

Slain soldiers get MON, scholarships for children, houses for families

NAOMI EMOVON

The 17 Army officers killed in the Okuama area of Delta State have been conferred with posthumous national awards by President Bola Tinubu.

At the burial of the deceased at the Military Cemetery, Abuja, President Tinubu also announced scholarships and house

● *as COAS assures pregnant widows, families of support*

gifts for the children and families of the slain military personnel.

The officers and soldiers were murdered by criminals of the riverine community on March 14, 2024 when the men in uniform were on a peace mission to warring Okuama and Okoloba communities in the area.

Four slain officers were

awarded the honour of Members of the Order of the Niger (MON) while 13 slain soldiers were honoured with Officers of the Federal Republic medals (OFR).

"Each of the men now belongs to the hallowed list of service men and women who defended our country and protected their

fellow Nigerians, not minding the risks to their own lives.

"They have all been awarded now a posthumous National Honour. Four gallant officers have been accorded the award of Members of the Order of Niger (MON). The 13 courageous soldiers who also lost their lives have been awarded the Officer of the Fed-

eral Republic medals," Tinubu said.

He said the gallant soldiers would be remembered as patriots who answered the call of duty and paid the ultimate price.

"It is now our duty to protect the families of our departed heroes. The Federal Government will provide housing in any part

of our country to each of the families of the four officers and 13 soldiers that were among them.

"The Federal Government has also approved scholarships to all children of the deceased up to university level including those who are in the womb. The military we appeal to you to within the next 90 days ensure that all benefits of the departed are paid," the President said.

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...that the people may know

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Edo to host Nigeria's largest coated calcium carbonate processing plant

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Edo 2024: INEC confirms receipt of names of 17 political parties' guber candidates

TOBORE JEROME

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has acknowledged receipt of the names of the governorship candidates of 17 political parties in Edo State ahead of the September 21 governorship off-cycle election in the state.

The electoral body made this known on its X handle (Formerly known as Twitter) Wednesday, adding that the names of candidates submitted would be published later this month in

● *to publish full list March 30*

compliance with statutory regulations.

"Following the conclusion of party primaries, seventeen (17) Political Parties have uploaded their candidates' nomination forms for the Edo State Governorship Election by the deadline of 6.00pm on 24th March 2024 when the dedicated portal automatically shut down.

"The personal particulars of

the Governorship candidates and their running mates will be published on Saturday 30th March 2024, a week from the last date for the submission of nominations as provided in Section 29(3) of the Electoral Act 2022," INEC said.

The electorate in Edo State, south-south Nigeria will go to the poll in September 2024, to elect a successor to the incumbent governor, Godwin Obaseki.

It is one of the off-cycle elections in Nigeria and leading political parties in the country are leaving no stone unturned in order to emerge victorious when the election is held later this year.

At the just concluded party primaries, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) elected Barrister Asue Ighodalo as its flag-bearer and Osarodion Ogie as his running mate. Ogie is pres-

ently the Secretary to the State Government of Edo State and his choice as the deputy governorship candidate was informed by his wide acceptance across the three senatorial districts in the state.

For its part, the All Progressives Congress (APC) elected Senator Monday Okpebholo, who is currently representing Edo Central at the Senate as its

governorship candidate and Honourable Dennis Idahosa as his running mate.

The Labour Party elected Barrister Olumide Osaigbovo Akpata, former president of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), as its governorship candidate.

"The Commission shall publish the personal particulars by displaying copies of Form EC9 along with all academic credentials and other documents submitted by each candidate at the State Headquarters and the 18 Local Government offices across Edo State. We appeal to Nigerians to scrutinise the documents.

"Any aspirant who participated in his/her party primaries with reasonable grounds to believe that the information provided by the candidate is false can challenge the nomination in a Federal High Court as provided in Section 29(5) of the Electoral Act 2022," INEC added.

According to the INEC timetable for the Edo Governorship election 2024, campaigns by political parties will start on April 24 2024 and end 24 hours before the election day, meaning the end of political campaign is September 19, 2024.



BURIAL OF SLAIN SOLDIERS:

Funeral ceremony being conducted for 17 officers and men of the Nigerian Army slain by criminals in the area of the Okuama and Okoloba communities in Delta State, at the Military Cemetery, Abuja, yesterday.

AfDB releases \$50m for Yobe climate change programme

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NEWS

Edo to host Nigeria's largest coated calcium carbonate processing plant

● **facility already under construction**

UYIOSA ISAAC

On the back of reforms by the Governor Godwin Obaseki-led administration, Edo State is set to host one of Nigeria's largest coated calcium carbonate factories in Lampese, Akoko Edo Local Government Area of the state.

The State Commissioner for Mining and Energy, Hon. Enaholo Ojiefoh, who disclosed this in an interaction with journalists, said the facility is already under

construction and will run at 200,000mt capacity.

