

PM race widens in UK with Foreign Minister Truss joining

By **OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH**
with agency report

The race to replace Boris Johnson as Conservative Party leader and the next British prime minister has broadened further on Monday as

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss became another high-profile contestant entering the row to go head-to-head with British Indian former Minister Rishi Sunak.

Rishi Sunak, former finance minister is the early front runner in the race.

Truss, who has held ministerial jobs in

a number of government departments including trade, justice and the treasury, said she would slash taxes and maintain a tough line against Russian President Vladimir Putin.

She is seeking to replace Johnson who

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Storm rages in APC, polity over Muslim-Muslim ticket

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Tinubu and Shettima

Storm rages in APC, polity over Muslim-Muslim ticket

By **TUNDE JOSHUA**,
Politics Editor

All Progressives Congress (APC) troubled the already charged national political waters on Sunday with the choice of former governor of Borno State, Senator Kashim Shettima as running mate to the party's presidential candidate, Bola Tinubu.

Tinubu who defended his choice of Senator Kashim Shettima as his running mate, explained that he could not choose a Christian and a Muslim at the same time.

Recall that Tinubu on Sunday said he settled for Shettima, because all his life, decisions regarding the team around and supporting him had always been guided by the principles of competence, innovation, compassion, integrity, fairness, and adherence to excellence.

Tinubu specifically said the belief in prioritising leadership, competence, and the ability to work as a team over other considerations influenced his running mate choice.

"I am mindful of the energetic discourse concerning the possible religion of my running mate. Just and noble people have talked to me about this. Some have counselled that I should select a Christian to please the Christian community. Other have said I should pick a Muslim to appeal to the Muslim community. Clearly, I cannot do both."

"Both sides of the debate have impressive reason and passionate arguments supporting their position. Both arguments are right in their own way. But neither is right in the way that Nigeria needs at the moment. As president, I hope to govern this nation toward uncommon progress. This will require innovation. It will require steps never before taken. It will also require decisions that are politically difficult and rare."

"If I am to be that type of President, I must begin by being that type of candidate. Let me make the bold and innovative decision not to win political points but to move the nation and our party's campaign closer to the greatness that we were meant to achieve."

"Here is where politics ends, and true leadership must begin. Today, I announce my selection with pride because I have made it not based on religion or to please one community or the other. I made this choice because I believe this is the man who can help me bring the best governance to all Nigerians, period, regardless

of their religious affiliation or considerations of ethnicity or region."

The Muslim/ Muslim joint presidential ticket of the party no doubt generated lots of reactions and concerns with stakeholders in APC applauding the decision and justifying the choice of Shettima.

They argued that the Tinubu / Shettima ticket was done in the quest for a better nation. They said kindred sentiments like tribe and region are retrogressive and should be jettisoned to quickly rebuild the nation.

They insisted that vestiges of tribal, religious and regional sentiments have slowed the progress of Nigerians as a people and held the nation down.

They argued that it is high time Nigerians deal with the toxic sentiments of religion and it's kinds, which should be kept under bridle and bit.

Vociferous outrage from mostly Nigerians of southern region and perhaps the Northern christian minority, however, trailed the announcement made last Sunday.

These cross section of Nigerians who rejected the single religion ticket, faulted arguments in support of APC choice as mere attempt to relegate religious sentiments only when it's convenient for a particular goal rather than looking at a larger picture of the overall good of the country.

They considered it disgusting that the major reason behind the Muslim-Muslim ticket by APC is the search for electoral victory because of the delve calculations that without a Muslim running mate, the APC will lose significant votes from the North and probably lose the entire presidency. The decision by APC is seen as less of religious problem but more of political dexterity.

To those who might feel displeased by his action, Tinubu said, "May I say this to all of you, especially to those who will be disappointed in my selection based on religious considerations. I will not and cannot ignore the religious concerns and ethnic sensitivities of our people. Taking them into due consideration is an important part of good and able governance."

"But religion, ethnicity and region cannot always and fully determine our path. To forge ahead as a nation toward development and prosperity, we must break free of old binds. We must recalibrate our political calculations to where competence and fairness matter more than reductive



Buhari

demographics."

PFN, CAN reaction

As expected, the Christian community kicked vehemently against the ticket and warned of it's implications and imminent national upheaval if not carefully handled.

As a body of Christ, both Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) and Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), rejected the Muslim-Muslim ticket of the All Progressives Congress (APC).

The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) through Elder Biodun Sanyaolu, Assistant General Secretary, condemned the act, saying the move would not be supported by members.

"It is not about Muslim-Muslim ticket or Christian-Christian ticket it is the mistrust existing in us for the last seven years which have been so terrible even with Nigeria inter-Religious Council, NIREC.

"All we are saying and want is the leader that will do well to everyone, irrespective of class, religion, sex, region, colour, among others.

"All we are craving for is a leader that will be fair to all Christians, Muslims and even Traditionalists. Poverty doesn't know religion.

"If there is a bomb blast it will kill whoever on its way not minding religion. We want good leadership that will be fair to all and good governance in Nigeria."

A top leader of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, PFN, said the party will not enjoy its support.

The source said, "Our position remains the same. The political parties have been warned that any party that fields a Muslim-Muslim ticket will not enjoy the support of the Christian community."

"It is as simple as that. It applies now that the APC is throwing up a Muslim-Muslim ticket. The PFN has been saying it repeatedly that any party that flies that ticket, will not enjoy the support of the Christian

community."

Tinubu insulted Christians, he cannot be like MKO Abiola - Prophet Ayedogbon

Prophet Samson Ayedogbon, Apostolic Leader of the Realm of Glory International Churches said Tinubu's action did not only insulted Christians, but entire humanity as it indicated that he did not recognise the need to accommodate the feeling of others.

He spoke on on Arise Television breakfast programme, The Morning Show on Tuesday.

He said Tinubu and his party would be depending on compromising the electoral process in the country through rigging, but urged Christians to stand up to every antic he and his party might throw up to ensure that such a plot did not work.

He earned that with the Muslim / Muslim ticket, Tinubu had plan to sustain the disrespect for Christians which had been the Hallmark of the President Muhammadu Buhari's administration.

The angered cleric said "why are they rubbing this thing on our face as if Christians don't matter? The leg of extremist religious bigot has been on our neck. The Owo incident has just been put aside, Catholic priests are being kidnapped, people are still captivity, Christian girls are being kidnapped as booty and as a means of motivating the terrorists. All of these horrible things. Who played up the issue of religion? It is President Muhammadu Buhari. Everything rises and falls with leadership."

"In my village, every story you tell, every folklore is on the head of the tortoise. The President is the tortoise in this matter. His lack of leadership, his lack of balance, his lack of sensitivity to every ethnic group and every religion is what is now being taken to the high heavens. What he and Asiwaju Ahmed Tinubu were sensitive to and respected in 2015 is what

now being rubbished."

Arguing that it was insulting for some people to compare Tinubu to the late Moshood Kashimawo Olawale (MKO) Abiola, who won the the June 12, 1993 presidential election on a Muslim-Muslim ticket, the cleric, stressed that it was like comparing apples and oranges, because the former governor did not possess the same qualities of Abiola outside the fact that Nigerians lived relatively peacefully then.

"We're now seeing the greatness of MKO Abiola. They should stop comparing this thing with 1993. We did not have this history in 1993. None of them has the quality, the greatness and the personality that MKO had. You can't be comparing apples and oranges, you can't be comparing ordinary cocoyam and pounded yam. We've moved far from there."

Ayedogbon, who also emphasised the need for principle, equity, justice and fairplay, said Nigerian politics must not be about the votes only, adding that world over, it had been recognised that there could be no peace without justice.

Stating that any consultation by Tinubu with Christians at the moment, including the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) at this moment, would be akin to medicine after death, he said it was no longer a question of whether Christian leaders would mobilise the members to vote against the APC, they had already begun to do so.

Bishop Mathew Hassan Kukah Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Dioceses

He said the choice is what is call team selection and everybody will chose depending on what they think will give them a fair chance, adding that people will take responsibility for the choice they have made.

He said "for me, it is not something to lose sleep over. If the people feel unhappy with the kind of choice they have made, that is why we are democrats, you can't force it."

"We outsiders cannot force a choice of any candidate. It is now left for you to look at the choice that have been made."

"And there is no guarantee that all Christians will vote for Christians and all Muslims will vote for Muslims".

Borno CAN Chairman, Bishop Naga Williams Mohammed

Dousing agitation against single faith ticket by the All Progressives Congress (APC), the clergy has okayed the choice of the former governor of Borno State, Senator Kashim Shettima

as vice presidential candidate of the party.

The Chairman, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Borno State, Bishop Naga Williams Mohammed zeroed in on the person of the vice presidential candidate by saying that Shettima is a lover of Christians.

He said the former governor has a favourable disposition towards christians in the state.

Bishop Mohammed said "in the history of Borno State, there is no Governor that has been fair to the Christian community in this state as much as Governor Kashim Shettima."

"I am saying this in the presence of God Almighty and this is nothing but the truth. Governor Shettima, in the history of Borno, is the only Governor that has sponsored highest number of Christian pilgrims every year since 2011."

"I am speaking boldly without fear or favour because as CAN Chairman I do not receive salary or kobo from government or any institution, but the facts need to be told. This governor has shown compassion to the Christian community."

"For example, when Gwoza people were driven from their ancestral homes, they fled to Maiduguri, and the governor personally came to CAN Centre in Jerusalem ward two times in June and July 2014. He gave N10 million for their upkeep at first instance, but the victims were not many. By the end of October 2014, the IDPs from Gwoza increased to 42,000 in that camp alone."

"Governor Shettima came again and gave another N10 million. He also gave additional N5 million for Christians from Borno who fled to Cameroon to be returned home. He gave another N5 million for non-indigenes who fled to Cameroon to come back to Nigeria."

The governor even directed the Borno State Emergency Management Agency, SEMA to be supplying food directly to the IDPs in under the Christian leadership.

"In fact, the governor insisted that he wanted Christian IDPs to stay together with their Muslim counterparts in various designated IDP camps here in Maiduguri but we the leaders felt it wise to separate Christian IDP'S to avoid frictions between displaced persons dealing with trauma."

Politically

On the political turf, even card carrying members of APC condemned the single religion joint ticket.

An Adamawa State serving senator, Ishaku Abbo who is a Christian took a swipe at Tinubu for being insensitive to a delicate issue of religion in the choice of Shettima.

The lawmaker who is a member of APC particularly castigated Tinubu for placing his selfish interest of winning next year's presidency at all cost over the principle of equity, fairness, justice and national stability.

He, therefore renounced his support for support for the APC presidential candidate in the

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was forced out on Thursday after his government collapsed over a series of scandals.

"I will lead a government committed to core Conservative principles: low taxes, a firm grip on spending, driving growth in the economy, and giving people the opportunity to achieve

anything they want to achieve," Truss said in a campaign video.

The race is for the leadership of the ruling Conservative Party, with the winner then becoming prime minister.

The leadership race followed one of the most remarkable periods in modern British political history, when more than 50 government ministers

quit, denouncing Johnson's character, integrity and inability to tell the truth.

The aim for the contest is to find a successor by September.

Many lawmakers are unhappy with Johnson remaining in office until a successor is found, the party is likely to hasten the election process. It could insist that

candidates have the backing of around 30 lawmakers to enter the process, before voting begins this week to cut the number down to two.

Truss announcement on Monday takes the total number of candidates to 11, including Indian-origin Attorney General Suella Braverman, Iraqi-origin Nadhim Zahawi, Nigerian-

origin Kemi Bedanoch, Tory backbencher Tom Tugendhat, former foreign secretary Jeremy Hunt, Trade Minister Penny Mordaunt and Transport Secretary Grant Shapps.

One Conservative member of parliament said he was astonished by the number of people entering the leadership contest.



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account if a single religion ticket.

Abbo said "for Tinubu now to be given the ticket and turn around to do what he couldn't achieve in 2015 despite opposition from Catholics and other Christian leaders is extremely irresponsible."

According to him, Tinubu has disappointed some APC members like himself who were concerned with the search for a credible Christian running mate for Tinubu

"We sat down in Abuja and strategized and we concluded that he should not take a Muslim as running mate. He (Tinubu) threw away the report. My conscience will not allow me to campaign for Tinubu. I am a member of CAN; I cannot deny CAN. I remain in APC. But I will take the survival of my country first over political considerations," said Abbo.

"We cannot work for such a man. I will oppose a Christian-Christian ticket because I am interested in the stability of this country. A Christian-Christian ticket will be insensitive to Muslims of this country. The country is evenly divided among Muslims and Christians. So any government that is Muslim-Muslim will be illegitimate and will never gain the respect of Christians."

Leaders and critical stakeholders in APC, however dismissed antagonists to the Muslim-Muslim ticket. They rather see it as the best decision which can give the party victory in 2023.

President of the Senate, Ahmad Lawan on behalf of the North East Caucus of the party, said Senator Shettima has demonstrated great competence, integrity and courage in all the positions that he has held.

"We of the North East Caucus of the APC attest that Senator Kashim Ibrahim Shettima is the right man for the job and that he will be an able and loyal lieutenant to our incoming President, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, insha Allah.

"We as a Caucus pledge our full cooperation and support to our candidates as we march again towards another resounding victory in the general elections.

"We enjoin all members of our party across Nigeria too to give the APC Standard bearer and his running mate their utmost support.

"We also assure Nigerians that the choices that our party has made in our presidential ticket are for the best of our country," said Lawan.

Governor of Borno State, Prof. Babagana Zulum expressed optimism that the combination of both Tinubu and Shettima will guarantee victory for APC in next year's presidential election.

Zulum said "for me, and I am sure for many leaders and members of the APC, Tinubu's choice of HE Kashim Shettima is the wisest choice at this point in time."

"Shettima's choice is very personal to me and together with our leaders and all stakeholders and members of the APC, we shall campaign vigorously, work day and night, to collectively secure overwhelming victory for the

APC in 2023, insha' Allah."

"Without the slightest doubt, HE Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu has chosen a leader who has very deep understanding of our country and its complexities.

"We are grateful to the national executives of the APC and members of the National Working Committee as well as all elders and stakeholders of our party."

10 APC Governor's support Shettima

Ten Governors of the All Progressives Congress (APC) at a closed door meeting with the President Muhammadu Buhari for an hour at his private residence in Daura, Katsina State on Monday, declared support for Senator Kashim Shettima as vice Presidential candidate of the party.

They were led by the Chairman, Progressives Governors' Forum, Abubakar Bagudu of Kebbi state, who said they had come to pay Sallah homage to President Buhari.

The ten Governors included their host, Aminu Masari; Abdullahi Ganduje (Kano); Abubakar Bagudu (Kebbi); Abubakar Bello (Niger); Abdullahi Sule (Nasarawa); Hope Uzodinma (Imo); Kayode Fayemi (Ekiti); Simon Lalong (Plateau), and Nasir El-Rufai (Kaduna).

They also expressed confidence in the combination of both men to ensure victory for the party at the presidential election.

Chairman of the Progressives Governors Forum, Bagudu said, "We were pleasantly surprised when Asiwaju Ahmed Tinubu announced in Daura on Sunday that Senator Kashim Ibrahim Shettima was the Vice Presidential candidate.

"We were happy that it is no less a person than Senator Shettima who was announced the Vice Presidential candidate. No doubt, Senator Shettima would compliment the good qualities of Asiwaju Tinubu.

"We are very happy at the choice. The two will compliment one another and will surely consolidate on the achievements of the President in the past seven years."

Imo State governor, Uzodinma said Shettima's choice as Tinubu's running mate was a collective decision by all the Progressives Governors, and that all the Governors would work hard to ensure victory for the party in next year's election.

According to him, "The choice of Senator Shettima as the Vice Presidential candidate is a collective decision. We shall work hard to ensure victory in all our states."

Plateau state Governor, Lalong also reiterated what Uzodinma said: "A Presidential candidate has the prerogative of picking his Vice. But ours is to ensure party's victory in the Presidential election."

Legally Reacting further on Tuesday a Senior Advocate of Nigeria, Ebuoluwa Adegboruwa outlined 10 grave implications of APC Muslim-Muslim ticket.

He said the single religion ticket; "shows absence of consideration for unity and plurality.

"Desperation and over-

ambition. We just want power at all costs and we don't care what others think or do.

"We can win the elections without you, especially by other means other than by open ballot.

"It is a cruel affirmation of supposed superiority complex. That only one region determines electoral victory. That the presidential candidate of the APC is not acceptable to Northern Muslims.

"It is an indication of a hidden agenda. The spirit of Hope 93 died with MKO and those who betrayed him and his mandate. May Boko Haram, terrorists and insurgents, their sponsors and sympathizers not win the 2023 elections.

"That Nigeria is not a secular state but rather being ruled to satisfy certain religious tendencies.

"That the APC has absolute control of the electoral system and thus electoral victory may not be determined through free, fair and credible elections.

"That certain political tendencies and interests do not trust others to accommodate them if they are entrusted with power whereas they have been in power and accommodated by others.

"That the APC presidential candidate has no mind of his own and he will be unable to defend the unity of Nigeria in crucial moments of decision making.

"That the APC is incompetent to manage a complex nation like Nigeria with diverse interests, different tongues and tribes and consisting of different faiths".

Also, al former Secretary to the Government of the Federation SGF and close ally of the presidential candidate, Mr Babachir Lawal, has described as a "disastrous error" Tinubu's resort to picking a fellow Muslim as his running mate.

The former SGF said though Tinubu is a good man and great listener, it is in the nature of power that sycophants and lapdogs have the most influence on leaders with such character traits.

According to him, Tinubu has now been cornered by self-serving lapdogs, and warned that the Muslim-Muslim ticket is dead on arrival.

In a statement on Tuesday night, Lawal said; "I thought I will be able to avoid commenting on the disastrous error by my very good friend, Sen Bola Ahmed Tinubu in his choice of a running mate. I will be the very last person to stand in the way of my very good friend Tinubu's path to the presidency. This is because since 2011 my consuming passion has been for him to succeed Buhari as President of Nigeria.

"It will not be true if I say that I did not see it coming. I have often read his body language, picked up snippets from several discussions with his lapdogs (some of whom, sadly are Christians but most of whom are Muslims) and I have conveyed my reservations to them against the pitfalls of a moslem-moslem ticket towards which I sensed they were drifting.

"As part of my obligation to him, a close friend, I had on many occasions argued the merits and demerits of both ticket permutations to him. I have done so in both verbal and

written form and I have likewise, done so with some of his close respectable associates and friends. In all instances I had left him with the sole responsibility for his final decision arguing that in the end the consequences of the outcome of any bad decision will be his to bear. There might be some collateral damages though.

"I have also on several occasions passed on to him counsels and messages from some well meaning Nigerians intended to alert him on the possible outcomes of the Presidential ticket permutations. Tinubu is a very good man. He is a great listener. He has a very humble and friendly disposition to every one. He is very generous in both cash and kind, especially where it could advance his political interests. But I have realized that it is in the nature of power that sycophants and lapdogs have the most influence on leaders with such character traits.

