

The Trumpet newspaper emerges, names editorial team, others

The Trumpet, a newspaper anchored on truth, objectivity, fair play, patriotism, ethics and morality, has entered Nigeria's vibrant media space.

It is published by Elomaz Communications Limited, a Nigerian-owned multimedia group, which has also named an editorial board, editors and other officials for The

Trumpet.

The Editorial Board, comprising veteran journalists and academics, is headed by a former stalwart of The Daily Times, Chief John Araka. The other editorial team is led by Omokioja JJK Eto, a former Associate Editor of The Guardian and immediate past Editor of The Daily Times.

John Onowighose Araka, FNGE, KSJI.

Chief John Onowighose Araka was born at Owhegbo in Isoko North Local Government of Delta State.

He attended St Joseph's College, Ozoro. He later gained admission to the University of Lagos to read Mass Communication. He graduated with Second Class Upper

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Electoral bill faces fresh danger from govts, others

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Nigerians fear 2023 polls in danger over electoral bill

Renewed anger in N'Delta over oil blocs ownership, others, stakeholders disagree

By NAPOLEON EHIREMEN, Abuja

Months after the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) was signed by President Muhammadu Buhari, the dust raised over some issues not addressed is yet to settle in the Niger Delta. Issues concerning the lopsided allocation of oil blocks which is allegedly skewed in favour of the North and the 3% allocation to the host communities in the PIA have continued to generate discussions and tensions in the region.

While the promoters of the allocation to host communities want 10% of profit made by oil companies be given to them to address environmental degradation and developmental issues, those opposed mostly from the north believe that will be giving too much to them; hence they settled for 3%.

The Niger Delta plays host to much of the oil which is the main source of revenue that drives the Nigerian economy. The region has, however, suffered untold neglect and abandonment by successive governments that have paid lip service to the plight of the people in the region which is mainly environmental pollution that has grossly impacted the economy life of the people. Although

the federal government has previously set up bodies like the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), the Presidential Amnesty Program and appropriate 13% derivation to oil-producing states, these have not been able to address the decay in the region due to poor funding and management. The people of the region have on every available opportunity called on the federal government to address the lopsided oil blocks distribution so that the people of the Niger Delta will also have a stake in their God-given resources.

Recall that Senator Ita Enang, in 2016, drew the attention of the Senate to a critical and raging issue that bothers on the inequitable distribution, saying that 83% of oil blocks in Nigeria belong to northerners while the Niger Delta that hosts the petroleum gets nothing.

Enang, who was then the chairman Senate committee on rules and business said: "some people who own oil blocks in the North are richer than their states and even some oil producing states. Now it is still said that Niger Delta is taking too much when one person's profits from the oil blocks is more than the entire derivation revenue to Niger Delta region."

He called on the federal government to revoke all the oil blocks and reallocate them

either through the PIB or an act of the executive. Despite the PIA coming on stream with the president's signature, the troubling issues are still left unattended while that of the host communities has not been given the desired attention.

The convener and former Secretary, South South and Middle Belt Movement, Tony Erha, says the controversial PIA is not made to address the problems of the oil states. According to him, "an act which seeks to spend only three per cent of the operational budgets of oil companies on host communities yet cede over eighty per cent of oil blocks to a people from the north is the worst sin committed to the people of the Niger Delta."

He stated that what Nigeria has done with the allocation of eighty per cent of oil blocks to the people of a particular region is to transfer the wealth of the Niger Delta to "northerners" and leave the producing area with a mere three percent as provided for in the PIA.

Patrick Osagie Eholor, a Benin-based rights activist, said the PIA should have clearly defined what constitutes host impacted communities rather than leave that to the discretion of oil companies. According to him, "because we have chosen to play politics with everything, Nigerians would continued to



Buhari



Sylva

bear the consequences of our actions when nepotism and parochialism are promoted above patriotism, equity and justice."

On his part, the National Coordinator, HOSTCOM, Prince Okuramen Maikpobi, emphasised the need for Niger Delta people to show more interest in the oil blocks allocation. He stressed that the oil blocks can only be allocated to those who bid for them.

In his words, "the marginal oil fields or oil blocks were recently advertised and everybody was encouraged to apply. Those that qualified in the first bidding round were those that were invited to the second bidding. There was no discrimination

in it nor favour to a particular region."

He, however, called on oil companies to relocate their headquarters to their operational base in the Niger, saying that if that is done development will come to the region.

Comrade Alagoa Morris, an environmentalist and rights activist, said those calling on oil companies to relocate to the Niger Delta are not being fair because it is not by force for business owners to establish their headquarters in the region. According to him, "the truth is that a high level of insecurity in the Niger Delta drove the companies away from the region."

Atiku's feud with wife over divorce takes new twist

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According to her: "Since this incident, I fear for my safety and that of my kids...Security operatives especially Ibro and others have made threats and called my relatives, friends, and staff, and searched for my assets to seize and monitor my phone calls and those of friends and relatives. For that reason, I have exited my law firm and sold all my assets, and moved abroad until peace reigns.

"I have done nothing wrong except to ask for a divorce and it pains me that I have to use this medium to address thorny issues but fear that at this point, I would have to put my side of the story on record. It is obvious that a campaign of calumny to total discredit and put me in bad light has begun.

"Despite all that has happened, I reiterate that I asked for a quiet divorce which if he had been granted, we would not be where we are today. Divorce is never an easy process for both parties. I reiterate that I hope we can settle our issues privately and I would remain at His Excellency's service should he need

my help, anytime."

The third wife of Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, while reacting to speculations on social media accusing her of disposing of the couple's Dubai real estate illegally, among other allegations explained that she requested for a divorce from her husband and mentioned prominent Nigerians who had mediated in their matter.

Her words: "For some time now, especially in the last few weeks, there has been a whole lot of rumors in circulation about the state of my marriage to his Excellency Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, the Waziri Adamawa, GCON. The stories got more vicious as they continued to circulate. I deem it necessary to defend myself against the calculated propaganda to malign my character and position me in a bad light and damage my name. Without resorting to nonsensical talk, I would address the two key issues at hand:

(1) That I asked for a divorce because His Excellency got married again.

(2) That I sold his Excellency's house in Dubai.

"That I asked for a divorce because His Excellency got married again On June. 26, 2021, I asked His Excellency to grant me a divorce in light of the breakdown of our marriage. And, during that period, I told his Excellency that I remain at his Excellency's service to continue to assist him in his activities even if I am no longer married to him. Suffice it to say that several friends of his Excellency tried to mediate in this matter. I thank them most graciously and remain grateful for their efforts, Peter Okocha, Senator Ben Obi, Tunde Ayeni, Captain Yahaya, and Senator Ben Bruce.

"The core reason for the divorce was disagreement over my continued stay in the United Kingdom, to look after my children and several other long-standing issues. I needed to play the role of a mother at this time to the children who have gone through the absence of both father and mother growing up; especially, with the passage of my elder sister who used to look after them. Furthermore, in light of COVID times, choosing to stay with the children was non-negotiable. And, in line with Northern culture,

the new wife takes up the baton so I can also focus on giving the kids more care.

"Despite not informing us officially according to northern/Islamic culture, I knew about his Excellency's new wife from the time Excellency was dating her and when his Excellency eventually married her. I have graciously invited our new wife to my son's wedding in Dubai in 2018 without any ill feelings and congratulated his Excellency when our new wife put to bed.

"I was already aware that His Excellency had gotten married to our new wife but that did not deter me from supporting His Excellency and indeed, we went through a most rigorous electioneering campaign and garnered massive support for his election in 2019.

"That His Excellency married a new wife was never the cause of our problem as many have said. His Excellency is a Moslem and I have never questioned him about his wives or intended. I hope this brings this issue to rest as I did not leave the house because of his new marriage."

She added: "The Matrimonial home in Asokoro where we reside was gifted to me by him even before we moved into that home from a previous residence. Indeed, His Excellency caused his Private Secretary to process the DEED of assignment documents for the house, which he did and handed. me the documents. I then commenced processing the title to the property.

"During the initial mediation discussion, Excellency denied that he gifted the house even after I showed him the document with the signatures of his aide, his Excellency asked me to give him the deed of gift. When I asked him, where will I and the kids stay when we come to Nigeria, he told me that since I am the one that asked for a divorce, I should find a place to stay, and subsequently, I moved out.

"Hence, during my last visit to Nigeria in December, 2021, I stayed at a hotel. I have long released these assets to him and hereby reiterate that thee titles are at his disposal to pick up whenever he deems fit.

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Nigerians fear 2023 polls in danger over electoral bill

By OBAH SYLA (Deputy Editor) and KELVIN OVIRI

■ Stakeholders, others disagree as Buhari refuses to sign

There are fears in some quarters that next year's general elections are imperilled by the President's refusal to sign the electoral bill passed by the National Assembly.

As the country awaits President Muhammadu Buhari's assent to the Electoral Act Bill 2021, many Nigerians have decried what they termed as the spineless posture of the National Assembly in bowing to him by accepting to rework areas which he cited for his refusal to greenlight the bill.

Most Nigerians expected the National Assembly to have stood up to the executive arm of government and overridden the President. They believe that they should have vetoed him on the Electoral Bill 2021 (Amendment) by a two-thirds majority vote due to its importance for the transparency and security of the country's electoral system.

According to them, the legislators should have done better to uphold the honour of the National Assembly and show the clear distinction between both arms of government on issues of governance with a firm stance on the bill.

The President's rejection of the bill led to a public outcry for the National Assembly to override him. But the National Assembly in its initiative ignored the calls from Nigerians and reworked sections of concern in the bill. The National Assembly believes that it will be difficult to veto a President whose party is in power apart from the many political, religious and ethnic intrigues and sentiments involved.

Hon Oghene Egho, a member representing Amuwo-Odofin federal constituency, House of Representatives, spoke on the issue in an interview. Egho who is also a member of the House committee on the Electoral Bill 2021 (Amendment), noted that the decision that the National Assembly took to rework the areas of concern as highlighted

by the President was in the best interest of Nigerians who are clamouring for free, fair and credible elections.

He remarked: "Now there is confusion in the Electoral Act Bill 2021 with regards to the issue of a consensus candidate as amended by the Senate. We in the House of Representatives, saw that the best thing was to have both direct and indirect primaries and removed consensus. Why we did that was because we saw that consensus was the easiest way to oppress an aspirant. So we decided that the consensus candidate option should be removed.

"On second thought, we knew we were going to have a meeting with the Senate which has already included the consensus option. We saw from the comments of Nigerians that they are very interested in the electoral bill because they want to ensure that there is a free and fair election. In fact, Nigerians are not happy that the President did not sign the bill. They reached out to us, from my constituency and everywhere, so we decided that for the electoral bill to be signed we need to include a consensus option.

"We do not want a situation where we will send it to the President and he returns it because there is no consensus option. So we did it to satisfy Nigerians. But in doing this we decided to put some clauses in Section (84) to ensure democracy will not be robbed through the consensus. So, we said, if there are people who want to contest an election, everybody has to sign to agree on a consensus. If one or two aspirants say they are not part of it, then you cannot use the consensus option.

"So we have tried to democratise the consensus option so that people will not say the house rescinded their decision just to satisfy the President. We have done it also to satisfy the entire electorates and Nigerians. We

know nothing is perfect but electoral bill is near perfect and it satisfies the yearnings of all our people. We included the direct, indirect, and the consensus option with clauses that made it very democratic.

"The time left for the President to sign the bill is very short. So if we send it to the President and he refuses to sign, you find out that it will be too late for us to say that we want to veto him. Do not forget that the word veto is used with serious care. It takes time to get a two-thirds majority to veto a President whose party is in power. Besides political inclination, tribal and religious sentiments always come in."

However, a former national chairman of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), Senator Victor Umeh, said disagreed with the consensus option as passed by the Senate.

According to him: "When the Senate passed its version and included consensus without specifying how a consensus candidate can emerge to become an option of nomination, I disagreed with the Senate but agreed with the House of Representatives to the extent that the House of Representatives rejected that consensus option.

"I pointed out that the Act premises the steps they will take to nominate a candidate. If you choose direct primary or indirect primary, you must specify the steps. If you then choose consensus, the Bill did not specify the steps you take to get a consensus candidate; so, to that extent, I felt that the provision for the consensus candidate was vague.

"Now, with the amendment from the House of Representatives which included the clauses for the adoption of a consensus candidate, I am gladly satisfied with all the three options. The amendment states that all the cleared aspirants for an elected position must in writing endorse a particular person as the

consensus candidate. If all other aspirants withdraw in writing and endorse a consensus candidate a special convention must be used to affirm its candidacy.

"Now that the three options have been provided, I do not see what the President can hold on to not to give his assent to the bill. Everything is now clear. There is nothing vague in the provisions anymore. It is left for the party to choose the option to select a candidate that they want to represent them in the general elections. If these clauses were not added, the President can say he will not sign. You will not blame him."

Before the decision of both chambers of the National Assembly to accommodate other forms of primaries as stated in clause (84), Buhari refused to sign the amended Electoral Act Bill 2021. This spurred mixed reactions from Nigerians at home and in the diaspora.

Mr. Ibekwe Noyenren supported the action of the President, stressing that it was undemocratic to make it mandatory for political parties to adopt direct primaries.

He said: "Let me state clearly that President Buhari did not refuse to sign the amended Electoral Bill 2021 into law, but he simply declined to assent to it because of the insertion of undemocratic clauses recommending a mandatory application of direct primaries for political parties to choose candidates.

"Buhari is right in declining and the legislature in its wisdom has admitted that Buhari is right and has gone further to begin tinkering with the bill to accommodate other forms of a primary election."

Pastor Ufuoma Bernard, founder of Godism, also supported Buhari's refusal to sign the bill. He said: "The major reason Buhari refused to sign the Electoral Bill 2021 (Amendment) into law and returned it to the National Assembly is the clause on direct primaries. He feels it should

be optional. The parties should choose between direct and indirect primaries based on expediency."

Mr. Nelson Eware, a political analyst and Senior Special Assistant (SSA) to the Delta State Governor, said that the inclusion of direct primaries is an infringement on the rights of political parties.

According to Nelson, "The President's refusal to sign the Electoral Act Bill 2021 (Amendment) was in order because the Constitution provides that political parties shall determine the mode of primary elections to be conducted for aspirants. Therefore legislating on a single mode of party primaries is an infringement on the rights of political parties to determine the mode of primary suitable for them.

"Although for time constraints he should not have waited till the very last day to withhold his assent. Personally, I am in sync with the reasons adduced by the President because the direct primaries conducted recently by the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) were all marred by fraud and irregularities. It is chaotic, expensive to administer, and could pose a very huge security risk."

Mr. Dickson Ogunbor feels that Buhari who came to power, defeating the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan in 2015 through massive support of Nigerians, has betrayed the trust reposed on him over his refusal to assent to the bill.

He said: "How can a president who came to power through free and fair elections, defeating an incumbent President, refuse to sign this all-important bill? This amendment will give all the registered members of the various political parties the privilege to decide first-hand who emerges as their party's flagbearer. It is sad that the President that most of us supported can reject this kind of bill."

Atiku's feud with wife over divorce takes new twist

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"There has been a lot of speculation on the Dubai home. For a while now, I had purposely stayed away from Dubai until I took custody of that property in September 2021 after his Excellency word to give the current value of the said property in exchange. When I came to Nigeria, in early September, 2021. I asked to have a private conversation with His Excellency. During that conversation, I informed his Excellency that once I get back to the United Kingdom, I will go to Dubai and take over the house. He subsequently departed for his medical trip to Germany refusing to address any of the issues I privately wanted to conclude with

him outside of third parties.

"I subsequently traveled to Dubai, and took custody of the said property. Once I did that, on 18 September 2021, His Excellency sent me a text and I quote: "I hear you have moved to Dubai to take over the house. I am still in Germany for my medicals. Make sure all my properties including (redacted) are intact so I can collect all my properties. I wish you well.

"I responded to him: 'Excellency, I am left with no other option as we need to get on with our lives amicably. I hope your medicals are coming up well. I wish you well too'.

"On 19th September, 2021 in response to his text that I am not being amicable and I quote,



Atiku

'Good morning, with due respect, Excellency, I told you on Saturday before you left for Germany, that I was going back to the UK, take

[our son] back for his test, then come to Dubai. I reiterated that day the need for an amicable resolution. I maintain that stance and remain at your service Your Excellency.'

"Further on Tuesday, 21 September, 2021, I asked His Excellency in another text whether he wanted me to pack up his clothes and give them to Rahim (his driver) since the driver on his instructions was moving his cars. I also asked Excellency in that text whether he wanted me to have Rahim pack up his office. Then his Excellency sent me a text back and asked: 'So it's true you have sold the villa?'

"Subsequently, His Excellency sent the driver to take possession

of all the cars. The truth subsists with regard to the Dubai house. I will make no further comments on it because it is the subject of litigation filed by his Excellency against me. I need to also put on record that if I wanted to take His Excellency assets, I would not have returned to him his property documents in Abuja and Jos and document, allowed the driver to collect his cars, gave up the house in Asokoro, and Yola.

"The last time I was in Nigeria I called to have the Asokoro and Yola documents delivered to him. It was never picked up and I still state that Excellency is free to send someone to have the documents picked up anytime he deems fit."

Electoral bill faces fresh danger from govs, others

By EDWARD ADAMIDENYO,
Regional Editor

Nigerians are once more apprehensive that there may be fresh plots by powerful interests to scuttle the amended electoral bill transmitted to President Muhammad Buhari on Monday.

A day before the bill was sent to the President for his assent, *The Trumpet* was reliably informed that some governors, especially those of the All Progressives Congress (APC), are leading the opposition to the reworked bill.

The governors who are uncomfortable with the new clauses in the bill are said to be mounting pressure on the President to withhold his assent until the two clauses are amended or dropped.

The clauses in contention are

resignation by appointed political office holders, including ministers, commissioners and others before the 2023 election primaries as well as what they termed 'unworkable' consensus option in picking candidates by political parties.

What has been in practice in Nigeria is for appointed political office holders to remain in office while contesting in their party's primaries.

The Office of the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami is allegedly uncomfortable with the re-amended bill.

Meanwhile, civil society leaders who spoke to *The Trumpet* yesterday warned that Nigerians would not tolerate another ambush against the important law that will guarantee transparency and credibility of the electoral process.

Ariyo-Dare Atoye, Executive Director, Adopt A Goal For



Fayemi

Development Initiative, said: "We are aware that dissenters are already scheming against the reviewed electoral bill re-transmitted to the President.

"We want to put it on record that the main fear of these detractors is the credibility and transparency that a new electoral act will guarantee.

"Therefore we wish to urge the Attorney General of the Federation, Abubakar Malami, not to conspire with these dissidents to obstruct the signing of the re-transmitted bill by the President."

Ariyo-Dare recalled that this is the sixth time that the electoral bill will be transmitted to Buhari in the last six years for his assent and cautioned that the President must not entertain any further distraction from anti-democratic forces.

Also speaking to *The Trumpet*, Samson Itodo, Executive Director of Yiaga Africa, said: "from a principled position, the consensus procedure is antithetical to democratic principles and will result in the subversion of popular will. If not democratically

conducted, it could violate the rights of aspirants to equal participation in party primary election and it limits the choice of voters to candidates who did not emerge from democratic primary elections. The safeguards introduced by the National Assembly though plausible, may not insulate the process from manipulation and capture."

He called on the President to urgently assent to the retransmitted Electoral Bill 2022 within seven days in fulfilment of his promise to bequeath to Nigeria an electoral system that guarantees the sanctity of the vote.

Itodo stressed that an expeditious assent to the bill has become critical given the paucity of time to prepare for the off-cycle governorship elections and the 2023 general election.

"It will bode well for our democracy if the President assents to the bill immediately. This is the President's moment to stand with Nigerians and override the selfish interests of politicians with public interest and assent to the bill," the Yiaga chief added.

It was however learnt that the governors and some ministers were not happy with what they termed "alleged two dangerous clauses in the re-amended bill on Electoral Act."

The clauses include the provision for consensus and another which makes it mandatory for all political office holders to resign if they want to contest for any elective post in 2023.

Again, a source at the National Assembly disclosed that the battle between the lawmakers and the governors has once more shifted to the Presidency. "This time, we will not go back for any reconsideration of the bill," the source said defiantly.

Before the Clerk to the National Assembly, Mr. Olatunde Amos Ojo, transmitted the authenticated copies of the Electoral Bill 2022 to the President, those opposed to the reworked document accused the lawmakers of inserting the two new clauses on consensus and resignation by all political office holders before contesting for the 2023 poll.

While the senators and members of the House of Representatives agreed on consensus, they recommended that before such a candidate can emerge, all contestants must sign a written agreement that they have consented to the adoption of the aspirant.

The re-amended bill also gave as condition that if one of the contestants is dissenting, no one can become a consensus candidate. Instead, all the contestants will either go for direct or indirect primary election.

It was further learnt that the Senators and the Representatives put the difficult clause on consensus to stop the governors from imposing any anointed aspirant on the political parties. They contend that the governors "can no longer work to the answer."

Political pundits and many Nigerians will be keen on the outcome of this fresh battle which may again truncate the hope for an enduring law to safeguard the electoral process.

Buhari launches N62b HIV Trust Fund

■ As Dangote appeals for support toward eradication of AIDS in Nigeria

By PAUL MICHAEL and SHARON
ISAALAH

President Muhammadu Buhari has launched a N62 billion trust fund to help Nigeria end AIDS as a public health threat and place more people living with HIV on treatment annually.

Speaking at the launch of the HIV Trust Fund of Nigeria (HTFN), Buhari pledged that his administration would continue to prioritize health interventions to address killer diseases and public health emergencies.

