No Plan to Withdraw Naira Notes from Circulation, CBN Clarifies

Nigeria and others to benefit from AfDB's $1.5bn Africa's food facility

James Emejo in Abuja

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) yesterday debunked reports that it planned to replace the conventional Naira notes in circulation with digital currency, otherwise known as the eNaira, in due course.

This is as the African Development Bank (AfDB) Group's Board has approved a $ 1.5 billion facility to support African countries deal with the impact of the Russian-Ukraine war impacting food prices and availability.

CBN's Director of Corporate Communications Department, Mr. Osita Nwanisobi, said the misleading statement purportedly made at a stakeholders' engagement on eNaira adoption in Asaba, Delta, was misconstrued and therefore, urged the public to completely disregard it.

Nwanisobi further explained that the digital version of the Naira is meant to complement the existing currency notes and therefore, would circulate simultaneously with the conventional Naira notes as means of exchange and store of value.

He said the adoption of the digital legal tender, aside from its safety and speedy features, would also ensure greater access

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Bauchi Gov Reads Riot Act as Violence Erupts over Alleged Blasphemy… Page 5

THISDAY

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APC to Reconcile Aggrieved Presidential Aspirants, Others after Primaries

Chuks Okocha in Abuja

The All Progressives Congress (APC) yesterday said there are plans to reconcile aggrieved aspirants after the presidential, governorship, senatorial and House of Representatives' primaries scheduled to take place from May 26 to 30.

National Chairman of the party, Senator Abdullahi Adamu, who stated this at a virtual town hall meeting, added that no grieving aspirant will leave the party after the party's primaries.

Adamu, who was represented by his Special Assistant, Prof. Abdullahi Yau, disclosed this at the event organised under the aegis of the party Ward-to-ward Diaspora Network in collaboration with the APC Ward-to-ward Ambassadors on "Intra-Party democracy for the Emergence of Best Candidates."

He said, "Directly, I want to tell you that after the primaries, none of the contestants of aspirants will leave the party. You can see unlike the other parties extending weight, in our party all our aspirants are calm. Everybody is going left and right, trying to win votes for themselves."

According to him, all aspirants would be listened to by a high-power delegation of the committee if there's a tangible reason why they are complaining after the party's primaries.

"They will listen to you and provide for your needs. In this way, we can carry along everybody to the party," he said.

"I can assure you this is the most interesting part; the number of people that are contesting and they are going to give everybody a playing level ground where you can exercise your right as a Nigerian to contest.

Continued on page 12

Buhari Sends Electoral Bill to INEC, Attorney-General for Legal Opinion

New law, if signed, may only benefit 2027, off-season electoral processes for APC, PDP as other parties forge ahead • PDP begins primaries today

Ejiofor Alike in Lagos and **Chuks Okocha** in Abuja

President Muhammadu Buhari has sent the new Electoral Act Amendment Bill to the Office of the Attorney General of the Federation (AGF) and Minister of Justice, and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for legal advice, THISDAY has learnt.

The president's decision not to be in a hurry to sign the bill, it was learnt, was to avoid a repeat of the mistake made by members of the National Assembly, who in their effort to punish political appointees, forgot to include themselves as delegates.

THISDAY's investigation revealed that the new law, if signed, would only benefit the 2027 general election and off-season elections for the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

A Presidency source, who confirmed this development last night, further disclosed that the president would await legal advice before signing the bill as recently amended by the National Assembly.

However, the PDP yesterday confirmed that the super delegates or statutory delegates would not vote at the state Houses of Assembly and House of Representatives' primaries of the party scheduled to take place today (Sunday) as they were not elected as delegates.

Following the failure of the National Assembly to recognise themselves, the president, vice president, governors and other elected government officials as statutory delegates in the Electoral Act 2022, the Senate and the House of Representatives had penultimate week passed

Continued on page 5



KEEP THE AWARDS COMING…

L-R: General Manager, Security, Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC), Mr. Kaka Abba; Group General Manager, Crude Oil Marketing Department, NNPC, Mrs. Rose Eshiett, and Edo State Deputy Governor, Mr. Philip Shaibu, presenting the Vanguard Personality of the Year Award, 2021, to the Group Managing Director of NNPC, Mallam Mele Kolo Kyari, who was represented by Eshiett, in Lagos…weekend

Kano Police Command Intercepts Vehicle Loaded with Explosive Devices… Page 12



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MEETING TO RUB MINDS…

L-R: Managing Director, Unilever West Africa, Mr. Carl Cruz; Board Member, United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), Mrs. Flora Mutahi; Executive Director, UN Global Compact Network Nigeria (UNGCNN) and Chair, African Regional Network Council-United Nations Global Compact, Naomi Nwokolo; Chief, Inter-governmental Relations and Africa, UNGC, Mrs. Olajobi Makinwa; and Resident Coordinator, United Nations, Mr. Matthias Schmale, at the CEOs' breakfast roundtable organised by UNGCNN in Lagos…recently

Bauchi Gov Reads Riot Act as Violence Erupts over Alleged Blasphemy

● *CAN insists on protests over Deborah's killing* ● *Soyinka demands sacking of National Mosque Imam*

Onyebuchi Ezigbo in Abuja and **Segun Awofadeji** in Bauchi

Several houses and shops were razed and many people, including a pastor, were critically injured when some Muslim youths in Katangan Wargi, headquarters of Warji Local Government Area (LGA) of Bauchi State went on a rampage on Friday evening in protest against an alleged blasphemy against Prophet Muhammad (SAW) by a Christian lady.

Normalcy has, however, returned to the area as Governor Bala Mohammed of Bauchi State, warned that he would not spare anyone bent on disrupting the peace of the state.

This is coming as the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) yesterday said that it would go ahead with its planned nationwide protests against the recent killing of Miss Deborah Samuel, a 200-level student of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto over alleged blasphemy by some Islamic extremists.

CAN has also expressed worry over the allegation of blasphemy in Bauchi State and urged the security agencies to act fast to address abuse of the Constitution before it leads to a serious conflict that cannot be handled.

Nobel laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka, has also called for the sacking of the Imam, National Mosque, Abuja, Professor Ibrahim Maqari, over his comment on the murder of Deborah.

THISDAY gathered that the lady identified as Rhoda Jatau, a 40-year- old member of staff of the Medical Department of Warji LGA, allegedly posted a video of someone who renounced Islam on a WhatsApp group.

The message, it was learnt, did not go down well with her co-workers who are predominantly Muslims.

However, the girl was whisked away to safety by fellow Christians, who got wind of the impending danger.

But the irate Muslim youths went on the rampage and started destroying properties belonging to Christians when the planned attempt to lynch the girl failed after Jumma prayers on Friday.

"We were at home Friday evening when we heard shouts from Muslim youths in their hundreds wanting to attack the ECWA church but Christian youths and others resisted and repelled them but after they had already set the shops attached to the church on fire," a member of the ECWA church, who pleaded anonymity, said.

He added: "In the process, one of the pastors of the ECWA Church was seriously injured. As I am speaking to you, efforts are on to save his life as he lost much blood due to the injuries inflicted on him."

Confirming the incident, the state police command said six houses and seven shops were on Friday evening set ablaze by irate youths while many people were also injured.

The state Commissioner of Police, Mr. Umar Mamman Sanda, has also ordered a thorough investigation into the crisis.

A statement issued yesterday by the state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Ahmed Mohammed Wakil said the violence was a result of a blasphemous message posted on social media by one Rhoda Jatau, a 40-year-old staff of the Medical Department of Warji LGA.

According to the statement,

Continued on page 12

BUHARI SENDS ELECTORAL BILL TO INEC, ATTORNEY-GENERAL FOR LEGAL OPINION

the amendment to the Act to recognise statutory delegates as voters during primaries, congresses and conventions of all the political parties.

The new Section 84(8) introduced in the Act recognises only democratically elected delegates.

It states: "A political party that adopts the system of indirect primaries for the choice of its candidate shall clearly outline in its constitution and rules the procedure for the democratic election of delegates to vote at the convention, congress or meeting."

President Buhari, who returned from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) yesterday, had come under intense pressure to sign the fresh amendment bill to the Electoral Act 2022, to ensure that himself, Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, members of the National Assembly, governors, their deputies and other statutory delegates of political parties can vote in the parties' primaries.

Others who will be able to vote if Buhari signs the amended Act include the parties' National Working Committee (NWC) members, state party chairmen, secretaries, local government chairmen, deputies, councillors, and party chairmen in the 774 local government areas.

But the Presidency source told THISDAY that Buhari was not in a hurry to sign the bill to avoid the repeat of the previous mistake made by the National Assembly.

"When the president receives every bill, he seeks the advice of all relevant agencies. In this case, he has sent the bill to the AGF and INEC for advice. So, he is not in a hurry to sign it. That was how the National Assembly was in a hurry and so busy punishing political appointees that they forgot to include themselves as delegates. Whenever he signs it, it takes effect for subsequent elections," the source explained.

The source wondered why the signing of the bill should become a major issue when the political parties have other options to conduct their primaries.

"They have three options - direct, indirect and consensus. In the case of indirect primary, they have already provided for the use of elected delegates and there is nothing wrong with that. In PDP, they have elected three ad hoc delegates – one national delegate and two others. In APC, there are five delegates. Other political parties have their own provisions. So, the political parties already have delegates that will vote in their primaries," the source added.

With the president's hesitant to sign the amendment, it means only national delegates elected at the local government congresses will determine presidential flagbearers of the party.

The ad hoc delegates were elected in line with the provisions of Section 84 (8) of the Amended Electoral Act 2022.

Section 82(3) of the Electoral Act, 2022 makes it mandatory that the primaries must be conducted democratically.

By Article 4.5 of the INEC's Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of Political Party Primaries, a political party that adopts the indirect primary mode shall make available to the commission, not later than seven days to the date of the primary, the list of persons that will form the delegates that are eligible to vote for the nomination of the party's candidates to contest every eligible position.

According to the guidelines, the list of delegates shall be accompanied by the list of aspirants and the list of the party's electoral panel conducting the primary.

With the commencement of primaries this week, it is already late for the amended Act to be used for the election of parties' candidates for the 2023 general election.

APC's presidential primary holds on May 29 and 30, while the PDP presidential primary is slated for May 28 and 29.

PDP has already confirmed that the super delegates or statutory delegates will not vote at today's primaries of the party as they were not elected for the 2022 primary elections.

The main opposition party confirmed this in a statement issued yesterday titled: "Use of elected delegates for the primaries and national convention," by its National Organising Secretary, Mr. Umar Bature.

"By Section 84(8) of the Electoral Act, 2022, delegates to vote at the indirect primaries and National Convention of political parties to elect candidates for elections shall be those democratically elected for that purpose only.

"Consequently, those qualified and eligible to vote as delegates in the forthcoming primaries and National Convention of our great party, the PDP are the three ad hoc delegates per ward, elected at the ward congresses, and one national delegate per local government, elected at the Local Government Area Congresses.

"Furthermore, the NWC wishes to inform our party members that the state Houses of Assembly primaries to elect our state Houses of Assembly candidates, earlier scheduled for Saturday, May 21, 2022, will now hold on Sunday, May 22, 2022, from 8:00 am to 12 noon; while the House of Representatives primaries to elect our House of Representatives candidates will also hold on Sunday, May 22, 2022, from 2:00 pm.

"All aspirants, critical stakeholders, leaders, and teeming members of our party should please take note," Bature explained.

By implications, only 326,081 delegates elected in 28 states and FCT during the three-man delegate elections will vote across 36 states to elect governorship, and members of House of Representatives candidates will vote as from today.

There are 8,813 wards in Nigeria multiplied by 28 states where the governorship elections will take place.

Similarly, only 810 delegates elected in the 774 local government areas and area councils of the FCT in the one-man delegate election will decide the PDP presidential flag bearer.

This has led to calls to shift the primaries to enable President Buhari to sign into law the amendment to section 84 (8) of the Electoral Act.

For instance, speaking at the Round table conference of the Abuja School of Politics and Social Thoughts, Professor Sam Amadi, who was the former Chairman of the National Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC), Prof. Udenta Udenta and Kelechi Azubuike accused the members of the National Assembly of cutting their face to spite the nose.

The trio of Sam Amadi, Udenta Udenta, and Kelechi Azubuike said that by the old Section 84 (8) waiting to be signed into law, the federal makers cannot even vote at the congresses and presidential primaries because they were not specifically elected for that purpose.

To salvage the situation, they appealed to INEC to extend the datelines for the political parties to elect their flag bearers.

They also appealed to INEC to alternately issue a guideline as a regulator to guide the political parties on the issue of section 84 (8).

However, Civil Society Groups on electoral matters yesterday rejected the demand for an extension of the timetable and schedule of elections so far released by the INEC as requested by the 18 political parties, stating that to do so would pose danger to the electoral processes.

Several CSOs, in a statement, commended INEC for rejecting the IPAC request for extension.

NEWS



CONSULTATION VISIT…

L-R: Ondo State First Lady/senatorial aspirant for Owerri Senatorial zone in Imo State, Mrs. Betty Akeredolu; Ekiti State Governor/APC presidential aspirant, Dr. Kayode Fayemi; and Imo State Governor, Senator Hope Uzodimma; during Fayemi's meeting with party delegates in Owerri, Imo State…weekend

Buhari Returns from UAE, Seeks Sustenance of Security, Counter-terrorism Pacts

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

President Muhammadu Buhari yesterday returned to Abuja after a two-day official visit to Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The president, who departed the country at about 1:30 pm Thursday, landed at the Presidential Wing of Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja, at about 4 pm, along with the members of his entourage.

While in the UAE, Buhari canvassed for stronger bilateral relations between the two countries.

He was emphatic about the sustenance of security and counter-terrorism pacts between the two countries.

The president, according to a statement issued yesterday by his spokesman, Mallam Garba Shehu, also expressed his determination to do more to ensure the growth and intensification of the strategic partnership between the two nations.

President Buhari met the new President of the UAE, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, to whom he sent Nigeria's condolences on the passing of the former president and Ruler of Abu Dhabi, His Highness, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

He also joined the Jummah prayers, at which prayers were said for the repose of the soul of the late President of UAE, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, on Friday.

In a short interaction with the new Ruler of Abu Dhabi and President of the UAE, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, during a condolence visit to the Presidential Palace, President Buhari expressed the hope that under Sheikh Mohamed the two countries will continue to actively champion a vision of sustainable security, strengthen counterterrorism cooperation, facilitate trade and investment, and promote prosperity and development.

In the seven years of the Buhari Presidency, the two countries have actively conducted bilateral dialogues leading to several agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) that have paved the way for further cooperation, mutual understanding and progress in many aspects of their bilateral relations.

The president also expressed his condolences and that of Nigeria on the demise of the late President Sheikh Khalifah and congratulated the new president on his election.

NO PLAN TO WITHDRAW NAIRA NOTES FROM CIRCULATION, CBN CLARIFIES

to financial services by the underbanked and unbanked populace thereby enhancing financial inclusion.

He urged the public and business owners to embrace digital currency as it offers more possibilities.

The eNaira was formally launched into circulation by President Muhammadu Buhari in October last year.

The apex bank's governor, Mr. Godwin Emefiele had recently expressed optimism that the bank would achieve the 85 per cent financial inclusion target which is currently at about 70 per cent.

Addressing a delegation of Executive Directors from the Bank of Uganda, who was on an experience sharing tour of the CBN's Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) project, Emefiele said the apex bank remained committed to accelerating the rate at which those who were financially excluded could come into the formal banking sector.

He also expressed satisfaction that the eNaira had recorded some level of success judging by the rate of integration and security features.

The central bank governor said the CBDC would enhance the relationship between mobile banking and e-business and speed up the rate of financial inclusion.

He pointed out that the interest that the eNaira continued to attract from other countries and multinational bodies, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, underscored the level and quality of work the CBN had put into the project.

Emefiele said Nigeria is currently a case study to other climes, being the first country in Africa to launch its CBDC, adding that the country was treading cautiously to ensure it sustains the successes recorded so far.

He also told the visiting team that the country had deepened its payment system infrastructure, which is ranked among the best in the world.

Emefiele had said with growing interest in CBDC around the world, the CBN had commenced extensive study, consultations, identification of use cases, and the testing of the CBDC concept in a Sandbox environment as far back as 2017.

He said the objective of the research was to establish a compelling case for the adoption of a digital currency in the country to enable a more prosperous and inclusive economy for all Nigerians.

He added that following the completion of the preliminary work, the researchers and experts at the CBN were able to clearly establish that a digital currency will drive a more cashless, inclusive, and digital economy as well as complement the gains of previous policy measures and our fast-growing payments platforms.

Nigeria, Others to Benefit from AfDB's $1.5bn Africa's Food Facility

Meanwhile, the AfDB Group's Board has approved a $ 1.5 billion facility to support African countries deal with the impact of the Russian-Ukraine war impacting food prices and availability

AfDB's Chief Agriculture Policy Economist and Coordinator of Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme at AfDB, Mr. Philip Boahen, said this at Tamale, Ghana, yesterday.

Boahen said the facility is expected to reach over 20 million African farmers to deal with the food shortfall.

The bank, on its website, also said that with the disruption of food supplies arising from the war, Africa now faces a shortage of at least 30 million metric tonnes of food.

AfDB said that food like wheat, maize, and soybeans imported from both countries was majorly affected by the war.

According to the Bank, the $1.5 billion, an African Emergency Food Production Facility, is an unprecedented comprehensive initiative to support smallholder farmers in filling the food shortfall.

The AfDB said it would provide fertilizer to smallholder farmers across Africa over the next four farming seasons, indicating it will use its convening influence with major fertilizer manufacturers, loan guarantees, and other financial instruments to provide the fertilizers.

"African farmers urgently need high-quality seeds and inputs before the planting season begins in May to immediately boost food supplies.

"The facility will provide 20 million African smallholder farmers with certified seeds.

"It will increase access to agricultural fertilizers and enable them to rapidly-produce 38 million tonnes of food.

"This would be a $12 billion increase in food production in just two years," the AfDB said.

The Bank said the facility would lead to the production of 11 million tonnes of wheat; 18 million tonnes of maize; 6 million tonnes of rice; and 2.5 million tonnes of soybeans.

"It will also support market growth and post-harvest management, and create a platform to advocate for critical policy reforms to solve the structural issues that impede farmers from receiving modern inputs."

Afreximbank, APPO Sign MoU on Energy Transition Bank

Meanwhile, the African Petroleum Producers' Organisation (APPO) and African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish an African Energy Transition Bank.

This is contained in a statement signed by Afreximbank's Media Contact, Mr. Amadou Sall, at the weekend.

Sall said the establishment of the energy bank was in support of an African-led energy transition strategy.

He said the new institution would accelerate Africa's economic development while ensuring the progress was compatible with and complementary to, the Sustainable Development Goals,

Sall said that the new bank would also ensure compatibility with the continent's long-term social and environmental objectives as set out in African Union's Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

He said that the bank would address an urgent and existential need on the continent.

"Africa stands to experience profound effects from climate change, while the considerable poverty across the continent further disincentivises a focus on environmental care and sustainability for many populations.

"Moreover, Africa's oil and gas industry faces growing pressures as international investment in hydrocarbons diminishes.

"While Africa's transition towards alternative energy sources presents great opportunities for the continent, this transition must be carefully managed to minimise the short-term adverse impacts of the transition while maximising its longer-term benefits," he said.

Sall said the new bank's responsibilities would include the management and encouragement of such a productive transition.

He said that APPO member states would be signatories to the Energy Transition Bank's constitutional documents which would be structured in the form of a multilateral treaty, and invest equity into the new vehicle.

Sall said that Afreximbank would co-invest and advise on the establishment and implementation process.

The statement quoted Prof. Benedict Oramah, President of Afreximbank, as saying "we are delighted to be collaborating with APPO towards the establishment of the proposed African Energy Transition Bank".

"These are challenging times when we must strive to strike the right balance between the imperatives of mitigating climate change and the urgency of averting social upheavals as a result of increasingly difficult economic and financial conditions in Africa.

"For us at Afreximbank, supporting the emergence of the African Energy Transition Bank will enable a more efficient and predictable capital allocation between fossil fuels and renewables."

Oramah is quoted to have said that establishing the bank would also free human and other resources at Afreximbank that would make it possible to support its member countries more effectively in the transition to cleaner fuels.


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ASUU Refuses to Resume Work, Says Payment of Arrears Not Its Demand

Ejiofor Alike

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has insisted that its members would not resume work despite the federal government's payment of minimum wage arrears.

In a circular issued by the University of Lagos branch of the union titled, 'Payment of minimum wage arrears,' the union argued that the payment of arrears was not part of its demand.

The circular read: "The leadership of our Branch has been inundated with calls concerning the recent payment of the long-overdue arrears of the consequential adjustment of the minimum wage.

"Our members are reminded that this is not one of the core demands upon which the ongoing strike action is premised.

"For the avoidance of doubt, the demands of our union are the conclusion of the renegotiation of the 2009 FGN/ASUU Agreement, abrogation of the fraudulent and corrupt IPPIS scheme and the deployment of UTAS, payment of promotion arrears, the proliferation of State Universities and governance issues amongst others.

"While our union welcomes this unsolicited payment, our members should please conserve the funds and spend wisely so as to energise our struggle until all our demands are satisfactorily met

"Our Union commends the resolve and sacrifice of our members in enthroning a University system that is globally competitive.

"United we bargain! Divided we beg! A people united can never be defeated. Solidarity forever".

The federal government had commenced the payment of minimum wage arrears, which it owed lecturers under the aegis of the Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics and Academic Staff Union of Universities

On February 15, ASUU began a four-week rollover strike following the federal government's failure to meet its demands.

The National President of ASUU, Prof. Emmanuel Osodeke, said the decision was taken after the union's National Executive Committee meeting.

ASUU extended the action by another two months to afford the government more time to address all of its demands.

The union also accused the government of displaying an indifferent attitude toward its demands.

Osodeke, in a statement to announce the extension of the rollover strike, noted that the national executive council of the union "was disappointed that Government did not treat the matters involved with utmost urgency they deserved during the four-week period as expected of a reasonable, responsive, and well-meaning administration".

He said the NEC concluded that the government had failed to satisfactorily address all the issues raised in the 2020 Memorandum of Action within the four-week roll-over strike period and resolved that the strike be rolled over for another eight weeks.

Jonathan Wants FG's Arbitration Cases Held in Nigeria, Not UK

Ejiofor Alike

Former President Goodluck Jonathan has faulted the hearing of arbitrations for the contracts entered by the federal government with international organisations in the United Kingdom.

Jonathan made case for the hosting of such arbitration sessions within Nigeria.

The former president advocated the position yesterday in Yenagoa, the Bayelsa capital, during a launch of the book titled: "Arbitration and Dispute Resolution in Nigeria".

The book is written by King Collins Daniel, the Traditional Ruler Abureni kingdom, in Ogbia Local Government Area of Bayelsa.

Jonathan also charged the bodies responsible for arbitration or resolving disputes in the country to work hard to ensure arbitration for the government contracts are done in the country for proper understanding.

He explained that resolving disputes outside the court room is short, less expensive and makes people more bound to the terms morally.

According to him: "Let me use this unique opportunity to charge the bodies in this country that are responsible for either arbitration or resolving issues to work hard to ensure that arbitrations are done in Nigeria.

"Because all the contracts the Nigeria government entered with international organisations, arbitrations are always done in the United Kingdom. Can't we do some of these arbitrations in Nigeria?

"I don't know why it must be the United Kingdom - why it must be outside Nigeria. I think we need to work hard, so that some of these things will be done here in Nigeria.

"As non-lawyers, we look at issues of resolving disputes in two different ways - one that takes place in the courtroom and one that takes place outside the courtroom.

"We think that society is so complex, going to court for judges to settle our disputes solved all our problems because judges decide based on the facts presented to them, that is why people still get back home and start fighting.

"More especially issues like land cases and Chieftaincy cases, so I believe solving disputes outside the courtroom will be a better and shorter way than going through court processes," he said.

The author of the book and Olila-Ebhugh of Abureni Kingdom, King Daniel, said he used his experience as a legal practitioner, law teacher and a traditional ruler to write the book, to help the society on how to resolve issues properly and permanently.

According to him, dispute resolution is key because in every society, there is bound to be dispute and the way the dispute is resolved to the satisfaction of every party brings lasting peace in the society.

The Paramount Ruler of Ogbia Kingdom, King Charles Owaba said that the traditional institution was the fundamental arbitration and dispute resolution system in Nigeria.

He commended the author for putting pen and book together to come up with such work, to settle disputes without the court.



DEVELOPMENT PARTNER…

United States Ambassador to Nigeria, Ambassador Mary Beth Leonard (left), and former Vice President of Nigeria and founder of American University of Nigeria, Yola, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, at AUN's 13th commencement ceremony in Yola…yesterday

Gunmen Behead Kidnapped Anambra Lawmaker, Okoye

David-Chyddy Eleke in Awka

Anambra State Governor, Prof. Chukwuma Charles Soludo, has pledged N10 million to anyone who provides useful information that will lead to the arrest of the member of the state House of Assembly and his aide.

Soludo yesterday received with shock and deep sadness the news of the gruesome murder of Hon. Okechukwu Okoye, member representing Aguata II Constituency at the State House of Assembly and his aide, Cyril Chiegboka.

Both Okoye and Chiegboka were kidnapped on the road by the heartless and barbaric murderers on May 15.

The head of Okoye was yesterday found at Nnobi in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

His body was not there and indications were that the killers removed the body.

Okoye and his aide were kidnapped at Aguata by gunmen who abandoned his Toyota Sienna car.

The police later recovered the car and said that they had deployed operatives to rescue the lawmaker.

In a statement issued last night, Soludo condoled with his kinsmen of Isuofia, noting that it was probably the same criminal gang that attacked him and killed three policemen at Isuofia two years ago that were on the prowl.

The governor vowed that they can never cow Isuofia and Anambra State.

Soludo vowed that the perpetrators as well as all criminals operating in Anambra must be decisively brought to book.

He has consequently placed a N10 million reward for anyone or group that will avail valuable information that will lead to the immediate arrest of the perpetrators of this dastardly act.

He promised that Anambra will soon be a hell for these criminals.

"Anambra will win against the forces of darkness," Soludo added.

15 States Yet to Sign up for Responsive Governance, Says Minister

Adedayo Akinwale in Abuja

The Minister of State, Budget and National Planning, Mr. Clem Agba, at the weekend disclosed that 15 states were yet to sign the Open Government Partnership (OGP) Initiative for responsive governance.

Agba said this while addressing journalists as part of activities to mark the OGP week in Abuja.

According to him, the OGP week is an annual event set aside by the OGP Global Secretariat to celebrate the wins of the initiative across the world.

He said that the OGP was a global multilateral forum consisting of 78 countries and 76 sub nationals, who committed to various transparency and accountability reforms for improved service delivery of its citizenry.

He added that President Muhammadu Buhari signed into the initiative in 2016 in his desire to stamp out corruption.

He said that after joining the OGP, Nigeria developed the first and second National Action Plans around four thematic areas of fiscal transparency, access to information, anti-corruption, and citizens engagement.

"Fifteen states of the 36 states of the Federation are yet to sign unto the OGP platform.

"I, therefore, encourage states who have not adopted the OGP to do so without any further delay, being a viable platform for ensuring more responsive governance.

"We have recorded some stories while implementing our laudable OGP programs; today in Nigeria, the budgetary process is a lot more inclusive, participatory, and accessible than it has ever been.

"All the different stages of the budget process are now participatory, citizens now engage and participate effectively in the process.

"As a matter of fact, the budget document has been simplified such that it is all available at the click of a button."

Agba advised citizens to deliberately play active roles in monitoring the budget and government projects for effective implementation.

He said the government developed a portal and recently developed an App called the "eye mark" to help citizens participate in the budgetary process.

"We're also working on the web App because now we want citizens to see what the government is doing.

"We want citizens to be able to see projects that are done by the government.

"We want citizens to be able to touch and feel the projects that are done by the government so that we no longer have a situation where a world-class bridge is said to be built where what we see years after is a wooden bridge."


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Daddy it has been two years since you left us to be with the Lord. We thank God for the life you lived and the sweet memories you left with us.

JUSTICE ADOLPHUS KARIBI-WHYTE

CFR, CON, KSC, DSSRS
(Jan. 29, 1932 - May 22, 2020)

Continue to rest in Christ. Amen

FONDLY REMEMBERED BY:

Mrs. F.A. Karibi-Whyte - Wife

CHILDREN:

Asikiya Karibi-Whyte
Charles & Tonye Uwensuyi-Edosomwan
Gogo & Ifueko Karibi-Wyhte
Abiye Karibi-Whyte
Tokini & Zainab Karibi-Whyte
Sodigi & Renee Karibi-Whyte
Oshioma & Nengi Brai

Grandchildren & Great Grandchildren

SIGNED:

Gogo Karibi-Whyte
for the family

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NEWS



CSR IN ACTION…

L-R: Second Vice President, Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN), Prof. Deji Olanrewaju; President, CIBN, Dr. Bayo Olugbemi; Emir of Nasarawa, Alhaji Ibrahim Usman Jibril; Deputy Rector, Federal Polytechnic Nasarawa, Dr. Makana Dogo; Registrar/Chief Executive, CIBN, Dr. Seye Awojobi; and National Treasurer, CIBN, Mr. Dele Alabi, at the groundbreaking ceremony of the Bankers Hall, a CIBN Legacy project bequeathed to Federal Polytechnic Nasarawa…recently

Kano Police Intercept Vehicle Loaded with Explosives, Sophisticated Weapons

Ibrahim Shuaibu in Kano

The Kano State Police Command yesterday confirmed that it had intercepted a Mercedes Benz car loaded with suspected sophisticated Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs).

It said the vehicle, which came from Jigawa State, was abandoned at Bubbugaje Quarters, Kumbotso Local Government Area of Kano State.

The spokesman of the command, Abdullahi Haruna Kiyawa, said in a statement issued yesterday that the Commissioner of Police, Mr. Sama'ila Shu'aibu Dikko, had immediately raised a crack team comprising Explosive Ordinance Disposal – Chemical, Biological Radiological and Nuclear Defence (EOD-CBRN) and Operation Puff Adder to examine the vehicle.

"Following a hot chase, the suspects abandoned the motor vehicle at Bubbugaje Quarters, Kumbotso Local Government Area of Kano State.

"A technical search conducted by the team revealed that the motor vehicle was fully loaded with Improvised Explosive Device materials.

"Items recovered from discovery included two AK-47 rifles, four AK-47 magazines, 1,098 live ammunition, and two pistol magazines were also recovered," the police spokesman explained.

Kiyawa added that an investigation into the incident had commenced.

According to the statement, arrests had been made linking one of the collapsed shops with dealing in the sale of illicit, toxic chemical substances and combustible materials suspected to be used for making IEDs.

It added that evidence of purchase was also recovered.

The command also confirmed that nine persons were killed during last week's explosion in Sabon Gari of the Kano metropolis.

The police disclosed that during the last week's explosion, a technical investigation conducted by the command's EOD-CBRN revealed that the explosion was "suspected to have occurred as a result of mixed chemical/gas reactions exposed to a source of heat, such as fire, spark or increase in pressure resulting in combustion/shock waves, creating an explosion which can have shattering effects."

BAUCHI GOV READS RIOT ACT AS VIOLENCE ERUPTS OVER ALLEGED BLASPHEMY

"On May 20, 2022, at about 1745hours, some irate youths set six houses and seven shops ablaze, while some score of persons were injured as a result of a blasphemous message posted on a social media by one Rhoda Jatau (female), 40 years old staff of the Medical Department Warji Local Government".

The PPRO stated that the police have since deployed all Tactical Teams, Mobile Police Force, and Rapid Response Squad (RRS) whose joint efforts brought the situation under control, adding that the area is calm for now, while visibility patrols are ongoing to keep the peace.

He said that the state police commissioner appealed to the public to be calm and go about their lawful business without any fear of intimidation as normalcy has been restored in the affected area.

"While assuring the general public that the police is on top of the situation and will continue to update the public as to the level of investigation from time to time"

"The command would like to use this medium to reiterate the need for parents and guardians to maintain strict vigilance over the activities of their wards, particularly youths.

"The Commissioner of Police also urges religious leaders, community leaders, and elders generally to always speak to youths to desist from anything that could temper with the security of their areas," the statement added.

Reacting to unrest in the state, Governor Bala Mohammed yesterday said he would not spare anyone bent on disrupting the peace of the state.

The governor stated when he visited residents of the Warji community to commiserate with victims over the incident.

Speaking at the palace of District Head of Warji, Mohammed expressed worry over the spate of insecurity in some parts of the country, saying that it was time for people to allow peace at all costs as the consequences of insecurity were devastating.

"Religion is very close to peoples' hearts. It is very uncivilised to joke about each others' religions. We know that there are Christians and Muslims in Warji. Those of us who are 60 years old never heard of a crisis in Warji before this time.

"I must commend religious leaders, traditional leaders, and security personnel for putting up a combined effort that leads to quenching of the violence.

"I will not spare anyone found making attempts to cause trouble. My administration has a special regard for peace and religious tolerance and I will not fold up my arms to allow unpatriotic people to cause trouble in any part of the state," he said.

Reacting to the incident, the Chairman of CAN in Kaduna State, Rev. Joseph John Hayab, has expressed worry over the allegation of blasphemy in Bauchi.

He urged the security agencies to act fast to address abuse of the constitution before it leads to a more serious conflict that cannot be handled.

He said in a statement yesterday, that allegations of blasphemy have now become the new excuse by fundamentalists in Northern Nigeria to kill the remnant that bandits and terrorists have not yet killed.

"We know and have evidence of how some of these allegations of blasphemy are false and just for blackmail or settling scores with perceived enemies or well-mannered young girls who have refused sexual advances by the opposite sex from another religion.

"We are also aware of how fanatics have in the past raised lies in the name of blasphemy.

"CAN wonder if the recent sermons we are getting from some Islamic clerics on what the Holy Quran says about what should be done if anyone is accused of blasphemy is unpopular amongst followers?"

"The challenge now is for government authorities and security agencies to act fast to address this abuse of our constitution before it leads to a more serious conflict that cannot be handled."

"Nigeria Christians most especially those of Northern extraction have for ages exhibited tolerance despite many provocations and lack of reciprocation of our love and friendship but these new tactics for killing our people from any and every accusation of blasphemy are unacceptable to CAN and all Christian faithful. We will not accept this brutal way of murder and inhuman treatment of our followers to continue."

"Government and security agencies should come out to enforce the law on every murderer hiding under religion.

In a related development, the national body of CAN has said that it would go ahead with its May 22 planned nationwide protests against the recent killing of Miss Deborah Samuel, a 200-level student of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto over alleged blasphemy by some Islamic extremists.

The Special Assistant on Media and Communications to the CAN President, Pastor Adebayo Ayodeji, disclosed this to THISDAY yesterday against the background of the threat by a Muslim group to protest on the same day.

He said: "We are going ahead with our protests and we have said that our members should hold their protest within the premises of the CAN Secretariat and not on the streets.

"We are to gather in the CAN Secretariat nationwide and not on the streets," Ayodeji said.

He added that CAN has directed that where there is no CAN Secretariat in a state, Christians should choose one of the churches that can accommodate them for the protests.

In a related development, Nobel laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka, has called for the sacking of the Imam, National Mosque, Abuja, Professor Ibrahim Maqari, over his comment on the murder of Deborah.

Soyinka accused the Islamic cleric of directing his followers to take the law into their own hands in the name of religion.

He spoke in Abuja yesterday during the one-year remembrance of the late former Chief of Army Staff, Lt.-Gen. Ibrahim Attahiru, and the launch of Attahiru's biography written by author, Niran Adedokun.

Meanwhile, Nobel laureate, Soyinka, has lamented lynching in the name of religion, adding that the "apostate of the creed of humanity, Professor Maqari, must be removed from office."

He added, "It is no longer sufficient for all to declaim that Islam is this and that, that the Sharia is thus and thus, that Prophet Mohammed set this or that example and made this or that humanistic pronouncement.

"We have gone beyond theocratic rhetoric that merely pays lip service to civilised norms. Let all pietistic denunciations be backed by affirmative action."

The playwright noted that the Islamic cleric had done nothing but encourage his followers to kill anyone that blasphemes Prophet Muhammad.

Soyinka added, "Professor Maqari, however, insists, with a handful of others, including vocal serving policemen quite recently, that there is no remorse involved in the torture and lynching of a young student on this earth.

"Maqari has implicitly directed his followers to take the law into their own hands in the name of religion, and innovation. That is the message of a supposedly holy man to a nation embroiled in his madness of multiple incidences."

APC TO RECONCILE AGGRIEVED PRESIDENTIAL ASPIRANTS, OTHERS AFTER PRIMARIES

"And at the end of the exercise, just as what happened in the National convention, you see that everybody will be satisfied with whoever that emerges from the primaries."

Speaking further, Adamu reassured, "Unless you have a process that is not well coordinated, a process that is marred by irregularities that's when people will be aggrieved and would want to leave the party. If you're allowed to exercise your right and you think there's fairness in what's going on in the party and you lose, I don't think you would want to leave the party.

"I assure you even if we are going to have such a scenario, where we are going to have aggrieved members after the primaries, the Chairman and stakeholders of the party will ensure they reconcile everybody after the primaries."

The list of APC presidential aspirants who met the deadline for submission of their nomination forms are Vice President Yemi Osinbajo; National Leader of the party, Senator Bola Tinubu; former Minister of Transportation, Mr. Rotimi Amaechi; former Minister of Niger Delta Development, Senator Godswill Akpabio; former Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Dr. Ogbonnaya Onu; former Imo State governor, Senator Rochas Okorocha and former Ogun state governor, Senator Ibikunle Amosu.

Others are Pastor Tunde Bakare, Cross River State governor, Prof. Ben Ayade; his Ebonyi State counterpart, Governor Dave Umahi; Ekiti State governor, Dr. Kayode Fayemi; former Minister of State for Education, Mr. Emeka Nwajiuba; former Senate President, Senator Ken Nnamani; Kogi State governor, Yahaya Bello; Jigawa Governor, Mohammed Badaru Abubakar, and former Zamfara State governor, Senator Ahmed Yerima.

Others on the list are Senator Ajayi Borroffice, the only female aspirant, Mrs Uju Kennedy Ohnenye; Pastor Nicholas Felix Nwagbo, former Speaker of Representatives, Dimeji Bankole; Senate President, Dr. Ahmad Lawan, former Minister of Information, Chief Ikeobasi Mokelu, and oil mogul, Mr. Tein Jack Rich.

