

BEING THE Y2012 BUDGET PRESENTATION OF THE GOVERNOR OF LAGOS STATE, HIS EXCELLENCY, MR. BABATUNDE RAJI FASHOLA, SAN DELIVERED AT THE CHAMBER OF THE LAGOS STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY, ALAUSA ON MONDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2011.

Almost 1 (One) year ago when I presented the Y2011 Budget, I pointed out that it was our last budget for the term of 4 (four) years that started in 2007 as we were going into General Elections in year 2011.

I reiterated that the budgetary policy of alleviating poverty through infrastructural renewal for economic development would continue and that while we would deal with the emerging issues of workers welfare and the demand for increased wages, we would also be responding to the emerging challenges of accreditation in our tertiary institutions especially the State owned University.

In that budgetary presentation, I also stated very clearly that our focus would be to continue and complete as many on-going projects as we could, whilst starting only critical ones that we could fund, with the intention of leading our Party to victory at the general elections with great optimism that our performance score card would be good enough to secure a return for us.

Distinguished and eminent Lagosians, ladies and gentlemen, in spite of the very turbulent economic environment after a global recession in 2009-2010 and a very keenly contested election, I am happy to report that we have achieved quite a significant portion of the goals we set for ourselves in the 2011 Budget with almost 6 (Six) weeks still to go in year 2011.

Not only did we succeed at the general elections, your massive turn out at the polls which we acknowledge as a large endorsement of our service to you, helped us to inflict a decisive and crushing defeat on all opposition in an unprecedented victory that returned all elective offices in the State to the Action Congress of Nigeria.

You have reinforced that mandate by again returning all 57 (Fifty Seven) Local Government and Local Council Development Areas to the trust and care of the Action Congress of Nigeria.

I must once again, on behalf of our Party, thank all Lagosians, our Party faithfuls and of course the media for this huge vote of confidence.

The success of the budget plans and the manifestation of its implementation are evident across our State.

You will see them in the relative labour and industrial harmony in our State, as the first Government in Nigeria to start implementing the minimum wage in January 2011 even before the law was signed.

While this has come at a huge cost and requires a strategy re-appraisal to sustain it, which I will address later, it speaks to the commitment of Government to the welfare of its workers, and its proactive and methodical approach to solving problems before they get out of hand.

The implementation of our budgetary commitment to resolve the challenges of tertiary education will be seen in the rapid infrastructural development going on in Lagos State University.

The completion of the first block of classrooms for the University Staff School, the completion of the Law Library and School Auditorium, the completion of the Science Laboratory and the commencement of ICT Centre at the AdeniranOgunsanya College of Education, Ijanikin.

As I speak, more projects are going through tender with a view to very near time commencement, and we are currently exploring a proposal for the delivery of broadband internet connectivity to the entire campus to improve the capacity for learning and access to information.

Apart from the regular funding through subventions, I have in my capacity as Visitor to all our tertiary institutions given directives for the creation of a special fund to each school to fund special capital projects and continuous research.

The conditions for accessing this fund and rules of governance are being worked out and will be communicated after deliberations and approval at the State Executive Council.

I am already working on developing new international affiliations for our tertiary institutions so that we strengthen our capacity to train ourselves locally and stop importing education.

At the lower education level, we have approved the renovation and rehabilitation of 314 (Three Hundred and Fourteen) primary and secondary schools across the State, in Yaba, Ipaja, Alimosho, Ejigbo, Badagry, Lekki, Ikorodu, Aguda and Ojo areas to mention a few.

