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CHANGE OF NAME

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Weekend

Horse-trading, intrigues as parties pick VP candidates

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Parties pick VP candidates amid horse-trading

By **TUNDE JOSHUA**,
Politics Editor

All the registered political parties for next year's general elections were expected to have submitted the names of their vice presidential candidates by 6.00 pm on Friday June 17, 2022 to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

There was serious horse-trading before the choices of the presidential running mates were decided in some parties.

All Progressives Congress (APC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in efforts the beat the June 17 deadline nominated Alhaji Kabir Ibrahim Masari (interim) and Governor of Delta State, Dr Ifeanyi Arthur Okowa as the running mates to their presidential candidates respectively.

Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, Presidential Candidate of the ruling APC may have submitted the name of Ibrahim Masari as his running mate but as a placeholder. He is a relative of Katsina State Governor and former Speaker, House of Representatives, Aminu Masari. He hails from a village located in Kafur Local Government Area of Katsina State.

He served as the National Welfare Secretary of the APC when Comrade Adams Oshiomhole was the chairman of the party.

When the late President Umaru Musa Yar'dua was in office, Masari was affiliated with the PDP. He left the party after Yar'Adua died.

On the other hand, the Presidential Candidate of Nigeria's main opposition PDP, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar while announcing Okowa as his running on Thursday at the party Secretariat, WADATA House, Abuja said his Vice President must fulfil the qualities to be president and one that could complement him as a President.

He added that he must possess qualities to unite Nigeria, and must not be afraid to speak and give advice on governance in the country.

He also added that his running mate must understand what he described as the depth of ills in the Nigerian system, with understanding of critical needs of economic growth.

Following the announcement, Okowa was screened by the committee already set up for that purpose.

But the Southern and Middle Belt Leaders' Forum (SMBLF), on Friday, condemned Okowa for accepting his nomination as the running mate.

This was contained in a

statement signed by leaders of four groups which include Chief Edwin Clark, for the Southern and Middle Belt Leaders' Forum (SMBLF) and the Pan Niger Delta Forum (PANDEF); Chief Ayo Adebajo, leader of Afenifere, Dr Dru Bitrus, the President-General, Middle Belt Forum and Prof. George Obiozor, the President-General, Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide.

The elder statesmen described as unspeakable and quite disappointing that Okowa, who is currently Chairman of the South-South Governors' Forum, and a native of Owa-Alero in Ika North-East Local Government Area (one of the Igbo-speaking areas) of Delta State, would exhibit such barefaced unreliability to accept the position of vice president.

They recalled that 17 Southern governors of both the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC), under the Chairmanship of the Governor of Ondo State, Rotimi Akeredolu, SAN, met in Asaba, Delta State on May 11, 2021, and took far-reaching decisions, including that, based on the principles of fairness, equity and justice, the presidency should rotate to the South at the end of the statutory eight years of President Muhammadu Buhari's tenure.

They said Okowa was the host of that historic meeting, adding that the Southern governors later met again in Lagos, on July 5, where they reaffirmed their decision and again in Enugu, on September 16, to restate the call that the presidency should rotate to the South in 2023.

"It is, therefore, most unfortunate that the Governor of Delta State, Senator Ifeanyi Okowa who should know better, accepted his appointment as running mate to Alhaji Atiku Abubakar.

"We do not have anything personal against Ifeanyi Okowa but his action is treacherous and tantamount to a despicable pawning of the political future of the people of Southern Nigeria," the statement said.

The group said Governor Okowa has, by his action, betrayed the trust reposed on him by his colleagues; the southern governors, the entire good people of southern Nigeria and all well-meaning Nigerians. It warned that he has made himself persona non grata, not only, with SMBLF but all citizens who treasure our oneness and yearn for a more united and peaceful Nigeria.

The group said it rejected Okowa, his vice president slot, describing the governor's action as "a betrayal of the highest order."

It added that this is not



Yakubu

a matter of loyalty to ones political party, but rather a greedy, parochial and unpatriotic action, committed against the general interest of his Delta State, Niger Delta and Southern Nigeria. It is, certainly, also not in the interest of the nation at large, it added.

Some stakeholders such as a former National Chairman of PDP, Prince Uche Secondus, were said to have secretly rejoiced over Wike's rejection. Wike allegedly masterminded Secondus's removal from office.

Secondus who had not publicly congratulated Atiku after his emergence took the opportunity of Okowa's emergence to greet the duo.

He said that Atiku's choice of Okowa says it all that he has a knack for picking good heads to be around him for the gargantuan task ahead. He added that with the picking of a running mate, the candidacy is complete and PDP was now set for the inevitable journey back to Aso Rock in 2023.

Picking of running mates for candidates (presidential or governorship) has been a delicate issue in Nigerian politics largely because of the interest it elicits because of the ethnic, tribal, regional and religious considerations.

Ahead of the 2023 elections, these factors are being played up and stakeholders across political parties are not leaving any stone unturned in making cases for preferred running mates.

Regional consideration dictates that running mates to presidential standard bearers must come from the opposite direction of the bi-polar regions of North and South of which the main candidate comes from.

The political turf has become murky and slippery immediately after the emergence of the presidential candidates, particularly of the two leading parties, APC and PDP.

Atiku had sleepless nights before arriving at the choice

of Okowa. Atiku approached the party to assist him in the selection process. He must have learnt a lesson not to go it all alone like he did in 2019. The national chairman of the party, Iyorchia Ayu, said the PDP leadership worked on possible candidates from the South East and South South and zeroed in on five, all of them governors. Victor Ikpeazu of Abia, Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi of Enugu, Nyesom Wike of Rivers, Ifeanyi Okowa of Delta and Emmanuel Udom of Akwa Ibom.

The eventual emergence of Okowa on Wednesday came as a huge surprise as less than 24 hours before Atiku's declaration, it was almost certain that Wike was going to get the slot but the table was turned against him at a midnight meeting. The party chairman was fingered as the 'hatchet man'.

Among the many albatrosses of Wike was the argument that the controversial governor might be too strong to tame for Atiku. Also, a reference book on all of Wike's utterances against the party were opened and used in nailing him.

Impeccable source said part of the allegations leveled against Wike was his imprint in crises ravaging some state chapters of PDP. Edo, Ogun and Cross River were mentioned. He was accused of causing divisions deliberately to railroad himself into those states ahead of his presidential ambition.

Also, it was learnt that Atiku did not feel comfortable working with Wike who nearly scuttled his chances of clinching the presidential ticket.

Wike was considered as a running mate who may not be marketable to the north where a campaign of discredit was waged against him as a Christian bigot who allegedly hates Islam.

Atiku bought into all of these allegations and decided to go for a 'cool headed' Okowa.

Atiku admitted that his decision on Okowa was a difficult one.

Okowa's emergence no doubt created a little division in the party's National Working Committee (NWC) as more of the members were said to be favourably disposed to having Wike as running mate.

On the other hand, Tinubu and his party have been battling with the choice of a credible and acceptable running mate. It is obvious that Tinubu, a Yoruba from the Southwest, must look north for a running mate.

There are dissenting voices among APC stakeholders on which zone in the north the vice presidential candidate should come from.

Advocates of the North West vee pee slot argued that APC needs the voting strength of the zone that comprises Kano, Katsina, Jigawa and Kaduna states to complement the expected bulk votes from Tinubu's base in the South West to coast home to victory.

For a vital reason that President Muhammadu Buhari is from the North West, it was largely submitted that Tinubu should look North East. This, it was argued, will be a replica of the combination of the winner of the June 12, 1993 presidential election, the late Chief Moshood Abiola and his running mate, Ambassador Babagana Kingibe.

Like the Abiola and Kingibe South West/North East combination, the APC may have settled for a North East vice presidential candidate later.

But the major obstacle before the party is that of religious consideration. Tinubu is expected to pick a northern christian running mate while some people do not see this as expedient. However, there are dissenting arguments on the possibility of Tinubu picking a Muslim running mate. And so, the controversy rages.

Proponents of the Muslim / Muslim ticket said this would not in any way affect the chances of APC winning in 2023.

They alluded to the fact that Nigerians did not reject the Abiola / Kingibe joint ticket in 1993, hence it should not be an issue in 2023. But the opponents say Nigeria has changed with deeper cleavages.

While consultation continues, the party submitted the name of the Katsina governor's relative, Kabir Ibrahim Masari as a temporary running mate to Tinubu.

But an APC social media influencer, Dr. Ugo Egbujo, reportedly criticised this interim decision, saying: "Asiwaju has submitted the name of one Masari as a dummy running mate. This is

not good enough

"For a man who has an eye for talent. For that man who is a political smooth operator. This is utter tardiness. Asiwaju had years to think about this. He had 10 days to settle on a choice

"He hasn't managed to come up with a name. This is not decisiveness. The APC is the ruling party. It must lead the way. It can't engage in this face-me-I-face-you tactic. Jagaban can't run like this. Mbanu

Director-General of Peter Obi Campaign Organisation and a former presidential aide, Doyin Olupe, said he has been tapped as the Vice-Presidential candidate of the Labour Party.

This disclosure was made by Olupe while speaking with Channels TV on Friday.

Olupe disclosed that his name has been submitted to INEC.

"I'm vice presidential candidate of the Labour Party, fact!"

"You know that this exercise close this evening 6pm and this is just past seven, the Labour Party will issue a statement, you yourself have been able to confirm that my name has been submitted to IMEC and so, that is the reality of the situation as of today," he said.

Speaking further, Olupe clarified that while he has been chosen as the Vice-Presidential candidate, there are possibilities of a change as the party is still holding its widespread consultations across the country.

Olupe explained that the Labour Party is working on a merger with other political parties, adding that things might change as time goes on.

He affirmed that the Labour Party is aiming to merge with the New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP), alongside other parties to work together to unseat APC and PDP.

He added: "We're talking to NNPP, we are talking to every possible region's political outfits outside APC and PDP."

"The choosing of the vice presidential candidate is a process, it is an electoral process. And it does not stop until the process and the schedule ends. INEC allows you to present your candidates and if you want to substitute, you make substitute, if necessary, but it is not necessary. The present situation is that we are believe that this Labour party government that is coming, is essentially going to be about young Nigerians. Those of us who have been part and parcel of the fight must be prepared to pay the sacrifice, even personal sacrifice, and allow a situation whereby we can lift up our youths to the position of power and authority."



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Akeredolu, his wife and others at the funeral service.

Akeredolu weeps at funeral of Owo terrorist attack victims' mass burial

By FRIDAY OMOSOLA,
Akure

Says we have failed to protect our people

Tears flowed freely on Friday at the funeral mass for victims of the June 5th, 2022, terror attack at Saint Francis Catholic Church, Owaluwa in Owo Local Government Area of Ondo State.

Governor Oluwarotimi Akeredolu, who was with his wife, Betty, wept during his speech at the Mydas Resort and Hotel, Owo venue, lamenting: "We have failed to defend these people. Not because we have not tried. But because these forces on the other side are evil and they have support. They will not triumph over us forever."

"When I see the sea of heads that are here it speaks volumes. What has happened to us in Owo in Ondo State was indescribable. A lot of words were used to qualify it. Dastardly, horrendous. But I still believe there are words to use to describe it but I am still short of those words."

"We have just 22 (deceased) in this hall. A few of them have been buried. Because the relatives couldn't wait till today. But as at the last count, these animals came to the church and murdered 40 people."

Akeredolu added that the security architecture of the country needs rejigging.

Bishop of Ondo Catholic Diocese, Dr. Jude Arogundade, declared that the governor had not failed in protecting his people but a strong soldier with determination to protect those who voted him into power.

Arogundade wondered why the people of the country needed to beg for state police, despite the endless attacks and killings.

He thanked the governor for accepting to designate a memorial park in honour of the victims, noting that those who carried out the attack have blood on their hands.

Muhammed Shehu

Usman and Lawal Mazaje, were similarly accused of assassinating a hunter in the forest. However, the court discharged the fourth suspect, Auwalu Abubakar, arraigned for aiding and abetting.

In his verdict, Justice

Williams Rotimi Olamide convicted the three suspects to death on charges bothering on conspiracy to kill, murder, kidnapping, and armed robbery. The judge commiserated with the victim's family and advised the

government to find a lasting solution to the thriving insecurity in the country.

On July 12, 2019, the 58-year-old Olakurin, who was heading to Akure, Ondo State, from Lagos, was attacked and shot by the armed

herdsmen on the Benin-Sagamu Expressway.

After months, the killers were arrested on April 6, 2020, following tracking and investigation by men of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad of the Nigeria Police Force.

SENATE PRIMARY ELECTION REPORTS RECEIVED

SENATE

DELTA

S/NO	STATE	DISTRICT	NAME
10	DELTA		
1		DELTA CENTRAL	EDE DAFINONE
2		DELTA NORTH	PETER NWOBOSHI
3		DELTA SOUTH	JOEL ONOWAKPO THOMAS

Signature
16/06/2022

Delta APC warns Okowa against funding Atiku's campaign with state fund

The All Progressives Congress (APC) Governorship Campaign Organisation in Delta state, has warned Delta State Governor, Dr Ifeanyi Okowa, against using state funds to finance the campaign and political activities of the People Democratic Party (PDP) presidential candidate, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar.

This was contained in a statement issued by the APC Governorship campaign organisation, on Friday by the Director, Communications and Media Strategy.

The warning came following the announcement of Okowa as the running

mate of Alhaji Atiku Abubakar for the 2023 general elections.

According to the statement, "the use of taxpayers' funds and collective resources of Deltans to fund personal political ambitions are unacceptable, callous and inhuman".

"It is said that on a day the Rivers State Governor, Nyesom Wike, approved the immediate payment of outstanding gratuities, pension arrears and death benefits for retirees of Rivers State Public Service, the Delta State House of Assembly approved a N25 billion loan for Governor Ifeanyi Okowa allegedly to plant palm trees," the

statement read in part.

"This is coming barely 49 days after the embattled PDP candidate and Speaker of the state Assembly, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevwori approved a controversial N150 billion loan.

"We have sufficient grounds to suspect that these loans are being taken to prosecute Atiku's presidential campaign. We will not stand by and watch Okowa impoverish our people to enthrone a man who has nothing to offer Deltans in particular and Nigerians in general.

"If Governor Okowa had devoted half of the time he used in pursuing his Vice Presidential ambition

to focus on governance, we wouldn't be where we are today.

"As of today, the government is owing retirees over seven years of gratuities, pension arrears and death benefits while the state goes on autopilot for Okowa to pursue his personal ambition. Most retirees have resorted to a commercial tricycle, popularly called Keke, for survival, some are bedridden and others have resigned to fate or even died while waiting for the present administration to pay their entitlements after 35 years of meritorious service to state and country."

According to the Delta

APC Governorship campaign organisation, "the path of backwardness and crippling debts which the Okowa government has condemned the state was undeserved given the huge, abundant human and natural resources that Delta is blessed with".

It, therefore, charged Governor Okowa to borrow a leaf from his counterparts in Rivers, Borno, Ebonyi and other states "that are blazing the trail with legacy projects, turning their states into massive construction sites, while paying outstanding gratuities and pensions, rather than take loans with nothing to show at the end of the day"



Dr Ifeanyi Okowa



Bawa

EFCC nabs 35 internet fraud suspects in Ibadan

By PAUL MICHAEL

The Ibadan Zonal Command of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has arrested no fewer than 35 suspected internet fraudsters.

A statement on Friday said some of the suspects were arrested at the Akobo area of Ibadan following credible intelligence reports on their alleged fraudulent activities.

It added that 18 of the suspects were arrested

at Ihejirika Garden, near the Army Cantonment, Ibadan by the Army and handed over to the EFCC by Lieutenant Goni Tijjani Ibrahim.

"Thirty-five suspected internet fraudsters have been arrested by the Ibadan Zonal Command of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC. Seventeen of the suspects were arrested on Thursday, June 16, 2022, at the Akobo area of Ibadan following credible intelligence on their alleged fraudulent

activities, while the remaining eighteen suspects were apprehended by officers of 2 Division, Nigerian Army, Ibadan and handed over to the Commission for further investigation.

"The suspects arrested by EFCC operatives are Taiwo Babalola Oluwatope, Adekunle Odewale Damilola, Lawal Ismail Adebola, Salau Ayobami Adeyemi, Adebowale Samuel Amusan, Abioye Oluwatobi Alex, Akinola Adekunle, Salau Opeyemi Saheed, Ugwu Osita, Adedun

Olajide Temidire, Adegbenro Adeola Damilare, Emmanuel Oluwatobi Ajala, Ojekale Samuel Ayodimeji, Adebayo Babatunde Teslim, Micheal Ayomide, Opeyemi Sonuola and Adetona Oladimeji Abdulazeez.

"Items recovered from them include seven exotic cars, mobile phones, laptops, one smart television set and incriminating documents.

"The 18 suspects handed over to the Commission by Lieutenant Goni Tijjani Ibrahim on behalf of the Army, were arrested at Ihejirika Garden, near the Army Cantonment, Ibadan following series of complaints from the

residents regarding the fraudulent activities of the suspects.

"They include Adeotun Omodéle, Lamidi Abeeb, Lawal Muhammed, Kolapo Samad, Akinpelu Gbotemi, Ahmed Rilwan, Sodiq Adebayo, Mohammed Salami, Muiyiwa Adeyeye, Awojoola Muiz, Ogunyemi Ayobami, Gabriel Ikyelede, Olamide Adekunle, Isaac Elijah, Azeez Yusuf, Damilola Muritala, Opeyemi Nurudeen and Olamide Lamidi.

"Items handed over alongside the suspects include mobile phones, one smart wrist watch, amongst others."

Atiku/Okowa pair's a restorative ticket – Ohaneze Youth

By PAUL MICHAEL

The Ohaneze Youth Council has described the presidential ticket of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) as a restorative journey to rescue and redirect leadership in Nigeria.

National Secretary, Obinna Achonye, said this in a congratulatory message issued on Friday in Abuja and made available to *The Trumpet*.

Achonye said the pair of former Vice President Alhaji Atiku Abubakar and Governor of Delta

State, Dr Ifeanyi Okowa as the Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates of the PDP for the 2023 elections respectively, will salvage the country and make Nigerians proud.

He pledged the support of the Igbo youths, saying that Gov Okowa is part of the Igbo extraction.

According to him, "The leadership of Ohaneze Youth Council received with joy the emergence of Atiku Abubakar and Dr Ifeanyi Okowa as President and Vice President. We see it as a restoration journey

to overhaul the polity and redirect the vehicle of the leadership of Nigeria to where Nigerians will be proud of their own country

"While we congratulate them we reassure Nigerians that we will never succumb to the fiction of sentimental politics as unemployment, insecurity, and poverty have no tribe and religion

"We reassure Nigerians of our unalloyed support to Atiku/Okowa ticket as Dr Ifeanyi is and remains one of our own. We are thrilled to get the news of this political elevation

and we are hopeful that this marks the beginning of good things to come not only among Ohaneze youths but Nigerian youths as a whole

"If leadership is the human capacity and the will to rally men and women to a common purpose and the character to inspire confidence, then Nigerians should get ready for a better thing to come.

"Finally Ohaneze appeal to Nigerians to pray for Atiku Abubakar/Ifanyi Okowa for the task ahead is enormous."

You'll never have peace if your aim is to crush Russia – France warns Ukraine, others

French President Emmanuel Macron has said Ukraine would never have peace if the ultimate aim of the conflict in the country is to "crush Russia."

Macron said, "some say that the goal of this war is to crush Russia. And that's where I say you're wrong. If you do that, you'll never get a negotiated peace."