"They will lie to him, malign and disparage others and generally do any thing to curry his favor and to also put well-meaning associates in bad light. I suspect this is what has happened to my friend.

"He has been cornered by self-serving, hero-worshipping, lapdogs. It never used to be like this. While in his hay-days in Lagos, he surrounded himself with smart, street-wise guys that could tell truth to power. He had Rauf Aregbesola, Yemi Osinbajo, Babatunde Fashola, Dele Alake, Muiz Banire, etc.

"The Lagos days were the days of think-tanks, strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, principles and ideologies. But these people have since grown-up and moved up to establish their own systems living my friend stranded. Nature they say abhors vacuum. Welcome the Abuja equivalent. But the Abuja equivalent are people inflicted with the modern Nigerian diseases - religious bigotry, sycophancy and morbid tribalism.

"They are mostly political jobbers who are most times not averse to the application of diabolical means. Gone are the days of think-tanks, and strategic planning. Gone are the days of principles and ideologies. Try and call a meeting; they will not attend.

Try and make a plan; they will sabotage it. Everything is ad-hoc, everything is chaotic because they excel in such environments. The result is that they have played on his longterm ambition to be President and have built it into a sort of desperation and a crescendo that easily justifies this satanic resort to a Muslim-Muslim ticket.

Greek Gift

"This is the calamity that has befallen my friend. And why Kashim Shettima? He is an overambitious man who has a Machiavellian bent and has lots of money with which to procure a preferred-candidate status among Tinubu's lapdogs. And as we are beginning to see, to also procure bogus supporters especially from among the Christian community to help launder his no-so-good image.

"But as a popular proverb goes: 'Those whom the gods



Adamu

want to destroy they first make mad'. It appears that the gods want to destroy the APC and its Presidential Candidate and have chosen the instrumentality of the northern Moslem governors and their super ambitious tool and Kashim Shettima for this purpose.

"Alhaji Kashim Shettima is a Greek gift from the Northern governors to Tinubu. I advise Bola to make sure Kashima's two hands are always in his plain sight and empty. True, based on the advice of his new friends, Bola Ahmed Tinubu has made his choice and I am sure he thinks he is ready for the outcome of that choice. He has chosen to bring religion to the front burner of Nigerian politics. And being a Muslim he has chosen to take sides with his own religion.

"For all he cares, Christians can go to blazes with their votes. But he must also be told that there will be consequences for this choice. Some of them are that Christians all over the country will revolt against the APC to put the chances of his election in serious jeopardy. It will also put the election of all Christians standing for elections in Christian dominated areas in jeopardy. This could result in APC being a minority party in both the National and State Houses of Assembly.

"Now tell me which Christian will vote for APC with the following contraption: Moslem Presidential Candidate (Lagos), Moslem Vice Presidential Candidate (Borno), Moslem National Chairman (Nasarawa), Moslem Deputy National Chairman (Borno), Moslem President (Katsina), Moslem Senate President (Yobe); Moslem Speaker (Lagos); Moslem Deputy Speaker (Plateau) e.t.c. APC the great! Wu na de try woh!

"The northern governors and some northern moslem elites must have persuaded him that they will never vote for a ticket that has a northern Christian on it. And he has agreed with them. But if he thinks a Moslem-Muslim ticket will win him the northern Muslim votes, he should have a rethink. They will massively vote for one of their sons because it is in their nature to do so.

"Buhari, their first son will not be on the ballot in 2023. Atiku their second son will be. Proof of a possible Islamic agenda was leaked when Governor Ganduje, the 'Kadmul Islam', gave advance notice that Tinubu had assured them he would be nominating a moslem as his running mate.

For those who might not know, Governor Ganduje has a foundation called 'Ganduje Foundation' which purpose according to its website is to 'provide selfless service to humanity and Islam' but whose

primary purpose it appears is the conversion of Christians to Islam. So if my very good friend Tinubu in a desperate bid to become President allows himself to be made into a religious bigot or even a mujahideen, he is welcome.

But it is a risk that will not play out positively for his presidential bid. But, were he to win and become President of Nigeria, it will be as a sectional President; an Islamic President. And he will surely face massive discontent and opposition even before taking off.

"Expecting Nigerians to ignore this crass insensitivity to the country's diversity amounts to acceding to the perpetration of very grave injustice and discrimination against a huge segment of the society. No one who seeks to be president of Nigeria should ever deploy the tool of religious extremism and exclusivism as a tool to win elections. This is very very dangerous. And this is very sad. But, barring any last minute change of mind, Bola has made his choice.

"He should be bluntly told that in this choice Nigerian Christians clearly see a pending Islamic Republic of Nigeria in its infancy and are right to be severely anxious. There is gloom among the Christian community all over the country since Tinubu announced Kashim Shettima as his running mate.

Are the generality of the moslem ummah happy with this? The answer is a resounding NO. How then do we respond? The decision as to how to respond to this deliberately senseless act of provocation is both corporate to each religious group and also personal to each voter who loves peace, and hate injustice.

"Christians want to continue to leave peacefully with their moslem neighbors at home, at school, at the work place, in the markets and on the streets as we have always done or desired to do. And I am sure Moslems share this view too. No one person's ambition to rule over us should be allowed to set us apart and at war with one another. Bola Ahmed Tinubu, should be compelled upon by whoever can do so to rescind this decision.

"President Mohammed Buhari should exercise his powers as the Commander-in-Chief and as the APC Leader to revoke this nomination of a VP by Tinubu. The APC National Chairman should refuse to sign the nomination forms if not rescinded.

There is a story in the Bible on how some people responded to similar provocation: 'And when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, 'What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Look now to your own house, David.' So Israel went to their tents" (1 Kings 12:16).

"I will love for Bola to be our next President. But I am afraid a Moslem-Muslim ticket will be 'Dead on Arrival'. And the arrival date according to INEC's election time table is 25th February, 2023. This ticket will drag down the whole APC members to the pit. We all should reject it".



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| 3 x 2 | 37,413.09 | 40,219.07 | 3 x 2 | 33,987.48 | 36,622.04 | 3 x 2 | 27,524.84 | 29,589.20 | 3 x 2 | 22,721.91 | 24,426.05 | |
| 4 x 2 | 49,884.02 | 53,625.42 | 4 x 2 | 45,177.83 | 48,566.17 | 4 x 2 | 36,700.09 | 39,452.60 | 4 x 2 | 30,295.53 | 32,657.70 | |
| 5 x 2 | 62,355.15 | 67,031.71 | 5 x 2 | 56,472.29 | 60,707.71 | 5 x 2 | 45,866.19 | 49,315.34 | 5 x 2 | 37,863.00 | 40,710.09 | |
| 6 x 2 | 76,142.50 | 81,853.18 | 6 x 2 | 67,975.12 | 73,073.25 | 6 x 2 | 55,049.68 | 59,178.41 | 6 x 2 | 45,443.82 | 48,852.10 | |
| 7 x 2 | 87,297.21 | 93,844.50 | 6 x 3 | 101,962.78 | 109,609.99 | 6 x 3 | 54,074.55 | 61,200.90 | 7 x 2 | 53,017.79 | 56,993.61 | |
| 7 x 3 | 166,172.00 | 179,229.37 | 6.5 x 3 | 110,459.64 | 118,744.11 | 6.5 x 3 | 89,455.78 | 96,164.94 | 8 x 2 | 60,591.76 | 65,136.14 | |
| 7 x 4 | 197,125.00 | 211,909.37 | 7 x 2 | 79,304.29 | 85,252.11 | 7 x 2 | 64,224.63 | 69,041.48 | 9 x 2 | 80,454.83 | 86,488.95 | |
| 8 x 2 | 99,768.24 | 107,250.85 | 7 x 3 | 128,456.43 | 138,090.67 | 7 x 3 | 96,336.94 | 103,562.21 | 10 x 2 | 86,147.92 | 92,609.02 | |
| 9 x 2 | 112,183.69 | 120,597.47 | 7 x 4 | 158,608.73 | 170,504.38 | 7 x 4 | 145,965.10 | 156,912.48 | 14.5 x 2 | 124,915.92 | 134,284.61 | |
| 9 x 3 | 168,358.90 | 180,985.39 | 7 x 5 | 198,260.25 | 213,129.77 | 7 x 5 | 182,500.19 | 196,187.71 | 5 x 3 | 56,804.77 | 61,065.13 | |
| 10 x 3 | 187,065.45 | 201,095.35 | 8 x 2 | 90,633.42 | 97,430.92 | 8 x 2 | 73,399.58 | 78,904.54 | 6 x 3 | 68,170.86 | 73,283.67 | |
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| 10 x 4 | 299,302.72 | 321,752.57 | 8 x 6 | 271,900.48 | 292,008.02 | 8 x 6 | 250,284.32 | 26,911.09 | 7 x 4 | 120,404.56 | 129,434.90 | |
| 14.5 x 4 | 520,790.19 | 559,849.45 | 9 x 2 | 101,962.78 | 109,609.99 | 9 x 2 | 93,773.60 | 100,872.44 | 8 x 4 | 137,692.17 | 148,019.082 | |
| 7 x 5 | 218,243.02 | 234,629.74 | 9 x 3 | 152,944.01 | 164,414.81 | 9 x 3 | 141,108.54 | 151,691.68 | 10 x 4 | 172,301.37 | 185,224.22 | |
| 8 x 5 | 299,304.72 | 321,752.57 | 9 x 4 | 203,925.29 | 219,219.69 | 9 x 4 | 187,921.52 | 202,015.71 | 14.5 x 3 | 187,057.43 | 201,086.73 | |
| 8 x 6 | 359,165.65 | 386,103.08 | 9 x 5 | 305,373.04 | 328,276.02 | 9 x 5 | 281,288.07 | 303,022.10 | 14.5 x 4 | 249,838.03 | 268,575.88 | |
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Afenifere declares support for Peter Obi

•Adebanjoises has confidence in Tinubu, Atiku

Leader of Yoruba socio-political organization, Afenifere, Pa Ayo Adebanjo, has declared the readiness of the group to support Labour Party (LP) presidential candidate Peter Obi in the 2023 general elections.

He said he has lost confidence in All Progressives Congress (APC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) presidential candidates, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed and Alhaji Abubakar Atiku, and that Afenifere will not support any of them.

The 94-year-old Adebanjo, attending to guests at a conference in Lagos, expressed hope that that an LP government under Obi can revamp the country, saying, "It is only Peter Obi that can rule inde-

pendently without the influence of these criminals in the government."

When asked whether Obi, an Igbo, might avenge what the Yoruba did against the Igbo during the civil war, the leader said the problem between the two ethnic nationalities came from the Fulani whom he accused of promoting hatred in Nigeria.

"It is time we join hands and liberate Nigeria from them. It is time we elect a neutral person to rule us.

"We know Peter Obi very well; that's why we endorsed him. He will not disappoint Nigerians. Let's put tribal differences apart and vote the right leader in," he said.

Asked if the Igbo are trustworthy, he responded

harshly, asking if the Fulani are also reliable. The Yoruba leader said that the Easterners are also Nigerians and deserve to rule.

"I am sure Peter Obi will not subject himself to the Northerners like

Tinubu and Atiku would do if elected," he said.

He further explained why he withdrew support from Tinubu, a Yoruba. Pa Adebanjo said in the case of Tinubu, a common adage in Yoruba language, "Omo eni kii

se idi bebere, kafi Ileke si idi Omo elomiran", meaning, a person can not have a child at home and decorate the bands of another person's child," does not apply.

He accused Tinubu of selling Buhari to over 200 million Nigerians knowing fully well that the the retired General

would not do anything except completing the "Fulani agenda."

He stressed that Tinubu will only continue Buhari's alleged incompetence: "Tinubu sold Buhari to over 200 million Nigerians for his own selfish interest of wanting to rule after Buhari. None of them loves Nigeria."

Lagos PDP confirms Funke Akindele as Deputy Governorship candidate

•I'll put my acting career on hold, she says

By **TUNDE JOSHUA**, Abuja

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has confirmed popular actress, Funke Akindele, as its deputy governorship candidate in Lagos State.

This put to rest uncertainty over her choice which dominated the social media a few days back.

The party's candidate, Olajide Adediran (Jandor), confirmed and justified the Ikorodu-born actress's choice as his running mate.

Adediran took to his tweeter handle on Tuesday for the confirmation, saying: "I appeal to the entire populace to work with me and my running mate who will add more value to my candidacy. My choice running mate is from the clear understanding of the task ahead and the need to work with a co-visionary with shared passion for the emancipation of the good people of Lagos.

"This journey demands focus, resilience and tenacity. My running mate is someone who is large-hearted with a well-known history of

service and advocacy; an Ikorodu-born success story who has, through several of her projects, positively transformed our society.

"I am proud to present Barrister Olufunke Ayotunde Akindele as my running mate and the deputy governorship candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party in Lagos for the 2023 general elections.

"Together, we will serve and offer you a breath of fresh air."

Akindele, in an Instagram post, appreciated the party for the confidence in her and finding her worthy of such political position.

Accepting that it is a great task ahead of her, she agreed to put her acting career on hold to allow her face the rudiments of real politicking and campaign activities.

She said: "I am not unaware of the cost of this assignment on my vibrant career, which I must now necessarily put on hold.

"It's a huge personal sacrifice. My resolve is that no sacrifice is too huge for the actualisation of the urgent mission to rescue our people and our dear state.

"I saw it as an opportunity to help liberate and improve the wellbeing of our people, particularly the deprived youths, women and the girl child.

"My decision is not only to accept this huge responsibility, but also to work tirelessly and complement Jandor's burning desire to see our dear Lagos live up to its full potentials."



Lagos State Governor and Chairman, APC National Campaign Council for the Osun governorship election, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu with other Party chieftains cheering on the crowd during the final APC governorship mega rally for re-election of Governor Gboyega Oyetola, at the City Stadium in Oshogbo, on Tuesday, 12 July 2022.

Tinubu, APC govts, others in Osun for Oyetola's re-election rally

President Muhammadu Buhari; Senate President, Ahmad Lawan; All Progressives Congress (APC) presidential candidate and National Leader, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu; National Chairman of APC, Senator Abdullahi Adamu; Chairman, Lagos State helmsman Babajide Sanwo-Olu and 11 other governors as well as party leaders on Tuesday converged on Osogbo Stadium for a mega rally in support of the re-election of Governor Gboyega Oyetola.

It was ahead of Saturday's governorship election,

Buhari, Tinubu, Sanwo-Olu, APC governors and leaders while speaking during the campaign rally, unanimously endorsed Oyetola and urged the people to vote for continuity of the lofty projects embarked upon by the APC-led administration in the state.

Speaking during the rally attended by thousands of residents, Buhari urged the electorate to come out in large numbers and vote for Oyetola for continuity of good governance.

He said Oyetola deserved to be re-elected to consolidate what he had done in his first term.

Buhari, represented by Tinubu, raised Oyetola's hand as the APC's governorship candidate and appealed to all the people to re-elect him.

"Go out with your PVCs and vote massively for APC and Governor Oyetola on Saturday. Think about your children and vote for Oyetola for a better future for them.

"You must all go out in large crowd on Saturday to re-elect Governor Oyetola. Don't be deceived by PDP and other mushrooms parties. We must vote and defeat them," Tinubu said.

Lawan said Osun in the last three and half years had witnessed great development and growth under the leadership of Governor Oyetola.

He described Oyetola as a prudent and good manager of human and material resources, adding that the governor has done a lot in his first term for him to be re-elected.

Sanwo-Olu said his Osun counterpart had performed very well in his first term and he is deserving of another term.

Sanwo-Olu, who is the Chairman of the APC National Campaign Council for Osun State Governorship Election, said the electorate must vote and ensure that their votes count.

He said: "Governor Oyetola has performed extremely well. He is deserving of another term. I have gone on campaign train with him and from what I have seen and heard, he has done very well.

"Don't allow anybody

to deceive you. There is no crisis in APC. We are united in our party.

"I want to urge you all to vote for APC and Governor Oyetola on Saturday so that he can continue the good work he is doing in Osun State. By God's grace, we will come back for victory dance on Sunday."

Adamu while presenting the APC flag to Oyetola said the party is impressed by the good performance of the governor and that is why it is supporting him for re-election.

He appealed to genuine APC members and the electorate to turn out in large numbers to vote for Oyetola.

"We are taking no chances and that is why we came out in full force to support our candidate, Governor Gboyega Oyetola."

"Governor Oyetola has done so much since assuming the office of Governor in Osun State. He did very well during his first term and he deserved to be re-elected.

We pray for better performance in Osun than what we scored during the Ekiti State governorship election."

Progressives Governors Forum Chairman, Kebbi State's Alhaji Atiku Bagudu, assured the people of Osun of good governance if they re-elect Oyetola.

Atiku who reiterated the support of Buhari, APC

governors and party leaders for Oyetola, said the ruling party has done very well at the state and national levels to deserve continuity in office.

In their goodwill messages, Kano State Governor and co-chairman of the campaign council, Dr. Abdullahi Ganduje and his Imo counterpart, Hope Uzodinma, who addressed the rally in Hausa and Igbo languages appealed to the people to re-elect Oyetola for him to be able to complete the good work he has started.

Appreciating the massive support from Buhari, Tinubu, APC governors and the party leaders as well as the people of Osun, Oyetola promised to do more than what he did for the people of his State during the first term.

"I will continue to deliver on my campaign promises. I want you to give me another opportunity to serve you for another term. You will enjoy me in my second term more than the first term.

"Don't allow anybody to buy your future. You are honourable people. Come out on Saturday and vote for APC on Saturday," he said.

The rally was attended by Governors, members of the National Working Committee of APC, ministers, members of National Assembly, party leaders, among others.



Funke Akindele

Health workers threaten solidarity strike with ASUU, others

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

Health workers have threatened to join the ongoing university teachers strike.

Mr. Biobelemoye Josiah, issued the threat in a statement he jointly signed with Acting Secretary General of the union, Mr Auwalu Kiyawa, yesterday in Abuja.

The statement is entitled; "MHWUN stands in solidarity with the university based unions in the ongoing struggle to emancipate and reposition the public tertiary Institutions in Nigeria for progressive development".

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), reported that ASUU, and other unions in public universities, polytechnics and colleges of education, have been on industrial action for more than six months over alleged failure of the Federal Government to meet their demands.

The unions are demanding funding of the revitalisation fund, earned allowances, implementation of the University Transparency Accountability Solution (UTAS) scheme, as well as promotion arrears.

Other demands are; the renegotiation of 2009 ASUU-FG Agreement, and the resolution of inconsistency in the Integrated Personnel Payroll Information System (IPPIS), among others.

Josiah said the leadership of the union condemned in strong terms the lethargic attitude of government in resolving the issues in contention.

He said: "In order to protect the future of our youths whose academic life is being disrupted, we call on the government to implement without further delay all the agreements it had entered with the unions.

