

Sultan, emir praise Fayemi, Tambuwal at Sallah

Sultan of Sokoto, His Eminence, Muhammadu Sa'ad Abubakar, has commended the harmonious working relationship between Ekiti and Sokoto states' governors, Dr. Kayode Fayemi and Rt. Hon. Aminu Tambuwal, respectively, describing it as a good

example in leadership.

Fayemi is also Chairman, Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF). Tambuwal is the Vice Chairman.

Sultan Abubakar stated this when the two governors paid him sallah homage at his palace in Sokoto, in celebration of the Eid Fitri festival.

The Sultan who, in company of his chiefs and religious leaders in the sultanate, welcome both Fayemi and Tambuwal to his palace, said he loves and admires the way the two governors work together harmoniously at the NGF and other

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Alleged plots for northern presidential candidates ruffle feathers in APC, PDP

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L-R: Ekiti State Governor/ Chairman, Nigeria Governors' Forum, Dr Kayode Fayemi; Sultan of Sokoto, His Eminence, Muhammadu Sa'ad Abubakar; and Sokoto State Governor/ Vice Chairman, NGF, Rt. Hon. Aminu Tambuwal; during a sallah homage to the Sultan's palace in Sokoto.

Presidential Aspirants List

APC - 16, PDP - 15, ADC - 3, SDP - 4, PRP - 2, APGA - 1, Accord Party - 1, NNPP - 1.

All Progressives Congress Aspirants

1. Prof Yemi Osinbajo
2. Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu
2. Chief Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi
4. Alhaji Yahaya Adoza Bello
5. Dr Chris Ngige
6. Ibinabo Joy Dokubo
7. Ihechukwu Dallas-Chima
8. Senator Orji Uzor Kalu
9. Engr Dave Umahi
10. Rev Moses Ayom
11. Senator Rochas Okorocha
12. Mr. Gbenga Olawepo-Hashim
13. Dr. Ibrahim Bello Dauda
14. Dr. Tunde Bakare
15. Mr. Tein Jack-Rich
16. Nicholas Felix

Peoples Democratic Party Aspirants

1. Alhaji Atiku Abubakar
2. Mr. Peter Obi
3. Senator Bukola Saraki
4. Senator Anyim Pius Anyim
5. Dr Nwachukwu Anakwenze
6. Mr Sam Ohuabunwa
7. Mrs. Olivia Diana Teriela
8. Mr. Dele Momodu
9. Mr. Ayo Fayose
10. Muhammed Hayatu-Deen
11. Senator Bala Mohammed
12. Alhaji Aminu Tambuwal
13. Mr. Udom Emmanuel

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Alleged plots for northern presidential candidates ruffle feathers in APC, PDP

By **TUNDE JOSHUA**,
Politics Editor, Abuja

Barely 30 days to the commencement of presidential primary elections across parties, uncertainty has pervaded the polity's turf regarding which part of the country should present candidates that will fly the political groupings' flags in the 2023 presidential election.

There is tension as a result of comments by political and non-political actors over zoning of Nigeria's presidency particularly by the two leading parties, the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) and the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

In the past two months, the PDP has been worst hit by criticism on its failure to make a categorical statement on where it is zoning its presidential ticket.

The party succumbed to pressure by inaugurating a zoning committee led by Benue State governor, Samuel Ortom to guide it on how to handle the delicate and sensitive issue.

At the completion of its assignment, Ortom announced that the committee members unanimously agreed a decision which will be tabled before the NWC for implementation subject to ratification by the National Executive Committee (NEC). The open ended statement, however gave room for speculation that the PDP has thrown its presidential ticket open.

Though Ortom frantically defended the committee's position of not being categorical about an open ticket, the party was left vulnerable

by attacks for allegedly being insensitive to the yearnings of the South that power must shift to the area.

The issue of zoning has remained volatile as it has created a sharp division among PDP members aspiring to pick the party's presidential ticket. One after the other, Northern aspirants either denied knowledge of zoning arrangement in the party or gave reasons why it should not be the yardstick for selecting the PDP candidate.

Sokoto State governor, Aminu Tambuwal and former Senate President, Bukola Saraki made frantic efforts at different fora in the course of their consultations to convince stakeholders that the party should consider competence above zoning because of the peculiarity of the 2023 polls.

Tambuwal pleaded that PDP should adopt any other consideration outside zoning to ensure it wins the Presidency and then come to a round table to zone political offices.

Bauchi governor, Bala Mohammed specifically cautioned the party leadership that should the PDP miss the chance of clinching the 2023 presidency, all stakeholders will remain in opposition while some may be forced to jump ship to the APC.

Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar who in the past has been an advocate of zoning turned round to query its feasibility as a yardstick.

Atiku said "Where the president comes from has never been the problem of Nigeria neither will it be the solution. There is no such thing as the president from Southern Nigeria or

president from Northern Nigeria. There is only one president for Nigeria, and by Nigeria."

Dr. Hayatudeen Mohammed even said he was not aware of any referendum for the Nigerian people to vote on zoning. He said "zoning is a matter of convenience for certain leaders and for parties to discuss and agree among themselves, it is not an imposition that everyone is bound to abide by."

Senate Chief Whip Orji Uzor Kalu and Rivers State Governor, Nyesom Wike, accused northern presidential aspirants of violating the party's principle of zoning and rotation of power by contesting. Wike blamed them for not honouring the gentleman's agreement subsisting in the PDP.

"The provision of our constitution is clear under Section 7, Sub-section 3C.I. It says there should be rotation of party offices and elective offices. The founding fathers of the party know the complexity, they know the diversity of this country and they made sure that for equity, fairness and justice, this should be done," Wike said.

However, in line with previous resolutions of the PDP Governors Forum that power must go to the south in 2023, aspirants from the area demanded from the party a southern presidential ticket.

Peter Obi, Pius Anyim, Sam Oluambuwa, Nwachukwu Anakwenze all agreed that one of the Igbo aspirants must clinch the party's ticket.

With the understanding that the ticket has been thrown open, 17 presidential aspirants paid N40 million each to obtain



APC National Chairman, Abdullahi Adamu



PDP National Chairman, Iyorchia Ayu

presidential nomination form, a majority of them from the South.

As confusion rages, the party leadership has maintained silence while the recommendation of the Ortom's Committee were kept top secret.

It is expected that this burning issue of zoning will top the agenda at the PDP NEC meeting this week.

On the other hand, the outcome of the March 26 national convention of the APC portends that the presidential ticket will go to the south since, Senator Abdullahi Adamu, a northerner emerged as national chairman.

A majority of the contenders who declared interest and those that have obtained nomination forms so far are from the southern part of the country. This, it is believed, may win sympathy votes for the APC in the southern part of the country.

There are those who also think that once the presidency is zoned to the south, the ticket should be micro-zoned to the southeast in the spirit of fairness, justice and equity.

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Presidential Aspirants List

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14. Mr. Nyesom Wike
15. Chief Charlie Ugwu

Africa Democratic Congress Aspirants

- 1 Prof Kingsley Moghalu
2. Mr. Chukwuka Monye
3. Dr. Mani Ibrahim

Social Democratic Party Aspirants

1. Mr. Eric Amagada
2. Cesnabmihilo Dorothy Nuhu-Aken'Ova
3. Mrs. Khadijah Okunnu-Lamidi
4. Mr. Adewole Adebajo

Peoples Redemption Party Aspirants

1. Mrs. Patience Key
2. Chief Kola Abiola

APGA Aspirant

1. Mrs. Angela Johnson

Accord Party Aspirant

1. Professor Christopher Imunolen

New Nigeria Peoples Party Aspirant

1. Engr. Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso

PDP and APC PRIMARIES

1. House of Assembly:

- (a) PDP - Saturday, May 7th.
- (b) APC - Tuesday, May 17th.

3. Senate:

- (a) PDP - Saturday, May 14th.
- (b) APC - Saturday, May 21st.

5. Presidential:

- (a) PDP - Saturday/Sunday, May 28th/29th.
- (b) APC - Tuesday, May 31st.

2. House of Representatives:

- (a) PDP - Thursday, May 12th.
- (b) APC - Thursday, May 19th.

4. Governorship:

- (a) PDP - Saturday, May 21st.
- (b) APC - Tuesday, May 24th.

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST & NOMINATION FORMS COSTS

(i) STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

*PDP Expression Form = N100,000
Nomination Form = N500,000.
TOTAL = N 600,000

*APC Expression Form = N500,000
Nomination Form = N1,500,000
TOTAL = N2,000,000

(ii) HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*PDP Expression of Interest = N500,000
Nomination Form = N2,000,000
TOTAL = N2,500,000

*APC Expression Form = N1,000,000
Nomination Form = N9,000,000
TOTAL = N10,000,000

(iii) SENATE

*PDP Expression of Interest = N500,000
Nomination Form = N3,000,000
TOTAL = N3,500,000

*APC Expression Form = N3000,000
Nomination Form = N17000,000
TOTAL = N20,000,000

(iv) GOVERNORSHIP

*PDP Expression of Interest = N1,000,000
Nomination Form = N20,000,000
TOTAL = N21,000,000

*APC Expression Form = N10,000,000
Nomination Form = N40,000,000
TOTAL = N50,000,000

(v) PRESIDENTIAL

PDP Expression of Interest = N5,000,000
Nomination Form = N35,000,000
TOTAL = N40,000,000

*APC Expression Form = N30,000,000
Nomination Form = N70,000,000
TOTAL = N100,000,000

Sultan, emir praise Fayemi, Tambuwal at Sallah

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national assignments, despite belonging to different political parties.

"I admire the mutual love and respect as well as the excellent working relationship between the two of you. Leadership is about service- service to the people.

"The way the two of you work together as Chairman and Vice chairman of the NGF and relate like brothers, despite belonging to different parties, is a good reference point in exemplary leadership.

"At the end of the day, it is about progress and development of our country. I must say you are

leading by example," the Sultan said.

Abubakar thanked Fayemi for visiting him in his palace for the Sallah celebration. He told his subjects present at the reception, that his relationship with the Ekiti State Governor predates his ascendance to the throne, adding that Fayemi has always demonstrated his love for the country and the people.

Fayemi, who brought greetings on behalf of his other colleagues at the NGF, also praised the Sultan for his interventions in conflict resolution and peace building initiatives in different parts of the

country.

His visit to the Emir of Gwandu, His Royal Highness, Alhaji Mohammed Jega, also went in the same direction with the monarch praising the cordial relationship between Fayemi and Kebbi State Governor Abubakar Atiku Bagudu. Alhaji Bagudu is also the Chairman, Progressives Governors' Forum (PGF).

Both governors were at the Emir of Gwandu's Palace in Birnin- Kebbi to celebrate the eid Fitri festival with him.

The emir recalled his strong connection to Ekiti through his late Battalion Commander in the 1960s, Colonel Francis Adekunle

Fajuyi. The emir, who retired from the military as a Major General, admonished the two leaders to always do what is right for the people without any expectation of praise or gratitude from them.

According to him, "it's in the nature of our people to be envious of those in leadership position, but I urge you to know that leadership is sacrifice, leadership is service to God and country, even if it's not appreciated".

He thanked Governor Fayemi for coming to celebrate the Eid Fitri festival with him and his people in Gwandu Emirate and wished him well in all his endeavors.



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Alleged plots for northern presidential candidates ruffle feathers in APC, PDP

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Former Abia State governor and Senate Chief Whip, Orji Uzor Kalu has been specific in the clamour for a President of Igbo extraction.

In a recent statement, Kalu dismissed the insinuation that power is not given but taken.

He said: "In reality, for a Southerner to become president of Nigeria, power is given and not taken. Power was given to the South West in 1999. Power was given to the South South in 2011. In 2015, the North did not give power to the South and that was why a sitting president lost. Unless for mischievous and selfish reasons against the South East, no one can comfortably deny these facts.

"As long as the Presidency of Nigeria is concerned, any pointer to equity and fairness is South East and North East, otherwise, and as I strongly advocated, Buhari's kinsmen, including his wife is free to run for the office of the president in 2023. It is very ungodly and immoral for any Southerner to talk about fairness and equity, but sees no fairness in working hard to cease the third meat that belongs to their remaining brother.

"None of the other aspirants is more Nigerian than me. Aside the capacity and what it takes to govern a country as diverse as Nigeria, I remain the most detribalized living Nigerian today and these are verifiable facts.

"It is a false claim and an old propaganda that the South East is not united in this contest. In the pursuit for the presidency, there is nothing the South East is doing that is different from what others are doing. Let the two major political parties zone their tickets to the South East and see the miracle that will happen to Nigeria."

The last straw that broke the camel's back was the statement last weekend by APC national chairman, Abdullahi Adamu that the party is yet to decide on zoning of its presidential ticket.

His comment sparked reactions from Nigerians, especially non-northerners and leaders of ethnic nationalities.

In a swift reaction to Adamu's comment about APC's indecision on zoning, leaders of the regional socio-cultural groupings, Middle Belt Forum (MBF), the Niger Delta group, PANDEF, Yoruba's Afenifere and

the South East Ohanaeze, condemned the party's position.

The joint leaders issued a threatening statement which suggested they could opt for a dismembering of Nigeria should the presidency go to the north in 2023. They vowed to resist another tenure of a northern President after Muhammadu Buhari might who will be completing his final term in office on May 29, 2023.

One APC leader who made effort to justify Adamu's statement said the decision of the PDP on presidential ticket will influence the next move to be made by the ruling party.

He said Nigerians should hold the opposition Peoples Democratic Party, (PDP) responsible if the 2023 presidency is not zoned to the South.

The Director General (DG) of Voice of Nigeria (VON), was apparently reacting to the knocks on APC's indecision to zone the 2023 Presidency to the South.

He lampooned the opposition party for breaching the zoning convention, which has helped in no small measure to unite and harmonize the country.

Okechukwu said, "PDP is aware that President Buhari will not be on the ballot in 2023, therefore, for them, there is a void to fill. They must have reasoned that the Buhari vote bank would be up for grabs if they go north.

"PDP's calculation is a desperate one, and selfish to the extent that they breached their own constitution and their age-long die-hard supporters in the South, especially the Southeast."

While not holding brief for the national chairman, he said the APC has not abandoned zoning but the party has to fine-tune its strategies for the 2023 polls.

"Although one is not holding brief of our distinguished national Chairman, Senator Abdullahi Adamu, one's little understanding is that the leadership of our great party, is watching closely the desperation and antics of our other sister political party, the PDP.

"They want to capture power by all means, indeed using Machiavellian tactics. We all know that PDP is famished, thirsty and desperate to win the Presidency in 2023. They loathe the loss of their slogan 'Share the Money' through their absence



Buhari

from power at the center for seven going to eight years," he said.

The ruling party has failed to implement its earlier zoning format of swapping offices between north and south, as declared by Governor Nasir el-Rufai before the March 26 National Convention.

Indications that the APC might have a northern presidential agenda up its sleeves started emerging with the interest of northerners in the presidential race.

The vigour and seriousness that the Kogi State governor, Yahaya Bello put into his presidential aspiration is seen in some quarters as no fluke.

Another northerner from Kwara State, Gbenga Hassim Olawepo is said to be joining the APC presidential race.

The rumoured dragging of the Senate President, Ahmad Lawan into the race further confirmed that the APC may have secretly thrown open the ticket.

It was gathered that many members of the 9th Senate are seriously mobilising for an Ahmad Lawan presidential bid. Though this was said to have divided the Senate as Senators rooting for Bola Tinubu and Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi, among others have vowed not to be swayed by the Lawan bid.

Lawan has though not come out to declare his interest. He was however quoted to have said that God will lead him aright but grapevine information has it that the Senate President may pick the APC presidential forms before the end of this week.

As the jostling for the sole Presidential ticket gathers momentum, an APC governor, Rotimi Akeredolu of Ondo State

has cautioned the party to thread the path of equity,

He said "the current democratic dispensation is anchored on the unwritten convention driven by a principle of equity and that political expediency dictates, more appealingly, that while adhering to the spirit and letters of the laws guiding conduct of elections and succession to political offices, we must do nothing which is capable of tilting the delicate balance against the established arrangement which guarantees peace and promotes trust.

"All lovers of peace and freedom must do everything to eschew tendencies which may predispose them to taking decisions which promote distrust and lead to a crisis, the end of which nobody may be able to predict.

"The leadership of the party ensured that the principle of rotational representation guided its decision at the just-concluded Convention. The party Chairmanship position has gone to the North. All other offices have been filled on this understanding. This is the time the leaders of the party must make a categorical statement, devoid of equivocation, on the pattern of succession.

"The party Executive Committee has fixed a fee for the purchase of the nomination form for the office. It is expected, fervently, that it will proceed to complete the process by limiting the propensities for disagreement to a region for possible micro-management. It is very expedient that we avoid self-inflicted crises before the general elections."

Akeredolu categorically stated that it is the turn of the Southern part of the country to produce the next President.

"The party leadership should have no difficulty in making pronouncement on this very important issue, just as it has fixed various fees for the purchase of forms. This must be done without delay. The principle of Federal Character is enshrined in the 1999 Constitution, as amended. It will be disingenuous for anyone to argue against rotation at this period.

"We must not keep our party men and women guessing on the position of the leadership of the party. This is the time to weigh in and take control of the process. No statement must suggest, even remotely, that the party harbours certain sentiments which may predispose it to consider throwing the contest open. This is certainly not the time for equivocation. Equity dictates that we take a stand," he declared.

In a statement entitled, THE ILLUSION OF A SOUTHERN PRESIDENCY, Governor Yahaya Bello's co-APC friend and former Aviation minister Femi Fani-Kayode reportedly said:

"As each day passes the illusion of a Southern Presidency in 2023 melts away like an iceberg approaching the tropics.

"At the end of the day both parties will present a Northern candidate, NOTHING will happen and the heavens will not fall.

"This is because Southerners do not know the meaning of unity or collective interest whilst most northerners do.

"As at today over 30 Southerners have indicated an interest to run for the Presidency when you look at all the political parties. The APC alone has at least 18 and is still counting.

"They can't even come together and agree on a shortlist of three but instead they are busy fighting each other and running each other down in an obsessive and frenzied attempt to get the golden fleece and win the prize.

"Meanwhile the North remains silent and is quietly doing their homework and planning with no rancour and little division.

"That is why they will have their way and no-one can deny the fact that they deserve it.

"He who plans quietly, operates covertly, displays caution, patience and wisdom, builds bridges, seeks unity, establishes alliances, identifies new friends, pursues a common and collective

interest and is strategic in all his ways always wins.

"He who is loud, brash, reckless, boastful, ostentatious, self-serving, incurably ignorant, historically illiterate, divisive, cowardly, quarrelsome, intellectually dishonest, unforgiving, uncompromising, politically inexpedient, shortsighted, blighted by bitterness, hate and rage, blinded by wealth and riches and is always fighting and pulling down his brother always loses.

"That is the lesson of life and the story of Nigerian politics.

"And these are the lessons that Southern politicians and leaders are yet to learn.

"Let me give you one example. There is only one zone in the South that has never enjoyed the Presidency. Yet how many Southern politicians and leaders are ready to step down for that zone?"

"See what I mean? It appears that some Southerners are more equal than others.

"If the South insists on fairness, equity and charity let it begin amongst themselves and within their own ranks but we know that they are wholly incapable of doing so and will even insult you for suggesting it. How sad and pathetic.

"Like Cassius said in Shakespear's 'Julius Caesar', the Nigerian Southerner must concede that 'the fault is not in our stars but in ourselves'.

