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DEMOCRACY WATCH

An E-newsletter from the TMG

Transition Monitoring Group

(A coalition of
Human Rights
NGOs and Civil
Society
Organizations)

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The Transition
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in August 1998 for the
purpose of developing
integrity in the electoral
process by monitoring
and reporting on the

MAJOR HEADLINE:

➤ Governance

- Elections for President, governors hold April 21, 2007
- INEC Discovers Babies, Under Age On Voters List
- INEC plans voters' card with passport
- INEC Registers Mega Party
- 15 Group Seek Registration
- INEC to aid women participation in Politics
- INEC money still trapped – Iwu
- Iwu Lashes at INEC Critics
- Britain and U.S to assist INEC on 2007 polls
- INEC, Due process differ on expenditure
- All claims to 2007 Presidency
- Buhari Vows to Die for Free Polls
- Election Riggers Won't Succeed Again
- Incessant political assassination: This time spreads to Ekiti state
- Politicians are arming students
- Governorship aspirants under assassination threat
- Don't allow your children to be used as thugs – Director advises mothers
- Southern youths vows to resist use as political thugs
- Northern students launch campaign against electoral violence
- 2007: ANPP zones presidency to Nigeria
- No Power shift agreement – Obasanjo
- YWCA task FG on 2007 elections
- Obasanjo Rejects PDP Guidelines
- 2007: New law to bar office seekers proposed
- ANPP shifts national convention
- Why Democracy Must Triumph

➤ This Month's Politricks:

- Will violence mar 2007 election?

➤ International News

- Seychelles president re-elected
- Sao Tome's president wins re-election
- Burundi uncovers coup plot
- Sierra Leone sets 2007 poll date
- Zambian opposition urge president to quit
- Death Toll Rises in Congo Clash

➤ For The Records

- Need For Alliance For Credible Elections In Nigeria (ACE NIGERIA)

➤ Opinion

- Civilian-To-Civilian Handover: Why It Must Come To Pass In 2007?

➤ News Titbits

- Alliance for Credible Elections in Nigeria (ACE Nigeria) debuts

prosecution of the political programme.

The work of the TMG is handled under a coordinating committee system of decision making and a secretariat which carries out its day to day activities. In addition to national committees of the TMG, it also has Zonal and State Coordinators drawn from among member organizations. TMG's Chairperson coordinates the activities of these committees and of the secretariat.

Comments from Readers are Welcome and can be sent to tmgabuja@yahoo.com or tmg@tmgnigeria.org

GOVERNANCE

Elections for President, governors hold April 21, 2007

A shift has been adopted for the conduct of next year's general elections, grouping voting for the office of president and the federal legislature together. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) announced the schedule at the opening of a three-day national forum on Nigeria's 2007 elections.

According to the timetable, INEC said that the presidential election and that of the National Assembly would hold the same day, April 21, 2007 and the governorship elections and that of the State Houses of Assembly on April 14, 2007, seven days earlier than the presidential and federal legislative election.

Obasanjo used the occasion to formally pledge that he will hand over the baton of leadership come May 29, 2007.

The Guardian, Wednesday, August 30, 2006 pg1/2

INEC, Due process differ on expenditure

Accusation has been leveled against the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for improper spending towards the forthcoming 2007 elections. Recently INEC was accused of over spending their expense account by millions of Naira on cars and a boat.

This was coming from the Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence unit (BMPIU) of the presidency, saying that INEC spent N34 million more than it should, having gone to unregistered car dealers to buy four all-terrain land cruisers. This allegation was made by the Special Adviser to the president on Due process, Mr. Kunle Abdulwahab, in his submission to the House of Representatives special committee on verification of INEC's preparation towards 2007 elections. Mr. Abdulwahab confirmed that his office had given INEC N730 million for buying cars but it had withheld approval for the purchase of a number of Toyota cars, which it questioned.

According to Mr. Abdulwahab, who gave a breakdown of cars bought by INEC, said "it purchased four Toyota Land Cruisers at N86 million; four land rovers at N74 million; four Mitsubishi cars at N45 million; three Mercedes Benz cars at N53 million and a boat at N65 million". Mr. Wahab also questioned that INEC could not explain why it put up a N3 billion request in the supplementary appropriation to buy ballot boxes when the same sum (N3 billion) had in recent time been released for the same purpose.

On the other hand, INEC responding to the accusation said the cars were necessary in view of the sensitivity of the elections so as to facilitate a smooth conduct of the polls in 2007 adding that cars should be considered as "election materials". A spokesman for INEC said in a response: "It does not amount to due process to buy cars from accredited companies, but that it was determined to fast track the activities of the Commission for effective service delivery".

Although, INEC's secretary, Alhaji Abubakar Jarou, who represented the chairman of the Commission was not able to respond to some of the questions saying that they were policy issues which only the chairman, Professor Maurice Iwu, was competent to speak on.

Unfortunately, Iwu was not there to respond to the weighty allegations.
Daily Trust: Tuesday August 22, 2006 pg 1/4

INEC Discovers Babies, Under Age On Voters List

Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof Maurice Iwu, said they discovered with shock by the result of the voter's registration exercise in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), at the numbers of babies that were passed off as potential voters. He said thorough investigations would be carried out and those implicated would have law enforcement agencies and the courts to deal with. He also said to give added credibility to the 2007 elections; the commission has began moves to get the academia practically involved. He insisted that INEC is fully prepared, well funded and ready to conduct next year's elections, and even snap election if called to do so by November this year.

The Guardian, Sunday, August 13, 2006 pg1/4

INEC plans voters' card with passport

Poised to ensure hitch-free general elections next year, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INE), has planned to issue voters cards bearing individual passport photograph. Secondly, more polling units may have to be created where and whenever the need for it arises, but says certain factors must be taken into consideration before such extra units would be created to avoid abuse. Resident Electoral Commissioner in charge of Imo state Eugene Amaju stated this recently during a sensitisation and grassroots tour of the 27 local councils in Imo state.

The Guardian, Thursday, August 24, 2006 pg6

INEC Registers Mega Party

The shape of the much talked about mega party to combat the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) at the 2007 polls has finally emerged as Chief Solomon Lar faction of the pDP; afaction of the All Nigria Peoples Party (ANPP) led by two serving governors; the Advanced Congress of Democrats (ACD); the Chief Bisi Akande-led faction of the Alliance for Democracy (AD); Chief Chekwes Okorie-led All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA); and Governor Orji Uzor Kalu's Peoples Progressive Alliance (PPA) fused into a party named the Action Congress (AC). The party got its certificate of registration for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on Thursday, August 24, 2006.

