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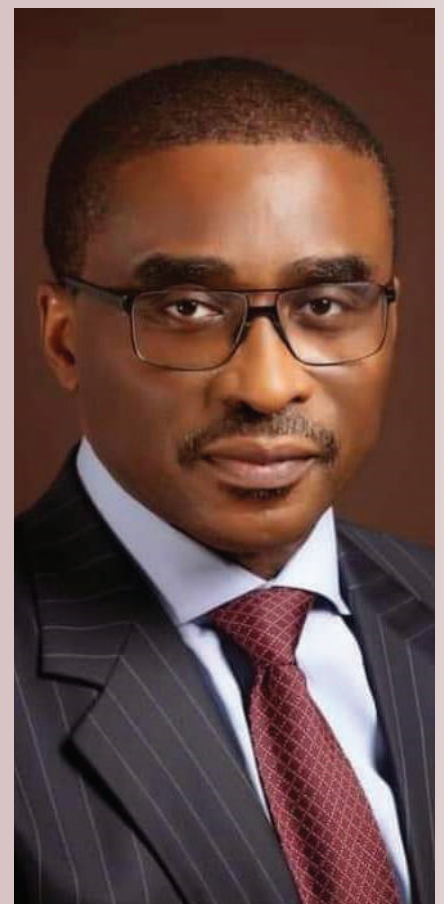
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# Anxiety hits Okowa, Ibori camps as INEC delists Delta PDP gubernatorial candidate

By PAUL MICHAEL

Internal wranglings in the Delta chapter of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) have made its leaders and stalwarts in the state apprehensive and sceptical about what awaits its 2023 gubernatorial bid.

The Trumpet can authoritatively report that anxiety has gripped members of the party over the possibility of not having a governorship candidate on the 2023 ballot following the ruling of a Federal High Court and subsequent Appeal by one of the battling camps.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on Friday published the personal particulars of candidates nominated by their political parties for the 2023 Governorship and State Assembly elections in all the constituencies nationwide.

Professor Mahmood Yakubu, chairman of INEC, had on Thursday urged Nigerians to scrutinize the particulars of the various candidates and seek judicial remedy for any observed violation of the law when finally published on Friday.

However, there were neither particulars of Speaker of the State Assembly, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborewori from the Okowa camp nor those of Olorogun David Edevbie of the Ibori faction. The development has further unsettled and thrown members of the PDP into dilemma as the chances of having a candidate in the 2023 elections grow slimmer.

The Governor of the State, Dr Ifeanyi Okowa, has been having an unending power tussle with the state's erstwhile helmsman, Chief James Ibori, who many analysts described as the political godfather of the party in Delta. Ibori was the political leader of Okowa before his emergence as Governor of the State in 2015.

Crisis, however, began when Okowa moved against the preferred candidate of his supposed political leader, Ibori in the run-up to the party's 2022 primary in the State. Ibori had anointed seasoned financial administrator,

David Edevbie, as a potential successor of Okowa. However, Okowa, who was bent on building a political structure of his own, vehemently resisted the much-taunted fearsome political force of Ibori by throwing his weight behind Oborewori.

The choices of the once political allies, who are now wrestling dirty to claim the soul of the party in the State, have caused a sharp division between members of the PDP with the loyalty of many being tested.

It was gathered that Okowa was allegedly able to take advantage of his office as the incumbent governor with access to the State treasury to influence many of the power brokers across the three senatorial districts and 25 Local Government Areas to his side by appointing a retinue of aides, thereby subjecting the State to a borrowing spree.

Our findings revealed that Okowa relegated all members of the party who are supporters and loyalists of Ibori by starving them of appointments and political patronage; a move that has caused a significant inadequacy in the circulation of resources within the Ibori bloc, thereby forcing many to shift allegiance.

It was, therefore, not surprising that the State's Speaker emerged the winner of the party's primary election that was conducted on 25 May after polling 590 votes to defeat his main rival, Edevbie who polled 107 votes. Senator James Manager came third with 83 votes. But then, that was the beginning of the crisis that is now threatening to kick out the PDP from the seat of power that it has held hostage since the return of Democracy in 1999 – some 23 years ago.

Edevbie wasted no time to file a pre-election case against Oborewori, challenging his qualification to seek the office of the governor. He prayed the court to disqualify the winner for false information and forged certificates.

In his ruling on Thursday, 7th July 2022, the judge, Justice Taiwo of a Federal High Court sitting in Abuja, ordered the PDP



Okowa

and INEC to replace Oborewori's name with that of the plaintiff, Edevbie, who scored the second highest votes.

"The 1st Defendant (Mr Oborewori) should and ought to be prohibited, prevented, or otherwise restrained from holding out, parading, and or advertising himself as the candidate of the 2nd Defendant (PDP) for the forthcoming Gubernatorial elections

in Delta State scheduled to hold on 11 March 2023 by the 3rd Defendant (INEC)," Justice Taiwo ruled.

The ruling of the court sent waves into Okowa's camp with supporters deadly silent, confused, and shattered despite Oborewori appealing the judgment.

INEC guidelines stipulated that political parties should submit their candidates' names

through the party's portal on or before Friday, 15th July.

The court judgment was said to have been served to both the PDP and the INEC before the deadline of the electoral umpire. However, it was gathered that the PDP failed to keep to the guidelines by submitting the name of Edevbie as a replacement for Oborewori, a situation that may lead to the disqualification of the political party.

A top PDP chieftain who spoke to The Trumpet on the condition of anonymity expressed fear that the chances of Oborewori in the ongoing legal battle are slim. He said the party is facing a very tough time and its members, especially those in the Okowa camp are currently in a state of dilemma.

He further stated that the name and particulars of the PDP governorship candidate missing from the INEC's published list have further increased tension and fear within the ranks of the PDP.

The source accused the

Deputy President of the Senate and governorship candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Sen Ovie-Omo-Agege, of orchestrating the crisis rocking the PDP to ensure that the party has no candidate in the 2023 governorship election.

"What is going on in our party has made many of us devastated. There is fear that PDP may not have a gubernatorial candidate in Delta State as a result of this unending battle between our leaders, which has resulted in lingering court cases. I believe that Ovie Omo-Agege is behind this whole crisis. He is the Deputy Senate President and has a close rapport with the Judiciary," the source alleged.

Meanwhile, there are speculations that Governor Okowa, who is the Vice Presidential Candidate of the PDP, is currently considering opting for Accord Party by supporting former Secretary of State Government (SSG), Festus Agas.

## CAPPA backs national protest over ASUU strike

By EDU ABADE, Business Editor

Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa (CAPPA) has commended the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) for its decision to organise a two-day national protest in solidarity with the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) to get Nigerian students back to school and support unions in the nation's public universities clamouring for uninterrupted quality education.

A circular sent by NLC National Executive Council (NEC) to its affiliates and state councils after its meeting on June 30, 2022, indicated that the protests will take place on Tuesday, July 26, 2022, and Wednesday, July 27, 2022, in all the state capitals across the federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.

In a statement signed and issued in Lagos by Policy and Research Officer of CAPPA, Zikora Ibeh, the group said the decision of organised labour to embark on solidarity protest with

ASUU was the best course of action given the Federal Government's insensitivity in the past five months despite attempts by the NLC and other stakeholders to intervene in the impasse.

"CAPPA welcomes the NLC's decision and urges all civil-society organisations, student unions, including the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) and all groups committed to the defence of social, economic, and human rights to join organised labour and education unions to defend the public university system.

"We at CAPPA support every legitimate action to ensure a speedy resolution of the strike and resumption of classes by students, who have been idling away at home for over five months," the statement reads.

The group expressed concern that the ASUU strike, which started on February 14, 2022, had now entered its fifth month, adding that this, coupled with the several months lost during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in 2020, meant that Nigerian

students have cumulatively lost over a year of academic work within two years.

"The long-term consequences of this loss for students and society can only be imagined. Unfortunately, the Federal Government does not seem bothered. Therefore, the national protest of July 26 and 27, 2022 must become a crucial point of engagement to demand accountability from political office holders and to insist on the right of the Nigeria child to improved funding of education, as enshrined in the 1999 Constitution (as amended) and other international agreements to which Nigeria is a signatory.

"CAPPA believes that Nigeria's public universities are severely underfunded and bedevilled by a poor governance system that promotes mismanagement and misappropriation of the paltry funding available. No doubt, this is one of the reasons why, according to the World University Ranking 2022 report, no public university in Nigeria is in the first 100 in Africa or

the first 1000 in the world," it said.

The group expressed concern that Nigerian academics were some of the least paid in the world despite having highly rated knowledge and qualifications comparable to any of their peers globally.

It stressed that any government that places value on education would do everything possible to ensure that the welfare of its academics and funding of its schools and tertiary institutions were prioritised in its budgeting and resource-mobilisation processes.

"We, hereby, urge the Nigerian people to continue to support academics and non-academic staff in public universities to demand improved funding for the university system and appropriate wages and allowances commensurate with their skills and services. This is the only way to block the curse of brain drain that plagues Nigeria and restore the integrity of the country's university system," the statement added.



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# Atiku tackles Tinubu, Obi, decries debt burden, others

By **TUNDE JOSHUA**, Abuja

As the dust raised by the alleged hiring of clergymen to endorse the unveiling of Senator Kashim Shettima as the vice presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) is yet to settle, torchbearer of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, has spoken on various issues, carpeting his main rivals, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, and Mr. Peter Obi.

He specifically revealed how he parted ways politically with Tinubu, the APC 2023 presidential candidate, in 2007 over single religion ticket.

He deplored the foisting of a single religion leadership ticket on Nigerians. He stressed that the Muslim-Muslim ticket was an unfair treatment for a secular nation like Nigeria.

The former vice president spoke Friday morning while featuring on Arise TV, Morning Show programme.

As a Nigerian believer of the Islamic faith, he said he has been very careful about the sensitive issue of religion and has always been avoiding playing politics with religion.

This, he said, informed his decision in 2007 to oppose Tinubu on the issue of the same faith ticket when the latter was contesting for the presidency then.

"The diversity in the nation was from the APC-led government. My fundamental disagreement and departure from Asiwaju politically was in 2007 on the issue of Muslim-Muslim ticket.

"Remember I came out of PDP on the issue of zoning and together with him we formed ACN and I was given a ticket

in Lagos and he insisted to be my running mate and I said no, I am not going to have a Muslim-Muslim ticket. So, he switched his support to the late Umaru Yar'Adua. That was the departing point."

Also, the PDP presidential candidate has expressed worries over the slipping trend in the Nigerian economy.

He lamented the rising profile of the nation's debt which he said is slipping from medium to high risk of distress.

Atiku said this on Friday while responding to a statement credited to Nigeria's finance minister, Hajia Zainab Ahmed that the nation's debt servicing exceeds revenue.

He said Thursday's revelation by Nigeria's Finance Minister that the cost of servicing Nigeria's debt has surpassed the Federal Government's retained revenue by N310 billion in the first quarter of the year is very worrisome.

"First, this action must be in breach of all known reasonable debt-sustainability thresholds. Second, it puts a big question mark on the capacity of the government to manage its rising debt profile without endangering macroeconomic stability. Indeed, I am concerned that this action is already exposing Nigeria to financial stability issues as we slip from a medium risk of debt distress to a high risk of debt distress.

"I had on several occasions warned that not only is the fiscal cost of government's indiscriminate borrowing so enormous but has even greater opportunity costs as we sacrifice investments in critical areas, including education, health, and other basic services. This is certainly detrimental to Nigeria's long-



Atiku

term growth.

"I urge the government to as a matter of urgency take immediate steps to slow down the rate of debt accumulation by promoting more Public Private Partnerships in critical infrastructure funding and identifying more innovative funding options.

"Review the current utilization of all borrowed funds and ensure that they are deployed more judiciously. Specifically, the government must ensure that all borrowed funds are for priority infrastructure projects that would generate income, boost output, and put the economy on the path of sustainable growth.

"Review the country's debt strategy by focusing on concessional and semi-concessional sources with lower interest rates and relatively long-term maturity. The government must reduce the issuance of short-dated debt instruments".

Atiku also charged the Federal Government to take steps to improve its spending efficiency and drastically cut unnecessary and wasteful

expenditures.

In the same interview with Arise Television, Atiku addressed a wide range of issues including the economy, insecurity, his chances at the poll, and those affecting Tinubu and Obi.

On President Muhammadu Buhari's lopsided appointments, Atiku said: "First and foremost, you have to give every part of this country a sense of belonging...we have 17 security outfits in this country and all of them being headed by one section of the country, that's a very serious imbalance."

He spoke about Tinubu, his long-time friend and former political associate whose presidential interest now clashes with his. He said: "My fundamental disagreement with Asiwaju since 2007 was on the issue of a Muslim-Muslim ticket, which led to my political departure from him."

Recall that Atiku contested the 2007 presidential election on the platform of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) formed by Tinubu after he

(Tinubu) fell out with the leadership of the Alliance for Democracy (AD).

When asked about the threat posed by Peter Obi with his Obidient movement, he said: "It will take a miracle for the Labour Party with no structure in the grassroots to win the presidency. In the north 90% of our people are not in tune to Social media." He advised Nigerians not to expect a miracle to happen on the basis that Peter Obi joined the Labour Party to contest the presidency in 2023.

On his choice of Governor of Delta State, Ifeanyi Okowa as his running mate, and his rejection of Rivers State Governor, Nyesom Wike, Atiku said: "I didn't reject

Wike. I picked who can deliver. Wike is brilliant and tenacious. Going by history, I had picked an Igbo as running mate in 2007, in 2019. I still picked an Igbo for 2023.

"The committee that presented the three nominees was chaired by the Governor of Benue State, Samuel Ortom. They recommended three people, so I picked one. People should be fair to me and state the facts."

Admitting that some members were not happy with his vice presidential candidate pick, particularly Wike, Atiku said, "We are reaching out to Wike and talking to him, very soon, we will resolve our internal crises."

## To avert global food crisis, Ukraine, Russia sign deal for resumption of grain exports

■ Accord unprecedented between warring countries, says UN

By **EDU ABADE**, with agency reports

Ukraine and Russia have signed a United Nations-backed deal to allow export of millions of tonnes of grains from blocked Black Sea ports to avert threat of a catastrophic global food crisis.

A signing ceremony at Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul was attended by the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres and Turkey's President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who had played a crucial role during months of tense negotiations.

Guterres said at the ceremony that the deal would open the way to significant volumes of food exports from Ukraine and alleviate a parallel food and economic crisis in the developing world, saying: "The beacon of hope was shining bright in the Black Sea" and called on Russia and Ukraine to fully implement the accord."

It is hoped the agreement will secure the passage of grains and essential goods such as sunflower oil from three Ukrainian ports including the Odesa Port, even as the war continues to rage elsewhere in the country. The UN had warned that the war risked mass malnutrition, hunger and famine.

International media reported that the deal is also aimed at ensuring the safe passage of Russian-made fertiliser products, essential for ensuring future high crop yields amid efforts to ease a global food crisis provoked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

UN officials said they hoped preliminary shipments could begin today, with the hope of reaching prewar levels of exports from the three Ukrainian ports at the rate of 5m metric tonnes of grains a month within weeks.

The UN officials revealed that under the agreement struck between Kyiv and Moscow, a coalition of Turkish, Ukrainian and UN staff would monitor

the loading of grains into vessels in Ukrainian ports before navigating a pre-planned route through the Black Sea, which had been heavily mined by Ukrainian and Russian forces.

Ukrainian pilot vessels would guide commercial vessels transporting the grains to navigate the mined areas around the coastline using a map of safe channels provided by Ukraine.

The vessels will then cross the Black Sea towards Turkey's Bosphorus strait, while being closely monitored by a joint coordination centre in Istanbul, containing representatives from the UN, Ukraine, Russia and Turkey.

Ships entering Ukraine will also be inspected under the supervision of the same joint coordination centre to ensure they are not carrying weapons or items that could be used to attack the Ukrainian side.

The Russian and Ukrainian sides have agreed to withhold attacks on any of the commercial vessels or ports engaged in the initiative to transport vital grains, while UN and Turkish monitors would be present in Ukrainian ports to demarcate areas protected by the accord.

Guterres said such a deal between the two warring countries was 'unprecedented' and that it would "bring relief for developing countries on the edge of bankruptcy and the most vulnerable people on the edge of famine. And it will help stabilise global food prices, which were already at record levels even before the war - a true nightmare for developing countries.

"Specifically, the initiative we just signed opens a path for significant volumes of commercial food exports from three key Ukrainian ports in the Black Sea-Odesa, Chemomorsk and Yuzhny. The shipment of grain and food stocks into world markets will help bridge the global food supply gap and reduce pressure on high prices."

## Thirteen Nigerian tertiary institutions win N500m

By **OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH**

Thirteen Nigerian tertiary institutions were awarded the sum of N500m by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB).

The beneficiaries include federal, state, and privately-owned institutions. They were ranked best for the 2020 JAMB National Tertiary Admissions' Performance-Merit Award (NATAP-M Award).

The award is in five categories, the winners shared N100 million among the best three institutions in each category.

The categories are the most preferred institution by candidates, the institution with the highest national diversity, the most

improved institution in gender balance, and the institution with the highest number of international students.

The award ceremony and presentation of prizes was held at the International Conference Centre, Abuja, on Thursday.

According to the JAMB registrar, Is-haq Oloyede said this year's ceremony is the third in the series since it was initiated in 2018.

University of Ilorin (UNILORIN) emerged as the most sought-after tertiary institution in Nigeria, with 81,659 applicants in the 2020 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examinations (UTME), while Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) ranked second with 75,446. Bayero University, Kano

(BUK), ranked third with 59,506.

UNILORIN was awarded with N75 million, ABU, BUK received N15 million and N10 million.

The most national admission spread award was given to Kaduna State Polytechnic, which has candidates from across 33 states of the Federation.

Ahmadu Bello University, with candidates across 32 states, and Afe Babalola University, with candidates across 29 states, emerged first and second runners-up.

Mr Oloyede said this category considers the institutions with the highest number of diverse students from across the country.

Federal University, Lafia, took home the prize for the most improved in

gender balance for the year 2020. The FCT College of Education, Zuba, emerged as the first runner-up and Abia State University, Uturu was the second runner-up in the category.

For the institution with the highest number of foreign students, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria emerged first with 61 candidates, the University of Maiduguri came second with 20 and Nile University, Abuja, ranked third with 11.

Meanwhile, Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State, emerged as the best in compliance with the policy guidelines of JAMB. The first and second runners-up winners are the University of Ibadan, and the University of Maiduguri, respectively.

# E. K. Clark's kinsmen, back Omo-Agege's guber bid

By **KELVIN OHOROR**

Jjaw leaders and kinsmen of elder statesman, Chief Edwin Kiagbodo Clark, have thrown their weight behind the endorsement of Delta APC Governorship candidate, Senator Ovie Omo-Agege, for the 2023 general election.

One of the leaders, Elder Timi Ogoriba described Chief Clark as the father of the Jjaw nation. He spoke in Warri at a meeting of The Struggle Platform, a group pushing for improved conditions for Jjaws in oil-bearing communities in the Niger Delta. The Leader of the group said Clark commands respect in the Jjaw nation, stressing that when he speaks his kinsmen would follow.

