

INEC under pressure to end voters' registration, disenfranchise Nigerians, Ohanaeze alleges

By **ADELEKE ADESERI** (News Editor) and **CHARLES OÑYEKWERE** (Abakaliki)

Ohanaeze Ndigbo has alleged that the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC,

Electoral body mulls extension, sensitizes youths

was under pressure to disenfranchise Nigerians ahead of the 2023 general elections.

Mazi Okechukwu Isiguzoro, Secretary-General of the apex Igbo socio-

political organization, at the weekend alleged that INEC's Chairman, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, was under pressure to end the voters' registration by June 2022.

In a statement, Isiguzoro

urged Nigerians to demand an extension of the registration. Isiguzoro urged Nigerians to take advantage of the ongoing exercise to get their voters cards.

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 Omoleye Sowore AAC	 Dumebi Kachikwu ADC	 Yabaji Sani ADP	 Christopher Imumolen AP	 Bola Tinubu APC
 Peter Umeadi APGA	 Sunday Adenuga BP	 Peter Obi LP	 Rabiu Kwankwaso NNPP	 Okwudili Nwa-Anyajike NRM
 Atiku Abubakar PDP	 Kola Abiola PRP	 Adewole Adebayo SDP	 Malik Addo-Ibrahim YPP	 Dan Nwanyawu ZLP

- ## 2023 PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES
1. AAC - Omoleye Sowore
 2. ADC - Dumebi Kachikwu
 3. ADP - Yabaji Sani
 4. AP - Christopher Imumolen
 5. APC — Bola Tinubu
 6. APGA — Peter Umeadi
 7. BP - Sunday Adenuga
 8. LP — Peter Obi
 9. NNPP — Rabiu Kwankwaso
 10. NRM - Okwudili Nwa-Anyajike
 11. PDP — Atiku Abubakar
 12. PRP — Kola Abiola
 13. SDP - Adewole Adebayo
 14. YPP — Malik Addo-Ibrahim
 15. ZLP - Dan Nwanyawu

Don't despair, Buhari assures Nigerians

By **TUNDE JOSHUA**,
Politics Editor and **FRIDAY**
OMOSOLA, Akure

President Muhammadu Buhari has assured Nigerians that his successor will be elected through a peaceful and transparent process, while their right to choose their government will be preserved and protected.

He also restated his commitment to finding lasting solutions to the hydra-headed insecurity challenges across the country.

He made this commitment Sunday morning in his nationwide broadcast to commemorate Democracy Day. June 12 is a day set aside to celebrate freedom and unity of the nation.

Buhari assured the nation of his commitment to protect Nigeria and Nigerians from all enemies from within and outside.

The president said: "I am also promising you a free, fair and transparent

electoral process. And I am pleading with all citizens to come together and work with Government to build a peaceful and prosperous nation.

"Fellow Nigerians this is my last Democracy Day speech as your President. By June 12th, 2023, exactly one year from today, you will already have a new President. I remain committed and determined to ensure that the new President is elected through a peaceful and transparent process.

"It is important for all of us to remember that June 12th, 2023 will be exactly 30 years from the 1993 Presidential elections. In honour and memory of one of our national heroes for democracy, Chief M.K.O Abiola, GCFR, we must all work together to ensure this transition is done in a peaceful manner."

His hope that this can be achieved was hinged on what he described as positive signs of peaceful conduct of primaries by all registered political parties to select their candidates for the 2023



President Buhari

general elections.

Buhari said "these primaries were peaceful and orderly. Those who won were magnanimous in their victories. Those who lost were gracious in defeat. And those aggrieved opted to seek judicial justice as opposed to jungle justice.

"I followed the party primaries closely from the

state level to the Presidential level. I was very impressed to see across all the political parties that, most candidates ran issued based campaigns. The language and tone throughout were on the whole measured and controlled.

"Another positive that came from the 2022 party primaries was the significant increase in women and youth

particularly across all parties. I was very pleased to see this development. This augurs well for the future. These trends clearly show the level of maturity our democracy has achieved in the last 23 years.

"As we move into the general election campaign season, we must sustain this mature attitude to campaigning and ultimately, voting. We must never see it as a "do or die" affair. We must all remember democracy is about the will of the majority. There must be winners and losers."

He charged all candidates to continue running issue-focused campaigns and to treat opponents with dignity. "As leaders, you must all showcase high character and never forget that the world is watching us and Africa looks up to Nigeria to provide example in governance. The tone you set at the top will surely be replicated in your followers," he said.

The president said his administration has in the past seven years made significant investments to reform and enhance the electoral laws, systems, and processes to safeguard votes.

He, however, said the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary were and still remain united and committed to ensure these reforms are fully implemented in the 2023 general elections.

Buhari the government is working hard to contain and address the rise in insecurity due to terrorist activities in parts of the country. He promised to protect lives of all Nigerians.

To achieve this however, he said "we must all contribute. It is not the job of government alone. I ask all citizens to support and cooperate with our security agencies by reporting any suspicious characters and activities to law enforcement agencies. We can only have a safe country if we are able to prevent crime not after the crime has been committed."

He urged the citizenry to put all victims of terrorism and kidnapping in their thoughts and prayers.

"I am living daily with the grief and worry for all those victims and prisoners of terrorism and kidnapping. I and the security agencies are doing all we can to free those unfortunate countrymen and countrywomen safely.

"For those who have lost their lives, we will continue to seek justice for their families against the perpetrators. For those currently in captivity, we will not stop until they are freed, and their kidnappers are brought to justice. If we all unite, we will be victorious

against these agents of terror and destruction.

"We have reformed some of our security structures. Some of the defence assets we procured three years ago have arrived and have been deployed."

He charged Nigerians to recommit themselves to ensuring protection and preservation of the ideals of democracy, because it marked the end of military rule and the return of power and control to those freely elected by the people.

In 2018, Democracy Day was moved from 29th of May to the 12th of June, a change meant to remind all Nigerians of one free election after which the presumed winner along with Nigerians were denied their rights and their choice.

Buhari said "on June 12th 1993, Nigerians saw the best in our citizens as we all went out to vote peacefully. By June 24th 1993, we also saw the worst of our leadership as the elections were annulled.

"We must never forget the sacrifices of the heroes of Nigeria's democracy during 1993. Their patriotism and peaceful struggle should guide our actions especially when it comes to electing our leaders and holding them accountable, now and in future."

Meanwhile, the presidential candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, has encouraged Nigerians not to be despair but be hopeful because this year's Democracy Day "provides us with no room to stomach rhyme and rhetoric. But salient facts, sobriety and promise of a better tomorrow."

He said the historic June 12 as Democracy Day in Nigeria, is indeed one of the most epochal political events in the nation, just before the February 2023 General Elections.

Atiku in a Democracy Day message to Nigerians said "it is an auspicious period to rally round all compatriots; to think and work in concert for the unity, security, equity, inclusivity, socio-economic prosperity and equitable development of our dear country.

"Let's seize this unique opportunity of Democracy Day to reinforce our firm commitment to the sacrifices made by the pioneers of our country's independence, and salute the courage and selflessness of the pathfinders of our current freedom and liberty; by pursuing with vim and vigor the fundamentals of our Constitution, the pillars and principles of rule of law, of electoral transparency and equity and unity in diversity.

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INEC under pressure to end voters' registration...

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take advantage of the ongoing exercise to get their voters cards.

According to Isiguzoro: "Ohanaeze Ndigbo worldwide has commended Nigerians, especially the youths, on their recent efforts to end voters' apathy and take back Nigeria in 2023.

"Nigerians should be conscious of the ongoing manipulation of the electoral process by corrupt politicians to ensure that INEC will end the ongoing voters registration exercise in other to curtail the surge of Nigerians hurrying to collect their PVCs

"This is the best time Nigerians should take advantage of the ongoing voter registration exercise and get all eligible voters registered, and Nigerians must rise and demand from INEC to extend the enrollment of eligible voters till September 2022 as it appears that INEC is under pressure to disfranchise the rights of Nigerians to participate in 2023 elections, there are undercover meetings to pressurize the INEC Chairman, to end the Voter's registration exercise by June 2022.

"There will be no democracy without Nigerians, the power to get the best leaders in 2023 will be in the hands of Nigerians; we should arise from our slumber and demand that INEC should extend the Voter's card registration to September 2022.

"Starting from 12th June 2022, Nigerians should use peaceful mediums

and constitutional ways to pressurize INEC to extend the time of the Voter's registration exercise till September 2022. Our message to Nigerians on 2022 Democracy Day, is to take back Nigeria from the hands of corrupt politicians.

"We must prove to them that the labor of our heroes past shall not be in vain, Atiku, Tinubu, and Obi should be summoned by youths, civil rights and religious organizations for a debate on issues of Nigeria's security, economy, and education. Nigerians should eject a sick and antiquated President from Aso Rock in 2023 with their PVCs."

But INEC says it is considering extending the continuous voter registration.

"We have heard your requests loud and clear. You will soon hear from us on the extension of CVR registration," the chairman of the commission, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, said in a tweet on its official handle.

"Please assure me that you will register, pick your PVCs, and Vote. I also assure you that your vote will count," he said.

His comments followed calls from several quarters for the body to extend the registration scheduled to end on June 30.

At the weekend, the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room (Situation Room), a coalition of Civil Society Organisations, called on the electoral body to extend the deadline.

The CSOs in their appeal

said; "Citizens have now intensified their efforts in registering for their Permanent Voter's Card (PVC).

"There have also been several appeals by Nigerians to INEC to extend the registration exercise to enable them to register to obtain a PVC while Situation Room has received reports of large crowds at the INEC offices across the country."

The commission also admitted there is a surge in PVC registration nationwide.

"In response, the Commission has immediately released additional 209 machines deployed mainly to the five South Eastern States, Lagos, and Kano where the pressure is most acute," the Chairman of INEC's Information and Voter Education Committee Festus Okoye said.

"The Commission will monitor the situation over the next few days. Thereafter, it will meet to review the progress of the exercise," he added.

Meantime, in a bid to sensitize the youths to get their permanent Voter's cards, the commission in conjunction with European Union, EU, organized a concert in Lagos.

Nigerian popstars Tuface, Omawunmi, Waje and many others thrilled fans to a fun-filled time at the political concert held at the Tafawa Balewa Square on Saturday.

The event tagged, 'Youth Vote Count 2.0 Mega concert', was to create awareness for the eligible youths to get their

Voter's card and vote for candidates of their choice in next year's general elections.

Permanent Voter's Card was the only thing needed to enter into the venue as no gate fee was charged.

The Tafawa Balewa Square venue of the concert was filled to the brim with youths singing and gyrating to songs from the artistes.

A video of Waje's performance at the event was shared on Twitter via the INEC official page.

The video was captioned, "@OfficialWaje using her power #VOICE to entertain the mammoth youth who turned up for the #YouthVoteCount2 in Lagos."

Omawumi also thrilled the crowd as she performed her popular hit track, "If You Ask Me".

"Na who you go ask if you no register to vote, Omawumi sang using her strong voice to encourage the mammoth youth to get registered to vote at the ongoing #YouthVoteCount2 in Lagos," INEC wrote on its official page.

Pictures also revealed that the youths defied the rain to attend the star-studded show

Some celebrities who attended the event include Falz, Mr Macaroni, Real Warri Pikin, Broda Shaggi, MI Abaga, and a plethora of many others.

Yakubu; Lagos State Resident Electoral Commissioner, Olusegun Agbaje; and other members of the commission were also present.



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Don't despair, Buhari assures Nigerians

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"Let's not despair by folding our arms in hapless helplessness. "The last thing that should die in a person is hope".

"Meanwhile, let's continue to do our civic duty and responsibility to salvage our dear country together; saving her from falling off precariously from current socio-economic cliff into abysmal catastrophic end of a failed state, as predicted by some naysayers!"

Awakening the consciousness of Nigerians to their civic responsibilities, he said "thus time is ripe for all adult Nigerians to register to vote; vote and defend their votes. For people's participation is the beauty of democracy.

"Let's gather the numbers and commitment to kick out APC - the borrowing and sorrowing party. Let's remember that Nigeria's current debt burden stands at over N41 trillion with less than \$40 billion reserve.

"It is visible that the Buhari administration has brought upon our commonality the worst form of government, where insecurity, disunity, inequity, lack of job opportunity, dwindling economic prosperity and hyper inflation stare us all on the face.

"Hence, we should by next year reject an inept, unpopular and insensitive and clueless APC government.

"A ruling party that offers crass opportunism and cronyism can never elevate nor uplift a diverse and secular country as ours.

"The APC that couldn't offer Nigerians honesty on their pledged manifestos with regards to security, economic growth and anti-corruption; shouldn't be honoured with another wasteful tenure of pillage, brigandage and carnage!

"Here's the season to prove to dishonest APC politicians that power truly belongs to the people via the use of the ballots.

"A government that impoverish us, divides us along our fault lines, make us insecure, make us hungry, starve us of public amenities like electricity and fuel and perpetually shut down gates of universities against our undergraduates, due to no fault of the students and causing untold sorrow to their parents and sponsors; such a party should never be allowed to occupy esteemed offices in government at any level in our country".

According to the PDP presidential flag bearer, the most pertinent tribute that can effectively be paid to national heroes past, those who struggled

to enthrone and sustain Democracy in Nigeria, "is to kick out the APC; a tainted government that was given a valuable mandate, but came unprepared about what to do.

"They squandered a precious political opportunity, by dashing the hopes of a trusting majority of the electorate. Not again, we should all clamour. Say no to the doom of bad governance; say yes to the prospect of a better Nigeria in 2023.

"Let's work together to fix our country and return the boom of days of yore. Let's kick out the APC.

"I stand with you all on the drive to reposition our country for greatness.

"I will unify all and sundry, enforce solid security nationwide, create jobs through private sector unhindered participation and inclusivity, break government monopoly to give wings for business to thrive, provide enabling infrastructural environment to reduce cost of production, cut governance cost through devolution of powers to other tiers of government, and provide incentives to hardworking and entrepreneurial Nigerians.

"Please trust yours truly, to deliver on these promises. We did it in the past under President Olusegun Obasanjo/Atiku Abubakar administration. We paid off Nigeria's global debt, liberalized the banking and telecommunications sectors, among others".

He, however said dreams don't come true, if positive action is not activated and implemented, urging compatriots not rest on their oars, but rekindle hope by not giving up on the dream of a better Nigeria.

Also, Mr Peter Obi, tasked political leaders to avail themselves opportunity of the Democracy Day to reflect on the total dilapidation of the country.

The Labour Party (LP) presidential candidate, urged to recommit themselves to their constitutional responsibility of providing good governance to the people.

The former governor of Anambra State in his Democracy Day message, bemoaned unabated cases of insecurity, poverty, and unemployment, which he said has left Nigerians devastated and despaired.

He charged leaders to reflect the philosophy behind the June 12 Democracy Day anniversary in the ways they conduct national affairs.

The memorable Day, he said was set aside in remembrance of the collective decision of Nigerians to chart a new course in

nation-building which they demonstrated in voting for the late MKO Abiola on June 12, 1993, presidential election.

"Democracy Day is an occasion for reflection and recommitment by our leaders at all levels to provide good governance to the people. It is a moment for stock taking on the extent we have gone in charting a new course in our journey to nation-building which Nigerians demonstrated in voting en masse for MKO Abiola, beyond ethnic and religious lines", he said.

Obi called on Nigerians not to lose hope but take their fate in their hands by overwhelmingly support him and vote the Labour Party to take over governance if the country come 2023.

Ondo State Governor Oluwarotimi Akeredolu singled out restructuring as the only panacea for the array of challenges confronting the country, especially insecurity. Akeredolu, who doubles as Chairman of the Southern Governors Forum, said the federal government should shed its excesses on the sub-nationals and devolve security to the states. He stated that the political leaders must identify the challenges facing the country and be prepared to tackle them for the benefit of Nigerians.

Akeredolu disclosed this in his June 12 message. He maintained that the time was now to deepen the democratic values that Democracy Day represents. He asserted that it was time to make efforts to ensure that the reason for the Democracy Day celebration was not defeated and the focus must shift mainly to the people.

"Since the people are pivotal to our democratic gains, their well-being and security must be prioritised. There was an urgent need for us to rethink our constitution and address issues that hinder our progress.

"We must be sincere in our approach to securing the lives and property of the people. The Chief Executives of states should not be Chief Security Officers without the prerequisite for necessary security measures. It is time to rise above mere appellation to being pragmatic.

"The symbol of the June 12 struggle paid the supreme sacrifice. Our people must not continue to pay the ultimate price in vain. It is devastating. Let us deepen our Democratic values by devolving power to the sub-nationals. It will strengthen governance and make us stronger.

"Although we are still mourning, we will not forget to join our voices to address the fundamental issues that have remained a clog in



Atiku

the wheel of the country's progress. This day represents a watershed in the history of democracy in our country. It also symbolises a total rebirth of hope and aspiration. It reinforces not just an enduring hope, but resilience in the face of daunting challenges."

Akeredolu, who said the country was going through a hard time, stated that the issue of insecurity requires collective efforts.

"We must renew our commitment to the protection of lives and property and our country must explore all angles aimed at securing our space against these divisive elements bent on setting the country on the path of conflagration," the governor stated.

He said June 12 echoes the triumph of the people against tyranny and misrule—enemies of the country must not be allowed to continue attacking the psyche of the people and oppress them with impunity.

"As we celebrate this year's June 12, our mood in Ondo State was melancholic. Our hearts were still hurt. These

mindless elements behind the terror attack at St. Francis Catholic Church in Owo drew a dagger into our hearts. Our flags are still flying at half-mast. We are still in shock. Our loved ones who fell to the bullets of these terrorists will never be forgotten," the Governor said.