"Weep not O south: you made your choices and you threw away your own chances for 2023 because you did not have the courage and foresight to pursue your collective interest and act with one accord.

"To you, individual interests were more important than the collective one.

Individual
"Yet again the North has flooded you.

"Abuse me as much as you like but this is the bitter truth.

"Know the truth and let it set you free!!!
"(FFK)."

Mr. Suyi Ayodele, writing in Nigerian Tribune, reportedly said: "Sources hinted that there is no notable presidential aspirant in the APC from the south today, who did not get the approval of Buhari and the northern mafia to go ahead! That is the strategy. Get as many of them down south to be in the race and then shop for a candidate up north that can upturn the apple cart. It is already happening."

CSOs decry IPAC chairman's alleged stand on NDLEA drug test

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

National Civil Society Coalition, a body of over thirty (30) Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have demanded the suspension of the Chairman of Inter-Party Advisory Council (IPAC), Amb Ogar Osim, for allegedly rejecting the proposal for screening of all aspirants by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA).

The IPAC chairman was said to have described the proposal by NDLEA as an awkward proposal.

Responding in a press statement signed by the convener, Martins Igwe, on Tuesday after an emergency meeting of the body held on Monday, the CSOs said that the IPAC chairman should be suspended within 14 days or come out to debunk his statement.

The statement says, "On behalf of

National Civil Society Coalition for peace and security we call on the IPAC members to immediately suspend its chairman for rejecting the effort of the NDLEA to compliment the effort of our electoral body to bring peace and security in electoral process through test of the political aspirants for 2023 election testing of aspirant is not only timely but appropriate to guarantee peace during elections and certified candidates whose mental health in capable of the challenges ahead.

"In Nigeria, we are witness to a state legislator after election he left his position for no reason. A federal legislator has also been caught beating a woman in a shop. Since Nigeria got independent all coups were based on corruption and bad governance. Democratic actions have been promised to Nigeria, still snake made away with millions of Naira from an Agency,

Gorilla allegedly took some million from a zoo, 13 billion naira was found in a house in Ikoyi while some are cooling off in septic tanks all over Nigeria.

"While the statutory salary of Nigeria President in a year is not up to 20 Million Naira, an agency staff allegedly took 300 Million as travel allowance. Allowing those kind of characters to jump into electoral process without drug test amount to sacrilege to democracy and if IPAC chairman is not officially suspended within 14 days or comes out to disown this unpopular statement CSOs will agree on the next action.

"Only in 2019 election, 629 human beings were killed across Nigeria. By rejecting drug test for politicians, IPAC chairman has overtly supported this electoral violence. Police and other security agencies should be officially



Amb Ogar Osim

informed of IPAC position while we mobilize for necessary legislative action that should halt further national embracement by politicians with yet to be identified misguided selfish interest.

"Finally, CSO join well meaning Nigerians to condemn the high cost of expression of interest form for contestable position in the next elections, that creates another possibility of drug barons and fraud stars to join the race as they have the resources.

"For IPAC chairman to have the shameless boldness to call a laudable idea by NDLEA 'Awkward Proposal' is tantamount to advisory disservice to Nigeria political parties, insult to credible electoral process hence our renewed call to political parties to suspend IPAC chairman immediately."

Gov's wife kicks off free eye treatment in Ughelli

By **GABRIEL ELOZINO**, Asaba

Wife of Delta State governor, Dame Edith Okowa, has flagged off a five-day free medical outreach for residents of Ughelli and environs in Delta state under her O5 initiative.

Speaking at the opening of the event at Ughelli Central Hospital, yesterday, Dame Okowa urged the residents to take full advantage of the programme to ensure their health challenges were addressed.

The outreach which specifically targeted eye patients according to the First Lady was part of her own way of helping the challenged in the society.

She urged political office holders in the area to reach out to their people by providing the necessary assistance especially to those in the hinterlands to ensure they take part in the programme, adding that it was the only way their mission would be achieved.

She said, "we have flagged off but staying here without people to treat we will achieve nothing. So they will do their own part, we have done our own part.

"I'm a teacher by profession, I don't know anything about medicine, it's just a passion that I have. I don't have any knowledge about medicine, the only knowledge I have is the

one I hear people talk about and I now imbibe.

Speaking further, she said after completing the programme in the 25 local governments of the state she would wait for God's leading to know her next line of action.

Reacting to the initiative, a former member of the House of Representatives, Hon. Solomon Awhinawhi described Dame Okowa as being passionate about the plights of the people.

He said, "I have seen that she have done so well, she is not a medical doctor but a teacher but it is her passion that's driving her to do all she is doing and I think she has done well."

Speaking on behalf of the Ughelli people, the President General of Ughelli Descendants Union (UDU) Chief Pius Omubaye said they were ready to mobilise as many that may be having any form of eye defect to the programme.

He expressed the appreciation of the Ughelli people to the First Lady for bring the programme to them.

In the same vein, Chief Omonefe Uwanogho thanked her excellence for the programme, pointing that it would provide a lease of life and hope to those who due to financial constraints may have lost all hope of treating their eye defects.

How to improve healthcare system, by Obaseki, Ehanire

By **SAAC OLAMIKAN BENIN**, City

Edo State Governor Godwin Obaseki and the Minister of Health, Dr. Osagie Ehanire have called for more private sector involvement in achieving a strong and effective healthcare system.

The duo made the call during a dinner organized for members of the Association of Nigeria Physicians in the Americas (ANPA) who are in Edo State on a one-week medical mission, providing specialised healthcare services to the people of Edo State.

Hailing the association for the free medical outreach, Obaseki said: "We have received the fundamental benefit of hope to Edo people as you gave renewed life to Edo people. You also engaged in capacity building as you interchanged skills and made your colleagues here locally improve their knowledge. They have learned new ways of doing things. You have brought a new way of commitment and dedication to duty.

"You have fulfilled your call of service to humanity as the team restored lives during this mission by providing free medical service."

He further stated, "To transform or reform any healthcare system in the world, we must focus on the people. It's

about the quality of human capacity and development. I am grateful to God that we have you. We need to organise ourselves to receive the value you are ready to give us."

On his part, Ehanire has commended the collaboration between ANPA and the state government, noting, "Nigeria suffers from brain drains as the country's medical personnel have left to practice abroad. It's difficult to stop them despite several plans as it affects not only Nigeria but across the globe."

He added, "I applaud the plan for telemedicine which has been experimented in America during the COVID-19 era with the help of technology which became very useful over there. Technology allows for virtual consultation between experts in the Diaspora and their patients here in Nigeria.

"We would like to institutionalize such a relationship to enable us share knowledge and skills and begin to develop the health sector here in Nigeria. We are waiting for the signature of the president to create the National Health Insurance Commission that will make health insurance mandatory for all Nigerians and increase the physical space for health."

ECOWAS Speaker tasks Muslims to extend love, care to downtrodden

By **EDWARD ADAMIDENYO**, Deputy Editor

Speaker of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Parliament, Dr. Sidie Mohamed Tunis said that Eid-el-Fitr is a time of deep reflection and renewed commitment that every Muslim faithful, and indeed the entire human race, in whatever way, should extend love and care to the downtrodden and take steps to make the world a better, safer and peaceful place.

Dr. Tunis who said this at his 2022, Eid-el-Fitr felicitation with Muslim faithful in West Africa, also noted that the celebration is a beginning of commitment in the exercise of faith, which is reflected in the communal relationships with one another, as well as brothers

and sisters of other faith.

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The Speaker further said, "I would like to extend my warmest wishes and that of the entire ECOWAS Parliament to Muslims around the West African sub-region and the

world celebrating Eid-ul-Fitr. While Eid marks the end of Ramadan, it also marks a new beginning in the lives of each individual. I pray that the beauty of Ramadan touch the deepest cores of our hearts and bring about increase in our good deeds, which will ultimately bring peace and happiness to our region and the world.

"I pray we each see religious intolerance, terrorism, extremism, poverty, democratic instability and lack of respect for constituted authorities as vices that make our world unsafe and increase hardship and suffering.

May Almighty Allah, after this long period of fasting and sacrifices, appreciate our obedience, answer our prayers and bestow His Mercies and Blessings upon mankind".

NAF tasks other security agencies on synergy with military

By **EDWARD ADAMIDENYO**, Deputy Editor

Chief of Air Staff (CAS), Air Marshal Oladayo Amao, has called on all security agencies to synergize with the military in the interest of Nigeria's peace and stability.

This is even as the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lieutenant General Faruk Yahaya said that he is ever determined to ensure the medical treatment of troops wounded in action, both within and outside the country.

Air Marshal Amao made this call during a Sallah luncheon organized in honour of the troops by the Headquarters Theatre Command, Operations Hadin Kai in Maiduguri.

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Akure records success with first IVF triplets delivery

By **FRIDAY OMOSOLA**, Akure

The first In Vitro Fertilisation delivery has taken place in Akure with a set of triplets to a couple that was seeking the fruit of the womb for 14 years.

The babies, two boys and a girl, weighing 1.9kg, 2.5kg and a 2.6kg respectively were delivered at a

private hospital, Classic Specialist Clinic and Fertility Centre, Akure, the state capital.

The Managing Director, Classic Specialist Clinic and Fertility Centre, Akure, Dr Momoh Rafiu, who delivered the 44 years old mother said the process of delivery took 45 minutes.

Thanking God and his medical

team, he said the three babies are in good condition.

Speaking with The Trumpet, a specialist in women fertility and other related health issues revealed that the clinic had three more expectant mothers, who have been through the IVF, to deliver.

He beseeched couples seeking the fruit of the womb to embrace IVF.

Represented by the deputy Governor, Mallam Umar Usman Kadafur, the Governor said the successes so

far achieved, clearly demonstrate the capability of the military in bringing the war to an end.

Earlier, during a routine operational visit to the JTF OPHK to assess the level of successes recorded thus far, the COAS called on troops to be more decisive in routing the criminal elements from their enclaves.

He also tasked them to remain dogged and unrelenting in the critical stage of ongoing operations.

While receiving operational brief on the ongoing Operation Desert Sanity and Operation Lake Sanity, the Army Chief expressed satisfaction with the successes so far.

He urged them to remain vigilant and proactive during the Eid-el-Fitr Celebration.

General Yahaya enjoined troops to continue to decimate the insurgents, and deny them freedom of action.

This he said, will provide a safe environment and opportunity for other elements of national power to play their statutory roles in the fight against terrorism and insurgency in the theatre.

The COAS was conducted round on inspection of some combat equipment recently revamped using the Nigerian Army Electrical Mechanical Engineers Corps repair capability.

CSOs decry IPAC chairman's alleged stand on NDLEA drug test

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

National Civil Society Coalition, a body of over thirty (30) Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have demanded the suspension of the Chairman of Inter-Party Advisory Council (IPAC), Amb Ogar Osim, for allegedly rejecting the proposal for screening of all aspirants by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA).

The IPAC chairman was said to have described the proposal by NDLEA as an awkward proposal.

Responding in a press statement signed by the convener, Martins Igwe, on Tuesday after an emergency meeting of the body held on Monday, the CSOs said that the IPAC chairman should be suspended within 14

days or come out to debunk his statement.

The statement says, "On behalf of National Civil Society Coalition for peace and security we call on the IPAC members to immediately suspend its chairman for rejecting the effort of the NDLEA to compliment the effort of our electoral body to bring peace and security in electoral process through test of the political aspirants for 2023 election testing of aspirant is not only timely but appropriate to guarantee peace during elections and certified candidates whose mental health in capable of the challenges ahead.

"In Nigeria, we are witness to a state legislator after election he left his position for no reason. A federal legislator has also been caught beating a woman in a shop. Since Nigeria got

independent all coups were based on corruption and bad governance. Democratic actions have been promised to Nigeria, still snake made away with millions of Naira from an Agency, Gorilla allegedly took some million from a zoo, 13 billion naira was found in a house in Ikoyi while some are cooling off in septic tanks all over Nigeria.

"While the statutory salary of Nigeria President in a year is not up to 20 Million Naira, an agency staff allegedly took 300 Million as travel allowance. Allowing those kind of characters to jump into electoral process without drug test amount to sacrilege to democracy and if IPAC chairman is not officially suspended within 14 days or comes out to disown this unpopular statement CSOs will agree on the next action.

"Only in 2019 election, 629

human beings were killed across Nigeria. By rejecting drug test for politicians, IPAC chairman has overtly supported this electoral violence. Police and



Amb Ogar Osim

other security agencies should be officially informed of IPAC position while we mobilize for necessary legislative action that should halt further national embracement by politicians with yet to be identified misguided selfish interest.

"Finally, CSO join well meaning Nigerians to condemn the high cost of expression of interest form for contestable position in the next elections, that creates another possibility of drug barons and fraud stars to join the race as they have the resources.

"For IPAC chairman to have the shameless boldness to call a laudable idea by NDLEA 'Awkward Proposal' is tantamount to advisory disservice to Nigeria political parties, insult to credible electoral process hence our renewed call to political parties to suspend IPAC chairman immediately."

Gov's wife kicks off free eye treatment in Ughelli

By **GABRIEL ELOZINO**, Asaba

Wife of Delta State governor, Dame Edith Okowa, has flagged off a five-day free medical outreach for residents of Ughelli and environs in Delta state under her O5 initiative.

Speaking at the opening of the event at Ughelli Central Hospital, yesterday, Dame Okowa urged the residents to take full advantage of the programme to ensure their health challenges were addressed.

The outreach which specifically targeted eye patients according to the First Lady was part of her own way of helping the challenged in the society.

She urged political office holders in the area to reach out to their people by providing the necessary assistance especially to those in the hinterlands to ensure they take part in the programme, adding that it was the only way their mission would be achieved.

She said, "we have flagged off but staying here without people to treat we will achieve nothing. So they will do their own part, we have done our own part.

"I'm a teacher by profession, I don't know anything about medicine, it's just a passion that I have. I don't have any knowledge about medicine, the only knowledge I have is the

one I hear people talk about and I now imbibe.

Speaking further, she said after completing the programme in the 25 local governments of the state she would wait for God's leading to know her next line of action.

Reacting to the initiative, a former member of the House of Representatives, Hon. Solomon Awihinawhi described Dame Okowa as being passionate about the plights of the people.

He said, "I have seen that she have done so well, she is not a medical doctor but a teacher but it is her passion that's driving her to do all she is doing and I think she has done well."

Speaking on behalf of the Ughelli people, the President General of Ughelli Descendants Union (UDU) Chief Pius Omubaye said they were ready to mobilise as many that may be having any form of eye defect to the programme.

He expressed the appreciation of the Ughelli people to the First Lady for bring the programme to them.

In the same vein, Chief Omonefe Uwanogho thanked her excellence for the programme, pointing that it would provide a lease of life and hope to those who due to financial constraints may have lost all hope of treating their eye defects.



Dame Edith Okowa

ECOWAS Speaker tasks Muslims to extend love, care to downtrodden

By **EDWARD ADAMIDENYO**, Deputy Editor

Speaker of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Parliament, Dr. Sidie Mohamed Tunis said that Eid-el-Fitr is a time of deep reflection and renewed commitment that every Muslim faithful, and indeed the entire human race, in whatever way, should extend love and care to the downtrodden and take steps to make the world a better, safer and peaceful place.

Dr. Tunis who said this at his 2022, Eid-el-Fitr felicitation with Muslim faithful in West Africa, also noted that the celebration is a beginning of commitment in the exercise of faith, which is reflected in the communal relationships with one another, as well as brothers and sisters

of other faith.

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The Speaker further said, "I would like to extend my warmest wishes and that of the entire ECOWAS Parliament to Muslims around the West African sub-region and the

world celebrating Eid-ul-Fitr. While Eid marks the end of Ramadan, it also marks a new beginning in the lives of each individual. I pray that the beauty of Ramadan touch the deepest cores of our hearts and bring about increase in our good deeds, which will ultimately bring peace and happiness to our region and the world.

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Maiduguri, to boost their morale in the critical stage of the ongoing counter terrorism and insurgency operations.

He noted that the Service Chiefs, who were visibly impressed with the performance of the troops, reaffirmed their commitment to their welfare.

The duo, he added, maintained that welfare of troops remains topmost in their priorities.

While delivering his remarks, the COAS, who had earlier paid a visit to troops wounded in action at the 7 Division Military Hospital, said he is ever determined to ensure the medical treatment of personnel and their families, both within and outside the country.

He added, that those wounded in action will continue to get support and special vocational training to help them cope with their new health status and overcome psychological trauma.

The Governor of Borno State, Prof. Babagana Umara Zulum, expressed appreciation to the military for the restoration of relative peace in Borno state.

Represented by the deputy Governor, Mallam Umar Usman Kadafur, the Governor said the successes so far achieved, clearly

demonstrate the capability of the military in bringing the war to an end.

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Is Jonathan qualified to run in 2023?

By MIKE OZEKHOME

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a country of one major news item per day. The issue in the polity currently generating national ruckus, hoopla and bedlam is the presumed intention of Dr Goodluck Jonathan to run for the 2023 presidency. It does not matter that he has never confirmed to anyone, the rumour of his planned defection from his opposition PDP party under which he was once elected President, to the ruling APC party. They are prepared, as ever, to shave his hair in his absence.

I have carefully read the arguments of those who believe that Dr Goodluck Jonathan is disqualified from contesting the 2023 presidential election, because according to them, he had already done two terms and will thus be ineligible to contest for a third term. They cite the Fourth Alteration (No 16) Act, which was signed into an Act by President Muhammadu Buhari on the 11th of June, 2018. The section they are relying on is section 137(3) of the said Fourth Alteration to the 1999 Constitution, which provides that "a person who was sworn in to complete the term for which another person was elected as president shall not be elected to such office for more than a single term".

THE ANTAGONISTS ARE DEAD WRONG IN THEIR LEGAL POSTULATIONS

The truth of the matter is that the antagonists of Jonathan running in 2022, in their strange line of argument, are mainly relying on the above section 137(3). They have probably not adverted their minds to sections 141 of the Electoral Act, 2010, as amended, and section 285(13) of the same Fourth Alteration to the 1999 Constitution, as amended, which they are relying on. More revealing is that these antagonists are probably not aware of an extant and subsisting Court of Appeal decision where Jonathan was frontally confronted and challenged before the 2015 presidential election, on the same ground of being ineligible to contest the said 2015 election, having allegedly been elected for two previous terms of office. The section 137(3) being relied upon by the antagonists was signed into law in 2018, three years after Jonathan had left office. Can he be caught in its web retrospectively? We shall see that anon.

The case in question is *CYRIACUS NJOKU V GOODLUCK EBELE JONATHAN* (2015) LPELR-244496 (CA). In that case, the Court of Appeal, Abuja Division, held that President Goodluck Jonathan had only taken the oath of office once and therefore upheld his eligibility to contest the then Nigeria's presidential election



Mike Ozekhome,

slated for March 28, 2015.

The intermediate court held that the oath of office President Goodluck Jonathan took in 2010 was merely to complete the "unexpired tenure" of late President Umar Yar'Adua, who died while in office as President.

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The appeal had been brought before the court by one Cyriacus Njoku, who was challenging the ruling of the High Court of Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, which on March 1, 2013, had dismissed the suit he filed to stop President Jonathan from contesting the 2015 polls.

In a lead judgement delivered by Justice Abubakar Yahaya, the full panel of the court unanimously held that President Jonathan had only spent one term in office as President, going by the provisions of the 1999 Constitution.

