

LCCI seeks FG's intervention in critical sectors of economy

By **EDU ABADE**, Business Editor

Again, the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), at the weekend, recommended the need for special

interventions in critical sectors and especially focusing on subsidising production to reduce the burden of rising cost of production.

It argued that the reversal of the Central

Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) concessionary interest rate of 5 per cent on its intervention loans to 9 per cent effective July 20, 2022 "could not reduce the burden on businesses at this time when we struggle with

sourcing foreign exchange (forex), rising fuel costs and massive disruptions to production lines due to insecurity.

"We urge the CBN

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Deputy Senate President and Delta APC Governorship Candidate, Senator Ovie Omo-Agege (left); PDP Vice Presidential Candidate, Governor Ifeanyi Okowa, and others greeting the Olu of Warri Kingdom, His Majesty, Ogiame Atuwatse III (right) at his first coronation anniversary service in the city at the weekend.

Uproar greets INEC's new body language on 2023 elections

By **TUNDE JOSHUA** and
MICHAEL PAUL, Abuja

National outcry led by the presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, is trailing a statement made by a senior official of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) that results of the 2023 election will be collated manually.

A spokesman of the Atiku Abubakar Campaign Organisation, Barrister Daniel Bwala, alleged that with such a statement coming from a top functionary of the electoral commission, "INEC is laying the foundation for the rigging of the 2023 elections."

The alarm was also raised in some other quarters.

National Commissioner and Chairman of INEC's Information and Voter Education Committee, Festus Okoye had on Saturday said the collation of results of the 2023 general elections would be manual despite the adoption of electronic transmission.

In a swift reaction, Bwala on his Facebook page on Sunday, said the PDP presidential candidate took exception to such declaration by Okoye because it ran foul of the provisions of Section 60 of the Electoral Act 2022.

He said: "Section 60 is clear. At the close of voting at the polling unit, the voting results will be uploaded, meaning that by the time the officer from the unit goes to the ward, he cannot present a result different from the one that was uploaded, which every voter can have access to it."

"And the same thing applies to the local government and the state, because there is evidence you have sent it to a server where it cannot be manipulated."

"By what Okoye said it means they are creating the room and possibility for somebody to manipulate the result without prejudice to the counting and the result as announced at the unit."

"And where there is a conflict, that reliance will be placed on the manual collation. In other words, they are trying to go around the provisions of the Electoral Act to take us back to where we are coming from."

"Sadly, they are trying to find a solution where there is no problem because this same electronic upload and transmission has been done

in Anambra, Ekiti, in Edo and Osun and they were successful, that procedure has not been challenged."

"If you go to court all the challenge in court were around certificates of individual and whether that individual is qualified or not. But that procedure has worked."

"So why are you trying to fix something that is not broken? It means something is fishy, we smell a coffee. And that's why we're calling all well meaning Nigerians and lovers of democracy in Nigeria and beyond to raise their voice and speak with one voice."

Okoye, had stated that INEC would transmit results from polling units to its result-viewing portal, IReV, as witnessed in recent elections, but that the Electoral Act was clear on how collation should be done.

Okoye said: "there is a marked difference between the transfer/transmission of results and the collation of results. Section 50(2) of the Electoral Act, 2022 gives the commission the absolute discretion to determine the mode and procedure of voting in an election and the transmission of election results."

"Sections 60 and 62 of the Electoral Act govern post-election procedure and collation of election results. Section 60(1) of the Act provides that the presiding officer shall, after counting the votes at a polling unit, enter the votes scored by each candidate in a form to be prescribed by the commission."

"Section 60(5) of the Act makes it mandatory that the presiding officer shall transfer the results, including total number of accredited voters and the results of the ballot in a manner prescribed by the commission. Thereafter, the presiding officer shall after recording and announcing the results deliver the same along with election materials under security and accompanied by the candidates or their polling agents, where available to such person as may be prescribed by the commission."

"The implication of this is that the collation process of results is still essentially manual, but the collation officer must collate subject to his verification and confirmation that the number of accredited voters stated on the collated result are correct and consistent with the number of accredited voters recorded and transmitted directly from polling units."

Making further



INEC Chairman, Mahmood Yakubu

clarifications, Okoye said that while the collation of results would "essentially" be done manually, where there was a dispute regarding a collated outcome or that from any polling unit, the collation or returning officer would use the original of the disputed collated result, accreditation data from the BVAS device and the results transmitted directly from the polling unit to determine the correctness of the result.

But Atiku's spokesperson said there must be strict compliance with the provisions of the Electoral Act with respect to electronic upload and transmission of result, without prejudice to what INEC is thinking about bringing.

"We must never try to change the procedure that has worked in these states mentioned."

"It must be free, it must be transparent."

"We don't want litigation. We want the voice and the will of the people to prevail in Nigeria," he said.

Also, another group, AIF Media alleged that INEC's Director in charge of ICT, Engineer Chidi Nwafor, has been removed.

The group said this is part of grand plan to rig the 2023 polls, while doubting the readiness of the commission to conduct free, fair and credible election next year.

The group entertained fears that INEC may not conduct a free, fair and transparent election in 2023, arguing that the latest redeployment of Nwafor is a sign that all is not well.

It expressed worries that Engr Nwafor was transferred from Abuja headquarters of INEC to Enugu as a mere

Administrative Secretary.

The group recalled that it was Engr Nwafor who introduced the Bimodal Voting Accreditation System, BVAS, to replace the card reader. The BVAS has proven to be more liable and has largely eliminated rigging.

The group stressed: "With BVAS, the issue of over voting, double voting and hijacking of ballot boxes have been eliminated. It also transmits results electronically to the INEC central serve."

"More importantly, Engr Chidi Nwafor from information available to AIF MEDIA introduced other applications to help eliminate double registration and ghost resignation."

"The application is capable of sieving voters register and produce real voters. It helped in reducing dubious numbers of voters in some states to real organic voters."

The group lamented that instead of promoting the brain behind this electoral innovation, he was demoted and transferred to Enugu as Administrative Secretary just six months to the election.

However, Okoye making further clarification on Sunday expressed INEC's readiness to conduct credible election, stressing that it has not jettisoned electronics transmission of results.

Contending that his interview was misunderstood, the

national commissioner said: "some have interpreted the explanation on result management procedure to mean that the Commission has jettisoned the electronic transmission of result and reverted to the manual process. This is not correct."

"For clarity, the procedure for result transmission remains the same as in recent Governorship elections in Ekiti and Osun States. There will be no change in all future elections, including the 2023 General Election."

"We wish to reassure Nigerians that the electronic transmission of result has come to stay. It adds to the credibility and transparency of the process when citizens follow polling unit level results on the INEC Result Viewing (IReV) portal on real-time on Election Day. There will be no change or deviation in subsequent elections."

"The entire gamut of result management is provided for in Sections 60, 62 and 64 of the Electoral Act 2022. In line with the provision of the law, the Commission, in April this year, released a detailed clarification of the procedure for transmission, collation and declaration of result which was shared with all stakeholders and uploaded to our website."

The commission appealed to all Nigerians to avail themselves of the provisions of the Electoral Act and INEC's detailed explanation of the procedure and not reach a conclusion on the basis of media headlines."

LCCI seeks FG's intervention in critical sectors of economy

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to look beyond increasing rates to taking definite and articulated actions that will address the factors driving inflationary pressures.

Director-General of LCCI, Chinyere Almona, made the assertions in a statement issued in Lagos, while reacting to the July 2022 inflation rate.

She said: "There is the need for a good mix of both fiscal and monetary policies to tackle the core drivers of the inflation scourge in Nigeria. There should be targeted financing for critical sectors like agriculture, food processing, aviation fuels, transport and forex availability for manufacturing inputs."

"It is obvious that the government's intervention so far has not impacted the inflationary pressures that keep rising till now. Without concrete and quick steps of intervention, the rising inflation rate may continue

into the end of 2022."

Speaking further, she said: "A major worry is about the inflation scourge constraining production, causing job losses, and courting an imminent recession. The inflation rate may ease in the near term driven by constrained consumer demand, harvests maturing in quarter three and the resumption of wheat exports from Ukraine to Africa. However, there are fears of falling growth due to constrained production in the past months."

"In July, Nigerians paid more for goods and services than they did in July 2021 by a relatively high rate of 19.64 per cent. With this, Nigeria has now had six consecutive months of increased inflation and the rate is at an almost 17-year high."

"This is largely attributable to rises in food and energy prices, forex scarcity for imports of critical raw materials for manufacturing,

and constrained production due to insecurity in some agricultural sites across the country."

She stated that core inflation increased to 16.26 per cent from 15.75 per cent because of increases in the prices of gas, liquid fuel, solid fuel, garments and passenger transport by road and by air.

Almona said it should also be noted that the high cost of aviation fuel or JetA1 drove the cost of air transportation to very high levels and became a major driver of the July inflation rate.

"Looking at the inflation rates of the states, the three lowest rates were recorded in Borno, Jigawa and Kaduna, while the highest rates were witnessed in Akwa Ibom, Ebonyi and Kogi states. These records may reflect the lockdown on food items in the North West and North East since the food items are not brought to the South due to insecurity that is

constraining the movement of goods," she added.

According to her, the development should be a warning signal of massive food waste and shortages in some parts of the country and scarcity in others.

"Government should offer a targeted intervention for the movement of food items from production areas to high-demand areas to cushion inflationary pressures."

"Specifically for manufacturers, input prices have increased astronomically. The price of diesel, which most firms depend on to power their factories have continued to rise causing an unbearable cost of production, which also translates to higher consumer prices."

"Nigeria's energy crisis is worsened by the poor supply of electricity and a bumpy road to renewable energy deployment," she maintained.



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Joel-Onowakpo Thomas felicitates with Olu on coronation anniversary

By GABRIEL ELOZINO and
KELVIN OHOROR

Harvard-trained business mogul and 2023 All Progressives Congress (APC) candidate for Delta South Senatorial District, Hon. Joel-Onowakpo Thomas, has congratulated Olu of Warri, Ogiame Atuwatse 111, on his first coronation anniversary.

He described the king as a paramount traditional ruler who ascended the throne as a self-made business mogul and serial entrepreneur with a visionary mindset.

"You ascended to the throne with purposeful leadership trust and profound integrity and promoted peace among other ethnic groups in Warri, Delta State," he said in a statement.

"You have been playing all-inclusiveness in your traditional leadership system without attaching any ethnic sentiment to it. Watching your recent economic summit held in your Palace, I saw how you displayed traditional intelligence in the presence of corporate and business players in attendance.

"One year on the throne, your leadership disposition has been impactful and creative in terms of cultural and socio-economic promotion in Delta State and abroad. You are a detribalized monarch who sees everybody equally irrespective of the region or political party anyone belongs to."

He commended him for using his traditional position to keep uniting all ethnic groups in Delta State.

He added: "You have exhibited your leadership dexterity that leaders are born from the womb and made on earth. On behalf of myself, my family, the JOT Campaign Organisation, and my amiable supporters, I pray God will continue to give you the wisdom to take fruitful decisions to make the throne the most enviable one in Nigeria.

Groups endorse APC chief's senatorial bid

You have always been a listening traditional leader with the capacity and you will continue to excel in all your endeavors."

Meanwhile, backing for Hon. Joel-Onowakpo Thomas (JOT), has further received a boost as a coalition of groups with slogan, "Strong Runner, Good Candidate," declared support towards the actualization of his ambition come 2023 election.

Rising from a meeting of the group held at Agbarha Kingdom, in Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State, representatives of different groups, artisans, civil servants, and craftsmen, said they gathered to endorse the candidature of Hon. Joel Onowakpo - Thomas as the Delta South senatorial candidate.

The group submitted that after a careful look at all the senatorial candidates in the forthcoming

elections, it have decided to identify with (JOT), who they have seen as the most credible, and qualified candidate. According to the Spokesman of the group, Comrade Miracle Amatesiro, "we are convinced beyond reasonable doubt that Hon. Joel-Onowakpo will deliver on the mandate. Hence we have decided to pitch tent with him.

"Yes, we decided to endorse him because he is a good man, very educated and intelligent. You could recall when the former governor, His Excellency, Emmanuel Uduaghan, made him the Chairman of the Delta State Board of Internal Revenue (DBIR), he was able to touch lives. He built offices across the twenty five local government areas for the board."

He noted that, "You saw what happened at the last Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) primaries.

The people who emerged as candidates of the party were those who paid money to see themselves through. As a pressure group, we looked at that and decided to support a man we know will deliver."

He opined that, "Hon. Joel-Onowakpo Thomas is a listening man. He was able to empower the youths when he was Board Chairman. Even those not from his constituency were touched. We are convinced that he will work beyond his Senatorial District if given the mandate."

Meanwhile, Prince Andy Egunoma, aide of Hon. Joel Onowakpo Thomas, brought goodwill messages from the business guru. He urged the group to make sure they all have their Permanent Voters Cards (PVCs) ready, as that is the only way they can walk the talk of their slogan 'Strong Runner, Good Candidate.'



Joel-Onowakpo Thomas

He also assured them of working together during and after the electioneering period, to ensure good governance. The former member, APC Presidential Campaign For President Buhari, also assured them that his Principal, Hon. Joel Onowakpo Thomas,

will not relent in his good deeds that have brought him this recognition by the group.

Present at the gathering were Mr. Sotu Godbless Oghenevwe, Comrade Meshack Akarota and Amanluoge Peter among others.

BudgIT highlights progress, tasks FG on PIA implementation

By EDU ABADÉ, Business Editor

An advocacy and policy monitoring group, BudgIT, has highlighted the progress so far made in the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), since it was signed into law and urged the Federal Government to ensure the timely implementation of all its provisions.

Speaking on government's recent decision to suspend subsidy removal, BudgIT's Extractive Lead, Adejoke Akinbode, said: "The current cost of petroleum subsidy to Nigeria along with other socio-economic implications necessitates its removal. Nevertheless, a couple of palliative measures should be in place for the subsidy removal to gain public

acceptance.

"BudgIT will keep Nigerians abreast of the implementation progress, but in the meantime, we urge the Federal Government to ensure the transparent implementation of the PIA and conduct the entity's operations in line with its mandate.

He explained that after over two decades, the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) finally became law when President Muhammadu Buhari signed it in August 2021.

It would be recalled that the PIA was meant to promote transparency, good governance and accountability in the country's petroleum resources administration, as well as encourage local and foreign investments.

But despite the high expectations, the PIA

has been met with mixed reactions, especially in oil-producing communities, necessitating urgent advocacy and engagements to increase public enlightenment, promote conversations and improve public perception of the PIA.

While stipulated timelines are specified for its implementation and operationalisation, the Federal Government has also taken necessary steps to take some necessary actions on it.

For instance, the former Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) has been transformed into the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), while the Petroleum Products Pricing Regulatory Agency (PPPRA) also

transited into the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA).

Another notable action is the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation's (NNPC) transition into a limited liability company under the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA).

The new company, unveiled by President Muhammadu Buhari on July 19, 2022, is now known as the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Limited). For emphasis, NNPC Limited is saddled with coordinating the commercial aspect of the petroleum operations and engaging in the business of renewables and other energy investments.

With the development, the NNPC Limited will compete commercially with its peers in the oil industry and as such, the entity is expected to be above board in its operations.

"Regarding subsidy removal, the government has put on hold a critical aspect of the PIA, which is due for implementation. As for the specified timelines of the Act, this aspect should have been implemented six months after the passage of the PIA.

"However, the Federal Government extended the timeframe for the complete removal of fuel subsidy because it needed to put necessary structures in place to cushion the impact of the subsidy removal on Nigerians," he said.

You're a source of inspiration to many, Omo-Agege tells Olu of Warri

The Deputy Senate President and Delta APC Governorship Candidate, Senator Ovie Omo-Agege has described the Olu of Warri Kingdom, His Majesty, Ogiame Atuwatse III as an inspiration to many.

In a statement, Senator Omo-Agege lauded the royal father for his role in promoting national unity and enriching the cultural values of Nigeria.

He noted that as custodians of traditions, values and customs, traditional leaders have what it takes to galvanize all Nigerians towards peace, stability and progress of the country.

The Delta Central lawmaker therefore urged traditional rulers to use their influential status to promote good governance and strengthen the unity of the nation.

He said the revered monarch who has always dignified the cultural values of the Itsekiri people with great passion.

"I humbly join our good

people to thank God Almighty for graciously keeping you in good health and sound mind to celebrate your First Coronation Anniversary as the youngest Olu of Warri Kingdom to lead the itsekiri Ethnic Nation in over 500 years.

"Our people deeply cherish Your Majesty's distinct place of honour as the symbol of the pristine cultural heritage and values of our Itsekiri people. Your special regard for the value of positive human relationships and clear vision of a modern, well-governed and organized society that is driven by the power of godly living, innovation and constructive, mutually respectful and excellent engagements across boundaries endear you to the people in unique ways", he said.

Omo-Agege was accompanied to the occasion by his running mate, Rt. Hon. Friday Ossai Osanebi; Delta APC Chairman, Elder Omeni Sobotie and other

chieftains of the party.

The thanksgiving service which held at Foursquare Gospel Church, located in the Olu's Palace in Warri South Local Government Area, was graced by the Delta State Governor, Dr. Ifeanyi Okowa; former governor, Chief James Ibori; Speaker, Delta State House of Assembly, Chief Sheriff Oborevwori; lawmaker representing Delta South Senatorial District, Sen. James Manager amongst others.

In his sermon, former President, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor, harped on the need for all to thank God at all times.

Giving his sermon from the books of Psalms 100:4, Philipians 4:6, 2nd Corinthians 4:15, 2nd Thessalonians 3:7-12, the Guest Speaker urged Nigerians to appreciate God no matter the difficult situation they faced.

The cleric urged youths in the country to imbibe the culture of hard work and dedication to service, even as he called

on governments at all levels to empower youths to secure the future of the country.

He said: "Without thanksgiving, you have no access

to God. Thanksgiving opens the gate. It brings you into the presence of God. If you are not grateful, you may become a 'great fool'".



Sen. Ovie Omo-Agege

58 communities flay FG for allegedly omitting them as oil areas in A'lbom

By ISAAC JOB, Uyo

Indigenes of 58 communities drawn from nine local government areas of Akwa Ibom State have queried the federal government for not capturing them as oil bearing in the Petroleum Industry Act(PIA) signed by President Mohammed Buhari recently.

They are Etim Ekpo, Ukanafun, Uyo, Uruan, Abak, Oruk Anam, Nsit Ibom, Ibesikpo Asutan, and Etinan local government areas of the state

This followed the non involvement of the nine (9)LGA areas in the meeting the state Ministry of Power and Petroleum Development held recently with oil and gas producing local government areas in the state on the issue of Petroleum Industry Act(PIA).

Speaking with newsmen in Uyo on Sunday, Coordinator of Gas pipeline communities of the 9 LGAs Comrade Kufre Emmanson described said non inclusion of the areas in the Act was unacceptable, adding that the Paramount Rulers of the affected Local governments have already written to the Ministry of Petroleum Resources on the matter.

Emmanson, however appealed to the affected council areas to remain calm and wait for state government's response to the Paramount Rulers' letter which have notified government of omission of their communities which are hosting the East Horizon Gas Company Limited till date.

His words: "We are demanding for inclusion of the 58 communities in Etim Ekpo, Ukanafun,

Uyo, Uruan, Abak, Oruk Anam, Nsit Ibom, Ibesikpo Asutan, and Etinan, local government areas as oil and gas host communities in Akwa Ibom state.