15 Group Seek Registration

The INEC National Commissioner in charge of Political Parties, Dr. Ishmael Igbani has disclosed in Abuja that more than 15 political associations have submitted their applications to INEC for registration as political parties. It was gathered that the commission has so far registered 40 political parties for the forthcoming general elections in 2007. It is likely that the commission may register additional five more parties before the 2007 elections; though, bearing in mind that the newly passed Electoral Act 2006 provides that such registration must, however, end before 90 days to the general election, to enable such parties to mobilize its supporters.

In addition, former governors of Anambra state launched a new political party in Abuja, on Monday, August 28, 2006. The new party is National Solidarity Democratic Party

(NSDP). The new party already has the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) registration form.

Thisday: Sunday August 6, 2006, pg 9/Daily Trust, Monday, August 29, 2006 pg5

INEC to aid women participation in Politics

The poor participation of women in politics has been a concern to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). According to INEC's Ambassador B. Dede, INEC is preparing a forum to enhance women's participation in politics. He disclosed this during the inaugural meeting of Media Consultative Group on Gender (MCGG) towards 'promoting women's participation and access to political leadership in Nigeria towards and beyond the 2007 elections, organized by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNDP) in Abuja.

Ambassador Dede disclosed that INEC would collaborate with UNIFEM, civil society and the ministry of Women Affairs to strategize on curbing the obstacles that discourage women from participating in politics.

Daily Trust: Tuesday August 22, 2006, pg 11

ACD wants INEC boss dropped

The Advanced Congress of Democrats (ACD) has restated its call for the removal of the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Maurice Iwu. The reasons the ACD gave is that the antecedents of Iwu and his conflicting statements on preparations for the 2007 polls have continued to erode the people's confidence in the commission. In a statement signed by its Media and Publicity Committee Chairman Alhaji Lai Mohammed, he said the party recounted what it called the illegalities being perpetrated by the commission over the various bye-elections conducted and declared that it had lost confidence of all the opposition and parties and Nigerians. The ACD recounted the refusal of Iwu to obey the decision of the Court of Appeal, which set aside two senatorial elections in Anambra and Borno states as a result of which Senator Sanusi Daggash is still occupying his seat. It appealed to the Federal Government to critically review the activities of INEC leadership and reconstitute the board of the commission in the interest of national stability and democracy.

The Guardian, Monday, August 7, 2006 pg7

INEC money still trapped – Iwu

Billions of Naira for the 2007 elections in the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), is out of reach of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), says Prof. Maurice Iwu, INEC boss. He said N20 billion of election funds said to have been made available to it is still being withheld by the office of the Accountant General of the Federation (AGF). But the AGF, Alhaji Ibrahim Dankwambo, in a response said it received the due process certification for the INEC funds only on Wednesday, August 16, 2006 and was expecting INEC to apply for their release.

Daily Trust, Friday, August 18, 2006 pg1/4

Iwu Lashes at INEC Critics

**Says they are afraid of 200 7 polls*

The chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, (INEC), Prof. Maurice

Iwu, has described critics of the commission as politicians in search of excuses for their possible failure in the 2007 general elections. He said this while receiving Baroness Amos from the British House of Lords, and the British high Commissioner to Nigeria, Mr. Richard Gozney, in his office. Iwu said, “When we started seeing attacks on the commission, we thought it was tactical move if not strategic. The idea is that if the people lose the election, they would turn around and say well, ‘we told you that these people are biased’. Iwu said the commission was however encouraged by the comments of political parties at his last meeting with them.

Thisday, Wednesday, August 2, 2006 pg1/4

Britain and U.S to assist INEC on 2007 polls

The United Kingdom has declared its intention to assist Nigeria pull through her elections come next year in a free and fair manner by offering the necessary logistics to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the leader of the UK House of Lords, Baroness Valerie Amos, gave the pledge during a courtesy visit on the Chairman of INEC, Prof. Maurice Iwu, said Britain was interested in a free, fair and credible polls in Nigeria come 2007. She assured INEC that UK would partner with it to have a peaceful election.

In like manner, the United States of America Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. John Campbell, has disclosed that his home government and the Nigerian authorities are holding diplomatic consultations in the bid to ensure the success of the 2007 polls. He further remarked that the 2007 election in Nigeria would be a milestone in the country’s journey toward democracy.

Thisday, Wednesday, August 9, 2006 pg1/6/The Guardian, Wednesday, August 2, 2006 pg7

INEC resumes recall of Farouk

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is set to resume the recall process of Hon. Farouk Adamu Aliyu representing Birni-Kudu Buji constituency in the House of Representatives following a court ruling. INEC said the Federal High Court, Abuja has given the commission the go-ahead to continue with the recall process which was earlier stopped by the same court following a petition filed by the lawmaker. In a swift response, hon. Farouk said he was ready to appeal the judgment.

However, the Independent National Electoral Commission confirmed Farouk Aliyu was recalled after a referendum was conducted on Saturday, August 13, 2006 at his Birn-Kudu Buji Federal Constituency. The result of the referendum showed that out of the 82,929 that participated, 61,398 voted for the recall while 20,324 voted against it.

Thisday, Monday, August 14, 2006 pg1/4/Daily Trust, Wednesday, August 2, 2006 pg6

All claims to 2007 Presidency

The 19 northern governors rose from a meeting in Kano insisting the North must produce the next president of the country in 2007. The governors have resolved to convince the people of the south south and southeast on the need to support the north’s claim to presidency in 2007. The Chairman of the Northern Governors Forum (NGF) stated that the north could stake its claim to the 2007 presidency on the basis of the power shift agreement, “a matter of equity and justice”. He said the north would not resort to legal struggle to enforce what he described as the North’s rightful claim to the 2007 presidency

with the south south and south-east, but rather engage in moral persuasion.

Meanwhile, elders from the Southern parts of the country under the aegis of the Southern Forum has met with the leadership of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), to press for a southern president in 2007. The forum was led by its chairman Ambassador M.T Mbu, the Secretary, Dr. Raimi Dejo and Chief Emmanuel Inwuanyanwu, among others. They said in their position paper "the retention of the presidency in the south in 2007 remains non-negotiable and sacrosanct". In his response, the party chairman, Dr. Ali Ahmadu assured the Forum that the party would take the right action at the appropriate time.

Daily Trust, August 17,2006 pg4/The Guardian, Friday, August 4, 2006 pg3

Buhari Vows to Die for Free Polls

All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) presidential candidate in the 2003 general election, Maj. Gen Muhammadu Buhari, has reiterated the need for credible election in 2007, stating that if need be, he is ready to lay down his life for the polls to be free and fair. " I am ready to stake my life for the protection of the peoples votes in the 2007 elections." He said in a speech read on his behalf by Katsina Zone vice chairman, Alhaji Mamman Danmusa, at the state congress.