President Jonathan had been empowered as acting President on February 9, 2010, following a motion for operation of the "doctrine of necessity" by the Senate, owing to the protracted stay of late President Umaru Yar'Adua in Saudi Arabia on medical grounds.

When President Yar'Adua eventually died on May 5, 2010, Goodluck Jonathan was sworn in as president to serve the unexpired residue of office of Yar'Adua. Jonathan was later elected President in 2011 for the first time, on his own merit.

Mr. Njoku had contended that Jonathan had already sworn to the oath of office and allegiance twice and therefore, should be disqualified from contesting the 2015 election, as any victory he secured would amount to being sworn in thrice.

However, the court ruled that the oath that Jonathan took in 2010 was merely to complete the unexpired tenure of late Yar'Adua; adding that by virtue of Section 135 (2)(b) of the 1999 Constitution, Jonathan only took his first oath in May, 2011. The Court of Appeal further held that disqualification is through election, not oath taking.

The intermediate court's judgement read in part:

"In this appeal, it is not controverted by the appellant that the first oath taken by the first defendant (Jonathan) was the oath he took as the Vice President and not as President... But he took the oath in May 2010 to complete unexpired tenure of late Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. Section 37(1)(b) disqualifies a person from contesting for president if he had been elected twice. Disqualification is through election and not oath taking. Election is a process of choosing a person to occupy a position by voting. When election is given its literal meaning, it connotes when a voting is employed to choose a person for political office. This did not take place when Jonathan stepped into the shoes of his Principal who went to the great beyond. To say these things were done is to import words not used by the constitution.® Section 146(1) of the constitution cannot be deemed an election for a VP to step into the office of a President.

Read Also: Mixed reactions as 'Goodluck Jonathan 2023 poster' surfaces

Election involves conducting primaries by party, nomination, election and announcement of results. All these processes were not done. If a VP succeeds a President that dies, that cannot be challenged. It is a mode of stepping into the vacant office provided for by the constitution. When a President dies, the Vice President automatically becomes President as provided for by S130 (1)(2) of the 1999 constitution... It was not election that produced the first respondent in May 2010, the oath he took then was not an oath of elected President as provided for by Section 180 of the constitution.

The process of election was followed in 2011. The oath of office taken in 2011 was the first oath taking by the first respondent as an elected President having fulfilled all the process of election.... Again, the succession

of a Vice-President to the office of a President who died, in accordance with Section 146(1) of the 1999 Constitution, cannot be "deemed an election", especially for the purpose of taking away a right that has been vested. As stated earlier, an election under the 1999 Constitution involves primaries, nominations, voting and declaration of results.

That is the mode prescribed in electing a President, and once it is so prescribed, it must be followed, and no other method can be employed. All these processes can be challenged in a Court of law and if successful, the election would be annulled. But if a Vice-President succeeds a President who died, that cannot be challenged because it is a Constitutional provision, and the succession cannot be annulled.

It is a mode of assumption to the office of the demised President, an 'appointment' by the Constitution, as it were, as no letter of appointment is necessary from anybody. The Vice-President automatically becomes the President, by virtue of his being the Vice-President. An example can be found in Section 130(1) and (2) of the 1999 Constitution." Per ABUBAKAR DATTI YAHAYA, JCA (Pp 40 – 41 Paras E – D)

The Court of Appeal further upheld the decision of the lower court which had dismissed Mr. Njoku's suit for lack of locus standi. It noted that "it is fundamental that where a party lacks locus, the court cannot assume jurisdiction.... We agree with the lower court that the appellant has no locus to sue".

On the question of the cause of action, the court held that the case of the appellant was "speculative and imaginary as none of the reliefs he sought accrued to him any benefit".

Indeed, the Court of Appeal had awarded the sum of N50,000 each as cost to the defendant, President Jonathan.

RETROSPECTIVITY OF LEGISLATION

Aside Jonathan being completely cleansed of the virus of ineligibility to contest the 2023 presidential election by the Court of Appeal decision in Njoku's case, as Naaman the leper was, after dipping himself in the River Jordan seven times, Jonathan is also aided by the golden canon of interpretation to the effect that an enactment does not operate retrospectively or retroactively to take away from citizens enured rights.

We may now ask the question: What is the effect of Buhari signing into law section 137(3) of the Fourth Alteration to the 1999 Constitution in 2018? The answer is found in section 2 of the Interpretation Act which provides that:

Why President Jonathan cannot run

By FEMI FALANA

It has been confirmed that former President Goodluck Jonathan has decided to join the All Progressive Congress for the purpose of contesting the 2023 presidential election. However, the former President is disqualified from contesting the election by virtue of 137 (3) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended which provides as follows:

“A person who was sworn in to complete the term for which another person was elected as President shall not be elected to such office for more than a single term.”

Some people have said that the amendment is not retrospective and therefore cannot apply to Dr. Jonathan. Assuming without conceding that the amendment is not retrospective it is submitted that under the current Constitution a President or Governor cannot spend more than 2 terms of 8 years. In other words, the Constitution will not allow anyone to be in office for more than a cumulative period of 8 years. In *Marwa v. Nyako* (2012) 6 NWLR (Pt.1296) 199 at 387 the Supreme Court stated that Section 180 (1) and (2)(a) of

the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has prescribed a single term of 4 years and if a second term, another period of 4 years and not a day longer.

In the case of *Gov. Ladoja v INEC* (2008)40 WRN 1 the Supreme Court rejected the prayer of Governor Ladoja for 11 months’ extension to cover the period he was kept out of office through illegal impeachment. The Supreme Court rejected the prayer on the ground that a Governor is entitled to spend a maximum period of 8 years or less and not more than 8 years.

It is not in dispute that Dr. Jonathan became the President of Nigeria in 2010 following the sudden death of President Umaru Yaradua. He later contested and won the 2011 presidential election. Having spent 5 years in office as President, Dr. Jonathan is disqualified from contesting the 2023 presidential election. The reason is that if he wins the election he will spend an additional term of 4 years. It means that he would spend a cumulative period of 9 years as President of Nigeria in utter breach of Section 137 of the Constitution which provides for a maximum two terms of 8 years.



Femi Falana

Is Jonathan qualified to run in 2023?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

“1. An Act is passed when the President assents to the Bill for the Act, whether or not the Act then comes into force;

2. Where no other provision is made as to the time when a particular enactment is to come into force, it shall, subject to the following subsection, come into force –

a. In the case of an enactment contained in an Act of the National Assembly, on the day when the Act is passed;

b. In any other case, on the day when the enactment is made”.

It is therefore clear that section 137(3) of the Fourth Alteration to the Constitution took effect from 11th June, 2018, when President Muhammadu Buhari assented to it. Section 137(3) is subject to section 318(4) of the 1999 Constitution which provides that, “the Interpretation Act shall apply for the purposes of interpreting (its) provisions”.

Section 137(3) is one piece of legislation that can be termed retrospective or retroactive legislation.

On retrospectivity of legislation, the apex court, coram Justice Kekere-Ekun, J.S.C, held in the case of *SPDC V. ANARO & ORS* (2015) LPELR-24750(SC) at (Pp. 64 paras. B), thus:

“There is a general presumption against retrospective legislation. It is presumed that the legislature does not intend injustice or absurdity. Courts therefore lean against giving certain statutes retrospective operation. Generally, statutes are construed as operating only in cases or on facts, which come into existence after the statutes were passed unless a retrospective effect is clearly intended. It

was held inter alia, in: *Ojokolobo Vs Alamu* (1987) 3 NWLR (Pt.61) 377 @ 402 F-H that it is a fundamental rule of Nigerian law that no statute shall be construed to have a retrospective operation unless such a construction appears very clearly in the terms of the Act or Law; or arises by necessary and distinct implication. See also: *Udoh Vs O.H.M.B.* (1993) 7 NWLR (Pt.304) 39 @ 149 F – G; *Adegbenro Vs Akintola* (1963) All NLR 305 @ 308.”

Similarly, in *ALEWA V. SOKOTO STATE INEC* (2007) LPELR-8388(CA) (PP. 32 PARAS. A), the Court of Appeal, per Ariwoola JCA (as he then was), held thus:

“It is however settled law that, unless the law makers expressly state otherwise, a statute operates prospectively but not retrospectively. It is a cardinal principle of English Law that no statute shall be construed to have retrospective operation unless such a construction appears very clearly in the terms of the Act, or arises by necessary and distinct implications. The position is the same in this Country. In *Olaniyi vs. Aroyehun* (1991) 5 NWLR (pt 194) 652, the Supreme Court held that:- “A construction like other statutes operates prospectively and not retrospectively, unless it is expressly provided to be otherwise. Such legislation affects only rights which came into existence after it has been passed.” See also; Chief C. Odumegwu Ojukwu vs. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo & Ors. (2004) 7 SCM 53 at 93, *Afolabi & Ors. v. Governor of Oyo State* (1985) 2 NWLR (pt 9) 734, *Ojokolobo vs. Aremu* (supra).”

Hear my Lord Kekere-Ekun JCA, (as he then was) in *ALEWA V. SOKOTO*

STATE INEC (2007) LPELR-8388(CA) (PP. 21-22 PARAS. D):

“There is a presumption that the legislature does not intend what is unjust. Thus, although under our legal system, the Legislature is competent to make retrospective laws, the Courts generally lean against giving a statute retrospective effect unless the terms of the statute so state in clear and unequivocal language. In *Afolabi v. Governor of Oyo State* (1985) 2 NWLR (9) 734 at 752 E, Aniagolu, JSC stated thus, “The Courts have always leaned against giving statutes a retrospective effect and usually regard them as applying to facts or matters which came into existence after the statutes were passed, unless it is clearly shown that a retrospective effect was intended by the Legislature.” Underlining supplied. See also *Adesanoye v. Adewole* (supra) at 147 B-C & D-E; *West v. Gwyne* (1911) 2 CH 1; *A.G. Federation v. A.N.P.P.* (2003) 15 NWLR (844) 600 at 648 G -H; *Sa’ad v. Nyame* (2004) All FWLR (201)1678.”

His Lordship Muhammad, J.S.C, in *EGUNJOBI V. FRN* (2012) LPELR-15537(SC), (PP. 34-35 PARAS. F), held that:

“...It is trite law that the Courts frown at retrospective and retroactive legislations. *Ojokolobo v. Alamu* (1987) 3 NWLR (Pt.61) 377 at 34 406; *Afolabi v. Governor of Oyo State* (1985) 2 NWLR (Pt 9) 734. Although under Nigeria Law, there is a presumption against retrospectivity, where a retrospective operation is clearly spelt out, that legislation must not be declared incompetent; *Adegbenro v. Akintola* (1963) 2 SCNLR 216; *Adeshina v. Lemonu* (1965) 1 All NLR 233; *The Swiss Air Transport*

Co. Ltd v. African Continental Bank Ltd (1971) 1 All NLR 37; *Attorney General East Central State v. Ugwuh* (1975) 5 SC 13...”

Indeed, section 4(9) of the Constitution denies the NASS “in relation to any criminal offence”, the power to “make any law which shall have retrospective effect”. Though this section specifically deals with criminal offences, judicial decisions clearly show that it operates with equal force to civil matters.

Thus, the court held in the case of the *ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE FEDERATION V. ALL NIGERIAN PEOPLES PARTY (ANPP) & 2 ORS.* (2003) 15 NWLR (Pt. 844) 600 @ pages 648-649, paras. E-B, that:

“A statute is deemed to be retrospective where it takes away any vested right acquired under existing laws or creates a new obligation or imposes a new duty or attaches a new disability in respect of transactions or considerations already past... Based on the presumption that a legislature does not intend what is unjust, the courts have always leaned against giving statutes a retrospective effect and usually regard them as applying to facts or matters which came into existence after the statutes were passed unless it is clearly shown that a retrospective effect was intended by the legislature. In the instant case the constitution came into being on 29th May, 1999 and all rights, liabilities and privileges as contemplated by the circumstance of the arose as of that day. Consequently, its provisions can only be read prospectively.”

• *Chief Mike Ozekhome, SAN, OFR, FCIARB, LL.M, Ph.D, LL.D, wrote in from Abuja*



From Legislative Chambers to Government House : Lawmakers eyeing Governorship Seats

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) had last week screened 201 governorship aspirants while the All Progressives Congress (APC) and other political parties are still selling nomination forms and waiting for aspirants to be screened. Most of the aspirants are serving legislators in either of the two chambers of the National Assembly. Politics Editor, **TUNDE JOSHUA** examine intrigues in states where lawmakers are eyeing Governorship seats.

As politicians step up their games in preparation for the 2023 governorship election in states of the federation except in few states which have off-season elections, there have been alignment and re-alignment of positions across parties in search of gubernatorial candidates.

Some serving governors are obviously not having stiff opposition to their second term ambitions as they have control of their party structures. These include Ahmadu Fintiri of Adamawa, Abdullahi Sule of Nasarawa, Babagana Zulum of Borno, Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos, Seyi Makinde of Oyo, Dapo Abiodun of Ogun, Gboyega Oyetola of Osun, and Abdulfatir Abdulrazaq of Kwara.

In what has become a norm in Nigerian polity, majority of the two term governors are jostling for seats in the Senate, thereby negotiating new positions for serving senators they want to replace. Governors of Taraba, Delta, Yobe, Plateau, Niger, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Jigawa, Benue, Enugu and Abia are believed to be nursing senatorial ambitions.

While a few other second term governors rather go for the most exalted office of the president. They are Nyesom Wike of Rivers, Emmanuel Udom of Akwa-Ibom, Dave Umahi of Ebonyi, Aminu Tambuwal of Sokoto, Bala Mohammed of Bauchi and lately, Ben Ayade of Cross River.

There is a believe that a few of these presidential aspirants might have secretly purchased senatorial nomination forms as back up but findings at the PDP headquarters proved this wrong as a staff in the office of the National Organising Secretary told The Trumpet that "such forms cannot be sold secretly now. How would they stand for two screening exercise. Are you telling me they will be screened as senatorial aspirants and then go to the presidential screening committee to be screened?"

When he was confronted with possibility of such happening in the past, he simply said "as far as records in the NOS office is concerned, there is no presidential aspirant that bought senatorial nomination forms".

Senators that have indicated interest in the governorship seats in their respective states include the chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriation, Barau Jibrin who is a leading contender for Kano State governorship ticket on the platform of APC. He has to contend with another ranking lawmaker, Alhassan Ado-Dogwu, the current Majority Leader of the House of Representatives, who is also eyeing Kano governorship seat.

Also in the Kano Guber race is Hon. Sha'aban Sharada representing Kano Municipal Constituency who an APC stalwart and a strong member of the Ibrahim Shekarau faction of the party in the state.

Senate Minority Leader, Enyinnaya Abaribe who has served as deputy governor of Abia State in the past is



Fintiri



Sule



Sanwo-Olu



Makinde

gunning for the number one position in the state in 2023. He is believed to have gotten the blessing of Governor Okezie Ikpeazu who himself wants to come to the Senate .

However, Abaribe is battling opposition to his ambition on zoning issues. Abaribe come from the same senatorial district with the governor.

Another lawmaker, Honourable Benjamin Kalu, member representing Bende Federal Constituency of Abia State in the House of Representatives is also in the Abia governorship race.

Immediate past Deputy Senate President, Ike Ekweremadu wants to be the governor of Enugu State on the platform of the PDP.

Like Abaribe, Senator Ekweremadu, who is from Enugu West senatorial district has his gubernatorial ambition

being objected to by PDP stakeholders in the state on the ground that the Enugu State governorship ticket has been zoned out of Enugu West

He, however have insisted to forge ahead with his ambition while discarding the claimed zoning arrangement.

In Taraba State, former Senate Minority Whip, Emmanuel Bwacha who recently defected from the PDP to the APC is in the race. Though, he claimed that he was forced out of the PDP by alleged crisis in the party but it was obvious he defected to APC in search of governorship ticket when it dawned on him that Governor Darius Ishaku was not going to back him.

Senator Bassey Akpan, wants to be the next governor of Akwa Ibom State and has been screened by the PDP. He has Pastor Umo, the anointed candidate of

Governor Emmanuel Udom to contend with for the PDP ticket.

Two federal lawmakers, a senator and an House member are in the race to succeed Rt. Hon. Aminu Tambuwal as governor of Sokoto State in 2023.

Senator Ibrahim Gobir representing Sokoto East senatorial district is of the APC and Honourable Balarabe Salame, member representing Illela/ Gwadabawa Federal Constituency of Sokoto State, are in the race.

Equally in Ebonyi State, two federal lawmakers are in the race. Chairman, Senate Committee on Youths and Sports, Senator Obinna Ogba representing Ebonyi Central and Honourable Anayo Edwin, member representing Ezza North/Ishielu Federal Constituency are willing to take over from Governor Dave Umahi.

Both want to explore the opportunity created by Umahi's defection from the PDP to APC.

Senator Ahmad Babba Kaita, representing Katsina North has never hidden his governorship aspiration in Katsina State but not on same page with the state governor, Aminu Masari and by extension, leadership of Katsina APC.

This might have informed his recent defection to the PDP to realize his governorship ambition.

In Oyo State, the two APC senator, Teslim Folarin representing Oyo Central and Abdulfatai Buhari representing Oyo North are said to be interested in the governorship race.

Folarin, who lost the APC ticket in 2019 to Bayo Adelabu seem to be the leading contender this time around. But he has his colleague, Buhari to contend with. Buhari has also took a shot at the party's ticket in the past.

In Adamawa State, Hon. Abdulrazak Namdas, member representing Jada/Ganye/MayoBelwa/Toungo Federal Constituency is ready to test the waters with the incumbent governor, Ahmadu Fintiri. Both Namdas and the governor are political allies of former Vice President, Atiku Abubakar.

The aspiration of Senator Elias Abbo is yet to be confirmed as the youngest senator is said to be consulting.

Honourable Onofiok Luke, representing Etinan/ Nsit Ibom/ Nsit Ubium Federal Constituency who the current chairman of the House Committee on Federal Judiciary wants to run on the ticket of PDP, for the Akwa Ibom State governorship seat.

Another House member gunning for Akwa Ibom Government House is Hon Enyong Okon, representing Uyo/Uruan/NsitAtai/Asutan/Ibesikpo Federal Constituency of Akwa Ibom;

A fourth term lawmaker in the House of Representatives, Hon. Herman Hembe, is in the race to has succeed Governor Samuel Ortom in Benue State, while

Honourable Farah Dagogo, member representing Degema/Bonny Federal Constituency in Rivers State is also eyeing the Rivers State governorship seat.

Amagada joins presidential race on SDP platform

By TUNDE JOSHUA, ABUJA

A development economist and investment banker, Eric Amagada, has joined the 2023 presidential race on the platform of the Social Democratic Party (SDP).

He said he is offering himself to serve the nation by heeding the calls of compatriots to arise and serve his fatherland.

Amagada who is from the oil-producing Isoko ethnic nationality in Delta State, said the office of the president of Nigeria is not for charlatans. "It requires a selfless, focussed and patriotic mind that is able to identify and solve problems. A visionary leader with proven leadership records," he noted.

The technocrat said Nigerian problems

were just too many and it was time for a leader with great capability and capacity to come to the saddle and address them by proffering solutions.

The presidential hopeful remarked: "The signs are ominous, our elders sigh in disbelief, our youth grope rudderless and our children are in despair. If Nigeria ever needed us, she needs us now.