"This is sequel to the meeting held in Uyo last month between the Ministry of Power and Petroleum development Akwa Ibom State, with the oil producing local government areas in Akwa Ibom State, concerning the Petroleum Industry Act without the above nine LGAs

"We are aware that the Petroleum Industry Act 2021 clearly stated that 'Host communities' are those whose oil and gas pipeline passes their communities and also clearly stated the three percent dividends to Host communities which these 9 Local governments should be part of.

"The East Horizon Gas Company Limited constructed a natural Gas pipeline from Ukanafun that passes through all the nine local governments and terminates in Akansoko in Akpabuyo LGA of Cross River State.

He appealed to the people to remain calm, shun violence, vandalism of government property, and maintain peace in their various communities as the Paramount Rulers have assured that necessary action will be taken legally if the nine council areas are not included as oil and gas producing communities in the state

The Coordinator appreciated the Paramount Rulers from the affected council areas for the confidence reposed in his leadership to handle the issues affecting the oil and gas communities.

Kingdom counters Deji of Akure, says markets, shops will open in Isinkan

By FRIDAY OMOSOLA, Akure

Iralepo of Isinkan Kingdom in Akure South Local Government Area, Oba Oluwagbemiga Ajimokunola Olofin-Adimula, Arulewolasi III, has disclosed that shops and markets in every part of the Isinkan domain shall remain open during the Aheregbe period. Oba Oluwagbemiga, who was reacting to a statement issued by the Deji's Palace that market and shops should be closed in observance of the annual Aheregbe Festival, said such directive does not affect traders in Isinkan Kingdom.

The Deji of Akure Kingdom, Oba (Dr.) Aladetoyinbo Ogunlade Aladelusi, Odundun II, had earlier

ordered markets and shops in Akure to be closed in commemoration of the annual Aheregbe festival. Deji in a statement by his Chief Press Secretary(CPS), Mr Adeyeye Michael said markets in Akure would close on Monday, August 22, 2022.

The Iralepo of Isinkan Kingdom in a statement he personally signed, said it is a taboo to bring such festival to Isinkan, saying forcing such on the community would have grave consequences. He said Akure and Isinkan share what some may consider blurred boundaries but the indigenes of the two communities know their domains and their boundaries are not blurred.

"For the purpose of emphasis, I

will like to say that Isinkan shares boundary with Akure at Imogun, just before Saint Thomas' Anglican Church, Isinkan, and Ondo at Owena River. In all these areas markets and shops are not closed for Aheregbe festival.

"It is a taboo and has consequence on Isinkan Community as well as the priest of the festival. So, for peace to reign, Akure people should not bring the festival to my community and neither can they enforce market and shop closure here. This statement is necessary in order to remove any iota of doubt."

Oba Olofin-Adimula said security agencies have been informed about the development and enjoined all market women and traders in Isinkan land to go about their lawful businesses. He equally enjoined the youths of the community to remain calm. He further congratulated the Deji of Akure Kingdom and wished him success in the activities lined up for the 2022 edition of the festival.

Similarly, the Elemo of Isinkan, High Chief Olasehinde Abidakun, stated that Isinkan Community had never been part of Aheregbe festival celebration of the people of Akure or any other such celebrations. High Chief Olasehinde said all Akure festivals stop at Imogun, stating that further exporting of Akure festivals into Isinkan land would amount to courting trouble. He affirmed the support of all the chiefs and people of Isinkan for Oba Arulewolasi.



Oba Oluwagbemiga

NFWP tasks Taraba women on alternative wood energy source

By **SURU CHARLES, Jalingo**

Taraba State Coordinator of the Nigeria For Women Project (NFWP), Isaac F. Yarafo, has asked them to embrace alternative methods of cooking.

He stated this weekend while introducing the women to the alternative fuel wood energy source at a training organized by NFWP in collaboration with the state government.

The seven days briquetting training, which brought Women Affinity Groups (WAG) together in Bali council, according to him, will go a long way to reduce the risk associated with "some

health challenges arising from the smoke that come from firewood.

If they take the exercise seriously, he believed it would also help reduce the risk of "attack and rape of our women who enter the bush to cut firewood."

The coordinator was also of the view that the programme is "going to empower our women with capacity for additional source of income." He said the women are the first beneficiaries to be trained on "briquetting in the whole project locations across the country."

The training which according to him is being implemented across the three local government councils of NFWP, he is

optimistic will be scaled down to the entire axis of the state.

He stressed that the training that will be also taken to the rural communities would save women from the various dangers they often encountered while sourcing for fire woods in the bush.

He said "with the skill that will be acquired by the women at the end of this training, waste elimination and healthier cooking methods which translate into healthier lives for our women is envisaged."

Also speaking, the state Commissioner of Women and Child Development, Bridget Twar, said listed businesses which they



Gov. Darius Dickson Ishaku,

cannot support. According to her, they include "firewood and charcoal businesses."

She said the briquetting training "is designed by the project to help alleviate the suffering of our women who are daily involved in the use of firewood and charcoal for home use which has been known to have its attendant health and environmental implications."

Applauding Governor Darius Dickson Ishaku, for throwing his weight solidly behind the project, she is optimistic that the incoming state government will as well sustain the project.

Some of the women beneficiaries who explained to The Trumpet the challenges they often confront while going into the bush to source for firewood, believed that the training will liberate them from such hazards.

Retirement of 243 soldiers not caused by corruption, low morale, says Army

By **PAUL MICHAEL**

Nigeria Army has frowned at statements making rounds on social media that soldiers are proceeding on mass voluntary retirement due to corruption, poor service conditions and low morale.

Chief of Army Staff, Lt Gen Faruk Yahaya, had granted approval for 91 NA/32/4792 WO Ndagana Ishaku and 242 other soldiers on voluntarily discharge from the Army.

Several commentators have traced the mass retirement in a time that the military needs more manpower to corruption and low morale.

However, the Army in a statement issued by the Director, Army Public Relations, Brig-Gen Onyema Nwachukwu during the weekend, said the allegation is a 'concoction of the imagination of the unrepentant enemies of the nation and mischief makers and should be outrightly discountenanced by the public'.

Gen Nwachukwu said the allegation was an attempt to weaken the spirit and loyalty of soldiers who are at the war fronts in defence of the

country, he added, however, that the move failed on arrival.

According to him, the way that recruitment into the Nigerian Army is volunteering, so also is room given for volunteering retirement and discharge while saying the practice is age-long.

"The subjective and unethical report is a distraction and another failed attempt at dampening the morale and fighting will of the loyal, dedicated and patriotic fighting force of the NA.

"Perhaps these impenitent mischief makers need to be schooled to understand that the NA is not a conscript Army and that recruitment into the NA is voluntary with extant policy on discharge and retirement of soldiers and officers respectively, like other organizations.

"This provides its personnel the opportunity to apply for voluntary discharge, when they deem fit and meet the terms and conditions as stipulated in the Harmonized Terms and Conditions of Service soldiers/ratings/airmen (Revised) 2017.

"It is thus, the inalienable right of a personnel to voluntarily or on medical grounds apply for discharge, if they meet the terms. It is therefore not an aberration that the COAS granted approval for 91 NA/32/4792 WO NDAGANA ISHAKU and 242 others to voluntarily discharge from the NA, as being unprofessionally manipulated by some media," he said.

Nwachukwu further said the Army under Gen Yahaya is well motivated as various interventions, welfare schemes and initiatives targeted at boosting the morale of soldiers and officers are being embarked upon.

According to him, the intervention programmes include car loans, housing loans, extensive construction of new accommodation, massive renovation of old and

dilapidated accommodation.

Others are building of befitting residences and issuing of vehicles to Regimental Sergeant Majors, scholarship awards to children and wards of fallen heroes and other unique interventions in the theatres of operation to sustain the heightening morale of troops.

He said these interventions evidently account for troops' game changing onslaught in the Northeast.

"It must also be mentioned, that the quantum of equipment that have been injected into the theatres and prompt payment of operational allowances, have all turned the tide against the insurgents.

"Also worthy of note is the welfare flight for troops, which has significantly reduced the burden of troops travelling in and out of the theatres, in addition to huge commitment on the medical needs of wounded-in-action soldiers and the barracks communities.

"Equally important, is the fact that troops are now being regularly and consciously rotated from the frontline, hence, issues of overstay and battle fatigue are gradually being overcome. Suffice to say, that some of these recently discharged soldiers are beneficiaries of these giant strides," he added.

Meanwhile, the Chief of Army Staff has congratulated the discharging personnel for their gallantry, patriotism, loyalty and courage while in service and wished them the very best as they successfully exit active service from the Army.

Gen Yahaya also reiterated his avowed determination to continue to have direct impact on the welfare and wellbeing of both serving and retired personnel while assuring the retirees that soon, their various commanders would organise a farewell luncheon in their honour, as it is the practice in the Nigerian Army since he took over.

Police rescue victim, arrests suspected kidnappers, others

By **PAUL MICHAEL**

Operatives of Delta State Police Command have rescued a 17 year old kidnap victim and arrested the suspected abductors in Warri.

Spokesperson for the Command, DSP Bright Edefe, made this known in a statement sent to **The Trumpet** on Sunday.

Edefe said the two suspects were being lunched by angry mobs when the police on patrol duty rescued and arrested them along Effurun roundabout, Warri.

"On 17/8/2022 at about 1345hours, policemen attached to Eagle-Net patrol team while on visibility and confidence building patrol along Effurun roundabout, Warri, saw a large crowd beating two boys.

"The Police rushed to the scene and rescued the boys from the mob. On the spot inquiry, it was discovered that they were suspected kidnappers.

"A woman also accused the boys of kidnapping her 17 year old son earlier that day.

"The two suspects, Oti Shevire 'm' aged 32years and Amos (surname unknown), upon interrogation, confessed to the crime and led the Policemen to their hideout, where the victim was rescued, and is currently receiving treatment. Suspects are in custody and investigation is ongoing," Edefe stated.

Also, one Aaron Uko was also arrested by operatives on stop and search at along Warri/Sapele road.

The suspect was arrested after the police intercepted a Volkswagen Jetta, a commercial vehicle with reg. no. PTN 242 TA, conveying some

passengers from Sapele to Warri.

"On 19/08/2022 at about 0815hours, Police operatives attached to Dragon 26 and Dragon 29 while on intensive stop and search duty along Warri/Sapele road, intercepted a Volkswagen Jetta commercial vehicle with reg. no. PTN 242 TA, conveying some passengers from Sapele to Warri.

"The team subjected the passengers to a search, during which one locally made cut-to-size gun loaded with two live Cartridges were recovered from one Aaron Uko aged 22yrs of Sapele. Suspect concealed the gun in his body close to his private part.

"Preliminary investigation revealed that he bought the gun in the year 2018 from a man nicknamed "OSE" for twenty-seven thousand naira (N27,000) and buried it in his house before leaving for Ghana. He was arrested and taken into custody, the exhibit recovered, and investigation is ongoing," the spokesperson said.

Edefe said the arrest was in compliance with the directives of the State's Commissioner of Police, CP Ari Muhammed Ali on the need for officers and men of the Command to not only sustain the tempo in curbing crime and criminality but also on the importance of stop and search.

Meanwhile, the CP while assuring residents of the determination of the Command to reduce crime, urged Deltans to shun jungle justice, warning that anyone found culpable will be made to face the law.



Lt Gen Faruk Yahaya

Edo evacuates beggars, others, parleys oil industry stakeholders

•Sets new road map for food security via access to land

By ISAAC OLAMIKAN

Edo State Government has commenced the evacuation and rehabilitation of street beggars, mentally-challenged persons and other destitute persons in major streets and markets within the Benin metropolis.

The implementation is by the state Ministry of Social Development and Gender Issues, in partnership with various security agencies in the state, in line with the 'Operation Plan Edo.'

The team evacuated over 50 such persons in the GRA axis of Benin City, including Ihama, Boundary and Country Home Roads axis, as well as Sapele Road and Ring Road axis, all within the Benin metropolis.

Permanent Secretary, the Edo State Ministry of Social Development and Gender Issues, Mrs. Barbara Osobajo, said the destitute persons will be rehabilitated and reintegrated into the society, while the others will be reunited with their families.

She called for increased collaboration and support of all residents to end street begging and other such unacceptable practices within the Benin metropolis.

She added: "The Edo State Government, in line with the 'Operation Plan Edo,' aims to sanitize the state and reposition it for sustainable growth and development. The government has kicked off the evacuation of street beggars, mentally-challenged persons and other destitute persons within the Benin metropolis.

"The persons who have been evacuated have been taken to various rehabilitation and correctional facilities within the state where they are being catered for, and will be reintegrated into the society after thorough care and rehabilitation.

"The operation kicked off within the Benin metropolis and will be extended to other parts of the state to ensure that we achieve a safe and sane Edo that we all will be proud to be associated with."

The government is also rallying stakeholders in the oil and gas industry for effective implementation of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), calling for increased collaboration to ensure sustainable peace and development in the state.

Governor Godwin Obaseki, at an oil and gas stakeholders' meeting organized by the Ministry of Mining, Oil and Gas, in Benin City, said with diligent implementation of the new law, the state will be able attract more investment into the sector.

He, represented by the Commissioner for Local Government Affairs, Hon. Monday Osaigbovo, said the forum with the theme, "Effective Implementation of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA): A Strategic Tool for Sustainable Peace Among Stakeholders," is aimed at fostering peace and enhancing collaboration between the government, oil and gas-producing communities and other stakeholders.

"The oil and gas sector, till date, is the mainstream of the Nigerian economy and as such, there is need to revalue its contributions to our communities and the state and one such reevaluation is the implementation of the PIA.

"The objective of the forum is to present opportunities to participants to freely discuss ways to strengthen the process of PIA implementation.

"This will foster sustainable prosperity, provide direct and economic benefits for the host communities as well as enhance peaceful and harmonious coexistence between the communities and oil and gas companies.

"We believe that to continue attracting investments, we must enshrine peace among the people and improve the general security of lives and property within the state by working closely with all the various traditional and community stakeholders," the governor added.

Obaseki further restated his government's commitment to enhancing the lives of residents in the various communities in the three oil and gas producing local governments, including Orhionmwon, Ikpoba Okha and Ovia North East.

He said, "The Edo State Government, in line with the provision of the law, set up the Edo State Oil and Gas Producing Areas Development Commission (EDSOGPADEC) which has been providing both opportunities for human development and provision of basic amenities that have

no doubt improved the standard of living of the residents of these communities."

In his opening remarks, the Commissioner for Mining, Oil and Gas, Ethan Osazee Uzamere stated that the state has begun the implementation of the PIA, adding that the ministry is at the forefront of the implementation of the Act.

"The Act seeks to promote the ease of doing business in the oil and gas industry, regulating the midstream and downstream sector, as well as making clear the roles of all players in the sector, provide for fast approvals of licences to investors, remove bureaucratic bottlenecks, end fuel importation and the subsidies involved in it, strengthen the value of the Naira and create job opportunities in the petroleum value chain, among others."

On his part, the representative of the Oba of Benin and the Esere of Benin, Chief Stanley Obamwonyi enjoined the host communities to avail themselves to the platform made available by the provision of the Act and work in partnership with the state government to bring the desired development and growth that the administration strives to achieve.

And to ensure food security, the government is collaborating with stakeholders so as to remove obstacles in accessing arable land for food production in line with the administration's Making Edo Great Again (MEGA) Agenda.

Obaseki disclosed this at the Edo State Access to Land Workshop held in Benin City, the state capital, with the theme, "Value Proposition for Sustainable Arable Land in Edo State."

Obaseki, represented by the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Osarodion Ogie Esq, said the Russia/Ukraine crisis has

intensified the need to boost agricultural production especially in critical commodities, a feat that can mostly be achieved through access to land for food cultivation.

The address at the event was delivered by the Permanent Secretary in the SSG Office, Barrister Deborah Enakhimior.

According to Obaseki, "Land access remains crucial as the bedrock upon which agricultural production rests. Land access has consistently been identified as a key constraint to the expansion of agricultural production and productivity in Edo State in particular and in Niger Delta in general.

"Food security, agricultural self-sufficiency and rural development is a priority for us. To facilitate this, the state has provided the needed support to investors in Edo State with allocation of 65,000-hectares of land to eight oil palm investors. We have also facilitated activities in crop production clusters across the state and have entered into partnerships for development of livestock.

"We have embarked on the restructuring of the Edo State College of Agriculture, Iguoriakhi and also facilitated a collaboration between GIZ SEDIN with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security to develop a workable agricultural policy in the state. There is also the CBN 5-Star Cassava Project, which would boost cassava production in the state."

Chairman of the Edo State Arable Land Committee and Managing Director, Edo State Investment Promotion Office, ESIP, Mr. Kelvin Uwaibi noted that Nigeria has about 34 million hectares of arable land which should be sufficient to make the country food self-sufficient and a major supplier of food in the world.

He lamented low productivity in the agricultural sector, noting that the state is taking deliberate measures to boost cultivation of food and cash crops in the state.



Gov. Godwin Obaseki

Oborevwo, Edevwie intensify media propaganda over Appeal Court on ruling

By GABRIEL ELOZINO, Asaba

The certificate controversy surrounding the winner of the Delta State Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) gubernatorial primaries, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevwori, has in the past two days created fresh tension in the political space. The Appeal Court has already reserved judgement on a suit by Oborevwori and PDP to overturn the Federal High Court judgement disqualifying his candidature as the gubernatorial candidate of the party in the 2023 general election.

However, the media space has been awash recently with claims and counter claims by both divides, all in a bid to probably influence the Appellate Court to rule in their favour. The fresh issue of controversy was the report published in Sahara Reporters online, on the outcome of a forensic investigation on the authenticity of the WAEC result submitted by Sheriff Oborevwori to PDP and INEC by one DSP Udenze (Rtd).

The reports captioned, "Forensic Investigation Exposes How Governor Okowa's Stooze, Oborevwori Forged, Submitted Relation's WAEC Certificate To Electoral Body, INEC" has stirred fresh anxiety on the possible outcome of the case before the Court of Appeal. According to the report, the forensic report was part of police investigation into the allegations obtained by Sahara Reporters during the weekend and showed that there were discrepancies

in the Assembly Speaker's certificate. The report claimed that Oborevwori is not the owner of the certificate he claims to be his own. Though genuine, forensic investigation showed that the WAEC certificate belongs to his family member identified as Mr. Francis Oborevwori. Francis was born in 1979 and wrote the WAEC examination in 1999 whereas Sheriff Oborevwori was born in 1963 and was 36 years-old in 1999.

"That the passport photographs marked exhibit A and B are single passport photograph of one person made at a time and lifted from Document marked A, and place on the Document marked B at different period," part of the report read.

"The passport photograph marked exhibit C-C1 is not the same person in the passport photographs marked exhibit A and B. The passport photographs marked exhibit A, B and C-C1 are different individual passport photographs."

However, in a rejoinder by supporters of the Speaker, captioned, "Oborevwori vs Edevwie: Rejoinder to the 'Forensic Report' Conducted By Apex Forensic Nigeria Limited," they claimed DSP Udenze (Rtd) was not a trained, certified facial image comparison expert. The rejoinder reads in part, "A forensic report conducted by Apex Forensic Nigeria Limited has been widely circulated on social media. The report is the latest in a series of publicity stunts aimed at discrediting

the candidature and good reputation of the Rt. Honourable Speaker of the Delta State House of Assembly, Sheriff Francis Orhowodor Oborevwori.

"Opponents of Oborevwori would like to con his supporters and unsuspecting members of the public into believing unfounded allegations of identity theft. However, a closer examination of the report exposes it as an unreliable document prepared by a 'hired gun'. It is neither independent nor credible and should be disregarded in its entirety. We draw the attention of independent thinking members of the public to the following.