The successful implementation of the budget is also evident in the number of projects that have been completed and handed over such as the 2 million gallons per day mini water works in Ajegunle, Ikorodu, Badore and Ojokoro; the 12 classroom blocks each in Gbara Community Junior Secondary School, Gbara

Community Senior Secondary School, Olowon Community Secondary School Ajah, AdeniranOgunsanyaStreet, Surulere, AdeniranOgunsanya Shopping Complex, the provision of 250 (Two Hundred and Fifty) Taxis, the Skill Acquisition Centre in Mushin, the house and clinic for physically challenged children in Owodo-Elede, Ketu, the Lagos Digital Mapping and Geographic Information System, the provision of 100 (One Hundred) new waste compactor trucks for refuse management and the provision of 60 (Sixty) high power motor cycles, 50 (Fifty)patrol vehicles, 10 (Ten) armored personnel carriers, 200 (Two Hundred) bullet proof vests to the Police for crime prevention and control, to mention but a few.

During the period under review, our Public Works Corporation lived up to its promise to address the problem of heavy tonnage and its wear and tear on our roads by rehabilitating 900 (Nine Hundred) roads, while construction works continue on critical roads like Eti-OsaLekkiEpe Expressway, the Badagry Expressway, the Lagos Light Rail Project and many other inner roads about which I will also speak.

In Alimosho, we have completed a total of 23 (twenty three) roads of various kilometreswhile work is going on in 14 (fourteen) roads; in Agiliti, Tedi, Erikiti-Ajara work is going on, while Igbo-Elerin Road, Murtala Mohammed Way from Yaba to Iddo have now been fully completed; and plans are at an advanced stage to award Mile 12 to Ikorodu.

Our efforts to improve security at night saw to the completion of the street lighting of Eko Bridge to Costain and the section from Ijora toward Apapa, while Ikorodu Road street lighting has commenced.

I must mention that we suffered a set back of cable theft on the Eko Bridge-Ijora-Costain project which is being replaced and as I promised at the last 100 days speech, we have apprehended the culprits.

It will take too much time for me to discuss the details of the developmental projects going on in several parts of our State. It suffices to say that work is going on in every Local Government as proof of our commitment to the continued transformation and renewal of Lagos.

However, what is most instructive in all of these have been your contributions and your invaluable trust. You are the ones who have made the progress possible.

While our State has been receiving an average monthly income of ₦6-7 Billion from the Federation Account, and some States in the oil rich regions without our size of population are getting as much as ₦20-30 Billion per month, we have

looked inwards, without oil derivation and taken our destiny in our hands to use the collective taxes we contribute to build the Lagos of our dreams.

Self-sufficiency through tax compliance has certainly proven more reliable than depending on oil revenues which are proving increasingly unstable, as the key to building our prosperity. This, ladies and gentlemen, we must continue and improve upon.

Our State has become better for it. We are receiving global attention and attracting international interest for what the people of Lagos have done with their taxes.

In major international media, the curiosity about Lagos and investment interest is to learn how Lagos is surviving on taxes and reducing dependence on oil.

I could only respond by acknowledging the tremendous goodwill and support you have given to our Government and it is that support and your most invaluable trust that I now seek more of today, so that we can improve our service delivery to you.

At this moment, the implementation of the minimum wage is costing your Government about ~~₦~~2 Billion extra every month.

We have grown in our work force in order to respond to the demand for jobs and the need to service a growing population. We are at a stage when we cannot afford to employ more, even as we remain committed not to lay off workers as the private sector has done.

But ~~₦~~2 Billion extra every month, means that we are annually short of about ~~₦~~24 Billion which we could have used to provide more water, schools, hospitals, drugs, roads, security and many other social services.

The politically motivated resistance to the commencement of toll collection on the Eti-Osa, Lekki-Epe Expressway means that your Government had to part with ~~₦~~4 Billion for year 2011 which could have been used to provide more schools, inner roads, hospitals and social needs in Eti-Osa, Ibeju-Lekki and Epe areas.

This decision was sensible and necessary in order to maintain much needed and growing investor confidence in the Lagos economy, in order to maintain our credit rating and reduce our credit risk. It was critical to maintaining the stream of emerging investments required to create business opportunity and jobs for young people.

Regrettably however, our financial realities cannot sustain such funding to the detriment of other developments that are crying out for funding in other parts of the State.

