 people and restricted movement last week in its Kie-Ntem province, where the hemorrhagic fever was first detected.

There was an initial report that Cameroonian authorities detected two suspected cases of Marburg disease in Olamze, a town on the border with Equatorial Guinea.

According to the Cameroonian authorities, “On Feb. 13, we had two suspected cases. These are two 16-year-old children, a boy and a girl, who have no previous travel history to the affected areas in Equatorial Guinea.

“Forty-two people who came into contact with the two children have been identified and contact tracing is ongoing.”

Although the report has since been dismissed by the Cameroon authorities, the country continues to restrict movement along the porous border with Equatorial Guinea. (NAN)



Prof. Tomori

# Meningitis

## *outbreak kills 38 persons in Jigawa*

**N**o fewer than 38 persons have died of suspected Cerebrospinal Meningitis (CSM) in Jigawa, an official, have confirmed.

Dr Salisu Muazu, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health, told newsmen in Dutse on Thursday that the state recorded a total of 398 suspected cases between October 2022 to date.

Muazu said the disease was detected in 56 political wards across seven local government areas of the state that border Niger Republic.

He said the outbreak was initially from the neighbouring Niger Republic, and later spread to the border communities in the state, through trans border activities.

The permanent secretary listed the affected areas to include Babura, Maigatari, Suletankarkar, Birniwa, Gumel, Gwiwa and Yankwashi.

"This is in spite of the fact that last year, we conducted immunisation against this disease across the state.

"But after getting the report of the outbreak, we took the samples for test in the laboratory,

and we discovered it was a strange disease.

"It is not a normal CSM disease that we commonly know which is the type A, this one, we discovered that it is bacteria, known as type B.

"And immediately after results were obtained, the state government, through the ministry, swung into action, by offering free treatment, control and prevention measures in the affected areas," he said

Muazu further stated that the ministry had established an isolation centre at Gumel General Hospital, to which affected persons are referred to for treatment and observation.

He, however, stressed that the situation had been brought under control, as cases are being sporadically recorded.

"As of now, we record only one to two cases per day. In fact there are some days that passed without recording a single case, as the last was recorded on Saturday," he said.

The permanent secretary commended the UNICEF, WHO and NCDC for their support to the ministry in tackling the outbreak. (NAN)



“It is not a normal CSM disease that we commonly know which is the type A, this one, we discovered that it is bacteria, known as type B



# \$1.36 needed for humanitarian assistance for 6 million people in Northeast Nigeria – UN

**T**he 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan for north-east Nigeria has requested for US\$1.3 billion to provide critical lifesaving assistance to 6 million people suffering from the devastating impact of the continuing 13 year long non-international armed conflict.

United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Nigeria, Mr. Matthias Schmale, made the appeal in a statement issued to journalists in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital.

Mr. Schmale said: "There is an increase of 500,000 people from the 5.5 million people identified for assistance in 2022.

"The large-scale humanitarian and protection crisis shows no sign of abating," saying "an estimated 2.4 million people are in acute need –impacted by conflict, disaster and disease – and require urgent

support."

"Some humanitarian needs of affected people are deepening and increasing, particularly those related to food insecurity and malnutrition. Approximately 4.4 million people are expected to face food insecurity in the 2023 lean season, up from 4.1 million in 2022. Without urgent action, 4,000 people in Bama, Borno State, are expected to be in 'catastrophe' (Phase 5) conditions, in which starvation, death, destitution and extremely critical acute malnutrition levels become prevalent.

He said: "The ticking time bomb of child malnutrition is escalating in Nigeria's north-east, with the number of children suffering from acute malnutrition projected to increase to 2 million in 2023, up from 1.74 million last year. The already high levels of severe acute malnutrition are projected to more than double, from 300,000 children affected last year to a projected 697,000 this year.

"Women and girls are the hardest hit,"



*An estimated 2.4 million people are in acute need –impacted by conflict, disaster and disease – and require urgent support*

said Mr. Schmale. "Over 80 per cent of people in need of humanitarian assistance across Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states are women and children. They face increased risks of violence, abduction, rape and abuse." During conflict, children, girls, women and people with disabilities are the most affected groups of people. They require additional attention through enhanced access to protection and quality of basic health, nutrition, water, sanitation, hygiene and learning services.

## Lassa fever kills 85 in 2023

*...as cases rise to 531*

**T**he Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) says 531 cases of Lassa fever and 85 deaths have been recorded in 2023.

The agency disclosed this in its recent Lassa fever situation report.

According to the report, between February 6 and February 12, new Lassa fever cases recorded in nine states and 24 LGAs were 68.

The states are Ondo, Edo, Bauchi, Taraba, Ebonyi, Gombe, Benue,

Nasarawa, and Plateau.

The NCDC said the new cases bring the total number recorded in the first six weeks of 2023 to 531.

"Cumulatively from week 1 to week 6, 2023, 85 deaths have been reported with a case fatality rate (CFR) of 16.0% which is lower than the CFR for the same period in 2022 (16.5%)," the report reads.

"In total for 2023, 20 States have recorded at least one confirmed case across 79 Local Government Areas.

"Seventy-four (74%) of all confirmed

Lassa fever cases were reported from these three states (Ondo, Edo, and Bauchi) while 26% were reported from 6 states with confirmed Lassa fever cases. Of the 74% confirmed cases, Ondo reported 36%, Edo 31%, and Bauchi 7%.

"The predominant age group affected is 21-30 years (Range: 1 to 93 years, Median Age: 31 years). The male-to-female ratio for confirmed cases is 1:0.9.



# Governors' Forum, *the naira and its enemies*

By Dele Olowu

**C**ontrived or not, there had once been a campaign by friends of Godwin Emefiele, Governor of the Central Bank Of Nigeria, to make him give the Presidency a shot. A reluctant Emefiele had at that time given the high-minded rambling response that he was more interested in helping Buhari finish well than seeking the high office. He was quoted as saying: "My focus at this time is a robust monetary policy and fighting inflation, which is now a global problem; building a strong financial system in an increasingly uncertain global economy, development finance and supporting farmers and manufacturers in our self-sufficiency and import substitution drive, raising 15 trillion NAIRA for infrastructure financing, building a world class international financial centre in Lagos as well as support the Buhari administration to finish strong. "A short denial of any presidential ambition would have just been enough. Instead Emefiele's pretentious statement opportunistically dwelt on solidarities for Buhari and how to ensure that the President ends strongly. In any case, in spite of all the bluster, Godwin Emefiele still picked the expression of interest form to contest the Presidential primaries on the platform of the All Progressive Congress on 6 May 2022. According to reports, Emefiele picked his form at the office of the

party's organizing secretary at the International Conference Center in Abuja. This event caused great consternation. It was wholly unexpected for a serving Governor of the hallowed Central Bank to become a politician with identifiable partisan ambitions. Some now say that in collecting the forms for the Presidential contest last year, Godwin Emefiele had probably covered himself, his office and his organization with enough malignant soot for years and years to come. Self denigration for that office could not have been more profound. Somehow, the Central Bank Governor managed to unscramble his confused Presidential effort and remain in his job. But he is still reeling and dazed! One of the results of this fuzziness is the NAIRA redesign initiative which now grips us all in the balls. In October last year, the Central Bank announced that the bank will be pulling out of the old design of the 200-naira, 500 naira and 1000-naira notes with effect from December. The old currency would cease to be legal tender on the 31st of January 2023. The CBN has been worried that since 2015 the currency in circulation has risen from 1.46 trillion NAIRA in December 2015 to 3.23 trillion in September 2022. The NAIRA was last redesigned twenty years ago. In line with the provisions of section 2 b section 18a and section 19 subsections a and b of the CBN act 200, the management of the CBN got the approval of the President to produce the new series of bank notes at 200naira, 500 naira and 1000 naira levels. Approval was received but the implementation has been poor. The replacement of the old currency has been slow, and the rural





areas expectedly have been very badly dealt with.

The demand for the currency is clearly more than the rate of production. A shift in deadline of the 29th January by another ten days has not helped to relieve an increasingly chaotic condition. Open riots have broken out and bankers themselves, unable to meet currency demand pressure have come under threat of real violence. Protests have come from various groups; from APC Governors; and from the Governors Forum itself. The President has remained surprisingly stoic and has expressed the hope that the crisis will blow over in time. This may well be so, but it is important to look at the tragic outcomes produced by this evident mismanagement.

