

Dr. Amba Ambaiowe Still Lives On - Douye Diri

In His Passing, I'm Coming To Understand The Scope of What Nimi Was All About - Ninah Nimi Briggs

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Loss Of Dangote Refinery: Rivers, Communities Strive To Improve Ties With Investors

The world was at Lekki in Lagos State last Monday to witness the inauguration of the 650,000 barrels per day Dangote Refinery, the biggest petroleum refinery in the world.

It is estimated that the plant would boost the economy of Lagos State by generating thousands of jobs, downstream investments and taxes in Lagos. It would also attract multi-billion dollar foreign direct investments to Lagos and further enhance the economy in that corridor of the Gulf of Guinea.

The refinery, according to the Chairman of the Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria (IPMAN) in Rivers State, Dr. Joseph Obele, will stabilise petroleum distribution with its multiplier

benefits on businesses that depend on the products. "The era of consistent scarcity. The product will be available. There will be surplus of products in Nigeria and that issue of once in a while scarcity will be a thing of the past," Obele told National Point.

While Lagos is celebrating the birthing of Dangote Refinery, stakeholders in the Niger Delta, which produces the crude oil in Nigeria are lamenting the loss of the multi-billion dollar investment to a non-oil producing corridor. This feeling is expressed against the backdrop that most of the crude oil that will be needed by Dangote Refinery will be pumped directly from the Niger Delta through a dedicated pipeline.

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Be Sincere At The Ongoing Presidential Election Petition Tribunal: SMBLF

By Preye Okah, Yenagoa

The Southern and Middle Belt Leaders Forum (SMBLF) has urged the Nigerian judiciary to be sincere during the ongoing presidential election petition trials, adding that Nigerians are keenly watching.

In a communique issued on Thursday at the end of the groups meeting in Abuja and presided over by elder statesman, Chief Edwin Clark, the group called on Nigeria youths to remain undeterred and emboldened to carry their foresight of building a new Nigeria to fruition.

The meeting also had Chief Ayo Adebajo, leader of Afenifere (South West); Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu, CFR, president-general, Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide (South East); Dr. Pogu Bitrus, president, Middle Belt Forum

(Middle Belt) as well as Emmanuel Ibok Essien, national chairman, Pan Niger Delta Forum, PANDEF (South-South).

Other participants were Oba Oladipo Olaitan - deputy leader Afenifere, general Lawrence Onoja rtd., former military governor of Plateau and Katsina States, Potter L. Dabup, D.I.G (Rtd.), John Nnia Nwodo, former minister of information and former PG Ohanaeze Ndigbo, Ambassador Okey Emuchay, secretary-general Ohanaeze Ndigbo, HRM Dr. Eze Ibe Nwosu, Amb. Eddy Onuoha, Chief Dr. Simon Okeke, former chairman of Police Service Commission, Amb. Dr. God knows Igali, Prof. G. G. Darah, Chief Sola Ebiseni - Secretary General, Afenifere, Dr. Akin Fapohunda, Chief Supo Shonibare, Professor Charles Nwekeaku, Dr. Alex Ogonnia, Dr. Ene Ede, Elder Mac Emakpore, Prince Maikpobi Okareme, Engr. Ben Akaakar, Hon. Jonathan Tsaku, and Dr.

Ken Robinson, among others.

The Communique read in part "SMBLF strongly urges the Nation's Judiciary to be aware that all Nigerians are watching with very keen interest the ongoing judicial processes at the Presidential Election Petition Tribunal as well as various election tribunals across the country.

"With regards to the 2023 General elections, SMBLF commends Nigerian youths for their courage and astuteness in expressing their interest in the future of this country and calls on them not to become discouraged by some of the seeming outcomes.

"Further cautions the judicial arm, at all levels, to be mindful of the fact that the present process is a true test of our effort at building a country based on rule of law and respect for our constitution. It is the expectation of Nigerians that the

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Protest Rocks BIU As 21-year-old Final Year Student Slumps, Dies On Football Pitch

Iduozee Efe Paul, Benin

A final-year Science student of Benson Idahosa University (BIU) Benin City, in Edo State, Bruno Chigozie Ezeonye has slumped and died while playing football at the institution's football pitch.

Information available revealed that the 21-year-old said to be the only son of his parents, died at BIU's Legacy Campus.

His father, who hails from Anambra, and mother, a South African, are said to be based abroad.



Late Bruno Chigozie Ezeonye

It was learnt he was rushed to the Campus health centre where he was referred to Faith

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Shocking: Loud Silence As Fred Alasia, Odili's Powerful Chief Of Staff Dies

Loss Of Dangote Refinery: Rivers, Communities Strive ...

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Mr. Ibifiri Bob-Manuel, the President of Rivers Entrepreneur and Investment Forum (REIF), blamed the state and local governments in the Niger Delta for failing to provide the required investment climate for Dangote to site the 650,000 BPSD refinery in the region. This he said also applied to relationships with other investors.

Bob-manuel said, "The Dangote refinery was to be situated in Rivers State and later they made a U-turn and went to Lagos, and we were very miffed by the whole approach.

"We wrote a couple of letters to the management of the Dangote group. We went as far as writing to the Federal Government.

"When they called for a meeting with us, we went for that meeting. It was discovered that the investment that was meant to be situated in Rivers State,

precisely Okrika and Eleme Local Government Areas, they got preliminary land acquisition and agreement and perfected all that.

"But the amount of pushback and demands that were from the state government at that time, obviously, left them with no other option but to go and situate the business at a location where they were welcomed."

The REIF President said state and local governments as well as communities should learn how to negotiate with investors in order to attract businesses to their areas.

"This brings us back to what we at the Investors' Forum have always talked about. We've always felt the Rivers State Government, the local governments and the communities need to understand the language of businesses.

"You can only imagine the amount of impact the refinery is going to have on the IGR of

Lagos State. Imagine if that investment was situated in Rivers State," Bob-Manuel said.

The story of the location of Dangote Refinery began from the Niger Delta, where the founder of the company, Aliko Dangote, had proposed to build the modern plant after his purchase of the Federal Government-owned Port Harcourt Refining Company Limited (PHRCC) was revoked in 2007 by the government of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua.

Dangote had in an interview admitted that the journey of the refinery located in Lekki started from Port Harcourt after his successful bid to take over the Port Harcourt refinery located in Eleme was revoked by the Federal Government in 2007.

"In business, you need to know before you jump into something. You have to do quite a lot of homework. For instance, Nigeria's refineries were privatized in 2007. We bought

two (Port Harcourt and Kaduna refineries), but after a few months, we had a new government that decided to void the transaction," Dangote told the Nigerian Vanguard in an interview.

"So, since 2007, we've been working on building our refinery, but we didn't finally start something until 2015. Here the capital investments are huge—much larger. And if you are not a big player, you have no way of survival," he said.

Dangote's company, Bluestar Oil Services Limited, a consortium that included Femi Otedola's Zenon Petroleum, Transcorp Group and Sinopec of China, that bought PHRC plant at Alesa, Eleme for \$561 million in the privatisation programme of the Federal Government the dying days of President Olusegun Obasanjo. Other bidders that lost out included Indorama

International Finance Limited, Global Oil and Energy, Mittal Investments Limited, Link Global International Limited and Taleveras Group Oil Works Limited.

In a hurried transaction, the Obasanjo administration signed the papers and handed over the refinery to Bluestar on May 28, 2007, just a day before leaving office. The transaction and its details raised suspicions and became a top issue soon after Yar'Adua assumed office as President.

The sale of the refinery to Dangote was seriously opposed by the two major oil unions, the National Union of Petroleum and natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) and the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN), which argued that not only was it an unfair disposal of a national asset, that the welfare of thousands of

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Be Sincere At The Ongoing...

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outcome of the processes will be a reflection of the provisions of the Constitution of the country, which must be sacrosanct, and the rights of all affected parties upheld based on the provisions of the laws of Nigeria.

"Accordingly, calls on the youths of Nigeria to remain undeterred and emboldened to carry their foresight of building a new Nigeria to fruition, and to note that the struggle for the needed change has just begun.

"SMBLF restates its time-tested position that the future of Nigeria can only be sustained on the basis of true federalism and respect for the autonomy of the federating units.

"SMBLF expresses shock at the escalation of killings, pogroms, total destruction of entire communities and means of livelihood in several targeted areas in select states since after the 2023 general elections, mainly in Plateau, Benue, Nasarawa, Taraba, Southern Kaduna, Kebbi and various states of the South East, where hundreds of armless citizens are being slaughtered daily.

"We note with grave concern that the nation's security agencies have continued to show unwillingness to decisively deal with the perpetrators of these monstrous acts, or rather, deliberately turned a blind eye to the atrocious occurrences, thereby exposing the country to a seeming state of war. It is shameful that non-state actors are allowed to openly tote dangerous weapons about and rampage the country unhindered.

"SMBLF condemns, in unmistakable terms, the cavalier and totally nonchalant attitudes of the outgoing governors of some states over the collapse of security in certain parts of their states, which has continued to exacerbate the worrisome situation and hopes their successors will show greater

commitment to the welfare of their citizens who are the victims of this sad situation.

"SMBLF further warns that the continuous abdication of government's primary and abiding constitutional responsibility of safeguarding the lives and properties of its citizens is an irresistible signal to Nigerians to exercise their inalienable rights of self-defense, by all means.

"SMBLF again deplors the inhuman plight of thousands of indigenous people in the Middle Belt states driven out of their homes and have now become internally displaced persons (IDPs) for years as well as several other internally displaced persons in different parts of the country, left to live in conditions that impinge on their human rights as citizens of this country.

"SMBLF hence, calls on the Federal Government to, without any further delay, facilitate the return and reintegration of these Nigerians to their Communities.

"SMBLF commends the various parties for subjecting themselves to the expected judicial processes in line with the Constitution and the Electoral Laws of the country.

"SMBLF notes with serious concern, the continued snowballing level of indebtedness being incurred by the Federal Government, particularly the recent request for \$800 million World Bank loan, and calls on the Federal Government to rescind that request.

"SMBLF decries the rising cost of living in the country and the hyper inflation rate, confining a vast majority of ordinary Nigerians to a dire state of survival. Implores government at all levels to take urgent, practical steps to rejig the economy, check inflation and help improve citizens' well-being and prospects.

Downen College vs Sylvester Oromoni: Brief Report Of Court Proceedings

By Our Reporter

January 27, 2021, Magistrate Mikhail Kadiri (Coroner) presided over the Sylvester Oromoni vs Downen College case in Epe, Lagos State. The sitting attracted a very large crowd of mainly Ijaw youths and elders from Lagos and Epe among other spectators. The Courtroom was filled to the brim. Lawyers representing Oromoni family, Downen College, Lagos State Government, Nigerian Bar Association, Civil Rights Organizations and other lawyers representing some students accused of torturing Sylvester



Sylvester Oromoni Jnr.

Oromoni jnr were also present. Outside the Court were policemen with patrol vehicles. Conspicuously parked opposite the Court premises was a mini bus belonging to Ijaw Youths

Council (IYC) with our youths hovering around. With the visible presence of Ijaw youths, more Police reinforcement arrived and cordoned off the Court premises situated near Epe river. Midway to the proceedings which centered around accreditation of lawyers, in our full view, a man rushed in and whispered to the judge. Without any word, the judge got up and retreated to his Chamber. We later learnt that there was rumor of Ijaw people were coming to attack the Court from Epe river! As more police were drafted to beef up security, the judge returned to his seat and announced adjournment. Early

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PANDEF National Chairman, Governor of Bayelsa state, Senator E K Clark Gen IBM Haruna former Edo state Governor

EDITORIAL

As Nigeria Moves Into Another Era

May 29 is the baton handover date for Nigeria's political leadership. With May 29, 2023, Nigerians come to the end of an eight-year leadership under President Muhammadu Buhari and the All Progressive Congress (APC), an era that has witnessed record anguish, abuse of office, deaths and desolation.

An unprecedented 63,111 Nigerians are reported to have died from various conflicts within this period while the bulk of the skilled manpower, especially youths migrated abroad. These were as a result of governance failure, a system crash that began with the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) government in 1999, which the succeeding APC regime worsened, making life unbearable for citizens.

The Buhari administration exhibited so much impunity that it encouraged even governments in states controlled by rival political parties to take a cue, where public officers serve themselves at the neglect of the people; borrowing without deploying funds to projects.

In the Niger Delta states, Rivers State for example, citizens' rights were grossly abused, needs were not met despite drawing huge resources from both federal and internal sources. Transparency and accountability were jettisoned while the people were harassed by security personnel and spurious executive orders, while the legislature despite having oversight powers to checkmate the executive impunity, aided it.

The people rejected this misrule through their votes in the February and March, 2023 general elections, but the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, chose to subvert the votes when it failed to respect the rules as set out in the Electoral Act 2022. That singular act further created new uncertainties that have generated the apprehensions surrounding today's transition.

It is clear to Nigerians and the world that the country needs leadership, a committed and empathic leadership to properly harness the

abundant material and human resources it has; restore trust and confidence in the people and earn world respect again.

Taking up from those handing over to continue on their path will be disastrous because the country is already on the brink of collapse, with a huge external debt record of \$41.8 billion, ever growing insecurity, collapsed infrastructure in all sectors-education, health, roads, etc., massive corruption with officials embezzling in hundreds of billions and getting rewarded with higher position.

Things have got to change to avert a revolt, whose consequence can be catastrophic. The people are choking, merely surviving and angry that their votes did not count in many places. They are angry that the yearning for the unity, peace, progress and opportunity promised them by the Nigerian National Anthem and the founding fathers are turning to an endless dream.

They are tired and want to breathe; and be real partners in the business of building Nigeria. This is the truth that all those coming on board the political leadership train today must understand and work towards. That oath to serve must cease to be abused but, be respected. Those electioneering promises must be honoured. Get ready to walk your work and be ready to respect the will, demands of the people. The world is daily changing their rules to shut the door against the influx of Nigerians and you cannot allow that to continue.

Remake Nigeria for by so doing, you are securing your future also. Generals have been killed by hoodlums taking over our forests and roads. Our top leaders like Ike Ekweremadu, a former Deputy President of the Senate, are in foreign jails because we failed to build a sustainable country. This is an opportunity to correct the many years that the locusts have eaten.

Come in prepared to serve, the people are watching! We welcome the Labour Party and expect to see the difference of their presence in the new leadership. ●

LETTER

The world campaign against climate injustice propelled by fossil fuel extraction activities continues to mount. A recent protest was staged in the UK where the views of Niger Deltans were projected.



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Eleme Women Protest Inheritance Denial

By Emmanuel Obe

Women in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State have protested the culture of denying women the right to inherit family property.

The women raised their voice at a one-day programme on Story Telling on Women Inheritance held at St. Stephen's Anglican Church, Alode, Eleme last Tuesday.

The programme was organized by Mba Okase Initiative Eleme and supported by Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Centre.

Leader of Mba Okase Initiative, Eleme, Dr. Patience Osaroejiji, said, "Eleme culture and traditions have had no place for girls and women with regards to inheritance of land and houses, either from their father's side or their husband's side. This has resulted to so much suffering and has created poverty amongst us as women."

She said this state of affairs has crippled women materially and has made it impossible for women to pursue their economic, social and political aspirations successfully, adding that women who dared to sponsor themselves in political and economic ventures, were stigmatized and branded as irresponsible.

Apart from inheritance rights denial, women are not included in leadership and decision making organs of the communities such as the community development committees, youth leadership and the council of chiefs.

"The only place our daughters are functioning in families is to get married and be the ones to care for those who deny them their rights," she added.

Dr. Osaroejiji said that even these days when communities share land compensation monies, Eleme women are not counted among those to benefit.

"They remember them when mummy or daddy is ill or any problem hits the family. During the sharing of father's property, she is not in the picture. They only give her two yards of George wrapper," she stated.

She however, thanked the Rivers State House of Assembly and the governor of Rivers State, Chief Nyesom Wike, for enacting the Women Inheritance Law, which entitles women to share in their father's properties.

Dr. Osaroejiji urged women to take advantage of the law and seek court protection of their rights in the share of their parents' property.

Land in Eleme culture can only be owned by men, who may lease out to women for farming purposes. Several years ago, when the host communities of Indorama Eleme Petrochemicals Limited started receiving dividends on their equity shares in the company, communities like Akpakpan, Njuru and Okerewa paid male children higher dividends than the female children. Daughters of the communities that had married out were not considered to



L-R: Mr. Jacob Iniodu, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer Kebetkache, Hon. Lawrence Osarobe, representative of Eleme Council Chairman, and Chief (Mrs.) Mercy Onungwe, female traditional ruler of Alode, Eleme

benefit from the dividends because the communities said they now belong to their husbands' communities.

A community like Okerewa did not pay the dividends to their daughters married outside or to their daughters who had returned home after they were divorced from their husbands. It was not until 2022 that a new leadership in the community reviewed that. But they only paid a fixed amount of money to their daughters that were married out and the ones that had returned home after they secured divorce from their husbands.

However after sustained protests from women and civil society groups, the discrimination against women in the payment of dividends and land compensations have been between male and female members of the communities have been dropped. But many families still discriminate against women in the sharing of proceeds from the sale of land. The argument is that land is always held in trust by the male descendants as the females would marry and move out.

However despite being

denied material benefits and inheritance rights in their fathers' families, women are burdened with heavy responsibilities in their fathers' homes.

The first daughters play major roles in the burial of their fathers, which require spending a lot of money to entertain guests and feed the community and religious organisations that their fathers belonged to. They are also the first people to contact, when family members need personal care, and when their fathers' families are embroiled in conflicts.

This point was buttressed by Chief Mrs. Mercy Edee, a midwife from Okerewa Community, who revealed that women who were married out of their communities were denied the dividends paid to the community from the Indorama Eleme Petrochemicals equity shares.

"We went and bought big drinks and wine and gave to the chiefs. They drank and went away. They said we should go, that we belong to our husbands, but, as the Lord would have it, those who are on the seat now later called us and compensated us with N50,000 each. Those whose marriages did not favour and came back home, they gave them N100,000 each," she said.

"Pray that government should look into this matter because it is paining us badly," Chief Edee added.

Also speaking, the female traditional ruler of Alode, Madam Mercy Nnenna Onungwe, appealed to the state and local governments to come to the aid of Eleme women by ensuring that they got their rights of inheritance whether in the father's homes or their husbands' home.

In a message he sent to the programme, the chairman of Eleme Local Government, Chief Obarilomate Olor, said the local government was following after the footsteps of the Rivers State governor and was already including women in strategic appointments in his government.

The chairman, who was



Dr. Patience Osaroejiji, Leader Mba Okase Women Initiative



Mba Okase Women Initiative in drama presentation



Drama presentation by Mba Okase Women Initiative

represented by Hon. Lawrence Osarobe, said women had the right to share in the properties left behind by their fathers.

The monitoring and evaluation officer of Kebetkache, Mr. Jacob Iniodu, urged the women to get conversant with the Violence Against Women law and the Prohibition of Curtailment of Women's Rights Act and assert their rights under the laws.

Highlight of the programme were two drama presentations that depicted how the Eleme woman is denied her rights in the family, property inheritance despite her contributions to the stability and progress of the family. ●

Odili Gave Me Secret Of Success – Wike

...says Fubara won't be like him

Governor Nyesom Wike of Rivers State has said the secret of the success of his administration was contained in a list handed him by former governor of the state, Dr. Peter Odili.

The governor, who spoke at a public lecture cum book presentation in his honour in Port Harcourt on Thursday, however did not reveal items on the list that Odili gave him.

He said those who expect that his successor, Mr. Joseph Fubara, will act like him would be disappointed, stating however that the incoming governor would surpass his own performance in office.

Wike confessed that his administration enjoyed tremendous support from leaders and people of the state and would want same support to be given to Fubara because if the incoming governor fails, all the people that worked for his emergence as governor would have failed.

"He is somebody you can rely on. His yes is yes, that I can tell you. He is an accountant, they are very conservative. They don't spend money anyhow. They spend the money where they know it will be useful. So, don't rate us as the same. But he is a very good person," Wike said.

The governor said no two persons are the same and therefore, people should not expect the same kind of relationship they had with his administration with the incoming government.

He assured that Fubara will be committed to deliver on what will make Rivers people happy.

"When people were struggling to be governors, he never one day came to me to say 'Sir, I am interested'. Only those who don't have the interest of the state were those masquerading themselves, running around, those who I know that would sell the State the next day and I thank God they have all left.

"If Rivers people were not in support of our administration, we would not have been encouraged to do what we have done. And so, I say to all of you our leaders, Rivers people that I appreciate every support you have given to us since 2015."

Governor Wike also expressed appreciation to Dr Peter Odili, former governor of the state for writing down the list of things he should avoid if he wanted to succeed. According to him, that list helped him greatly.

In the inauguration lecture entitled, "Democracy, Transformational Leadership and Sustainable Development: The Rivers Experience," Prof. Julius Ihonvbere acknowledged the tactically strategic politics of governor Wike that produced result in the state and beyond.

"Wike brought in a new phase of domestic and international appreciation of the location of the state in economic calculations.

"In terms of infrastructure, there is no one in the history of the state that you can compare comfortably with Wike. Like a man in a hurry to finish an assignment, he unleashed massive interventions, often at great cost, on practically every

By Emmanuel Obe

sector especially, health, education, administration of justice and rural development."

Prof. Ihonvbere said Nigeria's democratic practice is characterised by reactionary, opportunistic and anti-democratic actions that have tendency of bankrupting those who are not strong and focused.

According to him, the problem is in the fact that Nigerians are unwilling to think differently, work differently and interact differently.

He said what Nigeria has is not liberal democracy but illiberal democracy because it encouraged closed democratic spaces, extra-legal deployment of power and authoritarian tendencies.

Dr. Odili, former governor of Rivers State unveiled the four books that were written in honour of Governor Wike.

He described Wike as a phenomenal leader who

confronted leadership challenges and came out victoriously, becoming an example and inspiration to those coming after him.

Vice-Chancellor of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Prof. Okey Onuchukwu, said the books depict the kind of leadership styles that Governor Wike provided in driving development to meet present and future needs of Rivers people.

The four books presented to the public were, 'Leadership, Governance and Sustenance in Nigeria, in honour of Governor Nyesom Ezenwo Wike', edited by Prof. Okey Onuchukwu and



Governor Wike, Governor-elect Sim Fubara, others at the commissioning of one of the projects

Prof Chinedum Mmom, and 'Transformational Speeches of Governor Nyesom Ezenwo Wike', edited by Barr. E.K Beredugo.

The other books are, 'Educational and Sustainable

Development, a book in honour of Governor Nyesom Ezenwo Wike, edited by Florence Ataka, and 'Nyesom Wike, Leadership, Strategies in Governance, Faculties and Testimonials', edited by Eric Osagie. ●

Shocking: Loud Silence As Fred Alasia, Odili's Powerful Chief Of Staff Dies

By Sirah Lemmy

Chief Frederick Sunday Alasia, the super powerful, brilliant Chief of Staff to former governor of Rivers State Dr. Peter Odili, who died on Thursday, October 21, 2022, has been buried in his home town, Okparaki community in Ahoada West Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Alasia who died at 74 years, was buried March 25, 2023. *National Point* sources reveal that Alasia had died unnoticed and his remains undetected for days during the flood that ravaged the Orashi region in 2022. He was said to have been earlier moved to the first floor of his home, from the ground floor as the flood waters welled. Largely living alone, Alasia eventually died unnoticed as family and community members battled to save themselves and property from the flood waters of 2022, generally considered the worst flood incident since the 2012 flood. Found in circumstances perceived to be humiliating, his remains were then taken to a morgue in neighbouring Bayelsa State.

Afflicted with spinal paralysis for decades, Alasia was largely wheelchair bound, even in the hey days of his reign as one of the powerful, colourful personalities thrown up by the Odili reign as governor in 1999, when civilian rule returned in Nigeria.

The brilliant, eloquent Alasia had a personality which loomed large in the state during his controversial time as Chief of Staff to Peter Odili. He had returned to live in his community reportedly in 2018, after selling off his house at Nzimiro, Amadi Flats, Old GRA, Port Harcourt, his cars and other valuable properties.

Alasia was unarguably, one of the foremost political propagandists in the state at a time. He was highly controversial, a brain box and engine room for the good or bad

performance of Dr. Peter Odili from 1999-2007.

Fred attended Baptist High School in Port Harcourt in 1965. At the start of the civil war in 1967, he returned to his family stead in Edagbiri, Joinkrama. During the war, as was customary for young boys at the time, Fred gave himself the nickname *Janta Manta*, the name of a character from his favourite movie. *Janta Manta*, was a magician who many agreed was uncannily similar to Fred.

Fred returned to Baptist High School in 1972 for his higher school certificate. He completed his programme in 1973. After school, he was recruited as a teacher in the same school. It was while teaching at Baptist High School that he won a scholarship to further his education.

Fred attended the University of Wisconsin Superior, United States of America from 1977 to 1981. While there, as always Fred was a star. In addition to being the first black student Union President, he successfully completed three degrees. A double bachelor's degree in Mass Communication and Radio, Television and Film production. And a master's degree in Communication propaganda.