"At the last United Nations General Assembly High Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS, I made a call for a renewed global action to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa.

"Ending AIDS as a public health threat in Nigeria will require increased domestic funding. We have continued to make good our commitment of placing more people living with HIV on treatment annually using national resources.

"However, strong domestic resource mobilization with an enduring partnership and shared responsibility is required to sustain the response to HIV and other emerging public health emergencies," he said.

Buhari noted that Nigeria's purposeful partnership with the private sector in the response to COVID 19 pandemic had provided a readily available financing solution to leverage on to sustain the

HIV response.

He commended the National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA) and the Nigeria Business Coalition Against AIDS for their efforts in establishing the HIV Trust Fund of Nigeria to secure a generation of babies free of HIV.

He also expressed delight with the attendance in person of notable global key players in HIV response and from the private sector at the event and the pledges made.

"Going forward, I hope The HIV Trust Fund of Nigeria will galvanize more of the private sector and other partners to surpass the target of Sixty-Two Billion Naira in the next five years," he added.

In his remarks, the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Boss Mustapha announced that since 2005 about 6.2 billion dollars has been spent on HIV response in Nigeria.

"About 80 per cent of the funds were contributed by external donors, mainly the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The Private Sector contributed 0.1 per cent to 2 per cent of total funds with the rest of funds provided by the Nigerian government," he said.

Acknowledging NACA's efforts to promote resource mobilisation to complement existing external support, Mustapha said the Federal Government has sustained the treatment and financing of 50,000 PLHIV annually.

He said the launch of the HTFN

will guarantee funding from the private sector-led resources for HIV interventions especially for the elimination of the Mother-to-Child transmission of the virus.

"Since 2005, about 6.2 billion dollars has been spent on HIV response in Nigeria about 80 per cent of the funds were contributed by external donors mainly the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The Private Sector contributed 0.1 per cent to 2 per cent of total funds with the rest of funds provided by the Nigerian government," he noted.

Meanwhile, Chief Launcher and Chairman and CEO of Dangote Group, Alhaji Aliko Dangote said the mission of the private sector led fund proposed by NACA alongside the Nigeria Business Coalition Against AIDS (NiBUCAA) is to ensure mobilisation of resources towards eradication of AIDS in Nigeria, starting with the Prevention of Mother-to-Child transmission of the virus.

"I am reminded that we have 2 million of our compatriots living with HIV/AIDS and it is our collective responsibility to bring this number down to zero," he said.

Dangote, who is Africa's richest man, appealed to individuals and corporate organisations in the country to donate generously toward the Fund, currently chaired by Dr Herbert Wigwe, the Group Managing Director of Access Bank Plc.

I'm consulting before entering 2023 presidential race, Tambuwal declares

Sokoto State Governor Aminu Tambuwal has signified his intention to run for the presidential race in 2023 under the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

The former Speaker of the House of Representatives made this

known yesterday after a high-level stakeholder meeting in Sokoto.

Tambuwal said he was well prepared to fix the numerous problems of the country as President.

He said he has distinguished

himself not only as governor but as a Speaker of the House of Representatives without any blemish or corruption tag.

Tambuwal joins other PDP presidential aspirants including a journalist, Dele Momodu,

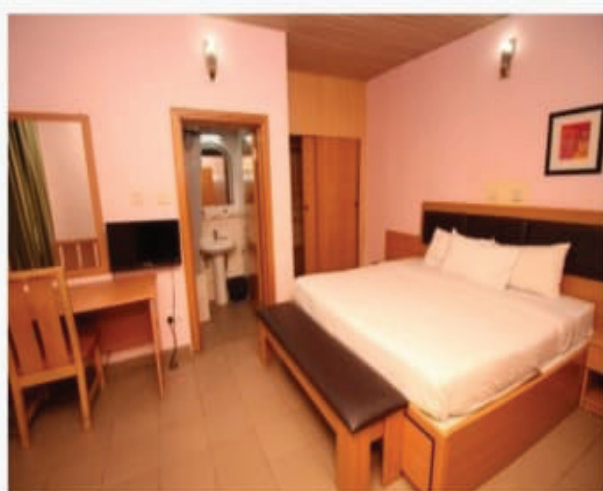
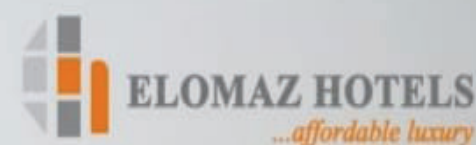
Gov Mohammed Bala who have declared their presidential ambition.

Tambuwal came second to former vice-President Atiku Abubakar at the PDP presidential primary in 2018.

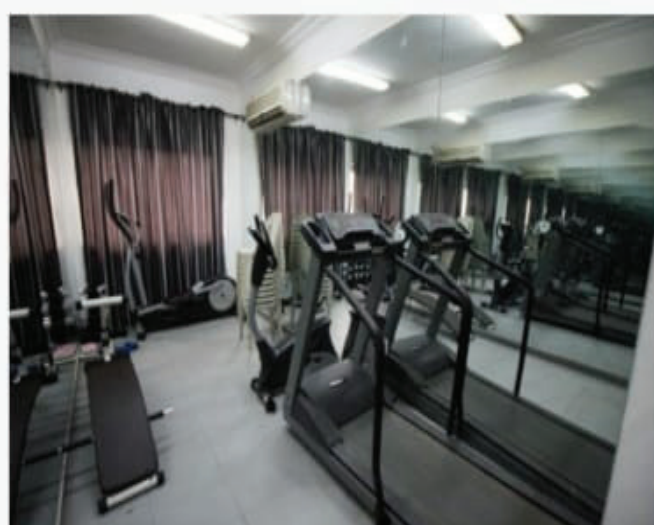
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NEWS



N'Assembly mulls law to boost local production of drugs, others

The National Assembly is canvassing strengthening of local production in Nigeria.

Chairman, Senate Committee on Health, Senator Ibrahim Yahaya Oloriegbe, Chairman, House Committee on Health, Yusuf Sununu, and Chairman, Pharmacists Council of Nigeria, Prof. Ahmed Tijani, made the call during a tour of Emzor's modern manufacturing plant at Sagamu, Ogun State. They also canvassed a ban on importation on goods made in Nigeria.

They said consuming locally made goods would improve the economy and create jobs.

Oloriegbe said: "We had some interactions with the Federal Ministry of Health, and there were some motions

that were taken on how to increase local content in terms of pharmaceutical products in Nigeria.

"During the early stage of COVID-19, everywhere in the world was closed down. And if a country is dependent on importation of all its drugs, it means there's no security in that country. Health security is very important. So, that's why we took it upon ourselves to pay a visit to Emzor, to see what is contained here, to know what we need to do to be able to strengthen and improve the capacity, and what we need to do as a country to become self-sufficient in pharmaceutical products. We are very pleased with what we have seen. We need to do whatever it takes within our capacity as people



Senator Ibrahim Yahaya Oloriegbe

that are privileged to be in government at this time to see how we can sustain, improve and increase the capacity of

this space for the benefit of Nigerians."

He went on: "One of the commonest illnesses in Nigeria

is malaria, and this factory produces anti-malaria drugs, so, with the capacity we've seen here, I think Nigeria should be in a position to produce almost all we consume. And we shouldn't allow importation of such products into the country. And one of the other things that we need to do is to see how all the relevant agencies of government will be able to support the effort, including the regulatory bodies, the financial sector and the trade and industry sector.

On his part, Sununu, said: "The hope is blink about the Nigerian health sector, but my confidence was restored after the facility's tour, considering the number of products that are produced by Emzor Pharmaceutical, and also the talented youths we saw while going round the facility. Going by our knowledge of what is happening in medical practice and manufacturing sector, this company is of international

standard. Emzor's products are not only accepted in Nigeria, but also worldwide.

"What we need to do now is for us as policymakers and lawmakers to advise and put up a framework and a legislation that will protect local manufacturers. We must ensure that things that are produced locally should not be imported so that we can increase local production. This will stimulate our economy and also create a lot of jobs for our youths.

On her part, Executive Director, Emzor Pharmaceutical, Uzoma Ezeoke, noted: "We promote unlimited wellness, which to us, translates as having quality products available and affordable. So, when we advocate buy made-in-Nigeria, we need people to understand what that means. We say with pride that this factory can stand on any continent and do very well. We have a lot of young and vibrant people.

Imo assures traders on reallocation of market

Imo State Governor Hope Uzodimma has assured traders, who lost their shops in the demolished Eke-Ukwu Main Market on Douglas Road, Owerri, of priority during the allocation of stalls.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the state Commissioner for Commerce, Simon Ibegbulem, stated this in Owerri, yesterday, when he led a team of journalists to inspect the project.

Ibegbulem said that the project, which was over 40 per cent completed, would be rounded up and inaugurated by December 2022.

He said the market, which is located at the heart of Owerri metropolis, was pulled down by former Governor Rochas Okorocha's administration. He disclosed that the market had 2,925 lock-up stalls and would have modern facilities, a bank, police post and fire service, among others, when completed.

He said on completion, the state government would collaborate with the market association to ensure that traders, who lost their shops in the demolished market, were prioritised during the allocation of stalls.

"There are at least 200 Owerri indigenes, who lost their shops in the old market. Such people and other original shop owners would be given price concession.

"For instance, if a shop would go for N2 million or N3 million, they may be

asked to pay less, as a way of compensating them for their losses," Ibegbulem said.

Speaking, Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Declan Emelumba, explained that the governor decided to rebuild the facility, because it remained the only Owerri ancestral market.

"When the governor assumed office, Owerri people visited him and lamented the abandonment of the market after it was demolished. They pleaded with him to rebuild their only ancestral market and the governor assured them that he would rebuild it. So, he has fulfilled his promise," Emelumba said.

He further said the project was being executed through a Public Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement.

Emelumba also conducted journalists round the fashion cluster, being built by the state, in conjunction with the Federal Government to promote small and medium enterprises.

The facility is equipped with over 500 modern machines for sewing and designing and solar panels for 24-hour electricity supply.

Emelumba said the facility would provide the platform for trained tailors and fashion designers, who had no capital to acquire their own machines, to rent and do their businesses.

He said the state government also gave N250, 000 startup capital to 1,500 youths, who were trained in dressmaking, hairdressing, shoemaking and welding, among others.

Court okays Customs bid to contest N2b judgment debt •ExxonMobil protests against verdict

The Supreme Court has granted the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) board's application to challenge the February 6, 2014 judgment of the Court of Appeal that awarded a N2.048 billion judgment debt in favour of Innoson Nigeria Limited.

A five-man panel of the court, in a unanimous ruling, upheld the prayers of Customs the applicant canvassed through its counsel, Tayo Oyetibo (SAN) by a Motion on Notice filed on November 9, 2020.

The panel comprised Justices Olukayode Ariwoola, John Inyang Okoro, Helen Moronkeji Ogunwumiju, Abdu Aboki and Tijani Abubakar.

Justice Aboki, who read the panel's decision on January 14, 2022, agreed with the lead ruling of Justice Abubakar that Customs' argument was meritorious.

The court held: "Having granted the application, therefore, the following orders are hereby made: "Leave is hereby granted to the applicant to appeal as an interested party against the judgment of the Court of Appeal, Ibadan Division in appeal number CA/1/258/2011.

"Time is extended to the applicant to seek for leave to appeal against the judgment of the Court of Appeal on grounds of mixed law and facts.

"Leave is hereby granted to the applicant to appeal against the judgment of the Court of Appeal, Ibadan Division, on

grounds of mixed law and facts. Time is extended to the applicant within which to appeal against the judgment of the Court of Appeal, Ibadan Division in suit No. CA/1/258/2011."

The court also granted the applicant leave to raise new points and adduce fresh evidence in the appeal.

The applicant was ordered to file its notice of appeal within 30 days from the day of judgment.

Chief Femi Aribisala (SAN) represented the first respondent, GTBank, while Prof. J. N. M. Mbadugha stood in for the second respondent, Innoson, just as Justice Christopher Balogun of a Lagos High Court, Ikeja ordered the Nigerian Navy to pay the entitlements of the late Rear Admiral Ndubuisi Kanu to a dedicated interest-yielding account.

The court made the order in a suit filed by Mrs. Gladys Ndubuisi Kanu, yesterday, that the force should calculate the benefits of her departed husband and pay into the account.

In the case, marked LD/3685FPM/2021, the widow is seeking to be declared as the only legal wife of the late military officer.

The respondents are the first wife, Josephine Ndubuisi Kanu and the children, Kelly Kanu; Nigerian Navy, Simone Abiona (Nee Kanu), Andrey Joe-Ezigbo (nee Kanu), Paula Kanu and Karen Johnson (nee

Kanu), Jeffery Kanu, Laura Kanu and Stephen Kanu.

The plaintiff also sought for an order of the court to declare that she is the only widow of the late Ndubuisi. The judge, therefore, adjourned hearing to February 7.

Also, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) High Court, yesterday, granted the former rector of Federal Polytechnic, Kaduna, Prof. Idris Bugaji, a leave for an appeal against a preliminary ruling in a N 1 billion defamation suit brought against him by a staff in the Budget Office of the federation.

Justice Hamza Mu'azu granted the application by Bugaji's counsel for extension of time to file their defence and a leave to appeal against the earlier ruling delivered by the court.

The judge had on September 28, 2021, held that the preliminary objection brought by the defendants' counsel challenging the jurisdiction of the court to entertain the suit as lacking in merit.

"I hold that the preliminary objection is misconceived and lacking in merit, and accordingly, fails and is hereby dismissed."

Besides, ExxonMobil Corporation has asked the Court of Appeal, Lagos to uphold the decision of the National Industrial Court refusing to stay its proceedings in a suit filed by one Paul Arinze for the wrongful termination of his employment by Mobil Producing

Nigeria Unlimited and Exxon Mobil Corporation.

The firm's appeal was sequel to an order made by Justice N. M. Esowe delivered on January 25, 2022 over jurisdiction.

The oil firm equally filed an application seeking to stay proceeding in the matter pending hearing and determination of an appeal it had filed at the appellate court.

The pending application, initiated by the law firm of Kenna Partners, led by Prof. Fabian Ajogwu (SAN), was against an earlier ruling of the NIC delivered on September 29, 2021, whereby the court elected to exercise jurisdiction over ExxonMobil Corporation.

Exxon Mobil Corporation had challenged the jurisdiction of the NIC on the grounds that its contract with Arinze was a simple contract and not an employment contract, governed by the laws and subject to the jurisdiction of the courts in the United States of America where Exxon Mobil Corporation is domiciled and carries out its operations.

The claimant, Arinze, through his counsel, Emeka Ozoani (SAN) of Emeka Ozoani & Co, argued that the claimant was co-employed by Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited and ExxonMobil Corporation, thus vesting the NIC with jurisdiction over both defendants.

Court awards Ubani N12m for illegal detention

BY ONYEBUCHI SAMPSON

The Federal Capital Territory High Court, Abuja has awarded the sum of N12 million in favour of Dr Monday Ubani for unlawful detention by the Economic and

Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

The former second vice President of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) was detained illegally by the anti graft agency for over 20 days on the ground that he stood surety for a woman

(Dr.Mrs Ngozi Olejeme), who jumped bail.

Consequent upon his detention and the tension generated, Ubani dragged the EFCC to court, asking for N5 billion in damages and public apology.

Delivering judgment on the

matter, the trial judge, Sylvanus Oriji was of the view that the detention infringed on the right of Dr Ubani and therefore entitled to the reliefs sought for.

The judge declared the detention illegal and awarded the sum of N12 million as damages

to the plaintiff against the sum of N5 billion sought for.

The court, in the judgment, however, refused to order the EFCC to offer public apology to the applicant for the illegal detention.

Responding, Ubani said the decision had further settled the already established law that a

surety has not committed any crime when the person he stood surety jumps bail.

According to him, the only legal implication for the surety is to show cause or forfeit the bail bond. Arresting and detaining such a surety, he said, amounts to a flagrant violation of the rights of that individual.

NEWS



Pupil sues Abuja secondary school for N2.1bn

A Junior Secondary School student of Baptist High School Abuja, Mr. Davies Dada, has dragged the school to court over alleged negligence, which led to bodily injury he suffered while in care of the school.

Dada, is specifically claiming the total sum of N2.1 billion from the school as compensation for cost of medical treatment, cost of instituting the legal action, general as well as exemplary / punitive damages.

According to the student, in a suit number: CV/2437/2021, the school failed in its duty as “loco parentis” by not noticing or providing necessary care and attention to him - after he fell and could no longer walk while participating in the school’s Physical and Health Education Practical Examination for the Basic Education Certificate Examination 2020/2021 academic session.

The alleged neglect of the school to either informed the claimant’s parents or provide urgent medical attention, the student said resulted in him suffering what doctors called “Slipped Upper Femoral Epiphysis (SUFE)” on his

right leg and “Prophylactic Pinning-in-situ” on the left.

In the suit filed by claimant’s lawyer, Arinze Obeta, problem started on July 5, 2021, when the student was asked to participate in a 100 meters race, despite a reported health condition.

In a Witness Statement on Oath, the mother of claimant, Mrs Sandra Davies, alleged that but for the defendant’s negligence, her son would not have participated in the said Physical and Health Education Practical Examination, which resulted to physical and psychological injury, suffering, pain and monetary expenses.

The deponent claimed she had earlier informed some members of staff of the school of claimant’s health condition after they noticed he was limping during the second term holidays of 2020/2021 session.

According to her, they had taken the lad to a hospital in the Wuse Area of Abuja, where doctors after treatment advised that student should not be allowed to stress his right leg.

She added that the information was not only passed to the student’s House Master but

the drugs to be administered on claimant were handed over to the Matron (head nurse of the school) for proper administration.

She however lamented that all these were ignored by the school while senior students were also allowed to punish

his son by asking him to do “frog jump” despite his health condition.

Consequently, the student has demanded for the sum of N1. 7 million being cost of medical treatment, another N5 million as cost of instituting the legal action.

He further demanded for another sum of N1 billion as general damages for the physical and psychological injury, suffering, future losses and expenses, future loss of earning capacity, and pain of the claimant owing to the negligence of the defendant and

N500 million as exemplary/punitive damages.

Meanwhile, trial judge, Justice Babangida Hassan of a High Court of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) has fixed March 9, 2022 for hearing.

APC can’t win elections in Delta, party chieftain warns

BY PAUL MICHAEL

As the 2023 general elections draw closer, a top member of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Delta, Olorogun Jaro Egbo has described the party as a “worthless piece of paper that cannot win any election” in the state.

Egbo, who won the Ughelli North constituency (II) House of Assembly election under APC in 2019 but was removed by the court, further warned that it would be fruitless to run for the governorship or any other elective office in Delta State on the platform of the party.

He stated this in a statement titled, “Why I will no longer vie for the governorship ticket,” stressing that the APC as a political party has been destroyed and hijacked by anti-democratic forces.

The statement reads: “With the 2023 general elections in mind, I have had cause to embark on a prayer retreat in 2019 when I turned 50 years of age.

“My prayer request to the almighty God was to be



Egbo

Governor or the opportunity to play a key role in who will emerge as Governor of Delta State come 2023. ‘I was then looking forward to a robust campaign for the Governorship ticket of my Party, the All Progressives Congress (APC), a veritable platform which I toiled day and night in concert with other Progressives to make a platform of choice for Deltans seeking a paradigm

shift in the governance of the State.

“We launched the campaign through my political platform Hivoltage Movement. *#APCTAKEOVADelta* hashtag through grassroots campaign, provision of free school uniforms, free fuel and financial assistance to our petty traders and other forms of support to bring our people socio-economic

succour.

“Our campaign and programmes endeared our party to the teeming populace who signed up for the ideals we upheld.

“All of these goodwill has been frittered away by the monstrous takeover of all party structures and machinery by an arch-Facist and anti-democratic fellow. “The APC in Delta State is now a one-man affair that brooks no alternative opinion. The party we all worked to build in Delta State has become a new APC, Alibaba Political Cabal which has now rendered the tickets of the original Delta APC as a worthless piece of paper that cannot win any election in Delta State.

“It is therefore my conclusion that it will amount to futile exercise to vie for the governorship or any elective position under the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Delta State.

“I am therefore withdrawing my expression of interest to vie for the governorship or any elective position under the All Progressives Congress (APC).”

Nigeria-Cameroon trans-border drug traffickers in NDLEA’s net

National Drug Law Enforcement Agency’s (NDLEA’s) operatives have arrested three trans-border drug barons while attempting to smuggle 48,000 tablets of 225mg Tramadol through Mubi, Adamawa State to neighbouring Cameroon.

Over 1,500 kilogrammes of imported Loud and other illicit substances have also been intercepted in raids across Lagos and Edo states.

The spokesman of the NDLEA, Femi Babafemi, in a statement, said those arrested at Tsamiya Junction, Madanya Road, Mubi, in Mubi North Local Government Area of Adamawa State are Mohammed Hussaini, 32; Adamu Bella, 18, and Mohammed Umar, 18.

He said the suspects claimed the drugs were being taken to Bagira town along Nigeria-Cameroon border to be delivered to some Cameroonians for onward delivery to Maroa in Cameroon.

Babafemi added that similar interdiction operation was carried out at Alaba Rago area of Lagos, where operatives of the state command of the agency intercepted 1,200 parcels of imported Loud, a strong variant of cannabis suspected to have been smuggled into the state from a neighbouring country with a total weight of 1,229 kilogrammes.

The NDLEA’s spokesman said that in another raid last at Suru Alaba, Ajeromi-Ifelodun Local Government Area of Lagos State, operatives arrested one Ibrahim Musa, 25, with 18,530 tablets of Tramadol, Rohynol, Diazepam, Exol-5, and 138 bottles of Codeine.

