

How Tinubu taught Buhari 'Politics 101'

ZEBULON AGOMUO and CHUKA UROKO

Since he left office as the military head of State on August 27, 1985, Muhammadu Buhari was not known to engage in

any political activity until he contested the 2003, 2007 and 2011 presidential elections and failed.

In 2011, before the election, Buhari had openly wept, de-

Continues on page 4

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Page 14

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Page 23

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Page 24

Gubernatorial Election:

Epic battle expected in Lagos, Oyo, Rivers, Abia, Enugu, Benue

See story on page 2 & 3

As APC, PDP, LP test might

IWD 2023: Celebrating top Nigerian female visual artists



29

LAPO spent N70bn to assist 262, 977 rural farmers, micro businesses in 15yrs



32

Over 80 oil palm farmers, others benefit from RSPO capacity building in Edo



34



Babajide Sanwo-Olu, APC



Olajide Adediran, PDP



Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour, LP



Seyi Makinde, PDP



Teslim Folarin, APC



Okechukwu Ahaiwe, PDP



Alex Otti, LP



Siminalayi Fubara, PDP



Tonye Cole, APC



Peter Mbah, PDP

Is PDP finished as top contender for power in Nigeria?

Can Labour Party drive Nigeria's political opposition?

NATIUS CHUKWU

For failing to do everything possible and legitimate to recapture the presidency in the just concluded presidential election, has the end come for the former ruling Peoples Democratic Power (PDP)?

Many say yes, the party is finished, some others say something can still be done.

A seasoned bureaucrat and democratic insider, Tony Okocha of Rivers State, who was once chief of staff (the political clearing house for former governor Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi) and now one of those who anchored the emergence of Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC), told BusinessDay that PDP "is finished."

Okocha, a chief and closest aide

Continues on page 4 & See Page 36

Ordeals in INEC's BVAS, IReV unite Atiku, Obi

ZEBULON AGOMUO

When on Tuesday, shortly before the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) announced Bola Ahmed Tinubu winner of the Presidential election held last Saturday, February 25, 2023, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the Labour Party (LP) jointly addressed a press conference rejecting the conduct of the election by INEC, alleging irregularities.

Since the outcome of the election as pronounced by the INEC became public, the two parties have continued to kick, accusing

the electoral umpire of complicity in the alleged electoral fraud that transpired.

Since Wednesday, the PDP and LP have continued to address press conferences in Abuja. Ifeanyi Okowa, vice presidential candidate of the PDP, and Datti Baba-Ahmed, vice presidential candidate of LP, jointly addressed the media last Wednesday.

By Thursday, Peter Obi independently addressed the media, condemning the process leading to Tinubu's emergence.

In the evening of the same day, Atiku Abubakar also did the same, complaining of same thing.

Continues on page 4

# Cover

## Gubernatorial Election: Epic battle expected in Lagos, Oyo, Rivers, Abia, Enugu, Benue

### ...As APC, PDP, LP test might

OBINNA EMELIKE and  
INIOMBONG IWOK

With the widespread feeling of dissatisfaction by the masses over the poor conduct of the February 25th presidential election by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), there are uncertainties over how the March 11, 2023, gubernatorial election will go across the country.

While many anticipate protest votes against the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), others think the betrayal by the INEC may likely result in low turnout of voters on Saturday, a development the APC will ride on to capture many states.

But no matter the way the election goes this Saturday, pundits anticipate epic battle between the APC and the main challengers; the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the Labour Party (LP), especially in Lagos, Oyo, Rivers, Abia, Enugu, and Benue states, which threw up surprises at the poll.

The battle is eminent in Lagos because of the overwhelming victory of the LP in the presidential election. Judging from the margin, with which the LP won, though many alleged that the INEC manipulated the result in order to close the gap between the winner and the loser, it gives the APC a huge concern because if things go the way of the February 25th presidential election, the party will likely lose again to the LP.

Of course, the APC is also worried because Lagos has never lost to another party from the time Bola Tinubu became governor of the state and that the party is working hard to ensure that record is not broken on March 11, 2023.

Before the Saturday, February 25th presidential election, the two prominent candidates in Lagos were the incumbent Babajide Sanwo-Olu of the APC, and Abdul-Azeez Olajide Adediran (Jandor) of the PDP, but at the moment, it would appear that the hitherto unknown candidate of the LP, Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour has become a force to reckon with, riding on the popularity of Peter Obi.

For Peter Oseni, a senior public servant, who voted for the LP in Lagos, the party will consolidate on its presidential election victory in Lagos with protest votes that will unseat the APC-led government in the state.

"That will not be easy, but it is very possible and I will join mil-



lions to change things in Lagos this coming Saturday," he said.

According to him, the PDP is not big in the battle and it is late for any meaningful coalition because LP has shown strength and can stand alone.

Ademola Adigun, a serial-entrepreneur and APC card-carrying member, fears the outcome of the gubernatorial election in Lagos because of the anger being expressed by many that the party rigged the presidential election.

"I know my party will try to do everything to win, but an army of angry Nigerians, including my three boys, are ready to stop us at the poll this Saturday. They keep asking me why one party will keep ruling since they were born," he said.

The serial-entrepreneur predicts that the LP will leverage on last election result, the APC will do anything to stop it and that the challenge may result in worst election violence in Lagos history.

However, while the PDP may not stand a chance in Lagos, it is going to be truly epic battle between the party and the opposition in the states it lost in the presidential election due the irreconcilable issues, championed by the G-5 governors.

Of course, the G-5 governors are the worst losers as three of them did not win their senatorial bids, as well as losing to other parties in the presidential election.

With the huge loss, and burden of betrayal by Nyesom Wike, governor of Rivers State, and Seyi Makinde, governor of Oyo State, who went behind to work for the APC, the other G-5 governors will likely fight to the finish at ensuring their party's victory at the gubernatorial election.

But it is going to be a fierce contest as it would amount to one eating one's cake and still having it.

Already, the APC and PDP are at loggerheads over which party actually worked for Tinubu's victory in Rivers.

By the same token, the APC in

Oyo State has warned Governor Makinde against dropping Tinubu's name. The question is, will APC massively vote for the candidates of PDP in Rivers and Oyo on Saturday instead of their own candidates?

Considering that the gubernatorial election is his last resort to remaining in power, Samuel Ortom, governor of Benue State, a ruthless fighter, will not allow the APC to unseat PDP in his state, many assured.

According to Teseh Agbah, a Benue-born politician, Ortom was one of the governors that withstood the president and resisted the excesses of the APC, which he dumped to join the PDP.

"Despite his unholy alliance with Nyesom Wike, which backfired on him,

Ortom will fight back and Benue people will support him. PDP will still win in Benue because the people prefer the party to any other," Agbah said.

But hope seems finally lost for Okezie Ikpeazu, the governor of Abia State, who has been suffering from one loss to another. From imposing an unpopular gubernatorial candidate, who later died, to getting a replacement candidate whose loyalty is in doubt, and recently losing his senatorial ambition to the LP, Ikpeazu seems to be heading to his political doom if the PDP loses in the gubernatorial election.

Abia has since 1999 been badly governed. All those who had presided over the state did not only wrecked it, they plundered it. The sign of rejection of the ruling party in the state showed last Saturday with the defeat of big names that contested on its platform by LP candidates. If the streak of victory should repeat itself next Saturday, the umbrella association may no longer recover in the state where indigenes have longed for a deliverer.

As many in Abia said, the poor-performing governor is paying for his unholy alliance with Nyesom

Wike.

With the many losses, pundits think however, that Ikpeazu will either fight to the finish or allow Abia PDP to sink, "after all, he has nothing at stake."

Akadike Asonye, an LP chieftain in Abia, assured that it was LP's time and that PDP cannot stop the party.

"We have not lost the mandate Nigerians gave us at the presidential election. We are in court and there will surely be victory. So, we are going ahead to win overwhelming in Abia this coming Saturday," Asonye, a retired Nigerian Customs senior officer, assured.

But the PDP is still hopeful in Abia, banking on its popularity since the return of democracy in 1999.

But Chijioke Umelahi, a former Abia lawmaker, said that such popularity, as shown in Lagos recently, has waned.

"You will be deceiving yourself to think that PDP is still popular. What is popular now is not party but candidate and Peter Obi has proven that with Labour Party. Kwankwaso did that in Kano too. I see LP winning in Abia and Enugu states, having won senatorial and House of Representatives seats," Umelahi said.

In the case of Rivers State, Umelahi said there is no battle because the PDP will win.

"Nyesom Wike betrayed his fellow G5 governors for possible slot in APC government, probably Secretary to the Federal Government of Nigeria, but he knows that the APC can still disappoint him the way it did to Chibuike Amaechi, so he will fight to retain his PDP governorship seat. I think there is an agreement to that effect and Rivers people will not work with him to scuttle the governorship arrangement, having supported him in all his fights with the APC," the former lawmaker said.

Although the February's 25 election was generally judged to have recorded low turnout against the

excitement that was seen among Nigerians and eligible voters across the country before the polls, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) data show that only 24.97 million voted in the poll, which is equivalent to 29 percent.

This was against Electoral Commission (INEC) published 93.5 million eligible voters registered for the 2023 polls, but only 87.2 million Nigerians collected their PVCs.

For some observers, the result of the presidential polls differs from expectations and many people perhaps did not expect to see the upset recorded in some states which saw many top politicians defeated.

Against all odds, the LP, a relatively unpopular political party before now, caused an upset in some states, especially in Lagos State, where the party's presidential candidate, Peter Obi won by defeating the national leader of the APC and Presidential candidate, Bola Tinubu in his base.

The LP and Obi victory in Lagos and in six other states where the incumbent governors were not members of his party and neither openly backed him may have emboldened the gubernatorial candidates of LP in those states to begin to see their possibilities of clinching victory as well.

The successful showing of opposition parties in these states, Lagos, Oyo Rivers, Abia, Enugu, and Benue in the presidential and National Assembly polls have also thrown up interesting permutations ahead of the gubernatorial poll.

Several top politicians, including sitting governors across the country also lost their elections to candidates of the LP and some other smaller parties in their

It would also be interesting to see if the LP would spring a surprise again and win those states, where the party won in the presidential poll.

The March 11 governorship poll promises to be an epic battle between candidates of the dominate

# Cover

parties in these states and LP.

## Lagos State

In Lagos State the stage is set for what is expected to be a fiercely contested gubernatorial election in the state since the return to democratic rule in 1999.

After losing the presidential contest to the LP in Lagos, the leadership of the party in Lagos have gone back to its shell to re-strategise on what to do to win the state.

In the last few days, the camp of the ruling APC have increased its activities, with the party making frantic efforts to meet with stakeholders and other non-Yoruba groups to garner support ahead of the polls.

Sixteen political parties are presenting candidates for the gubernatorial election in Lagos State, but most of them are not in the race, largely due to their lack of structure and finance to compete.

The contest of the gubernatorial poll in Lagos would largely be a straight battle between the APC, PDP and LP candidates.

Although in the last few days since the February's 25 presidential and National Assembly elections, there have been reports of a possible alliance between the LP and PDP candidates.

Lagos has been a cosmopolitan state and judging from the growing popularity of LP, where non Yoruba's residents constitute the bulk of the members of the party, it is expected that they would play a major factor in who emerges victorious.

Also, the vibrant Obidient movement across Lagos, if well mobilised can swing votes.

Going into the poll, all the parties are optimistic about their chances.

Publicity Secretary of the PDP in Lagos State, Hakeem Amode said the party candidate has toured most part of the state and was ready for the poll, stressing that they had begun House to House campaign to garner support across the state.

"We are the most prepared for this election, our candidates have gone round the state to meet the people and hear from them. We are ready for the antics of the APC, we are not ruling out talks with the LP, we are ready and have started the process", Amode said.

However, hope of an alliance with the LP have been dismissed by the Lagos State chairman of the party, Dayo Ekong who insisted that the party candidate Gbadebo Rhodes Vivour would not step down for anybody.

Speaking in a statement, the chairman said the party is positioned to win Lagos.

According to her, "The Labour Party states here unequivocally that nothing could be further from the truth. There is no basis for our candidate to step as he is well positioned to win the Gubernatorial election scheduled for Saturday.

"Architect Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour is the LP party candidate. He is good and ready to go to the Polls to vote and be voted for as the next



Abdullahi Adamu, national chairman, APC



Iyorchia Ayu, national chairman, PDP



Julius Abure, national chairman, LP

governor of Lagos.

"Lagosians, please disregard this misinformation, this baseless falsehood, which we have on good authority, is emanating from Nigeria Labour Congress, in its entirety.

"Those who want to sell out are not real Obidient, they are fake and must be disregarded mischief who mean no well for Lagosians".

Speaking to BD Sunday, the Publicity Secretary of the party said the LP in Lagos, Bunmi Odejobi said the party was mobilising members across the state and cannot be distracted by the antics of the PDP.

"We are working hard to win Lagos, all this talk of an alliance is not true, and we are going into the poll united to win Lagos next Saturday," she said.

The APC has advised its members and indeed, all residents, to vote its candidate, the incumbent Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu to complete the good work he has begun.

## Oyo State

Governorship elections in Oyo State always go down to the wire. In 2011, the late Abiola Ajimobi defeated incumbent governor Adebayo Alao-Akala. Ajimobi's reelection in 2015 made him the only governor so far to serve a second term in the history of the state.

But by 2019, Ajimobi had fallen out with powerful elements in the state and had lost much public support. As a result, he lost his bid to move from the governorship seat to the senate and candidates of his All Progressives Congress (APC) were routed in many constituencies across the state. His anointed governorship candidate, Adebayo Ad-elabu, also lost the election.

Although Seyi Makinde who defeated Ad-elabu in 2019 is seeking reelection, political pundits are saying the governorship poll in the state this year again remains too close to call.

Fifteen political parties have candidates in the election, but it has been billed as a three-horse race, Governor Makinde's two main challengers are the senator representing the state's central district and candidate of the APC, Teslim Folarin, and Ad-elabu who is flying the flag of Accord Party.

Ad-elabu, a former deputy gov-

ernor of the Central bank of Nigeria (CBN), moved to his new party after losing the APC governorship primary to Folarin by 327 to 954 votes.

Adelabu and his supporters alleged fraud in the primary and then left the party in anger.

But the decision of Makinde to support the presidential bid of the APC candidate against his party candidate Atiku Abubakar has thrown a new twist into the gubernatorial race, but many saying that the APC has decided to also back his reelection bid.

Although there are conflicting reports of some APC members pledging to work for Makinde's re-election and others saying they would do everything for the APC candidate to defeat him.

However, the contest in Oyo promises to be an interesting one, many are waiting to see if Makinde with his acclaimed popularity can defeat the other candidates to win a second term mandate in the state.

Publicity Secretary of the Oyo APC, Olawale Sadare, speaking some days ago, queried the rationale behind the insinuations about Governor Makinde responsible for the delivery of all the three Senatorial and eight House of Representatives seats to the APC in the same election where PDP also fielded its best candidates whose electioneering the governor campaigned for and funded heavily.

Several leaders of the APC have dismissed reports that Makinde played a key role in the victory recorded by Tinubu in Oyo state where he polled a total of 449,884 votes to defeat other presidential candidates and other political parties in the state.

## Rivers State

The gubernatorial election in Rivers State is expected to be an interesting contest, based on the recent comments of the major parties who have all vowed to win the state.

Observers are also keen to see if the Obidient movement in the state can also be mobilised to vote massively in the Saturday poll, to push aside the PDP candidate backed by the incumbent Governor.

In the presidential poll, the LP claimed it won Rivers State, even the report of some election observ-

ers said the election results released by INEC in Rivers were not accurate.

They also claimed that the LP presidential candidate won the state. Many would be watching to see if the LP can repeat the same magic on Saturday in the gubernatorial.

Governor Nyesom Wike is not gunning for another term, but his anointed candidate, Siminialayi Fubara is on the ballot and is perhaps, the candidate to beat.

Wike, who has had a running battle with his party leadership since losing at the presidential primary, led five incumbent governors of the PDP to work against the party's presidential candidate.

The Rivers Governor openly admitted working for the APC candidate, saying that he was instrumental to their victory in the state, amid reports that he manipulated the election results in Tinubu's favour with the aid of security agencies, when it was obvious that the LP candidate was coasting home to victory.

But the Rivers governor has said he would work for the PDP candidate in next Saturday's poll.

There is also the candidate of the APC, Tonye Cole and SDP candidate Magnus Abe, both candidates are key politicians in the state and cannot be underrated.

However, it would be interesting to see if the LP candidate, Beatrice Itubo can pull an upset, just like the party presidential candidate, Obi did in the state.

## Abia State

In Abia State the gubernatorial contest may offer some interesting new twist, especially in view of the LP great performance in the February 25 polls.

Many would be waiting to see if the LP and the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) can completely dislodge the PDP in the state.

There is also the APC candidate, Ikechi Emenike who after winning suit against his candidacy at the Supreme Court remains resolute about his chances of winning the state.

It was a surprise to many that the incumbent governor of the state, Okezie Ikpeazu lost his senatorial bid to the APGA candidate, Enyin-

naya Abaribe.

The LP won two senatorial seats out of three in the state; observers say that perhaps, if the stake is clean, the LP could repeat the same upset in the gubernatorial poll in March 11.

Since the return to democratic rule in 1999, Abia State has been a PDP state, so it would it be a huge upset if another party wins the state on Saturday.

The PDP candidate, Ahiwe Okechukwu, who emerged after the demise of the former candidate, Uche Ikonne, speaking some days ago, said he was sure of victory and was meeting stakeholders across the state towards the election.

Ahiwe is banking on the support of Governor Ikpeazu, but it is obvious that if the will of the people is allowed to prevail, elections this time around may be different from what it used to be in the past.

## Enugu State

Enugu State just like Abia has traditionally been a PDP state since 1999, however, it appears the pendulum may shift this time around judging from the results of the presidential and National Assembly elections.

Some observers have predicted that the failure of the incumbent governor, Ifeanyi Ugwanyi of the state to win his senatorial election may just be an indication of what to expect.

Ugwanyi, a member of the G-5 governors lost his senatorial election to the LP candidate, Okechukwu Ezea.

Ahead of the gubernatorial election many pundits have said that Ezea victory may just be a sign of the growing popularity of the LP in the state and that the LP gubernatorial candidate, Chijioko Edeoga can repeat the same feat.

However, the PDP governorship candidate, Peter Ubah, millionaire and popular businessman, who is backed by Governor Ugwanyi is optimistic that what happened in the presidential poll, where LP won his state would not happen again.

There is also Uchenna Nnaji, the APC candidate who cannot be ruled out of the contest considering that the APC is the ruling party at the federal level.

The gubernatorial election would be a keenly contested election among the major parties and one to watch out for.

## Benue State

Benue is among the state that may be difficult to predict the outcome of the gubernatorial race.

Before the presidential contest it was predicted that Obi was favoured to win the state, however, the LP candidate lost.

Incumbent governor of the state, Samuel Ortom, who is among the PDP G-5 governors, lost his bid to the Senate; he was defeated by the APC candidate, Titus Zam.

Going into Saturday poll, the battle is between Herman Hembe, the LP candidate, Titus Uba of the PDP and Hyacinth Iormem of the APC.

# Cover

## Ordeals in INEC's BVAS, IReV unite...

Continued from Page 1

By Friday, both Atiku and Obi had headed to the tribunal to challenge the declaration of Tinubu as the winner of the election.

Many Nigerians have wondered if the two parties were equally yoked. They have also wondered why the two men refused to work together before the election only to do so when the Rubicon had been crossed.

Atiku, presidential candidate of the PDP, ran on the premise of "completing the Northern slot" which he said was necessary to level up with the southern Nigeria.

Peter Obi, presidential candidate of the LP, contested on the premise of righting the wrongs and his teeming supporters believed it was only just and fair to allow power go to the South East that had not tasted it since the return of the country to civil rule in 1999.

Obi had decamped from the PDP on this plank.

When on May 25, 2022 he publicly announced his exit from the PDP, he said: "It has been a great honour to contribute to nation-building efforts through our party. Unfortunately, recent developments within our party make it practically impossible to continue participating and making such constructive contributions.

"Our national challenges are deep-seated and require that we each make profound sacrifices towards rescuing our country. My commitment to rescuing Nigeria remains firm, even if the route differs."

It became clear to Obi that he would never realise his presidential cum "rescuing Nigeria" ambition on the PDP platform because the slot appeared to have been reserved for Atiku.



Atiku had on May 16, 2022, while addressing members of the Board of Trustees (BoT) of the party, said that some of them would retire from politics in eight years.

"I am worried and you should be worried too that if we do not win, it means we will be in opposition again for the next eight years," he said.

According to him, "By the next eight years, I don't know how many will be left in politics and it may even ultimately lead to the death of the party because people gravitate, particularly in developing countries, towards governments.

"So, this is a very crucial and historical moment in history for our survival, I want you to think about it. We are now at a crucial moment in this country. For many of you here, it is either we retire together or we move on together."

It was also the insistence of Atiku to fly the flag of his party that resulted in the internal crisis that also worked against the party's chances.

Peter Obi's candidacy received endorsement of many Nigerians across religions, tribes, ethnicity, class status and he was seen as a new face of the envisioned new Nigeria.

He was massively supported by

several ethnic groups, including the Afenifere, the Middle Belt, Pandef, Ohanaeze Ndigbo, among others.

Atiku and Obi ran different campaigns and had cause also to give each other subtle kicks in the process.

Initially, some Nigerians advised the duo to join forces, but the plank of their ambitions could not fuse. Neither Atiku could step down for Obi nor vice versa.

So, it was ironic that after the election failed to go their way, they now decided to form an alliance when the head is off.

Each of them is alleging being rigged out by the All Progressives Congress (APC). Atiku came second with 6,984,520 votes, while Obi polled 6,101,533 votes against Bola Tinubu's 8,794,726 votes as declared by the INEC.

While Obi and his supporters strongly believed that the mandate was given to him but was manipulated and allotted to Tinubu, Atiku and his supporters are claiming the same thing.

It is left to be seen how they would share the victory should the court cases go in the favour of any of them.

## How Tinubu taught Buhari ...

Continued from Page 1

claring that it was going to be his last attempt. He contested on the platform of Congress for Progressives Change (CPC).

But in December 2014, he emerged the presidential candidate of a bigger platform, the All Progressives Congress (APC), made possible by Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

In spite of all that has been said, rightly or wrongly, about Tinubu in the aftermath of the grossly flawed February 25 Presidential Election in Nigeria, he is a master of the game of politics.

Some people may describe him as a demagogue or a shrewd politician, but that does not detract from the fact that Tinubu is a good teacher and an unyielding or unrepentant believer in that very controversial subject which he has the capacity to teach at elementary, intermediate and advanced levels which is why he has a large following of students and even disciples.

Buhari, Nigeria's outgoing president, is one of those students.

On many occasions, whenever the need arose, in the build up to the just concluded presidential election, Tinubu wasted no time to tell his audience that Buhari actually studied under his tutelage.

At a political gathering in Abeokuta, the Ogun State capital, the Jagaban Borgu disclosed that he made Buhari president. He buttressed this with his 'O lule' testament or theory in which he catalogued the number of times Buhari made attempt at presidency and failed until he came into the fray and changed the narrative. And Buhari became president.

He took it further with the 'Emi lokan' Declaration which he interpreted to mean that it was his turn to become president after

Buhari. Nobody challenged this declaration—neither the cabal nor the media aides did; not even the president himself did, apparently because the master has spoken.

This declaration became necessary when the master sensed that his student seemed to be looking elsewhere in the choice of his successor as the ruling party prepared for its primary elections. Tinubu used his financial muscle to clinch the party's ticket. The president did not support him, Nigerians read the "body language."

This feeling of alienation lingered into the peak of his electioneering campaign when the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in October 2022, less than four months to the election, came up with the Naira Redesign policy that created acute cash scarcity in the financial system.

In the midst of the uproar that greeted that initiative, the CBN governor, Godwin Emefiele, explained that the action of the apex bank had the support of the president, adding that the redesigning of the naira was meant to promote cashless economy and also prevent vote buying by politicians.

Buhari himself had severally, within and outside the country said that the naira redesign was to check corrupt politicians from buying votes with their ill-gotten wealth.

Speaking in a televised nationwide address on Thursday, February 16, 2023 Buhari said that the development was a positive departure from the past and a legacy for his administration.

"Fellow citizens, on the 25th of February, 2023 the nation would be electing a new President and National Assembly members," he said.

"I am aware that this new monetary policy has also contributed immensely to the minimisation of the influence of money in politics.

## Is PDP finished as top contender ...

Continued from page 1

to Governor Nyesom Wike in his days as Obio/Akpor local council area, said the moment the Jagaban takes over on May 29, 2023, people should expect massive realignments.

He said the National Assembly would witness cross-carpeting and new moves. In the process, the PDP may be the worst-hit.

He drew attention to the fact that the PDP almost died in 2015 when it lost the presidency. He said the departure of seven governors (nPDP) in 2014 led to the defeat of the party. He also said the departure of five governors (G-5) also led to another defeat.

Okocha said the fall of the PDP in 2015 almost led to its collapse but for Governor Nyesom Wike who he said rallied the discouraged party leaders at a summit in Port Harcourt and encouraged them to play viable opposition politics.

He said this time around, the story may not be the same because most groups in the PDP would be

seeking realignment because most persons cannot think of another eight years in the cold.

Many have blamed the PDP for failing to ride on the mass anger of the populace to field an equitable candidate (from the South-East) to match the APC's southern candidate.

They pointed at the fact the APC won with just over one million votes, saying a united PDP would have surpassed that vote. They pointed out that the PDP being in control of the centre would have been more important than the name of the president.

Other analysts said the signs are clear that the youth and Netizens have arrived and want power urgently to solve the problems of the nation; problems they blame on the old guard mostly from the APC and the PDP.

They argued that since the Labour Party seems to have provided such a platform, that the party may become a rallying point of the oppressed and the masses, thus becoming a formidable opposition party. By this, they argued,

the PDP may not present a sweet appeal for this purpose.

Another school of thought said now that the north heavily helped the South-West, Tinubu and APC to win, that the north would consolidate behind the APC instead of the PDP in wait for recapture of power after Tinubu's eight years. "It is the APC the north would most likely rally with to take their own turn when it comes.

"The fact that a man from the North East is vice president may also match the rotation of the presidency to that section that has yet to taste power since 1999. "So, the North would rally behind the North East to take power back up north, not the PDP," the source disclosed.

The source argued that the old brigade would flock to the APC (ruling party) while the youth and opposition forces may rally behind LP for the next phase of power contest in Nigeria in the next 20 years.

For Terhemba Shija, a professor, politician and political activist, poet, author and writer, the future

of the PDP depends on the number of governorship seats they win in the March 11, 2023 election. He may be arguing from the well-known position that governors are the backbones of political parties, but they also jump ship fast because they seek political survival more than any other group.

Abia-born media consultant, political analyst and social media influencer, Oby Ndukwe, told BusinessDay that the future of the former ruling party is badly bruised like its image because of the impact of the G-5.

"That is not to say they cannot bounce back. They can hold a special convention and appoint new leaders.

"The outcome of the court cases cannot be predicted. The situation is still pregnant. The PDP can form an alliance with LP but would the youth behind LP agree to such?"

For Benue-born Tom Chiahem, a onetime political editor and now publisher, the party's future depends so much on whether or not Atiku successfully proves in court that he (not Obi) won

the election. "But, again, I foresee Wike, Samuel Ortom of Benue State and the others pulling out of the party to either form a new one or join any of the existing ones," he said.

### Conclusion:

It looks like the PDP took a lot of things for granted once again. The party seemed not to understand the priority; access to Aso Rock over who benefits as the flag-bearer.

The party took the intelligence of Nigerians for granted in 2015 by fielding a southerner at a time many felt it was the turn of the north. It has also taken the presidential candidacy to the north at a time many felt it was the turn of the south. This extreme case of insensitivity seems to have hurt the party twice, and it may not recover from it. The big lesson may be the need to abide by equity and justice which can only be expressed through zoning and rotational presidency till every zone tastes it. The APC may not think it has escaped the fury totally because the jury may still be out.

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# News

## APC celebrating stolen mandate of the people - Atiku's spokesman

...Says 'PDP challenging Tinubu, INEC based on principles'  
...Urges Deltans to vote for party's guber candidate

MERCY ENOCH, Asaba

Charles Aniagwu, the spokesman of the Atiku/Okowa presidential council has frowned on the manner Bola Tinubu and the All Progressives Congress (APC) are celebrating the what he described as "stolen victory" at the 2023 presidential election, saying it shows they have no regard for the lives of Nigerian citizens.

He also said that the PDP would head to court to recover the stolen mandate even as he called on other political parties to join forces with PDP to achieve a better country for the people of Nigeria.

Aniagwu said that the party rejected the INEC's declaration of Bola Tinubu of the APC as winner of the election based on principles and in the best interest of the country. The spokesman, who stated this while addressing newsmen in Asaba, said that what happened last Saturday was that INEC compromised



Charles Aniagwu, spokesman, Atiku-Okowa presidential council, addressing newsmen in Asaba, Thursday.

the integrity of the election.

He posited that INEC failed to obey the electoral law that stipulates the electronic transfer of election results from the unit level to INEC server. You don't change a process in the middle of the way, he added.

He maintained that the electoral process was flawed by the deliberate refusal of INEC officials to use the available technology in the conduct of the election.

Most Nigerians were angry with the outcome of the presidential election and had voted for a country that works, adding that the stolen mandate was a backward movement as most Nigerians believe that Tinubu did not win the election free and square. While appealing to PDP supporters to remain calm and maintain the existing peace, Aniagwu, who is the Delt State Commissioner for information, informed Deltans that the oncoming March 11 governorship election would be a different ball game

He stated that the PDP governorship candidate Sheriff Oborevwori was best qualified to build on the legacies of the Okowa administration as he urged the people of the state not to believe the lies of APC.

He also dismissed the rumour being peddled by the APC that the Delta State Government was taking more loans. "We are not seeking any additional loan. The one we did was the bridging finance which was on account of the funds we are expecting from the Federal Government on the revenue shortfalls accruable to the state following inability of the government to pay 13 percent derivation years past.

"We had also made it clear that the bridging finance facility was for the programmes we had executed in the past seven years, thus voting for Oborevwori/Onyeme ticket would sustain the developmental stride of the outgoing Okowa-led administration in the state," he said.

## Group seeks Buhari's intervention on Nigeria's row with Emirates Airlines

IFEOMA OKEKE  
-KORIEOCHA

Nigerians for Better Nigeria, (NBN) a group comprising businessmen, women, students patients, tourists among others, have expressed concerns over the continued suspension of Emirates Airlines operations in Nigeria since last year.

They stress that both Nigeria and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have suffered a great deal since the suspension.

It will be recalled that in May, 2022, the International Air Transport Association (IATA), announced that the foreign airlines operating in Nigeria trapped funds stood at \$450 million.

