

SPEECH BY THE VISITOR, HIS EXCELLENCY, GOVERNOR YAHAYA BELLO OF KOGI STATE AT
THE 1ST MATRICULATION CEREMONY OF THE CONFLUENCE UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY (CUSTECH), OSARA, KOGI STATE ON THURSDAY THE 25TH DAY OF
NOVEMBER, 2021

Protocols

Our gratitude goes to the Almighty God for sparing our lives and granting us the opportunity to witness this formal induction of the pioneer student set of Confluence University of Science and Technology (CUSTECH), Osara, Kogi State into the university. Today's matriculation ceremony is indeed a watershed in the history of educational development of Kogi State.

My Administration was greatly disturbed by the painful experiences of hundreds of Kogi youngsters who were unable to pursue careers in Science and Technology due to very limited openings in universities outside Kogi State. We found that even with impressive scores in the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), cutthroat competition for limited spaces and unfavorable catchment considerations usually put our children at a greater disadvantage. Over the years, access to such programmes as Medicine & Surgery, Pharmacy, Architecture, Engineering and others in this category kept dwindling for Kogi secondary school leavers.

This trend became so worrisome that we just had to act as a Government to bring it to the only logical end. Problems make me combative for solutions. It is my default mindset that leaders exist to find solutions to the problems of those they lead or they lose their moral authority to leadership. It was thus my duty and the duty of my Administration to solve this particular problem too for Kogites using all the resources of Government at our disposal.

Accordingly, and in line with the Administration's avowed commitment to providing a wide spectrum of educational opportunities for our younger generations, we decided to take action by establishing a specialised university of our own, dedicated to science and technology. Not only was this action imperative but it was also very much in sync with best practices in educational progressivism all over the world.

In the spirit of the foregoing considerations, we sent a bill to the Kogi State House of Assembly and the university's establishment Bill was passed in record time. I immediately gave it the required Governor's assent and this was how this university came to be, at least on paper, in the third quarter of 2020. Thereafter we threw in everything we had and secured recognition by the National Universities Commission (NUC) for CUSTECH in the fourth quarter of 2020. I intervened personally at every stage. Today, to the Glory of God, the university is in the second semester of its first year of academic activities.

Thus, the Confluence University of Science and Technology (CUSTECH), a brand new school, went from consultation to conception to confirmation to construction to curriculum activities in under one year. In fact, we were so driven by the need to reduce the pains of our young ones as quickly as possible that we may have set a record for the shortest gestation period ever in the history of Nigerian universities.

Government's choice of location for the university was substantially guided by the principles of fairness and equity, succinctly captured under our EBIGO policy and philosophy. Hitherto, the Eastern and Western Senatorial districts already have the Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba, and the Federal University, Lokoja respectively. Thus, for geographical balancing, the Central Senatorial District easily had the strongest case. God knows that if the situation was otherwise I would not have hesitated to plant this school where equity demands.

Of course, I must state emphatically here that all of my State Tertiary Institutions are equally dear to my heart and that of my Administration. They are complementary units of our integrated policy in educational development and as I speak massive upgrades are ongoing simultaneously in each and everyone of them. For as long as I am Governor they will all be fully supported and strengthened to achieve the greatest heights possible in their core competencies, so help me God.

In establishing CUSTECH, our ultimate goal is to achieve a world-class citadel. It was designed and built to provide first-grade training in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines for our youth. By leveraging ICT and artificial intelligence (AI), it is our plan to rapidly move the institution forward till it becomes comparable to similar schools anywhere on the globe.

When I talk about making this school at par with its peers across the world, I do not refer to academic output alone. Indeed, not long ago we flagged off the commencement of works on more physical facilities for the first phase of the Campus development. This phase will deliver the University Senate Building, the University Library, Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Computing and Informatics, and Faculty of Basic Medical and Health Sciences. This Administration is also building a massive Reference Hospital in Okene which will be equipped with facilities which any ultramodern tertiary health institution would be proud of. It will be equipped for the diagnosis and treatment of most diseases prevalent in Nigerian society. When completed in the next couple of months, it is projected to be one of the best among its kind in the country. We are also designating it to provide Teaching Hospital services to this great institution. We are pleased to remark here that CUSTECH has just received a boost from the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) for both physical and academic developments on campus. This support will

help us achieve our desire to make this university of international standard all the more faster.

On a very personal level, the establishment of this institution gives me great joy, probably more than any of the other significant achievements we have recorded as an Administration. Firstly, I have been afforded the opportunity to be part of something that will endure into the future transforming the lives and prospects of generations yet unborn. Secondly, I have the privilege of stepping in the footsteps of several of my mentors in politics and leadership. They include, Sir Ahmadu Bello, First Republic Premier of the Northern Region and founder of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, my alma mater, and the number one leadership University in Nigeria. Of course, President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR who has established several specialised universities, especially by the armed forces, and who continues to deploy massive resources hitherto unheard of to the development of education and learning in the country. Also Prince Abubakar Audu who founded the first tertiary Institution in Kogi State and helped to cement our reputation as an education-loving people. My Administration renamed that school, formerly the Kogi State University, Anyigba after him during the 25th Anniversary Celebration of our State and I maintain today that it is an honour well deserved.

To the students we have just matriculated, I say a big congratulations. You should consider the opportunity delivered to you here, right at your doorstep, as golden and priceless. You are the lucky pioneers of generations of young Nigerians who will pass through the portals of this great institution and come out reconstructed into

Changemakers for our nation and our world. Your admission into this set has put much responsibility on you to excel in character and learning in order to justify your place in this Honour Guard of history. You must therefore cherish what you have here and allow it to guide you into the path of greatness. Remember that education has always been nationally acknowledged as the niche of Kogi indigenes and sustain that record with superlative performance.

I commend the CUSTECH Management led by Prof. Engr. Salawu Sadiku for relentlessly driving the Government's vision of quickly bringing this university to full functional order. So far, you have all proven that we did not make a mistake in your appointments. Keep it up and we shall have no problems. I am challenging Management to produce graduates for us in this first batch of students who are so excellent at what they do that future generations of students will be sought after from all over the world even before they graduate. In or out of Government, we want to have that great sense of fulfilment which will come from seeing CUSTECH graduates taking the driver's seat in national and international development.

I thank everyone who could join us here today due this historic effect. In particular the parents, guardians, siblings, friends and well-wishers of our students. Thank you for entrusting them to us. Kogi State is, by the grace of God, the safest state in the country and we are not reducing the high alert we have put our security agencies on. We will continue to ensure that your wards go about their lawful academic and living activities without fear or molestation.

Thank you all.

To God be the Glory!

YAHAYA BELLO

Governor of Kogi State.