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MEET THE BLACKS

This comedy, horror spoof movie is a parody of the 2013 film The Purge. "Meet the Blacks" became a box-office success when it grossed over $9 million on a budget of $900,000. An upcoming sequel, named The House Next Door: Meet the Blacks 2, was released in 2021.
Carl Black and his family are leaving Chicago. With the knowledge that he will be imprisoned for the next five or six years for having stolen money from a famous criminal drug king, Key Flo (Charlie Murphy). He moves to Beverly Hills with his family but they could not have picked a worse time to move. They arrive during the annual purge, during which all crime is legal for twelve hours. This movie is Charlie Murphy's final film role before his death from leukaemia in 2017, it was also Paul Mooney's last film role before passing away in 2021.

MEETING EVIL

This is a mystery thriller based on the 1992 book Meeting Evil by Thomas Berger. Samuel L. Jackson and Luke Wilson star in the movie. Suddenly, John (Luke Wilson) is tossed into a murderous adventure by a mysterious stranger, and the action changes him from a weak-willed father and husband into a desperate hero willing to go to any length to protect his family. He moves from being a guy down on his luck: it's his birthday, and he's just been fired, his house is in foreclosure, and his marriage is crumbling. Unexpectedly, a stranger Ritchie (Samuel L. Jackson) knocks on the door who is having car troubles an offer to take John to the hospital leads to a wild ride. There is no disappointment when it comes to Meeting Evil. Throughout the film there are twists and turns that keep the viewer interested and unable to turn away.

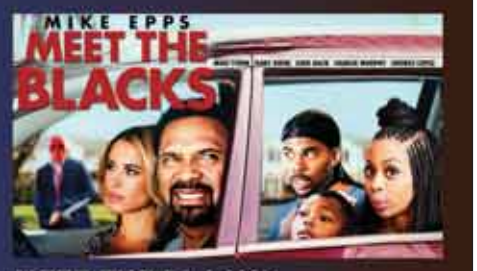
THE MARSH

"You can bury the past, but sometimes the past won't stay buried". Writer Michael Stokes and director Jordan Barker came up with the idea for the horror film "The Marsh". A children's author Claire Holloway (Gabrielle Anwar) decides to rent the Rose Marsh farmhouse in Marshville, Westmoreland. When she arrives, she finds that it is the same place that appears in her dreams. Claire discovers that the house is haunted by a young girl (Niamh Wilson) and a threatening teenage boy who haunt her in disturbing visions and this coincides with a series of supernatural killings in town. Claire and psychic investigator Geoffrey Hunt (Forest Whitaker) try to figure out the truth about the terrible crime that took place in the farmhouse.

I STILL KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER

I Know What You Did Last Summer is an American slasher film starring R&B singer Brandie, Jennifer Love Hewitt, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Ryan Phillippe and Freddie Prinze Jr. The film is loosely based on the 1973 novel by Lois Duncan of the same name. In the movie, four friends are stalked by a hook-wielding killer one year after covering up a car accident in which they killed a man. Despite mixed reviews, the film was commercially successful, grossing $125 million worldwide on a budget of $17 million, and remaining number one at the U.S. box office for three consecutive weeks. The film was also nominated for and won several awards.

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THE MARSH



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NEWS

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Okada Ban: Lagos Police Vow to Prosecute Operators, Passengers

Segun James

The Lagos State Police Command yesterday disclosed that both commercial motorcycle operators (a.k.a okada) and their passengers would be arrested and prosecuted if they violated the directive of the state banning their operations.

The command revealed the plan in a tweet by its Public Relations Officer, Benjamin Hundeyin in line with the directive of Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu.

Hundeyin said: "Under the new total ban of motorcycles in six local government areas of Lagos State, passengers and riders alike will be arrested and prosecuted.

"The passenger is an accomplice. Ignorance will not be an excuse!" he tweeted.

Sanwo-Olu had declared a total ban on the operations of commercial motorcycles popularly called Okada, in six Local Governments.

The six local governments listed by the governor are Ikeja, Surulere, Eti-Osa, Lagos Mainland, Lagos Island, and Apapa.

The governor said the fresh Okada ban followed the February 2020 restriction placed on the activities of commercial motorcycles.

Sanwo-Olu said the government took the decision in line with the State's Transport Sector Reform Law of 2018 to immediately address the chaos and menace created by the operations of Okada in the listed areas.

He told the police to enforce the order without compromise.

He said: "After a critical review of our restriction on Okada activities in the first six Local Government Areas where we restricted them on February 1, we have seen that the menace has not abated.

"We are now directing a total ban on Okada activities across the highways and bridges within these six Local Government and their Local Council Development Areas, effective from June 1.

"This is a phased ban we are embarking on this period, and we expect that within the short while when this ban will be enforced, Okada riders in other places where their activities are yet to be banned can find something else to do.

"We have given the notice now and we expect all commercial motorcycles plying the routes in the listed councils and areas to vacate the highways before enforcement begins. The enforcement will be total."

The ban came days after Okada riders killed a young man in the Lekki area of Lagos State over N100 balance.

It was learnt that the victim, who was a sound engineer, was lynched and burnt to death after a misunderstanding ensued over the N100 balance with one of the commercial motorcyclists.



ASIWAJU IN KANO…

L-R: Spiritual Leader of Qadiriyya, Sheikh Nasir Kabara; Kano State Governor, Dr. Abdullahi Ganduje; a presidential hopeful of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Senator Bola Tinubu, and a guest at the inauguration of Nasir Kabara flyover in Kano… yesterday

Three Die as Building Collapses in Lagos

A three-storey building located at 4, Alayaki Lane, Lagos Island, yesterday collapsed in Lagos during heavy rainfall, killing at least three persons.

This was revealed in a statement by the Director General of Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA), Dr Olufemi Oke-Osanyintolu.

The statement revealed that an unconfirmed number of people were still trapped under the rubble.

"The Agency responded to the above incident which was already in violation of building safety protocols," a statement revealed.

"It was discovered that the building had been captured by the LASBCA District Office and served with all Statutory Notices, Sealed at District and Central Enforcement Level.

"Further investigation determined that the developer had continued clandestine operations mostly at night and at the weekends.

"An unconfirmed number of people are still trapped inside the building. Two people have been rescued alive while three was recovered dead. Search and Rescue operations are ongoing. Further updates to follow."

Building collapse is not uncommon in Lagos due to lax regulatory oversight and sharp practices by developers.

Tambuwal: Buhari Short-changed S'East

Sokoto State Governor, Alhaji Aminu Tambuwal yesterday promised that he would run an all-inclusive government if elected.

Speaking with members of the party in Imo, Tambuwal said President Muhammadu Buhari short-changed the South-east by not appointing people from the region into key government positions.

The Sokoto governor said the people in the geo-political zone "feel marginalised and excluded from Buhari's administration."

He said: "Buhari has short-changed the south-east. I was the one who advised Saraki to choose Ike Ekweremadu to become his deputy in 2015. There is a complete case of exclusion of the people of the south-east," he said.

"The heads of the ten most important parastatals are not from the south-east, including the CBN governor. None of the service chiefs is from the south-east.

"The president, the vice president, the senate president, the deputy senate president, the speaker of the house of representatives and his deputy are not from the south-east.

"Under my watch, that cannot happen. Every part of this country will be carried along," the Sokoto governor promised.

Describing the people in the south-east as being industrial, Tambuwal said they will be appointed into strategic positions if he is elected president.

"South-east and Imo state in particular can't be excluded. The PDP will win back Imo when I become president. Igbo people are industrial. You will find a partner in me," he said.

"We are working together with our brothers in Sokoto. We have restored normalcy now in Sokoto state. I will be a president for all Nigerians."

Catholic Priest Suspended for Joining Benue Guber Race

The Catholic Diocese of Gboko in Benue State has suspended a priest, Revd Hyacinth Alia for joining the governorship race in the state.

Alia had picked up the N50 million governorship form of the All Progressives Congress and had been cleared by the ruling party to participate alongside 11 successful aspirants in the party's primary.

But the Bishop, Catholic Diocese of Gboko, William Avenya, in a letter dated May 20, announced the suspension of Alia from public ministry "after series of admonitions" to him.

Avenya noted in the letter that the Mother Church "does not allow her clerics to get involved in partisan politics on their own".

The letter partly read: "I write to communicate to you the suspension of my priest, Revd Hyacinth Iornem Alia from public ministry after a series of admonitions to him.

"The Mother Church does not allow her clerics to get involved in partisan politics on their own.

"You are aware that my son, your brother and your priest have purchased the party forms to contest for the Office of the Governor of Benue State under the All Progressives' Congress which is totally against our vocation.

N1.8bn Debt: Court Vacates Order against PDP Chieftain

Wale Igbintade

A Federal High Court in Lagos has discharged an exparte orders made against a chieftain of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Mr. Segun Adewale, owner of Aeroland Travels.

Justice Daniel Osiagor had on February 7 granted the exparte order filed by the Asset Management Corporation of Nigeria (AMCON) against the firm of the PDP chieftain.

The order empowered AMCON to seal the firm and other properties belonging to Adewale.

Some of the properties sealed by AMCON, in a suit numbered FHC/L/CS/AMC/154/2021, include; Plot 4 & 4B Block 66 Magodo Scheme, Lagos State; Plot 9, Block 44c, Adetoro Adelaja Street, Magodo Lagos; Number 4C Maye Ogundana Street, Magodo Lagos, and number 10 Oluyomi Oshinkoya Street, Magodo Residential Scheme, Lagos.

Others are Plot 8, Block 66, Residential Scheme, Sangisha, Lagos; No. 2A John Olugbo Street, Ikeja, Lagos; No. 2 Fadeyi Street, off Awolowo way, Ikeja, Lagos; No. 8 Surulere Alelor Street, Millenium, Gbagada; and No. 14 Jerry Iriabe Street, off Bashorun Okunsanya, off Admiralty Road, Lekki Penisula.

However, Adewale through his lawyer, Tope Alabi, in a motion pursuant to sections 6 and 36 of the Constitution, sections 49(3) and 50(2) of AMCON Act, 2020 (as amended), and Order 26 Rules 9(1) of the Federal High Court (Civil Procedure) Rules 2019, prayed that court for an order discharging and/or vacating the orders.

He also asked for an order directing AMCON to indemnify him for damages suffered as a result of the exparte orders made on February 7.

Alabi told the court that AMCON materially misrepresented, and concealed material facts from the Court and engaged in deliberate suppression of facts.

He argued that the court lacked jurisdiction to entertain the matter or made the ex-parte orders in issue, as the underlying matter amounts to gross abuse of court process.

NCAA Investigates How Mangled Corpse Got to MMIA Runway

Chinedu Eze

The Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) has launched an investigation into how a mangled body got to Runway 18R at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport (MMIA), Lagos.

NCAA's Head of Public Relations, Mr. Sam Adurogboye made this disclosure in a statement yesterday, noting that it was designed to prevent a recurrence of such incidents.

Adurogboye said: "This incident is still being investigated to ascertain how it happened so that steps are taken to prevent a recurrence."

Police Public Relations Officer, Airport Police Command, Olayinka Ojelade had confirmed that police had started an investigation on the mangled body found on the runway.

Ojelade, a Deputy Superintendent of Police, said the unidentified body might be that of one of the hoodlums who usually jumped through the airport fence.

Ojelade said: "I confirm that a mangled, unidentified body was found on the international airport runway on Thursday which was probably hit by taxiing aircraft.

"We are still investigating the case and once we are through we will communicate to you our findings. The Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) and the Nigeria Police Force evacuated the corpse from the runway on Friday," Ojelade explained.

On Friday, Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) announced that the resumption of flight operations at the airport, closed on Thursday.

FAAN's Acting General Manager, Corporate Affairs, FAAN, Mrs. Faithful Hope-ivbaze, added that flight operations were closed between 1 a.m. and 3 a.m., on May 19.

Support Third Force to Rescue Nigeria, Utomi Tells Nigerians

Gboyega Akinsanmi

The Chairman and Leader NC-Front, Prof. Pat Utomi yesterday challenged Nigerians to support the coalition of political parties working together to form a third force that would end the reign of bad leadership in 2023.

Utomi, a professor of political economy, explained that a shift of mindset would be required to facilitate a new order of good governance, value for money choices and commitment to the dignity of the human person in Nigeria.

He gave the advice during a virtual conference of concerned professionals and members of New Fabian Society at the weekend.

He warned the professionals that they would take part of the blame for the state capture that brought Nigeria to the brink of State failure.

Encouraging them to support the third force, Utomi said the third force fulfills popular aspiration for the end of the current regime of dissatisfactory leadership in Nigeria.

He, therefore, urged Nigerians to support a third force that would fulfill the popular aspiration for an end to the regime of dissatisfactory leadership in Nigeria

He added that admitting guilt "is part of the mea culpa we must make. Peers that allowed accountants to participate in looting state treasury evidenced in the accusation of the Accountant General by the EFCC of N80 billion fraud, and health care professionals in reducing the health sector to a man-made disaster have become vicariously culpable."

He, therefore, said all should dirty their hands to prepare for a third force government that would focus on the people and not the need and greed of politicians.

ARISE MOVIE BOX

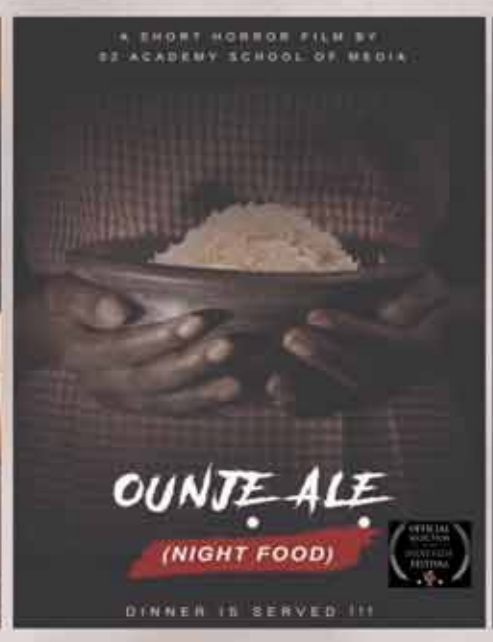
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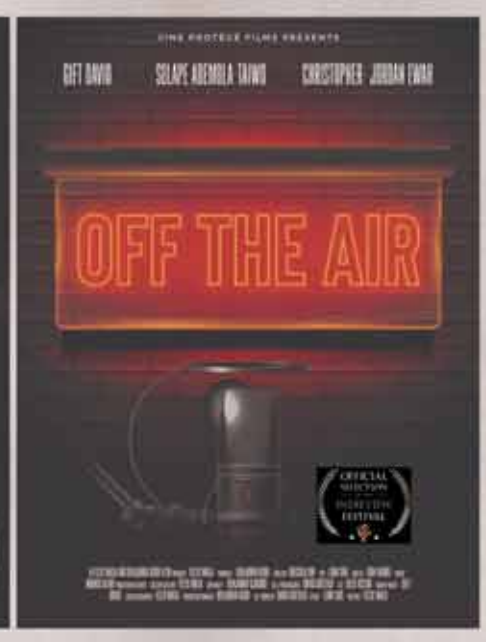
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HEALTH INTERVENTIONS

"when I was sick, you cared for me"
- *Matthew 25:36b*



Lagos State

- **Enoch and Folu Adeboye Intensive Care Unit**, Lagos State University Teaching Hospital, Ikeja, Lagos State
- **Healing Stripes Dialysis Center**, Maroko, Lagos State
- **Healing Stripes Cancer Screening Center**, Surulere, Lagos State

Borno State

- **Enoch and Folu Adeboye Dialysis Center**, Umoru Shehu Ultra-Modern Hospital, Maiduguri, Borno State

Sokoto State

- **Enoch and Folu Adeboye Dialysis Center**, Sokoto State. **(Work In Progress)**

Enugu State

- **Enoch and Folu Adeboye Dialysis Center**, University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, Ituku-Ozalla, Enugu State. **(Work In Progress)**

Ondo State

- **Akindayomi - Adeboye Intensive Care Center,** University of Medical Sciences Teaching Hospital Complex, Ondo State
- **Dialysis Center,** University of Medical Sciences Teaching Hospital Complex, Ondo State
- **Cardiac Diagnostic Unit,** University of Medical Sciences Teaching Hospital Complex, Ondo State

Ogun State

- **Enoch and Folu Adeboye Dialysis Center**, Redeemers Health Center, Redemption Camp, Mowe, Ogun State
- **Enoch and Folu Adeboye Intensive Care Unit**, Redeemers Health Center, Redemption Camp, Mowe, Ogun State
- **Enoch and Folu Adeboye Dialysis Center**, Olabisi Onabanjo University Teaching Hospital, Sagamu, Ogun State

Oyo State

- **Enoch and Folu Adeboye Dialysis Center**, University College Hospital, Ibadan, Oyo State
- **Dialysis Center**, Redeemers Health Care Center, Ibadan, Oyo State

FCT, Abuja

- **Enoch and Folu Adeboye Dialysis Center**, Wuse District Hospital, Abuja

Plateau State

- **Enoch and Folu Adeboye Intensive Care Unit**, Plateau State Specialist Hospital, Jos, Plateau State

Anambra State

- **Enoch and Folu Adeboye Dialysis Center**, The Comprehensive Medical Center Awkuzu, Anambra State. **(Work In Progress)**

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BUSINESS

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Fear of Election Spending Takes Toll on Forex Market

Last week, the two major political parties, the All Progressives Congress and the Peoples Democratic Party, continued to fine-tune plans for their presidential and governorship primaries as aspirants of the two parties crisscrossed the 36 states of the federation to woo their parties' delegates, an exercise, which financial analysts and the Association of Bureaux De Change Operators of Nigeria (ABCON) blamed for the ongoing dollar rain in the country and the attendant pressure on the foreign exchange market. **Festus Akanbi**, in this report, reviews the volatile scenario and ABCON's strategies to end the naira decline

In a cash economy like Nigeria's, in which financial transactions are carried out in cash rather than via direct debit, standing order, bank transfer, or credit card, it is not a surprise that the nation is awash with money on the eve of a general election.

Already, market intelligence is pointing in the direction of political spending for the current travails of the naira amid speculated mopping up of available foreign currencies, especially the dollar, in the run-up to the campaign period.

Analysts said whichever angles we decide to examine the nation's foreign exchange market, the naira has never had it so bad in recent times as it continues its free-fall against the dollar last week.

The situation is also compounded by the decline in Nigeria's foreign reserves, which, despite the rising price of crude oil on the international market, still fell to $39.650 billion as of the end of April 2022, compared to the $39.550billion recorded in March this year. This is according to data extracted from the daily external reserve tracker from the CBN.



Politicians' preference for the dollars is ruffling feathers in the Nigeria's forex market

Fear of Political Spending

Politicians in Nigeria are buying dollars to fund vote hunting in primary elections that start in a few weeks, driving the local currency to new lows in the unauthorised parallel market.

The naira weakened to N600 against the dollar last week in the unregulated field, according to Abubakar Mohammed, a bureau de change operator that tracks the data in Lagos. It's the lowest the currency has traded this year at a period when the central bank maintains an official exchange rate that is tightly controlled.

A market source told THISDAY last week that some politicians have begun to mop up dollars as some presidential aspirants of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the two major political parties in Nigeria are wrapping up their tour of the 36 states to woo delegates to their forthcoming party primaries.

The source explained that the naira is bound to take a further bashing in the weeks ahead given the propensity of the Nigerian political class to rely on the use of dollars to sway the delegates to their side. This was confirmed last week by a viral video of a gubernatorial aspirant of the PDP in Osun State, Senator Ademola Adeleke where he boasted his readiness to compete for voters using foreign exchange.

It was in this atmosphere of confusion that the Association of Bureaux De Change Operators of Nigeria (APCON) came up with strategies to halt the current assault on the naira, explaining that implementing those strategies will save the naira and economy from the impact of election spending that has kept inflation at double digits for a very long time.

This disclosure is contained in a statement issued by ABCON President, Alhaji Aminu Gwadabe, at the end of its National Executive Council meeting held a few weeks ago, where he said that there was an urgent need to enhance dollar liquidity in the market and ensure the stability of prices in the economy.

The ABCON boss said that the depreciation of the naira against global currencies was due to pressure from rising dollar demand without sufficient liquidity to meet the demands from retail end users, manufacturers, and other key players in the economy.

The association, which called for the reversal of the decision that excluded bureau de change operators from access to the CBN's dollar sales in 2021, believed the volatility in the FX market can be tackled by its new sets of strategies.

ABCON Lists Strategies to Save the Naira

Gwadabe outlined some of the strategies to include; The creation of BDCs' Autonomous Foreign Exchange Trading Window (BAFEX) with the determined maximum daily limit for legible BDCs to access dollars from banks, and autonomous market, and Diaspora forex window at the prevailing market prices.

It also includes enhancement of existing BDCs automation portals to file transaction returns on CBN/ABCON/NFIU/NIBSS portals for effective regulatory monitoring and supervision and the creation of an automation portal to encourage registration of undocumented and unlicensed operators for effective monitoring, identification, and tracking of their transactions.

Others include the review of the guidelines on BDC's scope of operations to include participation in payment space, such as agency banking, Point of Sale (PoS) services, inbound and outbound forex transfers, and ATM Forex services, to reflect the global business model practice.

ABCON also wants the BDCs to be allowed to access dollars or Diaspora remittances through the autonomous forex windows allowing operators to receive IMTOs proceeds, carrying out online dollar operations and Point of Sale (PoS) Agency, among others. Gwadabe said that now is the time to break the current industry monopoly that puts the remittances market in the hands of a few players depriving others of tapping into the plan.

Gwadabe said that ABCON resolved to align with the policy thrust of the apex bank and ensure that its members play their roles professionally and strategically in the interest of the market and economy.

He warned that the de-marketing of BDCs by regulators and security agencies is not good for the stability of the market, rather the strength of over 4,500 operators can be harnessed to bring forex closer to the retail end-users and strengthen liquidity in the market.

Gwadabe said: "We support any measures that would lead to compliance with the Anti-money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT).

"We support CBN's exchange rate stability policies and urge security agencies to punish any BDC operator breaching corporate governance and compliance guidelines.

"It is our sincere belief that BDCs need to be integrated back officially to ensure their continuous potent role in exchange rate stability management."

Widening Gap Between Official and Parallel Market Rates

In its review of the nation's foreign exchange market for the first quarter of the year, ABCON said that the widening gap between the official and parallel market exchange rates is driven by acute dollar scarcity due to the continued suspension of foreign exchange sales to BDCs by the CBN.

ABCON stated this in its Quarterly Economy Review for the first quarter of the year (Q1'22), expressing concerns over the inability of the fiscal and monetary authorities to address the wide parallel market and multiple exchange rates in the country.

Commenting on the trend, ABCON said: "A premium is the outcome of market restrictions that drive the non-official supply and demand for foreign currency which is a symptom of the inconsistency of fiscal and monetary policies. It also shows a lack of credibility in exchange rate policy given the level of foreign reserves.

"Those fiscal and monetary policies in Nigeria cannot curtail the premium of rent-seeking dealers in foreign exchange, that is banks and other intermediaries are worrisome and highly contributory to the distortions in the economy.

"Multiple exchange rates cause distortions by manipulating relative prices in the economy and widen opportunities for rent-seeking behaviour for those who have access to the lower exchange rates. When the multiple exchange rates are corrected, it would promote a more efficient application of market-driven relative prices to allocate resources in the economy."

The association also highlighted the nation's huge public debt and increasing level of poverty, recommending that the federal government should reconsider its strategy of depending on debt to grow the economy.

CBN's Shifts Attention to Banks

In July 2021, the apex bank ended the sales of forex to Bureau De Change operators, saying the parallel market had become a conduit for illicit forex flows and graft. The bank said it would also no longer process applications for BDC licences in the country.

"Weekly sales of foreign exchange by the CBN will henceforth go directly to commercial banks, the CBN governor, Godwin Emefiele, said in a live TV broadcast after announcing that the bank had retained its benchmark policy rate.

"We are concerned that BDCs have allowed themselves to be used for the graft," Emefiele said.

He added that international bodies, including some embassies and donor agencies, have been complicit in illegal forex transactions that have hindered the flow of foreign exchange into the country.

He noted that the organisations have chosen to channel forex through the black market than use the official Investors and Exporters (I&E) window, called Nafex.

Accordingly, Emefiele said banks are mandated to "immediately" and transparently sell forex to customers who present the required documents. All banks are to immediately create dedicated tellers for the same purpose.

The consensus of market watchers last week was for the government to step in to urgently address the recommendations of ABCON and to put in place additional measures to safeguard the naira from further fall as the various parties conclude plans for their primary elections.

ECONOMY



A market in Lagos

The Harrowing Inflation

As inflation pushes the economy towards a breaking point, is there leeway for policy interventions? **James Emejo** asks

A growing number of Nigerians are becoming uncomfortable with the country's monthly inflation outcomes in recent times. Even when the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) indicates that the headline index drops in a particular month, it is often the opposite in reality as food and commodity prices hardly moderate.

Inflation which is one of the macroeconomic parameters used to assess the health of an economy has been on an upward trajectory for several months with its negative effects on the general economy.

Food and commodity prices have spiraled out of control in recent times, making it difficult for the ordinary Nigerian to meet basic needs such as food.

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), which has the mandate to rein in inflation appears to have run out of monetary options for tackling rising prices as the problem is more of structural issues that have continued to fuel inflation.

An import-dependent and undiversified economy such as Nigeria, with a low export base and low domestic output as well as high youth unemployment coupled with insecurity that has kept farmers away from their farms – is bound to be subjected to external shocks.

Rising Index

According to the NBS, the Consumer Price Index, (CPI) which measures inflation increased to 16.82 per cent (year-on-year) in April compared to 18.12 per cent in April 2021. This is the highest rate of inflation within the past eight months.

However, month-on-month, the headline index increased to 1.76 per cent in April, representing a 0.02 per cent rise compared to the 1.74 per cent recorded in March.

Month-on-month, inflation recorded the highest increases in Abuja 2.91 per cent, Taraba 2.76 per cent and Bauchi 2.65 per cent, while Benue 0.29 per cent, Kogi 0.48 per cent and Niger 0.66 per cent recorded the slowest rise in prices April.

The statistical agency explained inflation rate slowed down in April when compared to the same month in the previous year, though price increases occurred in every parameter that yielded the headline index during the review period.

The composite food index moderated to 18.37 per cent in April 2022 compared to 22.72 per cent in April 2021. Month on month, however, the sub-index increased to 2 per cent in April, up by 0.01 percentage points from 1.99 per cent recorded in March.

According to the CPI report for April which was released by the NBS, this rise in the food index was caused by increases in the prices of bread and cereals, food products, potatoes, yam, and other tubers, wine, fish, meat, and oils.

The average annual rate of change of the Food sub-index for the 12 months ending April 2022 over the previous 12-month average is 18.88 per cent compared to 19.21 per cent in March.

On the other hand, core inflation, which excludes the prices of volatile agricultural produce stood at 14.18 per cent in April 2022, up by 1.44 per cent when compared with 12.74 per cent recorded in April 2021.

On a month-on-month basis, the core sub-index increased to 1.22 per cent in April 2022, down by 0.24 per cent when compared with 0.98 per cent recorded in March.

Essentially, There were increases in the prices of gas, liquid fuel, cleaning, repair and hire of clothing, clothing materials, other articles of clothing, and clothing accessories.

The average 12-month annual rate of change of the index was 13.68 per cent for the 12 months ending April 2022; this is 0.12 percent points higher than the 13.56 per cent recorded in March.

The percentage change in the average composite CPI for the 12 months ending April 2022 over the average of the CPI for the previous12-month period is 16.45 percent, showing a 0.1 per cent decrease compare to the 16.54 percent recorded in March.

However, the urban inflation rate slowed to 17.35 per cent (year-on-year) in April 2022 compared to 18.68 per cent in April 2021, while the rural inflation rate also moderated to 16.32 per cent in April 2022 from 17.57 per cent in April the previous year.

Food inflation, year on year was highest in Kogi at 22.79 per cent, Kwara at 21.56 per cent, and Ebonyi at 21.45 per cent, while Sokoto at 14.85 per cent, Kaduna at 15.55 per cent, and Anambra at 16.68 per cent recorded the slowest rise in prices.

Month-on-month, food inflation was highest in Ekiti at 4.03 per cent, Taraba at 3.68 per cent, Osun at 3.04 per cent, while Anambra at 0.66 per cent, Kogi at 1.01 per cent, and Bauchi at 1.08 per cent recorded the slowest rise in prices.

Inflationary pressures had mostly been associated with the food sub-index following shortages resulting from the inability of farmers to access their farms as a result of insecurity which remains a major constraint to growth besides infrastructural deficits.

Inflation is further exacerbated by the disruptions in the global supply chain following the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine which had sent food and commodity prices to the ceilings. Increases in fuel and electricity prices in the country have further contributed to rising prices.

Groping for Solutions

The CBN has severally stressed that structural constraints were responsible for current inflationary pressures in the economy but the global disruption in supply order has also taken its toll on prices.

The apex bank had targeted inflation of between six to nine per cent and deployed all monetary policy tools in recent times to keep it in check but the fiscal side also needed to do more to rein in inflation especially as election spending tends to compound the headline index in the coming months.

Analysts' Assessment

Analysts in separate interviews with THISDAY predicted that the high inflation was likely to remain shortly and offered intervention options that will reverse the upward trajectory.

Managing Director / Chief Executive, SD&D Capital Management Limited, Mr. Idakolo Gbolade, said the government needed to rejig the economy by ensuring that the country achieves self-sustainability in crude oil refining and fertiliser production to increase activity in the agriculture sector and other major areas of production.

He said Nigeria needs to block the continuous crude oil theft that now amounts to almost 90 per cent of production leading to the country's inability to meet up OPEC quota which has reduced the expected gains from the increased crude oil price.

Gbolade said, "The inflation index is not in congruence with reality. statistically more of Nigeria has been drawn into poverty in the first quarter of this year.

"We have witnessed continuous food inflation in the past three quarters and it is not abating. All economic indices are going south with no end in sight.

"Nigerians would soon start leading street protests if the hardship becomes unbearable. Crime has also been on the increase because of continuous hardship in the land."

Also, commenting on the rising inflation, Managing Director / Chief Executive, Credent Investment Managers Limited, Mr. Ibrahim Shelleng, said in the short term, the cash-strapped government may consider diverting some of the petrol subsidies to food subsidies to ameliorate the effects of inflation on Nigerians.

He said in the longer term, the government must improve infrastructure and ramp up local production to alleviate some of the supply shocks, especially regarding food.

Shelling said, "The economy was showing signs of recovery before the Russian-Ukraine crisis having come out of the COVID-19 induced downturn. Sadly, our import-dependent economy is highly susceptible to global markets, and whilst the latest inflation figures suggest moderation compared to 2021, it does not tell the full story.

"The average Nigerian would certainly attest to the sustained hardship caused by the high inflationary environment, which sadly does not look like tapering in the short term. Supply shocks still exist; currency devaluation and other cost-push inflationary pressures will certainly exacerbate the situation."

CAPITAL MARKET

Hope Rising as 24 Companies Realise N616.16bn Profits in Q1 2022

With the ease of COVID-19 epidemic restrictions, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) projection that Nigeria's economy is expected to grow by 3.7 per cent in 2022, supported by higher oil prices, gradual easing of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) production cuts and improved management of the pandemic, companies in Nigeria have emerged stronger in revenue and it has trigged N616.16billion profit in the first quarter (Q1) of 2022. In this report, **Kayode Tokede** examines 24 listed companies' improved performance in profit that has lifted some stocks on the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX)

Amid the easing of lockdown and total removal of restriction measures on the COVID-19 epidemic, a total of 24 fundamental companies have reported N615.16billion profit in the first quarter (Q1) ended March 31, 2022, an increase of 21 per cent from N513.14billion reported in the first quarter of 2021.

The 24 companies' unaudited financial statements for Q1 revealed a significant increase in revenue but a steady increase in inflation drives total operating expenses in the period under review.

The 24 companies consist of; 12 commercial banks, three cement manufacturing companies, four Fast-Moving consumer goods companies (FCMG), one brewery manufacturing company, two petroleum marketing companies, and one construction / telecommunication company.

Dangote Cement, MTN Nigeria, and Zenith Bank Plc are the most profitable listed companies on the Nigeria Exchange Limited (NGX) by value, according to THISDAY findings.

For instance, Dangote cement reported a nearly 18 per cent increase in profit to N105.85billion in Q1, 2022 from N89.71billion in Q1 2021, while MTN Nigeria reported an N96.82 billion profit in Q1 2022, an increase of 31.3per cent from N73.75 billion reported in Q1 2021. In addition, Zenith Bank grew its profit by nearly 10 per cent to N58.2billion in Q1, 2022 from N53.06billion in Q1 2021.

A telecommunication giant, MTN Nigeria Communication reported a 31.3 per cent increase in profit to N96.82billion in Q1 2022 from N73.75billion in Q1 2021.

The sectorial performance also revealed that listed commercial banks on the Exchange reported a significant increase in profit despite mixed provisions for bad loans.

Significant Increase in Revenue Spike Cement Manufacturing Companies Profit in Q1 2022

A total of three cement producers made a combined profit of N156.56 billion in the first quarter (Q1) of 2022, representing an increase of 29 from N121.2billion reported in the first quarter of 2021.

Despite reporting a hike in the cost of sales and operating expenses, the growth in profit by Nigeria's cement makers, Dangote Cement, Lafarge Africa Plc, and BUA Cement Plc was boosted by the increase in revenue.

An investigation by THISDAY revealed that the retail cement prices in Nigeria reportedly rose from around N2,400-N2,600 per 50kg bag in 2020 to an average price of N4,000 at the end of March 31, 2022.

Meanwhile, Dangote Cement reported an 18 per cent increase in its profit to N105.85 billion in Q1 2022 from N89.7billion in Q1 2021.

The cement giant generated N413.18billion from revenue in Q1 2022, representing an increase of 24.2 per cent from N332.65billion in Q1 2021.

The chief executive officer of Dangote Cement, Michael Pucheros in a statement had said: "Our group volumes were down 3.6per cent mainly due to energy supply challenges in Nigeria. Our operations relying on cement and clinker imports –namely Ghana, Sierra-Leone, Cameroon - were impacted by the global supply chain challenges."

However, BUA Cement saw a 22.4 per cent increase in profit to N33.14billion in Q1. 2022 from N22.4billion in Q1 2021 as its revenue closed Q1, 2022 at N96.99billion compared to N58.5 billion reported in Q1 2021.

In addition, Lafarge Africa reported a 92.18per cent increase in profit to N17.6billion in Q1 2022 from N9.14billion in Q1 2021, while its revenue rose by 27 per cent to N90.61billion in Q1 2022 from N71.47billion reported in Q1 2021.



MTN Nigeria


Dangote Cement Factory



Zenith Bank

On the backdrop of cement manufacturing companies reporting growth in revenue and profit, the only listed Nigerian construction company, Julius Berger Plc also benefited when its profit rose by 31.80 per cent to N3.73billion in Q1 2022 from N2.83billion in Q1 2021.

Capital market analyst, Mr. Rotimi Fakeyejo said: "The strong growth across the listed cement manufacturing companies as a result of price increment in the product. The cement manufacturing companies have been compelled to increase the price to preserve margins from the impact of foreign exchange devaluation."

He explained further: "For 2022, we are likely to see increased sensitivity from the private sector and also taking into account that this is a pre-election year. In pre-election years, you tend to see more cautious activities in the real estate sector because of uncertainties in the world economy.

"For public sector demand as well, we don't expect any significant effect in that space as we see preparation for the coming elections distracting policymakers from implementing the capital expenditure in the budget for 2022."

Union Bank, GTCO, Fidelity Report Decline in Profit as 12 Banks' Profits Hit N281.56bn

Of all the 12 banks, Union Bank of Nigeria Plc, Guaranty Trust Holdings Plc (GTCO), and Fidelity Bank Plc reported a decline in profit.

The breakdown showed that Union Bank of Nigeria reported an 11 per cent drop in profit to N5.55billion in Q1, 2022 from N6.21billion in Q1, 2021, while GTCO's profit declined by 5.1 per cent to N43.2billion in Q1, 2022 from N45.55billion in Q1, 2021.

The Chief executive officer, of the Union Bank of Nigeria, Mr. Emeka Okonkwo in a statement said the bank 2022 renewed its focus on turbocharging productivity and ensuring full leverage of the strength of its digital channels, regional network, and talent to maximise the bottom line.

Fidelity Bank shows its profit closing Q1, 2022 at N9.52 billion, representing a decline of 0.78 per cent from N9.59 billion reported in Q1, 2021.

On the reverse, Access Holdings Plc reported a 9.2 per cent increase in profit to N57.4billion in Q1, 2022 from N52.55billion in Q1, 2021, while UBA grew profit by 8.7 per cent to N41.5billion in Q1, 2022 from N38.16billion in Q1, 2021.

For Ecobank Transnational Incorporated (ETI), its profit grew significantly by 25.7 per cent to N38.3billion in Q1, 2022 from N30.49billion in Q1, 2021.

The Chief Executive Officer of Ecobank Group, Ade Ayeyemi stated that the performance was achieved in a difficult operating environment characterised by the strengthening of the US dollar against local operating currencies, high inflation, high-interest rates, and tight labour markets across Africa as the Russia-Ukraine conflict continued to take its toll.

"Despite these challenges, we continued to support our customers effectively, which paid off as our businesses grew their revenues and profits. These were driven by trade, cash management, FICC, and payments, while we also achieved modest loan growth with support from higher interest rates."

During the period under review, Wema Bank grew its profit by 119 per cent to N2.85billion in Q1, 2022 from N1.3billion in Q1 2021 as Stanbic IBTC Holdings reported N15.06billion profit in Q1, 2022 from N11.26billion in Q1, 2021.

Analysis of other banks' results showed that FCMB group generated N5.17billion profit in Q1, 2022, an increase of 44.6 per cent from N3.57 billion in Q1 2022; Sterling Bank reported N3.75billion profit in Q1, 2022 from N2.51billion in Q1, 2021 and Jaiz Bank reported 25 per cent increase in profit to N1.04billion in Q1, 2022 from N832 million reported in Q1, 2021.

Despite posting modest performance, some listed banks have struggled to grow their stock price.

Analysts at Coronation Research stated that 2022 has been a challenging year thus far for Nigerian banks' stocks.

Coronation Research in a report titled "Nigerian Banks: Q1 22 earnings review" said, "Year-to-date, the sector index has returned a disappointing 7.4per cent and has grossly underperformed the broader equity gauge (NGX-ASI: +24.3per cent).