Thisday, Thursday, August 17, 2006 pg 1/4

Election Riggers Won't Succeed Again

A gubernatorial aspirant in Abia State, Chief Henry Ikechukwu Ikoh has predicted that election riggers would not succeed in the general elections slated for next year, saying that Nigerians would resist rigging just as they resisted tenure elongation. He further stated that if INEC was compelled to always go to the presidency cap in hand in search of funds, there was no way the electoral body would maintain its independence and give Nigerians a credible elections in 2007.

Thisday, Saturday, August 19, 2006 pg6

Incessant political assassination: This time spreads to Ekiti state

Another PDP governorship aspirant in Ekiti state, Dr. Ayodeji Adaramola, was on August 14, 2006 killed in his Otunba Atuluse Crescent, Ijan-Ekiti home. It was gathered that the assassins scaled the fence of the building before finding their way into the deceased bedroom: "after breaking the door, they shot at him twice, hit him in the head before stabbing him in the stomach and waited for some minutes to ascertain that their victim died before leaving him in a pool of his blood".

The 55 year old food nutritionist, a former chairman of the state Community-Based Poverty Reduction Agency (EKPRA), and a consultant to the World Bank country office in Abuja on Social Protection and HIV/AIDS, joined the governorship race less than two months ago. He seemed to have enjoyed wide acceptability in the state because of his performance at EKPRA and people had started looking up to him as reliable hands that could successfully rule the state.

His death generated violent reaction from the people of Ijan as they protested and made bonfires on the major roads leading to the town. The youth of the town set ablaze some houses belonging to some people believed to be the political foes of the deceased. Among the houses includes that of the state chairman of PDP, Mr. Ropo Adesanya and an aide of

the deputy governor.

Meanwhile the Inspector General of Police, Mr. Sunday Ehindero, during a meeting with Ekiti State 25 gubernatorial aspirants at his office in Abuja on August 21, 2006, over the assassination of Dr. Ayo Daramola, a governorship aspirant in Ekiti state, expressed fears on the spate of political killings which he said portends danger for the country ahead of 2007 polls, especially if they remained unraveled.

In a related development, the Enugu state Commissioner of Police, Mr. Charles Dawodu, at a meeting with leaders of political parties and their aspirants in the state, on the political killings, assassinations and kidnappings in some parts of the country, warned that his commission would deal ruthlessly with any party or aspirant who violates the rules of the game. He said that information has reached his office that some of them (governorship aspirants) had recruited thugs and imported arms in preparation for their campaigns.

Guardian: Tuesday August 15, 2006, pg 1/2 /Thisday: Tuesday August 22, 2006, pg1/4,

Violence: CNPP summons Stakeholders

Conference of Nigeria Political Parties (CNPP) has summoned a meeting of political stakeholders, to find solution to incidences of political assassination, which has become rampant in recent times. In his address the National Chairman of CNPP, Dr. Olapade Agoro, said the conference has organized a one-day summit of stakeholders, leaders of thought, traditional rulers and professionals in Ibadan to proffer solution on how to stop the senseless killings, which if not checked, could scuttle the 2007 general election and drag the nation back to the dark old days. Thisday, Thursday, August 17, 2006 pg7

Politicians are arming students

Worried by increasing use of small arms by students of tertiary institutions in the country, the Inspector General of Police, Mr. Sunday Ehindero, has warned parents and guardians not to allow their wards to be used by politicians and other groups to foment trouble. He warned that the police would deal decisively with criminals who paraded the streets as students. Reports show that recent arrest by the police showed that students might have become recruits for political violence.

Meanwhile, the Advanced Congress of Democrats (ACD) has urged the Inspector General of Police to expose politicians arming students to perpetrate violence. The party's Media and Publicity Committee made the call on behalf of the party. They commended the police for disclosing the arrest of 15 students from Auchu Polytechnic, Edo state, traveling to Anambra state with pistols and other weapons and those also arrested in Osogbo, Osun state, with six pistols and 30 kilogram of Indian Hemp. They expressed worry that such arrests were being made at a time when political violence was escalating in the country.

The Guardian, Wednesday, August 9, 2006 pg7 /Thisday, Monday, August 7, 2006 pg1/4

Governorship aspirants under assassination threat

A governorship aspirant in Plateau state under the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Engr. Tambaya Stephen Mato has recounted how he was threatened to drop his ambition or be assassinated. Speaking in Jos after the PDP rally at Bassa Local government area of the state, the aspirant said received a threat call on his GSM at about 7.30 on July 8, 2006 to the effect that he either quit the race or go the way of late Chief

Jesse Aruku. He said he had since reported the threat to the police who he said acted swiftly by giving him police protection.

Another governorship aspirant in Abia state under the platform of the Advanced Congress Democrats (ACD), Iheanacho Obioma has informed governor Orji Uzor Kalu and leadership of the Nigerian Police that two PDP governorship aspirants in the state are plotting to have him killed.

Daily Trust, Monday, August 14, 2006 pg7/The Guardian, Sunday, August 13, 2006 pg3

Killings will mar elections

The senate has warned that elections in 2007 could turn into a “deluge of tears and blood” if politicians do not halt the chain of orchestrated and cold-blooded killings. This was made in a statement signed by the Senate Committee on Media and Public Affairs, Senator Victor Ndoma-Egba, the senate called for the police to uncover the murderers quickly before more murders mar the forthcoming elections.

Meanwhile, politicians in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) have been warned to stop giving weapons to thugs with the aim of intimidating their opponents during elections. The commission of police in the capital city Mr. Lawrence Alobi, issued this warning at the second interactive forum organized by the FCT Police Command in collaboration with CLEEN foundation.

Daily Trust, Thursday, August 17, 2006 pg1/4/Daily Trust, Monday, August 28, 2006 pg33

Don't allow your children to be used as thugs – Director advises mothers

Mothers should counsel their children against being used as political thugs, Chief Rejoice Danjatau, the coordinator of the Jerry Gana presidential campaign organization in Adamawa advised mothers. Danjatau while condemning political killings in some part of the country, she advised that mothers should be courageous enough to confront politicians who use their children for acts of thuggery. She said that “if they ask you to go into banditry, ask them to produce their children to lead the way”.

Daily Trust, Monday, August 28, 2006 pg9

Edo: House overrules veto on new council law

The Speaker of the Edo State House of Assembly, Mr. Friday Itulah, had on August 22, 2006 in Benin, signed into law the amended Local Government Law of 2000.

Going by the provisions of the new law, both Igbinedion (Edo state governor) and the legislators now have the powers to sack an erring council chairman instead of the governor alone who before now had the exclusive power.