Appropriately 36 state Governors of the Federal Republic of Nigeria under the platform of the Nigeria Governors' Forum, had urged the President to extend the time frame for the implementation of the NAIRA redesign policy. In December 2022 the central bank had announced new limits for cash withdrawal, specifically limiting daily withdrawal to 20000 NAIRA for individuals and 100000 NAIRA for corporate organizations. Similarly, the CBN had announced the redesigning of the 2000n 500naira and 1000n denominations and specified an

implementation period of 45 days before the deadline was shifted to February 10. The Governors' Forum acknowledges the correctness of the policy and the requirement to migrate to a cashless economy. Yet it insists that the implementation has been poor and impacts disproportionately on the vulnerable components of society. The Forum also quarrels with the timing of the policy. As we know, end of year witnesses increased commerce, increased movement and increased celebrations. All these have made it difficult to unfurl the policy without causing great social hardship, some of it extreme. The environment has been riddled by a rash of shortages; shortage of cash, shortage of new notes, shortage of fuel. And this has been worsened by a crisis of plural jurisdictions. Of the two currencies, old and new, discretion about acceptance is not predictable. The markets are confused, ill-supported and stagnating.

The Forum has noted sensibly that it is important to address the contradictions in our Fiscal environment including the dysfunction that has resulted from large volumes of cash circulating outside the banking system, estimated at over 80%. It however admits with most Nigerians that a poor

execution of the policy would hurt the economy and undermine the poor.

The Governor's forum has made important suggestions including the introduction of incentives to encourage the use of digital payment solutions and invest in infrastructure to expand access to financial services.

The currency redesign policy certainly derived its impetus from the best public service motives. It will enhance central banks control of the economy, promote the emergence of a cashless economy, retard inflation and make the economy more sustainable. Implementation of the policy has been undermined by huge difficulties and problems. Many Nigerians including notably, the Nigerian Governors' Forum have spoken. We all have an obligation to take notes and act. Governor of the Central Bank Godwin Emefiele, last year spoke glowingly of his wish to enable Buhari finish "strong". Those who recall this pledge may now be a bit worried that Emefiele's currency redesign policy, if not properly handled may become the sting in the tail of Buhari's administration. That way, the enemies of the NAIRA would have triumphed in spite of the intervention of the Governor's Forum and the rest of us.

### Editor's Note

*The above piece was scripted before the president's speech readmitted the 200 naira note into the market.*





# Violence not solution to Naira shortage difficulty - Sanwo-Olu



Gov. Sanwo-Olu

**G**ov. Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State on Saturday appealed to residents to remain calm, even in the face of the difficulties and frustrations due to cash shortage.

Sanwo-Olu made the appeal while addressing newsmen at Lagos House, Marina, on the current situation caused by Naira redesign in the country.

He urged Lagos residents to avoid all forms of violence, arson and rioting, as sure were not the solutions to the difficulties and frustrations being presently experienced.

“Let me thank you, the good people of Lagos for your patience and unwavering perseverance even in these challenging times.

“My fellow Lagosians, this is a heartfelt call to you, as your Governor, to please remain calm at this time, and avoid all forms of violence, arson and rioting.

“Even in the face of the difficulties and frustrations being faced by all, violence and destruction should not and will never be the answer.

“We know that there are unscrupulous persons who want to sow seeds of violence and discord

by their very utterances and actions, all with the view of robbing you of the chance to cast your votes in the Feb. 25 Presidential and National Assembly elections.

“Do not allow them to use you to achieve their evil intentions,” the governor said.

According to him, there is no justification whatsoever for attacking public or private property.

He said that the law enforcement agents had received clear instructions to take full control and ensure zero tolerance for any and all acts of arson, violence and destruction.

Sanwo-Olu enjoined all law-abiding residents to carry out their lawful activities without fear.

“As a government that fully understands the challenges that you are faced with, with regards to access to cash, we are working very hard to provide palliative measures to lessen the burdens being faced.

“As part of these measures, I have already approved an immediate reduction in transportation charges for public-owned transport, across the Lagos State public transport system: our buses, ferries and taxis.

“We are also equally in discussion with private transport operators not to hike fares at this point

of time, given the difficult circumstances in which many Lagosians find themselves.

“We have also since commenced the distribution of food packs, to the most vulnerable citizens, the people most impacted by this disruption in the supply of cash.

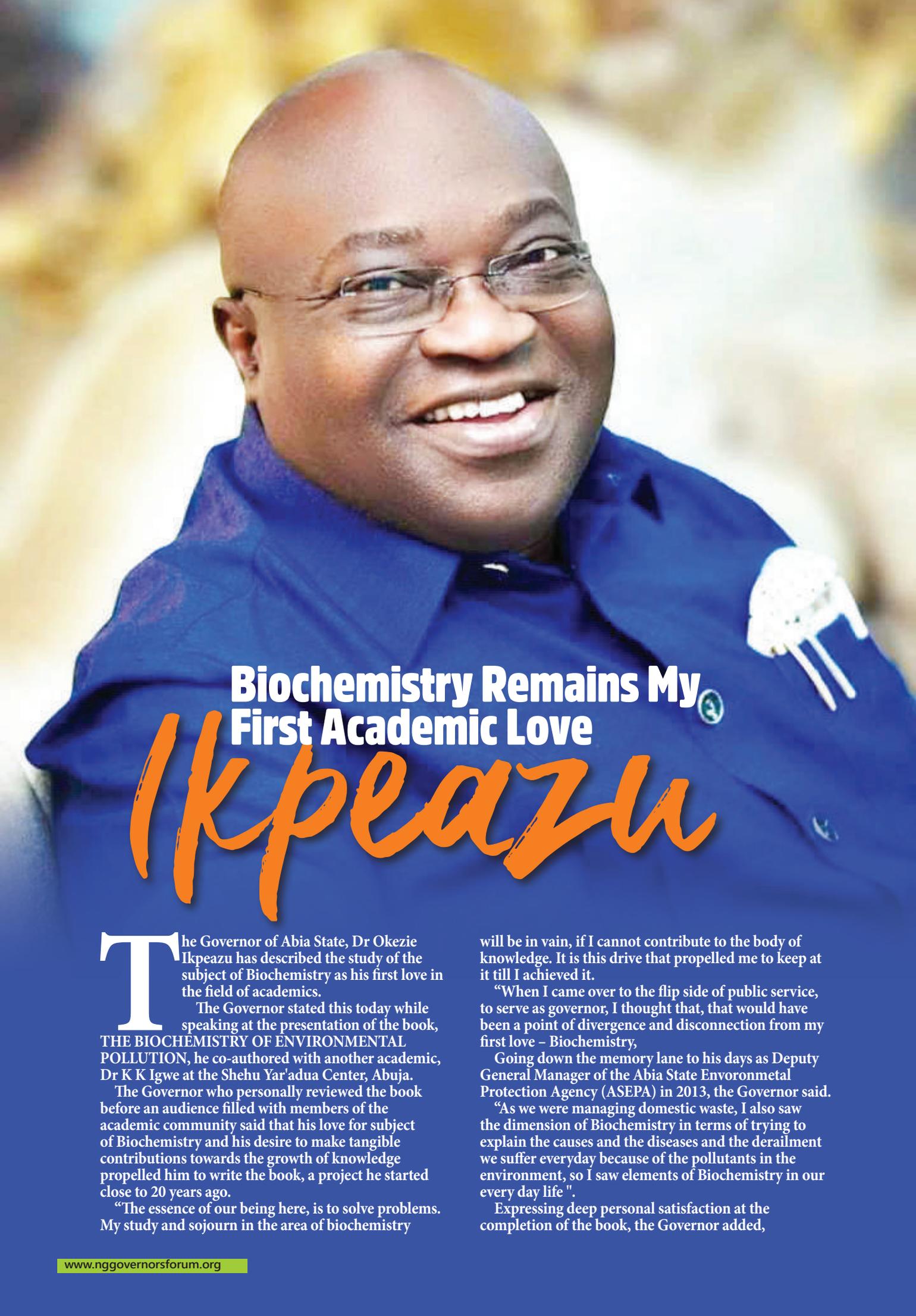
“We will continue to highlight more vulnerable groups within our distribution channels who would benefit from the palliatives.

“As we scale up the rollout of these palliatives, we ask for your continued patience and understanding. Remain calm and go about your lawful activities and duties,” he said.

The governor said the Lagos State Government under his watch would continue to stand by, with and for the ordinary people of Lagos.

He thanked the Police and other security agencies/operatives that had been working round the clock to maintain the peace, law and order in the state.

“We owe you a debt of gratitude. May I also use this opportunity to ask you not to relent in your efforts at continuing to keep the peace in and around the metropolis,” Sanwo-Olu said.

A portrait of Dr. Okezie Ikpeazu, the Governor of Abia State, smiling and wearing glasses and a blue shirt. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting.

## Biochemistry Remains My First Academic Love

# Ikpeazu

**T**he Governor of Abia State, Dr Okezie Ikpeazu has described the study of the subject of Biochemistry as his first love in the field of academics.

The Governor stated this today while speaking at the presentation of the book, **THE BIOCHEMISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION**, he co-authored with another academic, Dr K K Igwe at the Shehu Yar'adua Center, Abuja.

The Governor who personally reviewed the book before an audience filled with members of the academic community said that his love for subject of Biochemistry and his desire to make tangible contributions towards the growth of knowledge propelled him to write the book, a project he started close to 20 years ago.

