

BALANCE

POLITICS, GOVERNANCE & BUSINESS

Magazine

▶ **Elections '23: The Metaphor of the Chick and the Con Man**



WHY YOU MUST VOTE IN THE 2023 ELECTIONS

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From the *Publisher's Desk*



Dayo Omoogun
Publisher

Once again, the uppermost motivation is to challenge Nigerians to take their civic duty most seriously because it has been realized that most of our national problems arise from our non-chalant attitude towards our leadership recruitment process for which we have paid very dearly, as a people, over the years.

Happy new year dear friends and compatriots. That much-talked about year 2023 is finally here. The year of exit for the Buhari administration and the year of elections to choose new leaders to take over from the current ones. Indeed the elections is only a few weeks away.

Expectedly most of this edition is devoted to the elections as a way of sensitizing all citizens about their near sacred duty of participating at the polls and reminding them that choices will always come with consequences. From the cover story titled, Why You Must Vote In this Elections, to my Level Field Column, to Cosmas Uzodinma's "Veritas" to Onuwa Lucky Joseph's "Unvarnished" and to "Legal Lenses" by Barrister Ngozi Igwe the common theme is on the elections. Once again, the uppermost motivation is to challenge Nigerians to take their civic duty most seriously because it has been realized that most of our national problems arise from our non-chalant attitude towards the leadership recruitment process for which we have paid very dearly, as a people, over the years.

Your regular sections are in this edition apart from Heroes and Villains. We touched up on the general look of the magazine as we keep thinking about how to make reading it an enjoyable experience for you. We have increased the cover price to 3500 because we have no option left if we are to continue to publish. We tried to set up interview sessions with three different individuals but each attempt failed.

The Magazine's Award comes up in April again this year. Last year's edition was quite successful and we hope that this year's will even be much better. We will keep you posted as we progress towards the date which will be announced soon. This year as we thank you for your past support please be reminded that we count on your suggestions, support and patronage for the years ahead. You are our much valued partner.

Thanks and God Bless.

Dayo Omoogun



WHY YOU MUST VOTE in the 2023 ELECTIONS

By
BALANCE reporters

Will Nigeria's 2023 elections, which comes up in a matter of weeks, be the defining moment for the people of this great African country whose very bright potential has continued to remain largely unharnessed or harnessed but frittered away in the main?

Not a few citizens, international observers and other stakeholders believe strongly that Nigeria and Nigerians have not, in a long while, had a better opportunity than the forthcoming elections, to free themselves from the mostly self-inflicted bondage of primordial sentiments and “emancipate themselves from mental slavery” a la Bob Marley. This feeling rides largely on the back of the fresh enabling environment recently

emplaced after much dithering and other unforeseen developments in the polity.

Many Nigerians believe that the 2023 election is quite attractive and full of promise and are poised to ensure that they play their own roles by participating at the polls.

their efforts towards making their choice counts for little or nothing as election results were either pre-written, forged or re-written. In other cases ballot boxes would be stuffed or snatched. However INEC has assured that with the reforms all that is no longer attractive or

“The major factor that had discouraged many Nigerians from the electoral process resulting in large scale apathy over the years is the belief that their efforts towards making their choice counts for little or nothing “

The major factor that had discouraged many Nigerians from the electoral process resulting in large scale apathy over the years is the belief that

profitable.

There is no doubt that the 2022 Electoral Act has brought in some well thought- out amendments that may have

finally cast some of the ailments that bedeviled our electoral process prior to now into the dust bin of history. Some of the relevant provisions include Sections 47 and 50 subsection 2 which legitimizes electronic voting as well as electronic transmission of results. The aforementioned sections legalizes electronic accreditation of voters, use of smart cards and permits INEC to determine its choice of accreditation technology.

Abuja based Publisher of Revenue Magazine, Fred Apeji, puts his assessment this way, "You may not like Buhari's face and I must admit that his administration's performance has been quite disappointing in many areas but you will give it to him that he has accomplished several important and critical things as far as INEC is concerned".

"The BVAS is what everyone is focused on and it is quite excellent but beyond that I think INEC has done a lot to introduce easy-to-apply technologies. A lot of the persons that have registered as voters in Nigeria between 2015

and 2022 have done so online. This never used to be so and it is remarkable!

"So a lot of technology has been brought to play and we must raise our thumbs up to INEC for that".

"Concerning the amended Electoral Act 2022, my greatest excitement is the

provision that the results will be uploaded to the INEC server on the spot. If we are able to maintain this, there will be no post election wahala (crisis), there will be no suing of anybody", added Apeji.

The same thoughts were shared by Barrister Victor Otokunrin, a lawyer based in Abuja the same. According to him, "Civil Society Organisations and concerned citizens have for a long time been worried by elections in this country. If you observe, elections have been flawed in



Fred Apeji

this country and the results have been flawed with attendant consequences like election violence and confusing court judgments.

'This is what gave rise to dislocated election time tables. Dislocated in the sense that only 30 states participate in the general elections, the others are staggered and this brought some problems to us.

"The Buhari government promised flawless elections and this can only be achieved when the process is clean and believable. A lot depends on the process. BVAS is one of the moves in this direction and both critics and friends of this government have given them credit for this.

"With this amendment, once the results of an election is

"So a lot of technology has been brought to play and we must raise our thumbs up to INEC for that".



Barr. Victor Otokurin

declared the incidence of inconclusive polls, recounting or any form of confusion will be reduced to the barest minimum. Meanwhile the electoral umpire has been quite clear about its stand on the matter. Speaking in mid-December at a workshop, the umpire's director in charge of publicity and voter education, Barrister Festus Okoye said "I have said it and I want to repeat it, even if you protest from now till tomorrow against the BVAS the commission must deploy it," Okoye said.

"I was in Lagos with the chairman last week and we went to the international wing of the airport,

where the Nigerian Airforce were loading the BVAS meant for the states in the federation", he added.

"As of today, we have already delivered to location BVAS for the conduct of elections for 30 states.

"Before the end of December, the BVAS for the conduct of elections for all

the states of Nigeria will be where we want them to be."

Indeed, early in the new year, the Commission confirmed that it had taken delivery of all the BVAS machines it requires for the exercise including extra units as a proactive measure in the event of some of the machines malfunctioning.

The confirmation was made by

the same Okoye: "the Commission has now taken delivery of the required number of the BVAS for all the polling units in the country and extra machines in line with our contingency provisions for all critical election materials," the statement read.

The introduction of BVAS, for many Nigerians, is a watershed as it strengthens the hopes of millions that the loopholes that existed before now which crafty politicians exploited have been creatively, legally sealed.

The decision of INEC to use Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) machines in the February/ March 2023 elections is therefore well grounded legally and is a major inspiration for those who believe that the upcoming elections will not be business as usual. Without doubt the fact that the machines have capacity to capture fingerprint and facial features and confirm or denying same is a great confidence booster. The BVAS is a huge improvement on

"The introduction of BVAS, for many Nigerians, is a watershed as it strengthens the hopes of millions that the loopholes that existed before now which creatively, legally sealed."

“By virtue of section 51 of the new electoral Act, the problem of over-voting has been substantially checked”

he card reader used in recent elections as it is involved in the entire voter experience gamut from registration to accreditation and finally to upload of results.

For criminally minded and violence inclined elements who might have perfected plans to intimidate INEC officials into declaring untrue results under duress, the election law has gone ahead to remedy such eventuality. Section 65 of the Electoral Act, 2022 provides that INEC can, within 7 days, review results declared by a returning officer under duress or where such a declaration was made contrary to the provision of the law, regulations and guidelines, and manual for the election. This is without prejudice to the jurisdiction of a court of competent jurisdiction or election tribunal to review the decision of the returning officer.

Also by virtue of section 51 of the new electoral Act, the problem of over-voting has been substantially checked as the accredited voter figure serves as the baseline for authentic total votes as against

registered voters in determining the excess votes. It is trite logic that it is not all registered voters that necessarily turn out to vote and how some clear loopholes were glossed over is incomprehensible. Thus, where the number of votes cast at an election in any polling unit exceeds the number of accredited voters in that polling unit, the presiding officer shall cancel the result of the election in that polling unit. Before now, the number of registered voters, as opposed to accredited voters, shall be the factor in determining over-voting at election tribunals and only the

commission can declare the election at the polling unit as null and void.

On the issue of death of candidate before or in the course of the polls, the amended legislation provides thus:

“Where a nominated candidate dies before the date of election, Section 34 of the Electoral Act, 2022 empowers INEC to suspend the poll and fix a new date for the election within 14 days of the death of the candidate.

“On the other hand where a nominated candidate dies after the commencement of polls and before the final result and declaration of a winner, INEC is empowered to suspend the election for a period not more than 21 days.

“Provided that where it is an



Barr. Festus Okoye

National Commissioner for Information and Voter Education, INEC



Prof. Mahmood Yakubu
Chairman INEC

election into a legislative House, a fresh primary shall be conducted by the political party of the deceased candidate within 14 days of death.

“However, in case of presidential or gubernatorial or federal capital territory area council election, the running mate shall continue with the election and nominate a new running mate. This is so straightforward.

If this provision were in place at the time, Hon. Faleke and not Yahaya Bello would have been the appropriate person to go for the governorship in Kogi State and all the acrimony would have been

averted but all that is history now.

The added value of the new law is that it takes proper care of a lot of pre-election issues which would otherwise have become sources of distraction and even in some instances judicial manipulation long after the election. These manipulations which take their root from legal

technicalities have resulted in a lot of “court assisted” victories. The situation that played out in Imo State where the fourth became the first is still bewildering and many have still not overcome the dizzying effect.

