



APC/PDP: I fear for our country, ▶14,19
says Gen Williams

Kaduna Train Attack: Terrorists release 11 out of 62 abductees ▶26



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June 12: We must solve insecurity for free, safe elections –Buhari

...says voters' right'll be protected, preserved

- Agbakoba: We've not progressed beyond 1993
- Okei-Odumakin: That we kept military away is enough
- ASUU: Looters still holding us hostage
- Presidential aspirants, govs, Gbajabiamila, others upbeat ▶5,6,18,20,22



Obasanjo to youths: Don't leave Nigeria for those messing it up ▶3
●INEC: Your votes'll count

Ndigbo not under attack in Lagos ▶5
–Ohanaeze

Alaafin Stool: Agunloye ▶30
ruling house presents 48 aspirants

PRESIDENCY

HOW ATIKU'S PDPTICKET SAVED TINUBU'S AMBITION — SOURCES ▶4

- Ex-Lagos gov last resort to save APC
- Choice of Christian/Muslim running mate divides party
- 'My emergence as candidate, weighty responsibility'

Owo Massacre: Akeredolu cancels Democracy Day celebration ▶5

APC divided over VP candidate's faith

Biyi Adegoroye and
Johnchuks Onuanyim
ABUJA

With the emergence of the former Lagos State Governor and National Leader of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, as the flag bearer of the party in the 2023 Presidential election, the party is in dilemma of who should be his running mate, a party source has revealed.

The party source said there are divergent views of about Muslim/Muslim and Muslim/Christian tickets.

While some members of APC believe that Muslim/Muslim ticket can still accord the party victory, others have argued that it would be a disservice to the party.

For instance, the spokesperson of the Tinubu Campaign Organization, Bayo Onanuga, has said the choice of a Muslim running mate would not play any disadvantage in the election. Onanuga cited example of 1992, when late MKO Abiola chose a Muslim in the person of Ambassador Babagana Kingibe and won election against a Muslim/Christian ticket. The spokesperson also revealed that whoever would be the running of the APC Presidential candidate was already known to standard bearer since he had conceded the ticket to the governors on the platform of the party.

However, the party has a limited time to make the decision of who becomes the running mate of their candidate giving the INEC timetable that the candidates name should be submitted on or before June 17.

Among those considered as running mate from the Muslim circle are: Governor of Borno State, Prof. Babagana Zulum; Governor of Kaduna State, Malam Nasir El-rufai; Governor of Kebbi State, Senator Atiku Bagudu; Governor of Kano State, Alhaji Abubakar Ganduje and Governor of Jigawa State, Abubakar Badaru.

From the Christian circle, the party is looking at the Governor of Plateau State, Simon Lalong; Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Boss Mustspha; his predecessor, Engr. Babachir Lawal and former Speaker, House of Representatives, Hon. Yakubu Dogora, according to him such will jeopardize the chances of the party in the election.

The former SGE, Babachir Lawal, had at a Television program spoken against a Muslim/Muslim ticket. According to him such will jeopardize the chances of the party in the election.

The issue of who becomes a running mate to a Muslim presidential candidate from the South was one that

nearly cost Tinubu the Presidential ticket of the APC, the party source also stated.

Before the primaries, one Northerner that his name was on the front burner as a running mate to an APC Presidential candidate from the South was the governor of Borno State, Prof. Babagana Zulum. Zulum was severally mentioned as running mate to different Christian presidential aspirants.

Unfortunately, the Christian Presidential aspirants, Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo, Dr. Ogbonnaya Onu, Rotimi Ameachi, Senator Rochas Okorocha and some others could not clinch the party's ticket.

The zone in which the Vice Presidential candidate would come from is also of a concern. The Christian candidates considered are from North East and North Central, while the Muslim candidates are from the North West.

Speaking, the party source said: "The North West is pushing to get the slot of Vice Presidential candidate. Otherwise, they would have lost out in 2023."

"The North Central has the National Chairman, Senator Abdullahi Adamu and ceding the position of running mate to the Presidential candidate would accord them double position."

"For the North East, they have held high positions in the President Muhammadu Buhari's administration."

"But all these have to be resolved before June 17 which is the closing date for the submission of candidates."

A supporter of Tinubu, who chose to be anonymous said that Tinubu's "choice will have profound effects on his chances at the poll."

"Voting choices by electorate in Nigeria are largely informed by factors such as ethnicity, religion, competence and integrity. Unfortunately, the first two play predominant roles among the largest strata of our society."

"Competence and integrity make meaning only to a small fraction of the elite. In any case, both Asiwaju and Atiku arguably rank same on both counts."

"There would be consequences whether Asiwaju chooses a Muslim or Christian from the North as running mate. It is the relative proportion of such backlash and how to deploy an effective mitigation that would make the difference. Atiku and his handlers will definitely strategise to take advantage of either. Research and strategy is key."

"In the event of Muslim-Muslim ticket, we wish and should work towards re-enacting June 12, 1993 scenario. But let us be clear in our minds that circumstances are not the same. For one, Asiwaju is up against a

formidable candidate unlike the 1993 scenario, where a titan (MKO) was up against an unknown Bashir Tofa. We shouldn't just wish a repeat of 1993, we should meticulously deploy effective research and strategy to make it happen."

Another source said: "The issue of whether the running mate is a Christian or Muslim is not key to the people of South-West. But it is important to the electorate in the North-West and North -East. The electorate in the South-East will prefer a Christian running mate."

But from past experiences, their voting pattern will definitely not be in favour of APC and our candidate."

"In any case, the South East region may vote massively for Peter Obi and his Labour Party. South-South is predominantly a PDP region. Whether APC fields a Muslim or Christian running mate may not be their headache."

"What is paramount from that axis is for Amaechi and his people to close ranks. Edo and Delta will not worry themselves whether the running mate is a Mus-

lim or not."

"So, for political exigencies, I will suggest that the running mate to our candidate should be a Muslim. We need good votes from both the North-West and North -East."

"Over the years, the youths were alienated from governance. Not only that. Most of the youth don't see any hope or future in the country. Unfortunately, there is a lot of negative publicity against our candidate, especially on the social media. The only saving grace is that Peter Obi and his Labour

Party have distracted those youths away."

"If those army of youths have teamed up with PDP in order to 'teach APC a lesson' there is no way the party would have survived it. It would have just been a reverse case of the 2015 episode."

"But be that as it may, there is a need for engagement with our candidate. It will be good in his campaign if he has a feedback mechanism where those of us who are his 'unknown' supporters" can directly communicate with him."



Chief Whip of the Senate, Dr. Orji Uzor Kalu (left), Senate President Ahmad Lawan and Presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu (right) during a visit by the latter to the Senate President in Abuja

Muslim-Muslim ticket: APC playing with fire –Chieftain ...says Tinubu, wiser than that

Daniel Atori
MINNA

A chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Niger State, Jonathan Vatsa, has berated Governor of Kaduna State, Mallam Nasiru El-Rufai, over his comment that a Muslim-Muslim Presidential ticket will not be a problem for the 2023 election, warning that "El'Rufai is playing with Fire".

Vatsa warned that such arrangement will not only spell doom for the party but that such experiment cannot work in the presidential election in 2023.

That is as the battle of who becomes the running mate to the APC Presidential flag bearer in the 2023 general election, Asiwaju Ahmed Bola Tinubu, gathers momentum.

The former Publicity Secretary of APC in Niger State, in a statement in Minna yesterday, titled: "the Christians are awake and alive in Nigeria ahead of 2023 general elections", advised Bola Tinubu to disregard the comment by Governor El-Rufai, "because

no Christian in Nigeria can vote for Tinubu if he goes ahead with a Muslim-Muslim ticket".

According to him: "Kaduna State is smaller than Nigeria. If El-Rufai succeeded in Kaduna with a Muslim-Muslim ticket because he made sure the Christian communities in Southern Kaduna did not come out to vote in 2019 general elections to show their anger, such experiment cannot work in the presidential election in 2023".

The former Commissioner for Information, Culture and Tourism, while taking a swipe on the Kaduna State Governor, said, "that those scheming for Vice President position like El-Rufai are the ones advocating for a Muslim-Muslim ticket because of their unrealizable ambition even when they know fully that it is not absolutely possible."

"This country called Nigeria has grown beyond what people like El-Rufai think. Governor El'Rufai is the most unqualified candidate as running mate to Bola Ti-

nubu."

"El'Rufai's statement is capable of igniting religious crisis in the country. He failed woefully to govern Kaduna State, and turned the state into a killing field and now he wants to be Vice President."

"The entire Christian communities in Southern Kaduna came under attack few weeks to the 2019 general elections just because they don't want the people to come out and vote and speak through the ballot box. It was an evil plot against the people and the whole world knew it."

"Our National Leader and Presidential flag bearer, Bola Tinubu, is more intelligent than him. He is politically wiser than El-Rufai; he knows everybody's antecedent and so, he cannot be deceived."

Vatsa stated further: "Tinubu knows that Muslim-Muslim ticket will spell doom for him and APC in 2023".

He reminded El-Rufai that politicians in the country, including himself, have

made religion the first consideration in everything they do today. "I can recall how Governor El-Rafuai declared every Friday as public holiday in the state because of his religious belief."

"I wonder why such a person should tell Nigerians not to lay emphasis on religion."

"Now that El-Rufai is looking for Vice President, he wants Nigerians to put religious consideration in our dealings behind, when every form you fill in Nigeria today, they will ask you of your religion."

He maintained that the governor should not talk about the issue of competence "because we can find competent people in all the religions in Nigeria, including among idol worshipers that can be Vice President."

"There are very intelligent, more competent and highly respected Christians in the north that can be Vice President to Tinubu. Those who have turned their state to war zone should not dream of becoming Vice President of this country," Vatsa declared.

NEWS

Wale Elegbede and
Onyekachi Eze

When the Wazirin Adamawa and former Vice-President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, emerged the candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) at the party's convention in May, alarm bells were triggered in the All Progressives Congress (APC).

Competent sources within the governing party told *Sunday Telegraph* that Atiku's emergence rattled not only sitting governors of the APC, but also some individuals considered as powerful within the presidency, who saw Atiku's candidacy as a great threat.

Prior to his emergence, *Sunday Telegraph* learnt, Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo; former Minister of Transportation, Chibuike Amaechi; Governor of Ekiti State and Chairman of the Nigerian Governors' Forum (NGF), Dr. Kayode Fayemi, were the leading candidates within the party's blocs.

But within the APC and a larger part of the North, many believe that apart from Buhari, only the National Leader of the party, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, has a cult following across Nigeria.

It was gathered that initially, many in the party leadership and the presidency did not take the Tinubu ambition seriously and believed he could be muscled out. But the election of Atiku changed all that, as the party machinery went into the over drive.

A leader of the party from the North said: "Right from the time PDP picked Atiku, we knew that the game would not be easy for the APC. Here is a former Vice President, highly experienced with nationwide network and a serial presidential candidate. So, the question that remained was how do we counter the PDP? Remember, Atiku is

How Atiku's PDP ticket saved Tinubu's ambition –Sources

a Muslim from the North, who can easily sway the larger North based on ethnicity and religion."

The source added that it was in the light of this that the northern governors, APC thinkers and power blocs within the party had to jettison sentiments and move ahead of the PDP.

Furthermore, *Sunday Telegraph* gathered that the general opinion was that the party needed someone, who could match Atiku 'pound for pound and dollar for dollar' in terms of national reach, influence or even financially.

"We knew for sure that Tinubu was the only person who could do this. Although the Vice President had moved round and Fayemi was the chairman of the NGF, we know that without the backing of the President personally, none of them can beat Atiku. We have also learnt from experience that Buhari would not use state resources to support any candidate, even though many had claimed to have his blessing. So, we had a choice to make."

It was further gathered that while all the permutations were going on, Tinubu was still busy connecting with the governors of the party, especially from the North, on the need to choose him, even though many believed that he did not have the backing of the president.

Thus, when a few days to the Convention, Tinubu went to Abeokuta and made those scathing remarks, which many considered offensive to the president, it was thought that had sealed his fate.

However, the governors, members of the NWC, and a few others outside

the presidency remained unshaken that the APC needed the strongest of the candidates to face Atiku. In fact, sources in the party strongly believed that Atiku would easily roll over any other aspirant of the party.

That was also due to the fear that Tinubu might fight back against APC if he was denied the ticket.

A South-West leader of the party, close to Tinubu said: "When Atiku emerged, our optimism soared that Tinubu would pick the ticket. Even the President knew that Tinubu was just a phone call away from Atiku, if you deny him the APC ticket. The role of Tinubu in delivering Buhari against the PDP in 2015 is not something serious people take lightly.

"For sure, if Tinubu had backed former President

Goodluck Jonathan as he did in 2011, Buhari would not have won. To serious minded people in the APC, they knew that the PDP was ready for a fight with Atiku. The other options for APC were Osinbajo, Amaechi, Fayemi and possibly one of the South Easterners for equity sake. But we knew that none of them can beat Atiku. We also know that whether people like it or not, Asiwaju has a strong presence all over the country and is a great strategist."

He added: "Going South-East was not an option at this time. For one, PDP is entrenched there and there is the Peter Obi factor, even if you argue that his party is on the fringe. We know a South-East candidate will lose the election. He will even struggle against Atiku in the zone, not to talk of Obi. The South-South is

largely controlled by the PDP, save Cross River State, where we are not very certain of our chances. Then, in the South-West, our best shot was Asiwaju. Osinbajo, Fayemi and others can only try but can they beat Atiku? That was the question that was asked when leaders of the party in the South-West met."

Sunday Telegraph learnt that it was the fear of allowing the PDP have its way that the northern governors used to sway Buhari, who recanted on his earlier consensus decision to say that he had no preferred candidate. That was also in addition to Tinubu's insistence that he would not accept consensus if he was not the consensus candidate.

"Faced with the reality of having a divided party, Buhari had to cave in and the cabal within him with-

drew their opposition to Tinubu's candidacy. It was at that point that the party resolved to go for convention, even though the National Chairman, Senator Abdullahi Adamu, had pronounced the Senate President, Ahmad Lawan as the party's consensus candidate. He was overruled by the governors and the president."

A former Governor of Jigawa State, Alhaji Sule Lamido, had told *Sunday Telegraph* last year that people around Buhari would not allow Tinubu succeed the President. He said there were fears that Tinubu would outperform the President and render him irrelevant in the APC history.

Lamido said: "They will not allow anybody with that kind of personality

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



Emir of Kano, HRH Nasiru Ado Bayero (left) presenting his Senegalese highest honor "National Order of Lion" to President Muhammadu Buhari, during his audience in State House, Abuja

Olufemi Adediran
ABEOKUTA

Former President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, yesterday, called on Nigerian youths not to abandon the country in search of greener pastures but instead stay and take advantage of the opportunities that abound in the country.

Obasanjo insisted that youths must not leave the country in the hands of "those who are messing it up."

The former President stated this in Abeokuta, Ogun State, at an event tagged "OBJ @85 Free Keke Programme," where 85 tricycles (Keke) were distributed to beneficiaries as part of the activities marking the former President's 85th birthday.

Obasanjo to youths: Don't leave Nigeria for those messing it up

The tricycles were donated through the Youth Development Centre of the Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library (OOPL) with beneficiaries drawn from the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.

He charged youths to hold their future in their hands with a firm belief that "today is their day", as against the famous cliché - youths are the leaders of tomorrow.

Obasanjo said despite many challenges confronting Nigeria, there are "opportunities galore" and asked the younger generation to take advantage of it.

He also charged them to roll up their sleeves and make necessary contributions towards addressing challenges of the nation.

According to him: "If youths leave things to those who are messing it up and who are saying they are the leaders of tomorrow, they will never have that tomorrow."

He said: "The first thing we want to prove is that there are opportunities galore in this country. Yes, things are not what they should be but you, as youths, individually and collectively, must make up your mind, make con-

tributions in order to make things the way they should be.

"If you leave things to those who are messing it up for you and who are saying you are the leaders of tomorrow, you will never have that tomorrow. Today is your day.

"Then the third point is; yes, sometime you may get people who would help you and a times, you may not even get who would help you; you must remember God has given you innate ability to be what He wants you to be and if you make up your mind on what you

want to be, God will help you and He would provide those people who would help you to reach the sky which should be your limit."

The Chairperson of the Centre, Dr Bisi Kolapo, implored the youth to emulate Obasanjo's passion and commitment in an effort to build "Nigeria of our dreams."

Kolapo also warned them against corruption and greed, saying it would be difficult to fight those menaces if you're a culprit.

She harped on courage, fortitude, forthrightness, respectability, knowledge, loyalty, passion and respon-

sibility as some of the virtues expected of youths in order to move the country forward.

Responding, two of the beneficiaries, Bashir Alimodu and Asembe Ngumimi, respectively from Borno and Benue states, applauded the centre for the donation, which they said would enhance growth and development of their trades.

They also promised to make judicious use of the tricycles, just as they urged other wealthy Nigerians to take a cue from the gesture in order to lift young entrepreneurs across the country.

NEWS



The Director of Africa and Indian Ocean, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Paris, Mr. Christopher Bigot; Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu and French Ambassador to Nigeria, Emmanuelle Blatman during a courtesy visit to the Governor at Lagos House, Marina...Saturday



L-R: Team Leader, Democracy and Government, European Delegation to Nigeria, Mr Clement Boutillier; European Union Ambassador to Nigeria, Mrs. Samuela Isopi; Chairman, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Yakubu Mahmood; National Commissioner, INEC, Mr Festus Okoye and Resident Electoral Commissioner, Akwa-Ibom, Barr. Mike Igini, at the Youth Vote Count Mega Concert held at Tafawa Balewa Square Lagos...yesterday



Senior Pastor, Trinity House, Pastor Ituah Ighidalo (left) with members of Intercessory Group praying, during A PRAYER WALK FOR NIGERIA held at Lekki Tollgate Lagos...recently



L-R: Members of staff, Downen College, Dr. Bisi Layiwola; Mrs. Tomi Borisade; members, Safe Schools Lagos Team, Ms. Miju Oladele; Mr. Vinod Kaurani; Member of Staff, Downen College, Mr. Seyi Solano and Principal, Dr. Adewale Adeoye at the completion of the stage 1 of enhanced due diligence exercise on School Safety Compliance Framework at Downen College, Lagos...recently

CBN to introduce USSD code for eNaira transactions

Tony Chukwunyem

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has said that it would soon introduce the Unstructured Supplementary (USSD) code as part of measures to boost the adoption of its digital currency- the eNaira.

Deputy Governor, in charge of Economic Policy at the apex bank, Dr Kingsley Obiora, announced this at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) African Department Speakers Series held virtually at the weekend.

The session, which was moderated by the Director of the IMF's African department, Abebe Selassie, was titled, "Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) and Private Digital Payments in Kenya and Nigeria: Challenges and Opportunities for Sub-Saharan Africa."

Obiora said the introduction of the USSD code was the key to accelerating financial inclusion in the country as it would ensure that people without smartphones could still transact on the eNaira platform.

He noted that the bar-

rier to entry for the eNaira platform was low, as anyone with a Bank Verification Number (BVN) could be boarded into the eNaira platform in a few minutes.

He said: "We have made serious progress in the last seven to eight years because when the current governor resumed in 2014, one of the pillars of his vision was to significantly improve financial inclusion.

"So at the time, we were at 48 per cent of our population within the financial system and given several policies that he conceived and implemented, we are almost at 70 per cent.

"That still leaves us with about 30 per cent of our population out of the financial system and we believe the CBDC can help reduce that number even more.

"A lot of people might not have smartphones but that is essentially the next step of our improvement in the CBDC, to introduce the USSD code, so those that do not have smartphones can still transact."

He said the value of the country's digital payments grew from \$324 billion in 2008 to about \$2.4 trillion

presently, noting that more Nigerians were now adopting digital payments.

"As you know, within the continent, we have one of the largest Fintech companies, Fintech, Paystack, etc," the CBN Deputy Governor pointed out.

He said that the CBN was quick to introduce its own CBDC because the eNaira has significant benefits for Nigeria, such as boosting financial inclusion, reducing the cost of processing cash and enabling direct welfare payments to citizens.

According to Obiora, Nigeria was doing well based on a PwC report, which showed that the country was number one in terms of adoption of CBDC.

On the likely adoption of cryptocurrency by Nigeria, the CBN Deputy Governor said it would not become part of the country's financial system because of its volatility.

Sunday Telegraph reports that Nigeria became the first country on the continent and the second in the world after the Bahamas to launch its CBDC, when the CBN unveiled the eNaira on October 25, 2021.

2023: Your votes will count, INEC chairman assures Nigerian youths

Anayo Ezugwu

The Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, has assured Nigerian youths that their votes will count in the 2023 general elections.

Speaking at the Youth Vote Count Mega Music Concert at the Tafawa Balewa Square (TBS) in Lagos, Yakubu urged the youth to vote in the elections when they collect their Permanent Voters Cards (PVCs).

Yakubu said the number of youths coming out to register for their PVCs was an indication that the youths are ready to participate in the electoral process.

He said: "Those of you that have come out to register have sent a powerful message to the commission.

"I assure you that those of you that have registered and willing to register will get their PVCs before the general elections. In the last one week, we registered over 5,000 people in this venue. And when I saw

the crowd that came out to register, I said we must change strategy.

"Instead of everyone coming to TBS to register, we will register you in 20 centres in 20 local government areas of the state and there will be more machines deployed all over Lagos beginning from next week."

On her part, European Union Ambassador to Nigeria and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Samuela Isopi, urged the youth to be part of the electoral process in the country.

Isopi said the number of people registered by INEC in the one week showed that the exercise was a huge success and a sign of hope for a better future for Nigeria. She said it is also a sign of trust and confidence in the electoral process that has made tremendous progress in the last few years.

The Ambassador said the reforms, changes, technologies and innovations introduced by INEC has made the election more transpar-

ent and credible. She said the changes have also made it possible for the commission to protect the votes every Nigerian.

"But, you know that voter turnout in Nigeria is very low and that is not good. You also know that voter turnout of young Nigeria is very low and this is not good.

"And this is why we are here. We need to change this trend, mobilize the youth and this is why we are here to mobilize you because you are a massive force. You have the power to make change happen. You have the power to make the difference. Therefore, don't give up your power because your vote is your power.

"Your voter's card is your power. So, get it and use it on the election day because your vote will count."

Many artistes and entertainers like Wake, Small Doctor, Omawumi, MI, Pasuma, Mr Macaroni, Broda Shaggy and many others performed during the concert.

NEWS

Ndigbo not under attack in Lagos –Ohanaeze

Muritala Ayinla

The President of Ohanaeze Ndigbo in Lagos, Chief Solomon Ageuene, has debunked the rumour that the Igbo are under attack in Lagos.

According to leader of socio-cultural group, there is nothing like attack, saying that what appeared to have caused the rumour was the problem arising from the collection of voters' cards.

The leader of Igbo in Lagos, however, appealed to the Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu to intervene in the matter, so that the Igbo in Ojo, Ikotun and some other suburbs in Lagos can get their cards without stress at INEC registration centres.

Also reacting to the rumour on attack, another leader of the group, simply identified as Chief Ogbonna, asserted that contrary to the claims in the social media, the Igbo have experienced no threat to their peace in Lagos.

He recalled that at the last two general meetings of Ohanaeze held in Calabar Hall, Ajao Road, more than 1,500 attendees endorsed Governor Sanwo-Olu for second term, adding that it was only through the acquisition of PVCs that Igbo in Lagos can massively vote for the All Progressives Congress (APC).

The leader said that Ohanaeze, as the apex Igbo socio-cultural organization, has also made several efforts to sensitise the Igbo in Lagos

on the acquisition of PVCs as their civic responsibility and made it mandatory for full membership of the organization.

Ohanaeze explained that the Igbo ethnic nationality was not in contention with any tribe, saying that the Igbo in the state have en-

joyed the harmony, cordiality and friendliness that have existed between other ethnic nationalities in Lagos, especially their Yoruba hosts.

The group said that Governor Sanwo-Olu has demonstrated love and strong attachment to the Igbo living in Lagos, hence the huge

support for his administration. It said the Igbo have invested massively in the development of Lagos and would not do anything that can jeopardize these investments.

Ohanaeze, therefore, called on the Governor and the members of the public to dis-

regard statements or information purportedly issued on behalf of Igbo people in Lagos from any individual or group, which does not emanate from the office of the President of Ohanaeze Lagos or the secretariat at James Robertson Street, Surulere, Lagos.

'How Atiku's PDP ticket saved Tinubu's ambition'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

to succeed Buhari. That is why they will not allow Tinubu to succeed him because they don't want Tinubu to bury Buhari's personality. That is why Tinubu is having some problems. If you put Tinubu there, he will bury Buhari's personality and presidency. He will bury Buhari's political history because Tinubu is focused; he is a leader; he breeds and nurtures people. He knows the economy. I mean he has so much going for him that they envy him.

"Therefore, they will never allow him to see the light of the day with his aspiration. Leave all these Muslim-Muslim kind of thing. I mean his personality is an issue. They will not allow him to get to the presidency because if he gets there, his achievement there will simply bury Buhari and make nonsense of Buhari's presidency. I mean, they will not allow him."

So, important was that it was the emergence of Atiku that also threw up the candidature of the Senate President, Senator Ahmed Lawan and the shopping for former President Goodluck Jonathan.

Lawan was not in the equation from the beginning but some persons felt with Atiku as the candidate of PDP, it was only a Northerner with the stature of the Senate President that can give him a fight.

Alternatively, the party believed that if the ticket must come to the South, somebody like former President Jonathan can square up against Atiku.

After weighing the Senate President and finding out that he cannot stand Atiku notwithstanding his present political position and Jonathan having resistance from some party members, the last option was Tinubu.

The Tinubu option had also the resistance of who would be his running mate.

Owo massacre: Akeredolu cancels Democracy Day celebration

Adewale Momoh
AKURE

Governor Oluwarotimi Akeredolu of Ondo State has canceled this year's Democracy Day celebration scheduled for today in Ondo State.

The cancellation became imperative, according to the governor, due to terror attack by gunmen on parishioners at St. Francis Catholic Church in Owo last Sunday, June 5, 2022.

In a statement issued by the Chief Press Secretary to the Governor, Richard Olatunde, the move was made to allow the entire people of Ondo State to grieve their loved ones, who

died in the awful incident.

Also, Akeredolu had personally in a series of tweets on his verified Twitter handle on Saturday, said the cancellation was to allow Ondo people mourn the deceased.

Gunmen had last Sunday rained terror on Owo, when they stormed that church where worshipers had gathered for the Pentecost day.

After the deadly attack, no fewer than 40 people were killed and scores sustained varying degree of injuries.

In honour of the victims of the terror attack, Akeredolu ordered that all flags in the state be flown at half-mast for seven days.

June 12: We must solve insecurity for free, safe election –Buhari

Lawrence Olaoye
ABUJA

President Muhammadu Buhari has vowed to tackle the prevailing challenge of insecurity in the country in order to ensure the conduct of free, safe and secured general elections in 2023.

The President, in a national live broadcast commemorating the nation's Democracy Day today, also assured Nigerians that voters' right of choice at the polls would be protected and preserved.

This came as he tasked all candidates contesting elections to shun divisive and uncouth language and embrace issue-based campaigns.

The President, who noted that this would be his last Democracy Day speech to Nigerians, charged politicians to ensure that the transition was done in a peaceful manner in honour of the memory of Chief M.K.O. Abiola, whose Presidential mandate was annulled by the military some 29 years ago.

The President expressed the hope that the 2023 polls

...says voters' right'll be protected, preserved

would be peaceful, considering the positive signs he observed during the primaries conducted across party lines ahead of the 2023 general elections.

He said: "These primaries were peaceful and orderly. Those who won were unanimous in their victories. Those who lost were gracious in defeat. And those aggrieved opted to seek judicial justice as opposed to jungle justice."

"I followed the party primaries closely from the state level to the Presidential level. I was very impressed to see across all the political parties that, most candidates ran issued based campaigns. The language and tone throughout were on the whole measured and controlled."

Buhari also noted that the 2022 primaries conducted by parties were significant because of the significant increase in women and youths, adding that the trends clearly showed the level of maturity the nation's democracy achieved in the last 23 years.

"As we move into the general election campaign season, we must sustain this mature attitude to campaigning and ultimately, voting. We must never see it as a "do or die" affair. We must all remember democracy is about the will of the majority. There must be winners and losers."

On his promise to tackle insecurity, he said: "I know many of us are concerned with the rise in insecurity due to terrorist activities in parts of the country. As a government, we are working hard to contain and address these challenges. And ensure that the 2023 general elections are safe and secure for all Nigerians."

"To achieve this however, we must all contribute. It is not the job of government alone. I ask all citizens to support and cooperate with our security agencies by reporting any suspicious characters and activities to law enforcement agencies. We can only have a safe country if we are able to prevent crime not after the crime has been committed."

He used the occasion to call on Nigerians to put all victims of terrorist activities in their thoughts and prayers saying that he lived daily with the grief and worry for all those victims and prisoners of terrorism and kidnapping.

He, however, stressed that the security agencies and himself were doing all they could to free those unfortunate countrymen and countrywomen safely.

Commenting on the reformation embarked upon by his government, he said: "We have reformed some of our security structures. Some of the defence assets we procured three years ago have arrived and have been deployed."

"Our cyber security and surveillance systems are being upgraded to further enhance our ability to track and trace criminal elements. We are also recruiting and training new personnel across all our security and intelligence agencies to strengthen the country's over-all security."



L-R: Olota of Ota, Oba Adeyemi Obalanlege; wife of the celebrant, Mrs Aderonke Taiwo; the celebrant, Hon. Olaiwola Taiwo; Ogun State Governor, Prince Dapo Abiodun and his Deputy, Engr Noimot Salako-Oyedele at the 70th Birthday party of Hon. Taiwo in Ota on Saturday

Attack: APC, Tinubu afraid of elections –PDP

Onyekachi Eze
ABUJA

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has accused the All Progressives Congress (APC) and its presidential candidate, Asiwaju Ahmed Bola Tinubu, of instigating attack on Nigerians, particularly people of the

South East region living in Lagos State, to prevent them from collecting their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs).

The PDP, in a statement by the National Publicity Secretary, Debo Ologunagba, described the attack by the APC as desperate design to use violence to sabotage free, fair and credible elections in

2023, because the party realised that Nigerians would not vote for its presidential candidate in the election.