"We urge the relevant Ministries,



Mr. Biobelemoye Josiah

Departments and Agencies (MDAs), to ensure that President Muhammadu Buhari's earlier directive to resolve all outstanding issues with the unions is backed by immediate acceptable action that would end the stalemate.

"MHWUN wishes to use this medium to unequivocally state that we firmly stand behind the university based unions and the clear position of Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), leadership in this historic struggle.

"Our state councils have been put on red alert, and we will not hesitate to declare a solidarity strike in support of the unions if government fails to resolve the issues within a reasonable time," he said.

According to MHWUN, no responsible government will close down its public tertiary institutions over patriotic demands for a better funding of its universities and good welfare for its teaching and non-teaching staff.

He described it as shameful, saying that the union was particularly irked that the Federal Government and the political actors had abandoned the children of the masses at home to waste away.

"Instead, they are seen dissipating energy and resources that could have been used to resolve the issue to fund political tussles.

"We are more worried with the development because the academic future of the citizenry is being disrupted.

Whereas the politicians and top government officials have their children mostly in well funded and equipped overseas schools or in relatively expensive private schools in Nigeria.

"Discerning minds will agree with us that the negative impact of the strike to the future of our children and Nigeria in general cannot be quantified," he said.

Josiah called on people of goodwill to stand up in defence of the right and future of children and Nigeria, by demanding that the government did the right thing to bring the children back to the classroom.

Similarly, the union also categorically condemned in the strongest terms the spate of insecurity in the country.

It noted that the rising orgies of killing, banditry, kidnapping for ransom, and extreme agitation for secession, had assumed a dangerous dimension.

"Nigerian workers are no longer safe, both in their homes and at work places, as many have lost their lives to these enemies of state.

"We therefore, demand for a resolute action from government to end this degrading assault on the sovereignty of our nation," the president said.

Also speaking on the current economic crisis, Josiah condemned the current scarcity of diesel, cooking gas, petrol and aviation fuel, and the rising prices of goods and services all over the country.

He said that this pathetic development had further exposed workers, whose salaries and income has already been eroded by inflation, to greater hardships.

"The situation reinforces the earlier call by the organised labour for a resolute action on domestic refining of petroleum," he said.

MHWUN, however, reiterated the union's call for its members to ensure they registered and obtained their Permanent Voter's Card.

Improving Nigeria's health indices requires multi-sectoral approach - Stakeholders

By SHARON O. ISAALAH

Stakeholders in the Nigerian healthcare sector have called for more partnership among different key players within and outside the sector to advance healthcare delivery in the country.

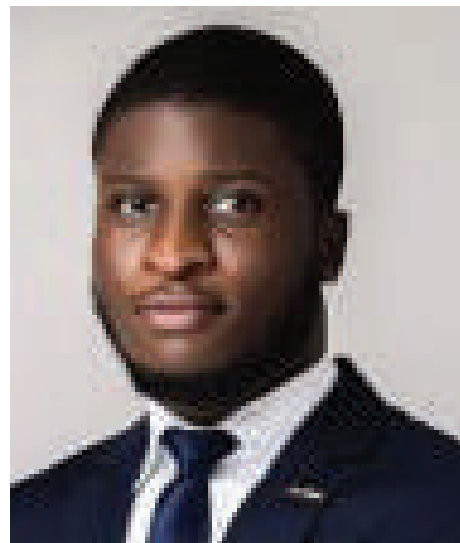
The experts who gathered at the 3rd edition of the Lagos Health Summit said that improving the country's healthcare indices is not something that can be done in isolation.

The third edition of the Lagos Health Summit was supported by Iwosan Lagoon Hospital, Casava, Total Health Trust Limited, Lancet Laboratories, Bora Communications, Tech Cabal and Hi-Impact TV.

Speaking at the conference, the Executive Director, Lagos Health Summit, Habeeb Moshood, said that improving healthcare outcomes in Nigeria goes beyond what can be addressed from a healthcare provider point of view.

"It is essential to understand the role of other sectors such as transportation, power, agriculture among others. For instance, transportation is important in terms of emergency while agriculture is crucial in addressing malnutrition and power in running healthcare facilities.

"So we are advocating a multi-sectoral



Habeeb Moshood

approach to improve healthcare delivery. We understand that there will be little challenges but when the goal of advancing healthcare delivery in the country is collectively shared, then all obstacles can be addressed."

Moshood hinted that the first edition of the summit focused on conversations around navigating the future of healthcare with emphasis on the role of insurance in optimizing healthcare delivery, "while last year focused on strengthening healthcare

with technology."

Corroborating his views, Chief Operating Officer, Iwosan Investments Limited, Dr. Idowu Adebisi said that there is strength in numbers and no single person has all the skills or technology to achieve desired results.

"For instance, it's either your partner for the purpose of finance, training, purchase of modern equipment or even for patients that you need to see. So it is difficult to run away from partnerships. What you just need to do while considering partnerships is to keep the patient at the front of your mind.

In his key note address, Global Growth Lead Field Intelligence, Peter Bunor said that the fastest way to achieve a collective goal is to work together, "different groups have different expertise and areas of specialization, so finding and encouraging people to work together is the fastest way we can achieve our collective goal in a way that it benefits all.

"Imagine a scenario where we are all trying to solve similar problems and everybody is trying to build solutions. Whereas, if people specialize and focus on things they are good at then we will have better outcomes.

"A lot of people want to own everything to themselves and that is probably because they have not found credible people to

partner with, people that will come to the table with good intentions.

"So it is fear of whether the partner share the same vision that makes some people skeptical about partnership. In coming together, you need to figure out what you are trying to achieve, and how it benefits all the players. When all the parties can see how it benefits one another, it will make it easier to engage and collaborate."

On her part, Chief Executive Officer of Babymigo, Mrs. Kemi Adedoye who spoke during a panel session tagged; "Adopting Collaborative Alliance in Improving Maternal and Child Healthcare" said that "technology will be instrumental to improving maternal and child health outcomes in Africa in the next decade."

She added that, "in addition to leveraging technology, there is also a need to support digital activities with offline activations including community outreaches."

She also mentioned that "a combination of private-public and private-private partnerships are necessary to provide unique accessible healthcare to mothers and children."

Without forgetting the need for aggressive awareness and enlightenment of mothers on all levels to reduce maternal and newborn mortality.

Osinbajo tasks academics on reforms in healthcare, tertiary education

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

Vice President Yemi Osinbajo has expressed the need for professors and academics to take keen interest, especially in issues of education and healthcare, exploring options for reform and innovation in human capital development sectors.

This was the highlight of the virtual meeting on Friday between Osinbajo and a team of professors drawn from the six geopolitical zones, under the auspices of Progressive Intellectuals Advisory Group (PIAG).

The Vice President, who interacted with the dons on a number of topical national development issues, urged stakeholders, especially members of professional bodies, to make contributions towards addressing them.

Discussing tertiary education, for

instance, Osinbajo said: "Given the rate of interest in tertiary education, we cannot cope with the brick-and-mortar approach. We won't be able to cope with the numbers in the near future because there will be millions more who will not be able to get into our schools.

"One of the things I have been thinking about is how to be deliberate about online tertiary education and how to develop it to the point where Nigeria offers the best services in the sector.

"One of the things I want us to think about is how we can develop this idea, and in what ways we can put together a plan, even if it is just an outline, so that we can push the idea further."

Also, the Vice President called on members of the group to support the Federal Government's efforts to reform the healthcare system by contributing to ideas that will make health insurance work effectively in the country, even as he noted that a Health Reform Committee

is already in place looking at issues.

Leader of the group and Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, National Open University of Nigeria, Prof. Shehu Adamu, also spoke about the need for Nigeria to strengthen the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) option to address the issue of access to university education.

In separate remarks, Professors Nasiru Yauri, Philip Okolo, Ernest Ugbejeh and Yahaya Baba commended Osinbajo's dedication to development of Nigeria and style of leadership, according to a statement made available to newsmen, yesterday.

The group, which supported Osinbajo's run for the presidential ticket of the All Progressives Congress (APC), described his loss as a missed opportunity, pledging to work for the Vice President in his future aspirations, and promising to maintain the relationship regardless of the outcome of the APC shadow election.



Yemi Osinbajo

Entrepreneur spearheads campaigns against environmental degradation

By AHERHOKE OKIOMA, YENAGOA.

An entrepreneur cum inventor, Azibaola Roberts has again commenced another round of enlightenment campaigns against deforestation and other forms of environmental degradation of the Niger Delta rainforests.

Hence, the Social Thinker applauded for recently receiving an award of the innovator of the year from the Vanguard Newspapers for his invention of an electric car and as well as other innovations in the Nigerian automobile industry has organized the first of its kind 'bonfire night' to push forward his environmental activism Campaigns.

The Trumpet source reports that the event which was tagged, 'an invitation from Azibaola Robert for a bonfire night' in Otakeme Community, which is the organizer's home town, in the Ogbia Council area of Bayelsa state featured the reliving of environmental features and old experiences by natives and non-natives alike in the Niger Delta rainforest.

Speaking to journalists on the reasons behind the event, the activist who also doubles as the Founder of Zeetin Engineering Nigeria limited stated that he intends to use the programme to create awareness and enlighten the people of the Niger Delta on the importance of the Niger Delta rainforest and why it has to be protected.

The Kakatar and Zeetin Engineering groups CEO who described the trend as worrisome, cautioned against the high spate of indiscriminate logging and wildlife hunting, saying if not curtailed, it could snowballed into total extinction of trees, some species of fishes and animals habitating the Niger Delta rainforests.

The Trumpet also learnt that prior to the 'bonfire night' and enlightenment programme in Otakeme Community, that in no fewer than six months ago, Robert had alongside staff members of Zeetin in company of journalists had also made the first ever 14 days (fourteen days) expedition into the Niger Delta rainforests in which Otakeme Community's forest was chosen as

the pilot forest for the programme. He promised to make the forest expedition an annual event, even though without local or international collaboration and partnership.

He stated that with indiscriminate logging, wildlife hunting by Indigenes and non-indigenes of the Niger Delta region and uncontrolled environment pollution caused by activities of multinational companies ongoing unchecked in the region, he was afraid the region's flora and fauna is headed for obliteration.

"That is why traditional Rulers were invited to take the message to the grassroot" he said.

A visibly passionate Robert enumerated some of the already extincted trees, saying upon carrying out his first 14 days expedition into the Otakeme forest recently heart rending discoveries were made as to the level of the destruction

of the biodiversity of the area.

He said: "I'm not doing this event because I want to criticize the government for not doing enough to protect our rainforests. The Niger Delta is called the rainforest because when it rains in the communities here, it also rains in the Niger Delta region's forests.

"The Niger Delta has one of the largest rainforests in the world. The largest rainforest is called the Amazon rainforest some where between Brazil and other American nations. We must protect this blessing given to us by God.

"I grew up in this Community as a child, and I know certain places where named after trees. But now all those trees have been fallen down by loggers for furniture and other things. Surprisingly, you can't find any furniture industry in this area, but can find them in areas that don't have the rainforest like us

here".

"I'm not doing this programme to gain anything, but to enlighten our people and create awareness on the dangers of deforestation and the near total extinction of our biodiversity.

"I'm not too poor, but I'm also not too rich to say I'm doing this event for any selfish gains. Recently myself, members of my team and other persons, including Journalists went into the Otakeme forest on a 14 day expedition to uncover the spate of environmental degradation of our rainforests in which we discovered that certain animals, trees and other biodiversity have completely gone into extinction. If you cut one tree, plant more, because without these trees, there won't be life. The oxygen we breathe comes from the trees which take in carbondioxide from the environment and give us oxygen for our survival."



Cross section of Ogbia Traditional Rulers at the Bonfire at Otakeme



Come the hour, come the man Peter Obi

By DOUBLE CHIEF ANTHONY

The last time an election elicited or generated such furore or so much interest from those outside mainstream participants was in the United States. The last such election was the US elections that ushered in Barack Obama. Obama was a political wild card that stood no chance because his political experience was as a young senator. His colour or race was considered a millstone, so he was patronised and ignored by political heavy weights. Republican opponents preferred to go against him because they assumed he would be a walkover. He ended up serving two terms and breaking a political taboo of been the first black man in the White House.

The advent of Peter Obi into the Nigerian political arena as a presidential candidate has galvanised interest from a group of erstwhile politically comatose group of youths who were once subdued by political apathy, brought about by the way in which the country in all sectors has been run aground. Suddenly, there is an awakening and an awareness never experienced before amongst this demographic.

Peter Obi is a breath of political fresh air just like Obama was in 2008 US elections. Both their presence has inspired a much forgotten, marginalised maligned and oppressed group of people. In America, it was youths and ethnic minorities. In Nigeria it's the youths, the unemployed, the politically irrelevant, those short-changed by the present ruling class and those hitherto apathetic towards politics.

For those of us who in our convoluted, contrived, conceited closet tribalists and religious bigots that oppose Obi because he is from the Southeast, hear this, 'you're missing his message'. Obi's message echoes Obama's message while he too was campaigning which is, 'It's no longer business as usual'. Albert Einstein said, "insanity is doing something in the same way and expecting a different outcome".

Nigeria can no longer afford to play politics with Ghana must go bags full of dollar notes. Neither can Nigerians ignore the number of deaths in peace time that exceeds the number of deaths in Ukraine who are at war. Nor can they continue to pay taxes to bandits in some Northern states. They can no longer ignore the constant free fall of the Naira since Buhari took up residence in Aso Rock.

Why not you may ask? Because merit, the rule of law, decency, our security, professionalism are all sacrificed on the altars of mediocrity, religiosity, tribalism, cabalism, and the common Nigerian foots the bill and bears the consequences. If you concur and promote the "business-as-usual agenda", it means you are a beneficiary of the economic and political chaos and cacophony currently oozing out of Nigeria and by extension you are complicit.

Yes, Peter Obi is an Ibo man but when he speaks, he speaks as a nationalist and not as a regionalist and not as a tribalist. When he speaks, he speaks hope instead of spewing pseudo encomium on the present diabolically abysmal regime. When he speaks, he speaks to the economically burdened generation whose future has been mortgaged by a selfish, clueless, and cruel ruling class.



Peter Obi

When Obi speaks, he speaks numerically so that we can verify his statements. When Obi speaks, out of his mouth comes forth, integrity, honour, devotion, servitude and intellectualism and transparency, qualities that are dearth in any other presidential candidate or their party members. When Obi speaks, some of us see in him an epitome of how a leader should be and an effigy of a leader longed for but seems to exist outside the shores of Nigeria.

Obi does not portray desperation nor a sense of entitlement, nor does he shout ethnic disenfranchisement, or displays a deep-rooted avarice for the people's commonwealth. Instead, he comes across as a man who is content with what he has and wants to simply serve and give back to his Motherland if given the chance. Obi can be described as a simpleton. No matter how lopsided one's cognition is this cannot be said of the presidential candidates from PDP and APC.

For once since 1999, Nigerians have an alternative in Peter Obi. We no longer must choose between two sides of the same coin or between the Devil and the Red Sea or Ali Baba and his minions: the forty thieves or the Broom and the Umbrella. We can unseat the political Cabal known as corruption personified or the ruling class that have been foisted upon us by unruly, greedy self-serving, malleable, (politicians who are devoid of any moral compass) regionalist, tribalists and religious fanatics, who recycle themselves every four years with disregards for the obvious and palpable suffering of the everyday Nigerian.

Tinubu and Atiku are dinosaurs that have outlived their sell by dates and compared to Obi are Neanderthals. Both think in analogue like their other political contemporaries and have no solution for the problems of a twenty first century Nigeria that requires

digital transformative solutions. Both are in the same league as Buhari, they will end up delegating others to do that which they should do which will result in delegated, unelected staff abusing their positions and usurping power to themselves. Because they will only be presidential signatories, these persons will end up stealing and arrogating to themselves the people's commonwealth. Like Buhari, they will be figure heads in their own government because they will be elected based upon dollarisation, cronyism and other irrelevances to the highest office of the land but devoid of competency, ideology and well thought out economic growth plans.

Tinubu brought appreciate economic development to Lagos state as a governor. His cabinet was culturally and ethnically inclusive. No one can dispute his achievements but the Tinubu of then is not the Tinubu of today. The Tinubu of today is no longer verbally coherent, lacking energy and verve. He no longer possesses any form of ideology but brings with him the baggage of entitlement and is ravaged by such frailties that accompany one in old age. He looks frail and fragile and in office will surely spend more time flying abroad for treatment much more than Buhari. Tinubu the presidential aspirant is a shadow of Tinubu the vibrant and articulate governor Lagosians were proud off and the political king maker of the Yoruba nation. There is a common saying that one cannot beat nature. Age has stolen Tinubu's erstwhile irretrievable panache from him.

Atiku on the other hand may appear healthy but his former boss, ex-president Olusegun Obasanjo dreads the thought of Atiku leading the nation and has alleged that Atiku is a certified, incorrigible, and irrevocably corrupt character of a man. As the vice president to Obasanjo, Atiku

committed the same sin as Satan, he coveted his boss's seat. Atiku has not helped himself by his verbal pontifications asking if his friends are not entitled to be wealthy and his flight to Dubai only to return when he wants to contest elections. If Tinubu has achieved remarkably since his foray into politics, what has Atiku achieved apart from spearheading the sale of national assets cheaply? His election campaigns are grossly embellished with political chicanery.

Does it surprise any intelligent Nigerian that Peter Obi is the only presidential candidate that is going around addressing the nation in the most articulate and easy to understand way. His the only one pointing out problems and advocating solutions to these age long problems such as the state of insecurity, poor education, health, and our cadaver like electricity sector. Tinubu is going around with motorcade and police escorts as if his already the president while Atiku is at large.

Peter Obi speaks the language of the oppressed, the jobless and those who feel unsafe, under fed and underrepresented, displaced in the present political dispensation. He speaks to us all because his one of us, his one of us because he lives among us. Peter Obi is not a part time Nigerian. His not like those who are Nigerians when it benefits them and at the slightest hint of trouble jet out while the common man bears the brunt of insurrection, insecurity and their children stay at home because ASUU and government are at loggerheads.

Please, think and as you do this empty yourself of tribalism, regionalism, religiosity, and partisan politics and ask yourself the following questions: Do you want to allow a leader that has no scruples about allowing his friends acquire wealth at your expense? Do you deserve a leader who wants to be your president because he assumes, "it's his turn"? Do you want to hand over to a man that his ex-boss has deemed unfit to lead this country? Or maybe you want to be led by a leader who will be a continuation of the ruling party whose Minister of Education spent 100million Naira on a nomination form whilst your children were sitting at home not learning anything whilst their children are graduating from universities abroad? Or would you rather vote a man who knows the problems of this country and articulates solutions; a man who refuses to dollarise his way to Aso Rock? A simpleton that carries with him hope, the desire to change the status quo and carries in him the spirit of prudence, frugality, and accountability?

