

## FLOODING IN STATES

## Lagos embarks on dredging of canals

LAGOS State is prepared to mitigate any impact of the ravaging flood, Commissioner for the Environment and Water Resources Tunji Bello has said.

He spoke during a meeting with critical stakeholders to evaluate the state's preparedness for any eventuality.

According to him, the state, through the Office of Drainage Services and Water Resources, has embarked on massive dredging and cleaning of all primary and secondary collectors across the state.

"This is in addition to construction of new channels as well as deployment of the quick response Emergency Flood Abatement Gang to free up manholes and black spots, all to ensure that the drains perform at optimum capacity to be able to contain runoffs," he said.

The commissioner, who sympathised with victims, added that Lagos is constantly monitoring the Ogun River which flows directly into the Lagos Lagoon. He also noted that Lagos may be susceptible to flooding with the periodic release of rain water from Oyan Dam by the managers, the Ogun Oshun River Basin Development Authority. He, therefore, directed residents of river banks to relocate.

Residents of all identified areas like Ketu, Alapere, Agric, Owode onirin, Ajegunle, Alagbole, Kara, Isheri olowora, Araromi Otun orisha community, Agiliti, Maidan, Mile 12, Odo ogun, Owode elede, Agboyi 1, Agboyi II, Agboyi III, which are banks to the Ogun River, were thus told to prepare for relocation at any time.

The state also directed all relevant enforcement arms of the state to step up their supervisory roles to contain any eventuality. He stressed that the enforcement impact must be felt by recalcitrant people and institutions who defy the government by building structures on drainage alignments, flood plains and low lying areas.

Bello also noted that despite Lagos being a coastal city, with almost one third of its total landmass under water, 'what it experiences after heavy rainfalls is flash flooding which will recede few hours after the cessation of such rainfalls'.

### Tinubu assists Kano victims with N100m

PRESIDENTIAL candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Asiwaju Bola Tinubu has donated N100 million to victims of the flood disaster in Kano State.

Tinubu, who was in Kano for a three-day range of political activities, announced the donation during a dinner with the business community.

The presidential candidate was accompanied by Governors Abdullahi Ganduje (Kano); Badaru Abubakar (Jigawa); Bello Matawalle (Zamfara) and Mai Mala-Buni (Yobe), as well as members of the National Assembly, state Assembly, the state executive council, among others.

### Navy provides humanitarian services in Rivers, Bayelsa

THE Nigerian Navy is providing security and ferrying stranded commuters across the flooded East-West Road linking Port Harcourt, Rivers State, and Yenagoa in Bayelsa State.

Base Information Officer of



•Rescuers pulling out a drowning vehicle in Ilorin, the Kwara State capital.

By Oyebola Owolabi; Kelvin Osa - Okunbor; Fanen Ihyongo, Kano; Nsa Gill, Calabar; John Ofikhenua, Abuja; Mike Odiegwu, Port Harcourt; and Okungbowa Alwerle, Asaba

the Nigerian Navy Ship (NNS) SOROH, a unit of Central Naval Command, Sub-Lieutenant Tochukwu Okeke, in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) yesterday, said the Navy had been ferrying people and goods from flooded spots between Yenagoa and Port Harcourt, and also deployed medical personnel to care for those in need.

Okeke added that the operation was being coordinated by the Commander of NNS SOROH, Commodore Sunday Daniel-Atakpa.

He said: "...under the directive of my Commander, this operation will continue until the flood recedes, we will continue to deploy men and materials to help Nigerians because we are here for them."

"The motto of the Navy is 'Onward Together', so we are moving with everybody."

"Basically, we have been providing ferries at flooded parts of the road from Bayelsa to Port Harcourt and vice versa. We have also been providing medicare for persons."

Okeke however said no casualty had been recorded since the naval interventions started.

A commuter, Mrs. Rita Ayaku, praised the Navy for the intervention, saying it has eased the hardship faced by people.

### Village head's wife killed in Plateau as snakebites increase

CASES of snakebites have reportedly increased in areas prone to snakebites, especially as treatment centres also reported a sharp rise in cases and more deaths as the floods blocked access to treatment centres.

Among the dead is the wife of the village head of Magama in Langtang South Local Government of Plateau State.

Managing Director of Ebitant Group, producers of Anti-Snake Venom (ASV), Dr Nandul Durfa, said: "Yes, I can confirm that there is a huge rise in snakebites; one of the victims is the wife of the village head of Magama. It is a scary situation. Snakes and humans are all running away from the floods and would usually clash in the dry lands in the struggle for space."

Former Chief Medical Director of the University of Abuja Teaching Hospital also decried the shortage of ASV in the treatment centres.

Research Officer in the Snakebite Research Hospital in Kaltungo, Gombe State, Dr Abubakar Balla, described the situation further.

"Because of the devastating floods, farmlands are wet and the snakes go to higher grounds where they mix with people. The situation is worse in Riverine areas around Borno, Adamawa, Kogi, Gombe and Bauchi."

"The floods force snakes to migrate or carry them along and deposit at the forests, homes or over river banks. The situation is worsened by the fact that victims cannot go to medical centres because the roads and bridges are either washed away or flooded."

"In the rural areas, the motorcycles usually help, but they cannot ride through the water now. Very often, victims reach treatment centres dead."

Balla added that it had become dangerous to go to the farms, especially in Gombe.

"It is time to harvest groundnuts and maize, but going to the farm is very dangerous now because the snakebites are rampant. Farmers cannot leave their crops in the bush, so the contact with the snakes is often inevitable," he added.

Meanwhile, statistics from the hospital indicate that 1,900 victims of snake bites had been admitted since January.

According to the Chief Medical Officer, Dr Suleiman Mohammed, 34 of the victims died. He said most of the victims were herders and farmers that were mostly in the bush and usually at risk.