The party noted that Tinubu has been in morbid fear of the soaring popularity of the its presidential candidate, Atiku Abubakar, hence the attempt by the APC to stop Nigerians from obtaining their PVCs to

vote in the elections.

The PDP warned that such attack portends serious threat and danger to the nation's democratic process.

It wondered why a party in government "that pretends to have the support of the people and professes continuity is busy chasing away prospective voters."

JUNE 12! JUNE 12!! JUNE 12!!!

Kick out APC to sustain democracy, Atiku tells Nigerians

Onyekachi Eze
ABUJA

The presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Alhaji Atiku Abubakar has called on Nigerians to unite and come together and kick out the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) in order to sustain the nation's democracy.

Atiku in a statement to mark this year's Democracy Day celebration said the ruling party has failed in its campaign promises.

The former vice president noted that President Muhammadu Buhari-led APC government has brought the worst form of government in the country, "where insecurity, disunity, inequity, lack of job opportunity, dwindling economic prosperity and hyper inflation stare us all in the face."

He told Nigerians to remember that Nigeria's current debt burden stands at over N41 trillion with less than \$40 billion reserve, and regretted that the ruling party could not offer Nigerians honesty on its pledged manifestos with regards to security, economic growth and anti-corruption.

According to him, "a ruling party that offers crass opportunism and cronyism can never elevate nor uplift a diverse and secular country."

"Hence, we should by next year reject an inept, unpopular and insensitive and clueless APC government."

"Here's the season to prove to dishonest APC politicians that power truly belongs to the people via the use of the ballots."

"A government that impoverish us, divides us along our fault lines, make us insecure, make us hungry, starve us of public amenities like electricity and fuel and perpetually shut down gates of universities against our undergraduates, due to no fault of the students and causing untold sorrow to their parents and sponsors; such a party should never be allowed to occupy esteemed offices in government at any level in our country."

Atiku stated that this is an auspicious period to rally round all compatriots; to think and work in concert for the unity, security, equity, inclusivity, socio-economic prosperity and equitable development of the country.

Gbajabiamila felicitates Nigerians

Philip Nyam
ABUJA

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rep. Femi Gbajabiamila, said Nigerians have a lot to celebrate as the country's democracy has developed in the past twenty-three years.

In a message, his special adviser on media and public affairs, Lanre Lasisi noted that



Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi of Enugu State (right) greeting State Health Workers, at the Government House, Enugu, after he restored their 230 plots of land registered as Villa Estate, Ozalla Abor, Enugu, which were purportedly revoked by the immediate past State Commissioner for Lands and Urban Development... yesterday.

this year's Democracy Day is historic coming on the eve of the 2023 general elections.

He expressed delight at how the citizens have embraced democratic governance in the past two decades, saying there is a lot to come in the coming years in terms of dividends of democracy.

Nigeria being handed over to generation of looters -ASUU

Sola Adeyemo
IBADAN

In a message, to mark the 12th day, Chairman, Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), University of Ibadan branch, Prof. Ayoola Akinwale said that the exclusion of best brains in Nigerian politics through imposition of high cost of nomination forms will place Nigeria's future in the hands of looters.

According to him, "it is a strategy of handing over the country to those individuals who have looted the country in the past. If this practice goes unchallenged, Nigerians are in for not just another regime of poor governance but that of extreme corruption and looting."

He stated that it will take a Nigerian Professor who earns N416, 000 per month but saves 20 percent of his salary over 100 years to be able to purchase the presidential nomination form of the ruling party and over 40 years to buy the form of the main opposition party.

Professor Akinwale stated that the 23 years of return of democracy has been characterised by "leadership of empty promises and dashed hopes", stressing that: "Given the level of prevailing level of corruption and loss of hope in the future, political leaders in Nigeria have shown lack of willingness and capacity and the capacity to protect lives and properties and they have successfully failed in promoting productive activities that can boost the Nigerian economy".

He advised that nothing will change except the country allows equitable distribution of wealth and access to quality education, health and security.

Include youth in politics -Kalu

Former Governor of Abia State and Chief Whip of the Senate, Dr. Orji Kalu, urged the political class to uphold the tenets of democracy by including youths in their political pursuits.

Also, he said that democracy has come to stay in Nigeria, even as Kalu commended President Muhammadu Buhari-led federal government for providing dividends of democracy to Nigerians, adding that the current administration has sustained democratic virtues in all ramifications.

The former Governor while admonishing Nigerians especially the younger generation to take active part in the political process, cautioned against violence in politics, noting that politics is not a do-or-die affair.

He said: "I congratulate Nigerians on the occasion of the 2022 democracy day. It is yet another opportunity to reflect on Nigeria's democracy."

Nigeria's founding fathers had laid a solid foundation for civilian rule to thrive in the country.

"The milestone attained in sustaining democratic process in Nigeria is impressive and encouraging."

"The political class must live up to expectations by embracing democratic virtues in their endeavours."

"The will of the electorate must be respected by ensuring their votes count in elections."

"Politics should be seen as a clarion call to serve the people and not an opportunity for self aggrandizement."

"Politicians must play the game by rules for the country's democracy to be sustained and for the good of

the people."

Nigeria on pathway to greatness -Obasa

To the Speaker, Lagos State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Mudashiru Obasa, Nigeria is currently on a track to greatness just as he urged the citizens to play active roles for this to be fully achieved.

Dr. Obasa said this year's edition coincides with the 29th anniversary of the June 12, 1993 elections,

"However, it is now very glaring that we are on the threshold of history with the forthcoming general elections that is now heralded by the smooth convention of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the emergence of our flag bearer, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu."

"The new story that we all anticipate, envisage and dream about for our country is achievable and right before us. Our hopes are rekindled. All that is required is our collectively resolve to be part of the ship of progress."

Political lessons learnt, not imbibed -YCE

Adewuni Ademiju
ADO - EKITI

The Secretary Yoruba Council of Elders (YCE), Dr. Kunle Olajide said: "I believe we have learnt some lessons, they ought to have learnt it but they have not really put it into practice as expected because of the type of democracy we practice which is not the ideal, if it were to be ideal, the lessons would have been better imbibed."

"As to whether we could ever have elections like that, I will say why not. If not, people are getting much more concerned now about who governed them because the quality of government has not been that impressive, so a lot of people now feel concerned and are showing interest."

On his own part, former Commissioner for Information and Value Orientation during the immediate past

administration of governor Ayodele Fayose in Ekiti State, Mr Lanre ogunsuyi said that June 12, 1993 remains a watershed and a bench mark of democracy in Nigeria.

"How have we felt since then? We have struggled to get to that level as a nation and we are still struggling. Our politicians learnt their lessons; the election was not about politicians. It was about Nigerians. Nigerians spoke their minds and they spoke with their votes without inducement, vote buying, violence. It's in the hands of everyone and some would say its in the hands of God."

"The challenges that we have today can be traced to the annulment of that election remains the obstacle to achieving such a democratic feat again in Nigeria."

Politicians've learnt nothing -Wole Oke

Stephen Femi Oni
ILORIN

A former House Leader in the Kwara State House of Assembly and a Chieftain of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), Chief Wole Oke, opined that the political class has not learnt any lesson that is beneficial to the country's political growth, lamenting that things are getting worse with the country's Democratic culture.

He said: "The June 12, 1993 Elections would remain with us here in Nigeria as epochal as the history of the Creation myth. Whether our politicians have learnt anything from it or not will be devaluing and degrading the significance of the entire electoral process that gave victory to MKO Abiola's presidency. It is not only the politicians that have a lesson to learn but the entire electoral population of the country. Has anybody in the country learnt the worthy and eternal lesson derivable from the most exemplary June 12, 1993 election this country has ever held since the first general election of 1952. If politicians, nay, the

entire Nigerian people, have ever learnt any lesson, then we should not have witnessed the most recent ugly incident where what was supposed to be a democratic primary election, has become a commercial venture: presidential aspirants were still buying delegates' votes at a commercially fantastic exorbitant price in foreign currency, and not even in our local naira currency.

Day remains landmark in Nigeria's democracy - Middle Belt Forum

Cephas Iorhemen
MAKURDI

Also, weighing in National President, Middlebelt Forum (MBF), Dr. Bitrus Pogu, said the day is significant to Nigerians because of what it portends, stressing that the citizenry,

He said: The Citizenry will continue to recognize the day and learn from what transpired so that we don't fall into similar traps in future.

"2023 is around the corner, less than twelve months from now. We are going to have elections, by this time next year we would have been around the swearing-in of the next President and what transpired at June 12 should be a lesson to us that we need to have an acceptable, credible, transparent election and the winner whoever he or she is, whether we like it or not should be declared the winner so that the June 12 experience will not happen again."

June 12th, 1993 will ever remain green in the hearts of Nigerians as an election that would have brought the late M K Abiola as the Nigerian president then was annulled by the military junta under Ibrahim.

We've had stable civilian rule, says, Ex - president INC

Pauline Onyibe
YENOGUA

Former president, Ijaw National Congress (INC), Engineer Charles Anbowe said: "In twenty four years, we have had some stable civilian rule. The truth is that at any material point in time, the game of politics is one that involves financial muscle. Just like twenty years ago, if you had one thousand naira, you know the worth of things you can buy."

"I was the NRC party chairman for the Southern Ijaw local area until they dissolved the SDP and NRC. We know as political players then that money was involved in issues like mobilizing delegates. People were spending money. There has always been financial inducement for people who are playing this game. I, as the local government party chairman, was directly under the late Pere Ajuwa, who sponsored my election."



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OUR TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY



The Federal Inland Revenue Service has a mandate to **assess, collect and account** for revenues accruable to the Government of the Federation.



The Vision

To deliver quality service to taxpayers in partnership with other stakeholders and make taxation the pivot of national development.



The Mission

To operate a transparent and efficient tax system that optimizes tax revenue collection and voluntary compliance.

Muhammad Nami, on assumption of office in December 2019 set out 4-cardinal goals to revamp the Service and set it on maximum output to pursue the realization of the above vision and mission.

4

Cardinal Goals of the Muhammad Nami-led Management

01

Rebuilding the Institutional Framework of the Service

02

Building a Customer-Centric Institution

03

Building a Data-Centric Institution

04

Improved Collaboration with Stakeholders



Rebuilding the Institutional Framework of the Service

The Nami-led management of the FIRS restored the “Group System” and created specialised functions and groups. To ensure maximum productivity of staff, deployment of officers of the service was aligned with skills and ability; while issues of staff welfare are treated with utmost priority. Critical to the institutional reforms embarked by the management was stopping the use of consultants for tax operations, thus returning the job of FIRS officers to them. Industry-focused tax offices for Telecom, Tax Incentive Management, International Tax, etc were set-up. We reinforced tax enforcement and created the Special Crimes Department. To provide our staff befitting and suitable work environments, we have built new offices across the country, improved on power supply, and ensured internet access across our tax offices. Exemplary staff have been rewarded while staff promotion is taken seriously and timeously.

Today the Service can boast of a functional board, a vibrant management team, motivated officers and a coherent system.



Building A Customer-Centric FIRS

At the FIRS the taxpayer is King; the goal for us is therefore to ensure that the payment of taxes is smooth, easy and efficient. To give the taxpayer the best experience we have conducted our reforms from a four-pronged approach: Communication; Support; Ease of Compliance and Clarity.

- **Communications:** Our contact centre and access to management, etc.
- **Support:** Penalty and Interest Waivers for taxpayers, as well as window to pay foreign currency tax in Naira, etc.
- **Ease of Compliance:** Our digital platforms and e-services; our Self-Service Stations in Tax Offices; etc.
- **Clarity:** Clearer and simplified tax rules, and room for alternative dispute resolution.



Building A Data-Centric Institution

The FIRS is working towards a near-total reliance on data for tax administration: for taxpayer profiling, tax assessment, tax collection, compliance and enforcement and corporate management.

Our digital transformational vision involves:

- building robust seamless connectivity with all stakeholders for data gathering (there is subsisting presidential directive);
- deployment of proprietary or third-party solutions to automate registration, returns filing, assessment, payment and compliance & enforcement functions; and
- transition from manual corporate administrative processes to fully automated regime with electronic document management system for human resource management, procurement, finance and account, etc.

Through Tax ProMax, our in-house flagship solution for end-to-end tax administration, taxpayers can now carry out: e-registration, e-receipting, e-tax clearance certificate; e-filing and e-payments for VAT and CIT, among other services.



Improved Collaboration with Stakeholders

Key to delivering on our mandate is strategic partnerships and collaboration. The Service has prioritized engagements with both domestic and international stakeholders for effective tax administration.

- **Domestic Stakeholders and Collaboration:** Engagement with taxpayers and the general public; consultants; professional bodies; diplomatic community; FIRS board and staff; the Joint Tax Board; the media; Ministries, Departments and Agencies of government; civil societies among others.
- **International Collaborations:** The FIRS participates and collaborates with various international bodies. Consequently, the Service is serving as Chair, past Chair, and Vice-chair in various committees within the OECD, UN, ATAF, WATAF and CIAT. The Executive Chairman of the FIRS, was elected last year as the President of the Commonwealth Association of Tax Administrators.

It is consequently not surprising that the FIRS surpassed its tax collection target, and achieved a record collection of N6.405 trillion Naira in the year 2021—the highest collection ever made in our history

YOUR TAXES ARE WORKING FOR YOU!



Citizens all over the world pay for their countries' civilization by the taxes they pay."

**Muhammad Nami,
Executive Chairman, FIRS**

No country can develop and achieve its maximum potentials without the contribution of its citizens through service and paying of taxes—enabling government to finance its obligations.

WHERE DO OUR TAXES GO?

In every facet of our daily lives we experience one benefit of the taxes we pay or the other: from the roads cars are driven on; to the lecture halls, libraries and other infrastructure in public schools we attend; to the security of lives and property provided by the personnel of our security agencies; to the primary health care facilities and public hospitals across the country; to scholarships; to countless public goods being provided by the government through its various establishments.

WHERE DOES OUR EDUCATION TAX GO TO?

The Education Tax is a tax chargeable on the assessable profits of companies registered in Nigeria as a contribution to the Education Tax Fund. The tax is 2.5% of Company's assessable profits.

This tax is paid into the Education Fund which is set up for the rehabilitation, restoration and consolidation of education in Nigeria. It is administered by the Board of the TETFUND which manages and disburses the Education Tax to public tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

As at May 2019, there were 215 beneficiary institutions of the Fund: 81 Universities, 64 Polytechnics and 70 Colleges of Education. From 1999 to May 2019 the total of disbursements by TETFUND to these institutions stood at N1.020 trillion.

These moneys have been used to fund interventions such as:

- Physical Infrastructure in Tertiary Institutions: Construction of classrooms, lecture halls, lecture theatres, laboratory complexes, teaching and learning aids acquisition, construction of library blocks, academic and non-academic staff offices and general furnishing.
- Library Development through support such as library equipment especially e-learning facilities.
- Academic Staff Training: The fund offers study fellowship to academic staff in Nigerian public tertiary institutions to undertake local and foreign Masters and Doctorate Degree programmes.
- Sponsorship of Conference Attendance for staff of tertiary institutions in local and international conferences and workshops.
- Funding for the Publishing of Academic Research Journals
- Funding for Institution Based Research
- Funding for Publication of Academic Textbooks and Academic Manuscripts and Theses Conversion to Books

THE ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE TAX CREDIT SCHEME

The Road Infrastructure Tax Credit Scheme was birthed by Executive Order 007, Road Infrastructure Development and Refurbishment Investment Tax Credit Scheme, signed by President Muhammadu Buhari in January 2019. The scheme is a public-private partnership intervention that enables the Federal Government of Nigeria to leverage private sector capital and efficiency for the construction, refurbishment and maintenance of critical road infrastructure in the country. Participants in the scheme are entitled to Tax Credits against their future Companies Income Tax to the tune of the project cost incurred in the construction or refurbishment of the eligible roads.

Some of the most prominent participants of the Infrastructure Tax Credit Scheme include:

1. NNPC: 21 critical roads across the 6 Geopolitical zones including:

NORTH-CENTRAL

- Dualization of Ilorin-Jebba-Mokwa/ Bokani Junction road Section 1: Ilorin-Jebba, Kwara State C/NO. 6468. 110.8km
- Dualization of Ilorin, Jebba-Mokwa/Bokani junction Road Section II: Jebba-Mokwa-Bokani junction in Kwara and Niger states. C/NO.6469. 46 km
- Dualization of Suleja-Minna road, Niger state. C/O. 6077. 40km
- Dualization of Suleja-Minna Road, Niger State Phase II (Km 40+000-101+000) C/NO.6267. 61km
- Reconstruction of Bida-Lambata Road, Niger state C/NO.6372. 125km
- Agaie-Katcha-Baro Road, Niger State 52.3km
- Emergency repairs of failed section of Mokwa-Makera-Tagina-Kaduna state border in Niger state. 164km
- Minna-Zungeru minna-Zungeru-Tagina road, Niger state. 90km
- Bida-Minna road, Niger state. 79.1km

NORTH-EAST

- Rehabilitation of Cham-Numan section of Gombe-Yola road in Adamawa state. 46.35km
- Construction of Bali-Serti road in Taraba state. 110km
- Rehabilitation of Gombe-Biu road in Gombe/Borno state. 117km

NORTH-WEST

- Rehabilitation of outstanding sections of Gada-Zaima-Zuru-Gamji road Phase II in Kebbi State 62km.
- Rehabilitation of Zaria-Funtua-Gusau-Sokoto-Birnin Kebbi. 221.5km

SOUTH-EAST

- Dualization of Aba-Ikot Ekpene road in Abia/Akwa Ibom states. 73km
- Rehabilitation of Umuahia (Ikwoano)-Ikot Ekpene road: Umuahia-Umudike in Abia state. 49km

SOUTH-SOUTH

- Rehabilitation of Odukpani-Itu-Ikot Ekpene road in Cross River state Section I: Odukpani-Itu Bridge Head in Cross River/Akwa Ibom states. 21.9km
- Dualization of outstanding portion of Odukpani-Itu-Ikot Ekpene: lot 2. 32km
- Dualization of Oku-Iboku Power Plant Section of the Odukpani-Itu-Ikot-Ekpene road in Cross River/Akwa Ibom state. 28km

SOUTH-WEST

- Rehabilitation and expansion of Lagos-Badagry Expressway (Agbara Junction-Nigeria/Benin border) in Lagos State. 62km
- Dualization of Ibadan-Ilorin road (Route A2) Section II in Oyo State (Oyo-Ogbomosho). 52km.

2. MTN: 110km Enugu-Onitsha road in Anambra State in exchange for tax credits.

3. Transcorp Group: Oyinbo-Izuoma-Mirinwayi-Oklama-Afam Road.

4. Access Bank: Oniru axis of VI-Lekki circulation road in Lagos State.

5. GZI Industries: Umueme village road, Abia State.

6. Mainstream Energy: Malando-Garin Baka-Ngwaski Road

7. The BUA: Bode-Saadu-Lafiagi road; Eyinkorin road and bridge

8. NLNG: Bodo-Bonny bridges and road.

Body & Soul

Our society discourages victims of violence from speaking out –Rimi

Aisha Rimi is an attorney, entrepreneur and an advocate of women and children's rights. She has practised Law with reputable local and international law firms for almost 30 years. She is a founding partner at Africa Law Practice (ALP), a leading commercial law firm in Nigeria. A wife, mother and businesswoman, Rimi has established several lines of businesses in real estate, management, hospitality and others. She also sits on the board of several companies. In this interview with OLUWATOSIN OMONIYI, she speaks on her passion for women and the less privilege

You have accomplished a lot in your field and other endeavours- from Law practice to real estate, the hospitality industry and other areas. What would you say are the secrets of your success?

I owe a lot to my upbringing, education, experience and family support system. I was brought up in a conservative Northern Muslim home, where both my parents were accomplished professionals. From a young age, my parents encouraged all their children (male and female) to seek knowledge and supported us in whatever career choices we made. Education and hard work were emphasized as the key to success. Being female, multitasking comes naturally to me. I also have an insatiable appetite for new experiences and so, having studied and then practiced law for 10 years, I decided to try out other businesses and entrepreneurship opportunities in what I felt were probably the most productive years of my life.

So, in my early 30s, I branched out into numerous sectors and grew my "side hustles" into active and successful business ventures. Some of my ventures included, trading in clothes and accessories, way before online shopping became fashionable; "importing" and distributing fresh fruit and vegetables from the north (specifically Jos) to Lagos when there were no mobile phones and flights often did not take off for days; started an outdoor catering company that eventually morphed into several restaurants; designing and supplying corporate gift items; building and operating a beach resort; buying and selling of land and developing real estate for sale and lease. I could go on and on. Suffice it to say that I am to a large extent able to take on new and financially viable challenges.

I am now fully back in legal practice in a corporate commercial firm with a pan African footprint and some of the businesses continue to operate with my capable support staff.

Could you tell how it all began for you? Why did you choose to read Law in the first place, and how has the journey been especially as a female lawyer?

To be honest, I am not really sure why I studied law. It just seemed like a sensible thing to study at the time and I felt it would prepare me for life generally. I also had an aunty who looked fabulous in her wig and gown and she made a huge impression on me. Needless, to say, I have no regrets. As a female lawyer, I have been lucky because I have worked with good mentors, who took the time to train and nurture my growth in the profession. I very quickly however knew that I preferred the corporate/commercial side of practice but I did go to court in the first few years of practice. I have practiced in a firm and rose to be a partner; practiced in the City of New York (NY) as a visiting attorney; set up and run my own boutique practice and finally set up a new and dynamic Corporate Commercial firm that operates in several African countries and with offices in Abuja and Lagos.

The firm is a merger of four successful individuals and their practices. We have over the last 18 months started the journey to grow a pan African network of law firms offering seamless legal advice and professional services to our clients, wherever they may be based and whatever their needs are. I therefore spend quite a bit of time between Lagos and Abuja and also our partner countries.

Although women have made much progress, most of the leading lights in the legal profession in Nigeria are men, especially the Senior Advocates of Nigerian (SAN). What do you think are the main obstacles for women in the legal profession in Nigeria?

As with most professions, gender is not really an issue at the entry level and as people rise to mid management levels, women for numerous reasons, tend to peel off the corporate or professional ladder as they grow older, usually to support their spouses and to start and raise families. Society is changing and women now get a lot more support in the workplace. I think the younger women are bolder and able to manage the challenges better and so I think like with other professions, law will also start to catch up. In law, women have traditionally also preferred corporate/in-house work and this is reflected in the number of advocates we see in practice. In our office, we have ensured that women do not feel that by stepping away to get married or start a family, they will be disadvantaged.

We encourage and support our female employees to take time, when they need to. They can work from home when the situation demands it. They can get personal days off to attend vaccination clinics, tend to a sick child or even go to common entrance exams. I am

proud to say that we actually have more female staff in the firm and in senior positions. We reward loyalty and hard work and that's how it should be. We do not see gender. We see professionals!

What is your advice to upcoming female lawyers and other female colleagues on surmounting the obstacles?

Be bold, confident and self-assured. Women also need to create their own networks and "clubs" where they can support and mentor each other. Men do it all the time and there is no reason, why we cannot do the same. As much as I hate to say it, I think women have not helped each other as much as we can and need to. I recently attended a Law Society roundtable on this same subject and we concluded that we have to take charge of this as a group. I read something somewhere which said something along the lines that, if there are no seats at the table, pull one up or start your own table.

What are your views about the prevalent cases of sexual violence against minors especially girls in the country. How can our justice system be positioned to tackle this social menace?

Sexual and domestic violence against anyone, girls, boys, old, young, is simply wrong and unacceptable. We unfortunately have a society that does not encourage victims to speak out and when they do, are usually stigmatized, blamed for the act and bullied into not pursuing any action against the perpetrators. There are sick minded people everywhere and as we have seen, the perpetrators, cut across many different socio-cultural and economic backgrounds. They are teachers, faith leaders, parents (of the victims), siblings and so on. The laws exist to punish these criminals but you constantly hear of "settlement" and non-cooperative victims. Some NGOs such as WARIF in Lagos are very active in supporting victims in many ways, by providing healthcare, refuge and even assisting with evidence for prosecution.

Our firm has an active pro bono programme where we help victims get justice. I am currently working on a case where a woman has been thrown out of

the house she built, had her children taken away and this after suffering many years of physical and sexual abuse from her husband. We support organization such as the Domestic Violence Unit in Lagos State. There are many more sprinkled around the country, but too much is never enough. Education is also key in letting younger people know about inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour no matter who the person is.

You are from Katsina State. What are your contributions to the development of girl education in the area and also in the North.

Support for the girl-child or female education is a nationwide issue. Some states/regions have done better than others. Studies have shown that the educated women have a positive impact on their communities. It reduces maternal and infant mortality rates because the women are able to take better care of themselves and their children and as the children progress in life, educated mothers are able to give them a better support system. If you educate a woman, you educate a community. Being northern as you have pointed out, but living in Lagos, I have tried to support both communities to which I belong and have made me who I am. I support by way of sponsorship of female students who have an active interest in seeking education and have also (along with family members), built a small school that offer vocational training for young women at a hugely subsidized cost. We train the women to knit, sew, make slippers and handbags, soap and candles etc. It has been heartwarming to see how accomplished they feel when they have learned a skill.

There has been an agitation for women to participate more vigorously in politics in Nigeria. What is your view on that, and do you see a woman becoming the president of Nigeria in the near future?

We have had successful female politicians but clearly the numbers are nowhere where they should be. Some of the reasons I have mentioned above and others revolve around the societal and financial pressures that prevent women venturing into politics. I sometimes watch proceedings and hear how women are quite honestly humiliated by their colleagues. Like everything in life, timing is key. And the time will come for women to rightfully take their places at the highest level. We have seen female leaders in African and Asian conservative countries. In the meantime, we would like to see more women appointed to positions of authority also.

How have you been able to maintain a stable balance between your family life and hectic profession and business?

Everything in life is about balance and nothing should be done to the detriment of oneself, or situation. Having an incredibly supportive spouse, amazing family support and dependable colleagues have all helped me to achieve a relatively good work – life balance



Women, marginalisation question, Adamawa's valorous example

By Betty Anyanwu-Akeredolu

There is a sense in which the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC), showed a darling example in its recently held primary election across the country, save for instances of irregularities in few states, including Imo, my state, where government actors made a charade of a process that should ordinarily have deepened democratic practice. Distasteful as the Imo instance is, it is not the thrust of intervention.

Of greater good is the standard set by the national secretariat of the party, which, in any case, is an admirable and enduring legacy with regard to female representation in politics in this dispensation. The party did score a golden goal by ensuring the inclusion of a novel provision in its electoral guidelines and, by this act, gave women a pride of place. The giant step notably increased women representation across the board, from local, state to national level, and provided a leeway to women's larger involvement in party affairs.

This development no doubt represents a watershed in Nigeria's annals of politicisation and signals a sturdy milestone in the

age-long struggle for women's fair share in the country's political affairs. I therefore commend the fighting spirit of Nigerian women, particularly the APC women under the leadership of the national woman leader, Dr Betta Edu. These women of worth worked so hard to bring about this profound provision and I admire their courage which largely helped to achieve this fruition.

The provision, strategic as it is, is supposed to work for a preponderance of women who nurture political ambition in the country. However, the pattern of voting in the recently held primary election of the APC across the country, has shown clearly that a vast majority of women are still miles away from the ideological drive that birthed the inclusion clause. The pattern indicates, conspicuously, that many a woman is yet to see her kind as deserving of trust and confidence.

Nonetheless, we must all pause to laud the exceptional and resounding example of Adamawa chapter of the APC. Unlike other states in the country, Adamawa women smartly took advantage of the party's guidelines which stipulates that every ward must have five delegates and of the five delegates, two must be women, and that saw to the

emergence of the senator representing Adamawa Central in the Senate, Aishatu Ahmed, popularly known as Binani, as the governorship candidate of the APC in the state.

Senator Binani had scored 430 votes, the highest in the election, to defeat Nuhu Ribadu, a former presidential aspirant of the Action Congress and pioneer chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), who polled 288 votes, and immediate past governor, Muhammadu Jibrilla Bindow, who came third in the contest with 103 votes. An oasis that this seems, it is also a gratifying example that Nigerian women must inculcate to win.

Answering how she won the feat, Senator Aishatu Ahmed said: "If you take Adamawa for example, we have 226 wards; if you multiply that number by two, you'd get 452 votes out of a total of 1,130 delegates for the state. This means 452 of these delegates are women." She, in furtherance said, "This is the first time women are uniting and speaking together in one voice, though not hundred per cent, but I can tell you that almost 70-75 per cent of the female delegates backed me, saying our own is contesting, let us give her our block vote."

The Adamawa spirit is palpably missing in most of our women in Nigeria, and this fact tells us where we are with regard to imbibing the can-do spirit. It is a hydra-headed challenge that most women still do not believe in themselves, let alone believing in another woman. It shows, more disappointingly, that the onerous efforts in mentoring, repeated public sensitisation and daunting sacrifices made by women for women are yet to be fully appreciated.

In Ondo State, for instance, deliberate and conscientious efforts have been made to make the womenfolk develop worthier outlook on life beyond being itinerant hailers who are usually rewarded with ridiculous and short-lived material gains.

The Foundation for Wives of Ondo State Officials and Female political appointees (FOWOSO) was birthed as a grooming field for women with a goal to elevate the status of women and bring about socio-economic turnaround for them. Concerted efforts made to position women strategically to enable them nurture dream beyond playing domestic roles.

CONTINUED ONLINE

As in PDP, as in APC, the South-East loses

Emeka Alex Duru

When the former Senate President, Chuba Okadigbo, sniggered that what existed in Nigeria were merely rallies, not political parties, many did not understand his drift. But facts continue to prove him right, almost daily. We may look at the two concepts to appreciate Okadigbo's observation.

A rally is a public meeting of a large group of people, especially supporters of a particular opinion. It is usually ad hoc and lacks precise and sustainable objective.

A political party, on the other hand, is an aggregation of people with similar ideas about politics and specific ideological or policy goals. A political party coordinates candidates to compete in a particular country's elections, among other functions.

Nigeria is yet to have political parties, strictly speaking, if we go by developments in the two major political organisations in the land - the Peoples Democratic Party

(PDP) and All Progressives Congress (APC). At most, what we have, are platforms for politicians to win election, appropriate the so-called national cake and cross over to another when things stop working in their favour. This orientation accounts for the fluidity of movements among chieftains of the two political parties from one to another, especially during and after major elections.