The French leader spoke with CNN affiliate BFMTV on Friday on board a train leaving Ukraine, adding

that crushing Russia is not Zelensky's goal either.

"President Zelensky defends his land. And we want to help him do so," Macron said, adding that "commentators or certain leaders shouldn't push beyond even what the Ukrainians intend."

"And so it has been the role of France to put a limit to this question," he said, adding, "we have sometimes won the war and lost the peace."

Macron affirmed France's support for Ukraine and countered charges that his previous comments about not wishing to "humiliate Russia" had hampered relations with Ukraine's president.

NUJ demands release of abducted journalist

By ATHAN AGBAKWURU, OWERRI

Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Zone C (South East) has called for the unconditional release of a kidnapped journalist, Mr. Chuks Onuoha, of the Abia State Council. The journalists said they received news of the abduction of their colleague with shock.

In a statement issued Friday by Sir Emma Ifesinachi and Comrade Eze Adiukwu, Zonal Vice

President and Secretary respectively, the union described the abduction of a mere journalist "who goes about his reportorial duties without the luxury of an ostentatious lifestyle" by unknown assailants.

The union disclosed that family sources say Onuoha, who is a former Abia State Correspondent of The Sun Newspapers, was reportedly kidnapped at his Umungasi Ohuhu family home in Umuahia North Local Government

Area of Abia State at about 10pm on Tuesday, 14th June, 2022.

The statement reads: "We call on Mr Onuoha's abductors to unconditionally release him for the sake of his family. Even if in the line of duty, Mr Onuoha may have stepped on toes due to his reportage, resort to self help and jungle justice are undesirable as any such infraction could be adequately handled by the courts as is expected in a democracy like ours.

"Mr Onuoha, like other Journalists, work to ensure that society functions with correct information to engender socio-economic development. They are the voice of the voiceless in the society.

"Most worrisome is the spate of attacks on journalists who have become endangered species in the society, especially in Abia as this is the third of such incident. Government and security agencies should swing into action to secure the release of Mr Onuoha."

The union called for more security personnel to be deployed in the state and ensure that such incidents are nipped in the bud.

"We call on the Governor Okezie Ikpeazu, Commissioner of Police and other government functionaries to ensure the safety of Journalists and the media industry. This is because when the press is gagged or intimidated by such attacks, then the society can never be free," the group added.

OZEMOYA

I, formerly known and called: **OZEMOYA OLIVER IZUAGBE (M)** and **OKPIKHUMU OLIVER**, henceforth wish to be known and called: **OZEMOYA OLIVER IZUAGBE**. Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public to take note

IFUNAYA

I, formerly known and called: **EMORDI PRISCILLIA**, henceforth wish to be known and called: **EMORDI CHERISH IFUNAYA**. Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public to take note

Buhari, Okowa, others mourn media mogul, Nduka Obaigbena's mother

President Muhammadu Buhari and Delta State Governor Ifeanyi Okowa are dignitaries who have commiserated with the Chairman of Thisday/Arise Media Group, Prince Nduka Obaigbena, on the passing of his mother.

Madam Margaret Obaigbena, the matriarch of the family, survived by

five children, reportedly died on Thursday night at a London hospital. She was 88.

In a condolence message by his Chief Press Secretary, Mr Olisa Ifeajika, on Friday, Okowa condoled with the Owa Royal family and the entire Owa-Oyibu community on the passing of the renowned nurse.

He said that the

deceased was a great mother and an accomplished Nigerian, who dedicated her life to the service of mankind through her profession and philanthropy.

He urged the media mogul and the family to take solace in the fact that their mother lived a life of sublime accomplishments and

impacted on society.

"On behalf of my family, the government and the people of Delta, I mourn the exit of the matriarch of Obaigbena Royal family of Owa Kingdom.

"The news of the passing of Princess Margaret Onyemakonor Obaigbena came to me last night as a shock, especially when my nomination as the Vice

Presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) had just been announced.

"We know that death is the ultimate end of all mortals; I, therefore, encourage the children of mama and all who mourn her demise to be encouraged by the good legacies she left behind.

"She impacted on soci-

ety very well as a young woman, who studied nursing and rose to become the Chief Nursing Officer of the defunct Bendel State Government and later Delta State Government.

"It is my prayer that God will grant her soul eternal repose and grant the family she left behind the fortitude to bear this loss," Okowa stated.



Head, Science, Technology, Health and Environment Desks of The Trumpet, Mrs. Sharon Onyekachukwu Udeh (nee Isaalah) (left); her husband, Mr. Hilary Ekenedilichukwu Udeh (right) and her parents during the journalist's marriage in Lagos.

Journalists condole with Raheemat Momodu's family over her passage

Journalism and Development Seminars Initiative (JADESeminars), has commiserated with the Momodu family of Agbede, Edo State over the passing of their daughter, Hajia Raheemat Omoro.

This is contained in a statement signed by Tony Akiotu, Gbemiga Ogunleye, Ibim Semenitari, Angela Agoawike, and Chinwe Worukwo, Programme Officer.

Until her death, which occurred on June 14, 2022, Raheemat Momodu, a founding member of JADESeminars Initiative, and Secretary of its Board of Trustees, was the Principal Programme Officer, Human Security and Civil Society Organizations in the Department of Gender and Social Affairs at the ECOWAS Commission.

She was a passionate believer in the Nigeria Project, with a deep commitment to issues of women and children. This passion

and commitment drove her activities throughout her life and were exemplified in the roles she played and the responsibilities that she took on.

The statement reads in part:

"We will hold on to the memory of Raheemat Momodu in death as we valued her in life. Among the fond memories was her dynamic leadership of the Lagos State Chapter of the Nigerian Association of Women Journalists in the 1990s as the chairperson during which she became a vital ally in the establishment of the New Trend Movement in the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ).

"As we learn to cope with the pain of her exit, we will exult and celebrate every day the memories she left for us. That retention of a friend, more of a sister, who was always there. That of a loyal, jovial, generous and dependable friend, associate and colleague."

SPONCO accuses Okowa of anti-southern activities

Senator Peter Onyelukachukwu Nwaoboshi Campaign Organization (SPONCO) has on his behalf congratulated Governor of Delta State, Dr Ifeanyi Okowa, "for his Anti-Southern Nigeria Agenda role, which saw to his infamous emergence as the running mate to Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, the Presidential Candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), who is now notorious for being a seasonal unsuccessful subscriber of the people's mandate on the Ballot Boxes."

This was contained in a press statement signed by the Director General of SPONCO, Evangelist Moses Kamanya.

Kamanya compared Okowa to the proverbial 'Abiku' of the Yorubas, who is known for coming and coming again,

as made famous by the great Writer, Poet and Nobel Laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka in one of his excellent Poetic deliveries.

He stated: "At a time like this, when there exists a unanimous clamour all over the country, for a 'Southernner' to manage the affairs of the country, in the interest of equity and fairness; a clarion call that has been echoed and being re-echoed from the depth of our collective existence as a Nation; a development that supposedly motivated the coming together of the entire PDP Governors in Asaba, Delta State, with a view to pushing forth a common front with a one-voiced message to the Nation, via a Communique issued to back up their resolution to queue behind a Southern

President in 2023 and hosted by the same Governor Ifeanyi Okowa, courtesy of wasted Delta State collective resources; he cunningly played along, only for him to lead them on with the Torchlight, and abandoning them to grope in the dark, by switching it off and diverting to another route."

He noted that it is very easy to finger out the proverbial Wolf in the Sheep's clothing as well as the Biblical 'Judas' who is synonymous with selling out those he claims he loves.

He added: "The 'Ekwueme' title in Anio-oma land, is not ascribed to those who speak one thing and go back to do another. It's an honourable nomenclature and traditional investiture to men with the integrity of words and deeds.

"Be that as it may, the voice of the common Nigerians, as well as the decisions of the power players to cede the Presidency to Southern Nigeria cannot be scuttled by the selfishness of one over-zealous Politician.

"The PDP has once again demonstrated and displayed their disregard and ingratitude to loyalty by shunning the calls and playing deaf ears to the yearnings of the Southern Nigerians, who have stood behind them all these while and this justifies the reason for their persistent struggle and position in the political rubble."

Kamanya praised the All Progressives Congress (APC) while stressing that it remains the Party with the large heart, listening ears and vivid eyes to actualize unanimous Agenda for a Southerner in 'Aso Rock' in 2023.

FG to concession 17 airports, unbundle aviation regulations

By ADAMU WALTER

Federal Government has hinted that no fewer than 17 airports under the management of the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) currently not slated for concessioning will be given to the concessionaires.

Minister of Aviation, Hadi Sirika, who disclosed this at the ongoing National Aviation Conference in Abuja, said besides the current concessioning of the country's major international airports, other airports will be concessioned.

He also disclosed that the country's civil aviation regulations were currently being reviewed for the unbundling of the airports to make the entry requirements for aviation investors much easier.

The minister said the concessioning process of

the country's four international airports in Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt and Kano was ongoing, noting that FAAN manages 21 airports on behalf of the Federal Government.

On the investment opportunities in the aviation sector, Sirika said the Federal Government would begin with the international airports, which provide excellent opportunities for investments, adding that other airports would gradually be put out for concessioning.

"There are several state-owned and private airports in the country that needs resources and investments and I am sure their owners and operators will support investments from the private sector to enable them to achieve their strategic goals for implementing the projects," he said.

Danger looms over Nigeria, Gani Adams warns UN, others

Aare Ona Kakanfo of Yorubaland, Iba Gani Adams, has petitioned the United Nations, warning of impending danger of disunity that awaits Nigeria should certain socio- cultural, ethno - religious and political problems remain unresolved.

He gave this warning in a letter titled: Avoiding a Replica of the Bosnian War in Nigeria, dated June 14, 2022, addressed to Mr. Ant6nio Manuel de Oliveira Guterres, the UN Secretary General.

It reads:

Greetings to you from the more than 60 million Yoruba people in South-West Nigeria and across the world. As you, and hundreds of millions of people globally, are aware, things are no longer normal in Nigeria.

Dangerous and despicable things are happening in the world's most populous black nation. What happened in the defunct Yugoslavia that led to the balkanisation of that country is becoming like a child's play in Nigeria.

Pitiably, terrorists moving from Northern Nigeria to the South are being embraced, encouraged and empowered by powers that be in Nigeria.

Your Excellency, globally, you are known and recognised as a statesman because you were Prime Minister of Portugal from 1995 to 2002 and as the ninth person to hold this title of UN Secretary General, you are the Number One diplomat in the world.

You are a symbol of UN ideals and a spokesperson for the interests of the world's peoples, in particular the poor and vulnerable among them.

I am raising-this alarm now because the effect of this dangerous trend may ultimately balkanise Nigeria and affect sub-sahara Africa.

Similar alarm was raised in the defunct Yugoslavia and sadly, nobody put in check the pogromists, whose actions, led to the massacre in that geographical location.

This lackadaisical attitude by those benefiting from this national malaise led to the Bosnian War which began in 1992 and lasted until 1995.

It was an international armed conflict that took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1992 and 1995.

The varied reasons for the country's breakup ranged from the cultural and religious divisions between the ethnic groups making up the nation, to the memories of the Second World War atrocities committed by all sides, to centrifugal nationalist forces.

Obviously, the grave factors that contributed to the dissolution of Yugoslavia, leading to the recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia (including the regions of Kosovo and Vojvodina) and Slovenia, are still fresh in memories of historians.

In 1991, Bosnia and Herzegovina joined several republics of the former Yugoslavia and declared independence, which triggered a civil war in 1992 that lasted four years.



Gani Adams

About 100,000 people were killed during the war and over 22 million people displaced, making it, up until that time, the most devastating conflict in Europe since the end of World War II in 1945.

In May 1993, the UN Security Council took the bull by the horn by seeking justice against those who committed atrocities during the war.

The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) at The Hague, Netherlands was created and it was the first international tribunal since the Nuremberg Trials of 1945-46, and the first to prosecute genocide, among other war crimes.

During the trial, 161 individuals who committed crimes during the war in the former Yugoslavia, including Radovan Karadzic, and the Bosnian Serb military commander, General Ratko Mladic (Butchers of Bosnia), were indicted for genocide and other crimes against humanity. Milosevic was later found dead in his prison cell in 2006.

Your Excellency, I have gone down memory lane to alert you that a similar scenario must be avoided in Nigeria at all cost because the Yoruba in South-West Nigeria are being pushed to the limit.

The Fulani in Northern Nigeria are now engaged in a war of attrition all over the country. Ironically, Nigeria's President is a Fulani.

The Fulani have been fingered in abductions, kidnappings and killings in the North. Now, they are gradually moving down South and the danger is that people in the South are already determined to

engage them. This might lead to a full scale war.

In the last few weeks, these Fulani terrorists have expanded their evil network.

Deborah Samuel, a 200-Level student of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto, was killed and her body burnt by some blood-thirsty fundamentals because, according to them, she was guilty of blasphemy. The killers are visible in a viral video seen by peace-loving people all over the world but the government only arraigned them for 'disturbance to public peace'.

Prelate Of Methodist Church in Nigeria, Rev. Samuel Kanu-Uche, was kidnapped by, according to the highly respected man of God, Fulani boys and they collected N 100 million cash arranged in five bags (about \$166,000) before he was released. Security agents are stationed near the location of the abduction but they did not move against the terrorists.

Anglican Bishop of Jebba Diocese in Kwara State, Rev Oluwaseun Aderogba, his wife and their driver were kidnapped and the abductors demanded for millions of naira before their release.

The Chairman of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in Jos East, Plateau State and a Catholic priest, Rev. Father James Kantoma, was also abducted by Fulani terrorists.

In a most wicked manner, Fulani terrorists wielding AK-47 assault rifles and explosives attacked the congregation at St. Francis Catholic Church in Owo, Ondo State, killing over 40 people. The Federal Government has traced the killing to IS

WAF, although it has not told Nigerians and family members of victims how it intends to arrest the perpetrators.

Another evil traced to religious fundamentalism was that of a prostitute, Hannah Saliu, who was killed and her corpse set ablaze at Alaba Rago, Lagos because she had the effrontery to keep the Holy Quran in her room.

Those abducted in the Abuja-Kaduna train attack in March are still with the terrorists. Just a few Of them have been released, It is unfortunate that government is begging non-state actors to stop kidnapping Nigerians.

Crimes are committed everyday by these state-protected, gun-wielding killers who are now moving to South of Nigeria to continue to unleash mayhem.

It is generally believed that those in authority are helpless, complicit or both, Now, Nigeria is at the point of no return, showing all signs of a failed nation.

Instead of tackling these atrocities by Fulani terrorists, government officials are busy planning and strategising for the 2023 general elections.

Something urgent must be done to avoid a final collapse of the country.

Your Excellency, it seems the only language the Fulani understand is violence and people of South-West are ready for this. The Yoruba are not cowards and will do everything legally possible to resist any attempt by Fulani terrorists to expand their territorial expansionist agenda to the South-West.

It is clear the Federal Government has lost control of the situation because it can no longer keep its citizens safe, secure and protected.

This inaction on the part of the government and aggressive killing agenda of the Fulani are already affecting Nigeria's economy, which is the largest in Africa.

The way Butchers of Bosnia were left to commit atrocities for years before the United Nations moved against them, butchers in Nigeria are already on the rampage and something urgent must be done to stop them.

The repercussion of leaving them to continue to maim Nigerians, especially Yoruba, is better imagined.

No part of Nigeria is safe again. The time for the United Nations to escalate this danger to a global concern is now. Please; accept the assurances of my highest consideration.

Gani Abiodun Ige Adams, Aare Ona Kakanfo of Yorubaland.

Cc: European Union
African Union Commission
British Parliament
US State Department
Director: Council on Foreign Relations
Director: The International Association for Religious Freedom bin United Kingdom
US Commission on International Religious Freedom
Director: National Endowment for Democracy

Ebonyi PDP Primary: INEC report affirms Odii as authentic guber candidate

BY CHARLES ONYEKWERE, SOUTH-EAST

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has affirmed the May 29, 2022, primary election of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Ebonyi State that produced Dr Ifeanyi-Chukwuma Odii as the governorship candidate.

The development is coming owing to the judgement of the Federal High Court, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, nullifying the rescheduled PDP governorship primary election in Ebonyi State and declaring Dr Odii as the authentic governorship candidate of the party.

Recall that Justice Fatun Riman had nullified the rescheduled exercise, saying the primaries were not monitored by the INEC.

In an INEC report obtained by The Trumpet, the Commission concluded that

the governorship primary election was successful.

The report dated May 30, 2022, was signed by the Head of Department of INEC Elections and Party Monitoring Department (EPM) in Ebonyi State, C. C. Nwodo, Anayo Onyejekwe and Oko Kelechi O. for the Ebonyi State team, while Musa Husunu, Esther Ofoegbu and Abiodun O. Lawal signed as Monitoring Team from the INEC Headquarters in Abuja.

In the report, Dr Nwazunku Augustine Alugbala scored one vote, Mr Nwankwo Fidelis Nwibo had one vote, Hon Ogbaga Sylvester got eight votes, Dr Eze Emmanuel Eze, one vote; Hon Christian Usulor, 9 votes; Chief Ifeanyi Chukwuma Odili scored 349 votes, Dr Andrew Sunday Opoke got six votes and Senator Paulinus Igwe Nwagu, one vote.

The report reads in part, "The Peoples

Democratic Party organized its governorship primary for the purpose of electing her flagbearer in Ebonyi State. It was held as scheduled on the 29th of May 2022.

"The venue of the Governorship Primary was the PDP State Secretariat along Abakaliki / Enugu Expressway. The Primary was jointly monitored by the state and Abuja teams. The monitoring exercise was coordinated by HOD EPM, INEC, Ebonyi State and the leader of Abuja Team.

"A seven-member Electoral Committee was on ground to oversee the conduct of the Primary."

Members of the Electoral Committee were listed as Engr Chris Okolo, Chairman; Olalekan Rotimi, Secretary; Barnabas O. Kunwa, Cynthia Nana Bala, Comrade Chidi Chidiebere, Mr Joseph Ode and Mrs Joy Odike as members.



Dr Ifeanyi-Chukwuma Odii

Buhari's campaign office in Abuja donated to Tinubu

By TOM OKPE, ABUJA



President Buhari



Tinubu



Yahaya Bello

The presidential campaign office used by President Muhammadu Buhari ahead of the 2019 general election has been donated to the 2023 presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress, Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

According to the leader of the Tinubu Support Group, Hon. James Faleke, the political edifice located in the Central area of the Federal Capital Territory was ceded to Tinubu shortly after the APC national convention in Abuja.

Faleke said the office is equipped with ICT database, call centre and furnishings.

In a statement on Thursday in Abuja signed by Bayo Onanuga, Director, Media & Communication, Tinubu Campaign Organisation; Faleke said the donated office will become Tinubu Campaign Headquarters, while other offices currently in existence will become annexes.

The Buhari Campaign Office was the second space donated to the Tinubu campaign since his emergence as the party flag-bearer in the 2023 Presidential election.

Governor Yahaya Bello also donated his presidential campaign office to Asiwaju Bola Tinubu earlier.

2023: IPRF declares support for Joel-Onowakpo

● *Vow to mobilise massive votes*

By KELVIN OHOROR

The Isoko Political Revolutionary Force (IPRF) has declared total support for Hon Joel-Onowakpo Thomas, the Delta South Senatorial candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in the forthcoming 2023 general election.

In a statement released by the group led by Comrade Chief Austin Ejabulor, Mr Ezimano Azagba, Mr Chris Akwenuke and Chief Geoffrey Okeh, in an enlarged meeting at Taase Hotel, Oleh, Isoko South Local Government Area of Delta State, they vowed to mobilise massive votes for the APC candidate.