"Our father has given you (Senator Omo-Agege)

his blessings. He is the father of the entire Izon nation. It was well publicised. I watched it on television when he said, 'I am of the PDP. They didn't do what was right. So I have left them. Now that you are here with me, I will vote for you.'

"If those things have been stated by our elders, who are we? We will give him the support that he deserves and go ahead with that. Today, you are seeing some of us from Bayelsa, Rivers and Edo, adding our voices to those in Delta State. They are our brothers. Whatever affects them affects all of us. We will give them the support and ensure that when the day comes we will know where to cast our votes," he said.

Ogoriba called on the Deputy Senate President



Chief Edwin Kiagbodo Clark

not to neglect the oil-bearing communities of Jjaw when elected as governor. He lamented that despite laying the golden egg, the Jjaws have been neglected by successive administrations in the state. He, however, expressed optimism that when Omo-Agege becomes governor, he will replicate his record-breaking achievements as a lawmaker in all parts of the state.

"I am meeting you formally for the first time

but we have heard so much about you. I heard about you when my wife was going to school in Anwai, you were the SSG of Delta State.

"We have heard so much about you. Today, you are the Deputy President of the Senate. That is a very high office. It didn't come very easy. It's by dint of hard work that you have ascended that office. And taking an office is one thing, but doing justice with that office is quite another.

And we have seen that you have been using the office altruistically; that is to the welfare of so many persons, your constituents and Delta as a whole.

"This House met on July 4th and said there is one man that we have to meet. Because looking at his credentials, if we give him support, those of us that are from The Struggle Platform, together with Deltans, I think we will go places. We are happy and you can see that so many people are

here because they believe in the cause. If we do not believe in it, we will not be here.

"And nothing goes for nothing. We believe that something definitely will be given to our people so that by the end of the day, they will know that where we gave our support to, has brought credence to us so that we can get the dividends of democracy."

The host, Chief Dan Ekpebide, threw his weight behind Chief Clark's endorsement and promised to mobilise his supporters for all candidates of APC in the forthcoming election. Chief Ekpebide extolled the leadership qualities of the DSP for influencing numerous projects to his constituency without executive powers.

It would be recalled that Clark, the former Federal Commissioner for Information who also led the struggle for the creation of Delta State in 1991 had recently affirmed his confidence in Senator Omo-Agege's capacity to turn the fortunes of the state and its people around. He gave his endorsement after Omo-Agege led a powerful delegation to his Abuja home.

## Woman arrested for stealing a day-old baby

By **FRIDAY OMOSOLA**, Akure

A 35-year-old woman, Funmi Mogbojuri, has been arrested by the Ondo State Police for allegedly stealing a day-old baby. According to the Police, Funmi stole the baby at Sabo, an area in Okitipupa, the headquarters of the Okitipupa Local Government Area of the state and took the baby to Sagamu in Ogun State.

The Police public image maker in the state, Mrs Funmilayo Odunlami, said the suspect was arrested while about to name the stolen baby.

"One Abass Issah of Arikawe Street, Okitipupa, came to the station and reported that his newborn baby was stolen by unknown persons. A discreet investigation by the Okitipupa Divisional Policemen led to the arrest of Funmi Mogbojuri, who absconded with the baby to Makun, Sagamu in Ogun State.

"During interrogation, she confessed to having absconded with the baby to her husband's house. It was also discovered that she had earlier stolen another baby on the 16th of January, 2021, in Okitipupa, took the child to Igbokoda and gave him to one Lucky and said the child died a few days later."

The Police Public Relations Officer said the suspect would be charged to court after the investigation had been concluded on the matter.

While confessing, the suspect said she doesn't know the spirit that entered her to commit such an act and

pleaded for forgiveness. She further said she had given birth to two children for her first husband before her husband's family prevented her from having access to the kids

"It was not intentional, I will just beg Nigerians to forgive me. Truly, I stole the child and I did that to take good care of the child. I have given birth before, but I never had a child for the husband I'm presently with. I just like the child, that's why I abducted the child because I have not conceived for my present husband."

She revealed that her current husband knew nothing about the situation, adding that she lied to the husband that she was pregnant. She said this was her second time abducting a child.

Speaking to newsmen, the mother of the stolen baby, Binta Alhassan, disclosed that Mogbojuri came to their house the day she put to bed and requested to spend the night which she obliged because the suspect said she was stranded in Okitipupa and had no place to sleep. Binta said they knew the suspect through a friend she always visited in their house, adding that the man was no longer living in their house.

"We allowed her to spend the night in one of the vacant rooms. We even gave her food to eat that night, not knowing that she had a mission. To my surprise, the following morning while on my way from the bathroom, the woman had disappeared with the baby which I had not even been breastfed by then, it was after five days that the police found and arrested her."

## Prince Harry wins bid to challenge UK over security arrangements

By **OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH** with agency report

Britain's Prince Harry was granted permission to challenge a UK government decision in

court over his security arrangements in Britain on Friday.

Harry, Queen Elizabeth's grandson, received the full police protection generally given to royal

figures before he decided to step back from his royal duties and move to the United States with his wife Meghan in 2020.

He is challenging the decision for him to cease receiving police protection while in Britain, even if he covers the cost himself.

The Queen grandson's challenge concerns the February 2020 decision of the Executive Committee for the Protection of Royalty and Public Figures (Ravec), which falls under the Home Office's management.

Ravec told the prince he and his family would no longer be given the level of personal protection he received as a full-time working royal.

Harry and his wife stepped back from royal duties in January 2020.

On Friday, a British High Court judge granted permission for Prince Harry to challenge the lack of

transparency around Ravec's decision-making and its policies.

He was granted approval for part of his claim for a judicial review of the decision. A judicial review involves a judge examining the legitimacy of a public body's decision.

The permission for Harry to apply for judicial review was granted on several different grounds although not all of those the prince's legal team had sought, the judgment, published on the court's website, showed.

Earlier this month lawyers for Prince Harry, argued in court that the royal household should not have been involved in the UK's decision to deny him police protection in Britain.

Prince Harry and the Home Office will submit further information to the court ahead of any application for judicial review.



Prince Harry

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# 2023: Dizzying echoes from Rivers APC

By **CHRIS EZEONOH**, PORT HARCOURT

Politics by its very nature encompasses some measure of uncertainties and palpitations without which it loses most of its attributes.

Ahead of the 2023 general election, some of those attributes are beginning to manifest in different shapes and colours.

In recent years, Rivers State has been attracting more than a passing attention in every election season due to the style and modus being adopted by the dramatis personae in the murky game.

The state is rich in hydrocarbon resources which is the nucleus of the national economy, and this may also define the mindset of the political actors in their cut throat struggle to clinch power and preside over the resources.

Since 2015, the PDP and APC have remained the dominant political force in the state and have been locked in a supremacy battle to out-do each other and call the shots.

However, the APC which is a party put together in 2014 after the merger of different political groups has not been able to find its rhythm in the state. The party has largely remained a replica of the legendary soap opera, 'Fuji House of Commotion', always bickering and tearing itself apart.

Even after what befell the party in 2019 general election where it was wiped out of the ballot and could not field any candidate in the election, almost four years after, the party is still pointing fingers at imaginary directions for its problems even as its leadership continues to display stubborn disinclination to enthrone due process amongst its ranks.

According to some observers, the Amaechi-Abe seeming intractable feud which is the genesis of the crisis in the party has remained so largely because of the apparent refusal by Amaechi, leader of the party in the state to allow due process to reign in the party.

The party had plunged into its governorship primaries in May with the baggage of grievances some of its critical stakeholders were carrying, pretending that all was well.

Before then, the announcement of Arch. Tonye Cole, the oil mogul as the consensus governorship candidate of the party by some elders after their meeting in Abuja at the instance of the former Minister of Transportation, Rotimi Amaechi had raised tension in the party.

The primary eventually did not produce any dramatic result as it was mere ratification of the choice of Cole. And so to most Amaechi apologists it was eureka as everything seemed to be working according to plan.

But according to some observers, the growing list of disenchanted members of the party were only holding out for the conduct of the presidential primaries of the APC where Amaechi was a major contender before making a decision on what to do next.

"Now with Amaechi losing out in the presidential primaries and also out of office where he could dispense some favours and create opportunities for his followers and Cole who doesn't command the respect and followership of critical stakeholders of the party as governorship candidate, many felt it was to your tents oh Israel", said an analyst who craved anonymity while reacting to the wave of defections and resignation sweeping across the Rivers APC.

Indeed, the Rivers APC is a troubled entity with the recent events in the party. Interestingly many of those who had one of their legs in and the other out of the party without openly speaking out are now justifying their resignation and defection on the ground of the Muslim-Muslim ticket adopted by the party for its presidential and vice presidential



**Rotimi Amaechi**

candidates.

However, of all the heavyweights who have resigned from the party in recent times including former Acting Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission, (NDDC) and former commissioner for Information, Mrs Ibim Semenitari, Prince Tonye Princewill, former Commissioner for Energy and Natural Resources, Dr Dawari George, Hon. Golden Chioma, etc, the one that rang the bell the most was that of Hon. George Tolofari, former Commissioner for Transport.

Tolofari headed the committee formed by all the governorship aspirants from the riverine extraction of the state before the governorship primaries. The committee had produced and assented to an accord to support any one of them who emerged victorious in the governorship primaries since the choice of a candidate was narrowed to the riverine axis by the party.

And so when eventually the committee that met in Abuja nominated Tonye Cole as the consensus governorship candidate, Tolofari came out boldly to defend the decision of the committee.

In an epistle to the party faithful, Tolofari argued forcefully why the choice should stand, making references to the accord by the riverine aspirants.

Hear him, "...I write with a deep sense of commitment and loyalty to our great party and to all of you who have stood to defend this party, her leadership and her ideals over the years.

"The event that took place on Friday, 22nd April 2022, has brought about mixed feelings and reactions from across many quarters because some expectations were not met. Many of you were disgruntled, sad, shocked and even surprised to say the least. Some of you as a result have reached out to me and other party leaders privately and openly to vent your spleen. Sincerely, we feel your frustration and understand how it feels when the lot does not fall on you because we've all been there before at one time or the other."

On what transpired in Abuja, Tolofari

revealed thus: "What many of us may not know is that all the aspirants from the Riverine Ijaw extraction came together and surrendered their rights to the party to choose for them since they could not reach a consensus amongst themselves. Hence, the decision taken by the committee was in the best interest of the aspirants, the party and all of us after a thorough scrutiny of all concerned.

"Some of you have erroneously accused and cast aspersions and insults at our leader for imposing Tonye Cole on the party, but unknown to you, our leader, The Minister of Transportation recused himself from the process and asked us to freely exercise our rights in the best interest of the party which we did. I appeal to us all to stop the unwarranted attacks on our leader because he has done nothing wrong, rather he set the stage for free deliberations and consultations. If he had wanted to impose a candidate on us, he would not need to set up a committee. He would have just announced his preferred candidate and asked us to support him, but this he didn't do. It may even surprise some of you that our leader's preference may not have emerged but he allowed the majority decision of the party elders to fly.

"I was part of that process and all decisions taken by the larger majority of the committee members are binding on me. I will say that again for emphasis. Although expectations of all party faithful may not have been met as some of us had wished our 'principal' emerged. I do not believe in that system where when it favours me, I applaud the leadership and its process and castigate leadership and its process when it does not favour me. As painful as it is, we must exercise restraint. We must not destroy APC because we didn't get the endorsement of the leadership this time around.

"Many of us have been beneficiaries of the same consensus decisions at some point in time and when it favoured us, others were probably displeased and when it favours others we may be displeased also. That is a common human factor. I, George Tolofari benefited

from consensus in the past. Dakuku Peterside, Sokonte Davis, Emeka Beke, Victor Giadom, Dawari George, Ojukaye Flag Amachree and a host of us are all beneficiaries of this same system however, it was arrived at. So we must learn the principles of give and take at times like this and also understand what party loyalty means. Loyalty is a very costly commodity and difficult to find and it's no loyalty until it is tested. Indeed, we are in for a loyalty test once again."

This was in April/May and now in July, Tolofari is singing a different song: "The above subject matter refers. Joining the APC was based on personal conviction, but having reviewed the general state of affairs of the APC-led government in the country, I'm no longer convinced of my continued stay in the party.

"The APC came on the mantra of anti-corruption, justice, equity and insecurity. But today that hope is dashed as insecurity; corruption and injustice stare us squarely in the face and threaten the very existence of our beloved country.

"To my dear leaders and die-hard party faithful in Bonny who see me as a role model and a loyal party man, I'm sorry to disappoint you by my decision. I guess I'm human after all, forgive me.

"My gratitude goes to my leader, His Excellency, Rt. Hon. Rotimi Amaechi and the party for the opportunity to serve the state and the party in the recent past.

"Although this is a very difficult and painful decision to make I believe it's time to move on. Let me also take this opportunity to wish the APC all the best in the forthcoming elections in 2023", Tolofari had written in his resignation letter to the chairman of his ward in Bonny Local Government.

Earlier, in his own epistle to communicate his resignation, Tonye Princewill had written, "I cannot defend the decision of my party, in fielding a Muslim Muslim ticket, especially at a time like this, against all protestations from well-meaning Nigerians across religious and political divides, it sets a very wrong precedent; it is totally insensitive and even if you win, will prove bad for good governance

"Under these dire circumstances, I find no justification to still remain in good conscience a member of a political party that subordinates electoral victory over the safety of lives and peace of mind of its citizens...."

In the same breath; Senator Magnus Abe who has been leading a faction of APC in the state announced his resignation, saying the party would not provide him with a platform to actualize his governorship ambition.

But reacting to all these disturbing developments in the party, the APC in the state accused Governor Wike and Magnus Abe of being the mastermind of the misfortunes the party has suffered over the years.

"The culmination of their evil machinations was the exclusion of Rivers APC from the ballot in 2019.

"Evidence exists how Senator Abe and his lieutenants broke into celebration the day the Party was excluded by the court", the party said in a press conference in Port Harcourt.

Chris Finebone, Publicity Secretary of the party in the state who addressed the press conference said "Rivers APC considers the formal exit of Abe and his associates from the APC as good riddance. We liken it to a successful excision of a debilitating cancer from the body."

He said the party can now heave a sigh of relief "from the sustained destabilizing onslaught by Senator Abe" and wished him well "as he joins the SDP".

## PDP asks Tinubu to quit presidential race over 'fake' bishops saga

● Says Osun election result signposts collapse of APC

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) asked the presidential candidate of All Progressives Congress (APC), Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, to toe the path of honour by withdrawing from the 2023 race and apologize for allegedly misleading Nigerians by dressing hired persons in bishops vestments to orchestrate an endorsement for his single religion ticket campaign.

"It is in its strongest term, we condemned what is described as a profane and highly provocative act of desperation by Tinubu, in the face of 'APC's collapsing leadership, membership and followership structure across the country.'

The party said it was appalled by the 'nauseating, blasphemous and unpardonable' act by the APC and demanded from Tinubu, a public apology to Nigerians.

The PDP said from the foregoing, it is obvious that the image of APC and Tinubu has been battered beyond repair and that it is only responsible for the former Lagos State governor, to honourably bow out of the race to avoid further embarrassment.

National Publicity Secretary of PDP, Hon. Debo Ologunagba said these at a briefing in Abuja on Friday.

He said "Nigerians were sickened by videos and pictorial evidence of known mechanics, bus conductors and fraudsters sacrilegiously being dressed in fake bishop vestments and paid to endorse the unveiling of Asiwaju Tinubu's widely rejected running mate, Sen. Kashim Shettima.

"Such action is unacceptable and unbecoming of any individual aspiring to a leadership position at any level let alone, the office of the President. This is an embarrassment to leadership."

He added that with this scandalous act, Asiwaju Tinubu, who is still battling with issues of "alleged perjury, non-existent certificate and allegations of extortions" has become more ethically challenged and lost all moral standing to seek election as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

"More sickening is the outcry by the hirelings that they were defrauded by agents of the APC Presidential candidate, who paid them sums ranging from N30,000 to N40,000 as against the N100,000 they were earlier promised.

"It is therefore ludicrous that instead of being remorseful and asking for forgiveness, the APC Presidential Campaign is shamelessly posting lame denials and excuses in the face of hard and verified evidence of its involvement in the shameless venture.

"Our Party is not surprised by the attitude of the APC Presidential Campaign. Such is consistent with the character and DNA of the APC, which was never a political party but a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) hurriedly put together by conflicting bedfellows and inchoate sailors clobbered together for remote personal gain and whose only interest is to defraud Nigerians through falsehood, lies, deceit, bribery, Temporary Loyalty Purchase, corruption of established institutions and violation of set rules without regards to the feelings, sensibilities and wellbeing of Nigerians.

"With this ugly episode, Nigerians now know the individual who has been the planner and executor of the lies, false promises and corruption of the APC that have brought disunity, excruciating hardship, mass killings and political instability in the country in the last seven years.

"Now that the APC Presidential candidate has lost the basic required leadership integrity and having been exposed and roundly rejected in his ancestral home State of Osun, the South West and across the country; our Party counsels him to immediately withdraw from the 2023 Presidential race to avoid further disgrace.

"Nigerians cannot afford to have fraudsters, liars, deceivers, perjurers, swindlers and corrupt individuals at the helm of affairs in our country. Such individuals

can only superintend over a deceptive, fraudulent and duplicitous administration and worsen the woes faced by our nation under the current inhumane and rudderless APC administration.

"The APC Presidential candidate and his party should know that it is in his own interest to withdraw from the race as it will be futile to go into an election in which the Will and aspiration of the people are manifestly against him and the APC."

The PDP listed the many alleged administrative deficiencies of the APC government which Asiwaju Tinubu confessed to have helped to install.

The party said "our productive sector has been completely wrecked; the over \$550 billion economy (largest in Africa and 26th globally) with a naira value of N167 to the Dollar handed over by the PDP has been brought to its knees with the naira now crawling at N665 to a Dollar today.

"Under Asiwaju's APC government, Nigeria's debt stock has astronomically risen from N12 trillion under the PDP to N41.6 trillion with our nation going broke as Debt Servicing cost has now surpassed Government revenue with over N300 billion.

"Today, millions on businesses have been shut down due to harsh economic policies and high cost of fuel; unemployment has risen to over 35%, cost of food

items, medication and essential services have skyrocketed beyond reach as over 90 million Nigerians are no longer able to afford their daily meals and other basic necessities of life. What a tragedy!

"It is now crystal clear to Nigerians why the people of Asiwaju's ancestral State of Osun and the South West geo-political zone which ought to be his natural stronghold outrightly rejected him and his APC in the July 16, 2022 Governorship election in Osun the State.

"PDP's sweeping victory and the spontaneous jubilation across our country are direct statements by Nigerians on their resolve to stand on the platform of the PDP to free themselves from the agonizing stranglehold of the lying, cruel and life-discounting APC and its Presidential Candidate."

The party said Asiwaju has no political fighting chance in the face of the soaring popularity of PDP's very competent, candid, transparent, people-oriented and much more prepared Presidential Candidate, Atiku Abubakar at the poll.

Ologunagba said the PDP is poised for a winning campaign and as always, is open to suggestions and further collaborations with well-meaning Nigerians to liberate the nation in the 2023 general elections.

However, both the party and candidates stoutly defended the presence of the clerics at the unveiling ceremony of Shettima.

Tinubu, through his campaign organisation, dismissed social media insinuations about the clergymen, saying the clerics were not fake as speculated.