The Guardian: Wednesday August 23, 2006, pg 6

Okonjo-Iweala quits cabinet

The former World Bank Vice President Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala quits President Olusegun Obasanjo's cabinet forty-four days after she was redeployed from the Finance Ministry to Foreign Affairs, and later replaced with Minister of Finance Mrs. Usman Nenadi as head of the Economic Team while in London negotiating another debt pardon for Nigeria. According to her, she resigns to pursue “pressing family matters”.

The Guardian, Friday, August 4, 2006 pg1/2

We are against ING-Falae

Protem National Chairman of the Democratic Peoples Alliance (DPA), Chief Olu Falae, has said his party is not in support of the Interim National Government (ING), and that Ezeife's purported comment was not its position. Falae said ING's support was both undemocratic and unconstitutional. He said the position of his deputy Dr. Ezeife Chukwuemeka was not the official position of the party.

Thisday, Friday, August 4, 2006 pg5

Southern youths vows to resist use as political thugs

Youths who converged in Ibadan, Oyo state, recently have stated their resolve to resist being used as agents of political violence by politicians in the approaching 2007 general elections. The youth leaders from 17 states in the southern part of the country also express their support for Southern presidency. The group appealed to politicians to exercise restraint and eschew violence in the forthcoming elections, warning their peers not to allow themselves to be used by any group or body to cause chaos in the land during the polls. It also condemned the assassination of Chief Funsho Williams and called on the Federal Government to speed up investigations into the heinous crime so as to bring culprit to book.

The Guardian, Monday, August 7, 2006 pg3

Northern students launch campaign against electoral violence

The National Association of Northern Nigerian Students and Youths (NANNYS) has advised northern student and youths against been used as thugs to perpetrate violence as the nation prepares for the 2007 general elections. The national president of the association Mallam Mohammed Usman gave the advice recently, he said the desire to witness a successful civilian-to-civilian handover, devoid of violence and thuggery is paramount. Daily Trust, Thursday, August 3, 2006

South-south takes campaign for presidency to middle-belt

To garner more support, leaders of the south south geo-political zones have taken their bid to produce the next president to Benue state. At a meeting with the south-south community in Makurdi, by the zone's North Central Contact Committee led by Gen. Anthony Etukudo and Prof. Godwin Sogolo, said south south deserves to produce the next president because it has more than any other geo-political zone contributed to the unity of Nigeria. He said for the sake of equity, justice and fair play, other zones should allow the south south to have a shot at the presidency since it is the only zone yet to produce the nation's president or head of state.

The Guardian, Wednesday, August 9, 2006 pg 7

2007: ANPP zones presidency to Nigeria

The national secretary of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), Dr. N. Asuquo, says the party does not believe in zoning the presidency to any part of the country. He said, "it is disheartening to hear people talk of zoning to any of the six geo-political zones. Well in ANPP we have often said that the presidency should go to Nigeria. That is it should be

given to the best candidate, irrespective of where he comes from. He also said that the south-south people Assembly (SSPA), a pro-south-south presidency group, is a PDP contraction and does not reflect the wishes of the people of the region.
Daily Trust, Wednesday, August 9, 2006 pg9

No Power shift agreement – Obasanjo

President Olusegun Obasanjo says every Nigerian, irrespective of geo-political zone is qualified to contest the presidency. The president, who made the remark, maintained that no zone should be denied the opportunity to contest the nation's number one political position except the southwest zone. He said what his administration is doing is to provide a level playing field for all contestants to ensure a peaceful and successful elections in 2007 and urged contestants to observe the rules and eschew violence and killing in the name of politics. He cautioned those searching for his successor to exhibit a high sense of fairness in the exercise, expressing hope that his successor will continue with his reform programmes.

Daily Trust, Monday, August 13, 2006 pg3

YWCA task FG on 2007 elections

The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) has urged the federal government to implement the provisions of the Beijing convention of 1994 to ensure a level playground for women. It said that the government was yet to fully implement the recommendations of the convention. The convention's affirmative action wants women to be given 30 percent representations in public offices at all tiers of government, the organisation's president Mrs. Comfort Ani said this on behalf of the organization.

Thisday, Sunday, August 13, 2006, pg13

Obasanjo Rejects PDP Guidelines

**INEC releases regulations soon*

President Olusegun Obasanjo rejected the proposed guidelines presented to him by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) for 2007 general elections. The document which was presented to Obasanjo by the national chairman of the party Senator Ahmadu Ali, was rejected as the president was said to have noted a displeasing area in the document where it provides that Ali would head the committee that would screen both presidential and governorship aspirants for the 2007 elections. Which is a clear departure from previous exercises where an independent committee handles the screening exercises.

Meanwhile the national executive committee of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) met on Monday, August 28, to rafi the guidelines for its primaries for the 2007 general elections after all corrections had being made to the previous provision.

The Guardian, Sunday, August 20, 2006/ The Guardian, Monday, August 28, 2006, pg1/4

2007: New law to bar office seekers proposed

**It's aimed at the VP – Group*

a new law that will require the vice president, governors and other elected officials to resign in two months time will be discussed soon in the senate. The law entitled 'A Bill for an Act to Control and Regulate Persons Vying for Certain Offices and Ancillary Matters Connected Therewith' is sponsored by Senator Timothy Aduda from Plateau state and

Senator Baba Tela, from Bauchi state. If the law is passed, it will ensure that any politician seeking public office will vacate his position six months before an election.

In a swift reaction, the vice-president's campaign organization says the law is aimed at scuttling Atiku's chances of running for president. The bill provides that from the commencement of the Act, any person holding certain offices and who wish to contest other elective office, must inform the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), of his/her intention not less than six months to the election. Such aspirant must also vacate his office three months to the next election. Failure to comply with these provisions will disqualify such aspirants from the election.

Those that will be affected by this law are; the vice-president, governors, deputy governors, senator, members of the House of Representatives, members of states' Assemblies, local government chairmen and councilors. Atiku's group stated that the Act has no basis in the Nigerian constitution, which does not require a person seeking re-election or election on to a higher office to vacate his current position.

Daily Trust, Thursday, August 3, 2006, pg2

2007: Masari Joins Katsina guber Race

The speaker of the House of Representatives, Alhaji Aminu Bello Masari, has joined in Katsina state governorship race. His emergence was described as the act of God Most High as it is said that his personality and acceptability have overshadowed those of all other aspirants because of factors favourable to the existence and development of the state. It is also said that "this is not only a sign of success for the PDP on which platform the speaker shall contest but success for all other parities, because the situation has surpassed the bounds of partisan differences".