It is regrettable though that while we are celebrating the introduction of BVAS, the trending Osun governorship tribunal judgement raises questions as to whether the election management has been able to fully grasp the purports of the amended legislation. Should the alleged over voting not have been spotted at the point of votes counting? Should the presiding officers not have done the needful to avert the matter being subjected to litigation? Is the intention of the amended Act not being lost this way?

“Now the trending judgement on the Osun State Governorship elections is a disturbing one because whichever way it eventually goes it will cast a slur

“If this provision were in place at the time, Hon. Faleke and not Yahaya Bello would have been the appropriate person to go for the governorship in Kogi State”

on the effectiveness of BVAS or the amendment itself. Whichever way it goes it will be a dent on the amendment. However, I must say that I have no doubt in my mind that those who brought about the amendment meant well for the country”, Otokunrin said.

Another newbie that excites many watchers is the emergence of a three-horse race as against the traditional two-horse race that had become the norm over the last six election cycles. That the Labour party is a major player in this year's elections aside the two big parties that dominated the 2015 and 2019 elections – the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC) is a truth that cannot be wished away. Prior 2015 APC did not exist but the PDP had been the common denominator with one more party to spar with in each election ranging from All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) /Alliance for Democracy (AD) APP, CPC.

According to an Abuja based journalist, Bode Olagoke, with the current formation, for the first time in the history of our elections since 1999, it is difficult for anyone to predict the winner because it is no longer a straight guess between this or that party but it has become a lot more complicated with the rising popularity and relevance of the Labour Party and its flagbearer

“For the first time in the history of our elections since 1999, it is difficult for anyone to predict the winner because it is no longer a straight guess between this or that party but it has become a lot more complicated with the rising popularity and relevance of the Labour Party and its flagbearer the former Governor of Anambra State Mr. Peter Gregory Obi.”

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Olagoke is also happy that the role of prosecution of electoral offenders has now been shifted to the election Commission, a development he believes will change the existing narrative about the tardiness in handling such cases.

“When a few offenders are prosecuted and bag their appropriate sentences, it will serve as deterrent to others, thereby ridding our elections of violent disruptions, killings, ballot box snatching and other allied vices”, Olagoke said.

Indeed Apeji shed more light on this while reacting to a poser as to the possibility of an upset in the elections with the growing prominence of the LP alongside the PDP and APC.

“In the South West traditionally people will want to play on the safe side and vote Tinubu and then in the North East and North West in the same logic you can also feel a sense that a people might generally warm up to Atiku but in the North Central prepare for an upset and this could be the deciding factor of the entire presidential elections”, said Apeji.

With all these new developments and innovations,

NCC

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Prof Umar Garba Danbatta
Executive Vice President, NCC

The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) is one of the very few public institutions within the Nigerian economic space that renew faith in the much touted “can do” spirit of the average Nigerian. In a milieu of underperforming agencies and departments within the public sphere, the services and contributions of this commission can be likened to a refreshing oasis that beckons hope that all is not lost. It has continued to conduct its business with evident understanding of its mission, “to support a market driven Communication industry and vision “to promote universal access as a way to creating a regulatory environment that ensures universal access to affordable and equitable

service which supports the nation's economic growth”.

Since inception this regulatory agency has had the uncommon luck of being managed by people-oriented, technically proficient, mandate-driven leadership which has resulted in its consistent exceptional performance which is fast becoming a template fit for guiding and challenging other regulatory bodies. Having consistently towed the path of excellence and being free from odium, the NCC has become like a beautiful and chaste maiden that gladdens the heart of both parents and suitors alike. So the Federal Government can boastfully point at the Commission's achievements as one of the markers of its democracy dividends under President Buhari's administration. It will therefore be an unpardonable disservice to the Commission, as well as the Board, management team and staff not to highlight and celebrate the Commission's achievements under Danbatta's headship and thereby provide a basis for posterity to apportion appropriate judgement.

Whereas there are several areas in which the NCC has done very well and done Nigerians proud, we will in this piece concentrate on only a few:

A major stakeholder in any sector is the final consumer and so consumer satisfaction is a key factor in assessing the success or otherwise of any regulatory agency. There is no over emphasizing that the Nigerian Communications Commission takes consumers and their needs seriously. Just recently it was faced with a situation where it



had to decide whether to pass the costs of production which had clearly increased over time to the consumer but the excellent corporate governance structure in place saw to it that it was stepped down even when network providers had announced the new prices in their pricing regime which then had to be quietly reversed. Through the delicate balancing required of an umpire the Commission was able to rally the network providers on their side to exercise some patience.

Having earned its epaulettes as one of the leading consumer centric organisations in Nigeria by showing keen interest in the welfare of the customer, the Commission has continued to step up in this regard. This claim can easily be supported with the number of call/network failure incidences resolved. It is remarkable that in a particular quarter within the period under review, the Commission resolved 99.2 percent of the complaints which it received through its 4 complaints channels, namely: written complaints, consumer complaints portal, contact centre (622 toll-free) and social media handles. In specific figures, 2995 cases out of 3019 complaints were resolved while the rest were escalated to the network providers for settlement. The complaints were mainly about billings and quality of service/ experience on both data and

voice. The precautionary messages and warnings that the Commission through its Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT) regularly releases has gone a long way in saving millions of Nigerians from cyber bullying and attacks that could otherwise have resulted in huge losses to both individuals and corporate bodies through fraud, corruption of records and so on.

Part of the agency's devotion to the stakeholders is evident in its deliberate, consistent and comprehensive partnership with the media and deployment of media tools in engaging with its various publics. There is a palpable sense of accountability, openness and duty in the way and manner in which it straddles the various media channels and platforms with the purpose of informing, educating and enlightening. So, whether your media channel of choice is Television or Radio, or newspapers, even social media you will not miss out on the activities, interventions of the Commission. Yet in spite of having gone to great lengths to put all this in place, the Commission's doors remain open to engage directly where necessary.

The Commission has overseen quite a number of high value sales of different categories of broadband and as much as can be seen Nigerians can testify that

“The primary idea of this set of guidelines is to prevent, and as much as possible put a permanent end to the embarrassing and disconcerting situation where you are suddenly jilted by your darling network provider and that without any recourse.”

transparency, fairness, accountability have been the hallmarks of such auctions. Notwithstanding, it remains a fact that all humans and human organisations remain imperfect even as the journey towards the attainment of perfection continues.

In 2021, to ensure seamless and effective communication in the true sense of the catchphrase “everywhere you go” (apologies to MTN), the communication sector regulator, made public its comprehensive guidelines targeted at enabling and regulating roaming services by network service providers in the country.

If you have ever travelled within this vast country of ours, Nigeria, and found yourself cut off from the world, communication-wise, due to unavailability of services by your network provider in that location then this sector regulator's effort aimed at addressing this avoidable social dislocation should score high with you.

The primary idea of this set of guidelines is to prevent, and as much as possible put a permanent end to the embarrassing and disconcerting situation where you are suddenly jilted by your darling network provider and that without any recourse. This move no doubt is a major boost to the consumer centric credentials of the Commission as it continues to walk the talk in its avowed devotion to the consumer.

Beyond the foregoing however, this guideline also supports the industry players as they no longer have to be under pressure to maintain a presence in every location especially where the cost-benefit analysis does not support such investment. As long as there is a player in such a location, there is no cause for alarm as the gap is seamlessly and effectively filled. The regulator therefore deftly discourages

unhealthy competition while promoting partnership as a way of bridging the gap in infrastructure roll-out or coverage in the sector. This way, the inadequacy of individual network provider in terms of national coverage will be less pronounced and less negatively impactful on the consumer.

Spurred and supported by the Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, and in conjunction with the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC), the Communications Commission took up the assignment of linking the Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) with the National Identity Number (NIN) of citizens in December 2020 and delivered on it in mid-2022. By this exercise, cases of identity theft and



Prof. Adeolu Akande
Chairman NCC

associated vices have been whittled down while tracking and apprehension of perpetrators of crimes such as bandits, terrorists, and kidnappers has been significantly facilitated.

The upward trajectory of broadband penetration statistics since Prof. Danbatta came on board as the Executive Vice Chairman of the Commission is second to none. Within five years of his appointment he piloted the nation's phenomenal increase in broadband reach by over 400% to over 45% penetration having inherited a 5% penetration level when he assumed office in 2015. This translates to about 80 million persons having access to broadband. He is also currently at the forefront of the move towards taking the penetration curve sky high to an ambitious 70%. It is hoped that the focus will not wander from this course of progress.

This piece will be incomplete without a mention of NCC's awesome revenue generation credentials. Indeed the commission has been a key driver of economic growth, contributing hundreds of billions of naira to the federation's purse annually apart from its economic diversification value addition. Reports in the media which are substantiated by National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reports suggest that the Commission's revenue contributions was instrumental to Nigeria's escape from recession in 2021.

More than anything else, the Executive Vice Chairman (EVC), Professor Garba Danbatta, has provided the leadership and capacity required to drive the Commission's mandate towards achieving the aspirations of the Nigerian people and government. It is therefore not surprising that he has been inundated with several awards and honours both locally and internationally in recent times.

The awards, honours and titles include and is not by any means limited to:

Regulator Of The Year Award (NCC) Nigeria Tech Innovation & Telecom Awards (NTITA) September, 2019.

Outstanding Accomplishments In Emergency Management (SEMA 2020).