"Notably, it is the second-worst performing sector index. Stock performance within our coverage universe tells a similar story: FBN Holdings (+4.8per cent) and Access Holdings (+3.8 per cent) have recorded small gains, UBA has been flattish, while GTCO (-8.1 per cent), Stanbic IBTC Holdings (-8.3 per cent), Zenith Bank (-2.6 per cent) have fallen."

Commenting on the unaudited result and accounts by listed banks, the Managing Director, ARM Securities Limited, Mr. Rotimi Olubi said: "Interest income has been a major driver of earnings across all banks. We have seen a significant increase in banks' interest income due to a rise in loans from customers and institutions."

Other companies with growth in profit

With the hike in global oil prices, listed petroleum marketing companies have also reported growth in profit. For instance, Totalenergies Marketing Nigeria reported a 46.97 per cent increase in profit to N4.37billion in Q1, 2022 from N2.97billion in Q1, 2021.

Seplat Petroleum thus reported a 12.27 per cent decline in profit to N8.29billion in Q1, 2022 from N9.44billion reported in Q1, 2021.

The only considered brewery company, Nigerian Breweries Plc reported N13.6billion profit in Q1, 2022, an increase of 77.7 per cent from N7.66billion in Q1, 2021.

BUA Foods, Nestle Nigeria, Dangote Sugar, and Cadbury Nigeria, all FCMG reported growth in profit on the backdrop of an increase in revenue and a hike in operating expenses.

BUA Foods in the period reported an 18.61 per cent increase in profit to N22.84billion in Q1 2022 from N19.26billion in Q1 2021.

As Nestle Nigeria reported a 45 per cent increase in profit to N17.98billion in Q1 2022 from N12.4billion in Q1 2021, Dangote Sugar grew profit to N8.87billion in Q1 2022 from N8.3billion in Q1 2021.

In addition, Cadbury Nigeria announced N1.54billion profit in Q1 2022 from N241million in Q1 2021.

The Managing Director, Cadbury Nigeria, Mrs. Oyeyimika Adeboye in a statement had said the company's current repositioning strategy is beginning to yield the desired results.

AGRICULTURE

Changing Nigeria's Agric Landscape Through Innovation, Technology

The introduction of tracking devices that allow farmers to book tractor services from local tractor owners via a mobile phone app, which is part of a programme recently unveiled by Hello Tractor in collaboration with Heifer International, will boost tractor ownership and guarantee a reality for entrepreneurs who find it impossible to get credit through normal channels, writes **Festus Akanbi**



L-R: Country Director, Heifer International, Rufus Idris; Representative of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Abdullahi Abubakar; one of the beneficiaries of the Tractor Financing Scheme, and the Vice President for Africa Programmes, Heifer International, Mrs. Adesuwa Ifedi at the unveiling of the Hello Tractor Pay-as-you-go programme, in Abuja…recently

With barely a month to the end of the second quarter of the year, expectations are high that the federal government will be able to deliver on its promise to ensure the provision of comprehensive farm inputs to rural farmers as a way of raising interest in agricultural practice with a corresponding increase in food production for domestic purposes and exports.

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr. Mohammad Abubakar, had at the 2021 budget performance and 2022 budget defence session at the National Assembly promised that comprehensive farm input, among others, would be provided to rural farmers through stakeholders such as the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) for the financial inclusiveness in the agricultural sector, to mitigate the adverse effects of COVID-19 and support farmers affected by incidents of flood disaster.

However, as the third quarter beckons, watchers of the nation's economy say funding is still a big deal to agric smallholders in Nigeria.

Meanwhile, available statistics showed that in the third quarter of 2021, Nigeria's agricultural sector grew by 1.22 per cent in real terms compared to the same period of the previous year.

It is a fact that agriculture is a key activity for Nigeria's economy after oil. Analysts said that Nigeria's agricultural sector has high growth potential, but that this potential is not being realised due to several reasons.

First, productivity is low and stagnant. In addition to this, farming systems, which are mostly small in scale, are still predominantly subsistence-based and for the most part, depend on the vagaries of the weather.

These developments did not produce any cheering news. For instance, $22 billion is spent every year on food importation and as of March 2022, the inflation rate accelerated to 15.7%, food inflation rose to 17.20% and food prices jumped more than 20%.

While demand for food is growing, the supply side faces the challenges of changing environmental and climatic conditions, dwindling water supply, shortage of arable land and farming inputs, the rapid rate of urbanisation that is reducing available land for agriculture, and a host of other problems.

To mitigate these challenges, farmers must continue to innovate and embrace digital technology to improve productivity to meet domestic and external demand. Hence, the need for the transformation to digital or smart agriculture.

Technologies such as mobile telephony, robotics, remote sensor technology, the Internet of Things (IoT), big data, artificial intelligence, and many others, provide the agricultural industry with the tools and information to make more informed decisions and boost productivity.

New Opportunities

However, as the Nigerian economy is opening up to private investments, new opportunities are emerging and are already dwarfing some of the challenges facing the agricultural sector in the country. The truth is that Nigeria, like some other members of the African continent, is beginning to enjoy direct interventions which promise to boost its agricultural financing.

Tractor Financing

One of such direct interventions came from Heifer International, which recently announced that it is investing $1 million in the tractor booking platform, Hello Tractor, to provide loans for tractor purchases—loans that can be repaid from revenues earned by leasing them to local farmers.

The programme, "Pay-As-You-Go (PAYG) Tractor Financing for Increased Agricultural Productivity in Nigeria," already has enabled tractor purchases in the states of Nasarawa, Abuja, and Enugu. These purchases, according to the company, could make tractors accessible to thousands of smallholder farmers via the increasingly popular Hello Tractor leasing platform.

Sometimes referred to as Uber for tractors, Hello Tractor offers software and tracking devices that allow farmers to book tractor services from local tractor owners via a mobile phone app.

"We developed the PAYG programme to make tractor ownership—and the reliable income these machines can bring—a reality for entrepreneurs who find it impossible to get credit through normal channels," said Jehiel Oliver, Founder, and CEO of Hello Tractor.

"We look at the revenue tractor owners can generate, not how much collateral they can pledge."

Oliver said that partnering Heifer "enables us to extend innovative financing to people who were previously considered 'unbankable,' while increasing access to technology that has the potential to improve the incomes of millions of smallholder farmers across Africa."

Unlocking Capital for Youths

However, Senior Vice President of Africa Programmes at Heifer International, Adesuwa Ifedi, who unveiled the Hello Tractor Pay-as-you-go Tractor programme last month in Abuja explained that "The pay-as-you-go model provides financing for entrepreneurs who want to create jobs by capitalising on the demand for tractor services on African farms, but who lack traditional forms of collateral", adding that the gesture is a way to unlock capital for youth who have strong business skills that can help transform African agriculture but are often overlooked by private equity investors.

Partnership with Local Economies

Since 1944, Heifer International has worked with more than 39 million people around the world to end hunger and poverty sustainably. Working with rural communities across Africa for 47 years, Heifer International supports farmers and local food producers to strengthen local economies and build secure livelihoods that provide a living income.

Ifedi explained that the company's strategic goal over the next 8-10 years is to assist more than one million farmers (largely young men and women) to reach a sustainable living income by 2030, through strategic private and public sector partnerships, unlocking demand and market opportunities, leveraging finance across priority value chains, and leveraging innovation and emerging agricultural technologies to reach transformational scale.

"Heifer believes leveraging technology and modern practices will create a pathway for Nigeria and other African countries to increase productivity and competitiveness of the agricultural sector to curb food insecurity and poverty. More progress can also be achieved with the involvement of the largest group in the population – the youth - in all phases of agriculture," she stated.

She added that with Nigeria's population currently estimated at more than 200 million people and growing at 3.2% a year, feeding 200 million people and a projected 400 million by 2050 will be a daunting challenge.

With more than 75 years of investing and technically contributing to agricultural transformation programmes globally, Heifer International is repositioning its work in Africa to include investment in infrastructure, young social entrepreneurs, and technology to support the continent's agricultural sector leapfrog.

Heifer International for more than four decades has been a trusted partner for smallholder farmers across Africa combining the power of African youth with the many possibilities of emerging technologies.

According to Ifedi, "Globally, there are roughly 200 tractors per 100 square kilometers of agricultural lands, but in sub-Saharan Africa, there are only about 27. This is illustrative of a mechanization deficit.

The deficit has a significant impact on farm productivity and local economies in a region where most people depend on smallholder farming for income.

"Hello, Tractor is one of many new agritech start-ups emerging across the continent that are finding business opportunities in addressing this and other farming challenges.

However, while private equity groups and large impact investors have provided more than $5 billion for tech startups in Africa, very little of that financing has gone to young agritech entrepreneurs," she noted.

In 2021, Heifer International created the AYuTe Africa Challenge, which awards cash grants annually to the most promising young agri-tech innovators across Africa. It also supports Heifer's goal of helping more than six million African farmers to earn a sustainable living income by 2030. The Pay As You Go Tractor model was a fallout of this annual African challenge competition.

The inaugural AYuTe Africa Challenge awarded a total of $1.5 million to two companies, of which Hello Tractor is one. The award allowed Hello Tractor to finance 17 tractors for 17 entrepreneurs in three countries.

Ifedi expressed the belief that Heifer's today's investment in the PAYG product will give more entrepreneurs and smallholder farmers access to tractor services at an affordable rate and in turn boost farm productivity, employment, food security, and farmer livelihoods in Nigeria.

Since 1944, Heifer International has worked with more than 39 million people around the world to end hunger and poverty sustainably. Working with rural communities across Africa for 47 years, Heifer International supports farmers and local food producers to strengthen local economies and build secure livelihoods that provide a living income.

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OPINION

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APC PRIMARIES AND NEED FOR CREDIBLE CANDIDATES

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The north as a single bloc is incapable of determining the presidency, argues Alhassan Farouk

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FROM OBSCURITY TO STARDOM

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For the nation's sake, and its own, the north should do well by making education free and compulsory, writes ***IKE OKONTA***



CITIZEN DEBORAH AND THE NORTHERN CRISIS

Last week, students of the Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto, laid their hands on one of their own, Deborah Samuel, and mobbed her to death. They alleged that Deborah had blasphemed against Islam, and instantly became prosecutor, judge and jury all at the same time. The next day, following the arrest and detention of two of the perpetrators of this heinous crime, the students took to the streets of Sokoto, assaulting Christians and vandalizing churches. The governor of the state had to impose a 24-hour curfew to prevent further breakdown of law and order.

As usual, condemnation of the students' act came thick and fast. True, the Sokoto students richly deserve blame. After all they are being trained to become teachers and discerning citizens who will be charged with the critical task of educating our children. However, these students did not just wake up one morning and turn into a mob, baying for blood. There is an enabling environment that nurtured them. There are enablers that aided and abetted their action. And the enablers, I argue, is the ruling elite that has been in charge of the northern part of Nigeria since 1960.

This northern elite played their first role on the Nigeria-wide political canvass in July 1966. Young army majors had struck earlier in January, putting an end to the feckless government of Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. Balewa, northern Premier Ahmadu Bello and several senior northern army officers had been killed. As it turned out, the majority of the perpetrators of the January 1966 coup were Igbo. Igbo politicians like Nnamdi Azikiwe and Michael Okpara had been spared. Even though the intention of the coup makers was to hand power over to Obafemi Awolowo, a Yoruba, northern politicians and army officers read an ethnic motive into the January 1966 coup and launched a revenge coup six months later, killing many Igbo military officers along the way.

It was during this period that the strategy of using the poor and uneducated northern masses as a battering ram against 'southern' interests was stitched together. The Northern Peoples Congress, led by Ahmadu Bello, had ignored this impoverished mass. Ahmadu Bello's undeclared policy was to educate only the children of emirs and district heads and leave the ordinary people to wallow in poverty and ignorance. It was only Malam Aminu Kano, leader of the Northern Elements Progressive Union, who railed against Ahmadu Bello's policies and insisted that the northern poor deserved a good and dignified life just as the privileged. The combination of the British colonialists and Ahmadu Bello's Northern Peoples Congress



hounded Aminu Kano's followers in the 1950s and 1960s and ensured that they were kept out of power.

Nigeria has had several military heads of state and civilian Presidents of northern origin since Ahmadu Bello. It is an obvious fact that there is a wide gap in educational attainment between the northern and southern parts of the country. You would have thought that the major preoccupation of northern leaders, once they assumed office, would be to narrow the gap by making education free and compulsory in the north. By taking this step, the northern poor in their millions would have been freed from endemic poverty and ignorance. But no northern leader, including President Muhammadu Buhari, has seen fit to take this step, even as they take care to send their children and other dependents abroad for education.

The reason for this inaction is that the north's ruling elite wants to continue to maintain the economic and social hierarchy in the north, wherein the emirs and their relatives, senior civil servants, military officers, politicians and businessmen continue to enjoy a life of ease and splendor while the northern poor are trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty, disease and ignorance. The poor are held in mental captivity by the elites' repeated nostrums of a 'southern' threat and that they should do what their political leaders tell them or else their way of life would be overwhelmed by Christians 'down there in the south.' This poor mass is only activated during elections when their elites tell them who to vote for.

The northern crisis is a Nigerian crisis. The billions of Naira currently being poured into containing Boko Haram in the northeast and combating bandits in the northwest could have been used in launching massive health and education programmes nationwide

But the cozy arrangement between the northern elite and the impoverished masses is now breaking down. The real reason for the spate of banditry, kidnapping, and Islamic insurgency that have overwhelmed the northwest and northeast is that the northern poor are now revolting against their socioeconomic condition. They are tired of being told that their elite are protecting them against the 'south' while in reality their objective condition is misery and want. The northern elite has responded with the combined strategy of silence and inaction. This is so because deep down in their hearts they know the real causes of the present northern malaise, but the obvious solution – compulsory and free education for the northern masses and economic and social programmes that will pull the latter out of poverty – is one they do not intend to implement.

The northern crisis is deep and long-running. Mathew Hassan Kukah, the Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Diocese has been following in the footstep of Aminu Kano and calling out the north's ruling elite. Kukah is a northerner and knows, as the saying goes, where all the bodies are buried. The northern elite has responded to Kukah by orchestrating attacks on him in the media. But Kukah Is unrelenting. And he deserves praise for this steadfastness. He should also be supported. Voices all over the country should further amplify what Bishop Kukah is saying and demand that the north educate its teeming poor and stop the practice of using them as inert cannon fodder.

The northern crisis is a Nigerian crisis. The billions of Naira currently being poured into containing Boko Haram in the northeast and combating bandits in the northwest could have been used in launching massive health and education programmes nationwide. What harms the north invariably harms the rest of the country. It is therefore imperative that all Nigerians speak out against the present failed politics of the northern elite.

Dr Okonta was until recently Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in the Department of Politics, University of Oxford. He presently lives in Abuja.

APC PRIMARIES AND NEED FOR CREDIBLE CANDIDATES



TUNJI OLAJIDE writes that the parties must ensure that only men and women of impeccable character are given the chance to emerge

In the last couple of days, it has been a frenzy of activities for the political parties, particularly the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) and the main opposition party, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), as they are involved in many engagements to produce candidates that would fly the flags of their parties in the coming 2023 general elections. Going by the time-table released by the election management body, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), all processes relating to party primaries are to be concluded by June 4, 2022.

That date is the deadline set by INEC



for the conclusion of the primaries and submission of the names of successful candidates to the electoral body. Some of the parties had requested for extension of the time, but INEC did not budge. Rather, it insisted that it would go ahead with its plans in accordance with the provisions of the Electoral Amendment of Act of 2022.

It is against this background that the parties are deeply engrossed in activities that would ensure they comply with the INEC deadline. The situation has provided an ample opportunity for political incumbents at various levels and new aspirants to square up against each other as they variously crisscross the land seeking the mandate of the people.

It is, however, unfortunate to note that many characters with questionable credentials are springing up from different directions as political aspirants. Given the rough times the country has gone through in the preceding years in the name of political representation, it has become very imperative that the parties must get their act right this time around by ensuring that only men and women of impeccable character, integrity and pedigree are given the chance to emerge. We cannot afford another unpleasant experience of going to wander aimlessly in the wilderness for another tenure of four years.

As the parties prepare for their primaries, they have a golden opportunity to screen out unsuitable elements who are presently strutting our political landscape, pretending to be responding to the calls of their people for them to run. The last seven years that the APC had been in power as a ruling party, it has not been a completely pleasant experience for the electorate and indeed the Nigerian people that voted it into power. If it seeks to return as a ruling party, it must ensure that only credible leaders are encouraged to emerge at all levels. Those being screened to participate as candidates in the primaries should be individuals that reflect the true values of the party. They must be credible people with exemplary conduct; and not people of doubtful pedigree. Those that have done well in their present positions must be encouraged to succeed in their aspirations so that they would continue to give their people good representation.

The party must do everything possible to stop gangsters and the morally bankrupt from getting its tickets as it goes into the primaries. It is such characters that give the party bad image across board. The party cannot sit down and watch things go wrong. Credible leaders are what the party should be looking out for now.

For example, some of the Senators and Representatives elected on the party`s platform have done very well that they deserve to be returned. Such outstanding members should be supported by the party to return so that they can continue to give credible representation and service to the people. One of such elements is Senator Tolu Odebiyi, a first timer in the Senate, who represents the good people of Ogun West. In the last three years, Odebiyi has shown strong leadership, courage and effective representation.

Within the period, he has done excellently well to put the Ogun West senatorial district on the political map of the Nigerian federation through key bills and motions he has introduced into the Senate and numerous dividends of democracy delivered to his constituents. One of the bills which has been passed by the two chambers of National Assembly and is waiting for presidential assent is the National Institute of Border Studies which is to be situated in Imeko, one of the towns in his constituency.

It is important to note that Ogun West shares border with Benin Republic. He had argued that the existence of the Institute would help in better and effective border management in the country. It would also help to address the issue of human trafficking, illicit arms trade, smuggling of banned goods and trans-border criminality.

One other key achievements he has recorded and which is very dear to the hearts of his people was the constitutional change of the name of his area from Egbado to Yewa. This has been listed in the Nigerian Constitution and awaiting presidential assent. He also pushed for the reopening of the Nigerian borders which were closed for about three years to check the influx of sub-standard products into the country. The border closure had negative impact on his people, given their location as border communities. He worked tirelessly both within and outside the Senate to ensure that those borders were reopened to give a lifeline to his people. The result was the recent reopening of those borders by Mr. President. These laudable actions have been well received by his people.

He has continued to champion the cause of the people of Ogun West through his scholarship schemes and numerous skills acquisition and economic empowerment programmes that have helped to provide means of livelihood for a good number of his constituents. He is presently pushing hard for the intervention of the federal government on the deplorable Sango Ota-Abeokuta federal highway. He has continued to engage the Minister of Works, Babatunde Raji Fahola, on the matter.

But in all of this, a certain Senator from a neighbouring State is making moves to come into Ogun State to bid for the Ogun West senatorial seat presently being occupied by Odebiyi. This is capable of creating unnecessary social tension and disrupting the existing peace in the area. Such unconscionable action should be condemned by the leadership of the APC at both State and national levels.

The APC cannot afford to lose the Ogun West seat to the opposition. Odebiyi has done very well in giving the constituency effective and credible representation. He should be encouraged and supported by all men of goodwill to continue to lead the way. Anybody that has too much money to throw around should channel same to the party`s coffers to help it in improving its fortunes in the coming elections. ■

Olajide, a public affairs analyst, writes from Abeokuta

The north as a single bloc is incapable of determining the presidency, argues ***ALHASSAN FAROUK***

THE NORTH AND THE PRESIDENCY

There has been several attempts to rationalize the divisive - and now obvious - plot by some power-crazed northern oligarchs to retain the presidency in the northern region following the eight years of Muhammadu Buhari, a man who did little to foster national unity and would leave behind a legacy marred by allegations of naked nepotism.

Of them all, the one that has held consistent and has been repeatedly put forward by the foot soldiers willing to stake their reputation for a political betrayal and self-absorption that could further weaken the country's union and jeopardize its continued existence as a single entity, is the claim that a northern candidate offers the brightest chance of victory for either of the two major political parties in 2023.

The reasoning, often portrayed as pragmatic, is that the northern region's share of the population makes its endorsement crucial to electoral victory in national elections and if it takes a northern candidate to appease the region and obtain its endorsement, then other concerns, including Nigeria's founding principles of equity, must take the backseat in the pursuit of this "win-at-all-costs" strategy.

This servile approach, which canonizes the interests of a single group in a multi-ethnic country and encourages the perpetual indulgence of their unfettered appetite for power, ignores the political realities of Nigeria and replaces that reality with a simplistic caricature in which the north, all 19 states of it, is reduced to a single monolith ever marching in one direction and with the power to single-handedly determine the presidency.

To win the Presidency, candidates are required to secure a degree of acceptance in all regions of the country with the mandated 25 percent of votes in at least 24 states of the country's 36. Failure to secure this before 2015 hobbled Buhari's bid and reduced him to a sectional figure, appealing only to an enclosed group

If that were true, Muhammadu Buhari would have been elected president in 2003, 2007, 2011 - his three previous unsuccessful attempts despite his popularity in the north and mythical 12-million vote deposit. His defeat on those occasions serve to prove a point: that the north is not a monolith, for Buhari was routinely rejected in northern states such as Kebbi, Plateau, Nasarawa and Taraba, due to historical reasons that may prove too elaborate to dissect in this essay.

The other point is that the north, as a single bloc, is incapable of determining the presidency. This is both a numerical and constitutional reality. To win the Presidency, candidates are required to secure a degree of acceptance in all regions of the country with the mandated 25 percent of votes in at least 24 states of the country's 36. Failure to secure this before 2015 hobbled Buhari's bid and reduced him to a sectional figure, appealing only to an enclosed group.

The dynamics remain unchanged and an understanding of it makes clear that a dismissal of southern interests in favor of yet another northern candidate is neither pragmatic nor wise. Rather the quickest route to defeat.

Equally concerning - and in fact dangerous - is the message that such an outcome would communicate. The message that the northern region is to be pacified and the south treated with casual disdain. Nigeria cannot survive such conceit and insensitivity, not when secessionist calls, based on perceived oppression and lack of inclusion, have rattled the federation and refocused attention on the country's future.

It is also worth highlighting the hypocrisy of those who, in 2015, rallied against Goodluck Jonathan on the basis that he betrayed a zoning arrangement, but now regard the term "zoning" as a strange, unfamiliar concept in Nigeria's politics.

They argue, dubiously, that emphasis should be on competence, as if there was ever a time leadership selection, and pretty much the allocation of national resources, has even been conducted in Nigeria without serious care for equity and balance.

Seeking legitimacy for their power greed and lack of consideration, they present their schemes as that of "the people", with the pretension that only a northerner can satisfactorily protect the interests of the north. But for all his clannishness, under the watch of Muhammadu Buhari, banditry has emptied communities in the north, with non-state actors successfully carving out enclaves where they reign supreme.

Despite spending the most time in charge of the country, whether as military dictators or democratically elected leaders, the northern oligarchs have failed to translate their self-elevation to meaningful development in their region, which continues to lag in welfare and social development indices.

Nigeria, all regions of her, does not exist to massage the ego of a few men who think governance and control of others is their exclusive right. We cannot sacrifice opportunities for progress, or downgrade the legitimate aspirations of others, because some people cannot stomach the idea that in a plural democracy, stability and success is impossible without mutual compromise and inclusion. ■

Farouk is former National Coordinator, Arewa Political Forum of Nigeria

CONVERSATION WITH MY BILLIONAIRE FRIEND



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WEALTH CAPSULE 16

Wealth Building Requires Can-do-mentality, Devoid of Excuses and Casting Blames

Sometimes I believe it is best to take the child's approach to life, which assumes no limitation at all. Children set out to do things without knowing that they are not supposed to be able to do them **–Les Brown**

If you travel the earth, you will find it is largely divided into two classes of people - people who say "I wonder why such and such is not done" and people who say "Now who is going to prevent me from doing that thing? **–Winston Churchill**

After exchanging our usual initial pleasantries, my Billionaire Friend shared yet another 'little mystery' with me. The conversation revolved around what he called a can-do mindset and how it is an essential element for building wealth.

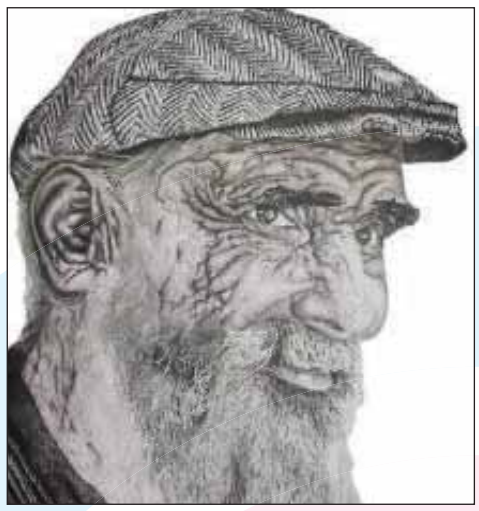
In his words, "Generally, wealth building requires a can-do mindset. This mindset must be devoid of casting blames and excuses. And this mindset grows from years of building competencies, continuous acquisition of knowledge, burning desire for success, commitment and unwavering focus on achieving goals. With these and other positive natural attributes, wealth-builders have a high chance of building extraordinary lives. Having a mindset that fuels defiance and grittiness helps you face life's challenges head-on".

"A simple look into students' attitudes at examination centres can teach us something about this Can-Do mindset. An aura of confidence oozes out from a student who has prepared well for an exam, and most times, they pass excellently. Athletes also have this same attitude, and they come to sports events brimming with confidence and zeal. I am of the opinion that a sportsman who does not believe he can win has a high chance of failing. Everything about life and human endeavours requires a positive attitude and thinking for producing good results".

"There is a reason many authors widely discuss positive thinking as an ingredient for success in all spheres of human endeavours. It is common for unsuccessful people to blame others, blame their environment, and give good excuses for their failures".

"Growing up, we had a neighbour who blamed "Capital" for failing to succeed as a big-time printer. He was an excellent printer, however, he had to rely on other printing presses for printing the jobs he obtained from clients. Unfortunately, until he died, he did not acquire his printing press. There were also other neighbours, who blamed lack of capital for not being able to build their own homes and died as tenants".

"Meanwhile, back then on Lagos Mainland, landed properties were comparatively very cheap. Yet such tenants kept blaming lack of capital for not being able to buy land. At the same time, many of their co-tenants devoted time and energy to plan and gradually build capital to buy their properties. Many others who kept offering excuses, blaming lack of money and poor economy, ended up as tenants till they eventually died. They kept casting blame and making excuses for their inability to act, take advantage of available opportunities and plan appropriately. This trait can also be found amongst potential wealth builders. You should see how wealth builders are staying aloof and doing nothing, while blaming their situation on Nigeria's high rate of inflation, cost of capital, badly managed Naira exchange rate, and poor safety of life and properties, for their failures in building wealth. Whereas, under these same circumstances, other wealth builders with the "can-do" mindset are taking advantage of these same circumstances to build wealth".



Artist Impression of my Billionaire Friend

Generally, wealth building requires a can-do mindset which must be devoid of casting blame and excuses, as reasons for inabilities, efforts and poor attempts at succeeding. This "can-do mindset", grows from years of building competencies, the continuous acquisition of knowledge, burning desire for successes, commitment and unwavering focus on setting goals

"Generally, human successes are best achieved by observing our environments and staying on the lookout for untapped opportunities. No matter how bad the environment of successful wealth-builders may be, they end up spotting the ripe and hanging fruits of opportunities which are waiting to be plucked by discerning and smart wealth builders. Thus, wealth builders who have taken the time and effort to take advantage of all the values and attributes that have been discussed in our previous conversations, will always succeed, no matter how bad their environment may be. History has it that many wealth builders made their wealth during the second world war, between 1939-1945. There were also others who made their wealth in the accompanying economic depression after the war, by searching, probing, investigating, and looking out for opportunities hanging out there. These all require wisdom, knowledge, skills, and a strong positive attitude toward life".

"Casting blame and excuses are self-destructive and do not go well with building wealth. Humans are not built to be passive and complacent. Man was not designed to lie down doing nothing and blaming others for their inability to be successful in life".

"Sportsmen spend hours and days preparing for their success by training hard and exercising. Scholars prepare for their successes by reading extensively, continuously acquiring knowledge, researching and devouring books. Wealth builders too, generally only succeed from searching for hanging, yet-to-be tapped opportunities, acquiring basic skills, literacy and knowledge about finance and economics and growing their competencies for taking advantage of the opportunities arising from their surrounding challenges. Such challenges include environmental, climatic, economic, financial, scarcity of goods and services, exchange rate mismanagement and many others. We had mentioned in our earlier sessions individuals such as Femi Otedola, Aliko Dangote and a host of others who with this can-do mindset took advantage of the opportunities in the environment to create phenomenal wealth".

THIS MINDSET YOU TALK ABOUT, IS IT INNATE OR ACQUIRED?

"The "can-do" mindset, which can also be referred to as positive thinking, has an element of innateness. There are people that are naturally pessimistic. They never see success in any endeavour. Most times, life gets hard for them. In life, those who give excuses and cast blame struggle to succeed. However, people who have a positive attitude towards life have a high chance of succeeding, regardless of how many times they experience failure in their journey".

"A good historical example is Abraham Lincoln. He competed many times before finally becoming President of the United States of America. There are many examples to cite of those who climbed and failed many times before eventually succeeding to reach their heights. The process of achieving success in life is not a piece of cake. It is generally tasking, arduous and can be disturbing. It requires personal sacrifices of energy, resources, reading, trying, failing and rising. Many times people tell me that, I must like the selfless sacrifices that I make of my time, resources, needs and energy, which accounts for why I go on, making such sacrifices. But I laugh in response to their ignorance. I engage in those sacrifices and hard work, mainly because of eventually achieving my goal of reaping happiness and lasting selfless legacies from those ongoing sacrifices and hard work. Indeed also, the process of building wealth is not an easy one. It involves making similar sacrifices, with the success being expected, helping to pump up the energies of wealth builders and keeping them going. Such expected success can be likened to that of a first-class student, who spends all his time and energy reading and researching. This same is exactly what happens with wealth builders who take advantage of opportunities around them by positively thinking, aspiring and overcoming confronting challenges to their endeavours".

WHY DOES IT SEEM ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING?

"Generally, a negative attitude, as earlier discussed, here leads to failure. This question has been globally covered by famous authors. Of particular reference, is Dr Norman Vincent Peale, who wrote the book, "Power of positive thinking".

"Dr Vincent Peale, a clergyman, has written about forty-six books on issues around positive thinking. 'Power of positive thinking' is his most powerful book on the subject. In that book, he clearly stated that, to succeed in life as with wealth building, people must believe in everything they do. Wealth builders must be kind to themselves. That is, kind to themselves in the sense of not overworking themselves. They should give themselves time to attend to their health and wellbeing whilst pursuing wealth building. The author also clearly states that positive thinkers must build new power and determination at every time. He goes on to espouse that, like others, wealth builders must renew their energy at all levels, as they proceed in building their wealth.

The can-do mindset which sums up positive thinking has some element of innateness. Some people are naturally pessimistic in nature. They never see any success in any endeavor. They are therefore generally unsuccessful. Those with such an innate attitude of casting blame and giving excuses and who wait for others to do things for them, generally do not succeed

YOUR WORST EXPERIENCE AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME IT?

"My worst obstacle has been in the quality of Nigeria's human capital. The human capital of Nigeria is full of people who are out to out-manoeuvre wealth builders and make illicit gains at the expense of wealth builders. The human capital of Nigeria is unfortunately full of people with poor reputations and integrity, who always want to cut corners at the expense of other people. These include government officials, who without any iota of human feelings or empathy whatsoever, always make things difficult for wealth builders . This is the worst obstacle wealth builders face in Nigeria. This is possibly why private investment in Nigeria is fast dying and why factories and manufacturers are fast closing and moving away from Nigeria, to saner countries. This is why our productive ability as a nation is fast declining. This is why our economy as a nation is mostly based on poor quality and poor performing assets".

MISTAKES ARE PART OF THE PROCESS?

"Human endeavors cannot and should not be expected to be perfect. Only the work of God is perfect. Man can only strive for the unreachable assumptions of God. All man's endeavours and activities should therefore be factored with the expectation of human mistakes in anticipation of expectations at the building, forecasting and budgeting for wealth, by wealth builders. Wealth building must go through the process of planning, forecasting and taking into consideration contingencies that would/may arise. It is these contingencies that people sometimes call mistakes. They should not be seen as mere mistakes, but controllable, uncontrollable, poorly prepared and unplanned contingencies which are of usual occurrence in wealth building. In basic financial management, experts make plans and provide for such contingencies ahead of their occurrences. This allows wealth builders to apply one of the most important elements of basic accounting, which is the concept of Contingency. The contingency concept guides wealth builders to avoid making provisions ahead of expected profits but provides for them to make provisions for future losses".

"In general, wealth builders who aim to succeed must develop their competency level in the area chosen for building their wealth. They must develop knowledge, financial literacy, positive thinking and positive attitude for successful wealth building. To do otherwise, such wealth builders are only assured of eventual failures"

TREASURED Memories!

Late High Chief (Dr.) O.B. Lulu-Briggs, OON, DCF,

Iniikeiroari V of Kalabari Kingdom
The Emine of Kalabari Kingdom
Paramount Head, Briggs Oruwari House of Abonnema



"The pain passes, but the beauty remains." –**Pierre Auguste Renoir**

"What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others." –**Thucydides**

"What we once enjoyed and deeply loved we can never lose, for all that we love deeply becomes part of us." –**Helen Keller**

You gave so much of yourself to us, not a single day goes by without us thinking about you!

We focus on the priceless times we had together, and the incredible memories!

On every birthday of yours, we will continue to celebrate the legendary life you lived and the remarkable memories you left in our hearts.

Happy Posthumous Birthday
Our Beloved Dad.

Fondly remembered by:

Chief (Barr) Dumo O.B Lulu-Briggs,
Ebuye-Lulu (II), Iniikeiroari (VI) of Kalabari Kingdom,
The Paramount Head of Oruwari Briggs War Canoe House of Abonnema
for the entire Lulu-Briggs family

INTERNATIONAL

Reordering World Disorder and Neutrality:

Finland-Sweden and NATO versus France- Mali Saga



VIE INTERNATIONALE

with

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When the French people came up with the idea of an order and counter-order amounting to disorder, it was largely predicated on the belief that the stakeholders are operating from different backgrounds that are on parallel lines. The stakeholders are therefore not together. Today, the world is witnessing an order and counter-order within the association of the Nuclear Weapons States all of which constitute the Five Permanent Members (P-5) of the United Nations Security Council. The P-5 constituted themselves into an exclusive nuclear club to which no new member can have access without first complying with Article 108 of the United Nations Charter.

Article 108 stipulates that 'amendments to the present Charter come into force for all Members of the United Nations when they have been adopted by a vote of two-thirds of the Members of the General Assembly and ratified in accordance with their respective constitutional processes by two-thirds of the Members of the United Nations, including all the Permanent Members of the Security Council.' The insistence on ratification that includes the vote of the P-5 is the stumbling block. It is within this context that the current world disorder, induced by Russia's special military intervention in Ukraine and the critical imbroglio generated for Finland's and Sweden's neutrality in international relations, becomes an issue for further reflection by international relations scholars.

Professor Bolaji Akinwande Akinyemi renewed the question of neutrality during the 95th Session of his every Thursday thruMYeyes current international affairs on May 5, 2022 (vide https://syncterface.zoom). He asked whether the regime of neutrality would be no more in international relations. A very moot question indeed. We observe that the quest by Finland and Sweden, two States that have adopted foreign policy neutrality in their foreign relations, to accede to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) may not stop the neutrality of the two countries but has the potential to seriously serve as a catalyst in deepening the emerging new Cold War between the US-led NATO and Russia. This is simply because membership of the NATO is of two categories: political and military. The very case of France protesting the US mainmise and non-preliminary consultations with France, especially as regards implementation of Article 5 of the NATO led to the withdrawal of France from the integrative membership of the NATO and the movement of the NATO headquarters from Paris to Brussels.

Explained differently, Finland and Sweden may adopt the French model, accepting military integration subject to preliminary agreement, meaning that neutrality may remain intact. But again, how can neutrality remain when the ultimate objective of Finland and Sweden joining the NATO is because of security protection? Without doubt, the world is challenged by disorderliness because the P-5 that are required to maintain or enforce global peace are at logger heads by proxy war in Europe and Africa. Russia is engaged in a dog fight with the EU while France is confronted by Russia in Africa to the extent that there are campaigns of unwanted France in some Francophone Countries, particularly in Mali.

World Disorder and Neutrality

The most recent manifestation of global disorder is Russia's special military intervention in Ukraine which has not only challenged the democracy and human rights advocacy-driven world order of the United States but also threatened and prompted Finland and Sweden to seek membership of the NATO. Finland and Sweden are considered to have a foreign policy of neutrality in the Cold War era. But their neutrality is now a subject of international interest and inquiry: has neutrality come to an end with the decision of Finland and Sweden to join the NATO? What are the likely implications of the membership for Russia- NATO relations? What are also the implications for Russia-China ties? And perhaps most significantly, what are the effects on Russia-European Union relations? The global disorderliness is largely intrinsic in these questions. The NATO, inclusive of the potential members, are positioning themselves for a military fight with Russia. Three nuclear powers - United States, Britain, and France – are strategizing against two other nuclear powers – Russia, supported by China. The non-neutrality of Finland and Sweden, by seeking membership of the NATO, is the catalytic dynamic of the aggravating new world disorderliness.

For instance, the United States welcomes the interest of Finland and Sweden to join the NATO. The two countries submitted their application forms on Wednesday, 18 May 2022. The US President, Joe Biden, considering the two countries as long time, stalwart partners, noted that 'while their applications for NATO membership are being considered, the United States will work with Finland and Sweden to remain vigilant against any threats to our shared security, and to deter and confront aggression or the threat of aggression.'



Macron

As good and welcome a development this may be, Turkey, another signatory to the NATO, which also has the right of veto by virtue of the fact that every membership bid of the organisation must be approved unanimously by NATO's 30 members, is not holistically in support of the membership of Finland and Sweden because the two countries are allegedly providing a safe haven to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) that is outlawed in Turkey. In the eyes of Turkey, the two countries, Sweden to a greater extent, are playing host to wanted terrorists. Besides, Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has also accused Sweden of implementing arms sanctions against Turkey following the Turkish cross-border incursion into Syria in 2019.