"The essence of our being here, is to solve problems. My study and sojourn in the area of biochemistry

will be in vain, if I cannot contribute to the body of knowledge. It is this drive that propelled me to keep at it till I achieved it.

"When I came over to the flip side of public service, to serve as governor, I thought that, that would have been a point of divergence and disconnection from my first love – Biochemistry,

Going down the memory lane to his days as Deputy General Manager of the Abia State Environmental Protection Agency (ASEPA) in 2013, the Governor said.

"As we were managing domestic waste, I also saw the dimension of Biochemistry in terms of trying to explain the causes and the diseases and the derailment we suffer everyday because of the pollutants in the environment, so I saw elements of Biochemistry in our every day life".

Expressing deep personal satisfaction at the completion of the book, the Governor added,

"I feel very fulfilled because this is a journey that I started about 20 years ago. It is not easy at all. To write a book on biochemistry does not leave me with too much choice, because there are rules, there are principles which you must reflect in your interventions.

"For me it is the icing on the cake, as an academic. I feel fulfilled I feel very happy," he said.

Also speaking, Chairman of the occasion, The Tor Tiv and a Professor of Biochemistry, Professor James Ayatse, expressed happiness at the quality of the book. The Royal Father, who taught Governor Ikpeazu at the PhD level at the University of Calabar expressed deep pride at the giant strides recorded by his former student. He also used the opportunity to express his gratitude yet again to the Governor for appointing him Chancellor of the Abia State University, thereby cementing the relationship between Abia and Benue States.

He described the book as a fundamental addition to the body of knowledge in Biochemistry and appreciated the Governor for still showing strong interest in the field of Biochemistry despite his extremely tight schedule as a sitting Governor.

"Your Excellency, I am very proud of you for your passion for biochemistry and what God has made you to be in life.

"What I find very exciting about you is that in spite of everything, you have never abandoned biochemistry. I am very happy and proud of you as my former student", the Tor Tiv and former Vice Chancellor of two different federal Universities said.

There were several goodwill messages at the event including those from the Vice Chancellors of the Abia State University, Professor Ogbulu, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike, Prof Madu Iwe, Babcock University, Prof Tayo and the University of Maiduguri, Professor Aliyu Shugaba.

The Presidents of the Nigeria Environmental Society and the Nigeria Society of Biochemistry and Environmental Biology were also physically present at the event. Professors of Biochemistry from

different universities across the country also spoke at the event describing the book as a major contribution to the teaching and learning of the subject of Biochemistry in Nigeria.

Former Deputy Governor of Abia State, Rt Hon Eric Acho Nwakanma, a graduate of Biochemistry commended the Governor for his passion and industry.

The Secretary to the Government of Abia State, Barrister Chris Ezem spoke on behalf of the State Executive Council, Chief Onyema Ugochukwu, Ambassador Empire Kanu and Rev Benson Ezem all spoke for Abia elders while a former Member of the House of Representatives and candidate of the PDP for Bende Federal Constituency, Hon. Nnenna Elendu Ukeje also spoke at the event.

Honorable Commissioner for Works, Rt Hon Cosmos Ndukwe also spoke at the occasion. Others were Professor Mkpa, former Vice Chancellor of ABSU as well as the Sole Administrator of ASOPADEC, Barrister Henry Chilaka.

The book was formally presented by Ide Sir B O

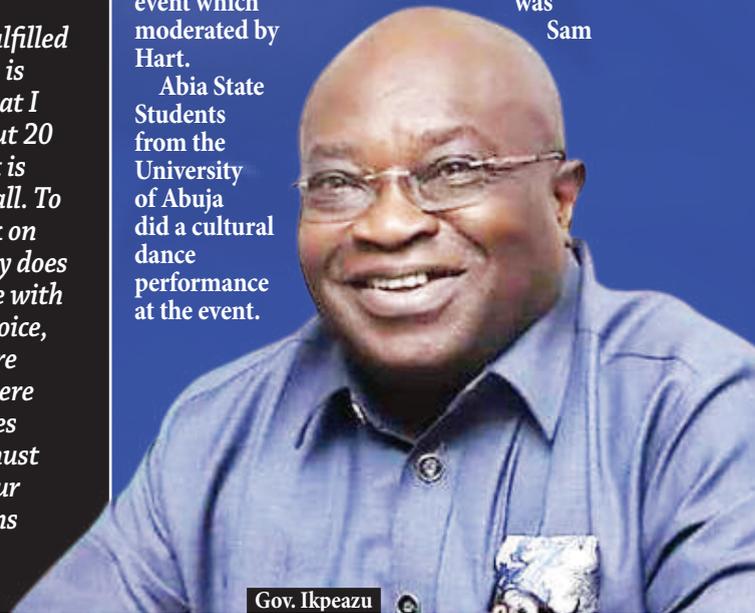
Okechukwu while the younger sister of the Governor, Dr Mrs Ocheze Ugboaja spoke on behalf of the Ikpeazu family.

Wife of the Governor, Dr Mrs Nkechi Ikpeazu gave the vote of thanks at the event which was moderated by Sam Hart.

Abia State Students from the University of Abuja did a cultural dance performance at the event.

“

*I feel very fulfilled because this is a journey that I started about 20 years ago. It is not easy at all. To write a book on biochemistry does not leave me with too much choice, because there are rules, there are principles which you must reflect in your interventions*



Gov. Ikpeazu

## Ikpeazu Commissions Nigeria British University, Obuzor Ukwu

The Governor of Abia State, Dr. Okezie Ikpeazu has described education as one of the most serious businesses of the people of Abia State. The Governor also approved scholarships for 20 students of the new Nigerian British University, Ukwu with an assurance of the support and commitment of the Abia State government towards the growth and upliftment of the institution.

Ikpeazu who made the announcement, during the official opening of

the University situated at Obuzor, Ukwu West LGA of the State, however stated that 5 out of the 20 beneficiaries of the scholarship must be drawn from the Host Community of Ukwu West LGA.

The Governor while noting that part of his administration's commitment is to make Abia state an enclave for education from the Primary through Secondary and Tertiary levels as well as create platforms and opportunities for young emerging intellectuals to learn, express themselves and aspire to become whatever they

desire.

He further noted that the addition of the institution within the Abia space is not only a blessing to the State and expressed hope that the University would top the league of universities in Nigeria and across Africa.

In his address, the Pro Chancellor of the Institution, Dr. Chukwuemeka Umeoji said the decision to establish the University was informed by the resolve to offer quality education and reduce the frequent educational migration of Nigerian students to the United Kingdom.


**SPECIAL REPORT**

# Money, Man, and Naira in Nigeria

## On the Current State of the Nation and the Currency Crises

**I** hope it is now clear to us that the leadership that will change this country will need to be hard core, display tough love and will almost have to look like he/she is Anti-Citizen and insensitive. Let me break this down:

I have found that the clamour for change by the ordinary man is really a clamour for what he truly doesn't understand or grasp. There is no change without pain. There is no real change without the semblance of a "setback".

Everything that changes form, from a lower state to a higher state, MUST, as a law of life, go through some seeming painful process. The caterpillar to the butterfly; the seed to the plant; an unfit body to a better fit or better toned body, just to mention a few; Life is scattered all through with the pointers that prove this to be true! Let me bring this home; As Nigerians, the bitter truth is that WE ARE ALL, directly or indirectly beneficiaries of the

systemic corruption that has been engraved into the fabric of our society. As matter of fact, the corruption has been so embedded that it trickles down, such that should the source of it be cut or attacked, the corrupt do not need to raise a finger to fight it, the masses will fight on their behalf.

Such is the summary of what we are currently experiencing.

Massive cash in our system has for a very long time been perhaps the primary tool of sustained corruption and economic sabotage. It is the singular tool through which corruption can be perpetuated on a massive scale without trace. On the other end, it is also the tool through which the poorest in the society transact their business on a daily basis.

The chief beneficiaries of corruption therefore know that should a policy like we currently have





◀ come to life, the masses will do the fighting! Which is exactly what is happening today.

Have we all been affected by the policy? Absolutely. Please think about this for a minute; how many genuine traders do you think have billions stashed in cash? How many of the people on the street protesting have millions in cash? All the sacks and bundles of cash we see on social media, do we think it belongs to the common man? We also have some middle-class accomplices of the corrupt using the banks to further help frustrate the masses (by refusing to release even the minimum amount CBN has asked that people should have access to); That is why, for instance, we would see a video of a bank with stashed currencies in their vault and yet refused to load their ATMs or release them to the people.

We have more of a people-to-people problem in Nigeria than we have a leadership to people problem! Our leadership is just a reflection of the people! The POS operators, the fuel attendants, all taking advantage of the situation and defrauding their fellow men, yet conveniently pointing at the leadership! We only need to think, and we would see! The rampant kidnapping that besieged us as a nation has, in the last one month, reduced drastically since the policy took effect. The kidnappers know there is no cash to pay ransome!

Naira is now more scarce than the dollar in Nigeria, and in the black market, demand and supply determine price.