"So 'what can I do?' You may ask. You can do what Nigeria needs to be done right now. Vote out the looters and incompetent demagogues. For decades, they took us for a ride which has now turned a dangerous bend to terrorism, kidnapping, banditry, ritual killing and organ trade. Violence and bloodshed with disgraceful frequency. Truth be told, there is no government, what we

have now is pure anarchy.

"Many of our youth have since lost direction. From betting booths to drinking pubs and to balance their emptiness, they have gone into large scale drug abuse.

"If children are indeed our future, do we have a future? And if the youth are tomorrow's leaders, then we are in dire straights.

"Our economy is in shambles, government is borrowing for recurrent spending. Security sector leaves much to be desired.

"We must arise to serve our fatherland, to provide leadership that will redirect and channel our children and youth energies to pull our nation from the brink to a veritable land of prosperity in peace and unity."

Coming on a platform, the Movement

for Good Governance (M4GG), he said it in the past 12 years has been preparing transformational leaders from the 36 states and Abuja that will transcend future generations.

He said the Eric Amagada Campaign Organization promises to elevate the quality of electioneering and upgrade democracy to meet the yearnings of the people for good governance on resumption at Asok Rock on May 29, 2023.

According to him, his campaign manifesto is built on five pillars: *Reduction of cost of governance. *Diversifying the economy.

*Provision of total security including food and social security.

*Diplomatic engagement and

*Restructuring for growth.

"So that mothers can again call their children to 'come chop.' Families can go to bed knowing that Nigeria stands at their doorstep to keep watch at night and 'nothing dey happen.

"That families will live in affordable housing without fear of landlord 'wahala' and that Nigerians can dream again of attaining lofty heights in academia and industry with incentives provided by government in a nation where everything works," he said.

He called for support and participation of Nigerians in the active pursuit of these goals.

Amagada added: "we have made room for your gifts, skills and talents including other endowments and financial support and together, we will win."

Amaechi lists reasons for supporting Buhari against Jonathan in 2015

By ISAAC JOB, UYO

Minister of Transportation, Mr. Chibuike Amaechi has given reasons for supporting President Muhammadu Buhari against Dr. Goodluck Jonathan during the 2015 presidential elections.

Amaechi gave the reason in Uyo Akwa Ibom State in his remarks at the 2022 Press Freedom Day Celebration organised by the Akwa Ibom State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists on a theme 'Journalism Under Surveillance.'

The former Rivers State governor stated that though many labelled him a betrayer for not standing with Jonathan, a fellow Niger Deltan, his support for Buhari was for the survival of Nigeria.

He claimed that there were no strings attached to the support he gave Buhari, "I did not give him any conditionality", he said.

Amaechi, declared that Nigeria was broke, and accused Jonathan's administration of wasting about 68 billion dollars that the administration of General Olusegun Obasanjo left behind.

The APC presidential aspirant claimed that the Buhari Administration inherited a paltry 2.5 billion dollars from the Jonathan administration.

Amaechi stated that until Nigerians began to hold every politician and office holder



Amaechi

responsible the country would not go forward

The former governor, who was the Special Guest of honour at the event, declared that this is the time for Nigerians to vote for the right people and journalists have a responsibility to president all the candidates before the electorates to make a right choice.

The minister confessed that why the elites are agitating for restructuring "is because there is nothing to share. Nigeria is broke."

"What worries me is the survival of Nigeria. I am worried to the extent that I begin to wonder if Nigerians know what

the problem is," lamented Amaechi.

Amaechi averred that the problem of Nigeria is not the poor man but the elites, which include journalists.

He boasted that he has been in government back to back for the past 23 years without a scandal, that is why no journalist can blackmail him.

The minister acknowledged that while there are good and bad journalists, some of the latter blackmail people to the extent that their victims have to pay.

"I have no scandal," Amaechi declared.



Amagada

Niger senator Abdullahi banks on achievements in contest with gov

By TUNDE JOSHUA, ABUJA



Bello

The race for the Niger North senatorial district ticket in the All Progressives Congress (APC) is gathering steam as the incumbent governor of the state, Sanni Bello, has signified his intention to come to the Red Chamber of the National Assembly.

He has the Deputy Chief Whip of the Senate, Senator Aliyu Sabi Abdullahi as major contender.

The serving senator is seeking a third term as representative of the people of Niger North while Bello wishes to join the league of ex-governors in the Senate.

While the governor may be relying on his position as leader of the party in the state and may be willing to appropriate and deploy the party's structure at his disposal during the senatorial primary, the serving senator will be banking on his antecedents in office.

The Trumpet gathered that efforts by party leaders in the state to broker amicable selective process for the district proved abortive as Abdullahi decided not to let go of his seat.

Apart from the state resources, Governor Bello is known to have come from a wealthy background, therefore having funds at his disposal to prosecute his senatorial ambition.

Senator Abdullahi believed he has given his constituents qualitative representation in the past seven years and he is willing to do more if given the opportunity to serve the third time.

Just last week, APC members from the 8 local government areas of Niger North senatorial district of Niger state Thursday stormed the National Assembly Senate to present to Senator Abdullahi APC's Expression of Interest and Nomination forms to run for another term.

Leader of the team and Director General of Sabi Abdullahi senatorial campaign, Muhammad Danladi said they obtain the N20 million forms in appreciation of the past deeds of the senator who was said to have "done well in the 8th and 9th Senate and to call on him to run for Niger North in the 10th Senate".

He said Sabi has been "tested and trusted" by constituents from the 8 local governments

comprising Niger North senatorial district: Agwara, Borgu, Kontagora, Magama, Mariga, Mashega, Rijau and Wushishi."

The DG said all the 87 wards in Niger North senatorial district are in support of Sabi "because since 1999 when democracy returned we have not seen a representative like Sabi Abdullahi in security and provision of infrastructure".

He said "we are satisfied to associate with you".

Responding, Senator Abdullahi expressed gratitude to God and his people for their efforts, adding that politics to him is about the people and "any politics that does not benefit the people is useless".

Knowing fully that the contest will be tough, he relied on the support of the people of his district whom he said he has served by tremendously improving their welfare. He assured them that he will do more in the three areas of his duty: law making, representation and oversight, if he is re-elected.

Putting his trust in God, Abdullahi said "for me, it is people first, people always" adding "victory is from God".

PDP disowns man who poses as Delta State Chairman to defraud aspirants

By PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

The Delta state chapter of the People Democratic Party (PDP) has disowned a man posing as the Chairman of the State, Kingsley Esiso, to defraud unsuspecting aspirants by demanding various amount of money.

The yet-to-identified fraudster was exposed after the State Publicity Secretary of the party, Dr Ifeanyi Osuoza, on Tuesday, issued a disclaimer on his activities.

While dissociating the party's state chairman from activities of the unidenti-

fied man, Osuoza, described the man as a fraudster and imposter.

He alleged that the suspect has been calling aspirants and leaders of the party to pay money to a specified account number to curry favour in the party's primary election.

The statement reads, "It has come to our Knowledge that a criminally minded person has been putting calls across to PDP aspirants and other leaders of our party, pretending to be the State Chairman of our party, PDP, Olorogun, Barr. Kingsley Esiso and requesting them to pay different sums of money into an

account, for the purpose of granting some favours.

"The number which this fraudster has been operating with is: 07035036524."

Osauzo called on the members of the PDP in the State and the general public to blacklist the mobile number and treat the caller as a criminal.

"The general public and particularly PDP aspirants are, by this notice, advised that the caller who is making the calls with telephone number 07035036524 is not the State Chairman of our party and the criminal caller is neither connected to him nor operating on his behalf.

"This statement, therefore, dissociates Olorogun, Barr. Kingsley Esiso, the Delta State PDP Chairman from the activities of this impersonator completely and urges the general public, especially our aspirants, to henceforth disregard any form of interaction with any caller with the number 07035036524 and warns that anyone who deals with this caller, will be doing so at their own peril," he said.

He urged the general public to be wary of such calls, urging the public to 'report any further calls from the said number to the nearest security agency'.

Kogi ICPC charges outgoing NYSC anti-graft CDS group to be good ambassadors



James

By PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

The Kogi State chapter of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) has charged outgoing members of the NYSC/ICPC Anti-Corruption CDS group, Batch A 'Stream 2' 2021/2022, to be ambassadors of anti-corruption wherever they find themselves after their service year.

This charge was given by the Resident Anti-Corruption Commissioner (RACC) of the ICPC Kogi State office, Mr Ulu Okoro James, when the office played host to the group after their passing out parade in Lokoja, Kogi State.

The RACC further encouraged the former corps members to be self-reliant by starting up small businesses after their service no matter how small, especially since they were taught skills by the NYSC.

He sternly admonished them to shun cultism, cybercrime (yahoo-yahoo)

and any other illegal acts capable of destroying their lives, explaining how young people are easily influenced by what they see, which often pushes them to engage in unlawful dealings (acts) hoping to become rich within a short period of time.

He finally felicitated with them on the successful completion of their service year and thanked them for their contribution to the fight against corruption during their service to the Nation.

Responding, Miss Olaleye Rachael, who served 2 terms as Vice President of the CDS group, expressed her appreciation to the Commission and her fellow corps members whilst introducing the new executives. She also urged them not to go into illegal dealings so as not to tarnish their images.

The highlight of the event was the presentation of certificates to about twenty outgoing corps members, and election of five new corps members to join the executive.

EFCC grills AGF's aides over alleged sales of Presidential pardon

Some senior officials of the Ministry of Justice and aides of the Attorney General of the Federation (AGF) have been quizzed by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) over suspicion of corruption in the compilation of the presidential pardon list.

President Muhammadu Buhari controversially pardoned former governors, Joshua Dariye and Jolly Nyame, who are serving jail terms for corruption, after getting the nod of the Council of State on April 15, 2022.

The council is made up of the president, vice-president, former heads of state, former chief justices, senate president, speaker, governors and the attorney-general of the federation (AGF).

Based on the recommendation of the presidential prerogative of mercy committee, Buhari submitted names of 162 persons to the council for advice on state pardon.

There has been widespread criticism of the pardon and the full list of those pardoned is still being kept under

wraps, although many convicted coup plotters made it.

Some sources at the ministry of justice said that several aides of Abubakar Malami, the Attorney General of the Federation (AGF), who were responsible for the processing of the list are currently being investigated by the anti-graft agency.

One of the sources said, "Of particular surprise is the inclusion of Atuche on the list that was submitted to the Council of State.

"There are several names that raised suspicion and the EFCC had to be called in to investigate what went down."

Atuche was, in June 2021, convicted of N25.7 billion fraud and sentenced to 12 years imprisonment to run concurrently for six years.

When the name was presented to the council, it was rejected, supposedly because he had just been convicted and was yet to serve one full year.

Dariye and Nyame were both jailed in 2018.

They are yet to be released from the prison weeks after the pardon,



Buhari



Malami

reportedly because of bureaucratic bottlenecks.

"Mrs Leticia Ayoola-Daniels, director of the administration of criminal justice and reforms department under the justice ministry, is also being quizzed by the EFCC," another source said.

Those invited have been subjected

to lie detector tests "and many of them are failing".

Some of those quizzed attributed their failure to pass the test to "high blood pressure".

There is yet no scientific proof linking blood pressure to effectiveness of lie detector test.

Alaafin Oba Lamidi Adeyemi 111 (1938-2022)

On Saturday 23rd of April, 2022, Nigerians and the rest of the world woke up to the sad news that Alaafin of Oyo, Oba Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi 111, danced into the night of his long royal life by joining his ancestors while receiving treatment at the Afe Babalola University Teaching Hospital, Ado Ekiti. He was the third from the Alowolodu Ruling House, the other being Agunloye of the two ruling houses recognised by Oyo tradition and the law of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Always richly bedecked in traditional Yoruba attire, surrounded by most of his beautiful and adorable 'Ayabas' (wives), Oba Lamidi held the traditions and moral values of his people in a most colourful manner. Indeed his sartorial elegance equally matched by his Ayabas' was a cultural beauty to behold at public events and any time he travelled from the shores of Nigeria.

Apart from being the most historically prominent of all Yoruba monarchs, reasons abound why Oba Adeyemi's memory and legacy will remain etched in the sands of time. As the foremost iconic aesthete of Oyo kingdom, he lived, practised and advocated the beauty of cultural nuances in all interactions. From the political angle he was one of the nationalistic royal fathers whose voice was respected and honoured in Nigeria's political circles. Although he strongly upheld the idea of Yoruba nation and state policing, he never called for splitting the federation. For about eight years Oba Lamidi privately paid vigilante groups to guard farms and villages from Oke-Ogun down to Oyo town. This was part of the metamorphosis of Amotekun as acknowledged by the Oyo State Government which made him the Grand Patron. He believed in community policing as the most effective means of local security. The Amotekun experiment has proved that local policing can co-exist with the national security systems. Unlike many of his peers,

Adeyemi placed ethics and virtue over money in giving chieftaincy titles of the land to deserving citizens. He was Chancellor to Uthman Dan Fodio University, Sokoto for three chequered tenures. When the grand monarch passed on, he was serving as the Chancellor of the University of Maiduguri.

On the social sphere, Oba Adeyemi was a unifying factor between the royal families, embracing all members of the royal household irrespective of being Alowolodu or Agunloye. He made peace with other kings thereby downplaying battles of supremacy. His marriage to non-Yoruba in his expansive polygamous harem shows his appreciation of cultural diversity. Adeyemi was widely reported to play fatherly and husband roles to all his wives who he established well

before his death. With his personal wealth he settled a very long list of known and unknown people's educational bills till he died. He patronized local medical services as evident in where he passed on. Furthermore, Adeyemi was passionate about religious harmony, making the palace a confluence where all religions merged for the progress of the kingdom. Traditionalists, Christians and Muslims all co-existed in worship in the various shrines in his palace.

The late monarch's major frustration was that Nigeria has never had the kind of leadership that thought more about the people; a leadership that is able to understand the complexity of the nation. While alive he often recalled that in 1914 when the amalgamation document was signed by his predecessor Alaafin Siyanbola Ladigbolu, the king lamented that what the British colonialists were trying to do was bringing predators and preys together and seriously warned against the consequences. But he then thought that if the leaders and managers of affairs were prudent enough, they might be able to manage the contraption. Alaafin wanted the Yoruba to play their leadership roles as exemplars and Omoluwabi as a model to others.

Oba Adeyemi was 83 years old and the longest reigning Alaafin ever, having ruled for more than 51 years. In general, he will be missed for his candour, his great intellect, his retentive memory, his ability to represent the true Yoruba person in the way he dressed, the way he danced, the way he moved, his courage, his versatility, his generosity, his love for family, and his love for youngsters' education. We sincerely condole with the people of Oyo and Nigerians over the loss of this great nationalist. While we say 'adieu' to the great king, we wish the Oyomesi the very best in selecting the next Alaafin.

Oba Adeyemi has since been interred according to Muslim rites and the tradition of Oyo, leaving the Oyomesi in control of the monarchy until another king is crowned.



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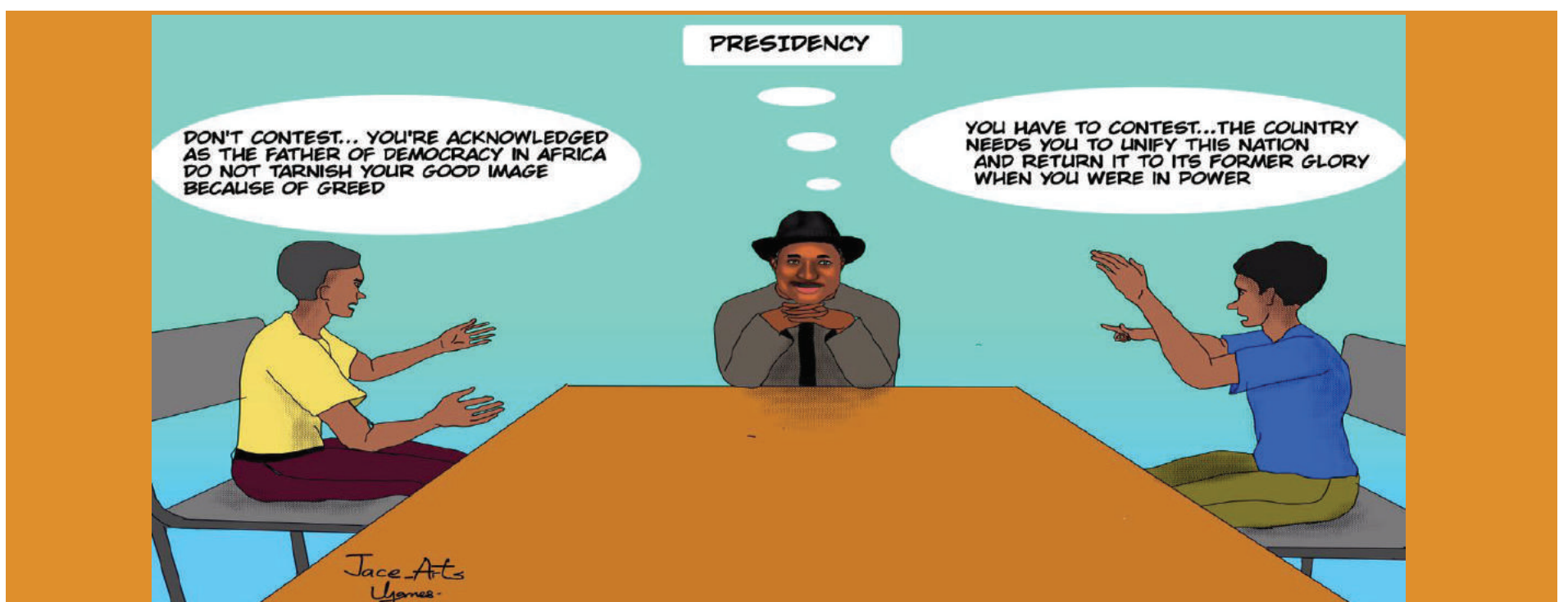
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Presidential rotation, crucial for Nigeria's survival

It is disturbing that some top politicians, for obvious selfish reasons, are trying to jettison the much-desired rotation of the Presidency between the north and the south. Since the advent of democracy in 1999, it has been an acceptable political tradition. Though it is not expressly written in our constitution, it has become a convention, just like the unwritten British constitution. The nearest constitutional provision is the federal character clause. It was meant to give all parts of our highly diverse country, a sense of belonging.

It was the same rationale that informed the decision to zone the Presidency to the southwest in 1999. In 1993, Chief M.K.O. Abiola won the presidential election very convincingly. He was unjustly denied the trophy. This infuriated most Nigerians, particularly the Yoruba, his ethnic group. In order to assuage their anger, two of their kinsmen, General Olusegun Obasanjo and Chief Olu Falaye, were deliberately given the tickets of the major political parties. The former won.

At the expiration of his tenure, it rotated to the north. Musa Yar'adua became the president. He died after two years. The Presidency then moved back to the south. Goodluck Jonathan, who was his vice, became president with the adoption of the now popular "Doctrine of Necessity". After completing the tenure of his boss, he contested and won the presidential election in 2011. At the end of his tour of duty, the position again went back to the north. And the current incumbent, President Muhammadu Buhari, took over.

