

Tambuwal assures slain Deborah Samuel's family of justice

By **KELVIN OHOROR**

Governor Aminu Tambuwal has assured that there would be justice for the family of Deborah Samuel who was

lynched in Sokoto State for alleged blasphemy against Prophet Mohammed.

Deborah, whose body was burnt by an irate Moslem mob after she was stoned and beaten to death, was until the

unfortunate incident, a 200 level student of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto.

Tambuwal who was speaking in an interview with journalists shortly after his meeting with

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) delegates at the Unity Hall, Government House, Asaba, said the incident was quite unfortunate.

According to the governor, nobody has
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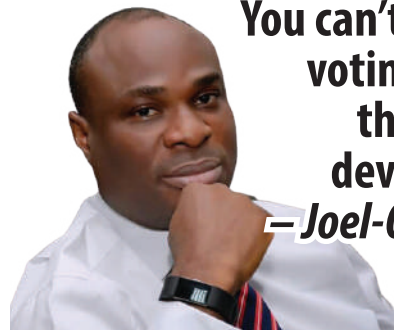
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DO CHANGE OF NAME, ADDITION TO NAME, CONFIRMATION OF NAME FOR BVN, EMPLOYMENT, VISA AND OTHER PURPOSES IN THE TRUMPET



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Participants from NGOs led by ANEEJ at a workshop organized by United States Agency for International Development in Abuja.

Nigerians want new era as party primaries begin, results trickle in

By **TUNDE JOSHUA**,
Politics Editor, Abuja and
KELVIN OHOROR (Isoko)

With great expectations, Nigerians are demanding the dawn of a new era from the country's political elite as the various parties hold primary polls ahead of the 2023 general elections.

The main opposition political grouping kicked off the primaries at the weekend.

As at midnight Friday, President Muhammadu Buhari failed to sign the latest amendment to Section 84 (8) of the Electoral Act 2022, which political parties and politicians fervently awaited.

This inaction of the President in a way eased the high tension in the polity as it dawned on the parties that they have to go into their various primary elections with only elected delegates as authentic voters.

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) kick-started its primaries on Sunday with elections in the states for State House of Assembly and House of Representatives seats.

The party adhered strictly to provisions of Section 84(8) of the Electoral Act, 2022, which allows only democratically elected delegates to vote at the indirect Primaries and National Convention of political parties.

National Organising Secretary of the party, Hon. Umar Bature specifically said on Saturday that "those qualified and eligible to vote as delegates in the forthcoming Primaries and National Convention of our great Party, the PDP are the three (3) AD-HOC Delegates per ward, elected at the

Ward Congresses and one (1) National Delegate per Local Government, elected at the Local Government Area Congresses.

Senatorial primaries hold in on Tuesday, May 24.

The ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) will hold its Governorship and House of Representatives primaries on Thursday May 26, Senate and States Assembly on Friday, May 27 while the presidential primary is on Sunday May 29.

Section 84(8) recognizes only democratically elected delegates, stating, "A political party that adopts the system of indirect primaries for the choice of its candidate shall clearly outline in its constitution and rules the procedure for the democratic election of delegates to vote at the convention, congress or meeting."

Upon realising their exclusion from the list of those privileged by the provision to vote, members of the National Assembly came up with an amendment to the section to include 'statutory delegates'.

The amendment to the section now read "...in addition to statutory delegates already prescribed in the constitution of the party in the amendment."

By virtue of this amendment, the lawmakers were asking that, statutory delegates, including elected councillors, local government chairmen and their deputies, party chairmen in local government areas, state and federal lawmakers (current and former), governors and their deputies, President and Vice-President, National



Ayu

Working Committee members, state party chairmen and secretaries, be allowed as voters at primaries, congresses and conventions of all the political parties.

But, these set of people captured in the statutory delegates cadre have lost out as they are not eligible by law to vote.

The Independent National Electoral Commission INEC requires that list of delegates to participate in congresses and conventions of all the political parties must be submitted at least seven days earlier.

The Trumpet learnt that a majority of the parties, APC and PDP inclusive, met the seven days window by forwarding to INEC lists that contain names of elected delegates only.

This means fewer than 5,000 delegates in both APC and PDP will determine the fate of the various aspirants at their respective primaries next weekend.

It means only national delegates elected at the local government congresses will determine presidential standard bearers of the

parties while the five delegates elected from each ward for the state congresses will vote to elect governors, senators, House of Representatives and states' House of Assembly members for the APC. This means that APC will elect its presidential candidate with 2322 democratically elected delegates

For PDP, it will be the three delegates elected from each ward. The PDP will elect its presidential flag bearer with 810 delegates based on one national delegate per local government area and one each per state to cover the physically challenged.

Failure by Buhari to sign the amendment, no doubt, is a big loss to members of the National Assembly who had introduced the addition to settle scores with the executive arm of government, particularly state governors.

The lawmakers had thought that by increasing the voters base at congresses and convention, they will have number of voters to negate number of votes the governors might muster.

By losing out in the

game for now, power has returned to the governors who decide to a large extent list of delegates from their states.

Some lawmakers in both chambers of Senate and House of Representatives who have gubernatorial ambitions or wishing to return to parliament are now at the mercy of the governors.

Many lawmakers have been crying foul, petitioning their parties over what they termed lopsidedness in delegates list or total hijack of the list by their state governors.

Senate Minority Leader Enyinnaya Abaribe led a few aggrieved gubernatorial aspirants in Abia to the PDP secretariat last week to protest against what they called 'fake delegates list' submitted by the state party chairman who is being backed by Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi.

Also last week, a former National Publicity Secretary of the party, Chief Olisah Metuh led aggrieved members of the Anambra PDP to protest shoddy handling of the state delegates list.

There are lots of unsettled issues in states across the parties regarding delegates list.

Those captured as statutory delegates have started counting their losses as they will be automatically shut out of the largesse expected to be enjoyed from contestants at the convention.

Presently, there are unsettled rifts in some states across parties on how to constitute the delegate list.

On the part of the aspirants, a few of them with huge financial war chests are rejoicing that limiting the voting population to elected delegates will afford them chance to determine their strengths and limitations.

Political onlookers said big spenders like Atiku, Tinubu, Wike, Tambuwal and Udom may capture fair shares of the delegates.

However, financially low rated aspirants like Osinbajo must not be written off in the monetary show of power as backers of the Vice President are already mobilising resources ahead of Sunday.

Lawan on the other hand whose sponsorship in the race is still shrouded in secrecy, it was learnt, has been assured that he can match the big spenders naira for naira.

In some results, Bino Obowomano Owhele clinched the PDP House of Assembly Isoko South constituency 1 after keenly contested election with 10 to 6 votes.

He was declared winner by the returning officer, Comrade Mike Ifeanyi Egwuyenga, the commissioner for Youths Development, Delta State.

Speaking to newsmen, Owhele said that the election went smoothly and credible, giving glory to God Almighty for giving him the victory.

He also stated that "I am going to make impact by doing things differently from what my predecessors did during their time at the State House of Assembly."

He lauded the delegates and his teaming for the confidence they have him for voting and supporting him to emerge victorious.

"I will reach out to my fellow contestants to give me their full support during the general come 2023", he stated.

Meanwhile, Hon. Ferguson Onwo was declared winner with 16 votes, one void vote after emerging as a consensus candidate of the PDP Isoko South constituency 2 for the House of Assembly.

Onwo was declared winner by the returning officer Mathew Tskere.

Also Barr. Bernard Odior won Isoko North Constituency PDP House of Assembly primaries with 23 votes out of the 40 delegates that voted during the Primaries.

Hon Emmanuel Egbabor took second position with 8 votes, Comrade Zino Onaemor scored 5 votes, Hon Jude Omena Ogbimi- 1vote, Hon Oviemuno Oghoore- 1vote, Ashaka Orobosa- 2votes, while Ogboru had null.

The Presiding Officer, Mr Noel Omodon, described the election as peaceful, free and fair.

All Progressive Grand Alliance, APGA has announced an adjustment in the date of its House of Representatives primary election earlier scheduled to hold on May 26, 2022.

The party says the shift in date is necessitated by the adjournment till May 26 of the trial of leader of Indigenous People of Biafra, IPOB, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, a day where there is usually a restriction of movement in the South East.

The party in a statement by the National

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the right to take laws into his or her hands, noting that some suspects who were apprehended by the police have been charged to court for their alleged involvement in the gruesome murder of Deborah. He debunked the rumour that there was no attempt to save Deborah from the mob attack, stressing that some DSS personnel actually got to the school on time where they initially rescued the deceased and took her to safety until the mob overpowered them.

"The security agencies particularly, the DSS were able to get to the school on time and they were actually able to get our sister, Deborah rescued from the hands of the mob initially and as they were mobilising forces from the military barracks and the police command, the mob was growing.

"As we speak, one of the DSS personnel that really attempted to save her is in hospital receiving treatment because he had a broken head and the other one had a broken hand. So, they were actually

overpowered. It is not as if she was left alone. There was rescue attempt by the DSS and they were where she was locked for safety but the mob overpowered them.

"It was not that the security agencies didn't respond, may be they didn't respond adequately but there was a response," Tambuwal, a presidential aspirant of PDP said.

He noted that such an ugly incident had never happened in Sokoto which he pointed out has been a very peaceful state.

"Sokoto is one

state where the state government, which I preside over, pay school fees and give school materials to every student of Nigeria that is schooling in our public schools without discrimination. So, we don't discriminate against our brothers who are from other parts of the country and we live peacefully.

"Normalcy has returned to Sokoto and the matter is in court. It is being tried and I can assure you that by the special grace of God, there will be justice in that matter," he added.



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Communities seek govt's intervention over water crisis

■ Say corporation sends bills without service

■ Youths protest, say no supply no votes

By **EDU ABADE**,
Business Editor

As the water crisis in Lagos State continues to linger, residents of Osogbon Community Development Areas (CDAs) in Alapere, Kosofe Council, have called on the state government to urgently intervene to save them from the constant typhoid fever, cholera and deaths occasioned by the acute water shortage in the communities.

They made the call at a meeting organised by the Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa (CAPPA) under the aegis of the Our Water, Our Right Coalition, to draw the state government's attention to the plight of the residents, who lamented the health challenges they have been facing and the huge amount of money they have been spending to get water from neighbouring communities.

They also alleged that the Lagos State Water Corporation has been sending them bills amounting to N2,000 per household, even though the corporation has not been supplying them water for a long

time, adding that they had to stop paying the bills as they were not getting public water supply.

Addressing the meeting, Chief Olusola Akinsanya, explained that the plight of the communities was compounded by the difficult terrain of Kosofe area, which he said, makes it impossible to drill boreholes or even dig wells. He lamented that those who had attempted to build boreholes and wells ended up wasting their money, as such endeavours were met with huge disappointment.

"The water challenge has been very serious since 2016 and laying pipes through canals and the difficult terrain has been frustrating. We buy 20-litre keg of water from Hausa vendors at N2,000 each. We need water because water is life. The water from our boreholes and wells is polluted and not drinkable and could not be used for cooking. This has been our experience in the last 30 to 40 years," he lamented.

Speaking, Chairman of Osogbon CDA, Chief E. O. Fadeyi, lamented that due to the perennial water shortage in the area, their properties were not being rented,

as property seekers abandoned them when they learned about the water situation in the three community development associations, with an estimated population of over three million.

Vice Chairman of Osogbon II CDA, Jaye-Johnson Otubaga, wondered why the Lagos State Water Corporation was sending bills to the communities without providing water, adding that no fewer than 8 households were being billed N2,000 monthly for water not supplied.

On his part, Pastor Isaac Oketola, said: "Politicians don't listen to us. When it is time for elections, they come to beg us in our churches and mosques to ask our members to vote for them. But this time it will not work unless they provide public water.

"I go to Somolu daily to buy water with my car and I spend at least N1,000, because our boreholes and well water are not good for drinking, cooking or even washing clothes," he said.

A women leader, who told The Trumpet that she and her husband had spent over N2 million to build boreholes for their hotel and residence, said the water from



Sanwo-Olu

the boreholes was messy, adding that each household in the communities spend an average of N3,000 daily.

"We have begged the state government on several occasions, but no response. We are pleading again with the Lagos State Government to come to our rescue. The situation has become very unbearable. They should please help us urgently," she added.

Some youths who carried placards with the inscription: "No Water, No Election," "Lagos State Government, Please Provide Us Water and Light," among others, vowed to mobilise the youths of the area against voting in the 2023 general elections.

They pleaded with the representative of Lagos East Senatorial District, Tokunbo Abiru, the Lagos State Government and the

House of Assembly to urgently assist them and provide safe and affordable potable water to save the communities.

The water crisis is evident as The Trumpet sighted rustic water tanks of boreholes and Hausa water vendors crisscrossing the entire communities to supply water to households with a huge stick and two kegs of water on each side of their shoulders.

The CAPPA team led by Director of Programmes, Philip Jakpor and Associate Director, Aderonke Ige, said their intervention was aimed at giving the communities a voice and to draw the attention of the Lagos State Government and representatives of the communities at all levels to rise to their responsibilities and help the Kosofe people to overcome the water crisis.

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Election will now hold nationwide on May 27, 2022.

The release partly read, "Due to the ongoing Court trial of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu which has been adjourned to May 26, 2022 and the resultant SIT-AT-HOME in the South East, it has become imperative for the Party to reschedule its House of Representatives primaries earlier scheduled for the same May 26, 2022. "Consequently, the House of Representatives Primary Election of APGA will hold nationwide on May 27, 2022."

The party further stated that INEC has been duly notified about this slight adjustment. Other primary elections of the Party will hold as originally scheduled.

The dates for APGA primaries at the moment are as follows: (1) State House of Assembly: May 24, 2022. (2) House of Representatives: May 27, 2022. (3) Senate: May 28, 2022.

(4) Governorship: May 29, 2022. (5) Special National Convention for nomination of Presidential Candidate: June 1, 2022.

Winners of PDP House of Reps primaries held Sunday, 22nd May, 2022.

1. Bomadi/Patani: Hon. Nicholas Mutu

2. Ika: Hon Victor Nwokolo

3. Ndokwa/Ukwuani: Hon Nnamdi Ezechi

4. Isoko: Hon Jonathan Ajirioghene Ukodhiko

5. Aniocha/Oshimili: Rt. Hon Ndudi Elumelu

6. Ughelli/Udu: Hon Talib Tebite

7. Warri: Hon Thomas Ereyitomi

8. Burutu: Hon Julius Pondi

9. Okpe/Sapele/Uvwie : inconclusive
3 Aspirants pulled 25 votes each (Hon. Efe Afe, Hon. Evelyn Oboro and Hon. Napoleon Gbinije)

10. Ethiope: Inconclusive. inconclusive
Two aspirants pulled 34 votes each (Hon. Ben Igbakpa and Hon. Erhiatake Ibori-Suenu)

Isoko protest, shut down flow station over marginalization

By **KELVIN OHOROR**

Some youths of the Isoko nation have shut down Olomoro/Oleh flow station over non-recognition and for excluding them from employment recruitments.

Under the aegis of Isoko Youth Assembly led by its president, Comrade Onoriode Gold Omagufi; President of Isoko Development Union, Youths Wing, Comrade Obokpaino Fidelis and President of Niger-Delta ex -

agitators, Isoko Chapter, Comrade Joseph Okor, they shut down Olomoro flow station while brandishing placards bearing various inscriptions such as; "We say no to marginalisation, unemployment, youth deprivation", "We say yes to our rightful percentage, contracts grant, employment of skilled and unskilled youths," and many others.

Speaking during the protest, Omagufi said:

"the reason behind today's protest, is the marginalisation of Isoko youths by all multinational oil companies operating in the area. The oil companies include; NPDC, Heritage, Shoreline and many others.

"They have completely deprived Youths of Isoko nation from the various benefits accruing to us. There is a percentage they should give us and we are supposed

to be part of the workforce. They have not employed any youth here and they came with all their workers to our land depriving us of our benefits."

Obokpaino Fidelis said: "The rate of unemployment, joblessness and poverty is unthinkable. The youth of Isoko land still wallow in the hallow chamber of economic injustice. The economic disequilibrium has been very obvious.

"The youths are not independent, thereby presenting to us a cheque of hopelessness yet fastening our legs to the iron rod of bankruptcy."

He said such injustice must not continue in the country, adding: "The management of NPDC, Heritage, Shoreline must immediately include youths of Isoko nation in vacant skill and unskilled positions in their companies and give Isoko youths the recognition due to them."

You can't continue voting for PDP, then expect development – Joel-Onowakpo

By **KELVIN OHOROR,**

Delta South Senatorial District candidate on the platform of All Progressives Congress (APC), Hon. Joe-Onowakpo Thomas, has said that the under-development and poor representation recorded in parts of the area in the past 20 years is as a result of the electorate's continuous voting for the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

He spoke when his campaign train berthed in Bomadi, Patani and Burutu Local Government Areas of Delta State, to consult the voters on his ambition to represent the people of the senatorial district in the 2023 general election.

He noted that he as their son will never deceive his people,

stressing that, "the only way for the electorates to enjoy dividend of democracy and experience development is by voting for APC candidates in the forthcoming general elections.

Also speaking at Bomadi, Patani and Burutu Local Government Areas respectively, a former member of the Delta State House of Assembly, Isoko South Constituency 1, Hon. Benjamin Essien Okiemute, said that the leadership of the party deemed it fit to send best hands who are financially committed to its growth hence the candidature of Hon. Joel-Onowakpo.

According to him, "I am here to tell you that with the order of the party, we in Isoko have resolved Hon. Joel Thomas Onowakpo should go to the

Senate to represent Delta South Senatorial District."

A prominent APC chieftain in Burutu local government area, Prof Moses Adagbabiri, said that Hon. Joel-Onowakpo is one of their own and that they are ready to give him their support 100 per cent. He opined that the Isoko supported the Ijaw nation for 20 years, noting that it is their turn to reciprocate the kind gesture.

Responding, Bomadi and Patani Local Government Area Chairmen of APC, Mr Kayode Tinaka, Mr. Seikemiegham Moni and the organising secretary of the party in Patani Local Government Area, Mr. David Ereboh all affirmed their unalloyed support for Hon. Joel Thomas Onowakpo and all candidates of the party in the forthcoming elections.



Hon. Joe-Onowakpo Thomas

Ex-convict held at airport for allegedly importing cocaine

•NDLEA uncovers 4.56kg crack in lawn mowers tyres •Seizes tons of Tramadol, Codeine

By **PAUL MICHAEL,** Abuja

Operatives of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) have intercepted 24 parcels of cocaine allegedly imported into the country through Port Harcourt International Airport (PHIA) by a Brazilian returnee, Okechukwu Francis Amaechi.

A statement by the Spokesperson of NDLEA, Femi Babafemi, on Sunday said Amaechi, who has just finished serving his jail term for drug trafficking in the South American country, concealed the cocaine in 12 tyres of lawn mowers

"The 45-year-old ex-convict from Idemili South LGA, Anambra State was arrested at the Port Harcourt airport on Saturday 7th May upon his arrival from Brazil via Doha onboard Qatar Airline flight QR1433.

"Preliminary investigations revealed Okechukwu who was arrested and convicted in Brazil for drug offences completed serving his jail sentence in March 2022, after which he decided to return to Nigeria with three new lawn mowers where he concealed

24 parcels of cocaine weighing 4.56kg.

"Curiously, each parcel concealed in the tyres of the three lawn mowers, bears some unique inscriptions, which are believed to be means of identification of the owners of the drug.

"The two parcels in one of the tyres of the first lawn mower bear O LORD and HAVE MERCY. The parcels in one of the tyres of the second mower bears the inscription IN GOD and WE TRUST, while the third mower has IJIOMA and 186.6 inscribed on the two parcels hidden in one of its tyres," Babafemi started

He added that Amaechi claimed one of his church members gave him the lawn mowers to deliver to his brother in Port Harcourt.

The statement further said in other operations across Zamfara, Kogi, Rivers, Kaduna and Kano state, no fewer than 37, 876 tablets of pharmaceutical opioids especially Tramadol; 10,884 bottles of codeine and 825.016 kilograms of cannabis sativa were recovered during raids in the past week.