The immediate gains are there for all to see, but the pain and current inconvenience are rather swallowing it up and enjoying all the attention!

We have more US dollars and British pounds in cash circulating in our markets than the owners of the currencies have in their own country. I was trying to purchase an item once in the UK using a £50 bill, and the store attendant had to go to the backroom for almost 20 minutes trying to confirm the note. He came out with his supervisor at some point and they both went back in and when they finally came out, I asked what the issue was, they politely explained that the attendant had never seen a £50 bill and secondly, they don't have people randomly walking in with £50 to make purchases and so they needed to call to know what security checks to look out for!

I stood there wondering to myself, "This same £50 that Abdullahi and his colleagues have bundles of in Sabo market?". Something is definitely wrong!

CBN at various times tried to intervene in the exchange rate crises but soon realised that there was enough cash in our system outside the banks to mop up any dollars released into the market, such that it makes

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*I have found that the clamour for change by the ordinary man is really a clamour for what he truly doesn't understand or grasp. There is no change without pain. There is no real change without the semblance of a "setback"*



any intervention by CBN of no effect. Any fx they release for legitimate trade or reasons were mopped up immediately.

Another example is the fuel subsidy. The beneficiaries of the subsidy scam are again the corrupt super rich elite. But we are also beneficiaries because we buy petrol cheap compared to other countries. They know that should the government choose to behead that source of corruption (subsidy) that is killing the country gradually, the masses and the middle class will be the ones to fight because all of a sudden, fuel may be sold for N600 or even more across the country as is the case of diesel today.

Our refineries will also not work to capacity until first the corruption is tackled. So the chief beneficiaries of this corruption are excited knowing the battle is not theirs to fight. So that brings us back to the word - Change? Are we truly ready for change? Singapore, China, Rwanda, Dubai and all the countries we refer to as third world to first world; have we studied them to see the painful processes they went through? I have found that it was what you will call a "benevolent dictatorship". Today, the gains are clear for all to see. We, however, have a different system and will have to work within the confines of what we practise. However, Nigeria! Are we truly ready for change? Any president who will not make the hard calls that will seem painful to all is truly just a chameleon in search of power! The country will remain the way it is even after their tenure is over.

On the balance however, we must also ask the vital question - why did this administration wait until this last minute to effect this all important policy? One of the biggest undoing of this administration is communication. They erroneously equate announcements for communication! Let it be clear

that there is the pain we must all endure for true change to come. This, however, is not what Nigeria wants to hear. We are more interested in insults, dragging and clap backs than we are in thinking. The problem is that sound knowledge and intelligence is no longer a prerequisite for visibility! We now have kings on foot and servants on horses.

Comedians with followership with no economic knowledge have become economic analysts, quick to talk about what they have zero understanding of simply because they have a million or more followers who followed them because they needed someone to make them laugh. I remember hearing one of them despising the move to change the currency, when it was first announced, comparing it to painting a house as a remedy to curing it's structural defect. The corruption is embedded, and we are all direct or indirect beneficiaries, and we must therefore ask ourselves in our closet; Are we truly ready for change?

*By Laolu Alabi  
Edited by Gambo Umar*



Emefiele

# FG's Cashless Policy

## Impact and Misery Among Nigerians

By Abdulmalik Saidu (Kupa)

The federal government's directive to the Central Bank of Nigeria to redesign the currency yields positive impacts despite the hardship faced by the masses. The implementation challenges are the sacrifice we have to bear for better governance and a better society.

Objectively, with the policy, the government will be able to curtail inflation in the economy by reducing the much money outside the banking environments and sustaining the electronic cashless business transaction system in the country.

The level of insecurity as a result of the policy has drawn to a minimum as access to so much money has been reduced and confidently makes it easy for the security personnel to manage the situation professionally without much media involvement.

In the political arena, the electioneering process is becoming peaceful because of the unavailability of too much money to share, which could lead to a free and fair election in the forthcoming election in Nigeria. Social vices also seem to be reduced as the exchange of money (cash) becomes difficult.

The menace of corruption is being put under control as electronic transactions will expose and make it easy to trace the source of the money and create fear in the mind of those having the intention to involve in it. The policy also encouraged personal saving, financial discipline, and saving extravagant expenditures in

the life of an average Nigerian.

No effective policy without challenges, if it must attain its expected result in which the cashless policy is not an exception. The Nigerian masses face a lot of hardship in the process of its implementation to sustain their lives for better living.

The policy led to a shortage of currency in circulation which affected the day-day business transaction among the people making life unbearable, mobility(transportation) became an issue as both the old and the new currencies become difficult to access. Amid these challenges, the point of sale (POS) operators' arbitrary charges on the available money in the system became worrisome.

The most challenging is the system failure of the telecommunication service providers that hindered the better electronic money transfer process.

The federal government's recent strategic move during the last presidential broadcast by the

president and other relevant stakeholder interventions are highly appreciated and encouraged to be sustained for a better Nigeria.

In addition, the Central Bank of Nigeria should ensure the federal government's directive on making available the old N200 notes to the public is strictly carried out quickly to quench the demand for it.

The telecommunication service providers under the good supervision of the Nigeria Communication Commission (NCC) should ensure stable telephone networks to support the federal government's transition to a cashless system in the country and the improvement of the effective power supply in the country should be prioritized if the policy is to achieve its goals.

This is a call to all Nigerians and the relevant stakeholders to bear the pains now and support the government for a better tomorrow, better change comes with hardship. Rest assured that after every hardship, ease follows.



# Duchess and woman of substance

Culled from ThisDay

If you are looking for a woman with a passion for humanity, Dr. Zainab Shinkafi-Bagudu is it. Wife of Kebbi State Governor, Dr Zainab Shinkafi-Bagudu noted that Nigeria needs more funding to make any meaningful progress in fighting Cancer to the barest level of eradication in the country.

This is what Thisday Newspaper says of her: "It seems that Dr. Zainab Shinkafi-Bagudu, has entered a covenant of sorts with her creator to dedicate the rest of her life to the service of humanity. If you are in doubt, you will have a rethink when you consider her passion for her foundation, a philosophy buoyed by Anatole France's words: "Without genuine love for humanity, there is no love for the motherland."

She is, no doubt, a woman of substance, who has won the hearts of many for her brilliance, simplicity, humility, and rare sense of fellowship.

Zainab: "Some people believe that there is hunger in society and hunger must be resolved before addressing cancer. So, if I have N200,000 new notes now, to give out, is it to women whose families need food or to patients who are at the final stages of cancer it should go?"

This, she rationalized when she stepped out, again, to justify why cancer should be funded as a matter of urgency. To show resilience for the lethargy in the air, she adds, "but, we must not give up."

Somehow, along the line, we would redress the imbalance at the grassroots, we would continue to work with the government to increase the funding preventing measures. We have been successful in some areas. We have started producing vaccines for cancer. We have gotten policy and interventions that were not there before.

Sounds like counting her blessings. "When I met President Muhammadu Buhari before going for my election at the International Cancer Union, all my



requests on cancer were granted. The last one was granted a few weeks ago. Now we have one of our own as the DG of the cancer institute.

A Paediatric Consultant, a loud voice in the fight against cancer and a child's right advocate, she has built a platform that has turned her into a role model in the state and beyond. Her advocacy for women, children, and the youth in Kebbi state and Northern Nigeria, cuts across health, education, and skills acquisition.

#### But who is Zainab Shinkafi-Bagudu?

Zainab obtained her MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine) from the prestigious Ahmadu Bello University Zaria followed by a specialist training in Paediatrics and Neonatology in the United Kingdom. Amongst other academic qualifications, she has a Masters in Paediatrics, a Diploma in Tropical Child Health and membership of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health.

After her specialist training abroad, she returned to Nigeria in 2002 to set up and head the Paediatric Unit of Garki Hospital under a pioneering Public Private Partnership (PPP) scheme with the Federal Capital Territory, FCT.

By 2009, she branched into private service with an innovative Diagnostic Centre, Medicaid Radio-diagnostics. The centre bridged the healthcare gap created by paucity of diagnostic tools in the region.

As well as being the Chief Executive of Medicaid, Dr Zainab Bagudu is the founder of Medicaid Cancer Foundation (MCF), which creates awareness and funds diagnosis, and treatment of the common cancers in Nigeria. MCF has become quite famous for holding an annual one million-walk, a cancer fundraiser.

She attended Queens College, Lagos, where she made wonderful lifelong friends. That period prepared her for life. Once she admitted that, "my husband is the Governor of Kebbi State and I now have a new role as mother to about 3.4 Million indigenes of Kebbi."

For all these qualities she was given many flattering sobriquets. The most appropriate being, Duchess.

Here the Duchess: "Medicine for me was a welcome 'accident'. I had straight A's for my O levels. My uncle who is now late marched me to the Vice-chancellor who decided there were too few female doctors from northern Nigeria and crossed off the B.Sc. Economics I had intended to study (which I had chosen because another uncle was an economist and I wanted to be like him). And that was it. I registered and joined the pre-med classes. I thought more about Paediatrics and took a more informed decision.

