Manufacturers, Others Groan over Inadequate Power Supply as Gas Shortage Hits Businesses in Lagos, Ogun

●At N118 - N170 per standard cubic metre, gas cheaper than N780 per litre of diesel ●Nigeria has 201,000MW electricity deficit, says report

Ejiofor Alike in Lagos and **Emmanuel Addeh** in Abuja

The operations of manufacturing firms and other businesses in Lagos and Ogun states are currently being threatened following their inability to generate electricity to power their day-to-day activities due to the inadequate supply of gas from marketers, THISDAY's investigation has revealed.

Nigeria currently has an electricity deficit of 201,000 megawatts as power generation hovers between 3,500MW and just over 5,000MW.

A new report revealed that the country needs 206,000MW of power to be at par with Qatar and others in electricity supply.

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Bode George: Renewed Rivalries between Minority, Majority Ethnic Groups Can Derail Nigeria… Page 8

THISDAY

TRUTH & REASON

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Eight States Owe Workers for at Least Six Months, Says Report

Segun James

Eight state governments failed to pay some of their workers for at least six months, a new report has revealed.

The states are Taraba, Nasarawa, Edo, Ebonyi, Ondo, Plateau, Imo, and Abia.

According to the report, they owe active workers as well as retirees.

Irregular payment of workers' salaries has been a problem in Nigerian states for decades. Officials often blame revenue shortfall, yet continue to apply the same lean resources to their lavish interests.

Budgit said it conducted the survey to spotlight and identify state governments that have consistently failed to meet the essential requirement of governance and employee compensation.

The group called on governments to urgently address the glaring inability to pay state workers' salaries as the attitude, enthusiasm, productivity, and survival of state workers and their families are directly related to the timeliness of their remuneration.

The organisation in its empirical survey across the 36 states of the federation expressed displeasure over certain state governments' refusal to pay the monthly salaries accruable to civil service workers in their states as and when due.

BudgIT conducted this empirical survey to spotlight and identify state governments that have consistently failed to meet the essential requirement

Continued on page 8

As APC Unites Behind Tinubu, PDP Struggles with Wike

●Fintri-led reconciliatory team meets Rivers gov's camp tomorrow ●Imoke, Waziri, Jegede among ex-VP's team ●Duke, Mimiko, former AGF Adoke, Gana lead Wike's camp ●Ayu-must-go agitation persists

Chuks Okocha and **Adedayo Akinwale** in Abuja

With the appointment of the Governor of Plateau State, Mr Simon Lalong as the Director General of the Presidential Campaign Council (PCC) of the All Progressives Congress (APC), the leaders of the ruling party have united behind the party's presidential candidate, Senator Bola Tinubu.

In contrast to the APC's united house, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has continued to be bogged down by the Governor of Rivers State, Mr Nyesom Wike, whose demands have stalled the efforts of the main opposition party to reconcile its aggrieved members.

However, the peace efforts by the PDP to reconcile its aggrieved members have received a boost as the reconciliatory team led by the Governor of Adamawa State, Ahmadu Fintri, will tomorrow meet with the camp of the Rivers State governor.

This is coming as the agitation for the resignation of the National Chairman of the party, Senator Iyorchia Ayu has persisted despite the ongoing efforts to reconcile all aggrieved parties.

With the appointment of Lalong as the Director General of the APC's Presidential Campaign Council (PCC), the members and leaders of the ruling party have closed ranks ahead of the 2023 general election.

The controversy generated by the APC's Muslim-Muslim ticket also appears to have died down

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A RENEWED PARTNERSHIP…

L-R: Chief Executive Officer, Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited, Mr. Mele Kolo Kyari; Chief Executive Officer, Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission, Mr. Gbenga Komolafe; and Country Chair, Shell Companies in Nigeria, Mr. Osagie Okunbor, at the execution of Production Sharing Contracts for Oil Mining Lease 133 in deep water Nigeria at the NNPC Towers, Abuja…weekend

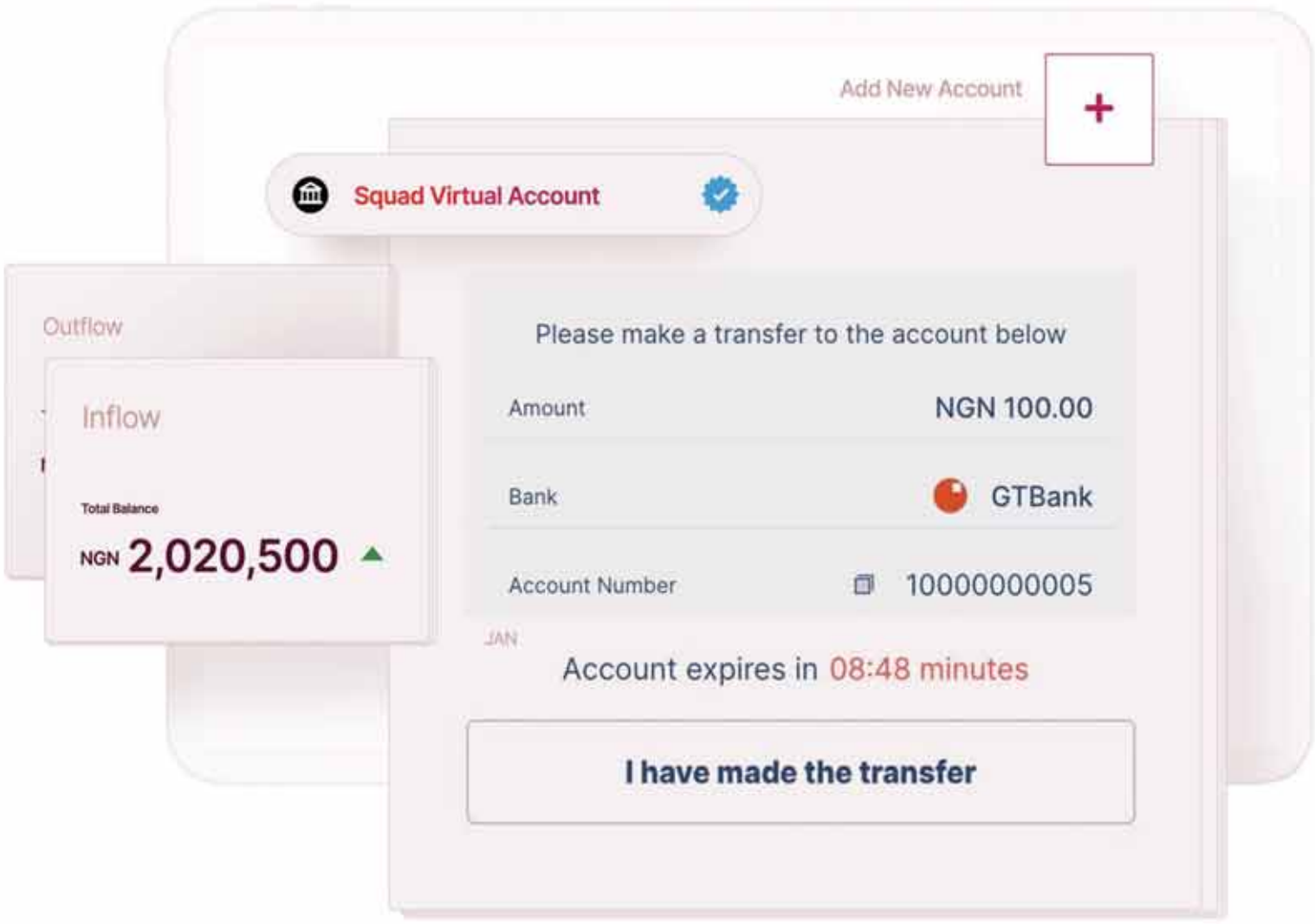
2023: Atiku, Tinubu, Obi, Others to Pay N10m Each for Campaign Posters in Anambra... Page 5



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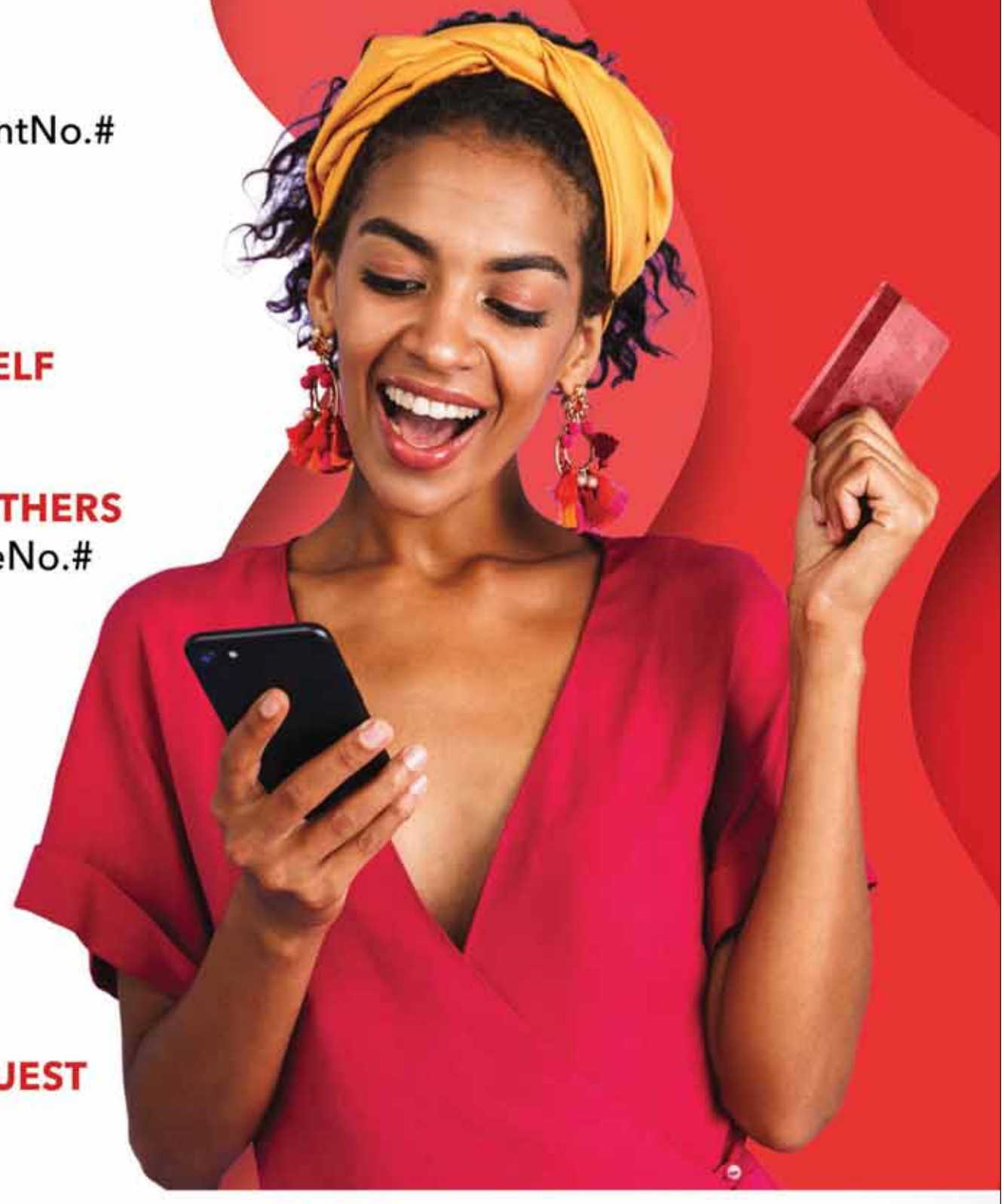
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WHEN UN ENVOYS CAME CALLING…

L-R: United Nations Deputy Secretary General, Ms. Amina Mohammed; President Muhammadu Buhari; and Special Representative of the Secretary General and Head of United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, during an audience at the State House in Abuja…weekend

2023: Atiku, Tinubu, Obi, Others to Pay N10m Each for Campaign Posters in Anambra

David-Chyddy Eleke in Awka

The presidential candidates of all political parties in Nigeria will pay N10million each to paste their campaign posters in Anambra State, the state government has revealed.

The affected candidates are the presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Senator Bola Tinubu; Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP); Mr Peter Obi of Labour Party, and Justice Peter Umeadi of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), among others.

Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Anambra Signage and Advertising Agency (ANSAA), Mr Tony Ujubuonu, stated this in a public notice issued in the state yesterday.

The public notice also disclosed that other candidates for public offices will pay varying amounts to paste their posters anywhere in the state.

While the presidential candidates are mandated to pay N10 million, senatorial candidates will pay N7million, House of Representatives candidates will pay N5million, and state House of Assembly candidates will pay N1million.

Ujubuonu also directed that the payment of posters be made to the government revenue account before pasting anywhere, noting that politicians who default on the payments would face prosecution before the election.

He announced that the state government has banned the pasting of campaign posters on street light poles; roundabouts and other public buildings and infrastructure in the state.

He stated that the statutory costs for out-of-home media and mobile advertising were pegged at N100,000 for 48 sheets of billboards; N500,000 for Spectacular billboards; N500,000 Gantry displays; N100,000 for an irregularly shaped billboard; N50,000 for the branded vehicle; and N5,000 for Keke rear branding, respectively.

The notice read: "As the campaign for the 2023 general election officially commences next month, September; Anambra State Signage and Advertisement Agency (ANSAA), in charge of all forms of Advertising in the state wishes to bring some important information to your notice.

"That posting of posters on bridges, road demarcations; street light poles, roundabouts and public buildings remain prohibited.

"That every campaign material and advert form such as posters, public address systems, banners, fliers, buntings, T-shirts, caps and sundries must be duly approved for after full payment of the requisite fee.

"That every billboard must be displayed through a registered advertising practitioner after the advertising content has been vetted by the APCON."

AS APC UNITES BEHIND TINUBU, PDP STRUGGLES WITH WIKE

after Lalong apologised to the Catholic Church for his recent reference to Pope Francis while defending his appointment as the Director General of the council. In a letter addressed to the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), Lalong admitted that it was an error on his part to have linked the Pope with Nigeria's politics.

He begged for forgiveness and understanding of the Catholic Church through the Bishop's conference.

However, with the loyalists of some key presidential aspirants like Vice President Yemi Osinbajo; former Minister of Transportation, Chibuike Amaechi and the Senate President, Dr Ahmad Lawan missing from the APC's presidential campaign team, there were speculations that all was not well with the ruling party.

But the Director of Media and Communications, Tinubu Campaign Organisation, Mr Bayo Onanuga, told THISDAY that the report of infighting within the team was untrue.

He also debunked claims that the campaign council was not all-inclusive, adding that the governor of Plateau State, the Director General of the PCC, Lalong and the Spokesperson of the campaign council and the Minister of State for Labour and Employment, Festus Keyamo were Amaechi's loyalists.

Onanuga pointed out that Lalong coordinated Amaechi's campaign among governors during the presidential primary of the party.

He insisted that everyone was carried along, adding that the presidential candidate of the party, Senator Bola Tinubu has mended fences with everyone and his co-contestants.

Onanuga said: "Lalong is from Amaechi, to start with. The Osinbajo new media team is working with the Tinubu-Shettima group. Which infighting are they talking about?" he queried.

On his part, the Convener of the Osinbajo Support Movement, Mr Badmus Olawale, stated that only unity can lead the party to victory in the forthcoming elections.

He noted that the vice president had asked his followers to support the party, adding however that the team set up was not complete yet and has not been inaugurated.

Olawale said: "As we all know, His Excellency, Yemi Osinbajo went through surgery and he is just getting back to work. Asiwaju reserves the right to put in place his team and win or lose, they will have to be held accountable.

"Mr Vice President has asked us, his followers, to support the party as we maintain our structure, which we are doing. Only unity can lead us to victory.

"The loss of Osun State governorship election is still fresh and I hope going forward, the party and the candidate will do the needful. I want to believe the team set-up is not complete yet and has not been inaugurated. Let's wait till then."

The former Deputy Publicity Secretary of the party, Yekini Nabena, also argued that the campaign council is all-inclusive.

He explained that both Lalong and Keyamo are Amaechi's loyalists.

Nabena stated: "Is the campaign DG not Ameachi's loyalist? Is Keyamo not Ameachi's loyalist, what are you talking about?

"Everybody is included. It is not a problem. When you say VP's loyalists, you know it is a problem here. Why am I saying it is a problem, VP is Tinubu's loyalist; so, who are his loyalists that are different from Tinubu's people? So, VP is also Tinubu's boy. If people are going to work for him, it is still the same structure; he does not have his own structure before he came to the government as a VP," he explained.

Lalong Inspects Campaign Headquarters, Meets Tinubu

Meanwhile, Lalong, has officially kick-started his work as he visited the headquarters of the Tinubu/Shettima Campaign Office to inspect the facility and meet some of the staff.

He was received by the Secretary of the APC Presidential Campaign Council, Hon. James Faleke and Director of Administration, Hadiza Bala Usman.

Lalong's Director of Press and Public Affairs, Makut Macham, in a statement at the weekend in Jos, said the governor was taken around the building and also ushered into his office, after which "he welcomed the APC presidential candidate, Senator Bola Tinubu who arrived at the office before they went in for a closed-door meeting."

He added: "Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, the APC Campaign DG and Speaker, House of Representatives, Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila also held another meeting with the Speakers of the state Houses of Assembly."

Fintri-led Reconciliatory Team Meets Rivers Gov's Camp Tomorrow

As part of his moves to resolve the feud between him and Wike, the presidential candidate of the party, Atiku Abubakar, had appointed Fintri to lead his reconciliatory team.

A former Minister of Information, Prof. Jerry Gana, has however cried out that some forces within and outside the main opposition party are frustrating the moves to reconcile the former vice president with the Rivers State governor.

Fintri yesterday told journalists at the Yola International Airport, that he was appointed the chairman of the reconciliation committee set up by the former vice president.

The governor, who disclosed that he seemed the right man for the assignment, was optimistic that with God's help, he could reach a truce between Atiku and Wike.

THISDAY gathered that as part of his assignment, Fintiri will tomorrow host a reconciliatory meeting between the supporters of Atiku and Wike.

The Adamawa State governor had last week met with his Rivers State counterpart to prepare grounds for the reconciliation.

The meeting, which will take place in Abuja, will be attended by six members each from Atiku and Wike's camps.

The six members are to represent the six geo-political zones in the country.

Among the six members, who will represent Atiku's camp are Fintiri; a former Minister of Police Affairs, Adamu Waziri; former governor of Cross River State, Senator Liyel Imoke and a former PDP governorship candidate in Ondo State, Mr Eyitayo Jegede (SAN), among three others, whose names could not be ascertained as at press time.

THISDAY also gathered that Wike's camp will be represented at the meeting by a former Attorney General of the Federation, and Minister of Justice, Mohammed Bello Adoke; former Minister of Information, Gana; former governor of Ondo State, Mr Olusegun Mimiko and former Gombe State Governor, Alhaji Ibrahim Dankwanbo, among others.

However, it was also learnt that Atiku and Wike will not attend the meeting.

At the end of the first meeting between Wike and members of his camp, Gana had in a one-paragraph communiqué said: "As far as we are concerned, we are open for discussion. We want everything to be put on the table. We remain in the party. We are not going anywhere; we want to be seen as equal stakeholders".

A source privy to the reconciliation efforts told THISDAY that the agitation for Ayu to resign has continued unabated.

According to him, the aggrieved camp has continued to insist that the North cannot hold the office of the national chairman and presidential candidate of the party at the same time. The camp also accused Ayu of being biased against Wike.

The call for the sack of Ayu is one of the issues stalling the announcement of members of the PDP presidential campaign team, as the party wants an all-inclusive campaign council.

PDP had to cancel its national caucus and National Caucus Executive Committee (NEC) meeting last week to ensure a total reconciliation of all aggrieved members of the party.

The NEC was put off because of the fear that the members may pass a vote of no confidence on Ayu.

However, the embattled national chairman of the PDP experienced respite as the party's House of Representatives caucus passed a vote of confidence on him.

Continued on page 10

NEWS



CELEBRATING A LEGAL ICON @ 85…

L-R: Chairman, Council of Legal Education, Chief Emeka Ngige (SAN); Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Geoffrey Onyeama; Enugu State Governor, Hon. Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi; legal icon, Dr. Anthony O. Mogboh (SAN); his wife, Veronica; and President, Nigerian Bar Association, Mr. Olumide Akpata, during the celebration of Mogboh's 85th birthday, 60 years post-call as a legal practitioner and 35 years as a SAN, in Enugu… yesterday

LCCI Urges FG to Tackle Crises in Aviation Sector

NECA wants reappraisal of monetary, fiscal policies

Dike Onwuamaeze

Following the escalating prices of aviation fuel that have risen on average from N400 per litre in February 2022 to about N800 per litre in recent times, the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) has tasked the federal government to take immediate steps toward resolving the crises buffeting the Nigerian aviation sector.

Similarly, the Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA) has urged the federal government to reappraise its monetary and fiscal policies because of the multifaceted challenges confronting the nation.

The LCCI argued that the intervention of the government has become a matter of categorical imperative because of the systemic importance of air travel for the conduct of trade and commerce across borders.

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

These views were expressed in a statement at the weekend by the Director General of the LCCI, Dr Chinyere Almona.

According to the statement, "the chamber is concerned about the aviation crisis because of the systemic importance of air travel for the conduct of trade and commerce across borders.

"The organised private sector urges the government to take immediate steps toward resolving the crises in the aviation sector.

"Air transportation is considered one of the safest channels considering the despicable level of insecurity in the country. Hence, resolving the continued fuel crisis facing the safest transport channel is critical for the business community."

Almona also said that the "government must immediately consider involving the CBN and the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC) in making foreign exchange available for aviation fuel imports. However, the more sustainable solution would be refining Jet-A1 fuel for our local consumption.

"While we acknowledge that the current energy crisis is real and global, it is aggravating in Nigeria because we do not produce the oil," adding that "the aviation sector qualifies for targeted financing to facilitate economic activities in the country, boost economic growth and avert an imminent recession."

She noted that the government could not afford to allow this sector to suffer from these crises as operators in the industry are faced with a double whammy issue of foreign exchange scarcity and the high cost of aviation fuel, Jet-A1, which is a significant cost component in airline operations.

She said: "This crisis was (and still is) an acute scarcity of aviation fuel (Jet A1), which has caused intermittent flight delays and cancellations. Some airlines have been forced to shut down operations due to the harsh operating environment.

"With the rising insecurity that has bedevilled our road transport system, a safer option is air transportation. This portends challenges around the movement of goods and business conduct across locations."

The director general added that "we have noted that from the beginning of the year, aviation fuel scarcity has remained a persistent and unresolved problem that has impacted the cost-of-service delivery, as reflected in the rising cost of flights.

"Aviation fuel prices have risen from an average of N400/litre as of February to about N800/litre in recent times. With the business community not sure of any intervention to provide respite, the woes of the airline operators may be far from over.

"The earlier intervention by the National Assembly alongside the CBN that saw the NNPC supply Jet-A1 at a discounted price of N480/litre may not have achieved the desired results. The sector has continued to suffer from persistent shocks and disruptions to operations."

Meanwhile, NECA has urged the federal government to reappraise its monetary and fiscal policies because of the multifaceted challenges confronting the nation.

Its Director-General, Mr Wale Oyerinde, made the call in a statement in Lagos yesterday.

Oyerinde said that the policies had little impact either because of inherent inconsistencies or strategic sabotage by external forces.

He said that the lack of adequate consultation during their crafting and implementation could also be a factor.

"While the monetary policies aim to reflate the economy through the various interventions, the fiscal policies tend to create a bottleneck for the productive sector.

"This they do by introducing new taxes and levies, such as Telecommunication Excise Tax, Excise Duty on carbonated drinks, Beverage's tax, NYSC Levy among many others.

"The introduction of these taxes and levies and other anti-enterprise regulations, to a large extent, will further hamper the consumption pattern of the citizens," he said.

According to him, they can also reduce the capacity utilisation of enterprises and worsen the macroeconomic situation of the country due to the multiplier effects.

He said that the recently held Employers' Summit in Abuja came up with some key conclusions and recommendations.

These, he said, could serve as alternative policy actions for government to consider.

Oyerinde said that as a matter of urgency, there should be deliberate alignment between monetary and fiscal policies to reduce contradictory tendencies.

"Also, a deliberate and independent mechanism with the active involvement of the private sector should be put in place to regularly gauge the effect and impact of policies and regulations.

"Ineffective ones should be changed and new ones formulated," he said.

MANUFACTURERS, OTHERS GROAN OVER INADEQUATE POWER SUPPLY AS GAS SHORTAGE HITS BUSINESSES IN LAGOS, OGUN

With the chronic supply of electricity by distribution and generation companies, manufacturers and other big businesses and organisations rely on gas to generate power for their operations.

At a price of between N118 and N170 per standard cubic metre, which is equivalent to a litre of diesel currently being sold for N780, gas is cheaper for power generation than diesel.

THISDAY gathered that while businesses located close to the major gas pipelines buy gas at N118 per standard cubic metre, others that are not on the pipelines buy at the price of N170 per standard cubic metre.

Investigation reveals that gas supply to businesses and organisations through the Escravos Lagos Pipeline (ELPs) has dropped drastically in recent months.

With this development, the operations of these businesses are being threatened with massive job losses looming.

It was also learnt that some of the marketers who made massive investments in gas pipelines and other infrastructure are counting their losses due to the insufficient gas supply to feed the pipelines.

The 36-inch ELPs, which begin at Chevron's Escravos gas plant in Delta State, also feed the West African Gas Pipeline (WAGP), which takes Nigerian gas to Benin, Togo and Ghana.

The pipeline operated by the Nigerian Gas Company (NGC), a subsidiary of the NNPC Limited, passes through Sapele, Benin City, Akure, Ife, Ibadan and Lagos.

The Nigerian Gas Marketing Company (NGMC), a subsidiary of NGC, sells gas to marketers that supply the product to businesses in Lagos and Ogun states.

Some of the marketers, it was learnt, include Shell Nigerian Gas, a subsidiary of Shell; Axxela Limited; Green Fuels Limited and Powergas Limited, among others.

THISDAY gathered that manufacturing firms, big companies and other large organisations in Lagos and Ogun states, including the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) rely on these suppliers for gas to power their operations.

However, these businesses and organisations along this axis have been experiencing an acute shortage of gas from marketers in recent months.

Some marketers have blamed the gas shortage on the supply drop from the NGC.

For instance, an investigation has revealed that these businesses received full supply for only two days in the last 15 days.

With this development, some of the manufacturers and producers of food in the two states have threatened to reduce their staff strengths or suspend operations until the gas supply improves.

This threat, if implemented, will have dire consequences on the economy.

The federal government had declared 2021 -2030 as the 'Decade of Gas' to encourage more investments in gas infrastructure and greater dependence on gas usage.

Nigeria Has 201,000MW Electricity Deficit, Says Report

Meanwhile, with a total power generation hovering between 3,500MW and just over 5,000MW, Nigeria has an electricity supply deficit of 201,000MW, a new report has indicated.

The Nigerian Guild of Editors Roundtable on Data-based Subnational Reporting, in its August edition, noted that with the 1,000MW per one million people, recommended as the Sustainable Development Standard, Nigeria's population of 206 million would require 206,000MW of electricity.

The unreliable power in the country has become a significant problem for citizens and businesses, resulting in annual economic losses estimated at $26.2 billion (N10.1 trillion), equivalent to about five per cent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Nigeria's fragile national electricity grid has collapsed at least seven times this year, with deteriorating infrastructure, limited investment, misalignment and liquidity issues being the main culprits.

Drawing a parallel between Nigeria and selected countries, the editor of the report, Rotimi Sankore, noted in the report that while Nigeria's highest record ever, has been 5,616MW, Qatar a population of 2.9 million people has 10,000MW.

In addition, he stated that Singapore, with a population of 5.8 million persons currently produces 12,582MW, which is a far cry from what Nigeria generates and supplies.

But the federal government had promised that with the Siemens deal, 7,000MW additional power would be supplied in the first instance, before it rises to 11,000W and consequently 25,000MW by 2025.

Analysing other development indices, Sankore said that with 33 per cent unemployment, 22 per cent unemployment, 42 per cent youth unemployment and 100 million Nigerians drowned in multidimensional poverty, the data wasn't looking good for the country.

Sankore added that roughly six million children do not complete primary and secondary school, while out-of-school children have now hit 13 million.

According to him, Nigeria's under-development cannot be solved by cosmetic policies.

"No military solution to under-development and no army has ever defeated under-development. Subnational governance is key to stability while subnational reporting will improve accountability," he said.

Citing the case of Katsina, he disclosed that the state has the highest malnutrition rate with 58 per cent, forced marriage at 70.9 per cent, highest birth per woman at 7.3 per cent while the lowest age for sexual initiation for girls remained at 15.3 years.

According to him, the state also has the highest polygamy per man, with a rate of 50 per cent worsened by 7.32 per man and 996,000 out-of-school children.

He argued that under-development is the main threat to Nigeria.

According to him, while Nigeria and France had the same population of 45 million each in 1960, France's population grew by a mere 20 million by 2000, while Nigeria's population rose by 161 million during the period.

"Investment in education and electricity and health haven't kept up with population growth," he said.

By 2050, he projected that Nigeria's population will be 401 million, up from the current approximately 216 million this year.

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NEWS



WELCOME TO MY HOME...

L-R: The presidential candidate of Peoples Democratic Party, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar; former Jigawa State Governor, Alhaji Sule Lamido; and PDP National Chairman, Dr. Iyorchia Ayu, at the wedding of Lamido's daughter in Bamaina, Jigawa State…yesterday

Bode George: Renewed Rivalries between Minority, Majority Ethnic Groups Can Derail Nigeria

Warns PDP against undermining interest of the south

Gboyega Akinsanmi

A former Deputy National Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Chief Olabode George, at the weekend, warned that the renewed rivalries between minority and majority ethnic groups in the main opposition party could utterly derail Nigeria as it did during the First Republic.

George has also warned the PDP National Working Committee (NWC) against undermining the interest of the South, pointing out that no section of the federation "can win the next presidential poll without substantial input from the other."

He gave the warning in an interview with THISDAY while lamenting how unnecessary tribal sentiments had stoked the renewed rivalries between the PDP leaders from minority and ethnic majority groups.

Since former Vice President Atiku Abubakar emerged as the PDP presidential candidate on May 28, the main opposition party has been plunged into deeper internal crises due to the hijacking of the top positions by northern party members.

During the interview, George blamed the present managers of the All Progressives Congress (APC) for the deepening internal crisis that plagued the main opposition party, claiming that they exacerbated the mistrust in the rank of the PDP.

He said: "This is an unnecessary tribal sentiment. The claims - we have the number; we can do whatever we want and nobody can challenge us - are getting us back to the majority versus minority contention both in the north and south.

"This is the issue that created the friction that disrupted the First Republic. Our founding fathers found solutions to it. They divided Nigeria into six geo-political zones. There are also six top political offices in the federation. Every geo-political zone must go home with one of those top political positions.

"If we are driving back to those days of the majority versus minority, it will not help this country. It has never helped us and it will never help us in the future. We must avoid it like a leech. People are angry. Now, the insecurity in the country has exacerbated that friction."

He, therefore, warned the national leaders of the PDP against undermining the interests of the south, noting that the southern leaders "are simply demanding a sense of belonging or inclusion in the top hierarch of the main opposition party."

He observed: "Nobody can win an election without substantial input from the North or the South. Do we really want to return to the Villa in 2023? If we want to return to the Villa, you need votes from the South to win.

"Can the North alone win an election to the villa without the South? Put differently, can the South alone win an election to the villa without the North? We must break that barrier. We must reunite ourselves as the founding fathers did," George challenged the national leaders to put their differences aside to save the PDP from a deeper crisis.

George also urged the national leaders not to throw into the debris of history, the lessons they learnt from the ways the founding fathers of the party had managed the political fallout of the country.

Before convening the next meeting of its National Executive Committee (NEC), George canvassed deeper consultation "to resolve the internal crisis that threatens the future of the PDP.

Whatever decision will be made at the NEC meeting will be all-encompassing.

"The need for deeper consultation is necessary. I think the managers have been hearing the cacophony of voices from all corners of the country and the six geo-political zones of the federation.

"The most contentious issue is inclusivity. How do we have that sense of belonging? How do we have this commitment? How will our people feel to encourage them to troop out in millions to deliver the voices of our party?"

WHO Names Monkeypox Variants as Clades I, IIa, IIb to Avoid Social, Cultural Offence

Ejiofor Alike

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has announced new names for the variants of the monkeypox virus, resolving to name the clades using Roman numerals - Clades I, IIa and IIb.

According to WHO, this step is taken in a bid to avoid causing any "cultural or social offence."

Experts in pox virology, evolutionary biology, and representatives of research institutes from across the globe reviewed the phylogeny and nomenclature of the known and new monkeypox virus variants or clades.

A group of global experts convened by WHO agreed on new names for monkeypox virus variants as part of ongoing efforts to align the names of the Monkeypox disease, virus and variants—or clades—with current best practices.

According to a statement by the WHO, current best practice is that newly-identified viruses, related disease, and virus variants should be given names with the aim to avoid causing offence to any cultural, social, national, regional, professional, or ethnic groups, and minimise any negative impact on trade, travel, tourism or animal welfare.

The statement further revealed that while there is a consensus name for the variants of Monkeypox virus, WHO is holding an open consultation for a new disease name for the virus.

The monkeypox virus was named upon first discovery in 1958, before current best practices in naming diseases and viruses were adopted.

Similarly for the name of the disease it causes, major variants were identified by the geographic regions where they were known to circulate

"The naming of virus species is the responsibility of the International Committee on the Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV), which has a process underway for the name of the monkeypox virus.

"The naming of variants for existing pathogens is normally the result of debate amongst scientists. In order to expedite agreement in the context of the current outbreak, WHO convened an ad hoc meeting on 8 August to enable virologists and public health experts to reach consensus on new terminology.

"Experts in pox virology, evolutionary biology and representatives of research institutes from across the globe reviewed the phylogeny and nomenclature of known and new monkeypox virus variants or clades. They discussed the characteristics and evolution of monkeypox virus variants, their apparent phylogenetic and clinical differences, and potential consequences for public health and future virological and evolutionary research.

"The group reached consensus on new nomenclature for the virus clades that is in line with best practices. They agreed on how the virus clades should be recorded and classified on genome sequence repository sites.

"Consensus was reached to now refer to the former Congo Basin (Central African) clade as Clade one (I) and the former West African clade as Clade two (II). Additionally, it was agreed that the Clade II consists of two subclades.

"The proper naming structure will be represented by a Roman numeral for the clade and a lower-case alphanumeric character for the subclades. Thus, the new naming convention comprises Clade I, Clade IIa and Clade IIb, with the latter referring primarily to the group of variants largely circulating in the 2022 global outbreak. The naming of lineages will be as proposed by scientists as the outbreak evolves. Experts will be reconvened as needed. The new names for the clades should go into effect immediately while work continues on the disease and virus names," it said

EIGHT STATES OWE WORKERS FOR AT LEAST SIX MONTHS, SAYS REPORT

of governance and employee compensation, thereby subjecting their workers to unpaid labour and harsh living conditions.

However, the Edo State government has asked BudgIT, to retract its publication.

In a letter addressed to BudgIT's Country Director, the Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning, Iserhienrhien Efe, said the publication which claimed Edo owed six months' salaries was false and "has the tendency to mislead the public".

The state government asked the organisation to take down the publication within 48 hours and issue a public apology.

One state, Abia, did not pay some workers for 22 months.

"The state (Abia) currently owes its state tertiary institution workers six months' salary, while Ebonyi State has not paid its pensioners in the last six months," BudgIT said in its report.

It said secretariat workers in Taraba State complained of irregular salary payments for up to six months, while lecturers at state tertiary institutions and midwives in the state-owned hospital in Ondo State have not been paid in the last four months.

BudgIT said this in a statement signed by Assistant Head, Media and Communications, Iyanu Fatoba,

The organisation said the outcome of its report titled, "2022 Nigerian Sub-National Salary Survey," showed that "at least 12 states owe their workers at least one month's salary as of July 28, 2022".

It urged concerned states to prioritise employees' rights by paying all accrued salaries.

"BudgIT expressed this disapproval after its empirical survey across the 36 states in the federation revealed that at least 12 states owe their workers at least one month's salary as of July 28, 2022," the statement reads.

"BudgIT conducted this empirical survey to spotlight and identify state governments that have consistently failed to meet the essential requirement of governance and employee compensation, thereby subjecting their workers to unpaid labour and harsh living conditions."

It added that findings from the survey showed that "Abia, Adamawa, Ebonyi, Ondo and Taraba owe three years or less in payments".

"For example, Abia State currently owes its state tertiary institution workers six months' salary, while Ebonyi has not paid its pensioners in the last six months. Secretariat workers in Taraba complained of irregular salary payments for up to six months, while lecturers at state tertiary institutions and midwives in the state-owned hospital in Ondo state have not been paid a dime in the last four months."

BudgIT's head of research and policy advisory, Iniobong Usen, said civil servants' remuneration is a necessary part of the employer-employee relationship, whether at the state or federal level.

Usen said the delay in payment of salaries affects the smooth working of the government, adding that the survival and livelihood of civil servants depend on timely salary payment and the government's refusal to pay shows its disregard for the legal obligation to pay.

"Nigerian civil servants are unfortunately no strangers to delays and gaps in monthly salary payments. Despite belonging to the executive implementing arm of the government, they have been left without payments in many instances. With several states guilty of this non-payment, civil servants are often at wit's end at 'month end," he said.

The civic tech group further said the lingering issue has become worrisome, adding that non-salary payments are a breach of the basic contractual provisions between an employer and employee and failed to recognise national legislation on employee rights at the continental and international levels.

"BudgIT posits that this state of affairs is a combination of 'governance failure' bordering on mismanagement and administrative inefficiency, an unnecessarily large wage bill which itself may be due to poor planning and hiring practices, and a problem of broader macroeconomic downturns which in some sense are beyond the control of the state governments, as they have little influence over monetary and fiscal policies," the group added.


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NEWS

Order INEC to Extend Voter's Registration Till November 27, Ozekhome Begs Court

Alex Enumah in Abuja

A human rights activist and Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), Chief Mike Ozekhome, has asked the Federal High Court in Abuja for an order of mandatory injunction compelling the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), to extend the Continuous Voter's Registration Exercise till November 27, 2022.

The request, according to the senior lawyer, is to prevent the disenfranchisement of millions of eligible voters in the 2023 general elections who are yet to be registered by INEC for the said election.

In a suit filed on August 5, 2022, the plaintiffs claimed that the stoppage of registration of eligible voters by INEC on July 31, this year without due recourse to the Electoral Act was tantamount to "executive lawlessness and constitutional infractions."

While Ozekhome and Abubakar Sani, who are yet to be registered voters are the plaintiffs in the suit marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/1335/2022, the electoral umpire is the sole defendant.

In a 14-paragraph affidavit deposed in support of the suit, Abubakar Sani argued that unless the court intervenes, he and other millions of eligible voters who are yet to be registered by INEC would be disenfranchised from exercising their rights to vote in the 2023 general election scheduled to commence from February 25.

According to the deponent, who claimed to be above the age of 18 required for qualification to be registered for an election, all efforts to get registered before INEC stopped registration on July 31, were unsuccessful owing to the mammoth crowd that characterised various INEC registration centres he visited.

Sani, who claimed to be keenly interested in voting in next year's general election, noted that unless he and millions of others in his shoe are duly registered by INEC, they would not be able to vote in the election.

The plaintiffs argued that while the electoral body is saddled with the conduct of credible elections in the country, the cessation of the registration of eligible voters last July contravened both the Electoral Act, Constitutional and the African on Human and People's Rights.

According to Ozekhome, the law provides that INEC shall continue to register eligible voters until 90 days to an election, adding that the stoppage on July 31, was over six months before the general election slated for February 25 next year.

He further stated that by stopping the registration exercise, INEC violated the provisions of the law, adding that the court has the necessary legal grounds to intervene and compel INEC to adhere to the provisions of the law.

Among the questions raised for determination include whether taking into consideration Sections 9(6) and 10(1) of the Electoral Act, 2022, which mandates INEC to continue registration of voters up to 90 days to an election, INEC can stop or terminate the registration of eligible voters on July 31, which is more than six months to the next general election scheduled to commence on February 25.

Ozekhome further asked whether by the provisions of the law INEC can refuse or decline to register an eligible voter who has attained the age of 18 years and present himself or herself for registration before 90 days to next year's general election.

He urged the court to after answering the questions raised in the suit in his favour, make a declaration that INEC cannot purport to terminate the continuous voter's registration on July 31, as doing so will disenfranchise millions of eligible voters.

He also urged the court to declare INEC's stoppage of registration on July 31 as ultra vires, invalid, null and void.

Meanwhile, the plaintiffs have also applied for an accelerated hearing of the matter in the interest of justice.

According to them, irreparable damage would be done to plaintiffs and others, if the matter is not heard timeously as they would be barred from participating in the 2023 polls.



STRATEGIC MEETING...

Presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress, Senator Bola Tinubu (left), and Director-General of APC Presidential Campaign Council/ Governor of Plateau State, Mr. Simon Lalong, at the APC Presidential Campaign Office in Abuja…weekend

Again, Angola Overtakes Nigeria in Oil Production

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

Angola has again produced more crude oil than Nigeria for the third consecutive month, as Africa's biggest economy lost 74,000 barrels per day in July compared with the previous month of June.

