

10th - 11th January 2007 Major Headlines

➤ INEC

INEC can't screen candidates

The House of Representatives has said that the screening of candidates for the scheduled April elections by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was unconstitutional, hence illegal as it lacks the power to do so. But the commission says it would go ahead with its plans to screen all the candidates for the 2007 poll. This is a reaction to an announcement made by INEC recently, that it would commence verification of the particulars of candidates based on Sections 65, 106, 131, and 177 as well as grounds for disqualification as contained in sections 66, 107, 137 and 182 of the 1999 Constitution.

AC shuns INEC verification

The Action Congress has directed all its nominated candidates for the 2007 election not to give a second thought to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) verification exercise as it is unconstitutional and illegal, while adding that the party has gone to court to challenge the exercise. The party's National Publicity Director, Lai Mohammed said the directive is an attempt to disqualify Vice President Atiku Abubakar who is the party's Presidential Flag bearer.

EU Observers arrives Nigeria

The European Union election observer have arrived the country. Mr. Denis Thieulin in a statement said it is an exploratory mission for the EU election Observation Mission (EOM) to Nigeria for the 2007 polls. He added that as part of its commitment and support to Nigeria's democratic process, the EU is planning to send an Election Observation Mission to Nigeria for the April polls. Meanwhile, the team already in Nigeria is to carry out a exploratory mission which is essentially a fact finding operation designed to make recommendations to the EU as to the advisability, usefulness and feasibility of deploying an EU EOM to Nigeria.

The statement also said the team is composed of four staff of the European Commission from Headquarter in Brussels, tow representatives of EU member states and three technical experts recruited by the commission for the purpose of the mission. The mission will last for two weeks.

800,000 voters registered in Sokoto

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Sokoto state says it has so far registered over 800,000 voters. According to the Administrative Secretary, Alhaji Isama'ila Kaura. He added that more machines have been provided for the exercise as the commission now has 853 Direct Data Capture Machines (DDC) to work with across the state. He assured that all eligible voters in the state would register before the end of the exercise.

Court to decide on Atiku seat

The Presidency says it is awaiting the ruling of the Court of Appeal on the interpretation of the Constitution on the office of Vice President Atiku Abubakar, which the People Democratic Party (PDP) has asked President Obasanjo to declare vacant. This is contrary to a report that the President Olusegun Obasanjo has declared the Vice President's seat vacant. The president says the seat of the Vice President remain intact until the Court of Appeal says otherwise. The president also distanced itself from an earlier declaration of the office of the Vice President as vacant.

Atiku not disqualified

Contrary to reports that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has finalized plans to disqualify Vice President Atiku Abubakar from contesting this year's presidential elections, the Commission is yet to even verify the names of candidates submitted to it says the Prof. Maurice Iwu recently. He however assured that INEC would not be intimidated in its determination to screen candidates for the April polls. Adding that the organization was poised to give Nigerians credible and acceptable elections come April 2007.

Fresh election fails in Oyo

The plot to conduct fresh elections into the Oyo state House of Assembly by the Independent National Electoral (INEC) and the 18 lawmakers loyal to Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu failed as an Ibadan High Court presided over by Justice Moshood Abass recently declared the Pro-Ladoja lawmakers as authentic members of the Assembly. The judgment also ordered Maroof Atiola and Taiwo Oluyemi of the Adedibu faction to stop parading themselves as the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Oyo state House of Assembly, while reinstating Adeleke and Dauda as Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

Nigerians are 140,033,542

The National Council of state met recently and unanimously accepted the provisional result of the 2006 census that was handed over the Federal Executive Council (FEC) in December 2006 by the National Population Commission (NPC). According to the census figure, Nigerians are 140,033,542 in population; the current figure reveals that there are more males than females in Nigeria. According to the NPC, Nigeria's population as at March 2006 stood at 140,033,542, comprising 71,709,859 males and 68,293,683 females. Kano state is the most populous having a population of 9,383,682 followed by Lagos state with 9,013,534, while Abuja has the lowest with a population of 1,405,201. The result will be forwarded to the National Assembly for onward passage into law.

Atiku's Arrest

The Federal Government recently declared that Vice President Atiku Abubakar still enjoys immunity from arrest and prosecution. The government also said that Atiku's seat is intact and that the Presidency has not declared the seat vacant nor notified the National Assembly and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) that it would send a nominee to replace him as vice president. These were contained in a counter affidavit filed by the Attorney General of the Federal and Minister of Justice, Chief Bayo Ojo, to a suit filed by Atiku at the Court of Appeal, Abuja.

Atiku seeks clearance from INEC

Inspite of directives given by the leadership of the Action Congress to all its aspirants to ignore the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) directive on verification of particulars of candidates exercise by the electoral commission, Vice President Atiku Abubakar has written the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), seeking clearance to contest the April 21 presidential election on the platform of the Action Congress (AC). This was contained in a letter endorsed by 12 Senior Advocates of Nigeria (SAN) and written on the letter headed paper of Rickey Tarfa and Co., stating that his indictment by the Federal Government Administrative Panel of Enquiry based on the report of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), was a nullity.