Asked about the Medicaid Cancer

Foundation (MCF). Dr Zainab Shinkafi-Bagudu explained that "we started Medicaid as a Diagnostic Centre. The Diagnostic Centre did a lot of tests for women's health, such as mammograms and pap smears.

The data was very helpful and the need, as we soon discovered, was also great. It became obvious that I had to have structure and support to manage this need. Thus, the Medicaid Cancer Foundation (MCF) was initiated as a response to that. The Foundation is about 6 years old now and basically, we are one of the strongest, if not the strongest cancer foundation in Northern Nigeria.

October is a month set aside to commemorate breast cancer every year. However, we at MCF have decided to use the month to create awareness on detailing the initiatives she had passionately taken in the she said, I represent

the women and children of Kebbi State and sometimes, the youth. Our programmes are mainly in health and education, and we try to align with existing programmes to achieve better outcomes. Now, I am the state champion for Breakthrough Action, a project of the United States Agency for International Development, which tries to change health-seeking behaviours of women and husbands with the aim of reducing maternal and infant mortality.

I am the state patron of High-Level Women Advocates, a United Nations Children's Fund programme that encourages girl-child education. I lead wives of elected officials and female councillors to deliver these messages to rural areas. Kebbi State is unique in having 23 elected female councillors in the local government areas. This is very useful for gender equity and representation at the grassroots. My office initiated a United Nations

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Zainab Shinkafi-Bagudu, has entered a covenant of sorts with her creator to dedicate the rest of her life to the service of humanity”



Office on Drugs and Crime-linked and recognised drug abuse programme, gender-based violence campaigns and sensitisation on new issues such as COVID-19. We have sponsored education for orphans across the state, cancer treatment and other illnesses too numerous to mention.

She drips with humility as she always insists “this is a privileged position to be in and one is fortunate to be able to really impact on lives daily. Simply Zainab.

On the level of poverty in northern Nigeria, she stresses that, according to estimates from the World Data Lab's Poverty Clock, about 109 million Nigerians live in extreme poverty. That is almost half of our population. I would rather discuss Nigeria than attribute poverty to one part of the country. People are deprived access to basic needs such as food, healthcare, education and, of course, assets, both in the North and the South.

Not one to complain without proffering solutions, She suggested that changing the narrative has to be a collective effort. Though I agree that government — and in particular good governance — has a larger role to play. We should send more girls to school, improve access to healthcare, improve security and provide infrastructure to attract the flow of foreign investments, expand economic opportunities and embrace technology. My programmes touch on these. In the past, we had focused on education, health, and empowerment. Luckily, one of our cooperatives has trained 200 women and youth in ICT skills and provided centres in four emirates. We left the centres for the youth to own. Some prospered; some did not. But the centres and equipment are.

Further responding to Thisday, on child marriages in the North, as a child rights' advocate and paediatric consultant? Again, she backs her statements with data.

Back in 2013, the International Centre for Research on

Women identified five evidence-based strategies to stop child marriage: the first is, empower girls with information, skills and support networks; the second is, provide economic support and incentives to girls and their families; the third one is educate and rally parents and community members; the fourth is enhance girls' access to high-quality education; and the fifth is encourage supportive laws and policies.

Trying to put a stop to anything that has been practised over a long period of time can be very difficult. It will take collective efforts to end child marriage as it requires work across all sectors and at all levels. Thus, my office and foundation work through partnerships with local and international agencies to empower girls and their mothers with skills and offer support networks.

We sensitise them on the available free education and empowerment opportunities offered by the state government. I started a multipurpose cooperative, which has Memorandum of Understanding and rebates with multinationals across Nigeria such as Eleganza Nigeria, Procter and Gamble, and Johnson & Johnson, which they benefit from. Some of these are my childhood friends like the Okoyas that I used to the benefit of women in Kebbi.

I have personally sponsored over 40 female students to nursing school from the Sokoto, Zamfara and Kebbi axis. This is aside from West African Examinations Council and National Examination Council forms I usually obtain for them.

I have also been involved in a foundation set up in my late father's memory, the Umaru Shinkafi Legacy Foundation. We are focusing operations in Shinkafi, Kaura and Gusau, Zamfara State, mainly to encourage girl-child education because that was one of his passions in life. So, it is a continuous and never-ending process.

Zainab is not your regular silver-spoon

## HUMAN ANGLE STORY

# Woman sets self ablaze over inability to pay N70,000 loan



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*Failure of government in providing social safety valves, especially for single mothers. Any society that doesn't provide cover for its people to the extent that this happens is a failed state*

**T**ragedy struck in Abeokuta on Saturday as a middle-aged woman, popularly known as Mama Dada, set herself ablaze in her rented apartment at Oke-Keesi, Itoko area of Abeokuta.

An eyewitness, Rasheed Aina, who spoke with newsmen on Sunday, said that the woman was burnt beyond recognition, as the entire building was also razed.

According to Aina, who resides close to the deceased's residence, explained that the woman killed herself after she was unable to pay back a loan she took from a popular micro-finance bank.

“I learnt that the loan was to the tune of N70,000,” he said.

A former member the micro-finance bank, who identified herself simply as Mrs Adeogun, stressed that ‘unprecedented embarrassment’ usually befell anyone who refused to pay back the borrowed money at the agreed date.

“If you refuse to pay them back at the agreed date, you will be treated like trash; you will be embarrassed in a big way, in a manner that your children will forever be ashamed of. I know what I'm saying because I used to be a member of the group.

“One must be a member and a committed one at that before you can be given a reasonable amount of money.

Secretary of the Community Development Association (CDA), Mr Micheal Babawale, said that the deceased was owing the sum of N70,000, adding that because she was unable to pay back the money, she then sent her last born to buy fuel.

“She stylishly discharged the small boy, locked herself up inside the room and wet everywhere with petrol, including herself, and set the whole place on fire,” he said.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the remains of the deceased had been deposited at the State General Hospital, Ijaye, Abeokuta.

When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer, Abimbola Oyeyemi, told NAN that he had not been briefed about the incident. (NAN)

# Oyo govt, French sign MOU on education, health development

...gets France's 55m euros to execute projects



Gov. Makinde

Oyo State government has signed a twin Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the French Government to promote a new healthcare initiative and the teaching of French language in the state.

Governor 'Seyi Makinde, who spoke after the signing of the MoU, held at the Executive Council Chambers of the Governor's Office, Agodi, Ibadan, where the French government was represented by the French Ambassador to Nigeria, Her Excellency (Mrs.) Emmanuelle Blatmann, said that the relationship will help the state in area of commerce, business, labour and education.

He explained that despite the popularity and wide usage of English in Nigeria, it is obvious that French is a major language of international relations capable of boosting commerce, labour, growth and development.

A statement by the Chief Press Secretary to the governor, Mr. Taiwo Adisa, indicated that the MoU is predicated on a 55m euros loan granted by the French government to Oyo State.

The statement added that the concessionaire loan will be used for the upgrading of Adeoyo State Hospital and other general hospitals across the geopolitical zones of the state.

Speaking at the MoU Signing ceremony, Governor Makinde said: "Let me specially welcome the France Ambassador to Nigeria to Oyo State.

"We are here for a two-pronged engagement, and the entire state is excited because the first agreement, which is on the initiative for health care delivery in Oyo State, is heartwarming. "In 2019, I campaigned on four

major pillars, which are health, education, security, and expansion of our economy. Now, the initiative is unfolding before us.

"Again, on the other side of the Memorandum of Understanding, Education is also tied into a major pillar for us, which is crucial. So, we thank you for supporting us. Regarding the commercial agreement on the health care initiative, the Honourable Attorney-General already gave out the data on concessionary loans.

"This agreement we just signed, and we look forward to the agribusiness side of it. The AG has said the loan is in 40 years maturity, which will be a long journey. So, I really want to thank you for this on behalf of the people of Oyo State.

"People may wonder how we could get such a low-interest loan facility - 0.009. I don't think we can have it better anywhere in the world.

"The second, which is the Memorandum of Understanding that promotes the French language in Oyo State, you will recall that in 2021, we acceded to the request by the French government to release funds for a block of four classrooms with an office building at the Centre for French Language. So, this is what we are building on.

"Recently, we also had the Emmanuel Alayande College of Education upgraded to a University of Education, which will be for training of teachers. We can leverage on that.

"Despite the popularity and wide usage of English in Nigeria and Oyo State, French is a major language of international relations.

"So, it is not out of place that we are signing an MoU to promote the French language in Oyo State. You will also help us with commerce, business, and labor.

"So, let me thank you, Ambassador and the team, for this visit. We hope you will come again as we continue to build on this mutually beneficial relationship. "Two days ago, I was at Igbeti, and one of the requests they put before me was to upgrade the general hospital, and now that they are listening to me, it is going to be upgraded.