In May and June, Angola produced more crude oil than Nigeria, despite an increase in the country's output.

OPEC's monthly report for July showed that Nigeria's oil production declined by 74,000 barrels per day (bpd) to 1.08 million bpd in July from 1.26 million in June, based on direct communication.

On its part, Angola's oil production rose to 1.18 million bpd in July, up from 1.17 million bpd in June.

OPEC uses secondary sources to monitor its oil output, but also publishes a table of figures submitted by its member countries.

Nigeria recorded the second greatest decline in production among its OPEC peers in July, even though Angola's also reduced, it still beat Nigeria in terms of barrels drilled.

"Crude oil output increased mainly in Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait, while production in Venezuela and Angola declined," the oil cartel said.

OPEC has cut its 2022 forecast for growth in world oil demand for a third time since April, citing the economic impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, high inflation and efforts to contain the coronavirus pandemic.

But the view from OPEC contrasts with that of the International Energy Agency (IEA), the adviser to industrialised countries, which earlier raised its 2022 demand growth outlook.

OPEC in a monthly report said it expects 2022 oil demand to rise by 3.1 million barrels per day (bpd), or 3.2 per cent, down 260,000 bpd from the previous forecast. The IEA raised its forecast by 380,000 bpd to 2.1 million bpd.

Oil use has rebounded from the worst of the pandemic and is set to exceed 2019 levels this year even after prices hit record highs. However, high prices and Chinese coronavirus outbreaks have eaten into OPEC's 2022 growth projections.

"Global oil market fundamentals continued their strong recovery to pre-COVID-19 levels for most of the first half of 2022, albeit signs of slowing growth in the world economy and oil demand have emerged," OPEC said in the report.

The international oil cartel cut its 2022 global economic growth forecast to 3.1 per cent from 3.5 per cent and trimmed next year to 3.1 per cent, saying that the prospect of further weakness remained.

"This is, however, still solid growth, when compared with pre-pandemic growth levels. Therefore, it is obvious that significant downside risk prevails," OPEC said.

Oil prices held on to an earlier gain after the OPEC report was released, finding support from the IEA's view on demand and trading above $98 a barrel at the weekend.

OPEC and allies, including Russia, known collectively as OPEC+, are ramping up oil output after record cuts were put in place as the pandemic took hold in 2020.

FG Threatens to Sanction Chinese Firm over Slow Pace of Rail Project

Segun James

The federal government has threatened to sanction the China Civil Engineering and Construction Company (CCECC) over the firm's alleged failure to provide 85 per cent counterpart funding for the rail project in some parts of the country.

The Minister of Transportation, Muazu Sambo, decried the slow pace of work in the Kanu-Kaduna and Maiduguri-Port Harcourt rail lines.

Sambo gave the warning yesterday while briefing journalists in Lagos at the end of a tour of the Lekki Deep Seaport to ascertain the level of work done so far.

Sambo, who frowned at the attitude of the Chinese firm, said two years after the agreement was signed, CCECC had not provided any of its 85 per cent counterpart funds.

According to him, the agreement stipulates that CCECC is to provide 85 per cent of the project cost while the federal government provides the remaining 15 per cent.

He said: "I have given them till October 2022 to fulfill their own part of the agreement or stiff sanction would be meted out to them.

"How could it be said that two years after the agreement was signed, CCECC is yet to provide a dollar?"

A former Minister of Transportation, Rotimi Amaechi, had in March accused the firm of playing politics with the Kano-Kaduna rail project, urging the contractor to provide funding for the project.

Amaechi had said, "The pace is extremely slow, the equipment are supposed to be 2,000 plus, but what they (CCECC) have brought so far is 541, they claim that 300 and something equipment are in Kaduna. I will send people to check. Even if you add that all together, you will have 800 equipment in place of 2,000 equipment they are supposed to bring. That means something is wrong somewhere.

"I know they (CCECC) claim that there is no money, that we have not funded them. But what of their responsibility in the contract, which is to look for the money?

"CCECC has not brought money; the Chinese are no longer giving us money for more than three to four years now. So CCECC can't afford to delay their responsibility to look for money for the project. That is what the Chinese must do."

AS APC UNITES BEHIND TINUBU, PDP STRUGGLES WITH WIKE

The position of the PDP House of Representatives was disclosed by the Minority Leader, Hon. Ndudi Elumelu.

Speaking at the International Youth Day seminar hosted by the PDP Youths, Elumelu said that the caucus has been hearing calls for the dissolution of the National Working Committee (NWC) of the party.

Meanwhile, it was reliably gathered that the presidential candidate of the PDP met with a team of lawyers last week at the Yar'Adua Conference Centre in Abuja.

The purpose of the meeting was not known, but a source close to the former vice president told THISDAY that "Atiku Abubakar met with the PDP's National Legal Adviser – Kamaldeen Ajibade who is a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), former Minister of Special Duties, Taminu Turaki (SAN), and Gordy Uche, also a senior advocate.

THISDAY gathered that the meeting may not be unconnected to the suit pending against Atiku and the party, which will be heard on Tuesday, August 16.

One of the spokespersons of the Atiku presidential campaign, Senator Dino Melaye, had said that those behind the suit would be known on the date of the hearing.

Forces Frustrating Moves to Reconcile Former VP and Rivers Gov, Gana Cries Out

Meanwhile, Gana has raised the alarm that forces within and outside the PDP are frustrating the moves to reconcile Atiku and Wike.

Gana, who is also a member of the Board of Trustees (BOT) of the party, said in a statement he issued to newsmen in Abuja, that Wike was not challenging the outcome of the PDP presidential primary.

"News in the media that Wike has commenced legal proceedings, challenging the outcome of the 2022 PDP Presidential Primary, is false.

"We unequivocally state that Wike has not and will not challenge the outcome of the just concluded PDP presidential primaries in court.

"He has long moved beyond such an action to focus on matters of how best to ensure victory for the PDP in the forthcoming elections."

Gana also described as false reports alleging Wike had instructed the removal of the ceremonial PDP flags and insignia from the Government House and Governor's Office.

He said: "This again is totally false and misleading. The Rivers State Governor never gave such instructions.

"It appears that some forces within and outside the party are expressly opposed to the reconciliation moves between Alhaji Atiku Abubakar and Wike.

"Such malicious efforts will surely fail by the grace of God," Gana explained.

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NEWS

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Senate Summons NDPHC CEO for Mismanaging $500m Power Assets

Sunday Aborisade in Abuja

The Senate committee on Power has summoned the Managing Director, Niger Delta Power Holding Company (NDPHC) over the alleged mismanagement of $500 million electricity assets.

The senate committee asked the NDPHC boss to account for the circumstances surrounding some fire incidences in some power plants across the country.

In its summon cited by TheCable, the committee added it would investigate the nature of the inferno that consumed some parts of the power plants which led to the loss of substantial electricity generation.

Some of the power plants listed in the summon include Gbarain, which had a fire incident; Ihovbor, with a turbine failure, Olorunsogo, Alaoji, Calabar and Sapele IPPs.

The committee said: "Over 4,000 megawatts (MW) worth of generation assets entrusted to NDPHC have been substantially damaged and about 500MW worth of generation which can easily be translated to over $500 million has been run down by company.

In addition, the committee asked the management of NDPHC to submit a detailed report of the incidents on Friday.

The company is also expected to appear before the committee on power on a scheduled date.

The NDPHC is jointly owned by the federal government, states and LGAs to manage the National Integrated Power Projects (NIPPs).

In July, the House of Representatives had commenced an investigation into the planned sale of five NIPPs belonging to NDPHC by the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE).

In a letter cited by TheCable, the house committee on finance asked the minister of finance, minister of power, director-general of BPE, managing director of the Niger Delta Power Holding Company (NDPHC), and the managing director of the Nigeria Bulk Electricity Trading Company (NBET), to provide information and documents "for the committees' determination on the way forward".

The lower legislative chamber asked the BPE to halt the sale of five power plants belonging to the NDPHC.

The resolution of the house was sequel to the adoption of a motion sponsored by Magaji Aliyu, chairman of the House of Representatives committee on power.



PERFORMING RELIGIOUS OBLIGATIONS…

Akwa Ibom State Governor, Udom Emmanuel (left), and his Bayelsa State counterpart, Senator Douye Diri, during the 70th anniversary programme of the Redeemed Christian Church of God at the Redemption City, along the Lagos-Ibadan expressway in Ogun State…weekend

Kenya Elections: Odinga, Ruto in Tight Presidential Race

Michael Olugbode with agency report

With more than a third of the results from Kenya's presidential election now confirmed, the two main candidates are running neck and neck.

n a report by British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) last night, former Prime Minister Raila Odinga has a slight lead over Deputy President William Ruto – 50 percent against 49 percent.

The head of the electoral commission, Mr. Wafula Chebukati has admitted that announcing the result of Tuesday's election is too slow.

The verification of results has been stopped several times after complaints by supporters of the main candidates.

Odinga's supporters have disrupted the result verification process several times and accosted some of the electoral officials, accusing them of tampering with the vote.

Riot police have been deployed inside the building to reinforce security. The results of 113 of the 292 constituencies have now been officially verified.

Previously, media organisations have been releasing provisional tallies using official data from the 46,000 polling stations. They also show a tight race between the two candidates.

About 14 million votes were cast - a turnout of 65 percent.

The electoral commission has until Tuesday 16 August to declare the winner.

"We have to make adjustments" to quicken the process of verifying results, Chebukati said in his latest briefing yesterday.

"It's taking three to four hours" to process the result from a single constituency, he said. "Some of our returning officers have stayed here for three days sitting on chairs which is totally unacceptable."

Keyamo: Attack on APC Campaign Council, Sign of Frustration

Gboyega Akinsanmi

The 2023 Presidential Campaign Council of All Progressives Congress (APC) yesterday lamented that attack on its campaign by the opposition parties "is a sign of frustration."

Unlike its opponents, the council promised to run a clean presidential campaign without resort to the use of abusive and incendiary language.

The spokesman of the APC Presidential Campaign Council, Mr. Festus Keyamo (SAN) made this clarification in his Twitter handle, @fkeyamo yesterday.

Keyamo's clarification came shortly after the spokesman of the 2023 Presidential Campaign Council of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Senator Dino Melaye slammed Keyamo over his comment against the presidential candidate of the PDP, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar.

Melaye berated the APC, saying the PDP would find it hard selling its presidential candidate, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu during an interview on Channels Television's Politics Today on Friday.

"This government marketed Atiku by their colossal failure. Today, the most difficult candidate to sell is an APC candidate whether, at the House of Representatives, Senate, or governorship level," the lawmaker said.

"That is why you cannot defend, promote or campaign for Bola Ahmed Tinubu without looking stupid. This is what happened to my brother and friend, Festus Keyamo, he started talking off point. He started saying things that do not make sense."

Reacting to Malaye's comment yesterday, Keyamo faulted the use of abusive words by the opposition parties against the presidential campaign council of the ruling party.

Keyamo therefore promised "to run a clean campaign," noting that the APC presidential campaign council "will not use abusive words on our opponents and their spokespersons.

"We will refrains from calling those who Nigerians think and say they look stupid with their gaffs as such. Abuses on a campaign trail are a sign of frustration. We will stick to the issues," Keyamo explained.

Court Sentences 82-year-old Monarch to Death in A'Ibom

Okon Bassey in Uyo

An Akwa Ibom State High Court sitting in Uyo has sentenced Chief Essien Odiong, an 82-year-old Head of Efen Ibom, a community in Ika Local Government Area, to death for murder and conspiracy to murder.

The court, presided over by Justice Edem Akpan, found the village head guilty of murdering Udoma Ubom by injecting some chemical substance on him, leading to his death on April 26, 2017.

The judge delivered the decision of the court on Friday after establishing the village head was guilty of Ubom's murder by using a syringe to inject lethal substance into the buttock of the deceased.

In its decision, the court said: "Having sensed the consequences of his criminal activity, the monarch escaped from the village since 2017 and returned in 2019, when he was arrested by the police."

"Since the accused had voluntarily admitted that he sat at Efen Clan Council with five other village heads and members of the Clan Council to try the deceased on the allegation of witchcraft, the law has relieved the prosecution of the burden to prove the offense of conspiracy.

Troops Neutralise Scores of Terrorists in Kaduna, Recover Weapons

John Shiklam in Kaduna

Troops of Operation Sanity have killed scores of terrorists during a clearance operation in Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

This was conveyed in an operational feedback to the Kaduna State Government from the security agencies carrying out the operation.

According to a statement by the Kaduna State Commissioner for Internal Security and Home Affairs, Samuel Aruwan, the terrorists were neutralised by ground troops and air assets during an operation in Galbi, Chikun local government.

According to Aruwan, troops of Operation Forest Sanity supported by assets of the Nigerian Air Force conducted clearance operations on an identified terrorist enclave in Galbi general area.

He explained that the troops during their advance across River Kaduna ran into stiff resistance from the insurgents, and after a fierce firefight, scores of the terrorists were neutralized as the military forces prevailed.

The Commissioner also disclosed that Two General Purpose Machine Guns (GPMGs), three AK47 rifles and seven motorcycles were recovered from the enclave of the neutralised bandits.

Meanwhile, the Kaduna State Government has expressed excitement at the feedback, and praised the troops for their tenacity in the significant victory against the enemy forces.

The Government while thanking the troops, air force crews, police personnel, intelligence operatives, and local vigilante members who contributed to the success of the mission, also urged the security forces to increase the momentum and vanquish the terrorists for good.

Repentant Insurgents Seek Forgiveness from Borno Residents

Some repentant insurgents yesterday participated in a sanitation exercise in Maiduguri and its communities, the Borno State capital.

The exercise was organised by the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) in collaboration with the Borno State Government.

Some of the repentant insurgents wore T-shirts with inscriptions: "Please forgive us. We have repented. Let us rebuild Borno again."

Speaking on the exercise, CDD's Senior Research Fellow, Mala Mustafa said the exercise is part of efforts to prepare them for their reintegration process.

Mustafa said: "The rationale behind this exercise is for CDD to support the Borno state government as part of preparatory work for the reintegration of the ex-combatants.

"We felt it is imperative to change the narrative, particularly the negative perception about them among community members.

No Regret on Decisions Taken over Electoral Matters, Says Ex-A'Ibom REC

Okon Bassey in Uyo

The retired Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) for Akwa Ibom State, Mr Mike Igini, has said he does not have any regret about the decisions taken while overseeing activities of the commission in the state.

He revealed that 35 court cases were instituted against the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the state in 2019 and the commission recorded a 99 per cent victory.

Igini who addressed journalists in Uyo, the state capital, as part of the events to mark his retirement, stressed that INEC in Akwa Ibom State under his watch was very clear on the conduct of the election as directed by INEC at the national level and "we are poised to deal with historical challenges as it concerns electoral matters."

He noted that in 2019 some illegal polling units were identified in the homes of politicians in the state and he directed that such polling units be relocated to open places where people can conveniently vote.

"For now Akwa Ibom State has 4,354 polling units that will be used in the 2023 election."

Despite his exit, he said INEC in the state would continue to serve the people even at the risk of their lives because they are doing the right thing.

"Democracy will have no meaning if the rule of law is not totally embraced.

"All elements, who acted contrary to the rule of electoral law in 2019 were duly punished, including INEC Staff.

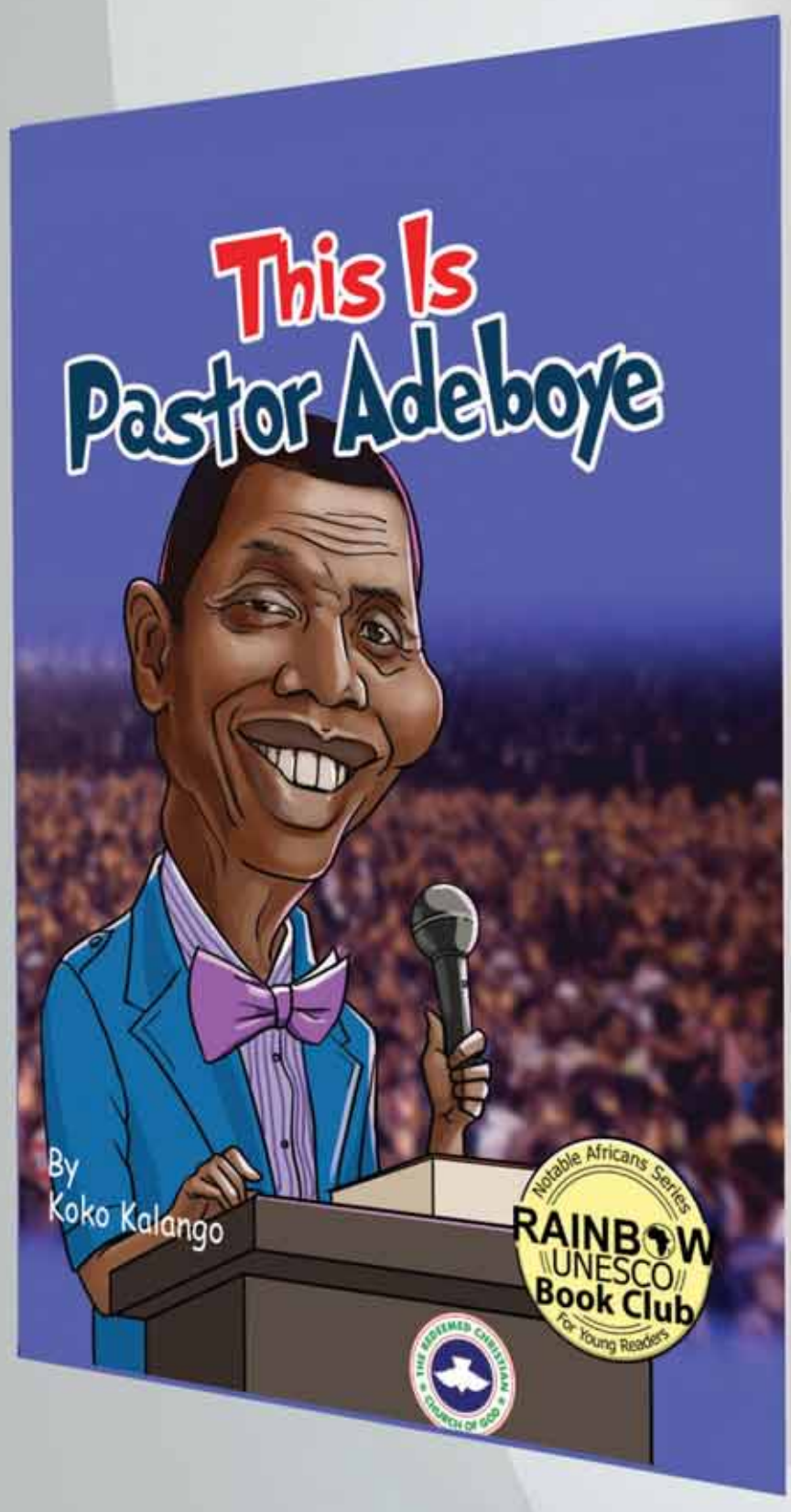
"INEC has built electoral fire world in Akwa Ibom State so that electoral template can be maintained," he added.

He noted that the people of the state have really embraced the Voter Registration exercise, saying that by the 2023 elections, voters' turnout will be impressive.

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REVENGE..

8 TO 14 AUGUST 2022: REVENGE

As the old saying goes, "The best revenge is not to be like your enemy." This may not be true in the British drama series "We Hunt Together" about two couples on opposite sides of the law. In this thriller, two detectives are hunting down two ruthless killers seeking revenge on people who wronged them in the past. A phone-sex operator and prostitute, Freddy seduces African immigrant Baba into becoming her murderous protector. To impress her and protect her, he is willing to go to any lengths, and he is also seeking revenge for himself and the trauma he experienced as a child. Now you can stream this psychological, murderous love story exclusively on ARISEPlay.

WE HUNT TOGETHER – 2 Seasons and 12 episodes BBC series

Gaby Hull created the British drama series We Hunt Together, which ran for two seasons. The first series debuted in 2020, and the second series in 2022. The show revolves around two odd couples on opposite sides of the law. A cat-and-mouse suspense story at its best.
First season of the show combines a love story with a procedural as well as psychological exploration, challenging viewers to rethink their ideas of justice and vengeance. During the show's second season, more traditional murder investigations are conducted along with more familiar serial killers.
The series stars six main cast members: Babou Ceesay as DI Jackson Mendy, Hermione Corfield as Frederica "Freddy" Lane, Eve Myles as DS Lola Franks, Dipo Ola as Babeni "Baba" Lenga, and Colin Morgan as Liam Gates (season 2).
Dipo Ola was born in Ibadan, Nigeria. With his family, he moved to the UK during his childhood. In the years following his studies, he appeared in a critically acclaimed and multi-award-nominated series on Channel 4. His career later led him to work for the BBC.
Babou Ceesay (as DI Jackson Mendy) is a British actor and producer best known for Free Fire (2016), Eye in the Sky (2015), and '71 (2014). "I thought to myself, 'I can sit here and tell myself that I'm fat, black, and ugly so I can't act,' but that would be unfair" is among the quotes that he is known for.

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BUSINESS

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Call for Review of Oil Pipeline Surveillance Contracts

At a time when it seemed the Nigerian authorities were giving up on the perennial theft of crude oil, with its unpleasant consequences on the nation's revenue, the call by Governor Ifeanyi Okowa of Delta State for a review of oil pipeline surveillance contracts in a way to bring host communities into the picture may be one of the urgent steps needed to halt the orgy of the economic sabotage, writes **Festus Akanbi**

Apart from the policy of the corruption-riddled oil subsidy which has continued to rob Nigeria of huge proportions of its revenue including its foreign reserves, energy industry commentators said it is a thing of shame that relevant agents of government have continued to watch with helpless glee as saboteurs steal thousands of crude oil barrels with reckless abandon.

Counting Losses

The reality is that Nigeria has been experiencing some of the worst crude oil theft in its history with millions of dollars lost daily. Several allegations have been made against the ability of security agencies to guard the pipelines. The problem is so nauseating that some have even alleged the complicity of security agencies in the spate of oil theft being experienced.

Recently the Chairman of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) Gbenga Komolafe, revealed that only about 132 million barrels of the 141 million barrels of oil produced in the first quarter of 2022 were received at export terminals.

Komolafe said: "This indicates that over nine million barrels of oil have been lost to crude theft… this equates to a loss of government revenue of approximately $1 billion…in just one quarter,"

He added: "This trend poses an existential threat to the oil and gas sector and, by extension, to the Nigerian economy if left unchecked."

Theft of crude oil grew from 103,000 barrels per day in 2021 to 108,000 barrels per day on average in the first quarter of 2022, according to Komolafe.

Call for Review of Pipeline Surveillance Contract

To combat the problem of oil bunkering and outright theft of crude oil, Minister of State for Petroleum, Timipre Sylva and his team have continued to tour oil-producing states in recent times.

It was during one such trip that Governor Ifeanyi Okowa of Delta State presented his template for the solution to the revenue losses.

Okowa, who is also the vice-presidential candidate for the Peoples Democratic Party in the 2023 general election, advocated a review of surveillance contracts on oil facilities to involve host communities to check the high rate of oil theft in the country.

Rather than continue with the system of rewarding cronies and friends with surveillance contracts, Okowa said reviewing oil surveillance contracts based on the performance of the contractors and engagement of host communities would ensure effectiveness in securing the nation's oil and gas assets.

He admitted that the challenge of oil theft was huge, given the level it had assumed, but expressed happiness with the steps being taken by the authorities to curb the menace.

"I am glad that we are discussing this hydra-headed issue which impacts directly on our economy and the environment," the governor said.

According to him, criminality has crept into the dispute between oil companies and host communities.

The governor pointed out that it was often difficult to secure the facilities, especially when the persons given the contracts did not have adequate information on the environment or did not have the buy-in of host communities.



Vulnerable oil pipelines

He said the support of the communities is needed because some parts of the creeks cannot be accessed by the surveillance contractor. "Therefore, surveillance contracts should not be such that communities are not involved," he said.

According to the governor, "The surveillance contracts should be tied to performance such that when there are oil thefts you terminate the contract and it is always good that communities are involved because they know the environment better."

Okowa flayed the oil companies for not keeping faith with their Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs), thereby making stakeholders lose confidence in the system.

He explained that when oil companies failed to sign or implement MOUs, "it becomes very difficult for the state government to mediate when there are issues."

The other plank of the intervention suggested by Okowa was the need to adequately equip the security in a way that will allow them to defend the territories assigned to them.

"The security agencies must heighten their operations and they need to be resourced to enable them to also increase their level of surveillance and for this to succeed, there must be sincerity on the part of all stakeholders."

Earlier, Sylva had told the governor that the team was in Asaba to seek the support and buy-in of the state government on measures to be adopted to check oil theft, saying, "as a country we cannot sustain this kind of theft perpetually."

He said oil theft had become a national emergency, especially as the nation had not been able to meet its OPEC production quota.

"Our production has dropped drastically to very unsustainable levels; so, we have decided to take the bull by the horn by putting some structures in place and those structures cannot function effectively without the collaboration of the state government," the minister said.

A National Shame

Analysts maintained that oil theft not only results in a drop in oil revenue for the government but also creates environmental pollution and other health hazards for the host communities.

Just like the case of the three moribund oil refineries which have defied solution notwithstanding the huge amount of money earmarked for their turnaround maintenance by the successive administrations, analysts said it is shameful that a country as big as Nigeria would allow few individuals and groups to continue to steal crude oil for months with reckless abandon.

Observers said more worrisome has been the failure of the Nigerian government to cash in on the current spike in crude oil prices, regretting that while other oil-producing countries are making a kill of the current production quota allocated to oil producers by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Nigerian authorities are still at the realm of complaining and counting their losses.

When the delegation visited Governor Hope Uzodimma of Imo State, Sylva disclosed that the country loses 400,000 barrels of crude daily via oil theft.

The Chief of Defence Staff, General Lucky Irabor, who is coordinating the security intervention against oil theft, disclosed that in the last five months security agencies had been dealing with issues of illegal refineries and oil bunkering across the Niger Delta.

The CDS also advocated the engagement of indigenes and host communities in the fight against criminal activity.

On his part, Group Chief Executive Officer of NNPC Limited, Mallam Mele Kyari, said Nigeria currently loses about $2 billion monthly to the activities of oil vandals, with its attendant effect on environmental degradation.

"As a country, we hardly meet our OPEC production quantum of 1.99 million barrels per day with our current production level of 1.4 million barrels per day which is currently being threatened by the activities of these economic saboteurs.

"This has done extensive damage to the environment and losing $1.9 billion every month is colossal, considering the nature of the global economy at the moment," he disclosed.

However, some operators will like to separate crude oil theft from restiveness in the oil-producing communities. According to the Managing Director of Chevron Nigeria / Mid Africa Business Unit, Richard Kennedy, "the issue with crude oil theft should not be confused with host community issues. It is much bigger than that. It is completely different from host community issues. Quite frankly it is organised crime."

However, on his part, the Imo State Governor Hope Uzodimma described the idea of engaging private security contractors as a delicate one, noting that, "for such to take place the Nigeria security agencies must take interest and profile the security contractors to ascertain their genuineness before engaging them."

He emphasised that those to be engaged, "must know the geography, the policies, and programmes and the workings in the places they are to operate before engaging them to avoid engaging some of the thieves as security contractors."

Uzodimma added: "Crude oil theft is run by a cabal and a cartel that are ready always to resist the security agencies. This, in other words, informs that the oil thefts and pipeline vandals are sophisticated in their operations, which means there is a need for strong support to the armed forces and other para-military agencies that are involved in the protection of the Nigerian oil economy."

Now that the relevant agencies of government responsible for crude oil production and sale appeared to have woken up to their responsibilities, it is hoped that the tempo would be sustained in a manner that will keep saboteurs away from the nation's resources for the good of all.

TELECOMS

Glo @ 19: Celebrating an Indigenous African Brand

A lot has changed in the telecoms industry since Globacom birthed in 2003. As it counts down to its 19th anniversary in a few days, the company and its founder, Dr. Mike Adenuga, Jnr, can look back on their chequered and storied journey and give themselves a robust pat on the back, writes **Lanre Alfred**

Indeed, few magnates refine the merchant tropes of endeavour, like Dr. Mike Adenuga Jnr. Through grit and hard work, he built his octopoidal conglomerate that employs thousands of Nigerians nay Africans in profitable, futuristic endeavours. If Adenuga's story reads like a business legend, it is probably because he has always been an enterprise stylist.

Adept at combining grit with desire, his life espouses crucial entrepreneurial anecdotes by its metaphor-rich manifestations of his hard work.

At work and at play, Adenuga shifts gear seamlessly between the whimsical and the earnest, demonstrating time and over again his ability to tame challenges and ride out storms - without falling prey to Scylla and Charybdis of cynicism and failure. All in pursuit of glory.

He symbolises the African enterprising spirit of passion, unalloyed commitment, resilience and hard work. Thus he is today one of the most recognisable names on the African continent; sitting atop what is arguably one of the continent's largest business empires.



Adenuga

When It All Began

Age 19 is not a landmark anniversary that calls for a rousing celebration. It is, however, for Globacom, Nigeria's first indigenous telecommunications network, a resounding testament and poignant reminder of its sheer survival skills, tenacity, innovativeness, and resilience in the treacherous Nigerian economy. The company and its founder, Adenuga, have survived several tempests and trials - a hostile economy, harsh government policies, and deliberate witch-hunt, among others - to remain a formidable telecommunications provider.

In the beginning, MTN and Econet Wireless (now known as Airtel) were owned by South African and Zimbabwean businessmen respectively, with vast capital bases. They had operated for two years before Globacom launched, meaning that they had a head start and presumably had already consolidated their hold on the Nigerian market. Then, it was prestigious and elitist to own a mobile phone because a SIM card cost as much as N40,000 while calls were charged at N50 per minute irrespective of the number of seconds the call lasted. The incidence of call-drop was equally very high.

Nigerians were at the mercy of the operators. Not even the government could come to the rescue of its people. To compound the predicament of phone users, the promoters of MTN and Econet told Nigerians with stone-cold remorselessness that Per Second Billing, which was the norm in other countries of the world, was not feasible in Nigeria. They had a field day milking Nigerians. More so, there was no competition. What could have passed as the competition was the federal government-owned MTEL, which would soon gurgle and burp to its demise.

Breaking New Grounds in Mobile Telephony

Adenuga had declared then that the vision of Globacom is to build the biggest and best network in Africa. The company launched with all guns blazing. Soon, Globacom crashed the price of SIM cards – selling at N500. Nigerians were stupefied; oblivious that there was more where that came from. Then, it introduced the Per Second Billing, which MTN and Econet had claimed was impossible for the Nigerian market. This move by Globacom would force the other telecom operators to also introduce the PSB. Consequently, this began the revolution that made mobile telephony not just an exclusive preserve of the privileged and well-heeled but, a necessity for Nigerians of all ages from the North to the South and everywhere in between. Globacom, a Proudly Nigerian company with the well-being of Nigerians as the core of its business principle, had come to stay.

From its early days, Globacom had always defied market odds to delight Nigerians. The company launched a slew of futuristic products and services such as being the first to offer 2.5G when others were on 2G, MMS, international SMS connectivity to over 804 networks in 174 countries, BlackBerry solutions, international prepaid roaming, voice SMS, personal ringback tunes, and Magicplus.

In 2010, the company stupefied Africa when it launched the Glo 1 submarine cable, a 9,800km cable stretching from the UK across West Africa with landing points in Nigeria, London, and Lisbon, and connecting different countries to the rest of the world. It was launched to provide tonnes of terabytes of data per second to West Africa and many European cities. In addition to boosting the provision of services to telecom end-users, the facility is currently providing much-needed connectivity to vital sectors of the economy such as oil and gas, manufacturing, banking, commerce, education, and health among others.

In recent years, Globacom has played a major role in the country's march to a digital future by introducing a range of customised and community-driven voice and data connectivity solutions that help to manage complex networking systems. Globacom also provides secured as well as verticalised IT solutions such as E-Health, Smart Cognitive Learning, Smart Energy, Industrial IoT, and Cloud Applications.

These solutions are particularly useful for collaborations, device management, workgroup storage, and information security among others. Its fixed connectivity and voice products such as Boost and Next Generation Bandwidth-on-Demand connectivity, SIP-based voice trunk, and telephony, further enhance the company's capacity to deliver advanced connectivity and fixed voice solutions to medium and large enterprises, large wholesale carriers, and ISPs in Nigeria and Africa.

In the last two years, Globacom has been carrying out an aggressive roll-out of network equipment and upgrade of its sites to 4G-LTE. This is intended to offer high speed and quality data experience to millions of Nigerians on the Glonetwork. The process covers the entire scope of telecoms infrastructure upgrade from the core network to access network, transmission and IP network, fibre network metro access and backbone infrastructure and passive equipment expansion like power and environment.

It also involves the rollout of new sites to increase network coverage in areas that need improvement and to also densifyand ease off already congested areas. This ultimately improves customers' network experience and satisfaction in terms of service delivery, network quality, and coverage.

On completion of these projects, Globacom will have enhanced capacity to continue to provide world class and high-grade voice, data and VAS services to its teeming customers in Nigeria as well as its numerous roaming customers in-bound Nigeria and out-bound in other countries.

How Glo Shapes Life with Powerful, Anecdotal Commercials

Globacom doesn't just churn out television commercials to promote its brand and services; the telecoms giant ensures to produce inspiring and ingenious TVCs that portray and project Nigerians and Africans in good light and spur them to achieve their dreams. This it has done again with four new commercials.

Like Mozart's peerless genius in classical music, Globacom is a leader by streets in setting the pace in producing inspiring and ingenious commercials that have become the high watermark by which other telecom operators are rated. Over the years, Globacom has, indeed, perfected the art of projecting the image of Nigeria and Africa, stoking the patriotic fire in citizens and motivating its teeming youth to reach beyond the stratosphere.

Globacom's Investment in the Arts

The chairman's love for the arts is intrinsic and invaluable. Perhaps after his passion for business, making money, and philanthropy, appreciation of the arts is next in line. The entertainment industry has featured prominently in Globacom's Corporate Social Investment (CSI) initiatives on account of Adenuga's passion for the industry.

Aside from direct financial commitments including massive sponsorships, Globacom currently retains the largest number of key players in the entertainment industry as brand ambassadors while upholding that by actively engaging these key entertainment drivers, they, in turn, can help to grow the sector and the economy. Many entertainers, both established and unheralded, have been blessed immeasurably by this love and patronage.

The Alliance Française, committed to promoting French culture and teaching French as a second language around the world, now has a more befitting building in a choice area of Lagos thanks to the Globacom boss. Since it was declared open to the public in April 2018, the centre, aptly named the Mike Adenuga Centre, has been commanding commendations from far and near; from art aficionados and artists and preeminent Nigerians.

Adenuga loves a good laugh and he loves to share happiness, which is why he has supported and sponsored many comedy shows ranging from Glo Lafta Fest, regarded as the biggest music, dance, and comedy event in Nigeria, which brings top-rated African comedians like like Bovi, Salvador of Uganda, Basket Mouth, Gordons, I Go Dye, 2Cantok, Seyi Law and others together in one place for an evening of unlimited fun and laughter; Glo Slide and Bounce, a traveling music and dance show; and the Bovi man on Fire Lagos and Warri editions, among others.

Since it began operations in 2003, Globacom has made home-grown stars from the entertainment industry the faces (ambassadors) of its brand while making them worth their popularity in affluence and influence. At a time when entertainers were being paid peanuts for their artistry, Globacom upped the ante, dishing out millions of naira to their ambassadors, and helping them to live the life they only see in the movies or on MTV.

It had also provided massive platforms for Nigerian nay African entertainers to practice their trade through direct sponsorship of concerts such as Glo Campus Storm, Glo Rock 'n' Rule'; Glo Slide 'n' Bounce; Glo Laffta Fest; Glo Mega Music Nationwide Tour, Dance with Peter, Glo X-Factor, Glo Naija Sings and the popular sitcom, Professor Johnbull. The Glo Battle of the Year Nigeria, the world's biggest dance reality television show brought to Nigeria by Globacom.

Like Entertainment, Like Sports

Like entertainment, sports also rank very high on the Corporate Social Responsibility activities and investments of Globacom. Over a decade ago, it took over the full sponsorship of the CAF African Footballer of the Year awards. Around the same time, the telecoms giant signed a sponsorship agreement with the Nigeria Football Federation thus becoming the official telecommunications partner and major sponsor of Nigerian national teams. Alongside this, it sponsors the Supporters' Club in any part of the world where any of Nigeria's national teams is competing.

BRANDS AND ADVERTISING

Political Campaign: Between INEC's Guideline and Menace of Hate Speeches

Raheem Akingbolu writes on the current political communications in the country and how political parties are flouting the rules of the game in an attempt to sell their candidates ahead of the 2023 presidential election



Atiku



Tinubu



Obi

It is often said that political communication thrives on the strength of mind modulation which invariably is the aim of any brand positioning. It is all about a relentless drive toward conditioning the mind of the consumer to see a particular brand as the ultimate choice.

While consumer brands might be easy to handle in terms of positioning, the same thing could not be said of political communication otherwise known in regular parlance as 'campaign'. Since humans are the products being marketed, other extenuating factors usually come into play. And that is why religious and ethnic emotions often play a role in the mix.

For instance, the brand equity of the presidential candidate of the Labour Party, Mr Peter Obi, seems to be self-sustaining on the premise of the perception that he is not corrupt and does not belong to the category of those who have been reaping off the system for decades. That is why his message resonates with the younger generation who seem to genuinely want a change. And the job of those marketing him is made easier by the fact that those rooting for his candidacy are the largest consumer of data on social media content.

What has worked for him, also, and which has become the albatross of Atiku Abubakar and Bola Tinubu of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC), respectively is the entrenched disillusionment on the part of the voting populace.

In 2015, the now ruling APC, then in opposition, launched a very strong and mind-changing campaign built on the fulcrum of 'change'. The messaging was not only bought by the people, it went a long way to demarket the then-ruling PDP. It was a concept of change from corruption (the main thrust of their messaging), insecurity and social disequilibrium. And coupled with the fact that humans naturally want a change from what they are used to, the APC created a perception of an alternative that could be trusted.

In the then-presidential candidate and now sitting President, Muhammadu Buhari, an image of a no-nonsense, upright and incorruptible leader was created in the minds of voters who were also made to believe rather impossible promises, especially in the area of the economy.

However, seven years down line, and with the situation even being much worse than it was when the APC came in, the job of selling the party to the electorate has been made so difficult. Even while there might be an impressive messaging and communication team, the question remains: what are the parameters to sell the party to the people again?

With the reverse being the case, the level of disillusionment is so high that the candidacy of Obi of the Labour Party is gaining a lot of traction. This is also helped by the fact that the baggage that PDP is still carrying from its own 16 years in power is still fresh in memory.

In a nutshell, selling the APC and PDP brands has been a bit difficult but more especially, that of the APC.

Foremost marketing communications practitioner and one-time Director of Monitoring and Planning for the Buhari Campaign Organisation, Dr TOE Ekechi, said the ruling party, in its communication, has to know the difference Buhari enjoyed in 2015 and the brand value of the party itself.

"The biggest undoing will be an arrogant assumption that as a ruling party, we still enjoy positive and extensive goodwill and confidence of the people of Nigeria. Another flaw in the thinking is the failure of the incoming 'administration' to realise that there is a very strong difference between the support for Buhari and support for APC, especially from our core base in the North. In addition to this, so many factors have providentially conspired to make the political environment naturally antagonistic to the APC and their identifiable stakeholders and pillars which include our presidential candidate and his running-mate. And these factors are insecurity, harsh economy and the unfortunate religious snare of the Muslim-Muslim ticket. Therefore, in proposing and couching their political messages and communication to voters, the aforementioned factors must be put into deep reflective considerations otherwise they will be sending sophisticated albeit sweet messages which may irritate and annoy the electorate further," Ekechi explained.

Speaking further, Ekechi said it would be unfair to say Tinubu did not consider his options before picking a minority northerner but from the majority religion.

"The more he tries, therefore, to respond to certain things, Tinubu supporters are like Arsenal Football Club supporters; they are with him, rain and sunshine. PDP supporters are like Manchester United supporters. Therefore, his message should be to those who could still be convinced but make sure you keep those who are already with you. In his messaging, he is not being proactive but responsive."

He added that those working for him are those who believe in the brand and not those who see him as an opportunity to get their gratuity.

"There must be an emotional connection to a brand before you can promote it. That is what is lacking in the Tinubu campaign train," Ekechi lamented.

The opposition PDP has often praised itself as the longest existing political brand in the country, having been in existence for over 24 years. Apart from this, it is the only party that has remained just the way it was registered in 1998. While other parties have fizzled out or undergone several name changes, the PDP has remained as it is and its brand logo remains unchanged.

Though the party has invested in its youth wings to cater for the younger generation, the election of a septuagenarian as its presidential candidate does not show consistency with the drive to give younger people more say in the party.

While the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is very clear in its guidelines on how campaigns are run, the fact that social media, where most of the communication takes place, remains unregulated, has become a challenge. Citizen journalism which is never controlled anywhere in the world seems to have taken over the functions and jobs of the traditional media. And that is why ethnic religious and homophobic content rules the air which usually relegates issues to the background.

The Advertising Practitioners Council (APCON), the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), as well as INEC can sanction the regulated media over what they run on their platforms. But they are helpless when it comes to social media. And that is why the control of the new media is so fierce among the candidates with the belief that anyone who gains upper hand there has scored a very big plus in its communication efforts.