According to Babafemi, "In Zamfara state, a Mercedes Benz

truck with reg. no. XB 986 AGB from Onitsha to Sokoto was intercepted in Tsafe area on Friday 20th May. Apart from the driver and his assistant that were arrested, three other persons: Alex Chukwumeka, 37; Ignatius Mokwe Odikpo, 47 and Andrew Chijokwe, 47 who are owners of the drug exhibits were arrested in a follow up operation at a hotel in Gusau while waiting to receive the consignment for possible movement to Sokoto. Seized from them include: 9,900 bottles of codeine, 599.3kg cannabis and 15,889 tablets of other opioids.

"In Kogi state, a fake security agent, Richard Agada was arrested on Wednesday 18th May while conveying 10 bags of cannabis sativa weighing 116.8kg in a white Nissan van. Various quantities of opioids and cannabis were equally seized in two separate operations the previous Tuesday and Monday in other parts of the state with the arrest of a drug dealer, Ayuba Nda Isah, 32.

"Three suspects: Nornu Abanne; Yirakpoa Emmanuel and Dornu Gbarazia were arrested at Kaani community and Bori with 90kg cannabis and 1.5gram of Cocaine on

Wednesday 18th May.

"In Kaduna, three suspects: Nura Salis, Bawa Musa and Charity Jacob were arrested on Tuesday 17th of May at Warri Street within the state capital with 4,900 tablets of Tramadol, 890 ampoules of Diazepam injection, 257 ampoules of pentazocine injection, 1,950 tablets of Nitrazepam and 830 tablets of Carbazapine.

"Equally, in Kano state, a drug dealer, Abubakar Abdullahi, 47, with 5,970 capsules and tablets of Tramadol was arrested, while Nasiru Musa and Musa Mohammed were also nabbed with 5,000 caps of the same drug on Tuesday 17th May."

While commending the officers and men of PHIA, Zamfara, Kogi, Rivers, Kaduna and Kano commands of the Agency for the arrests and seizures, Chairman/Chief Executive of NDLEA, Brig Gen Mohamed Buba Marwa (Rtd) said the war against drug abuse and trafficking is one that must be won.

He therefore charged all commands of the Agency to remain on the offensive against the cartels as they take advocacy messages to communities and schools.

Reps probe terminal operators, NPA over non-remittance of multi-million revenue

By **ADAKU WALTER**

The House of Representatives Committee on Public Accounts has begun investigation into terminal operators multi-million dollars debt owed the federal government and failure of the Nigeria Port Authority (NPA) to account for billions of naira supposed to be accruing to the national treasury.

The Committee being chaired by Rep. Wole Oke want the management of the NPA to explain why such a huge amount of money owed the Federal government by terminal operators has not been recovered and paid into the federal treasury.

The investigation is sequel to 12 audit queries from the office of the Auditor-General for the Federation on the financial statement of the NPA for the 2019 financial year.

Meanwhile, the NPA management had only responded to one of the 12 queries on the indebtedness of terminal operators to the government to the tune of \$852.094 million and N1.897 billion.

The NPA said the sum of N269.410 million of the N1.8 billion has been recovered while the balance of N1.6 billion invoices processed on the encumbered areas remain unpaid.

According to the NPA, "the sum of \$504.6 million is volume change on fix lease fee payment by APM Terminal, arising from clauses in the concession agreement out of the total sum of \$852 million.

The authority noted that bills raised on encumbered areas, which remained unpaid is \$19 million, adding: "The following has been paid-GMT-\$54,707,700.08, unpaid penalties- \$11,922,642.68 and unpaid VAT-\$28,693,707.07."

It said further that "\$92,533,518.72 has been recovered leaving unpaid lease and Throughout fee in the sum of \$139,970,637.71 (made up of \$113,982,486.82 and \$5,988,150.89) respectively.

Not satisfied with the explanation on the issue, the Committee directed the NPA management to come and reconcile their position with that of the Auditor-General for the Federation and provide evidence of remitting the recovered N269.51 million and \$92.534 million to the treasury.

The NPA is also to furnish the House with a contract agreement/Service Level Agreement, the list of all terminal operators as well as a comprehensive schedule of lease fees, Throughput fees and GMT that makes up the total amount being owed to the government by the operators.

The Committee is to invite the defaulting terminal operators to come and justify their reason for not paying the fixed lease fee, Throughput fee and GMT, while the NPA is also to provide details of community-related issues that hindered concessionaires from accessing the encumbered areas.

Results of Delta House of Assembly primaries

Isoko South 1. Hon. Bino Ohwede
Isoko South 2. Hon. Ferguson Onwo (consensus victory)
Oshimili North. Barr Esenwa
Okpe Local Government. Chief James Augoye
Ndokwa West. Hon Charles Emetulu
Ethiopia East . Arthur Akpovwovwo
Ethiopia West. Hon. Christian Onogba.
Oshimili South. Bridget Anyafulu
Warri South Constituency 2. Hon Poko Matthew Opuoru
Isoko North. Bernard Odior
Warri north. Fred Martins
Ughelli North 1: Jimmy Elijah Idiovwa
Ughelli North 2: Hon. Onoriode Agofure

Udu - Hon. Brown Jite
Ika South. Hon Okoh Festus
Warri South West Constituency. Hon Emomotimi Guwor
Ika North East. Barr. Marilyn Okowa-Daramola
Aniocha South Hon Chief Isaac Anwuzia PhD
Ndokwa East. IJELE (Prince Emeka Osamuta)
Aniocha North Engr Emeka Nwaobi
Uvwie. Solomon igharakpata
Patani . Hon Emmanuel Sinebe
Ukwuani DTHA Unbreaks
Sapele Pekins Umukoro
Ughelli south. Festus Otuama
Burutu North. Hon. Asupa Forteta

OKON

I formerly known and addressed as **MR. SUNDAY OKON** now wish to be known and addressed as **MR. SUNDAY UDOH**. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.

USA Consulate supports fashion designers in N'Delta

By **OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH**,
Foreign Affairs Correspondent

United States government continues to support a variety of programmes to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship in Nigeria. It is part of Washington's commitment to bolster sustainable economic growth in the African country.

To this end, the U.S. Consulate General launched the third cohort of the Field of Skills and Dreams VTE Academy's Fashion Entrepreneurship Program for 30 emerging fashion designers in the Niger Delta area.

Speaking at the opening of the workshop, which was held at the American Corner in Port Harcourt, U.S. Consulate Deputy Public Affairs Officer Jennifer Foltz highlighted the role of entrepreneurship as the key

driver of sustainable economic growth.

Foltz explained that the goal of the U.S. Consulate-supported capacity building workshop was to provide participants with the requisite business management skills to start, scale, and sustain viable fashion businesses.

"Fashion is a multi-billion-dollar industry and a huge contributor to the global economy, creating jobs and economic prosperity," Foltz said. "Nigeria's unique and innovative fashion designs are making waves in the United States and our goal with this fashion entrepreneurship workshop is to provide the participants with the knowledge, networks, mentors, and access they need to launch and scale successful fashion businesses."

Omowale Ogunrinde, program implementing partner and CEO

of Field of Skills and Dreams VTE Academy, encouraged the participants to direct their passion, imagination, skills, and ingenuity toward making a mark on the Nigerian fashion industry.

"Succeeding in the fashion industry takes a lot more than passion and creativity. You have to be able to think like an entrepreneur. Through the support of the U.S. Consulate, we are empowering emerging fashion designers to not only thrive in Nigeria's fashion industry but also to prepare for the global fashion marketplace," Ogunrinde, an alumna of the U.S. government-sponsored International Visitors Leadership Program, said.

One of the participants, Ruth Inyang, expressed appreciation for the opportunity to advance her theoretical knowledge in

fashion design, branding, and small business management skills.

Inyang explained that she has begun implementing some of the fashion design, branding, marketing techniques and practices she learned during the ongoing workshop.

"My experience at this workshop has been nothing short of amazing. I look forward to learning more from our mentors on how to succeed as a fashion entrepreneur," Inyang added.

Over the last six months, a diverse group of 100 young Nigerians have participated in three regional capacity-building fashion entrepreneurship workshops in Lagos (40), Enugu (30), and Port Harcourt (30).

The fashion entrepreneurship workshop is a reflection of the U.S. government's strong commitment to supporting young people

in Nigeria as they seek to build a future in which they can be constructive participants in the nation's economic development.

Catholic Church Suspends Rev. Fr.

By **GABRIEL OMONHINMIN**,
Religion Editor

Catholic Diocese of Kastina-Ala in Benue State, North Central Nigeria has suspended Rev. Fr. Hyacinth Iormem Alia for his alleged involvement in partisan politics.

The suspended priest was said to have bought the form to contest the All Progressives' Congress (APC) governorship position in the state for the forthcoming elections.

A press statement dated 20th May, 2022 signed by William A. Avenya, Bishop, Catholic Diocese of Gboko and Apostolic Administrator Sade Vacamte Catholic Diocese of Kastina-Ala, said the priest has been suspended from public ministry after a series of admonition.

The statement added: "The mother church does not allow her clerics to get involve in partisan politics, on their own so also CAN extant law. 285, 3 CIC.

"You are all aware that my son, your brother and your Priest has purchased the party forms to contest for the office of Governor of Benue State under the All Progressives' Congress (APC), which is totally against our vocation.

"Therefore, to respond to the spiritual and postoral needs of the church in the Catholic Diocese of Gboko, I have suspended him from the exercise of Sacred Ministry.

"This Canonical suspension, takes effect from the moment, it's communicated to him lasts until he ceases from contumacy."



Former Vice President of Nigeria, Atiku Abubakar, with United States Ambassador to Nigeria and Keynote Speaker at the American University of Nigeria (AUN) 13th Commencement Ceremony, Mary Beth Leonard, in Yola, Adamawa State at the weekend.

Advocacy group. Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP), has urged Professor Mahmood Yakubu to "widely publish the reports on the accounts and balance sheet of every political party submitted by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to the National Assembly since 2015."

SERAP urged the INEC chairman to "urgently examine the books and records of financial transactions of political parties, and to make public the outcome of any such examination."

SERAP also urged him to "provide details of the guidelines, and steps that INEC is taking to prevent vote buying in the forthcoming elections in Ekiti and Osun states and 2023 general elections, and to prosecute vote buyers and other electoral offenders."

Recently, the ruling All Pro-

SERAP seeks parties' financial transactions details from INEC

gressives Congress (APC) and the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) collected N100 million and N40 million for their presidential form respectively for the 2023 election.

In a letter dated 21 May, 2022 and signed by its deputy director Kolawole Oluwadare, SERAP said: "Nigerians have the right to know about the accounts and financial transactions of their political parties, especially the major parties with a strong possibility to assume government in the future.

"Transparency and accountability of political parties is important to achieve greater transparency in public life, curb the influence of money in politics, promote a level playing field, and remove the risks to the independence of political actors and would-be public office holders.

"It is both immoral and illegal to pay citizens to vote for a particular political party or candidate. Unpunished cases of vote buying and related electoral offences would continue to undermine good governance, the rule of law, moral values, as well as hinder citizens' participation in elections.

The letter added: "When a political candidate decides to buy the support of the people rather than contest fairly for their votes, there are possibilities that such candidate will show a disregard for democratic rules and a disposition to adopt illegal means becomes inevitable.

"Vote buying and related electoral offences encourage poor governance and weaken citizens' capacity to hold their elected officials accountable for their actions.

"SERAP urges you to urgently

take measures and to collaborate with appropriate anti-corruption agencies to ensure the effective prosecution of any outstanding cases of vote buying and related electoral offences allegedly committed in the context of the 2019 general elections.

"We would be grateful if the recommended measures are taken within 14 days of the receipt and/or publication of this letter. If we have not heard from you by then, SERAP shall consider appropriate legal actions to compel INEC to comply with our request in the public interest.

"The lack of transparency and accountability in political finance is seriously undermining the legitimacy and credibility of the democratic and electoral processes, and invariably contributing to denying the citizens the right to effective participation in their

own government.

"The failure of political parties to comply with transparency and accountability frameworks would undermine citizens' trust in their political parties and lack of trust will inevitably destroy confidence in the system and decrease citizens' interest and participation in the democratic process.

"Elections are only one part of the democratic process, and a fair and effective electoral system must be founded in an adequate democratic infrastructure and responsibility of political leaders.

"According to our information, several political parties have for many years failed to submit their annual financial statements to INEC. Many political parties have failed to submit election expenses reports, and to disclose material contributions received from individuals and corporate bodies to the Commission.

Gov to reconcile aggrieved aspirants in Akwa Ibom PDP

By ISAAC JOB, Uyo

Governor Udom Emmanuel has said that the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) will soon constitute reconciliation panels to pacify members aggrieved during primaries election in Akwa Ibom State.

Speaking with newsmen at his residence in Onna local government area after the House of Assembly primaries conducted across 26 state constituencies on Sunday, Emmanuel said the new dawn brought by the Electoral Act will spring surprises in the country.

He stated that he had been telling party supporters that no two elections are the same adding that all aggrieved aspirants who are not comfortable with the conduct of the primary election as stipulated by law would be pacified through the reconciliation panel that will be inaugurated soon.

He observed that the amended Electoral Act has disqualified him as the governor and leader of the party from voting and urged the aspirants to accept the result

of the primaries in good faith.

"Today I decided to obey the rules of the electoral act, that disqualified me from being a delegate, I refused to go nearer to the venue."

"I have come to understand that what ever comes our way is the act of God, we can't blame anyone. he said.

"Akwa Ibom is PDP and PDP is Akwa Ibom, I hope to immediately set up a reconciliation committee for those of us feeling agrieved that probably the process today did not favour them, it's an act of God and there's nothing anyone can do about it, No one in this country saw this coming, so we must take it the way we have seen it, so the committee will reconcile and bring them back together."

Meanwhile, one of the aspirants for AKwa Ibom South Senatorial District Akparawa Ephraim Inyangeyen said a group aspirants in the state has decided to pull out of the primaries because of the pending court issues arising from the last Adhoc delegates election in the state.

Speaking at Ikot Ebiere in Onna local government area of the state, Inyangeyen said the exercise conducted by PDP in the state is illegal and can not be considered as a democratic exercise.

Inyangeyen; a former Chief of Staff to Governor Udom Emmanuel said a group of aspirant has asked the leadership of PDP in the state to provide a plain level ground for all aspirants to contest and prove their popularity but the government of the refused because they are afraid to lost out in a free and fair competition.

"We approached the and injunction was granted against conduct of the exercise in the state. Because of the court order, I remain in my house today. I don't mind what they are doing today. I am a law abiding citizen. Whatever they are doing today, we would challenge it in court."

"We have asked our supporters to shun the primaries because it is conducted on illegality." he said

He predicted that All Progressive Congress Party(APC) will take over the state if PDP would



Gov. Udom Emmanuel

not adhere to electoral guidelines that regulate conduct of party primaries.

He said PDP could respect internal democracy and it may bring down the party in AKwa Ibom state.

Edo govt has no record of alleged Appeal Court attack'

By ISAAC OLAMIKAN

Edo State Government has said it has no record of an attack at the Court of Appeal in Benin City and the alleged kidnap of an unnamed lawyer, noting that the allegations are fabrications by detractors to serve their selfish ends.

In a statement, Secretary to the State Government(SSG), Osarodion Ogie Esq., said the state government or its agencies or officials have no record of the phantom 'invasion' of the Court of Appeal in the state.

According to him, "at the weekend, a section of the media reported an alleged invasion of the Court of Appeal in Benin City, stating that court processes were carted away and that an unnamed lawyer was kidnapped.

"Since then, certain parties have sought to suggest that the Edo State Government or its agents played a part in this alleged 'invasion'.

"The Edo State Government hereby states unequivocally that none of its agencies or officials has a record of this alleged incident, and neither did the government witness, let alone participate in the phantom attack."

He continued: "In order to prevent this obvious manufactured story from being taken as fact by all concerned, it may be necessary to restate the facts so that discerning members of the public will recognize the very cynical manipulation that is being attempted by malevolent political activists.

"Neither the Edo State Government nor any of its Ministries, Agencies and Departments (MDAs) or officials is a party to the suit regarding the selection of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) delegates pending at the High Court in Benin City and which matter has now proceeded to the Court of Appeal, also in Benin.

"Consequently, there is no basis whatsoever for the allegations that agents of the state were involved in any altercations at the courts that it so seriously reveres and protects."



Some participants at a workshop organized by the United States Consulate General for fashion designers in the Niger Delta.

Gender advocacy groups open Domestic Violence Clinic in Bayelsa

By AHERHOKE OKIOMA, Yenagoa

Gender advocacy groups, the Do Foundation International and the Hilarity World Foundation, have declared open a domestic Violence Clinic in Yenagoa, the Bayelsa State capital to provide Medical, legal and Psycho-socio support to victims of domestic and sexual violence.

According to the Founder of the Do Foundation, Barr. Dise Ogbise and the President of the Hilarity World Foundation, Miss Grace Ukpevie, the Domestic Violence Clinic is expected to also provide support to the victims of domestic violence through financial support and creation of a career and business

support in order to create means of livelihood after separation from their abusers.

The President of the Do Foundation International, Barr. Dise Ogbise, while speaking at the opening ceremony of the Domestic Violence Clinic tagged "Exposing Domestic Violence", expressed concern over the rising cases of domestic violence and noted that despite the worrisome trend the advocacy groups in the state are gaining grounds in the efforts to educate, intervene and stop the violence against women.

She also noted that the Domestic violence clinic will provide more avenue for victims to have access to advocacy groups instead of dying in silence during sexual

and domestic violence.

Also speaking, President of the Hilarity World Foundation, Miss Grace Ukpevie, pointed out that the domestic violence clinic is an online and mobile clinic for domestic violence victims and survivors, "the goal is to ease the stress survivors go through when seeking help."

Also speaking the Wives of the Chairman of the State Traditional Rulers Council, Queen Dakolo and Queen Tessy Diongoli expressed support towards the rising campaign against sexual and domestic violence, condemning situations where parents negotiate with violators in order to stop prosecution.

Other advocacy groups present at the occasion, including the

facilitator of the NBA Women Forum, Sagbama branch, Barr. Ebiere Ekpese, Member of the Gender Response Initiative Team(GRIT), Mrs. Blessing Komonibo, the Vice Chairman of the NUJ, Bayelsa Council, Judith Young, Chairperson of FIDA, Bayelsa, Deme Debra Pamosoo Esq ably represented by a former Fida Bayelsa Chairperson Pere Amanda Egbuson esq Executive Director of the Starrz Safety Initiative, Mary Accra Bekeowe, the International President of Do Foundation International, Boma Tonye Miebai Esq and the Chairperson of Do Foundation, Bayelsa, Ubodium Deghipulu and all declared their commitment to the campaign and the domestic violence clinic in the state.

Electoral Act: South-East PDP loses out

By CHARLES ONYEKWERE,
South-East Correspondent

Refusal of President Muhammadu Buhari to sign the amended Electoral Act has altered political permutations in the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP.

As it stands, without the President's signature, the act stipulates that only 811 people will be able to elect the Presidential candidate of the PDP as statutory delegates including the president, serving and former governors, and serving and former members of the National Assembly were excluded from voting at the national conventions. The 811 delegates would comprise of 774 national delegates (1 per LGA and 37 special delegates - people with disability from each of the 36 states and FCT).

The development has caused a total reshaping of permutations for the presidential candidates in the party with Senator Bukola Saraki, Governors Nyesom Wike and Aminu Tambuwal being boosted by the development. While Saraki has been boosted

by the endorsement of the North-Central zone of the PDP, Wike even though without an endorsement from the South-South, is, however, without a serious contender from the region and would be gladdened by the fact that he has a fewer number of delegates within and outside the zone to reach out to.

Tambuwal would also be gladdened by the fact that the North-West zone is presenting the highest number of delegates to the convention given the region's superior number of local governments. Tambuwal's room for manoeuvre, is however, tempered by incursions made into the zone by Wike and Saraki. The North-West has 186 national delegates more than double the 95 coming from the South-East, a region that has three major presidential aspirants, Peter Obi, Anyim Pius Anyim and entrepreneur, Pharm. Sam Ohabunwa.

The development means strong consequences for the South-East as the limited number of the national delegates available from the zone is now being split



President Muhammadu Buhari

Atiku is also being challenged by the fact that no governor is openly associating with him besides his home governor, Ahmadu Fintri, who according to political insiders sees it as an obligation or rather compulsion to support the former Vice-President. While the stalemate on the Electoral Act is like a catastrophe for the South-East as it removes the region's advantages in statutory delegates, it also at the same time presents the region's diminished Local Government Areas, 95.