Always a believer in blossoming where you are planted, he returned to Nigeria in 1981 and embarked on his NYSC programme from 1981 to 1982 during which time he was able to put his journalism degree to good use at NTA. While there, he became known for his popular segment that exposed criminals.

After his NYSC, he became a freelance journalist, his work during his time as a freelancer landed him his job at the Instructional Resource Centre, University of Port Harcourt in late 1983. Fred did not stay as an ordinary staff member for long, he soon became the Head of



Chief Frederick Sunday Alasia

Department and a member of the University Senate.

Fred's interest in politics had begun to take root. He went on to form several clubs with young men who would later become notable members of society. One of such clubs was the B-Club, formed in the time of General Ibrahim Babangida, 1985-1993. Fred also took on the role of campaign manager for the then National Republican Convention gubernatorial candidate, Chief Zebulum Abule.

During his early days lecturing at Uniport, Fred met a female medical student named Osuo-abo Solomon. A few months after their meeting, the couple got married in August, 1985. During the early years of marriage, Fred focused on his work as a lecturer and the young medical student became a doctor. The marriage was blessed with three children, two girls and a boy.

Unfortunately, Dr. (Mrs.) Osuo-abo Alasia died in 2018 and after the death of his wife Fred

welcomed a fourth child in 2021.

In 1998, Fred left the world of small-scale politics after he took on the role as campaign manager for Dr. Peter Odili. His Excellence in the game of politics brought him fame, respect and earned him the nickname 'Prof'.

During Dr. Peter Odili's tenure, Fred served in several capacities including Senior Special Assistant to the Governor 1999-2000,

Director of the National Orientation Agency, NOA 2001-2003 and Chief of Staff to the Rivers State Government 2003-2007.

During his years in Service, Fred Alasia was known for his sharp mind, his intellect, his wit and the unique ways he solved complex problems. His skills made him an invaluable asset to his party, government and people.

Fred Alasia was an intense, strongly opinionated personality, who did not ever suffer adversaries gladly in any shape or form. He fell apart with relatives, friends, associates and this made him a loner, at his home town Okparaki and similar spaces until his lonely end.

Even in death, due to the unsettled misunderstanding, the former governor Peter Odili, numerous friends and associates shunned his funeral rites. Rather, they all graced the burial ceremony of Chief Omunakwe Nsirim (OCC) Apiti of Rumueme Kingdom on the day Alasia was buried. ●

IYC Wants Regional Approach To Niger Delta Problems

By Preye Okah, Yenagoa

National Spokesman of the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) Ebilade Ekerefe has advised stakeholders from the Niger Delta region to adopt new strategies to tackle the persistent reluctance of the Federal Government to respond to their agitations.

According to Ekerefe, the region must do away with obsolete strategies and adopt the new era of strategic alliances with other ethnic nationalities and intellectuals in an aggressive engagement with the federal government for accelerated development of the region.

Speaking recently in Yenagoa at a colloquium to mark his 36th birthday and the unveiling of his book, "Chronicle of Ebilade Ekerefe, The Journey So Far," he maintained that the Ijaw nation and other stakeholders from the region cannot continue to apply outdated approaches to agitation and expect to achieve the desired result in an evolving world.

The IYC spokesman who used the opportunity to declare interest in the presidency of the ninth council of the IYC, maintained that the new age requires new strategies.

"We are currently in a jet age and we must prepare an army of young, vibrant and intellectually mobile Ijaw youths to drive home our demands."

"The IYC has come of age to look inward and come up with a renewed strategy to confront the myriad of challenges that affect us as a people, if we must get it right," he stated.

Ekerefe attributed the successes recorded by the IYC to thousands of youths, elders, and state governors of the region particularly, the Bayelsa State governor, Douye Diri who, he said had supported and encouraged him to speak out against injustice and the failure of the President Muhammadu Buhari administration to commit to the demands of the Niger Delta people.

He said the administration of President Buhari was unfair to the region in the past eight years.

He pointed out that the Buhari government unfairly treated the Niger Delta region and its peoples despite the huge contributions of the region to the economy of the nation.

He said: "Under his government, all the institutions of government which were established by law to develop the region, ran under interim or sole administration basis which stalled the development of the region. Despite our cries, the East-West road remains an eyesore."

"Portions of the road remain a death trap with all the promises made. There were serious efforts to terminate the amnesty program and annex the NDCC into the Niger Delta Ministry but, we stood our ground and fought very hard for the status quo to remain".

According to him, "Majority of the projects awarded by



Ebilade Ekerefe

Buhari's federal government in the Niger Delta region were all on ground-breaking level.

"The worst of it is the climate change and the perennial flooding which have made life very unbearable and yet, the federal government has refused to come to our aid. Unemployment is on the rise and our people remain constantly agitated."

Highlighting the federal government's lack of interest in the pains of the region, he added, "Rampaging Fulani herdsmen

have invaded our region, killing our people with impunity and the security apparatus of the country, is doing nothing about it."

As the country welcomes a new government, Ekerefe said it was time to review strategies.

"In a few days from now, we shall be having a new government under Senator Bola Tinubu. Nobody knows his plans for the region and what will befall us. The future is full of uncertainties and there's no better time than now for a vibrant and courageous

leadership".

On his aspiration for the position of president of the IYC, Ebilade Ekerefe said he was only responding to a public call to service.

"I have come to that point of accepting the call from my teeming supporters, political stakeholders, elders of the council, various organs of the council and the masses to become the ninth president of the most revered revolutionary youth council in the West African sub-region," he said.

Ekerefe said despite the challenges facing the leadership of the council, if elected IYC president, he would build a new era founded on the achievements he made in the past three years as spokesperson of the Ijaw Youth Council.

"I'm young, vibrant, and energetic to be your president for the next three years, and make no mistake about it, I'm the representation of a new era. Just as I did not sleep as the spokesperson in advancing the cause, I'll not still sleep as your president."

"Under my watch, the Ijaw nation will be protected against banditry and marauding herdsmen who are terrorizing our people. It will not be business as usual."

He said, "In the new era, my leadership will aggressively and strategically engage the Nigerian

state in a more robust and coordinated manner that will produce desired results. While we shall constantly keep the issues of resource control and fiscal federalism on the front burner of the national discourse, issues of climate change will be prioritized.

"We shall take the advocacy and engagements to the international scene and create global awareness on greenhouse emission".

"In doing so, we shall set up a research team of young intellectuals from Ijaw extraction who will guide us in our advocacies and engagements. We have already kick-started the free ICT skill acquisition training programme, intended to build the capacities of 301 Ijaw youths before the end of the year."

"We shall accomplish it and expand its scope to accommodate more youths across the region and other initiatives that will be attractive to youths, especially, agriculture and sports development."

The colloquium was attended by former Nigerian Ambassador, Dr. Godknows Igali, the Vice Chancellor of the Federal University, Otuoke, Professor Teddy Adias, the 2nd Vice President of the Ijaw National Congress, INC, Alabo Nengi James, former National Treasurer of the INC, Chief Kalaiti Jephtha among others.

The School Feeding Programme Will Not Stop - Hajia Farouq

The Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, Hajia Sadiya Umar-Farouq has assured Bayelsa state Government that the school feeding programme will not be stopped as the programme in the state and as a new administration comes onboard.

Speaking on Thursday in Yenagoa at the formal launch of the programme and handover of utensils to the cooks, the minister who was represented by the director legal services of the Ministry Garba Haganawega advised the state not to be afraid because the programme has already been domesticated.

She said "Allay your fear concerning the sustainability of the feeding programme. The act has been signed and the programme has been transferred into an agency of the federal government under the supervision of federal ministry of humanitarian affairs and so it will be sustained."

"Whatever the new administration is coming in to do, don't be afraid that we are coming almost at the end of the administration. That was the reason why it was transformed into an agency."

"Recall that the national home-grown school feeding programme (NHGSFP) is one of

the clusters under the federal government national social investment programme (NSIP) aimed at providing one free nutritious meal a day to pupils of primary 1-3 in public primary schools around the nation.

"Globally, school feeding programmes are increasingly being recognized as critical social protection interventions since they benefit vulnerable groups including children, their families, and communities."

"In Nigeria, the NHGSFP is a safety net for over 10 million children across thousands of communities and a lifeline for income generation for thousands of people."

"The key objectives of the NHGSFP are to increase school enrolment, attendance and retention, improve the nutritional and health status of school children, job creation by stimulating local agricultural production and local economy, provide empowerment opportunities for the cooks, thereby contributing to the promotion of food security for vulnerable households in Nigeria."

"Currently, with the aim to strengthen, sustain and scale up the programme to 13 million beneficiaries by 2023 which is geared towards contributing to the vision of Mr. President to lift 100 million Nigerians out of poverty by 2030 having previously onboarded 35 States

and FCT.

"I am pleased to inform that, Bayelsa State having fulfilled the conditions for onboarding into the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme, have signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), is ready to onboard the programme."

"The state is joining the programme with a total number of 59,113 Pupils in 599 schools and 1,217 cooks across the 8 LGAs. The Ministry has provided 59,113 feeding utensils for the use of pupils on the programme in Bayelsa State, in order to ensure that these free school meals are being provided under hygienic and favourable conditions, it is our fervent hope and appeal that these items are put to use as they have been provided for so that these children benefit more."

"Thus, with the onboarding of Bayelsa State into the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme, I am pleased to announce that feeding will now be taking place in the 36 States and FCT."

She asked for support for the focal person in the state Emmanuel Benson to make sure that the programme becomes a success.

He said "Be a listening person. Listen to them before taking any action. I want to assure you of quality service of the programme in the state."

Speaking earlier, Bayelsa state governor Douye Diri represented by commissioner for education Gentle Emelah said that the state's expectations had been high before now and wondered why the programme was delayed till now when it has kick-started in other states.

He said "I was wondering why the programme delayed till now. I was almost giving up. I was also wondering if this programme can be sustained now that the government is winding up but we have been assured that it will be sustainable."

He however called on the cooks to be diligent in their services and ensure that whatever they want to provide for the children are done under good hygienic condition.

The focal person Emmanuel Benson asked the federal government to make everything fast to ensure that Bayelsa is on board.

He said "Even though Bayelsa state is the last, they should know that MOU has been signed. The federal government should support the programme logistics wise and financially so that it will kick start immediately. And that state government on their parts should make sure that the programme starts immediately. Without their assistance we can do nothing."

The Delta State Ministry of Justice has assured the Delta Legal Hub, a Non-Governmental Organization, of partnership, to enable the organization seek redress for victims of trafficking in persons and irregular migration in the state.

The Delta Legal Hub is a brain child of the International Organizations for Migration, (IOM).

The state Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Isaiah Bozimo gave the assurance in Asaba, when members of Delta Legal Hub paid him a courtesy visit.

Delta Justice Ministry To Partner NGO In Fight Against Human Trafficking

Stories by
Dave Okpogadie, Asaba

He commended the Delta Legal Hub for the synergy in combatting human trafficking, saying the role they play in the fight against human trafficking and irregular migration is crucial in the overall interest of the state.

He added that the task force,

as set up by the state governor for human trafficking and irregular migration has been partnering with IOM and other domestic and international bodies.

He maintained that the ministry's vision and the Delta legal hub are in alignment, especially the office of the public defender that provides free legal services particularly for those

vulnerable victims in the society.

The Attorney-General noted that the ministry's interest is to ensure that there is a reduction of trafficking in persons in the state

Earlier, coordinator of the Delta Legal Hub, Mr. Paul Azuka disclosed that one of the reasons they want the synergy is for referral from the Ministry of

Justice to the public and trust from the victims of trafficking in persons and irregular migration.

He added that the hub offers legal service to victims of trafficking and sensitizes the public on the ills of irregular migration.

Azuka maintained that the hub will continue to support the government to curb the menace, and assist those repatriated that have civil claims. ●

History 'll Be Kind To You, Obaseki Tells Okowa

Edo State governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, has declared that history would be kind to his Delta State counterpart, Dr Ifeanyi Okowa, whose tenure as governor would end on May 29, 2023.

Obaseki said that no matter what people think about the Okowa administration, history has recorded the massive achievements of the governor's eight year rule.

Obaseki spoke at a valedictory dinner held for the outgoing governor and his deputy, Mr Kingsley Otuaro, at the Events Centre in Asaba.

He described Okowa as a unifier who had ensured that Edo and Delta states remained united and, for supporting the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) race to victory in the 2020 Edo State governorship election.

"I am here to celebrate and thank God for the life of our own chairman because he is the chairman of the South-South Governors Forum.

"I want to thank God that you have kept the tradition; you have played your own part, you have run your own session of the race. You inherited a Delta that is PDP and you are handing on a Delta that is PDP to your successor.

"You have done your part and that's all you can do and we thank God for your wife and family that have been a pillar of support all through these eight years.

"People will have their own versions of history but history is history and history has recorded what you have achieved for your people in Delta State.

"I congratulate you and thank God for your life that, as you move to the next phase of your calling, the Lord who has seen you through will be there to support you," he stated.

Obaseki charged the governor-elect, Chief Sheriff Oborevwo, to brace up for the challenges ahead and wished him well as he assumes office on May 29.

On his part, Governor Okowa who was very emotional, thanked Deltans for giving him and his deputy the opportunity to serve the state for eight years.

He also commended the legislature and the judiciary as well as the civil service for their contributions to his administration's success.

"There is no doubt that we had some happy moments but we also had some challenging moments. Several challenges came our way but God was with us all through.

"God was with us and He will be with you through your

tenure," he said.

Okowa apologised to the people of Ayakoromo and the Ijaw nation for his inability to complete the Ayakoromo Bridge project, but announced that he had taken steps to ensure its prompt completion in no distant time.

"I must publicly apologise for our failure to deliver the Ayakoromo Bridge during my tenure.

"The previous contractor somehow slowed us down and not until last year, we found out that if we needed to succeed, that contractor had to be exited from that project and we were able to talk with him and it has now been re-awarded to Setraco Nigeria Limited.

"We have done the initial phase of mobilisation which is about N2billion but the full mobilisation ought to be about N4.1billion.

"By God's grace, and talking with the governor-elect, by next week, we will have to pay the balance N2.1billion so that they can move in fully to the Ayakoromo Bridge and get it completed.

"I apologise and ask for patience of not only the people of



Collapsed portion of the Ughelli-Asaba Road

Ayakoromo but all Ijaws who had felt that that bridge ought to be completed. It is not our own deliberate fault, it was because of the non-performance of the contractor".

The out-going governor

also commented on the contentious Ughelli-Asaba Road under construction since the Ibori administration.

"I thank God for Levant Nigeria Limited for what I see on Sector A of the Ughelli-Asaba

road. From Ughelli to Oleh to Ozoro, I can see the pace of work and I thank God that we were able to repudiate the initial contract and to re-award it to Levant Nigeria Limited," Okowa stated. ●

Minister Performs Ground Breaking For 600 MW Coal Power Plant In Delta ...Commends Community Monarch For Efforts

The Minister for Mines and Steel Development, Olamilekan Adegbite has performed the ground-breaking ceremony for a 600MW Mine-Mouth Coal Power Plant in Ugboba community in Aniocha North Local Government Area of Delta State.

While performing the ground breaking ceremony, the Minister acknowledged the dogged efforts of the Ugboba King, HRM Obi Ezedimbu Emmanuel Nkebakwu III whom he said, visited his office in Abuja to ascertain the authenticity of the mining project in his community, and when convinced and satisfied made frantic efforts to see the project succeed.

He noted that while some traditional rulers were engaged in sharp practices that enmeshed their domains in crisis, this particular king, committed his time and effort to pursuing genuine development and peace in his community.

His words: "We are here to make history, and I must congratulate the king of Ugboba as one of the champions of this milestone achievement today. He

has cooperated with the mining company by providing a peaceful and secure environment for the exploration to take place."

"It was a known fact that mining is destructive in nature; that is why miners must seek the consent of the host community before commencing operation.

"However, that destructive nature of coal mining in the past is not the same as today in the sense that there are modern equipment that have drastically reduced the destructive impact of coal.

"We gave MOSRA Energy Limited license to mine and generate power because we trust in their capacity and experience. To this extent, MOSRA Energy took interest to mine in Ugboba, Obomkpa, Ugbodu and Ukwu-Nzu.

To mine and export are capital intensive; that notwithstanding, the company will also be generating power. Let me assure the people of Ugboba that the power to be generated must serve Ugboba and environs first, before others can benefit too. A lot of development is going to come in, it is no longer going to be business as usual, where

companies take mineral resources from a place and leave the host community to suffer degradation".

"The community is part of the project and so must be factored into all aspects of the operation in terms of employment to indigenes, infrastructure development, provision of social amenities and others. I urge MOSRA Energy to maintain cordial relationship with this community as well as others that they will be mining from," the minister demanded.

He explained that the Russian/Ukrainian war has raised demand for coal, a reason for the project.

"Today, coal is on high demand because of the scarcity of gas as a result of the Russian war. Russia is the number one producer and exporter of gas. The drop in gas has shored up the demand in coal and so those who initially said coal was bad are now the ones demanding seriously for coal.

"It was the policy of our administration to create alternative sources of power. I have advocated this everywhere in the world that I travelled to. I thank God that the effort is

paying off today with the likes of MOSRA Energy who bought into the idea and had been phenomenal in helping to realise this vision and policy of energy sufficiency in Nigeria", Adegbite explained.

Chief host and Governor of Delta State, Senator Ifeanyi Okowa, ably represented by the commissioner for Oil and Gas, Mr. Emmanuel Amgbadugba, said the Delta State Government had worked to provide enabling environment for industries to thrive and that one of such initiatives was the inauguration of the MOSRA Energy Idowu Falola Coal Mines and ground-breaking for a 600MW Coal Power Plant in Ugboba.

While congratulating the Ugboba community for their show of responsibility and commitment to community development, he enjoined other parties to remain peaceful.

The governor equally urged MOSRA Energy to adhere strictly to the MoU reached by stakeholders in the interest of peace and harmonious working relationship with the host communities.

US-Based Obidient Extols LP Ward 6 Members On Electoral Success, Urges More Work

Stories by **Iduozee Efe Paul, Benin** ...As LP Boss Lauds His Contribution To The Party

A US based Edo State Labour Party leader, Dr. Kingsley Oghogho Okundaye, says all politics is local, which is why he found it very important to identify with his people to build the party.

Dr. Okundaye made the point in an interview with journalists after addressing the LP Oredo Ward 6 members at their secretariat in Benin City, Edo State. He challenged the party members to wake up to their duties, by ensuring that the young generation takes its rightful place in governance and do not allow older people dominate the political leadership of the country.

He said, "If you must succeed in politics, you must have a base and your base must be local. I identified with what has worked in the past, and what would work now. This is my base and I came to identify with my base. Most of the things that have been done in the last few months is to empower the local base."

"The base is where we

build the party up and talk about the functionality of the party secretariat. The emphasis has to always really be that we continue to build up the party from the local base. That is exactly what we are doing, and it is going to ensure the success of Labour Party in Edo State and Nigeria as a whole.

"My own way of empowering the Labour Party at the local level or base, is to continue to identify what they have done well in the past. Obviously, there are some successes recorded by Oredo Ward 6 in the just concluded 2023 elections. Those are the things, I am trying to emphasize, and to encourage them to continue to look back to the successes achieved in the recent elections".

He said commitment and belief in themselves would propel LP members to future success.

"That is what will motivate them to look to the future. These are the commitments I want to really focus on because it takes a

lot of commitment for them to believe in themselves and for the party to achieve the success that we all were calling for in the last elections. That is what will push and lead us into future success of elections."

He expressed confidence in the ward leadership.

"When I look at the leadership we have in Oredo Ward 6 of Labour Party, I see the future of Nigeria, I see the future of the state and when people talk about changing the narrative, here is what I consider as changing the narrative; doing things differently from the way it was done in the past".

He said the Obidient Movement stands for the change in narrative.



Dr. Kingsley Oghogho Okundaye

"Politics should not be led by the older people. I have taken special interest in politics of late

as I abandoned politics for many years for some personal reasons, but when I saw the movement – the Obidient Movement; when I saw the vibrant movement, and when I saw the interest that was generated by the Obidient Movement, I felt that there is need to be a part of that movement.

"I was first an Obidient person before I became a member of the Labour Party. I am one of the people who started the Obidient Movement globally. That movement went on to support the presidential race, the senate race in some states including our state – Edo, and I personally supported some of the senatorial as well as House of Representatives and House of Assembly candidates.

"Some of the candidates were successful and some were not successful but, even with the level of successes we have achieved, we have something to build upon.

"When I look around and see someone like the Ward 6 chairman who is young and vibrant, it gives me hope that indeed what I cherished more, which is to identify with the dream and the aspiration of the people, can be achieved in the not too long distance.

Okundaye said he came to bond with the people to build their common interest.

"I came here today to know you better, to know you more. I came here today so that we can form an association, form a relationship, because in the real sense, you have shown kindness in terms of what I read in your Whatsapp platform. You people have identified with the things I have developed interest in, and so today, I decided to come in here to say, thank you for all the warm greetings that I have received.

"Thank you for all the reception that I have received. Thank you for all the identification of that which we can build upon together."

The US-based politician said it is time to build on the recorded success.

"We cannot relent, we cannot waste any more time, and we must begin to build on that which we have achieved. And to sustain that, it will take what I call identifying with an ideology, a philosophy that will tell everyone that we can do better.

"Things don't have to be the way they are. When you look around, you see strength; when you look around, you see enthusiasm to do better. We must now harness those enthusiasm, we must now harness those individuals' skills and talents and bring to bear that collective goal of making Nigeria and Edo State specifically, a better place", he stated.

In his opening remark, the LP chairman of Oredo Ward 6 Mr. Festus Ehizogie acknowledged and commended the great contribution Dr. Kingsley Oghogho Okundaye has made to Ward 6 of in particular and Edo State in general and prayed to God to continue to give him and the enablement to continue to assist the party. ●

NUJ Zone F Condemns Poor State, Neglect of South South Roads

The Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Zone F, has condemned the neglect and non-completion of major roads in the South - South states, especially the East/West, Calabar/Itu Highway, Benin/Sapale Road and Benin/Lokoja Road and called on the Federal Government to take immediate action on the roads, as it has done in other zones of the country.

The media body which, made call in a communique issued at the end of its zonal meeting held at the Press Centre, Uyo, AkwaIbom State, also urged state governors in the South - South to work closely with the in-coming federal administration to ensure completion of the roads stating, "The goose that lays the golden egg should have a comfortable nest".

The meeting, which had 14 leaders in attendance, including the NUJ national president, Chief Chris Isiguzo, discussed extensively on issues affecting both the NUJ and the South South, including the demolition of a property belonging to

Bayelsa State by the Rivers State government.

Part of the communique issued at the end of the meeting read:

"While condemning the demolition of the property of Bayelsa State Government by the Government of Rivers State in Port - Harcourt, an action which, has far-reaching implications on the relationship between the people of both states, the meeting requested the in-coming administration in Rivers State to demonstrate responsible leadership by addressing the issue in the interest of brotherhood, good conscience, unity and peace.

"The meeting noted the mindless neglect and non-completion of major roads in the South - South states, particularly, East/West, Calabar/Itu Highway, Benin/ Sapale Road, Benin/Lokoja Road and called on the Federal Government to take action on these roads as it has done in other zones.

"It also encouraged state governors in the South - South Zone to work closely with the in-coming Federal Government to complete the roads as "The goose

that lays the golden egg should have a comfortable nest."

The Zone F NUJ described the power tussle between the NDDC leadership as shameful, and capable of truncating the mandate of the interventionist agency. It called on the Board members to stop the ego war and work to deliver on the Commission's mandate to the people of the Zone.

It also called on the six governors in the zone to evolve strategies to resuscitate the BRACED Commission to serve the purpose of peer review and development coordination in the zone.

It decried the resurgence of kidnapping and other criminal activities in some parts of Rivers State after the 2023 general elections, as these incidents have claimed the lives of some citizens and led to the destruction of properties and called on the Rivers State government and security agencies to beef up security in the state to address the drift.

The meeting noted with satisfaction, the support of some governors in the zone to the NUJ in their respective states.

13 AAU Staff Sacked For Alleged Fraud, Sexual Harassment

The management of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State, has dismissed 13 of its academic and non-academic staff for alleged offences ranging from falsified age to financial fraud, gross misconduct, extortion and sexual harassment.

Acting Vice Chancellor of the institution, Prof. Asomwan Adagbonyin, said the decision to terminate the appointments of the alleged erring staff was

reached following the recommendations of the University Staff Disciplinary Committee, which found them guilty of the offences.

Adagbonyin made the disclosure while presenting the committee's report to the chairman, Andrew Olotu, and members of the AAU Special Intervention Team on Monday in Benin City.

He explained that the disciplinary committee gave the affected staff a fair hearing and recommended that "the criminal

aspect of the disengaged staff offences should be reported to security operatives."

The acting VC said the affected staff are from the Faculty of Basic Medical Science, Medical Laboratory Sciences, Nursing Department, Engineering Department, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Political Science, and included the former director of the university's farm.

