

Briefly

Inaugural speech

Former Vice-President Atiku Abubakar and a former Governor of Kwara State, Senator Bukola Saraki, have commended President Muhammadu Buhari on his inaugural speech on Friday.



Atiku

In separate reactions on Twitter, the All Progressives Congress chiefs expressed hope that Buhari's decisions and promises, as stated in his first official address as President, would bring about the promised change for the country.

While promising to deal with all forms of insecurity bedeviling the nation, Buhari had said, "Progress has been made in recent weeks by our security forces, but victory cannot be achieved by basing the Command and Control Centre in Abuja."

Nigeria, South Korea

The Parliament of Nigeria and that of the Republic of South Korea, on Saturday, agreed on collaborative efforts to improve on the economic, and socio-political relationships currently existing between them, in the interest of the citizens of both countries.

Senator Lee Ju-Young, who is the Head, Presidential Special Envoy from South Korea to President Muhammadu Buhari's inauguration and the Nigeria's Senate President, David Mark sealed the deal on behalf of their countries in Abuja.

Mark, according to a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Mr. Paul Mume, appreciated members of the international community for their solidarity and support for the smooth transition from the Peoples Democratic Party's government, to the All Progressive Congress.

Death penalty

A human rights organisation, Amnesty International, has called on President Muhammadu Buhari to immediately establish an official moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing death penalty in the country.

According to the AI, more than 1,500 people, including juvenile offenders, are currently languishing on death row in various prisons across Nigeria.

The call came after Delta State government on Thursday granted total pardon to Moses Akatugba who was sentenced to death for stealing three mobile phones in 2005.

Boko Haram kills 16 in fresh attacks on Maiduguri

FIDELIS SORIWEI,
OLALEKAN ADETAYO
and KAYODE IDOWU

TERRORISM

SIXTEEN persons were killed during an attempt by Boko Haram insurgents to invade Maiduguri, the Borno State capital, on Friday night.

Seventeen persons were injured in the attack that left many houses destroyed. The attack occurred a few hours after the inauguration of President Muhammadu Buhari in Abuja on Friday.

An online source also reported that a bomb exploded Saturday afternoon near Maiduguri's main market, after the city was attacked before dawn by

the insurgents using rocket-propelled grenades that killed at least 13 people. The explosion, it was gathered, occurred by the mosque near a market in the town.

One of our correspondents learnt that one of the insurgents joined the worshippers pretending to be one of them. The insurgent later detonated the bomb which killed some of the worshippers and injured many others.

In a swift reaction, Buhari, on Saturday condemned the latest attacks on the town.

In a statement issued by the head of his media

team, Garba Shehu, the President warned that his administration would not tolerate wanton and willful destruction of lives by criminal elements bent on anarchy.

He stated that his administration meant business in its determination to tackle terrorism with all the resources available to his government.

Describing terrorists as cowardly murderers that target innocent people, Buhari declared that as the Commander-in-Chief, he had sworn to protect the security of Nigerians everywhere.

The President while calling for increased vigilance by

local communities, assured that his administration would give security close attention, pledging that his government was committed to boosting the morale of the armed forces by effectively funding them and attending to their welfare.

He condoled with the families of the victims of the latest terrorist attacks on the town and assured them that the worst days of the criminal elements would soon be over.

SUNDAY PUNCH gathered that the residents of the town were woken from their sleep as sounds of heavy gunshots and explosions rocked the town.

A member of the youth

vigilance group, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to our correspondent on the phone, said that the insurgents tried to invade the town at about 12:50am on Saturday from Ajilari Cross and Bintu Sugar axis of the town.

He said the military were able to discover them on time and repelled them before they could further approach the town.

According to him, the engagement lasted for about two hours between 12:50am and 2:50am.

He added, "The insurgents were successfully repelled after heavy gunshots and explosions. They fled back into the dark towards the direction they came."

He, however, said he could not ascertain the number of the casualties.

A resident of Gomari in the town which is in the same neighbourhood with Bintu Sugar, Abdul Idi, said five residents of the area were killed in the attack.

Idi said a stray bullet killed a man who slept outside in the open to get fresh air.