It is undeniable that Property values have risen in that area because of the road work on Eti-Osa-Lekki-Epe Expressway; we have also recently completed the Falomo ramp. It is only fair that the investors begin to collect their toll.

I accordingly lift the suspension on toll collection and leave the concessionaire to announce the date for commencement of tolling.

Let me re-call your attention to the economic and financial realities that prevailed in December 2007 when I presented the first full budget of my tenure as your newly elected Governor, in the same way that I now present our first full budget for this new term.

In 2007, the exchange rate was ₦125.00 to United States \$1, today it is ₦162.00 to US\$.

In 2007, the local bank lending rate hovered around 17%, today it is an average of 19%.

In 2007, cement cost ₦1,450.00 per bag; bitumen for road construction was ₦75,000.00 per ton; diesel sold at ₦120.00 per liter.

Today cement costs ₦1,800.00; bitumen costs ₦158,000.00 per ton; diesel now sells at ₦150.00.

The truth therefore is that we need to find more money to bridge this gap, if we are to keep people at work, secure our State, build the houses we promised, implement the programme for construction of inner roads and keep the Lagos economy on the path of sustained growth.

As the leader of Government, I have already begun to lead the crusade to cut costs.

We also plan to strategically reduce our budget deficit towards 2015 and keep a vibrant economy.

This is possible, but it will not be easy. We must all sacrifice in order to benefit.

We cannot cut personnel costs such as wages and allowances or pension contributions and gratuity; but we have reduced overhead costs, trimming the number of trainings, travel costs, managing the procurement of generators and

vehicles to reduce diesel and petrol costs but even these can only go that far, because we need to keep the Police, LASTMA, and Waste Management trucks on the road daily to manage security, traffic and waste collection.

We have commissioned a 10 mega watt IPP on Lagos Island which now services the State House Marina, General Hospital Lagos, Island Maternity Lagos, the Lagos High Court and Igboosere Magistrate Court in consequence of which these facilities now enjoy 24 hour electricity for less; because our costs for powering these facilities outside of PHCN have reduced by about 40%.

When I announced these necessary cost cutting measures including the stoppage of new television sets and DSTV subscription in offices, one newspaper headline screamed on its front page "*Fashola introduces austerity measures in Lagos*".

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, this to me is the hallmark of sensitive and responsible governance that puts the people and service delivery first. This is why you chose the Action Congress of Nigeria ahead of all other parties.

Today, I lay before you, in the spirit of our democratic practice, the choices open to us, if we are to continue to progress.

We plan to build more houses, build Mile 12 – Ikorodu Road, build Odolya Alaro waste water treatment plant, Adiyon Phase II Water Works, several kilometers of inner roads in Aguda, Ijeshatedo, Mushin, Agege, Ikorodu Town, Eti-Osa, Somolu, Orilelganmu, Alimosho, Victoria Island, Ikoyi, Apapa and many other parts of Lagos.

These plans can only come to life with funding. We are borrowing within our statutory approvals to fund some of these projects, but loans, must be paid if we are to remain credit worthy.

We therefore need to earn every income due to our State and put these resources to work, in the most efficient manner.

One of the decisions that I have approved is the recommendation to stop granting waivers to those who seek to acquire land. We lose too much man hours processing requests for waivers for land and also lose revenues that the State would have earned.

The truth is that we have not reviewed the cost of our land since 2008 and we will retain these costs to make them affordable.

However, we cannot continue to subsidize the upper income class to the detriment of the lower income class. All over the world today, the privileged class is leading the sacrifice for change to secure their economies from collapse.

It is not because they are charitable. It is because they realize that their wealth depends on the existence and survival of the lower income group to earn a living to patronize the services that their companies provide and buy the goods they manufacture.

This is the kind of equitable wealth redistribution that your Government is recommending to reduce the income gap between the rich and the poor.

Unfortunately, but necessarily, we must implement a review in the annual property rates under the Land Use Charge.

The reasons are simple. The massive infrastructural renewal in Yaba, Apapa, Ikoyi, Victoria Island, Lekki, Iba, Surulere, Mushin and other parts of Lagos has increased the property values and rental income to property owners in this State.