This beautiful narrative is what the two major political parties, APC and PDP, are trying to change in 2023. The problem actually

emanated from the latter, the main opposition party. It set up a committee, headed by the governor of Benue State, Samuel Ortom, to work out its zoning formula. After allocating all the key offices, it dubiously left out that of the president. In fact, when it zoned the Chairmanship to the north, it was generally believed that the Presidency would automatically come to the south. But that was not to be. Rather it was thrown open. This was in compliance with the position canvassed by the Northern Elders Forum, NEF.

Most people believed that the warped decision was engineered by those who were bent on satisfying the obsessive yearning of the former Vice President, Abubakar Atiku for the presidential slot. He has contested as a candidate in every presidential election since 2007. He is being seen as the aspirant who may eventually win the PDP 2023 presidential primaries.

What the party is doing is a deliberate ploy to turn the presidential election to a straight fight between the north and south. This is so because the ruling party APC, has initially zoned its presidential slot to the south.

The PDP is, therefore, banking on the usually primordial voting pattern to snatch power from the ruling party. Its calculation is that the Northwest and the Northeast, which have the largest voters, may be inclined to elect one of their own than a southerner.

APC fully understands the game that its opponent is playing. In order to checkmate it, APC National Chairman, Senator Abdullahi Adamu said a few days ago that his party has not decided on where its presidential candidate would come from. Call it tit for tat, if you like.

It is true that the pro-

nouncement of the Chairman contradicts the well known position of his party. Its prominent stalwart, the Governor of Kaduna State, Nasri El Rufai, has categorically stated that all the party positions in the north would move to the south and vice versa. To be fair to the APC, they kept their promise. All their presidential aspirants were from the south. All that is about to change because of the dishonorable and divisive role that PDP is playing.

It is pertinent to sound a note of warning that retaining the Presidency in the north will have catastrophic consequences for this country. The leader of Afenifere, the umbrella sociocultural group of the Yoruba, Pa Ayo Adebajo, said that the return of the Presidency to the north in 2023 may lead to the disintegration of the country. A similar view was also expressed by Chief E.K. Clark who is the leader of the Pan-Niger Delta Forum, PANDEF. He said: "it will be calamitous if the major political parties should zone their presidential tickets to the north". He added that "Nigerians would be mobilized to protest against plans by the north to perpetuate itself in office after the incumbent, President Buhari". The Ohanaeze and Middle Belt Forum, the sociocultural and political umbrella groups of the Igbos and Middle Belt respectively

have also seriously opposed the position of the Northern Elders Forum, NEF, that the race for the 2023 presidency should be thrown open for the north to participate.

Interestingly, the four zones-- the Southwest, Southeast, South-South and North Central-- have vowed to work against any party that fields a northern presidential candidate.

The unity of Nigeria has never been so threatened as it is now. That is the more reason the politicians must be careful in taking decisions that would further weaken our bonds of unity. There have been strident complaints over the years in the South and the Middle Belt about the Hausa/Fulani domination of the country. It has even degenerated to an abysmal level that Nnamdi Kanu, an Igbo activist, and Sunday Igboho, a Yoruba irredentist, have, respectively, been spearheading the agitation for the secession of their ethnic groups from Nigeria.

That the fate of Nigeria, as a united entity, is hanging precariously on the balance, should be of serious concern to us all.

We should not forget that the National Intelligence Council of the United States predicted on March 5, 2005, that Nigeria would breakup in 2015. President Obasanjo took it very seriously. He therefore, sent the document to the Senate to study and

to serve as a guide in its operations. Although John Campbell, a former US ambassador to Nigeria, who was a part of the prediction later exonerated his country, we should only thank God for our resilience. That Nigeria survived 2015 is not enough reason to totally discountenance the factors threatening our unity.

Only recently, another release by the United States Council on Foreign Relations and Harvard Kennedy School painted a very gloomy picture of Nigeria. It said that Nigeria is now a failed state. The organization said that their conclusion was not based on emotion, but on "a body of political theories developed at the turn of the century and elaborated upon, case by case, ever since".

In the paper signed by its Senior Research Fellow and former ambassador to Nigeria, John Campbell and Robert Rotberg, a founding Director of the Harvard Kennedy School and President Emeritus of World Peace Foundation, it was stated that "Nigeria has long teetered on the precipice of failure. But now, it is unable to keep its citizens safe and secure. Nigeria has become a fully failed state of critical geographical concern".

These are very wrong signals that all discernable and patriotic Nigerians should be worried about. It is very disheartening that most Nigerian politicians are only interested in what they can loot from our common patrimony. They are not bothered about the survival of the country as a united entity.

The 2023 presidential election will serve as the litmus test. The rotation of the office of the president between the north and the south must be held sacrosanct. It should not be unduly politicized. If we do, we will unwittingly give credence to the doomsday predictions of the breaking up of Nigeria.

“

it will be calamitous if the major political parties should zone their presidential tickets to the north". He added that "Nigerians would be mobilized to protest against plans by the north to perpetuate itself in office after the incumbent, President Buhari.

”

Buhari assures families of train attack victims' safe return

Tasks military, NRC on rescue mission coordination

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

resident Muhammadu Buhari has stated that the terrorists who attacked the Abuja-Kaduna train on March 2, 2022, are using their captives as shields from military bombardments.

The President made the claims on Monday when he hosted some FCT residents at State House on Sallah homage, adding that the terrorists do not care if their hostages are killed during rescue mission. Noting that the situation requires wisdom, caution and patience.

A statement by the Special Adviser to the President on Media and Publicity, Femi Adesina, further indicated that Buhari assured families that efforts are ongoing to ensure the return of all captives alive and unhurt while ordering the management of Nigeria Railway Corporation (NRC) to create situation room for the coordination of hostages safe return.

According to the statement, the President said bandits and terrorists, unlike professional soldiers, don't respect the rules of engagement and could resort to harming hostages when attacked.

Buhari said, "As we celebrate this occasion with joy amidst friends and family members, we are fully conscious of the fact that many families in

our country are in a state of fear and anxiety on account of the many captives held by terrorists against their will, including those taken away after the tragic bombing of the Abuja - Kaduna train.

"I have directed security agencies to ensure quick and safe recovery of all victims of kidnapping. I urge the railway management to immediately set up a situation room for the coordination of the rescue mission and for a minute by minute engagement with the families of the captives.

"This should ease their pain and anxiety as we push the military to finding a safe return to their families. My aim is to see all those in captivity safely rescued.

"Let me assure Nigerians that the bandits are just pushing their luck, but this is only for a while before they are finally crushed. They are using civilians as human shields, thereby making it difficult to confront them directly," he said.

"They don't care about killing their hostages if they come under attack. It's a delicate situation that requires wisdom, caution and also patience. Any rescue operation that results in the death of any hostage cannot be deemed a success.

"The government doesn't want this kind of tragic outcome. It's a complex

situation that demands proper handling. The primary objective of any rescue operation is to free the hostages safely, unharmed and alive.

"Let me make it clear, however, that defeating the terrorists and bandits requires more than weapons; we also need human intelligence which is necessary to frustrate terrorist plans. The people and community leaders should help our security officials with information about the activities or movements of criminal groups."

Buhari urged Nigerians to create a hostile environment for criminals hiding in communities.

He added, "By protecting criminals from exposure, you are endangering your own security and the security of your own community. No criminal can thrive in an environment where he faces the risks of exposure by the people.

"This administration has allocated huge resources to improve the capacity of our security forces by timely giving them adequate equipment and improving the welfare of personnel to boost their morale.

"Abuja has witnessed remarkable improvements in terms of security. In the past terrorists had made it almost impossible to conduct our normal lives. Road barricades had overrun the capital city and people had to pray in



Buhari

fear because of the anxiety of terrorist attacks. No place in FCT was beyond the terrorist. Not the United Nations building, nor the Police Headquarters.

"But today, the situation is no longer so. We have significantly weakened and crippled the capabilities of the Boko Haram terrorists so much that they no longer have the ability to seize, and occupy any Nigerian territory without being repelled by our gallant troops.

"Of course, we can't say that the terrorists are one hundred percent destroyed, but we have destroyed their ability to seize our territory. This improvement in terms of significantly weakening the enemy is necessary for finally defeating them. The rate at which the terrorists are

giving up their weapons and surrendering to our troops is a significant and welcome development."

The President commended the FCT Minister, Mohammed Musa Bello for diligently ensuring the capital city stays safe and attractive, while thanking the FCT residents for visiting the Presidential Villa.

"It's my pleasure to welcome you all to the presidential villa. As is the tradition, people pay homage to the President as part of the events to mark the Sallah celebration.

"I value these kinds of visits because they afford me the opportunity to interact directly with the people or their representatives. I commend the FCT residents for living in peace and harmony for years since the capital officially came into being," the President said.

LSSTF secretary lauds security officers for sacrifice

By **ALEX OLISE**

Executive Secretary and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Lagos State Security Trust Fund (LSSTF), Dr Abdurrazaq Balogun has lauded personnel of the various security agencies in Nigeria for their sacrifice for the country.

He reminisced on their contribution to calming the frantic security situation both within and outside the shores of the country.

Balogun lauded the military and paramilitary agencies.

"I wish all men and officers of the security agencies in the entire country. I thank you all for your sacrifice and service to our dear Nation

"Despite the seemingly insurmountable challenges and seemingly thankless situation, they have continued to protect the lives and properties of individuals. They have also protected our national assets and infrastructure while providing a major boost to international security", he told The Trumpet in a brief chat.

The savvy administrator also used the opportunity to praise the individuals, banks, and other corporate organizations who contribute regularly to the Trust Fund. He urged other Nigerians to support the agency so as to bolster security in the nation's commercial nerve centre and West Africa's economic hub, Lagos state.

The funding agency, LSSTF supports various security agencies in Nigeria. This includes Nigeria Police, the Nigerian Army, Nigerian Navy, Nigeria Customs, Immigration Service (NIS), Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), the Rapid Response Squad (RRS), Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA), and Lagos Neighborhood Safety Agency (LNSA).



LSSTF Executive Secretary, Dr Abdurrazaq Balogun

Battle against terrorists nearing end, President affirms

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

President Muhammadu Buhari has restated the commitment of his administration to end the lingering war against terrorism in the country, saying that normalcy is gradually returning to the northeastern part of the country.

The President said this while giving a security appraisal in a message he sent to Muslims to mark Eid, stating that as the Holy month of Ramadan reaches its end, so the end to terrorism approaches.

According to a statement by his Senior Special Assistant on Media and Publicity, Garba Shehu, the challenges of banditry and kidnapping are being tackled differently in the North-western and North Central states.

Buhari said, "After a period of fasting and reflection, this year, we have cause to welcome the occasion in hope. The battle waged against terrorists who falsely masquerade under the name of Islam is approaching its conclusion.

"The fight has been long and hard. Final victory is within sight. Boko Haram and its offshoots' final embers are now fading.

"Last month, the leader of ISWAP was killed in an airstrike. Since the New Year, thousands of fighters have surrendered to enter rehabilitation programmes. The territories they used to occupy are now seeing the return of those who were forced to flee their barbarity. Normality is finally beginning to return to the Northeast. It is a long process. Yet it is one we are, together, now embarking upon.

"With the designation of bandit groups as terrorists, the challenges of banditry and kidnapping are being tackled differently in the North-western and North Central states where the latest military acquisitions and the Armed Forces are being fanned out across the region to thwart acts of terror.

"The administration is equally getting impressive reports of the special operations to curb crude oil theft and illegal oil bunkering in the South-South, with millions of illegally refined products being impounded and illegal refineries destroyed.

"While we are making progress cleaning the environment, some evil people are busy causing more pollution and destruction.

"In response to the disturbing rise in criminal attacks targeting law

enforcement and public facilities in the South East, concerted military operations to rid the region of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Eastern Security Network (ESN) elements have, in recent weeks, led to the overrunning of IPOB/ESN bases, the seizure of weapons and the arrest of a large number of suspects."

The President approved the establishment of a Naval Base in Oguta, Imo State.

"The reinvigoration of the war against drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking is also showing positive results as shown by the arrest of over 12,300 offenders including seven drug barons; the conviction of 1,400, counseling and rehabilitation of about 8,000 drug users.

"The seizure of over 3.4 million kilograms of drugs and cash worth over N130 billion, all in 2021 has been

recorded while the first Quarter of this year has seen the arrest of no fewer than 3,536 offenders including security personnel and a well-known billionaire drug baron. The seizure of more than 65,000 tons of assorted drugs in this period sets a record for the nation."

It is with a view to giving impetus to the concerned agency that President Buhari granted approvals for the promotion of more than 3,500 officers, the procurement of operational equipment, training for personnel and buildings for residential barracks.

The President also directed increased coordination and cooperation among security agencies, saying that an end has been brought to a silo approach among the agencies, assuring that there will be no shortage of funds to provide security for the citizens.



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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	
3 x 2	37,413.09	40,219.07	3 x 2	33,987.48	36,622.04	3 x 2	27,524.84	29,589.20	3 x 2	22,721.91	24,426.05	
4 x 2	49,884.02	53,625.42	4 x 2	45,177.83	48,566.17	4 x 2	36,700.09	39,452.60	4 x 2	30,295.53	32,657.70	
5 x 2	62,355.15	67,031.71	5 x 2	56,472.29	60,707.71	5 x 2	45,866.19	49,315.34	5 x 2	37,863.00	40,710.09	
6 x 2	76,142.50	81,853.18	6 x 2	67,975.12	73,073.25	6 x 2	55,049.68	59,178.41	6 x 2	45,443.82	48,852.10	
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14.5 x 4	520,790.19	559,849.45	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	
7 x 5	218,243.02	234,629.74	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	
8 x 5	299,304.72	321,752.57	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 6	359,165.65	386,103.08	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	
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11 x 6	592,622.16	637,068.82	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	
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Politics of Delta State N150b loan and its implications

By **EDU ABADE**, Business Editor

Despite attempts by the Delta State Government to explain its decision to obtain a N150 billion loan just about a year to the expiration of its tenure, which was approved by Speaker of the state House of Assembly, Hon. Sheriff Oborevwori, as requested by Governor Ifeanyi Okowa recently, tempers are high that the state government must have some ulterior motives for obtaining the facility.

The state government gave reasons for requesting the loan, which Okowa sent to the House of Assembly, as the lawmakers allayed fears that the money was being sought to prosecute the 2023 elections, but opposition elements are not convinced that the loan will be deployed to the projects the state government claimed it was meant for, insisting that the loan was meant to prosecute the 2023 governorship poll.

Chairman of Okowa's College of Commissioners and Commissioner for Finance, Fidelis Tilije and Commissioner for Information, Charles Aniagwu, outlined the motives for the loan, which they said, will be granted by Zenith Bank Plc.

They explained that the Okowa administration was encouraged to seek approval for the loan against the backdrop of expected statutory accruals from the Federation Account as part of the 13 per cent derivation fund from oil producing states of the country.

Tilije said following agreement with the Federal Government on the refund for years of wrongful deduction of funds belonging to benefitting oil producing states, Delta is due for two tranches of N257.6 billion and over N130 billion in the next five or six years.

Therefore, to avert the likely depreciation of the value of the expected funds from the Federal Government in the light of the steadily rising rate of inflation, the state government decided for the N150 billion loan to enable it to further lighten the huge debt burden inherited by the Okowa administration.

He explained that the N270.6 billion ought to have been received long before now, but because the Federal Government could not pay the total money in bulk, the oil producing states reached an agreement for some part of the funds to be paid within three years, while the other part should be paid in five years.

He said: "Having reduced the debt profile of the state from N151 billion to N72 billion, it is important that we have so many other contracts that we have awarded within the period of time and because it is a close out of a particular tenure, it became very important that we ensure those legacy projects, including the new state secretariat building are completely paid for before we leave office.

"Apart from the fact that we are paying old contractors, we are also ensuring that even the new contracts that we awarded, which we refer to as legacy projects, are also completed on time. The

governor is also very mindful of the fact that pensioners are suffering. When we came into office in 2015, the total pensions past dues was N35 billion and we have been trying to reduce that outstanding dues. The state government approved N300 million monthly to be paid as past outstanding and just recently it was increased to N500 million monthly.

"To further reduce the past pension obligations from the facility, we will be spending N20 billion for state pensions outstanding of past dues and N10 billion to the Bureau of Local Governments as grant to enable it to also reduce outstanding payments to pensioners at the local level."

Tilije also explained that the bridging loan would be used to offset debts owed many contractors with certificates for various completed projects, especially the legacy projects of the Okowa administration, including the State Secretariat Complex, Asaba, Orere River Bridge, the Ode-Itsekiri Bridge, the Coker Junction Asaba Flyover and interchange, Bridge across River Ethiope at Obiaruku, Owa-Alero drainage channels and projects being executed in the three new universities.

Also captured is the completion of the Asaba-Ughelli dual-carriage way from Ogwashu-Uku, Kwale, Isoko to Ughelli from Asaba. About N50 billion of the loan would also be deployed to the payment of entitlements of pensioners as well as further assist the Bureau of Local Government.

He further stated that part of the loan would also be used to fund the Warri/Effurun drainage project, explaining that the facility was of soft nature because it was being offered on the strength of the accumulated derivation fund wrongfully withheld from the state and other benefitting states.

Deputy President of the Senate, Ovie Omo-Agege and the state chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC) also criticized the move. They expressed concern that the loan was not tied to any specific development project thoughtfully conceived and executed in the best interest of Delta people.

Responding to the development, Executive Assistant to the Deputy President of the Senate, Aruviere Martin Egharhevwa in a statement said: "Responsible public finance management demands clarity on the funding of budgets. This is a key consideration in awarding contracts for infrastructure and general developmental projects. Given Delta's distinct comparative financial advantage compared to many states of the Federation on account of its huge monthly oil derivation funds, Delta people deserve to know the compelling justification to hastily borrow a whopping N150 billion under the pretext of paying for contracts that the Okowa administration regularly claims it duly awarded, with funding guarantees. Strikingly, the so-called projects are all unknown to the public.

"Further, why is the Okowa administration borrowing hastily against anticipated petroleum subsidy payment and refund with indeterminate crystallisation time? Are they not wetting the

ground for the next administration to contend with huge debts unnecessarily? Knowing that the repayment funds may not even crystallise till may be 2027/2028, why is the regime doing this? As suggested by some commentators, is the N150 billion a 2023 'election war chest'? If true, we can only advise a rethink because it will fail with serious consequences.

He said after about seven years of neglecting the all settling of pension commitments to retirees in the state, Okowa now suddenly wishes to pay them from the loan, because they are entitled to their pensions, they deserve to and must be paid their pensions anyhow.

"However, the state government's choice to pay them from an unusual source and close to the 2023 general elections is not lost on discerning minds, including our seniors. Whatever the intentions are, they will be clinically shut down at the right time.

"While we recognise that borrowing is sometimes necessary in public finance management, especially in relation to mega infrastructure development, we also believe such borrowing must be responsible, and not recklessly propelled by corruption and primitive private interests. It should not be all about sinking many generations into intractable debts in the hope of achieving impossible electoral postulations," he added.

He alleged that the N150 billion loan approved by the House of Assembly was an escalation of a corrupt pattern of reckless borrowing by the Okowa administration to fund mystery projects or what Delta people now generally refer to as 'audio' or invisible projects.

"We strongly advise and warn them to think twice about this so-called loan. It looks too corrupt in appearance and character to be ignored. It will create too many problems for them. A word is enough for the wise," he said.

Also, the state chapter of APC disagreed with Okowa for obtaining the N150 billion loan barely a year to the end of his tenure.