Goodwill Ambassador Award In Security And Emergency Management (Security And Emergency Management Awards, SAEMA 2019).

Most Innovative Federal Regulatory Agency Of The Year (Nita Awards November 2019)

ITU Telecom World Awards 2019 To NCC For Its Commitment As A Valuable Partner (September 2019)

Man Of The Year 2020, Money Report Magazine

Award Of Excellence By Head Of Civil Service Of The Federation To NCC (September 2019)

Regulator Of The Year Award ICT Watch Awards (July 2019)

Telecom Personality Of The Year ICT Watch Awards (July 2019)

National Public Servant Of The Year, 2018 Business Journal Award (September 2019)

Telecom Personality Of The Year Nigeria Tech Innovation & Telecom Awards (NTITA) September 2019.

Government Agency Of The Year (Beacon Of ICT Awards)

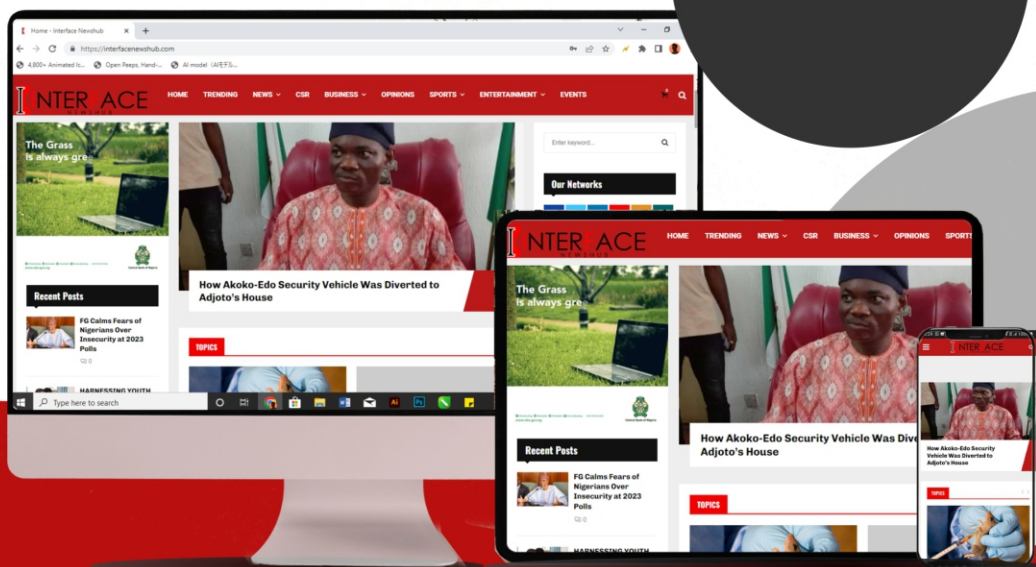
Pan African Telecomm Regulatory Excellence Niger

Umar Garba Danbatta, Professor of Telecommunications Engineering bagged his B. Eng and M.Sc from the Technical University of Wroclaw in Poland while adding a Ph.D from the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology. He was appointed as the Executive Vice Chairman of the Nigerian Communications Commission in 2015 and reappointed for a second and final term as statutorily provided for in 2020. Prior to this appointment, he had managed the Commission's Digital Bridge Institute where he introduced some land mark innovations

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Onuwa Lucky Joseph

Why 2023 Would be **THE SWING YEAR OF NIGERIA**

One good thing about being a columnist is that you make no bones about where you stand on matters personal, national or international. You are not pretending to be 'objective' in the way that's been drummed into our ears from all those long ago years in journalism school. The important thing is that you know the facts, and on the basis of those facts you now make informed decisions to enable your audience make their own informed decisions. There will be bias, clearly, but not ones based on primitive prejudices passed down from generation to generation without a hint of interrogation.

2023 is that much anticipated election year for which millions of Nigerians have waited, prayed and hoped, looking to have their say and in so doing force their way onto the trajectory of governance that, for the majority, has been fixatedly inimical to their aspirations for a better life as citizens. Unfortunately, we got into this hole via a well packaged propaganda machinery which painted our now illustrious seeming past as the very nadir of our nationhood. It was a well-coordinated campaign from several quarters, local and foreign, choreographed to oust a government that was clearly not perfect but one that ran the country far better than the malformed contraption that succeeded it.

One quite quirky character, Joseph Campbell, a

former US Ambassador who even after his tenure has stayed obsessed with Nigeria, predicted that the 2015 election would mark the end of Nigeria as we knew it. The fallouts would be of such immensity that collapse would be inevitable and the many

“2023 is that much anticipated election year for which millions of Nigerians have waited, prayed and hoped for.”

nations that made up the Nigerian nation would beat hurried paths to their various ancestral tents. His declaration of Nigeria's imminent end was with an air of magisterial authority. It was a done deal as far as he was concerned and of course the horde of believers who hankered for anything doomsday about Nigeria were only too happy to lap it up and spread the fear everywhere.

But 2015 came and went and Nigeria is still one. Broken in many places, badly in need of suture in delicate parts of its body, but its vitals are still beating and cleaning and flushing. Its pulse is sometimes difficult to locate, but the body is not only warm, its heart is beating. After eight years of



almost losing its mind, eight years that were supposed to signal its rebirth, it's still here confounding the naysayers, giving believers a good reason to keep the faith but knowing they cannot get off of their knees. They know that Nigeria being together at this time is nothing short of divine.

The nauseous nepotism under the current administration is one for the history books. Every time a position opens up, it would seem only another Fulani man or woman is qualified to fill it. But even beyond this has been the indelicate handling of Nigeria's security and the effort to push bills through parliament that further gives Fulani

“The nauseous nepotism under the current administration is one for the history books. Every time a position opens up, it would seem only another Fulani man or woman is qualified to fill it.”

And now cometh the hour of truth when that deemed undesirable should be consigned to the abode of chaff: the landfill or the furnace. But there's never been a guarantee that the masses will choose for themselves what is good for them. Over time, and in view of the scorched earth policy of the political elite, many amongst the electorate have elected to take what little they can for the now while leaving the remainder four years to take care of themselves. To be sure, many such still can be found amongst the electorate but the woeful performance of the current administration and the ever plummeting standard of living is making many think again.

herdsmen (sometime described by this same government as foreigners running away from the ever expanding Sahara), access to occupation of the ancestral lands of other Nigerians. So far, this is being resisted stoutly. And isn't this odious nepotism a consideration for some nationalities within the Nigerian supra nation demanding secession?

There are many issues currently plaguing the nation which predate the coming in of Buhari's administration, but largely due to his incomprehensible mishandling of things Nigeria has sunken deeper into the mire. Our national debt at N77 trillion and counting is incomprehensible.

“This is the first time we are getting a real credible third force that's threatening to upend the applectart. This time, Labour Party (LP) is distinctively in the mix and inching its way into the hearts and minds of millions of Nigerians.”

The unending ASUU/FG face-off and government's well documented 'sidon look' attitude to the matter is mind boggling. As is the health tourism that is the order of the day, the mass migration of Nigerian trained medical personnel, and the patent lack of accountability wherein the Minister for Humanitarian Affairs could claim that over N500million was spent on school feeding in Ogun, Lagos and the FCT during the Covid lockdown period. Not to mention the perennial fuel scarcity in a country once the largest producer of oil in Africa but which lacks capacity and political will to refine its own oil, preferring instead to import and thereby deplete whatever is gained from exporting crude oil. The runaway success of the 'Japa syndrome' as it's called is nothing short of embarrassing. Everyone you know is looking to leave the country as they can't see any light at the end of what looks to be an endless tunnel.

In all of these and more, the president gives himself a pass mark thereby giving the candidate of his party the APC, Ashiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, (BAT) the confidence to pledge to continue from where Buhari left off! The increasingly frail looking and gaffe prone BAT otherwise known as the Lion of Bourdillon is a stupendously rich individual whose wealth, many claim, comes exclusively from his eight years as Governor of Lagos State and the many years thereafter where he has reigned supreme Governor-General of the State. This is not to mention his well publicised drug issues with the FBI in America.

Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, representing the PDP, has promised to sell off national assets including the NNPC. This ought to have been a plus for

him, but his last time around as Auctioneer-in-Chief, the sales were done at crash down prices and to people who failed to get the assets humming again. Aside this is the corruption baggage he has had around his neck all these many years inviting the a plethora of excoriation from his erstwhile boss, President Olusegun Obasanjo, now an implacable foe, who at every point reminds Nigerians that Atiku cannot be trusted to lead Nigeria.

The good thing about 2023 is that it's more than those two mentioned above. It's a three-horse race this time around. No longer SDP vs NRC. No longer PDP vs APC. To be sure, there were always fringe players seeing as Nigeria's is a multi-party democracy. But those candidates merely filled up space and created theatric diversion away from what we all knew was clearly a two-man race.

Usually, Nigeria, since 2019 had always had two strong standout contenders for the Presidency. It was –

Obasanjo (PDP) against Olu Falae (AD/APP) in 1999;

Obasanjo (PDP) vs Buhari (ANPP) in 2003;

Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (PDP) vs Muhammadu Buhari (ANPP) in 2007

Goodluck Jonathan (PDP) vs Muhammadu Buhari (CPC) in 2011

Muhammadu Buhari (APC) vs Goodluck Jonathan (PDP) in 2015

Muhammadu Buhari (APC) vs. Atiku Abubakar (PDP) in 2019

Bola Tinubu (APC) vs Atiku Abubakar (PDP) vs Peter Obi (LP) in 2023

This time, Labour Party (LP) is distinctively in the mix and inching its way into the hearts and minds of millions of Nigerians who can see in the party's

presidential candidate a decidedly different kind of candidate. This is the first time we are getting a real credible third force that's threatening to upend the applectart. As I have said and believed all along, no saintly candidate can emerge from the PDP or APC. And that's not because everyone there is bad. No. It's because there's an established order (or disorder) to things. They are used to doing politics a certain way that has worked all these many years for them. What's the incentive for changing? Why would anyone believe that just because a party has 'Change' as slogan it was really a change agent despite logging heavyweight anti change agents?