Peter Obi can midwife a change in our political, economic, and social trajectory if all true economically displaced and oppressed Nigerians go to the polls on election day with the sole objective of taking our country back by votes.

Remember we have prayed fervently in times past. In Obi, we see the manifestation of our calloused bended knees. However, "where feet are required, knees are useless". To ensure that Peter Obi is the next tenant in Aso Rock come May 2023, we must be "obedient" to the cause.

Go and register, get your almighty PVC and march to the nearest polling station to cast your votes "Obidiently".

● Double Chief Is a lecturer at Arden University England.

SERAP sues govs 'for failing to fund' poor children's education

A lawsuit against the 36 state governors "over their failure to redirect public funds budgeted to pay ex-governors undeserved life pensions, to pay the counterpart funds that would allow poor children to enjoy access to quality basic education in their states," has been filed by Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP).

Over N40 billion has been reportedly paid to 47 former governors from 21 of the 36 states in pensions and provision of houses, staff and motor vehicles replaceable between three and four years.

However, several states have reportedly failed to pay the counterpart funds to access over N51bn matching grants earmarked by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC).

In suit number FHC/L/CS/1120/2022 filed last week at the Federal High Court, Lagos, SERAP is seeking: "an order of mandamus to direct and compel the 36 state governors to pay the counterpart funds that would allow poor Nigerian children to enjoy access to quality basic education in their respective states."

"an order of mandamus to direct and compel the 36 state governors to put in place mechanisms for transparency and** accountability in the spending of any accessed matching grants from UBEC.

"State governors are paying former governors in their states billions of naira in life pensions and other retirement benefits while failing to invest in education and pay funds that would allow poor Nigerian children within their states to enjoy access to quality education.

"Paying the counterpart funds for basic education in several states would be a major step forward for children's rights, and ensure the rights and well-being of all children, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds.

"The report by UBEC that several states have failed to access N51.6bn of matching grants suggests that these states are doing very little for poor children. It also explains why the number of out-of-school children in the country has continued to rise. The number is currently over 13 million.

"States' dereliction in paying counterpart funds is antithetical to the Nigerian Constitution 1999 [as amended], the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act, and the country's international human rights obligations.

"The persistent failure to pay counterpart funds has hugely contributed to denying poor Nigerian children access to quality basic education, opportunities and development."

Joined in the suit as respon-

dents are UBEC and the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory.

The suit filed on behalf of SERAP by its lawyers Kola-wole Oluwadare and Opeyemi Owolabi, read in part: "Rather than spending public funds to pay ex-governors undeserved pensions and other retirement benefits, governors should prioritise investment in education by paying up any outstanding counterpart funds to UBEC.

"Redirecting public funds budgeted for life pensions for former governors to fund education would be entirely consistent with the constitutional oath of office, and the letter and spirit of the Nigerian Constitution, as it would promote efficient, honest, and legal spending of public money.

"Continuing to spend scarce public funds on these expenses would deny poor Nigerian children access to quality, compulsory and free basic education in several states, and burden the next generation.



SERAP boss, Adetokunbo Mumuni

"States should prioritise paying their counterpart funds over and above spending on life pensions and other misallocations of scarce resources.

"According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 1 in 3 children do not complete primary school in several states.

27.2 percent of children between 6 and 11 years do not attend school. Only 35.6% of children aged 3-5 months attend pre-school.

"Basic education in several states has continued to experience a steady decline. The quality of education offered is low and

standards have continued to drop.

"The learning environment does not promote effective learning. School facilities are in a state of extreme disrepair, requiring major rehabilitation. Basic teaching and learning resources are generally not available, leaving many teachers profoundly demoralized.

"This situation is patently contrary to Section 18 of the Constitution of Nigeria 1999 [as amended]; and the Sections 2(1) and 11(2) of the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act.

"States are required to progressively implement socio-economic rights including the right to quality education commensurate with the level of resources available. Gross misallocation of resources to the detriment of the enjoyment of the right to quality education constitutes a human rights violation."

No date has been fixed for hearing of the suit.

Sustain hope in Nigeria, Peter Obi enjoins Nigerians, greets Muslims

Labour Party (LP) Presidential Candidate Peter Obi has felicitated with the Muslim faithful in Nigeria on the celebration of Eid el Kabir, while urging all citizens to sustain hope in the nation.

In a message, Obi said the Eid el Kabir celebrations reminded Muslims, and indeed Nigerians, of the need to sincerely love one another and pursue lasting peace and unity which he encouraged them to continue to preach as a critical requirement for national growth and development.

Obi said the season also afforded them the opportunity

to pray, in a special way, for the country which, he said, is passing through very severe challenges. He said the nation needs divine intervention to be able to overcome the challenges facing it.

"We are at a very dark moment in our nation's history, where it seems that every noble ideal that makes us a nation is collapsing before our eyes. Insecurity in the country has become unbearable, while our economy continues to struggle under the weight of bad governance and financial mismanagement of our leaders. With prayers and hardwork, we

shall overcome," Obi stated.

Obi urged Nigerians not to give up on the country, but renew their zeal in working towards building a new and more productive nation for all. He maintained that with good leadership, Nigeria will be rescued from the doldrums and placed on the path of growth and development.

"We have no other nation but Nigeria, and we must not let it collapse. Let us now break the barriers of religion that divide us, and unite to take back our nation for progress and development," he added.



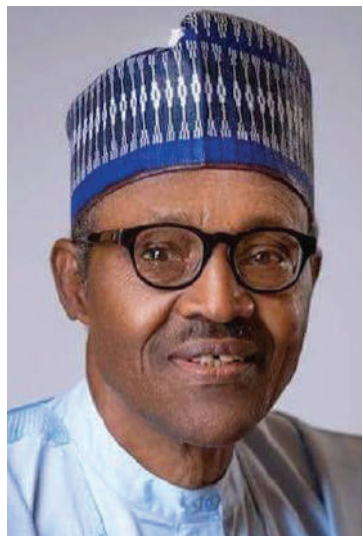
Peter Obi

CAN rages over spate of killings in Taraba, urges Buhari to match word with action

By SURU CHARLES, Jalingo

Taraba chapter of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has deplored incessant killings in the state.

A statement on the issue at the weekend in Jalingo, the state



President Buhari

capital, pointed to the killings especially in Ussa and Takum local government areas, saying: it is high time that the Federal Government of Nigeria led by President Muhammadu Buhari, "begin to match words with action in the areas of security so as to save the nation from eminent collapse."

It stressed that the 'unabating' attacks have resulted in the death of many innocent people while several commuters also fall victims."

The statement signed by the state chairman of the association, Rev. Dr. Isaiah Magaji Jirapye, claimed that the "security breach has not only worsened but subjected the people to untold hardships, and hampering economic activities."

"CAN cannot fold its arms and watch innocent people killed. If government cannot guarantee the security of the people, there is need for the people to be

allowed to protect themselves," the association affirmed.

CAN said it "has observed with dismay the series of attacks and onslaught going on for some times along the Takum and Ussa local governments by suspected Fulani militia." It felt sad that the "same Fulani militia who have been killing people and of recent soldiers including the Commanding Officer of the 93 Battalion of the Nigeria Army in Takum, can still return within shortest time and attack innocent communities while Federal Government folds its arm as if it does not exist."

"Why were the security check points mounted along that axis (Mararraba -Takum road) removed prior to the attacks, Where are the security men, why were they withdrawn, who withdrew them, and for what reason?" Government, according to CAN, "must be truthful in its action against terrorism and

banditry so as to win the fight."

It also underlined the negative impact the attacks will have on the people of the state and the country at large as they "are coming at the time the people are supposed to be serious with farming activities." "If People are not allowed to go to their farms peaceful, only God knows what will happen as there are predictions on impending famine."

Calling on "believers not to relent in prayers at this trying moment" and not "only to be security-conscious but strive to prioritize their security and well being and resist any form of attack."

The Trumpet last week reported how soldiers and police personnel have become terrorists prime targets, a situation which has raised anxiety and fears among the people as they can no longer go to bed with their two eyes closed.

Nigerian arrested in S'frica for alleged \$12m online fraud to be extradited to USA

BY PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

A 28-year-old Nigerian, James Junior Aliyu, has been arrested by officers of International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) for allegedly defrauding dozens of United States citizens of money totaling \$12m.

Aliyu was arrested in Sandton, Johannesburg, South Africa on Wednesday in a 'takedown operation' carried out

by INTERPOL with assistance from members of the South African Police Service (SAPS).

According to a statement issued by the South African police, Aliyu is "believed to be part of a cybercrime ring involved in phishing, internet scams and money laundering."

The South African police further stated that authorities in the US, where the investigation originated and where most

of his alleged victims are based, have applied for the extradition of the suspect.

The police noted that the suspect was charged to court the day of his arrest, adding that the case would be heard on Tuesday, July 5, 2022.

The statement added, "Just after 10:00 on Wednesday, 29 June 2022, members from the Interpol National Crime Bureau (NCB) in Pretoria with the assistance from members of the SAPS Gauteng Highway

Patrol Unit swooped in on the upmarket estate where they effected the arrest.

"His arrest follows a widespread investigation involving law enforcement authorities from South Africa (SA) and the United States of America (USA).

"The cybercrime suspect who has been conducting his criminal activities from South Africa is accused of swindling dozens of US citizens millions in USD through email and text messages."

ICPC, CCB team up against corrupt practices

BY PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Oyo State Office of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) has offered to collaborate with the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) to confront graft by public officials.

A statement by the Commission at the weekend applauded the CCB on its initiative of sensitizing the public on the Bureau's guidelines on the fight against corruption.

Mr Oluwole David, an Assistant Commissioner, who represented the ICPC Oyo Resident Anti-Corruption Commissioner (RACC) at a sensitization session organized by the two agencies, assured the CCB of the Commission's readiness to collaborate in whatever capacity as the fight against corruption cannot be done in isolation by any anti-corruption agency.

Deputy Chief Superintendent of the Bureau, Mr Amao Bolaji, who delivered a lecture at the sensitisation programme,

said that it became necessary to sensitise ICPC staff because most officers of MDAs only knew of the "Asset Declaration" among the 14 guidelines as enlisted in the Fifth schedule of the 1999 Constitution.

According to Bolaji, "there were 14 guidelines listed in the Fifth Schedule of the 1999 Constitution and the essence of these is to ensure a very high level of public morality."

He said it is imperative for ICPC operatives to know all the guidelines to ascertain whether public officers had complied fully with all the provisions.

Also speaking at the event, Superintendent Ologun Adebola, another officer of the Bureau, expounded on how to fill the Assets Declaration form accurately and correctly.

Given a closing remark, Mrs Faustina Adeoluwa of the Legal department of ICPC, acknowledged and praised the efforts of the CCB in taking out time to educate and enlighten ICPC officers in readiness for the fight against corrupt practices.

ICPC restates commitment to corrupt-free healthcare system

BY PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) has reiterated its readiness to continue supporting the activities of the Anti-Corruption and Transparency Unit (ACTU) of the Federal Ministry of Health. It is in a quest to promote a corruption-free ministry.

Mr Demola Bakare, a Deputy Director in the ICPC, made the pledge during a two-day Sensitisation Workshop and Retreat for the Directorate Cadre of the ministry in Abuja.

Bakare emphasized that the participants and ACTU members of the Ministry should abhor corruption and check unethical practices in the Ministry.

He further expressed the Commission's gratitude to the management and ACTU members of the Ministry for their consistency in organising workshops and retreats every year, noting that it has greatly contributed to the building of the right ethical standards and a culture

of transparency within the Ministry.

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, Alhaji Mahmuda Mamman, in his remark thanked the ICPC for its support in addressing the issue of corruption in the administrative procedures, especially at this time where the use of ethics is abused by public officials.

Also speaking, the Executive Secretary of the Presidential Advisory Committee Against Corruption (PACAC), Professor Sadiq Isah Radda, stressed that Nigeria had achieved a lot in the fight against corruption, "looking at what ICPC, EFCC, JAMB and Nigeria Customs Service have accomplished compared to what they were before this administration."

Meanwhile, Mr Hassan Salihu, an Assistant Commissioner of the ICPC, in his lecture titled, "Effective Communication: A Veritable Tool for Monitoring and Reporting Corruption", stated that effective communication is beneficial to making recoveries, assessing corruption risks, mitigating the risks and preventing of corruption in the Ministry of Health.

Court jails fake America military officer for cybercrime

BY PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Justice Muhammed Sani of the Federal High Court, Ilorin has sentenced a 300-Level Student of Federal University, Lokoja, Adesanya Adeolu Tosin, to one-year imprisonment for posing as an America military officer to defraud his unsuspecting victims.

Adesanya was convicted on Friday alongside one Usman Abubakar from Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State.

The Ilorin Zonal Command of the Eco-

nomics and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) arraigned the duo on separate charges bordering on cybercrime and retention of proceeds of unlawful activities.

The defendants pleaded guilty when the charges were read to them.

Following their guilty pleas, Innocent Mbachie and Sesan Ola who prosecuted the cases on behalf of the Commission reviewed the facts of the cases and tendered the extra-judicial statements of the defendants, phones, drafts which they brought as restitution to their victims

and fraudulent messages printed from his devices, which were admitted in evidence.

The prosecutors urged the Court to convict the defendants in line with their pleas.

Justice Sani in his judgment said from the totality of evidence brought by the prosecution, the court was convinced that the EFCC has proved its cases beyond reasonable doubt and subsequently convicted the defendants as charged.

The judge sentenced Adesanya to one-year imprisonment with option of N400,000

fine. and ordered that one iPhone 12 Pro Max which he used to perpetrate the crime and a draft of N600,000 which he raised as restitution to his victims, be forfeited to the Federal Government.

Justice Sani slammed a jail term of three years on Usman with option of N479,290.00 fine.

In addition, the court ordered the convict to forfeit his iPhone X 5 and Samsung s8 which he used to perpetrate the crime and also retribute the sum of N279,290.00 to his victim.

UK ex-convict returns to prison for credit card fraud

BY PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Lagos Command of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has secured the conviction and sentencing of one Ahmed Soetan Adebola, a United Kingdom ex-convict for credit card fraud.

Adebola was sentenced to one year imprisonment by Justice Mojisola Dada of the Special Offences Court sitting in Ikeja, Lagos

The EFCC had on June 3, 2022, arraigned the convict on a one-count amended charge bordering on obtaining by false pretence, which is contrary to Section 312 of the Criminal Law of Lagos State 2011.

The charge reads, "Ahmed Soetan Adebola sometime between the 23rd day of October 2020 and 4th November 2020 in Lagos within the Ikeja Judicial Division with intent to defraud, checked

into RADISSON BLU Anchorage Hotel for the sum of N4,449,633.12 with the understanding that your payment will be made using an American Express card with pretence you knew was false."

The convict pleaded "guilty" to the charge when read before him.

The prosecuting counsel, Ahmed Yerima, had led in evidence, his witness, an operative of the EFCC, Godwin Okara, who gave a review of the facts against the defendant, detailing how the EFCC received a petition from RADISSON BLU hotel in Lagos, sometime in December 2020, alleging that the defendant who had lodged in their facility, "off and on", made payments through credit cards, American Express in favour of the hotel and that "the payments were recalled by the unified payment system".

The trial judge had at the last sitting on June 3, 2022 fixed July 1, 2022 for

judgement.

In his ruling, Justice Dada declared the victim guilty as charged.

According to the ruling of Justice Dada, "The defendant is hereby sentenced to one year in prison.

"All the items recovered from him are hereby ordered forfeited to the

Federal Government and he must sign an undertaking with the EFCC never to go back to the same crime again."

He was however, given an option of fine of N2million, and ordered to retribute the money he was alleged to have defrauded the hotel, within four months.



The Ejiro Otarigho story: a lesson in heroism

In a country plagued with a chain of bad news and a series of disastrous events, it is indeed a breath of fresh air to witness something positive for a change. The story of Mr. Ejiro Otarigho's bravery, the young man who drove a flaming fuel tanker out of Agbarho to save lives of thousands, is a shining beacon of light in the dark tunnel that has become Nigeria. This brave, selfless and self-sacrificing tanker driver braved the odds and risked his own life so that others may remain unharmed.

On the 10th of July, the petrol tanker that Ejiro was driving caught on fire inside the highly populated town of Agbarho in Delta State. Rather than panicking or abandoning the truck to save his life, which is what the average human being would do, Otarigho instructed his apprentice to jump off the truck while he himself continued driving. As he said in an interview with BBC Pidgin, his only thought was to get the truck away from people before it exploded.

In an incredible act of bravery and self-sacrifice, Otarigho drove the burning truck to the bank of Agbarho River – for fifteen minutes! – through heavy traffic. He even managed to avoid brushing the white Hilux of a woman who had panicked on seeing the advancing burning truck and left her car in the middle of the road. He squeezed through a narrow lane in which a bus was parked, hoping against hope that he would not damage the other car; and he did not. This is the stuff of movies, or nightmares! We would not have believed it was possible if we had not seen the video with our own eyes. Through it all, a scared Ejiro managed to keep his composure because the beauty and kindness of his soul overshadowed his fear of death. He was determined that people would not die even if it meant

his own death.

Ejiro Otarigho is a true hero. Our leaders should borrow a leaf from this humble man. People in positions of power are looting the country blind, causing the deaths of many innocent Nigerians who die on account of poverty, hunger, and malnutrition. Instead of focusing on amassing wealth, our leaders should examine the story of Otarigho and ask themselves: What act of sacrifice have I done for my country? In what way am I using my position and my influence to better the lives of Nigerians? How many lives have I saved or made better since I took office?

Every time a corrupt leader plunders the commonwealth, he causes the suffering or

death of some citizens. Every time a corrupt official is derelict in his duty, countless innocent people suffer. Every time a corrupt contractor does a shoddy job, he cheats his fellow countrymen and may one day fall victim to his badly executed project. One does not have to drive a burning tanker like Otarigho to be a hero. We can all be heroes just by doing our jobs to the best of our abilities, by standing for the truth, and by avoiding any thing that could cause harm to others.

The Delta State government honoured Ejiro with a certificate and a plaque, and two-million-naira cash. Also, CASER (Citizens Advocacy for Social and Economic Rights) organized a fundraiser and on July 21, handed Otarigho a cheque for one million two hundred naira donated by Nigerians. The National Assembly has also recommended Otarigho to President Buhari for a national honour. This is commendable. It is an important reminder that for national honours, we should look at the character of potential awardees and not the depth of their pockets or because they occupied an exalted position.

Besides the awards, our hero deserves an engagement that is life changing. Mr. Otarigho should be sent on a safety training course so that he could be equipped to head the safety department of some company. He should become a safety trainer himself, thereby ensuring that he has a lifelong employment and statutorily contribute his quota to safety of drivers. As the incident has shown us, tanker drivers put their lives at enormous risk daily. Government and employers of these drivers should investigate the cause of the fire and take necessary steps to ensure that it does not happen again. Petrol tankers should also routinely be subjected to rigorous inspection. After all it is not every day that an Ejiro Otarigho will save the day.