Spokesperson of the organisation Bayo Onanuga said the clergymen were those gradually building their mission.

"They are not big names in Christendom yet, they are gradually building up their missions.

"They are church leaders who genuinely believe that Nigerians must eschew politics of hatred and religious bigotry and rather embrace politics of peace and nation building," Mr Onanuga said.

He blamed the campaign of calumny against Tinubu as an unwarranted distraction from the opposing political camps.

Onanuga said, "we want to say that those clergymen were not fake, not mechanics or yam sellers as the purveyors of hatred have made Nigerians believe in the social media.

"We are well aware that the opposition parties and the sponsors of the social media charade are jittery and threatened by the intimidating political credentials of our candidates.

"The only way they hope to shift the attention of public scrutiny away from their uninspiring candidates and credentials is to create social media distraction," he stated.

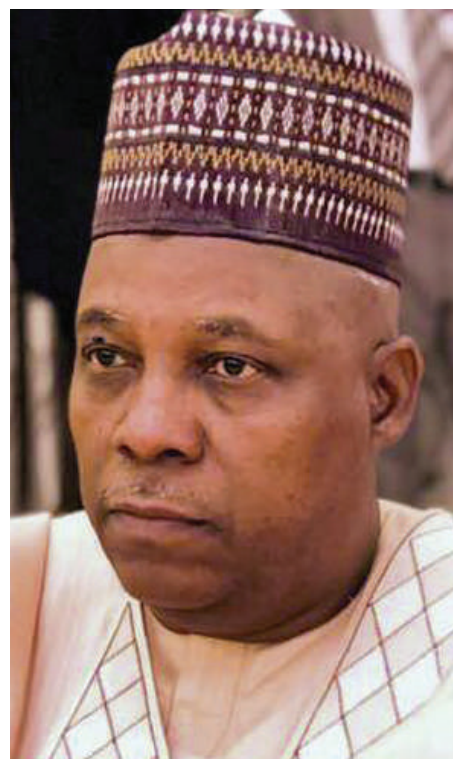
Another group, the Tinubu Shettima WinningTeam argued that the clergymen who were derided as "unknown Bishops" are after well-known decent men of reasonable conviction. The group even produced names and contact phone numbers of those it claimed were duly invited to the event.

"They are countrymen and patriots who have refused to be on the same page with hate-induced CAN, hellbent on setting Nigeria on fire.

"You can now call them to ask for their address and which denomination they belong to or shut up forever!"



Bola Tinubu



Kashim-Shettima

## LP plans massive sensitisation, mobilization for Peter Obi

By GABRIEL ELOZINO, ASABA

Labour Party in Delta State has vowed to embark on massive sensitisation and mobilization of the eligible voting population to deliver massive victory for its presidential candidate, Peter Obi ahead of the 2023 general elections.

The party which held an enlarged stakeholders meeting of all the candidates under the party and support groups for Peter Obi, at Vinmilan Hotel, Asaba, the state capital to streamline some of its victory strategies, also express optimism that the it will do well in all elective positions.

Speaking at the event, Pastor Elvis

Akiah, Delta State ate coordinator of Peter Obi support group described the labour party presidential candidate as a man who has a high sense of integrity that should be entrusted with power.

Also speaking, the gubernatorial candidate of the in Delta State for the 2023 general election Pastor Ken Pella promised a robust security network and employment creation if voted for in 2023 election.

Pella maintained that labour party is the right party to embrace, adding that Nigerians are already fed up with recycling the same crops of bad leaders.

He also used the occasion to appeal to all electorates to get registered and

obtain their PVCs to enable them vote Mr. Peter Obi as president all all labour party candidate in 2023 elections.

He highlighted that labour party came to provide relief to the entire citizens of the country owing to the series of predicaments that has befallen the nation in recent times.

He regretted that Nigeria that was one of the most peaceful nation's in the world has been weighed down by serious security problems.

Pella advised Nigerians not to be deterred in their resolve for a positive change, saying all hope is not lost, as Obi if voted for as president will revive the nation once again.



## 9th National Assembly weakest in our history – Luke-Kalanama VIII

By GABRIEL OMONHINMIN

His Royal Majesty, Pere of Akugbene-Mein Kingdom in Bomadi Local Government Area of Delta State, is the first Vice Chairman of the Delta State Council of Traditional Rulers.

The 56 years old Monarch, who ascended the throne of his ancestors at a youthful age of 21 years, has been on the throne of Akugbene-mein for 25 years. He is known to be very reserved and rarely intervenes in national issues.

Some days after the euphoria of his 56th birthday celebrations, *Trumpet Palace Watch* decided once again to try its luck and asked him for an interview after several attempts in the past were quietly declined.

He spoke about the efforts he had been making to attract developments to his hitherto rustic fishing village which is now one of the bustling modern cities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. We then dovetail into present-day politics, banditry and other national issues.

Commenting on recent political developments in the country, the Akugbene-Mein expressed disgust at some political developments: "The absurdity and political recklessness, which is almost becoming a norm in Nigeria, is most unacceptable and not good for the health of the nation, from here in the Niger Delta Region, to Imo State in the South East, to Kastina, North Western and Borno in the North-East, we are all Nigerians. We all have a common stake and common interest in the survival of the country. We, therefore, need each other to survive. It is our collective responsibility therefore as a people to ensure that Nigeria as a country, no matter its present challenges survives."

Speaking on the most recent political developments in the country, he said, "It is with utmost restraint that I am making these comments. As a traditional ruler, I am not supposed to play politics and I will never actively or covertly support any political group or party no matter the pressure. But this does not prevent me from making informed comments on issues that are giving the country great concern. And if the truth must be told, we have never had it so bad, like the way and manner we have descended so low in our political rating globally as a country under the outgoing

administration.

"Most Nigerians before the assumption of office of Major General Muhammadu Buhari (Rtd) as Nigeria's President believed very strongly that he was the long-awaited Messiah, who will take the country out of the woods. Our general assumption then was that he will fight insurgence and corruption to a standstill. He was also looked upon by all I mean all Nigerians, no exception! As the man who will further unite the country, to make it stronger and focused so that Nigeria can compete in global areas, economic, technology and politically. Sadly, we were all wrong in our assumption then. Within these past seven years, things have gone from bad to worse, our hope as a country has not only been dashed, the little gains our past leaders have managed to make have been totally plundered and filtered away. This is now eroding our national unity. This is truly disappointing! One must say! As we speak, Nigeria that was at some point one united indivisible country is on the verge of disintegration. Foreigners of all shades and colours are almost taking over our lands unchallenged.

"Except we are lucky to vote in the right quality of persons into political offices in the forthcoming 2023 general election people with integrity and track records, who are well intentioned, focused, detribalized as leaders the country might not make any progress. We need to vote for people who will be determined to make a difference, otherwise, we might no longer be able to save this country from its dangerous drift. More than ever before we now need leaders, who will not tolerate or encourage ethnicity or sectionalism. This is the only way our country will gradually be redirected and brought back from its present brink to a country of our dreams and aspirations.

"If not act of mischiefs and a calculated effort to further put a wedge into the country's unity and co-existence, of what use is this 'Water Resources Bill', which was again reintroduced to the National Assembly, after it was roundly defeated in the past, after the uproar that followed its first introduction? This particular bill, if ever passed into law, will not only set a dangerous precedent, it will take away the powers of State Governors in the federation, especially Lagos State and all States in the Niger Delta Region, under



HRM Pere S.P. Luke-Kalanama VIII (JP) of Akugbene-Mein Kingdom

the 1999 constitution, as amended.

"In 2017, Buhari's government first sent this particular bill to the National Assembly requesting that the bill passed into law. This bill sought to transfer the control of water resources from the state government to the Federal Government.

"Owing to a countryside outcry against the measure, it was killed by the former Senator Bukola Saraki's led 8th Senate. Surprisingly, this bill has again been reintroduced, because the Federal Executive Council led by President Muhammadu Buhari, knew it has a willing tool in the current 9th National Assembly headed by Senate President, Ahmed Lawal. Most disappointingly, Senator Lawal and Speaker Femi Gbajabamila had unashamedly told the Nigerian public when they assumed office, that whatever Executive bills were ever forwarded to them, they will pass without asking questions. It doesn't matter whether such a bill or bills is in the interest of the generality of Nigerians. It will be passed into law, so long as the personal interests of Senator Lawal and Speaker Gbajabamila are protected.

"If one may ask at the end of the day, how will these men be remembered in

our national history? Do they ever care about how history will judge them, either individually or collectively? The Senate President, Ahmed Lawal, was doing all he was doing, hoping that, at the end of the day, he will be rewarded with the country's presidency, as a form of compensation for being a very good boy all these years. I am sure he now knows better, that things don't just work the way and manner it was planned politically initially. When will the Senate President ever man up, to be his own man?

"To be candid, this 9th National Assembly is the weakest, since the inception of this present political dispensation in the country. Compared to past National Assemblies in the First and Second Republic even during military regimes in the country, the

"From time immemorial, Nigeria has been blessed with water in abundance. From the 1970s, the government at the centre alongside state governments invested in river basin authorities and dams, which made water available all over the country.

Indeed, the urban areas were guaranteed regular supply of water to the extent that there was pipe-borne water in every home and street in Nigeria. But the dream of the rural areas to have pipe-borne water extended to them was shattered in the regime of Military President, Ibrahim Babangida when the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was introduced in Nigeria. It was SAP that led to the drastic reduction in public funds meant for social services under the Directorate of Foods, Road and Rural Infrastructure. It was after this experience, that water supply was privatized and priced out of the reach of the common man in Nigeria. It was thereafter, that water from boreholes started to be packed and sold in sachets to the poor while the rich could afford bottled water produced by factories. Instead of collaborating with the States and local governments across the country to address this problem of lack of potable water, the Nigerian Presidency under Buhari again reintroduced to the 9th National Assembly the once rejected water bill.

"I am a proud Ijaw man, since the reintroduction of this bill, the political tension in the country has been unnecessarily hit, especially in the riverine areas of the country."

## OONI appoints Erelu Abiola new Yeye Oodua

By GABRIEL OMONHINMIN

The Ooni of Ife, Ooni Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi Ojaja II, has announced the appointment of Erelu Abiola Dosumu, as the new Yeye Oodua and Queen Mother of the House of Oduduwa.

Erelu now replaces Chief Mrs H.I.D. Awolowo, who was the last person to hold the prestigious title of 'Yeye Oba of the Source'. This title has since her death 7 years ago remained vacant.

According to the Director of Media to the Ooni of Ife, Otunba Moses Olafare in a press statement said that "It took the Royal Court of Ife this long to announce a successor because of the numerous achievements of the immediate past Yeye Oodua, H.I.D Awolowo. This is especially in the areas of human development, capacity building and her deliberate efforts at preserving the prestige and culture of the Yoruba people while alive. Mrs Awolowo was also known for her efforts to keep the peace and tranquillity across Yoruba land among others," the

statement stated.

Otunba Olafare said, "The choice of Erelu Abiola Dosumu as Chief H.I.D. Awolowo's replacement for the title was a unanimous decision of the Ife Traditional Council and major stakeholders of the Oodua race. As they all agreed that her character, personality and her wealth of experience as an international business woman, a royal ambassador and a great icon of the African culture perfectly fit the bill and qualify her to step into the big shoes of the immediate past holder of the prestigious title of 'Yeye Oodua of the Source'."

In almost half-a-Century of public life, Erelu has proven herself to be an outstanding woman of stamina, integrity and far-reaching influence. In 1980, late Kabiyesi Adeyinka Oyekan, the Oba of Lagos, installed her as the Erelu Kuti IV of Lagos. With that appointment, she became the right-hand person of the Oba of Lagos. Since then, she has executed her charge with maturity, sagacity, courage and commitment.



Erelu Abiola Dosumu

## Why there is relative peace in Niger Delta under Buhari - HRH Suanu

By **GABRIEL OMONHINMIN**

When President Muhammadu Buhari assumed office as Nigeria's 15th President in 2015, his administration drew up a new vision for the Niger Delta region.

The new vision, which was launched in 2016, after engagements with leaders and representatives of the region under the aegis of the Pan Niger Delta Development Forum (PANDEF), was for a prosperous Niger Delta in which the people of the region maximally benefit from the wealth of their land – through forthright partnership between the Federal Government, State Governments, Private Sector and the Local Government.

In President Buhari's inauguration Speech, on May 29, 2015, he said, "The Government intends to invest heavily in the projects, and programmes currently in place in the Niger Delta. I, therefore, call on the leadership and people in these areas to cooperate with the State and federal government in the rehabilitation programmes, which will be streamlined and made more effective. As ever, I am ready to listen to grievances of my fellow Nigerians. I extend my hand of fellowship to them so that we can bring peace and build prosperity for our people."

In the same vein, Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, while in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, on February 10, 2017, said, "We must focus on how to ensure that the people of the Niger Delta see the benefits of the land's wealth. This new vision will define the future of this region."

Since then, there has been an increase in the budgetary allocation to the region. In the year 2018 for instance, N71.20 billion Naira was allocated to the Niger Delta Development Commission (NNDCC). A total sum of N53.89 billion Naira was again allocated in the 2018 Budget for the Ministry of Niger Delta, up from the N34.20 billion Naira provided in the 2017 budgetary allocation.

As we enter the final phase of President Muhammadu Buhari's administration as Nigeria's President, Palace Watch reached out to His Royal Highness, Mene Dr Suanu Timothy Yormaadam Baridam JP, Ambassador. P. Gbenemene and Kasimene Bangha VII, to review the performance of this administration in the lives of the people and the region. King Suanu gives an insight as to why there is relative peace in the Niger Delta Region so far.

**King Suanu:** Well, as an Ogoni man and a Traditional Ruler from one of the Ogoni Kingdoms, let me begin with the issue of the Ogoni cleanup, which has been on the front burner of all the issues about the Niger Delta Region for some years now. Although a certain percentage of work has begun in this area of cleanup of our places, it is, however, not going on, at the pace we expected it to be.

When the new Minister for Environment, Mohammed Hassan Abdullahi, assumed office as Minister, he said "I do not envisage the completion of the entire Ogoni Cleanup project during the lifetime of President Muhammadu Buhari's administration. The Minister gave this clarification while addressing State House Correspondents after his first meeting with President Buhari in Abuja.

The Minister further elaborated, that the Ogoni cleanup project was cut into phases, out of which ten formerly polluted sites have been cleaned up, adding that there had been concerns about some aspects of the project. The concern the Minister raised during his briefing is yet to be addressed. The Minister again went further to say that the Federal Government had made moves at rallying all stakeholders so that the work

could move faster. Thus, stressing that President Muhammadu Buhari had instructed his Ministry to ensure that adequate attention is paid to delivering on the Ogoni project. As a traditional ruler, I am however speaking the minds of so many people in Ogoni land. We doubt very much whether this project will be delivered before the expiration of President Buhari's administration.

"I had the opportunity to present to Mr President, in accordance with the key priorities of my Ministry, certain key projects that are undergoing some sort of review and seeking direction from Mr President. Firstly, you are all aware of the hydrocarbon pollution remediation project, which is called the Ogoni cleanup. It's a major priority of this government and particularly, based on the undertaking and the promises made by Mr President, to deliver a very clear ecosystem for the Ogoni people." If you must know the truth, our ecosystem is still messed up."

The summary is that there are still a lot of polluted places in Ogoni land that have not been cleaned up. As far as we are concerned, seven years is enough time for these jobs to have been completed. Considering the fact that the livelihood of the majority of Ogoni people which is farming and fishing is dependent on the cleanup exercise.

In some areas of Ogoni land, some youths who are supposed to be in their farms and engaged in their daily fishing activities can't do so because of the pollution, that's why we are pushing for this project to be completed before President Buhari completes his tenure.

Suanu continued, "There have been many attempts and many plans made in the past to improve the lives of the people of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Sadly, each ended with very little to show for the time and resources spent. Therefore, it is understandable that the people of the Niger Delta Region are quite disillusioned with plans at this time. The disenchantment

of the people notwithstanding, it must be stated that the Niger Delta Master Plan is different in its goals, focus, and approach, and will not suffer, the fate of the others before it. This Master Plan is basically conceived as a tool that the millions of people of the region can use to actualize their common vision and build their future to the standard they desire."

Another area, I must quickly comment on, is that the entire Ogoni land as we speak is not connected to the national electricity grid. We are asking that this be done, so that we can also have a regular electricity supply that will enhance the capability of our youths, to venture into little enterprises that will boost our local economy. Finally, let me seize this opportunity to appeal to all Nigerians to go out and register and vote, in the forthcoming elections, as this is the only way we can effectively take control of our country and make sure things work well as expected."

## Late Abba Kyari Widow turbaned as first "Gimbiya" In Bauchi

By **GABRIEL OMONHINMIN**

In what could be described as a colourful and impressive ceremony in Bauchi on Sunday, July 17, 2022, the Emir of Jama'are, Alhaji Nuhu Wabi III, turbaned the widow of the former Chief of Staff to President Muhammadu Buhari, late Abba Kyari, as the first "Gimbiya" (Princess) of Jama'are, Emirate in Bauchi State.

The Emir in his remarks in his Palace in Jama'are LGA in Bauchi during the ceremony said, that Abba Kyari's Widow, Hauwa Kulu nee Gidado, is a true daughter of Jama'are town, who has contributed immensely over the years to the development of the entire Emirates.

Alhaji Nuhu Wabi III, then went further to enumerate the traditional functions of a "Gimbiya" (Princess) in the Emirates to be among other roles as the highly respected daughter of the Emir, who acts as the liaison between the Emir and the large majority of the women folks in and outside the emirates, who do not have direct access in the affairs in the Emirates Council. Stressing that with the installation of Mrs Kyari as Gimbiya, the women in the Emirates now have a voice that can now be heard loud and clear.

Concluding, the Emir expressed satisfaction that he now has a very strong voice as a real daughter of the Emirate in his council.

The Emir enumerated some of the qualities, the council found in the recipient, to be her amiable disposition towards others especially the less privileged. Her concern about the welfare and well-being of the people around her and her passion for the development of the Emirates.

The Emir stressed, "Hajiya Hauwa Kulu's is being turbaned today, because, she possesses all the three major qualities any recipient must have before he or she could be turbaned in our Emirate. He listed these qualities to include; Excellence in her chosen field of endeavour, Meaningful contributions to the development of our Emirate and She is from a Royal Family, which is acceptable to all.

Responding, the new Gimbiya of Jama'are Emirate thanked the Emir in particular and the entire Jama'are people and Council for the honour done to her, and for finding her among other eminently qualified persons worthy of the title. She said the news of her turbaning came to her as a surprise when she was called upon to take the title.

In an emotional laden voice, Hajiya Hauwa Kulu Abba Kyari promised to



Hajiya Hauwa Kulu Abba Kyari

continue to do what she has been doing in the Emirate that singled her out for the honour. She added, "The people of this great Emirate have really impacted positively in my life while growing up and presently, I, therefore, need to give them

my best, as a mark of appreciation. She thereafter expressed happiness that a day like this has come in her journey through life, saying this particular recognition she appreciated, and will linger for a very long time in her memory."

# Police arrest newspaper editor, four staffers over alleged DSS Muslim-Muslim report

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

Operatives of the Nigerian Police Force on Friday invaded the Abuja office of Peoples Gazette newspaper and arrested one of its editors and four other staff members.