Prof. Adagbonyin said a lecturer who was the head of Nursing Science was recommended for sack after he

was found guilty of extorting the sum N32,000 and N52,000 respectively from students, adding that another lecturer who was indicted for sexual harassment was also dismissed.

"The lecturer had claimed to only make advances, but he went to the said girl's church to plead for forgiveness. The victim has been protected and reassigned to another lecturer.

"Out of the 209 disciplinary cases received, the USDC has concluded 132 while 77 cases were pending," the VC stated. ●

Tech Firm Launches App For Offline Transactions In Edo

Following the pain and sorrow that characterized the recent cashless economy policy introduced in Nigeria, a tech company based in Benin City, DPG Soft Solutions, has launched a software application known as "Tokens" for offline transactions.

Addressing journalists on the new app in Benin City, Philips Nguzor, chief executive officer (CEO) of the company said the App has come to address the bottleneck in payment system arising as a result of the Federal Government's drive for an economy, devoid of heavy cash transactions in the country.

Tokens, Nguzor disclosed, provides a platform to complete transactions between traders who use the app without a mobile network, an app to reduce the stress in cashless transactions.

"Tokens, this is why we are here today. We are proud to let Nigeria and the world know that we are bringing out this innovation for the world, Africa and Nigeria, especially. We are in a critical stage of a time we are trying to push the economy to a cashless era. Do we get this done over night? No. We all know the system of cashless policy in Nigeria now and how the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) introduced the cashless policy that served as pains and sufferings in the lives of Nigerians.

"We all were affected in one way or the other. You see there is bottleneck in the payment system in the country, because we all of a sudden want to transgress or transit to a cashless economy. And the system channels are not strong enough and lack the capacity to move to the direction or speed they want to move".

He said with the Tokens that the company has invented, being offline cannot frustrate your monetary activity.

"This is why we came up to design what we are launching today called the, "Tokens App." It is a system or service that allows you to complete your transactions offline. So, it means, if you have this solution App in-store, you can make payment

Stories by
Iduozee Efe Paul, Benin

with tokens. I can buy something from somebody in the supermarket and that person can receive tokens. I can pay without having anything to do with the bank.

"I can also pay without having anything to do with network and internet. That is how it operates. With tokens you can do or complete your transactions offline; go to shopping complex, eateries and in anywhere make my payment promptly without having any problem in my transactions".

According to him, transaction is speedy. "The confirmation of the transactions is instant, and there is no reversal of your money. Whether the person you are transacting to or you has internet on his smart phone or not, it does not matter".

The CEO said market women will find the product beneficial. "It will make life easier for our market women because they can use it without data. I observe many who still go to the bank to queue do that because they need cash for shuttling buses. It is understandable because no commercial driver can wait for a transaction to be confirmed. However, this app has come to solve the challenge because the confirmation is instant."

The software works either with or without a mobile network; users just need to enable their Wi-Fi, he said, noting that the app is a product to bridge identified gap in the new monetary policy.

According to him, every measure is in place to ensure a safe system and verify transaction as they are levels of verification in the background. He noted, however, that the firm would not sleep on its oars towards ensuring safer and secured digital application.

Mr. Lugard God'sTime Ogbeide, chief operations and business development officer, DPG Soft Solutions Company, in his opening remarks, said the product to be launched is called



DPG Soft solutions team

Tokens, which the company just developed recently.

He said, "For the company itself, GPG system, we had been

working around to see how we can actually solve problems and to meet people's needs. We started in 2008, it has been a long

journey; we had been working on other products. This product we want to launch now is for big investors." ●

FG Appoints Oba Ewuare II As New Chancellor Of NOUN

President Muhammadu Buhari has appointed the Oba of Benin, Ewuare II as the Chancellor of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN).

The largest university in Nigeria, NOUN has over 120,000 students cutting across the various distance teaching and learning centres, nationwide.

Vice Chancellor of the University, Prof. Olufemi Peters made this known when the institution's management members paid the Oba a courtesy visit on Friday, 19 May, 2023 in his Palace.

The VC briefed the Oba in the institution's work force and assured that its fortunes would

improve tremendously with the new appointment.

"The reason why this university was established by the federal government is to bring university education to as many Nigerians wherever they are and whatever their circumstances or social hindrances may be.

"We are in every state of this country, serving every area. We have over 120,000 students. It is the biggest university in Nigeria," the VC stated.

Responding, HRM Ewuare II, Oba of Benin accepted the appointment and commended President Muhammadu Buhari for finding him worthy of the position.

The revered monarch promised to deploy his wealth of

experience in the discharge of his duties and leverage on his experience during his diplomatic sojourn towards improving teaching and learning in the university with the support of the management.

"When I was first informed about my appointment, I was very happy. We thank God Almighty for this recognition of the work we have been doing in Benin Kingdom.

"We hope to bring our experience to bear in piloting the affair.

"I am most grateful to the commander-in-chief, President Muhammadu Buhari for deeming it fit to appoint me as chancellor of the National Open University of Nigeria." ●

NAPVID Empowers 200 PWDs With Skills

The wife of the Edo State governor, Mrs.

Betsy Obaseki, has encouraged people with disability, PWDs, to explore their ability in disability to help make them succeed in life. She said the state government intends to create the enabling environment for them to strive and progress.

Mrs. Obaseki represented by Hon. Godsent Osagie, SSA to the governor on Religious Matters gave the advice at the flag-off/ inauguration ceremony of the NAPVID Skill-Up Program in Benin city.

She advised persons with disability to take the skills training serious and ensure they learn well.

The state first lady said that for them to make impact in the society, they must put on good attitudes and manners to make them excel in their various skills in the society.

Mrs. Obaseki stressing that there is ability in disability, urged them to use wisely, the skills they will acquire, and equipment to be given to them.

She said an invitation to learn a skill, is an opportunity to be self-reliant and to contribute to the society.

"As a government, we are going to ensure we create an enabling environment for you to operate. As you can see, in this 21st century, we are aware that disability is no longer an issue that affects more. People with disability should see themselves as new persons that have been transformed with skills and capacity to add to the economy of the nation.

"Disability is no longer a problem in this 21st Century. You must see the treasures, potentials and gifts that God has deposited in you, and see how you can actualize in life," she added.

The executive director, Network for the Advancement of People with Visible Disabilities (NAPVID), Melody Omosah said over 2000 people with disabilities from the 18 local government areas in Edo State will be trained on different skills that would make them self-reliant in life.

Omosah said the skill capacity training is for only PWDs who do not have skills.

He said the essence of the programme is to make sure people with disability live a life of dignity and contribute meaningfully to the development of the nation.

He explained that the training includes shoe making, make-up artistry, fashion designing, bag making, graphic design and many other skills.

Omosah appealed to the trainers to help train them in the manner in which they would learn and understand.

He thanked the Edo State government, the media, government ministries and agencies, and all those that partnered and support NAPVID to ensure the success of the event.

The permanent secretary, Ministry of Social Development and Gender Issues, Sylvester Okoeguale, said the vision of the state government is to provide good environments, facilities, equipment and other vital supports for PWDs to advance in life. ●

Edo Police Apprehend Cultists Plotting Initiation Of Members

The Edo State Police Command says it has arrested three persons suspected to be members of Manphite secret cult confraternity in Benin City

According a statement issued by the command's public relations officer, SP Chidi Nwabuzor, the suspects apprehended at the weekend, identified as Bright Amadin, 34; Brown Amadin 29 and Stanley Omoregie, 27, were arrested in a place they had converged to, "forcefully initiate innocent citizens in order to mark their anniversary."

The statement added that one pump - action gun, three live cartridges, and some clothes with Manphite insignia were recovered from the suspects.

The statement read in part: "On 11/05/2023 the officer in-charge of Command Intelligence Rapid Response Squad received

information that some cultists who are members of Manphite secret cult confraternity had planned to converge in an undisclosed location in Benin City to carry out attack on their perceived rival secret cult members and to forcefully initiate innocent citizens in order to mark their anniversary.

"Immediately, the operatives commenced technical intelligence in order to foil their plans, and on 12/05/ 2023 at about 0230hrs, the operatives arrested three of the cult members at Okabere community, Upper Sakponba Road Benin City."

The statement added that the arrested suspects have confessed to being members of the dreaded Manphite secret cult.

The command spokesman said concerted effort is ongoing to arrest members at large, adding that "sooner, the suspects would proceed to court." ●

Communiqué Issued At The End Of A One-Day National Conference On Organized Crime In Nigeria And The Gulf Of Guinea (NACOCINAG) Toward Strengthening Collective Effort Under The “Network On Organized Crime In Nigeria And The Gulf Of Guinea (NOCINAG)” To Address Challenges Of Domestic And Transnational Crimes In The Region



Prof. Fidelis Allen of Uniport, delivers his keynote address



YEAC - Nigeria, Mr. Fyneface Dumnamene flanked by Resource Persons, Special Guests



Some youths representatives

Introduction

With Nigeria as one of the countries in the Gulf of Guinea faced with challenges associated with organized domestic and transnational crimes, a one-day national conference on organized crime in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea was held on Friday, April 28, 2023, to address related salient issues. The event took place on Friday, April 28, 2023 at Landmark Hotel, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Theme of the conference was, “Toward Strengthening Collective Effort Under The Network On Organized Crime In Nigeria And Gulf of Guinea (NOCINAG) To Address Challenges of Domestic and Transnational Crime In the Region”.

Youths and Environmental Advocacy Centre (YEAC-Nigeria) facilitated the event sponsored by Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime and Resilience Fund.

Participants examined crimes relating to pipeline vandalism, crude oil theft, artisanal refining, illegal bunkering, kidnapping, banditry, insurgency, racketeering, cybercrimes, drugs/human trafficking, arms smuggling, sea pirates, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUUF) in the Gulf of Guinea (along with other fraudulent activities such as environmental crimes and illegal logging).

YEAC-Nigeria, executive director, Fyneface Dunamene, said the conference was designed to look into the character of mafia-like cartels comprising of criminal minded non-state actors that apparently, have established wide networks to operate illegal governance structures; holding control across both governable and ungoverned spaces that transverse national borders to carry out transnational organized criminal activities.

In the course of their activities human rights are

violated, and they profit illegally at great public expense, while damaging the national image of countries in the Gulf of Guinea –Nigeria, Republic of Angola, Republic of Cameroon, Republic of the Congo (Congo Brazzaville), The Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo Kinshasa), Republic of Equatorial Guinea, Republic of Gabon, and the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe. The scope of the conference covers the following areas:

- Strengthening community-based advocacy in the Niger Delta through multi-stakeholder engagement to combat organized crime;
- Serving as a platform for intelligence gathering and information sharing with security formation to counter organized crime violent extremism;
- Providing think-tank base for research and serving as a resource centre on organized crime, while constituting a mitigation mechanism for same;
- Building interventionist platform for civil society actors to expand participation through wide-based partnership linkages around the Gulf of Guinea Commission's advocacy effort –for contributing needed input, and rallying support for combating transnational organized crime;
- Serving as a training hub promoter for capacity development to build potentials at local, national and transnational level in strengthening effort against organized crime;
- Partnering and collaborating with other network formations (as state and non-state bodies) to mitigate organized crime, promote peace and security in Nigeria and the entire Gulf of Guinea;

The event specially highlighted other critical contributions of YEAC in

Nigeria, including advocacy efforts and propositions already captured in a report, titled: “The Doctrine Of PACORDI and Other Oil Theft Mitigation Mechanisms for Nigeria” aimed at countering organized crime acts of oil theft, artisanal refining, illegal bunkering and associated environmental pollution (including, but not limited to, the “black soot” hazard).

Participants were drawn from the security circle, government agencies, oil companies, policymakers, academic institutions, the diplomatic community, the organized private sector, media practitioners, religious bodies, ethnic nationalities, the civil society and persons from host communities to extractive/non-extractive operators, among others.

Concerns Raised At The Forum

The forum addressed the following concerns over six core objectives and other related concerns, as follow:

- ▲ Low development of effective, non-violent ways of raising the profile of community priorities to adopt constructive and sustainable approaches in handling issues of social destabilization;
- ▲ Virtual absence of generally approved/adopted campaign

strategies against organized crime manifesting as oil theft, artisanal refining, human trafficking and environment/social pollution in Nigeria (and other countries);

- ▲ Low concern around promoting sustainable/ gainful enterprising for youths toward combating rising wave of organized crime in Nigeria and the entire Gulf of Guinea;
- ▲ Need to promote the formulation of services that would be strongly benefiting from critical intellectual input/related resource sources;
- ▲ Need to leverage on existing local and international partnerships, contacts and networks - toward finding practical solutions to problems related to organized crime;
- ▲ Need to improve support services to complement state and non-state efforts in combating organized crime and,
- ▲ Need to focus more on alternative livelihood promotion, especially in the fields of green energy generation to empower youths as a way of creation orientation away from criminality.

Observations Made At The Forum

Some challenges related to combating organized crime in the Gulf of Guinea were covered during the conference proceedings—and observations made in the course of time include:

- ▲ The invisibility of modern day crime (and of criminals) has made traditional methods of crime mitigation (becoming more and more unreliable);
- ▲ New technologies (such as satellite surveillance mechanisms) are yet to develop and improve the effort of crime investigation to deal with present criminal challenges in Nigeria;
- ▲ Regional collaborations are yet to crystallize into helpful ways of supporting crime mitigation across borders;
- ▲ Organized crime is complex, and can be carried out by distant operators that may also be literally invisible;
- ▲ Exploitation of economic benefits has continued to serve colonial/post-colonial interests, which defy crime prevention values that (and are rather promoting crime perpetration);
- ▲ There is a relational linkage between the natural resource

Cont'd on page 10

Delta Govt. Orders Clampdown On Cultism In Schools

The Delta State Government has ordered massive clampdown on cultism and cult related activities in schools across the state.

The state's commissioner for Information, Mr Charles Aniagwu, who disclosed this at a news conference in Asaba on Thursday, said the clampdown became necessary following rising cases of cult related activities in secondary and primary schools in the state.

He said the state Ministry of Education and relevant supervisory and regulatory authorities have been directed to ensure proper supervision of all schools to nip cultism in the bud.

According to him, a number of persons particularly the civil society, have emphasized the need for parents to up their game and for the society to have a rethink on the management of youths and young ones. He said some adults have failed in their duties.

"Unfortunately there are also a number of elders, parents who obviously have not also lived up to their bidding in respect to monitoring the behaviour and attitude of their children.

"As a government, we have directed that teachers must step up their supervisory roles. Teachers are not only to impart knowledge by way of teaching the pupils or the students whatever is in the curricular.

"They must also encourage these students to participate in



Mr Charles Aniagwu, Commissioner for Information, Delta State

extracurricular activities like games that will promote camaraderie among students and pupils."

"We have directed that the Ministry of Education particularly the departments responsible for the supervision of schools be it private or public to also intensify efforts," the commissioner said.

Aniagwu said schools must deal decisively with devious behavior among students to bring law and order in the schools.

He further remarked that any school where such activities take place risks being closed down by the government.

"If there is any child behaving in a manner that is not

expected of him, particularly, in the primary and secondary schools, we have emphasized that beyond the need to sensitize, drastic actions need to be taken"

The commissioner said the hammer will be heavy on schools that fail to act accordingly..

"If any school is found to have wards in cult and nothing is being done about it, government will come down heavily on such schools".

"If you have children in your school and you are looking at them critically you will understand their behavior; not knowing that they belong to some groups will amount to negligence.

"If you have children who gang up to beat up a teacher, you must look beyond the immediate cause of that attack to interrogate what must have emboldened them to work as a group to attack a teacher.

Stories by
Dave Okpogadie, Asaba

"You must also take actions that will make the parents know that they too have not done well".

The commissioner said bringing up children right is a collective responsibility and cultism needs to be addressed with urgency.

"It's quite disheartening and it is the responsibility of everybody to take this as a matter of urgent state and national importance because we do know that cultism is pervasive across the length and breadth of this country.

"Any school where such thing is found to be in existence, the authorities in that school will have to answer and it could lead to closing down of such schools.

"If any school discovers that children under their tutelage are behaving in a manner not expected of children of that age, it behooves on them to know that the responsibility of bringing up those children goes beyond teaching in the classroom to also monitor their behaviour

including how they dress," he added.

Insisting that anti-social behavior is best nipped in the bud, Aniagwu called for tough disciplinary measures against offenders.

"Children of certain age are not free to engage in certain actions otherwise those actions would be termed anti-social. If you have children who gang up at the age of 12, 13, to attack a teacher, you know that there must be something behind it.

"Where ordinarily will they summon such guts or courage? So, if a child does that, the school must first take concrete action including expelling that child and taking up the parents.

"These children would take over from us tomorrow as leaders so we must not fail in our duty to bring up children of sane minds".

He traced present societal ills to parental failure.

"What we are suffering today largely stems from failures of the parents of the past and so parents of today cannot afford to fail more because it will lead to the doom of tomorrow," the commissioner said. ●

Science and Tech. Commissioner Attributes Success To Okowa's Support

Delta State Commissioner for Science And Technology, Hon. Jennifer Ardsen-Efeviro as attributed the success of the ministry to massive support from Governor

Ifeanyi Okowa.

The commissioner made this disclosure while briefing journalists on the activities of her ministry as the government is winding down.

She expressed appreciation to Governor Okowa for all the unflinching support given to her ministry to excel.

Said she: "If not for his support, giving us approval and buying ideas that we take to him from time to time, we wouldn't have been able to achieve what we have achieved."

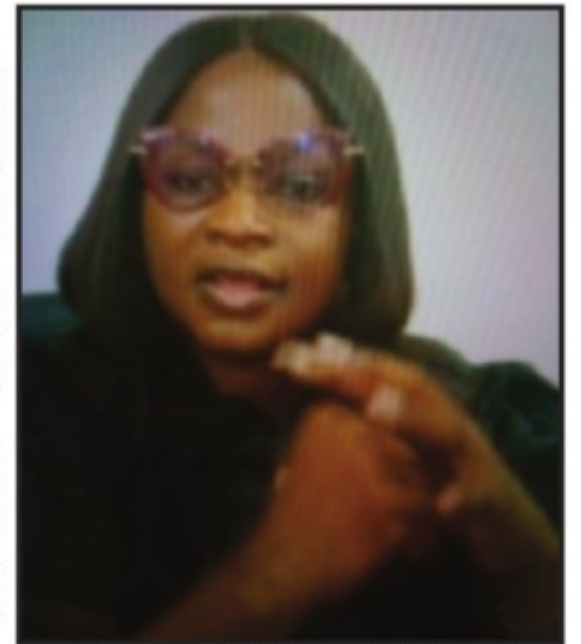
According to the commissioner, the ministry had Information and Communication Technology, ICT, empowerment programme which was the pilot programme in 2021 where 593 Delta State youths were empowered.

She revealed that some of the beneficiaries of the empowerment programme are now very successful while some are outside the country, using the relevant skills they acquired from the training.

"Some are even training others and we are even generating revenue from some of them by using the well-equipped Innovation Hub in the state to train other youths."

The commissioner also revealed that the second phase of the empowerment programme was done in two batches. According to her, the second phase involved mobile development, web development and ICT for self development where qualified youths from age 18 - 35 years were trained in ICT for advanced solar and installation, computer repairs, Close Circuit Television (CCTV), Home Security Cameras, etc. A total of 575 youths were trained in the areas according to her.

"Apart from the ICT, we had other trainings that the governor also supported us on such as



Comm. For Science And Technology, Hon. Jennifer Ardsen-Efeviro

fabrication of lubricant making machines and how to make the lubricant itself. The training was done under the supervision of the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON)".

Beyond this, Hon Ardsen-Efeviro remarked that some youths were also trained in the production of engine oil to the standard of Mobil Oil while farmers were trained on how best to manage and sustain the fertility of their farmland after harvest.

"The governor knows that the sure way to a successful economy of Delta is through technology and our youths are proud of what we are doing", she added.

On the high number of female participants and beneficiaries of the programme, the commissioner revealed that she took it upon herself to sensitize the females on the need to participate, adding that she took her awareness campaign to the 25 local government areas of the state.

Earlier, Hon Ardsen-Efeviro played host to past beneficiaries of the programme who presented her an award of excellence for her zeal and efforts towards the success of the training programmes of the ministry. ●

Delta Guber Election: Tribunal Adjourns Gbagi's Case To June 1

The Delta State Governorship Election Petition Tribunal sitting in Asaba, the state capital has adjourned the petition of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) governorship candidate, Olorogun Kenneth Gbagi challenging the eligibility of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) flag bearer, Sheriff Oborevori, in the March 18 poll.

The Election Petition Tribunal on Wednesday May 24, 2023, adjourned to Thursday June 1, 2023 for commencement of pre-hearing in the petition by Gbagi, against Oborevori, Ovie

Augustine Omo-Agege, of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Chief Great OvedjeOgboru, of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) and Ken Pela, of the Labour Party (LP).

The state chairman of the SDP, Chief Mrs Esther Ikule and other members of the state executive council, the deputy governorship candidate of the party, Chief Mrs Rosemary Oshilim and party supporters were also present in court on Wednesday.

Addressing newsmen shortly after the adjournment, the

lead counsel of Gbagi's legal team, Magaji Mato Ibrahim, SAN, said: "This is a petition against all the respondents that we have brought to court; PDP and their candidates, APC and their candidates, APGA and its candidates and LP and its candidates.

"Today, we commenced a pre-trial session and as it is because the 8th, 9th and 10th Respondents were not served with notice, this pre-hearing could not continue".

He disclosed that the matter was adjourned till June 1, for the continuation of the hearing session.

He assured that the legal team of the Social Democratic Party, would conclude the pre-hearing session within the period stipulated by the new Electoral Act 2022, "then hearing of the case will commence".

The Senior Advocate of Nigeria, reiterated that they are maintaining three basic grounds which he claimed is that all the other political parties and their candidates were not qualified to contest the election.

He also revealed that the election was not conducted in line with the Electoral Act and other statutory positions of the law.

The counsel also said the election was marred with rigging and other electoral malpractice adding that the three grounds are highly pleaded and adequately provided with facts and concrete evidence to justify the cause.

According to him, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), in its reply has conceded that the election was not conducted in line with extant laws. ●

Oborevori Will Excel As Governor - Hon. Ferguson Onwo

The majority leader and member representing Isoko South Constituency I in the Delta State House of Assembly, Hon. Ferguson Onwo has expressed confidence in the ability of the governor-elect of the state, Hon. Sheriff Oborevori to perform highly as governor of the state.

Speaking to journalists in his office, shortly after the valedictory session of the 7th Assembly, the majority leader of the House noted that the incoming governor of the state, Hon. Sheriff Oborevori would excel as governor based on his wide experience as speaker of the House, who has excelled in law making with a good working relationship with the executive.

Hon. Onwo said it was a thing of joy for him to be part of the Assembly that produced the state governor.

On the valedictory session of the House, the Majority

Leader observed that there was mixed feelings for them because some members were not coming back to the House, adding that it was an opportunity for members and staff to share their experiences in the past four years.

He commended members of the 7th Assembly for the wonderful and cordial relationship that existed among the legislators throughout their tenure and acknowledged the robust relationship that existed between the legislative arm and the executive.

Hon. Onwo, who, is the chairman, House Committee on Information also noted that the valedictory session was a ritual that signified the end of Assembly term prior to the introduction of a new one, adding that he expects the 8th Assembly to live up to the billing as the most vibrant Assembly among others. ●

In His Passing, I'm Coming To Understand The Scope Of What Nimi Was All About – *Ninah Nimi Briggs*

By Clifford Christopher Solomon

It was a carnival like atmosphere, as the creme-de-la-creme of Kalabari, Rivers State and beyond besieged Abonnema, the Headquarters of Akuku-Toru Local Government Area as they defied the heavy downpour to bid Emeritus Prof. Nimi Dimkpa Tobin Briggs, final goodbye on Saturday May 20, 2023. He was aged 79 years.

Ninah Nimi Briggs, the first child and only son of Prof. Nimi Briggs eulogized his father, stating that Prof. Nimi Briggs touched lives.

"I'm only in his passing coming to understand the scope of what Nimi was all about. To all intents and purposes, I only knew him as Daddy. Yes, I know a lot of what people are saying because I'm his son, I know all these things in pocket. To see the full spectrum of it from an international audience, federal and state government level to the community, Abonnema, the quality of people that attended the burial rites is a testimony and reflection of the way he affected everybody's life."

Arch Nimi Briggs further stated that the burial rites of his

late father which began in the United Kingdom, is a validation of the person he was, the many qualities he had in him, adding that he will surely miss the companionship, shields and the friendship they shared.

Officiating the commendation service, the Primate and President of St. Paul's Nyemoni Lutheran Cathedral, Abonnema His Eminence, Most Reverend (Dr.) Nimi Benson John Fyneface, recalled how in 1975, Prof. Briggs' father employed him as a parish worker and in 1980, recommended him for pastoral training which he finished in 1984 to come and assist him. He noted that if not for his recommendation, he would not have had the opportunity to go to the United States of America for his ministerial training and worked under him as an assistant minister until he died before taking over from him.