Apart from this, the attitudinal calculation of Turkey is defensive-offensive in strategic calculation, retorsion and reprisal-driven in diplomatic negotiation, and self-affirmatory within the NATO framework. Without any jot of doubt, the relationship between Turkey and the United States has not been good because Turkey purchased Russian S-400 defence system over which the United States has developed cold feet. When Turkey received the Russian S-400 defence system, the United States removed Turkey from its key F-35 fighter jet programme. Additionally, Professor Mensur Akgun of the Kultur University in Istanbul, has said that 'Ankara has been under US sanctions over F-35 fighter jets and is not happy about it' (Aljazeera.com). Most significantly, Turkey is condemning the United States for supporting the armed Kurdish groups even though it recognises the PKK as a terrorist organisation, particularly during its fight against the ISIL in the 2010s.

Expectedly, the European Union is actively in support of the Finland-Swedish membership. According to the EU Foreign Affairs Chief, Joseph Borrel, the membership 'will increase the number of Member States of the NATO. And this will strengthen and increase the cooperation and the security in Europe.' But true enough also, while cooperation among NATO countries will be increased, so will the opposition of Russia be also strengthened, especially that Russia's military intervention in Ukraine is basically because of Russia's vehement opposition to the expansion of the NATO towards the international borders of Russia.

As cautioned by Russia, even if the two countries are not perceived to constitute a threat to Russia, if they join the NATO, Russia could deploy nuclear weapons in its European enclave of Kaliningrad and would respond, especially if the military infrastructure in the two countries were to be boosted by the NATO. As noted by the deputy Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Ryabkov, the Swedish and Finish membership of the NATO is 'another grave mistake with far-reaching consequences... The security of Sweden, like Finland, for that matter, will not be strengthened as a result of this decision, it is obvious to us. And in what form we will ensure our security after the change in this general configuration is a separate question. It will depend on what, in practical terms, will be the result of the expected accession of Finland and Sweden to the alliance. There are no illusions that we will put up with it.' If it is expected that Russia will reciprocate the admission of Finland and Sweden into the NATO, what will be the format of the reciprocal treatment?

Thus, it is crystal clear that the dispute is not simply between Russia and Ukraine. It is a priori between Russia and the NATO countries. For Russia, the purpose of war is national security. For the NATO members, the purpose is defence of freedom and democracy in Ukraine. The battle ground for the war is neither in any of the NATO member State yet, nor on Russian soil. It is in Ukraine that is bearing the brunt of the hot war. The devastating effects are taking place in Ukraine as the United States and its allies have made it clear that they do not want to have any direct confrontation with Russia for fear of not deepening the war to global scale.

With or without a war on a global scale, the world has been sharply divided into proponents and opponents of the imbroglio. The issue of neutrality is not only raised at the level of Finland and Sweden whose neutrality status may be eventually thrown into the dustbin of history, but as well raised at the level of all other countries of the world who may have to decide on which side to support or not to support, thus again raising the question of non- alignment. In this regard, is neutrality synonymous with non-alignment?

It has been observed that 'Sweden's commitment to neutrality has not meant that the country is passive in international arenas. To the contrary, neutrality has for decades dovetailed with "international activism" and the articulation of international law and collective action' (see Ulf Bjereld and Ulrika Möller, "Swedish Foreign Policy: The Policy of Neutrality and Beyond," in John Pierre, ed., The Oxford Handbook of Swedish Politics, December 2015). Does engagement in international activism imply neutrality or non-alignment? Whatever is the case, it is neutrality that explains the independence of a sovereign state.

As regards Finland, Teija Tiilikainen has observed that 'neutrality constituted the core of Finnish foreign and security policy during the Cold War era and that the 'Finnish policy of neutrality leaned on firm domestic support implying that no alternative policy lines were seriously proposed' (Teija Tiilikainen, "The Finnish Neutrality: Its New Forms and Future," link.springer.com).

Whatever is the present and future of neutrality of both Finland and Sweden, the truth is that neutrality is precisely what is currently deepening disorderliness in international relations. For reasons of national security and for fears of uncertainty over Russian attitude towards them, Finland and Sweden have decided to join the NATO in the belief that their national security will be better protected. But in the eyes of Russia, their membership is a mistake. Their membership cannot but bring the international borders of the NATO directly closer to Russia. Finland has 1,340 km (830 miles) with Russia. By implication, Russia has NATO, as a body, as its contiguous neighbour by propinquity. There is therefore a Cold War between Russia, supported by China, on the one hand, and the NATO countries, on the other. A hot war between the two opposing camps is already in the making. This is the foundation of the new global disorderliness.

Russia and Africa without France

Another foundation for the new global disorderliness is the agitation for a New African Order in which neo-colonialism, and particularly French influence in Francophone Africa will not only be brought to its barest minimum but replaced with Russian influence. Reduction in French influence in Africa is not the problem directly responsible for global disorderliness per se, especially by requesting that the 5000 French troops in Mali, for example, should be withdrawn. The political lull is that France is newly being seen as an agent of perpetuation of re-colonisation and socio-economic exploitation.

In this regard, France has been variously accused. At the epicentre of the allegations is the consideration that since 2013, Malians have been increasingly subjected to terrorist attacks. The mission of French troops in Mali is not seen to be succeeding. The Malian people have felt so insecure more than ever before that they now believe that the solution to insecurity is to declare the French troops unwanted.

"Already, Africa has been divided along proponents and opponents of Russian special military intervention in Ukraine. The problematic now is how to reconcile likely replacement of French influence in Africa with Russian influence being sustained by the Wagner group of mercenaries. For France, the presence of the Wagner Group in West Africa and in some African countries (Libya, Sudan, and Central African Republic), is to exploit the mineral resources of Mali and the region. More inquisitively, it is surprising that France could be much concerned about Russian exploitation of African resources when the main complaint about France is that she is less focused on military security and more interested in the protection of French economic interests in Africa. In fact, if the French want to deploy their unwanted soldiers in Mali to Niger Republic, it is because of the strategic mineral resources like uranium in Niger. So, France is struggling to prevent the replacement of her influence with that of Russia and Francophone Africa is challenged by how to reconcile Russian interests in Africa with Francophone African interests in the absence of France. Thus, to what extent can the mounting anti-French sentiments go? Can there be orderliness resulting from order and counter-order? Can France be accusing Russia of what she is doing in Africa? This is time to re-order the current global disorderliness. Francophone Africa without France is a vacuum that Russia may not be able to fill with ease"

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FROM OBSCURITY TO STARDOM

IBRAHIM ABDULLAHI contends that Jack-Rich is capable of transforming the nation

"If I, who was a 10-year-old village orphan, a canoe paddler and fisher boy from the womb of a 42-year- old village garri and tomatoes hawker, who died because she couldn't afford her medical bills can get here, you too can"
- Jack-Rich

It was not exactly the same kind of event compared with that of Barack Obama's 2004 "my presence on this stage is pretty unlikely" Democratic National Convention speech in Boston, Massachusetts. Yet the narratives bear similarity in the context of coming



from relative obscurity to stardom, blazing the trail of extraordinary accomplishments. While one actually made it to the presidency, the other is still in the womb of time. The All Progressives Congress (APC) presidential aspirant and industrialist, Mr. Tein T.S Jack-Rich, who is quoted above relieved such emotional recollections about his background in relation to his aspirations, leadership and indeed human development and societal renewal during his formal declaration for president at the Congress Hall of the Transcorp Hillton, Abuja, recently.

As he told his supporters, party leaders, friends and associated who graced the event, at the end of his travails, the sense of purpose and determination and hard work to succeed triumphed and fortune smiled on him, not only attending some of the best schools in the world including Harvard, Stanford and LSE but also climbed the ladder of progress as one of Nigeria's most successful industrialists being the President of Belemaoil Producing Limited, the first indigenous oil exploration and production in the country.

Jack-Rich, a renowned philanthropist, affirmed that his is a success story the nation needs for transformation, to duly rejig our collective reality in tandem with a sense of purpose and move forward. It was indeed a timely admonition to the people especially the youths who should not allow their prevailing circumstances determine their aspirations to be successful in life. Like Obama, we now see a man who had literally lost everything, having lost his parents at age 10, becoming a man of the moment, running for president with burgeoning name recognition and popularity, calling on Nigerians to trust his leadership and judgment because he has the solutions to our problems.

Of course, that will be decided by the APC delegates at their convention at the end of May but the truth is that the young, affable and patriotic Tein Jack-Rich would be a good president if given the opportunity judging by the depth of his presentation on that night, intellectual enterprise and tack record on the basic steps to take in reinventing and reviving our nation. He spoke with candour and sounded so convincing as he cautioned Nigerians that 2023 would be a critical year for the country.

Aside the grass to grace story, however, it was a night of deep insights into the Nigerian condition, which he said required urgent action to re-order our realities and change course for national development. It won't be easy but as the presidential hopeful poured through the gamut of our national woes, even with comparative analysis with the western world, particularly on the critical socio-economic indices, he gave some promising overview of what he could do to turn things around with his dynamic and strategic leadership. Jack-Rich manifesto concentrates on the economy, security, empowerment, affordable health and education where technology and innovation will be a priority. Inherent in Jack-Rich postulation here is the need to have our young boys and girls who go to the university have certain skills to provide the needed knowledge base and value to grow the local economy.

Jack-Rich presented a comparative evaluation of how precarious our situation stands thus: "The global economy is about $83tn and the continent of Africa is just three percent of the global value chain. That's about $2.5tn…it is struggling with the economy of California which has a GDP of $3.6tn. "California is about the size of Lagos and Ogun states in South West, Nigeria and Nigeria is just 19.8 percent of Africa's GDP. That's worrisome". As a trained economist, the 47-year old outlined several of the economic steps to take in this direction: massive job creation, building a strong currency, engaging the G7 economies and negotiating our place in the comity of nations as well as making Nigerians respected abroad once again. Others are consistent fiscal policies and pro-private sector policies that will engender productivity and becoming an export-based economy by producing what we eat rather than being a dumping ground for imported goods.

Jack-Rich promised to create 26,000 jobs in every local government in his first one year in office, totaling 20 million jobs, open up the economy and ensure an end to the unbridled loans. Also in some specific terms, the presidential hopeful enunciated some zonal industrial enterprises to further create jobs and boost the national economy. In this respect, he gave insight into the creation of certain economic entities like the Digital City and Health Tech Centre in the South West and Technology Hub in the South East and similar enterprises in the North East, North West and North Central with relative comparative advantages based on local peculiarities. On the issue of insecurity, he also proffered an economic-based solution, premising the challenge on lack of opportunities, adding that with opportunities widely spread out to the perpetrators, insecurity will die naturally. Jack-Rich observed: "I don't believe in assault or missiles. I believe in economic bombardment. Youths, boys and girls are doing wrong things to survive. That's because opportunity has shrunk.

To discerning observers who listened to his presentation and familiar with his track record, when Jack-Rich said his heart is for humanity, he actually meant it. Of course, this can better be understood with regard to the extent and impact of his unusual philanthropy over the years covering education through local and foreign scholarships, qualitative healthcare, infrastructure and some innovative and strategic economic empowerment across the country. He's is truly a patriot and Nigerian for all Nigerians. Jack-Rich, hopefully, is on the cusp of history at the APC presidential primaries. ■

Abdullahi writes from Abuja

A VOTE FOR HARMONY AND STABILITY

Ahmad Lawan has what it takes to lead Nigeria, argues HASSAN KYARI NGURU

The Senate President Senator Ahmad Lawan is right now one of the leading presidential aspirants of the governing APC for the 2023 general elections. His entrance into the presidential race is a game changer and it opens a new chapter in Nigeria's democratic journey. As a politician and a leader, Senator Ahmad Lawan has been active on the political stage since 1999 – and needs no introduction nationwide. He has been in the legislature since 1999 as well; rising from the House of Representatives to the pinnacle, as the chairman of the National Assembly and Senate President. The increasing support he is getting across the nation is a clear testimony of his impeccable record of leadership and patriotism – and commitment to making Nigeria work.

Senator Ahmad Lawan has been leading the affairs of the upper chamber of the National Assembly in a way that established mutual respect between the legislature and the executive. He is leading by firmly protecting the independence of the legislature and putting Nigeria and Nigerians first – in everything. His leadership, so far, shows the evolution of the Nigerian legislature; carrying out its constitutional duties without acrimony or unnecessary drama. This is a remarkable achievement because it has brought the stability and the harmony that are key to making governance work for Nigerians.

The ninth senate under the leadership of Senator Ahmad Lawan had also carried out amendment of key legislations, many important nominees' screenings, parliamentary investigations – and also carried out many oversight functions diligently and effectively. Anyone conversant with the past of the National Assembly can easily understand why it is important to mention this as achievement. At the level of his legislative responsibilities Senator Ahmad Lawan has facilitated and attracted many development projects to his constituency and Yobe State in general.

Senator Ahmad Lawan has so far demonstrated exceptional ability to solving problems. One of the reasons why Nigeria will benefit from his leadership is his commitment to youth and job creation. He has been offering empowerment opportunities to his constituents in so many sectors. In September 2020 he sponsored the training of youths in the area of GSM technology. The training was conducted at the three senatorial zones of Yobe State. At least 1000 youths benefitted from the training that also includes hands-on on hardware, software and entrepreneurship development.

Giving youths what can be described as 'skills of the moment' is a way of preparing them for the future. Through his various empowerment projects youth have acquired skills and employment that enable them to realize their potential.

Education can be described as the priority of Senator Ahmad Lawan, annually awarding scholarship to youth from all the local governments of Yobe North. He built schools across the six local governments of his senatorial district. The schools provided a model that helps in increasing school enrolment and making education accessible to rural communities. Has been offering scholarships and other forms of educational support. He also facilitated the establishment of ICT Park in Nguru town. In the area of roads, Senator Ahmad Lawan has already achieved the reconstruction of Nguru-Gashua road and Gashua-Baymari road. Through his efforts the Federal Executive Council approved the construction of Gasamu—Amshi—Gogaram road at the cost of N14.5 billion. For years Ahmad Lawan has been sponsoring free animal vaccination which protects against Contagious Bovine Pleuro Pneumonia (CBPP). The lawmaker is also undertaking urban and rural roads, water provision and solar streetlights projects across the six local governments that constitute Yobe north senatorial district. In fact, there will not be enough space to list the numerous projects Senator Lawan attracted to the people he is representing across Yobe



north.

The achievement of Ahmad Lawan in improving the lives of the people who elected him is a clear pointer to his leadership and prospects if given the chance to lead Nigeria.

Leading the bold step towards giving Nigeria a better electoral system is one of the outstanding achievements of Ahmad Lawan that demonstrates his commitment to the development of the country. The passage of the Electoral Act (2022) will improve the nations electoral system. The new electoral act will enhance the quality of party primaries, as well as provide an electronic voter register. Under the new Act, the use of electronic devices such as smart card readers, electronic voting machines and other technological devices, is allowed in the accreditation process for voters and in the general conduct of elections. The new Electoral Act also provides for electronic transmission of election results.

At the centre of the focus of the National Assembly under his leadership is using the legislature to make Nigeria and Nigerians better. Politically, Senator Lawan has been loyal and dedicated to championing the ideals and values of the APC. Giving Senator Lawan the chance to lead Nigeria is a way of keeping the nation on the right track of progress and development. He has all the potential to move the nation forward, unify the country and solidify our democracy. ■

Hassan Kyari writes from Bulabulin Ward, Nguru, Yobe State

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EDITORIAL

PARTIES AND THE NOMINATION PROCESS

The process through which the candidates emerge is critical, and must be transparent

In strict compliance with the guidelines and timetable of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for the 2023 general election, political parties in the country must have commenced the process for the nomination of their candidates for various offices. These public offices include, national and state assemblies, governorship, and the presidency. The outcome of these primaries, especially in the leading political parties, will offer Nigerians glimpses of what to expect at the election proper and the kind of leaders to emerge.

However, for the first time under the current dispensation, only elected delegates from each of the 774 local governments are legally allowed to vote in the primaries of the various political parties, by virtue of the current enabling law. This development arose principally because we have a self-serving political elite. While the lawmakers were obsessed with inserting the contentious Section 84 (12) in the process of amending the electoral act, just to whittle the powers of governors in the nomination process, they inadvertently removed themselves and other elected public officials (at all levels) from the list of 'statutory delegates'. There was no indication as at last night that President Muhammadu Buhari would sign the hasty amendment to the amended electoral act 2022. The implication is that all elected officials (including national assembly members) have been excluded from voting in the nomination process of the political parties for the 2023 general election.

Even without that self-sabotage by the federal lawmakers, the challenge at hand is no less daunting. Unlike the fringe parties that often announce names of candidates against different offices after some hollow rituals, the big parties cannot afford such luxury without consequences at the polls. In the main opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), primaries to elect candidates for the state house of assembly were expected to hold yesterday while that for the house of representatives should hold today, 22 May. Senatorial primaries should hold tomorrow, 23 May while the special convention where delegates from across the country will elect the presidential standard bearer is scheduled for Saturday, 28 May. As for the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), primaries for the house of representatives and governorship candidates are slated for Thursday 26 May with primaries for candidates into the senate and states houses of assembly scheduled for the next day, 28 May. The party's presidential primaries should hold next Sunday, 29 May. Given the tight schedule by INEC, the parties have little rooms to maneuver, even though both the APC and PDP appear to be desperate.



It is paramount that party leaders ensure that the rules and regulations governing the primaries are binding on every participant and that they play fair. That will create confidence in the system

Meanwhile, to the extent that credible election is a basic requirement of democratic governance and an antidote to civil disorder, it is important that the nomination of candidates by all the parties be transparent and based on popular participation in which aspirants and their members are availed a level-playing field. We also hope that there will be no interference or imposition of candidates in the name of 'consensus', especially for critical executive positions. At a period the nation needs innovative leaders at all levels of government, the process through which the candidates emerge is critical and should not be compromised by unwholesome practices. As we have highlighted on several occasions, if intra-party primaries are flawed, as they have been over the years, it is a given that the outcomes of such exercise cannot deliver on good governance. That is also clear from the state of the country today.

Ordinarily, the essence of the primaries is to give party members the opportunity to help the democratic process by nominating for election people with character and competence. But in the past, party primaries were marred by widespread fraud, monetisation and lack of respect for democratic norms and competition. With the process usually hijacked by sundry godfathers and overbearing public officials, democratic choice has most often been subverted. It is therefore paramount that party leaders ensure that the rules and regulations governing the primaries are binding on every participant and that they play fair. That will create confidence in the system and save the country from the apparent storm ahead.

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LETTERS

PARTY PRIMARIES AND THE BEAUTY OF DEMOCRACY

In the course of history those who have been able to appreciate more than others the gift that democracy gives in the ballot box are those able to draw a distinction between the atrocities of autocracy and the blessedness of democracy because they have experienced both.

In 1999, after more than a decade during which Nigeria was subjected to all manner of indignities by military dictators the culmination of which was the annulment of the 1993 presidential election, the dawn of democracy finally snapped the long, uninterrupted period autocracy had enjoyed.

With the transition to democracy precipitated by the death of Nigeria`s last dictator in 1998, a new constitution was minted for the country in 1999, and with it, the return to democracy and elections. Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo became president in 1999 as Nigeria was finally set on the path to genuine progress that only democracy can pave.

It has been 23 years now and gratefully, Nigeria is yet to make a costly detour from the path of democracy as it remains the only path which gives Nigeria the most desirable options. With the return to democracy has come the return of elections which give Nigerians ample opportunities to determine who will govern them from time to time.

Elections in Nigeria have gratefully been on an upward trajectory. Although the wanton rigging of the early 2000s has since been replaced by subtler forms of electoral manipulation, the Nigerian electorate is more alert to the antics of electoral thieves and brigands. The violence that used to so grotesquely and grossly undermine elections in the country now happen only in pockets as opposed to the days when it cast a pall over Nigeria`s democracy.

With the 2023 elections just around the corner, projections are that Nigeria`s capacity to handle free and fair elections will continue to improve. But before the general elections next year, political parties in the country will go to their own internal polls to select the candidates they will field during the general elections next year.

Political parties in Nigeria have been mandated by the Independent National Electoral Commission to conduct and conclude their primary elections before June 3, 2022. It would not be farfetched to elect not to look beyond the opposition Peoples Democratic Party and the ruling All Progressives Congress, ancient rivals in Nigeria`s electoral arena, for the next President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

However, as members of different political parties determine their candidates through primaries, they will do well to remember the responsibility they owe themselves as citizens of Nigeria, and especially to the country that will most likely be formed in the image of whoever is elected president come 2023.

Internal party wrangling must be eschewed in the interest of democracy and justice. Internal democracy must be the prime consideration in choosing those that will emerge as candidates across different levels in next year`s elections. The freely exercised choice of party members must be allowed to trump imposition. It is the interest of Nigeria as a country that must feature prominently in the minds of the delegates who will vote at the primaries, not pecuniary interests.

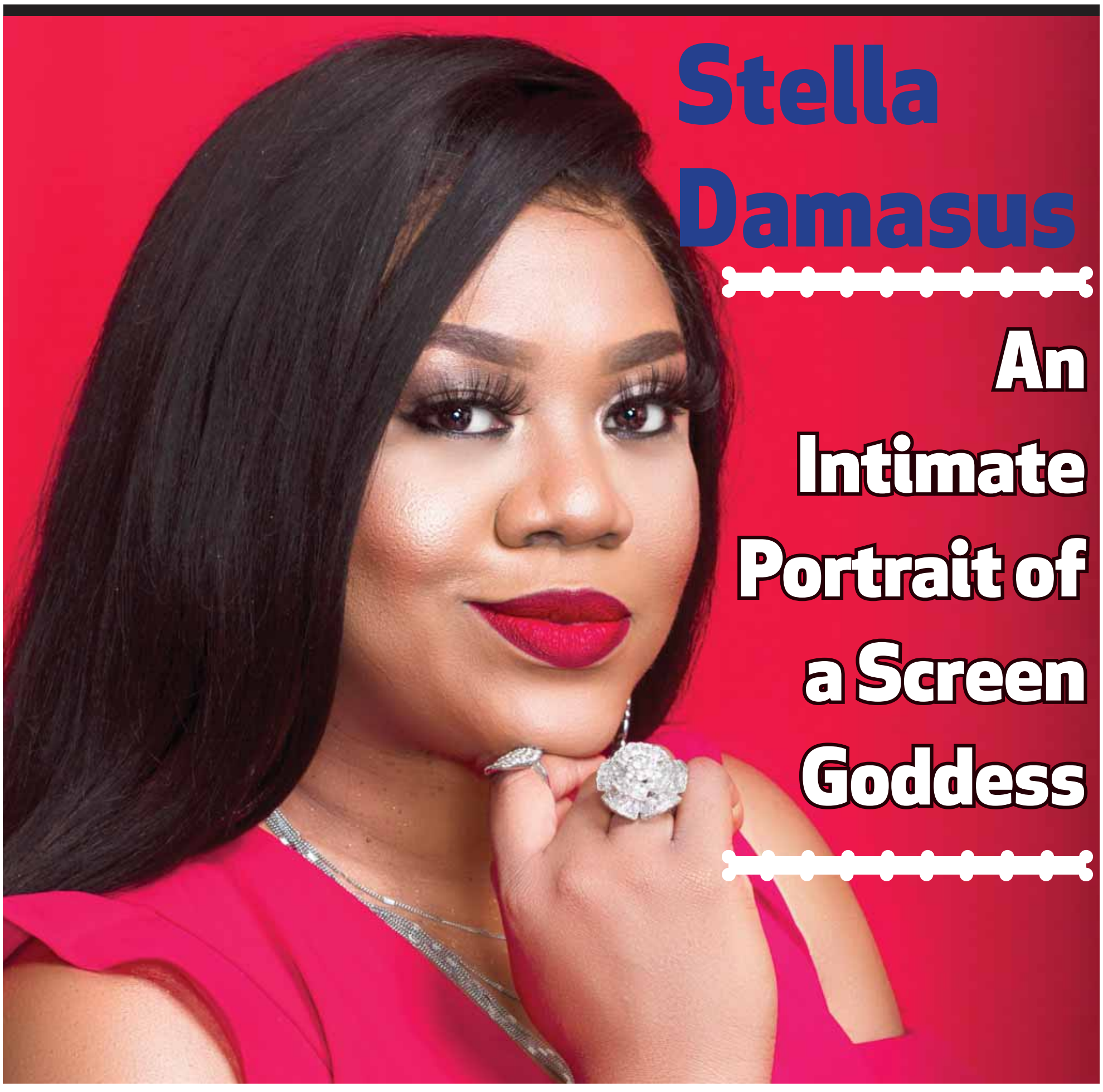
As things stand today, no one needs to be reminded that Nigeria is at a crossroads, and that a lot of the uncertainties and anxieties which the country is steeped in today has come from questionable decisions taken by Nigerian leaders past and present. To get the country back on track, the need to get credible leaders on board has never been more pressing.

Kene Obiezu,
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GLITTERATI

A THISDAY WEEKLY PULL-OUT

22.5.2022



Stella Damasus

An Intimate Portrait of a Screen Goddess

She never wanted fame but when it enveloped her, Nollywood actress, Stella Damasus, made a conscious effort to keep her private life from the public view. Damasus , who was recently in Nigeria for the burial of her mother, in this conversation with **Vanessa Obioha,** opens up on why she kept her children away from the spotlight and the perks of marrying at an early age

ASSISTANT EDITOR OLUFUNKE OLAODE/victoria.olaode@thisdaylive.com.

COVER

I Wanted My Children to Live Normal Lives

Stella Damasus was not easily recognisable with the black face mask covering half of her face. The soothing voice of the Nollywood actress is markedly different from those characters she assumes that light up the screens. In her 40s, Damasus has managed to keep an enviable physique that takes more years off her age.

We were at a rented apartment in Lekki. It was a busy Saturday for her as she prepares to return to the United States where she is based. Her trip to Nigeria was mainly for the burial of her mother who passed away last December but Damasus did not share the news till January.

"She actually passed on December 30 but I could not share the news. For a week, I could not speak. I only posted a month after because that was when I was able to write that my mother passed."

Damasus revealed that she had a profound relationship with her mother. They had pet names for each other and she could easily confide in her more than her friends or siblings. Such was the bond with her mother that she often joked with the deceased that she would get a boyfriend for her since her father passed away 12 years ago.

The Nollywood actress who is the last of her parents' children (her younger brother died at a young age) is yet to get over the loss of her mother.

"I'm still processing it."

Damasus, who hails from Delta, was one of the beloved Nollywood stars during the home video era. Originally a singer, she made her first appearance in the movie 'Abused' in the 90s. Subsequent features in Nollywood shot her to fame but the actress, who is diffident, tried as much to keep her private life away from the public view.

"I am shy. I hardly go out to mix with people. I can be on stage and be myself and do what I want to do. But throw me inside a crowd, I can be like this for three hours and I will not know anybody's name. Nobody will know my name. When people look at me, they don't believe it because I'm vocal on my social media."

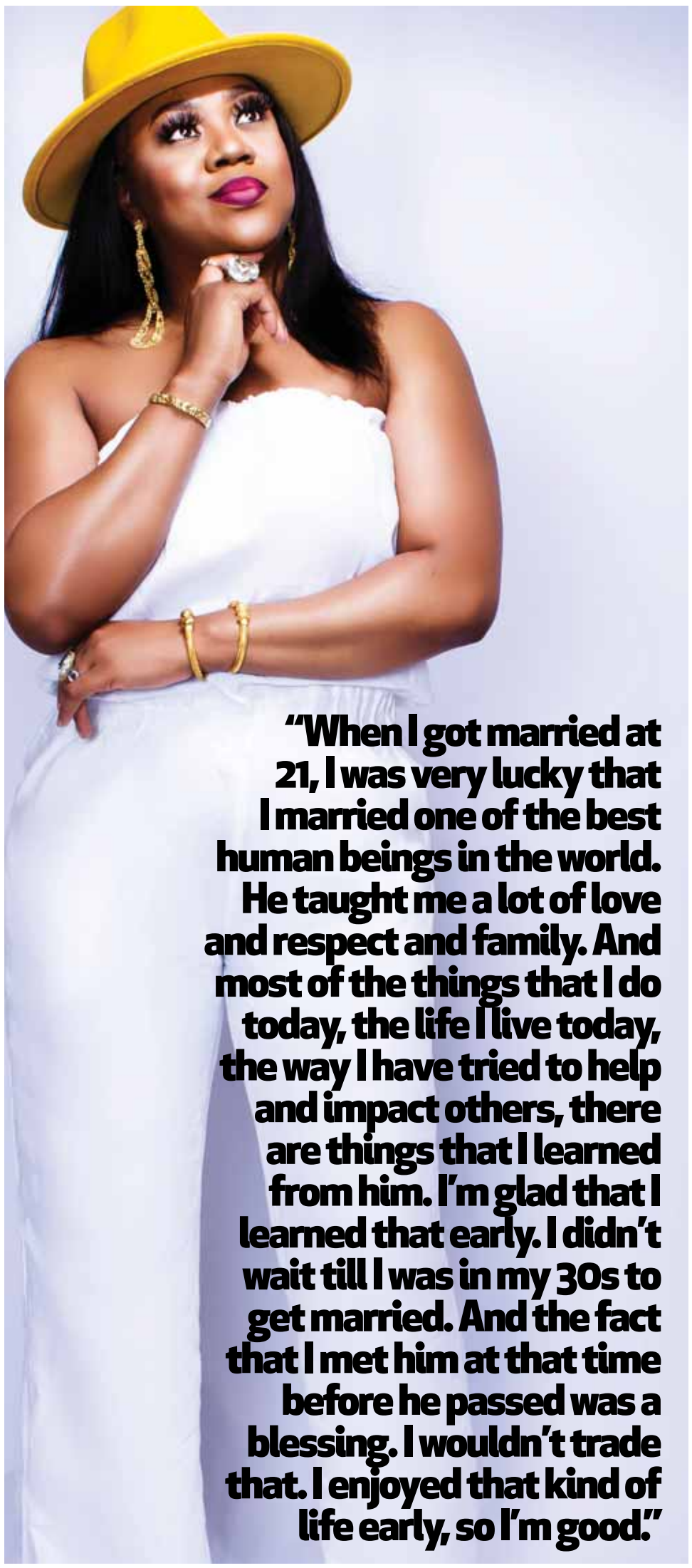
She added that she never really wanted fame.

"I didn't want fame. I never knew that I would get fame. I know that since I was a kid, I loved the arts. I loved to sing, act, and dance. I stumbled into acting so I didn't really go into it for fame. I like privacy. I cherish it a lot. I can't handle the noise very well. I go to an event and before everybody knows, I'm out. I love people. I love to laugh but I don't really know how to do all the meet and greet. I had social anxiety for a while. This whole fame thing is not really for me so you won't catch me posting designer wear or vacation pictures or new cars on social media."

Following the death of her husband Jaiye Aboderin in 2004, Damasus kept a low profile and deliberately stayed away from the movie industry. Although her obvious reason was to avoid being constantly stereotyped in movies. The other reason was to raise her daughters.

"I took a break at a time when I knew that at the age where they were at, I have to be hands-on. I have to know what they're doing, where they're going, their school, their friends. I have to be hands-on because there are certain times in the age of a girl that if you are not the one to teach her or guide her and they get the information from outside, it is hard. And I was travelling a lot and filming a lot. I was away from home.

"And I thought no, I don't want someone else to raise my kids. I wanted to raise my kids myself. So I'm going to take a long break until I know that they're mature enough to handle certain things by themselves, they can take care of themselves, I don't have to be there. So I waited until they told me to go do your thing," explained Damasus.



"When I got married at 21, I was very lucky that I married one of the best human beings in the world. He taught me a lot of love and respect and family. And most of the things that I do today, the life I live today, the way I have tried to help and impact others, there are things that I learned from him. I'm glad that I learned that early. I didn't wait till I was in my 30s to get married. And the fact that I met him at that time before he passed was a blessing. I wouldn't trade that. I enjoyed that kind of life early, so I'm good."

Very protective of her family, Damasus deliberately kept her children away from the spotlight. Nigerians only found out their identity two years ago when she started posting their pictures on social media.

"From the time they were born, it was a conscious effort not to put them out there. They were always covered and hardly went anywhere. They either visited their friends or had them come over. There were no pictures because I wanted them to live a normal life.

"Their surname is still Aboderin. They have normal friends who treat them like normal people not because they are Stella Damasus's daughters. I didn't want that. I want them to read, study, work hard and earn a living, not because they are associated with me. I'm happy I did because they don't even regard me as anything, just Mummy. They have always had social media but I didn't want them out there until they were mature enough to handle the negative side of social media."

One of the perks Damasus enjoys is having had her children early. She was 21 when she married and will be turning 44 in April. Her two daughters are in their 20s. For the Theatre Arts graduate from the University of Lagos, there are no regrets about walking down the aisle that early.

"When I got married at 21, I was very lucky that I married one of the best human beings in the world. He taught me a lot of love and respect and family. And most of the things that I do today, the life I live today, the way I have tried to help and impact others, there are things that I learned from him. I'm glad that I learned that early. I didn't wait till I was in my 30s to get married. And the fact that I met him at that time before he passed was a blessing. I wouldn't trade that. I enjoyed that kind of life early, so I'm good."

However, she wished she explored some areas of her life that her children exhibit today. For instance, her younger daughter is very strong-willed and stands up for things that she believes in.

"I wish I was in an environment where we had an opportunity to speak up as women, as young girls. During our time, we were not allowed to attend or know about these forums. It's always for guys. But my child comes out and says no, no woman should take this.

"I wish that I had the kind of mindsets that they have I feel that my life would have been different because I find that in my own lifetime, I actually accepted a lot of things that were thrown at me or that happened around me because everybody's accepting it, I don't want to be the odd one out. So I see her and I wish that I had that. Izzy on the other hand is the opposite of me. She is very friendly. I am not. Maybe if I had their personalities, my career would have grown bigger."

In a way, her career has gone beyond just acting and singing. Today, Damasus is known as a publisher, content creator, producer, acting coach, entrepreneur, a podcaster among other things. Her social media pages are full of content that not only inspires but uplifts the soul. For instance in her Ask Stella series, she reads emails from fans who want her to address relationship issues.

While harnessing the power of social media to motivate her followers, Damasus is not immune to the negativity that emanates from the platform such as the venom and bashing celebrities often get from social media users. However, she believes that most times, oversharing leads to toxicity. She gave an instance of how people often devalue themselves on social media just because they feel they have to expose or overshare their privacy. For her, a level of decency must be maintained on social media.

"Part of it is us too. When you devalue something it is hard to make somebody else value it. My mom used to teach me this and everybody says it too. When you know how to treat yourself, you teach others how to treat you because if you devalue yourself and everything is open one day, someone comes and wants to do something you don't like. So why are you shocked that you're attracting certain types of attention? The woke people always come at me, claiming that nobody has the right to touch you but the fact is let there be some value to yourself."

For someone who works in an industry where everything is glamorised, Damasus is taking a different and less travelled path. Understanding the role she plays in society has kept her from falling into the bottomless pit of social media toxicity.

"We have the power to change a lot of minds so my question is what kind of future are we building for our young ones?"

Moreover, she added, she wants her children to grow up in an environment that is not too saturated with sex, nudity and violence.

Currently working on some Nollywood movies, Damasus's latest venture is the Geli collection- a brand name coined from her middle name Obiageli. The collection is a one-stop-shop for all her accessories from rings to hats. She hints at launching her wigs brand soon.

GLITZ ENTERTAINMENT

Let's Talk about the AMVCAs

Stories by Vanessa Obioha

Since it held its eighth edition last week at the Eko Convention Centre, the news cycle has been spawning stories about the fashion and mammoth crowd at the Africa Magic Viewers Choice Awards (AMVCA). It was as if a memo was issued to Nollywood, stating that failure to attend would lead to a ban. The Convention Centre could barely hold the well-heeled and ordinary guests. Early birds were lucky to find somewhere to perch. Yet, everywhere you turned, people were standing, some frustrated, others too dazed to worry about the disorderliness. The crowd somehow detracted from the event known for its class and panache.

Perhaps, the mammoth crowd can be attributed to the one-year hiatus of the event. Last held in 2020 before the lockdown period of the coronavirus pandemic, celebrities appeared to have been starved of the Glitz and glamour that punctuate the AMVCAs. Therefore, the red carpet turned out to be a fashion battlefield of some sort. Bold, eccentric, outrageous and simplistic styles were displayed. A lot of Met Gala themes were seen on the red carpet. There was the fashion designer and Real Housewives of Lagos star Toyin Lawani's scary bull-head outfit and former Big Brother Naija housemate Ifu Ennada's thousand masks dress which by the way generated a lot of discourse on social media following her outrageous revelation that the dress costs over $100,000.

Of course, the men were not left out in the roast. Denrele Edun, James Brown and Timini Egbuson were among those whose outfits raised eyebrows.

But the AMVCA was more than just the fashion. It was an eight-day festival of creativity that started with an opening gala on Saturday, September 7. The rest of the week had one event or the other. For instance, there was the first-ever AMVCA runway show which paid tribute to some of the iconic styles on the AMVCA runway in the past as well as rewarded budding talents who participated in the 'Design the Stars' competition. One of the significant events of the AMVCA week-long activities was the Digital Content Creator Day which specifically recognised the talents in the digital space as well as the abundant opportunities.

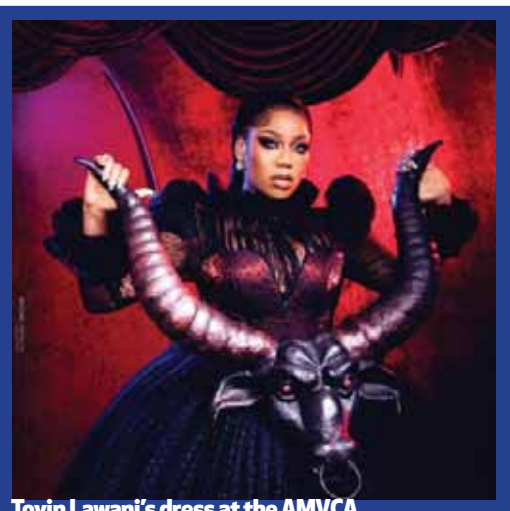
Former Director-General of the NBC, Emeka Mba, at the brunch held at Wheatbaker Hotel voiced his concerns over the fate of traditional broadcast platforms. According to him, the dynamics of storytelling are changing because of the platforms, "but even as they change, certain fundamentals remain the same."