To effectively change the system would require being the helmsman of the ship rather than being in a ship that's been hijacked by a motley of unscrupulous passengers. This time, two old warhorses who have gotten accustomed to getting the cheers and adulation reserved for those under the klieg lights are again back in the ring for the ultimate title. Are they fit for the fight? Well, if they went against one another, it could have been anyone's fight. But now there's this seeming upstart who has more KOs than his two opponents combined despite his fewer years in the ring.

He is street smart, he is book smart, has a way with words despite a shrill voice that's ordinarily not appealing. But it's the message. A message backed with 8 years of solid performance as governor of Anambra State in South East Nigeria. His battle cry is "Go and Verify!". He did the unthinkable: left money in the treasury, not the usual debts, so his successor could start with some advantages. His state was faring badly in the WAEC Exams. He did the radical thing. Handed the schools back to the original owners, who happened to be missionaries, and gave them grants to enable them get their structures up to speed, and voila, Anambra State became the top performing state in the exams. He invested state funds in businesses, funds which are today yielding dividends for the people of the state.

He took no pension, refused to move to the senate, like all governors do; has no record of any property given him by the Anambra State government, has no chieftaincy titles despite his

“We can't wait for the Obi Presidency. And no, it won't be Eldorado. There will be traducers. And principalities who will plant obstacles all along the way.”

many years as a business and political chieftain. He is still simply Mister despite all these many years, and coming from Anambra State where such things are de rigueur. He carries his own bag, big deal, yes; stays on the queue and waits his turn like the rest of us, is ready to sell his message on any platform that invites him, has incredible amount of energy, stamina and staying power on the campaign circuit.

Nigerians everywhere are receiving him with arms wide open. Not for him, promises made on his behalf by others. He does not only say it. He says how he's going to do it. This is a different kind of candidate, clearly, a type many in Nigeria are privileged to see for the first time in their lives. He has energized every demographic but especially the young who are running in their numbers to go pick up their PVC.

The prayer in many places, and at least from this writer, is that Obi makes it to Aso Rock. His record bespeaks a man who matches his words with action. Some have raised the issue of how he also emerged from the rotten system. But yes, that is the way it is and will always be. Change that comes from within is the sustainable type because the man knows the ways of the many with whom he has interacted in his time with them and so knows how to checkmate their moves and how to move the rest of the country forward.

We can't wait for the Obi Presidency. And no, it won't be Eldorado. There will be traducers. And principalities who will plant obstacles all along the way. The reason it'll be a new dawn however, is because Nigeria would have changed direction from backward to forward movement and the results would begin to speak in quick time and in so doing give renewed hope to the very idea of shared nationhood for everyone called Nigerian.



WORLD BANK EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR VISITS DBN

(R-L) - The Managing Director/CEO Development Bank of Nigeria; Dr. Tony Okpanachi receiving; the Executive Director, Angola, Nigeria and South Africa Constituency Office of the World Bank Group, Ms. Ayanda Dlodlo, during a courtesy visit to the Bank's Head Office in Abuja, recently.

ABOUT DBN

Development Bank of Nigeria exists to alleviate financing constraints faced by Micro, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (MSMEs) in Nigeria through providing financing, partial credit guarantees and technical assistance to eligible financial intermediaries on a market-conforming and fully financially sustainable basis.

The bank gives financial support through qualified financial intermediaries not directly to the enterprises.

It was birthed as a result of the Federal Government's partnership and collaboration with global development partners. The bank's current major partners are the World Bank and the Agencie de Francaise de Development (AFD).

While its 10- member board is chaired by Dr. Shehu Yahaya OON, its management team is led by Dr. Tony Okpanachi as the Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer.

Other members of the Management Team are: Mrs Ijeoma D.Ozulumba, Executive Director Finance/ Corporate Services; Mr. Bonaventure Okhaimo, Chief Operating Officer; Mr. Olu Adegbola, Chief Risk Officer; Mr. Idris Salihu, Head Corporate Services; Mr. Joshua Ohioma, Head Internal Audit; Prof Joseph Nnanna, Chief Economist and Mr. Shofola Osho who is the Company Secretary cum Legal Adviser.

MIXED MOMENTS



Buhari Commissions Reference Hospital in Okene, Kogi State.



Peter Obi LP Presidential flagbearer at Chatham House.



APC Presidential candidate Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu at Chatham House



Atiku at one of his recent campaign rallies



Minister of State for Finance and National Planning Prince Clem Agba honoured with South Korean National Award recently.



2022 Calabar Carnival held again after a 2year break



Osun State governor, Senator Ademola Adeleke, visits Buhari in Aso Villa.

FASHION EXHIBITION

Fund Raising Fashion Exhibition organised by Trashion a la mode 5 held at Ceddi Plaza recently. It was an evening of fashion, music, light refreshments and supporting the underprivileged.





Cosmas Uzodinma

ELECTIONS '23 THE METAPHOR OF THE CHICK AND THE CON MAN

At the 2019 Ahiajoku Lectures in Owerri, Imo State, Udom Emmanuel, the Governor of Akwa Ibom State had, in his goodwill address, painted a picture of the destiny of Nigerian state with a fitting metaphor. In his parable, a certain con man upon meeting a native doctor, hid the chick he was holding by moving his two arms behind him. He then asked the native doctor to predict whether the chick was dead or alive. The native doctor thought to himself; "If I say the chick is dead, the con man would produce it alive; but if I say it is alive, he would squeeze the life out of it and bring it out dead. The native doctor then answered, "The life or death of that chick is in your hands." That saved day. So it is with Nigeria. At no time in the history of our country has its destiny been so dependent on the voters' cards in our hands.

We have reached a tipping point in the destiny of our nation. The coming elections portends a watershed our history. This is not alluding to a big bang event that would shake the earth. No. However, it would either be the commencement of a gradual build-back better or a sure slide off the cliff to a resounding fall. The choice before Nigerians now is either to get it right this time or to drive a final wedge into the Nigerian project. The life of the Nigerian chick is in our hands.

In a democracy, governance is determined by the majority and elections is a mechanism for the recruitment of the governing authorities. A major ingredient of democracy is the indispensability of an independent judiciary, the rule of law and a free press.

This is what has been referred to as the government of the people, by the people, for the people.

Furthermore, there is the critical role of education in the sustenance of democracy. One voter that casts his vote out of ignorance imperils the life of the rest of us. Consequently, the great American philosopher, John Dewey, states, "in order to perpetuate itself, democracy needs educated citizens." But how can this be in a nation where 20 million of its children are out of school?

Peter M. Lewis's in his book, "**Growing Apart: Oil, Politics, and Economic Change in Indonesia and Nigeria**" painted a grim picture of the Nigerian condition under military rule. Lewis describes the state of governance in Nigeria and Indonesia as corresponding to the Weberian concept of Partrimonialism. Here, power is concentrated and personalized, as the state becomes an extension of the ruler's household.

Lewis further notes, that even when such nations become democracies, they simply become Neopatrimonial states where "...regimes maintain formal aspects of constitutional order, bureaucratic organization and legal procedure...yet beneath this institutional veneer, power is personalised and discretionary. The executive constitutes the regime through a web of personal ties, loyalist networks and disbursal of largesse".

A related term is that of the "Prebendalist State," in

which the ruling class use state power to benefit mainly family members, tribesmen, supporters and people of same faith. Indeed, whether a Neopatrimonial state or a Prebendal one, the common feature is that they are "...largely incapable of fostering economic development, as they furnish lax management of public finances, pursue capricious political interventions into markets, fail to provide rule of law, and generally lack constraints on the predatory

and bigoted citizenry to rise above their nature.

As Nigeria goes to the polls there are three main contending parties which are representative of our moral tapestry. We have parties that are representative of the Prebendalist ruling class and their coterie of unproductive "hailers", and a motley of productive "wailers" who seem to be tired of the status quo and are labouring for a genuine change.



As at April 2015 fuel prize was N116 per litre. Today, it ranges from N290 in Nasarawa State to N350 in Imo State. A bag of rice which sold at between N8000 and N10, 000 in 2015, today sells between N45, 000.00 to N50,000.00. The same goes for the cost of obtaining medicare. It has become a feat to live beyond 70 years. Between December 28 and January 13, barely two weeks, I have witnessed the deaths of four close friends aged between 60 and 68 years. This is bellwether sign of the collapse of our health system, especially with a record migration of over 10,000 doctors outside the shores of Nigeria.

impulses of rulers."

This has been the lot of Nigeria since independence in 1960 and has threatened to wreck the Nigerian state. Nigeria socio-political order is a patchwork of people connected to the ruling class through a complex structure of prebendalist network running "from top to bottom." Political parties are simply deliberate confraternities of dubious men united by a common strategy of state capture and the goal of plundering the commonwealth. The way we vote in this elections therefore, would be critical to whether the Nigerian chick would emerge alive or dead from our hands.