"The examiner, Chief Reginald Udenze, describes himself as a forensic document examiner/handwriting expert. While he may be accomplished in his field of training, there is a vast difference between a forensic document examiner and a facial image comparison expert.

"The examination of documents includes detecting alterations and obliterations, analysis of paper, detection and examination of forgery, origin, determining authenticity, and others. Members of the public should note that the examiner, Chief Udenze, does not say that any documents he examined were forged. However, with the greatest respect, Chief Udenze's qualification as a forensic document examiner does not make him a facial image comparison expert.

"Facial image comparison experts compare images of unfamiliar faces

(i.e., faces not known to them) and decide whether or not they show the same person. Given the importance of these decisions for national security and criminal investigations, practitioners attend training courses to improve their face identification ability.

"The 'forensic examination' starts on incorrect premise by presuming that the reference imagery was each taken at the same time, at the same angle and distance and of the same image quality. These factors can significantly affect the comparison. The examiner did not use original photographs, but images submitted by Oborevwori's opponents. He did not analyse whether these images were altered in any way.

"Additionally, a significant amount of time elapsed between the photographs in question. The first was taken in about 1999. The second photograph was taken 15 years later, in about 2014. Finally, the third photograph was taken in about 2018, 4 years after the second photograph and 19 years after the first photograph. As individuals grow and age, facial features can change significantly. The examiner does not account for this factor. The fallout from the Delta State Governorship primary elections has been the subject of intense media scrutiny. For this reason, the examiner should not be exposed to imagery before conducting their comparison to minimize possible

sources of bias, such as confirmation bias. This is why independent verification is key and accords with international best practices.

"A second independent examiner should repeat the entire facial image comparison process to verify the result. There should have been a blind verification by the second examiner without knowing the conclusion of the first examiner. This prevents confirmation bias and preserves the integrity of the process. There was absolutely no verification in this case. For the avoidance of doubt, Sheriff Francis Orhowodor Oborevwori has never submitted any false documents as alleged or at all. He has not stolen any person's identity as alleged or at all - indeed, none of Oborevwori has brought forward the person they identify as the genuine holder of the identity. The reason for this failure is simple. All the photographs shown in the examination are of Sheriff Francis Orhowodor Oborevwori.

"It is curious that a document apparently addressed to the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Guzape District, FCT Abuja, has found its way to WhatsApp and Facebook, instead of the intended recipient. Equally curious is how a complaint of events allegedly occurring in Delta State has found its way to Guzape District, FCT Abuja. Opponents of Sheriff Francis Orhowodor Oborevwori should test their popularity at the polling booth, not on social media pages.

Ebonyi women protest against alleged attack by Ebebuagu operatives

By **CHARLES ONYEKWERE**

Thousands of Ebonyi women at the weekend staged a protest alleging maltreatment against them by Ebubeagu Security outfit personnel.

The attack allegedly took place at the Ebonyi state People's Club Recreational centre along Abakaliki-Enugu Road High way where they were supposed to have their August meeting.

The women were seen crying as they protested round the Abakaliki city expressing their dissatisfaction over the action of Ebebuagu security operatives who allegedly disrupted their already scheduled August meeting.

They alleged that the Ebubeagu Security Outfit invaded the venue of the meeting with their branded vehicles and guns, cordoned the place, arrested some women, destroyed already set canopies, chairs, tables and confiscated some of the materials for the event.

They said their rights had been violated against the Constitution of Nigeria which grants individuals and Citizens the right of Association and peaceful gathering.

They called on Nigeria Government to come to their aid as their rights had been trampled upon.

The women in a statement titled "DESECRATION OF WOMANHOOD IN EBONYI STATE: IGP, FIDA, RIGHTS GROUPS SHOULD COME TO EBONYI WOMEN'S AID" described the incident as the desecration of womanhood.

According to the statement signed by Mrs. Charity Chukwuemeka, President, Umuada Ebonyi Women, Hon. Amaka Chukwu, Coordinator, EBOWATAN, Mrs. Margaret Nweke Chairperson, Ebonyi Widows Forum, Alobu Seraphina, South-East Women Association, Hon. Nwali Eucharia U (Rep. Female Ministers of God,, Amina Mustapha (House Community Women), and Mrs. Ngozi Nwabueze (President-General, Urban Women Organization), the aggrieved women further called on rights groups to come to their aid.

"This press briefing is aimed at calling for the aid of the press, IGP, FIDA, and rights groups to the desecration of the rights of women of Ebonyi State using Ebubeagu Security Network. The Nigerian constitution guarantees freedom of women. Articles 15(2) and 42 (1) a & b (2) (3) prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex and ensure that men and women have equal access to the courts in matters of contracts, torts and civil matters.

"The hard-working, Peace fostering women of Ebonyi State under the aegis of Federated Ebonyi Women Organization,

were on this day 20th of August 2022, unjustifiably attacked, embarrassed and chased out of the venue of their 2022 Annual August Meeting slated to hold in People's Club Hall, Abakaliki.

"This abominable act was carried out by the Ebubeagu Security outfit of Ebonyi State.

"It is not new or alien to the Igbo Race that the entire women meet every August to discuss and chart the best possible developmental ideas and projects to improve the well-being and welfare of our people.

"Notably, Annual August Meeting is not a partisan gathering as it cuts across party lines and even involves women who never belonged to any political party.

"It is surprising therefore that the Governor knowing the importance of this annual gathering for the women and the society at large, facilitated this dehumanizing attack on this year's August Meeting that has the approval of all relevant security agencies.

"It should be noted that Ebonyi State Government led by Governor David Umahi has over time maintained an enviable streak of antagonism against the womenfolk ranging from the manhunt for the Ebonyi South APC senatorial aspirant, Princess Ann Agom-Eze who is currently on exile outside for aspiring to serve her senatorial district; two previous disruptions and harassment of Ebonyi women's lawful gatherings; and today's attack on Ebonyi Women's Annual General August Meeting 2022 where in ??? were abducted by Governor Umahi's Ebubeagu Security militia and taken to Ebonyi State Government House, beaten up and stripped naked, while delegates from Afikpo were forced back by another detachment of Governor Umahi's Ebubeagu militia who fired sporadically at the hapless women.

"Arising from the unwarranted disruption of this year's August meeting, scheduled to hold this day, 20th of August 2022, our position are as follows : That these attacks are unreasonable and unwarranted infringements on the constitutional rights of the women of Ebonyi State which must not be tolerated.

"That as mothers, we will speak to our sons and husbands to be in solidarity by standing with us in this protest against dictatorship.

"That despite the hardship meted on the women of Ebonyi State through his unproductive leadership, he further attacked our women on this auspicious day, thereby subjecting us to further suffering.

"That he has infringed on the rights of the entire Ebonyi Women and should be liable.

"That for unjustifiably at-

tacking and humiliating our women in this sacrilegious manner, Ebonyi women hereby call on the Inspector-general of Police and civil rights groups to come to our aid by ensuring that Governor Umahi's agents whom he used to perpetrate these crimes are brought to book while Umahi's militia known as Ebubeagu Security Network should be disbanded by the federal government.

"Ebonyi women want to remind Governor Umahi that he once galvanised support through this usual Annual August gathering event, when he needed votes to ascend; and that he should refrain from actions that will pitch Ebonyi women against his political party which Governor Umahi is angry with because of his disgrace in the

APC presidential primary.

"Finally, Ebonyi women are encouraged that he should know that only votes count now and that THUGS will not count and may not vote."

Confirming the incident when Journalists accosted him, the Special Assistant to the Governor on Internal Security, Mr. Panchris Ikechukwu Eze said members of Ebubeagu operatives invaded the venue of the August meeting, following a Security tipoff.

According to him, Ebubeagu operatives got a tip off that members of Indigenous People of Biafra, IPOB, were going to have a meeting at People's Club and so, we went there to make sure it doesn't hold.

Reacting to the development, the Special Assistant to the Governor of Media and

Strategy, Mr. Chooks Oko stated that the Governor had no idea about what happened at People's Club as he (Umahi) was far away Abuja attending several meetings that concern the development of the State.

"The Governor has been involved in lots of consultative meetings in Abuja as it concerns the development of the State. Moreso, the Governor applies rule of law in whatever he does and there's no way he can be connected with any seeming breach of law and order."

When contacted, the Ebonyi State Security Consultant, Chief Stanley Okoro-Emegha added that Ebubeagu operatives went to the location of the meeting as way of nipping at the board any planned attack by unknown gunmen in the State.



Gov. Umahi

Expelled Enugu APC chairman, Agballah gone for good, says Nwoye

By **CHARLES ONYEKWERE**

Immediate past Chairman of the All Progressives Congress, APC, in Enugu, Dr. Ben Nwoye has said the expulsion of the party's chairman, Barr. Ugochukwu Agballah is for its good in the state.

Nwoye spoke to journalists, weekend, at Akanu Ibiam International Airport, Enugu, where he lamented the high rate of defection of leaders of the party in the state to other political parties.

He blamed the development on alleged high-handedness and bad leadership style of Agballah.

The Trumpet had reported that Agballah was sacked from the party on Friday by his Udi/Agbudu ward in Udi Council Area of the State.

Reacting to Agballah's expulsion, Nwoye stressed the need for unity among members of

the party, especially as the 2023 general election gathers steam.

The former Chairman stated that Agballah's leadership style "led to the exit of some of our notable leaders with their teeming supporters to other parties," describing his sack as a right step in the right direction.

Nwoye also saluted the courage of the executive members of the Udi/Agbudu ward for doing the needful, stressing that they had the right to do so.

He named some of the key leaders of the party in the State that recently defected to other political parties to include a former Nigerian Envoy to the Republic of India, Major General Chris Eze, (Rtd.), Enugu State APC Governorship Candidate in 2015, Barr. Okey Ezea, Zonal Chairman of Enugu East Senatorial district, Chief Emma Okenwa, among others.

Nwoye, a Federal Com-

missioner, advised Agballah to stop parading himself as state Chairman of the party, as his expulsion had the APC constitutional backing.

On the claims that the signatories to Agballah's expulsion were not the authentic ward leadership, Nwoye said "the certified true copy is there both with the INEC and the National Secretariat of our party. Their names are clearly there as the executive members of the party in Udi/Agbudu ward."

He recalled that former national chairmen of both the APC and the PDP, Adams Oshiomhole and Okwy Nwodo, respectively, were similarly sacked by member of their ward executives.

According to him, stakeholders of the party have agreed that there was a need to unite and move the party forward to win the 2023 election in the State.

Paris Club refund: Lead consultants accuse governors of \$100m kickback

BY PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

The lead consultants working on the London and Paris Club refunds, weekend, accused state governors on the platform of Nigerian Governors Forum (NGF) of collecting \$100 million in kickback.

They also disclosed that contrary to the claim of the NGF, the money being owed the consultants was \$68 million not \$418 million.

Ned Nwoko made this known while addressing newsmen in Abuja at the weekend. He alleged that the NGF demanded and received the sum of \$100 million in the name of prosecuting elections in some states.

Nwoko further alleged that when the consultants submitted a bill of \$350 million as the consultancy fee, the state governors demanded to be paid 50 percent of it before it could be honoured.

He alleged that a former chairman of the forum had explained to him that the money was needed to prosecute elections in Bauchi, Ekiti and Ondo states.

Nwoko revealed that it took the intervention of the Ministry of Justice before the governors eventually received the sum of \$100 million.

While commenting on what is being owed the consultants, Nwoko explained that the consultants had nothing to do with \$418 million, noting that it must be a miscalculation.

He also absolved the Attorney General of the Federation (AGF) and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami, of any wrongdoing, saying the Minister was only trying to ensure that the law was

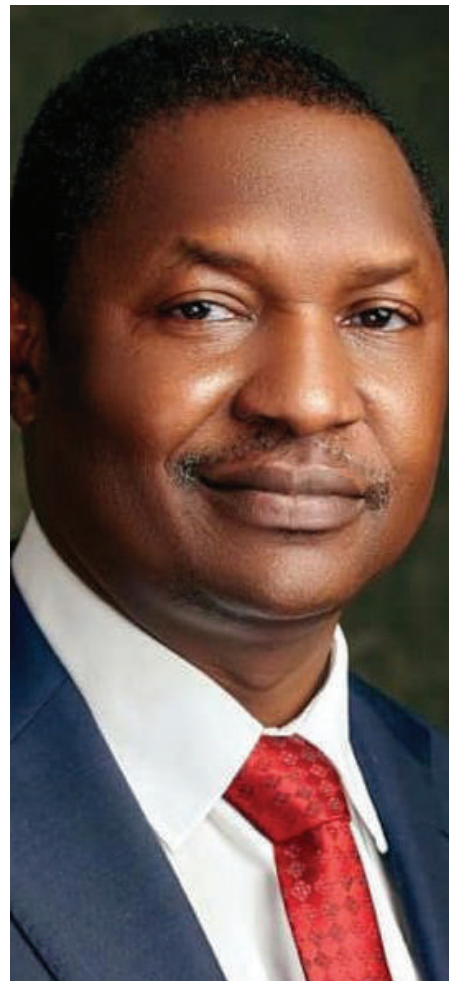


Ned Nwoko

obeyed.

Nwoko stated that the agreements and judgment being executed were reached before the Muhammadu Buhari administration.

The lead consultants also accused the chairman of the NGF and Governor of



AGF Abubakar Malami

Ekiti State, Kayode Fayemi, of telling a litany of lies over the payment to the consultants.

Recall the governors had during their last meeting, debunked comments credited to Malami where he dismissed as noising making and no basis for



Chairman of NGF, Gov Kayode Fayemi

rejection of the deductions of \$418 million from the Paris Club refund.

The governors had said that all the claims made by the AGF were lies and his actions are self-serving and fraudulent, vowing to pursue the matter to the highest court of the land.

Inibehe Effiong: 'Trial court erred for conviction without fair hearing'



Inibehe Effiong

BY PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Convicted human rights lawyer, Inibehe Effiong is currently at the Court of Appeal, Calabar Division to challenge the decision of the state's high court for convicting him without fair trial.

The notice of appeal was filed on the 19th of August, 2022 with Inibehe Effiong as the Appellant and the Governor of Akwa Ibom State, Udom Emmanuel and Leo Ekpernyong as the Respondents.

This was revealed by Court processes sighted by journalists during the weekend.

The notice of appeal contained 9 grounds of appeal and was filed by his legal team led by Femi Falana SAN, Adeyinka Olumide-Fusika SAN, John Aikpokpo-Martins Esq, Monday Ubani Esq, Olukunle Edun, Funmi Falana Esq,

Femi Adeborisade Esq, Taiwo Olawanle, Nsisak Akai, Augustine Asuquo, E.E. Philip, and Joseph Eleh.

In the Appeal, the Appellant said the lower court in its decision made by Chief Judge of Akwa Ibom State, Justice Ekaette Obot on the 27th of July, 2022 in SUIT. NO:HU/279/2019, erred.

The grounds of appeal range from an alleged violation of Section 36(3) of the Constitution by the Honourable Chief Justice by excluding a Premium Times journalist from covering the Court's proceedings, lack of fair hearing in convicting the Appellant for contempt, infringement of the Appellant's right to personal liberty, among others.

In his relief, the Appellant is praying the Court of Appeal for "An Order" setting aside the conviction and sentence imposed on the him by the Lower Court on July 27, 2022.

Alleged N20.5m fraud: Court grants herbalist N10m bail

An Iyaganku Chief Magistrate Court sitting in Ibadan has granted a 29-year-old herbalist, Ganiyu Rilwan bail of N10 million for alleged fraud of N20.5 million.

The defendant Rilwan, a resident of Muslim area in Ibadan was arraigned on a three-count charge of conspiracy, N20.5 million fraud and conversion.

Ganiyu, however, pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The Prosecution Counsel, Inspector Opeyemi Olagunju told the court that defendant conspired with others to obtain money by false pretence and stealing.

Olagunju said Rilwan between November 2021 and April 2022, with

intent to defraud, allegedly obtained the sum of N20.5 million from one Abeeb Adejumo under the pretence of giving him spiritual assistance knowing same to be false.

He added that the defendant allegedly stole the money from Adejumo and fraudulently converted it to his own use.

Olagunju said the offence is contrary

to Section 383 and punishable under section 390(9), 419 and 516 of the Criminal Code Laws of Oyo State, 2000.

The Chief Magistrate, Mr S. H. Adebisi granted the defendant bail in the sum of N10 million and ordered him to produce two sureties in like sum.

Thereafter, Adebisi adjourned the matter till October 27, for hearing.

Police release journalist, Jalingo after intervention of Falana, Sowore

By PAUL MICHAEL, DEFENCE EDITOR, ABUJA

The police in Abuja have released the publisher of "Cross River Watch", Agba Jalingo, who was on Friday arrested at his residence in Lagos.

Human rights lawyer and Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), Femi Falana and publisher of Sahara Reporters, Omoyele Sowore, earlier faulted the police for the arrest and detention of a journalist over a civil issue.

It was gathered that the journalist had in his newspaper, Cross River Watch, questioned the rationale behind the arrest and prosecution of a lecturer who wrote examinations for someone in the Nigerian Law School, Abuja while the student is being treated like a sacred cow.

The student was said to have failed Law School Bar examination in her first attempt and then hired a university teacher to write it for her a second time.

The lecturer, however, was caught and has been arraigned in court while the said student is walking freely, thus the publication of Jalingo.

The publication was said to have angered the family of the student,

Mrs Elizabeth Alami Ayade, wife of Franco Ayade, the younger brother of the Cross River State Governor, Prof Ben Ayade.

Consequently, a petition was written to the Inspector-General of Police, IGP Usman Alkali Baba, who then detailed a special police squad led by one SP Danbaba M Alura from Abuja to Lagos to arrest Jalingo who was flown to Abuja.

Reacting to the development, Falana said the journalist has not committed any offence known to the provisions of the Criminal Code, saying it is a civil case.

He demanded the immediate release of the journalist while describing the action of the petitioner and the police as "the height of official impunity in a democratic society."

Falana said, "Based on the information at my disposal, I was compelled to demand for his unconditional release since he has contravened any provision of the Criminal Code. But the police officers informed me that his detention was ordered by the Authorities in Abuja.

"Thus, at about 11 am this morning (Saturday) he was flown out of Lagos and he is currently being detained at the Criminal Investigation

Department, Garki, Abuja.

"The ongoing harassment of Agba based on the allegation that he has defamed the wife of the brother of a serving Governor is the height of official impunity in a democratic society.

"Since defamation is not a criminal offence, the action of the Police is a flagrant breach of section 8(2) of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, 2015 and section 32(2) of the Police Establishment Act 2020 which have banned the police from arresting any person in Nigeria for civil wrong or breach of contract.

"Therefore, the police Authorities should release Agba Jalingo unconditionally and advise the petitioner to sue for libel in a civil court."

On his part, Sowore accused the IGP of harassing innocent Nigerians that are merely expressing their opinions on the social media and internet.

He described the action of the police as 'unlawful policing' while demanding for the unconditional release of Jalingo.

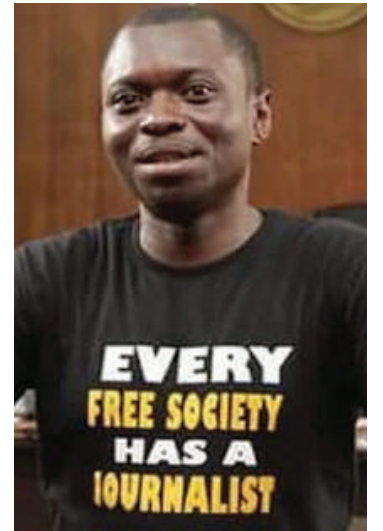
"The IG of Police devoted a 'Special Unit' to these VIPs dedicated to harassing, brutalising, torturing

and kidnapping Nigerians posting opinions on the internet about the fraudulent and sometimes scandalous lifestyles of these VIPs.