He, however, called on the people to reflect on the gains of June 12, as Democracy Day was not only a deft stroke on the canvas of justice a reminder to all of the need to uphold the principle of equity and fairness.

"We must strive to deepen this path of democratic ethos, our resolutions must resonate with the gains of June 12 and this revalidation of hope must be total," he stressed.

On its part, National Orientation Agency (NOA) called on Nigerians to use the day to reflect on their roles in Peace Building and Good Governance for Sustainable Development in our nation.

Director General of NOA, Dr. Garba Abari made the call in a message of felicitation with Nigerians, stressing that recent happenings around

the country demand sober reflection to reawaken the conscience of citizens to their collective brotherhood and the need for entrenched peace in the interest of national development.

He said the 2022 Democracy Day celebration provides an opportunity for Nigerians to renew their commitment to democratic tenets of patriotism, discipline, tolerance and social justice, urging Nigerians to make necessary sacrifices to strengthen democratic institutions and practices, especially as the nation prepares for another general elections.

Abari also appealed to public servants, who he described as "the engine room of government and the oil of good governance", to contribute their quota toward quality service delivery as a hallmark of democracy. He said no government policy, however laudable, can succeed without the impetus of the public service and therefore urged public officers to see their daily service as inputs for the good governance of our country.

The NOA Chief Executive also implored all citizens, both public and private, to lead the charge for sustainable development in their various fields of operation, noting that the economies of nations are built by their citizens, under the guidance of their governments.

While wishing Nigerians a peaceful and memorable Democracy Day celebration, Abari looked forward to great advancements in the nation's development before the return of the day in 2023.

Leaders must be servants, says Diri

■ Urges Nigerians to prioritise PVC collection

By **AHERHOKE OKIOMA, Yenagoa**

Bayelsa State Governor Douye Diri has said that the essence of democracy would be lost if leaders fail to be servants to the people.

He made the remark on Sunday while speaking at a non-denominational Democracy Day Service at King of Glory Chapel, Government House, Yenagoa. The governor charged those occupying elective and appointive offices to see themselves as servants while they see the people that gave them the mandate as their masters to whom they are accountable.

A press release by his Chief Press Secretary, Mr Daniel Alabrah, quoted the governor as saying that elected or appointed officials should regard such positions of authority as a privilege and a platform to

better the lot of the people.

His words: "Today being Democracy Day, we should all be reminded to continue to give service to our people. If you have been elected or appointed into key government offices and positions, you should note that it is only but a privilege.

"In all our actions, we should know that those who have given us the mandate to serve them are our masters and we are their servants. If you make yourselves a demi-god, you are only deceiving yourselves."

Commenting on the recent attack on the St. Francis Catholic Church in Owo, Ondo, Diri again condoled with the government and people of the state. He said Bayelsa in solidarity with the government of Ondo State has declared that there would be no Democracy Day celebration.

Describing Bayelsa as a relatively peaceful state, Diri said

the state's security architecture is being repositioned with the signing of the Bayelsa State Community Safety Corps Law to complement the efforts of the various security agencies in the state.

According to him, over 5,000 youths will be engaged by the Corps headed by Brig-Gen. Eric Angaye (Retd) and trained in all aspects of security to curb criminal activities. He explained that the state-owned complementary security outfits - Bayelsa Vigilante and Bayelsa Volunteers - have been incorporated into the Corps and their personnel would also be trained to make them more effective. Speaking with newsmen shortly after the service, Senator Diri called on all well-meaning Nigerians, particularly the youths, to get their permanent voter cards to be able to participate in the process of electing leaders.

NDLEA nabs 39 drug suspects in Abuja raids

•Destroys 5.3 hectares cannabis farm in Edo

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

National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has arrested no fewer than 39 drug suspects in different raids in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

A statement on Sunday by the Agency's Director of Media and Advocacy, Femi Babafemi, said the raids took place between 4th June to 11 June in different locations.

"In the past week, no fewer than 39 suspects were arrested across drug joints raided in parts of the Federal Capital Territory and different quantities of as-

sorted illicit drugs recovered from them.

"Areas raided between Saturday 4th June and Saturday 11th June include Apo Mechanic (Cashew forest), Apo NEPA, Tora Bora, Gishiri junction, Jabi park, Jabi forest, Jabi Gidan Bola, Deidei area, Rugga area, City Gate, Sabon Lugbe, Basa village and Airport road," Babafemi said.

According to him, the raid, which continues across Abuja, is a joint operation between the FCT Command of the Agency and the Chairman Monitoring Special Task Force to rid the capital territory of the activities of drug dealers and peddlers.



Marwa

More so, 5.301713 hectares of cannabis farm have been destroyed by operatives of NDLEA in Edo state.

Babafemi said the farm, which was destroyed at Oke forest, Ovia North East LGA, is "part of efforts to disrupt all cannabis planting activities for the season in the state."

He added, "anti-narcotic officers in Edo have intercepted 10,280 tablets of Tramadol, 2000 tablets of Diazepam, 300 tablets of Swinol, 5000 tablets of Axol and 10 bottles of Codeine based syrup in Irrua area of the state."

Meanwhile, a Nigeria-based Congolese, Kandigu Kadi and a Nigerian, Makowulu Ebuka Anthony have been arrested by operatives of NDLEA at the NAHCO and SAHCO export sheds of the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Ikeja Lagos for attempting to export controlled and illicit drugs to the United States of America and Dubai, United Arab Emirate.

"While Kandigu was arrested on Tuesday 31st May at the NAHCO export shed for attempting to export 2.100kilograms of pentazocine injection, Makowulu

was nabbed on Friday 3rd June in connection with attempt to export parcels of cannabis sativa concealed in cereals packs to Dubai through the SAHCO cargo shed.

"Investigations reveal that the pentazocine consignment was being sent to Kinshasa, Congo, while a similar package containing 200 bottles of pentazocine injection intercepted a week earlier at the airport was heading to the US.

"In his case, Makowulu was caught with eight parcels of cannabis weighing 2.90kg concealed in Nutribom Cereals cartons among other natural packs of the cereal, as part of a consolidated cargo meant for different people in Dubai," Babafemi stated.

Also in Yobe State, a 22 blocks of cannabis sativa was recovered from a notorious drug dealer, Usman Alhaji a.k.a NEPA, who was arrested on Friday, 9th June after NDLEA operatives raided Tsohuwar Kasuwa area of Potiskum town.

According to the spokesperson, Chairman/Chief Executive of NDLEA, Brig Gen Mohamed Buba Marwa (Rtd) commended the officers and men of MMIA, Edo, Yobe and FCT Commands as well as the C-MSTF for their resilience.

"He charged them and others across all commands to remain vigilant and committed to the collective goal of saving Nigeria from the drug scourge," Babafemi said.

How to diversify Nigeria's economy, by Edo govt

By **ISAAC OLAMIKAN**

In its desire to change the narrative of the income generated in oil palm sector of the economy, Edo State Government has called for regional collaboration to drive investment into sustainable oil palm production in Nigeria, as part of strategies to lead the country's industrialization drive.

Managing Director of Edo State Investment Promotion Office (ESIPO), Mr. Kelvin Uwaibi, made the submission during the Central Bank of Nigeria Oil Palm Stakeholders' Engagement session held recently in Asaba, Delta State.

Sharing the Edo State Oil Palm Programme (ESOPP) success story, Uwaibi said it, Ondo and Delta can collaborate with the Central Bank of Nigeria to create a sustainable oil palm production belt, which could lead to development of the crop and other tree crops in Nigeria.

He added that stakeholders like the Federal Ministries of Industry, Trade and Investment and Agriculture and the Bankers' Committee are key in driving the plan of creating a national policy for oil palm development.

According to him, "the role of the Bankers' Committee is critical to the oil palm development initiative. CBN must approach other banks to expand the Edo success story to other states. Let the Bankers' Committee lead a synergy similar to what obtained during the response to the COVID-19 pandemic to stimulate the development of tree crops in Nigeria.

"The Russian-Ukraine war should give us an insight on why we must act fast. There is food crisis everywhere. We have over 200 million Nigerians; we must do something to sustain ourselves internally outside export"

While presenting a paper on "State Government and Private

Sector Partnership on Oil Palm Development-Lessons from Edo State", the Coordinator of the Edo State Oil Palm Programme, Mr. Churchill Oboh, noted that Edo State has allocated about 62,500 hectares of land to oil palm investors in the state.

He urged neighboring states like Ondo and Delta to either learn or improve on the Edo experience and come up with sustainable ways of ensuring land availability that will be properly put to use, thereby making Nigeria self-sufficient in oil palm production.

Oboh said, "I urge the CBN to look critically into the deliberations here today because funding is very critical in the oil palm business. CBN should also look into a process of financial support to oil palm investment in Nigeria."

Stakeholders at the event also include representatives of the Governors of Edo, Delta and Ondo States; the IDH, the Sustainable Trade Initiative, Netherland, the Smallholders Farmers and big-players in the oil palm industry.



Kelvin Uwaibi

Okowa tasks leaders on people's wellbeing

By **GABRIEL ELOZINO**, Asaba

Delta State Governor Ifeanyi Okowa has charged people in authority to use their positions to make the lives of the people they lead better.

Dr. Okowa made the call on Sunday, at a Thanksgiving Service for the 3rd anniversary of the 7th Assembly of Delta House of Assembly held at Living Faith Church, Asaba.

He said that God allowed people to be in positions of authority to add value to the lives of others in the society.

"I am glad to be with us as Delta State House of Assembly celebrates its third year in the 7th Assembly.

"I thank God for the members as they celebrate and as you have come to thank God, you are asking God to do more for us as a state.

"I recall that, unfortunately, we lost two members of that House but we thank God for those that are alive to celebrate today," he said.

While congratulating members of the Assembly on the anniversary, the governor lauded them for the good working relations between

the executive and the legislative arms of government in the state.

"As I congratulate you, I thank you for the very warm relationship you have had with the executive.

"I urge you to still realise that we have more work to do for our people; next year will be very challenging because it is an election year.

"We shall work to the very last day because that is the wish of our people that elected us to render services to them, to the glory and praise of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"You have come before the Lord to renew your appreciation to Him and I urge you all to stand strong in faith and do the best you can do for our people in Delta State.

"Thanksgiving is not just about coming to church to thank God for what He has done in our lives, it is about what you are able to do for every Deltan that crosses your path and through your various representations in your constituencies.

"It is the Lord that allows us to be where we are in positions of authority and therefore, we must use such positions to better the

lives of our people.

"It is my prayer that you will continue to touch lives in your various offices.

"We look forward to a very exciting fourth year and because we have come forth to thank the name of the Lord, the Lord will bless you all collectively, individually and the entire state," Okowa stated.

Earlier, Resident Pastor of the church, Mr Chris Nwaka, had in a sermon titled "Accessing Our Breakthrough Heritage In The Word", said Christians were redeemed as ambassadors of Christ to enjoy dignity and for generational impact.

He said that only God could guide and direct the affairs of men, and urged leaders to always put their trust in God.

The Speaker of the House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevwori, took the scripture reading from Psalm 115:1-12.

Deputy Governor Kingsley Otuaoro; Chief Judge, Justice Theresa Diai and State Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Chief Kingsley Esiso were among other top government functionaries at the service.

Publish your assets, reject vote-buying, SERAP asks Atiku, Tinubu, Obi, others

An open letter has been sent a non governmental body, Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP), to presidential candidates ahead of the February 2023 general elections, urging them to “urgently publish details of your assets and liabilities, and to publicly commit to rejecting vote buying and electoral bribery before and during” the polls.

“While there is no constitutional requirement for presidential candidates to publish their assets and liabilities before elections, doing so would show that you can stand up for transparency in assets declaration by public officers if elected,” SERAP said in the June 11th, 2022 letter signed by its deputy director Kolawole Oluwadare.

“The public office is a public trust. As such, the voters deserve to hear from presidential candidates regarding what they will do about issues of public interest, particularly with respect to integrity, selflessness, openness, accountability, human rights, and the rule of law if elected.”

SERAP added: “As you and your parties prepare for presidential election campaigns, we hope that you will seize the opportunity to show your commitment to addressing these fundamental issues of public interest by immediately publishing details of your assets and rejecting vote buying, intimidation and harassment.

“Publicly committing to these issues will also show the voters that if elected you would act solely to protect the public interest; and avoid placing yourself under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence you in the discharge of your constitutional duties.

“It would also show that you would be accountable to the public for your actions and submit yourself to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

“Your public commitment to these issues will also demonstrate to the voters that if elected you would act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner, and that you would not withhold information from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

“Now is the time to show the voters that it will be no business as usual, and to make a public commitment on issues that if addressed would strengthen Nigeria’s anti-corruption and human rights records, and improve access of Nigerians to public goods and services.

“SERAP also urges you to publicly commit to probing the spending of security votes since the return of democracy in 1999, and widely publishing details of spending of security votes; finding the missing N11 trillion meant to provide regular

electricity supply for Nigerians; as well as obeying court orders and the rule of law if elected.

“Widely publishing your assets before the elections would also show your principled stand on transparency and accountability in the management of the country’s resources.

“Making asset declarations open would ensure that leaders do not abuse their powers for personal gain and allow civil society to hold leaders to account. If leaders are seen to live beyond their means, an asset declaration can be a starting point for investigations.

“The practice of vote buying and electoral bribery by politicians have characterised elections in the country for many years, preventing political equality and fair electoral competition. Yet, no body politic worthy of being called a democracy entrusts the selection of leaders to a process of auction or barter.

“Vote buying amounts to undue influence and improper electoral influence. When politicians buy votes, they reinforce social subjugation and do long-term damage to poor voters.

“Public officials rarely publish their asset declarations submitted to the Code of Conduct Bureau, contrary to the principles of transparency and accountability, and other international standards.

“Impunity for corruption and grave human rights violations is widely prevalent in Nigeria, as perpetrators are rarely brought to justice. Successive governments, including the government of President Muhammadu Buhari have persistently failed to obey court orders and the rule of law, thereby eroding the citizens’ trust in the judiciary, and violating Nigeria’s international human rights obligations.

“N11 trillion meant to provide regular electricity supply has been allegedly squandered by governments since 1999. Many unimplemented reports of corruption in the electricity sector continue to gather dust on the shelves while suspected perpetrators continue to profit from their crimes. Socially and economically vulnerable Nigerians continue to pay the price for corruption in the electricity sector.

“Successive governments and state governors have persistently failed to explain to Nigerians how they spend security votes meant to ensure the security and welfare of Nigerians. In fact, the misuse and embezzlement of public funds in the name of security votes is widely recognized as a major cause of the ongoing security challenges in several parts of the country.

“Please let us know if you and your political party are willing to commit to some or all of the issues outlined in this letter.

Presidential candidates for Nigeria’s general elections in 2023 include Alhaji Atiku Abubakar



SERAP boss, Adetokunbo

Three dead, several injured, houses destroyed in Katsina rainstorm

By **JAMES DANJUMA**, Katsina

Rainstorm has killed three people, injured several others and destroyed many homes in Kankara Local Government Area of Katsina State.

The rainstorm which started on Saturday and lasted till Sunday, affected several communities in the area, with Kankara town, Nasarawa and Matsiga communities mostly affected.

While one person was said to have died in Nasarawa community, the other two who were

women, lost their lives at Matsiga community.

One of the victims, whom sources said lost her life after the wall of her room collapsed on her, was buried on Sunday morning according to Islamic rites.

Local authorities were still trying to determine extent of damage to humans, homes and farmlands as at time of this report.

Abdulkarim Sani, an information officer at the council area, confirmed the incident Sunday

of Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP); Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, All Progressives Congress (APC); Mr. Peter Obi, Labour Party (LP); Alhaji Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso, New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP); Professor Peter Umeadi, All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA); Prince Malik Ado-Ibrahim, Young Progressive Party (YPP); Comrade Omoyele Sowore, Africa Action Congress (AAC); Prince Adewole Adebayo, Social Democratic Party (SDP); Kola Abiola, Peoples Redemption Party (PRP); Professor Christopher Imumulen, Accord Party (AP); Dumebi Kachikwu, African Democratic Congress (ADC); and Yusuf Mamman Dan Talle of Allied Peoples Movement (APM).

morning.

Sani said a staff of the information unit of the council, Surajo Zabo, lost his wife to the rainstorm.

He said several communities and homes were affected by the rainstorm, but that the actual number would be determined at a later time.

As at time of this report, officials of the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) were yet to issue any statement or respond to inquiry on the incident.

Minister to inaugurate newly elected chairmen, councilors in FCT councils

By **TUNDE JOSHUA**, Abuja

Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Malam Musa Muhammad Bello will on Tuesday inaugurate chairmen and councilors elected into its six area councils in February this year.

He will swear in the elected persons in accordance with the ruling of an FCT High Court last Friday which vacated the restriction placed on the minister by same court not to inaugurate them.

Reprieve came for the elected chairmen and councilors as the court set aside the judgment given in favour of tenure elongation for the immediate past chairmen and their councilors.

The court as well ordered immediate swearing-in of the newly elected chairmen and their councilors.

The Trumpet recalled that on May 18, 2022, the FCT High Court in Kubwa suspended the swearing-in of the elected chairmen and the councilors.

The ruling was challenged and the court reversed itself by ordering the minister to swear in the elected council officials.

The Chief Press Secretary to the minister, Mr Anthony Ogunleye said, as a law abiding citizen, the outcome of appeal which set aside the earlier judgement will be complied with.

The statement reads: “the Federal Capital Territory Administration at about 1400hrs

of this Friday, the 10th of June, 2022 received the Certified True Copy of the new judgement of the FCT High Court delivered by Justice Ibrahim Mohammed in respect of the above subject matter.