A total of five armed police officers were said to have carried out the operations at the newspaper's office opposite NNPC Quarters in Utako.

The arrested assistant managing editor, John Adenekan was said to have been taken away at about 12:35 pm while the officers returned to the office to arrest four other staff members, Amedat Adeyemi, Grace Oke, Sammy Ogbu, and Justina Tayani.

Reports said the officers declined to state the reason for the arrest, but demanded to see Managing Editor, Samuel Ogundipe and a reporter, Adefemola Akintade,

who were not available during the operation, thereby perpetuating an unconstitutional tradition of arresting associates in the event that people of interest are unavailable.

Mr Adenekan was said to have been taken to the Utako police division following the raid.

The Gazette has faced several attacks since its inception in September 2020, including the restriction of access to its website in January 2021 and the invasion of the same head office in January 2022 by the National Intelligence Agency (NIA).

A source within the Police, however, told The Trumpet, that the arrest of the Gazette's Editor and five of its staff members has to do with a story that the news platform reported a few days ago.

Gazette broke a report that the Department of State Service (DSS) gave an intelligence report to the President, Muhammadu



**IGP Alkali**

Buhari that Muslim-Muslim presidential ticket of the ruling All Progressives Congress will destabilise the country.

According to the report, a document got to the president through the National Security Adviser (NSA), Gen Babagana Monguno (rtd), recommending that Bola Ahmed Tinubu should consider the security implications of his

selection, Kashim Shettima, before making it public.

Gazette an intelligence officer had informed its reporter that "The SSS produced the report and handed a copy to the NSA."

"The NSA looked at the report and added it for security briefing to the president.

"Simply put, our understanding is that the alliance will destabilise

Nigeria and embolden attacks on Christian citizens from their fellow Muslim citizens.

"The distrust Christians are likely to harbour against a presidency occupied by two Muslims won't make our work easy at the national security level."

However, presidential spokesman, Garba Shehu, in a terse statement responding to newsmen, said no such document existed, thereby tagging the report as laughably puerile.

"We wish to advise well-meaning Nigerians to ignore a laughably puerile report by an apparently pirate online newspaper seeking to sow division and chaos on the choice of Governor Kashim Shettima as the Running Mate of our Party's Presidential Candidate, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

"This so-called newspaper is like a deadly virus. Stay safe by keeping away from its toxic reports," the presidential spokesperson said.

**Terrorism: Security Council to ban motorcycles, mining activities**

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

As part of its strategies to curb terrorism and tackle insecurity in the country, the National Security Council has said that it is considering a nationwide ban on motorcycles and mining activities.

This was disclosed on Thursday by the Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami, who addressed State House correspondents after the President, Muhammadu Buhari, met with Security Chiefs in Abuja.

According to Malami, there is an ongoing investigation to establish the correlation between mining and motorcycles, which they suspect provides funding for the supply of arms to the terrorists. He stressed that banning motorcycles and mining activities would cut off terrorists' sources of funding.

Malami also noted that terrorists had moved from the conventional ways of funding their activities to mining and ransom taking. He disclosed that the government was not unaware of the economic consequences of the proposed resolutions, particularly the motorcycle ban but it has become imperative in order to guarantee the nation's security.

On his part, the Minister of Interior, Rauf Aregbesola, who spoke on the attack on Kuje Medium Correctional Prison, said that despite the extensive intelligence gathered before the onslaught, the attacks succeeded because there was "no will to act."

Aregbesola revealed that President Buhari had received a report on the preliminary investigation of the Kuje attack and officers who have been found to renege on their responsibilities would face dire consequences.

Terrorist groups, particularly in Nigeria, are increasingly interested in controlling areas of production of gold. This may have contributed to the increased terrorist attacks in the nation's northeast.

The opportunistic nature of these activities ties strongly to the fact that gold is often the favoured mineral of the terrorist groups as many of these groups use this to secure a source of funding for future operations.

The proposed banning of motorcycles, however, posed another major security threat to the protection of lives and properties of Nigerians, especially if the government failed as usual to provide a means of livelihood for the millions of citizens who genuinely survive daily on commercial motorcycling.

## Social media needs co-regulation, Police spokesperson says

By **PAUL MICHAEL**

The Force Public Relations Officer, CSP Olumuyiwa Adejobi has urged media practitioners and critical stakeholders to join hands with the government to ensure proper regulation of social media.

Adejobi argued that such collaborations would enhance the country's national cohesion, development, and security.

The Police spokesperson stated this at the Penpushing 4th Anniversary Lecture held on Thursday, July 21st, 2022, at the Olusegun Obasanjo Library, Abeokuta, Ogun State.

He tasked media practitioners in the country to be circumspect in carrying out their responsibility while noting that special attention should be given to authentic reportage to the society while shunning the impulsive urge to "break the news".

According to Adejobi, "the need for Nigerians to understand and uphold the sanctity of our legal framework in order not to continually misconstrue or misjudge the efforts and engagements of the police and other law enforcers in the course of discharging their duties since they don't make the law but rather enforce the law."

He stated that this drive will surely bridge the gap of trust deficit and hatred sandwiching the security communities in Nigeria.

The FPRO called on all and sundry to collaborate with policymakers, security experts, as well as societal leaders to ensure a total clampdown on fake news on social media.

The Lecture had in attendance the former Governor of Ogun State, Otunba Gbenga Daniel, the Commissioner of Police Ogun State Police Command, CP

Lanre Bankole, Dr Chichi Anialogu-Okoye, Ford Foundation Regional Director for West Africa, and Guest Lecturer, representative of the Ooni of Ife, Ooni Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi, Ojaja 11, other revered traditional rulers, and leaders of the political class.

The pros and cons of the use of social media were adequately deliberated upon with a unanimous call for collective regulation of social media to drastically cut down on the spate of disinformation and misinformation in the country.

The President Muhammadu Buhari administration made the initial attempt to regulate digital rights and social media in Nigeria through the "Frisivolous Petitions (Prohibition) Bill 2015". The Bill was introduced in 2016 during the 8th National Assembly led by the then Senate President,

Bukola Saraki but it did not see the light of the day.

In 2019, the government introduced the Protection from Internet Falsehood and Manipulations Bill 2019 (also known as the Anti-Social Media Bill) at the 9th National Assembly. The Bill sought to criminalize the peddling of false or malicious information through social media.

The Anti-Social Media Bill scaled second reading at the Nigerian Senate, however, there was a general consensus that the bill will hinder freedom of speech and freedom of the press; a situation that led to major pushback from stakeholders against the passing of the bill.

There is a public sentiment against the regulation of social media in Nigeria. This has made its regulation a major hurdle for the FG to scale through.

Social Media has been a

## Terrorists kill five policemen, three civilians in Katsina

By **JAMS DANJUMA**,  
Katsina

Terrorists have killed five police officers and three civilians in Kankara Local Government Area of Katsina State.

The incident, which occurred at Gatikawa village at about 6:30 pm

Wednesday, was said to have been carried out by more than 300 terrorists.

The terrorists were said to have stormed the community riding on motorcycles, and armed with AK-47 rifles, among other weapons.

They were said to have operated for more than an

hour, moving from house to house to loot food items, money and other valuables.

Several people in the community were said to have sustained injuries when the terrorists attacked, with some of them said to have been hospitalized and receiving treatment.

A source from the area

had initially told reporters that a mobile policeman and five civilians were those killed by the terrorists during the attack.

However, spokesman for the Police Command in the State, SP Gambo Isah, who confirmed the incident on Thursday afternoon, said eight persons were killed

during the attack.

Isah said the victims include five policemen and three civilians, and that the policemen killed were on special duty to the area from Kano State.

Isah said the attack was carried out by more than 300 terrorists who were armed with sophisticated

weapons.

"The terrorists were over 300 and were fully armed. The five policemen are from Kano on special duty to Gatikawa.

"The terrorists attacked them at 6:45 pm. The terrorists also killed three civilians. Investigation is ongoing," he added.

# Implications of a Muslim-Muslim Ticket

Recently, APC Presidential Flagbearer, Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu a Muslim, announced another Muslim, Borno Central Senator, Kashim Shettima, as his running mate for the 2023 presidential election. This decision has stirred the hornet's nest of deep religious sentiments across the country, virtually pitching the predominantly Muslim north against the Christian south. Stakeholders have daubed it a 'Muslim-Muslim Ticket' and have reacted to it in several ways. The general feeling is that it is inimical to the survival of the country. Indeed, the Legal adviser of APC has resigned from the party to protest the presidential ticket. Foremost Tinubu supporter Babachir Lawal from the north and Christian Association of Nigeria have raised a loud voice against the Muslim-Muslim ticket. The Department of State Security has written a memo to the President advising that the Muslim-Muslim ticket has grave implications on the nation's security.

Since 1960, only two political parties have adopted same religion presidential tickets: the Unity Party of Nigeria in 1979, and the Social Democratic Party in 1983. The three political parties that led Nigeria into independence were formed along ethnic lines. They were implicitly formed along religious lines since each of the dominant ethnic group is known to be strong in either of the two religions in the country. Religion ran through the general elections of 1954, 1959, as well as 1964/65. By 1979 when the military organized the first elections, the choice of presidential as well as gubernatorial flagbearers was dictated by religious sentiments. Popular opinion has it that the 1979 adoption of Muslim-Christian ticket of NPN ensured both political and legal victories over the UPN which ran a Christian-Christian ticket.

In the elections of 1983, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2011 and 2015 the parties were also sensitive to religion. Currently, the president of

Nigeria is a Muslim, the Vice President is a Christian, the Senate president is a Muslim, while his Deputy is a Christian. In the House of Representatives, the Speaker is Christian, his Deputy is Muslim. Of the 36 states in Nigeria, there are 20 Christian governors and 16 governors who are Muslims. In the South where Christianity appears strong, 16 out of the 17 governors are Christians, with only one Muslim; there are 14 Christian deputy governors, 3 Muslims. In the North where Islam appears dominant, Muslims occupy 15 of the 19 gubernatorial seats, while the rest four are Christians. Muslim deputy governors are 11 with Christians, 8. These are signs of balancing in the country's political space.

Ideally, one's religious faith should not count

in politics. But certain ideal and desirable practices may provoke devastating unintended consequences in others if not properly handled. The latter may be the case of any same religion presidential ticket at this time. Certainly, being sensitive to religion in pairing is how the many peoples of Nigeria have managed religion as a factor in national politics.

We are aware, however, that the tendency to overrate religion remains very high even when it has not pragmatically assisted the country in addressing her unending crises of insecurity, nationalism, and the economy. For this reason, we advise the nation's electorate to focus on electing empirically capable candidates, irrespective of their religion or ethnic affiliation. In the Nigeria of today, a Muslim-Muslim or Christian-Christian ticket for presidential election is provocative, and counterproductive. Because of the tendency of each religion to see its adherents as superior to others, many voters are more likely to vote for candidates who share their religion. The belief is that because they have similar orientation and think in similar ways, candidates with of their religious outlooks are more likely to protect their interests. It is important to state that none of the two political parties that in 1979 and 1993 adopted same-religion presidential tickets in Nigeria won the elections.

It is up to the Nigerian people to decide who will become their leaders in 2023. Beyond the elections, all forms of balancing needed to manage our diversity must be considered for the purpose of post-election legitimacy, peace, and tranquility. The route chosen by APC's Bola Ahmed Tinubu to the 2023 Presidential election is fraught with danger, insensitive to the sensibilities of the Nigerian State and could be a source of future instability in a country already tottering from a savage attack on its national institutions. It is not too late to make a reversal. The overall interest of the country is more important than individual ego and rabid desire to win the Presidency!



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## De-sacralization of priestly habits and vestments

Christian priests, as in most religions, are often identified by their attires. This is often called 'habits' and 'vestments' if are to include the altar and other elements of worship.' The most common is the cassock or sultanas. The cassock is actually not a sacred vestment. It may be identified as a common daily attire of a priest.

Nevertheless, most Christian priests are identified with white collars, cassocks and clerical shirts that they put on. Again, only those who can discern would be able to distinguish the differences among priests of the different churches' denominations.

There are the traditional Anglican cassocks – the simple, double-breasted and 39 articles cassocks – that come in three colours. Most Priests of the Anglican faith may be seen in three colours of clerical shirts of which one, like the cassock, is reserved for Bishops. Only one who is acquainted with what is referred to as orthodox or so-called liturgical churches, may be acquainted with these details. Therefore, a theologically trained priest should be able to know a Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian or Anglican/Episcopal priest by mere appearance.

The English poet, Chaucer says the hood does not make the Monk. But the monk must always wear a hood. In the course of their daily offices, and they are diverse in types and forms, priests appear in various vestments. Now, Priestly vestments are termed "holy and sacred" since they are biblically regulated along the order of Leviticus. "And of the blue and purple and scarlet stuff they are made finely wrought garments, for ministering in the holy place; they made the holy garment for Aaron; as the Lord had commanded Moses" (Exodus 39:1). Again, in Leviticus 8:5, 30, the sacred nature of the vestments of a Priest is put thus: "And Moses said to the congregation, 'this is the thing which the Lord has commanded to be

done. 'And Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water. And he put on them the coat, and girded them with the girdle, and clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod upon him, and girded him with the skilfully woven hand of the ephod, binding him therewith .... Then Moses took some of the anointing oil and the blood which was on the altar, and sprinkled it upon Aaron and his garments, and also upon his sons and his son's garments; so he consecrated Aaron and his garments, and his sons and his sons' garments with him.'"

The vestments with which a Christian priest adorns himself are never for profanity.

They may be classified as those used strictly within the confinement of the Church's sanctuary and those worn outside which are simply meant to identify him as a man of God. Now, there has been the common practice among Nigerian politicians who believe that Christian Pastors and Priests can be engaged, hired and fired depending on if their 'price' can be afforded. Everyman, Thomas Bolt wrote, has his price! Given this, one can easily understand why the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, and a host of other orthodox liturgical denominations in Christianity can be easily relegated to the background, and handle with disdain by some contemporary Nigerian politicians.

The height of this disdain was demonstrated by the Muslim-Muslim unveiling of the Vice Presidential Candidature of Senator Shetima. Without any regards for the sacredness of priestly vestments; with speechless disregard of their sacerdotal use – liturgical/seasonal colours, stoles and preacher's scarves, chasubles, pastoral staffs and rings name it – some persons, God forgive us in Christ Jesus' name, were lined up and marched to the 'unveiling arena' as epitome representatives of Christianity in



Dr. Karo Ogbinaka

Nigeria. It cannot be denied that this was an APC event!

The implication is grievous for the Nigerian Christian. Christians should be ready for more of such humiliations as well as the de-sacralisation of whatever their faith represents. We have with us a set of desperate politicians who are not ready to value or hold as sacred anything that will stop them from holding on to power in Nigeria. It is only in Nigeria a political party will condescend so low in order to make or score a political point. We have never had it so terribly bad. Granted that religion was not a criterion used in the choice of the Vice Presidential candidate of the APC, what point was Christian religious characters being paraded meant to score? Why were Islamic clerics not so paraded at the event? Christianity cannot be brought to such profanity by unscrupulous politicians.

The Muslim-Muslim candidature has been foisted upon the psyche of every Christian in the wake of the atavistic murder in the Church at Owo, and the killings of Catholic and other denomina-

tions' priests. Let us not mention Sarah's killings and burning at the Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto. We may go back in history to mention the Chibok girls and the forceful conversion of Christians. The attacks on Christians in central Nigeria which are mostly defined in the outright dislocation and occupation of their communities are incidences we are living with in Nigeria. But those who bear the ticket of the APC at the Presidential level will be appraised and voted for not only in their areas of the stronghold. The entire South-South and South East of Nigeria are Christian-dominated. Benue and Plateau States are. These politicians may need to reincarnate the MKO Abiola's formulae in the 2023 election.

They will be appraised with what they did not say or do when Christian communities, priests and leadership were being killed daily. They will be appraised by what they have not promised that they will do to the criminals that are daily being freed and honoured by the powers that are!

The things of God must not be brought to disdain. "Therefore you and your sons with you shall attain to your priesthood for everything at the altar and behind the veil, and you shall serve. I give your priesthood to you as a gift for service, but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death" (Numbers 18:7). In the name of desperately wanting presidential victory, many are becoming despondent and despicable. They have given to themselves what is not a divine gift unto them. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

•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

## Response from readers on previous article – "God position on Tithes"

This week, I want us to look at some responses from readers to my recent article on God's position on Tithes. I will present the responses by readers and follow up with my replies.

One of the readers opined that tithes were meant for the Levites alone because they were exempted from doing any other kind of job except serving God in the Temple and since the pastors today are not Levites, they are not entitled to benefit from tithes.

My Response:

If you say paying tithe is for only Jews, then the old testament laws are for only Jews. In essence, you don't need to keep the ten commandments and other laws in the old testament.

In Matthew 5:17, Jesus Christ said He did not come to destroy the old testament (law and the prophets) but to fulfil it.

On the other hand, if tithes are for only the Levites, how will the workers and Pastors in the Church get paid to take care of themselves and their families? In my opinion Pastors and those who are called and dedicated to the service of God are the Levites of our days. Pastors who are fully working in the vineyard of God should be taken care of as well as the less privileged in the Church and that is what tithes are used for.

If they are not paid, should they stay in the wilderness like Elijah praying and



Dr. Agbodo

waiting for the Raven to bring money to feed their families and pay the children's school fees?

If you say the old testament laws are no longer potent, I can decide to marry my sister because there is no clear law in the new testament that says I should not marry my sister. The breakdown of all spiritual, moral, financial and criminal laws are in the old testament and that is where it was stated clearly that I cannot marry my sister. The old testament is still as potent as the new testament in other areas except in the

process of sacrificing for the forgiveness of sins and accessing the presence of God through Christ Jesus.

Another reader was blunt; she wrote: "Your submission is not biblically accurate".

She went further to pose these questions before me:

1. Did Jesus pay tithes?
2. Did his disciples pay tithes?
3. Did Paul, Peter and others ever preach tithes and issue curses and condemnations like our modern-day Pentecostals are doing?

She added that "anyone can attach some mischievous title to his or her name. As far as God is concerned, He sees us as EQUALS and the bible presents us with answers to ALL life's questions. Most of those title holders are big SCAMMERS who have zero relationship with God and are only in this Christian zone purely for their stomach. They are false preachers cunningly merchandising the Gospel and mesmerising gullible church members who NEVER read their Bibles to discover the truth. And when you push to their face the truth, they will tell you touch not my anointed which is another misuse of the word of God. Anyone truly in Christ is anointed with or without some funny titles. So many Mr or Miss are more anointed than several self-appointed Bishops, she concluded.

MY RESPONSE:

Pastors should only point people to the Word of God and not threaten them. The Word of God is complete and there is reward for obedience to the Word of God.

My position is that Jesus must have paid tithes because He was a Carpenter and must have paid tithes from His income. Paul and others paid tithes in the Temple as other Jews did.

When Christianity started, the disciples started first in the Temple but when persecution came, they had to set up their own structure and started meeting in the homes of brethren and from there to what we have as Church buildings today. The early Christians may have not paid their tithes while they were on the run, but I believe they started paying when the Church became more organized.

Apostle Paul, for instance, was not a Levite but if he wanted to ask them to give him offerings, he could do that but decided to work with his hands so that nobody will see him as spreading the gospel to make money for himself.