"Today, Agba Jalingo is being detained accused of raising concerns over the prosecution of a lecturer hired by the wife of Franco Ayade, the younger brother of the Calabar-based tyrant, Governor Ben Ayade. According to the sources, his wife, Mrs. Elizabeth Alami Ayade, failed Law School Bar examination and then hired a university lecturer to write it for her a second time. The lecturer was caught and is being prosecuted (as I was told).

"As a journalist, public conscience and social critic, Agba Jalingo questioned why the woman, who procured the lecturer hadn't been apprehended.

"Instead of swinging into action, the police were procured to kidnap Agba Jalingo from Lagos, a team of policemen led by one SP Danbaba M Alura led the team from CID Garki, Abuja and flown into Lagos to kidnap journalist Jalingo. This morning (Saturday) Femi Falana (SAN) visited Agba Jalingo at the 'Area F' holding cell in Ikeja. He was politely told this is 'IG's personal



Agba Jalingo

case'.

"The police officers on duty said they can't even entertain legal intervention until Agba Jalingo is flown to Abuja. Apparently, Ayade and family have paid for a one way ticket to have Agba flown to Abuja with the team of police officers sent to fetch him for what is purely a civil matter. In fact, it is Franko's wife that should be flown to Abuja in handcuffs for examination malpractice.

"Today, Nigeria is beset with a myriad of security challenges because the Nigerian police has abandoned its constitutional duties to other security agencies and non state paramilitary units.

"With a 350,000 men, the police force though inadequate could be doing better in protecting the citizenry but corruption, incompetence, scandalous recruitment, poor feeding as well as poor remuneration has ruined the police force," Sowore said.

Following the intervention and public condemnation, the Police on Saturday night released the journalist.

Sowore, who shared a video of Jalingo's release on his Facebook page, said the FCT police command granted bail to the journalist.

"He'll be back on Monday. We will never allow impunity to thrive in our country," he added.

COAS tasks graduating army cadets on tackling insecurity

By PAUL MICHAEL

Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt Gen Faruk Yahaya, has charged graduating cadets to ensure they deploy acquired skills in tackling insecurity, which remains the country's major challenge.

He spoke during the weekend as the Special Guest of Honour at the Battle Inoculation phase of Exercise Camp Highland, which wrapped up final exercises for the Army Cadets of Regular Course 69 of the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA), before their passing out later in October this year.

The COAS expressed satisfaction over the level of training received

by the Cadets while noting that with the recent review of training curriculum in the academy, there has been remarkable improvement in the quality of cadets' combat training, in tune with Army's deliberate capacity development effort towards tackling contemporary security challenges.

He expressed optimism that as junior commanders, they will add value to ongoing operational efforts to restore peace and security in troubled parts of the country, Director, Army Public Relations, Brig-Gen Onyema Nwachukwu said in a statement.

According to Nwachukwu, the COAS re-assured the President of the country, Muhammadu Buhari and all Nigerians that terrorists and

bandits will all be dealt with.

"While pointing out that a lot of resources have been invested in training the cadets, the COAS expressed appreciation to the Commander – in- Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria, President Muhammadu Buhari for the confidence reposed in the NA, as well as his support and strategic guidance.

"He assured the President and all Nigerians that the NA in synergy with other services and security agencies will 'speak to the insurgents and bandits in the language they understand,'" Brig-Gen Nwachukwu stated.

Meanwhile, the Commandant NDA, Maj-Gen Ibrahim Yusuf has

described Exercise Camp Highland Battle Inoculation as a 'baptism of the Army Cadets into battle'.

Yusuf said the exercise is a culmination of five years of training for the Cadets before their graduation.

The exercise featured a combat assault on a simulated objective with live firing by a combat team of cadets, supported from the air by the Nigerian Air force to inject realism into the exercise.

The Commander Training and Doctrine Command, Principal Staff Officers from the Army Headquarters, Corps Commanders and General Officer Commanding 1 Division among others were the senior officers that witnessed the exercise.

Grandpa who allegedly ships illicit drugs to daughter in Dubai nabbed by NDLEA

●Agency intercepts 2.3m tabs of opioids going to Northern states

By PAUL MICHAEL

Operatives of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has arrested a 63-year-old grandpa, Sola Afis Abibu, who ships illicit drugs to his daughter in Dubai.

Director of Media and Advocacy, Femi Babafemi, on Sunday disclosed this in a statement, saying Abibu is a major importer of Loud variant of cannabis from the United States.

According to him, the suspect was arrested at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, (MMIA) Ikeja Lagos.

"Abibu was arrested in connection with a 19.30kg Colorado consignment from Los Angeles, USA, which was intercepted on 30th June at the NAHCO cargo import shed of the

Lagos airport.

"While Abibu was still being interviewed in custody, a 37.1kg consignment of Loud intercepted on 7th July was also traced to him," he said.

In another development, Babafemi said over 2.3 million tablets of illicit pharmaceutical opioids and other psychoactive substances meant for distribution in seven Northern states of Borno, Kano, Kaduna, Sokoto, Zamfara, Gombe and Nasarawa were also intercepted in series of interdiction operations in last week.

"In all, a total of Two Million Three Hundred and Twenty Five Thousand Five Hundred and Fifty Three (2,325,553.00) tablets and capsules of Tramadol, Pregabalin, Hypnox, Diazepam and Exol-5

including 7, 353 bottles of a new psychoactive substance locally called Akuskura meant for the seven states were seized from locations across Kaduna, Kogi, Sokoto, and the FCT," he said.

Also, Babafemi said a drug dealer Umar Sanusi, was arrested on Friday 12th August during a follow up operation in Kano and brought back to Kaduna where his consignment of 50 cartons of pregabalin 300mg, containing 750,000 capsules, weighing 375kgs earlier seized along Abuja-Kaduna expressway was counted and weighed in his presence.

"Same day, operatives also intercepted along Abuja-Kaduna express road 7,068 bottles of a new dangerous substance of abuse called Akuskura meant for Kaduna,

Zamfara, Gombe, Kano and Borno.

"The recipients in Kaduna and Zamfara have been arrested during follow up operations. The following day, Saturday 13th August, 285 bottles of the NPS were recovered from a dealer, Abubakar Ahmad, along the same highway.

"In Kogi, no fewer than 696,000 tablets of Tramadol and Exol-5 among others loaded into a truck at Onitsha, Anambra state and heading to Maiduguri, Borno state, were seized along Okene-Abuja expressway on Friday 19th Aug, while NDLEA operatives also recovered 300,000 tablets of Diazepam from a suspect, Faruku Bello, 30, in Sokoto State on Wednesday 17th Aug," he added.

Meanwhile, officers of the anti-

narcotic agency FCT command, at the weekend, intercepted a bus loaded with 323,200 tablets of Tramadol 225mg and others.

The bus was heading to Nasarawa State from Onitsha, Anambra State.

"Driver of the vehicle, Osita Nwobodo, 45, who made fruitless bids to compromise the operatives is now in custody," Babafemi said.

Meanwhile, a freight agent, Miss Njoko Elizabeth, 37, has been arrested for attempting to export 250grams of Tramadol and cannabis to Dubai through the NAHCO export shed.

It was gathered that the drug exhibits were concealed inside some gallons of palm oil and honey, which were packed among food items and hair attachment.



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2 x 2	24,941.96	26,812.61	1 x 2	11,294.45	12,141.54	2 x 2	18,349.89	19,716.64	2 x 2	15,147.94	16,284.03
3 x 2	37,413.09	40,219.07	2 x 2	22,588.91	24,283.09	3 x 2	27,524.84	29,589.20	3 x 2	22,721.91	24,426.05
4 x 2	49,884.02	53,625.42	3 x 2	33,987.48	36,622.04	4 x 2	36,700.09	39,452.60	4 x 2	30,295.53	32,657.70
5 x 2	62,355.15	67,031.71	4 x 2	45,177.83	48,566.17	5 x 2	45,866.19	49,315.34	5 x 2	37,863.00	40,710.09
6 x 2	76,142.50	81,853.18	5 x 2	56,472.29	60,707.71	6 x 2	55,049.68	59,178.41	6 x 2	45,443.82	48,852.10
7 x 2	87,297.21	93,844.50	6 x 2	67,975.12	73,073.25	6 x 3	54,074.55	61,200.90	7 x 2	53,017.79	56,993.61
7 x 3	166,172.00	179,229.37	6 x 3	101,962.78	109,609.99	6.5 x 3	89,455.78	96,164.94	8 x 2	60,591.76	65,136.14
7 x 4	197,125.00	211,909.37	6.5 x 3	110,459.64	118,744.11	7 x 2	64,224.63	69,041.48	9 x 2	80,454.83	86,488.95
8 x 2	99,768.24	107,250.85	7 x 2	79,304.29	85,252.11	7 x 3	96,336.94	103,562.21	10 x 2	86,147.92	92,609.02
9 x 2	112,183.69	120,597.47	7 x 3	128,456.43	138,090.67	7 x 4	145,965.10	156,912.48	14.5 x 2	124,915.92	134,284.61
9 x 3	168,358.90	180,985.39	7 x 4	158,608.73	170,504.38	7 x 5	182,500.19	196,187.71	5 x 3	56,804.77	61,065.13
10 x 3	187,065.45	201,095.35	7 x 5	198,260.25	213,129.77	8 x 2	73,399.58	78,904.54	6 x 3	68,170.86	73,283.67
14.5 x 2	260,395.00	279,924.62	8 x 2	90,633.42	97,430.92	8 x 3	125,871.78	134,674.05	7 x 3	79,526.68	85,491.18
8 x 4	199,536.48	214,501.71	8 x 3	135,950.22	146,146.48	8 x 4	167,043.40	179,022.80	8 x 3	103,375.58	111,130.80
9 x 4	224,478.54	241,314.43	8 x 4	181,266.93	194,841.95	8 x 5	208,805.79	224,469.23	6 x 4	100,634.10	110,944.41
10 x 4	299,302.72	321,752.57	8 x 5	226,238.74	254,477.52	8 x 6	250,284.32	26,911.09	7 x 4	120,404.56	129,434.90
14.5 x 4	520,790.19	559,849.45	8 x 6	271,900.48	292,008.02	9 x 2	93,773.60	100,872.44	8 x 4	137,692.17	148,019.082
7 x 5	218,243.02	234,629.74	9 x 2	101,962.78	109,609.99	9 x 3	141,108.54	151,691.68	10 x 4	172,301.37	185,224.22
8 x 5	299,304.72	321,752.57	9 x 3	152,944.01	164,414.81	9 x 4	187,921.52	202,015.71	14.5 x 3	187,057.43	201,086.73
8 x 6	359,165.65	386,103.08	9 x 4	203,925.29	219,219.69	9 x 5	281,288.07	303,022.10	14.5 x 4	249,838.03	268,575.88
9 x 5	404,061.37	434,365.97	9 x 5	305,373.04	328,276.02	9 x 6	337,805.68	363,141.11	7 x 5	141,001.98	161,793.93
10 x 5	448,957.08	482,628.86	9 x 6	367,065.92	394,595.86	10 x 3	156,602.81	168,348.02	8 x 5	172,116.65	185,025.40
11 x 5	493,852.78	530,891.74	10 x 3	169,651.36	182,375.21	10 x 4	208,808.58	224,469.23	9 x 6	278,649.91	299,548.66
9 x 6	484,873.39	521,239.16	10 x 4	226,258.00	243,176.28	10 x 5	325,815.11	349,966.25	11 x 5	295,636.20	317,808.91
10 x 6	538,748.49	579,154.53	10 x 5	354,037.54	380,590.16	10 x 6	390,978.13	420,320.48	11 x 6	340,573.10	340,466.08
11 x 6	592,622.16	637,068.82	10 x 6	424,845.04	456,708.42	11 x 5	358,396.62	385,276.37	HP7.25 X 6	218,226.87	234,593.89
HP 7.25 x 6	317,178.40	340,337.5	11 x 5	389,441.887	418,650.01	11 x 6	412,916.45	443,885.19	FP14.5 X 6	379,943.00	408,438.72
FP 14.5 x 6	560,500.00	602,537.50	11 x 6	447,303.49	480,851.24	14.5 x 2	151,178.45	162,516.84			
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Wrong diagnosis in the practice of medicine in Nigeria

A proper diagnosis of a health problem is fundamental to commencement of treatment in medical practice. It is for this reason that laboratories are often established both as an integral part of a hospital or as independent entities in the health care delivery system of a country. A wrong diagnosis could have fatal consequences. There have been too many cases of wrong diagnosis in Nigeria in the last ten odd years.

In 2019, a patient in Jimeta, Adamawa state died after a doctor operated on him for a kidney disease which he never had. In the same year, a Kebbi-based doctor was convicted after erroneously diagnosing a dead baby in the womb and proceeded to operate on the mother to evacuate the dead fetus only to discover that the baby was alive. The discovery came too late however, since the doctor had amputated the baby's upper limb as he dissected the mother. The famous human right's activist late Gani Fawehinmi had lung cancer which was misdiagnosed as asthma. In 2006, a journalist, Bayo Onanuga nearly lost his broken foot which the doctor misdiagnosed and put in a cast. He was lucky the pain caused him to insist that the cast should be taken off. Another doctor examined the foot and was shocked it had been placed in a cast. If the cast had stayed a few hours longer, the foot would have developed gangrene and would have had to be amputated. In 2020, a Mrs. Odechukwu spent six months taking medication for acute abdominal pain which the doctors had diagnosed as stomach infection or food poisoning, only to discover after another round of tests that she had kidney disease. Another woman lost her husband to colon cancer which had been diagnosed as ulcer.

The list goes on and on. It is therefore not surprising when many Nigerians who can afford it opt to travel abroad for medical care. Nigeria is facing a serious problem in its health sector due to misdiagnoses and missed diagnosis. Already suffering Nigerians are taking medications for ailments that they do not have; or

they are suffering acute pain and being told that there is nothing there. Many find out the truth about their condition too late. The Nigerian health sector needs immediate and serious attention if the current trend is to be stopped. The constant loss of lives, trauma and economic strain caused by the decay in our medical laboratories and among medical laboratory personnel is not something to be trifled with.

The problems are many. Nigeria has become a leading dumping ground for substandard rapid test and diagnostic kits, reagents and chemicals due to poor monitoring compliance to laid-down standards. Unqualified medical lab personnel conduct tests and generate results for doctors to use in making diagnoses; some of the qualified personnel do not have current

working licenses or work permits; pharmacy shops – which are easy avenues for quacks to infiltrate the system – are allowed to provide medical laboratory test services; the regulatory framework provided by the federal government is routinely ignored; and the entire health sector suffers from poor regulation and non-validation. According to some reports, no teaching hospital or federal medical centre in Nigeria has International Certification (ISO 15189) accreditation for the laboratories that they operate.

The Medical Laboratory Science Council of Nigeria (MLSCN), which the federal government has given the sole responsibility of approving, validating and registering diagnostic kits, reagents and chemicals needs to face up to its responsibilities of sanitizing the practice, and taking disciplinary measures against non-compliance to standards. The Ministry of Health needs to develop a policy of mandatory accreditation for medical laboratories in Nigeria and should take steps to arrest the proliferation of unlicensed medical laboratories across the nation, especially those run by pharmacy shops. There should be regular checks and inspections to ensure that lab scientists and technicians adhere to standards and procedures to avoid causing harm or even death to fellow Nigerians.

The Nigerian government should also impose strict sanctions and punitive measures on any laboratory, lab technician or medical personnel found guilty of operating on a false license, running an unregistered or sub-standard laboratory, or any doctor found guilty of carelessly disregarding procedure and due process in handling patients or in making diagnoses. Indeed, medical personnel should be mindful of their code of ethics in carrying out their task as care givers and health providers who frequently hold the lives of other human beings in their hands. Doctors who run private practices in particular should desist from insisting on laboratory tests where none are required, just to make a profit. Nigerians are suffering enough as it is. When we go to hospital, we go there seeking health, not death.



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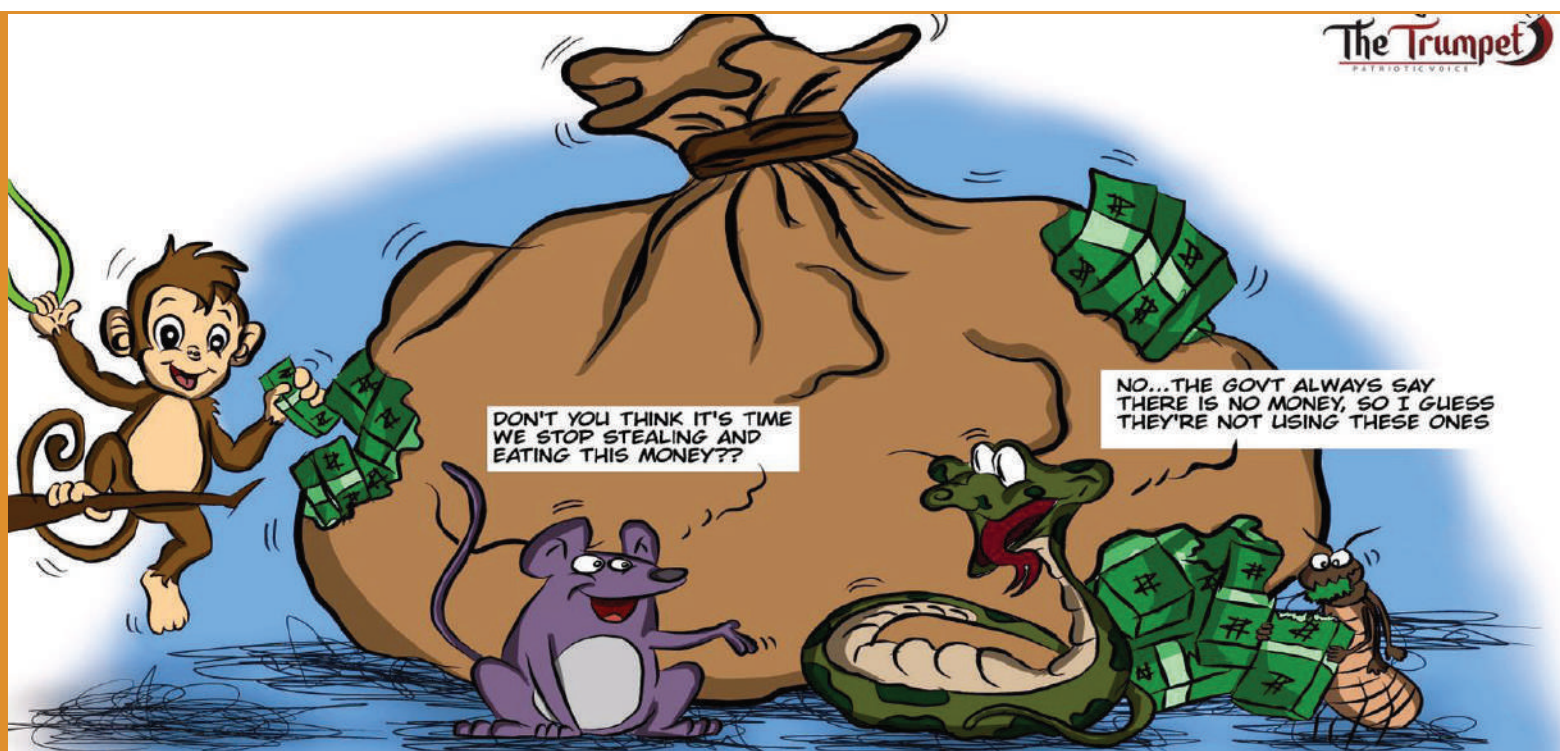
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Conversation Nigeriana (4)

Abubakar: Goat!
Ojo: Alhaji sir!
Abubakar: Are you a goat?
Ojo: No Alhaji!
Abubakar: So why did you respond when I called you Goat?
Ojo: It is a political season Alhaji. Anything you call me I will answer. That way my meals will be guaranteed! Baba o! I hail o!
Emeka: Politics of survival is the game in Nigeria. Promise anything and everything and ignore the electorate later.
Timi: It's not everyone who plays stomach politics. See the way Atiku treated Wike and Wike's reaction. That man is like a mad dog oo. They should not mess with him. The Rivers State guy doesn't care. He is ready to go for broke in the tradition of 'emilokan!
Ojo: Hehehehehe! *Emilokan* and other stories will make a good title!
Omokomoko: Republic of Emilokan! After Tinubu takes over, we shall change the name of the country. Federal Republic of *Emilokan*!
Ojo: Or Oduduwa Republic!
Abubakar: If Atiku takes over we shall become Fulani Republic!
Emeka: Hahahahahaha! That is a joke. Nnamdi Kanu will not accept it.
Banjo: Igboho will not accept it either!
Tega: If Obi wins, we shall become Biafra Republic!
Ojo: This is all nonsense you guys are spewing! We have only Federal Republic of Nigeria which can and should be renegotiated.
Abubakar: Will ISWAP of Boko Haram accept it?
Timi: Is this conversation for real? Are we really taking these anarchists as factors in the development of Nigeria?
Abubakar: Ignore them to your own peril!
Omokomoko: Calm down everybody. Calm down. Let us get back to the core of our discussion. Atiku's choice of a running mate and Wike's reaction. Everything is intertwined but let us have a focus. Abubakar, you were making a point!
Abubakar: Thank you Omokomoko!