Specifically, in a letter addressed to the Federal Government, Sheikh Majid Al Mualla, Emirates Airlines

DSVP International Affairs, said: "With effect from 15 August 2022, Emirates will be forced to reduce flights from Dubai to Lagos from 11 a week to seven. We have had no choice but to take this action, to mitigate the continued losses Emirates is experiencing as a result of funds being blocked in Nigeria.

As of July 2022, Emirates has \$85 million of funds awaiting repatriation from

Nigeria. This figure has been rising by more than \$10 million every month, as the ongoing operational costs of our 11 weekly flights to Lagos and five to Abuja continue accumulating.

The airline had stated that the funds were urgently needed to meet its operational costs and maintain the commercial viability of its services to Nigeria.

The airline had stressed

that it simply cannot continue to operate at the current level in the face of mounting losses, especially in the challenging post-COVID-19 climate.

In a statement signed by Abdulmumin Sanusi, National Secretary, NBN, he stated from the above, the problem is essentially caused by some Nigerians in high places with intent to ridicule the country and have succeeded.

"Why should Nigeria be

withholding money for tickets sold by any company whether indigenous or foreigner?"

It is unfair, shameful and criminal. This criminal act has caused a lot of Nigerians their livelihoods, lives and even endangered their educational pursuits.

"Nigerians having businesses or doing businesses in United Arab Emirates (UAE), many have lost significant proportion of their businesses, while those schooling may have had their educational pursuits terminated.

"Similarly, those that need medical attentions in Dubai may be in deeper crisis. There is no doubt that some of them may have even died because of the suspension of the Emirates Airlines operations in Nigeria.

"We believe those responsible for this national shame do not know the height of the damage their action has done to the country and the

consequences it have inflicted on other innocent Nigerians," Sanusi stated.

According to him, this was how they destroyed Nigerian Airways by not remitting money for tickets and also, flying on complimentary tickets among others.

He said today, it is cheaper to transit to most part of the world through Dubai.

"For instance, while Qatar Airline charges N2.5 million on economy tickets, British Airways and Virgin Atlantic charge not less than N5.2million," he disclosed.

Sanusi said this cannot continue and Nigeria and Nigerians cannot be ridiculed by the action of some individuals to the detriment of the majority other Nigerians.

"We call on President Mohammed Buhari to immediately intervene and save the country from further shame and national embarrassment," he added.



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# News

## Kanu Football Camp resumes in April to aid students' sporting career

AMAKA ANAGOR-EWUZIE

**D**etermined to aid students' sporting careers, Greensprings School has announced the resumption of the Kanu Football Camp in April 2023 after its suspension due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

The 9th edition of the football camp is scheduled to take place from Sunday, 16th April to Friday, 21st April 2023 at the Lekki Campus of Greensprings School.

Uche Ogbu, the chief strategy officer of the school, said the Kanu Camp is designed to enable young children between the ages of five and 17 to learn the fundamental skills required to be professional football players.

According to him, the camp aims to empower children through football and education, adding that the children are trained by top coaches from Europe and the Lagos State Football Association.

Ogbu revealed that while the camp was suspended, two



alumni of Greensprings Kanu Football Camp, Jubril Azeez and Light Eke were recruited into the Golden Eaglets squad for the West African Football Union B U-17 Championship in 2022 and the team won the championship for Nigeria.

He said the two are expected

to represent the country at this year's U-17 African Cup of Nations in Algeria and FIFA U-17 World Cup in Peru.

Ogbu said the students will be taken through so many drills including, one-touch shooting, three-goal drills, lay-offs, turns, chest control, head-

ers on goal, basic short passes, shuffling passes, tackling, sliding tackles, goalkeeping, and other exciting drills.

He listed other activities to include 5-aside football matches, mentoring sessions, mental stimulation, swimming, basketball, and basic networking.

He further said that the European coaches will have a training session with Lagos State football coaches before the camp opens, to help improve their technical coaching skills. At the end of this one-day intensive training session, top coaches will be selected

to be part of the Greensprings Kanu Football Camp and given the opportunity to practise what they have learnt.

On the participation packages, Ogbu mentioned three options for participants as follows residential, non-residential with bus service, and non-residential without bus service.

He advised interested participants to register their children/wards before the 10th of March, to take advantage of the massive early bird discount.

On the camp's ultimate prize, Ogbu disclosed that the most promising player will be granted a full scholarship into Greensprings School.

"As part of Greensprings School's corporate social responsibility, awards will be issued to participants based on their conduct in camp; more importantly, the most promising player of the camp will be awarded a full academic scholarship to study at Greensprings School," he added.

Greensprings Kanu Football Camp is organised by Greensprings School in collaboration with Kanu Nwankwo and Kanu Heart Foundation.

## Abia South: LP Senatorial candidate rejects result, goes to court

GODFREY OFURUM, Aba

**C**hinedu Onyeizu, Abia South Senatorial candidate of the Labour Party (LP) in the February 25, 2023 Presidential/National Assembly elections, has condemned the declaration of Enyinnaya Abaribe, of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), as winner of the 25th February 2023 senatorial election.

Onyeizu, in an interview with newsmen in Aba, Abia State, Friday, argued that INEC made a mistake that resulted in awarding Abaribe more votes than he got as could be seen on the records of INEC. He expressed shock that Georgina Ugwuanyi, a professor and Returning Officer changed her mind concerning her earlier announcement that the election was inconclusive.

Ugwuanyi had in the morning of Tuesday announced before party agents that the election was inconclusive hence, the need for a rescheduled election.

She however, returned Tuesday evening to declare the winners in an election earlier declared inconclusive stating that she got calls from Abuja INEC to declare the results without further elections.

Onyeizu said that despite irregularities that INEC talked

about in affected polling units, the figures given to Abaribe were wrong as he was leading with 10,000 votes.

He said it was shocking and remained an electoral mystery how INEC reduced his scores to 43,903 votes and inflated Abaribe's to 49,693 from about 38,000 when he should be trailing him (Onyeizu).

Onyeizu, who condemned Abaribe's lawless declaration of himself as winner before INEC pronounced him winner, said that he has rejected the results and will contest it to the end.

He said that his opponents had shown that they are afraid of the rescheduled election, seeing that he was on ground and that the people had chosen LP in all their votes.

"There were issues with a lot of the polling units in Aba North, Aba South and Obingwa local government areas based on the number of registered voters and the number of actual votes cast.

"So, it was obvious that the election was inconclusive and the Returning Officer made a statement two days ago concerning that.

"She stated that the election was inconclusive, as a result of the irregularities experience..

"We were optimistic that INEC would make public the new date for the rescheduled elections, but instead, that they turned around to declare results," he said.

## Greensprings students win \$298,000 Conrad scholarship, to represent Nigeria in USA

AMAKA ANAGOR-EWUZIE

**S**egun Balogun, Adewale Saliu and David Onukwugha, three students from Greensprings School, Lagos will represent Nigeria at the global Conrad Summit scheduled to hold at NASA's Johnson/Kennedy Space Center in the United States of America.

The three students were selected to represent Nigeria after emerging as Nigeria's overall best at the 2023 Conrad Challenge held in February. The trio won \$298,000 worth of scholarships for their college tuition, an exclusive invitation to represent Nigeria at the Global Conrad Summit in April at NASA's Johnson/Kennedy Space Center, USA, and 1 million

cash prize.

At the competition, the students represented their school as Team S.A.D – an acronym they formed using the first letter of their first names and they created a smartphone application that connects craftsmen with people who need their services.

Speaking on Greensprings School's participation in the challenge, Feyisara Ojugo, acting deputy director of Education, said the school presented five teams out of the 230 teams from several schools that participated in the competition. While four of the five teams made it to the finals, with Team S.A.D emerging as the best in the cyber-technology and security category, and the best in Nigeria thus claiming the grand prize

after weeks of rigorous efforts.

"Apart from the awards given to the winning team, each of the 15 students that made up the four finalist teams received \$60,000 worth of scholarships from Clarkson University and awards of excellence," Ojugo said. Expressing her pride in the students' accomplishments, Ojugo said that beyond winning the competition, she is pleased that the students were able to develop an app that would help to solve a specific challenge in the country by connecting craftsmen with people who need them, thereby giving access to a larger market without the limitations of geographic location.

According to her, it also

enables instant access to the services of the craftsmen at the convenience of the customers, without the hassle of driving around endlessly in search of workmen.

She added that the students are able to apply what they learn in the classroom to solving societal problems. "Beyond developing the winning app for the competition, our students have put out a service through tech to help link artisans with those who need their services promptly and efficiently," she said.

Ojugo said the school embedded coding in its curriculum as a core subject that all students should take. "This is hinged on our understanding of the fact that coding is the language of the future. I am happy that the students are taking what they learn in the classroom to solve real-life problems. I can only look forward to more achievements from our students.

A big congratulations to the winners of this year's Conrad Challenge," she added.

The Conrad Challenge is a purpose-driven innovation competition with the aim of creating the next generation of entrepreneurs who will change the world. Greensprings School was established in 1985, and today, it is regarded as one of the leading schools in Nigeria.



Segun Balogun, Adewale Saliu and David Onukwugha, the three Greensprings School students who emerged overall best in Nigeria for the 2023 Conrad Challenge.



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# News

## SMEs urged to leverage logistics, digital solutions for business growth

SEYI JOHN SALAU

**N**namdi Okoh, the chief executive officer (CEO) and co-founder of Terminal Africa, a software logistics aggregator company in Lagos, have urged Nigerian SMEs to leverage logistics and digital solutions for business growth.

Okoh stated this during a panel session on 'Simplifying Logistics Solutions for Business Growth' at the just concluded AfricaNXT Conference, held at Landmark Convention Center, Victoria Island, Lagos.

Moderated by Jadesola Adewodun, the panel which included Nnamdi Okoh (CEO | Co-founder, Terminal Africa), Charles Edosomwan (CEO, Teksight Edge), Walter Isoko (Head of Growth, Terminal Africa), and Sandra Ifeoma Iheuwa (CEO, Ella Logistics) discussed extensively on the benefits of digital logistics solutions, the rising awareness of logistics tech, and how this innovation has helped business owners achieve their business goals and improved logistics processes.

According to Okoh, Terminal

Africa helps in simplifying logistics solutions for business growth across Africa. "Building an e-commerce platform that gives Nigerian businesses the opportunity to sell to customers anywhere in the world".

He stated further that through leveraging digital and software solutions, businesses had their website integration, payment and logistics solutions all on one platform without difficulty. "Evolving as Nigeria's premier logistics aggregator merely by a passion fuelled by the rising market demand," Okoh stated.

Charles Edosomwan, on his part, stated that "there is no commerce without logistics". Walter Isoko highlighted the impact of intentional growth to the sustainability of any organization. According to Isoko, there would be little or no growth in a business (especially product-based businesses) without logistics.

He also mentioned that business growth is boosted by a blend of 'people, service, product and innovation' classified as the PSPI model. "Having great people, providing exceptional service, creating a compelling product and the constant quest for innovation.

Simply put, applying the PSPI model in your business might just be what sets you apart, just like Terminal Africa," Isoko stated.

Speaking further, Isoko

stated that logistics remains the lifeblood of SMEs, and the supply chain. According to him, businesses can explore the endless possibilities offered by Terminal Africa through its

website.

"Terminal Africa combines premium top-tier logistic solutions through strategic partnerships with industry-leading logistic companies

such as Kwik, GIG Logistics, DHL, GoKada, and others to propagate the importance of logistics to small, medium, and large businesses in Nigeria and across Africa," Isoko disclosed.



L-R: Walter Isoko, head of growth, Terminal Africa; Charles Edosomwan, CEO, Teksight Edge; Nnamdi Okoh, CEO Terminal Africa, Jadesola Adewodun, panel moderator and Sandra Iheuwa, CEO, Ella Logistics, during the panel session on 'Simplifying Logistics Solutions for Business Growth' at the just concluded AfricaNXT Conference, held in Lagos.

## TikTok announces new features for teens, families in push for market share

SEYI JOHN SALAU

**U**nderpinned by its belief that digital experiences should bring joy and play a positive role in how people express themselves, discover ideas and connect, TikTok, the entertainment platform has announced new well-being features for teenagers, families and its broader community in push for greater market share.

TikTok is improving its screen time controls with more custom options, by introducing new default settings for teen accounts, and expanding Family Pairing with more parental controls.

"In the coming weeks, every account belonging to a user under 18 years will automatically be set to a 60-minute daily screen time limit. When deciding on a feasible amount of screen time for teens, we consulted the current academic research and experts from the Digital Wellness Lab at Boston Children's Hospital," Cormac Keenan, TikTok head of Trust and Safety, stated, disclosing that the new features will help

teens manage their time on TikTok better.

According to Keenan, if the 60-minute limit is reached, teenagers will be prompted to enter a passcode to continue watching, requiring them to make an active decision to extend that time. "While there's no collectively-endorsed position on how much screen time is 'too much', or even the impact of screen time more broadly; we recognise that teens typically require extra support as they start to explore the online world independently," he explains.

Speaking further on the new initiative, Keenan stated further that research indicates when people are more aware of how they spend their time, they can be more intentional about the decisions they make. According to him, this is especially important, but typically more difficult, for younger audiences.

Keenan stated that TikTok is also prompting teenagers to set a daily screen time limit if they turn off the 60-minute default and spend more than 100 minutes on TikTok in a day. "In our first month of testing, this approach increased the use of our screen time management

tools by 234 percent. And, we'll send every teen account a weekly inbox notification with a recap of their screen time".

He explained further that the features add to TikTok's robust existing safety settings for teen accounts. "For instance, those aged 13-15 have their accounts set to private by default, enabling them to make informed choices about what they choose to share, when, and with whom. Direct messaging is only available to those ages 16 and older and to host a live, community members must be at least 18," Keenan stated.

Among other things, the new features are geared towards helping families have conversations about digital well-being, and new screen time controls for everyone. The features provide for custom daily screen time limits; screen time dashboard; mute notifications, and new content controls.

"We want to provide families with controls to make decisions based on their individual needs, and we also recognise the importance of doing so with careful consideration for both parents and teens.

## Political parties in Kwara plan alliance against APC

SIKIRAT SHEHU, Ilorin

**A**head of March 11, 2023 governorship and House of assembly elections, strong indications have emerged that opposition parties in Kwara State may form an alliance against the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

The APC swept all the nine available Senate and House of Representatives seats during last Saturday's Presidential and National Assembly elections in the state.

The party also won the presidential election in all the 16 local government areas of the state.

Speaking at a media event organised to unveil the agenda of the PDP gubernatorial candidate, Abdullahi Yaman, the party's chairman in the state, Babatunde Mohammed urged the party's supporters, "to keep a good relationship with members of all other political parties in the state, except the APC."

At the event which held at Monarchs Hotel, Ilorin, the

state capital, the PDP chairman said all the opposition parties were likely to work together for the gubernatorial and House of Assembly elections.

Mohammed posited that the PDP remained the greatest party in the state and would come out stronger in the next round of elections in the state.

He said: "PDP remains the greatest party in Kwara. We shall come out stronger in the next elections. PDP is the party that will rule the state in 2023. We won the last election. We shall do everything legally possible to reclaim our stolen mandate.

"I want to urge our members and supporters to be very friendly with members of other parties, except APC. We are likely to work together, because what we are saying is what they are saying."

Unveiling his plans for the people of the state, the PDP gubernatorial candidate, Abdullahi Yaman declared he would focus on economic prosperity for all Kwarans, social service reform, human capital development, infrastructural revolution; financial security and investment for the future.

Yaman announced plans to grow cotton in commercial quantity in Baruten local government area and make the youths the centre-piece of the project.

This, he said, would lead to the establishment of a textile industry to be owned by the youth cotton farmers.

He added that there would be cassava revolution in Kwara South which would lead to the establishment of a starch company and shall be owned by the youth cassava farmers.

Yaman further declared that his administration would work towards making Ilorin, the state capital the commercial nerve centre of the north while ranches would be set up in Kaiama local government area.

"We shall go into partnership to grow cotton in the vast land of Baruten. Mechanisation shall be employed. We shall purchase 250 tractors within the first year. We are already talking with Bank of Industry. We shall build textile factory in partnership.

"The idea is to provide prosperity for young men and women. We shall set up ranches in Kaiama.

## JET Systems committed to Nigeria's electric mobility future

...wins Nigeria's 'Electric Vehicle Company of the Year' award

SEYI JOHN SALAU

Nigeria's quest towards the shift from fossil fuel to vehicle electrification has continued to resonate with the recent award to a promoter and assembler of electric range of buses in the country.

On February 9, 2023 inside the Oriental Hotel, Victoria Island, Lagos, Jet Systems Automobile Industries Limited received the Nigeria Auto Journalists Association (NAJA) 'Electric Vehicle Company of the Year' award.

Responding to his company's emergence as the Electric Vehicle Company of the Year award, Sanjay Rupani, director of sales and marketing stated that, "We are delighted to have received the Nigeria Auto Journalists Association (NAJA) award. We interpret this recognition as a challenge to accomplish more in terms of development and innovation."

The director of sales and marketing also disclosed that, Jet Systems have set out ambitious plans in years to come to ensure the transformation in E-mobility space is intensified across Nigeria.

Part of these plans he said is to promote the adoption of E-mobility in Nigeria and educate the public on electric vehicles (EVs). "We will also encourage relevant stakeholders such as governments at various levels, financiers, investors, general public, and the other assemblers to come together and develop the policies that will promote the systems.

Jet Systems Automobile Industries Limited also plans to introduce more products that will

meet different needs of mobility options at a budget-friendly price, in addition to innovating to provide energy solutions as it relates to electric vehicles.

Sanjay Rupani identified the target audience of Jet Electric Vehicles in the country to include all ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) of government, corporate entities, schools, transport companies and other logistics support providers.

He expressed hope that some of the impediments towards vehicle electrification in Nigeria such epileptic power source, high acquisition cost is high, lack of government initiatives to encourage and promote the adoption of EV and inadequate charging infrastructure can be addressed.

In his own reaction, Oluwemimo Osanipin, chief operating officer (COO) of the company reflected on some of the constraints facing automotive assemblers in Nigeria. He identified such bottlenecks to include inconsistent government policies as it relates to the auto industry, poor infrastructure for instance, the power supply.

The COO also frowned at the cost of funding in Nigeria which he noted is extremely high and as much as 28 percent annually.

Osanipin regretted that apart from the current duty structure in the country that is unfavorable for assemblers, the hydra-headed problems of multiple taxes, porous border that facilitates the influx of gray importation remains a major

concern that hampers auto assemblers bottomline.

The COO declared that the expectations of electric vehicle assemblers from the federal government should be to initiate policies that will encourage people to invest in EVs and also improve the use of EVs.

Furthermore, he wants government to offer consumers and assemblers incentives that will aid the speedy adoption of EVs, (both financial and non-financial). He called on the government to improve the policy that supports local raw material production and infrastructure.

Jet Systems electric vehicle is the first fully locally-made electric vehicle to run on the Nigerian road. The new electric vehicle was made to have zero emissions and is eco-friendly.



L-R: Emmanuel Rosilu, head business development; Sanjay Rupani, director of sales, and Oluwemimo Osapini, chief operating officer, all of JET Systems Limited after winning the Nigeria Auto Journalists Association (NAJA) award as the 'Electric Vehicle Company of the Year' at the Oriental Hotel, Victoria Island, Lagos recently.

## QNET empowers 600 Nigerian youths with financial management, business skills

AMAKA ANAGOR-EWUZIE

Determined to scale up the financial management and business skills of Nigerian youths, QNET has in partnership with Transblue empowered a total of 600 Nigerian youths through financial literacy.

The company recently organised the FinGreen Financial Literacy Initiative designed to financially educate underserved communities and empower individuals to take charge of their future.

Biram Fall, the regional general manager of sub-Saharan Africa for QNET, said the programme aims to give financial education to communities from the ground up,

adopting a peer-to-peer model to ensure sustainability and enhanced reach.

"The pilot cohort has gained basic financial management skills and knowledge necessary to become trainers and champions of financial literacy in their communities and among their peers," Fall said.

According to him, developing financial knowledge, skills, and habits are important factors in young people's path to independence and inclusion.

Fall further said the FinGreen programme aims to increase financial inclusion for the youth and support overall economic growth and development, adding that the programme is facilitated by Financial Literacy

For All (FLFA), a non-profit organisation providing on-the-ground financial training workshops for students and young adults in underserved communities.

He said the training enabled QNET to address the gaps in making sound financial decisions by youths.

He further said that the programme aligns with the United Nations SDG and the Addis Ababa Agenda targeted at providing adequate skills and proper developmental training for all, particularly for youths, women and those aspiring to be entrepreneurs.

"As part of the training, participants were taught fundamental financial skills such as investments, savings, budgeting, use of credit and deb-

it cards, and how to identify fraudulent financial activities, aiding them to organise and manage their finances more efficiently," he said.

He said out of the 572 beneficiaries trained by the 14 FinGreen ambassadors, less than 50 percent recognised the importance of savings, budgeting, and employability skills before the training.

"However, by the end of the training, over 80 percent of the beneficiaries now know the importance of these skills and how to practice them, thus showing an increase in their understanding of financial management. Upon the completion of the pilot phase, the programme will be rolled out in Nigeria's four geopolitical regions by April 2023," he added.

## Edo APC congratulates Tinubu, says victory underlines wide acceptance

IDRIS UMAR MOMOH

The Edo State chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC) has congratulated Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the President-elect, for emerging the winner of the last Saturday's presidential election.

BusinessDay reports that Ahmed Tinubu was declared winner of the election by Mahmud Yakubu, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) chairman with 8,794,726 votes.

The APC presidential candidate defeated Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) who polled 6,984,620 votes, Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP) with 6,101,533 and Musa Kwakwanso of New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) with 1,496,687 votes.

A statement by the State Publicity Secretary of the party, Peter Uwadiae Igbiniye and made available to newsmen in Benin City on Wednesday said they joined the numerous admirers, supporters, friends and well wishers of the President-elect; Asiwaju Ahmed Bola Tinubu in rejoicing with him for emerging the winner of the

national elections of Saturday, 25 February, 2023.

"In spite of the complexities which poses a daunting task ahead, we trust in your antecedents as a certified achiever to give a 'Renewed Hope' of a great edifice that could be called a nation; to Nigerians.

"It is our prayer therefore; that Allah who made the victory possible; will not only keep you, but will continually give you good health, guide and guard you in the new call to service of the Nigeria nation, her people, and humanity generally.

"The APC also congratulated the Nigeria people for their patience and resilience saying the Party's victory; is a victory for everyone for a better Nigeria.

"The victory, further underlines the intimidating and outstanding credentials of the President - elect which speaks volumes about his capacity and capability; to efficiently stir ashore the ship of the Nigeria nation, from trouble waters.

"Under the leadership of the President - elect; Asiwaju Ahmed Bola Tinubu, Nigeria of our dream will certainly be achieved," it assured.

## You've admitted 2023 election was flawed, Atiku replies Tinubu campaign

DAVID IJASEUN

The Presidential Candidate of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Atiku Abubakar, has said that Bola Tinubu's presidential campaign council's claim that there was rigging in the South East is evidence that indeed the election was fraught with irregularities.

In a statement issued in Abuja on Friday by Atiku's Special Assistant on Public Communication, Phrank Shaibu, the PDP Presidential Candidate, said it was unfortunate that the APC presidential campaign council had continued to attack and mock Nigerians whose mandate it stole.

Shaibu said it was obvious that Nigerians did not want Tinubu, and this was proven in Lagos, where he had turned the state into his personal fiefdom.

He said, "Festus Keyamo's claim that there was massive rigging in the southeast and that the APC will be challenging the votes in that region validates our position that this election was fraught with irregularities. This is the reason we are seeking the cancellation of the results.

"Is it not funny that Tinubu claimed he wanted to replicate the developments of Lagos across Nigeria, and yet the same people of Lagos rejected him at the poll? He and his minions unleashed thugs on the people of the state and yet still lost.

"We ask them to save their strength for the legal fireworks ahead. Nigerians and the world will see how All Progressives Criminals (APC) stole the mandate of the people and most importantly, they should explain to Nigerians why people have been partying in Columbia while there is grave silence in Nigeria since the declaration of their candidate."

BUSINESS DAY



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# Court grants Obi, Atiku leave to access INEC sensitive materials

TONY AILEMEN, Abuja

An Abuja Court of Appeal of Friday, granted Candidates of the Labour Party (LP), Peter Obi and his Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) counterpart, Atiku Abubakar, leave to access to sensitive materials used for the February 25th Presidential election.

The appellant Court which will also serve as the Presidential Election Tribunal, sitting in Abuja, in a ruling on two ex parte motion argued separately by the two parties, ordered access to all sensitive materials the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), deployed for the conduct of the February 25th Presidential election.

A panel of the appellate court, led by Justice Joseph Ikyegh, made the order, after listening to two separate ex parte applications filed by the two aggrieved parties, along with their political parties.

The acclaimed winner of the Presidential poll, Bola Tinubu, INEC and the All Progressive Congress (APC) are joined as respondents.

Both applications are predicated on section 146 (1) of the Electoral Act 2022, Paragraph 47(1, 2 & 3) of the first schedule of the Electoral Act,

as well as under the jurisdiction of the Court, as stated in section 6(6)A and B, of the 1999 Constitution as amended.

The team of lawyers led by Alex Ejesiemi, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), Atiku's lawyers, led by Adedamola Faloku, sought seven prayers.

They had asked that they be allowed access to the documents which will, aid their petition against the outcome of the Presidential contest that was declared in favour of the APC candidate, Bola Tinubu.

The Labour Party (LP) Presidential candidate, Peter Obi, had on Thursday, filed the case against the conduct of the 2023 Presidential election, at the Presidential Election Court (PEC), asking the court to void the pronouncement of All Progressive Congress (APC) candidate, Bola Tinubu, as President-elect.

BusinessDay gathered that the PDP candidate had also filed a similar case at the tribunal.

Peter Obi had filed the



Obi

Atiku

petition on Thursday, March 2nd, pursuant to section 36(1) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, as amended, section 146 of the 2022 Electoral Act and Paragraphs 47(1): 54 of the First Schedule to the Electoral Act, 2022.

Section 146 Nigeria Electoral Act 2022 (1), grants "An order for inspection of a polling document or any other document or packet in the custody of the Chief National Electoral Commissioner or any other officer of the Commission may be made by an Election Tribunal or a Court of competent jurisdiction if it is satisfied that the order required is for the purpose of instituting, maintaining or defending an election petition.

"(2) A document other than a document referred to in subsection (1) relating to an election and which is retained by the Chief National Electoral Commissioner or any other officer of the Commission in accordance with this section shall be open for inspection on an order made by the Election Tribunal or the Court in exercise of its powers to compel the production of documents in legal proceedings.

"(3) Where there is a breach of an order of the Election Tribunal or the Court directed at the Commission, particularly order to produce, inspect or take copies of electoral documents or materials, the Commission shall first be summoned to show cause why it cannot comply with the order to establish disobedience before it can be deemed to have disobeyed the order.

"(4) Such disobedience where established, shall attract court sanctions, which shall include the committal

by the Tribunal or Court of the Commission's official to whom the order is directed to summary conviction to imprisonment for at least two years, without an option of fine.

The case is brought against the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Bola Tinubu and the All Progressive Congress (APC) as defendants.

Under the 2022 Electoral Act, petitions are instituted for the purposes of challenging the validity of an election or disputing the due return of a candidate.

An election petition is usually presented by a candidate in an election or a political party that took part in the elections.

Election petitions which are sui generis actions, that is to say, "they are peculiar with legal procedures and processes that are different in character from normal civil proceedings", entail special proceedings guided by electoral law as encapsulated in the Constitution and the Electoral Act 2022.

Recall that the Labour Party (LP) Presidential candidate, Peter Obi, on Thursday, had assured millions of his teeming supporters that he will not abandon his mandate and vowed to prove to the world that he won the February 25 Presidential election. Obi, had while addressing a World Press Conference at the Transcorp Hilton hotel, Abuja, on Thursday, assured that he will not abandon his mandate but lead in ensuring that the nation overcome the current political darkness, trying to envelop the country.

Obi had accused Mahmud Yakubu, the Chairman of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), for violating essential pro-

visions of the 2022 Electoral Act on the transmission of results from the polling units to the INEC viewing center.

This followed the declarations by INEC on Wednesday, pronouncing Bola Tinubu, the All Progressive Congress (APC) Presidential candidate, as winner of the poll, with a total of 8,794,726 votes, while Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) had 6984, 520 and Peter Obi scored 6,101,533 votes.

But Obi declared the results as a daylight robbery, and vowed to do everything legally possible to reclaim the stolen mandate.

He stated that the election was "conducted and results announced as programmed"

He noted that the election will go down as one of the most controversially conducted in Nigeria, added that "Nigerians have been robbed."

Obi, while pleading with Nigerians to be calm, added that this will not be the end of the struggle, adding that "It requires that we now do the right thing.

"I'm not going away, I will lead until we overcome this darkness until day breaks."

Obi recalled that he had vowed to govern by the rule of law, adding that he will explore all legal options to reclaim the mandate. He therefore urged Nigerians to come out and vote during the forthcoming gubernatorial election, on the 11th of March, 2023.

Speaking on possible pressures to step down, he stated that "No one will put me under pressures. When I challenge, I challenge their misconducts, rascality and irregularity. I am challenging a process that is faulty and wrong."

## Ezekwesili's group condemns INEC conduct of presidential poll

INIOMBONG IWOK

The Obiageli Ezekwesili's #FixPolitics, a citizens-led, research-based movement, has condemned the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) handling of February 25 presidential and National Assembly election, saying that the conduct of the poll failed to meet the expectations of Nigerians.

A statement to the media on Friday signed by Anthony Ubani, Executive Director of #FixPolitics, noted that INEC's failure to transmit election results from the polling units was against the Electoral Act and the Commission's promise to conduct free and fair polls.

The statement stated that INEC's failure to review the conduct of the poll before declaring the winner was disregard to the popular calls by Nigerians and candidates.

#FixPolitics pointed out that the Commission's behaviour signalled that the election outcome was already predetermined, noting that the declared winner lacks legitimacy.

According to part of the statement, "We believe that INEC's decision to declare the winner of the 2023 presidential election has raised severe doubts in the minds of Nigerian citizens and a global audience

about the legitimacy of the process that produced the results announced by INEC.

"Elections are integral to the democratic process, and validity and legitimacy of elections are rooted in principles of transparency, obedience to the rule of law and the open compliance with due processes.

"In the absence of these principles of good governance, elections become a mere tool contrived to reach a predetermined end, leaving the citizens as hapless passengers and on-lookers in the governance of a commonwealth that is their patrimony.

"The beneficiaries of such a poorly managed and questionable process will lack the legitimacy and full support of citizens to govern effectively.

"We believe that INEC has erred in declaring a winner of the presidential election at this time when significant matters of electoral infractions that are of concern to most citizens are yet to be addressed."

There has been wide criticism of INEC handling of February's 25 presidential and National Assembly elections, the commission failure to transmit results electronically using the Bimodal Voters Accreditation System (BVAS) as proscribed by the Electoral Act has led to protests from parties, candidates and election observers.