Certainly we are not outraged by the very nature of our politicians because they reflect who we are. In his mini tome on the country, "The Trouble with Nigeria," Chinua Achebe, echoed the words of the French philosopher, Joseph De Maistre that "a nation gets the government they deserve." Certainly, Nigeria cannot rise above its nature. Voters would always reflect their inner self in the way they vote. It is a wild goose chase expecting a nation of corrupt, undisciplined, illiterate

In the movie, the "The Fall of the Roman Empire", a certain Senator, worried about the declining state of the empire, had asked, when does an empire collapse? Another answered, when its youth lose faith in it. This seems to be the case with Nigeria. Our youths have lost faith in our nation and are escaping. Today, there are three groups of Nigerian youths. Those who have left Nigeria, those frantic to leave and a residual mishmash comprising insurgents, cybercriminals, separatist agitators and those helplessly trapped in the muddle.

Yes. Some of the founding fathers have described the Nigerian project in various ways - "the mistake of 1914", "a mere geographical expression" or like Flora Shaw, "a dynamic people and a global brand." Matters have come to a head and Nigeria has become like the live chick in the hand of the con man. The questions are, whether Nigeria would be "the mistake of 1914", "a mere geographical expression", or "a dynamic people/a global brand?" The answer is in our hands.



High Blood Pressure **THE SILENT ENEMY**

High blood pressure, or hypertension, occurs when the force of blood pushing through your vessels is consistently too high. Narrow blood vessels, also known as arteries, create more resistance for blood flow. The narrower your arteries are, the more resistance there is, and the higher your blood pressure will be. Over the long term, the increased pressure can cause health issues, including heart disease.

Hypertension is quite common. In fact, since the guidelines changed in 2017, so many adults could now be diagnosed with this condition.

Hypertension typically develops over the course of several years. Usually, you don't notice any symptoms. But even without symptoms, high blood pressure can cause damage to your blood vessels and organs, especially the brain, heart, eyes, and kidneys.

Early detection is important. Regular blood pressure readings can help you and your doctor notice any changes. If your blood pressure is elevated, your doctor may have you check your blood pressure over a few weeks to see if the number stays elevated or falls back to normal levels.

Treatment for hypertension includes both prescription medication and healthy lifestyle changes. If the condition isn't treated, it could lead to health issues, including heart attack and stroke.

Five categories define blood pressure readings for

adults:

Healthy: A healthy blood pressure reading is less than 120/80 millimeters of mercury (mmHg).

Elevated: The systolic number is between 120 and 129 mm Hg, and the diastolic number is less than 80 mm Hg. Doctors usually don't treat elevated blood pressure with medication. Instead, your doctor may encourage lifestyle changes to help lower your numbers.

Stage 1 hypertension: The systolic number is between 130 and 139 mm Hg, or the diastolic number is between 80 and 89 mm Hg.

Stage 2 hypertension: The systolic number is 140 mm Hg or higher, or the diastolic number is 90 mm Hg or higher.

Hypertensive crisis: The systolic number is over 180 mm Hg, or the diastolic number is over 120 mm Hg. Blood pressure in this range requires urgent medical attention. If any symptoms like chest pain, headache, shortness of breath, or visual changes occur when blood pressure is this high, medical care in the emergency room is needed.

A blood pressure reading is taken with a pressure cuff. For an accurate reading, it's important you have a cuff that fits. An ill-fitting cuff may deliver inaccurate readings.

What are the symptoms of hypertension?

Hypertension is generally a silent condition. Many people won't experience any symptoms. It may take years or even decades for the condition to reach levels severe enough that symptoms become obvious. Even then, these symptoms may be attributed to other issues.

Symptoms of severe hypertension can include: flushing, blood spots in the eyes (subconjunctival hemorrhage), dizziness

What causes high blood pressure?

There are two types of hypertension. Each type has a different cause.

Essential (primary) hypertension

Essential hypertension is also called primary hypertension. This kind of hypertension develops over time. Most people have this type of high blood pressure.

A combination of factors typically play a role in the development of essential hypertension:

Genes: Some people are genetically predisposed to hypertension. This may be from gene mutations or genetic abnormalities inherited from your parents.

Age: Individuals over 65 years old are more at risk for hypertension.

Race: Black non-Hispanic individuals have a higher incidence of hypertension.

Living with obesity: Living with obesity can lead to a few cardiac issues, including hypertension.

High alcohol consumption: Women who habitually have more than one drink per day, and men who have more than two drinks per day, may be at an increased risk for hypertension.

Living a very sedentary lifestyle: lowered levels of fitness have been connected to hypertension.

Living with diabetes and/or metabolic syndrome: Individuals diagnosed with either diabetes or metabolic syndrome are at a higher risk of developing hypertension.

High sodium intake: There's a small association between daily high sodium intake (more than 1.5g a day) and hypertension.



Secondary hypertension

Secondary hypertension often occurs quickly and can become more severe than primary hypertension. Several conditions Trusted Source that may cause secondary hypertension include: kidney disease, obstructive sleep apnea, congenital heart defects, side effects of medications, use of illegal drugs, chronic consumption of alcohol, adrenal gland problems, certain endocrine tumors

Diagnosing high blood pressure

Diagnosing hypertension is as simple as taking a blood pressure reading. Most doctors' offices check blood

pressure as part of a routine visit. If you don't receive a blood pressure reading at your next appointment, request one.

If your blood pressure is elevated, your doctor may request you have more readings over the course of a few days or weeks. A hypertension diagnosis is rarely given after just one reading.

Your doctor needs to see evidence of a sustained problem. That's because your environment can contribute to increased blood pressure, like the stress you may feel by being at the doctor's office. Also, blood pressure levels change throughout the day.

If your blood pressure remains high, your doctor will likely conduct more tests to rule out underlying conditions.

These tests can include:

cholesterol screening and other blood tests
test of your heart's electrical activity with an electrocardiogram (EKG, sometimes referred to as an ECG), ultrasound of your heart or kidneys
home blood pressure monitor to monitor your blood pressure over a 24-hour period at home.

These tests can help your doctor identify any secondary issues causing your elevated blood pressure. They can also look at the effects high blood pressure may have had on your organs.

During this time, your doctor may begin treating your hypertension. Early treatment may reduce your risk of lasting damage.

People & Events

Images from the conferment of chieftaincy title on NNPC's former GGM Group Public Affairs Department, Dr. Kennie Obateru and his twin brother, Dr. Taye Obateru, held in December 2022. They were conferred with the title of Otunba of Eruku and Bobagunwa of Eruku respectively by the OwaEruku, Oba Busari Olanrewaju.





Dayo Omoogun

A FAILURE FORETOLD & A Chance for re-invention

As Nigerians head to the polls in February, less than a month away, most of them—social thinkers, workers, entrepreneurs, civil servants, teachers, lecturers, traders, ordinary folk, soldiers, security personnel, clergy, literate or not, men and women, old and young from around all the nooks and crannies of this great country can in unison testify that it's been a rough ride to this cliff edge under the Buhari regime whose tenure expires, with great relief, by the end of May this year.

By the power of market forces, many Nigerians including those who in the early Buhari hey days qualified for and gladly celebrated their membership of the hailers class, the flip side of the wailers/halers class categorisation as created by Femi Adesina, are coming back to their senses but alas much damage has been done! The euphoria is over, the drums are silent, the sai Baba choristers can no longer find their voices as they all are beaten by the unrelenting torments of their bellies, the chickens have come back home to roost. The market does not ask you whether you are Pro-ruling party or opposition before it slaps you with a N48k bill

for a bag of rice that used to cost 8k under the “useless” Jonathan regime. Inflation was recently reported by the government itself, through the National Bureau of Statistics, to have reached a 17- year record high of over24%.

This much-dreaded inflation is not a respecter of political inclination, religious affiliations or ethnic extraction. Many Nigerians are not only dazed by the current atrocious economic realities but are even more fazed and disheartened by the cluelessness of the sitting regime. Most of those who used to sing, whistle and dance in adulation of this administration in its advent, are most probably now singing, “I can see clearly now, the rain is gone; I can see all obstacles on my way, gone are the dark, dark clouds that held me blind...” – a song made popular by Jimmy Cliff but originally done by Johnny Nash. What a shift! The scales are falling.

Many readily recall with much pain and regret, that we were warned but gleefully ignored the warnings, when the rain of APC's promises and propaganda began to

fall, when President Jonathan and his regime were serially carpeted, when the chants of “anything but Jonathan” excited the undiscerning and my country people literally drooled as the main opposition party then All Progressives Congress which has since become the ruling party, masterfully painted pictures of magnificent castles in the air. Nigerians literally swooned and were promptly swept off their feet resulting in, for the first time in our nation’s history, the “defeat” of an incumbent democratically elected government by a party in opposition. It is a moot point clearly overtaken by events to begin to argue that the election was marred by irregularities as there were massive cases of underage voting, vote buying, the Kano fire incident which culminated in the death of the Kano resident Electoral Commissioner has not been satisfactorily explained, the massive use of incident forms to manipulate the process, and such allied demeanors remain unattended.

A failure foretold? Yes. It was campaign season like this in December, 2014 when former President Goodluck Jonathan uttered these powerful, memorable words, “The choice before Nigerians in the coming elections is simple: A choice between going forward or going backwards; between the old ways and the new ways; between freedom and repression; between a record of visible achievements and beneficial reforms and desperate power-seekers with empty promises.” This warning fell on deaf ears!