The rate of the Land Use Charge has remained unchanged since 2002 and although it was agreed that the rate will be increased in 2009, but at the peak of the global financial crises, we refrained from doing so until now.

So for 9 (Nine) years we have kept the same rate of Land Use Charge without review even though all the variables of the economy, inflation, interest, and exchange rates have increased.

I must now necessarily announce an increase of 0.05% in the rate of Land Use Charge effective from 1st January 2012.

Although the revenues we expect from this increase will not be sufficient to meet all our costs, it will be useful and necessary if we must continue to fund the new minimum wage, security, education, healthcare, housing, waste management and inner city and neighborhood road repairs and construction without depending on the diminishing and at best unstable oil prices.

As we exercise these choices, we are mindful of the genuine aspirations and desires of our citizens to own their houses and transact businesses with their properties.

In order to continue to stimulate and facilitate this critical economic exchange, I have also approved the recommendation to reduce the rate of Governor's Consent by 2%.

Although the rates for Stamp Duties and Registration remain the same, the gross costs for perfecting title now stands reduced from a total of 15% to a total of 13%.

And we have also pegged the total cost of mortgages for residential purposes only to a gross sum of 1% of the value of the property.

Similarly, in respect of the regularization of title to Government land, which some of our citizens built on without prior allocation or approval, I have approved the reduction of regularization costs as follows:

- a. The removal of the E-Transaction fee, which is 10% of the assessment; and
- b. The reduction of the penal fee from 100% to 50%.

This policy will be in effect only for the Year 2012, as we will no longer look kindly to encroachment of Government land.

Of course we are reviewing the costs and processes of obtaining building permit with a view to possible reduction of costs and expeditious processing of approvals in certain areas of the State to act as additional stimulus for real estate development and economic growth and increased job opportunities in the State.

Quite apart from the foregoing, we are all aware of the huge global environmental challenges that nations across the world now face.

We have taken too much from our environment that it is now seemingly exacting a revenge. Rich and poor nations suffer alike without discrimination.

On July 10 this year, we got our share of unusual and violent weather, when our State was subjected to a most unusual storm that produced rainfall that lasted about 16 hours.

It delivered 340mm of rain in only one day. This is about half of the 700mm of rainfall in Holland for one year.

The uninformed and some cynics quickly rose to condemn us. Some claimed that there was no drainage in Lagos. Some political jobbers subjected themselves to public ridicule and odium when they called for my resignation.

But when the rain which started at 6am ended 10pm, the water began to recede. By 7am on Monday morning, transportation services and business were up and running.

The clean-up commenced in earnest, displaced people were attended to even though sadly and painfully some lives had been lost by those who lived close to the rivers and canal banks and who remained there inspite of our warnings and appeals 3 months before the event.

We are saddened by the avoidable loss of lives and pray for repose of the souls of the dead while we extend condolences to the bereaved, and the victims of the tragedy.

But the question to ask is where did all the flood water go, if it is true as they claim that there is no drainage in Lagos?

The truth is that there is a reliable drainage system in Lagos, but like everything in a State with a growing population, there is need to increase and improve on it, to cope with the demands of an increasing population and new emerging settlements.

We must come to terms with the fact that global warming and consequent flooding have become a reality of modern human life, especially for people who are surrounded by water like those of us in Lagos.

New York State and city, inspite of its relative advanced infrastructure suffered a similar storm and rainfall popularly called Irene for 10 hours and it left in its wake death and destruction. Transport services did not return until over 24 hours after.

Taiwan and China were also afflicted by a storm called Nanmadol that destroyed lives and property around the same time as Ibadan in South West Nigeria was sadly visited. Even after suffering a devastating tsunami early in the year, Japan was again visited by a deadly typhoon called Talasthat sadly damaged property and claimed lives.