## We are ready for next Saturday's governorship, assembly polls - INEC

...to conduct supplementary NASS elections after state polls

JAMES KWEN, Abuja

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has assured Nigerians that the Governorship and State Houses of Assembly elections scheduled for next Saturday, March 11 will hold as scheduled.

Festus Okoye, INEC national commissioner and chairman, information and voter education committee who disclosed this in a statement on Thursday, said all the processes and procedures leading to the election are being finalised.

Okoye also said the commission will conduct the re-scheduled senatorial and House of Representatives elections in Enugu and Edo states along with the Governorship and State Assembly elections.

He said INEC will fix a date for supplementary elections for constituencies where declarations and returns were not made at the last Saturday National Assembly polls after the state elections.

"The commission held its regular weekly meeting today,

Thursday 2nd March 2023, and deliberated on several issues, including the Presidential and National Assembly elections, the Governorship and State Assembly elections and the pending elections in Enugu East Senatorial District and the Esan Central/Esan West and Igbuben Federal Constituencies in Edo State.

"The commission assures Nigerians that the Governorship and State House of Assembly elections scheduled for Saturday 11th March 2023 will hold as scheduled and all the processes and procedures leading to the election are being finalised.

Furthermore, the commission will conduct the re-scheduled elections in Enugu and Edo States on Saturday 11th March 2023 along with the Governorship and State Assembly elections.

"The commission is aware that in some Senatorial Districts and Federal Constituencies, Declarations and Returns were not made. The commission is compiling the list of the affected constituencies. A date for supplementary elections will be fixed after the Governorship and State Assembly elections," the statement read.

# News

## Election observers urge INEC to investigate returning officer, EO for Abia South Senatorial zone

...call for rerun in 108 polling units in Aba South, Aba North LGAs, as recommended

GODFREY OFURUM, Aba

A group of civil society organisations, certified by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to observe the 2023 general election in Nigeria, have urged the INEC to investigate the activities of Georgina Ugwuanyi, a professor and returning officer for Abia South Senatorial zone and Nkem Oko, electoral officer (EO) for Abia South Senatorial zone in the just concluded Presidential/National Assembly elections.

They observed that the duo announced the result of the Senatorial election three-days after declaring same election inconclusive and called for a rerun in 108 polling units.

INEC on Tuesday afternoon declared Enyinnaya Abaribe of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), winner of Saturday, February 25, 2023 Senatorial election in Abia South.

Ugwuanyi said that she had to return to declare results

for the election, because she was asked by INEC office in Abuja to announce winners in the election.

Earlier, Ugwuanyi had told party agents that a substantial number of polling units totalling about 108 had irregularities requiring a reschedule of the Abia South election.

She said that Abaribe, who is the APGA candidate, got the highest number of votes in the election having scored 49,903.

She further announced that LP's Chinedu Onyeizu scored 43,903, while Okezie Ikpeazu, Abia State Governor, scored 28,422 votes and declared Abaribe winner of the senatorial election for Abia South.

The group urged INEC to organise supplementary election in the identified polling units in Abia South Senatorial zone to determine the real winner of the Senatorial election.

They also urged INEC to suspend Georgina Ugwuanyi and Nkem Oko, from the supplementary and March 11, 2023 elections. 2023 Abia State Civil Society Election Observers, is an umbrella



body of organised civil society organisations accredited by INEC to work as domestic observers for the 2023 general election.

They are led by Nelson Nnanna Nwafor (Convener) Foundation for Environmental Rights Advocacy and Development (FENRAD), Okoye, Chuka Peter (Co-convener) Centre for Human Rights Advocacy and Wholesome Society (CEHRAWS) and Nnamdi Elekwachi (Secretary) Society

for Economic Rights and Social Justice (SERSJ). They demanded that the Commission corrects its mistakes, and comply with the Electoral Act in further elections, and also fix a convenient date for the supplementary election in Abia South Senatorial zone.

The group in a press conference held at the secretariat of the Aba Federated Chapel of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) insisted that the date be

set on an acceptable day, not when it will be inconvenient for the people, and that adequate publicity be made to this effect.

They observed that the just conducted National Assembly and Presidential elections and the performance of the electoral umpire, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Abia State, totally contradicted democratic tenets.

According to them, INEC's

promised to deliver credible polls to Nigerians, as captured both in the Electoral Act of 2022 and the Commission's election guidelines, thereby making the huge borrowed resources, cost of which was covered by the 2023 budget, for the conduct of the election, a waste.

They stated that INEC voting materials were dispatched late to all polling centres and units, which grossly violated the INEC timeframe for the arrival of personnel and materials, according to the Commission's guidelines.

"In Abia State, especially Ugwuanyi axis, the presence of INEC staff was not felt nor did election start till 1pm. We urged the people to be patient till when materials and personnel arrived.

"In Abia South and North LGAs, for example, materials and personnel left for voting centres by as late as 9:49am and 10:17am respectively.

"When some of our colleagues confronted the Electoral Officers (EOs) of most local government areas, where they covered, their response was simply logistics challenge."

## Dangote disburses scholarship funds to host Kogi Kogi, Benue communities

VICTORIA NNAKAIKE

The Dangote Company, Africa's largest donor and second biggest employers of labour after government in Nigeria has disbursed scholarship fund to members of its host communities in Kogi and Benue states.

In Ankpa, Kogi State scholarship fund was distributed to members of the host communities and in the same vein host communities in Gboko in Benue state received scholarship funds.

This is coming barely one year into coal mining operation at Effeche Akpalli in Ugbokolo Ward of Okpokwu Local Government of Benue State.

The exercise is part of the company's annual Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) scheme for host communities, and it has been running for upward a decade.

In 2022, Group President of the Dangote Industries Limited Aliko Dangote had announced series of scholarship schemes for communities hosting the Dangote Sugar Refinery in Nu-

man, Adamawa State.

In Benue, ten members of the Effeche community who are currently studying in higher institutions of learning benefited from the fund.

The company's contribution to the educational development in Nigeria has been described as immeasurable having constructed multimillion naira edifices and hostels in some selected universities in the country.

The Head of Dangote's mining operation in Benue, Dillip Taman, said the scholarship was part of the Corporate Social Responsibility of the company, adding that the company takes the plights of the host communities very seriously.

He also said the company is kick-starting several other projects contained in the Community Development Agreement.

Amina Audu, the chairperson of the Okpokwu Local Government, who was represented by the Leader of the Legislative Council, urged the beneficiaries to use the money efficiently, while urging the company not to relent in the annual scholarship scheme.

## Digital innovation will drive future of businesses in Africa - VerifyMe

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA

Businesses in sub-Saharan Africa have been urged to leverage digital innovation in order to achieve scale, improve efficiency and enhance customer experience.

Mohammed Maibe, director, corporate strategy & growth, VerifyMe Nigeria, owners of QoreID platform, made the call on the sidelines of the discussion on 'Digital Business Solutions: The future of Africa's Economy', at the recently concluded African Tech Summit held in Nairobi, Kenya.

According to Maibe, the ability to harness the opportunities offered by digitalisation will distinguish businesses that attain sustainability and profitability from those who fail in Africa's challenging business environment.

He said "We are in an era where technology plays a critical role in the evolution and sustainability of business across sectors. As fast-paced innovation in technology continues to drive complementary response in regulation and consumer demands, industry expertise will simply not be enough to guarantee the survival of businesses.

"Now, more than ever, operators must tap into the opportunities that digitization offers so that they can be in sync with the changing dynamics of the operating environment, scale faster in a cheaper and more efficient way, and keep within the ambit of regulation.

"For example, Know Your Customer (KYC) used to be a sore point between organisations and regulators because the former considered it too expensive and beyond the scope of their competence. However, leveraging technology, VerifyMe was able

to bridge the gap by building an eKYC infrastructure that directly connects companies with government's database."

Maibe said this has helped companies achieve compliance at very reduced costs without the burden of reaching outside their core business.

He said VerifyMe's new Business-to-Business platform platform, QoreID, offers a one-stop solution for all business verification ranging from AML checks, digital and last mile address verification, financial and criminal profiling and much more.

He noted that convenience is also one of the advantages that digitization brings.

Continuing, Maibe called on African innovators to leverage home-grown technology in providing practical solutions that meet the continent's needs.

He said, "I believe the start-up community has

done well in responding to the needs of the market but we must see it from the mindset of a journey, not a destination.

"This is one of the reasons we are excited about our work in pivoting beyond identity to powering consumer data to drive Africa's credit economy because we are convinced that it is a critical foundation for a financially inclusive society." VerifyMe is leading digital identity and KYC technology company in Nigeria. The company was voted as a Notable Ecosystem Champion in Nigeria by the StartupBlink Global Startup Ecosystem Index Report.

Presently, over 55 percent of commercial banks, 90 percent of digital banks, 50 percent of the top 15 insurance companies, and over 50 top credit lenders rely on VerifyMe's B2B platform, QoreID to grow their businesses and onboard customers seamlessly.



# 2023 presidential election records least votes since 1979

INI OBONG IWOK

**T**o many Nigerians the 2023 general election fell short of their expectations.

In the run-up to the 2023 polls, Nigerians were hopeful that after decades of controversial and flawed polls, since the advent of the current fourth republic in 1999, which had drastically affected public confidence in the country's electoral system and led to wide apathy among eligible voters in the country the situation would be different in the 2023 polls.

Parts of the reasons for the high expectations came after the amendment of the Electoral Act by the parliament, which gave way for the introduction of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), through which election results can be transmitted electronically in the polling units after the announcement of results.

The euphoria was seen in the huge turnout by Nigerians, especially among the youths in the one year long, Continuous Voters Registration Exercise (CVR), where they would register and get their Permanent Voters Card (PVCs).

Across the country, Nigerians turned up enmass to claim their PVCs and with the hope that this time around their votes would count.

According to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), 93.5 million eligible voters were registered for the 2023 polls, but only 87.2 million Nigerians collected their PVCs in a process that was hindered by bottlenecks.

However, INEC data show that only 24.97 million voted in the February 25 poll, which is equivalent to 29 percent.

With that number, it means that it is less than three in ten Nigerians who had PVCs turned up at the poll on February 25, making it the lowest voter turnout since the return to democratic rule in 1999.

In light of the high enthusiasm among many Nigerians in the lead up to the election, the low turnout has left many analysts surprised and disappointed.

Bola Tinubu, a former Lagos State governor from the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), was declared the winner of the presidential election with 8.8 million votes.

INEC officials said Tinubu satisfied all conditions required by securing both the majority of votes as well as 25 percent of the vote in at least two-thirds of the country's 36 states.

Tinubu only managed to secure 36 percent of the valid votes cast, with the remaining 63 percent of voters choosing other candidates.

The three leading candidates, including Tinubu, Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Peter Obi of the Labour Party each secured victory in 12 states with some other dominant politicians fail-



Bola Tinubu



Atiku Abubakar



Peter Obi



Rabiu Kwankwaso

ing to win in their own states.

Tinubu's win also marks one of the lowest thresholds secured by an elected president in Nigeria's democratic era, which began in 1999.

Elections in Nigeria, Africa's biggest democracy, have been dogged by low voter turnout which has declined every year since the 2003 election.

However, experts say the low turnout is not healthy for democracy and eludes legitimacy of the elected government.

Political analysts said the results from the presidential and National Assembly elections was an indication of the deep division in Nigeria presently which was along religious and ethnic lines.

Sylvester Odion-Akhaine professor of political science and public affairs analyst said several factors may be responsible for the decline in voters' turnout, stressing that the prevailing state of the economy cannot be ruled out.

He pointed out that the decision of the federal government to redesign the naira and the scarcity of the new notes may be partly responsible.

According to him, "Voter turnout

universally is 30 percent, in Australia it is 30 percent; people just go to the polling units and take the ballot paper and put it in the box without voting, so that they would not say they did not do anything.

"The inability of people to get their PVCs could also be responsible; I mean the process was difficult for people to collect their cards.

"We saw what happened in the South East where people's PVCs cards were dumped in the bush and people could not have access to them. Some people belong to that category and could not vote.

"Also the changing of polling units of hundreds of people at the last minute by INEC could also be an issue. Some people could not go online and check their new polling units.

"The non-availability of cash for people to move round the country is a serious issue too. There was also suppression of votes in some parts of the country, especially in Lagos here."

Sadeeq Gombe, political analyst, said that the president-elect could have performed better at the polls, adding that the spread of the votes revealed a lack of national unity.

"Now, he faces the difficult task of uniting the country.

"Tinubu must not make the mistake of President Buhari by looking at it that other regions didn't vote for him.

"The way we are today, I think we need a president who can come and unite Nigerians, carry everybody, irrespective of their socio-political, religious, regional sentiments," Gombe said.

With the results and turnout, Ekiti, Enugu, Gombe, Jigawa, Kwara, Ogun, Ondo and Osun all saw a decline in voter turnout in 2023 compared to 2019.

Jigawa state recorded the biggest slump in voter turnout as only 42 percent of Nigerians who collected their PVCs in the Northern state voted on February 25. That's down from 71 percent in 2019.

Ekiti, Kwara, Osun and Ogun states, all sitting south west of Nigeria, followed with the biggest drop in voter turnout.

Only 33 percent of Nigerians who collected their PVCs in the South Western state of Ekiti voted compared to the 59 percent that voted in 2019

The conduct of the February's 25 presidential and National Assembly elections have been criticised across the country, judging from the commission's failure to transmit election results electronically according to the Electoral Act and promises made to Nigerians and stakeholders.

Several local and internal observers have faulted the commission describing the election as failing to meet expected standards.

A civil rights organisation, Yiaga Africa said that INEC missed an opportunity in the history of conducting elections.

Yiaga Africa also faulted the presidential election results in Rivers and Imo States, declaring that the results were inconsistent with its observations.

The organisation raised the observation in its post-election statement signed by the Chair, Watching The Vote and Executive Director, Samson Itodo, obtained on Wednesday night and titled,

They said that the results announced by the Independent National Electoral Commission were manipulated.

# Nigeria Decides 2023

## Why six states ask Supreme Court to void Tinubu's election victory

TONY AILEMEN, Abuja

Six states- Adamawa, Delta, Bayelsa, Akwa-Ibom, Edo and Sokoto- have dragged the Federal Government before the Supreme Court over the February 25, 2023, Presidential and National Assembly elections, conduct, collation and announcement of the result. BusinessDay has gathered.

The states are asking the apex court to declare that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) pronouncement of the All Progressives Congress (APC) candidate, Bola Tinubu, as winner of the February 25 presidential election and president-elect based on that election be voided.

The suit was filed on February 28 by the Attorneys General of the six states against the Attorney General of the Federation as sole respondent and was brought pursuant to Sections 6 (6) (a), 14 (2) (b), 153 (1) (F) and 232 (1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as Amended); 2. Sections 25 (1), (2) and 3; Sections 60 And 66 Of The Electoral Act, 2022.

The case is predicated on the grounds that, "The collation of the national election results from the 36 States of the Federation, and that of the Federal Capital Territory, for the said 2023 Presidential and National Assembly elections have not been carried out in compliance with the mandatory provisions of relevant sections of the Electoral Act, 2022; the INEC Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of Elections, 2022, made pursuant to the provisions of the Electoral Act, 2022; and the INEC Manual for Election Officials, 2023."

Lawyers to the plaintiffs, Mike Ozekhome, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), had filed the case against the agents and officials of the federal government and INEC, for failing to transmit the collated result as prescribed by the provisions of the Electoral Act, 2022; the INEC Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of Elections 2022; and the INEC Manual for Election Officials requiring transmission of the results by the use of Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) in flagrant breach of the relevant provisions of the Electoral Act, 2022; the INEC Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of Elections, 2022; and the INEC Manual for Election Officials, 2023.

The state are seeking "A declaration that the entire results of the Presidential Election conducted on the 25th of February, 2023 announced by the Chairman of INEC at the National Collation Centre, Abuja, in flagrant violation of the provisions of Sections 25; 47(2); 60 (1), (2), (4) & (5); 62; 64(4)(a) & (b); 70; and 148 of the Electoral Act, 2022, governing the 2023 nationwide general elections, particularly paragraphs 38 of the INEC Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of



Bola Tinubu

Elections, 2022; and paragraphs 2.8.4; 2.9.0; and 2.9.1 of the INEC Manual for Election Officials, 2023, for the conduct of the Presidential Election, were invalid, null and void, and of no effect whatsoever.

"A declaration that the fundamentally flawed electoral process through the non-uploading of the results of each of the 176,974 Polling Units nationwide, in respect of the presidential election and National Assembly Elections held on Saturday, 25th February 2023 were not in accordance with the provisions of Sections 25; 47(2); 60 (1), (2), (4) & (5); 62; 64(4)(a) & (b); 70; and 148 of the Electoral Act, 2022, governing the 2023 nationwide general elections, particularly paragraphs 38 of the INEC Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of Elections, 2022; and paragraphs 2.8.4; 2.9.0; and 2.9.1 of the INEC Manual for Election Officials, 2023, for the conduct of the presidential election."

In addition, they are seeking "A declaration that the failure of the Federal Government of Nigeria, the Independent National Electoral Commission to electronically transmit or transfer Polling Unit Results in Form EC8A using BVAS by uploading Scanned Copy of the said Unit Result to the Independent National Electoral Commission Result Viewing Portal (IREV) after the counting and announcement of the Polling Units results on 25th of February, 2023 in collusion, violates the provision of Sections 25; 47(2); 60 (1), (2), (4) & (5); 62; 64(4)(a) & (b); 70; and 148 of the Electoral Act, 2022, governing the 2023 nationwide general elections, particularly paragraphs 38 of the INEC Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of Elections, 2022; and paragraphs 2.8.4; 2.9.0; and 2.9.1 of the INEC Manual for Election Officials, 2023, for the conduct of the presidential election."

They are also seeking an order of the apex court "directing a holistic review of all results so far announced by the Federal Government of Nigeria through INEC which were carried out other than through the man-

ner prescribed by the provisions of the Electoral Act, 2022, the INEC Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of Elections, 2022; and the INEC Manual for Election Officials.

"And for such further Orders as the Honourable Court may deem fit to make in the circumstance."

The plaintiffs also brought an application praying the apex court for an order directing a departure from the rules of the apex court in the interest of justice by directing for accelerated hearing of the substantive suit. Besides, plaintiffs also filed another application seeking for an order for abridging time for parties to file and serve responses for and against the suit. No date has been fixed for hearing.

The plaintiffs in the originating summons marked: SC/CV/354/2023, are specifically asking for an order of the apex court, "directing a holistic review of all results so far announced by the Federal Government of Nigeria through the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) which were carried out other than through the manner prescribed by the provisions of the Electoral Act, 2022, the INEC Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of Elections, 2022; and the INEC Manual for Election Officials.

It was their submission that the, "Non-compliance with the due process of law has led to a widespread agitation, violent protests, displeasure, and disapproval from a wide spectrum of the Nigerian populace, including international observers, political parties, well-meaning Nigerians and former Head of States of the Federal Republic of Nigeria."

They further claimed that the widespread violent protests, demonstrations and rallies endangered the peace, order, good governance, security and safety of the plaintiffs. The plaintiffs argued that the federal government through INEC, "is empowered by law to correct the elections due to technical glitches and errors arising from the conduct of the elections with substantial effect on the electoral process in line

with the provisions of Section 47 (3) of the Electoral Act, 2022; and other relevant sections thereof.

"The Federal Government of Nigeria has nonetheless continued to collate results for the Presidential and National Assembly elections, against the provisions of extant Electoral laws and Guidelines, notwithstanding the fundamental flaws identified in the process of the collation of results and the public outcry that has greeted the entire electoral process.

"Whilst queries were being raised as to the failure or deliberate refusal of INEC to transmit the results electronically, INEC suddenly pulled down its portal harbouring the Regulations and Guidelines, thus leaving the plaintiffs in the dark. "Most Nigerians, including the governments and peoples of Adamawa State, Akwa Ibom State, Bayelsa State, Delta State, Edo State, and Sokoto State, are entitled to a proper and electoral lawful process and procedure that guarantees a free, fair, transparent and credible election. "There is no justifiable basis for the ongoing collation of results without compliance with the mandatory provisions of the law that mandatorily require the use of BVAs, electronic transmission to the IReV Portal.

"Unless this Honourable court intervenes, the Governments and peoples of Adamawa State, Akwa Ibom State, Bayelsa State, Delta State, Edo State, and Sokoto State, who have suffered and will continue to suffer irreparable hardship and damage of unquantifiable proportions by being denied the opportunity to participate fairly in a free, transparent, fair and credible election, which can lead to a breakdown of law and order and thus endanger the public peace, security, safety, order and good governance, consequent upon the violent demonstrations and protests that have already started to take place in different parts of the country, including the Plaintiff States, as a result of the fundamentally flawed electoral process, which does not represent the wishes of Nigerians and of the plaintiff states," they submitted.

Amongst the issues raised for determination by the apex court were: Whether having regard to the provisions of Sections 25; 47(2); 60 (1), (2), (4) & (5); 62; 64(4)(a) & (b); 70; and 148 of the Electoral Act, 2022, governing the 2023 nationwide general elections, particularly paragraphs 38 of the INEC Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of Elections, 2022; and paragraphs 2.8.4; 2.9.0; and 2.9.1 of the INEC Manual for Election Officials, 2023 thereof, the electronic transmission of votes collated at polling units and the use of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) in the transmission of collated result is made mandatory.

"Whether by virtue of the provisions of Sections 25; 47(2); 60 (1), (2), (4) & (5); 62; 64(4)(a) & (b); 70; and 148 of the Electoral Act, 2022, governing the 2023 nationwide general elections, particularly para-

graphs 38 of the INEC Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of Elections, 2022; and paragraphs 2.8.4; 2.9.0; and 2.9.1 of the INEC Manual for Election Officials, 2023, for the conduct of the Presidential Election, the Federal Government of Nigeria through presiding officers of its executive body, Independent National Electoral Commission was bound to electronically transmit or transfer Polling Unit Results in Form EC8A using BVAS by uploading Scanned Copy of the said Unit Results to the Independent National Electoral Commission Result Viewing Portal (IREV) in the course of the General Elections held on the 25th of February, 2023 throughout the Federation.

"Whether the Federal Government of Nigeria in the recently held Presidential and National Assembly elections conducted nationwide on 25th February, 2023 through INEC, complied with the mandatory provisions of extant laws, INEC Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of Presidential Elections, 2022. "Whether the failure of the Federal Government of Nigeria through the Defendant and INEC to electronically transmit or transfer Polling Unit Results in Form EC8A using BVAS by uploading Scanned Copy of the said Unit Result to the Independent National Electoral Commission Result Viewing Portal (IREV) after the counting and announcement of the Polling Units results on 25th of February, 2023, violates the provisions of Sections 25; 47(2); 60 (1), (2), (4) & (5); 62; 64(4)(a) & (b); 70; and 148 of the Electoral Act, 2022, governing the 2023 nationwide general elections, particularly paragraphs 38 of the INEC Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of Elections, 2022; and paragraphs 2.8.4; 2.9.0; and 2.9.1 of the INEC Manual for Election Officials, 2023, for the conduct of the presidential election.

"Whether the failure of the Federal Republic of Nigeria through INEC to comply with the provisions of Section 60 of the Electoral Act, 2022 and the Regulations and Guidelines for Conduct of Elections, 2022 made pursuant to the Electoral Act and the Constitution of the FRN, 1999, as amended, in collating and announcing the results of the Presidential and National Assembly Elections render the already announced results and the elections conducted as a whole a nullity. "Whether the entire results of the presidential election conducted on the 25th of February, 2023, as announced by the Chairman of INEC at the National Collation Centre, Abuja in flagrant provision of Sections 25; 47(2); 60 (1), (2), (4) & (5); 62; 64(4)(a) & (b); 70; and 148 of the Electoral Act, 2022, governing the 2023 nationwide general elections, particularly paragraphs 38 of the INEC Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of Elections, 2022; and paragraphs 2.8.4; 2.9.0; and 2.9.1 of the INEC Manual for Election Officials, 2023, for the conduct of the Presidential Election, were valid."



# Nigeria Decides 2023

## Groups in Rivers bicker over who made Tinubu win the state

...We did not see Wike's billions said to have made Tinubu win – ICC leader

IGNATIUS CHUKWU

**P**ro-Tinubu groups in Rivers State are now at loggerheads over who truly delivered the candidate in Rivers State.

Governor Nyesom Wike has been seen on video footage dancing in one of the western states showing happiness for delivering the presidential candidate of another party other than his.

A stalwart of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Rivers State, Tony Okocha said Governor Wike made huge financial resources and humans available to deliver Bola Ahmed Tinubu (BAT) instead of Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), and that his group would work to deliver Wike's PDP governorship choice, Sim Fubara.

Okocha spoke on behalf of the Grassroots Independent Campaign Council (ICC) and urged all Rivers people to pay back Wike by voting Fubara.

The next day, Friday, March 3, 2023, the state coordinator of ICC, Augustine Wokocha, backed by Ineye Jack (secretary) and Wenenda Onukwuru (media director), countered the Okocha group.

Addressing journalists at another venue, the state coordinator said they did not see a kobo from Governor Wike, saying they were



Augustine Wokocha, state coordinator of ICC, flanked by exco members

not aware that the state governor pumped over N2billion.

He however, said if Wike did, the money is Rivers' money and all Rivers' people would be commended for it, not just Wike.

Instead, Wokocha said he as a person would vote for Magnus Abe, governorship candidate of the So-

cial Democratic Party (SDP).

He said Abe was one of the forces that worked for the emergence of Tinubu.

Wokocha said Okocha spoke for himself and was never mandated by anybody to speak for ICC.

He admitted that Tinubu must be congratulated, but said BAT won

naturally, not because of any undue push by anybody and that credit for the victory must go tall Rivers people.

Tinubu won with 231,591 (56,520 more than LP) which got 175, 071 while PDP got 88,468 votes, trailing behind APC by 86,603. The figures are being disputed by LP.

The ICC state coordinator said what should worry the Tinubu group is that almost 90 percent of Nigerians did not vote for him. "He must work to convince them but he is going to be their president."

He said many forces worked against Tinubu but that Abe was steadfast. He too said Abe should be voted for.

The mainstream APC in the state has since claimed to have worked for the victory of Tinubu and sent a hearty congratulation. They too claim to have worked for the victory.

Okocha however, said the Tonye Cole-led APC did not for once mention Tinubu at their rallies. He said evidence before them shows that top APC leaders in Rivers State may not have even voted for Tinubu.

The Tinubu victory has continued to divide rather than unite political groups in the state, just as Tinubu was accused of also dividing the APC family in the state over the years.

This allegedly led to factions in the state that seemed to draw strength and funds directly from him which seemed to embolden them to stand up to the leader of the APC in the state, Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi, who Okocha preferred to call former leader.

Instead, Wike is being touted as the leader of both the PDP and APC in the state.

## Abia 2023 - Okey Ahiwe's experience an advantage

IKECHUKWU NMERENGWA

**O**key Ahiwe is the gubernatorial candidate of the PDP for Abia State in the 11 March 2023 election. Ahiwe emerged following a clear majority of votes and after six candidates stepped down for him in the interest of party unity.

What is the message of Okey Ahiwe? What is he bringing to the Governor's Office? How would he stand apart from Dr. Okezie Ikpeazu, who he served as Chief of Staff? This last question is critical given the public perception that Ikpeazu's government was less than stellar. It also comes against the backdrop that between November 2022 and 4 February 2023, when Professor Eleazar Uchenna Ikonke, the PDP candidate passed on, the party's campaign had flagged.

The race for the governorship of Abia State in March 2023 at the end translates to a contest

between continuity and new paradigms. Okey Ahiwe, for the PDP, represents continuity in government. His significant contenders are from the LP (Dr Alex Otti), APGA (Prof Greg Ibe), YPP (Nana Nwafor) and APC (Chief Ikechi Emenike). Given the public perception of the performance of the PDP over 23 years in Abia State, the opposition has framed continuity with the garb of negativity. The LP candidate builds on the traction of the Labour Party's presidential candidate Mr. Peter Obi nationally to position himself as the candidate of change. Okey's frame of continuity represents new paradigm that acknowledges the mistakes of the past and marches to the future with experience to beat that past.

"My experience is an advantage," Ahiwe said in an interview. "My participation in government places me ahead of other candidates.

"There is so much to do that there is too little time to learn how to do them. Government process-



es, the needs of people across the state, and their management, require who knows what to do."

Ahiwe said Abians should expect a new impetus and some quick wins once he assumes office as the person who knows where all the bodies are buried.

"I will clear the arrears of salaries and pensions. Do not believe in any quick fixes.

"Our government will then tackle critical infrastructure notably the Port Harcourt Road in Aba and the Umuahia to Ikot Ekpene Road.

"We will work with the developer, Nigeria Customs Service, and the NPA to ensure completion of the inland dry port planned for Abia State for so long."

Ahiwe asked Abians to expect a new Abia that would benefit from his service in government.

A political science graduate of the University of Lagos, Ahiwe trained in building technology at the Ahirara Technical School. He is a successful entrepreneur, experienced in logistics and oil and gas services.

# Nigeria Decides 2023

## Elections: Understanding the real kidnapper in Nigeria

CHUKA UROKO

**T**hough the bandit who takes people hostage for ransom and plies that trade with gun remains condemned, he is a lesser evil, when weighed on the same scale of values, than the politician in Nigeria who, from experiential evidence, has proved to be the real kidnapper in the country.

The politician does not use gun and so he does not kill; he does not demand for ransom as the bandit does. But the politician kills destinies; he ambushes the future especially of the young people. He dashes hope and, in a brazen manner, truncates processes and upturns rules and order to his advantage.

For four whole years, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was busy, or so it seemed, preparing for a general election to elect a new president, new governors and new national and states assembly members.

INEC assured Nigerians it had done excellent work, infusing modern technology that would make the electoral process not only seamless, but also incorruptible by which it meant the politician would be kept at bay while the process took its course leading to a free, fair and credible election never seen in the history of Nigeria's democratic journey and electoral processes.

But the Nigerian politician was also at work, evidently, working harder and seeing farther than both the electors and the electoral umpire. He was relentless and brutal in his planning. He knew the result even before the election was conducted and, by his nature, he knew the risks and how to derisk the risks.

That explains how, the INEC technology on which assurance was given less than 24 hours to the elections proper by Mamoud Yakubu, the INEC chairman, collapsed almost irredeemably just a few hours into the Presidential and National Assembly elections on February 25.

Pronto, the politician went to work and so, between the polling units and the collation centres, he was able to ambush the hope of many Nigerians who saw in the ballot paper which they dropped into the ballot box not as a piece of perishable paper but as hope, their future and that of their children.

Many of them, especially young Nigerians, who are lamenting today are doing so because their votes, representing their future, are not part of the result they have heard today. Theirs were the votes that were ambushed by the politician who manipulated, falsified or completely destroyed them.



Many Nigerians have reacted to this rape on democracy that gave the politician undue advantage over the rest of them estimated at 200 million. Some have paid the supreme sacrifice like the 19-year old boy in Plateau State who decided "to end it now rather than live in a hell called Nigeria" because his candidate, Peter Obi of Labour Party, did not win. He took his own life!