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

# Pentecostal leaders risk revolt over APC Muslim-Muslim ticket

By **GABRIEL OMONHINMIN**, Culture and Religion Editor

The Presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, allegedly met with the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Pastor Enoch Adeboye at the Redemption Camp on Sunday, July 17, 2022.

Tinubu, a Yoruba Muslim and Adeboye were alleged to have met in connection with the APC's decision to pick the former Governor of Borno State, Senator Kashim Shettima, a Northern Muslim as his running mate in the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria.

It was gathered that the APC presidential candidate has already set up a team of prominent persons with whom he was scheduled to meet the Christian leaders within the party and faith-based organizations like the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) and the Catholic Church to appeal to them and secure their support ahead of the 2023 polls.

RCCG on Tuesday, July 19, 2022, clarified the purported meeting. They said in a press statement, that contrary to the reports that Pastor Adeboye met with Asiwaju Tinubu over the APC Muslim-Muslim presidential ticket, the meeting between the duo never took place.

"It has come to our notice that some news outlets are reporting that a meeting between Pastor E.A. Adeboye, the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God Worldwide and former Governor of Lagos State, Bola Tinubu, was held a few days back at the Redemption Camp where our esteemed father in the Lord was said to have supported the preferred candidature of the party of the former Governor.

"Pastor E.A. Adeboye and RCCG have not and will not endorse any candidate for the 2023 general election in Nigeria."

At the official unavailing of Shettima in Abuja, the alleged hiring of miscreants who posed as Christians Bishops and clergymen further complicated matters.

Trumpet Religious Desk Editor decided to dig into this matter to find out whether or not a meeting did take place between Tinubu's group and Pastor Adeboye. In an effort to further confirm the veracity of these claims and counterclaims, we reached out to Tinubu's Media Adviser, Alhaji Tunde Rahman. But he did not pick his calls.

Meanwhile, Prophet Gabriel Onaolapo, who is the Founder of one of the fast-growing Pentecostal Church in Nigeria, known as the Christ The Kings Rescue Global Ministry based in Ogun State, has warned that some of the General Overseers of the big Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria, need to exercise a lot of caution and restraints over the way and manner they handle this Muslim-Muslim presidential ticket of the APC.

He said, "As an active member of most of the Christian bodies in the country, I know that most younger pastors of churches across board, call it the new generation or orthodox Churches in Nigeria, are very angry over what the APC Flag bearer did when he decided to pick a fellow Northern Muslim as his running mate."



Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu

He stressed that Tinubu, attempted to trivialize this matter, claiming that he considered competence above religion in picking his running mate is unacceptable to most Christians as it is a deliberate attempt to hoodwink the Christian Communities. He added that because of this insult younger Pastors from all the dominations have decided to ignore the older Pastor and form a movement. He asked, "is Bola Tinubu saying there are not competent Christians in the whole of the Northern region to be his V.P?"

Onaolapo explained that "Justice

Aniagolu's Deputy in the 1988 Constituent Assembly meeting who was then the Chief Judge of former Gongola State, died suddenly in 1991, two years after that Assembly completed its work. While Justice Aniagolu was a Christian, Ardo his Deputy was a Muslim. While the Secretary to that Constituent Assembly was then Alhaji Babagana Kingibe, whom the country has since then gotten to know a lot more eloquently, he is a Muslim from Borno State. Kingibe's assistant at the Assembly was a Christian lady from Rivers State, Ms Amal Inyingiala

Pepple, who retired from the Federal Civil Service as a Permanent Secretary. This was the time Nigeria only had 21 states."

Onaolapo added that "it was this same Assembly that negotiated the terms of a constitution which we now operate on the basis of which the Babangida regime claimed it would hand over power to an elected government at the end of its transition programme. This is the same Constituent Assembly that got into a very animated debate in October 1998 over this very irrelevant issue of religion as the All Progressive Congress (APC) would want Nigerians to believe. Centred in this heated debate are religion in Nigeria and the role it plays in the civic and constitutional life of the country. In that quarrel that lasted for months, the Muslim and Christian members of that Assembly then, neither gave nor took a quarter from each side of the divide. Yet the APC and Tinubu in the year 2022, want Nigerians to believe that religion should not be of any importance to them."

He warned Christian leaders, who might want to compromise and sell the Christian faith out for a pot of portage, over this matter that a huge surprise awaits them.

Onaolapo said the recent revelations he got indicate that, except there is divine intervention, the way things are currently going in Nigeria today, there might not be elections. He added that, although he is not in a position to say what will happen and the shape things will take in the days ahead, that will prevent the 2023 general elections from holding, he said he foresees an interim government that will eventually midwife a fresh election that will lead to a democratic transition in the country.

## TREM, Atlanta felicitates with Bishop Peace Okonkwo at 70

By **KINGSLEY DIKE**, Atlanta, USA

Bishop Peace Okonkwo has always been at the forefront of the Christian Pentecostal faith movement in Nigeria, serving beside her husband, Dr Mike Okonkwo, the Presiding Bishop of The Redeemed Evangelical Mission (TREM). She was with him in establishing TREM and still together doing good works for humanity and the body of Christ around the world. For example, she told all her admirers around the world to celebrate her 70th Birthday by doing something good for society and serving the less privileged. Thus, TREM, Atlanta (God's Embassy, Smyrna Ga USA) kicked off her birthday festivities in North America on 4th June 2022, by feeding the poor and homeless in downtown Atlanta. According to Mrs Bisi Olaoye, one of the parishioners, who organized and took part in feeding the homeless at the event, said, "it is a hallmark of Bishop Peace Okonkwo, that the church must serve and cater for the needs of the poor".

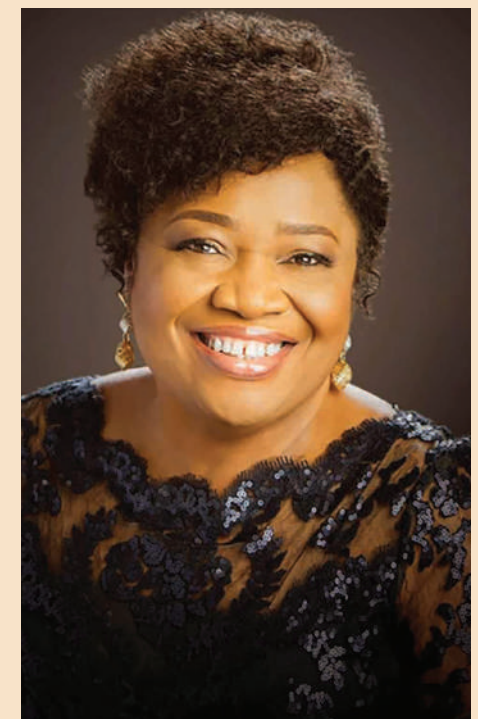
But more importantly, is Bishop Peace Okonkwo's strong advocacy for

women and education of the girl-child. Okonkwo created the International Women Prayer Conference (IWPC), a non-denominational annual gathering and prayer conference of women around the world focusing on the family as the building block of a wholesome Christian faith through worship and support network. The head of the IWPC in Atlanta and wife of the host Pastor of TREM, Atlanta, Pastor Chi Imuseh and Director of Operations, Mrs Rolly Okome, both agree that the IWPC is now a major Christian event in North America and around the world supporting scholarships for girl education.

That is why Mrs Tilda Dike, a long-time parishioner of TREM, Atlanta (God's Embassy, Smyrna) is grateful to God for granting Bishop Okonkwo the grace and leadership in strengthening families through the IWPC and providing the framework for women's engagement in supporting one another and promoting good deeds in Christendom. The host Pastor of TREM, Atlanta (God's Embassy, Smyrna), Pastor Fred Imuseh congratulated the woman he calls affectionately "big Mom" on her birthday and profusely praised and thanked God for her life

of service and devotion to God and the Christian faith.

• *Kingsley Dike, a former Foreign Affairs Reporter with The Guardian newspapers in Lagos, Nigeria, is a Parishioner of TREM (God's Embassy, Smyrna), Atlanta, Georgia, USA.*



President Buhari



## Replicate rice production feat in other sectors, Dangote charges CBN

•As experts canvass robust non-oil export trade, technology to boost Nigeria's economy

By **EDU ABADE AND JOHNMARK UKOKO**

President of Dangote Group, Alhaji Aliko Dangote, has urged the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to replicate its feat in encouraging the production of rice, wheat, dairy and other economic crops to boost non-oil exports in the country.

Dangote, who gave the charge at the seventh edition of Zenith Bank International's yearly trade seminar with the theme: Unlocking Opportunities in Nigeria's Non-Oil Export Business, which was held virtually on July 20, 2022, in Lagos, said Nigeria currently imports \$2.8 billion worth of wheat and \$1.4 billion worth of dairy into the country.

He said: "Cash crops have been major components of non-oil exports and there is room for improvement. Nigeria has abundant varieties of solid minerals, but the sector constitutes only 0.2 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP)."

"We can generate \$20 billion from solid minerals, we need a more robust steel industry and so, we should establish an equivalent of the Nigerian National Petroleum

Company (NNPC) to hold stake on behalf of the Federal Government."

He also pointed out that Nigeria's non-oil exports remained quite low compared to other African top oil producers, adding: "This exposes the economy to oil price and production risks. There is much room for growth and the CBN is helping to drive this through the RT200 programme."

He maintained that the aim of CBN's RT200 FX programme to achieve \$200 billion in foreign exchange earnings from non-oil proceeds in the next three to five years was laudable, stressing that it included enhancing foreign exchange inflows, diversifying the source of FX inflow, increasing the level of contributions from non-oil export, as well as ensuring stability and sustainability of FX flows.

Besides, stakeholders also canvassed support for Nigeria's non-oil exports sector through collaboration in diversifying Nigeria's export base through the promotion of non-oil exports and technological innovations.

In his goodwill message and presentation, Founder and Chairman of Zenith Bank Plc, Jim Ovia, highlighted the importance of non-oil

export to the nation's economy, pointing out that Nigeria largely exported cocoa and several other non-oil products for decades before oil was discovered in commercial quantities.

He cited the 25-storey Cocoa House in Ibadan, Oyo State, which was built with proceeds from cocoa exports, pointing out that some countries like Japan and China had been successful because they were doing a lot of innovations, production and manufacturing of goods and services.

"We should also look at promoting the nation's non-oil export sector through technology to create technological giants like Apple, Tesla and Google. And we already have technology companies in Nigeria, such as Flutterwave, which has a valuation of \$3 billion, making it more valuable than some banks in the country."

Speaking further on the enormous potential in Nigeria's non-oil sector, Ovia highlighted the phenomenal growth of Nigeria's emerging financial technology (Fintech) companies such as Flutterwave, OPay, Interswitch, Kuda and Paystack, with market valuations of \$3 billion, \$2 billion, \$1 billion, \$500 million, \$200 million respectively, insisting that this underscored the enormous opportunities in the Fintech space.

He also noted that the most capitalised companies in the world, such as Apple, Microsoft, Alphabet (Google), Amazon, Tesla and Visa, among others, were not oil companies, but were operating in the technological innovation space.

Group Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (MD/CEO) of Zenith Bank, Ebenezer Onyeagwu, said the yearly seminar had served as a veritable platform to deepen the conversation on promoting non-oil export in Nigeria, bringing together non-oil export practitioners and relevant government agencies to interact and explore the opportunities and proffer solutions to the challenges of non-oil export in the country.

On the origin of the seminar, Onyeagwu said the commodity price



Alhaji Aliko Dangote

slump of 2014-2016 was a watershed moment, adding: "When crude oil prices plunged from \$114.55 per barrel in June 2014 to \$28.76 in January 2016 with an attendant effect on the availability of foreign exchange, the time was ripe to look towards the non-oil export sector for a more sustainable source of foreign exchange not susceptible to external shocks and price volatility."

Highlighting some of the salient outcomes of the past six editions, Onyeagwu noted that the outcomes of previous editions have found expression and influenced policy initiatives, adding: "For instance, the extension of the repatriation period of non-oil export proceeds from 90 days to 180 days and the policy mandating shippers not to carry exports without a Nigeria Export Proceeds (NXP) Form Number, were recommendations from previous seminars."

Also, the need to incentivize exporters to repatriate their export proceeds through the official channels and the recommendation to create export terminals across various export hubs in the country were from past seminars. Also, previous editions recommended having Export Desks in commercial banks, which has now been instituted.

He also stated that Zenith Bank has trained over 100 exporters through

its Zero to Hero programmes, which provide a platform for grooming and exposing beginners to become strong exporters by providing training on documentation, product sourcing, access to market and financing. He noted that Zenith Bank will continue the advocacy of promoting non-oil export.

Delivering his goodwill message, Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Godwin Emefiele, commended Zenith Bank and its leadership led by Ovia for the initiative in organising an annual export seminar to explore opportunities in Nigeria's non-oil export with the view to increasing the nation's non-oil export base and ultimately increasing its share as a percentage of total exports.

"This is why the theme of this year's seminar is timely and appropriate. This is because the global economy and structure are changing rapidly. The previous world economic order underscored by globalisation and seamless trade possibilities seems to be suffering major disruptions lately. We believe Nigeria has a lot of potential and we can harness this for the good of our people and country," he said.

He pointed out that the CBN had undertaken several initiatives to promote the non-oil export sector, because of its firm belief that the non-oil export sector holds enormous potential to contribute to employment generation, wealth creation and economic growth of the country.

Also, Secretary-General of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat, Wamkele Mene, enumerated the progress and achievements of the AfCFTA and efforts to improve intra-Africa trade.

On his part, President Chairman of African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank), Prof. Benedict Oramah, highlighted the efforts of Afreximbank to enhance intra-Africa trade through implementation of the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS).

He said the PAPSS would make it easy and seamless for Africans to trade and receive payments for goods and services in their local currencies, as well as eliminate the challenges of currency conversion.

## NCAA suspends Dana Air's operations indefinitely on financial, safety grounds

•As Airline appeals to passengers, express confidence of return

By **ADAKU WALTER**

The Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) has suspended the Air Transport Licence (ATL) and Air Operator Certificate (AOC) of Dana Airlines indefinitely with effect from Wednesday, July 20, 2022.

NCAA explained that the suspension was made pursuant to Section 35(2), 3(b) and (4) of the Civil Aviation Act, 2006 and Part 1.3.3.3(a)(1) of the Nigeria Civil Aviation Regulations (Nig. CARs) 2015.

The suspension order, which was delivered on the orders of the Director General of the NCAA, Captain Musa Nuhu, has since been communicated to the management of Dana Airlines.

Recall that Dana Air, on June 29, 2022, had announced the introduction of additional flights on its Lagos and Abuja route network, in what could be described as a good development at the time.

The airline revealed that the move was based on popular demand, the desire to meet the growing demand, and the need to follow through with its strategic route expansion.

Latest events have, however, proved otherwise, following the suspension of the airline by the NCAA on financial and safety grounds.

"The decision is the outcome of a financial and economic health audit carried out on the Airline by the Authority, and the findings of an investigation conducted on the Airline's flight operations recently, which revealed that Dana Airlines is no longer in a position to meet its financial obligations and to conduct safe flight operations."

"The NCAA acknowledges the negative effect this preemptive decision will have on the Airline's passengers and members of the travelling public and seeks their understanding, as the safety of flight operations takes priority over other considerations," the suspension order reads.

When contacted, Communications Manager of Dana Air, Kingsley Ezenwa, said on telephone that the stoppage of catering services would not be for long, and was not due to any financial difficulty.

On the airline's financial situation, Ezenwa stressed that Dana remains one of the strongest in the country, adding that the recent increase in frequency, sponsorships and partnerships are pointers to the fact that it is doing well financially.

Confirming the development, management of Dana said the decision was reached to undergo full operational audit and blamed the situation on increasing cost of Jet A1, which now sells at 830 per litre in some airports, unavailability of forex and inflation as contributory factors.

"Our operations have been suspended as advised by the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) to enable us to undergo full operational audit with effect from July 20, 2022," it added.



Capt. Musa Nuhu

## Shippers Council intervenes in dockworkers, APM Terminals labour crisis

By **JOHNMARK UKOKO** and **ADAKU WALTER**

Regulators of terminal operators and shipping firms in the maritime industry, the Nigerian Shippers Council (NSC), has intervened in the ongoing crisis between the AP Moller Terminals (APMT) and protesting dockworkers under the aegis of the Maritime Workers Union of Nigeria (MWUN) over unresolved dispute.

As of the time of filing this report, it was learnt that the officials of the NSC were still in a meeting with the leadership of MWUN with a view to dousing the tension.

It would be recalled that aggrieved dockworkers under the aegis of the Maritime Workers Union of Nigeria (MWUN) have shut down the APM Terminals in Apapa, thereby crippling port operations over poor remuneration of workers at the facilities.

Top executives of the union led by the President-General of MWUN, Adeyale Adeyaju, and other members of the dockworker's branch converged on the entry points of the terminals during the protest, insisting that

management of the terminal was taking Nigerian labour workers for granted, hence the need for the demonstration.

This followed 24 hours after the expiration of the three-day extension of the strike notice, which the leadership of MWUN gave issued to the terminal operator earlier in the week.

Consequently, managements of the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) and NSC started mounting pressure on the terminal operators to find a lasting solution to the current impasse.

Adeyaju said if the management of the APM Terminal refuses to meet with the workers and accede to their demands, the closure of the terminals would continue.

"Our members have closed APM Terminals in Apapa. All the examination offices in the container terminal that are being used by officials of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) are currently shut. The agitation is connected with the refusal of the APM Terminal, Apapa management to review the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) of the workers, which ought to be reviewed every year."

"It is an internal agreement between the workers and the terminal operator,

but the terminal operator has refused to review the condition of service of the workers this year and that is why everywhere inside APM Terminals is currently under lock and key.

"Management of the APM Terminals has decided to act funny by not reviewing the workers' condition of service, but I will address the workers soon. If APM Terminals refuses to meet with us, the shutdown of port operations at APM Terminals, Apapa will continue," he stated.

Confirming the situation at the APM Terminals, the Spokesman of Apapa Command of the NCS, Abubakar Usman, explained that officers were currently in the ports, but could not access their examination offices, as the workers had shut the entrance gates against them.

"Our officials are in the ports. They have not been locked out of the ports. However, their offices have been locked up by the protesting workers. If the officers cannot access their offices, there is no way they can carry out any cargo clearance duty. Our men are there, but are not working currently, because of the protesting workers, who have locked up all the cargo examination offices in APM Terminals," he said.

## Senate passes Electricity Bill to boost power distribution, seeks increased investments, reforms

By **JOHNMARK UKOKO**

Following the incessant collapse of the national grid and persistent power outages across the country, as well as consideration of a report of the Senate Committee on Power, the upper legislative chamber has passed the Electricity Bill 2022.

Chairman of the Committee, Gabriel Suswam (PDP-Benue North East), in his presentation, said the bill seeks to, among other things, provide an ideal legal and institutional framework to leverage the modest gains of the privatisation phase of the country's electric power sector.

He said when signed finally into law, the bill will improve utilisation of generated power through increased investments in new technologies to enhance transmission and distribution of generated power to minimise aggregate value chain losses.

Suswam, who maintained that the legislation would revive the institutional framework for the reform of the Nigerian Electricity Supply Industry (NESI), as initiated and implemented by the Federal Government, disclosed that the provisions of the bill seek to promote policies and regulatory measures that would ensure the expansion of power transmission networks to address any imbalance in the existing transmission infrastructure.