Babafemi also revealed that at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos, operatives at the SAHCO export shed of the airport during their routine cargo search intercepted a consignment

of 22 international passports of six different countries concealed in a bag of gari among other food items.

He disclosed that nine of the passports were three each of UK, France and Portugal, while the rest were: Nigeria -eight; Ghana -four, and Cameroon -one.

He said also at the airport, operatives equally recovered 12 parcels of cannabis weighing 4.95 kilogrammes concealed in a carton of Golden Morn packaged for export through the SAHCO export shed.

Babafemi explained further that in Plateau State, a team of NDLEA officers last Friday arrested two suspects; Emeka Ezenwa, 37, and Julius Akingbe, 45, for being in possession of 126.5 grammes of methamphetamine concealed inside a DVD player coming from Lagos, while a raid in Kampani Zera- Wase local government area of the state on Friday led to the arrest of Fatima Sadiq, 20, who was caught with 21.3 kilogrammes cannabis.

He noted that a similar raid on Friday of a notorious drug joint, Bakin Kogi Ringim, Jigawa state led to the recovery of different quantities of Cannabis, Diazepam, Exol-5 and some new psychoactive substances with a total weight of 8.7 kilogrammes as well as weapons such as knives, cutlasses, Gora sticks, catapults and charms.

Meanwhile, the Chairman/Chief Executive of NDLEA, Brig. Gen. Buba Marwa (Retd), has commended officers and men of Lagos, MMIA, Adamawa, Plateau and Edo commands of the agency for their tenacity and vigilance.

He however charged them along with their colleagues across the country not to relent until the last gramme of illicit drug is recovered from every part of Nigeria.

Bayelsa, bank, others sign \$5m MoU on medical supplies

•WHO commends project, calls it trailblazing

An agreement with a consortium comprising Sterling Bank, Zipline, Health Spaces and DrugStoc for the Bayelsa Health Supply Chain Transformation Project (BHSCTP) by the state government.

The project, estimated at \$5 million to be provided by the firms, is expected to provide a 21st century supply

system and other supply chains using drone technology in the distribution of cost-effective pharmaceuticals in the state.

Speaking during the MoU signing in Yenagoa, the state capital, Governor Douye Diri charged the stakeholders in the project to ensure that it comes on stream to boost distribution of pharmaceuticals, especially in remote communities of the

state.

He identified access to healthcare as a major challenge and urged the consortium to deploy the technology to create access for residents in far-flung communities.

His words: “We would like to see the drones fly to Koluama, Korokorosei, Egbemo-Angalabiri and every nook and cranny of the state to solve the issue of access to pharmaceutical products.

“Communities in nearby states can also benefit from this project when it is fully operational.”

Diri, who acknowledged that technology was fast taking over in all spheres of life, said it is now being deployed in improving security, electoral system and healthcare delivery.

Commissioner for Health, Dr. Pabara Igwele, signed on behalf of the state government, while Senior Vice President (Africa) of Zipline, Daniel Marfo, signed on behalf of the consortium.

Speaking, Igwele said the project would go a long way in enhancing delivery of emergency healthcare products in the localities, adding that the initiative would also provide job opportunities for Bayelsa people, especially in the areas

of drone operations and drug store management.

Also speaking, state coordinator of the World Health Organisation (WHO), Dr. Leonard Ughele Ghele, commended the state government for its developmental strides and described the project as trailblazing in the state and entire country.

He noted that as a partner in the Bayelsa State health sector, the project would achieve various aspects of health system in strengthening programmes as envisaged in the state health summit blueprint.

He added that soon a full-fledged resident consultant for the state would be assigned to ensure that the programme succeeds.

Senior Vice President (Africa) of Zipline, Daniel Marfo, explained that the company and the other two firms were partnering to provide adaptive and resilient supply chain that would serve the health needs of the people in the area of health product distribution.

He said the project is a \$5 million investment by partners of the consortium to improve access to healthcare, adding that products could be provided within 30 minutes upon request.



Governor Diri



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METRO WATCH



Six feared dead as illegal gold mine collapses in Cross River

The police have confirmed that an illegal gold stone mine has collapsed in Umai community, in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State, in South-South Nigeria.

The police however declined to confirm the number of people who lost their lives in the collapse, asking journalists to be patient as investigation is still ongoing.

Police Public Relations Officer, Irene Ugbo, in a phone interview, said a combined team of security operatives was deployed to the scene of

the incident, immediately the police was alerted on the sad development.

Eye witness account say the deep mine collapsed, killing six of the miners, while others critically injured, have been moved to an undisclosed hospital.

The Cross River State Government at the weekend, sent an emergency team to the scene of the collapse, warning those engaged in illegal mining and blasting in Akampa, Biase and Yakurr Local Government Areas to have a change of mind or face the law.

Cult clashes leave five dead

No fewer than five residents of Ilesa, Osun State, have been killed during clashes between two rival cult groups and suspected land grabbers.

The fight started after some youths, suspected to be cult members, stormed a new building that was being roofed at Omi-Tuntun area of Ilesa and demanded for money from workers at the site.

One witness, Mr Bisi Oyetade, said the hoodlums, who also operated as land grabbers, were told to stop extorting workers at the site by some suspected cult members, said to be relations of the house owner.

Oyetade explained that in the process, clashes broke out and a suspected cult member was overpowered, dragged to the bush and hacked to death by the gang protecting the new building.

He said that the hoodlums

regrouped at night and avenged the death of their colleague.

The group stormed Ijoka Area of Ilesa and killed another suspected cult member.

He added that in a bid to maim their opponents, an innocent woman was shot dead by the warring suspected cult members on Friday night.

According to him, the rampaging youths resumed their hostilities on Saturday and ended up killing two innocent residents.

The police have since launched an intensive manhunt for the suspects while some patrol vans of Ijamo and Ayeso Police Divisions in Ilesa were seen patrolling the town in order to restore peace and order.

All efforts to speak with the Police Public Relations Officer, PPRO, DSP Yemisi Opalola, on the matter proved abortive.

Terrorists attack community on border with Niger Republic

Terrorists operating in the forest area of Jibiya Local Government Area of Katsina State, North-West Nigeria, have launched a fresh attack on Bugaje village, killing one and injuring two others.

A local who took to a WhatsApp platform with news of the attack said, it occurred between 6pm and 7.30 pm on Saturday.

According to the source, the two injured persons are currently receiving treatment at a health facility within Katsina metropolis.

Jibiya, which is a neighbouring area to Niger Republic, is among the 13 frontline Local Government Areas, bedevilled by the activities of terrorists engaged mainly in abductions, cattle rustling and rape.

Popular bishop allegedly burnt alive, son beheaded

A bishop, whose name is yet to be ascertained, has been burnt alive, and his son beheaded in a renewed communal war between the people of Abanwan and Urugbam in Erei clan, Biase Local Government Area of Cross Rivers State.

It was gathered that the Bishop was ambushed alongside his son on a motorbike on their way from Abanwan community to nearby Afikpo in Ebonyi State.

Sources say that no fewer than six houses and their occupants were set ablaze as the attackers mobilised and invaded Abanwan community.

The Erei communities have over the years, been at loggerheads over a piece of land that was established

by defunct Eastern Region, before the the Nigerian Civil War as Oil Palm Plantation Settlement.

The settlement was handed over to the Cross River State Government shortly after the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970, given that the location was in the state. However, the Erei community where the oil palm plantation was located has 10 villages.

Meanwhile, troops from the 13 Brigade of Nigerian Army have moved into Abanwan and Urugbam communities to restore order.

The information officer at 13 Brigade Nigerian Army Calabar, Captain Aluko, confirmed that they have moved men and materials into the communities already.

Ooni declares curfew in Ife as robbers invade community

BY BENJAMIN OMOIKE

The Ooni of Ife, Oba Adeyeye Ogunwusi, has declared restriction of movement from 11pm to 5.00am daily, following a sudden rise in incidents of armed robbery within his domain.

Confirming the development, Lowa Adimula of Ife, High Chief Abraham Adekola, who is the third in line to Ooni, said the Ooni-in-Council had to put up the measure on behalf of the monarch, to curtail criminality in the town.

Chief Adekola, who said Oba Ogunwusi was in Sokoto on official assignment, when the armed robbery incidents

started happening, added that the palace chiefs had to act after briefing the royal father, in a bid to arrest the situation.

Adekola, who assured that no one would be molested before or during the curfew, said since the restriction was imposed, there was a drastic reduction in cases of armed robbery in the town.

"It is true, restriction of movement had been imposed in the name of Baba Ooni. He is in Sokoto on an official assignment but after consultation with him, we agreed to impose restrictions from 11pm to 5am daily until the situation improves.

"During the restriction, no night party, vigil or movement. It is just to check criminality in the town."



Ooni of Ife, Oba Adeyeye Ogunwusi,

Police AIG lauds Civil Defence for establishing female

BY ALEX OLISE

The Assistant Inspector General of Police (Veterinary), Mrs. Aisha'tau Abubakar, has lauded efforts of the Commandant General of Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps., Dr Ahmed Abubakar Audi, for the establishment of the Special Female Squad (SFS), and the relentless efforts in the current fight against insecurity occasioned by banditry, kidnapping, abduction of school children, among other vices in the country.

The Police Chief made the remark while receiving the Special Female Squad National Commander, CSC Oluwakemi Imohnikie, and her entourage during a courtesy visit to Nigeria Police Force Headquarters Abuja.

The *Trumpet* learnt that the visit was to strengthen the existing collaboration between the two organisations.

While speaking on the activities of the Special Female Squad both in Federal Capital Territory and other states in the Country, the Commander noted that the NSCDC ADS was primarily established as a response to

the clarion call by the Federal Government, through the Office of the Minister of Interior, Engr. Rauf Aregbesola, who tasked the NSCDC Commandant General to develop a robust scheme that would tackle the menace of insecurity in Schools.

This pragmatic move of course, is in tandem with Federal Government's safe school initiative and since formation the Special Female Squad has not rested on her oars.

"Immediately the SFS was established, we leveraged on the maximum support given by the Commandant General, who had already set up a committee of intellectuals in corps that conducted a vulnerability studies on all schools across the federation. It was deduced that from over 82,000 government and private schools in the country, about 62,000 had no perimeter fencing or any security measures put in place to forestall external aggression and this informed determination to put an end to kidnapping and incessant abduction of school children across the country," she said.

She explained further that the corps has employed a

non-kinetic approach in tackling insecurity by carrying out sensitisation and awareness programmes across primary and secondary schools across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja; as the students are being exposed to necessary security tips that will enhance their knowledge and make them develop a security conscious mindset in their day-to-day activities.

In her response, AIG Aisha'tau Abubakar, praised the NSCDC Commandant General for giving the female personnel the opportunity of exercising their fundamental strength, by contributing their quota to protection of lives and property of the citizens; adding that women are diligent and dogged agents of positivity when given the much needed support and encouragement.

She affirmed that her office would facilitate a more elaborate interactive session, security workshop and seminars between the two agencies, so as to foster and strengthen the existing synergy and engender stronger collaborative effort in the fight against insecurity.



Mrs. Aisha'tau Abubakar,

How teenager who beheaded girlfriend for rituals was arrested in Ogun State

BY BENJAMIN OMOIKE

There was confusion in Oke Aregba community in Abeokuta, Ogun State capital when some teenage boys were caught burning the head of a girl, said to be in a relationship with one of them, for alleged money rituals.

It was gathered that a community security guard, one Segun Adewusi, had in the wee hours of Saturday observed that some boys were burning something suspicious in a local pot.

It was gathered that the security guard immediately alerted the police at Adatan Station, who went to the scene to get three of the boys ar-

rested, as one had fled before police arrival.

A source, who confirmed the incident to our correspondent, said the slain girl, identified as Rofiat, was a resident of Idi-Ape.

She was a girlfriend to one Soliu, who is now in police net.

Soliu was said to have lured the girl to his room, where he held her down and asked one of his friends to slaughter her with a knife.

"The arrested suspects were identified as 17 year-old Wariz Oladeinde from Kugba, 19 year-old Abdulgafar Lukman from Kugba and Mustakeem Balogun from Bode Olude, all in Abeokuta. Soliu was the boyfriend of the girl, he ran

away, but was later arrested."

They killed Rofiat, cut her head, packed the headless body in a sack and started burning the head in a pot. They told the police in the presence of a mammoth crowd that they wanted to use it for money ritual.

The police have taken the body away to a mortuary," a source told our correspondent on Saturday.

The Ogun State Police Public Relations Officer, Abimbola Oyeyemi, confirmed the incident.

Oyeyemi stated that the three young boys have been arrested by men of Ogun State Police Command.

He said, "On interrogation, the arrested suspects

confessed that what they were burning in the local pot is the head of the girlfriend of their escaped accomplice.

"They confessed further that the girl, who was simply identified as Rofiat, was lured by her boyfriend simply identified as Soliu, to where she was murdered by four of them, after which they cut off her head and packed the remains in a sack, and dumped it in an old building.

"They subsequently led policemen to the building, where the dismembered body was recovered and deposited at General Hospital Mortuary for autopsy. The short cutlass and a knife used in cutting off the deceased's head were also recovered."

METRO WATCH



I learnt money rituals via Facebook, says Ogun teenager who killed lover

STORIES BY BENJAMIN OMOIKE

A teenager, Soliu Majekodunmi, who slaughtered his girlfriend, Sofiyah, for suspected money ritual purposes has explained that he learnt the practice through Facebook.

Majekodunmi said he typed 'how to make money ritual' on Facebook and got the detail, adding that the link instructed him to behead and burn a female skull in a local pot.

Majekodunmi and three other suspects spoke on Monday when they were paraded at the state police headquarters, Elewera, Abeokuta, Ogun State.

Majekodunmi, who had fled but was later arrested, said after learning the money ritual skill on the internet, he conspired with

others to execute what he learnt. The 18 year-old suspected killer, while speaking with newsmen on how he killed his girlfriend, said he squeezed her neck and beheaded her immediately after he had made love to her.

He said he conspired with his friend, Mustakem Balogun, to lure the slain girl to their apartment in the Oke Aregba area of Abeokuta, where she was killed.

They confessed to killing the girl, claiming that they concluded on money ritual because they wanted to ride exotic cars and live in luxury apartments.

The suspects added that they purchased three pigeon eggs known as 'Eyin Aparo' in Yoruba language and other fetish ingredients which they added in the local pot.

They, however, said the sum

of the money-making ritual ingredients cost N2,500 which they contributed among themselves.

The State Police Public Relations Officer, Abimbola Oyeyemi, while parading the suspects said the incident was a result of bad parenting.

The police spokesperson urged Nollywood actors to desist from promoting money ritual movies, just as he urged religious bodies to desist from preaching prosperity.

He said, "This can only be described as a superlative degree of callousness. It is despicable and barbaric at this time for somebody to still have it in mind that money can be made if he sacrifices the life of a fellow human being. More so, what is it that teenagers want to use money for that will lead them to this type of heinous crime? It

is still beyond the comprehension of a normal human being

"I want to say that many parents have failed in their responsibilities. This is a result of bad parenting. It is a result of complete failure of parental responsibility because if this thing has not been encouraged by the parents, I do not believe that any properly brought up child will want to embark on this type of criminality.

"I also want to advise that the generality of people have a lot of work to do, the religious bodies, entertainment bodies and everybody that has one thing or the other on protecting life and properties.

"The religious bodies should stop preaching only prosperity, you should be preaching morality more than the way you preach

prosperity. Nollywood actors and the movie censors board have a lot to do to regulate the type of film they produce because some of them (ritual suspects) learn it in movies."

Sunday Olatunbosun, who spoke on behalf of the slain girl's family, urged the police to help ensure justice over the death of Sofiyah.

He said, "We want justice for her and I am speaking on behalf of the family, all that we want is justice, nothing else.

"Her mother is in a very critical situation, even we needed to give her sleeping pills before she was able to sleep. Her father is late and the situation of her mother is very critical at the moment. We had to take her away from Abeokuta to Ifo area because of the incident."

EFCC detains airline MD over \$900,000, other Hajj funds

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, has detained the Managing Director of an airline (name withheld) over alleged diversion of Hajj funds.

According to available information, he arrived at the headquarters of the EFCC at about 11.00am on Monday.

As at press time, he was still with the anti-graft agency which invited him over a case of alleged diversion of 50 per cent of funds paid to him by the National Hajj Commission and additional \$900,000 for the airlift of pilgrims in 2019.

He allegedly received the funds as mobilisation, but did not execute the contract.

The spokesman of the EFCC, Wilson Uwujaren, confirmed the development to newsmen.

My boss promised me N30m to get human parts, suspect alleges

A suspected ritualist, Timothy Odeniyi, has been nabbed by operatives of the Ondo State security outfit, codenamed Amotekun, for allegedly being in possession of human parts.

The 35 year-old suspected ritualist was paraded by the security outfit after he was caught with the human parts.

Odeniyi was getting set to leave for Lagos when he was arrested at Ondo Town motor park with the human parts.

However, there is a dispute over the source of the human parts.

While the Ondo State Commander of Amotekun, Chief Adetunji Adeleye, said the suspect killed the victim, removed the human parts and hurriedly buried the corpse, Odeniyi insisted during the parade that he exhumed the corpse from a grave.

The suspect, a truck driver, said his former boss in Ibadan, the Oyo State capital, introduced him to the business of making money through rituals.

Odeniyi said: "I went to the burial ground to cut the legs and hands of one of the corpses buried there. "Before I was caught, I had planned to take the human parts to the person that sent me in Lagos.

"He promised to pay me N30 million once I deliver the items.

"I only went to the burial ground in Sabo area of Ondo town to cut the parts.

"I didn't kill anybody and this is my first time. I used to be a trailer driver. The person that sent me used to be my boss when I used to drive truck.

"I used to dump it in a waste bin and he will send those who will pick it."

But Adeleye said: "We want to intimate the public on the need to be very careful.

"Of late, the trend is shifting gradually from daily kidnapping to ritual killings.

"The public should be generally careful about the craze to make money by this young men.

"We have a suspect in our custody, Timothy Odeniyi, who was caught and arrested with legs and hands of human being wrapped in paper.

"Upon interrogation, he took us to where he severed the body of the person killed and hurriedly buried the person in a shallow grave.

"He was arrested in Ondo Town and committed the crime on January 30, 2022.

"We want to warn the public to be careful of who they go out with.

"We have a number of them that we are still investigating that will go out with their girlfriends solely for her purpose of killing them for ritual purposes.

"I think the public should be wary and careful about this."

Adeleye equally revealed that no fewer than 35 suspected kidnappers, armed robbers, ritualists and vandals were arrested in the outgoing month.

He said: "Underage herders as well as criminals who disguised as scavengers were also arrested in various parts of the state.

"Within this January, we arrested about 150 suspects of various crimes and out of them 32 are still currently with us.

"Some of them are suspected kidnappers, armed robbers and some of them were involved in the vandalism 132 KVA power lines under construction.

"Some of them were ex-convicts that ran away from prison cells, some of them jumped bail and rearrested.

"Some of them pretend as if they are scavengers, but we found weapons, guns, locally made



Baba, Inspector General of Police

pistols in their trolley.

"The teenagers among the suspects were caught contravening the underage anti-open grazing law.

"They were found to be grazing with about 300 cows. They were about 10 to 11 years of age.

"We are still waiting for their

parents to come and face the music. Some of them will be handed over to the police for further investigation, especially the homicide issue.

"After discreet investigation, the remaining ones will be taken to court for prosecution."

Court adjourns alleged €250m fraud trial against deceased Malaysian

A €250 million fraud trial involving a Malaysian, Tan Ah Chai Richard, now late, and his company, Coastal Asia Investments Limited, before Justice Mojisola Dada of the Special Offences Court sitting in Ikeja, Lagos, has been adjourned till March 4, 2022 for continuation of trial.

The Malaysian and his company were first arraigned by the

Economic and Financial Crimes Commission on May 22, 2019.

They were arraigned on a five-count charge bordering on forgery, use of false document, conspiracy to forge and an attempt to obtain money by false pretence to the tune of €250 million.

He had pleaded "not guilty" to the charges, thereby prompting the commencement of trial, which

had seen the prosecution calling a witness.

However, in the course of the trial, Richard reportedly died in prison custody, necessitating the need to amend the charges.

At the proceeding on January 28, 2022, the prosecuting counsel, E.S. Okongwu, informed the Court that the charges had been amended as ordered.

One of the amended charges reads: "Tan Ah Chai Richard (Deceased), Coastal Asia Investments Limited and Dr. Sawang Jana (still at large), on or about the 27th September, 2018 at Lagos, within the jurisdiction of this Honourable Court, with intent to defraud, conspired to commit felony, to wit: forgery of Swift Telex Advice dated 27th September,

2018, indicating transfer of the sum of €250,000,000.00 (Two Hundred and Fifty Million Euros) to Coastal Asia Investments Limited account with Polaris Bank Plc (formerly Skye Bank Plc), from HSBC Bank Plc, London, United Kingdom."

Consequently, Justice Dada adjourned till March 4, 2022 for continuation of trial as the defendant was not represented in court.

How I killed seven persons, slept in cemetery to get fame, power - Warri Bishop

A Warri-based bishop, Apostle Prince Ufuoma, has confessed to killing no fewer than seven persons in his quest to become a famous pastor in Nigeria.

The cleric also narrated how he slept in a cemetery as part of activities for him to acquire power to do "great miracles". Apostle Prince, made the confession at headquarters of God's Delight Gospel Assembly, also known as Free Indeed, in Udu, Delta State.

The pastor revealed that he was equally contracted to assassinate the senior pastor of Free Indeed, Pastor Johnmark Ighosotu.