“The Court has set aside its earlier judgement delivered on Friday the 13th day of May, 2022 granting a one year extension of the outgoing Chairmen and Councilors of the 6 FCT Area Councils due to lack of jurisdiction.

“The judgement effectively clears the way for the swearing in of the newly elected Chairmen.

“We want to reiterate that as a law-abiding organization, the FCTA will equally obey this new judgement just as it had complied with the earlier judgement. The Chairmen shall accordingly be inaugurated at 10:00hrs prompt on Tuesday, June 14, 2022. Further details will be provided in due course.

“Residents are once again reminded that the FCT is a creation of law and all actions of the FCT Administration are guided by the rule of law and this case will not be an exception.

The FCTA extends its appreciation to all stakeholders for their patience and support in this regard and enjoins all residents of the Territory to remain calm and law abiding in their daily activities.”

Recall that in his fresh ruling on Thursday, Justice Ibrahim Mohammed who gave the suspension order, clarified that everybody is

in a learning process, that persons are bound to make mistakes and also bound to make corrections.

He said that it was very clear that some mistakes were made and a judgment was entered, which brought a lot of issues concerning the elongation of the tenure of the outgoing chairmen in the six area councils.

Mohammed further said that in his wisdom, he has vacated that first judgment that was given by him and thereby directed that the area council chairmen who were elected and issued a certificate of return that the FCT Minister should go ahead and swear them into office.



Malam Musa Muhammad Bello

Nigerians determined to sustain democracy, Uzodinma affirms

By **ATHAN AGBAKWURU**, Owerri

Imo State Governor Hope Uzodinma has applauded the unwavering spirit of Nigerians in the face of the multifarious daunting challenges bedeviling the country. He noted that the citizens by their resilience over the years have shown their determination to sustain democracy for the good of the nation.

He made the assertion in his message to the people of Imo State as part of activities to mark the 2023 Democracy Day celebration.

According to him, the June 12 Democracy Day celebration should be a day of sober reflection by the political elite and the entire populace on how to keep faith with the spirit of the struggle. The governor stated that the event of June 12 has taught Nigerians the lesson that citizens have power to freely elect their own leaders stressing that if the citizens fail in their civic responsibilities to turn out to vote come 2023, they will have themselves to blame.

His words, "It gives me a great pleasure to address the good people of Imo State today on the auspicious occasion of this year's Democracy Day celebration. For our young ones, June 12, 1993, was the day Nigeria conducted what has been described as the fairest and freest presidential election in the nation's modern history. But it was annulled by the then government, thus precipitating a long and bitter struggle for freedom and democracy.

"In the course of that struggle, some of our citizens paid the supreme sacrifice, others went into exile while others were incarcerated. By the grace of God and consequent upon the relentless struggles, the country returned to democratic rule on May 29th. Consequently, President Muhammadu Buhari did the needful by institutionalising June 12 as Democracy Day, which serves

as acknowledgement of the the foundational impetus that led to the struggle for democracy.

"Today, is therefore symbolic because it resonates our collective struggle and our resilience as a people to enthrone and sustain democracy. June 12th serves as a constant reminder to all of us that no force on earth can stop the will of the people if they are determined. It is a clear pointer to the age long fact that power and sovereignty belongs to the people. Let me therefore use this auspicious occasion to congratulate Nigerians in general and Imo people in particular for their individual and collective efforts and sacrifices in sustaining democracy since 1999. The fact that democracy has thrived uninterrupted for 23 years is an eloquent testament of the determination of Nigerians to sustain democracy. I congratulate all of us.

"For me, each democracy day should be a day of deep meditation and reflection, both by the political elite and the people, on how far we have kept faith with the spirit that inspired the June 12th struggle. Are our actions or inactions helping to deepen the hard earned June 12th democracy or helping to erode it? As leaders and participants in the democratic process can we in our right conscience say that we are good Apostles of the June 12th struggle? These are but a few of the issues that ought to agitate our minds as we celebrate June 12th today because our answers to the questions will help us to further deepen our democratic gains.

"Let me also use this auspicious occasion to salute those whose tenacious struggles and invaluable sacrifices brought us to the glorious dawn of the democracy we are savouring today. I hail Chief M. K. O. Abiola, our martyr of the struggle. I salute our own Chief



Gov. Hope Uzodinma

Ralph Obioha and Rear Admiral Ndubuisi Kanu. I remember the thousands of Imo people who were forced out of their homes in many parts of Nigeria. Some died, others never recovered from the economic trauma. I salute all of them.

"With the benefit of this historical hindsight, it is not only imperative but germane for us to guard this democracy jealously. We should do all in our power to ensure that we don't toil with this freedom of choice which is the foundation upon which our development is predicated. That freedom should never be tied to pecuniary gains lest the foundation of our democracy be threatened.

"Consequently, we should, all of us, take seriously our civic obligation to freely elect our leaders. This begins with citizens

obtaining their permanent voters cards. By the end of this month, INEC will not be issuing these cards. So those who are yet to obtain theirs should use this window of opportunity of just 18 days to do the needful.

"June 12th has taught us the evergreen lesson that we have the power to freely elect our leaders. If we fail in discharging that sacred responsibility, we should blame ourselves for the consequences. Let us therefore be proactive by taking our destiny into our hands. The first step is to obtain our PVC today. The second is to make it a point of civic duty to vote in all the elections.

"As we celebrate this democracy day, let me reaffirm my commitment to serve Imo people with all the energy at my behest for the utmost good of the state and citizens. I am happy that this administration has been consistent in the implementation of our prosperity agenda encapsulated in the 3Rs of Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Recovery.

"In the coming days, our signature projects of dualization of Owerri - Okigwe and Owerri - Orlu Roads will be formally commissioned as a catalyst towards the economic development of our dear state. The more than 72 roads built and reconstructed across the state are also geared towards enhancing social and economic development of the people. Our intervention in the health, education, agriculture and other sectors is aimed at making life easier for our people."

Governor Uzodinma used the opportunity to appeal to the youth to leverage on the empowerment programmes of the state and federal governments to improve their lives insisting that they should refrain from allowing themselves from being used by disgruntled politicians to destabilize the state.

Radio presenter not abducted, arrested, say police

By **ATHAN AGBAKWURU**, Owerri

Imo State Police Command has debunked news making rounds especially in the social media that, one Prof. Jachimike Adiele, staffer of Boss FM Radio, Owerri was abducted by unknown persons. It described the news as false, saying he was arrested by operatives from Police Area Command Owerri, Imo State.

In a statement issued by the Police Public Relations Officer, PPRO, CSP Michael Abattam, the command stated that, sometime in the month of March, 2022, a lady reported a case of fraud against Prof. Jachimike Adiele at the Police Area Command Owerri, alleging that he collected the sum of one million two hundred thousand Naira (N1.2m) from her with a promise to give her a shop in Douglas market only to discover after some months, that there was no shop and demanded for her money but could not get it hence, her report.

Abattam hinted that police acting on the strength of the allegation, invited Prof Jachimike Adiele and his statement, the Area Commander released him on bail due to his status in the society and he promised refunding the money back to the lady on 1st April, 2022, but never did rather, he jumped bail.

He added, "When all efforts made to reach him proved abortive, the surety was invited and he claimed not to know the whereabouts of the suspect and pleaded for time to trace him.

"Luck ran against him today 11/6/2022 at about 0940 hours, when the surety got information that, he was in the studio presenting a programme and alerted the police. On arrival, the police were professional, they never went to the station rather, they waited until he concluded his programme presentation and was heading home when he was arrested and taken to the station. He has since been released and on conclusion of investigation, he will be charged to court."

Two 'candidates' trade words over authentic PDP guber torch bearer

By **CHARLES ONYEKWERE**, South-East Correspondent

The lingering crisis rocking the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Ebonyi State, took a different dimension, at the weekend, as two governorship 'candidates' that emerged during its primaries of 28th and 29th of May, 2022, and 4th and 5th of June, 2022, traded words as to who was the authentic one for the 2023 general election.

Senator Obinna Ogba, whose governorship primary election was conducted on 4th and 5th of June, 2022, told newsmen in Abakaliki that he remained the authentic candidate as he has received the party's Certificate of Return. He assured his rival, Chief Ifeanyi Chukwuma Odii, that he would defeat him in court against all odds.

But in a quick reaction, the Director of Media & Publicity, of AnyiChuks Campaign Organization, Chief Abia Onyike, told Ogba to stop "deceiving" the general public as to his current status after the party's primary election.

He said: "On the 10th of June, 2022, the national body of the party

obeyed Court Order by forwarding the names of all the candidates elected during the legitimate primaries of 28th and 29th June, 2022, to INEC and the processing of their forms have commenced.

"Certificate of Return has been given to me and the results of our primary election has been accepted by the PDP in Abuja. We have appealed the court case. Nigeria is not a banana Republic. Court doesn't belong to anyone but to everybody. They will look at it and know who is at fault. Nobody can take the mandate of our people from the backyard. Am happy with the PDP delegates who expressed their choice of my person.

"The way I defeated him in practical terms is the same way I will defeat him in court. I don't belong to hear say or gossip. Ebonyi people shouldn't be fooled. Am going to serve him. I am the candidate of PDP for Ebonyi State Governorship in the 2023 general election. The case in court is a pre-election matter. It will get to the Supreme Court."

In a press release titled "The time for Truth and Reconciliation has come", Onyike further described "the parallel primaries conducted

on the 4th and 5th of June, as an anti-democratic intervention by some powerful forces who were hell-bent on reversing the popular will of the people."

"The ruling of the Federal High Court in Abakaliki on 7th June, 2022, restoring the authenticity of the first primaries which elected Dr. Odii was a historic confirmation of the democratic will of Ebonyi PDP cadres as against the dictatorship and imposition by a few Godfathers. The PDP governorship candidate today is Dr. Ifeanyi Chukwuma Odii. He won the primary election conducted by the PDP on 28th and 29th of May, 2022. The 3-man delegates list used for the primary election was the outcome of the State PDP Congress of 7th May, 2022, which was eventually recognised by the PDP National Working Committee (NWC).

"That primary election was properly authorized by the PDP NWC and was peacefully conducted with the INEC monitoring the exercise in line with the Electoral Guidelines and the 2022 Electoral Act. An attempt by the opposition to cancel the successfully conducted primary election suffered a set-back.

Enugu steps up surveillance against emerging diseases

By **CHARLES ONYEKWERE**, South-East Correspondent

Enugu State Government says it has stepped up surveillance against emerging and re-emerging diseases in localities and council areas.

Dr George Ugwu, Executive Secretary of Primary Health Care Development Agency (ENS-PHCDA), told newsmen on Sunday that disease surveillance officers at council areas had been sensitised and placed on alert on monkeypox.

Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) said in the month of May, only six new confirmed positive cases were reported from four states with Bayelsa (2), Adamawa (2), Lagos (1) and Rivers (1).

Ugwu noted that the step-up of surveillance was made going with the stance that Enugu State is a multi-bordered state - three states in the South-East region and two states in the North Central region.

According to him, we have retrained our local disease surveillance officers on symptoms and signs to watch out for emerging and re-emerging diseases. He

said: "Monkeypox have not been detected in Enugu State; but we are not resting on our oars since we are a multi-bordered state.

"We have stepped up all perimeter of local disease surveillance against monkeypox, other emerging and re-emerging diseases in order to safe-guard the health of all in the state.

"However, we want our residents as well as individuals and families living in the state to up their personal and environmental hygiene and cleanliness levels. The issues of taking good care of one's hygiene and observing those protocols of personnel and family hygiene as during the heat of COVID-19 especially that of regular hand washing and sanitising.

"Our people should also be careful on how they handle or touch home pets and animals since the disease is first transmitted from animal to human as well as infected human to another normal human."

Ugwu noted that the agency, its affiliates and partners had also sharpened their response time to any suspected case of emerging and re-emerging diseases.

Owo terror attack can't cow me into silence, says Akeredolu

•S'West govs declare three-day mourning for victims

By **FRIDAY OMOSOLA**, Akure

Ondo State Governor, Oluwarotimi Akeredolu has reiterated that he would not be silenced by acts of terrorism that led to the slaying of children, women and unharmed worshippers at St. Francis Catholic Church, Owo recently.

Akeredolu disclosed this at a special interdenominational prayer service organised by the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Owo Chapter, held at the premises of the St. Francis Catholic Church where 40 worshippers were killed by terrorists.

Akeredolu stressed that the dastardly act committed in Owo was targeted to create fears into the mind of the people, adding that South-West and the state in particular, could not be conquered by the enemies of the people under any guise. The Chairman South-West Governors' Forum, also visited the Federal Medical Center and St. Louis Hospital, both in Owo to check on the survivors of the attack on admission.

He assured that efforts would be geared towards strengthening the security in the state and across the South-West. Akeredolu equally encouraged all places of worship to install CCTV cameras and engage local security men to further provide security in their premises.

In his sermon, Bishop Fagbemi, lauded the Governor for providing leadership, saying since the sad incident happened the Governor's continuous responses and actions had been unique and commendable. He also lauded him for his efforts in providing security for the protection of lives and property of the people of the state through the establishment of the Amotekun Corps.

The Bishop expressed shock over the Owo attack, saying the church of God should be a place of safety. He, however, urged Christians not to entertain any fear, saying God would continue to be with them and give them victory.

According to him, despite the fact that some people have allowed themselves to be used by the devil, Jesus is still alive and would continue to protect and be with His people. Bishop Fagbemi prayed to God to expose the killers of the worshippers and their sponsors.

Also at the event were intercessory prayers for the victims of the attack, Owo town and the state at large.

Meanwhile, governors from the South-West States have declared three days of mourning in memory of the victims.

The mourning announced at a meeting held virtually on weekend to deliberate on the

rising wave of insecurity in the country and South-West, would commence from Monday, 13th of June to Wednesday 15th of June, 2022.

The governors in a jointly signed statement directed flags in the South-West states to fly at half-mast across all public buildings, facilities and official residences. They condemned the horrendous crime perpetrated by terrorists against the residents of Owo, the peace-loving people of the South-West, as well as sympathised with the victims of the attack.

The statement read: "The governors noted, with a great discomfiture, the increasing agitations about spaces taken over by unidentified and unknown migrants in all South-West states. The meeting, therefore, recommends an increase in the scope of surveillance of the activities of these undocumented settlers by relevant security agencies in all the states.

"The governors reviewed reports from various states on the factors militating against peace and security in the region. They expressed grave concern

about the influx of Okada riders into all parts of the South West, especially the states capitals. The meeting further resolved that efforts be geared toward identity management of Okada riders and stringent regulations put in place for their operation.

More so, they resolved to continue assisting the security agencies in the areas of crisis management and intelligence gathering at all times. They also disclosed that it was time to reconvene the South-West Security Committee to look critically into the creeping

menace before it blossoms into another intractable social problem, noting that the committee would submit its findings on the desirability of Okada operations in the region.

According to them, the committee is expected to also submit a multi-level template to combat the threat of insurgency and terrorism in the region. The forum further agreed to convene forthwith a physical meeting of the South-West Governors to deliberate on the security challenges confronting the region.



Ekiti State Governor, Dr Kayode Fayemi and his wife/celebratory, Erelu Bisi during a thanksgiving service commemorating her 59th birthday at Government House Chapel, Ado-Ekiti...at the weekend

Linking Owo church attack to ISWAP too hasty, Akeredolu tells Fed Govt

By **PAUL MICHAEL**, Defence Editor

Ondo state Governor Rotimi Akeredolu has said the Federal Government (FG) was 'too hasty' in linking the Owo church attack to the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP).

In a statement issued by his Chief Press Secretary, Richard Olatunde, at the weekend, he said: "I take their conclusion with a pinch of salt. ISWAP don't hide their attacks.

"If they have done it, they would have owned up. We are yet to know their identity and our security people are still on their trail."

The governor was quoted as saying this during a virtual interaction with a Swiss-based Christian human rights Organisation, Christian Solidarity International (CSI).

Akeredolu, who described the attack that led to the death of over 40 person with several

others injured, said the incident is a crime against humanity.

He said the attack, though horrific, will not deter the indomitable spirit of the people of the state in their quest to fight insecurity.

The governor had earlier said during a meeting that a single police command cannot guarantee safety in this country. Adding that state police is paramount at this time.

"We are doing our best with

Amotekun. But Amotekun is suffering a lot of limitations in getting all the equipment needed to fight these criminals," the statement reads.

While lauding the international community for their response so far following the incident, Akeredolu reiterated the resolve of his administration to help victims of the attack, especially those who lost loved ones and those still in the hospital.

I'll back Muslim-Muslim ticket if Tinubu wants it, says Fani-Kayode

A former Aviation minister Femi Fani-Kayode has said he would support a Muslim-Muslim presidential ticket for his ruling party if its candidate insists on it.

In an article for a national newspaper, he wrote:

"A high-ranking and respected official of the Christian Associa-

tion of Nigeria (CAN) came to see me yesterday and expressed concern about my disposition towards a Muslim-Muslim ticket.

"He informed me about CAN's vehement opposition to such a ticket and said that the leadership of the organisation watched my interview on Channels Television

where it appeared that I was not on all fours with them.

"They felt this was very unlike me because they know how much I rever my faith and how much I respect CAN and its leadership and how I am usually in agreement with them on all issues. It was a mark of

honor to me that they thought me worthy of sending someone to get an explanation and after thanking him for that we spoke for no less than two hours. At the end of it all I believe the person understood my position better and promised to convey it to the leadership of CAN.

ICPC boss tasks REDAN on low-cost housing

BY PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Chairman of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Professor Bolaji Owasanoye, has charged the Real Estate Developers Association of Nigeria (REDAN) to provide low-cost housing to the poor.