In spite of attempts to explain the motives of the loan, the APC lampooned the state government for obtaining what it called "yet

another humongous loan," saying: "Okowa wants to spend what will accrue to Delta in the next five years within the last one year of his mistake of a 'one chance' administration!"

A statement signed by the party's state Publicity Secretary, E. V. Onojeghuo, and made available to journalists in Asaba, said the N150 billion, a facility to be managed by Zenith Bank aimed at securing the loan.

This, of course, was against the "expected inflow from the Federation Account from petroleum subsidy payments made without recourse to the 13 per cent derivation due to oil producing states from January 1999 to November 30, 2021.

"Okowa went further to present a most unlawful excuse for obtaining the facility to the legislature, claiming that the state's ability to deliver the legacy projects of his administration is limited by the fact that the expected total refund will not be received into the state's account in one lump sum, but will be refunded over a period of five years on a quarterly basis with effect from April, 2022 to January, 2027," the statement reads.

But those who spoke in favour of the state government's move argued that Omo-Agege and his APC ilk have no basis to criticise the Okowa administration for its decision to go for the loan, maintaining that it was for the overall interest and development of the state.

A Lagos-based public affairs analyst, Barrister Okotiebo Omoviro, argued that the APC-led administration at the federal level had borrowed trillions of naira to fund railway and other phantom projects that have yielded little or no result in the past seven years of the President Muhammadu Buhari administration.

"Therefore, if the Okowa administration decided to borrow N150 billion to further develop infrastructure and drive development with a view to delivering more dividends of democracy in Delta before he leaves office next year, so be it. The onus only falls on the people of Delta State to monitor the projects being outlined and hold the Okowa



Gov. Okowa

NCDMB creates \$40m fund for women in oil and gas sector

Stories by **JOHNMARK UKOKO**

The Nigerian Content Development and Management Board (NCDMB) has created a \$40 million fund specifically to enable more female participation in the Nigerian oil and gas sector.

Executive Secretary of the board, Simbi Kesiye Wabote, stated this at the board's Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Oil and Gas Trainers Association of Nigeria (OGTAN) in Abuja.

Speaking on the theme: Diversity And Inclusiveness In Human Capital Development For The Energy Sector, Wabote noted that unavailability of funds remained one of the key challenges that often hinder the participation of women in the oil and gas sector activities.

He said the board had addressed

the issue through the Nigerian Content Intervention Fund (NCIF), adding: "To provide a fair chance for women in the oil and gas industry, the board is partnering with Nigeria Export and Import Bank (NEXIM) to establish a \$20 million fund that matched with an additional \$20 million fund by NEXIM bank, making the total pool of funds available to women in oil and gas to be \$40 million."

He explained that his board and its partners have introduced and implemented several initiatives that promote diversity in the oil and gas industry. Some of those gender focused intervention were being implemented in partnership with the Bank of Industry (BOI), while others were facilitated by the Nigerian Export-Import Bank.

Wabote said another step taken

by his board to drive diversity in the oil and gas activities was the setting up of the Diversity Sector Group in the Nigerian Content Consultative Forum (NCCF), adding that the board has also organised events targeted at women and community activities to promote inclusiveness.

"NCDMB efforts to lead the women folk into the mainstream of the Nigerian oil and gas industry was recognised at the fifth Nigerian International Energy Summit this year when the agency was awarded the best gender support company in the energy sector," he said.

He assured the audience that the NCDMB would continue to encourage female members of staff to occupy key positions in preparation for higher leadership roles and continue to promote hu-

man capacity development across various spheres of the energy sector, including skills development and entrepreneurship programmes to ensure development in secondary and tertiary institutions to prepare the youths for the future.

He affirmed that NCDMB's Human Capacity development model was not gender-based and that it was inclusive and provides equal opportunities for all applicants and beneficiaries.

On youth development, Wabote said the NCDMB has initiated the 60-20-20 training model in which 60 per cent of the training resources provided for young Nigerians with specialised skills to secure employment, while the women get 20 per cent and the remaining 20 per cent are reserved for other interested applicants.

Workers hold rallies, demand better welfare on International Labour Day

•Nigerian workers will overcome, PENGASSAN declares

Stories by JOHNMARK UKOKO

Labour unions organised rallies across the country on Monday and Tuesday to mark the International Workers Day and canvass better welfare for Nigerian workers.

Following a pre May Day rally by the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), a major focus of this year's celebration was centered around a call on Nigerian workers to get their Permanent Voter Card (PVC) and make their voices and votes count ahead of 2023 general elections.

The International Labour Day came into effect in 1889 to celebrate workers' struggle following the fall out of Heymarket affairs in Chicago, United States of America, where workers led a protest to insist on working for eight hours instead of 12 hours daily, besides other welfare issues.

In his presentation, President of the Senate, Ahmad Lawan, assured workers that the National Assembly would continue to partner with organised labour to address issues concerning them.

Lawan, who made the assurance in a statement to celebrate Nigerian workers at this year's May Day, advocated speedy and amicable resolution to the over three months Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) strike.

"The Nigerian workers deserve our appreciation and respect

for their contributions to the development of our country. I also salute them for their patriotic cooperation with the government and other institutions in the collective efforts to address special challenges," he said.

National Leader of the All Progressive Congress (APC), Bola Ahmed Tinubu, urged all Nigerians to work in harmony to produce a better country for themselves and future generations.

"Labour is the backbone of every nation and our country's labourers are the daily unsung heroes of the society. Their works help to define our nation. The goods and services they provide are the basis of our collective well being. Today is workers day. It is a day to fully celebrate the Nigerian worker," he said.

The state governors were not left out among those who joined workers in celebrating the 2022 workers day.

In Lagos, Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu urged workers in the state to remain productive and committed to their duties, while his Edo State counterpart, Godwin Obaseki, assured workers of the state that his administration would continue to prioritise their welfare.

He announced a N40,000 new minimum wage for civil servants of the state to help cushion the impact of the country's economic downturn.

In Ogun State, Governor

Dapo Abiodun joined workers to commemorate the day at the Moshood Abiola Stadium in Abeokuta where a match past was held and he appreciated them for their loyalty, professionalism and perseverance in the face of the global economic challenges.

Abiodun pledged better years ahead as he promised to settle all outstanding deductions, gratuities and other welfare packages for workers and retirees.

At the Kaduna State Chapter of Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), led by Ayuba Suleiman, labour leaders lamented that the productivity and safety of workers in the state have been largely affected by banditry and terrorism challenges and therefore, charged the Federal Government to rise to its responsibility of protecting the life and property of citizens.

On their part, the National Executive Council (NEC), the Central Working Committee (CWC), members and staff of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN) felicitated with Nigerian workers on the 2022 workers day celebration.

In their message, Comrade Lumumba Ighotemu Okugbawa and the President Comrade Festus Osifo, PEGASSAN said: "We salute our comrades in the oil and gas industry, telecommunications, education, power, food and agricultural products distribution and indeed every Nigerian worker for staying



Sen. Ahmad Lawan

strong and committed to their jobs, despite the challenging and difficult situation occasioned by the worsening economy and insecurity.

"Our special greetings to all PENGASSAN members who toil day and night to keep the oil wells, platforms, offices and rigs flowing despite all the challenges encountered in performing these Patriotic duties, sometimes at risk to their lives.

"We can rightly say that May Day 2022 is not different from the previous years of 2020 and 2021 that were marred by the global COVID-19 pandemic whose sad memories are still affecting families, businesses, communities and ways of life. In fact, the 2022 event may even be marred by concerns that are akin to worse than the pandemic as there are many unresolved issues biting the Nigerian workers and the masses."

Over 20 PFAs meet PenCom's N5 billion recapitalisation deadline

No fewer than 20 Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) have met the National Pension Commission's (PenCom) deadline to increase their minimum regulation capital and shareholders fund from N1 billion to N5 billion as of April 27, 2022.

The Trumpet recalled that in 2021, PenCom approved recapitalisation for PFAs, with a 12 month transition from April 27, 2022.

In a statement issued by the commission, it declared that the recapitalisation was expedient, as the value of pension fund assets under their management and custody had grown exponentially.

"The assets had grown by 244 per cent from N3 trillion in 2012 when the previous recapitalisation was done to N12.29 trillion as of December 31, 2020. The sustained growth in assets implies greater fiduciary responsibilities that require more operational capacity by the PFAs," it stated.

There was also an urgent need to boost the PFAs capacity to manage the increasing number of registered contributors and value of pension fund assets in their custody.

PenCom explained that 10 PFAs had met the new regulatory capital requirement of N5 billion as of December 31, 2021 while the others intensified efforts to meet the April 27, 2022 deadline.

The commission stated that the exercise resulted in some mergers and acquisitions, which led to the reduction of the number of PFAs from 22 to 20.

The commission approved the acquisition of AIICO Pension Managers Limited and the merger between Tangerine Pension Limited and APT Pension Funds Managers Limited.

It also approved change of name of the merged entities to Tangerine APT Pension Limited. In addition, the commission approved Norvenberger's acquisition of IEI-Anchor Pension Managers Limited after acquiring majority shareholding.

"With the conclusion of the recapitalisation, particularly Retirement Savings Account (RSA) holders should expect increased effectiveness and efficiency, as well as improved service delivery from PFAs," it added.

Access Holdings Plc profit hits N57b in Q1 2022

Access Holdings Plc has released its financial results, which reveals that the top tier lender recorded a profit of N57.40 billion in the first quarter (Q1) of 2022 translating to a 9.23 per cent increase year-on-year.

The group also reported earnings per share of N1.63 or 9.46 per cent growth from the N1.49 billion earning in Q1 of 2022.

Access Bank Plc has grown its Q1 of 2022 profits by 16 per cent in four years since hitting N22 billion in Q1 of 2018 and the profit reaching N57.40 billion.

The result also showed that in Q1 of 2022, net interest income declined by 7.03 per cent from N93.96 billion to N87.36 billion within the period.

Access Holdings profit performance is on the back of margin growth, as income from interest foreign exchange gains, fees and commissions income appreciated year-on-year.

The financial institution earned

N 170.32 billion from its lending business as interest income grew by 27.27 per cent from N126.07 billion, while the group's e-business income raked in N20.13 billion representing 12.36 per cent from N17.92 billion in 2021.

This suggests that the bank has improved its use of e-banking channels in the delivery of financial services to its customers, even as credit related fees and commissions stood at N21.15 billion during the period.

In addition, the group grew its deposit from customers by 7.9 per cent to N7.49 trillion, while its total assets have increased to N12.08 trillion and net assets rose by 4.77 per cent to N1.08 trillion.

Access Holdings Plc last traded at N9.85 per share and its market capitalisation as of Wednesday, April 28, 2022 year-to-date performance showed that the company's share price appreciated by 5.91 per cent.

MAN tasks FG on implementation of AfCFTA

The Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) has urged the Federal Government to urgently commence the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to support its industrialisation agenda and for robust competitiveness.

President of MAN, Mansur Ahmed, made the appeal recently at the Business Luncheon of the Apapa Branch Council of MAN in Lagos with the theme: Improving Nigeria's Manufacturers' Competitiveness Within The Context Of AfCFTA's Implementation.

Ahmed, who was represented by the Chairman of Ikeja branch, Robert Ugboaja, said the call became necessary because the country was not competitive enough to fully maximise and harness the benefits of the AfCFTA.

He said the country's manufacturing sector was beset with several changes, such as lack of infrastructure, erratic power supply, deplorable road networks and high cost of funds, among others.

He lamented that countries like South Africa, Egypt and Morocco have more infrastructure, such as broadband, gas and electricity unlike what obtains in Nigeria.

"Almost all manufacturers have to provide their own electricity, they have to provide their own generating sets, buy very expensive diesel to power their generators. A company in Nigeria will have to provide its own water and still have to pay government for generating the water," he lamented.

Ahmed stated that the country

needed to look beyond the ease of doing business and seriously tackle the challenges of interest rate and exchange rate.

Speaking, Chairman of Apapa branch of MAN, Frank Oyebu, charged the Lagos State Government to collaborate with the Federal Government to ensure the success of the AfCFTA implementation.

Oyebu added that AfCFTA's design reflected an explicit commencement to creating a framework for deeper socio-economic integration that would enable trade, investments and greater mobility of people.

He urged manufacturers to embrace innovations, review their processes and strategise to enhance their production mode and compete favourably in their markets.

NDE director general urges youths to key into FG's employment scheme

From SURU CHARLES, Jalingo Rather than rely solely on white collar jobs, youths in Taraba State and the entire country have been urged to key into the Federal Government's job creation scheme.

Director General of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Abubakar Nuhu Fikpo, made the call while declaring open the orientation ceremony for the Rural Employment Promotion (REP) and the Sustainable Agricultural Development and Training Scheme (SADTS) in Jalingo, the state capital.

According to him, the training which is geared towards mitigating food crisis will assist participants to transfer the knowledge gained in improving the production of crops

in their various communities.

Fikpo, who was represented at the occasion by Farouk Abdulkarim Farouk, said the essence of the training was to empower the participants with the requisite skills and transfer such skills to farmers in their communities.

He explained that after the training programme, the trainees would be empowered to establish, grow and expand agricultural enterprises of their choice and urged the participants to take the training seriously, adding: "Your certificates alone cannot give you jobs, but skills will empower you."

Specifically, the beneficiaries are to be trained in crop production, animal production and business skills, among others, already mapped out by the directorate for participants undergoing

the training.

Head of the Rural Employment Promotion in the state, Mac Bernard Ishaya, said the directorate will work hard to assist serious minded participants to access agricultural loans after the training.

Also, on his part, Taraba State Coordinator of the NDE, Illiya Yakubu Ilelah, said the directorate will not hesitate to sanction absentee participants.

Citing the huge amount the Federal Government has been spending on job creation, he urged the participants who are not ready to take the training seriously, to, as a matter of urgency, withdraw as several qualified applicants were waiting for an opportunity for the training.

Dignity of labour

By DANIEL IGHAKPE

"There is benefit in every kind of hard work . . ." -Proverbs 14:23

A talented Nigerian musician, Adekunle Gold, in one of his popular songs titled: Work, encouraged people to work hard. This is in harmony with what God's Word, the Bible, recommends at Ecclesiastes chapter 9, verse 10, where it says: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do with all your might . . ."

Work - whether paid or unpaid, is good for our health and well-being. It contributes to our happiness, helps us to build confidence and self-esteem, and can reward us financially. Work is an essential tool through which individuals can achieve their goals, flourish, and live happy, meaningful lives.

Work has different dimensions, such as work for making a living and work for developing one's talent and potential. For example, a little girl in one of the corners of the world who goes to the kindergarten and learns how to count, draw, or write, is working. Likewise, an adult, who goes to his/her job every day, and gets paid for that, is also working. Thus, based on the age, circumstances, needs and desires of individuals, work, or labour takes different shapes.

Work is a virtue and necessity, which requires the use of time and energy. Man is in control of his time and energy when he voluntarily and constructively works. The Bible emphasises the importance of work when it says, among other things in 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 that: "If anyone does not want to work, neither let him eat. . ." This scripture condemns laziness. We need to work to make a living and provide for our families. Work provides the individual with the ability to be independent, to flourish, to develop and most importantly, to find a meaning to life.

However, there are many problems seriously affecting work and workers in Nigeria today. These include: unemployment, poor remuneration/wages, poor working environment and conditions, casualisation of workers, among others. Many people experience poverty and unemployment through no fault of their own. Many who



Ngige

are able to work, willing to work hard, and even actively searching for work, are still unable to find work - they are unemployed!

Unemployment and poverty are two of the major problems currently plaguing Nigeria's economy and its society. Nevertheless, despite the high rate of unemployment and poverty, the situation is not necessarily hopeless. People can still find some meaningful work to engage in, even though it may be small. And, as another talented Nigerian musician, Sonnie Smyth, sang in his music video entitled: 'NO WAHALA': No wahala, e go better, after today, I go see tomorrow o! (You can download and watch this music video by Sonnie Smyth and directed by Achor Yusuf on YouTube).

If you are unemployed, or cannot find a job in your area of particular interest, it is wise to consider looking for a job in other areas, even if the job is considered 'menial' by the standards of some people. Do not allow false pride to let you look down on a job-as beneath your dignity. Any legitimate service that can benefit others, and that people are willing to pay for, can be considered as an alternative job

opportunity when jobs are scarce.

People differ in terms of many characteristics such as intelligence, talents, academic levels, etc. Therefore depending on human potential and the specific working environment, work can be equally beneficial to the person or demeaning. For example, prostitution, gambling and drug dealing constitute work, as you get a kind of remuneration for the service you provide. But the money you get out of these kinds of work becomes useless, as it neither contributes to human flourishing, nor is the basis of a meaningful life. Work should be the key to human survival and flourishing, and not to degradation of the individual and his moral values.

On the other hand, no matter how honest, working from dawn to sunset does not make your life flourish either. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," goes the popular saying. Workaholics, the people whose only purpose in life is work, deprive themselves of the enjoyment of engaging in other activities. Productive work is not an end-in-itself, but a means of flourishing. If one pursues productive work to the exclusion of everything else in one's life, so that it becomes one's only purpose in life, this will undermine one's flourishing. On the other hand, those who keep their life balanced are likely to enjoy their work even more.

So, whether our work is mostly mental, physical or somewhere in between, we should recognise that there is dignity in labour! Hard work helps us to care for our material needs. Moreover, it contributes to our self-esteem, after all, hard work is just that-hard. When we discipline ourselves to stick with our work-even if it seems boring or difficult - we can have the satisfaction of knowing that we held ourselves to a high standard. We have won the victory over the inclination to take the easy way out. In that sense, work brings an intense feeling of satisfaction.

God wants us to enjoy the fruitage, or reward, of our hard work. His Word, the Bible says: "There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and find enjoyment in his hard work. This too, I have realised, is from the hand of the true God," -Ecclesiastes 2:24.

Dana Air apologises to passengers for cancellation of Port Harcourt-Lagos flight

Dana Airline has apologised to its customers over the inconveniences the cancellation of its Port Harcourt-Lagos flight on May 2, 2022 caused them, saying it was due to safety precautions.

According to the airline, its aircraft with registration number 5N JOY operating flight 9J 344 was set to take off when the pilot noticed an anomaly, which he queried with the Air Traffic Control (ATC) before returning the flight in line with its safety operating procedures.

It said the impact on the brakes due the aborted takeoff affected the aircraft tyres, which sparked off while the aircraft was taxing to re-park at the airport.

Communications Manager of the airline, Kingsley Ezenwa, in a statement, disclosed that all 50 passengers onboard the aircraft disembarked safely, adding that the maintenance team immediately grounded the aircraft pending the conclusion of investigations.

"We sincerely apologise to all the passengers onboard the aircraft for the inconveniences caused due to the cancellation of the flight. At Dana Air, the safety of our passengers and crew will remain a top priority in all aspects of our operations and we will continue to operate in accordance with the civil aviation regulations and global best practices," the statement added.



NUATE protests against planned airports concessioning, catering by foreign airlines

By ADAKU WALTER

The National Union of Air Transport Employees (NUATE) has protested against ongoing discussions to concession airports in the country, saying they do not understand government's response to the demands of aviation unions on labour-related issues and several lapses



Ben Nnabue

in previous concession programmes.

National President of NUATE, Ben Nnabue, in his May Day message, said the union was also presently battling the vexed issue of catering by some foreign airlines.