"I want to assure you that the next time you come to Oyo State, we will still be here because we know the people will give us four more years."

Speaking earlier, the French Ambassador to Nigeria, Her Excellency, Mrs. Blatmann, revealed that the concessionaire loan is the first in three decades from the French government to Nigeria, adding that it will help in the provision of quality healthcare, qualitative education and enhance globalization.

## Cash Crises

# Bayelsa Govt asks CBN to make new notes available

The Bayelsa State Government has urged the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to make the new banknotes available to commercial banks in the state to mitigate the suffering of the people.

The State Deputy Governor, Senator Lawrence Ewhrudjakpo, who made the call at a meeting with bank managers and service commanders in Yenagoa, expressed concern over the difficulties the people experience following the scarcity of the new banknotes in the state.

A statement issued by his media aide, Mr Doubara Atasi, quoted Senator Ewhrudjakpo to have said that the meeting was convened as a response to the security concerns resulting from the CBN naira swap policy and the attendant hardship being faced by the public to get the new naira notes to meet their daily transactional needs.

He urged residents of Yenagoa to be law-abiding, assuring that government would take precautionary measures to prevent any breach of peace in the state

His words: "Our number one responsibility as a government is to ensure peace and security of our people. We are aware and deeply concerned about what our people are passing through because of the CBN cur-

rency swap policy.

"That is why we called this meeting to see how we can manage the situation we have in our hands. We believe the banks should be open for business because the security agencies are there to protect you.

"This idea of locking up the banks is not helping us. If there is no money, you let the public know. But if the people know you have money and you are not paying or transacting business, it will definitely cause problems. And that's what we don't want."

Briefing the press, the Commissioner of Police, CP Ben Okolo, said the meeting was about taking stock of the various measures and efforts being made by government and the banks to ensure peace as well as assuage the suffering of the people.

CP Okolo assured the people that the State Police Command had beefed up security in all the commercial banks and the CBN in Yenagoa following a communique reportedly issued by a group of people threatening to attack banks over the scarcity of the new banknotes.

He said: "Effort being made by the Government is to ensure that the security situation in the state continues to be peaceful even with the misinformation or disinformation that is in the public domain and threats of protest against the cashless policy and scarcity of fuel.



Gov. Diri

## Wike files fresh suit against FG over naira swap

Governor Nyesom Wike of Rivers State has filed a separate suit at the Supreme Court against the Federal Government on the implementation of the naira redesign policy.

River State Government through its counsel, Mr. Emmanuel Ukala (SAN) stood its ground not to team up with other states, adding that it would prefer to do its case separately.

The state wants the apex court to stop full implementation of the naira policy redesign.

However, six other states, Lagos, Cross River, Ogun, Ekiti, Ondo and Sokoto have joined their counterparts, Kaduna, Kogi, and Zamfara in the legal battle against the Federal Government.

The seven states in their respective motions for joinder pitched their tents

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states that initially ignited the legal battle.

Their joinder motion was moved by Mr. Samuel Ologunorisa (SAN) and was granted by a seven-member panel led by Justice Inyang Okoro who presided over the matter.

Also, Edo and Bayelsa States have pitched their tents with the Federal Government.

Edo and Bayelsa state counsels told the



panel of seven-man Justices of the apex court that they are in support of the cashless policy regime and sought to be joined as respondents.

The apex court on Wednesday, February 15, 2023 directed the plaintiffs to amend their originating summons to reflect the name of the six fresh plaintiffs.

The Supreme Court also fixed February 22 for the hearing of the suites filled by some state governors against the Federal Government over the cashless policy by the CBN in old Naira note withdrawal.

Justice Okoro fixed the date after directing all parties involved to amend their processes to reflect the new position of their respective cases.

The Supreme Court had on Wednesday February 8, temporarily stopped the withdrawal of old Naira Notes from February 10.



# Oyebanji launches Ekiti Digital Skill Academy, distributes Laptop computers to 100 youths

...Restates commitment to wealth creation, shared prosperity

**E**kiti State Governor, Mr Biodun Oyebanji on Tuesday, launched the Ekiti State Digital Skill Academy, restating his administration's commitment to wealth creation and shared prosperity.

Speaking at the launch and beneficiary orientation at the conference hall of the Governor's Office, Ado Ekiti, the Governor said, making job creation and youth development number one of his administration's six-point agenda is a pointer that his administration is particular about youth development.

The Governor who said about 500 youths would be given laptop computers and other devices to facilitate their learning process for the next one year of their intensive training, expressed confidence that through right knowledge and digital skill, vocational education, small and medium scale development, sport development and entertainment, Ekiti youth can get to any level in life and become financially independent.

"As a people, you determine how much you go in life and you determine the height you want to reach, you can chose your own game and the speed at which you play the game, the fact that you are here in Ekiti State does not make you a second class citizen, I say no to that and we have brought everything to your door step" said the Governor.

Speaking further, Governor Oyebanji said Ekiti people are known to be educated and intelligent, adding that these attributes must be translated into wealth creation and not poverty which is why Ekiti Knowledge Zone was designed based on the peculiarity of Ekiti people.

"The Ekiti knowledge zone was designed based on the fact that we realize our own peculiarity as a people, they called Ekiti the state of intellectual, if a people are intelligent and knowledgeable they cannot be poor, so if we are known to be educated, intelligent, home of professors, then the thesis should be wealth creation and not poverty." The Governor asserted.

While thanking Meta and Tech4Dev for partnering Ekiti State Government, Oyebanji urged the beneficiaries to maximize the advantage of the digital skills for legitimate jobs and poverty eradication.

Speaking earlier, the Commissioner for Finance and Economic Development, Mr Akin Oyebode, who thanked the Governor for this giant strides said the programme was a fulfillment of Governor Oyebanji's campaign promises of shared prosperity for the people of the state.

Oyebode hinted that the beneficiaries would be paid throughout the 12 months of their training and would be fixed for jobs at the completion of the programme.

In the same vein, the representative of Meta, Mr. Emeka Okafor and Tech4Dev, Mr. Joel Ogunsola in their separate goodwill messages commended Ekiti State Government for the initiative and charged the beneficiaries to give the training every seriousness it deserves.

Omolade Omotade, who spoke on behalf of the beneficiaries expressed her appreciation to the Governor for the opportunity and promised to maximize the opportunity to better their lives.

Also at the event were the Head of Service, Barrister Bamidele Agbede, Commissioner for Education Dr. Kofoworola Aderiye, Special Adviser on Governance Mr. Seun Fakuade.





Gov. Bagudu

## Jigawa Govt vows to enforce Supreme Court order on naira redesign

**T**he Jigawa State Government has vowed to enforce the Supreme Court order restraining the Federal government from banning the old naira notes as legal tender.

This was contained in a public notice made available to newsmen by the Jigawa State Commissioner for Special Duties Auwal Sankara.

According to the public notice, commercial banks, corporate organizations, ministries, agencies, and traders must accept the old notes or face sanctions from the state government.

"It has come to its notice some individuals and corporate bodies are rejecting the now-old N200, N500, and N1,000 notes. The Jigawa State Government is concerned about the conduct of such individuals," it read.

The statement added "Jigawa State Government respects the rights of its people and those rejecting the now-old currencies are enjoined to desist from disobeying the law and causing hardships to the people of Jigawa State.

"Jigawa State Government will not hesitate to use section 287(1) of the Constitution (as amended) and other extant laws to enforce the order of the Supreme Court of Nigeria."

The Supreme Court of Nigeria earlier issued an order "restraining the Federal Government of Nigeria, either by itself or acting through the Central Bank of Nigeria CBN and/or commercial banks, ministries, parastatals, organizations or through any person or persons (natural and artificial) howsoever, from suspending or determining or ending on the 10th of February, 2023 the time frame within which the now older versions of the 200, 500 and 1000 denominations of the naira may no longer be legal tender pending the hearing and determination of the notice".

## "We are investigating incitement by governors over naira scarcity" – IGP

**P**olice are investigating some governors and individuals whose utterances are considered to have incited riots over the naira redesign policy of the CBN.

Inspector-General of Police, Mr Usman Alkali, made this known in Abuja on Wednesday while fielding questions from State House correspondents.

He was accompanied to the news conference by the Attorney-General of Federation, Mr Abubakar Malami, at the end of Wednesday's National Security Council meeting, presided over by President Muhammadu Buhari.

Alkali said those found guilty would definitely be prosecuted.

He maintained that the police were not in position to prosecute culpable governors because they enjoyed immunity.

Govs. Abdullahi Ganduje of Kano State, Dapo Abiodun of Ogun and Nasir el-Rufai of Kaduna State, had openly condemned and denigrated the implementation of the naira swap policy.

They asked people in their states to continue to spend the old N500 and N1000 as legal tenders.

"We all know why the governors have not been cautioned. We are investigating. Whoever does anything can be investigated.

"However, there are some people who have immunity. I think that is one of the reasons why they have not been cautioned.