He also stated that four people were killed in a house affected by the explosion in the area.

According to Idi, eight other people died of stray bullets and explosives in some areas in the town.

Meanwhile, a security source who spoke with one of our correspondents on the condition of anonymity on Saturday, said the insurgents fired rocket-propelled grenades and detonated bombs in the town.

The source said that the fighter pilots of the Nigerian Air Force were deployed to bomb the insurgents and were able to dismantle them for ground troops to take over the area.

It was further gathered that several of the residents of the Airport Road axis of Maiduguri fled their communities in fear for safer places in the metropolis.

The source stated further that the troops were in control of the area and were intensifying a cordon and search operation designed to fish out and arrest the fleeing insurgents.

The source said, "Fighter jets were deployed to scatter them for ground troops to move in to take control of the area. As for casualty, I cannot give you any figure because the insurgents fired at buildings and killed some people; the military also got some of them."

All efforts to get across to the Director, Defence Information, Maj. Gen. Chris Olukolade, to comment on the development were futile as calls to his mobile phone did not connect.

Also, Olukolade had not responded to a text message sent to his phone as of the time of filing this report.



L-R: Secretary to the State Government, Lagos State, Mr. Tunji Bello; Deputy Governor, Dr. Oluranti Adebule; Governor Akinwunmi Ambode; Head of Service, Mrs. Folashade Jaji; and Chief of Staff to the Governor, Mr. Olukunle Ojo, during the governor's first meeting with the Body of Permanent Secretaries in the State in Ikeja... on Saturday. Photo: Lagos State Government House

It'll take Nigeria time to stop B'Haram -Campbell

BAYO AKINLOYE

TERRORISM

A former United States of America's Ambassador to Nigeria, John Campbell, has said that the ongoing insurgency by Boko Haram remains a great challenge for the newly elected President Muhammadu Buhari's administration.

According to Campbell, who drew the country's

ire with his book, 'Nigeria: Dancing on the brink' published in 2010 believed to have predicted that the country would disintegrate in 2015, the country's security and economic challenges will take a long time to overcome.

He said, "Nigeria's challenges are great: Boko Haram and a huge

population of internally displaced, a potential renewal of an insurrection in the oil patch, ubiquitous corruption, falling oil prices, labour unrest, and generally, a people by and large alienated from their government and their elites. President Muhammadu Buhari has appealed for patience from the Nigerian people. It remains to be seen whether

they will give it to him. Nigeria's challenges will be there tomorrow and for long after."

President Buhari had in his 2015 presidential election campaign promised that he would step up the fight against Boko Haram and widespread corruption in the country. Buhari repeated this promise in his inaugural speech on Friday.

It's new dawn for Nigeria - Malian President

GODWIN ISENYO

POLITY

THE President, Republic of Mali, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita on Saturday visited Kaduna State Governor, Malam Nasir el-Rufai, declaring a new dawn for Nigeria under the Buhari administration.

Keita, who spoke at the late Gen. Hassan Usman Katsina House, Kaduna, noted that he attended the inauguration of President Buhari and decided to visit Kaduna because of his special attachment to the state and el-Rufai.

According to Keita, he is convinced since Friday that with the inauguration of Buhari, a new dawn, a

wonderful wind of change will blow across Nigeria.

He added that with the new dawn in Nigeria, his country would remain committed in strengthening her relations with Nigeria.

The President said, "I am deeply convinced that since Friday, a new dawn, a wonderful wind will blow on Nigeria with the inauguration of President Muhammadu Buhari and your inauguration as a young and wonderful Governor of this wonderful state of Kaduna."

"I am delighted to be the first President to visit you in your new capacity as Kaduna

State Governor. But I am convinced that I won't be the last and only President to visit you in the state. My team and I are assuring you of how committed we are and how committed we will be to strengthen the relationship between Nigeria and Mali."

President Keita, then prayed to God to inspire and guide both President Buhari and el-Rufai to lead the country and the state to greater heights.

el-Rufai had earlier in his remarks said Nigeria and Kaduna State in particular had a lot to learn from the Malian President in their attempt to unite the country and Kaduna State.