All attention is now turned to the South-West, which presents only Ayo Fayose. This presents a lot of opportunity for Saraki, Wike and Atiku who already have strong appendages in the region. Saraki has maternal origin in the region and campaign officials are very hopeful of the support of delegates from Ondo where the campaign is fighting off the influence of Atiku who has entered the state through his long-time associate, Eyitayo Jegede.

The Wike campaign on its part is hopeful of mobilizing delegates through the only governor in the region, Seyi Makinde who is openly backing the Rivers State Governor. Ayodele Fayose who even though an aspirant is also believed to be working for Wike. The development has turned the South-West into the most contested zone.

PDP Enugu primaries peaceful'

By CHARLES ONYEKWERE,
South-East Correspondent

Electoral Committees from the National Working Committee (NWC) of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) for the conduct of the State House of Assembly (SHOA) and Federal House of Representatives (FHORs) Primary Elections in Enugu have expressed satisfaction with the exercises, describing them as peaceful, transparent and orderly.

The two electoral committees which gave their separate verdicts when they supervised the conduct of the primaries in the State, on Sunday, commended the Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi-led leadership

of the PDP in Enugu State for galvanizing the delegates in displaying utmost commitment, discipline and comportment during the peaceful exercises.

Speaking at Udenu Local Government Area, where Hon. Solomon Onah was unanimously elected as the Party's candidate for Udenu Constituency in the State House of Assembly, the Chairman of PDP National Electoral Committee, Barr. Uche Igboke, lauded the process of the primary election, expressing delight at the presence of the officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) at the event.

In Nsukka LGA, where the primary elections for Nsukka East

and Nsukka West constituencies were conducted, Barr. Igboke, on behalf of other members of the electoral committee, also commended the peaceful conduct of the exercise.

Led to the venue of the primary election by the State Deputy Chairman of the PDP, Hon. Innocent Ezeoha, and the State Organising Secretary, Dr. Christian Iyiani, the Committee applauded the delegates for their sincerity of purpose and decorum, expressing satisfaction with the electoral processes put in place by the State Working Committee of the party.

In Enugu East LGA, the SHOA Primary Election Committee, pointed out that "everything is going on peacefully", stressing that "We have gone to several LGAs and we have seen that everything is going on perfectly well in Enugu State".

They appreciated Gov. Ugwuanyi for his uncommon leadership role in Enugu State in particular and the PDP South East zone in general, revealing that the governor is the one that has kept state chapters of the party in the zone going.

Supervising the Federal House of Representatives Primary Elections in Enugu State, the National Electoral Committee led by Hon. Aminu Koko equally described the exercise in the State as peaceful, transparent and credible, maintaining that they were satisfied with the electoral process and convivial atmosphere.

among themselves and others poaching from outside. While Atiku looks formidable on the national scene, being the immediate past presidential candidate of the party, he has to grapple with Governor Bala Mohammed of Bauchi for the North-East's 112 national delegates.

APC will collapse if I emerge PDP's presidential candidate, says Tambuwal

By CHARLES ONYEKWERE,
South-East Correspondent

Sokoto State Governor and presidential aspirant on the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, Aminu Waziri Tambuwal, at the weekend, said the ruling All Progressives Congress, APC, will collapse if he emerges the presidential standard bearer of the opposition political grouping.

Tambuwal made this known while addressing stakeholders and delegates of the PDP in Ebonyi State during his consultation visit.

He lamented that the APC government led by President Muhammadu Buhari has increased Nigeria's problem to a greater percentage.

According to him: "By the grace of God, come May 29, 2023, PDP will take over the government house of Ebonyi State and the Aso-Rock Villa in Abuja.

"We want to win the election, and as such, we must remain united in Ebonyi and in Nigeria at large.

"We must nominate a candidate that knows the way. A candidate

that has the capacity, competency and the credibility to win election along with other leaders and members of the party in Ebonyi and in Nigeria in general.

"We need a president that understands the executives and will not be doing trial and error because we have no time, this is because the problems in Nigeria are too many, that the president must start work on May 30, 2023.

"We need a president that has good character and temperament, that will be able to unite all Nigerians. The South East has been damouring for the presidency of this country and it is the right thing to do," he stated.

Earlier in his remark, the PDP chairman in Ebonyi State, Barr. Silas Onu, assured that the delegates from the state will vote wisely, and will support any presidential aspirant that has good character and temperament to unite party members and Nigerians in general.

He lamented that there is increased hunger, suffering among citizens and threats to lives of PDP members in the state, allegedly orchestrated by the APC government in Ebonyi State led by David Umahi.



Gov. Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi

How UK court seized £2m cash linked to Nigeria's ex-Gen Useni

● *Accuses him of creating accounts to conceal proceeds of corruption* ● *Monies are gifts from friends, relatives, he claims*

BY PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

A Royal Court in Jersey Island, United Kingdom has reportedly seized about £2 million belonging to Lt Gen Jeremiah Useni (rtd), a former Minister of the Federal Capital Territory during the Gen Sani Abacha-led military administration.

The said sum, described by a Jersey Island publication, *Bailiwick Express*, as "dirty money transferred into local bank accounts by a Nigerian General and politician said to be corrupt dictator Sani Abacha's right-hand man," was allegedly transferred by Useni into four Standard Chartered Bank accounts on the Island.

Useni, the second most senior officer under the rule of General Abacha between 1993 and 1998, was said to have first opened an account in Jersey in 1986 in the name of 'Mr Tim Shani', who he later admitted did not exist and presented himself as the true account holder.

"Over the next 15 years, money totalling £1.9m was transferred into four accounts held by 'Mr Shani' with Standard Chartered Bank," the publication stated.

It added, "In 2001, the bank wrote to Gen Useni - believing him to be 'Mr Shani' - informing him that changes to anti-money laundering legislation in Jersey had resulted in stricter regulations, including the need to have a certified copy of his passport.

"In response, six months later, 'Mr Shani' requested that the entire balance in his existing accounts be transferred to a Nigerian bank, in which it transpires that Gen. Useni was a shareholder.

"This request was rejected, and in February 2003, the bank was refused permission to operate the accounts by the police's Joint Financial Crimes Unit.

"There followed several attempts by Gen Useni's lawyer to unfreeze the accounts and, in 2007, Gen Useni finally identified himself as the true owner of the accounts.

"Giving his occupation as 'Lieutenant-General', he informed Standard Chartered that the main source of his wealth was derived from the profits of his multiple businesses, which included transportation, hotel hospitality, petrol stations, personal savings and property investment.

"He said the reason for opening a Jersey-based account was for 'security' as it was 'necessary to hold a proportion of wealth outside of Nigeria'.

"However, the bank asked Gen Useni to explain the source of the money and why he had transferred it to the accounts, as well as 'supporting documentation to back up the provenance of the funds' and a full explanation as to why the account was originally opened up under a different name."

Bailiwick Express said although in correspondence the following year Gen Useni said he dealt in property investment where he sold some and put some in rent and owned a shopping centre, two petrol stations and a domestic gas station, a farm and a rice mill, he provided no information about his income in the 1980s and 1990s.

The publication stated, "He (Useni) added that he had not set up the original account in a false name, rather he had used a 'coded password name' as advised by the person who had set it up on his behalf.

"However, he did not explain why he had used 'Tim Shani', with Jersey's Attorney General concluding that he did so to further distance himself from the ownership of assets that had a likely criminal origin.

"In a judgment handed down this



ex-Gen Useni

morning setting out its decision to order the transfer of the £2m into the island's Criminal Offences Confiscation Fund', the Royal Court said, 'The Attorney General believes that the Shani accounts were created to hold, hide and conceal bribes or other proceeds of corruption received by Useni during the period he held office.

"The payments into the Shani accounts were more likely than not for the purposes or on account of exercising political influence over the award of lucrative contracts to foreign and Nigerian companies for the supply of industrial or commercial services in Nigeria.

"If this conduct had occurred in Jersey, it would have constituted the customary law offence of misconduct in a public office."

The report added that through a

Jersey-based lawyer, Gen Useni fought but failed to prevent the seizure.

He was also said to have explained the source of the funds in a written affidavit as follows: "In accordance with a culture of gift-giving in Nigeria, which is still accepted practice in Nigeria, government officials from time to time receive cash gifts from friends and well-wishers during festive seasons.

"These acts are similar to gifts being provided by Members of Parliament in England or corporate gifts being provided to directors/employees.

"The culture needs to be looked at in the context of when I was a government official, and at that material time, save there being a culture of gift-giving, there was no official code of conduct governing the issue.

"This could also be said to be true for the western governments, from what I know, so Nigeria should not be chastised or criticised for this."

Explaining the use of the name of a fictitious person to set up the original account, Useni reportedly said, "The primary reason for this again was nothing sinister, but for my protection. As you will understand from reviewing Nigeria's history, it has had several coups, and we are now in our fifth republic.

"The governmental regimes are unstable, and if rulers came into the office who are not friendly to my political persuasion, my wealth and safety could be on the line."

He reportedly added that the money constituted savings for his retirement and there had not been a code of conduct in place in Nigeria at the time obliging him to declare it.

However, the Royal Court was not convinced by his explanations.

It said, "Essentially, (Gen Useni's) case is that the source of the substantial sums paid into the bank accounts is cash gifts from friends, relatives and well-wishers on festive and other ceremonial occasions in accordance with Nigerian custom, but in the view of the Court, it is simply not credible that friends, relatives and well-wishers would make gifts to (Gen Useni), as a public official, of such magnitude to allow him not only to accumulate millions in these bank accounts, but to acquire the very substantial assets he said he owned in Nigeria.

"It is an explanation that verges on the absurd."

It also found that there had been a code of conduct for public officials in place in Nigeria well before substantial amounts were paid into the Jersey accounts.

It concluded, "The affidavits of [Gen Useni] have not satisfied the Court that the property held in the bank accounts is not tainted property and on the application of the Attorney General, we will make a Forfeiture Order in relation to that property."

The Court reportedly ordered that £45,000 be taken out of the amount seized to pay Standard Chartered Bank's legal costs.

In 2020, Jersey returned more than £230m of money to Nigeria which had been laundered through the United States and the island by Gen. Abacha.

EFCC releases former speaker, Etteh over alleged N130m fraud

BY PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) has announced the release of a former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Patricia Etteh, after fulfilling her bail conditions in an alleged N130 million fraud saga.

According to the Commission on Saturday in a statement by its spokesperson, Wilson Uwujaren, the former speaker was released on Friday, adding that she will be reporting periodically for further questioning.

"Former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mrs Patricia Olubunmi Etteh, detained by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC on suspicious and shady financial involvement with Phil Jin Projects Limited, has been released by the Commission.

"She was released on Friday, May 20, 2022, upon fulfilling bail conditions offered her by investigators working on her matter. She is to report periodically to assist further investigations," the statement said.

Etteh, who was Speaker between June 6, 2007, and October 30, 2007, was arrested in Abuja on Tuesday by operatives of the



Patricia Olubunmi Etteh

Special Duty Unit of the anti-graft agency, sources familiar with the matter said.

The former lawmaker is currently being interrogated for allegedly receiving a suspicious N130 million payment from a contractor that the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) awarded a solar-powered electrification project in Akwa Ibom State.

The said contract was awarded to a certain Phin Jin Project Limited in 2011 for N240 million. It is unclear if the company is registered with Nigeria's Corporate Affairs Commission. A search of its name on the CAC online directory did not show any update.

Investigators said weeks after the contractor was paid the mobilisation fee for the project, N130 million was transferred to Etteh, who is neither a director nor a shareholder of the company on record.

"The payment of that huge amount to her is suspicious," one source said.

"She is claiming that the contractor repaid a debt due to her but that is doubtful. So her claims are being scrutinised.

"They even overpaid for the contract. Instead of N240 million, they paid N287 million. These are knotty issues she and the contractor need to explain and that is why she is being interrogated by operatives," the source added.

"It is uncertain that the contract was delivered. Its exact status has not been determined but we feel that no magic would have made the contract to be delivered or executed to specification after Etteh was given that huge amount from the contract sum," another source said.

CMS girls' alumnae hold 42nd anniversary, task females on building purposeful future

By **BENJAMIN OMOIKE**, METRO EDITOR/LAGOS BUREAU CHIEF

Young girls in secondary schools and females in general - in the academic environment - have been challenged to remain focused and ensure that they build and maintain a purposeful future that will allow them stand out as leaders of tomorrow.

The admonition was given at the 42nd Anniversary celebration of the CMS Girl's Grammar School Akoka, Bariga, Lagos, with the theme: 'Strengthening The Bond: Past, Present And Future'.

The event, which held on Saturday, May 21, 2022, brought together all past graduate students of the school from 1985 to 2020, and equally served as a platform to reunite the former students with their old principals and teachers; both serving and retired.

Speaking at the event, the National President, CMS Girl's Grammar School Akoka Alumnae Association, Mrs. Adeola Adetugbobo, explained that education is the passport to the future and every necessary arrangement must be made to get prepared for the tasks ahead.

Adetugbobo said that a conducive learning atmosphere

is one of the key ingredients to improving quality education and such provision is sacrosanct within the academic environment.

"Because we know benefits of providing a good atmosphere of learning and to augment the existing infrastructure of the school, today, as part of our mission, we will be donating 100 chairs and desks for the classrooms, as part of our gift to our beloved Alma Mater.

"To the young, charming, brilliant, focused girls and ladies out there, I urge you to devote all your time and energy to your studies, to sustain the academic excellence for which CMS Girls is known. Remember to always keep your face towards the sunshine, and with time, shadows will face behind you.

"You must always be of good character, both at school and at home, even as you uphold the legendary high moral values of our school, as good ambassadors. Remember, you are the future of this school, and will in the course of time, take the baton of leadership. Therefore, follow your dream and pursue your vision with purpose and tenacity. A positive mindset brings positive things," she said.



School remains shut after pupil, 5, drowns during swimming lesson, police step in

By **ALEX OLISE**

Management of Redeemers Nursery and Primary School in Ogba, Lagos state, has suspended activities after Chidera Eze, its five year-old pupil, reportedly drowned during a swimming session, even as the Lagos State Police Command have started investigating the incident.

The late Chidera Eze was said to have drowned during a swimming lesson

organised by the school at the Ivory Health Club in the Ikeja axis of the state.

The deceased and his colleagues were said to have been playing close to the pool during the training when he suddenly slipped into it.

When The Trumpet visited the school on Friday, no student was seen within the premises, while suspicion enveloped the atmosphere.

Some security men at the school gate told The

Trumpet that all school activities had been suspended since the incident happened.

Anthony, the pupil's father, had earlier alleged that the school's officials neglected his son, resulting in his death.

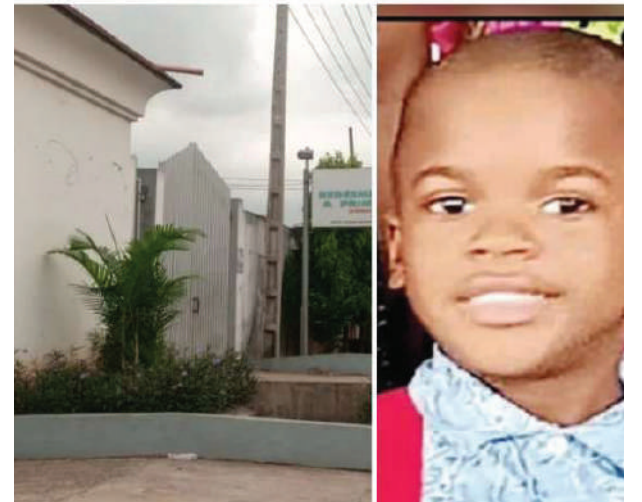
"All these happened and none of the teachers, caregivers and lifeguards took notice of what was happening," he had said.

"My son was under the water for over 30 minutes and we were all shouting

as we watched the video. Another pupil also fell into the water, but her colleagues raised the alarm and they pulled her out and while this was going on, nobody noticed my son was inside the water."

At the time of this report, the school was yet to react to the matter.

Police authorities at Area G, Ogba, Lagos Command told The Trumpet that they were investigating the incident.



Again, four-storey building collapses in Lagos, four feared dead

By **BENJAMIN OMOIKE**

A four-storey building has, again, collapsed in Lagos.

Giving a final report on the incident in a release signed by the Public Affairs Officer of Lagos State Emergency Management Agency, LASEMA, Nosa Okunbor, it stated that: "The incident occurred on Saturday, May 21. The building was located at no 4, Alayaki Lane, Lagos Island.

"After several hours of intense overnight Search and Rescue Operation coordinated by the PS LASEMA, Dr. Oluwafemi Oke-Osanyintolu and combined efforts of three LASEMA Response Teams from Lekki, Cappa and the Alausa Command Control Center (C3), a total of five adult males were rescued

(alive) and taken to nearest hospitals for further treatment.

"However, four adult males were recovered (dead), bagged and handed over to officials of the State Environmental Health Monitoring Unit, SEHMU, to be processed further after being deposited at the mortuary.

"Remains of the self-collapsed four floor building was then taken down to ground zero by the Agency with the use of it's heavy duty equipment-the Excavator, thereby eliminating any further threat to lives and all other proximal properties.

"Other primary responders present includes the LASAMBUS, LASG Fire Service, LABCA, SEHMU, Federal Fire Service, NEMA, Red Cross, LNSC and NPF," the release read.

2023: Catholic church suspends priest for joining guber race



The Catholic Diocese of Gboko in Benue State has suspended a priest, Rev Fr Hyacinth Alia, for joining the governorship race in the state.

Alia had picked up the N50m governorship form of the All Progressives Congress and had been cleared by the ruling party to participate alongside 11 successful aspirants in the party's primary.

But the Bishop, Catholic Diocese of Gboko, William Avenya, in a letter dated May 20, 2022, announced the suspension of Alia from public ministry "after series of admonitions" to him.

Avenya noted in a letter that "the Mother Church does not allow her clerics to get involved in partisan politics on their own"

The letter partly read, "I write to communicate to you the suspension of my priest,

Revd. Fr. Hyacinth Iormem Alia from public ministry after series of admonitions to him.

"The Mother Church does not allow her clerics to get involved in partisan politics on their own.

"You are aware that my son, your brother and your priest has purchased the party forms to contest for the Office of the Governor of Benue State under the All Progressives' Congress, which is totally against our vocation.

"Therefore, to respond to the spiritual and pastoral needs of the Church in the Catholic Diocese of Gboko, I have suspended him from the exercise of sacred ministry.

"This canonical suspension takes effect from the moment it is communicated to him and lasts until he ceases from contumacy."

Communiqué of southern and middle belt leaders' forum, held in Abuja recently



Chief Edwin Clark



Chief Ayo Adebajo



Prof. George Obiozor



Dr. Pogu Bitrus

A Meeting of the Southern and Middle Belt Leaders' Forum (SMBLF) was held on Thursday, 19th May 2022, in Abuja under the Chairmanship of the Leader and Elder Statesman, Chief Dr. E. K. Clark, OFR, CON.

2. Delegations of the constituent Organisations of SMBLF were respectively led by Chief Ayo Adebajo, Leader of Afenifere (South West); Professor George Obiozor, President-General, Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide (South East); His Excellency, Air Commodore Dan Suleiman (Rtd.), Leader and Dr. Pogu Bitrus, President, Middle Belt Forum (Middle Belt); as well as Senator Emmanuel Ibok Essien, FNSE, National Chairman, Pan Niger Delta Forum, PANDEF (South-South).