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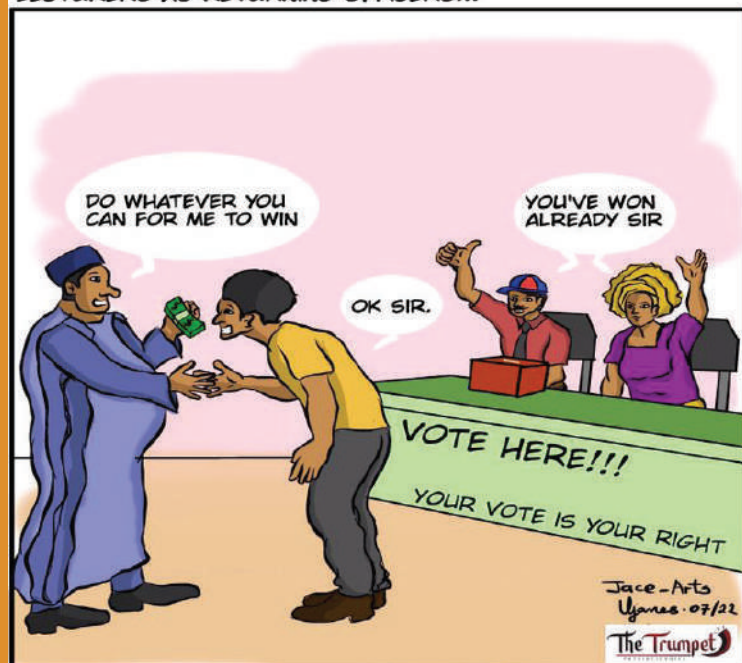
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LECTURERS AS RETURNING OFFICERS...



LECTURERS AFTER THE ELECTIONS...



Peter Obi and his supporters

Femi Osofisan's play *Morountodun* derives its historical substratum from the Agbekoya uprising of 1969 in the Western part of Nigeria. Popularly known as the 'farmers' revolt', the incident occupies an iconic place in Marxist revolutionary ethos which is why many critics describe Osofisan as a helpless Marxist writer, an emblem he unsuccessfully tries to discard. In 1969, while the civil war was raging in the Eastern part of the country, illiterate, uneducated, uneducated farmers, without any political structure, took up arms and fought the government in Western Nigeria. Their pain was manifold but they bore it with equanimity. They lived through deprivation, government irresponsibility, official rascality, decayed infrastructure, and many other aberrant social conditions. But a time came when the farmers could not take the pains anymore, they revolted. The immediate cause of their revolt was the introduction of higher taxes which meant that they had to pay more. Throwing all cautions to the wind, they adopted a guerrilla approach, fought the government and overthrew the prevailing superstructure. In the end, the government was forced to the negotiating table.

All over the world, from history to modern times, revolution is always preceded by an endured period of exploitation, general angst against a coterie of political opportunists who feed on the flesh of ordinary people and quench their thirst with the blood of the wretched. There is no other way to describe situations in Nigeria. One does not need a soothsayer, prophet,

seer, or augury to know that anger daily wets Nigerian soil. Millions of people, especially the youths, are angry that their country has been seized by a few reprobate, iniquitous, inconsiderate bourgeois class. While the masses wallow in the cesspool of decay and squalor, our traducers and their accomplice junket around the globe, flaunt their filthy lucre before us and throw crumbs to the floor which they use as a controlling device to keep the gullible in chains constantly. Before our eyes, our country has been taken away from us. Like a patient Cheetah waiting to pounce at the right time, Nigerian youths have patiently waited for many years, waiting for an opportunity to pounce. Of course, opportunities will always present themselves. Then enter Peter Obi and Labour Party.

That millions of youths have queued behind Peter Obi is not in doubt. The support for him to become the next president of Nigeria in 2023 has taken a national, even international dimension. But what has become a source of worry to many accomplices of Nigeria's slippery conditions is the manner, organization, force, unity and never-say-die spirit of the Peter Obi Movement. In fact, Peter Obi does not and cannot understand what is happening. He has no control of the Movement and has never had any control of it. Many people have accused Peter Obi's supporters, popularly called OBIDIENTS, as a bunch of quarrelsome, antagonistic and fiery groups of people who insult and attack simultaneously. If any Nigerian lays claim to happiness given

the lacerating conditions in the land, then that Nigerian lacks the spirit of truth. There is absolutely nothing to make one happy in Nigeria, NOTHING. It will be a complete waste of energy and time to analyze and document all of Nigeria's woes. But the people are surely living on the edge, precariously hanging on a precipice. Given such conditions, it would be unfair to expect someone to jocularly indulge anyone who tries to stop a change of baton from bondage to freedom.

If millions of OBIDIENTS are rude and fiery disposed, they are responding to Nigeria's 41 trillion naira debt. They are responding to a dead educational system. They are responding to executive corruption in the corridors of power. They are responding to the gripping poverty all over Nigeria. They are responding to billions stolen by former governors as pensions. They are responding to insecurity in the land. They are responding to an empty treasury, over-bloated cost of governance, and domineering power control at the centre. If you are trying to recover your property from a thief, do you smile and hug the thief? If you are chased by an armed robber, do you stop, smile, and handshake him? The conditions in Nigeria have inevitably elicited a corresponding response which unsettles the polity. All the ethnicities in Nigeria have their share of politicians who have stolen from the commonwealth, helping to usher in penury and peonage in the land. All the religions have their share of economic plunderers in the country. So it has nothing to do with ethnicity or religion. The

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OBIDIENT Movement has gone beyond such infantile labels.

I support Peter Obi with the whole of my heart because I want to witness the emergence of a New Nigeria, simple. I want to see a Nigeria where things work like in other countries of the world. In my support of the Obi Movement, I do not resort to an uncouth or condescending approach but I also do not begrudge those who resort to such methods. The truth is that conditions in Nigeria offend the sensibilities. The general anger in the land is made worse when a few in the land revel in stupendous wealth and swim inside surplus like a fish in an ocean. OBIDIENT Nigerian youths are angrily responding to these conditions. The youths are united by frustration, joblessness, hunger, inflation, and deprivation. Millions of youths in Nigeria are victims of serial misgovernance at all levels and they are reacting to these realities. They are vehemently rejecting the return of those who have dragged the country to the gutters. No, they should never be allowed to drag us to our graves.

The OBIDIENT language is that of revolution and the language of revolution is not

salutary. The most shocking thing is that those who castigate millions of OBIDIENT youths find it difficult to sell their candidates. Their pastime is to spew hate and concoct unfounded inanities about Peter Obi. They roundly insult adherents of the OBIDIENT philosophy and when the OBIDIENTS reply, they cry blue murder. It is shocking. Perhaps their physically and spiritually expired candidates are not saleable due to a putrid past or mysterious identity made more puzzling by a foul, disreputable educational background. Nigeria cannot afford to have men of questionable, controversial past inhabit Aso Rock and make decisions for the rest of us, no way. Peter Obi is not perfect. Nobody has said he is perfect. But God does not always look for perfect people as instruments. Peter Obi is a divine instrument in the hands of the Almighty to restore Nigeria to its glory. The OBIDIENTS are not unmindful of the notorious reputation of Nigeria's electoral umpire. But when the revolution starts, it takes a different dimension which no one can predict. Arab Spring is on my mind. For now, let the OBIDIENT wildfire continue. A new Nigeria must emerge. Get your PVC.

Femi FALANA SAN



During a visit to the Kuje Correctional Centre last week, the Minister of Defence, General Bashir Magashi (ret'd) told journalists that all the 64 Boko Haram members were among the over 600 inmates that were freed by the terrorists who attacked the facility in a commando fashion. Before jetting out of the country after the attack, President Buhari visited the prison and asked certain rhetorical questions. The questions would have been totally unnecessary if the Federal Government had complied with section 28 (1), (2) & (3) of Nigerian Correctional Service Act provides as follows:

"(1) There shall be provided monitoring devices to protect, control and safeguard correctional activities, including observatory towers, double

perimeter walls, close circuit television, body scanners, e-monitoring devices, electrically activated alarm systems and other instruments of restraint.

(2) The Correctional Service shall establish and maintain a fully equipped armed squads, intelligence and investigation unit to enhance security, surveillance, monitoring, intelligence gathering and protection.

(3) In deploying the facilities under subsection (1), priority shall

Why government refused to try terror suspects, sponsors

be given to the security requirements of maximum security custodial centres."

Before the attack on the Kuje Correctional Centre, terrorists and other armed criminal gangs had successfully attacked 14 other Correctional Centres and freed thousands of convicts and awaiting trial inmates in many States of the Federation. In order to secure all correctional centres in the country in line with the aforementioned provisions of the Nigerian Correctional Service Act the Federal Executive Council should urgently approve fund for the purchase and installation of the necessary security equipment.

However, having regard to the security implications of the escape of the freed terror suspects the Nigerian people have expressed concern. Since only 64 terror suspects are detained in Kuje Correctional Centre,

the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Mr. Abubakar Malami SAN should disclose to Nigerians where the 400 sponsors of terrorism and the 800 terror suspects who were due to be arraigned in the Federal High

Court last year are being detained.

Before then the 10 soldiers led by an Army Captain who ambushed and killed the three police officers who had arrested an alleged kidnap suspect, Bala Hamisu (a.k.a. Wadume) in Jalingo, Taraba State in August, 2019 were not arraigned in the Federal High Court even though a charge was filed against them by the police. In fact, the case was discontinued against them by the Attorney-General of the Federation in a purported exercise of his powers under section 174 of the Constitution. It has been confirmed that Wadume one of the terror suspects who escaped from Kuje Correctional Centre last week.

During his own visit to the facility last Thursday, the Minister of Interior, Mr. Rauf Aregbesola noted that Nigeria was experiencing asymmetric warfare and that the insurgents have been degraded in the North-East. The Minister further said that "We have 61,000 of them in our custody in the North-East; the result of the effectiveness itself in degrading them in the North-East

is what we are experiencing."

It is common knowledge that majority of the detainees have been detained for over 10 years. Since terrorism is said to be a federal offence the Governors of the North-East region have requested for the fiat of the Attorney-General of the Federation to have the suspects tried by the respective State Ministries of Justice. But for some inexplicable reasons, Mr. Malami SAN turned down the request. Hence, the suspects have been abandoned in prolonged detention.

In view of the foregoing, we are compelled to call on the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Mr. Abubakar Malami SAN to ensure that the indicted sponsors of terrorism and terror suspects are charged before the Federal High Court. We also call on the members of the National Assembly who have been appropriating fund for the prosecution of terror suspects to monitor the prosecution of the indicted terror suspects.

•Falana is Interim Chair, Alliance on Surviving Covid 19 and Beyond (ASCAB)

Man excretes 47 wraps of cocaine

By PAUL MICHAEL, DEFENCE EDITOR, ABUJA

Operatives of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) have arrested one Aloysius Ajuruchukwu Onyekwe (a.k.a Kelvin), an alleged drug trafficker who ingested 47 wraps of cocaine in his stomach.

Director of Media and Advocacy, Femi Babafemi, in a statement on Sunday said Onyekwe was arrested alongside an eighteen years lady, Blessing Broke at Ojo park Ibadan where he went to board a vehicle enroute Sokoto to Algeria.

"The desperate bid by a drug trafficker, Aloysius Ajuruchukwu Onyekwe (a.k.a Kelvin) to travel by road to Algeria through Sokoto state with ingested 47 wraps of cocaine in his stomach has been frustrated by NDLEA operatives who intercepted him in Ibadan, Oyo state following intelligence shared by the Department of State Security, DSS.

"Onyekwe, 26, who hails from

Owerri West LGA, Imo state was arrested on Sunday 3rd July at Ojo park Ibadan where he went to board a vehicle enroute Sokoto to Algeria. He was traveling with an 18-year-old lady, Blessing Nwoke.

"The father of a 10-month-old child who passed out the 47 pellets of cocaine in five excretions confessed that he began his journey to Algeria from Cele area of Okota, Lagos where he ingested the illicit drug, weighing 1.1kg," Babafemi said.

In another development, attempt by a human trafficker, Mathew Bassey to export illicit drug to Dubai, United Arab Emirate by planting same in the luggage of an orphan, Ms. Peter Gift Eno recruited for a phantom job in the Arab nation was thwarted by the NNDLEA at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport (MMIA) Ikeja Lagos.

"Bassey, 29, from Oron LGA, Akwa Ibom state was arrested on Wednesday 6th July following the

interception of Eno at the departure hall of the Lagos airport.

"When Enos luggage was searched, 50 parcels of cannabis (2.80kg) concealed in food items were discovered while there were discrepancies between the age she declared and the date of birth on her international passport.

"Further interview reveals that the human trafficker who recruited and brought her to the airport, Mathew Bassey was still lurking around the airport, waiting for her departure. He was promptly tracked and arrested," he stated.

According to him, investigations showed that the victim who hails from the same Oron LGA of Akwa Ibom State like Bassey recently lost her mother and as a result made it easy for Bassey to recruit her with the promise of securing her a job in Dubai, UAE.

It was further discovered that the recruiter leveraged on the victims naivety and planted drugs in her bag for onward delivery to his



Femi Babafemi

contact in Dubai.

Meanwhile, no fewer than 1,900 tablets of Tramadol 225mg were seized from a drug dealer, Mustapha Ijabula, who was arrested in a Yola, Adamawa-bound commercial vehicle stopped for routine search along Lagos-Ibadan expressway, in Oyo State. Ijabula hails from Mubi area of Adamawa State.

Inmates' money not stolen in Kuje prison attack – NCoS

By PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS) has denied reports that monies belonging to inmates were stolen when the Kuje Medium Security Custodial center was attacked last Tuesday in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

NCoS' Public Relations Officer, Umar Abubakar, in a statement on Saturday, said the report was untrue while saying that all inmates' cash deposited in the custody of the authorities of the custodial centre is intact and safe.

Abubakar further stated that there is an existing instruction from the Controller General of Corrections that all officers superintending custodial centres must not keep huge sums in the facility.

He said, "We wish to inform the general public that the report in some quarters that the fleeing inmates from the Medium Security Custodial Centre, Kuje, stole money (local and foreign currencies) belonging to their fellow inmates, is not true.

"All Inmates' cash deposited in the custody of the authorities of the custodial centre is intact and safe as there is an existing instruction from the Controller General of Corrections that all officers superintending custodial centres must not keep huge sums in the facility.

"This clarification becomes imperative against the misleading narrative the unfounded information has generated and the unpatriotic diversion of attention from addressing the challenges at stake.

"The Controller-General of Corrections, Haliru Nababa is sparing no effort or resources in hunting down all the escapees and it is heart-warming that the integrated strategies are yielding favourable results.

"He expresses his deep appreciation to security agencies and patriotic Nigerians whose collaboration is facilitating the recovery exercise.

"Nababa assures the public of his irrevocable commitment to bringing back all escapees to answer for their crimes.

"He, therefore, appeals that citizens should assist in achieving this task by visiting the Nigerian Correctional Service's website <https://corrections.gov.ng/escapees> for the pictures of the escapees and alert the nearest security agency if they suspect or see any of them."

Terrorists free seven train attack victims days after Kuje onslaught

By PAUL MICHAEL

A few days after the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) successfully attacked Kuje Medium Security Custodial centre in an operation that lasted over two hours without early attempt to foil the onslaught by the country's security agencies, seven victims of the Abuja-Kaduna train killings have been freed.

Tukur Mamu, publisher of Desert Herald newspaper, confirmed the release of the abducted passengers at the weekend, stressing that the son of Ango Abdullahi, chairman of Northern Elders Forum (NEF), is among the seven freed victims.

On March 28, a passenger train heading to Kaduna from Abuja was attacked by terrorists with several persons killed, dozens injured and many abducted. In June, eleven

of the abducted passengers were released by the abductors.

According to Mamu, the newly-freed passengers include Muhammad Paki, Bosede Olurotimi, Abubakar Zubairu, Alhassan Sule, Sadiq Ango Abdullahi, Aliyu Usman and Muhammad Abuzar Afzal, a Pakistani.

"I want to assure the nation that everything that was achieved today was singlehandedly initiated and arranged by me with the full support and prayers of my principal, Sheikh [Ahmad] Gumi.

"That is why I keep emphasising that government has the power to end the agony of these innocent victims in one day. This is just one individual that sacrifice his life and even integrity.

"There is no military solution to the current security debacle in Nigeria. When you sincerely

engage them, these guys even though wicked with misguided religious beliefs, they are listening.

"I have sufficient evidence to prove that they do listen. It is this power of engagement and sincerity that resulted to the release of [these] seven victims," he said.

The coordinator of the families of the abducted passengers, Abdulfatai Jimoh, confirmed the release of the seven victims to news men.

"Yes, it is true seven people were released today [Saturday]. I just spoke with the family of one of those released," Jimoh said.

The development comes four days after insurgents attacked and freed close to a thousand inmates including 69 terrorists at the Kuje correctional facility in Abuja.

Reacting to the development,

Military worse victim of armed forces' rule, Defence HQ claims

By PAUL MICHAEL

Defence Headquarters has denied speculations that the military is considering a coup d'état. It said that the military is always the worse victim of armed forces' rule.

Director of Defence Information, Major-General Jimmy Akpor, said this at the weekend in a statement while reacting to a video where controversial politician, Femi Fani-Kayode, accused the military of professional negligence among others.

Fani-Kayode in the video alleged that the Department of State Security (DSS) had informed the military of the attack on the Kuje Medium Custodial Centre as well as the onslaught on the Kaduna-Abuja train.

He also claimed that the military did nothing about the intelligence but instead withdrew soldiers shortly before the prison attack. He also accused the military of contemplating a coup.

Describing the allegations as wild and unsubstantiated, Gen Akpor said the Nigerian Armed Forces have toiled to sustain and nurture the country's democracy, and as such cannot be contemplating a coup d'état.

"Mr Fani-Kayode is also called to refresh himself on the constitutional roles of the Armed Forces of Nigeria. In all, subordination to civil authority, is key.

"It is pertinent to state that, the Nigerian Armed Forces has toiled to sustain and nurture our democracy, hence the same military

cannot contemplate a coup de tat, as alluded to by Mr Kayode in his video.

"The Chief of Defence Staff, Gen Lucky Irabor has always stressed the unalloyed loyalty of the Armed Forces of Nigeria to the President, Commander-in-Chief and the Nigerian Constitution.

"Accordingly, as the 2023 General Elections approach, desperate persons must depart from their evil ways, for never again would they lure the military into their wicked machinations. If a confession must be made, Nigerians must know now: the military is always the worse victim of military rule," he said.

Akpor, denying all the allegations of Fani-Kayode, said: "In all these allegations, Mr Kayode is merely playing to the gallery. He is not

in any position to know whether the DSS notified the military of any attack or not.

"It may not be impossible that such a claim is part of a calculated attempt to cause division and rivalry amongst all Government Agencies that have been working collaboratively in addressing issues of insecurity in the country.

