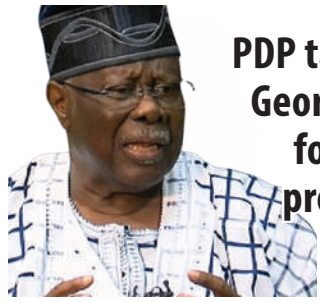


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Twists, turns as Atiku, Wike play hide-and-seek

By **TUNDE JOSHUA** (Abuja) and **CHRIS EZEONOH** (Port Harcourt)

Frantic moves for reconciliation to save the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the the 2023 electoral fortunes of its presidential candidate, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, are taking twists and turns he continues his cat-and-mouse game with Rivers State Governor Nyesom Wike.

Just when it seemed all over given some alleged hostile remarks and actions by both camps, it has emerged that the peace process may have been yielding results as gladiators in the protracted crisis are fastly closing ranks.

This is coming barely a week after both the presidential candidate of the party and governor met in Abuja,

Wike on Friday openly announced that he will throw his full weight behind Atiku.

This is contrary to insinuations that the governor is planning to subvert efforts of PDP at winning the 2023 presidency and that he instituted a legal action against Atiku's candidacy.

Wike on Friday in Port-Harcourt said he will fully support Atiku's campaign as he remain a committed party member.

The governor also denied taking legal action against the party and the candidate or removing its flag from his office. He was said to have sought Atiku's removal as presidential candidate of PDP.

Wike was quoted to have said "I don't know anything about the so-called suit. I did not ask anyone to file any suit for me.

"I don't know the lawyers. Am I a kid to be filing a suit at this time. I had 14 days after the primary within which to have filed any suit. I didn't do that then, is it two months after primary I will file a suit?

"Just yesterday they

came up with the claim that I ordered my Chief Security Officer to pull down PDP flag in Government House. This is all false, it's all propaganda. Some people are trying to use me to win the election. Please disregard all these lies."

In the purported suit number FHC/ABJ/CS/782/2022, Wike was said to have listed Atiku, Sokoto State Governor Aminu Tambuwal and the PDP as defendants, questioning the conduct of the party's presidential primary, held on May 28 and May 29, 2022, in Abuja

A member of the party, Newgent Ekamon, was said to have joined Wike as co-plaintiff in the suit in which the PDP is listed as the first respondent; the Independent National Electoral Commission as 2nd respondent. Tambuwal and Atiku are listed as the 3rd and 4th respondents respectively.

It was alleged that Wike and his co-applicant, had in the originating summons asked the court to determine eight issues including whether the purported transfer of Tambuwal's votes to Atiku by the PDP was illegal and void.

The court was asked to determine if Tambuwal lost his claim to votes the moment he stepped down for Atiku; to determine whether Tambuwal "having stepped down during the primaries ought to lose his votes."

The plaintiffs were said to have demanded from the court, nine reliefs including a declaration that the purported transfer of Tambuwal's votes to Atiku be declared null and void.

They are seeking a declaration that the PDP acted negligently and in bad faith by assigning the Sokoto governor's votes to Atiku at the primary.

They prayed the court to "cancel the transfer of votes and a corresponding



Atiku

order restraining the 3rd respondent (Tambuwal's) withdrawal in the primary was done after voting had commenced."

The plaintiffs also allegedly prayed the court to declare that the PDP and Atiku took undue advantage of Tambuwal's withdrawal when they allowed the Sokoto governor to persuade delegates to vote for the former Vice-President in the primary.

They, therefore, prayed the court to order the PDP to recount the votes of the primary that was held on May 28 and May 29.

The plaintiffs was said to recalled that during the PDP presidential primary, when aspirants were addressing delegates, Tambuwal had asked them to vote for him only to return moments later to ask them to vote for Atiku.

At the primary, Atiku polled 371 votes while Wike and Bukola Saraki garnered 237 and 70 votes respectively.

It was based on this allegations that a presidential aspirant of the party who was on the ballot at the presidential primary, Chief Dele Momodu was said

to have pleaded mostly with Wike to be mindful of the fact that such step as suing the party can destroy PDP.

Momodu admonished the Rivers governor to control his anger and be

accommodating in a party where there are divergent views.

The international publisher likened the party to a bridge which Wike has crossed to political limelight which must not be destroyed because PDP is a veritable platform on which notable Nigerians want to stand upon to transform the country.

He told Wike "even if you no longer need the bridge, what of your friends and family? I pray you kill this excessive and perpetual anger. It is getting out of hand.

Momodu advised Wike to "kill" his "excessive anger" against the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

Momodu, in a letter personally signed on Thursday, said Governor Wike should channel his anger properly rather than use it to destroy the PDP – the party he claims to love.

He said the Rivers State Governor should give his thoughts a rethink "before it is too late".

Meanwhile, the National Publicity Secretary of the party, Hon. Debo Ologunagba, said despite these, the reconciliation process in the party is ongoing and nothing can detail it.

Even with the step already taken by Wike, the NPS dismissed speculations that Rivers State governor, was planning to leave



Wike

PDP.

He said, "Wike Is an important member of this party, he is a man who has invested so much in this party, he has also harvested so much from the party, the party has also promoted him.

"He has said in so many fora that he is a committed party man and has remained loyal to the party since inception.

"Before the presidential primaries which he contested, he told the whole world that he was ready to respect the outcome of the elections. I have no evidence that he has changed his mind."

Ologunagba said unity of the party is paramount at this precarious moment with just a few weeks to commencement of the presidential campaign.

"Right now, we need to recognize the need for the party to remain united. We have a system, a robust conflict resolution mechanism, we are getting to our destination which is peace in the party and the resolution of our security challenges nationwide."

"Reconciliation is not not a 100 meters dash, it is a marathon. Nigerians have a right to expect quick fixes because they have been pillaged over the last 7 years.

"I know for a fact that there are behind the scene discussions which details cannot be put on the pages of

newspeper.

"Slowly we are getting there, we need to get away from the current state of affairs as a nation."

"We don't want to go into the election with a constitutional crisis, we have barely six months to the election.

"Elections are coming and we don't need a distraction. You can't destroy the whole for a part, we respect people's rights and positions but going into negotiations, you cannot say it is either this or nothing.

"It means you're not ready to negotiate, we don't have that in our party, we are all interested in the survival of our party and our nation Nigeria. We will look at the need to do balancing," he said.

Alluding to the fact that the unity of the party is not negotiable, Minority Leader, House of Representatives, Hon. Ndudi Elumelu said those calling for dissolution of the National Working Committee NWC or resignation of the chairman, Iyorchia Ayu do not mean well for PDP.

Speaking at an event to commemorate the year 2022 Internation Youth Day by the PDP Youth Wing in Abuja on Friday, Elumelu said members should be thinking thinking about joining hands with the leadership of the party to rescue Nigeria.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



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Twists, turns as Atiku, Wike play hide-and-seek

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

"We have implicit confidence in the leadership of our parlied by Dr. Senator Iyorchia Ayu. We are part of him, we are with him".

Meanwhile, PDP National Chairman, Dr. Iyorchia Ayu, has hailed Barrister Wike, as "a strong party man.

He accused the ruling APC of using the governor's name to institute a bogus suit against the party, describing the desperate action as "criminal."

Ayu spoke Friday in Abuja during the commemoration of the United Nations International Youth Day (IYD).

The event was put together by the Youth Wing of the PDP. In attendance, were representatives of Nigerian youths from all walks of life.

Hailing Wike for promptly coming out to dissociate himself from the said suit, Ayu advised the party faithful to be wary of APC's divisive manipulations.

"His Excellency, Gov. Nyesom Wike never took the party to court. It is the APC that did it. The first name in the case is a coordinator of the presidential candidate of the APC.

"We know very well that they don't believe they can win any election. They have decided to divide you. But don't let any APC manipulation divide you.

"They are the ones sponsoring false stories of crisis in PDP. PDP has no crisis. It is a united party.

"Anyone who thinks they can come and brew crises here is deceiving himself. They should wait for us till next year. In February, we will show them that they are the ones with crises.

"I want to make this clear before people start saying: Oh, Wike took the party to court.' Wike is a strong party man.

"And I am happy

that he came out immediately to deny that he took the party to court. And very soon, the truth will be revealed because it's a criminal thing," Ayu was quoted as saying in a statement by Simon Imobo-Tswam, Special Adviser to the PDP National Chairman (Media and Communication).

The event was attended by Atiku and other members of the party's National Working Committee (NWC), including its Youth Leader, Alh. Muhammed Suleiman.

All speakers harped on the imperative of rescuing the country in 2023, and restoring Nigeria to her glory.

Wike had also on Friday warned Atiku to be mindful of the governors and party members hanging around him.

The governor gave the advice while speaking at the commissioning of the legislative quarters of the members of the Rivers State House of Assembly in Port Harcourt.

The governor accused those he described as "favour seekers" who hang around Atiku as the masterminds of such plots in their bid to tarnish his (Wike's) reputation.

Wike said: "But I want to tell the candidate, it is the candidate's groups that are doing all these things. Let the world hear, they are the ones plotting all these things, thinking that they will spoil my name, you cannot.

"Those of you who are plotting and saying that I went to court instead, for you to have come out now to say Wike went to go court, I say shame on you. Shame will be on all of you.

"I have told the candidate, you will win or lose this election because of people around you. The legal adviser of the party called me and I told him that he knows that there is mischief going on.



Ayu

But that he knows me very well, if I'm going to court, it is not those kinds of lawyers that I would have used and I don't even know the lawyers."

Wike noted that there is a bigger challenge ahead, and it is how to win the 2023 general election for the PDP. This concern should be the focus of all true lovers of PDP who want electoral victory.

"You're supposed to be talking about how you will win election. All these rent seekers around him are not doing him any favour. Rather they are trying to make him not to win election. But if that is what they wished, I wish them good luck.

"You see that I am not talking. I am doing my work, so leave me to do my work. Those concocting ideas every day, social media cannot make you to win election.

"Election is about the people and by the people. Let those in Abuja with you (Atiku), tell them to go home and campaign for you to win election. Leave Wike alone, enough is enough."

Wike recalled that during the 2019 general elections, the same people claiming to love the PDP more now in South-South, sabotaged the party's winning chances in the region.

He lamented that

instead of them, particularly the governors, to plot on how to win the 2023 election, they are joining in wasting the time plotting accusations that they would level on him.

"When I see people talking about PDP today, I say to myself what is going on in this world. In the South-South, they all betrayed us. President Muhammadu Buhari wouldn't have won the 2019 election because he wouldn't have had the spread.

"But all the States in the South-South made Buhari to have 25 percent. It was only Rivers State that did not give Buhari 25 percent; I am challenging anybody on it."

Wike said the action of those persons who gave President Buhari the winning margin in 2019 invariably also frustrated the winning chances of the PDP candidate then.

The governor pointed to how he had urged Atiku to look carefully at the governors around him and understand why they worked against his victory in 2019.

"Today, I see people talk about PDP. When we were supposed to have won election in PDP under Alhaji Atiku. Rivers State gave the highest votes, Rivers State gave the highest

support in terms of logistics too. Let anybody come and contradict me."

"I told Atiku the other day, I said to him, all these governors that you think they are working with you, what happened in 2019. Nobody wants to say the truth.

"I have said it, everybody, go to your State and deliver. It is operation deliver your State. It is not to just talk. It is not to stay in Abuja. I don't stay in Abuja, I don't sleep there.

"I am here (Rivers) everyday with my people. I will tell Rivers people to demand for report card. See my report card, they are the projects we are delivering. I will tell them see why you will vote for our governorship candidate. See why you will vote for all the other (PDP) candidates."

Wike said he was busy inaugurating projects that have been completed for the benefit of Rivers people, and would start politicking and choke his opponents.

The governor also expressed doubt if the National Assembly members would have the guts required to impeach Buhari as they have threatened to do.

This is because, he noted, they have not been firm in their role to check the excesses of the presidency and wondered if the current threat is not another gimmick to deceive Nigerians

Wike said it was imperative for him to have invited House of Representatives Speaker Rt. Hon. Femi Gbajabamila who, as a friend, had supported Rivers State government to get the refund from the Paris club. Part of the money, Wike noted has been expended on the Rivers State Assembly Quarters.

Inaugurating the project, Gbajabamila noted that housing

facility will definitely provide conducive residences for members of the Rivers State House of Assembly.

Gbajabamila described the project as a worthy achievement that will long impact the performance of the legislature in the state and stand to the credit of the men and women who envisioned and executed it.

"The highest test of our democratic experiment lies in our ability to deliver policies and programs that improve the lives of our people. And we achieve this objective by building ladders of opportunity that allow them to achieve the highest aspirations of their hearts.

"If we can accomplish this, we have justified our public service; if we fail, nothing else will matter. With this project, His Excellency Nyesom Ezenwo Wike has demonstrated his recognition of the vital role of the legislators in a functioning democracy.

"It now falls to the present and future legislators to live up to the high expectations of their office and justify the confidence reposed in them."

Speaker of the Rivers State House of Assembly, Rt Hon. Ikuinyi-Owaji Ibani, said in his 16 years now in the assembly, he had not seen such gesture shown to the legislative arm of government in the State.

"I have not seen anything like this. Governor Wike also built an iconic residence for Speaker of the Rivers State House of Assembly. This is added to this 32 units of 4bedroom duplexes.

"This is what he does, as a leader, who does not attack democratic institution that has benefitted him. Governor Wike is a leader that can encourage, improve and bring about superior status to democratic institutions for the good of the nation."

Endless wait: Seven years after, Akpaka family still in search of justice over sister's suspicious death

■ Alleges sabotage by police, doctors, MDCN, others ■ Accuses Health Ministry workers, other state officers of obstructing justice

By CHARLES ONYEKWERE,

Members of the Akpaka family of Umueze, Nimo, in Njikoka Local Government Area of Anambra State, have continued to cry out for justice over the mysterious death of their sister, Mrs Rita Ugwuegbulam (nee Akpaka), as well as to seeking explanation over a mysterious abdominal incision later discovered on her body.

The family also accuses certain persons and institutions of plotting tirelessly to obstruct justice in the suspected murder of the deceased.

The petitions obtained by The Trumpet indicate that the entities which the bereaved family are making accusations against the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN), men and officers of the Nigerian Police Force Enugu State Police Command (Homicide Department), Dr S.A.R. Ohayi of Enugu State University Teaching Hospital and Dr Victor A. Osiatuma of Federal Medical Centre Asaba, Delta State.

The deceased, Rita Ugwuegbulam, who was married to one Raymond Ugwuegbulam, was said to have died under suspicious circumstances on May 22, 2015, at her matrimonial home in Enugu.

The bereaved family believes that the husband, Mr Ugwuegbulam, may have had a hand in the death of their sister in view of certain alleged actions and inactions prior to and after her death.

Since then, the bereaved family has relentlessly battled to win justice for her, all to no avail, more than seven years after her death.

The Intrigues surrounding the autopsy had the bereaved family demand for explanations from Ugwuegbulam, regarding what they considered suspicious circumstances surrounding the death of his wife, but he was not forthcoming with any reasonable explanation.

In a letter written by the family, obtained by The Trumpet, Dated May 25, 2015, and signed by the four Akpaka brothers (John, Mike, Chris and Joe), the letter demanded, among other things; that Mr Ugwuegbulam furnish his in-laws with the report of a medical diagnosis which he said had proved that his deceased wife was pregnant instead of having a suspected fibroid growth in her womb.

This includes a copy of a supposed CT scan which he was said to have promised to give to one of his in-laws, Chris, but never did.

The family also requested for explanations as to why their sister was not taken to any hospital during the period when she was sick preceding her death. The writers stated "We would like to know what killed our sister. Since she was never taken to a hospital, everything up to this point is mere speculation."

Believing that their in-law was not willing to offer the demanded explanation, the bereaved family took their next step. "When our

brother-in-law would not answer our questions regarding the circumstances surrounding our sister's death, we asked him for an autopsy. When he would not cooperate with us for an autopsy, we demanded for the body to conduct the autopsy ourselves.

On retrieving the body from him, we discovered a crude incision on the corpse. We had no previous knowledge of the incision. We immediately reported the case to the Police Commissioner, Enugu State, for investigation to determine the cause of her death," said Chris, a member of the Akpaka family.

"The family informed that they started suspecting foul play from the moment the autopsy was agreed upon as the police insisted they would appoint the pathologist who would conduct the post-mortem and that the family would not be permitted to bring their own expert even if only as an observer.

"Dr S. A. R. Ohayi of the Enugu State University Teaching Hospital was appointed by the police for the autopsy. However, following the family's insistence, Dr Godwin Molokwu, a physician appointed by the Akpaka family, was allowed to observe the process. The autopsy was eventually conducted on October 16, 2015.

"Nonetheless, the result of the autopsy rather than help resolve the suspicion surrounding Mrs Ugwuegbulam's death, created further suspicion and compounded the intrigues that had been unfolding".

The family complained that the result did not capture the cause of the deceased's death, which they claimed, was the primary reason for their seeking and paying for an autopsy in the first place. To verify the allegation, a copy of the said autopsy report dated October 27, 2015 and signed by Dr Ohayi was obtained, a close scrutiny of the document showed that information as to the cause of the deceased person's death was conspicuously absent.

But Dr Ohayi has denied the bereaved family's assertion as to the purpose of the autopsy. In a statement of defence filed with the Medical and Dental Practitioners Investigation Panel, he claimed that the family had told him that they were only interested in knowing whether all the organs of their dead sister were present and not what caused her death.

The deceased family, however, challenged the claim, pointing out that it had always been their aim to uncover the cause of their sister's death given the suspicious circumstances surrounding that, and that their intention was always clearly made known to the police, Dr Ohayi and every other person that has been involved with the matter.

A copy of the first petition written by the family to the Enugu State Commissioner of Police through their counsel, L. C. Iguh, Esq, seems to confirm the family's assertion. Dated August 25, 2015, the letter concluded, "With this revelation, my clients suspect that their sister was murdered. This is therefore to most kindly request you. sir to institute an



Late Miss Rita

investigation into the cause of my client's sister's death so as to ascertain whether any heinous thing was done leading to her death."

The above also agrees with the assertion in paragraph 15 of the Further and Better Affidavit deposed to by Mike Akpaka on behalf of the Akpaka family wherein he averred that the investigating police officer (IPO), Mrs Rhoda Akpa of the Homicide Department of the force, had informed him before the autopsy that the interest of the police was to find out the cause of death with a view to uncovering possible criminal acts.

Speaking to The Trumpet, a senior police officer with the FCT police command who did not want his name in print averred that any autopsy done under the auspices of the police homicide department is for the sole purpose of unravelling the cause of death. "I am not aware of the matter you are referring to, probably because it happened under a different command, and so cannot confirm the veracity of any claims made. But one thing I can confidently say is that the police homicide department was established for the sole purpose of investigating and unravelling suspected murder cases.

"Any autopsy conducted under its authority is for the purpose of investigating a murder case. "So, I would be very surprised if a pathologist appointed by the same homicide department performed an autopsy in such a way that left out the very key objective the police was pursuing, which is finding out the cause of death," he said.

This was not the end of the intrigues surrounding the report of the autopsy performed on the body of late Mrs Ugwuegbulam. The family also complained of the vagueness of the report regarding which organs of the body were intact or missing. According to the report as authored by Dr Ohayi, a "structure that appears fairly very large" was removed around the uterine wall.

The deceased family expressed their astonishment as to why Dr Ohayi failed to mention the particular "structure" that was removed and challenged him to demonstrate that the said "structure" did not include ovaries and the fallopian tube as suspected by them.

But Dr Ohayi's autopsy report stated that "Organs (of the deceased) are anatomically complete and in their normal

(anatomic) positions."

Intriguingly, however, the finding is contradicted by the report produced by Dr Molokwu who observed the autopsy session on behalf of the Akpaka family.

His report dated November 1, 2015 states (in the 2nd and 3rd paragraphs): "I am surprised that the pathologist did not capture the absence of the two fallopian tubes and the two ovaries, which he substituted with 'a structure that appears fairly very large (by the space created) was avulsed from each of the left and right sides of the uterus,' which he described as normal - a subtle way of hiding the truth that the fallopian tubes and ovaries were absent... In my opinion, what happened on autopsy day was a mere exercise that lacks detail that will ascertain the cause of death."

In an affidavit deposed at a Magistrate Court of Anambra State, Abagana, Dr Molokwu gave his account of what had transpired on the autopsy table. In the 11th paragraph, he averred as follows: "That Dr Ohayi brought out the stump of a uterus with left and right incisions marking the position of the two fallopian tubes that were removed and called it complete but could not show me the amnesia (the two fallopian tubes and the ovaries)."

Instructively, Dr Molokwu has alleged that the police and Dr Ohayi had made frantic efforts to exclude him from the autopsy, and even when he was eventually allowed to be in the autopsy room, Dr Ohayi was "uncooperative" all through. But Dr Ohayi has denied these claims, alleging that he was only initially concerned that he was not given any prior information that a doctor was coming to observe the procedure on behalf of the deceased's family.

The family, however, described Dr Ohayi's claim as "a blatant lie" insisting that he was part of the negotiation and the consequent agreement that the family could bring an observer since the police did not accede to their request to bring their own pathologist.

Also speaking, Dr Molokwu gave a detailed account of how Dr Ohayi remained hostile and acted in a suspicious manner all through. "We scheduled the autopsy for 9am I got there around 8.30 am but was kept waiting by Dr Ohayi till about some minutes past 1 pm I even saw him dilly-dallying with the man suspected to have killed Mrs Ugwuegbulam (nee Akpaka) for about two hours. At some point, I was losing patience... When Ohayi eventually came and the autopsy was about to start, I brought out my ward gown which I had held folded all along. As I started putting it on while walking towards the man (Ohayi), he started shouting 'Who are you? Who are you?' Chris Akpaka's brother told him it was Dr Molokwu, and he became mad shouting 'I was not told Dr Molokwu will be part of this...'"

After all, said and done, the autopsy session started with Molokwu doing the observation. The medical practitioner, however, told this reporter that the police flatly prevented the photographer procured by the family from taking pictures at

the autopsy session but insisted on using their own photographer whose services the police forced the family to pay for.

Dr Molokwu revealed that his greatest shock was, however, to come when Dr Ohayi produced a report that was a complete misrepresentation of facts as witnessed by both of them regarding the missing organs of the deceased. He also revealed that the photographs which the bereaved family was made to pay for were not released to them by the police. This same allegation was also made by the family who stated that the police had told them that they had deleted the pictures.

Dr Molokwu further claimed that he had later, during a phone conversation with Dr Ohayi, appealed to his conscience to produce a report that would reflect the true findings of the autopsy regarding the missing organs, but that Dr Ohayi had asked him "do you want them to kill him?" - referring to Mr Ugwuegbulam, the in-law to the Akpakas, who would be in serious trouble if what was found on the autopsy table became disclosed. Dr Molokwu said his phone was on speak-out during this conversation, hence this implicating statement of Ohayi was clearly heard by Mr Chris Akpaka, the deceased brother, who has as well confirmed this incident to this reporter.