3. The Meeting was also attended by former Governors, Ministers, Federal and State legislators, top politicians and professionals from the Southern and Middle Belt regions, including His Excellency, Chief Cornelius Adebayo, His Excellency, Dr. Chukwuemeka Ezeife, Oba Oladipo Olaitan - Deputy Leader Afenifere, Potter L. Dabup, D.I.G (Rtd.), Chief John Nnia Nwodo, former Minister of Information & former PG Ohanaeze Ndigbo, Professor Ihechukwu Madubuike, former Minister of Education and Health, Professor Anya O. Anya, Chief Gary Igwariwey, former PG Ohanaeze Ndigbo, Ambassador Okey Emuchay, MFR, Secretary-General Ohanaeze Ndigbo, HRH Eze Cletus Iluomanya, Chief Dr. Simon Okeke, former Chairman of Police Service Commission, Professor G. G. Darah, Senator Inatimi Rufus-Spiff, Solomon Asemota, SAN, Chief Mike Ozekhome, SAN, OFR, Ambassador Eddy Onuoha, Ambassador Humphrey Ojiako, Ambassador Ozo Nwobu, Chief Supo Shonibare, Chief Edozie Ezeugwa, Eze Dr. Ibe Nwosu, Nze Ozichukwu Chukwu, Professor Charles Nwekeaku, Chief Hon. Olivia Agbajoh, Dr. Alex Ogbonna, Comrade Jare Ajayi, Hon. Keftin Amuga, CP Iorbes Ihagh (Rtd)- PG MUT, Dr. Mrs. Esther Mangzha, Mrs. Beatrice Eze, National Treasurer Ohanaeze Ndigbo, Mrs. Elizabeth A. Jibrin, Chief Mrs. Chika Ibeneme, Elder Mac Emakpore, Chief Douyi Douglas-Naingba, Chief Ominimini Obiwevbi, Mogaji Gboyega Adejumo, Engr. Ben Akaakar, Dele Farotimi, Dr. Katch Ononuju, Debrah Ogazuwa, Olutola Mobolurin, Christopher Aba,

Audu Samuel Riko, Hon. Jonathan Tsaku, Joshua Bawa, Akwa Jeremiah and Ken Robinson, among others.

4. The Meeting deliberated extensively on the State of Nation, particularly the worsening insecurity; the 2023 General Elections; and recent troubling developments in the polity.

5. Arising therefrom, the Forum:

i. Firmly reiterates its stance on the Principle of Zoning and Power Rotation between the North and the South, as the basis on which the Nigerian Federation has, since Independence, been premised.

ii. States, unequivocally, that the Zoning and Rotation of the Presidency of Nigeria are fundamental to the future existence of the Country.

iii. Accordingly, condemns, in strongest terms, obvious schemes by the two main political parties, the PDP and APC, ahead of their Presidential Primaries, to jettison the time-honoured principle of Rotation, which has traditionally served as the glue holding the Federal Republic of Nigeria together.

iv. Warns that the reported permutations by the main political parties to foist Northern Presidential Candidates on the nation would be a grave misadventure, with grim consequences on national concord and harmony.

v. Therefore, calls on all delegates of all political parties, and true lovers of democracy, as a sacred obligation, to reject Presidential Aspirants, or Candidates, from the North, and only vote for those from the South in the Party Primaries.

vi. Calls on all politicians and professionals from the South not to accept, on any account, the position of Vice President, as that would amount to a shameful committal of present and future generations of Southern Nigeria to senseless political vassalage.

vii. Further insists that, in observance of the principles of justice, equity, fairness and political inclusiveness, the South, and particularly, the South East Zone, being the third leg on which Nigeria's political trajectory had revolved, should produce the next President of the Country in 2023. Insists that this would bring the Igbo quest for full reintegration and reconciliation, since the end of the Civil War in 1970, to full realisation.

viii. SMBLF commends a number of northern governors who have demonstrated great patriotism by their public support for the rotation of the presidency to the South; to name a few,

Malam Nasir El-Rufai of Kaduna State, Aminu Bello Masari of Katsina State, Babagana Umara Zulum of Borno State, and Abdullahi Umar Ganduje, OFR of Kano State. While equally urging other well-meaning northern leaders, who believe in the oneness of Nigeria, to support this cause, because therein lies the unity and progress of Nigeria.

ix. On the worsening state of insecurity and rampaging violence across the country, Forum warns that Nigeria is plummeting into a state of total disorder and lawlessness, with attacks on innocent people resulting in kidnapping, loss of lives and destruction of properties happening in different parts of the country almost daily.

Sadly, the Federal Government and its Security Agencies are not doing enough to arrest the situation, whereby people can no longer travel safely either by road, rail or even by air to Kaduna State in particular.

It is not only frightening but unimaginable that despite the heavy presence of military commands and installations in the State there could be such security challenges.

Cites the bombing of the Kaduna-Abuja bound train over 60 days ago as well as the brazen attack on motorists on the Abuja-Kaduna Road about two days ago. On both occasions, innocent lives were lost while several people were wounded with many abducted. Undesirably, most of those who were kidnapped are still in the terrorists' captivity after 60 days.

x. Forum condemns, in unmistakable terms, the killing of Miss Deborah Samuel Yakubu, a student of the College of Education, Sokoto, by her Muslim schoolmates and the wild spread of violence that engulfed the state, following the arrest of two of her killers. Denounces the worrisome disregard for the inviolability of human life by terrorists, criminals and religious extremists in the country.

xi. Likewise, strongly condemns the recent burning to death of a young man, a Sound Engineer, by commercial motorcyclists in Lagos, as well as the spree of killings and wanton destruction of properties and businesses owned by Southerners, particularly the occurrence, few days, at Dei Dei Market in Abuja.

xii. Decries the unabating killings and destruction of livelihoods in the Middle Belt Region, especially

in Southern Kaduna, Southern Borno, Southern Gombe, Benue, Taraba, etc, and the inaction of the Federal Government to live up to its Constitutional responsibility of safeguarding the lives and properties of its citizens.

xiii. Classifies these killings and pervasive acts of aggression on the indigenous people, being perpetrated by elements of Islamic Extremism and Terrorists, as cultural genocide and ethnic cleansing. The Meeting cautions that these bellicosity and deliberate programs to exterminate the indigenous populations of the Middle Belt are, by implication, acts of aggression against the rest of Nigeria, and would not be tolerated any further.

xiv. Deplores the inhuman plight of the 1,700 indigenous people of Southern Kaduna driven out of their homes and have now become Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) for over five years as well as several other Internally Displaced Persons in different parts of the country, left to live in conditions that impinge on their human rights as citizens of this Country. Hence, calls on the Federal Government to, without delay, facilitate the return and reintegration of these Nigerians into their Communities.

5. The Meeting resolved to resist, through all legitimate means, the barefaced attempts by religious fundamentalists to impose on the rest of us, a Nigeria of "one country, different laws".

6. The Meeting reaffirmed the commitment of the people of Southern Nigeria and the Middle Belt to the RESTRUCTURING of the Country, in tandem with the Principles of True Federalism, as was established by the Founding Fathers of Nigeria.

7. Done in Abuja, this 19th day of May, 2022.

Signed:

1. Chief (Dr.) Edwin Kiagbodo Clark, OFR, CON.

Leader

2. Chief Ayo Adebajo

Leader, Afenifere

3. Dr. Pogu Bitrus

President-General, Middle Belt Forum

4. Professor George Obiozor,

President-General, Ohanaeze Ndigbo

Worldwide

5. Senator Emmanuel Ibok Essien, FNSE, National Chairman, PANDEF

APC and PDP set to dump power rotation?

There are indications that Nigeria's two leading political parties APC and PDP may dump power rotation in the 2023 general elections. Both parties have thrown their presidential slots open to politicians from all the regions in the country, a move that has reinforced the notion that both parties are steeped in caprice. Many Nigerians are shocked at this development given that there has been an unspoken, even if unwritten understanding that power should be rotated between the South and North to ease tensions.

President Muhammadu Buhari has been in power for seven years and barring any developments, he will be in power for eight years. During his tenure, it is believed that he has favoured the North in what seems like a primitive rehearsal of nepotistic predilections.

Given that Nigeria seems to be at a crossroads with all the arising ethnic tensions and distrusts in the polity, zoning, which will see power rotate to the South, is the best option for the country. There are fears in the South that the North has monopolized power to the marginalization of the South. In the spirit of equity and fair play, power rotation in Nigeria is not only desirable but necessary to assuage general feelings of alienation across the South. Before this period, it was believed that the South-East deserved to produce the next president of the country, a move which will give the region a sense of belonging and perhaps, stop all the agitations for a separate country. The decision by the two leading political parties to do away with zoning will further fan the embers of agitation in the South-East and promote further blood-letting and criminal activities.

Nigeria must work out an arrangement that would ensure peace and assuage bruised feelings across the country. Advanced democracies in the world have evolved

through a workable and practical political arrangement that is convenient for all their regions. In Nigeria, the quota system was worked out as a mechanism to achieve balance in schools' admission and recruitment into various security outfits in the country. The greatest beneficiary of the quota system is the North. Although the quota system has continued to stifle merit and excellence, it is somewhat enshrined in Nigeria's Constitution. Despite the entrenchment of the quota system in Nigeria, there are still abysmal gaps in education excellence and growth in terms of career development.

The political class should not deliberately cause an implosion in the country through acts of omission and commission. The unwritten

arrangement and understanding of power rotation should be respected. Following MKO Abiola's death, Nigerians agreed that the South-West deserved to be assuaged. Therefore, power was zoned to the region which saw the emergence of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as President in 1999. It is fair to say that Obasanjo's emergence saved Nigeria from tipping over the abyss of imminent civil unrest that could have snowballed into a war.

The desirability of power rotation in a heterogeneous federation like Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized. It will amount to the highest level of insensitivity if a Northerner emerges as a presidential flag bearer of any of the leading political parties in 2023. In the current dispensation, Nigeria needs a president from the South, especially the South-East. Any person of good intentions would agree that since the end of the civil war, the South-East has not been properly integrated into the Nigerian polity given its size and contributions to the growth of the country. That sort of bias against the region has fuelled agitations for a separate country called Biafra. It will be in the interest of the whole country that the two political parties, APC and PDP adopt power rotation that will see them zone their presidential slots to the South-East.

It will be foolhardy for the Nigerian political class to pretend that power rotation is not necessary now. To continue to exclude or deny any ethnic group the opportunity to hold power at the centre is to advance the narrative that One Nigeria is a mirage. Nobody in Nigeria is more Nigerian than the next person. The political class must steer the country away from the precarious precipice on which it delicately hangs. To pretend that all is well while some sections of the country are summarily imploding is to demonstrate an insensitive behaviour which is at cross-purposes with democratic culture.



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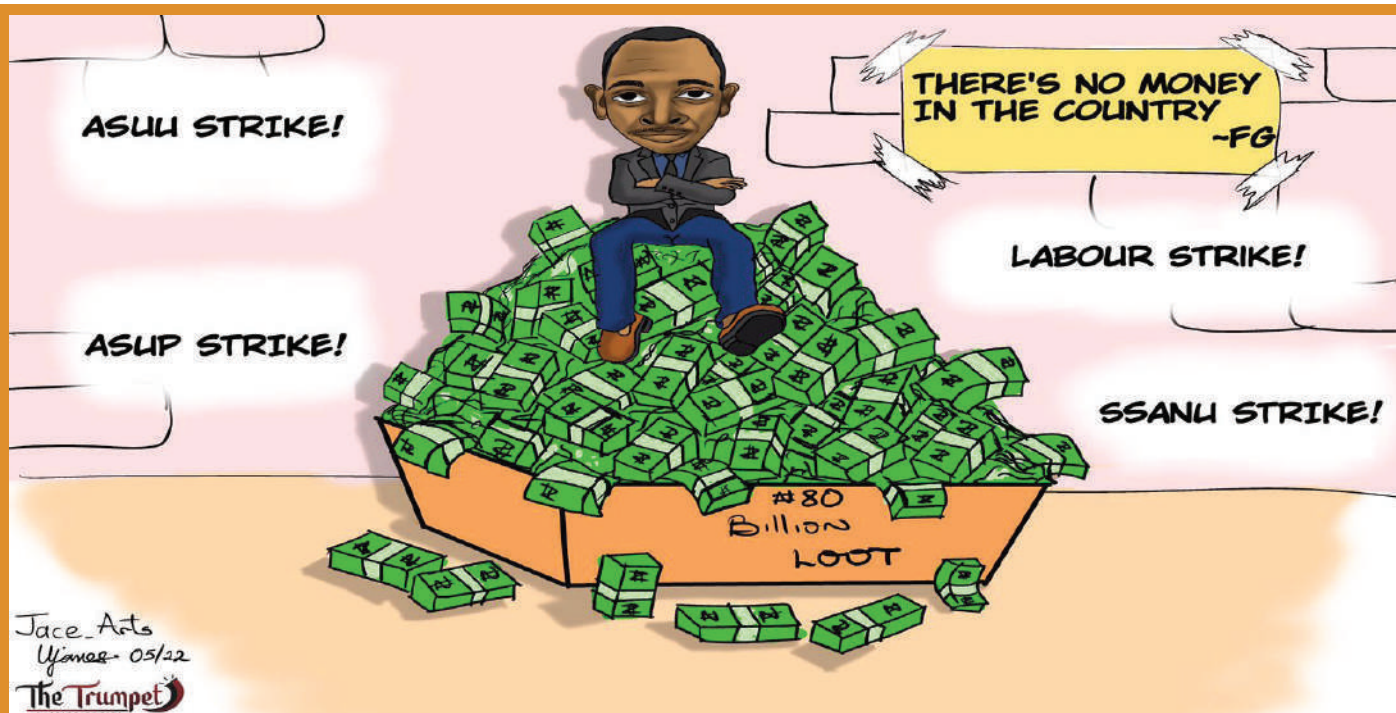
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Jokers in Power!

The rulers of Nigeria are jokers. Not comedians. Comedians can and often do positive things. Jokers don't; they can't. Ali Baba, Gordons, I go dye, Basket Mouth and Okey Bakassi could make you laugh, shed tears, and forget your sorrows. Of course, you would feel good after the dose of comedy. Besides, an erstwhile comedian in Ukraine has taught the world how to govern, how to be tenacious, to be inspiring, both at peace time and when a country is at war. He has become a hero overnight. He will never be forgotten in the story of resistance. He did not flee the country to deliver speeches from exile. He stood like a soldier.

I am very sure that if Boko Haram miscreants were to attack Abuja, all the jokers masquerading as rulers would scamper out of Nigeria, away to Europe and America, perhaps disguised as persons of the opposite sex! Already, several of them cannot visit their hometowns and villages. The other day, those scoundrels attacked the home state of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria and kidnapped a traditional ruler!

Abuja is a composition of jokers in the corridors of power. They may look serious. But they are indeed jokers. They are joking with the destiny and lives of millions of hapless citizens. I wonder if Aliko Dangote or Tony Elu-

melu or Femi Otedola would agree to hire those jokers as managers in their businesses! Certainly, a serious business concern like MTN will not hire these jokers to conduct business on their behalf. A joker is 'someone who likes telling funny stories or doing stupid things to make people laugh!' How many of us watched the Frank Spencer serial? Frank was the joker in the comedy 'Some Mothers Do have Them! Did I get the title right? Some countries do have them, can be used to develop a Sitcom of how Nigeria has wobbled in the last eight years! A joker could also refer to a 'person who has done something that annoys you! As we all know, jokers are not to be taken seriously. Achebe refers to them as 'efulefu!

Today I am going to play the joker by describing the jokes and jokers who bought Expression of Interest Forms in PDP and APC. The first joke was the cost of the form, fixed by a government that rode into power on the anti-corruption horseback! A whopping one hundred million naira! Someone did a quick math and concluded that the salary of the President for eight years will not sum up to one hundred million. We all thought it was a joke, we thought that only a few persons would cough out that amount of money to buy a worthless sheet of value, whose value was ascribed than earned. Alas, the joke was on us! A long

queue soon grew from the ashes of greed and infantile optimism. Some who could not manage a Ministry opened loud mouths to proclaim aspiration to the Presidency. Labour and Productivity and Education ministers wanted to be President though under their watch all federal universities had been shut down for three months! In their wild thinking if a man as competent, sagacious, purpose-driven, healthy as the incumbent could ruin the country, who would doubt their own skills and energy since they did not spend weeks or months in London hospitals! So, our beloved President, Technical Conqueror of Boko Haram was their model.

Serving Ministers and a few legislators all filed out to ogle the national pie. Soon, it became clear that what the aspirants had fallen into was a bazaar to build a war chest for the forthcoming elections. The Executive branch of government attempted to scuttle the provision in the Electoral Act that could have made aspirants remain in office while jostling for power they know will not get to them! It failed. The greatest joker of them all was the CBN Governor! This man has been the only CBN governor to get a second term in the last thirty or so years. Not satisfied, while sitting atop the affairs of CBN he thought he could meddle into politics. Having exposed himself a card-carrying APC

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member he is the biggest joker of then all!

But the Joker was on them. After collecting osusu of one hundred million naira each, Baba Aso Rock told them to resign. See the rash of withdrawals! Including the controversial Attorney-General and Minister of Justice who had bought luxury cars for delegates and other political persons in his home state. He had set his eyes on Government House in Birnin Kebbi. Alas, he has had to shelve his dream.

While the APC hierarchy was dancing naked in the public square, PDP was swimming in a pool of self-delusion. It was announced that the man who flew PDP flag in 2015 had teleported to APC, and that Miyetti Allah had bought forms for him! He denied it. News came that he is still in PDP. Right now, Oga Joe escapes classification. PDP had preached zoning the Presidency to the south as a policy. Now, there is pussyfooting. The policy has somersaulted like a man struck with the notorious love juju 'magun' and opened the presidency for anybody! The price tag

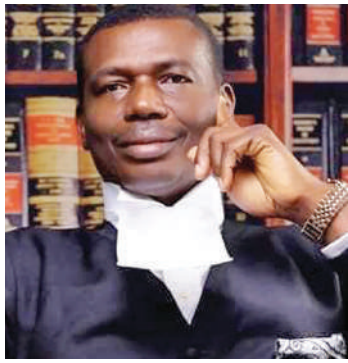
of Expression of Interest form was not as high as that of APC. You know, being outside government, they are not privy to the contents of the national honeypot. Yet, these are jokers? How did we land in this hot stew with fires as hot as hot can be?

How can anybody take these fellows, including their oga, seriously? The young people are watching askance at the men and women dancing in the public square. These are people who cannot manage a firm of three persons, now entrusted with the destiny of millions!

Sadly, these jokers are not making us laugh. They are making buckets of tears for millions of families. Let us tell them that the circus show should end. A new spirit should come down. To be sure, the jokers will not part with power without a fight. So, those who want the jokers out of power must rise to the occasion and use the ballot box to chase the baldheads of town!

•Professor Eghagha is a member of The Trumpet's Editorial Board

**Ebun-Olu
ADEGBORUWA**



There is need for genuine reconciliation in this matter.

The criminal charge of Criminal Conspiracy and Inciting Public Disturbance as framed by the Sokoto State Government against hardened murderers is an insult to the sensibilities of the parents of the deceased, the people of Nigeria and God who created Deborah.

This crime took place in an enlightened environment in a higher institution, under the watch of security men, who were said to have been overpowered.

It all started from a WhatsApp group, which has identified leaders. There are students who sent messages and threats of death on that platform. Their phone numbers are registered with NIN

identification. They belong to a class in the school so they are known individuals.

Images of persons who openly and boastfully confessed of partaking in the murder abound, with one displaying the match stick with which the deceased was set ablaze.

The government of Sokoto State has by these charges shown itself complicit in this whole drama and it is most unfortunate, for a State that is headed by a lawyer, a former Speaker of the House of Representatives and who is aspiring to rule Nigeria as its President.

It is most uncharitable of His Excellency to have condoned this baseless charge. It is

better to set the suspects free rather than claim to try them.

The aftermath of this gruesome murder, the watery charges filed and the consenting attitude of those concerned have depressed me more than the act itself.

Nigeria cannot work this way at all. I'm truly saddened by this development.

I expected Governor as Visitor to that school to have visited the parents of the deceased, who trusted the authorities and sent their ward to school from Niger to Sokoto State, in furtherance of the mantra of a United Nigeria.

If the impression we get with all these charges is that the State itself endorsed the

murder of the deceased, then we are sowing the seeds of discord and fragmentation.

The political ambition of Governor Aminu Tambuwal should not override the life of a citizen entrusted to his care but who was murdered in cold blood. It is better for His Excellency to resign now, rather than go down in history as the Governor under whose watch a citizen was murdered and the Governor could not enforce the laws of the land but rather aided and abetted its cover up.

It is Governor Tambuwal who is actually on trial in this case.

•Adegboruwa, SAN wrote from Lekki, Lagos.