"The claim that soldiers were withdrawn from the Kuje Correctional Custodial Centre before the attack is laughable. It is sad that Mr Kayode is ignorant of whose responsibility it to guard prison."

Akpor urged the general public to ignore the claims of Fani-Kayode and continue to remain vigilant as well as report suspicious activities promptly to law enforcement agencies for actions.

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Pressure mounts on ministers as stakeholders demand transformation of transport, maritime sectors

Stories by **ADAKU WALTER**

With the appointment of Muazu Sambo and Ademola Adegroye as Minister of Transportation and Minister of State for Transportation, stakeholders have expressed the hope of rapid development in the maritime sector in the next nine months before President Muhammadu Buhari leaves office in May next year.

President Buhari had on July 6, 2022 reshuffled his cabinet, while approving the appointment of Muazu Sambo as substantive Minister of Transportation and Ademola Adegroye as Minister of State for Transportation.

Sambo, who replaced Rotimi Amaechi who had resigned in June 2022 to contest the presidential primary elections under the All Progressive Congress (APC), was a former Lagos Area Manager of the National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA) and worked as senior civil engineer with the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA).

It would be recalled that stakeholders have lamented about fielding persons who do not have knowledge about the transport and maritime industry to head the ministry, which they claimed is responsible for the poor state of trade facilitation thereby hindering the sector from generating the desired revenue to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the economy.

The Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) had projected that the maritime sector will generate N7 trillion revenue yearly and will create no fewer than four million jobs in the next five years, if properly harnessed.

Also, Armstrong & Associates, a research and consulting firm, estimated that the transportation sector, seen as the gateway to Nigeria's economy would boost trade and investments opportunities and generate over \$9.6 trillion as of 2018.

Stakeholders, however, expressed the hope that there would be drastic and positive change in transportation infrastructure and inefficiency in road, rail, water, air and pipeline and the seaports remain critical in the maritime and transportation sectors.

Managing Director of National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA), Dr. George Moghalu, who congratulated the ministers, said the appointments were a clear testimony and recognition of their competence, hard work, dedication and track record of achievements in their previous national assignments.

He said the agency strongly believes that both ministers will

bring their wealth of experience, wisdom and knowledge to bear in the discharge of their new assignments by improving the affairs of the Ministry.

Also, Managing Director of the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), Mohammed Bello-Koko, said Sambo and Adegroye's wealth of experience and their track record of excellent performance would undoubtedly boost the ongoing efforts at improving efficiency and advancing the frontiers of trade facilitation.

On his part, Chairman, Governing Board of the Council for the Regulation of Freight Forwarding Practice in Nigeria (CRFFN), Abubakar Tsanni, said the appointment of the ministers was apt, especially at a time when the ministry was in need of competent, experienced

and patriotic leaders, who will continue to execute various development projects.

He described Sambo as 'a round peg in a round hole,' as he was not new in the industry, adding that the minister has a rich background in maritime administration as a former Area Manager of NIWA.

Tsanni, who described the new minister as an experienced, patriotic and hardworking administrator, who will bring more hope and progress to the ministry, pledged the council's commitment to work hand in hand with the ministers for the success and development of the transportation sector.

Also, National President of Africa Association of Professional Freight Forwarders and Logistics of Nigeria (APFFLON),

Frank Ogunojemite, stated that Sambo has little or no time for festivities with numerous the numerous issues that require urgent intervention in the transportation ministry.

Ogunojemite encouraged Sambo to quickly study some of the activities and recommendations of his predecessors at the Ministry, especially submissions drawn from robust engagements with industry stakeholders.

National President of the Nigerian Merchant Navy Officers and Water Transport Senior Staff Association (NMNOWTSSA), Bob Yousou, said the minister's experience in the maritime industry eminently qualified him for the job, adding that he would take the industry to greater heights, especially as he had worked in the terrain.

While congratulating the ministers on their appointments, Ondo State Governor, State, Rotimi Akeredolu, charged them to exploit the opportunities of their new office to help the state's quest for the establishment of a deep seaport as Ondo needed a port.

Meanwhile, other stakeholders have expressed dissatisfaction on the change in the ministry at this point when agencies under the ministry needed urgent intervention for quicker development.

Acting President of Association of Nigerian Licensed Customs Agents (ANLCA), Dr. Kayode Farinto, faulted the recent change in the leadership of the ministry, adding that such changes by trial by error was capable of breeding stagnancy and neo-colonialism.



Financial Secretary, Lagos Area Committee (LAC) of the Nigerian Council of Registered Insurance Brokers (NCRIB), Lateef Sanusi (left); Assistant Secretary, Casmir Azubuikwe; Ex-Officio, Mrs. Olanike Olabode; Vice Chairman, Ademola Olutusin; Chairman, Rotimi Olukorede; President and Chairman, Governing Board of NCRIB, Bar. Rotimi Edu; Vice President, Bar. Ezeibe Ekeoma; Advisers, Olubode Adebayo; Omotayo Dada; Internal Auditor, Olubukola Aiyeola and others at NCRIB's Mid-Year Workshop in Lagos.

MSN seeks deployment of personnel to jetties for waterways safety

The Merchant Sail Navy (MSN), a reserve marine formation established and incorporated under the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) in Abuja, has urged the State and Federal Governments to deploy personnel of the outfit for voluntary assistance to jetties across the country.

Commander General of MSN, Capt. John Linus Okoronkwo, who disclosed this in statement,

said deploying the sail navy officials to the jetties would help to reduce accidents on the waterways, adding that this is one of the approved objectives of the body.

Stressing that the plea followed the boat accidents on the Lagos waterways that led to several deaths, Okoronkwo said the Merchant Sail Navy could assist government agencies in such situations by patrolling

and issuing live safety apparatus, such as life jackets and life vest to the boat passengers.

"The Merchant Sail Navy shall regulate the safety apparatus to ensure when to change expired items. We shall take records through the manifest as a data collection including information of the next of kin of boat passengers in case of emergencies, as well as provide vital information to the Nigerian security forces relating

to challenges at sea.

"The Merchant Sail Navy needs an emergency rescue speed boat for our divers units, a beat station at the waterfront jetty and government support in achieving this goal," he said.

Okoronkwo argued that apart from making Nigeria a safe place for citizens of the country, deploying the merchant sail navy to jetties would also reduce the rate of unemployment in the country.

Maritime arbitrators urge FG, port users to embrace ADR in solving trade disputes

The Maritime Arbitrators Association of Nigeria (MAAN) has restated the importance of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in the promotion and sustainability of effective and efficient business relationships between Federal Government agencies, port users, cargo and ship owners in the maritime sector.

President of MAAN, Bodunrin Adewole, who stated this in Lagos at the weekend, stressed that rather than resorting to litigation, port users should embrace ADR in settling disputes in trade contracts between themselves, members of the public and with the Federal Government.

Adewole also restated the commitment of MAAN to the promotion and sustainability of international best practices in maritime arbitration and ADR, through the creation and establishment of an International Maritime Arbitration and Dispute Resolution Centre in Lagos.

He also urged agencies under the Federal Ministry of Transportation, especially the Nigerian Shippers Council (NSC), Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) and Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) to also apply ADR in their engagements, adding that it was much cheaper and faster way of dispute resolutions.

The MAAN President noted that the establishment of the International Arbitration Center would further promote Nigeria as an attractive venue for settlement of maritime disputes through arbitration and ADR in West Africa.

He said it was expected that when put in place, the International Arbitration Centre (IAC) would benefit the Federal Ministry of Transportation with all its contacts, especially as it concerned disputes arising from execution of contracts.

Registrar of Ships at NIMASA, Mrs. Nneka Obianyor, who spoke on institutional framework for maritime arbitration and dispute resolution centre, recalled that in the past, the absence of formal arbitral institutions was identified as one of the reasons why Nigeria was not considered as a viable centre for international commercial arbitration.

She, however, acknowledged that this is no longer the case since the maritime sector now has a number of reputable bodies such as MAAN that has a well structured practice direction for ADR.

Besides, Vice President of the Association, Mrs. Jean Chiazor Anishere, said since the inception of MAAN in 2005, its collaboration with various stakeholders in the maritime industry had led to the drive to promote the resolution of maritime disputes through arbitration, mediation and other ADR mechanisms.

She disclosed that the association is set to undertake more programmes and initiatives in the years ahead.

Truckers give NPA, TTP seven-day ultimatum to refund N40b illegal collection

•COMTUA vows to deploy legal means to stop irregularities

•Blame concessionaires for congestion at Lagos ports

Stories by **ADAKU WALTER**

Council of Maritime Transport Unions and Associations (COMTUA) has vowed to recover the over N40 billion illegally collected by the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) through the Truck Transit Park Limited (TTP) from truck owners operating at the Lagos ports.

COMTUA alleged that the money, which was collected from the truckers between February 2021 and July 2022, was due to NPA and TTP's failure and mismanagement of the electronic call-up system.

In a statement issued in Lagos by National President of COMTUA, Adeyinka Aroyewun and made available to The Trumpet, he described the collection as a 'fraud,' insisting that that it must stop, while refund of proceeds of the illegal collections and payments to ETO on call-ups should be effected immediately.

He added that all legal and legitimate means shall commence against all of the irregularities in the next seven working days.

He lamented that NPA and TTP have turned truckers to cash cows who now pay for the problems and charges accrued by the concessionaires (terminal operators and shipping companies) at the ports and all corridors.

Aroyewun explained that the extortion through ETO/TTP began after NPA's concession agreement with private companies such as APM Terminal, Port & Cargo, Tin Can Island Container Terminal (TICT), PTML Terminal, Five Star Logistics, among others between 2005 and 2006.

He said, while these terminals

keep cargoes and empty containers for shipping companies, with importers paying for container rentage and services, as well as terminal handling charges on their cargoes as listed by NPA as the regulator, congestion became a problem due to the poor administration of containers by terminals operators, with the resulting effects extended to the roads.

Aroyewun said the problem became compounded by the dilapidated state of the roads that led to congestion, which was not peculiar to container trucks and tankers alone, but to other road users who suffered the same fate.

He stated that the situation became worse due to road construction between 2016 and 2020, which aggravated traffic congestion that led to the creation of the Presidential Task Team (PTT) that was later dissolved, as the state government took over.

The COMTUA boss queried how NPA, TTP and Lagos State government team were claiming that ETO was working when the truck owner using it were complaining, adding

that the current regime that has the NPA, TTP, Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA) and Lagos Task team were not different from the era of the Presidential Team, as extortion had continued at the highest level.

"The extortionists of the PTT were basically doing so secretly and the complaints of truckers were not as bad. We were working and making million on each loading. There was no case of 'official payment' as it is now with the ETO/TTP," he stated.

He highlighted the irregularities in the ETO/ TTP project



Adeyinka Aroyewun

to include illegal collection of over N2 billion through POS in Kiri-Kiri, imposition of garage without facilities and collection of money for unused garages, policy somersault on traffic and road issues, criminal conspiracy with some state and non state actors to impound trucks and levy exorbitant fines, constant hike in cost of call up and priority for some trucks on passage.

Aroyewun also lamented that NPA had wanted to generate revenue from truckers when it introduced the minimum safety standard sticker, recalling that the matter was challenged in court and its enforcement was put on hold.

"We pay for road worthiness, Hackney permit, heavy-duty permit and so on, yet you are charging N10,000 for the same service, which amounts to double taxation," he said, maintaining

that NPA's insistence on minimum safety standard for trucks coming into its premises was a contradiction since the facility had been concessioned.

He further argued that by implication NPA can only levy charges on the concessionaires who are its tenants as truckers are not NPA's subjects, adding that imposition of a levy on them is illegal.

Noting that NPA and TTP had failed in its promises, which include trucks coming into the port within hours, no stationed truck or extortion on the roads, he said there was no human interference in the process, standardised garages and CCTV cameras to monitor all the roads with no preferences.

He alleged that the CCTV cameras meant for the road are nowhere to be found, noting that assessing TTP based on these to verify the effectiveness of ETO as claimed shows failure.

He decried a reduction in importation by more than 40 per cent as well as the increase in price of diesel, while the cost of loading is at the least.

Aroyewun, who lamented that the ETO/TTP project was fraudulent, questioned the essence of the container matching charges, insisting that the fraud must not continue.

"No regulation from the economic regulator. It is obvious that everyone is against truckers and this is a recipe for anarchy. I advise government to ensure that the illegality should stop, a forensic audit conducted and refund made to the truckers. All legal and legitimate means shall commence against all of these irregularities in the next seven working days. Accept this as the final ultimatum," he said.

Nigeria, shipping industry unveil strategy to curb piracy in Gulf of Guinea

Federal Government and a coalition of global shipping stakeholders have launched a new strategy to end piracy, armed robbery, and kidnapping in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG).

The strategy establishes a mechanism to periodically assess the effectiveness of country-piracy initiatives and commitments in the GoG. Targeted at all stakeholders operating in the region, it will identify areas of improvement and reinforcement in order to eliminate piracy.

The plan comprises two mutually supportive sections actions, which could be overseen by the Nigerian Industry Working Group (NIWG) and actions that require engagements with other regional and international partners. The strategic ambition of the coalition is to eliminate piracy in the GoG, secure trade routes, reassure traversing crews and support local communities.

In May, the United Nations (UN) Security Council condemned the GoG, as the world's piracy hot spot. Despite the International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Centre tracking an overall drop in global piracy during 2021, threat levels in the region remain high.

Piracy activity in the GoG has posed a severe threat to seafarers and local communities for over a decade. In 2020, 40 per cent of piracy attacks, and 95 per cent of crew kidnappings occurred in the region. However, attacks decreased by nearly 60 per cent in 2021, following the establishment of Deep Blue Project, the Nigerian Navy and Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency NIMASA anti-piracy project, and increased international counter-piracy operations in the GoG.

The newly launched strategy was developed by the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), BIMCO, Intertanko, Intercargo, Oil Companies International Marine Forum (OCIMF) and representatives of the Nigerian Navy and NIMASA, which make up the NIWG.

Director-General of NIMASA, Dr. Bashir Jamoh, said: "Working collaboratively with state and non-state actors, the maritime industry's various critical players and stakeholders have highlighted key areas where they can make collective improvements. The strategy is an important step in codifying joint efforts to sustain maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. It will be an important tool

to monitor our progress."

Secretary-General of ICS, Guy Platten, commented: "The agreement of this strategy demonstrates the strong relationship between the shipping industry and Nigeria, and their shared commitment to eradicating piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. The strategy is already identifying successes and areas in which further improvement will continue to reduce the capability of pirates to attack innocent seafarers in the region."

Secretary-General and Chief Executive Officer of BIMCO, David Loosley, said: "The joint counter-piracy strategy is a welcome result of productive dialogue between Nigerian authorities and industry partners. The long-term success of the joint strategy relies on establishment of structures and incentives which will stimulate a sustainable change in the Niger Delta pirates' behaviour."

Speaking, Managing Director Intertanko, Katharina Stanzel, said: "The agreement on the Gulf of Guinea Strategy marks a significant point in the fight against piracy and insecurity in this region. Seafarers have borne this burden for too long and this agreed strategy, with its associated KPIs will assist in

making their time on ships in the area safer and more secure."

On his part, Secretary-General Intercargo, Kostas Gkonis, said: "With the new strategy, the shipping industry is beginning a new journey alongside Nigeria, an organised approach to tackling security in the Gulf of Guinea. It is only the first step and the partners must continue to work together to ensure continuous improvement and ensure that the shipping community and the local economy see real change as a result of the strategy."

According to Managing Director of OCIMF, Karen Davis, there is the need to identify and prioritise the issues, which can help prevent harm to seafarers, is important, adding: "The joint strategy provides clarity to the activities that when tackled collaboratively, will make a difference. A positive effect has already been demonstrated."

Spokesperson of the Nigerian Navy said: "The Nigerian Navy plays a vital role in ensuring maritime security. Collaborating with national and international stakeholders is most important, and this joint strategy demonstrates the good that can be achieved through working together."

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ASUU decries Buhari's threat

By OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH

President Muhammadu Buhari's "enough is enough" comment in which he described the ongoing university teachers strike as unacceptable has been deplored by their union.

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) on Tuesday, in a statement, said his lamentations on the prolonged strike were unconvincing and indicate that the president just woke up to the reality of the five-month-old industrial action.

The statement signed by the Zonal Coordinator, ASUU Lagos Zone, Dr Adelaja Odukoya, said Buhari's comment made in Daura, Katsina State is merely wishful thinking and would not resolve the current strike unless he signs the renegotiated agreement.

The statement addressed to Buhari entitled, "Mr President Sir: When and why Enough cannot be Enough," said it is with painful and heartfelt amusement that the union received the "comical" statement.

Odukoya said the industrial action was occasioned and forced on the lecturers by the insensitivity, nonchalant disposition, ineptitude and indifference to the fate of public university education in the country under Buhari's leadership.

Odukoya reminded the president that other sister unions in the nation's public university system, as well as in other tertiary institutions in the country, are also on strike for similar reasons. The strikes, ASUU noted, belied and exposed the ridiculous disposition and propaganda to paint of black in the eyes of the Nigerian public who has seen through the shenanigan, deliberate, systemic and orchestrated agenda of the present government.



President Muhammadu Buhari

His words: "This is not only to undermine but to comprehensively destroy public university education in unpatriotic obedience to the slavish and destructive command of the neo-liberal high command to which the soul of this administration and her forbears seems to be irrevocably sold.

"The fact that the president unfortunately and sadly taken and embraced an attitude of mute indifference and unedifying quietude in the face of calamitous consequences of a neglected education the sector could foist on generations of Nigerians, including those yet unborn is a clear signpost of leadership failure.

"Nigerian public university students remain at home while our dear president and his cronies lavish valuable time on partisan party political activities, family egoistic ceremonies and global junketing, and to have finally woken up to address the issue of the national strike in the nation's public universities in a season of Eid Adha celebration, a season that calls for utmost and supreme sacrifices exemplified by Prophet Ibrahim should elicit both spiritual and popular condemnation."

According to ASUU, his choice of this solemn occasion to trade blame rather than making a sacrifice as the season demands appears

more of a gross lack of understanding of the enormity of the crisis. Odukoya stressed that the usual window-dressing, buck-passing and inability to rise up to address issues affecting the country, particularly the nation's education sector is rather unfortunate.

It went on: "Mr President sir, for ASUU this strike should not have lasted beyond the first week after it was declared because the issues at stake were neither new nor do they require rocket science to resolve given that there had been a Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) and Memorandum of Actions (MOAs) as well as a duly renegotiated ASUU-FGN agreement completed way back 13th May 2020 before your government which you and your administration neglected and refused to implement and signed.

"Our Commander -in - Chief, if only your administration has taken the sacred responsibility for education and the future of the Nigerian youth seriously, this latter-day unconvincing lamentation without doing anything would have been unnecessary.

"Your Excellency, your position is to be on top of issues and solve national problems no matter how tough the situation instead of hopeless lamentation and sermonising."