"The immunity will not stop us from cautioning them; from warning them; from advising them; and we are doing so," he said.

According to the IGP, the police have done what is required to calm the situation and stabilise the polity, assuring that there won't be security issues on Election Day.

Speaking on the outcome of the security meeting, Malami said the Council resolved that there was no going back on the Feb. 25 and March 11 elections.

He said the conclusion was reached after security chiefs briefed the Council on their level of preparedness for the elections.

He noted that INEC had also expressed its preparedness to conduct the elections.

"The summary and conclusion of all submissions was to the effect that the system is wholeheartedly ready for the conduct of the elections.

"Arising there from, the position of government and the position of the president are to the effect that the elections are holding on Feb 25 and on March 11.

"Mr President and the National Security Council are happy with the preparations on ground and wholehearted arrangements are put in place in that direction," Malami stressed. (NAN)



## KEBBI GOVERNMENT RELEASES FOOD ITEMS AS PALLIATIVES TO 21 LGAS



**K**ebbi State Government has commenced the distribution of food items to the people as palliatives to cushion the hardship of ongoing cash crunch and fuel scarcity.

Items distributed are garri, maize, guinea-corn and millet to all the twenty-one local government areas of the state. The Secretary to the State Government, SSG, Babale Umar Yauri, flagged off the distribution exercise on behalf of Governor Abubakar Atiku Bagudu at the government's store,

Bulasa near Birnin Kebbi, this Thursday.

Babale Umar explained that the palliative materials consisted of the consignment from the federal government and those procured by Kebbi state government. The SSG said Senator Abubakar Atiku Bagudu in furtherance of his benevolence, compassion and love for the people of the state gave the directive for the release of the grains to chairmen of local government councils for distribution to their peculiar localities to serve as relief to all communities.

The SSG added that separate relief materials would also be provided to victims of flooding in fourteen local government areas.

Already, he said, those affected in seven local government areas before now, have received such items to mitigate losses incurred from the flooding.

In a comment, former Commissioner for Water Resources, and the APC candidate, Arewa constituency to the State House of Assembly, Alhaji Nura Kangiwa thanked Governor Atiku Bagudu for his consistent fatherly care to the people of Kebbi state.

Alhaji Nura Kangiwa described the food items as major relief to the inhabitants, especially rural dwellers.

## Zulum empowers 5,340 tailors with N100m in Borno

**B**orno State Governor, Babagana Zulum, has released N100 million and working tools to over 5,340 tailors to enhance their businesses in the state.

Zulum made the announcement in a brief ceremony held at the multi-purpose hall of the Government House in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital.

The governor said: "We have distributed N100 million through the Borno Renaissance Microfinance Bank to 2,000

tailors with another 3,340 receiving different types of working tools that include industrial machines, butterfly sewing machines, designing machines, and electrical generator sets.

"We will want other tailoring associations to compile list of members from all the 27 local government areas that have not benefited from today's distribution, so that we support them in our 2nd and 3rd distribution exercises."

Speaking, the Managing Director of Borno Renaissance

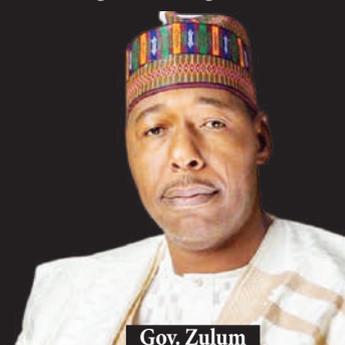
Microfinance Bank, Dr Bello Ibrahim, urged the beneficiaries to put the empowerment into positive use.

The event was attended by the Borno APC Chairman, Ali Dalori, and the party's candidate for Borno Central Senatorial Election, Kaka Lawan, both of whom supported Zulum during presentation to the 5,340 beneficiaries.

Of the combined 5,340 tailors, about 2,000 of them received N50,000 each totalling N100 million.

Another 2,000 received

sewing machines each, 200 of them received industrial machines, 40 received embroidery machines, while 100 others got electric generators.



Gov. Zulum



## El-Rufai defies Buhari in broadcast, orders use of all Naira notes in Kaduna

In a brazen disregard of the President of the Federal Republic, and siding with the Supreme Court's order that N200, N500, and N1000 notes should remain legal tender, the Governor of Kaduna State, Nasir el Rufai has told residents of his state to continue to use the old Naira notes, even threatening to shut down any outfit in the state that rejects the notes.

His words in a broadcast to residents of the state on Thursday, barely 24 hours after President Muhammadu Buhari announced that only the old N200 notes will be in use until April: "For the avoidance of doubt, all the old and new notes shall remain in use as legal tender in Kaduna State until the Supreme Court of Nigeria decides otherwise. I therefore appeal to all residents of Kaduna State to continue to use the old and new notes side by side without any fear. The Kaduna State Government and its agencies shall seal any facility that refuses to accept the old notes as legal tender and prosecute.

el Rufai pointedly accused the president of flouting a subsisting Supreme Court order. Read him: "The address by the President earlier this morning limiting the legal tender status of old notes to only N200 amounts to total disregard and disobedience of the ruling of February 8th which was extended further yesterday by the Supreme Court.

"The misguided action of the Attorney-General to mislead the President into engaging in this public violation of the order of the highest court of the land shows how desperate the

policy architects are to cause national chaos, by showing open contempt for the judiciary.

With the battle line now openly drawn by el Rufai, Nigerians wait, with bated breath, to see who blinks first.

Already, Mr. Femi Gbajabiamila, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and a fierce supporter, like el Rufai, of All Progressives Congress (APC) presidential candidate, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who first criticised the money policy and fuel scarcity but whose minders quickly turned around to say he was referring to the main opposition PDP, has lashed out at the CBN and the presidency.

On the sidelines, and speaking the minds of political watchers, as the ruling party tears at itself, the presidential candidate of the main opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), former Vice President Atiku Abubakar says the APC, which governors - el Rufai, Yahaya Bello (Kogi), and Matawalle (Zamfara) - initiated the Supreme Court suit that led to an order, should take responsibility for the failings of its own policy.



Gov. El-Rufai



Gov. Obaseki

## Naira scarcity: Obaseki offers free bus services in Edo

Edo State Governor, Godwin Obaseki has directed all Edo City Transport Service (ECTS) buses to from Thursday provide free services to passengers to cushion the effect of naira scarcity experienced by the people.

Governor Obaseki gave the directives in a statement signed by his Special Adviser on Media Projects, Mr Crusoe Osagie and made available to newsmen in Benin.

He said: "The directive is applicable to all routes and is effective till Monday, Feb. 20, after which further announcement would be made on the matter.

"The government calls on the people to remain calm, be law-abiding and we are assuring that normalcy will be restored shortly."

## EKSG appeals to citizens to remain calm

The Government of Ekiti State empathises with all residents on the challenges being faced on account of the lingering fuel shortage and scarcity of the new naira notes.

Government, however, appeals to all residents to remain calm and go about their daily activities peacefully as concerted efforts are being made to redress the situation.

We specifically appeal to all our traditional rulers, religious leaders, political leaders . community leaders and leaders of thought to help prevail on the citizens, especially our youths. not to allow themselves to be used to foment any trouble on account of the current situation.

The Governor Biodun Oyebanji administration is committed to the welfare and wellbeing of all citizens of the state and is exploring all avenues to make life more comfortable for them.

# Communique

**ISSUED AT THE END OF THE  
3RD MEETING OF THE NIGERIA  
GOVERNORS' FORUM (NGF) HELD ON  
SATURDAY, 11TH FEBRUARY 2023**

**W**e, members of the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF), at our meeting today discussed critical issues of national interest and resolved as follows:

1

*First, we express our sympathies and support with Nigerians who are experiencing great difficulties under the current CBN Naira re-design and cash withdrawal restrictions policy. We feel your pain and we are determined to employ all legitimate channels to ease the situation.*

2

*It has become necessary to make a distinction between the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Naira redesign policy backed by Section 20 (3) of the CBN Act, 2007 and the aspirational policy of going cashless, both of which are mutually exclusive at this time.*

3

*It is our considered view that what the CBN is at present pursuing is a currency confiscation programme, not the currency exchange policy envisaged under S20(3) of the CBN Act, 2007. Currency confiscation in the sense that the liquidity provided to the general public is grossly insufficient due to the restrictions placed on the amount that can be withdrawn regardless of the amount deposited.*

4

*The current approach of the CBN raises concerns about the respect for the civil liberties and rights of Nigerians as it relates to their freedom to use legitimately earned income as they so wish.*

5

*The Forum believes that to deploy a cashless policy and deepen digital transactions, the best practice around the world is to create a suite of incentives to attract customers; rather than a draconian approach as we have witnessed in the last three months.*