In September of 2011, 132 (One Hundred and Thirty Two) lives were lost to flooding in Pakistan, 9 (Nine) people died in flood that hit Accra in October, while 365 (Three Hundred and Sixty Five) people were killed in Bangkok floods in Thailand and the devastation to lives and property is still under evaluation in the floods that took over almost one-third of the Philippines in October 2011.

The floods that took over Thailand since August have not receded, and only last week many parts of Italy were severely flooded.

We are building more drains and expanding existing ones in Arigbanla in Agege, in Somolu, Orile, Alaka, BabsAnimashaun, Itire to Ilesamaja and other parts of Lagos.

In Lekki area we are building 11 (eleven) new concrete storm channels and expanding existing ones in Ikoyi. We have completed the famous Idi Araba Canal which explains why there was no major devastation in this once popular flood prone area of Lagos.

This shows that if we have the resources we can solve the problems.

Property owners will be the better for it. They will benefit enormously as we build more drains that will protect their wealth and property assets, from the threat of flood, caused by global warming.

Let me state for the avoidance of doubt that our prosperity depends on getting more employed people to pay their taxes and contribute to our commonwealth. Voluntary compliance will be of great assistance to us.

This is therefore not about increasing taxes but about ensuring that any eligible tax payer contributes; because benefits from the public service will increasingly be dependent on our tax compliance status.

Let me also public implore our tax administrators, collectors and operators to demonstrate the highest level of civility and courtesy in the administration of our tax laws and policies.

We will also continue to pursue public private partnerships as viable means of getting private sector funding to work in the public sector.

We see the future for jobs in a knowledge based economy, with a rich mixture of public and private partnerships.

We also see enormous possibilities in the development of the housing sector and tourism which requires significant investment and pro-active policies before the benefits can mature.

We are convinced of the possibilities if the attitude is right and enabling.

Ladies and gentlemen, my review of the performance of Year 2011 Budget and the current economic realities will be incomplete if I do not report that inspite of the difficult environment in which we now operate, our budget performance at the end of the third quarter was 66% which was an improvement over the second quarter performance of 57%.

This improvement was as a result of some of the policies and cost-cutting creative measures we have deployed and they demonstrate very clearly that the only thing that stands in our way and a higher budgetary performance is the availability of funds.

Budget 2012

I will now lay out our Budget estimates for Year 2012, for which I seek appropriation before this distinguished House of Assembly.

PROPOSED Y2012 BUDGET

Considering the Macro-Economic climate, the proposed Y2012 budget exceeds the Y2011 revised budget by 7.66%. A proposed budget of **N485.292bn** is hereby presented as summarized below:

	Proposed Y2012 N
TOTAL REVENUE	- 399.834bn
(i) Ordinary Revenue	- 289.676bn
(ii) Federal Transfers	- 110.158bn
	Proposed Y2012 N
RECURRENT EXPENDITURE	227.471bn
(i) Total Personnel Cost	81.511bn
(ii) Total Overhead Cost	145.960bn
CAPITAL RECEIPTS	25.677bn
CAPITAL EXPENDITURE	257.821bn
FINANCING REQUIREMENT	59.781bn

Our Capital to Recurrent ratio is 53:47 for Y2012 as against 56:44 in 2011.

These ratios are dictated by recent wage increases and also partly informed by the emerging recurrent costs of maintaining and staffing the various infrastructure projects we have embarked upon over the years that are now being put to use, such as new schools, new hospitals, new water works, skill centres, and so on.

The deficit financing requirement proposed is ₦59.781bn which is 1.19% of the State's GDP.