One imaging, two reports:

In the midst of the ensuing confusion, the family's next move was to procure a post-mortem imaging to resolve their confusion. However, this move turned out to add another twist to the episode. The deceased family told this reporter that they had, through their physician Dr Molokwu, requested for a post-mortem imaging but that the report they got from Onitsha Medical Diagnostic Centre Limited showed that what was done on their sister's body was a Thoracoabdominal CT Scan. A signed request form seen by this reporter indicates that Dr Molokwu of Due Care Hospital & Maternity, Oye Agu Abagana, Anambra State, on October 15 2015 placed a request for a post-mortem imaging to be performed on a patient named Rita Ugwuegbulam (nee Akpaka).

But more intriguing was an allegation that Dr Osiatuma had produced two imaging reports containing an irreconcilable contradiction regarding whether all the internal organs of the deceased were intact. This reporter saw two reports dated October 16, 2015, bearing the name Dr Osiatuma V. A. (Consultant Radiologist). One of the reports was without a signature and has in its 3rd paragraph the following statement, "The uterus, ovaries and contracted urinary bladder are also in place."

However, the other report bearing a signature reads in the 4th paragraph: "Both ovaries were not visualized. The fallopian tubes are usually not seen on CT scan

and as such cannot comment on it."

But why would Dr Osiatuma write two different reports of a single medical examination? The Trumpet learnt that the second result was produced days after and backdated only after Dr Molokwu had appealed to the conscience of Dr Osiatuma urging him to do the right thing for the sake of the image of the medical profession. A handwritten letter dated October 25, 2015 written by Molokwu to Osiatuma was seen by our reporter.

The writer expressed surprise that the scan report did not capture the calcification of the uterus and absence of the fallopian tube and the ovaries. "It is legal for a consultant radiologist to live to expectation. Therefore, I urge you to examine these slides critically and do a report that will save the image of the medical profession," the letter stated.

The Trumpet sought Dr Molokwu's response to Dr Osiatuma's claim that fallopian tubes are not usually seen via CT scan. He was of the view that the radiologist's choice of words was wrong. "Rather he should have said that it is difficult to see through scan," he submitted, adding, however, that better diligence and application of expertise on the part of Osiatuma would have helped in determining whether the fallopian tubes were intact or not. He mentioned that injecting a dye into the body would have helped to achieve this.

On the difference between post-mortem imaging he requested and the Thoracoabdominal CT Scan performed by Osiatuma, Dr Molokwu explained that a post-mortem imaging is meant to scan the entire body of a deceased and not just the abdomen. He expressed surprise that the Onitsha Medical Diagnostic Centre Limited failed to do a complete body scan despite charging the Akpaka family as much as 90, 000 naira. Speaking further, he noted that the scan report left some serious gaps.

"The report ought to have told us whether the wound in the abdomen occurred before or after death." Emphasising the importance of the post-mortem imaging, he said, "I told Chris (Akpaka) that I didn't want to be involved with the autopsy in Enugu unless a post-mortem imaging would be done thereafter so that whatever I would be seeing I would have a second opinion which anybody can interpret."

Even though Dr Osiatuma was given the opportunity by the Medical and Dental Practitioners Investigation Panel (MDPIP) to respond to allegations made against him by the Akpaka family and Dr Molokwu, he did not deny the accusation that he wrote two contradictory reports. An affidavit deposed to by him at the Asaba Division of Delta State High Court on February 1, 2016, was completely silent on this. Rather, he merely stated in paragraph 5 that he "wrote the report of the post mortem CT scan dated 16th October, 2015 and the findings are my sincere opinion."

CONTINUED ONLINE @ www.thetrumpet.ng

How Muslims/Muslim ticket may wreck Taraba APC's train

By **SURU CHARLES**

Dreams of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Taraba state triumphing over the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), especially in the presidential election come 2023 polls have no doubt begun to gradually fade away.

The party's choice of Muslim/Muslim presidential candidate, as noticed by *The Trumpet*, is doubt the major reason why the party's dreams may no longer make headway in the state.

At the time of filing this report, various persons who spoke on the issue, some of whom include chieftains of the APC, agreed that the party's hope of winning the presidential election in Taraba is now a mirage.

Some of the chieftains of the party who spoke with our correspondent, said "I must confess to you that some of us

are also not comfortable with this Muslim/Muslim ticket that our party has ventured into."

The chieftain who believed that the chances of the party's presidential candidate triumphing in the state "are now becoming slim" is however still optimistic that the party will triumph in both the governorship, National and state House of Assembly polls.

"Though this will no longer be easy for us because our people have already been grieved by Tinubu's choice of running mate, but I still see APC having an edge over the PDP in the governorship, National Assembly and the state House of Assembly elections."

Another chieftain of the party who also sorted for anonymity for fear of being indicted for anti-party urged the leadership of the party at the national level and its presidential candidate not to include Taraba among

the states APC is hoping to win.

"Frankly speaking, if I am in a position to advise them, I would ask them not to even come here for their presidential campaign because no amount of money or persuasions would make Tarabans vote for Tinubu." The chieftain said.

On their part, the leadership of the state chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), who is as well not pleased with Tinubu's choice, has vowed to tread extra legitimate miles to frustrate his presidential ambition in the state.

The state body of the association made its position known through its chairman, Isaiah Magaji Jirapye, said it would ensure its members do not vote for the pair.

Citing Tinubu's action as "capable of causing disunity among religious groups in the country" the association affirmed that "We cannot vote for any candidate who is failing even at the early stage".

Stressing that "the association does not want a religious crisis in Nigeria" CAN, who according to him "are peace-loving people" he said "would continue to embrace peace" but vowed to go against "whoever



Ahmed Bola Tinubu

that has portrayed to be against the peace between religious groups in the country."

"Tinubu's action" according to Taraba CAN "is proof that he doesn't want the peace of this country and is a religious bigot who has been hiding his face in a certain cover" adding that "but God has decided to expose him."

Tinubu's Muslim/Muslim ticket decision" as viewed by CAN "is an idea to tell the entire world that there are no Christians in Nigeria, and is an

idea that is coming to divide the country so, we would not allow it to see the lights of the day."

The northeast leaders of the party have however disagreed with the threats of Taraba CAN, drumming that the decision of Tinubu, is the best thing that has happened to the region in recent times.

Describing Tinubu's choice as the best thing that has happened to the region in recent times, the northeast National Vice Chairman of the party, Mustapha Salihu believed that his action would attract more supporters for the party, especially from the region.

Shettima's choice, according to him "has given the APC North East Zone the added energy to rally our party supporters, members and all stakeholders in the zone towards actualising Tinubu's presidential bid."

Rather than dragging Tinubu to the slaughtering slabs, he suggested that he should "be commended for once again being a staunch democrat and progressive going by his wide engagement and consultation with stakeholders which paved the way for his eventual choice of Senator Shettima as running mate."

"Why former House of Representatives Majority leader was suspended," Borno APC

By **SURU CHARLES**

The leadership of the Borno State chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC), has finally broken silence on the suspension of the former Minority leader in the Lower chamber of the National Assembly, Mohammed Kumalia.

In a letter made available to *The Trumpet*, Kumalia was suspended following his alleged anti party activities.

The lawmaker who *The Trumpet* observed to have been representing Maiduguri federal constituency at the House of Representatives, was last Monday suspended by his Limanti ward.

The party's state Working Committee who confirmed his suspension via a letter signed by the state Publicity Secretary, Makinta Zarami, said the claim by the lawmaker that he has tendered a letter of resignation to the party was an afterthought.

Apart from describing the letter as an afterthought, the committee was also observed denied not to have received the lawmaker's resignation letter.

Part of the committee letter reads "your purported letter of resignation dated 21st day of March 2022, was not received by the party, either in the ward, local government or state secretariat of our party."

Affirming that "your letter was an afterthought to cover up your deficiencies" the party, according to the state working committee "states that you remain suspended following the allegations contained in the letter of suspension from Limanti



Mohammed Kumalia

ward."

Apart from his alleged anti party, the lawmaker was also said to have been suspended for allegedly dragging the party to court.

Such action, our correspondent learnt, was in violation of Article 21 (2) (xi) of the APC constitution 2022 as amended.

The working committee was also observed to have gone further to enumerate the lawmaker's consistent engagement in acts which they said are inimical to the party.

Stressing that such acts are contrary to the party's Article 21(2), the decision of the party to suspend the lawmaker, they believed would go a long way to save the hard earned good image of the party in the lawmaker's ward, his local government council and the state at large.

Why Gombe is relatively secure, peaceful-Yahaya

By **SURU CHARLES**

The combined efforts of security operatives and other critical relevant stakeholders have been identified as the major reason why Gombe state is relatively secure and peaceful.

The State Governor, Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya, who stated this while declaring open the state Peace and Security Summit, observed that the present security situation in the country is generally precarious, but quickly stated that "but Gombe is relatively secure and peaceful."

Citing the Nigeria Security Tracker published monthly by Eons Intelligence (A reputable Risk and Security Consulting Organisation), that stated that the State recorded the least incidences of killings, kidnapping and other violent crimes during the first quarter of this year, such feat, as made known by him, was made possible by the "combined efforts of our security agencies and other



Gov. Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya

relevant stakeholders."

Vowing not to stop working round the clock to maintain such a feat, he was optimistic that the peace and security summit will provide an opportunity for security personnel, government officials and other strategic stakeholders in the maintenance of law and order in the state to brainstorm.

He also believed that the summit would aggregate and explore pressing internal issues to identify new security and community pathways for mitigating them for lasting peace and stability.

Stressing that "we are all aware that our dear country is passing through a delicate period of immense security and economic challenges and risks" criminal elements all over the country, as stated by him "are united in their determination to threaten our common values, destroy our means of livelihood and make life brutish and miserable for our people."

While the country was struggling to arrest the menace of Boko Haram in the North-East, he expressed sadness that "another security threat in the form of rural banditry, emerged in some parts of North-Central and North-Western Nigeria with significant impact on human and the economic well-being."

Admitting that the state is not totally immune and insulated from happenings in other parts of the country, he said "We have our own share of local security threats fuelled by political thuggery, youth restlessness and unemployment which led to the emergence of the notorious Kalare group."

"The proliferation of local militia groups, therefore, calls for a proactive approach in dealing with these

emerging threats and applying local strategies for tackling them". Yahaya said.

The governor who believed that his administration had been able to contain the menace of political thuggery and youth restiveness to the barest minimum through the combined efforts of the political class, security agencies, community, religious and traditional institutions, said more still need to be put in place in order to flush out the local militia groups.

For the aforementioned dreams to come to reality, his administration, according to him has established the Gombe State Security, Traffic and Environmental Corps (GOSTEC), adding that "we aimed to employ not less than 2000 youths with the first batch of 500 corps already engaged to support the statutory agencies in the state in maintaining law and order."

This home grown initiative, the governor said is geared at "harnessing the energies of our youths in state building in line with our human capital development initiative".

More to his plans to make the state peaceful and secure for all and sundries, his government, according to him, has taken steps further by collaborating with the relevant security agencies to launch a special security task force to be named as Operation Hattara to reinforce security architecture in the entire axis of the state.

Passionately appealing to the people to extend the much needed olive branches to the security operatives, his administration on its part, he said will continue to reach out to the security agencies via the provision of logistics.

Yoruba want own nation, Akintoye writes Buhari

• Gives FG September 30 deadline to approve Self-determination

The Yoruba, occupying the six states of Nigeria's South West geopolitical zone, have again demanded severance from the country.

Foremost historian and leader of the Yoruba self-determination movement, Ilana Omo Oodua, Emeritus Professor Banji Akintoye, says the ethnic group is ripe for a separate nation to be carved out of Nigeria.

He deplored the annihilation of Yoruba sons and daughters leading to a possible extermination by alleged Fulani militias and terrorists.

He, therefore wrote President Muhammadu Buhari to demand secession on account of continual denial of self-actualization, injustices and incapacitation for self-actualization

In a letter dated August 6, 2022, Akintoye formally gave the President "notice of the decision of the overwhelming majority of our Yoruba nation and people to exercise our right to self-determination to have our independent and sovereign country separate from the country of Nigeria."

The lengthy letter sought to inform the President of the desire of the Yorubas "to commence this process of self-determination officially so as to establish our independent and sovereign country as soon as possible, hopefully in constructive dialogue with the Government of Nigeria."

"We Yoruba people solemnly and unalterably reject any arrangement that would subject us to continued membership of Nigeria," he said in the letter.

"Even much worse, Mr. President, you and we do know that, consequent upon, and beyond, all these serious distortions and devastations, a bloody and generalized war is now imminent in Nigeria.

"As these would-be conquerors and their allied terrorists continue to unleash their devastations on indigenous peoples across Nigeria, former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo (president 1999 – 2007), has publicly alerted the world that war has become inevitable, and is imminent, in Nigeria. According to countless additional sources from all parts of Nigeria, including statements and threats by terrorist and bandit groups, this final war will be triggered by a massive invasion of Abuja by a combination of terrorist and bandit forces, followed by claims by these forces that they have taken over the authority of the Nigerian federal government, and followed by a general demand that the peoples in all parts of Nigeria should surrender their homelands, and that since the indigenous peoples will not surrender their lands to the Fulani and their terrorist allies, the war will spread all over Nigeria for years to come and lead to massive refugee floods from Nigeria into most parts of West Africa, generating massive disruption, poverty and human suffering across West Africa.

"We can no longer continue to watch as we face the probable extermination of our people through the unprovoked and persistent aggression by another ethnic group with which we are living together in the same country."

Condemning the continuous invasion of the western region by people suspected to be from the northern part of the country, Akintoye said: "That the Nigerian Federal Government, in view of the serious urgency of the situation, shall, within the coming days, but not later than Friday September 30, 2022, inform us that they have graciously agreed to our proposal for negotiation and that they have set up a negotiation team that will meet and dialogue with our Yoruba nation's representatives.

"That as soon as we receive the communica-



Muhammadu Buhari

tion from the Nigerian Government, we shall forward the list of our negotiation delegates to the Nigerian Government.

"That the Nigerian Government negotiation team and our negotiation team shall meet to appoint co-chairpersons, and to agree on a date for the first negotiation meeting, the procedure, and the venue.

"That ECOWAS, the African Union, and the United Nations shall be invited to send observers to the negotiation meetings."

"Mr. President, we eagerly and most respectfully await your response to our proposal as spelt out above.

"Mr. President, we include below in this letter a Map of Yorubaland in Nigeria, depicting our desired sovereign Yoruba Nation-State," he stated.

The demand further include "Mr. President, we, Yoruba, have taken our time to consider various options available to us as a civilized people in today's civilized world. We have arrived at the most reasonable conclusion and the most sustainable option in the best interest of our people. "Throughout the past sixty years of independent Nigeria, we Yoruba, having attained to a considerably higher level of modern education and other modern developments than all other Black African nations before the coming of European colonialism and the amalgamation of hundreds of peoples to form the country of Nigeria, have patriotically and consistently made positive efforts to impact the lives of the other nationalities of Nigeria with our high standards. However, our efforts have not yielded any much of good results for our people or for the other different ethnic nations, owing to serious divergences in cultural and value orientations, amounting to a clash of cultures.

"Yoruba people have now decided to manage their own affairs and to command unencumbered control over their lives and destiny. The Yoruba are denied the opportunity to exercise their God-given rights in a Nigeria that is dragged down by a ponderous, ineffective and bloated central government that is regularly burdened by contentious religious involvements, by a powerful culture of public corruption, and by the headstrong efforts of one ethnic nation to subjugate the others. Mr. President, you might be aware, given your military service history, that in a memo in early February 1969, only nine years after Nigeria's independence, the IC (Intelligence Community advising the US Government on the Biafran war) asserted that 'further disintegration of Nigeria was likely' and that the Western World might have to live with a 'loose confederation' or 'formation of several



Professor Banji Akintoye

completely independent countries'. What we Yoruba have now chosen is formation of our own independent Yoruba country separate from Nigeria.

"Mr. President, it is essential to remind you as the president of Nigeria that during the discussions leading to the independence of Nigeria from Britain in the late 1950s, Yoruba leaders at the time strongly advocated for the inclusion of a secession clause in the constitution, but they were overruled by the colonial administration. Thus, right from the onset, the doubt about the different nationalities co-existing in one country was very clearly expressed. Present-day Nigeria amounts essentially to something like forcing the nations of the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, and Belgium together as a country and expecting such a country to function optimally.

"You would remember also, Mr. President, that all the persons who served at the top of Nigeria's affairs in the formative years of the 1950s and 1960s expressed serious doubts about the wisdom of keeping the many peoples of Nigeria as one country. Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the then foremost Yoruba leader and one of the foremost negotiators of a federal system for Nigeria, wrote at the time that 'Nigeria is a mere geographical expression - - -' and that 'if a member of a Federation became predominantly anarchistic, the other members of the Federation should, if they disagreed with such, be able to discontinue their association with the country.'

"Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the man who, as Prime Minister, headed the Nigerian federal government in the years immediately before and after Independence, said on a number of occasions before and after Independence, 'Since 1914, the British Government has been trying to make Nigeria into one country, but the Nigerian peoples themselves are historically different in their backgrounds, in their religious beliefs and customs, and do not show themselves any willingness to unite. Nigerian unity is only a British intention for Nigeria'. Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa also once said during a visit to the University College Ibadan in 1964, that the toughest part of Nigeria's insurmountable problems was the fact that the three largest Black African nations (the Yoruba, Hausa-Fulani and Igbo, each of which should be a separate country) were being forced together in one country. Even Sir Ahmadu Bello, the foremost leader of Northern Nigeria before and after Independence, once described the Amalgamation of 1914 as 'the mistake of 1914'. In August 1966, General Yakubu Gowon who had, only a few weeks before, become Nigeria's Military Head of State, made the

following very deep statement: 'Suffice it to say, putting all considerations to test – political, economic, as well as social – the basis for Nigeria's unity is not there'

"Even till today, Mr. President, the same kind of wisdom concerning Nigeria continues to be expressed with emphasis by leading Nigerians. For instance, Professor Ango Abdullahi, former Vice-Chancellor of Ahmadu Bello University, generally respected as the foremost intellectual from Northern Nigeria, said the following in a public interview in 2017, 'If Nigerians are tired of staying together, they should be prepared to accept divisions instead of remaining in agony and disappointment with one another. - - - We are always talking that the Nigeria state is not working and asking how can we make it work. And if the best option is to call for separate countries, why not?' In 2020, Alhaji Mohammed Mahdi Shehu, Chairman of Dialogue Group, Kaduna, said that the 1914 Amalgamation was done 'out of mischief without taking into consideration the peculiarities of Nigeria and that since independence in 1960 Nigeria has stumbled from one form of calamity or tragedy to another. He added that, obviously, not even an angel can ever unite Nigeria.

He added, 'It is better for Nigeria to break into smaller, smaller, countries - - - to save properties, lives, relationships and posterity. - - Let us go to the negotiation table, break the Kola, and distribute the country to everybody's peace. If we do not do it now, the future generations will curse us'. Mr. President, we Yoruba people have now painfully, and upon very careful and deep thinking, concluded that the false hope of unity promoted by the British colonial officials and imposed on all of us at Independence has not been achievable in the past sixty years of Independence. Rather, not only has unity proved impossible to achieve, outright anarchy has taken over. We Yoruba therefore seek to discontinue our association with Nigeria, and to do so in an orderly and peaceful manner.

"As you know, Mr. President, we, the Yoruba, are a well-defined and universally recognized indigenous nation or distinct ethnic group with substantial cultural and linguistic homogeneity. It is a well-known fact that we Yoruba have a rich history of accommodating foreigners and strangers in our homeland and extending to them the respect and protection required of civilized peoples, without prejudice to our rights over our territorial space and culture. Throughout our history in Nigeria, we have always respected and advocated for fundamental freedoms and human rights for all Nigerians and all Nigerian peoples. We are known worldwide for religious tolerance.

"Because we are an ancient civilization with solid modern achievements in education today, and a people with an old tradition of accepting and interacting smoothly and productively with various peoples throughout our history, we can live harmoniously with ethnic and cultural diversity in the same country. But we have painfully concluded that sustained attacks by one ethnic group on us and other ethnic groups in the same country, and a plan of conquest and subjugation by one ethnic group against the other groups in the same country, represent a conclusive negation of the existence and legitimacy of Nigeria. We can no longer bear the pain and indignity of living in constant fear and mourning, like a conquered and subjugated people, in our homeland.

PDP tackles Bode George over call for S/ West to produce party Chairman

Should Ayu resign, Deputy Chairman North, Damagum takes over, NPS corrects George

By TUNDE JOSHUA, Abuja

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has tackled the former Deputy National Chairman (South), Chief Bode George on his call for reversal of the party's national chairmanship position from the north-central to the south-west.

While Chief George wanted the position to be zoned to the south-west, the spokesperson of the party said everything should be done to let the status quo remain, arguing that any change of baton in leadership now will cause distraction to the party.

George had on Thursday on Channels Television breakfast programme, Sunrise Daily said presently, the party needs the bargaining power of the south-west zone and should be complemented with the position of the national chairman.

The party chieftain was quoted to have said "there is this process we call inclusivity. Right now the South is out of the political equation of the PDP. I'm talking as an elder of the party, I'm talking as a person who has been in the party since 1998 and who listened to the concept generated and planted by the elders. My position is if we're deviating from the culture then some of us who are still alive will be able to question and call them to remain steady on their course. This is because what is good for the goose is good for the gander.

"Now, you want me to lead a team in the South West, for me to have that bravado to go to the rostrum and tell our people that you must vote for our party. Where is that sense of inclusiveness? There are six positions in the land and those positions have been so distributed that each zone will go home with something.

"Ayu himself knows that if the Presidency comes from his own zone, he will resign so that the people in the South will have a sense of inclusivity and be part of it. Our party is designed like a human body. If the leg says I don't want to be part of the body, can it still remain a body? You know how difficult it is? Even the anus, where the excreta comes from, is so vital in the human body.

"So, what we're saying is that we need to go to our people, to reassure our people that this is still a party that is national in its outlook. There was a time you could get away with a Muslim-Muslim ticket, but our situation now doesn't beg for that. Let's do it the way it should be done so that you can bring that sense of oneness, that sense of belonging to the people. I'm not talking about whether Iyorchia Ayu did well or he didn't do well, he has done his best.

"What we're doing is that we're going back to the people, to campaign to the people, to woo their hearts and minds, what do we tell them? How do we talk to them? Nigeria of today is not like Nigeria of

2015. So, if we have a divided house and we're going out to this battle, we will be defeated."

But the National Publicity Secretary denied that the party is in disarray.