Police arraign two men over alleged theft of N4.7m goods

The Police in Lagos have arraigned two men in a Badagry Chief Magistrates' Court for allegedly stealing goods valued at N4.7 million from a shop.

The defendants: Yusuf Kuye, 18; and Saheed Musa, 23, with

no address, are facing a two-count charge of breaking and stealing.

The prosecutor, Inspector Ayodele Adeosun, told the court that the defendants committed the offences on January 12, at about 10am at Block 9, Trade Fair Complex area of Lagos.

Adeosun said that the defendants unlawfully entered the shop of the complainant, Sunday Emendu, and stole 18 cartoons of Kiss Beauty Compact worth N3,816,000 and seven cartoons of 24k Fitme Powder valued at N910,000.

He said: "The total amount

of goods stolen is N4,726,000.

"They were later caught by the police and charged to court."

Adeosun said that the offences contravened the provisions of Sections 309 and 287 of the Criminal Law of Lagos State, 2015.

The defendants pleaded not

guilty to the charge.

The Chief Magistrate, Lazarus Hotepo, admitted each of the defendants to bail in the sum of N100,000 with two sureties each in like sum.

The case was adjourned until March 1 for mention.

EDITORIAL

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The Trumpet is born

Nigeria has had a vibrant print media tradition and history dating from the pre-colonial days. In the last six odd decades, the print media in the country has vigorously performed its responsibilities as the Fourth Estate of the Realm. In pre-colonial Nigeria, newspapers played a major role in creating awareness and agitating for self-government. After independence, newspapers also bore the responsibility of educating the people through incisive news reporting and objective analysis, thus putting the government on its toes through critical insights in the fledging Republic. From the First Republic till date, newspapers have also played a remarkable role in nation building through consistent reportage and dissemination of information across the country. Indeed, the history of Nigeria cannot be complete without the roles played by the print media in galvanizing opinions against irreverent leaders in power.

A new and fresh voice has been added to the vibrant newspaper tradition in Nigeria – **The Trumpet Newspaper**. Established in 2021 and scheduled to hit the streets in 2022, the newspaper has set a high ethical and professional bar for itself in consonance with the dream of its sponsors in order to fill a vacuum that has been created by the shenanigans of the tumultuous political, social, cultural, and economic times that we live in. It is a huge self-elected mandate which we have boldly and relentlessly taken on. With God and truth on our side, we shall overcome all mountainous challenges and get to the pinnacle of the ladder.

It is true that while a section of the print media has consistently stood against bad governance, identifying deteriorating aspects of society and showing empathy for the people, some others have gone into an unholy romance with the rulers, with the powers-that-be and wielders of political power essentially for influence peddling and putrescent benefits. Often, the people have been guided and educated with correct information, unbiased and authentic while occasionally, objectivism and factual reporting have suffered in news reportage leading to misinformation of the people.

The history of print media in Nigeria therefore is a chequered one. Some of the newspaper companies became victims of the country's epileptic economic conditions. Unable to cope with high cost of printing, they folded up. Some other newspapers compromised standards by abandoning the ideals for which they were set up and in their bid to remain in business, they ate the poisoned chalice. However, some newspapers have weathered the storm. Through thick and thin, they have remained in business while upholding the ideals of the profession. The success story of the country cannot

be complete without a mention of these newspapers. The success of Nigeria's current democracy can be partially attributed to these successful newspapers. But gradually, ethnic and diverse sectional biases have crept into news reportage. In some cases, fiction has replaced facts and the people are worse for it. Social media has inadvertently created an avenue for disinformation and misinformation. Given the above

scenario, there are gaps, yawning gaps begging to be filled in news reporting and news commentary. It is the desire to fill this gap that motivated Elomaz Communications Limited with headquarters in Abuja and regional offices in Lagos and Delta States to establish **The Trumpet Newspaper**.

The Trumpet Newspaper is founded on the egalitarian principles of truth and honesty, fair play, objective reporting, factual presentation of issues, and incisive analysis of developments covering a wide range of subjects in Politics, Culture, Entertainment, Sports, Education, Religion, Technology, Climate Change,

Agriculture, Business and many other aspects of national and international developments. The underpinning philosophies of The Trumpet Newspaper are honesty, objectivity, patriotism, nation-building and the pursuance of equity, fair play and justice. The newspaper is primarily poised to lend a hand in rescuing Nigeria from the stranglehold of deceptive and misleading news reporting.

Even to the blind, it is obvious that our country has suffered near fatal dislocations, serious security breaches, and experienced avoidable upheavals due to rumour peddling, propaganda, and inciting news reporting. Having lost faith in many news channels in the country, the people have, unfortunately, resorted to harvesting information and news items from the ubiquitous social media with all the attendant negative consequences. This slide into the fake news reporting must be halted. The hope of the people in the print media must be restored too. This is the role **The Trumpet Newspaper** seeks to play in nation-building.

We are poised to reach millions of Nigerians no matter where they may live. Through a vibrant distribution mechanism, the newspaper will reach the young, the old, policy makers and implementers, the urban elite, and the rural poor. Also, **The Trumpet Newspaper** can be accessed online for the soft copy editions from any part of the world through its website www.thetrumpet.ng. In addition to the website, it has an active Facebook Account which currently has about 18,000 followers. People recognize quality when they see it. The Trumpet is quality and that accounts for the large number of followers on Facebook within such a short time. The newspaper has taken it as a primary responsibility to only report the truth. It promises to be objective and demonstrate love for the country which will further sustain our patriotic zeal. In this regard, the slogan of the newspaper is 'a patriotic voice, speaking truth to the nation'.

The Trumpet Newspaper will ensure that truth is upheld and only thoroughly investigated information will be fed to the public. The newspaper has assembled a world-class Editorial Board, drawn from academia, business, and journalism. Our editorial opinions shall focus on the immediate issues in Nigeria targeted towards policy-makers to help them in making decisions that would uplift the country. We have also engaged and secured the services of excellent opinion essay writers who have a profound understanding of the complexities of the Nigerian state and how the overwhelming challenges can be overcome. Our outings shall be a delight to all lovers of excellent writing in the best tradition of journalism. We therefore say:

Welcome, **The Trumpet Newspaper**.



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DISCIPLINE THEM WITH LOVE

Discipline is an essential tool used by parents daily to guide a child in the right path.

1

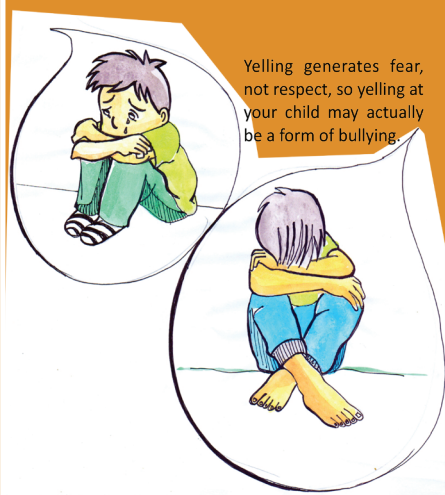
Esuoghene is a very young boy of about six (6) years old in Odeh, Isoko South Local Government Area, Delta State, who became very depressed. Why? Esuoghene's father yelled at him saying: are you not seeing your mates...?, they are reading their books and you are here playing.....you lazy son! Esuoghene became weak and depressed.

If a child is disciplined without love, many unhealthy thought will accommodate his heart.



2

'My dad doesn't love me!' Esuoghene imagined... I don't know why my dad hates me so much....



3

Esuoghene's mother noticed her child's state of depression and talked to him calmly.



4

Esuoghene now has confidence in himself and became delighted with his parents at last.



OPINIONS

Dreadful future for Nigeria's children

BY JOHN ARAKA

In a video that has gone viral, three boys, all below 15 years, were hanging around someone's gate. When the owner of the compound asked what they were doing there, they said they were there to "hustle". When asked what that meant, they boldly responded that they were looking for "yahoo, yahoo work" to do.

This graphically shows the abysmal level that Nigeria has degenerated to. These young children, who are supposed to be among the leaders of tomorrow, have only one consuming and dangerous ambition of joining the fast growing ranks of the "yahoo, yahoo" criminals. These are groups of miscreants who use mysterious ways to get very rich overnight. Many of them, indeed, are millionaire s for doing nothing concrete.

Prof Wole Soyinka the Noble Laureate, once described his generation as a wasted one. Looking back now, that was the golden era of Nigeria. That was when children's ambitions were to go to school, make good grades and end up in any of the prestigious universities or any other higher institutions of learning. They were determined to clinch academic laurels that would bring honour and pride to their families and communities as well as enhance their standard of living.

Then, too, neighbors who were medical doctors, engineers, journalists, accountants, lecturers, bankers, among others, were the role models of children. The reason was simple. These top professionals were the iconic personalities who drove good cars, lived in decent houses in the high-brow areas, wore the best dresses and shoes as well as eat sumptuous meals and sent their children to the best schools. And when the children graduated, they were sure of getting lucrative jobs on merit. They didn't need to know a business guru, a parliamentarian, a governor or a top politician before getting employment.

Nowadays, those who graduated with even first class or acquired doctorates will count themselves lucky if they manage to get menial jobs in Nigeria. In fact they hardly get employment, unless they have godfathers who "know somebody who knows somebody else at the top."



Chief Araka

Education is, therefore, no longer attractive to the present young generation. This is more evident in the villages, the city slums and among the illiterates who populate the low socioeconomic class. Education is no more seen as a veritable ladder that a child of a poor man can use to climb from the dungeon of excruciating poverty to the alluring ambience of affluence associated with the middle class.

The question that many young people often ask these days is: why waste several years burning the midnight candle to acquire a chain of degrees or diplomas that will not improve their livelihoods, but would rather drive them deeper and deeper into frustration and despair due to joblessness which may linger on indefinitely? It is not uncommon to see millions of brilliant Nigerians, who graduated over five years ago, yet have not gotten any paid employment for one day. This is most disheartening.

The seemingly easiest way for young people to live their dream of affluence, abundance

and comfort is, unfortunately, to resort to criminality. Although this is most unedifying, our uncaring society is to blame for the unpalatable option.

Perhaps, the most common felony is the "yahoo, yahoo" which seems to trump kidnapping and armed robbery in terms of the quantum of money that accrues by merely pressing buttons on their phone or computer in the comfort of their home. No stress. Chances of getting arrested is remote. Even if apprehended, they would throw bundles of crisp naira notes at the law enforcement agents to buy their freedom. After all, did the immediate Prime Minister of Britain, Mr David Cameron, not describe Nigeria as "fantastically corrupt?"

The perpetrators of yahoo, yahoo, flaunt their wealth with reckless abandon. They live big. They are ostentatious. They drive the latest cars in town. They buy or build the most eye-catching mansions in their environment. They befriend the most beautiful and sophisticated ladies in their neighborhoods.

That simply explains why many young children, some in their teens, see them as their role models. Of course "who no like better thing eh?"

By the way, why should unemployed graduates, who wear worn out shoes and clothes as well as depend on their parents to get transportation fares, feed, buy bathing soap and even toothbrush, several years after leaving universities be anybody's role model?

It is most heart-rending that our excessively corrupt and extremely incompetent leaders have foisted on us all a future that is mortgaged to the detriment of our children and grandchildren. It is not inconceivable that in no distant time, illiterate yahoo, yahoo boys with a lot of money to throw around will dominate the commanding heights of our sociopolitical life. There is the possibility of some of them eventually becoming our presidents, governors, council chairmen and parliamentarians. It is difficult to believe that an enormously endowed country like Nigeria can contemplate such a dreadful future for her future generations.

Money ritual: Nigeria's new normal (1)

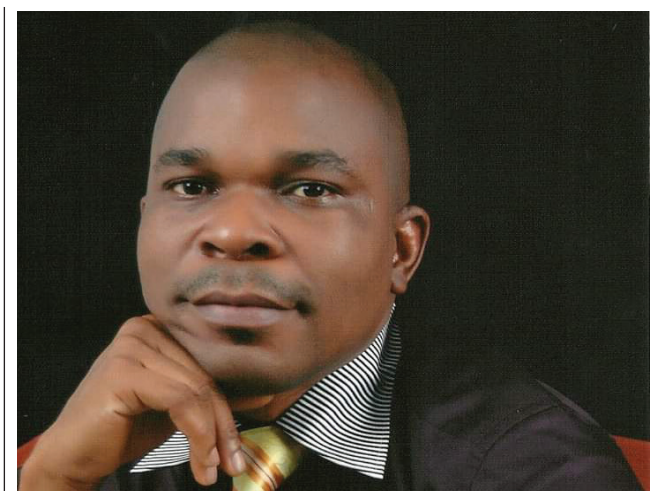
BY PROMISE ADIELE

Teaching Oral African Literature affords me the opportunity to critically engage magic, sorcery, animism, and voodoo as ritual practices. No doubt, these practices are global but there is an unspoken conspiratorial conviction about their primordial origin in Africa where they are domiciled and perpetually revalorised. Therefore many people view them as African phenomena. In truth, Africans cannot deny their collective predilections towards these practices because they formed part of their indigenous religion, tradition, and culture before the advent of Western ideologies which, according to Chinua Achebe, led to things falling apart. Beyond the spiritual, symbolic roles of these ritual practices, they provide a framework for traditional societies to formulate codes of moralities and existential ethos. These practices have continued over time but continuity should provide a balance where hierarchies of different tensions are resolved which in turn form a historical logic. The re-enactment of rituals for money and sundry purposes lacks any historical logic. In the days of yore, magic, sorcery, animism, and voodoo as ritual practices served various purposes for Africans. When there was drought and famine, Africans offered sacrifices to their gods. When sickness ravaged the land, sacrifices were offered.

When circumstances confounded the living, they consulted the dead to ask questions. Generally, through constant propitiations via ritual processes, Africans lubricated the spiritual thoroughfare between them and their ancestors. In contemporary times, these practices currently represent significations of spiritual vulgarity in many parts of Africa including Nigeria. The most offensive is the morbid recourse to these practices by Nigerians for diverse purposes including wealth creation. Today, magic, animism, and voodoo as ritual practices have become, unfortunately, avenues to advance material progress, victory in elections, success in businesses and many other indulgences which represent the idolization of mammon, the irreverent, vindictive god of wealth. Every day our newsreel is inundated with various accounts of how young men of different ages engage in rituals to make money. These accounts summarily violate the inner sanctum and sensibilities of a normal, well-disposed person. They grate at our humanness and question the future of our society. Currently, the African practice of spiritual regeneration through diverse ritual processes has become a source of diabolic fetishism to create wealth. I watched in utter horror a video where young men were defecating in public and eating their human waste for money rituals. No arrest was made, no voice of admonition, and no one bothered to show concern. Rather, people were busy video-recording the scene to circulate on various social media platforms. Indeed, our generation is collapsing fast. I read the story of a 28-year-old young man who, after graduation, could not secure a job. According to the account, the young man used one of his testicles to undertake a ritual and enter into a convenient with the devil, the suzerain

ruler of the kingdom of perdition. Afterwards, the young man became a billionaire. Promptly, a chieftaincy title was conferred on him by the elders in his village. He built a hospital, constructed roads, reconstructed the market square, demolished the local church, and built a cathedral. Three years later, thunder strike mangled his body beyond recognition. He writhed in pain and confessed his dealings with the devil before he died. According to another account, a 24-year-old young man performed a money ritual. After the ritual, he was given a dog to take home and instructed to allow the dog to bite his mother. After biting his mother, the woman died within two weeks and was put in a mortuary. Then he slaughtered the dog and ate the meat alone. Thereafter, his Building Material business blossomed and he became a billionaire. The inherent catch-22 is that he must not bury his mother. To this day, the woman is still in the mortuary one year after she died. The boy gave the church and the village elders stupendous money to look away and not talk about the burial. Any day the woman is buried, the boy's wealth will vanish. The two scenarios above represent millions of other cases where our young men, in their pursuit of self-glorification and inordinate craving for materialism, indulge in despicable, horrendous practices, subverting African spiritual heritages to perpetrate evil. Apparently, the youths are not the only ones involved in these kinds of heinous practices. Politicians are involved too. There are politicians in our country who indulge in human sacrifices and ritual practices to win elections. Contractors are involved too. Different people are also involved for different reasons ranging from promotions, luck to travel abroad, success in sports betting, and many more. Many women in their husband's houses today performed one ritual or another to get married and remain in the marriage. The husband victims of such marriages behave like a zombie, one whose senses have been taken away. This is true.

Today, ladies are on the prowl looking for men to harvest. Young girls wear Kayamata beads on their waists to talk to men who, in their hypnotized conditions, do the biddings of these girls. Some women offer sacrifices and rituals with animals, sometimes with human beings. I remember as an undergraduate, I went to one of the beaches in Lagos with my friends to play over the night. While touring the beach, I saw pure horror - a big woman, completely naked, and on her knees. Two men slaughtered a goat over her head and the blood sprinkled all over her body. Then, the men chanted 'obey-billions, obey-billions, and more billions'. The mental image of that scene stayed with me for many days. Given the geography of those who indulge in these practices, it is therefore morally wrong to call these people Yahoo yahoo boys. No, yahoo yahoo is not the entire problem. It is a pure money ritual, simple. Of course, one can argue that many young people who engage in internet fraud also engage in rituals to hypnotize their victims and command them to part with money. I agree. But if we continue to call money ritual Yahoo Yahoo, we inadvertently exonerate those who do not engage in internet fraud but also engage in



Dr. Adiele

money rituals. Many people in the music industry, Nollywood, doctors, lawyers, prostitutes, big market women, and different people all engage in rituals for diverse reasons.

Therefore, we must quickly change the nomenclature to Money Ritual instead of Yahoo Yahoo. We all use Yahoo, the famous web link, don't we? In English, yahoo means 'a stupid person'. If therefore we wish to call ritualists stupid people, then it is euphemistic and does not adequately capture their deranged mentality. So let us stick with calling them Money Ritualists, simple. Gradually, our society is gravitating towards a dangerous new normal. Money ritual, a ritual for wealth or for whatever purpose is steadily but surely assuming a part of our social narrative and progress. I do not know if there is any law against money ritual or its prohibition in our constitution. Human life has lost its sanctity among people. Young girls are easily beheaded these days, mothers are killed or buried alive, human parts have become sought-after commodities because they are used for money rituals.

Everywhere you turn, the story is the same, people of different ages and vocations engage in money rituals. It is indeed a shame of a country the despicable things our people embrace in their pursuit of the cosmetic illusions of materialism. We have degenerated to these regrettable levels because our social structures are too weak to checkmate these developments. Many parents have abandoned their responsibilities of raising their children properly. In fact, some parents put their children under undue pressure to bring money home like their peers.

● Dr. Adiele PhD, Mountain Top University. Promee01@yahoo.com

To be continued.



Araka



Eghagha



Aghalino



Abdullahi



Eesuola



Adiele



Hamidu



Shaibu



Ogbinaka



Eto



Sylva



Ojukwu

The Trumpet newspaper emerges, names editorial team, others

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Division in 1978. He went for his Master's Degree in the same department in 1980.

During his NYSC, he served as the news editor of the Bauchi Broadcasting Corporation, BBC.

After his NYSC, he joined the Daily Times as a senior reporter. He was redeployed to the Editorial Board in 1981 as a leader writer, becoming its chairman in five years.

He was also Times Journalism Institute's (TJI's) Director/CEO, making it to be financially viable for the first time since its foundation in 1965. He was later transferred back to the Daily Times Editor. He became the General Manager of the newspaper conglomerate, which then had 13 publications.

He also visited several countries in Europe, Africa as well as the USA for training, seminars and news coverage.

He is a Fellow of the Nigerian Guild of Editors, FNGE, the highest honour in the country's Journalism.

Hope Eghagha

Hope Eghagha, poet, dramatist and columnist is a Professor in the Department of English, University of Lagos where he once served as Head of Department. He was Visiting Member The Guardian Editorial Board, Chairman Editorial Board of Daily Times of Nigeria as well as a former Commissioner for Higher Education in Delta State.

Promise Adiele

Dr. Promise Adiele is a Researcher and Lecturer in the Department of English, Mountain Top University.

He was a Research Fellow in the Department of English, University of Lagos for four years, and Columnist in The Sun and The Daily Times newspapers for many years.

He was also member, Daily Times Editorial Board.

Samuel Ovuete Aghalino

Professor Samuel Ovuete Aghalino, Ph.D., FHSN, is with the Department of History and International Studies, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. In addition to a doctorate degree in History, he holds a certificate in Leadership, Strategy and Change Management, Coventry University; the Centre of Applied Entrepreneurship, Coventry, UK; Certificate in Preparing to Manage

Human Resources, University of Minnesota, Certificate in Work Smarter, Not Harder: Time Management for Personal and Professional Productivity, University of California, Irvine, Division of Continuing Education among others. Until recently, he was the Head, Department of History and International Studies, and Director, University of Ilorin Archives and Documentation Centre. Aghalino's research interests are in the areas of Economic and Social History, with emphasis on the oil armada and socio-economic change in the Niger Delta, Nigeria.

He has published extensively in local, national and international journals and chapters in books. He is the author of a number of books including Oil Exploitation in the Western Niger Delta: A Cost-Benefit Analysis, 1956-1995 (Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert, 2011 and his commissioned and edited book, Delta Beyond Oil: A Quest for Sustainable Development (Benin City: Mindex, 2014), which received positive and critical reviews from scholars and commendation from the Delta State Government. Aghalino is the Vice President and a Fellow of the Historical Society of Nigeria. Aghalino has attended and presented papers in a number of learned conferences in Singapore, Germany, Kenya, the US, UK, to mention just but a few. In 2016, he received the Presidential Award in recognition of his outstanding services to the Historical Society of Nigeria. As an avid participant in the annual congresses of the Historical Society of Nigeria, he is the Chairman, Conference Organising Committee, Chairman of the Biographical Series Committee, Chairman, Ethics Committee as well Chairman, Fellows Night Committee.