Also, Kenyan-born Jacktone Alufwani emerged as the winner of its Digital Content Creator competition. He won the Overall Best in Technical Skill, Lighting, and Performance awards after competing against hundreds of other content creators who entered the competition in April. He was rewarded with a Canon camera, studio earphones from Dolby, and a masterclass from the MultiChoice Talent Factory.

In a similar vein, MultiChoice Nigeria and MultiChoice Talent Factory also rewarded two runner ups with masterclasses. Evovo from Warri won the award for Best Theme while Rivers' Allison Precious took home the award for The Most Creative Video.



Ifu Ennada's outfit at AMVCA



Toyin Lawani's dress at the AMVCA



Ramsey Nouah wins Best Director at AMVCA

To celebrate the beautiful culture of the continent, the organisers held the Africa Cultural Day on Thursday, May 12 at the Balmoral Hall of Federal Palace Hotel, Victoria Island, Lagos. The event was a vibrant display of fashion, arts, music and food. Seun Kuti who thrilled the audience with music performances reminded the guests that Africa's culture should not be relegated to a special day but celebrated every day.

On the eve of the main awards, nominees and other celebrities converged at the Jewel Aidea in Lekki for the nominees gala. The gathering is usually a soiree for the nominees with music performances and comedy. Hosted by actress Adesua Etomi-Wellington and actor Etim Effiong, some of the faces at the gala included prolific filmmaker and theatre director Bolanle Austen-Peters, filmmaker and director Mildred Okwo, actors Nonso Bassey, Akah Nnani among others.

Earlier that day, a Hollywood and Nollywood exchange was held at the Grand Ballroom of Eko Hotels and Suites. Participants at the exchange included Hollywood stars Tasha and Sidra Smith and Brandon Hall. The session moderated by Nollywood actress and theatre producer Kemi 'Lala' Akindoju, focused on mentorship and training for talents in the film and TV industry.

The main awards was not void of memorable moments. From IK Osakioduwa and Deyemi Okanlawon's recreation of the epic Will Smith and Chris Rock's Oscar slap moment to the touching tribute to late Nollywood and music creatives by the top 12 contestants of Nigerian Idol and the music performances by Pepsi ambassador Rema and Lagbaja, and the eclectic performance by D'banj who brought the night to a close.

The award also witnessed first time winners such as Osas Ighodaro and Stan Nze who won the Best Actress and Best Actor in a Drama respectively for their starring roles in 'Rattlesnake: The Ahanna Story'. Others include Samuel Perry, aka Broda Shaggi, for his performance in the comedy series 'Dwindle' and Oga Sabinus who took home the award for the Best Online Content Creator for Mr. Funny skit.

Perhaps the major upset of the night was 'Amina' winning the Best Overall Film. Although the film bagged the most nominations, not a few in the hall rooted for 'Rattlesnake: The Ahanna Story' which won Best Director for Ramsey Nouah.

With the new format of the AMVCA, subsequent editions will show if they are heading in the right direction or not. At least, the awards should be remembered for more than the fashion moments.

KAP Film and Television Academy Graduates First Set of Trainees

The newly established Kunle Afolayan Production (KAP) Film and Television Academy is set to graduate its first set of trainees and certified affiliates of the prestigious School of Cinematic Arts (SCA) at the University of Southern California (USC).

Founded by award-winning filmmaker Kunle Afolayan, the KAP Academy, in partnership with USC and content streaming giant, Netflix, has executed the programme in post-production - the first in a series of training workshops in Africa.

Scheduled for May 23, 2022, at the KAP Hub, Ikeja, Lagos, the Academy has announced that cultural guru and distinguished scholar, Professor Duro Oni will be Chairman of the occasion while the Keynote address will be delivered by award-winning Writer, Producer/ Director and photographer, Mr. Femi Odugbemi. Also expected at the event are former D.G of National Theatre, Prof Ahmed Yerima and Chairman, Audio-Visual Rights Society of Nigeria, Mr. Mahmoud Ali-Balogun among other creative industry stakeholders.

With the coming event, KAP is optimistic that the Nigerian film industry is about to witness a turnaround with professionals who will take the film industry to higher grounds. The Academy stated that graduating students are film editors with previous experience who now have a global professional mindset.

The course which ran for 10 weeks had world-renowned facilitators like Douglas Blush, Stephen Flick and Richard Burtonled from the School of Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California. The Academy has imparted in the trainees, the required knowledge and skills for the new forms of post-production techniques, including Picture Cropping, Editing and Sound Design.



Kunle Afolayan, founder of KAP

According to Afolayan, "It has been amazing working with the Netflix team to produce dynamic Nigerian films, and it will only get better now that we are partnering with Netflix and USC to train the newest crop of film post-production experts. These editors and sound designers will go on to craft Nigerian stories on a world-class level."

Speaking on the partnership, Allison Triegaardt, Netflix Grow Creative Manager for Africa says, "Our Grow Creative partnerships like the one with USC and KAP in Nigeria will help bridge the skills gap, upskill experienced crew and improve diversity head-on. This will also ensure an even stronger diversity of voices, stories, and points of view for our global audience."

The USC School of Cinematic Arts is one of the most prestigious schools in the world for the study of all facets of the cinematic arts. Notable alumni include; Hwang Dong-Hyuk creator of Squid game; Jon Chu director 'Crazy, Rich Asians'; Shonda Rhimes, creator and showrunner of 'Grey's Anatomy.'

Giving Voice to the Disabled Through Film and TV

To celebrate Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD), Netflix has expanded the language availability of Audio Descriptions (AD) and Subtitles for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (SDH). Starting this month and into 2023, these features will be made available across the streamer's catalogue and in more languages including Spanish, Portuguese, and French.

"For decades, your access to entertainment was determined by where you lived and what language you spoke, meaning that until recently people who needed AD or SDH could only enjoy a story if it was made in their local language," said Netflix's Director of Product Accessibility, Heather Dowdy.

New badges shows and films that have AD and SDH on Web and iOS are also introduced.

Taking a step further, Netflix launched its first-ever collection, titled 'Celebrating Disability with Dimension' which features over 50 shows and films with characters or stories about people living with disabilities.

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...Amazing lifestyles of Nigeria's rich and famous

Who is Backing Abdulahmed Mustapha?



Mustapha

Politics is not a game for the faint of heart. In fact, the way the system runs most of the time, there is always a need for someone else to usher in new waves, or the people may only watch and not participate. When the common people choose against participating, everything ends in tears. To avoid this, antecedents are necessary. The question, therefore, is: who is the antecedent for Abdulahmed Olorunfemi Mustapha, one of the aspirants in the forthcoming All Progressives Congress (APC) governorship primaries?

It is a fact now that quite a number of people are gearing up to contest the Lagos governorship post with the incumbent governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu. Some of these individuals, for example, Mustapha, are from the winning party (APC). Others, however, are not. For the latter, until the last day before tears are shed. But for the former, the primaries might just decide everything.

Mustapha is an interesting person. As a former Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, he sure knows the way that politics works. One needs someone else to go before and prepare the way for them to succeed. Going against Sanwo-Olu, as he is sure to know, is going against the endorsement of the Governance Advisory Council (GAC), and possibly Asiwaju Bola Tinubu (who nobody wants to admit has a masterly handle on Lagos politics).

But Mustapha is confident because he believes that he has more to offer to the good people of Lagos State than anybody else. According to him, he is a disciple of Tinubu and will even follow Tinubu's Master Plan for Lagos if he wins. But does that mean that Tinubu is his backing?

Mike Adenuga: Another Crown for the Magnate of Our Time



Adenuga

Banking, oil and gas, telecoms and property! Who else do you know that has huge investments in these sectors. We are talking about a big player whose business interests are tied to the nation's economic growth and survival. Mike Adenuga, is not called the guru for anything. He's the sage of big business who can smell opportunities that are yet to make an appearance. Over the years, his sense of smell and foresight have continually astound. There is no point in debating the fact that global business people are very influential. With the snap of a finger, they can change the fortune of a young man or woman, and consequently, affect the direction of the future. This is what the government of Nigeria has recognized and appreciated Adenuga for doing, a merit that will go down in the history books for years and years to come.

A few days ago, President Muhammadu Buhari led the charge of government officials to recognise the peerless contributions of Globacom's Chairman, Adenuga. Buhari conferred on the astute and impactful businessman the National Productivity Order of Award. By doing so, the leadership of Nigeria was saying that Adenuga's achievements are not something that others can match up to, especially considering that these achievements are revolutionising the entrepreneurial sector and promoting a culture of diligence and patriotism.

Adenuga was not the only person recognised during the event. Also included in the awardees in the 'Employers of Labour' category were 35 other personalities; from Zenith Bank Chairman Jim Ovia to BUA Group Boss Abdulsamad Rabiu, not to mention super industrialist Chinedum Anthony Okereke.

Woman at the Top: The Astounding Womanhood of Aisha Babangida at 52

One can jabber on about certain people, but the truth is that no number of words is too much, no deluge of compliments is too much, and no loudness of praise songs is too much. For people like Erelu Aisha Babangida, people who are quietly changing the world, charming, graceful, purposeful, words fail and compliments fall short. Thus, as she hits 52, one can only sigh in admiration, and nod in resignation.

To be honest, there are scores and scores of fabulous Nigerians that are over the golden age of 50 years. There are also women, visionary women, within the same category whose narratives of glory and virtue cannot be captured in a few words. Nevertheless, all these fabulous people and visionary women can only hold a candle near Aisha. Even though she will be taking her second age step since she entered her golden years, she has done—and is doing—really amazing things.

When you have a mother like Maryam Babangida of blessed memory, you generally have to struggle first out from under her shadow before making a name for yourself. What Aisha did was stay in that shadow and do her things. The result of this decision was that her name eventually extended outside of her late mother's shadow until it took on a life of its own.

Now, the world recognises Aisha as the founder of the Women Enterprise Alliance (WenA). The world sees her as a visionary, compassionate leader with more sympathy for women and children than she has for herself. Thus, in her more than 20 years of active participatory work with non-profit organisations, Aisha's image has grown firmer and larger in the hearts of other people.



Babangida

Muiz Banire: Legal Luminary, Lecturer, Philanthropist, and Politician Who Ticks All the Boxes



Banire

There are people and there are people. There are those who prefer to hide away from the world because they are convinced that nothing is worthy of their efforts. Others dedicate all their efforts to making a name for themselves because they think that they are awesome and the world should know. There are a few individuals who are in the middle: they want to humbly contribute to the world's progress and end up as superstars in the process. Dr Muiz Banire is one of the latter.

Those who know Banire have often wondered how the man came to be all he is. In the field of legal counsels and courtrooms, he is an unyielding character. In the classroom with supple and stubborn students, his momentum is unstoppable. In the nebulous area of politics, Banire is a light that cannot be mistaken for anything else. And in philanthropy, he is simply relatable.

There have been many geniuses in Nigeria's history, some brilliant enough to compete with revolutionary figures like Albert Einstein and Alexander the Great. However, few have been able to make their contributions to the nation's growth and development without losing face with their relatives, friends, and associates. Banire is one such individual.

One of the groups that Banire is known for forming, United Action For Change, is a pillar of social transformation. The group serves as both a pressure group and a think tank, and its impact has been felt far and wide. It has also complemented Banire's natural gifts, giving birth to initiative after initiative to see Nigerians better equipped to compete with close friends and distant peers from other nations of the world.

To say that Banire ticks all the right boxes is to play down his achievements and contributions. However, there is no better way to summarize his work. Even at 55 years of age (going to 56), Banire remains one of the brightest brains in Nigeria. But for his humility, he would be known the world over.

Babajide Sanwo-Olu, Obafemi Hamzat, Tayo Ayinde Honour Tokunbo Wahab in Private 50th Birthday Soirée

There is nothing more rewarding than a good day's job. This is a feeling that is gradually losing its place among Nigerians, especially those of the younger generation. Nevertheless, there are still a few people who hold up this banner of diligence and good work. When such individuals are celebrated, the whole world gets to know them. This was how it went down with the 50th birthday celebration of Tokunbo Wahab, the Special Adviser on Education to Lagos State Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu.

It should not come as a surprise to anybody that there was a gathering of Lagos captains and commanders some days ago at the house of the Education Adviser, Wahab. As it was the latter's birthday, all these otherwise busy fellows made sure to clear their tabs and get themselves to Wahab's Banana Island home to celebrate him and they did this magnificently.

The scale of the celebration can be understood from knowing the individuals that were present. These included Governor Sanwo-Olu, Deputy Governor Obafemi Hamzat; Chief of Staff Tayo Ayinde; Head of Service (HoS), Hakeem Muri-Okunola; Oba Saheed Ademola Elegushi of Ikate kingdom; Oba Abdulwasiu Omogbolahan Lawal of Iruland; Oba Olufolarin Olukayode Ogunsanwo of Ilara kingdom; Mayor Akinpelu Lamex; Chief Lekan Osifeso; Gbenga Obadina; Yemi Kuforiji; and many others. All of these personalities were on ground to raise a wine glass to Wahab.



Wahab

Sweet Mother as Oba Saheed Elegushi Plans Superlative 70th Birthday for Mum

Mothers will always have a special place in the hearts of their children. It doesn't matter that father's traditionally bear the title of the breadwinner. After all, it is the mothers that end up feeding the children that bread. It is, therefore, no surprise that Oba Saheed Elegushi, the undisputed monarch of the Ikate-Elegushi kingdom in Lagos State, will be taking time out to celebrate the birthday of his mother, Olori Sinat Elegushi.

A king in the modern day is like the only elephant in a jungle of noble beasts. Every time he moves, there is a quake in the lands below and thunder in the skies above. That is how it is with Oba Elegushi every time he moves to celebrate his mother. He did it like this last year, and the year before, and the year before that. He is doing it this year also, and the celebrations are even more lavish since the Queen Mother is hitting 70 years.

According to reports on social media, Olori Sinat's 70th birthday is today, Sunday, May 22, 2022. In recognition of this special day, Oba Elegushi is not sparing a kobo as he plans to throw the biggest birthday party yet. All guests are expected to come bearing goodwill as they gather at the prestigious Monarch Event Centre in Ikate, Lekki, Lagos.

Although people have grown used to Oba Elegushi's empathetic side (where he congratulates everybody on anything), people are still in awe of when he expresses joy on the birthday of his mother. This year is no different, based on whisperings from the Royal Palace of Elegushi. The gist is that there will be bands from here to the moon and back, all of them encouraging the guests to dance in commemoration of Olori Sinat's impactful 70 years on the earth.

Indeed, one only needs to look at the son she raised to know that Olori Sinat is a superwoman. At 70, she has a son willing to flip the world over in celebration on her behalf.



Oba Elegushi and mother



Orelope-Adefulire

Senatorial Race: Asiwaju Bola Tinubu in Dilemma Over Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire as the Preferred Candidate Failed to Submit Form

It is neighbourhood gossip, not editorials, that begins with the phrase, "Wonders shall never end!" Nevertheless, some scenarios call for the declaration of the endlessness of wonders, especially the kind of relatable wonders that yanks the mouth open. What greater political wonder is there than to have a senatorial path opened for you while you tighten up your shoulders and refuse to walk the path?

This is one of the ways that people have taken to describe the curious event that happened between presidential aspirant and chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, and the Senior Special Assistant to President Muhammadu Buhari on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire. According to those in the know, Tinubu went to great lengths to secure a place for Orelope-Adefulire wherein she could be the Senator representing Lagos West, but Orelope-Adefulire inadvertently decided against following through with Tinubu's plans.

It must be said that Orelope-Adefulire has not made her intentions known to the public, other than to inform them that she intends to run for the Senate in order to represent the people of Lagos West. After this, she joined two other prominent APC aspirants, former Nigeria's High Commissioner to Ghana, Senator Musiliu Obanikoro, and Akeem Opeifa, to obtain forms that will allow them officially run the race.

The forms were expected back at the APC headquarters for screening. However, only Obanikoro and Opeifa returned their forms after filling them. The form of Orelope-Adefulire, for whatever reason, was nowhere to be found. Until the form submission date zoomed past and screening was conducted for Obanikoro and Opeifa, Orelope-Adefulire did not show up. Thus, it became clear to everyone that she was not interested in the position anymore or someone or something else had convinced her otherwise.

Akeredolu's Role in Billionaire Ibrahim's Bid to Become Ondo Senator

We will never get tired of iterating the popular words of English historian, politician, and writer, John Acton: power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely. In truth, there are many ways to see the alleged role of Governor Rotimi Akeredolu in the senatorial bid of Ondo State businessman Jimoh Billionaire. The abuse of power is one of the easiest to point to. Of course, whether this is alright or not is left to the reader's discretion.

It is no longer news that the venerable businessman, Chairman and CEO of Global Fleet Group, Ibrahim, has his eyes on the Ondo South Senatorial District. According to reports on this front, Ibrahim intends to run for Senator of the senatorial district under the aegis of the All Progressives Congress (APC). There is nothing bad about this, as many people have noted, except that there appears to be some shadows behind the aspirant.

One of these shadows is Akeredolu. According to those in the know, it is Akeredolu's wish that Ibrahim ends up with the APC primary ticket and also goes on to be Ondo South Senator. And since Akeredolu is APC Member Number 1 in Ondo, his will must be done.

What is interesting about this entire proposition is that Akeredolu and Ibrahim are allegedly very close. In fact, Ibrahim's desire to become a senator and Akeredolu's intention to indulge this desire is reportedly based on the fact that Ibrahim assisted Akeredolu during the governorship election that saw him into office. Thus, this is the perfect opportunity for Akeredolu to show his gratitude to the Global Fleet man.

But there is another shadow behind Ibrahim, and that is the Asset Management Corporation of Nigeria (AMCON). The latter is allegedly intent on seizing Ibrahim's assets because he reportedly owes N69 billion. Unfortunately, while Akeredolu may be able to get Ibrahim the APC senatorial ticket, there is nothing that the governor can do about AMCON's crosshairs.



Akeredolu

How Presidential Ambitions Tears Fayemi and Oshiomhole Apart

Faced with this headline, smart and informed readers ought to immediately mumble to themselves, "So, that's why they classed! It is a thing of corporate interest, after all, nothing personal."

What these individuals would be noting to themselves is the reason Ekiti State Governor Kayode Fayemi and former All Progressives Congress (APC) National Chairman, Adams Oshiomhole seem intent on rubbishing themselves before all and sundry. If it is all for the presidential election of 2023, then none of these squabbles is new to the block.

Many things are happening over at the national APC camp. The most recent of these happenings is the figurative slug of mud that Oshiomhole threw at the face of Fayemi by telling everybody that Fayemi once begged him to rig an election as a favour to him (Fayemi). This allegation, like a bombshell, has thrown many things out of order within the party, jamming the otherwise smooth narrative that the party's publicity personnel have been peddling.

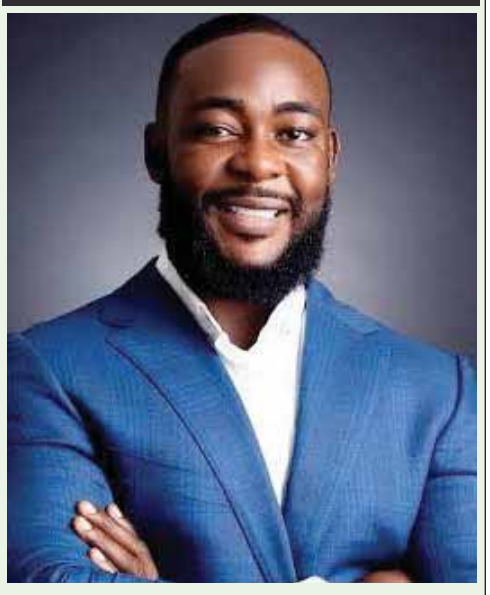


L-R: Oshiomhole and Fayemi

Oshiomhole's allegation that Fayemi asked him to rig the 2018 primaries for the benefit of Fayemi's people has been well received by Nigerians. You will find people at newspaper stands nodding their heads as they claim that this is not surprising since it is expected of National party Chairpersons to be partial to their own people.

Fayemi, naturally, is not at ease with Oshiomhole's allegation. In response, people from his camp stated categorically that Oshiomhole is off his rocker and is only spinning tales that have long lost touch with history and reality.

Captain Abdul Abubakar Gaffe



Abubakar

The gruesome murder of Deborah Samuel, the 200-level student of Shehu Shagari College of Education (SSCOE), Sokoto, has caught the attention of Nigerians at home and abroad. According to reports, the late Samuel allegedly blasphemed Prophet Muhammad, the progenitor of Islam. For that, she was flogged, stoned, and set on fire by some of her classmates. While many individuals, Muslim, Christian, or otherwise, took to their social media handles to condemn the act, a few appeared to support the girl's murder.

One of the high-profile individuals who belong to the latter category is Captain Abdul Jamil Abubakar, the son of former Inspector-General of Police Mohammed Abubakar and son-in-law of Africa's richest man, Aliko Dangote. Judging from the statement made by Jamil, it is not unreasonable that the late SSCOE student paid for her alleged blasphemy with her life.

Specifically, Jamil posted on his Twitter handle, "In Islam, we respect the Injil, Taura, Zabur, we were never taught to disrespect any of the books, or any of the prophets From Adam to Muhammad SAW and the Quran. The punishment for blasphemy is death! in most religions including Christianity. Respect people's religion. It's simple!"

Of course, Jamil's comments did not sit with the majority of his audience. These people could not understand how Jamil, an individual that used to bear the weight of other people's lives by helping them travel in aeroplanes, could so disregard the life of another person, a young adult, for that matter.

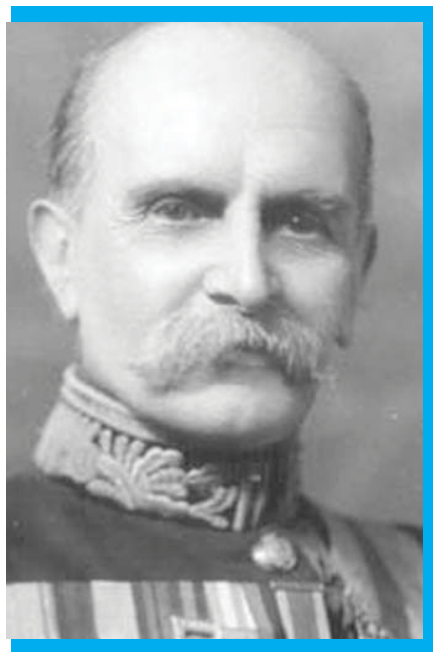
As expected, there were many repercussions to his statement. Although Jamil has released a statement to retract claims that he supports the killing of the late Ms. Samuel, he is still in the crosshairs of individuals and groups who are opposed to such jungle justice murders. In fact, Azman Airline, an airline that Jamil worked with a few years ago, released their statement that he is no longer working with them and that his opinions about anything are his own.

All in all, it is not a good time to be Jamil. But, what he might go through as a result of his insensitive statement cannot hold a candle next to what the late SSCOE student experienced.

LOUD WHISPERS

with JOSEPH EDGAR (09095325791)

Please, Let's Leave Lord Lugard Out of Our Problems



Lugard

You know when something don pass you, and you start looking for silly excuses and telling beer parlour stories to explain why unlike your mates you have not been able to 'make' it yet.

That is the way I see these things especially when I listen to supposedly very intelligent people who blame not only the British for our present predicament as a nation but even go as far as pulling Lord Lugard into the matter.

How all this 'rubbish' we are facing in this country concern the gentle Lord Lugard, I really don't see.

If it is not cowardice and a failed disposition in nation-building, why would we be calling these people's names after over 60 years of independence and over 100 years of amalgamation? It is appalling that people are still crying foul.

Mbok, I think we should just all shut up and face the foibles of our national failure. After 60 years of continuous failures, a series of coups, a constant flow of irritating leadership and a gross inability to achieve national cohesion and consensus, how is Lord Lugard to blame? Come on na.

They will now be quoting Awolowo that Nigeria is a geographical expression and that the colonialists really wanted the North to rule forever, hence their disjointed constitution and all that crap.

The 600 coups, the crazy and infantile attempt at rewriting the constitution, the blatant stealing, the mayhem and banditry, is Lord Lugard abi? We have not started. When we are ready, we will have more credible people like Satan, Michael Jackson and Bobrisky to blame for our sad situation. We have not started.

IDRIS AHMED AND NSIMA EKERE'S N127BN QUESTIONS

Barring that this could be politics playing, I would like for the National Psychiatric Hospital to invite these gentlemen for a series of evaluations. I would like to sit in on these sessions to be using 'atori' to flog their balls as we try to understand the brain that they carry getting involved in this level of stealing.

You see, Nigerians, let's remain very calm and patient o. Let's not get carried away o. We that know these things, know these things o. Election is coming, primaries of both parties in a matter of days and all of a sudden such monumental fraud is uncovered and EFCC which has been pursuing Lekki miscreants suddenly makes these huge arrests.

In fact, we have also just heard that Patricia Etteh, the former Speaker of the House of Representatives has also been pulled in. That mama no dey even hear word sef. Let's relax o.

Some unfortunate presidential aspirant has just had his pipeline of funds blocked. Simple. This is no time to scream Uhuru. Someone is being knocked out of the race.

Sad thing is that my Juju man has not told me just yet who the person is but let's watch very carefully, the person or the people will soon drop out of the race and be saying, "in the spirit of national unity, I have decided to step down". National unity my foot!

My people, anyhow we look at this thing, the madness is real. How a few people will arrogate to themselves these kinds of power and rights over our destiny and be using our money to be playing 'kalo kalo' really defies all logic.

Even at that, I still think that these hapless two should still be brought in for mental evaluation. They really have mind o and they will be sitting on the negotiation tables with ASUU and NLC and be keeping a straight face when those ones will be crying for even half of this money and they will be saying, "government has no funds."

Even that big-headed Nsima will be seeing the wanton poverty all over the South-south and he will be oiling a war chest to either contest or support a candidate when the people would have all died from kwashiorkor.

Our God is very patient o.

ATIKU ABUBAKAR: BABA IS TIRED

Mbok, Baba is tired but you know how it is with old men, he just won't agree. The Baba must still continue even though the intellectual capacity and indeed physical energy is all but gone.

A presidential race, especially from the opposition can be very tasking. Fighting to come back from the outside, especially years after being in power is not child's play.

Baba with a series of gaffes is showing very strong signs of stress and lack of focus. First was the Deborah matter. That gaffe was unforgivable on all sides. I used to sha marvel as to how he was always quick to comment on social media. Small thing, Atiku will tweet and I used to suspect that those pronouncements were not usually well thought through especially with the speed they come out. This Deborah matter finally confirmed my suspicions and he now even buried it by throwing his people under the bus. That one has not finished o, he has gone to harass and throw away media men. Media men? At this time. This man has not heard that you carefully choose your enemies o. He is making very powerful enemies left and right – Muslims, Christians and now media men. Who will now even vote for him, Cattle?

Honestly speaking, I think he has served enough. Customs, Vice President, concurrent aspirant, it is enough. Just slide into oblivion, Lord. Thanks.

NYESOM WIKE, SHOW THEM PEPPER

If for nothing, his barbs and utterances are making this whole campaign season very interesting. He is so comical and fearless that I am thinking of voting for him if for nothing else.

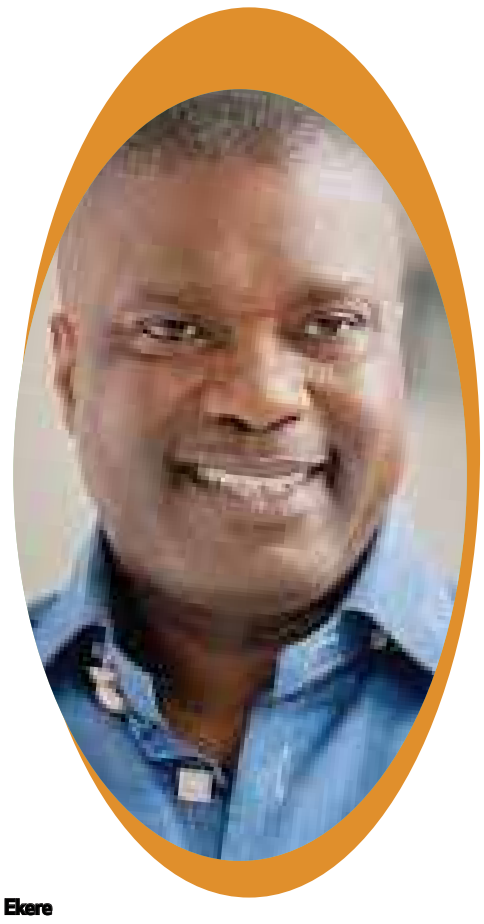
The other day, he said: "Just give me the votes and I will show APC pepper." I laughed and almost peed on my pants. This Wike as President will ask Putin, "what is even the matter with you o, I will slap you o." Kai.

I simply love this man. The other time he asked what was even wrong with the people who are saying they want to continue Buhari's good works. "Which good works?" he asked in his unique gravel voice. Everybody reeled on the floor in laughter. Kai.

Another one: "Give me the votes and go and sleep with your two eyes closed. Dem no dey fear?"

Kai, Wike, Wike na you biko.

A long time ago, he was giving a speech when he spotted a young man in full traditional regalia of a respected Rivers traditional ruler. He pointed at him and said, "You, you are a small boy o. They have given you chieftaincy title and you have gone to sew cloth and be looking like Uthman Dan Fodio and be causing



Ekere



Abubakar



Karim



Sanwo-Olu

trouble all over the place."
This one almost killed me, because the guy was seated there and in front of the people and media being taken out by his Executive Governor. He must have felt like a fool. Kai!
Now he has trained his sights on the Nigerian Bar Association. He said they are – let me quote him o before those ones will now out of cowardice come at me o.
"Nigerian Bar Association useless, only good at issuing statements."
If you ask me though, I will say apt. Let's leave it there. Wike for President o. Wike for President. Na correct man. Kai!

BABAJIDE SANWO-OLU, PLEASE DO NOT LISTEN

Following the comprehensive ban on Okada in six local governments of the state as a first step, I have just seen a report where the Hausa community is offering him massive votes to rescind the decision.
This is a Greek gift and the Sanwo-Olu that I think I know will not fall for this kind of joke. The gruesome murder of the young sound engineer is just the most publicised of the series of atrocities carried out by these marauders.
Aiding serious crimes, kidnapping, armed robbery and even reckless riding leading to road rages and the untimely deaths of so many people. Mbok, the disadvantage of Okada far outweighs their uses. We will walk instead. Is it not better to walk than to be exposed to such mindless criminality all in the name of transportation?
The numbers make it very impossible to regulate. You cannot even register them, they come at you like locusts and invade a community and before you know it, their numbers will begin to scare you.
I once pursued a young girl to Bariga. She said:
"Edgar, if you want me, come and see where I live."
Trust me, I don't back down from such challenges. That was how we drove into Ilaje. The road, ehn. Sanwo? The road. Let me not talk about that one here. When we got to the house, it was the last house before the lagoon.
Come and see. I saw over one million okada riders living there o, inside an abandoned building. Some were taking their baths, others were cooking but most of them were just lazing around. I asked the lady if she was comfortable living beside these people.
She told me that rape was part of their lives in exchange for security. That not even married women on the street were immune to it and because of her condition, she could not leave the place since she too was an illegal squatter in the place. We relocated her but the millions of so-called 'okada men' in that building scared me.
If they want to, these okada riders can take over the whole of Bariga in a second. Which kind of country is this one na? Fear everywhere. Please baba, don't listen, carry out that ban and let's even have a registration exercise for all Lagosians so that people will be carrying ID cards around so we know who is who. This is mad.

CORONATION ART GALLERY: EXQUISITELY ELEGANT

I saw the invite in my mail asking if I would be available for the opening of their Art Gallery carrying works from the massive collector, Mr. Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede.
Oya na. We understand painting.
That was how I stormed the place complete with my new 'pussy shirt' as designed by my brother Clem Effanga. Na only me wear shirt o. Everybody wore black suit and traditional wear.
Even my brother, the legendary photographer Kelechi Amadi Obi sef wear something that looked one kain beautiful and I am sure it was my brother Mudi that made it for him.
As expected, the place was glam, mature and fulfilling. I saw a lot of big people o. From Dere Otubu who is the Chairman at Eko Disco and my egbon Kola Adeshina, a powerful man from the Sahara Group. My native and townsman Udem Ufot came in beautiful shoe o. As I looked at the shoes, I felt like pushing him down and collecting them. They were that beautiful. Aig Jnr, looking very distinguished in his lovely grey beard, received the guests. Immediately he saw me, he exclaimed, "Duke, I dey owe you."
I said, "Yes o, you dey owe me." We laughed and hugged.
Then Aigboje came in looking simple but very cute if I can use the word. He too wore the same shoes Udeme wore. It was either na Udeme buy am for am or na him buy am for Udeme but to confuse us, they wore different colours.
I am sure, Udeme would have called him from home, "Oh boy, no wear that our shoe o, you know say that Duke boy go dey there make he no come yab us."
Aig would have replied, "My brother, I like the shoe, make we risk am, he fit no notice. We go just give am Afang and he go confuse."
Sorry no Afang and I noticed.
The paintings were out of this world. They were African and a lot in abstract and oil on canvas. You know as your money never reach that level, you look very quickly and walk away and go take picture with Kelechi before you spill the drink on them. That Udom wey no like me, will never use Akwa Ibom money to compensate for any spoilt painting.
Falana, a beautiful up-and-coming jazzy singer, thrilled the audience. Her smokey pulsating voice rendered the cool breezy evening, giving the whole event a colour that made it resplendent.
Mbok, whoever decided to invite me, God bless you o, it was a sweet evening.

AKAN UDOFIA: A CROSSING FORETOLD

When the news of Akan's crossing to APC hit, I wasn't surprised. I dare say it was inevitable. The man has a message, a vision that is fluid and cannot be hampered by the limitations of the party platform.
So, when the crossing was announced, I reached out to him. We had a fruitful discussion and he reiterated his vision. For him, the state needs to cut off from the now very erratic federal allocation and begin to generate internally driven wealth, led by private sector initiatives while leveraging the vast human and material resources all over the state.
So, for him, the vehicle doesn't matter. The message and vision are all that matters and as far as that is not changed or watered down, he will continue to seek a veritable avenue to deliver on his plans to the people of Akwa Ibom State.



Udofia

AYODEJI KARIM: BREAKS BOUNDS

This super intelligent businessman and leader in the infrastructure and construction world has just thrown his hat into the ring. He has indicated an interest in vying for the Oyo South Senatorial District.
Up until recently, he was the CEO of the giant Costain West Africa where he has more than proven his mettle as a visionary leader and one of the youngest at 39 to run a quoted company.
It is this foresight and vision-driven leadership that he wants to bring into the Senate. A scion of the Alhaji Dauda Adebayo Karim Family of Ile Jagun Aiko Compound in Opo Labiran area of Ibadan North East Local Government, Ayo is one of the most educated in that race which throws a certain depth into the equation.
His brother, the great Kola Karim who is the CEO at Shoreline, the infrastructure and energy giant continues to express expansive optimism at the very strong prospects of his victory leaning on the call to serve issued by the very eager people of the senatorial district. My prayers are with him.

DENIS OLISA: PLEASANT SURPRISE

I heard a very hot gist relating to this perfect gentleman who works at Zenith Bank. I know he is really reclusive and usually does not like his name in the media but how will I now give the gist without mentioning his name o.
Let me just talk abeg. He was recently on a flight out of Lagos to Asaba for something I don't know and in the process of checking in, forgot his hand luggage at the 'Aviation checking in' desk with valuables and important documents.
It was until he landed in Asaba that it dawned on him that he had forgotten the hand luggage. All attempts to reach the Lagos Airport fell flat and he gave up and continued with his task in Asaba.
Anyway, on his return to Lagos a few days later, he just said, he should sha try.
My people, that was his luggage waiting for him with all it contained intact.
Boy, he was so excited and thanked God for this small miracle. Now listen, in other climes, this is a normal routine and nothing to shout to heaven about.
But in our country, this is a major seismic occurrence.
When you have used a handcuff to tie your bag to your wrist, they will use a chainsaw and cut off your hand to steal N1,000 from you. In traffic, they will break your windscreen to carry your phone and even at that airport, all sorts of miscreants in various kinds of uniforms all with one aim – to fleece and steal from you. You now come and experience this kind of thing, it is worth doing thanksgiving in church, I tell you.
Congratulations my brother, but no try am again o. Lightning doesn't strike twice in one place o.

MUDI, PLEASE GROW UP

My people, me and Mudi are fighting o.
You will notice that I have not jabbed him on this page for some time and I know it will be paining him because he likes to be jabbed on the page.
Anyways, let me confess. I am the one that looked for his trouble. One evening, he asked me to meet him at Jevnik for a late-night dose of Afang. You know Mudi likes to eat too much and me sef when it comes to Afang, I am the Olympic champion and Jevnik is where you get the kind of heavy Afang that can feed a whole village.
So, we appeared. Two celebrities. Mudi with his 'tontiri' trousers, me and my uncombed hair. They dropped the Afang and the Eba was so huge that I could not see his face on the other side. Now Mudi has been complaining that he was broke and me sef I no dey ever get money. So, I convened a national conference before we started to eat.
I said: "My Urhobo brother, you know as we both no too hold, make we share one pot of soup and get different Eba."
That is the strategy of eating at Jevnik. Their food used to kill.
Mudi, astonished, said, "How can?" That people are watching us and that he has a brand. I asked him which brand, will it be better if we end up washing plates? That one, Linda Ikeji will finish us o. I ended my submission by reminding him that na him kuku get shop for Accra, Nairobi and South Africa.
He was about to agree, when one beautiful girl walked in and screamed, "Mudiiiiiiii, can I take a picture with you?"
That was how Mudi now ordered another plate of Afang and a big goat head pepper soup for the girl
Me, I was just looking at this man. He wants to play me Urhobo wayo. I say I will show him. After eating to my heart's satisfaction, I even took a piece of meat from the girl. I told them I was coming, let me take a call. That was how I landed in Shomolu straight to my toilet o.
Since then, Mudi has blocked me. He is not taking my calls and refused to follow me to Warri. I miss him, he is my brother. Please, if you know him, help me call and beg him for me. Please tell him I am ready to do a repayment plan and that he should not allow Afang to come between two brothers. I love you bro, no vex. Na Buhari cause am. The economy is tight.

SOCIETY WATCH

Adebayo Adeoye
bayoolunla@gmail.com; 08054680651

When Friends celebrated UBA Big Boy, Ramon Nasir



Nasir

That Ramon Olanrewaju Nasir, Head, Media and External Relations, United Bank for Africa Plc, is a known name in the Nigerian media space need no debating. The communication expert has proven over time that he knows his job like the back of his hand. In his capacity, he keeps regular contact with media managers.