In a telephone conversation with THISDAY, the Registrar and Chief Executive Officer of the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria, APCON, Dr Lekan Fadolapo, said the regulatory body is working behind the scene with the INEC and NBC to come out with guidelines for the political campaign as Nigeria approaches 2023 election.

For instance, for weeks, the issue of Muslim-Muslim tickets was on the front burner. It took so much discussion time that many didn't remember to ask what the manifestoes of the party were. Therefore, what dominated the communication was religious content which made messaging so difficult. And in an environment where such issues are very sensitive, the ruling APC had its job cut out.

In a bid to send a message to the Christian community that their members were not really against a Muslim-Muslim ticket, some supposed clerics were present at the official presentation of the running-mate to their presidential candidate, Kashim Shettima. The aim of this was to further puncture the position of those who said a Muslim-Muslim ticket won't fly and convince Christians that their interests would be taken care of. Unfortunately, the intended consequences were lost because those who were at the event did not represent the Christian community.

Meanwhile, in what looked like regulatory rascality, the PDP governorship candidate in Lagos, Olajide 'Jandor' Adediran, had recently accused the Lagos State government of pulling down his campaign posters.

He made the claim when he appeared as a guest on ARISE NEWS Channel programme, 'The Morning Show.

He said the state government, through the Lagos State Signage and Advertisement Agency, (LASSA) "threatened" two advert companies handling his campaign posters to pull them down or have their licences withdrawn.

"The moment that of Afromedia happened at Falomo here, I put a call through to the commissioner of police myself and I said to him 'CP, this just happened, it was removed,' we didn't even know, we thought it was the hoodlums that removed them.

"After investigating we now realised that it is the state government, through LASAA, that went to remove them.

"And the company in question did say to us that 'we have been asked not to take anything from you, we will refund your money. Just like JCDecaux did refund our money," the politician stated.

In a swift reaction, LASAA dismissed the claim. LASAA Managing Director, Prince Ademola Docemo, in a statement, said the candidate's allegation did not show an understanding of the rules guiding outdoor advertisement practice in Lagos.

The statement said that LASAA regulates billboard structures and not advertisement campaigns.

"The decision to deploy any advertisement is the sole discretion of billboard owners who must have registered with LASAA for a licence to hoist advertisement structures in the state.

"Advertising companies determine their clients and the terms of their trade," the statement reads.

It clarified the pasting of posters when political campaigns are formally flagged off by INEC guidelines.

According to the statement, when this is done, the pasting of posters, rather than being done indiscriminately, must be done at designated sites.

But as summed up by a communication expert and social media activist, Dauda Lawal, there is a need for decorum on the part of all political parties in the area of political advertisement before INEC's stipulated period.

"Beyond regulatory bodies, I think political parties should be in the forefront of educating their members against hate speech and unruly campaigns that flout INEC and ARCON guidelines. This is important because, to date, the Nigerian government is yet to take a position on social media regulation, which is fast changing the face of communication," Lawal said.

BUSINESS LAW

Court Forecloses Reprieve for Wonder Bank's Investors

After 14 years of trying to recoup their investment through a case that went up to the Supreme Court, investors in Nospetco Oil and Gas Limited lost everything when a Federal High Court in Lagos dismissed their suit, thereby sending a strong message to investors in Ponzi schemes to beware, **Wale Igbintade** writes



Malami



Yuguda

Efforts by Nospetco Oil & Gas Limited investors to recover their investment worth N22, 445,571,446.84 billion suffered a technical setback recently when a Federal High Court in Lagos dismissed their suit against the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

Justice Lewis Allagoa in his ruling on the preliminary objection, filed by counsel to the CBN, Mr. Olumuyiwa Aduroja (SAN) held that the suit filed by Nospetco investors is statute-barred and no longer legally enforceable owing to a prescribed period of limitation has lapsed.

Fourteen Nospetco investors through their lawyer, Debo Adeleke, had on behalf of 13,741 other investors, instituted suit number FHC/L/248/2012, against SEC, CBN, and Nospetco Oil & Gas Limited. The plaintiffs prayed the court to mandate the 2nd defendant (CBN) to release a sum of N22,445,571,446.84 presently in its custody on the instruction of the 1st Defendant. They also prayed the court to mandate the CBN to release the N22,445,571,446.84 billion back to the investors through their solicitor or the court in a profit-yielding account.

In addition, the plaintiffs also prayed the court for an order compelling the 3rd defendant, (Nospetco Oil & Gas Limited) to stop forthwith its illegal, unlawful, and fraudulent business and banking activities, which it has been relentlessly carrying out under the covers since May 2007.

Also, they demanded N10 million damages against the defendants.

However, Justice Allagoa in his ruling upheld the submissions of CBN counsel, Aduroja that the plaintiffs failed to commence the suit within the statutory period of three months as prescribed under CAP. P41, LFN, hence the court has no jurisdiction to entertain the suit.

The senior lawyer, Aduroja had in a preliminary objection brought pursuant to Section 6(6)(b) of the Constitution and Section 53 of Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act, argued that the plaintiffs' cause of action arose in May 2007, and the suit was filed in 2012. He argued that the suit was filed five years beyond the three months within which the plaintiffs were allowed to bring an action against a public officer including corporate or statutory corporations or bodies like the CBN.

He urged the court to hold that the issue of limitation touches on the jurisdiction of the court and can be raised at any time. He stated that the 2nd defendant (CBN) became involved in the transaction in the process of carrying out its statutory duties under Section 2 of the CBN Act 2001, saying that by the provision of Section 53 (1) of BOFIA, the 2nd defendant was protected against any adverse claims for anything done or omitted to be done in good faith in connection with the execution of any power conferred upon the bank.

He further argued that the provision of Section 53 (1) of BOFIA applies to the 2nd defendant not only when it is implementing the provisions of BOFIA but also when it is carrying out its statutory duties under the CBN Act, 2007.

But, the plaintiffs through their lawyer, contended that the provision of Section 53 (1) of BOFIA does not apply in this particular situation. They also argued that the suit is not statute-barred as the acts of the 2nd defendant (CBN) are continuous.

He submitted that the 2nd defendant is to promote a sound financial system in Nigeria and act as a banker and provide economic and financial advice to the federal government.

The 14-years-old legal battle began in 2008 when SEC declared a scheme founded by Nospetco Oil and Gas Limited illegal.

Nospetco was registered solely for the importation, sale, and distribution of petroleum products and cooking gas. The firm started a collective investment scheme between 2004 and 2005 and encouraged thousands to invest N450,000 per slot, with a promise of a monthly N40,000 return on investment on each slot.

Shortly after the investors invested in the firm, SEC, in 2007, opped the firm's operations, describing it as illegal. The regulatory agency also froze its various bank accounts and deposited the money with the CBN on behalf of the investors.

Miffed by this, Nospetco filed a suit at the Investment and Securities Tribunal (IST) with suit No: IST/OA/19/07 in 2011, challenging SEC's power to declare its business illegal and lost.

Adeleke on behalf of the investors also filed a suit at the IST, Lagos, for payment of the seized money and got a favourable judgment.

Dissatisfied with IST's judgment, the firm appealed to the Court of Appeal in Lagos, urging it to set aside the decision, but the Court of Appeal upheld the decision.

Still dissatisfied, the company again appealed to the Supreme Court to quash the appellate court's decision. But the apex court dismissed Nospetco's claims, declaring that the money was actually to the investors. The apex court also dismissed Nospetco's claims that the money should be paid into its coffers. It, however, asked the investors to go to the appropriate court for the recovery of their money.

Delivering the judgment through zoom, Justice Amina Augie leading Justice Osegi, said the three other justices of the apex court that formed the five-man panel agreed that since it is a collective investment scheme, the case can be prosecuted in a representative capacity and directed the investors through their lead counsel, Debo Adeleke, to go to the appropriate court to ventilate their grievances.

This was why the case was filed at the Federal High Court in Lagos. With the declaration by the court that the case is statute-barred, observers believe that the investors who are desperate to recover the money, may have to wait until the appeals are exhausted, otherwise, they have lost their investments.

According to research conducted by an investment banking financial firm, Norrenberger Financial Investments Scheme, Nigerians lost over N300 billion in Ponzi schemes in five years.

Over time, poverty, lack of financial literacy, and greed have been identified among the reasons for the growing number of persons that fall for the intoivities of illegal investment companies as well as Ponzi scheme operators.

In addition, the undying and unrestrained appetite for get-rich-quick syndrome has also seen operators of such schemes swindle unsuspecting members of the public. Ponzi scheme operators also capitalise on the harsh economic environment to offer unrealistic returns on investments to gullible persons with Nigerians reported reporting lost billions to criminals masked as investment portfolio managers. These illegal schemes have also expanded through the use of online services.

On their part, investment analysts cited scarce justice from security outfits as a major factor that makes Nigeria a breeding ground for Ponzi schemes.

Findings revealed that the Ponzi scheme has been evolving in different forms to attract people of different generations. For instance, from the days of famous wonder banks such as Planwell, 'Umana Umana' to Nospetco Oil and Gas, Ponzi schemes in Nigeria have evolved with the times into community scams like Ultimate Cycler.

This is why the Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC) last week issued a warning signal to Nigerians who invest with illegal fund managers, saying it does not insure them. The deposit insurer said in a statement that with the recent increase in investment channels arising from innovative products, there has been an increase in illegal fund managers who have been using different platforms soliciting the public to invest their funds with them, promising excessive returns on such investments.

Recently, the International Center for Investigative Reporting (ICIR), an independent, non-profit news agency with a mission to use investigative journalism to impact good government, submitted that public endorsement of Ponzi schemes by Nigerian celebrities, greed, and poor financial investment knowledge have been identified as some of the major enablers to the loss of billions of naira by investors.

"Most Nigerians get into the Ponzi scheme knowing it is a bubble, hoping they get in early enough to make some profit. Most players know it is a gamble, so they put in only small amounts they can afford to lose," the Managing Director of Norrenberger Financial Investments, Tony Edeh, told the ICIR.

The financial expert, who spoke further on how low financial knowledge is a key enabler of the Ponzi scheme in Nigeria, stressed that many victims of the Ponzi scheme did not have the knowledge to pick out flaws from an offer.

He added: "Financial literacy is still low in the country. As a result, few can tell when an offer is too good to be true. Many investment scams mask themselves as legitimate by flaunting business registration certificates."

Experts have accused the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) of not doing enough to curb Ponzi schemes in the country. They wonder why the agency should rely on the information provided by victims to act.

MARKET NEWS

FUND MANAGERS ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA

A Mutual fund (Unit Trust) is an investment vehicle managed by a SEC (Securities and Exchange Commission) registered Fund Manager. Investors with similar objectives buy units of the Fund so that the Fund Manager can buy securities that willl generate their desired return.

An ETF (Exchange Traded Fund) is a type of fund which owns the assets (shares of stock, bonds, oil futures, gold bars, foreign currency, etc.) and divides ownership of those assets into shares. Investors can buy these 'shares' on the floor of the Nigerian Stock Exchange.

A REIT (Real Estate Investment Trust) is an investment vehicle that allows both small and large investors to part-own real estate ventures (eg. Offices, Houses, Hospitals) in proportion to their investments. The assets are divided into shares that are traded on the Nigerian Stock Exchange.

GUIDE TO DATA:
Date: All fund prices are quoted in Naira as at 11-Aug-2022, unless otherwise stated.

Offer price: The price at which units of a trust or ETF are bought by investors.
Bid Price: The price at which Investors redeem (sell) units of a trust or ETF.

Yield/Total Return: Denotes the total return an investor would have earned on his investment. Money Market Funds report Yield while others report Year- to-date Total Return.
NAV: Is value per share of the real estate assets held by a REIT on a specific date.

DAILY PRICE LIST FOR MUTUAL FUNDS, REITS and ETFS

MUTUAL FUNDS / UNIT TRUSTS

AFRINVEST ASSET MANAGEMENT LTD			aaml@afrinvest.com
Web: www.afrinvest.com; Tel: +234 818 885 6757			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
Afrinvest Equity Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
Afrinvest Plutus Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nigeria International Debt Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
Afrinvest Dollar Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
AIICO CAPITAL LTD			ammf@aiicocapital.com
Web: www.aiicocapital.com, Tel: +234-1-2792974			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
AIICO Money Market Fund	100.00	100.00	8.55%
AIICO Balanced Fund	3.68	3.74	8.01%
ANCHORIA ASSET MANAGEMENT LIMITED			info@anchoriaam.com
Web:www.anchoriaam.com, Tel: 08166830267; 08036814510; 08028419180			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
Anchoria Money Market	100.00	100.00	4.90%
Anchoria Equity Fund	139.84	141.42	0.42%
Anchoria Fixed Income Fund	1.18	1.18	3.47%
ARM INVESTMENT MANAGERS LTD			enquiries@arminvestmentcenter.com
Web: www.arm.com.ng; Tel: 0700 CALLARM (0700 225 5276)			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
ARM Aggressive Growth Fund	21.49	22.14	5.95%
ARM Discovery Balanced Fund	510.92	526.33	13.25%
ARM Ethical Fund	42.94	44.24	10.23%
ARM Eurobond Fund ($)	1.07	1.08	-0.43%
ARM Fixed Income Fund	1.05	1.06	3.71%
ARM Money Market Fund	1.00	1.00	8.05%
AVA GLOBAL ASSET MANAGERS LIMITED			info@avacapitalgroup.com
Web: www.avacapitalgroup.com; Tel 08069294653			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
AVA GAM Fixed Income Dollar Fund	96.8	96.8	-0.19%
AVA GAM Fixed Income Dollar Naira	1,095.05	1,095.05	9.50%
AXA MANSARD INVESTMENTS LIMITED			investmentcare@axamansard.com
Web: www.axamansard.com; Tel: +2341-4488482			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
AXA Mansard Equity Income Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
AXA Mansard Money Market Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
CAPITAL EXPRESS ASSET AND TRUST LIMITED			info@capitalexpressassetandtrust.com
Web: www.capitalexpressassetandtrust.com; Tel: +234 803 307 5048			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
CEAT Fixed Income Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
Capital Express Balanced Fund(Formerly: Union Trustees Mixed Fund)	N/A	N/A	N/A
CAPITALTRUST INVESTMENTS AND ASSET MANAGEMENT LIMITED			halalfif@capitaltrustnigeria.com
Web: www.capitaltrustnigeria.com; Tel: 08061458806			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
Capitaltrust Halal Fixed Income Fund	1,012.20	1,012.20	4.69%
CARDINALSTONE ASSET MANAGEMENT LIMITED			mutualfunds@cardinalstone.com
Web: www.cardinalstoneassetmanagement.com; Tel: +234 (1) 710 0433 4			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
CardinalStone Fixed Income Alpha Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
CHAPELHILL DENHAM MANAGEMENT LTD			investmentmanagement@chapelhilldenham.com
Web: www.chapelhilldenham.com, Tel: +234 461 0691			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
Chapelhill Denham Money Market Fund	100.00	100.00	9.45%
Paramount Equity Fund	19.36	19.71	11.12%
Women's Investment Fund	147.54	149.36	3.96%
CORDROS ASSET MANAGEMENT LIMITED			assetmgtteam@cordros.com
Web: www.cordros.com, Tel: 019036947			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
Cordros Money Market Fund	100.00	100.00	8.62%
Cordros Milestone Fund	133.02	133.95	6.82%
Cordros Dollar Fund ($)	110.67	110.67	5.04%
CORONATION ASSETS MANAGEMENT			investment@coronationam.com
Web:www.coronationam.com, Tel: 012366215			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
Coronation Money Market Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
Coronation Balanced Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
Coronation Fixed Income Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
EDC FUNDS MANAGEMENT LIMITED			mutualfundng@ecobank.com
Web: www.ecobank.com Tel: 012265281			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
EDC Nigeria Money Market Fund Class A	N/A	N/A	N/A
EDC Nigeria Money Market Fund Class B	N/A	N/A	N/A
EDC Nigeria Fixed Income Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
EMERGING AFRICA ASSET MANAGEMENT LIMITED			assetmanagement@emergingafricafroup.com
Web:www.emergingafricagroup.com/emerging-africa-asset-management-limited/, Tel: 08039492594			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
Emerging Africa Money Market Fund	1.00	1.00	7.99%
Emerging Africa Bond Fund	1.03	1.03	8.76%
Emerging Africa Balanced Diversity Fund	1.04	1.04	4.32%
Emerging Africa Eurobond Fund	102.99	102.99	1.90%
FBNQUEST ASSETS MANAGEMENT LIMITED			invest@fbnquest.com
Web: www.fbnquest.com/asset-management; Tel: +234-81 0082 0082			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
FBN Bond Fund	1487.18	1487.18	11.34%
FBN Balanced Fund	194.39	195.67	10.92%
FBN Halal Fund	122.27	122.27	10.69%
FBN Money Market Fund	100.00	100.00	9.31%
FBN Dollar Fund (Retail)	125.17	125.17	5.79%
FBN Nigeria Smart Beta Equity Fund	159.52	161.66	5.48%
FCMB ASSET MANAGEMENT LIMITED			fcmbamhelpdesk@fcmb.com
Web: www.fcmbassetmanagement.com; Tel: +234 1 462 2596			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
Legacy Money Market Fund	1.00	1.00	7.89%
Legacy Debt Fund	3.74	3.74	-6.65%
Legacy Equity Fund	1.89	1.93	8.59%
Legacy USD Bond Fund	1.24	1.24	2.51%
FSDH ASSET MANAGEMENT LTD			coralfunds@fsdhgroup.com
Web: www.fsdhaml.com; Tel: 01-270 4884-5; 01-280 9740-1			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
Coral Balanced Fund	4,070.29	4,125.49	7.30%
Coral Income Fund	3,599.78	3,599.78	6.20%
Coral Money Market Fund	100.00	100.00	9.86%
FSDH Dollar Fund	1.11	1.11	4.00%
INVESTMENT ONE FUNDS MANAGEMENT LTD			enquiries@investment-one.com
Web: www.investment-one.com; Tel: +234 812 992 1045,+234 1 448 8888			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
Abacus Money Market Fund	100.00	100.00	7.83%
Vantage Balanced Fund	2.90	2.95	4.74%
Vantage Guaranteed Income Fund	1.00	1.00	7.31%
Kedari Investment Fund (KIF)	142.06	142.06	7.59%
Vantage Equity Income Fund (VEIF) - June Year End	1.26	1.29	1.03%
Vantage Dollar Fund (VDF) - June Year End	1.06	1.06	7.84%
LOTUS CAPITAL LTD			fincon@lotuscapitallimited.com
Web: www.lotuscapitallimited.com; Tel: +234 1-291 4626 / +234 1-291 4624			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
Lotus Halal Investment Fund	1.60	1.63	12.68%
Lotus Halal Fixed Income Fund	1,162.11	1,162.11	5.87%
MERISTEM WEALTH MANAGEMENT LTD			info@meristemwealth.com
Web: http://www.meristemwealth.com/funds/ ; Tel: +234 1-4488260			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
Meristem Equity Market Fund	12.33	12.39	12.93%
Meristem Money Market Fund	10.00	10.00	9.77%
NORRENBERGER INVESTMENT AND CAPITAL MANAGEMENT LIMITED			enquiries@norrenberger.com
Web: www.norrenberger.com, Tel: +234 (0) 908 781 2026			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
Norrenberger Islamic Fund (NIF)	101.74	101.74	9.57%
Norrenberger Money Market Fund (NMMF)	100.00	100.00	8.08%
PAC ASSET MANAGEMENT LTD			info@pacassetmanagement.com
Web: www.pacassetmanagement.com/mutualfunds; Tel: +234 1 271 8632			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
PACAM Balanced Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
PACAM Fixed Income Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
PACAM Money Market Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
PACAM Equity Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
PACAM EuroBond Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
SCM CAPITAL LIMITED			info@scmcapitalng.com
Web: www.scmcapitalng.com; Tel: +234 1-280 2226,+234 1- 280 2227			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
SCM Capital Frontier Fund	130.04	132.63	4.74%
SFS CAPITAL NIGERIA LTD			investments@sfsnigeria.com
Web: www.sfsnigeria.com, Tel: +234 (01) 2801400			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
SFS Fixed Income Fund	1.05	1.05	9.25%
STANBIC IBTC ASSET MANAGEMENT LTD			assetmanagement@stanbicibtc.com
Web: www.stanbicibtcassetmanagement.com; Tel: +234 1 280 1266; 0700 MUTUALFUNDS			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
Stanbic IBTC Balanced Fund	3,616.40	3,658.02	6.87%
Stanbic IBTC Bond Fund	240.67	240.67	2.16%
Stanbic IBTC Ethical Fund	1.44	1.47	15.48%
Stanbic IBTC Guaranteed Investment Fund	324.12	324.13	3.51%
Stanbic IBTC Iman Fund	267.01	271.10	14.50%
Stanbic IBTC Money Market Fund	1.00	1.00	6.55%
Stanbic IBTC Nigerian Equity Fund	11,978.74	12,149.30	9.83%
Stanbic IBTC Dollar Fund (USD)	1.33	1.33	3.10%
Stanbic IBTC Shariah Fixed Income Fund	119.32	119.32	2.06%
Stanbic IBTC Enhanced Short-Term Fixed Income Fund	111.28	111.28	4.61%
UNITED CAPITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT LTD			unitedcapitalplcgroup.com
Web: www.unitedcapitalplcgroup.com; Tel: +234 01-6317876			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
United Capital Equity Fund	0.98	1.00	10.38%
United Capital Balanced Fund	1.33	1.35	2.31%
United Capital Wealth for Women Fund	1.15	1.17	11.38%
United Capital Sukuk Fund	1.07	1.07	4.40%
United Capital Fixed Income Fund	1.90	1.90	3.88%
United Capital Eurobond Fund	122.43	122.43	3.33%
United Capital Money Market Fund	1.00	1.00	9.72%
QUANTUM ZENITH ASSET MANAGEMENT & INVESTMENTS LTD			service@quantumzenithasset.com.ng
Web: www.quantumzenith.com.ng; Tel: +234 1-2784219			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
Zenith Balanced Strategy Fund	13.76	13.89	4.34%
Zenith ESG Impact Fund	16.16	16.33	10.57%
Zenith Income Fund	22.98	22.98	4.68%
Zenith Money Market Fund	1.00	1.00	6.69%
VETIVA FUND MANAGERS LTD			funds@vetiva.com
Web: www.vetiva.com; Tel: +234 1 453 0697			
Fund Name	**Bid Price**	**Offer Price**	**Yield / T-Rtn**
Vetiva Banking Exchange Traded Fund	3.80	3.90	-5.08%
Vetiva Consumer Goods Exchange Traded Fund	5.87	5.97	0.38%
Vetiva Griffin 30 Exchange Traded Fund	18.22	18.42	3.02%
Vetiva Money Market Fund	1.00	1.00	7.06%
Vetiva Industrial Goods Exchange Traded Fund	19.22	19.42	-3.81%
Vetiva S&P Nigeria Sovereign Bond Exchange Traded Fund	148.21	150.21	-6.02%

REITS

Fund Name	NAV Per Share	Yield / T-Rtn
SFS REIT	117.96	4.16%
Union Homes REIT	51.82	1.90%

EXCHANGE TRADED FUNDS

Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Lotus Halal Equity Exchange Traded Fund	14.48	14.58	3.55%
SIAML Pension ETF 40	134.63	137.92	5.87%
Stanbic IBTC ETF 30 Fund	103.64	105.85	3.86%
MERGROWTH ETF	16.40	16.50	-2.94%
MERVALUE ETF	17.10	17.20	20.26%

INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

Fund Name	NAV Per Share	Yield / T-Rtn
Chapel Hill Denham Nigeria Infrastructure Debt Fund	107.59	0.00%

The value of investments and the income from them may fall as well as rise. Past performance is a guide and not an indication of future returns. Fund prices published in this edition are also available on each fund manager's website and FMAN's website at *www.fman.com.ng.* Fund prices are supplied by the operator of the relevant fund and are published for information purposes only.

CONVERSATION WITH MY BILLIONAIRE FRIEND



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• PERSONAL FINANCE • SAVINGS • BUDGETING • COMMODITIES • GOLD • INVESTING

Putting It All Together…On the Path to the Next Phase

My meeting with my Billionaire Friend was a short one; it was essentially a review session and we went through the entire project and looked at the feedback from the readers. My friend confirmed we needed to move to the next phase but that would require a recap of what we have done so far to put people in the picture again. So here is the first set of recaps. Enjoy.

1. BUILDING WEALTH STARTS FROM PLANNING AND UNBROKEN DEVOTION TO EXECUTION

"Without commitment, there are only promises and hope, no plans" **- Peter F. Drucker.**

Building wealth is not a miracle. It takes intentional planning and taking active steps. Being intentional with one's life is rare. Many people are not in control of their lives, they are easily influenced by extrinsic factors, distracting their focus.

In building wealth, there is a need for a "Wealth Plan"- the same way you don't enter a business without having a clear-cut plan, analysis and financial projections, you don't build wealth without a plan.

WHAT IS A WEALTH PLAN?

"A wealth plan is a detailed form of looking at the micro and macro environment and devising ways to achieve wealth creation. In other words, it involves the continuous processes of designing and reviewing the economic and political environment, available investment vehicles and instruments, prevailing financial policies and indices, available opportunities and other qualitative and quantitative inputs for building wealth. This is what wealth planning is all about".

HOW CAN YOU GO ABOUT WEALTH PLANNING?

You can plan wealth by scanning, exploring and understanding the wealth-creating synergies around you. In other words, you need to broaden your knowledge base to achieve your goal of building wealth. This involves the non-exhaustive gathering of knowledge through classroom exposures or self-education by reading relevant books and articles and/or mentoring experienced investment/wealth building experts".

CONTENT OF A WEALTH PLAN

The content of a Wealth Plan has to do with determining what your best wealth-building investments would be, given your skills, passion, knowledge base, the extent of the reliability and predictability of your political/economic environment and the relative performance of the various available investment vehicles in your environment".

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DON'T HAVE A PLAN?

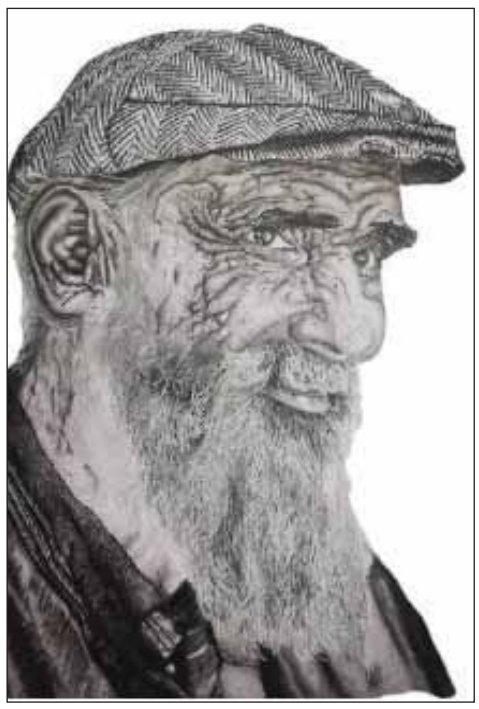
You should not blame others if you live in abject penury when you live without a plan. Every youth should have a plan for his/her future. You can not afford to live by the beggarly hands; the world does not listen to people on their knees. You must be completely devoted to that plan. Your plan must be absolute, only changing for the better, at enhancing and safeguarding your responses to the dynamics of the macroeconomics of your environment. The prioritising of buying Aso-Ebi should be out of it, the frivolous expense of unending partying should be out of it, and the issue of buying unnecessary expensive fashion items should also be out of it. The truth is that building wealth generally entails the continuous saving of scarce resources, which must be devoid of consumptive and wasteful living. It is a journey of absolute focus".

HOW DID YOU TAKE CARE OF DISTRACTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS?

Building wealth requires avoiding distractions and complete devotion to executing wealth-building plans. Here are a few tips to help you get started:

- Don't allow yourself to be influenced to buy what you don't need
- You must avoid consumptive expenditures.
- Find a financial mentor.

2. YOU DO NOT NECESSARILY



Artist Impression of my Billionaire Friend

An investment in material things does not prepare you for the economic and financial vagaries of the unforeseeable future, it does not generate capital gains, and incomes and are consumptively depleted

HAVE TO OWN YOUR OWN BUSINESS TO BUILD WEALTH

"Wealth from get-rich-quick schemes easily disappears and destroys; however, wealth from hard work grows over time."

Imagine two people; Mr A and Mr B earn 10 million and 5 million Naira, respectively. In 10 years, who do you think would be more wealthy? If your mind chose Mr A at first glance, you have work to do on your decision-making. Many factors could have influenced who will be more wealthy than the other. In this case, we'll examine two significant factors; spending habits and investments.

Building wealth from earned incomes in paid employment is a long-term process. It is not a process of acquiring wealth within a short time; it is a gradual process of continuous devotion to converting savings into wealth by using the adage of "little drops of water makes a mighty ocean"- the highlight here is SAVINGS.

The question is, how do you save? Simply put, living below your 'means.'— living below one's income, ensuring that one's total living cost is managed continuously to be much less than one's earned income, leads to a wealthy life. As an employee, make sure you are prudent with your spending. Live on a budget. Your goal is to become wealthy and not look wealthy. If you would dare tame your spending habits, you are setting yourself up for a prosperous life.

Another factor to consider in our case study is investments. This is crucial in building wealth as an employee. You can accumulate wealth over time by initially investing in the previously mentioned financial instruments, then gradually and systematically investing in real estate, business ventures, and angel investments. The worth of your wealth can be significantly increased by doing this after first accumulating some wealth through investments in stock instruments, treasury bills, sovereign and corporate bonds, etc.

While saving, you must equip yourself with the proper investment knowledge and information. Talk to professional financial advisers, don't rush the process. You don't want to blow up your entire savings on Ponzi schemes or a bad investment. So, save. Live below your means. And while you save, learn about investment – this would help you grow your savings gradually.

Now, who do you think would become wealthier between Mr A and Mr B?

3. TO BUILD SUSTAINABLE PERSONAL WEALTH, YOU HAVE TO CULTIVATE THE HABIT OF CONTINUOUSLY LEARNING

"It is important to view knowledge as a semantic tree — make sure you understand the fundamental principles, i.e. the trunk and big branches, before you get into the leaves or there is nothing for them to hang on to." **- Elon Musk**

Learning should be a lifelong endeavour for anyone determined to build wealth. Building wealth requires knowledge-driven motivation, just like any other human endeavour. Building wealth means developing the habit of acquiring new knowledge at every level and studying all relevant subjects to reach one's wealth objective.

For building wealth, learning includes reading, asking the right questions, and staying up to date with the latest information in your field. You must consistently practice these things, it must be continuous and endless. It must excite you. You must love it. Your commitment to learning will transform your financial life. The goal is to ensure you are familiar with finance, economics, and accounting fundamentals. Learning to read and comprehend financial, economic, and investment articles can be more useful to you than learning to become an accountant or economist.

Sadly, there is a craze for materialism and knowledge in this age. You don't want to be like those who have been caught in the unreasonable glamour of consumptive lifestyle'. Expanding your mind is crucial if you ever want to become wealthy. The truth is an investment in material things does not prepare you for the economic and financial vagaries of the unforeseeable future, it does not generate capital gains, and incomes and are consumptively depleted.

Here are four must-read books for anyone who intends to create wealth:

- "Richest Man in Babylon" by George Samuel Clason
- "Rich Dad, Poor Dad" by Robert Kiyosaki
- "Creating wealth" by Robert G. Allen
- "The intelligent investor", by Benjamin Graham

4. PATHWAY TO PERSONAL WEALTH: DISCOVER, EXPLOIT AND CREATE SUCCESSFUL BRANDS OUT OF GAPS IN HUMAN NEEDS

The greatest challenge you will ever face is that of expanding your mind. It is like crossing the great frontier. You must be willing to be a pioneer, enter uncharted territory, face the unknown, and conquer your doubts and fears **- John Maxwell**

A straightforward way of creating wealth is by discovering existing gaps within unsatisfied human needs, exploiting the opportunity around these gaps and building successful brands in the form of products and services. Simply put, solving people's problems is the best way to create wealth.

In Rushel Conwell's classic, THE ACRES OF DIAMONDS, the author highlighted that diamonds are all around us waiting to be mined. The problem is, how do we recognise these diamonds?

- You must be willing to read and research
- Be observant
- Look for the problems people are complaining about
- Talk to mentors.

People like Bill Gates, Elon Musk, Warren Buffett, and Aliko Dangote recognised a need, a gap, and they filled that gap and became billionaires. Let's examine Aliko Dangote:

Aliko Dangote saw the huge unsatisfied opportunity gap in the local production of cement in Nigeria and went into creating a successful brand of his locally producing cement, eliminating cement importation by Nigeria and expanding his brand into some 13 other African countries. His brand is also exploiting the unsatisfied opportunity gaps in food, sugar, tomato paste and, very soon, refined petroleum. Dangote has thus built his wealth of about $12 billion from exploiting and satisfying the unsatisfied needs of Nigerians and other African cement with a successful brand.

We discover the opportunity gaps in human needs by scanning our environments through conducting market research. These opportunities hang there around us, waiting to be discovered and exploited by those seeking them. Knowledge is required for such discovery and exploitation of the unsatisfied need opportunities. A typical example is Warren Buffett. At only the age of seven, out of family financial frustrations and challenges, he borrowed a book for reading. The book was titled: 1000 ways to make $1000. Reading that book at that age; fired up the determination, the hidden talent, the commitment and zeal that has created the multi-billion dollars wealth of about $60 billion for Warren Buffett, who at some ninety years of age is still investing in trend-defining investments and building wealth out of it.

Conclusively, solve a problem. And if the problem is significant enough, you are on your way to becoming a billionaire.

5. THE ESSENCE OF WEALTH IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN WEALTH ITSELF (PART 1)

Everything in nature has a purpose, and that purpose is methodically fulfilled. Have you, for instance, observed the total interdependence of everything in nature? The earth grows the plants. The plants feed the animal. The animal feeds the man. The man dies and returns to the earth to fertilise it. Ask yourself, are you fulfilling your life's purpose in the larger scheme of things? Every day and in every way, nature beckons you to share, love and live in simple harmony with it - Agbalagbi

The big question here is, "What is the Essence of Wealth"? The answer is: how much your wealth impact the lives of others is the Essence of wealth.

Read the biographies of great people like Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos, Warren Buffett, John D Rockefeller, Oprah Winfrey, and back home, Aliko Dangote, Femi Otedola, Jim Ovia, or any other person who built wealth over time, you would see this principle in all of them. Most of them have impacted the lives of others through their wealth.

How do you think seeds become trees? Well, if you asked a farmer he would probably have a good answer for you. However, logically we can say TIME plays a major role in this transformation. It's the same in all strata of life.

Time happens to all of us, regardless of age, class, or status, we all obey the tick-tock. What distinguishes us from one another is what we do with the time that we all have. And if our time on this wealth can impact the lives of others, that's a wonderful way to live.

The truth is, a little show of kindness from you has the power to transform the life of another person. You can only experience the essence of wealth when a piece of all you have serves humanity.

I can't wait to catch up with you next week.

Building wealth from earned incomes in paid employment is a long-term process. It is not a process of acquiring wealth within a short time; it is a gradual process of continuous devotion to converting savings into wealth by using the adage of"little drops of water makes a mighty ocean"

FAKE VIDEO ON GOVERNOR ABDULRAZAQ: A THROWBACK TO KWARA'S DARK AGE



Yesterday afternoon, August 7, 2022, some opposition figures sought to trend a video in which thugs and supporters of former Senate President Bukola Saraki threw caution to the wind and disrupted an event held on 26th December 2018 by the Ilorin Emirate Descendants Progressive Union (IEDPU) at the Emir of Ilorins Palace. This video showed the Saraki crowd, known in those years for intimidating people, *heckling the th*en governorship candidate of APC AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq as he gave his remarks at the community event in the presence of the Emir and dignitaries from the Emirate.

Attached to the video (they tried to trend now) is a caption that the Governor was booed at Kwara State Polytechnic. It is false. No event took place in Kwara Polytechnic yesterday, August 7, 2022, to warrant the Governor being there. The video was taken in 2018 at the annual event organised by Ilorin Emirate's apex sociocultural body, the IEDPU. The Governor who was a candidate then, attended the event as a special guest of his home community association. It is well known that this riotous and disrespectful action by Saraki supporters and thugs was the last straw that caused the Saraki's loss of every single elective seat in Kwara at the 2019 General Elections.

Those who trended the video desperately meant to send the signal that an incumbent Governor was being booed. That probably misled the wrong audience. For the Kwara audience, however, the video did the opposite. It reminded them of the terrible old days when anyone who held different views was treated with contempt and harassed with thugs loyal to the deposed dynasty. The video reminds them of the dreaded dark days when respected Royalty and elders of the community were humiliated for daring to differ. The video brought back memories of when opposition leaders were denied access to public places.

But the fake video came at a wrong moment in history. Over the last three years of the AbdulRazaq Administration, Kwara has enjoyed unprecedented peace and security. Scheduled flights to the city of Ilorin have quadrupled. Less than a month ago, this conducive environment allowed all Ilorin sons and daughters and residents of the capital city to enjoy a very peaceful Eid as well as a joyous Durbar at which the Governor and other dignitaries rode on horseback along with the Emir amidst a cheering tumultuous crowd. Such events were never held peacefully in those dark years.

It was a video that retold the story of the horrors of those years, in contrast with the convivial atmosphere that the same man they harassed in the old video has now created in Kwara State. It is a rude awakening of Kwarans to the ugly past administrations and a time call for them to exercise their imminent civic duty of voting to permanently bury the bad old days and its ruthless rulers.

While the Governor represents a bright new dawn of free speech, those behind the video are purveyors of fake news reminiscent of the old order.

Certainly, no reasonable Kwaran wishes a return of those years where to hold a contrary view earns you jeers, indignation and violence.

Members of the public are kindly urged to ignore the old video clip which is clearly one propaganda gone awry.

Alhaji Bashir Adigun
Special Adviser, Political Communication to the Governor of Kwara State

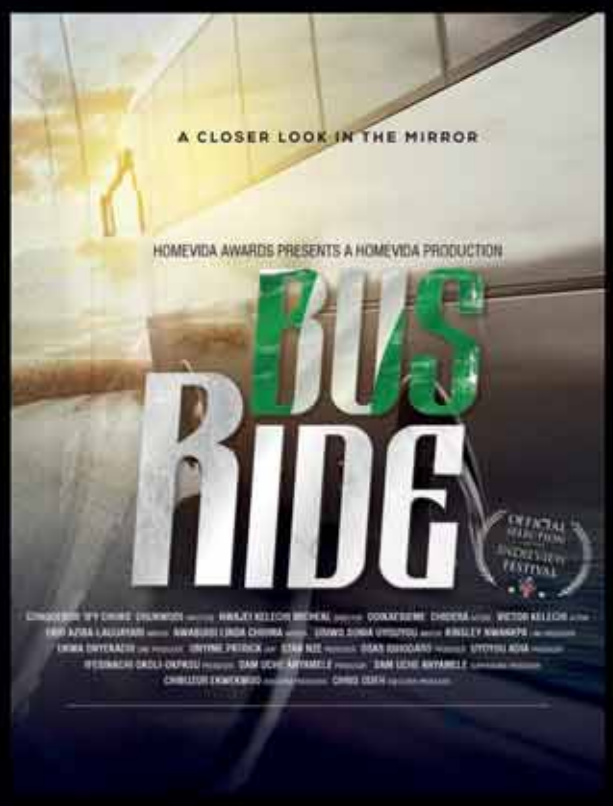
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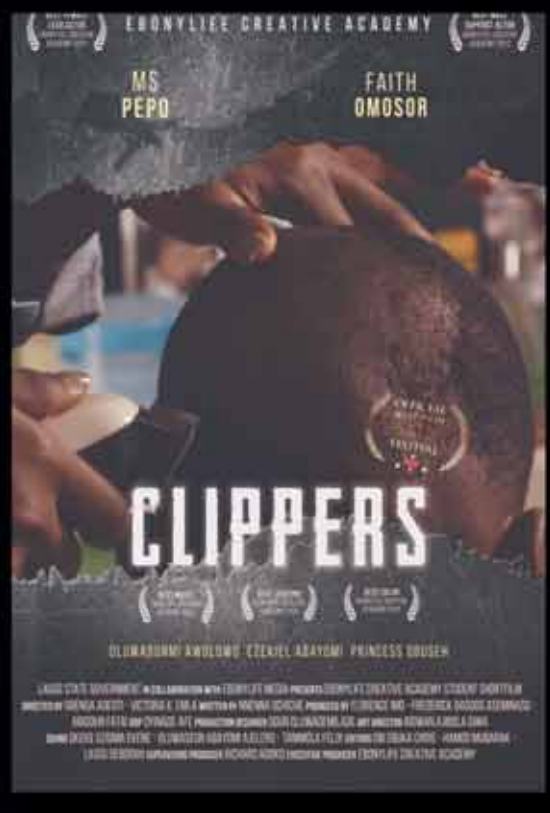
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DEALING WITH MISPLACED OUTRAGE

AISHA SHUAIBU *examines the misplaced priorities in the Nigerian public space when discussing what ails us as a nation*



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OMOLUABI AND THE BOLAJI ABDULLAHI EXAMPLE

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EDITORIAL

THE SCOURGE OF KIDNAPPING FOR RANSOM



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TUNDE OLUSUNLE *urges President Buhari to make good use of the remaining months in office*



ISHAYA BAMAIYI AND VINDICATION OF A GENERAL

Except for the release and launch of his controversial book, "Vindication of a General" in 2017 which accorded him some media visibility, Ishaya Rizi Bamaiyi, has maintained a very low profile over the years. For those who do not know, or who have forgotten him, Bamaiyi, a lieutenant general, was the last Chief of Army Staff, (COAS), under the rulership of Sani Abacha, Nigeria's one-time Head of State. Abacha was in office between November 1993 and June 1999. Bamaiyi spent eight years, in the aftermath of the enthronement of civil rule in 1999, in prison. He was supposedly implicated in the attempted murder of Alex Ibru, founder and publisher of The Guardian newspapers who also served as Minister of Internal Affairs, under Abacha.