When also the leaders mouth justice, peace and unity, they do so to hoodwink the people. They do not mean what they preach, hence they discard them at will, as long as their interests are affected.

Take a look at the PDP, for instance. At its formation on July 29, 1998, the facilitators had dreamed of a party that would put the Nigerian nation on a new phase of political engineering. Their goal was to institute a process that would ensure just and equitable distribution of power, resources, wealth and opportunities in line with the principles of power shift and power sharing.

Rotation of key political offices and equitable devolution of powers to zones, states and local governments so as to create socio-political conditions conducive to national unity and to defend the sanctity of electoral democracy, ranked high in the party's agenda.

APC at formation in 2013, had described itself as a change with a pledge to restructure the country, devolve power to the units, with the best practices of federalism and eliminate unintended paralysis of the center.

Both had preached rotation of key offices in the land among the major component units. These were the considerations that informed the PDP giving the South West the chance to produce the president through Olusegun Obasanjo, in 1999. In 2007, it conceded the slot to the North through the late Umar Yar'Adua. The South-South also had a feel of the office through Goodluck Jonathan. The expectation was that it was going to be the turn of the South East, next time.

In the APC, it was hoped that with Presi-

dent Muhammadu Buhari from the North teaming with Vice President Yemi Osinbajo from the South West, the slot would come to the South East in 2023.

But when it mattered most, the two parties treated the zone in a manner unbefitting of partners in a project. Against expectations by many, PDP literally parceled out its ticket to the North, at its May 28 presidential primary. APC chose the South West at its June 7-8 special convention. As in the PDP, the South East was treated with scorn.

The outcomes of the primaries by the two parties, were not surprising, though. Chinua Achebe, the literary icon saw it earlier in his incisive book; The problem with Nigeria. He wrote; "Nigerians of all other ethnic groups will probably achieve consensus on no other matter than their common resentment of the Igbo". That has been the arrangement all the while. PDP and APC merely followed the trend.

CONTINUED ONLINE



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Nigeria's electoral map has direction

Dear Editor

The electoral map towards 2023 has a direction, from the highest down to the lowest level across the entire country.

My humble advice to the electorate is to change their political ideology which does not define the goodness in people and their political parties.

Not all that glitters is gold. Do not be carried away by the wind of political parties or ethnicity, tribalism and nepotism, because Nigeria is a multi - ethnic, multi - tribal, multi - religious and multi - regional country.

Nigeria is the third most linguistically diverse country in the world.

Don't be deceived by the self painted manifesto of the various parties being displayed, rather the personality of the individual they present, the ideology they preach and the capability of their aspirants. Don't engage in vote buying which is a new order of the day.

Nigeria is our nation, the decision on who holds which office largely depends on the electorate. We should make the right decision in order to have a better democratic Nigeria.

Do not vote on the basis of political parties or religion, ethnicity. Vote for a candidate that deserves it.

Bello Shehu Shuni wrote from Sokoto via
08035114465

Yoruba political leaders too cold for comfort

Dear Editor,

The question that keeps pumping in my heart is whether our political leaders in Yoruba land are cowards, sold out, or heartless because of their political ambition. I could not believe that the situation in Nigeria has turned bad to the extent that Yoruba people have become second class citizens in their own native land.

I remember the National Anthem of Nigeria, from 1960 until 1978: "Nigeria We Hail Thee, Our own dear native land, though tribe and tongue may differ, in brotherhood we stand".... The question is, does the country called Nigeria still exist? Really, tribes and tongues differ but do we stand in brotherhood? Since there have been incessant killings of the Yorubas in the South West, has Buhari's voice been heard? Surprisingly, when Chief Sunday Igboho asked the Fulanis to quit Igangan in Yoruba land for peace, Buhari's voice echoed. This is clear handwriting on the wall that the present administration does not represent all Nigerians, but a particular tribe. Why then do we call Nigeria a nation?

Fulanis in the Southwest still receive strong support from their political and association leaders, the same leaders who are supposed to protect the interest of all Nigerians. It is time for our political leaders in Yoruba land to represent the interest of our people. Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN) and two Northern governors flew to the Southwest to solicit for the peaceful coexistence of their brothers when criminal elements were asked to quit Ondo State Government reserved forest. What a true brotherhood? But reverse is the case when our Yoruba people were incessantly kidnapped, raped, and killed. We did not hear our political leaders' voices, either as individuals or groups, talk less of seeing them springing to action. Igboho's house got burnt, because of his agitation for the Yoruba nation's freedom. The news is all over and our elected political leaders in Yoruba land claim they did not hear about it. Will there be any action to the Federal Government from them? I doubt if such will ever happen.

It is time for our political leaders to rise and save us from the failed nation called Nigeria. By my understanding, a nation is a stable community of people formed on the basis of a common language, territory, history, ethnicity, or common culture. None of these attributes exist



TURNING WASTE TO WEALTH: A Scavenger collecting wastes at the Ile – Epo dump site, Gatan Kowa, Agege, Lagos.

PHOTO: ESAN SEFIU

between the Yorubas and the Fulanis in Nigeria.

I enjoin all Yoruba political leaders (past and present) to rise and protect the masses who voted them to power.

Dr. Gbenga Michael Adeyeye wrote from
South Africa.

Governor Bala, champion of women

Dear Editor

In every setting in life, there exists a category of people who see nothing good in any positive efforts, made out of goodwill to improve the lives of the people.

Handling this group of people is, without doubt, the most distressing and hectic aspect of Government business, as they myopically tend to lead the good citizens astray and give them the wrong impression. There was public derision after an appointment letter confirming Balaraba Ibrahim as "Special Assistant to the governor on Women Affairs (Unmarried)", surfaced on social platforms, owing to the appearance of the word "unmarried".

The State Government through the office of Special Assistant to the Governor on Media, Mukhtar Gidado has told the BBC that it was a typing error and that she was in fact appointed as "Special Assistant on Women Affairs (Divorced)". The appointment which was copied from neighbouring Kano State has a similar role. In her new responsibility, Ms Balaraba Ibrahim, a divorcee herself, is obliged to be engaging women in a think tank of sister conversation germane to their existence with a view to providing them with solace and solutions, and is expected to be organising state sponsored mass-weddings for divorced women and also supporting their business ideas. This is not a responsibility she is new to, Ms Ibrahim was head of the association of divorced women in Bauchi State where she organised meetings and programmes for them.

Following her selfless service to women, devotion to duty and sense of responsibility, the Governor saw her fit to assist him fulfill his campaign promises among which include providing an avenue for women to feel and taste the dividend of democracy, thereby improving their lives and giving them a sense of belonging.

Reports indicate that the percentage of divorce rate is high in northern Nigeria, and it appears

to be the itchiest part of women's bodies. The saddest part of it is, despite their gigantic contribution in every democratic dispensation, women's voices are muted, their dreams, yearning and aspirations are not taken into cognisance; they are discriminated and dominated by men, in fact, sometimes, they tend to fall prey for dishonest people, mainly because they know fully that the women have no channel through which their voices can be heard. Governor Bala Mohammed out of his compassion for the plight of women, especially widows and divorcees who are mothers, sisters and daughters and who require special attention; has made a difference to have appointed their fellow woman whose pedigree is a golden one in championing the cause of women. This alone is a testament to the Governor's intention to carry everybody along without an iota of prejudice against gender. The appointment should, therefore, rather be glad tidings than a subject of controversy. And since the appointment is a copied one from Kano State, It would be recalled that within three years (2012-2015) in Kano, no fewer than 5,000 widows and divorcees had benefited from the government-sponsored mass wedding programme introduced by former Governor Rabi'u Kwankwaso.

From 2015 till date, the Kano State Government has sustained the programme to have been organising programmes as regards to the dittoed. This has been a blessing to the state, as owing to the policy, the rate of prostitution and other vices women, especially widows and divorcees do indulge in, out of depression, have drastically reduced. The good citizens of Bauchi State, particularly women, should be hopeful and optimistic that the appointment will yield a juicy and fruitful outcome, and on the watch of conscientious Governor Bala Muhammed, their lofty dreams will always certainly be reality. Dear Governor Bala, listen not to and care not about destructive criticisms. Only take into consideration constructive criticisms that are born out of patriotism for progress, as they improve performance.

Sulaiman Maijama'a wrote from the
Faculty of Communication, BUK.

Agriculture and nation building

Dear Editor

For a country to be ideally independent, such a country has to be self-sufficient. When

a country has difficulty in producing what it consumes, then there is an imbalance of trade and that will affect the per-capita income of the country. If a country cannot achieve self-sufficiency in technology, resources, or other sectors due to environmental location and/or other factors; it should at least be able to achieve such in terms of food production (agriculture). For a country like Nigeria, the acclaimed giant of Africa, that has over 200 million citizens; it is imperative for her to be able to produce its own agricultural consumption especially for the fact that it is blessed with natural and human (manpower) resources needed to achieve this goal. Food security is defined as "the access for all people at all times to have enough food for a healthy, active life. Food self-sufficiency is defined as being able to meet consumption needs (particularly for staple food crops) from own production rather than buying or importing.

The economies of most African nations in the world depend primarily on one or two sectors making them particularly vulnerable to international market fluctuations and encouraging over-exploitation of natural resources. Thus the need for "sustainable development", an all embracing concept which calls for environmentally non-degrading, technically appropriate, economically viable and socially acceptable development, poses dramatic challenges to developing countries like Nigeria in terms of diversifying the economies; providing income and employment opportunities for their citizens and intensifying production. Population pressure and inequitable distribution of resources undermine efforts to feed the citizens.

For every negative or retrogressive trend to be reversed, reformation is necessary. China had a series of challenges in the past, however, between 1960-1970 they had their cultural revolution which greatly impacted on agricultural production years later.

Grace O. Abu is programme assistant,
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Agbakoba: Nigeria's democracy still hovering around June 12
p.20,22

Keeping military in barracks is my joy, says Okei-Odumakin
p.18

The Sunday Interview
Gen Ishola Williams: APC, PDP delegates chose money over integrity
p14,19

POLITICS

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Ayu



Buhari



Adamu

In this analysis, BIYI ADEGOROYE retraces the crises that greeted the annulment of the June 12 elections and makes a projection in respect of the impact it should make on Nigeria's 2023 elections

June 12 and 2023 elections

Among the many benefits of history is the fact that though it does not give a programme for the future, it can give a fuller understanding of the common humanity and form a prognosis for the future.

In the annals of Nigeria's political history, the June 12, 1993 presidential election which produced Chief M.K.O. Abiola, the candidate of the Social Democratic Party, (SDP) as winner ahead of the National Republican Convention, (NRC), candidate, Alhaji Bashir Tofa, remains a watershed in the nation's democratic experience.

It was the day Nigerians across all ethnic nationalities and creeds thronged out and voted en mass, for the SDP to trounce the NRC candidate despite the fact that both of them were Muslims, in an election which would have united Nigeria.

Even today, 29 years after the historic

election and its annulment by the military President, General Ibrahim Babangida, and its attendant crises and protests which brought Nigeria to its knee for over five years, the date has continued to impact on the nation's polity.

The annulment and the consequent strikes and demonstrations hurtled scores of Nigerians into exile and civil society groups and members of the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), across the country became the target of the Abacha government, a number of whom were muled in state-sponsored terrorism.

Numerous notable Nigerians like Alhaja Kudirat Abiola were killed while the likes Chief Abraham Adesanya survived with skin of their teeth. However, others like Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, General Oladipo Diya and a number of senior journalists were imprisoned over alleged coup against the Abacha government.

Abacha's transition programme produced five political parties which Chief Bola Ige derisively described as "five fingers of a leprous hand," geared to-

wards producing Abacha as a civilian president. Months into the exercise, Chief Abiola and General Abacha died within weeks apart, clearing the way for the emergence of General Abdusalami Abubakar who succeeded him as Head of State who commenced a one-year transition to at least civil rule.

June 12 and 1999 poll

Abdusalami revalidated the 1979 Nigerian Constitution and following the announcement his transition programme, the All Nigerians Peoples Party, (ANPP), Alliance for Democracy, (AD) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), which birthed the Fourth Republic on May 29, 1999 came up.

The conciliatory and pacific elections whose major presidential candidates, Chief Olu Falae and Olusegun Obasanjo were from the South-West, has been described as one election designed to assuage the pains of June 12 to the Yoruba people and reunite Nigeria.

At the subnational level, many pro-democracy activists like Bola Tinubu, Kayode Fayemi rose on the crest of the popularity they garnered during

the agitations to become governors in Lagos, and much later Fayemi in Ekiti State. Other assumed the post of commissioners.

While the President Olusegun Obasanjo's eight-year tenure set the stage for the current democratic experience, successive government have taken to the center stage since then until the Buhari government assumed office in 2015.

Since then, Tinubu not only become a kingmaker in Lagos and the South-West, but spread his political tentacles across major parts of the country, having become a national leader of the APC, and a huge influence in the merger of legacy political parties which produced President Buhari in 2015.

Beneficiaries of June 12

The death of their father did not scare Chief Abiola's children from partisan politics. At the dawn of the Fourth Republic, Hon. Lola Abiola-Edewor, one of his daughters was elected into the House of Representatives, and represented Apapa Federal Constituency. Upon the completion of her term she

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

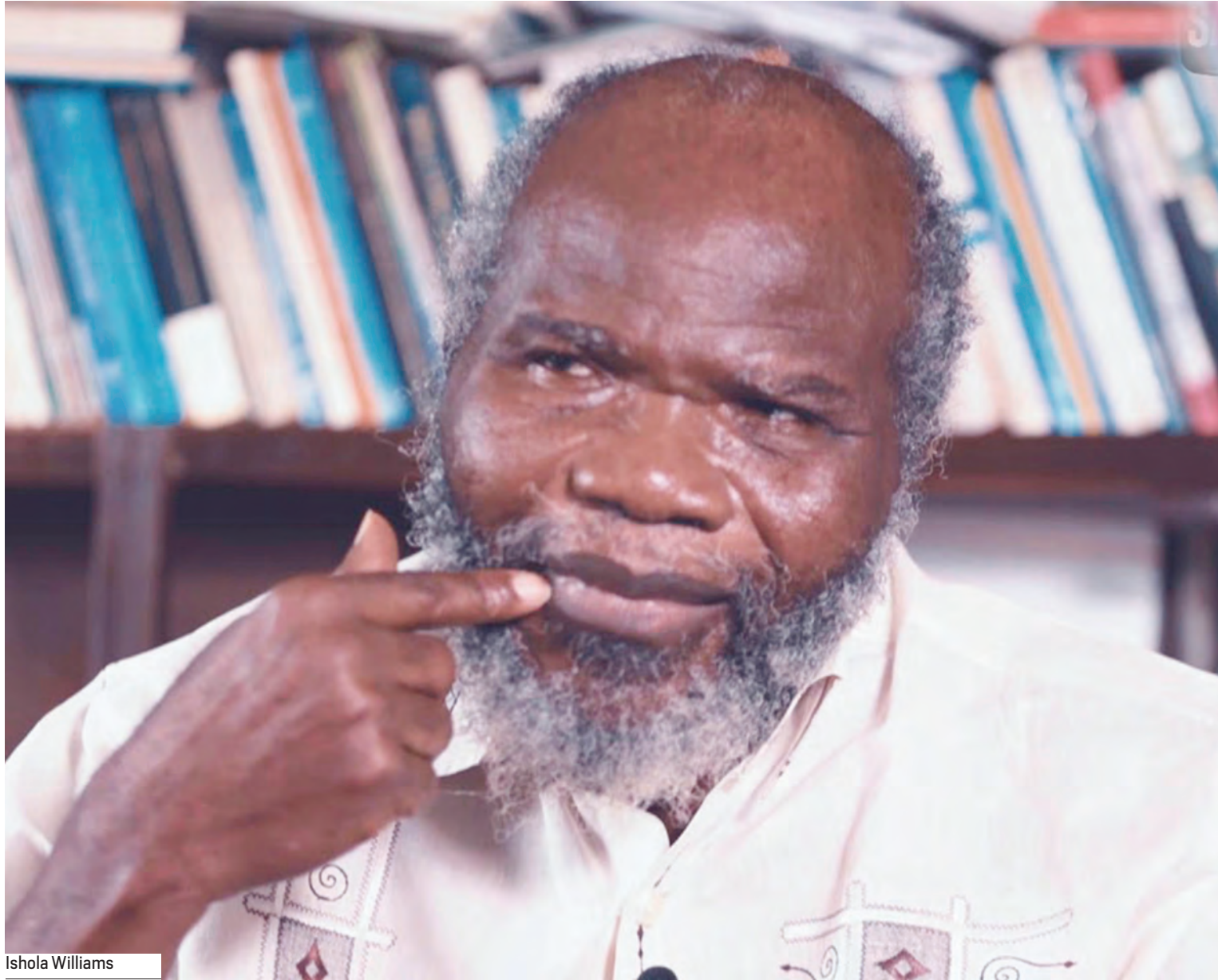
Gen Williams: APC, PDP delegates

Major Gen. Ishola Williams (rtd) is a one-time Commandant, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Nigeria Army. In this interview with JOHNSON AYANTUNJI, he talks about his fears for Nigeria with the way and manner presidential flag bearers of the parties emerged. He said that it is a shame that delegates chose money above integrity and character, security challenges confronting the country. He is of the view that the Nigerian Army is over armed. He bares his mind on the Sunday June 5 attack on Owo as well as sundry issues

The two major political parties – APC and PDP just had their conventions to pick their presidential candidates in Bola Tinubu and Atiku Abubakar, to slug it out in 2023. What do you make of this?

My fear is this because of the situation you have presidential candidates above the age of 70 years. We all know about the health situation of the APC candidate. Not much is known about that of the PDP candidate. The PDP candidate will choose a South Easterner as his running mate while that of the APC has an obligation to choose either a Christian or Muslim from the North East. Man proposes but God disposes, the English man says. If anything happens, in the case of PDP either through infirmity or death, or serious sickness like the case of the Late Yar’ Adua, the power will go to the South East. If it happens to the APC, power will go back to the North. The Southerners, which one will they prefer?

The second one is that if you hear that a country is stable, it is because there is constant attempt and continuous attempt to establish equity and fairness. The presence situation in Nigeria is that the main ethnic groups keep fighting for power because of the federal constitution that we have today, we are lucky that the Supreme Court has ruled on the autonomy of the Local governments, bringing some subsidiaries into our federal system. Secondly the amendment by the National Assembly which is circulating through the States House of Assembly now has to some extent increased some subsidiaries into our federal system. Therefore, we are in a situation in which we should not abandon the rotation between North and South, not Constitutional, but it has become the norm for equity and fairness. With that said, when



Ishola Williams

people said this and that... I ask a simple question. Why do we have the Federal Character Commission? Is it not for equity and fairness? It appears that from the two conventions, the delegates who said they were representing us have lost all sense of respectability, all sense of choosing character and integrity. They should be ashamed of themselves, especially those who collected money and voted against their consciences. I am sure every one of them collected money including those who voted for their candidates.

To certain extent too it is a shame on them, they voted because of the money not because of the character and integrity of the individual. If we do not stop this now, we are going to create a culture that one day it is only people who have stolen wealth, who can become president of Nigeria, who can become the governor of a state, or even the local government chairperson, especially with the autonomy now. Is that good for any country? It has to stop. I keep telling people that Nigeria has no problem with leadership, Nigeria has problems with followership. I ask a question, is there any country in the world where leaders drop from heaven. The leaders come from the people themselves, either through activism or middle class or elites. I do not believe many people say that the democratic system has been completely monetized and Nigeria can prove that with some of the candidates. If we can have a third force and the third force can produce a candidate from the South East that can galvanise people all over the country, who is younger

We all know that we need a third force. We need a credible candidate to stand as presidential candidate for that third force

than the two candidates, who has proved himself in good governance. That has always been difficult in the past. We all know why. What the big parties do is to create confusion in dividing the other parties since they are all like delegates. There are a lot of people too who make so much noise about national interest, but just to attract attention to themselves and for the money they will get. Look at the case of (Kingsley) Moghalu who lost the ticket in ADC (Action Democratic Party). You can imagine what will happen. The Labour Party is divided in itself between the supporters of Peter of Obi and the other fellow. We all know that we need a third force. We need a credible candidate to stand as presidential candidate for that third force. I can't say it right now but you know in politics six months is a long time, anything can happen.

On Sunday, June 5, a church was attacked in Owo, Ondo State, where 40 people were killed and scores injured, and we have Amotekun, what really happened?

It looks as if we do not learn lessons from the past. When Amotekun was created, it was created because there was a need for governors to have control over the safety and security of their states. It was clear to all of them that community comes first in making sure that the safety and security of the community is guaranteed. Who gets killed first? It is the community and when there is a situation like the case in Owo, who gets killed first, it is the community themselves. It is not an invading force. The people just came into the com-

munity and into the Church, where did they come from? As usual when such things they say they are Fulanis. Where were they, they are hiding in the forest. Remember that Ondo State government itself ordered everybody out of the forest of Ondo State and deplored Forest Rangers who were supposed to patrol the forest where those people come from? How come that the community did not know? If there is an Amotekun intelligence system which is supposed to exist, how come there was such a big gap? Was it an inside job? Or some people knew and did not say anything until it happened? Are members of the Community themselves, led by their Baales or Chiefs keeping their ears to the ground, and seeing strange things happening and not informing the Amotekun intelligence system? You know in other countries, when such things happen the head of the security will either resign or be fired.

Mum has been the word since Sunday....

The Head of Amotekun will resign or the governor will sack him. Olowo of Owo will sack the Baale.

It happened a stone's throw away from the palace...

Then, the military will remove all the commanders and heads of the security agencies in that area and make them face court martial. If they do not take disciplinary measures like that it will continue to happen.

But that has always been the case?

Nothing has happened; the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

chose money over integrity

Amotekun Commander is still in office, all the heads of those agencies are still there. No disciplinary action has been taken against anyone for the number of lives lost, and the number of people hospitalized. We move on and then we say that we are investigating, everybody believe that it is the Fulanis. You know the interesting thing when they now come up and say it is not the Fulani, it is our own people, the thing will go quiet. There are two sides of the story now. The Governor is saying that the people came from Kogi, which road did they pass that the Amotekun did not see? Other than this, the Amotekun has been known to stop truck loads from the North with strange people, carrying daggers or anything and send them back, seizing whatever they are carrying. Recently they stopped one, they said were carrying ammunition. How did those ones get through? The issue is that when things are happening and people who are supposed to be in charge of command and control situations, nothing happens to them.

Why is the security and safety architecture so poor?

I have said so, so many times about what to do, but it appears the National Security Adviser, advising the president and the president himself have been adamant. It appears the president and the security adviser do not want State Police. They are trying to convince the president that they are not needed. But Amotekun has proven very clearly that it is needed. Do you know what would have happened in the South West if there was no Amotekun. Like I told you the last time, it was too late for the South East when they established Ebube agu. If they had done it around the same time that Amotekun was created. Like it was in the South south when Nyesom Wike was creating his own outfit like the Amotekun in Port Harcourt and he was backing them up. Good the governors are backing them up. Oyo is an example. Makinde is serious and he is making sure that Amotekun is working.

During our last dialogue, it was said that you cannot take politics out of security, because security needs funding to be done by politicians and some would say separate security from politics. Are they justified in saying this?

Look! Look!! Do not let anyone deceive you. Taking politics out of security is not true. Politics gives direction to safety and security. They just tell the president something and he repeats it, even though he is a retired soldier. Why do you make a governor the Chief security officer of his state? Why is he Commander in Chief if you take politics out of security? Why does he have a National Security Adviser? Why do governors have security advisers? Anybody telling you politics and security are different, that person is talking nonsense.

It was on the crest of the president being a retired officer and that he would be able to deal with the insurgency, banditry and what have you, but that has not been the case and it is so for the past seven years.

It is too late to talk about that now. He has less than nine months to go. Leave the president out of it, he is tired. He does not know what to do anymore. For the past two years I have been saying that if the gover-

nors do not take charge of the safety and security of their states, nobody is going to take care of it.

The Prelate of the Methodist Church in Nigeria was abducted recently and after the payment of N100 million ransom he was released and he alleged that the military is complicit in his abduction. Do you share this view?

The Chief of Defense Staff himself came out openly and said that the military has been found to be complicit in some of these crimes. I have also said so many times too that there is something wrong with the Counter intelligence system of the military, of the police and they need to fix it. What is so interesting in this is that is the DSS (department of State Services) doing its job? The DSS is supposed to be an intelligence outfit, mainly to get intelligence that ordinary people cannot get, to see the things that ordinary people cannot see, especially within the territorial area of the country and that is why they are all over the country. To me it looks as if they like competing with the DSS boldly written on their back and front like soldiers and policemen. They do not live up to their mandate and expectations. Again it depends on political direction, it depends on the NSA.

How has the military fared under civilian dispensation?

The Chief of Army Staff has been very honest with himself. He cried out that I need help. He told old soldiers, retired officers that if you think that you can help us please come. We are open to ideas that we can use to be able to tackle some of these problems. But the first thing I will tell him is that it is not his business to run after terrorists and bandits. I did tell him in Minna last December, Please tell the Commander in Chief , separate the Mobile Police from the Police and create an independent Mobile Police and retrain them as Police Commando. They will be responsible for handling terrorism and banditry. The State Police will provide the information that they need. This independent Mobile Police Command will back them up.

But the Police have a Counter Terrorism Unit aside from the Mobile and regular Police. They are to counter terrorism as the name implies.

That is where the confusion lies. People like creating jobs and jobs for everyone, It is like Lagos State Neighbourhood Watch. Tell me what they are doing? They are not doing the job they are supposed to be doing. You find them at the traffic junction controlling traffic. No! if the neighbourhood Watch were working properly, they are supposed to be taking care of the Okada people (Motorcycle Operators) before the police. That is why are they called Neighbourhood Watch. Some of them are not supposed to be in uniform. But Nigerians love uniforms. Not for anything but because of what they want to do with it – to show off and to extort money with it here and there. They have a Commander, Director General or something like that. He too likes wearing a uniform. If they are really working, some of them will be Okada riders who will infiltrate the okada riders. Every state has a ministry equivalent of the ministry of Interior at the federal level. What are the min-

istries of Home Affairs doing? People are not doing what they are supposed to do. There are so much corrupt minds. If money does not come out, forget it whether people get killed or not. They leave everything to the police. One interesting thing about the police as far as I know is that the Police used to collect money monthly from all these Unions. They allow them to grow wings to do whatever they like. In Lagos some years back, I do not know if still happens, if the Danfo driver knows that he would go scot free if he had an accident. Why? Every month the Danfo driver delivers to the Police and the police too know how to cover them up. If that continues to happen, how do you expect the danfo driver, the Okada riders to behave?

Two days ago (Tuesday, June 7, they stood up to the Police at Idi Araba and where throwing stones at the Police over the enforcement of the ban on Okada riders. Is that a proper thing to do?

They do not respect the police. Police! In the Francophone country, you dare not do that. Just go to Cotonou and go and misbehave, they will just blow the whistle and you are arrested. The Police have lost its respect. Again, money. Many people have done the studies and they calculated how much all these transport unions collect every day – Okada, Danfo, millions, every month billion, no taxes. Can you imagine, they are collecting more money than Lagos State does monthly. Can you imagine if Lagos state were collecting taxes on those money made by those unions. But Lagos state will leave them alone, because of politics. They can use them for politics. There are so many things that are happening and they are becoming a culture, and the politicians like I call them not politicians who are playing tricks and not politics are creating an environment for this culture to be entrenched in our society. We have the worst organized system in the world. How can a group of people be collecting money without control?

They are modifying it now, they call it the Park Management System.

They are joking. They are not serious. Which park are they managing? Have you been to the parks to see some of these parks, they are not maintained. At least the one in Agege they are building remains uncompleted. The one Ambode spent a lot of money on in Ikeja, of what use is it?

Still talking about the military, even if they have the best of the equipment and their morale is low, they still cannot perform well, what is your view on this?

To me the military is over armed for what they are doing.

What do you mean?

They do not need all those sophisticated equipment and hard wares. They do not need all those Tucarnos. Like Brigadier General Gumi (rtd) although he is a medical officer said, it is not the Tucarno that will stop the terrorists. I read one shocking one even though it has been written long ago, a helicopter went to a village in Southern Kaduna and killed about 32 people. A Helicopter. I do not know whether it is a fake news. Where did the helicopter come from? How come nobody knew? Our intelligence system is not working well; counter in-

telligence system is not working well.

Is that when they have the information, they keep it to themselves or even leak information to the terrorists. Early this year in Kebbi State, about 52 vigilante men were killed in ambush in Kebbi because they were going to take on the bandits by surprise, those ones got wind of it and waited for them to come and attacked them.

It means like a story I read one or two years ago in which a commanding officer, told everybody to put their mobile phones on the table before they go on operation. The telephones started ringing after they has left on the operation. He told the intelligence boys to pick the phones and talk to those people. They were terrorists asking those boys when are you leaving, where are you passing through. There are some soldiers and very few have been apprehended from the announcements that have been handing information to those terrorist. What about the Prelate of the Methodist Church who said that the military is complicit in the kidnapping. The place they took them to was near the military location. The Chief of Defense Staff himself said so. It means that something is wrong with your counter intelligence.

What is your view on the general situations in the country – inflation, killings, and abductions?

All these challenges and problems here and there is a question of subsidiary. If you can solve a problem as the local government level, solve it, if you can solve a problem as the state level, solve it, if the local government cannot solve it, go to the state. Most of the problems can be solved at the state level, you do not need to go to Abuja.

But that is the way our Constitution is configured.

Yes even those in Abuja are not looking at subsidiary as a conflict management and resolution mechanism. They are looking at it from control of money. How much percentage will go to the federal government? That is why you have a situation in which Amaechi could afford to cancel a university in the south south and build a university in Daura and within the period of seven years, the institutions that have been placed in the president's home town – polytechnics, military hospital, university and what have you. It is nothing but abuse of power, abuse of opportunity. That is why it is good for states to control their resources and contribute money to the federal government for defense, foreign policy, central banking and so forth. If a state does not develop it is not the problem of the federal government. Also, it will force many states to merge, especially in the North.

The Orosanye Panel made recommendations that some ministries, departments and agencies (MDA) doing similar things be merged or scrapped, the government has even issued a white paper on it, but government is yet to implement them...