"We wish to state that we are a group of individuals that have come together

to declare our support while mobilising massively for Hon Joel-Onowakpo Thomas to ensure he wins the Delta South Senatorial District election," IPRF said in the enlarged meeting.

According to the group, Delta South Senatorial District will be in safe hands with the experienced Harvard-trained business mogul, who has held several positions at local, state and federal government levels.

They stressed that his experience, capacity and credibility can never be challenged by any aspirant from the senatorial district.

They noted that "As Chairman of the Delta State Board of Internal Revenue (DBIR), he was able to increase internally generated revenue from 1.2 billion to

over 5 billion monthly.

"JOT as he is fondly called, led a resounding campaign on human capital and infrastructural development across the entire state when he was in DBIR," the group added.

The socio-political group also noted that with the emergence of Joel-Onowakpo Thomas, they are no longer in search of a credible candidate because, in him, all the virtues needed in a worthy leader are found.

They further described him as a worthy son of Isoko Nation, Delta State and Nigeria, adding that IPRF has unwavering confidence in his ambition to provide sterling representation at the Red Chambers of the National Assembly for the people of the senatorial district.



Joel-Onowakpo

Edo restores Ogiamen Royal Stool after seven years legal battle

By GABRIEL OMONHINMIN

After seven years of protracted legal battle between Oba of Benin, Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku-Akpolokpolo Oba Ewuare II and the head of the Ogiamen Royal Dynasty of Utantan in the ancient city, His Imperial Majesty, Rich Arisco Osemwengie, Edo State Government made a move that took the public / Palace Watchers, and the litigants by surprise. On April 29, 2022, it decided to drop all charges initially filed against the head of the Ogiamen Royal Dynasty. The charges were for allegedly violating the Edo State Traditional Rulers and Chiefs Law, when he was proclaimed the Ogiamen of Utantan Kingdom in Benin without recourse or approval of the Oba, which the latter till date still insist his people do not need to do.

Mr Oluwole Iyamu SAN, the Attorney-General and Commissioner For Justice of Edo State, before doing a letter to the Registrar, Magistrate Court 4, Benin City, from the available evidence before Trumpet Newspaper, had met with the legal team of the head of the Ogiamen Royal Dynasty of Benin and the following conditions agreed upon:

1. That you immediately revert to your official statutory position as Chief Ogiamen of Benin, as recognized under our Traditional Rulers and Chiefs Law and legal notices issued thereto.

2. That you withdraw all pending civil claims and/or appeals against the Edo State Government, the Benin Traditional Council and or any other authority arising from or related to any claims of sovereignty or traditional authority outside of the position recognized by our laws.

3. In return, this office shall take necessary steps to terminate any withdrawal or any criminal actions instituted against you in relation to the subject matter under reference.

"It is the Governor's hope and expectation that these magnanimous steps would, in return, give rise to a new spirit of harmony, peace and respect for our laws and traditions regarding Chieftaincy matters.

"Whilst looking forward to your expeditious necessary actions in line with the content of this letter, we request that you kindly accept the assurance of our regards as always."

The Edo State Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, thereafter sent a letter to the Registrar, Magistrate Court 4 Benin City "The action of the Edo State Government is as a result of the Ogiamen Family's decision to withdraw all pending claims and/or any other authority arising from or related to any claim of sovereignty or traditional authority outside of the position recognized by the laws. As the decision to prosecute His Imperial



His Imperial Majesty Rich Arisco Osemwengie Ogiamen of Utantan Benin City.

Majesty, the Ogiamen of Utantan, in Charge No. MOR/148C/2015 for legal and administrative charges as a result of his actions and utterances at the time of traditional transition in the Benin Kingdom no longer exist."

He stressed further, "As at the time the charges were filed by the Edo State Government, the Ogiamen's actions were deemed to be in breach of the Edo State Government's Traditional Rulers and Chiefs Laws and a clear and present danger to the peace and tranquillity of Benin and the entire Edo State then."

The Edo State Government filed a 'Nolle Prosequi,' the Latin phrase for 'I do not want to prosecute or I do not want to continue to prosecute,' used in the temporary or total termination of criminal or civil cases before judgment in most of the countries that are within

Common law jurisdiction to put this matter to rest once and for all.

Trumpet Newspaper contacted Mr Oluwole Iyamu, SAN, who is the Edo State Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice to find out other reasons outside the already stated above, for the Edo State Government action. Mr Oluwole Iyamu, SAN, responded as follows "Of what use is a case that is no longer of interest to the general public and the Edo State people in particular and this is a case that has been in court for seven years now gathering dust.

"The Edo State Government has dropped all the charges against His Imperial Majesty, Rich Arisco Osemwengie as the Ogiamen of Benin Kingdom following an amicable resolution of the dispute between the Oba of Benin and the Ogiamen Royal Dynasty of Benin City. The Ogiamen has expressly stated that

it has nothing against the Oba of Benin. What other point does anyone want the Ogiamen to make before they are left alone and allowed to be?

"Recently, we had a Northerner in Benin City, who woke up one morning to proclaim himself as the 'Sultan of Edo State', he was not killed, the Edo State Government immediately arrested and arraigned him before a court of competent jurisdiction. The man was made to retract his earlier claim, and also made to apologise verbally and in writing before he was let off the hook."

"I honestly do not want to be dragged into local traditional matters like this, as I'm simply doing my job as the Chief Law Officer of Edo State. He added, His Imperial Majesty, Rich Arisco Osemwengie, in the first instance, was docked seven years ago, after he was proclaimed as

the Ogiamen of Utantan Kingdom in Benin, during the run-up to the present Oba of Benin coronation on October 11, 2015. The Edo State Government has decided this time around to enter nolle prosequi following an agreement by Chief Ogiamen to revert to his official statutory title as Ogiamen of Utantan Kingdom in Benin, as recognized under the Government's Traditional Rulers and Chiefs Law and legal notices."

When contacted the Oba of Benin Palace Secretary, Mr Frank Irabor, said contrary to the claims of the Edo State Government Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, there was never a time, the Oba of Benin Palace settled out of court with the Ogiamen Royal Dynasty of Benin City.

Secondly, up till the time, Trumpet contacted the Oba of Benin Palace over this matter, the Edo State Government has not deemed it fit, to officially notify the Oba of Benin, His Royal Majesty Oba Ewuare II, the reason(s) why it arrived at its decision to enter a nolle prosequi in the matter in question.

Mr Irabor said, "From the foregoing, the Oba of Benin palace will not react to the matter, it has only read it on the internet until the Edo State Government deemed it fit and necessary to do what is right."

An elated High Chief Monday Wehere JP, who is the Director, Information and External Affairs of the Ogiamen Royal Dynasty of Benin Kingdom, in a press statement dated and signed on the 6th of June, 2022, entitled "Nolle Prosequi: Ogiamen Royal Dynasty Lauds Governor Obaseki, stressing that he is a man of peace."

"The great Ogiamen Royal Dynasty is eternally grateful to the Executive Governor of Edo State, His Excel-

“
I honestly do not want to be
dragged into local traditional
matters like this, as I'm simply
doing my job as the Chief Law
Officer of Edo State
”

Cont'd on page 10

Edo restores Ogiamen Royal Stool after seven years legal battle

Cont'd from page 9

lency Godwin Obaseki, for entering Nolle Prosequi in the case with charge No. MOR/148C/2015.C.O.P vs Rich Arisco Osemwengie and Patrick Osabuohien. The Ogiamen Royal Dynasty said, from this singular act, Governor Obaseki, has further demonstrated that he is truly a man of peace, who means well for the Edo State people.

"We are therefore expressing our profound gratitude to Governor Obaseki for using his good office to resolve this long standing imbroglio between the Great Ogiamen Royal Dynasty and the Oba of Benin especially for entering into Nolle Prosequi in the case we earlier cited above.

"We are again using this opportunity to commend Governor Obaseki for restoring our original and official statutory position as the Ogiamen of Benin as recognized under the Traditional Rulers and Chiefs Law and Legal Notices issued thereto in Edict M.S.L.N No.37 of 1968 tied to the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Constitution (Suspension and Modification) Decree, 1966 Chiefs Law (CAP 19) which cannot be repealed by a state government.

The press statement continued, "While the Ogiamen Royal Dynasty of Benin Kingdom, is looking forward to receiving all the paraphernalia attached to this irrepealable Edict M.S.L.N No. 37 of 1968, the Ogiamen Dynasty is again grateful for the wonderful efforts by the Edo State Governor so far, to restore peace between the Great Ogiamen Royal Dynasty and the Oba of Benin.

We promised to cooperate with the state government by this action to further enhance the development of Edo State and Nigeria in general in any way within our reach and powers.

Concerning the purported charges of criminal offence, preferred against His Imperial Majesty Rich Arisco Osemwengie and Patrick Osabuohien, who is the Traditional Prime Minister of the Ogiamen Royal Dynasty of Benin Kingdom, the statement made reference to the provisions of the Memorable Ekiokpaga Treaty, thus saying "The Great Ogiamen Royal Dynasty of Benin

never committed any criminal offence in the first instance, as they were just persecuted for doing no wrong.

The statement further maintained, "For record purposes, the Ogiamen never breached any law of the land. Stressing that the installation of the then Prince Rich Arisco Osemwengie JP as the 24th Ogiamen of Utantan Kingdom in Benin, which is the old Igodomigodo Kingdom of Edo State, is the sole prerogative of the Great Ogiamen Royal Dynasty, right



His Majesty Oba Ewuare II of Benin

from inception to date.

And as such, "The Ogiamen Royal Dynasty of Benin, has never sought nor obtained permission from anywhere including the Benin Traditional Council then and now, other than the Ogiamen Royal Dynasty, to perform any of its traditional rites, including the installation of our King, who happens to be the head of the Ogiamen Royal Dynasty of Benin City whenever such a vacancy exists.

"Rather, it is the duty of any incoming Oba of Benin, as an Edaiken Uselu, who must perform some rites with the Ogiamen Royal Dynasty of Benin, before he could, this has been the practice and

tradition for many centuries now."

Emphasizing that, when the late Oba Erediauwa, the father to the present Oba of Benin, Ewuare II, wanted to ascend the throne of his ancestors, he had no option but to re-enact the age-long practice of signing the Ekiokpaga Treaty with the then Ogiamen Osarobo.

And to further buttress that there is no dispute whatsoever, about the Ogiamen stool, which is recognized by the then Mid-West Nigerian government as far back as 1968, the Ogiamen Royal Dynasty, was accorded all the respect accorded to any other traditional ruler in the old Bendel State, which was later split into Edo and Delta States

up till 1979.

In view of the foregoing and to further emphasise that the Ogiamen Royal Dynasty is a much older throne and title, while the Oba of Benin and other kings in his category are using the titles of His Royal Majesty, the Ogiamen decided to settle for His Imperial Majesty.

"It will amount to a monumental cultural and traditional fraud, the attempt that was made in 1979 to fraudulent alter the long-existing Edict of 1968, which already recognized the Great Ogiamen Royal Stool as a distinct traditional ruler. This particular Edict of 1968 was tied to the Constitution (Suspension and Modification) Decree, 1966 Chiefs Law (CAP 19).

"The later attempt to alter or repeal this law is not only bizarre but fraudulent in all particular manner. This altered Edict of 1979, tried unsuccessfully for it to be gazetted and to make the Ogiamen title a Chief under the Oba of Benin palace. This disgraceful act, the Ogiamen resisted

and will continue to resist with the last drop of blood in their veins.

"In an Appeal Court ruling in a case No. CA/B/99/2016 on this particular subject matter, the Ogiamen Royal Dynasty was once again vindicated. In his judgment, Justice Jimi Olukayode Baba of the Appeal Court ruled on Wednesday the 16th day of November 2016 delivered a judgment, which partly reads as follows: - 'it is my humble view that the Ogiamen of Benin Chieftaincy is one of the recognized instruments (M.S.L.N 37 of 1968)'."

"In another vindication of our position, in a letter dated 15th March 2010 with reference BTC.A7/3/VOL.1X/205, the late Oba Erediauwa sent the immediate past Ogiamen of Utantan, Pa Edwin Ogbomo, the content of that letter further vindicates the position of the Ogiamen, that we have never been an appendage to the Oba of Benin and its Palace."

The Ogiamen Royal Dynasty of Benin is therefore seizing this opportunity to appeal to the Edo State Government and His Excellency, Governor Obaseki, in particular as a true son of Edo land, to now endeavour to enact a new Edo State Traditional Rulers and Chiefs Laws or Chieftaincy Edict that will capture and take cognizance of all the latest developments and put the new positions of things in their true perspective. Stating that that is the only way to forestall any possible attempt now and in the future, by anyone to again try to manipulate the Edo State Chieftaincy law and screw it to suit their whims and caprices.

“We are therefore expressing our profound gratitude to Governor Obaseki for using his good office to resolve this long standing imbroglio between the Great Ogiamen Royal Dynasty and the Oba of Benin especially for entering into Nolle Prosequi in the case we earlier cited above

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Police arrest suspected cultists, arms dealer in Delta State

Stories By **PAUL MICHAEL**,
Defence Editor, Abuja

Officers of the Delta Police Command raided a celebration centre of cultists at Ogwashi-uku and arrested no fewer than 51 suspects.

It was gathered that the suspects are members of the Eiye confraternity group who were marking their anniversary in Big Apple Hotel.

A statement by the State's Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Edafe Bright, on Thursday said the venue of the anniversary celebration was raided on Wednesday, 15th June 2022. Adding that while some of the suspects took to their heels on sighting the policemen, others shot at the officers.

The statement reads, "On 15/6/2022, the Command received a tip-off, that some suspected Eiye Confraternity Cult group will be marking their anniversary in Ogwashi-Uku. The Command swiftly



CP Ali

acted on this information and located where and when the ceremony will be held.

"CP Ari Muhammed Ali detailed the Command's Buffalo Patrol team, operatives from Area Command Ogwashi-Uku and Ogwashi-Uku Division, stormed the venue at Big Apple Hotel in Ogwashi-Uku. The suspects on sighting the police took to their heels, while some of them shot at the Police.

"They were given a hot chase by the team and fifty-one (51) suspected cultists were arrested, two cut to size locally made guns, one expended cartridge, Eiye Confraternity regalia were recovered. Suspects have been transferred to the Command Anti-Cult unit (SACU) for investigation, and those found wanting upon completion of the investigation will be charged to court."

Meanwhile, the Command has also arrested an 80-year-old man, Omoraka James, who sells cartridges in Kokori, Ethiopia East LGA of the state. 114 rounds of live cartridges were recovered from him.

Also, the Eagle net special squad of the Command intercepted a Hiace Bus while on stop and search duty along Sapele-Benin expressway and a suspect was arrested with six locally made double barrel guns.

"In another development, the Command arrested one Omoraka James, 'm' age 80yrs in Kokori. The suspect's premises were raided by the Command Raider's Unit on the strength of information received that he deals in Cartridges, sells to hoodlums which they use in carrying out various nefarious activities. One hundred and fourteen (114) rounds of live cartridges were recovered from him.

"Similarly, Eagle net special squad while on stop and search duty along Sapele-Benin Expressway intercepted a Toyota Hiace

Bus with reg no OLG 13 EFR and subjected the passengers to a search. During the search, six locally made double barrel guns concealed in an umbrella belonging to one Mrs Victoria Itla were recovered. The suspect was arrested and investigation is ongoing," the statement added.

Edafe noted that the Commissioner of Police in the State, Ari Muhammed Ali, warned in strong terms that the Command under his watch will not tolerate any form of cult-related activities in the State and that the Command will go all out in identifying cultists and their hideouts, arrest them and ensure that they are brought to book.

The CP urged parents and guardians to monitor and teach their wards about the need to stay away from cultism and vices while also admonishing members of the public to continue to partner with the Police by providing useful and timely information that will help in the fight against crime and criminality.

NIPOST seeks police protection for staffers over physical harassment

Sokoto State Postal Manager of Nigeria Postal Services (NIPOST), Henry Ayuba Baba, has appealed to the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) to protect staff of the organisation against physical abuse and harassment from members of the public.

Baba made the appeal when he and some of the staff of the organisation paid a courtesy call to Assistant Inspector General of Police, Zone 10 Headquarters Sokoto, AIG Bello Sani Dalijah, on Thursday.

According to a statement

by the Zone's Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Adamu Abbas, the NIPOST boss stated that some staff of the organisation while rendering their lawful services are subjected to physical harassment by members of the public.

The statement further added that Baba also presented some of the services of NIPOST to the police and stressed the need for patronage by the officers and men of the Force.

"Mr Henry Ayuba Baba stated that the purpose of his

visit was for familiarization and also to seek the assistance of the Nigeria Police in protecting the members of his staff while rendering their lawful services as they have sometimes been subjected to physical harassment by members of the public.

"He equally uses the visit to advertise some of the services of NIPOST and the need for their patronage by the Officers and men of the Nigeria Police," the statement said.

It further added that AIG Dalijah pledged the

support of officers and men of the NPF towards ensuring that officials of NIPOST are given adequate security cover to aid their lawful services in society.

"In his own remarks, AIG Bello Sani DALIJAN psc (+) on behalf of his management team and the entire officers and men of the zonal headquarters thanked the Manager and members of his staff for the visit and reiterated his support to ensure that officials of NIPOST are given adequate security

support in carrying out their lawful services.

"He said NIPOST has existed from time immemorial and has not lost its glories even with the change of times," the statement added.

Deputy Commissioner of Police in charge of CID, DC Maxwell Olatokumbo, Assistant Commissioners of Police, ACP Hassan Abdullah Maji, and ACP Ibrahim Bawa psc, among others were part of the senior officers that were present during the visit.

Police parades 87 suspects for terrorism, kidnapping, others in Borno

Borno State Police Command has arrested 87 suspects for criminal activities involving terrorism, abductions, rape, and culpable homicide across the state.

Parading the suspects on Wednesday in Maiduguri, the Police Commissioner, Abdu Umar disclosed that the suspects were arrested in the first half of 2022 in Maiduguri metropolis, Jere, Konduga, Gwoza, and Hauwul Councils. He said some of the suspects were in possession of dangerous weapons while committing most of the crimes, including

cattle rustling and forgeries.

According to the CP, the Police arrested five suspected terrorists and recovered three gun trucks, three machine guns, and two AK-47 rifles with live ammunition.

He further added that the suspects are members of the Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) terrorists.

Umar noted that investigations are in progress, as the suspects are in the custody of the military.

While narrating how the

suspects were arrested, the police chief said that after an exchange of gunfire between the security teams and terrorists with aerial support from a fighter jet, most of the terrorists were neutralized.

Umar also added that six suspects were arrested on May 30, 2022, for alleged kidnappings in Borno, Adamawa, and Taraba states.

On how they were arrested, he said, "The police crack team stormed a Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) in Njmitilo area of Maiduguri," stating that the arrested terrorists are leaders

of kidnapping syndicates in the Northeast.

According to him, some community leaders like Abubakar Ali of Njmitilo, have been compromising with cattle rustlers by harbouring criminals in the community.

He said that Abdul Isa, Bala Musa, Abdullahi Bukar, Garba Usman, and Jordi Garba were also arrested for kidnappings, cattle rustling, and receiving stolen property.

The CP further disclosed that all the suspects confessed to their alleged crimes, including theft of armoured cable.

Speaking on recoveries of rustled cattle and property, he said: "Efforts are being intensified towards reaching to where the cows were rustled.

"This is to enable the police to trace the owners, before going after the receivers of the remaining stolen cows."