### 14 councils, 94 communities affected in Cross River

DIRECTOR-GENERAL of the Cross River State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) Ayim Princewill has said 94 communities in 14 local government areas in the state have been affected.

The SEMA boss noted that his agency officials are still taking inputs of reported incidents across the state.

Meanwhile, the heavy rainfall at the weekend left houses and roads heavily flooded in Calabar. Residents, commuters and motorists were stranded due to the surging flood.

Residents of Musaha/Ekeya community in Calabar South

woke up finding a commercial bus inside a culvert.

However, disaster was averted at Atimbo by Edim Otop junction as young men rescued a fully loaded tricycle from being swept away by the ravaging flood.

The rain which started about 3pm covered the busy roundabout which connects the city centre with Akpabuyo local government area.

### Why petrol is scarce after floods recede, by IPMAN

PRESIDENT of the Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria (IPMAN) Alhaji Ahmed has said Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) petrol was still scarce in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and its environs, even after the floods which blocked Kogi State have receded, because of the supply gap the disaster created.

Recall that the floods stalled conveyance of the product from the coastal depots to Abuja from early October.

Owing to the situation, the bulk of the trucks laden with PMS was trapped in Kogi State, the Federal Government was to some weeks later urge the transporters to take alternative routes in Niger and Benue States to ferry the product into Abuja.

In the melee of scarcity, some retail outlets closed shops to motorists, who turned to black marketers.

While some travellers blamed the continuing shortage in supply on the blockade of the Benin/Abuja road by Auch, Ahmed added that consumers were embarking on panic buying for fear of continuous shortage of supply.

Ahmed, who spoke with The Nation on phone, said the product was available in the depots, stressing that there should be increase in loading.

He said: "In the distribution cycle, if there is a little of gap in fuel supply, it takes some days before you can cover it up. It is the gap that emanated because of the flood that is still causing the little scarcity we have."

"The suppliers have to up their load from the depots to meet up because as it is coming people are buying. A lot of people are thinking there is still the issue (scarcity) so they will queue. It is not that there is no product, there is a lot of product in the depots. So, it is because of the break in supply of

the product that is still causing the scarcity."

Last week, only a few petrol stations were opened to customers.

### Implement presidential directive on flooding, Bayelsa pleads

BAYELSA State government has urged the Federal Government to quickly implement the directive of President Muhammadu Buhari to ameliorate the inhuman living conditions of persons displaced by flood.

Commissioner for Environment and chairman of the State Flood Mitigation and Management Committee, Mr. Iselema Gbarabiri, made the call at the Oxbow Lake Internally Displaced Persons' (IDPs) camp in Yenagoa.

According to him, more than 4,000 homeless individuals and families were being sheltered and fed daily at the Oxbow Lake IDP camp alone, stressing that the Governor Douye Diri-led administration was also taking care of a similar number of victims at the Igbogene and other IDP camps.

He lamented that the delay in the implementation of the presidential intervention towards the emergency in Bayelsa had continued to reinforce the feeling of neglect among the victims.

While some officials of the committee on a routine inspection of the camps, said: "We need Federal Government's urgent intervention. Whatever we are doing here is being replicated at the Igbogene camp and other camps. Medical services have been provided. We are providing food, and we have our sanitation unit that is cleaning the camps daily. We ensure that there is lighting."

### Wike releases N1b for victims' care

Rivers State Governor Nyesom Wike has released the N1 billion he promised persons affected by the flooding, it was learnt yesterday.

Chairman of the taskforce set up by Wike to alleviate the victims' suffering, Dr. George Nwaeke, at the weekend, promised that supply of relief materials and evacuation of trapped victims would continue in line with the committee's mandate.

Nwaeke, who spoke after delivering relief materials to

victims in Ahoda East and Ahoda West, said Wike was committed to cushioning the effects of the disaster on residents. He said the committee was also working to forestall future occurrences with a robust post-flood programme.

He said: "We are here to hand over additional food materials to the people of Ahoda East and West councils. You will recall that this week, and also the previous week, we were here with some trucks of food items for the local government areas. Today we are here again to hand out additional materials to the IDPs."

"I want to thank God for the Governor who has made a continuous provision for the people of these areas that are currently displaced. In addition to what we have here, we are handing over this cash to the council chairmen for the logistics to take these items and distribute them to the various IDP camps."

"And we have also promised that we will come again. I want to assure the public that we will continue to do this. The governor has marched words with action, the funds have been released."

Chairmen of Ahoda East and West, Ben Eke and Hope Ikiriko, thanked the governor for remaining consistent to his promise from the first day he inaugurated the committee.

### United Nigeria Airlines donate to Bayelsa victims

UNITED Nigeria Airlines has flown relief materials to Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, for distribution to victims of the flood disaster.

The airline also announced it will resume scheduled daily flights to the state today.

Chief Operating Officer of the airline, Osita Okonkwo, said: "The flood has been very devastating. Lives have been negatively impacted. Families have been separated. Homes and properties destroyed. Businesses have also been negatively affected. More than half of the state is under water. We hope for immediate receding of the flood so that people can return to their normal lives."

"What we have done is in line with our Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). It is also in response to the call for help. The impact of the flood is huge and it will cost a lot to fix. We have only contributed towards ameliorating the sufferings of the people, many of whom cannot even find a place to cook for their families. We put ourselves in the shoes of those who have been negatively impacted by the flood. We feel their pains at this time and keep praying that succor will come their way sooner."

### INEC postpones events in Delta

THE Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Delta State has postponed its sensitisation visits across the state due to floods.

It noted that sensitisation visits to Delta South and Central have been postponed.

According to a statement, INEC said: "The indefinite postponement is in deference to the flooding that has ravaged most parts of the two respective LGAs."