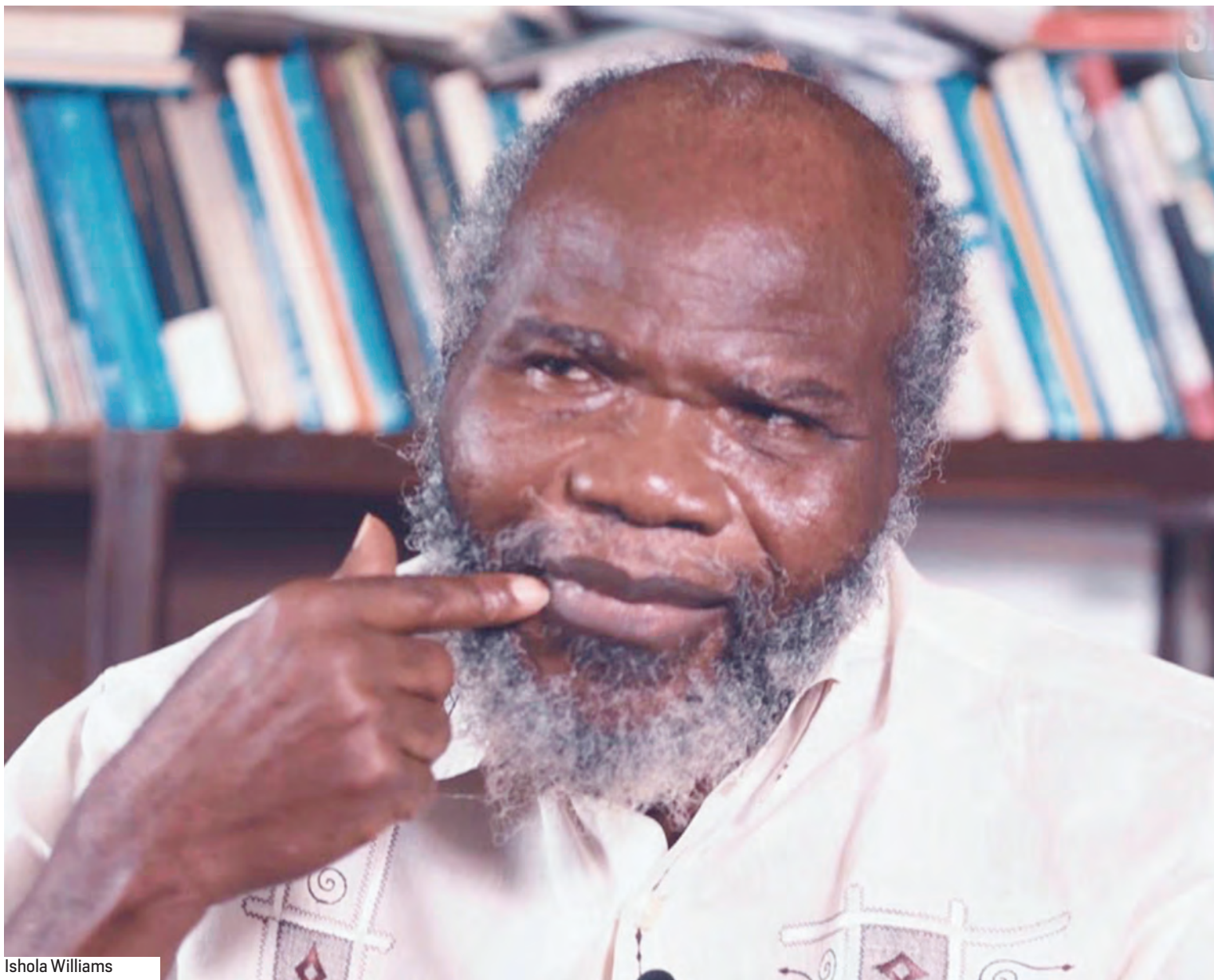
The president say go ahead with a particular policy. That is where the civil service and the civil servants come in. It shows you the power of the civil service. If they do not want anything to happen in this country,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

SUNDAY INTERVIEW

Gen Williams: APC, PDP delegates

Major Gen. Ishola Williams (rtd) is a one-time Commandant, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Nigeria Army. In this interview with JOHNSON AYANTUNJI, he talks about his fears for Nigeria with the way and manner presidential flag bearers of the parties emerged. He said that it is a shame that delegates chose money above integrity and character, security challenges confronting the country. He is of the view that the Nigerian Army is over armed. He bares his mind on the Sunday June 5 attack on Owo as well as sundry issues



Ishola Williams

The two major political parties – APC and PDP just had their conventions to pick their presidential candidates in Bola Tinubu and Atiku Abubakar, to slug it out in 2023. What do you make of this?

My fear is this because of the situation you have presidential candidates above the age of 70 years. We all know about the health situation of the APC candidate. Not much is known about that of the PDP candidate. The PDP candidate will choose a South Easterner as his running mate while that of the APC has an obligation to choose either a Christian or Muslim from the North East. Man proposes but God disposes, the English man says. If anything happens, in the case of PDP either through infirmity or death, or serious sickness like the case of the Late Yar' Adua, the power will go to the South East. If it happens to the APC, power will go back to the North. The Southerners, which one will they prefer?

The second one is that if you hear that a country is stable, it is because there is constant attempt and continuous attempt to establish equity and fairness. The present situation in Nigeria is that the main ethnic groups keep fighting for power because of the federal constitution that we have today, we are lucky that the Supreme Court has ruled on the autonomy of the Local governments, bringing some subsidiaries into our federal system. Secondly the amendment by the National Assembly which is circulating through the States House of Assembly now has to some extent increased some subsidiaries into our federal system. Therefore, we are in a situation in which we should not abandon the rotation between North and South, not Constitutional, but it has become the norm for equity and fairness. With that said, when

people said this and that... I ask a simple question. Why do we have the Federal Character Commission? Is it not for equity and fairness? It appears that from the two conventions, the delegates who said they were representing us have lost all sense of respectability, all sense of choosing character and integrity. They should be ashamed of themselves, especially those who collected money and voted against their consciences. I am sure every one of them collected money including those who voted for their candidates.

To certain extent too it is a shame on them, they voted because of the money not because of the character and integrity of the individual. If we do not stop this now, we are going to create a culture that one day it is only people who have stolen wealth, who can become president of Nigeria, who can become the governor of a state, or even the local government chairperson, especially with the autonomy now. Is that good for any country? It has to stop. I keep telling people that Nigeria has no problem with leadership, Nigeria has problems with followership. I ask a question, is there any country in the world where leaders drop from heaven. The leaders come from the people themselves, either through activism or middle class or elites. I do not believe many people say that the democratic system has been completely monetized and Nigeria can prove that with some of the candidates. If we can have a third force and the third force can produce a candidate from the South East that can galvanise people all over the country, who is younger

than the two candidates, who has proved himself in good governance. That has always been difficult in the past. We all know why. What the big parties do is to create confusion in dividing the other parties since they are all like delegates. There are a lot of people too who make so much noise about national interest, but just to attract attention to themselves and for the money they will get. Look at the case of (Kingsley) Moghalu who lost the ticket in ADC (Action Democratic Party). You can imagine what will happen. The Labour Party is divided in itself between the supporters of Peter of Obi and the other fellow. We all know that we need a third force. We need a credible candidate to stand as presidential candidate for that third force. I can't say it right now but you know in politics six months is a long time, anything can happen.

On Sunday, June 5, a church was attacked in Owo, Ondo State, where 40 people were killed and scores injured, and we have Amotekun, what really happened?

It looks as if we do not learn lessons from the past. When Amotekun was created, it was created because there was a need for governors to have control over the safety and security of their states. It was clear to all of them that community comes first in making sure that the safety and security of the community is guaranteed. Who gets killed first? It is the community and when there is a situation like the case in Owo, who gets killed first, it is the community themselves. It is not an invading force. The people just came into the com-

munity and into the Church, where did they come from? As usual when such things they say they are Fulanis. Where were they, they are hiding in the forest. Remember that Ondo State government itself ordered everybody out of the forest of Ondo State and deplored Forest Rangers who were supposed to patrol the forest where those people come from? How come that the community did not know? If there is an Amotekun intelligence system which is supposed to exist, how come there was such a big gap? Was it an inside job? Or some people knew and did not say anything until it happened? Are members of the Community themselves, led by their Baales or Chiefs keeping their ears to the ground, and seeing strange things happening and not informing the Amotekun intelligence system? You know in other countries, when such things happen the head of the security will either resign or be fired.

Mum has been the word since Sunday....

The Head of Amotekun will resign or the governor will sack him. Olowo of Owo will sack the Baale.

It happened a stone's throw away from the palace...

Then, the military will remove all the commanders and heads of the security agencies in that area and make them face court martial. If they do not take disciplinary measures like that it will continue to happen.

But that has always been the case?

Nothing has happened; the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

We all know that we need a third force. We need a credible candidate to stand as presidential candidate for that third force

FEATURES

Marginal Fields: How Russia-Ukraine war can improve upstream petroleum sector –NUPRC

Having ensured that it concluded the 2020 marginal oilfield bid round by insisting on strict adherence to the rules guiding approvals and issuance of licenses in the upstream sector of the nation's oil and gas industry, the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) says it is gearing up to issue Petroleum Prospecting Licences (PPLs). **TONY CHKWUNYEM** reports



Kyari



Komolafe

Clearly, with no end in sight to the Russia-Ukraine war, the Federal Government is hoping to cash in on the current high prices of crude oil by ramping up the country's oil reserves and daily production.

In order to achieve this, the government would undoubtedly want production to commence in the 57 marginal oil fields won last year by 161 companies in the 2020 marginal oil field bid round.

The 2020 marginal oil field bid round started in June 2020 and by May, 2021, 161 companies were shortlisted as winners of the 57 marginal fields put on offer, which spanned onshore, swamp and shallow-water.

Some of the companies, which emerged winners in that exercise included: Matrix Energy, AA Rano, Andova Plc, Duport Midstream, Genesis Technical, Twin Summit, Bono Energy, Deep Offshore Integrated, Oodua Oil, MRS and Petrogas.

Others were: Metropole, Pioneer Global, North Oils and Gas, Pierport, Shepherd Hill, Akata, NIPCO, Aida, YY Connect, Accord Oil, Pathway Oil, Tempo Oil and Virgin Forest, among others.

The defunct Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) had at the time put the total value of the 57 marginal oil fields at not less than \$500 million.

However, early this year, the successor agency to the DPR, the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), disclosed that 80 per cent of the awardees had complied in terms of payment while close to 90 per cent of the companies had complied in forming the Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs).

The commission had also disclosed that the marginal oil fields awarded to 33 companies had been revoked following their inability to meet the 45 days deadline required to pay the signature bonus for the fields.

According to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of NUPRC, Mr. Gbenga Komolafe, the commission is targeting June for marginal field awardees to begin the Field Development Plan (FDP).

Komolafe, who stated this while appearing on "The Morning Show" of the ARISE News Channel recently, said the plan includes all activities and processes required to optimally develop a field.

He noted that over 600 companies had applied to be pre-qualified for the bid rounds of 57 marginal fields, which began on June 1, 2020.

Commenting on the first successful bid programme which was completed by the defunct DPR in May 2021, but was hindered by bureaucratic challenges, thus ensuring that actual drilling for oil did not effectively take off well over a year after the awardees were officially handed award certificates, Komolafe said although the NUPRC inherited a complex situation, it would resolve all issues by the first half of this year.

He said: "It's critical because one of our cardinal objectives is to ensure that we increase the national oil production, and of course, we realise that the fields will help in enhancing that."

"We took the issue frontally. It's really been very challenging to handle the issue in the sense that the model used poses serious challenges to bringing the matter to an end quickly."

"But I want to assure Nigerians and indeed the awardees that we have been able to, as I speak, try to bring the issue to a manageable state and devise a strategy for bringing the challenge to a close."

He disclosed that there has been over 80 per cent compliance in terms of payment.

"In fact, one of the challenges we've had is that even forming the SPVs, they are still having challenges working together because of the nature of the model used," the NUPRC CEO added.

It is better you have a regulator that abides by the rule of law than to have a genius as a regulator. If you have a judge in court and he decides to rule on the basis of his ingenuity, then, it becomes a ground for appeal

"But by and large, I want to say that, as a commission, we will learn from this experience, and I want to assure Nigerians that the next marginal bid will not be bogged down by these kinds of challenges we experienced in managing the fallout of the 2020 marginal field."

"Before the first half of the year, we want to see a situation where some of the awardees will be proceeding to the field development plan."

"At the moment again, we have recorded close to 90 per cent of the co-awardees forming their SPV, and at that stage, it is the very comfortable stage when the commission can go ahead to issue Petroleum Prospecting Licences (PPLs)."

About two months ago, NUPRC had said it would invite eligible reserve bidders for the 2020 marginal field bid round programme.

Rule of law

In a chat with journalists recently, Komolafe had emphasised that the regulator would ensure that law and due process were followed in the award of licenses to operators, stating categorically that under his leadership, no marginal field operator would be allowed to 'trade' in papers issued by the organisation.

He stated that the rule of law would be strictly followed in the issuance of final licences to the winners, stating that no amount of pressure would make the commission award final documents without due process.

He further said: "It is better you have a regulator that abides by the rule of law than to have a genius as a regulator. If you have a judge in court and he decides to rule on the basis of his ingenuity, then, it becomes a ground for appeal."

He added: "If you have such a judge, he is a problem judge; he would be abusing discretion. I am going to ensure that our rules and processes give effect to the law. Awards of acreages will be carried out on the basis of fairness, transparency and competitiveness."

He acknowledged that some of the companies that had fully paid their bonuses were insisting that they could not raise funds without collecting the licences.

PIA as boost to financiers

However, commenting on the issue at a recent marginal field conference in Lagos, Komolafe, pointed out that the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) has provided a safety net for financiers to provide funds for the development of oil and gas in Nigeria, as the marginal field operators can leverage on this to raise funds for their operations.

He said the PIA under Section 95 (5) has also made provisions for: "Holders of license or lease by way of security, to assign, pledge, and mortgage its interest, in whole or in part under the applicable license or lease provided the consent of the commission is obtained".

Represented by the commission's Head of Basinal Assessment and Lease Administration, Mr. Edu Iyang, the CEO listed the various options open to the marginal field operators and investors to raise funds for marginal field development as "private equity, capital market, strategic alliance and debt financing."

The NUPRC CEO noted that the commission was improving due diligence protocols to enable investors and operators access information prior to taking investment decisions and encouraging synergies in the use of shared facilities.

He stated further that the commission was also developing regulations to enable ease of implementation of the PIA, saying concerted efforts were being made in collaboration with stakeholders to tackle security issues in the oil and gas sector.

Komolafe said the commission had delineated the 57 marginal fields' areas and engaged awardees to resolve issues arising from the 2020 marginal field award as well as concluded drafting of model license document, which is critical for issuing PPL to awardees.

Conclusion

Industry watchers believe that the tough stance of the NUPRC leadership with regard to ensuring transparency and the rule of law in its regulation of the upstream sector of the oil and gas industry will play a key role in boosting the nation's oil reserves and production.

Today marks exactly 29 years since the June 12, 1993 presidential election was held. Adjudged to be the freest and fairest election ever held in Nigeria, the presumed winner of that election, Chief Moshood Kashimowo Olawale Abiola was, to many, Nigeria's hero of democracy. In this piece, LADESOPE LADELOKUN writes on the legacies of the business mogul and consummate politician

Once a Mecca of sorts for the down and out that daily thronged the Ikeja residence for succour, one could almost hear a pin drop on stepping into the compound of the expansive house of the late Chief Moshood Kashimowo Abiola during a visit on Monday, June 6, 2022.

Except the newly painted building and fence, perhaps in preparation for the 29th remembrance of the annulment of the June 12 1993 presidential election, nothing signified the acclaimed winner of that presidential election lived in that vicinity as quietude had sacked the once boisterous atmosphere.

Barely twenty-four years after his demise, stories are still told of his uncommon philanthropy. Tongues share testimonies of the selflessness of the late business mogul. But, like the certainty of death, change, they say, is the only constant in life.

Baba Omitogun, a roadside vulcaniser, has plied his trade beside the office of the old Concord Press- producers of the now defunct Concord newspapers owned by the late business mogul and Philanthropist, popularly known as MKO-for 40 years.

For him, having his business right beside the company has been a bitter-sweet experience. But, counting his blessings, he said, they far outweigh the pains to him, saying having his business beside a company owned by MKO has in no small lifted him to heights he never imagined.

But things took a different turn when the company went under. The once-bubbling-with-activities company had, according to him, become a shadow of itself after the demise of Abiola, as it played host to weeds and dangerous animals. Behind Omitogun is an unused piece of land overgrown with weeds, which shares boundary with MKO's property. But, right on the body of the gate of the property is a banner hung that read "FOR LEASE"; something that advertises the business of the new occupants of Concord Press.

"This place has been leased out to the present Secretary to the State Government in Ogun State, Tokunbo Talabi," a manager of the property, who pleaded anonymity told *Sunday Telegraph*.

"There are more than six companies here. There's Courier Plus here. We have American Corner, Regus and so on. That's all I can say."

Reliving memories of the philanthropist in the days of Concord newspapers, Omitogun said he demonstrated his love for people by allowing them to sell their wares right in front of his company, adding that he never left without offering everyone at the gate some financial assistance.

"No one is completely perfect but he was a good man. I never went to him for financial assistance but I know many people he helped. People I know personally. During



29 years after: MKO's legacies battered by death



Location of Abiola's Epetedo declaration

Ramadan, people would queue here - in front of Concord newspaper office-waiting for him and he would make them happy. This place was like a market place. People sold their wares. Whenever he stepped down, he would give all of them money.

"The company was looking horrible before it was leased out. That was about five years ago. And it is understandable when you lock up a place for a very long time. It is expected. This place was overgrown with weeds. Personally, my business benefitted from the presence of Concord newspapers here. When the paper got defunct, things were very difficult because people here would always patronise me. Though there were auto-mechanics in the compound, many artisans were in the compound, my business still boomed."

"When Abiola was alive, he was even happy that people were selling wares in front of his office. Whenever he came here then, he would tell his driver to stop. He would alight from his car and give people selling wares in front of his company money. If it were some people, they would just send them away. But he was accommodating and selfless. But now that this place has a new occupant, you can no longer see people here. It is not everyone that would allow people to turn the front of their office to a marketplace. Things have changed."

Today, his investments and children are scattered all over the world. Some of his business interests were the Concord Press, Banuso Fisheries, Abiola Farms, Abiola Bookshops, Radio Communications Nigeria, Wonder Bakeries, Habib Bank, Concord Airlines, Summit Oil International Ltd, Africa Ocean Lines, among others. In Nigeria and the West African sub-region, Abiola's



Former Concord Press Gate



Abiola International School

firms and companies employed over 5,000 people.

His first son, Kola Abiola, is the 2023 presidential candidate of the Peoples' Redemption Party (PRP).

Expressing gratitude to his party for the confidence reposed in him by choosing him as the flagbearer, Kola said: "We must now move to the next stage of our journey. To achieve the results that we know we are capable of, as a Party, we must secure broad support across our diverse and divided nation. We must compete and win at the local, state, and federal levels. We will do this because our secret weapon as PRP is our people and their commitment to our great Party and its ethical foundations. I promise to campaign with every PRP candidate, from the ward, local government to state level, to achieve our collective goals."

How defunct Concord newspaper made me -Vulcaniser

"Abiola's house was like a market place. Except you don't see him, once you see him, you are sure to smile back to your house. People slept over at his house. His house was always busy. You know he was everywhere. Sometimes, he could be out of the country but people waited for him to return from his trip in his compound because they knew they would not be the same person again after meeting him. He loved people and accommodated them. Like I said, I never went to him for any help despite being my kinsman but his family members always invited me whenever there was a function and I honoured their invitation whenever I could. But, in all, Abiola was a loving person. He loved the downtrodden."

"Despite the hardship the absence of Concord caused me, I still soldiered on. My faith in God was unshaken because I know it is from God that sweetness comes. When things get sour or bitter, it is also from him. But I knew my God would always make a way for me. Look, even with the hardship the demise of Concord caused me, I never for once thought of leaving here. With this job, I trained my kids. I gave them education. My children are graduates and I built my house. Every basic thing anyone needs in life, I have. Interestingly, in my 40 years of stay here, I never paid a kobo here," Baba Omitogun said.

Children protest over sharing formula of properties

Displeased by what they called an unfair sharing of their father's properties, children of the wife of the billionaire business man, Kudirat Abiola, had in a letter titled, 'Report of A Decade-Long Fraud' alleged that some family members had continued to deny them their rights to their shares of the late business mogul's properties within

An encounter with domestic staff, neighbours at MKO's house

Sunday Telegraph: Good evening. Is this the late MKO Abiola's house?

Neighbour 1: Yes, it is.

Sunday Telegraph: I need to speak with a member of his family.

Neighbour 1: You can go in. It's not a place you should be scared of entering. People go in and out of here every time.

Sunday Telegraph: I hope there's no dogs inside

Neighbour 1: No now. Just go in. Abiola's house is like a public place. You can interact with whoever you see.

Neighbour 2: Yes now. No problem.

Neighbour 2: That's her daughter-in-law coming. You can see her.

Sunday Telegraph: Okay

Domestic Staff 1: What are you doing here?

Domestic Staff 2: You know you can be accused of theft? Is this your house?

Sunday Telegraph: Baba's daughter-in-law just walked in. I would appreciate if you can help facilitate a chat with her.

Domestic Staff 2: Oga, get out of this place now.

Domestic Staff 1: What are you still doing here?

Sunday Telegraph: Haba!

Neighbour 1: So, how did it go?

Sunday Telegraph: I was harassed and sent out

Neighbour 2: When dem come start that one now?

Neighbour 1: E shock me o.

and outside Nigeria. Led by Lekan Abiola, the letter, which was addressed to President Buhari in 2021 partly read:

"Your Excellency, we know you are determined to build a new Nigeria where there is law and order and as a result, you will want to be informed about the matter at hand before it gets out of hand."

"Our father was a man of equity and, as such, he established companies that reflected this side of him. In all his companies, he made sure that no child was given one single share and that no child was even officially made a director. Even in Habib Bank (now Keystone Bank), he gave equal shares to children of different mothers (Kola and Lekan were given equal shares and this can be verified)."

They argued that after the death of their father, some members of the family fraudulently and criminally inserted their names into their father's companies, including the most active one called RCN.

"Having taken control of this company, these individuals were able to tamper with the Bank PHB shares and borrow monies from commercial banks using our father's assets with the aim to default and impoverish his other children," they added.

"This is despite the fact that in his will, our father stated that his entire assets should be equally shared among all his children. This is something that should have been done over two decades ago. They were also able to use their new status in RCN to exert influence on other companies like Abiola Farms and Abiola Bookshop, where RCN is also a major shareholder."

"If they were to do it all over again, they would do it same way" - MKO's daughter

In an interview with the CNN, Hafsat Abiola, a daughter of the late business mogul, said her parents -MKO Abiola and Kudirat Abiola-would make more sacrifices for humanity despite paying the supreme price for the enthronement of democracy if

they had another chance.

"I think that if they were to do it all over again, they would do it exactly the same way. Or if not, they would even make more sacrifices because I think we only live once, and we must do what we can."

Also, in another interview monitored on television, a son of the politician, Abdulmumin Abiola, said MKO stood for better Nigeria, describing him as a man who tried to better everyone he came across.

"Today, we shouldn't be talking about the things we talked about in 1993. I wouldn't say we have not learnt. It takes time to change. It's important to understand that we are basically where we were in 1993. My father used to say something. It goes: The most precious thing is not our oil or gold in Osun or cocoa in Ogun State. The most important thing in the country is our people," he added.

Lived, died for masses

The National President and Convener of "my Nigeria e-passport" project, Ambassador Tolu Ayodele, said there was need for wealthy Nigerians to emulate MKO's selflessness.

According to him, MKO Abiola remains Nigeria's hero of democracy, stating that he was an embodiment of a good Nigerian billionaire, who used his wealth for the people around him.

"So many people benefited from his benevolence. Top politicians like Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu can testify to Abiola's kind gesture. Abiola lived his life for the masses and he died for the masses, he fought and died for the democracy that we are all enjoying today."

"MKO Abiola made people. He produced great leaders. So many people stepped up through him. When he was alive, his house at Toyin Street in Ikeja, used to be filled up with people seeking help and they always go back home smiling. Nigerian billion-

aires and millionaires should learn from the good life of MKO Abiola- live your life for people. We brought nothing into this world and we are taking nothing back. Life is ephemeral. Nothing on earth is forever. In this world, there is no amount of money that can buy life. That is why wealthy men and women should assist other people to rise up. The good or bad life you lived will live after you, use your wealth for humanity, it is God that gives wealth. That is the only way we can stop crimes in Nigeria."

"There are lots of graduates out there who are very creative. Some came out with First Class and the wealthy men around them know these people but they will never help them and most of this graduates laboured to pay school fees and after graduation, no job to keep body and soul together. That is why they are into all sorts of criminal activities. Most of them don't like to do it but they are pushed to do it."

"The rich men and women should learn from Abiola, help people around you, invest in people."

MKO Abiola International School

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"We are a nursery/primary school serving families within Ikeja and its environs. AIS was founded in 1993 by the late Chief MKO Abiola to offer quality and affordable education, a legacy we have remained committed to. Experiences in the early years have major impacts on the future; that is why we offer a haven where children are to develop their creativity and self-confidence and also fulfill their potentials," the school wrote on its website.

MKO Abiola Bookshops

Before now, 362 Herbert Macaulay Way, Yaba, Lagos used to be known as Abiola Bookshop. But, not anymore. Right from the gate, pictures of UNICORN welcome visitors, suggesting that the property now has new occupants.

"Abiola Bookshop is no longer here. As you can see, this place has been leased out. If you need more information, come back tomorrow," a security guard told Sunday Telegraph.

Meanwhile, in January 2018, at least four suspected burglars were arrested and arraigned before a Lagos Magistrate Court for allegedly entering the Late MKO Abiola's Bulk purchase bookshop in Oshodi, Lagos to steal properties valued at N1 billion.

The properties allegedly stolen by the accused persons, according to the Police included a generator, welding machine, books, tank and printing machine.

The Police said that the accused persons allegedly threatened the life of Mr. Ajayi Oluwatosin, a security officer attached with Pexion Security services and other staff guarding the bookshop to gain entry into the shop to steal and damaged properties valued at N500 million and escaped.

Our democracy's Abiola's legacy -Atiku

In a series of tweets, Nigeria's former Vice President, Atiku Abubakar, had opined that though Nigeria's democracy was Abiola's legacy, Nigeria must grow beyond democracy and Nigerians must make Nigeria work. See his tweets below:

"For many of us who worked with Chief M.K.O. Abiola, his death was painful but it paved the way for enduring democracy #June12

"Our democracy today, is MKO Abiola's legacy. But we must grow beyond just democracy - our country must work. #June12

"On #June12, 1993, Nigeria was united in one cause, to defeat tyranny through democracy. We all believed.

"The integrity of the #June12 electoral process also shows that we Nigerians can achieve great things, if we are united.

Today marks exactly 29 years since the June 12, 1993 presidential election was held. Adjudged to be the freest and fairest election ever held in Nigeria, the presumed winner of that election, Chief Moshood Kashimowo Olawale Abiola was, to many, Nigeria's hero of democracy. In this piece, LADESOPE LADELOKUN writes on the legacies of the business mogul and consummate politician

Once a Mecca of sorts for the down and out that daily thronged his Ikeja residence for succour, one could almost hear a pin drop on stepping into the compound of the expansive house of the late Chief Moshood Kashimowo Abiola during a visit on Monday, June 6, 2022.

Except the newly painted building and fence, perhaps in preparation for the 29th remembrance of the annulment of the June 12 1993 presidential election, nothing signified the acclaimed winner of that presidential election lived in that vicinity as quietude had sacked the once boisterous atmosphere.

Barely twenty-four years after his demise, stories are still told of his uncommon philanthropy. Tongues share testimonies of the selflessness of the late business mogul. But, like the certainty of death, change, they say, is the only constant in life.

Baba Omitogun, a roadside vulcanizer, has plied his trade beside the office of the old Concord Press- producers of the now defunct Concord newspapers owned by the late business mogul and Philanthropist, popularly known as MKO-for 40 years.

For him, having his business right beside the company has been a bitter-sweet experience. But, counting his blessings, he said, they far outweigh the pains to him, saying having his business beside a company owned by MKO has in no small lifted him to heights he never imagined.

But things took a different turn when the company went under. The once-bubbling-with-activities company had, according to him, become a shadow of itself after the demise of Abiola, as it played host to weeds and dangerous animals. Behind Omitogun is an unused piece of land overgrown with weeds, which shares boundary with MKO's property. But, right on the body of the gate of the property is a banner hung that read "FOR LEASE"; something that advertises the business of the new occupants of Concord Press.

"This place has been leased out to the present Secretary to the State Government in Ogun State, Tokunbo Talabi," a manager of the property, who pleaded anonymity told *Sunday Telegraph*.

"There are more than six companies here. There's Courier Plus here. We have American Corner, Regus and so on. That's all I can say."

Reliving memories of the philanthropist in the days of Concord newspapers, Omitogun said he demonstrated his love for people by allowing them to sell their wares right in front of his company, adding that he never left without offering everyone at the gate some financial assistance.

"No one is completely perfect but he was a good man. I never went to him for financial assistance but I know many people he helped. People I know personally. During



29 years after: MKO's legacies battered by death



Location of Abiola's Epetedo declaration

Ramadan, people would queue here - in front of Concord newspaper office-waiting for him and he would make them happy. This place was like a market place. People sold their wares. Whenever he stepped down, he would give all of them money.

"The company was looking horrible before it was leased out. That was about five years ago. And it is understandable when you lock up a place for a very long time. It is expected. This place was overgrown with weeds. Personally, my business benefitted from the presence of Concord newspapers here. When the paper got defunct, things were very difficult because people here would always patronise me. Though there were auto-mechanics in the compound, many artisans were in the compound, my business still boomed."

"When Abiola was alive, he was even happy that people were selling wares in front of his office. Whenever he came here then, he would tell his driver to stop. He would alight from his car and give people selling wares in front of his company money. If it were some people, they would just send them away. But he was accommodating and selfless. But now that this place has a new occupant, you can no longer see people here. It is not everyone that would allow people to turn the front of their office to a marketplace. Things have changed."