Ogunagba said George was entitled to his opinion as the party being democratic, recognises and respects the right of every member to express personal opinions which may not necessarily be a reflection of the view of a majority of members.

He said "We respect his views but his views cannot be equated with the view of the majority of Our members.

"The view of a member no matter how highly placed cannot equate to that of the majority of members.

"Right now, we need to recognize the need for the party to remain united. We have a system, a robust conflict resolution mechanism, we



Ayu

are getting to our destination which is peace in the party and the resolution of our security challenges nationwide."

Speaking on the call for the dissolution of the NWC, and



George

the resignation of Ayu, he said such a call will create an irreconcilable crisis in the party saying what PDP need now is unity.

He said, "we don't want

to go into the election with a constitutional crisis, we have barely six months to the election.

"Even if you say Ayu should go today, his replacement comes from the same north.

"There has been precedence when (Umaru) Yar'adua became our candidate (2007), Ahmadu Ali, a fellow northerner was national chairman and remained so until the party won the 2003 elections.

"Several organs of the party have met on different occasions and have passed a vote of confidence on his leadership and the National Working Committee.

"Elections are coming and we don't need a distraction. You can't destroy the whole for a part, we respect people's rights and positions but going into negotiations, you cannot say it is either this or nothing.

"It means you're not ready to negotiate, we don't have that in our party, we are all interested in the survival of our party and our nation Nigeria. We will look at the need to do balancing."

In the like manner, the House of Representatives Minority Leader, Hon. Ndudi Elumelu said such a call for the dissolution of the NWC is not in the interest of the party.

He said "those who are calling for the dissolution of NWC do not mean well for the party"

Rather, he said "they should be thinking about joining hands with the leadership of PDP in the mission to rescue Nigeria.

"We have implicit confidence in the leadership of our party under the leadership of our chairman, Senator (Dr) Iyorchia Ayu. We are part of him, we are with him".

2023: Fubara's kinsmen in APC abandon Amaechi for Wike

By CHRIS EZEONOH, Port Harcourt

Two chieftains of the ailing All Progressives Congress (APC) in Rivers State have joined the bandwagon of defectors from the party.

The latest defectors are former state chairman of APC, Chief Davies Ibiamu Ikanya and the Publicity Secretary of the party, Warisenibo Chris Finebone.

The duo are kinsmen of the governorship candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party, (PDP), Warisenibo Nkimalayi Fubara in Opobo Nkoro Local Government Area.

They visited the state governor, Nyesom Ezenwo Wike at his private residence in Port Harcourt Thursday evening where they met behind closed doors.

However, it was gathered that the two former arch

rivals of PDP pledged to work to ensure that their 'brother' wins the governorship election which according to them would help to change the landscape of Opobo and Rivers State in general.

It was learnt that they also used the occasion of the visit to extract a commitment from the governor towards doing the Opobo Ring Road.

"It was God that has made your son to be the

governorship candidate of our party. The same God will make him win to His glory. I did not plan it, but God did it. Opobo people should be thanking God for His mercies", Gov. Wike was quoted to have said this during the private meeting.

The last outing of Finebone for the APC was the press conference he addressed in reaction to the gale of defections in the party.

He had during the press conference blamed the woes of the APC in the state on Gov. Wike and Senator Magnus Abe whom he said had been working in cahoots to destroy the opposition party in the state.

There is no doubt that the exit of Finebone in particular would rob the APC of the yeoman's job he was doing for the party as spokesman with a gift of the garb.

FG'll give priority to high employment generating sector - SGF

By GABRIEL ELOZINO, Asaba

The Federal Government has said it will continue to give priority to high employment generating sectors, business improvement environment and youth development. The Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Mr Boss Mustapha, disclosed this in his remarks at the 2nd Quarterly meeting of Secretary to Government of the Federation and Secretaries to State Governments held at the Unity Hall, Government House, Asaba.

According to Mustapha, social investment programmes will continue to be given the required attention, adding that the active support and collaboration of sub-national governments was very critical as we strive to resolve the present economic challenges of Nigeria. He said the quarterly forum meeting strives to build the required synergy between the federal and state bureaucracies in order to enhance harmony and improve the relationship between the tiers of government. He noted that the forum provides an atmosphere for critical discussions and policy articulation,

experience sharing, peer review and adaptations. He said, "In addition, the feedback process is also in place where citizens participate to have a greater say in public decision-making as well as the desire by many governments to improve inclusivity and responsiveness led to calls for more openness in governance.

"Pursuant to this, the federal government has been collaborating with an international transparency and accountability organization known as the Open Government Partnership [OGP] to ensure that budget planning, approval, implementation monitoring and reporting meet the needs of citizens and that citizens have open access to budget information in a format that is both human and machine-readable.

"To improve accountability and transparency of the government procurement process through the implementation of open contracting and public participation in the public contracting process," among others.

He encouraged state governments to key into the Open Government Partnership initiative to

enhance transparency and accountability in governance.

"The sustainable development goals are being steadily implemented and substantial progress has been attained in a number of goals, as we work towards meeting the 2030 target, States are also encouraged to partner with the federal government in this area.

"I urge you to utilize the instrumentality of your office as the policy coordination hub of government to fast-track the initiation and implementation of policies and programmes, as well as harness the various opportunities in key sectors of the economy, offered by the federal government to improve the lives and well-being of our people," Mustapha stated.

Earlier in his welcome address, Delta State Governor, Senator Dr Ifeanyi Okowa, said that effective democratic governance helps to advance sustainable development. He said the theme of the meeting "Democratic Governance and Sustainable Development in Nigeria: Opportunities in Key Sectors of the Economy" was apt as governments at all levels strive to strengthen democracy and make the

idea real.

Represented by the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Chief Patrick Ukah, Okowa commended Mr Boss Mustapha, for keeping faith with the cause of advancing the forum through continuous engagements with Secretaries to State Government. He said public service provides an incredible opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the people and urged them to use their privileged offices to improve the lives of the people in their respective states. According to him, the opportunity given to us to serve at this level of governance in the country places on us a very high sense of responsibility to deliver the dividends of democracy to our people.

"As you all know, this forum is a very stable platform to share ideas and compare notes on the implementation of national and sub-national policies and programmes of government. Opportunities in key sectors of the economy must be identified and exploited fully by all tiers of government to achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

"Indeed democratic governance is paramount for the attainment of sustainable

development and we must not lose sight of this focus. Therefore, we must uphold our democratic norms, deliberate deployment of political will and administrative expertise, values that hold us as a people and commitment in support of the attainment of sustainable development by the federal and state governments.

"We have come to listen, discuss and share ideas and to make useful contributions that will help us to achieve sustainable development for the country," Okowa stated.

Keynote Speaker and former Head of Service of the Federation, Professor Oladapo Afolabi, said to ensure good governance, rule of law, social accountability, transparency and integrity, independence and high moral values must retake the centre stage. He charged all leaders to provide direction, maintain order and put the interest of the people above self, stressing that anything contrary will be counter-productive.

Other speakers spoke on ways that the federal government has been implementing its policies and programmes for the good of Nigerians as well as the economic potential of the nation.

Falana to sue prison officials for torturing Lawyer, Effiong

● *As correctional centre denies wrongdoing*

By PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Human rights lawyer and Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), Femi Falana, has vowed to sue prison officials for allegedly torturing lawyer, Inibehe Effiong.

Effiong, also an activist, is serving a one-month prison sentence for contempt of court after asking the Chief Judge of Akwa Ibom, Ekaette Obot, to recuse herself from a case he is handling.

Falana, in a statement on Thursday titled, 'Brutal Torture Meted out to Inibehe Effiong by Nigerian Correctional Service is Unacceptable', said the chief judge had refused to provide Effiong with the certified true copies of the judgment, therefore, delaying his appeal process.

"In order to prevent Effiong from appealing against the conviction and sentence imposed on him, the chief judge has refused to furnish him with a certified true copy of her judgment in contravention of Section 36 (7) of the constitution which prescribes that every convict is entitled to a copy of the judgment of the court that tried and convicted him," Falana stated.

He said the warrant signed by the judge directed that Effiong be held in Ikot Ekpene Correctional Centre, Akwa Ibom throughout the duration of his prison term but the order of the court was secretly varied on Thursday as Effiong was forcefully transferred to Uyo Correctional Centre in handcuffs even though there was no violence on his part.

"At the Uyo Correctional Centre, Effiong was forced to sit on the bare floor while his head was shaved together with his beard. He was thereafter subjected to more horrendous



Inibehe Effiong

humiliation and paraded before all prison inmates," he added.

Falana argued that the brutal torture meted out to Effiong by the prison officials in Akwa Ibom State constitutes a violent violation of his fundamental right to dignity guaranteed by Section 34 of the constitution and Article 5 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights.

According to the learned silk, it is painful to note that the unprovoked violence unleashed on Effiong is a sad reminder of the case of Minere Amakiri, then a reporter with Nigerian Observer, the old Bendel State-owned newspaper whose head was shaved with a broken bottle in 1973 on the orders of Alfred Diette-Spiff, the then military governor of the state.

"Apart from challenging the egregious infringement of the fundamental right of Inibehe to the dignity of his person and fair hearing we shall press for the prosecution of the officials who inflicted torture on him contrary to the provision of section 2 of the Anti Torture Act of 2017. The penalty for the

offence of inflicting torture on any person in Nigeria is 25 years imprisonment without any option of fine," the activist said.

Meanwhile, the Akwa Ibom Command of the Nigerian Correctional Service has denied any wrongdoing, saying shaving Effiong's hair and beard was a security measure and routine practice.

A statement by the Public Relations Officer of the Command, Richard Metong, on Friday said Effiong is safe and unhurt, noting that the transfer was part of following the Covid-19 protocol, where all inmates upon conviction were isolated for a period of 14 days at the Uyo Custodial Center.

Metong said the Command is committed to upholding human rights and dignity of all inmates.

The statement reads, "The attention of the Controller of Corrections, Nigerian Correctional Service, Akwa Ibom State Command has been drawn to the fake report being circulated on social media that Barr Inibehe Effiong was handcuffed, assaulted and bundled into a van by officers of the Command in a bid to secretly transfer him from Ikot Ekpene Custodial Centre to Uyo Custodial Centre.

"The Command is constrained to state that this news is fake, baseless, and an attempt by mischief makers to drag the corporate image of the Service to the mud. The general public is hereby advised to ignore, discard and disregard the fake news as this is a product of rumour mongers and attention seekers.

"For the purpose of clarity, Barr Inibehe Effiong is safe, secured, unhurt, and not tortured or humiliated. His dignity and human rights are not violated in any way.

"The human rights lawyer was committed

to one-month imprisonment in Uyo Custodial Centre by the Chief Judge of Akwa Ibom State for contempt.

"As part of the efforts by the Service to prioritize the health and welfare of the inmates in custody and in adherence to the Covid 19 protocol, all inmates, upon remand or conviction, are isolated for a period of fourteen (14) days at the Isolation Block in Ikot Ekpene Custodial Centre before they are transferred to any custodial centre in the state to which they are sentenced.

"Barr Inibehe Effiong, upon completion of his 14 days isolation period in Ikot Ekpene, was transferred to Uyo Custodial Centre on Wednesday 10th August 2022 where he is to serve the remaining part of his term as indicated in his warrant.

"Prior to the transfer, he was duly informed and was assisted by the officers of the service who escorted him to the waiting van in which he was peacefully conveyed to Uyo Custodial Centre. On arrival at Uyo, he was duly admitted into the facility and was also informed of the need to cut his hair and beards as a security measure as well as a routine practice in the facility which he obliged and willingly allowed the barber to use a clipper and not a blunt instrument as speculated on the social media.

"The Controller of Corrections hereby wishes to express the unflinching commitment of the Command to maintain and uphold the human right, dignity and well-being of the inmates, officers, and men of the service in Akwa Ibom State and also call on the stakeholders, civil society and the general public to collaborate with the Service to fully deliver on her mandates of safe, secure and humane custody as well as providing security to the society."

EFCC indicts Ministry officials for smuggling Atuche's name into pardon list

By PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Two officials of the Federal Ministry of Justice have been indicted for allegedly receiving bribes to smuggle the name of a jailed banker, Francis Atuche, into the list of convicts recently granted pardon by President Muhammadu Buhari.

The two officials, Emmanuel Fan and Lawrence Marinus were indicted by a report of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), which served in the secretariat of the Presidential Advisory Committee on Prerogative of Mercy (PACPM).

While Emmanuel Fan headed the PACPM secretariat, Lawrence Marinus was a member of the secretariat. Both were drawn from the Federal Ministry of Justice to serve in the PACPM secretariat.

One other official, who allegedly paid the bribe on behalf of Atuche is yet to be identified, however, s/he is being tracked by the EFCC, according to the report.

The 12-member PACPM headed by the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami, had recommended 162 convicted persons for pardon and other forms of clemency in a list sent to President Buhari and the Council of State on 14 April.

However, the Council of State approved pardon for 159 of the recommended persons in April while rejecting the names of three others.

One of the three rejected names was Atuche, the former Managing Director of Bank PHB, who was, in June 2021, sentenced to six years in prison for stealing the bank's N27 billion.

Atuche was, on the PACPM's list submitted to the Council of State, "recommended for clemency on the grounds of life-threatening ill health." But the recommendation was rejected by the Council of State.

However, Malami, on 6 June, sent a petition

to the EFCC alleging that the PACPM's final report was "doctored/tampered with" to include Atuche's name.

According to the AGF, whose petition presented "a case of conspiracy, abuse of office and corruption", pointed an accusing finger at the PACPM secretariat.

He explained that the PACPM's list, which was finalised in November 2021, was referred to the secretariat for production and onward transmission to President Buhari and the Council of State for consideration and ratification.

EFCC subsequently arrested and interrogated some of the members of the PACPM, the PACPM secretariat and the ACJRD.

A source at the EFCC who pleaded anonymity said that the "investigation into the smuggling" of Atuche's name into the list of the "Presidential Advisory Committee on Prerogative of Mercy has been concluded."

The report of the EFCC investigation, which was addressed to Malami indicted the head

of the PACPM secretariat, Fan, and another member of the secretariat, Marinus, saying both colluded to include Atuche's name in the PACPM's list.

Marinus, according to the report, received money from Fan and the yet-to-be-known agent of Atuche. The report, however, did not name the amount of money allegedly given in the bribery scandal.

"Investigation, so far, has revealed that Emmanuel Ishaku Fan conspired with Lawrence Marinus to include the name of Francis Atuche in the final report of PACPM submitted to the President and the Council of State for consideration and ratification.

"The investigation has also established that Lawrence Minus received money from both Emmanuel Ishaku Fan and a yet-to-be-verified agent of Francis Atuche to perfect the plan, while Emmanuel Ishaku Fan is in direct contact with the so-called agent of Francis Atuche," the report said.

The report further said efforts are in top gear to arrest other co-conspirators for prosecution.

It also absolved the acting Director of the Administration of Criminal Justice Reform Department of the Federal Ministry of Justice, Leticia Ayodele-Daniel, and Grace Okewole.

The report said Mrs Ayodele-Daniel and Ms Okewole "have not been found to be criminally liable."

Meanwhile, Fan denied any wrongdoing, saying he was yet to be informed of the outcome of EFCC's investigation.

"I am not aware of my indictment by the EFCC. I know nothing about the allegation.

"I am not aware of any outcome of EFCC's investigation over the allegation. We were only invited and questioned. Since then, we have not received any information that I have been indicted.

"I'm shocked to hear that I have been indicted (by the EFCC)," Fan said.

Court jails Corps member for cybercrime, forfeits house, car, others to FG

● *As aluminum fabricator bags 6 months imprisonment*

By PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Justice Ibrahim Yusuf of the Kwara State High Court sitting in Ilorin has convicted and sentenced a Corps member, Adetuberu Christopher Adetoyese, to two years imprisonment for internet-related fraud offences.

Adetoyese, who is 28 years old, is currently serving the mandatory National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in Ogbomoshosho, Oyo State.

Justice Yusuf, on Thursday, August 11, 2022, found Adetuberu guilty of the two counts preferred against him by the Ilorin Zonal Command of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission

(EFCC).

This was disclosed in a statement by the EFCC's spokesperson, Wilson Uwujaren, on Friday.

According to Uwujaren, while sentencing Adetuberu, the court ordered the forfeiture of the 3-Bedroom flat acquired with the proceeds of the illegal activities, a Lexus car, different brands of phones, and a laptop, which are instruments of the crime as well as the sum N921,535.49 in his bank account to the Federal Government.

The judge, who however gave the convict an option of a fine of N200, 000 said his conviction would serve as deterrence to others.

Operatives of the EFCC while acting on

intelligence had recently arrested Adetuberu, who hailed from Ilesha, Ilesha West Local Government Area of Osun State at Ogele area of Eyenkorin, Ilorin.

The convict had in the course of the investigation revealed that he ventured into 'Yahoo Yahoo Business' in 2016 and had among other things built a house with the proceeds of the illegal activities. In a related development, Justice Yusuf also sentenced a 30-year-old aluminum fabricator, Olayiwola Tunde Saheed, who acts as 'Leader' to co-fraudsters to six months imprisonment at the Correctional Centre in Ilorin without an option of fine.

How troops killed top terrorist leaders, foot soldiers in Katsina, Borno

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

The Nigerian Armed Forces have in the last two weeks recorded major successes against terrorists and criminal elements that are waging guerrilla warfare against the country.

In a bi-weekly briefing by the Director of Defence Media Operations, Major General Benard Onyeuko, at the Defence Headquarters on Thursday, it was disclosed that a high profiled terrorist leader, Alhaji Abdulkareem Lawal (aka Abdulkareem Boss), who has been on the wanted list of the military and about 27 of his foot soldiers were killed after troops struck their hideout on 6th August 2022.

Gen Onyeuko said Lawal was responsible for several terrorists' attacks, animal rustling and kidnapping in Katsina State.

He said, "Air Component of Operation Haderin Daji on 6 August 2022 carried out successful strikes on key terrorists' enclave and hideout located at Rudu forest in Katsina State. The air interdiction led to the neutralization of a high-profiled terrorist leader who has been on the wanted list of the military named Alhaji Abdulkareem Lawal (aka Abdulkareem Boss) and his foot soldiers.

"Credible intelligence report revealed that he was responsible for several terrorists' attacks, animal rustling and kidnapping and was also known to regularly invite terrorists' groups from other areas and regions to join in the attack on his targets.

"Report gathered from the locals revealed that the terrorists' leaders were neutralized alongside 27 foot soldiers. All recovered items and apprehended bandits were handed over to the relevant authority for further action."

In a similar development, a key commander of the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), Alhaji Modu (aka Bem Bem), was also killed alongside his fighters in an airstrike carried out on 3rd August 2022.

Gen Onyeuko said a total of 20 terrorists were neutralized following the airstrike at Degbawa near Mandara Mountains in Gwoza Local Government Area of Borno State.

"Similarly, the air component of Operation HADIN KAI conducted air interdiction on 3 August 2022 at Degbawa near Mandara Mountains in Gwoza Local Government Area of Borno State. The airstrike led to the neutralization of a key Islamic State of West Africa Province Commander Alhaji Modu (aka Bem Bem) and his fighters. Information gathered from



Major General Benard Onyeuko

the locals revealed that 20 terrorists were confirmed dead in the strike at the location where the terrorists converged for a meeting before the strike.

"Accordingly, within the weeks in focus troops neutralized 29 terrorists, arrested 55 and rescued 52 civilians. Also, troops recovered 128 rounds of 7.62mm ammunition, 5 bicycles, 12 AK47 rifles, 4 motorcycles and 5 mobile phones. Accordingly, all surrendered and items recovered have been handed over to the appropriate authorities for further action," he said.

Gen Onyeuko further disclosed that troops in

conjunction with Civilian Joint Task Force also arrested Hussain Dungus, Ali Bulama Jidda and Mallam Ali Abuna, who are terrorist logistics suppliers on 6 August 2022 at and Buni Yadi general area.

"Items recovered from the suspects include the sum of One Million Seven Hundred and Ninety-Three Thousand Seven Hundred naira (1,793,700.00) only, large quantity of assorted food stuff, 3 handsets, 2 bicycles and other sundries.

"Consequently, within the week under review, a total of One Thousand Seven Hundred and Fifty-Five (1,755) Boko Haram Terrorists members and their families

comprising 280 adult males, 523 adult females and 952 children surrendered to own troops at a different location. All surrendered Boko Haram Terrorist members and their families were profiled and handed over to relevant authority," he added.

Meanwhile, troops of Operation Safe Haven between 3 and 4 August 2022 arrested 4 notorious kidnapers named Umar Zakari, Usman Hamina, Haruna Umaru and Umar Mohammed at Fuskar Mata village in Bassa Local Government Area of Kaduna State and Qua'anpan Local Government Area of Plateau State.

According to Gen Onyeuko, "The arrested kidnapers confessed to have been involved in a number of kidnapping incidents in Fuskar Mata village and Qua'anpan town, items recovered from the suspects include 1 AK47 and 10 rounds of 7.62mm special."

"Moreso, troops on 2 August 2022 while on patrol recovered 100 vandalized rail sleepers in an abandoned Peugeot boxer with registration number AGL 466 XM at Bak village in Barkin Ladi Local Government Area, troops also rescued 2 kidnapped civilians named Mr Ebuka Nnadi (30yrs old), and Mr Uchenna Edoga (25yrs old) on 4 August 2022 at Kasuwa Ali Gindiri in Mangu Local Government Area in Plateau," he added.

Colourful farewell parade as Zamfara CP, Elkanah retires

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

The Zamfara State Police Command on Thursday organised a colourful farewell parade for the State's Commissioner of Police, CP Ayuba Elkanah, to mark his historic retirement after 32 years of serving the nation in the Nigeria Police Force (NPF).

The ceremony was held at the capital city of the State, Gusau.

CP Elkanah, who was being bid farewell alongside other men and officers of the Command, received awards, commendations and gifts from officers and other stakeholders.

While presenting his farewell address, CP Elkanah appreciated God, the Inspector General of Police, IGP Usman Alkali Baba, AIG Zone 10, AIG Bello Sani Dalijan, Traditional Rulers and other stakeholders for the strength and support he was given in his service years.

"My historical service career in the Nigeria Police will not be complete without mentioning Zamfara State. This is because, only in Zamfara State Command, I serve in three (3) different capacities, First as DC CID; Second as DC Operations and above all as Commissioner of Police.

"In these periods, the successes I achieved would not have been made possible without the support and assistance of our indefatigable Governor, His Excellency Dr. Mohammed Bello MON, Matawallen Maradun, Barden Kasar Hausa and Shettiman Sokoto. I must appreciate our workaholic Deputy Governor, His Excellency, Senator Hassan Mohammed Nasha, The SSG, the Chief of Staff, the Head of Service and all Members of the State Executive Council.