It is to help close the 17 million housing deficit in the country, he said during a courtesy visit by the executives of REDAN led by Alhaji Aliyu Wamakko to the commission's headquarters in Abuja

According to the ICPC Boss, REDAN has the financial and knowledge-driven capacity to help solve the housing challenges being faced by low-income earners in the country. He added that the Association also has a platform for easy access to information and validation, that was key to housing

development.

He said, "Nigeria is said to have about 17 million housing deficit if not more than that. I see REDAN as an organized outfit able to play a critical role in closing that gap and in boosting the economy."

Earlier, the President of REDAN, Alhaji Aliyu Wamakko, stated that the association's collaborations with ICPC would help rid the real estate sector of quacks and unscrupulous persons.

He called on the Commission to engage the House of Representative in passing the Real Estate (Regulations and Development) Bill, which has been passed by the Senate already.

To this, he was duly informed by ICPC Boss that some investigations carried out so far by the Commission has been on members of REDAN, and that it does not need a law to be a self-regulating institution as global

practices revealed. The ICPC Boss however, expressed concern over conflict in some of those kinds of laws being passed.

Advising REDAN, he said, "Let me share my experience with how other international self-regulating organizations operate. I can guarantee you; you do not need a law.

"Already, I am looking at the constitution and the legislative lists in my mind and I know for sure that a lot of what falls within your jurisdiction are for states, but that does not stop you from being a self-regulating institution, you have a code of conduct and you must be bold. That's where the challenge is."

Finally, the ICPC Chairman assured REDAN of its support after being informed that moves were currently ongoing by the Association to provide housing at low cost to Nigerians through partnerships with both local and international organizations.



Professor Bolaji Owasanoye

Be wary of criminal elements in your fold, EFCC charges DNFIs

BY PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has charged operators of the Designated Non-Financial Institutes (DNFIs) in Lagos to be wary of criminals infiltrating their ranks with intent to launder slush funds.

Speaking during a sensitization programme organised by the Special Control Unit against Money Laundering (SCUML) on Thursday, June 9, 2022, at the Lagos Command of the EFCC, Pascal Samu, Coordinator, SCUML,

Lagos, also charged the participants to carry out their dealings in line with the Anti-money Laundering/Counter Terrorism Financing AML/CFT Laws.

Samu said, "The Executive Chairman of the EFCC, Abdulrasheed Bawa, is urging you to ensure that you observe due diligence in your businesses to avoid sanctions in line with the Money Laundering (Prevention and Prohibition) Act, 2022."

He also enjoined them to support the Commission in its sustained fight against money laundering and terrorism financing in Nigeria.

Also speaking at the sensitization, Folashade Oluwasanya, a senior Compliance Officer with SCUML, enlightened the participants on ways to report currency and cash-based transactions as well as suspicious transactions in their various businesses.

While reiterating the importance of adequate Know Your Customer (KYC) for every customer, Oluwasanya said that failure to do that could result in sanctions.

Present at the sensitization were religious bodies, non-governmental organisations, hotel owners, automobile dealers and construction firms owners, among others.

ICPC to support NDPB on data protection

BY PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) has promised to support the Nigeria Data Protection Bureau (NDPB).

The ICPC Chairman, Prof Bolaji Owasanoye, gave the assurance during a courtesy visit to the Commission's headquarters in Abuja by the Board and Management of the Nigeria Data Protection Bureau (NDPB) led by its Chairman, Dr Vincent Olatunji.

Owasanoye said the Commission was keen to support the NDPB in the development of a statutory framework on data protection.

He said, "There is a need for the development of a statutory framework for data protection. Without a framework, it is a bit difficult to have a work plan. The Commission is ready to support the Bureau in its realisation of its mandate of data protection because having secured data will also strengthen the operations of the Commission. We can collaborate to make our jobs easier."

The ICPC boss, who reinforced the significance of data protection to the safety of any society, added that some situations call for encroachment on the fundamental human rights of criminals for the security of the State.

On the role of law enforcement agencies in enforcing the Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (NDPR) 2019, Owasanoye stressed the need for a law that will state the boundaries of these agencies while considering their mandates.

He assured the delegation that the Commission would give insights and support in the development of the Bureau's Statutory Framework and how best to mitigate data protection conflict for the interest of the society.

Olatunji expressed some concerns over the lack of awareness on the existence of the Nigeria Data Protection Regulation despite its issuance since 2019.

Olatunji said many data users were ignorant of their rights with respect to the protection and integrity of their personal data.

He said, "Data controllers who process personal data do so with insufficient or non-existent understanding of the provisions of the NDPR and their respective obligations."

He, therefore, requested a partnership between the Bureau and ICPC to set standards for Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and private companies on how data protection should be processed within the ambit of the law.

'Nigeria making progress in fighting illicit financial flows'

BY PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) has stated that Nigeria is making progress in the stoppage of Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) by the implementation of advisories proffered by the Inter-Agency Committee to the Federal Government of Nigeria.

Mr Hassan Salihu, an ICPC Assistant Commissioner, made the disclosure at a Focus Group Discussion on Political Integrity and Illicit Financial Flows, that was recently organised in Keffi, Nassarawa State by Transparency International (TI), Nigerian Chapter.

Mr Salihu stressed that ICPC plays a major role in fighting IFFs and as part of its preventive mandate, had deployed several activities/interventions aimed at combating IFFs from Nigeria in a project tagged "Project IFFs".

During his remarks, Executive Secretary of the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) and Head of TI, Nigeria, Auwal Ibrahim Musa Rafsanjani stated that "In Nigeria, the ever-increasing problem of dirty money in politics, which suggests

a high level of impunity among politically exposed persons who seek to gain power and accrue wealth through illegal means, has been a growing concern within local and international domain."

Comrade Rafsanjani stressed that "There is correlation between political accountability and illicit financial flows. Experts have estimated that Nigeria loses about \$18Billion USD annually to illicit financial flows, which reportedly account for roughly 30% of Africa's loss to IFF."

A member of the Inter-Agency Committee on IFFs and staff of ICPC, Joy Esu Mbang, further stressed that the Committee had issued advisories on issues propelling IFFs such as tax exemptions, contracts denominated in foreign currencies by MDAs, and is enforcing such implementation of advisories.

According to Mbang, the advisory forwarded to the government by the Inter-Agency Committee after the review of the "Report of IFFs in Relation to Tax" saw to the issuance of a circular on 10th March 2021 by the Hon Minister of Finance with the caption "Tax Exemptions".

She added that amongst the items listed in the circular was the directives to government agencies that they do not have any authority to grant tax exemptions to parties with whom they enter into contracts.

"The same circular also has another caption, 'Contracts Denominated in Foreign Currencies' and stated that MDAs are to ensure that their contracts are wholly denominated in Nigerian Naira (NGN). No MDA is authorised to enter into contract denominated in any foreign currency without the prior approval of the HMF&NP," she added.

Mbang added that plans were ongoing for the development of homegrown technology in a collaboration between the National Information Technology Agency (NITDA) and the Federal Ministries of Education to mobilize stakeholders against IFFs.

Papers presented for discussion around the IFFs included Political Integrity and IFFs: Case Study of Pandora Paper by Mr. Hassan Taiwo, Editor & Head of Investigation & Data of Premium Times; and IFFs and its Effects on Public Resource Management by Mr Lukman Adefolayan, Convener 21st Century Abuja.

Navy lauds EFCC on handling cases of illegal oil bunkering

BY PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Base Commander of the Nigeria Navy Ship, NNS Victory, Calabar, Commander Ifeanyi Chidi Okpala, has commended the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) for its professional handling of illegal oil bunkering cases.

Okpala gave the commendation in Calabar, Cross River State on Thursday when the Uyo Zonal Commander of the EFCC, Assistant Commander of the EFCC, ACE Bawa Hamidu visited him in his office.

According to him, the Navy has always seen the EFCC as a better partner in the prosecution of maritime crimes.

"We have handed quite a number of cases to you, and they have been diligently prosecuted. I truly prefer handing over arrested cases to the EFCC because I know and I'm convinced that I can go to sleep when I hand over maritime arrests to you," he said.

Okpala also commended the EFCC for always ensuring that functional working relationships are sustained between collaborating agencies, and for showing consistency in the professional manner in which it carried out its duties, as

well as "its admirable level of courage, even in the face of obvious hazards."

He added, "The establishment of the EFCC is one of the best decisions of government; though the Commission has huge burden resting on its young shoulders, it has not traded professionalism and has continued to display more courage and determination, even in the face of danger."

While responding, Bawa thanked the Navy for sustaining synergy with the EFCC over the years and for allowing the Commission's maritime exhibits to remain in its domain, even after handing over seized vessels to the EFCC.

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The Sunday massacre in Owo: matters arising

Last week Sunday, the nation was shaken to its foundations by news of a brutal massacre of worshippers in St. Francis Catholic Church Owo in Ondo State by some masked gunmen. There have been conflicting reports about the actual number of casualties. Scores of persons lost their lives in that brutal encounter put between 22 and 40. The federal government through the Interior Affairs Minister Rauf Aregbesola has blamed ISWAP for the attack. This is not enough. The criminals must be apprehended and prosecuted to serve as a deterrent.

The Owo massacre is one massacre too many with the usual harvest of sympathies! In this senseless and heinous massacre, according to a government statement, apart from the dead, some fifty worshippers were injured! The entire nation was traumatised again, leaving families to mourn their dead in sorrow and pain.

Once again, the government failed the people in its Constitutional obligation to protect lives and properties. The first matter arising therefore is the failure of intelligence. Where were our secret service officers and personnel before, during and after the attack? Where were our Police, Army, Navy, and Airforce officers?

The other matter arising from this ugly incident is that why did the government ask Nigerians to surrender their licensed arms earlier? Was it to grant these marauding killers an easy passage for these criminal acts? Why were indigenous communities disarmed by government? Why are aliens masquerading as herdsmen allowed to carry arms around to intimidate the citizens?

It is on record that many churches and mosques have been visited by one massacre or the other from North to South. Why are there no consequences for such actions? Why have these massacres held President Buhari's regime comatose?

The Owo massacre does not state well for the continuous unity and future of our dear

nation. Nigeria is in an unusual war situation with many questions on the lips of citizens.

Massacres in Nigeria have always been followed by condemnations without attendant actions or sanctions. As in Deborah's case many including the President and Vice President among others were loud in condemnations. But when are we going to see the strong political will that will make all arms of our security agencies go after these satanic sadistic killers of the innocent? When will Nigeria end our hypocritical romance with religions and no God or love in our lives? When will we see the end of these cyclic beastly acts in our dear country?

We must use this opportunity to tell the government that it has failed on security. The basic expectations on security of our

people have been serially and severally dashed. When will our government rise to the occasion with severe punitive actions that will act as deterrence to the criminal gangs behind criminality in our land? When will our government respond to the security reports that there are kidnappers, killer herdsmen and women, including children and Boko Haram cells in most bushes in Nigeria? When will our government do something concrete to alleviate the pains and agonies of Nigerians and the victims of several massacres in our land?

Nigerians must rise to the clarion call of the moment. Crying over spilled milk is no longer enough. Weeping and lamentations cannot save us. We must now be eternally vigilant as vigilance is the price we pay for liberty. A school of thought which pushes the view that since our security has gone fragile, Nigerians must be allowed to buy and carry guns for self-protection has emerged. Such persons argue that carrying weapons must be with a caveat - that there must be strong regulatory backup on utilization. Since government cannot protect us, we must learn to protect ourselves! This position has its merits and demerits.

The time is now for community and regional initiative for security protection to be in place. Our compromised national and State Houses of Assembly should as a matter of urgency table bills for state Police or state security initiatives. Our churches, mosques, schools, and malls must quickly install CCTV cameras for us to see the faces of the people behind such massacres.

We commiserate with the bereaved families and pray God to console them. The huge sums of money donated to the victims should be deployed to resettling families that were hit by the attack. We call on government to ensure that the perpetrators of the Owo massacre are brought to book.

Finally, we at The Trumpet believe that the time to improve our security architecture is now!



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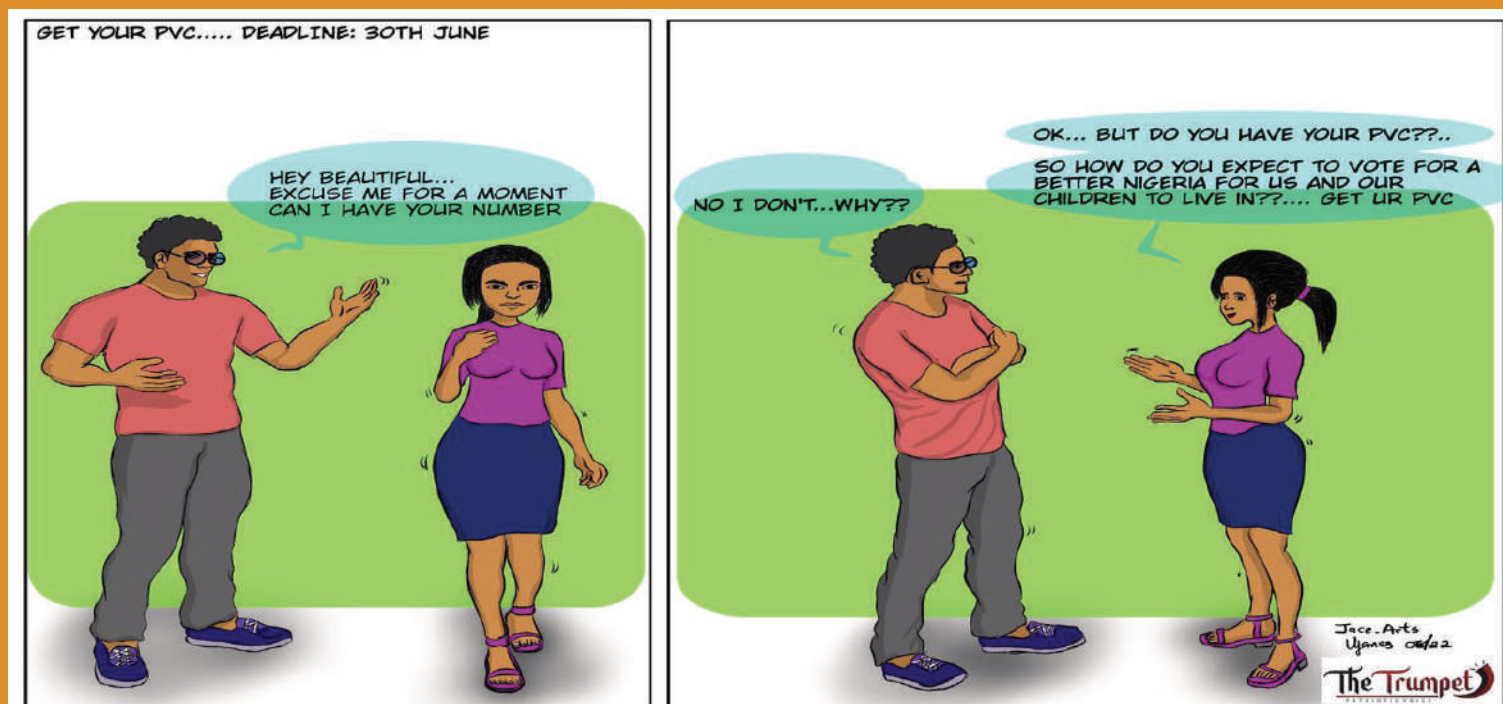
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Edging towards the precipice

Nigeria is edging towards the precipice. The long history of scant regards for the rules of engagement has caught up with us. There is loss of faith in the ability of Nigeria to protect its citizens. There is despair. There is frustration. The managers of the federation take steps daily, carry out actions which threaten the existence of the country. Ensnared in the opulence of filthy power, they do not feel the pulse of the nation. If they do, they do not show it. Individuals have become more powerful than the country. Self help has become the order of the day. The brutish state of nature which we escaped from is here.

Those who are in power are helping themselves with the national cake before the house crumbles. The anti-corruption mantra of the incumbent government is a joke. The party primaries offend our sense of collective dignity. The people are angry with the politicians in Abuja and the State capitals. But there is nothing they can do. They will still vote for the clowns in 2023! Some have taken their share of the national delegates at the party primaries. They have sold their conscience!

Religion and politics have mixed to destroy the country. There is lip service to the ideals of religion. Religion has not defined life in daily encounter with reality. But it has become an ego bank. A fence. A wall. A protectorate which is conveniently deployed to stress difference. It has not stopped stealing. It has not stopped corruption. With State funds, men can build Mosques and churches. The

religions preach against stealing. Yet adherents steal funds to feed religion. It is odious. It is a contradiction. Looting the treasury is a dent on character. These characters go to the Mosque on Fridays, to the church on Sundays, visit the Holy Lands on pilgrimage. Yet, when a man as much as criticize their proclaimed religion, they are prepared to kill.

The young man who boasted on social media that he murdered Deborah Yakubu played a script, written by the powerful men in the corridors of power. Disobey the tenets of the religion. But kill the next man who utters a word against what they hold sacred. It is barbaric. It is destructive. It is atavistic. Yet, governance, if it qualifies to be so called, is all about blasphemy against the morals and ideals of the great religions. This is a paradox that the leadership class luxuriates in. Thus, we have no reports of men who reject eating the stolen pie on account of religion. That is a no-go area. Paradise is preached. Paradise is believed. But the paradise of here and now created from pilfered funds at the expense of the lives of God's own children is more attractive!