Besides the cattle rustlers, he added that three suspects were also arrested for criminal conspiracy, trespass, and impersonations while stating that an army camouflage uniform and a wooden pistol were also recovered from the suspects.

Operatives kill four bandits, arrest female accomplice in Kaduna

Four bandits terrorizing residents of Saminaka in Lere Local Government Area of Kaduna State have been killed by the security operatives.

This was disclosed by the Public Relations Officer of the Kaduna State Police Command, DSP Mohammed Jalige, adding that the bandits were intercepted by operatives of the Special Tactical Squad Force Headquarters, Abuja (STS) in conjunction with Operation Yaki Kaduna.

Jalige explained that items recovered from the bandits include AK47 and AK49 rifles loaded with live ammunition, one empty magazine, one hundred and thirty-four rounds of different calibers of live ammunition, and an operational vehicle.

He said that the bandits met their Waterloo on their way to deliver some dangerous weapons to their cohorts when they ran into the operatives who were on trail of suspected bandits along Saminaka-Jos expressway and on sensing danger engaged the officers in a gun battle.

The police spokesperson said that the officers were able to injure the criminals who were later pronounced dead by doctors when taken to a hospital.

A female accomplice who was arrested, according to Jalige, had during the course of investigation confessed to supplying arms and ammunition to bandits within Kaduna State.

He added that an investigation into the matter is currently ongoing as the command is poised to arrest other criminal elements in the state.

Troops rescue another abducted Chibok girl, eight years after

Barely a day after announcing that its troops of 26 Task Force Brigade have rescued one of the abducted girls, Mary Ngoshe, from Government Girls Secondary School (GGSS) Chibok on 14 April 2014 and her son, the Nigerian Army has again said another girl and her baby has been rescued by troops.

Recall that the Army on Wednesday 15 June 2022 said, "Troops of 26 Task Force Brigade on patrol around Ngoshe in Borno State on 14 June 2022 intercepted one Mrs Mary Ngoshe and her son. She is believed to be one of the abducted girls from GGSS Chibok in 2014. Further exploitation is ongoing."

According to a brief statement posted on its official social media handles on Thursday 16 June 2022, the Army further said the new girl named Hauwa Joseph, was rescued on 14 June 2022 during clearance operations.

The Statement added that the rescued victim, who is one of the abducted girls from GGSS Chibok on 14 April 2014, and her baby are currently receiving medical attention in a military medical facility.

The Lagos Okada ban and public transportation

On Wednesday 1st of June 2022, Lagos State Government began the “total enforcement” of the ban on commercial motorcycles popularly called Okada in specified parts of Lagos, particularly, the six Local Governments and nine Local Council Development Areas, LCDAs, of Eti Osa, Ikeja, Surulere, Lagos Island, Lagos Mainland and Apapa. The ban also extends to the entire trunk roads and flyover bridges in Lagos. Reason given for the ban is the menace of reckless driving, crime rates, and general insecurity which through Okada riders, have led to loss of lives and property.

Okada as a means of commercial transportation is popular across the country. Indeed, this unique form of commercial transportation has filled a gap in the chain of vehicles needed to move the mass of the Nigerian population. But sadly, it has also become a source of high rate of accidents, security risk, and a social hazard. This has made different state governments impose different types of restrictions in their operations.

The Lagos State government declared that the menace of Okada riders became aggravated with the infiltration of persons from neighbouring Niger Republic, Chad, and Northern Cameroon. It also revealed that most of the Okada operators in Apapa, Lagos Island, Lekki and Ikeja axis were illegally armed; ready to kill anyone that crossed their path. Examples cited are the incidents of the killing and setting ablaze of one Superintendent of Police, CSP, Kazeem Abonde, in Ajao Estate on September 24, 2021 during an enforcement activity; and more recently in May 2022, one David Imoh in Lekki Phase 1.

An association of commercial motorcycle riders has taken LASG to court. In suit No. FHC/L/CS/1016/2022, they are seeking a declaration that the ban on commercial motorcyclists in Lagos by the government “is a violation of the rights of the applicants guaranteed by Section 33 of the 1999 Constitution as amended who cannot be alive without food and other means of sustenance and whose income is the business of commercial motorcycle transportation. The association is also praying the court for a declaration that the “purported proposed ban of the commercial motorcycle

transportation in Lagos State by the governor, without hearing from the operators whose rights are affected or likely to be affected is a violation of the constitutional rights of the applicants to fear to hear provided for and encapsulated in Section 36 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended.”

The government needs to utilize decisive executive action to institute social order while acknowledging its own shortcomings, need for policy pro-activeness, respect for the Constitution and the rule of law. There are 36 states in Nigeria, with Abuja as capital. Lagos is home to approximately 9 million persons out of the total number of 195.9 million people that live in Nigeria. Lagos also tops the list of the highly metropolitan and populated cities. There is no effective transportation in most cities across Nigeria. The lacuna is what has over the

years been filled by commercial motorcycling that has now become a national embarrassment.

In Lagos and such cities as Port Harcourt, Ibadan, Uyo, Enugu, Aba, majority of Okada riders are often reckless. They have no regard for the law, especially traffic laws. They drive against traffic and freely use the restricted lanes. Many of them are not lettered; so, it is impossible for them to read road signs or communicate with other road users. Many times, some wear military, or police uniforms, giving them the temerity to take the law into their hands. Some police and military officers also own and hire out motorcycles to augment their income. They are clearly a security threat to lives and property in Lagos and across Nigeria.

To prevent breakdown of law and order and set deterring precedents, Lagos State should be fully supported in exhibiting controls over Okada riders. In doing this however, the government needs be reminded that her long-time inadequate town planning and transportation network necessitated the use of motorcycles for commercial transportation. This must be addressed without delay; otherwise, the security agents that are detailed to enforce the ban will soon be overwhelmed and subsequently compromised as it happened in the past. The ban was first imposed by the Raji Fashola administration but suffered compromises from the Police and other state agents. Government needs to pay living wages to security agents and all in the Nigerian working force. This is a fundamental way of preventing compromise.

The Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) must secure our borders to prevent illegal entries from neighbouring countries. The federal government has the responsibility of controlling importation of motorcycles used as Okada. The Constitution of Nigeria must be respected to allow any Nigerian of any tribe or tongue live and work in any part of the thirty-six states. While the court entertains their case, Okada riders should restrict themselves to areas where they are allowed to operate. Lagos State government needs to use the gap to register and train all Okada riders and restructure Okada use. The entire parts of Nigeria, not only Lagos, must take a clue from this.



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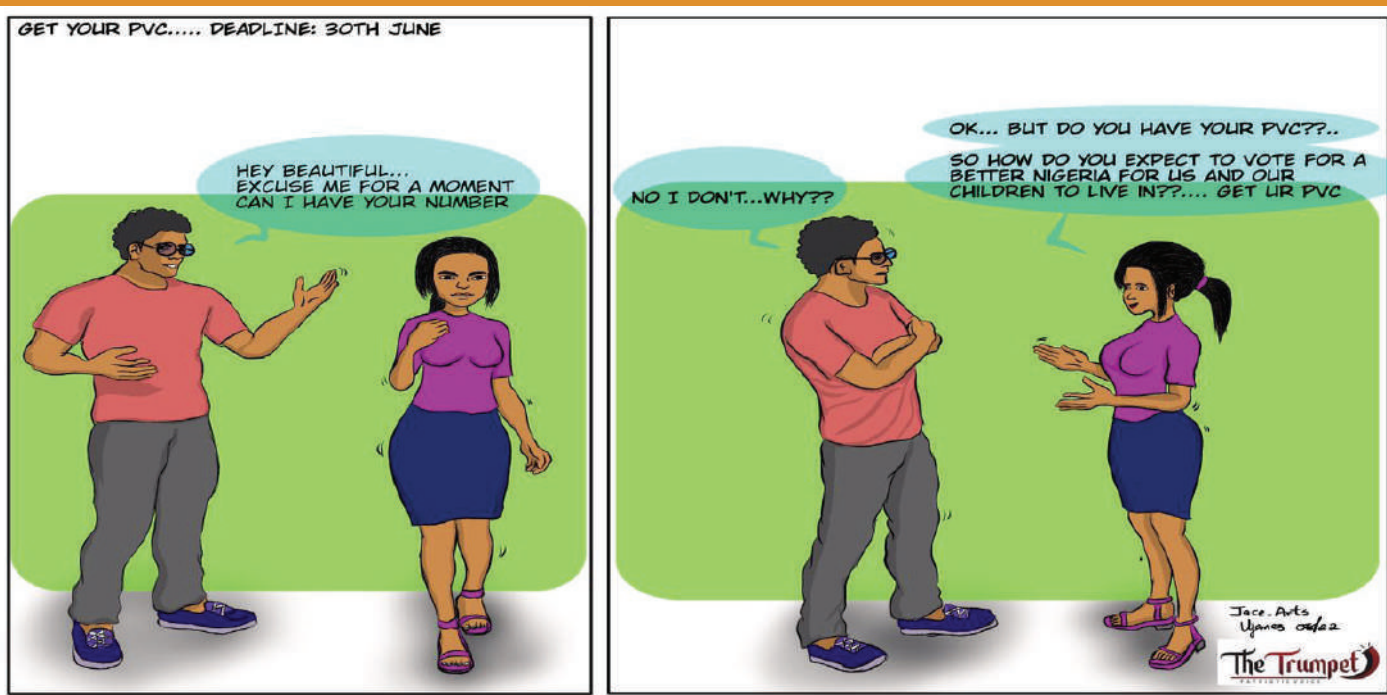
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Being the Chosen of God

To be chosen is to be selected or enlisted. It is a privilege. From the perspective of a believer's relationship with God, it is first and foremost borne out of God's mercy, grace and love for us. We did not merit "being chosen" by God to be His chosen people. To be chosen by God is preconditioned upon separating and surrendering ourselves to Him. In 1 Samuel 7:3-4, the term "returning" to the Lord is used. Believers are required to change their direction from the imperfect human worldly ways to the Holy Spirit filled ways of God. Samuel, the prophet, gives three commands in order for a successful return to God to be possible, thus: (1) turn away from idolatry; (2) direct your heart to the Lord; and (3) serve Him alone" (Deuteronomy 6:4-15; Joshua 24:14-28; Judges 10:6-16). It follows therefore that God could not just make everyone His chosen.

In his epistle Peter (1 Peter 2:1-3) gives these preconditions clearly. "So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation - if indeed you have tested that the Lord is good." It amounts to self-deceit and delusion for "Christians" to simply assume that they are chosen because they are members of a given denomination or fellowship. Yes! The Lord is our God. We are the people of God's pasture. And we are the sheep of His hand (Psalm 95:7). But being 'chosen' can only be realised if we pass God's test that we should be holy. This is the only way we will be able to establish a relationship with "The Chosen Stone" and be "His Chosen

People." Then we can come to "Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:4-5).

God has placed all believers in an elevated position of envy. This comes with a huge status pride laden with privileges for believers. Quoting the Old Testament (Isaiah 28:16), Apostle Peter puts it delightfully thus: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame" (1 Peter 2:6). Furthermore, in verse 7a: "So the honour is for you who believe". This is an honour that connects us to Christ Jesus; thereby elevating us to be fruitful in this part eternity, and to secure salvation in the thereafter.

Fruitfulness because Christ says, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me." Salvation because Peter tells us "... but for those who do not believe, 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone' and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word (1 Peter 2:7-8). We cannot resign to ignorance about our own individual responsibility of "hearing" and "obeying" God.

God's privileging us into being His own also requires our being 'the regenerated' for His purpose. Consequently, being 'chosen' is a spiritual office for believers who are: (i) born of God (John 1:13); (ii) born again (John 3:3,7); (iii) born of water and the



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spirit (John 3:5); (iv) born of the spirit (John 3:6, 8); (v) who God has raised from the dead together with Christ (Ephesians 2:4-5; Colossians 2:18); (vi) saved by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5); (vii) brought forth by the word of God (James 1:18); (viii) caused to be born again (1 Peter 1:3, 23); (ix) who practices righteousness by being born again (1 John 2:29); and (x) who overcome the practice of sinning because they are born of God (1 John 3:9; 4:7; 1 John 5:1, 4, 18).

To be chosen is a glorious thing. Hence the caution of the Psalmist, "Today, if you hear His voice: 'Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of trial in the wilderness'" (Psalm 95:7b-8). It is for those who 'hear' the voice of God; Peter thus qualified it: "But you are a chosen

race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation; a people of his own possession that you may proclaim the excellence of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). This is a special 'call' for believers who were once in 'darkness' of sin, of the flesh and the world. The great transition of believers is that which moves from a dark past into the present marvellous light. We are called to be the light of the world. Consequently in verse 10, "once you were not a people, once you had not received mercy". Having been a 'chosen' of God, the Stone - Jesus Christ - will no longer be a stumbling rock that will crush unbelievers, because, "now you are God's people... now you have received mercy" (1 Peter 2:10; Hosea 1:6-9, 10; 2:23).

Jesus Christ is speaking to us today saying, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:1-2). Jesus has pronounced us clean. "Already you are clean because of the word I have spoken to you." (John 15:3). Therefore, let us pray to God for this divine connection which He alone has freely offered us through His mercy and loving-kindness; for "it is in keeping of His commandment, that we may be able to please Him, both in will and deed."

Be blessed. Shalom.

•The Rev'd Dr Karo Ogbinaka, an Anglican priest of the Diocese of Lagos West, lectures at the Department of Philosophy, University of Lagos. He is a member of the editorial board of The Trumpet

'I'll be merciful to whom I'll be merciful': Is God partial?

The statement of God in the Bible which says "I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" has thrown up different levels of debates and contributions among Christians and Bible Scholars. While some people believe that God is unjust or not fair for making that statement, others believe that God is still just to all humans.

But from my perspective, I want to state here that the statement of God

only emphasised that God's judgement on any issue is always right both from the seen and unseen reasons and most times people don't see the unseen reasons and jump into conclusion that God is not fair to all.

For instance, what was the offence of Pharaoh that made God to harden his heart until he was destroyed? What was the offence of Esau that made God to ordain Esau right from the mother's womb to serve Jacob his younger brother? What was the offence of Manasseh that made God through their grandfather Jacob to place his right hand on the younger one and proclaimed that the eldest shall serve the younger one - Genesis 48?

What was the offence of Judas Iscariot that qualified him to be the one to betray Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and finally hanged himself?

All these questions are looking for the correct answers because if God has preordained some people to fail and others to succeed, what is the need then to strive to live a holy and righteous life when the final destination have already been adjudged by God.

To answer all these questions, we need to look in-depth into the character of God through His actions from the book of Genesis in the Bible to the book of Revelation.

The truth is that God has never showed any favouritism towards any of His children from the time of Adam till date but what God does is that based on His programme for all humans, He may begin with even the younger in His plan to reach a people and end up with the eldest.



Dr. Agbodo

For instance, to save the children of Israel from total destruction with famine, God sent Joseph who was the second to the last son of Jacob ahead to Egypt. Although Joseph got to Egypt through untoward circumstances, I believe that even if his brothers did not sell him as a slave, God would have still provided another avenue for Jacob to get to Egypt.

But, while God began the journey of the salvation of the family of Israel through Joseph, He brought down the law to guide them through Moses (the family of Levi) in the wilderness and finally brought Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ through the lineage of

of Judah to save Israel and indeed all mankind from sin and the devil. So, even though at the beginning, people may question why God had to start with Joseph while Reuben the eldest and others were still alive, He ended the process of the final salvation of humanity through the tribe of Judah.

God also used different tribes of Israel for different purposes in their journey to the total salvation of mankind, according to the gifts He gave to them at different

times. So, God cannot be seen to be unfair because it is normal to use an Engineer for Engineering works while a Medical Doctor is used for medical related issues.

In the case of Pharaoh, God would have even appeared to him in the past through different means to tell the children of Egypt that He was the true God to be worshipped and he should allow the children of Israel to be free, just the same way God appeared to Abraham, and they disregarded those opportunities, and in God's word, there is a particular time that an irreversible judgement can be passed for the destruction of those who refused to heed the call of repentance and that may be what happened in the case of Pharaoh and even Judas Iscariot. Yes, it was prophesied that somebody who dipped hands with Christ in the same bowl will betray Him, but Judas was not mentioned in that prophecy, hence the sins of Judas Iscariot as a thief, because he was the treasurer of Jesus Christ and the Bible opined that he was not faithful in that department. In essence his initial unfaithfulness may have opened him up to be used to fulfill that scriptures of betraying Christ.

So, God was not unjust in allowing Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus Christ because he made himself available through his past disobedience to the word of God.

Also, God did not preordain Esau to sell his birthright to Jacob and the selling of his birthright to Jacob as a foolish act only made God to be angry with him and this informed the statement of God in the book of Malachi that Jacob I love and Esau hate. But, the preordination of God was that it was Jacob that will continue with the baton of producing the seed that will finally lead to the salvation of men through Jesus Christ and this was fair because it is only God that gives everyone different assignments on earth based on His Wisdom. Esau was also materially blessed because when Jacob returned from the house of Laban the father of his wives, he met Esau on the way with a battalion of soldiers and other manifestation of riches.

Furthermore, God chose David to become the King of Israel after weighing him with His wisdom because David was a committed person to keeping the commandments of God even as a young boy. In fact, it was one of such cases of obedience to the directives of his father that he was carrying out in the field with the sheep to feed them when Prophet Samuel came calling to anoint him.

So, God is not fair to some and unfair to others but it is preordination in terms of gifts to all humans and how we obey his commandments that determines our future, and everyone is preordained for an excellent life.

So, when God says He will be merciful to whom He will be merciful, He is only saying that His judgement is always just and should not be questioned.

Some people are suffering today because of the sins of their fathers and unless they completely repent and follow Christ with all their hearts to redeem them from the consequences of such sins, a human being without understanding can say "why is this good man suffering and the other bad one enjoying".

The good man who is suffering may be paying for the sins of his ancestors or his personal past sins and waiting for the day of salvation from God while the proud and bad man who is enjoying some level of riches and comfort may be enjoying the rewards of his ancestors but again squandering them, thereby creating another future of suffering for incoming generations.

So, man is the creator of his or her future but God is only the perfect Judge that decides what happens in our future based on our personal and family spiritual and physical histories.

Readers are welcome to contribute to this topic.

God bless us in Jesus Name.

•Pastor Esaneroovo Trinity Agbodo is a Contributing Editor with The Trumpet Newspaper and can be reached on eagbodo@gmail.com

General Overseer reads riot act to church members on PVC

By **CHRIS EZEONOH**, Port Harcourt

General Overseer of Omega Power Ministries, OPM, Port Harcourt, Apostle Chibuzor Chinyere, has directed all members of his congregation and beneficiaries to endeavour to get the Permanent Voters Card, PVC so that they can vote in the forthcoming elections.

He said the ownership of PVC is compulsory for all the church members and beneficiaries of the church's philanthropic activities.

Chinyere stressed, "From today, you cannot collect prayer assignments without showing your PVC.

"All traders in OPM Divine market will not be permitted to sell in the market if he or she does not have PVC.

"Everyone selling in OPM Divine market doesn't pay for the shop as the shops are getting to them free by Apostle Chibuzor. In the same vein, about 90 to 120 percent of the traders in the place were also given money by Apostle Chibuzor to start their businesses"

According to the Apostle, for more than 11 years, the welfare office of OPM has been attending to people with different needs every week all through the years.

"But, from now on, before you come for any form of assistance to the OPM Welfare Department, you must come with your PVC, otherwise such a person will not be given clearance by the OPM

security personnel.