"For the Speaker Zamfara State House of Assembly, Hon. Nasiru Mu'azu Magarya and all Members of the Federal and State Houses of Assemblies, I appreciate your support towards my success in the State.

"Therefore, I must thank His Excellency and his Government for this wonderful gesture. Let me use this medium to assure His Excellency that my relationship with Zamfara people will not end here, as I will continue to see Zamfara as one of my finest homes where I will be visiting from time to time," he said.

CP Elkanah said he was happy that he retired with honour and dignity while wishing his colleagues the same grace to complete their service years successfully.

"As I said earlier, today marks the end of my career as a Police officer and having retired successfully with honour and dignity. I'm excited and humbled by this privilege, and pray that all of you will one day retire and go back to your respective homes Hale and hearty.

"In achieving this, you require much sacrifice and commitment. This also includes your ability to learn from past and present experiences and try to exhibit professionalism in the discharge of your duty, and by doing so, you will gain the respect and acceptance of your host communities," he said.

NSCDC trains personnel on civilian protection, disaster management

By **PAUL MICHAEL**

The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), in a bid to boost the capacity of its personnel in Disaster and Crisis Management, has collaborated with the Centre for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) to train over 100 men.

The staff, who were drawn from the Corps' National Headquarters and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Command, were trained to properly position the agency towards response to civilians in times of emergency.

The Commandant General of the Corps, Dr Ahmed Abubakar Audi, said the programme is aimed at assisting participants in learning more techniques and

acquiring new orientation, Director of Public Relations, DCC Olusola Odumosu, stated in a statement on Thursday.

The programme with the theme "Protection of Civilian and Civilian Harm Mitigation" will further enhance the capacity of personnel to know how to manage civilians in reducing casualties when there is a crisis.

Dr Audi, who was represented by the Deputy Commandant General in charge of Crisis and Disaster Management, Dr Nnamdi Nwinyi, cited the roles played by the Corps by educating civilians on how to respond to bombings and other emergencies during the civil war in 1967, when the Corps was established as a voluntary agency then known as Lagos

Civil Defence Committee.

While stressing the need to extend the training to State Commands, tasked participants to put the knowledge acquired into use. He said the Corps is known for its deployment of a soft approach while relating with the civil populace and emphasised that the training was timely, apt and germane to the execution of the Corps' mandate.

On his part, the Country Director, CIVIC-Nigeria, Benson Olugbuo, appreciated the NSCDC for its ability, energy, ideas, expertise and responsibility of protecting national critical assets and infrastructure.

Olugbuo explained that CIVIC-Nigeria was established in 2016 and that since then it

has worked mainly in Borno State, Abuja and Kaduna State.

He said CIVIC envisions a world in which no civilian is harmed in conflict and supports communities affected by conflict in their quest for protection.

"We also strengthen the resolve and capacity of armed actors as well as international and multilateral institutions to prevent and respond to civilian harm.

"We believe that civilians are not 'collateral damage' and civilian harm is not an unavoidable consequence of conflict - civilian harm can and must be prevented.

"We believe that civilians are not merely victims of conflict but have agency and influence in ensuring that their protection needs are met," he

added.

He declared that the workshop was to enhance the capability of NSCDC to take every feasible precaution to mitigate civilian harm, and in the event of accidental and or incidental harm, encourage the practice of making amends.

"The training is to enlighten participants on the principles of protecting civilians and civilians harm mitigation, enhancing participants' understanding of the strategic value of protecting civilians.

"It is aimed at achieving security objectives in asymmetric operations while at the same time introducing the concept of civilian harm tracking and its benefits to security forces", the Country Director said.

Police Reform: NPF commences implementation of POSSAP

By **PAUL MICHAEL**

As part of its efforts toward reformation, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), has commenced the implementation of the Police Specialised Services Automation Project (POSSAP).

POSSAP is designed to automate the processing and management of the specialised services of the Force such as specialised Escort and

Guard services, Police Extract, Police Character Certificate, Supernumerary Police Permit, Fingerprint Information, Police Investigation Report, among others.

Force Public Relations Officer, CSP Olumuyiwa Adejobi, who disclosed this in a statement made available to The Trumpet on Thursday night, said with the implementation of this

POSSAP, individuals and corporate entities who require specialised services rendered by the Police are guaranteed access to these requests via an automated, seamless, transparent and efficient process.

POSSAP was approved by the Federal Executive Council (FEC) following a memo presented by the Hon Minister of Police Affairs on the 14th of

July, 2021.

Subsequently, POSSAP was launched on the 2nd of June, 2022 by the Honourable Minister of Police Affairs, Dr Maigari Dingyadi on behalf of the Federal Government at the Goodluck Jonathan International Peacekeeping Hall, Force Headquarters, Abuja.

According to Adejobi, "The goal of the project is to simply

automate the rendition of existing specialised services processes and reap the added benefits of improved transparency, accountability, efficiency and sustainability that technological solutions deliver. It will also benefit the Force by minimizing dependence on the Federal Government for funding and improving the welfare of personnel."

NDDC: Continued delay to inaugurate board repulsive, recipe for violence - Groups warn FG

By **GABRIEL ELOZINO**, Asaba

Niger Delta groups, Community Development Committee of Oil and Gas Producing Communities of Niger Delta (CDCOGPCND) and Mothers of Oil and Gas Producing Communities of Niger Delta (MOGPCND) have described the continued delay in inaugurating the Board of NDDC as becoming repulsive to the people of the region.

In a joint Press Statement signed by Joseph Ambakederimo, Chairman Board of Trustees, CDCOGPCND and Lady Happy Kagogo, Convener of MOGPCND, the group stated that the "process of appointing a substantive board has been completed a long time ago," and that "what is going on in the NDDC is repulsive and all people of good conscience must condemn and oppose it."

The group held that the Federal Government was deliberately taking the people of the region for granted over time, again and again, adding that, it was ready to disappoint the government

on its plan to instigate fresh hostilities in the region.

It said, "It seems the government and its agents only understand the language of violence and destruction, but we will not give in to such provocation

"Whatever they think they are doing, the import of it is that they have completely destroyed the integrity and high esteem of President Muhammadu Buhari in the region. The President's hands have been misdirected too many times by his appointees. There should be consequences on the part of those who have entrenched this kind of behaviour with impunity. Certainly, this attitude of I don't care is a recipe and a call to violence.

"The patience of the people of the region is running thin, any moment from now the government should accept whatever comes out of the frustrations of the people without any fault of theirs. All indicators on ground are pointing to a possible turmoil that may erupt in the region. We have made representation to the

Minister on this but our concerns have been treated with levity so far.

"The resources that have accrued to the NDDC and have been mismanaged under this illegal sole interim administration will soon dry up as a result of the continuing impunity for not wanting to acquiesce to due process and allow a board with the enabling law to administer the Commission for the benefit of the people of the region who are the ultimate beneficiaries of a working and democratic NDDC.

"We have been taken on a circus show for too long and the Minister (Niger Delta Affairs) must understand that there comes a time when the people will come out of their cocoon and force the government to do what is right. In this instance, it is to inaugurate the standing board without further delay.

"The process of appointing a substantive board has been completed a long time ago, but to allow the appointees assume work has become confrontational with no clear cut reason only for a phantom forensic audit to be announced. If President Buhari must know, the resources of the commission have far more been mismanaged or stolen under the illegal occupation



Obong Umana Okon

of the Commission by Interim Management Committees /Sole administrators than the entire period covered by the audit.

"What is going on in the NDDC is repulsive and all people of good conscience must condemn and oppose it. Even when we believe that we now have a man of good conscience and an incorruptible man in the person of the Honourable Minister, Obong Umana Okon Umana, it seems he too has

been indoctrinated wrongly to tow the path of his predecessor who showed absolute disdain to due process.

"We urge the Minister not to take the bait sold to him by those who do not wish him and the entire region well. An appointed and Senate confirmed board is standing and waiting to be inaugurated and that should happen as soon as possible to help tone down the renewed anxiety for violence and destabilisation in the region.

"We should not forget quickly what has happened in the past in the region which should be a guide and direction on how very important issues that affect the region and its people are addressed. Never again must we encourage the path to stifle the economy of this country by ways of untoward action. We have had enough troubles on our plate and no more should be added as there will be dire consequences for the nation.

"We must continue to express our disgust and revulsion to what is happening in the NDDC until the right thing is done. Enough of this trajectory we all seem to be trying to accept as normal when in the true sense of the word it violates the NDDC Act and is morally wrong and reprehensible. We vehemently oppose the one-man show running the NDDC."

Expert highlights major challenges facing local manufacturers

Managing Director of Global Industries Nigeria Limited, Abdul Balogun, has declared that local manufacturers are grappling with several challenges despite Federal Government's assurances to improve the business and operating environment in the country.

In an interview with The Trumpet recently, Balogun said the scarcity of foreign exchange in recent months has made

manufacturing very tasking lamented that it was becoming increasingly difficult to access foreign exchange to import machinery and import raw materials to produce the needed items.

Balogun, whose Global Industries produce creams, powder and other beauty products, said the massive crash of the naira against major world currencies, especially the dollar, have made it very tasking to raise enough naira to buy dollars in the parallel market.

"Manufacturing in this country is very difficult. The inability to access forex through the Importers and Exporters (I&E) official window has made import very challenging. With the naira exchanging for as much as N700 to a dollar, how many thousands of naira will manufacturers use to convert \$50,000 to import raw materials?

"Any time I approach my bank for forex, the bank will place me on queue for weeks and sometimes months. At the end of the day, one will get about 20 percent of one's forex needs. So, the parallel market is a reliable source of forex. The only issue is the crazy amounts being quoted for just \$1," he lamented.

Balogun also identified the high cost of diesel due to the Russia-Ukraine war, as a major setback for manufacturers, adding that diesel has simply gone beyond the reach of most local companies at a time when public electricity supply has reduced drastically due to constant collapse of the national grid.

According to him, many manufacturing companies have reduced their operations to one shift, instead of three shifts, due to the price diesel is sold, while investors across all sectors in the economy are concerned about the high and increasing energy costs, especially the cost of diesel, which has increased by over 300 per cent.

He also lamented that the cost of gas has risen by over 100 per cent, while the price of aviation fuel has increased by about 500 per cent, all of which he said, have added to the cost of production, adding that the various challenges local manufacturers have had to contend with have made it increasingly difficult for local products to be competitive against imported ones.

He said the output of most industries had declined significantly, because of the challenges of accessing raw materials due to scarcity of foreign exchange.

"Most players in the economy now resort to the patronage of the parallel market at very prohibitive rates. Insecurity has also created serious risk and reputation challenges for the country to the extent that it has become difficult to visit our distributors and dealers in many parts of the country due to insecurity," he stated.

I don't have Senatorial ambition - Dariye

Former Governor of Plateau state, Joshua Dariye, has said that contesting senatorial election in 2023 is not up his sleeve.

He denied plans to vie for Plateau Central senatorial district seat in the next election on the platform of the Labour Party.

Dariye was recently released from prison three months after being granted pardon by the National Council of State. He was until last Monday serving 10 years' imprisonment for N1.126 billion fraud.

He denied the ambition while playing host to the Plateau State Governor, Simon Lalong, who led a delegation from the State to visit him and former Governor of Taraba State, Rev. Jolly Nyame.

A statement issued on Friday by Lalong's Director of Press and Public Affairs, Macham Makut, after the visit read in part, "He (Dariye) narrated his ordeal in prison and said it was a difficult moment but God saw him through and made him survive.

"Dariye also debunked the rumour that he was running for Senate, describing it as

unfounded and untrue as he has not bought form or done anything to that effect. Related News

"He advised politicians in Plateau to unite and rally around the Governor in promoting the interest of the citizens, saying governance is an opportunity for those in charge to do their best and leave posterity to judge their efforts as no one can finish the business of Government in a day."

The statement noted that Lalong, who was accompanied on the visit by his wife, Mrs Regina, National Assembly Members as well as Members of the State Executive Council, also visited Nyame's residence.

The statement partly read, "Lalong told Governor Dariye that the entire State received the news of his release with joy because they had been praying for him since his travails and incarceration happened.

"He said so much prayer and appeal was made towards the pardon granted to him, and thankfully, the President was magnanimous to accept to grant the pardon.

"The Governor, while appreciating President Muhammadu Buhari for giving Dariye another opportunity, said this is the time for Chief Dariye to reflect and forgive people that may have offended him, as has been his practice during previous challenges.

He prayed to God to continue to give him sound health even as he offer to advise to the State while making available his vast knowledge for the good of the people.



Joshua Dariye,

President Buhari buys official cars for Niger Republic

The subject of this Editorial, as out of touch with reality as it seems is apodictic. At a time when the federal government is struggling to pay salaries and when universities have been on strike for some six months, it is baffling that the Buhari administration could spend over a billion naira to purchase luxury cars for a neighbouring country. This was first leaked by an independent investigative journalist. Documents published by the journalist revealed that President Buhari ordered the office of the Accountant General to release the money to 'Kaura Motors Nig. Ltd. for the supply of 10 Toyota vehicles.

The documentary evidence tendered to back this claim reads: "Being release of fund in the sum of N1,145,000,000.00 to the office of the Accountant-General of the Federation IFO Kaura Motors Nig. Limited for supply of ten (10) Numbers Toyota Land Cruiser V8 Vehicles to Republic of Niger Vide Mr. President's Approval on page 83 dated 28/02/2022 and the HMFBNP'S directive on File NO: FMF/CMD/FINANCE/0001/V/TIII/AT page 84 dated 22/07/2022 with the following bank details'. The beneficiary's account was provided as Fidelity Bank PLC.

All doubts about the authenticity of the reports were cleared when after the Federal Executive Council meeting during the week, Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning Zainab Ahmed confirmed that the federal government bought some cars for Niger republic on the approval of the President 'whose actions she cannot question'.

Indeed, Mr. President preaches prudence in government spending, but the budgets he signs off annually tell a different story. Since coming to power seven years ago, the president's office has spent over N5 billion on vehicles – enough to build 500 health centres at N10 million each. These kinds of expenditures are an example of how Nigeria annually channels scarce public resources into

inexplicable projects while critical programmes that should benefit citizens are perpetually underfunded. But that is a story for another day.

This Editorial is more interested in finding the rationale for purchasing deluxe vehicles for officials of another country during this period of global economic challenges to the detriment of credible national needs and how, in a country with a record of low budget implementation score card, a contract of over one billion was successfully implemented within the twinkle an eye.

Perhaps the rationale advanced for the National Assembly to quickly accede to the request of Mr. President to buy cars for our brothers in Niger Republic was premised on the imperative

to project power and enhance our diplomatic intercourse. If that was the case, our goodwill quest should have been directed at the good people of Niger Republic and not some select government officials, whose tenure is short term and whatever friendliness is garnered from the gesture will also be short lived.

Perhaps, the action was an effort to ensure the full support of beneficiaries of the gift in the war against insurgency. This reason, as implausible as it sounds, is negated by the argument that the cars are too flashy and comfortable and are very unlikely to incentivize the Nigerien soldiers at the front. In fact the gifts are more likely to be counter-productive if the Nigerien soldiers begin to feel the same way their Nigerian counterparts are feeling, that their bosses are feeding fat on their sweat.

Having exhausted most of the plausible excuses for the gift of these 10 SUVs, it is only logical to look at the implausible rationale. Was the move to dash these vehicles to Nigerien officials hinged on corruption? This question is apposite because of the alacrity with which the contract was 100% executed, even before the release of the budgetary allocations. Was someone angling for the 10% kick back or was it just contract for cronies and friends? Was the gift conceived and executed on the basis of shallow analysis and/or wanton financial recklessness? These are questions only the President and the National Assembly can answer. Nigerians wait on them for a credible answer.

The thesis with regards to the Nigerian economy remains that the revenues are inadequate to fund fundamental expenditure, therefore, every available fund should be spent with the greatest value for money, tied to a high-level national policy framework and aimed at improving livelihoods as well as growing the economy, reducing poverty and inequality. Until the government proffers an acceptable explanation on the gift of 10 deluxe vehicles to Niger Republic officials, Nigerians view the action as reckless, irrational, and insensitive.



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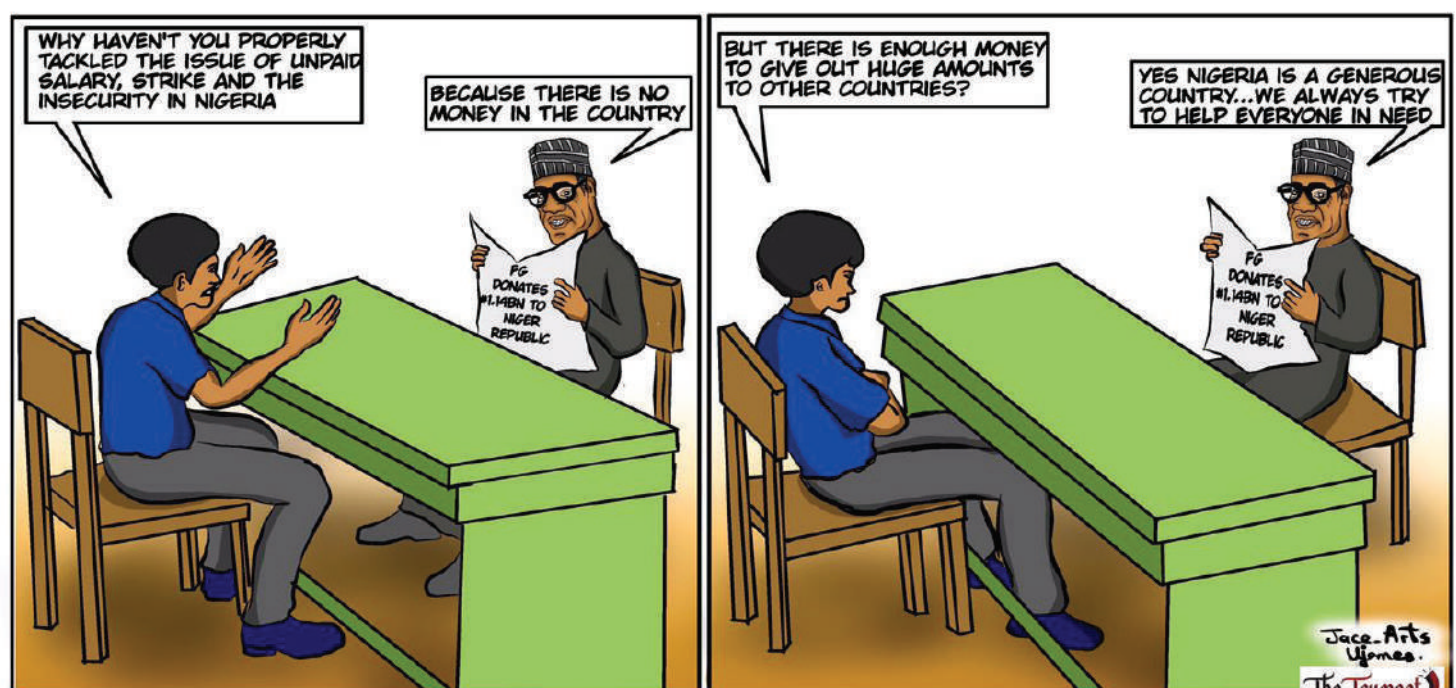
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What restructured Nigeria will look like

Sixty-two years ago, Nigeria as an independent state started with a parliamentary system of democracy with semi-autonomous three regional governments. Through its tortuous political journey to the present, it went through military dictatorship with small federating units that are centrally controlled.

The year 1999, issued a presidential system of democracy with the president vested with a lot of powers with weak federating states.

To complete our metamorphosis into a prosperous nation, the last leg of restructuring that is not only pragmatic and feasible but will address the call for self-autonomy or even sessional cries, it is paramount that the next government should address and act immediately on the issue. I mean by the 2027 elections, Nigeria should be different. We should be having the last president in this old dysfunctional system.

But as they say, the Devil is always in the details. This New Nigeria cannot but retain the 36 federating units with FTC. Like the United States of America which harbours people of different races, ethnicity, religions, ideological differences, and persuasions, a nation that was built on the ruins of a bloody civil revolutionary war, the Nigerian political option is narrowed towards this model.

Our type of federation should be fashioned in a manner that will accommodate our drastic difference with self-governing states, under a central federal government that deals primarily as a guard to our collective sovereignty and economic posterity, especially when dealing with the outside world. This will silence all insurgencies whether it's ethnic like Biafra or Oduduwa or religious like the Sharia-based agitators or economic like the farmer-herder clashes.

Except for the FCT, where all

Nigerians should have equitable representation, and should be made unattractive for business or industrialization but habitable for administration which will decongest it, all other states have the power based on the democratic principle in each to promulgate laws that will ensure peaceful coexistence and progress.

When it comes to resources, each state should control its resources but pay its shares of common expenditures to the federal government with a percentage agreed collectively.

In short, we need a united state of Nigeria. Who knows, in the future, it can be a nucleus of the United States of Africa.

In this case, IPOB would have no federal police or troops to attack, they can only attack their people. Boko Haram areas would all be policed by their people. Herdsmen would have no reason to migrate to other states without permission as other traders should have to



**Ibrahim
Ahmad GUMI**

get before being allowed out of their native states.

With alternative energy advancement, the Niger Deltans would have little to worry about their commodity which is still valuable for some time, as other regions are ready to exploit their God-given resources widespread throughout the country.

For me, any politician that is ready and capable of restructuring Nigeria to our collective taste immediately with the participation of foes and friends has my vote. I don't want empty promises about fighting terror or

secession or corruption or fake promises of industrialization in a nation of poverty-stricken unskillful citizens and half-baked intellectuals.

They are all political ploys to get power from gullible sick and poor citizens. Haba! After 62 years of independence, Nigeria should come of age. May Allah see us through, Amin.

•*Sheikh Gumi posted the write-up above, entitled "The Restructured Nigeria" on his official Facebook page.*

Redefining the role of UPU for the Urhobo People

By

**Michael
OWHOKO, PH.D**



The Urhobo is among the first 10 major ethnic groups, and fifth largest in Nigeria, yet, its initial capacity to command considerable influence in the Nigerian polity was weakened by lack of brotherliness, unity, and trust among its people, unarguably, owing to multiplicity of dialects, as depicted in the 24 kingdoms that make up the nationality.

In an attempt to eliminate this deficit, prevent disunity-induced regression, and raise sustained awareness for unity and trust across the divide, the founding Urhobo leaders came up with a philosophical slogan of "Urhobo Ovuovo".

Specifically, the concept of "Urhobo Ovuovo" was informed by the need to foster unity as a strategy for driving the collective interests and aspirations of Urhobo people, particularly within the Nigerian space. The concept, which simply means, "Urhobo is one", became the major thrust of the Urhobo Progress Union (UPU), formerly Urhobo Brotherhood Society at its formation, in 1931.