Beyond that, players in the banking industry have rated his media relations skills as second to none. He is one man whose circle of friends cuts across the who-is-who in high society, including captains of industry, monarchs, politicians, socialites and celebrities. The tall and handsome PR expert got the rewards this last week when he celebrated his birthday.

The birthday soiree was organised on his behalf by some of his friends in Banana Island, Lagos. The roll call of guests who attended the birthday shindig includes top businessmen, public relations experts and top media executives. The award-winning image maker also showcased his sense of hospitality, as he treated his guests to expensive cognac, premium wines and champagne.

Nasir bagged a First-Class degree in International Relations and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State. He also has a master's degree in Media/Marketing, and Communication from Pan Atlantic University, Lagos.

Omnicom MD, Lanre Olaniyan's Latest Move

How time flies!

Lanre Olaniyan, Managing Director, Omnicom Solutions Limited, started on a very eventful note upon his appointment 14 years ago. The news of his appointment didn't come as a surprise to any. It was well deserved and applauded by all stakeholders.

He distinguished himself in various capacities. As a result, stakeholders were confident that he would keep up the momentum that the leading telecommunication firm is known for.

But to the surprise of many, Olaniyan left the company recently, a development that has left tongues wagging.

However, contrary to the rumour in some quarters, it was confirmed that Olaniyan did not quit the company, but only decided to "step aside" to focus on other interests.

Confident that he has given his best to Omnicom, he believes the stage is set for a new hand to run the company and take it to greater heights, while he remains on the Board and gives advisory support.

It was further revealed that his decision to step aside had been reached a while ago due to several reasons, but was only made official in March 2022.

The decision, he was quoted to have said, is "the latest good news from his over a 15-year career in the Nigerian telecom sector," while expressing gratitude to God for the successes the company achieved under his leadership.

Reward for Air Peace Boss, Allen Onyeama's Good Deed

That Allen Onyeama, Chief Executive Officer, Air Peace, has been able to stand tall despite all odds against him particularly in his business is what astounds many. But what they don't understand about this lawyer cum entrepreneur is that he was born with the proverbial lucky star. Nevertheless, he has never taken the grace of God in his life for granted.

All his life, Onyema always aimed for the best. Even so, he has an abiding trust in the Almighty God. He remains unshaken even when things are difficult and seem almost impossible to actualise.

Earlier in life, he started as a lawyer and later ventured into the real estate business. As fate would have it, he joined the players in the aviation sector. Today, he's regarded as one of the major players in West Africa's Aviation Sector. Those close to him revealed that he has remained relevant based on his wonted tenacity and doggedness.

No doubt, evidence of his success abounds. Despite a series of media attacks targeted at maliciously denting the reputation he has built over the years with dedication, selflessness and hard work, he has always been vindicated.

The cosmopolitan business magnate, who had sowed in tears, is currently reaping



Onyeama

bountifully, as his airline, Air Peace, is being showered accolades by all for its seamless services and good customer relations.

Leveraging his intelligence in the business, the Anambra State-born Onyeama has been able to move his company from an indigenous airline leasing a few planes to owning fleets plying international routes; thus, putting Air Peace in the leagues of industry players in Africa and the rest of the world while also according Nigeria the great prestige she deserves among the comity of nations.

Not yet sated, Onyeama, it was gathered, recently brokered peace and interceded between the federal government and airline operators to ensure airlines are not grounded due to the unavailability of aviation fuel.

This act added to several commendations he has received for his various patriotic acts over the years. To prove that his numerous humanitarian and philanthropic activities have not gone unnoticed, Onyeama has been bestowed with the National Productivity Order of Merit (NPOM) award by President Muhammadu Buhari in Abuja.

He has created well over 3,000 jobs through the establishment of Air Peace in 2014. And in less than 10 years, the airline has grown to own the largest fleet in West Africa.

Many would not forget in a hurry how the renowned entrepreneur in 2019 evacuated hundreds of Nigerians from South Africa during the Xenophobic attacks.

Onyema has also been involved in many social investments, which have impacted Nigerians in various ways, especially the deployment of aircraft for rescue flights during the lockdown in 2020; corporate philanthropy, massive employment, and other social impact initiatives.

When House Aspirant, Ayara Olamigoke, Put the Record Straight

During the electioneering times, particularly in this part of the world, the polity always witnesses strange activities, horse-trading, propaganda, half-truths and, many times, outright lies from desperate politicians.

For them, the only way to remain relevant and be what they are not in the eyes of the people is to spread falsehoods, half-truths and, most times, tell wicked lies about their opponents. But they forget that no matter how far a lie travels, the truth will definitely catch up with it.

The foregoing scenario seems to be playing out ahead of the 2023 general elections, as a leading aspirant in the Ilaje-Ese Odo Federal Constituency of Ondo State on the platform of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), Otunba Ayara Olamigoke, has denied reports in some section of the media allegedly sponsored by a former commissioner in the state to tarnish his image.

The former US-based Olamigoke who faulted the publication dated May 9, 2022, said: "Ordinarily, we would have ignored the publication because we know the aspirant behind it is someone without any electoral value but we have decided to respond in order to put the records straight.

"There is no time Otunba Ayara Olamigoke has relied on the Deputy Governor of Ondo State to support or push him through to get the ticket of the party. Rather, he has been peacefully talking to various leaders, excos, members and delegates of the party for support which is the right thing to do in politics and politicking and the support I am getting from these people is overwhelming as I am truly the people's choice for the job.

"One begins to wonder why an aspirant who moved from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to APC in 2016 and was made a commissioner would want to soil the hard-earned and mutually respected working relationship between the governor and deputy governor, with his ambition that is not backed by his people," Olamigoke said.

He explained further that in 2016, the aspirant was welcomed and accepted into the APC by all without any discrimination. "He was eventually appointed as a Deputy Chief of Staff and later Commissioner, despite that many foundation members of the party are



Olamigoke

more capable and competent to hold those positions. But they accepted it in good faith and supported him.

"We humbly suggest that the governor should be careful with such character/person as this perceived rosy relationship will automatically turn sour in no distant time."

Billionaire Businessman, Ayo Karim's New Dream



Karim

No doubt, the billionaire businessman and Managing Director of Costain West Africa, Ayodeji Karim, has made a name for himself in Nigeria and even beyond. His antecedents over the years precede him anywhere he goes and he is considered one of the most visionary corporate leaders in the country.

He glided from business to politics. But the Ibadan, Oyo State-born businessman would never forget in a hurry how he was given a baptism of fire in 2019 during the Oyo State governorship election when he made known his intention to contest for the number one job of the state on the platform of the ruling party in his state, the All Progressives Congress (APC).

In spite of this, the astute corporate giant immediately picked up the pieces of his life and went back to his original boardroom job, which had suffered a big setback during his political foray.

Today, the younger brother to another successful businessman and the Agbaoye of Ibadanland, Kolade Karim, is on another mission: to represent the Oyo South Senatorial district.

The intelligent and charismatic man believes that the time has come to herald policies and initiatives with direct impacts on the welfare of the people. He believes that there is so much that could be achieved in the Senate through proper legislation, adequate leadership and representation. Karim hopes to bring governance closer to the grassroots if given the opportunity to represent the senatorial district at the Red Chamber.

According to his supporters, he has a history of running successful companies, and this is one of his plans for the senatorial district.

Karim worked as a manager with Le Pain Croissant Limited, South-all, UK, before joining Charles Walden & Associates Company Ltd, the UK as the Project Team lead.

He served as Chief Executive Officer, Fortis Construction Company Limited, and was employed by Costain West Africa Plc, in February 2007, as Operations Director.

He rose to become the Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer of the construction giant in January 2010. He is currently the CEO of Winchester Farms, Winchester Homes & Construction.

Sujimoto Boss, Sijibomi Ogundele's Midas Touch

It was Catherine Pulsifer who said: "Setting goals allows you to paint a vision of what you wish your future to be."

It is no gainsaying that Sijibomi Ogundele, Chief Executive Officer, Sujimoto, is a man of no mean repute. When the luxury property merchant announced to the world that he would be diversifying, some of his critics were said to have laughed scornfully while some others sneered. But the man whose ultimate mission is to rule the world of entrepreneurship confidently proclaimed his determination to elevate his company's fortunes to heights never seen and scarcely conceivable. With his eyes fixed on the future, he held on to his dream.

Consequently, earlier in May, he launched Homewin, which has now become a household name in Nigeria, while it is gradually setting a new standard in the sector. With its popularity and acceptability, there is no question about just who is smirking now.

What else could be responsible if not Ogundele's Midas touch?

After delivering such a resounding slap to the face of his numerous doubters who insisted on remaining blind and deaf to his incontestable greatness, the businessman is not resting on his oars. He has already set bigger targets for himself, which he is working harder than ever to achieve.

On the menu are grand visions of turning his numerous businesses into a big, lean



Ogundele

profit spinning model of organisational and operational efficiency, not to mention expansion plans geared towards widening his tentacles to other corners of the globe.

ARTS & REVIEW

A THISDAY PUBLICATION

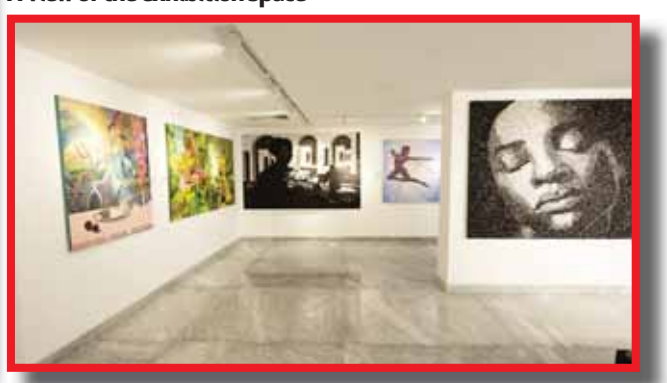
22.5.2022



Art collector Femi Akinsanya admires a painting by Chike Obeagu



A view of the exhibition space



Another section of the exhibition space

FOR A CORONATION TREAT, HOW ABOUT A GLIMPSE OF THESE TIMES?

With a recent glitzy launch at a swanky venue, the Coronation Gallery seems all set to fulfil its objective of "democratising" the art scene. But regaling a segment of the Lagos art community with an exhibition of artworks from the collection of banking mogul Aigboje Aig-Imokhuede is only a right step towards its desired, indeed very distant, destination. **Okechukwu Uwaezuoke** reports

Shouldn't "zeitgeist" have been this exhibition's curatorial anchor point? At least it would have served the gaggle of chic and dapper visitors, who were shepherded into the salubrious lobby of the Coronation Plaza's main building in Lagos's upmarket Victoria Island on Friday, May 13, as an infallible guide. Otherwise, what else would the babel of visual expressions in diverse media by mainly Nigerian artists and a handful of others from South Africa, Ghana, Cameroon and Uganda have in common? Indeed, "zeitgeist", a term that translates as "spirit of the age" and is often traced back to 18th and 19th-century German philosophy, reworks itself with ease in these works, the majority of which were paintings.

Perhaps, if used in another setting or circumstance, the word would have been superfluous, if not downright obtrusive. But in this case, besides the fact that they were being granted privileged access to selected works in the banking mogul Aigboje Aig-Imokhuede's private collection, it leaves the guests with an additional takeaway. And that is the realisation that there is an increasing blurring of cultural boundaries, perhaps differences, among a younger generation of African artists, who seem to draw their inspiration from a common creative power-centre.

A few needful words about Aig-Imokhuede: Beyond his exploits as the former CEO of Access Bank, which were preceded by a glittering career that propelled him to the pinnacle of corporate eminence, he had been raised in an art-friendly environment—both parents being renowned figures in the local art scene. As the narrative goes, he began collecting art at the age of five, when he was barely out of his toddling years, and has since sustained this over half a century of a passion, which has been as eclectic as it has been reflective of his ideals.

Under his watch, the Access Bank Group had wormed its way into the art public's consciousness as major sponsors and keen supporters of visual artistic endeavours, which has made its support of West Africa's premier art fair, Art X Lagos, legendary. Is it any wonder that, now that he is at the top of the corporate ladder of Coronation Capital, he is expected to replicate this same largesse?

Surely, it should have been clear by now that the exhibition was curated by the Coronation Gallery, which forms part of this corporate behemoth. So, it all added up that the Friday business soirée doubled as the formal launch of the gallery. Speaking about this gallery, Aig-Imokhuede disclosed that it would have a space wherever a Coronation office building exists and that the works in the collections of other collectors would have their limelight moments in these spaces.

It is, therefore, not hard to see how he intends to "democratise" art appreciation and collection. Yet, as an ice-breaking gesture, that penultimate Friday's evening vernissage could at best be considered a right step towards the right direction to a very distant destination. This is because the general public's deep-rooted reticence towards art appreciation would need more than just such tokenist, albeit well-meant, gestures to dispel it so quickly.

Back to the works, which a statement from the gallery said "were carefully excerpted from the generously loaned private collection of Mr Aigboje Aig-Imokhuede." They attested eloquently to a vibrant contemporary art scene, blessed with an ever-growing talent pool. That the collector, who is known to be well-acquainted with the works of such art luminaries as his childhood years' icon Ben Enwonwu, Aina Onabolu, Yusuf Grillo, Obiora Udechukwu, Uche Okeke, and El Anatsui, among others, seems enamoured of the works of these younger artists, offers a glimmer of hope for the future of the local art scene.

Not surprisingly, Peju Alatise's enthralling 70 x 92-inch mixed-media (metal, stone casts, and acrylic paint) offering, titled "Sticks", held court in a corner of the spacious foyer. But then, that was only long enough for the aficionados to notice other head-turners in the exhibition space.

Among these, the Ugandan-born Henry Mzili Mujunga's two 2021 oil on canvas paintings, "Life through Plants" and "Children through Plants", deserve to be spotlighted. Could it have been a coincidence – or due to a deliberate curatorial decision – that it was placed next to Ndidi Emefiele's 2020 48 x 40-inch acrylic on canvas painting titled "Celestial Diners" III?

Still, beside these Ugandan artist's paintings, on the adjoining wall on the right-hand side, South Africa's Manyaku Mashilo's 2021 acrylic on canvas monochrome painting, titled "The Bride and the House of Unfinished Dreams," asserted itself. Then followed Olawunmi Banjo's 2020 48 x 40-inch oil on canvas diptych paintings, "Moments III" and "Moments II", depicting human figures in acrobatic poses who seem to be unravelling from the electrical wires with which they were put together.

Perhaps not a few among the aficionados would, for a range of possible different reasons, affirm that Bunmi Agusto's triptych, titled "Longer Throat," was among the most enthralling works in the collection. That is, by the way, the work that features three identical stylised human figures, with exaggerated long necks, looking upwards and embedded against the backdrop of red-and-black striped traditional Yoruba aso-oke textile patterns.

Further away and adorning an adjacent wall, Oluwole Omofemi's blue-themed polyptych portrait of the murdered African American George Floyd, whose death in 2020 sparked off waves of anti-racism protests across the globe, gave curious viewers good reasons to linger long enough before it. Probably, it was because there were hidden words in Floyd's slightly-unzipped mouths in the nine portraits.

Omofemi's other work, a 2020 oil on canvas painting titled "Inspiration", deserves an equally long viewing time, albeit for curiosity's sake. In the painting, a maiden with cornrowed hair and clad in a thin-strapped floral dress backs the viewer and is huddled together with four topless young men before a stag-headed figure.

In a special class of its own, Babajide Olatunji's 2021, 60 x 82-inch charcoal and pastel on paper painting, titled "Tribal Marks Series III," was well positioned in the hall to be fittingly acknowledged by the gushing aficionados. The work's lifelike details and the artist's deft manipulation of the mediums should be good enough reasons for that.

Similarly, so much of Chike Obeagu's 2021 mixed media (folded paper on canvas) proclaims his industry and creative depth. These qualities should earn it a place among the most engaging pieces in the hall.

Meanwhile, it is with an expectant longing that the art public awaits the promised Coronation Gallery's follow-up exhibitions, which are hopefully to be held on yet-to-be-announced dates before the end of the year.

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ARTS & REVIEW\\POTPOURRI

A Dak'Art Opportunity for LIMCAF's Lucky 18

Yinka Olatunbosun

They are 18 artists, culled from zones across Nigeria. They jetted out of Lagos on Wednesday, May 18 for the Senegalese capital, Dakar, for the 14th edition of the Dakar Art Biennale, tagged Dak'Art. The biennial art meet, arguably Africa's most famous contemporary art platform, opened in Dakar on Thursday, May 19.
As for LIMCAF, it is a pan-Nigeria youth empowerment art competition now in its 15th year, which is currently the biggest and longest running contemporary art event in Nigeria and draws in an average of 500 entries from young artists every year.
The 18 young artists now in Senegal – called the LIMCAF 18 – have emerged as the top six winners from the 2018, 2019 and 2021 editions of the LIMCAF art competitions and have the renowned Ghanaian-born, Nigeria-based artist El Anatsui to thank for this all-expenses-paid trip.
Recall that the former University of Nigeria, Nsukka art lecturer first sponsored LIMCAF's 2017 top four winners to Dak'Art's 2018 edition and later extended the largesse to the top six winners of the 2018 and 2019 editions in anticipation of the next Dak'Art, which was to be held in 2020.



Professor Anatsui with LIMCAF's 2017 top four winners in Dakar, Senegal in 2018

VISUAL ARTS

Incidentally, both LIMCAF, which is an annual festival, and Dak'Art, a biennial event, could not be held in 2020 on account of the coronavirus pandemic. Hence, the inclusion of the 2021 winners to swell the number to 18.

The LIMCAF 18 are currently participating in a group exhibition with a coterie of older artists from the Pan African Circle of Artists (PACA), which is one of the biennale's many "off" exhibitions holding in the Senegalese capital.
Earlier on Tuesday, May 17, the artists were hosted to a special private dinner given by the Chairman of LIMCAF, Elder K. U. Kalu, at his Independence Layout, Enugu residence, together with board members and members of the Organising Committee.
Perhaps the most memorable highlight of the evening was the segment when the young artists gushed with gratitude as they told the stories of their journey to LIMCAF and the prizes they eventually won.
In his brief farewell speech, Elder Kalu implored the young men and women to show their gratitude more by exemplary conduct, open-minded learning, and full participation while in Senegal as ambassadors of both LIMCAF and Nigeria, and he described them as proud beneficiaries of a policy of reward for merit regardless of origin or gender.
Elder Kalu noted that it was a thing of joy and pride for all who have assiduously invested their time and energy to keep LIMCAF going over the past 15 years, to be associated with the heights they have so far attained, and hoped that LIMCAF and its sponsors would continue to invest in the career and economic empowerment of young people from all over the country for many more years to come.
Meanwhile, a statement signed by the LIMCAF's art director, Dr. Ayo Adewunmi, who incidentally accompanied the prize winners, disclosed that three female artists were among the 18 young artists.

Shuta Bug, Others Ignite Desperados Collectives Playground

Yinka Olatunbosun

Call it a shut-down Saturday. In Lagos, party buffs witnessed an evening showcasing the Lagos edition of the global campaign called "Desperados Collective.' The exclusive event organised by the flavoured beer brand Desperados was held at the magnificent Jewel Aedia, Eti-Osa, Lekki. It was indeed a cocktail of varied creative energy; it was indeed a collective's playground: an amalgam of artists and disc-jockeys. The young art connoisseurs enjoyed the visual treat of live painting that accompanied the night for the Nigerian multidisciplinary artist and the chosen one, Shuta Bug.
Shuta Bug, born Mayowa Alabi, first came to public attention in 2017 when he won the European Union / United Nations Women's Gender Equality 'Picture It' Comic and Cartoon Competition. He has since had two solo



Brand Manager, Desperados, Abayowa Ikpobe, Multidisciplinary artist Shuta Bug, OAP, Oluwakemi Owatemi, Senior Brand Manager Flavoured Beers, Nigerian Breweries PLC, Kolawole Akintimehin at the DSP Collectives event held in Lagos

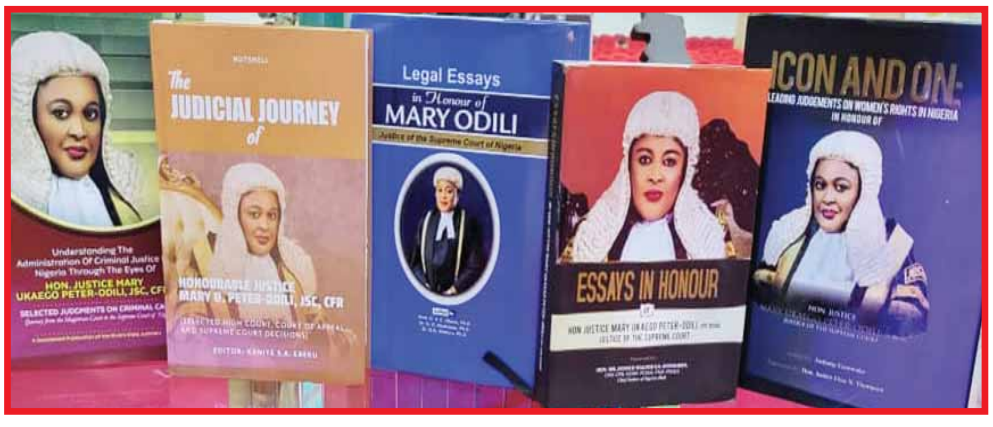
VISUAL ARTS

exhibitions in 2017 and 2019 respectively. Fast forward to 2022. The international platform called the Desperados Collectives was launched to spotlight young, emerging creatives in France, Germany, Spain, Ivory Coast, and Nigeria. Shuta Bug, who also works as an artist at the British Broadcasting Corporation, was selected from Nigeria for the Desperados Collectives Campaign, where he was commissioned to create a new design for the Desperados bottle that resonates with the brand's affinity for playful experimentation.
The event turned out to be a night for artists who dared to be different. From the mystery DJs in masks to the collection of artworks in the adjoining exhibition hall, it was quite insightful to view a total art experience pulsated by heavy beats and grills.
Anchored by Kemi Smallz and Ilowithdflo, the show also featured live paintings that ran simultaneously with the hot mixes from the DJs of the night, including the masked duo, Maze x Mxtreme, and the female duo, Wanni and Handi.
Speaking at the Collectives Playground in Lagos, Shuga Bug described the experience as exciting. "I'm ecstatic. This is the first time this has happened to me. Most artists like their works to speak for themselves, but this is really huge for me and I'm grateful for the opportunity to be here. I was given artistic freedom to do whatever I wanted around the bottle. I am going to collaborate with an artist from Ivory Coast."
The brand manager, Desperados, Abayowa Ikpobe, also revealed how the campaign empowers the growing community of young experimental artists.
"We're excited to partner with Shuta Bug and other young artists to fire up the spirit of playful experimentation at the Desperados Collectives Playground. We have given every artist the freedom to be creative, daring, and expressive without control or interference in this multicultural campaign by Desperados, for Desperados Collectives, " he said.

Justice Odili's Footprints and Ink Prints in Judiciary

A. I. Iyayi-Lamikanra

Five books on the retired, Justice Mary U. Peter Odili, who sat on the High Court bench in Rivers State, the Court of Appeal, and the Supreme Court of Nigeria until her retirement on May 12 after she attained the constitutionally-prescribed retirement age of 70 years, have elicited so much interest among legal practitioners.
The first book, Legal Essays in Honour of Mary Odili, Justice of the Supreme Court of Nigeria, is a collection of legal essays in honour of Justice Mary Ukaego Peter Odili, Nigeria's Amazon of Justice. The 48-chapter book is meticulously arranged into 18 thematic parts numbered as Part A to Part R. Consequently, each part has a number of chapters dealing with various aspects of a particular theme.
The thematic parts reflect the various areas in which Justice Odili has made her mark in Nigerian jurisprudence. Of particular note is Part M, entitled "Judges, Courts, and the Law". The essays in this part focus on the role of judges in law-making and the limits of judge-made laws in Nigeria.
Part R, entitled: "Women, Children and the Law", is another area in which Justice Mary Peter Odili has made special contributions in Nigerian jurisprudence. As Chairperson of the Juvenile Court and inaugural Chairperson of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) in Rivers State, Justice Mary Peter Odili played an active role in the development and protection of the rights of women and children in Nigeria.
It is an outstanding contribution to Nigerian jurisprudence, which every law library must have. The title of the book is apt, and it will imprint the name of Justice Mary Peter Odili as the Amazon of Justice in Nigeria.
The same can be said about the second book, titled, The Judicial Journey of Honourable Justice Mary U.



BOOK REVIEW

Peter-Odili, which tells the story of the jurist's contribution to the understanding of legal principles and the development of legal science in Nigeria.
A complete, albeit nutshell, picture of the journey necessitates the structuring of the book. It is structured into four parts, selected from a large volume of decisions written and delivered by my noble Lord across the different levels of court she sat.
Altogether, the various decisions cover 558 pages. However, as earlier stated, these decisions represent merely a bird's eye view of the spectacular volume of decisions written and delivered by His Lordship in the various superior courts where she sat in 44 years of service in the judicial service of Nigeria.
As for the third book, Essays in Honour of Hon. Justice Mary Peter-Odili, it is a compilation of essays in honour of Justice Peter-Odili, in celebration of a long, distinguished and meritorious career as a jurist who has sat on the bench at all hierarchical levels of the judiciary in Nigeria. The book has been conceived to address topical gender and legal issues, a number of which she would have dealt with in her career. Contributors come from the bench and bar, academia, and gender development law experts in Nigeria and beyond, and it's worth noting that some of the contributors are accomplished men. This provides the basis for the notion that tender activism for the protection and enforcement of the rights of women is not for women alone.
The essays deal with human rights at all facets and stages of a woman's life, contemplating and analysing rights protection under customary law, Islamic law, rights arising in the workplace, in marriages, concerns about domestic violence, women in crisis situations, reproductive rights, evolving rights of women and children, etc., and, without limiting the scope of enquiry to our local jurisdiction, even taking international perspective into consideration.
The fourth book, Understanding the Administration of Criminal Justice in Nigeria Through the Eyes of Hon. Justice Mary Ukaego Peter-Odili, is a selected judgement on criminal cases (Journey from the Magistrates' Court to the Supreme Court of Nigeria), is a specialised publication of the Rivers State Judiciary. This 820-page and 14-chapter book is a tribute by the Rivers State Judiciary to the Honourable Justice Peter-Odili. The choice of the title of the book and its concentration on criminal matters is intended to convey to the public the avowed area of interest and passion where My Lord has made so many contributions to the growth of the law and in shaping the judicial process.
However, Justice Peter-Odili did not only give judgements on criminal matters; she also handled civil matters and gave laudable judgments in that area. This book, though a specialised publication, would have been most useful if My Lord's Civil Judgments were also captured in this book, especially in her sojourn at the Magistrate's Court of Rivers State. I hope the Rivers State Judiciary will do a further edition that will cover this area.
Then, there is the fifth book, "Icon and On," which can be described as both poetic and prophetic. Part of the prophecy was fulfilled when she was elevated to the Supreme Court of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Although the book's publication is only being realised when she is taking her bow from the Supreme Court and an illustrious career on the bench spanning over five decades, there is still much that she can offer to the world.
Her elevation to the Supreme Court also engendered a review of the book so that the volume consists of only judgments of the apex court. This is not because the finest and boldest of decisions on the rights of women emanated from the Supreme Court, but because the decisions of the apex court are final and stand a minimum risk of being overturned.
The books are highly recommended to both law students, legal practitioners, and judges of both the lower bench and the higher bench as they will serve as good reference materials for all and sundry. It is indeed rare to see works of this nature that capture judgments from the lower bench.

• Justice Iyayi-Lamikanra is a retired Chief Judge of Rivers State.

CICERO

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IN THE ARENA

Blasphemy and the Constitution

Deborah Yakubu, a 200-level student of the Shehu Shagari College of Education in Sokoto, was stoned to death and set ablaze penultimate week over alleged blasphemy. The way her assailants summarily terminated her life in a very cruel manner raised valid questions on the acceptability of the 1999 Constitution as Nigeria's supreme legal instrument, **Gboyega Akinsanmi** writes

Sokoto, a northern state with the worst poverty and literacy indices nationwide, was on fire penultimate week. A mob of religious extremists flooded the streets of its sprawling capital, attacking Christian residents and demanding immediate release of two suspects earlier arrested by the police in connection with the murder of Miss Deborah Yakubu, a 200-level student of the Shehu Shagari College of Education in Sokoto.

The extremists laid siege to the palace of Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Mohammed Sa'ad Abubabkar III. The Sultan became a target because he condemned the mob action that abruptly terminated Deborah's life. Also Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Diocese, Dr. Mathew Kukah could have been a victim if not for the timely intervention of the police. The state governor, Alhaji Aminu Tambuwal saved the day by declaring a curfew after violent protests broke out across the capital. Eventually, public order was restored. But what triggered this violence? It is the same old reason. Deborah was accused of blasphemy against Prophet Muhammad (SAW) on a WhatsApp platform. As a result, Muslim students mobilised within and outside the college. As shown in a viral video, they went for their target and bestially decided her fate without recourse to known laws. After they stoned Deborah to death in the public, the extremists set her body ablaze, a despicable action that has no place in law.

In Nigeria, Deborah is not the first victim of religious extremism. Before her case, some citizens, especially of Christian faith, had suffered the same fate at different times in the country's history. Suspects have also faced prosecution for alleged blasphemy in the North.

In June 2015, a Kano Islamic Court sentenced eight men and one woman to death for saying Sheikh Ibrahim Naisse, founder of the Tijaniyyah order, was greater than Prophet Muhammad.

In August 2020, Yahaya Sharif-Aminu had his own bite when a Kano Islamic Court found him guilty of Section 382 of the Sharia Penal Code. On this ground, he was sentenced to death.

Just last April, President, Nigerian Humanist Association, Mubarak Bala bagged a 24-year imprisonment for blasphemy.

Across the North, these cases are common. But is blasphemy an offence in Nigeria? It is an offence under the Criminal Code Act, 2004, which classifies it as public insult.

In Nigeria, the Act is the highest codified legislation, which provides grounds, principles and rules for criminal investigation, trial and awards of punitive measures against any suspects found wanting under it.

In Section 204, the code does not recommends death penalty against any convict. Rather, according to the section, a convict shall be liable to imprisonment for two years only.

Under the 1999 Constitution, the decisions of the Islamic courts that sentenced convicts to death were alien. Under Section 10, the constitution stipulates that the Government of the Federation or of a State "shall not adopt any religion as State Religion."



Deborah

Section (1)(1) states that this Constitution "is supreme and its provisions shall have binding force on the authorities and persons throughout the Federal Republic of Nigeria." The Constitution is superior to any legislation enacted whether by the federal legislature or by the state legislature.

Under section (1)(2), the constitution stipulates: "If any other law is inconsistent with the provisions of this Constitution, this Constitution shall prevail, and that other law shall, to the extent of the inconsistency, be void."

Finally, punishing suspects arbitrarily for blasphemy, whether by mob action violates Section 38 of the 1999 Constitution. This section stipulates that every person shall be entitled "to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance."

Altogether, these provisions are obviously on trial. With the rising cases of blasphemy-related killings, Nigeria is now a federation where laws that brazenly contravene the 1999 Constitution are deployed to determine the fate of innocent citizens. Also, political elites are unwilling to confront the religious extremists for fear of losing their political aspirations.

Given the bestial manner Deborah was murdered, Nigerians are calling for justice. Such demands for justice can only be seen to have been served by fair prosecution of the suspects. Also, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has petitioned the United Kingdom and United States, citing diverse religious killings in Nigeria and their implications for national unity.

In Deborah's case, whether justice will eventually be served is evidently in doubt, at least for two reasons. First, whether by commission or by default, no suspect of religious killing has been successfully prosecuted in the history of Nigeria.

Second, a number of northern leaders never saw any wrongdoing in the way the religious extremists clubbed their targets to death on the pretext of fighting for Prophet Muhammad. Unlike previous cases, however, some progress has been recorded in the search for justice for Deborah. Already, the state has started prosecuting two suspects, Bilyaminu Aliyu and Aminu Hukunci arrested in connection with her murder.

Also, the police have declared four other suspects wanted, which suggests that Deborah may not eventually die in vain. But as prosecution kicked off, a team of 34 lawyers appeared in defence of the two suspects. This team is led by a Professor of Law, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Prof. Mansur Ibrahim. Again, this high-profile legal representation attests to the conspiracy of the northern elite, who often encourages the recurrence of religious killings. But the world is waiting for the outcome of the criminal justice dispensation, the lack of which a senior lawyer, Mr. Femi Falana (SAN) argued, had triggered the recurrence of religious killings in the North.

Even if justice is served in Deborah's case at last, that may not be an end to religious killings in the North due to inherent socio-economic issues that plague nearly all northern states.

In the north, injustice is pervasive. First, those who are killing in the name of religion are facing heinous social and economic injustice, which according to diverse reports, has reduced them to captives of bestiality. Northerners are grappling with endemic economic injustice, which impoverished not just their bodies, but also their minds. Nigeria Poverty Assessment 2022, a report by the World Bank, also lends credence to the depth of economic injustice, which the majority of northerners are battling with by the day.

In Sokoto, as spelt out in its report, the bank put its poverty headcount at about 87.73 per cent; Taraba 87.72 per cent; Jigawa 87.02 per cent; Adamawa 75.41 per cent; Zamfara 73.98 per cent; Yobe 72.34 per cent; Niger 66.11 per cent; Gombe 62.31 per cent and Bauchi 61.53 per cent.

As these indicators show, ensuring justice judicially alone will not end religious extremism in the North. Apparently, it will entail conscious pro-poor policies tailored towards addressing the economic and social injustice, which most analysts agree, often spurs most northern youths to kill in the name of religion rather than embrace the justice system under the 1999 Constitution.

POLITICAL NOTES

Nigeria's Presidency Beyond Political Requital



Tinubu

In one of his books, the late Prof. Chinua Achebe wrote about an adage that says that when one fetches firewood infested with termites, he should expect many lizards as his guests. This is case with the National Leader of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Senator Bola Tinubu.

Since he declared interest to contest the 2023 presidential election, all manner of insults have been thrown at him either directly or indirectly. Political analysts argued that Tinubu should have remained a kingmaker.

Tinubu, as Lagos governor, showed his mettle; worked out a roadmap for the state; had a diverse cabinet; watered many seeds which have burgeoned; nursed many fledging political careers to maturity; created opportunities for many who were without a compass; and invested his life and resources in building people; and midwifed the formation of the APC.

However, many also argue that he has benefitted immensely in the course of executing all these laudable achievements.

This school of thought has insisted that the presidency of Nigeria should not be his compensation.

They feel that if the supporters of Tinubu want to pay "reparations" to him, it should be done outside the delicate office of the president. This is perhaps why Ekiti State Governor, Dr. Kayode Fayemi who has equally declared for the same office Tinubu is seeking, while responding to insinuations that the former Lagos State has been betrayed by the same people he made, said the presidency is not "an inheritance or a traditional title", but an office meant to seek improvement in the lives of Nigerians.

According to him, "We have worked together on a number of issues; so, this is not a personal contest, this is about Nigeria and the future of our children and it is about competing vision of what that future holds for Nigerians."

Fayemi, obviously belongs to the analysts that believe that the presidency is to much of a critical office that should be occupied on the basis of political requital.

BRIEFINGNOTES

Will APC Betray the Trust of Southerners on Power Rotation?

The thickening plot by the All Progressives Congress to zone the 2023 presidency to the North-east against the subsisting gentleman's agreement by its leaders to rotate power to the South after President Muhammadu Buhari's eight-year tenure, is a betrayal of trust that will further polarise the country, **Ejiofor Alike** reports

Though power rotation between the North and South is not enshrined in its Constitution, the All Progressives Congress (APC) had demonstrated that it intended to zone the 2023 presidency to the South after President Muhammadu Buhari's eight-year tenure. Many chieftains of the party, including a former Governor of Ogun State, Mr. Olusegun Osoba had confirmed that there was indeed, a gentleman's agreement by the party leaders on zoning. Osoba disclosed this in January 2021 when he featured on the Good Morning Show, a programme on ARISE TV, the broadcast arm of THISDAY.

He said as the chairman of the constitution drafting committee during the formation of APC, the party leaders were careful not to use the word "zoning" so as not to be in conflict with the constitution.

Osoba, however, confirmed that they agreed that the North should produce the president, while the chairmanship position of the APC should be produced by the South

He stated: "Part of the understanding in the case of rotation is a conventional understanding that the presidency will move between the North and the South. That was the reason why we now allowed the chairman (of the party), I don't want to use the world zoning, because we definitely did not put zoning, we know it may go in conflict with the Nigerian constitution which says anyone who is a Nigerian, who has read up to school certificate can contest and at the age of 35, I think, can contest for the presidency of the country.

"But there was a clear gentlemanly understanding that the northern part of the country will produce the president when we did the merger in 2013, and the chairman of the party will then come from the South," Osoba reportedly added.

To corroborate Osoba's position, a member of the National Assembly representing Borno South and former Senate Leader, Senator Ali Ndume, had last week declared that it would be unfair, and a betrayal of trust and gentleman's agreement if the APC zoned the Presidency to the North. Ndume, who is the Chairman, Senate Committee on Army, while reacting to APC's alleged jettisoning of zoning, said, "that will be unfair, injustice and almost a betrayal of trust and a gentleman's man agreement.

"We had an agreement, though not written in 2015 that the North should produce the President. That was why all the presidential aspirants were from the North: Atiku, Nda Isaiah, Rabiu Kwankwaso, Muhammadu Buhari, all contested.

"Only Rochas Okorocha just participated because he already had the governorship ticket in his pocket. He just participated for the sake of it because Buhari even won in Imo State. That was why no aspirants contested from South-west, South-south and South-east. I believe in justice; I am not against anybody from the North contesting, it is their constitutional right," Ndume reportedly explained.



Buhari

The ruling party had in February this year demonstrated its commitment to implement power rotation when it agreed on a zoning formula that swapped offices held between North and South. The agreement was reached when President Buhari held a meeting with 19 governors of the APC at the Presidential Villa in Abuja.

By the arrangement, all offices that were occupied by northerners in the last eight years went to the South and vice versa.

Kaduna State Governor, Mallam Nasir el-Rufai, who addressed journalists after the meeting, reportedly stated that agreement had been reached on zoning formula. He said: "We have agreed a zoning formula for all the six geo-political zones.

"Essentially, northern zone will have the positions the south had in the last eight years and vice versa. It is a very simple, equitable and fair formula," the governor said.