Ibru who allowed professional independence for his newspaper stable under Abacha's unpopular fistic rule, was shot on Falomo Bridge in Lagos early February 1996, by suspected agents of state. Principal suspect in the attempted Ibru murder case, Barnabas Jabila, known by the alias "Sergeant Rogers" a notorious hitman for the Abacha killer squad, had framed Bamaiyi for ordering the annihilation of the newspaper magnate. Bamaiyi was released from incarceration April 2008, after being discharged and acquitted of all four counts of the murder allegations. Ishaya Bamaiyi's elder brother, Musa Bamaiyi, a famously moustachioed major general, was equally very prominent during the Abacha government. He was the dreaded Chairman of the Nation's Drug Law Enforcement Agency, (NDLEA), in that dispensation, who kept no prisoners.

Bamaiyi's book stoked quite some embers of discontent, especially among people who didn't share his representation of issues in the publication. The soldier-author maintained, for instance, that he was singled out for vilification by the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo, because he opposed Obasanjo's succession of Abdulsalam Abubakar. Abubakar, also an army general, was enthroned head of state, following the demise of Abacha in June 1998. He handed over power to Obasanjo, a former army general and military head of state in 1999, a succession arrangement Bamaiyi claimed he opposed.

Bamaiyi contends that the public image of the military had received severe battering because of the long and controversial involvement of the institution in politics, over time. He claims he supported the candidature of a thoroughbred civilian in the mould of an Olu Falae, a very experienced economist and technocrat who once served as Secretary to the Government of the Federation, (SGF). Falae, a banker, equally served as Minister for Finance, Budget and Planning, also under Nigeria's former military President, Ibrahim Babangida.

Arising from his once-upon-a-time stature in the nation's political organogram, Bamaiyi who will be 73 in September, is by right a senior citizen and an elder statesman. For the avoidance of doubt, the pyramid of authority in a military regime, privileges the Chief of Army Staff. Immediately following the President or Head of State, depending on the preference of the Commander-in-Chief, (C-in-C), in order of seniority, is the "Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters," (CSSH). Babangida redesignated the office as "Chief of General Staff," (CGS), in his time, a title retained by Abacha and Abdulsalam, respectively. Next to this office is that of the "Chief of Defence Staff," (CDS), who sometimes doubled as "Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff," (CJCS), a nomenclature borrowed from the United States military.

Following this position, is the COAS, who is the most senior of the group of Service Chiefs, including those heading the navy and the airforce. But the COAS, in a way, towered even above the CDS. Avid followers of Nigeria's political history will recall the weight of authority and power wielded by iconic army chiefs of staff, like Theophilus Yakubu Danjuma, Alani Akinrinade and Samuel Victor Leonard Malu. Apart from commanding the military service with the largest number of troops, the soldiers reported directly to the COAS, from the level of the platoon, to that of the division, and so on. The COAS, therefore could be nominally Number Four in the hierarchy of a military government, but in reality, be the Number Two, only next to the C-in-C. Bamaiyi is rarely heard in the marketplace of public engagement, but he remains a respectable voice in the socio-politics of the country.

I came across a recent interview granted by Bamaiyi and conducted by Thecla Wilkie, for the Nigerian Television Authority, (NTA). I'm occasionally impatient watching long, dragging interviews, I must confess. I have, however, been recently delighted and enriched, staying through those of some of Nigeria's military greats, including Malu and his exploits in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The Bamaiyi interview covers his early years; desired profession; odyssey in the army; ascendancy through the rungs of the military pyramid; tenure as COAS and relationship with Abacha, among others.

Instructively, Bamaiyi contends that Abacha "never cared about anybody's religion... Until his death, all his service chiefs were Christians. He worked with people who could do the job for him, whose assurances he could take at the surface level." Bamaiyi equally spoke of his concerns about national security, particularly at the onset of the Boko Haram insurgency in the North East of the country, midway through the administration of former President Goodluck Jonathan. I indeed enjoyed my self-imposed task of transcribing parts of the dialogue, something I've not done in a while.

The former military chief recalls that he put a call through to Jonathan's aide-de-camp, (ADC), Ojogbane Adegbe, (who was then a lieutenant colonel but is now a brigadier general), who expedited the meeting with the former President. Bamaiyi applauded Jonathan's warmth and humility, for a man who was the leader of Africa's largest country. He expressed his worries about the prosecution of the battle against terrorism which was restricted to the North East, at the time. Rather than abating, the insurgency was spreading.

Jonathan, Bamaiyi observed, shared similar concerns about the military operations in the area, noting that his government's fiscal provisions for the armed forces, were not justified by the performance of the military on the frontlines. Bamaiyi, who still wears the scar of a bullet shot on his left knee from the 1967 to 1970 Nigerian civil war, stopped short of telling Jonathan he was evidently being fleeced by his service chiefs and their accomplices.

With the nationwide spread of insecurity vis-a-vis re-vigoured terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, killings and bloodletting, under the Muhammadu Buhari government, a concerned Bamaiyi wrote to request an appointment to see the President. His words: "I wrote to General Buhari at the beginning of the Fulani herdsmen clashes with farmers. I had a relationship with him and I thought I could offer some assistance. I was Commanding Officer, (CO) in Keffi, with responsibility for the security of the upcoming federal capital, Abuja, when he was Head of State.

I wrote that I wanted to see him. The letter was delivered. I was told by telephone that my letter had been received and I will be scheduled to see him in two days. On the day I was to meet him, somebody called me and said my appointment had been put off. He said to me in Hausa, that some people who sighted my correspondence in the State House system, said "I will stop water from running or flowing," should they allow me to see the President." I understood what they meant and I kept quiet. And I never, ever applied again to see him." Bamaiyi, who holds the second highest national honour, Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger, (GCON) which is primarily reserved for Vice Presidents and Presidents of the Senate, continued: "Many of us are concerned about goings on in the country. Unfortunately, your experience in these matters cannot reach the person who should know when access to him is blocked. ■

Dr Olusunle,
poet, journalist, author and scholar, is a Member of the Nigerian Guild of Editors



AISHA SHUAIBU examines the misplaced priorities in the Nigerian public space when discussing what ails us as a nation

DEALING WITH MISPLACED OUTRAGE

It is no longer news that there has been a dark cloud of ethnic divide and religious intolerance hovering over Nigeria since independence, but even more so in recent times. This disease which stifles Nigeria's lungs has only been worsened as the 2023 general election draws nearer. Reported cases of kidnapping, armed violence and cultism have become more frequent. While the people continue to tremble in fear, frustration and hopelessness, there is a seeming lack of capacity by the federal government to guarantee public safety, economic stability and the protection of lives and property.

Sadly, our national discourse has placed greater emphasis on issues of



religion and ethnicity over and above that of governance deficits and violations of basic human rights. Issues like Muslim-Muslim presidential ticket by the ruling party, farmer-herder clashes in the middle-belt, separatist agitations in the Southeast and acts of hate speech and misinformation campaigns on social media are topical issues in the polity. But they are not only divisive but also miss the mark in terms of the root causes of Nigeria's political instability. What we need to deal with are weak governance and the marginalization of majority of our people, especially in the areas of education, health and empowerment.

In what appears to be one of our darkest hours as a nation, most of our elites are guilty of vilifying and dehumanizing one another based on linguistic, tribal and religious differences. We fail to see how much we have in common as one people who are suffering under the same flag and toiling on the same soil. Ethnic divisionism has been a threat to peace and security across our continent and the same can be said about its effects in Nigeria today. But there are huge challenges we need to deal with.

Since the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic in mid-2020, the Nigerian economy has not quite bounced back from economic difficulties. The Nigerian Interbank Settlement System (NIBSS) reported that a total of N59.9 million bank accounts were left abandoned in 2021, which was an increase of 11% from the previous year. Additionally, the ripple effects from the Russia-Ukraine conflict has left the Naira falling to the dollar rapidly, leading to the increase in the general cost of living as food, petrol and diesel prices are getting harder to keep up with.

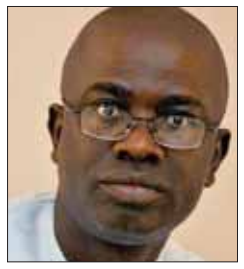
The response to hunger and poverty can be glimpsed from the increase in crime as robberies and kidnappings worsen daily. The continuous attacks by 'unknown gunmen' in the Southeast, terrorism in the Northeast and banditry problem Northwest have all placed our country at arguably its worst possible state since becoming independent 63 years ago. To worsen matters, financially able young Nigerians are left with no choice than to follow the 'Japa' movement and seek greener pastures in other countries. This, at a period we need all the bright minds, patriotic spirits and forward-thinking citizens we can get to rewrite our story as a nation.

Meanwhile, Nigeria does not lack the capability or capacity to flourish and achieve economic and financial growth through its greatest resource: its enormous population. According to the World Bank, Nigeria accounts for half of the total population of West Africa and has approximately 202 million people within its borders. Nigerians have demonstrated at home and abroad that they are multi-talented, incredibly resilient and gifted people. The Financial Times stated in 2020 that the most educated Africans in the United States are Nigerians while 61% of Nigerian immigrants hold at least one bachelor's degree and 54% of them are likely to occupy management positions. In the United Kingdom, Nigerians are mostly found in financial services, medical, tech and legal positions. Nigerians are also the highest number of students from Africa.

In recent reports from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), there are 96.2 million registered voters in the country, predominantly made up of youth between the ages of 18 – 35 years and women. That is a huge and critical demographic group for any country. This then brings us to pertinent questions. How can we build the capacity of this segment of our society? How do we regain the trust of some of our young people who have lost faith in the country and are now angry at everybody as we see on social media? How do we make both the leadership and followership accountable for their actions in Nigeria?

I have no ready answers for those questions. What I do know is that to rebuild the future, artificial differences that are used to divide us as a people must take a backseat. We must all promote things that unite us. As the Governor of Kaduna State, Mallam Nasir el-Rufa'i said, "We do not ask doctors of their religion, we just want to be cured when sick. You do not stop by the cockpit when boarding a flight to confirm the ethnicity of the pilot, you just want to arrive safely". Competence in leadership is what is required to navigate the future that must begin with the 2023 general election. ■

Shaibu
is a member of THISDAY Editorial Board



OLUSEGUN ADENIYI uses the former Sports Minister to reflect on character and leadership at a youth summit in Ilorin

OMOLUABI AND THE BOLAJI ABDULLAHI EXAMPLE

I like the theme for this year's International Youth Day which we mark today: 'Intergenerational Solidarity: Creating a World for all Ages'. It is very appropriate for this inaugural 'Omoluabi Summit' which has as its theme, 'Character as Leadership'. Both character and leadership are for the young and the old. Meanwhile, 'Omoluabi' is a cultural construct of the Yoruba people which is used to describe a person who exhibits the right values or, if you like, good character. And we are here today because of one 'Omoluabi', my friend and brother, AbdulGaniyu Bolaji Abdullahi. For those who may not know, today is also Bolaji's birthday, so congratulations are in order.

If there is any virtue we need in the Nigerian public space today, it is that of 'Omoluabi'. We need such people in politics, in the economy, in the security forces, in the academia, in the media, in the civil society, etc. Put simply, we need the virtue in all areas of our national life.

To be an 'Omoluabi' takes courage. It's about sacrificing convenience to uphold cherished principles. It's about taking the right decision that could come at huge personal cost. It's about exhibiting strong conviction even when we may lose friends in the process. It's about thinking less of self and more about the collective. It's about compassion for the less privileged of our society. It's about loyalty to ideals regardless of the consequences. It's about gratitude and honour. It's about taking the lonely road that could harbour thorns. So, it's effectively about the road less travelled.

We all know how Bolaji lost his job as Sports Minister just because he would not betray his benefactor. That is what 'Omoluabis' do. For those of us who are students of the Bible, we must have read the account of how the wife of Job goaded her husband to take a certain decision in a moment of distress. But as we also saw in that story, being an 'Omoluabi' ultimately pays. Because that is the true measure of a man. Incidentally, I read it somewhere that the opposite of being an 'Omoluabi' is to be described as 'Eeyan k'eyan'—a caricature of a human being. A worthless person. A charlatan. I doubt if anybody here would want to be so characterised.

Being an 'Omoluabi' has nothing to do with the faith anybody professes. It is more about conduct of such individuals in their 'Oro Siso' which means that their words must be temperate and seasoned with wisdom; in 'Iteriba' which depicts humility and respect, especially for elders. I will qualify this because the Yoruba people also have an instructive adage: "Àgbàlagbà tí kò bá mo eran è l'òbè, à nyóo fun ni." That is deep but we can break it down to the fact that respect is reciprocal and every 'Omoluabi' also knows that. Other virtues include being an 'Oloo'to' (speaker of truth, not someone who tell lies all over the place) and being an 'Akinkanju' which presupposes that the person is diligent in whatever he or she is doing. These and few others are the distinguishing qualities which describe an Omoluabi. They are the essence of his / her personality.

Before I take my seat, let me briefly highlight a few of them. Cultivating them will help many of our young people seated here today. Let's begin with self-discipline which speaks to the inner strength that allows us to control our thoughts, actions, and reactions. This is what gives a person the power to abide by commitments made, even when doing so requires tremendous effort and may not be convenient. It is self-discipline that allows us to push through challenges, fulfil responsibilities, and strive for excellence. It is also what earns one the virtue of integrity without which nobody can be said to have character.

The second issue I need to point out is diligence. One of the greatest character traits one should develop is the ability and inclination to work hard. As the common saying goes, the only place where success comes before work is in the dictionary. It is not only satisfying to be hardworking but also bolsters self-respect and self-worth



without which nobody could be considered truly an 'Omoluabi'.

Being an 'Omoluabi' also connotes being kind. This is an attribute that lifts both the giver and the receiver and breaks down barriers. While being kind doesn't require any more effort than being selfish and inconsiderate, it helps to create a better society for all of us. Finally, an 'Omoluabi's is someone whose words are measured. As we all know, the tongue is a tool that can be used for great good or much evil but in the age in which we live, we can say the same of our fingers. So, let me tell our young people here today: What you post on social media reflects on your character.

Anytime I interact with young people I always encourage them to step out into the real world from the virtual world in which most of them currently reside. That will also be my charge here today. Besides, if you misbehave in the virtual world, it will catch up with you in the real world. The sort of indiscretions that many other public officials were allowed to get away with in the past would not happen in your generation. You must therefore note that among those following you on social media are friends, enemies, and potential voters, especially for those of you who may, like Bolaji, want to join politics. Your relationship with these different audiences and individuals will be made or broken by their perception of your personality and character based on what they read or watch about you.

That imposes on you a responsibility to be careful in your online activities. Don't post or forward anything that would make others to judge you as an 'eeyan keeyan'. As Bolaji Abdulllahi reminds us with his own career trajectory in both media and politics, being an 'Omoluabi' may come with certain inconveniences but ultimately it pays. That should be your aspiration as young people. ■

Adeniyi
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EDITORIAL

THE SCOURGE OF KIDNAPPING FOR RANSOM

Security agencies could do more to stem the spate of abductions



Whatever may have been his reassurance to family members of the Abuja-Kaduna train abduction who met him last week, President Muhammadu Buhari should be concerned about the growing scourge of violent kidnappings for ransom in Nigeria. Not long ago, when the African Insurance Organisation held its forum in Mauritius, Nigeria was designated the global capital for this criminal enterprise, having overtaken countries like Colombia and Mexico that were hitherto front-runners. The March train attack which left no fewer than eight passengers dead, and the abduction of dozens, including women and children, was an indication that the situation has since degenerated.

With the increasing sophistication of valued added services offered by communication networks especially the tracking system, we wonder why it is difficult for the security agencies to monitor the calls being made by these criminals during negotiations for ransom. Whatever may be the case, we call on the authorities to redouble efforts in dealing with this dangerous phenomenon that is fast turning our country into a huge jungle. From senior advocates of Nigeria to top politicians and wealthy businessmen and clerics, nobody seems to be beyond the reach of these kidnappers. Even traditional rulers who ordinarily are the custodians of cultural values and norms have become easy prey for kidnappers. It is a testimony to the increasing sophistication of these criminals that they could easily get to royal fathers who are never alone. Many of the victims have also been killed after their families had paid the demanded ransom.

However, the targets are not only the well-heeled of our society, but these kidnappers also afflict the lower bracket, perhaps out of desperation. In some of these cases, freedom could be purchased with any amount that these criminals could get. In some cases, the criminals randomly stop vehicles on the road in the hope of finding someone worth kidnapping. Perhaps more worrisome is that too often, even when the security agencies are involved in the rescue bids of kidnapped persons, ransoms are still paid, after which the victims are then abandoned by their abductors for law enforcement agents to "rescue and recover".

This is a serious issue considering the implications. The national economy has been at the receiving end of the escalation in banditry and kidnapping. The impact on education is also significant. A situation where students are arbitrarily abducted while in schools poses a major threat. There is also the concern about food security as many farmers have neglected their farms for fear of being abducted for ransom or killed. But questions remain as to why the problem defies solution.

Kidnappers are not ghosts. They are human beings, and some of them live within communities. Since traditional rulers are also targets, members of our various communities must realise they have a critical role to play in providing useful information to security agencies that should also begin to act with urgency or deploy all necessary and available resources, not only when big names are victims. Above all, we call on government at all levels to begin to address social issues like unemployment and poverty which help to feed this crime because with ransom being paid for victims, kidnapping now seems to be a serious vocation for many idle hands.

Increasingly, an underground ransom economy seems to have taken root. People are kidnapped. Ransom is demanded and paid sometimes through the banks with no trails tracked or credible security questions asked. Even when these transactions are reported to the police, there is hardly any systematic investigation let alone arrests. Yet the kidnappers' dens are within our borders, in the ungoverned spaces of forests and remote villages. Besides, there are reports that most of these kidnappers are agents of some powerful people who live within the cities. Efforts must be made to identify, arrest and bring such people to justice.

Meanwhile, some states have stiffened their laws prescribing even the death sentence for kidnapping. The National Assembly should follow suit. Complicity by security agencies with kidnappers should attract the same punishment as perpetration of the offence itself. In the meantime, everything should be done to ensure the safe return of the remaining abductees of the Abuja-Kaduna train attack.

With the increasing sophistication of valued added services offered by communication networks especially the tracking system, we wonder why it is difficult for the security agencies to monitor the calls being made by these criminals during negotiations for ransom

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LETTERS

THE HIGH COST OF GAS FLARING

There are many Nigerians who have absolutely no doubt that what is deemed as the precarious situation in the country is only but a tip of the iceberg. This is because the country is largely data-poor. In 1956, in Oloibiri, Bayelsa State, Nigeria, barely four years away from a historic independence, struck gold when crude oil was discovered in commercial quantities. The discovery was to change the economic fortunes of the country as petrodollars began to stream in.

Before then, the different regions of the country were holding their own, with each of the regions majoring in the production of a particular agricultural commodity. But complacency was never far away, and it was only a matter of time before Nigeria abandoned its other options to become a mono-product economy.

In its journey as an oil producing country, Nigeria has encountered many monsters on the road, the most formidable of these monsters of which have included corruption and environmental degradation.

According to the World Bank, gas flaring is the burning of natural gas associated with oil extraction. The practice has persisted from the beginning of oil production over 160 years ago and takes place due to a range of issues, from market and economic constraints, to a lack of appropriate regulation and political will.

Flaring is a monumental waste of a valuable natural resource that should either be used for productive purposes, such as generating power, or conserved. For example, the amount of gas that is currently flared each year – about 144 billion cubic meters could power the whole of sub-Saharan Africa.

Gas flaring persists to this day because it is a relatively safe, though wasteful and polluting method of disposing the associated gas that comes from oil production. According to data from the Nigerian Oil Spill Monitor, an arm of the Nigerian Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA), released on August 7,2022, Nigeria lost N891bn to gas flaring in 18 months.

The data revealed that the country lost a total of N707bn in 2021 and N184bn in the first half of 2022, to bring up a total of 891bn. According to NOSDRA, despite efforts to reduce gas flaring, it has continued to be flared in Nigeria since the 1950s, releasing carbon dioxide and other gaseous substances into the atmosphere with the resultant environmental and health challenges.

From 2012 to 2021, NOSDRA estimated that the total value of gas flared over a decade is valued at $13.3 billion. Converting this into naira at the prevailing exchange rate over the course of 10 years puts the cumulative value at N4 trillion.

One of the major drawbacks of oil exploration in Nigeria is just how deleterious it has been to the environment, particularly the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

The World Bank has ranked Nigeria seventh among the top gas flaring countries of the world after Russia, Iraq, Iran, the United States, Algeria, Venezuela.

Gas flaring results in a range of pollutants released into the atmosphere, including carbon dioxide, methane, and black carbon (soot). According to the World Bank, the methane emissions from gas flaring contribute significantly to global warming in the short to medium term, because methane is over 80 times more powerful than carbon dioxide on a 20-year basis.

There is no doubt that the current levels of gas flaring in Nigeria are simply unsustainable. Not with the staggering environmental and economic costs.

Kene Obiezu,
Keneobiezu@gmail.com

An Icon Goes Home



The families of Nelson and Laja/Tinubu-Meredith announce the passing unto glory of our beloved Wife, Mother, Grandmother, Sister and Aunt

CHIEF (MRS)

Titilola Olukemi Nelson

(nee Laja)

YEYESEWA OF LAGOS

February 9, 1956 - July 17, 2022

FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

TUESDAY, AUGUST 23, 2022
EVENING OF SONGS & TRIBUTES
The Haven,
Off Oba Akinjobi way,
G.R.A Ikeja, Lagos
5:00 pm

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 24, 2022
CHRISTIAN WAKE KEEP
The Haven,
Off Oba Akinjobi way,
G.R.A Ikeja, Lagos
4:00 pm

THURSDAY, AUGUST 25, 2022
FUNERAL SERVICE
Archbishop Vining Memorial
Church Cathedral GRA, Ikeja,
Lagos
9:00 am



INTERMENT (PRIVATE CEREMONY) follows immediately after the Funeral Service

Abayomi Nelson
For: The Family

Relatives, Friends and Well-wishers are encouraged to share tributes on
yeyesewa.forevermissed.com

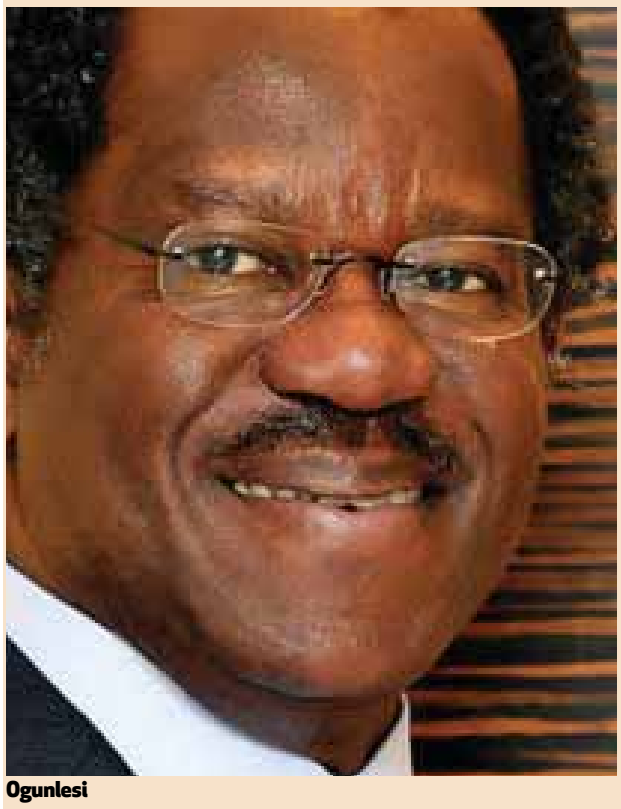
GLITTERATI

A THISDAY WEEKLY PULL-OUT

14.8.2022

10 NIGERIANS ACHIEVING EXTRAORDINARY FEATS IN THE DIASPORA

Vanessa Obioha profiles 10 Nigerians who have defied the stereotypical narrative about Nigeria in their respective fields and contributed positively to their host communities, making a difference



Ogunlesi



Onwurah



Olutoye



Badejo



Adeyemo



Okolo

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

10 NIGERIANS ACHIEVING EXTRAORDINARY FEATS IN THE DIASPORA



Adeleke



Tometi



Peterside



Agbaje

The popular narrative peddled about Nigeria has been stereotypical for so many years. Nigerians have been portrayed as victims of corruption, poor leadership, poverty, diseases, conflicts and many other vices. While the veracity of these narratives is debatable, many Nigerians home and abroad have shown that there is a whole lot more to the West African nation and its people than the often peddled narratives. From technology to entertainment and academia, these Nigerians have contributed positively to their host communities and made a difference where it matters.

They are leading innovations, shaping governance and changing the narrative globally. In the spirit of acknowledging achievements and spotlighting the results of hard work and determination, here is a list of ten Nigerians making exploits in the diaspora:

Adebayo Ogunlesi

An indigene of Sagamu, Ogun state, Adebayo Ogunlesi is an investment banker and lawyer who owns five airports in the United Kingdom, three of which he bought within six years.

He is currently the Chairman and Managing Partner at the private equity firm Global Infrastructure Partners (GIP), New York — a company that manages a portfolio of combined annual revenue greater than $46 billion, and investments of over $51 billion for its investors.

Married with two children, Ogunlesi has received numerous awards for his giant strides and is an alumnus of Ivy League schools including Oxford University, Harvard Law School, and Harvard Business School.

Adebayo Adeleke

Adebayo Adeleke is a dynamic leader with global insights on a wide array of issues, including emerging markets, risk management, security, supply chain management and logistics, leadership, geopolitics, diversity and inclusion. A seasoned combat veteran of the United States Army with 20 years of service, Adeleke is a sterling example of how immigrants have contributed to America's progress and development.

He is the creator of the Unfettered Podcast, a platform which captures the unfiltered narration of failures, triumphs, and lessons that characterise the life of industry leaders and celebrated heroes. Each episode of the podcast boasts profound wisdom and insight essential to the creation of formidable economic policies, sustainable governance, systematic leadership, and an impeccable value system.

Through his podcast and social media platforms (especially Twitter and Instagram), Adeleke explores global issues, trends, and narratives that shape our world, equipping many to be visionary leaders, proactive doers, critical thinkers, and knowledge builders driving various economies.

Funmi Olorunnipa Badejo

One of the attorneys selected to the White House counsel's office by President Joe Biden, Funmi Badejo aids the President in updating the federal judiciary and putting his stamp on it.

With degrees from the University of Florida, the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and the University of California, Berkeley School of Law, Badejo has distinguished herself in practice.

Prior to her role as attorney at the White House counsel's office for the Biden administration, Badejo served as general counsel to James E. Clyburn, the House majority whip, and headed the select subcommittee on the Coronavirus outbreak.

Badejo has also held positions as ethics counsel at the White House counsel's office, counsel for policy to the Assistant Attorney General in the civil division of the U.S. Department of Justice, and Attorney Advisor at the Administrative Conference of the United States during the Obama-Biden administration.

Esther Agbaje

Esther Agbaje defeated Raymond Dehn in the 2020 election to become a member of the Minnesota House of Representatives. She is the first Nigerian-American legislator elected in Minnesota.

An associate attorney at Ciresi Conlin LLP where she specializes in general civil litigation and medical malpractice, Agbaje represents District 59B in Hennepin County, which includes parts of Minneapolis' north and downtown.

Agbaje previously worked as a Foreign Service Officer for the US Department of State.

Ayo Tometi

Ayo Tometi, formerly known as Opal Tometi, is a Nigerian-American Yoruba human rights activist who also works as a writer, strategist, and community builder. She helped establish the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM) and has for nine years served in various capacities in the Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI) — the nation's first organisation dedicated to advancing the rights of immigrants of African heritage.

Tometi uses BLM to draw attention to the racist injustices that black people contend with. In the beginning, she was a vocal supporter of human rights causes in her small-town neighbourhood. She has advocated for the advancement of racial justice, migrant rights, and human rights throughout the world.

Additionally, Tometi has managed cases for victims of domestic abuse. She was included in Time Magazine's 100 Most Influential People of 2020 and the BBC's 100 Women announced in November 2020.

Chinyelu Onwurah

Since 2010, Chinyelu Susan Onwurah, a member of the Labour Party, has represented Newcastle Central as their Member of Parliament (MP). From October 2016 to April 9, 2020, she served as the Shadow Minister for industrial policy, science, and innovation before being named the Shadow Minister for science, research, and digital.

Prior to this, Onwurah was head of telecoms technology at Ofcom before entering politics, with a focus on broadband provision. Along with Hannah Dee, Sarah Wood, and Sherry Coutu, Onwurah was inducted into the Computer Weekly's 'Most Influential Women in UK IT' Hall of Fame in 2018. In 2020, Onwurah was named an Honorary Fellow of the British Science Association.

Wally Adeyemo

Like most Nigerians leaving the country in search of greener pastures, Adeyemo's parents emigrated to the U.S. in order to give him and his siblings a better chance at life. He would later attend the University of California at Berkeley, where he obtained a bachelor of arts degree before being accepted to Yale Law School where he earned his Juris Doctor.

Adeyemo was appointed as the U.S. Deputy Secretary by the 46th President of the United States of America, Joe Biden. The 41-year-old Nigerian-American economist was also the Deputy National Security Adviser for International under the administration of the previous government led by President Barack Obama.

Having developed desirable leadership qualities over time, he was described by the Board's Chairman Martin Nesbitt in a press release as "The ideal person to help lead the Foundation team as we continue to grow the impact of our global civic engagement programmes and advance the Obama Presidential Center."

Furthermore, Nesbitt stated that "given his executive experience in both the public and private sectors and previous service with President Obama, Wally is well positioned to help us continue to translate our sky-high ambitions into operational reality through daily leadership of our talented staff."

Dr Oluyinka Olutoye

Born in Nigeria and trained in the U.S., Dr Oluyinka Olutoye is a famed pediatric surgeon known for successfully conducting a sacrococcygeal teratoma — an operation where the baby was taken out of the uterus for 20 minutes during the five-hour procedure to remove the tumour and was then put back inside for the remainder of the gestation period before being delivered alive without any incident.

For his contribution to global society, Olutoye was recently conferred the prestigious Nigerian National Order of Merit (NNOM) Award for 2020 by president Muhammad Buhari, alongside two other individuals.

Olutoye is an alumnus of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, where he obtained his medical degree in 1988 and a PhD in anatomy from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, VA, in 1996. He later completed his residency in general surgery at the Medical College of Virginia Hospitals, Virginia Commonwealth University, and his fellowship in pediatric surgery at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine in Philadelphia.

Elvis Peterside

A Professor of Pediatrics and Neonatology at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, Peterside works as a consultant at one of the best children's hospitals in the world, the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

For his medical strides, in 2020, Peterside was named America's Best Physician by the US National Consumer Advisory Board.

Osaremen Okolo

An indigene of Edo state, 28 years old Osaremen Okolo was appointed as a Policy Advisor for Public Health and Equity on COVID-related matters by the US President-elect (now President), Joe Biden.

Before that, she served as Legislative Aide for Health Policy on the US Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) for Ranking Member Patty Murray of Washington, and also served as Senior Health Policy Advisor to U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky of Illinois.

GLITZ ENTERTAINMENT

BBNaija S7: With Christy O, Cyph Evicted, Who's Next?

Stories by **Vanessa Obioha**



Bryann, Groovy,Ilebaye,Khalid and Phyna nominated

Another Sunday night, another eviction looms in the Big Brother Naija Level Up House. Last Sunday saw three housemates leave the game. While Christy O and Cyph were evicted, Beauty was disqualified for continuously flouting Big Brother's rules.

The third week came with its own twists. Again, Level One won the Head of House challenge. This time, Adekunle took the title. As expected of him, he nominated Bryann, Groovy, Ilebaye, Khalid and Phyna for possible eviction tonight.

At least, one of the nominated housemates will exit the show. It is the second time Phyna and Khalid are being nominated for possible eviction. Will they survive again tonight?

Big Brother also asked the housemates to swap levels, and Khalid and Daniella grabbed headlines for the intimate sessions in the house. On Twitter, Bella and Phyna fans dragged each other on superiority and popularity. Phyna's declaration that she is an elephant and a threat to the Level One housemates seemed to have ruffled some feathers, with some declaring her the potential winner of the season. Time will tell if their prediction will be a reality.

Lagos Abstract Art Fair Exhibition Set to Hold First Edition

With the recent confirmation of finalists to showcase their pieces of abstract paintings, the first edition of the Lagos Abstract Art Fair Exhibition (LAAFE), is set to hold from August 31 to September 3, at Moist Beach, Oniru, Lagos.

LAAFE is the brainchild of Collins Akpapunam, the Head Honcho at Efizzi Communications, Kofya Brown of Mar'et Productions, and Chima Enwezor of Vertical Space. The collaborative venture seeks to address the dearth of platforms projecting abstract artists in the Nigerian art space.

For the project, Brown serves as the chief art curator. She explained that abstract art is often overlooked, especially in this part of the world. Through the exhibition, artists who specialise in the field will help extend their reach, which in turn increases their chances of monetizing their work.

"Most of these artists need to be discovered. We are using this platform to shed more light on the aspects of abstract art as well as create an avenue for these artists to express themselves while earning a livelihood," said Brown.

The selection process for finalists entailed weeks of analysing the works of hundreds of potentials. The trio of organisers hope that the exhibition will serve as a launchpad for initiating successful career paths for the artists through unlocking unique untold Nigerian stories to the rest of the world.

TBabz on Mission to Preach the Gospel of Christ through Music

For musician, songwriter and producer, Tolulope Babajide aka TBabz, there is no relenting on his passion for music. TBabz has independently released, produced and contributed to over 50 songs. Among the artists he has worked with are Gil Joe, Buchi, Marizu, Limoblaze, and Angeloh, and crafted production for UK gospel legend Faith Child as well as rapper/singer, S.O.

TBabz's latest songs, 'Still Blessed' featuring Nathanael, and 'Gotta Be God', which he did with Sal Ly and Da' T.R.U.T.H, are currently making waves on the global music scene. Aside from these rare achievements, his works have generated over 13 million streams across major digital music platforms.

In a recent chat, TBabz revealed that music runs in his family. "I came from a musical background. My dad is a music lover while my mom is a choir leader and an instrumentalist, who plays the cello. My sister plays the violin. So, I believe that's where my music interest came from."



TBabz

He recalled how he used to write songs in his college days and even joined a group called Champion Squad. His mentors Twize and Woye helped him hone his skills in music production which he started professionally in 2016. To date, music production remains his first love. The feeling he gets from it, he said, is fulfilling.

Top Trending Stories

- Kizz Daniel was arrested in Tanzania for failing to perform at a concert. Although there were various versions of the reason behind his actions, including a forgotten gold chain necklace, the singer later cleared the air on an Instagram Live interview that miscommunication and logistic issues were responsible.
- Once again, 2Baba issued another apology to his wife on social media, apologising for his shortcomings. Shortly after he expressed remorse, reports filtered in that the singer has allegedly impregnated a banker. The veracity of this report though is yet to be established.
- BBNaija Level Up housemates Khalid and Daniella were one of the trending topics for their late-night steamy sessions under the duvet. It is alleged that Daniella lost her virginity in the house. However, the longevity of their relationship is still in doubt.

Donna Adja Goes Romantic on 'Ganja'

In her latest single 'Ganja', fast-rising sultry Nigerian singer, Donna Adja sings of intoxicating love.

"'Ganja' is a love song," she said. "And the way I see it, love is intoxicating. When we fall in love, we just want to breathe in everything about our new love, just fill our lungs with that irreplaceable feeling."

The song is a comeback for the artist who went on a short hiatus from the music scene.

'Ganja' infuses danceable African tunes and mixes them with the latest American-style pop. The upbeat singer is optimistic that her new Afrobeat single will reinvent her career and take her fans higher.

A multi-talented Afropop singer-songwriter who hails from Delta State, Adja has recorded sensational singles including 'Breathe', 'Super Love', 'Wakanda Forever', among others.

Adja was listed among The Sun 100 Most Influential African Women in the Music Industry. Her first break in the music industry was working as a featured vocalist with top Nigerian recording artists such as Duncan Mighty, Harry Song, Dezign, and others. Soon, she took the lead in putting together her own band, Daz Entertainment, which became the in-house talent at the prestigious Sheraton Lagos hotel, where they performed five shows a week. During their multi-year run, she and her 14-piece band performed for two different Nigerian presidents, while Donna herself did solo shows in the UK, Dubai, and Australia.

After moving a few years ago to Los Angeles, California, she continues to break barriers and increase her footprints with her music.



Adja

Cadbury Rekindles Spirit of Nostalgia with Candy Land Party

Following the introduction of two new candy flavours — Caramel, and Coffee, as well as introducing a new look to Buttermint, Cadbury Nigeria Plc walked dozens of families down memory lane with its Candy Land Party.

Themed 'Like a Child Again', the event transformed the space of Filmhouse Cinema, Victoria Island, Lagos into a fairy wonderland made out of fancy props and colourful balloons, a bouncy castle, and a games arcade.

Treated to rounds of finger foods, chocolate and candy on its portfolio, guests were also entertained by the sounds of the early 2000s with many donning their best versions of '90s fashions. Mirroring the tradition of Halloween, some guests showed up wearing costumes of their favourite movie or superhero character. Additionally, the brand created a nostalgic moment for the families with the screening of the 1994 Disney classic 'The Lion King.

Speaking at the event, MD, Cadbury Nigeria Plc and Mondelez West Africa, Oyeyimika Adeboye explained the importance of the brand to serve as a bridge between generations.

"Today's consumers are fun. They are not looking for something boring. Everybody comes to the movies, and so we are showcasing a movie that resonates with all generations, from the older to the child. Our candies are for all generations, too," Adeboye said.

As a side attraction, the best-dressed guest walked home with N1,000,000.



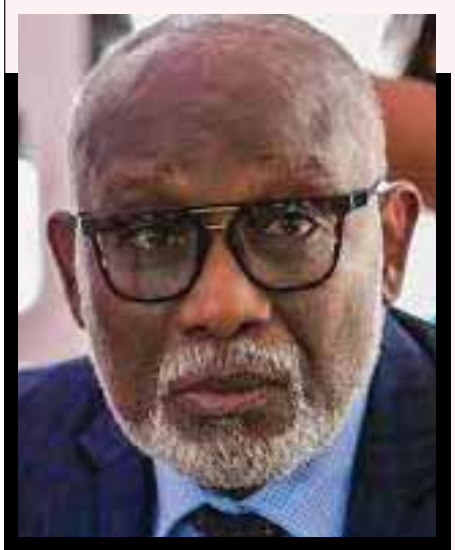
Guests at Cadbury Candy Land Party

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

For Rotimi Akeredolu, Security is a Priority



Akeredolu

So much is happening in Ondo State despite the good intentions and attentive efforts of Governor Rotimi Akeredolu. Concerning the safety of the Ondo people, particularly, Akeredolu is going all out to guard lives and properties. Thus, security has become the number one focus of the Akeredolu administration, no thanks to the Owo massacre that attempted to rattle the confidence of the people in the governor.

In the past, Ondo was a state unmatched in many different areas. Nicknamed the sunshine state, the people were very friendly, very open, and very generous with their greetings. And then the Owo massacre happened and things grew gloomy, overturning the single-mindedness of Governor Akeredolu from economic development to security.

One of the most recent developments for Akeredolu's response to the growing insecurity in the state is the signing into law of the first amendment of the Ondo State Security Network Agency Law. By doing so, the authority of the special regional security squad, Amotekun Corps, has been strengthened and criminal elements can now be better sorted out without overloading the federal government with complaints and supplications for stronger police activity.

It has to be said that Akeredolu's response to insecurity in Ondo so far has been very impressive and encouraging. Even though it required the June 5 attack on Christian worshippers at the St. Francis Catholic Church, Owo, and the consequent death of 40 persons to wake up Akeredolu's cabinet to the reality of insecurity, at least Akeredolu was always aware and never trivialized such evils nor pass them off as banal.

So, Ondo has become a very security-conscious place, with Akeredolu's government ready with a deliberate attentiveness to catch criminals before they lay their wicked seeds and punish them harshly for attempting to further break the peace in the state. Thus, with security as the priority, the narrative of Akeredolu's governance has changed, but this is for the better.