He further noted that the bill would stimulate policy and regulatory measures to scale up efficient power generation, transmission and distribution capability of the sector, as well as address technological limitations and outdated infrastructure that had been responsible for the huge losses in the electricity value chain.

President of the Senate, Ahmad Lawan, who interjected midway through consideration of the bill, sought to know the role and operational capacity of banks that had taken over distribution companies (DisCos) indebted to them.

But responding, Suswam explained that the banks' intervention in the DisCos was done in collaboration with the Nigerian

Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) and the Bureau of Public Enterprise (BPE).

According to him, there was a transitional process put in place during the take-over of the Abuja Electricity Distribution Company (AEDC) by the United Bank for Africa (UBA) to ensure efficiency in its service delivery.

He noted that such transitional process usually involves the invitation of new investors to scale up generation and distribution capacities, adding that the Federal Government had disbursed about \$100 million to Siemens to facilitate transmission in the distribution end of the power sector.

On his part, Senator Ahmad Babba-Kaita (PDP-Katsina North), who said the faulty way in which the DisCos were created was largely responsible for their inability to live up to expectations, urged the Federal Government to ensure a transparent process in the selection of the companies to take-over power generation and distribution across the country.

Deputy Chief Whip, Senator Aliyu Sabi Abdullahi (APC-Niger North), noted that the aspect of renewable energy in the bill was given prominence amidst the energy mix.

After a clause-by-clause consideration of the Committee's report on the Electricity Bill 2022 by the Committee of the Whole, it was passed in the upper chamber.

Speaking shortly after the passage of the bill, Lawan, said: "Because of its importance and sensitivity, we would like to see a quick concurrence by the House of Representatives, because time is of essence, as far as issues of electricity and energy supplies are concerned in Nigeria."

"So, we would like to see that this bill is fully processed in the National Assembly and sent to the Executive arm of government for the consideration for assent by President Muhammadu Buhari. We believe that this piece of legislation could change the fortunes of the country's electricity industry for the better."

## Debt servicing surpasses revenue by N310b as FG releases fiscal report

### Govt to spend N6.72tr on fuel subsidy in 2023

By **EDU ABADE**, Business Editor

The cost of servicing debt surpassed the federal government's retained revenue by N310 billion in the first four months of 2022.

The federal government said this in its 2022 fiscal performance report for four months released on Thursday.

According to the report, the Federal Government's total revenue for the period was N1.63 trillion, while debt servicing gulped N1.94 trillion.

While providing update on the budget performance in Abuja, Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Mrs Zainab Ahmed, said urgent action was urgently required to address under-performance of revenue and expenditure efficiency at the national and sub-national levels.

"The aggregate expenditure for 2022 is estimated at N17.32 trillion, with a *pro rata* spending target of N5.77 at the end of April," the report reads, adding that the actual spending as of April 31 amounted to N4.72 trillion, of which N1.94 trillion was for debt servicing and N1.26 trillion was for personnel costs and pensions.

"As of April 2022, N773.63 billion has been spent on capital expenditure, while the Federal Government's retained revenue was only N1.63 trillion, which is 49 per cent of the *pro rata* target of N3.32 trillion," she said.

The document added that the Federal Government's share of oil revenues came to N285.38 billion, representing 39 per cent performance, while non-oil tax revenues amounted to N632.56 billion, which translated to 84 per cent performance and that based on the figures, the Federal Government generated N401.8 billion from Company Income Tax (CIT) and Value Added Tax (VAT).

"CIT and VAT collections



Mrs Zainab Ahmed

amounted to N298.83 billion and N102.97 billion, representing 99 per cent and 98 per cent of their respective targets. Customs collections, comprising import duties, excise and fees and the federation account special levies, trailed target by N76.77 billion, amounting to 25.42 per cent. Other revenues came to N664.64 billion, of which independent revenue accounted for N394.09 billion," the report added.

Meanwhile, the Federal Government has said it would make provision for N6.72 trillion for fuel subsidy in 2023.

Ahmed disclosed this in Abuja on Thursday during the 2023-2025 Medium Term Expenditure Framework and Fiscal Strategic Paper (MTEF and FSP) Public Consultation, maintaining that the amount would remain and be fully provided for by the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Limited on behalf of the Federal Government.

The minister, however, said the NNPC, which had funded the fuel subsidy until last month, would henceforth leave that responsibility to the federation, adding that this

would even create a greater strain on the fiscal position of the federal government, describing fuel subsidy as unsustainable.

"It will remain and be fully provided for by the NNPC on behalf of the federation if government allow this to continue," she added, explaining that another scenario would be that petrol subsidy would remain till mid-2023 based on the 18-month extension announced in early 2021, in which case, only N3.36 trillion would be provided for.

"Both scenarios have implications for net accretion to the Federation Account and projected deficit levels. There will be tighter enforcement of the performance management framework for Government Owned Enterprises (GOEs) that will significantly increase operating surplus and dividend remittances in 2023," she said.

The minister added that the Federal Government recorded a N3.09 trillion deficit in its 2022 budget implementation between January and April this year, adding that the deficit underscored the fiscal challenges confronting the Federal Government.

## Coca-Cola partners Sterling One Foundation on Africa social impact summit

By **EDU ABADE**, Business Editor

The Coca-Cola Company has restated its commitment to regional inclusive development of the African continent through its Africa Social Impact Summit (ASIS) in partnership with Sterling One Foundation.

The two-day hybrid event with the theme: Rethink, Rebuild, Recover- Accelerating Growth Of The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which was held at the Transcorp Hilton in Abuja, attracted executives and partners focused on advancing inclusive growth on the continent, as it provided a viable platform for dialogue on regional inclusive development aimed at stimulating private sector and impact investors

to shape market-led solutions for the SDGs with a focus on climate solutions, health, agriculture, renewable energy, WASH and circular economy.

The sponsors expressed optimism that the summit would help fashion out functional frameworks for the private sector and impact investors to boost Africa's regional comprehensive development on the principles of the SDGs 2030.

In her keynote address, Vice President, Public Affairs, Communications and Sustainability for Africa, Patricia Obozuwa, highlighted the company's continued focus on creating a better shared future for host communities of its world-class beverages through acceleration of on-the-ground impact of its initia-

tives and interventions, leveraging the collaborative investments from The Coca-Cola Foundation and other partners.

She said: "Earlier this year, we launched 'JAMII', our Africa sustainability platform, which houses our existing and new sustainability initiatives. JAMII embodies the true spirit of 'community' and continues to expand on our past accomplishments with key focus on water, stewardship, economic empowerment of women, as well as youth and waste management.

While we continue to drive the achievement of the SDGs through our signature programs under JAMII, there remains a need to scale our efforts significantly leveraging collective action and impact hence the summit objective.

Stressing that the whole world will benefit from keeping faith with the SDGs, she, however, maintained that Africa's special disposition makes the continent's specific needs dire, which was why Coca-Cola had refocused with the launch of JAMII to enhance the impact of its social investments in Africa.

"To achieve success, there is an urgent need for effective and coordinated partnerships and collaboration as Africa has the potential to be at the heart of a sustainable future for both the continent and the world. I assure you of our continued commitment at The Coca-Cola Company, as we remain key contributors in driving the 2030 agenda," she stated.



Senate President Ahmad Lawan





# FG, World Bank, reiterates commitment to project implementation in coastal communities

By GENESIS ERIRIOMA

The World Bank in collaboration with the Federal Government (FG) of Nigeria has reiterated its commitment to implement the West Africa Coastal Areas (WACA) Management Programme aimed at improving the livelihoods of coastal communities in the country.

Mr Muhammed Abdulahi, The Minister of Environment, made the commitment at a two-day National Stakeholders' Technical Committee Meeting on WACA programme held in Abuja, Nigeria.

Mr Abbas Suileman, Director, Environmental Impact Assessment in the ministry, who represented the minister, said the effort would reduce the vulnerability of coastal areas in the country.

He said that the programme will also promote climate-resilient integrated coastal management, within the framework of sustainable environmental management.

"The benefits of the WACA are quite immense; the WACA will help Nigeria obtain financing and exper-

tise to sustainably manage her coastal areas, enhance industrial competitiveness, market access, innovation and investment promotion.

"It will also promote productive employment for rural communities and entrepreneurship development, sustainable energy and environmental management.

"The Federal Government is desirous of witnessing verifiable milestone achievements to showcase under the implementation of the WACA," he stated.

Furthermore, he said the implementation of the programme was delayed due to some technical issues, including funds for technical studies which were prerequisites for Multi-Sectoral Investment and outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic.

He further disclosed that the World Bank had secured a grant for the technical studies in Lagos, Delta and Cross River states.

"In view of this, I am convinced that the World Bank in Nigeria will continue to bring to fore their wealth of experience and understanding in achieving results within the shortest possible time,"



Mr Muhammed Abdulahi

he said.

He urged stakeholders, the World Bank and its partners to redouble their efforts at developing the coastal landscape now that WACA had been implemented in other West African countries.

The critical stakeholders should carry out their official responsibilities with utmost diligence and uprightness, he

stated.

"Let me also reiterate that your appointment to the National Stakeholders Technical Committee on WACA is indeed a call to service.

"It is also a representation of your various state governments, Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and the minimum

expected from you is a service of honesty, integrity and foresightedness," he said.

Mr Francesco Mentovani, Engagement Leader and Lead Water Specialist, Sustainable Development, World Bank said that all countries in West Africa, including Nigeria, were committed to the implementation of the programme.

Mentovani said that the stakeholders' meeting was convened to get the buy-in of all stakeholders on the way forward for WACA in Nigeria.

He said that the objective of the programme was to preserve, protect and tackle environmental issues such as desertification, climate change and other environmental challenges in the region.

The Permanent Secretary of the ministry, Mr Hassan Musa, said WACA was established in 2015 by the World Bank to manage growing coastal erosion and flooding problems in West Africa region.

"WACA established a committee in 2016 to ensure that the programme covered a range of sectoral issues" he said.

The Permanent Secretary was represented by Mr Dilichukwu Etigbue, Director, Erosion, Flood and Coastal Zone Management in the ministry.

The Lagos State Commissioner for Environment and Water Resources, Mr Tunji Bello, represented by Mr Adegbite Mohammed, disclosed that the state had invested much funds in the programme.

He said the state had over 100km of coastal land, adding that it was committed to creating seawall, thereby protecting promenades, roads and houses in the area.

He urged the stakeholders to increase efforts for effective implementation of the programme.

"I will suggest that all the coastal states management should create a strong team to share their problems to make the implementation of the programme easier" he stated.



A cross section of National Stakeholders' Technical Committee Meeting on WACA programme held in Abuja, recently

# IHRC partners FG, set to tackle 28m housing deficit in Nigeria

By GENESIS ERIRIOMA

With a deficit of 28 million houses, Nigeria needs urgent measures to provide affordable housing for her teeming population of around 200 million people. With this in mind, the International Human Rights Commission (IHRC) has revealed that it is in partnership with the federal government to reduce the deficit.

The Director of the Africa Region Headquarters of the commission, Dr Tivlumun Ahure, made this known this month in Abuja during a news briefing at an event that featured the unveiling of the new director of the IHRC Pro-Poor Housing Programme, Dr Edward Olutoke.

The director disclosed that the aim of the project was to contribute to the efforts of the Nigerian government to achieve the affordable housing goal listed under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) before 2030.

He explained that, for the country to achieve an increase and improved housing opportunities for low and medium

income households, special needs populations, among others, concerted efforts at reducing it are required.

He stated that: "Indeed, Nigeria faces a severe housing deficit as estimated by the Federal Mortgage Bank indicating a deficit of at least 28 million housing units.

"While the deficit cannot be addressed within the lifetime of an administration, a concerted effort at reducing it is however clearly required.

"This will entail creating linkages between provision of land to property developers, increased availability of housing finance, reduction in property transaction costs and job creation across sectors ancillary to the provision of additional housing stock," he said.

He added that in January 2021, the Commission communicated with the federal government its intention to assist millions of people that live in slums and substandard houses to have adequate housing.

"The IHRC's proposed Pro-Poor housing scheme in Nigeria is, therefore, going to be on a joint venture basis

with the government.

"It will be to us a dream come true to facilitate an increase in housing stock via Public Private Partnerships (PPP) as well as through housing finance reforms,".

While speaking after his unveiling, Dr Olutoke said that housing was key and important to every Nigerian as "it is fundamental to have a shelter over one's head.

"For me, this is an assignment which I am committed to achieving.

"Housing is key, shelter is too key and fundamental and these are the things we toil within our decision making process.

"For instance, if we move 5,000 families from Asokoro or within the city centre to a new land, the house rents will definitely reduce and so the issue of high house rents will be a thing of the past," he observed.

The IHRC is a worldwide voluntary group of individuals who are activists and diplomats in Asia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, North America and Africa without being affiliated with any government.



Dr Tivlumun Ahure

## Experts mull solutions to building collapse

By BLESSING OZIWO

There has been a big question about the engineering practices in the construction of buildings because of the increased rate of building collapses in the past few years. This is blotting on

the professional reputation and integrity of the engineering sector.

Recently experts drawn across different sessions of the building industry called for concerted efforts toward bringing an end to the menace

of building collapse in Lagos State.

The experts spoke at the T.M Olatunji Distinguished Annual Lecture organised by the Nigerian Institution of Civil Engineers held in Lagos on Wednesday.

In his keynote address, a former President of the Nigerian Institute of Builders, Builder Kunle Awobodu, decried the alarming rate of building collapses in the state.

According to him, even as he was about to deliver his paper, a breaking but bad news of another building collapse had surfaced in the media.

Awobodu added that lack of capacity had long been identified as the clog in the wheel of appropriate building control.

He said, "The alarming rate at which the BCPG record of collapsed buildings in Nigeria is being reviewed makes me appreciate the herculean task facing the updating team of the organisation searching around for news of collapsed buildings. Owners of 2 collapsed buildings usually try to conceal the information in order to circumvent the confiscation of their land by the government. For this reason, the BCPG records of

collapsed buildings consist only of the 'exposed' or reported collapsed buildings.

"Experience has taught us that each time a building collapses in Nigeria, built environment professionals in other parts of the world tend to doubt the competence of professionals in the Nigerian Building Industry. Building collapse is a global phenomenon, but the frequency at which buildings collapse in Nigeria has attracted a worldwide concern on the need to assist this country to improve on its safety performance."

An engineer and the Special Adviser for Works and Infrastructure to Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, Mrs Aramide Adeyoye, said it was instructive that infrastructure must be sustained if it was to benefit coming generations and its provision must be seen as an investment that would pay off many times over in the future.

She added that the prevention of infrastructure collapse as prevalent in Nigeria and other developing nations was a matter to be looked at critically.

She said, "The construction industry responsible for these infrastructures also accounts for

a major proportion of the GDP of Nigeria. Therefore, seeking to improve the efficiency of the industry is very essential in promoting the growth of the Nigerian economy.

"It is important for professionalism to be exhibited in all stages of the infrastructure project cycle right from concept to planning to design to construction and maintenance stages. Professionalism is key to ensuring the sustainability of infrastructure and professionals are therefore expected to exhibit a high level of professionalism by adhering to their professional ethics when discharging their duties."

She further stated that the public had seen the collapse of new and existing infrastructure across the country because of poor design and periodic assessment/maintenance.

She added, "To curb incessant infrastructure collapse using road infrastructure as a reference, we in Lagos State Government from the planning stage of our road projects have adopted measures to curb their early deterioration. Such measures include giving quality control and quality assurance high priority in our execution of road projects."



Gov. Babajide Sanwo-Olu

## Alleged N109bn Fraud: Court remands ex-Accountant General in Kuje prison

●As EFCC says ex-AGF got N15bn bribe to fast-track 13% Oil derivation payment

By PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Justice Adeyemi Ajayi of the Federal Capital Territory High Court, Abuja, on Friday remanded embattled former Accountant General of the Federation, Ahmed Idris and two others in the Kuje Medium Correctional Centre.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) arraigned Idris and his co-defendants including Gezawa Commodity Market and Exchange Limited on a 14-count charge bordering on stealing and criminal breach of trust to the tune of N109.4 billion.

In an earlier statement announcing the scheduled arraignment, EFCC spokesman, Wilson Uwujaren disclosed two counts (one and eight) of the 14 counts the defendants will face while accusing Idris that he received a total of N15 billion bribe to fast-track 13% derivation funds to oil-producing states of the Niger Delta region.

The 13% derivation fund is a benefit-sharing system that helps crude oil producing communities get funds meant for development.

The fund comes from the federation revenue through the state governments as enshrined in section 162, sub-section 2 of the Nigerian Constitution.

In 2021, the nine oil-producing states of Delta, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Rivers, Edo, Ondo, Imo, Lagos, and Abia shared N450.60 billion from the federation account through the 13 percent derivation formula.

The EFCC claimed that the suspended AGF accepted the sum of N15,136,221,921.46 from



Ahmed Idris

Olusegun Akindele, his Technical Assistant for accelerating the payment of 13% derivation to the states.

According to the anti-graft agency, count one of the charges reads, "That you, Ahmed Idris between February and December 2021 at Abuja in the Abuja Judicial Division of the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory, being a public servant by virtue of

your position as the Accountant General of the Federation accepted from Olusegun Akindele, a gratification in the aggregate sum of N15,136,221,921.46 which sum was converted to the United States Dollars by the said Olusegun Akindele and which sum did not form part of your lawful remuneration but as a motive for accelerating the payment of 13% derivation to the nine (9) oil producing States in the Federation, through the office of the Accountant General of the Federation, and you thereby committed an offence contrary to Section 155 of the Penal Code Act Cap 532 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 1990 and punishable under the same section."

Count eight reads, "That you, Ahmed Idris while being the Accountant General of the Federation and Godfrey Olusegun Akindele while being the Technical Assistant to the Accountant General of the Federation between February and November 2021, at Abuja in the Abuja Judicial Division of the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory, in such capacity, entrusted with a certain property, to wit: N84,390,000,000 committed criminal breach of trust in respect of the said property when you dishonestly received the said sum from the Federal Government of Nigeria through Godfrey Olusegun Akindele trading under the name and style of Olusegun Akindele & Co., and you thereby committed an offence punishable under Section 315 of the Penal Code Act Cap 532 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 1990."

Recall that the EFCC on May 16 announced the arrest of Idris who was the Accountant

General of the federation at the time, a move that sent shockwaves across the nation in the current administration's efforts in fighting corruption.

In a statement, the anti-graft agency had explained that Idris was arrested for an alleged diversion and laundering of N80 billion.

The development forced the Minister of Finance, Ahmed Zainab, to suspend him pending the conclusion of the corruption investigations.

About two weeks later, the EFCC uncovered another N90 billion alleged fraud involving the suspended Accountant-General.

When arraigned on Friday, all the defendants pleaded not guilty. Idris and other defendants. Therefore, asked the court for bail pending trial.

Counsel to Idris, Chris Uche, SAN, in his submissions, assured the court that his client would be available to face the charge against him.

Uche specifically noted that the EFCC had earlier granted administrative bail to the Defendant who he said flew into Abuja from Kano state immediately after he was notified about the arraignment.

"In a matter of this nature that the Defendants have been on bail, and since there is no complaint that they violated the administrative bail conditions, I pray that they be allowed to continue to enjoy the same," Uche submitted.