Its founding leaders recognized clearly from the outset that without unity among a people, unison and progress might be hampered, prompting them to identify and highlight the dangers of disunity to peace, growth and development in pursuit of Urhobo vision.

On the strength of this, the leadership of UPU led by Chiefs Omorohwovo Okoro, Mukoro Mowoe and Thomas Erukemem made unity a catalyst and driver in their quest for progress in Urhobo land, as aptly captured in the Union's motto: Unity

is Strength. This was also reflected in the Aims and Objectives of the Union's Constitution, namely: "To foster the spirit of love, mutual understanding and brotherhood among Urhobo people." Since then, unity has remained one of the guiding principles in decision-making process in UPU.

All free born of Urhobo, irrespective of place of birth and location, are automatic members of UPU. Branches of UPU exist in all corners of the globe, particularly in countries with significant presence of Urhobos. From Europe to United Kingdom, Australia, and from America to Asia and the Middle East, UPU is active. All positions held by UPU executives are held in trust for all Urhobos.

Thus, it came as a surprise to many sons and daughters of Urhobo ancestry, the alleged decision of the current national executive of UPU led by Chief Moses Taiga to endorse a particularly candidate for the 2023 governorship election in Delta State. Regrettably, up till this moment, the executive is yet to deny the allegation. However, since silence means consent, it is assumed to be true, at least, for now.

By this position, the leadership of UPU is unwittingly, laying a foundation for potential cracks in the body of the oldest socio-cultural organization in Nigeria. The endorsement negates and runs contrary to the vision of the founding fathers, as it is not only a recipe for disunity in Urhobo land, but capable of encouraging emergence of parallel bodies or equivalent associations.

The UPU could be likened to a

father, with members as children. Like children in a family, it is absurd for a father to overtly demonstrate preference or declare support or identify or show love for one over the others. This can permanently put a division in such a family.

Since all gubernatorial contenders in the 2023 general election in Delta State are of Urhobo descent, it was needless for the UPU to have expressed preference for one candidate over the others, moreso, when the outcome will ultimately produce Urhobo son as winner. Therefore, in line with the spirit of unity and progress for Urhobo nation, UPU should have invited all candidates for a counselling meeting premised on peaceful electioneering conduct devoid of violence.

If it was a contest involving Urhobo sons and other ethnic groups, then UPU was obligatory to back its own, as demonstrated by the support given to Chief Daniel Okumagbaw when he contested as governorship candidate of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) in 1979. UPU also extended similar backing to Chief Felix Ibru when he ran for same office under the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in 1993.

It is therefore imperative for the national executives of the union to strive at all times not to deviate from the objective of UPU, but focus on issues that can deepen unity and progress in Urhobo land, particularly within the context of emerging challenges.

It must draw from the experience of the founding fathers, who at the time, were confronted with daunting challenges, but overcame them through sheer vision and action plans, like they did with the establishment of Urhobo College in 1948 when UPU identified education as a major tool for boosting opportunities and aspirations. This also led to sponsorship of Messrs Gabriel Ejaiye and Ezekiel Igho to universities abroad during the intervening period.

Besides, Urhobo territories straddling other ethnic neighbours that were facing expropriation threat were all reclaimed and regrouped within Urhobo geographical boundaries. Some of these cases involved litigation, and these were won and

recovered with the support of UPU. There was no true son and daughter of Urhobo who was not proud of these accomplished milestones then.

Even the translation of the Holy Bible into Urhobo language was part of efforts to advance and strengthen Urhobo unity, which became a source of pride, as it went a long way in defining the Urhobo personality.

The Urhobo nation cannot be insulated from current dynamics and challenges in Nigeria. UPU must therefore be proactive and respond to these vulnerabilities, particularly those that can potentially hinder development in Urhobo land.

Insecurity is currently a threat. Fulani herdsmen have become a menace in Urhobo forests and savannas, stalling farming businesses and creating fear across the land through criminal activities. This is also responsible for reluctance of Urhobos to come home to invest. While efforts by UPU in this regard must be acknowledged, it should take further steps through concrete action plans to nip this criminality in the bud. Urhobo Security Network (USN) and other surveillance groups should be strengthened and equipped to provide intelligence and sundry activities.

Urhobo wealth is outside Urhobo land, partly because of "deve" (development fees). UPU should discourage youth from harassing and collecting these levies from potential investors and developers. Monarchs collaborating with youth in this shameful act should be sanctioned. If five percent of Urhobo wealth can be attracted home for investment, jobs will be available for youth.

Also, UPU should constitute Economic Advisory Council to hold Urhobo Economic Summit annually aimed at identifying opportunities that will promote empowerment and stimulate development in Urhobo land.

The future is science and technology. While the proposed Mukoro Mowoe University is commendable, it should be STEM-based (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). Currently, there is under-admission of Urhobo sons and daughters in Petroleum Training Institute (PTI) and Federal University

of Petroleum Resources (FUPRE). UPU should sensitize and encourage all secondary schools in Urhobo land to predominantly pattern their syllabus after science to enable them take advantage of these opportunities.

Also, there is dearth of qualified artisans in Urhobo land. UPU should establish technical schools similar to former Sapele Technical College or Atamakolomi Trade School, where Urhobo youth can acquire vocational skills in carpentry, electricals, automobile engineering, welding, bricklaying, tiling, painting, tailoring, and other artistry works.

Of note is Urhobo Historical Society (UHS) which was set up to study, research and document Urhobo history and culture, just as the Urhobo Studies Association (USA) was established to promote scholarships pertaining to Urhobo language, literature and culture. UPU should support these institutions, particularly the USA to drive the study of Urhobo language and literature in universities up to doctorate level.

Urhobo and her immediate neighbours have common socio-economic challenges and aspirations but are unable to work in unison for this purpose due to trust gap engendered by domination fear. This was one of the reasons the Itsekiri opposed the creation of Delta State from the old Delta Province with Warri as capital. Rather than demonstrate leadership morality, Ibrahim Babangida took advantage of the confusion to appease his wife and in-laws, obviously due to oil benefits, by merging Anioma region, which was hitherto under Benin Province, with Delta Province, and also made Asaba, an obviously unsuitable location, as capital. The Anioma region should have rightly been made part of Edo State, not Delta. UPU should therefore build bridges across to its immediate neighbours to restore confidence.

It is therefore imperative that current roles of UPU should be redefined within these contexts, to reposition Urhobo for the emerging challenges of this 21st century.

•*Dr. Mike Owhoko, Lagos-based journalist and author, can be reached at www.mikeowhoko.com.*

Settling in locations outside God's will

"Shepherd" and "Flock" are common words among Christians. Jesus is variously called as the 'Great Shepherding of the Flock' (Hebrew 13:20), and the 'Chief Shepherd' (1 Peter 5:4). Invariably, all Christians are His flock. As imitators of Christ, the Christian leadership is called to the ministry of shepherding. Against this background, Peter wrote to the elders – calling them fellow elders and partaker of the glory that will be revealed – to "shepherd the flock" or feed the flock.

Shepherding the flock is dear to the heart of Jesus Christ. "And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So he began to teach them many things" (Mark 6:34). Also, "And when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonah do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Feed My lambs! He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes Lord; You know I love You.' He said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon son of Jonah, do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.'

Jesus said to him, 'Feed My sheep.' Feed My Lamb, Tend My Sheep and Feed My Sheep was the charge of Jesus Christ to Peter if he [Peter] loves Him.

Today, Jesus is asking us thrice if we 'love Him. Christ was first our Shepherd before He tasked the leadership of the Church to shepherd others. Psalm 23 proclaimed that: "The Lord is My Shepherd!" What are the implication of being a shepherd for the flock? 1 Peter 5: 2 – 3 gives us the answers. Feed, do not fleece the flock of God. Take oversight of the flock of God. Serve God and His flock willingly. Serve readily, not for personal gain. Do not be a lord over God's heritage. Be a good examples to the flock of God.

Christian leaders are expected to do this because their reward will come from Jesus Christ who is the Chief Shepherd. Peter says, He will give us "the crown of glory that does not fade away." Shepherding implies more than the provision of food and grass for the flock. In Mark 6:34, we are told that Jesus was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd, so He began to teach them many things. Jesus did not begin to give them plenty food for them to eat.

The Psalmist says: "My soul faints for Your salvation, but I hope in Your word."

"My eyes fail from searching Your word, saying when will you comfort



Dr. Karo Ogbinaka

me?" Psalm 119:81-82. The comfort that the flock receives flows from the word, statutes, commandments and ordinances of God. Without the 'Word,' there is no world for the sheep. The apostles fed the early church with the word (i.e. the Gospel). They resisted all distractions that were poised against the word of God. "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables" (Acts 6:2). "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41).

The shepherd must care for the sheep with humility (Matthew 18:1ff). The

shepherd must also seek the lost sheep, even if it were one (Matthew 18:12). The shepherd should protect (Psalm 118:6). He should be a confidence giver to the flock, and he is to be trusted by the flock (Psalm 118:8). The shepherd must put away evil and the enemy from the flock (Psalm 118:11). The shepherd must make the sheep fruitful (Matthew 28:19). "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations... baptising them ... and teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." Consequently, he that shepherds must imitate the Great and Good Shepherd who is Christ Jesus, the lord and saviour.

We are being reached to be shepherds in the church? Where is our flock? Are there no lost sheep in our neighbourhood? Are we not moved with compassion, seeing the lost, the hungry, the sick, the desolate, and the bereaved? Do we love Jesus? Christ is today asking us: Do you love Me? If we say YES, as Peter answered, Jesus is then charging us thus: Feed My Lamb! Tend My sheep!! Feed My Sheep!!!
Shalom and be blessed.

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

REACTIONS: "Being born again not enough to enter heaven"

This week, we are going to look at some reactions and responses from readers to my last week's article titled "Being Born Again Not Enough to Enter Heaven".

A reader in a chat with me quoted from Psalm 103:8 and 10 in a bid to prove that God does not deal with us according to our sins and iniquities, hence according to him, nothing can stop us from entering Heaven once we are born again. He quoted: "The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."

My response: The word of God is always correct and that is why God Almighty showed His compassion to humanity by sending Jesus Christ to die for us so that we can have the power to live above sin. So, God's compassion for us is not to continue in sin but to repent and live holy.

Before Jesus Christ came to pay the supreme price for us to be saved, it was not easy for men to keep the laws, we no longer keep the laws, but the laws live in us through Christ Jesus. So, there are no more struggles to keep the laws once the Holy Spirit lives in you because righteousness will become natural for those who are in Christ. A Dog does not struggle to act like a Dog because the nature of a Dog is inside. In the same vein, once you are in Christ and the Holy Spirit lives in you, you don't struggle to overcome sin but sin will now smell dirty before you. It is a new nature.

Hence, in line with the scripture he quoted, God did not count our sins against



Dr. Agbodo

us, else He would not have sent Jesus Christ, but now that Christ has come and gone, God expects us to live above sin.

It is a very serious issue because nobody will enter heaven without holiness and even if it is only one person like Noah that is qualified, God will not go back on His Word.

The Reader quoted again: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" -Gal. 2:16. He also quoted from the book of Isaiah that "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind, our sins sweep us away- Isaiah 64:6.

My Response: Of course, those statements are for the old man who lived in sin. The new man in Christ should live in righteousness. Our righteousness is in Christ Jesus hence higher than just personal discipline which is called self-righteousness. Also, being justified by faith in Christ means we should live above sin just as Christ lived above sin. If Christ lives in us, sin cannot have dominion over us. Therefore, if sin is still having dominion, then there is still pollution or lack of repentance somewhere in that life.

We can live holy always and move on daily to perfection and this is the plan of God for all humans.

He now asked: "So, how perfect are you?"

My Response: Only God can score us but I try daily to follow God. However, it is not about me but our understanding of the standard of God so that we can judge ourselves whether we are on our way to Heaven or not.

Moving to perfection is leaving the sin you know behind and waiting on the Holy Spirit to guide us to perfection. If we continue to commit the sins we already know about with impunity and the excuse of Grace, it is no longer sin but rebellion against the Word of God. We really need to work on ourselves as Christians because the world is reading us, not the Bible, to either decide to follow Christ or not.

Some people believe that once you accept Christ, that is all, and whether you live in sin or not does not matter. Please note that accepting Christ as Lord and Savior comes with the responsibility to live holy. The early Apostles strived to live perfect

lives and that is why God worked with them to that extent in great wonders and miracles. Let us also say bye-bye to sin and strive toward perfection.

Our Lord Jesus Christ said in Matthew 5 from verse 44 to the end of that chapter that we should be perfect even as our Heavenly Father is perfect and that should be the standard.

In fact, the message of Apostle John in the book of 1 John 3:9 that whosoever is born of God (Born Again) does not sin should be our standard and I really believe Apostle John lived what he preached and that was why he was beyond human destruction because when he was thrown into a pot of boiling oil, he came out unscathed before he was expelled to the Island of Patmos where he wrote the book of Revelation in the Bible.

In conclusion, let us note that being Born Again is the beginning of the journey of salvation and we need to maintain our holiness to the end to make Heaven. Also, note that the name of a person can be removed from the book of life after being born again if the person does not follow righteousness continuously to the end. Revelation 3:5 says: He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life. Hence the name of the person that does not overcome can be blotted out. So, there is work to be done to overcome sin and remain saved to the end. God bless in Jesus Name.

•Pastor ESANEROVO TRINITY AGBODO is a Contributing Editor with The Trumpet Newspaper and can be reached on eagbodo@gmail.com or 08075504012(WhatsApp)



Seplat reacts to Buhari's purported reversal of ExxonMobil deal

By **EDU ABADE**, Business Editor

Seplat Energy has responded to reports claiming that President Muhammadu Buhari has withdrawn the ministerial approval of the company's proposed acquisition of the share capital of Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited (MPNU).

In a statement issued by the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Emeka Onwuka against an earlier statement purportedly signed by the company's Director of External Affairs and Sustainability, Chioma Nwachuku, Seplat Energy disclosed that it has not received any official notification of such a decision and was seeking clarification from the relevant authorities.

"We will continue to work with all parties to achieve a successful outcome to the proposed acquisition and will provide

an update in due course," the statement said.

Onwuka further said the announcement was made pursuant to Rule 17.10 of the Rulebook of the Nigerian Exchange 2015 (Issuer's Rule), adding: "This announcement has been authorised for publication on behalf of Seplat Energy by the Chief Financial Officer of Seplat Energy Plc, Emeka Onwuka."

The Trumpet recalled that President Buhari had on Wednesday, August 10, 2022, reversed his authorisation of the acquisition of the entire share capital of Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited by Seplat Energy Offshore Limited, a move that demonstrated the Presidency's support for the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Limited, which earlier declined the \$1.3 billion worth of transaction.

A statement earlier issued by the Special Adviser to the

President on Media and Publicity, Femi Adesina, revealed that the President consented to the acquisition of Exxon Mobil shares by Seplat Energy Offshore Limited.

According to the Presidency, Buhari authorised the move in his capacity as the Minister of Petroleum Resources to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDIs) into the country.

But providing an update on the issue, Senior Special Assistant (SSA) to the President on Media and Publicity, Garba Shehu, affirmed that Buhari had reversed the decision and that the previous misunderstanding was because the "agencies involved in the decision had not coordinated well among themselves."

Earlier, Shehu said the President's reversal of his earlier approval was in line with the position of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC).



Chioma Nwachuku

NLNG refutes alleged theft of crude oil, gas worth \$1.2 billion

The Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) has refuted claims that \$1.2 billion worth of crude oil and natural gas was stolen by government officials close to the company.

It denied the allegation in a statement issued by General Manager, External Relations and Sustainable Development of NLNG, Andy Odeh.

"The attention of Nigeria LNG Limited (NLNG) has been drawn to an August 10, 2022 publication in a national daily, not *The Trumpet*, with the caption: *How Government Officials Facilitated \$1.2b Crude Oil, Gas Theft- Source*. The report is false, malicious and deliberate, as it is a rehash of fallacious claims reported in an online media channel in January 2022," the statement reads.

Odeh said that NLNG had responded to the allegations, clearly stating the facts, yet the national published the same allegations with no prior opportunity offered to the company to react or respond to the assertions in

its online platform.

"The publication is obviously calculated to cast the company and its leadership in bad light. To again set the records straight, NLNG wishes to clearly state that: Deliveries of LNG from its Bonny Terminal comply with all regulatory requirements for the export of its products and are made under various LNG sales contracts to destinations not limited to Europe, but also to the Far East, Greater Middle East, North America and South America, thus ensuring NLNG's position as a significant competitive global LNG supplier, promoting the Nigerian Brand.

"NLNG is a responsible corporate citizen operating its business according to strong business principles and ethics in accordance with requirements of relevant Nigerian and global laws and regulations," he added.

Speaking further, he said from the commencement of its operations in October 1999, NLNG has never and does not, engage in illegal exportation of LNG or

any of its products, nor is it involved in any international cartel, as alleged.

It is simply not true that the illegal exportation is still ongoing with the backing of some top officials of government.

The LNG trade undertaken by the Company is bound by strict protocols and controls, hence not amenable to the kind of illegitimate schemes alleged in the report", the statement maintained.

Odeh stressed that contrary to the allegation of export of LNG without paperwork, records exist for every single cargo of product loaded by the Company since it commenced operations, together with fully accurate accounts of destinations, quantities loaded and unloaded and related earnings on each cargo and these are demonstrable.

"For each of the past financial years, which are periodically audited, including the periods alluded to in the report, the shareholders of NLNG, which includes NNPC and three IOCs never reported that any cargo or product of the Company was lost or unaccounted for. Indeed, the possibility of such happening is beyond comprehension.

"For the avoidance of doubt, NLNG restates that the report paints a very incorrect picture of the Company's business and its LNG trade and is at complete variance with the Company's Vision as a globally competitive LNG Company helping to build a better Nigeria.

"NLNG demands an immediate retraction of the false and malicious report in its entirety in addition to an apology, which must be given as much prominence as the original report. The legal rights of NLNG and its impacted personnel are fully reserved", he added.

LCCI tasks FG on availability of forex for aviation fuel imports

By **EDU ABADE**, Business Editor

The Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) has tasked the Federal Government to urgently consider involving the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Limited in making foreign exchange (forex) available for the importation of aviation fuel or JetA1.

It insisted that the aviation sector qualified for targeted financing to facilitate economic activities in the country, boost economic growth and avert an imminent recession.

Director-General of LCCI, Chinyere Almona, stated this while proffering solutions to the current crisis in the Nigerian aviation industry, adding: "The Chamber is concerned about the aviation crisis because of the systemic importance of air travel for the conduct of trade and commerce across borders.

"The Organised Private Sector (OPS) urges the Federal Government to take immediate steps toward resolving the crises in the aviation sector. Air transportation is considered one of the safest channels considering the despicable level of insecurity in the country. Hence, resolving the continued fuel crisis facing the safest transportation channel is crucial for the business community.

"While the Government tackles terrorists, bandits, and kidnapers who have taken over major highways in the country, the Government must immediately consider involving the CBN and the NNPC in making forex available for aviation fuel imports. However, the more sustainable solution would be refining Jet-A1 fuel for our local consumption. While we acknowledge that the current energy crisis is real and global, it is aggravating in Nigeria because we do not produce oil."

She lamented that the crisis in Nigeria's aviation industry had reached a worrisome level, as domestic airlines were faced with an astronomical hike in the price of aviation fuel, with the commodity rising from N300 per litre to over N800 per litre within five months.

The challenging operating environment has led to an unprecedented increase in airfares and continuous delays and flight cancellations by domestic airlines. The Federal Government has stated that there are no immediate solutions to the crisis currently rocking Nigeria's aviation sector, claiming the issues are global," she maintained.

She noted that the Airline Operators of Nigeria (AON) recently notified air transport passengers that the sector was experiencing a significant crisis.

The crisis according to her was (and still is) an acute scarcity of aviation fuel, which has caused intermittent flight delays and cancellations. Some airlines have been forced to shut down operations due to the harsh operating environment.

"With the rising insecurity that has bedeviled our road transport system, a safer option is air transportation. This portends challenges around the movement of goods and business conduct across locations. The Federal Government cannot afford to allow this sector to suffer from these crises. Operators in the industry are faced with a double whammy issue of foreign exchange scarcity and the high cost of Jet-A1, which is a significant cost component in airline operations.

"We have noted that from the beginning of the year, aviation fuel scarcity has remained a persistent and unresolved problem that has impacted the cost-of-service delivery, as reflected in the rising cost of flights. Aviation fuel prices have risen from an average of N400 per litre as of February to about N800 per litre in recent times.

"With the business community not sure of any intervention to provide respite, the woes of the airline operators may be far from over. The earlier intervention by the National Assembly alongside the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), that saw the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC), supply Jet-A1 at a discounted price of N480 per litre may not have achieved the desired results. The sector has continued to suffer from persistent shocks and disruptions to operations," she stated.



Andy Odeh

N.I.E.S 2023 CEOs' roundtable to unveil strategies for seamless energy transition

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) roundtable of the upcoming Nigeria International Energy Summit (N.I.E.S 2023) scheduled to hold in Abuja from February 27 to March 3, 2023, will unfold strategies for a seamless energy transition with a view to ensuring energy security without putting the country's economy and its huge hydrocarbon resources at risk.

The session will commence with a keynote address by the Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, Chief Timipre Sylva, while former Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, Dr Ibe Kachikwu, will be joined on the panel by top industry Chief Executive Officers (CEOs).

They include the Group Managing Director of Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Limited, Mele Kolo Kyari; Chairman Shell Companies in Nigeria and Managing Director, Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), Osagie Okunbor and Chairman, Managing Director Chevron Nigeria Limited, Ricky Kennedy

Others are Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Total Energies Nigeria, Michael Sangster; Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (MD/CEO) Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas Limited, Philip Msesinila and Chairman Managing Director, ExxonMobil companies in Nigeria, Richard Laling, while Chairman, Independent Petroleum Producers Group (IPPG), Waltersmith Petrman Oil Limited, Abdulrazaq Isa, will deliver the closing session.

Managing Director of Brevity Anderson, James Shinddi, said: "With the significant and accelerating global energy transition and a COVID-19 that impacted the industry's foundations, it is our hope that this session will unfold the broad strategies to revive the industry fortune and chart a pathway for the future.

In line with the energy transition global agenda, strategies for significant structural challenges in Nigeria's energy mix and systems would be driven by the recognition that the target was zero-carbon emission.

According to the United Nations in one of its publications, on energy transition. An energy revolution based on renewable and energy efficiency is urgently needed, not just to accelerate economic progress and development, but also to slash emissions that are rapidly warming the planet.

Over the years, the N.I.E.S, formerly known as the Nigerian International Petroleum Summit (NIPS) is the official oil and gas meeting of Nigeria had witnessed the highest level of attendance by top decision makers, industry leaders and stakeholders from the public and private sectors.