The zonal coordinator insisted that the various issues confronting the nation, including the ongoing strike in public universities, would not be solved by presidential lamentations but by executive actions induced by rare patriotism and nationalism.

He added: "Therefore Mr. president, saying that enough is enough is mere wishful thinking and will not resolve the present decadence in our universities nor stop the present struggle to reposition our public universities.

"For the records, Mr President, enough will not be enough in the struggle to reposition the public university education in Nigeria under this present administration and beyond as long as; the Nigerian public universities are reduced to glorified secondary schools for the production of poor quality and globally uncompetitive, rejected and unemployable graduates; Nigerian academics remain one of the poorest paid scholars not only in Africa but the world; our universities are unattractive to students and scholars from across the globe; universities in the countries are made constituency projects and mushroomed for political exigencies; Nigerian universities, no thanks to Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) are run as government parastatals; Nigerian universities are seen as profit-centres where government and its functionaries can obtain money to fund its excessive gastronomical greed.

"Mr President, the reason why enough cannot be enough is that you have failed to act presidentially to reposition the decaying and dying public university education in our beloved country. This struggle too shall continue despite the state's tyrannical disposition which has since manifested in the use of starvation as an instrument of oppression and subjugation against our members by the refusal to pay our salaries in the last five months."

Odukoya reminded the president that enough would not be enough until he does the needful and act presidentially by signing the renegotiated agreement before him, authorise the end to the use of IPPIS and the adoption of University Transparency and Accountability Solutions (UTAS), payment of outstanding allowances, stop the proliferation of universities and ensure the proper funding of public universities among other

Don donates books to Edo poly library

Rector, Edo State Polytechnic, Usen, Prof. Abiodun Falodun, has commended Professor of Public Relations and Advertising, Prof. Ezekiel Asemah, for boosting literacy among students at the institution with the donation of forty academic textbooks and journals to its Department of Mass Communication.

Asemah is the current Dean, College of

Management and Social Sciences, Glorious Vision University, Ogwa, in Edo State.

Receiving them, the rector said the gesture will encourage research and development in the study of communication.

According to Falodun, "The gesture in donating books and journals by Prof. Asemah is commendable and aligns with the plans

of the management of the polytechnic and Governor Godwin Obaseki-led state government in promoting literacy and reading culture among the students and professionals."

The donation, according to Asemah, is aimed to foster reading culture and promote quality education among mass communication students in tertiary institutions.

My classmate riding Keke after graduation

By SALEH INUWA KANO

Dayo and Rukayat Studied Engineering at a University in Kwara State. They were both Classmates and after Five years of Studying hard, they both graduated. After graduation, Fate took them through different paths of life.

5 Years later, Rukayat after much frustration of securing a job, ended up as a Secretary in a Building firm earning 50,000 Naira monthly.

Meanwhile, Dayo on the other hand, couldn't Secure a Job and ended up a Taxi Driver, He makes At least 5,000 daily and if he works for only 20 days in a month, He makes 100,000 Naira that month.

One Evening, Rukayat closed from work and was at the bus stop waiting for taxi when Dayo stopped. She hopped in when she discovered the taxi was going her way but little did she know it was Dayo. All through the journey, she was lost in her Phone.

She reached her bus Stop and after alighting, just when she was about paying, she took a

look at the driver and their eyes met, wow! They were both happy.

"Is this you?" they both asked themselves simultaneously as if they planned it. Rukayat gave him money but Dayo insisted she keep it. He was happy to see her and for old time sake, he left the money for her even when she insisted that she wanted to pay. They both exchanged contact and left.

Well, Rukayat went home that night and was lost in thought. Not as if Dayo was looking bad but Dayo driving Taxi? She couldn't wrap her head around it. She pitied him. Felt Sorry for him. If Dayo had allowed her she would have paid him and beg him to keep the change.

Little did she know that, Dayo actually has another Taxi running for him, He is a Land owner and he is planning on developing it soon. But because he was driving a Taxi, She felt Pity for him.

On the other hand, Dayo felt sorry for himself too. Before he slept that night, he remembered Rukayat, how neatly she

dressed and nice she smells, "She must be earning over 300,000 Naira per month" he said to himself. He felt ashamed, He felt like a failure and he felt she was way ahead of him financially and otherwise.

Little did he know that, If Rukayat removes the transportation fare and feeding money from her monthly salary, it will take her at least 3 Months to earn what he earns monthly.

Sadly, this could be some of our reality, you measure your progress and success with that of your friends, Classmates and Relatives even with very limited information you have about them.

You think yours is worse because you look dirtier, you think yours is worse because you are not on Corporate wears, you think yours is worse because the other person acts and looks Nicer.

Stay Focused and Face your life. It's not a competition. Stop Comparing things, you don't have the full picture. Every one is running on his own lane. Be contented.

Tinubu and APC Muslim-Muslim ticket

By REUBEN ABATI

The ruckus that has been generated by the announcement of former Borno State Governor, Senator Kashim Shettima as running mate of the Presidential standard bearer of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), for the 2023 Presidential election is a perfect illustration and yet another sharp reminder of how religion has driven a wedge among Nigerians. Religion, etymologically, is derived from the Latin word, "religare" which means "to bind together", but rather than bind the people of Nigeria together, religion has divided them along sectarian lines. It is the oxygen of devious power politics, sectarian politics, mass murder, terror, instability, and the plague of amorality. This is ironic, for Nigeria is clearly one of the most religious countries in the world, with every street, every corner boasting of either a church, a mosque, a shrine or a temple. The business of religion is also perhaps the most lucrative in Nigeria, with many religious groups noted more for commerce, hustling and mass hypnotism rather than piety, with a yawning gap between private and public morality, as the people commit atrocities in the name of God.

The evidence abounds in the weaponization of religion, even if the Nigerian Constitution states expressly that "the government of the Federation or of a state shall not adopt any religion as state religion", the resort to violence on the basis of religion as has been witnessed over the years in the Middle Belt, Southern Kaduna and other parts of the country, the politics of Sharia, and the cruel exploitation of religion by political leaders. The easiest way to ignite violence in Nigeria is to play the ethnic or religious card as in Kafanchan, Kano, Jos, Zango-Kataf, Maitatsine riots, Kano, the slaughter of priests, incessant attacks on churches. Many have died for no just cause: Gideon Akaluka, Mrs. Christianah Oluwatoyin Oluwasesin, Deaconess Eunice Olawale, Mrs. Eunice Elisha, Pastor Bolanle Ibrahim, Deborah Yakubu Samuel, all made worse since the return to civilian rule in 1999, by "the religion-inspired war" unleashed on Nigeria by Boko Haram and a band of terrorists and their international partners. Nor does it matter whether the perpetrators of violence are educated or not. Indeed, once upon a time, the University of Ibadan nearly witnessed an open warfare between Christians and Muslims within the community over the location of a Chapel Cross, which the Muslims asked to be removed because it was visible from the direction of the University Mosque, hence allegedly hindering the faith of worshippers! Between 1985 and 1986, this became known as the Cross and Crescent crisis in Ibadan. Religion is so sensitive that both Nigerian Muslims and Christians have learnt to live in an atmosphere of mutual suspicion. Such measures and groups as the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC) and Inter-Faith Dialogues have not necessarily promoted tolerance enough. The fear of likely domination by



Bola Tinubu

the other worsens the situation. Every election season, religion plays a major role in the selection of candidates giving rise to the need for zonal, ethnic, and religious balancing.

This is the general context of the emotions attached to the kind of ticket which politicians present to the electorate most especially at the Presidential and Gubernatorial levels. The convention is to have a balanced Muslim – Christian ticket or vice versa, to do otherwise is to exhume and oxygenate religious passion and prejudices. This is exactly what the Presidential candidate of the ruling APC, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu has done by choosing a fellow Muslim as his running mate. Virtually every Christian group in the country, including the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Arewa Christians and Indigenous Pastors Association, and the Christian Global Network has kicked against this. No other general election in this country in recent memory has attracted as much religious sentiment. Faced with unprecedented assault in the last few years, the Christian community has been vocal in seeking to defend itself physically, and by mobilizing the congregation to vote, and defend Christian choices.

Christians have been advised by some of their leaders to take up arms to defend themselves. Many churches have turned the possession of Permanent Voters Cards (PVCs) into an access card to church. Those without PVCs have been told to stay away. Some major Christian denominations have also set up Departments devoted exclusively to

politics and voter mobilization. Out of distrust and fear of the havoc that has been wreaked over time in the name of religion, Nigerian Christians want their own men and women in positions of authority. The other political parties that have announced their Presidential running mates so far have exercised great caution in this regard, more so as the churches warned before now that in 2023, a same-faith, Muslim-Muslim ticket would not be acceptable. The Bible enjoins Christians "to turn the other cheek." Christians in Nigeria have since abandoned that injunction. They are on their way back to the Old Testament.

Is Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, APC Presidential candidate not aware of this? Of course, he is. He has been in politics long enough to know that politics in Nigeria is driven by sentiments. But in choosing a Muslim like himself as running mate, he provides a robust even if rhetorical, defence that has been questioned by members of his own party and outsiders alike. He has been accused, for example, of promoting the politics of exclusion and discrimination against Christians. An APC member, Daniel Bwala has resigned from the party in protest. Another APC member, Senator Elisha Abbo (Adamawa North) has resigned his membership of the Bola Ahmed Tinubu Campaign organization. Tinubu however says: "To re-envision and reshape the nation, I must compose the best team possible, a team put together with but one overriding purpose: to forever establish, just, capable and compassionate governance

for the people of Nigeria without regard to religion, region or ethnic origin."

The problem here is that it is impossible to do anything in Nigeria without "religion, region, or ethnic origin." Is this part of the candidate's statement written by a foreigner? Nigerians, Christians and Southerners, have said they don't want another eight years of Northern leadership or any arrangement that excludes Christians completely. A few paragraphs later, Tinubu says: "A dominant theme of my political history and my personal life is my staunch belief in our diversity...My selection of a running mate comports entirely with this longstanding inclination." So, how exactly does a Muslim-Muslim ticket promote diversity? He goes further to state that he is aware of the "energetic discourse concerning the possible religion of my running mate... today, I announce my selection with pride because I have made it not based on religion or to please one community or the other." The counter-argument by Christians is that a Muslim-Muslim ticket will definitely please the Muslim community, and make Christians feel alienated. Asiwaju Tinubu's attempt to discount the factor of religion is a hard sell. The Nigerian Christian community is not impressed.

Tinubu sells Shettima to the electorate: "as a man with the talent, maturity, strength of character, and patriotism" and adds that "he has my implicit confidence and faith." He obviously feels comfortable with Senator Shettima, and that is fine – compatibility,

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Tinubu and APC Muslim-Muslim ticket



Bola Tinubu and Senator Kashim Shettima

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apart from electoral value is an important consideration in choosing a running mate. Shettima was a major player in Tinubu's emergence as APC Presidential candidate. He was director of his campaign. Both men also have a good relationship: Shettima is after all, a major exponent of the "Emi Lo Kan" – "It is my turn" – agenda. He is being rewarded for his loyalty. Tinubu further talks about "the need to place competence above religious sentiment". There is no doubt that Senator Shettima is a competent man. He is educated, brilliant, experienced, articulate and fit. He holds a B. Sc. in Agricultural Economics from the University of Maiduguri, and an M. Sc. in the same discipline from the University of Ibadan. He has worked as a University Teacher and as a Banker. He has also served as a commissioner five times in his home-state of Borno in different Ministries, Governor for eight years and Senator of the Federal Republic for 4 years. He can read a book and understand what it says, he can even quote Shakespeare effortlessly. Except that the biggest obstacle is the question of his faith. He is a Muslim, running a ticket with a Muslim. Tinubu says that should not be a problem. He argues that "the spirit of 1993 is upon us again in 2023." I have heard some persons in response to that saying

Tinubu should speak for himself. The spirit of 1993 may be upon him as a person, but some people draw attention to the fact that we are in 2022, not 1993 and the times are different.

Tinubu is referring to the Muslim-Muslim ticket of Chief MKO Abiola and Alhaji Baba Gana Kingibe on the platform of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in the 1993 Presidential election. Tinubu has practically replicated the Abiola-Kingibe model. Kingibe like Shettima, to drive home the appropriation, is a Kanuri, from the same state of Borno in the North East geo-political zone. But that is only as far as the comparison should go. In 1993, the Muslim-Muslim ticket may not have mattered because Nigerians wanted democracy badly. They were tired of military rule. Besides, religious conflict had not yet assumed its current hydra-headed, octopoid shape. As Simon Kolawole pointed out earlier in a piece titled "The Awkward Muslim-Muslim ticket" (ThisDay, June 18, 2022) – "before the late 1980s, religion was not a defining factor in national politics." Under the Shehu Shagari administration, Shagari was a Muslim, and Fulani, but the Senate President, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and all his Service Chiefs were Christians. This was not an issue. In 1979, Chief Jeremiah Obafemi Awolowo, candidate of the Unity Party of Nigeria ran a Christian-Christian, all Southern, Ogun-Anambra ticket with

Philip Umeadi. Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, Presidential candidate of the Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP) picked his running mate from Southern Kaduna, Dr. Ishaya Audu, a Christian. That was once upon a time in Nigeria, but not anymore. Some observers have talked about Governor Nasir el-Rufai running a Muslim-Muslim ticket in Kaduna State and getting away with it, but Kaduna is not Nigeria. A state with a population of a little over 9 million cannot be compared to a complex country like Nigeria. In today's Nigeria, it will be difficult for anyone to run an entirely Southern or an entirely Northern Presidential ticket with the candidates being of the same faith. Such a proposal would be dead on arrival – that is the extent to which religion has divided us. The APC proposal as it is therefore, seeks to test the established order and sentiments. It is a bold move. But what are Tinubu's strategic thoughts? How strong are his propositions?

No 1: Electoral value. Politicians make choices in order to win not to lose. Senator Shettima is Kanuri from the North East. Would it have been better to pick a running mate from the North West which has more voters compared to the entire North East? A running mate to Tinubu from the North West would have meant picking from the same zone as the outgoing President and from a zone that had previously produced late President Shehu Shagari,

late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, former Vice President Namadi Sambo and a couple of former military Heads of State (Murtala Muhammad and Sani Abacha). The North East has to date produced only Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa from Bauchi State. The Kanuris are not as populous as the Hausa-Fulani but would the Northern voter worry about that or be more concerned that the Presidential running mate of the APC is a Muslim? Besides, Senator Shettima is from the same geo-political zone as the PDP Presidential candidate Atiku Abubakar. His presence on the APC ticket could swing significant votes in favour of the party and divide Atiku's votes. I had in fact argued in a piece titled "June 12, 1993, Running Mates and 2023" (ThisDay, Tuesday, June 14, 2022) as follows: "If Tinubu must pick a Muslim running mate as has been argued, his best choice is Kashim Shettima, former Governor of Borno State."

No. 2: Religion. We have established that this would remain an issue. The ready argument by those who do not consider it an issue is that Christians constitute a minority in the entire North where the population is predominantly Muslim. But is that why Northern Christians should be excluded? Are there no Northern Christians that have the clout and the credentials to win big-ticket elections? Or that is "competent, reliable, capable and able?" By choosing a Muslim as his strategists advised, and as he has done, Tinubu is obviously leaving himself open to the accusation that he has no regard for the Christian community. He is nonetheless considered by many a liberal Muslim. His wife is even a Pastor in a Pentecostal Church. He also knows that whereas it would be easier for him to defeat his major opponents in the South West and parts of the South, the main battle ground for his candidacy would be in the North. A Muslim-Muslim team is an attempt to woo and win the votes of the Muslim majority in the North. Examined closely, this is a cold-blooded, Machiavellian move. But did Tinubu at any time make any effort to consult the Northern Christian leadership and try to carry them along, before making his announcement? If he has not done so, let him do so now.

No 3: Finally, does religion necessarily make our leaders good men and women? Absolutely not. Religion is that affective thing in our consciousness which may have no bearing whatsoever with our daily conduct or character. Some of the most religious people are also some of the worst human beings ever. Nigerians are looking for good leaders, leaders who can address the major issues that affect their lives, and who can make Nigeria a better and safer place for all.

The strongest value of democracy is that it offers the people an opportunity to make their own choice. In 2023, it is up to the Nigerian people to vote according to their conscience. There are options on the table. The electoral umpires must provide the enabling environment for the people to vote freely, without any form of hindrance, and every opportunity to ensure that their votes count. In the end, that is all that matters



Committee refutes AFN board member's petition

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

■ **Ogba added personal funds to assuage expenses**

The organising committee of the recently concluded National Athletics Championship in Benin have vehemently refuted a petition to the Honourable Minister of Youth and Sports Development, Sunday Dare that the athletes were treated with 'disdain'.

According to the committee, the petition was written by the athletes' representative on the governing board of the Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN), Mr Henry Okorie.

In a statement by the organising committee that was saddled with the responsibility to plan, execute and record a successful event that also serves as a platform to pick qualified athletes to represent the nation in the World Athletics Championship in Oregon, USA and Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, Okorie is feigning ignorance of the limited funds raised by the committee which was duly given to him to settle athletes' expenses.

The committee said that while they raised the sum of ten million naira which was not enough to settle athletes' bills, the Edo state government helped immensely to provide accommodation for all the participants during the national championship.

"Our attention has been



drawn to the petition written by Henry Okorie, the athletes representative on the board of AFN accusing the chairman of the organising committee for the championships of not respecting the athletes," the statement read.

"While we feel it is not necessary to join issues with Okorie who, as a member of the executive board of the AFN, should be abreast of development in the federation especially the organisation of the event, it is however necessary we put the record straight for posterity to judge us.

"Okorie pretended not to know that the committee was charged with the responsibility of raising funds for the organisation of the championships. The committee was able to raise N10m for the championships while the Edo State government took

care of accommodation, which Okorie allocated to the athletes," the statement added.

Furthermore, the organising committee lamented that the ten million was not able to pay for flight expenses for foreign-based athletes, adding that the chairman of the committee, Chief Solomon Ogba went beyond using his personal fund to upset some incurred expenses.

They underlined that Okorie would have thought it wise to ask how the committee, despite the paucity of funds, could achieve such a huge success.

The statement continued: "The N10m raised was not even enough to pay for the flight tickets of the Ghana and Benin relay teams invited for the championships as well as some of our foreign-based athletes. Okorie should have

endeavoured to find out how the committee managed to accomplish the task with just N10m. If he must know, the chairman of the committee he desperately tried to malign used some of his personal money to offset some of the expenses incurred including the money Okorie collected for the feeding of some of the athletes.

"He should also know that the AFN president and the Delta State Sports Commission also came in to rescue the committee. He may also claim not to be aware of the delegation to the Edo State acting governor, Comrade Philips Shaibu on the first day of the championships who speedily granted the committee's request for more assistance.

"If he does not know, it is the board of the AFN of which he is a member he has rubbished with his unfounded allegation and not Chief Ogba, who was a two-time president of the AFN honoured by World Athletics in 2013 with a veterans pin award for his contribution to the development of athletics in Nigeria," it stated.