Today, his investments and children are scattered all over the world. Some of his business interests were the Concord Press, Banuso Fisheries, Abiola Farms, Abiola Bookshops, Radio Communications Nigeria, Wonder Bakeries, Habib Bank, Concord Airlines, Summit Oil International Ltd, Africa Ocean Lines, among others. In Nigeria and the West African sub-region, Abiola's



Former Concord Press Gate



Abiola International School

firms and companies employed over 5,000 people.

His first son, Kola Abiola, is the 2023 presidential candidate of the Peoples’ Redemption Party (PRP).

Expressing gratitude to his party for the confidence reposed in him by choosing him as the flagbearer, Kola said: “We must now move to the next stage of our journey. To achieve the results that we know we are capable of, as a Party, we must secure broad support across our diverse and divided nation. We must compete and win at the local, state, and federal levels. We will do this because our secret weapon as PRP is our people and their commitment to our great Party and its ethical foundations. I promise to campaign with every PRP candidate, from the ward, local government to state level, to achieve our collective goals.

How defunct Concord newspaper made me -Vulcaniser

“Abiola’s house was like a market place. Except you don’t see him, once you see him, you are sure to smile back to your house. People slept over at his house. His house was always busy. You know he was everywhere. Sometimes, he could be out of the country but people waited for him to return from his trip in his compound because they knew they would not be the same person again after meeting him. He loved people and accommodated them. Like I said, I never went to him for any help despite being my kinsman but his family members always invited me whenever there was a function and I honoured their invitation whenever I could. But, in all, Abiola was a loving person. He loved the downtrodden.

“Despite the hardship the absence of Concord caused me, I still soldiered on. My faith in God was unshaken because I know it is from God that sweetness comes. When things get sour or bitter, it is also from him. But I knew my God would always make a way for me. Look, even with the hardship the demise of Concord caused me, I never for once thought of leaving here. With this job, I trained my kids. I gave them education. My children are graduates and I built my house. Every basic thing anyone needs in life, I have. Interestingly, in my 40 years of stay here, I never paid a kobo here,” Baba Omitogun said.

Children protest over sharing formula of properties

Displeased by what they called an unfair sharing of their father’s properties, children of the wife of the billionaire business man, Kudirat Abiola, had in a letter titled, ‘Report of A Decade-Long Fraud’ alleged that some family members had continued to deny them their rights to their shares of the late business mogul’s properties within

An encounter with domestic staff, neighbours at MKO's house

Sunday Telegraph: Good evening. Is this the late MKO Abiola’s house?
Neighbour 1: Yes, it is.
Sunday Telegraph: I need to speak with a member of his family.
Neighbour 1: You can go in. It’s not a place you should be scared of entering. People go in and out of here every time.
Sunday Telegraph: I hope there’s no dogs inside
Neighbour 1: No now. Just go in. Abiola’s house is like a public place. You can interact with whoever you see.
Neighbour 2: Yes now. No problem.
Neighbour 2: That’s her daughter-in-law coming. You can see her.
Sunday Telegraph: Okay
Domestic Staff 1: What are you doing here?
Domestic Staff 2: You know you can be accused of theft? Is this your house?
Sunday Telegraph: Baba’s daughter-in-law just walked in. I would appreciate if you can help facilitate a chat with her.
Domestic Staff 2: Oga, get out of this place now.
Domestic Staff 1: What are you still doing here?
Sunday Telegraph: Haba!
Neighbour 1: So, how did it go?
Sunday Telegraph: I was harassed and sent out
Neighbour 2: When dem come start that one now?
Neighbour 1: E shock me o.

and outside Nigeria. Led by Lekan Abiola, the letter, which was addressed to President Buhari in 2021 partly read:

“Your Excellency, we know you are determined to build a new Nigeria where there is law and order and as a result, you will want to be informed about the matter at hand before it gets out of hand.

“Our father was a man of equity and, as such, he established companies that reflected this side of him. In all his companies, he made sure that no child was given one single share and that no child was even officially made a director. Even in Habib Bank (now Keystone Bank), he gave equal shares to children of different mothers (Kola and Lekan were given equal shares and this can be verified).”

They argued that after the death of their father, some members of the family fraudulently and criminally inserted their names into their father’s companies, including the most active one called RCN.

“Having taken control of this company, these individuals were able to tamper with the Bank PHB shares and borrow monies from commercial banks using our father’s assets with the aim to default and impoverish his other children,” they added.

“This is despite the fact that in his will, our father stated that his entire assets should be equally shared among all his children. This is something that should have been done over two decades ago. They were also able to use their new status in RCN to exert influence on other companies like Abiola Farms and Abiola Bookshop, where RCN is also a major shareholder.”

“If they were to do it all over again, they would do it same way” - MKO’s daughter

In an interview with the CNN, Hafsat Abiola, a daughter of the late business mogul, said her parents -MKO Abiola and Kudirat Abiola-would make more sacrifices for humanity despite paying the supreme price for the enthronement of democracy if

they had another chance.

“I think that if they were to do it all over again, they would do it exactly the same way. Or if not, they would even make more sacrifices because I think we only live once, and we must do what we can.”

Also, in another interview monitored on television, a son of the politician, Abdulmumin Abiola, said MKO stood for better Nigeria, describing him as a man who tried to better everyone he came across.

“Today, we shouldn’t be talking about the things we talked about in 1993. I wouldn’t say we have not learnt. It takes time to change. It’s important to understand that we are basically where we were in 1993. My father used to say something. It goes: The most precious thing is not our oil or gold in Osun or cocoa in Ogun State. The most important thing in the country is our people,” he added.

Lived, died for masses

The National President and Convener of “my Nigeria e-passport’ project, Ambassador Tolu Ayodele, said there was need for wealthy Nigerians to emulate MKO’s selflessness.

According to him, MKO Abiola remains Nigeria’s hero of democracy, stating that he was an embodiment of a good Nigerian billionaire, who used his wealth for the people around him.

“So many people benefited from his benevolence. Top politicians like Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu can testify to Abiola’s kind gesture. Abiola lived his life for the masses and he died for the masses, he fought and died for the democracy that we are all enjoying today.

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INTERVIEW

Keeping military in barracks my joy, says Okei-Odumakin

Dr. Joe Okei-Odumakin was in the trenches in the struggle to actualise June 12, 1993 election. She reminisces on this and more in this interview with WALE ELEGBEDE

What is your satisfaction over the June 12 struggle?

My key satisfaction was keeping the military in their barracks since that epic struggle. My disappointment is that we left the political space to professional politicians mostly without a second address. With hind sight, we should have insisted on a new grund-norm. A new constitution. The error is monumental, in hindsight.

Do you think Nigeria has learnt any lesson from the June 12 struggle?

Not much surprises me anymore in Nigeria. The truth is that June 12 remained the authentic Democracy Day. The May 29 scheme was introduced to blunt the edge of June 12 and its entire essence in expended lives and resources. A strategic swindle to rig history and give victory to the losers.

The twist was for negative political expediency.

How do you see the declaration by Buhari that Abiola won the election?

The posthumous stature of MKO Abiola would not be enhanced by any State prop, especially not from a President Buhari who admires Abacha greatly and absolves him of blame even as Nigeria continues to use Sani's ATM card from netherworld. Abiola's true stature is firm in history and in the consciousness of human beings.

Does June 12 have impact on our democracy?

I do not see the impact of lessons learnt anywhere. Things have gone totally worse. We need to press pause once more and reset. But I feel it would force itself on us as there is no appetite for nation-building right now. A shame.

Does religion really matter in our democracy?

I don't think the Muslim/Muslim ticket sailed with Abiola because there was national unity. You see, Nigeria has never been in unity. We have always been in a union. MKO Abiola was from the Yoruba part of the country where all religions are practiced without that acidic resentment elsewhere. For the Yoruba Christian at that point, it was not even an issue. The key issue was the age-long denial of Awolowo and by implication, Yoruba presidency. Abiola presented an opportunity to break the jinx.

Abiola's network and contacts around the country was also critical. I don't know if a Muslim/Muslim ticket would fly today because they have made religion so toxic as an instrument of politics that a groundswell of resentment is perceivable. But this is what I consider a practical take.

If you are from the south-West and you want a Yoruba president for instance, that is your slot. The running mate slot does not fall to you. The people who are saying no before it happens are not political strategists seeking to strengthen the ticket. They are people who would feel no pain if they put a Christian Northerner and lose the election. Their own mission is religion, not election. But you must



Odumakin

take all the views seriously. I don't envy those who must take the final decision. You must be practical and sentimental at once. You recall when candidate Buhari said all Moslems should vote for Moslems only? That is toxic in a plural society.

Will you support two-party system for Nigeria?

I don't believe a two-party system should be forced. It could and should evolve like we see in established democracies around the world. The USA has Republican and Democratic parties, but you still have the Independent and many others of lesser stature.

The UK has Conservative and Labor but

also many other less prominent parties.

It is not the path of two-party restriction which elevates a nation. It takes more than that. In any case, democracy abhors such compulsion.

Is Nigeria getting its democracy right?

At this moment I don't even see the tunnel let alone the light. However, I am a firm believer in the possible success of this Nigerian project...if we could achieve 60 per cent restructuring in a matter of months. If we fail ain doing that, I am afraid. That was the song on my husband's breath as he went home. It is the only way left to redeem Nigeria. I hope we take it.

I wasn't surprised June 12 was recognized –Banjo

As one of the actors in the June 12 election and subsequent struggles, what is your biggest satisfaction and disappointment, 29 years after?

Were you surprised about two years ago when suddenly there was some recognition for June 12 and was declared democracy day?

Do you agree that the President ought to have indeed declared that MKO Abiola was the president to ensure complete recognition?

After 29 years, has the botched election made any impact and have we learnt any lessons in our democratic practice?

Many Nigerians believe that the country was literally united during the election with no recourse to religion or tribe. It was unique in a way such that for the very first time we had a Muslim-Muslim ticket for the presidency and that didn't in any way affect the voting pattern. Can that still be replicated, 29 years after?

The SDP and NRC were the two parties during that process and some people are saying today that perhaps it is better to have a two-party system and that if that system had been allowed to stand we would have something close to a two-party system against where we now have many political parties. What do you think about that?

Do you see light at the end of the tunnel for our democracy? Surprise that June 12 was recognised?

I was not surprised given the pressure citizens exerted on the government. But it is not the declaration that matters but what June 12 stood for. All the promises made to

Ogbeni Lanre Banjo was one of the actors in the post-June 12 election struggles. In this interview with WALE ELEGBEDE, he speaks on his experience and effects of the crises on the polity through the years

the family of Late MKO were not redeemed, according to the family members. June 12 promised hope and Buhari's APC killed hope and massacred those who may nurse hope.

MKO declared the President

I am in agreement that a gazette should be made to register the fact MKO won the election. It would have been proper and dignifying to do that, but this government would not do it because General Buhari was one of the silent cabals that never wanted MKO to be sworn in. Consequently, a gazette recognizing Chief MKO Abiola as the winner of the election would indict General Buhari.

Botched election and lesson learnt

Nigeria has learnt nothing. The owners of Nigeria witnessed fairest election in their life, yet they still plan for a system that would allow rigging and malpractices. Today, General Buhari still clandestinely schemed for consensus which is highly undemocratic and deepens corruption.

Can Muslim-Muslim ticket be replicated?

If we have a National Assembly with patriotic men and women of integrity, religion would not matter. But where and Naval Base is always left unguarded on Fridays in the name of religion, we need to think twice. What is the fear of Muslim-Muslim Ticket or Christian-Christian ticket? Both



Banjo

Muslim president and Vice may ignore unjust behavior against Christians or both Christians President and Vice may do the same. But, if we have a National Assembly that is not about party, but about the country with men and women who would summon the courage to impeach both of them, no one would dare do it. Or, if we have a vice who is a Christian like Pastor Yemi Osinbajo, in whose administration

his fellows Christians are being massacred and he was speechless but when a Mosque was brought down in River State, he was ordered to go with Sultan to investigate, then one may give premium to religion. It must be mentioned though, that both Moslem and Christian President and Vice President since Independence destroyed our lives to this abysmal level.

Two party system?

This is a decision to be consciously made by enlightened Nigerian electorates. In Nigerian context, I would not vote for two party system. If Late Chief Gani Fawehinmi did not fight for the registration of political parties, there would not have been ACN, APGA, Labor, SDP etc. The establishment of multiple political parties that he fought to the Supreme Court for, lessened the political assassinations. It allowed Anambra to witness what Peter Obi could do and it gave Dr. Olusegun Mimiko the ability to prove himself.

Light out of the tunnel?

Where Electorates only appreciate those who are destroying their lives because of money, I don't see any light out of the tunnel. Even if an admiration begins today to rebuild the shattered Nigeria, if he survives 4 years, we would be afraid after 8 years. Corruption has eaten into the fabric our society.

chose money over integrity

Amotekun Commander is still in office, all the heads of those agencies are still there. No disciplinary action has been taken against anyone for the number of lives lost, and the number of people hospitalized. We move on and then we say that we are investigating, everybody believe that it is the Fulanis. You know the interesting thing when they now come up and say it is not the Fulani, it is our own people, the thing will go quiet. There are two sides of the story now. The Governor is saying that the people came from Kogi, which road did they pass that the Amotekun did not see? Other than this, the Amotekun has been known to stop truck loads from the North with strange people, carrying daggers or anything and send them back, seizing whatever they are carrying. Recently they stopped one, they said were carrying ammunition. How did those ones get through? The issue is that when things are happening and people who are supposed to be in charge of command and control situations, nothing happens to them.

Why is the security and safety architecture so poor?

I have said so, so many times about what to do, but it appears the National Security Adviser, advising the president and the president himself have been adamant. It appears the president and the security adviser do not want State Police. They are trying to convince the president that they are not needed. But Amotekun has proven very clearly that it is needed. Do you know what would have happened in the South West if there was no Amotekun. Like I told you the last time, it was too late for the South East when they established Ebube agu. If they had done it around the same time that Amotekun was created. Like it was in the South south when Nyesom Wike was creating his own outfit like the Amotekun in Port Harcourt and he was backing them up. Good the governors are backing them up. Oyo is an example. Makinde is serious and he is making sure that Amotekun is working.

During our last dialogue, it was said that you cannot take politics out of security, because security needs funding to be done by politicians and some would say separate security from politics. Are they justified in saying this?

Look! Look!! Do not let anyone deceive you. Taking politics out of security is not true. Politics gives direction to safety and security. They just tell the president something and he repeats it, even though he is a retired soldier. Why do you make a governor the Chief security officer of his state? Why is he Commander in Chief if you take politics out of security? Why does he have a National Security Adviser? Why do governors have security advisers? Anybody telling you politics and security are different, that person is talking nonsense.

It was on the crest of the president being a retired officer and that he would be able to deal with the insurgency, banditry and what have you, but that has not been the case and it is so for the past seven years.

It is too late to talk about that now. He has less than nine months to go. Leave the president out of it, he is tired. He does not know what to do anymore. For the past two years I have been saying that if the gover-

nors do not take charge of the safety and security of their states, nobody is going to take care of it.

The Prelate of the Methodist Church in Nigeria was abducted recently and after the payment of N100 million ransom he was released and he alleged that the military is complicit in his abduction. Do you share this view?

The Chief of Defense Staff himself came out openly and said that the military has been found to be complicit in some of these crimes. I have also said so many times too that there is something wrong with the Counter intelligence system of the military, of the police and they need to fix it. What is so interesting in this is that is the DSS (department of State Services) doing its job? The DSS is supposed to be an intelligence outfit, mainly to get intelligence that ordinary people cannot get, to see the things that ordinary people cannot see, especially within the territorial area of the country and that is why they are all over the country. To me it looks as if they like competing with the DSS boldly written on their back and front like soldiers and policemen. They do not live up to their mandate and expectations. Again it depends on political direction, it depends on the NSA.

How has the military fared under civilian dispensation?

The Chief of Army Staff has been very honest with himself. He cried out that I need help. He told old soldiers, retired officers that if you think that you can help us please come. We are open to ideas that we can use to be able to tackle some of these problems. But the first thing I will tell him is that it is not his business to run after terrorists and bandits. I did tell him in Minna last December, Please tell the Commander in Chief , separate the Mobile Police from the Police and create an independent Mobile Police and retrain them as Police Commando. They will be responsible for handling terrorism and banditry. The State Police will provide the information that they need. This independent Mobile Police Command will back them up.

But the Police have a Counter Terrorism Unit aside from the Mobile and regular Police. They are to counter terrorism as the name implies.

That is where the confusion lies. People like creating jobs and jobs for everyone, It is like Lagos State Neighbourhood Watch. Tell me what they are doing? They are not doing the job they are supposed to be doing. You find them at the traffic junction controlling traffic. No! if the neighbourhood Watch were working properly, they are supposed to be taking care of the Okada people (Motorcycle Operators) before the police. That is why are they called Neighbourhood Watch. Some of them are not supposed to be in uniform. But Nigerians love uniforms. Not for anything but because of what they want to do with it – to show off and to extort money with it here and there. They have a Commander, Director General or something like that. He too likes wearing a uniform. If they are really working, some of them will be Okada riders who will infiltrate the okada riders. Every state has a ministry equivalent of the ministry of Interior at the federal level. What are the min-

istries of Home Affairs doing? People are not doing what they are supposed to do. There are so much corrupt minds. If money does not come out, forget it whether people get killed or not. They leave everything to the police. One interesting thing about the police as far as I know is that the Police used to collect money monthly from all these Unions. They allow them to grow wings to do whatever they like. In Lagos some years back, I do not know if still happens, if the Danfo driver knows that he would go scot free if he had an accident. Why? Every month the Danfo driver delivers to the Police and the police too know how to cover them up. If that continues to happen, how do you expect the danfo driver, the Okada riders to behave?

Two days ago (Tuesday, June 7, they stood up to the Police at Idi Araba and where throwing stones at the Police over the enforcement of the ban on Okada riders. Is that a proper thing to do?

They do not respect the police. Police! In the Francophone country, you dare not do that. Just go to Cotonou and go and misbehave, they will just blow the whistle and you are arrested. The Police have lost its respect. Again, money. Many people have done the studies and they calculated how much all these transport unions collect every day – Okada, Danfo, millions, every month billion, no taxes. Can you imagine, they are collecting more money than Lagos State does monthly. Can you imagine if Lagos state were collecting taxes on those money made by those unions. But Lagos state will leave them alone, because of politics. They can use them for politics. There are so many things that are happening and they are becoming a culture, and the politrikians like I call them not politicians who are playing tricks and not politics are creating an environment for this culture to be entrenched in our society. We have the worst organized system in the world. How can a group of people be collecting money without control?

They are modifying it now, they call it the Park Management System.

They are joking. They are not serious. Which park are they managing? Have you been to the parks to see some of these parks, they are not maintained. At least the one in Agege they are building remains uncompleted. The one Ambode spent a lot of money on in Ikeja, of what use is it?

Still talking about the military, even if they have the best of the equipment and their morale is low, they still cannot perform well, what is your view on this?

To me the military is over armed for what they are doing.

What do you mean?

They do not need all those sophisticated equipment and hard wares. They do not need all those Tucarnos. Like Brigadier General Gumi (rtd) although he is a medical officer said, it is not the Tucarno that will stop the terrorists. I read one shocking one even though it has been written long ago, a helicopter went to a village in Southern Kaduna and killed about 32 people. A Helicopter. I do not know whether it is a fake news. Where did the helicopter come from? How come nobody knew? Our intelligence system is not working well; counter in-

telligence system is not working well.

Is that when they have the information, they keep it to themselves or even leak information to the terrorists. Early this year in Kebbi State, about 52 vigilante men were killed in ambush in Kebbi because they were going to take on the bandits by surprise, those ones got wind of it and waited for them to come and attacked them.

It means like a story I read one or two years ago in which a commanding officer, told everybody to put their mobile phones on the table before they go on operation. The telephones started ringing after they has left on the operation. He told the intelligence boys to pick the phones and talk to those people. They were terrorists asking those boys when are you leaving, where are you passing through. There are some soldiers and very few have been apprehended from the announcements that have been handing information to those terrorist. What about the Prelate of the Methodist Church who said that the military is complicit in the kidnapping. The place they took them to was near the military location. The Chief of Defense Staff himself said so. It means that something is wrong with your counter intelligence.

What is your view on the general situations in the country – inflation, killings, and abductions?

All these challenges and problems here and there is a question of subsidiary. If you can solve a problem as the local government level, solve it, if you can solve a problem as the state level, solve it, if the local government cannot solve it, go to the state. Most of the problems can be solved at the state level, you do not need to go to Abuja.

But that is the way our Constitution is configured.

Yes even those in Abuja are not looking at subsidiary as a conflict management and resolution mechanism. They are looking at it from control of money. How much percentage will go to the federal government? That is why you have a situation in which Amaechi could afford to cancel a university in the south south and build a university in Daura and within the period of seven years, the institutions that have been placed in the president’s home town – polytechnics, military hospital, university and what have you. It is nothing but abuse of power, abuse of opportunity. That is why it is good for states to control their resources and contribute money to the federal government for defense, foreign policy, central banking and so forth. If a state does not develop it is not the problem of the federal government. Also, it will force many states to merge, especially in the North.

The Orosanye Panel made recommendations that some ministries, departments and agencies (MDA) doing similar things be merged or scrapped, the government has even issued a white paper on it, but government is yet to implement them...

The president say go ahead with a particular policy. That is where the civil service and the civil servants come in. It shows you the power of the civil service. If they do not want anything to happen in this country,

There are so much corrupt minds. If money does not come out, forget it whether people get killed or not. They leave everything to the police

POLITICS

What are your thoughts on June 12 as Nigeria commemorates Democracy Day?

June 12 remains a very focal point and an epochal part of Nigeria's political history. In a sense, that is sad because if you look at most democracies twenty years ago and compare them to where they are today, there must have been a progression and some advancements in the political developments of those countries. But from what you see in our political environment today, it is not very clear whether we have actually advanced beyond what Chief MKO Abiola was able to achieve with his widespread popularity and the no need for 'mago-mago' campaign of that era. It is doubtful whether as at today, we have managed to advance beyond where we were in 1993. That is disappointing and very disturbing.

So, Nigeria's democracy has not grown and for me that is what June 12 always recalls. It would have been better to say that since June 12, Nigeria's democracy has grown to a point where we even begin to use it as a historical reference, but rather we are still using June 12 as a reference point for free fair and credible elections and that's not good. So the conclusion is that we have not advanced; we are still at June 12, 1993.

What's the implication of this situation?

If we haven't advanced politically, you can imagine the consequences for the economic development of our country. This spirals into the problems of high rate of unemployment, ASUU on strike, government unable to control the rate of inflation and so on and so forth. It is a combination of two problems - political and economic. You must have political development to have economic development. So the massive consequence of not having moved forward since June 12, reminds us of how badly we need leaders and not politicians. We have politicians and politicians are interested in power while leaders are interested in development. I think that's what June 12 evokes for me personally.

It's a sour and sweet thing remembering what Abiola did, but also sad because we've gone nowhere. You also know it, that we are just marking time.

Are you saying that both the political elite and the electorate in Nigeria haven't learnt anything from June 12?

No. No. No. I'm saying the political elite; not the electorate. You can't blame the voting population, you can't blame Nigerians. Leaders are those who shape the society. Not all of us can be leaders. Not all the 200 million people can be leaders. People make the choice to be political leaders. So, just like Abiola made the choice; nobody forced him back then, but he understood what to do. He was quite popular which is why we still talk about him till today. That is the type of leader that we are so desperately looking for now. We are not looking for politicians because politicians will never solve our problems.

We are looking for the best people who can lead Nigeria because if we get Nigeria out of the political tragedies we face, then we can talk about economic prosperity. But if we can't have people who are ready to lead us out of our political challenges, then we're going to remain in this situation.

How has this lack of leadership manifested in real terms?

It is why we don't have our refineries working and which is why you see that diesel is selling at almost N800 per litre. Such basic things. Have you asked yourself some basic questions? Why can't we fix our refineries so that we do away with fuel importation and fuel subsidy? Why should we produce crude oil in our country and export it only to import it back as petrol and diesel? This (refining of petroleum products) is something we can do here. It is lack of political leadership. Anyone who has leadership skills and is concerned about Nigeria should have fixed our refineries and that could have helped to cool the temperature of the nation because they are all related. Today, people are all sick, hungry and dying. Look at all the banditry, kidnappings and killings across the country.

Agbakoba: Nigeria's democracy still hovering around June 12

The annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election, provoked nationwide unrest because it was adjudged as free, fair and transparent by both local and foreign observers. In this commemorative chat, human rights lawyer and one of the heroes of the struggle for its revalidation, Dr. Olisa Agbakoba, tells ONWUKA NZESHI that Nigeria has not made much democratic progress since that historic election



Agbakoba

So, June 12 evokes sour and very sad memories. Sometimes, one begins to imagine that if we had not had June 12 annulled...there are many dimensions to the issue. If it was not annulled and Abiola had come in, maybe ... There are too many maybe's to the matter.

About four years ago, the government of the day tried to elevate June 12 by declaring it as Democracy Day. You think that was not enough?

No, that was just symbolic. I'm not interested in symbols, I'm interested in democracy and those who lead us. How has that symbolic gesture impacted on democracy and good governance in Nigeria? Democracy is not about symbolism but about impacts on the people.

It is not a bad thing that President Muhammadu Buhari declared June 12 as Democracy Day, but what has that translated to in our democracy? What has that declaration done to the lives of Nigerians who are poor, hungry and jobless? If you ask people: Which do you prefer? Do you prefer job opportunities and better living conditions for the average citizen or just symbolism? They would tell you that they prefer to see and feel the dividends of democracy to the symbolism of Democracy Day.

So, that's why when the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) is reeling out those their statistics, you need to ask the man on the street: Do you feel these things that they are saying? At the end of the day, the real impact of government policies and programmes on the average citizens is the ultimate measure of leadership. How is the ordinary man, let's say Okeke, Dahiru, Solomon or whatever, fairing? Are they happy? That's how you measure leadership. Sometimes, I think about it that if China can pull about one

billion people out of poverty over the last twenty years without a democratic government, then you begin to wonder whether democracy is not an alien concept in Nigeria.

If you read African History from Zaire where Mobutu Sese Seko was the leader to Sao Tome, Angola and other places, you'll begin to wonder: What's wrong with Africans? What's the problem with our leadership? The problem is that we have politicians and not leaders.

Abiola was one of those political leaders that I felt in my heart could have made a big difference because he wasn't there to steal money. He was there to lead the process of political and economic growth. Nigeria is not a difficult place to govern. Some people think that Nigeria is a complex place. It is not complex. It is the politicians that are complex people, not ordinary Nigerians.

I have been around Nigeria even when Sani Yerima declared Shariah in Zamfara. I led human rights group there and I found that the people were just living their normal lives. They don't care about the difference between a Northerner who is a Muslim and an Igbo Christian. They don't; but the politicians would create these problems in order to win votes and keep the resources of Nigeria to themselves. So if we can find a June 12 leader in this process and when I say June 12 leader, I mean someone like Abiola, that will win the presidential election next year and keep politics aside, then the symbol of June 12 will perhaps, begin to make meaning.

Talking about the election next year, you have seen the array of presidential candidates jostling for the position, is there any one among that you think fits the bill?

I'm not going to say anything about that because I'm entitled to keep my choice private.

All I can say is that we should find someone who can lead Nigeria out of its political and economic challenges.

Nearly two decades after June 12, do you think we have achieved even the basic ideals of free, fair and transparent election in Nigeria?

No, we haven't even though I have to concede that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has tried to improve on its past performances. But, I still find INEC, with all due respects to them, not seizing the massive constitutional opportunities bestowed on them to regulate the political environment. I think that's part of the problem. They ought to realise that by the Constitution, they are the regulator of both the political and electoral environment.

INEC is like an example of a referee at a football match. They don't brook nonsense and they show their yellow and red cards when necessary. If INEC had been showing the yellow and red cards, I think the political temperature would have been less hectic. For instance, I strongly feel that INEC should disqualify anybody who upon the receipt of a Certificate of Return, after being declared winner of an election as Governor or Legislator and the person decamps to another political party. It needs to withdraw the certificate because it is clearly written on the certificate that you have been returned on the platform of this particular party. So if you go to another party, then you cease to be recognised by INEC. I don't know why INEC refuses to take this line of action. I know it sounds revolutionary but that is what it should be.

Indiscriminate defection by politicians is why the political environment is so dirty. Carpet crossing is at the drop of a hat and politicians have no loyalty or ideology and the impression we get is that politics is for the highest bidder.

So these guys that are doing all these in order to win election, are they doing it for my interest? It can't be. So INEC has a role to play here. I'll like INEC to step up its role, be a stronger regulator of the political environment. Take strong decisions and if the courts declare what INEC has done to be wrong, so be it. But we cannot allow these politicians to be running around madly, throwing money everywhere and there is no repercussion. INEC has reduced itself to just the voting process and abandoned all other responsibilities.

This is why, while I was a member of the Justice Uwais Panel on Electoral Reforms, we recommended that INEC's role does not include monitoring of political parties and we recommended the Political Parties Regulatory Commission. That Commission would have been dealing with all these infractions that INEC seems unable to handle.

The other thing that I think will make our electoral process more proficient, is this issue of internal democracy within political parties. INEC is aware that a lot of political parties violate it and they do nothing. Instead, they have allowed the courts to take over that function. That's where I also find INEC not doing well.

Then the final one where INEC has completely misunderstood its role is the election petition. INEC is always defending petitions. For instance Buhari Vs Atiku; INEC came to defend it. This is wrong. INEC is a neutral body. All INEC should do is to present all

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

POLITICS

We mustn't elect president out of emotions –Longers Anyanwu

A prominent chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Chief Longers Anyanwu, has been part of Imo State's politics for over two decades. He was the pioneer National Chairman of the Accord Party and upon the emergence of Dr. Ikedi Ohakim as Imo State governor in 2007, he served as the Commissioner for Agriculture for four years. He also served on the Niger Delta Development Commission, (NDDC) and later as chairman of SURE-P in Imo State. In this interview with STEVE UZOECHI, Anyanwu, who was a member of the Presidential Campaign Council of President Muhammadu Buhari speaks on some vital national issues



Anyanwu

With your experiences, do you think anything has changed in Nigerian politics, is it getting better?