He is a Member, Publications Committee, Senate Representative to Council and several committees in the University of Ilorin. He is the Editor, Ilorin Journal of History and International Studies, and on the editorial boards of national and international journals. Aghalino was a visiting Lecturer to several universities and also external examiner, undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes in several universities. He is a resource person and subject expert to JAMB and have participated in accreditation/resource verification of programmes for the National Universities Commission.

Professor Aghalino consults for the Department of History and War Studies, Nigeria Defence Academy, Kaduna, Nigeria Military History Institute, Abuja, and The Nigerian Army Resource Centre, Abuja. By way of community service to Delta state and Nigeria, he was member, Governing Council, Delta State School of Marine Technology, Burutu and Chairman, Governing Council, College of Education, Warri. He was a member of the Delta state Thin-tank to the 2014 national confab in Abuja.

Professor Aghalino is a multiple recipient of awards and also community mobiliser.

Ralia Maijama'a Abdullahi

Department of English and Literary Studies, Bayero University, Kano. B.A. and M. A. Bayero University; PhD Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Fellow, African Humanities Program (2021); alumnus, Study of the US Institute on American Literature (University of Louisville, 2015).

Lawal Mohammed Hamidu, FDMSS, former Foreign Service Officer and former Chief of Staff FMHADMSD.

Kayode Eesuola

Dr. Kayode Eesuola holds a Ph.D in Political Science. A 2008 Fulbright Scholar and researcher in political thoughts and behavior covering governance systems, elections and resistance politics, Eesuola is a prominent socio-political analyst in both print and electronic media.

He is on the editorial boards of many international scholarly journals, and the Editor of African and Diaspora Discourse, a journal of the Institute of African and Diaspora Studies, University of Lagos. Eesuola was an editorial board member of The Daily Times.

He has attracted many national and international research grants on political thoughts, migration and governance in Africa, the most recent being by the German Research Foundation's Africa Multiple.

Samson Alhaji Shaibu

Associate Professor S.A. Shaibu is a former Acting Director General of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN).

He is now Head of Department of Mass Communication, Bingham University, Karu.

Oghenekaro Ogbinaka

Dr Oghenekaro Moses Ogbinaka is an Associate Professor of Epistemology and Analytic Philosophy at the University of Lagos (UNILAG).

He is a former Chairman of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), UNILAG Branch from 2006 to 2010. He served as a Deputy Dean of Student Affairs Division, University of Lagos.

He researches in various aspects of political and educational philosophy. He is a member of the Faculty of Lagos Anglican Seminary; and the incumbent Vicar of St Paul's Anglican Church, Mende, Lagos State.

Ogbinaka is an analyst on Nigerian educational matters.

Omokioja JJK Eto

Omokioja Kwame Julius Jamal Eto, the Editor-in-Chief of The Trumpet, attended primary schools in Sapele and Isokoland, Delta State. For his secondary education, he was at Government College Ughelli and Emore Grammar School, Oleh both also in Delta State.

He has a B.Sc. in Political Science & Public Administration (Upper Division) from the University of Benin, Nigeria (1983-87); M.Sc. in the same field from the University of Lagos, Nigeria (1995) as well as a Post-Graduate Diploma, Nigeria Institute of Journalism.

He was a Lecturer (Graduate Assistant), Imo/Now Abia State University, Uturu-Okigwe, Nigeria (1988).

For his media practice, he was a Reporter and Subeditor, The Guardian (1989-92); Foreign Affairs Editor, The Punch (1994-96); Assistant News Editor, Chief Subeditor Thisday (1997); News Editor, Chief Sub-Editor, Deputy Editor and Associate Editor, The Guardian (1999-2020) and Editor, The Daily Times (2020-2021).

Eto has travelled widely. He also has BBC and VOA training certificates.

Obah Oghenefego Sylva

Obah Oghenefego Sylva is the Deputy Daily Editor and Weekend Editor of The Trumpet.

Sylva holds a postgraduate in Investigative Journalism from the International Institute of Journalism, Abuja. He also has a

postgraduate degree in Business Administration from the University of Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria, and a Bachelor's degree in Industrial Chemistry from the University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State.

He was a one-time Media Assistant to the Executive Chairman, Delta State Board of Internal Revenue for over six years.

He had also served as an Associate Editor of Isoko Times newspaper and as a Production Editor at the Epitome Source Magazine.

He has attended several international business conferences and seminars including the Creativity and Innovation for Business Growth Training USA., Environmental Social Responsibility, Growth and Governance Training in London, United Kingdom, among others.

He is a Google-certified digital marketer, a software developer and a Tech enthusiast.

He is a member of the Nigeria Institute of Management.

Adeze Ojukwu

Editorial Page Editor Mrs. Adeze Ojukwu studied Communication and Development in Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, United States.

She earned a Bachelors of Arts Degree BA in English, Second Class Upper Division, from the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) in 1988, as well as a Postgraduate diploma and Master of Science in Mass Communication in 1995 from University of Lagos.

She has over two decades of media experience and commitment towards sustainable development issues in Nigeria and other developing countries.

As a development journalist, her niche is in deploying practical advocacy skills and modern multi-media platforms to disseminate news, reports and opinions to positively, influence public policies.

She has an award of excellence in Social Transformation Service from the United States Consulate, Lagos and the US Government Exchanges Alumni Association (USGEAA).

She won the maiden Nestle Nutrition Media Award, successively in 2000, 2001 and 2002.

She was the Founding Editor of Harvest Africa and a columnist and digital media publisher.

Her articles appear in national newspapers and magazines.

POLITICS/DEMOCRACY



2023 presidential race gathers pace as more aspirants join

JOSHUA OMOLOYE, POLITICS EDITOR, ABUJA

As the 2023 general election inches closer and political parties continue to search for credible candidates among the many presidential hopefuls, the number of aspirants will increase as today in Abuja, a former governor of Imo State, Senator Rochas Okorocha, has officially declared his intention to run.

National Leader of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, opened the floodgates of declarations when told President Muhammadu Buhari at Aso Rock Villa of his intention to contest the APC presidential ticket.

Ebonyi State Governor David Umahi followed suit by visiting Buhari and since then more personalities have been voicing out their wish to run in 2023.

Also from the fold of the APC is former governor of Abia State and Senate Chief Whip, Orji Uzor Kalu.

Although Vice President Yemi Osinbajo is yet to declare, his name has featured prominently among APC hopefuls.

Declaring on the platform of the PDP are known faces like former Vice President, Atiku Abubakar, two former Senate presidents;

Anyim Pius Anyim and Bukola Saraki while supporters are rooting for governors Aminu Tambuwal of Sokoto, Bala Mohammed of Bauchi, Nyesom Wike of Rivers to vie for the party's ticket.

Party debutants like Sam Ohuabunwa and Dele Momodu have also declared to contest on the PDP platform.

Senator Rochas Okorocha is not a first timer in the presidential race. The senator representing Imo West Senatorial district, a 3 times presidential aspirant led the Igbos through the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) to join forces with President Muhammadu Buhari of the then Congress for Progressives Change (CPC), Asiwaju Bola Tinubu of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and the All Nigerian Progressive Party (ANPP) to form the APC.

He took his first shot at presidency 20 years ago as an aspirant under the platform of ANPP with Gen. Muhammadu Buhari then former Head of State, Chief Nnia Nwodo, and Chief Harry Akande.

Again in 2007 he ran under the platform of PDP coming second to President Umaru Muda Yar'Adua where the likes of Prof Jerry Gana, Gen. Gusau and Gen. Marwa were contestants.

Okorocha indicated his readiness for 2023 on the floor of the Senate last Wednesday when he notified the Senate President, Ahmad Lawan

He made his intention known in a letter which Lawan read at the floor of the Senate, Wednesday 26th January, 2023.

Okorocha who is from South East Nigeria is one of the prominent aspirants hoping to clinch the presidential ticket of the All Progressives Congress (APC) should the ruling party zone its ticket to the South East.

Okorocha in the letter went ahead to itemize expected qualities of a 21st century Nigerian President topmost among which is that the next president must be a detribalize Nigerian.

He said "our citizens are concerned about the quality of persons to run the affairs of our nation, one who can address some of their major concern which includes; a detribalized Nigerian who can unite our country.

"A leader with a compassionate heart, who will care for the poor and downtrodden and the masses of our country.

"A visionary leader who can create wealth for our teeming populace thereby, addressing the issues of poverty, insecurity and youth restiveness".

He said "it is as a result of these concern that I wish to run for the office of the President of our dear nation".

Matters arising from Ekiti 2022 APC, PDP governorship primaries

JOSHUA OMOLOYE, POLITICS EDITOR, ABUJA

The two leading political groupings, All Progressives Congress (APC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) held primary elections to determine their standard bearers in the June 16 governorship election in Ekiti State last week.

While Biodun Oyeibanji, the immediate past Secretary to the State Government won the APC ticket in a landslide victory, a former House of Assembly member and state party chairman, Hon. Olabisi Kolawole, became the PDP's candidate.

The elections have been won and lost but fallouts from the shadow polls may make or mar the chances of the parties and their candidates.

The PDP primary though less rancorous, it did not go without a few challenges while that of the APC was more controversial with seven aspirants rejecting the outcome.

Seven aspirants, Kayode Mojo, Demola Popoola, Femi Bamisile, Bamidele Faparusi, Dayo Adeyeye, Opeyemi Bamidele and Afolabi Oluwasola withdrew from the poll few hours before the poll for lack of confidence in the process.

In a statement on Thursday, the aspirants were dismayed by the list of local government election committee and ward election committee allegedly made up of party members and political appointees who had openly endorsed the candidacy of Biodun Oyeibanji.

They demanded that the party reconstitute the primary election committees across the state before they can participate in the election.

"It is on record that the government of Governor Kayode Fayemi has given its unwavering support to the candidacy of Biodun Oyeibanji, it is common knowledge that the Governor and most appointees of the governor are openly rooting for and supporting Biodun Oyeibanji's aspiration to become the flag bearer of our great party.

"What is more disturbing is the fact that a simple glance at the names of the persons appointed as members of both committees would reveal that it is made up of appointees of government who are all supporters of a candidate in the primary election they are appointed to superintend on", they said in their protest.

Ekiti APC has 183,560 registered members across the 177 wards and voters were expected to queue behind the poster of their preferred candidates using the "Option A4" otherwise known as direct primary mode of election.

Oyeibanji, the winner polled 101,703 votes out 104,983 total votes cast. Though a total number of 107,877 voters were accredited for the primary election.

Even though other aspirants announced their withdrawal before the commencement of poll, they received votes from their supporters.

Opeyemi Bamidele scored 760, Femi Bamisile 400, Kayode Ojo 767, Dayo Adeyeye 691, Bamidele Faparusi 376, Demola



Fayemi

Popoola 239 and Oluwasola Afolabi 47.

They all rejected the outcome of the exercise as well as results declared by the chairman of the election committee, Governor Abubakar Badaru of Jigawa State who dismissed their rejection.

Badaru absolved the 7 member committee of any complicity in the whole exercise while describing the APC Ekiti State governorship primary election as free, fair and credible.

The committee chairman defended his action of cancelling a meeting slated for the morning of the election on Thursday with the aspirants. He said the meeting was called off because there was a security report that thugs were being mobilised to invade the venue of the meeting.

However, grapevine source told The Trumpet that Badaru was irked by the news of the threat by the aggrieved aspirants to boycott the election and decided to botch the meeting.

While submitting the report of the exercise to the party at APC headquarters in Abuja on Friday, Badaru said the committee followed to the letters, primary election guidelines and constitution of the party as well as the extant electoral laws including the 2010 Electoral Act as amended.

He said, he directed each aspirant to nominate 20 persons that would work with the committee as local organising committee in the collation and transmission of results, saying the modality was adopted to make the process more credible and acceptable.

He told journalists that there were pockets of violence in 11 out



Fayose

of 177 wards in which election took place leading to cancellation of results from affected wards

Badaru said: "elections were conducted in 166 wards while, 11 wards were disrupted and we canceled those areas but in the 166 wards, people actively participated".

He dismissed as untrue the withdrawal of 7 aspirants from the process, saying "that is absolutely not true. We got to the state on the 26th January, and called a meeting with all aspirants, which seven, (7) of the eight, (8) aspirants attended.

"We discussed the guidelines and agreed on specific terms. Their allegations maybe, party members, probably loyal to the governor, were chosen to serve as returning officers in various wards and local governments, which was also raised at the meeting and I told them, our guideline is to use the party people to do the job.

"They provided 20 names, which we incorporated into returning officers, and this was communicated in the early morning to all.

"We incorporated all the 20 people sent, to participate in the exercise. But you can see from what happened that they are supposed to have agents in all the 177 wards.

"This eleven (11) wards that the primaries were disrupted were wards that had relationship with most of the aspirants. So, you can see if they have that power, to stop the congress, they

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POLITICS/DEMOCRACY



‘Atiku should appreciate those who campaigned for him in 2019’

Col. Chinyere Obi (retired) is a chieftain of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and National Coordinator for the House-to-House Campaign for former Vice President Atiku Abubakar during the 2019 general election. In this interview, she lamented that the Atiku failed to appreciate efforts of those that laboured for his campaign. She, therefore advised the PDP presidential hopeful to start the 2023 campaign by first sending letters of appreciation to those that campaigned alongside with her in 2019. Excerpts by Politics Editor, **JOSHUA OMOLOYE**.

You were one of the directors of Atiku’s House-to-House campaign in 2019. Why the sudden change?

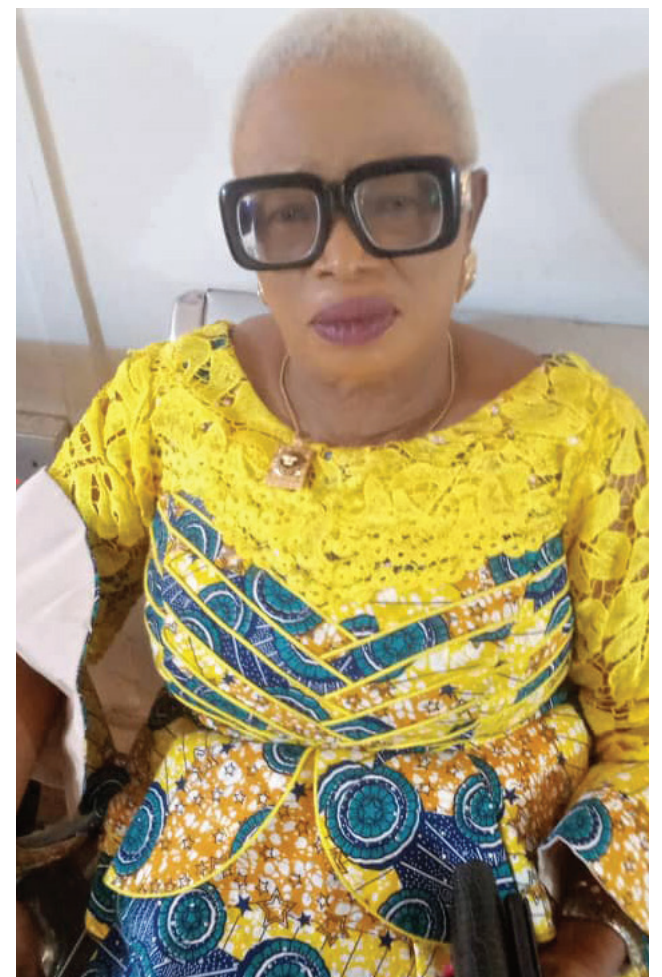
Let him know that this is his retired Colonel B. He knows me by that name. I don’t think there’s anybody in Atiku’s crew that can work the way I worked. Anywhere he goes, I go with him. Even the drivers- Pilot one, Pilot two, Pilot three, I always give them N5,000 in every state we go during the campaign. There was a time this same Atiku Abubakar saw me in Lagos and said, “Colonel na everywhere you dey?” and I said, “where do you want me to stay again if not by your side”. I’ve known him since 1985 and I know his wife, Rikiyatu, she was my friend, she comes to my house in FESTAC then. When I saw that yes, he’s the kind of person I can support, I didn’t take his money, I spent N12.7 million and I never collected one naira from it. The only money I collected was the one Ola gave us in Yola, that was N150,000. All the nineteen states coordinators that came, I put them in Gongola Hotel. Everywhere I go, I support him, he’s my good friend. Even when he sent people to Lagos for inauguration, I inaugurated thirty-six states and for each of the states I have the proof that I went, even the picture we took together is in my car now. So, why am I saying this? Even when he left the country for Dubai after the 2019 election, we were the ones that suffered for him in Supreme Court. Everyday I give those boys money, even the boys that came to Dubai to see him, he never gave them one naira for ticket. They paid their money, they went there but he never gave them a kobo and he’s telling me he wants to come back again? Tell him I said it’s a lie! He’s not coming because when you are climbing a tree, and people you met down, you did not treat them well, how do you think you can climb again and come down? Atiku has messed us up. They used me to speak nine languages before the primary. I will kneel down and tell people Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, whichever one Calabar. I know what I suffered for him. I usually pay 20,000 everyday. I will charter bus when we are going. I will be sharing T-shirts. I shared customized kettles to his friends. I did pictures for him, I did enlargement pictures for all of them and then you didn’t recognize all the groups, you didn’t even say “thank you”, no appreciation. There is a woman in

Enugu, her case is paining me. She used her house to go and collect four buses mentioning: Atiku this, Atiku that. They have sold that woman’s house now. She went to bank, borrowed money and bought five buses, that woman now is in stroke and you didn’t appreciate anybody and you think you, Atiku Abubakar will come back again? “Walai.....because that man used us and the people you used are still those who are going to vote for you. It is these people who are still going to use their voters card to vote for you and then you didn’t do them good, not even money. Nobody needs your money because we know you won’t. But that doesn’t mean you won’t say thank you to the people who stood by you come rain, come sun? They were there for you. How many groups did you have? Almost 14,000 groups and these people that fought for you, you never said okay all the coordinators, you send letters to them telling them thank you despite the fact that I didn’t win but I still appreciate you people, but he never did it. Even God said you must say thank you before he does another one. So, tell him I’m saying let him wake up now to write letters to those coordinators and appreciate them before he will come. Thank you very much.

But frontline campaigners of Atiku like Dokpesi and others have equally said that 24 stakeholders have endorsed him. Has that not defeated your protest?

They will just take his money and go. Didn’t Gbenga Daniel eat his money and go? Do you know how many billions he spent on Gbenga? When time reach, didn’t Gbenga leave him as DG? So whether Dokpesi or no Dokpesi, whether it is hundred states, let him prepare and appreciate them. Let him tell his people, all the coordinators are in his system.

Buchi has the system, so let them go to the system, download their names and write a letter to all coordinators, let them relay it to their own groups and say “thank you, we appreciate you people, we love you people. It is appreciation I’m talking about not his bloody money. After all I know how much I put into his campaign. So let him call all the coordinators, it is an advise and appreciate them before Dokpesi or Tinubu or anybody support him. Let him start from the grass root.



Col. Chinyere Obi (retired)

Matters arising from Ekiti 2022...

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could have done it also in the 166 wards.”

The report had been submitted and the aggrieved aspirants were expected to have either individually or collectively filed their petitions before the party’s Appeal Panel.

Biodun Oyeibanji, while submitting that the process was seamless and peaceful, said the APC appeal panel will handle all controversial issues surrounding the conduct of the election.

The leadership of APC really has a delicate issue at hand in handling the post primary crisis. There is the need to explore all internal democracy mechanism including calling a roundtable involving all other aspirants and stakeholders to resolve the matter.

Leaving the aggrieved wild may spell doom for the party at the June 18 election. They should be prevailed upon from going to court.

Ability to douse the already tensed atmosphere in Ekiti will determine how far APC can go in retaining power in Ekiti.

The PDP on the other hand went into Wednesday primary with less fuss. All aspirants except Senator Biodun Olujinmi were on the ballot after attempt at forging a common front through consensus failed.

The only issue which could have made the contest volatile was well handled by the Iyorchia Ayu - led National Working Committee.

The decision of the party to nullify the ad hoc ward congress earlier conducted left the aspirants to battle with no fewer than 1,200 statutory and automatic delegates across the 177 wards

to determine their fates.

Withdrawing from the contest, Olujimi alleged that the delegate list had been tampered with to disenfranchise delegates from her constituency.

“I thought it was very unfair, it was unjust, it was disenfranchising me because of my gender or because the party feels I have not done enough for it. Going forward from there would mean that I am condoning what is wrong.

“So I thought my best was just to pull out and I pulled out. I did not step down. They can continue with it, I will also internalize the problem, there will be some introspection, then I will take a decision,” she said.

At the end of the January 26 primary election, a former member of the Ekiti State House of Assembly, Hon. Olabisi Kolawole emerged as governorship candidate of the party.

Kolawole, one time state chairman of the party scored 671 votes to beat his closest rival, Chief Segun Oni and nine other contenders.

Coming second in the governorship primary conducted in Ado Ekiti, the state capital was former governor, Segun Oni who polled 330 votes.

Results of the shadow election conducted by the five man Electoral Committee headed by the Akwa Ibom State governor, Udom Emmanuel showed that former deputy governor and PDP candidate in 2018, Prof Kolapo Olusola Eleka scored 93 votes while the immediate past PDP National Treasurer, Wale Aribisala scored 56 votes.

Others are, Kayode Adaramodu with 10 votes, Ayodeji Kazeem

with 6 votes and Senator Biodun Olujinmi who though stepped moments before the election with 2 votes.