One Year Remembrance for Captain Idahosa Wells

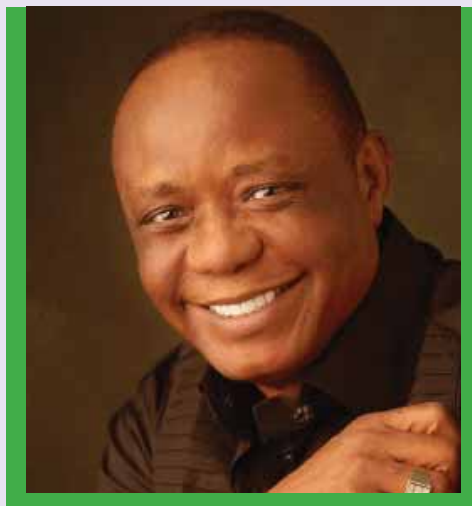
It is generally believed that only a handful of individuals will be known or cared about while they live. For the majority, only death brings fame and recognition. The late Captain Idahosa Wells was not one of these people. While he lived, he was a well-known and highly regarded individual. And when he died, the nation jerked on its heels. It was his one-year remembrance a few days ago, and even though the memorial service was quiet and simply organised, the recollection of how Captain Wells lived echoed across the country.

Some days ago, his wife, Nosa held a memorial service in London in honour of her late husband. The service was very simple and attended by a handful of relatives and guests. The service did not even rock New Hampstead where it was held, but the presence of the family and friends of the late businessman, philanthropist, and pilot spoke volumes.

Among the individuals who were at the event was Pastor Ituah Ighodalo, the Senior Pastor of Trinity House. He was the official minister at the memorial service just as he was the official minister at the burial of the Captain on October 7, 2021. Ighodalo's words captured the magnificence of the life lived by the man whose many businesses were only outshone by the largeness of his heart.

Many people will remember Captain Wells because he was an all-around genius recognised worldwide for his contributions to humanity at home and abroad. Others will remember him for being a humanitarian, a genuine kind. And yet, others will remember him for being a good man, a good friend, a good husband, and a good father.

Even though it is one year since Captain Wells departed this world to go to the next, his footprints will always remain clear and concentrated.



Okunbo

Revealed! Why Gbenga Daniel May Never Forgive Amosun

Ogun State has started again. It has been a long time since any serious or personal battle of titans took place. But it looks to be happening now, at least, at the beginning of it. This is just one way to describe the face-off that is set to happen between the incumbent Governor, Dapo Abiodun, and his predecessor, Ibikunle Amosun. Although Amosun is just as annoyed with Abiodun as his predecessor, Otunba Gbenga Daniel (OGD), is as annoyed with him.

The mechanics of governance in Ogun is largely the same as in other states. However, one thing that stands out is a spirit of vindictiveness that appears to swaddle succession. When Abiodun emerged from the 2019 gubernatorial elections, he had 19,517 more votes than the runner-up, who just happened to be Amosun's person. So, when Amosun recently declared that Abiodun must not be allowed to get a second term because the 2019 election was rigged, other people remembered his time with OGD.



Daniel

Amosun was Ogun Governor from 2011 to 2019. This cannot be considered a very long time. But OGD most probably felt like the period of eight years was like 800 years instead. Why? Because Amosun was always on his case.

Amosun is alleged to have exhausted his resources grinding down on Daniel until the latter broke down at some point and wept like a child. This point was the forced closing of his hotel, Conference Hotel and Golf Resort Hotel in Òkè Mosan, Abeokuta, in 2012, barely a year after Amosun ascended the throne. Thus began a witch-hunting exercise that endured for eight years of his reign, and Daniel felt every moment of it.

So, is OGD enamoured with his successor, the man who continually set a fire on his coattails for the better part of eight years? No. This puts Amosun's campaign against Abiodun in great perspective.



Saraki

The Saraki Siblings Unite to Celebrate Mother at 87

Life is beautiful on its own. But it is even more beautiful when it is filled with moments shared with family and friends. This is the oft unappreciated beauty that the family of the late Olushola Saraki is swaddled in as they celebrate the 87th birthday of the matriarch of the Saraki household, Chief (Mrs.) Florence Morenike Saraki.

It has been a while since the Sarakis of Kwara State organised a big event to celebrate someone within the household. But this changed a few days ago with the birthday celebration of Mama Morenike. With this event, former Senate President Bukola Saraki and his wife, Toyin Saraki, joined his siblings, Minister of State for Mines and Steel Development, Gbemisola Saraki, Tope Edu, and Olaolu Saraki.

It was a welcome sight at the Saraki family house on August 8, 2022. Each of the Saraki children was present and in high spirits as they took turns serenading their mother with relatives and close friends. Moreover, with Gbemisola and Laolu to her left hand, and Bukola, Toyin, and Tope to her right, Mama Morenike was even more delighted than everybody else. After all, these past few years have been problematic, especially with the bitter history of Senators Bukola and Gbemisola's contrary political views and associations.

The misunderstanding in the Saraki family started with the late Olushola who was a notable senator in Nigeria's Second Republic. With his dedication to his wife and children, he laid a strong foundation that eventually benefitted Bukola and Saraki more than any of the others. And when he passed away at 79 in 2012, he went away a fulfilled man.

How Akwa Ibom Governor Overshadowed His Former Godfather, Akpabio

Politician succession in Nigeria is no small business, especially with the governorship. First, depending on the relationship between the incumbent and the predecessor, there may already be tension. If not, even when the relationship is sweet, what if the successor performs significantly better than the predecessor? The outcome of such a situation is what is happening in Akwa Ibom as Governor Udom Emmanuel is doing well and has already exceeded all expectations.

It is now largely considered an exercise in futility to compare Governor Emmanuel and his predecessor, Godswill Akpabio. The reception that is usually given to these men is as different and far apart as the earth from the heavens. Specifically, even though a lot of regards is still kept in store for Senator Akpabio, it is like the light of a candle compared to sunlight, which is what Governor Emmanuel gets in and out of Akwa Ibom.

Very much unlike his principal, Emmanuel has been hard at work, unceasingly communicating with the people to learn their needs, and responding favourably to them. In this spirit, he has further developed Akwa Ibom as an industrial state, integrating manufacturing with electricity distribution, agriculture, and all-around infrastructural development. Thus, even the rate of unemployment in the state is likely much lower compared to other states in the country.

Due to all of these merits, Governor Emmanuel was strongly considered by the presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Atiku Abubakar as a vice presidential candidate. And even though Emmanuel's equally diligent neighbour, Governor Ifeanyi Okowa of Delta State, was eventually selected, it speaks volumes that Emmanuel was included in the trio of possible VP candidates.

And how does Akpabio compare to Emmanuel now? According to some quarters,



Akpabio

the man is an effigy for political and financial controversies, today battling with the Independent National Electoral Commission and tomorrow with the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission. Thus, it is no surprise that Emmanuel has overshadowed Akpabio in the State and outside.

Woman at the Top … Dolapo Osinbajo at 55

There are levels to this thing called political influence. Like the wife of Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, Dolapo, political influence is not all founded on funding thugs, snatching ballots, or distributing wheelbarrows and motorcycles to young people. It can be integrity and strength of character, and that is what both Dolapo and her husband are known for. As she clocked 55 a few days ago, this was the tone that the majority of the goodwill messages carried — Dolapo, a woman of substance and honour.

Among the multitude of Nigerian women that occupy the front pages of newspapers, there is likely none as honourable as Dolapo. This truth is recognised by those that like her and those that do not. At 55, even though she did not go to the moon, invent a flying broom, or overturn the nation for women and children, she is still considered a woman of grace and graciousness, truth and authenticity, care and candour.

When her husband lost the opportunity to serve as the presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Dolapo wrote to him, "Oluyemi, Oluleke, Omoluabi, Omo oko, Oninu ire, Oniwa Pele, Oniwa tutu, Ologbon, Olododo, Alaanu, I'm proud of you!" This is the kind of message that boosts the spirit of a man and enables him to keep striving for his goal and people. And this is the kind of woman that can serve as a moral and spiritual foundation for a progressive nation.

So, while Dolapo is not as well-known as her peers, every single individual that knows of her considers her a blessed woman. Her prestige is not defined by the fact that she is the granddaughter of the great Obafemi Awolowo, or that she is a brilliant lawyer. No. In the same way, as her husband is known for being a man whose brilliance does not overshadow his goodness, so is Dolapo.



Osinbajo

Senator Solomon Adeola on the Move at 53



Adeola

These are happy times for the Senator representing Lagos West, Solomon Adeola. Amidst loud cheers from family members, close friends, business associates, and well-wishers, the man popularly known as Yayi clocked 53 a few days ago. And with the merriment that the celebrations brought, one can only describe Yayi's political career as normative and extraordinary at the same time.

Yayi was born on August 10, 1969, to a happy family in Lagos. He was not a spectacularly brilliant child during his early years, even as he undertook his primary and secondary education in Lagos. However, what stood out to observers was his optimism and charm, the two factors that eventually played significant roles in his being able to lead his schoolmates in most school endeavours.

It would have seemed to the ordinary observer that Yayi was destined for ledgers, credit and debit balances, and all the other trappings of an accountant's life. Indeed, he worked with Guardian Newspapers as an accountant, and even when he founded his company, SOOTEM Nigeria Limited, it was to specialize in tax consultancy, a branch of accounting.

Yet, Yayi happened upon the political ring and came to excel in it. First, he was elected to represent Alimosho State Constituency 2 at the Lagos State House of Assembly from 2003 to 2007. Then he was reelected to do it again from 2007 to 2011. He later joined the lawmakers to represent Alimosho Federal Constituency in 2011. Four years later, he joined the Senate to represent the interests of Lagos West Senatorial District, and was, once again, asked to do it in 2019.

Yayi's political portfolio is extraordinary because, despite these achievements, he has experienced many run-ins with the law, social media, and controversy chefs. Nevertheless, his political momentum remains strong, gathering strength, and reaching for greater things. Thus, at 53, the man is half a step into becoming a legend. After all, someone else would have collapsed after all the trials and found an easier trade to hide under. But not Yayi. Yayi persists.

What's Next for Lawan?

Nothing is definite in Nigerian politics, this much is true. But certain things stand unshakeable currently, and foremost among them is the refusal of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to recognise Senate President Ahmad Lawan as a candidate in the forthcoming senatorial elections. This effectively rules him out as the Senate President come 2023. So, what will he do?

INEC is currently engaged in a battle of words with several critics and political analysts who are sure that the electoral agency is intending to reinstate Lawan as the All Progressives Congress (APC) candidate for Yobe North Senatorial District come 2023. INEC insists that Lawan is not included in the list of possible candidates for the position, while critics are accusing INEC of preparing to break the law as consideration for Lawan, thereby letting Lawan participate in the senatorial elections as a candidate.

Indeed, things are not looking good for Lawan as the public has been drawn to the repercussions of his choice. He was among the many political figures and public officers that gathered around the presidential election with hopes of inheriting the mantle from President Muhammadu Buhari. He lost that opportunity to Bola Tinubu and smartly returned to register himself for the senatorial position he is currently holding. Unfortunately, others had already fixed their names.

As things stand for Lawan currently, there is someone else, Bashir Machina, who has been recognized by INEC as an APC candidate for Yobe North. Thus, there is nowhere else to fix Lawan, meaning that he has to keep his fingers crossed for a ministerial position after the 2023 presidential election or get out of the political ring for a while.

So, things are not at all looking good for Lawan. Only time will tell what will become of his political portfolio.



Lawan

Standing Ovation for Daisy Danjuma as Pillars of High Society Honour the Matriarch



Danjuma

Great women are almost always honoured among their friends. With this in mind, it would come as no surprise that the well-known political figure, businesswoman, and socialite, Senator Daisy Danjuma was surrounded by family and friends on Saturday, August 6, 2022, as she celebrated her 70th birthday. And, as befitting a woman of her status, it was a most stunning and well-attended event.

It is likely that the Eko Hotel and Suites, Victoria Island, Lagos, did not have as many top-class Nigerians for a social event in the first half of 2022 as it had on the birthday of Senator Danjuma. The high-society lady played the gracious host to the most prestigious individuals in the country, while her billionaire husband, Theophilus Danjuma, exuded that grace of sophistication and charm that has long been attributed to the rich and powerful.

The event was so well-attended that anything forthcoming would have to look up to Senator Danjuma. Among those who were present were Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) presidential candidate, Atiku Abubakar; New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) presidential candidate, Rabiu Kwankwaso; Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State; Governor Darius Ishaku of Taraba State; Governor Aminu Tambuwal of Sokoto State; Reverend Esther Abimbola Ajayi of Love of Christ Generation Church, also known as Iya Adura; Chief Olu Okeowo of Gibraltar Constructions; and the founder Stanbic IBTC Bank Plc, Atedo Peterside.

One may wonder why such prestigious individuals would leave their duties to attend Senator Danjuma's birthday celebration. After all, there are many senatorial veterans in the country. In truth, while there may indeed be hundreds of senatorial figures in the country, Senator Danjuma has a whole block of prestige to herself, despite serving in the Senate for Edo South Senatorial District between 2003 and 2007. During her time, Danjuma was the face for women affairs and youth development in the country and helped engage the government on the people's behalf.

Even now, although her influence is not what it used to be, Senator Danjuma is still a strong advocate for the people, and one of the best examples of a true Nigerian political figure. So, at 70, she checks all the boxes.

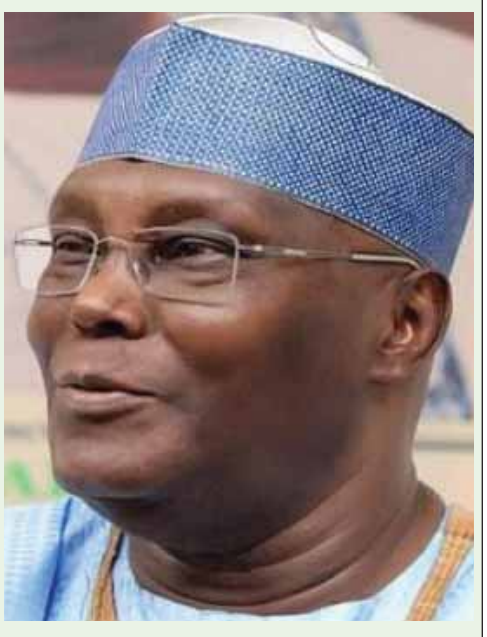
Wike: Atiku by the Balls

Politics in Nigeria is a more dangerous game than is immediately obvious. A foreign analyst may conclude that Nigeria's political style is no different from that of any other African country. But such analysts have no idea what they are talking about. How, for example, would they explain the actions of Rivers Governor Nyesom Wike in the light of his straddling the lines of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC)? How does one explain the fact that Wike appears capable of single-handedly demolishing the dreams and presidential aspirations of PDP presidential candidate, Atiku Abubakar?

Reports are all over the place that Wike has banned Rivers State PDP members from campaigning for Atiku. These reports started after some of these members visited Atiku to reassure him that Wike and all of Rivers were on his side, but Wike allegedly slapped aside their comments and went further to warn them against using his shoulders to advertise Atiku to anybody.

Now, it is obvious to anybody with eyes and a working mind that all is not as it seems with the PDP. This was very evident after Atiku won the presidential primary and Wike came second. The latter accused delegates from the South of having betrayed him. Then came the time for Atiku to choose a vice presidential candidate, and Atiku went for Governor Ifeanyi Okowa of Delta State, leaving Wike with nothing. Ever since, Wike has drifted from place to place, seemingly running his own show without any consideration for the PDP.

The biggest piece of evidence for Wike's is-with-us-is-not-with-us behaviour is that he has no problem sharing laughs with APC Governors. With these Governors going, "Wike, you ehn, you ehn," one cannot say exactly whether Wike has the APC or Atiku's interests at heart, or just the latter's gonads in his hands. With his influence in the South-south and South-east, Wike may be the single human determinant of where the mantle of presidency will settle in 2023.



Atiku

LOUD WHISPERS

with JOSEPH EDGAR (09095325791)

Gov AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq in the Eye of the Storm

I saw a video recently that has purportedly gone viral. In the video, Governor AbdulRahman was being heckled and harassed, booed out of the stage and had to be smuggled out of the venue. It was supposed to be an event organised by the Ilorin Emirate Descendants Union at the Emir of Ilorin's Palace.

Now nothing wrong with the video or of a person of that stature being booed for that matter especially where emotions run high – remember you cannot be everything to everybody, but the wahala there is that some people have added a narrative to that video with the aim of damaging and ridiculing His Excellency.

The event took place over three years ago – December 26, 2018 to be precise when Oga was a candidate moving against entrenched but selfish interest.

The booing and heckling were expected because a wave was being created with the fervent focus of uprooting established and pseudo monarchical interests that had held down the state for decades. So, yes, he will be booed, heckled, called a thief and even rained with tomatoes and smelly pepper by those who had been sent by their masters.

But if you've noticed, all that did not stop the inevitability of change that my brothers and sisters in Kwara yearned for. 'Otoge' happened and the state sighed a collective sigh of relief.

Three years later, after an extended run of peace and security, stupendously wonderful social investment policies like the Kwara Investment Programmes-(KWASSIP) and a simple and almost unbelievable style of G governance, the video has re-surfaced with wicked impunity and devilish purpose.

They have sponsored the video. Made it go viral targeting a legendary feeble social media community with the hope that it would weaken a confident stride towards an assured re-election.

The narrative this time is that the event happened on August 7, 2022 throwing up the impression that His Excellency was now deeply unpopular thereby weakening his public standing.

You see, me I don't know how to seat on the fence. I don't know how to waddle with words and be diplomatic once a friend is touched. I jump in and take very strong position.

Abdul bobo, I dare say, has been a revelation in leadership. Not only in Kwara but the whole of Nigeria. His quiet but determined resolve to instigate a transparent run-in process has earned not only my admiration but that of millions nationwide. His humble streak, no airs approach to governance has won him many admirers and that is why some of us will fall sick for him.

The same, I would do for Soludo in Anambra, Prof. Zulum in Borno, Seyi Makinde in Oyo and maybe Sanwo-Olu in Lagos. These ones have thrown up a semblance of seriousness and focus-based leadership in governance and this is what gives me the confidence that even if they released a nude picture of His Excellency, the course of history will not be changed. We stand.



AbdulRazaq

BISMARCK REWANE, WHAT LIES BENEATH?

Be like say the relaxer we are using to maintain the jerry curl don expire. How for the life of me will you be saying in public that this our Ebola ravaged Naira is still overvalued by 200%.

This daddy is making somebody want to be verbally 'vawulent' this morning o. The Naira has taken a deliberate hit, throwing up inflation deep into the double digit space, making cost of living hellish and all other economic indices run haywire.

All hands are on deck to redress the situation which we all know is debilitating and may need a long term and sustainable engagement with shoring up forex revenues and a concise turn around in import dependent lifestyle and this one is wearing baba sala suit and be talking crap all over the place. Shebi he is a member of one economic team or the other for this government and many institutions. Please what has his team achieved apart from meeting all over the place and be drinking tea and coffee and be going to salon? Please, is it not in their presence that naira has been beaten up like a paying customer of my favorite prostitute from N360 to N710 and daddy is saying he will not have an erection until the thing reach N1,000.

Please, did they send this person to us? Is it not time we go and check his citizenship? Is this one a true Nigerian abi na mammy water. Is it until people start jumping off bridges that he will agree that things are bad?

Even the price of condoms has gone up. In a career that has seen condoms move from 50kobo at my debut to over N2,000 depending on which part of the country you are buying it. Please, someone should not do the one that when we see them on the road, we will pour them fish water o.

What the Chris Okotie lookalike should be talking about is the back end- our efforts at local production, our efforts at local infrastructural development, inbound tourism and the like to shore up earnings, he still wants to be playing 'kalo kalo' with a supply deficit forex system.

This is the laziness of our economic managers. Instead of doing things like very brilliant strikers who will come back to the midfield to collect the ball when they are no longer getting supply, they still remain at the front and be saying, 'dem no give me ball.'

Please, Mr Rewane, please, stop all this intelligent babble. It is adding to the crisis because it will fuel speculations. Please, if you don't stop, I will advise EFCC to come after you the way they are going after the BDCs, you are doing more damage. Please, just keep quiet. Thanks.

THE ARROGANCE OF THE MAN CALLED AHMED IDRIS

You see, I hate writing in anger. I can be lethal o. I will write and regret o. So I try to contain myself as I write this one. I have just seen a report carried by TheCable where it has been said that this person is seeking a plea bargain.

My people, a civil servant that has been accused of stealing that amount of money still has mouth to ask for a plea bargain? Please, can someone wake me up or has this gonorrhea finally taken my senses. Please, as a layman, plea bargain na when you say, ok, I agree to this charge and that charge and I will give you ex percentage of the money and you give me a reduced sentence and after five years, you will give me state pardon.

Please, you see why I agree that Buhari don old. 'Laye' Buhari for 1984, this one will be looking at 750 years in prison on each count of 80 charges.

What plea bargain o? A civil servant? N80 billion. Please, let me be part of the negotiation. It is with fresh pepper that I will blow into his eyes as we are negotiating. The arrogance of it all is killing me here o. The report said, they asked for the meeting, then they said they will not have the meeting in the EFCC Chairman's office again and ended up not showing o.

This same EFCC will now be parading Yahoo boys for stealing N10,000 and they are now seeing the biggest of them all and they are talking plea bargain. Na wa.

My advice is simple. Please, calculate all him salary as Civil servant or wetin he be from when he start work to time of arrest and net it off the alleged stolen amount. The balance is what he stole if we can trace to him.

The plea bargain should now be how many years between 100 and 1,000 years in prison. Kai, I miss all those Tribunal judges dem Buhari and Idiagbon been use that time. This na three days matter for them hand.

This matter has given me erectile dysfunction I tell you. Kai.

PYRATE CONFRATERNITY: THIS IS WHAT IS CALLED 'NA WA'

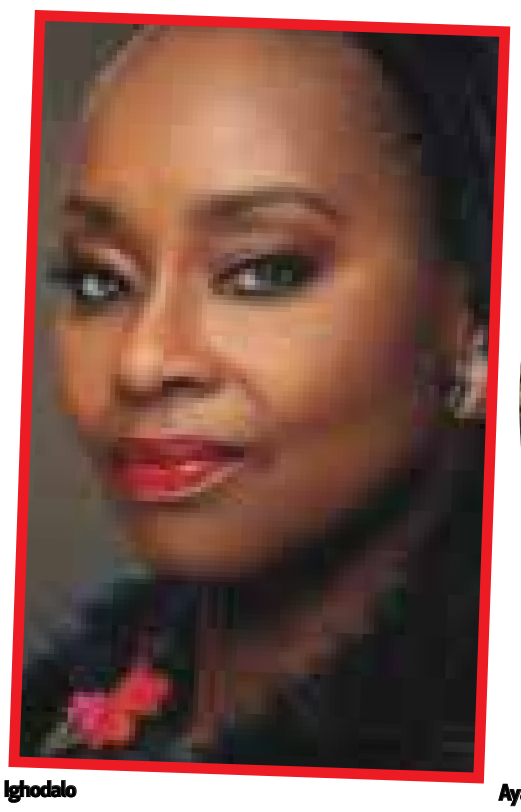
It is only just fitting that their oga has come out to condemn that disgrace with the strongest words he could find.



Adeshina



Idris



Ighodalo



Ayade

That was puke inducing when grown men wear baby diapers and be running down the street and singing abusive and disrespectful songs.
Like I have said, this is what is called 'na wa' in Shomolu. This confraternity has within its community some of Nigeria's very intelligent and brilliant minds. At least, I have plenty as friends. In this matter of redefining Nigeria, instead of them pushing for a holistic debate, mobilising voters and ensuring credible public voter enlightenment towards any candidate of their preference, see what they are doing.
If someone talk too much, they will come and beat me now. But is this right? Does this even make sense? Why go after a candidate's health in that manner? Why all the disrespect. Please, what is the difference between these ones and motor park touts? The only difference I see is the costumes, every other thing na the same.
If you think I am lying, when next you see that procession, jump in and say something they don't like and see if you will not be a guest at Igbobi Hospital.
Me, I don't know too much about this Pyrate people beyond the fact that they like to dress like cartoon characters.
But from the little I know and in my interaction with a very few, one can tell that they have very distinguished and engaging members, so they should kindly show some more maturity in this matter.
We are all on the same side but they should not spoil it with this kind of show, mbok. That was too childish abeg. Mbok, make nobody call me o and make nobody come beat me o, at 53 I no fit fight again o. I don old. Thank you.

PROF BEN AYADE – A COMEDIC TURN

I used to sha laugh anytime I see this my Governor. If he is not crying that he cannot believe that after five years as Governor that there are still some poor people in his state, he will be riding huge bikes along the streets of Calabar and be taunting his people and be saying "see me, I am your Governor and I have not paid salaries, come and beat me."
Anyways, that was how he carried his wahala go church o. I don't know what they were celebrating or what carried him to church. That was how he was given microphone and he stood there boldly and proclaimed on behalf of his government, his family and all the prostitutes in Calabar and beyond, he was donating the whooping sum of N25m to the church. If only he knew what was coming.
The bishop wey don tire for all the showmanship, just carry microphone from His Excellency and announced, "mbok, take the money go pay salaries."
Governor fart. I swear he mess. The smell reach us here for Lagos.
Well deserved. That is all I can say for now. I am hungry, no time for 'awada kerikeri.'

KOLA ADESHINA: A PERFECT GENTLEMAN AT 94

My brother who is a director at the massive conglomerate Sahara Group was 94 during the week. These are people who went to school with highly revered Accounting Doyen Akintola Williams. These are people who saw the Burma war and who helped capture King Jaja of Opobo.
So, you see why we should not joke with this birthday. It is iconic and prayer is for the Lagos State government to deem it fit to declare a five day public celebration for this iconic Nigerian.
Seriously, Kola has continued to contribute very powerfully in the very critical sector that he plays. An egghead whose positions and engagements in the sector delineate national direction. This is why I remain very proud of my fellow 'Shomolu boy' as he celebrates another milestone in a very eventful life.
Happy birthday my Lord, kindly send a delivery address. Silver or gold I have not, but a hot sizzling bowl of well-made Afang I have to send. Let me know. God bless you.

NIGERIAN IMMIGRATION SERVICE AS A CESSPOOL OF MORBID CORRUPTION

I am tired. I have tried and have come out defeated and this is why I am coming out to beg Nigerians to please, help me put mouth. When my wife, the very elegant Erelu Mena Joseph Edgar passed, I decided to send her son out to get himself back. Alvin was 14 at the time and we went to the Ikoyi office to renew his international passport and my people, as I write two years later, we never see the thing.
We have run into a cauldron of turbulence. Stolen from, dragged here and there, disgraced, humiliated and harassed and despite all that, no passport. They say it is 'issued' but wey the thing, we never see.
Every turn is blocked. I went to the PR department, the very beautiful woman there was just looking at me and speaking Igbo. I went to servicom, no joy. I went to the oga patapata in Ikoyi's office. One smelly mouth officer looked at me twice and said, "Madam will not see you."
I hear it is not only me, that thousands of Nigerians go through hell to get their passports. You see the systems efforts at stemming all these corruption with technology but at the same time, you see the elements frustrating the whole thing.
It is organised crime in that place. From the main gate to the end, na just major scam and Nigeria is suffering for it.
Almost every officer in that place has a whole backup team working outside of the premises. As you enter, they divert you to their staff and those ones will give backup services before you come back to government.
Too many old people in that system. Too many fat and ugly people who cannot be retrained. The morbidity of corruption has entered their DNA and it's only a robust cleansing that can shake the system. Even if you computerize from the gate to the toilet, they will put virus in the thing.
Abeg, whoever is reading this thing from the Minister in charge to the gateman in that office, please help me give my son international passport. Na frustration carry me come here so oo. His name is Alvin Kokoette Joseph Edgar and him mama don die.
We cannot go and give him Cameroon passport na. Please help me. I am begging. Two years with still no hope in sight? Abi is he a coup plotter?

IFEYINWA IGHODALO: A DESIGN OPTION

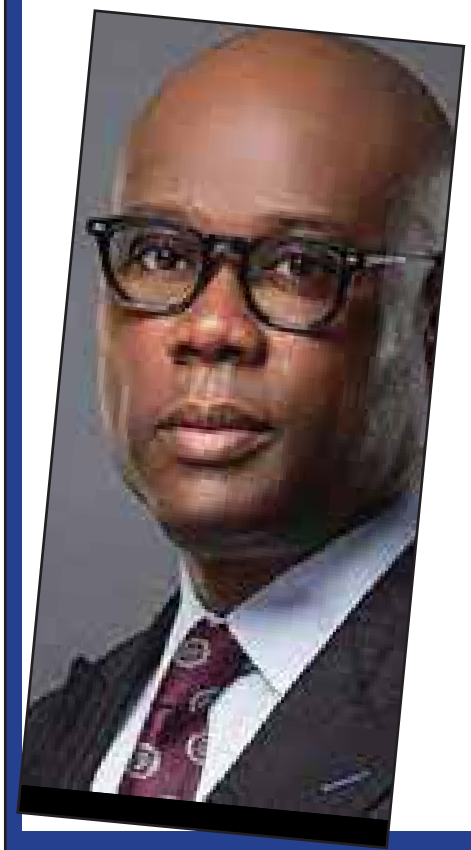
Madam is the very beautiful wife of my great brother and friend, the ever-brilliant Asue Ighodalo. Funnily enough, I had never met her until last Sunday at the Muson Centre.
They had just exited the show and were running towards their car when I happened upon them. I ran straight to hug Asue who as Chairman of Sterling Bank and himself supported the production and then I finally met her.
What first struck me was her beauty. I dey see her picture for THISDAY Style, but you know those people with what them dey do with those pictures. When I see Alibaba in the paper, I mistake am for Idris Elba. That is what they do to people on that Style pages.
Anyways, madam was physically beautiful. Her eyes are engaging and her energy palpable. Make I no go hail am too much before Bro Asue send me summons. You know how these lawyers dey do.
Anyways, I called her later in the week and we had a long conversation on high profile management at high octane events. I learnt a lot from that conversation and thanked her very powerfully.
I later learnt that her Firm DOII, an offshoot of the once popular Design Options, was celebrating its 10th year this year. Quite remarkable. Well done my sister, well-done. We, your fans, are here waiting for invite o, don't go and do revenge o. That will not be good o. I must come and eat that Afang .

KIZZ DANIEL: VILLAGE PEOPLE THINGS

I heard that this very handsome bobo was arrested in Tanzania for refusing to perform. So many reasons have been given. I have heard that it is because he forgot his clothes in Kenya, others have said that it was because he forgot his gold chains but his people have said it was due to a technical hitch.
Well for me, I have heard that this is beginning to look like his stock in trade and that the Tanzania one was just the latest in a series. They say paddy has been cancelling shows and not showing up all over the world.
If this is not village people chasing him with Juju, I don't know what else is.
Being errant is not professional and even damages Nigeria image abroad. If we are known for anything is our music. Our music and maybe sports is the only major export we are giving the world so when a frontline star like Kizz is messing up like this, it's not good.
Mr. Daniel better get your act together and really stop panzing around the world stage. Remember that fame is very fleeting so make the most now.
I still like you sha. That your Buga is massive. But the one I like the most na the one where you and that model were swimming under water and you were doing your head like big tomatoes. Kai. You are talented. Well-done but get some discipline. You hear?

HERBERT WIGWE, AIGBOJE AIG-IMOUKHUEDE ARE TWIN GIANTS OF THE ARTS

As I stood on the stage during the last showing of Emir Sanusi and looked into the huge crowd, two heads stood out. I saw them very clearly as they sat beside each other smiling at me.
Between Herbert and Aigboje, they have created jobs for about 1,000 thespians, media people, costumiers, make-up artists, scriptwriters and all that is vested into the massive productions that we had done.
They never asked me twice. Once I can reach them which is usually obviously herculean, they deal. They will just say, "Edgar, how much do you need this time?" Before I used to fear and call small figures and they will give me. But now, I don get sense. This time, Herbert sent one of the most brilliant media minds in the country, Abdul Imoyo to me. How much do you need? I called the Taraba State budget and pronto, I saw an alert.
This time, we were doing two shows in Lagos and Abuja simultaneously and the budget was crazy.
For Aig, he just said, "We will support you." When the alert came, I was at a filling station in Surulere. When I saw it, I hugged one middle aged woman, who quickly called her husband for forgiveness that "one fine bobo with dreadlock just hug me daddy." I spread the love and gave out N50,000 to all the attendants to share. Kai.
Funnily enough, they both have never watched any of our productions.
They just made it happen and moved on. But this time they were in the hall to support their brother- Khalifa Muhammadu Sanusi.
I ran to the actors and said, show all your strength. Show power. Our benefactors are in the house. Anybody that fumbles, just run away because you will not like what I will do to you.
Aig and Herbert, on behalf of the theatre industry, I say thank you. You have created jobs, empowered us and given us a sense of belonging. God bless you both eternally. Mbok, don't say you have given too much o. I am still coming back o that is why I am doing all these hailngs o. Don't travel o.



Wigwe



Aig-Imoukhuede

SOCIETY WATCH

Adebayo Adeoye
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Amosun Tackles Abiodun over 2023

Does Senator Ibikunle Amosun hate Governor Dapo Abiodun that much? This has been the question on the lips of many in Ogun State in the last week after the former governor's outburst, during which he vowed that his successor Abiodun will never be reelected, no matter his attempts.

Amosun, who was governor of the gateway state between 2011 and 2019, unarguably fought the biggest war of his political career towards the twilight of his tenure in a bid to install Abdulkabir Akinlade as the anointed candidate for the All Progressives Congress (APC).

The battle polarised the APC in the state into factions after Abiodun emerged as the candidate of the party for the governorship election. Unhappy with the outcome, Amosun and his supporters moved to the Allied Progressives Movement (APM), under which Akinlade ran and lost to Abiodun. He fought like a wounded lion in his desperation to upturn the mandate given to Abiodun. He reportedly visited President Muhammadu Buhari and top monarchs in the state, all to no avail.

Before he visited the President, he had reportedly boasted to all that the President would grant his wish, as he had threatened to dump APC for the Accord Party, if his wish was not accepted. But he was said to have gotten the shock of his life when the President told him point blank that he would not want to go against the decision of the party's NWC.

Consequently, Amosun's stubbornness in big measure unsettled the leaders of the party who had mounted pressure on him not to move and to place the interest of the party above personal interest. He vowed, roared and beat his chest, like an emperor would, that he will never work with Abiodun, who he said lacked the wherewithal to win a senatorial district, let alone Ogun.

Those close to him then and the party leaders in the state added that Amosun believed so much in his influence, power, political experience as well as heavy financial war chest that he even looked the Vice President, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo in the eyes and boasted that he would rubbish him at the poll. It was a serious tug of war and Amosun and his loyalists lost out.

Society Watch gathered that Amosun was unable to out-muscle his opponent; it was a grand alliance by those he had reportedly persecuted politically in the past. It was a case of 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend'. They brought out all diverse interests together for this purpose against a common foe — Amosun. It was revenge served cold!

To say that period was the darkest of his political career is an understatement. Since then, there has been no love lost between the governor and his predecessor. But not many envisaged that the level of animosity and hatred between the two gladiators was as bad until Amosun's outburst last week. His comments were not only baffling but unfathomable to many political watchers in the state. And at a time when many thought the senator representing Ogun Central had taken the matter behind him, he came back like a wounded rattlesnake with its poisonous fang and ready for a 'fight to finish'.

Like the experienced politician that he is, he chose a very good gathering to launch his attack. It was the 50th anniversary of Egba Club in Abeokuta. Expectedly, he left many stunned after he vowed to unseat the governor during next year's election.

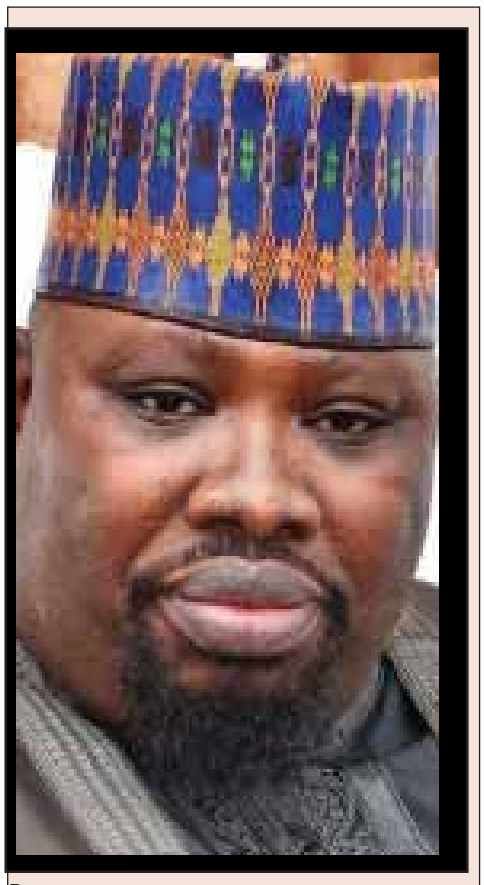
Since he dropped the speech, it has generated heat across the state, with stakeholders not taking the former governor's threat for granted. Governor Abiodun, it was also gathered, is not taking the matter as a simple threat, as he is said to have begun to re-strategise.



Amosun

Although some political analysts have opinionated that if Amosun could not defeat Abiodun when he had much influence as a two-term sitting governor and a close ally of the President, it would be totally impossible for him to achieve the feat in 2023.

For analysts, Amosun with a depleted camp is going against a now better experienced Abiodun with the power of incumbency and added gain of having attracted some of the former governor's loyalists to his corner, while he continues to negotiate fresh alliances with other political players alienated by Amosun's latest move.



Danu

Another Feather to Nasiru Danu's Cap

The Chairman/CEO of Casiva Limited, Nasiru Danu readily comes to mind when one considers businessmen who have enjoyed tremendous goodwill based on their character and business acumen. Indeed Danu's potent influence cannot be overlooked.

For the Dan Amana Dutse of the Dutse Emirate in Jigawa State, his circle of friends cuts across the who-is-who in the high society, including captains of industry, monarchs, politicians, socialites and celebrities.

Danu, a highly reputed businessman, politician and philanthropist of note, is a top player in the oil and gas sector of the country and also a reputable member of the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the All Progressives Congress (APC). He has an unprecedented track record in business spanning over a decade with interests mainly in oil and gas.

Likeable and suave, Danu has been reputed for his early start and interest in business. His dexterity in business stands him out among his peers and also earned him a place among the 100 Most Influential Nigerians in 2017.

A few weeks ago, the serial entrepreneur won the Entrepreneur of The Year Award organised by the reputable magazine, National Waves, at the Airport Hotels, Ikeja, Lagos. Danu's laudable stint in business puts him alongside renowned African business leaders like African richest man and President of Dangote Group, Aliko Dangote and Chairman of United Bank for Africa, Mr. Tony Elumelu.

The unassuming and shrewd businessman gives back to humanity through his foundation known as The Nasiru Haladu Danu Medical Mission Foundation, which has engaged in philanthropic projects like the free medical mission in Dutse, Jigawa State capital where about 5,000 people, including men, women and children received medical attention from American medical specialists.

Billionaire Couple, Tein and Elizabeth Jack-Rich, Step out with Style after 'Misunderstanding'



Tein and Elizabeth Jack-Rich

For obvious reasons, many women would wish to be as lucky as she is in life. If not for anything but the fact that her husband, Tein Jack-Rich, is a billionaire oil baron and founder of Belemaoil Producing Limited.

But unlike many other women of her status, Dr. Elizabeth Jack-Rich has refused to be a "trophy wife." The mother of two is the brains behind the popular ELIN Group.

In its five years of operations, ELIN has grown into a conglomerate, with footprints across West Africa and the United States.

Her investment portfolio touches several facets of Nigerian society, drawing on its core operating values of integrity, mutual respect, customer service, innovation and safety. In fact, the couple has been a great inspiration to many youngsters.

Elizabeth and her husband are being discussed as a template for a successful and happy marriage. Their union, according to those close to them, continues to inspire many hoping to find a lasting union.

Like two young lovers, they are always seen together at events and social gatherings, holding each other's hands, whispering sweet nothing into each other's ears.

Stories emanating from the home of the couple have confused many who would rather not believe such. The sad story of a misunderstanding between the hitherto role models has shocked many of their admirers.

What fuelled the rumour was that the beautiful woman reportedly deleted pictures of the family on her Instagram handles.

It was gathered that many have even begun prayer sessions for the couple, hoping that all the stories will turn out to be mere rumours.

For sure, those prayers have surely been answered by God, with the latest news suggesting that the matter has been resolved and the loving couple are back in each other's arms, according to a source.

Recently, they stepped out together and attended two different occasions in one week: the installation of Erelu Abiola Dosunmu as the Yeye Oodua as well as Dr. Tope Agbeyo's son's wedding at the Monarch Events Centre in Lagos.

It was gathered that the light-skinned woman, who was decked in a free-flowing glittering gown, stole the show when she stepped into the event hall. They both held hands like new lovers as King Sunny Ade serenaded both of them with praise songs.

The mixed blood drop-dead damsel at 29 has become the embodiment of Nigeria's next generation of leadership and she is on a mission to bring shared prosperity to her fellow citizens. The sartorial elegance that radiates around her anytime she steps out in public gives her a distinct outlook and places her in a league of her own.

Oil Mogul, Ifeanyi Ubah's Wondrous Donation

No doubt, Ifeanyi Ubah, Chairman, Capital Oil, is generous to a fault. This top player in the nation's oil and gas sector also has a large heart. Besides, he is unapologetically committed to the uplift of his community, while also helping the course of humanity.

The billionaire is fast becoming one of the biggest philanthropists from the South-east part of Nigeria for the milk of kindness running in his veins.

As proof of his fellow feeling, the Senator representing Anambra South senatorial district in the National Assembly has just made a wondrous donation of N500 million to Anambra State to support the fight against insecurity. Ubah made the pledge during a visit to the state Governor, Prof. Chukwuma Soludo, at the Government House last Tuesday in Awka, the state capital. The Senator, however, made specifications on how the money would be spent.