My point is that Atiku made his choice. It should be respected by all parties. Period.
Tega: His personal choice is not, should not be the most important factor. Atiku set up a committee to screen the candidates and majority of the committee members chose, recommended Wike, not Okowa. Okowa's choice is an imposition by Atiku, undemocratic. Period. See how PDP is struggling to keep the factions and people together.
Banjo: It is true; Wike came out second and he should be the logical choice for running mate. If he was able to garner so many votes from delegates, then he should have been the running mate.
Abubakar: Politics is not like that. Atiku feels uncomfortable with Wike as his running mate. He doesn't want a loose cannon as Vice President if they win. Says Okowa is calm and as we know Okowa has invested heavily money-wise in the project! A man must choose the person he can work with. Just imagine if Osinbajo were a typical politician, he would have fallen out with Buhari by now, especially when he saw the northernization agenda of Buhari.
Ojo: The nation would have been better served with a vibrant Vice President under Bubur. Not a Mike Pence type of VP! The Buhari administration is a disaster to the country!
Tega: But Okowa has a lot of baggage! He cannot win the South-south or the South-east having gone back on the Asaba agreement.
Abubakar: Who says? You cannot say that with any certainty. His name is Ifeanyi. The Igbo will remember that when push comes to shove! Besides, personal survival and interest cannot be ruled out!
Banjo: Is there any politician who has no baggage? Even Atiku carries baggage international and national. Wike's baggage is big.
Timi: They all have baggage. Okowa is presiding over a split party in Delta State caused by his decision to be an

emperor, singularly selecting people to run for positions at all levels! He alone chose the governorship candidate and his running mate ignoring other stakeholders in the state. That is baggage. Can he alone deliver Delta State for PDP?
Banjo: That is not totally correct. Okowa is shrewd. He has full control over the Party structure because he built it over the years. His candidate has a lot of support among the other leaders in the party. We should advise him to make up with other leaders in the State to go into the elections as one party, especially after the Appeal Court has ruled on the governorship matter. Ibori must not be disrespected by any politician in the state because he virtually made them all! Very important.
Abubakar: As for Wike, is he popular or it was money that spoke for him at the Convention? As President, would you like to have a VP who can run his mouth against everybody and anybody?
Tega: Is Atiku popular or it was his money that bought over everybody at the Convention? When I remember that it was Atiku who stole the rotation of power from the South, I will never vote for him. We need to respect the constituent parts of the federation. We are told that in 2019, he asked southern politicians to support and promised that for 2023 he would support a southern president. But see what he has done. No honour. No integrity.
Omokomoko: Is there any honour among thieves?
Abubakar: Excuse me, you cannot, should not brand all our politicians as thieves! They may be fantastically corrupt as Prime Minister Cameron described them. But you cannot say that they are thieves. There is a difference.
Banjo: Look here, the word 'corrupt' is not of Nigerian origins. In the 1890s, Liberal Party MP Jabez Balfour was exposed as running several fraudulent companies to conceal financial losses. In 1915, the Shell crisis led to the fall of H.H. Asquith Liberal Party government during WW 1. In 1922, in the Lloyd

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George scandal honours were sold for large campaign contributions. In 1980 Baron Kagan was convicted of fraud earlier ennobled by Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson's notorious Lavender List. In 2010, there was the cash for influence scandal in which undercover reporters for the Dispatches television series posed as political lobbyists offering to pay members of Parliament to influence policy. Corruption sits in Britain in nice terms. What about Boris Johnson? Made laws and serially broke them. Let us not demonize our political class!
Timi: In plain terms, corruption is universal.
Banjo: The wealth of America is built on corruption. It was built on the sweat of slave labour, black men and women who were kidnapped and worked without pay till they dropped dead. Corruption is everywhere my people!
Tega: Are you for real? Justifying corruption in Nigeria because it happens in other places?
Banjo: I'm not justifying corruption. I am saying we should not tar all politicians in the same brush and that corruption is worldwide!
Omokomoko: Is there any country in the world that has been run aground by the political class through looting public funds? We have borrowed trillions of naira; what has the nation got to show for it? Instead, we have made millionaires and billionaires from stolen funds. The AGF stole billions. We do not have a record of the others yet.
Ojo: Back to Atiku and Wike. How

will the matter be resolved? There's an impending implosion in PDP.
Tega: How's that any of our business? Our business is Nigeria.
Ojo: Is PDP not a part of Nigeria? Was that not how internal disagreement within Action Group in the First Republic snowballed into a national conflagration? Have we recovered from that inferno? So, we must pay attention to the madness in the political parties. APC and PDP are birds of the same feather and the earlier we curbed their excesses at the polling booth the better it will be for Nigeria.
Timi: That is why we must vote in Peter Obi. He will change the narrative.
Emeka: How are you sure he will make a difference. Please stop campaigning for a man who is saying sweet things. That is the same thing Buhari, and his gang did in 2015 that made us vote out a government that had a grip on the economy and moved on to welcome a sleepy and sleeping presidency!
Timi: Why is that it is you an Igbo man that must be the first to dismiss Peter Obi? As for me any Igbo man who doesn't support Obi is free to do so; but any Igbo person who campaigns against Peter Obi, is in the words of Chinua Achebe, 'efulefu!
Banjo: Must everything degenerate into ethnic politics? I am leaving. Bye!
Abubakar: Me too! Bye...
Ojo: *Emilokan*!

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

By
Eric
TENIOLA



Cont'd from last week Saturday/
Sunday edition

Many disqualified candidates from the SDP and NRC took the same view. Some of them had even canvassed the military to annul the election, and felt no sympathy for Abiola, whose misfortune they regarded as no different from their own in 1992. Some politicians also ditched Abiola after being given very generous financial "settlements" by Babangida. Abiola found himself having to financially match or exceed Babangida's "settlement" of these politicians in order to retain their support. However, the military had totally exhausted its goodwill and had little credibility left. Few believed it would or could organise a fresh election, and instead believed that the idea of another election was just a ruse to buy the military more time in office. Even if it could conduct another election in such a condensed time frame, such election would lack credibility and the winner would be haunted by the ghost of the annulled June 12 election. Although they had threatened Babangida and severely weakened his authority, the military

clique behind the annulment were willing to give Babangida breathing room to negotiate his own exit - so long as this did not entail Abiola as president. Abiola's stubborn insistence on his mandate further enraged senior officers and stiffened their opposition to him. Babangida decided to bypass Abiola and SDP party members to negotiate directly with the SDP and NRC leadership. After Babangida's meeting with the national chairmen of the SDP and NRC (Tony Anenih and Hammed Kusamotu respectively) in Abuja on July 7, 1993, the SDP and NRC issued a joint statement announcing their decision to "cooperate fully" with the FMG, and their acceptance of the FMG's proposal to form a national government. The parties decided: To cooperate fully with the Federal Military Government to ensure the speedy resolution of the present political impasse. To this end, the two parties accepted in principle the second option of a national government proposed by the Federal Military Government, but would suggest that in view of the implications of the option, a committee comprising representatives of the Federal Government and representatives of the two political parties should be set up to

Ernest Shonekan as a footnote (2)

work out the composition, tenure and other issues pertaining to the setting up of the national government.
The NRC thought a national government would allow them to circumvent their defeat on June 12, and provide the opportunity of getting some of its members into the government. It is not clear where the idea of a national government originated. Although the parties' joint statement of July 7 claimed that the national government was proposed by the FMG, Brigadier Shagaya and the Director-General of the CDS denied that the idea emanated from the military (although they disagreed on whose idea it was). Both Abiola and Omoruyi believe that former Head of State General Obasanjo proposed to Babangida the idea of handing over to a civilian national government which would conduct fresh elections. However, the biography of Shehu Musa Yar'Adua claimed that it was Lateef Jakande (former Governor of Lagos State) who suggested a national government. According to the biography (based on the recollections of Yar'Adua's colleague A.B. Borisade): Lateef Jakande tabled a suggestion for an interim national government at a meeting with secretary of the party Su'le Lamido, Chief Anenih and others. IBB said he shouldn't swear in Abiola if Aso Rock was burning because he did not want him dead. Jakande tore off a piece of paper and wrote, 'Why don't we try an interim government?' He handed the paper to Lamido - he probably still has it.
There does seem to be a consensus that the idea of forming an Interim National Government (ING) originated from a civilian source. Opportunists and pragmatists decided to back the ING proposal for different reasons. Opportunists thought it was their

best chance for another attempt at the presidency. Pragmatists knew that the military would never reverse the annulment, so started considering other avenues to force Babangida to stand down. Their objective changed from trying to validate Abiola's victory, to one of finding a face-saving way to manoeuvre Babangida out of power. Reversing the annulment would almost certainly have triggered a violent coup. Senior military officers repeatedly vowed that they would leave office only on their own terms and would never be "humiliated out of office" by civilian agitation. With the military unwilling to reverse the annulment, the ING became a way to get the military to give up political power without losing face.
The pragmatists knew that confronting a military government populated by soldiers trained and experienced in combat would end in disaster and bloodshed. They also wanted to avoid bleeding into the hands of hard core Babangida loyalists who were trying to manipulate the crisis to create enough chaos to justify leaving Babangida in power as the least daunting of frightening alternatives.
Shehu Musa Yar'Adua became a pivotal figure in the planning to force Babangida to relinquish power by August 27. He joined efforts to construct an ING to succeed Babangida, telling his SDP colleagues that as a former military officer, he knew and understood the mentality of a military government.
When the ING proposal was first presented to senior officers, they initially opposed it. However, they were eventually won over. Babangida was finally convinced of the need to step down by the insistence of his own generals, who concluded that his name had become so synonymous with the

pain of the annulment that his position was untenable. Even respected retired military officers became exasperated by Babangida. In a rare moment of indiscretion, the normally taciturn General Bali later revealed that he gave his fellow "Langtang Mafia" member Brigadier Shagaya the green light to force Babangida out.
I think the biggest blunder he [Babangida] made was to annul that election. Personally I think it was the freest and most orderly conducted election in this country and it was clear that Abiola was winning ... So when that happened, I told General Shagaya (he is a Langtang man: he was then the General Officer Commanding (GOC) the 15th Division); I said Babangida has lost the credibility to remain as head of state of this country. So, they must remove him. If he doesn't leave, they must remove him because he will never again stay as head of state."
On July 31, 1993, Babangida inaugurated a Tripartite Committee headed by Vice-President Aikhomu to formulate the ING's composition, duration and operational details. The Tripartite Committee comprised representatives from the FMG and the two political parties.
FMG Representatives: Vice-President Aikhomu, Lt-General Dogonyaro, Lt-General Aliyu Mohammed, Brigadier Mark, Brigadier Shagaya, Brigadier Ukpo, Ernest Shonekan, Clement Akpangbo, Alhaji Abdulrahman Okene. NRC Representatives: Adamu Ciroma, Bashir Dalhatu, Tom Ikimi, Eyo Ita, John Nwodo. SDP Representatives: Major-General Yar'Adua (retired), Dele Cole, Jim Nwobodo, Abubakar Rimi, Olusola Saraki, Dapo Sarumi, Joseph Toba.

To be continued next edition

Wike's many battles, how far can he go?

By CHRIS EZEONOH, PORT HARCOURT

Zeno, a renowned philosopher once said that, "Ambition often puts men into doing one of the meanest offices, so that climbing is performed in the same posture as creeping".

Governor Nyesom Wike of Rivers State is no doubt a political strategist; no one can take that credit away from him. He is very steadfast and puts all his energy into any task he sets out to do. He is also a stickler for quality.

When he was chairman of Obio/Akpor Local Government Council in Rivers State, he pioneered the building of state-of-the-art secretariat in local government councils in the state.

When Dr. Peter Odili, then as governor of Rivers State, went to commission the state-of-the-art secretariat at Obio/Akpor, he had while commending the feat Wike achieved in the building said had it not been that the state government had put up a befitting Government House in Brick House, he would have taken over the secretariat Wike built as new Government House to underscore the finesse associated with edifice.

When Rotimi Amaechi later had issues with Odili following the K-leg saga and the emergence of Celestine Omehia as governorship candidate and later governor, Wike who then was among Amaechi's strong loyalists stood uncompromisingly behind Amaechi throughout the latter's travails.

As Chief of Staff to Amaechi, Wike was like a buffer for the governor, ensuring that the business of the Government House flowed seamlessly. As Director General of Amaechi's campaign for second term as governor, Wike ensured that the campaign was fluid, colourful and with clear message.

When he became the Minister of State for Education, he transferred the same zeal and energy he had deployed in previous assignments and positions he had held to his task in the ministry.

And when it became clear that he could no longer be in the same political boat with Amaechi, Wike turned from the buffer he used to be to become Amaechi's nemesis such that the mention of Wike now makes Amaechi's heart beat to miss a pulse.

In the realm of national politics, Wike has established himself into an enigma, and an oracle of sorts who must be consulted before major decisions are taken.

Is it not intriguing that a political juggernaut like Alhaji Atiku Abubakar whom Chief Olusegun Obasanjo literally knelt down to beg for support when both of them were in the saddle of power is in a quandary now on how to handle Wike and seeing his seeming life ambition of becoming president almost being thwarted by Wike?

It is against this background that some analysts are asking the question: Is Wike a political 'monster'? Where does he derive his power of influence such that even fellow governors kowtow to him? Why does the PDP think that the party and its presidential candidate cannot make headway in the 2023 general election without Wike if the



Nyesom Wike

governor thinks and says so? This is what it seems because everyday Wike comes out with behavioral residues that suggest that the ongoing negotiation between his camp and that of Atiku is a mere waste of time.

Amidst the energy sapping negotiations, Wike has continued to play anti party, 'dinning and wining' with the opposition while dishing out snide remarks against PDP, Atiku and other PDP chieftains.

And while the 'fire' he set in PDP at the national level is raging, the governor has taken the drumbeat of 'war' down to Port Harcourt, positioning the snout of his 'missiles' at his (former) allies who would rather stick with Atiku in the build up to the 2023 general election.

People like the former governor of the state, Sir Celestine Omehia, former Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives, Sir, Hon. Austine Opara, Senator Lee Maeba among many others who have over the years provided astounding support for the governor have now strangely become political outcasts who must be hunted and hounded for choosing a political path they thought good for themselves by standing with Atiku.

"Governor Wike's stance of 'my enemy must be your enemy' in the state is childish and unreasonable. That is what he is telling us by attacking some PDP stalwarts in the state who would rather stand with Atiku Abubakar in the ongoing efforts to bring sanity in the party", a PDP source said at the weekend in Port Harcourt.

The source said that those who declined from antagonizing Atiku in solidarity with Wike are charting a political path for themselves and looking beyond May 2023 when Wike would have lost the paraphernalia of office that is now "intoxicating" him.

In a recent state wide broadcast, Governor Wike had threatened that the

state government would seal hotels and other facilities being used as gathering points for suspected political thugs and cultists in the state, apparently targeting perceived Atiku loyalists.

Last Friday, the Rivers State government made good the threat by clamping down on facilities belonging to some loyalists of Atiku Abubakar in Port Harcourt

Security operatives attached to Government House, Port Harcourt, sealed off a lounge, hotel and a petrol station, belonging to three chieftains of the PDP in the state, including a serving member of the House of Representatives, Hon. Chinyere Igwe.

About 40 staff and customers who were at the facilities during the time of the operation were arrested by the security operatives.

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Reacting to the development, the APC in a statement issued in Port Harcourt on Friday by its acting Publicity Secretary, Darlington Nwauju, said the opposition party was alarmed at the vendetta and style of harming businesses in the state as an act of regulation.

The statement reads in part: "May we draw the attention of the State Government and its agents to the provisions of Chapter 4 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) which allows for freedom to live and move freely in Rivers State.

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took place in the morning, later in the day at the flag off of the 12th fly over at the Mgbuoba, Ozuoba -Ada George Road in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, in Port Harcourt, Wike placed a subtle imprimatur on the action of the security agents, saying "let me tell anyone who cares to listen, whether you're in PDP, APC, you're in SDP, you're in Accord or any other party, if I catch you trying to breach the security in this state, you'll go in for it.

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Again the following day, Saturday while flagging off construction of internal roads in Omagwa, Ikwerre Local Government Area, Governor Wike announced that he had directed the security agencies to arrest the owner of the filling station earlier sealed off on Friday for allegedly engaging in illegal oil bunkering.

"If I hear of any filling station involved in oil bunkering, I will close that filling station. Therefore, I have directed the security agencies to identify who has that filling station in Diobu, arrest that person and we are going to prosecute the person. It doesn't matter how highly placed that person is.

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Gov. Nyesom Wike

Tinubu names Onanuga, Alake, Keyamo in media directorate of APC campaign

By **TUNDE JOSHUA**, Abuja

Presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, has approved creation of three departments in the Media and Communication Directorate of the party's presidential campaign team.

The directorate is made up of Public Affairs, Media and Publicity and Strategic Communication, departments.

Mr. Bayo Onanuga, the Managing Director of The News/PMNews and former Managing Director of News Agency of

Nigeria, heads the Director of Media and Publicity.

Former Information Commissioner in Lagos State, Mr. Dele Alake, heads the Director of Strategic Communication. He served in this role for the Buhari campaign in 2014-15.

Minister of State for Labour, Festus Keyamo leads the Director of Public Affairs department.

The Directorate will also have six deputy directors that include Mallam Lanre Issa-Onilu, Deputy Director, Communication Strategy, Hannatu Musawa, Deputy Director, Public Affairs, Kehinde Bamigbetan, Deputy Director,

Media Relations.

Mallam Modibbo Kawu will be Deputy Director of Media and Publicity, while Mohammed Bulama will be in charge of multi-media. Seun Olufemi-White will be the deputy director New Media.

"The tripodal arrangement, the first in a presidential campaign, has a line of other assistant directors and senior officials, representing the nation's various regions with job specifications spelt out.