An unconfirmed report has it that before the frustrated young man died, he left a note saying, "no hope for Nigeria for the next 20 years after Obi lost the election; I rather end it here than live in a hell called Nigeria." So far, this is the major victim of the unwholesome activities of the Nigerian politician.

Another young Nigerian felt so frustrated that he decided to curse the Nigerian politician who he described, in between sobs, as "enemy of democracy in this country." To demonstrate his inner pain and hopelessness he sees ahead, the young man took out his permanent voter's card (PVC) and cut it into shreds with a pair of scissors. According to him, INEC who he sees as an accomplice in dashing his hope and killing his future should go ahead and appoint the state governors from the list already submitted to him by the politician.

"They murdered sleep; they killed democracy in this country; it will never be well with all those who participated in this evil; that's your voter's card; I don't need it again," he said as he threw away the shreds of his PVC

A middle-age man was also full of lamentation as he painted the hideous

and invidious picture and activities of the Nigerian politician who, according to him, has reset destinies, dashed his hope and ambushed his future and those of other young Nigerians between his polling unit and the collation centre.

According to the young man who simply introduced himself as 'an Obidient' meaning that he supports the candidacy of Peter Obi and was a member of the Obidient Movement, he had a lot of meaning and hope attached to the piece of paper he dropped inside the ballot box on February 25 which was why he endured hunger, thirst, rain, sunshine and long hours of waiting to see that his vote counted.

"I voted for Peter Obi," he said, adding, "but I did not join that queue for Peter Obi; I did not smuggle any-

When the heaven opened and poured out rains and I thought of taking shelter, I remembered the students who were stuck at home for eight months because of ASUU strike and I stood, enduring the hunger and my worry about the children I left at home

body into the polling booth for Peter Obi; I did not brandish a knife or threaten anybody for Peter Obi; I did not snatch, stuff or break a ballot box for Peter Obi; I did not bribe anybody; I did not steal or kill anybody for Obi.

"What I did for my candidate was to stand in line from 8 o'clock in the morning on Saturday till 8am on Sunday. When the sun got too hot and I thought of going back home, I remembered the gunshot on the train going from Abuja to Kaduna.

"When the heaven opened and poured out rains and I thought of taking shelter, I remembered the students who were stuck at home for eight months because of ASUU strike and I stood, enduring the hunger and my worry about the children I left at home," he said.

Continuing, he said, "I stood there because what I wanted to give my candidate; what I ended up putting in that box was not an ordinary piece of paper but my hope, my country where children would not be so disillusioned by the actions of their own parents or their own leaders that they will be willing to cross the Sahara Desert, taking all the risk, just to escape. That hope was what I put in the ballot box and that was what my presiding officer refused to upload."

He recalled standing on the queue with a young boy, a first time voter, who stood with them all through the night counting those votes. The boy, he said, saw his future in the votes and was pregnant with hope.

"But somewhere, between our polling unit and the collation centre, that boy's future was ambushed by the politician who used biro to cross out

that boy's destiny and has written a new word—hopeless.

It is a terrible thing when a Nigerian is kidnapped on his way to Zamfara or Makurdi or Enugu. But it is infinitely worse when Nigeria itself is kidnapped on its way to the collation centre," he lamented.

For this young Nigerian, it is not Nigeria as a country that has its foot on citizens' neck; it is not the Fulani or Igbo; the Christian or Muslim that have wrapped their fingers around their neck and squeezing life out of them. He added that it is not Yoruba people that don't give a damn whether citizens have houses to live in or jobs to do; it is not the north or south that has failed to fix their roads or provide other basic things of life for them.

"It is that politician who is willing to steal to stay in office that is the enemy. Just like the serially abused, many of you have fallen in love with your kidnapper; you admire the swagger of those who steal destiny; you admire the confidence of those who use your future to fuel their cars," he fumed.

The Nigerian politician has done the unimaginable in uncountable numbers and to think of the impunity and arrogance that follow deadens our collective psyche as a people. After inflicting pain on the rest of Nigerians, the politician goes about gloating with 'victory' song.

That is why it is only in Nigeria that somebody thinks that "for democracy to flourish, only those who can endure the pain of rigging, sorry defeat, should participate in an election."

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## ???????

July 2022 was a watershed for the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) as it transitioned into a profit-driven commercial entity, now to be known as NNPC Limited. As a limited liability company, it will be governed by the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA). It has activities locally and internationally, especially the exploitation and exploration as well as financial reporting.

It is a dream come true for individuals and civic organisations that have canvassed for the new status NNPC Limited now enjoys. To the proponents that wanted NNPC Limited to be commercially oriented, they see no reason why Nigeria's NNPC Limited cannot rival the likes of Saudi Arabia's Aramco; Brazil's Petrobras; Russia's Gazprom, or Malaysia's Petronas.

In 2019, Saudi Aramco sold 1.7 percent of its stake to global investors, and succeeded in the process to raise \$29 billion. At the end of the first quarter that ended in March 2022, Saudi Aramco reported a net income of \$39.5 billion, up from \$21.7

billion in the comparable period in 2021. This firm has overtaken Apple as the most valuable company across the globe.

Petrobras of Brazil is among the largest producers of crude oil and gas in the world. It is engaged in exploration, production, refining, and energy generation and trading. As of March 2022, the publicly traded Petrobras had a market value of \$93.3 billion. It is listed on Sao Paulo Stock Exchange and New York Stock Exchange with over 815,000 shareholders and ADR holders.

The ownership structure of Petrobras is not in ambiguity. The Brazilian Federal Government controls 28.67 percent; BNDES/BNDSPar owns 7.94 percent; Brazilian individual investors through Sao Paulo Stock Exchange own 18.21 percent. Other foreign investors on the Sao Paulo Exchange control 24.70 percent, while the New York Stock Exchange controls 20.48 percent.

Petrobras' ambitious strategic plan for 2022-2026 aims to keep debt under control, focus on resilient assets, refining modernisation and quality products, new frontier equatorial margin, and net zero ambition and governance for profitable diversification, among others.

Gazprom is Russia's state-

owned company and one of the biggest crude oil producers in the world. In 2021, the company reported a net profit of \$29 billion, up from \$1.84 billion in 2020. The huge profit reported was driven by higher crude and gas prices.

In terms of ownership structure, the Government of Russia controls 38.37 percent stakes, according to Statista. AO Rosneftgaz 10.97 percent; AO Rosgazfikatsiya, 0.89 percent; ADR Holders 16.71 percent, and other registered holders, 33.06 percent.

Petronas is Malaysia's oil and gas corporation that is into upstream, downstream, gas business, new energy, among others, and has presence in over 50 countries of the world. In 2021, the company realised \$10.69 billion as profit after tax, up from a loss after tax of \$4.63 billion in 2020. In the first quarter of 2022, Petronas realised \$5.14 billion as profit after tax.

From the above, it is clear that all the NNPC's peers across the world are doing well profitably. They are also spearheading the technological innovations that will improve their top and bottom lines as well as for a sustainable future. Petronas organises tech challenges with a view to crowdsourcing game-changing technology solutions for its complex operational

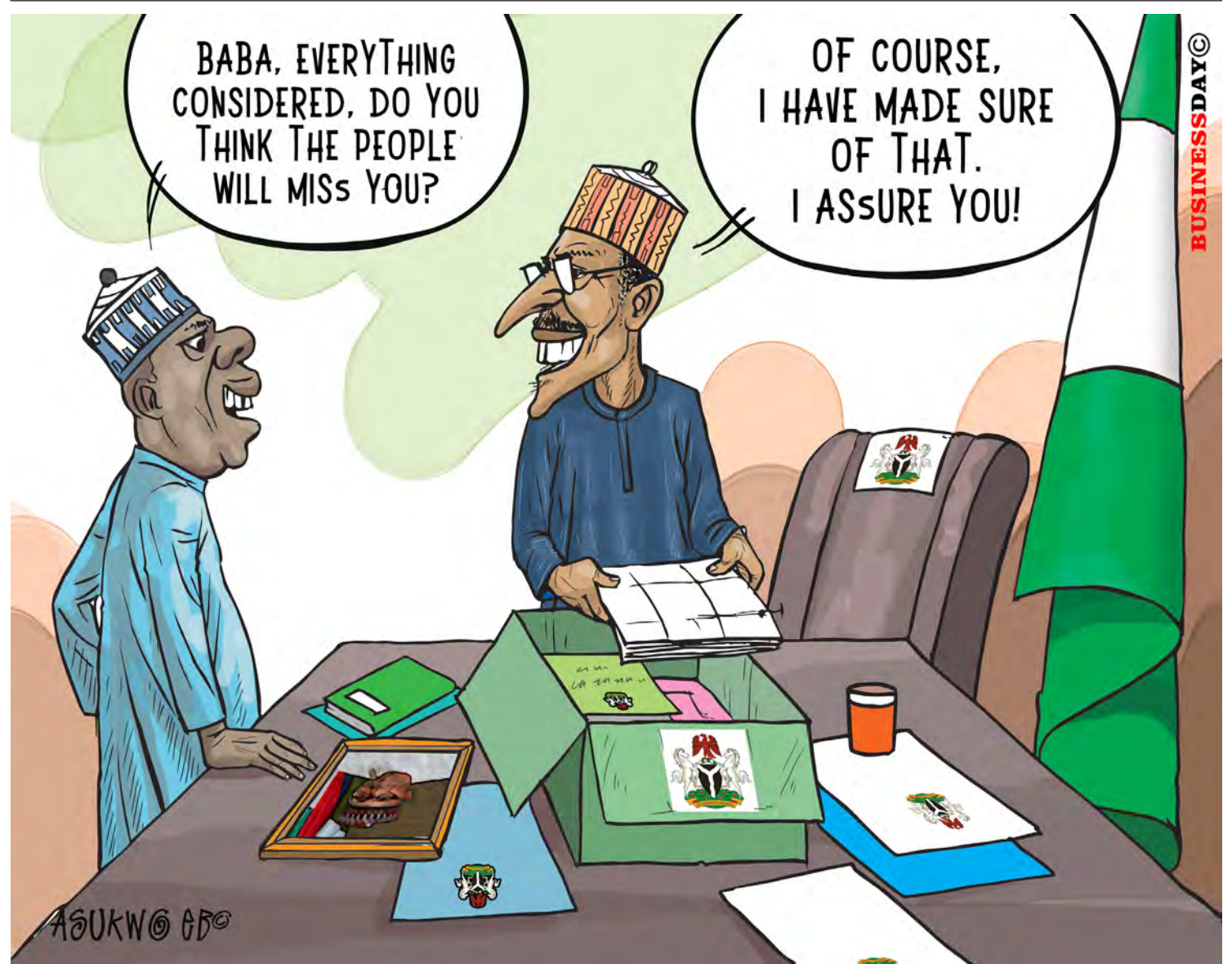
challenges.

Now that the NNPC has transitioned to NNPC Limited, with listing target set for mid-2023, it is now time for the management of the enterprise to open its book for public scrutiny. This will allow likely future investors to know what is at stake, and be able to make informed decisions about the commercial enterprise when the time comes.

The public should also be well sensitised to know that it is no longer business as usual. This is necessary because the success of a programme like this requires public support for successful implementation.

Ownership structure of the enterprise should be well-diversified, taken into consideration of the different economic and ethnic blocs in the country. Just as foreigners can get the ownership structures of those foreign petroleum exploration companies across the world, NNPC Limited should not be different.

The recent transition is commendable as it is a step in the right direction. The Federal Government should ensure the project is successfully completed from having an NNPC Limited that is run by professionals resulting in an enterprise that will rival Gazprom, Petrobras, Petronas, in a not too distant future.



# Personality

## Mahmoud Yakubu and the burden of history

TONY AILEMEN, Abuja

There is no doubt that the supervision of the last Saturday's Presidential and National Assembly election has dented the records of Mahmoud Yakubu, chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

The Nigerian electorate had participated in the Presidential election, following Mahmoud's assurances that the election will not only be free, fair and peaceful, but also credible.

But the conduct of the election fell short of expectations, following Yakubu's inability to deploy the right processes and procedures as enunciated in the Electoral Act, 2022.

The transmission of results at the polling units is crucial, and imposes statutory obligations on INEC to upload polling units results on its portal.

This is because polling units results are the pyramid upon which other results are built, which required that the moment polls come to a close and the results are declared, the results must be uploaded on INEC server or portal.

Yakubu was accused of deliberately ignoring Paragraph 38 of INEC Manual 2022 made pursuant to the provisions of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended and Section 149 of the Electoral Act 2022 which provides that: "On completion of all the Polling Unit voting and results procedures, the Presiding Officer shall: (i) Electronically transmit or transfer the result of the Polling Unit, direct to the collation system as prescribed by the Commission.

(ii) Use the BVAS to upload a scanned copy of the EC8A to the INEC Result Viewing Portal (iReV), as prescribed by the Commission.

(iii) Take the BVAS and the original copy of each of the forms in tamper evident envelope to the Registration Area/Ward Collation Officer, in the company of Security Agents."

These breaches gave rise to allegations of compromise and bribery against him which may have also etched his name in vantage place in the book of infamy.

This came after huge amount of money voted for the exercise, the technology on which the confidence of Nigerian voters was boosted failed to deliver free, fair and credible election.

Yakubu has been accused of deceiving Nigerians by promising that no other means of accreditation of voters would be acceptable and that result must be uploaded real time.

He continued to deny that INEC had been compromised ahead of the elections.

For instance, when in September, the Coalition of United Political Parties (CUPP) raised the alarm to an alleged plot to deactivate BVAS from INEC server and the plot to compromise the Commission's database, Mahmoud Yakubu took the alarm as



Mahmoud Yakubu

a vain cry.

In October last year, while dispelling the rumour around the BVAS, the INEC chairman, represented by Lawrence Bayode, director, ICT, answering questions from participants after presenting a paper on 'INEC and the Challenges of ICT- The way forward,' insisted that technology would be deployed to actualise a credible, fair and hitch-free general election.

He said: "As with every aspect of our national lives, adopting technologies into the electoral process is always met with challenges.

"One major challenge was the lack of a clear-cut legal framework supporting the deployment of technology by the Commission especially in the accreditation of voters and the voting process."

He further said: "The deployment of the Smart Card Readers in 2015 and its use was faced with various challenges such as resistance to use in some isolated instances, snatching and destruction of devices, attempts to manipulate the use of the devices, and most prominently various judicial pronouncements on the legality of its use."

Yakubu, on other occasions, personally reiterated the commitment of INEC to deploy the technology in the conduct of the elections.

When in October 2020 Buhari reappointed him for another term of five years, some Nigerians had kicked.

His appointment was renewed at a time when the Buhari administration and the APC government were performing poorly in matters of gov-

ernance.

Some angry Nigerians had said that INEC was not independent since the President makes all the important decisions for the Commission.

Yakubu, a professor of Political Studies and International History, was first appointed on October 21, 2015.

A concerned citizen, who said she was pained at the delivery handed to Nigerians by the INEC, in-between sobs, asked: "Should we celebrate INEC chairman or condemn him?"

### The man Yakubu

Born in Bauchi in 1962, Mahmoud, took over as Chairman of INEC on 21 October 2015, when he took over from Amina Zakari, who acted as Chairman, after the exit of Attahiru Jega.

After completing his basic and secondary school education at Kobi Primary School and Government Teachers College, Toro, he proceeded to the University of Sokoto, now Usman Danfodio University, where he obtained a first class degree in History.

He later proceeded to the Wolfson College, Cambridge, for his Masters degree, to study International Relations and later, Oxford University, to study Nigerian History for his Doctorate degree, on Bauchi State government scholarship in 1991.

The INEC Chairman, was appointed Executive Secretary (ES) of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund, by late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, in 2007

Yakubu's tenure saw the estab-

lishment of the National Book Development Fund, that supported the development of 102 journals of professional associations.

During the 2014 National Conference, Mahmoud Yakubu was appointed by former President Goodluck Jonathan as the Assistant Secretary of Finance and Administration.

He will go down in history for conducting Nigeria's worst polls, according to the opinions expressed by opposition parties who have accused him of rigging for the ruling party.

Contrary to expectations, the 2023 Presidential and National Assembly elections were marred by very poor organisation, severe logistical and operational failure, voter suppression, lack of essential electoral transparency, substantial disruption of voting, and several incidents of violence.

Nigerians who were initially assured of the best election ever, were later told by INEC that the election was marred by an alleged "system glitch that prevented uploads of the Presidential election results to the INEC Results Viewing (iReV) Portal."

These were in contradiction to the 2022 Electoral Act as amended which was signed on February 25, 2022.

The election also suffered from poor communication gaps between INEC and some of its staff, as some said its citizens contact numbers did not work and electoral officials in some parts of the country claimed they had received orders not to transmit results.

## Guber: Oguntoyinbo remains Ogun NNPP candidate, denies stepping down

REMI FEYISIPO, Ibadan

Olufermi Ajadi Oguntoyinbo, the governorship candidate of the New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP) in Ogun state says he is still much in the race to liberate the good people of Ogun State from the hands of political machinery, whose their stock in trade is political propaganda.

While calling on the good people of the state to disregard any fake information concerning stepping down for any political party, debunked the rumour making rounds the state by political desperados that he has stepped down.

In a statement personally signed by him, the youngest guber candidate in Ogun state described the rumour as untrue and a cheap blackmail by opposition parties to discredit his growing popularity.

The NNPP, he pointed out, remained the only party with the interest of the masses, youth oriented party and the party that would deliver free and qualitative education to youths as well as provide job opportunities to all.

He declared that the rumour that he had stepped down from the guber race in the state was untrue and a mere blackmail, insisting that the NNPP was still very much in the race.

Having toured all the 20 local government areas in the state, Oguntoyinbo disclosed that the level of his acceptability by the electorate is making other political parties jittery, hence, the need for the political



desperados to opt for political propaganda, lies, misinformation and deception.

Oguntoyinbo maintained that the people of the state are already aware of the antics of some politicians which cannot take them anywhere in the governorship election.

According to him, "I want to use this avenue to appreciate those that believe in my ability and capacity to move the forward. Those that stand by me, those that stand behind me and those that feel concern about the handiwork of political jobbers.

"I want to assure good people of Ogun state that I am not in any negotiation with any political party or candidate, I am still much in the race and victory is ours."

# Fashion Talk

## Choosing the right shoe for the right occasion

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA

NO matter how well you dress or look, your shoes could make or mar your dressing. To choose the right pair of shoes, there is a need to identify the occasion, the outfit you will be wearing, the colour of your dress and your comfort level.

Shoes are one of the vital parts of fashion and the importance of choosing the right one that gives the perfect vibe is crucial.

Choosing which pair of shoes to wear can be daunting as there are plenty of variations available. Some shoes compensate for the casual dresses, while others bring out your stunning side in a gown.

For that, you need to keep in mind the surrounding ambiance before putting on any. A poor choice of shoes can take you down straight to tragic four from a solid eight.

That's why it's essential to know which shoes are right for you. Lifestyle By PS, an online fashion publication lists some factors that influence choosing the right shoe.

### Use the S.O.F.A method

This is an extremely effective method and it mixes the two important aspects. You would want something practical to wear and look pretty as well. Once you have these two reasons ensured, you will automatically feel more confident.

The idea is to go through the different types of shoes and choose the right pair that will make you look pretty and feel comfortable.

The S in S.O.F.A stands for season. When it comes to shoes, the season is an important point. You have to consider the weather outside and the vibe different seasons bring.

If it is winter then it opens the doors to a lot of different color combinations and different looks that you might not be willing to wear in the middle of July. So the season here means, the weather and the time.

The second letter O stands for the occasion. Other than the weekends it is pretty certain what you will be doing throughout the day. If you have plans, then you know what type of occasion it is and can plan accordingly.

You might be going to a wedding or for work. The former will most likely be a formal and fancy event, where the latter one will be business casual or business formal. This would mean two separate combinations of colours, fabrics, and outfits. We will be talking more about different types of events later on.

F is for formality. This means the level of formality. The event could be fancy, formal, or casual. A black-tie wedding is a fancy event and you will need to choose high heels to match your formal attire.

On the other hand, going to the beach is a super casual event and flip-flops will be your go-to shoes.

And lastly the A in S.O.F.A stands for the level of activity. If you are sitting in your office all day, chances are you may not be on your feet all day long. If it is a desk job then you go for slightly impractical high heel shoes instead of something more comfortable.

But if you know that you will have to stand for a long portion of the day or have to walk around the place a lot then you should choose something with a flatter heel.

### Event type

First & foremost, you need to ponder over the occasion you are attending. It doesn't matter if the shoes are your favorite or you had an excellent deal when buying them it is not worth it unless the event suits them. Maybe those shoes are amazing, but for that particular occasion, those could be useless.

For instance, if you plan to take a walk in the park, heels won't work. Again, you can't take part in a formal meeting by wearing a pair of sneakers.

Also, flip-flops & nightwears are unacceptable in the office. It's as simple as that. So, what should you wear?

For starters, wear ballet flats or a simple loafer if you are attending a casual ceremony. No fancy formal shoes will help; instead, it will look exaggerated. A pair of classic pumps are always suitable for fancy dresses. Then again, you may feel bored if you are not into the traditional types.

### Type of outfits

People wear shoes depending on the outfit. The opposite doesn't happen unless you are against the mainstream. You first need to sort out what type of dress you will be

wearing. You don't want to ruin your high-end shoes by pairing them with sweatpants.

Mastering the art of good fashion sense is always essential. Otherwise, you will have to depend on other people's suggestions. But, as a starter, it's not wrong to follow someone's fashion sense if it's tasteful.

Dress code plays a huge role in setting up the perfect impression. Again, a poor choice of shoes can ruin a solid dress no matter how fancy & expensive those are.

Select shoes that will incorporate with your clothes, not underperform or outperform them. For instance, you certainly don't want to look like a black-ninja by wearing black shoes with an all-black attire. Sort out first if you want to look professional or casual. If it's not a party, a professional look always has its charms.

### Preference & comfort level

Always put yourself first when it comes to choosing an outfit. Remember, you do not always have to follow trends. Every person has uniqueness & you must hold on to it. There are some other benefits of prioritizing your preferences.

Choosing a shoe that makes you feel comfortable is crucial to boost your confidence. You can enjoy the day & night and feel more confident in front of people when you are comfortable. Forcing to try something new doesn't always work out.

Once in a while, we all try something new or change brands. But if it makes you feel uncomfortable, don't try it. Go back to your comfort zone. Remember, choosing the wrong pair can cause short term problems like corns or even long term problems like collapsed arches.

Corns occur mostly when the shoes are too tight. It puts pressure on specific areas. A plug of hard dead skin grows on particular areas and hurts when pressure is applied on the spot.

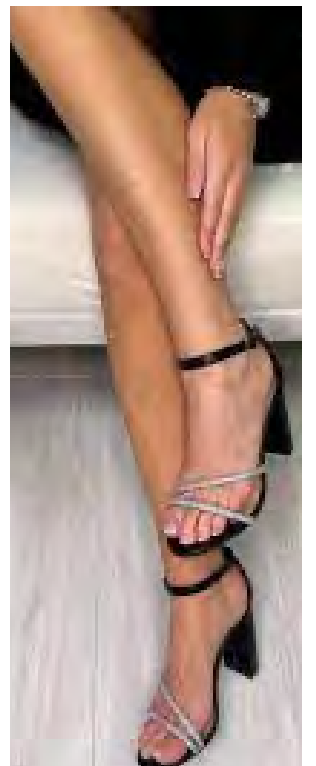
If your shoe is too tight, not supportive, or too loose it will end up hurting you. Depending on the level of physical activities it might cause joint pains, and put stress on your ankles and feet.

### Dress code

Sometimes there may be no dress code for specific events. In such situations, it's better to understand the kind of vibe you want to send.

For instance, you don't wear gym shoes in a suit-tie formal event. While delivering a presentation, you don't want to wear an old busted shoe with a tucked-in shirt & formal pants. It will completely ruin the impression you want to create.

That said, if it's a formal event, match your shoes accordingly. Sometimes the color of your belt buckle can determine the type of shoe you should wear in case the dress is of bright hue. Wear simple flip-flops or sneakers in a casual event with faded-jeans & a t-shirt, and wear formal shoes where you need to look professional.



**“ If you have plans, then you know what type of occasion it is and can plan accordingly ”**

# Interview

## We help people, institutions create deserving financial futures - MD Kwakol Markets

Yakubu Ishaku Teri is the managing director of Kwakol Markets, a fast-growing startup Fintech company that demonstrates competence in assessing macro-economic linkages with industries and firms. In this interview with IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEO-CHA, he speaks on the company's plans for the nation's Fintech sector and more. Excerpts:

When was Kwakol Markets founded and what is its focus?

Kwakol Markets is a global multi-asset broker, creating new opportunities in the financial markets for the global audience, wherever they are, and helping them create the future they deserve. Kwakol provides a simple, secure, and superior trading experience and services with transparency and innovative technology.

Kwakol Markets is an authorised Finance company by Australia Security and Investment Commission (ASIC); we are authorised to provide financial product advice, deal in financial products/issue, and apply for, acquire, vary, or dispose of financial products for clients.

We are a global multi-assets broker operating in a growing number of jurisdictions including Nigeria, Australia, Canada, the US, and New Zealand. We provide a simple, secure, and superior trading experience with transparency and innovative technology.

Kwakol Markets began operations in May 2021 with a vision to bring emerging opportunities in the global financial markets to untapped markets as well as innovate around products and services that push the frontiers and create new opportunities. Africa is not the typical headquarters of a global **brokerage firm. Is Kwakol Markets making a stand?**

That's a factual assessment of the global landscape of trading in particular and also finance in general. We recognise that this has significant implications for the service that traders get from these traditional brokerage firms. Beyond just wanting to create a truly African brand with a global reach, we believe that we are best positioned to meet the unique needs of traders and tackle their pressing pain points that other brokers may overlook.

Kwakol Markets is quickly acquiring licenses in **Cyprus, Australia, Hong Kong, and local Nigeria. No lack of ambition there. What's next for the broker?**

We are anchored by our mission to help individuals and institutions to create deserving financial futures. To do this, we devote our people, capital, and ideas to innovate around products and services that help us to achieve this mission. Today, this can take the shape of a brokerage service that enables people to earn sustainably and reliably OR a product that democratizes access to trading education as with Kwakol Academy. The immediate goal is to iterate on these offerings to serve clients in the best way possible and extend our award-winning services to new clients and markets. We are currently seeing growth in our client base from Europe and Asia and we want to consolidate our global standing.



In the future, we rely on the incredible team of innovators we have on the team to help break new ground. So, watch this space.

**What is the story behind the launch of Kwakol Markets?**

I am always happy to share the motivation for why we do what we do. We are driven by the mission to empower people to earn reliably and sustainably as they look to secure their future. Technology innovations in global finance open up several opportunities for people to generate wealth, even for those with limited capital who have previously been financially excluded. We identified online trading as a low-hanging fruit for people, especially young people, on a wealth-building journey. At Kwakol, we see ourselves as the vehicle that delivers this opportunity to people, especially those in underserved markets; while remaining globally competitive. Our experience trading with a plethora of brokers helped us identify gaps in their services that we believe we are well-positioned to plug and deliver more value to traders.

Given our experience trading with a plethora of brokers, we identified gaps in their services that we believed we could plug and deliver more value to traders like ourselves and enhance the general experience; including profitability. The lockdowns back in 2020 provided an opportunity to lay the foundation for what Kwakol is today. Since then, the evolution has been incredible and the building journey has been as worthwhile. We have managed to acquire licenses in several markets including Australia, Hong Kong, and Canada with some other market entries lined up over the next few quarters.

We believe it is important to have views about where the world is going to go and what will be important in the future. Therefore, we strive to envision the future to the best possible approximation to allow us to build a company and innovate around products that thrive in the short as well as long term. We rather proactively seize the future than re-actively struggle to shape-shift to survive in the future. This is a challenging but incredibly exciting exercise for

us.

**What sets you apart from the competition?**

The company was founded to bring a new light on innovation in the online investing industry. We are a team of energetic and young analytical thinkers, with a client-centric approach in everything we do. A happy client makes us happy and pushes us to achieve new heights every day. Our growth is backed by our client's satisfaction and that is what gives us an edge in the market.

Our blend of a clear understanding of the context and our world-leading innovations uniquely position Kwakol Markets to serve our customers as no alternative can. Our ability to bring our knowledge and experience within our context and blend that with frontier technology innovations allows us to get it right in delivering our promise to clients. The world would be missing a lot if Kwakol didn't exist.

**What should we look out for from Kwakol in the near future?**

Our starting point is that the world should and can be different and we are responsible for making it so. Our lofty ambition may not provide a clear vision for the careless observer but expect the picture to develop over time as we launch some exciting products and services.

We are a customer-obsessed company and what we are building is informed by the customer experience and our vision. Expect to see new features, products, and services that ease customers' current pain points, enhance their trading experience including profitability, and expose them to new opportunities. The immediate goal is to iterate on current offerings to serve clients in the best way possible and extend our award-winning services to new clients and markets. We are currently seeing growth in our client base from Europe and Asia and we want to consolidate our global standing. In the future, we rely on the incredible team of innovators we have on the team to help break new ground. So, watch this space!

We believe that everyone deserves a financially secure future and that we will make that a reality. We have managed to bring together a group of brilliant individuals that are constantly innovating and generating new ideas. Our promise to our clients is that we will always commit our capital, people, and ideas to help them create the future they deserve. That's exactly what success looks like. People building lasting wealth. That's the impact we want to have. Building a world-class and market-leading company is only the vehicle to success.

We have recently announced our foray into new markets, the launch of exciting client-focused tools and apps that enhance the trading experience, and new licenses. Our young and vibrant team is always innovating around products and tools that advance our clients' pursuit of financial freedom. We have a slew of developments in the pipeline. So, watch this space!

**Is there anything more in store?**

We have many more for our clients. We are customers obsessed and we continually task ourselves to deliver beyond what you'd expect from a traditional broker to our clients. Kwakol Academy has a wealth of resources and hosts a community for members of the Kwakol Tribe to connect. Kwakol Research is consistently delivering insights to make our clients smarter about the workings of the local and global economy.

**How would you describe yourself?**

I am a self-motivated and conscientious individual, who holds a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery from Afe Babalola University Ekiti State, Nigeria. Being a holder of a great office in Kwakol, I have shown knowledge in budget, financial consultancy, business decisions, market research, and analysis and have participated actively in the evaluation of business operations in Kwakol as this helped in resolving the issues and trends that affect the company.



**Technology innovations in global finance open up several opportunities for people to generate wealth, even for those with limited capital who have previously been financially excluded**



# Interview

## Wealth building requires long term mindset, discipline – Adegoke

IFEOLUWA ADEGOKE is a certified financial education instructor, and capital market and security analyst. In this Interview with JOSEPHINE OKOJIE, she speaks on the steps in wealth building and the role of tech in financial planning.