INEC registers 30 million voters

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) says it has registered thirty million voters (30m) out of the sixty million (60m) voters it targeted to register before the end of the exercise. Meanwhile, INEC's director of publicity, Mr. Segun Adeogun expressed confidence that the remaining 30 million will be registered within the remaining three weeks left for the exercise. However, fears are being expressed in some quarters especially political parties and civil society organizations regarding the possibility of completing the ongoing validation of voters register.

PDP may replace candidates

Information has it that the peoples Democratic Party (PDP) may replace some of its candidates seeking elective positions before the next general elections says the party's National Director of Publicity of the party, Mr. John Odey. He said some candidates have security reports against them while others have pending cases in court which he say the party cannot wish away without verification. He added that the party must verify all allegations of wrong doings against all candidates, as the party would not want to field wrong candidates because oppositions may have legal grounds to throw the candidates out which he added that the PDP would not want.

➤ **Governance**

Yar'Adua says the constitution comes first

The presidential flag bearer of the People Democratic Party (PDP), Governor Umaru Musa Yar'Adua says his government will be guided by the nation's Constitution if elected president and not any agreement signed with the PDP. He made this known while answering questions at a world press conference recently in Abuja. It would be recall that the PDP at a policy retreat in Abuja requested all candidates contesting under its platform to sign an article of agreement with the party to ensure allegiance after the elections.

INEC registers 1m voters in Kaduna

The Independent National Electoral Commission says it has registered more than one million people in Kaduna state and 857,892 in Osun state. The INEC Commissioner in Kaduna state, Alhaji Aliyu Marafa, said the commission achieved this speed in the recently. He said the commission took delivery of 1,277 required registration machines and attributed the success recorded to the quick deployment of the machines. He added that people's attitude toward to exercise has changed in recent times as they were coming out en masse to register.

Candidates pictures will appear on ballot papers

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has reinstated that candidates contesting this year's elections will have their pictures printed on the ballot papers. The Chairman of the Commission reemphasized this recently while receiving the European Union (EU) delegates at his office in Abuja. He said there was need to print pictures of all the candidates on the ballot paper for people to identify candidates of their choice to avoid the mistake of the past where people vote for candidates who are not their choice.

AC and ANPP candidates to submit to INEC verifications

The All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) has ordered its candidates to submit themselves for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for verification. The directives came at a height of criticism by some political

stakeholders in the country over the recent INEC's verification of candidates who want to contest this year's general election.

The Action Congress (AC) has in a recent development reversed its directives to party candidates in this general election not appear before INEC's verification committee. The Chairman of the party, Chief Bisi Akande who said he was not in the country when the directives were given has asked all candidates contesting under the party for the elections to make themselves available to the INEC verification committee.

INEC uses current constituencies for April polls

Figures from the recently released 2006 census will have no bearing in the configuration of federal constituencies for the 2007 general elections as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) would conduct the polls based on the existing federal constituencies says Prof. Maurice Iwu, Chairman of the Commission. On the delineation of constituencies, which INEC is constitutionally empowered to carry out following the census result, Iwu said the time between now and April was too short to complete all the process. He however added that the 2006 census would be used for the 2011 poll.

INEC calls for public holiday

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has called on all tiers of government to grant workers free hours and days from work to enable them register. The commission said this recently in Abuja through its National Commissioner in charge of Political Party Monitoring, Dr. Ishmeal Igbani, who said that such gesture would motivate workers to register. He said that the commission has set out January 15 to January 30 as "Special Voter Registration" period throughout the country. He also urged private sector employers to also grant their workers time within the period to enable them participate in the exercise. He also called on CSOs, religious groups, NGOs and other stakeholders to assist in mobilizing people to get registered during the final phase of the exercise.

No change in election date says INEC

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has dismissed as "tissues of ices," reports that the forthcoming general election slated for April, may be shifted to August. The commission also seized the opportunity to dispelled rumors that it had fixed January 27 for bye-election for the controversial 12 seats of Oyo State House of Assembly declared vacant, a fortnight ago by the electoral body.

The Commission while speaking through its Director of Public Affairs, Pastor Segue Aerogun described as unfortunate, reports on the papers recently saying that plans were on to extend the general election date from April to August. While citing the slow pace of the on-going voters registration and loopholes in the 2006 Electoral Act as some of the reasons for the postponement. The commission however said they are not aware of any plans to shift the date of the general election.

Screening: Nnamani warns INEC

The Senate President, Sen. Ken Nnamani has cautioned Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), against mass disqualification of candidates who refused to be screened by the commission. INEC recently threatened to disqualify candidates if they fail to appear at its screening / verification exercise, a threat rebuffed by some political parties. Such disputes between INEC and the political parties constitute a danger to democracy; Nnamani said this while addressing Senators at the beginning of the second leg of the 2006/2007 legislative sessions. He warned that INEC should not misconstrue its constitutional rules as liberty to cause confusion in the national polity while adding that only the judiciary and the National Assembly can decide on this disputes.