"The campaign structure will also soon unveil representatives and spokesmen in all the states of the federation," said Onanuga in a statement on Sunday.



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Nigeria's seeming helplessness and Tompolo's solution to oil theft

*Over the years, Nigeria has been losing billions of dollars to illegal bunkering, pipeline vandalism and crude oil theft. In spite of security agencies guarding offshore and onshore oil installations and pipelines in the Niger Delta, the country continues to lose huge amount of crude oil to oil theft. The situation has forced the Federal government and the Nigeria National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Limited to revalidate a multi-billion surveillance contract with former Niger Delta militant leader, Government Ekpemupolo, popularly called Tompolo, to help fight the menace, a development that prompted **JOHNMARK UKOKO** to ask if Nigeria and its various security apparatuses have become helpless and clueless to tackle the challenge.*

On August 10, 2022 the government of Equatorial Guinea announced that it arrested a ship laden with 500,000 barrels of stolen crude oil from the Nigeria's waters.

The report claimed that the Nigeria Navy attempted to arrest the ship on the Nigerian sea, but was unable to do so before Equatorial Guinea arrested the vessel in its territory.

The report has that the ship had 10 Indians, five Sri Lankans, two Nigerians and four others, whose nationalities were not immediately confirmed.

While top officials of the government of Equatorial Guinea were discussing the development with the Nigerian government in Abuja and what should be done to the oil thieves and their 500,000 barrel loots, the Federal Government hinted that it has had enough of crude oil theft and swiftly announced that it has struck a multi-million dollars pipeline surveillance contract to a former militant leader in the Niger Delta, Chief Government Ekpemupolo, popularly known as Tompolo.

The government actually renewed the contract that was initiated by former President Goodluck Jonathan's administration, as crude oil theft, which has been rampant during the immediate past government, but worsened under the President Muhammadu Buhari administration, consistently robbed the country of huge revenues.

On their part, International Oil Companies (IOCs) at a recent conference in Abuja announced that the country was losing as much as 400,000 crude oil daily to theft, and as such, the Federal Government, IOCs, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Limited and security agencies should strategise and synergise to curb the menace.

As the Federal Government was thinking of the best approach to overcome the challenge, the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) announced that oil theft in Nigeria has been giving the oil cartel serious concern as it was distorting its oil production quota.

The oil cartel revealed that for several months, Nigeria has consistently been unable to meet its daily production quota, which it said, hovered between 1.7 million to 2 million barrels per day (mbpd).

While Nigeria is expected to produce 1.7 to two million barrels per day, it currently produces one million to 1.2 million barrels per day, thereby robbing the country of huge amount in foreign exchange earnings.

Its failure to meet crude oil production quota has led to depletion of the country's external reserves from over \$35 billion early this year to less than \$20 billion as of June 2022.

Also, about two weeks ago, the Minister of Finance, Budget and Economic Planning, Mrs. Zainab Ahmed, announced that the country was losing about \$1.9 billion monthly to crude oil theft, saying that if the country failed to tackle the menace, a serious economic crisis was imminent.

Before painting the country's gloomy economic outlook, the naira, which exchanged for about N500 to the dollar earlier in the year, crashed to about N700 to \$1 in July, prompting the National Assembly to summon Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Godwin Emefiele, to appear before it to explain what was going on with the local currency at the official the parallel market.

Despite Emefiele's promises and the fact that the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) arrested some foreign currency speculators last month, the naira still exchanged for over N600 to the dollar at the parallel market.

Although the naira exchanged for N429 to the dollar at the Investors and Exporters (I&E) window on Friday, August 19, 2022, it exchanged for between N630 and N645 to \$1 at the parallel market depending on location.

Economists and analysts blamed the development on scarcity of Foreign Exchange (FX) due to the low crude oil production and export, a situation that has been compounded by the Russia-Ukraine war.

While other OPEC member countries continue to reap handsomely from crude oil sales, non-OPEC members Nigeria groan under a depressed economy and lack of funds, just as the Federal Government declared that the massive crude oil theft has robbed it of required revenues to meet its budget projections.

In a rather belated response two weeks ago, President Muhammadu Buhari dispatched a



Chief Tompolo

delegation led by the Minister of State for Petroleum Resources Chief Timpre Sylva and comprising Chief of Defence Staff (CDC), General Lucky Irabor, Group Managing Director of NNPC, Mele Kyari and others to visit the oil producing states to solicit their support in the fight against oil theft.

Irabor and the Director-General of the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), Dr. Bashir Jamoh, assured governors of the nine oil producing states and Nigerians of their determination to fight oil theft headlong.

While Nigerians await fulfillment of Irabor and Jamoh's promises and that of other local security forces, a ship loaded with 500,000 barrels of Nigeria's stolen crude oil was arrested in Equatorial Guinea last week.

However, the failure of the security forces to stop the massive theft might have forced the Federal Government and NNPC to sign a surveillance contract with Tompolo, a former commander of the defunct Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) to end illegal bunkering, illegal refining and all forms of oil theft in the Niger Delta region.

A source close to Tompolo told *The Trumpet* that the contract was

worth over N4 billion monthly, adding that the former MEND leader will be responsible for monitoring and overseeing other surveillance contracts, contractors and their activities in the oil-bearing region.

Although, the actual figure Tompolo will be paid could not be confirmed, the source said Tompolo's role in the deal will be similar to the one he played during former President Jonathan's administration when Mrs. Diezani Alison-Madueke was Minister of Petroleum Resources.

Before the Buhari-led government cancelled Tompolo's contract in 2015, it was learnt that the strategy he adopted effectively tackled illegal bunkering and oil theft and increased Nigeria's crude oil production quota to over 2mbpd.

It would be recalled that at the inception of the Buhari administration, the contract was cancelled, while Tompolo was declared him wanted, though he was later exonerated of all wrong doings.

"But it now appears as if the Federal Government has suddenly realised the need to bring him back, because currently, over 500,000 barrels per day (bpd) are being lost to illegal bunkering," the source said.

The Trumpet learnt that the new deal was brokered by Sylva and some top officials of the NNPC, including the Group Executive Director, Upstream, Adokiye Tombomeye.

In its new status, NNPC as profit making outfit is determined more than ever before to curb all illegal activities affecting operations and making the company run at a loss.

At the signing of the renewed contract with Tompolo, it was also learnt that over 5,000 stakeholders from the Niger Delta, especially from Bayelsa and Delta states attended the meeting.

While it appears that the government has realised that security agencies lack the willpower to end crude oil theft, the presidency and top government officials are now lamenting that the menace had impacted negatively on the country's revenue generation capacity.

Responding to the development, most Nigerians say it was ironical that Tompolo has once again secured the contract, in spite of all the allegations the Buhari administration leveled against him at its inception, adding that it was unbelievable that the former militant leader could secure the same contract from the Federal Government.

They expressed surprise that the Buhari government could re-award the contract to Tompolo to protect the country's crude oil pipelines and crude oil facilities.

Expressing disgust that thousands of navy officers, security agencies and their men could not arrest crude oil thieves, they lamented that the country's security apparatuses seem to be collaborating with some foreign powers to steal Nigeria's crude oil.

They maintained that it was unbelievable that crude oil thieves that stole 500,000 barrels of crude oil and evaded arrest in Nigeria could be arrested in Equatorial Guinea.

But with the renewal of Tompolo's contract to guide monitor and possibly protect crude oil pipelines in the Niger Delta region and end crude oil theft, most Nigerians wonder if the country's security agencies and their officials have become helpless and clueless on strategies to effectively put a final stop to the massive stealing of crude oil in the country.

Customs grants N2.3 trillion duty waivers

Stories by JOHNMARK UKOKO

It has been established that the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS) gave duty exceptions and waivers to importers amounting to N2.5 trillion in 2021, a 194.65 per cent increase from the N779.4 billion waivers it granted in 2020.

The exemptions included Value Added Tax (VAT) relief granted on imports, waivers and concessions on imports duties, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Trade Liberalisation Scheme surcharges, comprehensive import supervision scheme, as well as excise and levies.

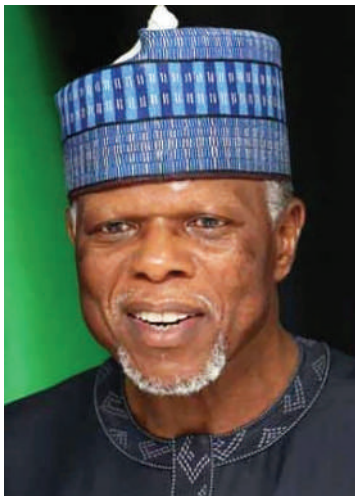
These data are contained in the 2023-2025 Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) and Fiscal Strategy Paper, which revealed that the exemptions translated to huge amount of revenue forgone relative to the N1.34 trillion the NCS collected as revenue in 2021.

Globally, governments use import duty waivers, exemptions and concessions to protect local businesses and jobs, but they are susceptible to abuse and could be major drains on the national economy.

Also, import duty waivers are vehicles to meet specific economic goals, especially in protecting local industries, creating jobs and promoting exports.

Details of the aggregate customs exceptions showed that waivers on import duties were valued at N33.85 billion surcharge or seven per cent of import duty amounted to N30.38 billion, while Common External Tariff (CET) levy reached N1.42 trillion.

Similarly, Comprehensive Import Supervision Scheme (CISS) was valued at N130.04 billion ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme, N72.91 billion, iron levy, N15.879, National Automotive Council (NAC) levy of N41.39 million and import VAT of N208.24 billion.



Hammed Ali, Custom boss

The data revealed that the highest jump in aggregate custom was in the Common External Tariff levy which jumped from N223.19 billion in 2020 to N1.42 trillion in 2021.

In 2021, import duty amounted N305.65 billion, surcharge was N305.65 billion and N21.29 billion, Common External Tariff levy was N223.99 billion, comprehensive import duty generated

N28.87 billion, while ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme was N1.08 billion.

Also, iron levy was N113.77 billion, while NAC levies amounted to N179.60 billion.

"Exemptions applied to imported goods covered by diplomatic privileges, military hard wares, fuel and lubricants, hospital and surgical equipment, aircraft parts and ancillary equipment, plant and machinery imported by companies in Export Processing Zones (EPZs), health and medical supplies to contain the spread of COVID-19 pandemic.

"Other exemptions include reliefs on the Presidential Initiative on COVID-19 supplies, imports, tax expenditure on customs and VAT relief. Tax expenditure

estimated based on Nigeria's tax reference, including N1.419 trillion from waivers of CET levy, which constitutes 72.6 per cent of total customs tax expenditures.

"Import VAT tax expenditures amounted to N111 billion of the N1.49 trillion from waivers of common external tariff Levy import duties exemption certificate amounted to N1.417 trillion," the report added.

It further showed that petroleum products, especially fuels and lubricants accounted for 46 per cent of N216.85 billion import duty waivers granted, adding that in 2021, China, accounted for nearly half of total relief granted waivers, while Singapore, Netherlands, Togo, Benin Republic were also major beneficiaries.

SEC to sanction stakeholders over unclaimed dividends •Cautions Nigerians against Ponzi schemes

In spite of efforts by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) to ensure the effective deployment of the Electronic Dividend Mandate Management System (e-DMMS), investors have continued to lament acute delay in the payment of their e-dividends.

Director-General of the commission, Lamido Yuguda, who stated this recently in Lagos, said unclaimed dividends as of 2021 stood at N177 billion, which was higher than the N168 billion in 2020.

"Capital market operators must also do more to demonstrate an efficient capital market system that prioritises the interest of investors through their activities.

"As part of efforts to stem the tide of activities of unregistered crowd funding platforms, the

commission warned the operators of the platforms that they stand the chance of being prosecuted," he said.

He also said the commission had obtained donor securities market surveillance system, adding that the system would improve the commission's regulatory and supervisory capabilities over securities trading activities.

Yuguda stressed that commission would continue to engage the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) to deepen the commodities ecosystem, maintaining that the commission had continued to engage the Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning on requests for tax exemption for corporate bonds.

Meanwhile, the SEC has urged Nigerians to be careful in patronising Ponzi schemes, describing them as "cancerous

and major hindrance to effective capital market operations."

Yuguda said this at its post-Capital Market Committee (CMC) meeting media briefing in Abuja where he revealed that the commission had been fighting against Ponzi schemes where people without licences extort money from unsuspecting victims.

He said the commission had been working with other agencies to reduce access of Ponzi scheme in the country, adding: "We have been saying that people should only deal with registered operators with the commission. People should confirm that an operator is licensed with the commission before patronising them.

"We have done a lot of sensitisation to discourage people from patronising Ponzi schemes, but unfortunately, a lot of people still patronise them. We have cases reported to us and our enforcement and the Police have been working on several cases trying to resolve issues of investments that have been lost. It is not difficult to recognise a Ponzi scheme. When a return is too good to be true, desist from it."

He disclosed that the commission was collaborating with the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to fight money laundering and promoters of Ponzi schemes in the country.

Yuguda, who said the commission would continue to enlighten members of the public to desist from patronising Ponzi schemes, added that the 2021-2025 revised Capital Market Plan (CMP) would be launched at the next CMC's meeting in November 2022.

NBS points to rising price of kerosene

National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has alerted that the average retail price per litre of household Dual Purpose Kerosene (DPK), popularly known as kerosene, rose by 98.76 per cent in July 2022 compared to July 2021.

NBS's National Household Kerosene Price watch for July 2022, which was announced on Friday, August 19, 2022 in Abuja showed that between July 2021 and July 2022, its average retail price increased by 98.76 per cent from N397.34 to N789.5 per litre.

According to the report, the product witnessed a month-on-month increase of 3.68 per cent in July 2022, rising to N789.75 from N761.69 in June 2022.

Also, state profile analysis showed that Enugu State had the highest increase in the average price per litre of kerosene in July 2022, with N1003.68, followed by Ekiti and Osun state with N989.58 and N949.11 respectively.

Alternatively, Bayelsa State reported the lowest price at N643.06, followed by Benue State at N645.76 and Rivers State at N658.24 respectively.

The study further revealed that on regional basis, the South West had the highest increase in average retail price per litre of kerosene with N900.90, followed by the South East with

N892.40 and the North Central with N761.92, while the South-South recorded the lowest with N727.07.

It also showed that consumers paid an average retail price of N2,886.41 for a gallon of domestic kerosene in July 2022 an increase of 7.98 per cent from N2,673.04 in June 2022, adding that the increase from N1,302.56 in July 2021 was up 121.60 per cent, year-on-year.

State profile analysis disclosed that the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, had the highest average increase in retail price for a gallon of household kerosene followed by Enugu State and Ekiti states at N3,500.75 and N3,450.00.

According to the survey, Borno and Gombe states came second and third with N2,500 and N2,430.57.

The South West had the highest average retail price per gallon of household kerosene with N3,186.93 according to an analysis by zone, followed by the South East and the North Central with N3,130.76 and N2,924.73, while the lowest average retail price per gallon was N2,597.04 in the North East.

Similarly, the price watch of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), popularly known as cooking gas for July 2022 showed an increase of 105.35 per cent for 3.5kg of the commodity year-over-year.

Naira appreciates after two-day lull

After a two-day lull, the Naira appreciated against the dollar at the Investor and Exporter (I&E) window on Friday, August 19, 2022.

It exchanged at N429.05 to the dollar, representing an increase of 0.05 per cent compared with the M429.38 it exchanged for the dollar on Thursday, August 18, 2022.

The open indicative rate closed at N428.53 to the dollar on Friday, while an exchange

rate of N444 to the dollar was the highest rate recorded in the day's trading before it settled at N429.08, just as it sold for as low as N416.06 to the dollar in the day's trading.

A total of \$50.22 million dollar was traded in foreign exchange at the official window, while *The Trumpet* findings showed that it sold for between N630 to N652 to \$1 at the parallel market in some locations in Lagos.



Lamido Yuguda

Expert laments plight of airlines, urges CBN to release trapped funds

By **EDU ABADE**, Business Editor

A former Vice Chairman of the National Association of Nigerian Travel Agencies (NANTA), Segun Adewale, has urged the Federal Government to urgently repatriate the \$600 million ticket revenue to foreign airlines operating in the country.

Adewale, who is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of an aviation company, gave the charge in a statement he issued in Lagos at the weekend.

It would be recalled that on Thursday, August 18, 2022, Emirates Airlines announced suspension of its flight operations in Nigeria as from September 1, 2022 over its inability to repatriate its funds from the country.

International carriers operating in the country have constantly complained about their inability to repatriate funds to their home countries.

Blocked funds belonging to the airlines have risen to about \$600 million as the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) had not been able to make dollars available for the carriers to repatriate to their countries.

Adewale stated that the CBN blocked revenue from ticket sales, which accumulated since 2021 till July 2022, from being repatriated to airline operators through the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

"Repatriation of revenues of tickets sold to travelers by airline operators to their home offices is CBN's responsibility, but it has refused to release the equivalent in dollars for services rendered.

"We have lost many airlines and jobs are being lost in the aviation sector and at our airports. The development is inimical to our economic wellbeing as a country. From the spiritual point of view, it is wrong to muzzle the ox that threads the corn," Adewale stated.

He decried that the blocked funds had already led to reduction of air connectivity and restriction of flights, lamenting that it was disheartening to know that the same foreign exchange (forex) being denied the airlines was being released to import non-essential products such as champagnes and tooth picks.

"If foreign airlines suspend their flight operations, businesses will be shifted to neighbouring countries like Ghana, Benin Republic and Togo. The issue is so difficult for the operators, who now borrow forex from their home offices to fuel their aircraft.

"With the increase in dollar rate leading to rise in the prices of flight tickets, especially en-route America and Dubai, which is now over N1 million, the environment is becoming too hostile for businesses to thrive," he stated.

Adewale, therefore, appealed to the Minister of Aviation, Hadi Sirika, his Finance, Budget and National Planning counterpart, Zainab Ahmed, as well as the CBN to do the needful and ensure availability and release of the funds.

Guidelines for implementation of Finance Act 2021 ready, says NAICOM

By **JOHNMARK UKOKO**

National Insurance Commission (NAICOM) has declared that having carefully studied provisions of the Finance Act 2021, especially on capital requirements, it has drafted regulatory guidelines, which will soon be issued during year for implementation.

NAICOM's Deputy Commissioner (Technical), Sabiu Abubakar, who disclosed this at a forum recently in Lagos, also submitted that the commission would commence a pilot Risk-Based Supervision (RBS) examination in eight insurance companies.

He stressed that the commission did a pilot RBS examination in 2021 with

seven companies and that the outcome had been sent to the affected underwriting firms.

Maintaining that NAICOM had started training its staff members, he said the RBS would commence in August ending.

"The RBS team in collaboration with FSD Africa and local insurance operators are expected to ensure that they

carry out capacity building of their staff members on RBS, as involvement of the operators in the industry remains crucial," he stated.

He said the RBS framework is very demanding in terms of human, technical capacity and other resources, adding that the commission hoped to commence full implementation of RBS between 2023 and 2024.

Rivers State farmers tackle Wike over purported neglect

By **CHRIS EZEONOH**, Port Harcourt

Rivers State chapter of the All Farmers Association of Nigeria (ALFAN) has lamented the neglect of the Agricultural sector by the Nyesom Wike-led administration in the state.

State Chairman of ALFAN, Chief Firmobari Igwe, who spoke with The Trumpet in an interview, lamented that despite their importance to the economy, farmers' welfare had been relegated to the background in the state and entire country.

He particularly expressed disappointment over the Rivers State Government's attitude towards farmers, who he said, were going through hard times across the country.

According to him, farmers needed urgent help from government to avoid food shortage and to encourage others to join the agricultural sector.