He added "All students on scholarship in Nigeria must present their PVC in 7 days to revalidate their scholarship. And if they don't have PVC to show, their next school fees will not be paid by OPM.

"While students on overseas scholarships, parents and guardians must present their PVC to the Welfare Department of the church for the revalidation of their wade's scholarship before the expiration of 7 days.

He continued "All parents whose children are presently attending OPM free schools also have 7 days to get their PVC to revalidate their children's admission in OPM free schools"

The Apostle also advised everyone coming to attend OPM Free Specialist Hospitals to arm themselves with their PVCs.

"Before they are registered, they must present their PVC, both husbands and their wives. Without your PVC, you will not be registered. Old patients of the Specialist Hospital were also advised to get their PVCs within the expiration of the 7 days ultimatum.

The Apostle stressed further "A 7 days notice is hereby given to all the people residing at the 18 OPM free estates to get their PVC or be ready to relocate out of the free estates in Port Harcourt.

"All the repentant armed robbers, kidnappers, cultists etc, undergoing rehabilitation at the OPM rehabilitation



Apostle Chibuzor Chinyere

centres also have 7 days to get their PVC or have their rehabilitation suspended as they will be evicted".

The same condition applies to all the repentant sex workers undergoing rehabilitation, the GO said.

"I'm trying to get the church lawyers on the phone to find out what the law

says about staff working for OPM, so we don't go against the nation's labour laws.

"For now, I can only penalize those benefiting from OPM free programmes, not OPM staff.

He concluded, "By the grace of God, this time, our country must work".

Rivers PFN declares June 26 PVC Sunday

By **CHRIS EZEONOH**, Port Harcourt

The leadership of Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), Rivers State chapter, has declared Sunday, June 26, 2022, as 'PVC Sunday'. A statement issued Friday by the State Chairman of PFN, Bro. Minaibi Dagogo Jack, said the declaration followed a directive from the National Executive Council (NEC) meeting of PFN held on Thursday, 16th June 2022, in Lagos.

Jack said that NEC amongst other resolutions at the meeting frowned at the continuous incidences of killings and kidnappings across the country

and restated PFN's committed stance for the interest of justice which explains its opposition against, Muslim-Muslim ticket for political parties towards the 2023 elections.

Accordingly, the statement maintained its stance of a Christian/Muslim ticket which it said has been the stance of the umbrella body, CAN. Reeling out other resolutions at the NEC meeting, the state chairman said that NEC directed that: "That every member of the Church should show his/her PVC for counting before entering the church for service.

"That the counted total number of PVCs per Church/Ministry, should be

communicated to the state PFN Chairman who will communicate the same to the national office.

"That those who are yet to go for their PVCs, should do so immediately now that the window is still open to all.

"That all PFN leaders/ members should not give up HOPE but to continue to pray believing that Jesus never comes late. Jn 11: 21- 22.

"That NEC shall communicate to all concerning its resolve for the 2023 general elections after a proposed leadership summit."

The statement enjoined all members to adhere strictly to the directives.

Supreme Court overrules Lagos on Hijab ban in schools

By **OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH**

The Supreme Court on Friday granted the use of Hijab by female Muslim students in Lagos State Government-owned schools without harassment or discrimination.

In a split decision of five to two of a seven-member panel, the Supreme Court affirmed the July 21, 2016 judgment of the Court of Appeal, Lagos, which set aside the October 17, 2014 judgment by Justice Grace Onyeabo of the High Court of Lagos State, which upheld the Hijab restriction.

Justice Kudirat Kekere-Ekun, who wrote the lead majority judgment, which was read on Friday by Justice Tijani Abubakar, dismissed the appeal filed by Lagos State against the 2016 judgment of the Court of Appeal, Lagos, on the grounds that the appeal was without merit.

It would be recalled that a special five-man panel of the Court of Appeal sitting in Lagos had in 2016, set aside the judgment of a Lagos High Court which had banned students in public primary and secondary schools in the State from wearing Hijab with their school uniforms.

Church holds funeral service for victims of Owo attack

By **FRIDAY OMOSOLA**, Akure

Tears flowed freely on Friday as Catholic Diocese of Ondo held a funeral service for the victims of the June 5th, 2022, terror attack at the Saint Francis Catholic Church, Owa-luwa in Owo Local Government Area of Ondo State.

The service, held at the Mydas Event and Resort, Owo, was attended by Governor Rotimi Akeredolu, his wife, Betty, immediate past Governor of the state, Dr Segun Mimiko, APC Chieftain, Chief Olusola Oke and prominent indigenes of the state.

Speaking at the service, the Bishop of Oyo Catholic Diocese, Ayo Badejo, condemned the killing of worshippers and described it as brutal and coarse without any defence. Mr Badejo applauded people that had in one way or the other brought succour

to the victims of the attack. He said the attack was blasphemy on the body of Christ and humanity, saying the lives of children between the age of two and three were lost in the incident.

"None of the victims did anything wrong before their sudden death. Although they are dead, we have relief that they are in the hands of Jesus Christ."

Badejo, who said Christian who died in Christ Jesus have hope in the resurrection, urged them to decline to be crushed. He tasked the Federal Government and other stakeholders to address the killings across the country. However, the state Governor, Oluwarotimi Akeredolu regurgitated his administration's responsibility to the safety of lives and property of residents.

The governor condemned the attack and called for the immediate rejig of the country's security architecture.



Gov. Oluwarotimi Akeredolu



PTECSSAN accuses MTN of violating corporate best practices, labour laws

By **EDU ABADE**, Business Editor

Pivate Telecom Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PTECSSAN) has accused telecommunications giant, MTN of violating corporate best practices and the country's labour laws.

Lamenting MTN's unfriendly attitude to workers, the association urged the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment to take necessary measures to defend the country's labour laws by prevailing on MTN to implement the exit package in its Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) with employees.

In a statement issued by the union and made available to The Trumpet, it noted that MTN could not claim to be a certified Investor in People (IIP) organisation when it does not care about its employees, some of whom have spent their productive years with the company.

The union recalled that on March 1, 2022, MTN and PTECSSAN went to Abuja at the behest of the Ministry of Labour, when MTN raised the alarm that the union wanted to disrupt its activities in Nigeria and alleged that the union refused to obey the agreement reached in a Procedural Agreement (PA) by both parties.

It said the PA entered into and

signed by MTN and PTECSSAN on October 9, 2020, stated in paragraph (d) that:

"This agreement shall constitute the sole record of the understanding and agreement between the parties and overrides any prior verbal or written communication relating to the subject matter, whether express or implied, including letters or memorandum of understanding (MoU)."

The association also alleged that in total disregard for that clause, MTN refused to continue the negotiation of the CBA presented by the union, insisting that it had concluded everything about exit package in another document before signing the PA and the above clause.

However, in deciding the dispute and having fully understood paragraph (d) above, the ministry held that MTN could not reprobate and approbate at the same time, insisting that having signed the Procedural Agreement and the clauses contained therein, MTN in all intents and purposes, was bound by the agreement and it was, therefore, out of place to claim that the union failed to respect the agreement.

PTECSSAN noted that MTN had continually declined to convene a meeting to conclude the CBA, as directed by the



Ngige

ministry, even when the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) wrote to MTN ON April 14, 2022, on its recalcitrant nature in obeying the country's labour laws and stop having the management and employee council as a parallel union in the company.

It expressed concern that the Ministry of Labour and Employment had failed to transmit MTN's appeal to the arbitration panel as it should have done under the circumstance.

While the association had continued to follow due process in resolving any industrial dispute with MTN, the company had continually used all control measures within its powers to

scuttle every effort of PTECSSAN and cause disunity among its members.

The union also claimed that MTN could not claim to be IIP certified and not have a basic exit package for its employees, noting that whatever MTN claimed to have for its workforce was being enjoyed by its senior employees, while only very little fraction goes to the lower cadre.

PTECSSAN further claimed that: "MTN pays exit packages to its senior staff members but refuses to do the same to the lower cadre. All exited or sacked executives have been paid handsome exit packages, but frown at the lower cadre mentioning it in spite of MTN's avowed certified IIP organisation."

"The senior staff members enjoy \$15,000 lifestyle benefit yearly, but the company cannot do anything for the lower cadre employees no matter how little. MTN pays school fees for the children of its executives, but that cannot be mentioned by

the lower cadre.

"The company gives and fuels generators of its executives and will not care when the union mentions issues of inflation and fuel price increases.

"MTN pays 80 per cent of the executives' take home as bonus, while the lower cadre takes only 20 per cent. In spite of all MTN has done for its workforce including the executives, the total employee cost to revenue is barely 3.5 per cent, which is very low compared to other organisations and banks in Nigeria doing well above 6-9 per cent," among other violations.

It further expressed disappointment that the Ministry of Labour and Employment had failed to take necessary action to defend the country's labour laws and compel recalcitrant employers to observe international best practices, adding that all members of the union were now asking for an exit package, as stated in the collective bargaining agreement.

Leadway Assurance pays N111.4m claims to 3,110 farmers in Benue, Nasarawa

By **EDU ABADE**, Business Editor

To mitigate harvest losses suffered by farmers to pests, drought, prolonged dry spells, soil moisture stress and other climatic conditions attributable to the negative impact of climate change, Leadway Assurance, Agri-technology businesses indemnified about 3,110 smallholder rice farmers in Benue and Nasarawa states with N111.4 million claims payment.

Leadway Assurance, in collaboration with Heifer International, Olam and Pula Advisors, an agricultural insurance and technology company provided Agric-insurance cover- the Area Yield Index Insurance AYII, Pay At Harvest (AYII-PAH) initiative.

This insurance solution, which allows farmers to pay insurance premiums after their crops have been harvested and sold, was designed by Leadway Assurance and Pula Advisors to mitigate climate change-induced losses among smallholder farmers in Nigeria and further deepen insurance penetration among rural households in the country.

It was also designed to enable farmers to pay for insurance premiums when it is financially convenient for them to do so. The cover compensates the farmers for yield losses suffered at the end of a cropping season.

The insurance premiums paid to the farmers were pre-financed by Heifer International, the implication of which is that the farmers, who are usually constrained by cash to buy farm inputs at the beginning of the farming season, now have the option of paying for

their insurance premiums at the end of the season from the proceeds when the rice paddy have been harvested and sold or from the insurance claims paid by Leadway Assurance to those who have suffered losses during the season.

The underwriting firm explained that Olam took the harvested rice paddy from the farmers, thereby guaranteeing a ready market for the harvested rice paddy, adding that either way, it amounts to a win-win situation for the farmers.

Speaking at the ceremony for the claims payment in Makurdi, Benue State, Head of Agric and Micro Insurance at Leadway Assurance, Ayoola Fatona, said compensating farmers for losses suffered during their production was crucial to boosting investors' confidence in unlocking opportunities in the agricultural value chain towards engendering food security on the continent.

"By extension, this is Leadway Assurance's contribution to guaranteeing food security of the country.

In the 2021 farming season, we insured 4,358 hectares of farmlands of over 4,354 farmers in Benue and Nasarawa states.

"Today, with the payment of the claims amounted to over N100 million directly to the farmer's bank accounts, we have ensured that 3,110 of these smallholder farmers would not lose their investments due to soil moisture stress occasioned by prolonged dry spells and mild droughts. The farmers now truly believe that insurance truly works," he stated.

SON makes inroads into traditional medicine practice

By **JONHMARK UKOKO**

Nigeria seems to be getting its act right in the area of traditional medicine. Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) in collaboration with African Organisation for Standardisation (ARSO) has developed over 10 standards on traditional medicine for the country.

The SON feat is coming on the heels of the World Health Organisation (WHO) traditional medicine strategy 2014-2023 aimed at building a mental capacity as well as formulating national policies on the strategy.

Director General of SON, Farouk Salim, disclosed this recently during his lecture at Igbinedion University, Okada, Edo State with the theme: Impact

of Standards On The Practice Of Pharmacy Profession.

Salim, therefore, urged pharmaceutical manufacturers to strengthen the industry through development, adoption and standardisation of the sector for economic growth, nothing that standards remain crucial for the survival of the country.

He maintained that standards were particularly crucial in the pharmaceutical sector, as the practice has zero tolerance for error and as much as standards enhance investments in trade and Africa's healthcare industry enshrined in the African Free Continental Trade Agreement (AfCFTA).

He added that the SON has been exploring existing international, regional and national standards to meet the continent's unique challenges in trade and pharmaceuticals.

Salim reaffirmed the agency's commitment to working with relevant authorities such as National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and others for the approval of more traditional medicine standards.

Responding, Vice Chancellor, Igbinedion University Okada (IUO), Prof. Lawrence Ezemonye, noted that the pharmacy profession played a vital role in delivering care and helping people maintain and improve their health, safety and well-being.

Ezemonye explained that the profession could improve the quality of care they provide through adherence to standards for education and training, registration to practice and code of conduct among others.

He said the university had recently received accreditation for Bachelor of Pharmacy Degree Programme by the Pharmacists Council of Nigeria (PCN) and National Universities Commission (NUC) with the first set of admissions in the 2021/2022 session.

Also speaking, Dean College of Pharmacy, Prof. Ighodaro Igbe, said the idea of public lecture has become imperative, first as an integral part of the college's academic tradition to generate discourse around pertinent issues in Nigeria.

"Secondly, it is an opportunity for universities to engage with the government, businesses and members of the public to inform and educate the community through leading open discussion of issues confronting our country, regions and the world.

"It is against this backdrop that the topic for today's lecture was organised to capture stakeholders' concerns. The Professionals Practices Standards (PPS) is intended to provide guidance on the expected standards of professional behaviour of pharmacists towards individuals, community and society," he added.



Farouk Salim

Demand for fish in Nigeria exceeds 3.6m metric tonnes

By **EDU ABADE**, Business Editor

Federal Government has said the demand for fish has exceeded 3.6 million tons, lamenting that Nigeria produced only about 1.2 million metric tons, which did not meet local needs.

Director of Fisheries Department in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Oneih Umoh, stated this at the second dialogue with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) implementation of Phase Two of the government's fisheries project recently in Abuja.

The three-day dialogue was Co-hosted by African Union Development Agency (AUDA), Inter Africa Bureau for Animal Resources (IBAR) with support of the European Union (EU).

Umoh said Nigeria's fish industry could only produce 1.2 million metric tons of fish from the industrial, artisanal and aquaculture sub-sectors, adding that the country had benefited from the Phase One of the FISH Government project and the success was glaring and

as such expressed the hope that the Phase Two will also boost fish production in Nigeria.

"The Minister of Agriculture is passionate about fish production and the ministry believes that fish remains the cheapest source of protein and the total fish required in the country exceeds 3.6 metric tons. But we could not meet the target because of some of the issues that we will be discussing in this dialogue. We are only able to produce about 1.2 million metric tons in all the sub-sectors of the industrial, aquaculture and artisanal sub-sectors," he said.

Umoh said the Fisheries Department had licenced no fewer than 164 fishing vessels on the Nigerian territorial waters and economic zones, adding that to safeguard the health of Nigerians, the Federal Department of Fisheries had drafted inspectors to ensure that importers follow due process before selling fish to Nigerians.

"Frozen fish is good because as fish is brought into the country, we have task certificates to certify where they are bringing the frozen fish from and we inspect the cold

rooms to determine the health status and how they are being stored.

"We have inspectors in Lagos, Abuja and others who go there to certify that the frozen fishing brought into the country is in very good condition," he said, adding that the government had also installed monitoring systems in Abuja and Lagos to monitor activities of the fishing vessels.

In the artisanal sub-sector, we have been able to register the canoes and build up the capacity of artisanal farmers as well as supplying them with inputs, canoes, fishing gears and other equipment that will help them to increase their production.

"In the aquaculture sub-sector, we have established fish farm estates, feed farm clusters and other activities to stimulate aquaculture production in Nigeria. We have also provided processing and storage equipment and enhanced structured market facilities that will help the aquaculture sub-sector to grow," he said.

Speaking, representative of the African Union Commission

(AUC), Ms Panduleni Elago, pledged that the comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CADP) would support artisanal fish farmers and small-scale fish farmers to bridge the gap existing in fish demand in Nigeria.

Elago, who is CADP Advisor, said fish is one of the healthiest and cheapest proteins to human being, and as we strive to end hunger in Africa by the year 2025, we also seek to support all those involved in the fisheries sector, small scale farmers, the non - state actors and civil societies.

Also speaking, the Head of Agriculture and Food Security Division of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission, Ernest Aube, said ECOWAS had collaborated with the Nigeria Navy to protect the territorial waters of the sub-region from criminal activities as they affect fish production.

He said ECOWAS emphasises

fisheries and aquaculture and it is in this light that the EU and AUC are working together to develop fisheries programmes on the continent.



Mohammad Mahmood Abubakar

Bayelsa govt harps on synergy with private sector to develop tourism

By **AHERHOKE OKIOMA**, Yenagoa

Following the official inauguration of Bayelsa State Chapter of the Federation of Tourism Associations of Nigeria (FTAN) in Yenagoa, the state government has stressed the urgent need for synergy between the public and private sectors to grow tourism in the state.

Bayelsa State Commissioner for Culture and Tourism, Dr Iti Orugbani, who stated at the inauguration of the state chapter of FTAN, maintained that there could be no thriving Ministry of Tourism without

robust collaboration with the private sector as represented by the FTAN.

Orugbani, who explained that tourism boosts the revenues of economies, creates jobs, develops the infrastructure of countries and states, as well as engenders a sense of cultural exchange between foreigners and citizens, urged investors to take advantage of the peaceful environment in Bayelsa to invest in the tourism sector.

He said the state was home to some tourist sites, including the tallest lighthouse in Akassa, the white men graves in Twon-Brass and Akassa, the rich cultural heritage, local cuisines, as well as the alluring landscapes and beaches in the coastal areas.

Speaking, National Vice President of FTAN, South-South zone, Mrs Justina Ovat, pointed out that the development of the tourism sector in Bayelsa had become critical as it was capable of boosting the state's socio-economic status.

Ovat stressed that with the state's abundant tourism potential, which ranges from the rich cultural heritage, history, people, arts and crafts, gastronomy, wildlife sanctuaries, natural parks, fine beaches, slave routes, the tallest lighthouse in West

Africa, historical monuments, artefacts and landscapes, when fully developed and promoted, have the potential of repositioning the state's economy beyond oil.

She urged the Federal Government to create a stand-alone Ministry of Tourism in line with global best practices, adding: "The mandate of FTAN, being the umbrella body that represents private sector interests in the tourism industry, must continue to grow and strive in all regions, hence the inauguration of the Bayelsa Chapter of FTAN becomes vital in the actualisation of our tourism aspirations."

Also speaking, the President of Ijaw National Congress (INC), Prof Benjamin Okaba, described the Ijaw as element of tourism, adding that Bayelsa and by extension, the Ijaw nation, has a lot of tourism attractions begging for attention.

Okaba, who maintained that there the Ijaw nation is the most endowed region in the country, disclosed that the leadership of the INC in collaboration with stakeholders have initiated plans to ensure that Ijaw films are shown on African Magic and other international television channels to promote the rich cultural heritage of the Ijaw nation.



Dr Iti Orugbani,

SMEDAN trains teachers on entrepreneurship skills in Kaduna

Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) and the Kaduna State Government recently had a two-day training programme for teachers of entrepreneurship in primary and secondary schools in the state.

In a statement issued by SMEDAN and made available to The Trumpet, the agency stated that the entrepreneurship of teachers cut across the 23 councils of the state.

"The capacity building for the teachers was facilitated under SMEDAN's mind shift entrepreneurship programme

and it is designed to engage students and youths to channel their skills to productive ventures and management of their own businesses.