"My elder brother Emeritus Prof. Nimi Briggs was a wonderful, gentle and extraordinary man just like his father and born into a Christian family.



Funeral procession for Prof. Nimi Briggs at Abonnema

Though, no man is perfect, he tried and lived a very good life and he helped others to fulfill their destinies."

The Lutheran Primate said the demise of Prof. Briggs is a personal loss. "I will miss his advice. To lead a church and denomination is not a joke and he

is one of the pillars giving me support to carry on in leading the Lutheran Church in Nigeria."

Dignitaries who graced the funeral rites were Dr. Ipalibo Harry Banigo, Deputy Governor of Rivers State who represented the governor, Dr. Tammy Wenike Danagogo, Secretary to Rivers

State government, Chief Dumo Lulu Briggs, King Disrael Gbobo Bob-Manuel, the Amanyano of Abonnema, Sen. Andrew Uchendu, Prof. Ngozi Odu, Deputy Governor-elect Rivers State, Mr. Roland Sekibo, Chairman Akuku-Toru LGA and a host of others from the academia.

The state secretariat was once the centrepiece of the Port Harcourt skyline evoking memories of the good old days, when the young military governor, Alfred Diete-Spiff held sway as the helmsman of the old Rivers State. It used to be a beauty to behold.

Alas, today the Rivers State Secretariat is a shadow of itself. As it were, it has received the beating of a lifetime. A beating punctuated by tales of decay and sheer neglect. The Rivers State secretariat is now more of a monstrosity than the beautiful state secretariat residents often showed off to visiting friends and relatives, over the years.

The ugly, dilapidated Secretariat buildings are a perfect foil for the state of mind and reality of physical decay of many civil servants in the State.

The workers had had their hopes of succor raised recently by some civil servants having been interviewed for promotions in the past few months. Further, the hearts of the civil servants had leapt with the statements offering hope by the State governor Wike in his Workers Day, May 1, 2023 declarations.

Represented by Tammy Danagogo, Secretary to the State Government SSG, during the May Day celebrations this year, Wike had raised the hopes of civil servants in the state that long years of being treated with contempt by succeeding administrations in the state especially those of his predecessor, Chibuike Amaechi and himself, were coming to a final end. Wike directed the Civil Service Commission, to issue the beneficiaries with their promotion letters immediately, assuring that the entire promotion exercise of other categories would be completed before the expiration of his tenure.

Wike who commended the workers as a vehicle that delivers the action plans and services of the state to the people, urged them "to work together to protect and advance the social economic interest of the state and the citizens".

He assured that his

Uncertainly Grips Rivers Civil Servants Over Delayed Promotions And Payments

By Collins Welu

...turn hopes to Sim Fubara as Wike tenure ends



Gov. Nyesom Wike

administration will clear all the challenges facing the civil servants in terms of pension and gratuities, while seeking workers' patience and understanding.

One salient question on the lips of many civil servants and other Rivers men and women is that, bearing in mind these statements, why did the Wike administration leave both the civil servants and the secretariat which ordinarily should be the engine room of government, to rot away.

Our reporter, who went to the State Secretariat in the course of his investigation to get a clear sense of the concerns of the workers, returned with a chilling feedback. "The State Secretariat is like a ghost town. The morale of civil servants is very low. I had to use the torch of my phone to climb and descend the staircases. You have to be very careful so that, you don't bump into other people. Not so fortunate people that are compelled to use these staircases with many broken

steps, had consigned themselves to use the dark staircases, even when there was no sign of electricity within the Secretariat premises".

More worrisome is the issue of lack of water in the Rivers State Secretariat. The stench of unflushed human waste, hangs heavily on all the floors of the blocks in the Secretariat.

Hausa cart pushers are hired to get water for civil servants in jerry cans. Fourteen jerry cans cost about N1,000. The men from the North are doing brisk business, with a little nudge from the people at the helm of affairs in Rivers State.

What is even more galling is the propensity of successive administrations to turn a blind eye to the wellbeing of the hapless Civil Servants.

The civil servants approached to speak on their sorry condition, during the visit declined to speak or even stand for a few minutes for fear of being victimized. One of them who agreed to speak anonymously, noted that, "We are reliably informed that our counterparts in Bayelsa State receive their promotions promptly. These promotions are not phantom promotions. Immediately they receive their promotion letters, payment commences".

This is a far cry from what obtains in the Rivers State Civil Service. The recent announcements by the outgoing administration of Governor Wike stated the government's resolve to promote and effect implementation of the promotions. This brought many smiles to the workers who felt used and dumped by the state.

Indications that all was not well trickled in, in the course of the May Day celebrations. The secretary to the State Government, Dr. Tammy Danagogo, who represented the governor at the occasion, stated that over 4,000 civil servants had been promoted. He directed that their promotion letters should be given to them immediately. Three weeks after this directive, many Rivers civil servants are still jostling to be given their promotion letters.

Reports making the rounds indicate that some civil servants have received their promotion letters. These people claim that not only have they seen the letters, but that the financial benefits accruable to the Rivers Civil Servants will be paid from January 2023 to date. That means that the beleaguered and endangered species, the Rivers State civil servants, will be entitled to arrears once the implementation of the promotions commences.

It would be recalled that during the May Day celebrations, Dr. Danagogo who represented Governor Wike said that with regard to other categories of civil servants, like teachers, the Governing Boards that will conduct their promotions have not been constituted and as a result, these categories of staff have to wait until the Governing Boards responsible for their promotions are established or constituted.

It is rather interesting that teachers who were not adequately informed were celebrating prematurely without taking proper stock of what the Secretary to the State Government said at the Workers Day celebrations. Other teachers embarked on a frolic of their own, deceiving themselves into wishful thinking and unfounded faith that their promotion letters were waiting for them somewhere.

Further investigations at other Boards (names withheld) corroborated that they had not

done their promotion interviews and could not in any way benefit from the promotion exercise.

A holistic analysis of this promotion saga gives one the impression that Governor Wike, having good intentions for Rivers State Civil Servants set up the State Civil Service Commission, gave them a mandate and time frame to tidy up the promotions.

However, it appears that the time given to the commission was not sufficient. This has been corroborated by the non-constitution of the Governing Boards of some government parastatals like the Hospital Management Board, the Universal Basic Education Boards, etc.

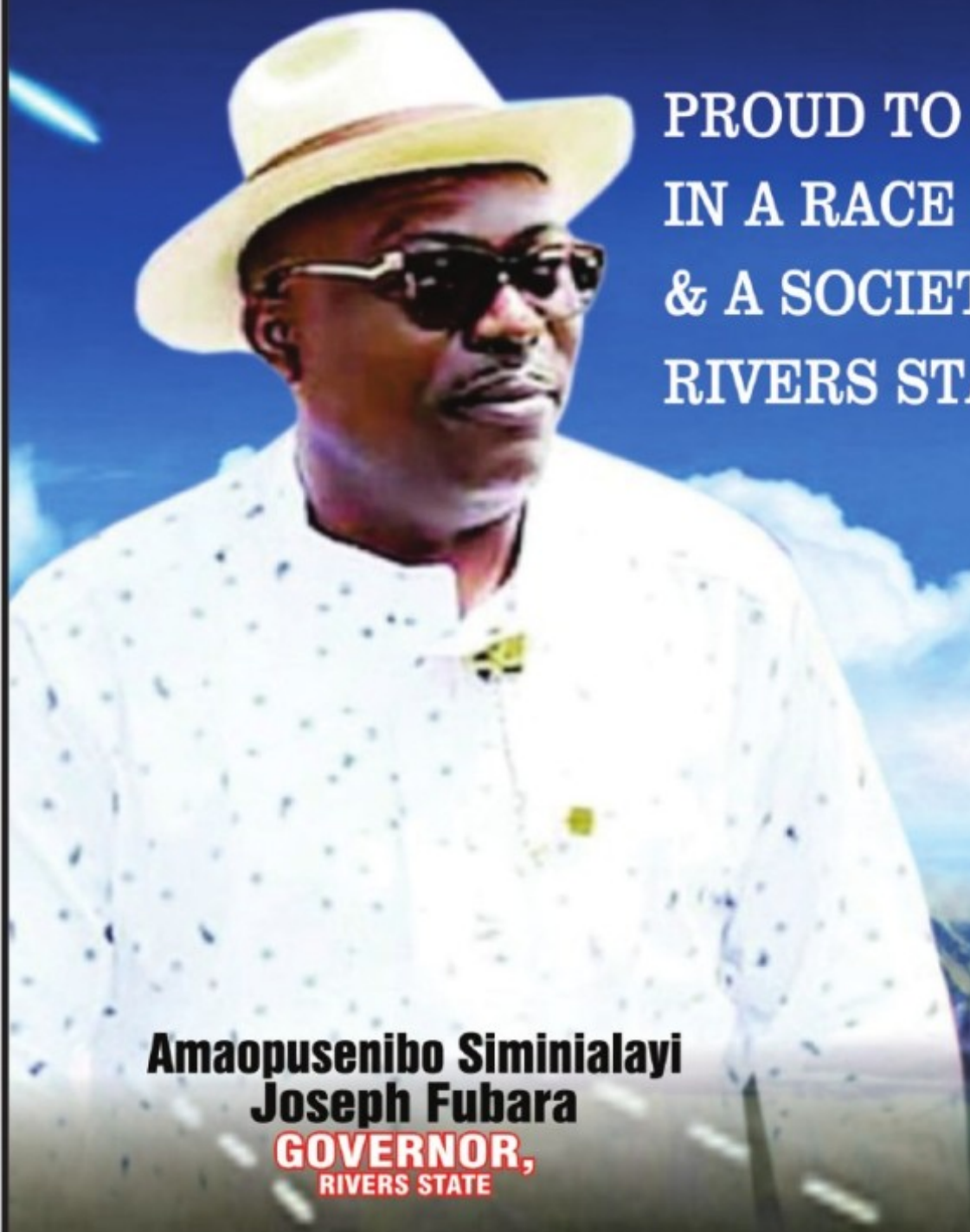
One thing is looming large on the horizon. Rivers state civil servants may smile. When these smiles will be activated is not entirely clear. But what is becoming clearer by the day is that the Governor-elect, Sir Siminalayi Fubara may likely be the messianic figure that may do the magic.

Speaking on the occasion of the May Day celebrations, Governor Wike said, "Fortunately, the Governor-Elect was a civil servant and belongs to your constituency. I assure you; he will do well and make your constituency proud. All that is needed is your co-operation, prayers and support. State building is a continuous process."

Speaking in synergy with his mentor during the last Worker's Day, Sir Fubara stated: "As a civil servant, I was part of you and I will always remain so. I will always identify with you and work with you to improve the system. Although no society can adequately pay for your sacrifices and loyalty to the state and the nation, I will ensure that you get the right benefit you deserve."

Opobo Title Holders Association (*otihas*)

PROUD TO JOIN YOUR EXCELLENCIES
IN A RACE TO BUILD BUSINESS SECTORS
& A SOCIETY TO MAKE STARS FROM
RIVERS STATE

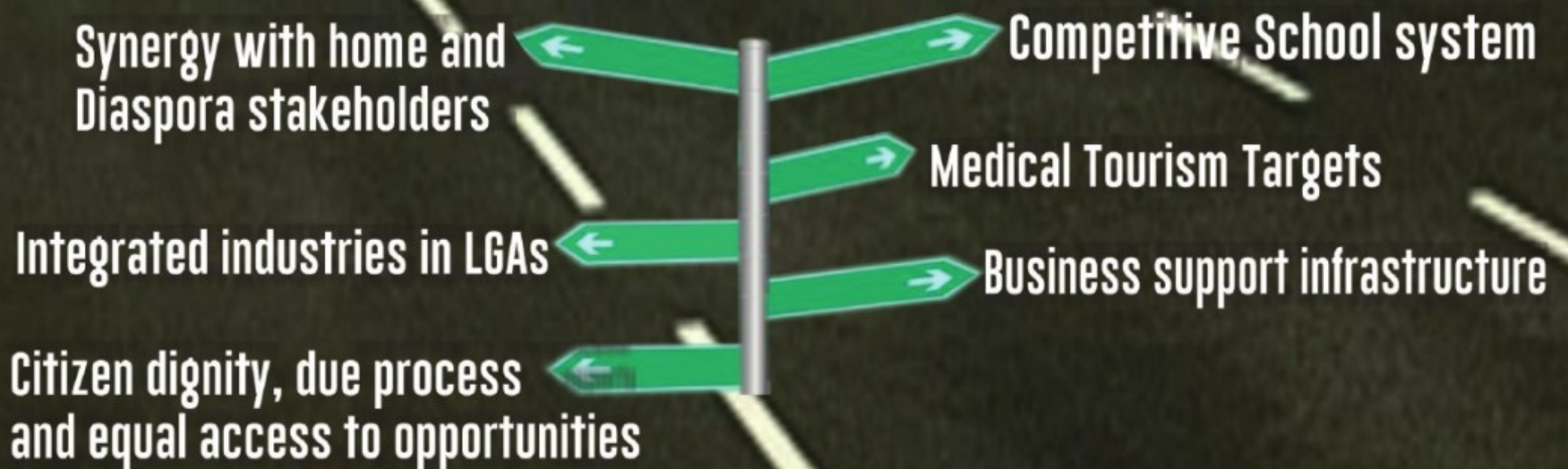


**Amaopusenibo Siminialayi
Joseph Fubara**
GOVERNOR,
RIVERS STATE



Prof Mrs. Ngozi Odu
DEPUTY GOVERNOR RIVERS STATE

New Rivers Vision



Signed: Amaopusenibo Barr. Mike Epelle
Chairman

Concept And Design



—Presented by:—
GRAIN Consulting

CBN Takes eNaira Campaign To BIU

The Branch Controller of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in Benin City, Apostle Michael Mgbeze says e-Naira will make a significant positive difference to Nigeria and Nigerians.

The Branch Controller made the statement when he and his entourage met with the management of the Benson Idahosa University (BIU), Benin City. He said the e-Naira is the digital equivalent of "Cash Naira."

According to him, expected gains from eNaira include improvement in the availability and usability of Central Bank money, support to a resilient payment system, ecosystem, encouragement of financial inclusion, reduction of the cost of processing cash, enabling direct welfare disbursements to citizens, increased revenue and tax collection, facilitation of diaspora remittances and improvement of efficiency in cross border payments.

Mgbeze said that globally, central banks are essential to the

Story by
Iduozee Efe Paul, Benin

economy and keep evolving in line with development.

"Central Banks play an essential and pivotal role in the economy. They act to ensure monetary and financial system stability, a robust, safe, efficient, and inclusive payment system, and issue the most popular form of money to the populace - fiat money.

"Central Banks must evolve in the face of several technological advances that transact the financial industrial to be able to play these roles, and maintain control over the monetary space. Many central banks are exploring how contemporary technologies such as the block chain technology used to issue digital currencies could, alleviate several policy problems.

According to him, "Nigeria has one of the most advanced payment systems in the world making it a benchmark for payment systems in Sub-Saharan Africa and globally. The eNaira is the digital equivalent of the cash



The CBN, Benin City and BIU Management team

Naira. Put simply, "same Naira, more possibilities".

"The eNaira, like the physical Naira, is also an official legal tender of the Federal

Republic of Nigeria and is a direct liability of the CBN. The CBN believes the eNaira will make a significant positive difference to Nigeria and Nigerians," he further explained.

The Acting Vice Chancellor of the Benson Idahosa University (BIU), Prof. Johnson Oyedeji, told the CBN team that the management of the university will support the initiative for creating an enabling environment for CBN to interact with the students on the best way to use the eNaira policy.

Prof. Oyedeji said, he was happy that central banks all over the world have adopted the policy, noting, what is important

now is that, "whatever that would help, and we can do as a nation to regulate and grow our financial system for the betterment of the people, is our desire"

He stressed that what should matter is that the policy must be well thought out, and efficiently implemented."

Announcing support for the scheme, he said, "As a university, we are going to support you. We are going to get some of our students as your ambassador since you want to give them some stipends.

"As a university, we are also looking forward to what we would benefit, because we are the one to do your branding around the campus and the environs." ●

Communiqué Issued At The End Of A One-Day National Conference On Organized Crime In Nigeria And The Gulf Of Guinea (NACOCINAG) ...

Con't from page 10

- endowment of the Gulf of Guinea region and the scramble for profiteering that can include deviation to transnational organized crime;
- ▲ Transnational organized crime is a problem that affects all of us among the populations in the (Gulf) region;
- ▲ There is a co-relationship between created conflicts in conflict-afflicted areas and the formations/sustenance of organized crime in the (Gulf);
- ▲ There is usually a collaboration between international crime syndicates and Nigerian state/corporate officials who wield high-level influence in the industries related to the problem of organized crime;
- ▲ State effort in setting up mere task force outfits cannot automatically translate into desirable result, but may even help benefit the few corrupt/thieving members of society;
- ▲ Environmental pollution taking place around the Gulf of Guinea is contributing to minimize ecological (or natural resources) services that traditionally benefit the people of the region;
- ▲ International interests approximating to superpower struggle from part of insecurity difficulties and related challenges across Africa's coastal regions (including Gulf of Guinea);
- ▲ National security strategy efforts are weak generally - as perpetrators of international crime are usually part of formulation of strategic mechanisms;

- and,
- ▲ Low capacity of political leadership (particularly, of elected leaders) naturally give rise to weak state effort to provide effective governance around organized crime management.
- Recommendations**
- After conference rigorous deliberations, were considered:
- ▲ FGN should fast track effort in setting up effective task force against organized crime;
- ▲ FGN should no longer delay to establish the modular refineries promised across the Niger Delta states to support sustainable youth empowerment priorities;
- ▲ We should adopt new innovative ways of combating crime to be able to address the problem of organized crime and perpetrators of such crimes now carried out in sophisticated ways;
- ▲ Cultural orientation must be revisited to recapture value dimension to prevent increasing penchant for crime;
- ▲ Tactful mitigation of organized crime must go beyond mere declaration (statements), and must involve seriously committed mindset and political will;
- ▲ Discussions must be sustained and expanded in an effort to seek solution against transnational organized crime;
- ▲ The state (government) must target to make genuine effort to provide services that address the needs of the grassroots population-to make the masses happy;
- ▲ The Gulf of Guinea membership is still expanding to include more countries, and the current efforts to secure the region (and combat crime) must be responsive to related emerging trends;

- ▲ Concerted effort should be made to continue this engagement to ensure that strong persuasion messages can emerge to help improve crime mitigation contributions;
- ▲ A coast-guard mechanism should be established to support the effort of maritime security enforcement to ensure related benefits are maximized;
- ▲ Existing state agencies should be properly funded to ensure that they have capability to carry out legitimate duties of providing security and combating organized crime;
- ▲ Government's role in combating organized crime is prime, and must be put to play if our effort to mitigate the menace posed by organized crime will succeed
- ▲ There should be coastal community development areas agencies to cater to the special security and development needs of the people living there - toward strengthening partnership advantages from even there disadvantaged conditions;
- ▲ Legal reform-based advocacy and governance oversight role must also be intensified on this same organized crime menace.

Conclusion

There is a consensus that the effort of mitigating organized crime should be sustained with continuous engagement which would be expanded to involve more collaboration from a wide spectrum of actors across urban and non-urban settings - and across state/non-state bodies. Also, more demand from individual citizens and groups for good governance practices must be sustainably carried out to promote beneficial results. ●

NADESSTU Frowns At N25m Diverted Students' Town Hall Meetings Fund

Story by
Dave Okpogadie, Asaba

The President-elect of the National Association Of Delta State Students Union (NADESSTU), Comrade Monday Wiska has frowned at the diverted N25m earmarked by the state government for Students' Town Hall Meetings, describing it as an aberration.

He promised members that all property and belongings of the union must be judiciously used for the benefit of students.

Wiska made the revelation on Tuesday at the NUJ Press Centre, Asaba, Delta State while briefing journalists.

Harping on prudence and accountability, he declared that all those who in the past had misappropriated the finances of NADESSTU must be brought to book.

He congratulated the incoming governor of Delta State, Hon. Oborevwo Sheriff, and he urged him to reconsider the downward review of school fees in the state's higher institutions, pointing out that it would reduce the sufferings of parents and increase students' enrollment in all the state academic institutions.

He also charged the incoming governor to jettison multiple appointments with regards to overseers of Students

Affairs which he blamed for the infighting in NADESSTU. Speaking on the harsh economic situation in the country, the President-elect also appealed to the incoming governor to increase the bursary paid to Delta State students as well as the number of scholarships to students.

Wiska also congratulated members of the newly constituted Delta State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission, DESOPADEC Board as he urged them to expand the scholarship scheme to truly involve students from the oil producing areas.

The new helmsman of NADESSTU assured members that his administration will serve their interests with a pledge that the Egyptians they saw before would be seen no more.

He explained his visit and consultations within the four zones of the union have kept him abreast with the challenges of the union which his tenure would surmount.

"Delta students should rejoice because the Egyptian you see today, you shall see no more. In the course of my consultation across the four zones, I have the rare privilege to be inundated with the peculiar challenges and plight of our students and the issues that continue to undermine and divide our dear association.

"It is my pledge that my administration will address all these concerns and put them to a permanent rest," he stated. ●

Dr. Amba Ambaioweï: Bayelsa State Foremost Founding Father, Returns Home To Well Deserved Rest



Public Lecture: State And Ijaw Identity Management In Nigeria:



Dr. Stephen Olali, Bayelsa State Government Chief Historian and Archivist, guest lecturer



Benjamin Okaba, President Ijaw National Congress INC



Dr. Tariladei Amba Ambaiowei, son

A mixed crowd made up of family members, government officials, development advocates was present, Thursday May 18, 2023 at a public lecture in honour of Dr. Amba Ambaiowei, a fervent advocate for Ijaw, Niger Delta development. The theme was, "State Creation and Ijaw Identity Management: The Role of Sir, Dr. Amba Ambaiowei MFR, JP."



Prof. Roseline Izonbodo (right)



L-R: Gboribiogha Jonah, former Deputy Governor and current chairman Bayelsa Elders Council, Gideon Ekeuwei, Secretary to Bayelsa State Government



Ekiyokenigha Didi Clark and wife



Chief Godwin Akedesuo



Hon. Donald Daunemigha and wife



Mrs Patience Timiyo, daughter

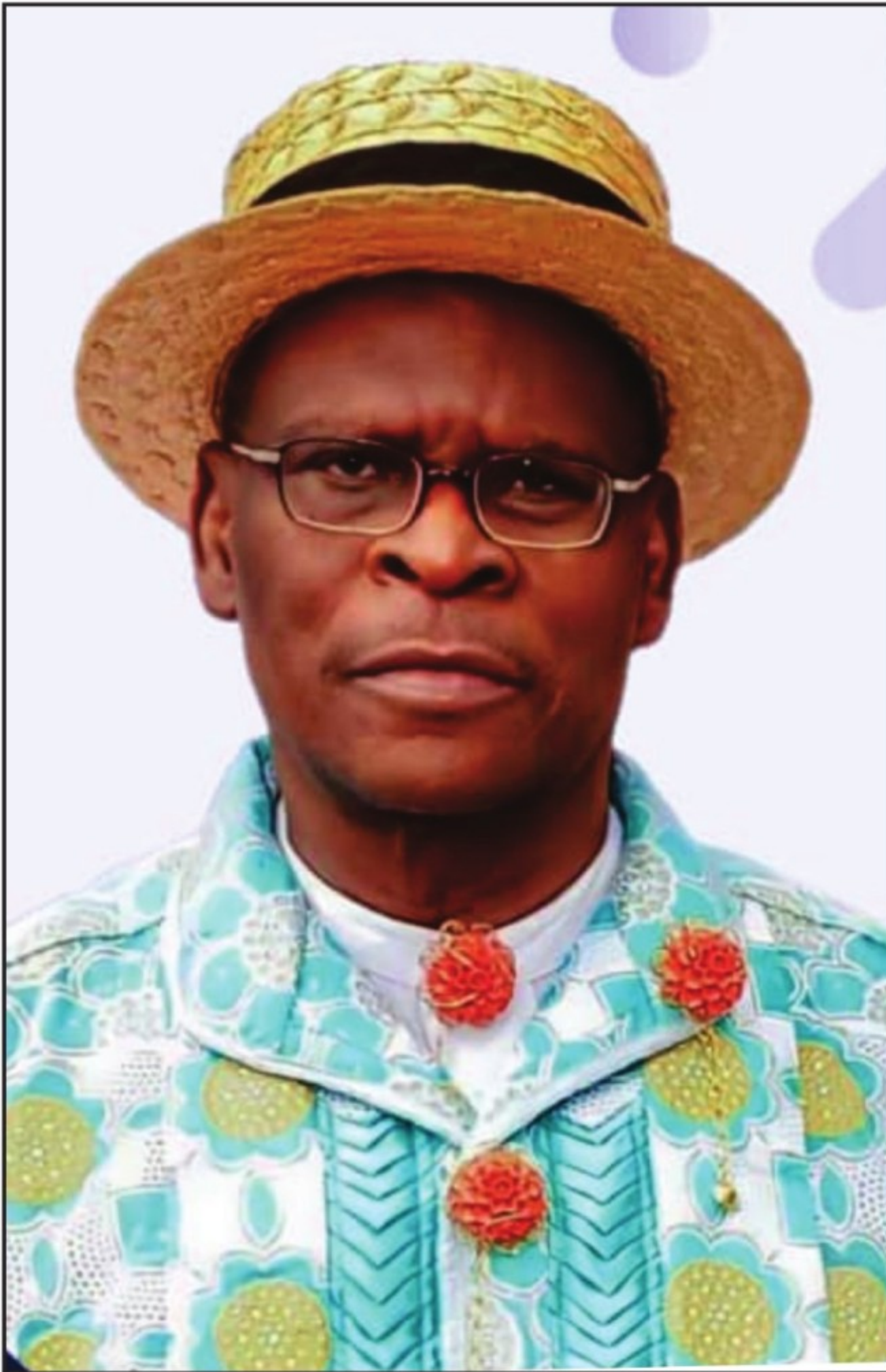


Left: Dr. Lovet Kigigha



Elders and chiefs in attendance

Dr. Amba Ambaoweï Still Lives: Gov Diri



Dr. Abraham Ayebakepreye Amba Ambaioweï

Bayelsa State Governor, Douye Diri has said that Chief, Dr. Abraham Ayebakepreye Amba Ambaioweï still lives on, because of the indelible foot prints he has left on the sands of time.