A failure foretold? Yes again. Retired Major-General Buhari (as he then was) who came challenging was not new to us. He had served in similar capacity before as military head of state. What is the use of history if not

deployed as a reference point for the present and a guide for the future? Can we feign ignorance of his antecedents? If a man couldn’t make life better for his citizens as a young military head of state where you could create states, relocate national capital, establish anything by fiat with little or no consultation with anyone, is it in a civilian democracy with all its protocols, intricacies, horse trading, rascality, opposition gimmicks and bureaucracy that he would do better?

Do we need to do a quick rehash of some of the scam promises that have indeed become empty “korofa” promises? In the history of this country, no Nigerian President has been off duty for as long as Buhari on grounds of ill-health nor has any equalled him in the number of foreign trips he has embarked upon to go take care of his health. He couldn’t even self-censor by reason of the promise he made before he got into office. The promise to cut spending on the presidential fleet as well as medical tourism by equipping our health facilities and building world class hospitals as a way of preserving our foreign reserves and the way it has been so shameless jettisoned smacks of promises made by a man in the heat of passion. What about the promise not have an Office of the First Lady?

That probably was just a play on words, semantics, because it didn’t take long before an activity hub was built around the Wife of the President with various levels of aides paid from taxpayers money in tow. How about 20,000 megawatts of power? N5,000 monthly stipend for every unemployed graduate? Repair and rehabilitation of our national refineries? What about the careless talk that there is nothing like petrol subsidy and it will be scrapped pronto!



We have come to that point in time when we must realize that a lot of our challenges take their root from our flawed leadership recruitment process because as they say, everything rises or falls on leadership. The results or democratic dividends that accrue from the investment of citizens or stakeholders depends to a large extent on the competence of the leadership that gets thrown up. An even more important take-away from this realisation is to recognize the fact that, we the led, must take responsibility for the quality of leadership we get!



The same factors should be compelling enough to make every voter to come out of their corners to cast their votes as we get set to make history again. It is up to us therefore to grab the opportunity with both hands and do the right thing with our franchise by electing our representatives without the usual primordial considerations. If we do not choose our doctors on the basis of tribe but based on competence and experience, if we do not board airplanes because the

pilots in charge are our kinsmen but because they have the requisite qualifications how can we take such an indifferent view of the office of the first citizen in the country who has power of life and death, so to say, over the entire nation?

This quote: 'A people who elect corrupt politicians, impostors, thieves and traitors are not victims but accomplices', is an apt synopsis of how we make foolish choices based on base sentiments thereby setting up ourselves for ruin, blame game and regret. Even though the above quote has become an orphan as its attribution to George Orwell has been disproved, the nexus between the fact contained therein and the shame and pain of our leadership question is well established. It is one of the cases where the identity, even character of the messenger is of little or no significance whereas the message is all-important.

For emphasis let it be stated here that the person who emerges President becomes so powerful by virtue of that office and can choose to do good or evil. He can kill human beings, he can kill businesses, sources of livelihood, he can cast into prison, he can mortgage the destiny of children yet unborn, he can enrich a few friends and cronies while impoverishing the generality of the people, he can make our country a pariah among nations; yet on the other hand, he can reduce large scale poverty, create an enabling environment for businesses to prosper and create wealth, improve employment statistics, work towards higher life expectancy, make our country the foreign investment and tourism destination for the world, give education and skills acquisition a pride of place, prioritise food security, ensure safety, security, and welfare of citizens, uphold equity and justice, improve energy supply and build infrastructure while also unifying the various sub nationalities within the nation.

We have lamented enough. We must wipe our tears in order to gain focus and proper perspective. We have a good chance to do the right thing as we approach the general elections. Our destiny is in our hands and we can decide to muzzle it or launch it into fulfilment. One area where the Buhari administration probably expects to gain some redemptive value on its overall dismal performance is the elections. To be fair, the government of the day has brought some salutary changes to the electoral process through several amendments to the electoral Act which was passed into law in 2022, introduction of Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), the Not Too Young to Run Act, etc. In addition to these, the emergence of a 3-horse race in the Presidency as well as the naira redesign should make this election the most transparent since our return to democratic rule. All that is required to complete the checklist will be for the authorities to ensure maximum security of lives and property on the election days as well as endeavor to avoid the temptation to interfere with the intention of swinging the results in favour of any of the runners.

Let me end this piece with relevant quotes from Plato, Socrates, George Carlin, Keith Ellison respectively:
 "Bad governments are elected by "good" citizens who don't vote".
 "The wise who refuse to rule should prepare to suffer the rule of idiots".
 "If you don't vote you lose the right to complain".

An Appraisal of **THE ELECTORAL ACT 2022**

Barr. Ngozi Igwe



The Electoral Act 2022 which repealed the Electoral Act No 6, 2010 was enacted to address the challenges of voter intimidation and violence, rigging, inadequate training and capacity building for electoral officials, delays in the announcement of results, logistics problems, technical difficulties and others in order to ensure credible, transparent, and fair elections in the future. These challenges compromise the integrity of the election, undermine the credibility of the electoral process, leading to a lack of trust in the system.

This article is a brief appraisal of the Electoral Act 2022, highlighting the provisions of the Act in relation to vote buying, tampering or manhandling of INEC officials, malfunction of the computers and the voting process. We shall adumbrate on these issues in the light of the Electoral Act 2022.

I. VOTE BUYING AND OTHER FORMS OF INDUCEMENT

SECTION 121 OF THE ELECTORAL ACT 2022 provides that any person who bribes or conspires to influence the vote of any person commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a maximum fine of N500, 000 or imprisonment for a term of 12 months or both. **SECTION 126 (1) (B)** of the Act, makes it an offence to solicit for the vote of any voter, and **SECTION 127** imposes a fine of N100, 000 and/or 12 months' imprisonment for those found guilty of undue influence on a voter.

Another effort to curb vote-buying is the placing of limits on the campaign expenditure of political parties and candidates. **SEC 88** stipulates the amount that can be

spent on elections at the various levels and also spells out the punishment for candidates, accountants or other persons who contravene the provisions of the Act.

A candidate who knowingly acts in contravention of this section is liable on conviction to a fine of 1% of the amount permitted as the limit of campaign expenditure under this Act or imprisonment for a term not more than 12 months or both. Any individual found guilty of contravening the section will pay a fine of N500,000 and/or imprisonment for a term of nine month; while an accountant who contravenes this section is liable on conviction to a fine of N3,000,000 and/or imprisonment for a term of three years.

To effectively monitor the finances of political parties, the Act mandates every political party to submit to the Commission a detailed annual statement of assets and liabilities and analysis of its sources of funds and other assets, together with statement of its expenditure including hard and soft copy of its list of members or in such a form as the Commission may require. Any official of the political party who contravenes this directive commits an offence and is liable to a fine of N1, 000,000 and/or imprisonment for a term of six months-**SECTION 86**

SECTION 87 further limits the amount of money or assets that an individual can contribute to a political party or candidate.

II. Manhandling of INEC officials

The Act clearly prohibits manhandling of INEC officials while on duty and even provides for the suspension of an ongoing election where there is threat of a substantial disruption of the election, or where it is impossible to

continue with the election occasioned by threat to peace and security of electoral officials and materials-
SECTION 24

The Act, in **SECTION 27** clearly spells out that Officers employed by the INEC for the purpose of registration of voters and handling elections shall not be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority other than the Commission in the performance of their functions and discharge of their duties. The Commission shall also request for the deployment of the Nigerian Armed Forces for the purpose of securing the distribution and delivery of election materials and protection of election officials.

Section 114 provides that any person who impedes or obstructs a registration officer or a revision officer in the performance of his or her duties commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a maximum fine of N1, 000,000 or to imprisonment for a term of 12 months or both.

Section 128(a) further provides that any person, directly or indirectly, by his or herself or by another person on his or her behalf, makes use of or threatens to make use of any force, violence or restraint, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine of N1, 000,000 or imprisonment for a term of three years.

III. TAMPERING WITH AND MALFUNCTION OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES

The Nigerian Electoral Act provides specific provisions regarding the malfunctioning of computers and other technology used in the electoral process.

According to the act, where a smart card reader or any other technological device deployed for accreditation of voters fails to function in any unit and a fresh card reader or technological device is not deployed, the election in that unit shall be cancelled and another election shall be scheduled within 24 hours if the Commission is satisfied that the result of the election in that polling unit will substantially affect the final result of the whole election and declaration of a winner in the constituency concerned- **SEC 47(3)**

Section 126(4) further states that any person who snatches or destroys any election material or any election device, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term of 24 months.

Additionally, **Section 41** of the Act requires the electoral commission to take measures to ensure that election materials and devices are received in good condition by ensuring that the Polling Agents are present at the



distribution of the election materials, electronic voting machine and voting devices from the office to the polling booth. Before the commencement of the elections, the Polling Agents are also entitled to have originals of electoral materials to be used by the Commission for the election inspected, and this process may be

recorded as evidence in writing, on video or by other means by any Polling Agent, accredited observer or official of the Commission.

IV. VOTING AND COUNTING OF VOTES

The procedure for voting is clearly outlined in the Act. **SECTION 47** provides that every intending voter must present himself with his voter's card to a Presiding officer for accreditation at the polling unit in the constituency in which his name is registered. The Presiding Officer shall then use a smart card reader or any other technological device prescribed by the Commission to verify, confirm or authenticate the particulars of the intending voter.