Conspiracy in Sokoto

Osinbajo: Dishonest thesis

By AJIBOLA BASHIRU

I read with deep interest an article published by my predecessor in the Senate as the representative of Osun Central Senatorial District, Senator Professor Sola Adeyeye. I believe the description of him at the foot of the article as “the Senator for Osun Central in the National Assembly” is clearly erroneous as since June 2019, I have been representing Osun Central Senatorial District in the Senate Chamber of the National Assembly. Nonetheless, I find it curious that a news organ will not know that the Spokesperson of the Senate is the Senator representing Osun Central Senatorial District. The central thesis of Senator Adeyeye is that Professor Yemi Osinbajo is the preferred aspirant of President Muhammadu Buhari of the account of what he considered to be the loyalty of Professor Yemi Osinbajo to the President and alleged inadequacies of other aspirants particularly Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu. In pursuing this thesis for which he is apparently expressing the eventual triumph of Professor Osinbajo, he predicated his thesis on the following contentions: that a person can only attain the office of the President if he is supported by those he referred to as the establishment; that religion has almost nil relevance ultimately in the Nigeria political context; that the President was referring to Professor Osinbajo when he answered the question on who is the favourite among the aspirants in a live television interview; that President Buhari will anoint Professor Osinbajo as appreciation of the later’s loyalty; that most Buhari’s men are against Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu; and of course making defamatory and denigrating remarks against Asiwaju Tinubu. The Theory of Establishment as the only route to the Presidency appears to be the typification of



Osinbajo

Nigerian democracy by the writer. Senator Adeyeye asserted and I think rather firmly that “if the establishment does not want you, you can never win the presidency”. I am at a loss to see the factual and empirical basis for this assertion in view of the recent political history of Nigeria that saw President Buhari dislodging an incumbent President and a political party that has controlled the Presidency for about 16 years before the 2015 electoral loss.

Which establishment want President Buhari and the APC in 2015. I see here a clear attempt to use a banal assertion to becloud the spirited efforts of the coalition that ripened to the APC and the struggle of our leaders like President Buhari, Chief Bisi Akande, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Chief Ogbonnaya Onu among others that ensure the presidency of

the APC against all odds. Perhaps, Segun Adeniyis’s title “Against the Run of Play” comes to mind. Another banal assertion by the Distinguished Senator id that “religion as a factor in Nigerian political outcomes is overrated, especially at the national level.” Beyond this mere assertion, I am yet to see the empirical study that support the assertion. His further assertion that “when it matters, realpolitik always trumps religion” leaves the gaping questions of “when realpolitik matter?” and “who determines when realpolitik matters?”. I see in the assertion an overly dangerous assumption that mass of the people and their opinions can be easily discounted in a democratic polity. To dismiss with a stroke of pen the possible effects of religion in a largely traditional society like ours in democratic choices is far from being profound. Is the Senator oblivious of the fact that Professor Yemi Osinbajo became Vice President in 2105 largely due to the orchestrated campaign again a Muslim/Muslim ticket because President Buhari was perceived to be an Islamic extremist and hence the party needed a Pastor from the South West to unsure the candidacy is sellable to the southerners? My sense in reading the article is that people are outrightly discounted in our democratic enterprise, what matters from his theory is the predisposition of what he termed the “establishment”. Therefore, the mission for the Distinguished Senator is simple, market the aspiration of Professor Osinbajo and make disparaging and even outright defamatory assertions against other aspirants, particularly Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, to curry the favour, nay the endorsement of “the establishment” for his aspirant. I indeed find very interesting that the Senator readily asserted with apparent finality “that Nigeria is not a land of political revolution.” These are indeed very interesting

times! According to Professor Adeyeye, “If the North thought Osinbajo is a problem on religious grounds, he wouldn’t have been accepted as the vice president to a Buhari as president”. So, we are being told that it is the “North” that accepted Osinbajo as the Vice-President? Are we being taken on a journey of amnesia on how Professor Osinbajo became the Vice President by mere assertion and deliberate distortion?

So, it is the “Northern establishment” that suo motu “notice(d) the genius behind the string of legal victories – Professor Yemi Osinbajo” and his emergence is not part of the negotiated political arrangements with our party Leaders in the South West after the victory of the All Progressives Congress (APC)? While, I am not denying the astuteness of Professor Osinbajo as a legal scholar, to simply attribute his emergence as the Vice President to being “noticed” by the “Northern establishment” as a “genius” is to distort and deliberately falsify political development and history we all know and partook in. The writer is obviously claiming to have conducted census of the President Buhari’s foot soldiers against Asiwaju Bola Tinubu as he claimed “let him name one Buhari foot soldier in Tinubu’s camp and I will name a hundred that are not there”. Perhaps he can oblige the public with result of his census of anti Tinubu Buhari foot soldiers to back his assertions! In making comment on President Buhari’s comment that the presidency is not for sale to the highest bidder, perhaps the Senator is oblivious of the fact that the President has access to information of the camp already reported as wooing delegates with cash gifts in Naira and Dollar. Surely, we wise citizens are paying attention!

That the Senator is not content with selling his aspirant to those he called “the establishment” without attacking Asiwaju is revealed by this obviously deprecatory and defamatory assertion unfortunately

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

Hero-worshipping senator’s agbada caught in barbwire

By OLUSOLA ADEYEYE

Rejoinder to Senator Ajibola Basiru’s piece titled “Osinbajo: Senator Adeyeye and his dishonest thesis,” published in the media.

Basiru is my successor in the Red Chamber as the Senator representing Osun Central. So, he is my Senator, but he’s in a bit of a pickle at the moment. His cry for help has come in the form of his tendentious attack against me in the media. I hear him.

Before I deal with the substantive issues in his piece, let me deal with the attitude he exhibited. Somehow, the attitude is tied to the substantive issues, but I want to deal with aspects of it that have to do with presentation and character.

It should be a given that when you are the spokesperson of the Senate, which Basiru in his piece lavishly reminded us that he is, being the mouthpiece of a presidential aspirant in the public space would be a walk in the park for you. Sadly, Basiru falls short of this miniscule expectation.

The first rule of public engagement is to respect your interlocutors and understand the issue. You just don’t jump into an ongoing public discussion with an idea in your head without understanding or, at least, acknowledging the context of an ongoing debate. The title and the first paragraph of my piece clearly says it is a rejoinder to Reno Omokri’s piece published in his column (‘THE ALTERNATIVE’) on

the the backpage of ThisDay newspaper of Tuesday, the 3rd of May, 2022. The least one would expect from anyone publicly joining the discussion is to acknowledge this. But Basiru dove headlong into it to grab my throat because he wasn’t happy I didn’t have mushy things to say about his preferred aspirant. I apologize on behalf of Basiru to Reno Omokri, the young man who did a brilliant job in the piece I responded to, even though my rejoinder disagreed with his view. A man who does not respect intellect has none.

Now, about character, when a man chooses the public space to declare you “dishonest” over something you had said in the public space, you owe it to yourself and to posterity to either reject or accept that tag. You can reject it by responding or you can accept it by admitting that indeed you are dishonest, or you can just keep mute. In the last case, any reasonable person would take your silence as consent.

I do not accept the popular wisdom that you should ignore people who mischievously lie against you or misrepresent what you’ve said in the public space. No, you should respond. If they are in the gutter and they think you won’t come in there to roll with them, because you are Mary Poppins, or a shrinking violet, oh, please, disappoint them. Jump in, feed them with the slime they’re used to and leave them there to marinate in their natural abode. It befits them. That’s me.

Okay, why this attitude and why over the issue in question? Senator Basiru and I are at this moment on two different sides of the political divide within our party, the All Progressives Congress (APC). Ordinarily, as my successor in the Senate, I should have no reason to engage with him in an adversarial manner in public space. However, where it concerns Nigeria and our patriotism, where it concerns nothing personal, there are no sacred spaces to speak the truth.

Senator Basiru accuses me of dishonesty. That is heavy. He should not be allowed to emblazon a supposed response to me in national newspapers with a tag of dishonesty without proving it to Nigerians. Perhaps he should look up the meaning of dishonest and then come back and point out to me where I was dishonest in my piece. Of course, I say this because nothing, absolutely nothing in his piece suggests that I am dishonest. Everything he said in response to me only indicates that we have a difference of opinion. You don’t differ with someone else’s opinion and then tag him dishonest, except, of course, if he is and you can prove it or as an adult, you’re still grappling with that basic elementary school English Language curriculum called “Words and Meaning.” Whatever the case, I will give Senator Basiru the opportunity to prove it, while I respond to the substantive issues he attempted to discuss in his piece in supposed response to me.

But, before I delve into that, let me say something about my politics and what I am about at the moment without fear of contradiction. Apart from being a scientist and an academic, I have been a Local Government Chairman, a member of the House of Representatives and a Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In all these emanations, I have carried myself with dignity and a strong sense of purpose with full respect to Nigerians who I humbly served and still serve. My biggest asset throughout the decades of being active in academia and politics and now is my integrity. To the ironic embarrassment of some around me, I carry it like an egg. That is why there is no one in Nigeria or anywhere in the world I cannot tell my mind. Of course, I should add that I have been that way right from my days as a young secondary school lad through my political and party activism with the Action Group (AG) and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and throughout the time of the highly political military of the seventies, eighties and nineties.

Now, as a strong supporter of Vice President Yemi Osinbajo in this forthcoming election, I made a conscious choice to follow my idealism. I know the way of politicians, but even though I’m one, I do not stain myself in pursuit of power for myself or on behalf of another person, no matter who they are.

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Osinbajo: Dishonest thesis

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penned by a personality I have so much respect for: "Yes, Tinubu has the structure, he has amassed the money and is already throwing it around left, right and centre, but the truth is that many are just fleecing him at the moment. Many signals within the party and within the establishment indicate he is on a hiding to nothing.

Many see Tinubu as a greedy blackmailer who must be kept away from Aso Rock because he has the capacity to create an entirely different political patronage structure that can alienate the 'Class of 1966'." The above remarks revealed a desperate move to disparage the character and reputation of Asiwaju Tinubu and must be interrogated to reveal that they were made with bile and guile. Asiwaju Tinubu has been out of office since 2007 and has not held office and has never been indicted for corruption and breach of public trust. So, we can ask our Senator, when has it become a crime to be rich? Where is the evidence of Asiwaju throwing "money around left, right and centre"? Baseless allegation from a Distinguished Senator is rather mind boggling! It is rather outlandish to hide under the one finger of "many" to call Asiwaju Tinubu "a greedy blackmailer"! Let the Senator identify a single patronage given to Asiwaju Tinubu since the inception of President Buhari administration. Then talking of blackmail, who is Asiwaju Tinubu blackmailing? President Buhari or Professor

Osinbajo or "the establishment"? It is quite unfortunate that a mind trained in science will make disparaging remarks without any evidence and hiding under unidentifiable "many". Apart from unfounded denigrating remarks, there was also the intention to rally the "establishment" against Asiwaju Tinubu when he commented that Asiwaju is someone "who must be kept away from Aso Rock because he has the capacity to create an entirely different political patronage structure that can alienate the 'Class of 1966'." The apparent desperation of the commentator to rally the "establishment" against the candidacy of Asiwaju Tinubu was brought out with more potency when he again asserted: "Incidentally, Tinubu went full throttle to politically terminate Ambode when the latter tinkered with the patronage structure in Lagos. As far as the establishment are concerned, Tinubu has been amply rewarded with the free rein they've given him over Lagos and its purse strings. Giving him Aso Rock is class suicide for the establishment." Many issues may be raised from the above. Of what relevance is issue of Ambode to the choice of Nigerian presidency? Is it that it is "the establishment" that gifted Lagos to Asiwaju as a reward? and reward for what? The innuendo of control of purse of Lagos is another evidence of the liberty the Senator in making defamatory assertions in the article. The assertion on "giving" out Aso Rock

depicts the obvious understanding of the Senator that our democracy has become a spoil of war. Perhaps, the Senator will need to elucidate how Asiwaju Tinubu winning the Presidential election will constitute "class suicide for the establishment". I think this is a mere exercise in scaremongering and calling a dog a bad name to kill it. I don't think it is necessary to comment on equally defamatory assertions against Godwin Emefiele, the Central Bank Governor, as it has become a pattern in coming against any perceived opponent of the writer's aspirant. However, I find rather strange the "new revelation" that the late Abba Kyari "was said" to have been working closely with Tinubu to frustrate the nomination of Professor Osinbajo as the Vice President in 2019. Apparently, the Senator was not sure of himself on that fact and therefore used the phrase "was said" which in legal parlance means what he stated was mere hearsay. It speaks to the motive of the commentator that such revelation could be based on what "was said! Also, as a student of logic, I cannot find the sequence in the contention that because Buhari did not replace Osinbajo as vice president in 2019 "is a strong indication that Buhari thinks him worthy of succeeding him in 2023". That is a rather outlandish proposition! I wouldn't know that Distinguished Senator Adeyeye has developed talent for mind reading when he said the President was

referring to Professor Osinbajo in a Channels Television interview by Maupe Ogun. However, if the Senator was cocksure of having read the mind of the President at that interview, one will think the subsequent paragraphs of his article campaigning to the President to help make the case with the "Northern establishment that Osinbajo is the best bet for Nigeria" is needless! It seems my Distinguished leader is not convinced himself of the mind reading. And I am at a loss to understand what the Senator meant when he said: "For a man who knows what Osinbajo has endured as vice president, he knew what he was talking about." Is it that the Vice-President has been a beast of burden and Nigerian Presidency is a compensation and not about service? Speaking about loyalty, is it the case that party leaders and supporters who are outside the government are not loyal to the government both in birthing it into power and sustaining it. The price for loyalty cannot and ought not to be exclusive preserve of those who have been in the corridor of power for about seven years. Can anyone in his right mind doubt the commitment and loyalty of Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu to the emergence and sustenance of the APC and its government under the leadership of President Buhari?

● **Senator Basiru Ph.D. represents Osun Central in the Senate Chamber of National Assembly in Abuja.**

Hero-worshipping senator's agbada caught in barbwire

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Osinbajo did not give me money and cannot give me money. He has given me what I want and it is exactly what I want for my children and for all Nigerians. Let me elaborate.

I read Chidi Amuta's column in the Sunday ThisDay of the 15th of May, 2022. He had an article there titled "Overcrowding the Presidential Doorway." Like most informed commentators, he is scandalized by the number of unserious people clogging the space in supposed contest for the presidency on the platforms of the political parties. He took the liberty to mention that only "seven from the multitude of presidential aspirants have any business aspiring to lead anything beyond a local government or town union" and he went further to describe them.

Here is how he put it:

"In the minor parties, my friend Kingsley Moghalu stands out for knowledge about Nigeria and informed opinions on how to rescue the nation from the present prison house of tragic misgovernance. From the PDP queue, I can see Pius Anyim, Peter Obi and Atiku Abubakar. Each comes with options outside the box and undeniable experience in getting good things done.

"In the APC, there is Bola Tinubu who set Lagos on the path to a modern mega city status and introduced a tradition of enlightened governance. Rotimi Amaechi stands tall in the APC pack as one man with an unusual courage and boldness to fix frightening problems. He has fixed things we can see and feel in his Rivers state and all around Nigeria. There is Yemi Osinbajo, exemplary Vice President, an unusual combination of morality, ideas and practical solutions. I hardly know about the rest of the crowded choir."

I mean, read that again and pay close attention to how he described each person. Is there any description or testimonial that is better than what he said about Osinbajo? Is there anyone better for Nigeria now than a person with "an unusual combination of

morality, ideas and practical solutions"? Amuta gave each their due, but he found in Osinbajo an encapsulation of what he found in others and more.

This is a man who has been Vice President for seven years. If in seven years, power did not make him lose his idealism, ethics and can-do spirit, what will the next four years be with Nigeria under his watch? Yes, this Nigeria drugged up in political miasma needs a man like him and I am proud to stand with him! The possibilities his candidacy portends are exactly the tonic my creaking bones need to get on the road for him. I didn't need to be preached to or converted. I know him. If helping deliver Osinbajo as the leader of our country is the last thing I do here on earth, I will die a very fulfilled man. In politics and in my private life, I don't do duplicity. In Osinbajo, I find a leader I can identify with, a leader I can trust.

Senator Basiru claims that the central thesis of my piece "is that Professor Yemi Osinbajo is the preferred aspirant of President Muhammadu Buhari." He read what I wrote and heard what he wanted to hear. But what he heard is not what I wrote. I made a case for why the Vice President should be Buhari's preference, not that he is. If a person with a doctorate degree is unable to make this elementary distinction, the best I can do is to adapt the words of Jesus on the cross - "Father, forgive him, for he knows not what he is saying."

None of us, at least not me, knows Buhari's preference, even though he has indicated he has one. I'm sure Senator Basiru wishes his principal is Buhari's preferred choice. So what is wrong with my being forthright about my own wishes in that regard?

He also has a problem with the following comment I made, which he interpreted as pursuant to my thesis:

"In his piece, Reno missed two fundamental truths about Nigerian politics. The first is that if the establishment does not want you, you can never win the presidency. The second

is religion as a factor in Nigerian political outcomes is overrated, especially at the national level. Yes, the establishment uses it when convenient, but, when it matters, realpolitik always trumps religion.

"Nigeria is not a land of political revolution. We have been caught in the web of the 'Class of 1966' like since forever and they are still in charge. They determine who is president, irrespective of parties. Buhari, for good or ill, has reshaped the establishment platform to be more pro-North. He may have done it deliberately or it may just be something that has developed naturally under his watch. Whichever is the case, it is today our reality.

"Of course, the popular wisdom is that religious sentiments determine the outcomes of national political contests, especially for the presidency - at the party and general election levels. But the historical facts do not support this. What history tells us is that any candidate of any religious background can be sold successfully nationally by the establishment once they determine he or she is the one they want there."

He says he is "at a loss to see the factual and empirical basis" for what he termed my Theory of Establishment "in view of the recent political history of Nigeria that saw the presidency of President Buhari dislodging an incumbent President and a political party that has controlled the Presidency for about 16 years before the 2015 electoral loss." He contended that no establishment wanted President Buhari and the APC in 2015 and then said he sees my comment as "a clear attempt to use a banal assertion to becloud the spirited efforts of the coalition that ripened to the APC and the struggle of our leaders like President Buhari, Chief Bisi Akande, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Chief Ogbonnaya Onu among others that ensure the presidency for the APC against all odds."

Obviously, he is avoiding the basic truth of my thesis and attempting to replace it with his own invented "recent political history"

despite hearing me talk clearly about the 'Class of 1966'. Or, is it that he does not know that all the presidents we've had since the advent of the Fourth Republic are fully sanctioned by the 'Class of 1966' before the vote that brought them formally to Aso Rock? In 1999, did they not determine, after their bungling of June 12, that Olusegun Obasanjo, one of their own, should get it? When Muhammadu Buhari looked to succeed Obasanjo, did they not freeze him out because they believed at the time that he still had resentments over the Ibrahim Babangida coup that toppled him? Okay, we might say Umaru Yar'Adua was an Obasanjo project, but he was also the establishment's project to reward one of their own, the late Shehu Yar'Adua. The original coming of Goodluck Jonathan was fortuitous, but he was adopted because he was still part of the Obasanjo project. When they fell out with him, did they not bring back the now contrite Buhari to replace him?

So, why go on a wild goose chase with his "recent political history" when the facts support my basic thesis that if the establishment does not want you, you can never win the presidency? Or why does he think there are pilgrimages to the Hilltop Mansion in Minna or Obasanjo's abode in Abeokuta by all manner of people seeking the presidency? When his principal went to see Babangida in Minna in January this year, did he just go there to secure Babangida's sole vote in his quest for the presidency? Of course, the political parties will naturally organize and make their choices and partake in elections, but our history tells us that the powers that be make these choices for the topmost national political position before the ordinary voter. It is what it is and we need not lie to Nigerians because they know.

● **Professor Olusola Adeyeye was a Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and is a strong supporter of the Vice President, Professor Yemi Osinbajo**

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FG to reward innovative MSMEs

By SHARON O. ISAALAH, Head, Science, Technology and Health Desk

Through its National Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) clinics initiative, the Federal Government is to reward the most hard-working and innovative ones in Nigeria.

Tola Adekunle-Johnson, special adviser to President Muhammadu Buhari on MSMEs, while briefing newsmen in Abuja, said that the 5th edition of the National MSME Awards would hold on June 27.

He said that the programme designed to commemorate the 2022 World MSME Day would provide an avenue for recognising and supporting outstanding small businesses in the country.

According to Adekunle-Johnson, 10 brand new cars and other cash prizes are to be won by the participants.

"Ten outstanding MSMEs in different categories will receive 10 cars and other

prizes at the 5th edition of the awards which holds on June 27.

"The categories for this year's awards include MSME award of excellence in agriculture, award of excellence in beauty, wellness and cosmetics and MSME award of excellence in creative arts.