### What is the first step to building wealth?

The first step to building wealth is to start saving and investing your money wisely. This means living within your means and creating a budget that allows you to save a portion of your income monthly. In addition to saving and investing, building wealth also requires a long-term mindset and the discipline to stick to your financial plan even in the face of uncertainties and challenges. Over time, the power of compound interest and the growth of your investments can help you build wealth and achieve your financial goals.

### How can technology make financial planning easier and more effective?

Automation is one way that technology is making financial planning easier and more effective. Financial tasks, such as saving and investing can be automated using different fintech apps. This helps to save time and ensure that financial goals are being met even when you're busy or don't have time to monitor your accounts regularly. Thanks to technology, I save a fixed amount automatically every month without having to think much about it.

### Can debt ruin one's chances of attaining wealth?

Debt can hinder one's chances of attaining wealth, but it doesn't necessarily mean that it is impossible. Bad debt -especially high-interest debt like the common instant loans we see nowadays, can make it harder to save and invest money because you're using your income to pay off debt and high-interest charges. Debt can also lead to financial stress and anxiety, which can impact your ability to make clear, rational decisions about your finances. However, debt can be used as good leverage to build wealth if used strategically but bad debt especially when used to fund a lifestyle often leads to more financial difficulty.

### Is it vital to have multiple streams of income before one can be termed financially free?

Having multiple streams of income can certainly help you become financially free, but it's not necessarily a requirement. Being financially free means having enough passive income or assets to cover your living expenses without having to work actively for a paycheck. There are many



different paths to achieving financial freedom, and having multiple streams of income is just one approach. Some people may achieve financial freedom by building a successful career or business, while others may achieve it through smart investing or real estate investments. However, having multiple streams of income can provide some important benefits that can help you achieve financial freedom faster, such as diversification, increased income potential, and financial security.

### Is having a strategy key while making investment decisions?

Yes, having a strategy is key while making investment decisions. Investing without a strategy is like driving a car without a destination in mind – you may end up going nowhere or worse, end up in the wrong place. A well-defined investment strategy can help you achieve your financial goals, effectively manage your risk, track your progress

and avoid making emotional or impulsive investment decisions. Investing haphazardly is like trying to hit a target blindfolded, it leads to nothing but a waste of time and resources. Overall, having a well-defined investment strategy can help you make more informed investment decisions and significantly increase your chances of achieving your long-term financial goals.

### What is the place of risk in wealth acquisition?

Risk is an essential component of wealth acquisition. Most wealth-building strategies involve some degree of risk-taking, and there is typically a trade-off between risk and potential reward. The greater the risk, the greater the potential reward, but also the greater the potential for loss. Taking calculated risks is often necessary to build wealth, but it is important to understand the risks associated with different strategies and to balance risk and



One of the primary reasons why saving is important is that it allows you to create a financial safety net that can help you weather unexpected expenses or financial emergencies



reward in a way that aligns with your financial goals and risk appetite.

### What practical steps can one implement to put an end to procrastination in financial planning?

The best way to curb procrastination is to work with a financial planner that will hold you accountable. It can be daunting to try to figure out all the moving parts of wealth building like saving consistently, investing in the right opportunities, managing risk, protecting your wealth and planning for emergencies. I believe choosing to work with a financial planner you trust can help put an end to procrastination.

### Is budgeting relevant to creating wealth? If yes, how?

Yes, budgeting is highly relevant to creating wealth. By creating a budget, you can track your income and expenses, and identify areas where you can cut back on spending when necessary. This can help you control your expenses and reduce unne-

cessary spending, freeing up more money to save and invest. It can help you plan for future expenses, such as buying a home or starting a business, by setting aside money and planning for those expenses in advance, which can help you avoid taking on debt and achieve your goals more quickly.

### Can having a plan help reduce the financial burden?

Yes! I like to call financial planning the ultimate cure for all money-related anxiety and stress. I say this because financial planning takes into account every single thing going on in your finances and helps you navigate how to change the part that is not satisfactory.

### How can investors ensure maximum profit in the era of inflation?

Investors can potentially maximize profit during an inflationary period by diversifying their portfolio, considering inflation-protected investments, investing in growth stocks, investing in real estate, monitoring and adjusting their portfolio, and seeking professional advice. Inflation is not static, and it can vary over time. It is important to monitor inflation and make adjustments to your portfolio as necessary to ensure it remains aligned with your goals and risk tolerance. By taking a proactive approach to invest, investors can potentially mitigate the impact of inflation and still achieve their financial goals.

### How important is a saving culture in achieving wealth?

Having a saving culture is crucial to achieving wealth. Saving is the act of setting aside a portion of your income for future use, and it is an essential habit that can help you build wealth over time. One of the primary reasons why saving is important is that it allows you to create a financial safety net that can help you weather unexpected expenses or financial emergencies. When you have savings, you're less likely to be caught off guard by unexpected expenses like a medical emergency, car repairs, or a sudden job loss, which can help you avoid falling into debt and negatively impacting your long-term financial health. It is also crucial to investing, as it provides the funds that you need to invest in assets like stocks, bonds, or real estate. By investing your savings, you can earn a return on your investment that can help you grow your wealth over time.



# The Worshipper

## Why Nigerians must keep calm and give peace a chance, by Archbishop Ojo

Joseph Ojo, founder and General Overseer Calvary Kingdom Church (CKC) International, Lagos shares his thoughts on the just concluded 2023 presidential elections with SEYI JOHN SALAU. In this interview, the presiding Archbishop of CKC admonished Nigerians and the Church to take the incoming administration by its electioneering campaign to the country. Excerpt:

**W**hat are your reactions to the presidential election outcomes?

It's just to seek for peace and ask people to be peaceful and not to take laws into their own hands. That's just the truth - the truth of the matter is- everything committed to God should be seen to be safe. Nobody can understand what God can use people to do. So, I just wish people will give peace a chance and not take laws into their hands.

**Looking at the outcome of the election; what lesson do you think it has for the Church?**

Everything in life including politics teaches people different lessons. What some have learnt from this is different from what others will learn from it. This will lead some people to trust God the most, while this may lead to some people to maybe think that God has failed them - but God never fails. That is the truth; He holds the whole world in His hand. All I think the Church needs to do like what they've been doing before is to obey the Bible injunction - pray for those in authority. Whoever is there is a minister of God; that's what my Bible tells me, and let's see how things will play out. It will be wrong for anybody to begin to take laws into their hands at this time. When we are praying for the will of God; at times we don't know when God establishes His will. So, we just have to believe - if I have prayed for the will of God and this is the outcome, then there should be the assumption that this is the will of God.

**Can we say the Church is divided based on the fact that different denominations pursue different agenda within CAN?**

The reason why it is so is that every



Joseph Ojo

issue in life, people have different views about it: there is nothing you can do about that. Even in a family where you have people raised in a nuclear family made up of the father, mother, five/six children, definitely there will be a divergent view on the same issue, but it does not mean they are no longer family; the same way it is with the Christian Association of Nigeria, that is CAN, there are five blocs, if there are issues and we do not agree, it does not stop us to be one.

**What will be your advice to the incoming administration and what should be done differently for a new Nigeria?**

To prove people wrong - that is my own personal advice. If people were thinking and maybe noising some fear; they should at least prove them wrong, and people will change their mind. Even in the Bible (Acts 27:28) Apostle Paul had a shipwreck and people thought that vengeance was on him when he came to the island of Patmos. Sneak coiled on his hand (a viper) but he shook it into the fire and felt no harm. When they saw for some time expecting him to fall down and die, and he didn't fall down and die, they changed their mind. By the time the administration is maybe given time to pursue their programme

those who were skeptical will change their mind - that's the truth. It is for them to be a blessing for people that doubted them before will have reasons to thank God; that's my thinking.

**We know that in a few days from today, Nigerians will go to the polls again; especially Lagosians. What is your take on the gubernatorial election in Lagos?**

The truth of the matter is the Lagos State governor is seeking a second tenure; I don't think he has done badly in his first tenure - that is the truth. So, people should not change somebody that is already doing something positive anyhow because of politics. I am not a politician, I don't believe in blind politicking. The man in Lagos has not done badly, so I think there should be a need for him to be allowed to do his good job.

**We are currently in the Lent season for many in the Christian community; do you draw any inference**

**from having the election during Lent season?**

I do not want to go into something I do not personally participate in. Lent is mostly observed by the Roman Catholics, Anglican and some others, and not by all Christians. Most Pentecostals do their fasting in January and am not sure they are ready to enter into another one so soon. I think if they're following what they have been doing, this shouldn't disturb them and they shouldn't be thinking that there should be a national holiday of proclamation.

They have been doing it whether politics or no politics; whether elections or no elections - they should go ahead pursuing their God given mandate and spiritual responsibilities. However, lent should be observed all year round in remembrance of the work of grace and the blood that was shed for the remission of the sins of man at Calvary. Lent is about pushing out distraction and about focusing on the one thing that really matters to us as Christians. For Christians, the season of Lent officially begins with the Ash Wednesday where church members especially those of the orthodox churches walk to the altar to receive the sign of the cross on their foreheads in ash, which is to signify and remind us that without God we are dust, and we shall someday return as dust

**As we look ahead to Easter, what is your message to Nigerians?**

Like God spoke to me; they should be glad and rejoice. (Joel 2:21) Be glad and rejoice - God will do a great thing and during this Easter celebration, God will be doing something wonderful. Very good enough; during the time also; on the 18th, I think a week after Easter itself will be my 74th birthday; so, I will be glad and rejoice.

## Adegbite calls for caution, restrain in reaction to election outcome

SEYI JOHN SALAU

**S**tephen Adegbite, chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Lagos State chapter, has called on Lagosians and Christians at large to be cautious of their utterances in response to the outcome of the 2023 presidential election so as not to heat up the polity.

"We are not oblivious to toxic comments from some individuals and groups within and outside the state calling for cancellation of what has been a credible process going by all we can see.

"As a responsible organisation and

leaders of Christian community in Lagos we deem it fit to call for caution, restraint and demand responsibility from such people and others who may still intend to join such act," Adegbite said while addressing journalists in Lagos recently.

The Lagos CAN chairman also acknowledged the fact that there were skirmishes in some parts of Lagos, which was however, brought under control before it escalated.

He assured the Christian community in Lagos of the safety of lives and property across the metropolis. "The government of the state has promised to continue to provide level playing field for all, and Lagos will continue to be home for all and for all. We

urge everyone to go about their daily activities without fear, concerns or worries," he stated.



Adegbite equally congratulated the presidential candidate of the Labour Party, Peter Obi who made a brilliant showing in Lagos by winning the state in the presidential election.

He rejoiced with the president-elect, Ahmed Bola Tinubu on the outcome of the polls, and prayed that his tenure as president of Nigeria will spell good for all.

"I have known Asiwaju and his family for 23 years. If you journey with anyone for 23 years it will be difficult to deny him when he needed you most. The statement I made at a time that we needed to support him was taken out of context by the press. I was speaking as a friend of Asiwaju family. We must separate that from

being the chairman of CAN," Adegbite stated.

Timothy Ademola, the national convener, Progressive Christian Clerics Association, said that God has given Nigeria a leader in Tinubu. According to him, it is God that gives power to whoever comes to power.

"When power was ceded to Asiwaju we know that the power was given to him by God. I call on all brothers and sisters to realise that this is the work of God. We believe the resurrection message of God. I believe God has chosen a Cyrus to lead is. I call on all faithful to realise this. God is the owner of power and he has given it to Asiwaju," Ademola said.

# Health and Living

## With BHIS, we aim to enable access to healthcare for Nigerians in UK - Olatunji

Taiwo Olatunji, the Founder and Medical Director of MHF Medical Concierge (MHF), spoke on his background, and how Bespoke Healthcare for International Student (BHIS) – a product of MHF – is bridging gaps in accessing quality healthcare services for Nigerian students living in the United Kingdom (UK). Excerpts by SEYI JOHN SALAU:

**Who is Taiwo Olatunji?**  
I consider myself a dynamic, multi-faceted and self-motivated individual who is committed to personal and professional growth. I am passionate about providing strategies and solutions to challenging problems whilst taking care of others. I take pride in my ability to inspire and motivate others to be their best selves and achieve their full potential. I like to foster an environment where colleagues and friends are encouraged to take on new challenges in a bid to exceed their own expectations.

### May we know a little about your upbringing and educational background?

I was born to working-class Nigerian parents who married in England and raised four children. I am the youngest of four and a twin. I attended Government College, Eric-More, Lagos, sat for my GCE a year early and re-joined my family in London where I completed secondary school, college and university. I have a first degree in Biochemistry followed by a second degree in Medicine, then trained as a GP with specialist interest in Ear, Nose and Throat surgery.

I have been a doctor for over 10 years. I previously worked as a research scientist in Oncology and later worked in the pharmaceutical industry initially with Merck Sharp and Dohme, then later for Astra-Zeneca.

### How was the BHIS idea birthed?

It was a natural evolution following founding the first Afro-centric Medical Concierge company in the UK called Millennium Health Focus (MHF). MHF is a private healthcare company that looks after all health and related affairs of high net-worth individuals, predominantly Africans anywhere they need healthcare in the world. BHIS was born following the challenge a client faced in accessing information about the health status of his daughter who was unwell whilst in boarding school. The



parents' resident in Nigeria was unable to speak to a doctor or nurse at will, to brief them about their child's illness.

Many parents whose children study abroad assume the National Health Service (NHS) will provide care when needed, after all the UK is famed for its high standard of healthcare. Unfortunately, whilst this is largely true, what many fail to understand is that care is not instant and waiting times to access the free NHS service are getting longer.

Take, for example, the waiting time to see a GP in most parts of the country for a routine appointment is two weeks and to see a specialist can take up to 3-4 months, with some specialties taking up to 14 months to see someone.

The same applies to imaging and even blood tests. More notably is that parents abroad are not afforded instant contact with a doctor when their child is unwell whether mildly unwell or seriously ill and needing hospital admission.

The NHS makes no provision for a personal service regardless of means or status. It is near impossible for a concerned parent whether abroad or local to be granted an audi-

ence with a GP or hospital consultant without appointment or pre-planning. This often needs the intervention of secretaries or school nurses and at best a wait of days to weeks to arrange such an important discussion.

The truth is if doctors spend their precious time speaking to concerned parents, there will be little time left to do much else, hence secretaries protect this precious time so that patient consultations can occur undisturbed. Unfortunately, this is at the expense of anxious parents who reside abroad. MHF stepped in for this client and was able to have a doctor-to-doctor conversation with the GP, and then a hospital consultant on behalf of the family back home. The information was then relayed to the parents including answering all their queries having full knowledge of the case and test results.

Understanding the cultural and personal expectations of parents abroad allows us to be able to fill this unmet need with immense satisfaction from parents. The service caters for students from primary school to postgraduate students.

### What are the major challenges

faced by Nigerian students in the UK and other European countries when trying to access healthcare?

Most international students including Nigerian students are new to the NHS and unaware of challenges in accessing healthcare including waiting times. To complicate things further most international students are used to a walk-in private health service back home where a doctor's appointment can be had either by calling the doctor directly or turning up in clinic.

Most enjoy a personalised service that does not exist in the UK's NHS. This often leads to students not reporting symptoms or at best reporting them late. In the absence of a health advocate, it is not uncommon that when students seek private healthcare on their own, they end up paying for unnecessary consultations, tests and specialist fees.

Another common challenge is the lack of knowledge about patient rights to their medical notes including test results. Although challenging to access due to the remote location of parents, students can grant parents access (automatic if less than 16yrs old). BHIS solves all these challenges by creating the first-ever bespoke healthcare service for international students which aims to allay parent anxieties by providing a seamless line of communication between parents and their child's medical team. It uses technology to give round-the-clock access and share medical notes remotely from anywhere.

### Is BHIS only for students in the UK?

Yes. We take on students studying in the UK only.

### How affordable is the service?

It is comparatively very affordable. The annual subscription is £1500 per annum. There are family and renewal discounts available.

### Are there any partnerships between BHIS and other known health insurance services, HMOs for international students; if yes, how does it work?

There are ongoing discussions with the main UK health in-

surance providers but currently none is available.

### How does one subscribe to the BHIS services?

It is very easy. Just fill in a membership form online ([www.mhf.healthcare/students](http://www.mhf.healthcare/students)) and then an appointment is made to discuss your application and subsequent steps.

### How do you see the BHIS impacting the Nigerian health system?

We complement existing health providers in Nigeria by working with leading private health providers to ensure continuity of care for students when they return home. We are also embarking on a medical exchange program which seeks to share best medical practices between the UK and Nigeria. We will be sharing more information about this collaborative effort in due course.

### What differentiates BHIS from other digital healthcare services currently at Nigerians' disposal?

We are the only UK private health provider seeking to provide a bespoke health solution for international students studying in the UK. The organisation leverages the fact that it has been providing the highest level of personalised healthcare (Concierge Medicine) to high-net-worth individuals for nearly a decade. We take pride in being the sole provider of healthcare specifically for students in our purpose-built facility in Central London with onsite pathology testing, imaging, GP and specialist clinics.

### As a first-of-its-kind solution for Nigerians, what are your fears and projections in terms of competition and duplications?

We expect duplication and we welcome it. There are too few providers of private healthcare from an African background who own their facilities in the UK and participate in this niche health space. More providers like MHF are needed to provide the highest level of care to those who call the UK their second home or visit as a medical tourist from Nigeria. Nonetheless, we will always remain the pacesetter.

# Perspective



OLUDAYO TADE

## OBI-BATism and the 'Kingmaker' President-elect

winner as announced by Mahmood Yakubu, the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the early hours of March 1, 2023.

The new month of March opened with the declaration of Bola Ahmed Tinubu (BAT) of the APC as the president-elect. The 'kingmaker' who has now become president-elect defeated his long-time rival and political associate, Atiku Abubakar and the third force, Peter Obi to the second and third positions respectively. Bola Tinubu who promised renewed hope polled 8,794,726 while Atiku Abubakar who promised to unify the country polled 6,984,520 which is 1,810,206 below the votes of the winner. The political game changer, Peter Obi who promised to move the nation from consumption to production gave the two establishment forces a battle for their money, returning with 6,101,533 votes. Rabi Kwakwanso was only able to finish with 1,496,687 votes; the largest part of this came from Kano, the only state he won decimating other political parties.

While the results may have been announced, some felt the process was not entirely credible. They are unhappy about the manner the polls were conducted by INEC such as delayed uploading of results, delayed arrival of INEC staff, voter suppression and intimidation, collaborative electoral fraud, violence, and disenfranchisement of Nigerians. This perception has generated cold war and hate speeches on many social media platforms. Although he finished third, many didn't believe that Peter Obi did not win. They believe that there are underhand dealings or electoral malpractices. Friends, associates and family attacked one another based on political differences. The sociology of voter behaviours and preferences as exemplified in the 2023 presidential election tells me that Nigerians desire a country where peace, progress and prosperity are assured but differ on the right pilot to take the country to that destination. The main contention was and is still between the supporters of the president-elect, Bola Tinubu and those of the labour party candidate, Peter Obi. Old men fought themselves dirty, the youth felt disappointed with the outcome. They reasoned that the process was compromised.

The Asiwaju people would not tolerate anyone to talk down on the man they think hold the magic wand to their futures.

The presidential results however tell me a lot of stories. One, a total of 14,896,259 (Tinubu + Obi votes) voted for a southern presidency while a total number of 8,481,207 (Atiku + Kwakwanso votes) voted for northern presidency. The difference of 6,415,052 voted for equity, justice, inclusive governance, peace and unification of the country which may have been threatened if the opposite happened. Two, the total number of people who voted against the president-elect are 14,582,740 indicating that there is possibility that the president-elect's chances may have been threatened were it not for the Obi phenomenon and the G5's disruptive political move in the PDP. What this says is that the president-elect will need to understand the dynamic needs of these people and incorporate their aspirations in his blueprint of governance.

People think it is backward to vote along tribal lines even when you believe your ethnic group has the best of the candidates. Such thoughts, as good as it may seem, downplays the social reality embedded in the sociology of electoral victory in Nigeria. The law stipulates winning majority votes and getting 25 percent in two-thirds of all the states and FCT. This implies is that you must have a strong base, secure it and reach out to political allies in zones with higher voting population for partnership. This is where the constitution lays foundation for voting along ethnic lines. Bola Tinubu edged others out in these areas because all three top candidates won 12 states each while the fourth won one. What separated them was the highest votes he secured and the 25 percent spread. Tinubu secured his southwest and where he lost, it was with narrow margin or not without getting 25 percent votes. Obi secured his base but his gains outside his base were not with high margins as with the first two candidates according to the results released by INEC. Tinubu reached out to the G5 who added to his gains. This should tell Nigerians that politicians, unlike them fighting themselves, don't have permanent enemies. They go after those who can guarantee their

interests and futures. Nyesom Wike's posture aptly captured this point.

INEC, with all the logistics support ought not to have allowed suspicion at all let alone asking people to go to court if they have any issue with the results. A maxim in Yoruba says If God sees you, let humans see you too (ti olorun ba ri e, je ki eniyan naa ri e). Transparency has tracking variables. An electoral umpire should be transparent and follow due process as laid out. When people perceive injustices in the electoral process, they will protest and it may cause legitimacy crisis. Peace is possible when people experience justice. Obviously, we didn't learn from how Kenya conducted her elections.

We need to do better in the coming gubernatorial and state assembly elections. It is sad that those who turned out to cast their votes during the presidential and National assembly polls were less (about 24 million) than that of 2019 general elections where 28,614,190 voted. Apathy is growing and the way election process and outcomes are perceived may contribute to this. It is a loss of scarce resources to plan for at least 50 million voters only for less than 25 million to show up on election day. We must appeal to people and act for people to believe in our election management system.

Moving forward, the 2023 presidential election teaches the establishment some lessons about over-hyping and overrating themselves. Peter Obi who was said to have no structures won 12 states just like the PDP and APC who boasted of structures. The 6.1 million Nigerians who voted Peter Obi showed that the people are the pillars of support and structures needed once your plan captures their needs and aspirations and represent the future they desire. Obi and his supporters have proven that they exist in real life and not only on social media. Leaders should begin to tap into the unmet needs of their people so as to be able to develop policies that will be impactful. OBI-BATism is a lesson in democracy and a beneficial springboard for the kingmaker to become the king.

*Dr Tade, a sociologist wrote via dotad2003@yahoo.com*

## Issues that may emanate from the 2023 Election Petition process

SANCTUS EJEH AND  
EMMANUEL AGHERARIO

The 2023 Presidential and National Assembly elections have just been concluded. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has declared the winner of the Presidential Election. Results from the National Assembly election are still being declared gradually.

What is becoming clear, is that a lot of the elections will be challenged at the election petitions tribunal. These petitions will throw up new compliance issues that are a substantial departure from the decision in the case of *Atiku Abubakar & Anor v INEC*

& *Anor LER [2019] CA/PEPC/002/2019*. The compliance issues will be around the use of technology. Of note is the use of card readers, BVAS, and IREV. The *Osun* case of *Oyetola and Anor v Adeleke & Anor* is in this sense a prelude to this new era.

Any petitioner approaching the election petitions tribunal on grounds of non-compliance must not only ensure he puts together a formidable legal team that comprises experts in the use of technologies provided under the Electoral Act 2022, but must also be abreast with innovations introduced by some relevant sections of the 2022 Act. These innovations in the Electoral Act will be the game changers at the election petition tribunals. For instance, although the Court was reluctant to grant an order of inspection of card readers in the case of

*Atiku Abubakar & Anor v INEC & Anor supra*, with Section 47(2) of the new Act providing for mandatory use of BVAS, an all together different approach is anticipated from the court.

Furthermore, the Supreme Court in the extant case refused an order for inspection of INEC server on the basis that the Act did not make provision for a server. But a community reading of Section 60(5) of the 2022 Act and Article 38 of the Regulations and Guidelines for the conduct of Elections 2022 is expected to bring in a new dimension to the issue. Section 60 (5) provides: "The presiding officer shall transfer the results including total number of accredited voters and the results of the ballot in a manner as prescribed by the Commission." It is in line with the power donated to INEC in

the above section, that the commission released the Regulations and Guidelines for the conduct of Elections 2022. Clause 38 of the regulation provides: "the presiding officer shall electronically transmit or transfer the result of the polling unit, direct to the collation system as prescribed by the Commission; use the BVAS to upload a scanned copy of the EC8A to the IREV as prescribed by the Commission." This Regulation as a subsidiary law is binding on INEC and all players in the election. Hence, substantial compliance with some of these innovations are expected to dominate proceedings at the election petition tribunals.

*Ejeh & Agherario are associates at Olisa Agbakoba Legal*

# Perspective



BUNMI MAKINWA

The results of presidential and national elections in Nigeria show that there are more changes than were anticipated by many analysts and commentators. Many politicians must be shocked. Some unexpected turns have happened in the political landscape and a lot of rethinking will go on. Perhaps there may emerge a better country coming in large part from the combination of the failures and successes of democracy.

## Rigging

Has rigging taken place? An elder politician who had seen almost all the elections in Nigeria once told me. "All parties rig elections where they can. But you can only rig successfully where you have the support of most people. Results of voting largely reflect voters' wishes in almost all the previous elections." It is the same in these elections. Those who wish to believe it will do and those who won't believe it will not. No facts, documents or evidence can

## Election Time Is Rough

convince those who shout, "No."

### Violence

On violence, Nigeria has never had any elections without some level of violence. Unfortunately, the trend has continued. There are always those who stoke embers of hate and anger. And there are those who are willing to die for nothing. Both groups must be reined in quickly and stopped. Let normal people refuse to join them. More importantly, let citizens and those who wish the country well dissuade the goons, thugs and users. Denounce them, stop them and report them.

Burning, arson and killing does not profit any society. When normal lives resume, the hate and destruction perpetrated during this period will remain and fester. We must reduce hate and destruction.

### INEC

On the performance of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), there will be blame and commendation. This is just as usual in every election. Few losers of elections accept the results. However, INEC should strive for maximum communication. It should provide as full information as possible to the public at all times.

The reported hacking of INEC's servers

and spreading of fake results are expected. How well is INEC prepared for it? When servers are being hacked, INEC should inform Nigerians. It should also explain what it is doing to counter the hackers. Where there are lapses or failures, INEC should admit them and also state its successes. If INEC decides to make important changes of policy directions, the public deserves to know. When there is no official information, other types of information, mostly wrong ones, will fill the space. The erroneous and false information will be consumed by the public and form the basis of actions.

Trust in government is very low and agents of government, including INEC, are generally seen as only doing the bidding of certain interests.

### Interventions

Former President Obasanjo has criticised INEC strongly and accused it of wrongdoings as election results were being released. He urged President Muhammadu Buhari to impose new directives on the agency. Against the background of Obasanjo's choice several months ago of one of the political parties, his voice cannot be credible nor respected. He has campaigned eloquently for the party of his choice and its presidential candidate, hence Obasanjo's advice can only be seen as a protest when

his chosen party was not able to reach the goal that he had in mind.

The role of giving advice and finding compromises belongs rightly to a statesman. Obasanjo cannot be a referee at a game in which he is a player. Obasanjo knows what it means to be a statesman. He cannot be the voice of reason, or balanced and objective viewpoints when he has chosen a path of alignment and partisan politics.

Let other past leaders intervene. Former President Abdulsalami Abubakar has called for rational discourse and given his support to the current electoral process. This is important. It is timely and desirable that other leaders of various callings seek to calm the restive populace and commend those who remain calm. Law and order must prevail.

### Perfections

Governance in Nigeria is burdened with many failures. There are far too many challenges and problems to be overcome. Within such a situation, it is highly unlikely that any perfect outcomes can emerge.

There are no elections in Nigeria that have gone quietly and smoothly. This one is not different.

*Bunmi Makinwa is CEO of AUNIQUEI Communication for Leadership.*

## BASSEY NSSIEN

Umo Eno promises agriculture renaissance to make Akwa Ibom self-sufficient in food production.

Umo Eno, the candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the March 11, 2023 governorship election, is campaigning on the promise of taking Akwa Ibom State from where Governor Udom Emmanuel will leave off on May 29 to a higher level in terms of development, in all its ramifications. This includes provision of infrastructure, healthcare, security, education, industrialization, employment, for the purpose of improving the quality of life of the people and making the state the ideal place to live and work.

The candidate recognizes that the state cannot be the investment and tourism destination it is being prepared for if it cannot meet the basic expectation of feeding its people. He knows that the state has the potential to produce enough food not only to feed its growing population, but also to sell to other parts of the country and outside. This has informed his decision to make agriculture a cardinal programme of his administration, should the people of the state give him their mandate.

Agriculture forms the first leg of the A.R.I.S.E. agenda – agricultural revolution, rural development, infrastructure maintenance/advancement, security management and educational advancement – of the PDP candidate. The agenda is designed to revolutionize agriculture and raise it from the subsistence level it has been for decades, through large scale mechanized farming, at commercial level. The whole idea is to make farmers in the state to embrace agribusiness because of the critical role agriculture is expected to play in the economic development of the state.

"Farmers will be made stakeholders in the economic renaissance project," Eno assures, in the agenda. "It is worth emphasizing that there is a lot of money to be made in agricul-

## A pledge for food security in the 'Land of Promise'

ture. Ours must go beyond the rudimentary stage of just making garri, starch, flour and others. Farmers need to be assisted."

Akwa Ibom is an agrarian state where a good number of people, especially those in the rural areas, are predominantly farmers. The state has riverine communities that are engaged majorly in fishing, with a coastline that stretches 129 kilometers from Oron in the east to Ikot Abasi in the west – one of the longest in Nigeria.

Agriculture in the state is still at the subsistence level, though it is a source of income for many. This is not enough to feed the estimated population of over seven million people, the reason the state still relies on food items such as yam, potato, tomato, pepper, onion, rice, beans, etc, from other parts of the country to meet demand.

"Subsistence agriculture is no longer serving our needs; so, the mechanized farming approach will be adopted and my government will work on assisting both local and commercial farmers with farm implements, modern technology and new farm techniques," the candidate promises. "This will be a major consideration in our proposed settlement scheme. Government will explore all available avenues to assist large-scale farmers with funds to achieve this objective and help small scale farmers with inputs and extension services."

Eno has promised support for extensive and intensive agriculture through a boost in productivity in areas such as crop farming, fisheries and animal husbandry. This would allow for integration of an agricultural value chain that would help achieve the objective of self-sufficiency in food production in the state. He said his government would also provide off-taker incentives and facilitate access to markets for raw materials and processed food.

There's a plan to establish an agency for the sole purpose of managing agribusiness,

to make it attractive to investors within and outside the state. That is the extent to which an Umo Eno administration would be willing to go, to turn around the agricultural sector in Akwa Ibom.

The present administration experimented with the Green House project that has proved to be a success. This project has revealed the state's potential to grow agricultural produce that were thought could not be grown in the state – crops like tomato, carrot, cucumber, onion, etc, in commercial quantity.

Eno has signified intention to follow up on the project by establishing farm settlements where farmers would live and engage in large scale, mechanized farming, in order to be able to produce enough food to feed the state and supply to other markets. The programme would be approached from both the small holder and medium scale farming perspectives.