It is worthy to note that **SECTION 56** prohibits voting at any other polling unit except the one to which the voter is allotted. *Section 124 (1) prescribes the punishment of such an offender by paying a fine of N100, 000 and/or 6 months' imprisonment.*

Voting at an election under this Act shall be by open secret ballot. A voter on receiving a ballot paper shall mark it in the manner prescribed by the Commission. All ballots shall be deposited in the ballot box in the open view of the public. Voters are expressly prohibited from voting for more than one candidate **SEC 50 AND 51**

SECTION 60 of the Act outlines the procedure for counting of votes and forms. The Presiding officer, after counting the votes at the polling unit, enters the votes scored by each candidate in a prescribed form. He will then count and announce the result at the polling unit.

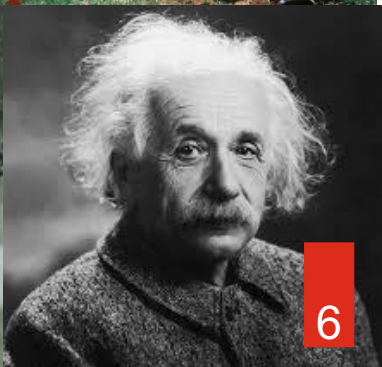
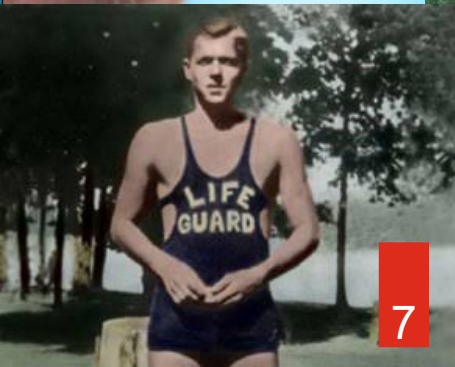
A presiding officer who willfully contravenes any provisions of Sec 60 commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine not more than N500, 000 or imprisonment for a term of at least six months.

CONCLUSION

The provisions of the **NIGERIAN ELECTORAL ACT 2022** regarding vote buying, tampering or manhandling of INEC officials, malfunction of the computers and the voting process, aim to ensure the transparency, accuracy, and fairness of the electoral process in the event of technical difficulties.

AMAZING FACTS

1. Only female mosquitoes bite.
2. A bat is the only mammal that can fly.
3. A snail can sleep for three years.
4. There are only two countries in the world where Coca-Cola does not exist.
5. It snows in the Sahara desert.
6. Albert Einstein was offered the role of Israeli's second President in 1952 but he declined.
7. Ronald Reagan former US president, was a lifeguard while in high school and saved the lives of 77 people.
8. The human brain though only 2% of the body mass, uses one fifth of the blood and oxygen supply.
9. You can't taste food without saliva.
10. During the period 1900-1920, the tug-of-war was an Olympic sport.



Celebrity Snippets

Ama Serwah Genfi known professionally as Amaarae, is a Ghanaian-American singer, songwriter, producer, and engineer was born in July 4, 1994. She is known for her work around representation and gender in music. Amaarae had already begun to experiment with music at the age of 13, and by 17, she took up an internship at a music studio. Amaarae's music has been recognised both locally and internationally. In 2018, she was named one of Apple Music Africa's Favourite New Artist and later. The same year, she became an Apple Music Beats 1 featured artist for her debut project Passionfruit Summers, a work she released through her independent record label, Golden Child LLC in 2017. Then Amaarae released her debut studio album, 'The Angel You Don't Know' on November 12, 2020. She's estimated to be worth around \$3 million.

AMAARAE



ZENDAYA

Zendaya Maree Stoermer Coleman is an American actor, singer, and dancer. She was born September 1, 1996, Oakland, California, U.S. Zendaya first gained fame for her comedic roles on the Disney Channel before later transitioning to serious roles later in her career. In 2010 Zendaya won the part of Raquel ("Rocky") Blue, one of the lead characters in the Disney Channel's Shake It Up, then she released her first single, "Swag It Out", and her first full album, Zendaya, which featured the hit song "Replay." Zendaya appeared in her first non-Disney role in 2015, guest-starring on the TV comedy Black-ish. In 2017 Zendaya had her first big-screen role, as Michelle ("MJ") Jones in Spider-Man: Homecoming. In 2019 she took the lead role in the HBO series Euphoria. For which she has received two Primetime Emmy Awards for outstanding lead actress in a drama series and a Golden Globe (2023) for best actress in a TV drama. She's currently worth around \$20 million.

T Tyler Gregory Okonma was born on 6th March in 1991 at Ladera Heights in California. His father is of Nigerian decent and mother of white Canadian and Afro-American decent. By fourteen, he took keen interest in music, so he learnt to play the piano himself and became a skilled pianist in a short time. Before his music career kicked off, he worked at 'FedEx' for two weeks and at 'Starbucks' for a couple of years. Ultimately, he left doing odd jobs and decided to make music his profession. In 2009, Tyler produced and released his debut mixtape titled 'Bastard' and it was quite a hit and ranked at 32 on 'Pitchfork Media's' Top Album list for the year 2010. After his first album, Tyler began collaborating with other rappers and featuring in their albums and songs. Tyler has since been nominated for grammy, MTV's award and a couple of other significant awards and has even won in several of them too. Tyler is currently worth \$25 million.

TYLER THE CREATOR



Celebrity Snippets

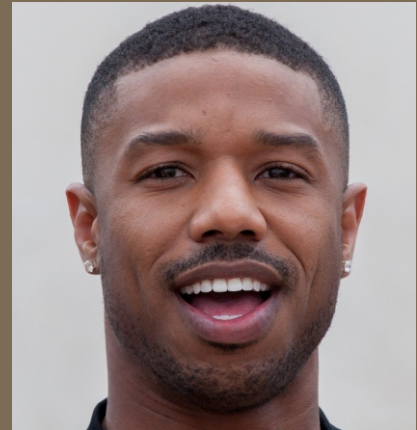


TEMS

Temilade Openiyi was born on the 23rd of July, 1996 in Lagos State, Nigeria, and she is a Nigerian leading female artiste that sits at the intersection of Afrobeats, R&B and Alté genres of music. She discovered her music talent at a very early age after joining her church's choir. Tems, became a sensation in the industry after the release of her debut single, Mr Rebel, which she produced herself. However, she gained more recognition after she dropped a follow-up single, Try Me. Releasing her debut EP, For Broken Ears, in 2020. Tems won the Most Alternative Song category for Damages at Net Honour Awards in 2021. At the 2021 African American Entertainment Awards, she won the Best Female Artist, Best Collaboration, Best Video, and Song Of The Year. In 2023 she also became the first female Nigerian artist to win a grammy. Tems is estimated to be worth US\$1.

Robert John Downey Jr. born April 4, 1965 is an American actor and producer. At the age of five, he made his acting debut in his father's film in 1970. In 1992, Downey portrayed the title character in the biopic Chaplin, for which he was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Actor and won a BAFTA Award. He then struggled with drugs a lot, and got arrested severally and was also put in rehabilitation. Downey then resurged into the movie scene playing some roles here and then before landing his role as Tony Stark/Iron Man which he reprised in ten films with the Marvel Cinematic Universe. He has also played as Sherlock Holmes, which earned him his second Golden Globe. Downey was named by Time magazine among the 100 most influential people in the world, and from 2013 to 2015, he was listed by Forbes as Hollywood's highest-paid actor worth \$300 million.

ROBERT DOWNEY Jr.



MICHEAL B. JORDAN

Michael Bakari Jordan, born February 9, 1987, in Santa Ana, California, U.S., is an American actor with a successful career on television with high profile movie roles and is known for his finely tuned and compelling characterizations. Jordan's family moved from California to Newark, New Jersey, when he was a toddler. He began working as a child model, and that led to his first acting roles in 1999. That year he notably appeared in an episode of The Sopranos and had a small part in the movie Black and White. Since then he has gone to being involved in all kinds of movie projects that have brought him into the limelight including "The Fantastic Four" "Black Panther" "Creed" "Without Remorse" and other high profile movies. His various high-profile parts have seen him rake in awards such as the BET Award for Best Actor, Emmy awards for Best Movie, MTV Movie Award for best villain, and several NAACP awards. He is currently worth \$25 million.

BALANCE

Magazine

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SPECIAL REPORT

NEXT LEVEL AGENDA:

Most Focused, Result Oriented
Ministers/Chief Executives



Times are hard. Government revenues are dwindling. Add to this the shutdown occasioned by the need to mitigate the spread of the novel Coronavirus disease.

All the foregoing is a perfect scenario or excuse for failure or poor performance. However in spite of the confounding gloom, the foggy economic scene, there are public servants who are dedicated to their assignments notwithstanding the sundry distractions.

As the Buhari administration winds down, it is important for Nigerians to begin to ask for verifiable scorecards of the various Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) involved in the execution of its various programmes. Balance Magazine has identified some of such focused and result-oriented organisations, Ministers and Chief Executives and has been serializing their scorecards/ achievements. We have since published the achievements of the NNPC under the leadership of Malam Mele Kyari, the exploits of the FCT Minister Malam Musa Bello and now in this edition we publish some of the achievements of the Nigerian Communications Commission.

You and Your MDA should be hopping on this train too.

Don't be left out. Call us today on 08035996063.