Daily Trust: Monday August 21, 2006, pg 15

ANPP shifts national convention

At a meeting chaired by its interim national chairman, Governor Ali Modu Sherrif in Maiduguri on August 21, 2006, the All Nigeria People's party (ANPP) decided to shift its national convention earlier scheduled to take place on Thursday August 24, 2006 by one week to now take place between 1st and 2nd September 2006.

It was revealed that the convention was shifted because the committees on the review of the party's constitution and manifesto have not completed their assignment. It was gathered that "The party's new constitution and its manifesto must be adopted at the convention", whereas the committee working on the review needed three more days to complete their assignment. Also disclosed was that the current caretaker leadership of the party would have its tenure ended by the 2nd of September – there is need for them to finish their assignments in time for the new leadership to be elected at the convention to take over the party's affairs.

Daily Trust: Tuesday August 22, 2006 pg 2

Anambra: SIEC in Court with Obi

The Anambra State Independent Electoral Commission (ANSIEC) has dragged the state Governor, Peter Obi to court, over its dissolution. A declaration that the removal of the 1st plaintiff as chairman and the 2nd to 7th plaintiff as members of Anambra State Independent

Electoral Commission from holding the said office by the Governor of Anambra state.

The suite filed at the High Court of Awka by the plaintiffs' lawyer, Nnamdi Ibegbu, ANSIEC questioned the right of the state government in dissolving the Commission whose term has not elapsed. The commission members which includes the Chairman Chief Cornel Umeh and other seven, wanted a declaration that the state government erred by dissolving it without the constitutional requirement of two-thirds majority of the House of Assembly as stipulated by Sections 199(1) and 201 (1) of 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. They contended that the expiration time for their tenure was 21st day of June 2009, having assumed office on June 22, 2004, after their inauguration by former Governor, Chris Ngige.

Thisday: Tuesday August 22, 2006, pg 6

Why Democracy Must Triumph

The emergent dominant democracy sought a society where man would "employ his productive means" to the best of his ability. That society is the democratic society.

According John L. O'Sullivan, democracy must finally triumph in human reason, because its foundations are deep in the human heart. It fastens the affections of men, as the shield of their present liberties and ground of their future hopes. They perceive in it, a saving faith, a redeeming truth, a regenerating power. It is the only creed, which does justice to man, or that can hind the entire race in eternal chains of brotherhood and love. The fortunes of individuals may change – empire be born and blotted out – kings rise and fall – wealth, honour, distinction fade as the dying pageant of a dream – but democracy must live while man lasts, it must live, it can only cease to be when eternal truth is no more.

Democracy, more than any known system, asserts a virtuous freedom of acts and thought which insists on the rights of men – demands the equal diffusion of every social advantage – ask the impartial participation of gift of God – sympathizes with the down-trodden, rejoices in their elevation, proclaims to the world, the sovereignty, not of the people barely, but of immutable justice and truth.

Democracy, in every aspect it may be regarded, is obviously important, it involves question of the highest moment, which have engaged and battled the greatest minds, from the day of Aristotle to those of Sidney and Locke – which have tasked the loftiest intellects, and furnished themes of earnest discussion in each successive age of the world. Democracy does not uphold tyranny but the true friend of man and the noble champion of the oppressed many. It does not identify with the rotten abuses of past misgovernments, but the healthful spirit of modern reform. The condition of modern society is modified by every change in this doctrine of rights, not other doctrine exerts a mightier power over the weal or woe of the whole human race. In the past, it has been the moving spring of revolutions – has aroused the ferocious energies of oppressed nations – has sounded into the ears of despots and dynasties the fearful moaning of coming storms – has crimsoned fields of blood – has numbered troops of martyrs – has accelerated the down-fall of empires – has moved the foundation of mighty thrones. Presently, millions of imprisoned spirits awaits it march with anxious solitude and hope.

It must go forth like a bright angel of God; unbar the prison doors, to succor the needy, heal the sick, clieve the distressed, and pour a flood of light and love into the darkened intellects and dreary hearts of the sons of man.

... Government is the agent of society, the organ through which its purpose are declared and its will be executed. It is the instrument by which the few exert the delegated power of the many. Its origin is in the weakness or wickedness of men. To protect the feeble from the strong, the good from the bad, each from all and all from each is its prominent design. The best government is that whose rule of action is simple justice to all. Justice is the supreme, sovereign arbiter of the world – of higher authority than either the edict royalty, the devices of party or injunction of law. The States' most indispensable duty is to provide for its people, impartial administration, fastening to it by indissoluble bond, the affinities of every individual and class; it will establish a social union more stable than the hills and more harmonious than the spheres.

If it be true, then, that men are equal in respect to their rights – that they enter society on common ground – that Government is the agent of all – there are momentous inferences which the truth plainly involves.

First, the basis of representation is the person. Neither birth, wisdom nor wealth confers on its possessor an exclusive right to legislate control, or select those in whom the legislation is placed. Power emanates from the people. It is transiently delegated by society to be wielded for its benefit. It is transferred to representatives to guard and facilitate its exercise. Every individual is interested in its use or abuse; for it is his own power relinquished for a moment, with a view to his higher security or good. Property qualification are but little regarded in these state, the prevailing theoretical doctrine if the majority of the whole number must rule. Objections to this principle, however, sturdily advanced, have fallen one after another. Although majority is not always right, probability is in its favour. Its ability to decide on matters of the State is more than equal to those 'better classes', which affect all wisdom and knowledge. It is a common error to overrate our own capacities and underrate those of others. There is a vulgar pride gratified in depreciating the integrity and information of the great mass. The arrogant vanity of the rich, the haughty pretension of the privileged, the insolence of the unprincipled, the pomposity of the learned and the inflated conceit of the selfish and superficial "business man" delight to disparage the intellectual or moral claims of "the multitude". They are stigmatized as the lower orders, but a little, if any, removed from the brute; they are spoken of as the wild, ferocious herd; passed by with the rude jest or the scornful look. The details of a consolidated government based on unwritten laws, perpetually changing – comprehending an infinity of functions – fettered by a vast variety of checks, balances and restrictions – connected directly with every interest of society; mingling in all the gambling and speculations of trade; entrenching itself behind immense civil, ecclesiastical and military establishments, and operating through a machinery as intricate as the differential calculus, but the democratic creed contemplates no such complicated arrangement.