Director General of SMEDAN, Olawale Fasanya, said the programme was designed to enhance the capacity of teachers, who should, in turn, prepare the pupils and students and propel them towards entrepreneurship ventures.

Fasanya, who was represented by Deputy Director of Payment of the agency, Yinka Fisher, stressed that there was a lot of

anxiety and uncertainty among Nigerian students about the dearth of opportunities in the employment market and their lack of entrepreneurial skills to go into new business ventures.

"The World Bank recently predicted that there will be an additional injection of 40 million people joining the economically active group by 2040 in Sub-Saharan Africa. Given the most promising economic performance within the region, there is no way regular employment can cope with the huge number of people in the unemployment market," Fisher said.

WAPCO celebrates 10 years of successful commercial operations

The West African Gas Pipeline Company Limited (WAPCo) will hold a major event in Nigeria to mark the 10th Anniversary of the start of its Commercial Operations. The event is also aimed at appreciating our diverse stakeholders in Nigeria who have supported us through the years to make this ECOWAS vision a reality.

A statement issued by the General Manager, Corporate Affairs of the company, Dr Isaac Adjei Doku, recalled that WAPCo started Commercial Operations in March 2011 and had overcome a challenging decade to become an efficient and dependable transporter of natural gas to customers in Togo, Benin and Ghana, promoting safe, clean, long-term and secure power generation from gas supply sources in Nigeria and Ghana.

"WAPCo will be the first to admit as we celebrate 10 years of commercial operations that the first decade was not easy. Thanks to the determination of our talented workforce and collaborative efforts of our key stakeholders, we see marked improvement in the new decade and a clear path to being a world-class pipeline company in a unique region of the world," says WAPCo's Managing Director, Greg Germani.

"We congratulate our One-WAPCo family members in Nigeria, for their dedication and hard work in the achievement of this milestone. Without the dedication and diligence of a world class workforce that works together as a team across four countries, this feat would not have been attainable.

WAPCo is extremely grateful to the Federal Government of Nigeria, the Ministry of Petroleum Resources, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, its shareholders, customers, partners, regulators, the traditional leaders, and community stakeholders for their invaluable support over the period.

"The strong collaborative support we get from governments across the four countries and our customers is setting us on a path to achieve success in the first phase of the ECOWAS vision for cleaner and more efficient energy across the West Africa region," says Greg Germani.

This support resulted in some major achievements that have placed WAPCo in an excellent position to fulfil the company's mission to transport natural gas from producers in Nigeria and Ghana to consumers in Benin, Togo, and Ghana in a safe, responsible, and reliable manner.

Notable among these achievements are the significant improvement in reliable gas supply from Nigeria, the implementation of an Operational Excellence Management System, the completion of the Takoradi to Tema Interconnection Project in Ghana that allowed the addition of gas supply from oil & gas fields in Western Ghana to the WAGP in 2019.

WAPCo's key business partner, the Nigerian Gas Company Limited (NGC), was able to mitigate issues on their Escravos to Lagos Pipeline System (ELPS) allowing them to lift a prolonged force majeure on the ELPS, which had been affecting gas supply to the WAGP from the east. Due to this development, WAGP is now in a better position to transport record volumes of gas to customers.

With the improvement in gas supply from Nigeria, the completion of Takoradi to Tema Interconnection Project in Ghana and the growing demand for use of gas in power supply in Ghana, Togo and Benin, the WAGP was able to set a new record on monthly average gas deliveries to customers across the pipeline of over 215 MMscfd in March 2022.

WAPCo's continued focus on Operational Excellence and a strong safety culture allowed it to achieve zero recordable incidents for the past eight years and nine million workforce hours without a recordable incident, helping to protect our workforce and the communities we operate in.

"As the company enters another decade of commercial operations, we look forward to greater achievements and impact in the sub-region, fulfilling our mission as an international company transporting natural gas in a safe, responsible, and reliable manner. WAPCo is looking beyond today to further expand its customer base to industrial customers and new supply sources soon," it stated.



Effect of new CBN policy on housing

By GENESIS ERIRIOMA

The Central Bank of Nigeria recently increased the Monetary Policy Rate (MPR) which is expected to affect the cost of living, cost of home financing and property prices.

The apex bank recently raised the benchmark interest rate by 150 basis points from 11.5 per cent to 13 per cent. MPR is the rate at which the bank lends to commercial banks and often determines the cost of funds in the economy.

This development now raises fear among housing experts as they have expressed worries about the implication. They noted it would increase operating costs, and prices of housing and limit profit maximisation for non-creative operators in the industry.

The real estate sector has been battling high inflation, which affects the prices of building materials, making housing unaffordable. Nigeria's official inflation climbed to 16.82 per cent in April (7.82 per cent) above the CBN's target ceiling of nine per cent.

According to experts, the housing delivery challenges are rooted in three major factors namely, lack of finance, escalating cost of building materials and infrastructural development costs. These problems hamper the efforts of private developers and housing agencies to build affordable housing and reduce the contribution of the real estate sector to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Housing development is a capital-intensive venture, which requires huge financial obligations. Getting loans from banks comes with tough requirements and ridiculously high rates making accessibility difficult.

Most times, developers are unable to obtain legal documents that would be required by the bank due to issues relating to perfecting land titles.

To avoid the encumbrances, some developers shun bank loans and rely on alternatives to finance their projects. These include off-plan sales and partnering funders, which are not as friendly as well, but less stringent than bank loans/credits.

The Managing Partner, Refin Homes Limited, Mr Kazeem Owolabi, said increasing the cost of borrowing would make it more difficult for developers to operate effectively.

According to him, with the rate of MPR, the cost of borrowing will be about 30 percent and the cost of housing production will skyrocket, while the cost of rent will increase as the developer



Mr Adeniji Adele

factors every cost incurred to maximise profits.

The development, he stated, may make prospective investors shun investment in the real estate market. "Adding to the MPR will only make borrowing very difficult. If you really want to increase frequency of delivery of homes in any economy, there should be easy provision of funding for developers to do their job.

"There are three variables that make borrowing to finance housing important. The developer has to meet up with the variable of time, and material cost in the market, which is

subject to exchange rate and labour, which will continue to rise. These are not under the control of developers," he said.

The President, International Real Estate Federation (FIABCI) Nigeria chapter, Mr Adeniji Adele, argued that the development would be a disincentive to property investment and investors in the country.

He cited the case of the United States of America, where the interest rate is about three and one per cent but recently increased to about 3.5 per cent. The increase in the rate, he observed, had a negative effect on the market.

"Be that as it may, some

developers in that economy are still developing and borrowing money from the bank. But, in our own case, with 30 per cent, it is killing and I don't think any developer will continue to go and borrow money from the bank and come to a place like Ikoyi and sell properties. It will take the grace of God to break even," Adele said.

He further argued that the ripple effects would be on all sectors of the building industry, "It is going to be negative and a disincentive to investors. But that doesn't mean people will not buy or continue to build houses."

According to the Principal

Partner, Gladstone Opara and Company, Gladstone Opara, most developers have continued to shun the banks for loans due to high interest rates.

He disclosed that his firm was negotiating for a bank guarantee but the bank didn't want to assist us, "they insisted that what we want is not workable, except we bring 102 percent of what we want in cash," Opara said.

The Chief Executive Officer, Fine and Country, West Africa, Udo Okonjo, said the impact is not just on the increase of interest rate but the devaluation of the naira as prices had gone up.

She said that the real estate sector, which shouldn't be for special people, is unfortunately for special people in Nigeria because of affordability, which is an issue across all levels.

Okonjo said: "And coming from the pandemic in the last two or three years. The real estate sector is not bullish but in a flat shape. Real investors need to put on their creative cap to optimise value, engineer their projects and figure out how to make projects affordable.

"From the pricing point of view, it is not just what you charge but how people pay in terms of construction payment over time from two years to five years. Ultimately, the impact is obvious and it comes down to how you value engineering projects and structure payment in such a way that the participants are now seen as co-investors, instead of developing projects and people coming to buy."

It is noteworthy that a rise in demand and shortage in supply of housing calls for the need to address issues of affordable housing to halt homelessness in the country.

FHA to provide 25,000 Houses in Abuja

By GENESIS ERIRIOMA

Even though the Nigeria Real Estate Sector has grown tremendously in the last decade, housing provision remains a major challenge, especially in Nigeria's capital city, Abuja.

Various Stakeholders in the sector have been churning out programs aimed at providing affordable homes, especially for low-income earners. The latest in this fray is the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) which is gearing up to commence work in different parts of Nigeria beginning with the New Town Project in Bwari, Abuja.

Speaking to newsmen, Mr Gerver Gemade, MD of the FHA, said the main objective of the FHA is to provide affordable housing for workers. He disclosed this in Abuja during the inspection of the site with members of his management team. Mr Gemade promised that they are targeting 25,000 affordable housing units in the Abuja project due to an urgent need to relieve the City Centre of pressure on its facilities and infrastructures. Another FHA housing project is currently under construction at Apo in Gudu District of Abuja, where about 1,300 housing units are expected to be completed through direct construction by the FHA

in partnership with Private Sector Operators.

Speaking further, he emphasized that the FHA had acquired parcels of land in 17 States of the federation for housing estates and that they are currently interfacing with the Lagos State Government on the titling of FHA land holdings in Lagos State. The MD stressed that the emphasis on housing for low and medium income earners is born out of the need to cater for the vulnerable segment of the population and to assist the government in combating crime, diseases, unemployment and other societal ills confronting Nigerians.

He said, the FHA project will comprise mainly one, two, three and four bedroom apartments in high-rise structures the purpose of which is to save cost on infrastructure and the serviced land. Another plus for the project is that it will be carried out through direct construction and Public-Private-Partnerships (PPP). The facility promises to have its independent power source and water treatment plant.

It is good to know that the FHA is not primarily driven by the pursuit of profit but by a passion to ameliorate the suffering of Nigerians by making available affordable housing units.

Dealing with the Menace of Quack Real Estate Agents

By **GENESIS ERIRIOMA**

A very pressing problem that requires urgent solution in the Nigeria Real Estate Market is the regulation of the activities of "Real Estate Agents". What were supposed to be a dignified profession is presently an all-comers affair and a means of exploiting gullible people.

All most of them do is just get an office, which some don't even bother to do, know some landlords and you are good to go. Many cases have been reported of these folks absconding with people's money and nowhere

to trace them.

The high price of rent coupled with the 'agency fee' which they charge their clients has become a major challenge. How does one rationalise a situation where one pays say, N250,000 as house rent per annum on a new apartment and pays extra N65,000 to an 'agent' in the name of 'agency fee' and legal fees? How can one justify an 'estate agent' charging upwards of 10% of the total cost of buying a property bearing in mind that these guys seldom incur any expenses in that process?

Just for linking a buyer and a

seller, they insist on collecting 10% 'agency fee'. For instance, if a person buys a property worth say N100 million naira and an agent insists on being paid 10%, that amounts to a whopping N10 million! The buyer will also be required to dole out another 5-10% as legal fees in addition to other sundry charges which makes the total cost of that real estate go up by 20-30%.

The truth is, estate agents are not alone in this. There was an incident where a potential landlord was visibly angry when I politely enquired why he was asking me to pay an 'agency

fee' even when the apartment was gotten directly from him. Other terms used for this include "agreement fee", "commission", and "damages". This problem is more in Lagos and Abuja than in other parts of the country.

On the part of the government, there is an urgent need to do more to regulate this industry because it has now been made to look like touting, exploitation or a career for lazy folks. The activities of these people have made it difficult for real professionals to find their footing.

On the part of individuals,

prospective tenants must resist an attempt by 'estate agents' to extort them, especially when buying a property. Property buyers should try to negotiate a reasonable fee.

The National Assembly will do Nigerians a lot of good to rise to the occasion by enacting a nationwide tenancy law that also regulates the activities of 'estate agents and landlords' in Nigeria. It is also pertinent that the "Institute of Estate Agents of Nigeria" should rise to its responsibility and do more to regulate the activities of the industry and sanitize it.

Nigerian real estates to embrace decarbonisation

By **BLESSING OZIWO**

A real estate firm, The Address Homes, has made an urgent call to property firms to embrace global shift towards the reduction of carbon emissions.

The firm disclosed this during a two-day 2022 Real Estate Unite Summit tagged "Towards A Sustainable Culture," held in Lagos.

Speaking on the sidelines of the summit, the company's Marketing Manager/Client Sales Executive, Segun Ogunbiyi, said all hands must be on deck to ensure the preservation of the environment via sustainable practices in the real estate sector.

Ogunbiyi said there had been calls across the real estate sector and beyond for individuals and business entities to prioritise clean and renewable sources of energy.

"the world is trying to see how it can reduce the emission of carbon monoxide to secure the environment. There's a need for all real estate firms to create a sustainable policy within their system that revolves around the workforce, work methodology, the design and the team," he said.

"There are no quick fixes that will suddenly transform today's energy inefficient buildings into models of sustainable construction in the coming decades. It will take time, investment and expertise to retrofit the majority of buildings across urban areas.

"Given that more than 60 per cent of carbon emissions within cities typically come from buildings, a concerted effort is needed sooner rather than later.

"It's why long-term commitments for a net-zero future are now fuelling short-term

measures to start formulae action plans that will deliver steady progress.

According to him, one big step towards embracing greener energy sources would be to phase out the use of fossil-based power sources, a practice embraced by the Address Homes.

"When we talk about sustainability, there's a green concept now. Projects have to be certified through Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). For instance, if you use generators more, you reduce them to safeguard the atmosphere.

"Generators emit carbon emission. Technologically, It is being advised that we should start the installation of solar systems and electric systems to sustain the environment."

Also speaking, Client Sales Executive, The Address Homes, Doyin Olaleye, noted that the real estate firm believes that Nigerians could live in luxury homes without stress.

"We make luxury, premium and high-end homes available to people at affordable prices. We encourage a convenient payment structure for our customers. When people hear about luxury homes, they believe they could afford to live in houses in Ikoyi, Lekki and Banana Island. But we believe that people can actually live in those places without having too much pressure on their finances.

"We make it possible by giving you a well-structured payment plan, in which you pay within two to three years conveniently. We don't really go strict on our payment plan. We work with people's finances to make it easier for them because we believe that luxury is for everyone."

Quick rise in exchange rates and Nigeria real estate market

In Nigeria, the quest for affordable housing amongst the populace remains almost a mirage as the real estate market is currently underpinned by an unexpected quick rise in exchange rates, foreign exchange issues, escalating production costs, soaring cost of materials, building reinforcements and a significant decrease in housing affordability conditions, particularly, in the crucial entry-level markets.

The impact of forex rates on the economy is showing lapses in sensitive areas in the building sector as prices of houses have continued to rise astronomically and this is eroding investors' and homebuilders' confidence.

This trend is unavoidably leading to high cost of building materials and low purchasing power which is constraining market deliverables. This has led to serious concerns as this is already negatively affecting the real estate sector in the country.

The lack of price control and price implementation policy has brought about shortage of homes and disrupted sales of building materials in relative demand across the country.

Speaking on this development, Mr Frederick Okpaje, Managing Director/CEO, PWAN HAVEN Investment, told newsmen the persistent rise in exchange rates is having a serious negative impact on the construction sector of the economy. "Real estate investors in diaspora markets are benefiting from the fluctuating exchange rates such that whatever money they are sending becomes big money for Investment in Nigeria. For them, they are gaining more from the Nigeria economy while our institutional players are finding it difficult to adapt to the current inflationary pressures that is disrupting the economy and shrinking the purchasing power of consumers in the market" he said.

Furthermore, for these reasons and more, the cost of construction and procurements of materials have been inflated with the



Mr Frederick Okpaje

current economic realities and this has made it lower in clear terms for people investing in construction business.

He, however, stated that the banks should step up plans with intervention programmes to bail out the real estate sector while affirming the need for the banks to boost the economy of the construction business sector by releasing money for the SMEs in the construction sector.

When asked about the issue, Chief executive officer, LandWey Investment Limited, Mr Olawale Ayilara said "the Nigerian real estate sector is currently battling economic challenges ranging from contractors' time inefficiencies, inflation and the fluctuating Forex, which has severely impacted the procurement of construction material.

While it may appear on the surface that the world has made a successful return to business as usual, this is not the reality of most businesses, especially the Real Estate sector which is still battling with the challenges mentioned above.

Since 2020, companies like LandWey have battled different challenges ranging from contractors' time inefficiencies, inflation and the fluctuating forex, which has severely impacted the procurement of construction material"

"There is a lot to be said about the burden of construction in Nigeria. However, at LandWey, we have learnt that construction requires a daily review of our processes and improving on them. In reality, we are learning to adapt to thrive. The companies that survive these challenging times are those that can lead with integrity and have a deep understanding of their customers.

"We are facing these challenges by being optimistic despite the tough market conditions and devising new strategies that will enable us to create greater value for our customers in the long run. We are bringing together our industry expertise; quality product and service applications, and safe and reliable supply to provide more viable solutions.

"As part of its efforts to deal with the ripple effects of these current challenges, LandWey has constantly improved its communication to clients who may be understandably displeased with the delays. Through routine project updates, an increased workforce and an efficient work plan towards delivery, LandWey is also optimizing its processes to keep to its promise of quality service to clients."

"LandWey has taken stringent measures to avoid common preventable disasters peculiar to the industry by ensuring the use of quality building materials and hiring experienced skilled workers who are focused on expediting the delivery of housing units without the risk of compromising the existing standards" he stated.

He further, acknowledged stabilizing the exchange rate is the only way to reduce the cost of building procurements and the cost of materials in the market.

He tasked the government to come up with policies that would mandate the banks to finance the building sector such that the commercial banks would have to lend money for financing infrastructure in the country.

ICPC, NDLEA collaborate to tackle corruption in Enugu

By PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

The Enugu office of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and the Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Enugu State Command have agreed to collaborate in tackling the menace of corruption, especially in information and intelligence sharing.

Both agencies agreed on the collaboration when the newly deployed Resident Anti-Corruption Commissioner (RACC) of ICPC, Enugu State Office, Mr Kennedy Ebhotemen, and a delegation of principal officers of the Commission

in the state paid a courtesy visit to NDLEA Enugu State Command.

Speaking during the visit, the Commissioner commended the NDLEA State Commander, Mr Bassey A. Idim, for the prompt response to the request from the ICPC to pay the courtesy call, and explained that as agencies of government, working in synergy in the areas of information gathering and sharing of intelligence to restrain crimes would complement efforts of both agencies in the State.

Ebhotemen further explained the tripartite mandate of ICPC, which

comprised Enforcement, Prevention, Public Education, and Enlightenment as enshrined in section 6 (a-f) of the ICPC Act 2000 and solicited the assistance of the anti-drug agency to oblige the Commission the use of its detention facilities to keep ICPC suspects whenever the need arises, as well as the use of their personnel for joint operational activities.

While responding, the NDLEA Commander, welcomed the team to his Command and expressed the hope that both organizations would work together to rid the society of corrupt and other criminal elements.

You can go to jail for accommodating fraudsters, EFCC warns hoteliers

By PAUL MICHAEL

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has warned hotel owners to avoid being accomplices to Yahoo Boys who check into their facilities for internet fraud and money laundering activities or risk being prosecuted and jailed.

The Ilorin Zonal Commander of the Commission, ACE II Michael Nzekwe, gave the admonition on Thursday, June 16, 2022, while addressing a stakeholder meeting of Designated Non-Financial Institutions (DNFIs) at the Commission's Office along Catchment Road, GRA, Ilorin.