The components of the total overhead costs of ₦145.960bn are as follows:

Overhead cost	-	₦79.797bn
Dedication Expenditure	-	₦25.595bn
Subvention	-	₦28.668bn
Staff Housing Fund	-	₦0.050 bn
Debt Charge (External)	-	₦1.050 bn
Debt Charges (Internal)	-	₦6.958 bn
Debt Charge (Bond)	-	₦3.842bn

Capital Receipts for the Year 2012 Budget is put at **₦25.677bn** made up of:

Grants	-	₦3.468bn
Investment Income	-	₦0.289bn
and Other Capital Receipts	-	₦21.920bn

Capital expenditure of **₦257.821bn** consists of:

Core Capital	-	₦222.868bn
Capital Development (Dedicated)	-	₦21.920bn
Grants	-	₦3.468bn
Counterpart Funding	-	₦3.465bn
Special Expenditure	-	₦6.000 bn
Risk Retention Fund	-	₦0.100 bn

The sectoral allocation of the Budget in size and percentage are as follows:

General Public Service	-	₦108.526bn (22.4%)
Public Order and Safety	-	₦13.849bn (2.9%)
Economic Affairs	-	₦154.419bn (31.8%)
Environmental Protection	-	₦44.227 (9.1%)
Housing and Community Amenities	-	₦42.812bn (8.8%)
Health	-	₦39.754bn (8.2%)
Recreation, Culture and Religion	-	₦5.989bn (1.2%)

Education	-	₦72.346bn (14.9%)
Social Protection	-	₦3.370bn (0.7%)

Significantly, this will be a most challenging budget to implement. Critically, it is the first full budget in this term of great expectation, when we must again begin to fulfill new electoral promises and meet citizens' expectations at a time of enormous economic and security challenges.

For a start, let me assert very clearly that our purpose and commitment towards delivering the greatest good for the greatest number is not in doubt.

We have a clear plan, informed by a progressive manifesto of the fastest growing political party, the Action Congress of Nigeria.

We are concerned about the quality of life of working and middle class people and those who are vulnerable in our State. This has led to many strategic policies aimed at making life better and less challenging.

These policies are administrative and legislative. Three of such that readily come to mind are the recent laws to create the Office of Disability, review the Criminal Law and the Tenancy Law.

The law creating the Office of Disability gives legal backing to some of what we are doing already, to recognize that some people are physically challenged and require special provision to make them lead as normal a possible life in spite of their disabilities.

Many of you will have observed that our TV Station has blazed the trail in Nigeria by being the first to offer sign language translation on its 8pm news belt, for people with hearing difficulties. The Disability law now compels Government to do more such as dedicated car parks, provision of ramps in public buildings, dedicated seats on our buses and so many more.

Again, we will require massive funding to make these provisions for the vulnerable members of our society.

The Criminal Law has first helped us to dispense with one of the last remaining colonial vestiges, a Criminal Law made by Europeans about 97 years ago which they themselves have dispensed with but which sadly continued to remain in our statute books until our legislators repealed it and replaced it with a more contemporary law that makes special provision for women and introduces many ground breaking reforms including non-custodial sentence such as community service as a way of punishment for crime.

Of course there is the Tenancy Law which strikes at the root of our shelter challenge.

While Government is pursuing its housing policy, this law has the capacity to give relief to all concerned and reduce the trauma that we are all involuntarily inflicting on ourselves.

Yes it will not solve the problem of housing, but the fact is that we all pay directly or indirectly for the outrageous demands for multiple years rent without diverting our minds to the cost.

It is one of the identified causes of desperation and difficult living to ask a worker, a trader or other person in self or paid employment to bring 2 to 3 years rent in advance.

Apart from the fact that the impact of the desperation to meet the multi-year rent affects our society as a whole and examples are legion, what really happens is that we simply pass the cost into the cost of goods and services and we all pass it around in a way that creates inflation and reduces our disposable income and the money available to deal with other things such as payment of school fees, healthcare, feeding costs and so much more.

It also compounds the problem of housing because not a few flats are empty or spend so much time idling on the market and not yielding any income because people are struggling to find 2-3 years rent to occupy them.

All of these expectedly should change and those flats should be taken up now as people comply with the law and those once empty flats should begin to earn income for their owners and contribute to the growth of our economy.

Of course, the law is not one-sided. It protects the landlord from the defaulting or difficult tenant. It dispenses with many of the previous difficulties of the old law that makes recovery of possession difficult.