Ojiefoh also noted that Rosatum, one of Europe's largest nuclear energy companies, has commenced exploration of lithium in Edo and has got the state government's approval to build a lithium processing plant.

Ojiefoh said, "We have allocated land for the company to build a lithium processing plant and it will soon commence production of lithium batteries in the state.

"We are also very keen on

driving the governor's holistic industrialisation plans and have performed the groundbreaking ceremony for one of the biggest coated calcium carbonate factories in Nigeria here in Lampese. It is under construction and will run at 200,000mt capacity.

"Also, a Commodities Trading and Mineral Analysis Center is being completed in Dangbala in Akoko-Edo."

According to him, the State Government has secured over 40 new licenses for solid mineral

deposits in the state through Associates Mining and Investment Company, a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) promoted by the state government, noting that the state will rent the licenses to interested private investors to exploit the mineral deposits in the state.

The commissioner further stated that not less than three multinational companies are constructing processing plants in the state, which is an indication that the state's solid mineral market is attaining maturity.



ALIKO DANGOTE FOUNDATION:

L-R: One of the beneficiaries of Aliko Dangote Foundation National Food Intervention Programme; Group Executive Director, Commercial Operations, Dangote Industries Limited, Fatima Aliko Dangote; Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu; and Chairman, Aliko Dangote Foundation, Aliko Dangote; during the Lagos flag-off of Aliko Dangote Foundation National Food Intervention Programme in Lagos on Wednesday, March 27, 2024.

AfDB releases \$50m for Yobe climate change programme

NAOMI EWANSIHA

The African Development Bank Group (AfDB) has approved a \$50 million loan for the Yobe State Environmental and Climate Change Action Project (ECCAP), aimed at fortifying resilience against climate change and improving food security in northeast Nigeria.

This funding initiative, part of a broader project totaling \$101.34 million, seeks to positively impact the lives of more than 3.5 million people in the region by addressing climate vulnerabilities and promoting sustainable livelihoods.

The project is set to receive additional co-financing of \$30 million from the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), with contributions from the Yobe State Government and project beneficiaries. Yobe State, grappling with persistent communal and insurgency conflicts, faces severe environmental and economic challenges, exacerbated by climate change.

With 72 percent of its populace living below the poverty line, the state stands as one of Nigeria's most vulnerable to climate change. ECCAP aims to tackle these issues head-on by implementing interventions to combat droughts, desertification, and environmental degradation. The project will empower women through initiatives such as supplying small ruminants and providing efficient cooking stoves, while also supporting the devel-

● **to boost food security, resilience**

opment of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

Speaking on the significance of the project, Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, President of the AfDB, emphasised its integrated approach to addressing insecurity, climate vulnerability, food insecurity, and environmental restoration. Adesina highlighted the project's focus on building resilient livelihoods and highlighted its practical and granular nature.

"This is a very practical and granular project that tackles the issues of insecurity, more generally vulnerability, but also food security, and restoration of the degraded environment. It is all about how we build resilient livelihoods. This is a project that shows how we can do that in an integrated way," Adesina said.

The ECCAP project includes innovative measures such as a Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) scheme, incentivising the population to maintain and regenerate trees. This initiative aligns with Nigeria's goals to restore degraded land and contribute to global sustainability targets.

Martin Fregene, director of the bank's agriculture and agro-industry department, highlighted the project's holistic approach, emphasising its contribution to improving vegetative cover, establishing new MSMEs, and introducing clean cooking technologies.

"The ECCAP project is not a typical livelihood support project; it seeks to fill a gap to ensure sustainability in livelihood-enhancing projects. The project will lead to

the improvement of the vegetative cover of the state with more than 20 million established trees over 120,000 hectares and will train selected youth and women to set up 3,560 new MSMEs that will process and market new products using raw materials from trees, such as neem oil, and introduce improved clean cooking stoves and clean cooking technologies targeting 10 % of the population," Martin Fregene said.

The approval of the ECCAP project reflects the AfDB's ongoing commitment to Nigeria, with a diverse portfolio of 50 operations valued at \$4.6 billion. This project underscores the bank's dedication to supporting sustainable development and addressing pressing challenges facing African nations.

FG declares Friday, Monday public holidays for Easter

The Federal Government has declared Friday, March 29 and Monday, April 1, 2024, as public holidays to mark the celebrations of 2024 Good Friday and Easter Monday respectively.

The declaration was made by the Minister of Interior, Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, on behalf of the Federal Government in a statement signed by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, Aishe-tu Ndayako, on Wednesday.

According to the Minister, Easter, beyond religious significance, promotes values of love, forgiveness and compassion which are essential for social cohesion and harmony.

He called on Christians to

imbibe these virtues as they are capable of impacting positively on the socio-economic development in Nigeria by fostering unity, reducing conflicts and encouraging cooperation among Nigerians.

He further urged Nigerians to show acts of charity and generosity to help alleviate the material conditions of the less privileged amongst them.