Speaking during the presentation, he said: "It takes a secure environment to sustain infrastructural development. I will complement your efforts with a series of interventions aimed at curbing capital flight from the zone and restoring confidence in our people to return home and help in developing our economy.

"N200 million will be spent on the training of security personnel and provision of latest security communication gadgets for Anambra South vigilante groups," adding that "N300 million would be for the provision of solar lights to further illuminate and strengthen the security architecture in Anambra South senatorial district."

The senator added the promise would all be implemented in the next three months.

This donation, again, has proved beyond any reasonable doubt that the oil mogul is indeed a generous man that has taken humanity above politics and a politician that plays politics without bitterness.

He is being lauded for the fact that he seems not to stomach any animosity against the incumbent governor, Soludo, whom he had contested against in 2021.



Anambra had, for over a year, been under the tight grip of criminals who kidnap, kill and steal from residents until lately when Soludo fought back.

ARTS & REVIEW

A THISDAY PUBLICATION

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As Global Ambassador, Davies-Okundaye, Relishes Her Limelight Moment

The announcement of Chief Nike Davies-Okundaye on Wednesday as the Busan 2030 World Expo Goodwill Ambassador means that she shares the honour with the world-renowned K-pop supergroup BTS. **Okechukwu Uwaezuoke** reports

Chief Dr Nike Davies-Okundaye looked regal in her conical pink beaded crown, finely textured red shawl, and blue-themed flowing tie-dye boubou as she stood before her guests on that sun-drenched Wednesday, August 7, afternoon. The South Korean ambassador, Kim Young-Chae, stood behind her and first presented her with a certificate of appreciation before presenting her with a plaque as the goodwill ambassador for the much-anticipated 2030 Busan Expo.

If there was a feeling of déjà vu about this event, which was held at her gallery along the Lekki expressway in Lagos, it was because the vivacious septuagenarian matriarch of the arts scene has maintained a persistent presence in the public consciousness. And, indeed, this wouldn't be the first time in recent memory that she would find herself in the spotlight.

Speaking of these spotlight moments, one of the most recent of them was a recent collaboration with the South Korean Embassy on March 8. This was when her gallery—which, besides Lagos, has outposts in Abuja, Osogbo, and her hometown Ogidi—co-hosted the Nigerian Female Art Exhibition with the embassy in Abuja in commemoration of International Women's Day.

Meanwhile, it's hard to miss the subtext of this appointment, which eloquently attests to the great admiration and respect the South Korean ambassador has for Chief Davies-Okundaye. This is further buttressed by the fact that he, accompanied by his wife, Kim Hyun-Joo, and a coterie of his embassy staff flew into Lagos from Abuja just for this event.

Of course, there was also the primary factor that, according to the embassy's press release, the appointment stands the Kogi State native in good stead "to play a vital role in promoting the Republic of Korea and Busan in Lagos, Nigeria, and West Africa until the voting day for the 2030 World Expo site selection scheduled for November 2023."

Talking about the 2030 World Expo, it is a proposed international fair, for which Russia, South Korea, Italy, Ukraine and Saudi Arabia have submitted bids. With Russia withdrawing its bid in May, the contest has now been narrowed down to four countries, among which South Korea is a top contender.

The East Asian country proposed to host the event in Busan, its second-largest city, with the theme "Transforming Our World, Navigating Toward a Better Future," in a letter of candidacy sent to the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) in June 2021. Indeed, its hopes of being elected as the host country for this prestigious event pivots on the premise that it has spectacularly transformed itself from a developing economy to a developed one within the last 60 years, as a promotional video shown to the audience at the beginning of the event corroborates. Even though Korea is a divided nation, it nonetheless actively participates in international initiatives to promote peace and harmony and believes that it has a lot to teach the rest of the world.



L-R Chief Rueben Okundaye, Chief Nike Okundaye, South Korean Ambassador, Kim Young-Chae and his wife, Kim Hyun-Joo



Davies-Okundaye expresses her gratitude to the ambassador and his wife

"As one of the ten largest economies in the world, Korea is a global Information and Communications Technology (ICT) powerhouse," the embassy's press statement adds. "Korea is leading the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution with technologies in the fields of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), Big Data, and Smart Mobility. Korea is also a cultural powerhouse. K-culture, encompassing drama, movies, music, and food, has taken the world by storm, enabling Korea to become a global trendsetter in soft power."

An eventual successful bid would see the Expo taking place between May 1 and October 31, 2030, at the North Port district of Busan, which is Korea's second-largest city and the largest port city with top-notch infrastructure. "The city has been a hub of transportation and logistics and a gateway at the intersection of the Eurasian continent and the Pacific Ocean," the press statement further explained. "Busan represents the past, present, and future of Korea. It has played a crucial role in Korea's growth, from one of the poorest countries receiving economic aid to a donor country. During the Korean War, the city was home to a million refugees. The Busan Spirit embodies the World EXPO values of education, innovation, and cooperation."

Back to Chief Davies-Okundaye's last Wednesday's investiture, Ambassador Kim Young-Chae is confident that with her charisma she would deepen and widen the support base for the proposed Busan Expo among her gallery's habitués and her network of patrons and friends. For there were, among the audience, renowned members of the local art community, in addition to the distinguished presence of the Korean delegation, which included the embassy's economic officer, Choi Jung Won, the Director of the Korean Cultural Centre, Nigeria, Kim Chang-Ki, the director of KOTRA (Korea Trade Promotion Corporation), Lee Seungwoo, the Samsung Heavy Industry-Nigeria's managing director, Kim Jong-Seok, the managing director of SHIN Kim Gang, the director of LG Electronics Nigeria, Song Joon Kyu, the Daewoo Autoland CEO Cho Hong Sun, and the Asiana Mart CEO, Chang Jung Sik.

Chief Davies-husband, Okundaye's Chief Rueben Osaruyi Okundaye, the general manager of The George Hotel, Judd Lehmann, the Stony Brook University, New York, US-based Professor Oyeronke Oyewunmi, and Sterling Bank's Head of Tourism, Culture, and Arts, Mrs Abiola Adelana were all present to celebrate this moment in the spotlight with her.

There were also Media Entrepreneur Azuka Ogujiuba, Solution 17 Green's CEO / Project Director Ms Fluke Michael, the International Federation of Interior Designers Association of Nigeria's 21st president Titi Ogufere, University of Bristol's Dr Ryan Connor, University of Lagos's Dr Bolaji Ogunwo, New York University, Abu Dhabi-based Professor Awam Amkpa, the Culture Advocate Caucus's executive programme director Jahman Anikulapo, Refund Business Technologies Limited's managing director Dr Kensington Okundaye and the renowned artist, Junkman of Afrika.

With her last Wednesday's announcement as the World Expo 2030 Busan, Korea goodwill ambassador, Chief Nike Davies-Okundaye now shares the honour with BTS, the K-pop supergroup, which was earlier officially announced as ambassadors by the Bid Committee during a ceremony at entertainment company HYBE's headquarters in the South Korean capital city, Seoul on Tuesday, July 19.

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Biyi Bandele: An Exit So Shocking, So Unexpected...

Yinka Olatunbosun

"I consider myself to be a storyteller. I use all sorts of media, but I am first and foremost a writer." That was how Biyi Bandele introduced himself to the world in a video clip shared by EbonyLife Studios, a film and television company that had just produced his latest work, The King's Horseman, due for a premiere screening at the upcoming Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) in September. The movie will be the first Yoruba language film to be screened at the prestigious film festival in the special presentation category. The recent trailer and poster posts by Bandele himself on his social media accounts have heightened the anticipation for this Netflix original, which is a screen adaptation of Wole Soyinka's 1975 classic tragedy, Death and The King's Horseman.

This was one reason why the news of his death, which was announced on his Facebook page by his daughter, Temi Bandele, who revealed that the filmmaker had died on August 7, sent ripples of shock waves across the arts community. Although the details of his death remained sketchy, friends such as Steve Ayorinde disclosed that the UK-based writer had died in Lagos.

Bandele was Nigeria's lost but found treasured storyteller. He had been swarmed by several film projects and books. In a tribune penned by his friend, a writer and cultural activist, Kola Tubosun, it was revealed that Bandele has a novel that tells the story of Samuel Ajayi Crowther and his generation of West Africans in the offing.

"He wanted to start a PhD programme in the UK and he had movies to direct," he wrote.

No doubt, the sudden death of Bandele at 54 sent shock waves across the global creative community.

Netflix Nigeria described his demise as 'a monumental loss to Nigeria's film and creative industry.'

"He will be remembered as a powerhouse who made some of the finest films out of Africa," the press statement read.

Steve Ayorinde, a journalist and former Lagos State Commissioner for Arts and Culture, described Bandele as a very "private person," citing the way the news of his death in Lagos came in from London in an interview with ARISE television. "Biyi was a creative person, a storyteller and an African all through his life. He never forgot his roots. And you would see that in the way he loved to appear- his clothes, his hairstyle and then he dropped Thomas from his name. He used to be called Bandele-Thomas."

Mo Abudu, the founder of Ebony Life Studios and one of Bandele's long-time collaborators also mourned the late multimedia storyteller.

"He was so passionate about Elesin Oba more than any project he had worked on with us and



Bandele...

TRIBUTE

was so excited when he heard about our selection at TIFF. I am sad that he will not be at TIFF and he will not get to see how loved his last project was."

One of his unfinished projects is the movie production of his novel Burma Boy. Aside from his oeuvre of writings, he is a documentary photographer. His thought-provoking pictures of the people of Lagos are a celebration of everyday heroes, conveying hope and joy even in the absence of perfect living conditions.

Born on October 13, 1967 in Kafanchan, Kaduna State, Bandele developed an interest in the arts at a very young age. His father, a war veteran, introduced him to the library, and he fell in love with books. He started to write stories of his own by copying writers that he liked. He was also a very keen observer of his environment, as he would reveal in a conversation with students of the Portland Community College in 2015.

"I spent a lot of time as a kid at the train station," he was once quoted to have said. "My mother had a kiosk at the train station where she sold food. I knew from a very early age who the thieves and pickpockets were because I could see them. No one told me, I just knew. I went from copying writers that I knew to writing what I knew. One of the things I was very familiar with was pickpockets and how they deceived themselves. I wrote about that and it was published in a regional newspaper."

That became the first piece of writing that he was paid for. Years later, at 16, he started working on what would later become his first novel, The Man Who Came in From the Back of Beyond, published in 1991. In 2007, he published his most acclaimed novel yet, Burma Boy, described by The Guardian UK as "a fine achievement."

In 1987, the BBC advertised a playwriting competition and he entered the play for it. Two years later, the play won the International Student Playscript competition of 1989. It was the first time since the 50s that anyone outside North America and the UK would win. As a result, Bandele was invited to the UK for the performance of the play. He had a copy of a manuscript of his novel that he had wanted to publish in Nigeria but couldn't get any willing publisher. Within a week of arriving in London, he had publishers from Italy, Germany and France and in the UK.

"I started writing from there. I got a job as the arts editor. I was 21 then. I didn't have a plan. I was just someone who did things. I started writing plays for the Royal Court Theatre. In 1994, I was invited to a workshop for playwrights who were interested in writing for television," he revealed.

The only problem was that Bandele wasn't interested in writing for television but there was £2000 for every participant. So, he went for the workshop spread over two weekends. The first weekend, they were assigned to write a scene for a movie. Buoyed by the zeal to write, Bandele adapted his novella that he had submitted to a German publisher into a screenplay. When he submitted it, the faculty was impressed and in two weeks, he got a call from the head of screenplay at BBC. His work had been approved and would be directed by Danny Boyle.

His other plays include Marching for Fausa (1993); Resurrections in the Season of the Longest Drought (1994); Two Horsemen (1994), selected as Best New Play at the 1994 London New Plays Festival; Death Catches the Hunter and Me and the Boys (published in one volume, 1995); and Oroonoko, an adaptation of Aphra Behn's 17th-century novel of the same name. In 1997, Bandele did a successful dramatisation of Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart. Brixton Stories, Bandele's stage adaptation of his own novel The Street (1999), premiered in 2001 and was published in one volume with his play Happy Birthday Mister Deka, which premiered in 1999.He also adapted Lorca's Yerma in 2001.

Bandele was writer-in-residence with Talawa Theatre Company from 1994 to 1995, resident dramatist with the Royal National Theatre Studio (1996), and the Judith E. Wilson Fellow at Churchill College, University of Cambridge, in 2000–01. He also acted as the Royal Literary Fund's Resident Playwright at the Bush Theatre from 2002 to 2003.

His first short film "The Kiss" was just a tip of the iceberg. His debut directorial work in feature film production, 'Half of A Yellow Sun" remains the biggest budget movie in Nigeria estimated at $12m. The movie, based on the 2006 novel of the same name by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, was screened in the Special Presentation section at the 2013 Toronto International Film Festival. But the movie was later banned from Nigerian cinemas.

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TELEVISION

For Its Customers, 9mobile Debuts Content Streaming Platform with New 9TV

Yinka Olatunbosun

As part of efforts to provide Nigerians with quality affordable entertainment, the telecommunications company, 9mobile, has launched its innovative online entertainment platform, 9TV. A one-stop entertainment hub, 9TV is created for 9mobile subscribers on prepaid and hybrid subscriptions to watch their favourite movies, live events, television shows, children's entertainment and educational content on the go.

9TV, which is accessible on web platforms as well as mobile devices, offers free to air local and international channels, video-on-demand, reality shows and live streams all at affordable rates.

At the recent virtual launch of the app, 9mobile explained that 9TV is a unique platform to give its subscribers refreshing content on various smart devices and help them keep abreast of latest news, music and

"We are happy to be introducing this new entertainment platform for the delight of our subscribers. 9TV will offer unlimited relaxation with quality entertainment content at prices that they can afford," the Director of Product Innovation and Business Development, 9mobile, Kenechukwu Okonkwo, said.

On the various 9TV offerings, Okonkwo said movies would be available in categories including new releases, most-watched, blockbusters, children, and other genres. 9TV, he further explained, would be subscription-based, with subscribers getting exceptional value for their money.

Commenting on some of the other unique features of 9TV, Okonkwo said that apart from having all the major features and services a media and entertainment app should have, it allows users to watch whatever they want at their convenience.

"9TV's 'Timeshift' feature on Live TV allows users to watch their favourite programmes with pause, rewind, and forward functionalities. Also, the 'Catch-Up' feature will enable users to watch programmes after they have been broadcast, or users who have missed a live broadcast will be able to view it on demand.

"9TV allows users to watch and also download their favourite movies, which they will be able to watch later under 'my downloads' feature on the app. The downloaded movies will be available to users to view whenever they want, even with 'No Network Coverage' or when the device is on 'Airplane Mode'."

Another unique offering on 9TV is Liv.9ja. This on-demand live entertainment streaming section allows users to watch live concerts, interviews, parties, and similar events.

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That Exhilarating Good-Guys-Gone-Bad Action-Comedy, Called *Money Miss Road*...

Yinka Olatunbosun

As film buffs grab their popcorn packs and seats at the cinema, they obviously hope that the buzz around the new flick directed by Obi Emelonye is as good as the production itself. Since July 22, when Money Miss Road hit the cinemas, the veil has been lifted on yet another story of villainy with an unexpected ending. The well-crafted plot featured the veteran actor and non-conformist entertainer Charly Boy in a supporting role that almost trumped the lead role.

The plot, built on the story of the struggles, dreams, and drive of two friends, Josiah (Josh-2funny) and Joseph (Jide Achufusi), whose chance encounter with Diokpa (Charly Boy), a ruthless criminal kingpin, is a survivalist narrative.

The characters' haunted journey would spell a life of coincidence, luxury, and misery as their rat race begins. With Money Miss Road, Nollywood records yet another example of a great picture. With the power of good lighting and set design, the director delivered a fascinating set of undistracting reels.



Emelonye

MOVIES

Anyone who had seen Charly Boy in the series King of Boys 2 would be compelled to think of the legendary actor as an example of a stock character. His slowly-delivered speech always seems like an anti-climax to the well-costumed character and the action he brings on screen. Maybe he shouldn't speak so that the menacing persona is not punctured by weak lines, slow pacing, and predictable camera angles.

The choice of location for Josiah and Joseph's lives in the trenches is juxtaposed with the good life to make the viewer empathise with them for doing the unthinkable to get rich. But can they manage the sudden change in financial status? The director provides an answer as the story evolves into a linear account of multiple but related events that make the story relatable.

The pace of the chase in the movie is perhaps its Achilles' heel – a steady movement of leather-wearing men in black is simply not enough to convey urgency and desperation. But that could be laughed over, maybe. After all, it is just comedy.

The producer, Joy Efe Odiete, who is also the CEO of Blue Pictures, described the action-comedy film cast as "a combination rarely seen in Nigerian cinemas as seen from the trajectory and history of the box office. 'Money Miss Road' is a buffet served with a lot for everyone to chew on, seeing all that has been going on in the country today."

In regards to the movie's technical depth, the director, Emelonye, who has shot Nollywood blockbusters like Last Flight to Abuja, Mirror Boy, Oxford Garden, and BADAMASI, says in a prelude to the movie: "The film was shot on an Arri Alexa mini using high quality prime lenses.

The Director of Photography was Biola Oke. Although most of the action in the film happens at night, we wanted to use that to create a really dark cinematic mood for the film, although the subject matter is light and comedic. This played into the thriller elements of the film and the tense, edge of your seat rhythm of the chase scenes. If you liked films like Rush Hour and Bad Boys then you'll love Money Miss Road. "

Filmed on locations in Abuja and Lagos, it took three weeks to shoot all the scenes in Money Miss Road, which has Odinaka Emmanuel Offia as its executive producer.

CICERO

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IN THE ARENA

Resolving the $418m Paris Club Refund Conundrum

The dispute between the federal government and sub-nationals over payment of $418million allegedly owed the consultants on Paris Club refund is now in the judicial arena and should be resolved there, writes **Louis Achi**

Last week, President Muhammadu Buhari halted the controversial payment of $418million from the federation account, related to the Paris Club refunds allegedly owed four contractors. The presidential directive was to the Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Mrs. Zainab Ahmed.

This development followed the efforts by some ministers, who during the weekly Federal Executive Council (FEC), moved against the idea being resolutely pushed by the Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami and Ahmed, saying the idea was inimical to the current realities in the country.

But the ministers' effort had the prior backing of the state governors. The Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) had consistently resisted the renewed moves by Malami to pay the money. In a letter to the federal government, through the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Boss Mustapha, the governors condemned restarting of the deduction being challenged in court.

According to the letter signed by Chairman of the NGF and Governor of Ekiti State, Dr. Kayode Fayemi, the governors held the new move was an "attempt by the Attorney General of the Federation (AGF), Abubakar Malami, and the Minister of Finance to circumvent the law and the recent judgment of the Supreme Court by surreptitiously securing the approval of the FEC to effect payment of the sum of $418 million to four contractors, who allegedly executed contracts in respect of the Paris Club refunds to the states and local governments."

Specifically, in their letter, the governors were of the position that the essence of the definitive pronouncement by the Supreme Court was that none of the contractors recommended for payment of the sum of $418 million could be so paid, because the contracts and payments relied upon were not processed as prescribed by the constitution and the law.

This notwithstanding, at the FEC meeting of Wednesday, August 3, Ahmed and Malami presented a memo, urging the cabinet to approve the deductions from funds due to states from the federation account. But this cut little ice with the other ministers who swiftly countered the duo. Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo; ministers; and the SGF, Mustapha led the charge.



Malami

The FEC members who spoke against the deduction, contended that it would be sub-judicial for any payment to be made to the contractors while cases were pending in courts, according to THISDAY sources.

It could be recalled that in 2006, the federal government under the Olusegun Obasanjo presidency had paid $12 billion to secure an $18 billion debt write-off by the Paris Club of international creditors. But because the payment was made directly from the revenue accruing to the entire federation, states and local government councils that did not owe the Paris Club asked the federal government for a refund.

Some consultants nimbly surfaced along the line to claim a percentage of the refunds as payment for their services to the states and councils. Some of the contractors also claimed they were asked to execute projects across the country by the Association of Local Governments of Nigeria (ALGON).

Cogent questions were raised on why states would need consultants to negotiate with federal government over the refund, while the projects said to have been awarded by ALGON reportedly turned out to be mostly non-existent.

Subsequently, state governors then asked for a forensic audit. Significantly, while the contractors and consultants went to court, Malami curiously went to negotiate an out-of-court settlement with the consultants and agreed to pay $418 million as judgment debt.

Despite opposition by the governors and activists, President Buhari went ahead to approve the payments and directed the Ministry of Finance to ask the Debt Management Office (DMO), to pay in form of promissory notes. Malami had reportedly persuaded Buhari to approve the Paris Club claims because Nigeria's foreign assets "might be attached".

But against the background of persistent opposition by governors who also enlisted the legal process, President Buhari altered course and directed the Ministry of Finance to stay action "until all the cases are exhausted". This was in September 10, 2021 - while the latest such position came up last week by the president.

But certainly not a fellow to allow the grass grow under his nimble feet, Malami stoutly fought back, stating on Thursday that the state governors had no basis to refute $418million deductions from the Paris Club refund paid to consultants they hired. He spoke to newsmen at the 46th Session of the State House Ministerial Briefing organised by the Presidential Communications Team at the Aso Rock Villa, Abuja.

Malami declared that the governors originally created the liability whose payment they had also indemnified explaining that when the NGF requested the refund, one of the conditions was the settlement of the consultants it engaged.

He noted that when the refund was paid to the states, a part payment was also made to the consultants. But the governors eventually halted payment, requesting for an out-of-court settlement instead.

Dismissing Malami's position, the governors maintained that it is immaterial that part of the contract sums had been paid, explaining the payments did not validate the unlawful nature of the contracts. "The Supreme Court has spoken. It is final and must be obeyed," the NGF noted.

In NGF's words: "The rule of law is not only supreme but a cardinal principle canvassed by the present administration and should in this particular occasion be strictly obeyed. In the face of the crushing economic realities and security challenges facing the nation and competing allocation of scarce resources, the payment of contractors of the humongous sum of $418 million from pubic treasury is not and should not be the priority of FEC.

At a time many state governments cannot pay salaries or cope with the high cost of administration, not many Nigerians are wondering why the AGF is so interested in paying the consultants the controversial sum. They wonder whose interest is he representing in the matter: public interest or personal interest?

However, of some concern is that Buhari's directive to "stay action" may not be final. This is because in the past, a dubious payment of legal fees was made to lawyers over the Abacha Loot despite the president initially holding off.

POLITICAL NOTES

It's Secondus' Turn to Laugh Last



Secondus

The former National Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Prince Uche Secondus would definitely be laughing himself out at the fate that has befallen Rivers State Governor, Nyesom Wike. For him, it is a case of what goes around, comes around.

Wike contested for the party's presidential ticket and lost to former Vice President Atiku Abubakar. Against all odds, he also lost the vice presidential seat to Delta State Governor, Dr. Ifeanyi Okowa.

Since Wike failed to secure PDP's presidential ticket and vice presidential slot, he has been on the loose, doing everything possible to undermine the party.

The Rivers governor had led the conspiracy that unseated Secondus, just the way he had helped to install him as the chairman of PDP in 2017. His calculation was that with Secondus, his kinsman from River State, and from the Southern part of the country as PDP chairman, he would not be able fulfill his ambition of getting the party's presidential ticket. But he was wrong. Not only does God give power to whoever He desires, anybody who kills by the sword, dies by the sword.

With the way and manner he lost the party's presidential ticket and vice presidential slot, it is obvious that nemesis caught up him. The ghost of Secondus is haunting him.

Analysts believe that if the governor had allowed Secondus to get a second term, there was no way the former PDP chairman would not have stood firmly to ensure that at least he emerged as the party's vice presidential candidate.

Today, rather than blame himself for the humiliations he is suffering in the party, he is looking for people to hold responsible.

The governor who has not learnt his lesson, has given the same treatment to Senator Maeba, who he removed as the Chairman, Governing Council of Elechi Amadi Polytechnic, due to his closeness to Atiku.

He also removed former Governor Celestine Omehia and a former Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Chief Austin Opara, as leaders of PDP in Ikwerre and Port Harcourt City LGAs respectively.

Due to the ridiculous manner the governor is handling the issue, there is a revolt in his camp with Maeba calling his bluff and describing him as disrespectful to his political seniors.

BRIEFINGNOTES

Killing of Police Inspector: Impunity Too Many

The recent beating to death of a Police Inspector, Monday Orukpe, by soldiers at the Nigerian Army Ojo Cantonment in Lagos was a sad reminder of the unending atrocities committed by security agents against civilians. **Ejiofor Alike** reports that no civilised army torture and kill policemen and civilians at the slightest provocation like the Nigerian soldiers who feel that they are trained to kill without any consequences

Soldiers at the Ojo Military Cantonment in Lagos recently added the torture and killing of an Inspector serving with the Lagos State Police Command, Monday Orukpe, to the list of atrocities perpetrated against civilians and policemen by the officers and men of the Nigerian Army. Army personnel, especially junior ones, have gained notoriety for unleashing terror against unarmed civilians and policemen at any slightest provocation or opportunity. These soldiers behave as if part of the orientation during their training programmes is to kill policemen and civilians at peacetime without any consequences.

The military authorities appear to give tacit support to the impunity of soldiers as evident in their lack of willingness to punish the erring ones unless the videos and reports of such incident go viral and cause serious public embarrassment to the authorities.

Even in cases where videos and reports went viral, military authorities still shielded their officers and men from criminal prosecution by claiming that they were probing the incident.

It is a common knowledge that nothing was heard of many previous cases after the military authorities had claimed that they had launched investigation to bring the culprits to book, according to the military tradition of disciplining their officers and men.

This apparent backing of impunity by the military authorities has emboldened some soldiers to run amok on the highways, markets, communities, streets and major cities where they manhandle and kill civilians over minor arguments.

Similar atrocities committed by policemen, especially the disbanded notorious Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), against civilians had fuelled the #EndSARS protests in October 2020.

In the latest incident, Orukpe, who was abducted alongside another police Inspector, Igbafe Ojo, died at the military hospital on Thursday afternoon, August 4.

He died from the torture he received from Army personnel, who attacked him and his colleagues at the Trade Fair area of Lagos State.

Ojo was hospitalised at a military hospital, where doctors were said to be battling to save his life.

The soldiers were on their way to Ojo Military Cantonment on Wednesday last week when the Army bus conveying them encountered traffic around the Trade Fair area of the Lagos-Badagry Expressway. There was an argument between the soldiers and the policemen. The soldiers beat the police officers to pulp, abducted them and drove them to the nearby Ojo Cantonment where they were further tortured. While Orukpe died, Ojo is still struggling to live, with the help of doctors.

As a confirmation of the backing by military authorities, the immediate past General Officer Commanding (GOC) 81 Division, Nigerian Army, Major General Umar Musa, on Tuesday justified the action of his men when he claimed that the soldiers killed Orukpe because he shot at one of them. The arrogant posture is expected when an accused becomes a judge in his own case.



Yahaya

Speaking while handing over to the new GOC, Major General Obinna Ajunwa, at the Division's Headquarters on Victoria Island, Lagos State, Musa said preliminary investigations revealed that the police officer shot at the soldier during the altercation. He alleged that the bullet clipped him in the ear but narrowly missed his vital parts.

"The other soldiers reacted to the shot fired by the police officer and this led to their beating the policeman to death," Musa added.

The Lagos State Police Command has since challenged him to present the soldier allegedly shot by the slain policeman.

According to the command, when the killer-soldiers abducted the two police officers, the third Inspector they attempted to abduct fired a single shot into the air, which forced the soldiers to retreat.

In the military's characteristic manner of investigating itself, the authorities of the 81 Division of the Nigerian Army had earlier issued a statement, through its spokesman, Major Olaniyi Osoba, claiming that they had constituted "a Board of Inquiry to unravel the circumstance surrounding the unfortunate incident."

The military's penchant to assume the role of judge in its own case has been the usual tactics to douse tension and bury such incidents under the carpet. The former GOC did not even wait for the conclusion of investigation before he justified the murderous act. However, in a swift response, the Lagos Police Command, through its Public Relations Officer, Benjamin Hundeyin, on Wednesday, insisted that the cops were attacked unprovoked.

"The fact remains that on Wednesday, August 3, 2022, at the Trade Fair area of Lagos State, about 30 Privates of the Nigerian Army attacked five policemen for stopping vehicles along their lane to pave way for a heavy duty truck joining the expressway.

"After the soldiers had brutalised the ASP leading the team, taken out his magazine, and abducted two Inspectors with their rifles, the next Inspector they attempted to attack fired a single shot into the air – an act that made the soldiers retreat.

"The single shot was into the air. At no point was anyone hit. The Lagos State Police Command challenges the Army authorities to present the soldier allegedly shot," the statement explained.

The statement added that the state police command was awaiting the report of the panel of inquiry set up by the Nigerian Army to investigate the immediate and remote cause of the incident.

The statement also urged the Army to fish out the soldiers behind the murder of Orukpe.

It also asked the Army to return the two AK-47 rifles and three magazines carted away by the soldiers "in line with the pledge made by the Nigerian Army as conveyed by Brigadier General KN Nwoko during a condolence visit to the Commissioner of Police, Lagos State Command, CP Abiodun Alabi."

Reacting to the killing of her husband and bread-winner of the family, the widow of the slain officer, Mrs. Favour Orukpe, and his family members have demanded justice from the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and the Inspector-General of Police (IG).

In an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) at her residence located in Ijagba area of Obasanjo Farm, Ota in Ogun State, Mrs. Orukpe said that her husband died on duty serving the nation, stressing that the COAS and the IG should not allow his service to the nation be a waste.

"My message to the Chief of Army Staff and the Inspector-General of Police is that I want justice. I want them to take care of my four children, because I can't do it alone," she said.

"All I want is justice. My husband should not die in vain. Those involved must be brought to book," she added.

Similarly, the senior brother to Inspector Orukpe, Mr. Alama Orukpe, also stated that the family was demanding justice from the army and the police authorities for his deceased brother.

He said that they found it difficult to identify his brother's remains when they visited the mortuary due to the impact of the beating he received from the soldiers.

He added that his head had become bloated due to the beating he received that no one could recognise him.

The Amnesty International has consistently accused the Nigerian Army of torture, extra-judicial killings and other human rights abuses but military authorities have denied these allegations. But despite their denial, evidence of torture and killing of policemen and civilians by soldiers abound. The military authorities have demonstrated through their actions and inactions that they tacitly condone these murderous acts of their officers and men.

The federal government should urgently address this issue by reviewing the rules of engagement of soldiers and their training manuals before their atrocities degenerate into another #EndSARS

NOTES FOR FILE



Ayade

Ayade's Regrettable Humiliation by the Church

Perhaps Cross River State Governor, Professor Ben Ayade, thought it was one of the events where he used to mesmerise the people of the state with donations, verbose and grandiloquent words. But he was wrong on this day as he got the greatest shock of life.

The event was a holy mass held at St. Patrick Catholic Church, in Ikot Ansa, Calabar, the Cross River State capital. It was organised by Obudu-Obanliku Elites Forum, in honour of Justice Agim, who hails from Obanliku, for his elevation to the Supreme Court.

The holy mass officiated by Bishop John Ebele Ayah, also from Obanliku, coincided with the unveiling of the year's harvest, themed, "harvest of divine intervention."

Ayade, who was a guest at the event, made a donation of N25million on behalf of the state government, his family and the judiciary arm of the government. After the donation, the governor turned to the direction of the presiding bishop and said: "For our pride, the pride of Cross River North, the son of the soil, Bishop John Ayah, I will whisper my package to him later."

Knowing his tricks, Bishop Ayah without wasting time, and as it is characteristic of him as a man who is known for always speaking truth to power, rose up, took the microphone and stunned the congregation by rejecting the offer from the governor. He urged him to rather pay salaries of workers in the state.

He said: "I want to appreciate the governor and tell him to package whatever he has for me, add to it and use it to pay the salaries of the workers".

The bishop's reaction was greeted with a thunderous ovation of "correct bishop God bless you" by the congregation.

Some civil servants in the state have been owed salaries and arrears for over four years. Last May, the civil servants stormed the office of the Head of Service (HoS) at the state Secretariat in Calabar, chanting solidarity songs and displaying placards with different inscriptions such as "Over four years without salaries, who did we offend? Yet we go to work everyday," "The injustice too much," "labourer deserves his wages," "Governor Ayade please pay us our salary."

Many people in the state know that the governor is in the habit of making unfulfilled promises to churches and even the traditional institutions. But this time, he met his match in the no-nonsense bishop.

Amosun, Abiodun Return to Trenches over 2023

With the recent war of words between the former governor of Ogun State, Senator Ibikunle Amosun, and his successor, Prince Dapo Abiodun, it is obvious that the two political gladiators are set to return to the trenches over the 2023 governorship election in the state, writes **James Sowole**

It is no longer in doubt that former Governor of Ogun State, Senator Ibikunle Amosun and his successor, Governor Dapo Abiodun are determined to return to the warpath. This was on full display last week when the two engaged each other in bitter exchange of words.

Though many knew that the two gladiators in Ogun State politics, had reservations for each other, they didn't know that it was that serious until Amosun fired the first salvo at Abiodun.

Speaking in Abeokuta, the state capital, after receiving an award from the Abeokuta Club to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the association, the former governor had used the opportunity to break his silence, alleging that Abidoun rigged the 2019 governorship election that brought him into office.

The senator who claimed that those who were involved in the unlawful act had since apologised to him, vowed that the governor would not return to power in 2023.

Amosun, who was governor of the gateway state between 2011 and 2019, fought the biggest war of his political career at the end of his tenure in a bid to install Hon. Abdulkabir Akinlade as the anointed candidate for the All Progressives Congress (APC).

The battle polarised the party in the state into factions after Abiodun emerged the candidate of the party for the governorship election. Disatisfied with the outcome of the governorship primary, Amosun and his supporters moved to the Allied Progressives Movement (APM), under which Akinlade ran and lost to Abiodun.

He fought desperately to upturn the mandate given to Abiodun. He reportedly visited President Muhammadu Buhari and top monarchs in the state, all to no avail.

During the election, Abiodun defeated Akinlade with a margin of 19,517 votes. He polled 241,670 votes as against the APM candidate's 222,153 votes.

Since then, there has been no love lost between the governor and his predecessor. But not many envisaged that the level of animosity between the two of them was deep-rooted until Amosun's outburst last week

Incidentally, the same Akinlade who was Amosun's anointed candidate in 2019 is now the running mate of the Peoples Democratic Party's (PDP) governorship candidate, Mr. Ladi Adebutu, ahead of the 2023 election.

At the event, the former governor said though he had moved on, the governor would not have the opportunity to rig himself back to power.

"During the last election, thank God, Chief Olusegun Osoba is here, I have said it; we won convincingly. They rigged, and ended up with 19,000. Some of them came to apologise to me. I can't be mentioning names. We won that election. But I have moved on. We did our work; we will continue to do what we have to do. God will be with all of us," the former governor reportedly said.

Speaking later in an interview with journalists, Amosun who currently represents Ogun Central in the Senate, declared that he was not in support of Abiodun's administration, insisting that he must be removed. He also assured his supporters that the next line of action would soon be made public.

"Just wait; very soon, you will hear where we are going next. You know my stand, and my stand is my stand. I am not supporting this administration that is there now. He must be removed," he added.



Amosun



Abiodun

But in a swift response, Abiodun declared that he would not be distracted by any person who has a problem with self-delusion, noting that "Ogun State is not anybody's father's inheritance."

The governor called on the people of the state to ignore his predecessor, insisting that he would not join issues with him.

Also in an apparent response to Amosun's allegation, Abiodun further stated that he would rather focus on his mandate and not join issues with anyone who wants to play God.

"I will not be distracted by any person or persons who have a problem with self-delusion. I will not be distracted by any person who does not appreciate that Ogun State is not anybody's father's inheritance; we are all stakeholders in this commonwealth called Ogun State.

"I am not going to join issues with anyone that wants to play God; I will leave them to God; God can deal with whoever is challenging His authority and wanted to play God. All I can say is that what we stand for in Ogun State is an administration that is committed to providing purposeful leadership and purposeful infrastructural development across the length and breadth of the state," he said.

Abiodun, however, expressed his disappointment that a former governor who was a sitting governor in 2019 would cry that he was rigged out during the election.

"How can we on the outside take on an incumbent and then be accused of rigging out an incumbent in the same party? Anyone can explain their failure whichever way they like; anyone can also begin to pant and threaten that they will do whatever," he added.

Equally responding to Amosun's claim, the Ogun State chapter of APC, asked the people of the state to pray for Amosun because he was suffering from "political amnesia and out-of-office loneliness."

The party, in a statement issued by its Publicity Secretary, Tunde Oladunjoye, described the ex-governor's claim that Abiodun did not win the 2019 election as "an after-lunch belching of a man suffering from political amnesia and loneliness."

"The quoted statement was not only an insult to the psyche of the people of Ogun State but also a sad indication that the former governor is yet to purge himself of extreme arrogance and intolerance that were his trademarks, which earned him a suspension from our party, even as a sitting governor.

"The APC, therefore, calls on the public, and particularly our esteemed members, to pity and pray for the former governor as he suffers from political amnesia, loneliness and absolute lack of touch with reality.

"There is absolutely no truth in the specious utterance of the former governor who is still sulking from the electoral defeat of his surrogate party in 2019. Our party and candidate not only won fair and square but the victory of Prince Dapo Abiodun was also attested to by his co-contestants, many of whom later joined APC and are still in APC.

"Having been witnessing the frustrating exodus of his former political allies who openly said they were tired of endemic lies; and his failure to wrest the party structures from the incumbent governor, the recourse by Senator Amosun to 'elated' after-lunch belching is understandable and pitiable.

"Furthermore, Amosun is still pained that despite the violence wrecked on our members, despite unfinished projects whose costs were mostly paid 100 per cent upfront, despite the handover without a handover note, despite the wanton destruction of public facilities including pipe-borne water taps in Abeokuta, and notwithstanding the untoward provocations and shenanigans; Governor Abiodun remained focused and determined to leave Ogun State much better than he met it."

While commending Governor Abiodun for his giant strides since assumption of office, the party urged him to remain focused and deliver the dividends of democracy for which Ogun people elected him; and not to join issues with sore losers.

Many analysts have have dismissed Amosun's outburst, saying that if he could not defeat Abiodun when he had much influence as a two-term sitting governor and a close ally of the President, he should not think that he would achieve the feat in 2023 especially now that his camp is seriously depleted

"With a depleted camp, going against Abiodun with the power of incumbency, I do not see how the senator can upstage the governor," Oladunjoye added.

It is interesting to note that just as Amosun is annoyed with Abiodun, his predecessor, Otunba Gbenga Daniel, is annoyed with him for grinding down. Barely a year after Amosun took over from Daniel, he began a witch-hunting exercise that endured for eight years of his reign, and Daniel felt every moment of it.



Atiku



Tinubu



Obi

A Season of Suits against Presidential Candidates

Alex Enumah writes on the plethora of suits filed against the presidential candidates of the three leading political parties at the Federal High Court in Abuja, which have the potential to truncate their ambitions

The headline was unequivocal and unambiguous: "Court grants order of substituted service on Tinubu."

Ruling on an ex parte application filed by four chieftains of the All Progressives Congress (APC)- Memuna Suleiman, Jigo Mohammed Garba, Ofodu Anthony and Ibiang Miko Ibiang, who are seeking the disqualification of the party's presidential candidate, Senator Bola Tinubu, from contesting the 2023 presidential election for allegedly presenting forged certificate, Justice Ahmed Mohammed of the Federal High Court Abuja, granted an order for substituted service on the former Lagos State governor.

In the suit, the plaintiffs asked the court to rule that Tinubu is ineligible to run for president in the 2023 presidential election as the party's candidate because he allegedly submitted false information to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

In a 33-paragraph affidavit in support of the suit deposed to by Ibiang, the four APC chieftains averred that Tinubu falsely swore to an affidavit in 1999 in which he claimed to have attended St Paul Aroloya Children Home School, Ibadan, from 1958 to 1964, and Government College, Ibadan, 1965 to 1968 and presented the same to INEC.

According to the plaintiffs, the deposition is untrue. They claimed that in his INEC form for the 2023 elections, Tinubu refused to include any information about his primary and secondary schools in order to hide the false information he had provided to INEC.

The plaintiffs are praying the court to determine whether having regard to the provision of sections 1 (3); 4(1) and 2; 14(1),(2)(a), and (c)and 42(1)(a) and (b) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), the provision of Section 29(5) of the Electoral Act, 2022 as enacted by the fourth defendant which modified the provision of Section 31(5) of the Electoral Act, 2010 (as amended), is not ultra vires the fourth defendant and therefore unconstitutional, null, void and of no effect whatever.

They wondered whether, having regard to the decision of the Supreme Court in the case Modibbo Vs Usman (2020) 3 NWLR(PT.1712) 470 and the provision of Section 137(1)(j), the third defendant has not presented a forged certificate to INEC.

Ruling on an ex parte application, Justice Mohammed granted an order for substituted service on Tinubu after the plaintiffs' counsel, Goddy Uche, told the court that substituted service has become necessary because all attempts to serve the presidential candidate proved abortive.

The court also ordered that court processes should be served on the national secretariat of the APC and that such service shall be deemed as having been properly served on Tinubu.