He said the union is in consultations with the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) over the matter on why the workers delayed action on it in the last one month, adding that the union remains committed to ending the unwholesome act in the interest of local firms that provide in-flight catering services.

Nnabue said the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, increase in price of aviation fuel, travelers' negative reaction to recent hike in air fares and other adversities have been excruciating for airline and had delayed the exit of the aviation industry from recession.

He said big local airlines continue

to defy the law on free association and membership of unions, noting that the Minister of Labour and Employment, Dr. Chris Ngige, had not fulfilled his pledge to intervene in the matter.

Nnabue said the air transporters had been left with their own devices to ensure that all aviation workers, particularly in Air Peace, Azman Air and Dana Air, among others, were free from slavish labour this year.

"We urge the Minister of Aviation, Hadi Sirika, to urgently review his Aviation Roadmap. We are of the view that the projects under the roadmap require significant adjustments to harmonize them with current realities in the world of aviation and our national interest," he said.

He also pointed out the issue of Minimum Wage Consequential Adjustment and Conditions of Service for the aviation agencies, noting that the union

was firmly behind the workers decision not to accept further by government agencies on the issues.

"We express our frustration at the delay of the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BP) in resolving the negotiated redundancy benefits of former employees of SAHCO, a matter pending since 2009. We assure the affected ex-workers that the unions have gone far and cannot retreat on the matter at this point. We are at the verge of a final solution, failing which we shall take decisive actions towards seeking justice for the victims," he added.

He further urged the Federal Government to urgently address the shortcomings of the newly commissioned international terminal at Murtala Mohammed International Airport (MMIA) so as to put the terminal to maximum use.

He warned that it will be a major disservice of this administration should the terminal turn out to be a white

Obi meets Rivers PDP leaders, delegates, commends Wike

•Ex-gov has passion to build better Nigeria, says party chairman

Rivers State chapter Chairman of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Ambassador Desmond Akawor, has praised former Governor Peter Obi of Anambra for his undying passion to build a better Nigeria, while describing him as one who truly understands the country's economy.

Akawor made this known when Obi visited Rivers State for his interaction with the PDP family. He explained that the country should be proud of people like Obi, who have remained consistent in their struggle for a better Nigeria.

"Undoubtedly, Obi is interested in the development of the

country. He does not just preach about how things should be done rightly, but he shows you his track record of success in governance and tells you how he did it rightly, with verifiable evidences.

"Under him, Anambra enjoyed the best road infrastructure, while developing in all fronts. He left behind no debt and

even kept a savings of N75 billion for the State, a record yet unbroken in the country. We are very proud to associate with a man like him," Akawor said.

Outlining some of their challenges in the state, Akawor expressed gratitude that Obi had already identified some of their challenges on

his own. He regretted that governments at the national level has continued to pay deaf ears to their pains.

In his comments, Obi praised Governor Nyesom Ezenwo Wike for his infrastructural development in Rivers State. He described Wike as his brother and friend, and appreciated him for

the warm hospitality he granted him in the State.

He assured the delegates, and by extension Nigerians, that, if given the chance, he would turn their country into a highly productive nation, where the youth are productively engaged in different endeavours and people are well rewarded for their hardwork.

Ortom lauds Nigerian media's courage, resilience

Nigerian journalists have been commended for their courage and resilience in the sustenance and promotion of the tenets of democracy.

The commendation came from Benue State Governor Samuel Ortom in a goodwill message to commemorate this year's World Press Freedom day. He said credit must be given to the Nigerian press for the enduring democracy and its resilience in the face of daunting challenges to continue to inform, educate and entertain the populace.

The United Nations General Assembly declared May 3, every year to celebrate the media and appreciates the importance of press freedom globally. The theme of this year's world press day is "Journalism Under Digital Siege."

The governor noted the harsh environment under which the Nigerian media operates and urged

the Federal Government to consider subsidies and import waivers for media equipments.

This, he opined, will help the media industry survive the harsh economic environment and put it in a better stead to contribute immensely to the socio-economic and political development of the country.

The governor therefore enjoined the media to remain steadfast in the discharge of its duties pointing out that, "of all professions, it is only the Press that is empowered by the Constitution of Nigeria to hold governments and its functionaries accountable at all times."

Ortom however counseled the media to always exercise caution in reporting issues that affects the security, welfare and wellbeing of citizens to avoid needless sensations.

He also appreciated the importance of the new media otherwise referred to as the Social Media as it disseminates information real time but was quick to point out that caution must be observed to verify facts before publishing.

This, he contended is necessary to avoid being ready tools in the hands of desperate politicians and mischief makers to use against opponents or perceived enemies.

While wishing the Nigerian Press a successful celebration, Ortom urged them to continue to play their roles diligently in order to make the society a safer and better place for all.



L-R: Diocesan Lay President of Trinity Church Council, Tinubu, Sir Wole Ariyo; Sir Ide Ifeanyichukwu Okechuke; Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu; Prelate, Methodist Church Nigeria, His Eminence, Dr. Samuel Emeka Kanu Uche; wife of the Prelate, Nneoma Folerance Kanu Uche, during the opening of the 39th Council of Bishops of Methodist Church, Nigeria at the Methodist Church of Trinity, Tinubu, Lagos, on Tuesday, 03 May 2022

Methodist bishops praise Sanwo-Olu, urge regionalism, fiscal federalism

•Gov pledges compensation over missionary schools

Bishops of the Methodist Church Nigeria have commended Lagos State Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu administration for good governance and service to humanity. Therefore, they enjoined Lagosians to grant him a second term to complete the enviable projects he has started and others in the pipeline.

They spoke during the opening session of the 39th Bishops' Council of Methodist Church Nigeria in Lagos

Speaking on their behalf, the Prelate of the Methodist Church Nigeria, His Eminence, Dr. Samuel Uche, said: "You are among the best in governance we currently have in Nigeria. For this reason, I urge that you be allowed to go for a second term in office so as to complete the enviable projects that you started and others that are in the pipeline. All the bishops

in Lagos will mobilise our members, our votes must go to Sanwo-Olu.

"Though, I am not a card-carrying member of any political party neither am I partisan, yet I value people for who they are and not their political affiliation. I believe people like you are the ones we should replicate all over the world. The Bishops' Council will pray for you and other government functionaries so that we continue to have a very progressive and development-oriented Lagos State."

On the state of the nation, Prelate Uche urged the federal government to address issues of hunger, inflation and insecurity, saying no nation can prosper in the midst of the three challenges. He also implored Nigeria to practise true federalism and regional governments.

Responding, Sanwo-Olu

remarked: "I humbly acknowledge and thank you for your quiet endorsement of my second term. We cannot afford to fail. We cannot afford to give excuses. We cannot afford to give reasons, untenable reasons why we cannot take our country forward.

"I stand before you and I have said this over and over, with every fabric in my body, I will continue to serve the people of Lagos. We will serve them without fear or favour, ensuring that the greatest good is for the greatest number."

The governor also announced that his administration would pay compensation for missionary schools that had been given back to missionaries, saying they are partners in government, considering their contribution to the education sector in the state.

Sanwo-Olu also charged all Nigerians to continue to trust God for miraculous interventions in their lives, State and the country, saying: "Our individual and collective challenges are by no means beyond us. Our faith in the Almighty God is able to move mountains. That unshakable faith must be extended into our daily lives.

"We must maintain faith that our country can and will triumph over all its challenges and cement itself onto the path of everlasting progress. For with God, nothing shall be impossible."

The governor added that he believed that the 39th Bishops' Council will come out with resolutions that will move the Church forward and, in line with the council's theme, prepare the people "for the second coming of Jesus Christ."



Gov Samuel Ortom

I want to be remembered as lady who made impact with her beauty, brains

Delectable Nollywood actress, Ebube Nwagbo, has upped her game by joining the league of filmmakers and becoming one of the most sought-after celebrities. The mass communication graduate of Nnamdi Azikwe University, in this chat with OMONIYI ALLI, spoke about her forays from acting to movie production against the will of her parents and men wanting to take advantage of her.

Was acting your childhood dream?

I will not say I have always wanted to be an actor, but I have always loved be on television as a broadcaster. But somehow, acting found me and here I am today.

When did it dawn on you that you would make a living off acting?

When I shoot my first movie, after the heat, I disappeared. I told them I could not cope with it and I did not want to act anymore. They called me for a second job, telling me that I would be allowed to leave after that. Afterwards, they still lured me to do the third one. Somehow, they wanted me.

I ran away because I felt I could not deal with the pressure and drama. But, after sometime, I realised that it could be the right place for me. Now, I do not need anyone to tell me that it is meant for me. If I decide to leave Nollywood today, it is because I want to.

Is it a necessity to feature in any movie you produce?

I must not feature, but why would I produce a movie and I am not in it? Remember other people pay me to be in their movies. I feel it is what I love to do and being part of it add value to the movie.

What's the secret of your staying power?

The industry is very competitive. What I have tried to do is to be myself. When you be yourself, it stands you out from any other person. If you are trying to be some other person, it is not you. I try to be me and I believe it is slow and steady. So, I would rather be here and steady than being forgotten so soon. I take things one after the other.

As the same time too, I try to be relevant in the industry because it is the only way nobody forgets you.

How did your background contribute to what you do today?

First of all, I come from a very strict home. Normally, my parents will not allowed any of their children to do what I do today. I actually shot my first movie without telling my parents. People who knew me back home still do not believe I am an actress.

But being an actress has not changed me or give my parents reasons to regret allowing me to go into it. It has shaped me more and I do not forget where I am coming from. I am doing this for a reason and propose and

I do not forget that. I do not forget where I am coming from and it helps me a lot.

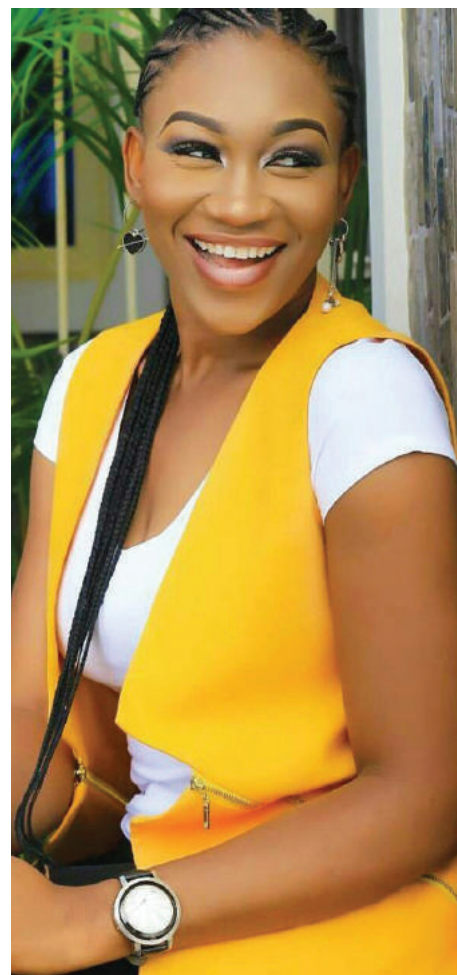
Was there any time you wished you were not famous?

Yes, I have felt that many times. I always feel like quitting, especially when they write things about me that are untrue. I think I actually quit, but after a while I said to myself that why should I?

Most people who judge me are people who do not know you and you cannot keep explaining to everyone that what they wrote about you was untrue. I have learnt to live my life and focus on what is important. I think I have grown wiser and stronger. I just see some things as the downside of my job.

What is the major cooking blunder you've committed?

While growing up, whenever I made beans, it would get burnt. I do not do that anymore, but making beans then was scary. It would



get burnt and undone.

How do you want to be remembered?

I want to be remembered as the lady who made an impact with her beauty and brains. People think that when you are pretty, you have nothing to offer. Even as an entrepreneur, I try to support young girls and encourage them that they could be beautiful and intelligent. I went through a lot as a young girl; men will want to take advantage of you. Be who you are; being in the limelight does not make you a lesser person.

How did you deal with men wanting to take advantage of you?

Even now, I still experience it. Things like that happen every day, especially when one puts herself in a vulnerable situation. The truth is that if you throw yourself at people, they will want to take advantage of you. It is now left for you to be strong and discipline.

As a producer, I have sought support from many men. They thought that asking them for something made me vulnerable and wanted to take advantage of that fact. I am one person who believes in me. You cannot put me in a position I do not want to be. Nobody should push you to do what you do not want to do because it makes you a lesser person. But when you believe in yourself, you will gain more respect.

A lot of people want to come into Nollywood,

thinking it is a bed of rosy. There is nothing that comes easy.

Don't you think being pretty also comes with its own baggage?

Yes, because it attract a lot of male attention. And sometimes, people think you are beauty without brains. They think you are not good but for your beauty. Like I said, I am trying to prove them wrong. You can be pretty and intelligent; you can be pretty and responsible and you can be an actress and responsible.

Sometimes, your beauty is your pain but you have to make good use of it and look at the advantages of being beautiful. That I am pretty is not by mistake; God made me this way.

How would you describe your style?

I wear whatever I am comfortable with; I do not move with the trend. I live to wear everything, depending on the occasion I am going for. I love everything that has to do with fashion.

Are you in a relationship?

Yes, why won't I have a man in my life? I am not a young girl. If I say I do not have a man in my life, people may think I am possessed or something. Yes, I want to get married but at the right time. I am not one of those people who do something out of pressure.

Music executive, Daniel Chiori Cole unveils new name

Foremost music executive of leading showbiz outfit, Achievas Entertainment, Daniel Chiori Cole, delved into the industry as a way of lending his voice against various societal vices through releasing of brilliant works that are not just to entertain alone but send vital messages too.

Now officially identified with the stage name 'MANSA COLE', the new budding artist is gearing up towards putting his first EP (Extended

Playlist) tagged 'The MANSA EP'. Speaking on the soon to be released project, Cole disclosed that is the new EP is a story of grass to grace, celebration of Life, struggles, pains and moreover to give life a meaning.

He said 'I decided to embark on this EP journey because as humans it is known that change is constant it's either you're going up your circle or you're going down the pecking order. This EP has given me meaning to Life, and free will to do what you want at any point in time. Life doesn't stop you from being who you want to be, you can only stop yourself from being who you want to be'.

Having been in the creative industry for over 10years; Mansa Cole has worked with the brightest of superstars in Nigeria that include 2baba, Burna Boy, Olamide, Davido, Kizz Daniel Future, Zlatan, Buju, 1da Banton, Solid Star, Wizkid amongst others, with his entrance into the mainstream music, Mansa sure has a lot to deliver through his musical prowess and experiences.

The Mansa Cole 5 Track EP features the brightest stars from Nigeria and other parts of Africa.

The MANSA EP is however an avenue to express myself through music as we've done through other business models we've created over the years.



Ali Nuhu, Becomes Mouka's Brand Ambassador

Celebrated actor and director Ali Nuhu, popularly called the King of Kannywood or Sarki -Ali, has joined the Mouka family as the Brand Ambassador for Northern Nigeria. The market leader in Nigeria's sleep industry made this strategic move to further deepen the brand's presence in the Northern region by leveraging the popularity of this sensational celebrity.

This move comes right after the company announced its change in ownership and its elevation to becoming a member of the Dolidol International Group based out of Morocco. In announcing this strategic ownership, Mouka's Managing Director, Femi Fapohunda, hinted that the company would be taking even bolder steps to ensure the brand maintains its growth trajectory.

Introducing him to the company's operations, Mouka's Managing Director, Mr. Femi Fapohunda, said the movie superstar resonates with one of the company's core values, which is excellence. He also had this to say,

"The objective of this partnership with Ali Nuhu is to use his voice to educate our Northern consumers about the importance of quality sleep to their overall wellbeing and the role Mouka



products play in this equation".

In his remark, the elated Kannywood idol, Ali Nuhu, said, "I am committed to doing my best to take the Mouka brand to greater heights in

Northern Nigeria through various initiatives in line with its mission of adding comfort to the lives of Nigerians."

Nigeria's best bartenders set to shake it up at world class 2022

Recently, Guinness Nigeria announced the commencement of its foremost bartender competition, World Class. This official flag off for the World Class journey which began in Lagos, will stop in key cities across Nigeria before ending with a bang down in Sydney, Australia. World Class is the world's largest and most exclusive bartending competition, mixology education programme; curated to celebrate bartending creativity and innovative cocktail-making trends while inspiring people to drink better and create unforgettable experiences in the process. World Class has supported, trained, and inspired over 400,000 bartenders, across 60 countries, for over twelve years, while partnering them with the world's finest spirits – the Diageo Reserve collection.

World Class 2022 will witness the unveiling of the 'Big 30' – top 30 mixologists/bartenders across Nigeria put through Masterclasses on the perfect serve for participating Diageo premium spirits; Johnnie Walker and Ketel One.

Diageo through Guinness Nigeria is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion which will be brought to life in this year's competition.

Thus, an intentional approach to-

wards ensuring active participation from women has been adopted with hopes that it will encourage interest in the years to come and recruit more women into the bartending community leveraging the Diageo Bar Academy program.

The 30-strong list will be shortlisted at Regional Finals in Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt, where four bartenders will be selected. The final 4 will dazzle a select crowd at a 3-day Cocktail Week showing off their winning recipes. The eventual winner will represent Nigeria at the Global Finals in Sydney, Australia later this year.

Sammy Okwandu, Head of Customer Marketing International Premium Spirits, Reserve Brands and Modern Spirits, Reserve Brands and Modern Trade opined; 'World Class is a global platform that seeks to take consumers on a journey where fine drinking is seen the same way as fine dining. The bartender competition is also our way of giving back some of the value we derive from a sector of the value chain that is often overlooked; our on-trade partners. Ultimately, we look forward to an amazing 6 months with some of the best mixologists in the land and may the best bartender win.'

Africa Magic announces Digital Content Creator's Day Competition

As part of efforts at spotlighting and celebrating the growing popularity of online content creators across Africa, the Africa Magic Viewers' Choice Awards (AMVCAs) will feature a special Digital Content Creator's Day Competition to showcase exceptional talents from across the continent.

The debut edition of the AMVCA Digital Content Creators Competition will take place online, and the winners will be announced at the Digital Content Creators' Day Brunch on Wednesday, 11 May, 2022. Speaking on the competition, Executive Head of Content and West Africa

Channels at MultiChoice Nigeria, Dr. Busola Tejumola, said "We are very excited to stage a digital content creators' competition as we believe this will further underscore our commitment to spotlight and support content creators and inspire new talent." Content creators will have the opportunity to showcase their craft whilst promoting authentic African storytelling. To participate, creators are expected to submit a well-produced skit, not more than 3 minutes long in any genre or topic. Entries would be judged on

Creativity, Technical skill, Comedic punch, Message/theme and Performance.





Super 6: Tulcan Energy signs N10m deal with NWFL

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

Nigeria Women Football League (NWFL) has signed a mouthwatering sponsorship deal with Tulcan Energy Resources Limited for its NWFL 2022 Super 6 tournament taking place in the ancient city of Benin, Edo State.

The deal which has boosted the morale of the organisers of the tournament and participants will ensure the winner, first runner up, and second runner up go home with N5million, N3million, and N2million respectively.

According to the sponsor, who will also provide kits for the competing teams, this gesture which the energy company intends to sustain, is a means to contribute to the growth and development of sports in the country.

"Our strategy and



intentions are to grow the sports and that's the reason we are sponsoring the NWFL Premiership Super 6. We are also planning to sustain this," Dolapo Akinwale, Tulcan Energy representative, said after signing the deal.