While wishing Christians at home and abroad a happy and blissful Easter celebration, the Minister also called on Nigerians to join hands with President Bola Tinubu led Administration in its determination to bring sustainable development and usher in prosperity to all.

Dangote donates 80,000 bags of rice to Lagos residents

The Aliko Dangote Foundation, (ADF) has flagged off the distribution of 80,000 10kg bags of rice to the vulnerable in Lagos State.

President of Dangote Group and Chairman of the foundation, Aliko Dangote, said the gesture is part of the over one million 10kg bags of rice that would be distributed to reach one million vulnerable people in the 774 local government areas of Nigeria.

Speaking at the flag off in Alausa, Dangote, said the distribution of the 80,000 bags of 10kg rice is another demonstration of the foundation's commitment to upholding the values of compassion and solidarity that are at the core of humanity.

Noting that the distribution of the rice is in addition to the daily distribution of 12,500 loaves of bread in Lagos, Dangote stressed that with the initiative, the foundation aspires to ameliorate some of the burdens faced by vulnerable communities across Lagos State.

In his remarks, Governor of Lagos state, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, applauded the many initiatives of Dangote to ameliorate the sufferings of Nigerians, while praising him for showing compassion to the needy in the society.

Sanwo-Olu said the gesture of distribution of 80,000 bags of 10kg rice shows that the leadership of the foundation prioritises the welfare of the people beyond the pursuit of profit and accumulation of wealth.

The Governor said: "Aliko Dangote is a Nigerian that has chosen to be different. You have choices but you have made the right one which is caring for the vulnerable. I appreciate Mr. Aliko Dangote for extending his

kind gestures to the people at the bottom of the pyramid and we are grateful for supporting us in government. There is a lot of global disruption in different parts of the world, and it is a tough time to be in a position of leadership," he said.

While encouraging other wealthy Nigerians to emulate Dangote, the Governor said the distribution of the rice would support the initiative of the state in addressing the effects of the economic hardship.

Justifying the food intervention in Lagos, Dangote said: "While our traditional Ramadan food distribution has been focused on the Muslim Community, we recognise that the current circumstances where a significant proportion of Nigerians across the nation are experiencing severe hardship due to the prevailing high prices of food, require that we broaden our program to cover communities of all faiths.

"This is why we are extending the Ramadan initiative to cover all the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory as a testament to our commitment to supporting our communities in line with our core values and the spirit of the Holy Month of Ramadan," he said.

The CEO of the ADF, Zouera Youssoufou, said the foundation is partnering credible NGOs, civil societies, religious bodies among others, to ensure the donations go to the most vulnerable in Lagos State.

She said the Foundation is guided by a vision of empowering Africans to achieve their self-actualisation and full potential as it believes that every individual, regardless of their circumstances, deserves the opportunity to thrive and succeed.

Lagos warns of heavy rains, urges residents to move to higher ground

Barely two weeks to the commencement of heavy rainfall, Lagos State Government has warned residents living on flood plains of major rivers and drainage channels to be on the alert and ready to relocate to higher ground.

Lagos State Commissioner for the Environment and Water Resources, Mr. Tokunbo Wahab gave the warning during a press conference at Ikeja, on Seasonal Climate Predictions (SCP) to annually alert Lagosians of the predicted rainfall patterns and its socio-economic im-

plications for the people of the state.

While highlighting the flood plains areas such as Owode, Iwaya, Makoko, Badia, Ijora, Isaalu, Pota, Shibiri, among others, the Commissioner stated that the state government would continue to notify such residents at the appropriate time.

The government anticipated a more than normal amount of rainfall during the 2024 rainy season with unprecedented 1936.2mm of predicted rainfall.

He stressed that the average annual rainfall amount predicted for

2024 was 1936.2mm which was greater than the long-term average of 1721.48mm with the onset date expected to be the first week of April and ceasing in the first week of December.

The Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMET), had on 20th February 2024, released this year's Seasonal Climate Prediction (SCP) which is a forecast of the expected rainfall and temperature patterns spanning the entire country.

According to the Commissioner, the rainy season was expected to start in the first week of April

and cease in the first week of December, while the average annual rainfall amount predicted is 1936.2mm and greater than the long-term average of 1721.48mm.

Wahab further said, "Lagos State is expected to experience normal to above normal rainfall, the same is reflective of neighbouring Ogun State."

He added that the low-lying areas of Agiliti, Agboyi, Itowolo and Ajegunle communities in, "Lagos State are being closely monitored with respect to the likelihood of

Ogun River flooding as well as all other river basins in the State."

The Commissioner said, "The Lagos State Signage and Advertisement Agency (LASAA) has been put on high alert to make sure advertising and communication agencies comply with regulations on the safety of billboards and telecommunication masts to prevent the incidences of telecommunication mast collapse caused by the high wind speed, expected during the onset and cessation of every rainfall season.