That creed is consistent with itself throughout. It does not construct an engine of adjustments and relations so multiplied and abstruse, that the most practiced wisdom is alone adequate to their comprehension. It does not abuse the people for not controlling what is beyond their capacity to understand. It does not hang laws far above their heads, and then Praco-like, execute a terrible penalty upon every infringement: while it asserts the competency of the whole to govern themselves, it restricts government to its natural uses; it curtails the number of its function; separates its action from partial interests; simplifies the mode of its operations, and reduces the principles of legislation to the simple expression compatible with some form of national organization. It insists strenuously on

popular rights because it believes the popular body sufficient to the discharge of its public duties.

Secondly, as government is the agent of society, its operation must be directed to the good of all its members. In this we include more than is commonly meant by that very indefinite phrase: “the general good”; a phrase to which the lives and fortunes of millions of have been wantonly sacrificed.

The great object of government is to secure every man in the enjoyment of his rights. Beyond this, it should not meddle with the affairs of men. There is provision and necessity for growth and existence of society in our very constitution. It seems to be imagined by many that human nature must be fostered, fondled or stimulated to exertion by legislative interposition, while a thousand clamorous desires reign in the human breast; while man shall seek his highest happiness; while he shall delight in advancement and conquest; while industry will add to his comfort, and indolence prove the inevitable source of misery and death; no mode of exertion, no means of production, no road to improvement, will be left untried.

... Democracy must finally reign. There is in man an eternal principle of progress, which no power on earth may resist. Every custom, law, science or religion, which obstructs its course, will fall as leaves before the wind. The despotism of force, the absolutism of religion, the feudalism of wealth. It has laid on the crimson field, while the principle, alive, unwounded, vigorous is still battling against nobility and privileged with unrelaxing strength. It is contending for the extinction of tyranny, for the abolition of prerogative, for the reform of abuse, for the amelioration of government, for the destruction of monopoly, for the establishment of justice, the elevation of the masses, the progress of humanity and for the dignity and worth of the individual.

Such a tolerable democratic society is neither authored nor controlled. It has come to stay, it is limitless, found in the East, in the North, South and indeed West; is indeed a global phenomenon.

John L. O’Sullivan quoted from “Globalization of Democracy: A Western Agenda”. A thesis by Chibuike Mgbeahuruike

This Month’s Politricks:

Will violence mar 2007 election?

It is the year before 2007 and the guns, machetes and knives and even bombs are beginning to attract the buying power of the political gladiators and the powerful men who have the monopoly of violence and know how to use them for their personal quest. Politicians are already getting their thugs in place for the eventual showdown and only the strong hearted will venture to challenge opponents. In most cases, a visit by party thugs at night will check any ‘blockage’ to an aspirant’s ambition. In this battle no life is too precious and there is no stopping the aggressive office seeker. For most politicians and aspirants, next year is a do or die affair and the office being vied for is the ultimate prize. So apart from visit to marabouts and the prayer houses, the tell tale signs of political violence are here already: assassinations kidnapping, burning of opponent campaign offices, outright terror, fetish sacrifices and all sort of shenanigans associated with the

quest for power in third world countries.

According to a former minister of information, there is nothing new in the whole situation. He noted that the stage has been set for political killings. "This is an embarrassing reminder of what lies in wait as we approach 2007 he said. Blaming the spate of political killing on politicians' perception of power seeking as a full time business, he said effort must be made to rid public office of all the gains associated to it. He argued that in the past, politics was not seen as the means of amassing wealth and that lawmaking was not a full time job. The result of this is that politicians have become desperate to grab power at all cost, as their political cloth is no longer of the same size as the economic cost.

This past seven years has been one of heaven on earth for politicians. While businesses were suffering, politicians had a field day stealing public money. The attempt to check the drift by the EFCC was too late. They have made all the money they will need. This is how it works. The new office seekers believe that it is war and they are ready

Already political groups are whetting their weapons. In Lagos state, easily said to be the hot bed of southwest politics, aspirants were called together and admonished to be peaceful as they go about politicking. The next day Funsho Williams who was also at the meeting was killed. Many people believed that his political opponent was responsible. A trend has emerged with Williams's death, which has repeated itself in Ekiti state with the killing of an aspirant under the auspices of the PDP, Dr. Ayodeji Daramola on Monday, August 14, 2006 at his country home in Ijan-Ekiti by unknown assassins.

The only solace is that the police in conjunction with the God Almighty will work round the clock to save the politicians from each other.
Daily Trust, Monday, August 31, 2006

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Seychelles president re-elected

The Seychelles president has won a new five-year term as leader of the Indian Ocean archipelago after seeing off a strong challenge from an activist priest. The electoral commissioner announced early on Monday, July 31, 2006, that James Michel had come out ahead in the poll taking 53.7% of the votes while Ramkalawan, an Anglican cleric who was making his fourth run for presidency took 45.7% of the votes, while Philippe Boule, an independent candidate, came in a distant third with 0.56%. Michel will be inaugurated on Tuesday, August 1, 2006.

[Daily Trust, Tuesday, August 01, 2006 pg17](#)

Sao Tome's president wins re-election

Voters in the tiny Atlantic archipelago of Sao Tome and Principe have re-elected President Fradique de Menezes for a second five-year term, during which the nation off Africa's west coast hopes to strike oil. De Menezes won more than 60% of votes in Sunday's, July 30, 2006 polls, seeing off a challenge from Patrice Trovoada, the son of a former president, who won just over 38% of votes while a third candidate Nilo Guimaraes, won less than 1% of votes, electoral commission head Jose Carlos Barreiro said.

[Daily Trust, Tuesday, August 1, 2006 pg17](#)

Burundi uncovers coup plot

The Burundi government said on Wednesday, July 2, 2006 that it has strong evidence that former high-ranking politicians and a dissident rebel leader arrested lately planned to assassinate President Pierre Nkurunziza and overthrow the government. Government spokesman Karenga Ramadhani said a coup had been planned for June 30 and 15 people, including military personnel, were involved. It is said that Alain Mugabarabona, dissident of the Hutu rebel Forces for National Liberation (FNL) and leader of a small Hutu party, was the mastermind of the plan.

The Burundi police have so far arrested Mugabarabona, along with his brother-in-law and a friend, former vice president Alphonse Marie Kadege and two other former officials. Damien Ndarisigaranye, an army colonel, in connection with the alleged coup plot.

Meanwhile, the eight people suspected of attempted coup plot in Burundi have been jailed while investigation continues an official of the government has said.

[Daily Trust, Thursday, August 03, 2006 pg17](#)

Sierra Leone sets 2007 poll date

Sierra Leone, has announced elections for July 2007, the first since United Nations peacekeepers left in 2005. President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah appealed to Sierra Leoneans to see the elections “not as warfare between warlords but as a friendly contest”. The poll will be a test of whether Sierra Leone is on the road to full recovery from the brutal 10-year civil war, which ended in 2002. President Kabbah will not be eligible for re-election. The president named July 28, 2006 as a demonstration of his government’s commitment to good governance and democracy.