More so, the organising committee implored AFN to refer Okorie to its disciplinary committee as he could not substantiate his allegations, stressing that his actions are capable of soiling the reputation of the federation.

Wimbledon nemesis rattles ATP ranking

■ **As Roger Federer drops out of 1000 ATP spots in 25 years**

The recently concluded 2022 Wimbledon championship in England has rattled the ATP world ranking with champion Novak Djokovic falling four places from 3rd to the seventh position.

Djokovic, who won the 2021 All England Club tourney and defended the title in 2022 on Sunday, July 10 against Australian Nick Kyrgios, lose 2000 points to slide down through the ATP ranking.

Recall that the ATP and WTA had sanctioned the All England Club for barring Russian and Belarusian athletes from competing in SW19 following the military invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

The resultant effect of the sanction was to strip Wimbledon of its ranking points which have consequently affected the ATP strata for tennis professionals.

According to the new ranking, Russian Daniil Medvedev retained the top spot on the ATP ranking with a deduction of 180 points followed by German Alexander Zverev on the second spot, who lost to Rafael Nadal in the French Open final at Roland Garros.

Meanwhile, French Open and Australian Open champion Rafael Nadal, Stefano Tsitsipas and Casper Ruud move one place up the ATP ranking to 3rd, fourth and fifth positions respectively after 360 points were deducted from their ranking points.

Following the trio, Spain's sensational teenager and Madrid Open champion, Carlos Alcaraz move up the ranking from seventh to sixth position after the ATP removed 45 points from his total ranking points.

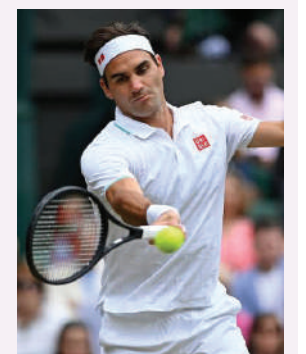
Andrey Rublev, a Russian who partook in the event as an independent athlete retained its eighth position just after 35-year-old Serbian and SW19 champion on the ATP ranking. He lost 150 points while Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime lost 315 points to remain in the ninth position.

However, Italian Jannik Sinner returned to ATP top-ten ranking by jumping three places to emerge in the 10th position after missing out from his highest ever ranking in 9th position which was attained on November 1, 2021.

Surprisingly, former world number one, Roger Federer has dropped out of the ATP ranking for the first time in 25 years after missing out on Wimbledon due to a knee injury he sustained last year.

The Swiss, who is regarded as one of the tennis greats with 20 Grand Slam titles, has not played any competitive match since his quarter-final defeat to Polish Hubert Hubert.

From analysis, The Trumpet explains that had Federer partaken in 2022 Wimbledon without competing in any preceding event to gain ranking points, he would have not escaped dropping out of the 1000 ATP spots following the ATP sanction on All England Club.



10 cricketers, 2 coaches set for training in Zimbabwe

The Edo State Cricket Association has sponsored ten Nigerian teenage cricketers to

Elton Chigumbura Cricket academy in Zimbabwe to prepare them ahead of the September African qualifiers in Botswana, a pathway to the International Cricket Council (ICC) U19 World Cup.

According to the Public Relations Officer of the Nigeria Cricket Federation, Musa Ehizoje Bodie, the ten cricketers comprising five boys and five girls were selected for one-month intensive training in a bid to leverage new skills to propel the nation through the qualifying phase to the ICC U19 World Cup in January next year.

While the maiden edition of the ICC U19 Girls World Cup takes place next year's

January in South Africa, the 15th edition of the Boys U19 version is scheduled for 2024.

Recall that last month, three cricketers who were sent to South Africa for high-performance training in Hollywood Dolphins Academy in Durban by the Nigeria Cricket Federation (NCF) returned to the shores of the country.

According to the federation, Sasan Adedeji, Sylvester and Isaac Okpe, during the one-month training programme, were 'introduced to new technology and skill enhancement programs in batting, bowling and fielding'.

Among the cricketers, Edo State Cricket Association sponsored are Prosper Useni, Selim Salau, David Abiebhode,



Pam Pam and Solomon Chilemanya in the male category while Piety Lucky, Oseyande Omonkobbio, Peculiar Agbonya, Victory Igbinedion and Divine Uranta were selected in the female category.

Two coaches, Esewi Kingsley Guobadia and

Azuka Onwujobi were also assigned to accompany the players.

This development is in furtherance of the NCF commitment in the last three years to fashion out pathways to bolster the national team in all categories and levels.

Inter to extend Skriniar's contract if PSG fails

Simone Inzaghi's side, Inter Milan are set to extend the contract of highly courted centre-back, Milan Skriniar, beyond 2023 if offers above €70m are not made by interested clubs.

Paris Saint-Germain and Chelsea are clubs highly interested in the Slovak who was impressive in the Nerazzurri's defence last season.

In a report, Sky Sport Italia claimed that Inter Milan will extend Skriniar's contract should the negotiations with PSG break down, adding that the Nerazzurri will not accept anything less than their targeted offer.

Meanwhile, Les Parisien are looking for a way to round up the deal and would want it finalised at the same amount that saw Achraf Hakimi switched last summer from Inter Milan to Paris, reportedly

around €60m plus a €5m add-on.

PSG are not willing to meet the €70m request by Inter Milan which may be a result of the Financial Fair Play rule, reported Sky Sport Italia.

Notwithstanding, Inter Milan are not ready to shift ground on Skriniar and would walk away if anything falls short of their expected offer from Les Parisien.

In another development, French journalist Toni Weeler said that PSG would try to wrap up Skriniar's deal before the weekend so that he can join the team on their pre-season tour to Japan.

He noted that Luis Campos, PSG Sporting Director is confident that the deal will be completed for the defender who is believed will play at the Parc des Princes in the 2022-23 season.

After Nigeria, South Africa suffer injury blow

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

South African ace striker and 2018 CAF Women's African Footballer of the year, Thembi Kgatlana has been ruled out of the 2022 TotalEnergies Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) in Morocco after rupturing her Achilles tendon against Botswana on Sunday night at the Mohammed V Stadium, Casablanca.

Kgatlana has been very impressive for Banyana Banyana of South Africa, opening her goal account against Burundi while causing several difficulties in the opponent's defensive lineup.

The country is slated in the quarter-final to face Tunisia on Thursday in Rabat but the 26-year-old, who newly signed for Racing Louisville in the NWSL, USA, and has been



out of the tournament, presents coach Desiree Ellis of Banyana Banyana an arduous task in exploiting other options for a capable replacement.

However, the South African striker is not the first to suffer a major injury blow in the WAFCON event in Morocco as Nigeria and Barcelona Femini striker, Aisat Oshoala suffered a Grade 2 Medial Collateral Ligament strain that resulted in her being ruled out of the

tourney completely. She has since returned to Spain to get herself fixed by the medical team of her club.

Confirming the incident of Kgatlana, the team's medical doctor, Rodney Mokoka disclosed that the MRI scan result proved that 2018 Women's African Footballer of the Year completely ruptured her left Achilles tendon.

"Thembi suffered a

complete rupture of her left Achilles tendon as confirmed by the MRI scan this morning," Mokoka said.

"Unfortunately, she will be out for the whole WAFCON 2022 tournament. She is due to undergo an operation back in South Africa."

"Healing will be guided by certain milestones that we have to achieve. Of course a comprehensive rehabilitation program will be in place for her, but the quicker we achieve those milestones the sooner she will be back on the field of play.

"She will start jogging in about 12-16 weeks, which is roughly three months, return to non-sport after 16-21 weeks and return to contact sport 20-24 weeks from now," the doctor explained.

Kgatlana's absence is indeed a big blow for coach Ellis and the Banyana Banyana having set a target to win their first WAFCON title in the continent.

Angella Okutoyi, first Kenyan to win Wimbledon title

Angella Okutoyi has won the doubles event at 2022 Wimbledon, becoming the first Kenyan in history to attain such a feat, The Trumpet gathered.

The 18-year-old in partnership with Dutch Rose Marie Nijkamp defeated unseeded Canadians, Kayla Cross and Victoria Mboko, in a three-set encounter to win the girls' doubles title.

According to the match report, Okutoyi and Nijkamp in the three-set thriller lost the first set 3-6 but dominated the remaining two sets, 6-4 11-9 to edge their opponent to the crown.

"It's great for me to be the first Kenyan to win a Grand Slam and to reach a final in a Grand Slam," Okutoyi said according to BBC Sport Africa.

"I'm now able to inspire most players from Kenya and Africa. I'm able to put a belief in them that they can also achieve it.

"It doesn't matter the background you come from or where you've been, it's just the belief and the dream that you can achieve it. Now I believe that we'll have more Kenyans here for sure," the Kenyan added.

Okutoyi was raised under the tutelage of her grandmother after her own mother passed on. She added that Mary, her grandmother, will be excited by the good news.

She continued: "She will be over the moon, she will be so happy for sure.

"She will be so happy. And I'm happy that I'm able to put a smile on her face," Okutoyi said.

Her triumph in the Grass Court event succeeds her

inexperience despite being her first time in the event.

She said, "This is my first time in Wimbledon and now I'm starting to love grass."

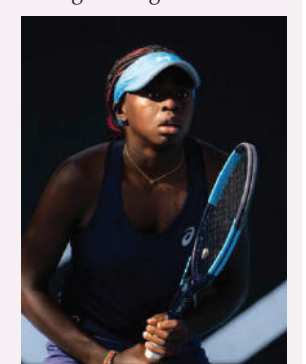
"It doesn't matter about the surface, just the belief you have in yourself, you can play on any surface. So yeah, I'm happy to play on grass for sure," Okutoyi added elatedly.

Following her victory, the first Kenyan to win at All England Club revealed that she move away from the juniors to challenge in senior events.

She said, "Ever since I was a kid, my goal was to see myself playing at the big stages, win as many Grand Slams as possible and to be the first Kenyan to be in a Grand Slam," she said. "So for me, I believe that that's going to happen.

"I have the drive to do it because my grandmother is my drive. I'm really happy that I have a person who I can look up to because she's everything to me. So I know that I can do this. And I hope for the best in the future," she added.

BBC Africa reports that Okutoyi had never played on grass before last week when she lost in the opening round of the girls' singles.



S'Falcons in Casablanca for Cameroon clash



Nigerian senior women's football team also known as the Super Falcons are already in Casablanca to take on Cameroon in the quarter-final of the TotalEnergies Women's African Cup of Nations (WAFCON) in

Morocco.

Super Falcons qualified for the stage to face their West African counterpart after they plummets Burundian women 4-0 at Stade Moulay Hassan in Rabat with a brace from

Uchenna Kanu coupled with Rasheedat Ajibade's and Peace Efihi's goals.

Recalled that the nine-time champions lost their opening match to South Africa but returned to winning ways by dealing a heavy blow to Botswana, before their last group game win.

Bayana Bayana of South Africa topped Group C having won all three matches to earn maximum points while the Super Falcon trailed with 6 points followed by Botswana and Burundi with 3 and 0 points respectively.

On the other hand, Cameroon finished in the second position behind Zambia in group B with 5

points having drawn two matches and winning Tunisia in their three group marches.

Both teams are scheduled to battle for the semi-final spot on Thursday which guarantees an automatic qualification for the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand.

Nigeria is keen on representing the African continent in the World football fiesta and had set the target before the tournament kick-started. Should they beat the Lionesses of Cameroon in the quarter-final, their objective in WAFCON would have changed to clinching their 10th AFCON title.

Chelsea offers Azpillicueta to Barca for €12m

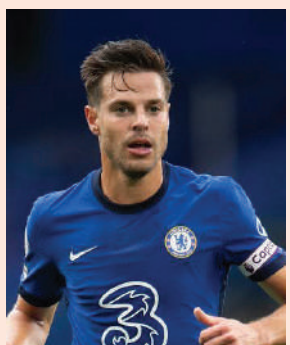
Chelsea captain César Azpillicueta continues to be a priority target for Barcelona that are eager to bolster their defensive reinforcement for the new season, The Trumpet gathered.

Firstly, it was thought easy to land the Spaniard in the Blaugrana's team but as it is, the situation is becoming more complicated as Chelsea issued a new directive.

According to a report from Spain, the West London club and last season's Premier League third-place finished team are looking to release the player but not below the €12m asking price.

Barcelona are not willing to meet the offer as the club's financial status isn't healthy enough for such transactions and this has resulted in the club bidding for players whose contract have expired in their respective clubs.

The Catalan head coach Xavi Hernandez needs Azpillicueta in Camp Nou



to bolster the right flank of his defensive lineup and is mounting much pressure on the club to see the Blues captain makes the switch.

Despite the insistence from Xavi, the club do not want to go beyond the valued limit and will decide to make an offer of not more than €8m.

Reportedly, Football Espana said that the '32-year-old joined Chelsea's pre-season tour of the United States on Sunday even though he's keen to leave Stamford Bridge and return to Spain to Barcelona'.

3SC extend unbeaten streak to 5 games

Beat league champions 3-2

Abiodun said, "We know what is on ground, our lives depend on this particular match as it will either make or mar our dream of remaining in the premier league and we are fully prepared for the match because we know anything short of victory will not be good for us.

"It is not going to be easy. We even heard they said they are coming to beat us but that will not happen here on Sunday.

"We cannot afford to fail not only ourselves but the ever-supportive government and the people of Oyo State, as well as millions of our

Shooting Stars Sports Club beat league champions Rivers United 3-2 to extend their unbeaten streak to five games in a role.

The home side has continued to put up surprising stunts to survive the relegation scare to the lower division, Nigeria National League (NNL).

Prior to the Sunday encounter with the Pride of Rivers at the Lekan Salami Stadium, said that the feelers emanating from the visitors' camp galvanised them to be at their best outing to secure maximum points.

Prior to the cracker, the captain of 3SC, Omololu Waheed Abiodun, who is abreast with the situation of the club presently, assured fans that they will give all their best to ensure the visitors are not only taken to the cleaners but in a convincing manner.



supporters all over the globe. It is going to be a fight to finish, but we will get the job done," he stated.

With the win, 3SC have now move up the NPFL league table to fourteen position with 48 points and will fight to preserve the feat when they travel to face relegation side Kano Pillars on Sunday, July 17, 2022.

“Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.”

— Leo Tolstoy

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Rivers APC chiefs quit party

By **CHRIS EZEONOH**,
Port Harcourt

■ **Princewill says 'I can' argue for equity in my state and defend inequity in my country'**

A former governor's hip candidate of the defunct Action Congress (AC) in Rivers State and Kalabari prince, Tonye Princewill, has dumped the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

Princewill, a staunch ally of the immediate past Minister of Transportation, Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi, in a letter dated July 12, 2023 addressed to the Ward Chairman of the party in Asari Toru Local Government Area said his reason for dumping the APC was the Muslim-Muslim ticket adopted by it for the presidential candidate and his running mate.

Some other Amaechi loyalists had dumped the APC in the last couple of days.

They include Hon. Dawari George, a former House of Representatives member; Hon. Golden Chioma, a former House of Assembly member; Celestine Akpobari, Ogoni and human rights activist, and Ibim Semenitari, Amaechi's former Commissioner for Information and erstwhile Acting Managing Director of Niger Delta Development Commission, NDDC.

In his letter of resignation, Princewill expressed appreciation to the former minister for the relationship they shared in the party. However, he stressed that he could not defend the muslim-muslim ticket the party has foisted on Nigerians.

He said. "I cannot defend the decision of my party, in fielding a Muslim ticket, especially at a time like this, against all protestations from well meaning Nigerians, across religious and political divides. It sets a

very wrong precedent; it is totally insensitive and even if you win, will prove bad for good governance.

"Under these dire circumstances, I find no justification to still remain, in good conscience, a

member of a political party that subordinates electoral victory, OVER the safety of lives and the peace of mind of its citizens.

"The men and women of our party here in Rivers are the most loyal and

faithful supporters I have met. They know right and they know wrong. And they know me. I enjoyed working with them and I'm so sad to leave. But an APC party that totally disregards the

basics of the same equity we preach, is alien to me. Buhari resisted the same temptation and chose a little known Osinbajo and won. By doing this, Tinubu is saying that a Northern Christian has no electoral

value. My staying means I agree.

"I wish you well. And I remain grateful to our Leader, but I cannot defend the indefensible. And to be totally honest, neither should you".

Shaibu tasks Pilgrims on 2023 elections

Acting Governor, Rt. Hon. Comrade Philip Shaibu, has charged Edo State Pilgrims travelling to Israel for the 2022 pilgrimage to pray for Nigeria ahead of the 2023 general elections.

He gave the charge while addressing the pilgrims, urging them to be good ambassadors of the state.

The Chairman of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Bishop Oyenude Kure, is leading 13 others to the pilgrimage and will be assisted by three other officials. They include the Secretary of Edo State Christian Welfare Board, Lady Brenda Ezekiel.

The acting governor remarked: "Be good ambassadors of our state and take positive steps to promote the state in the holy land. We are good people; please ensure you represent the State well."

"Our country is in serious need of prayers, as we are going through a lot of challenges as a nation. We are faced with insecurity, economic



L-R (front row): Secretary, Edo Christian Pilgrim Welfare Board, Lady Brenda Ezekiel; Chairman and Chairman, Christian of the body and state chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Bishop Oyenude Kure; Acting Governor, Rt. Hon. Comrade Philip Shaibu; Kate Mordi and Victoria Onuoha, during a programme for intending ones, at Government House Chapel, in Benin City, on Tuesday.

retrogression and other serious challenges troubling the nation.

"2023 is another election year. Let us pray for a peaceful election so we can have good leaders that can manage our human and natural resources.

"We should pray for leaders who will be able

to transform the nation, tackle insecurity and solve our economic challenges so we can move the nation forward."

The acting governor said the state will not lament but rather take action to change the narrative, noting "As you go to the holy land, remember Edo State in

prayers and pray for the governor, his executives and the entire people of Edo State."

The leader of the delegation to the holy land, thanked the governor for his commitment to Pilgrims which is proof that the state government caters to the needs of the

Christian faithful.

Kure added: "Since the commencement of the Obaseki-led administration, the State has not recorded any abscondment among the pilgrims. Fourteen pilgrims are traveling from Edo State for the 2022 pilgrimage to Israel."

Edo ex-commissioner returns to APC

A former Commissioner for Energy in Edo State, Akin Agbaje, has defected from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to the All Progressives Congress

(APC). Agbaje, who served under the administration of Governor Godwin Obaseki returned to the APC from where he joined the PDP with the latter and others.

The defector was received by former national chairman of APC, Comrade Adams Oshiomhole, at his home in Igarra, Akoko-Edo Local Government Area of Edo State.

Oshiomhole used the opportunity to warn political leaders against what he described as institutionalization of poverty among the citizens.

He noted that it is very

dangerous for a man to be the only one who can feed in his community, and that it is more dangerous for a country where only a few look unto tomorrow with hope.