"The farm settlement programme will be a major project during my dispensation," he assures. "In my agriculture renaissance programme, the starting point will be the low-hanging fruits – commercial farming, livestock production, fishing, as well as infrastructure for processing (value chain) and incentives. The implication of not being able to feed ourselves is dire; but the market potentials are also huge but unexploited. I will take full advantage of the coming fertilizer plant and grow our agricultural potentials. It will be of great relevance to our farm settlement scheme."

Agriculture is not practised in Akwa Ibom at the same scale with what obtains in the northern part of Nigeria. But that is not to say farmers in the state are immune to the challenge of storage and preservation of farm produce that farmers in those parts regularly grapple with. Farmers in the state also face the challenge of lack of facilities for preservation of

farm produce, even at the relatively small scale on which they operate.

Eno has promised to embark on provision of storage facilities to curb waste. "We will be working on large-scale production; we will also be working on storage facilities to avoid wastage," he said.

There has been a growing interest in agriculture in Akwa Ibom in the last decade, mostly by young people and retirees from public service, in areas such as livestock, poultry, fish and snail farming. Interest in these areas is buoyed by the availability of a ready market in the rapidly growing hospitality industry. The snag has been the inability of farmers in these areas to meet demand, because of the low scale on which they operate.

Many believe an intervention such as the PDP governorship candidate is promising would go a long way in mitigating the challenges farmers face, in terms of infrastructure, finance and incentives. The plan to establish farm settlements is going to be a novelty, and is capable of attracting more investors into the sector.

"The idea of living in a settlement with modern infrastructure such as good roads, light and water, to be able to carry out farming on a large scale looks quite attractive," says Idongesit Ebong, a hospitality outfit owner in Uyo, the Akwa Ibom State capital. "That promise, if it becomes a reality, is certainly going to encourage more people to take up farming as a business. We are going to witness a new era in which more educated people will go into agriculture, different from the time when it was meant for uneducated people in the villages."

His prayer is that the PDP candidate would emerge victorious in the governorship election because, in his words, "Umo Eno stands shoulder above the rest."

*.Nssien writes from Lagos*

# IWD 2023: Celebrating top Nigerian female visual artists

OBINNA EMELIKE

The International Women's Day (IWD), is here again. The global day, which is marked on March 8th of every year, celebrates the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women across the world.

So, on Wednesday March 8, 2023, the world will celebrate women across the globe and their achievements, as well as, reflect on their challenges. Bearing in mind the many challenges women face even today, especially inequality, the International Women's Day 2023 is themed; 'DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality', as gender equality and empowerment remain priority for the world.

To drive home the essence of IWD 2023 in Nigeria, below are some top Nigerian female visual artists who have and are still impacting lives through their works.

Some of the artists are:

## Peju Alatise

Alatise is a mixed-medium artist in her own right, a poet and published writer, whose interdisciplinary work has garnered attention on the global art stage. She was selected as the 2016 fellow at the Smithsonian Institute of African Art and was 2017 recipient of the highly coveted FNB Art Prize, a prize that made her join the ranks of previous winners such as Nolan Oswald Dennis, Turiya Magadlela, Portia Zvavahera and Kudzanai Chiurai.

With the FNB Art Prize, Alatise had the opportunity to create new projects that were showcased in dedicated exhibition spaces across Africa.

Of course, the works of the sculptor who was also among the three artists that represented Nigeria at Venice Art Biennale in Italy in 2017 are worth seeing. Alatise, who also put up a good show for the country at the biggest global art event has gone beyond mere sculpture to exerting some level of socio-cultural influence with her work and even personality.

Again, the female artist is offering her works in private and institutional collections around the world more than ever before. As well, her passion about addressing social, political and gender-related issues as her primary subject matter, through artistic work that also captures the joys and pain of womanhood in modern-life-African traditions makes her work a must-see.

All these offer Alatise a place among top female African artists that are worth celebrating in this year's International Women's Day.



Peju Alatise



Nike Davies-Okundaye



Nengi Omuku



Taiye Idahor



Modupe Fadugba



Queen Nwaneri-Olatunde



Nyancho NwaNri

## Nike Davies-Okundaye

Probably, one of the biggest names in African visual art, Nike Davies-Okundaye is a household name in the African arts landscape. She is one of the internationally acclaimed female artists from Nigeria, who has made astounding strides in textile, visual arts and mixed media painting in the global arts scene. An Amazon in her own right, Nike is the woman behind the Nike Art Empire with galleries, art shops and training centres across Nigeria and the world.

There is hardly any important museum in the world that does not have Madam Nike's work. She is an artist of many parts - she drums, directs plays, dances, paints, and trains young adults to do all of the listed.

## Nengi Omuku

Born 1987 in Delta State, Nigeria, Nengi Omuku's paintings feature amorphous presences that float through 'active' or loaded spaces. Her work functions as a metaphor, alluding to wider themes of identity, mental journeying and mutual belonging. Omuku's colour palette acts as a subtext for transforming the human figure.

Her recent exhibitions include; At Work, Arthouse Foundation (2018) Stages of Collapse, September Gray Art Gallery, Atlanta (2017), the Armory Show Focus: African Perspectives, New York City (2016),

A State of Mind, Omenka Gallery, Lagos (2015) and Jerwood Drawing Prize 2014, Jerwood Gallery, London (2014). She is the recipient of several awards including the British Council CHOGM Art Award, presented by HRH Queen Elisabeth II. Her work has been shown at international art fairs including ArtX Lagos, 1.54 London, and the Armory Show in New York.

## Taiye Idahor

Taiye Idahor grew up in Lagos. She studied Fine Art at the Prestigious Yaba College of Technology Lagos Nigeria where she graduated in 2007 with a Higher National Diploma (HND) after specialising in sculpture at the college.

In the last few years Taiye Idahor has worked significantly within the concept of identity and women using hair as a visual language. Tangled through the issues of trade, beauty, the environment and globalisation, she examines how these factors build the woman's identity in today's Africa but in particular Lagos, Nigeria where she has lived all her life. She has participated in a number of exhibitions and workshops both at home and abroad including Nigeria our Nigeria, Presidential Inauguration Exhibition Abuja Nigeria 2011; the specially curated at the Dubai Art Fair, Marker 2013; her first solo exhibition "Hairvolution" in Lagos Nigeria 2014 and Timeline, a residency exhibition in Johannesburg South

Africa 2015. Taiye Idahor also works part time with the Centre for Contemporary Art Lagos Nigeria as project coordinator and curatorial assistant.

## Modupe Fadugba

Modupeola Fadugba was born in 1985 in Lomé, Togo, but lives and works in Abuja. She is a multimedia artist working in painting, drawing, and socially-engaged installation. With a background in engineering, economics, and education, she works at the nexus of science, politics, and art. Fadugba works in series addressing cultural identity, social justice, game theory, and the art world within the socio-political landscape of Nigeria and the greater global economy.

Fadugba holds a BEng Chemical Engineering / MA Economics (University of Delaware) and MEd (Harvard University), yet she is fast mastering art, her passion. Recent solo exhibitions include Prayers, Players & Swimmers (Cité des Arts, Paris, 2017) and Synchronised Swimming & Drowning (London, 2017). Selected group exhibitions include; The Royal Academy Summer Exhibition (Royal Academy, London, 2017); Afriques Capitales (Gare Saint Sauveur, Lille, 2017); Dakar Biennale (Senegal, 2016); The Art Energy (London, 2015); and Design is the Personality of an Idea (Ford Foundation & African Artists Foundation, Lagos, 2015).

## Queen Nwaneri-Olatunde

Queen Nwaneri-Olatunde was born in 1993 in Rome, Italy. She attended Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife, where she obtained a Diploma in Fine and Applied Art in 2012.

She is reputed for her unabashed expressions in which rich texture of colours give vent to her subject, oftentimes in a manner that escapes conventional exactitudes. As a portraitist, she draws her themes from the mood of her subjects (women and children) as she situates them in discourses; also allowing for spatial escape (as opposed to closed finish) this opens up extensive suggestions about her artistic concerns.

She has participated in several group themed exhibitions, her most recent participation at the International art fair, Art X Lagos. She is also represented in North America, by Caverley LLC, an art management firm based in Atlanta, USA.

## Nyancho NwaNri

Nyancho NwaNri is a Gambian-Nigerian filmmaker and photographer born in Lagos, Nigeria in 1988 whose work revolves around African history, culture, languages, spirituality and ethnic identity.

She graduated in 2012 with an Honours degree in Digital Animation from the University of Greenwich, UK. She is a self-taught filmmaker and photographer who started her career at Disney's ESPN and has since worked in the Film and TV industry in the United Kingdom and across West Africa.

Her works have been exhibited at various festivals locally and regionally including Chale Wote Festival, Ndiva Women's Film Festival (Ghana), and the Lagos Photo Festival & Tamerri Festival (Nigeria).

She has also taken part in several group exhibitions in Nigeria. Nyancho NwaNri was the curator of the photography exhibition at the inaugural edition of Tamerri Festival - a first of its kind arts and culture festival in Nigeria, and is also an accredited Canon film and photography trainer under the Canon Miraisha Programme, conducting trainings and workshops across Africa.

# Travel

## Countdown to WTM Africa

...At least 500 top-end 'king buyers', new speakers, formats expected  
...new sustainability village

OBINNA EMELIKE

rica 2023:

**W**ith just one month to go until Africa Travel Week takes place from April 3-5, 2023, at the Cape Town International Conference Centre in the host City of Cape Town, the countdown has well and truly begun.

The trade show, which includes flagship shows WTM Africa and ITM Africa, will allow travel industry leaders to reconnect and catch up on trends and developments in the African tourism space. Exciting content sessions hosted by experts and speakers are to be augmented by several bolt-on conferences, including EQUAL Africa, the African Tourism Investment Summit (ATIS), the Responsible Tourism Africa Conference, Travel Tech and ITM Africa.

In view of that, Megan De Jager, portfolio director, Travel, Tourism & Marketing RX Africa, shares an overview of what to expect at WTM Af-

### A killer content programme

Do you want to get inside knowledge into Africa's hottest source markets? Would you like to hear all about the tech innovations that will revolutionise the tourism industry in Africa? Or do you want to know if the African tourism industry is getting inclusivity right? This year's content programme brings fresh ideas, new speakers and exciting new formats and partners. Speakers include industry stalwarts such as; Mandisa Magwaxaza, Jean Scheltema and Colin Bell among others. Partners for EQUAL Africa now include the IGLTA Foundation and Afrigay.

### The most prominent global buyers

Africa Travel Week is expecting to welcome over 500 top-end 'king buyers' from across the world, which will be hosted at the Southern Sun Cullinan Hotel, The Vineyard, the Westin, as well



Megan De Jager

as other selected hotels in the city. Buyers this year range from our tried-and-trusted source markets such as the US and the UK, as well as some exciting new markets such as Malaysia, Bangladesh and Romania.

### Exciting media partners

The interest from the media for WTM Africa 2023 has been phenomenal and we're

Magazine, Afro Tourism West Africa, Business Events Africa and Euromonitor.

### Inspiring young minds

World Travel Market (WTM) Africa 2023 have collaborated with Katie King – published author and CEO of AI in Business, to launch an inclusive programme aimed at upskilling high-school students in Cape Town on the impact artificial intelligence (AI) will have on careers in the tourism industry. The most promising young minds will share their technology solutions with us at Africa Travel Week.

### Making a difference

Expect a range of exciting new features at the 2023 show. We are particularly excited about our new Sustainability Village where attendees will be able to make a difference on the spot. The Sustainability Village, a new and unique walk-through hub, will feature a variety of eco-focused pop-up exhibitors, each showcasing what they do through interactive

displays and communicating how they can assist other businesses in prioritising the environment and the support of local communities. The pop-up exhibitions include Growing Paper, Painted Wolf Wines, How Many Elephants, E'Yako Green, and Uthando South Africa among others.

### And the winners are....

Who told the most inspiring story about Africa in 2022? And who are our responsible tourism champions? One of the highlights of the show will be the announcement of the winners of the Responsible Tourism Awards and the Africa Travel and Tourism Awards.

"Africa Travel Week is the show that everyone in the travel and tourism industry wants to be at. The industry's most influential names become the talk of the town as they create exciting new itineraries, do business, and build lifelong bonds during three days of high-quality appointments, educational sessions and networking parties," concludes De Jager.

## ITB Berlin: African destinations make a massive return this March

**I**nternationale Tourismus-Börse (ITB Berlin), one of the globe's leading tourism market place, will be making a return to live (person-to-person) event since 2019 when it last held the event in the marquee Messe Berlin Arena.

Scheduled to take place from March 7-9, 2023 in Messe Berlin in the Charlottenburg province, this year's event has Georgia as the Partner Country.

In 2020, ITB Berlin had to make the difficult decision of canceling that year's edition, which was much anticipated, on the eve of the weekend leading to the event following the declaration of Covid-19 a pandemic by WHO. It shook the tourism sector in an unprecedented magnitude with some delegations said to have been stranded after the subsequent announcement of travel restrictions.

ITB Berlin, like many of the industry's big gatherings and events, resorted to the virtual space to keep the sector going. The industry has endured hard times over the 24 months of conducting business, but now seeing light finally at the end of the tunnel.

The travel shows are back and the return of the world's leading travel show is another



er fine opportunity for Africa's tourism sector to woo travellers to the continent. African destinations have made strong appearances since the restart of tourism at leading travel expos to showcase the new, exciting, and diverse offerings travellers seek to benefit when they opt for it.

At WTM London, FITUR, BIT Milan, and Vakan-tiebuers among others, the continent has been well represented to speak to the needs of the new traveller.

ITB Berlin's mega comeback may see most African destinations, including national tourism boards, private sector players and the ecosystem in Africa making strong appearance.

Confirmed African countries include; Angola, Benin,

Ghana, Seychelles, Mauritius, South Africa, Namibia, Cote d'Ivoire, Tunisia, Botswana, Lesotho, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, Cabo Verde, the Gambia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Togo, Swaziland, Sudan, Somalia, sierra leone, Seychelles, Rwanda, Sao tome & Principe, Saint Helena, Reunion, Niger, Madagascar, Mozambique, Mauritania, Mali, Malawi, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Gabon, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Comoros, Congo, Cameroon, and Burundi.

With the newly introduced format creating a much-enhanced avenue for B2B, the African pavilion will not be short of insightful and business conversations and learnings on the new paradigm to unlock the continent's tourism potential.

## Meetings Africa 2023: Business, sustainable practices, cultural heritage at the heart of the event's success

**T**he 17th edition of Meetings Africa 2023, held at Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg, has been a resounding success, with delegates, buyers, and exhibitors applauding the organization, strategic content, and business opportunities.

According to Zinhle Nzama, acting chief convention bureau officer, South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB), the number of confirmed meetings is edging closer to pre-pandemic levels.

Nzama revealed that a whopping 7,000 meetings were confirmed using the online diary system this year, compared to only 3000 in 2022.

She added: "The trade show is all about buyers meeting suppliers (product and business owners), resulting in real business opportunities

and sales, some of which materialize years later."

She emphasized the importance of sustainable tourism practices, explicitly mentioning the Green Stand Award and Sustainability Village. The former recognises exhibitors who meet green criteria and limit their environmental footprint, while the latter promotes using locally produced, recycled, and reused materials.

The business exchanges and connections made at Meetings Africa 2023 are expected to have a long-term impact, leading to policy changes, new partnerships, and increased business opportunities to benefit Africa's Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry for years to come.

First-time exhibitor, Ikala Nala of IPS Tours, was over-

whelmed by the beauty of African products and impressed by the connections made, with quality leads established.

Claire Kivedo, managing creative director, Overall Events and Communication from South Africa's Nelson Mandela Bay, echoed the same sentiments and waxed lyrically about the invaluable connections she made at the trade show.

Buyer Raymon Honings, managing director of Travelmediate Global from the Netherlands, was impressed by the diversity of exhibitors. Honings noted that the quality of meetings was higher than in the past, adding that he had access to an entire portfolio of potential suppliers showcasing what the African MICE industry can offer.

Phumeza Nywe Ndjock of Mankwe Gametrackers was ecstatic after scoring multiple confirmed bookings for her business, highlighting the success of Meetings Africa 2023.

Myra Theron, Business Development Consultant at Mankwe GAMETRACKERS, proposed using Q codes to share business cards, thus limiting the event's carbon footprint.

"Meetings Africa is sure to have a long-term impact on the industry, benefiting local communities and the environment," concluded Nzama.



# SundayBusiness

## Food & Beverages With Ayo Oyoze Baje



## Eat right and live longer

of energy-giving carbohydrates, proteins that assist in body building and repair of worn-out cells, lipids (fats and oils) which support the body's warmth as well as the vital minerals and the magical minerals, combined with regular exercise and stress-free lifestyle do live longer.

It has also been discovered that there is evidence-based nutrition. That means that eating habits of different ethnic groups with specific relation to locally available food items do have influence on our physique or the way we look and our general wellbeing.

According to world-renowned nutritionist, Mark Wahlqvist, an Australian professor of medicine who was the President, International Union of Nutritional Sciences(2003) there is evidence-based nutrition. Interestingly, Nigeria's foremost nutritionists such as Prof. Adewale Omololu, Tola Atinmo, A. Onisemi and E.O. Ojofeitimi also agree.

It is significant therefore, for people to understand the right food items in their environment which are most beneficial to their health.

For instance, after some researches were conducted towards the tail-end of the 20th Century it was discovered that amongst the races the Asians lived longest. This was traced to their diets which consist mostly of fish rich in Omega-3 fatty acids, periwinkles and plant materials such as fruits, nuts and vegetables.

Since the cells and bones weaken as we age manifesting in illnesses

such as sagged skin, appearance of wrinkles, grey hairs, and loss of teeth the foods to eat should have adequate calcium to prevent arthritis, rheumatism and osteoporosis which is the thinning of bones.

Such food items should include milk, soft fish bones and plant protein which reduce the loss of calcium through the kidneys.

Amongst the approved diet against arthritis are lemon juice in a glass of hot water to be taken thrice a day, coconut oil, pineapple juice, ginger and garden egg.

In addition, a gentle massage with olive oil, Neem oil, camphor will do wonders.

To overcome brain-related health challenges such as stroke, Alzheimer's disease, dementia and Parkinson's Syndrome take food items such as fruits and vegetables, liver and liver.

To keep the muscles strong take oats, soy-ogi, milk, poultry, fish and one egg per day.

For the blood to circulate seamlessly take a mixture of garlic and onion which is an effective blood cleanser.

Generally, replace red meat with beans, as the fibre in beans lowers the risk of cancer.

Increase the intake of colourful fruits rich in anti-oxidants and dark-green vegetables that are full of essential minerals and vital vitamins.

Going further, even amongst the Asians it was discovered that the people of Okinawa, who live off the coast of Japan lived longest then.

Their diets were found to be nutrient dense with sea weeds, periwinkles and plenty of fish. What this means to their bodies is fundamental.

For instance, while the plant sources of food provide a lot of minerals and fibre, the fish such as tuna, sardines and salmon gave their hearts electric stability.

Interestingly, most Okinawans used to live above 100 years until the introduction of the so called fast foods most of which are sugary, salty low in calories and cholesterol - packed food items that on regular consumption started to lead to their early deaths!

That was early in the 21st Century. According to Asaka Miyashita, a world-renowned Japanese nutritionist, writing for Health and Wellness online magazine, they are amongst the longest living people in the world today because they were brought up to believe in the mantra that "you are what you eat". And it is still working for them.

Writing on March 2, 2023 for the Health and Wellness Magazine, Miyashita states that there are 90,526 Japanese people living at 100 years and above. And that is because of their right food choices. So, what do they eat often?

These include the popular Japanese sweet potatoes that are purple in colour, rich in carbohydrates and anthocyanin that has anti-aging properties.

They improve blood sugar level and reduce the risks of cardiovascular diseases.

They also consume Miso soup which is fermented like yoghurt. They are rich in probiotics and boost the immune system.

Not left out of their diets is Daikon radishes which are vegetable roots that prevents cold and boost the immune system.

Next comes Seaweed packed full with minerals such as iron, calcium, folate and magnesium.

Its high fibre content reduces high blood pressure, (HBP), stroke, hypertension and Type -2 diabetes.

They also contain anti-oxidants such as fucoxanthin and fucoiodan, both of which are anti-inflammatory, anti-aging and anti-cancer.

A lot has been said about the nutritional benefits of oily fish such as tuna, sardines and salmon which the Japanese consume with passion!

Daily intake of one ounce of walnuts and coca-based chocolate are recommended. A mixture of honeydew, grape, watermelon, and milk increase cell activity and boosts the immune system.

Apart from body massage with Eucalyptus oil, avoid cold drinks but take hot foods against back ache.

Drink lemon juice mixed with a pinch of salt to be taken twice daily.

Combine all these with regular exercise such as morning walk, a stroll in the sun, bicycling, swimming and register sex are good for your health as you age gracefully.

By Ayo Oyoze Baje is Nigeria's first food technologist to practice as a journalist. ayobaje@yahoo.co.uk; 07068638066

## Tolaram Group to boost nutritional value of Nigerian meals with Addmie seasoning

AMAKA ANAGOR-EWUZIE

Tolaram Group, a multi-national conglomerate that focuses on the production of consumer goods, has launched a new mixed additional seasonings range known as Addmie into the Nigerian market.

Produced for indigenous, international and continental cuisine, the new product is meant to serve as finisher that will encourage mixity, intensify and boost the Nigerian cooking experience. According to the company, Addmie is an innovative all-natural three in one blend made with a carefully selected mixed vegetables, proteins such as Crayfish and Chicken chunks and seasoning powder.

Speaking at the launch recently in Lagos, Sukhman Kaur, general manager, Addmie Nutrition Limited, said the new products was in line with the group's commitment to not just simplify the cooking process for the homemakers but also to make everyday meals more nutritious and delicious for all families. "With



L-R: Vivian Pratt, marketing executive for Addmie; Biliqis Badmus Rashaq, CEO of Al Zim Nig Ltd; Rashidat Biola Atanda, CEO of Atanda Ventures; Sukhman Kaur, general manager of Addmie; Temitope Ashiwaju, group communications and event manager, Tolaram Group; Bowale Ekundayo, CEO of Seyibowale Ent; Kaltime Umami Mustapha, CEO of CNS Global limited, and a guest, at the launching of Addmie by Tolaram Group in Lagos.

Addmie, we want to make the process of adding vegetables and proteins to your meals super easy and convenient. Addmie will elevate your dishes to the next level by giving it the final

touch. It is made using the finest of ingredients and completely free of artificial preservatives and additives," Kaur explained.

Kaur said the seasoning will

help homes to save time that they would normally use to prepare/ source vegetables or proteins before using them in the meals. Kaur urged consumers to continue to support

the group's marketing doggedness, while assuring them of the group's commitment towards creating another Nigerian success story with Addmie brand.

# News

## Olubadan hails judgment on Naira redesign

...asks FG to ease pains in the land

REMI FEYISIPO, Ibadan

The Olubadan of Ibadanland, Oba Lekan Balogun, Alli Okunmade II on Friday hailed the Supreme Court judgment extending the legality of old currency notes till the 31st December this year.

The Supreme Court on Friday asked the Federal Government to latch on the judgment to ease the pains and tension in the land.

Reacting in a press statement made available to journalists in Ibadan on Friday by his Personal Assistant (Media), Oladele Ogunsola, the monarch praised the Supreme Court for standing by the people at this critical moment when living is becoming extremely difficult for ordinary citizens.

The Federal Government through the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) had fixed last 10th February as the deadline for the validity of the redesigned Naira notes of N1,000, N500 and N200 for which some of the state governors had approached the court and for which the court had given two adjournments.

At the first hearing of the case on the 8th February, the court ruled against the 10th February deadline which brought a great deal of relief to



Lekan Balogun, Alli Okunmade II

the people and eased tension in the land. The CBN however did not obey the ruling, insisting to uphold the deadline hitherto set. As a form of palliative however, the FG later announced the extension of the validity of the old N200 note till the end of April this year.

But, with the Friday judgment making all the redesigned notes valid till the end of this year, Oba Balogun said "it is a great opportunity for the FG to bring succour to the people by releasing money

to the populace. The last couple of weeks were too traumatic for the people and it is hoped that the Supreme Court judgment would be a platform to lean on by the government to ease the pains in the land."

Recalling the twin problems of hike in fuel pump price and cash crunch occasioned by the removal of fuel subsidy and Naira redesign policy respectively almost at the same time, the first class monarch noted that the two policies resulted in excruciating pains

for the people, adding, "I felt deep pains seeing people queuing up at filling stations and banks at the same time.

"Even when fuel seemed available and the queues reduced, at what price? And when people were ready to buy at whatever price, where was the money? All these almost stretched the masses beyond the limit and that's why the Supreme Court judgment was a balm that could soothe the pains," Oba Balogun added.

The monarch disclosed that the judgment brought personal relief to him as an individual, stressing that "seeing people in distress without ability to help out makes me weak and unhappy and so, with the judgment, I'm elated. The FG is advised to as a matter of urgency give effect to the judgment without any delay."

Oba Balogun praised the people for their resilience and perseverance while the trauma lasted and more importantly, for not allowing the problems to prevent them from performing their civic responsibility by coming out to vote in the last Saturday presidential and National Assembly election just as he urged them to also demonstrate the same patriotism come next week when the gubernatorial and State Assembly election would be held.

## APC fights back, vows to take PDP, LP to court over election results

JAMES KWEN

The All Progressive Congress (APC) presidential campaign council said it will challenge the results scored by the candidates of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Atiku Abubakar and Labour Party (LP), Peter Obi at the just concluded presidential election in the court.

Atiku of the PDP and Obi of the LP who came second and third respectively in the last Saturday's presidential polls have resolved to challenge their APC's counterpart, Bola Tinubu victory in the court over alleged irregularities.

But in fight back manner, Festus Keyamo, the chief spokesperson of APC presidential campaign council at press conference in Abuja said they were going to file counter petition against the opposition parties.

Keyamo said the votes garnered by the opposition candidates, particularly LP's Obi were fraudulent obtained as evident in the electoral malpractices perpetrated in the south-east.

He said: "As I am talking to you, we have constituted our legal team. We are going to court too. Let it not be that they are the only ones going to court. I am part of the legal team."

Speaking earlier, Dele Alake, the special adviser, media and communications of the

presidential campaign council urged Atiku and Obi to pursue their grievances with decorum.

He said the complaints by the candidates of the two opposition parties over electronic transmission of the election result is not supported by law.

Alake, said the claim that INEC did not use the BVAs is false, adding that those who voted across Nigeria, including Atiku and Obi, were accredited by the machines.

"We must say, however, that listening to both Atiku and Obi yesterday, (Thursday) left us in the APC family confounded. We understand that there has been an orchestrated campaign by the acolytes of PDP and LP in the media to discredit the Presidential election.

"What we did not expect is that the two presidential candidates and, indeed, their political parties, would shamefully re-echo the puerile and unimaginative arguments that are being canvassed by political illiterates and mischief-makers who are crying wolf on the social media.

"As we can see, these two, otherwise experienced politicians are pinpointing lack of adherence to guidelines as basis for discrediting votes lawfully cast by Nigerians.

"We shall examine the so-called process that was purportedly breached by the electoral body and how, in their wild imagination, undermined the credibility of the election.

## Elections: African Bar Association urges INEC to address grievances

IFEOMA OKEKE  
-KORIEOCHA

The African Bar Association (AFBA) Secretariat in Collaboration with the Human & Constitutional Rights Committee of the Association has called on the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to ensure that grievances expressed by the electorate during the recently concluded Presidential and National Assembly elections be addressed and not repeated during the gubernatorial and House of Assembly elections.

Speaking during a press conference at AFBA secretariat, Chartered Institute of Bankers in Lagos on "The 2023 Nigerian Presidential & National Assembly Elections and the Rule of Law", Hannibal Uwaifo, president, African Bar Association (AFBA), said the electoral body must address the pitfalls already enumerated in the public domain including reports from other international Observer Groups.

Uwaifo however, called on all players to give INEC a chance to genuinely and decisively address these issues so as to restore confidence in the process and bring the election to an acceptable conclusion.

He disclosed that as an international observer group, the association deployed a sizable number of observers across about 18 states in Nigeria and received on the spot reports and observations before, during and after the exercise.

The AFBA president noted that while the association was highly impressed and appreciated the high turnout of voters especially among the youth and young people, the finishings of the important assignment appears to be untidy and cast doubts on the transparency of the outcome. "With accusations and counter accusations, the road to a general consensus on the outcome of the elections appears far off.

"There have been allegations and proof of irregularities, violations of the basic laws, electoral regulations, falsification of unit results and outright

criminal interferences by top government officials.

"This situation ought to be unacceptable to all the political actors if they genuinely believe in democracy and the rights of Nigerians to freely choose who to govern their affairs," Uwaifo said.

According to him, the situation has undoubtedly led to several tense scenarios leading to high stake verbal exchanges amongst the main actors.

He however, stressed that as an aspiring country to be respected member of the international club of Nations, Nigerian politicians must rise above these primordial behaviours and embrace the call for a better future for all Nigerians.

"The recent walk out of representatives of some political parties from activities at the National Collation Centre where the final results were being tallied is a pointer to the fact that the situation is degenerating and may lead to a bigger scenarios if not quickly checked and grievances quickly and expeditiously addressed," he added.

## LAPO spent N70bn to assist 262, 977 rural farmers, micro businesses in 15yrs

IDRIS MOMOH, Benin

Lift Above Poverty Organization (LAPO) has said that it had disbursed over N70billion to 262, 977 clients since 2007 to date under its LAPO Rural Development Initiative (LARDI).

Honestus Ayobami Obadiora, the executive director of LAPO-NGO, made the disclosure at the annual media forum in Benin City.

Obadiora said the loan was disbursed to clients in 303 branches across 22 states in the country.

He also disclosed that under LARDI, the sum of N23.5billion was disbursed to improve the livelihood of rural farmers as well as support micro businesses between January and December 2022.

He added that the mandate of LARDI was to improve the income, food security and

general living conditions of rural households, particularly women-headed households and youths.

"We are delighted that the beneficiaries who were hitherto subsistence farmers and small scale business owners have expanded their farmlands and businesses with improved income for family upkeep and savings for the future.

"LAPO addresses challenges limiting farmers' productivity and income as well as business expansion and growth such as non-availability of inputs for improved farm yield and limited access to finance.

"The organization builds the capacity of rural farmers and business owners through on-farm demonstration, workshop and training programmes," he said.

On the health project of the organisation, Obadiora said that between January 2016 and December 2022,

3,368,142 community members were sensitised against cancer by LAPO-C4 project.

He explained that 86,198 of the beneficiaries were referred for further screening and treatment in government-approved health facilities.

While attributing the problems militating against cancer control in Nigeria to inadequate awareness and poor access to screening services, he, however, added that almost 102,000 new cases of cancer occur annually in Nigeria with over 60 percent in women due to breast and cervical cancer.

He advised women to regularly check their health status as breast and cervical cancer pose a serious threat to their lives.