It was this zoning arrangement that produced Senator Abdullahi Adamu as the National Chairman of the party. The emergence of the former Nasarawa State governor as the chairman of the ruling party raised the hopes that the party's presidential candidate would come from the South. But the Adamu's leadership appears to be working towards zoning the party's presidential ticket to the North-east.

Currently, there are strong speculations that the Senate President, Dr. Ahmad Lawan would likely emerge as APC's presidential candidate in the 2023 elections. Adamu-led National Working Committee (NWC) of the party has also decided to allow ad-hoc delegates to elect presidential candidate at its forthcoming convention.

This, many believe, will boost the chances of a northern aspirant emerging as the presidential standard bearer. Sokoto State Governor, Aminu Tambuwal had hinted that the ruling party may have settled for Lawan as its presidential candidate.

The National Assembly's latest amendment to the Electoral Act, 2022, to allow statutory delegates – all those elected – to participate and vote in the conventions, congresses or meetings of political parties, was said to have been designed to boost the chances of the Senate President. The current Electoral Act 2022 (as amended) has no role for statutory delegates at the convention. The sudden entry of Lawan into the presidential race at the last-minute gave strong indications that the ruling party was plotting to jettison zoning. To actualise this plot, APC has been shifting its presidential primary to prepare grounds to either impose a consensus candidate or possibly manipulate the process in favour of the North-east.

In a strange development, one of the northern governors, who had publicly expressed support for power shift to the South, Governor Abdullahi Ganduje had recently hinted that the party delegates in the state had not taken a final position on their choice of candidate. After the state delegates had endorsed a frontline presidential aspirant of the party, Senator Bola Tinubu, the Kano State governor, in an apparent volte face, told another presidential aspirant, Mr. Rotimi Amaechi that Kano as a "swing state, will continue to swing."

Ganduje added that Amaechi would know where the state eventually swung to at the right time. His failure to reaffirm their support for Tinubu during Amaechi's visit has sent strong signals that their pledged support for Tinubu, and by implication, a southern presidency under APC is not yet a done deal.

Unlike Ganduje, the Governor of Lagos State, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu had told Amaechi in clear terms that Tinubu remained their rallying point in Lagos State. The unreliable position of Kaduna State delegates has also become a cause for concern. Governor el-Rufai rallied the delegates to endorse Amaechi after they had promised Tinubu their votes.

Former Director General of Tinubu's Campaign Organisation, Hon. Abdulmumin Jibrin, who recently abandoned the APC and the Tinubu project to pursue his personal ambition in the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) is also believed to have seen the handwriting on the wall that the ruling party has no plan to concede power to a southerner.

APC chairman, Adamu had on Wednesday reaffirmed that the party had not zone its presidential ticket. This dangerous gamble will amount to a betrayal of the trust of southerners. This will further divide a country that has already been divided by the APC-led administration.

NOTES FOR FILE

If Only Lagos Govt Had Listened



Sanwo-Olu

Three weeks ago, this column drew the attention of the Lagos State Government to the menace of commercial motorcyclists, better known as Okada riders in the state and the need to urgently tame them. Unfortunately, the advice was not heeded. One of the consequences was the death of a young man, David Imoh, in the Lekki area a few days ago.

It was learnt that the victim, who was a sound engineer, was lynched and burnt to death after a misunderstanding ensued over the N100 balance with one of the commercial motorcyclists.

So bold have the Okada operators become that in September 2021, they also hacked to death a Chief Superintendent of Police (CSP), Kazeem Abonde, in Ajao Estate, Isolo.

Captioned: "Lagos Playing Politics with Okada Riders', this column warned that the lawlessness and impunity of the riders in the state had gone overboard and called on the government to strongly enforce the law against them.

Many newspapers, through features, opinions and editorials, had also severally called the attention of the state government to menace of the commercial motorcyclists to no avail.

But following the killing of Imoh, Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, last Wednesday banned the operations of commercial motorcyclists in six local government areas.

The six local governments listed by the governor are Ikeja, Surulere, Eti-Osa, Lagos Mainland, Lagos Island, and Apapa.

While many residents of the state believed that the directive of the governor was a clear case of "it's too late to act when the head is off", others believed that with the kind of government and law enforcement agencies in the country, the governor's directive was an empty pronouncement.

The latest ban was not the first time the state government would ban or restrict Okada riders. From Governor Babatunde Fashola, to Akinwunmi Ambode and the incumbent Sanwo-Olu's administration, similar directives were issued many times but monitoring and implementations have always been a challenge.

It is hoped that the governor will take the matter seriously this time and personally monitor the situation himself before it becomes a mere opportunity for the police and task force to enrich their pockets.

Hot Race for PDP's Presidential Ticket

Chuks Okocha examines the strengths and weaknesses of the presidential aspirants jostling to secure the ticket of the Peoples Democratic Party at the party's presidential convention fixed for May 28 and 29



Seventeen presidential aspirants paid the N40 million Expression of Interest (EoI) and nomination forms of the main opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Fifteen were cleared, while two were disqualified.

Atiku Abubakar

He was a former vice president from 1999 to 2007 and later defected to other parties, but in 2019 emerged as the PDP's presidential candidate. He was a former top shot in the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS). His political career dates back to the two-party system of the military era. Atiku is a scion of the Yar'Adua political dynasty, which founded the Peoples Democratic Movement (PDM), which fused into the PDP in 1998. Atiku had left PDP to contest the 2007 presidential election under the AC. He later returned to the PDP only to join the APC later to contest in its presidential primary in 2015. He lost to President Muhammadu Buhari. In 2017, he reunited with PDP and became the party's presidential candidate in the 2019 election. He lost to President Buhari.

He has structures and contacts all over the country. He also has the financial capacity to prosecute presidential campaign without seeking sponsorship. But he is accused of abandoning any party he joins when he is needed most. He was one of the founding fathers of PDP but he has the party twice and attempted to destroy it. The popular clamour for power shift to the South does not favour his ambition. Atiku is also a serial presidential aspirant since 1992 and age is not on his side.

Peter Obi

He is a former governor of Anambra State for eight years. He was a running mate to Atiku in the 2019 general election on the ticket of PDP. He was governor between March 17, 2006 and November 2, 2006, when he was removed. He regained his mandate and served as governor from February 9, 2007 to May 29, 2007 following a judgment of the court restoring his mandate to complete his term, in spite of a fresh election conducted on April 29, 2007. Obi won the February 6, 2010 governorship election to secure a second term in office. The popular clamour for power shift to the South-east favours his presidential aspiration.

Obi is a popular candidate with ideas on how to fix the economy. His excellent record as a former governor of Anambra State also speaks for itself. But his prudent management of public funds is believed to be a sign of stinginess. He is also not a known moneybag who can successfully fund presidential campaign.

Mohammed Hayatu-deen

He is an investment banker and economist of note. He is from Borno State. Though the North-east where he hails from has produced the President, many have strongly argued that the late Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa wielded the executive power while Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was a mere ceremonial president. He is a former Managing Director of FSB Bank. He built his reputation as the chief executive of the New Nigeria Development Company. He served three past presidents of Nigeria as adviser on economic issues. He has the financial strength to actualize his ambition but he has no structures and the agitation for the North to concede the presidency to the South works against his ambition.

Aminu Tambuwal

Tambuwal is a lawyer and a former Speaker of the House of Representatives. He later became governor of Sokoto State in 2015 and was re-elected in 2019. He served as Personal Assistant on Legislative Affairs to Senator Abdullahi Wali, the then Senate Leader before he decided to contest for a seat in the House in 2003. He was elected to represent the Kebbe/Tambuwal Federal Constituency on the platform of the then All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP). He later moved to the defunct Democratic Peoples Party (DPP) in the build-up to the 2007 general election together with a former governor of Sokoto State, Attahiru Bafarawa. He was also among PDP leaders that once defected to the APC but later returned to the main opposition PDP. He is young and vibrant with ideas. But he is from the North-west, where the incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari hails from. North-west is also the home of the late President Umaru Yar'Adua. He also championed power zoning to the North in 2015 and defected from the PDP only to return to the party and reject zoning power to the South after the North had ruled for eight years under Buhari. He championed the arrangement for a northern consensus candidate but when it did not favour him, he kicked against the process.

Udom Emmanuel

Before he became governor, Emmanuel, in July 2013, was the Secretary to the Akwa Ibom State Government. In 2014, he defeated 22 other aspirants to emerge the candidate of the PDP and went ahead to win the governorship poll in April 2015. He got re-elected in 2019. He has the financial capacity but lacks structures and contacts nationwide. He is also from South-south where former President Jonathan hails from.

Nyesom Wike

He is the sixth civilian governor of Rivers State. His political career include two-term chairmanship of Obio-Akpor Local Government Area (1999 to 2007); he was Chief of Staff to Rotimi Amaechi as governor of Rivers State; Minister of State for Education from July 14, 2011 and later, Acting Minister of Education. He resigned before finishing his term to campaign for governorship of Rivers State. He was elected governor in 2015 and re-elected 2019 on the platform of PDP. He has a very large war chest to execute presidential campaign. But he is accused of being brash and dictatorial. Wike is also accused of disrespecting everyone around him, including his traditional rulers. He is also accused of meddling in the internal affairs of PDP in other states and creating crises in those states. Wike is also accused of sponsoring the crisis that forced Governor Ben Ayade of Cross River State to leave the party. Wike is equally accused of lacking respect for his party leadership and his colleague-governors. Governors Ayade, Godwin Obaseki of Edo State and Dave Umahi are some of his colleagues that he is accused of insulting publicly. He had once described the leaders of PDP as tax collectors. Another odd against him is that he is from the South-south, the region of former President Goodluck Jonathan

Anyim Pius Anyim

Anyim was the President of the Senate and later Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) in the Jonathan's administration. He was elected into the Senate on the platform of the PDP in 1999 at the age of 37 and became the Senate President at the age of 39. He represented the Ebonyi South senatorial district.

He has the financial strength and is from the South-east, which has not produced president. He lacks national structures and some governors are mobilising against him.

Bala Mohammed

The governor of Bauchi State was the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) from 2010 to 2015. He won the Bauchi South senatorial district election in 2007 on the platform of the defunct ANPP. He later joined the PDP. He was the chairman of the committee that recommended that the PDP should throw open its presidential ticket for the 2023 elections. The recommendation triggered anger across board in the party, with stakeholders insisting that the PDP must adhere to the provision on zoning and power rotation as enshrined in its constitution in the interest of justice, equity and fairness. He has the financial capacity but he is allegedly contesting to be president as well as governor of his state at the same time. He also lacks structures. His statement that Fulani herdsmen carry AK-47 rifles to protect themselves and that the forests do not belong to anyone diminished his popularity in the southern Nigeria. The clamour for power shift to the south does not favour him.

Bukola Saraki

Saraki was president of the Senate between 2015 and 2019. Before then, he had served as a two-term governor of Kwara State (2003-2011). He was elected under PDP in 2011 to represent the Kwara Central senatorial district, and then re-elected in the 2015 general election on the ticket of APC. He became the president of the Senate, despite stiff opposition from the establishment. After his sojourn in the APC, he went back to the PDP, where he sought presidential ticket in the 2019 election. The ticket went to Atiku, and Saraki became the Director General of the Atiku presidential campaign organisation for the election. He has structures, financial capacity and age is on his side. But the agitation for power shift to the South does not favour him. He was also one of those that left PDP because they wanted power to be zoned to the North only to return to the PDP to kick against power rotation to the South after the North has ruled for eight years under Buhari.

Sam Ohuabunwa

He is a pharmacist with a wealth of experience gathered from the corporate world. He believes that, "No single Nigerian deserves to die. What Nigerians need is security," and that "what we must understand is that we are already in a war situation." He is also running on the backshop of his belief that he can translate his success in the boardroom."

He has the ideas and his records speak for him. He lacks the financial strength and structures.

Dele Momodu

The publisher of Ovation International is a celebrated columnist and strong advocate of a paradigm shift in leadership in the country. He vied for the presidency in 2011 on the platform of NCP. He has the ideas but lacks the structures and the financial powers.

Terila Oliver Diana

She is only female aspirant in the race. Oliver Tareila Diana purchased her presidential nomination form in person last Wednesday, making her the 13th aspirant. She is from Imo State. She is seen as a pretender with no structures. She is financially capable but is unknown.

Ayodele Fayose

Fayose is a two-term governor of Ekiti State. He defeated the incumbent Governor Niyi Adebayo in 2003. Fayose could not complete his tenure as a result of an impeachment on October 16, 2006.

During the 2014 Ekiti State gubernatorial election, Fayose was again the PDP nominee and was declared winner by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

He has no structures except in Ekiti State.

Chikwendu Kalu

Kalu was the Speaker of the Abia State House of Assembly. Little is known about him except that he was a former speaker of the Abia State House of Assembly.



Saraki

How 2023 Favours Saraki

With the presidential primary of the Peoples Democratic Party fast approaching, one aspirant to carefully watch out for is former Senate President, Dr. Bukola Saraki, **Vanessa Obioha** writes

With the number of presidential aspirants in the race for the 2023 general election, the two main parties whose presidential candidates may be competing for the big slot in Aso Rock are still the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Party (APC). Though there are upcoming parties like the SDP and the NNPP trending, it is doubtful they will have a national appeal to upstage the main parties to produce the next president.

It is therefore believed that this is the reason why the national focus is on the 38 people seeking the two presidential tickets of the two parties.

Among the 15 aspirants cleared to contest for the PDP presidential ticket at its National Convention scheduled to hold at the Velodrome of the MKO Abiola National Stadium, in Abuja, are former Vice President, Alhaji Abubakar Atiku; former Senate President, Dr. Abubakar Bukola Saraki; Rivers State Governor, Nyesom Wike, former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Anyim Pius Anyim; Bauchi State Governor, Bala Mohammed; Sokoto State Governor, Aminu Tambuwal and former Anambra State Governor, Peter Obi.

Others include Akwa Ibom Governor, Emmanuel Udom; ex-Ekiti State Governor, Ayodele Fayose; boardroom guru, Sam Ohunabunwa; former Managing Director of Nigerian International Bank (NIB), Mohammed Hayatudeen; Ovation Magazine publisher, Dele Momodu; Olivia Tarela who is the only female among them, Charles Okwudili, Chikwendu Kalu and Cosmos Ndukwe.

In the APC, the contestants who submitted their nomination form before the closing date and will feature in the primaries billed for Eagles Square, Abuja, on May 29 are Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, Senate President Ahmed Lawan, former Lagos State Governor, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu; former Ogun State Governor, Senator Ibikunle Amosun; former Minister of Science and Technology, Dr. Ogbonnaya Onu; Ebonyi State Governor, David Umahi; former Minister of State, Education, Chukwuemeka Nwajuba; and Kogi State Governor, Yahaya Bello.

Other APC aspirants are ex-Governor of Akwa Ibom, Senator Godswill Akpabio; popular preacher, Pastor Tunde Bakare; Ekiti State Governor, Kayode Fayemi; former Minister of Transport, Rotimi Amaechi; former Senate President, Ken Nnamani; Jigawa State Governor, Abubakar Badaru; former Zamfara State Governor, Senator Ahmed Sani Yerima; Cross River State Governor, Ben Ayade; former Speaker, Dimeji Bankole, among others.

From the beginning of the race, it has been clear the opposition PDP planned to go to the north in search of a candidate. That is why from the word go, Saraki, Atiku, Tambuwal, and Mohammed were the leading candidates. The race has since last week narrowed to three aspirants: Saraki, Atiku, and Wike.

However, there are indications that the race may have narrowed down to only two people with one of them being the favoured choice of the top leaders of the party, a significant section of the governors, and other super-delegates.

The calculation in the PDP is that using the mathematical principle of elimination and substitution, the race should continue to narrow down until it will get to the convention day. Now, the two aspirants who are having serious consideration as possible flag bearers are Saraki and Wike. It is believed that the elimination process has got to a semi-final stage where one aspirant from each of the two sections of the country, north, and south, is now being considered.

Atiku was eliminated on account of age, agility, and past position on party issues. At age 75, he is said to be too old to face the rigour of the job and provide the presence that the critical job of salvaging the nation requires. Also, it is believed that his health is suspect. The stakeholders also believe that he has had his chance and that his best time was in 2019 when he was handed the ticket on a platter of gold based on the surreptitious intervention of the elders.

His failure to win and his lacklustre attitude to pursuing the litigation challenging the victory of the incumbent has also become a piece of baggage for him. Many party elders and delegates are still unhappy at the way he abandoned the party after the loss of the 2019 election.

"When the party was in crisis in many of the states and even at the national level, he was nowhere to be found. He was aloof, staying in the United Arab Emirates. He failed to provide leadership. We do not think such a man should get our most prized trophy," a source said in Kaduna yesterday.

Saraki was therefore chosen as the aspirant from the north who will be pitted against a southern candidate for the party ticket at the convention. What counted most for the former Senate President is his affinity with the south and the decision of the northern elders and power brokers to compensate the northern minority from the north-central zone. It is believed that at a time when the major issue is a threat to national unity and general instability, a man with his background is who the country needs.

His role in the party's presidential campaign as DG Atiku Campaign Organisation in 2018/2019 and also as chairman of the National Reconciliation and Strategy Committee (NRSC) and his underground role in all the staggered elections that the party featured in, in the last three years are said to have counted for Saraki.

In any case, it was generally agreed that he is capable, competent, and courageous enough to do the job. Some others mentioned that he is the only aspirant that has unfolded his plan that he will implement as soon as he is elected president.

Wike on the other hand is believed to have created too many IOUs that he is now cashing and converting to political capital. He has also shown the capacity to provide funds for the campaigns. It is believed that only his money and the number of people he has provided financial support to in the past are working for him. The Rivers State Governor, many stakeholders reasoned, also has a lot of pieces of baggage which may make him unelectable and acceptable to people from other zones other than his own, if he emerges.

The deal initially in the APC seems to have been concluded that the presidential ticket of the ruling party will go to the south in line with an old, unwritten agreement put together when the party was formed in 2014. This was the reason why until about a week ago, all the aspirants in APC except for Kogi Governor, Bello, were southerners. It is also the reason why all the big wigs in the south in all the three geo-political zones are in the race.

However, the calculation changed when the APC failed in its determination to coerce or compel the opposition PDP to also follow suit. When it became apparent that PDP will not yield to the game of presenting an all-southern candidates election, the APC suddenly changed gear. And guess who was first used to send the clear signal that APC may also join the PDP in presenting a northerner as its candidate? Another Senate President, Dr. Ahmed Lawan.

It is believed that Lawan is the candidate the APC has prepared in case PDP picks a presidential aspirant from the north. He is said to enjoy the support of the National Assembly caucuses, the Presidency, and other stakeholders.

Many believe Lawan is the establishment candidate. He was said to have been propped up after a secret opinion poll sponsored by some top elements in Aso Rock indicates that Saraki will likely win the PDP presidential primaries and go ahead to defeat any candidate from the south.

The apparatchiks who are privy to the results of the opinion polls and the attached analysis then decided to move fast and create an opportunity to stage a return leg of the battle for the Senate Presidency in 2015. It was said that the nation was denied the opportunity of seeing both men square up against each other when Saraki emerged because Lawan and his sponsors out-schemed themselves by being absent from the venue of voting. It was also said that the game is now a draw with Saraki also forced out of the return leg by the forces that ensured he did not get re-elected in his constituency, to forestall his standing against Lawan in the 2019 race for the presidency.

The 2023 presidential election may be another race between the two gladiators, both former Senate Presidents, the incumbent, and his immediate predecessor, to slug it out for a higher post. This time, the electorate will not be just 109 senators. There will be over 80 million registered voters. However, before that return match, both men must scale the hurdle of the presidential primaries next weekend in Abuja.

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Osinbajo



Tinubu



Amaechi



Bello

For APC Aspirants, Convincing Nigerians Remains a Herculean Task

With the perceived poor performance of the present administration led by the All Progressives Congress, the emerging presidential aspirants of the party face a difficult task of convincing Nigerians, **Vanessa Obioha** reports

The body language of most presidential aspirants from the ruling party All Progressives Congress (APC) recently showed their veiled alienation from President Muhammadu Buhari's administration. The reason for this may not be far-fetched. In the past seven years, Nigerians have nothing but diatribes and regrets. The hope of a better life as promised by Buhari during his electioneering year in 2014 has turned into despair as daily reports of insecurity, economic hardship and corruption continue to confront Nigerians.

The Buhari-led administration in the eyes of many is the worst the nation has ever experienced. From the banditry and insurgency that have characterised the polity leading to numerous deaths and homelessness, to the rising inflation, there is a level of fear pervading every part of society.

In both the northern and southern parts of the country, so many lives have been lost in recentimes. Even those abducted by dare-devil bandits who attacked an Abuja-Kaduna bound train over months ago, are still in the captivity of the terrorists.

The disturbing trend is becoming worrisome.

While many leaders who are courageous have repeatedly been criticising the government for failing Nigerians, other have opted to be silent to remain in the good book of the administration.

The Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Diocese, Mathew Kukah, who has been acting as the voice of the people, captured it succinctly in his Easter message recently where he criticised the president for his inability to tackle the myriad of problems. According to him, the president has destroyed every aspect of life in the country except corruption, "which he allows to thrive and grow."

Nigeria, he said, has become one big emergency national hospital with full occupancy and the government seems to be in hibernate mode.

"With everything literally broken down, our hearts are broken. Our family dreams are broken. Homes are broken. Churches, mosques and infrastructure are broken. Our educational system is also broken. Our children's lives and futures are broken. Politics, the economy, and the energy system are also broken. Our security system is broken. Our roads and rails are broken. Only corruption is alive and well."

He continued: "Nigerians can no longer recognise their country, which has been battered by men and women from the dark womb of time. One would be tempted to ask, what is there to say about our tragic situation today that has not been said? Who is there to speak that has not spoken? Like the friends of Job, we stare at an imponderable tragedy as the nation unravels from all sides.

"The government has slid into hibernation mode. It is hard to know whether the problem is that those in power do not hear, see, feel, know, or just don't care. Either way, from this crossroad, we must make a choice, to go forward, turn left or right or return home. None of these choices is easy, yet, guided by the light of the risen Christ, we can reclaim our country from its impending slide to anarchy."

Against this backdrop, Nigerians wonder how those jostling for the APC's presidential ticket would convince the people to vote for the party given that President Buhari's performance sheet is filled with red marks. More so, how will they reignite hope in their party without mentioning how their leader has contributed to the problems?

Aspirants who have chosen not to say anything about the poor performance of the Buhari administration, do so for fear that they do not know the extent of the role he would play in the emergence of the party's presidential flagbearer for the 2023 election. But others who have decided to take the risk, have been faulting some of his policies.

For instance, recently, Senator Bola Tinubu at a grand rally at the Mobolaji Johnson Arena, Onikan in Lagos, promised Nigerians that he would deliver a united and banditry-free Nigeria if elected president.

He told the gathered youths under the aegis of Progressive Youth of South-West who had declared their support for his presidential aspiration, that Nigerians were tired of excuses and lamentations of the past.

"You must change the story of potential, the story of banditry, you must change the story of tribalism," he reportedly explained.

Tinubu had apparently admitted that the present administration failed to unite Nigerians and make the country bandit-free. In order to sell himself appropriately to the youths as the saviour Nigeria desperately needs, the National Leader of the APC tackled Buhari on his comment four years ago about Nigerian youths being indolent.

Buhari had made the popular expression "Nigerian youths are lazy" during a Commonwealth Business Forum in London in 2018. He described Nigerian youths as lazy folks who only want the good things of life without working for them.

"More than 60 per cent of the population is below 30, a lot of them haven't been to school and they are claiming that Nigeria is an oil-producing country, therefore, they should sit and do nothing, and get housing, healthcare, education free," Buhari was quoted as saying at the conference.

During the rally, Tinubu indirectly responded to Buhari, telling the youths that they cannot be blamed for being "lazy" with erratic electricity supply in the country. He said no nation can witness "rapid development" without electricity, adding that the country cannot continue to give "excuses" for failure to generate a stable power supply. He noted that the country is blessed with enough gas that can be used to generate electricity and even export to European countries.

He further urged the youths to revalidate their Permanent Voters' Cards and be ready to vote in the forthcoming 2023 general election.

In a similar vein, the Minister of Transportation, Mr. Chibuike Amaechi, who declared his ambition to contest the 2023 presidential election on the platform of the APC on April 9, 2022, vowed to fight insecurity and promote the stability and unity of the country if elected president in 2023. Amaechi also acknowledged that Nigeria has been facing insecurity and other challenges but said it was a global problem.

He noted that the current administration of President Buhari has done well in building a better Nigeria, and promised to do more by improving the economy of the nation.

"I have never been the type who folds his arms and complains about inadequacies I see around me. I have always jumped in with both feet to do whatever I can to help, to try and bring relief to those suffering, to work to make things right where I see wrong. If you elect me as your President, I promise to play my part to the best of my ability. Every day I will rise and go to work for you. I will never forget the fact that I am there to serve you.

"We are facing some very serious challenges as a country. These are problems of insecurity, challenges of greater accountability in governance, youth unemployment and the scourge of spiralling poverty. These problems are however not the exclusive preserve of Nigeria. We live in a troubled world. The reality we used to know has altered in nearly every nation… Transborder crises have erupted in unusual places and placed the internal security of many nations under pressure. We are part of the Sahel, an area of the world that is subject to frequent terrorist attacks. Let us look at our current challenges as part and consequences of these global trends. I admit that Nigeria's problems did not begin today. And they will not be solved overnight. But they are not beyond the capacity of our people to solve. Fortunately, that process has already started," the minister had explained.

What Vice President Yemi Osinbajo who declared for the election last month, told Nigerians was however surprising. He said he was interested in the presidency because he would want to continue with the legacies of his principal.

Since he made the comment, Nigerians have been demanding to know these legacies. They are wondering how anyone would continue a legacy of failure and hardship. Many political analysts believe that Osinbajo's statement was just a deceptive ritual facade to gain the confidence and support of his principal in a political system where blind and subservient loyalty is key to succession.

Another presidential aspirant who has inadvertently chided Buhari for not stamping his authority in effectively tackling the insecurity challenges confronting the country is Governor Yahaya Bello of Kogi State, who said if elected president in 2023, his administration would not tolerate buck-passing over insecurity.

Bello while answering questions from journalists at the second annual GYB Seminar for Political and Crime Correspondents and Editors in Abuja recently, noted that while President Buhari could not be in every state of the federation to ensure the security of lives and property when there are chief executives in place in the states, he would ensure that states are empowered to rise to the challenges. The aspirant insisted that he would not play politics with the security challenges in the country because it was a result of the failure of various administrations in the past.

"If I become the president, I will ensure that every Chief Executive of the various federating units sits up and does his or her jobs. I will not tolerate any lackadaisical attitude or passing of the buck to the centre. I will ensure that various federating units are strengthened. The majority of some of these crimes are politically motivated, especially the recent ones we are witnessing. However, the issue of security can never be brought out to the public so you would not expose your country to danger," he said.

From their declarations, it is obvious that the aspirants believe that the present administration has failed to tackle insecurity. It is also obvious that their campaign promises will focus on surmounting insecurity but it remains to be seen if Nigerians would have any hope in a party that has brought them so much pain and tears in the last seven years.

ENGAGEMENTS

with Chidi Amuta
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Madness and the Succession

In an election season, the briefcases of political salesmen are full of assorted marketing pitches. Not even the most outrageous and unexpected ideas are off limits. Conflicting notions and ideas tumble and clash for headlines in a crowded and confused market place. The public is desperate for words of encouragement and perhaps something new and different from the old worn out clichés of politics.

Someone will end terrorist insurgency in less than three months. One aspirant will chase back Boko Haram and ISWAP to the Sahel and find them alternative theatres of war there. One hopeful will 'bring back our girls' except that he forgot the girls are all women now and nearly all proud mothers! Another will eradicate poverty in one term only. Yet another will eliminate unemployment within a year. Somebody has promised to stop Nigerian doctors and nurses from emigrating to better climes. The count is endless and still rising. Behind all the promises, no empirical data, no studies. Just empty promises and vacuous expressions of intention and wishes.

Our present pains and adversity leave us not much choice than to absorb it all. Somehow, the hope endures that perhaps something good might emerge from even the wombs of adversity and the sporadic outbursts of insanity.

Despite the repeated ritual of political promises, the pageant of presidential aspirants for 2023 has yielded something new. In our desperate search for a leadership type that can rescue us from the concoction of ills plaguing the land, the ongoing scramble for the presidential gate pass has yielded a novel leadership type: the Mad Man as president has emerged as a leadership model that the 2023 politicians want us to seriously consider as appropriate.

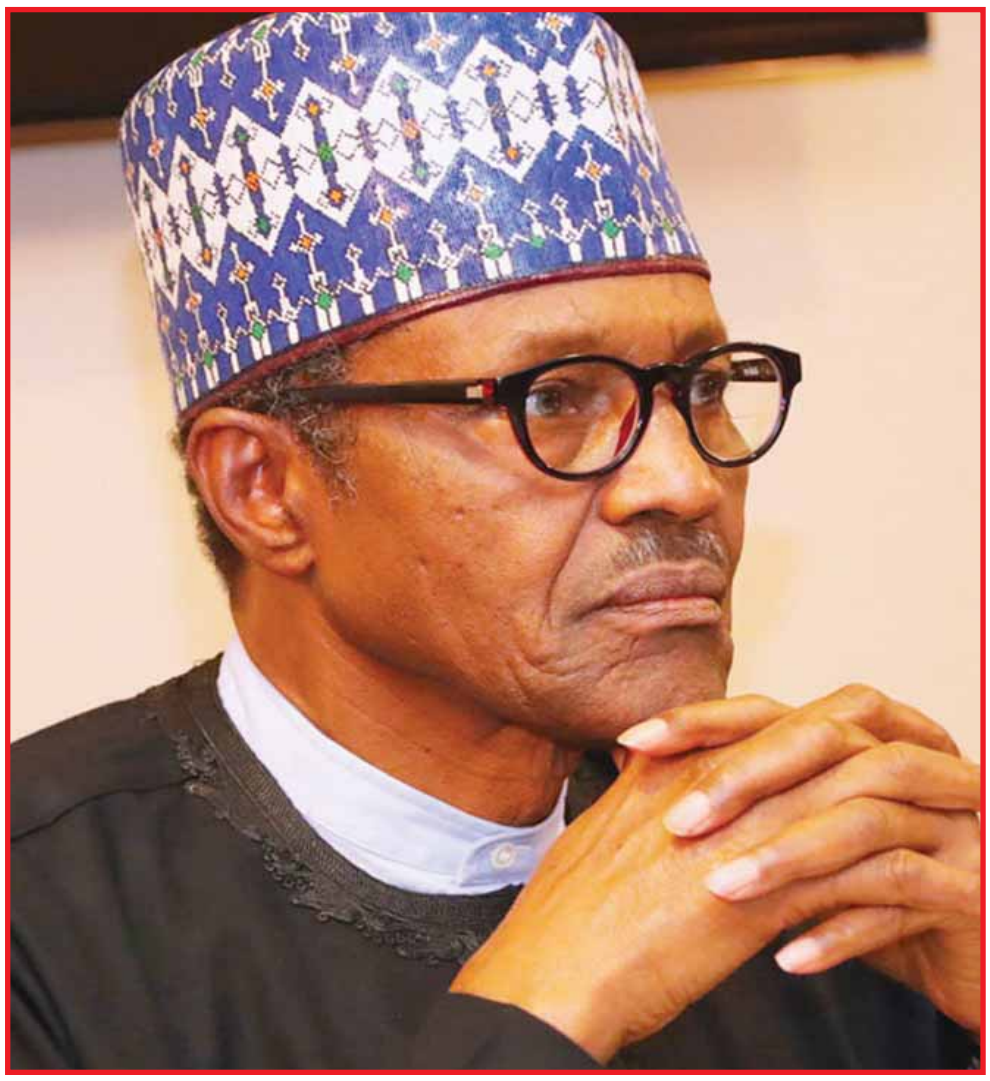
Incumbent Governor of Rivers State, Mr. Nyesom Wike, in the course of his nationwide campaigns for the presidential candidacy of the PDP had occasion to put forward a case for the Mad man president. In his gubernatorial estimation, our national problems have assumed an insane and other worldly dimension that a normal president may no longer fit the bill. In his view, Nigeria is a 'crazy country', a virtual asylum with insane problems. It requires only a mad man as president in 2023 to address these problems in their insane enormity.

Mr. Wike got a bit of the headlines he desired and deserved except that most of the commentators did not find the suggestion quite out of character. Even then, there is a body of opinion out there that would agree with Mr. Wike's proposition purely out of frustration with present realities and tested approaches to leadership. While a section of the public was sufficiently magnanimous to accord Mr. Wike his poetic license or right of deviant opinion, the mainstream wrote his thesis off as evidence that our politics has now trespassed into the zone of insanity in which major political aspirants may in fact need psychiatric evaluation themselves.

Maybe we should not write off Mr. Wike so quickly. Only last Wednesday, former President Olusegun Obasanjo while receiving another of his numerous presidential aspirant pilgrims in Abeokuta added his voice to the Mad Man theory of leadership. In Obasanjo's weighty view, the problems besetting the nation are so gigantic in scope and herculean in scale that they need a leader who is both 'passionate about Nigeria' and who has 'a touch of madness' to get the nation back on the right footing. For him, the next leader must be prepared to deploy unusual methods and do unfamiliar things to solve a barrage of unusual problems.

The trouble with the Nigerian Mad Man doctrine of leadership is not in its novelty. We are sufficiently frustrated to embrace just about anything that shows up in the name of a solution. But the disturbing reality is that there may in fact be a statistical basis for prescribing that we might as well choose a mentally challenged as a communal hero to find solutions to our leadership crisis.

A few months ago, a group of Nigerian mental health experts came up with the shocking revelation that close to half of the Nigerian population (100 million) may be afflicted with one form of mental health challenge or the other. Of this number, 50 million are actually mentally ill in a clinical sense. This is in the sense that they are likely to commit murder or suicide at the slightest inkling. The other 50 million cannot make a precise determination as to whether they are mad, unbalanced, or too dazed by everyday reality in a nation that is prone to drive people crazy.



Buhari

This epidemic of national madness means that on an average day, far too many people are likely to jump off the railings of the Third Mainland Bridge in Lagos and plunge into the lagoon. So many more are likely to commit rape, incest or abuse a minor. Some might even set a market on fire just to have a good laugh.

The trouble with Nigeria's mental health statistics is that the total number of alleged mentally challenged people (100 million) is almost equal to the population of abjectly poor Nigerians, those living on less than $2 a day. But then, the poor are not necessarily mad. More problematic is the fact that it is these poor folks who are embarrassed by the symptoms and displays of madness among the well off ones. So, the socio economic explanation of the roots of mental illness will not hold water here.

The very poor cannot understand why, for instance, a man or woman who is already rich should be charged with a crime of misappropriating billions of dollars. Ordinary people cannot comprehend whether rich and privileged thieves are necessarily mentally healthy.

Let us not crucify the 2023 emergency political theorists for smuggling this Mad Man leadership theory into our political lexicon or thinking. The Mad Man theory of leadership is really not so new in political theory. It was first proposed and popularized by late US President Richard Nixon. Simply put, it sought to present the US president as unpredictable and potentially insane. His powers are so awesome and powers so overwhelming that he is capable of inflicting the greatest damage to America's adversaries in a precise but unpredictable manner. It was popularized as part of the Nixon administration's foreign policy in a bid to deter America's adversaries especially the USSR and Soviet bloc countries. The Mad Man theory prepared the world to expect the worst from the US president at any time. It worked for a while before it was discarded as the world's stock of mad leaders increased beyond the borders of the two great powers in opposition during the Cold War.

In the leadership of nations, the Mad Man often comes to power either through normal democratic means or is propelled by non democratic forces of national history. Hitler was elected. So was Mussolini and even Stalin. In nearly all cases, power insanity creeps in as an effect of power absolutism. What is disturbing however is that all instances of the Mad Man as leader in history have been associated with dictatorships of the most vile and bloody kind. Baby Doc Duvailier of Haiti, Idi Amin Dada of Uganda belong in this cast.

The danger in allowing democratic systems to elevate mad men to apex power is the damage they usually do to both the democratic system and the nation itself. Even normal presidents elected through the best democratic systems need to be checked from degenerating into personal insanity because of the aphrodisiac of power. The US electorate adjudged Donald Trump a normal president when he assumed power in 2016. Months after allowing him to exhibit traits that bordered on clinical insanity, a group of over 100 mental health experts had to subject his behavior to psychiatric evaluation and handed down an unsavory conclusion that he could be unhinged. This was not before he nearly destroyed the American citadel of democracy on January 6th, 2021 by endorsing and directing a mob invasion of the Capitol.

It is therefore unsafe for our democracy both in 2023 and beyond for leaders to be advocating for the deliberate enthronement of a 'mad man' to ascend the pinnacle of national power simply because the nation's problems appear crazy. It is quite understandable that the 2023 elections are coming at a time when our national problems have been allowed to degenerate to insane levels.

Yes indeed, our insecurity has grown from isolated Boko Haram sectarian insurgency in Borno state to envelope the entire North East, North West and now parts of North Central. Periodic highway robberies have grown into assured bandit takeovers of major arterial highways all over the country. Annual remembrance parades of Biafra by MASSOB have grown into an armed guerilla movement and bloody insurgency in the South East. Organized crime syndicates in parts of Delta and Edo states have become sophisticated networks of robbery, kidnapping, extortion and voodoo ritual killing syndicates. What used to be restricted to serial fraud letter writing has grown into sophisticated cybercrime networks with thousands of undergraduates and urban youngsters as subscribers and active practitioners.

That is not all. Faith that used to distinguish our peoples in terms of differential beliefs has become weaponized as Nigeria is now divided into religious factions willing and eager to draw the blood of each other to advance the cause of one world faith over the other. The sense of community and unified diversity that has been the marker of Nigeria's exceptionalism has given way to a landscape of hate and the spontaneous hurling of hateful abuse across all divides.

The politics of factions has degenerated into angry regionalism, tribalism and vicious ethnocentrism. In the midst of the shouts of hate, we can no longer hear each other speak as everyone is howling at everyone. Human life has become trivialized as angry mobs are ever ready to incinerate fellow citizens at the slightest provocation or altercation.

No one dares go towards our economic problems. No one knows now how much we are owing foreign creditors or domestic contractors. Estimates indicate that we spend over 96% of revenue to service debts. Our children that troop out of schools and universities cannot find work for their idle hands and able minds. An informal poverty republic has lodged in place as Nigeria is now globally recognized as the leading home of some of the poorest people in the world, in a republic within a republic of over 100 million abjectly poor people.