"We are saying that farmers in the state have been totally neglected, as their welfare is not being considered. Government is not doing anything about it and it is disturbing. Without farm-



GOV. Nyesom Wike

ers or farming activities in the state, there will be no food. We appeal to the state and Federal governments to look into the welfare of farmers.

"The situation in Rivers State in particular should be reviewed so that we will not depend on other states for our food needs. We have fertile land all over the

state and we are blessed.

"We can plant our crops without fertiliser, but surprisingly we are still depending on other states for food supplies, which is pathetic. We have good and fertile lands in Ogoni, Omuma, Etche, Ikwerre and other parts of the state where we can plant and produce food stuffs capable of sustaining the state.

Igwe said although the state government was trying in the aspect of commercialisation, it had not impacted grassroots farmers, adding: "When it has to do with farming or agriculture, the grassroots has to feel the impact. In our neighbouring states, their governments carry the farmers along and they are doing well, but it's not the same here in Rivers.

"I don't know whether they are playing politics with it or have other people they are dealing with, because for me as Chairman of all farmers in Rivers, we have not seen anything from the state government.

"Our main challenge has been our welfare, we have been totally neglected and it is telling

on us. We just heard recently that the state government approved the training of 10,000 youths in agriculture. Our position is that if it is being done and they are sincere about it, it will take out some youths from the streets and it will boost the state's agricultural sector."

On the impact of insecurity on farming, Igwe, who said agriculture remained the livelihood of every nation, any country without farmers could not survive, lamented that insecurity has really affected farming, but once the government commits to investments in agriculture, it would go a long way.

He called on farmers in the state to use their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) wisely in the 2023 general elections and vote people who would cater for the interest of farmers in the state.

Igwe also admonished youths to take farming seriously, because it remains the most lucrative investment, stressing: "Farming is the best business on earth. Even if you are a lawyer or practicing any profession, it is advisable to engage in farming."

NOA pledges to partner NTCA on tobacco control

By **EDU ABADE**, Business Editor

Director-General of the National Orientation Agency (NOA), Dr. Garba Abari, has said that the agency is willing and available to work with the tobacco control community to ensure that tobacco products are effectively controlled in the country.

He made the commitment when a delegation of tobacco control advocates from the Nigeria Tobacco Control Alliance (NTCA) visited the agency's headquarters in Abuja.

Chairman of NTCA Board and leader of the delegation, Akinbode Oluwafemi, commended Abari for dedicating time for the meeting in spite of his busy schedule.

He lamented that about 16,000 people die yearly in Nigeria from the use of tobacco products, but added that the figure remained conservative and that the actual number from an updated survey would most likely be higher.

This, he said, is as a result of the proliferation of Shisha

in the Nigerian market, which tobacco companies market as a safer alternative to conventional cigarettes; an assertion that science has debunked as untrue. Oluwafemi stressed that Shisha has higher concentration of chemicals, most of which are known to cause cancer and are twice as deadly as conventional tobacco products.

He also condemned the placement of tobacco products in movies and other entertainment products as a form of advertisement by tobacco companies thus violating the provisions of the National Tobacco Control Act 2015, which bans tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship (TAPS).

"This presents a challenge because young people are negatively influenced to take up smoking, which often becomes a gateway to the use of hard drugs. The smoking and public health menace has direct link to the insecurity challenges facing the country," he said.

He also restated that as a

party to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO-FCTC), Nigeria had gone a step further towards implementing the recommendations of the convention through the enactment of the National Tobacco Control Act in 2015 and approval of its Implementing Regulations in 2019.

"The NOA with its strategic mandate and national reach has a clear duty of public education and awareness in the fight to ensure that Nigeria is tobacco-free," he added.

The delegation, therefore, requested to partner with NOA to take the tobacco-free message to local communities and all Nigerians.

Responding, Abari said the issue of tobacco control was important because of its devastating impact on society, adding that tobacco control required critical attention, because Nigeria's youth population was high and that most youths are impressionable and easily influenced by who and what they see in movies.

He agreed that smoking and

consequent drug use is a vice that permeates all levels of society, causing rifts, sickness and hardship and, therefore, pledged to open the doors of the agency for collaboration on effective tobacco control.

He made the pledge in company of his management team including the Director, Planning, Research and Strategy, Samuel Soughul, Director, Reform Coordination and Service Improvement, Samuel Attah, Director of Orientation and Behaviour Modification, Theresa Nnalue, Director, Public Enlightenment and Mass Mobilisation, Mrs. Theresa Maduekwe and Director, Documentation, Translation and Publication, Mrs. Victoria Kansa.

The NTCA delegation had Director of Programmes, Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa (CAPPA), Philip Jakpor; Project Officer of NTCA, Chibuike Nworie; Communication Officer of NTCA, Paul Ashibel and Digital Media Manager of CAPPA, Abayomi Sarumi.



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Football matters not for civil courts, Pinnick warns

By OVIRI KELVIN, Sports Editor, Abuja

■ Nigeria risks FIFA ban ■ Back to trenches if- PFAN

President of the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF), Amaju Melvin Pinnick, has warned stakeholders that the world soccer governing body abhors taking related matters to civil courts.

A Member of the Confederation of African Football (CAF) executive committee said the country risks FIFA ban should forces continue to insist on dragging the national federation to court over the amendment of statutes.

His caution is a response to the spate of agitations and appeals by concerned stakeholders, ex-internationals and the Ministry of Youth and Sports Development to the federation to amend the NFF Statutes to include all relevant stakeholders for the development of Nigerian football.

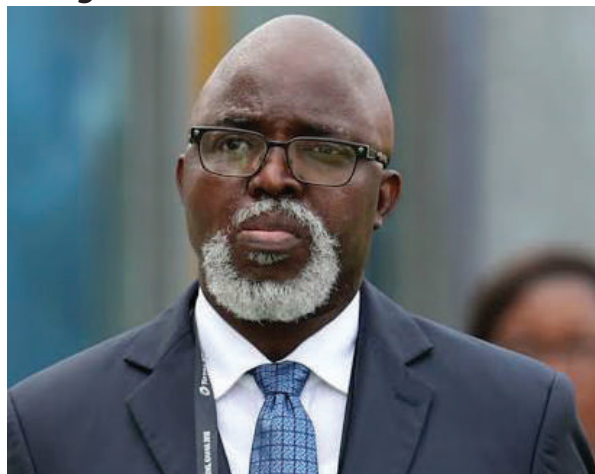
"I want to say that enough is enough. We have tolerated these individuals for much longer than necessary," Pinnick roared.

"I am leaving the position of NFF Presidency in a few weeks but I am still a Member of the FIFA Council and I can talk about Nigeria Football anywhere.

"It is time to call the bluff of these persons. Their actions not only malign and defame the NFF; these also de-market the NFF to a certain degree," the NFF President continued.

"If the NFF holds a General Assembly, they go to court. If the NFF does not hold, they go to court. Every single day, they want to go to court. It is their right, but it is also the right of the NFF to curtail such excesses.

"FIFA clearly stipulates that football matters are not meant for civil courts, and



further infractions by anyone would be met with the stiffest of sanctions, including but not limited to outright ban from the game," he added.

Recall that on June 17, President Muhammadu Buhari directed the NFF to commence processes to amend the NFF Statutes in a bid to include more relevant stakeholders that were hitherto disenfranchised from previous elective congresses.

On Thursday, the NFF held the 77th Annual General Assembly in Lagos State where all the modalities to hold the September Elective Congress that will usher new football administrators into the Glass House were set.

Although there happens to be a headway to the September elective congress after several hitches, including an ex parte order by the Federal High Court in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State that barred the NFF from holding the 77th Annual General Assembly, stakeholders are calling on the nation's football governing body to amend the NFF Statutes.

Furthermore, Pinnick cited the NFF Statutes to assert his position regarding litigations against the nation's football body.

Article 69 (1) of the NFF Statutes 2010 stipulates: "NFF, its members, players, officials and match and player's agents will not take any dispute to ordinary courts unless specifically provided for in these Statutes and FIFA regulations. Any disagreement shall be submitted to the jurisdiction of FIFA, CAF, WAFU or NFF.

(2) NFF shall have jurisdiction on internal national disputes i.e., disputes between parties belonging to NFF. FIFA shall have jurisdiction on international disputes, i.e., disputes between parties belonging to different Associations and/or Confederations."

Meanwhile, the Professional Footballers Association of Nigeria (PFAN), on Saturday, accused the NFF of tactically denying the representatives of the association from participating in the 77th Annual General Assembly.

Harrison Jalla, who heads the task force constituted by PFAN, with other representatives to forge its position regarding the election to usher in new executives, were denied access to present their position.

He noted that the association is paying keen interest as development unfolds, adding that Nigeria football is bound for doom should the local government and state football associations fail to conduct their elections that would produce a new breed of electorates for the NFF election.

"They can return to the trenches if the issue of not holding new Local Government Football Council and State Football Association elections before the general elections is not dealt with first, to produce a brand-new electorate that will elect a brand-new leadership," he said.

Jalla, adding that players are an indispensable entity in the current five constituent members of the congress, reiterated that they are waiting and watching patiently as the event unfolds.

Recently, the FIFA banned the All Indian Football Association (AIFF) over "undue influence from third parties" into issues surrounding the football association "which constitutes a serious violation of the FIFA Statutes."

According to FIFA, who divulged that they are constantly in touch with India's Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports to fashion out a remedy, stated that the Asian country can no longer host the FIFA U17 Women's World Cup in October until the ban is lifted.

Consequently, should NFF and shareholders not manage the issues surrounding the elective congress and amendment of NFF Statutes properly, which has close similarity with India's, the nation risk FIFA's venomous wrath.

I'll bounce back better, Usman declares

Nigerian Kamaru Usman, after his defeat to Leon Edwards in Sunday's rematch at UFC 278, has vowed to return better than envisaged.

Usman, in the contest against Edwards for the welterweight title, was knocked out with a powerful head-kick to lay out cold.

The fighter was immediately rushed to the hospital following precautionary measures which thwarted any room for a post-match interview.

However, Usman, who later in a tweet, admitted that champions are also fallible, said he was going to return better than before.

"Champions f\$ck up sometimes," Usman tweeted.

"But we bounce back and come with vengeance!"

"Damn I love this sport!!! Things happen but... Alhamdulillah, we move!! Congratulations Leon Edwards," he said.

Meanwhile, UFC chief Dana White explained that he is reviewing the option of choosing Wembley Stadium as the venue for the third contest between the fighters.

"How do you not do it? Wembley... yeah," he noted

White said from the commentary, he thought Usman had the day until

Edward landed a head-kick.

"I thought that Usman fought the perfect fight. It's crazy, I was listening to the commentary of Joe Rogan, Jon Anik and Daniel Cormier, and they were spot on in everything they were saying about what Leon needed to do," he continued.

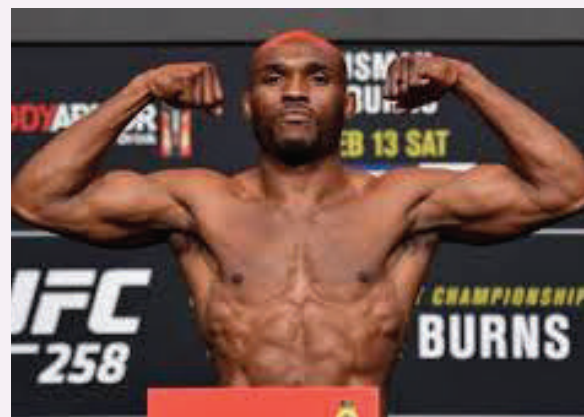
"And as soon as they were saying it, he literally lands the head-kick.

"Usman fought with absolute and total confidence all night. He fought the perfect fight, it might not be the most fan-friendly style but...he was landing big shots to the body, big shots to the head, elbows - he couldn't have fought a more perfect fight.

"There are no lopsided, one-sided, fights in this sport. The problem with this fight was that people wouldn't give Leon enough credit. He's a very dangerous opponent," White added.

Nevertheless, the Nigerian who was ahead of the judges' scorecards in the final round, was knocked out with less than a minute to go.

Following the loss to Edward, having won the first match, a trilogy was activated on the cards which would see both fighters meet soon for the third match.



Vardy says 'I feel like part of furniture' in Leicester over new contract

Jamie Vardy has signed a new contract with Leicester City that expires in the summer of 2024, admitting that "I feel like part of the furniture".

The former England international said he was amazed the moment he got wind of the club's plans to retain him.

Vardy noted when the opportunity presented itself, he never reconsidered the offer to pen a new deal with the Foxes.

"I'm obviously over the moon. Once I heard it was something the club was looking at, there was only one thing that was going to happen, and I was going to sign it," he told LFC TV.

"The decision was easy.

"I've been here long enough now that I feel like part of the furniture," Vardy added.

The 35-year-old was among the instrumental figures whose performances catapulted Leicester City to the Premier League 8 years ago after he joined the Foxes from Fleetwood, a non-league for £1m in 2012.

Vardy has been consistent in Leicester City, scoring 164 goals in all competitions from 387 appearances.

One season he would never forget like other Foxes, 2015-2016 season, where his goal-poaching qualities saw the striker net 24 times, including 13 successive Premier League goals when the Foxes won the title to stun the world.

"I think you can see with the way we're trying to play, the way the club's wanting to go, that it's going to be onwards and upwards," Vardy continued.

Fenerbahce want Iheanacho in Turkish Süper Lig

Turkish Süper Lig giant Fenerbahce have turned to Nigeria Super Eagles striker Kelechi Iheanacho to bolster their attacking option in the 2022-2023 season.

From a report, the technical committee of Fenerbahce recommended Iheanacho, who plays for Leicester City in the Premier League, as a prime target before the summer window closes.

According to Futbol Meydani, the Super Eagles striker has been on the radar of Yellow Canaries who are

desperately in need of a top scorer.

Following the above, negotiations between both clubs have started in earnest to conclude a loan move for the striker before the transfer window draws its curtain.

Corroborating the above report, another report from England confirms that the Turkish topflight club has entered into a negotiation with Leicester for the 25-year-old whose contract with the Foxes subsists until 2024.

The Yellow Canaries need Iheanacho on a season-long loan with an option to sign him permanently at the end of the season.

Kelechi Iheanacho joined Leicester from Manchester City in 2017 circa €27m where he has netted 73 career goals in 246 appearances in all competitions, including 25 Premier League goals for the Foxes in 124 appearances.

Reports have it that feelers from the meeting between both clubs have been positive.



Eberachi Eze relishing role in Crystal Palace

By OVIRI KELVIN, Sports Editor, Abuja

British-born Nigerian midfielder Eberachi Eze is relishing his role as the focal point of Crystal Palace's attack and complemented Saturday's comeback victory against Aston Villa.

Eze, who is being courted by the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) to play for the Super Eagles, was outstanding for Crystal Palace at Selhurst Park playing the number 10 position.

According to the 24-year-old after the comeback win, he feels better playing in central attacking midfield position.

"It's good to be starting and playing and enjoying my football. I feel free and that's what I want to continue," Eze said.

He explained the intricacies involved in his role which actually worked for Crystal Palace.

"In midfield, I can get on the ball and be effective and it's just a good team to play in. People want to give you the ball and play and today it worked for us," he added.

Furthermore, Eze, who

Best performance since he came back- Vieira



is still eligible to play in the Nigeria senior men's national team despite playing for England U21 national team, added that the team worked assiduously to ensure they put in outstanding performances at Selhurst Park.

He continued: "We worked hard. We wanted to put in a good performance here at home and get the three points - which we did.

"We were looking to be creative in and around their box and see things but unfortunately [Jeffrey Schlupp's ruled-out goal] didn't come off.

"But regardless we had a good performance and it's good we came away with three points today.

"It was a difficult start but we did what we could, put in good performances and today it paid off," Eze added.

Meanwhile, Eagles boss Patrick Vieira was delighted with Eze's outing against Aston Villa where Wilfred Zaha's brace cancelled Ollie Watkins' opener before Jean-Philippe Mateta sealed a 3-1 victory.

Vieira explained that the midfielder's improvement is on a progression and

acknowledged the team for putting up a good display today.

"Eze is getting better and better," he said.

"When the team play like that it allows him to show his quality. He loves the game, is a football player and loves to have the ball at his feet.

"Today it's his best performance since he came back," he added.

Earlier in his post-match interview after the Eagles' performance recorded three points against Steven Gerrard's side, Vieira said the team endured a difficult period to turn the result around.

"I'm really pleased, delighted. We had a really good performance today. We went through a difficult period but we remained calm, determined and competed well," he said.

"At times we played some really good football today so I'm really pleased with the quality and attitude we showed today.

"It was important to try to answer [Villa's early goal] straight away. We scored that goal really early and were really up for it. I was pleased with that," he added.

Inter take Milan Skriniar off transfer market

Following the delay in the negotiation for Inter Milan defender Milan Skriniar, Nerazzurri President Steven Zhang has withdrawn the Slovakian from the transfer market.

Paris Saint-Germain were reportedly itching to sign Skriniar to Parc des Princes but failure to meet Inter's demands has allegedly truncated their effort.

According to Sky Sports Italia journalist, Di Marzio, before the match against Spezia where Inter thrashed them 3-0 at San Siro, Zhang will no longer listen to offers for the 27-year-old.

"Yesterday [Friday] Inter took Skriniar off the transfer market," Di Marzio said,

"Zhang communicated it to the directors and Inzaghi. He can't be touched by anyone and, on the contrary, there will soon be talk of a contract extension.

"Yesterday [Friday] PSG made a new bid which only increased the add-ons included. Inter not only refused it but also made clear that at the moment they won't accept other offers," he added.

Moreover, Zhang gave a timeline to sign Lazio's Francesco Acerbi which may end up being Inter's last transfer deal in the summer window.

Di Marzio revealed that representatives of Nerazzurri met with Lazio

on Friday to discuss a potential switch of Acerbi to San Siro.

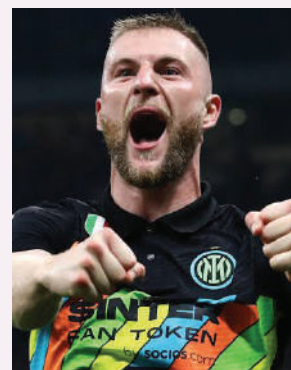
However, a loan deal with an option for a buy at the close of the season put forward.

"Yesterday [Friday] there was a meeting with Lazio, in which the teams both proved to be open to a loan deal with a purchase option," Di Marzio said.

"I believe that between Monday and Tuesday it can be wrapped up, which should make Simone Inzaghi happy as he's already worked with him before at the Biancocelesti," he added.

Skriniar's prospective move to Paris has undergone a different tone despite keen interest from PSG in the last couple of weeks.

However, with the insistence of coach Simone Inzaghi to keep the defender for the season, it has become clearer that Inter are not ready to part ways with the Slovakian just yet.



World champion Tobi Amusan handed wild card entry to Budapest 2023

World champion Tobi Amusan has been handed a wild card entry to compete in the next edition of the World Athletics Championships in Budapest, Hungary.

Amusan, who stunned the world in the recently concluded World Athletics Championships by terminating Kendra Harrison's 6 years record in 100mh, will alongside other winners feature in Budapest 2023 without following the usual qualification route.

Also to get the nod to skip the qualifying series through a statement by the world athletics governing body on Friday, August 19, 2022, are selected number of area champions in certain disciplines and subjected to certain conditions, 2023 Gold Label marathon winners and top-five finishers at Platinum Label marathons.

"Defending world champions will be offered a wild card entry, as will the winners of the 2022 Diamond League, World Race Walking Tour and World Combined Events Tour, plus the leading hammer performers on the Continental Tour; all subject to selection by the athlete's national federation," the

world body said.