N.I.E.S is the Federal Government's official petroleum industry event with the Ministry of Petroleum Resources, the Nigeria National Petroleum Limited, the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) and other agencies in the public and private sectors.

Oando shareholders task government on oil theft

Promoters of Nigeria's indigenous energy independent firm, Oando Plc have charged the Federal Government to explore all workable partnerships in addressing the rising incidents of oil theft and vandalism of facilities in the oil and gas industry.

Representatives of shareholder groups, who spoke at the company's 43rd Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Lagos, deplored the recurrent issue of insecurity in the country such as vandalism, banditry and terrorism, among others.

The investors suggested that government should partner with public and private sector stakeholders to resolve the insecurity issues which they said they are crippling the economy and ap-

proved all resolutions proposed at the AGM and also commended the company on creating space for gender balance in the leadership of the company.

The shareholders applauded the company for appointing two distinguished women to the board of directors.

One of the shareholders, Patrick Ajudua said: "I commend the management for the appointment of Mrs Ronke Shokefun and Mrs Nana Mede as director. Their appointment will boost the performance of the company and add greater value to the shareholders."

Leaders of the various shareholder groups and their proxies also encouraged the Management of Oando to focus on corporate activities.

that would be beneficial to all, just as they applauded the company's recent partnership with the Lagos State Government for the launch of electric mass transit buses.

They also encouraged the management team to maintain its tenacity in striving for the company's growth.

Responding to shareholders' requests, the Group Chief Executive of the company, Adewale Tinibu, reaffirmed management's commitment to continually take the right decisions in the best interest of the shareholders.

Tinibu also assured of the board's commitment to grow the company further for the benefit of all the shareholders and pledged that the board would continue to deliver good figures as it had been doing over the years.



Adewale Tinibu

NESG pleads with CBN to harmonise multiple exchange rates

Stories by JOHNMARK UKOKO

The Nigeria Nigeria Economic Summit Group (NESG) has canvassed harmonisation of the country's foreign exchange (forex) rates so as to eliminate the attendant adverse effects on the economy.

It said multiple foreign exchange markets with significant price differences was capable of creating room for speculation, round tripping cronyism and outright graft and as such there was no better time to harmonise the foreign exchange rates than now.

The group stated this in a communiqué issued at the end of its Board Meeting recently in Abuja, insisting that failure to address the current prevailing condition of multiple exchange rates will continue to reduce the much needed inflow of Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) and Diaspora remittances.

It stressed that said international investors being savvy and rational will not invest where there is a real risk to their ability to access and repatriate investment proceeds or when the functional currency is in sporadic depreciation.



Mrs Zainab Ahmed

The NESG also advised the Federal Government to explore a systemic subsidy removal programme that cushions the impact on the most vulnerable populations through a well-coordinated and effectively transmitted social protection scheme.

Citing the report of the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) recently released by the Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Mrs Zainab Ahmed, which stated the rising fuel subsidy costs had continued to

exceed unsustainable levels, the NESG said: "It is

clear that the current fuel subsidy regime's debilitating impact on our fiscal fragility cannot be over-stated."

It also urged the Federal Government to urgently initiate a pragmatic national security strategy that would unconditionally guarantee the safety of life and property within the country and frowned on the ongoing face-off between the government and the Academic Staff Union of the Universities (ASUU), saying the six months strike had become a national embarrassment.

"The increased tension and apprehension within the citizens arising from the effect of the government to do all within their means to douse the tensions and assuage the feelings and sensitivities of the people through their actions and conduct.

"The NESG calls for a new social contract between the government and the people of Nigeria to reduce the growing trust deficit. The goodwill that the government enjoys from its people is not different from the operation of a bank account," it added.

FG disburses N100 billion loans to pharmaceutical companies

The Federal Government has disclosed that it disbursed N100 billion to indigenous pharmaceutical manufacturers and healthcare investors

as loans to help the companies expand their capital base and boost local production of medicines and other medical consumables.

President Muhammadu Bihari, said this while receiving the new executive members of the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA)

recently in Abuja, explained that the loan was extended through the Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) support for the private pharmaceutical sector.

He stated that the Health Sector Reform Committee headed by Vice President, Yemi Osinbajo, is currently exploring models for revitalising

the nation's healthcare system in ways that will improve the quality of care and the benefits package for care providers.

Buhari urged NMA and other stakeholders in the health sector to support the government's initiatives and work with the committee set up to chart a fast track to a health system that best meets the needs of Nigerians in the 21st century.

The President also commended the NMA for consistently choosing peaceful resolution of differences on matters pertinent

to the national health system.

He said: "I commend our medical professionals for their contribution to Nigeria's exemplary management of the COVID-19 pandemic, the control of malaria, HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and other feats also achieved by Nigerian doctors in the Diaspora.

"Our response to COVID-19 pandemic has been praised internationally and your members are key to the success story. I recall that in the last quarter of 2021, the immediate past NMA Executive visited me and made recommendations for the health sector."

He said the recommendations included the review and amendment of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) Act, upgrading and equipping existing health institutions, loans to fund hospital equipment, the repeal and re-enactment of the Medical and Dentist Practitioners Act and appeal for more funding for the four newly established universities of medical sciences.

"I am pleased to inform you that most of the recommendations have been addressed, while further action is being taken to study those involving cross-cutting administrative processes with legal implications," he added.

Speaking, Minister of Health, Dr Osagie Ehanire, who led the

medical practitioners to the President, pointed out that the doctors have been good partners with the ministry in helping to regulate the health profession and stressing quality service delivery.

Responding, the President of the NMA, Dr Uche Ojinmah, who said the new National Officers Committee (NOC) was elected on May 21, 2022, commended President Buhari for signing the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA) Act aimed at improving the country's health indices, adding that the constitution of the Health Reform Committee under Vice President Yemi Osinbajo and the infrastructure projects embarked upon by the Buhari administration would boost performance of the health sector.

Ojinmah enjoined the President to ensure full and appropriate implementation of the NHIA Act, provision of adequate work equipment and necessary budgetary support, as well as extending the retirement age for medical consultants to 70 years and 65 years for non-consultant doctors and other healthcare workers.

He also advocated the implementation of the Hazard Allowance that was circularised in December 2021 with the arrears, as well as the setting up of a Health Bank in the country.



Lagos HOMS rent-to-own houses not empty, says official

Authorities have debunked the claims that houses allocated by the Lagos government under its mortgage and rent-to-own schemes are not occupied years after allocation. It stated that some of the houses were occupied, while other joint venture schemes between private developers and the government were yet to be allocated to subscribers.

The General Manager, Lagos Home Ownership Mortgage Scheme (Lagos HOMS), Mr Bayo Forsythe, told The Guardian that Babajide Sanwo-Olu's administration is passionate about building decent, durable homes for citizens and has been earnestly addressing the huge housing deficit in Lagos.

He said: "It is a strong misconception. For instance, one of our schemes in Wempeco Road, Ogba, when you're coming in the night, the kind of glass used, you can't see the inside from outside, in most cases, people feel that the place is empty. But when you visit on a Saturday

morning, there are no spaces to park cars.

"Like the Ibeshe scheme, we are doing about 480 units; we have prequalified over 700 applicants. There is no scheme we are short of allottees.

"In Ibeshe, people are agitating to move in, but there are processes to follow immediately after the schemes are commissioned, which includes documentation before people start moving into their homes. Some allottees adopt staggered movements into their houses."

According to Forsythe, the agency has adopted measures to eliminate double allocation, "In every application, there is a space for passports, addresses, date of birth, which we enter into the system. It is like the Lagos Residents registration, you can't do it twice.

"Once they type in your name, it shows the allottee. There is also an affidavit signed as a first-time buyer, and we also have other ways of verifying allottees through other govern-

ment agencies and departments."

He expressed the determination of the government to reduce the housing deficit in the state. "We saw the housing deficit of about four million and affordability was a problem, to bridge the deficit, we must build about 10,000 houses per month and about 120,000 homes per year, which is a difficult one.

"In bridging it, the government has to look at a way in which people will be able to get into the property ladder as it is done globally. That is why we brought in an installment payment programme, which is called the rent-to-own scheme.

"Initially, there was a mortgage system, the mortgage is global, with a mortgage the equity contribution could be up to 50 per cent of the asking price of the property. Initially, we started with 30 per cent and we saw that those getting into the ladder are probably the high fliers within the property sector.

"We reviewed the scheme and

embraced social housing, which is not for the poor but salary earners such as civil servants and artisans, medical doctors and aviation and communication experts. We reduced the equity

contribution and prices of the houses. Since then, we have been able to provide homes for many people who would never believe that they will have a property," he said.



Babajide Sanwo-Olu'

Why Nigeria affordable housing remains a mirage

By GENESIS ERIRIOMA

With a fast growing population estimated at approximately 218 million, with a ten-year average growth of about 2.6 percent coupled with current economic difficulties affecting all sectors of the Nigerian economy, providing affordable housing, particularly for low-income earners has become a frightening task among property developers, further compounding the cost of living among average Nigerians.

The explosion in population has engendered unprecedented migration of rural dwellers to urban areas, with an urbanization rate of 4.98 percent, putting strain on available housing and other facilities in cities.

Research revealed that most households spend over 50 percent of their disposable income on housing as the Federal Government struggles to meet housing demand estimated at between 22 to 23 million.

Yet, despite housing programs by the Federal, state governments, and private developers, who contribute the highest number of units yearly to the market, an estimated

two-thirds of people in cities like Lagos, Port Harcourt, Ibadan, Abuja, and other metropolises still live in informal accommodations, suburbs or slums.

The rising cost of building materials is taking homeownership far beyond the reach of many, who fall within the low-income bracket in the society. For example, prices of essential building materials like cement, iron rods, sand, roofing materials; paint and other essential building items rose by over 51 percent in the last two years.

Data available to The Trumpet show that newly built one-bedroom flat in some locations including suburbs especially in places like Lagos and Abuja is as high as N500, 000, two bedroom N750, 000 and three bedroom has risen to between N900, 000 and N1million. It requires ingenuity for a young family earning between N30, 000 to N50,000 monthly to save up to N500, 000 within two years to rent a one-bedroom flat.

In Lagos, around Abule Egba and Ogudu, a plot of land now goes for N15 million and N80 million respectively, Banana Island from N500 million, in Eko Atlantic City it ranges between N1.2 billion and N1.5 billion.

In Nigeria's major cities like Abuja and Lagos, to build a moderately furnished one-bedroom flat will cost between N2.5m and N3m aside from the cost of land. The current high rent in cities has driven people to slums and shanties, while others live in dilapidated buildings prone to collapse, live under bridges or uncompleted/abandoned buildings.

Some experts who expressed their opinions on the matter say market forces, foreign exchange crisis, naira devaluation, inflation, lack of finance for homes, unfriendly policy, inaccessibility to land, poor mortgage regime, and demographic changes, make it difficult to increase access to affordable housing for renters and homeownership.

One Expert, Ayo Ibaru, the Chief

Operating Officer/Director, Research at North Court Real Estate, said "Housing affordability for this income again depends on the location and property features. There is generally a mismatch between desired locations and asset prices. Average prices in the urban areas of Nigeria's core cities are high – a result of strong demand, which in itself is based on infrastructure, security, and accessibility features. In challenging economic times, these prices further escalate.

"In Nigeria, cooperative societies through the periodic contributions of its members have long been a system for buying ticket items, especially in the informal sector."

"There are now some initiatives aimed at bringing cooperatives as a tool for homeownership into the mainstream," he stated.

Another expert, Olatunde Macaulay, Managing Partner, RefinHomes Ltd, said "There are mortgage banks but the mortgages are highly priced at about 19 percent, whereas mortgages should be single digit and long-term spanning about 30 years. Typical mortgages in Nigeria are 10 years and at 19 percent, which is expensive. Very few people can afford that".

"Private sector operators are trying their best but there are difficulties in obtaining building approvals, which is still tedious and could be expensive. We need an environment that will make it easier to acquire land and title from the government.

"The government has to give us incentives to go into low-income housing. Investors are bothered because you invest so much but the returns are so little and so they rather go into medium or luxury apartments. There is the National Housing Fund (NHF) at six percent and N15million maximum and 30 years, but access to it is still very difficult, it takes a long time to access. If it were easier, a lot of people would be able to access housing through the platform because it is enabled by the government."

Stakeholders seek new roadmap, technology to tackle housing deficit

By BLESSING OZIWO

Real estate experts have stated the need to deploy a new approach, including sustainable and renewable technology that would speed up the construction of affordable housing and reduce the huge deficit in the country.

They noted that over 40 per cent of Nigeria's population living in urban areas is projected to grow at 4.2 per cent due to the high fertility rate, hence the emergence of fresh demand for housing, adding that the development of new housing estates and increase in the size of existing ones would go a long way to mitigate the challenge.

The experts spoke at the 16th Africa International Housing Show (AIHS) in Abuja. Leading the call, the Group Head, Sales and Marketing, Dangote Cement, Rabiou Umar, said the disparity in the growth and metrics between rural and urban settlements has resulted in a housing shortage crisis in spite of the government's interventions.

Umar, who spoke during a special session themed: 'Dangote Cement – Championing Innovations for Real Estate Development in Nigeria,' said there was the need to address housing imbalance through innovative strategies.

He said: "We have several platforms which are designed to attend to challenges and peculiar needs of the real estate development industry in the country. Given the high cost of developing new estates and in providing affordable houses, Dangote group has come up with some recommendations, some of which are in place and some of which are new."

He said the government could support the development of real estate by providing the land, while private sector operators, including mortgage institutions, provide the funding.

The President of the Nige-

rian Institute of Town Planners, Toyin Ayinde, said the persistent predicament of low-cost or affordable housing was a result of the 'conspiracy of the rich'.

Ayinde, who was represented by the first National Vice President of the institute, Nathaniel Atebije, said: "If the political elites in Nigeria think that the only way to develop is to do it haphazardly, then, there is no hope for the poor."

He said one of the cardinal issues that hinder the low-income earners in the country from enjoying affordable housing is connected to a location, adding that rural settlements, which obviously house the greater number of the nation's population, are not given proper attention as it pertains to planning and development.

Also speaking, Director of Research and Innovations Office, University of Lagos and Founder of Ideal Habitat Initiative, Prof. Timothy Nubi, said affordability should be addressed by the income of the people, cost and payment scheme.

He advised that the Family Homes Fund should not only focus on building new homes but also engage in renovating existing structures.

On his part, Sam Odia of Millard Fuller Foundation, disclosed that the firm is building climate-smart, energy efficient and fully serviced homes at affordable prices, adding that the project is aimed at delivering sustainable and affordable housing for all.

Mr Andrew Nevin of PWC Nigeria explained that real estate is very important, in the sense that everyone has a place to work and a place to live.

Contributing, the President of the Nigerian Institute of Building (NIOB), Prof. Izam Yohana argued that housing and the price of cement are important elements in constructing homes. He stressed the need to check the rising prices of the materials.



Ayo Ibaru

Taraba Governor Ishaku to attend NITP National Conference

By GENESIS ERIRIOMA

The Executive Governor of Taraba State, TPL Chief Darius Ishaku, alongside three other Ministers are expected to attend the 2022 Annual General Meeting/National Conference of the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP).

The event tagged: "Physical Planning and Urban Security In Nigeria: Issues, Challenges, And Prospects" the 53rd edition of the conference is expected to hold from 7th to 11th November 2022 at the International Conference Center, Abuja.

The conference which will be declared open by Mohammed Bello, the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory will also have in attendance Minister of Works and Housing, Babatunde Fashola; the Defense Minister, Major General Bashir Salihi Magashi (rt.d.) amongst others.

In a recent media chat with the Chairman, planning committee for the event, TPL Nathaniel Atebije revealed the aim of the conference was to strengthen the institute's awareness mechanisms towards prioritizing planning to drive Socioeconomic development, peace, and national security.

He stated that the conference will feature town planners, political actors, lawmakers, and professionals across various fields within and outside of the build and construction industry to discuss pressing issues affecting the sector.

In his words "it is important to let Nigerians know that physical planning is directly related to security". He further stated that with the increasing population rate in the country, there is an urgent need to effectively plan and manage the nation's land space to avoid future disasters.

He also revealed that Governor Ishaku will deliver the keynote address, while Dr Kabir Adamu will be the lead speaker at the event respectively.

Goodwill messages will be delivered from the Inspector General of Police, Chief of Defence Staff, etc, while other attending Ministers will also deliver their addresses.



Gov. Darius Ishaku

Oasis' City within City berths in Ikeja, Lagos

By EDU ABADE, Business Editor

In spite of the harsh socio-economic environment occasioned by missed expectations from government at all levels, investors who believe in Nigeria's huge market potential and positive returns on investments (RoIs) and are willing to broaden the business space, especially in the retail and hospitality sectors, have continued to invest in the country.

To that extent, Mall D'Oasis Shopping Centre Limited, a commercial development company, has announced its plans to change the landscape of retailing and hospitality industry by building a vast facility that will accommodate all creeds in a modern, civilised and somewhat sophisticated setting.

Conducting journalists round the facility recently in Lagos, its promoters, a consortium of consultants and investors, said the centre was poised to leave a signature of excellence, satisfaction and quality, across its various real estate developments. Owning the trade name Oasis, the firm is excited to introduce its flagship development, The Oasis Centre, Ikeja.

In her presentation on the Mall D'Oasis, Director of Accounts for Blu Flamingo, Mrs. Adelola Chu-Osakwe, said: "The Oasis Centre, Ikeja is a state-of-the-art lifestyle development, situated along the Mobolaji Bank Anthony Way, Ikeja. A joint development between the Nigeria Police Cooperative Multipurpose Society Limited (POLCOOP) and Mall D'Oasis Shopping Centre Limited (MDO), the Oasis Centre is a unique mixed-use development and the first mixed-use space in Nigeria that will house three distinct development types in one building.

She explained that the sections are the retail section, which will house a variety of 42 distinct retail brands and will operate from its ground and first floors of the seven storey facility; a business section with flexible Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) component that will provide service for meeting rooms, boardrooms and meeting spaces.

"The hospitality section is a 200-room five-star hotel and suites component across four floors offering leisure and accommodation with executive lounges, gymnasium, spa, wellness suite, infinity pool, pool bar, piano bar, an all day dining and a rooftop bar with an open terrace view, overseeing the skyline of Ikeja," she said.

Also in his presentation on the Wyndham Hotel, its Managing Director, Ignatius Plangnaan, explained that Mall D'Oasis was set to enhance the quality of the hospitality industry with the introduction of Wyndham hotel brand-the signature brand of the largest hotel franchisor in



The Mall D'Oasis Shopping Centre when completed

the world, with over 8,900 hotels, 812,000 rooms in over 95 countries and counting by the day.

Plangnaan, who said the hotel will operate locally, but will deliver globally in terms of standards when completed in December this year, said: "Wyndham is a respected name in the upscale service industry and like every Wyndham hotel around the world, Wyndham Lagos, Ikeja will deliver comfort that exceeds expectations, with thoughtful services and amenities tailored to make guests make the most of their stay, in ways that are more enjoyable than they can imagine. The Wyndham Lagos, Ikeja at the Oasis Centre Ikeja is the anchor and will be the first hotel of the Wyndham Hotels and Resorts in Africa.

"Lagos will join cities like London, Dubai, Brussels, Madrid, Istanbul, Delhi, Athens, Milan and many other posh locations to become one of the global locations that bring exceptional value to travelers.

Guests of The Wyndham Lagos, Ikeja, patrons of the retail and work spaces within this Oasis City will enjoy uninterrupted power supply, good road network, starting with a slip road to the centre, ample parking, excellent security systems and processes; all the elements of a great city, designed with the complete comfort and success of its occupants in mind," he said.

On her part, Lead Consultant of Awoyokun Consulting, Mrs. Nnenaya Awoyokun, who conducted journalists round during a media tour of the facility, further explained that whether for business or pleasure, The Oasis Centre Ikeja is the perfect destination, as each component is designed to complement the other to give occupants an enriched hospitality experience.

"It's simply an ecosystem that works, is safe, functional and elegantly styled for business, retail and leisure purposes. Strategically located in the heart of Lagos, the five minutes' drive to the Lagos International and local airports is simply

one of the astounding features of this innovative lifestyle development. The wholesome, tranquil comfort and convenience The Oasis Centre Ikeja is designed to deliver is best experienced.

She also revealed that the Nigeria Police Coop Multipurpose Centre, known as Oasis Centre Ikeja is committed to delivering this one-of-a-kind project that positively impacts the capital of Lagos Ikeja area and beyond.

According to her, the Mall D'Oasis Shopping Centre Limited (MDO) is a commercial development company that holds and manages the "Oasis" brand, which was inspired by the vision to provide a world-class environment for shopping, leisure, business and hospitality within a single location.

On the role of the partners, Chu-Ohakwe earlier explained that Crane is a construction cost consultancy firm with significant experience in the real estate industry. Crane has experience in a range of retail projects, successfully delivering the project ranging from 10,000 square meters to over 100,000 square meters. They are specialists in quantity surveying, project and programme management, as well as financial advisory services for developments across specialized areas of the real estate industry.

"Denver Building Services, incorporated in 2006, is a construction company providing a range of services including piling services, remedial construction services, ready-mix concrete supplies, project management and turnkey solutions. Although they entered the Nigerian market in 2013, they have been directly involved in various projects across the country including infrastructure works, commercial, residential, office and retail developments.

Profica Limited is a professional project and construction management company that provides standalone projects, construction and development management services across

several industry sectors. Profica was formed through the collaboration of professional project managers, combining international experience with local knowledge and expertise.

They have over 10 years experience in providing world class services to clients. LYT Architecture, with over 50 years experience, is a highly experienced and diversified professional practice dedicated to excellence in architecture and design and to providing the highest quality service. LYT's portfolio of completed projects includes commercial, industrial, retail, educational, residential, hotel and leisure projects.

Although LYT maintains its head office in South Africa, it continues to grow its operations in Nigeria and The Oasis Centre, Ikeja is a unique state-of-the-art lifestyle development that combines hospitality, retail and leisure in one location. It also offers excellent opportunity for meetings and events and is driven by the significant opportunity to provide a one-stop experience for diverse retail and business needs. Five strictly private, confidential and unique retail experience of the MICE would be available in the five-star Wyndham Hotel.

The retail space has approximately 48 shops of varying sizes with the intention of having a rare mix of distinct retailers. A welcome addition to the office space in Ikeja of approximately 3,000 square meters which would offer serviced meeting rooms and working spaces The Wyndham is one of the foremost hospitality brands globally.

The Oasis Centre will have a five-star Wyndham Hotel offering accommodation for over 200 rooms and comprises seven floors with a total GBA of 31,000 square meters under one roof, while other associated infrastructure includes on-site ground parking for 300 cars and an internal 1km private road network connecting to the major highway via a slip road and key components of the facility.