[The Guardian, Saturday, August 5, 2006](#)

Zambian opposition urge president to quit

Zambia’s divided opposition urged president Levy Mwanawasa to step down before elections in September 28, 2006 saying a minor stroke in April had left him too sick to run the southern African country. Mwanawasa pulled a political surprise late July, by setting a September 28 election date while opposition leaders were still struggling to agree on a single candidate. Mwanawasa will stand for a final five-year term in the polls, which come two months earlier than most analysts had expected.

[Daily Trust, Thursday, August 3, 2006](#)

Death Toll Rises in Congo Clash

The Democratic Republic of Congo says 23 people including police, died in clashes after first round of election results were announced. President Joseph Kabila fell short of 50% of the vote, prompting a run-off. Jean-Pierre Bemba, his main rival came second with 20%. Gun battles erupted recently between the rivals’ supporters in Kinshasa.

An uneasy calm returned after the two signed a deal to withdraw their force from the city center. The toll at the moment indicates 23 deaths and 43 persons injured during the events, Interior Minister Theophile Mbemba Fundu said.

[The Guardian, Saturday, August 26, 2006 pg7](#)

FOR THE RECORDS

CIVIL SOCIETY'S PROPOSAL FOR ALLIANCE FOR CREDIBLE ELECTION IN NIGERIA (ACE NIGERIA)

Background

Elections are such a routine and common event around the world that it is easy to overlook their significance for democratic development and national stability (Lewis, 2005). When elections are competitive they provide citizens with political choice. The ability of voters to weigh parties, ideas, and candidates, and to select among them, is an integral part of the democratic process. When average citizens feel that their engagement in elections makes a difference, they are much more likely to value the democratic system. Therefore, elections are important rituals of democracy that can regularly confirm and reinforce the legitimacy of the system.

However, when elections are fundamentally flawed, most of these benefits turn into deficits and threats to the survival of democracy. When the citizens face repeated occurrence of election rigging, political violence, and disorderly administration of elections, their fundamental trust in the institutions and processes of electoral rule may rapidly dissipate. The most obvious liability of troubled elections is that political choices are foreclosed. As a consequence, many voters come to believe that their political will is being unjustly denied. Without genuine political competition, in which there is a realistic chance that power can change hands according to the will of the voters, the simplest premise of democracy is denied (Lewis, 2005).

Nigeria has had a long history of electoral fraud, which has contributed significantly to the obstruction of the citizens' aspirations for democracy (Jeja, 2005). Although rigging and other forms of electoral malpractices have been prevalent in successive elections in Nigeria, what happened in 2003 and especially 2004 local elections in some states surpassed them all and simply defied characterization. In the elections, the will of the voters was simply marginalized and results that had no bearing on voting patterns and preferences were announced and in some parts of the country people who did not contest elections were declared winners in very bizarre manners by electoral administrators. The consequence is an alarming spate of consistent decline in peoples' satisfaction with democracy in the country from an all time high of over voter 80 percent in year 2000, which made it the highest in Africa, to the current rating of less than 40 percent, which makes it the lowest by a wide margin among emerging democracies in the continent (Afrobarometer, 2002 and 2005).

Therefore, as Nigeria prepares for the all-important elections in 2007, there is an urgent need to restore peoples' confidence in the electoral process and democracy through the conduct of credible elections. Experiences from other jurisdictions has shown that this task is too important to be left alone to the good will of electoral administrators, traditional election monitors/observers, civic and voter education industry or to foreign consultants and 'experts' with fancy slides, catchy phrases, anecdotes and sound bites. It requires

galvanizing latent forces in civil society and business and forming broad based alliance which will involve such civic forces as labour unions, professional bodies, faith based organizations, media, non governmental human rights organizations, organized private sector and other community power centers too numerous to list here in order to ensure that the planned elections in 2007 are not only allowed to hold but are also credible. This paper proposes the establishment of Alliance for Credible Election in Nigeria (ACE Nigeria) to mobilize and coordinate civic efforts towards ensuring that elections that are credible hold in 2007.

Objectives of the Alliance

Proposed mission of ACE Nigeria are to:

- Ensure that general elections hold when they are legally scheduled
- Promote popular participation in elections
- Encourage issue-based campaign and orderly election
- Ensure that the votes count

Nature of the Alliance

ACE Nigeria shall be a non-partisan and not-for-profit loose alliance of organizations and individuals committed to ensuring the conduct of credible elections in Nigeria in 2007 and probably beyond. It shall serve as a coordinating body for articulation of civil society positions and actions on issues aimed at ensuring credible election in Nigeria. It shall not seek to dominate or replace existing networks and coalitions around elections but shall strive to synergize, mainstream and reinforce activities in these areas in different parts of the country for maximum impact.

Proposed Structure of the Alliance

ACE Nigeria shall have the following structures:

1. A Steering Committee with not more than 9 members, comprising a chairman, vice chairperson, General secretary, Publicity secretary and six other members and representatives of CSOs, labour, students, media etc.
2. A National Secretariat in Abuja headed by the General secretary, who shall be a fulltime staff and such other number of staff as are deemed necessary to facilitate the work of the alliance
3. The Steering Committee shall meet at least once in a quarter

Funding of the Alliance

Funding of the Alliance shall be obtained through support from members, public-spirited Nigerians, organized private sector and donor agencies.

Activities of the Alliance

The activities of the alliance shall included but not limited to the following

1. Advocacy and endorsement visits to stakeholders and corporate bodies
2. Sponsorship of impact programmes on radio and television
3. Syndication of articles on credible elections by leading columnists of major national newspapers in Nigeria
4. Organization of rallies and town hall meetings in different parts of Nigeria
5. Press conferences, opinion articles and paid adverts in Newspapers
6. Conduct of public opinion polls
7. Organization of presidential/gubernatorial debates
8. Production of posters, bill boards, fliers, stickers, T-shirts and faze caps on credible elections and their distribution in all states of Nigeria
9. Production of newsletters and their insertions in Newspapers

OPINION

CIVILIAN-TO-CIVILIAN HANDOVER: WHY IT MUST COME TO PASS IN 2007?

Events of the last few months in Nigeria have made it imperative for one to ask questions as negative as portraying 2007 election and the resultant climax, which is a peaceful handover same year as uncertain. However, as a Nigerian, an optimist and a transition monitor for that matter, I have no doubt in my mind that there will certainly be a hitch-free hand over not only to another government, but one that is credible and generally acceptable to majority of Nigerians.