Well, to the extent of our return to democracy after so many years of military rule, I will say that government through the ballot has at least been sustainable. Over 22 years since Nigeria embraced democracy after a very long military rule, to that extent I will say that Nigeria has not done badly because there is a saying that 'a worse democratic government is better than the best civilian rule'.

I know we have achieved democracy but I have always said that we are still undergoing the process of democratization. But democratization is only possible when there is institutionalization of democratic signposts. The judiciary must exist independently where by nobody will be above the law, the executive must work in accordance with the rule of law and legislature being the bastion of democracy must be seen to be really robust and playing its role as another tier of government.

Stretching it further, democracy must equally allow other ingredients of government to exist. For example, there must be accountability and we must uphold constitutionalism which is the highest norm in a country's existence. I believe that it is a process. Good governance, democracy is not a destination but a process.

Of course, the essence of government is to protect its citizens, making sure there is law and order, protecting our norms and values and securing the properties and lives of the people. So putting these expectations into a scale, you will then evaluate how much or how far we have gone.

What is your view of president of South-East extraction in 2023?

Well, let us talk about the next Nigerian president. The next Nigerian president must be a president that must be prepared to face challenging national issues. He must be a nationalist; somebody who will live above board and see Nigeria as his own constituency and still be a good representative of his own group within the nation, whether the Igbo nation, Kanuri nation or Yoruba nation. That is the first standard.

The next standard is to ensure that we don't make the mistake of producing a president out of emotion, sentiment, religion or cultural idiosyncrasies. The person must be somebody

that is prepared and must be physically ready both in mind and body to handle the challenges of the position he is elected for.

Having said that, the Nigerian nation is at crossroads now, agitation has become rampant and sporadic; insurrection and violence have become the order of the day. There is the question of inclusion and exclusion, and because of the rising threat to the oneness and unity of this country posed by different ethnic nationalities, it becomes compelling and urgent for political parties in their considerations for who flies their party flag, to factor in these realities.

Equity is a very brutal and truthful phenomenon. So we are saying that every ethnic nationality or nation within Nigeria, have played very important roles in nation-building. During the struggle for independence, the champions who made all the sacrifices to ensure that Nigeria remains one, came from the major blocks.

Before independence, there were so many concessions because everybody was desirous of one Nigeria. South-East made a lot of concessions; some of the concessions were made by the great Zik, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chief Obafemi Awolowo. And their brother, Tafawa Balewa then appreciated these gestures and that was the beginning of the 'One Nation' philosophy in this country.

Unfortunately, the civil war came, after the war, General Yakubu Gowon who led the war, declared in his own wisdom that there was "No Victor, No Vanquished" and Nigeria embraced it. When the second republic emerged, the nation builders didn't hesitate to rebuild the nation in order to heal the wounds, by adopting Dr. Alex Ekwueme as the Vice President so that Ekwueme could step into the presidency after Shehu Shagari. But unfortunately, the second republic was truncated, it became impossible for Ekwueme to step into the presidency and it took another long interregnum before civilian government was restored again.

After the aborted election and violent political crisis of 1993, Nigeria as a whole agreed that power must shift in order to assuage the West, power shifted to the West, and it became needful to bring in a General who many Nigerians could trust to come and stabilize the system again.

Though, the G-34 and then PDP was established by Ekwueme, power has to go to the West to compensate the region over the maltreatment of Chief Moshood Abiola in the annulled 1993 election.

It is instructive to note that rotation should not mean exclusion, it should mean inclusion. It should target to achieve inclusion, not exclusion. We rotate to include and involve everybody, not to exclude.

It was part of Ekwueme's recommendations that gave birth to a new structure for rotation in the country, to include all the six geopolitical zones and not just North and South.

Nigerians embraced it as all ethnic groups were now included in the power equation. But leaders of the nation felt that now that Obasanjo had finished if you hurriedly ceded power to the South-East again, it would be a problem. Obasanjo now said, let the vice president go to the North and then instead of number two, they said Ekwueme should go to number 3, Ekwueme declined. This is the beginning of the political evolution that just started gathering momentum.

Sometimes we don't want to face the historical fact. So as it stands then, they brought out Umaru Yar'Adua as candidate, everybody voted for Yar'Adua, and PDP won again.

Unfortunately, Umaru Yar'Adua died in office, then they invoked the doctrine of necessity and Dr. Goodluck Jonathan took over, a minority which couldn't have been possible if that zone was not created through the ingenuity of Igbo intelligentsia.

At the time, Igbos had little choice, as the tension was incredible. Now because the people had seen the existence of the South-South, they said they are the people laying the golden egg, our oil crashed. And to intervene, Yar'Adua became a general that went to war and became victorious without firing a single bullet by the introduction of amnesty programmes, by doing so, everywhere became calm, oil production increased again.

Gentlemen, Jonathan as the executive president knew, when the pressure started mounting from the Northerners, that it was their turn. So, Jonathan surrendered willingly to Muhammadu Buhari. Buhari as a perfect gentleman appreciated Jonathan's contribution to nation-building, that's why Buhari till this day, holds Jonathan in high esteem.

Nigerians celebrated the emergence of President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015 as an up-right leader. Nevertheless, there are enemies of this country who knew that the position of President Muhammadu Buhari was to revert to those processes of zoning that had already commenced. And immediately, crisis escalated as the Igbos began to demand for their turn in the presidency.

What I am saying is that electing a president

of South-East extraction will help to quench the burning agitation across Igboland. I therefore urge Nigerians to give the Igbos a chance to produce the next president and they will not let the country down.

But we are not looking for an Igbo president for only the Igbos, we are looking for an Igbo president that will unite Nigeria the more. An Igbo president that will live above board and make us another Singapore, another Malaysia, another Rwanda, it is an Igbo man that can do it.

Some people are making a lot of comments that if Igbos didn't get the presidency after 2023 they will do this or that. Let me tell you, Igbos will preserve Nigeria because they have invested heavily in every part of Nigeria and for anything that threatens the stability and nationhood of this country, Igbos will become the biggest losers. And that's the truth.

Even when it comes to Igboland and they ask: "where will the presidency in Igboland come from? Everybody will want the presidency to come from his or her community.

We have qualified Igbos who can lead this country to the expectation of those who laid the foundation of this country, who would even protect the achievements and legacies of President Muhammadu Buhari.

I am saying it without any fear of contradiction that Nigeria needs an Igbo president that will place Nigeria in its rightful place in the comity of nations. We cannot continue to play the ostrich to the challenges we are facing today as a nation.

Your thoughts on the Security situation in the state and country

The insecurity in the country is orchestrated and there are people manipulating it so they would have their way. The President has to come out and tell Nigerians that Nigeria is more important than any region or individual interest. He needs to be and show he is the father of the nation, and assume the role of a rallying figure. He needs to urge Nigerians to close ranks and let us in practical terms be 'one Nigeria'. It is not weakness but strength, to appeal to Nigerians as a father and bring the children together in mutual and peaceful coexistence.

The greatest parting gift Mr. President will give to Nigerians is a peaceful Nigeria. He loves Nigeria enough to have gone to war to keep it as one united nation, so I do not think he would want to bequeath to Nigerians, a country that nobody is sure of.

What is your view on the Imo State government?

If you want me to give you a fair assessment of the government in Imo State, I will say it has excelled in quality service delivery. Going by our not-too-distant experience, I can boldly say that there seems to be a strong determination to do things right and to get things to work optimally.

One of the greatest challenges leaders have is avarice and wholesale greed, and I can tell you that Governor Hope Uzodinma is not into primitive acquisition of wealth. He desires strong leadership. How our former governor was lying down, calling and praying for help should teach every leader that there is a day of reckoning for everyone.

I can also assure you that the earnest desire of Governor Uzodinma is to satisfy and delight the people of Imo through quality service delivery and rapid development across sectors.

This has always been the desire of the governor, but the seeming intractable security situation in the state has become a major setback for the governor.

I am certain that Governor Uzodinma will achieve many great successes in leadership and development before he leaves office. I, therefore, call on all citizens of Imo state to support his administration.

POLITICS

'APC, PDP delegates chose money over integrity'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

it will not happen. They are looking at the number of people that will be thrown out of job. Like I said, if you allow states to control their resources, they will employ most of the people at the state level, not at the federal level. There are so many useless agencies at the federal level that need to be scrapped.

But they are still keeping them because they refused to implement the Orosanye Recommendations, even though the president gave the go ahead. It shows the president can be powerless. There is a limit to power. That limit is by the civil service. That brings me to a point that everybody knows. No minister can steal without the civil service. Until the civil service overcomes corruption, it won't happen.

All this money the politicians are spending, where does it come from? Who allow them to take the money? As the minister is taking, the permanent secretary is also taking. But the permanent secretary, no one is talking about them. They hide all the money they have stolen. That is why when they retire; they do not talk because they are accomplices to what is happening in Nigeria today. They will tell you that they told the minister, but they are stealing together. There is something that we also need to change – that is the gap the gap in pay in compensation between the top and the bottom in Nigeria is crazy.

How can you pay somebody N30, 0000 and the person at the top gets about N1million? The gap is too wide. They must find a way for doing that to close the gap. In the case of a professor who gets N400, 000 and the Vice Chancellor gets N1 million in the same university. We are not serious.

June 12 and 2023 elections

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

was confirmed by the Senate as an Executive Director of the Nigerian Deposit Insurance Company in 2019.

Ahead of the 2023 elections, his children have not taken the backstage when it comes to politics. Kola Abiola is the presidential candidate of the Peoples Redemption Party, (PRP), while his sister, Hafsat Abiola-Costello is the Director-General of Governor Yahaya Bello Presidential Campaign Organisation.

Though Bello has crashed out the national congress of the All Progressives Congress (APC), which produced Asiwaju Bola Tinubu in landmark primaries, Nigerians must be looking forward to a notable performance from Kola Abiola not only in the campaign, but also in the eventual election.

Earlier, in response to popular demands, President Buhari recognised Abiola as winner of the June 12 election and immortalized him by naming the Abuja Stadium, MKO Abiola Stadium, and declared June 12 a national holiday.

But has the country learnt anything from it? A human rights activist and participant in the June 12 struggle and one time member of the National Assembly, Senator Shehu Sani, said Nigeria has not learnt anything from the epochal election.

"Nigerian politics is still divided along ethnic and regional lines, even as elections are neither credible nor fair. The party primaries are highly monetized unlike June 12. But today the story has changed as votes are bought and these are not in agreement with democratic values.

On the heroes of democracy during the struggle, Sani said Abiola and Kingibe are not the only icons who fought for the actualisation of June 12. "Rather, the media, civil society groups and a section of labour unions fought for this democracy and should be honoured



as well.

He said the recognition of Abiola would be incomplete without the government without "formally acknowledging him as a former president and ensuring that his name and photographs adorn government offices throughout the country as a former president."

On the impact memories of June 12 should have on the 2023 elections, Sani wants the two major political parties to embark on issue-based campaign, blurring the lines of ethnic, religious and social divides.

"They must avoid ethnic, religious and money politics which have further polarized the country, rather they should do everything in their power to unite the country, build bridges and promote free and fair elections. The political parties should consider the South-East in their power structure and avoid marginalising that part of the country."

To Chief Frank Kokori, the then President of NUPENG, one of the groups that face firing lines over the annulment, June 12 has become a crucible of democracy, and should forever define Nigeria's democratic values.

Speaking in an interview with Sunday tele-

graph, he said: "Though the sacrifice we made has returned democracy and rule of law to the country, because no one is locked up again at the seams, politicians have squandered dividends of democracy with their corruption and bad leadership.

"Today, those of us who suffered terrible deprivations for democracy are disillusioned due to bad leadership. We need good leaders like pan-Africanists in the form of Nnamdi Azikiwe, Julius Nyerere and Nelson Mandela who fought for their country, not the current self-seeking and self-serving leaders.

"It is shameful that in the country we fought for, our children are kidnapped and killed like animals. Life has become almost valueless. Our children are losing interest in the country and its future and they chose to travel abroad."

On the impact it should have on the elections, he said he hoped to see free, transparent and fair elections especially with the introduction of the bimodal system by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

Kokori expressed confidence that the candidate of the APC, Asiwaju Tinubu would make a huge difference if he wins the 2023 election because he was part of the struggle. "Tinubu was in the international wing of the struggle. We met in the United States then and he worked as one of the international soldiers of the struggle. He knows what he is doing and will record remarkable achievements.

"Tinubu should spend the twilight of his life to develop Nigeria. He should assemble a good team after winning the elections and write his name in gold. He has no reason to look for wealth again, because he has it. History will not forgive him if he does otherwise because he must demystify the cabal holding Nigeria to ransom, snatch the country from them and restore it to the path of development," Kokori said.

Agbakoba: Nigeria's democracy still hovering around June 12

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

the documents it used for the conduct of the elections for the court to analyse. Now when politicians see that INEC is beginning to take a neutral position, you will find that the number of petitions would go down. So, you see, it's a long way and the only way we can get these things corrected is to begin to find people who are leaders and not politicians. Nigeria's biggest challenge is that we just have politicians running around the whole place.

In the just concluded party primaries, we have seen the role money played and tickets allegedly went to the highest bidders. How can one reconcile this with campaign against vote buying during elections?

That's precisely the point I'm making. Where is INEC in all of these? Whether money was thrown around or not, I don't know, but INEC hasn't said a word.

In America, their own INEC is not like ours. They have an Independent Federal Electoral Commission that strictly monitors campaign finances. If you look at what INEC does, it has several functions and powers that it does not exercise. The best analogy here is like a football match between Team A and Team B. The referee goes to centre of the pitch and blows his whistle. He marks the centre circle, marks the penalty area and the teams take their positions on the pitch. As the match goes on, the referee watches closely to identify any fouls and applies the appropriate sanction.

So, one of the things I will recommend for credible election in Nigeria is to unbundle INEC. The Commission is doing far too many things. It has no capacity to monitor the entire electoral process. Let INEC concentrate on vote counting. Let the Justice Uwais Report be fully implemented. We recommended the establishment of an Electoral Offences Commission; that has not been done. So how do you expect INEC to be able to monitor delegate inducement or vote buying when it is

busy with some other functions? INEC is not designed to do well by the type of functions that it carries.

What would be your advice to our political elite and the people on what we can do to remedy this situation ahead of 2023?

We are in a very bad situation and the only reason we're still standing is because of the resilience of the non-formal sector of our economy. I'm talking about the pepper sellers, vulcanizers, okada people and other artisans and self-employed people. The economy is in a very bad spot; we are now owing about N41.6trillion and our debt to GDP ratio is 23.3 percent.

In fact, I don't envy anyone anyone who wants to be the President of Nigeria if he is aware of the problems. The first challenge for the next President should be looking for money to run the economy, but I've not heard anything in the agenda of the presidential aspirants or candidates on this issue. I've just read Tinubu's agenda..... I have not heard anything in the agenda about how they want to raise money to run the economy without borrowing.

It is not a question of seeking office and then when you get there, you'll say: Oh, there's no money in the treasury, therefore I have to go and borrow.

Governor Chukwuma Soludo had lofty ideas only to get there to find out that he had only N300million.

So, I'll like to hear very clearly from the presidential aspirants exactly what plans they have for the economy. Have you actually given a thought about what you're going to do on your first day in office? Beyond the swearing-in ceremonies, television appearance and all that, what are they planning to do? Have you thought through carefully, how you're going to balance the books? Have you thought about how and why Nigeria should continue to pay N4trillion as fuel subsidy? How are you going to correct the

structural defects in the economy? How are you going to deal with the problem of electricity? How are you going to deal with the problem of an unbalanced federation where the Federal Government is running primary schools, issuing driver's licence and paying for prisons when it has no prisoners? Those are the structural issues that we're not hearing them. We need to hear more of these things from the presidential candidates. We need hear more eloquence from the presidential candidates. In particular how in spite of not collecting the revenues we have internally, how can we make legal and institutional policies that will harness the massive amount of resources that we have.

One presidential aspirant pointed to it in his speech but unfortunately, he didn't make it. I'm not interested in somebody telling me, you need a cure for malaria. I that have the malaria, how are you going to make me well? So, how are the candidates going to turn around Nigeria and make Nigeria to be well politically and economically?

That is what we need to hear, but unfortunately for us, we have a very uninformed voting population. These are people who are extremely poor, uneducated and can be easily swayed. So it now behoves on the candidates to think deeply and tell us what they really have to offer. Something like, I want the Presidency and within three, four, five or six months, Nigerians will see that there is a new person at the helm. These are the measures that we are looking for from the presidential candidates.

It appears that we are still being served the same old narratives of where a person comes from, his religion and the depth of his pockets?

That is the problem.. (laughs). You see, the thing is that the politicians have understood where the fault lines are and are capitalising on them. They know the fault lines, so they know how to play them up to whip up

ethnic, linguistic and religious sentiments. So we easily have people shouting: It must be an Igbo man; It must be a Yoruba man or It must be an Hausa man. But we've failed to ask ourselves: If it is somebody from a particular zone, what is the guarantee that he is going to do something good?

We've not asked ourselves that question. Which now points to the fact that we need a political doctor who can step into the shoes of Abiola and deliver on leadership and turn around Nigeria. I give anybody who wants to be Nigeria's President, three months to cure my malaria. I must feel his impact in three months because anyone who is running for President today must have a blueprint of what he wants to do on the economy and the big issues of how the private sector should drive the economy not the government. The private sector controls ninety five (95) percent of GDP while the government contributes only five per cent. But the problem is that the private sector is not doing well because the government is kneeling on their neck like George Floyd, the black American who died as a result of a policeman kneeling on his neck. That is how the Federal Government is kneeling on the neck of and choking the private sector.

If the Federal Government were to remove its knee, you'll be shocked at the energy in the private sector. In spite of the fact that the Federal Government is kneeling on its neck, you'll find that a lot of businesses manage to thrive amidst all the constraints. So once the government takes off its knees, removes obnoxious regulations and just creates a positive environment, we will have an economic boom in this country. So, a new President must be ready to take such an important decision on the day of his inauguration. The inaugural speech on May 29, is what will define whether the President, whoever he would be, will succeed or not. It should point towards the direction we might be heading as a country.

Odd colours that blend



Every day, fashion and style evolve with new creativity and innovation.

In the past, there are colours fashion stylist will categorically tell you that would never blend when pieced together. Odd colours like mint green, turquoise blue, fuchsia pink, mauve, royal blue were hard to pair with other bright colours.

Fashion police was on the tail of any celebrity or stylist who dared to try these colours with orange yellow, or red. Most of the time, such people are tagged 'walking rainbow', 'flower shrub' or 'clowns'.

Now, there is no colour under the sun that cannot be paired. All you need is a little bit of creativity.

These odd colours don't just blend, they look great as well.

Some of the favourite looks we can find on these odd colours that blend series is that of renowned Nigerian writer, Chimamanda Ngozi-Adichie, who paired her mauve top with a bright blue skirt.

Popular social media model, gave of a blend of orange and fuchsia pink, among other.

Let these photos inspire you to get creative with colours.



Strange but True

My husband said it's a shame if he gives birth at old age, Woman tells court

Oluwatosin Omoniyi

A mother of four, Mrs Chinwe, has accused her husband, a transporter, Mr Irinsanmi Ayeniberu of not telling her that she would not give birth for him before they got married.

Chinwe's position came in her defence, after her husband pleaded with an Igando Customary Court in Lagos State to grant him divorce on grounds of incompatibility with his wife. They had lived for four years together.

The petitioner, a resident of No. 15, African Mission St. Igando, said that Chinwe, who he married after his first wife's death, was quarrelsome, disrespectful and intolerant.

"My son's wife, who was living with me, had to move out because of the way my wife quarrels with her.

"My two sons also moved out. She doesn't find it hard to hurl insults at them and fight them," he said.

Responding, Chinwe, a trader, denied the allegations.

She claimed that her husband married her dubiously.

"He never told me I won't give birth for him. He married me knowing I had four children for my late husband.

"He promised to take care of me and my children, but they were all lies.

"I took in sometime in 2018 and gave birth to a boy who was healthy.

"Immediately my husband came to see that boy, he passed away," she said.



The respondent told the court that when she got pregnant again, her husband gave her abortion pills, claiming they were for dysentery.

"I bled for almost two weeks and lost that baby. He later told me that it was embarrassing for him to have a baby

at old age.

"He said he only married me to be having sex with him, washing his clothes, cooking and caring for him, and I asked him what would be my gain in the marriage.

"He said he didn't know but I should

stick to what he told me," she said.

She added that her husband called her a secondhand material.

The respondent also said there were attempts to poison her and make her to miscarry a pregnancy.

She also said that her stepchildren, on several occasions, beat her with brooms and sticks and scattered her wares.

Chinwe said that her husband wanted divorce because of her refusal to go for family planning.

The Court President, Mr Koledoye Adeniyi, adjourned the case until June 28 for further hearing.

Meanwhile, the court has dissolved the marriage between Mr Lambert and Mrs Joy Onwuka on grounds of cruelty and lack of care on the part of the woman.

The court's President, Mr Koledoye Adeniyi, said that the two had ceased to be husband and wife and should go their separate ways without any bickering.

"The court hereby orders you, the petitioner, Mr Lambert, to pay the respondent, Mrs Joy, N200,000 as severance fee, so she can move on with her life.

"She should also be granted unhindered access to the children," he said.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that Lambert, a businessman who resides at No. 112, Ijagemo St., had prayed the court to grant him divorce on grounds of cruelty, threat to life, lack of care and abandonment of home by Joy.

Woman in the News

Ken-Ohanenye: Stepping down at her pinnacle

Mixed reaction trailed her contest among the women folk. Some felt disappointed on the efforts put into her presidential ambition. Comments on social media, mostly WhatsApp platforms, felt she wasn't serious enough or that she didn't put in enough energy. As such, she wasted the 35 per cent affirmative slot for women.

Barr. Uju Ken Ohanenye was the only woman presidential aspirant out of the 23 aspirant seeking to be flag bearer of the All Progressives Congress (APC) but she stepped down for Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, even though some also opined that perhaps, she was forced or cajoled to step down.

Speaking at the convention ground on Tuesday night, she described Tinubu as a lifesaver.

She said: "Nigeria needs a leader and I have decided to be the mother of the country. Nigeria is lacking women's expertise.

"I thank you so much but I have found out that we need more time for that to happen. I am pleading with delegates to know that their votes are life savers. Think of your children and mothers before you vote.

"Vote for someone that will ensure the brighter future of our children. I feel I should step aside for that life saver and the best candidate who is Asiwaju Bola Tinubu. I beg my supporters to vote for Tinubu."

When she bought her Expression of Interest (EOI) and nomination forms, Ken-Ohanenye had given a serious hope that she was in the race. She told journalists: "It is so obvious and all of us know that it is time for a mother to come on board. Everybody, including Mr President came from a woman. As it is today, insecurity, and other things, the children need motherly care. We can under-

stand that from their attitude. I have never been a politician but because of what I have seen, I just felt I should come on board.

"The major solution I am bringing on board is to involve the commoners, less privileged, in governance of the country. If we don't involve, from killing of the commoners they will kill the elite. We must involve them to get them understand what is going on. Nigerian youths are very intelligent and instead of using them negatively, we use them positively for the growth of the country.

"I am going to localise the construction of roads and



many other things. I won't copy the westerners all through because they have their way of constructing it which makes very expensive. I want to localise Moston the roads and involve indigenes of those areas in constructing them. They will generally get involved and get paid. It will reduce unemployment, keep the busy and out of mischief," she said.

Asked her fear going into the primaries, she replied: "My fear is that men will want to muscle me out. But I am standing firmly for the people I am here to protect. They will want to push me over. But I cannot be intimidated. I have been emboldened.

"I am sure you want to also ask me why I didn't want to go for governorship, but I don't want any position that will limit to particular region or place. I want to be out for all Nigerians be you Christian, Muslim, male, female, I don't care. I just want to be there to ensure that they feel good. What is causing insecurity is lack of love, selfishness and bias."

They no longer feel any sense of belonging or reason to live," Ohanenye said.

On her view about the speculated consensus option of the ruling party, she said: "it all depends. I will agree with a clause and that clause is that the major reason for my joining the race must be addressed. Those issues concerning the downtrodden must be addressed. I don't really care if any other person other than me take up the responsibility but the person be one who will look into solving the problems of Nigeria.

"How much are you at home with the womenfolk I don't just have only women as my constituency but constituencies all over Nigeria. I have donated health centres across the country. I visit the downtrodden and less privileged. I am well prepared with my constituencies," she noted.

DazzlingRazzle

with Ifeoma Ononye
Edwin Usoboh

08132652224

TY Bello, Cobhams Asuquo to teach songwriting skills as Make Music Lagos returns



Music Day 2022 celebrations will kickoff across Lagos and other Nigerian cities like Abuja, Uyo, Ibadan, Owerri and Ado-Ekiti on 16th June and run till 26th June 2022 with a host of free concerts.

"Early in the year, we promised a scaled-up version of the Make Music Day celebration for 2022 and we are excited to be able to deliver on our promise with these landmark celebrations. Our desire is to deliver unforgettable experiences

and boost the music culture in Nigeria and the rest of Africa so I encourage fans and industry insiders not to miss out on the event this year," Adeola Akinyemi explained.

Listing some of the events that will make up the several events across cities, there will be Open Mic Nights, 'Learn to Play', 'Learn to DJ', 'Music Business Conference', 'Songwriting and Artist Boot camps' among other.

On the 'Learn to Play' program, Chord5 House of Music and Art and Dopree Music Studio and School are one of the top collaborators who would be giving classes on how to play the keyboard, drums and many other instruments.

Represented by Music Directors Moyinoluwa Nwevo and Faith Lana respectively, they explained they are excited about the upcoming event.

The biggest concert which is often regarded as the Shutdown and closing Concert on 26th June is said to hold at Muri Okunola Park, Victoria Island, where music stars like Johnny Drille, Magixx, Cavemen, Helen Ibe, Mike Abdul, and Sunkey Daniels among others will perform.

Professional songwriter and singer, Cobhams Asuquo, TY Bello, Nosa and many others have been listed among instructors that will headline the songwriting and art boot camp planned by Make Music Lagos.

At the press conference to unveil plans for the 2022 edition of the music event, the team leader of Make Music Lagos and coordinator of Showgear Nigeria, Adeola Akinyemi, explained that Make Music Lagos is part of a global alliance that celebrate music with head quarters in New York.

She stated that before Make Music became a global alliance, it first started as Fête de la Musique in Paris in 1982 under the direction Jack Lang, the then Minister of Culture of France, and Maurice Fleuret. Fête de la Musique is a celebration of World Music Day where everyone and anyone can share their love for music.

The event, which are held in commemoration of the World Music Day every 21st June is now in its 7th consecutive year in Nigeria, and promises to be extra special as it also marks the 40th anniversary.

To make it a memorable 40th celebration, Make

Timini Egbuson is the Luxury man for BOZ jewellery

Nollywood actor and socialite, Timini Egbuson, is still in a double celebration mood as he disclosed signing the dotted lines as brand ambassador for luxury jewellery brand, BOZ on his birthday on Friday, June 10, 2022.

Taking to his social media page to announce a new endorsement, Timini, who didn't go into details, hinted that it is a multi-million naira deal.

The actor expressed gratitude to God and his fans for standing with him and propelling his career to greater heights.

Born in Bayelsa State, Timini is the younger brother of Nigeria's talented popular actress, Dakore Akande. He attained his primary education at Greenspring Montessori, The Afro School and St Catherine's. He also attended Adebayo Mokuolu College, Lagos. He studied Psychology in the University of Lagos, graduating in the year 2011.

His acting career kicked off in 2010, on M-net's soap opera 'Tinsel'. At the 2020 AMVCA, Timini won the Best Actor in a drama for his role in

'Elevator Baby'.

BOZ is a premium and luxury brand focused on creating a wide variety of unique and quality jewellery which include wedding and engagement rings, jewellery sets, watches and more while providing excellent customer service.

Some of its stock in trade include ready-made and customized designs, natural diamonds, high-quality simulants, solid gold, and sterling silver jewellery.



The boy-child also needs love to stop rape, cultism –Winner Mr Tourism Nigeria

The winner of the 2022 edition of Mr Tourism Nigeria, Hamilton Nosagie Iro Eweka have said that, just like many Non governmental organisations, foundations around the world is doing their best to cater for the girl-child, male children also needs love and care to stay away from vices.

The 21 years old model whose dream has always been to become a pageant king, said the title will give him a wider opportunity to reach out to teen-age school boys, explaining that there is need to start catering for the boy-child.

"There is need to cater for the boy-child to reduce rape, cultism and other social vices in our communities," he said.

For his pet project, Hamilton, who recently completed his service year to our great nation Nigeria, wants to work with Edo State Museum to revamp it into a modern tourist site that will

attract more visitors and revenue to the State.

Hamilton Nosagie Iro Eweka, hails from ancient city of Benin in Edo state. He beat 25 other contestants to emerge winner of Mr Tourism Nigeria 2022 organised by Zanzu Entertainment, which took place at Koga Studio Ikeja Lagos Nigeria.

Aside being a model and a fashion enthusiast, Hamilton has a BSc in Microbiology from Benson Idahosa University.



Afro-swing sensation, Valvin drops weekend vibe new song "It's Friday"



with assistance from Baeken. Using a lethal combination of infectious melodies and smooth lyrics, Valvin is inviting us all to get loose, relax and have some much needed fun.

Valvin officially launched his music career in August 2021 when he released "No Worry" in the company of BNXXN.

The Millaboy Music Group artiste has garnered over 50,000 streams for the Afrobeats track.

On the background of that success, he followed up with "Tonight" four months later and is now dishing out the spanking new tune "It's Friday" for the weekend vibes.

This new track is also the first taste of his forthcoming debut EP "Sound Not Found", so now is the best time to get on Valvin's refreshing wave.

Whether you plan to spend the weekend chilling indoors or partying outdoors with friends, Nigerian super star singer popularly known as, Valvin says he has one of the perfect soundtracks for a good time.

Out now on all streaming platforms is "It's Friday", a mid-tempo Afro swing banger by the creative genius of Valvin

Nollywood actress, Georgina Onuoha hit Yul Edochie over polygamy

Nollywood actress, Georgina Onuoha, has berated Yul Edochie, her colleague, for boasting about the "blessings" of marrying a second wife.