The federal government promotes a dangerous narrative. It proclaims a federation in words. But it practices oligarchy of a sort. This oligarchic disposition is woven into ethnic stasis. Power belongs to us. There is a veneer of population advantage. But anyone who has lived in the north wonders where the huge population figures come from. The British who promoted the ascendancy of the north in

governance helped to create the myth of superior population. The successor government sustained the myth. But within the vaunted superior population is the existence of a minority group. This group has seized power. Ruthless in power acquisition, they are yet to learn how to deploy power to the development and growth of their own people. What is power for if it cannot change the circumstances of the people?

We are on the precipice, the edge of it. The journey to doom started long ago. Through wrong-headed economic and political policies, the rulers started the decimation of Nigeria. If the people had their way now, they would dissolve Nigeria. Perhaps what has somewhat held the nation together is the reluctance of state officials in aggrieved regions and areas to take on the federal government as Emeka Ojukwu did in 1967. Non-state actors have filled the vacuum. These non-state actors hold the elected and selected state officials in great contempt. In the north, Boko Haram, bandits, and Islamic terrorists terrify state officials. In the southeast, non-state actors control the first day of the week. The South-south once held in the jugular by militants is the only region free of control by non-state actors. Indeed, there is no guarantee that if another rebellion of the Ojukwu shade were to start today, there would be no national consensus for the rest of the federation to bring back the rebellious region. There is too much disenchantment with the terms of the federal union.

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Away to your tents is on the lips of most southerners, in and out of government. Who will bell the cat, appears to be the restraining factor?

Before the civil war of 1967, there was a dingdong between state actors and the federal government. But there was a patchwork going on. The back of the camel got broken after the coup and counter-coup. It was a turning point. The centre could not hold. The arrogance which Abuja currently displays, the attempt to seize power in the north, to jettison rotation of power between the two main regions which patently suggests a rotation between practitioners of the two rival religions, is a threat to peace. To retain power in the north in 2023 is the equivalent of a coup against the people of the south. Through bulldozing and intimidating methods, the north could hold on to power. But the seed of splitting the nation along regional lines is going deeper and deeper into the soil of time. Let us not allow the heat in the nation to reach breakpoint. No one will have a tea party if there is

a conflagration.

It takes no rocket science to surmise that we do not have an Army that can overrun Nigeria if there is widespread rebellion. Pushed to the wall, the people will have no choice but to go into martyrdom. It is not the way we should go. Yet, if we continue along the current path, the day of an implosion is just a matter of time. It will be inevitable.

So it was that a car that was parked by tourists in a park was swarmed by a troop of monkeys. They took control of the car and chased away the real owners. But they could not drive the car. A man who seizes power anywhere and fails to use it for the betterment of the people who are the ultimate owner of power is like the monkeys in the anecdote. Except we put the national car on reverse and stop the descent into anarchy, the conflagration of 1967 to 1970 would be a party of jollof rice and fried chicken!

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

Fallacy of Hope: Nigerian Conundrum

Stethoscope

By
PHILLIP OAK

The Nigerian Dream is defunct. It has run aground on the shallow shores of our collective lackluster effort at nation building. And if the Nigerian experiment has failed spectacularly it is because it has had so many able abettors, leaders and followership alike - a collective sin of omission: it takes all to untangle.

It's hard to believe now, given the current nationwide mood of doom and gloom that there was once such a thing as a Nigerian Dream, the grand and robust hope in a viable Nigeria Project, one in which proud, dignified citizens would prosper to fulfill and flower the universal aspiration for a powerful, negroid nation, the bastion and jewel of African pride, the designated beacon for black people everywhere.

Now alas, mired deeply in treacherous socioeconomic waters, this dream is in tatters. It is now more despair and despondency than rainbows and roses, a matter of profound sadness to all who, at the onset, truly wished her well and God's speed.

Distressingly, this has been a

sustained trend of decline for the best part of her post-independence history. We have gone from bad to worse in a maddened course of lusty autocannibalism, running this magnificent ship of state aground on the shaggy shores of poor governance and civil irresponsibility. So much so that today we are left with little of note to call a country worthy of a patriot's pride and devotion.

Nigeria became a federal republic in 1963, having gained independence from Great Britain in 1960, during the mid century blitz of decolonization in Africa and around the world. It had come through its precolonial period relatively incident free, achieving its sovereignty on the back of the intellectual and political sophistication of its emergent political class. And it was heralded as the Golden Child of England's African colonial experience, vested with the trust of becoming the standard bearer of global black identity.

However that dream quickly unraveled. Seemingly unprepared for the serious task of forging a virile nation

out of its huge collective of tribes and tongues, the country rapidly went through a series of civil and political crises, through a meaningless, divisive civil war and then through a domino fall of military intrusions into governance as well as policy and constitutional miscalculations - leading to where she is today - a pariah nation, chock a block with citizen desperadoes, its leadership a laughing stock of the world.

Naturally the search for answers to complex problems invariably generates a spectrum of theories and postulations. The current sociological dilemma the Nigerian state finds herself is no exception. Opinions abound richly, thick as the problem itself. But they are mostly divisible into two broad camps; that of those who blame the Nigerian citizens themselves for the mess they find themselves in (we will call this the citizen accusing view) and those that blame the leaders - the leadership accusing view.

In the latter view, like every other country, Nigeria has her own share of the demons of regional, ethnocultural and religious divisions, differences which sometimes break down, mostly under the manipulation of powerful but less than patriotic political apparatchiks, into down right mayhem and destruction. Our civil war of '67 - '70 is a classic case in point. But there is scarcely any country without the historical scar of a civil war on its records. Countries tend to rebound from such internal convulsive crises with a national mosaic that becomes stronger and tougher and more dynamic. Therefore, the leadership accusing view holds, our many differences and schisms is not our problem. If anything this

is the source spring of the famous Nigerian versatility and resilience. Our problem is the crass chicanery, the swashbuckling kleptocracy of the captains of the Nigerian polity, the sustained moral bankruptcy of the leadership of Africa's flagship country. This view preempts and precludes the notion that Nigerians are naturally corrupt, that this infamous stature is the egg and not the chicken, the natural end result of a system so bedeviled by the kleptomania of its leadership that the followership has no choice but to model itself along the same lines.

They say the character of the king is reflected in the characteristics of the kingdom. To have our leaders rape the state with manic rapacity and expect the citizenry to somehow magically remain unsullied is a tall order indeed. The natural order of things, perforce, is for the chicks to follow the hen.

It's the former view on the other hand begs to differ. The problem of the country's fall from grace to grass is so often laid squarely at the proverbial feet of "our leaders," that one can be forgiven for wondering if our leaders are an alien species who regularly arrive here in UFOs with the only purpose of leading us into perdition! It holds that a people are the author of their own destiny, their material situation a function and aggregate result of the quality and momentum of their collective efforts at nation building - for good or ill. Manna, as it were, no longer falls from heaven. A people in effect get the kind of leaders that they deserve. Therefore unless there is a change in the fundamental nature of the people themselves what other outcome is rightfully theirs to expect

other than one of inevitable, terminal deterioration?

Stethoscope holds the position that the truth is the total of both these points of view. Anthropologically, the average Nigerian is a friendly, hardworking and fun loving person. And this is true of the Hausa, the Kanuri, the IBO or the Yoruba. The country is a tapestry of people animated with enthusiasm and vitality. What we asked for at the beginning of this national enterprise was simple: the same civic decencies accorded the citizens of other thriving countries: respectable, working infrastructures, a well managed economy and social justice. Given these, our Nigerianess would have taken it from there. The Nigerian Project, a virtual comucopia of tremendous human and material resources, well harnessed and widely engaged, would have had us, in the words of Goya Menor's catchy tune, "playing with the big boys." There is no one to blame for our failure here than ourselves. Not "our leaders" and certainly not the colonial masters who left us with a robust infrastructure and treasury. The age old argument that the British destroyed Nigeria by ceding powers to the North is as juvenile as it is laughable. The true test of the mettle of an independent people is their determined self-direction in overcoming whatever preexisting odds and obstacles threaten the cohesive productivity of their union. To instead wallow in those imperfections and the ride them like the chariots of hell towards our own ultimate destruction is no more the fault of the white man than it is of aliens in UFOs. Self determination means just that. Anything that happens after that baton is handed over is exactly your cup of tea and no one else's.

Nigeria's 2023 election season is well underway

By IDAYAT HASSAN

With dates for the 2023 Nigeria general elections now set by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) - the presidential and National Assembly poll is set for 25 February and governorship and other subnational elections scheduled for 11 March - the countdown is well underway for what will be the seventh consecutive elections since the return to democracy in 1999. This represents 23 years of unbroken democracy; the longest period in the country's history.

The 2023 election will be conducted under a new electoral framework. The Electoral Act 2022, allows INEC to review results made under duress or financial inducements, extends the time for campaigns from 90 to 150 days, and provides for the use of technology to determine the mode of voting and transmission of results.

Pundits believe these measures can help manage situations where inaccurate results are returned, expand the opportunity for politicians to visit the nooks and crannies of the country if they so desire and can cure the chaotic, vulnerable manipulation and unnecessarily opaque process of aggregating results.

However, instead of reducing the role of money in politics, the Act has increased the campaign finance limit from N1 billion to N5 billion for presidential candidates. The ceilings for all other elected positions have also been increased fivefold, but without any efforts to improved scrutiny of compliance limits are still likely to be exceeded.

Presidential aspirants

The Electoral Act requires that parties submit the names of their candidates 180 days before the elections, thereby allowing for the legal resolution of fractious primaries ahead of voting day. In signing the Electoral Act, President Buhari also requested that the section that precludes political office holders from participating in the party primaries and voting during congresses be deleted as it breaches participation rights. However, the National Assembly refused to make this amendment. This meant that several of Buhari's ministers were unable to contest for elective office unless they first resigned their position.

In late May the main opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP) delegates chose long-time presidential aspirant, Atiku Abubakar as their candidate - as they did in 2019. He will face off against Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC). On 8 June, Tinubu emerged from an initial field of 28 candidates who each paid N100 million to purchase the party nomination forms. Just like at the PDP convention where the decisive movement was delivered by the governor of Sokoto's decision to stand down, handing his delegate votes to Atiku, the APC presidential primaries saw frontline southwest candidates such as governor of Ekiti state, Kayode Fayemi and former Ogun



Atiku

governor Ibikunle Amosun stepping down, handing Tinubu their bloc votes.

Rotational politics referred to locally as zoning was a serious consideration in internal party deliberations. There exists an unwritten rule that the presidency must rotate between the north and the south, but this provision is only written into the PDP constitution. But in selecting Atiku the PDP has already pushed backed against its own commitment. Though it will likely select a southern, Christian as Atiku's running mate? The selection of Tinubu by the APC was an attempt to return some power to southern Nigeria, after two-terms of northern dominance.

However, having Tinubu APC as the presidential aspirant likely means a Muslim-Muslim ticket as he will have to pick a northern Muslim as his running mate to offer some competition for Atiku. However, this may lose the APC votes in a bifurcated southern Nigeria, where narratives around an 'Islamisation agenda' have gained ground during the Buhari administration.

The old and the new?

Tinubu, 70, and Atiku, 75, are now the frontline candidates in the forthcoming elections and both have significant war chests at their disposal. They previously worked together in 2007 when Tinubu's party, the Action Congress, fielded Atiku, then outgoing vice-president, as their presidential candidate and in 2015, when both were frontline promoters of the APC.

However, with 60% of Nigeria's population youth and with many among that generation disgruntled with the ruling class following events such as the #EndSars protest against police brutality, the prospect of an inter-generation divide widening is clear.



Tinubu

Potential third forces that could increase the likelihood of Nigeria's first ever presidential run-off are Peter Obi, 60, who withdrew from the PDP primary contest and will now run as the Labour Party flagbearer and Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso, 65. While Obi has cultivated a significant online following among younger voters, Kwankwaso is equally popular among youth in his native Kano state.

The attempt to create a formidable third force seems to have been midwived as the Peoples Redemption Party, New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP), National Rescue Movement (NRM), Nigeria Labour Congress have all agreed, for now, to an alliance to run under the banner of the Labour Party. A joint Obi-Kwankwaso ticket could shake up the presidential race.

Challenges ahead

The 2023 elections will be one of the most challenging elections to conduct in Nigeria as the country battles nodes of complex insecurity. The Boko Haram conflict that defined the 2015 election is yet to be quelled, but with bandits operating across the northwest, violent secessionist agitation spiraling in the southeast and farmer-herder clashes ongoing across the country the 2023 election is set to take place amidst nationwide insecurity.

The 5 June attack on a church in relatively stable Ondo state, in southwest Nigeria, which saw more than 50 people killed was a stark reminder of the insecurity challenges that will the safety of election materials and personnel a major challenge for INEC.

INEC chairman, Professor Mahmood Yakubu, is the first election head to get a second term in the country's history. But whilst Yakubu has done well to build on the successes of his



Obi

predecessor Attahiru Jega by adopting innovation and consulting regularly with key stakeholders, Nigeria's zero-sum political game with desperate and disparate actors out to win at all costs still pose a sizeable threat to electoral integrity despite technological advances.

The forthcoming off-cycle governorship elections in Ekiti (18 June) and Osun (16 July) states will offer an early indication of what to expect in the 2023 general elections. But the economic implications of an extended election season are already putting strain on an economy which has hobbled in and out of recession in the last seven years. The Naira is now trading at over N600 to one US dollar on the black market as thousands of dollars are dispersed by political aspirants at all levels to shore up support.

Voter turnout is another area of concern. Just 34.75% of eligible Nigerians voted in 2019 and a similarly low, or lower, turnout in 2023 would further undermine the credibility of the poll. But given the prevailing insecurity across the country, the choice available when it comes to the presidential race, difficulties in registering for permanent voter cards in insecure areas in northern and southeast Nigeria and the likely rampant misinformation and disinformation that will emerge in the lead up to voting day designed to draw distinct divisions and undermine the credibility of key election stakeholders, means that fewer Nigerians may vote next year than in 2019.

Nigeria may be experiencing its longest run of uninterrupted democracy but the quality of it remains very much in need of improvement.

● Hassan is the Director, Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Abuja.

Surge in voters registration and INEC's response

By TUNDE JOSHUA, POLITICS EDITOR

As the ongoing Continuous Voters Registration (CRV) exercise ends on June 30th, 2022 there seems to be renewed awareness and enlightenment across the country for those concerned to strive to beat the deadline set by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). They are Nigerians who have not registered at all, those just attaining the adulthood age of 18 years and others that want to transfer their voting centres.

This is thanks to civil society and faith-based organisations with support of foreign donor agencies that have penetrated communities courting collaboration of traditional and religious leaders to sensitize citizens on the need to be involved in the selection process for political office holders for better representation and good governance.

Trade associations are not excluded in the awareness drive, even though it may have political undertone and or be ethnic influenced in a few instances.

In some areas densely populated by Easterners in Lagos, the drive for voters registration is massive. The Trumpet learnt that punitive measures are even applied against anyone that fail to comply with the registration order.

Recent development in Lagos in which there was report of attack on Nigerians who trooped out for the exercise was highly condemned by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) which said such attack cannot deter anxious people wishing to register.

The PDP said it was disturbed by the dastardly action allegedly instigated by leaders of All Progressives Congress (APC) to prevent citizens, particularly people of the South East region resident in Lagos State from collecting their Permanent Voter Cards (PVC) to enable them vote in the 2023 general elections.

"That action by the APC in Lagos is part of its desperate design to use violence to sabotage free, fair and credible elections in 2023 having realized that Nigerians have rejected its Presidential Candidate, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu ahead of the polls," claimed the PDP.

To this effect Hon. Debo Ologunagba, National Publicity Secretary of the PDP in a statement on Saturday said "Asiwaju Tinubu has been in morbid fear of the soaring popularity of the PDP Presidential Candidate, Atiku Abubakar, hence the attempt by the APC to stop Nigerians from obtaining their PVCs to vote in the elections; an action that portend serious threat and danger to our democratic process.

"Is it not an irony that the party of the government of the day that pretends to have the support of the people and professes continuity is busy chasing away prospective voters?"

"The APC is already suffering from Pre-Election Fever Syndrome in trepidation that it cannot win in a free, fair, credible and transparent process where Nigerians are allowed to freely express their will."

The PDP said it is particularly disturbing that this pattern is a resurgence of previous attempt in 2019 where APC leaders harassed Nigerians, especially the people of the South East and threatened to throw them into the Lagoon should they vote for any other party other than the APC.

"It will also be recalled that similar act of violence was unleashed on Nigerians in the Isolo axis of Lagos in the 2019 general elections, where the APC, upon discovering that it has been rejected at the polls, openly sponsored and unleashed terror on innocent



Prof. Yakubu

citizens and destroyed all votes cast.

"The APC has again become chaotic and desperate because Nigerians have recognized it as what it is; a Special Purpose Vehicle which was hurriedly put together to defraud the nation.

Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu and the APC must know that they cannot surmount the determination of Nigerians who are now rallying on the platform of the PDP to use this 2023 general elections to take back their country from the stranglehold and misrule of the corrupt, incompetent, inhumane and rudderless APC," said PDP.

The party cautioned Tinubu and the APC to thread carefully and rein in their "thugs, hoodlums and terrorists" as they will be firmly resisted by Nigerians.

Also in a self convinced drive, icons in the nation's entertainment industry are set to lead an unprecedented street and social media awareness campaign for voters registration.

Burna Boy, Davido, 2Baba, Tecno, Zlatan, Olamide, Kizz Daniel, Wizkid, Psquare, Teni, Phyno, Zoro etc are set to organize a 10 million walk and operation show your PVC.

Though, this is politically laden as it was said to be in support of Peter Obi, as it was said the artistes did a collaboration and produce an album that would become a national campaign jingle for the presidential hopeful who is running on the platform of the Labour Party (LP).

"We are paying all the network providers and making the jingle a free callertune for the millions of network users in Nigeria.