Before that, in another suit, Justice Inyang Ekwo of the same court in Abuja had refused to throw out a suit seeking to compel the Inspector-General of Police (IG), Usman Baba, to commence a perjury trial against Tinubu.

Ruling on an ex parte application filed by a Civil Society Organisation (CSO), Incorporated Trustees of Centre for Reform and Public Advocacy, to apply for an order of mandamus to compel the IG to prefer charges against Tinubu for having allegedly lied on oath, Justice Ekwo granted permission and said the suit has merit.

In a suit marked FHC/ABJ/CS/1058/2022 and filed on July 4, the CSO claimed that Tinubu lied under oath when he tendered his credentials to the INEC in 1999 when he contested for the Lagos State governorship seat.

The group said the IG is empowered by the Constitution and Police Act to probe criminal allegations levelled against anyone. It added that according to Section 32(1) of the Police Act, any suspect is meant to be arrested and tried in court. The group said it was compelled to file the suit because two letters it wrote to the IG where it called for the prosecution of Tinubu were allegedly ignored.

In another suit equally seeking to bar Tinubu from the 2023 presidential election over allegations bordering on forgery, Justice Obiora Egwuatu recently ordered substituted service on the candidate.

The order was issued after the judge heard an ex parte motion brought by Action Alliance (AA) to serve the suit on Tinubu, who is the third defendant through substituted means.

The plaintiff, in the writ of summons, predicated its request on the claim that both the APC and Tinubu were not qualified to participate in the 2023 presidential election, following alleged forgery committed by Tinubu in 1999. The suit filed on behalf of the plaintiff by its lawyer, Mr Upkai Ukairo, claimed that Tinubu forged his University of Chicago certificate he submitted in 1999, in aid of his qualification for the 1999 governorship election in Lagos State, which was won by Tinubu.

However, owing to the difficulty in serving the suit on the third defendant, the plaintiff on June 29, brought an ex parte application praying the court for an order to serve Tinubu through substituted service.

Delivering his ruling Justice Egwuatu granted the request to publish the writ of summons and other processes including the order of substituted service in THISDAY or The Nation Newspapers.

Also, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) recently instituted a lawsuit compelling INEC to prevent Tinubu; and the Labour Party standard bearer, Peter Obi, from replacing their running mates with Senators Kashim Shettima and Datti Baba-Ahmed, respectively.

The PDP is also asking the court to declare that Tinubu and Obi be disqualified unless they contest alongside their previous running mates – Kabiru Masari and Doyin Okupe, respectively.

Tinubu had nominated Masari as a surrogate running mate or placeholder in order to beat the June 17 INEC deadline. Obi had also nominated his campaign manager, Okupe, as an interim running mate. However, INEC gave a grace period of about one month to substitute their names.

After weeks of consultations, Tinubu and Obi nominated Shettima and Baba-Ahmed respectively while Masari and Okupe resigned.

However, the PDP asked the court to determine if, by the combined interpretation of Section 142(1) of the Constitution, Section 29(1), 31 and 33 of the Electoral Act 2022, and INEC's timetable, Tinubu and Obi are bound by the submission of Masari and Okupe, respectively as their running mates.

The party also asked the court to determine if by the combined interpretation of Section 142(1) of the Constitution and Sections 29(1), 31, and 33 of the Electoral Act 2022, INEC can validly accept any change or substitution of the fourth (Masari) and seventh (Okupe) defendants as running mates of the third (APC) and sixth (Labour Party) defendants.

In yet another suit filed at the Federal High Court in Abuja, former Minister of State for Education, Emeka Nwajiuba, is seeking to disqualify Tinubu and the presidential candidate of PDP, Atiku Abubakar.

In the suit jointly filed along with a group, Incorporated Trustees of Rights for All International, Nwajiuba alleged that the primary elections of the APC and PDP that produced the presidential candidates were marred by vote-buying.

Nwajiuba was the first aspirant to procure the N100 million nomination and expression of interest forms of the APC. However, he refused to show up at the venue of the June 8 convention where the primary election was held. He polled only one vote.

He subsequently claimed that he stayed away from the convention because the APC did not zone the ticket to the South-east and he did "not want to be part of the dollar and Naira bazaar."

In his suit, Nwajiuba attached video evidence of former Minister of Transportation, Rotimi Amaechi, claiming that the delegates were bribed to vote.

The latest of the suit to disqualify Tinubu from contesting the 2023 elections was filed last week when an Abuja-based lawyer, Mike Enahoro-Ebah, sued the INEC over its refusal to provide the certified true copies (CTCs) of documents relating to Tinubu's presidential nomination. The lawyer is also seeking an order asking INEC to release Tinubu's nomination forms submitted when he contested the Lagos governorship election in 1999 and 2003 respectively.

In a suit marked FHC/ABJ/CS/1337/2022, Enahoro-Ebah is seeking an order granting him leave to apply for judicial review of an order of mandamus directing or compelling INEC to furnish him with the CTCs of the "nomination forms for governor and affidavits in support of personal particulars and all other documents attached thereto, submitted to the respondent by and on behalf of Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, for the 1999 and 2003 Governorship Elections in Lagos State."

Additionally, the applicant is requesting that the court orders INEC to give him the CTCs of the "Nomination Forms EC13A, EC 9, affidavits and any other papers filed to the respondent (INEC) by and on behalf of Bola Tinubu, for the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria."

According to him, he had applied for the documents through two different letters dated July 13 and July 22 to INEC, pursuant to section 29(4) of the Electoral Act, 2022; section 1(1) and (3); section 2(6) and section 7(4) of the Freedom of Information Act, 2011.

The plaintiff said the request for Tinubu's credentials was based on the argument that since INEC is holding them, they have become public records and he is entitled to access them under section 29(4) of the Electoral Act, 2022 and section 1 (1) of the Freedom of Information Act, 2011.

Also five months after Justice Inyang Ekwo struck out a suit challenging the Nigerian citizenship of Atiku, a fresh suit last month emerged before the court seeking his disqualification immediately after he was announced the presidential candidate of PDP.

In the new suit filed by a lawyer, Mr. Johnmary Jideobi, it was argued that Atiku is not constitutionally qualified to participate in the presidential contest.

Jideobi sought seven principal reliefs against Atiku, PDP and INEC who were cited as first, second and third defendants in the matter; and the Attorney-General of the Federation was also joined as the fourth defendant.

The plaintiff asked the court to determine whether, by the combined provisions of Sections 1(1) &(2), 25 and 131(a) of the Constitution (as amended), only a Nigerian citizen by birth can contest for the office of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. He argued that given the circumstances surrounding Atiku's birth if he can be cleared to contest for the office of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

As the presidential candidates of the three leading political parties are going through their consultations, mobilisation and campaigns, they are also worried about the suits, which can Mar their ambitions.

The most recent of the suits was the one filed a chieftain of PDP, Newgent Ekamo last week at the Federal High Court in Abuja against the presidential candidate of PDP, Atiku and the Sokoto State Governor, Aminu Tambuwal, over the conduct of the presidential primary of the party that was held was in Abuja on May 28 and May 29, 2022.

During the primary, when aspirants were asked to address delegates, Tambuwal had asked them to vote for him only to return moments later to say that he was withdrawing from the race and delegates to vote for Atiku.

At the primary, Atiku polled 371 votes while Rivers State Governor, Nyesom Wike and Senator Bukola Saraki garnered 237 and 70 votes respectively. After the convention, the National Chairman of the PDP, Iyorchia Ayu, in a viral video, described Tambuwal as the "hero of the convention."

In the suit marked FHC/ABJ/CS/782/2022, Ekamon is asking the court to determine eight issues including whether the purported transfer of Tambuwal's votes to Atiku by the PDP was illegal and void.

The plaintiff asked the court to determine if Tambuwal did not lose his claim to votes the moment he stepped down for Atiku? He is equally seeking a declaration that the PDP acted negligently and in bad faith by assigning the Sokoto governor's votes to Atiku at the primary.

CICERO/INTERVIEW

BODE GEORGE

Atiku Can't Win 2023 Election without Substantial Votes from the South

Former Deputy National Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Chief Bode George, is one of the leading voices demanding the reordering of key national offices in the PDP National Working Committee after Alhaji Atiku Abubakar emerged as its presidential candidate two months ago. In this interview with **Gboyega Akinsanmi**, George incisively discussed the triggers of the internal crisis undermining PDP and proffered antidotes to rescue it from implosion, among others

More than two years after Alhaji Atiku Abubakar emerged as the presidential candidate of the PDP, the party sinks deeper into the internal crisis by the day? What are the issues its leaders have not addressed?

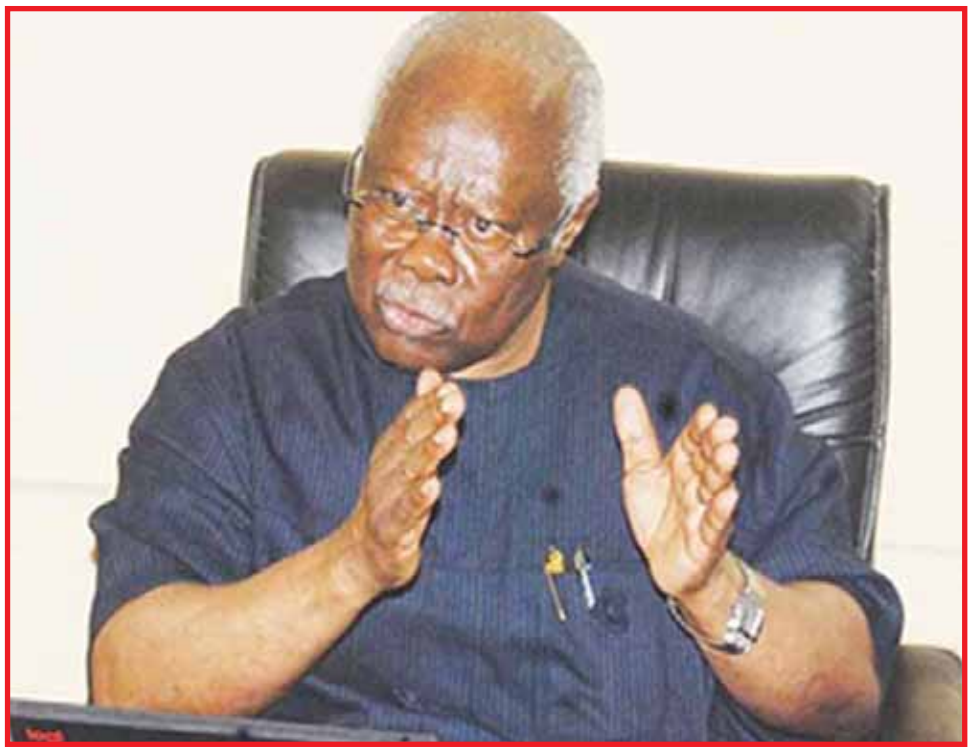
Once you have an organisation, especially if it is political, trust is a major issue that must not toyed with. Inclusivity is another critical element that holds a political organisation together. That also means oneness or a sense of belonging. We are all parts of the same political family. We must be able to go home with what has been allocated to us as parts of this big family. Loyalty and commitment to the party, not to any individual, are also fundamental. They were born out of inclusivity. All these elements are the pillars and tenets of a political party. In any organisation, we always have people who are happy with certain issues and those who are not happy with certain issues. But the ability of the party to successfully manage its difference will be the selling point to the larger society to trust us. With this quality, people will be able to trust us that no matter the situation in this country, this party has the ability to manage a crisis. Yes, we have disagreements. Are they surmountable? I believe our party has the ability and capacity to resolve all these crises. But we need to listen to ourselves. Before the national convention in 2021, the zoning issue was very thorny. We were able to resolve that crisis based on compromise, conviction and give-and-take principle. With my experience, I know we have people, elders and youths too in our party, who can proffer solutions to our challenges. We can rub minds. It is not a situation we cannot resolve. Every party should come down from his high horse and negotiate.

Some leaders from the South have been suspecting a sectional agenda, citing the lopsided positions in the PDP. Do you align with this crop of leaders?

That is one of the issues agitating the minds of our people from the South. What has caused that? The present managers of the All Progressives Congress exacerbated this mistrust. This is an unnecessary tribal sentiment. The claims - we have the number; we can do whatever we want and nobody can challenge us - are getting us back to the majority versus minority contention both in the North and South. This is the issue that created the friction that disrupted the First Republic. Our founding fathers found solutions to it. They divided Nigeria into six geo-political zones. There are also six top political offices in the federation. So, every geo-political zone must go home with one of those top political positions. It means each geo-political zone will be represented in the management of this country. If we are driving back to those days of the majority versus minority, it will not help this country. It has never helped us and it will never help us in the future. We must avoid it like a leech. People are angry! Now, the insecurity in the country has exacerbated that friction.

To put it in a clearer language, what are the key demands of the southern leaders of the PDP?

We are simply demanding a sense of belonging. We have to participate in the process or in the management of the party. Nobody can win an election without substantial input from the North or the South. Do we really want to return to the Villa in 2023? If we want to return to the Villa, you need votes from the South to win. This is more so now that the electoral process has been modernised. The new technology is at play. The new electoral system was experimented during the last three elections.



George

And it has encouraged a lot of young people to come out in preparation for the next context. The will of the people is now being respected. The next general election will be a turning point in the annals of our country that the will of the people or the voices of the people will now be heard. The leaders will be elected to go and serve their people and protect their interests. They will be entrusted to manage the resources of the land for the benefit of those people. If you go in for four years and embark on the mission of self-aggrandisement, they will wait for you at the poll again to determine your political fate. Then, they will assess whether a reliable, responsible, respectable and trustworthy person that they entrust the resource of this country in. Their voices will be heard and the power of the PVCs is vital. With the PVCs, the bad managers of public resources will be sent to the dustbin of history forever.

Last week, the PDP convened a meeting of its NEC, it was later suspended and a new date for the meeting is expected to be announced. With the enormity of the crisis at hand, can the NEC save the party from implosion?

The NEC is the next most powerful organ of the PDP after the National Convention. The highest organ, the Supreme Court of the PDP, is the National Convention. The NEC is like the Court of Appeal. Whatever decision that would be made at the NEC meeting will be all-encompassing and all-embracing. So, the need for deeper consultation is necessary. I think the managers have been hearing the cacophony of voices from all the corners of the country and from six geo-political zones of the federation. The most contentious issue is inclusivity. How do we have that sense of belonging? How do we have this commitment? How will our people feel to encourage them to troop out in millions to deliver the voices of our party?

If, for instance, the decision of the next NEC meeting is at variance with the demands of the Southern PDP, what happens next?

Can the North alone win an election to the villa with the South? Put differently, can the South alone win an election to the villa with the North? We must break that barrier. We must re-unite ourselves like the founding fathers did. We must not throw out the way they managed the political fallout of the country into the debris of history. If we avoid the pitfall of the past, then we can grow. Democratic dispensation is not a 100-metre race. It is a continuum. Now, we are in a crisis. I believe we have committed people who can reassess the challenges at hand. It is not a one-dash race. Now, there will be more consultation. There will be more movement. Let us look at how we can resolve these challenges and not individual interests. We should protect the interests of the PDP. If we cannot resolve this crisis now, it is better to spend more time consulting and annexing various inputs for us to come to a conclusion rather than rushing to it and messing it up. We have been hearing various voices. The best thing to do is for the managers of PDP, the elders and some other people to come together and listen to ourselves. The PDP is not a private company. It is the collective responsibility of all Nigerians that own that flag. The PDP flag is a national flag. It is not for the North; neither is it for the South alone. It is a national party from the swamp forest to the Savannah. That is what we should reflect, and our ability to do that will convince Nigerians that these people are going to be disruptive. Rather, they will listen to all shades of opinion.

Fortnight ago, the opposition senators called for the impeachment of President Muhammadu Buhari due to the country's worsening security challenges. Do you think the proposal is necessary at this time?

Whatever the reasons behind the impeachment plan, I want to plead with our people to be patient. We are at the twilight of Buhari's administration. What do we want our nation to be like? Do they have the number? So many things have happened in the last seven years that call for questions. They should bring whatever issues agitating to the campaign to convince Nigerians that APC has done more damage to this country than any political party in history. Bring those issues out to the campaign because every party is building up to face the next elections. Pursuing Buhari's impeachment now will be like a distraction. The senators should not dissipate their energy in the pursuit of Buhari's removal. Let us see them as issues for debate. Something that is so disgraceful recently is the spending of N1.4 billion to purchase 10 SUVs for the Government of Niger Republic. What kind of decision is that? Our police and security operatives are yet to be paid the new salaries that the federal government approved for them in 2021. Why will you be helping other countries while we are yet to see any difference in Nigeria? Are we Father Christmas? Self-help, they say, is the best help. Is there any return on that investment for us?

Some southern leaders still believe that there should be restructuring before the 2023 elections. From which lens do you see it?

For me, we have been shouting about the restructuring since the 2014 constitutional conference. I believe President Goodluck Jonathan handed over its report to President Buhari. For Buhari, the report of the conference belongs to the archive. That report is more necessary now than 2014. The tribal union we used to have, the easy movement of people from one state to the other and the National Youth Service Corps have almost disintegrated. There is this sense of unnecessary hatred from one tribe to the other. The oneness we used to enjoy is fast disappearing. And fear has taken over the land now. Who is secure? Who is safe in any part of the federation? Insecurity is so high, and we want investors to come. Where are the investors? If we, Nigerians, are afraid in our own country for our daily existence, why will an investor come? We are gradually becoming a pariah state. Where is that Giant of Africa? Look at the situation in the country. If you travel to any part of the world, immigration officials will bring you out from the queue and x-ray you head to toe. All is not over yet. We need good leaders to manage the resources of the country for the benefit of the people.

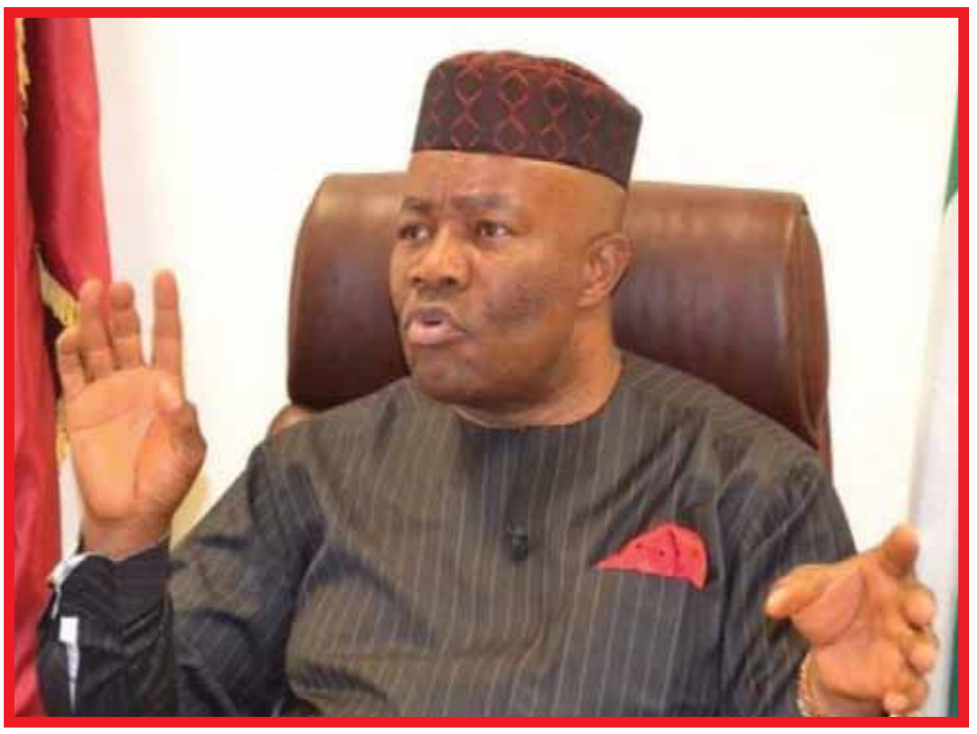
With the spate of insecurity nationwide, some eminent leaders have been calling for an interim national government rather than conducting the 2023 elections. Does this suggestion hold any hope for the country?

Constitutionally, how do we create an interim national government? From what? Is it going to be by fiat? We should not compound the problem we have at hand. We should debate the state of the nation and the crisis we are going through. We can proffer solutions to it and campaign based on the solution so that our next set of leaders will take it up from there. Fortunately, the electoral process is transparent now. We are not going to elect some first-class jokers, who will go through the back doors and emerge by manipulating the result. These are people with questionable character, whom you cannot define what their names are; what qualifications they have and what they have done positively in the country to emerge as the leaders of the country. That has been the bane of the country. These are people who will access the national funds and squander them and who will not spend according to the budget enacted by the legislative arm. That has been the problem. We know what these problems are. Let us go and discuss with the people. Let us campaign for the people. Let the people go to the poll and vote for the proper people. If they fail to achieve their set goals in four years, you vote them out. What do we want to do with an interim national government? Who are the people that will constitute the interim government? Are they going to be angels that will come from outer space? What can be more interim than talking to the people about the next elections and encouraging the people to tell the truth to power during the next elections?

GAVEL

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Lawan **Akpabio**

All Eyes on INEC over Lawan, Akpabio's Ambitions

Despite repeated assurances by the Indepdent National Electoral Commission that it has not altered electoral documents in favour of the Senate President, Dr. Ahmad Lawan, and former Minister of Niger Delta Affairs, Senator Godswill Akpabio, concerns have continued to mount over the sincerity of the electoral umpire, **Udora Orizu** writes

In the last two months, the Indepedent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has engaged in a battle of words with several critics and political analysts who are sure that the electoral body is plotting to reinstate Senate President, Dr. Ahmad Lawan and former Minister of Niger Delta Affairs, Senator Godswill Akpabio as the All Progressives Congress (APC) candidate for Yobe North denatorial district and Akwa Ibom North West senatorial districts come 2023.

While INEC has insisted that Lawan and Akpabio are not included in the list of possible candidates for Senate, critics are accusing the commission of preparing to break the law as consideration for them to participate in the senatorial elections as candidates.

The names of the duo were missing from the list of successfully nominated candidates submitted to INEC by the 18 political parties in June.

Having lost out in their quest for the 2023 presidential ticket of the ruling APC, Lawan and Akpabio on their part are not relenting as they have been making clandestine efforts to claim the senatorial tickets.

While Bashir Machina and Udom Ekpoudom had emerged as candidates in the primaries supervised by INEC officials in their respective senatorial zones, the names of Lawan and Akpabio, who did not participate in the election were instead forwarded to the commission as candidates.

Although Akpabio had won a rerun held in the zone, there was no report of a similar election held in Yobe after Machina had earlier emerged the winner.

In his reaction to the news of Akpabio's victory, Ekpoudom vowed that he would not relinquish the senatorial district ticket which he won on May 27, 2022 to anyone, no matter the pressure on him. In a statement signed by his campaign Director-General, Hon. Uwem Udoma; Secretary, Obong Etokakpan, and the campaign's Director of Media and Publicity, Peter Idiong, Ekpoudum described the June 9, 2022 midnight primary that produced the former Minister of Niger Delta Affairs as "scam, unconstitutional, deceitful and legally defective."

The reaction was re-echo by Machina who contested the primary in Yobe North senatorial district and won. He vowed to go to court to challenge the alleged attempt to steal his mandate. He equally insisted that he was the validly elected candidate, and that he had not withdrawn for any other person.

However, there are fears and speculations that INEC may have doctored documents to allow Lawan and Akpabio actualise their senatorial ambitions despite not participating in APC primaries.

A media report on Tuesday claimed that INEC had backdated Certified True Copies of reports of the APC primaries "to accommodate" Lawan and Akpabio.

But in a statement by its spokesperson, Mr. Festus Okoye, INEC on Tuesday denied doctoring or certifying any document in favour of either of the two APC chieftains. The commission said it had followed through its timetable, adding that there was no point in its schedules where the names of the persons in question were published.

"The forms of the two personalities in question were not published by the Commission. The decision of the Commission triggered legal actions which are still ongoing. It therefore defies logic and common sense to go around and submit doctored documents purportedly recognising the duo as candidates when the matter is clearly sub-judice," the statement said.

Okoye said the copy of the form uploaded on the online news platform as evidence, was not properly fact-checked and had thereby encouraged misinformation. He called for responsible reporting of the development just as he described the story by the online platform as an unwarranted attack on the electoral body.

"As part of the ongoing case in court, a law firm requested the commission for a Certified True Copy (CTC) of the Form EC9 submitted by the APC as its candidate for Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District which we are duty bound to oblige them under the law. The Form was certified on 15th July 2022. If minimum care had been exercised by the promoters of the story, they would have seen the two stamps of the commission bearing different dates on the Form. It is this Form that is now misconstrued as INEC' s endorsement.

"For the record, the Commission has not recognised any of the two personalities as a Senatorial candidate," Okoye further explained.

INEC had earlier last month sounded a death knell for Lawan and Akpabio's ambitions following its rejection of their nominations on the grounds that it didn't monitor the primary elections that produced the two aspirants.

It said only the courts can decide the fate of the two politicians whom many in their constituencies had accused of regarding political positions as their birthright.

In a separate statement by Okoye, the commission said the allegations of underhand dealings against it regarding the two senatorial tickets were intended to impugn the integrity of the commission

The statement read in part: "In particular, allegations intended to impugn the integrity of the commission have been made in respect of the Akwa Ibom North West and Yobe North Senatorial Districts. To set the record straight, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria mandates the commission to monitor the organisation and operation of political parties, including their finances, conventions, congresses, and party primaries. In line with its constitutional and legal obligations, the commission deployed monitors to the various constituencies and received reports of such exercises. About the primaries for the Akwa Ibom North West and Yobe North Senatorial Districts, the commission stands by the monitoring reports received from our State offices."

For these reasons, Okoye said the commission did not publish the personal particulars of any candidate for the two senatorial districts at variance with the reports, which emanated from the states.

"Right now, the commission is funtus officio in the two cases. Aggrieved parties are at liberty to approach the Federal High Court and seek redress as provided in section 285 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) and sections 29(5) and 84(14) of the Electoral Act, 2022. On the issuance of Certified True Copies (CTCs) of documents, he said the staff of the commission has been working hard, including weekends, to meet the deluge of requests received.

As of Friday, July 8, 2022, he said the commission had processed 433 requests, involving the certification of 1,662,776 pages of documents. He said many of them were awaiting collection at the INEC headquarters by some of the same applicants complaining of delay in issuance of the CTCs. "Section 29 (4) of the Electoral Act provides that any person may apply to the commission for a copy of nomination form, affidavit, and any other document submitted by a candidate at an election and the commission shall, upon payment of a prescribed fee, issue such person with a certified copy of the document within 14 days. Persons applying for CTC of documents should endeavour to act timely and within the ambit of the law. The commission will continue to uphold the integrity of the electoral process, including the deepening of the deployment of technology to enhance the credibility of elections," he added.

With this pronouncement by INEC, only the courts can decide the fate of the two politicians whom many in their constituencies had accused of regarding political positions as their birthright.

Perhaps Akpabio's trouble started when the outgoing state Resident Electoral Commissioner, Mr. Mike Igini, while speaking at a radio programme in Uyo, said the re-run primary that led to his emergence was strange and unknown to law.

According to him, the May 27, 2022 primary, which produced Ekpoudum subsists because it was not cancelled, neither was it rendered inconclusive. He added that Akpabio's emergence was nothing but a "Nollywood fantasy."

Igini added that what he knew about Akpabio was that he was a presidential aspirant for the APC, who stepped down for Tinubu, adding that, even if there was a rerun, it could only be conducted for aspirants that participated in the first primary. He advised politicians contesting the 2023 general election to meticulously study the new provisions of the 2022 Electoral Act as amended, so as not to continue with the hope that things were still the way it were with the repealed 2010 and 2012 Electoral Act.

"By virtue of Section 31 of the 2022 Electoral Act, the only way somebody can be replaced in any form is that we no longer have substitution by political party. What you have now is withdrawal by individual or nominee and or death," Igini reportedly explained.

INTERNATIONAL

Huffs and Puffs of Nigeria's Foreign Policy Misdirection:
ECOWAS, Liberia and Niger's Braggadocio



VIE INTERNATIONALE

with

Bola A. Akinterinwa

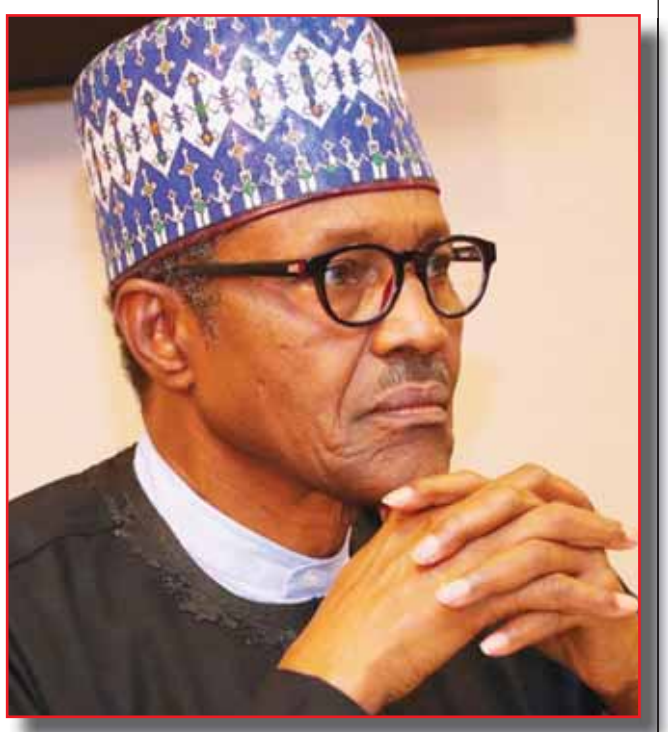
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The expression, 'huffs and puffs,' is traceable to the 16th century, when huff meant 'to emit puffs of breath in anger,' and puff meant 'to blow in short gusts.' Figuratively put, puff means to inflate. By 'huffs and puffs,' we are simply talking about an angry attitudinal disposition of an individual or a corporate entity. By seeking to discuss the huffs and puffs of Nigeria's foreign policy misdirection, we have already implied that there is a misdirection in the conduct and management of Nigeria's foreign policy and that the misdirection has engendered some huffs and puffs at various levels, including the levels of the policy makers, politico-diplomatic observers and the Nigerian foreign policy elite.

And without any jot of gainsaying, Nigeria's foreign policy under President Muhammadu Buhari (PMB) has been very rankling because of its lack of focus. The rankling question is whether Nigeria even has any foreign policy on any given international issue beyond being reactive or claiming to have secured international appointments for Nigerians, which, we all know, is regulated and regionally rotated, but only requires lobbying when there are many candidates in the region from which it is the turn to present a candidate. And true enough too, lobbying may be quite tasking, but that cannot be a good foreign policy objective.

When it can be argued that there is indeed a case of foreign policy, especially that of good neighbourliness and altruism, based on either territorial contiguity or political propinquity, it is always difficult to delineate which national interest is at stake and that is being protected by all means. What is more often noticeable is the policy of giving out what Nigeria does not have, showing good neighbourliness that is neither appreciated nor reciprocated. One Latin maxim has it that 'nemo dat quod non habet,' meaning that 'you cannot give what you do not have,' but this is precisely what Nigeria is doing. Nigeria's foreign policy actions, more often than not, conflict with this maxim.

PMB is on record to have gone to Liberia to teach Liberians how to maintain peace and security. Nigeria has donated money to Afghanistan and has recently shown largesse to the Republic of Niger. And yet, Nigerian public officials are complaining about job recruitment marginalisation at the ECOWAS parliamentary level, mistreatment and killing of Nigerians in many parts of Europe, but completely ignoring the aspect of lack of foreign policy on such issues. Indeed, policy or politics of braggadocio does not work in international diplomacy, particularly when there is foreign policy misdirection.



Buhari

Foreign Policy Misdirection

At the inception of Russian special military intervention in Ukraine, which truly qualified to be described as an invasion, Nigeria told Russia to withdraw its troops from Ukraine. Besides, Nigeria voted along with many others at the United Nations General Assembly against the Russian invasion. This was a partisan policy stand that was not helpful to the protection of Nigeria's development interest. There are more strategic interests to be protected at the level of Nigeria's ties with both Russia and Ukraine. In fact, the strategic interests are more considerable in the bilateral ties with Russia. Most unfortunately, however, when the principle of non-alignment should have been strictly adhered to, it was partisanship and foreign policy misdirection.

And perhaps more disturbingly, Nigeria gives an international impression that she is not only very solvent and very secure at home, but also that its insecurity at home is not really a big deal, and as such, like when General Gowon reportedly told Nigerians that Nigeria's problem is not money but how to spend it, Nigeria can afford the luxury of frolicking around with financial grants. This erroneous stand is most unfortunate.

Nigeria's bilateral ties with Afghanistan is such that the donation of one million US dollars to the Jihadist government in Afghanistan is uncalled for because of various other international or multilateral interventions. For example, the United Nations World Food Programme is to deliver aid to 14 million people in Afghanistan this year. The UN Food Programme has been in Afghanistan for 60 years providing assistance and it still needs public help to sustain its 'operations in communities ravaged by conflict around the world,' and therefore, it is requesting for people's support to make a difference in the lives of families, living in a precarious conflict zone today: just $75 is required.

Indeed, there is also the issue of devastating effect of an earthquake in Afghanistan. The UNICEF is rushing needed emergency supplies to vulnerable children and families. The UNICEF is also asking people to make a 100% tax-deductible donation today. Good enough. Our concern here is that Nigeria of today is more than a precarious conflict zone with hundreds of thousands of people displaced internally and externally, and therefore needing more of international help than ever.

The PMB government has donated to the Humanitarian Trust Fund for Afghanistan the sum of one million US dollars, meaning that she has catered to the needs of 13,333.33 families in one month based on the $75 required calculation of the UN Food Programme. There is goodness in bringing international help to Afghanistan. However, our major concern here is the secrecy of the mania of Nigeria's donation to Afghanistan.

As noted by the Nigerian Tribune editorial of April 4, 2022, 'instructively, Nigerians would not have known of the donation but for the statement by the Secretary-General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Hussein Brahim Tuha, commending the Nigerian government for its apparent generosity. When things of this nature are done secretly, how do researchers keep record? In the same secret manner, Nigeria was made to join the OIC in such a way that Nigeria's foreign policy analysts believe that the sole objective is in furtherance of Islamic interests in Nigeria.

The editorial gave three other rationales that point to the purposelessness of Nigeria's foreign policy donation to Afghanistan. 'First, donations, no matter how small, must be officially appropriated. There is no reason to believe that the donation to the Afghan government underwent due diligence. Second, right now, Nigeria is hardly in a position to donate money to anyone, having relied on massive borrowing for its recurrent and capital expenditures. You cannot give what you do not have. Third, and perhaps most important, the Taliban government in Afghanistan is not just another government, but an ultra-conservative Islamist regime that has stopped women from going to school, continued to treat women like chattel, and repeatedly violated the human rights or ordinary Afghans.' In fact, as the editorial further puts it, the Taliban is 'a barbarous regime with which Nigeria should have no relationship and donating money to, it is no different from endorsing its human rights abuses.'

Apart from the case of Afghanistan, what really is the lesson for the Liberians to learn from Nigeria in terms of how to keep national peace and security? How do we explain the increasing largesse being shown to the Republic of Niger when the same cannot be shown to the people of Nigeria at the domestic level? This is one question many Nigerians have been asking to no avail.

True, Nigeria has done a lot in peace enforcement, restoration of peace, maintenance of orderliness and sustainable democracy in Liberia, and also in neighbouring Sierra Leone, thanks to ECOMOG I and II. Hundreds of Nigerians died in the process. However, why is it now difficult for the type of ECOMOG feat not repeatable in the struggle against Boko Haramists in Nigeria? The PMB administration has claimed technical victory over the Boko Haram by arguing that the Boko Haram has been technically neutralised. If this is so, how do we explain the recidivism that has come to characterise its insurrection? Is it not that the Boko Haramists have tactically withdrawn from the northeast to transform into armed bandits and kidnappers or to join hands with them in the northwest? Whatever is the case, Nigeria has continued to be challenged by renewable threats against national unity, all of which appear to have been taken with kid gloves. What PMB has done and is still doing, is engaging in non-profitable acts of altruism to the detriment of domestic interests.

PMB's foreign policy attitude towards Niger Republic is quite worrisome because of the public perceptions it generated. PMB donated ten Toyota Land Cruiser SUVs to the government of Niger Republic on 2nd August 2022. The sum of N1,145,000,000 ($2.7m) was reportedly approved on 28 February, 2022, and based on the instructions of the Minister of Finance on 22nd July, 2022, the sum was transferred into the Fidelity Bank account number 4010638472 of the Kaura Motors Nigeria Ltd on Ali Akilu road, Kaduna to supply the 10 SUVs. The gift has generated much animosity and many questions and self-ascribed motivations for the donation have been raised.

The animosity in many twitter comments is largely driven by the consideration that the situation of domestic insolvency should have first been given priority of action before external misadventures. The ASUU strike and the impact of students staying away from classes for too long are frequently raised. Nigeria is said to be unable to service its foreign debts and has resorted to external borrowings to the discomfort of the people, and yet, the government of Nigeria is presenting itself as a solvent nation-state.

As regards the many questions, why the purchase of Toyota vehicles and not the choice of legacy of enduring projects? This question is pertinent because other countries with foreign policy focus engage in more constructive gifts. China is on record to have not simply funded, but actually constructed and digitised a new University of Liberia building in Monrovia. When President Sirleaf-Johnson requested the Washingtonian government to assist in the reconstruction of the university following the end of the civil war in Liberia, Washington responded with difficult conditionality and the Chinese offered to assist without conditionality.

Besides, China funded Zimbabwe's parliamentary building in Mt. Hampden in Harare as well as built the new Secretariat of the African Union at a cost of $30m with an additional provision of $10m for maintenance in the first ten years.

Besides, was the sum approved by PMB for the purchase of the vehicles duly appropriated? Which Nigeria's national interest is being protected with the gift of cars? Why is the cost of each vehicle so prohibitive? Is it true that the Zamfara State government donated five Toyota Hilux to the Government of Niger in March 2022 for special security border patrol or because of other untold motivations? These motivations are hereafter explicated against the huffs and puffs of many public officials with the ultimate objective of revisiting the need for Nigeria to become an internationally recognised regional power in international politics as advocated by Professor Bolaji Akinwande Akinyemi.

Foreign Policy Huffs and Puffs

The reasons given for PMB's donation of the 10 SUVs point to a very bleak future in terms of national unity and particularly inter-ethnic relationships. First, many people believe that PMB's generosity towards Niger Republic is because his biological father is a Nigérien and only his mother is Nigerian. Since he is unable to achieve his Fulanisation agenda, he is preparing to resettle in Niger Republic after his tenure in office. Many people referred to PMB's interview with the AriseTV during which he justified the construction of a railroad to Niger Republic based on his having relatives in Niger Republic.

For many others, PMB's act has nothing to do with diplomatic goodwill or altruism. They say that the gift of cars is simply nepotistic and given to pave way for the inflow of illegal voters from Niger for the purposes of the 2023 general elections. In fact, PMB's government is simply seen to be dishonest by claiming to be insolvent while it is frolicking around with financial donations. The government has also been accused of taking ransom money to develop Niger Republic, of inability to assist one DSP, Musa Muhammad Adamu, from the 4.5 PMF who sustained bullet wounds while engaging bandits while @PoliceNG Welfare Scheme does not have money to assist him. Complaints about bags of rice of the COVID-19 palliative with the Nigerian Coat of Arms being sold in a shop and suya (roasted beef) being wrapped with INEC's letter-headed paper and with the names of Nigériens on it.

"The basic rules of international relations – regional cooperation, sovereign equality, peaceful coexistence, reciprocity, legitimate self-defence, etc. – do not allow for huffing and puffing unless one has the extraordinary means of backing them up. There is no need for huffing or puffing in relating with the Niger Republic because it is the most cordial of all the contiguous neighbours: no territorial dispute between them. In fact, the foundation for special collaboration was laid in 1970. The Nigeria-Niger Joint Commission for Cooperation (NNJCC) was set up following a bilateral summit held in November 1970 in Nigeria and another in Niger, in March 1971. It is within this framework that both countries signed an agreement for the implementation of development strategies at the end of the 40th session of the Council of Ministers held in Abuja in December 2020. The rail project, which also falls within this developmental strategy, is capable of generating 30 million tons of trade annually, according to Ambassador Rabiu Akawu, the Secretary General to the NNJCC. And true again, Nigeria funded the construction of Seme border-Cotonou road. However, the unanswered question is why the protection of foreign interests always takes priority over Nigeria's national interest. This is the basis of the mounting anti-PMB's sentiments today. Before huffing and puffing, the public perceptions of an Islamic and Fulanisation agenda and PMB's nepotistic policies must first of all be reconciled"

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ENGAGEMENTS

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El Rufai: Letter From the Front Line

The reign of terrorists is not without its own sardonic humour. Soon after storming Kuje prison in Abuja to free their comrades in arms, ISWAP terrorists indicated an interest in two pricey trophies: President Muhammadu Buhari and, my friend and brother, Nasir El Rufai, Governor of Kaduna State. While their interest in the president as their adversary in chief is understandable, the choice of El Rufai was somewhat curious. Why not Bello Matawalle of Zamfara, the national epicenter of all the variants of terrorism or Babagana Zulum of Borno state where it all began or, for that matter, even Aminu Masari of Buhari's home state of Katsina who has advocated that citizens arm themselves against bandits and terrorists. In the buffet menu of ready targets for the jihadists' human acquisition, there are too many attractive gubernatorial takeaways. I am fascinated by the terrorists' fascination with el Rufai.