In April, Yul announced the arrival of a child with Judy Austin, his lover, to the chagrin of May Edochie, his first wife.

The actor also unveiled Judy as his second wife, generating mixed reactions across social media platforms.

In an Instagram post, the actor bragged about the blessings that have come to his household since he took a second wife.

The 40-year-old film star also backed his claim on polygamy with reference to some "great men in the Bible" who trod that path.

Reacting to Yul's post, Georgina tackled the actor in an Instagram post, saying he shouldn't have married a second wife without the consent of his first wife.

The actress said although marrying a second wife isn't a crime, Yul's approach to polygamy was "wrong".

She also accused him of "committing adultery and disrespecting" his first wife, adding that he has "failed traditionally, and scripturally".

"My dearest brother Yul @yuledochie I appreciate that you acknowledged you wronged your wife, May @mayyuledochie," she wrote.

"I don't recall anyone saying marrying a second wife is a crime. Our culture permits that, and some Christians take more than one wife. There is a reason they say process and intent matter.

"It's one thing to impregnate another woman (adultery) while you are still married without discussing with your wife your desire to marry a second wife, which our traditions demand.

"Since you are quoting our traditions on polygamy, have you forgotten there are rules for such engagements? Most of us have parents who were born into polygamy.

"Who will tell you that their mothers brought the new wife home for their husbands, which is a sign of her giving her blessings to her husband. I bet you know that is our culture and traditions.

"Taking a second wife because you impregnated her while still married is not noble; it is called adultery, and God punished most great men in the Bible you are quoting for such acts.

"Marrying the same woman without the knowledge of your wife until she finds out on social media via a blog; is the worst kind of betrayal of trust. There is nothing noble in what you did."

"You don't force polygamy on people when they are not prepared for it. Give them an option. Not everyone has the grace to be a polygamist. So both traditionally and scripturally, you failed."

NEWS

Baba Negedu
KADUNA

Kaduna train attack: Terrorists release 11 of 62 abducted passengers

After spending 75 days in the hands of their abductors, terrorists who attacked and kidnapped passengers of the Abuja-Kaduna bound train have released 11 of the remaining 62 victims.

The terrorists had killed at least nine of the passengers and abducted about 65 others when the attack took place on Monday, 28th March, around Katari and Rijana axis of Kaduna State.

Kaduna based publisher and Media Consultant to Sheikh Ahmad Gumi, Malam Tukur Mamu disclosed

on Saturday in Kaduna that after series of negotiations between the Federal Government and the terrorists, they were able to secure their release.

He gave the names of the 11 victims released as: Jessy John, Amina Ba'aba Mohammed (Gamba), Rashida Yusuf Busari, Hannah Aje-wole and Amina Jibril.

Others he said include: Najib Mohammed Dahiru, Gaius Gambo, Hassan Aliyu, Peace Aboy and Danjuma Sa'idu.

Tukur Mamu also said the released persons have been flown on the orders of President Buhari to Abuja for medical evaluation and treatment before reuniting them with their families.

According to him, some retired Army Generals and a renowned professor also assisted in the release of the passengers.

Mamu who also quoted an insider source said, the male victims were released on health grounds as part of the request made by the

negotiating team while the women who are among the vulnerable are part of the agreement reached with the abductors.

The publisher said: "It was expected initially that all the abducted women will be released in the first batch while negotiations for the release of the remaining victims will continue but according to another source that was privy to Saturday's engagement with the abductors, they decided to cut down the

number of women they initially agreed to release because of FG's demand to include those with life threatening injuries/illnesses among the ones they released.

"The abductors have initially insisted that the only condition they will accept to start negotiating the

release of their victims is when government release their teenage children unconditionally but Mamu insisted that no government will accept such bargain as they must also show signs of good will and make acceptable compromises too by way of releasing some of the victims."

Plateau PDP guber candidate pledges commitment to robust security

Musa Pam
JOS

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), governorship candidate in the 2023 election, Caleb Mutfwang has pledged to provide robust security to residents of the State as well as build on the infrastructural development of the Jonah Jang administration.

Also, he said that Plateau State must rise again as the opposition party has been repositioned with vigour to reclaim power in 2023.

Mutfwang disclosed this yesterday while addressing hundreds of PDP supporters who thronged the Yakubu Gowon Airport, Heipang, to receive him and former Governor Jonah David Jang, who returned from Abuja, where he had gone to receive his certificate of return as the candidate of the party.

He said: "The presentation of the certificate of return to me as candidate of PDP in Plateau State has reaffirmed our determination and commitment to work collectively as a people to reclaim power in 2023.

"We are prepared as a party to go into the 2023 election as one family without backbit-

ing, without hatred or any form of rancour. We are determined to unite as a party and as Plateau people to rebuild Plateau for the prosperity of our people.

"We are also grateful to the people of Plateau State over their relentless effort in ensuring that the PDP return to power in 2023. I am assuring the people that they will not regret their decision if they return PDP to power."

Mutfwang urged the youths who have no voter's card to go to the nearest INEC office and register to vote out the failed APC during the 2023 general elections.

He said: "PDP will return to power to continue with the infrastructural development of the Jang administration, we will bring peace and security; we will open up businesses to boost the economy of Plateau.

"I assure you that the Plateau will rise again, the Plateau will be prosperous again, and the Plateau will be great again. Although INEC has not opened a campaign, we should go back to our various polling units to educate our people on the need to get PVCs and vote for PDP."

New Telegraph Correspondent now CAN media aide

Chairman, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Niger State and Bishop, Kontagora Diocese, Catholic Church, Bishop Bulus Yohanna, has appointed Daniel Atori of the New Telegraph newspapers to serve as its "Media Aide."

The appointment was contained in a letter handed over to Mr Atori at the State CAN secretariat, Minna by the CAN Chairman in company of his secretary Pastor Raphael Opawoye.

While handing over the letter of appointment, Bishop Yohanna said the selection of Daniel Atori was due to his antecedents and obvious track records as a seasoned journalist who has used his professionalism to propagate Jesus Christ and help in the growth of Christianity in Niger State.

He further stated that he

is to serve as a gateway between CAN and the public in matters of information dissemination, galvanize other journalists in the state to help in setting Agenda that will put the Christian body on a roadmap to championing the course of Christians in Niger State and to further deepen cordial relationship between CAN and journalists in the state.

In his acceptance speech, Atori commended the leadership of CAN for finding him worthy to be appointed media aide to the CAN chairman, and pledged to be committed in the discharge of his assignment.

He however called for collective efforts by journalists in the State to ensure tremendous success is achieved in Niger State by bridging the existing gaps.

His appointment takes effect immediately.



Borno State Governor, Professor Babagana Umara Zulum, supervising the resettlement of 2,500 displaced families into their homes rebuilt by the state government at Kirawa, a border community in Gwoza Local Government Area, and distribution of food items worth N120 million...yesterday

Following the conduct of primary elections by political parties, there are indications that the All Progressive Congress (APC) may be on a collision course with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Akwa Ibom State.

Reports from the INEC, has shown that APC did not conduct governorship primary election in the state. The commission said the party failed to hold the governorship primary which should have been held on Thursday, 26 May, at Sheergate Arena, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

2023: No guber primary in Akwa Ibom APC –INEC Report

The Commission said only two senatorial districts in the state, Akwa Ibom North East and Akwa Ibom North west held successful primaries on Saturday, 28th May. It stated that no senatorial primary was held for Akwa Ibom South senatorial district.

This development is already unsettling the hierarchy of the State Chapter of the party and its national headquarters in Abuja, as a for-

mer minister of Niger Delta Affairs and former governor of Akwa Ibom State, Senator Godswill Akpabio is celebrating his victory at another primary held late Thursday for the North West District of the state not monitored by INEC as required by section 84 of the 2022 Act.

Two reports detailing the activities leading up to the senatorial primary and non-conduct of the governorship primary in the state have been submitted by the state office to headquarters in Abuja and certified copies of the report have been applied for and given to stakeholders.

Sources at the Zambezi Street headquarters of the commission in Abuja made the reports available for sighting. One of the reports, for the governorship primary, is dated May 27, 2022,

and signed by the Akwa Ibom Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC), Mike Igini was stamped received in the Office of the National Chairman.

The report addressed to the chairman with the report, titled 'Report of the non-conduct of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Governorship Primary Scheduled to hold on Thursday, May 26, 2022 at the Sheergate Arena, Uyo, 8/10 Nsikak Eduok Avenue, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, stated as follows:

"I forward herewith, the Report of the Non-conduct of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Governorship Primary, scheduled to hold on Thursday, 26th May, 2022, at Sheergate Arena, 8/10, Nsikak Eduok Avenue, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, for your information and necessary action."

Also, the Monitoring Team from INEC, in concluding report which is before the Commission's Chairman, concluded that the governorship primary did not hold "because the APC Primary Election Committee did not come to the venue and did

PUBLIC NOTICE

ARAWARA-ARA COTERIE CLUB

The above named Organisation wishes to notify the General public of its intention to formally register with the Corporate Affairs Commission of Nigeria under Part "F" of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, 2020.

The names of the Trustees are:

- Ajewole Albert Oluremi Bamidele
- Oluwatuyi Michael Oluwadare Festus
- Akinmoladun James Ayodele
- Jegede Babajide
- Oladele Albert Abiodun
- Faleimu Veronica Modupe
- Abe Esther Oluremi

Aims and Objectives of the Incorporated Trustee

- Support and provide care for the interest of Ara members.
- Care for orphans, widows and less privileged in the society.
- To promote cultural values and norms.
- To organise enlightenment activities that could take care of the employment challenges of the youths.

Any objection to the registration should be forwarded to the Registrar-General, Corporate Affairs Commission, Plot 420, Tigris Crescent, off Aguiyi Ironsi Street, Abuja within 28 days of this publication.

Signed: TRUSTEES

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known and called as ATAGBO ESE ELOHO now wish to be known and addressed as ATAGBO ELOHO JEFFERY, and my correct date of Birth is 27/04/1984. All former documents remain valid, any authority it may concern and the general public to take note.

INTERVIEW

My testimony will inspire other women, says Oyibiribiri
p.28

SERMON

Holiness is essential
p.28

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chiabiazem@gmail.com
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FAITH

Cleric charges Christian men on exemplary living

Christian men have been charged to flee promiscuity, other evils and be exemplary in their way of living.

The counsel was given by Supervising Minister, Central Christian Men's Fellowship of United Evangelical Church (Founded as Qua Iboe Church), Rev'd Idoren-yin James, at the 20th Central Christian Men's Fellowship Rally 2022, held at UEC Cathedral, Itire, Surulere, Lagos. James stressed that it was necessary for men to walk with God closely in order to come to the fullness of the mandate of God upon their lives.

The preacher said God still needs men who faithfully seek him, to bless and empower; advising Christian men to re-examine their lives and ensure conformity with God's instructions for blessings.

While delivering the sermon on 'Empowered for Glory', with scriptural reference drawn from First Corinthians 15 verse 10, James asked participants not to think God has forgotten them. Rather, they should fast to the confession of their hope without wavering, for God who promised is faithful and just, as they were created to be the head, great and excel in all endeavours.

James stated: 'Don't go to church to occupy space but

be a practical Christian man in words, actions, service and charity. God is still in need of men who really know and love him, to bless and empower. Beloved of Christ, I charge you, to hence rise up to serve the Lord and humanity, lift high the cross of Christ as true believers in the Lord.'

Superintendent Pastor of the Lagos Township Superintendency of the Church, Rev'd Charles Nwogwugwu while congratulating the congregants on the success of their 2022 rally, urged they maintain the tempo of collective evangelism, service to God with hope for a rewarding future.

President of the Central Christian Men's Fellowship, Lagos Township Superintendency of UEC, Elder Imeh Etuk, said the 2022 really was born to ignite spiritual and physical growth of the UEC men.

He also advised participants to remain resolute in honouring God with their lifestyles and service.

Meanwhile the men's programme which held Monday, May 30 to June 5 also featured Bible study, visit to motherless babies' home, prayer meeting, bible quiz, health and business talk, fundraising for the support of evangelism, general prayers for Nigeria and the world.

Democracy day: God is set to deliver Nigeria –Muoka

Stories by Chinyere Abiazem

General Overseer of the Lord's Chosen Charismatic Revival Ministries, Pastor Lazarus Muoka, has said God is set to truly deliver Nigeria as the nation marks its democracy anniversary.

Muoka revealed that the cries of the citizens have risen unto God following the killings, hardship and pains going on.

He made these known ahead of the biennial two-day crusade programme en-

titled; '...And The Enemies Submitted', which started Saturday, June 11 and ends today, Sunday 12.

"There is no doubt that the ongoing hues and cries as a result of insecurity, economic woes, political turmoil, social anarchy, etc. are nothing but that the power of God will be made manifest. Many may think that the devil, our arch enemy, is now in control of the affairs of men. But that assumption is erroneous because our God is still the Almighty and Sovereign God.

"He knows there will be a

time of public outcry and a time to intervene and deliver his people. He has time for everything, time to weigh the enemies of his children on the balance and time to judge them.

"The time now is for God to deliver his people and cause their enemies to submit. It does not matter how strong your enemy may be, our assurance is that God has set aside the two days to deliver His people from all forms of bondages which they have been subjected to by their enemies," Muoka stated as contained in a statement re-

leased by the Public Relation Officer, Pastor Louis Chidi.

He added: "His Children have cried enough and he has heard their cry and will on that day in a dimension never witnessed before demonstrates his power to deliver them from all afflictions.

"The crusade is designed to spiritually deal with everything that constitutes itself as the enemy of man. At the end, the prevailing economic woes, political turmoil and social disorder will be a thing of the past and a new dawn will emerge in Jesus name."

Officiating ministers and winners of bible quiz competition, led by the Superintendent Pastor, Lagos Township Superintendency of United Evangelical Church (Founded as Qua Iboe Church), Rev'd Charles Nwogwugwu (2nd from left) at the grand finale of the 2022 Central Christian Men's Fellowship Rally of the church at UEC cathedral, Itire, Surulere, Lagos...recently



Genesis Global unveils Ikeja parish, says spread of gospel necessary

Edwin Usoboh

"The true gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ must be heard throughout the whole world." These are the words of popular televangelist, Founder of Genesis Global Ministries, Prophet Israel Oladele Ogundipe, as he unveiled another Inter-denominational Parish in Ikeja

Ogundipe reiterating Jesus' charge to his disciples to go into the world and preach the gospel, stated: "We are emulating this by spreading the tentacles of the ministry cum evangelism to the people of Ikeja as another Genesis Global interdenominational church would be opening Sunday, June 12, 2022, in Ikeja."

While addressing journalists, the clergyman promised to shake the land of Ikeja and its environs, adding that the church's services would still be limited to evening, 4p.m.

to 6p.m. on Sundays for the time being.

Speaking further, he revealed that he has been praying fervently for the mighty hands of God to fall upon everyone that would be in attendance every Sunday, reasserting as well that the branch would be an interdenominational and not only white garment-wearing parish.

Also, the man of God expressed his feelings of complete love for, and devotion to the gospel of Jesus Christ, saying when it comes to the gospel of God and establishment of Genesis Global, he would never discriminate because he observed in the ministry of Jesus Christ that he disengaged himself from his people, as he accommodated all.



Leke Adeboye launches empowerment scheme to mark 40th birthday

As part of showing appreciation to God, Pastor Leke Adeboye, last child and Principal Executive Assistant of the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) launched an empowerment scheme to mark his 40th birthday.

Forty youths were selected to benefit from the acquisition of digital skills between June and August 2022 at the Redemption Camp, Ogun State.

The initiative is one of the numerous programmes and projects designed to give hope to many Nigerian youths in celebration of Pastor Leke's 40th birthday, a statement from the organisers made known.

The statement added that the training, which is aimed at folks intending to pivot into a career in

InfoTech or those willing to upgrade their skills, is part of the celebrator's efforts in increasing Africa's tech talent base.

Adding that it holds in partnership with the IncubatorNg and other stakeholders and will cover in-depth training in Data Science.

However, a Christian Social Responsibility (CSR) programme was held where a medical outreach took place with free glasses given. Also donation of a borehole was made to provide Mushin residents with access to clean water.

Also a crusade held at the Bishop Aggey Secondary School, Mushin where youths defied the heavy downpour to join gospel artistes including Bidemi Olaoba, Tosin Bee, Eniola Olusoga, Femi Okunuga, Benard Fuji and others to celebrate with Leke, Pastor of RCCG, The Bridge and the Assistant Pastor-in-Charge

of Province (CSR), RCCG Youth Province 1.

In a chat with journalists the elated celebrator revealed that the event's venue was deliberate, sharing: "I was born and raised up here in Mushin before we were shipped off to the middle of the jungle in Ogun State. This is where I and my brother (Pastor Dare) who passed on, started life from. This is also where the founder of RCCG lived. So it is always good to never forget your source.

"Borehole, health care, school uniforms, food, improving the lives of people around here is the least we could do. God has helped some of us to get opportunities and it is good we come back to help others up.

"The people here should not be addressed as criminals, just that they do not have access to opportunities like some in the society. Part of the questions God will ask when we get to heaven is

when I was hungry did you feed me when I was naked did you clothe me? That is the basis of what we are doing."

In addition, a thanksgiving and worship event was also organised by Pastor Titi Adeboye to celebrate her husband, Pastor Leke.

The private event had in attendance, Pastor Joseph Obayemi, National Overseer of RCCG (Nigeria), Pastor Johnson Odesola, the Assistant General Overseer (Admin & Personnel), Pastor Joseph Adeyokunnu, the Financial Controller of RCCG.

Also in attendance were, Pastor Kunle Ajayi, Rev. Mother Esther Abimbola Ajayi, Founder of the Love of Christ Generation Church C&S (Worldwide), Pastor Adeolu Adeboye, brother to the celebrator, Pastor Bisi Akande, Pastor-in-Charge of RCCG Youth Province 1, among other guests.

Tell us what your nickname 'Oyibiribiri' means?

Oyibiribiri simply means when God has turned your sadness to joy; when God has turned your sad story to good news.

Has it always been singing and music all your life? When did you discover that you have a talent in music?

I have been singing right from childhood. I was born into the family that loves God and gospel music. I have been in the choir in my church from childhood. While growing up, I was one of Gbenga Adeboye's backup singers -Shola Allison, Yemi Ajide and myself. Shola Allison is a good gospel singer now.

From a backup singer to the head of your own music band, how did that happen for you?

I just kept singing and being true to the work of God. I am also the lead singer in my church and I minister with music at events. To the glory of God, I released my first gospel music album titled 'Abba Baba' recently. The album launch was celebrated with my 50th birthday together.

Tell us about the 'Abba Baba' album launch, how was the reception of the song?

It was wonderful. It was glorious. I never expected the crowd that came. Till now I am still amazed how people came out to support me and the album. Someone I met on Facebook who has been listening to my songs on YouTube also came to launch the album. That wowed me because this 'Abba Baba' is on YouTube so I have people who follow me on social media that have listened to my song. My people really surrounded me. My Pastors, friends, fans, family, loved ones and people I have not met before all came. I was speechless. I printed about 500 copies of my CDs and I have about 100 left.

What would you say was the biggest challenge you faced while making the album?

Recording songs in the studio is tedious. Sometimes, we will think we are done recording one song and the producer will call us back saying, 'oh you missed one chorus,' or 'ah, I couldn't hear one back up singer's part clearly' or it could be that 'you didn't pronounce one word well'. We will have to call the person back to start all over again. It was not easy but God made it possible.

We finish late most times. I thank God for the husband that he gave me because he was supportive. Most of my backup singers had young children. I thank God for their families and their husbands' understanding too. Sometimes they don't have any option than to bring the children to the studio. Many times we had to carry the babies so they could allow us to work. There are times the babies' voices will get into the recording and we start again. I thank God it all ended in praise.

In situations like this, I appreciate other gospel singers, especially the Osinachi Nwachukwu who was going through a lot at home but had to put her pain aside to still do the work of God. I, as an example, was 48 years old two years ago. And it was two years ago that I got married. All those while I was ministering at other people's weddings, traditional marriages and people never knew that I was single. I was believing God for a partner, but I never allowed my challenges to show on my face. I smile, I dance very well wherever I am asked to minister during the praises. If you squeeze your face and always look sad, no one will come close to you.

When I was about to get married, people were surprised. Many people in my neighborhood came to see if it was true that I was the one getting married or my daughter. As a minister of God, you just have to hide your own pain. We are like pastors. After church service, couples

My testimony will inspire other women, says Oyibiribiri

Deaconess Adeshola Julianah Ogundipe, popularly known on the gospel music scene as Oyibiribiri, started her gospel music career in the church and made a name for herself in ministering with music. Ogundipe, a school teacher and a business woman with a HND in Printing Technology from Yaba Polytechnic, in this interview with IFEOMA ONONYE, Oyibiribiri, who recently celebrated her 50th birthday with the launch of her first gospel album 'Abba Baba', shares her story and testimony on how God changed her single status

bring their problems to the pastor, pastor has to put his own challenges aside to counsel and help them with their own problems.

You said earlier that you want to use your testimony to encourage other women waiting on God for a life partner. Tell us about that biggest testimony?

I never saw my marriage coming. I had closed the chapter of marriage. I was praying and was telling God, 'if husband is not coming, that He should help me to produce my first music album'. I never knew that God has a plan of giving me both. In the process of working on my album, I met my husband. I had to put the album on hold for the marriage to take place.

Was he someone you were dating before?

I never met him before that day. I was in the process of adopting a child because I was 48 years old. I wanted a child I could call my own since no husband was coming but in the process, I met my husband through Pastor Olayogun. Pastor Olayogun was my provincial Pastor when I was a choir mistress. So we got talking and he was saying how active I am in church but has never seen me with any man or in the 'Good Women' program in church and he knows that I am not a bad woman.

I told him I was not married and that was why I don't attend 'Good Women' programme. He prayed for me and through him I met my husband. I want to use my life as a testimony to tell other women that there is no one God has forgotten. It is just that his time is not our own time and his time is always perfect. He said it in his words that 'he will make things beautiful at his time.

My dear women waiting on the lord for a partner, hold God firm. Yes, you will pass through a lot. I was mocked. People said all sorts to discourage me. Someone called me that I should leave the church, that I have been serving God in that church and nothing has changed. That I have not seen my husband. Maybe if I change church, things will change. I didn't listen to her because I wasn't in church because I was looking for a husband. This same person when I was getting married didn't come for my wedding. She didn't even congratulate me. So beware, not everybody in church is there for God's work. Some come to distract people of God.

What inspired the songs in the album?

The 'Abba Baba' song was inspired by me being grateful to God for all he has done in my life. On my way to church one day, I saw two women fighting because one was owing a cloth she bought. Their fight caused a bit of traffic. I started speaking to myself that I have no husband, I am living in a good apartment which I pay for by myself, I do not owe anybody. In all I have passed through in life, I have never borrowed. I wear what I want to wear, no matter how expensive.

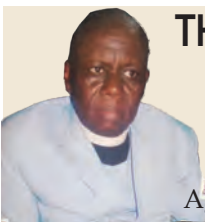
I live within my means and I started thanking God. I started singing 'Abba

Baba', 'Daddy da dani, Ope se jije, (he provides food for me without borrowing) ope se mi mu, (He provides water for me to drink) Oko mi bale (my mind is at peace) God I am grateful for that'. I wrote the song down as it was flowing in my head. God gave me the second song in my album when I was planning my wedding. God turned everything round for my good.

This may sound personal but we would like to know if you have given up on adopting a child or are you hoping on God to have your own child even though you are 50 years old?

God gave me three children already with my husband. They are my children and I love them. They even look like me, if God wants to give me more children, who am I to say No? I will receive the gift with both hands.





THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF CHRIST MISSION

With
Bishop Robert

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xxxxx, xxxxx (SMS only)

Holiness is essential

Hebrews 12:14 (KJV) "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

A lifestyle of holiness is very important and essential, the Lord our saviour expects all His children whom He has used His own blood and life to redeem unto God to be holy and consecrated to Him.

According to our text today, we noticed that holy living is depending on following peace with all men, without following peace with all men, we will find it difficult to live a holy life. Jesus said to us, all the laws is hanged on this saying "love the Lord thy God, and love thy neighbor" that is only way to overcome and triumph over the laws of sin and death. (2Peter 1:5-11)

Another way to live a holy life is by separating ourselves unto God from every forms of sinfulness and companies that pollutes our life, it is by then, God will be our Father and we will be His beloved daughters and sons.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 (KJV)

Every Christian who understands the worth of being a child of God will purge himself from every filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Wherefore come out from

among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

Every Christian who understands the worth of being a child of God will purge himself from every filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

2 Corinthians 7:1 (KJV) Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

For this reason, we must pull off the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lust and be ye renew in the renewing of your mind and put on the new which after God is created in righteousness of and true holiness. (Eph 4:21-32)

We must strive to appear before God as a worker who is approved and not be ashamed, rightly dispensing the word of truth. (2Timothy 2:15-22),

The coming of our Lord Jesus is near and He is coming soon to take His children out of this deadly world before the unbearable judgement of the world. Let us all who have this hope separate themselves and continue to wait for the coming of our saviour, for those who wait to the end, shall be saved. (2 Peter 3:8-14)

It was the custom of the King of Israel in those days to take dinner with his principal officers the first few days of the new month. Saul, happened to be the king of Israel at that time. David was expected to be present during the new month dinner but was absent.


King Saul found his son's excuse for David's absence very annoying. He started abusing his son Jonathan. And instead of limiting his anger to his son, he started abusing Jonathan's mother who had nothing to do with David's absence at the dinner party. He shouted "thou son of the perverse rebellious woman", and this is something many children do not like.

Children do not generally like it when their fathers abuse their mothers. Children do not generally like it when their fathers do not treat their mothers with respect. Children do not generally like it when they see that their fathers do not take care of their mothers. Children generally do not like it when they hear their fathers shout at their mothers. And of course, children hate to see their mothers being verbally or physically beaten by their fathers. I know of a family where the first born physically fought his father in order to prevent his mother from being dishonoured. Well, that man ought not to have fought his father. No excuse for that at all. But I brought this example in to show how many children feel when their fathers use their office as the heads of the home to dishonour their

Marriage and Family Intimacy

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When your children are closer to their mother

mothers.

In some homes, you see the children spending more time with their mothers than their fathers after their mothers have been maltreated by their fathers. And this generally gets many men angry. Some men go the extent of disowning the children and go to marry a brand new wife with a brand new set of children who they think will end up giving them the love that the first wife and her children did not give them.

Even when the home is at peace and father and mother are at peace with each other, many children are still closer to their mothers than their fathers, and this makes some men think that they love their mothers more. I just want to let my fellow male folks know that it is not always so. Many children love their fathers deeply and yet closer to their mothers whom they also love. Why is it so? The bonding between mother and child starts right from when the child is in the womb. When

a child develops to a stage in the womb, he/she starts hearing the mother's voice. A child therefore gets used to the mother and her voice right from the womb. After birth, the little babies spend most of their time with their mothers than with their fathers. Breast feeding alone is a very special time of bonding between mother and child. In many instances, the baby fixes a look on the mother's face while sucking her breast. Powerful cords of love are being tied in the process. There are many other things that bond mother and child. It is not that they do not love you as a father. They love you deeply but they are likely to be closer to their mothers. If you want your children to love you the way you think they love their mothers, there are two things you need to do. (1) Truly love their mother and let the children know that you love their mother. (2) Encourage your children to love their mothers. This will make them honour and love you more. Love you.

TEXT: Philippians 3:10; John 1:1-3; Psalm 119:11; Isaiah 1:19-20; 1 Samuel 15:22-23; Matthew 6:9-15.

Philippians 3:10. That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.

John 1:1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Psalm 119:11. Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Isaiah 1:19. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.

1 Samuel 15:22. And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.


Matthew 6:10. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Happy glorious, beautiful and wonderful day to you and to every member of your family. May God bless you abundantly today in Jesus Name.

It is only a fool that can walk with God. It takes foolishness to walk with God. A fool is he who does not know what to do without God. A wise person does not need God and does not have to walk with God. A wise person is he who knows what to do without consulting God or ask for permission from God before embarking on anything.

Walking with God is having a relationship with God, communicating with Him on a daily basis and constantly, submitting to Him, taking instructions or permission from Him before taking any step.

A fool in this context is someone that is lesser than God and he or she is not as wise as God, he depends on God absolutely while a wise person in this con-




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Walking with God

text is someone that is bigger than God, more knowledgeable than Him and as a matter of fact, he or she is wiser than God. A wise person does not depend on God for anything.

It takes walking with God for someone to have deeper knowledge, understanding and relationship with God. It is when you walk with God that you can fully and maximally enjoy Him in all ramifications of life. If you are so wise in your own eyes before God you can not enjoy God because God will not be your Commander, Master, or Instructor but if you want to enjoy God to the fullest you need to become a fool before Him so that He can instruct and direct you from time to time and tell you what to do per time. If you become a fool before God does not turn you to a Robot but rather it means you make God your SUFFICIENCY. It means you depend on His wisdom, instructions and directions for your life and destiny.

In today's message, we are going to look at various ways to walk with God.

First, you need to walk with God by His Word. You take instructions, directions and commands from God through His WORD.

You can also walk with God by Faith. You need to develop your faith in God through the Word of God. Reading, studying, meditating, believing and acting on God's Word will make your walk with God deeper and deeper.

Prayer is another means of walking with God. There is no way you can walk with God without prayer. Through prayer, you communicate and receive instructions from God.

You need to walk with God in Love. You need to love God passionately and unconditionally. You must love God at all times regardless of circumstances if you want to walk with Him. God loves you and He wants you to love Him back.

You are to walk with God in obedience. This is where you need to become a fool before him. God can tell you to do something that is humanly unreasonable but you must do it if you want the blessings of God. When the Children of Israel got to the red sea and God said they should move forward. Humanly speaking it sounds unreasonable but when they moved forward their victory came. If you want to walk with God, you must always obey His instructions.

If you want to walk with God and enjoy Him you need to walk with Him in patience and long suffering. God makes everything beautiful in His time. You may be diligent and hardworking in whatever you are doing now but yet, no positive results to show for it, don't be discouraged, don't loose hope but continue doing it and very soon God will crown all your efforts with success and blessings. Let us pray the following Prayers.