While we are all wishing that this expectation will come to pass with ceaseless prayer, since only God knows (already) what 2007 will bring, it is also important that we Nigerians should stand by what we believe in and what binds us together, irrespective of widespread killings, intimidation and threats of hail and brimstone that have again characterized the democratic space.

It is sad that so far Nigeria is yet to understand or experience what it means to hand over from one civilian government to another. We have had a number of military to military takeovers by way of military Porsche though. We have also had military to civilian handover. For a long while in Nigeria it was one military takeover or another. I believe this reality has been a minus in the psyche and performance of our present civilian government, which not only has a military background and mindset, but also was further bequeathed with militarized constitution (Decree) and action plan. It will require the grace of God therefore for such a beneficiary to throw away overnight prevailing militarized culture and orientation and put on the toga of Democratic culture that will impress all and sundry. The result of all that are made manifest in the myriads of strange occurrences you see and hear today in the polity in the form of killings, near assassination, kidnapping and violent threats.

I am again strongly persuaded that those who perpetrate violence in the system have spent time to understand the Nigerian psyche as is evident in 'kill one or two and the rest will definitely run away'. This factor is closely related to another belief that Nigerians value their lives more than anything else, that you can violate them, bruise them, ridicule them, slap them left right and centre and go away with it, provided you spare their life for them. We strongly believe in Bob Marley's maxim, which says 'he who fights and run away,

lives to fight another day'. But pray, we run away too often without mustering the courage to revisit the fight again. I know Nigeria have got real brave men and women who can say never again to those actual cowards who go the extra length of snuffing life out of their opponents, (perceived or imagined), believing albeit, wrongly, that they have eliminated or minimized the competitive challenges before them.

We may not indulge in physical combats now to stop these culprits and mischief-makers who only actually bankroll the killings, leaving the execution to their youthful hangers-on and contractors who have also been trained in the art of killing. We can however identify the bad and brutal politicians among us (Governors and their aides) who hide under the cover of providing democratic dividends to the people, to inflict damage on same people, by other means.

I strongly believe that it is not out of place raising eyebrows against those governors who have intentions of remaining in office after 2007. We know an average Nigerian politician or leader would always want to perpetuate himself in office whatever it takes. They therefore abhor healthy competition, especially when the opponents' parade high profile track records that constitutes a threat to the incumbent. Perhaps only a few of our present crop of Governors would tolerate their opponents growing in strength and popularity among the people, not when they are still in office or aspiring to remain in power. If you ask me, I'll put it to all Nigerians that the scenario is the cause of all the senseless shedding of blood we have witnessed not only in the present dispensation, but since democracy took root in Nigeria.

We know that democracy is not an easy process; almost always it takes the blood of real democrats to sanitize the system that will ultimately usher in the cherished democratic environment. In a speech to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1795, quoted in the Public Affairs Section Newsletter 'Crossroads' of the American Embassy, Fisher Ames, a federalist politician said of democracy, *"A monarchy is like a merchantman, you get on board and ride the wind and tide in safety and elation but, by and by, you strike a reef and go down. But democracy is like a raft, you never sink, but "your feet are always in the water"*.

Nigeria's democracy like any other can be likened to a journey worth taking though, but very tortuous, rough and rarely smooth with bumps and even a few treacherous turns. But it has become imperative that we must remain focused to cross the rubicon despite the untold distractions we now see in the form of bloodletting. No matter who is killing and who is being killed, Nigerians believe and are strongly agreeable on the followings;

That election in 2007 must hold as planned

That change in 2007 is not negotiable.

That Nigerians are deeply interested in who assumes the face of that change in 2007

That no questionable character no matter how wealthy or highly placed will lead Nigerians against their wish.

That Nigerians know and can recognize a credible politician when they see one and he/she will be acceptable to Nigerians irrespective of his extraction.

Through the most legitimate means available to Nigerians, which is the 2007 election, Nigerians will dismantle any and every scandalous and suicidal structures mounted by the killers and their ilk. The 2007 election offers the Nigerian electorate another ample opportunity of express themselves through the ballots be it electronic or manual.

We believe that the four years the incumbents have remained in power is enough for the electorate to have appraised their performances, and then that appraisal normally would provide the necessary yardsticks that would earn the incumbent another renewed mandate or a vote of no confidence that would kick him out and usher in another.

Be that as it may, Nigerians expect nothing but a smooth transition from Obasanjo's civilian administration to another incoming civilian administration. We look forward therefore to a smooth electoral process, we also look forward to a rapidly born again INEC between now and 2007 when they would effectively mount their umpire saddle and deliver Nigeria of a brand new (baby) president. I can hardly fault but agree with Professor Iwu's continued pledges and commitments to a very credible and acceptable election conduct in 2007. He has shouted it from the mountaintops that he cannot be any body's student on how or how not to conduct a credible election. The whole truth is that he is adequately schooled in the art of credible elections even though he has not conducted one before, but he has promised that much. What he now needs is prayers and definitely not prophetic pessimism.

The final assurance of a credible election in 2007 is the readiness of the security operatives to be democracy-friendly. For those who don't understand, the security agents can be democracy-friendly when they protect the people and their votes instead of snatching ballot boxes, when they prevent rather than foment trouble, when they make peace rather than coerce officials. With the (unholy) wedlock between the Police and the Civil Defense Corps, it is expected that the sanity, which the later have radiated in the discharge of their duties, would spillover the former, in bringing about a smooth and violent-free elections in 2007.

Without being unnecessarily euphoric, I see a colorful handover ceremony where OBJ is handing over the reins of power to a neatly suited young man in his late forties, beaming with confident smiles to a cheering and hopeful crowd of Nigerians.

Good luck Nigerians.
Long live Nigeria.

Agathus Chibuikwe Mgbeahuruikwe
TMG

NEWS TITBITS

Alliance for Credible Elections in Nigeria (ACE Nigeria) debuts

Worried about the spate of ugly signals as evidenced in assassination and violent threats, coupled with the experience of 2003 elections which was believed to be a sham, civil society groups and other non- state actors gathered in Abuja to strategize towards the conduct of credible elections in 2007.

The climax of the meeting, which deliberated on a whole lot of election issues, was the formation of "A platform for action" known as Alliance for Credible Elections in Nigeria (ACE Nigeria).

The broad objectives of the alliance are to among others to;

- Ensure that general elections hold when they are legally scheduled
- Promote popular participation in the elections
- Encourage issue based campaign and orderly elections
- Ensure that the votes count in election
- Promote fair hearing during judicial process for resolving election disputes

The alliance also constituted steering committee structures constituting of a broad spectrum of representatives, a Chairman, a general secretary that would head the secretariat as well as a treasurer.

PHOTO SPEAK

ADD PICTURES HERE