"Imaging running a paid ad on all social media handles with PO as the man on stage. Imagine using the October 10, 2020 images to say no to voting for the looters of our economy. Imagine shutting down Twitter with traffic in support of this man. Imagine INEC declaring Peter Obi the president elect come 2023.

"The journey starts now. We can make the looters urinate on themselves when they see the force behind our movement. Enough is enough. Can you imagine! Peter Obi as President come 2023. Please share, let's make

Peter Obi go viral," the message on the social media handle of the campaigners read.

But, stop to think of this: what suddenly made the youths to get interested in voting? Could it be that one of the political parties has selected someone with the right message for them? Are the youths shifting from their abode in the social media to real life especially now their votes can count?

An anonymous youth mobilizer who spoke to The Trumpet said youths have woken up from their political slumber which explain why they are rushing to get their PVC. "They have learnt that they can determine who leads them. They no longer want those politicians who had lived out their own youths and are now determined to spend that of their children's and grandchildren's. Nigerian youths consist of 65% of the current population.

"The worrying news to the political establishment is that there are more than 48 million Nigerian youths of voting age. And they are annoyingly trooping out to obtain their PVCs," he said.

He also said that the new Electoral Act recently signed into law by President Buhari few months ago gave hope to Nigerians, particularly, the youths.

According to him, the youths have confidence in the fact that the law allows electronic transmission of results from the polling booths hence rendering political contractors, ballot box snatchers and result sheets manipulators useless.

He said "results of any election in Nigeria can no longer be changed at the collation centres! Rigging of 2023 elections is nearly impossible. All results will be transmitted from 176,846 polling units to INEC's server and can be viewed by anyone from all the world online real time. The implication is that the winner of the 2023 presidential elections shall be known by 7pm on the Election Day without waiting for INEC pronouncement.

"A political tsunami is about to happen as millions of youths jostling to get their PVCs have a different idea on who to vote for. They no longer listen to anyone neither do the majority of them believe in tribal marks. If

they are not stopped, the results of the 2023 elections will shock the world.

Record had it that as at 2019, INEC had a total of 84,004,084 registered voters. Only 28,614,190 turned out to vote for president. Buhari won with 15,191,847 votes.

The Trumpet recall that last year, the Commission resumed the current nationwide CVR exercise. An elaborate calendar of activities spanning over 12 months was released. The introduction of the online pre-registration system and the new INEC Voter Enrollment Device (IVED) helped to reduce the long queues witnessed in the previous registration exercise in 2017 and 2018.

Also did INEC created additional registration centres and deployed more machines. In three states of Anambra, Ekiti and Osun, the exercise was devolved to ward level to give more citizens the opportunity to register ahead of their off-cycle governorship elections. Similarly, on weekly basis since 5th July 2021, the Commission has been giving weekly detailed updates on fresh registrations nationwide.

But it was unfortunate that in some places the exercise was disrupted by general insecurity. In other places, INEC Local Government Areas offices were consistently attacked resulting in the suspension of all activities, including voter registration. A number of IVED machines were snatched and uncollected Permanent Voters' Cards (PVCs) destroyed. Worse, registration officials were violently attacked. Some of them were abducted but later released. In one sad incident, an official lost his life.

Despite these challenges, the CVR has continued nationwide. However, as the deadline for the suspension of the current exercise approaches, the Commission said it has received reports of a surge in the number of prospective registrants that daily throng our State and Local Government Area offices as well as designated centres in many states across the country.

Chairman of the Commission, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu last Thursday at a meeting with Residents Electoral Commissioners in Abuja reassured Nigerians that the INEC remains committed to ensuring that all citizens who wish to register are given the opportunity to do so.

He disclosed that already, some of the Resident Electoral Commissioners have requested for more voter registration machines to ease the congestion while promising deployment of additional machines to areas of need immediately.

"We will always respond positively to the needs of Nigerians and therefore appeal to all citizens to be patient with the Commission as we strive to serve them better. We appreciate the desire of Nigerians to register as voters. Let me reassure all eligible registrants that no one will be left out," he assured.

Keeping his words, the Commission has deployed additional 209 bimodal machines to the five South Eastern states, Lagos and Kano to tackle the sudden surge in registrations.

Chairman, Information and Voter Education, Barr. Festus Okoye, who disclosed this at the weekend said in some states, the sudden turnout of prospective registrants was overwhelming.

"Consequently, the Commission convened an urgent meeting with all the Resident Electoral Commissioners (RECs) yesterday Thursday 9th June 2022 to review the situation so that eligible Nigerians who wish to register are able to do so. The necessity to urgently deploy more voter enrolment machines to ease the congestion at the registration centres was identified as a priority.

I will defeat insurgency, ensure free election



President Muhammadu Buhari

President Muhammadu Buhari has vowed to tackle the prevailing challenge of insecurity in the country in order to ensure the conduct of free, safe and secured general elections in 2023.

In a national broadcast on Sunday morning, Buhari assured Nigerians that voters' right of choice at the polls would be protected and preserved.

The President also expressed the hope that the 2023 polls would be peaceful, considering the positive signs he observed during the primaries conducted across party lines ahead of the 2023 general elections.

FULL TEXT OF ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, MUHAMMADU BUHARI, PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES OF NIGERIA ON THE OCCASION OF COMMEMORATION AND CELEBRATION OF DEMOCRACY DAY

12TH JUNE, 2022

Fellow Nigerians, Today,

June The 12th, marks another Democracy Day anniversary and an occasion to celebrate freedom and unity of our Nation.

2. From 1999, we consistently celebrated Democracy Day to mark the end of military rule and the return of power and control into the hands of those freely elected by the people. On this day, Nigerians recommit themselves to ensuring we protect and preserve the ideals of democracy.

3. In 2018, we moved Democracy Day from 29th of May to the 12th of June. This change was to remind all Nigerians of one free election after which the presumed winner along with Nigerians were denied their rights and their choice.

4. On June 12th 1993, Nigerians saw the best in our citizens as we all went out to vote peacefully. By June 24th 1993, we also saw the worst of our leadership as the elections were annulled.

5. We must never forget the sacrifices of the heroes of Nigeria's democracy during 1993. Their

patriotism and peaceful struggle should guide our actions especially when it comes to electing our leaders and holding them accountable, now and in future.

6. Fellow Nigerians this is my last Democracy Day speech as your President. By June 12th, 2023, exactly one year from today, you will already have a new President. I remain committed and determined to ensure that the new President is elected through a peaceful and transparent process.

7. It is important for all of us to remember that June 12th, 2023 will be exactly 30 years from the 1993 Presidential elections. In honour and memory of one of our national heroes for democracy, Chief M.K.O Abiola, GCFR, we must all work together to ensure this transition is done in a peaceful manner.

8. I am hopeful that we can achieve this. The signs so far are positive. Recently, all registered political parties conducted primaries to select their candidates for the 2023 general elections.

9. These primaries were peaceful

and orderly. Those who won were magnanimous in their victories. Those who lost were gracious in defeat. And those aggrieved opted to seek judicial justice as opposed to jungle justice.

10. I followed the party primaries closely from the state level to the Presidential level. I was very impressed to see across all the political parties that, most candidates ran issued based campaigns. The language and tone throughout were on the whole measured and controlled.

11. Another positive that came from the 2022 party primaries was the significant increase in women and youth particularly across all parties. I was very pleased to see this development. This augurs well for the future. These trends clearly show the level of maturity our democracy has achieved in the last 23 years.

12. As we move into the general election campaign season, we must sustain this mature attitude to campaigning and ultimately, voting. We must never see it as

I will defeat insurgency, ensure free election



President Muhammadu Buhari

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

a “do or die” affair. We must all remember democracy is about the will of the majority. There must be winners and losers.

13. I will therefore take this opportunity on this very special day to ask all candidates to continue running issue focused campaigns and to treat opponents with dignity. As leaders, you must all showcase high character and never forget that the world is watching us and Africa looks up to Nigeria to provide example in governance. The tone you set at the top will surely be replicated in your followers.

14. For the voters, I am pleased to inform you that in the last 7 years, our government across all tiers, has made significant investments to reform and enhance our electoral laws, systems, and processes to safeguard your

votes.

15. The Executive, Legislature and Judiciary were and still remain united and committed to ensure these reforms are fully implemented in the 2023 general elections. Fellow Nigerians, your right to choose your government will be preserved and protected.

16. I know many of us are concerned with the rise in insecurity due to terrorist activities in parts of the country. As a government, we are working hard to contain and address these challenges. And ensure that the 2023 general elections are safe and secure for all Nigerians.

17. To achieve this however, we must all contribute. It is not the job of government alone. I ask all citizens to support and cooperate with our security agencies by reporting any suspicious characters and activities to law enforcement agencies. We can

only have a safe country if we are able to prevent crime not after the crime has been committed.

18. On this special day, I want us all to put all victims of terrorist activities in our thoughts and prayers. I am living daily with the grief and worry for all those victims and prisoners of terrorism and kidnapping. I and the security agencies are doing all we can to free those unfortunate countrymen and countrywomen safely.

19. For those who have lost their lives, we will continue to seek justice for their families against the perpetrators. For those currently in captivity, we will not stop until they are freed, and their kidnappers are brought to justice. If we all unite, we will be victorious against these agents of terror and destruction.

20. We have reformed some of our security structures. Some of

the defence assets we procured three years ago have arrived and have been deployed.

21. Our cyber security and surveillance systems are being upgraded to further enhance our ability to track and trace criminal elements. We are also recruiting and training new personnel across all our security and intelligence agencies to strengthen the country’s over-all security.

22. I will conclude this Democracy Day speech, my last as President, by assuring you of my commitment to protect Nigeria and Nigerians from all enemies from within and outside.

23. I am also promising you a free, fair and transparent electoral process. And I am pleading with all citizens to come together and work with Government to build a peaceful and prosperous nation.

24. God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.



Meed for cautious celebration over discovery of Lithium in Kwara

With the recent discovery of huge deposits of Lithium in Kwara State, it was natural for most Nigerians to celebrate what would ordinarily have been a blessing to the country. Expectedly, the Nigerian Geological Survey Agency (NGSA), the agency responsible for prospecting solid minerals in the country and the Federal Government were excited at the discovery. This prompted most Nigerians to ask if there is the need to celebrate the find, just the way they do when crude oil is discovered in any part of the country, but which has not benefitted a majority of Nigerians, JOHNMARK UKOKO writes.

Without a doubt, Nigeria is one of the countries endowed with different kinds of mineral resources, especially the Niger Delta region, which is known largely for its huge deposits of crude oil and gas and other untapped natural resources.

Apart from the Niger Delta, regarded as the goose that lays the golden egg, Zamfara and Osun states are among states blessed with commercial quantity of gold deposits and other minerals, just as Ondo State has the largest deposits of bitumen in the world.

Also, Enugu State is famous for its coal, while some states have large deposits of uranium, just as Jos is known for tin and bauxite, among other natural resources.

Kogi, Ogun, Edo, Ondo and Ebonyi states are among states with huge deposits of limestone, which has helped to attract cement firms to locate their factories close to the source of their major raw material.

But in spite of the huge solid minerals and other natural resources being discovered in the country, as well as their exploration and exploitation in Nigeria apart from bitumen, the country's treasury and inhabitants of the places where the mineral discoveries are located do not feel the positive impact that such natural resources should bequeath to them.

It should be stressed that the mineral deposits God has blessed Nigeria with in commercial quantities have not impacted positively on the host communities across the country.

Only recently, Director-General of the Nigerian Geological Survey Agency (NGSA), Dr. Abdulrazaq Garba, disclosed that a large quantity of high grade lithium mineral deposits had been found in Kwara State, but most Nigerians sceptical in the face of the development, since the over six decades of crude oil exploration in the country had not benefitted them in any significant way.

Briefing newsmen on the mineral exploration activities of the agency, Garba announced that Nigeria had discovered a critical high grade lithium deposits in Kwara State and that that several investors have indicated interest to pay any amount to start prospecting the natural resource.

He explained that lithium is an element valuable for the production of glass, aluminum products, as well as batteries used

in recharging mobile phones, laptops, digital cameras and electric vehicles, among other gadgets.

"Nigeria's lithium is a hot cake currently. The mineral was discovered in Kwara State by the National Integrated Mineral Exploration Project (NIMEP) and during exploration we did our investigation and came up with analysis and discovered that it is of very high grade.

"It is of high grade in the sense that the global standard for its exploration and mining starts from 0.4 per cent lithium oxide, but when we started exploration and mining, we saw one per cent and up to 13 per cent lithium oxide content. Another advantage of Nigeria's lithium is hard rock. The lithium find is what investors are looking out for globally.

"We even discussed with some private companies with mining licences in Nigeria and they conducted tests on the lithium and we also collaborated with Canada on 100 per cent partnership," Garba said.

He said all data received from the agency were positive and would boost the Nigerian economy, adding that a track of 'mineralisation' showed that the product could be found in almost two to 10 kilometers west of Abuja, adding that the resource evaluation was conducted on the area and that large deposits of gold, lead and silver were also discovered in the area.

"The gold found there has high content of tungsten, which is used as an additive for exploration of steel and therefore, any company mining there will be mining gold associated with lead, silver and tungsten," he added.

Garba maintained that local and international companies were willing to pay any amount for the product, adding that the pronouncements would be made soon on the companies that had shown interest and the data on the development.

"We don't sell data, but we concession areas of huge deposits of natural resources such as lithium, gold, silver, uranium and others through the Nigeria Mining Cadastre Officer (NMCO) and so, interested investors can obtain licences and data and take it to the next level. These are the things we are looking at and working on to ensure that the data we generate are useful to investors," he said.

Garba's excitement is understandable, considering the level of revenue that could



Abdulrazaq Garba

accrue to the country through the new mineral resource if well accounted for, but as the euphoria of the lithium mineral discovery goes on, Nigerians will not forget in a hurry that many aliens and unpatriotic Nigerians have been arrested for illegally mining various mineral resources in the country, without much results in prosecuting them.

Among the worst culprits in the illegal mining are the Chinese, who have been arrested severally for illegally mining various mineral resources across the country.

The sad aspect of the issue is that nothing has been achieved by such arrests, while the media had been awash with various illegal mining cases and stories across the country.

Meanwhile, some commentators are of the opinion that bandits, terrorists and armed gang across the country were deeply engaged in illegal mining, as in the case of Zamfara State where several foreigners have been arrested for mining gold for the umpteenth time.

It would also be recalled that some powerful individuals illegally mine mineral resources across the country, from crude oil, gold, limestone and others without paying taxes or royalty to the Federal Government's treasury.

However, while Nigeria is richly endowed with various natural resources and mineral deposits, one issue that continue to beg for attention that is where

the revenue from such minerals are being deployed by the relevant authorities.

This has prompted most Nigerians to lament that every month when governors go for the Federal Allocation Committee (FAC) meeting to share allocations, the money the Accountant General of the Federation (AGF) and Minister of Finance and Budget bring to the table for sharing are mostly crude oil export earnings, revenues from the Nigeria Custom Service (NCS) and the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), among a few other sources.

Reacting to the development, an economist, Felix Amechi, said most of the revenues derived from the mineral resources have been appropriated by individuals, who divert the revenue into their private pockets.

He alleged that the government was mainly concerned about the revenue from crude oil and gas, adding that while most Chinese and their Nigerian collaborators line their private pockets with proceeds of natural resources, successive governments have not paid much attention to the local various minerals around apart from the crude oil and not too interested in the other minerals.

"Nigeria is endowed with numerous mineral resources, but the Federal Government concentrate more on only crude oil and gas, while foreigners and their criminal collaborators feed fat on our commonwealth. There are several minerals such

as bitumen, coal, gold and others that could be exported other than crude oil, but the country does not seem to know what to do with those other natural resources.

"People are usually arrested for illegal mining, oil bunkering and oil theft, but we do not hear much afterwards. For me, the discovery of lithium is a welcome development, but will the revenue used to develop the country? I am not sure all the money realised from gold and many other minerals ever get to the federation account," he said.

Nigerians, who reacted to the development, argued that the discovery of lithium was a welcome development to the country, but they appealed to the Federal Government to initiate measures aimed at making the revenue accruing from the natural resources to have positive impact on Nigerians.

They urged the government not to let the ugly experience of the degradation of environment that happen in Niger Delta be replicated in Kwara State and part of Abuja where the lithium deposit had been discovered.

They also appealed to the Federal Government and other relevant authorities not to allow the money from the new mineral discovery to end up in private pockets, insisting that the discovery of lithium mineral would be meaningless if the proceeds from its exploration do not benefit the entire country and the people, especially the host community in Kwara State.

The respondents, who charged the government to initiate processes and use the proceeds from the mineral instead of constantly seeking foreign loans to finance its budget deficits, however commended Garba and his colleagues at the NGSA for their efforts that led to the discovery.

They also charged Garba and his colleagues to intensify efforts at discovering more mineral resources to develop the country and urged the Federal Government to support the agency through improved funding and provision of modern equipment for effective discharge of its duties.

In the final analysis, the years ahead will determine if the discovery of lithium would be a blessing to Nigerians, Kwara State, Abuja and particularly the host communities or a curse like the case of crude oil in the Niger Delta region.

NPA hosts IMO as port community system project reaches phase II

Stories by **JOHNMARK UKOKO**

The Port Community System (PCS), a single window Information and Communication Technology (ICT) platform being developed by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in partnership with the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), has reached its second phase, as it nears completion and deployment by 2023.

Managing Director of NPA, Mohammed Bello-Koko, disclosed this at the weekend, when consultants of the IMO visited him in his office at Marina, Lagos.

He subsequently posted on his verified Twitter handle: "Earlier in continuation of the phase II implementation of the port community system, I hosted IMO consultants, who visited the country on a needs assessment. Digitising our port processes is on top of my to-do list."