However, the court ordered that Idris and other defendants should remain in the custody of the Nigerian Correctional Service till Wednesday when their bail applications will be heard.

## ICPC charges JAMB staffers on professionalism, anti-corruption

By PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) has charged staff members of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) to uphold a high level of professionalism and imbibe anti-corruption principles in the discharge of their official duties.

Assistant Commissioner of the ICPC in Imo State, Mrs Chinwe Egbeocha, gave the charge in Owerri during a sensitization programme organized by the Commission for the management and staff of the Board in Imo.

The Assistant Commissioner emphasized that one of the very important roles of the Board is to ensure a successful administration of examinations to candidates to enhance their consideration for admission into tertiary institutions.

According to her, an outcome of a meeting presided over by President Muhammadu Buhari at the State House in Abuja, warned that the Board must ensure that the best candidates are being considered for admission for the smooth running of the school system.

Mrs Egbeocha advocated for attitudinal change to be embraced by the staff against

the evils of corruption as well as the need to have zero tolerance for corruption in view of the danger it poses to development.

She cautioned that public officers must ensure that they work diligently while pushing aside any form of wrongdoing that could land them in jail.

JAMB Chief Administration Officer, Mr Chinyere Ezech, who represented the JAMB Coordinator, Imo state, Mr Chukwuemeka Cyril, in his speech thanked the Commission for a well-presented lecture, which he said was very detailed and contained vital information that could greatly assist the staff in discharging

their duties effectively and efficiently.

The JAMB Coordinator stated that the current Board of JAMB under the leadership of Professor Ishaq Oloyede had zero tolerance for corruption and any type of infractions while noting that JAMB represents the same value ICPC stands for.

Mr Ezech called on all staff to take full advantage of the enlightenment programme as a wake-up call towards updating their knowledge to facilitate the effective discharge of their assigned responsibilities, to enable qualified Nigerians to have a smooth process of admissions into various tertiary institutions.

## EFCC arrests ex-convict, 32 others for cybercrime

By PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

An ex-convict, Okhiria Alex Chibueze, has again been arrested alongside 32 others by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) for alleged cybercrime.

Chibueze and others were arrested Thursday by operatives of the Ibadan Zonal Command of the Commission.

It was gathered that the suspects were nabbed at the Soka axis of Ibadan, Oyo State, in a sting operation by the EFCC following a credible intelligence report on their alleged cyber-crime activities.

It will be recalled that Chibueze was arrested by the operatives of the Ibadan Zonal Command of the EFCC sometime in 2021 for fraudulently obtaining \$3,800 USD (Three Thousand, Eight Hundred United States Dollars) through a fake lottery scheme.

He was successfully prosecuted and sentenced to six months of community service by the Court on June 16, 2022. However, barely a month after his conviction, Chibueze has again

landed in the net of the anti-graft commission.

Spokesperson for the EFCC, Wilson Uwujaren, confirmed the arrest on Friday in a statement.

Uwujaren gave the names of all the suspects as "Okhiria Alex Chibueze, Olootu Damilola Ayomikun, Akiwale Isreal Bunmi, Oladele Olatunde Oladimeji, Okeniyi Samuel Akin-niyi, Sanya Oyekole Olakunle, Okon Gideon Henry, Stephen Samuel Shekwuduza, Adeshina Opeyemi Akanni, Hezekiah Ajadi Oluwatobi, Omoke Ogbonnaya Okike, Alex Samuel Aiku, Micheal Olakunle Oyiwola, Salami Oluwafemi Salami, Udeh Moses Emeka and Monday Samuel Nnaemeka."

Others are "Oluchukwu Emmanuel Ifeanyi Chukwu, Olaleye Azeez Olaide, Akintunde Victor Opeyemi, Akintayo Abass Waliu, Bada Samuel Rotimi, Isaac Isaiah Chinedu, Adeleke Olawale Isaac, Enoch Obaloluwa Bolaji, Afolabi Tomiwa Pelumi, Chukwudi Emeka Samuel, Abiola Oloruntoba Enoch, Chukwu Ogbonnaya Chukwu, Ogbonna Simon Ugwu, Durodoye Jubril Akinwunmi, Durodoye Idris Akindeji, Sanmabo Ayodeji Olufisayo and Olatunbosun Abdulmujeeb Olanrewaju," he added.

## Court declares employment termination of 19 persons' wrongful, awards N11.4m against firm

By PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Justice Faustina Kola-Olalere, presiding judge of the Portharcourt Judicial Division of the National Industrial Court, has declared the employment termination of Emmanuel Ogbonna and 18 others by Baker Hughes Company via redundancy as wrongful.

The Court, which held that the termination was done in violation of the Labour Act and the International Labour Organization Convention Protocols, awarded the sum of N7.6m (Seven Million, Six Hundred Thousand Naira) only as compensation for the wrongful employment termination and N3.8m (Three Million, Eight Hundred Thousand Naira) costs of action against the firm.

The Court, however, held that Emmanuel Ogbonna and 18 others are not entitled to the sum of N144m redundancy benefits, USD49,400.00 one-year medical contribution as End of Service Benefits under the Voluntary Release Program (VRP) and was dismissed accordingly.

Facts by the claimants - Emmanuel Ogbonna, and 18 others - had stated that by policies of the defendants including the Voluntary Release Program (VRP), which did not at any time provided for redundancy, the defendants embarked on redundancy exercise without following the procedure provided for in the Labour Act as well as failed, refused and/neglected to pay their redundancy package.

In a further submission, the claimants posited that Martin Craighead and Baker Hughes Incorporated were co-employers with the Baker Hughes Company because the firm acted on their behalf.

In defence, the defendants averred that Martin Craighead and Baker Hughes Incorporated are not in any way responsible for the act of Baker Hughes Company and that the so-called Voluntary Release Programme (VRP) heavily relied upon by Amadi, was never introduced, developed, or applied in Nigeria, neither was it provided for in the Claimants' Contract of Employment nor incorporated by reference into the said Contract of Employment.

# Staying married for 6 years, best decision ever - D'banj



*Oladapo Oyebanjo, better known as 'D'banj', has come a long way since he released his debut album 'No Long Thing' in 2005. The multiple-award-winning artiste and CEO of DB Records has been dubbed one of Nigeria's richest solo musicians, and still waxing stronger. Announced as this year's season judge of the Nigerian Idol Season 7; Koko Master as he is sometimes called spoke with OMONIYI ALLI on his new role, business, and marriage amongst others.*

**Q: What has Koko Master been up to?**

A: Business I have been taking most of my time because music gets you in the room but what you do in that room is up to you as an individual. You would have noticed that I have been more focused especially when I became a family man. It's been six years of being married and ever since I have looked for a different platform where I know is still my flair. For instance, if you google Jay-Z, Kanye West or the richest

musician in the world; you will find out that 10% of their wealth is probably from music while the other percentage is from several business investments which I have also emulated.

**Q: Does that imply that doing business has ripped you off from doing music?**

A: Not at all, Music will forever be in me; but investing in business is something I won't stop doing. From me having the right

infrastructure and merchandise that will sustain me over the years and then I can do more music. Sometimes I go to a show and they give me one hour to perform, I can't sing all my songs in three hours. It's what you can do to still give people that image to look up to. We didn't have anybody to look up to while we were growing up but the industry has us to look up to, they are people to look up to. If you have a brand, it's high time you stop doing jobs that pay peanuts and start doing what will make you the next sponsor of Nigerian Idol or big brother.

**Q: Does that mean music is not profitable?**

A: I'm not saying that, I'm just saying it goes beyond music to be able to live that luxury lifestyle.

**Q: As a businessman with so much merchandise, how profitable are all these businesses?**

A: I can confidently say all businesses that I have ventured into are profitable because if you go to popular malls and stores; you will find my Koko Garri there. The most important is that we need more management in our industry because everyone that comes into the industry now just wants to be popular overnight. It is important to have people in the back who will say ok, you have a song that is trending but you can also have merchandise.

**Q: How affordable is your DB perfume?**

A: The perfume is selling for a token of 250 dollars. It's global now; very soon it will be everywhere in Nigeria but at the moment you can get it online. My partners are from

the UAE and I will also be partnering with Dubai tourism to be able to take people to go and see the factory and try the other scents that we have, just to have that impact.

**Q: Don't you think 200 dollars is on the high side?**

A: I know you think that 250 dollars is high but we pay more for those foreign brands. The earlier we encourage our people to start investing, the better; from food to clothes, hair and even cars. Even drinks, I'm looking forward to a time when I will have an endorsement with an alcoholic drink that is Nigerian.

**Q: Six years of marriage, don't you miss those old days when you could gallivant around?**

A: Sure I do miss those days but for how long will you do that; I am happy I took the best decision to not just get married but stay married. I am also glad that there is a huge difference between Daniel Dapo Oyebanjo and Dbanj the koko master. I get on stage anywhere, and it's still the koko master. The amount of kokolet that flows on the stage has not been reduced. You know that you still have it but now you are committed to someone. When you've done it too much, you get tired.

**Q: What has sustained your marriage because a lot of people don't believe you could still be married till now?**

A: It is very important for me when I say that I'm happy that I got married when I got married and for the reason, I got married. I thought I had reached the best part of my life and I wanted to start building an empire for me to do this, I have to be stable, have a best friend as a partner and then you have to be true to yourself. I pray to God a lot and the Bible says He who finds a wife, finds a good thing, so I got myself a best friend, my best partner who understands me and knows everything about me and because of that, we can grow together. The most important thing is that God has sustained my marriage.

**Q: As a parent, would you allow your kids to go into music?**

A: Of course, if my son wants to be a musician, he's permitted. My daughter on the other hand might already be a musician. I just celebrated her birthday and she was dancing throughout and I think there is something there.

**Q: Aren't you challenged by the new crop of artists that we have at the moment?**

A: Generally, I love everybody. I think the industry is growing to the level that we have been praying for. I can't even keep up and they are all extremely good. I won't say challenge is the right word because if you say challenge, it might mean that I have something to prove and I don't have anything to prove to anybody. It's my life; it's what I do for a living. If I was in a competition, then it is a different thing but I'm not in competition with anybody. None of them will stand and say that I'm not a source of inspiration to them.

**Q: Should we be anticipating a Mo-Hit comeback anytime soon?**

A: Don Jazzy will be best to answer that; although we were supposed to have a reunion concert last year but it was cancelled and moved to this year. So let's keep our fingers crossed and for the record; the entire MO-Hit crew including Jazzy are in good accord.



## Kizz Daniel Breaks Record on Boomplay with 300M Total Streams

With a global tour underway and arguably one of the biggest songs rocking major cities, Kizz Daniel is having an impressive year. He records another artistic landmark as the first artist to hit 300 million total streams on Boomplay, making him the current most streamed artist on the platform.

Leading the way in those streams includes some of Kizz Daniel's most acclaimed projects, such as "Barnabas" EP with 133.5 million streams, "King of Love" with 39M streams, No Bad Songs with 22.1M streams, and his most streamed single "1" at 82 million streams.

Having recorded mainstream success with "Buga" featuring Tekno, which has also been largely described as a masterstroke, the single continues to enjoy massive reception. Buga was reported to have accumulated 1 million streams within 24 hours of release

on Boomplay and has since retained the top spot in countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Togo, Zambia, DRC, Benin and Sierra Leone.

Furthering recent milestone announcements from Boomplay, Kizz Daniel's 300 million streaming feat also signals astronomical growth levels in the music industry regarding music consumption and streaming culture. Earlier in April 2022, Boomplay announced that Kizz Daniel became the first artist to hit 100,000,000 project-based streams in less than six months with his fourth studio project "Barnabas EP."

With this feat, Kizz Daniel becomes the leader of Boomplay's Golden Club which also houses Burna Boy, Fireboy, Joeboy, Omah Lay, Rayvanny, Diamond Platnumz, Davido, Wizkid, Olamide, Naira Marley, Ruger, Black Sherif and Simi.



## Toke Makinwa return as host of BBNaija 'The Buzz'



For the second season of Showmax's exclusive talk show, BBNaija S7: The Buzz, multimedia personality Toke Makinwa shared the news with Big Brother Naija fans excited for the new season's start today

23 July 2022.

BBNaija S7: The Buzz will feature well-known personalities, special guests and BBNaija enthusiasts sharing their thoughts on the juiciest moments in the Big Brother

house. Streaming exclusively on Showmax, the first episode drops on 2 August, with new episodes every Tuesday and Saturday.

That's not all for BBNaija fans this season, as the producers take the fan experience to the next level with extra cameras, as well as an Eviction Vodcast with evicted housemates and what's being teased as Secret Diaries, which are short clips from the Diary Room.

Speaking on her return as host, Toke Makinwa says, "It feels good to be back! The Buzz has always been about unfiltered conversations and opinions, and this season, we're back better and juicier. I look forward to meeting the new housemates and watching their strategies play out. Bring the drama."

Busola Tejumola, the Executive Head of Content and West Africa Channels at MultiChoice, added: "We want to create the ultimate Big Brother Naija experience for superfans, and with Toke Makinwa back as the host of BBNaija S7: The Buzz on Showmax, as well as new content formats this season, the stage is set for a jam-packed ten weeks of entertainment that Showmax subscribers can enjoy on-the-go."

For the second year in a row, BBNaija fans across sub-Saharan Africa, the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland will enjoy front row access to all the activities in the Big Brother house on Showmax.

## Broke men shouldn't be looking for women -Timaya

Nigerian singer and songwriter Inetimi Alfred Odon, better known as Timaya, has given his fellow men relationship advice.

The musician took to his verified Twitter handle on Wednesday to appeal to men not to approach ladies if they don't have money.

He also urged men to stop complaining about women and their interest in money whenever they are in relationships.

"Stop complaining about women liking money! If u don't have money don't go close to her. Bye," he wrote.

This is not the first time Timaya will be dropping relationship nuggets for men on social media.

In May, the 'Ukwu' crooner had called on men to be financially buoyant before embracing polygamy.

"If you want to be a polygamist, do it like Ned Okonkwo. You can't be managing and have two wives," he had said.

Timaya, who has four children — Emmanuella, Gracey, Emmanuel, and Maya — from three different women, once prayed against falling in love.

The musician has made a name for himself since he rode to the limelight in 2005 on the back of 'Dem Mama', his hit single.

He then released his first album 'True Story' in 2007. This was followed by 'Gift And Grace' in 2008; 'De Rebirth' which came in 2010; 'LLNP' which he put out in 2011; 'Upgrade' in 2012; and 'Epiphany' released in 2014.

The singer is the founder of DM Records Limited, a label that houses music stars like Patoranking and Runtown.



## Why I made 'Money Miss Road' - Joy Odiete, Blue Pictures' boss



Joy Odiete, chief executive officer of Blue Pictures Entertainment and producer of the highly-anticipated action-comedy film, 'Money Miss Road', scheduled for global theatrical release on July 22, 2022, has explained the reason behind assembling the hugely talented cast and crew members who worked tirelessly to bring the film to reality.

During a chat, Odiete, who is Nigeria's only female leading a global film distribution company, explained that the film was conceived to explore a rare genre that is lacking in the Nigerian cinema ecosystem. She says: "Yes, 'Money Miss Road' is out in cinemas on the 22nd of July. It is an action-comedy film; a combination rarely seen in Nigerian cinemas as seen from the trajectory and history of the box office."

Directed by award-winning Obi

Emelonye, the brain behind blockbusters like 'Last Flight To Abuja', 'Mirror Boy', the film features a stellar cast that includes Charly Boy, comedy skit-maker, Josh Alfred (Josh2funny), Jide Kene Achufusi (Swanky JKA), Melvin Oduah, Oma Iyasara and Anthony Monjaro.

'Money Miss Road' highlights the struggles, dreams and drive of downtown existence, reflecting on the lives of two friends, Josiah (Josh2funny) and Joseph (Jide Achufusi), whose chance encounter with Diokpa (Charly Boy), a ruthless criminal kingpin would set up for a life of luxury as well as misery. Shot in locations in Lagos and Abuja, the movie is a partnership between Blue Pictures Entertainment and The Nollywood Factory, with Odinaka Emmanuel Offia as the Executive Producer.



## Nadal, Djokovic, Federer, Murray team up for Laver Cup in September

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

French Open champion Rafael Nadal, Wimbledon champion Novak Djokovic, former world No.1 Roger Federer and 2016 Wimbledon champion Andy Murray will all make up Team Europe in the Laver Cup event.

The tourney scheduled to take place from September 23 - 25, a three-event, will have six players from Team Europe tackle six others from Team World in London.

While the event will be astonishing for fans and promoters of tennis sports to watch tennis rivals come under a fold to take on Felix Auger-Aliassime, Taylor Fritz, and Diego Schwartzman of Team World, it is, however, a unique event according to Djokovic who admitted that it is the only event that brings his tennis rivals together.

In January, the former world number one was refused access into Australia to compete in the Australian Open over his refusal to take the coronavirus vaccine but attained his 21st Grand Slam title on July 10 at the SW19



event. "It's the only [event] where you play in a team with guys you're normally competing against," Djokovic said.

"To be joining Rafa, Roger and Andy, three of my biggest all-time rivals, it's going to be a truly unique moment in the history of our sport," he affirmed.

The Spaniard with a 22nd Grand Slam title, earned at Roland Garros, leads the Serbian who has 21 with Swiss Roger Federer on 20 and Andy Murray clinching 3.

British Broadcasting Corporation said that Team

Europe will be captained by retired tennis star, Swedish Bjorn Borg while Team World will be captained by his long-time rival, John McEnroe.

Both players between November 1978 and April 1981 were known for their rivalry with the American and Borg sharing equal numbers of victories in the 14 times they met in regular tours.

"I don't think I could have imagined having these four icons of the sport on one team together," the Team Europe captain said.

The Swedish is optimistic

that his side will take the day having paraded topmost stars in the contest.

"I know they, like I, appreciate the significance of this moment and will be truly up for it. Each year our goal is to win. With Rafa, Roger, Andy and Novak on the team, I like our chances," Borg claimed.

The Trumpet reports that the 14 times Borg and McEnroe met in tours, the latter won 3 Grand Slams, 3 ATP International Series and 1 WCT Finals while the former won 1 Grand Slam, 4 ATP International Series, and 2 Masters Grand Prix.

## Arsenal signs City's Zinchenko for £32m

Arsenal have signed Manchester City defender Oleksandr Zinchenko on a four-year deal bringing an end to his eight years reign in the Etihad Stadium.

The North London club paid £32m with £2m on add-ons to become the second City player to switch to Emirates Stadium this summer.

Zinchenko, a right-wing back, who can also play in the left-defensive and midfield positions, featured mostly in a defensive position during his time in Manchester City.

However, the 25-year-old defender's appearance for Pep Guardiola on the right-back wing dropped with Joao Cancelo particularly favoured in the position ahead of him.

Despite Cancelo being given the nod by Guardiola in the club last season's campaign ahead of Zinchenko who joined Manchester City from Russian club, FC Ufa, the versatile player soared in the left-wing back positions where he scored a decisive Premier League goal against Chelsea in 2021-2022 season.

Reportedly, Arsenal had pencilled former Ajax defender, Lisandro Martinez for a summer swoop but the Argentine preferred a reunion with Erik ten Hag which prompted a switch for Zinchenko.