According to Nzekwe, "the Commission has observed a worrying pattern of cold complicity by hospitality entrepreneurs who appear to be hands-in-gloves with suspected fraudsters by housing them over long spells and making internet facilities available to them."

While warning hoteliers against allowing cybercriminals into their facilities, the Zonal Commander said that hoteliers would be contravening Section 3 of the Advance Fee Fraud and Other Fraud Related Offences Act if they continue to allow Yahoo Boys to check into their hotels.

"Section 3 of the Advance Fee Fraud and Other Related Offences Act, 2006 provides for a prison term of between five and 15 years without an option of fine for any person who permits his premises to be used for any offence under the Act," he said.

According to him, the meeting was called to sensitize stakeholders on the rising activities of fraudsters and the need to support the Commission in the fight against corruption. He said that ignorance was not an excuse under the law.

"While the argument is being made in certain quarters that hoteliers as business people have no means of determining who a fraudster is before allowing them to lodge in their facilities, that position runs counter to the law," Nzekwe said.

He urged the hoteliers to always ask their customers for means of identification and to fill their occupation as part of the check-in procedure.

The Zonal Commander also implored them to support the Commission with credible and actionable information, adding that such information when received would be treated with absolute confidentiality.

The President of Hotel Owners Association, Kwara State, Mr Dauda Akande and Chief Isaac Omogbenle Adeyemi, the immediate past chairman of the Association while responding mentioned some of the challenges faced by hotel owners in dealing with customers.

According to them, the challenges include concealment of identity by guests, difficulty in determining a fraudster before allowing them to lodge in their facilities and safety of whistle blowers among others.

They commended the EFCC for its professionalism and doggedness in the anti-graft war, while pledging their support for the Commission in its bid to stem the scourge of corruption in Nigeria.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Zonal Commander had urged compliance officers of banks to be diligent in the discharge of their duties and to ensure that they play active role in tackling money laundering and other fraudulent practices in the banking sector.

Bawa tasks CBOs on whistle-blowing

By PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

The Executive Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Abdulrasheed Bawa, has called on Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) across the country to rise vigorously to the imperatives of whistle-blowing by volunteering information about cases of economic and financial crimes in their neighbourhood.

Bawa made the call in Ilorin, Kwara State on Thursday, June 16, 2022, while presenting a paper on overcoming the challenges of whistle-blowing and anti-corruption at a One-Day Stakeholders' Town Hall meeting organized by the African Centre for Media and Information Literacy (AFRICMIL).

According to him, every Nigerian has a role to play in the fight against economic and financial crimes by exposing compromises of extant laws on corrupt practices in their environments.

"We need every Nigerian to come on board because the negative effect of corruption does not discriminate against ethnicity, religion, or political affiliation. We need citizens to actively participate in the fight against economic and financial crimes through volunteering information," he said.

Bawa assured that the EFCC is willing to collaborate with CBOs such as AFRICMIL in strengthening citizens' capacities to identify and report cases of corruption as well as educating them on the guidelines for whistle-blowing and procedures for processing an entitlement.

"This is an area where the Commission is willing to partner with organizations such as AFRICMIL, to work with Community-Based Organizations in strengthening their capacities to identify and quickly report suspected cases of corruption in their communities," Bawa added.

He explained that one of the positive steps the EFCC has taken in easing the process of whistleblowing is the development of the 'Eagle Eye App' that allows informants to report and interface with officials of the Commission.

According to him, "The app has added a new and very interesting perspective to whistle-blowing in Nigeria. I urge all those who are yet to make use of the application to download it into their phones and take advantage of its easy-to-use features."

He enjoined anti-corruption agencies, policymakers, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and CBOs to recommit to the whistle-blowing policy and work towards its success and ensure that all corrupt people have no place anywhere in Nigeria to hide their loot.

The coordinator of the Centre, Chido Onumah, stated that the meeting was organized to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders on the whistle-blowing policy. He added that the Centre has created awareness and sensitized the public on the importance of whistle-blowing as a tool for fighting corruption and checking other forms of wrongdoing in society.

He called on Nigerians from all

walks of life to see the exposure of corrupt acts in their neighbourhood as a bounden duty and patriotic drive and in the process assist the EFCC to deliver more on its mandate.

"Whistle blowing has proven to be the most direct method of exposing corrupt acts. We are both morally and legally bound as citizens not to keep silent or acquiesce to any corruption or wrongdoing whenever we see one," he said.



Bawa

ICPC declares man, 48, wanted over impersonation, fraud

By PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

The Independent Corrupt and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) has declared a 48-year-old man, Wasiu Adewale Azeez, wanted for corrupt practices bordering on impersonation and defrauding of unsuspecting members of the public.

According to a public notice signed by the Spokesperson for the anti-graft agency, Mrs Azuka C. Ogugua, the wanted man, Azeez, is an indigene of Offa LGA, Kwara State.

Mrs Ogugua appealed to members of the general public with useful information about his whereabouts should report to any of the ICPC offices nationwide or the nearest police station.

She said, "The person whose picture

appears here, Wasiu Adewale Azeez is hereby declared wanted by the Independent Corrupt and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) in connection with issues bordering on impersonation and defrauding unsuspecting members of the public of different sums of monies.

"Mr Azeez was born on 30th April 1974 (48 years old) and is an indigene of Offa LGA, Kwara State.

"Anyone who has useful information about his whereabouts should report to ICPC Headquarters Abuja, any of the ICPC State Offices, or the nearest police station, or call ICPC Toll-Free lines: 08031230280, 08031230281, 08031230282, 07056990190, 07056990191, and 080-CALL-ICPC (0800-2255-4272)," the statement said.



Prof Owasanoye

I'm as expensive as the job requires - Lola Maja

Award-winning make-up artist Lola Maja Okojevoh started doing it as a hobby at age 14 in London. Today, her make-up and beauty outfit, Sacred, has warmed its way into the hearts of many Nigerians including filmmakers. In this chat with OMONIYI ALLI, she bares it all.

Q: How did you start as a make-up artist?

A: I've been doing make-up since I was 14. So, it's something that developed from a passion into a career. It's not something that I feel like I chose to do. My mum always encouraged me. I came from a family full of women and I just found that I loved make-up and then realized that I can get paid (laughs) to do it. So, I wanted a part-time job when I was in school. I just wanted to be working. And my older sister was working as a make-up artiste. And I went and I joined, pretending to be my older sister. I went to join some agencies. I used her details and I started working. And I've moved on since.

Q: When was that?

A: That was when I was 14 (laughs), 1992.

Q: Was that in Lagos?

A: No, it was in London. I grew up in London. I only came back like five years ago when I got married. I went there when I was two.

Q: So, you actually started your make-up business in London?

A: Yeah.

Q: And from that time till now, what are some things that have changed in the make-up business?

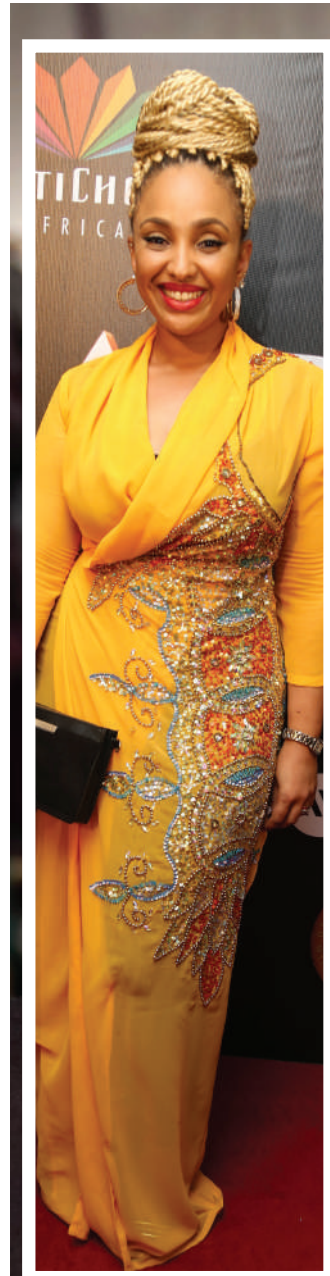
A: Everything has changed. So many things have changed. The way people do eye shadows, the way people style their eyebrows, the products, and especially filming as well. When I first started film make-up, mobile phones were just being invented, now you've got cameras on your phones. Everybody is taking pictures with their cameras. It's all of these things that actually affect make-up. So, you have to learn the different types of cameras, different things that they are using for filming to understand how your make-up is going to look on screen, how your make-up will look in a picture, how your make-up will look in daylight – everything. You have to understand how make-up is being affected by technology.

Q: So, have there been times you've had to do trial and error?

A: I've done a lot of trial and error (laughs). I mean, there are things that they can teach you and there are things that you learn (laughs). I stay by the director a lot, not because he's the director but because he has the monitor. So, you want to look on the monitor and see how your characters look on the screen. You can't see it with your own eyes. You have to go on the monitor and see, 'how does this person look?' When they put it up on the big screen, the actual TV, it's too late to change it.

Q: You do make-up and beauty therapy, what else do you do?

A: I personally do make-up, I do



hair and I do beauty. I'm a qualified therapist, so I have a beauty salon as well in Maryland and in Victoria Island. We do facials, waxing, lashes – we do the whole range of beauty services.

Q: How did you meet your husband?

A: I met my husband at my cousin's wedding many years ago. And we were friends. I was actually engaged to somebody else. But in my engagement, we broke up. And then, a few years later, Tonio, just out of the blues, said we should get married.

Q: Are you sure your husband wasn't responsible for destabilizing the engagement?

He lived in Nigeria and I was in London. He was actually like my best friend. That guy that I could always confide in and tell different things.

My husband is a Christian. He was celibate for six years before we got married. To me, he was almost like a saint. And he was like, 'we should get married.' We've never even dated. He said it doesn't matter, 'we're friends. We know ourselves. And I know I want to marry you.' And we got married. We never dated.

Q: Some men, even knowing you're married with children, would even want to chase. How do you fob off such men?

A: I have the best husband in the world. What am I looking for?

Q: But they'll pressure you?

A: You can only feel pressured if you allow them to pressure you. You don't just give anybody a chance because within a few minutes of meeting anybody, you already know I'm

married with two children and how much I am in love with them, what are you going to tell me? There's a huge amount of trust.

Q: How expensive is Lola Maja?

A: I'm as expensive as the job requires. You pay for my experience. I've been a make-up artist for more than 25 years

Q: What are some of the highlights of the job?

A: I've worked with everybody. Most of the people I ever wanted to work with in Nigeria, I've worked with them. From Genevieve, Omotola, Rita Dominic, Ini Edo, Tonto Dikeh, Omoni Oboli. Music wise, I've worked with Tiwa Savage, Omawumi, Davido and Banky W is my son's godfather. And I'm just thankful. It's not just getting a job but it's being able to keep a relationship. It's very important.



Mercy Eke opens up on her cosmetic surgery, business

Former BBNaija reality TV show winner, Mercy Eke, has revealed why she underwent cosmetic surgery.

In the latest episode of the 'Tea with Tay' podcast, the 'Pepper Dem' star said she went under the knife to "enhance my confidence."

She added that she also did it to "sell her business".

The 28-year-old also argued that people who go through body piercings and bleaching are no different from those who undergo cosmetic surgery.

"I did it for myself. I did it to enhance my confidence. I wanted to look good in what I wear. I'm into fashion. I have to have a certain type of body for myself," she said.

"I feel like those who are hiding the truth, probably don't have the confidence; they feel like they did it for someone. But I did it for myself."

"I did it to sell my business. So, I don't think there is anything to be ashamed of in enhancing your body."

"People are bleaching; let us not talk about it. It's all the same thing. That is another form of enhancement because it's not the way God created you."

"Even those that fix eyelashes. All these things, if we talk about it; they are the same. So, if you think you are 'that girl', leave yourself the way God created you."

Mercy was romantically involved with Ike, her colleague, during their time in the 2019 edition of BBNaija, which she eventually won.

But in November 2020, the reality TV star revealed that she was no longer in a relationship with Ike while also announcing her marriage to one 'Mr. H', her mystery man.

Mr Eazi merges art, music in 'Legalize Art Experience'

African music superstar Oluwatosin Ajibade, popularly known as Mr Eazi, is inviting viewers into his creative process with "The Legalize Art Experience," a new short film documenting his collaboration with Benin-based painter Patricorel.

The mini-doc, directed by Demola Falomo, captures Eazi's first time performing "Legalize," the first single from his forthcoming debut album, as Patricorel creates the single's artwork onsite for an intimate audience.

Inspired by his growing interest in acquiring and plat forming African art, Mr Eazi sees his yet-to-be-titled debut album as a collection of art pieces. Each single from the album will be represented in the form of a series of uniquely commissioned pieces from different African visual artists. These pieces will be tokenized and shared

with the public through specially curated metaverse and physical events.

For "Legalize," Mr Eazi tapped Patricorel, whose work he was introduced to while recording for the album in Cotonou, Benin. While the song sees Eazi exposing his emotions as he celebrates his love for fiancée Temi Otedola, Patricorel's painting by the same name simultaneously captures the intimacy of love, submission, vulnerability, and death's finality.

"I see the instrumental as a canvas... just like Patricorel... It's a plain canvas and you don't know what you will create," Eazi explains. "What struck me was the fact that he represents love with his pieces, but he draws with skeletons. I think skeletons are our most human, naked form."

The song "Legalize" and its official music video is currently enjoying mass airplay.



Father & Son; The Experience: Femi Kuti's BIG surprise ahead of his 60th birthday

Recently history was made when FK Management, an international events company owned by Funke Kuti, staged a breath-taking Afrobeat concert tagged Father & Son "The Experience."

The event, co-headlined by Femi and Made Kuti, left several celebrities and attendees breathless and in awe. Hosted by popular MC and comedian, Omo Baba 1, the concert also had performances by Olusegun and his Afrobeat band.

The event, which lasted five hours, was also used as a platform to surprise Femi with a rare saxophone as a birthday gift before he sets out on his 7-week American tour.

The expensive saxophone, a Limited Edition Selmer Paris Alto Supreme 2022, was made to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first Selmer saxophone that was

manufactured in 1922.

The saxophone was acquired by the family of the Afrobeat Legend led by his sister, Yeni Kuti, his son Made Kuti, and a committee of family and friends.

Speaking on the reason for planning the surprise, Yeni Kuti aka YK Power said the family needed to celebrate Femi, who always puts others before himself and is very hardworking.

"I set up a group and we came up with suggestions on what we should gift him as he turned 60."

Some said car, others said the saxophone. I decided let's do the saxophone. The reason for the sax is that his current saxophone is very old and has been giving him issues.

"The saxophone is about 20 something years old and he won't change it. He would always give the excuse that he can't afford

it. I am so happy he's turning 60 and we were able to make him happy with the gift," YK Power said.

For Made, a rising Afrobeat star, the gift was worth every emotion it erupted from his father. The young singer and multi-instrumentalist also corroborated his aunt's submission saying he knew his father wanted the saxophone but will not change his old saxophone despite the glitches it has been having in recent times. The 26-year-old grandson of late Fela Anikulapo Kuti said he had first seen the Selmer Paris Alto Supreme 2022 at a store in the company of his father during one of their tours. He said he saw it in his father's eyes that he wanted the saxophone but would rather put his responsibilities before his wants or needs.

"We planned the surprise because we all wanted to do something special for my dad. He constantly goes out of his way for people, does so much self-sacrifice, is very selfless, and always thinking about his family and friends. He's not a materialistic person, hence it was tough getting him a gift but I knew he had been having issues with his saxophone and he's also very attached to it."

An elated Femi Kuti couldn't hide his joy as the new expensive saxophone was presented to him by his family and friends.

"This as far as I am concerned is bigger than the Grammy. I can't ask for more," he said. "I felt they were planning something but thought maybe they'll just surprise me with a cake. I was very shocked when I saw it. I'm very grateful to my family and friends."



Actress Bikiya Graham-Douglas gears up for 5th Beeta playwright competition



The Beeta Universal Arts Foundation (BUAF) spearheaded by Award-winning Actress and Producer, Bikiya Graham-Douglas, announces the Fifth edition of the Beeta Playwright Competition, which has over the years, birthed plays from its past winners; 'Our Son, the Minister' by Paul Ugbede, 'Jagagba' by Abdul Qudus-Ibrahim and 'Daughters of the East' by Achalugo Chioma Ezekobe and "Black Dust" by Temilolu Fosudo; playwrights who have all gone on to experience enormous successes.

The competition's theme for this edition "Our Stories Our Voices" has a deadline for all entries from May 30 through to June 30, 2022, and calls for entries from indigenous

playwrights between the ages of 18-40 who an esteemed panel of judges made up of award-winning Playwright and Professor of the Arts, Ahmed Yerima as Chairman, Director and Producer, Kenneth Uphopho, Publisher, Ibiso Graham-Douglas, Writer and Producer, Ayo Jaiyesimi, Culture/Film Journalist and Arts Administrator, Shaibu Hussein and Veteran Actress and Producer, Ego Boyo will judge.

As is the norm, ten finalists will be treated to a writing camp, from whence a winner, who stands to win prizes worth up to One Million Naira, Five hundred thousand naira and a publishing deal with PaperWorth Books Limited and their play produced by BUAF

and will be part of the nationwide University Campus Outreach, will emerge at the grand finale.

According to Bikiya, with the 5th edition of the Beeta Playwright Competition, "we remain committed to finding new voices in Nigerian Literature. Our theme this year "Our Stories our voices" aims to find authentic Nigerian stories by Nigerians."

For the Beeta Playwright Competition's fifth edition, BUAF partners once again with Union Bank, PaperWorth Book, Olajide & Oyewole LLP, Limited and other partners include MTN Foundation, Chairborne Global Services Limited, Megaletic



AFCON22: Super Falcons open camp in Abuja

Stories By **OVIRI KELVIN**,
Sports Editor, Abuja

Cup holders Nigeria have commenced a training camp at the country's Federal Capital Territory, Abuja ahead of next month's 12th Women Africa Cup of Nations finals holding in Morocco.

July's colourful house party in the North African kingdom is expected to generate greater media and global public interest than ever, with the exponential rise in the stature of women's football helped by the tremendous gains of the last Women's World Cup in France, robust deliberations on pay parity (with the men) and FIFA's decision to hike the number of participating teams at next year's Women's World Cup finals to 32 – same as for the men's World Cup.

Head Coach Randy Waldrum and his assistants have the interesting challenge of quality and quantity of players – a useful blend of the old guard, talented youngsters from the home front and several skilful foreign-born stars who have been holding their own brilliantly.

As of Friday morning, there were 19 players in camp, including captain Onome Ebi, alongside goalkeepers Chiamaka Nnadozie and Tochukwu



Oluehi, defenders Osinachi Ohale and Akudo Ogbonna, midfielders Rita Chikwelu and Rasheedat Ajibade, and forwards Francisca Ordega, Asisat Oshoala and Gift Monday.

US-based goalkeeper Yewande Balogun, defender Michelle Alozie and midfielders Amanda Mbadi and Toni Payne were being expected in camp on Friday. Forwards Desire Oparanozie and Uchenna Kanu, as well as midfielder Regina Otu and US-based defender Nicole Payne will arrive in Abuja by the weekend.

England-based defender Ashleigh Plumptre, midfielder Halimatu Ayinde and forwards Francisca Ordega, Vivian Ikechukwu and Ifeoma Onumonu are to join the squad in Morocco next week.

Nigeria, who have won

nine of the 11 Women Africa Cup of Nations championships held so far, bundled out Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire in the qualifying series and will play South Africa, Botswana and Burundi in the group stages in Morocco.