Speaking on Thursday during a public lecture to herald his burial ceremony, Gov. Douye Diri represented by the Secretary to Bayelsa State Government, Gidoen Ekeoweï noted that the deceased has done well for the Izon Nation and promised that the Bayelsa State Government, will work with the ideals of Dr. Amba Ambaioweï to move

Ijaw Nation.

He described the deceased as a great man who provided free medical treatment to many people at his hospital that was fondly referred to as, "Ijaw Hospital."

The governor advised the family and the people of the state to uphold the values he stood for and work in a manner that will advance his ideals.

"The deceased has done well for the Izon Nation. Bayelsa State Government will work with the ideals of Dr. Amba Ambaioweï to move the Ijaw Nation forward.

Also speaking, the President Ijaw National Congress, Professor Benjamin

Okaba described the deceased as a determined, courageous and fearless icon noting that the sacrifices late Dr. Amba Ambaioweï made led to the creation of Bayelsa State.

Disclosing that he lived an impactful life while alive, he urged privileged leaders in government to manage resources accruing to the Ijaw Nation well and avoid the winner takes all syndrome emphasizing that "We should not allow politics divide us."

The Elders Forum Chairman and former Deputy Governor of Bayelsa State, retired Rear Admiral Gboribiogha John Jonah advised the younger generation to learn from the

ideals of the late hero.

He warned the Ijaws to desist from writing frivolous petitions and support those that have won election to develop the state.

He urged the founding fathers to always give direction and advice to those in government, to deliver the dividends of democracy to the people.

The Chairman Bayelsa State Founding Fathers, Chief Benedict Gwambe described Dr. Amba Ambaioweï as exemplary, focused, courageous, brilliant and excellent leader that coordinated the struggle for state creation effectively.

The Vice Chancellor Niger Delta University represented by the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academics, Professor Jonah Akekere noted that the University was a major beneficiary of the founding fathers struggle.

He promised that the NDU will place the lecture on the school website and expressed commitment to collaborate with the Ambaioweï family to make the lecture an annual series.

Delivering a lecture with the title the role of Sir, Chief, Dr. Abraham, Ayebakepreye Amba Ambaioweï (MFR) JP, the Ebe Dou-Pamoweï of Bayelsa State, Dr. Stephen Temegha Olali chronicled the existence of the Ijaws as aborigines of the Niger Delta and the predominant ethnic nationality in the region.

The Guest Lecturer who

is the chief historian and archivist of Bayelsa State, also gave a background history of the struggle for Ijaw Identity in Nigeria dating back to the colonial era to the creation of Rivers and Bayelsa States.

Dr. Okaba described Dr. Amba Ambaioweï as an excellent, civilized man, with a passion to liberate the Ijaws from all forms of subjugation from external predators as evident in the manner he convened and coordinated meetings, presentation of memorandum, and personal sacrifices he made to actualize the Bayelsa State creation.

"Dr. Amba Ambaioweï was an apostle of proper and effective management of the gains of the state creation through building of a virile economy, health facilities, establishment of financial institutions such as insurance companies, mortgage houses, social development in education, health, water infrastructure.

"The late hero established Amba Hospital in Port Harcourt at a time it was rare for an Ijaw man to own a hospital, which became a rallying point for the Ijaws and he provided free treatment to many people who could not afford it.

Dr. Olali urged the state government, the Ijaw nation and the Ambaioweï family to uphold the ideals of the departed hero to advance the frontiers of Ijaw self determination struggle. •



Gov. Douye Diri

Commendation Service Of Dr. Amba Ambaiowei



Council of Knights mount guard



Bishop Nixon Enekeme



St. Stephen's Anglican Church Amassoma choir



Engr. Charles Ambaiowei



Barr. and Mrs. Patience Timiyo



Hon. and Engr. Mrs. Donald Daunemigha



Mr. and Dr. Mrs. Tonyi Amba Ambaiowei



Dr. Tariladei Amba Ambaiowei



Sir Amba Ambaiowei's grandchildren

At St. Stephen's Anglican Church Amassoma



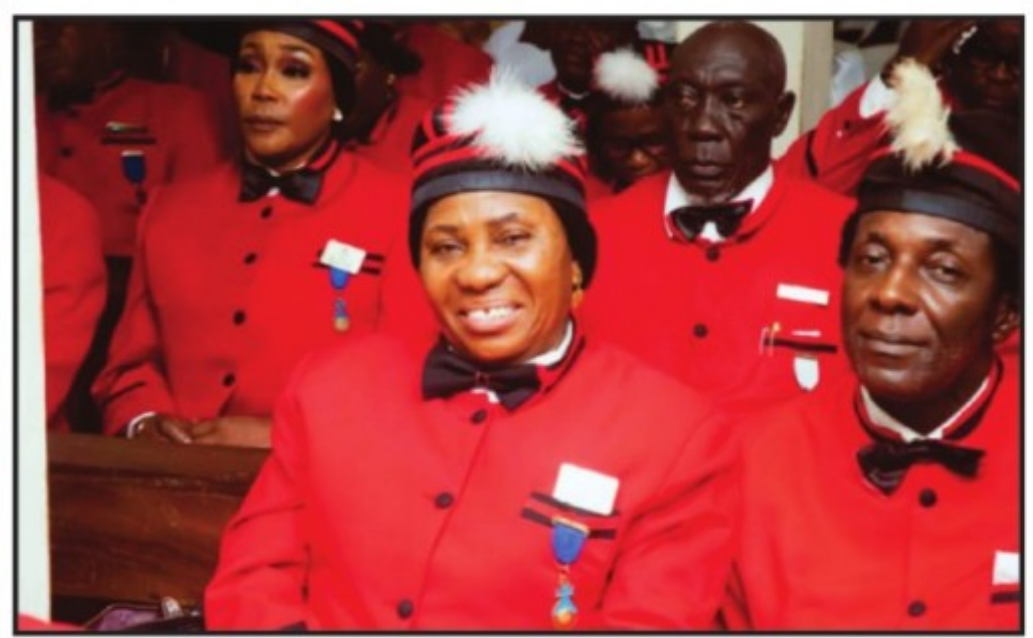
Officiating Ministers



Arc. Eseimokume Amba Ambaiowei



Council of Knights



Dame Grace Fiepere



Margaret Alamiyeseigha



Dr. Boladei Igali and Gboribiogha Jonah



Progressive Brothers



*Engr. Mrs. Ebiere Daunemigha,
Barr. Bekere Clark and Bomene
Amba Ambaiowei*



Dame Ebimie Okara

The Creation Of Bayelsa State

In the 136 page book in which he explored the journey to the creation of Bayelsa State, Dr. Amba Ambaiwei captures the long, arduous journey to the creation of Bayelsa State October 1, 1996 by the military government of General Sani Abacha.

The brilliant, self-assured personality that Dr. Ambaiwei was, he not only captured the long search for a place of safety and nuanced development for Ijaw people, he never failed to acknowledge the contribution of forebears to the actualization of a long held dream, he documented the contribution of the men and women, who worked with him to make the dream come alive.

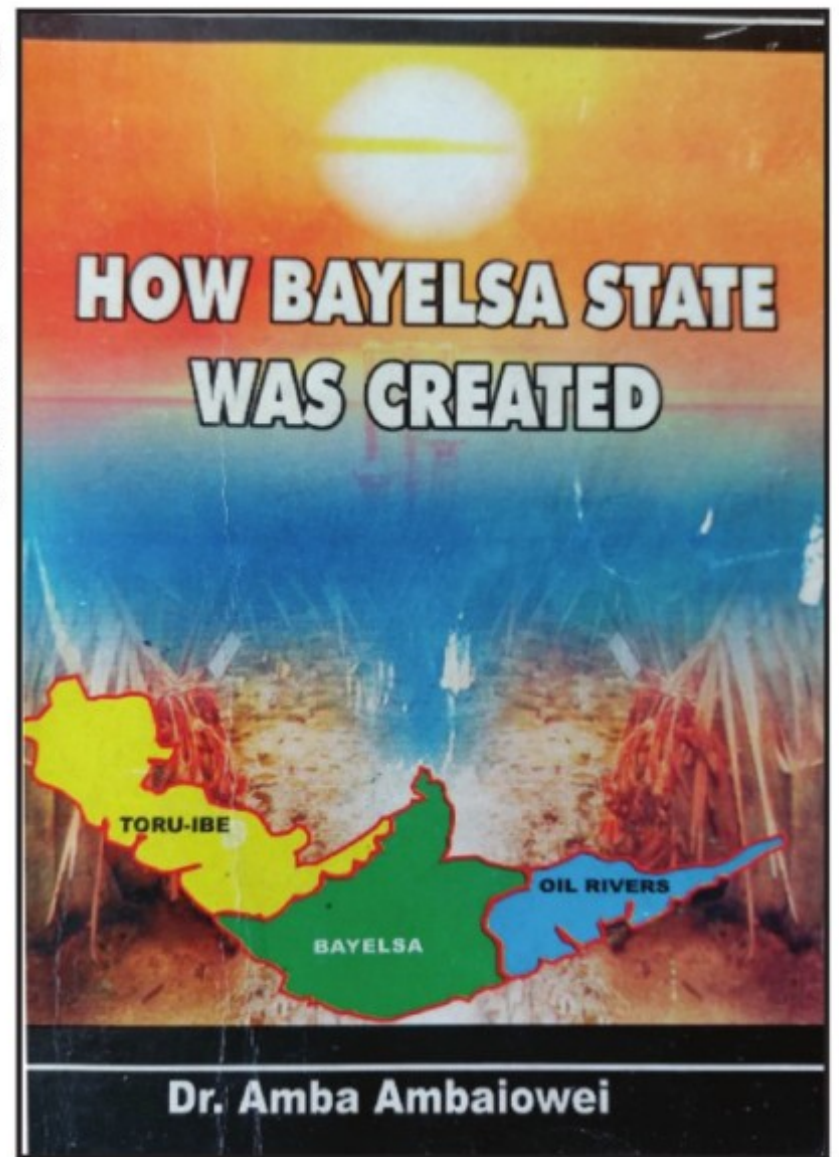
The book is divided into ten chapters and covers key epochs, leaps and set backs of the journey set in simple, concise language. Not only this, he is clear about setting out what structures are necessary to sustain the state after its creation.

Finally, he sets out for posterity, the name of all the persons, men and women, who were part of the various meetings and gatherings held up to the creation of a state which, today is regarded as a homeland or "Jerusalem" by Ijaw people wherever they are.

Bayelsa State Founding Fathers

1. DR. AMBA AMBAIOWEI
Former Chairman Bayelsa Forum/Bayelsa State Creation Movement
2. COMRADE T.K. OGORIBA
Former President MOSIEND Movement for the Survival of Ijaw Ethnic Nationality in the Niger Delta
3. CHIEF J.B. FUMUDOH
Former President Ijaw National Congress
4. Rear Admiral FESTUS PORBENI
5. CHIEF DAN ETETE
6. COMMODORE VICTOR OMBU
7. COMMODORE W.G. YANGA
8. HIGH CHIEF F. J. WILLIAMS
9. SIR DR. LAMBERT ERADIRI
10. SENATOR AMATARI ZUOFA
11. HIS EXCELLENCY SENATOR MELFORD OKILO
12. HRM E.P. OKOYA
13. HRH N.A. FRANK OPIGO
14. LATE HRH G. F. AGANABA
15. LATE HRM C.B. AGULATA
16. LATE HRM J. A. ERE
17. HRM W.S.J. IGBUGBURU
18. HRM N.S. ORIANZI
19. PROF. T. T. ISOUN
20. HON. F.G. ENDELEY
21. CHIEF FRANCIS DOUKPOLA
22. CHIEF STEPHEN OWEIBIA
23. MR. W.J. KEME
24. CHIEF J.T.T. ALAMENDE BOBAI
25. CHIEF SIMON AMBAKEDEREMO
26. CHIEF FRED AGUGU
27. HRM J.I. IGBAGARA
28. PROF. KIMSE OKOKO
29. CHIEF C. PERE AJUWA
30. CHIEF YOUMO GABICE
31. COL. MAC ITONYO

32. DR. GABRIEL OKARA
33. CHIEF J.I. ARIKEKPA
34. PRINCE M.O. ERE
35. CHIEF J.K. BRAIMBAIFA
36. PROF. AMB. LAWRENCE EKPEBU
37. CHIEF L.T. UKUTA
38. CHIEF MARTINS AGBEDE
39. ENGR. CHARLES AMBAIOWEI
40. MR. NGOZU KIME
41. DR. LOVET KIGIGHA
42. REV. RAWLINGS EBEN-SPIFF
43. DR. D.C. DOUGLAS
44. MR. NELSON AZIBOLONARI
45. MR. B.F. IKOLI
46. MR. DECEMBER SAMSON
47. MR. I.M.F. OMBI
48. MR. OYINGIDUBAMO KAKIRI
49. MRS. PRIMROSE KPOKPOSEI
50. MRS. REBECCA SUOWARI
51. MRS. LOVEINAH IKENI
52. MR. MORRIS EKIYE
53. MR. MARSHALL KUNOUN
54. MR. PRINCE KAINGA
55. PROF. N. BRAIMBAIFA
56. MR. THOMAS ITI
57. MRS. EVELYN SUOWARI
58. APOSTLES S.D. ASAIPUKA
59. DR. KINGSLEY D. ALAGOA
60. DR. EMMANUEL DENENU
61. MR. FOSTER OGOLA
62. MR. JOSEPH OPIGO
63. CAPTAIN KENNEDY IBARIWENI
64. MR. COLLINS TITUS ODOGU



Dr. Amba Ambaiwei

65. MR. DOUYE DIRI
66. MR. J.T. TORUEME
67. MR. JOE GARB
68. BARRISTER C. J. AYABOWEI
69. CHIEF SUPER DIGIFA PARIS
70. LT. COL INOKOBA
71. MR. BENEDICT GUEMBE
72. CHIEF M.Y. WARITIMI
73. CHIEF OBIYO OWOTORUFA
74. ENGR. GEORGE AMOS
75. CHIEF A.A. TARBIE

THE BORO LEGACY

1. MAJOR ISAAC ADAKA BORO
2. CAPTAIN SAMUEL T. OWONARU
3. LT. NOTTINGHAM DICK

More Images From Dr. Amba Ambaiwei Home Return



Body arrives Amassoma



Ijaw National President Ben Okaba eulogises their patriot



Mrs. Patience Timiyo



Members of the Ambaiwei Igoniyougha family receive body with some dignitaries



Lying in state at Ijaw House



Committal to mother earth: Boladei Igali and the Amba Ambaiweis

The Role Of Sir, Dr. Amba Ambaioweï MFR, JP



Pereoweï, Waripamo and Eseimokumo Amba Ambaioweï, sons



Tonyi Amba Ambaioweï, son



Engr. Charles Ambaioweï



Chief Benedict Guembe, Chairman Bayelsa Founding Father's Forum



Gboribiogha Jonah, former Deputy Governor and current Chairman Bayelsa Elders Council



Elders at the event

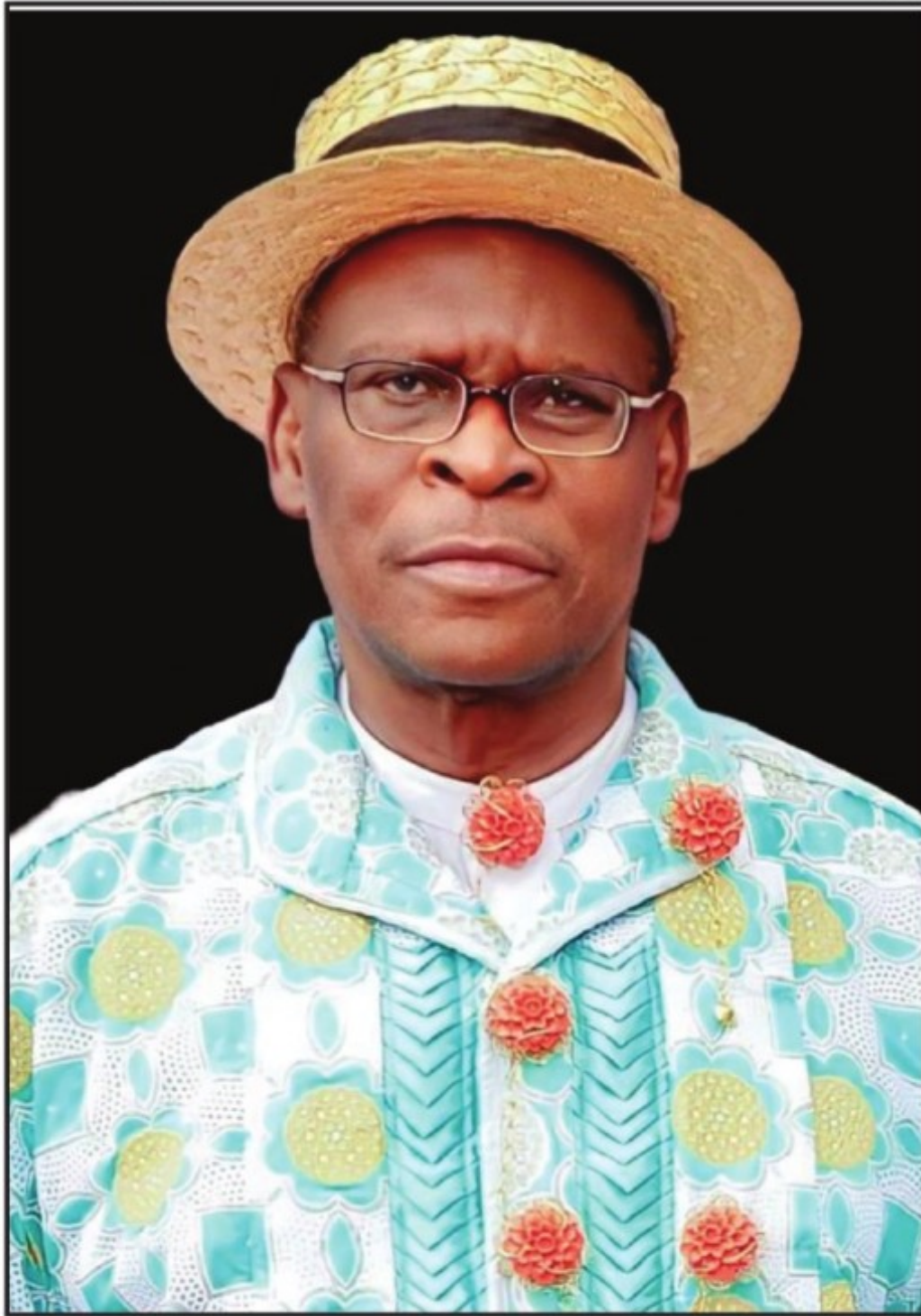


Bomene Amba-Ambaioweï, daughter



L-R: Benedict Guembe, Chairman Bayelsa Founding Father's Forum, Chief Godswill Akedesuo, Acting Amananaoweï of Amassoma

Bayelsa's Founding Fathers And Mothers



Sir, Chief, Dr. Abraham Ayebakepreye Amba Ambaiowei MFR JP (The Ebe Dou-Pamowei of Bayels State) Founder Bayelsa State Creation Movement, 1940 - 2023



Chief Dan Etete, Minister Of Petroleum 1995- 1998



Rear Admiral Festus B. Porbeni (rtd)



Primrose Kpokposei Oringeriya



Prof Turner Isoun



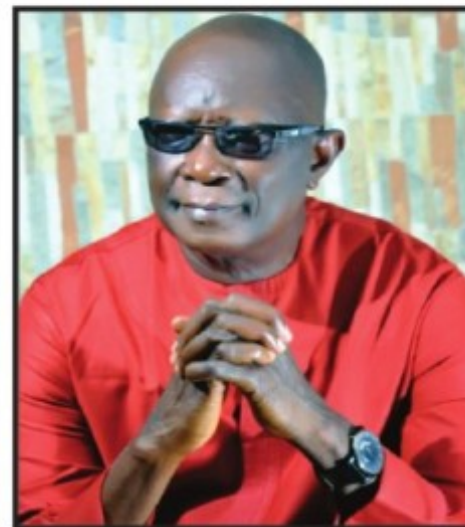
Chief Joshua Fumudoh Former President INC, One of the founding Fathers Of Bayelsa State



Engr. Charles Ambaiowei



Sir (Dr) Lovet Kigigha



Timi Kaiser Ogoriba MOSIEND Leading light



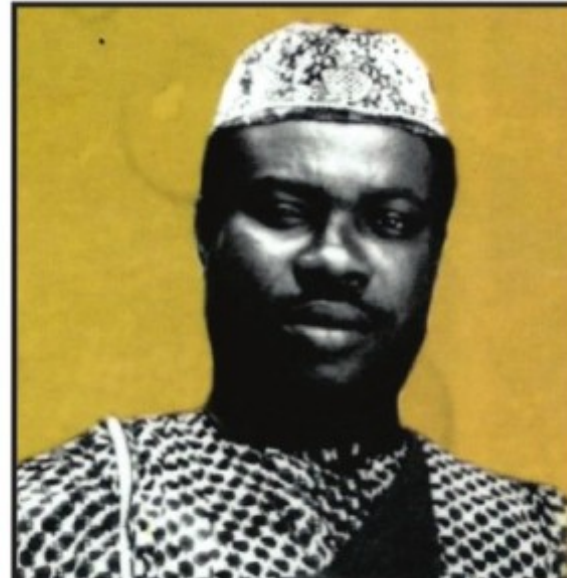
Mrs. Lovina Ekeni Imo



Nicholas Abo Frank-Opigo 1926 - 2010



Mrs. Suowari Waide, One of the founding Mothers of Bayelsa State



Chief Abo Frank Opigo (1926-2010)



Chief Francis Doukpola

We Will Stop The High Cost Of Food In Bayelsa - John

What does Bayelsa State commodities and export development agency do?

Our responsibility is to promote export business in Bayelsa State, export products for sale, export products overseas, encourage internal food production and encourage international export production so that we can produce a lot and send them overseas.

What are some of these export products?

We have identified seventeen export produce that we can use to make a lot of returns to the state government and some of these export produce we have them in tonnage. They are palm oil, plantain, we have cassava and cassava produce which is being processed into Garri and other things. We also identified crops like bush mango which is Ogbono and we also have Crayfish, Shrimps and Snail. We have Water Yam. We have Water Snail, Bamboo Raffia Palm, Potatoes, Banana and others.

How do you intend to preserve them so that they can get out of the state without going bad?

We have a warehouse where we will preserve those export crops but we don't keep them in our warehouse beyond 48 hours. Some are perishable goods so those ones that are perishable, we sell them off. We sell them back to the public from our plaza at government controlled price.

Can people get anything from there now?

For now, the ones we had, have been cleared, we are waiting for new things to come.

How do you assemble all those produce, because I know almost every part of Bayelsa is riverine?

We assemble them through our local government field officers. We have field officers in all the eight local government areas. These field officers interact with local farmers and there are people we call vendors. These vendors relate with our field officers on a daily basis. So if they have anything, they bring it to them and we pay at a subsidized rate.

There is this saying that Bayelsa State is easily prone to inflation. Don't you think what you are doing can increase inflation and cause food shortage because you get all these things and dump in a particular warehouse and they are sold out in bulk?