Perhaps this is the landscape that has encouraged the new political gladiators to insist that our problems as a nation are insane in dimension. Gigantic in scope and frightening in expanse as they may be, they remain normal economic, social and national security problems except that they have been allowed to spiral out of control in the last seven years.

The responsibility for the state in which we find our nation lies squarely at the doorstep of the outgoing Buhari administration. Never in the history of independent Nigeria has an administration been bestowed with so much hope and trust only to serially fail the people, the nation, the world and the very operatives of the system of government. What the aspirants of 2023 are angling to inherit therefore is an empty shell of a nation. But it can be rescued; not by enthroning a mad man as president.

The impulses that have driven the argument for a 'touch of madness' in leadership to rescue the nation lie squarely in the serial failures of the Buhari administration. That abysmal failure stares us in the face in every direction. It demonstrates how a national edifice can be destroyed in just under eight years.

But the failure of the last seven years is not a failure of system. It is a failure of specific operators of what should be a workable system. The mad man theory of leadership assumes a necessity to overturn the system. It allows the new leader to discupt the established order, to breach due process, to truncate the established order in order to reach urgent goals and re-write the rules if necessary in order to get us there quickly. It may even allow for the leader to adopt a purely personal and idiosyncratic approaches to problem solving with the justification that the nation has entered an emergency mode.

The risk of the mad man option is that a personality cult based on the wrong ideas could develop. The established order of governance could be permanently damaged. The General Order of administrative governance, the Financial Instructions that guide government transactions and the observance of due process could be seriously damaged. The personalization of governance could destroy democracy by enthroning an authoritarianism of the mad man as a political deity. In the process, democracy could suffer permanent damage as the new mad man redefines democracy to suit his personalized model. Technically therefore, what is required in 2023 is not the enthronement of a mad man but the elevation of an enlightened, dynamic leader who can manage diversity, reunite the nation and inspire progress rather than disrupt the system and replace order with rudderless flux.

We do not need a collective of mad men and women either to rescue a nation simply because it is beset with magnified problems of national development and existence. The president we need now is therefore not a mad man but a rational deviant. It is somebody who is enlightened, assured, firm, decisive and systematic. A knowledgeable president who is passionate about Nigeria and its many missed opportunities is the one we are waiting for. He or she does not need to be mad in any sense. But he must be constructively subversive of the present hegemonic order and its conservative bedrock which has brought us to this brutish pass. Nigerians await that personage and that hour.

NEWSXTRA

Olawepo-Hashim Accuses INEC of Imposing Tight Schedule of Primaries on Political Parties

Segun James

A chieftain of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), Mr. Gbenga Olawepo-Hashim, has warned that the confusion currently being created by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) must not be allowed to endanger the conduct of the 2023 elections.

In a statement from his media office in Abuja yesterday, Olawepo-Hashim explained that the looming danger stems from the "tight INEC schedule of primaries imposed on political parties in the country."

Olawepo-Hashim said the schedule "has been influenced purely by a section of the political elites who have positioned themselves to benefit from this INEC's calendar."

He said as one of those who played a prominent role in that transition process in 1998, he can smell danger from afar any time it rears its ugly head.

He added: "We have come a long way in our journey and as one of those who played a prominent role in that transition process in 1998, I can smell danger from afar any time it rears its ugly head.

"The current tough-guy grandstanding of the INEC chief must give way to reason so as not to endanger the entire process.

"Predictably, the political process is robbed of any clarity as there is even confusion as to who is lawfully a qualified delegate to primaries that are supposed to be going on. Unfortunately, the INEC management has continuously insisted that party primaries schedule cannot be changed," he said.

Olawepo-Hashim, who had rescinded his decision to contest for the presidency, contended that it is not the business of INEC to fix dates of primaries as long as the primaries are conducted 180 days before election in accordance with the provision of extant law.

"To start with, it is not the business of INEC to fix dates of primaries in as much as the primaries are conducted 180 days before election in accordance with the provision of extant law.

"Election was stopped in this country and new date announced when it dawned on all that INEC was conducting a sham exercise. We also had a situation where election was postponed because of security concerns. What then is this infantile argument by this INEC that the dates for the primaries cannot be moved forward when it has become obvious that is about to hold will be flawed?

"Whose interest is this INEC serving, the public or unknown interests desirous of fostering on Nigerians a flawed electoral process with far reaching consequences for the nation?"



CONSULTATION CONTINUES…

Enugu State Governor, Hon. Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi (left), and former Senate President and Peoples Democratic Party's presidential aspirant, Dr. Abubakar Bukola Saraki, during Saraki's courtesy visit to the Enugu State Government House in Enugu…weekend

Insecurity Compels TRCN to Defer Exams in Sokoto, Zamfara

Kuni Tyessi in Abuja

The Teachers Registration Council (TRCN) at the weekend said it had rescheduled its teachers Professional Qualifying Examination (PQE) in Sokoto and Zamfara states over recent security concerns.

TRCN's Acting Director of Certification and Licensing, Dr Jacenta Ogboso disclosed this in Abuja while supervising the examination at SALSCON International School.

He disclosed that a total of 9,204 participated in the exercise nationwide, with the exception of the two states.

Ogboso said 125 candidates registered for the exercise in Sokoto while 151 candidates registered in Zamfara state, adding that the examination in the two states will be rescheduled as soon as the situation is better.

"We have to reschedule the exam for Sokoto and Zamfara states because we want to be sure of the situation. So those two are not writing today. They are going to either write online or we find another time," she said.

She disclosed that 663 candidates sat for the exam in the Federal Capital Territory, FCT, even as she praised the conduct of the exercise as very smooth because TRCN started this exam since 2017 and keeps improving on the processes.

On fighting malpractice in the conduct of the exercise, she said TRCN had put in place a process of accreditation through a platform that the ICT department has developed, which is able to detect the actual people registered for the examination to avoid impersonation of candidates.

According to her, every candidate is expected to go to the area where he registered to be accredited, and that candidates were not allowed into the exam hall with phones or any banned item to ensure that nobody does anything funny.

"Inside the exam hall, we have our officers who go round to check each person on the computer that is being used to ensure that the photograph of that person is the same as the person writing that examination.

Youth Groups Hold Rallies for Peter Obi in Awka, Lagos, Abuja

David-Chyddy Eleke in Awka

A coalition of youth groups rooting for former Governor of Anambra State, Mr. Peter Obi as president of Nigeria yesterday held a solidarity march for him in Lagos, Abuja and Awka.

The groups, comprising mainly youths, trooped to the streets in their large numbers.

In Awka, just like in Ikeja, Lagos and Abuja, the groups said Obi "is the best of all the aspirants seeking to succeed President Muhammadu Buhari in 2023."

In Awka, the youths, doning white T-shirts atop a pair of jeans, converged on Ekwueme square in Awka, from where they danced through streets of Awka to the secretariat of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) at Udoka Housing Estate, Awka.

The youths begged the PDP to rescind its decision to throw open the contest for the presidential ticket, describing it as an affront on the South, especially the South-east zone.

At the PDP secretariat, Mr Ikechukwu Anonye, the Anambra State Coordinator for Peter Obi Support Network (POSN), and coordinating chairman of all Peter Obi Support groups presented a position paper to the leaders of the party in the state.

Anonye, who spoke to journalists, said the position paper addressed the national chairman of PDP, Dr Iyorchia Ayu.

He said: "We hope that it gets to him. Today's solidarity walk is to let the PDP know that we are aware of the schemings going on in the party and that we know that we know that the PDP has a constitution that supports rotation of the presidency between the North and the South.

"Now that it is the turn of the South, and precisely the South-east. We are hearing that a committee has met and thrown it open for everybody. We consider it a level of injustice in the South-east.

Gunmen Kidnap Farmer in Anambra, Shoot Only Son

Gunmen have abducted a farmer, Chukwujekwu Uzozie, in Ukpor, Nnewi South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

It was learnt that the gunmen fired many shots into the air before forcing themselves into the farmer's compound

According to sources, the farmer's only son was shot by the attackers, who stormed his home in Umudiji Umuohama village, on Saturday morning.

A family source said Uzozie was taken to an unknown destination and no contact has been made by his abductors.

It was gathered that Uzozie was a Special Adviser to a former chairman of Nnewi South Local Government Council.

According to the source, members of St Andrew's Church Umuoham where the victim worships have organised special prayers for his release and quick recovery of his only son.

The state police spokesman, DSP Toochukwu Ikenga, confirmed the incident and said that a manhunt had been launched for the abductors.

If APC Disappoints You, Come to PDP, Ortom Woos Fayemi

George Okoh in Makurdi

Benue State Governor, Samuel Ortom yesterday urged his Ekiti State counterpart, Dr. Kayode Fayemi, to switch from the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in his race to become the next president of the country.

Ortom urged Fayemi to pursue his ambition with vigour, stating that he and ex-Governor Gabriel Suswam, who was also present during the visit, would have worked for him if he were in PDP.

He marked the remarks yesterday when Fayemi visited him at the Government House in Makurdi, the Benue capital, noting that he was working for the emergence of a southern president.

He said: "If they mess you up in APC, come to PDP and join us so we can prosecute Nigerians' agenda. Some of us have made our positions very clear. We are from the north but believe in a southern presidency because we believe in fairness, equity and justice.

"Yet, if my party says it's a northern candidate, I would have no choice but to succumb. But the truth must be told, the presidency, for some of us who have a conscience, believes that it should go to the south.

"But if the leadership and delegates decide that it should go to the north. That's not going to be a problem, then we can queue up and work together. Because we must have leadership.

"That is why myself and Senator Suswam believe in the south and we are working for a southern presidency. Just like you came here, if we were in APC, we would have been working for you because we know that you have the capacity, knowledge and education to help us out of the problem we are today as a country."

Earlier, the presidential hopeful said he was at the Government House to pay a courtesy call on Governor Ortom while on the visit to meet with APC delegates in the state.

Fayemi said the visit was to fulfil the tradition of the Nigerian Governorship Forum (NGF) as its chairman, irrespective of the political party differences.

Okonjo Joins Forbes Business Council

Chief Executive Officer/ Executive Vice Chairman, Fine and Country West Africa, Udo Okonjo, has been accepted into the Forbes Business Council, the foremost growth and networking organisation for successful business owners and leaders worldwide.

Forbes Business Council is an invitation-only community for successful business owners and leaders.

In a statement yesterday, Okonjo was vetted and selected by a review committee based on the depth and diversity of her experience.

The statement said criteria for acceptance "include a track record of successfully impacting business growth metrics, as well as personal and professional achievements and honours.

"We are honoured to welcome Udo Okonjo into the community," said Scott Gerber, founder of Forbes Councils, the collective that includes Forbes Business Council.

Kumuyi Cancels S'East Crusade after IPOB's Warning

General Superintendent, Deeper Christian Life Ministry (DCLM), Pastor William Kumuyi yesterday cancelled a global crusade scheduled to hold in Aba, Abia State between May 24 and 29.

This was contained in a statement the Chairman of the Aba Global Crusade, Pastor James Akpofure issued yesterday.

The statement said: "As there are currently some security challenges at the intended alpha location (Aba, Abia State, Nigeria), the Global Crusade Convener, Pastor (Dr) W.F. Kumuyi commiserates with our people in Abia State and will be praying along for God's Divine Intervention."

Apart from Akpofure's statement, a member of the organising committee had in a telephone conversation with The PUNCH confirmed that the crusade had been cancelled.

The official added that a new venue would be announced for the crusade.

Celebrating One Year of Global Evangelisation (Global Crusade with Kumuyi), Akpofure said Kumuyi would keep praying for God's divine intervention in the insecurity bedevilling the South-East geopolitical zone.

In a statement Thursday, IPOB's Media and Publicity Secretary, Emma Powerful, had asked Kumuyi to consider the insecurity in the South East and not proceed with the crusade.

"Let him (Kumuyi) and the organisers of the crusade make sure that nothing happens. The security of this region is not good because of political and criminal activities. We, therefore, advise him to stop this crusade for security reasons.

"IPOB will not allow anyone to die because of this crusade scheduled to hold in Aba. The probability of criminals operating as unknown gunmen infiltrating the crusade is high and they will blame it on IPOB," Powerful had said.

The Christian Association of Nigeria had backed Kumuyi and urged IPOB to allow the holiness preacher proceed with his crusade.

NEVER EVER WRITE NIGERIA OFF

information on its website. If we had run it like NNPC, NLNG would have been declaring losses. Aramco — NNPC's mate in Saudi Arabia — just declared a net income of $39.5bn for Q1 2022. Our own NNPC cannot even remit sale proceeds to the federation account, much less declare genuine profit. They get crude allocation for the refineries that don't work and, in turn, use it to part-subsidise petrol as directed by the political authorities.

Nevertheless, I am not here to lament or curse our luck. I am here to highlight what is possible in this same Nigeria. I am here to underscore why we should not throw up our hands in surrender anytime we get overwhelmed by the commotion and bleakness around us. It is difficult to keep hope alive in a country plagued with poor leadership and all the debilitating pathologies that come with it. If nothing else, the NLNG success story should tell us that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with the Nigerian water, topography, temperature, humidity and atmosphere. We should rather be encouraged to face the hard questions on why we are not replicating the NLNG story elsewhere.

There is a tendency to focus all of our attention on what NLNG Ltd has contributed to the national purse in the last 33 years — such as the $9 billion it has paid in taxes; or the $18 billion dividends; or loan repayments and interests; or the inflow of $17.5 billion FDI mostly for the construction works; or the $15 billion it has paid to the federal government for feed gas since inception; or its growing contribution to the GDP; or the tens of thousands of jobs it has generated directly and indirectly; or its enormous impact on developing and encouraging local content in engineering and procurement; or the $1.2 billion finance scheme to facilitate access to funds for its Nigerian vendors.

While these have impacted positively on the industry and the economy, NLNG Ltd's contributions to other non-core areas are equally important: be it the sponsorship of some of biggest and most prestigious prizes in Africa for science, literature, and literary criticism; be it the health insurance initiative for residents of its host community, Bonny Island, in partnership with the Rivers state government and Bonny Kingdom; be it the malaria eradication programme; or be it the support programme for 12 teaching hospitals across the six geopolitical zones and Abuja, covering renovating or re-equipping gynaecology and maternity wards or building intensive care units.

Nigeria's oil-producing communities often complain about neglect and one sore thumb that always stood out was the fact that Bonny Island was cut off from the rest of Rivers state because of a lack of bridge. Trips are done by boats and a journey that should take not more than 30 minutes by road can last for nearly two hours, along with the risks, dangers and financial cost. For years, government promised to build the road but a combination of factors not unrelated to paucity of funds and youth restiveness stalled it. The construction of the 39km-long Bodo-Bonny road finally commenced in 2017, with NLNG Ltd picking 50 per cent of the total bill of N120.6 billion via tax credits.

Above all, this is the core of my excitement: in case you think NLNG is run by Europeans, you are dead wrong. Its senior management is fully Nigerian. The MD is Nigerian. Although there is the unseen hand of the multinationals, some of the managers have garnered world-class experiences over the decades working home and abroad — including in The Netherlands, Trinidad & Tobago, France, UK and Norway. Ironically, some of them have worked with the NNPC. But they have a different work ethic and corporate culture at NLNG. Same Nigerians. We must never stop pondering this question: why do so many Nigerians do well in the private sector compared to the public sector?

Let me now tell you a sad story. The NLG projects were originally approved by the federal military government in 1975. In fact, the Bonny LNG Limited (BLNG) was incorporated in 1976. It was to be the biggest LNG project in the world at the time, but government itself became the biggest obstacle. As it is our custom in Nigeria, when one president goes and another comes in, projects are inevitably affected. By 1982, foreign investors had lost interest in BNLG. We do not have a culture of continuity. Only God knows how many court cases we have across the world because of abandoned or cancelled contracts simply because of a change of government. That is the story of Nigeria.

Kudos to Babangida for getting the NLG project back on track in 1989. More kudos to Gen Sani Abacha who did everything to ensure the take-off of the project by providing seed funding and enacting enabling laws, providing country guarantees and granting a range of concessions, including tax holiday and waivers. The vision of making it wholly Nigerian has always been there. Of all the investments ever made by Nigeria, the NLNG is by far the most successful. The question that many rational observers would ask is: if this governance model has worked for us so well, why can't we apply it to other things under government control? We need leaders who can think outside the box.

Another opportunity to reboot Nigeria through the ballot is around the corner. Nigeria can be great. We should resist the temptation to give up or give in. Our circumstances are damning and the future looks forlorn but it takes just a major U-turn for things to start falling into place. That is why we have to remain positive and never write Nigeria off. For me, the success story of the NLNG is built on the excellent model of competent leadership, merit-based recruitment that also accommodates the host community, solid succession planning as well as world-class work ethic and corporate culture. Apply these basics to the leadership of Nigeria and we will become a different country in a matter of time.

And Four Other Things...

MOB INJUSTICE

We were still mourning the blood-chilling lynching of Deborah Samuel over alleged blasphemy in Sokoto when David Sunday Imoh, a sound engineer, was brutalised to death by commercial motorcyclists in Lekki, Lagos state. It would seem lynching has become entrenched as a legitimate course of action in Nigeria. These incidents brought back sad memories of the October 2012 lynching of four innocent students of the University of Port Harcourt in Aluu, Rivers state. Lynching is nothing but jungle justice and we need to clamp down on it with everything we have. However, it will take a lot of work because the problem starts from the mindset of lack of value for human life. Primitive.

RESTRAIN AND RESPECT

Can we make the Deborah tragedy a turning point in the management of toxic religious relations in Nigeria? While condemning the dastardly act, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) also voiced out the need to respect other people's beliefs. That is a major statement that runs counter to the dangerous "free speech" argument. Sheikh Ahmad Abubakar Gumi, prominent Islamic cleric, has also said there is no place in Islam for lynching an alleged blasphemer. I am seeing a huge opportunity for peace-building in these statements coming from the two divides. Extremism and hostility will not solve any problem. We must learn to live and let live, for God's sake. Respect.

DEI-DEI DEATHS

How does the death of a passenger in an accident become another source of ethnic conflict? That, again, is what we heard about the riot that broke out at the Dei-Dei market, a suburb of Abuja, on Wednesday. At the end of the mayhem, four persons lay dead and property worth millions of naira destroyed. The passenger, a woman, was crushed to death by a hit-and-run trailer who was eventually arrested. But as the motorcyclist reportedly tried to retrieve the bike, traders restrained him. His fellow motorcyclists came together to fight back. And then it became an inter-ethnic fight. How many lives do we have to waste before we finally come to our senses in this country? Senseless.

RESIGN AND RETURN

No matter what you think about this government, you can never say it is lacking in drama. After President Muhammadu Buhari had held a valedictory session for ministers who had been directed to resign to go and contest for various political offices, four of them made a U-turn and attended the next cabinet meeting. In what country does this happen? Some lawyers have argued that if a minister resigns, the process of return or replacement has to go through the senate. That is why if a new government is going to return a minister, the process involves another senate screening. But we are in an era of anything-goes and an Umuahia court injunction may be in the offing. Scandalous.

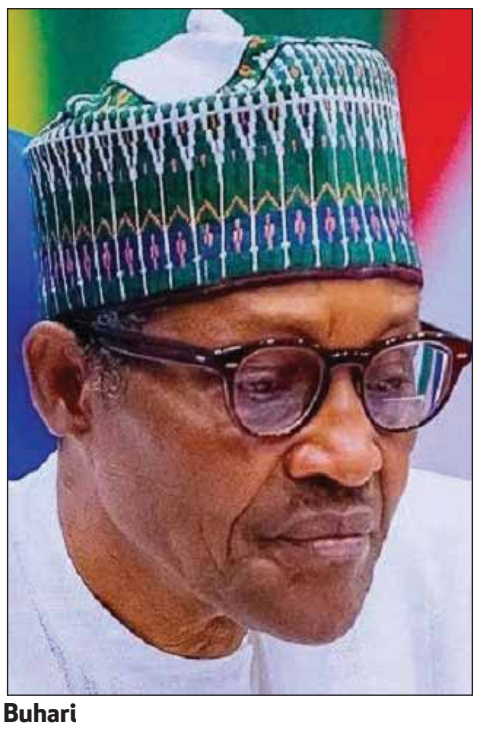
CRITICAL ISSUES AHEAD OF SUPER WEEKEND

accommodation, feeding, transportation and other expenses. But many will also lose out, from business owners to delegates and other key political actors. For one, the presidential aspirants have invested considerable time and resources courting only statutory delegates because the elected delegates were not yet in place. The junkets across the country and the expenses incurred may have been in vain, as no one makes refunds in this game.

Using only elected delegates alters the political calculus in many ways, especially in terms of tipping the balance of power in favour of the governors who constitute the most formidable power bloc in the country. Governors are now in control of at least between 70% to 90% of delegates at play from their states.

Some of the parties have started their primaries without the amendment. INEC also has a requirement that delegate lists must be transmitted to it seven days before the primaries and statutory delegates can be part of such lists until amendment is signed. If the amendment to the act is eventually signed, there will be questions and possibly litigations about whether the rules can be changed in the middle of the game. That is a potential landmine.

The parties can opt for direct primaries or consensus primaries as a way around this avoidable logjam. Given INEC's June 3rd deadline for conclusion of primaries, time may be too short to organise direct primaries across the country. Also, Section 84 (9) (a) of the electoral act makes the consensus option less feasible for the two leading parties: all cleared aspirants will need to withdraw from the race and endorse the consensus candidate in writing. It will take quite an effort to pull that off, given the calibre and desire of some of the aspirants.



Buhari

The second critical issue is the case instituted on 29th April 2022 at the Supreme Court by the President and the Attorney General of the Federation (AGF) on the constitutionality of Section 84 (12) of the same electoral act. This is the section that states that political appointees cannot vote or be voted for in a convention to choose the candidates of the parties except they had resigned their positions 30 days prior to the primaries. The president and the AGF contend that the section is in conflict with sections 42, 65, 66 and others of the 1999 Constitution.

The Supreme Court adjourned hearing on the case to 26th May 2022, after acceding to the request of Rivers State to be joined. Prior to that, President Buhari had asked his cabinet members interested in running for office to tender their resignation before 16th May 2022, and most of them complied except those who changed their minds on running for office. State governors had issued same orders much earlier. Based on these developments, it is difficult to know whether this case was instituted just to prove a constitutional point or to provide legal cover during screening for aspirants who might not have resigned 30 days before the primaries. No matter the outcome of this case, it may lead to a party being deemed to be without a candidate if one of the affected aspirants emerges from the primaries.

The third issue is zoning. PDP has decided to throw the presidential race open to all zones. APC has not said a word about zoning, though an overwhelming number of its presidential aspirants is from the south. There are two opposing arguments about where to zone the presidency: one posits that after eight years of a president of northern extraction, power should naturally rotate to the south; the other counters that the south would by 2023 have been in power for 13 out of 24 years of the Fourth Republic. Each argument has a corresponding counter but beneath the hesitation of the dominant parties to take a categorical position on zoning is the crude calculation about winning the next election.

Whether the parties take categorical positions or not on this issue, zoning (and even micro-zoning) will feature prominently during the presidential primaries. The fact that aspirants from all zones are allowed to run does not mean there are no or there will be no informal agreements on zoning or that it will not play out by default. Past primaries offer a guide here. However, how the parties handle this hot potato will have implications not only for voters' turnout and preferences next year but also for post-election peace and development in the country. It is therefore very important for the political elites to start figuring out how to deal with the fallouts.

The fourth is what I will term primary colours: this week will witness intense jockeying by the aspirants and their supporters for the most coveted tickets in the race. To maintain the lead or displace those in the lead, each camp will throw everything it has into the last mile.

This will manifest in different forms: advocacy for consensus option for those likely to be advantaged by it, last-minute jostling to keep or snatch delegates, saturation of the media with adverts, analyses and projections (including disinformation and fake news), attempt to use social pressure to change the outcome, desperate horse-trading with powerful individuals and power centres, deployment of blackmail in different forms, withdrawal of some aspirants for others, and in APC, a spirited move to get Buhari's endorsement.

It is going to be a long and interesting week, with a series of meetings, constant changes in the league tables (especially among the top three), and dramatic switches of loyalties. It should be a week to savour, at least for the neutrals.

SUNDAY SPORTS

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Day of Long Knives as So Much at Stake on Final Day

Duro Ikhazuagbe

2021/2022 PREMIER LEAGUE SEASON

TITLE: Will it be Man City or Liverpool?

Never in the last 10 years for the English Premier League to be in the state of uncertainty as we have witnessed going into the last Match-day 38 this afternoon.

This is the very first time in 10 years that the title, top four and relegation are all still to be fully decided before the final day!

It is this unusual state that makes the Premier League the best in club football globally.

Even with Manchester City hold a one-point advantage at the top of the table on 90 points, the story can still change today. If the unexpected happens with 14th placed Aston Villa defeating the hosts or even holding them to a draw of any kind, Liverpool can still claim the silverware. That too is dependent on their result against Wolves at Anfield. The Reds must win to stand any chance of such a miracle.



Manchester City's Kevin de Bruyne has been named as the Premier League Player of the Season. The Etihad club are waiting to be crowned champions of the 2021/2022 season this afternoon

Few people expect the defending champions to surrender their lead, and not just because no side has ever started a Premier League final day top and not ended it there.

The main reason is that City have been simply superb this season, winning 28 games to stay out in front despite Liverpool clawing back what was at one stage a double-digit lead.

Chelsea have sealed the third place due to their superior goals difference.

FOURTH PLACE: Tottenham or Arsenal?

Can Tottenham seal a Champions League spot ahead of their north London rivals Arsenal? With 68 points and seated fourth on the log, Spurs come into this game with two points advantage over the London Gunners.

But the story can still change this afternoon if Spurs are beaten at already relegated Norwich while Arsenal win at Goodison Park.

With Everton already in safe waters having come from behind to beat Crystal Palace 3-2 last Thursday to escape the drop zone, the fourth placed ticket to the Champions League is in Antonio Conte's bag unless they choose to play the Bazaar.

With their vastly superior goal difference, Antonio Conte's side can afford a draw at relegated Norwich. Then, Arsenal will need to beat Everton by as much as 15-0 to stand any chance.

EUROPA: Man Utd or West Ham

There is also an outstanding European issue still to be settled a bit lower down the table, as Manchester United and West Ham fight it out to decide who will be playing in the Europa League and who in the Europa Conference League.

The sixth-placed Red Devils can end a disappointing season by sealing a Europa League spot with a win at Crystal Palace. Anything less, though, leaves the door open for the Hammers, who trail by two points in seventh but have a vastly superior goal difference.

RELEGATION: Burnley or Leeds for Drop?

At half-time at Goodison Park on Thursday, it looked as though three sides would be battling it out to avoid joining Watford and Norwich in the Championship next season.

But Everton's remarkable comeback win over Crystal Palace leaves Burnley and Leeds to duke it out for survival today.

The pair are level on 35 points but the Clarets have the edge courtesy of a vastly superior goal difference, meaning they only need to match Leeds' result on the final day to stay up.



Calvin Bassey... Was MVP of the Scottish Cup final yesterday

Bassey Named in Europa League Team of the Year

Three Glasgow Rangers players, among them, Nigeria's Calvin Bassey as well as Ryan Kent and James Tavernier- have been named in Uefa's Europa League team of the year.

But Eintracht Frankfurt have four after Wednesday's penalty shootout win over the Glasgow side in Seville.

Kevin Trapp, whose spot-kick save from Aaron Ramsey proved crucial, is named along with Rafael Santos Borre, whose goal cancelled out Joe Aribo's opener.

Centre-half Martin Hinteregger and midfielder Filip Kostic are included.

Although midfielder Aribo does not make Uefa's selection, Bassey and captain Tavernier, who was the tournament's top scorer with seven goals, are in defence with Ryan Kent on the wing.

David Moyes' West Ham United, who lost to Eintracht in the semi-final, have two of their players included – defender Craig Dawson and midfielder Declan Rice.

The other players involved are Leipzig pair Konrad Laimer and Christopher Nkunku.

Curtain Falls on NWFL Super Six in Benin City

Curtain will fall on the Nigeria Women Football League (NWFL) Super Six in Benin City today.

Bayelsa Queens are topping the table on maximum 12 points from four matches with Nasarawa Amazons trailing with on nine points.

Ahead of the grand finale of the Super Six, NWFL Chairperson, Aisha Falode, yesterday afternoon supervised the last Pre-Match Meetings for the final rounds of matches.

According to Aisha Falode, the Super Six closing ceremony will start at 2pm at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium with valuable items to be given to spectators. "Three matches are to be played today at 10am at the University of Benin Ugbowo Campus; 12 noon at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium; and the final match between the two contenders for the title, Nasarawa Amazons and Bayelsa Queens to be played at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium to cap the week long female football fiesta in the ancient Benin City.

Rangers Beat Hearts to Claim Consolatory Scottish Cup

Aribo, Bassey, Balogun on parade as Ibrox side claim the trophy first time in 13 years

Nigerian internationals, Joe Aribo, Calvin Bassey and Leon Balogun were on duty as Rangers put aside their Europa League trophy miss to take consolation in winning the Scottish Cup. Bassey was voted Man-of-the-Match.

Two goals in three extra-time minutes by substitutes Ryan Jack and Scott Wright gave the Ibrox side the Scottish Cup against Hearts.

Rangers claimed the trophy for the first time since in 13 years after Jack crashed a shot in off the bar from the edge of the box, before Wright finished low past Craig Gordon.

Hearts stood strong in the 90 minutes but did not offer enough in attack, apart from Ellis Simms' lunging effort off a post after only 10 minutes.

The Rangers end of Hampden celebrated joyfully at the full-time whistle, just three days after their Europa League journey ended in heartbreak on penalties against Eintracht Frankfurt in Seville.

Manager Giovanni van Bronckhorst made five changes to his team after 120 minutes of energy-sapping football in Spain, and his side again defied suggestions of fatigue as the match wore on.



Glasgow Rangers celebrating winning the Scottish Cup...yesterday

NPFL RESULTS

Abia War'	2- 0	Plateau Utd
Rangers	1- 0	Dakkada



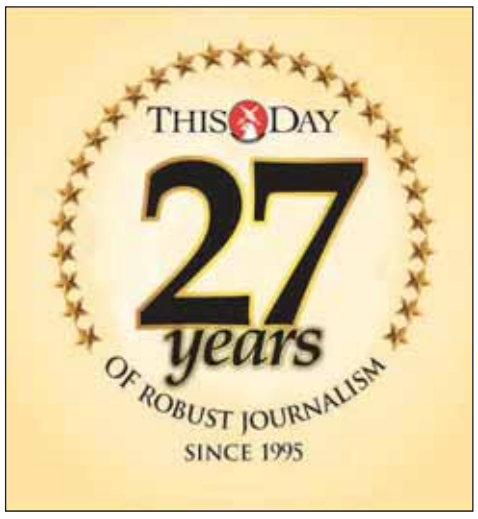
THISDAY

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MISSILE

Ortom to Fayemi

"The truth must be told, the presidency, for some of us who have a conscience, believes that it should go to the south. But if the leadership and delegates decide that it should go to the north, that's not going to be a problem, then we can queue up and work together." *– Benue State Governor, Samuel Ortom, his urging his Ekiti State counterpart, Kayode Fayemi, to switch from the ruling APC to PDP in his party messes up.*



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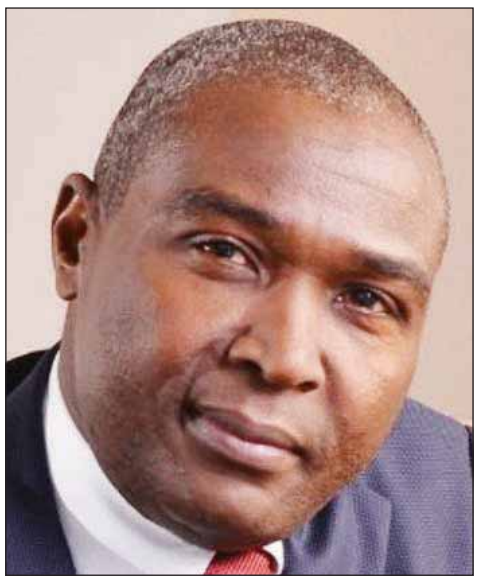
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Never Ever Write Nigeria off

A confession is in order this early Sunday morning. Although I was quite sceptical about the electioneering rhetoric of the All Progressives Congress (APC) ahead of the 2015 general election — in fact, I said as much in a series of articles, including one with the title: "Where is the Beef?" (March 1, 2015) — I finally dropped my guard when I saw the party's policy proposals after President Muhammadu Buhari's inauguration. The transition committee, headed by the late Alhaji Ahmed Joda, made a number of far-reaching policy recommendations covering removing fuel subsidies, revamping the refineries and reducing of the number of senior ministers. I was impressed.

The aspect that really caught my fancy was the plan to revive the refineries through what the committee called the "NLNG Model". The Nigeria LNG Limited (NLNG) is owned by four shareholders: Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), 49 per cent; Shell Gas, 25.6 per cent; Total Gaz Electricite Holdings France, 15 per cent; and Eni International, 10.4 per cent. Although Nigeria is the single largest shareholder



NLNG MD, Philip Mshelbila

through the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Shell Gas, Total Gaz and Eni International own a combined 51 per cent stake. When it comes to sharing the dividends, the Nigerian government takes nearly double what Shell, the next biggest partner, gets.

The real deal, for me, is that NLNG is not managed by Nigeria or the NNPC. Otherwise, it would have been run aground ages ago — that is if it took off at all. Is it NNPC that cannot run a mega filling station that will manage one of the world's biggest liquefied national gas projects? Are you kidding me? When the APC committee recommended the "NLNG Model" for the refineries — which means Nigeria would still hold the biggest stake, thereby accommodating a bit of the sentiments of the anti-privatisation movement, but they would not be managed by NNPC — I was somewhat excited. I felt we were about to finally break the jinx around the refineries. It turned out I was completely wrong.

The Buhari administration, like all previous administrations, ignored the proposal and decided to sink more billions of dollars to "revive" the refineries. In 2007, President Olusegun Obasanjo had managed to sell two of the refineries after spending billions on turn around maintenance but President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua nullified it as NNPC promised they would come back to life "within two years" if we parted with more billions. President Goodluck Jonathan's government also said the refineries would be "back to life" if we spent another batch of billions. Today, we are spending another $1.5 billion on Port Harcourt refineries alone to bring them "back to life". What a country.

But in case you are temped to write Nigeria off on the basis of these shenanigans and conclude that the country is doomed to fail and nothing can ever work here, take a deep breath. The "NLNG Model" is one reason to be hopeful. The NLNG was incorporated on May 17, 1989 by the military government of Gen Ibrahim Babangida to exploit and export our enormous natural gas resources: the liquefied natural gas and the natural gas liquids. Exactly 33 years on, it has become one of the biggest success stories to have come out of Nigeria since 1914. What this tells an optimist like me is that with the right leadership, right policies and right culture, we can indeed get some things right.

Between 1999, when NLNG exported its first cargo, and today, Nigeria has been reaping bountiful harvest from its stake — principally because we got the management right. NLNG has paid dividends in excess of $18 billion over the period, according to

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WAZIRI ADIO

POSTSCRIPT



Critical Issues Ahead of Super Weekend

The already charged political landscape will become more animated this week as the big two political parties choose their presidential flagbearers in Abuja. The most consequential decisions around the 2023 general election will be taken mostly by delegates within a few days of what can be called our Super Weekend. Expect suspense, plot twists, rhetorical flashes, denouement and other elements of good political drama. No matter how it ends, one thing is certain: the week will be full of drama.

There will be drama from the screening of the 25 presidential aspirants still standing on the platform of the All Progressives Congress (APC). There will be drama from the dozens of aspirants in the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and APC making their closing, fevered pitches to the delegates, who will be feted and shielded in equal measure. There will be drama from shifts in delegate counts, from last-minute alignments and re-alignments, and from desperate and calculated trade-offs. And there will be the minute-by-minute drama of the primaries proper. This is the week that political junkies live for.

In this high-octane week, some issues will be playing high in the minds of political actors and keen watchers of politics; and some developments are bound to come into view because they go with the terrain. These issues and developments are likely to shape not only the outcome of the primaries of the Big Two but also the permutations for the 2023 polls and beyond. I will highlight four of these elements here.

The first issue is the implication of the amendment to Section 84 (8) of Electoral Act 2022 which the Senate hastily passed on 10th May 2022 and the House of Representatives duly concurred with the following day. The amendment was reportedly transmitted to the President on 13th May 2022. It was yet to the signed at the time of writing this.

For context, Section 84 (8) of the electoral law signed by President Muhammadu Buhari on 25th February 2022 states that: "A political party that adopts the system of indirect primaries for the choice of its candidate shall clearly outline in its constitution and rule the procedure for democratic election of delegates to vote at the convention, congress or meeting." The key words here are: elected delegates will choose the candidates of parties that adopt indirect primaries. This section does not exclude other delegates but a principle in law is that what is not mentioned is not intended. And for this purpose, the electoral law supersedes precedents or whatever else is in the constitutions and rules of individual parties.

Effectively, statutory delegates have thus been excluded by the current electoral law from voting in indirect primaries. The statutory delegates include the president, the vice president, the governors and their deputies, federal and state legislators, local government chairmen, their deputies and councillors, and key party officials at federal, state and local government levels. The amendment passed by the National Assembly on 11th May 2022 was intended to correct what was clearly an unintended exclusion of this high-heeled class of delegates.

Since the president and the key political actors are all involved, a presidential assent is still possible. But having a late and hasty amendment to the electoral law raises some fundamental issues. To be clear, the problem is not that an amendment was rammed through in one legislative day in each chamber of the parliament. There is nothing untoward as long as all the processes were followed. Indeed, a law can be passed, amended or repealed in one day. But our legislators hardly attach same speed to things that do not directly affect them. More importantly, it is quite rich if the entire elected political class could be blindsided on something as significant as this even in areas that affect them.

In the two leading parties, the statutory delegates constitute the majority of the usual delegates. APC was expected to have 7, 800 delegates, out of which 2, 322 (or 29.76%) are elected delegates and 5, 478 (or 70.23%) are statutory delegates. On its part, PDP was expected to have 3, 700 delegates, out of which 810 (or 21.89%) are elected delegates and 2, 890 (or 78.10%) are statutory delegates. What this means is that without the amendment, only between 22% and 30% of earlier expected delegates will choose the presidential flagbearers of the two leading parties.

On the face of it, this should reduce the final cost of the primaries in terms of

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