They go up against the Banyana Banyana in their first match at the Prince Heritier Moulay Hassan Stadium in Rabat on Monday, 4th July, before matches against Botswana (Thursday, 7th July) and Burundi (Sunday, 10th July) at the same venue.

All four semi-finalists at the tournament in Morocco will qualify to represent Africa at the FIFA Women's World Cup in Australia/New Zealand in the summer of 2023.

ALREADY IN CAMP:
Onome Ebi, Rita Chikwelu,

Osinachi Ohale, Tochukwu Oluehi, Glory Ogbonna, Asisat Oshoala, Rasheedat Ajibade, Chiamaka Nnadozie, Chidinma Okeke, Rita Akarekor, Gift Monday, Opeyemi Sunday, Charity Adule, Christy Ucheibe, Suliat Abideen, Chinonyerem Macleans, Peace Efih, Ugochi Emenayo, Akudo Ogbonna

EXPECTED FRIDAY:
Yewande Balogun, Toni Oyedupe Payne, Michelle Alozie, Amanda Uju Mbadi

EXPECTED BY WEEKEND: Nicole Payne, Uchenna Kanu, Desire Oparanozie, Regina Otu

TO JOIN TEAM IN MOROCCO: Ashleigh Plumptre, Francisca Ordega, Vivian Ikechukwu, Halimatu Ayinde, Ifeoma Onumonu

Warriors crowned NBA champions

■ Curry Stephen named Finals MVP

Golden State Warriors won Boston Celtics in Game Six to lift the NBA championship trophy for the fourth time on Thursday, 16 June, 2022.

Warriors clinched the title with a 103-90 win which saw their prolific point guard Stephen Curry named the NBA Finals Most Valuable Player of the tourney.

Reportedly, Reuters noted that the Finals MVP award was one of the few major honours that had eluded the eight-time All-Star, who has won two league MVPs and four championships.

Curry said, "It means we won, it means we took advantage of the opportunity to get back here."

Following, the NBA star applauded the award stressing that it is a testament to his prowess in the game.

"I hear all the conversations, I hear all the chatter, we hear all the chatter but at the end of the day, it's about what we do on the floor. Ain't got to talk about it, just got to go do it. And that's what this is about," he said.

The Warriors' shooting guard did not win the award by a fluke as individual stat that assesses players' abilities confirms the player led all scorers with 31.2 points per game in the finals.

In Game Four, he amassed 43 points with 10 rebounds in a crucial road

win that levelled the series 2-2.

Reacting to the award, Curry's teammate Andre Iguodala, who in 2015 won the same award, has described him as the best point guard in the NBA of all time.

He said, "Steph has solidified himself as the greatest point guard of all time."

Warrior head coach Steve Kerr, who was stunned by the performance of the Warriors to win the trophy for the eighth time, underlined Curry's contribution which he stated that without it, winning the championship would be impossible.

He said, "I'm obviously thrilled for everyone in that room, and a lot of people had a big hand in this, but the thing with Steph is, without him, none of this happens."

"I'm thrilled for Steph. To me this is his crowning achievement in what's already been an incredible career," Kerr reiterated.

A snippet from Reuters added that Curry, who was selected by the Warriors with the seventh pick of the 2009 draft, also transformed a struggling franchise with help from fellow "Splash Brother" Klay Thompson and defensive force Draymond Green. They formed a solid trio that have reached the championship finals in six of the last eight seasons.



PSG to start Ligue 1 season against Clermont

Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) will kick start their 2022-23 campaign with Clermont in a weekend tie which will be scheduled on either August 7 or 8 at Clermont-Ferrand.

Following the clash against the Lancers, PSG will entertain Montpellier at home in Parc des Princes before they face Monaco in what will be the opening cracker of the 2022-23 season.

In a quick recall, PSG last season recorded a mind-blowing result against Clermont with Kylian Mbappe and Neymar Jr scoring hat-tricks in a 6-1 emphatic win.

According to the report by GFFN, the full French

league fixtures will be released later in the week where PSG on matchday 8 will face Lyon while the first leg of Le Classique against Marseille comes on October 16 at Parc des Princes.

However, in return, Marseille will host PSG at the Stade de Velodrome on February 26 for the second leg of Le Classique.

PSG end the 2022-23 season against Clermont in Paris, with the penultimate and antepenultimate home fixtures coming against Rennes and Lyon.

The report added that the 2022-23 season will experience a six-week-long break from November to December following the



World Cup in Qatar, meaning the season will end in June. The action will resume in winter on December 28 for matchday 16.

PSG, defending champions of the French

Ligue 1 title, in the build-up to the season, will go on a pre-season tour of Japan from July 17 to 25, with training sessions starting again at the Camp des Loges on July 4.

Roma chase Atletico Saul Niguez

Following the expiration of the loan move of Atletico Madrid Saul Niguez to Chelsea which has made the player return to his parent club in Madrid, Roma boss Jose Mourinho is keen to bring the player to Italy.

The Portuguese coach has been a subject of discussion in recent times after reports

from France reveals that Paris Saint-Germain has listed him among the possible replacements for Argentine and former Tottenham coach Mauricio Pochettino at Parc des Princes.

Roma have made moves for some players belonging to Diego Simone's squad but with the refusal of the club

to sell their prized assets like Rodrigo de Paul, Giallorossi have turned their attention towards Nunez who Atletico will oblige to sell.

According to their financial record, the return of Niguez to the Spanish club would alter the club's summer transfer deal owing to the increment in wage bills.

However, Spanish media, Mundo Deportivo, reported that Roma is keen on reinforcing their midfield before the start of the 2022-23 campaign and have pencilled Niguez as one of their targets.

Although, Italian media, La Gazzetta dello Sport reported that Niguez is not the only player on Roma's

radar as they have outlined three players on their list of targets.

More likely that Niguez will move to Italy, Mundo Deportivo reported that Roma value the versatility of the player and this may favour a possible switch of the player to join Mourinho's squad.

Getafe hunts Marcelo Vieira

Former Real Madrid left-back defender, Marcelo Vieira could be on his way to Getafe following his farewell move away from Los Blancos after 16 years.

The Brazilian, who retired from Real Madrid honorarily, winning a total of 25 trophies in grand style, is on the hot list of several European and South American clubs.

With Fenerbahçe, Sao Paulo, Palmeiras and other Spanish clubs, all lined up to have the 34-year-old in their team, Marcelo's decision is constrained by his unwillingness to move out of Madrid.

Spanish media reported that the former Real

Madrid defender has been approached by Real Valladolid but he turned it down because it would make him move away from Madrid.

Another constraint as reported is that his son, who is in the Real Madrid academy, is doing excellently well and the Brazilian do not want to make to move to jeopardize or snail-walk his progress.

However, the player still has stocks in his boots for like 2 years but is faced with the decision to choose between Rayo Vallecano and Getafe.

According to todofichajes, both La Liga clubs have reached with the Brazilian with Getafe tabling the best offer that will see him earn



a €2m salary for a 2-year contract.

Getafe President, Angel Torres has guaranteed Marcelo of a first-team start and with the exit of Olivera to Napoli, he would likely have

no rival for the position.

Since Marcelo needs to remain in Madrid, accepting Getafe's offer would be a greater burden than moving to Vallencano which is situated in Madrid.

Ajax's Timber to bluff United switch



Ajax defender Jurrien Timber will not honour a move to Manchester United following the player's wish to feature in this year's FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

Timber recently broke into the first-team football last season in Ajax and has been capped eight times for the

Netherlands international team.

An emerging report reveals that the player, who is believed to be courted by the Red Devils that are eager to build their defensive lineup, will probably not get enough playing time that would guarantee him a place in the

Dutch squad for World Cup.

Erik Ten Hag inherited a squad whose defensive lineup comprises Victor Lindelof, Harry Maguire, Raphael Varane and Phil Jones as centre-backs.

Timber wants to go to Qatar but a move to Old Trafford may likely hamper his dream of a first World Cup outing and this is a route he would likely not take.

Meanwhile, a report by Football365 reveals that Ten Hag is more concerned about strengthening the squad's midfield and attacks than the defence and this is 'another blow for Man Utd as they watch rivals Man City and Liverpool sign Erling Haaland and Darwin Nunez respectively'.

Reacting to Manchester United's floppy summer transfer deals, Sky Sports pundit Gary Neville says he

is worried about the club's inability to complete deals like other English top-flight clubs.

Neville, who retired after a 9-year-spell at Old Trafford in 2011, stressed that deals must be completed early for Ten Hag to have time to mould the squad together.

He said, "I know early in the window but it's worrying that United are struggling to get business done.

"The others seem set and ready yet United can't get moving. ETH needs his group together ASAP to mould them. Bringing them in late will only make it harder for him! it happens soon," he added.

United have missed out on certain deals with Liverpool snapping Benfica's Darwin Nunez from their watchful eyes and Erling Haaland completing a deal with their arch-rivals Manchester City.

A bonus getting to Trent's level - Ramsay

Liverpool-bound defender Calvin Ramsay said it would be a bonus if he can play to the level of Reds' Trent Alexander-Arnold, the right-wing back for Jurgen Klopp's side.

Ramsay, who plays for Aberdeen in the right-back position will soon be on his way to Liverpool after both clubs agreed on a £6.5m fee.

Liverpool initially offered £3.3m for the 18-year-old but the Dons valued him at £10m with an initial payment of £5m and £5m for add-ons.

The teenager has attracted interest from several clubs in Spain, Germany and Italy with Bologna striving to secure his services on loan and an option of a £3.3m permanent switch which was rejected by Aberdeen in January.

Sky Sports reported that the player will become a club-record sale after the deal

is completed, surpassing the current record of £3m from Nottingham Forest for Scott McKenna. The Dons have also received an extra £1m for the centre-back this summer after Forest were promoted to the Premier League.

Scottish Ramsay is expected to undertake medical at Liverpool in later days after both parties would have finalised the player's personal terms.

"As a full-back, watching Trent and his crosses and his technical ability, if I can get to that level then it would be a bonus," he explained.

"Andy Robertson at Liverpool and [Kieran] Tierney at Arsenal have been brilliant and they're players I look up to, especially as they are full-backs like me. I feel I could go on to do that as well," Ramsay added.

Aberdeen manager,



Jim Goodwin, said he is unsurprised over the growing interest in the youngster who he described as one of the best young defenders in the world.

"Prior to January, Calvin was probably one of the best young full-backs in the world to be perfectly honest. That is not an over-exaggeration," Goodwin said.

He added that the player later dropped in form which he believed was influenced by the growing interest in him in January.

The Trumpet reports that the player will become the third summer signing for Liverpool after Darwin Nunez joined from Benfica and Fabio Carvalho signed from Fulham.

WWE CEO Vince McMahon steps down as board investigates alleged misconduct

By **OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH** with agency report

The chairman and CEO of World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) Vince McMahon has relinquished his duties while he is being investigated for misconduct.

This was announced on Friday by the WWE and its board of directors.

McMahon, 76 has run the company for 40 years after taking over for his father in 1982, when it was known as the World Wrestling Federation.

The company announced that McMahon will still maintain control of the WWE's creative output during the investigation, and he would appear on Friday night's episode of SmackDown.

"I have pledged my complete cooperation to the investigation by the Special Committee, and I will do everything

possible to support the investigation. I have also pledged to accept the findings and outcome of the investigation, whatever they are," McMahon said.

His daughter Stephanie McMahon, 45, will serve as interim CEO and chairwoman, she has been often lauded as her father's successor.

The board of WWE has launched an investigation into allegations that McMahon offered a \$3 million settlement to a former female employee with whom he had an affair.

The McMahon family has been involved in wrestling for more than a hundred years, and Vince McMahon regularly cast himself and his children as villains in the WWE's wrestling storylines. The company achieved a near-monopoly of the industry with the shutdown of World Championship Wrestling in 2001.



Russia and Belarus to partake in US Open- USTA

United States Tennis Association (USTA) have raised the hopes of Russian and Belarusian tennis players to partake in the US Open taking place later this year.

With the pronouncement by USTA, world number one and defending champion Daniil Medvedev will have the opportunity to defend his title in New York.

According to the statement, the players from these countries (Russia & Belarus) that have been banned by International Tennis Federation (ITF) will take part in the event as independent participants under a neutral flag.

USTA recalled that the tennis institution had previously, like every other tennis governing body, condemned the military invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

The statement reads: "The USTA will allow individual athletes from Russia and Belarus to compete in the 2022 US Open, but only under a neutral flag. Alongside the other Grand Slams, the ITF, the ATP and the WTA, the USTA, which owns and operates the US Open, has previously condemned, and continues to condemn, the unprovoked and unjust invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

"The USTA, standing with

these other tennis entities, supported the banning of the Russian and Belarusian Tennis Federations from the ITF, and therefore all international team competitions, and the directive for players from those countries to play under a neutral flag when competing outside of international team competitions.

"We recognize that each organization has had to deal with unique circumstances that affect their decisions. Based on our own circumstances, the USTA will allow all eligible players, regardless of nationality, to compete at the 2022 US Open.

"The USTA will work with the players and both Tours to use the US Open as a platform to further the humanitarian effort of the "Tennis Plays for Peace" program.

"In addition, the USTA will introduce a broad, comprehensive set of initiatives to amplify existing Ukrainian humanitarian efforts, including committing to significant financial support, for which details will be announced soon," it stated.

However, the USTA decision runs contrary to Wimbledon's which barred athletes from Russia and Belarus from partaking in the tournament scheduled for June 27, 2022.



Tyson Fury to return from retirement

By **OVIRI KELVIN**, Sports Editor, Abuja

Undefeated boxing champion Tyson Fury says he would return to action after calling it off previously to face either Anthony Joshua or Oleksandr Usyk but only on a 'big money' call. Fury after knocking out Dillian Whyte to defend his WBC heavyweight title in April, abruptly took the sport's community by surprise to pronounce a retirement call.

The Gypsy King as he is widely called by his admirers expressed that his decision to retire from boxing was influenced by the need for him to spend more ample time with his family.

Two months into retirement, Fury according to Queensberry said he is mulling a move to return to action but only on big bucks.

"We've got some very exciting news coming, I think the world's been waiting for our plan of action," Fury told Queensberry.

"We had a nice bit of Italian down in London, we had a long conversation about lots of stuff and... Frank do you want to take it from here?" he asked.

Accordingly, boxing promoter

Frank Warren said spoken with Fury on several occasions and hopes to come up with an idea.

Warren said, "We've looked at a couple of scenarios. I spoke to Tyson again today, and we're hopefully going to come up with something that Tyson wants to do. We've talked about various scenarios.

"Maybe an exhibition bout, we don't know. Something will come out of it. Once Tyson is happy, then I'll be happy, and whatever is going to be will be.

"There's obviously a lot of things to talk about, and the public will want to see Tyson Fury back in the ring, where he's the king. I want to see that.

"I get where Tyson is and what he's said, people retire and come back in a couple of years, I like fellas to fight when they're in their prime, and for me, Tyson Fury isn't at his prime [yet].

"That performance last time out was something else but we're going to have a good chat and I'm sure we're going to have some good news we can announce fairly soon," he commented.

However, Fury has raised the possibility of a bout happening between him either Usyk or Joshua.

He said, "There's something to be really excited about, but it doesn't

Will face Joshua or Usyk but...



involve Usyk or Joshua at this moment.

"I will make a decision on all this. I've only just fought, not even three months ago. I wouldn't be expected to fight until October, November, December anyway.

"I've got no mandates coming up. No one is rushing me to do anything.

"When this middleweight knocks out this bodybuilder again, there's only going to be one man to sort this absolute circus out, isn't there?

"What I would say to the people who want this fight to happen,

you better have a big cheque book, because to bring the big 'GK' (Gypsy King) out of retirement, to redeem this country yet again, it's going to cost.

"I am a prize fighter and I do fight for prizes, but it's going to cost if you want me to do a mission on this middleweight and show you what a real heavyweight does to him.

"That's going to be expensive, you're going to have to have big pockets, and we can even talk then. Until [they fight], I'm going to stay in Morecambe, training like a lunatic," he added.

Bissouma completes Tottenham medical

Brighton Yves Bissouma has completed his medical to join the North London club Tottenham after Seagulls agreed a £35m deal with Spurs.

Bissouma has been on the radar of Tottenham when he was still in Lille after Mousa Dembele left the club for Guangzhou City and will become the third signing for Antonio Conte following Fraser Foster and Ivan Perisic's move.

The Mali international has been impressive for Brighton where he scored 6 goals in 123 appearances

and was exceptional in the game against Tottenham last season that reignited Conte's interest in him.

With a year left for Bissouma at Brighton, the 25-year-old, who attracted interest from Arsenal, Aston Villa and Everton, would sign a long-term contract that will keep him at Tottenham for long.

Reportedly, Tottenham will pay an initial £25m with an additional £10m on performance-related add-ons for the midfielder. Spurs are ready to bolster their squad for this season and will strive to sign a right-

wing back, a left-footed defender and a versatile forward.

Sequel to the above, Middlesbrough's Djed Spence is a leading target for the right-wing back position and could become Spurs' fourth on completion of Bissouma's deal in the coming days.

Tottenham could have signed the Midfielder when he was in Lille but made a U-turn to sign Tanguy Ndombele at a club-record fee while Brighton snapped Bissouma for around £15m from Lille.



Arsenal move for City's Gabriel Jesus

North London club Arsenal will swoop for Manchester City Gabriel Jesus who is reportedly seeking more playing time that would probably be elusive at Etihad.

Jesus joined Pep Guardiola's side in 2016 from Palmeiras and the Brazilian last season scored 13 goals in 28 starts coupled with 12 assists that complemented the team's Premier League success.

Despite the stats, the 25-year-old is unsatisfied and believes he needs to be handed more roles at Manchester City but with the signing of Erling Haaland and Julian Alvarez, his insistence for more playing time had become Infeasible.

However, Arsenal whose season was hampered because the team's attack lacked clinical finishing in

front of goal are reportedly interested in Jesus, valued at £50m by City.

The North London club contended with their fellow rivals Tottenham for a top-four finish in the English Premier League table last season but fell off the cliff after a derby match at Tottenham Stadium where they were battered 3-0 on May 12, 2022.

According to a report by Sky Sports "the Gunners' most pressing

need for next season is in attack. When your leading marksman has the same number of goals as bottom-placed Norwich, you know there is a problem".

"The issue is not in creating chances, the problem is in taking them. Arsenal ranked fourth for shots, shots on target and expected goals (xG) this season, but ranked 11th for shot conversion," it added.

Lukaku close to Inter's return

Chelsea forward Romelu Lukaku is almost close to a return to Inter Milan following heartwarming discussions between the Blues and Nerazzurri.

The Belgian striker joined the Blues at a club-record fee of €115m last season after sensational performances in Italy but was a shadow of himself in the 2021-22 season at Chelsea.

With a paltry sum of 6 goals in 26 Premier League appearances for Thomas Tuchel's side, resulting in the club's drop in form where they finished without a silverware, the 29-year-old is eager to return to where he broke into the spotlight as one of Europe's top strikers.

According to emerging reports from Italy, Chelsea will welcome a loan move for the Belgian to return to Italy and are asking between €10 - €15m which is far above the initial €5m offer for the striker.

La Gazzetta dello Sport said that the discussions between both clubs are favourable and an agreement will certainly be reached in the coming weeks.

Lukaku is eager to return and would be ready to take a pay cut from his about €350,000-a-week salary to help Nerazzurri facilitate the deal should the need arises.

More so, Thomas Tuchel is not opposed to the loan deal for the player and was reported to have convinced Chelsea's new CEO Todd Boehly to give his approval to the deal.