Pay attention to this from the words of Christ:

Mark 8:34-37 (KJV): "And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Many of us have forgotten we were called to carry the cross. A true Christian must carry his cross for the sake of pleasing God. What is The Cross? In a simple language,

"The cross is whatever pain you suffer and endure because you want to please God, because you want to obey God you bear the pain and agony that come as a result of doing righteousness"

That, my friend, is The Cross the Lord want me to remind you today about this most important element of Christianity, without carrying your cross, it's impossible to enter into the Kingdom of God. That is what the word of God says; you must endure your own cross in order to cross over to the other side of Jordan where there is life everlasting.

Complacency is too much in the church today, people commit sin at will and enter into the church to pray. Brethren, examine yourself, are you still carrying your cross, many people have compromise their holiness for food and money, and the pride and pleasures of life.


What are you suffering, in what ways have you constrained your-

Jesus Christ said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20). Coupled with this wonderful truth is the statement in His Word that "... as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God ..." (John 1: 12).

If you have, to the best of your knowledge, received Jesus Christ, God's Son, as your own Savior, according to the scripture quoted above, you have become a son of God in whom Jesus Christ dwells. Altogether too many people make the mistake of measuring the certainty of their salvation by their feelings. Don't make this tragic mistake. Believe God. Take him at His Word:

"These things have I written unto you that believe in the Name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life..." (1 John 5: 13).


It is impossible in the short space of these few paragraphs to go into all the wonderful results of the transaction that took place when you received Christ. A child may be born into a wealthy home and become the possessor of good parents, brothers and sisters, houses and lands, but at the time of his birth it is not necessary that he be informed of all these wonderful things. There are more important matters to take care of first. He must be protected, for he has been born into a world of many enemies. In the hospital room he is handled with sterilized gloves and kept from outsiders that he might not fall victim to the myriad germs waiting to attack. It is the knowledge of such enemies which enable the doctors and nurses to take measures to protect the precious new life. You have become a child of God; you have been born into His family as a spiritual babe. This is a strategic moment in your



The Inward Life

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Remember the cross!

self just because you fear God, what have you denied yourself? A Christian brother/ sister who does not have any plan to obey Christ at any cost, how can you claim you belong to Him? You commit adultery and fornication and you think God does not see you. My brother/sister rethink, repent and remember the cross today. That you are going to church and you are a worker in your local church doesn't make you a candidate for eternal life unless you forsake the world and it's ungodly pleasures and leisures.

You drink from the cup of the Lord today and tomorrow you wallowing in sin and drinking from the devil's cup, and you expect your prayers to be answered. Hypocrisy has become the order of the days. God have mercy!

Mark 8:34-37 (KJV) And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

In a world where temptations abide, how are you glorifying God? In a world where sexual immorality is the order of the days, how are you crucifying your fleshly desires? The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life have dragged many kings and priests of God into darkness. Everyone is pursuing money, money money, but what shall it profit you if The Lord say to you on that day "depart from me, I never know you, you worker of iniquity"? Many claim to be workers in the church but they are politicians looking to profit from everyone and everything in the church. Remember the Cross. God is not a Nigerian, He mean whatsoever He says and says what He means.

Remember the Cross? You only go to church whenever it's convenient, nothing for God from you, you run away from any church that tells you the truth claiming the pastor is outdated, don't worry, it's a prophecy, but I pray evil prophecy will not come to pass in your journey of eternal destiny. Remember? "The first shall be last, and the last shall become first." Friend, you choose where you belong to in God's eternal programme.

Get Equipped

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Beginning with Christ

life. It is our desire to share with you a few simple truths which will strengthen you for the battle ahead: and keep you safe from the onslaughts of Satan. In 1 Peter 2:2 you will read, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby." In Acts 20:32 you will read, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up ..."

His Word will now serve as your spiritual food and will build you up in the faith. You probably have a Bible New Testament. If not, get one and begin read it faithfully everyday. It is most important that you have time set aside, preferably in the morning, to read and study the Word of God and pray. Now let's be more specific with regard to your intake of the Word of God. In the 9th and II verses of Psalm 119 we read, "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word," and then the psalmist speaks to the Lord saying, "Thy Word Have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee." So we challenge you to hide His Word in your heart to memorize it. Each section titled "Assurance of..." has included in it a Scripture with which you may begin. But we have spoken only about your spiritual food. Let us consider for a moment this new enemy which you face.

Before you trusted Christ, Satan may not have bothered you par-

ticularly, but now he has seen you make the step which angers him more than anyone thing in all the world. You have left his crowd and joined the ranks of those who believe and trust in the Son of God. You are no longer in Satan's domain; you now belong to the One who has "bought" and paid for you "with a price," the price of His own blood shed on the cross. You may be sure that Satan will attempt to trouble you. His attack assume many forms, but we wish to speak of some of the most common ones and give you help on how to resist him successfully.

We can overcome him only as we use the weapons which God has provided. Ephesians 6: 17 says "And take ... the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." Not only is the Word of God spoken of as the sword of the Spirit but it is that through which faith comes as a shield to ward off the darts of the enemy (Romans 10: 17, Ephesians 6: 16). The Word of God then, is our weapon of defense as well as our weapon of offense. For example, consider that our Lord was tempted by Satan in three specific ways, and He defeated him each time with Scripture, saying, "It is written ..." (see Matthew 4). If Christ deemed it necessary to meet Satan this way, how much more do we need this mighty weapon, the Word of God. How much more we need to be prepared to say to Satan, "It is written ..." or "Thus saith the Lord ...".

Alaafin stool selection: Agunloye Ruling House presents 48 aspirants

Sola Adeyemo
IBADAN

...Other agitating families lose out of race

In line with the position of the Oyo State Governor, Seyi Makinde, that the choice of the 46th Alaafin of Oyo will be made based on the existing Chieftaincy Declaration of the State which only recognizes the Alowolodu and Agunloye Ruling Houses, the Oyomesi have received list of names of 48 aspirants who are mainly from the Agunloye family.

Sunday Telegraph gathered that agitations that erupted from some families after the demise of the Alaafin, His Imperial Majesty, Oba Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi 111, on April 22 at the age of 83, to the effect that they are also qualified to become Alaafin being members of the expanded

eleven children of Atiba, could after all not hold water.

The late Alaafin was from the Alowolodu ruling house and it is the turn of the Agunloye family to produce the next Alaafin. Names of interested aspirants numbering 48 from the Agunloye family including the Owoade family, have been forwarded to the Baba Iyaji who according to investigation and traditional role, has forwarded the list to the Basorun of Oyo, who heads the seven-member Oyomesi (the Kingmakers).

The official chieftaincy declaration which Governor Makinde said was signed and will be followed to select the next Alaafin is under Section 4(2) of the Chiefs Law, Cap 19 of the Customary Law which

regulated the selection of the Alaafin of Oyo Chieftaincy providing thus that: "there are two Ruling Houses and the identity of each Ruling House is: 1. Agunloye, and 2. Alowolodu".

The governor had last week Saturday during the final burial of the Alaafin said that his government would not make use of the 1976 document that was not signed but rather the signed and recognised Oyo State Chieftaincy Declaration.

Governor Makinde had said "the process to select the new Alaafin must be in conformity with the Chieftaincy Declaration which was signed. Some people came to me and said the selection process must not be limited to

only two ruling houses. They said other families should be included, but I said the selection should be in conformity with the Chieftaincy Declaration that was signed".

The claim therefore that Alowolodu (from which the late Oba Adeyemi hailed from) and Agunloye had been merged in 1976 by the then Military government to accommodate all eleven children of Atiba, their Ancestor, thus qualifying other families to engage in the contest, has been jettisoned.

The Oyomesi comprises: the Basorun, the Ashipa (non-existent since the dastardly murder of the late occupant), the Agbaakin, the Alapinni, the Lagunna, the Samu, and the Akinniku of Oyo.



FCT Minister, Malam Muhammad Musa Bello (6th left); flanked by CEO, Qatar Charity Organisation, Sheikh Yousuf Ahmad Al-Kuwari (5th left); Qatar Deputy Ambassador to Nigeria, Ahmed Alhur (7th left), with other senior officials of the Qatar Charity and FCTA, during the visit of the Qatar Charity CEO to FCDA in Abuja... yesterday.

PHOTO: ELIJAH OLALUYI

YOV stages global rally on Owo massacre

Chinyere Abiazem

Prominent Yoruba Diaspora Organisation, Yoruba One Voice (YOV), will use the day to hold a global rally to press home the demand for a thorough investigation into the Owo Catholic Church massacre which led to the death of over 38 worshippers last Sunday.

YOV Director of information, Mr. Tope Oladimeji, expressed sadness over incident, saying the Yoruba had never experienced

such a terrible onslaught in its long years of history, even as it wondered how a place of worship became the target of the terrorists.

The rally he said is to tell the world that Nigeria is not safe, maintaining that the group had embarked on the protest to drive home their demand for self determination.

"We are saddened by the attack on the Owo Catholic church. It is only in Nigeria that you go to church or mosque to worship without an assurance that you will return home safely. That

tells you how insecure Nigeria is at the moment.

"We are holding the protest rally in about 174 countries across all the six continents. The June 12 rally is to express our condolences to the people of Owo, the government, and also to demand a thorough investigation into the killing.

"What happened in Owo was predetermined. Terrorists are on rampage in the south west and we want to let the whole world know that the Fulani religious extremists and terrorists have decided

to set Nigeria on fire," stated Oladimeji in a statement.

He, however, blamed the Federal Government for not having the political will to tackle the spate of insecurity in the country, viewing its claim that the attack was perpetrated by ISWAP showed the failure.

He added: "Our call for self determination isn't by chance. The situations across Nigeria have been the reason for our agitation, so today's rally is an expression of our demand for justice.

fielding his name as a participant in their party activities including the just concluded "perfidious" rerun election where 720 votes were allocated to him even though he and his teeming supporters did not participate in the election.

He described the action of the APC against him as "malicious and intentional mischief".

GTCO Squad: Payments future digital, says Agbaje

Ifeoma Ononye

The Group CEO of Guaranty Trust Holding Company, GTCO, Segun Agbaje has said that the role digitalisation plays in today's banking process cannot be underestimated.

Agbaje also noted that if Nigeria and Africa must ride the wave of continued cash displacement, then the future of payments is digital.

He made the assertion in a paper he presented at a seminar on why Squad By GTCO is the best approach to radically transform Africa's payment space.

He said: "The future of payments is digital." The launch of Squad is timeous if Nigeria, and indeed Africa, must ride the wave of continued cash displacement and go on to drive digital payment adoption and financial inclusion. And, if there is a question of how to radically transform Africa's payment space, Squad is the answer."

He explained that without a doubt, digital payment is the next growth frontier for financial services. Amongst other extenuating factors, growing digitalisation, mobile penetration, and evolving consumer behaviour have accelerated the shift towards cashless thereby creating entirely new business models and solutions built around payments.

Furthermore, he stated that the key role digitalisation plays

in the financial lives of many people today shows that electronic payments are at the core of the payment ecosystem.

Available research points to the fact that asides security and privacy concerns, a major challenge presently facing the mobile payment ecosystem is the high level of market fragmentation as seen in multiplicity of platforms and the different service configurations on offer.

With consumer adoption stalling, mobile payments still represent a small portion of total consumer payments. The complexities around payments and the rapid evolution of merchant services require a re-evaluation of business focus and value propositions.

"It is against this backdrop that the launch of Squad, a full-service digital payment company conceived by Guaranty Trust Holding Company Plc (GTCO Plc), is a most welcome development."

With the launch of Squad, GTCO Plc aims to deploy its trademark efficient operations and innovative capacity to drive adoption in payment services and enhance financial inclusion. With the overarching goal to be the most efficient off-line and online merchant acquiring platform in all of Africa, Squad is well positioned to serve four important enterprise verticals namely: micro-businesses (kiosks), online sellers, digital natives, and corporate.

Clergyman to politicians: Shun self interests, primordial sentiments

Archbishop of Lagos, Methodist Church Nigeria, the Most Reverend (Dr.) Isaac Ayo-Olawuyi, has decried the current state of poverty and insecurity in the country even as he called on the political class to shun self interest and primordial considerations.

The clergyman made the call while briefing journalists on the activities lined up to mark celebrations of the Diamond Anniversary of the Diocese of Lagos, Methodist Church, Nigeria, Wesley Chapel, Ajah, Lagos State, recently.

Also, he urged the politi-

cal class to shun 'do or die' politics, noting that no position is worth anybody's blood.

The Cleric expressed optimism that God would intervene in the current situation in Nigeria.

However, Bishop Ayo-Olawuyi, singled out Governor Babajide Sanwo – Olu of Lagos State for commendation for what he described as his giant strides on infrastructural development and provision of security in the State.

The Cleric expressed optimism that the Governor would do more if given the opportunity in 2023.

ARCAN annual awards holds tomorrow

The 2022 Association of Retired Career Ambassadors of Nigeria (ARCAN) awards ceremony will take place on Monday June 13, in Nigeria

The awards is part of activities organized by the association to honour and celebrate members who have distinguished themselves in outstanding and exemplary ways in the nurturing and development of Nigeria's diplomatic and foreign policy engagements over several years while they were in

active service representing and projecting the interests of Nigeria locally and all over the globe.

Unlike previous years, this year's edition has some new features that include the posthumous recognition of former career ambassadors and the celebration of some of the living icons of the Foreign Service who were members of the original officers popularly referred to as "The Twelve Apostles" that were recruited into the Foreign Service in 1957.

Benue APC crisis: Rep member sues party over defamation

Cephas Iorhemen
MAKURDI

The crisis rocking the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Benue State has assumed another dimension as former member of the party and House of Representatives member for Jechira Constituency, Herman Hembe, has dragged the party to court

over alleged defamation.

Hembe, who has since defected from the APC to Labour Party (LP), to pursue his ambition of becoming the governor of the state, disclosed this in a statement he personally signed and made available to Sunday Telegraph in Makurdi yesterday.

The federal parliamentarian expressed worry that

long after he dumped the APC and notified its leadership through his counsel of his withdrawal from the governorship race and other activities of the party and subsequent resignation which was also served on the APC chairman of his Mbake Council Ward in Konshisha Local Government Area, the party's handlers have continued

CAA Senior Championships: Olatoye, Onyekwere strike gold in Mauritius

Charles Ogundiya

Sade Olatoye's African Championships debut took off on a winning note as she overcame the threat posed by Algeria's Zouina Bouzebra to win the women's Hammer throw on Day 4 of the 22nd African Senior Athletics Championships in Mauritius.

It was a close contest between the Nigerian and Algerian as the latter's first two throws of 59.86m and 59.66m landed farther than the former's throws of 57.78m and 57.98m respectively.

However, Olatoye who has a Personal Best (PB) of 69.89m in the event, dug deep to produce her winning mark of 63.67m at her third attempt and Bouzebra eventually had to settle for Silver with 63.48m. Egypt's Rawan Barakat claimed Bronze with a mark

...as Big Brother Naija star, Edwards, targets historic gold



Onyekwere

of 62.67m.

Olatoye's GOLD medal was enough to keep Nigeria in joint



Olatoye

3rd place (alongside Algeria) on the medals table with a total of seven medals: four GOLD, two

Silver and a Bronze medal.

Also on Saturday, Chioma Onyekwere won the Discus event to add to the country's medal haul.

Meanwhile, Big Brother Naija Pepper Dem star, Mike Edwards, will be seeking his first major title for Nigeria when he files out for the high jump event on Sunday, the final day of the Championship.

Edwards, 31 will be making his second attempt for a podium appearance in the competition after finishing fourth at the 21st edition of the championship four years ago in Asaba, Delta state.

While Edwards will be seeking a personal first continental title of his career, a win for him will also be Nigeria's first gold medal in the event in the history of the championship.



First Pillars' goal excites Adamu Mohammed

Charles Ogundiya

Kano Pillars forward, Adamu Mohammed, has expressed his excitement after scoring his first official goal for the club in a FA Cup match against Karota FC.

The product of Kano-based Northwest FC was introduced in the 40th minutes of the game while scoring the only goal late into the game to give the Sai Masu Gida passage to the next round of the competition.

Speaking with the media after the game, Mohammed said he hopes this will be the beginning of greater things to come this season.

"I am really excited to have gotten the goal that has now taken us to the next stage of the AITEO Cup," he said.

"I want to thank the technical team for giving me the opportunity to prove myself in a game like this. I also want to thank my teammates who also motivated me in the course of the game.

"We gave in our best and although Karota FC were very resolute in the game, we just kept pushing and hoping that we will finally be able to convert our chances in the game and although the goal came late on, it was enough to see us through to the next stage of the competition.

"I am excited to have finally gotten my first goal of the season and I hope that this will be the start of more goals and more exploits for me this campaign."

Lagos agog as Eagles stars faceoff against BYT Academicals

Charles Ogundiya

Lagos fans will once again have the opportunity of watching some of the Super Eagles stars since the team was moved from the Centre of Excellence to Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory as Nantes forward, Moses Simon, lead other players in an exhibition game at Eagles Club, Surulere.

Other players expected to feature in the game are Oghenekaro Etebo, Isaac Success, Peter Olayinka, Rabi Ibrahim and others.

The Managing Partner of B.Y.T. Academical and co-organiser, Omobolanle Osoba, said preparations are now in finishing gears, as they are set to host a magnificent game of friendly tussle.

"This exhibition game will feature some of the top players and we are really excited to establish this platform for everyone," he said.

"It's another opportunity for Lagosians to watch the players again since they moved to Abuja and some of these players would be playing the game against Sao Tome and Principe.

"We have put everything in place for a successful game with other side attractions to make it a worthwhile event."

The game will be played on Wednesday, June 15th, 4pm at Eagles' Club, Lagos.

Australia face "difficult" play-off against Peru

Australia legend, Tim Cahill, is looking forward to his country's difficult World Cup playoff against Peru as he claimed that qualifying for the World Cup is "ultimately what you play for".

The sides meet in Doha, Qatar, on Monday (19:00 BST), with the winners returning to the Middle East for the tournament later in the year.

"I know how important the World Cup is for our country," said former captain Cahill, who played at four tournaments.

Costa Rica face New Zealand in Doha on Tuesday for the final World Cup spot.

Australia finished third in the Asian qualifying groups behind Saudi Arabia and Japan, who went directly into the main draw, and defeated the United Arab Emirates to reach the inter-confederation play-offs.

Cahill won 108 caps for Australia and is the country's all-time leading scorer with 50 goals, including their first one at a men's World Cup in 2006.

"I think it's going to be difficult for Australia," said the former Everton midfielder who is now chief sports officer at Aspire Academy in Qatar.

"It's never easy, but in the end, it comes down to preparation, and whether you've done everything in your power to prepare and be mentally and physically fit for the World Cup.

"Qualifying will mean everything, particularly after the pandemic, but qualification is not a given. Being at the World Cup is ultimately what you play for."

Australia or Peru will join Group D alongside holders France, Denmark and Tunisia, while Costa Rica or New Zealand will go into Group E alongside Spain, Germany and Japan.

The tournament begins on 21 November, with the final taking place in Doha on 18 December.

WAFU B U-17: Golden Eaglets shoot down Ghana's Black Starlets in Cape Coast

Nigeria's Golden Eaglets were imperious as they dominated and eventually overpowered hosts Ghana 4-2 on Saturday in the opening match of this year's WAFU B U-17 Championship taking place in Cape Coast, Ghana.

The five-time world champions started off from where the country's U-20 Boys, Flying Eagles left off against Ghana's Black Satellites at the WAFU B U-20 Championship in Niger Republic last month, where the wards of Coach Ladan Bosso hammered their Ghanaian counterparts in the opening match on their way to the title.

Wing back Emmanuel Michael set the Golden Eaglets on the way with a ferocious free-kick from some 23 yards in the 12th minute, which the Ghanaian goalkeeper, Ahmed Amadu Dembaram, had no answer to.

Nigeria doubled the lead just a minute before half time through forward Precious Tonye Williams, ensuring they went into recess on the ascendancy against the host nation in the coastal town.

Nigeria's advantage was extended further in the 51st minute



by Jubril Opeyemi Azeez, but the Starlets reduced the deficit seven minutes later when substitute Abdul Razak Salifu got the better of goalkeeper Richard Odoh.

The Eaglets would not relent and in the 77th minute, midfielder Ebube Wisdom Okere netted to make it 4-1 for Nigeria.

A momentary loss of concentration in the vital area led to Nigeria conceding a penalty with two

minutes to the end, which was put away and cut Nigeria's advantage to two goals.

With the victory, the Eaglets top Group A of the championship ahead of their clash with Togo on Tuesday. Victory over the Togolese will guarantee Nigeria a spot in the tournament semifinals.

Group B is made up of Cote d'Ivoire, Benin Republic, Burkina Faso and Niger Republic.



Golfer, Junior Egbakumeh; Chairman of NOVA Merchant Bank, Mr. Phillips Oduzo; Chairman, NOVA Asset Management Co, Osemwengie Ede and Regional Manager, Microsoft Nigeria and West Africa, Akin Banuso, at a Special Golf Competition held at Ikoyi Golf Club in Lagos... yesterday



FAITH

My testimony
will inspire
other women,
says Oyibiribiri

28

SPORT

CAA Senior
Championships:
Olatoye,
Onyekwere
strike gold in
Mauritius

31



Introduction PHCN or NEPA

The Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN), formerly known as National Electric Power Authority (NEPA), is an organization in charge of electricity in Nigeria. The electricity sector in Nigeria currently generates, transmits and distributes megawatts of electric power that is significantly lower than Nigeria's required household and industrial needs. In 2012, the industry had laboured to distribute a mere 5,000 megawatts, very much less than the 40,000 megawatts needed to sustain the basic needs of the population.

How much light do we have?

Nigeria is endowed with large oil, gas, hydro and solar resources, and it has the potential to generate 12,522 MW of electric power from existing plants. This is the estimated quantum of electricity that Nigeria ought to be producing daily with all our numerous endowments. Unfortunately, on most days, we are only able to dispatch approximately 4,000 MWT, which is insufficient for a country of over 215 million people (by UN projection), a country that boasts of numerous businesses and infrastructure.

Many sources of power in Nigeria

In Nigeria, there are four major sources through which power is provided: coal, hydro, oil (petroleum) and natural gas. Among these, the whole energy sector is dependent only on petroleum, a factor that slows down the production of electricity and development in alternative forms of energy. 45 per cent of the Nigerian population is currently connected to the energy National grid. However, the grid only supplies energy about 85 per cent of the time; and is virtually nonexistent in many parts of Nigeria.

After the privatization of electricity in Nigeria, the transmission and supply of power in Nigeria were divided amongst several companies with different functions. The Generating Companies (GenCos) are those in charge of the actual generation of the electricity; transmission and distribution are left to the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), and the Distribution Companies (DisCos), respectively. The GenCos are tasked with transforming hydro and gas power into electricity power.

History of electricity generation in Nigeria

Electricity was first generated in Nigeria in 1866, when two generating sets were installed in the Colony of Lagos. However, the first electric utility company in Nigeria known as the Nigerian Electricity Supply Company (NESC) was established in 1929. In 1951, the Nigerian government by an Act of Parliament, established the Electricity Commission of Nigeria (ECN), to regulate and operate power supply in Nigeria.

The evolution and revolution

As part of the evolution in the Power Industry in Nigeria, the Federal Government by Decree No. 24 of 1972, created the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA). This was consequent upon the merger of the Electricity Corporation of Nigeria (ECN) and Niger Dams Authority (NDA). In September, 1990, the partial commercialization came into being with the appointment of a Managing Director/Chief Executive to superintend over the Corporation. Also, the Authority was divided into four autonomous divisions namely: Generation and Transmission; Distribution and Sales; Engineering; Finance and Administration. Each division was headed by an Executive Director.

By the year 2000, a state-owned monopoly, the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA), was put in charge of the generation, transmission and distribution of electric power in Nigeria. NEPA operated as a vertical integrated utility company and had a total generation capacity of about 6,200 MW from

NEPA in PHCN: How Nigerians pay for darkness (1)



The NIGERIAN PROJECT

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two hydro and four thermal power plants. This ended up becoming a problem as there was unstable and unreliable electric power supply situation in the country with consumers frequently exposed to power cuts and long period of power outages. It was an industry characterised by lack of maintenance of power infrastructure, outdated power plants, low revenues, high losses, power theft and non-cost reflective tariffs.

In 2001, the reform of the electricity sector began with the promulgation of the National Electric Power Policy, which had as its goal as the establishment of an efficient electricity market in Nigeria. It had the overall objective of transferring the ownership and management of the infrastructure and assets of the electricity industry to the private sector with the consequent creation of all the necessary structures required to forming and sustaining an electricity market in Nigeria.

The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) thus took further steps towards the Restructuring of the Nigerian Power Sector to establish an electricity supply that is efficient, reliable and cost-effective throughout the country and which will attract private investment. Subsequently, another Power Sector Reform Act was enacted in 2005, transferring the public monopoly of NEPA to Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) which was unbundled into 18 Business Units (BU); viz eleven (11) Distribution companies:- six (6) Generation companies and one (1) Transmission company.

The Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) is one of the successors of the unbundled PHCN and is currently an asset held under the custodianship of the Federal Ministry of Power. It will initially remain publicly owned. TCN has the responsibility for the management of operation, maintenance and expansion of the 132kV and 330kV transmission system. The Bureau of Public Enterprise (BPE) recently appointed a Management Contractor, Manitoba Hydro International (MHI) for TCN which took over the functions of Transmission Service Provider, System Operator and Market Operator to undertake the overall management of TCN.

System Operations (SO) function was established as a sector within the defunct Power Holding Company of Nigeria under the Transmission sector. The SO has now evolved into a semi-autonomous sector under TCN and upon acquiring its license would operate as an independent company in future. The main responsibility of the System Operator is to operate the transmission system and the connected installed generation in a safe and reliable manner. SO is also responsible for the overall security and reliability of the grid system, economic dispatch of available generation resources and maintaining system

stability. SO has seven functional departments namely: Operations/Control, System Planning, SCADA, Communications, Technical Services, Transitional Electricity Market and System Performance. SO is headed by the Executive Director (System Operation). The operational control hierarchy is as follows:

- National Control Centre (NCC), Osogbo
- Three (3) Regional Control Centres (RCCs) at Shiro, Ikeja West and Benin. With proposed control centres at Kano, Alaoji and Gombe
- Eight (8) Regional Operations Coordinating units (ROCs) at Benin, Enugu, Port-Harcourt, Bauchi, Kaduna, Shiro, Osogbo and Lagos – several Area Control Centres covering 330kV and 132kV substations which fall under the supervision of the ROCs.

The mission statement was exercising grid control to maintain an efficient, coordinated and economic supply of electricity in accordance with the grid code and operational procedures. The vision was to operate the grid system efficiently to ensure open access, safe, reliable and economic electricity supply.

In 2005, the Electric Power Sector Reform (EPSR) Act was enacted and the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) was established as an independent regulatory body for the electricity industry in Nigeria. In addition, the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) was formed as a transitional corporation that comprises the 18 successor companies (6 generating companies, 11 distribution companies and transmission company), all created from NEPA.

In 2010, the Nigerian Bulk Electricity Trading Plc (NBET) was established as a credible off-taker of electric power from generation companies. By November 2013, the privatisation of all generation and 10 distribution companies was completed, with the Federal Government retaining the ownership of the transmission company. The privatisation of the 11th distribution company was completed in November 2014.

Nigeria, known to have Africa's largest economy, has one of the world's worst power sectors, producing an average of 5,000 megawatts of electricity for a population of about 200 million since the establishment of its electricity institutions. According to World Bank Report, over 80 million people do not have access to the national grid; and power shortages cost the country \$29 billion. By comparison, South Africa, the continent's second biggest economy, generates about 55,000 megawatts for a population of only about 58 million. Successive governments have tried, but failed to reform Nigeria's energy sector. The main problems are decaying infrastructure, low investment, debts, and poor management. There are also "operational inefficiencies", so said PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), in a 2020 report.

Operation of the power sector Transmission

The Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) manages the electricity transmission network in the country. It is one of the 18 companies that was unbundled from the defunct Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) in April 2004 and is a product of a merger of the transmission and system operations parts of PHCN. It was incorporated in November 2005 and issued a transmission licence on July 1, 2006. The TCN is presently fully owned and operated by the government and as part of the reform programme of the government, it is to be reorganised and restructured to improve its reliability and expand its capacity.

TCN's licensed activities include electricity transmission, system operation and electricity trading. It is responsible for evacuating electric power generated by the electricity generating companies (GenCos) and wheeling it to distribution companies (DisCos). It provides the vital transmission infrastructure between the GenCos and the DisCos' Feeder Substations. TCN consists of three operational departments:

1. Transmission Service Provider (TSP)

The TSP oversees the development and maintenance of the transmission infrastructure. It is responsible for the national interconnected transmission system of substations and power lines and providing open access transmission services. Its role is to maintain the physical infrastructure that make up the transmission grid and expand it to new areas.

2. System Operations (SO)

The SO manages the flow of electricity throughout the power system from generation to distribution companies. It operates the Grid Code for the Nigerian Electricity Supply Industry (NESI). The SO has the responsibility for ensuring that the transmission grid lines are reliable and maintaining the technical stability of the grid through its operations of planning, dispatch, and control of the electricity on the grid.

3. Market Operations (MO)

The MO administers the market rules of the NESI. It is responsible for the administration of the Electricity Market and promoting efficiency in the market. Specifically, the roles of MO include implementing and administering the Nigerian Electricity Market Rules; drafting and implementing the Market Procedures; administration of the Commercial Metering System by ensuring that each trading point has adequate metering systems in place; administration of the Market Settlement System; Administration of the Payment System and commercial arrangement of the energy market, including Ancillary Services; supervising Electricity Market Participants' compliance with and enforcing the Market Rules and the Grid Code. The functions also encompass periodic reporting on the implementation of the Market Rules; capacity building of market of Participants on the Market Rules and Procedures and Trading Arrangements, finally, at the long-term stage of the electricity market, of the MO is to ensuring and promoted competition among market participants.

Thought for the week

"Good governance, safety, a chance to grow economically and professionally - those are important things". (Dana Perino).

Last line

God bless my numerous global readers for always keeping fate with the Sunday Sermon on the Mount of the Nigerian Project, by humble me, Chief Mike Ozekhome, SAN, OFR, FCI Arb., LL.M, Ph.D, LL.D. Kindly, ride with me to next week's exciting conversation.