Lateef Ajijola and other female contestants; Adekemi Adewumi, Olukemi Ojo and Deborah Alo scored one vote each.

The party swiftly in line with its election timetable empanelled the 25 man Appeal committee of NWC and BoT members under the headship of national chairman, Iyorchia Ayu.

The panel received Olujinmi’s withdrawal notification during its sitting on Friday while the PDP national publicity secretary, Debo Ologunagba dismissed any serious petition from other aspirants against Kolawole’s emergence.

Not leaving anything for chances, the party immediately ignited reconciliatory process as Ayu accepted to lead other members of NWC to resolve all issues that might arise from Wednesday’s governorship primary election in the state.

Ologunagba also said the NWC will be much more involved in the campaign for Kolawole, ahead of the June 18 governorship election.

He disclosed that the winner of the election has kick-started reconciliation process by meeting with other aspirants.

Dismissing post-primary crisis, Ologunagba said “PDP is an organic party. The party has a way of coming round after such contest. The winner has started reaching out to others but the party will start process of reconciliation. The unity will be there”.

Events within the next two weeks within both parties will determine how far their candidates can go in the June 18 governorship election in Ekiti State.

ENERGY



Revisiting oil well ownership, other critical host communities' issues

OBAH SYLVA (DEPUTY DAILY EDITOR), GABRIEL ELOZINO, EMMANUEL OBE, KUWEKUZI AIGBE AND ISAAC OLAMIKAN

- *PIB not designed to solve host communities' issues - Activists*
- *Don't force business owners to establish headquarters in your region'*

- *'Insecurity higher in Lagos than'*
- *'Local content made it mandatory for IOC headquarters to be in oil areas*

Leaders of the Niger Delta have continued to cry out over what they consider as the refusal of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) to tackle critical issues including the ownership of over 83 per cent of oil blocks in the Niger Delta by non-indigenes of the area.

The leaders expressed their disappointment over the inability of the bill to handle core issues affecting the Niger Delta, including the relocation of International Oil Companies (IOCs) to their area of operation.

They also expressed concern over the circumstances under which the National Assembly allocated a mere three per cent of revenue to host communities in the Niger Delta, while a fund for the exploration of oil in frontier basins, mostly in northern states, received 30 per cent.

Before its passage, the National Assembly delayed the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) due to regional loyalty and political differences. The bill was with them for more than a decade, with successive sessions of the Senate and House of Representatives failing to approve its provisions of sweeping reforms for the oil and gas sector. The Senate finally passed the bill on July 15, 2021, while the House of Representatives did the same on July 16, thus ending a long wait since the early 2000s. President Muhammadu Buhari, on Monday, August 16th, 2021, signed the Petroleum Industry Bill into law. Its key objective is to overhaul and transform the Nigerian oil gas industry. The Petroleum Industry Act provides legal, governance, regulatory and fiscal framework for the Nigerian petroleum industry, the development of host communities, and other related matters. The oil and gas industry has a significant impact on Nigeria's economy. Though the industry contributes less than 10% to the country's gross domestic product, it contributes about 90% of the foreign exchange earnings and 60% of total income.

NIGER DELTA LEADERS REACT

One key area the Petroleum Industry Act refused to address was the 83 per cent of oil block ownership by non-indigenes. According to the DPR oil blocks and oil wells are awarded based on the bids made by interested persons that are being considered by the DPR and qualified persons awarded the oil blocks and oil wells. But Trumpet investigation has revealed that in the past oil blocs allocation was done to favour persons from northern Nigeria, many of whom have now become richer than their states and geo-political zones. Oil blocks are awarded at the

discretion of the president through the Petroleum Minister largely without any transparent process. It was usually an avenue to settle themselves and their cronies. Many past public officials, particularly those that served during the military era are today proud owners of oil blocs, with some of them selling the blocks for billions of dollars. The issue of 83 percent ownership of oil blocks by Northerners, came to the front burner in 2016 when, Sen. Ita Enang who was the then Chairman of the Senate Committee on Rules and Business, advocated for equitable distribution of oil block licenses in the country. Sen. Enang claimed that 83 percent of the nation's oil blocs are owned by people from the North part of Nigeria. Enang said oil blocks should be revoked and re-awarded to ensure the principle of federal character. He alleged that most of the owners of the oil blocks were richer than their states. "Some people who own oil blocks in the North East are richer than their States. At least one person is richer than the entire six or seven states of the North East." "Now it is still said that the Niger Delta is taking too much when one person is taking from the profit he makes from each of the oil blocks more than what even the derivation that the totality of the states is taking." "Most of these oil blocks were awarded long ago. Most of the owners are so rich that the country becomes poorer for it." "We should revoke all the oil blocs, re-allocate them either through this bill (PIB) or an Act of the Executive. This is the wealth of the nation." Sen. Enang accused the wealthy operators in the oil sector of being responsible for the theft of oil and illegal bunkering in the Niger Delta. "We talk about people stealing oil. Oil is not stolen with teacup. Enang added. It was reliably gathered that PIB deliberately refused to attend to this critical issue.

Edo-born philanthropist and rights activist, Patriot Patrick Osagie Eholor, said the PIB was designed as a tool for resolving Nigerian oil industry development challenges rather than as palliatives to host communities. "The PIB should have clearly defined what constitutes host and impacted communities, rather than leave that to the discretion of the companies." Going further he said: "On the issue of ownership, the bill should have made it compulsory for members of the board of trustees of the trust to come from host communities and give communities a stronger role in the selection process, financial management, and administrative procedures of operating the trusts. "Needs assessment, monitoring, and evaluation for projects and programmes should be jointly



conducted by both the communities and companies. "The PIB should've clearly set out timelines for implementation of projects and penalties for defaulting companies. "But, because we have chosen to play politics with everything, Nigerians would continue to bear the consequences of our actions when nepotism and parochialism are promoted ahead of patriotism, equity, and justice."

Erha Tony Erha, Convener and former Secretary of the South-South and Middle Belt Movement, has said that the controversial Petroleum Industry Act, which seeks to spend only three percent of the operations budget of oil companies on hosts communities yet cede over eighty percent of the oil blocks to people from the north is "the worst sin" committed against the people of the Niger Delta. Erha, who spoke to the Trumpet on telephone, lamented that it was sad that the rest of Nigeria has rather taken the Niger Delta and its peoples for a ride and has not only continuously exploited the region of its rich mineral deposit but have also collaborated to deny the people opportunities to participate in the ownership and the benefits derivable from the oil industry. "They don't have regard for collective living in the sense that it is the minorities that are saddled with the responsibility of carrying the majority groups along. "They take what belongs to the area and don't develop the area. Is that how a federation is run? Do you call a country a federation when it does not have fiscal federalism?"

Let everyone take what belongs to them and send 50 percent to the centre," Erha said. "What the Nigerian government has done with the allocation of over 83 percent of the oil blocks to people from the north is to transfer the wealth of the Niger Delta people

to northerners and leave them with a bare three percent as provided for in the Petroleum Industry Act." Erha while reacting to the refusal of the international oil companies to relocate their headquarters and main administrative bases to the Niger Delta region, despite the ultimatums given to them by the South-South governors forum, the National Assembly, and different youth groups in the Niger Delta, he said it is economic rascality. "This shows the collective disdain that they have for the region. How can you have your operational base in the Niger Delta, yet you do not want to stay there to run your business? "The reasons are obvious. It's part of the whole plan to deny the people of the region their due benefits from their oil resources. If the companies stay in the region, they will appreciate the people better and will offer them the benefits of host communities; benefits like employment, payment of taxes to the state governments, development of the host communities and participation of the people in the industry" he said. He however blames the political leadership of the South-South for failing to stand their ground and ensure that the oil companies are brought back to the region. He said that if Nigerians do not sit together and chart a way to establish true federalism, the country will be heading to a precipice. "It bothers me that the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), which anchored its cardinal objectives on restructuring had turned full cycle against that standpoint and has jettisoned it as soon as it took overpower. "It's time for Nigeria to restructure or be balkanised," he lamented.

Comrade Alagoa Morris, an environmentalist and rights activist has taken a wibe on those making calls for the relocation

of International Oil Companies to the Niger Delta. He said it is not by force for business owners to establish their headquarters in our region. He accused state Governors of the region who organize their retreat in other states of not practicing what they preach. Why can't they organize their retreat within their state? He queried. "The Edo state government recently organized their retreat for political appointees in another state. The Douye Diri's led administration went to either Akwa Ibom or Cross River state to organize their retreat. Why can't they do it in Bayelsa state? Why is the amnesty office not in Bayelsa, Delta, Rivers, or any other state in the Niger Delta? What is it doing in Abuja? "The truth is that the high level of insecurity in the region drove them away. Shell was in Warri operating until Warri boiled, the ethnic crisis and other volatile situations caused the company to relocate to Port Harcourt and so whenever there is danger they flee. They were drilling oil without fear before the Niger Delta crisis. Oil companies' workers go about their businesses alone with their cameras snapping here and there, but after the uprising in the Niger Delta, they lost that freedom. "If the 13% derivation fund coming to the Niger Delta is properly utilized, if there is relative peace in the region, these people will come back on their own, they are human beings and they are sensitive to what happened in their environment. We should work towards having peace in the Niger Delta, every money coming to the Niger Delta should be used for the development of the host communities and the state capitals. We must ensure that there is enduring peace in the Niger Delta. When all these are in place our own businesses will thrive and they will come back

voluntarily." While responding to 83 percent of oil well ownership by northerners, he said, "I do not have the current statistics in the first place. But talking about the Petroleum Industry Act not dealing with the issue of 83% ownership of oil blocks by Northerners, I want to ask; Who are those that have the other 17% out of the 100%? Well, I aligned myself with the thought of Senior Advocate of Nigeria, Femi Falana, who said that there is no need giving oil blocks to individuals, these are our national wealth and should be given to the state that owns them."

INSECURITY IS HIGHER IN LAGOS

The National President of Niger Delta Nonviolence Agitators Forum (NDNAF), Wisdom Ikuli has accused the International Oil Companies of not being sincere, stating that the insecurity in Lagos is higher than that of the Niger Delta. Ikuli said, "The major reason given by the multinationals for their relocation to Lagos is insecurity, but it is a general knowledge that insecurity in Lagos is higher than the security challenges in the Niger Delta region, even though they conspire with different media houses to downplay the security issues in Lagos state while exaggerating and amplifying every negative issue in the Niger Delta. "The relocation of the Multinationals headquarters is long overdue, it is non-negotiable. They cannot continue to exploit our land and in the process pollute, devastate, degrade our environment while paying taxes to Lagos State Government and also developing other areas at the expense and detriment of the owners of the crude oil and gas." Ikuli added.

The founding National coordinator of HOSTCOM, Prince Okareme Maikpobi has said that the local content act made it mandatory for oil companies to establish their operational headquarters in the area of their operation. He said "The relocation of the oil companies' headquarters to the Niger Delta has been our cry for years. We have made our point very clear, we are currently at the implementation stage. So I do believe that they will relocate.

Maikpobi however advised more southerners to show interest in the oil block allocation, stressing that oil blocks can only be allocated to those who bid for them. "The marginal fields or oil blocks were recently advertised and everybody was encouraged to apply. Those that qualified in the first bidding round were those that were invited for the second bidding. So there was no discrimination in it to say the person must come from a particular region to succeed. Is Emeka Ofori, not from the South? What about Mike Adenuga and Daniel Etizie are they not from the south? Our people must show adequate interest in this area. Maikpobi added.

ENERGY



NNPC's dirty deals fuel oil subsidy controversy, stakeholders warn

● *Governors, NLC, TUC want forensic audit of corporation*

● *House probes subsidy furor, current status of refineries*

REX ENABULELE, ABUJA

There is a consensus among the Nigeria Governors' Forum, Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Trade Union Congress (TUC) and other stakeholders in the oil sector that the prevailing dirty deals by the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) is fuelling controversy over the subsidy regime.

This suspicion over swelling corruption in NNPC has attracted attention of the House of Representatives as the Speaker Femi Gbajabiamila, on Wednesday, set up an adhoc committee to investigate the actual volume of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) otherwise called fuel or petrol consumed on a daily basis to determine the level of subsidy being paid by the government.

Gbajabiamila also set up another adhoc committee to investigate the actual state of refineries to ascertain what it will cost to bring them back to life again.

The Muhammadu Buhari-led federal government recently failed in its efforts to remove the touchy issue of subsidy on petrol, when it recommended an 18-month extension of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) to the National Assembly.

The implication of the pronouncement is that the burden of the policy, which has been described as a major drain of the nation's resources, would be passed to the coming government, effect from May 29, 2023, if the National Assembly approves an extension of the PIA's implementation.

The implementation of the PIA, which stipulates the removal of petrol subsidy ought to be in February 2022 and was later shifted to July 2022. However, due to pressure and threats of protest by the NLC and the TUC, the decision was recently suspended.

A joint meeting among the governors, NLC and TUC over the controversy on withdrawal of oil subsidy, urged the federal government to constitute a forensic examination of the NNPC, claiming that the corporation had always banded falsehood and untruth in its financial records, thereby fuelling controversy over subsidy regime in the sector.

The meeting, which was held at the Nigeria Governors Forum (NGF) secretariat in Maitama, Abuja, brokered a partnership between the NGF and the labour, in tackling the huge corruption at the NNPC.

The Chairman of the NGF



and Governor of Ekiti State, Dr John Kayode Fayemi, argued that the nation's economy is at the precipice.

"It has become necessary for the two groups to carefully verify all of the NNPC's estimates to ensure that whatever action is taken on subsidy, it would be the people that get direct benefits and not a few wealthy individuals and their cronies in the country", he stated.

Fayemi told the leadership of labour groups that subsidy removal has remained an ongoing conversation not just among governors but the country at large and emphasised that the governors cannot but be part of the solution providers in this onerous task that is confronting the nation.

He further explained that there are raging questions of accountability associated with subsidy removal in the country, observing that the NGF and the NLC can jointly work together to proffer solutions that heal the economy and provide succour to the Nigerian people.

The NGF chairman, who led a delegation of governors: Simon Bako Lalong of Plateau State and chairman of the Northern

Governors Forum and Governor Godwin Obaseki of Edo State, to the meeting stressed that governors cannot ignore the economics of petroleum.

He argued that all the countries surrounding Nigeria including, Niger, Mali, Cameroun and Ghana have their fuel pump prices at the equivalent of a US dollar, stating that Nigeria has a pump price that is far less than a dollar and is uncomfortable with the removal of subsidy.

"We need a partnership with the NLC to confront the challenges of what the NNPC is about; because there is a lot of fraud in the consumption and distribution figures that the country is getting, and we can only move forward if the NLC engages all those who are knowledgeable in the field like PENGASSAN to conduct a thorough research into the sector before any further action is taken on subsidy," Dr Fayemi declared.

Fayemi also insisted that the partnership with the NLC must confront the perennial issue of palliatives for the common man towards cushioning the effects of subsidy removal on the citizenry, stating that "not tackling the problem now is tantamount to

postponing the evil day."

Also speaking at the meeting Governor Godwin Obaseki of Edo State warned that Nigerians have a choice of continuing to behave like "Father Christmas (Santa Claus)" or take concrete actions on a problem that is permanently with it rather than throwing away N3tr on subsidy.

Obaseki suggested that the nation can, in the interim, increase productivity to reduce imports and create jobs.

He also emphasised that the country would do well to revamp the power sector, which is virtually comatose, arguing that without power the nation will continue to throw millions of the people into unemployment, and ultimately, poverty.

Governor of Plateau State, Simon Lalong who like Obaseki, joined the meeting virtually recalled that the NGF had spent three years on this matters, saying Nigerians cannot continue with subsidising petroleum products.

Both the NLC President Comrade Ayuba Waba and the TUC president stressed their lack of appreciation of the trust deficit that characterised previous negotiations and wondered why the subsidy issue

had always been shrouded in lack of transparency on the part of government.

The unionists argued that the conflicting figures that always came from the managers of the petroleum sector had always tended towards inefficiency and corruption.

Speaking at the plenary on Wednesday, the Speaker noted that the time has come for the lawmakers to intervene on the issue, saying that it is only when this investigation is painstakingly carried out that the nation can determine the actual volume of fuel that is consumed daily in the country and the amount of subsidy being paid by the government.

He said members of the Committee on fuel consumption, which will be headed by Hon. Abdullahi Ningi (APC, Bauchi), are Hon. Ahmed Satome, Hon. Prof Julius Ihonvbere, Hon. Usman Zanna, Hon. Leke Abejide, Hon. Uzoma Abonta, Hon. Chinda, Hon. Henry Nwawuba, Hon. Ibrahim Obanikoro, Hon. Akin Alabi, Hon. Dachung Bagos, Hon. Maki Yalleman, Hon. Dike Chisom and Hon. Prince Obi.

For state of refineries headed by Hon. Engr. Ganiyu Johnson

(APC, Lagos), the committee include, Hon. Yusuf Buba, Hon. Fred Obua, Hon. Akinfolarin Mayowa, Hon. Haruna Dederi, Hon. Ibrahim Ishiaka, Hon. Ezenwankwo Okwudili, Hon. Wale Raji, Hon. Zakari Mohammed, Hon. Mansur Soro, Hon. Stanley Olajide, Hon. Aniekan Umanah, Hon. Olododo Cook Abdulganiyu, Hon. Comrade Aminu Suleiman and Hon. Johnson Oguma.

The Speaker tasked members of the committees to speak to various stakeholders, and not rely on just figures being paraded around.

Gbajabiamila said, "We will be setting up two adhoc committees, to address the issue of fuel subsidy. One will look into how much fuel we consume as a nation on a daily basis.

"We have had figures banded here and there without any authenticity, before we can even begin to talk subsidy. Like I said, we need to know how much we are consuming. The second is to look into refineries and state of repair and determine what will be needed to bring our refineries back to life again."

The committees has been given four weeks to present its report.

ENERGY



Oil belongs to N'Delta people, not Nigeria

MICHAEL OWHOKO

For the record and for posterity, it is imperative to state that oil found in the Niger Delta region belongs to the people of the area. It is not owned by Nigeria. God provided every habitat with natural resources, including agricultural crops for subsistence. Oil, among others, is one of the natural deposits God provided for Niger Delta people for existence. The region had existed before Nigeria was created, and the oil was never part of sovereignty it ceded to bring about the country. This explains why other regions in the country have control over natural resources in their domain. Therefore, it is morally wrong for the government to single out the most valuable resource of a particular region for confiscation, while leaving other regions to enjoy their resources exclusively. That the Federal Government has oppressively expropriated the oil in the Niger Delta region by transferring ownership to itself, and using the law to legitimize the process, does not make it morally right. The obnoxious Petroleum Act of 1966 which now forms part of Section 44(3) of the 1999 Constitution was used to legitimize this illegality. It confers on the Federal Government, ownership and control of all petroleum resources found in, under or upon all land or waters in the country. However, this is at variance with practices in advanced democracies where host communities, states or regions own the resources and pay taxes and royalties to government. In law, whoever owns the land, owns the resources therein, and this principle is supported by the Ad Coelum Doctrine. Why singling out petroleum resources in a particular region for acquisition? If the intention of government was sincere, the law should have been extended to cover all natural resources, including food and cash crops across the country. The Niger Delta people believe strongly in their soul, spirit and body, that the oil belongs to them but that the federal government has unjustly used its might to seize it because of their helpless polyethnic minority condition. It is most likely this could not have happened in a monolithic majority group in the country for fear of resistance. Depriving the Niger Delta region of its oil while leaving other regions or communities to exploit natural resources found in their areas, amounts to injustice. Zamfara and Osun states, for example, are currently enjoying the benefits of gold mining, just as other states or regions in the country are reaping from their agricultural crops. Yet, the Niger Delta people are not only deprived of their oil resource, they also bear the brunt of oil exploration, including destruction of their ecosystem. Fish, crops, weather, water and other organisms in the region suffer pollution and contamination. Oil has



Owoko

brought miseries to the people to the extent that even basic agricultural and fishery activities which provide succour for the people are no longer generative, due to environmental degradation. When you complain, those whose only contribution to the economy is their population are quick to remind you that the region is already enjoying 13 percent derivation proceeds, in addition to input from intervention agencies like the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, thus, does not deserve further support. This is population-induced arrogance. When groundnut, cocoa and palm produce were Nigeria's economic mainstay, the parts of the country where these

produces were derived, namely, the North, West and East separately received 50 percent of the revenue in line with the derivation principle as contained in the 1963 Constitution. Why then is the government reluctant to raise the derivation revenue that should accrue to the Niger Delta region to 50 percent when the 1999 Constitution has given a window for upward review. The 13 percent derivation principles as contained in Section 162, Sub-section 2 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) is intended to adequately compensate the people of the region for confiscation and damages arising from oil exploration and production. While the region is still contending for an upward review of the 13 percent, about 59

Northern lawmakers in the House of Representatives lately had vexatiously pushed for a bill to expunge the derivation principle under the 1999 Constitution. Obviously, the intention of the 59 legislators is to deny the Niger Delta region of the 13 percent derivation revenue to enable redistribution of the proceeds to shore up revenues in their region. This motive is not only thoughtless and heartless, it smacks of parliamentary hypocrisy and insincerity, capable of plunging the region into pointless crisis that could worsen the country's economic woes. Are these lawmakers bereft of ideas that can shore up revenue pots in the northern states or they are just being mischievous? Rather than channel and expend energy on how natural resources that are spread across the northern states can be explored and harnessed for growth of the region, they are ridiculing the legislature and exposing the limit of their intellectual capacity for good governance. It was these same northern legislators that contributed to the delay in the passage of the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) over their insistence that allocation to host communities from oil companies operating expenditure must be reduced from 10 to 3 percent. They had opposed the initial 10 percent as recommended in the original draft. The PIB was eventually passed into law on August 16, 2021. Now, they have not only succeeded in this overbearing trajectory; they have introduced 30 percent frontier exploration fund in the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) despite previous records of unsuccessful geophysical exploration efforts, including seismic surveying, by international oil companies

(IOCs) in the region. Is there any exploration magic they expect the Nigerian Petroleum Development Company (NPDC), a subsidiary of Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) to perform in place where the IOCs could not find oil in commercial quantity? It is a clear demonstration of pursuit of sectional interests aimed at commuting the exploration fund into advantage for the North. In what way has the Niger Delta region offended the Nigerian state and their leaders? Why the show of zero tolerance for development and comfort in the region? Projects meant for development in the area are not only sometimes diverted and moved to other regions, even statutory privileges are occasionally aborted. For example, former President Olusegun Obasanjo relocated the West Niger Delta LNG, Escravos to Olokola in Ogun State and changed the name to OK LNG. Protest by the Delta State House of Assembly that the LNG be returned to Escravos, Delta State, were rebuffed by the government. Former late President Musa Yar'Adua attempted to relocate the Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun to Kaduna until he was pressured to halt the plan by Niger Delta governors. Rather than establish one in Kaduna, he preferred to strip the region of the university. The proposed Oil and Gas Industrial Park designed for fertilizer, methanol, petrochemicals, and aluminium plants earmarked for Ogidigben, Delta State, has been abandoned by the Federal Government. It is hoped there are no plans to move it outside the region. The Petroleum Equalisation Fund (PEF) which was established to administer uniform fuel

prices across the country has consistently failed to extend coverage to the riverine oil communities in Niger Delta in their network, causing fuel to sell above pump price in these areas. The unending construction of the East-West Road stretching from Effurun, Delta State to Calabar, Cross River State has lasted over 16 years with no hope in sight on completion date. It is imperative to calm frayed nerves in the Niger Delta by sincerely compensating the people through measures earnestly designed to develop the area for their oil that have been commandeered by the Federal Government Template used in developing Abuja can be adopted. Direct the IOCs and the indigenous oil companies to relocate their headquarters to Niger Delta, just as ministries, departments and agencies of government (MDAs) moved to Abuja. This will accelerate development of the region. Also, just as NNPC has directed oil companies to make annual budget provision for funding of rehabilitation of schools, houses, roads, hospitals and other infrastructure destroyed by terrorists in Borno State and other parts of the North East Region, similar measures can be extended to oil communities whose properties have been impacted by seismic blasting and corrosion arising from activities of oil exploration. This way, enduring peace can be achieved in the Niger Delta region, rather than see it as a conquered territory whose oil has been taken over as spoils of persecution.