The law is therefore a victory for landlords, tenants and the Lagos economy. Its success will be defined by voluntary compliance for mutual benefits rather than by the coercive authority of the State.

We have demonstrated our capacity for hard work and we are poised to exceed our efforts. The only request we make now is for your support and for funding through taxation and mutual restraint and voluntary compliance to rules and regulations that secure law and order.

I cannot conclude this address without sharing with you some of the foreseeable challenges that we anticipate and our decision to enlist your support and understanding to share the responsibility to overcome them at the best, or mitigate their adverse impacts drastically, at the worst.

As you know, we are blessed with 2 (two) distinct weather seasons in the year; the rainy and dry season. Each season brings its unique benefits and challenges.

We are coming to the end of the rainy season, which brings challenges of flooding, inclement weather, damage to roads; but which also helps agriculture and we experience less fire accidents because of the high moisture content in the atmosphere.

The dry season which we are about to commence brings on a better weather relatively. It gives us about 7 (Seven) months from November to May of the next year to patch and repair bad roads, clear the drainage before the next rainy season and make rapid progress on civil works at construction sites.

It is unfortunately also the season when moisture is reduced and there are high incidents of fire. While our Safety Commission and Fire Service and emergency services are poised to act, your safety consciousness with inflammable materials like petrol and chemicals, management of electricity appliances and candles and lanterns, gas cylinders and those types of things will be our biggest collective safeguard for the protection for lives and property.

While this will help reduce accidents and disasters, our emergency helpline of 767 and 112 are always there for you to call for free should the need arise.

The last 4 (four) months of the year which started in September and will run till December, which are often called the "ember months" will pose their usual unique challenges for security and traffic management.

First, this is the period when some unscrupulous people who have not done any decent share of hard work will seek to benefit where they did not invest by resorting to crime.

We have raised the alert level of the security agencies to these challenges, we have provided additional vehicles and equipment; and I expect that they will respond.

Our community police initiative through the Neighborhood Watch has been primed for vigilance and information gathering which it will pass on to the Police.

As citizens, we owe the greatest duty of care to ourselves, our children, and our valuables by being more careful about ostentatious display of wealth and being very vigilant and security conscious.

Let me also use this opportunity to appeal to all citizens to desist from sending panic text messages and direct their information which may help prevent crime to the law enforcement agencies through the 767 and 112 emergency lines.

Of course this period brings with it the festivals of Eid-el Kabir and Christmas where traditionally we exchange gifts and move millions of tons of cargo of foodstuffs and drinks in traffic. Officers and men of LASTMA have been prepared to help manage traffic.

Our responsibility as citizens is to recognize that the enormous requests to use our roads means that they are a shared asset that we cannot all use at the same time if we are to minimize congestion.

If it is possible therefore to transact our business by telephone, by text message, by email or to postpone our journey, we must resist the temptation to put that vehicle on the road if we can help it.

This will help reduce the pressure on the roads and on our public servants and contractors who will be working to make them motorable and ready for the next rainy season.

Let me use this opportunity to issue another appeal to motorcycle operators in our State to show restraint, and comply with our rules and regulations about the permissible times for operation and to stop driving against traffic.

We have been extremely tolerant of their needs and challenges. They must not abuse our understanding or our hospitality.

Of course I must also urge motorists in general and operators of fuel tankers and articulated trucks commonly called trailers, to drive carefully and with restraint.

Most of the traffic gridlock witnessed in recent weeks has been caused by accidents and the build up that follows before the big vehicles are successfully removed by LASTMA.

In a peaceful and secure environment of shared responsibility, a lot is possible and the dream of a brighter and rewarding future is real.

As leader of this team, I remain committed to delivering on those possibilities.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, Ladies and gentlemen, let me conclude now by wishing you all a merry Christmas in advance and a prosperous Year 2012 ahead.

Thank you for listening. God bless you all.

Long live Lagos State.

Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Eko o ni baje o!

Babatunde Raji Fashola, SAN
Governor of Lagos State

Monday, November 14, 2011