Read also: FCMB, Mastercard Foundation partner to uplift 100,000 MSMEs in Nigeria

"Others are MSME award of excellence in fashion and style, award in leather works, award in furniture and woodwork, award in manufacturing and award in tech and innovation-driven enterprise," he said.

Adekunle-Johnson urged interested MSMEs to visit the website www.msmeclinics.gov.ng and fill out their application.

According to him, the portal will open for applications by 11:59 p.m. today, Thursday, May 19, 2022, and will close on Sunday, June 12, 2022.

According to him, the Federal Government is not relenting in its support for

small businesses in Nigeria.

"The government is moving on with its support for the small businesses by sustaining a reward programme initiated in 2018."

He said that the initiative had impacted more than 600, 000 directly and indirectly, inspiring prospective business owners to strive for excellence.

Speaking on what qualifies a participant, Obassi Ettu, the deputy director, Engineering Design and Development, Raw Materials Research and

Development Council, said participants must ensure that their products meet specifications and are competitive.

"The product must be indigenous and we want to see it promote local content and we must ascertain that the participants have the facilities.

"We want to ensure that the products are truly Nigerian," Ettu said.

The National MSME Awards was conceived in 2018 to reward excellence, hard work and innovation in the MSME space



Tola Adekunle-Johnson

Group calls for more girls participation in ICT careers

By SHARON O. ISAALAH

Plan International, a non-governmental organization (NGO), has called for more girls' participation in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) careers to foster a more dynamic technology sector and enhance innovation and productivity.

Country Director, Plan International, Mr Charles Usie, made the call in Abuja at the weekend, at an event to commemorate the 2022 Girls in ICT Day.

The News Agency of Nigeria reports that the event featured a debate and quiz competition among schools in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

The topic of the discussion is tagged "Is Technology a Critical Component of the Education of Students today?"

The selected schools in the debate and quiz competition include Light of Day School, Kubwa, Capville School, Government Secondary School (GSS)

Dutse, GSS Garki, GSS Wuse Zone 3 and Maitama Model School. Usie, represented by the Communication Advisor of the organisation, Mr Yunus Abdulhamid, said that the competition would spur conversation among girls in ICT.

"Girls in ICT debate competition for a young adolescent is to help spur conversation of girls in ICT." Data indicates fewer females in ICT and science generally. Also, as you progress, more girls drop out from related courses. "In today's world, more women are found in all human endeavours like the pilots, engineers, architects, medical doctors, bankers and many more.

"For us, as a country to advance in what we do, we need more participation of girls in ICT in our world today," he said. Usie also said that 50 per cent of the country's population were female, hence the need for the government to pay critical attention to the girl child in the area of technology. "We can hardly survive in today's world without technology. In Nigeria, 50 per cent of our population is female and



Charles Usie

involving them in ICT will help to advance the country's development. "Any society who looks down on this group of people will definitely fail. So, we are saying that females must imbibe technology to really grow our country.

"At Plan International, we focus on the adolescent girls. This does not mean the boys are not important, they are because, in our programmes for girls, we also carry the boys along," he said.

The Project Coordinator, Plan International, Mrs Mary Mbukpa, called

for monitoring of devices used by children from home. Mbukpa called on the government to provide digitalised library and put in place a system where the girls don't have to go to other sites that would not be significant to their learning. She also encouraged parents to ensure that they guide their children in the use of digital platforms "We have had debate and quiz competitions towards showing the good about ICT, so it is important for young girls to begin to access ICT and also bearing in mind that they need to be safe online.

"Looking at our society, the boys have access to different ICT platforms but we are very conservative in the way we build up our young girls. "We need to try to control a lot of things they do but we are looking at how girls can use the ICT to better their education," she said.

One of the students, Jamie David, an SS1 student of GSS, Wuse Zone 3, said there was a need for girls to be given the opportunity to be able to have access to ICT.

David said this would be one of the ways to tackle gender inequality in our society. "We have to evolve as the world is evolving. Technology has helped us in many ways; it all depends on the choice of technology.

"Parents should look more into what the children do and not buy a gadget for children who are not mature to use it," she said.

Mr John Osigbemhe, a Science Teacher in GSS Garki said that girls around the world were becoming more interested in ICT, hence the need to encourage Nigerian girls to utilise the power of ICT.

Osigbemhe added that stakeholders should help the children by putting in place restrictions on the use of technology and control by parents. He said that there was a limit to what the school could do to curtail the gadget being used for all manners of social vices in society.

NAN reports that Capville School clinched the first position, GSS Wuse Zone 3 came second while GSS Garki and GSS Dutse came third in the debate category.

Also, Maitama Model School clinched top, Light of Day School came second and GSS Dutse came third in the quiz competition.

NAN reports that Plan International in partnership with Tech Her for Women in Technology, an NGO, would offer six months online programme for

ICT mentorship from June to December for the best students in the competition.

Federal Govt approves incentives for startups

By SHARON O. ISAALAH

A plan for incentives and to further harness Nigeria's digital innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem has been approved by the Federal Executive Council (FEC).

This followed the presentation of a memo by the Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Professor Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami.

The approval, according to the ministry will enable the implementation of strategies to encourage and support the development and growth of more Innovation-Driven Enterprises (IDEs), which have the potential to create millions of additional jobs in the country.

This will also help to develop innovative solutions to societal problems, and rapidly grow, as well as diversify the Nigerian economy,

in line with the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS) for a Digital Nigeria.

The ministry said a number of the proposed strategies resulted from recommendations that were made at an interactive forum held on 22nd

February 2022, where the Honourable Minister led a Federal Government Delegation on a working visit to the Lagos digital innovation ecosystem.

The delegation included the Director-General of NITDA, the Executive Vice

Chairman of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), the Post Master General and the Managing Director of Galaxy Backbone Plc.

The visit provided a useful platform for open and interactive discussions on the ecosystem's pertinent challenges and interventions required from the government to enable the ecosystem achieve its full potential.

The forum was attended by 143 ICT and Startup Companies. The delegation also paid a visit to 3 selected tech startups, namely: Flutterwave (currently valued at US\$3 billion), Treepz (with a current funding of US\$3.1 million) and Reliance Health (with US\$48.3 million in funding).

The Nigeria Startup Bill (NSB) was earlier approved by the Federal Executive Council and forwarded to the National Assembly and the process is about 90% complete. The approval of the incentives at the Council will consolidate the gains recorded for far in the NSB process. The implementation of the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS) emphasises the importance of the innovation and startup ecosystem to the development of an indigenous digital economy. The Ministry will continue to position Nigeria to develop this ecosystem in order to transform Nigeria into a country with a sustainable and thriving digital economy.



Professor Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami

Ghana's Communications Minister launches National Digital Academy

By SHARON O. ISAALAH

Communications and Digitalisation minister, Mrs. Ursula Owusu-Ekuful, has launched Ghana's National Digital Academy (NDA) with a call on the youth to embrace the opportunity to build their skills.

An initiative of Smart Africa, a digital think tank, the NDA under the Smart Africa Digital Academy (SADA), being financed by the World Bank, is to train the youth with digital skills to address the skills gap in the sector.

The academy will also build the capacity of senior government officials and policymakers with digital skills for effective decision making.

Owusu-Ekuful who made the call in Accra said digital technology had taken centre-stage in the current Fourth Industrial Revolution.

She said job avenues globally were tilting towards digital technology and it was, therefore, imperative for the youth to pursue skills become marketable on the job market.

For instance, she said it was estimated that about 230 million digital skills job would be created by 2030 and the youth needed to position themselves to take advantage of the job opportunities in the digital market.

The minister said the government was committed to promoting a digital economy to enhance transparency and efficiency in the delivery of public service.

She said the state would derive a lot of benefits from digitalization and



Mrs. Ursula Owusu-Ekuful

adoption of technology, and reduce the delay and inefficiency associated with accessing public service.

Owusu-Ekuful commended the Smart Africa for the NDA to develop digital capacities in the digital industry in Africa.

The Chief Executive Officer of Smart Africa, Mr Lacina Kone said digital skills development was more than ever at the heart of Africa's current and future socio-economic development in Africa, particularly Ghana.

He said Smart Africa decided to

launch the NDA in Ghana in view of the commitment of government to promote a digital economy and the huge investment the state had made in the sector.

"Ghana is one of the most active countries of the Smart Africa alliance has been instrumental in advancing digital skills of its citizens.

Today, we are launching SADA-Ghana, a platform that aims to bridge the critical digital skills gap in the country to support Ghana's digital ecosystem to create an enabling environment around policy making," Mr Kone said.

He said Smart Africa would partner the Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation to conduct executive training on digital economy for senior government officials.

"In our mission to transform Africa into a single digital market, we must value the skills and capacity development of our people to achieve a knowledge-based transformation of the continent," he said.

The World Bank Country Director, Pierre Larporte in his remarks said digital technology and skills would play a critical role in the development of the Ghanaian economy.

"As the country strives to rebuild from the effects of the COVID-19, digital skills and adoption of technology and delivering government business will go a long way to revamp the economy," he said.

Mr Larporte pledged the World Bank's commitment to supporting digital initiatives to drive the country's development agenda.



CBN's policies and need to save naira from free fall

In the 1970s and early 1980s, the naira exchanged for one United States of America dollar. It was highly sought after globally due to its value. But Nigeria's romance with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, particularly during the military era and the penchant for obtaining loans from foreign financial institutions, empowered the IMF and World Bank to force successive administrations to devalue the country's currency to an all time low. Last week, the naira exchanged for N600 to \$1. JOHNMARK UKOKO writes on the need to save the local currency.

The naira was more like a beautiful bride in the 1970s to the early 1980s, as the currency was highly sought after by Nigerians and foreigners alike. But today, even wealthy Nigerians hardly want to deal with the local currency because of the low value it currently commands. The currency, which traded for N1 to \$1, now exchanges for about N600 to the dollar and much lower with the Pound Sterling and Euro.

In spite of various measures put in place by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to shore up the value of the currency, it has consistently continued to nosedive.

Nigerians like the blame game, as the currency, which exchanged for less than N200 to the dollar, when the President Muhammadu Buhari administration took over power seven years ago now see the naira exchanging for about N600 to the dollar at the parallel market.

About two years ago, the CBN blamed the free fall of the naira on activities of the country's Bureau De Changes (BDCs). As a result, the apex bank's big hammer fell on the BDCs, leading to their being banned from accessing the dollar at the foreign exchange (forex) market.

But the ban on BDCs from accessing forex at the official window did not shore up the value of the naira.

Shortly afterwards, the CBN blamed AbokiFX for the continued fall of the naira. Governor of the bank, Godwin Emefiele told the world that the daily publication of the black market rate on the AbokiFX site was responsible for the misfortune of the currency.

It then swiftly barred the site and went ahead to announce that the management of the AbokiFX would be sanctioned for their role in the free fall of the naira, following which owners of AbokiFX shut down the site, but the fate of naira worsened.

The CBN also blamed some manufacturers and importers for the situation of the currency, saying it had granted forex to some manufacturers and importers, which it said, was partly responsible for the worsening value of the local currency.

To further drive home its point, the apex bank prohibited 42 products from sourcing forex from the official window, following which the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) and the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) pleaded with the Federal Government and CBN to reconsider the ban, but they did not succeed. Yet, the naira continued to fall.

Even as crude oil now sells for over \$100 per barrel at the international market due to the Russia and Ukraine war, the naira has consistently continued to crash, just as the country's foreign reserve has continued to dip.

A black market operator, who told *The Trumpet* that black market operators buy the dollar for between N570 and N580 depending on the quantity, but sell at between N595 and N600, attributed the eroding value of the naira to increasing demand for foreign currencies and low inflow of foreign exchange into the country.

Investigations by *The Trumpet* showed that between April 15, 2022 and May 17, 2022, the country's external reserves dropped by over \$700 million.

Economists also affirmed that although the CBN has blamed the decline of country's external reserves to the activities of politicians, who are bent on mopping up the dollars in circulation and expressed concern that while the price of crude oil has risen to over \$100 per barrel, there was no reason for the country's external reserves to fall.

Speaking to *The Trumpet*, they argued that although the CBN has consistently said that the parallel market was not the true reflection of the value of naira, Nigerians should take that submission with a pinch of salt.

Some watchers of the political and economic developments in the country, led by Ondo State Governor, Oluwarotimi Akeredolu, have attributed the recent crash of the local currency to Emefiele's presidential ambition.

Akeredolu had insisted that Emefiele goofed to have contemplated contesting the presidency, when his tenure at the CBN had not ended; maintaining that he (Emefiele) sent the wrong signals to the local and foreign investors with his foray into politics.

He said the apex bank governor's body language had put severe pressure on the naira, adding that Emefiele's action was unprecedented in the country's central banking history.

Responding to the developments, a former Deputy Governor of the CBN, Prof. Kingsley Moghalu, took a swipe at Emefiele for his actions, adding that he ought to have ended his tenure at the apex bank before aspiring for political office.

He said Emefiele was wrong to have attempted to vie for the country's presidency, as governor of the CBN, saying his action had further put pressure on the value of the naira against foreign currencies.



Emefiele

Curiously, the Association of Bureau De Change of Nigeria (ABCON), which the Emefiele-led CBN earlier blamed for the continued slide of the naira, informed Nigerians that it had found a solution to the poor value of the local currency.

ABCON President, Dr. Aminu Gwadabe, said the association had developed a roadmap campaign plan needed to save the naira from further decline and enhance exchange rate stability.

Gwadabe revealed that the move to save the naira was agreed upon by the association after its meeting recently in Lagos, where he said, ABCON unveiled strategies to save the local currency, bridge the exchange rate gaps, curb volatility gaps and check volatility in the forex market.

He stressed that there was the urgent need to enhance dollar liquidity in the market of prices in the economy, saying the steps would save the local currency and the economy from the impact of election spending that had kept inflation at double digits for a long time.

The ABCON further disclosed that the depreciation of the naira against global currencies was due to pressure from rising dollar demand without sufficient liquidity to meet the demands from retail end users, manufacturers and other key players in the economy.

"The naira has consistently come under serious pressure due to scarcity of the dollar, making it difficult for forex end users, manufacturers and industry players to access the dollars to meet their needs.

"ABCON under my leadership will continue to encourage its members to play the vital role of closing the exchange rate gaps in

the market and reducing premium between the parallel market and the official widow," he said.

Gwadabe canvassed an enhancement of existing BDCs automation portfolio to file transaction returns on the portals of CBN, ABCON, the Nigeria Inter Banks Settlement System (NIBSS) and other related organisations for effective regulatory monitoring and supervision.

"The CBN's reluctance to open new windows through which foreign exchange can be attracted to the economy remains a key factor in the naira's continued fall. The non-inclusion of BDCs among channels through which Diaspora remittances to Nigeria under the apex bank's guidance and regulation has reduced the volume of dollars inflow into the economy," he lamented.

On his part, President of MAN, Mansur Ahmed, who addressed journalists recently, said members of the association were increasingly finding it difficult to access forex to import the needed raw materials and machinery for production.

Ahmed said the apex bank had consistently promised them that the commercial banks would meet all their foreign exchange requirements, but so far, they hardly get up to 20 per cent of their forex needs.

Arguing that scarcity of foreign exchange has been the major challenge of the manufacturers in the past three years, he urged the Federal Government and the CBN to walk the talk by providing forex for the manufacturers to enable them keep their production going as expected.

He identified epileptic power supply in the past few months

as a major headache the local manufacturers were currently contending with.

Also, an economist, Dr. Muda Yusuf, blamed the free fall of the naira on CBN's policy summersaults, saying its multiple foreign exchange policies was responsible for the failure of most people who have dollars do not bring them into the country.

While speaking with members of Finance Correspondents Association of Nigeria (FICAN) recently in Lagos, Yusuf said most Nigerians and foreigners have plenty of dollars but were reluctant to bring them into the country because of the CBN's fixed exchange rate regime.

He advocated liberalisation of the exchange rate, as one of the ways to shore up the value of the naira, stressing that the currency had been on the free fall because there was scarcity of dollars in the country.

"I blame CBN policies for the free fall of the naira. It is wrong for CBN to tell those who have foreign currencies how much they should sell. Let people bring in their foreign currencies and sell at whatever price, by so doing, there will be increased inflow of forex rather than dollars that come from only the sale of crude oil.

"If CBN can allow local and foreigners who have foreign currency to bring them in and sell at whatever price they like, within a short time there will be enough forex in the country and the naira will appreciate in a way it has not done for a long time," he added.

Nigerians wonder why despite the promises of the current administration, it banned several products from accessing forex at the official window, while the naira that exchanged for less than N200 in 2015 now exchanges for about N600 to the dollar.

While Nigerians are being told that there is scarcity of dollars in the country, government officials, their supporters and CBN senior executives swim in foreign currencies.

As analysts contend that with the forthcoming 2023 general elections, huge spending by politicians will put severe pressure on the nation's currency, Nigerians ask: Is this how the naira will continue to fall until it hits N1,000 to the dollar? Who will stop the naira from the free fall?

It will be interesting to experience how Nigerians, who have been negatively impacted by the insensitivity of successive governments and CBN's policies, will cope with the anticipated harder times ahead.

Access Corporation seeks to acquire majority stake in First Guarantee Pension

Stories by **JONHMARK UKOKO**

Access Holdings Plc, the holding company of Access Bank, at the weekend, said it has entered into a definitive agreement with First Guarantee Pension Limited regarding the potential acquisition of majority stakes in the company.

In a regulatory filing with the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX), the company, which trades under Access Corporation, revealed that the transaction is a consequential step in its evolution from a narrow banking business into a financial service holding company positioned to gain relevant scale across Africa, as well as global monetary centres and beyond banking verticals.

Its Group Chief Executive Of-

ficer, Herbert Wigwe, maintained that the transaction was a natural evolution for the company.

He said in the last 20 years, the corporation had paid careful attention and delivered ambitious plans to transform the African financial services landscape, focusing on banking and has created the African leading bank and the largest bank by customer base.

Wigwe explained that the large customer base on the wholesale and retail segments makes the pension business a natural fit for the corporation given its objectives of ecosystem optimisation.

"We will leverage our well established culture of strong corporate governance, risk management, as well as technology and digital capacity to deliver



Dr. Taiwo Afolabi

high standards of professionalism in the management of the pension assets to the benefit of our stakeholders," he stated.

The National Pension

Commission and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) have accepted the transaction, subject to the receipt of all required regulatory approvals.

CIBN pledges capacity training for bankers, construction of six regional centres

The Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN) has restated its resolve to continue to strengthen the capacity of bankers in the country and as part of efforts to achieve the goal has begun the construction of the Lagos Bankers House, which it said, will be fully equipped.

Speaking at the ground breaking ceremony, its outgoing President and Chairman of Council, Bayo Olugbami, disclosed that the five-storey building, which will be equipped with modern gadgets, will boost bankers' performance through lectures, research and other activities in a comfortable environment.

Olugbami said when completed, the project will enhance competence, training and development of experienced and future bankers.

"This project is our modest contribution towards the promotion of banking in Nigeria. We need to do much more for the future bankers in terms of capacity building. I felt that we had to leave a legacy project that will outlive us, so that they can have a place of their own to receive lectures in a good ambience that is Internet enabled.

"The governing council of our institute resolved to establish legacy projects in the six geopolitical zones of the country. By God's grace we have been able to commission four of the six projects, while the remaining two are at an advanced stage. The Ilorin branch, Osogbo branch, Owerri branch have been completed and we bought a property for the Ogun branch.

"I am happy we have been able to achieve this with the support of the governing council and all our stakeholders in the industry," he said.

He said he was leaving a

legacy that the incoming executive could build on, adding: "I believe the leadership of the country is trying its best, but can do more in building capacity of citizens.

"Government alone cannot do everything and that is why the CIBN is partnering with the government. The schools we visited are government or state owned schools. I believe the Ministry of Education can also do similar thing to support institutions of learning.

Chairman of Lagos branch of CIBN, Peter Ashade described the ceremony as a significant milestone in the history of the institute.

Ashade, who is also the Group Chief Executive Officer, United Capital Plc, noted that the journey to realising the vision with the support of the national secretariat had given the institute a lot of hope as the edifice would be commissioned in due time.

He noted that the location was strategic and that completing the property would give the institute better visibility.

"We have done a lot. We are building a point of reference where a lot more can be done. One of the floors will be used for computer-based test (CBT). We are trying to position ourselves to mirror what is happening at the national level in terms of visibility and sustaining the capacity building of the institute. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, we had bricks and we now have virtual learning.