Maybe the attraction is somewhat mutual. Kaduna State's uncommon governor, Nasir el-Rufai, has been relentless in his hawkish disposition towards the terrorists and bandits who have been tormenting the entire north and his state in particular. In turn, the terrorists have been unrelenting in their attacks on targets in Kaduna state. Kaduna state may have witnessed the highest incidence of terrorists and bandit attacks in the last five years on a state by state basis.

El Rufai has now authored an unusual but very consequential letter to President Buhari on the matter. In the normal ritual of governance, communications between our governors and the president ought to be routine. But this letter is existential in its timing and geo strategic origins and very consequential for the nation at large. It is rooted in the very kernel of our festering insecurity as a nation. Simply put, the central contention in the present state of our insecurity has been reduced to whether or not the sovereignty of Nigeria as we know it will endure. It is no longer a matter of abductions for ransom by cash strapped incidental bandits and casual criminals. It is now serious business, a contest for the sovereign control of the Nigerian state. The terrorists and jihadists want to capture control of the state so they can help themselves to the treasure pot instead of waiting endlessly to negotiate ransoms in miserable tranches.

El Rufai's message is simple and yet of fearsome urgency. He has technically formally informed the president that his strategic state is in immediate danger of a terrorist overrun. Among other things, the governor, a man of unusual courage and sterling patriotic zeal, has served notice that Kaduna state is at the verge of falling to the rampaging power of relentless terror. The state is sliding towards ungovernability as the terror squads have literally overrun the rural and sub urban areas.

But Mr. El Rufai has in his characteristic direct manner posed the question to an audience of one that matters the most. The president probably needs to be told by no less a person than a state governor that the Nigerian state and its component parts are gradually being eroded. The activities of unrelenting violent non-state actors are chipping away at the territorial sovereignty of the Nigerian state, leaving a shrunken and badly compromised state.

Mr. El Rufai's specific alarm is that Jihadist terrorists especially of the Ansaru franchise of Boko Haram operating in much of rural and sub urban Kaduna state have literally set up a parallel government. The machinery of state security and national defense have so far proved incapable of halting this threat. To wit, these non-state agents are countering the legitimate orders and directives of the state government on matters of urgent national importance. These range from revenue collection to preparations for the imminent general elections.

By far the most frightening aspect of the revelations in El Rufai's letter is the speculative fear that the terrorists could plunge the state and most of the North West into darkness by breaching the power transmission system that supplies the states in the region. There is of course nothing in this scenario that should come as a surprise to Abuja. After all, the jihadists had previously overrun a number of local governments in Borno, Yobe and Niger states.



El Rufai

They have sabotaged or destroyed critical infrastructure such as rail lines or used IEDs to blow up bridges in vital places.

Of course, questions abound about El Rufai's letter. Could the governor not keep the letter secret and confidential since it has a national security implication? Could the governor not have fared better breezing into Abuja to have a conversation with the president and possibly the relevant service chiefs on the matter? In a nation ruled by the politics of headlines and front page grand standing, El Rufai's letter could as well be another ruse to catch the attention of an overwhelmed president and already frightened public.

Mr. El Rufai's alarm is not new. He has repeatedly cried out about the seeming helplessness of our defense and security establishment on dealing with repeated incidents of insecurity. Only recently, he advocated total aerial bombardment of forests and other ungoverned spaces where the terrorists are known to be quartered. On the appropriate disposition of the state towards repeated challenges to its monopoly of force, El Rufai has been unapologetically hawkish, insisting that the federal state has no business playing ping-pong with its armed opponents and adversaries. There is every reason to believe that El Rufai's all too frequent outbursts on the security situation in his state and the entire northern zones is the result of frustration with conventional communication with the security authorities.

In the context of our worsening insecurity especially the geo strategic thrust of the more recent jihadist targeted attacks, El Rufai is not just another ordinary governor. His state occupies a strategic position in relation to our overall national security geography. The consequential theatre of engagement in the advance of the jihadist forces has since moved down from Borno and Yobe states to Kaduna and Niger states with Zamfara as training base. This is an equation in which Kaduna occupies a unique position as a veritable frontline state.

The frontline status of Kaduna derives from its historical, cultural and strategic importance. Apart from being the political and cultural centre of the old northern region, Kaduna has remained a contentions restless melting pot of different cultures. Most conspicuously, the long standing clashes between a migrant settler Fulani herder population and an a Hausa population of land owning crop agrarian indigenes has led to frequent sporadic violent upheaval. Violent clashes between generations of these groups has made Kaduna state the hotbed of a homegrown culture of bad neighborliness. Not even the succession of military regimes in the past was able to quel these frequent bouts of unrest on a sustainable basis.

This landscape has only been aggravated by religious differences among these divergent groupings. While the settler herder community tends to be predominantly Moslem, the indigenous populace are mostly Christian. All the ugliness of the larger Nigerian Christian versus Moslem politics and jostling for predominance is constantly at play in parts of southern Kaduna at any given time.

The recent spread of jihadist militancy in parts of northern Nigeria has only weaponized and taken advantage of this already incendiary backdrop. Southern Kaduna has consequently remained a killing field in the spate of sporadic clashes. Therefore, in the context of the wider national cultural and religious ferment of communal clashes, Kaduna remains a natural frontline state of sorts.

By most strategic military calculations by both the Nigerian state and its jihadist adversaries, Kaduna is the decisive frontline state in the present spate of engagements with non-state actors. It is the last credible defense line for Abuja. In addition it is the home of a good number of vital military institutions and assets. These range from the Nigeria Defence Academy to the Command and Staff College in Jaji as well as some of the oldest barracks and training schools . There is also the School of Civil Aviation in Zaria.

Under El Rufai as governor, Kaduna has also become a frontline state in more respects. Mr. El Rufai has from inception waged a protracted war against some of the long standing cultural values that he deems to have held the northern zones of the country hostage for decades. Through a rampaging reformist sweep, he has challenged the hegemony of a decadent status quo of traditional rulers and instiitutions.

He has also tackled educational backwardness through an aggressive education reform programme. Illiterate teachers have been sacked. Ghost civil service workers have been expunged from the public pay roll. Untrained teachers have been sent back for retraining and re-orientation. In the pursuit of these reforms, the governor has been fiercely combatted by vested interest and conservative bastions. To that extent, this governor has been in the trench of a modernization drive in a state that is a critical center of culture and politics in the north.

These governmental and political battles further define Kaduna as a frontline state in more respects than are immediately obvious. In today's Nigeria, cultural and identity issues have come to the forefront in a vastly divided country. Matters of religion, ethnicity and long held prejudices have come to the front of national discourse and communal existence in many parts of the country.

In addition to the now familiar weaponization of the Moslem-Christian divide by politicians, Kaduna has also been a real time theatre of more aggressive versions of religious fundamentalism. It has for long been the epicenter of the militant Shiite movement of Mr. El Zak Zakky, the embattled Iranian backed sect leader of Shiites in Nigeria. That movement has frequently engaged the Nigerian state in pitched battle and sporadic urban guerilla warfare sometimes with fire fights in the Abuja city centre.

More importantly, Kaduna state under Mr. El Rufai has come to occupy a prominent place in the battle to deploy political will to effect long awaited reforms in society, culture and overall development. The regional ideological implications of some of these battles make the state a hotbed of more than the physical security threat posed by franchised terrorists and irate jihadist squads.

Therefore, Mr. El Rufai's recent pronouncements and now this letter to Buhari and its trenchant note of alarm are contextual in two respects. First, the alarm is coming at a moment when the Nigerian state seems to be shrining in terms of its control of both the territorial space and the processes of a normal society. The Abuja-Kaduna railway corridors has been shut down after a series of terrorists breaches that has left a few dead, many abducted, millions of dollars in ransom and the rail line permanently breached. The Abuja-Kuduna highway itself is sporadically ravaged by armed gangs of kidnappers, terrorists and bandits. Those intent on travelling on that route now say their last prayers first, no knowing if they will get to their destination in either direction.

In furtherance of the shrinkage of the state, the Nigerian railway corporation has announced the closure of the Kano-Lagos, Itakpe-Ajaokuta and a partial shut down of the lucrative Lagos-Ibadan line. This is a virtual shutdown of the entire national railway network on account of the threat and activities of terrorists and violent gangs.

In the immediate prelude to this moment in time, terrorists have targeted and successfully attacked targets in the Abuja area. The Kuje prison breach is still fresh. The threatened attack on the Abuja Law School claimed the lives of soldiers from the famed presidential Brigade of Guards. Some schools in the federal capital territory have been closed just as the police and the military have beefed up security measures around the Federal Capital Territory.

Elsewhere in the country, the pattern is not radically different. Cells of terrorists have continued to be uncovered in different places. In Ondo state, a key operative in the unfolding drama of arrests of perpetrators of the Owo catholic church killings has turned out to be one of the convicted terrorists freed from the Kuje prison breach. In and around Ogun state and the periphery of Lagos, suspicious movements of suspected terrorists continue to engage the attention of security agencies.

(See concluding part on www.thisdaylive.com)

NEWSXTRA

Akeredolu Laments Ebira's Complicity in Owo Terrorist Attack

Asks leaders to flush out criminals from their midst

Fidelis David in Akure

Ondo State Governor, Mr. Oluwarotimi Akeredolu (SAN) yesterday lamented the complicity of some Ebira people in the June 5 attack, which killed over 40 worshippers in St. Francis Catholic Church, Owo.

With the revelation, Akeredolu challenged the leadership of Ebira, an ethnic group from Kogi State, living in the state to flush out criminals from their midst.

Akeredolu expressed grave concerns about the complicity of some Ebira people in the June 5 massacre during a meeting with their leaders in Akure, the Ondo State capital yesterday.

At the meeting with the governor yesterday were the leaders of Ebira in the state led by the Odeyani Anabira, Zubair Dan Musa and State Chairman of Ebira, Alhaji Abdulazeez Majeobaje, among others,

The Chief of Defence Staff, Gen. Lucky Irabor had revealed that those arrested in connection with the June 5 attack on St Francis Catholic Church, Owo are Idris Abdulmalik Omeiza (a.k.a Bin Malik), Momoh Otohu Abubakar, Aliyu Yusuf Itopa and Auwal Ishaq Onimisi, all from Ebira in Kogi State.

At the meeting, the governor stressed that the people of Ebira "have lived together with the indigenes of the state for too long," challenging them not to deviate from the farming trade.

Akeredolu said the meeting was summoned in the light of the recent development of the June 5 attack in Owo and other kidnapping cases in the state.

He challenged the leaders of the Ebira community "to rid themselves of criminals and deal with the situation the best way, so as to protect their name and integrity in the state."

He said: "We summoned this meeting with our brothers. They are not new here but because of the recent developments that have to do with the owo massacre and kidnappings.

Zawahiri's Killing Ignites Fresh Global Campaign against Boko Haram, ISWAP

Michael Olugbode in Abuja with Agency reports

The recent killing of the leader of Al Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri in Kabul, Afghanistan may have eclipsed hope for the insurgents of Boko Haram and its splinter group, Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) in Nigeria.

Likewise, Zawahiri's killing brought back the fear of breakdown of law and order in the south Asian country, which according to reports, attested to the hollowness of the 2020 Doha Agreement.

A foreign media report revealed this concern at the weekend, pointing out that the killing of the Egyptian-born terrorist and physician "has reignited the debate on Pakistan and terror."

Under the 2020 Doha Agreement, the United States Government withdrew its forces from Afghanistan on a condition that the Taliban would allow the territory of Afghanistan to be used as a launch pad by al-Qaeda or Islamic State for attacks against the United States.

Recent activities of Boko Haram and ISWAP in Cameroun, Chad, Nigeria and Niger further raised global concerns about the hollowness of the Doha Accord that threatened international peace and security,

Citing a senior United States administration official, reports claimed that Zawahiri, before his extermination had been in hiding for years contrary to the principle of the Doha Agreement.

The report further showed that the operation "to locate and kill him was the result of careful, patient and persistent work by the counter-terrorism and intelligence community.

"The prospect of Pakistani involvement in Zawahiri's targeting, meanwhile, has emerged as a contentious issue, even if neither the US nor Pakistan has so far publicly acknowledged such a role.

"If, indeed, there is truth behind reports suggesting that Islamabad did play a part, it will be yet another demonstration of Pakistan's time tested policy of running with the hares and hunting with the hounds as far as terrorism and Rawalpindi's terrorist assets are concerned.

"Furthermore, more than two years after the US and the Taliban signed the Doha Agreement and almost a year after the radical Islamist group took over Afghanistan, Zawahiri's killing in Kabul makes it evident that the peace deal the US had signed with the primary purpose of getting its troops out of Afghanistan is all but over.

"Sadly, more than the US and the Taliban, the signatories of the Doha deal, it is the careworn people of Afghanistan who will yet again have to bear the consequences.

"Zawahiri, a trusted lieutenant of Osama bin Laden, had played a key role in the 9/11 attacks and had later formed several of Al-Qaeda's regional affiliates, including the one in the Indian subcontinent.

"Since he took over as leader, Zawahiri has played the critical role in keeping Al Qaeda together by working behind the scenes to forge consensus among Al Qaeda affiliates, branches, and franchise groups.

'BON Awards, Huge Brand Exposure Platform'

Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria (BON), the organiser of The Nigerian Broadcasting Awards (TNBA), has stated that the awards process and ceremony will be a huge brand exposure platform.

Speaking on Channels TV's Sunrise Show yesterday, TNBA Lead Consultant and CEO, Strategic Outcomes Limited, Jenkins Alumona said TNBA would provide sponsors with optimal exposure and credible affiliation.

According to him, the awards night will be a spectacle of entertainment and celebration of broadcasting excellence, which will broadcast live on over 300 BON member stations.

"It's a huge opportunity for people who want to drive brand awareness to be part of it. BON will put up an event that meets the quality expected from Nigerian broadcasting. We are planning a show like the Oscars. You will be seeing superstars and high-quality professionals being rewarded.

"What sponsors get are eyeballs. All BON members are part of the publicity, as such, the event will be live on all BON member stations. On that day, if you are watching television, there's 80 percent chance you will be watching the TNBAs. The opportunity for brands is enormous It's like paying for one and getting 300 free.



GLOBAL BRAND…

L-R: Country Marketing Director, Nigerian Bottling Company, Ms. Yomi Moses; Managing Director, Coca-Cola Nigeria, Mr. Alfred Olajide; Marketing Director, Coca-Cola Nigeria, Ms. Bunmi Adeniba; and Corporate Affairs and Sustainability Director, Nigerian Bottling Company, Mr. Ekuma Eze, at the launch of Coca-Cola UTC Campaign in Lagos… recently

Aiyedogbon Hits APC, Says Same Faith Ticket Insensitive

Yinka Olatunbosun

Convener of Catalyst for Global Peace and Justice (CPJ), Pastor Sam Aiyedogbon at the weekend hit APC and its presidential candidate Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu for nominating a Muslim as the party's vice presidential candidate,

Aiyedogbon also condemned the parade of fake bishops at the unveiling of the APC vice presidential candidate, Senator Kashim Shettima, describing the decision as a flagrant display of insensitivity.

He made the remark at a news conference he addressed in Lagos Friday on the unfolding developments and concerns about the 2023 presidential election.

Concerned about the same faith ticket, Aiyedogbon utterly faulted it "as a direct insult to the collective sensibility of every Nigerian to the level of sacrilege through the discretion of sacredness of divinely ordained priesthood."

He thus called on Nigerians "to resist and condemn such acts. Any candidate or party that can impersonate the revered ministers of a noble religion give themselves away not only as being fraudulent but as a gang of vicious criminals."

Fielding questions from journalists, Aiyedogbon said the OBI-dient movement "is a third force that will challenge the dominance of the ruling party APC and PDP. Also avails the electorate an alternative in the 2023 election.

"I think this is a pleasant development. In past elections, people were clamouring for what they called the third force. There was a plan to bring all these forces together to form a third force that can be an option for Nigerians and challenge the dominance of the ruling party and the major opposition.

NCC Alerts on New Cyber Threat, Canvasses Stronger Security Measures

Emma Okonji

The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) at the weekend alerted corporate organisations about a new malicious cyber threat named Yanluowang Ransomware, which could cause devastative damage on institutional records.

The commission therefore urged organisations to adopt stronger cybersecurity measures like ensuring their employees use strong, unique passwords for every account and enabling multi-factor authentication (2FA) wherever it is supported to prevent ransomware attacks.

This warning was contained in an advisory NCC's Director of Public Affairs, Mr. Reuben Muoka issued on Friday, advising organisations to ensure regular system backups.

According to NCC-Computer Security Incident Response Team (NCC-CSIRT) Ransomware is a malware designed to deny a user or organization access to files on their computer until they pay the attackers.

The advisory came after the threat actors gained access to Cisco's network using an employee's stolen credentials after hijacking the employee's personal Google account containing credentials synced from their browser.

In its advisory Friday, NCC said User education" is critical in thwarting this type of attacks or any similar attacks, including ensuring that employees are aware of the legitimate channels through which support personnel will contact users."

With this measure, the commission observed that employees "can identify fraudulent attempts to obtain sensitive information. Organizations should ensure regular systems backup."

Cisco had reported the security incident on its corporate network but said it did not identify any impact on its business although the threat actors had published a list of files from this security incident on the dark web on August 10.

Family of Police Inspector Killed by Colleague in Imo Petitions IG

Amby Uneze in Owerri

The family of a Police Inspector, Iseke Koradaman, who was allegedly shot dead by his colleague has petitioned the Inspector General of Police, Mr. Usman Akali over the killing.

Koradaman, who was serving in Imo State Police Command, was allegedly shot and killed by his colleague, Chikadibia Okebata on August 10, 2022 on his way to work with his team at Ejemekwuru in Ohaji/Egbema Local Government of the state.

According to the petition, a copy which was made available to THISDAY, an eyewitness and the deceased's colleagues who sustained several injuries during the attack confirmed that even after the deceased had been shot dead, his murderer still came down to confirm that it was actually the deceased.

They family alleged that when the murderer confirmed the identity of the deceased, who was in uniform, he then turned his lifeless body and shot at him three times on his head.

"Worst of it is that the alleged murderer was arrested the same day and was released that same day by the Imo State Commissioner of Police who claimed that the order to release him came from above.

"Mr. IGP sir, does it mean that Nigeria Police is now training and protecting criminals? Is Nigeria police being used as hired assassins? Where are the other colleagues of the deceased that was in the car with him before he was shot dead? Who and who escaped with bullet wounds?

"What's their own side of the story?

Why has the CP Imo State command quickly released the alleged murderer in a haste?

What will be the fate of the deceased wife and eight children?"

SUNDAY SPORTS

Edited by: **Duro Ikhazuagbe**
email:Duro.Ikhazuagbe@thisdaylive.com

Premier League: Brentford Stun Man Utd in 4-0 Crushing

City Cruise past Bournemouth *Arsenal secure maximum points against Leicester

Duro Ikhazuagbe

Brentford produced a stunning first-half performance as they scored four goals in the first 35 minutes to condemn Manchester United to a humiliating 4-0 defeat at Gtech Community Stadium.

Josh Dasilva put the hosts ahead when his strike from distance somehow eluded United goalkeeper David de Gea.

Mathias Jensen doubled the lead after dispossessing former Brentford player Christian Eriksen, with Ben Mee and Bryan Mbeumo goals putting Thomas Frank's side four up during an incredible first half in which they dismantled United in stunning fashion.

The defeat is United's seventh in a row on the road - their worst run since 1936 - while it is the seventh time they have conceded at least four goals in a league game since the start of last season.

While Brentford can bask in a historic win, United boss Erik ten Hag faces the unenviable task of lifting his players in time for the visit of Liverpool to Old Trafford on Monday, 22 August.

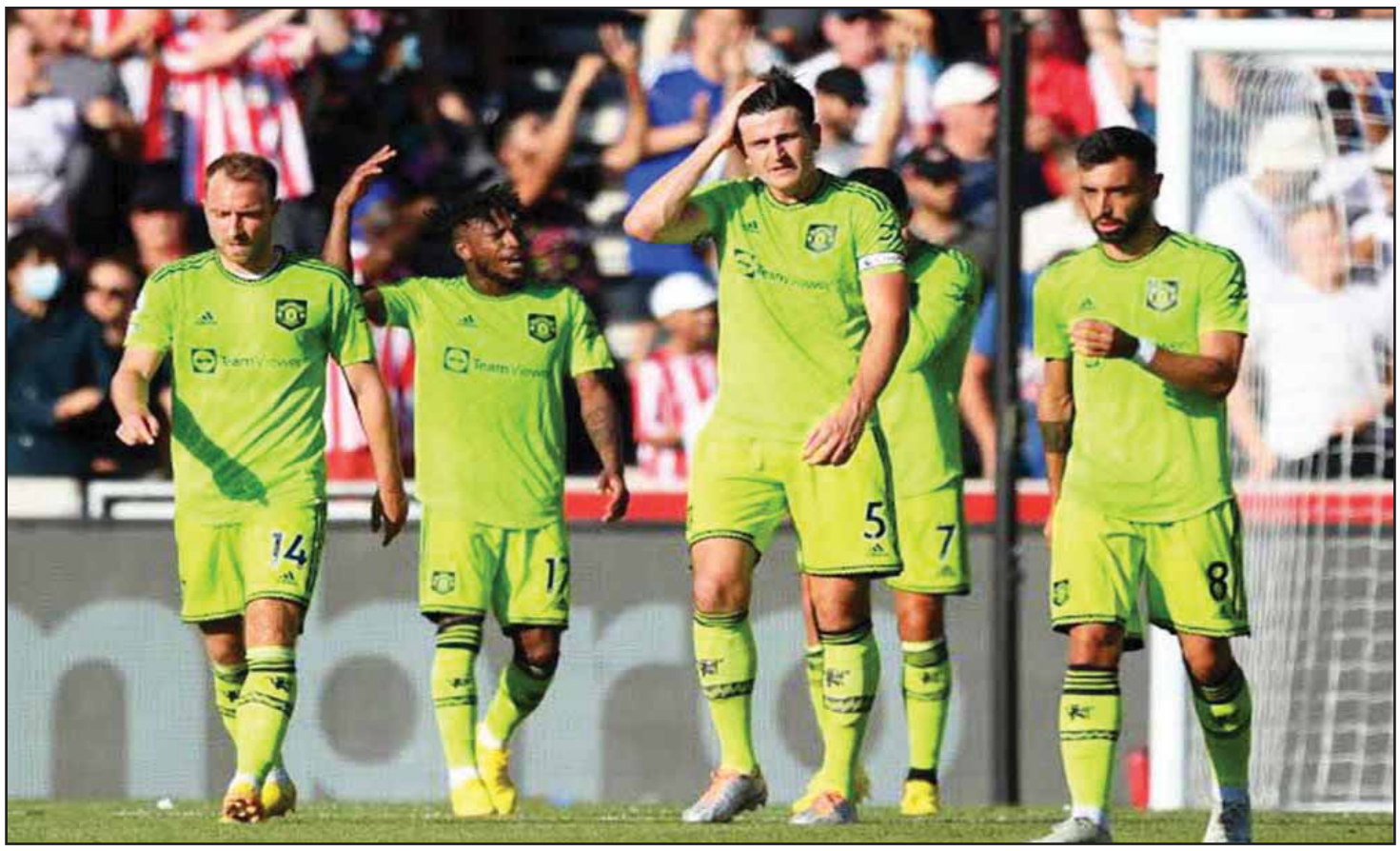
Having been deservedly beaten by Brightonlast week, United sought to make a quick start but it was Brentford who found early joy as the visitors' defence crumbled in spectacular fashion against their high-pressing hosts.

De Gea, who for so long has been one of United's most consistent performers, was left red-faced when he allowed Dasilva's speculative shot from distance to slip underneath him and into the net, with Cristiano Ronaldo claiming he was fouled in the build-up.

Harry Maguire was then booked for a clumsy lunge on Dasilva, and while Mathias Jensen missed from the resultant free-kick, the Danish midfielder was celebrating two minutes later following another United mistake.

De Gea's pass to Eriksen on the edge of the United penalty area led to Jensen stealing the ball before slotting low into the net to double Brentford's lead.

After falling two behind to Brighton last week, it was another stern examination of United's character, but it only got worse as Brentford struck twice in the space of five minutes to move four clear.



Harry Maguire (2nd right) leading his teammates out of the pitch shortly after Manchester United were humiliated 4-0 by Brentford...yesterday

Elsewhere, Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola insisted it will take time to get the best out of Erling Haaland when he faces packed defences, after seeing the striker have only eight touches as his side thrashed Bournemouth 4-0 yesterday.

After scoring two goals against West Ham last week, the £51.2m signing was often a peripheral figure on his home debut, but the power of City's attack meant it made no difference to the defending champions and they still swept the Cherries aside with ease.

At the Emirates Stadium, impressive Gabriel Jesus scored his first Premier League goals for Arsenal as Mikel Arteta's side beat Leicester City 4-2 in an entertaining encounter on Saturday afternoon.

The Brazilian striker, signed from Manchester City in the summer, scored twice before the break and missed several chances for a hat-trick as well assisting his side's other goals.

RESULTS

Brentford	4-0	Man Utd
Man City	4-0	Bournemouth
Aston Villa	2-1	Everton
Brighton	0-0	Newcastle
S'thampton	2-2	Leeds
Wolves	0-0	Fulham
Arsenal	4-2	Leicester

Ballon d'Or: Messi Misses out as Benzema, Haaland, Others Listed for Award

Real Madrid forward, Karim Benzema, is among the 30 nominees on the shortlist for the prestigious men's Ballon d'Or trophy, organisers France Football magazine announced at the weekend.

The French international has had an incredible season for Real Madrid, scoring 44 goals in 46 games and helping them win the Champions League and LaLiga.

Seven times reigning winner Lionel Messi was not nominated for this year's Ballon d'Or for the first time since 2005 and nor was his Paris Saint-Germain team mate Neymar.

Other nominees are Manchester United forward Cristiano Ronaldo, Manchester City striker Erling Haaland – who has just joined the club from Borussia Dortmund – and last season's joint Premier League top scorer Mohamed Salah of Liverpool.

Among the 20 players on the shortlist for the women's Ballon d'Or is Lyon's Ada Hegerberg, who won the inaugural award in 2018, and Barcelona's Alexia Putellas.

Arsenal striker Beth Mead, who won the European Championship with hosts England last month and was named the Player of the tournament, is also nominated.

The honour for the best player in the world will be presented on Oct. 17.

The trophy will now be awarded based on a regular season from August to July rather than a calendar year.

Shaibu Retires from Pro Football, Reiterates Govt's Commitment to Sports Devt

The Edo State Deputy Governor, Rt. Hon. Philip Shaibu, has reiterated the state government's commitment to sports development as an avenue to promote tourism in the state.

Shaibu made the submission during a press conference to announce his retirement from professional football, after the match between Bendel Insurance Football Club (FC) and Vandrezzer FC of Lagos which Bendel Insurance won with a scoreline of 1-0 at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium in Benin City.

The deputy governor who has played for Bendel Insurance for over five years, expressed appreciation to fans of the club and other stakeholders, noting that his retirement coincided with the promotion of the club to Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL).

He noted that Governor Godwin Obaseki had given him the mandate to transform the state into a sporting hub using Bendel Insurance and Edo Queens as a template for other sports.

"We rebranded Insurance and a year after Edo Queens. Today, look at where we are; we are in the NPFL. We thank the coaches, players, football fans and Edo people for their unwavering support, commitment, and dedication in making this happen.

"Edo State Government is not in sports to make money but to redefine how sporting activities should be managed to attract people and promote sports tourism. It's only in Edo State that you can play matches at night like in Europe and night games have been sustained for the past three years including national games without power failure."

Six Female Footballers Kidnapped in Edo

Adibe Emenyonu in Benin City

Six grassroots female footballers have reportedly been kidnapped by gunmen in Urhonigbe, a border community between Edo and Delta states in Orhionmwon local government area of Edo State.

It was gathered that the footballers were kidnapped around 6pm on Friday while returning from a football competition at Owa-Alero in Ika North-East Local Government Area of Delta State.

A source in the community said the kidnapers have contacted some families demanding a ransom of N5million for each of the victims.

He said: "They (footballers) went to Owa-Alero to play football match, so, on their way back, they were kidnapped at Uronigbe area, the boundary between Delta and Edo states.

"The victims include Mrs Precious Agbajor, one Abraham, Nancy, Beatrice including the driver. They are six in number that are in kidnapper's den. The matter have been reported to Urhonigbe police station.

"The kidnappers have contacted the family of Agbajor and asked them to pay N5 million for his wife."

When contacted, the police public relations officer in Delta State, DSP Bright Edafe confirmed the kidnapping incident, adding that the incident happened in Edo State.

However, his Edo state counterpart, Chidi Nwabuzor said from the record available at the State Command, there was no information about the incident.

He said: "You know we transmit our records to Force Headquarters everyday. There is no such record before us. From the Command's record, no such incident happened yesterday (Friday) so the police will not give account of anything unreported.



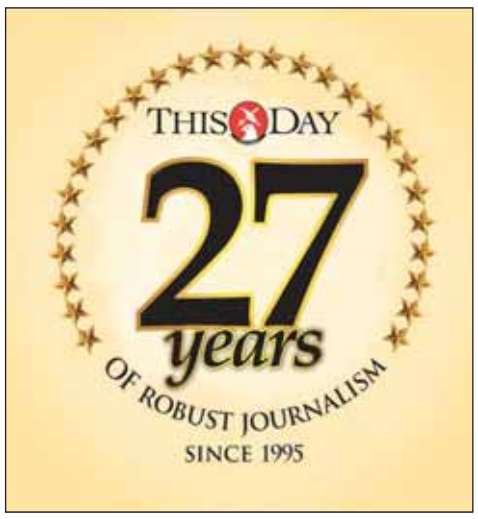
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MISSILE

Gana to PDP

"It appears that some forces within and outside the party are expressly opposed to the reconciliation moves between Alhaji Atiku Abubakar and Wike." – *Former Minister of Information, Prof. Jerry Gana, raising the alarm that forces within and outside the PDP are frustrating the moves to reconcile Atiku and Wike.*



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The Perils of Ethnic Profiling and Prejudice

Let's call it a tale of two WhatsApp broadcasts. On June 5, 2022, I received this chat from an older friend whom I call "uncle" because of the age difference: "Today in Owo at St Francis Catholic Church Owaluwa street Owo, Fulani herdsmen on rampage." It was accompanied with videos of the terror act in which 80 defenceless worshippers were murdered in cold blood. I can't stand gory sights, so I did not open the videos. I already read the news and the heart-wrenching details and did not need any visuals. The Owo attack shook me gravely: I started fretting and wondering if the terrorists were about to open a new frontier in their attacks on the peace and stability of Nigeria.

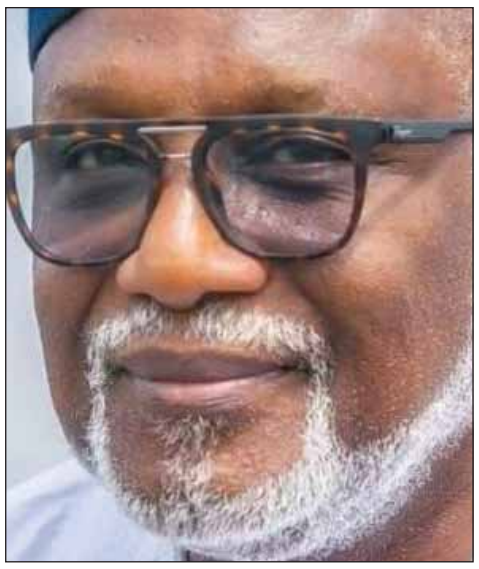
On August 9, 2022, I received another WhatsApp broadcast from uncle. It had a title: "Owo Massacre: Arrested Suspects are Mostly Ebira." It read: "Two of the masterminds of the deadly terrorist attack on St. Francis Catholic Church in Owo, Ondo State, South-West Nigeria have been arrested. The suspects described as top commanders of Islamic State West Africa Province ISWAP in Nigeria, are 39-year old Jimoh Ibrahim, Idris Abdul Malik Omeiza, Momoh Ojowu Abu, Aliyu Yusuf and Auwal Onimisi." By popular accounts in June 2022, echoed by sections of the media, the attackers were "Fulani herdsmen". Two months later, they were Ebiras from Kogi state.

You see, to set Nigeria on fire through ethnic profiling and hate-mongering in order to promote the "this country cannot work" mindset is not that difficult. Just craft a fantastic narrative that will sell ethnic and religious prejudice and get the hate merchants to help you nurture it. You are good to go. If some Yoruba taxi drivers in Jos are found to have kidnapped a passenger, just start a narrative around "Yoruba kidnappers" and soon enough, every criminal in Plateau state and northern Nigeria will be called "Yoruba kidnapper". Anytime anyone is kidnapped, the template is set: "Yoruba kidnappers abduct passengers in Riyum." It doesn't matter if the kidnappers are Beroms or Hausas.

If an Igbo is arrested for internet fraud or drug pushing and your interest is in casting the Igbo ethnic nationality in bad light, your job is made easy. All you need to do is develop a narrative that Igbos are internet fraudsters or cocaine pushers. Ignore the fact that Igbos are doing excellently in science and technology, commerce, sport and other spheres of life. Just focus on the 0.0001% involved in internet fraud and conclude that all internet fraudsters are Igbos or that Igbo people are fraudsters. Discount the fact that Yoruba, Edo, Ibibio and Hausa people are also being arrested and jailed for internet fraud. You must ignore that detail — because it won't help your hate-mongering duty.

Let me be clear again: I do not deny that many criminals wreaking havoc across the country are Fulanis. This has been well established in many places, north and south. I also know that there is a perception that the criminal elements are getting a pass because President Muhammadu Buhari, himself a Fulani, has failed to come down heavily on them. It is a very popular notion. What I object to, and will continue objecting to, is the demonisation of a whole ethnic group because of the criminal conduct of a tiny minority. Suddenly, all kidnappers and killers in Nigeria are "Fulanis". People of other ethnicities are clean — they don't kidnap or kill. That is the prevailing narrative.

Here is my point: we should never rush to attribute crimes to members of an ethnic group before the actual facts are established. In August



Akeredolu

2017, gunmen attacked St Philips Catholic Church, Ozubulu, Anambra state, on a Sunday morning, killing 35 worshippers. Internet was immediately awash with claims that "Fulani herdsmen" and "Boko Haram" were behind the massacre. The police commissioner said it was local war. He was savaged and ridiculed on Twitter over the "newfound efficiency" of the police in establishing the facts of a crime. It did not take us long to discover that it was indeed a gang war between drug lords who were trading in meth. Ethnic profiling is deadly.

How do we tackle ethnic profiling? The least we can do is stop prefixing terrorists, bandits, robbers, drug pushers and fraudsters with "Yoruba", "Igbo", "Fulani", etc. Criminals are criminals. There is no ethnic group in Nigeria that does not have criminals in abundance. I felt quite uncomfortable when the military authorities identified the suspects behind the Owo attack as "Ebira", "Egbirra" and "Ebra". I believe it was enough to identify them as coming from Okene, Kogi state, and leave the rest unsaid. I suspect the authorities were eager to disprove the "Fulani herdsmen" claim, but they may end up profiling Ebiras. Every Ebira now stands the risk of being perceived as a terrorist or bandit.

Ethnic profiling promotes ethnic hate. We have to deal with it. For starters, maybe we should start celebrating the good in others rather than magnifying the bad in them? Maybe we should free our minds to also see the professionals and entrepreneurs from other ethnic groups, not just the outlaws? Maybe we should start seeing others as human beings like us: imperfect, self-interested, territorial and capable of doing good and bad? Maybe we should judge people individually rather than collectively? As a Nigerian who has experienced prejudice in foreign lands because of the adventures of a few fraudulent Nigerians abroad, I can never be an evangelist for ethnic profiling.

When Mr Peter Obi, the presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP), picked Dr Yusuf Datti Baba-Ahmed as his running mate, I was gratified by the way "Obidients" welcomed him with open arms. They started celebrating his two degrees in economics. They started casting his Fulani roots as an electoral asset. I said: "This is it!" On another day, those who celebrated him would typically have called him a "Fulani terrorist" or "Fulani cow". They would otherwise have derided his degrees as a product of "quota system". But the same human being, from the same ethnic stock and the same religion, is being cast in a good light. Yes, that is what you see when you pocket your prejudice.

Aside ethnic profiling, identity politics is also being deployed to promote ethnic hate. You will later find out that people are just playing politics. For instance, the heartland of the resistance to "Fulani jihad" in northern Nigeria today is Benue state. Yet, I understand that most Benue delegates voted for Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, a Fulani Muslim, in the presidential primary of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Dr Iyorchia Ayu, the PDP chairman and a Christian from Benue, worked for Atiku, not Chief Nyesom Wike, his fellow Christian. Ayu embraced Rt Hon Aminu Tambuwal, another Fulani Muslim, hailing him as the "hero of the convention" for delivering his delegates to Atiku. Politics!

Mr Babachir Lawal, the former secretary to the government of the federation, has been campaigning against Muslim-Muslim ticket since Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the APC presidential flagbearer, picked Alhaji Kashim Shettima as his running mate. However, he worked for Tinubu, a Muslim, in the APC primary despite the fact that Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo, a pastor, was also in the race. It would appear Lawal completely forgot about religion in this instance. It is understandable: if Osinbajo, or Rt Hon Rotimi Amaechi, had won the APC ticket, Lawal would not be in running for the VP slot. Tinubu settled for a Muslim and Lawal became a fiery northern Christian activist. Politics!

Anyone familiar with my writings knows that I am an advocate of "balancing" in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. I do not wish to depart from that. Not yet. However, I am intelligent enough to understand that we freely deploy politics and prejudice to promote a narrative. We take certain positions and ignore certain facts and realities because of our undeclared self-centred agenda. Which is perfectly human. The dangerous part, for me, is when we go overboard to propagate and promote ethno-religious hate and stoke fire. We need to draw a line. We have to choose between promoting peace and propagating hate. If Nigeria catches fire, we will all suffer the consequences.

As I was putting finishing touches to this article, I received this instructive broadcast from a friend: "Take a good look at the ongoing case of Ahmed Idris (the suspended accountant-general of the federation); he is being prosecuted alongside an accomplice in person of Godfrey Olusegun Akindele, a Yoruba man. They are being defended by the chambers of Kalu Uche & Co; all before a Yoruba Judge - Adeyemi Ajayi. So, in summary, a Hausa/Fulani man stole, his partner in crime is a Yoruba man, he is being prosecuted by the EFCC headed by another Hausa/Fulani man but engaged the services of a Yoruba prosecutor… and the accused are being defended by an Ibo man."

The writer concluded: "Those who steal our common patrimony are always united in corruption, irrespective of tribes and religions; but whenever they want to hoodwink the unsuspecting citizens for their own gains, they amplify our fault-lines". That is my point. We are all victims of insecurity, kidnapping, terrorism, corruption, inadequate infrastructure, economic hardship, and poor governance. Yet, we have managed to allow ourselves to be hoodwinked into promoting ethnic hate through profiling and identity politics. When those destroying Nigeria gather to plot and plunder, the last thing on their mind is ethnicity or religion. I hope we would wake up to this reality someday.

And Four Other Things…

PARIS CLOBBERS

Mallam Abubakar Malami, the attorney-general of the federation, has been fighting tooth and nail to make us pay $418 million to consultants who said they were engaged to help use their calculators to determine what was due to the states from the Paris Club refund. On Thursday, he insisted that the claims are justified. What he did not add was that there is still a case in court challenging these claims. If we are really serious, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) should have been unleashed on the claimants and their lobbyists by now to uncover the shady details — as was done in the P&ID case — but it seems there is more to this than we are being told. Nigeria!

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

The arrest of suspected perpetrators of the June 4, 2022 Owo massacre is heart-warming, even if it cannot bring back the lives of those heartlessly gunned down by the terrorists. I don't know if anyone has noticed this but Ondo is one of the very few states where perpetrators of these dastardly acts are being brought to justice. In June 2022, three persons were sentenced to death for the murder of Mrs Funke Olakunrin, daughter of Reuben Fasoranti, the former leader of Afenifere. In 2017, seven people were imprisoned for life for kidnapping Chief Olu Falae, former minister of finance. Rather than just lamenting and alleging conspiracy, we should seek justice. Always.

BANDITS' PARADISE

Seven more kidnapped victims of the Abuja-Kaduna train attack were released on Wednesday after over four months in captivity. The sorry sight of a family with four children hit me very hard. This is what Nigeria has become. The bandits, or terrorists, are having a ball at our expense. According to reports, not only did the federal government meet their demands of having their commanders and family members released from prison, they still went ahead to collect ransoms before releasing their victims. We do not want to use military force because they are using the victims as human shield. Clearly, the advantage is with the criminals until we figure out how to conquer them. Damning.

ASUU ISSUE

It is now six full months since university students have been at home as a result of the strike embarked upon by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). A big bone of contention, obviously, is the insistence by the federal government that university employees should be enrolled on the integrated personnel and payment information system (IPPIS) for more transparency on the wage bill. ASUU has developed the universities transparency accountability solution (UTAS) which it says is better. For us to resolve this crisis and move forward, I would advise that (1) the federal government should accept UTAS (2) ASUU should allow UTAS to be linked to BVN. Compromise.

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