No. It will even reduce the cost of food items in the state. Now we have them in bulk and at a cheaper price for the people to buy. We collect from farmers and we disburse to the general public and at the same time we disburse to exporters who want them in tonnage and those we cannot sell out in tonnage we sell at a retail price. So the essence of this programme is to reduce cost of food items in the state. We are indirectly

Dr Paul Ebikabowei John is the Director General of Bayelsa State Commodities and Export Development Agency. In this interview with Preye Okah, he explains what the agency is doing to stop food shortage and inflation.

controlling prices of commodities in the market. Most people will prefer to come to the plaza to buy rather than going to Swali market by so doing, we are forcing the general market to reduce their prize because when you have your goods and people are not buying and everybody is going to one particular pool to collect, that will generate this awareness and then people will begin to say instead of us to leave our food items unsold, they will sell it at the particular price that is affordable to the people. Indirectly, we are using that system to push down prices of goods and services in the society.

What is the agency's relationship with the state and federal governments?

We are working in collaboration with the Nigerian Export Promotion Council and at the same time we are working in collaboration with Nigeria Export and Import Bank where we are expecting some of our export grants to be given to the state. The federal government budgeted about 30 billion naira for exporters this year. Now the highest state with the export growth will be able to access this money through the Central Bank of Nigeria and then the money will be brought to the state for exporters to benefit and it will energize the exporters.

How can people be registered?

We have registered about thirty eight exporters of Bayelsa origin who are farmers who are now waiting for federal



Dr Paul Ebikabowei John

government. The state government wants to give six million naira which is our take off grant. We are still expecting that. As soon as the state government makes that available to us, Bayelsa will never experience increase in the prices of food items anymore.

What plans have you put in place to make sure that you preserve these items?

help the people. Because most of the farm produce that we will have in the warehouse would have served as a succor to a lot of people who had nothing to eat during the crisis. We would have been giving out garri, plantain, and so many food items from there. So it's a way of preserving for the rainy days because no one knows when we can run into crisis. Now we are

"We have identified seventeen export produce that we can use to make a lot of returns to the state government and some of these export produce we have them in tonnage. They are palm oil, plantain, we have cassava and cassava produce which is being processed into Garri and other things. We also identified crops like bush mango which is Ogbono and we also have Crayfish, Shrimps and Snail. We have Water Yam. We have Water Snail, Bamboo Raffia Palm, Potatoes, Banana and others."

government incentives to energize them to go back to their bases and continue to produce more for public consumption. This is a way of energizing them to produce more and the agency works as a middle man between the exporters and the federal government. The money comes to the agency and we disburse to the farmers and the farmers will report back to us with their produce and through that produce we give back to the society through export.

Have you got any funding from the state government?

We have not got any funding from the state

Like in the processing, we have discussed with the Nigerian Export and Import Bank. We have written to them and we have told them to assist us with fund to get processing machines like machines to process garri, palm kernel, palm oil. So by the time we are able to get this funding, we will be able to increase our export drive in the state.

Many crops were lost last year because of flood. How are you planning for this year?

If we had been properly funded and we had been in operation before the flooding, we will have gone a long way to

asking for fund. If government can fund us now, we will meet up those problems experienced during the flood season. So, if the flooding is coming this year and if we are given those monies that we are expecting from the state government, we will be able to at least stock the warehouse with new food items so by the time we run into that problem, supply will be easy for us.

How do you intend to get all the items for supply or are you going to buy from outside the state?

We are not buying from outside the state. We are

encouraging our farmers. We have enough land for farm but our people have decided to run away from the land for oil money, government appointment and all the rest. That is why most of those things are not coming up but, if we can move them back to farm through this process, as long as the farmers are given incentives and they are receiving money from us, they can go back to farm immediately. So that will energize them to go into farming even the youth can go into farming with the hope that people can come and collect and pay. Before you know it, we will have enough food inside and outside the warehouse. All these things will work if the state government finances us. And at the same time, we have product monitoring unit which monitors every food product that moves out of Bayelsa state. Once it is at the trucking level you are going to pay N2000 at the tollgate to the agency and if you are not registered, you are not entitled to move the products out of the state.

Won't all these cause food shortage in the state?

It will not. As we are right now, the consumption level of farm produce in Bayelsa is about 2.5%. That is to tell you that we are not buying. They are just moving them out. There are people who go straight to the farmers, pick and take them out and then bring them back to the state at an exorbitant price. That is why you are having this inflation. So if we are able to stop them, they can't come in and pick. We control all the process and then we supply back to the state at a government own price. People now buy at a lower price rather than inflation price.

When do you intend to surmount all the challenges that are now staring you in the face?

Two years from now, Bayelsa will know their food ratio. Bayelsans will no longer be seen as a state that is having high cost of living. Export produce will increase and the state government will make so much money to plough back into the farming sector. Once this happens, people will be coming from outside to buy. And we will have a market space for export produce.

How do you come about the 2.5% Ratio?

2.5% is the consumption ration. We have calculated the ration. We are looking at the import and export ratio in the state. The state consumes more of food from outside than food produced from within. You now discover that the circulation of what we have in the market comes from outside and that increases the price of goods and food in the state and it is hiked from transportation, road levies and those charges are being put on the items. ●

More Images From The Commemoration of Boro Day 2023 Across Ijaw Communities By The Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC)

Bomadi, Delta State was in full festive mood, as youth and other community members gathered, sang and danced in celebration of the life of Ijaw Revolutionary, Major Isaac Adaka Boro.



Bishop Hyacinth Egbebo, Bishop of Catholic dioceses of Bomadi



I-R: Chairman, Bomadi LGA, Mr. William Angadi, Dr. Felix Tuodolo and others



Dr. Felix Tuodolo, (in blue hat) first president IYC in procession with other IYC members of Western zone



Dr. Felix Tuodolo, other members



L-R Mr. Andaye Dagidi, SSA to Delta State governor, Dr. Ifeanyi Okowa, Dr. Felix Tuodolo



Images from the Ogele



Tuodolo, Oweilami and others in procession

Niger Delta At The Cusp Of Civilian Transition Rivers State: Violent Politics, Cults, Political Realignment And Excluded Populace

By Sunny Dada

The complicated political realignments in Rivers State which created political fragility within the political landscape before and since the 2023 election, is now further heightened by the emergence of cult war in some parts of the state. On Saturday, May 6, 2023, two rival cult groups - the Greenlanders and Iceland engaged each other in a supremacy battle around the Ahoada axis of the East-West Road. The cult clash which led to the killing of three suspected cultists after a prolonged gun duel, is a traditional signature of violent politicians who induce and aid cultists to achieve political gains.

In April 2023, another five cultists were killed in a clash between two rival groups of Deygbam cult group around the Elechi Beach axis of Diobu in Port Harcourt.

Prior to the post-election cult related killings, between November and December 2022, similar incidents claimed the lives of nine people when two suspected rival cult groups clashed near an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp located inside the newly commissioned Ahoada campus of the Rivers State University (RSU) in Ahoada Town.

However, if antecedents of political fragilities that accompanies electoral processes in the state are anything to go by, the emerging cult war and other conflict profiles witnessed in the pre-election, election day and post-election regime may not be anything new to residents of Rivers state. The Centre for Democracy (CDD) in its report Election Violence Tracker Report released on March 18, 2023 listed Rivers State as one of the highly volatile states with "with the most recorded deaths" for election violence.

In 2015, findings from a commission of inquiry that set up by the state government to investigate election related killings between November 2014 and May 2015 reported that 19 people were killed monthly in election related violence. At the time of submitting its report the commission noted that 94 persons were killed "between November 15, 2014, and April 11, 2015." Most of the killings according to the commission occurred in an election-day and post-election regime violence. The report which indicted top

politicians as major sponsors of the gang violence, made far reaching recommendations to stem the tide.

In 2016, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was forced to suspend a crucial legislative re-run election after the exercise was marred by unprecedented violence. The electoral umpire described the

soul of the party in the state with many party bigwigs aligning their interest with the national headquarters against the governor Nyesom Wike. While the governor protested his loss of the presidential election by working against the party, those who maintained their loyalty with the national leadership also withdrew support from the party's governorship

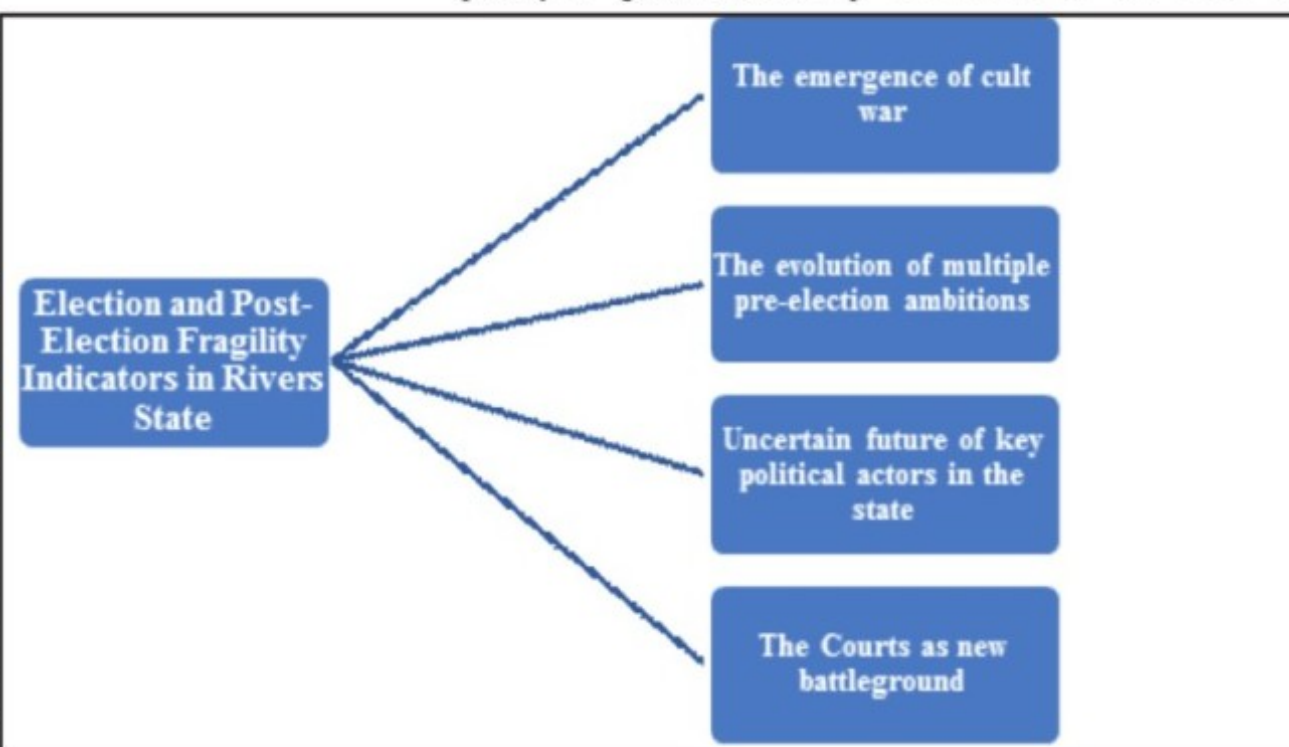
(nPDP) who is also a chieftain of the APC in the state, Chief Eze Chukwuemeka Eze in a statement said, "The surreptitious affair of Bello and Wike revealed a strong and deliberate attempt to hamper the steady progress recorded by the party and its candidate at the tribunal in a bid to subvert the wheel of justice." Chief Eze who commended the national leadership of the APC for

Most of the movements which occurred from the Opobo/Nkoro axis and largely around the Ijaw ethnic nationalities were also instigated by mostly ethnic considerations due to the emergence of an Opobo-Ijaw son as the governorship candidate of the PDP. This is understandably so because of the 24-year wait by the Ijaws to occupy the brick house which used to be their traditional home. The Ijaws in the last 24 years have suffered political irrelevance, loss of social and cultural landmarks, underdevelopment and policy of structural exclusion. Within the period, they also lost their most prominent political leaders to the brutal hands of assassins.

The movements and cross-alignments to a large extent did not only weaken the claim of the APC to the Brick House, it further added to the toxicity of the electoral process in the state. Part of the toxicity also led to the emergence of draconian laws which led to unprecedented violence in many parts of the state. For instance in the weeks leading to the elections, the state grabbed negative headlines with targeted attacks against political parties by cultists who also act as political thugs. In many instances they violently disrupted opposition party campaigns and orchestrated clear threats to life.

The disruptions were anchored on the strength of 'Executive Orders' promulgated by the Rivers State government few months to the elections. The executive orders mandated political parties in the state to seek approval from the state government before they can hold political rallies in the state. The executive orders which are known as 'Orders 21 and 22,' also mandated political parties to relocate their campaign offices from residential areas.

A report published by the Fund for Peace and The Foundation for Partnerships Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND) in May 2016, on election related cultism induced violence, reported that "during the three months (Dec-Feb) prior to the March 16 legislative elections, cult related violence resulted in over 100 fatalities across the state. The report which was titled 'Growing Insecurity in Rivers State: Impacts of



actions of political thugs as "deviant behaviour." and further declared that the re-run election was marred by "fatalities, kidnappings, and ballot snatching." The violence claimed the lives of four soldiers and a Youth Corper who served as an INEC adhoc staff.

The 2023 electoral process ushered in an interesting vista of political realignments in Rivers State. The state has been in the grip of the People's Democratic Party since 1999 at the return of civilian government. Although the All Progressives Congress (APC) briefly captured the state in 2014 when the then governor, Rt. Hon. Rotimi Chubuike Amaechi decamped left the PDP, the PDP reclaimed the state after the current governor won his first term in office. The position of the PDP was consolidated with another victory in 2019 and has remained so until the just concluded 2023 elections.

But in spite of the PDP holding power in the state, a lot has however changed since the conclusion of the 2023 election. The change which was induced by the fall-out from the PDP presidential primaries, is gradually re-defining politics of the state. The change also threatens the

candidate.

Like the PDP, key political actors within the APC in the state also worked against the APC presidential candidate Asiwaju Bola Tinubu. Although the challenge of the APC has its root in the protracted conflict amongst party bigwigs in the state, it however escalated with the outcome of the party's presidential primaries where the leader of the party in the state. Rotimi Amaechi emerged the first runner-up. Again, just like the PDP, while some party members refused to campaign for the presidential candidate Bola Tinubu others however aligned themselves with the party's presidential candidate and that of the Labour Party.

At the national level, the APC National Legal Adviser Mr Henry Bello also withdrew from the party's petition against the PDP at the governorship election tribunal last week. There are talks that the withdrawal of the national legal adviser from the petition is part of a deal between the APC and governor Wike, as the governor's reward, for his technical assistance to the APC presidential candidate. But former National Publicity Secretary of the defunct new Peoples Democratic Party

relieving Mr Bello of his role over his action, also called for further sanctions against him.

The APC in the state had repeatedly accused Mr. Tinubu and some APC stalwarts of undermining the Rivers State chapter of the APC as a result of their romance with the Rivers State governor. The APC presidential candidate who is now the president-elect and his lieutenants, made several visits to the state during and after the elections, without recourse to the state chapter of the APC. Political watchers interpreted the visits and the general attitude of the national leadership of the APC as a foretaste of the internal battle that may eventually consume the Rivers APC when Mr Tinubu takes the oath of office on May 29, 2023.

The evolution of multiple pre-election ambitions

The period also witnessed the evolution and launch of new ambitious interests, mainly within the state chapter of the APC. Notable political actors like Senator Magnus Abe, Dr. Dawari George and many others left the party to fly the flag of other political parties. Like a massive hurricane, there was also an unprecedented exodus of grassroots party members to the ruling PDP.

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Rivers State: Violent Politics, Cults, Political Realignment And Excluded Populace

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Legislative Re-Run Elections' stated that in December 2015, over a dozen communities were reportedly attacked by cultists resulting in over 17 fatalities in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni, while clashes between rival Icelanders and Degbam cult groups caused three fatalities in Ikwerre. The report further stated that "in January 2016, over 20 people were reportedly killed in series of cult violence-related incidents in Ahoada East, Ahoada, West, Obio/Akpor and Ikwerre LGAs" and another "three fatalities when security agents raided the home of an ex-militant leader."

In response to the violence the Rivers State government set up a 'Judicial Commission of Inquiry to investigate the killings and other violent acts/matters that occurred during the December 10, 2016 rerun/supplementary elections to elect members of the National Assembly and House of Assembly in Rivers State.'

The Inspector General of Police also set up a joint investigative panel to investigate the violence that accompanied the elections. However a Federal High Court in Abuja, in a suit filed by the Rivers State government, which challenged the authority of the IGP, declared as illegal, the Special Joint Investigative Panel constituted by the IGP, to uncover those behind the violence.

In 2019, a similar tide was repeated after the state recorded six deaths including a Nigerian army lieutenant.

The Courts as new battleground

The post-election fragility in 2023 has also seen a shift to the courts. The Rivers State governorship and legislative election petition tribunal was relocated from Port Harcourt to Abuja due to concerns growing insecurity. Prior to the shift, there were palpable threats of possible violence as members of the PDP routinely barricaded the entrance to the office of the Independent National Electoral Commission, in Rivers State in protest.

The PDP insisted that they should be granted a joint observer status to enable them simultaneously inspect all election materials used for the conduct of the 2023 elections in the state. The request meant that the PDP will jointly inspect the materials with the APC which had been granted the permission



Gov. Nyesom Wike



Rotimi Amaechi

by the tribunal to inspect the materials. Before the protest, Lawyers representing the APC were arrested and later released by the Police after what the police described as 'mistaken identity.'

Away from the tribunal is another brewing legal crisis. A Federal High Court in Port Harcourt, on May 17, 2023, issued a bench warrant against Rt. Hon. Rotimi Amaechi; Mr Tonye Cole, the Rivers State governorship candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC); and others. The court issued the bench warrant against the entities in a criminal suit filed by the state government. The court said the bench warrant was necessitated by the failure of the defendants to appear before it. The Rivers State government filed the fresh criminal law suit against the defendants, on allegations of misappropriation of public funds and corruption in the purchase of government assets between 2007 and 2015 when Mr Amaechi was governor of the state.

The lawsuit came on the heels of the report submitted by the panel of inquiry set up by the Rivers State government in 2022, to probe Mr Amaechi over an alleged withdrawal of N96 billion from the state treasury during his tenure as governor. The panel which also investigated the sale of assets by the former governor indicted Sahara Energy for its role in the purchase of the assets.

Interestingly, the rivers state government had in October 2022 withdrawn a similar suit against Mr Amaechi and Tonye Cole. Many political watchers have however

described the fresh charges as a ploy to force Mr Tonye Cole to discontinue his case against the victory of the PDP at the Election Petition Tribunal.

Uncertain future of key political actors in the state

Beyond the cult wars and legal battles, the fate of most of the key political actors which hangs in the balance, in their various parties are also contributing to the tension in the political landscape. There are hush speculations about a possible implosion that may ravage the state in the days to come, if speculations and permutations are anything to go by. While some sources close to key political actors speculate possible transitions of their principals to new political parties, others say it is too early to draw conclusions.

Gov. Nyesom Wike

For instance, some leaders of the Grassroot Development Initiative (GDI), informed this reporter that the governor does not intend to leave the PDP for anyone. They argued that the governor would rather destroy the party than to just walk away. However, two Councillors disclosed that there are actual talks about the governor decamping to the APC within the governor's inner circle. They said the governor is however waiting for the outcome of the various cases at the governorship and presidential tribunals.

One of the councillors from Ikwerre LGA who preferred not to be named stated that the governor will most likely leave the PDP for the APC. He said "the signs are eminent and the governor's body language clearly shows that he is

preparing the ground for his eventual departure from the party." He also informed that such a move will not be popular with most bigwigs of the party. According to him, the governor did not manage his politics very well with the national leadership of the party. He also argued that even if Mr Tinubu eventually rewards the governor for his support, such reward may not necessarily trickle down to his followers. On what becomes of Wike in view of his wrangling with the national leadership of the party, the source said "if you observe the national leadership is using diplomacy on him; they are waiting for him to finish his tenure before moving against him. They are aware that if they move against him now, he still has many followers because of the money he controls as governor and that may not be too good for the party."

However, another serving councillor in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area informed that there is an uncertainty on the governor's next political move. He said the governor has kept everything to himself and is not giving information to most of his key allies on the expectations from his alliance with the APC. He said: "Since after the election, the governor has not been talking. Even his G-5 friends have been silent. So, nobody knows what's on his mind. He is not saying anything even those who are very close to him are complaining because he's not telling them anything."

When asked if the governor's refusal to disclose his plans has to do with fear of

betrayal, the councillor said: "It is possible. Remember what happened when he instructed us to mobilize for the APC; it was supposed to be coded. But even before we started the mobilization, the news was already everywhere."

He however said everything will become clearer after the swearing in on "May 29."

But, a former State Secretary of the PDP disclosed that talks about the governor's movement to the APC "is neither here nor there." He argued that before the governor can make such a move "the APC must first fix the Amaechi factor within the Rivers APC." He said "Tinubu and the APC faction fighting Amaechi will have to ensure that Amaechi is eased out in order to allow Wike to take over the party structure." According to him, until that is done, such a plan will be herculean because of the "unwelcoming attitude of some Tinubu's aides who are not comfortable with Mr Project's' towering influence." He however stated that "everything is on the table especially if Tinubu wins at the tribunal."

All the sources who spoke to this correspondent also informed that the governor however envisages an impending onslaught by the national leadership of the PDP against his strangle hold of the party in the state if Atiku wins at the presidential tribunal.

Rt. Hon Rotimi Amaechi

The former Minister of Transportation was less visible during the presidential campaigns. Many had thought

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that Mr Amaechi who was the first runner-up at the APC presidential party primaries, would be given a prominent role by the All Progressives Congress Presidential Campaign Council (APC-PCC). Mr Amaechi, a two-time Director-General of the APC Presidential Campaign Organisation (APC-PCO) between 2015 and 2019, was however named Special Adviser on Infrastructure of the PCC for the 2023 presidential election. His diminished visibility and lack of strong reference by the party's presidential candidate even on his several visits to Rivers State, led to multiple interpretations that the two may be at cross-purposes.

The interpretations gained further prominence, when the National Protocol Director of the APC-PCC, Chief Tony Okocha, publicly claimed that the former Minister of Transportation was no longer the leader of the APC in the state. Tony Okocha who was a former Chief of Staff to Amaechi, accused the former governor of anti-party activities. Okocha had claimed that on the eve of the presidential election, Mr Amaechi ordered his supporters to vote for the presidential candidate of the PDP. He said, "A day to the presidential election, he ordered his supporters to go and vote for the presidential candidate of the PDP. And himself, we have it on record that he voted for the candidate of the PDP, Atiku." Although Okocha's position was dismissed by the leadership of the party in the state, the silence of the national leadership of the APC on the cold war, has further given credence to Mr Amaechi's uncertain future in the party in post-Buhari regime.

In a chat with the State Publicity Secretary of the APC, Mr Darlingron Nwauju, on the future of Mr Amaechi in the party, Nwauju said Amaechi as one of the founders of the party cannot be pushed out of the party by anybody. He stated that Mr Amaechi has also not told anybody that he's leaving the APC and that "his body language does not suggest so." On the battle for the soul of the APC in the state and the possible take-over of the party by the governor Nyesom Wike, who is in strong political romance with the President-elect, Nwauju said, "I know that Nigerians are already aware of what is going on in



Arch. Tonye Cole

Rivers State. The fact that somebody once described the APC as a cancer...and today you're romancing with the cancer; we have no problem with that.

"The only problem the person has after condemning the APC is a crisis of integrity. What will be the public perception of that person? It shows you that the person is inconsistent. So, it is his problem; it is an image crisis for him, not for us."

Commenting on the possible return of Mr Amaechi to the PDP if Mr Wike does otherwise to the APC, Mr Nwauju said, "Recall that Amaechi was pushed out of the PDP in 2014 after the party structure was taken from him. So, he cannot now wake up to go back to the PDP."

On the seeming or looming loss of the state party structure as was the case in 2015 and the implications on the political future of Mr Amaechi, the publicity secretary said, "The truth is that if I now answer you by saying it is the same thing that is playing out, then you will expect that the next answer should be that, we will move if he is expelled or he is suspended. I'm not a Nostradamus for me to predict that my principal will be expelled or suspended from the APC. So, since I'm not a Nostradamus, I cannot predict or I cannot tell you that we're going to leave the APC. For now, I'm sure that we are members of the APC."

"When the APC came to the Niger Delta, everybody said it was an Islamization agenda and he said no, that he has interacted with the then General Buhari, and the man never discussed with him about an islamization of Nigeria. And so a lot of our people who

embrace the APC were killed because of Amaechi. You will recall our campaigns at Okrika, we were shot at some persons including a policeman died. So, on the day that Buhari and including the President-elect in September of 2014 came to Rivers State, he was stoned at the Port Harcourt Airport by the same persons who are now trying to hobnob and romance with the APC. So, you see how people can be inconsistent. "So what I'm trying to say is that Amaechi has laboured to bring the APC into Rivers State and into the South-South, and so, if he will be rewarded with whatever, we leave that to God. But, as at today, I can tell for sure that we have not contemplated, he has not told us that we're going to leave our party; it is our party."