6

*The argument by the CBN for what it describes as the astronomical increase in the currency in circulation as the basis for this policy is not supported by its own data. According to the CBN, the currency in circulation increased from N1.4 trillion in 2015 to N3.23 trillion in October 2022. The Bank appears not to have taken into consideration the increase in the size of the country's nominal GDP over this period, the doubling of consumer prices, rising population, and the impact of the humongous Ways & Means advances to the federal government by the Central Bank of Nigeria over this period.*

7

*In the circumstances, it is safe to draw either of two conclusions - the CBN data may be incomplete or in fact, Nigerians may have done exceptionally well in the transition to a cashless economy.*

8

*In addition, considering the sizeable informal sector in the nation, the amount of banknotes created in exchange so far by the CBN implies it vastly underestimated the economy's actual cash needs. The inability to use the new notes has had far-reaching economic effects, leading to the emergence of the Naira black market, severe food inflation, variable commodities prices based on the method of exchange, and long queues as well as crowds around Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) and banking halls across the country with individuals hoping to get a fraction of their money in new notes to meet their daily livelihood. The country runs the risk of a CBN-induced recession.*

9

*While we acknowledge the submission of the Attorney General of the Federation that the Federal Government will comply with the ruling of the Supreme Court which calls for the halting of CBN's plan to end the use of the old currency notes, we are yet to observe changes in the financial system.*

10

*Consequently, we call on the Federal Government and the CBN to respect the Rule of Law and listen to the voice of reason expressed by Nigerians and several other stakeholders including the Council of State, before the damage to our economy becomes too great to fix by the next administration.*

11

*Members rose from the meeting agreeing to direct their Attorneys General to review the suit at the Supreme Court with a view to consolidating the legal reliefs pursued by States.*

  
Rt. Hon. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal  
Chairman, Nigeria Governors' Forum  
11th February 2023



Gov. Umahi

## Umahi suspends Ebubeagu, inaugurates 2 new vigilante groups

**G**overnor David Umahi of Ebonyi State has suspended the operations of the Ebubeagu Security Outfit, in deference to a Federal High Court ruling, which declared the security outfit as illegal.

In its place, Mr Umahi announced the setting up of two new vigilance outfits – Ebonyi Neighbourhood Watch and Ebonyi Vigilante Corps.

A Federal High Court in Abakaliki recently disbanded the Ebubeagu Security Outfit, after ruling that its existence and operations in Ebonyi State was illegal.

Ebubeagu have been allegedly involved in illegal arrests, torture and extra-judicial killings.

The Ebonyi State Government through the Commissioner for Information, Uchenna Orji, said it would appeal the court ruling.

“The Ebubeagu security outfit will not function in the state until the

stay of execution is granted and appeal entered.

“This is in obedience to the rule of law; and whether it is good or bad for our people, it is the court’s judgement,” Mr Umahi said on Friday at an enlarged security meeting in the state.

The governor recalled that a judgment from a court of equal jurisdiction had a month ago restrained anyone from disbanding the Ebubeagu security outfit.

“This means that I have two judgements on the same subject matter, as such the second one shouldn’t have been entertained due to an earlier decision on it.

“I could have chosen which one to obey if I were not a lover of the judiciary, but have chosen to obey the latter.

“When the stay of execution is granted, Ebubeagu will function again,” the governor said.

He thanked the Ebonyi House of Assembly for passing the law establishing the two vigilante groups which he said the processes began in 2021.

When Ebubeagu returns, they all should not infringe on the rights of the citizens.

“None of them would be involved in the forthcoming general election and the public must note this,” the governor said.

Mr Umahi called on political parties in the state to carry out their activities with decorum and not heat up the polity as the election approaches.



## Hope rises for power and water supply as Kano power plant comes alive

It is a thing of joy for the people as they eagerly look forward to drinking potable running water as they like and enjoying uninterrupted streetlights at night. This is courtesy of the Kano State Government which is set to inaugurate its Tiga Hydroelectricity Plant that will generate at least 10 megawatts of power to fire the water treatment plant and streetlights.

That automatically will also ensure the availability of drinking water for the huge Kano population and reduce the incidence of water-borne diseases which have plagued the town for decades due to lack of potable water. Residents in the state have faced acute water shortages for years, with taps remaining dry across the state.

Such areas include Kano Municipal, Dala, Nasarawa, Tarauni, Gwale, and Fagge local government areas. Residents in such areas were left with no option but to source water from boreholes or water vendors, thereby exposing themselves to unclean water and an imminent cholera outbreak. The residents were also forced to pay a heavy price for water because water vendors, who took advantage of the absence of running water in a densely populated state like Kano, made brisk business.

A resident of Naibawa, Tarauni LGA, Habeeba Mohammed, said that in the absence of running water for many years, they were forced to use water from the well. Mohammed said: "We resorted to the use of well water and usually fill buckets in the bathroom with the water we fetch from the well as the water is not running from our taps and showers. In fact, currently, our well is dry because a neighbour dug a borehole in the neighbourhood," Habeeba lamented.

Those familiar with the development identified the epileptic power supply as the major factor responsible for the acute water shortage in Kano State, while

others blamed the problem on the growing population, pipe leakages, and destruction, among others.

It was also gathered that Kano metropolitan areas alone require at least 210 million litres of water from the Challawa complex daily, but now only get about 50 million litres due to the ongoing expansion project in the area.

According to a reliable source, once the project is completed, the Tamburawa treatment plant will produce 150 million litres, and the Challawa complex will produce 210 million litres, for a total of 360 million litres of water per day. Similarly, the Kano State Water Board and the Kano Electricity Distribution Company, KEDCO, have often traded blame between themselves over the unceasing water challenge in the state and the predicament of the residents.

However, to put an end to the predicament, Governor Ganduje has announced that the 10-megawatt power plant is now ready for the inauguration to pump water for the state and improve street lighting. The governor said after a visit to the project site that the hydropower project had been completed and was ready for use. Ganduje expressed satisfaction with the progress of the work while commending the efforts of the state-independent power company, KHEDCO, contractors, and other stakeholders.

Shedding more light on the project, the Managing Director, Kano Hydro and Energy Development Company, KHEDCO, Engr. Hadiza Ahmed Tukur said the project was borne out of the need to address the water shortage and also boost the power supply in the state. "So when we supply the Tamburawa Water Treatment Plant, we take them off the electricity line, and the excess power supply will be supplied and channelled to take care of other



Gov. Ganduje

residential areas.

By doing that, we are increasing power supply in Kano State," she said.

Tukur, who doubles as the Acting Director General, Kano Metropolitan Agency (street light agency), said the Tiga power station is also expected to power street lights in the state. "The issue with effective streetlight operation is the scarcity and price increase of diesel. Even with your money, it is scarce. So when the project is commissioned, it will power our street lights at night since the street lights are most useful at night, while we plan to sell the power during the day to some industries to boost the economy. So if we commission this project (Tiga power station), the government will be relieved of the burden of diesel scarcity and price hikes."



## NASENI begins construction of Skills Acquisition Centre in Kebbi State

**T**he National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure (NASENI) has commenced the construction of an ultramodern Skills Acquisition Centre in Bagudo, Bagudo Local Government Area of Kebbi State.

The Kebbi State Governor, Senator Abubakar Atiku Bagudu CON, performed the groundbreaking and foundation laying ceremony for the centre on Thursday.

The Executive Vice Chairman and Chief Executive of NASENI, Engr Professor Muhammad Sani Haruna said at the epochal event that the establishment of the centre was in fulfilment of the Federal Government's employment generation strategies as ably championed by President Muhammadu Buhari.

The NASENI Executive Vice Chairman and also Chief executive said such centres to be established across Nigeria were designed to trained more technology-based professionals for the country. He listed them to include: craftsmen and women, technicians and technologists, scientists and engineers as well as other tech.-based professionals.

The executive vice chairman said that the centres were also aimed at meeting the challenges of technology and fill the extant gaps created by the

shortage of artisans, craftsmen and women.

Haruna added that the centre would be adequately equipped with the basics to cater for modern training of competitive workforce.

He further said that graduants of the centre would be ready for self employment generation and entrepreneurship.

Haruna commended Justice Minister, Abubakar Malami, SAN, for donating 20-hectares land for the establishment of the centre.

He also lauded other collaborating agencies like NBTE and other relevant agencies.

Professor Muhammad Sani Haruna commended Kebbi State Governor for the invaluable support towards the actualisation of the center and other activities of NASENI through the Nigerian Governor's Forum, NGF and the National Economic Council to mobilise financial support to the

center.

Haruna also acknowledged the useful counseling and mentorship of Bagudu for his sustained support of NGF and the National Economic Council towards proper funding of the agency.

He also commended Buhari for his commitment to transformative measures to develop the tech-based Nigeria leading to the emergence of a new NASENI.

Also speaking, Gov. Bagudu acknowledged the myriad of developmental strides engineered by Buhari in Kebbi State, North West and Nigeria in general.

He said that APC has focused attention on the even socio-economic development of the state.

Bagudu appealed to the people of the state to reciprocate the invaluable gestures by voting for Tinubu, Shettima and other APC candidates at all levels.



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