Responding, Chairman of the Building Committee, Kola Abdul, said the building, which would be completed in reasonable time, would advance the institute's cause as a professional body.



Bayo Olugbami

Nigeria's equity rallies 1.05% as MTN's fintech firm begins operations

The Nigeria equity market closed on a positive note as investors piled on MTN Nigeria stocks following the announcement by the telecommunication giant that its technology startup firm, Momo PSP has commenced operations.

MTN Nigeria announced that Momo PSP, its financial services subsidiary, commenced operations last Monday, which boosted its share value on the floor of the Nigeria Stock

Exchange (NGX).

All Share Index (ASI) increased by 1.05 per cent to close at 53,257.49 points compared with the 52,721.34 points it closed with the previous day, while market capitalisation of equities listed on the NGX increased to N28.721 trillion from N28.423 trillion as of last Wednesday.

The total volume traded closed with the exchange of 274.557 million units valued at N8.45 billion and traded 5,184 billion

in 5,184 deals.

However, the market breadth closed negative with 21 gainers, as against 29 losers, while the NGX 30 index increased by 1.13 per cent to close at 2,065.52 points, as against 2,042.63 points the previous day.

Market turnover closed with a traded volume of 120.62 million units, just as MTN and Stanbic IBTC were the key gainers, while Fidelity Bank and Ecobank Plc were the key losers.

CBN issues guidelines for open banking in Nigeria

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has issued the regulatory framework for Open Banking in Nigeria in its efforts to enhance data sharing across the banking and payment systems to promote innovations and broaden the range of financial products and services available to customers.

The apex bank disclosed this in correspondence titled: Operational Guidelines For Open Banking In Nigeria, explaining that with open banking, third

Naira notes will soon be out of circulation, says CBN

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has said that paper currency will soon be out of circulation, urging market men and women to sign onto the e-Naira.

Controller of the Delta State Branch of CBN, Godwin Okafor, stated this at the Ogbogonogo Market during the bank's market sensitisation programme on the e-Naira in Asaba at the weekend.

He urged traders to key into the Central Bank's e-Naira policy, adding: "We are in the market to sensitise the people on the use of e-Naira. It is backed by the CBN, unlike Bitcoin, which has no legal backing," he said.

Consultant to CBN on e-Naira, Dr. Aminu Bizi, said Delta State was chosen as the second state to sensitise market women on the e-Naira after Lagos State.

party financial services providers are given open access to customer banking transactions and other financial data from banks and non-bank financial institutions through applications interface (APIs).

It stated that the guidelines to data in the financial sector would enable customers to access innovative financial products and services, adding: "Open banking recognises the ownership and control of data by customers of financial and non-financial services. This is anticipated to drive competition and improve access to banking and payment

services.

"Open banking operators should adhere strictly to security standards when accessing and storing data and shall be subject to minimum privacy, operational, risk management and customer experience standards, as provided by the bank."

The CBN also explained that the open banking proposition would allow any organisation with a database of customers, which may be exchanged with other entities, to provide innovative financial services within Nigeria to be eligible for participation in the system.

Buhari names Jummai Tutuwa DG of FIRO

President Muhammadu Buhari has approved the appointment of Mrs. Jummai Tutuwa, as substantive Director-General of the Federal Institute of Industrial Research, Oshodi (FIRO) effective May 10, 2022.

A statement issued by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, affirmed that Tutuwa takes over from the Acting Director General, Agnes Asagbra, who was appointed in February 2020.

According to the statement, Tutuwa was the Director in Charge of Biotechnology Centre at the National Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA) in Jalingo, Taraba State.

The development came two

years after Asagbra took over as the Acting DG of FIRO following the dismissal of Chime Igwe, who was accused of involvement in a certificate scandal.

Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Dr. Ogonnaya Onu, had appointed Igwe as the Acting DG in 2019 when the position was vacant after the retirement of the former Director-General, Prof. Gloria Elemo.

The institute had been enmeshed in controversy over Igwe purported PhD, which he claimed to have obtained from the Universite D'Abomey Calavi, Benin Republic, but he could not present a certificate to back his claim.

Igwe reportedly failed to present his PhD certificate 17 years after submitting a letter of attestation form the university and was alleged to have used the attestation letter to secure promotions up to the directorate level at the institute.

He is currently facing trial at the Special Offences Court in Ikeja, Lagos by the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) over the alleged certificate forgery.

FIRO was created with a mandate to assist the industrialisation of the country and its economy through the use of local raw materials and upgrading indigenous production technology.

Police kill 10 suspected criminals in Delta

By PAUL MICHAEL, DEFENCE EDITOR, ABUJA

Delta Command of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) has killed about ten alleged kidnappers and armed robbers in their hideout in the Kwale axis of the state.

Spokesperson of the Command, DSP Bright Edefe, in a statement on Sunday, said the criminals were overpowered by the superior firepower of the police during a fierce gun battle.

According to him, a combined squad of policemen had embarked on a sting operation following an intelligence report and stormed the hideout of the Kidnappers/armed robbers around Kwale axis. The Hoodlums, who were armed with AK47 rifles and charms, on sighting the Police started shooting sporadically.

Therefore, the police engaged

them in a gun battle and neutralized ten of the criminals while others escaped with gun wounds.

Edefe said, "Following killings, Arsons, Kidnapping, armed robbery, attack on innocent civilians and policemen while on duty and their rifles taken away, the Command never relented on its effort towards arresting and ensuring that these hoodlums are brought to book.

"Consequently, the Command went on intelligence-led investigation and on 21/5/2022 at about 0500 hours, the Commissioner of Police Delta State detailed a combined team comprising of the State Anti-kidnapping/Cybercrime Squad, Dragon patrol teams, RRS Operatives, and Anti-Cult Volunteers from Agbor, Ekwoma, Igbodo, Ibusa, Abavo, Kwale respectively.

"The combined teams embarked on a sting operation and stormed the hideout of these daredevil

Kidnappers/ armed robbers around Kwale Axis. The Hoodlums who were armed with AK47 rifles and charms on sighting the Police shot sporadically at them and the team equally engaged them in a fierce gun battle.

"Due to the superior firepower of the Police, ten of the suspected kidnappers/armed robbers were successfully neutralized while others escaped with gunshot injuries. Five AK 47 rifles, six magazines and one hundred and seventeen (117) rounds of 7.62mm ammunition were recovered from them.

"The CP while assuring residents that the Command will continue to sustain this tempo, also urges members of the public, vigilantes, Anti-Cult volunteers and other non State actors to continue to partner with the Police to ensure that Delta state will never be a haven for criminals."



DSP Bright Edefe

MNJTF arrests 30 persons fishing, farming around terrorist camps

By PAUL MICHAEL

In a bid to end terrorism around the Lake Chad Basin (LCB), the officers of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) have arrested some suspects fishing and farming around terrorist camps belonging to Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP).

A statement by Lt Col Kamarudeen Adegoke, Chief of Military Public Information Office, said troops of Operation Hadin Kai/MNJTF commenced aggressive clearance from Monguno on 17 May, 2022 and have so far cleared the settlements of Grada, Kwatan Maishayi, Daban Karfe, Daban Gajere, Tumbun Buhari, Tumbun Abuja, Sabon Tunbu, Ali Sherifiti, Doron Naira and Daban Masara among others.

He explained that troops did not come in contact with any terrorists in the camps, however, 30 young men who claimed to be fishermen and farmers in the areas were arrested.

He said, "No contact was made with the criminals who ran away from these enclaves in a bid to avoid being sent to account to God for their heinous crimes.

"Items found include packed fish in cartons, fish being prepared, assorted grains, household items and a lone motorcycle.

"In line with MNJTF SOP for operations, the enemy camps were destroyed and items were properly burnt.

"About 30 young men who claimed to be fishermen and farmers were arrested in the general area of Doron Naira and are being profiled and interrogated to ascertain their culpability or otherwise."

Lt Col Adegoke also added that troops of Task Force Mallam Fatori comprising of Nigerian and Nigerian troops from the MNJTF firm Base in Arege carried out clearance operations to the general areas of Ali Jimari, Dogon Chuku and Tunbum Rago from May 17, 2022.

"Troops sighted some motorcycles and an old Hilux Toyota van suspected to be Boko Haram/ ISWAP criminals, a hot pursuit led them to the location where the criminals ran away and abandoned the items. The 2 motorcycles and the old Hilux Toyota van were burnt in the location.

"Similarly, in a separate incident, a young Fulani girl named Salamatu, aged about 12 was found by this Task Force team wandering in the bush, she claimed to be from Darge Kessa Village in Abadam LGA.

"After necessary profiling, she will be handed over to the relevant authority for further action," he added.

We can't be cowed, Soludo vows after beheading of lawmaker in Anambra

●Offers N10m for information on killers

●Umahi accuses politicians of benefiting from insecurity

By PAUL MICHAEL

Governor Charles Soludo and the Anambra Police Command have reacted to the gruesome murder of Hon Okedukwu Okoye, a member of the House of Assembly representing Aguata North state Constituency, condemning his killing by his abductors.

Recall that the lawmaker was kidnapped on May 15th to an unknown destination. He was later decapitated by his abductors and his head hung at Chisco park in Amichi community at Idemili North Local Government Area of the State.

Reacting to the ugly incident, Prof Soludo expressed shock and deep sadness over the murder of the lawmaker, who represented his constituency.

In a statement, the Governor



Hon Okedukwu Okoye

consoled his kinsmen of Izuofia, noting that it is probably the same criminal gang that attacked him and killed three policemen at Izuofia two years ago that is once again on the prowl.

"But they can never cow down Izuofia and Anambra state," he added.

Soludo, who offered a N10 million reward for information to track the killers, vowed that the perpetrators, as well as all criminals operating in Anambra, must be decisively brought to book.

"Anambra will soon be a hell for these criminals," he assured, giving the assurance of the government's resolve and renewed determination with the security agencies to go all out against the criminals and ensure they are brought to justice.

While urging Ndi Anambra to brace up for the all-out war against the criminals, he said "Anambra will win against the forces of darkness."

Similarly, the State's Commissioner of Police, CP Echeng Echeng in a statement issued on Saturday by the Public Relations Officer, DSP Ikenga Tochukwu, described the act as barbaric and cowardly while assuring that the perpetrators will be brought to book.

"The Commissioner of Police Anambra State Command CP Echeng Echeng has today 21/5/2022 (Saturday) describe the murder of

Hon Okechuwu Okoye as barbaric and cowardly.

"Recall on 15/5/2022, the Command Operatives had earlier embarked on a rescue operation following the incident of his abduction on the same date at about 5:30 pm along Aguluzigbo Umiona, Aguata LGA.

"While the operation is still ongoing, today 21/5/2022 at about 4 pm, a headless body was seen and later recovered by Police along Nnobi, Ideani road. Further information and confirmation, identify the corpse as Hon Okechuwu Okoye. The corpse has been deposited in a morgue.

"The CP while commiserating with the family and friends assures that the perpetrators of this dastardly act shall be brought to book," the statement said.

Meanwhile, Governor David Umahi of Ebonyi State has accused some politicians in the Southeast of benefiting from the growing insecurity in the region.

Umahi, who spoke during an interview on Channels TV regarding his presidential ambition, noted that the level of insecurity in the country can be addressed region by region.

According to him, "Security is a topical issue in the country and that is what occupies the mind of every Nigerian. This is very key for everybody who wants to be a president, but let me say that the level of insecurity in the country can be addressed region by region.

"First of all, we have to look at the fundamental issue because this issue of insecurity is growing almost every day and people are very scared of their safety. Exactly what's happening in the Southeast may not be what's happening in the Northeast, Northwest or Southwest.

"What is to be done is first and foremost is to evaluate the sources of this insecurity. I can tell you frankly that you have a couple of factors like mismanagement; the future is not secured for the young ones. You also have the issue of politics.

COAS urges retired officers to remain vigilant to end insecurity

By PAUL MICHAEL

Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt-Gen Faruk Yahaya, has urged retired army officers not to rest until the security challenges in the country are brought to an end in favour of the military and Nigeria.

The Army Chief gave the charge at a Regimental Dinner Night arranged in honour of retired officers in the 81 Division Nigerian Army.

Gen Yahaya, who was represented by General Officer Commanding 81

Division NA, Maj Gen Umar Thama Musa, noted that the Army is still open to their invaluable contributions towards attaining her constitutional mandate and would always welcome their support.

Gen Yahaya further said that they are welcome to attend functions and sessions to continue to extend their fellowship to the colleagues they were leaving behind in service.

According to General Yahaya, "retirement is an inevitable phase

in the life of every military personnel as it marks the complement of active service to the nation."

He, therefore, commended the retired officers for the remarkable achievements they made while in active service to the Nation through the Army.

The Army Chief assured them that the Army will remain grateful for the services they rendered in the defence of their fatherland. Adding that the celebration should also be

taken as an avenue to thank God for the grace to render the distinguished and meritorious service to the Nation in the quest to restore peace and harmony to our beloved country.

Earlier, the President Mess Committee, Brig Gen Danlami Ndahi, while welcoming the retired officers and guests to 81 Division, congratulated the retired officers and their families on behalf of the entire Division on their successful and meritorious retirement from the Army.



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2 x 2	24,941.96	26,812.61	2 x 2	22,588.91	24,283.09	2 x 2	18,349.89	19,716.64	2 x 2	15,147.94	16,284.03	
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7 x 2	87,297.21	93,844.50	6 x 3	101,962.78	109,609.99	6 x 3	54,074.55	61,200.90	7 x 2	53,017.79	56,993.61	
7 x 3	166,172.00	179,229.37	6.5 x 3	110,459.64	118,744.11	6.5 x 3	89,455.78	96,164.94	8 x 2	60,591.76	65,136.14	
7 x 4	197,125.00	211,909.37	7 x 2	79,304.29	85,252.11	7 x 2	64,224.63	69,041.48	9 x 2	80,454.83	86,488.95	
8 x 2	99,768.24	107,250.85	7 x 3	128,456.43	138,090.67	7 x 3	96,336.94	103,562.21	10 x 2	86,147.92	92,609.02	
9 x 2	112,183.69	120,597.47	7 x 4	158,608.73	170,504.38	7 x 4	145,965.10	156,912.48	14.5 x 2	124,915.92	134,284.61	
9 x 3	168,358.90	180,985.39	7 x 5	198,260.25	213,129.77	7 x 5	182,500.19	196,187.71	5 x 3	56,804.77	61,065.13	
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14.5 x 2	260,395.00	279,924.62	8 x 3	135,950.22	146,146.48	8 x 3	125,871.78	134,674.05	7 x 3	79,526.68	85,491.18	
8 x 4	199,536.48	214,501.71	8 x 4	181,266.93	194,841.95	8 x 4	167,043.40	179,022.80	8 x 3	103,375.58	111,130.80	
9 x 4	224,478.54	241,314.43	8 x 5	226,238.74	254,477.52	8 x 5	208,805.79	224,469.23	6 x 4	100,634.10	110,944.41	
10 x 4	299,302.72	321,752.57	8 x 6	271,900.48	292,008.02	8 x 6	250,284.32	269,911.09	7 x 4	120,404.56	129,434.90	
14.5 x 4	520,790.19	559,849.45	9 x 2	101,962.78	109,609.99	9 x 2	93,773.60	100,872.44	8 x 4	137,692.17	148,019.082	
7 x 5	218,243.02	234,629.74	9 x 3	152,944.01	164,414.81	9 x 3	141,108.54	151,691.68	10 x 4	172,301.37	185,224.22	
8 x 5	299,304.72	321,752.57	9 x 4	203,925.29	219,219.69	9 x 4	187,921.52	202,015.71	14.5 x 3	187,057.43	201,086.73	
8 x 6	359,165.65	386,103.08	9 x 5	305,373.04	328,276.02	9 x 5	281,288.07	303,022.10	14.5 x 4	249,838.03	268,575.88	
9 x 5	404,061.37	434,365.97	9 x 6	367,065.92	394,595.86	9 x 6	337,805.68	363,141.11	7 x 5	141,001.98	161,793.93	
10 x 5	448,957.08	482,628.86	10 x 3	169,651.36	182,375.21	10 x 3	156,602.81	168,348.02	8 x 5	172,116.65	185,025.40	
11 x 5	493,852.78	530,891.74	10 x 4	226,258.00	243,176.28	10 x 4	208,808.58	224,469.23	9 x 6	278,649.91	299,548.66	
9 x 6	484,873.39	521,239.16	10 x 5	354,037.54	380,590.16	10 x 5	325,815.11	349,966.25	11 x 5	295,636.20	317,808.91	
10 x 6	538,748.49	579,154.53	10 x 6	424,845.04	456,708.42	10 x 6	390,978.13	420,320.48	11 x 6	340,573.10	340,466.08	
11 x 6	592,622.16	637,068.82	11 x 5	389,441.887	418,650.01	11 x 5	358,396.62	385,276.37	HP7.25 X 6	218,226.87	234,593.89	
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FP 14.5 x 6	560,500.00	602,537.50	14.5 X 2	197,128.09	211,912.70	14.5 x 2	151,178.45	162,516.84				
			14.5 X 4	394,256.19	423,825.40	14.5 x 4	362,827.71	390,039.79				
			14.5 X 5	472,286.06	507,707.52	HP7.25 X 6	246,131.63	264,591.50				
			HP7.25 X 6	269,191.05	289,380.38	14.5 X 5	431,525.39	463,889.79				
			FP 14.5 X 6	460,275.00	594,225.62	FP14.5 X 5	423,373.39	455,126.39				
						Double Spread Half Page	832,371.68	894,805.68				
						Double Spread Full Page	1,334,669.15	1,434,769.344				

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Earpiece Front Page 2x2	403,750.00	434,031.25	Page 9 (Full Page)	674,500.00	725,087.00
Earpiece Front Page 3x2	593,750.00	638,281.25	Wrap around 1 Front Strip 1 Back Strip 4 Full Page Pull Out	25,650,000.00	27,573,750.00
Earpiece Back Page 2x2	409,687.50	440,414.06	4x6 Front Page	5,187,000.00	5,576,025.00
Earpiece Back Page 3x2	628,187.50	675,301.56	6x6 Front Page	6,982,500.00	7,506,187.50
Inside Earpiece 2x2	199,500.00	214,462.50	7x6 Front Page	9,975,000.00	10,723,220.00
Inside Earpiece 3x2	285,000.00	307,325.00	10x6 Front Page	14,250,000.00	15,318,750.00
Centre Spread	1,795,500.00	1,930,162.50	FP (Strip) 2x6	641,891.25	690,033.09
Double Spread	1,558,000.00	1,674,850.00	BP (Strip) 2x6	625,452.64	670,319.08
Centre Spread (HP)	1,017,063.80	1,093,343.59	Back Page 10x6	5,320,000.00	5,782,750.00
Double Spread (HP)	741,000.00	796,575.00	ROP 2x12	771,400.00	829,255.00
Page 2 (Full Page)	1,420,250.00	1,526,768.75	ROP (Strip) 2x6 Colour	266,000.00	285,950.00
Page 3 (Full Page)	1,311,000.00	1,409,325.00	ROP (Strip) 2.6 (B/W)	717,000.00	768,825.00
Page 4 (Full Page)	1,187,500.00	1,276,562.50	3x6 Front Page	1,140,000.00	1,225,500.00
Page 5 (Full Page)	1,064,000.00	1,143,800.00	2x6 Under Mast Head	3,990,000.00	4,289,250.00
Page 6 (Full Page)	940,500.00	993,937.50	12x2 Front Page	4,788,000.00	5,147,100.00
Page 7 (Full Page)	817,000.00	878,275.00			

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Minister hosts triumphant F'Eagles, Scrabble team

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

Minister of Youth of Sports Development, Sunday Dare, will host the champions of the WAFU Zone B championship held in Niamey, and the scrabble team who swept the West African championship in Ghana.

Dare, who spoke to both teams after they emerged victorious in the respective tournaments, advised that they should ensure they sustain the feat in future events.

The U20 Nigeria team had in their surge for the WAFU Zone B competition defeated the defending champions Ghana 2-0 in their opening game, drew with Burkina Faso 1-1 before narrowly seeing off Cote d'Ivoire 2-1 in the semifinal.

However, the third champions of the WAFU Zone B competition never flinched on reaching the grand finale as they humbled Benin Republic in the final with a convincing



3-1 win.

According to the Sports Ministry's statement, "the Minister spoke to both teams immediately after their resounding successes in Niamey and Accra, commending them for doing the nation proud.