Reacting to the development, the President of NWFL, Aisha Falode, who revealed in the success of the league over the years despite not having

sponsors, acknowledged the importance of Tulcan Energy's deal to the event.

She said, "To run football in Nigeria is all about sacrifice. We've succeeded in running the league before without sponsors but now, we have a big brand for our premium football."

The NWFL Super 6 scheduled from May 16 - 22, 2022, will see Bayelsa Queens take on Rivers Angels in the opening game

of the tournament.

Despite the winner going home with the prize money of N5m, they will automatically qualify to represent Nigeria at the WAFU Zone B qualifiers for the CAF Women's Champions League.

The competing teams for the NWFL Super Six are Bayelsa Queens, River Angels, Delta Queens, Nasarawa Amazons, Naija Ratel, and Edo Queens.

'Ronaldo deserves United's stay beyond short-term fix'

Former Manchester United defender and football pundit, Roy Keane says Cristiano Ronaldo has proven beyond being a "short-term fix" and deserves to remain with the club a little longer.

Keane, after the United match against Brentford where Ronaldo scored his 18th Premier League goal of the season, marveled that at 37, the Portuguese forward has put in brilliant performances for the club.

Though the soccer pundit opines that United need new players to pose competition in the squad, lamenting that it is wrong for the leading goal scorer of the club to be of that age, he, however, objected to the view of letting Ronaldo leave.

Keane stressed that it is absurd to consider keeping the Manchester United talisman out of the squad adding that such logic is unfathomable.

In a TV programme, Monday Night Football, Keane said, "Ronaldo's signing was a short-term fix, for the fans, for the share price. But he has still scored the goals.

"I just think with the goals that he has got, his performances, warrants staying at the club. But Manchester United have to get players around him, they have to get other strikers in,

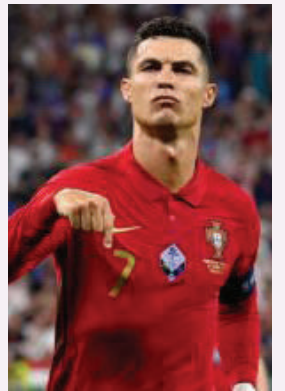
there has to be competition for places.

"If the leading goalscorer, the man you are depending on, is 37 years of age then that is certainly not good but I would certainly be holding onto Ronaldo.

"There might be a conversation that needs to be had about the way you are going to play or that you are not going to be playing week in and week out. But why would you get rid of a player who scores that many goals? I don't see the logic in it," Keane, the former United captain, added.

Keane took over the captain's armband at Manchester United after Eric Cantona's abrupt retirement, and held to it for eight years until his retirement in 2005,

He added that the problem bedeviling the Red Devils is way above Ronaldo.



Tyson reacts harshly to female fan's inadvertent action



After retiring from boxing, former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson keeps on making the headlines intermittently.

Prior to the WBC featherweight championship bout between Shakur Stevenson and Oscar Valdez at the MGM Grand Garden Arena, Tyson who was in Las Vegas to watch the fight attended other events.

Tyson, in one of such events, where he was seen snapping pictures with fans, reacted harshly toward a lady who indeliberately stuck her fingers close to his face.

However, the incident did not escalate beyond the normal, thanks to his security detail who were able to meddle in, New York Post reported.

Meanwhile, the ex-boxer had earlier made the headlines after being involved in an airline brawl with Melvin Townsend, a fellow JetBlue flight's passenger.

Tyson's representative claimed Townsend threw a bottle at the former heavyweight champion which provoked him to warrant a punch. Townsend's representatives repudiated the claim.

Torino style restricts Aina's match time

Super Eagle Ola Aina has been starved of regular playing time in his Italian club, Torino, after being subjected to fighting for his position in the starting lineup.

The Nigerian international and versatile defender who plays as a wing-back or right-back has either come from in as a substitute or substituted in most matches.

While some Nigerian media think that the Super Eagle must have been subjected to this treatment following his appearance in the Nigeria senior men's team to play against Ghana, The Trumpet report otherwise.

Aina's club Torino adopted a 3-4-2-1 system of football which projects three central defenders after the goalkeeper, two wing-backs, and two central midfielders

on the next array comprising four players, two midfielders thereafter, and the central striker.

On the array of four, comprising two wing-backs, Torino rotate the position, right and left wings, among three players, Ola Aina, Ivorian Wilfred Singo, and Kosovan Mergin Vojvoda.

Aina, 25, after the World Cup qualifiers against Ghana on March 29, returned to Italy and was listed as an unused substitute against Serie A side Salernitana, Joel Obi's club, on the 2nd of April.

Following the away match against Salernitana in Stadio Arechi, Aina came in as a second-half substitute against AC Milan on April 10th at the Olimpico di Torino.

Torino head coach, Ivan Juris, drafted the Super Eagle in the starting lineup against

Lazio at the Stadio Olimpico after Milan's encounter that ended barren.

Surprisingly, the Super Eagle played the entire 90 minutes against Atalanta which ended 4-4 after being benched against Spezia and in the recent 3-1 win against Empoli.

The player, who joined Torino from Chelsea after a successful loan spell in Stadio di Torino where he made 30 appearances and scored his debut goal against Udinese on February 2, 2019, completed a permanent switch worth £9m to II Toro on 11 June 2019.

Aina's major challenge lies with Juris, who deniably, prefers to use Singo and Vojvoda more regularly in Torino's starting lineups. The Super Eagle has featured 21 times for Torino this season in all competitions.



Fulham clinch Championship title, make Premier League return

Fulham have won the 2021-22 Championship season to return to the Premier League after thrashing Luton Town 7-0 at Craven Cottage on Monday.

Fulham against Nottingham Forest were unable to lift the trophy after they lost by a lone goal at Craven Cottage but put up a surprising performance against six-placed Luton to finally ice their season's blistering campaign.

The Cottagers opened the feast of goals through captain Thomas Cairney in 29 minutes and doubled the lead 10 minutes from defender Kenny Tete.

Serbia's Aleksandar Mitrovic scored a brace in the second half with Fábio Carvalho, Bobby Decordova-Reid, and Jean Seri firing the furnace that consumed The Hatters.

Consequently, Mitrovic on Monday, May 2, 2022, equalled the record of Portsmouth hero Guy Whittingham's 42 championship goals in a season and surpassed

it having scored two consecutive goals to take his tally to 43 for the season.

Reacting to the performance of Mitrovic in the romp, Fulham manager Marco Silva praised the record-breaking striker and affirmed that the accolade bestowed on him is well deserved.

"What a fantastic way to finish with a 7-0 with Mitrovic scoring the last goal and breaking the record is amazing," Silva told Sky Sports in a post-match interview.

"He deserves it. He played a fantastic game as well, he's a very good professional, a good lad. He enjoyed the moment, we all enjoy being with him and I just want him to keep working hard," he added.

Fulham, returning to the Premier League after a successful 2021-22 campaign, makes it 28 times the London-based football club has featured in the English topflight league.

Why FIFA sanctioned Nigeria, others

The world football governing body has slammed Nigeria with sanctions over the country's inability to control its fans after they failed to secure the qualifying ticket to FIFA World Cup hosted by Qatar.

The Super Eagles played a goalless draw against the Black Stars of Ghana in Kumasi during the first leg of the double-legged tie but failed to capitalize on the overwhelming home support to edge out their West Africa rivals.

Following the result of the match that ended in a one-all draw, the disappointed Nigerian supporters trooped into the pitch and caused disgraceful damage to the MKO Abiola National Stadium facilities which prompted people to scamper for safety.

However, the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) delegated its Disciplinary Committee to review all the incidents that took place during the qualifiers for the Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup.

FIFA on its official site reiterated that it is committed



to "zero-tolerance stance against discrimination and violence in football, a number of member associations have been punished due to the abusive behaviour by their respective supporters."

Accordingly, the world football governing body fined Nigeria \$150,000 and also banned the Super Eagles to play a one-match without any spectators to cheer them up to victory.

Other countries also sanctioned in Africa according to their degree of crime, include Algeria, fined \$3000 for

throwing objects and lighting fireworks in a match with Cameroon and DR Congo, fined \$5000 for throwing objects in a Qatar 2022 first leg qualifying match with Morocco.

Consecutively, DR Congo after incurring the wrath of FIFA in the first leg tie with Morocco, were fined \$120,000 and have been contained to play one match without a spectator after their fans threw objects and invaded the field of play.

FIFA added that the Congolese failed to maintain

law and order in the stadium and also failed to organise the match properly.

Morocco and Egypt got a piece of FIFA's disciplinary actions to ensure sanity in the game of football. Morocco were fined \$30,000 for lighting fireworks, throwing of objects and

blocking of stairways while Egypt were fined \$6000 for team misconduct.

Senegal national team were handed a \$175,000 fine and have been constrained to play one match without their fans in the stadium.

Declan Rice: from unwanted kid to England star

West Ham midfielder Declan Rice has developed to become one of the most impressive players in England in recent times, attracting interest from European top clubs.

Rice's development in football from Chelsea's academy to becoming a key player in West Ham and England's Three Lions, is a story with certain unhappy epistles.

The 23 years old West Ham player left Chelsea at the age of 14 to join the East London club but was faced with challenges that were beyond his control.

As a kid, he had an uneven growth, smaller in stature than his usual age which made West Ham rethink considering him for a role.

However, Rice at the eventual moment until Hammers could ponder on his status as a player in the club, overcame the defect, sprouting in growth to stamp his importance to the club and country's successes.

Rice was a formidable figure in England's team during the EURO 2020 final, playing all seven matches in a superb form and continued in this clime in the 2021-2022 campaign season for West Ham.

"I was really small when I was a kid. Not too small, but smaller than most," Rice told Sky Sports as West Ham hosted Arsenal at London Stadium.

"Then when I joined West Ham, when they were thinking

about getting rid of me, I was in the middle of a growth spurt. I could play, but I just looked so gangly and unorthodox - it didn't look right.

"I knew if they gave me the time, I had the ability and I could still play. It was just my running technique - I looked long in the legs and everything was off.

"Once they gave me that time and that space to grow into my body, everything else came through," said Rice. "My personality as a kid, I always wanted to be a captain, I always cared about the game and wanted to learn. As I got older, that started to show through.

"When you're younger, ability is one thing, but you have to want it the most. I feel like that gets you further. I hear so many ex-pros say it, that they come across players where they were better than them but they didn't want it enough.

"For me, I came across so many players who were better than me, but they didn't have the mentality, the head, the heart to want it enough and keep pushing themselves. Luckily enough, in the end, I had both," he added.

The England international being sought by Chelsea and top English clubs to help solve their midfield challenges ahead of next season's campaign, has featured 33 times in the 2021-22 Premier League season for the Hammers, scoring 1 goal and providing four assists.

Pogba pays tribute to Raiola

Since the demise of renowned football agent, Mino Raiola, which shocked the international soccer community, a series of condolence messages have been awash in the social media to empathize with his family in their moment of grief.

The Italian, who died at 54, was an agent that brokered certain deals successfully based on his experience and knowledge to ensure his representatives' contractual terms were fulfilled.

One of such deals was that of Paul Pogba leaving

Manchester United to join Juventus on a free transfer and a return of the French international to Old Trafford in a record transfer deal of €105m.

According to Raiola's family condolence message, he fought with the same tenacity he exerted on the negotiations table for a players' transfer deal.

However, Paul Pogba has taken to Twitter to pay tribute to the former President of The Football Forum, a forum comprising Jorge Mendes and Jonathan Barnett formed to create a new football system



opposed to FIFA's.

Pogba posted a video where he expressed his gratitude to Raiola for what

he did for him.

"Always in my heart. Thank you mimi," Pogba passionately Tweeted.

'Nkeiah adds a different dimension to Arsenal's attack'

Harry Redknapp has praised Arsenal Striker Eddie Nketiah for adding a different dimension to the club's style of play.

The West Ham head coach analysed the player's influence on Arsenal's attack, revealing that he relieves the pressure on the midfielders to connect with the ball.

Arsenal, in a lacklustre performance, fought to record a win against Hammers, with doubleheaders from central defenders Rob Holding and Gabriel Magalhaes.

The win helped the Gunners close on Chelsea by three points, after the



latter lost by a lone goal to relegation-threatened side, Everton.

Though the 22 years old was neither voted as the man of the match nor scored in the 2-0 win, Redknapp stressed that the player was instrumental in spreading the play of Arsenal, a quality he pinpointed Alexandre Lacazette lacks.

Redknapp told Sky Sports, "Nketiah has given Arsenal a different dimension.

"When you've got a player like Lacazette, who can't run in behind, he's always coming to the ball.

"It's fine, he links the

play, lovely, but you need to spread the play.

"You need to stretch teams and that is what Nketiah does.

"He gives the team a release and it changes the whole complexion of the game," the Hammers' boss added.

Arsenal continue to fight for the Champions League qualifying spot with fellow Londoners, Tottenham.

A win against the Hammers saw the club maintain a two-point lead above Tottenham who would have leapfrogged the Mikel Arteta's men after they torpedoed Leicester 3-1.

Prosperity Cup: Diri kicks off competition

■ Debutantes defeat defending champions in opening game

By **AHERHOKE OKIOMA,**
Yenagoa

Bayelsa State helmsman Douye Diri has officially kicked off this year's 'Governor Football Tournament' at the Samson Siasia's Sports complex in Yenagoa, Monday, May 2, 2022.

Addressing the 206 sportsmen and women, Governor Diri tasked them to be best losers and winners by imbuing the spirit of sportsmanship, fair play and charged them to give their best throughout the competition.

The "Miracle governor" while declaring the competition open, described sports as an integral part of every society and expressed optimism that the tournament will not only curb youth restiveness, but create opportunities for exceptional players who may want to pursue a career in football.

According to him, the state government was unable to host the competition last year due to some unforeseen circumstances, but expressed delight that the competition is held this year.

"This is a competition you need to put in your all, you wouldn't know those who are coming to scout for players. This is a competition that can expose you nationally and internationally"

"And for the ministry and organisers, I will thank you for ensuring that this year did not pass us by. This competition should have been held last year, but due to unforeseen circumstances, we couldn't hold it last year," he stated.

Hon Commissioner for

Youth and Sports Development, Hon Daniel Igali, attributed the success of the sporting sector to the commitment and support of the governor who was once a commissioner for sports in the state.

Earlier, the Director-General of the "Prosperity Cup", Mr Ono Akpe in his welcoming address highlighted some prospects of the competition and thanked the governor for the attention given to sports in the state since he assumed office.

"The tournament will run for six weeks and we anticipate that the final will be played on June, 12. For now, we have 20 centres across the state, sixteen teams will emerge from the centres and will play until the final at this stadium," he said.

"We expect a lot of national and international scouts in the last phase, the quarter-finals, semi final, while our own local scouts will be with us from the beginning of this match till the end of the tournament," he added.

Meanwhile, the debutant Bayelsa Medical Varsity defeated their opponent 2-1 to herald their arrival into the competition.



'The greatest discovery of all time is that a person can change his future by merely changing his attitude'

— Oprah Winfrey.



Israel demands apology from Moscow after Lavrov says Hitler had Jewish roots

By **OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH** with agency report

Israel has denounced Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov for suggesting that Nazi leader Adolf Hitler had Jewish roots, and that Jews are among the worst anti-Semites. Israel has demanded an apology from Moscow.

Israel's Foreign Ministry said it summoned the Russian ambassador for "a tough talk" over the comments, which Lavrov made on Sunday in an interview with Italian television.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, Israel has sought to keep a delicate balance between the two sides, but remarks by the Russian foreign minister to an Italian channel sparked anger in Israel.

Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid said Lavrov had made "an unforgivable, scandalous statement."

Israel marked Holocaust Remembrance Day last week, with sirens blaring out across the country to commemorate the millions of Jews killed by the Nazis during the Second World War.

The comments by Russia's foreign minister came as he reaffirmed Moscow's stance that his country's invasion of Ukraine is aimed at freeing the country from Nazis.

Moscow has previously said it wants to "demilitarize" and "denazify" Ukraine.

During an interview with an Italian news channel Lavrov was asked how Russia could say it needed to "denazify" Ukraine, when the



Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid

country's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, was Jewish. "When they say 'What sort of nazification is this if we are Jews', well I

think that Hitler also had Jewish origins, so it means nothing," Lavrov said

"For a long time now we've been hearing the wise Jewish people say that the biggest anti-Semites are the Jews themselves," he added.

Lapid, in a statement from the foreign ministry on the "grave remarks", condemned Lavrov's comments.

"Foreign Minister Lavrov's remarks are both an unforgivable and outrageous statement as well as a terrible historical error," Lapid said.

"Jews did not murder themselves in the Holocaust. The lowest level of racism against Jews is to accuse Jews themselves of antisemitism."

Israel's foreign ministry "has summoned the

Russian Ambassador to Israel for a clarification meeting," the statement added.

Dani Dayan, director of the Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Israel, also criticised Lavrov's statement, calling them "unfounded, delusional and dangerous remarks which deserve to be condemned."

In a speech to the Israeli parliament in March, the Ukrainian President called on Israel to "make a choice" by supporting Ukraine against Russia, and asked the Jewish state to provide them with weapons.

Israel has however provided helmets and bulletproof vests to Ukrainian rescue workers, but has not supplied the country with weapons.

Pope wants to meet Putin in Moscow over Ukraine war

By **OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH** with agency report

Pope Francis has said that he asked for a meeting in Moscow with Russian President Vladimir Putin towards ending the war in Ukraine but had not received a reply.

The 85-year-old Pontiff also told Italy's Corriere Della Sera newspaper that Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church, who has given the war his full-throated backing, "cannot become Putin's altar boy."

He also disclosed that he had sent a message to Putin around 20 days into



Pope Francis

the conflict saying "that I was willing to go to Moscow."

Francis, who made

an unprecedented visit to the Russian embassy when the war started, said in the interview that about three weeks into the conflict, he asked the Vatican's top diplomat to send a message to Putin.

The message was "that I was willing to go to Moscow. Certainly, it was necessary for the Kremlin leader to allow an opening. We have not yet received a response and we are still insisting".

He added, "I fear that Putin cannot, and does not, want to have this meeting at this time. But how can you not stop so much brutality?"

Before the interview, the Pope had not specifically mentioned Russia or Putin publicly since the start of the conflict on Feb. 24. But he has left little doubt which side he has criticized, using terms such as unjustified aggression, invasion and lamenting atrocities against civilians.

When asked about a trip to the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, the head of the Roman Catholic Church said he would not be travelling to Ukraine anytime soon.

"I'm not going to Kyiv for now. I feel I shouldn't go. I have to go to Moscow first, I have to meet Putin first," he said.

2023 Presidency: Tinubu, Amaechi meet in Lagos

Two leading All Progressives Congress, APC, presidential aspirants, Bola Tinubu and Rotimi Amaechi met in Lagos on Tuesday.

According to Tinubu's spokesman, Tunde Rahman, both presidential aspirants met at the private wing of the airport in Ikeja.

In a tweet, Rahman wrote: "HE ASIWAJU Tinubu and Hon. Minister of Transportation, Rotimi Amaechi, at a chance

encounter at the private wing of the airport in Ikeja, Lagos this afternoon.."

Both Tinubu and Amaechi recently declared for the Presidency.

A few days ago, Amaechi had said Tinubu was qualified to rule Nigeria.

Amaechi spoke during his visit to the Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, at the Lagos House in Marina.