Describing Wike as a possible tenant, he said, "The landlord does not need to argue over the ownership of his property. It is the tenant who is trying to lay claim to that property that should now show us his C-of-O. There are people who laboured for the APC, to build the structures in Rivers State and in the South-South. Those are the landlords I'm referring to and if you're going to pay them back in wickedness for their loyalty even when the APC was an unpopular brand and unacceptable, even against our own brother from the south-south who was a sitting president; there's no argument."

On the reasons for the seeming cold war between Mr Amaechi and the President-elect, Mr Nwauju stated that Mr. Tinubu's alleged discriminatory behaviour against Amaechi is hinged on the decision of the former Transport Minister to contest for the party's presidential



Sen. Magnus Abe

ticket. "For me, the only possible reason I can point to is the fact because my principal aspired to be the flag bearer of the APC, because before that time there was no publicly known issues between Sen. Tinubu and Amaechi."

Sen. Magnus Abe

Senator Magnus Abe left the APC to fly the flag of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) at the just concluded governorship election. His departure to the SDP was preceded by a bitter rivalry between him and the former Minister of transport Rotimi Amaechi. His fight against Amaechi is predicated on a number of multiple issue ranging from imposition of candidates and the general lack of internal party democracy within the APC in Rivers State. In 2019, their fight led to the disqualification of all APC candidates in the state by the courts.

However, although he eventually decamped from the APC, he still campaigned and worked for the presidential candidate of the APC whom he often describes as a worthy political ally. The former lawmaker, who also recently withdrew his petition against the victory of the PDP at the governorship election tribunal, has been serially described by some APC elements as a PDP mole. His decision to work for the presidential candidate of the APC and the withdrawal of his petition from the tribunal has however sparked conversations about a possible return to the APC after May 29. Part of the conversations has also revolved round an alleged deal between him, Wike and the President-elect. The deal according to political watchers, may have been brokered by Mr. Tinubu as part of compensation for Mr Wike's support for the

presidential candidate.

A return to the APC may however have a profound effect on the soul of the APC in the state, as it could revive the intractable conflict between him and Mr Amaechi who himself is also facing an uncertain political future.

Commenting on the developments, a former legislative aide to Senator Magnus Abe, Mr Friday Kennedy, stated that the political future of Sen. Abe will be

determined by the interest of his followers and that of Rivers people at large. He said Abe's decision to work for Mr Bola Ahmed Tinubu was informed by an age-long relationship they both shared. While dismissing the allegation of being a mole, Mr Kennedy stated that the "relationship between both men precedes politics."

On Abe's decision to withdraw his petition from the tribunal, he stated that the decision to withdraw the petition from the governorship election tribunal, was based on a pragmatic assessment of certain indicators which are informed by the need to move the state forward. He said the withdrawal was a collective decision taken by key members of Abe's political family and reflection of the wishes of progressive Rivers people.

The key highlights of the realignments will however be tested after the governor would have left office and when Mr. Tinubu takes the oath of office on May 29, 2023. The fragility would also continue at least for the foreseeable future unless leaders of thought and critical stakeholders take steps to build a citizen led consensus that will determine the political future of the state.

The onus however lies on the incoming governor to lead the process of reconciliation. To do this he needs to first shrug off the burden of expectations tied to his emergence by the outgoing governor, who disenfranchised other aspirants to pave the way for his emergence as the party's candidate and eventually the governor elect. The reconciliation should also involve truth telling and strong apology offered to citizens for the violent disruption of the electoral process in the state.

Prof. Nimi Briggs Laid To Rest In Abonnema, Rivers State



Lying in state at Our Saviour's Chapel Uniport

Prof. Nimi Dimkpa Briggs, Emeritus Professor of Medicine and former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt was laid to rest at his hometown, Abonnema, after a commendation service at St. Paul's Lutheran Cathedral, on Saturday, May 20, 2023. The service was attended by the cream of the society including top public officers, academics, Ijaw leaders, traditional rulers and many more.



Son, Ninah performing dust-to dust rite and the Parish Priest giving blessings



Procession before the commendation service



Cross section of professors at the church service



Choir procession, Senator Andrew Uchendu and others at the church service



Some members of the family at the church service



L - R: Ninah Nimi Briggs, son of the deceased, Dr. Ipalibo Harry Banigo, Deputy Governor Rivers State, Prof Ngozi Odu, Deputy Governor-elect Tammy Danagogo, former SSG, Rivers State and others



Right: Chief Dumo Lulu-Briggs and other Kalabari chiefs

Prof. Nimi Briggs Laid To Rest In Abonnema, Rivers State



The Lutheran Church Choir



Widow and her children



Prof. Nimi's sister



King Disrael Gbogbo Bob-Manuel and others



Prof. Nimi Briggs children and grand children



Hon. David Briggs



Prof. B.B. Fakae



Professor reading tribute



Cross section of women



Kalabari chiefs at the burial



Cross section of community men

Dangote Launches Africa's Biggest Oil Refinery - 4 Ways It Will Affect Nigeria

Nigeria's new Dangote petroleum refinery is Africa's biggest – it will produce 650,000 barrels a day, giving it the potential to address the country's energy supply crisis. First product from the refinery is expected to hit the market by the end of July 2023.

Owned by Nigerian industrialist and Africa's richest man, Aliko Dangote, the refinery is expected to boost domestic refining capacity, getting rid of the current consumption shortfall. It will also reduce import dependency and stimulate economic growth.

It is the first privately owned crude oil refinery in Nigeria. Nigeria's existing refineries, plagued by operational inefficiencies under government control, have failed to meet the growing demand for petroleum products. Substantial imports have become necessary.

Nigeria currently imports more than 80% of its refined petroleum products. The country is the largest importer of refined petroleum products in Africa. Local production will therefore massively cut the country's import bill.

According to the Central Bank of Nigeria, the cost (including freight) of petroleum products imports into Nigeria doubled over a five-year period from 2017 indicating an annual average of US.1 billion to 2022.

The central bank says the average annual cost of petroleum products imports to Nigeria could climb further if the

country continues to rely on petroleum imports.

This money can now potentially be saved with Dangote refinery plugging the supply shortfall.

In my previous research, I have found that there is a link between Nigeria's crude oil export dependency and its weak local refining capacity. This is also the case with Mexico, which exports its crude abroad for processing.

Based on my experience in the sector, I set out the four areas where the Dangote refinery is expected to make an impact on Nigeria's petroleum sector and, by extension, the Nigerian economy.

Reduced oil import dependence

The most notable impact of Dangote refinery will be the increase in local refinery capacity, which will reduce imports.

Dangote refinery is expected to help Nigeria meet 100% of its refined petroleum product needs (gasoline, 72 million litres per day; diesel, 34 million litres per day; kerosene, 10 million litres per day and aviation jet, 2 million litres per day), with surplus products for the export market.

The refined petroleum output from the refinery in combination with other refineries in Nigeria is expected to meet the shortfall of the estimated daily consumption of 72 million litres of petrol.

The country has faced

several fuel shortages in the past, which have caused prices to surge for transport and basic commodities.

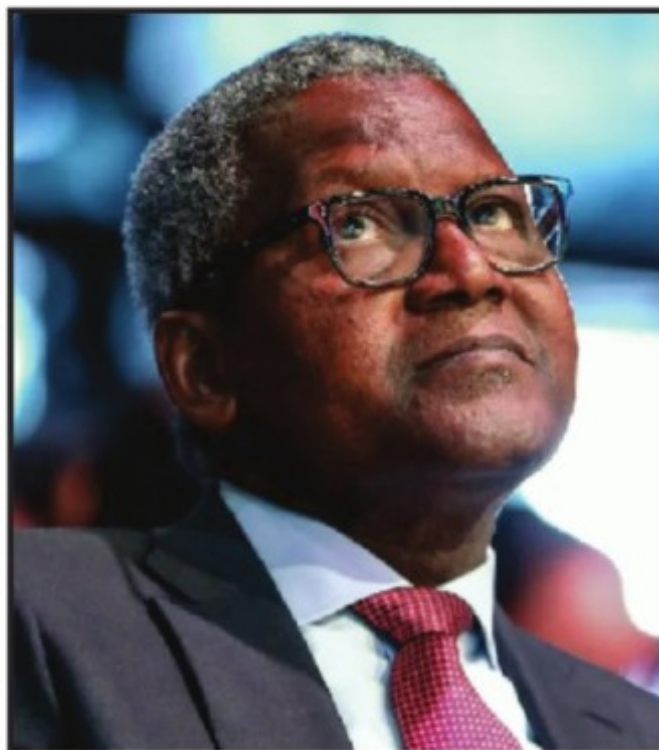
Recent fuel shortages have been blamed on the Russia-Ukraine war. The price of imported fuel rose more than 100%. Importers operated at a loss due to price ceilings set by the government.

Besides eliminating import dependency, the Dangote refinery can potentially reduce Nigeria's crude oil export dependency as more crude oil will be refined domestically.

Refining crude oil locally will enable the country pay for the refined product in naira which will save scarce foreign exchange and generate revenue in exported refined petroleum products.

The Central Bank of Nigeria says Dangote refinery could engender foreign exchange savings of several US billion dollars annually for Nigeria.

Support for allied industries



Aliko Dangote

The establishment of the refinery is also likely to help reduce the cost of production for industries that rely on petroleum products such as diesel to power their operations. In turn, this should increase their competitiveness in the global market while promoting local industry capabilities.

The refinery could also create an environment for allied industries to emerge in and around it. For instance, businesses in transport, housing and telecommunications will benefit from the construction and

operations of the refinery.

And the refinery should create jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities.

While under construction, the refinery employed about 40,000 workers – 29,000 Nigerians and 11,000 foreigners.

The jobs were in engineering, construction, manufacturing and operations, among other areas.

In full operation, the refinery, according to media reports, is expected to create over 250,000 direct and indirect jobs. I believe this is a fair estimate.

The country's current unemployment rate is expected to reach 40.6% in 2023.

Possible increase in carbon footprint

The operation of Dangote refinery raises concerns about its potential impact on Nigeria's net zero emission goals. Net zero is an ideal state where the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced and greenhouse gas emissions taken out of the atmosphere is balanced.

Decarbonisation efforts are required for countries to achieve net zero but the path and time might differ as countries may want to take a gas-led approach to transition to renewable energy.

At the COP26 climate change meeting in 2021, President Muhammadu Buhari committed to net-zero emissions by 2060. This is to protect Nigeria's environment and ecosystem from the impact of climate change and reduce the country's greenhouse gas emissions.

Nigeria has an Energy Transition Plan to get closer to a more sustainable economy. The plan assumes greater use of natural gas as a "transition fuel".

Oil refineries contribute about 4% of the global carbon emissions.

The Dangote refinery complies with World Bank, US, European and Nigerian norms for emissions and effluents.

Conclusion

The Dangote refinery is a significant step towards self-sufficiency in Nigeria's energy sector.

However, the refinery is still reliant on fossil fuels, and it is not a long term solution to Nigeria's energy needs.

Nigeria has significant renewable energy potential, including solar and wind power.

Renewable energy can be harnessed to meet Nigeria's energy needs in a sustainable manner. Therefore, Dangote refinery should be viewed as a stepping stone towards a transition to cleaner energy sources in the medium term.

It is essential that Nigeria continues to invest in renewable energy and explore ways to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels to achieve its net zero emissions goal.

- Nnaemeka Vincent Emodi, Research Fellow, The University of Queensland, this article is republished from The Conversation, a nonprofit news site dedicated to sharing ideas from academic experts. (yahoonews.com)

...600 MW Coal Power Plant In Delta

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In the same vein, he explored the host communities to avoid making overbearing demands on the mining company in order not to discourage them from genuinely carrying out their social responsibility to the communities.

Being optimistic of the enormous benefits of the mining project to the community and state at large, the governor affirmed that there was no doubt that the power that MOSRA Energy would produce from the coal and inject into power would impact greatly on the economy of the state.

In her speech, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Mines and Steel Development, Dr. Oluwatoyin Akinlade congratulated MOSRA Energy for the commitment to achieving their desired goal in Ugboba, despite daunting challenges usually occasioned by community disputes and misconceptions about mining.

She said the MOSRA Energy historic ground-breaking in Ugboba did not come to her as a surprise, based on her interactions with the company which did open up an experience of doggedness, visionary and focused leadership of the company's chief executive officer.

"This occasion today, has

marked an important turning point for all the stakeholders in the project. I pray God to breathe life into the project so that all its direct benefits to life will be actualized," she stated.

MOSRA Energy Limited CEO, Mr. Olukayode Ramos commended all the stakeholders that made the historic ground-breaking possible.

He said he was honoured to witness the milestone made by his company in contributing its quota to the nation's power reform.

Olukayode said his company's partnership with the Federal Ministry of Mines and Steel Development was integral to the success recorded thus far, adding that the Minister, Adebite provided solution to bottlenecks that would have hindered the progress made.

The helmsman of MOSRA Energy, equally appreciated the Delta State government for maintaining a secure and peaceful environment for mining operations to thrive.

He specially commended the monarch of Ugboba Kingdom, Obi Nkebakwu for his awesome, persevering and supportive disposition towards the mining project.

According to Mr. Olukayode, "Electricity is essential to modern life. We need alternative sources of power to generate electricity for economic viability. Today in Nigeria, there is no coal power plant anywhere and we need to change that

narrative.

"This ground-breaking for a 600MW Mine-Mouth Coal Power Plant in Ugboba is a milestone that will remain historic. It will create employment for our teeming youths, open up market for the locals, increase real estate value of property around Ugboba community, provide educational opportunities in scholarships, acquisition of skills and many other benefits".

He said the company has already embarked on some development projects in the community.

"As a result of this project, we are carrying out so many projects within and around the community. We have a #1.2 billion road construction from Ugboba to Ukwu-Nzu which is in progress, we have completed an erosion control project to the tune of N237million, we have supplied laptops to many indigenes and so on. We will do more, because this is a partnership that must work", Olukayode affirmed.

Elated by the encomiums showered on him, the traditional ruler of Ugboba Kingdom, HRM Obi Ezedimbu Emmanuel Nkebakwu, thanked every individual that graced the ceremony.

He said the experience of the day was borne out of determination and commitment to the vision set out by MOSRA Energy Limited. "Thank you MOSRA Energy for the vision you have brought to my kingdom.

We want to go on this journey with you", he said.

He also thanked the Federal and Delta State government for being supportive in making the vision come to fruition.

In all, he said without the belief in his person and support by Ugboba people to his rulership, the understanding of the MOSRA Energy vision wouldn't have been possible to explain. He thanked them immensely for being his pillar of support, and asked God for more wisdom to continue to lead them the way the almighty has ordained.

In clear show of validation of the mining activities of MOSRA Energy in Ugboba, about 10 traditional rulers from Aniocha North LGA, including the Obi of Iselle-Uku Kingdom, HRM Agbogidi Obi Nduka JP, Obi of Onicha-Ugbo Kingdom, HRM Obi Victor Chukwumalieze, Obi of Idumuje-Unor Kingdom, HRM Obi Charles Chukwunwike Anyasi III, Obi of Ugbodu Kingdom, HRM Oloza Ayo Isinyemeze, Obi of Ezi Kingdom, HRM Obi Mohanyem, Obi of Idumuogo Kingdom, HRM Obi Samuel Otiogede II, Obi of Ogodor Kingdom, HRM Obi Sunday Ollisenweokwu, Obi of Onicha-Uku Kingdom, HRM Obi Raphael Agbamuche and others were there. The presidents-general of different communities including the members of the Coal Committee comprising Ugboba, Obomkpa, Ugbodu and Ukwu-Nzu were equally in attendance. ●

Stakeholders Call For Collaborative Action Against Drivers Of Organized Crime In Nigeria And The Gulf Of Guinea

By Sunny Dada

Stakeholders have called on the federal government to widen the community of policy makers to include non-state actors in its drive to effectively respond to the drivers of organized crime in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea.

The call was made at a Conference on 'Organized Crime in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea.' The conference which was organized by the Youth and Environmental Advocacy Centre (YEAC-Nigeria) was held on April 28, 2023 at the Landmark Hotel, Port Harcourt.

In his welcome address, the Executive Director, YEAC-Nigeria, Mr Fyनेface Dumnamene Fyनेface, commended the guests for their various roles towards a national re-orientation and moral re-orientation. He stated that participants and members of the panel of discussants were carefully selected in view of their rich background on issues of conflict, security, and policy and community development.

Explaining the objectives of the conference, Mr Fyनेface informed that the conference was intended to amongst other things build a collaborative response to threats posed by domestic and transnational organized crime. He said there was a need to "expand the policy community that does not depend on static actors alone to drive change."

Speaking further, Mr Fyनेface observed that many countries facing challenges of insecurity within the Gulf of Guinea are all struggling with challenges of violent conflicts, corruption and poverty on the domestic front. He therefore called on guests to proffer actionable solutions "towards improving the response to threats posed by organized crime in the region."

The keynote speaker, Professor Fidelis Allen, Head, Department of Political Science, and former Coordinator Centre for Conflict and Gender Studies, University of Port Harcourt, stated that the sub-culture of crime is an industry that draws strength from both local and international dynamics. He argued that until a proper diagnosis is made on the actual cost of crime and its reward system, organized crime within the region will continue to be sophisticated.

Tracing the origin of



YEAC-Nigeria, Mr. Fyनेface Dumnamene flanked by resource persons, special guests

conflict in the Gulf of Guinea to the movement of international

capital, Prof. Fidelis stated that the "goals of international

capitals are not to develop or empower but to take as much resources as it can." He said, "The political economy was disruptive and exploitative. The post-colonial political economy was to maintain the relationship between the exploiter and the exploited."

Prof Fidelis further called for the adoption of a collaborative effort which he said should include both structural and relational approaches in responding to the myriad of conflicts in the region.

In their separate presentations, members of the panel of discussants called for the adoption of multi-dimensional approaches to crime in the gulf of guinea. They also called for multilateral

interventions that integrate home grown solutions. Commenting on the need to unbundle the political economy around organized crime in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea, Managing Editor of the *National Point* Newspaper and Gender Expert, Chief Constance Meju who was represented by Mr Sunny Dada, called for the review of national and regional security strategies.

Key highlight of the conference include the official launch of a 'Network on Organized Crime in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea' (NOCINAG). The network which is made up of organizational membership, is drawn from civil society and policy communities. ●

Loss Of Dangote Refinery: Rivers, Communities...

Cont'd from page 2

its members in the company would be jeopardized by the transfer of ownership to Dangote and partners.

However, the host communities in Eleme and Okrika Local Government areas were eager to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the new owners of the refinery and begun discussions moderated by the Bureau of Public Utilities with Bluestar when suddenly the Yar'Adua government gave in to pressures from NUPENG and PENGASSAN and revoked the privatization deal and refunded Bluestar the \$561 million dollars already paid to the Federal Government. Today, the federal government has entered into a \$1.5 billion loan arrangement to rehabilitate the refinery after it had remained idle for almost ten years.

After its purchase of the Port Harcourt Refinery was revoked, Dangote began to explore the possibility of erecting a Greenfield refinery within the Eleme/Onne industrial hub.

Prospects of land acquisition had begun and the landowners were eager to talk with the company. Somehow, the talks never took off. Dangote was no longer forthcoming. Feelers said the company was concerned about militant activities that were

rampant then in the Niger Delta and had moved west to Edo State, around the Gelele Basin. That move also failed and the company continued its movement westward to the Ondo/Ogun coastal axis before it finally settled in the fast developing Lekki Free Trade Zone in Lagos State, where it has just commissioned the world's largest refinery.

Mr. Olungwe Obele, an indigene of Eleme, said with the benefits that the communities have been receiving from Indorama, which bought over Eleme Petrochemicals Company Limited, the people are now eager to made things easy for prospective investors.

Downen College vs Sylvester Oromoni...

Cont'd from page 2

morning on the next adjourned date as Ijaw youths and elders prepared to move to Epe, information filtered in that the Court has moved from Epe to Ikeja GRA for security reasons. Swiftly our people moved to Ikeja to witness what was going on. After few sittings with increased number of people trooping into the Court with the press in attendance, the venue was again changed to Legacy Building Court premises in Ogba, Ikeja, Lagos with same judge Mikhail Kadiri presiding. Court 20 on the second floor was allocated to him. With the movement from Epe to Lagos we started to notice some curious reasons for adjournment like;

1. After all parties were seated in Court, the Registrar walks in to announce that Court won't sit because his lordship is off to attend a meeting.

2. A day to the next sitting, Registrar sends text message to all parties that due to a

Indorama, which bought over EPCL in 2006, has been posting impressive profits and dividends for the host communities. The communities do not only receive dividends every quarter, the company also sponsors corporate social responsibility projects in the communities.

Rivers State Government, which owns 10 percent of the shares of Indorama is also receiving dividends from the company in billions every year as well as collecting income taxes from the operations of the company.

Very recently, when the company wanted to acquire more land to expand its

operations, it was the Rivers State Government under Governor Nyesom Wike that that undertook to acquire the needed lands from the host communities under the Land Use Act to smoothen the process.

Also, when Indorama decided to construct an 11-kilometre road dedicated to transporting its products to the Onne ports for exports, the state government took over the construction of the road to avert a likely intractability in the negotiation between the company and the communities through which the road would pass. ●

Presidential visit to Lagos which could impede vehicular movement around Ikeja axis, Court would not sit. On that particular day, I didn't get the registrar's message on time and breezed into an empty Courtroom. I met an Admin staff and asked: "Where are my people?" "No sitting today" he told me. Guess what? There was no road closure.

3. All parties seated as usual with our brother Sylvester flying in from Warri, judge walks in to announce he's not feeling fine so could not sit. What do we do than console one another and disperse.

Oromoni at the last aborted Court date told me his journey to Lagos marked the 93rd air trip to/fro Delta State where he resides. One can imagine how much our brother has spent in view of the fact that he apparently maintains a permanent suite in a high brow hotel in GRA Ikeja.

During this epic trial, there had been some tense moments.

One of such moment was when Oromoni yelled at a Counsel who accused him of been emotional. The judge calmed the situation and told Oromoni that though the Court is sympathetic to his plight nevertheless he has powers to sanction him. No sentiment in Court he said with all seriousness. Oromoni's lawyer Andrew Efole fired back that as a father, Oromoni's being emotional was in order.

All crown witnesses including Downen College principal, doctors, Police, nurses, house master, students etcetera have testified. Oromoni himself in his evidence in chief tendered 11 exhibits including newspaper and television interview clips. Before the Coroner went on the last break without fixing another sitting date, the Court and lawyers from both parties agreed to visit the locus in quo. Locus in quo in legal parlance means "Place where the incident took place" (the school) in this case. ●

Protest Rocks BIU As ...

Cont'd from cover

Mediplex Hospital on Airport Road, Benin, an affiliate of the university. He was confirmed dead at the hospital.

His death sparked off anger as some students mobilised to protest after vandalising the university's health centre and security post.

They were however, prevailed upon by top officials of the university to calm down.

BIU's head of Communication and Brand Strategy Unit, Temi Esonamunyor said, "The university will make an official press statement on the true state of things." ●

Tina Turner – Tributes Pour In After 'The Best' Singer Dies In Switzerland Aged 83

Tina Turner, one of the greatest rock 'n' roll singers of all time, has died in Switzerland at the age of 83.

"Tina Turner, the 'Queen of Rock 'n' Roll' has died peacefully today at the age of 83 after a long illness in her home in Kusnacht near Zurich, Switzerland," her publicist said in a statement, May 24. "With her, the world loses a music legend and a role model."

Tina Turner, the singer rose to prominence performing with her husband Ike Turner in the 1960s before overcoming his violent, abusive behaviour to go on to become a chart-topping solo artist.

Turner earned a legion of fans for her riveting live performances, and was best known for songs such as "Private Dancer", "The Best", "What's Love Got to Do With It" and "Proud Mary".

Born Anna Mae Bullock on 26 November, 1939, in Nutbush, Tennessee, Turner would go on to sell more than 180 million albums and win 12 Grammy Awards.

Turner was diagnosed with intestinal cancer in 2016 and received a kidney transplant in 2017.

Stars of the entertainment world including Mick Jagger, Bryan Adams, Rosario Dawson, Paloma Faith and Naomi Campbell paid tribute to the iconic singer.

The White House reacted, 'That is incredibly sad news'

The stars of the West End stage show Tina: The Tina Turner Musical broke 'news of its namesakes death during an emotional interval speech on

Wednesday (24 May).

According to audience accounts in the Mail, the auditorium at London's Aldwych Theatre was filled with "gasps" when the stars came out and broke the news to the crowd during a performance on Wednesday night.

Caleb Roberts, who plays Ike Turner, made the announcement, with Kristina Love, who plays Tina, delivering a small speech at the end of the show.

The statement from the cast was "poignant" and "sombre", theatre goers said, with the show reflecting the idea that Turner herself "would have wanted the show to go on".

Former US president, Barack Obama: "Tina Turner was raw. She was powerful. She was unstoppable. And she was unapologetically herself - speaking and singing her truth through joy and pain, triumph and tragedy. Today we join fans around the world in honoring the Queen of Rock and Roll, and a star whose light will never fade."

Tina Turner died at her home in Switzerland at the age of 83 following a long illness.