According to the Arsenal technical director, Edu Gaspar,

Zinchenko is a good addition to the club whose experience will complement the depth of the squad.

"I'm very pleased to see how we're working as a team here in the club. We put a plan together early and Oleksandr Zinchenko was a main focus on our list," he said.

"We're pleased to have Alex with us now because he has the attributes which I'm sure are going to put our squad at a different level," Edu explained.

The North London club have been very busy in the summer transfer market with Zinchenko their fifth addition and the second City player to join Mikel Arteta at the Emirates Stadium.

Last season was a battle between Tottenham and Arsenal to qualify for the UEFA Champions League football but Antonio Conte was able to clinch the top-four spot ahead of Arteta.

The Spanish manager remembers the incident that led to his club's inability to qualify for the UEFA Champions League spot which also included a 3-0 bashing at the Tottenham Stadium.



## FG, Laing, confident in Team Nigeria's success in 2022 Commonwealth Games



The federal government is optimistic that Team Nigeria will perform spectacularly in the 2022 Commonwealth Games slated to kick off on July 28, 2022, in Birmingham.

This position by the federal government is hinged on the series of competitions processed by the Nigerian athletes, including participating in the African Senior Athletics Championships in Saint Pierre, Mauritius from June 8 - 12 last month.

In a statement by the Minister of Youth and Sports Development, Sunday Dare, at the residence of the British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Catriona Laing, on

Thursday, he noted that the tourneys have indisputably strengthened Team Nigeria in all ramifications.

He added that some athletes of Team Nigeria are presently in the United States for the World Athletics Championships in Oregon.

"The last few months have toughened our athletes," the Sports Minister admitted.

"As I speak now, some of them are in Eugene, Oregon, United States of America for the World Athletics Championships.

"Before now, some were in Mauritius for the African Senior Athletics Championships.

"By being part of these

competitions, I can say that Team Nigeria is fit and ready. We will compete with determination and fairly," Dare assured.

Furthermore, the Sports Minister stressed that the ministry has been very supportive of the athletes, adding that with what has been put in place, success is within Team Nigeria's grasp.

Dare added, "As a Ministry, we have tried to provide resources as much as we can afford for our athletes to be well prepared and we are sure of great success."

The British High Commissioner, Catriona Laing expressed delight at the opportunity to host Team Nigeria for a farewell reception.

According to her, "I know the Team Nigeria athletes will make this nation proud. I know they have worked extremely hard, put in so many hours of training and competing to represent Nigeria.

"Do not forget those sacrifices you have made, and use that memory, that muscle memory, that energy to pull through your most challenging

moments. In the end, it is only you who can give your best," Laing advised.

She continued: "Birmingham is a modern and bustling metropolis and one of the most diverse cities as well as being a truly multicultural destination.

"There are a lot of Nigerians living in the cities which makes getting access to African delicacies within reach," the British High Commissioner revealed.

Also, the President of the Nigeria Olympic Committee (NOC), Engineer Habu Gumel, urged the Nigerian athletes to be good ambassadors.

Gumel appreciated the British High Commissioner for the kind gesture of hosting the team.

He said, "I am confident in the ability of Birmingham to host the rest of the Commonwealth successfully.

Nigeria will be competing in nine sports at the Games. The sports are; Athletics, Boxing, Judo, Wrestling, Weightlifting, Table Tennis, Para Athletics, Para Powerlifting and Para Table Tennis.

## Develop Para Sports to enviable height- Sports Minister

The Minister of Youth and Sports Development, Sunday Dare, has charged the newly inaugurated board members of Para Sports to use their proven integrity and knowledge to develop Para Sports to an enviable height in the nation.

Dare said as part of the initiative of the federal government to create a sense of belonging for all Nigerians, including those living with disabilities, President Buhari-led administration expediently created the National Sports Festival and Para-Sports Department to oversee the affairs of Para-sports in the country.

According to the Sports Minister in his office yesterday, at the Moshood Abiola National Stadium, Abuja, the inauguration of the newly elected board was in tandem with the vision of Buhari's administration to restructure sports for better service delivery and to create opportunities for Nigeria youth.

In his statement reported by the Director, Press and Public Relations, Mohammed Manga, the Sports Minister who was represented by the Ministry's Permanent Secretary, Alhaji Ismaila Abubakar, implored the federations to target gold medals in the forthcoming 2022 Commonwealth Games scheduled from 28 July - 8 August in Birmingham.

"National Sports Federations are the bedrock of sports development in Nigeria and the constitution of the new board for Para Sports was, therefore, to reinvigorate them in line with the desire

of the Federal Government to re-position sports for effective and efficient service delivery and progressive agenda for job and wealth creation for Nigeria teeming Youth," the Sports Minister said.

"It is my hope and belief that you will use your proven integrity, knowledge and resources to render selfless and purposeful service to facilitate effective growth and development of Para Sports in Nigeria. I implore the Federations that will be participating in the 2022 Commonwealth Games to go for the gold and make Nigeria proud," he added.

Peter Nelson, Director of National Sports Festival and Para Sports Department, earlier in his remark, charged the recently elected board members to put in their best to invigorate Para games in Nigeria.

He advised that the federation must not depend solely on government sponsorships and patronages but must endeavour to fashion out plans to woo corporate organisations in this regard.

The Sports Minister had in his speech, commended the Federation for conducting free, fair and credible elections that ushered in men of integrity into the helms of leadership and advised them to be magnanimous in victory.

Dare admitted that he believes the newly inaugurated board members will put their asses to work and tasked them to leverage on their integrity while exploring their proven track record of experiences to move sports in Nigeria to an enviable height.

# Oshoala wins historic fifth CAF player of the year

## Mane, others scoop CAF awards

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

Nigeria's and Barcelona Femini forward Asisat Oshoala has won the 2022 CAF Women Player of the Year award for the fifth time surpassing her fellow compatriot, Perpetua Nkwocha's record, to become the all-time highest record holder in the continent in both male and female categories.

The CAF award ceremony held in Mohamed VI Technical Centre in Sale, Rabat, saw Bayern Munich's new signing and Senegalese forward, Sadio Mane scooping home the CAF Men's Player of the Year award.

Oshoala, who recently returned to Barcelona after sustaining an injury in the Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) in Morocco, won the Pichichi award in Spain last season to become the first African and the second Barcelona Femini player to win the award.

The 27-year-old Super Falcon has been fantastic in her footballing career prior to her fifth CAF accolade having

played in top English clubs, Liverpool and Arsenal where she won the Women's FA Cup with the latter in the 2015-2016 season.

She was instrumental to her club's success last season with a record of 20 league goals despite being ruled out by injury for a couple of months from action.

While in the men's regard, Sadio Mane guided his country to win their first African Cup of Nations (AFCON) title by slotting in the decisive penalty kick against Egypt in Cameroon's final.

Mane made his debut for the Senegalese national team in 2012 and has established himself as a rallying point where he has been capped 91 times to finish off 33 chances advantageously.

The former Liverpool player recently joined Bayern Munich this summer after winning the Carabao Cup and Fa Cup last season for Liverpool and featured in the UEFA Champions League final in Stade de France against Real Madrid.

Remarkably, the 30-year-old Teranga Lions' captain who won the 2019 CAF Men's Player of the Year award is



the only Senegalese player that has won the diadem two times.

Other recipients of CAF awards are Ghana's Evelyn Badu, who won both the Interclub Player of the Year (Women) and Young Player of the Year (Women) awards, Egypt's Mohamed El Shenawy for Interclub Player of the Year (Men), Senegal's Pape Matar Sarr for Young Player of the Year (Men).

More so, Banyana Banyana coach, Desiree Ellis and Teranga Lions coach, Aliou

Cisse, scooped home the CAF Coach of the Year awards for women and men respectively while the Club of the Year award (Women) went to Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa and that for the men was given to Wydad Athletic Club of Morocco.

CAF concluded the event with the Teranga Lions of Senegal winning the CAF National Team of the Year award while that of the women, will be awarded at the close of the WAFCON tournament in Morocco.

# Pinnick flew private jet amid Falcons' unpaid bonuses

The Super Falcons camp at the Women's Africa Cup of Nations in Morocco, is allegedly a bit unsettled following the inability of the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) to upset the bonuses of the players The Trumpet gathered.

According to a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reporter, Osasu Obayiuwana, the bonuses owed the Falcons is a minimum of \$10,000 with the NFF only paying \$1000.

Obayiuwana, who was a member of the NFF Reform Committee and former Anti Racism Taskforce of the International Association of Football Federation (FIFA), stated that Nigeria's senior women's football team boycotted a training session following the NFF's inability to upset their bonuses.

"The Super Falcons boycotted training this morning, ahead of their WAFCON2022 third-place match against Zambia," the BBC correspondent tweeted on Wednesday.

"The Super Falcons' players have reportedly received \$1k of the minimum \$10k they're entitled to. Coach Randy Waldrum got \$2k and assistant coaches \$1.5k. Backroom staff got \$1k each. When will they be paid the remaining cash?" Obayiuwana asked?

Obayiuwana in his vituperation against the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development and Nigeria Football Federation, under the stead of Hon Sunday Dare and Amaju Melvin Pinnick respectively, lampooned both institutions for towing a path that

degrades the country's reputation.

He said, "How come that nearly 25 years after, Super Falcons are going through the same indignities? The same humiliations? How insensate and wicked can NFF and the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports be doing this for a quarter of a century, to these patriotic, gallant women?"

"Do people in Nigeria realise that the failure to pay Super Falcons' allowances & bonuses started right from 1998, when they won their first WAFCON? Let Marvellous Mercy & Florence Omagbemi tell you their tales of woe, from that time. You will weep," the former NFF committee member added.

The Super Falcons against Morocco, lost 5-4 on penalties at the Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium on Monday having valiantly tamed the attack of the host team despite conceding two second-half red cards.

However, Obayiuwana in a recent update, added that the Falcons have been paid \$2800 per player and expect all the accrued allowances cleared, adding that South Africa pay Banyana Banyana at due time.

The British-Nigerian reporter criticised the NFF President, Amaju Pinnick for flying a private jet to Port Harcourt to join in the official presentation of the Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL) title to Rivers United for winning the 2021-22 season when the Super Falcons' bonuses were yet to be paid in full.

# Wike honours Rivers United for NPFL triumph

## Set to sponsor team to Real Madrid

Rivers State Governor, His Excellency, Nysome Ezenwo Wike, has honoured the newly crowned champions of the Nigeria Professional Football League season in Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital.

In the ceremony on Thursday where the trophy was officially presented by the State Honourable Commissioner of Sports, Barr Chris Green alongside the team's head coach and captain, Stanley Eguma and Festus Austin respectively, the Governor conferred on the players the Governors Medal Service Award (GMSA).

Wike was in the Adokiye Amiesimaka Stadium on Sunday to watch the final NPFL match between the Pride of Rivers and Gombe United, where the trophy was handed to the

team in the presence of the Minister of Youth and Sports Development, Sunday Dare and President of Nigeria Football Federation (NFF), Pinnick Melvin Amaju.

According to the governor who showered encomiums on the Pride of Rivers for winning their first NPFL title in history, the team should be encouraged, adding that his government is fully committed to the team's project.

Furthermore, the Rivers State Governor rewarded each of the players with \$20,000 and promised to send them for a two-week training tour to Real Madrid.

"Today, our own Rivers United FC winners of NPFL 2021/2022 season were at the Government House to formally present their trophy," Wike said.

"We are elated at their



victory and the record margin they used to win the league.

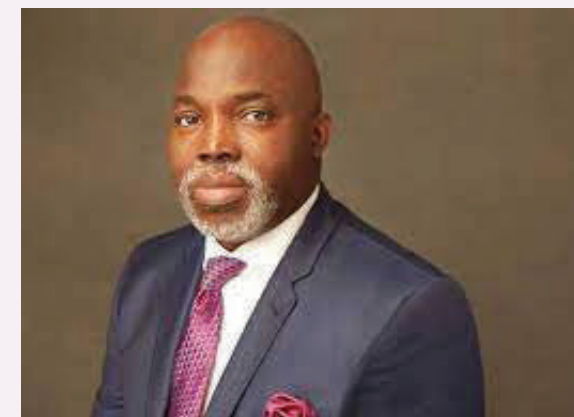
"To encourage them, the players will get \$20,000 each and be sponsored to Real Madrid on a 2-week training tour.

"We are also fully committed to supporting the team to ensure they excel in their continental competition," the Governor who lost in the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) presidential primaries to Alhaji Atiku Abubakar,

assured.

Rivers United contended for their first NPFL trophy with Plateau United but edged the latter out with 10 points difference on the NPFL log to finish the season on 77 points.

Moreover, with the club's triumph in the NPFL league, it got an automatic qualification to play in the CAF Champions League and the Governor has promised to gift them an additional \$20,000 each if they qualify for the group stage.



# Sadio Mane records first Bayern goal

Senegalese forward Sadio Mane has scored his first goal for his new club, Bayern Munich, against D.C United at the Audi Field stadium in Washington, United States.

Mane, in the game against the American side, opened the score chart for the Bundesliga champions in an encounter that turned into a feast of goals.

"First match, first win, first goal," Mane said.

The former Liverpool player, who won a double last season before completing a cumulatively £35m move to Allianz Arena to sign a three-year contract, scored a fifth-minute penalty in the 6-2 win for the Bavarians.

Mane has been a key player

at Anfield for Jurgen Klopp and complemented the team's successes since he joined the club from Southampton in 2016.

Last season, the Senegalese who scored the deciding spot-kick against Egypt in the AFCON final, helped the Merseyside club reach the Champion League final in Stade de France where they lost 1-0 to

Real Madrid.

Remarkably, Mane on December 19, 2017, scored the only goal in the 227th Merseyside derby against Everton at Goodison Park.

The 2020 CAF footballer of the year who became the second Senegalese to win the award after El Hadji Diouf, guided the national team to

win the TotalEnergies Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) in Cameroon in January 2022.

After Mane got the opener for head coach Julian Nagelsmann, Marcel Sabitzer, Serge Gnabry, Matthijs de Ligt, and Joshua Zirkzee got their names on the scoresheet with Thomas Muller leaving late to make 6-2.





# Britain's Jake Wightman emerges 1500m world champion in Oregon

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

Britain's Jake Wightman has emerged as the new world champion of 1500m race after he edged Olympic champion and Norwegian Jakob Ingebrigtsen to clinch the gold medal.

Wightman in 2018, won the Commonwealth and European bronze and broke the 'Scottish record at a Diamond League meet' in 2020.

The 28-year-old in a record of 3:29.23, ran past Ingebrigtsen who got 3:29.47 to beat the 2020 Tokyo Olympics champion while Mohamed Katir from Spain came third.

Unbelievable, the astonished British runner after he made history to defeat stronger contenders that included defending champion Timothy Cheruiyot and Abel Kipsang of Kenya, said he had to shrug off the disappointing result in Tokyo last year before he ran the world record.

"It probably won't [sink in] until I've retired. It's mad," Wightman said after winning gold in the 1500m in Eugene.

"I had such a disappointing year in Tokyo last year. I don't think people realise how crushing it was to go in with such high expectations and come away hoping for a medal but ending up with tenth.

"I just knew, here, take the pressure off, the only thing that can happen is that it is a better run than last year," he admitted.

From the start of the race, Ingebrigtsen took the race and led the frontline with the tactical Wightman saving his best charge for the last lap.

Firm to his tactics, after realising that the race was left with about 200m to decide on the winner, Wightman surged forward and overtook the Olympic champion to lead a new 3:29.23 record time.

He said, "I just got a whiff of it on the last lap - I knew if I was there with 200 [metres] to go, I was going to do everything



I could to put myself in a position to win it. I was just running for my life down the home straight."

Geoff Wightman, the father of the world champion who was also a runner and an announcer in the stadium at Eugene, applauded his son's feat echoing that it is the world champion.

"Running is coming home.

Wow. That is my son and he is the world champion," the world champion's father said in Hayward Field.

The Trumpets reports that this feat achieved by Wightman is the first of Britain's gold medals in the men's 1500m race since Steve Cram ran 3 minutes 30 seconds at the 1983 World Championships at the Olympic Stadium in Helsinki.

# Joel Obi joins Reggina on two-year deal

Nigeria midfielder Joel Obi has signed for Serie B club Reggina on a free transfer after his contract with Salernitana ended last season.

Obi, who has plied his career in Italy, with Castello Calcio as his foundation, joined Salernitana from Chievo Verona and helped coach Fabrizio Castori's campaign to retain the Garnets Italy's topflight division status.

The former Inter Milan midfielder made his debut for the Super Eagles in 2011 during an international friendly match against Sierra Leone that Nigeria won 2-1.

The 31-year-old, who earned his debut under coach Samson Siasia, a former Super Eagles coach, went on to feature in 11 friendly matches and 5 times in the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) for the national side.

Last season, Obi featured 23 times for Filippo Inzaghi's side in all season and provided the assist for Simy's opener against Spezia in a Serie A clash at Alberto Picco stadium.

According to Reggina, the midfielder who has played 295 matches in his club career, netting 23 times, brings a wealth of Serie A experience to the Italian second-tier division club.

Reportedly, Obi signed a two-year contract with the Amaranth that will keep him at Stadio Oreste Granillo until 2024.

# 'Kano Pillars seek backdoor return to NPFL'

## ■ We'll play in elite league - Doma United

Relegated Nigeria Professional Football League club, Kano Pillars, are allegedly on the verge to bypass the Nigeria National League (NNL) campaign through Doma United to return to the Nigeria topflight division.

The Kano State-based club before the matchday 38 fixture against Shooting Stars FC of Ibadan, were sanctioned for breaching the League Management Company (LMC) rules against Dakkada FC and Katsina FC which resulted in the Disciplinary Committee of the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) ratifying the deduction of league points from their accrued points.

Consequent to the actions of the NFF, Kano Pillars who were contending with other clubs like Shooting Stars of Ibadan, Lobi Stars, Dakkada FC, Abia Warriors, Niger Tornadoes, Katsina United and Heartland of Owerri for NPFL

survival, irredeemably wallowed in the red zone notwithstanding the 2-1 win against Shooting Stars in Sani Abacha Stadium on Sunday, July 17, 2022.

Sai Masu Gida having been relegated will have to begin their 2022-23 campaign in Nigeria's second-tier division but an unconfirmed report reveals that they are on the move to return to the top tier by leveraging on Doma United NPFL qualification ticket.

According to the report, Kano Pillars are planning to buy the qualification spot of the Gombe State-based club for N40,000,000 to quickly return to the NPFL which Doma United have refuted by reaffirming their commitment to kickstarting their campaign in the NPFL next season.

In a statement by Doma United CEO, Alhaji Suleiman Umar, he

stated that contrary to reports making the rounds on various media outlets, the club is ready to play in the NPFL, reiterating that they worked assiduously to get to where they are presently.

"Let me clear the thought about this and assure the good supporters of Doma United Football Club that Doma United is not going to sell its NPFL ticket and we're ready to play in the elite league," he assured.

"We didn't come this far to stop, we will play in the elite league. People

should debunk any other report that is saying a different thing because we don't know where they're emanating from.

"We're a professional club and I believe in my players' performance so we'll play in the league," Umar reiterated.

The Doma United stand regarding the melee which was reported by the club's media officer, Abubakar Saleh, further reaffirmed the NPFL newbie's position not to concede their NPFL spot to anyone at any price.