● **Dr. Mike Owoko,** journalist and author, is the publisher of "Media Issues," an online newspaper based in Lagos.

Jonathan urges companies to impact N'Delta host areas

Former President Goodluck Jonathan and President of Belemail Producing Limited, Tein Jack-Rich, have asked oil operators in the Niger Delta to positively impact their host communities.

They made the call at Idama Community in Akuku-Toru Council of Rivers State at the commissioning of industrial-capacity potable water facility and 1,250KVA power generator donated by Belemail Producing Limited under its Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC)/Belemail joint venture (JV) project.

They stated that if operators support local communities, they would coexist peacefully, while job opportunities would be created to boost economic growth and development.

Findings by The Trumpet Newspaper revealed that Idama Community had lacked potable

water for decades before the company's donation.

Jonathan, who was represented by Ambassador Godknows Igali, said: "This project is a great model for all other companies in communities to emulate and impact on local communities to better their lives."

While commending Belemail for the gesture, he also commended the Idama Community for creating the right environment for intervention projects in the area.

Jack-Rich said in spite of his poor background, he did not allow his humble beginnings to discourage him from building a great future that would impact lives.

"I come from Kula Community that looks very much like Idama. We suffered a lot of mental degradation, fighting for environmental justice, economic denial, social relegation and



Jonathan

self-dignity, a lot that created social vices.

"I solved my problem by thinking outside the box. What you feed your mind with, is what your mind will produce to design your path to success or failure.

"Everything you see here: the tanks, water depth, I designed them, the machineries, human resources, and I said to NNPC that we cannot continue to let this community to suffer," he stated.

He commended NNPC for supporting the vision, adding: "If other operators can support local communities, business ventures and the communities will always be at peace because when a mind is not engaged, it will engage itself," and urged the youths to explore their potential to make a difference in society.

On his part, traditional ruler of Idama Community, King Kariboye Karibo, said the provision of water and electricity represented abundant life to the people and expressed hope that more projects would be initiated to improve the lives of the people.

President of the Ijaw National Congress (INC), Prof. Benjamin Okaba and the President General of Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC), Peter Igbifa, also commended Belemail's gesture, adding that it was time to change the narrative through intellectual battle, as opposed to weapons.

'Removing unserviceable planes at airports difficult due to court cases'

The Director-General and Chief Executive Officer of Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), Captain Musa Shuaibu Nuhu, in this interview with journalists spoke about the recent lifting of the travel ban on Nigeria by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), 5G network concerns, Airline Operators of Nigeria's (AON's) petition to remove NCAA from the Civil Service Structure, expectations for the year, among other recent and important issues in the aviation sector. Excerpts by ADAKU WALTER.

What is the update on UAE unbanning Nigeria and 11 other countries?

The Country Manager of Emirates Airlines came to my office and he submitted a letter showing us a letter of release by Dubai Airport lifting the ban on Nigeria and 11 other African countries. Of course, we still have some protocols that have to be complied with. I think it is acceptable.

But, what I told him is that the issue of flight operations between Nigeria and UAE is based on BASA. Nigeria as a government, we don't deal with an airline, we deal with the authorities of UAE. So, what I told him is that the Civil Aviation Authority of UAE should write to us officially through diplomatic channels. When we have that, it means the Nigerian Government is in official communication with UAE. As soon as that letter comes in, I am sure it is going to come and we will act on it.

Unofficially, we are not aware because I need the UAE CAA to officially inform me through government to government channels. So, when we get that it becomes official.

Did he state when the airline will resume flight services to Nigeria?

When we receive their letter, then, the Federal Government will have to take a decision on that. We have the Ministry of Aviation, which deals with matters of policies and also, we have the Presidential Steering Committee (PSC) on COVID-19. However, we don't think it will take time to take a decision once we receive the letter officially.

There is a report that the Dubai Airport Authorities gave Air Peace some stringent measures before the airline can be allowed to fly into Dubai Airport. Can you shed more light on some of these measures?

I am not so sure on the measures you are talking about, but, we cannot choose for Air Peace whether it is Dubai or Sharjah it wants to fly into. It depends on the airline to choose the airport it wants to fly into and the approval given by the UAE Government based on our Bilateral Air Service Agreement (BASA) arrangement with them. We will support Air Peace and if Air Peace is having some issues there, we will see how we can

help with the authorities there so that they won't have any problem and the airline can resume flight services to the airport.

Air Peace is a Nigerian carrier and it is our responsibility to ensure that they get any support we can give them like any other Nigerian carrier. We see a lot of countries that their airlines come here and how their governments support them. For instance, when United Airlines wanted to resume flight services to Nigeria, the American Government supported it through their embassy in Nigeria. Everybody is supporting its own and we should support our own airlines, too.

A few weeks ago, NCAA restricted Emirates Airlines operations to Abuja Airport only. Has the authority rescinded its decision?

The whole idea was because they didn't give Air Peace what it requested for. Air Peace requested for three frequencies and they gave it just one and the reason they gave was that Sharjah airport was overstretched. Believe you me there is nobody that will tell you its airport is operating above capacity at the moment. But, if you look at Lagos Airport now, it is operating at above capacity. Lagos was launched in 1978 or 1979, how many people were travelling then and how many people are travelling now? If there is any airport that is operating above capacity it is Lagos Airport. But now, they said they have given Air Peace the slots it applied for and we have given them the slots they wanted too.

Nigeria is planning to roll out the 5G network very soon, while the same network has been suspended in some countries, including the United States. What is your say on this?

It is not completely true that the 5G network has been suspended in the United States, rather it was just in some of the places close to a few of the airports within some radius that 5G was suspended in order to fully understand what is happening. The concern raised is about interference with aircraft that are being controlled to land. There is a critical component called radio altimeter; the spectrum by which this equipment operates is close to that of the 5G. So, they are afraid of interference from the radio altimeter and giving aircraft erroneous indication and it is during aircraft approach landing when they are about 2,500ft or so

above the ground. Usually, it is for flights that are put to land.

For us in Nigeria, we don't have auto landing authorisation, our flights don't do auto landing. So, for now, it is of no concern to us, but we are still monitoring the situation and see the development if there are issues that might affect us, then, we will take the necessary action.

What is your say on the letter that emanated from the Airline Operators of Nigeria (AON) to the National Assembly, canvassing the removal of NCAA from the civil service structure?

NCAA is a government agency and not an independent body; we operate under public service rules and government salary structure. We have very experienced pilots with minimum of 4,000 flying hours. That is the recommendation to be a flying instructor, but our pay is poor when compared to what the industry is paying. Our pay within the civil service structure seems to be great, but if you compare that to the closest we need from the industry, our pay is poor. So, people will rather go and work in the industry as a captain, earn some millions of naira, than to come here and earn less than N1 million.

It is normal for humans to do that. If I can work somewhere and get triple of my monthly salaries for less work, why will I go and work somewhere else? The only people that come to work for NCAA as flight operation inspectors are people who have retired from flying. People who have attained the age of 65 years or more and we employed them on special contracts and even as a special contract staff, when you get to 70 years of age, you are supposed to leave.

If you employ someone who is 65 years old, it takes you about 18 months to two years to train him and by the time he is going to function as a full inspector and he has three years to go. He has to go by age 70. This is not a very efficient system. We need to find a right balance within the senior inspectors and the younger ones so that we do not have this every four years disruption where we have to start looking for inspectors. It is very disruptive and it is not the most efficient use of resources. We certainly need the elderly people for their experience, but we need to strike the right balance.

We need to get people who can be employed as regular staff, people who are under 50 years



DG NCAA, Capt Nuhu

old and can come out to work and by the time they retire at the mandatory age of 60, we can still engage them as contract staff for another 10 years. So, you will have people who can work with you for 20 years and this promotes stability in the system.

According to the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) documents 9737, we are supposed to be a competitive employer, but because we are under the civil service rule, which we must comply with, I cannot compete with the airlines in the hiring of staff and in the other side, the aviation safety inspectors, they come out of school, we employ them, train them, they are here for six years and when they are about to become very productive for the system, the private sector comes and attract them with better salaries and take them away.

We need to find a way of balancing this so that the system gets enough technical personnel to function. We are however, working on the government to see how things can be addressed. There is a limit we can pay. We are working with the ministry through the Minister of Aviation, Head of Service and salaries and wages commission to see how we can address this.

On AON letter, they came in and complained that some of their services are delayed and we explained to them that we do not have enough inspectors because they have a lot of work to do. So, we have to prioritise the system, but if we have more hands, the work will be quite faster. And I understand the concerns of the airlines; they invested money and they don't want delays. If you delay them, they are losing money.

What are your expectations in 2022?

2021 was relatively a good year for the Nigerian aviation industry, especially the domestic operators. We expect the growth to continue in 2022; we expect more airlines to take delivery of their new aircraft orders.

Can you give the statistics on the number of private jets we have in Nigeria?

I don't have that figure off hand and I don't want to give you an erroneous figure, but our expectation is that the private jet sector will also receive a boost. We believe it will increase.

NIMASA increases conditional survey of flag registration

■ Grows port state inspection by 24.2 %

Director-General of the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) Dr. Bashir Jamoh, has announced an increase of 43.6 per cent in condition survey for Flag Registration by it last year as against the performance in 2020.

It also recorded an improved Port State Control (PSC) implementation in year 2021 with 24.2 per cent higher than the PSC inspections of year 2020.

Jamoh, who disclosed this during a media interactive session in Lagos, noted that despite the challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the agency ensured improved port and flag state administration in accordance with the safety requirements of the Merchant Shipping Act 2007.

A breakdown of the figures shows that in 2020, the Agency carried out condition survey of vessels under Flag Registration for 276 vessels, while in 2021, the figure increased to 489, representing a 43.6 per cent improvement. Port State Control implementation by NIMASA in 2021 was assessed onboard 673 vessels, which was a marked improvement on the 510 Vessels Boarded for Port State inspection in year 2020 representing a 24.2 per cent increment.

Jamoh also disclosed that the Agency reactivated the online portal for stakeholders to verify Nigerian Certificate(s) of Competency (CoCs) from any part of the world.

"The online certificate verification platform was reactivated last year to reduce falsification of Nigerian Seafarers Certificate and enhance the employment of Nigerian Seafarers.

"We experienced rejection of Nigerian

Seafarers both locally and internationally and the Agency decided to introduce the online certificate verification platform which allows ship owners to easily authenticate CoC's from the comfort of their electronic devices."

While raising concern over the percentage of failures recorded for Nigerian seafarers who sat for the Certificate of Competency examination last year, Jamoh announced that the Agency has commenced investigation into the immediate and remote causes of the trend with a view to addressing it holistically.

In year 2021, NIMASA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Maritime Transport Coordination Center (MTCC), for capacity development to address the need for reduction of Green House Gas emission in the maritime industry with emphasis on achieving 0.5 per cent sulphur oxide in Bunker fuel.

"Our laboratory is already completed and we hope to enter a public private partnership arrangement this year to manage the laboratory for optimal utilisation.

The Agency also carried out 20 marine accident investigations in 2021, as against 18 in 2020, while also enforcing safety regulations on barges and tugboats under the code named: Operation Sting Ray.

The NIMASA helmsman revealed further that the agency took delivery of more Deep Blue Project Assets, which was flagged-off by President Muhammadu Buhari, adding that some of these assets have been deployed to the Nigerian Navy for its operational use.

"The Agency is collaborating with major international stakeholders in the maritime sector



Jamoh

in other to entrench coordinated response to piracy and other criminalities on the Nigerian waters and prompt reportage and escalation of marine incidences to where action is most expected and to provide navigational advisory to mariners," Jamoh added.

Speaking further, He noted the Agency's commitment to improved strategic collaboration with the Nigerian Navy, Nigerian Air Force, the Nigerian Police, Nigerian Army and the office of the National Security Adviser (NSA).

This move, Jamoh noted has helped to reduce piracy attacks off the coast of the Gulf of Guinea, as there was no single attack on Nigerian waters in the third quarter of 2021, as reported by the International Maritime Bureau (IMB).

Maritime group cautions CBN over e- invoicing policy

■ Says it will hinder trade facilitation

By **ADAKU WEALTH**

Save Nigeria Freight Forwarders Importers Exporters Coalition (SNFFIEC), has kicked against the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) e-invoicing policy, saying it would militate against trade facilitation and delay in cargo clearance from the seaports.

The CBN had said that all import and export operations will require the submission of an electronic invoice authenticated by the authorised-dealer banks on the Nigeria single window portal, Trade Monitoring System, effective from February 1, 2022

The activist group also called on stakeholders in the maritime sub sector to speak with one voice by squashing the proposed CBN policy on e-invoicing.

According to the group, the Single Windows platform is enough to monitor transaction of trade from the shipping industry, adding that the implementation of the policy will further compound cargo clearance from the ports.

National Coordinator of the SNFFIEC, Osita Chukwu, reiterated that if implemented by the CBN, cargo throughput will reduce and goods might be diverted to neighbouring ports in the sub region.

He also accused the CBN Governor, Godwin Emefiele for the proposed ill-advised policy of invoicing, noting that the directive from the apex bank is a mirage.

Osita lamented that the sector revenue generating agencies remit to the Treasury Single Account (TSA), adding that decision from the Ministry of Finance surpassed what the CBN Governor is clamouring for.

He added that if implemented, stakeholders should expect bottleneck and cumbersome process and procedures of cargo clearance.

"If implemented then stakeholders in the shipping industry should expect terrible and difficult process in cargo clearance. The CBN Governor has failed to understand what shipping business is all about," he said.

He further called on the CBN Governor to tackle issues of forex in promoting international trade and not compound the existing challenges faced by operators in the maritime sub sector of the nation's economy.

"Any country that fails to understand and protect the peculiarity in shipping industry is doomed" said.

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) had also released guidelines for the newly-introduced electronic invoicing (e-invoicing) and evaluator for exporters and importers.

The new regulation, it stated, is aimed at determining the accurate value for goods leaving the country or otherwise.

Abuja MoU boss seeks regulation of vessels trading in West, Central Africa

By **ADAKU WEALTH**

The Secretary General, Abuja Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Port State Control, Captain Sunday Umoren, has called on member states to support the body in regulating activities of vessels trading in the coastal regions of West and Central Africa.

This is as Umoren raised alarm at the rate of oil spill by foreign vessels in the regions, thereby causing pollution.

"Majorly, the source of pollution is the vessel. For instance, when it comes to oil spillage; there are three reasons for it. One is caused by

operational spillage. This happens probably when their ship-to-ship transfer of oil and some of the oil drops into the water. Another one is when a hose bursts into the sea. The last one is intentional.

"You will see foreign vessels coming for instance to Nigeria because Nigeria would charge them if they are to wash their tank at the shore. So, in the middle of the night, they release the oil that has been washed off their tank into the water. And our duty is to charge Member States to regulate the activities of vessels coming to their country. Abuja MOU can't do it alone," he said.

The Abuja MoU is a regional body set up by

coastal states in the West and Central African region. It is saddled with the responsibility of developing and implementing a common mechanism for port state control activities in the region.

The Abuja MoU duties include the harmonisation of the port state control procedure and practices of all the countries in the region aimed at eliminating the operation of substandard shipping thereby ensuring maritime safety, security, protection of our marine environment from pollution and improving the working and living conditions of ship crew.

Kaduna dry port set for domestic warehouse operations

■ Interacts with NEPC on export expansion programme

By **ADAKU WEALTH**

Kaduna Inland Dry Port (KIDP) has geared up in readiness for full commencement of the Federal Government's Domestic Export Warehouse (DEW) and the Export Expansion Facility Programme (EEFP).

The General Manager of the port, Rotimi Raimi-Hassan, disclosed that ahead of March when the DEW operations will fully commence, KIDP has put in place all that are necessary for smooth take off and hitch free services.

Raimi-Hassan also disclosed that KIDP has procured three trucks through federal government support that will be branded with Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) approved mark to deliver export cargoes directly into the ports without delays or stoppage by any regulatory and security agency.

According to him, all checks, examinations and due diligence required must have been completed at the designated DEW facilities, which KIDP is one of the nine recently approved by the government.

The Federal Government, through the Nigerian

Export Promotional Council (NEPC) had approved the setting up of the domestic export warehouse to ease supply chain constraints as part of its efforts to boost non-oil export in the country.

At an interactive session with private sector export stakeholders in Abuja, the Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer of NEPC, Ezra Yakusak, reiterated the council's commitment to the success of the DEW programme.

At a meeting to showcase key beneficiaries of the Export Expansion Facility Programme in Abuja, Yakusak said the agency is committed to address logistics constraints for competitiveness and promotion of exports.

Kaduna Inland Dry Port is being Nigeria's first dry port has been noted to be equipped with modern facilities and highly skilled manpower to handle and process exports as a way of helping in federal

government's economic diversification agenda.

"DEW is expected to reduce the cost of doing business for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), exporting companies, and also be a one-stop transit facility/terminal where pre-shipment activities like packaging/labeling, fumigation, pre-shipment inspection, among others of export designated agricultural products in preparation for transportation to the ports prior to eventual shipment," he explained.

NCS to challenge N2b Innoson judgement debt

By **ADAKU WEALTH**

The Supreme Court has granted the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) Board's application to challenge the February 6, 2014 judgment of the Court of Appeal in Ibadan that affirmed a N2, 048,737,443.57 judgment debt in favour of Innoson Nigeria Limited.

In the appeal marked SC.816/2020, the sum of N700, 220,000 was awarded against the Customs and the Attorney General of the Federation in favour of Innoson, with interest at the rate of 22 per cent per

annum from the date of commencement of the action and 22 per cent per annum until the final liquidation of the judgment debt.

The Customs paid Innoson N700, 220,000, out of the judgment sum, which at the time stood at N1, 881,219,981.17, leaving an outstanding of N1, 625, 119, 514, 97.

Following an application by Innoson, the Federal High Court, Ibadan, on July 29, 2011, made a garnishee order against three banks in the sum of N2, 048,737,443.57.

One of the banks appealed the decision of the garnishee proceedings in the Court of Appeal, Ibadan.

However, the Customs claimed that the bank withdrew its appeal against it and the AGF, whereupon their names were struck out of the appeal, and subsequently, no processes were served on Customs by reason of the withdrawal but the Court of Appeal affirmed the garnishee absolute of the trial court and ordered that the sum of N2, 048,737,443.67 be released from the Customs' account in satisfaction of the judgment debt.

LAW & JUDICIARY



How judiciary is promoting restructuring, by Falana

BY PAUL MICHAEL

•Applauds court verdict against deductions from federation account to fund Police Trust Fund

To many, the recent judgment of a Federal High Court sitting in Abuja, which barred further deductions from the federation account to fund Police Trust Fund could not have come at a better time than now.

This is so because many judiciary observers are of the view that Nigeria is in dire need of restructuring to save the nation from disintegration.

With the seeming political actors' reluctance to listen to the voice of reason and restructure the polity, the courts are expected to lead the way for the nation's survival.

Hence, the pronouncement of the Abuja court is adjudged a promotion of restructuring through litigation.

The verdict followed Rivers State's suit marked FHC/ABJ/CS/511/2020 and instituted on its behalf by Mr Joseph Daudu, a former President of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA).