Landwey to build 2,000 homes in 36 months

By BLESSING OZIWO

Despite the high cost of building materials like sand, cement, blocks, and other economic challenges, a real estate developer, Landwey Investment Limited, has concluded plans to deliver 2,000 homes to Nigerians in 36 months, despite the ever-increasing cost of building materials.

According to the firm, the promise came about because of the jump in the influx of people into

Lagos for residential, commercial, and tourist purposes.

Following reports from the Federal Mortgage Bank, Nigeria is plagued with a deficit of about 28 million housing units leaving many in dire need of a home.

Against this backdrop, Landwey promised to play a significant role in mitigating the housing deficit by developing contemporary estates.

It would be recalled that one of Landwey's thriving projects, Urban Prime, an award-winning

estate launched three years ago, has delivered over 1000 homes to its customers across the country and beyond.

On the new development at the homes handover ceremony, the Managing Director, Landwey, Adeshola Bello, said "The three-year-old Urban prime project amongst other ongoing projects has been working tirelessly despite the hike in the price of construction materials, inflation, the volume of materials needed and other factors."

She stressed that "Landwey is on a mission and will stop at nothing to ensure our clients get the best value for their money while we also pay detailed attention to the building process from start to finish."

Urban Prime which was recently awarded by African property as a residential development in Nigeria sits on over 40 hectares of land with different building prototypes from apartments to semi-detached villas.

Wike is a committed party man - Ologunagba

National Publicity Secretary of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Hon. Debo Ologunagba in an informal chat with members of the PDP Press Corps at the party secretariat in Abuja on Thursday dismisses claims that the party is heading for the broke over a protracted crisis, rather he says the ongoing reconciliation process by stakeholders is gradual and that it is yielding results. He said the party cannot toy with the idea of changing leadership at this crucial moment making reference to constitutional provisions. Politics Editor, TUNDE JOSHUA brings excerpts.

There are different views on happenings in the party but the leadership has not been talking. A chieftain of the party, Chief Bode George called for the resignation of the national chairman, Dr Iyorchia Ayu. What would you say to this?

We are a party that allows conversation, we are a party that allows members to speak. We don't allow autocracy in the name of the running of a political party like the APC, where somebody says something and it becomes the party says. Because we are a democratic party, we allow for views and for different views and this is the whole essence of democracy. You express your views, you go to vote and you either win or lose but then anybody is entitled to speak. And with all due respect to Chief Bode George who was privileged to hold very high government and party offices in this country and we expect that he knows more, he understands the importance of the unity of the party and party politics. The requirement for that unity is actually now as to when the party was in near crisis in our country apart from our constitution. What should be more germane is the exigency of times. Because the constitution is for man not man for the constitution.



Nyesom Wike

Are you saying the party does not respect his views?

Why will you expect me to respect his view if he is not going to respect my view? And his view may not be the majority of views in the PDP. We respect his view as he is entitled to that, he can say what he believes in but he can't hide from the facts. Back to your comment about more people, in view of members of the party, no matter how highly placed doesn't equate to the opinion of the party. Because the party is a culmination of divergent views and interests, every member of this party must recognize the importance of the unity in this party at this time and in the interest of Nigerians.

Will this not bring further disunity to the party?

The level of disunity in the country is so accelerated and it's our responsibility particularly the leaders of the party to recognize the need for unity. All organs of the party are working almost over time to ensure that this family is going in the right direction, we expect to have little issues as it is inevitable but because we have a system described severally as a robust defensive resolution mechanism, we don't want an eruption and that is why you can't get what we do elsewhere. We are setting out on what we are doing and slowly we are getting to our destination, which is fixing the party and then address the issue of the country, particularly the issue of insecurity and the need for unity.

But there is insinuation that the process is not becoming feasible or slow?

We are slowly going there and as I said, reconciliation in such a big party as ours is not a 100 metre race, it is a marathon so it takes a process, it might be slow but be sure, it will get to its destination.

Reconciliation is a process, it is a marathon, it is not a dash, in reconciling people, the tendency is that you might be frustrated with the process just like democracy. Democracy is

not particularly a quick fix but in the end, it is like justice, you might have a murder case, the trial might take another four years, they would probably have forgotten the victim because it goes slowly so that all aspects of it is respected, people might become frustrated. Nigerians have a right to expect, why, it's because they have been under a government that has consistently abused them in the last seven years so we are eager to get out of the wood but we know that PDP has a structural process and policies to ensure that Nigerians get out of the woods.

PDP organs at all levels are actively involved, I know that behind the scene, discussions are ongoing at multiple levels, of cos they are not issues to put on pages of newspapers. The important thing Nigerians need to know is that we are engaged constantly and consistently on this because we know that the future of Nigeria is hinged on the success of PDP. We recognize the burden, we know the responsibility and we can't afford to fail. Every aspect of the party is working towards achieving this goal. I can assure that we are doing well by our assessment, we are increasing our tempo in that regard and slowly we are getting there. More importantly, we are focused on the Nigerian project, we need to get away from where we are, the insecurity, lack of unity that is completely getting worse every day, the disregard for life experienced daily, the fact that the economy is collapsing and our index depreciating every day, that should concern us as a party, and this is the front burner of our decision process.

What is your take on the alleged defection plan by the Rivers State governor, Nyesom Wike?

I am happy you used the word alleged, I am not aware of that. Gov Wike is a registered member of this party, he is a man who has invested much in this party and has harvested so much from this party, the party has promoted him and he has also expressed his passion and commitment to the party. The latest of

his passion was at the convention where he declared that he is a committed member who has never left the party since 1999. He is a patriotic party man and he said all that to the whole world. As at this moment, we have no evidence or statement that he has changed his mind or position from what he said. As a man of honour who has invested so much in this party and a man who rose to the position he is today from the platform of the party, being projected as limelight to the whole world using that opportunity to display his capacity, a man who can manage resources and men to the point that he was nicknamed "Mr Project", it is only under the platform of the PDP. At this moment, we believe and know that he is a man of his words, most fearless, most forthright who is committed to what he believes in, we have no reason to believe the rumours.

How do you think members in the south will feel when party officials only come from the North. Your presidential candidate is from the north, national chairman from north, chairman BoT from north?

I am excited each time these questions come to our party, it means Nigerians are interested in what happens in the PDP because the hope is in PDP, it gives the feeling that we are in the right track because Nigerians are looking up to us and if they are looking up to us, it means they are watching what we are doing.

But again, we must compare like to like, the APC today has a president who is from the north, the chairman of that party, from the north, they don't even have Board of Trustees, all positions in the government, particularly in the security sector, they are from the north, which means Nigerians know that APC is a failure. I mentioned earlier something about exigencies that you don't want an election with a constitutional crisis, we recognize this as a party and I can assure you that as a party conscious of its constitution must equally be conscious of the exigency of the tribe. We have less than six months to the elections, by our Constitution, when a position is vacant, a replacement must come from that zone, assuming the chairman goes today, which of course is not going to happen because this NWC is working together, the urgency of now for Nigeria requires stability in the party, even if he does, what we will be having is that the deputy national chairman (North) will constitutionally be the next person to take that position. If the presidential candidate is from the Northeast then if that happens, the acting national chairman will be from the Northeast, so what are we talking about, the exigency of the fact that we are having an election makes it a different scenario. When Late President Umaru Yar'adua became the presidential candidate, Mohammed Aliyu was the chairman but because of the elections coming, the party because of the exigency of time allowed that because you can't replace a chairman except you have another mini convention, that is the constitution. Can this country with the urgency of now or can this party afford the constitutional gathering and the logistics required to have a larger convention or mini convention? Again, people spewing out this only to create a semblance of crisis in the party. This party with the backing of its member wants Senator Iyorchia Ayu to

remain as chairman of the party for this period, when the party is consistent with its review process, we look at things and say we need to do this at this time, so that serves some balancing so far it is within our constitution and the country federal character. We are not in a cloud of doubt, those are the issues, all those spilling now are people that are trying to make us look in disarray, of course not, we are united like I said, people can say what they believe in, we respect it but your view doesn't reveal the position of the party, a party comprises of people and not of one man. Our party organs have been meeting and at the last NEC meeting, the NEC confirmed and expressed its confidence in Senator Iyorchia Ayu led NWC, which is an organ of the party.

Most recently, about two weeks ago, another very important organ of the party at the interactive meeting between Zonal, States publicity secretaries and major stakeholders of the party came into this premises and they issued a communique, there can be no one way to make communication, the fact that there are multiple organs of the party expressing confidence in the leadership of Ayu tells you that this is going on, that we have not issued a press statement doesn't mean the confidence is not there.

The fact is that the NWC is united, the organs of the party and other stakeholders are with the NWC, they are for the party to be united and serve because elections are here and we don't need any crisis or distraction not just for the party but because the Nigerian people are looking up to us.

NPS, a critical member of the party has placed destination as a condition for peace and full reconciliation and with your stance that the National Chairman is going nowhere, does it mean you have closed the door for peace?

We won't toll the line of not talking about negotiation, then we work on what we call "give and take" and this can't destroy the whole, you can't destroy the whole for a part, it is not about being hard on them but being realistic. My point is this, we respect people's interests, we salute their courage and need to request for anything but there must be negotiation when people say this or nothing, it means they don't want negotiation and I don't think it is in this party, I am not privileged to be in the meetings but I know that in this party there is no such as this or nothing, we are a family and that is why we are in a democracy and that is going on. I know that the overall interest of the party is in line and in tune with the expectation of Nigerians and the country and am sure every member of the party has keyed into that position which is survival of the party in the interest of the party and in the interest of our country Nigeria.

What will happen after the election?

What is constant in life is change and it will be hard for me to project what will happen in 2023 but I will tell you one word, this party is very sensitive, will review its constitution, look at ways to improve the constitution and so the right thing which is the unity of the country, the unity in the party, recognition of diversity in the country and the need to do balancing, we will review a lot and do that which is right in line with its constitution.

Active youth's involvement in politics is way to go - Femi Adebayo

Femi Adebayo is undoubtedly one of the most sought-after actors in the country who has paid his dues so well. Femi has equally joined the growing list of Nigerian entertainers who are getting involved in governance. In this interview with OMONIYI ALLI, Femi spoke about youth's involvement in politics, cinema culture and the journey thus far.

Q: What are your assessments of the cinema culture amongst Nigerian youths?

A: For me, it is growing in as much as there is still room for lots of improvement; gone are those days when all we do is go to cinemas and watch foreign movies but the reverse is the case now as more prominence is now been given to Nigeria movies in cinemas as our productivity level has increased. For me, I believe we are already knocking out Hollywood in cinemas if not sending

them packing.

Q: For you, how would you describe your creative process?

A: It's not that gradual but it's improving because something actually invokes the creativity in me, what I see around me; unlike before when I actually started anything comes to play but now more exposure has further helped in shaping my creative process.



Q: How much did your father influence your career?

A: Working closely with my father gave me a picture and maybe I got the passion from him since he is an actor. I used to take acting as a hobby before it turned into a profession. I wanted to be a lawyer and I went to school to study it. But I later realized that I was having more fun and getting comfortable in showbiz. That was why I settled for acting.

Q: What are the lessons you've learnt from your father?

A: I have learnt so much from my father and I am still learning. I am using this opportunity to say thank you to him and if I am coming to this world again I wish to come through him. He is an extremely humble man and we learnt that from him. Apart from the fact that he is a talented actor, he is a born leader and we got that attribute from him too. I have been using so many of his principles in my daily activities and it is really working for me. I give it to him and I see him as a major factor behind my success.

Q: Do we still see you practising law?

A: As much as I am a qualified barrister, I can appear before the law court. But it is important to mention that the professional ethics of law won't permit you to be a practising lawyer if you are into any other business. As a lawyer you should have enough time to prepare your matter as much as you want to represent your client in the law court; you shouldn't misrepresent the court. So if I am not doing any other thing again, I can decide to go into full-time practice.

Q: When did you decide to dump law for acting?

A: Sincerely, it was even after my call to bar. I was called to the Nigerian bar in 2003 and I decided to turn my passion into a profession in 2005.

Q: What is your take on youth's involvement in politics?

A: Believe me sincerely it is a good idea that youths these days have begun to show keen interest in politics but it is actually sad that when people hear the word 'Politics' what ordinarily comes to the mind is that there are thieves, they are corrupt and if we continue to think that way nobody will have interest in the politics of the country. The fact remains that we have so many truthful politicians in there but as you know the bad eggs will overshadow the good ones.

So for me, I will tell the youth that now it is our time to get right and happily for us there is not too young to rule bill indicating that a lot of youths can be lawmakers; let us use this medium to tell those grandfathers to go and sit down; retirement age is 65 in Civil Service; so let those people above 65 give chances to the younger ones to come on board and see what we can do.

Q: A lot of celebrities have been bashed on social media; what is your take on social media trolls?

A: Luckily for me I have not had cause to have issues on social media where insults will come in; I take a step at a time and I have tried as much as possible to keep records and stay off scandals. Even when fans give a polite insult on my page, I have been trained not to attack or react and believe me that has really helped me a lot because you don't have to respond to all passes on social media.

Q: Who is Femi Adebayo away from the limelight?

A: You can give me the opportunity to describe myself and I won't say sweet things. I am an easygoing person, straight forward and I am totally different from the person you see on screen. But when it comes to work, I interpret my roles well and I can go to any extent to achieve it. I do research very well.



Comedian Pencil set for Abuja Edition of annual show 'Pencil Unbroken'

Having hosted a successful show in Lagos, Ace comedian Ogechi Nwanevu Cyril better known as Pencil has revealed that all is now set towards the Abuja edition of the show come September 17th at Transcorp Hilton Abuja.

Expected to excite guests with rib-cracking jokes include Mr Funny, Gordons, Lasisi Elenu, Forever, MC Bob, Shortcut, Kenny Blaq, I go Save amongst others while music sensations, Arrya Starr, Asake, Chike and Alternate Sound have assured guests of a night of fun and bliss.

Speaking on the forthcoming show, pencil disclosed that as a normal tradition; it is important to put smiles on the faces of his Abuja supporters and believers of his growing brand, hence the scheduled Abuja edition.

He said 'I am bringing a lot of new elements and stage craft for my performances and I believe that it will be a delight to watch.'

It is important to note that Pencil has graced many concerts with his witty quips both in Nigeria and abroad. His style, which is simplistic and original, has earned him an enviable spot among the elite class of comics.



First-Ever BBNaija Documentary Premiere today on Africa Magic



Cross section of past BBN contestants

The first-ever documentary about Big Brother Naija is set to drop. The mini-documentary titled BBNaija: the Fame, the Fans, the Frenzy, produced by ID Africa's The Bang Studio will premiere on Africa Magic Showcase today, Saturday, August 13, 2022.

BBNaija: The Fame, the Fans, the Frenzy will take viewers behind the scenes of the biggest reality TV show in Africa and reveal

some truths about the show's production. It features some of the show's most popular housemates, including Mercy Eke, Laycon, Nengi, Prince, Alex Asogwa, Bisola Aiyeola, Elozonam, and Ozo.

BBN: The Fame, the Fans, the Frenzy tells the untold story of the show and examines its impact through the eyes of relevant stakeholders, with appearances from the host, crew and

organizers of the show, which has grown to become the biggest Big Brother franchise in the world.

Chief Executive Officer of ID Africa, Femi Falodun, explains that the show is an African pop-culture phenomenon, so it was necessary to tell its story.

He shared, "At ID Africa, we love to tell untold stories, and what better story to tell than that of the biggest Big Brother installment in the franchise's history? In the recently concluded season alone, the show recorded over a billion votes from millions of viewers. It was also watched in over 30 countries across the globe. I am thrilled that we get to share the backstory of how this show is made and how much it changes the participants' lives."

The Executive Head of Content and West Africa Channels, MultiChoice, Dr Busola Tejumola, also shared her excitement about the premiere of BBN: The Fame, the Fans, the Frenzy. She said, "We've worked tirelessly behind the scenes for years to make Big Brother Naija a success. So, it's quite exciting to see the story of how the show comes together each year being told so brilliantly. The documentary will give fans an insight into how much work it takes to deliver the show each year."

BBN: The Fame, the Fans, the Frenzy will premiere on Saturday, August 13, 2022, at 2 pm on Africa Magic Showcase

Mádé Kuti promotes peace in new release, 'No more wars'

Grammy nominee and Africa's rising Afrobeat singer, Mádé Kuti, has released a brand new single (via Partisan Records) off his forthcoming album.

The single was produced by Sodi Marciszewer, (who recorded, mixed or produced Fela's last six albums) and GMK.

The song entitled 'No more wars' features an impressive vocal performance from the multi-instrumentalist, who preaches the need to embrace peace and re-awakening of true values during trying times.

'No more Wars' marks the young Mádé Kuti's first musical release after the completion of the tour of the U.S. with his dad, Femi Kuti and the Positive Force.

The record is coming after the success of 'For'eward, Mádé Kuti's first album that was jointly released alongside his father's album and titled Legacy+.

'No more wars' was composed, arranged, and authored by Mádé Kuti.

Mádé Kuti's new music draws from a deep well and understanding of the insecurity and global wars and the Afrobeat storytelling tradition to fuse soulful Afrobeat chords, horns and voices in creating a unique sound that will be a hit among young and older Nigerians and international audiences alike.

Speaking on the release of "No more wars," Mádé explains: "'No More Wars' is entirely about temper, control, and focus. It's

about experiences I've had that taught me to reflect intentionally before I react. The lyrics are inspired by my father's consistency in following his path despite dealing with an overwhelming amount of harsh, untrue, and deliberately cruel people inside and outside of his circle."

Over the years, this graduate of London's Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance has been honing his musical prowess in the

music industry - learning from his father and the legacies of his grandfather, Fela Anikulapo Kuti - before starting his Movement band to release his first album while still performing with his father's Positive Force band. With the release of this single and his forthcoming album, Mádé Kuti is set to once again remind Nigerians and his international audience of his lyrical prowess, vocal dexterity, and multi-instrumental abilities.



Unique Afro-Caribbean food line opens in Scotland

Gidi Grill is an exciting west African and Caribbean grilled food fusion restaurant founded in Dundee. We fuse the best spices, herbs and sauces marinated over freshly cooked prime meat cuts.

Our new flagship restaurant is opening in Aberdeen September 2022. Expect big things!

www.Instagram.com/gidi_grill



Netflix drives exciting content for African audience

Popular streaming platform, Netflix, has presented an outline of what is largely an exciting time for viewers on the African continent regarding programming for the rest of 2022 and the beginning of 2023. Bringing together talent, filmmakers and the media from South Africa and Nigeria, Netflix hosted See What's Next Africa content showcase to spotlight its increased investment in Africa's rich heritage of storytelling through exciting new projects that span a diverse range of genres and formats that will be available in 190 countries.

During the first half of 2022, Netflix in Africa released an exceptional slate of content from the sub-Saharan Africa region across multiple

genres including the pan-African reality show Young, Famous & African, the South African action film Silverton Siege, the South African soapy drama series Savage Beauty, Netflix's first Kenyan licensed branded series Country Queen, the first Netflix-owned Nigerian series Blood Sisters, a riveting south African crime documentary Senzo: Murder Of A Soccer Star and most recently, Justice Served. The response has been astounding with several of these titles landing on the Netflix weekly Global Top 10 lists which rank global and country lists for the most popular titles on our service, in addition to the Top 10 daily product rows on Netflix.

"We believe that Africa is one of the

major creative centres for great storytelling that resonates around the world so it only makes sense for us to increase our investment with our slate with an even more exciting slate. We're proud to continue creating global opportunities for the talented Creatives of this great continent and sharing their authentic stories with our members in Africa and around the world," said Dorothy Ghattuba, Netflix Director of Series in Africa.

As part of the company's ongoing commitment to creating sustainable relationships with African storytellers, Netflix announced a multi-project partnership with acclaimed South African filmmaker Mandlakayise Walter Dube. Under the partnership, Mandla - who

directed Netflix's first commissioned African film Silverton Siege (Kalushi) - will direct a variety of Netflix-owned projects which will be shared in due course. This partnership joins other multi-title agreements between the company and African Creatives including Mo Abudu (and Ebonylife StudioS) and Kunle Afolayan (KAP). At the event, Netflix also gave a glimpse into the progress of the various projects being created by emerging filmmakers from the various initiatives the company introduced in the past year which include, the UNESCO & Netflix 'African folktales, Reimagined' Competition; the Netflix & NFWF Film Fund and the Realness Institute Episodic Lab. Watch the conversation video here.



33 years after, Okwaraji lives on

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

August 12 of every year will never be wiped from the memory of Nigerians, who witnessed the death of a great football maestro and 1988 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) winner, Samuel Okwaraji, in a FIFA World Cup qualifying match against Angola.

The sad incident, which overwhelmed the entire football community with deep pains, was worsened when some Nigerians questioned why Okwaraji's not happened the same way as Christian Erikson's.

Erikson in the Euro UEFA 2020, collapsed on the pitch on June 12, 2021, after suffering a cardiac arrest that quickly resulted in a cardiopulmonary resuscitation which preserved the life of the midfielder.

Today, Erikson is alive after several months away from action, with an implantable cardioverter-defibrillator fitted into his system. He has since returned to action, playing for Brighton last season before sealing a move to Old Trafford this summer.

How, our football hero, whose name has transcended the lips of those, who witnessed his reign and sad incident on that fateful day at the Lagos National Stadium, Surulere, to the teenagers, who despite not being born then, have composed rhymes in his name to honour him.

Born on August 12, 1964, in Orlu, Imo State, Okwaraji started his youth career in Italy in AS Roma before he made



his senior career in 1985-1986 for Dinamo Zagreb in Croatia. He had spells in Austria Klagenfurt, VfB Stuttgart, SSV Ulm, and K Berchem Sport before his untimely demise.

There is not a time when Nigerians recounted names of players that impacted greatly in the Super Eagles without the great Nigerian football icon's name not being mentioned.

Friday, 12th of August 2022, 33 years after his demise from possible hypertrophic cardiomyopathy according to the autopsy report, Nigerians honour Okwaraji, though he has left, still resides in our hearts as a hero.

Accordingly, the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) have joined Nigerians to celebrate Okwaraji, describing him as a patriot who will forever remain in our hearts.

NFF also on its Twitter handle, expunged remarks from Okwaraji's friends who eulogised him with heartwarming words.

"It's 12th August again, and we remember the patriotic Samuel Sochukwuma

Okwaraji who died on this day in 1989. Forever in our hearts," NFF tweeted.

Furthermore, on NFF's tweet, the nation's football governing body included two photos that contained the comments of different footballers and coach about Okwaraji at different periods.

"He told me back then that he had three ambitions in life and these were to play professional football abroad, obtain a doctorate degree in law and play for the Super Eagles," Meinkeme Fekete, coach, Bayelsa United, said in 2007.

"He actually achieved each and every one of these things before he died," the man who discovered Sam Okwaraji, added.