According to him, the IMO has come up with a regulation that stipulates full compliance by 2025, but the NPA has set 2023 target to fully automate the Nigerian ports.

"The Port Community System is not an Information Technology (IT) solution that will phase out the e-Customs or other platforms of stakeholders at the ports, but will rather complement them. We engaged IMO consultants for the NPA towards the deployment of the port community system.

"The IMO consultants are in Nigeria and they are currently in Lagos for a 10-day on-the-spot assessment after which they will go and come back for the final part," Koko said adding that the final part would be funded by the NPA and that upon the return of the IMO consultants, they would visit all the ports in Nigeria," he stated.

He assured that the port community system will be a game-changer, as it will curb wastages and waiting time of vessels, maintaining that it would be deployed in other parts of the world, adding: "But we do have it in Nigeria and it will also make our ports competitive and better positioned. We will do whatever it takes to make provision for it in our 2022 budget."



Mohammed Bello-Koko

Highlighting how far the NPA and IMO have gone with the process, Bello-Koko said the IMO consultants were currently holding meetings in the NPA headquarters, visiting offices of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) and other stakeholders to

see the kind of IT development with government agencies and other stakeholders.

He stressed that by so doing, the IMO would be able to develop a robust and all-encompassing port community system that would accommodate all interests.

"Eventually, this might be the foundation that would lead to the foundation that would lead to the setting-up of the National Single Window, which is a requirement for modern ports, because it enables trade facilitation and ease of doing business," he added.

On how the NPA was automating its internal process, Bello-Koko said the authority, which currently has the oracle e-business solutions was on

the verge of automating all its processes.

"We believe that one of the most important things is to deploy IT at our ports to be efficient, because it reduces human interference, improves efficiency and blocks leakage. We are about to start harbour automation, which is our main function. This will cover the time vessels come in from the fairway buoy for berthing and clearing," he said.

Continuing, he said harbour operations would also engender interference between NPA's harbour department and other users including the towage company and terminal operators, adding: "We also have multiple IT tools, which we are currently integrating."

Sahara Group clarifies report on Rivers-owned First Independent Power Limited

By **EDU ABADE**, Business Editor

Sahara Group, an integrated indigenous energy services company and viable player in the distribution of aviation fuel across the country has refuted reports of alleged involvement in illegal transactions with a former governor of Rivers State.

Specifically, the company clarified that its attention had been drawn to reports alleging illicit financial transactions between it and the previous Rivers State Government led by former Governor Rotimi Amaechi.

In a statement made available to The Trumpet, Sahara Group stated that the report was misleading and a rehash of previous allegations for which the company had since provided detailed explanations.

Upon assumption of office in May 2015, the Governor Nyesom Wike-led administration constituted a panel in June 2015 to review the sale of Rivers State assets by the previous administration. The Commission was chaired by Justice George Omereji.

"As part of the process, Sahara Group was invited to appear before the panel and was asked to provide evidence of payment for the 70 per cent stakes in First Independent Power Limited (FIPL), which it acquired from the previous administration in a transparent transaction.

"The judicial commission, thereafter, published a white paper report that erroneously indicated an outstanding balance of \$28.4 million due from Sahara with respect to the transaction. Sahara Group disputed the claim and a reconciliation committee, chaired by the Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice was subsequently formed to confirm the payment records," the statement reads.

The company further explained that committee confirmed and verified receipt of all payments it made.

It, therefore, urged its stakeholders to disregard what it described as "misleading reports in the media," as the records verified

by the Rivers State Government showed that Sahara Group followed due process in line with the state government's internal processes, following which Sahara emerged preferred purchaser for 70 per cent equity in First Independent Power Limited.

"Full payment was subsequently made by Sahara Group for the asset in line with the purchase agreement. The reports of illicit transactions are not new and are the same allegations that were reviewed and subsequently cleared by the Judicial Commission led by Justice Omereji and the reconciliation committee comprising the state's Attorney General and the Commissioner for Justice.

"The Sahara Group remains committed to supporting the growth and maturation of emerging economies, through critical investments that drive economic growth responsibly. To this end, we continue to support and work with the Rivers State Government as development partners to improve the economy and quality of life of Rivers people and all its residents

"Sahara Group restates its commitment to integrity, corporate governance and transparency in our operations. These values continue to drive the success of the Sahara Brand for over 25 years in keeping with global best practices and bringing energy to life in a responsible manner," the statement added.



Rotimi Amaechi

Asaba airport gets ILS, AGLS certification

•Targets international flights

Asaba Airport in Delta State has upgraded its devices and has disclosed plans to target international flight operations with the successful verification of the Instrument Landing System (ILS) at the facility.

The Trumpet recalled that the airport was downgraded to a category three facility by the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) in February 2015.

But on assumption of office, Delta State Governor, Ifeanyi Okowa, embarked on massive rehabilitation of the runway, taxiway and other ancillary works.

Okowa completed the perimeter fencing and evacuated the hill besides the airport for provision

of hitch-free zone for the runway, as required by the regulatory authority.

Upon completion of the ILC and Airfield Ground Lighting System (AGLS) to enable the airport to handle night operations, it was fitted with a medical centre, while the formally unserviceable Automatic Weather Observation System (AWOS) and the low (LLWSAS) were fixed.

Consequently, the facility was upgraded to category six, which would enable it to handle large aircraft and operate international flights.

Managing Director of the Asaba Airport Company, Christopher Penninck, who was accompanied by the Commissioner for Information, Charles Aniagwu, said

the ILC verification process was successful, adding that the Nigeria Aviation Management Authority (NAMA) would formally carry out the certification following the successful verification.

Corroborating the Managing Director, Aniagwu disclosed that the assurance of safety and attractive routes have continued to attract new airlines to the airport, which was earlier concessioned to first investment.

He explained that the airport now ranked above its counterparts in the country with better traffic and greater number of navigation facilities, adding: "We look forward to the real intention of upgrading the airport to an international hub for the South-South, other states of the country and beyond.

Voting in consumer value award ends June 30

By **EDU ABADE**, Business Editor

Consumers Value Broadcasting has announced that the closing date for online voting for brands of repute and influence will close on Thursday, June 30, 2022.

The online voting portal opened on April 1, 2022 and will close on June 30, 2022, making it exactly three months of consumers expressing preferences for brands considered to be of value.

No fewer than 40 categories of brands are on the portal contending for the votes of consumers in the last 60 days of voting, while the remaining thirty days are for brands to gather more votes from the consumers through direct conversations.

Consumers' responses to the call to vote have been impressive in different categories since the commencement of the voting on the portal as various brands compete for leadership positions.

Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of Consumers Value Broadcasting (CVB), Akonte Ekine, said experiencing the interest of consumers' preferences for brands based on interactions with the brands was impressive.

Akonte commended consumers for responding to the call to vote for brands in the last two months, adding that more consumers should visit the site and vote for brands based on their experience.

At the end of 60 days of voting, leading brands in various

categories are Coca-Cola (55 per cent); Dettol (83 per cent); Samsung (48 per cent); Toyota (56 per cent); Knorr (71 per cent); Mastercard (88 per cent); Power Oil (57 per cent) and Golden Penny (55 per cent).

Others are, Shoprite, which polled 66 per cent; Reload Multivitamin (88 per cent); Lush (60 per cent); Mr. Chef salt (62 per cent); Interswitch (35 per cent); Dangote Cement (65 per cent); Checkers Custard (84 per cent); Colgate (37 per cent); Air Peace (41 per cent); MTN (68 per cent); Lucozade Boost (48 per cent); GTCO (41 per cent); Amstel (48 per cent); Chivita (39 per cent); Orijin (26 per cent) and Kellogs cornflakes (85 per cent).

Army deploys 5,800 new recruits to battle terrorists

By PAUL MICHAEL, DEFENCE EDITOR, ABUJA

To contain growing insecurity across the country, the Nigerian Army has concluded arrangement to deploy 5,800 newly recruited soldiers to tackle Boko Haram, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and other criminal elements.

Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt Gen Faruk Yahaya, said this during the Passing-out-Parade (PoP) of the 82 Regular Recruit Intake on Saturday in Zaria, Kaduna State. He stressed that the recruits would be posted at various theatre operations to tame persistent insecurity bedeviling the country.

Yahaya, who was the Special Guest of Honour and Reviewing Officer of the PoP, said the exercise aimed to strengthen the Nigeria Army would translate into more food on ground.

The COAS said the new soldiers would be posted to more relevant areas where they are required, warning that "it is a clear message to all criminals, whether they are bandits, kidnappers or terrorists".

He, therefore, urged the new soldiers to maintain a high

standard of professionalism and remain good ambassadors of Depot Nigerian Army and the Armed Forces of Nigeria.

Yahaya said, "As for the passing out recruits, you are all aware, Nigeria is currently facing numerous security challenges such as the activities of Boko Haram Terrorists, armed bandits, kidnappers, secessionist agitators and other criminal elements.

"I wish to state that these security challenges can only be surmounted by the collective resolve and effort of every officer and soldier of the Nigerian Army, including those of you passing out today."

Yahaya enjoined the new soldiers to apply the mental, physical and moral training acquired over the past few months as well as those they will be exposed to at their respective units, formations and corps.

"These values along with other cherished ethos of the Nigerian Army, if well imbibed and upheld, will help you attain great heights in your chosen career," Yahaya told the soldiers.

The army chief also advised the soldiers on the importance of the Oath of Attestation they

have sworn to.

"By this oath you are under obligation to remain loyal to constituted authorities at all times and place the interest of the nation ahead of your personal convictions," he added.

He noted that Depot Nigerian Army, since its establishment in 1924, has borne the responsibility of moulding selected able bodied citizens into well trained and disciplined soldiers to meet the manpower demands of the Nigerian Army.

He added the function of moulding selected able bodied citizens into well trained and disciplined soldiers was of utmost importance and remained relevant, considering the numerous security challenges presently bedeviling our great nation.

Yahaya said he was glad to report that Depot Nigerian Army has continued to plan and conduct its training activities in compliance with the Army Headquarters Training Directives.

He said the training was also in cognisance of his vision of having a "professional Nigerian Army ready to accomplish assigned missions within a joint environment in defence of Nigeria".



Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt Gen Faruk Yahaya



IGP, Baba

Police in Sokoto embark on shooting range exercise

By PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Sokoto State Police Command has alerted residents that it would embark on a shooting range exercise as part of training to equip officers with required knowledge and expertise to tame criminal elements.

DSP Sanusi Abubakar, Police Public Relations Officer of the Command, made the public notice at the weekend, saying the exercise shall commence from Monday, June 13, 2022.

Abubakar urged members of the public not to panic during the exercise, and solicited for their support and cooperation while assuring them that the police is commitment to sustaining peace in the state.

He said, "Sokoto State Police Command wishes to inform all residents in the state that the command will embark on a shooting range exercise from Monday, 13/06/2022 to Friday, 18/06/2022 between 0600hrs and 1800hrs at the Army range ground along Kware-Illelah road.

"In view of this, the command uses this medium to notify all and sundry to stay away and should not panic, especially residents in the following villages: Gidan Yamma, Mashedi, and Tsire villages along the Kware-Illelah road.

"While reiterating our commitment to sustaining peace in the state, we call on members of the public to cooperate with the police in this gesture."

Gumi secures release of 11 train attack victims

By PAUL MICHAEL

Tukur Mamu, spokesperson of Islamic cleric, Sheikh Ahmad Gumi, has secured the release of 11 of the 61 victims of Abuja-Kaduna train attack.

The attack at Dutse forest in Chikun local government area of Kaduna State on March 28, 2022, left eight people dead, 26 injured, many others kidnapped while scores of passengers were declared missing.

Mamu, who said he had been involved in the negotiation for the release of the victims, disclosed this on Channels TV at the weekend.

According to him, the six females and five males who were freed on health grounds in order to enable them undergo urgent medical treatment, had been flown to Abuja.

Mamu gave their names as Jessy John, Amina Ba'aba

Mohammed (Gamba), Rashida Yusuf Busari and Hannah Ajewole.

Others include Najib Mohammed Daiharu, Gaius Gambo, Hassan Aliyu, Peace A. Boy and Danjuma Sa'idu.

According to him, the release of the 11 victims was part of the request by the negotiating team, while the women who are among the vulnerable ones are part of the agreement reached with the abductors.



Sheikh Ahmad Gumi



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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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7 x 4	197,125.00	211,909.37	7 x 2	79,304.29	85,252.11	7 x 2	64,224.63	69,041.48	9 x 2	80,454.83	86,488.95	
8 x 2	99,768.24	107,250.85	7 x 3	128,456.43	138,090.67	7 x 3	96,336.94	103,562.21	10 x 2	86,147.92	92,609.02	
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14.5 x 4	520,790.19	559,849.45	9 x 2	101,962.78	109,609.99	9 x 2	93,773.60	100,872.44	8 x 4	137,692.17	148,019.082	
7 x 5	218,243.02	234,629.74	9 x 3	152,944.01	164,414.81	9 x 3	141,108.54	151,691.68	10 x 4	172,301.37	185,224.22	
8 x 5	299,304.72	321,752.57	9 x 4	203,925.29	219,219.69	9 x 4	187,921.52	202,015.71	14.5 x 3	187,057.43	201,086.73	
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9 x 6	484,873.39	521,239.16	10 x 5	354,037.54	380,590.16	10 x 5	325,815.11	349,966.25	11 x 5	295,636.20	317,808.91	
10 x 6	538,748.49	579,154.53	10 x 6	424,845.04	456,708.42	10 x 6	390,978.13	420,320.48	11 x 6	340,573.10	340,466.08	
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S'Eagles land in Agadir for São Tomé AFCON qualifier

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

Nigeria's delegation to Monday's 2023 Africa Cup of Nations qualifying match against 'The Falcons and True Parrots' of São Tomé and Príncipe landed in the southern Moroccan city of Agadir.

Air Peace airline's Embraer 195 E2 which has flown the team to several match venues including from Morocco when they defeated Liberia in a FIFA World Cup qualifying match in Tangier, touched down at Aeroport Agadir Almarissa at exactly 8:15am on Sunday, with a total of 25 players and technical and administrative crew.

The delegation was led by NFF 2nd Vice President, Mallam Shehu Dikko, including the General Secretary, Dr Mohammed Sanusi, some board members, a couple of management and staffers, a few stakeholders and some media representatives.

Having bagged all three points in their 2-1 defeat of Sierra Leone at the MKO Abiola Stadium, Abuja on



Thursday, the Eagles are set to battle another three points against 'The Falcons and True Parrots' at the Grand Stade Agadir, also known as Adrar Stadium, on Monday afternoon.

Head Coach Jose Peseiro said at the Aeroport Agadir Almarissa that the encounter against 'The Falcons and True Parrots' will bring the best out of his team as they seek to go top of the Group A table.

"We want to be the team at the top of the table, so we must fight hard against the opponents. Every match, we must commit ourselves fully to winning it," Peseiro said in

Morocco.

"As I said earlier in the week, Nigeria have huge pedigree and they also have both quality and quantity of players. It is important that we select the best all the time to win the big games," he stated.

Defender and deputy skipper William Ekong and midfielder Innocent Bonke have returned to their respective bases in England and France to attend to injuries copped during the international break. Bonke was injured in the friendly game against Mexico in Dallas on 28th May, while

Ekong suffered a groin strain in the 2-1 defeat of Sierra Leone in Abuja on Thursday.

The Confederation of African Football has appointed Liberian official Hassen Zinnah Corneh as referee for the encounter, with his compatriots Joel Wonka Doe, Ephraim Grant Whengar and Moses Forkpah as assistant referee 1, assistant referee 2 and fourth official respectively.

Alim Konate Aboubakar from Cameroon will be the match commissioner. The match starts at 1pm Morocco time.

Seasoned officials to handle NPFL matches

League Management Company (LMC), Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) match commissioners, Nigeria Referees Association (NRA) and other stakeholders have agreed that the remaining six Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL) matches will be officiated by seasoned and astute officials.

In a meeting on Wednesday in Abuja, June 8, 2022, the nation's football stakeholders in a review of the 2021-22 NPFL season, stressed that certain standards that border on fair-play must be upheld to avoid a repeat of hitches that revolve around relegation and league triumph happenstances.

According to Shehu Dikko, LMC Chairman, the officials and stakeholders must ensure practices that happened in time past during the season's end must be checkmated by ensuring the fair-play standard is upheld.

Dikko, who led a delegation of the LMC to the meeting, underlined the urge by some clubs to avoid relegation, qualify for continental ticket and league triumph have been a major challenge.

"We took stock of trends in the past seasons and realised that anxiety to either win title, secure continental ticket or avoid relegation sometimes come to play leading to tendencies to disrupt games and or deploy unfair means

in trying to get points," Dikko said in the meeting.

"So, the meeting we called is to ensure that in all fixtures, fairness will be upheld. We are on the same page with the Committee on this", he stated.

Nevertheless, Dikko who said the LMC will meet with the NFF security committee to discuss the level of security on match days at the respective venues of NPFL matches, commended the leadership of referees and match commissioners appointment committee and NRA for their role in ensuring a credible season so far despite some unexpected challenges, NPFL reported.

Dikko continued: "On Referees, it was agreed that the NRA will encourage their members on the field to be courageous and extra vigilant to interpret the rules and manage games in line with football best practices, especially at this crucial time of the season while the match commissioners are enjoined to be firm and take control of their matches to ensure everything and everyone played by the rules."

Present in the meeting are Davidson Owumi, Salihu Abubakar, Alhaji Sharif Rabi Inuwa Ahlan, Otunba Tade Azeez, Babagana Kalli and the NFF Referees Coordinator/ Secretary Referees Committee, Mr Zubeiru.