He posited that with early detection, over 80 percent of cancer cases are preventable while 40 percent of the disease can be eradicated by lifestyle changes.



## NewsXtra

## Lafarge Africa calls professionals as 2023 Holcim Awards for sustainable construction begins

CHUKA UROKO

Lafarge Africa, a leading Sub-Saharan Africa building solutions company is calling professionals for entries that will enable to participate in the 2023 Holcim Awards for sustainable construction which begins this month. The company which is a member of Holcim-the global leader in innovative and sustainable building solutions-announced the beginning of the internationally renowned Holcim Awards at a media conference it hosted in Lagos, Nigeria on Wednesday, March 1.

According to authorities of the company, the Holcim Awards recognises and promotes projects that combine sustainable designs and construction with architectural



Khaled EL Dokani

excellence, adding that the Awards are a competition organized by the Holcim Foundation-an independent

non- profit organization.

“We are, therefore, calling on professionals in Nigeria’s built and construction sector to

participate in the 2023 edition of the awards which is seeking real-world projects that are client-supported and exemplify sustainable construction,” Khaled EL Dokani, CEO, Lafarge Africa, said.

“To be eligible, the project must not have started construction before January 1, 2022, and must be at detailed design, complete design, under construction, and completed construction stages,” EL Dokani added. He explained that the purpose of the global awards competition was to showcase and reward leading-edge thinking and real-world examples in practice that could accelerate the global movement for sustainable construction.

Titilope Oguntugua, Lafarge Africa’s Head of Sustainability and Corporate Brand, said at the media conference that the competition which promises USD 1 million prize money is

open for projects in architecture, building and civil engineering, landscape and urban design, materials, products, and construction technologies.

According to her, the competition has two categories and is conducted in parallel as separate regional competitions across five regions, including Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America, Middle East Africa, and North America, adding that USD200,000 per region will be shared between winners of Holcim Awards Gold, Silver, Bronze, and acknowledgement prizes in every region.

“Lafarge Africa, therefore, calls on all eligible engineers, architects, builders, planners, construction firms, and project owners to be part of this opportunity to make a mark in the global construction space by showcasing how their projects are contributing to a more sustainable built

environment,” she said.

Oguntugua also noted that all entries will be evaluated by independent expert juries who will later nominate a shortlist of winners. “Entries will be evaluated using the Holcim Foundation’s renewed goals for sustainable construction that serves as a framework to drive system change- uplifting places, a healthy planet, viable economies, and thriving communities,” she assured.

The juries will be chaired by Tatiana Bilbao, Founder, Tatiana Bilbao Estudio (for Latin America region), Craig Dykers, Founding Partner, Snøhetta (North America), Lesley Lokko, Founder, African Futures Institute (Middle East Africa), Mani Rastogi, Founding Partner, Morphogenesis (Asia Pacific), and Belinda Tato, Founding member, Ecosistema Urbano (Europe).

## Over 80 oil palm farmers, others benefit from RSPO capacity building in Edo

IDRIS UMAR MOMOH

As part of plans to boost the oil palm production in Nigeria, the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) has flagged off capacity building programme for four oil palm producing communities in the Ovia South-West Local Government Area in Edo State.

Foremost Development Services Limited, Intermediary Organisation (IMO) for the RSPO flagged off the capacity building.

Fatai Afolabi, managing consultant and chief executive officer of Foremost Development Services Limited, said the Community Outreach and Engagement Programme (COEP) was to engage stakeholders at all levels of society within palm oil producing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Afolabi said that over 80 smallholder oil palm farmers, elders, youths, women and community-based organisations (CBO) were trained on the principles and criteria of RSPO.

He added that the programme, which was to ensure an equitable playing field for all stakeholders in the palm oil industry, focuses on the three impact goals of Prosperity, People and Planet.

He said the participants were drawn from

Madagbayo, Gbelebu, Udo and Maroghionba (AT&P) communities in the Ovia South-West local government area.

“With this training RSPO wishes to educate the communities and other stakeholders in the palm oil supply chain on the standards to adopt for sustainable palm oil production.

“It also wishes to raise the level of awareness of the people on the obligations of the communities and companies producing sustainable palm oil on matters relating to their rights, livelihoods, social and environmental management, protection of communities and employees.

“In all of these, the overall aim of RSPO is to make sustainable palm oil the norm,” he said.

He explained that the choice of Edo State for the COEP was as a result of its being the major producers of sustainable palm oil in Nigeria. He added that the Edo State government has also subscribed to the production of sustainable palm oil through the application of the RSPO standards.

He said the state government has also mandated investors through the Edo State Oil Palm Programme (ESOPP) to do same in order to achieve a palm oil sector that is sustainable.

He further said the capacity building on the RSPO Community Outreach

and Engagement Programme will run for 14 months and will involve stakeholders.

Fatai pointed out that the stakeholders include local communities, civil society organizations, smallholder farmers, government agencies, media and oil palm companies.

He also added that the Community Outreach and Engagement Programme will be organised in six oil palm producing local government areas in the state.

He listed the five local government areas to include Ikpoba Okha, Ovia South-West, Ovia North-East, Ovia South-West, Uhumwonde, Owan West and Orhionmwon. According to him, between 90 and 120 farmers and other stakeholders will benefit from the capacity building in each of the local government.

He said RSPO is a global multi-stakeholder initiative on sustainable palm oil and not-for-profit international membership organization that unites stakeholders from key sectors of the palm oil industry.

BusinessDay recall that the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) had October 25, 2022 during the official launch of the Community Outreach and Engagement Programme in Edo State said it committed the sum of \$300,000 into the promotion of sustainable palm oil production in Edo State.

## NITDA to discuss policies, standards amid digital revolution at RegTech conference

IFEOMA OKEKE  
-KORIEOCHA

The National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) will be highlighting key standards, guidelines and frameworks for the development, standardization, and regulation of information technology practices in the face of global digital revolution at the 2023 RegTechAfrica Conference.

Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi, Director General, NITDA who confirmed attendance at the RegTechAfrica Conference would discuss Information Technology policy objectives and provide frameworks within which the policies are implemented.

At the conference, Inuwa along side other speakers would discuss issues that help cross the divide between regulatory reporting and technology spectrums, and also look at different approaches in which technology and data could reduce the complexities in regulatory reporting thereby increasing operational efficiencies.

The conference which is scheduled for May 24 to 26, 2023, will also focus on the development, challenges, solutions and economics of

cybercrime, which is one of the emerging threats facing the global economies as a whole.

Cyril Okoroigwe, the convener of RegTech Africa Conference, said with the global Regtech market reaching over \$10Billion this year, leading companies in the Regtech market and financial services sector are focusing on product innovations in order to expand their products and services portfolio and gain a competitive edge.

According to Okoroigwe, the reality of a harsh economic environment the world over has made it demanding to maximise cost efficiencies, increase requirements for sustainability as well as provide an increasingly heterogeneous financial market landscape.

The conference will feature an expansive line-up of stellar speakers, case studies, panel discussions, presentations providing access to a wealth of industry-leading knowledge sharing best practices and experiences, spotlighting trends, information exchange, insights and outlooks with actionable takeaways.

The event is focused on attracting top professionals with interest in regulations, compliance, technology, fraud, risk, monitoring, reporting, financial crime, cyber security, data management and identity management.

Technology service providers will share their knowledge, invited agencies of government at federal and state levels will share insights and showcase use cases in their domains, while international experts will provide perspectives on international best practices and use cases.

NITDA is mandated by the National Information Technology Development Act (2007) to establish standards, guidelines and frameworks for the development, standardization and regulation of Information Technology practices in Nigeria.

NITDA has published several instruments and monitors their compliance for the development of information technology in Nigeria. The instruments serve as a minimum benchmark in the development and implementation of information technology in Nigeria and enforceable by law.

RegTech Africa Conference is the premier Conference on Regulatory Services Innovation and Excellence with focus on Africa. It provides the platform for regulators, regulated and key industry stakeholders to engage, collaborate and share knowledge around new technologies and practices that support better regulations.

# News Extra

## Elections: Abiodun tours Ogun Waterside, rues loss of \$16b Dangote refinery to Lagos

...commissions largest PHC at Ibiade

RAZAQ AYINLA

The Ogun State Governor, Dapo Abiodun, has lamented the lackadaisical attitude of the immediate past administration in the state which led to the loss of a \$16bn Dangote Refinery Investment intended to be sited in Ogun Waterside Local Government Area, to a neighbouring state of Lagos.

Speaking at the commissioning of a primary health centre and 6km Agodo/Lukogbe/Lokula/Tigara road all in Ibiade town, as part of the campaign tour to the Ogun Waterside LG, Abiodun said the project would have been operational in Ogun, but, lack of foresight and vision of his predecessor made the state lose the huge investment.

"This local government area is the aquatic splendour of the state. It will be an oil producing local government and will host a deep seaport. By now, we should have had a refinery in this local government area, but because some people did not want it



Dapo Abiodun

to be in this land, they worked against it," he explained.

Abiodun expressed his displeasure that the local government has not, in the last 30 years, got any road project, noting that the new

road apart from connecting other towns and villages in the axis, it would also provide an easy link to Ondo State.

Addressing the people further, Abiodun said, "I will upgrade the Gateway

Industrial and Petro-Gas Institute so that our children will be trained to take up appointments when the Deep Seaport which would be sited here comes on stream.

"I know that there are

more roads that need our attention but we will be picking them one after the other for construction."

He added that efforts would be intensified to restore electricity to Ibiade town within the shortest possible time.

The newly commissioned health centre, which according to the governor is one of the largest in the state, is one out of the 100 his administration had constructed in less than four years.

He added that the PHC is adequately equipped and provided with solar lights.

Speaking, the Deputy Speaker, Ogun State House of Assembly, Akeem Balogun, said the road had been in bad shape for about 16 years, noting that the reconstruction of the road has brought great relief to the people, appealing to the governor to help in restoring electricity to the area.

The Alarige of Ibiade, Oba Bola Raheem, lauded the State government for considering the area in project allocation and execution, adding that his people would repay the governor with their votes.

Addressing the people

of Iwopin town earlier, the governor stated that the new jetty in the area was constructed by the APC led Federal Government to ensure easy movement and connection to the Dangote Refinery located around the axis.

He disclosed that his administration had embarked on the renovation of educational and health facilities across the state, adding that the Primary Health Centre and public schools in and around Iwopin had received a facelift.

While thanking the people for voting for Bola Tinubu at the presidential election, Governor Abiodun urged them to extend the same gesture to him during the gubernatorial election, saying that voting for him is a voting for more dividends of democracy and prosperity.

Addressing party supporters at Oni Ward 2, he promised to upgrade the Gateway Industrial and Petro-Gas Institute, Oni, to meet the needs of the oil and gas sector, as the state was working towards becoming oil producing.

## Election: NUJ tasks INEC on credible poll, has no anointed guber candidate

REMI FEYISIPO, Ibadan

Oyo State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) has said it was not giving support to a particular gubernatorial candidate, contrary to insinuations, saying that the union has no anointed candidate.

In a communique issued at the end of its monthly Congress in Ibadan, the state capital, the group tasked the electorate to beware of the fifth columnist and fake news ahead of the March 11, 2023.

The communique read in parts: "The NUJ Oyo State Council, under the chairmanship of Comrade Ademola Babalola, held a congress, on Friday, March 3, 2023, which was well attended by members across different chapels under the council, at the NUJ Press Centre, Iyaganku, Ibadan, the state capital.

"The congress deliberated extensively on a number of topical issues. After an exhaustive exchange of comments and views thereon, the Congress resolved as follows:

"That NUJ, as a body does

not have an anointed candidate for the Saturday March 11, 2023 governorship poll in Oyo State.

"That NUJ, like in the past, offers our platform to all candidates of various political parties in the state, and beyond.

"That a write up that went viral on the social media, which was published by one Ademola 'Bablow' Babalola, and calling on the gubernatorial candidate of one political party to merge with the governorship candidate of another equally important political party ahead of March 11th governorship election, does not have anything to do with our Chairman, nor the NUJ in Oyo State."

It further stated that "The name of the blogger is not on the list of recognised members of NUJ in the state. Therefore, we dissociate ourselves from the publication. As expected of one political party to merge with the governorship candidate of another equally important political party ahead of March 11th governorship election, does not have anything to do with our Chairman, nor the NUJ in Oyo State."

"That the politicians should know that it is only Almighty God that enthrones and de-thrones whosoever He wishes. Therefore, we urge all politi-

cians to play the game according to the rules. There should be no violence. There should be no bloodbath. We urge INEC to correct all anomalies reported during the last election on February 25, 2023 and ensure the gubernatorial poll is better organized with the expected outcomes to be free, fair, transparent and credible.

"That all journalists, especially those that have been accredited to cover the governorship and House of Assembly elections on March 11th, should be careful, be professional, should let their colleagues know their locations, move in different groups for the coverage of the elections, and should report emergencies to appropriate quarters, including the Situation Room of NUJ, through the number already given to them.

"The Congress commended the efforts of the proprietor of Ibadan Central Hospital (ICH), and Academic Suites, Abib Olamitoye, a medical doctor for his kind gesture towards the Treasurer of NUJ in the state, Akeem Abas, who was attacked by armed robbers at Iyaganku, Ibadan, on his way home recently.

## Lagos PFN divided over Sanwo-Olu's endorsement

SEYI JOHN SALAU

The Lagos State chapter of the Pentacostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) is divided over the recent endorsement of the state governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu for a second tenure.

According to those against the endorsement, the move was contrary to the directive of the national body that mandated members to be neutral in the 2023 general election.

It was alleged that the state chapter of the Fellowship has been compromised financially to act contrary to the earlier position of the PFN that directs pastors not to take a partisan position heading into the general elections.

One of the aggrieved members who pleaded anonymity disclosed to BusinessDay that "This endorsement is splitting heads in Lagos PFN. Can you do anything about it? Though, I wish to be anonymous."

According to the source, the endorsement was carried out of fear or financial inducement.

"No! There was an un-

known fear plus a likelihood of financial inducement to do so.

"Unknown fear that: since Tinubu has been declared President-elect, it won't be appropriate for the church to be in opposition to the ruling power," he said.

In reaction to the fact that Enyinnaya Okwuonu, the chairman of the PFN, Lagos chapter was in attendance at the endorsement; the source responded thus, "Yes, he was there without discussing or taking approval from the house.

"For instance, our agreed position ever since is that we should not take sides with any party.

"Everyone should encourage his members to vote according to their conscience."

Similarly, the director of politics and governance for the PFN in Lagos, Theophilus Taiwo Ajose, has been fingered in the contravention of the directives from the national body.

"The Director of Politics & Governance is responsible for this.

"I mean, the Lagos State Director of... P&G; not the National Director."

We reach out to both men

via text messages and calls on the issue and non responded to our enquiries.

However, the state director of politics and governance was quoted in the statement endorsing the governor as follows.

"The Church in Lagos State asked for a Christian governor and Governor Sanwo-Olu has done very well in the last four years.

"This gubernatorial election is not about any political party but about the candidate. Mr Sanwo-Olu has made Christians very proud and has governed the state without any religious bias. He is one of us and the church is speaking with one voice that Mr Babajide Sanwo-Olu deserves our support again."

In seeking further clarification on the matter, we reached out to the national secretary of the PFN, who agreed with the position of our source on the Fellowship's position to maintain a neutral stand in the general elections.

"PFN as a body at all levels is not endorsing any party or candidate. That's our position," Cosmas Ilechukwu, the national secretary of PFN said in reaction to the endorsement.

# News Extra

## No legal dispute against Umo Eno as PDP governorship candidate in A/Ibom - Nwoko

ANIEFIOK UDONQUAK, Uyo

There is no legal dispute about the status of Umo Eno as the authentic governorship candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Akwa Ibom State, former Attorney General and commissioner for Justice, Uwemedimo Nwoko has said.

The governorship election holds March 11 in many states of the federation including Akwa Ibom.

Nwoko was reaction to reports in some quarters which he regarded as false being peddled by "mischievous elements without sound legal knowledge and background," stated that Umo Eno has been cleared and remains the candidate of the PDP in the

governorship election.

Nwoko, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) and Head of the Legal team of the PDP Governorship candidate stated that the Court of Appeal had made a final pronouncement on the matter in respect of the Michael Enyong's case while the Supreme Court rested the matter in respect of Akan Okon's case.

"At the moment, there is no court process filed against our client before us.

"So, all the court cases concerning Umo Eno's candidature, the final decisions have been made, and there is no dispute as to that again.

"If you visit the website of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) now, you would find out the final correction that was field

by INEC as regards Umo Eno, where his name was restored and INEC went as far as putting that it is by the order of Court that his name was restored on the INEC platform.

"It was wrong for INEC to have even contemplated replacing Umo Eno's name on their website and I confronted them through a letter and they discovered their error. That is why they quickly corrected their error.

"I have come across a writeup shared by some characters that do not know anything about law. The issue of cross-appeal is nowhere on any record anywhere.

"Umo Eno was already restored as candidate of the PDP, and then this mischievous judgement by the Federal High Court came in. In fact that was why the Court of

Appeal was very angry with the judgement of that High Court and awarded a punitive cost of N1 million against Mike Enyong.

"The Court held that this matter ought not to have come to any court again, having been decided by the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court. So, the cost awarded was to serve as deterrent to the person (Mike Enyong) and others who might want to toe the same line."

While re-echoing his earlier position that Mike Enyong should make himself available to the Police for investigation, Nwoko disclosed that the federal lawmaker had secured an ex parte order of the court on the 20th of February, 2023, restraining the police from arresting him, saying the order which has a 7-day lifespan had elapsed.

## Kogi assures farmers of support to boost agric activities

VICTORIA NNAKAIKE,

As new farming season approaches, the Kogi state government has assured farmers of its super support to help boost agricultural activities in the state.

Gabriel Olofu, the Commissioner for commerce and Industry gave the assurance while declaring open a training workshop by the Nigeria Export Promotion Council (NEPC) for cassava farmers and processors in Kogi state held in Lokoja.

Represented by the permanent secretary of the ministry, Salifu Ahmed commended Governor Yahaya Bello for deploying huge resources into the development of agriculture in the last seven years in the state, describing him as agriculture-friendly governor.

He urged cassava farmers and processors to form cooperative groups to enable them benefit from government's grants.

In her welcome address, the state coordinator of NEPC, Amina Abdulmalik assured of the council's commitment to ensure it's continued collaboration with cassava farmers and processors to improve on the Non-oil Export performance in the country.

She pointed out that the major objective of the multiplication and distribution of the improved cassava rapid multiplication CRM stems was to establish an improved

cassava multiplication system and to develop effective and sustainable improved varieties to farmers to help boost cassava production in Nigeria.

In a paper presentation, titled Rapid Multiplication of cassava to solve low multiplication ratio, the resource person, Yakubu Zubairu said the workshop was a follow up to the previous workshop on cassava production multiplication and value addition, noting that there was need to train cassava farmers on how cassava stems can be multiply into large quantity for increased cassava farming.

While commending the present administration for committing huge resources into agriculture, urged Government, individuals and commercial banks to inject more funds into the agriculture sector to increase production and implored cassava farmers whom were provided with cassava stems to ensure proper maintenance and care.

In their separate good will messages, the MD/CEO of Kogi Enterprise Development Agency KEDA, Rakiya Onaivo Sani, Head of Ventures of NYSC in Kogi state, Nweke Ifeoma, NASSI Secretary, MB Yusuf commended NEPC in its sensitization program for farmers in the state.

Rekiya Onaivo particularly requested cassava farmers to approach her at the KEDA office on the issue of grants and urged them to take proper care of the cassava stems given to them by NEPC.

## Lagos guber: Eti-Osa monarchs, community leaders pledge support for Sanwo-Olu

DAVID IJSEUN

Ahead of next Saturday's governorship and House of Assembly elections, traditional rulers and community leaders in the 62 communities in the Eti-Osa Local Government Area of Lagos, have thrown their weight behind Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu for his re-election bid.

They also sued for peaceful coexistence among all residents of the area and urged them to come out en masse to perform their civic responsibility without fear of victimisation and harassment from any quarters during the poll.

Speaking during a press conference held at Ikota Primary School, Lagos on Saturday, the Chairman of the Baale's Forum in Eti-Osa Local Government Area, Chief Wasiu Alli-Balogun, who is the Baale of Lafaji, assured victory for Governor Sanwo-Olu, who is the APC governorship candidate in the March 11 gubernatorial poll.

He implored all the Lagos residents in Eti-Osa Local Government Area to file out in large numbers and re-elect Governor Sanwo-Olu because of the remarkable achievements of the governor during his first term in office.

"We want to appeal to those that were annoyed with the last elections, that they should forget what happened. Let us forget the past and face the future. Governor Sanwo-Olu means peace. He wants progress for Eti-Osa and Lagos as a whole. We need to support him and give him votes so that



L-R: Chairman of Baales Forum in Eti-Osa LGA, Baale Lafaji, Chief Olanrewaju Alli-Balogun (middle) addressing the Press alongside other Baales in Eti-Osa, during a news conference on the upcoming Governorship Election in Lagos, held at Ikota Primary School on Saturday.

he can be able to complete the work he has started," the Baale appealed.

Alli-Balogun, who said that there were many irregularities in last Saturday's presidential and National Assembly elections in Eti-Osa Local Government Area, noted that many eligible voters were disenfranchised as they could not locate the new polling units where their names were before the close of the election.

He also appealed to all aggrieved members of the All Progressive Congress (APC) and residents in Eti-Osa Local Government Area to sheath their swords and come out en-masse to vote for Governor Sanwo-Olu and other APC candidates, stressing that the governor has done so much for the state and deserves to be given a second term of office.

The Chairman of the Baale Forum of Eti-Osa Council, who admitted that there were lots of irregularities during the presidential and National Assembly elections, said

security should be beefed up to ensure the safety of lives and prosperity, adding that security agencies should perform their constitutional duties without being partisan.

Also speaking, the Baale of Ikota, Nasiru Omotayo Laguda, urged Governor Sanwo-Olu to count on the communities in Eti-Osa Local Government Area, promising that they would support and deliver votes for him in the area as he had been very supportive of people in the area, which had also witnessed massive socio-economic development during his tenure.

"We want to tell the whole world that Eti-Osa is solidly behind Asiwaju Bola Tinubu and Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu. I am appealing to all our Baales that they should go back home and work out their strategies. It is not a matter of fighting. We will call our neighbours, children, communities, and everybody to come out en masse and vote for Governor Sanwo-Olu. We are more than our strangers

and our neighbours. If we come out en-masse, we all will deliver our communities," he said.

The Chairman of Eti-Osa Resettlement Scheme, Ayodeji Thomas, who is the Baale of Gedegede, urged residents of Eti-Osa to give maximum support to Governor Sanwo-Olu and other APC candidates, saying by the grace of God victory is assured in the forthcoming elections.

"We need to encourage our people. We want to appeal to everybody to come out and vote without fear or intimidation. I can assure everybody that we are going to have a peaceful election on Saturday by God's grace. I pray by the grace of God that we are going to deliver for Governor Babajide Olusola Sanwo-Olu," he said.

Thomas congratulated the President-Elect, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu for his victory in last Saturday's presidential poll and urged him to prioritise the welfare of the masses and ensure an indivisible

## Obi's over one million votes in Lagos must be released - Adebajo

INIJOBONG IWOK

Ayo Adebajo, Afenifere leader, has said that the Labour Party (LP) scored over one million votes in Lagos State.

He added that Tinubu's current supporters, who are jubilant with his triumph, will be the ones to eject him from the office.

The elder statesman urged Nigerians to refrain from expecting President Muhammadu Buhari to uphold the law at this time because, according to him, the President was elected by illegal means.

"The result in Lagos has not been released. The whole thing was mismanaged. We scored over one million votes in Lagos and they altered all the results that belonged to Obi," he told Arise TV.

"That's why they've not released it. Why are they reluctant to prove it? You can tell the marine that you won the

election and all that. What do you expect Buhari to say?

"He himself came into office through a fraudulent election in 2015. Many of you might have forgotten, the electoral commissioner in Kano, who refused to cooperate with the rigging in Kano, was burnt alive with his family and till today no arrest and you want that kind of person to do justice.

"He doesn't know justice. He has been living in injustice and all sorts of shenanigans. You want him to come out to say something is unfair? Has he been fair in his administration?

"Tinubu will be another Shonekan. He'll be sent away by some of those people rejoicing now. This is not about Yoruba and Igbo.

"Is the Presidency about Yoruba and Igbo? It's a national matter. Most of them came into the office through rigging. All the governors, how many of them are fair?"

# Cover

## Can Labour Party drive Nigeria's political opposition?

NOSA IGBINADOLOR

The ascendancy of the APC to power in 2015 has witnessed a systematic erosion of opposition from Nigeria's politics, leading to the opposition parties failing to influence the electorate during elections as well as being unable to express a national vision or strategy for the country.

Political opposition to the ruling All Progressives' Congress (APC), over the past eight years has been ultra-lacklustre, if not non-existent. After the loss of the then ruling Peoples' Democratic Party, (PDP), to the APC in the 2015 political tidal wave that brought the latter to power, political opposition to the ruling APC essentially went to sleep.

Disapproval of the ruling party's rich failings and incapability was left to a section of the media and the twittering class, as opposition parties and hitherto vituperative civil society groups, went into an incestuous hibernation that allowed the APC and President Muhammadu Buhari to encouragingly levy their unimpactful agenda on Nigerians.

The feebleness of the PDP as the lead opposition, meant that the ruling party continued to define the narrative, shaping the country, without alternative voices gaining a hold amongst the masses.

The PDP only became visible again just before the 2019 presidential elections, and yet again went on a long hiatus after its electoral and judicial loss, ceding the political and policy space to the ruling party. The PDP came back into political consciousness in 2022, a year before the 2023 general election.

The abject failure of the APC to grow the economy, secure Nigerians and fulfil its grandiose promises of social provisioning were rich enough grounds to hold the feet of the party to the fire of public opprobrium and censure by the PDP; a party that was unable to further define itself as the natural alternative to the clearly disappointing ruling party.

The outcome of Nigeria's last presidential elections which the APC won amidst loud remonstrations of fraud, voter suppression, intimidation and technical deficiencies, from the opposition parties and their supporters, exposed the repudiation of the PDP by the electorate as the sole major opposition.

"Each of the top three candidates was the leading vote-getter in 12 states, a remarkable first in Nigeria's modern political era, reflecting the diversity of views that characterised the campaign and the wishes of Nigeria's voters," Ned Price, the spokesman of the



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U.S State Department noted of the elections' result.

The Labour Party (LP), a previously peripheral party that rode on the back of its popular presidential candidate, won twelve states. Its candidate who came third with 6,101,533 votes has refused to accept the outcome of the elections. In his first official reaction to the results of the 2023 presidential election, the party's candidate, Peter Obi, claimed he was the actual winner of the election and vowed to challenge the outcome of the 25 February vote in court.

The will of the people, he said, had been suppressed and swore to explore all legal and peaceful options to reclaim his mandate.

"The good and hardworking people of Nigeria have again been robbed by our supposed leaders whom they trusted... We will explore all legal and peaceful options to reclaim our mandate. We won the election and we will prove it to Nigerians," he said at the press briefing in Abuja. "We were asked to go to the court. Is that not what they said? So, let's go there."

His running mate, Datti Baba-Ahmed, had earlier reinforced the party's position to seek judicial interrogation of the elections' outcome, when he held, "It is our position that the purported result didn't meet the minimum criteria of a transparent, free and fair election in addition to the most condemnable attacks, voters' intimidation and suppression.

"Please be assured of our determination to fight the injustice that has been perpetuated on Nigerians through all legal and peaceful means."

Obi and the Labour Party ate deep into the states hitherto considered safe elective states by the PDP – states in the southeast and South-south. In the Federal Capital, Lagos, Plateau and Nasarawa states, the LP triumphed and further made strong showings in Ad-

amawa, Taraba, Benue and several other states. The PDP senator for the FCT who had spent nineteen years as a legislator, twelve of them in the senate, was ousted by LP's Irete Kingibe.

What this means is that the PDP has no strong and moral claims to lead Nigeria's political opposition, having clearly failed to do so since its shocking loss to the APC eight years ago.

Between 2015 and February's elections this year, PDP's leadership had centred around Nyesom Wike, the governor of Rivers state, who practically financed the continued existence of the party after its 2015 defeat, and Atiku Abubakar, the party's presidential candidate.

Both men mutually detest each other. At 76, Abubakar's days in electoral politics are limited, and his ability to command widespread respect within the party has been severely compromised by the civil war within the PDP which he helped to ignite when he jettisoned the unwritten rule to zone the party's presidential ticket to the South. Abubakar's entry into the race and his eventual triumph at the primaries in May 2022, sparked an insurgency within the party from which the PDP is yet to recover.

Wike, the loquacious governor of the oil-rich Rivers State led the insurrection against Atiku's presidential ambition. He had lost to the latter during the primaries and industriously worked against his party's candidate, supporting the contender from the ruling party instead.

While Atiku is limited by age and the divisive role he played to boost his ambition of becoming president, Wike has lost the moral capacity to lead the PDP. He is widely regarded as a fifth columnist within his party, one who surreptitiously yet seditiously aided the ruling party's candidate, Bola

Tinubu to win the election.

The role of leading the political opposition to the ruling APC looks likely to be filled by the LP. The party is aligned with the country's leading trade unions. Just before the 2023 Nigerian general election, the party obtained the support of both the Nigeria Labour Congress and the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria. The trade union federations advised their members to vote for Peter Obi. It was the first time the trade union federations would be expressing explicit support for a political party.

The challenge notes a retired security chief, is that whether PDP or Labour, Nigeria's political parties have since the dawn of the 4th republic been platforms for contesting elections and not structures for questioning government actions and presenting alternatives to existing government policies which is the primary role of the official Opposition, as well as other smaller opposition parties.

"Two critical areas we cannot run away from: We have to re-educate ourselves on what it takes to be a citizen. What we have now; the mindset and the culture is not helpful to our society if we want to develop.

"Secondly, our population is not well managed. It is growing at a rate that we do not have the resources to deal with. Our growth rate means more many more classrooms, hospitals and social amenities that government simply does not have the resources to provide. We need to persuade our citizens that we need to reduce our rate of growth in order to be able to meet the needs of our citizens.

"How well Labour does as the leading opposition depends on how well it serves as a platform for aggregating national opinions and driving opposition to the ruling APC, and not just as a platform to contest an election. It was simply Peter Obi's popularity and a feeling amongst a section of the country that he was a different face in Nigerian politics that drove the passion and momentum that led him to where he is now. So, how effective the opposition will be will depend on the decisions they make with respect to deliberately and calculatedly holding the government to its election promises and galvanising public opinion against policies that might not bear dividends.

"Nigeria will be better served if Labour will come to terms with several realities; that they did not have nationwide spread. Labour needs to build its brand, lay out its philosophical basis, bring out more persons, reach out into distant communities so that it can have a good generational, and pan-Nigerian outlook. The PDP needs to rebirth itself to remain a political force."