"Whatever confidence I have in my goalkeeping career today, Sam was instrumental to it. I'll be grateful to him forever," David Ngodigha said in 1991.

"He represented, for me, the new generation of midfield players with a very good foundation in football. Good

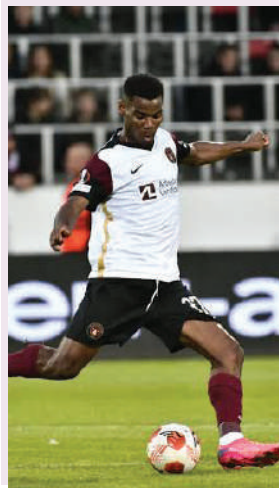
techniques all around, great vision, impeccable style and finesse; and [he was] a true patriot," Segun Odegbami said in 1989.

"None of us apparently thought Sam would die like that, and that was why we continued the match with a settled mind. But when the news of his death reached us at the hotel, it shattered me personally," Samson Siasia, said in 1989.

"A patriot who never worried about what his country will give to him, but shed strength and sweat to the country's glory," Sports Minister, Tonye Graham-Douglas said in 1989.

Okwaraji was buried in front of National Stadium, Surulere, with this message inscribed on his tomb, "In memory of an illustrious and patriotic Nigerian sportsman late Samuel Okwaraji, who died on active service to his fatherland on the 12th of August 1989 in a World Cup qualifying soccer match between Nigeria and Angola at the National Stadium, Lagos."

It is Onyedika or no one else, Maldini, Massara affirm



Ahead of the start of the new campaign, AC Milan are in the market to bolster their midfield and have spotted FC Midtjylland teenager Raphael Onyedika as a perfect fit for the position.

Reports from Denmark reveal that FC Midtjylland have valued the midfielder, who signed a five-year contract last two years, within the range of €7 - €10 million.

Although the Rossoneri are yet to make a formal offer for the former FC Ebodei midfielder, reports revealed other names are being considered for the position.

According to Tuttosport, following the numerous names that are being linked with a possible move to Milan, Arsenal midfielder Alberto Sambi Lokonga is among the names to have surfaced on the radar of the Rossoneri.

Lokonga moved to the North London club from RSC Anderlecht last season at a fee reportedly 17.50 million euros.

The player, who can function either in the central or defensive midfield positions, featured in 20 Premier League matches for the Gunners without scoring a goal last season.

However, despite several names being linked with a move to San Siro, Milan technical director, Paolo Maldini, and director of football, Ricky Massara, have concluded on Onyedika as their desired target, an Italian paper claimed.

Onyedika, since he joined the Wolves, has scored 4 times, coupled with 3 assists from 55 appearances.

The versatile player, whose main role is the defensive midfield position, can also play the centre-back and central midfield roles proficiently.

Juventus sign Filip Kostic from Eintracht Frankfurt

■ Pellegrini switches to Eintracht Frankfurt on loan

Italian giant Juventus have finalised the signing of Serbian Filip Kostic from Eintracht Frankfurt according to emerging reports from Turin.

Kostic, who landed in Turin yesterday to undergo a medical, met with Juventus boss Massimiliano Allegri and other players in Continassa for familiarisation.

He then signed the contract after he completed his medical.

However, the 29-year-old, who plays as a left winger and joined Eintracht Frankfurt in 2019, featured 129 times while scoring 18 goals before switching allegiance to the Old Lady.

The Old Lady last won the Serie A title three seasons ago, specifically in the 2019-2020 season, and have struggled to clinch further glory with Inter Milan and Milan evolving as the dominant force in the Italian league.

Last season, Juventus' closest opportunity to clinch silverware having lost out on the Serie A title race, was obliterated by Nerazzurri who defeated them in the Supercoppa Italiana.

The Old Lady are ready to return to the glory days when they won the Serie A title four times consecutively spanning the 2014-2015 to 2017-2018 seasons.

Following the opening of the summer window, Bianconeri have swelled their ranks with the signing of French midfielder Paul Pogba, Federico Chiesa, centre-back Bremer from Torino, and Angel Di Maria from PSG before securing Filip Kostic from Eintracht Frankfurt.

Meanwhile, the newbie has sent a farewell message to Die Adler for the support he was given during his time at Deutsche Bank Park.

"Thank you Eintracht Frankfurt for believing in me when no one else did! I would like to thank the club, all the wonderful people who work there, the teammates, the coaches, the management, the fans and the whole city for making my stay in Frankfurt unforgettable," Kostic said.

"Eintracht fans, thank you for supporting us in every game. We gave everything for the colours of Eintracht Frankfurt, you in the stands and us on the pitch. Together we were able to write the history of the club by winning the Europa League.

"Thank you for all the love and support you gave me. We couldn't have done it without you. I will carry you in my heart forever," he added.

Reacting to the move, head coach Oliver Glasner lamented that it is weakening that such a good player, who won the UEFA Europa League trophy with club last season, has left the club.

"From a sporting point of view, the fact that we are losing such a player is clearly weakening," Glasner told the media.

"But I also [feel OK] because I know how the season started last year with Filip's strike, where he didn't play.

"We had a lot of talks then and he put himself 100 per cent at the service of the team. That's when I said that he should leave the team as a hero for once. That's what he's doing now, he's leaving Eintracht as a European Cup winner. As a hero who helped shape it.

"He was player of the season in the Europa League, which he deserves. I don't begrudge him that from the bottom of my heart. From a sporting point of view, it's a shame," Die Adler boss added.

Glasner added that the Kostic' scenario always happens annually in the club but it is saddening that he leaves Deutsche Bank Park as a hero.

He said, "We have had the Filip issue every year since he joined us. Of course it's a shame, Filip has done a lot for this club. He leaves as a hero who played a big part in this team - but you have to be honest: That's part of football.

"Players come and go. Today is the day an important player left. That is part of the game. We have a team that is capable of winning games and performing well without Filip. It's a pity, but it's nothing that will throw us off track," Glasner added.

In a related development, Juventus Luca Pellegrini has switched to Eintracht Frankfurt to process a year loan deal. With this move, the left-back will play in the Bundesliga under coach Oliver Glasner and may make his debut on Saturday against Hertha Berlin.

Emphatically, Pellegrini's move to the Bundesliga is not connected to the deal that brought Kostic to Allianz Stadium

AITEO Cup: Kogi United secure walkover victories

Following the withdrawal of other contenders for the Aiteo Federations Cup, in which the winner was supposed to get an automatic ticket to join Remo Stars in this year's CAF Confederations Cup, Kogi United secured walkover victories to the final against the winner in the crunch semi-final tie between Heartland FC of Owerri and Niger Tornadoes.

According to reports, the contending teams, including Kano Pillars, Lobi Stars, Nasarawa United, and Wikki Tourists withdrew from the tournament

when NFF allotted the CAF Confederations Cup available slot to Kwara United.

Resultant of this withdrawal, Kogi United slated to battle Kano Pillars in the quarter-final secured a walkover victory to slate a tie in the semi-final with the winner between Nasarawa United and Wikki Tourists who both boycotted the game.

Due to the resolutions by the Solid Miners and the Tourists, Kogi United strolled into the final awaiting the winner between Niger Tornadoes and Heartland of

■ Play winner between Niger Tornadoes and Heartland of Owerri without a ball.

In a press release by the NFF Communication Department, "Kogi United, who walked over Kano Pillars in Makurdi, were programmed to meet the winner of the clash between Wikki Tourists and Nasarawa United. Both the Solid Miners and the Tourists failed to turn up in Kaduna.

"On that score, Kogi United are through to next week's grand finale, to play the winner of the semi-final tie between Niger Tornadoes and

Heartland FC.

"Giant-killers Heartland FC of Owerri will square up with Niger Tornadoes of Minna in the first semi-final of this year's AITEO Cup competition. The match will be held at the Lekan Salami Stadium, Ibadan on Sunday, 14th August," NFF stated.

However, the grand finale of this 2022 AITEO Cup competition, for both the men's and women's events, will hold at the Samson Siasia Stadium, Yenagoa on Wednesday, 17th August



Alleged assault: I kept going back because Giggs promised the world, Greville tells Jury

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

August 2017 and November 2020.

Ms Kate Greville told the jury at the Manchester Crown Court that she kept returning to former Manchester United captain Ryan Giggs because he kept promising the world to her despite the series of abuses.

Greville said this during a cross-examination by Giggs's lawyer, Chris Daw QC, on Thursday in the presence of the jury that comprises five women and two men.

According to the proceedings as reported by Planetsport, Ms Greville, 36, admitted that she was ashamed to have returned to Giggs after the assaults that included bodily injuries.

"It was a cycle of abuse that made me feel insecure," She responded when asked why she moved into Giggs' home during the first Covid-19 lockdown if "he had been a serial and violent abuser".

"I kept going back, he kept promising the world.

"He made me believe that he would not do it again and, stupidly, I went back. I am hugely ashamed of that, but I did," Greville, who works as a PR executive, admitted.

Ms Greville dragged Ryan Giggs, who had to resign his appointment as Wales national team manager, to the Manchester Crown Court for alleged assaults (for inflicting actual bodily harm, and the common assault of her younger sister) spanning from

The 48-year-old football manager denied all the allegations brought by his ex-girlfriend before the authorities.

In his cross-examination, Daw said Greville and Giggs decided to live together in the former Wales manager's home in Worsley in Manchester.

The defence lawyer asked Greville "Could you have gone to your parents or someone else?"

Ms Greville replied: "Yes."

Mr Daw said: "Was one of the reasons you didn't because actually you wanted to spend time with Ryan in his rather larger house?"

The witness said: "I wanted to stay with Ryan, not because of his house but because we had just started the relationship again."

Mr Daw said: "Can I suggest that you would not have done that if he had been a serial and violent abuser?"

To further support his defence, Planetsport added that Daw played two videos of the couple in lockdown to the jury. One of the videos showed when both exercised together in the garden and the other had Giggs and Greville rapping along to 50 Cent's In Da Club song.

According to Giggs' lawyer, the lockdown was tough but unarguably, posited that Ms Greville had a wonderful time with the former Manchester United captain.

Ms Greville said: "It was not all fun. It doesn't mean he was being nice to me all the time.



"At the start of lockdown it was fine but it got progressively worse," the plaintiff added.

Prior to Thursday's sitting, Ms Greville told a jury that Giggs grabbed her by the shoulders and headbutted her in November 2020 after she confronted him about his serial cheating.

In the lead-up to the alleged attack, she said she learned he had "full-on relationships" with eight women while they were together.

In the Crown Court, Mr Daw said to Ms Greville: "I suggest to you that the decision (to leave him) was entirely based on that issue, that infidelity. It was nothing to do with coercion, violence, anything like that."

Ms Greville replied: "There's a lot of emails between me and him where I say a lot more things about control and coercion and manipulation."

She said it was "incorrect"



that her decision to leave Giggs was solely because "he was a cheat".

Mr Daw asked whether finding out Giggs was involved with other women made her decide she "needed to come up with a plan".

Ms Greville told the court: "I needed a plan to get away in secret so he couldn't find me, so he wouldn't harass me. And how to let him know how I had found all those things out."

However, the PR executive agreed with Mr Daw that Giggs was "very flirtatious with women" and "got a lot of attention out and about in all sorts of situations, from both men and women, because he's well known".

Mr Daw said: "You suggest in your various accounts that lockdown was a period of living hell."

Ms Greville replied: "I felt like I was losing my mind. I was having panic attacks. It was a horrific time for me."

Olumide Agoye steps down as 3SC coach

■ Prepares to attend a coaching course abroad

Head coach of Shooting Star Sports Club, Edith Olumide Agoye has tendered his resignation voluntarily which has been accepted by the management of 3SC.

Agoye has had a long spell with the Ibadan-based club and on two occasions, led them to qualify for the Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL).

While the most recent promotion to the Nigeria elite division was in 2020/2021 season, the football gaffer last season, led the team to sustain its NPFL status.

In a statement by the club and signed by the executive chairman, Honourable Babatunde Olaniyan, on Tuesday, 3SC thanked Agoye for his long-time contributions to the club, including guiding the team to win a promotion to the elite league.

3SC also commended Governor Oyo State, Oluseyi Makinde for granting the club's approval to send Aboye to further his coaching course in the United Kingdom.

The statement read in part: "Coach Agoye, a former player of the Ibadan soccer lords, quitted as the chief tactician of the Oluyole Warriors on Tuesday, after a nine-year spell both as an assistant coach and the head

coach.

"As an assistant coach, he worked under coaches Franklin Howard (2014/15), Gbenga Ogunbote (2015/16) and Fatai Amoo (2016/17), before he was named the head coach during the 2017/18 season, the position he held till he resigned on Tuesday.

"Apart from guiding the team to pick a promotion ticket back to the elite league in the 2020/21 season, after four unsuccessful attempts, the former Ila FC and Gateway United gaffer led 3SC to a historic eight consecutive victories in the Nigeria National League (NNL), en route the team's qualification for the playoff in Enugu, where the team eventually secured promotion to the elite league," 3SC said.



Costa Rica 2022: Falconets walk the talk, beat France 1-0

The Nigeria U20 women's team also known as the Falconets fulfilled their promises to beat France in the opening Group C match in the tenth FIFA U20/Women's World Cup in Costa Rica.

Falconets, two-time runners-up, gave a sneak preview of their capabilities when they overcame torrential rain, an hour's delay and more rain to defeat Europe's top team France 1-0 in the opening match of Group C on Friday morning.

Stormy conditions in San Jose, capital of the central American country, made fluid football impossible from the start, but midfield lubricator Esther Onyenezide still caused panic in the French team's vital area with an intelligent free-kick after only seven minutes.

Mexican referee Francia Gonzales opted to stop the game in the 20th minute as a tropical rainstorm made visibility impossible for both the combatants and the umpire. The game's suspension lasted exactly one hour.

Eight minutes after resumption, Magnaba Folquet had to desperately head the ball away from goal as Nigeria pushed forward. However, within two minutes as the first half wound down, Nigeria skipper Oluwatosin Demehin and France defender Kysha Sylla were cautioned – a measure of the intensity of the battle.

In the second half, both teams fought even harder. Two minutes before the hour mark, Mercy Idoko just failed to connect properly at the tail end of a sweet team move, and 20 minutes from time, goalkeeper Oyono Omini provided a critical block in the vital area as France surged forward.

In the 72nd minute, substitute Chiamaka Okwuchukwu was hindered from getting anything positive as Flourish Sabastine got a cross into the French vital area. The game flowed from end to end as both teams attacked with zest and defended with resolution.

Substitute Jade Nassi thought she had put France



ahead when she slotted home from a goalmouth melee that followed a corner kick in the 80th minute, but referee Gonzales consulted the Video Assistant Referee which correctly ruled out the strike for a foul on Omini.

Five minutes later, Nigeria got the goal that their push, effort and enterprise deserved when Flourish Sabastine, top scorer for the Falconets

in the African qualifying series, raced onto a brilliant Mercy Idoko pass, kept her composure and slotted past goalkeeper Marie-Morgane Sieber with some flourish.

The Falconets' next game is on Sunday against Korea Republic at the Estadio Alajuela Morera Soto. Victory in that game will automatically assure Nigeria of a place in the tournament's quarter-finals.

CHAN 2023: Super Eagles camp swell in numbers ahead of Ghana clash

The Super Eagles camp has continued to swell up in numbers as no fewer than 25 players have arrived to kickstart preparation for the crunch tie against a regular foe Ghana in the Championship of African Nations.

Wednesday's report from the camp reveals that 13 players have joined the early birds in Bolton White Hotels at Wuse Zone 7, Abuja, to bolster the ranks of the Super Eagles B (home-based Super Eagles).

Among the early birds already in camp included Enyimba FC's safe hand, Ojo Olorunleke, Water FC and Flying Eagles goalkeeper, Nathaniel Nwosu.

Other early arrivals

include Remo Stars striker, Andy Okpe, veteran defender, Tope Olusesi, Katsina United defender, Sani Feisha, Christopher Nwaeze, Zilfikilu Mohammed, Haggai Katoh, Sadiq Abubakar, Godspower Aniefiok, Joseph Onoja, and Hafeez Nosiru.

The Super Eagles will face Ghana in the first leg in Accra on Sunday, 28th August while the second leg holds at Moshood Abiola Stadium Abuja on Saturday 3rd September.

Consequently, the winners on aggregate will go on to participate in the 7th African Nations Championship in Algeria in 2023.





Leon Balogun, a regular Rangers' visitor despite exit

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

Super Eagles defender Leon Balogun, though he left Rangers in the summer, is still a regular visitor at Ibrox. Rangers had wanted to renew the contract of the big defender but he chose to look elsewhere for a new challenge.

Following his exit from Ibrox, the player, while in search of a new club, was on the stand to watch Rangers in a crunch Champions League clash with Union Saint Gilloise on Tuesday night where the Gers came from a first-leg 2-0 deficit to win 3-2 on aggregate.

It was more like a call to return to Rangers as Balogun watched how Antonio Colak slotted the second goal to hand Giovanni van Bronckhorst's side a tally on aggregate in the 58th minute.

The determined Royal Blue, who were firing from all cylinders, thrilling the ecstatic crowd, finally climaxed a reaction in the 78th minute when Malik Tillman sealed the victory with a powerful header.

Balogun has been part of Ibrox's success story in the last two seasons, winning the league title under Steven Gerrard and also reaching the Europa League final in Seville where Gers narrowly missed the title to Eintracht Frankfurt.

Rangers were eager to retain the 34-year-old defender who joined the club on a free transfer from Wigan but Balogun, presently without a club, chose the exit door.

At the time he left Ibrox, he said, "Took me some time, but eventually it is time for me to say goodbye."

"Thank you to every single soul at the club working their socks off, making sure I and the boys can focus on performing at our best. A lot of whom we work with on a daily basis, kitchen staff, medical staff, sports scientists and athletic trainers, as well as our two girls Katy and Hannah. You have shown and taught me -in your very own way- the dedication that is expected and I thank you for that."

"Thank you to the managing staff and especially to my amazing teammates over the 2 seasons, who welcomed me from day one as a player and a friend. Who pushed me to be better and taught me the Rangers way. A lot of highs, a few lows that made our bond even stronger."

"We became invincible champions, the class of 55, the magical European nights at Ibrox that led us all the way to the final. Eventually, we crowned my time with the Scottish cup. Thanks for all the memories, the laughter and for sharing some of the best moments in my career with me."

"And last but not least, a massive



thank you to you, the supporters. You are one crazy, passionate bunch. High expectations, that can be intimidating at times - but I loved every single second of it."

"All your messages over the past 2 weeks have been incredibly overwhelming for me and at the same time, they're the greatest testimonials I can get for my time at Rangers. It has been an absolute

privilege and honour to represent you near and far."

"One of the most frequent questions I've been asked in my time at Rangers was if I understand the size of the club and what it means - thanks to you, I do now."

"We are the people and you are my people - Forever Blue," he reiterated.

Ancelotti, Kroos, become coach, player, with most Super Cup titles

Real Madrid lifted the UEFA Super Cup title after a first-half goal from David Alaba and a second-half strike by Karim Benzema sealed the victory at Helsinki Olympic Stadium against Europa League champions Eintracht Frankfurt.

The encounter was however a rematch of the 1960 European Cup final where Madrid plummeted Eintracht Frankfurt 7-3 through the efforts of Puskas and Alfredo Di Stefano.

Kickstarting the new season, the German side in their opening Bundesliga game against Bayern Munich were dismantled 6-1 at Deutsche Bank Park last week.

While Die Adler had hoped to shrug off the devastating defeat with a win over Los Blancos in the Super Cup cracker, Los Blancos ensured they exacerbated their woes further.

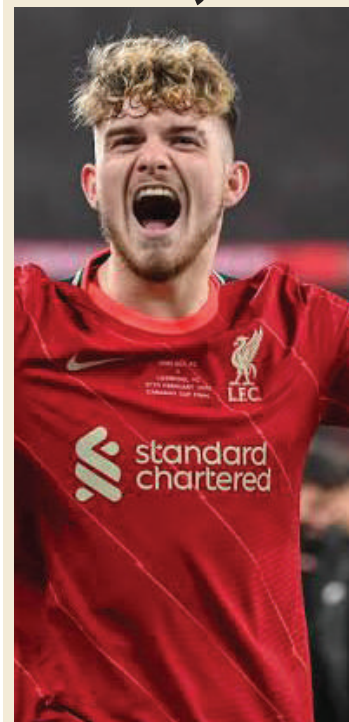
Following the victory, Carlo Ancelotti secured the fifth Super Cup title for Real Madrid having won the La Liga title and the UEFA Champions League last season.

Moreover, the Madrid boss became the coach with the most Super Cup wins in history (2 with Milan and 2 with Madrid) after the victory at Helsinki Olympic Stadium, surpassing Pep Guardiola's tally.

Also, Madrid midfielder Toni Kroos was not left out, as he became the player with the most Super Cup wins having lifted the Cup five times to beat Dani Alves and Paolo Madini, who both lifted it four times.

The triumph over Eintracht Frankfurt, Real Madrid equalled the Super Cup records of Milan and Barcelona who both have won it five times.

Harvey Elliott commit to Liverpool until 2027



English midfielder Harvey Elliott is excited to have penned a long-term contract with Liverpool after returning to the club last season following the completion of a loan spell with Blackburn.

On his return, the 19-year-old signed a five-year deal last summer.

However, it seems the club have found the teenager as a promising talent and decided to improve the terms of his contract that will see the youngster remain in Anfield until 2027.

Speaking to the media department of the club after fulfilling his long-time dream, Elliott said he was happy to commit his future to the Reds for a long time which he acknowledged is a great thing to do for a club he is an ardent supporter.

He said, "It's always nice to

know that I'm going to be here for many more years, which is always a great thing with it being my boyhood club and there is nothing in this world that makes me more happy and more excited than this."

Elliott joined Liverpool in 2019 from Fulham at €1.7m fee and the following year, he was sent on loan to Blackburn Rovers.

Last season after his return, Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp incorporated him into his squad where he made 13 appearances in all competitions coupled with a goal in the 3-1 win against Cardiff in FA Cup.

Elliott added, "It's been a big rollercoaster for me and my family and even for the club. So much has happened in the years that I have been here."

"We've already won so much and hopefully we can win so much more, so just to know that I am going to be here for

a long time again - as I said, it's always a wonderful feeling for myself and my family [and] being Liverpool supporters there is no better place in this world to be than playing for Liverpool and to put the shirt on and go out and play for the team and the fans," he added elatedly.

Moreover, Elliott is poised to make an impact in Liverpool where memories can be created.

"I'm hoping there are many more memories to come with it but I'm just so excited to put pen to paper and stay here for a lot longer," he said.

The midfielder has already started this season with his first appearance against Manchester City in the Community Shield and was also in action for Liverpool in the 2-2 draw against Fulham at Craven Cottage.