News of the "What's Love Got to Do with It" singer's death was first announced by her representative in a statement.

"Tina Turner, the 'queen of rock 'n' roll' has died peacefully today at the age of 83 after a long illness in her home in Kusnacht near Zurich, Switzerland," the statement read.

"With her, the world loses a music legend and a role model... With her music



and her inexhaustible vitality, Tina Turner thrilled millions of fans and inspired many artists of subsequent generations."

Countless other musical giants have paid tribute, from Beyonce to Mick Jagger and Diana Ross.

"My beloved queen, I love you endlessly," Beyonce wrote in a message

on her official website. "I'm so grateful for your inspiration, and all the ways you have paved the way.

"You are strength and resilience. You are the epitome of power and passion. We are all so fortunate to have witnessed your kindness and beautiful spirit that will forever remain.

"Thank you for all you have done."

Angela Bassett The Actress Who Played Tina Turner Reacts To Her Death

'I am humbled to have helped show her to the world' in 'What's Love Got to Do With It'



Angela Bassett performs in *What's Love Got to Do With It*. (Photo: Everett Collection)

Bassett lauded Turner for using her 'pain and trauma' as 'a means to help change the world.'

Within hours of the death of music icon Tina Turner, actress Angela Bassett paid tribute, which just felt right, since Bassett introduced many people to

Turner's story when she portrayed her in the 1993 movie *What's Love Got to Do With It*.

"How do we say farewell to a

woman who owned her pain and trauma and used it as a means to help change the world?" asked Bassett, who was nominated for the 1994 Oscar for Best Actress for the role. "Through her courage in telling her story, her commitment to stay the course in her life, no matter the sacrifice, and her determination to carve out a space in rock and roll for herself and for others who look like her, Tina Turner showed others who lived in fear what a beautiful future filled with love, compassion, and freedom should look like."

Bassett's biopic featured memorable scenes of the physical abuse she endured from her then husband and sometimes partner in music, Ike Turner, who died in 2007. They couldn't have been easy to watch.

"Her final words to me, for me, were 'You never mimicked me. Instead, you reached deep into your soul, found your inner Tina, and showed her to the world,'" Bassett said. "I shall hold these words close to my heart for the rest of my days. I am honored to have known Tina Turner. I am humbled to have helped show her to the world. So today, while we mourn the loss of this iconic voice and presence, she gave us more than we could have ever asked. She gave us her whole self. And Tina Turner is a gift that will always be 'simply the best.' Angels, sing thee to thy rest...Queen."

Source: YahooNews.com ●

Opportunities To improve The Host Community Development Trusts (HCDTs) Under Nigeria's Petroleum Industry Act (PIA)

Introduction

The Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) was passed in August 2021, initiating the restructuring of regulation for the oil and gas sector in Nigeria, with a significant impact on communities that host operations. One section of the Act is focused on community development and provides for the establishment of Host Community Development Trusts (HCDTs) to increase social spending by oil and gas companies (OGCs) in host communities. While SDN's view is that this section of the act should have focused on a more holistic, government-led strategy for development in host communities and protecting them from the harmful impacts of hydrocarbon exploration and production, it does at least offer the hope for vastly increased social spending by OGCs, and greater autonomy of that spending for host communities.

The head of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) has stated that under the new legislation, huge sums of money - over US\$500 million per year - are due communities. This is a significant opportunity for investments into widespread community development. However, it is also the latest in a long line of initiatives which are meant to direct funding to communities impacted by the oil and gas industry (for example, the creation of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and the 13% derivation provided to states). These have seen large amounts of revenue from the oil and gas industry flow to the region, but with limited results, for example, due to misuse of funds and benefit capture by certain groups. It is therefore of paramount importance that these pitfalls are avoided, and it is in the interest of all parties that the funds are calculated, collected, and utilised in a transparent and accountable way, and that they are directed to initiatives which are in the widespread public interest.

To manage the investments locally, Host Community Development Trusts (HCDTs) are being established. To guide implementation, accompanying regulations were issued by gazette in June 2022. Our close reading highlights that the PIA and HCDT regulations lay the foundation for managing these funds, but there are many opportunities to build on this to ensure best practice is followed in finance and governance mechanisms.

This report outlines some of the key concerns under these two areas - finance and governance - and provides specific recommendations for the legislature and regulator to consider, in their efforts to improve implementation of the HCDTs, and wider PIA. We have structured our discussion around some key questions we believe need to be answered, providing answers where we can, and



An oil devastated community

highlighted when more information and work is needed where we cannot. It is based on a close reading of the PIA, HCDT regulations, and from analysing the audited accounts of an OGC.

This is a major, complex new policy initiative, with many potential risks and benefits for communities. From our discussions with OGCs, the FGN, communities and wider civil society, it is clear that work is being done to try to navigate this complexity. However, the speed at which this is happening, and the focus on the business side of the reforms, may gloss over several critical issues related to host communities, which this report seeks to highlight.

Research and analysis findings Finances

When it comes to the Niger Delta and host communities, the first challenge is not lack of funds¹, but the failure to use funds which have flowed to the region to the benefit of all citizens. For example, in 2020 alone, Federal and State Ministries, Departments and Agencies were allocated NGN1.4 trillion (US\$3.7 billion) (see Annex 1). Our later section on governance focuses on some of these issues. However, firstly there is a need to understand the scale of funds involved with HCDTs, and to understand the risks if information on this is not transparent, in a context where mistrust between communities, companies and government is prevalent, and where the

allocation of significant amount of funds is overlaid with locations where there are existing risks of intra- and inter-communal conflict.

How much funding are we expecting?

The PIA states that OGCs shall pay an annual contribution, "in an amount equal to 3% of its actual annual operating expenditure of the preceding financial year in the upstream petroleum operations affecting the host communities for which the fund was established".² The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) claims the total will be huge, with the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Group Managing Director, Mele Kyari, quoted as saying:

"The operating expense in the industry is up to \$16 billion in a year. That means that 3% of that operating expenses is clearly somewhere around \$500 to \$600 million, it can even be as high as \$800 million. So, when you look at this, that value is almost bigger than the size of the budget of the NDDC (Niger Delta Development Commission). So, it is a really huge investment."³

The NDDC budget was on average US\$806 million (NGN206 billion) per year between 2012-2020 (see Annex 2). However, the total amount contributed to HCDTs is expected to be far lower than the NDDC levy, which is equal to 3% of the operating budget of the preceding financial year, and supplemented with a contribution from the

FGN.⁴ This is because the operating budget includes operating expenses (OPEX), as well as capital expenditure (CAPEX), plus other costs. On this point, the FGN ought to exercise caution in its communications, to avoid false expectations. The best way would be to publish total OPEX figures.

The definition of OPEX is itself open to interpretation. The HCDT regulations provide a fairly detailed definition of operating expenditure, which should take into account, "non-capital production costs, cost of sales, administrative expenses and any other expense incurred for the operations of the business on a day-to-day basis as included in the audited financial report, provided that such expenditures shall not include capital expenditures, impairment, depreciation or amortisation."⁵ However, it is understood that the industry definition of OPEX is different to the FGN definition - as the latter typically does not include maintenance.⁶ This definition therefore leaves a lot of room for interpretation, and without a specific definition, companies may calculate their contributions differently. Therefore, we recommend that the regulator provides a specific definition, with the line costs to be included in financial accounting.

One thing is clear, the HCDT allocations will far surpass the existing non-mandatory social spending (CSR) of OGCs. The total of non-mandatory social

spending reported for all OGCs between 2012-2020 was US\$655 million, which is an average total of US\$72 million per year.⁷ The expected contributions to HCDTs are therefore expected to be many times higher than what is currently spent (see Annex 3).

How will communities be able to tell if they are receiving the funds they are due?

At present, there appears to be a large transparency and accountability gap, what funds should be due to their HCDT and whether they have been received. Communities will not be able to validate what they are owed, because almost all companies do not publish their detailed annual audited accounts or budgets. These details are reported to the upstream industry regulator (Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission, NUPRC), the manager of FGN interests in the industry (National Petroleum Investment Management Services, NAPIMS), and the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS). But without publishing this information, the amount the companies should be remitting to the HCDT cannot be independently verified.

Moreover, compliance with provisions to fund NDDC has reportedly been poor. The FGN claims that several OGCs fail to submit their allocations, and that the deficit was US\$4 billion in 2021.⁸ This is exacerbated by the fact that NDDC has no statutory powers to compel the release of funds, or impose penalties for non-compliance. The NUPRC does have powers it can exercise if payments are not forthcoming - including issuing penalties up to US\$250,000, and making recommendations to the Minister of Petroleum Resources to revoke a lease.⁹ This is positive, although it remains to be seen whether the NUPRC will follow through to compel the timely release of funds due.

How will the funds be calculated and split among Trusts?

Dividing the contributions among HCDTs will be complicated for a number of reasons. Firstly, there is no guidance in the regulations on how to form a HCDT cluster. It is therefore left to the OGCs to decide which communities are hosts to their facilities, group them into HCDTs, and calculate how much they are due.¹⁰ The regulator will have to approve the grouping of communities under HCDTs, but this may be done without ample risk assessments. This has the potential to cause conflict in areas where there are existing community-level disputes, for example, over territorial borders, and existing revenues and opportunities from the oil and gas industry. While HCDT structures have a range of positions that should ensure broad-based community representation, there could still be disputes when selecting

Opportunities To improve The Host Community Development Trusts (HCDTs) Under Nigeria's Petroleum Industry Act (PIA)

Cont'd from page 33

representatives and projects. Moreover, the OGC contributions will need to be split among different HCDTs, and there is no guidance in the regulations on how this will happen. The ad hoc approach to grouping communities will make it more difficult to calculate how much each HCDT is due, and for communities to verify this. If, for the sake of argument, HCDTs were based on existing oil mining licence (OML) boundaries, then production is already calculated and published at that level. However, in an ad hoc approach, the OGCs must calculate their production within the territory of each HCDT, assess how 'impacted' each area is, and then apportion contributions.¹¹ The regulations specify that the settlor should design a funding matrix for the proposed allocation of funds to host communities "based on equitable and economic principles".¹² But it also outlines that "the commission may issue a template of fund distribution matrix to serve as a guide to settlers." We recommend that the NUPRC exercises this right, and issues a uniform template, if it has not done so already, so all companies follow the same principles. Otherwise, there will inevitably be disputes with communities.

To further complicate this, all operations in Nigeria are under a Joint Venture (JV) or Production Sharing Contract (PSC). In this arrangement, various companies have a different equity share, contribute different levels of investment, and take different profits. Therefore, it is not clear how HCDTs will manage this issue, since it could become confusing to calculate the contributions due on a company-by-company basis, when the allocation of HCDTs to companies is different to the JVs. In addition, offshore oil blocks are set to make contributions to 'littoral communities' "located along the Gulf of Guinea of the Nigeria shoreline up to about 500 metres inland", who will be "assigned to a settlor by the Commission (NUPRC)".¹³ In terms of contributions from offshore operations, they will

be "pooled and distributed amongst beneficiary trusts equitably considering annual operating expenditure of the preceding financial year, asset value size, and any other criteria as may be determined by the Commission."¹⁴ This is another grey area where the regulator should intervene, to create a uniform approach to allocating funds from offshore production, to communities along the coastal areas.

Case study: Calculating contributions

From an outside perspective, calculating the contributions due to HCDTs is currently not possible. We attempted to do this and ran into several challenges, which others will face when attempting to verify what HCDTs are due, and whether OGCs are

making the payments required of them. More will need to be done to by the FGN and OGCs to align HCDTs with commitments to transparency and accountability. We sought to analyse the audited accounts of several OGCs, but could only find published reports for one domestic oil and gas company. In this process, we observed the following:

- The majority of OGCs do not publish their annual audited accounts so there is no transparency on OPEX.

International oil companies publish their annual audited accounts, but these cover the entire company, and they do not show the figures for their subsidiaries in Nigeria.

- Most companies are involved in upstream (production) and downstream (distribution) activities, and the OPEX for each is not separated in reports. Some companies are only involved in upstream activities, but they also have operations that are not directly impacting host communities, such as international offices, and sole cost projects, such as shares in power plants. Their reported OPEX totals cover all these activities, and it is not possible to separate for onshore oil and gas operations.

- All companies operate in Nigeria under joint ventures (JVs), where they have a share in the producing asset (e.g. NNPC 55%, SPDC 30%, Total 10%, Agip 5%), and OPEX is not reported on a JV basis. It is therefore not clear how contributions to HCDTs will be calculated under JVs.

- When we used the definition of OPEX provided in the HCDT regulations, we found that 3% of a company's total OPEX was far higher than the amount they reportedly remit to NNDC. This should not be the case, as the NNDC levy is based on 3% of the operating budget, which includes OPEX, CAPEX, and other costs. Therefore, this implies that the OGC either uses a different definition to calculate their OPEX, have not fulfilled their mandatory NNDC payments, or NNPC has not contributed their share.

- In the industry, the definition of depreciation, depletion and amortisation (DDA) is subjective, meaning companies will calculate the costs to be deducted from their OPEX in different ways. Furthermore, DDA applies to CAPEX more than it does to OPEX, so it is not clear how much should be deducted from the contribution.

How much can be deducted for damage to infrastructure and what are the implications for host communities?

The Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) states that deductions can be made to HCDT funds to cover "the cost of repairs of the damage" that result from "third-party damage", when "an act of vandalism, sabotage, or other civil unrest occurs that causes damage to petroleum and

designated facilities or disrupts production activities".¹⁵ However, the Host Community Development regulations appear to significantly broaden what is stated in the PIA, to allow deductions for not only for the cost of repairs and replacements, but also:

- the value of products lost as a result of the action (crude oil, gas, or products);

- the operating expenditure incurred during the period that production was shut down.¹⁶

On the face of it, it appears the regulations are a significant overreach on what the legislation permits. If implemented, this could lead to huge deductions to HCDTs, but it is challenging to establish exactly how much. During 2022, FGN sources publicly estimated as much as 200,000 to

and civil society organisations (CSOs), who claim that the regulator and OGCs often underreport the total volume of spills, and regularly misattribute the cause as third-party, instead of operational failure, to avoid paying fines and compensation. Under the PIA, if OGCs can charge communities the associated costs, this is a potential incentive to report more spills as third-party damage, and to increase their estimates of total spill volumes.

Furthermore, single extreme incidents could exhaust funds allocated to HCDTs. As an illustrative example, it has been claimed that third-party damage was the cause of a spill at OML 29 in Nembe in November 2021. No official joint investigation visit report has been made public, but an independent expert estimated that at least

500,000 barrels of oil were

a failure of oil companies to protect their infrastructure, of security agencies to perform their role effectively, and of the FGN to provide an effective and holistic policy response to tackle the underlying causes of the problem.

Finally, the reality of the artisanal oil industry is that it is controlled by organised, often heavily armed groups – and as is now publicly acknowledged, even in the National Assembly, with the collusion and active participation of a range of groups and influential individuals.

This has enabled the informal sector to grow in scale over the past two decades, with the FGN and OGCs unable to stop it, despite spending billions of dollars on military operations and hardware. This is a major problem across the Niger Delta and simply passing the costs that oil companies incur onto community



The Nembe oil spill in 2021 (Source Ovieteme George)

400,000 barrels of oil a day were being stolen, so the deduction could be US\$365-730 million per year (at US\$50 per barrel, a price well below the current oil price).

The total deductions rise sharply when other permitted deductions are included, such as pipeline repairs, which according to NNPC statistics, costs on average US\$370 million (NGN110 billion) per year.¹⁷ Assuming 80% of damage is due to third-party sabotage as OGCs claim (and this equated to 80% of the cost of damage), this equals US\$296 million (NGN88 billion).

Based on the cost of oil lost and pipeline repairs alone, under the new definition in the regulations, HCDTs could theoretically have US\$661 million to US\$1 billion (NGN303 – 458 billion) deducted every year. This exceeds the amount they are estimated to receive. The total could be even higher, as this does not include the value of other products, and operating expenditure during down time.

Furthermore, this provision will be controversial under the current system of recording and reporting oil spills, which is highly contested by communities

lost.¹⁸ At \$50 per barrel, this would amount to US\$25 million alone (NGN10 billion), on top of the other permitted deductions. Taking a more modest estimate of 50,000 barrels, this would still cost US\$2.5 million (NGN1 billion) – which is still likely to be more than the total contributions to the local HCDT.

This highlights a broader question SDN has previously asked surrounding third-party damage - why should whole communities be held accountable? The situation is undoubtedly complex: the lack of jobs and access to energy in communities in the Niger Delta are among the drivers for the artisanal oil industry. These drivers have in part been created by the oil and gas industry, for example, through historic oil spill pollution which has destroyed local livelihoods. In turn, this situation has created a level of reluctant acceptance in communities for the existence of the artisanal oil industry, and the further environmental damage this creates on top of the damage already caused by OGCs

On the other hand, for this illicit industry to exist in the way and scale that it does, there is a failure of all actors. For example,

members without adequate support is not an effective solution.

SDN campaigned for this provision to be removed entirely, as it abdicates OGCs from their responsibility to protect their own infrastructure, places an unfair onus on communities to ensure the security of oil and gas infrastructure, and punishes entire communities for the actions of a few, which may be completely outside of their control.¹⁹ At the very least, based on the fact that this provision in the regulations appears to be out of line with the PIA, we expect this can be challenged and hopefully the regulations can be reviewed to bring them back in line with the PIA.

Governance

With larger amounts of money allocated to communities, it is important that the correct governance structure is in place to coordinate planning, spending, and ensure accountability. New structures are being established for this purpose, but there is a lack of guidance, several grey areas open to interpretation, and several issues arising from the

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Opportunities To improve The Host Community Development Trusts (HCDTs) Under Nigeria's Petroleum Industry Act (PIA)

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Who will be involved in the Trusts and what will they do?

There were some welcome changes made in the final version of the PIA, for example clearly stating that community representation is required in certain parts of the structures, yet we fear they do not go far enough to ensure that communities have a significant and meaningful say on how HCDTs operate. On paper, the settlor (i.e. the OGC) retains a disproportionate level of control over management and direction of the HCDT—although in our discussions with OGCs, a number suggest that once the HCDT is set up, they will have very limited control and involvement beyond providing the funds. Regardless, the top-down structure provides layers of administration and upwards reporting and accountability (e.g. to the OGC and government), but very little provision is made for ensuring accountability to communities and ensuring regular communication, reporting, consultation and participation.

The structure of the HCDTs is outlined below, with their roles unpacked, as specified in the PIA and regulations. This is what the regulations require to be established in every group of communities that 'host' the operations of OGCs. The vast bureaucracy could become highly burdensome, and without guidance, risk causing disputes over control of the different structures. This could be improved, for example, by creating guidelines, and rolling these out across the industry. It could be produced in a multi-stakeholder process between OGCs, communities, and the FGN.

Another positive change in the final version of the PIA was to ensure the Board of Trustees (BOT) for every HCDT is composed of members of the host community, and that there must be consultation with communities on their selection²⁰. However, the settlor retains the right to determine the criteria for appointments, without any requirements to consider gender or age, and it has powers to remove members²¹. This could lead to a situation where a handful of representatives - i.e. those who are already influential in the oil and gas sector, typically middle-aged and elderly men - will decide what projects are implemented, who is awarded contracts, and could scheme to create a cartel to capture these funds. Furthermore, the maximum number of BoT members is nine—so HCDTs that cover more than nine communities will force them to compete for representation.

The Management

Committee is responsible for the general administration of the HCDTs, so it is positive that executive members must have experience in relevant professions, and that appointments must "give due consideration to diversity as it relates to age, gender, and physical disability"²². However, it is not clear how the roles of these executive members - who will not necessarily be members of host communities - differs from the roles of the community representatives, who will serve as non-executive members. In corporate governance, non-executive directors typically provide oversight and insights to challenge executive directors. But that is at the director or board level, and the management committee is at the level below this, so they will not have usual powers to challenge executive members and remove them if performance is sub-standard. The structure therefore risks concentrating power with executive members, who are not from host communities, and appointed by the BoT, while non-executive members from the host communities could be accommodated for the sake of representation, without any formal role in day-to-day management.

The Advisory Committee has been given the responsibility for monitoring project implementation, and reporting to the Management Committee. Yet there is no guidance on what or how to monitor the impact and outcomes. This will likely be a significant undertaking, and it is not clear what proportion of the 5% of HCDT funds allocated to administrative purposes will be allocated to the advisory committee. There is a significant opportunity to develop an enhanced approach, which involves regular community consultation, monitoring and evaluation, and iterative updates of development plans, in line with best practice from the development sector.

Who decides what gets funded?

A needs assessment will be carried out in each HCDT at the outset. One positive change in the regulations is that the settlor has to show evidence it has engaged with each affected community to understand the issues and needs; consulted with and considered the concerns of women, youth and community leaders, and; engaged with each affected host community in developing a strategy to address the needs and effects identified in the applicable needs assessment²³. However, this will only happen at the outset, and be reviewed every five years, which could be improved by creating regular opportunities for community feedback, to make updates based on changes in issues and

context.²⁴ NUPRC reportedly has a template for needs assessments, but this does not appear to be enforced. In observed HCDTs, the approach used was not comprehensive - e.g. one settlor sent 50 forms for community members to fill their needs.

Moreover, the requirements for consultation do not extend to

Anecdotal, in our informal discussions with OGCs, they have expressed concerns about the short timeframes given for needs assessments, and the complexities they will face in developing robust community development plans.

Because development of the plan rests with the settlor, it is ultimately within their power to

communities, as we have seen with other initiatives in the Niger Delta.

While there of course needs to be a decision-making structure which prioritises initiatives from community consultations, we are concerned that the current process is not open enough and too much power rests with the settlor, which could be prone to capture by individuals or interest

Body	Composition	Project roles	Administrative roles
Regulator – Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC)	Civil servants appointed by the FGN	Review and approve community development plans.	
Settlor – Oil and gas companies	Oil and gas company staff	Undertake a needs assessment to define the issues that need to be addressed, then design the community development plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Incorporate HCDTs with the Corporate Affairs Commission, after completing the needs assessment. ● Make annual contributions to HCDTs. ● Appoint BoTs in consultation with host communities. ● Determine procedures and regulations for BoTs. ● Submit an annual report on projects and finances to the Regulator.
Board of Trustees (BoT)	Members of the host communities, appointed by the Settlor, in consultation with host communities. Odd number of trustees (<9) serving a maximum of two four-year terms. Plus a Secretary appointed by the Settlor.	Approve and oversee projects under the development plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Responsible for general administration of HCDTs. ● Set up management committees and appoint members. ● Determine procedures and regulations for management committees. ● Determine the process for allocating funds to specific development programmes. ● Keep account of finances. ● Submit an annual report on projects and finances to the Settlor.
Management committee	<p>Executive members: Individuals with experience in accountancy, finance, law, or project management. Selected by the BoT, not necessarily from host communities.</p> <p>Non-executive members: One representative of each host community, nominated by the community. Unspecified number of members, serving a maximum of two four-year terms.</p>	Prepare budgets, run contracting processes, and supervise project implementation under the development plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Responsible for the general administration of HCDTs. ● Prepare budgets and submit to BoT ● Manage the procurement and contract award process. ● Report on activities of management committee, contractors, and other service providers ● Set up advisory committees and appoint members. ● Determine procedures and regulations for advisory committees. ● Submit a mid-year and annual report on projects and finances to the BoT.
Advisory committee	One representative of each host community, unspecified number or term limit.	Articulate and advise on community development projects to the management committee, and monitor and report progress of projects being executed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Monitor and report progress of projects to Management Committees. ● Nominate members to represent host communities on management committees.

the subsequent community development plan, which is the key document guiding the strategy and project selection under the HCDT.²⁵ The settlor is only required to consult with the proposed BoT members, and submit the development plan to the NUPRC for approval, after

30 days of completing the needs assessment.

This does not provide adequate time for thorough consultations to occur with the affected communities, even if this was required of the settlor, which it is not. As a result, OGCs may use existing needs assessments that were conducted for previous CSR projects, which will be outdated and geared towards OGC priorities.

define the issues to be addressed; set the objectives and strategy of the fund; determine and specify the community development projects to implement; and set the budget and timeframe for implementation.²⁶ Therefore, community members may be consulted on their needs at the outset, but there is no guarantee that they will have a say in the design of the overall strategy of the development plan, or the projects that are implemented, nor will they be part of validating or approving the final plan, as this is left to the regulator. The process could even be open to elite capture of the benefits, potentially creating further fault lines along which conflict can emerge within and between

groups. Even if a settlor were to behave in completely responsible way, they will be open to accusations of bias, thus creating further risks of conflict. Without mechanisms to ensure consultation and feedback from community members, the only way they can have a say in the project selection will be by lobbying members of the Board of Trustees, Management Committee, and Advisory Committee. If these channels are not productive, disgruntled community members may turn to protest or sabotaging infrastructure, as has become common during lingering disputes with OGCs across the region.

Cont'd next edition

“No country can progress if its POLITICS is more profitable than its INDUSTRIES. In a country where those in government are richer than entrepreneurs, they manufacture poverty.”

- Peter Obi



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