Balance Diary

January 2023

January 1 Call Your Thugs to Order
FG Warns Governors Who Use Political Thugs to Disrupt Campaigns

January 2

State Governors are the cause of rising Poverty Level –

Nigerians in totality are the strongholds of Labour Party - Julius Abure

- Ø FG pays ASUU full November salaries, withholds 8 months arrears.
- Ø Doyin Okupe, 10 others Sacked by Labour Party, over non-payment of membership dues
- Ø They Are Making Noise But I Don't Care – Wike Slams Okowa, Other Niger Delta Governors who challenged him for speaking openly about the 13% derivation arrears paid by the FG

January 3,

- Ø Peter Obi releases 62-page campaign manifesto
- Ø Labour Party Crisis: Attack On Okupe Is Attack On Obi – Campaign Council Declare

January 4

- Ø Labour Party says the endorsement of Atiku Abubakar by the Northern Leaders Consultative Forum is elitist
- Ø Wike: Benue Govt Knocks APC For Describing Gov Ortom As An 'Errand Boy'

January 5

- Ø President Buhari Issues Stern Warning To Army to stay neutral Ahead Of Elections
- Ø How dare you criticize us when you could not even build roads to your hometown? -FG to Atiku
- Ø Dogara officially dumps APC for PDP

January 6

Ø CBN Restricts Cash Withdrawals To N100,000 Per Week

Ø Alhassan Ado Doguwa caught on camera threatening to deal with those who won't vote for the All Progressives Congress (APC).

January 7

- Ø Justice Rita Ofili-Ajumogobia reinstated as Judge after dismissal for alleged fraud case
- Ø Peter Obi denies being involved in any corruption during his time as the Governor of Anambra

January 8

- Ø Senate President Ahmed Lawan pushes for support for the cattle rearing business in Nigeria
- Ø DSS gives NNPC, oil marketers 48 hours to address fuel crisis

January 9

- Ø D'banj, regains freedom after hours in detention
- Ø N-Power Beneficiaries Lament Over Non-Receipt Of Monthly Stipends after earlier report by ICPC on the diversion of funds
The Debt Management Office (DMO) announces that Nigeria's public debt reached N44.6 trillion in the third quarter (Q3) of 2022

January 10

- Ø Tinubu leaves UK to meet ex-Super Eagles players and APC Chieftains in Kano, couldn't complete his tour due to fatigue

January 11

- Ø 2023 Elections: We will not be supporting any Presidential Candidate- US Govt
- Ø Charles Soludo of Anambra State warned to not convene an illegal stakeholders' meeting of the All Progressives Grand Alliance

January 12

Ø FG denies allegation that the Nigerian Military conducted secret abortions for victims of Boko Haram attack asks Reuters to provide evidence.

Ø Falana tackles CBN, says that new cash withdrawal policy is illegal, because the Money Laundering Act 2022, which has fixed maximum cash withdrawal to N5 million, has not been amended

January 13

Ø Lai Mohammed knocks Atiku over comment on Boko Haram insurgency, accuses PDP of nurturing them

Ø 2023 Elections: I have no problem with PDP's presidential candidate - Gov. Wike

January 14

Ø 14th- MKO Abisola's children due Buhari over Kudrat Abiola's Murder, seek \$10m compensation

Ø Labour Party postponed Ekiti, Ondo Presidential Campaign Rallies

January 15

Ø Atiku Abubakar urges the people of the southeast region to vote for him to pave way for the Igbo presidency.

Ø Controversial Kano Islamic cleric, Abduljabbar Nasiru Kabara, convicted to die by hanging over alleged blasphemy.

Ø EFCC announces recovery of N30bn from suspended Accountant General, Idris Ahmed

January 16

Ø The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), dissolved and de-registered as a legal company in the United Kingdom

January 17

Ø Atiku vs Wike: Okowa leads fresh reconciliation moves

Ø Makinde stops conferment of Traditional title on Atiku as PDP BoT member says party crisis is about to be red

January 18

Ø NDLEA uncovers underground bunker in Delta state

Ø You Were 'Disowned', Show Your Family Members, Tell Us Your Real Name – Atiku Camp Challenges Tinubu

January 19

Ø Buhari Govt Insists It Negotiated With Twitter Before Lifting Ban

Ø Plans have been put in place to replace BVAS machines incase there are faulty ones - INEC

January 20

Ø Doyin Okupe steps down as DG following High Court ruling convicting him of money laundering

January 21

Ø Senate receives request from President Muhammadu Buhari asking the upper chamber to approve the advance of N1trillion to the Federal Government by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

Ø CBN increases maximum weekly limit for cash withdrawals for individuals and corporate organizations

January 22

Ø Atiku wants to rob people of their jobs - FG to Atiku over comment Nigerian borders

Ø CBN reveals pieces of the redesigned notes printed.

January 23

Ø 2023 elections Wike seals off Atiku's campaign office in Rivers state. 24th Dec: Atiku Abubakar challenges Bola Tinubu, to face off with him in a national debate.

Ø I Tried My Best For Nigeria But It's Not Good Enough – Buhari

January 25

Ø G5: Our demands are beyond 2023, Ayu's Resignation- Ikpeazu

January 26

Ø President Muhammadu Buhari expresses confidence in Bola Tinubu to make Nigeria prosperous

Ø 2023 elections: Bauchi State governor, Bala Mohammed raises alarm over alleged plot to rig him out of office during the 2023 general election.

January 27

- ∅ President Muhammadu Buhari directs the IGP, Usman Alkali Baba, to take “the strongest possible action” against policeman who killed a pregnant lawyer, Bolanle Raheem
- ∅ Former presidential aide Akin Osuntokun named the new DG of the Labour Party Presidential Campaign Council (PCC), replaces Okupe

January 28

- ∅ Senate passes N819.5b supplementary budget, FG to borrow more
- ∅ Bolanle Raheem: IGP recommends suspension of Assistant Superintendent of Police Drambi Vandi over killing.

It's Never
too late
to be
what you
might have
been

*Today's
Motivation*

Keep going!

AFRIGO

Understanding Nigeria's Domestic Card

By Adefolarin A.Olamilekan



Global financial and business environment continues to unfold. Even in the face of uncertainties that envelope current economic reality. We continue to witness arrays of meaningful and life changing packages cutting across the way things are done. In recent times, the means of exchanging and trading as well as transaction payment for goods and services have all been impacted. This is courtesy of developed and developing empirical innovation in telecommunication. Although as it stands, developed nations in their quest for better society re-engineer and re-tool the usage of telecommunication technology to achieve these fits. That is why, it has been said that telecommunication has allowed the world to be moving far in speed of points, and no nation can afford to be left behind.

The foregoing speaks to the intent of the recently launched 'Afrigo' National Domestic Cards of Nigeria. By the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in collaboration with Nigeria Inter-Bank Settlement Systems (NIBSS) in partnership with the Bankers Committee.

Expressly, this latest initiative is part of the apex bank's pragmatic ways of strengthening the national payments system through the implementation of a Domestic Card Scheme. Afrigo is in line with the National Payments System Strategy of the CBN. Meanwhile, this is the same vein with the Apex bank's initiatives such as the Bank Verification Number (BVN), Real Time Gross Settlement System (RTGS), Shared Agent Network Facility (SANEF), Regulatory Sandbox, Open banking and the eNaira.

Instructively, speaking at the unveiling of the country's domestic card scheme. The CBN governor, Godwin Emefiele, said the event signals another major step in the drive to ensure a thriving and competitive payment landscape in Nigeria. According to Emefiele, "given the limited usage of cards by Nigerians and in a bid to deepen penetration, the Bank actively promoted the National domestic card scheme which will be



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accessible to all Nigerians and also address our local peculiarities. In addition, "Afrigo card scheme is therefore an important plug in the gap that has remained with us since the cash-less policy was introduced".

In retrospect, the CBN Cash-less Policy started in 2012, as the core drive to strengthen the national payment system and deepen the usage of electronic platforms in Nigeria. Interestingly, the cash-less policy has created value, engendered competition and attracted investment into the Nigerian banking and payments ecosystem. That is why the likes of Visa and Mastercard have dominated the card payment market in Nigeria. And they would remain convenient, particularly for international transactions. On the other hand, Afrigo as a national domestic card is expected to serve the unbanked market population and increase competition within the payment landscape.

Conversely, the question that Nigerians may ask is Why national domestic cards now? Answer to this question lies within the benefits national domestic cards provide. For instance, it ensures the capacity to reduce Nigeria's reliance on foreign-owned financial services companies. Moreover, across the world, it is a

trending monetary policy that embraces Fintech innovation and financial penetration and inclusion service. Hence, joining countries like China, Russia, Turkey and India which have launched similar national domestic card schemes is a worthwhile initiative.

Also, given the challenge of "proliferation of products, channels and participants which significantly increased foreign direct investments into the Nigerian payments space without the benefits of helping us harness the unbanked and underbanked population for a transformative financial penetration and inclusion system. In 2021 card transactions carried by Nigerians amounted to \$18.2 billion dollars. Yet still, there is much ground to be covered as millions of Nigerians are without payment cards to consummate transactions.

Going forward, the "Afrigo" national domestic card is out for a robust, ecosystem efficient and safe national payments system and welcomes innovation from both domestic firms and foreign investors.

What needs to be done. Instructively, this Afrigo national domestic card is strategic to enhance the smooth operation of the cashless policy of the CBN monetary policy. However, measures must be put in place to reduce the challenges of high cost of card services, and ensure to address infrastructure peculiarities, challenges of the Nigerian micro and macro payment ecosystem.

And in the words of Dr Tope Fasua this is another "Leap in Financial Innovation...as the national domestic card scheme bodes opportunities for our economy to integrate the informal segment of our economy". Hence, we must embrace and can no longer neglect.

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