"Area champions in selected disciplines and subject to certain conditions, top-five finishers at Platinum Label marathons during the qualification period and winners of Gold Label marathons held in 2023 shall also be considered as having achieved the entry standard," world athletics added.

Meanwhile, the logo for the 2023 World Athletics Championships has been unveiled which depicts the visual framework by World Athletics with regard to the shape defined by the international federation in 2019.

The logo, an emblematic replica of the 14-metre-tall charismatic woman holding a palm at Gellért Hill, Statue of Liberty, reflects values that are historic to the Hungarian people.

According to World Athletics, "the palm branch held in the statue's hand has been a symbol of glory, victory and light since ancient times, a reward for the athletes of the past."

"The complexity of this symbol, the link with sport, tourism, and heroism make the Statue of Liberty the perfect symbol of the World



Championship," the world body continued.

"In addition to this symbol, the visual identity of the logo also carries an important message: it creates a link with the graphic world of comics and superheroes.

"We think that the world champions, Olympic champions and athletes who push human physical limits every day are real superheroes living among us.

"They are the heroes who inspire everyday heroes and do more for their own health by walking, running and doing sport every day. These everyday heroes will

meet the superheroes in Budapest in August 2023.

"The main colours of the logo are orange and the shades of black, inspired by the colours of the Hungarian athletics, and red and green are the colours of the Hungarian flag while the white colour is part of both," World Athletics added.

Moreover, the 2023 World Athletics Championships in Budapest scheduled from August 19-27 have amended the number of athletes in certain events compared to 2022 with the field events number increasing from 32 to 36.

Cardiff boss seeks preseason return for injured Jamilu Collins

Cardiff boss Steve Morison said the club will ensure it fast-track Jamilu Collins' return to action during next year's preseason tour by the club.

Morison in a press conference, where he disclosed that the player would be out for the rest of the season after he tore his Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL), lamented over Collins' unfortunate layoff.

"We won't see him again until next season," Cardiff's boss said in the press conference.

"It's gutting for the lad. Really gutting. We are all here for him. We are going to make the next year the best it can possibly be for him.

"It's the worst-case scenario. We will try and get him back for pre-season next year.

"One thing we do know is we will have one hell of a left-back next season," Morison, who adjudged the Nigeria international as the best left-back, added.

The Cardiff boss is optimistic Collins will recover quickly, aided by the support from his family that recently relocated to Wales.

According to him, the hardworking Collins, a great kid, exudes an infectious aura that attracts everyone to him.

He continued: "On a plus-point for him, his family has just moved over and he has his family with him now.

"The lads will get behind him, he will be around. I'm sure you'll see his smiling face around the place. We have something else to fight for now.

"He is a great kid, he comes in with a smile on his face every day. He loved working every day with us and we loved working with him.

"He is someone you want around. He is infectious.

"As soon as he has his operation and he's a bit more mobile he will be around the lads," Morison insisted.

Collins joined Cardiff this summer on a free transfer from Bundesliga second-tier club, SC Paderborn, and has featured in four English Championship matches, including that against West Brom where he ruptured his ACL in the 9th minute.

Following the layoff, the Super Eagle who made coach Augustine Eguavoen's squad in the 2022 African Cup of Nations (AFCON) in Cameroon, will be unavailable for selection as Nigeria continue their qualifying campaign to the 2023 AFCON in Côte d'Ivoire.

Usyk eager to fight Tyson Fury

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

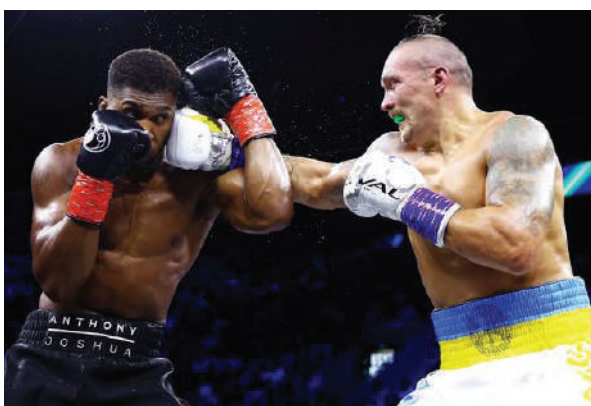
Defending champion Oleksandr Usyk at the weekend defeated British Anthony Joshua to retain his heavyweight belts, WBO, WBA and IBF titles, in King Abdullah Sports City Arena in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

In a 12th round bout, the Ukrainian on a split decision, '116-112 and 115-113 respectively won on the cards of Ukraine's Viktor Fesechko and Britain's Steve Gray. Glenn Feldman of the USA scored 115-113 for Joshua'.

Infuriated by the outcome of the result, despite the effort put in to reclaim the belts he lost to the undefeated champion in September 2021, Joshua told the crowd he was stealing the belts based on the passion put in to reclaim them.

"I'm stealing this Usyk, I'm sorry, but it's because of the passion we put into this," Joshua said after Usyk was declared the winner of the rematch.

"If you knew my story



you would understand the passion. I ain't no amateur boxer from five-years-old that was an elite prospect from youth.

"I was going to jail, I got bail and I started training my arse off, I wanted to be able to fight.

"This guy to beat me tonight, maybe I could have done better, but it shows the level of hard work I put in so please give him a round of applause as our heavyweight champion of the world," Joshua conceded.

Meanwhile, Usyk has dedicated his victory to the people of Ukraine fighting to defend it from the military

invasion of the Russians.

"I did this victory for my country, for all people, militaries who are defending the country. Thank you very, very much," the heavyweight champion said after the victory.

He added that the outcome of the rematch will transcend generations where they understand how he was able to turn around from being defensive into an offensive approach.

"This is already historic. Many generations are going to watch this fight, especially the round when someone tried to beat me hard, but I withstood it and turned it in a

different way," Usyk said.

The Ukrainian remains undefeated, holding three out of the four heavyweight title belts with Tyson Fury fondly adored as the Gypsy King and ostensibly retired with the fourth WBC title.

Usyk eyes a bout with the undefeated Fury believing the latter will come out of retirement to challenge him to a contest or he fights no one.

"I'm sure that Tyson Fury is not retired yet," the Ukrainian claimed.

"I'm sure, I'm convinced he wants to fight me.

"I want to fight him and if I'm not fighting Tyson Fury, I'm not fighting at all," Usyk stated.

Comparatively, Joshua greatly improved in the rematch against Usyk at Jeddah having included extra trainer, Robert Garcia, in his coaching crew to prep him tenaciously for a victory whilst correcting earlier mistakes made in September 2021.

Usyk on the other hand did feel the pressures mounted by the implacable Joshua but was able to rebuff them intermittently.



Manchester United possess quality midfielders, says Klopp

Ahead of Liverpool's cracker against Manchester United at Old Trafford on Monday, coach Jurgen Klopp has praised the Red Devils' midfield for possessing quality players.

Klopp listed Scott McTominay, Fred, Christian Eriksson, Donny van de Beek and Bruno Fernandez adding they possess real qualities.

Recall that in the pre-season tour, Manchester United plummeted the Reds 4-0 at Rajamangala Stadium in Bangkok where Jadon Sancho, Fred, Anthony Martial and Facundo Pellistri starred commendably.

However, United fans were of high expectations after the Liverpool encounter but since the Premier League started, the club is yet to record its first win and wallow at the bottom of the Premier League table.

Klopp analysed the tactics Manchester United boss Erik ten Hag is trying to adopt in Old Trafford which he admitted doing similarly during his first reign in Premier League.

He said, "It's obvious what he wants to do, he wants to build up from the back.

"We played them in the pre-season obviously. There, you could see and feel the high-press idea and these kinds of things.

"We were, for sure, not ready for that game in the pre-season. We made some mistakes but they used them really well," Klopp continued.

"The individual quality of United upfront is ridiculous. I heard (Anthony) Martial can play probably: he played against us obviously a really good game, so another boy with technique and speed.

"(They have) football quality in midfield, whoever lines up he will have (Christian) Eriksen, (Bruno) Fernandes, Donny van de Beek, Fred and (Scott) McTominay.

"There's real quality there and then it's just about how we deal with that.

"I saw their two games and now we have to try to figure out if he (Ten Hag) will change and what he will

change,"

"We go from there. If we have no idea then we just have to learn it in the game," He added.

The former Dortmund boss also indirectly held brief for Ten Hag when he lampooned former Aston Villa striker Gabriel Agbonlahor over his comments against the United boss.

Agbonlahor, after United sustained the humiliating defeat to Brentford, opined that the Dutch gaffer should 'just pack up'.

"If I was them now after this game I'd be thinking, 'You know what, (Erik) Ten Hag, just pack up,'" the former England international said.

"He's had pre-season and they have started the season as a shambles, they're like strangers on the pitch," he added.

In a reaction to Agbonlahor's outburst, Klopp claimed the 35 years' views were obviously out of place.

"It was that bad," said Klopp

"It was obviously not a nice week for United after the Brentford game, we forget in these moments how good Brentford is.

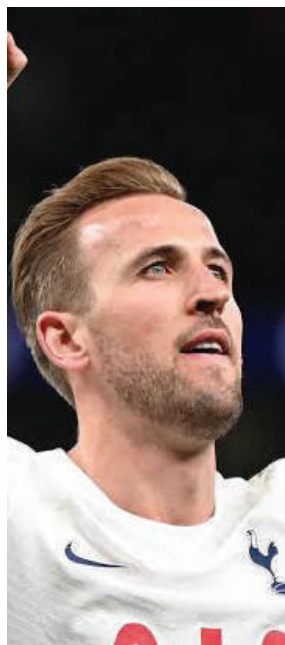
"I watched the first half here and then drove home and listened to talkSPORT and Gaby - he lost against us 6-0 in my first year and I could not remember him as a mentality monster on the pitch - what he said about United, I was close to calling in and tell him 'You forget completely you have been a player'.

"It was completely unbelievable. And if ex-players go in like this then you can imagine how everything else is going," Klopp added.

Liverpool aim to get their first win after two consecutive draws against Fulham and Crystal Palace to rock the 12th position on the Premier League table while United, seeking to reignite their campaign for the season.

However, Klopp will have to travel to Old Trafford without Darwin Nunez who conceded a red card in Anfield for headbutting Joachim Andersen.

Kane breaks record with 185th Premier League goal



Tottenham's Harry Kane has surpassed Kun Aguero's record in Manchester City as the player with the highest number of Premier League goals for a single club.

The England captain in the match against Wolves on Saturday, scored the only goal through a flick from Ivan Perisic to record his 187 Premier League goals for Tottenham, one above Aguero's 186.

Kane, a top-class striker has over time proven to be consistent but will pride himself more if he could exchange his personal accolades for a league honour according to the Tottenham boss Antonio Conte.

Conte praised the 29-year-old for achieving the feat but stressed that the aim is to challenge for major trophies this season.

"I know very well that Harry

would like to exchange his personal achievements for a trophy and he is working very hard for this," the Tottenham boss clarified.

Conte, furthermore, described Kane, who has poached 250 goals for the club in all competitions to close on Alan Shearer's record to 75 goals difference in the all-time highest Premier League goal chart, as a player that contributes substantially to the team.

"We are talking about a world-class striker but what makes me happy is not only with the ball that we have a top scorer, we have a player that is involved and works a lot for the team," he added.

However, Kane in an interview with BT Sport, admitted it has been fantastic with the Lilywhites for about a decade and wishes to continue

scoring for the club.

"It's been a fantastic nine or 10 years in the Premier League. Hopefully, many more years to go. I always love scoring," Kane said.

The underlined that winning games is paramount and applauded his teammates for their contributions.

"The most important thing is winning games. Credit to the boys, they dug deep. We need to start games better," he said.

"We need to improve. But the sign of a good team is winning when you don't play at your best," Kane advised.

Conte's next match is against Premier League newcomers Nottingham Forest at City Ground on Sunday while Wolves would welcome Newcastle at Molineux Stadium after playing Preston in the second round of the Carabao Cup.

Fabregas clarifies his move to Serie B

Former Chelsea playmaker, Cesc Fabregas, has divulged the reason behind his move to Serie B side, Como after seeing off a 3-year contract at Ligue 1 side, AS Monaco.

Fabregas, adored as one of the best passers of the ball, signed a two years contract this summer to unite with former Chelsea player, Dennis Wise, who happens to be the club's Chief Executive Officer.

At 35, with his career about to shrivel, the former Arsenal and Barcelona star would have had clubs in top divisions that could have sought his services but his sudden move to Stadio

Giuseppe Sinigaglia continues to stir surprise.

However, the former Spanish international clarified that he could not resist the offer presented to him which is not limited to becoming a shareholder in the club but with other incentives attached.

"What convinced me most was the global project they proposed, to continue playing at a good level, to be a shareholder in the club, to live in a very nice city," Fabregas told Marca.

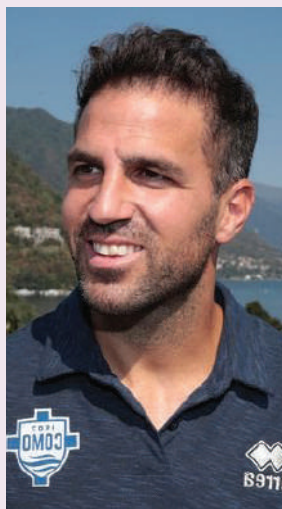
He added that the location of the club is not far from Switzerland where his children can have a sound education

while he looks towards becoming a coach.

"I think my family will be relaxed, it's close to Switzerland, the children can go to a Swiss school, with a very good education and good foundation. Then I can prepare for a future as a coach," he added.

Fabregas joined Monaco in a €9m move from Chelsea after winning two Premier League titles, two FA Cups, and 1 Carabao Cup.

In the three seasons he spent in Stamford Bridge, the Spaniard in his 198 appearances, assisted 57 goals while he found the back of the net 22 times.





NLC ex-chairman accuses Delta govt of nepotism in civil service recruitment

By **GABRIEL ELOZINO,**
Asaba

A former Chairman of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) in Delta, Comrade Mike Okeme, has accused the state government of conducting backyard recruitment for cronies. He specifically accused the Chairman of the State Civil Service Commission, Dame Patience Nkem Okuofu, of being the mastermind of the alleged illegality.

Okeme who is also a former Special Adviser to both Governor Emmanuel Uduaghan and his successor, Dr. Ifeanyi Okowa on Labour Matters, described the development as worrisome and called for immediate investigation.

According to former the Labour leader, who spoke to journalists in Asaba, the state capital, the purported recruitment into the civil

service contravenes the guidelines of the civil service commission rules. He revealed that a lot of persons have been recruited into the civil service from the "backyard" which he said has never happened in the history of civil service in Nigeria neither in the state.

He explained that there are rules and regulations that guide the Civil Service Commission, adding that these rules are being jettisoned for people they regarded as first class citizens. He said, "This morning I invited you here because of what is happening in the state. There have been backyard entry into the civil service in the state, which has never happened in the history of Nigeria neither in Delta State.

"There are rules and regulations that guides the civil service commission. The chairman of the Civil Service Commission, one woman they call

'Mama Government' is the one ravaging the civil service, a nurse heading technocrats, which is not done anywhere in the country. They are passing through backyard.

"Uduaghan, a year to go, employed 1000 civil servants into the service, then they were given letters, they have worked for three months when this government ascended office and this government said they should be suspended. They were not even paid a dime. We made a case and they started reviewing them after two years and decided to absorb about 400 of them, 600 of them are still outside, some of them are in court today, and behind them you are recruiting from nowhere.

"The civil service regulations says that before you conduct recruitment, you must do advert. Some of us came in through adverts, we saw the advert then in Benin and we applied



Comrade Mike Okeme

and when you apply they shortlist you, you go for interview and maybe taken. Nowadays there is no interview, you are selected on the prerogative of somebody.

"I have never seen a Civil Service Commissioner moving from one ministry to another and they will be supporting k00la, it is not done. The Civil Service Commission is the builder of ethics. It builds people's

intelligence and moral, but you tell them you are coming to their office tomorrow, that they must wage kola, this is a new dimension to it.

"Government must investigate how people are coming through backyard into the civil service whereas there are still 600 people employed by Uduaghan a year to his exit and were stopped because there was no money, they

didn't absorb them, and later when Labour made noise they took some of them. They are recruiting people now and people who were recruited eight years ago could not get their appointments ratified.

"The Okuofu of a woman is telling us that some of us are second class citizens. This government has only done public recruitment once since it came into office. So far they have recruited over 70 persons, and they have resumed work. If you go to the ministries you will see some new staff, ask them how they came into the service. I'm calling on you, journalists, to investigate it. The facts are there."

When contacted to react to allegation, the state Commissioner for Information, Mr. Charles Anigwu, denied the allegations saying there is nothing of such going on in the Civil Service Commission.

Tompolo seeks stakeholders' support against oil theft

By **KELVIN OHOROR**

A former head of militants, Chief Government Ekpemupolo (aka Tompolo), has called on stakeholders, ex-agitators leaders as well as bunkering dealers and operators of local refineries in the Niger Delta "to help curb the level of oil theft and pollution caused by illegal oil bunkering activities in the region."

Tompolo, who was recently awarded pipeline surveillance contract in the area by the Federal Government, made the call at a consultative meeting he held with the stakeholders at the weekend in Oporoza Community, Gbaramatu Kingdom, Warri South West Local Government

Northern group kicks against his pipeline surveillance contract

Area of Delta State.

Addressing the forum, which drew a large crowd cutting across all tribes in Delta State, Tompolo sought for their cooperation in the task ahead just as he disclosed that the women would be allotted 40 per cent of the surveillance contract.

However, a northern body, the Amalgamated Arewa Youth Groups, has kicked against the award of the pipeline surveillance contract worth over N4billion monthly to Tompolo by the Nigerian National Petroleum Limited.

The group handed down a seven-day ultimatum within which the Federal Government or its agent (NNPC)

will revoke the contract or be forced to either protest or take legal action. The group also called on President Muhammadu Buhari to sack the Minister of State for Petroleum, Timipre Sylva; and Director, Upstream of the NNPC Ltd, Adokiye Tombomelye, for "promoting ethnic and regional interest as well as the Group Managing Director of the NNPC, Mele Kyari, for using his office to allegedly reward criminality."

According to them, it is unfortunate that the NNPC succumbed to the "blackmail" of the former Niger Delta warlord to award him such a mouth-watering contract

despite being declared wanted by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) under the current government of Buhari.

The organisation, comprising a coalition of some youth groups from the 19 northern states and Abuja, noted with grave concern that the seeming triumph of people like Tompolo over our nation's Armed Forces, is a clear case of abdication of responsibilities, otherwise, hundreds of his type wouldn't have succeeded.

A statement by the group's spokesman, Victor Duniya, issued in Kaduna at the weekend read in part:

"The Amalgamated Arewa Youth Groups, a coalition of 225 youth groups mainly of northern Nigeria extraction that operates both at home and in the diaspora, has received the news of the award of pipeline surveillance contract worth over N4billion monthly by NNPC Limited to Mr Government Ekpemupolo, (alias Tompolo), a former leader of the Movement for Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) with rude shock.

"We are particularly concerned that in the early days of the President Muhammadu Buhari administration when Tompolo was

declared wanted by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), there was uncontrolled bombing of oil facilities in Niger Delta, which contributed in no small measure in dragging Nigeria into recession.

"Our group sees the awarded contract as empowerment scheme for Niger Delta youths and nothing more. This is in addition to the billions of naira that is being spent in the failed Amnesty Programme that is exclusively reserved for them. This is against the spirit and letters of our constitution that advocates for federal character in all government dealings."