Effective opposition parties

have the task of encouraging the government to make well-planned and appropriate decisions that benefit the majority of citizens. Nigeria's opposition have tended to collude with government especially in the national and state legislatures.

Nigeria is not short on challenges whether economic, social and infrastructural development, governance, law and order. A plethora of issues; each one as important as the other which every government must deal with. For the LP, its capacity to hold the government to the fire and also develop its own outlook as the alternative government will depend on how well the party is able to whip its members into line.

The PDP has been a highly undisciplined and unmanageable party; one in which dire consequences for deviance has been all but lacking. If the LP is to be successful as the lead opposition, it must look at the failings of the PDP and decide not to be like the PDP.

A lecturer who teaches finance at a private university in Nigeria said: "PMB ran for election 2003, 2007, 2011, and only won in 2015. He never gave up and kept gathering forces until he won. Perseverance is key to overcoming the odds in a difficult situation. I believe that Okwute can win as long as the movement continues and grows. I haven't been this excited about our prospects in recent times. There's hope.

"2015 taught me that the journey would be far longer than I thought and the Nigeria of my dreams may not happen in my lifetime. Hence the need to look long-term.

"This movement has brought serious potential plan to this long-term bright future. We need to celebrate our victories."

According to him, "Imagine a campaign that ran on 'we no give shishi', spontaneous contributions, excitement over accountability of politicians across board, calls to consider competence over tribe and religion, and so forth. These are the messages that may change our culture for the better. The process itself may matter far more than the outcome.

"Now we have a far better foundation to build on for future victories. I'm very proud of this movement and happy with the results. I pray Okwute continues to push this movement for many years to come. This is just the beginning. There's hope."

He advised LP members: "Now let's focus on the local levels and flush out all the fake Igbo politicians in the South East and make progress there.

"Now to sack APC from Lagos and grab as many governorships and houses of assembly. The OBI-dient movement just has begun."

# Election Fallout

## Why Peace Accords fail - Analysts

### ...Blame Executive lawlessness

TONY AILEMEN, Abuja

**O**n the 23 of February, 2023, 18 political parties participating in the 2023 general election came together to sign a "Peace Accord", in what has now become a regular ritual, ahead of every election in Nigeria.

The parties took oath to eschew violence and accept the outcome of the election results, including the Presidential, National Assembly, Governorship and State House of Assembly elections.

Former President, Goodluck Jonathan, put it succinctly at the recent signing of Peace Accord by the 18 political parties contesting the 2023 general election, when he said that "the peace accord is needed to deter candidates and their allies from using instruments of misinformation to influence the election."

The former president, whose speech was read by Matthew Kukah, Catholic Bishop of Sokoto, charged the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and security agencies to ensure that the election is credible.

"This is aimed at mitigating disinformation, and misinformation during the election and in the time of the social media era," he said

The Minister of Justice and Attorney General of the Federation, Abubakar Malami, speaking after a recent meeting of the National Council on Security, assured Nigerians that the Security Agencies had been mandated to protect Nigerian voters at the polling units

According to him, "The resolution of the Council is to the effect that the elections are to hold as planned and the President has directed the Inspector General of Police to liaise with other security agencies to ensure that Nigerians come out to vote."

Also speaking after the meeting, IGP Alkali Baba, reiterated that "The election will hold as planned. We have been mandated to provide security to everyone, before, during and after the election.

"The Council is satisfied that the Nigerian Police, leading other agencies are fully prepared to guarantee the right of voting that day.

"The Military has also assured of their capacity to provide support to the other security agencies to ensure that the election hold under a free and fair atmosphere.

"We expect that we will be able to cover every area in the country."

This is because, according to him "a total of 425,106 security operatives were deployed for the February 25th presidential and National Assembly elections.

"We have a total of 425,106 and I have said it agency by agency, the Police have 310,973, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence – 51,000; Federal Road Safety Corps – 21,000; Nigerian Correctional Service – 11,336; National Drug Law Enforcement Agency – 9,447; Economic and Financial Crimes Commission –



One of the accord signing events in Abuja

350; Nigeria Immigration Service – 21,000."

He assured that Orderlies attached to those usually regarded as Very Important Personalities (VIP) "will be withdrawn from them.

"No orderlies for VIP at polling booths," he had said.

The candidates and their parties were made to sign documents, pledging to abide by the letters of the Peace Accord. A few hours to the election, they signed again, to reenforce their commitments to peace, before, during and after the elections.

Despite these rituals however, on the election day, everything but peace transpired, as the parties threw caution to the wind, armed their supporters with machetes, cudgels, and in some extreme cases, guns, to attack, intimidate and snatch ballot boxes.

They deploy several strategies to as it were, either prevent voters from turning out or force people to vote for them, especially where there have deficiencies

These attacks had over the years led to disenfranchisement of voters in some communities and other forms of electoral malpractices.

Thus, signing the Peace becomes just a mere fulfillment of all righteousness, which can't have any force of law.

The Director of Legal Services, National Board for Technical Education, Mainasara Umar, while speaking with BusinessDaySunday on the issue, insists that until the Nigerian government begin to penalise wrong doers, especially on election days and at polling units, "impunity will never be cease."

Umar, while blaming what he

called, "Executive lawlessness" for violation of the Peace Accords, added that "those who control the machinery of force, often deploy such forces to intimidate, coerce people to do their wills.

"It is wrong for those in government to move about on election days with armed security men, from polling units to polling units.

"In some instances, they deploy their cronies, hit men, thugs and fraudsters to do their bidding for them. People see them, make complaints, protest and do all sorts, but nobody can apprehend and prosecute them. That is why electoral violence has remained with us.

"The relevant security agencies assigned to polling units must be ready to both apprehend and prosecute those that would forment trouble at the elections," he said.

According to him, "Section 14 (2) of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, as amended makes it clear that the security and welfare of the citizenry is the primary responsibility of government. Therefore, whatever should be done to secure the nation and INEC infrastructure nationwide must be done.

"Attacks on INEC facilities nationwide, before, during or after elections must be treated as part of violence at the polls."

Umar, while also charging INEC to make the electoral process easy for the people by making voter's registration a continuous process, said such will help to avoid the situation where many people are unable to identify polling units early, or even obtain their permanent voter's cards on time.

"With the provision of section

1, 2,3,4,6,7,& 8 of the Electoral Act, INEC has been the responsibility to design, identify, print, secure and distribute voters card.

Umar, who is also a Constitutional lawyer, called on politicians to have the spirit of statesmanship to avoid using manipulations to secure nomination tickets for primary elections in which they did not participate, thereby heating up the polity and wetting ground for violence at elections.

"Amendment of Electoral Act is a very serious revolutionary giant stride for the electoral history in Nigeria. But, there maybe written laws and there are practical characters of Nigerian politicians that in every day they are evolving ways and strategies to outsmart the law," he said.

He also charged the political parties to reduce the cost of securing nominations for elective offices, adding that "How do you expect someone who is made to pay as much as N100m to obtain nomination form for party primaries to keep quiet, if he failed?"

"This has to a large extent deficiency of statesmen where they decide to imbibe autocratic system whereby they depend on their money to do evil, promoting corruption, because, they would want to recoup their money at all cost."

Godknows Igali, Chairman, Governing Council of the Federal University of Technology, Akure, speaking at a recent event in Abuja, emphasised the need for INEC to do its own beat to ensure credible as well as peace election, while the security operatives must enforce the laws governing the exercise.

Igali who also urged politicians to avoid making inciting statements

that would elicit violence in their supporters, described elections as "investments in what matters most to us,

"We have to all put our hands together to think of how best election can hold peacefully. Where there are early warning signals, there must be interventions to nip it in the bud. We can not run away from enforcement, we can not spare the rod for those that decided that others can not sleep, we have to put them where they will not sleep.

"Somebody is making incitive statements, nobody is above the country. The coarsive power of the state can be utilized where necessary. It may not always be kinetic, but nobody is above the law. Those that have duties should do it quickly."

Auwal Ibrahim ( Rafsanjani), while also contributing, stated that despite the good intentions of promoters of the Peace Accord, "some people now see it as means of silencing the oppressed, after the election.

"It is now like you are holding the hands of those who have been cheated, while those who have cheated them walk away in the name of obeying the Accord.

"Unless the perpetrators of violence at an election are brought to Justice, it will not make any sense.

"How can you rig people out of an election, using violence and all forms of manipulations, then you turn around and say they should go to court.

"In the near future, you may discover that many people will not come out to sign the Peace Accord, unless, perpetrators of violence are apprehended, and Justice served for the people to see."

# Women's World

# News



## Aisha Salisu: Women's role in powering energy transition

NGOZI OKPALAKUNNE

**C**hief Executive Officer of March Energy, Aisha Salisu, was a speaker at Dotmount Communications's Future Forward Forum on February 18, 2023. The speakers and attendees dialogued on the theme: "The Power of Networking in the Digital Era", it was strictly curated for female business owners and CEO's, and was graded by heavy weights in today's industry.

Aisha Salisu discussed 'Women's Role in Powering the Energy Transition.' She began her keynote with a history of women who inspired her to becoming the fierce woman that she is today, and how it took her sometime to find what she was passionate about.

She made a connection between "networking up and networking down", and gave a story of how she "networked up, leveraging on her then organisation to be able to transition to another sector. Being a banker, she was diligent in service, which wasn't particularly easy especially coming from a political science background. But because of her tenacity and willingness to learn she was able to succeed, say-

ing "the easiest way to network is to be indispensable that will be the way to network without introducing yourself."

Salisu, then spoke about leveraging her connections to start a business. She further spoke about the importance of research, and regaled the audience with a story where she had been convinced to haul petroleum products and hadn't done sufficient research that led to her paying the price afterwards.

After, her introduction she delved into her topic on climate change and energy transition. Hajia Aisha Salisu began by imploring the women in the room to be open to the concept of climate change as it affects us.

She defined Energy transition according to (S&P Global, 2020). as "The worldwide shift away from fossil-based energy production and consumption systems, such as coal, natural gas, and oil, and toward renewable sources of energy, such as solar, wind, and lithium-ion batteries."

She emphasized the need for energy mix for the country as natural gas which Nigeria has in abundance is the cleanest fossil fuel and is widely regarded as a critical component in the world's transition to a cleaner future. The Nigerian government has also stated its position on the use of

gas as a transitional fuel.

As Nigerians we value oil, but it is time to move away from it to other cleaner energy solutions such as gas, solar, wind, and other renewables. The reason is because oil emit greenhouse gasses alter temperature of the environment, and harms the climate"

Hajia Aisha Salisu then made a connection between climate change, food security and insecurity, stating that if our climate was in a good condition we would have more opportunities available for people suffering in the North East as result of insecurity. She also emphasized the need for curbing food wastage by utilizing renewable such as wind and solar

Additionally, Hajia gave a striking instance about how most casualties in the Turkey earthquake were women and children further emphasizing the need for women to take a stand on climate change.

Hajia Aisha Salisu concluded her keynote by saying women should start taking up more space to be able to effect the change needed in the environment. She also proffered some credible solutions such as: women participating in climate action and conversations, taking up corporate spaces, and educating our girl children.

## Atiku hails media, US senator for standing with Nigerians, democracy

TONY AILEMEN

**T**he Presidential Candidate of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Atiku Abubakar, has hailed a ranking member of the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Jim Risch, for pointing out the fact that Nigeria's recently concluded Presidential election was fraught with irregularities.

He also hailed Risch for criticising the US government over its decision to hurriedly embrace Bola Tinubu as president-elect despite damning reports from election observers.

Senator Risch had said, "The ongoing electoral process in Nigeria is widely viewed as deeply flawed by election observers and many Nigerians. It is disappointing to see the administration rush to embrace the result, while the full picture of what occurred during this electoral process is yet to be seen.

"I've expressed similar concerns related to other areas of our relationship with the Nigerian government. I worry this rush to judgement will undermine our ability to be an effective partner to all Nigerians, especially given their longstanding desire for democracy."

Responding in a statement on Saturday, Atiku's Special Assistant on Public Communication, Mr. Phrank Shaibu, said posterity would be kind to Senator Risch for siding with the people of Nigeria even against the US government.

Shaibu, "Senator Risch's name will be etched in the minds of Nigerians forever. Posterity will be kind to him for speaking up at this crucial point in history. His action is reminiscent of the late US Ambassador, Walter Carrington, who acted as an activist, insisting on the June 12 mandate from 1993 till 1997 during the repressive regime of General Sani Abacha.

"Senator Risch has confirmed what objective observers revealed. And that is that the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria was a sham, a usurpation of the will of the people and a stain on the history of Nigeria."

Shaibu also commended the Guardian Newspaper of London, the Financial Times of London, and The PUNCH for their strongly worded editorials, where they described in detail what really happened in the so-called election of 25 February.

Atiku's aide noted that the Financial Times in its editorial titled, 'Nigeria's Badly Flawed Election Fails to Set an Example' dismissed the poll for the sham that it was.

"What Nigeria needed above all was a clean election to reiterate the basic message of democracy: that a sovereign people can choose its leaders. Sadly, it did not happen. The election - which appears to

have delivered the Presidency to Bola Tinubu, a wealthy political fixer running for the incumbent All Progressives Congress - was badly managed at best. It failed to set the example needed for West Africa," The Financial Times stated.

It added, "INEC badly misfired. Voting started late in many districts, depriving millions of the right to vote. The system to upload the results from 177,000 polling stations stuttered, causing legitimate concerns of vote tampering during long delays. Violence was troubling. Party goons invaded many polling stations in what appeared to be blatant acts of intimidation. The Financial Times witnessed armed men remove a presidential ballot box in Surulere, Lagos."

He also commended The PUNCH for its scathing editorial, where it described in graphic detail how thugs acting on the instruction of the APC used violence to intimidate voters in Lagos.

The PUNCH particularly stated, "In Ikate, Lagos, gunmen invaded a centre, scattered the voting materials, causing voters to flee. The soldiers nearby saved the day. There was also violence in Oshodi and Okota, compounded by the late arrival of materials in polling centres, which was reportedly instigated by a faction of the road transport union that refused to move materials. Thugs threatened those who refused to vote for the All Progressives Congress in Shitta, Surulere, Lagos."

Shaibu argued that the crown that Tinubu was wearing was stained with the blood of innocent Nigerians who were bold enough to resist the APC on the day of the election.

He added, "Tinubu's pyrrhic victory will be short-lived. The stolen crown balances on his head precariously. He will continue to shake until he drops it. It is funny that Lagos was the fulcrum of Tinubu's campaign as he promised to replicate the miracle of Lagos across Nigeria, and yet the people of Lagos rejected him on the day of election.

"Tinubu lost in Ikeja local government where he had voted and also lost in Bourdillon, Ikoyi where he lives. Rather than accept the will of the people, he unleashed thugs on the people he claimed to love. Jennifer Efdi Bima was hit in the face by Tinubu's hounds in Surulere. Her blood-stained ballot paper is a testament to the resolve of the people as he still lost in Lagos despite the violence.

"Ahead of the governorship election, Tinubu will once again relocate to Lagos, where he will try to unleash violence on the people in order to ensure that his puppet, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, is re-elected. Nigerians must rise up against such tyranny."

# Umo Eno makes final push in Akwa Ibom, lays out economic plan

IDRIS MOMOH

In the search for the outgoing Governor Gabriel Udom Emmanuel's successor one man stands head and shoulders higher than all other candidates in the gubernatorial election which holds in Akwa Ibom State on March 11. That man is Bassey Umo Eno, a man loaded with results-oriented ideas and visions.

He is not only armed with a rich profile in leadership, Eno is also an astute entrepreneur with sparkling evidence to show as an accomplished development agent who clearly understands what it means and takes to create wealth.

Umo Eno's foray into politics is not just a stray incidental development. Though not long as a contestant for elective political office, he can also not be dismissed as a neophyte or lilliputian. In the administration of former Governor, Obong Victor Attah, a renowned architect, he was appointed the chairman of Akwa Ibom Hotels and Tourism Board from 2004-2007.

While there, he made his modest contribution. Under his watch at the agency, the first Hotel/Tourism Directory was published. In the current administration of His Excellency, Gabriel Udom Emmanuel, he is serving as Executive Director, Agricultural Investments Directorate of Akwa Ibom State Investment Corporation (AKICORP). While there, among other things he led the team that planned and developed the first ever comprehensive data base of farmers in the state and covered crops and animal farmers. This has helped government to easily coordinate, support, educate and execute programmes.

He was also made to Chair the team to establish the Ibom Fadama Bank, a project that had been in the pipeline for years. He walked with nimble steps to get all the approvals done and get the bank up and running. While still on that assignment he was made Commissioner for Lands and Water Resources where he worked for slightly more than one year before he resigned to pursue his gubernatorial ambition.

In the private sector, he began his work career in banking and left paid employment as a Group General Manager to start Royalty Group, a company that at a time employed more than 2,500 people and was second highest employer of labour in the state. This explains why he believes with all sense of modesty that no one in the race can match his job creation credentials.

As Governor/Chief Executive Officer in his company, Royalty Group, a company he founded in 1997, he leads a team of more than 2,500 hundred direct employees to create tremendous wealth and immense opportunities for citizens in the hospitality, oil and gas, and manufacturing value chain. The knock-on effect of this is massive



Bassey Umo Eno

by any metric and must not be overlooked as the country battles to tame the canker of unemployment and poverty.

Among the candidates, Bassey Umo Eno, a visionary Christian leader and an astute entrepreneur and wealth creator is by far the best. He is the Governor / Chief Executive Officer of Royalty Group, a company he founded in 1997 with business interest in hospitality, manufacturing and oil / gas sector with over 500 direct employees spread across Nigeria.

Buoyed by his 5-point A.R.I.S.E agenda he says: "My vision is to deliver a prosperous state with ease of doing business. We want to create a state every Akwa Ibom person will have a sense of belonging and where every part of the state will be developed based on comparative advantage." A.R.I.S.E is an acronym for an agenda strategically defined by agricultural revolution, rural development, infrastructural maintenance/ advancement, security management and educational advancement). It is a focused attempt by the Peoples Democratic Party governorship candidate to continue along the path already taken by the Udom Emmanuel administration that has enabled the state to enjoy relative peace as the country contends with the harsh realities of insecurity. This has created an environment that has made development in all sectors thrive.

Eno recently disclosed in a recent interview with some select media professionals that his administration will be all about jobs, jobs and more jobs. He said: "The next government would provide jobs in so many

massive rural development. We intend to invest in primary health care, rural electrification, revamp our schools and ultimately reduce rural-urban drift. We are an agrarian state. We will harness our agriculture potentials for example, the oil palm. We will invest in and explore the agriculture value chain of various crops. Agri-business will be encouraged because of its job creation and economic benefits. Because of the current realities of the country and even the world, our state needs someone who understands the practical aspects of running the economy not just people who talk about it. I keep telling our people that if God gives me the opportunity, we intend to create a middle-class for this state."

The man cut out for the top job in Akwa Ibom State remains firm in his commitment to developing the tourism potential of the more than 129 kms of coastline and water bodies, upgrade beaches and tie this with his comprehensive hospitality and tourism plan. Hospitality and tourism constitute his forte, and he is keen on upgrading all the state's tourists' sites, harnessing tourism assets and revamping beaches in the state to international standard in addition to providing all support services.

He said: "Our goal is to make Akwa Ibom the number one tourism destination in Nigeria. Seriously, we intend to make the state very investment friendly, our people are hospitable, give excellent road network, and make sure our state is peaceful. Akwa Ibom will be the one-stop open to business and as a businessman, I know what is required to make this happen. In addition, I am probably the only candidate who has conducted a needs assessment and have plans for all sectors and LGAs of this state."

The Governor, as he is called in Royalty Group, is dexterous. He is a leader par excellence in the spiritual and secular realms. This ordained

apostle in the body of Christ is the Undershepherd of All Nations Christian Ministry International, a church called to build a community of Christian believers that transcends race, tribe, colour into a kingdom focused church, now also seeks to clinch the job of Governor of the state that would confer more executive powers to lead the state and do more to nudge Emmanuel's achievements to higher pedestals.

Pastor Eno's career trajectory has been thriving since 1982 when he joined the banking industry, working with Union Bank of Nigeria. He later ventured into private business working with Bertola Machine Tools from 1985 to 1990 and joined Norman Holdings Limited from 1990 to 1997 where he left as the Group General Manager (GGM), Commercial Services. Thereafter, he established Royalty Hotels and Recreations Limited in 1997.

He's the two (2) Star Paul Haris Fellow of Rotary Club of Eket District 9140 and has received several awards for his public spirited life. That's not all. Umo Eno is also an alumnus of Pan-African University's Lagos Business School (LBS) and a recipient of the National Productivity Award. In addition, he is a Fellow of Nigerian Catering and Hotel Institute (FNCHI).

On the social radar, he is seen as a good mixer who is a stickler for hard work, integrity and strong character. Besides these sterling qualities, he is the author of several books including, Wealth Creation – God's Way, Break Forth, Exercising Your Dominion Mandate, Dream Again and Marks of a Disciple. He is the Publisher/Editor-in-Chief of Hospitality Connect, The Appetizer Magazines. Pastor Eno is a regular contributor to Christian journals and is in high demand as Speaker in many public forums.

As expected, he a dedicated family man and is married to Pastor (Mrs.) Patience Eno. They are blessed with children and grandchildren.



L-R: Abubakar Alkali, May Agbamuchi-Mbu, national commissioners INEC; Mahmoud Yakubu, and Festus Okoye, national commissioner during the meeting with Resident Electoral Commissioners (REC's) and the Commission ahead of governorship and state Assembly in Abuja. picture by TUNDE ADENIYI.

# 2023 Polls: The morning after!

When on Saturday, July 11, 2009 the then United States President Barack Obama stated that: "Africa doesn't need strongmen, it needs strong institutions" it was made in total condemnation of tyrants on the continent; especially those who enrich themselves at the expense of the poor people. That is according to 'International Articles' online platform. Back then Obama was on a landmark trip to Accra, Ghana.

Going further, he urged Africans to demand for stronger governments, which of course, begins with free, fair, credible, violence-free elections of international standards. Such elections run in sync with the wishes of the people as expressed through their votes cast at the polling units. Unfortunately, what has recently transpired through the Presidential, Senatorial and House of Representatives polls held on Saturday, February 25, 2023 is contrary to Obama's clarion call.

Ordinarily, elections should not be viewed as a war front scenario, to be fought and won by the jungle mentality of might-is-right, or by brute force. No! Also, it should not be won by using the instrumentality of the power of incumbency, by the collusion of those agencies and arms of government entrusted with the mandate to protect the wishes of the eligible voters. That is under normal electoral conditions and more so in a sane society.

But here in Nigeria winning elections by the deployment of slush funds, overt injustice, subterfuge, lies, acts of betrayal and intimidation are becoming the rule rather than the exception. The import is that it is most unfortunate because we seem not to have learnt the bitter lessons from our past mistakes.

For instance, in 2010 ahead of the 2011 general elections a Texas, United States-based manufacturer of armoured vehicles wondered at the huge demand for such high-profile cars by our politicians. And he asked the troubling question: "Are Nigerians preparing for elections or are they getting set for war?" The answer should be obvious to many discerning citizens.

In a similar vein, a report titled: 'Nigeria's 2015 general elections: Limiting the violence' made available by

**Free, fair and credible elections form the strong foundation on which to build the house of democracy**

- Ayo Oyoze Baje (On 'Editors Forum', Galaxy TV, May 2011)

the International Crisis Group (ICG), a Belgium-based advocacy organization warned about the influx of wide-ranging firearms, ranging from pistols to assault rifles, portending grave dangers for the conduct of the elections. That was some eight years ago.

Fast forward to the current 2023 general elections. There have been several reported incidents of killings of candidates and harassment of voters after the process. For instance, the Labour Party Senatorial candidate, Oyibo Chukwu and five of his supporters were burnt to death in Enugu before the elections!

Similarly, some 13 people were reportedly burnt alive and three others shot to death on Sunday, February 26, 2023 in Tundunwada LGA of Kano state. Also, the campaign office of the New Nigerian People's Party (NNPP) was set ablaze in the same state. Furthermore, there were incidents of shops burnt in some places in Lagos state after the elections.

But one significant issue that has bedeviled the results as released is that of accusations and allegations of complicity and compromise by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). By its mandate INEC was established by the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to among other things organize elections into various political offices in the country.

In spite of the allocation of a humongous sum of N305.5bn as its 2023 budget its performance on the field has so far been below expectations. For instance, former

President Chief Olusegun Obasanjo recently stated that it is no longer a secret that INEC officials, at operational level, have been compromised. He wondered why the electoral body went against the Electoral Act to obtain results by manual means instead of by electronic transfer, as agreed. His observations are reflected in the document titled: 'Don't Set Nigeria on Fire if Your Hands are Clean'.

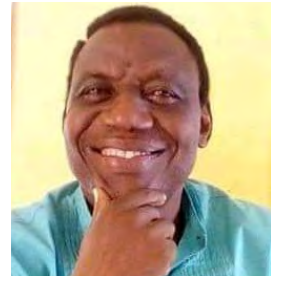
Not left out Comrade Isaac Balami, the Deputy Campaign Manager of the Obi/Datti Campaign Organization charged INEC to declare true results and not the "fake ones" as collated at the International Conference Centre (ICC), Abuja.

Incidentally, some aggrieved youths had a peaceful protest outside the ICC accusing INEC of reeling out results that are at variance with the votes cast by the eligible voters. On his part, a Human Rights lawyer, Inibehe Effiong accused the presiding officers of INEC of committing a criminal offence by failing to transmit results to the IReV portal, contrary to the new Electoral Act. INEC ought to have transmitted the results real time from the polling units.

In his candid view, renowned Human Rights lawyer, Femi Falana (SAN) demands immediate prosecution of electoral officials, especially those arrested by the police for disrupting the election, those caught for forging results and those who deliberately prevented people from voting.

On the querulous issue of declaring a presidential candidate as the winner, according to Mike Igini, the former Akwa Ibom Resident Electoral Commission (REC) 'no presidential candidate can be declared winner in the presidential election without winning 25% of the votes in Abuja, FCT'. This is also supported by Barrister Emeka Ozoani (SAN) quoting Section 133(b), last paragraph of the 1999 constitution. But was that complied with during the recent declaration of Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu as the winner? Only the courts will tell.

From the observations of the International observers, the European Election (EU) Observers Mission was disappointed that INEC could not upload election results to the viewing portal IReV despite the use of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) which they



**AYO OYOZE BAJE**

Baje is Nigerian first food technologist in the media and author of 'Drumbeats of Democracy'

had earlier commended.

Another issue of concern was raised by Jonathan Rosen, a researcher of the Committee to Protect Journalists. He revealed that 14 cases of harassment, attacks and detention during the course of the election took place.

From all the above-stated infractions, concerned Nigerians and political parties have called on INEC to comply with the Electoral Act and indeed, cancel the elections held so far. Pa Ayo Adebajo, the Afenifere chieftain, worried about the collapse of INEC's web infrastructure called for the immediate suspension of the collation of the results before the winner was declared.

Others include former President Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, Godwin Tsa, of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), political party presidential candidates such as that of the PDP, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP) and Dr. Rabi Kwankwanso of the NNPP. In fact, the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) has described the results as "illegitimate".

As rightly canvassed by Obama, we do not need strong individuals who would subvert the wishes of the people using the Machiavellian tactics. Rather, we need strong institutions, beginning with INEC to ensure that the people's votes must always count.

The ball is now in the court of the courts and the time to act is now!

Note: This piece is dedicated to Mrs. Bina Jennifer Efidu, a voter who was wounded by suspected thugs in Ikate area of Surulere, Lagos during the elections but still went ahead to cast her vote.



**IKEDDY ISIGUZO**

.Isiguzo is a major commentator on minor issues

## 2023 Elections - 'Go to court' is not an answer

told the Civil Society Situation Room in Abuja: "On technology, the Electoral Act 2022 requires the Commission to deploy the technology on Election Day for voter accreditation and the upload of polling unit results to the INEC Result Viewing (IReV) portal. These processes will be achieved through the use of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS). I wish to reassure Nigerians that the BVAS has come to stay as the only means of voter accreditation.

"Results from polling units will be uploaded to the IReV portal in real time. Nigerians will view the results as they are uploaded.

"For the last two years beginning from August 2020, the Commission has published results direct from polling units in 105 off-cycle Governorship and bye-elections in real-time and the results can still be viewed on the IReV portal. The 2023 General Election will not be different.

"This should put to rest the erroneous notion that Nigerians will not have the opportunity to view polling unit results uploaded by Presiding Officers in real time on Election Day."

One needed to quote Prof Yakubu elaborately to rest any insinuations that the public's expectations that INEC should have uploaded the results "real time" were misplaced.

Has real time assumed new meanings? Does real time still mean, "the actual time during which a process or event occurs"? Prof Yakubu should tell us.

Professor Yakubu swore by the efficiency of BVAS, knocking off every doubt to the point of convincing Nigerians that the

plastic they held in their hands, PVC, was a powerful tool for expressing their electoral preferences. INEC would protect the choices Nigerians make from tampering.

INEC confessed it had time. It had rested the technology. No excuses. Thankfully, its silence is less insulting than explanations that could deepen the pains of millions who invested their trust in a new, expensive process that drained more than N350 billion from public coffers.

Anger and frustrations at the management of the 2023 elections, relief that they ever held, celebrations for those "announced" winners and those who won, have dotted the landscape.

The moments of triumphalism have drowned the expectations that the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System, BVAS, was the elixir to election rigging. And questions about why it did not work. Or did it work?

There were more assurances. INEC National Commissioner & Chairman Voter Education Committee, Festus Okoye issued a November 11 statement about the sanctity of the BVAS and the fidelity it would vest on the results of the 2023 elections. The statement was a response to growing doubts that INEC would not use the BVAS technology for the 2023 elections.

Okoye was direct and pointed in asserting that, "The Commission has repeatedly assured Nigerians that it will transmit results directly from the polling units as we witnessed in Ekiti and Osun Governorship elections and 103 constituencies where off-cycle Governorship/FCT Area Council elections and bye-elections were held since August 2020".

Okoye said IReV was one of the most im-

portant innovations that the Commission had deployed for the integrity of elections in Nigeria. "It is therefore inconceivable that the Commission would turn around and undermine its own innovations," he said.

Nigerians are sad above the failure of these expectations. When they were told that the 2023 elections would be different, they could never have imagined how different. They trusted INEC again and got more battered than in previous elections.

Lives are involved. Some have been lost in election violence. A teenager reportedly committed suicide as the results were not in his candidate's favour. He, like others, wanted proof that their candidates were beaten fairly.

Unlike others, his frustration tipped. He did not wait for the proof.

The answer to if BVAS worked cannot be "you can go to court". If you don't know the answer, say so. Nigerians want quick answers to what happened on 25 February 2023. They deserve candid answers.

What is clear is that how they manage the answers would be different and personal. At least, the answers could be the barest affirmation that public institutions like INEC are established to serve the public which they also owe accountability.

Finally...

LET us go to the polls on 11 March even more peaceful than we were for the presidential and National Assembly elections. There is more to life than elections

.Isiguzo is a major commentator on minor issues