In the suit, the state challenged the decision of the federal government allocating funds directly from the Federation Account to fund some of its agencies claiming that the decision violated section 162 of the 1999 Constitution.

The Rivers State government also claimed that by the federal government's unlawful action, it had deprived it substantial revenue from the federation account, and therefore prayed the court to nullify the unlawful funds allocation from the federation account.

Named as defendants were

the Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice AGF, Accountant General of the Federation, Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission and Minister of Finance.

In its verdict, the court holds that institutions or bodies, such as the Nigeria Police Trust Fund not listed in the Nigerian constitution cannot be funded directly from the Federation Account.

It also contended that it was not the responsibility of the state governments, but that of the federal government to fund the police.

The court's verdict was in tandem with earlier pronouncements of the courts in 10 other cases.

According to this, a foremost human rights lawyer and senior advocate of Nigeria (SAN), Femi Falana, described it as a very sound judgement.

The former president of West African Bar Association (WABA) said the Supreme Court had ruled, several years ago, that the Federal Government lacks the power to remove fund from the Federation Account without the authorisation of State Governments and Local Governments.

According to him, under the defunct military junta the unitary military government usurped the powers of the other tiers of Government.

"But since 1999, the courts have consistently promoted restructuring by litigation. Before the VAT judgment, State and Local Governments have defeated the Federal Government in not

less than 10 cases.

Some of the cases dwelled on physical planning, conduct of local government elections, seizure of local government fund, monitoring of local government fund, collection of entertainment/hospitality levies, control of land, control of inland waterways and setting up of commissions of inquiry," Falana added.

HISTORY OF THE SUIT

The Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) had announced at its April 2020 meeting that the deductions were to commence in earnest.

But about a month after the FAAC meeting, Governor Nyesom Wike-led Rivers State Government filed its suit on May 20, 2020 to challenge the planned deductions and the law on which it was premised.

The Rivers State Government, through its Attorney-General of the Federation, challenged what it described as the unlawful deductions being made from the federation account, jointly owned by the federal, state and local governments, to fund the NPTF.

It contended that it was not the responsibility of the state governments, but that of the

federal government to fund the police.

It also urged the court to order a refund of the money deducted from the Federation Account and paid into the NPTF since when it was informed about it at the FAAC meeting of April 2020.

Delivering judgment in the suit, Justice Ahmed Mohammed, declared as "illegal, unlawful and unconstitutional," the direct allocations made so far by the federal government from the federation account to fund the NPTF.

The judge held that Section 161 and Section 162 of the 1999 Constitution were breached by the federal government in making direct allocations to the NPTF from the Federation Account.

He added that Section 162 of the 1999 is unambiguous to the effect that only the federal, states and local governments shall be allocated fund directly from the Federation Account.

The court also held that section 4 of the Nigeria Police Trust Fund Act 2019 relied upon by the federal government to justify the unlawful deductions from the federation account is inconsistent with section 162 of the 1999 Constitution which recognises only the federal, states and local governments.

It also agreed with the plaintiff that the levies imposed on companies operating in Nigeria by the federal government to be paid directly to the NPTF instead of the Federation Account was also illegal, unlawful and unconstitutional.

The Rivers State government had argued that such levies ought to be paid to the federation account for it to be benefit from it.

It said failure to pay such funds into the federation account and rather into the NPTF has deprived it of substantial revenue accruable to the state as taxes.

The court dismissed the Attorney General of the Federation's objections and upheld all arguments of Rivers State that where the provisions of the 1999 Constitution are clear and unambiguous, they must be given their ordinary meanings.

The court also agreed with Mr Daudu that the federal government was completely wrong in the interpretation given to section 4 of the Nigeria Police Trust Fund Act to the effect that the Nigerian Police was established for the federal government alone and as such the funding is solely on the shoulder of the federal government.

The AGF had in his pre-

liminary objection asked the Federal High Court to decline jurisdiction in the matter on the ground that such suit ought to be filed directly at the Supreme Court.

But the judge dismissed the preliminary objection before going ahead to deliver the verdict.

The court held that the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court can only be invoked when a dispute involves the federation and any of the component states.

On the objection raised by the AGF that the Rivers State government ought to have sought and obtained the leave of the Federal High Court before instituting the suit, the judge said the plaintiff had no reason to seek the court's permission to file the case.

While upholding that the plaintiff's suit, the judge ordered that the funds belonging to Rivers State but were used to fund the NPTF by the federal government should be refunded to the state.

The judge, however, declined to extend similar order of refund to the 35 remaining states on the grounds that they were not parties in the suit and that the Rivers State as the plaintiff in this matter did not file it on behalf of others.

Family seeks justice, probe of Nigerian student's death in Ukraine

BY ONYEBUCHI SAMPSON

The family of 19-year-old Nigerian student, Fadlullah Agboluaje, who allegedly died in mysterious circumstances, is calling for an investigation into his sudden death in Ukraine a few days after leaving Nigeria.

The family's quest for justice has received a boost with 8,460 people signing a petition initiated by one Christopher Juwah to compel Ukrainian and Nigerian authorities to unravel the mysteries surrounding Agboluaje's death.

In an urgent appeal, the family is urging Lviv Polytechnic National University in Ukraine to tell them how the healthy 19-year-old brother, Fadlullah Adedayo Agboluaje died.

The appeal is titled: "Tell us the truth of the death of my 19 years old Son in Ukraine." A helpless Mother's cry."

Narrating the incident, a sibling to the deceased said: "My mum was with him at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport in Nigeria, before he traveled from Nigeria on Saturday, January 8, 2022, and landed in Ukraine on Sunday, January 9, 2022.

"He was picked up from the airport by a Lviv Polytechnic National University representative to the school's accommodation facility, the same day, January 9, 2022.

"On getting to the room assigned to him, he wasn't happy with the way it looked and my mum told him to request a change of room.

"So, he went to the front desk of the accommodation facility to report to the personnel on duty, unfortunately, the person didn't understand English, so



Deceased student in Ukraine

he ended up reaching out to the liaison officer, the undersigned agent on the letter the school sent, before he left for Ukraine.

"This man asked my brother to see him in the morning the following day by 7:00a.m.

"My mum chatted with my brother up until 11(p.m), Nigeria time on Sunday, January 10, 2022.

Then on Monday, we didn't hear from my brother, all his calls were going through, messages were dropping, but no responses at all.

"My mum began to panic and reached out to different people for help as at afternoon time after we got no response all morning. Then it struck her that she could copy the number of the liaison officer on the letter. So, she reached out to him also.

"Later that afternoon, he stopped responding to calls, keeping us in the dark.

"He ended up picking up his calls later that evening and then gave a student in that

accommodation facility the phone to break the news that my brother was found dead on the floor of his room.

"It was a big shock. My brother left Nigeria very healthy. He took a COVID-19 test on the 7th of January and tested negative. He got the full COVID-19 vaccination, took his yellow fever vaccine, ran a complete health check at our family hospital and the results came out fine.

"After we got the news, we began to ask this liaison officer to send us his picture if truly he's dead. He didn't do so until early evening on Tuesday, January 11, 2022. I couldn't look at the picture until Wednesday 12th, because I just couldn't look at my younger brother dead.

"As an older one, you always want to fend for your younger siblings. It hurt too much to look at the picture but my mind needed to have a grasp of the evidence. I looked at the

picture on my uncle's phone and my brother looked asleep in the blue shirt, he wore from Nigeria as seen in the picture, fully buttoned up and in a blue thick furled coat.

"They haven't sent us another picture of my brother in his dead state until now."

The family of is asking for official autopsy report claimed to have done by the institution.

They are also worried about why Lviv Polytechnic National University has not contacted or reached out to them, wondering if the deceased was not their responsibility, having already been in the school's territory.

The family also want Nigeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, its Embassy in Ukraine, and the Ukraine Embassy to tell them what happened and what was done to justify their duty of care for the student.

They further called for answers from the school about what happened to their son and not to be kept in the dark.

Group petitions N'Assembly against early gir-child marriage

• Garners 468,975 signatories

BY ONYEBUCHI SAMPSON

A not-for-profit organisation, It's Never Your Fault, has petitioned the Nigerian Senate and House of Representatives against early child marriage in the country.

The petition has attracted 468,975 signatories of the expected 500,000.

The group, run by teenage friends; Susan Ubogu, Kudirat Abiola and Temitayo Asuni, is calling on lawmakers in the National Assembly to amend section 29(4b) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and make the constitution clearer on child marriage in the country.

It's Never Your Fault said the petition is an effort to ban child marriage in Nigeria and ensure that the law is enforced all over the country.

It noted that in Nigeria, gender equality is something we need to work towards as there are institutionalised systems, which aim to keep women subservient to men and one of such, is the issue of child marriage.

According to the group, the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria presents contradicting stances on the issue.

"Section 23 of the 2003 Nigerian Child Right's Act says, "a person under the age of 18, is incapable of contracting a valid

marriage. If such a marriage does take place, it should be declared null and void and of no effect.

"Contradicting that, is section 29(4b) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which says, "any woman who is married shall be deemed to be of full age.

"Due to the fact that this law is not clearly stated, many Nigerians have gotten away with marrying young girls at any age," the group added.

It's Never Your Fault's #BanChildMarriageNigeria wants the Federal Government to ban child marriage in all the 36 states across the country.

According to United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Nigeria has the 11th highest percentage of child marriage in the world.

A child as young as eleven can be married off. This leads to innumerable complications not only for the child, but also for the economy as a whole.

UNICEF defines gender equality as "a state of equal ease of access to resources and opportunities regardless of gender, including economic participation and decision making, and the state of valuing different behaviours, aspirations, and needs regardless of gender."

It adds that a total of 44 per cent of the female Nigerian population gets married off before their 18th birthday.



Adebayor bemoans Aubameyang's fate at Arsenal

■ Says Gunners hardly forgive

By OVIRI KELVIN

Former Manchester City striker, Emmanuel Adebayor, has said that Arsenal treated him badly after the club severed the good relationship that existed between them in 2009.

The Togolese national stated this due to the frosty relationship that presently exists between Arsenal's striker, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, and the head coach of the club, Mikel Arteta.

Aubameyang has been involved in a series of disciplinary problems and this has caused Arteta to strip him of the captaincy of the team.

Taking an insight differently from other people's views on Aubameyang's situation in Arsenal, Adebayor said he had to accept the offers from Manchester City the moment they signified their interest when he had issues at the Emirate stadium.

According to Emmanuel Adebayor, his exit from the club to Manchester City in 2009 after spending three years in Arsenal was

necessitated by his coach, Arsene Wenger, who told him in his office he won't be needed any longer in the club.

The embattled Aubameyang who is presently enmeshed in disciplinary problems with the manager of Arsenal is likely to leave to the club to further his football career in Saudi Arabia or somewhere else.

Adebayor said that even though there are a lot of dissimilarities between his and Aubameyang's, he stated that the Gabonese international is going through a lot at the moment in the club. He added that Arsenal as a club lacks the spirit of forgiveness.

In an interview with Sky Sports News, he said, "I know he's going through a lot because that's Arsenal for you. They never know how to forgive."

Adebayor who played for Arsenal for 3 years started his international football career at the age of 15 in Metz, a Ligue 2 division Club in France before being snapped up by Monaco in 2004 after impressive outings with the club.

He played in nine games for



Monaco in their build-up to the Champions League games before they were defeated by Jose Mourinho's Porto in 2004.

However, he continued his career with the club till he was signed by Arsene Wenger in 2006 where he was likened to the former Arsenal star player, Kanu Nwankwo, due to his physique, and area ball control that saw him wear the Kanu's number 25 Jersey.

If Adebayor had played for the Super Eagles of Nigeria, his parents' country national team, he could have been a complete replica of Kanu Nwankwo but he opted to play for Togo his birth country and took them to their ever world cup outing in 2006.

It is noteworthy to state that Emmanuel Adebayor is the all-time highest goal scorer in the Togolese national team.

Recalling Adebayor's statement in a Turkish television

programme, Beyond The Game, in 2018, he said, "I had a meeting with Arsene Wenger in his office and he told me I had to leave because he didn't see my future anymore in Arsenal."

"So, I didn't have any choice other than to join Manchester City, who I was very happy to join."

"The next day, when I joined Manchester City, I saw him doing a press conference in London saying that I wanted to leave because the money was big. That is where the hate for Arsenal came from."

He noted that this singular action by Arsene Wenger instigated his ridiculous celebration after scoring a goal against Arsenal in a clash with Manchester City in September 2009 where he had to run the entire length of the pitch to celebrate in front of Arsenal fans at Etihad Stadium.

NFF releases Super Falcons provisional list for clash with Cote d'Ivoire

By OVIRI KELVIN

Nigerian Football Federation (NFF) has released a provisional squad list consisting of 35 players of the Super Falcons for next month's clash with the Cote d'Ivoire female national team.

In a press release, the NFF noted that the provisional squad consists of four goalkeepers and 10 defenders with Paris FC goalkeeper in French Division 1, Chiamaka Nnadozie, Onome Ebi who plays for FC Minsk, a Belarusian football club, and Marvis Ohale who plays the right-back position in the Spanish Primera División club making the list.

Furthermore, the provisional squad list included 12 midfielders and 9 forwards with Toni Payne in the Spanish Primera Division Club, Sevilla, Desire Oparanozie of FC Dijon, Amarachi Okoronkwo of Nasarawa Amazons making the list.

The Super Falcons of Nigeria will be in action on January 13 for the first leg of the African Women Cup of Nations (AWCON) qualifiers with Cote d'Ivoire and the return leg will be played on January 17 of 2022.

The Provisional Squad:

Goalkeepers: Tochukwu Oluehi, Chiamaka Tochukwu, Christy Ochiaeriaku

and Yewande Balogun.

Defenders: Onome Ebi, Rofiat Imuran, Gloria Ogbonna, Osinachi Ohale, Ayomide Ojo, Ashleigh Plumtree, Joy Duru, Nicole Payne, Michelle Anozie, and Akudo Ogbonna.

Midfielders: Peace Efih, Yetunde Aluko, Amanda Mbadinuju, Ngozi Okobi-Okeoghene, Grace Igboamalu, Toni Payne, Regina Otu, Christy Uchiebe, Racheedat Ajibade, Rita Chikwelu, Amarachi Okoronkwo and Deborah Abiodun.

Forward: Asisat Oshoala, Francisca Ordega, Esther Okoronkwo, Desire Oparanozie, Vivian Ikechukwu, Ifeoma Onumonu, Uchenna Kanu, Gift Monday and Juliet Bassey



Cameroon vs Egypt: AFCON Clash of The Titans

The African Cup of Nations semifinal clash between Cameroon and Egypt cannot be said to be over-hyped to say that it is a game meant for the titans in the tournament.

While the clashes take place on Thursday, football fans are ecstatic on which of the team will qualify to play the finals with who wins between Burkina Faso and Senegal on Sunday 6 to compete for the well coveted trophy.

The Cameroon national team have been on an excellent form since the tournament started. As the host nation, they have shown capacity by topping group A with 7 points, conceiving 3 goals while scoring 7 to qualify for the knockout round of 16.

From the games played so far, the Indomitable Lions of Cameroon defeated AFCON debutant, Comoros, 2-1 in the round of 16 to play the quarter final match with Gabon where they won 2-0. Comoros, despite having one of its player sent off in the 7 minutes of play, scored in the 87th minute to reduce the 2 goals deficit to 1.

Going by the records, Cameroon after playing 5 games to compete with the Pharaohs of Egypt in the semi on Thursday, has conceded in 80% of all games played; except the quarter finals with Gabon.

Meanwhile, the Pharaohs of Egypt lost their first game against Nigeria in Group D at the Roudé Adja Stadium, Garoua. The Pharaohs undeterred by the defeat, went ahead to win the next games by a lone goal each against Guinea-Bissau and Sudan to qualify for the round of 16.

In the round of 16, Egypt won Ivory Coast on Penalties after playing a goalless draw in the 120 minutes (full-time and extra-time) clash to qualify for the game against Morocco. Egypt in

the quarter final game, came from a one goal deficit to win the match 2-1.

From the statistics, Egypt only conceded in two games out of five in a 90 minutes clash, which is equivalent of 40% of the total games played. Despite not scoring sufficient goals in the matches played, Egypt has shown discipline as a team and proven that their defence is solid.

Furthermore, going by the head to head ties according to 11v11, Egypt and Cameroon has met 27 times in football contests. In these encounters, Egypt won 15 times, drew 6 and lost 6. This depicts the fact that Egypt has a better record and would know how to tame the rampaging Indomitable Lions of Cameroon.

There is no doubt that Cameroon who are five times AFCON winners has a formidable attack with the likes of Vincent Aboubakar who has scored 6 goals in the competition to be the leading goal scorer and Toko Ekambi whose goal tally has increased to 5 after scoring a brace in the match against Gambia.

Egypt also has won the AFCON title seven times to be the highest in the history of the competition and parades the African best player, Mohammed Salah, in the tournament. Salah, undoubtedly has been very instrumental to Egypt's successes in the tournament. He is the key figure and has proven his versatility in the contest.

The contest will surely be a stiff one between the two teams who are the leading champions of the AFCON tournaments, but one thing is certain, the Indomitable Lions or the Pharaohs of Egypt will proceed to compete in the finals on Sunday 6, 2022.

“When you have a dream, you’ve got to grab it and never let go.”

— Carol Burnett

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Obi gives two conditions to run for president in 2023

By ADAMIDENYO IGHO,
Regional Editor, North

Former Vice Presidential candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) during the 2019 general elections, Peter Obi, yesterday listed two conditions under which he would contest the 2023 poll for the office.

He promised to throw his hat in the ring for the 2023 presidential election if his party (the PDP) opens the contest to all or zones the slot to the south.

In a statement by his media aide, Val Obienyem in Awka, the Anambra State capital, Obi said he is capable of turning around the fortunes of the country, but would wait on the decision of the PDP before he declares his intention.

Obi: “All the elections that I followed in the past, the party that I belong to today, the PDP made a pronouncement and took a stand. At least in 2019 when I was involved, where I can say Atiku graciously chose me as his running mate which I remain eternally grateful to him for, the party decided that the candidate should come from the North and that was what the party decided.”

“And I believe that the party owes it a duty to say what their stand is. If there stand today is South, be rest assured I am aspiring, if they say North, I can't do otherwise or they chose the option that everybody is free, then, of course, you will be hearing from me,” he said.

The former Governor of Anambra

state who affirmed his commitment to building a better Nigeria, advised all and sundry to choose a candidate who is competent and most importantly has integrity.

According to him, “What we are looking for in this country today are people of integrity, people of conscience, people who are less greedy. Educational qualification is not a measure of integrity; it doesn't guarantee that somebody is less greedy or that people have conscience.”

He stated that, “I have seen people here acquire what they don't need. I saw it while I was serving, to fight corruption here, you need somebody who has integrity, who is not greedy, who has conscience. If you have that, fighting corruption is easy, because, if you who is in charge is not stealing, you will reduce stealing by 50 to 70 per cent.”

He explained that “it is critical that you have somebody who is like that. It is not when people are acquiring lands, houses, everything they don't need; they want to live a lifestyle that is far beyond the economy of Nigeria, far beyond their earnings, that is why the place is collapsing. That is why we have insecurity, that is why we have poverty.”

The former Anambra governor said he has what is needed to manage the costs efficiently and these are the critical areas Nigerians should look for as they search for who will govern the country in the future.



Obi

US announces limited No-Interview visa renewals

By EDWARD ADAMIDENYO,
Regional Editor

The United States Mission in Nigeria has announced there is expanded visa services to assist non-immigrant applicants who qualify to renew theirs.

This new application procedure will begin in February at the U.S. Consulate in Lagos and will be extended shortly thereafter to the U.S. Embassy in Abuja.

A statement by the United States Mission in Lagos disclosed that the number of qualified applicants who can apply using the new procedures will be limited initially.

An applicant may be eligible for a visa renewal without an interview if his application is for a B1/B2, F, M, J (academic only), H, L or C1/D (combined only) visa, AND meet each of the following criteria:

- Your previous visa was issued in Nigeria;
- Your previous visa is in the same classification as your current application;
- Your previous visa was a full validity, multiple entry visa;
- Your previous visa expired within the last 24 months or will expire in the next 3 months from the date of application;
- You have all your passports covering the entire period since receiving the previous visa and the

passport with the most recent visa;

- You have never been arrested or convicted of any crime or offense in the United States, even if you later received a waiver or pardon; and
- You have never worked without authorization or remained beyond your permitted time in the United States.

Applicants can contact the US website at <https://ng.usembassy.gov/visas/nonimmigrant-visas/> for further information.

If an applicant is qualified based on the above criteria, he may visit <https://www.ustraveldocs.com/ng> to start his/her application.

Please note that processing

times for the program are expected to be up to two months and you will not be able to retrieve your passport during that time.

Each applicant must individually meet the criteria; minors can apply without an interview only if they meet the eligibility criteria on their own.

Emergency Appointments

If you have a life-or-death emergency, you may request an expedited, in-person interview, however, to accommodate No-Interview Visa Renewals, appointments will be very limited.

Business travel, conferences, weddings, and graduations are not considered emergencies. If you have an emergency and need

to travel immediately, please follow the guidance provided at <https://www.ustraveldocs.com/ng> or +234-1-227-8955 to request an emergency appointment.

Special Note: Third parties unaffiliated with U.S. Embassy Abuja and Consulate General Lagos may seek to take advantage of various visa services to target visa applicants with fraudulent offers or claims.

Applicants are also expected to fill out their own forms and make their appointments themselves via the official websites.

As future opportunities for Interview Waiver appointments become available, they will be communicated via the US website.

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