"In Accra, Nigeria's Eta Karo emerged as the Most Valuable

Player(MVP) in the WAFU Zone B championship as the Nigerian team won the top nine places, emerging as the best country in the competition.

"The Minister had visited the Scrabble team on the eve of their departure to Ghana and urged them to be worthy ambassadors of the nation, a charge that has now been followed through.

"The President of the Nigeria Scrabble Federation(NSF) Olobatoke Aka thanked the Minister for his support and promised that his Federation will ensure Nigeria maintains its status as a global leader in the sport.

"In his chat with the Flying Eagles after their victory, the Minister expressed his delight with the team's performance and in restoring the nation's pride at age-grade competitions.

"He however charged them to stay committed to the greater goal, which is qualifying for the FIFA U20 World Cup in 2023.

"The Flying Eagles beat the defending African Champions Ghana 2-0, drew 2-2 with Burkina Faso, and edged Cote'd Ivoire 2-1 after extra time in the semi-finals before the convincing 3-1 win over the Benin Republic in the final," the statement said.

Consequently, the two finalists, Nigeria U20 and Benin Republic U20, secured automatic qualification to Africa U20 Championship in Egypt next year.

Rivers United extends lead in NPFL title chase

Rivers United have extended the lead on the 2021-2022 table of the Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL) to five points over title rival, Plateau United.

Plateau United fell yesterday in the Enyimba Stadium to a 2-0 defeat to Abia Warriors which paved the way for the Pride of Rivers to capitalise on the slip to record a hard-fought victory in Yakubu Gowon Stadium, Port Harcourt.

A second-half goal from Enyinnaya Kazie in the 77th minute was enough to secure a three-point victory over fourth-placed Remo Stars while Plateau had conceded two goals from Innocent Gabriel and Imeh Atobasi, Abia Warriors' players.

Elsewhere in Enugu, Rangers returned to the third position on the NPFL table by defeating Dakkada 1-0 after Remo Stars lost

to league leaders in Port Harcourt by a lone goal.

Matchday29 NPFL results from other areas saw Katsina United defeat Enyimba 1-0 in Muhammadu Dikko Stadium, Nasarawa won Wikki Tourist 1-0, Shooting Stars drew with MFM 1-1, and Gombe United trashing Kwara United 4-2.

Furthermore, Kano Pillars defeated Heartland of Owerri 3-1, Lobi Stars played a barren draw with Sunshine Stars of Akure while Akwa United edged Niger Tornadoes to a one-nil victory in Godswil Akpabio Stadium, Uyo.

However, Rivers United in their matchday30 will travel to tackle Dakkada on Sunday, May 29 at the Nest of Champions while fellow title contender Plateau United will host third-placed Enugu Rangers the same day in Jos.



How Man City clinched EPL trophy

Manchester City have, in a comeback, won the Premier League (PL) 2021-2022 season after defeating stubborn Aston Villa 3-2 at Etihad Stadium in the final game of the PL season.

City have been in close rivalry with Liverpool for their fourth English Premier League title in five years and led the English topflight league's table with a point difference to the last fixture.

With the game against Steven Gerrard's side, a legend of the Reds, Liverpool had hoped a shocker will be pulled in the Etihad and sustained while Klopp and the Kop in Anfield will panel-beat Wolverhampton to leapfrog Pep Guardiola's side to lift the PL trophy.

Aston Villa scored first

in first-half against City and double the lead in the second half through a former Liverpool and Barcelona player, Philip Coutinho.

Shocking has the outcome may seem, to see the trophy slip through their fingers without a fight, a resonated Manchester City slotted in the first of the superb comeback win through Ilkay Gundogan, and Rodri doubled it 2 minutes later.

Surprisingly, with Aston Villa's towering resilience to checkmate the high-powering attack of Manchester City, 3 minutes after Rodri's, the Premier League Player of the season, Kevin De Bruyne assisted Ilkay Gundogan to seal the victory and clinch the Premier League trophy with 93 points.



Phil Foden beats Mount, Declan, to claim Premier League award

Manchester City midfielder Phil Foden has been named the 'Premier League Young Player' of the season for the second consecutive season.

Foden, whose early season was disrupted by a foot injury, was able to reignite his potential to be a promising wunderkind for Pep Guardiola in the 2021-2022 season.

Despite contending with other stars like Mason Mount and Declan Rice of Chelsea and West Ham respectively, the 21-year-old statistically out-performed the duo with 623 passes into the opposition half, 32 dribbles completed, 37 chances created, and 9 goals scored in the season.

Foden, who felt honoured to win the award for the second time, admitted that there are so many good players eligible to win it.

He said, "I am very proud to have won this award for a second season in a row. There are so many talented young players in the Premier League and it is a real honour to win it again."

Meanwhile, Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has not hidden his admiration for the young midfielder, who he believes is eager to improve given the

opportunity.

"For Phil, responsibility is not a problem. Since day one going to bigger stages, bigger scenarios and important games, it's not a problem (for him). He loves to play," Guardiola told Sky Sports.

"I think in time he will be more capable to play in positions in the middle, he still has all the actions, the high speed, so maybe now the wide positions suit him better.

"In the Academy when I started to see him at 16/17-years-old when I arrived here, he played in a position like Kevin De Bruyne and wow, he played good but all the actions are so, so quick.

"You remember David Silva, sometimes he slowed the rhythm to increase the rhythm, (but Phil's) rhythm is always high.

"It's good as he is so aggressive and we need it but sometimes he needs a little bit, but that is a question of time. He can do it no problem, it's just a question of time," the City boss added.

Foden, who started from Manchester City academy before joining the senior team in the 2017-2018 season, has featured 96 times in all competitions, scoring 24 goals.

Perpetua edges Rashedaat in Oshoala's five-a-side team

Super Falcons and Barcelona Femini striker, Asisat Oshoala prefers Perpetua Nkwocha to Atletico Madrid forward, Rashedaat Ajibade in her attacking five-a-side lineup.

Oshoala, who was recently crowned with the Pichichi award in 2021-2022 season of Spain Women's Primera Division, beating off close contenders like Geyse of Atletico Madrid and fellow teammates, Alexia Putella and Lieken Martens, chose Chiamaka Nnadozie to man the goal post.

She described the 21-year-old goalkeeper, who is a

fellow Super Falcon and plays in France for Paris FC in the French Division 1 female league, as a very good goalie who has shown a lot of promise at her age.

Nnadozie, having spent two seasons in France after her stint in the Nigeria Women Football League (NWFL) with Rivers Angels, has featured 28 times in all competitions for the French side.

However, though, Oshoala's 2021-2022 season was challenged with injuries that prevented the Super Falcon from featuring for Nigeria in the double-tie friendly with

Canada, she chose Super Falcons' captain Onome Ebi and Florence Omagbemi in her defence lineup.

She expressed that Ebi, 39, who plies her career in the Belarusian female league for FC Minsk, is aerially strong, agile and has good ball control.

Ebi, the first African footballer to partake in five FIFA World Cups and a four-time African Championship winner, has scored four goals this season in 19 appearances for Volodymyr Reva's side.

The Barcelona striker also prefers having a visionary midfielder, schema and

someone that can use the ball efficiently and opted for Eskilstuna United DFF's midfielder, Ngozi Okobi.

Expectedly, the goal poacher, who became the third Barcelona player and the first of African descent to win the Pichichi award, led the attacking lineup with Rashedaat Ajibade as a supporting striker.

Oshoala, however, considering the link to be created with the midfield and the attacking positions, swapped Rashedaat for Perpetua Nkwocha who she prefers as better pair.

Lyon stops Asisat Oshoala's Barca's second Women's UEFA

By OVIRI KELVIN, Sports Editor, Abuja

French club, Lyon defeated Barcelona femini 3-1 in Turin to lift the Women's UEFA Champions League trophy for the 2021-2022 season, held in front of 32,257 fans at Juventus' Allianz Arena.

Barcelona, tipped as the favourite for the women's European clubs' top-flight competition after an impressive flawless season in the Spain women's football league, got a shocking surprise as Lyon opened the goal vault against Asisat Oshoala's side.

Lyon, a seven-time winner of the trophy and the leading record holder of the diadem, extended it to eighth after Amandine Henry's 6-minute long-range strike broke the

deadlock, followed by a 26-minute Ada Hegerberg's header.

Remarkably, Hegerberg's goal capped her return to Europe's biggest football event for European female clubs after been laid off for over 20 months by injury.

However, Barcelona Alexia Putellas and 2020-2021 ballon d'or winner, responded for the Catalans 4 minutes before the first-half additional time to make it 3-1.

Despite both clubs making a series of changes to affect the scoreline, including the Pichichi award winner and Nigeria international Asisat Oshoala coming in the second half to salvage the disappointing defeat, Lyon quelled the firepower of the Spanish champions to parry the 3-1 lead to the last sound of Finnish Lina Lehtovaara's



whistle.

Barcelona's loss in Turin to Lyon yesterday prevented the Spanish champions from clinching their second

successive UEFA Champions League diadem but that did not stop leading scorer of the tournament, Putellas from increasing her tally to 11 goals.

'I'm overreaching my goals winning all tournaments'



WTA world number one Iga Swiatek says she is overstretching herself after winning more than the target set for 2022.

Poland's Swiatek, who became world number one after the unexpected retirement of Ashleigh Barty, expressed that she has become a centre of attraction for every tennis player to tackle.

Swiatek, the favourite to win the French Open championship in Roland

Garros for a second time after winning her first Grand Slam last year, has swept five tournaments including Italian Open, Indian Wells, Stuttgart, Doha and Miami Open.

The 20-year-old tennis star noted that since she was crowned WTA number one, her fame in Poland has grown exponentially which inadvertently attracted journalists to always interview her.

"I feel like winning

all these tournaments is overreaching the goals I set at the start of the year. Roland Garros - like all the Grand Slams - is a totally different vibe," Swiatek said in her column in BBC Sports.

"Obviously my position has changed and I am seen as the person to beat. Everyone wants to try and beat the world's number one.

"The changes have been big since I became world number one. The biggest has been the increased attention away from the court.

"I have been spending more time speaking to journalists and doing interviews - which I really enjoy doing - but it's something I have to learn how to deal with," she conceded.

Swiatek continued: "I always knew it would be part of the job. I wanted to prepare for it and be ready for it.

The most important thing is ensuring I have enough time to rest and be ready for the tournaments mentally.

"In terms of attention from fans, I was really surprised there have been more of them approaching me - and they have been more excited - since I became world number one compared with when I won Roland Garros.

"In Poland, I am recognised all the time and it is hard to find a place where I am not recognised. So when I am meeting friends I am usually doing it at my house or their house, which is OK for me," she said.

The double Grand Slam winner added that compared to her performance in the last French Open event, she has greatly improved to challenge any of her contestants confidently.

NWFL Super 6: Delta Queens petitions Bayelsa



Delta Queens have lodged a petition against Bayelsa Queens for allegedly fielding an ineligible player in the ongoing NWFL Super Six in Benin City, Edo State.

The NWFL Super Six organised by the Nigeria Women Football League

(NWFL) resulted in Delta Queen accusing Bayelsa Queens of fielding an 'ineligible' Gift Monday who scored against them in Friday's encounter.

According to the petition signed by the Secretary of Delta Queens, Alero Pinnick, dated May 18, 2022, Bayelsa Queen violated the NWFL rule to have fielded Monday Gift who do meet the criteria to feature in the tournament.

The petition reads in part: "Permit me to refer you to Article 11.9 of NWFL league rule book of players rules that says, "A player shall only register and play for one club in the league during a season, except if properly transferred to another club within the season; provided that a player

may not play for more than two clubs within the same season.

"Article 11.10 says, any club found guilty of double registration or false procurement of registration or transfer shall be suspended for a period of one year.

"May I also inform you that, Natasha Witika of Konak Belediyespor, a Zambian player, but presently playing for Bayelsa Queens FC, did not meet the eligibility of Players' Rules on international transfer, being that the transfer window has closed in January, 2022, and Natasha came into Nigeria three (3) weeks ago.

"In view of the above, we implore the management of the NWFL/Super 6 to use their good

offices to act according to the stipulated rule," Pinnick said.

Delta Queens had argued that the Bayelsa women's football outfit had signed and were featuring Gift who had played for both Rivers Angel's and parent club FC Robo in the current 2021/22 NWFL football season, the News Agency of Nigeria reported.

Gift who already has six goals at the Super 6 competition holding in Benin City, Edo state capital, represented Rivers Angels in the CAF women's Champions League and the first stanza of the ongoing NWFL season.

She later returned and represented FC Robo in the second stanza of the current campaign.

Why Mbappe shocked Real Madrid, renewed PSG deal for three years

Paris Saint-Germain's top striker, Kylian Mbappe, has made a U-turn from a move that would have seen him in the Spanish capital next season, signing a three-year deal to keep him in the French capital until 2025.

The player, whose move has been on the headlines of most media releases, has been under intense pressure from the French Football Association, Noël Le Graët, and other notable figures like President Emmanuel Macron to remain in Ligue 1.

Le Graët opined that Mbappe has a better chance of winning the Ballon d'Or if he remains in situ at PSG than playing for Real Madrid.

"I want Kylian to stay in Paris. It's better for French football to have one of the best players in the world, if not the best, in its league. He is likelier to win the Ballon d'Or with PSG than if he leaves," he told France-Quest in an interview.

Also, President Macron, who supports Olympique Marseille and is a fan of PSG's wunderkind Mbappe, jokingly said he would have done everything to ensure Marseille signs the Le Parisien should the deal had been headed towards his boyhood club.

Macon said, "Unfortunately, you can't speak about Kylian Mbappe going to OM. If he was willing to come I would have fought to make that happen... but he said 'not so fast' (laughing). So it's better to fight for him to stay in Ligue 1 because he continues to be a great player."

Earlier in the month, Mbappe's mom, Fayza Lamari, refuted a tweet from a prominent French journalist, Frederic Hermel, alleging that the French forward has agreed to sign a new contract with PSG.

"Mr Hermel. When you don't know, keep your mouth shut... no



agreement was ever reached," Mbappe's mom responded harshly to debunk Hermel's tweet.

However, in a recent twist of the event, the player has reportedly jettisoned the move to Madrid to sign a new contract with the French giants.

According to reports, the contractual terms will enable the player to have a say on who becomes the new coach of the club and will also be given priority on the appointment of a sporting director.

In addition to the above, the contract extension will see the player pocket a wholesome amount of \$100m per year after tax, a \$300m sign-on bonuses and particularly, will be given the leverage to approve signings and sales.

Announcing the deal, France's World Cup-winning star before PSG's last game against Metz, told Le Parisien's fans that he was happy to remain in the place he calls home.

He added that he hopes to continue in the jersey on PSG in doing his best by winning more trophies.

"I'm very happy to continue this adventure, to stay in France, in Paris, my city. I always said Paris was my home," Mbappe told fans.

"I hope I will continue doing what I love the most, which is to carry on playing football and winning trophies," he reiterated.

Meanwhile, PSG's President, Nasser Al-Khelaifi who was standing close to Mbappe, breaking the good news to the fans revealed that the PSG star will stay until 2025.

Al-Khelaifi said, "I have some very good news to give you. Kylian Mbappe is going to stay until 2025,

"Kylian's commitment to PSG represents an amazing milestone in the history of our club," he added.

According to Canadian Press, PSG turned down Madrid's official bid of 180 million euros (\$190 million) — the same amount it signed Mbappé for from Monaco in 2017 — and even another reported amount of 200 million euros (\$211 million) was not enough to sell its star despite him having only a year remaining on his contract. Mbappé said he wanted to leave at the end of last season but only on the right terms for PSG.



AfDB okays \$1.5b food fund for 20m farmers

Stories By **JOHNMARK UKOKO**

African Development Bank (AfDB) has approved a \$ 1.5 billion emergency food production facility for 20 million farmers on the continent to avert a looming crisis caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

AfDB disclosed this at the weekend, saying the fund was meant to assist Africa in overcoming the shortage of about 30 million metric tons of food due to the disruption of global food supplies caused by the conflict in Europe, especially for wheat, maize and soybeans imported from Russia and Ukraine.

The bank explained that the facility was designed to boost the local production of cereals and oil grains, as the most effective and efficient way of building resilience across Africa's food systems, adding: "African farmers urgently need high quality seeds

and inputs before the planting season begins in May to immediately boost supplies."

President of AfDB, Dr. Akinwunmi Adesina, said: "Food aid cannot feed Africans. Africa doesn't need bowls in hand. Africa needs seeds in the ground, machinery and harvesters to harvest locally produced food. Africa will feed itself with pride, for there is no dignity in begging for food."

The African emergency food production facility had benefited from stakeholder consultations, including those with fertiliser producers and separately with African Union agriculture and finance ministers this month.

The price of wheat has soared in Africa by over 45 per cent since the Russia and Ukraine war began. Fertiliser prices have also increased by as much as 300 per cent and the continent faces shortage of two million metric tons of fertiliser. Most African



President of AfDB, Dr. Akinwunmi Adesina

countries have already witnessed increases in the prices of bread and other food items.

"If the deficit is not addressed, food production in Africa will decline by at least 20 per cent and

the continent could lose over \$11 billion in its food production value. The AfDB's \$1.5 billion strategy will lead to the production of 11 million tons of soybeans.

"The bank will provide

fertilisers to small holder farmers across Africa in the next four farming seasons with its influence with major fertiliser manufacturers, loan guarantees and other financial instruments," he stressed.

Ukraine must decide its own future, says Poland's president

By **OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH** with agency report

Poland's President Andrzej Duda has told lawmakers in Kyiv that only Ukraine has the right to decide its future.

The Polish president is the first foreign leader to give a speech in person to the Ukrainian parliament since Russia's February 24 invasion.

Kyiv has ruled out any peace deal that would involve ceding territory and has dismissed calls for a ceasefire that would involve Russian forces remaining in territory they have occupied, saying this would simply give Moscow time to rebuild its forces.

"Worrying voices have appeared, saying that Ukraine should give in to Putin's demands," Andrzej Duda said. "Only Ukraine has the right to decide about its future, nothing about you without you," he added, to a standing ovation in the chamber.

He said that the international community must demand that Russia completely withdraw from Ukrainian territory.

"If Ukraine is sacrificed for economic reasons or political ambitions, even a centimetre of its territory it will be a huge blow not only for the Ukrainian nation, but for the entire Western world," Duda said.

Poland's relations with Russia have long been fraught, since the Russian invasion Warsaw has positioned itself as one of Kyiv's loyal allies.

Poland is a strong advocate of tough sanctions against Russia and has been vocal in its support of Ukraine becoming a member of the European Union.

"I will not rest until Ukraine becomes a member of the European Union," the president said on Sunday.

Four members of same family killed in tourist plane crash

By **OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH** with agency report

All four members of a family and the pilot of a tourist plane that crashed in the French Alps at the

weekend died, rescue services said.

The plane crashed moments after it took off from the Versoud airfield near Grenoble in southeast France,

for what should have been a half-hour flight.

Eye-witnesses to the crash alerted the emergency services, when they arrived at the accident scene they

found the bodies of four adults and a child inside the plane's burnt-out wreckage.

Around 60 firefighters were deployed to the site to

put out the fire.

Grenoble prosecutors have ordered an investigation into what happened, said regional officials.

Titan Trust Bank plans Africa expansion after UBN acquisition



CEO/MD of Titan Trust Bank, Mudassir Amray

Titan Trust Bank Limited, the Nigerian lender has acquired the shares of Atlas Mara Limited after acquiring Union Bank Plc to cement its planned expansion across Africa after stabilising its operations in Nigeria.

Chief Executive Officer of Titan Trust Bank, Mudassir Amray, maintained that the initial plan for the first two years after the acquisition was to focus on key industries such as agriculture

and big companies for transactions and later consider expansion in Africa, as well as diversify across general financial services.

"Acquisition of Union Bank gives Titan Trust the scope to do bigger deals because it lift firm's regulator-imposed lending limit by creating Nigeria's sixth biggest bank," he said.

It would be recalled that Union Bank's total assets rose by 19 per cent to N2.6 trillion in 2021,

while Titan Trust total assets hit N136 billion in 2020.

In 2021, Titan Trust signed the agreement with Atlas Mara, Union Global Partners Limited and other shareholders to acquire 89.39 per cent of Union Bank's shares, subject to regulatory approval and other financial conditions.

"It is looking to obtain regulatory approval this month after which it will close the transaction," Amray said.