Dybala's agent meets Inter to finalise deal

Argentine striker Paulo Dybala is close to joining Inter Milan after Juventus refused to renew his contract to see the player continue with the Old Lady in next season's campaign.

Juventus had previously in 2021 offered to extend the contract of the Argentine striker with a €10million-a-year deal but later backed out of the contract talks after they signed Dusan Vlahovic from Fiorentina in January.

However, Inter have tendered a contract worth

€6million-a-year deal with €1million add-ons to the player but his agent Jorge Autun has insisted the value of the contract be reviewed upwards.

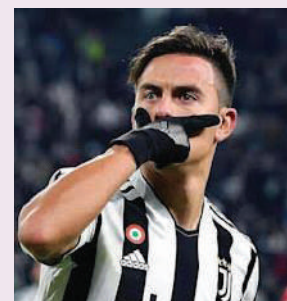
Although, Dybala has received interest from several English Premier League clubs, the Argentine striker chose Inter long ago but would welcome interest from Spain.

According to La Gazzetta dello Sport, a meeting between Inter Milan and Jorge Autun will hold early in the week, either Monday or Tuesday, to

finalise the latter part of the deal which would see Dybala, who is on holiday in Miami, sign when he returns.

Italian media reported that the striker contract talk with Juventus was supposed to be held in March this year but suffered a setback as Bianconeri never brought up the issue since Vlahovic's switch.

The Trumpet reports that Dybala joined Juventus in 2015 in a five-year deal worth €32million and €8million add-ons from the Italian side



Palermo and has been an ace striker in the attacking lineup for the Bianconeri where he amassed 115 goals in 293 appearances coupled with 48 assists.



Meeting with Maldini was vital, says Milan Chief

Gerry Cardinale, new CEO of AC Milan, says his move to earn the trust of its legend Paolo Maldini during the club change in ownership was very vital.

Maldini has been infuriated with Hedge Fund Elliott Management for shutting him out of the discussion with Cardinale during the takeover of Rossoneri.

Cardinale, an expert in sports management and the founder of US investment firms RedBird Capital recently acquired Milan through a deal worth €1.2 billion.

"It was very important to me that I did that. We ended up spending three and a half hours together. It was

fantastic," Cardinale told Financial Times.

Meanwhile, reports from Italian media reveal that Cardinale has experience of success with some of the USA's biggest sporting franchises and he is hoping to use his experience to continue that trend with the Rossoneri.

"A brand of this scale, like AC Milan, should have infrastructure that is indicative of its football prowess and global potential. We've had a lot of experience with stadium projects in the US.

"Milan and Italy deserve a world-class stadium that houses the best of sports and entertainment on a global scale," he said.

Victor Mbaoma's hat-trick keeps Enyimba's continental hopes alive



Enyimba striker Victor Mbaoma was in the spotlight against Kwara United in matchday33 fixture as his hat-trick ensured the 2004 CAF Champions League

winner maintained the continental spot on the Nigeria Professionals Football League (NPFL) table at the weekend.

Mbaoma, presently the leading goalscorer with 15 goals in the Nigeria topflight league, scored successively in the 3rd, 15th and 54th minutes against Kwara United to gift the Aba-based club a 3-nil victory.

The eighth-time NPFL league winners top Remo Stars placed fifth on the

league table with one point and two points above Kwara United that were partitioned in three's on sixth position at the Enyimba Stadium on Saturday in Aba.

Mbaoma's performance is to reemphasise to Super Eagles head coach, Jose Peseiro, why he should have been included among the national team's squad processing the AFCON qualifiers in the continent.

However, Enyimba who once dominated clubs

football in the African continent for two consecutive seasons (2003, 2004) contend for the continental spot with fellow Eastern club Enugu Rangers, Remo Stars, and Kwara United.

Spurred by the win, Enyimba who lost 2-1 to Niger Tornadoes in last week's fixture will hope to consolidate the continental spot when they travel to play relegation wallowing side MFM next week's Sunday, June 19, 2022.

Italy's Nation League performances stun Mancini

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

Italy national team head coach, Roberto Mancini, has been impressed with the Azzurri's performances in the UEFA Nations League tournament.

The Italian team which have been undergoing a revamp under Mancini with some fresh blood injected, have continued to reel out shocking surprises that deserved the coach's commendations.

Mancini, in a post-match press conference after Italy drew at Wolverhampton with the Three Lions of England to remain top of the group that also includes Hungary and Germany, admitted he never expected to get the results they produce.

According to the Italian boss, it was risky to give opportunities to these newbies but praised their

performances by rating them above the squad that won the EURO 2020.

Mancini said, "I'll be honest, I did not expect this, I thought it'd be worse.

"We still have a lot to work on, there's a long road ahead full of dangers. We certainly need to score more goals and if Davide Frattesi had scored in the opening five minutes, it would've been a different game. He'll get it next time.

"I didn't expect us to do so well in these three weeks together. It's important that we haven't changed our style of football, even when the personnel did," he confessed.

Mancini went further to exemplify some of the players that have shown capacity with stunning surprises in the course of the UEFA Nations League tournaments.

Azzurri's boss continued: "If I play Gatti, it's because



I think he can become an excellent defender for the future. The same goes for Sandro Tonali, he is 22 years old, but one of the best midfielders in Italy.

"Pellegrini has his own style of football, he's not a 10 like Giuseppe Giannini, nor a 10 like Francesco Totti. I think he can become much better with time because he is so good at both attacking and

defending.

"At times he loses balls he shouldn't, but if he improves that and a couple of other things, he can become simply extraordinary," Mancini added.

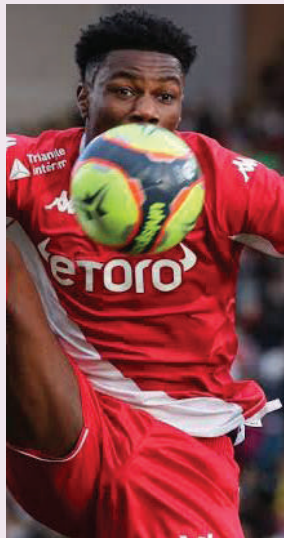
Italy will look to continue their impressive outing to finish top of the group as they travel to play Germany on Tuesday at Borussia-Park Stadium, Mönchengladbach.

Monaco's Tchouameni joins Madrid on six-year deal

UEFA Champion League victors Real Madrid have continued to scoop extensively for players to complement their squad for next season with AS Monaco midfielder Aurelien Tchouameni their latest catch.

Real Madrid after intensive deliberation with the French club to sign the player, have agreed to six years contract that will see the youngster remain at the Santiago Bernabeu until 2028.

Tchouameni, who attracted interest from European top clubs with Liverpool and Paris Saint-Germain among the lot, will



be presented officially by Los Blancos after completing medical on Tuesday.

A statement by Real Madrid to announce

the breakthrough, said, "Real Madrid CF and AS Monaco have agreed on the transfer of the player Aurelien Tchouameni, who will be linked to the club for the next six seasons.

"Next Tuesday, June 14, at 12:00 at Real Madrid City, the presentation ceremony for Aurelien Tchouameni as a new Real Madrid player will take place after the corresponding medical examination.

"Aurelien Tchouameni will then appear before the media," the Spanish club added.

Meanwhile, former Monaco and Granada coach Roberto Moreno

has described the 22-year-old French international as a talented player who has established himself in the midfield.

In an interview with Sky Sports, Moreno said, "They are talking €80m (£68.3m) so I will be waiting for a thank-you message.

"He has become one of the best midfielders in France.

"He has become the player we expected," the former Spain head coach exemplified.

Tchouameni becomes the second signing for Real Madrid following Antonio Rudiger, who joined the club on a free transfer, to sign a four-year deal.

Chelsea part ways with Christensen

Chelsea have announced Andreas Christensen will not be part of their plans for next season having released the squad list with the defender's name absent.

Christensen spent a decade in Stamford Bridge having signed from Danish club Brøndby in 2012.

He started in the English club's youthful ranks before he was promoted to the senior team in 2015 where he was sent on loan to Bundesliga Borussia Mönchengladbach for two seasons.

The defender, who

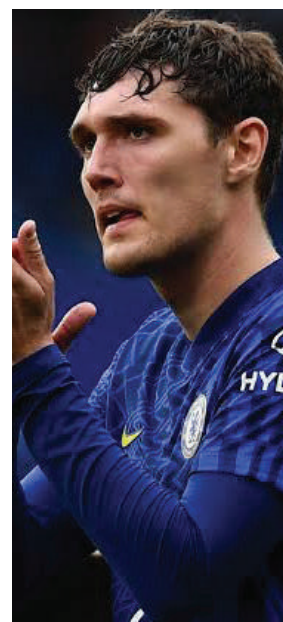
established himself in the starting lineup of Thomas Tuchel's side, finding a perfect click with Thiago Silva as defensive pair, is favoured by a deal to Barcelona.

Moreover, Christensen's contract with Chelsea has ended but the player who craves new challenges in his career blatantly refused to extend it.

During his time at the West London club, the 26-year-old Barcelona-bound player made 161 appearances in Chelsea's first team, scoring two goals in the process coupled with two assists.

Despite these two goals for Chelsea's first team being scored in the UEFA Champions League and FA Cup tournaments respectively, his 10 years spell includes storylines of successes with UEFA Champion League, FIFA Club World Cup, Europa League, Premier League, and UEFA Cup trophies in his kitty.

Chelsea, however, have wished the defender, who is on international duty with the Denmark national team in the UEFA Nations League soccer event, "Thank you, Andreas".



Recuperating Raducanu yearns for Wimbledon

US Open champion in 2021, Emma Raducanu, has given a glimpse of hope that she could feature in this month's Wimbledon after she pulled out of the Nottingham tournament abruptly.

Raducanu got injured in a round of 32 contest with Switzerland's Viktorija Golubic where she was trailing 4-3, and will not partake in next week's Rothesay Classic in Birmingham.

The teenager after she got injured, tried using painkillers to numb the pain to continue her campaign to the finals but invariably ended the match to hand Golubic a walkover.

However, the British number one whose first feature on her home soil since her US Open success in 2021 resulted in an injury in Birmingham, hopes to be fit for Wimbledon.

Sequel to the incident, the 19-year-old stressed that she will undergo a scan to know if she developed spasms and would not subject herself to a personal diagnosis.

"It was disappointing to go out this week with a side injury and unfortunately will no longer be able to play in Birmingham," Raducanu said on lta.org.uk.

"I'm looking forward to being back on the match court soon, though, to enjoy the rest of the grass season," Raducanu referred to the Wimbledon taking place in the latter part of June.

According to a report, the US Open champion WTA Tour campaign have been marred with a series of injuries ranging from hip, fitness issues, and back complaints amid blister attacks.

Meanwhile, coach Judy Murray on The Telegraph advised that Raducanu needs to engage the services of women experts who understand the female physique to properly take care of her.

Murray said Raducanu outside her sterling performance in the US last year is like every other teenager who needs quality time to build her physique.

She said, "What's becoming increasingly clear is that Raducanu's body needs time to mature

"If you strip away the fact she was catapulted into this amazing success following her US Open triumph last September, she is no different to any other young player in the sense that her body needs time to fill out, become more robust and resilient," Murray underlined.



'Give Super Eagles a breathing space'

Legend Felix Owolabi has said Nigerians should not rate the performance of Super Eagles head coach, Jose Peseiro, with the game against Leone Stars of Sierra Leone at the MKO Abiola National Stadium, Abuja, on Thursday.

The former Green Eagles player stated this to remind Nigerians this is Peseiro's first competitive game with a new team undergoing a reform.

The ex-player, who was among the Nigerian squad that won the first African Cup of Nations (AFCON) diadem in 1980, noted that the Portuguese coach needs all the support he can get to succeed.

According to him, the Super Eagles players performed very well individually and it would be out of place to judge a team which is in its embryonic stage.

"It is too early to choose any adjective to describe the Eagles' because now, they are a new team and they played well as individuals. We just employed a new coach and this is his first competitive game," Owolabi told NAN.

"So, we can't assess him with just a game, he needs our support to succeed. As someone who has seen it all in football, it will be difficult for me to pass judgment on him.

The coach just gathered the team.

Peseiro, during the opening Group A match with Sierra Leone in the AFCON qualifying fixture in Abuja, made five changes including Oghenekaro Etebo substituting Umar Sadiq, Kenneth Omeruo for Troost-Ekong, Ademola Lookman for Samuel Chukwueze, Terem Moffi for Victor Osimhen, and Abdullahi Shehu for Ola Aina.

However, Owolabi allayed any form of criticism on the changes made by Peseiro against the Leone Stars stressing that the new Eagles coach made the move to correct errors made in the starting lineup.

He added, "During the game, the coach made some changes and the reason is that he did not get it right, so, he needed a change, to reinforce. For me, the team needs breathing space."

Meanwhile, Nigeria placed second following the 2-1 win against Sierra Leone in Group A, with Guinea Bissau on top with a 5-1 thrashing of Baciro Candé's team, travel to Morocco to take on Sao Tome and Principe in their second AFCON qualifiers on Monday, June 13, 2022.



UK set to fly first planeload of illegal immigrants to Rwanda

By **OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH** with agency report

Ruling that politicians must manage immigration policy, a British judge at the weekend rejected an emergency bid to block deportation flights of asylum seekers to Rwanda under an agreement with the east African country.

The UK government intends to fly the first planeload of claimants to Rwanda on June 14, after agreeing the plan with Kigali in a bid to deter illegal migrants from undertaking dangerous crossings of the Channel by boat.

Britain's government announced in April that it had agreed a deal to send asylum-seekers to the East African country, in a move that it insisted was aimed at disrupting people-smuggling networks and deterring migrants from making the dangerous Channel crossing to England from Europe.

Refugee rights groups and a trade union representing UK Border Force personnel challenged the plan in London's High Court, seeking an injunction against Tuesday's initial flight and any beyond then.

They argue that the plan violates asylum

seekers' human rights, and say the government cannot justify its claim that Rwanda is a safe destination.

Delivering his decision after a one-day hearing, judge Jonathan Swift said it was in the public interest for Interior Minister Priti Patel to be able to implement immigration control decisions.

Swift gave permission for his ruling to be appealed, suggesting Court of Appeal judges would hear the case on Monday, while also setting the date for a fuller two-day High Court hearing next month.

The rights groups bidding to block the policy said they were



"disappointed" with the decision.

"It is extremely worrying that despite these legal challenges and widespread concern,

the government remain determined to press ahead with the removal of people to Rwanda as soon as next week," chief executive of the Refugee Council,

Enver Soloman, said.

The government remains committed to the policy, Prime Minister Boris Johnson's spokesman said.



Wei Fenghe

'China will not hesitate to start war over Taiwan'

By **OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH** with agency report

If Taiwan declares independence, Beijing will "not hesitate to start a war," China's Defence Minister warned his United States counterpart at the weekend.

"If anyone dares to split Taiwan from China, the Chinese army will definitely not hesitate to start a war no matter the cost," Wei Fenghe said during a meeting with Lloyd Austin.

The warning came as

he held his first face-to-face meeting with Lloyd Austin on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue security summit in Singapore.

The Chinese minister also vowed that Beijing would "smash to smithereens any 'Taiwan independence' plot and resolutely uphold the unification of the motherland."

He "stressed that Taiwan is China's Taiwan.. Using Taiwan to contain China will never prevail", the ministry said.

Austin told his Chinese counterpart during the talks in Singapore that Beijing must "refrain from further destabilising actions toward Taiwan."

Tensions over Taiwan have escalated due to increasing Chinese aircraft incursions into the island's air defence identification zone (ADIZ).

Taiwan, a self-ruled, democratic island, lives under the constant threat of invasion by China. Beijing views the island as its territory and has vowed

to one day seize it, by force if necessary.

US and China tensions over the issue have risen in recent months.

US President Joe Biden, during a visit to Japan last month, appeared to break decades of US policy when, in response to a question, he said Washington would defend Taiwan militarily if it is attacked by China.

The White House has since insisted its policy of "strategic ambiguity" over whether or not it would intervene has not changed.

On World Day Against Child Labour, Obaseki harps on social systems

By **ISAAC OLAMIKAN**

Edo State Governor Godwin Obaseki has thrown his weight behind the fight against child labour. He said the state government's investments in education and enforcement of the Child Rights Law will ensure the protection of children from abuses, especially labour.

The governor said this in commemoration of the 2022 World Day Against Child

Labour. It is marked every June 12, by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and observed across the globe.

He said, "In commemoration of the World Day Against Child Labour, we will continue to commit ourselves to the protection and welfare of our children, through programmes and policies that bequeath them with basic social and technical skills required to actualize their

dreams.

"As a government, we will continue to invest in education which is critical to the development of a child. We are transforming our school system, offering every Edo child the requisite knowledge and skills to compete with their peers in a technology-driven 21st century.

"We have expanded the Edo Basic Education Sector Transformation (Edo-BEST)

programme to give more children the opportunity to get quality basic education. Our commitment to technical and vocational education will ensure the construction of 20 more technical colleges that will allow children to acquire technical skills as part of our drive to promote industrialisation."

Obaseki said the state government will not fail to prosecute parents and guardians

of out-of-school children, as it will deploy necessary steps to take all children off the streets and improve access to education.

He noted, "The implementation of the Violence Against Persons (VAP) law also protects our children from all forms of abuse which include the use of children for cheap labour."

According to the United Nations, "the 2022 theme of

the World Day Against Child Labour calls for increased investment in social protection systems and schemes to establish solid social protection floors and protect children from child labour. While significant progress has been made in reducing child labour over the last two decades, progress has slowed over time, and it has even stalled during the period 2016-2020."