Fresh plot to impeach OBJ

Hon Bashir Nadabo recently made an attempt to revisit the botched impeachment plot against President Olusegun Obasanjo but the attempt suffered a major setback in the House of Representatives as Speaker Aminu Masari prevented the motion from being discussed by federal lawmakers. Hon Nadabo, had in a motion under legislators' privilege, urged the House to continue the impeachment proceeding against the President which was suspended early last year and revisited late last year.

Meanwhile, a committee headed by House Leader Hon Abdul Ningi was constituted during a closed-door session of the legislature to verify signatories as well as compile all constitutional breaches against the president. While arguing his motion, Hon Nadabo insisted that the Ningi-led panel must formally brief the lawmakers on its work adding that since more members are itching to join in the impeachment exercise there is need for an update on the matter. He also cited recent act by the president in declaring vacant the seat of the Vice President Atiku Abubakar but before Nadabo could conclude his submission, Hon. Ita Enang challenged him arguing that the notion was flawed and that impeachment was not prerogative while asking if Nadabo had anything to gain or lose in the impeachment. The motion was dropped.

Belgore retires, urges respect for constitution

After 42 years of outstanding service to the nation's judiciary, Justice Salihu Modibbo Alfa Belgore finally retired as the country's ninth indigenous Chief Justice of Nigeria. In his valedictory speech, Belgore called on all tiers of government in the country to respect the constitution.

At a valedictory session held at the Supreme Court complex which was witnessed by the former Vice President, Dr Alex Ekwueme, Governor of Kwara State, Dr Bukola Saraki, the Emir of Ilorin, Alhaji Ibrahim Sulu Gambari, Esama of Benin, Chief Gabriel Igbinedion, among other dignitaries, Justice Belgore indeed demonstrated that judges are human after all as he broke down in tears while narrating the story of his life at the session.

Meanwhile, the Senate is currently considering the appointment of Justice Idris Legbo Kutigi as the 10th indigenous Chief Justice of Nigeria following a memorandum forwarded to it by President Obasanjo in line with Section 231 of the 1999 Constitution.

Senate returns census report to Obasanjo

While citing non-compliance with the constitutional procedure, the Senate recently resolved to return the report of the provisional result of the 2006 Census to the President to allow him submit it to the Upper House through the proper channel in line with section 213 (3) and (4) of the 1999 Constitution. Which states thus

(3) "Where the Council of State advises the President to accept the report, the President shall accept the same and shall then lay the report on the table of each House of the National Assembly;

(4) "Where the President accepts such report and has laid it on the table of each House of the National Assembly, he shall publish it in the official gazette of the government of the federation for public information."

President Olusegun Obasanjo had sent the report with a covering letter dated January 10, 2007 to the Senate through the Senate President, Ken Nnamani. The Senators moved a motion to return the letter while requesting that the proper channel be followed

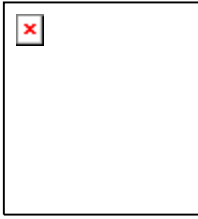
Lebanese eyes Senate

Engr. Abbas Hajaig a Lebanese by birth and a Nigerian by naturalization from Jigawa State wants to be a senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In fact, he is the PDP senatorial candidate for Jigawa Central Senatorial District. At the PDP retreat for all its candidates, Abbas was the cynosure of all eyes: A Lebanese-Nigerian running for the nation's Upper Legislative House. If Abbas clinches the prestigious seat, he will certainly be making history as the first immigrant Nigerian to be elected senator.

If Abbass eventually wins, Nigeria would be joining the enviable rank of advanced democracies, including the United States of America, which has produced immigrant leaders in all spheres of life including the governorship. For instance, Arnold Schwarzenegger, the present governor of California, the largest state in America, is an immigrant from Austria, Senator Barack Obama of Illinois is also an immigrant from Kenya, Carlos Saul Menem who ruled Argentina from 1989 to 1999 is the son of an Arab immigrant from Syria.

Born September 25, 1961 in Nigeria, Abbas attended BirninKudu Central Primary School, 1967-1972; Government Secondary School, (Now Government College) BirninKudu 1972-1977; Kaduna Polytechnic 1977-1980; Kaduna Polytechnic 1980-1982 (HND). He eventually went for his NYSC programme in Calabar, Cross River State in 1982/1983. He also holds computer certificate of the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi. Abbas, speaks flawless Hausa and says he has no other country but Nigeria.

Group petitions EFCC, PDP over candidate



Concerned Deltans for Progress (CDP) has called on the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to investigate the circumstances that led to the emergence of Princess Pat Ajudua as the Oshimili North Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) candidate for the forthcoming Delta State House of Assembly elections. The group argued that no primary election was held before the candidate emerged. In a petition signed by the President, Patrick Okafor and Secretary, David Nwaezeagu, the group claimed that Pat Ajudua's husband was standing trial for a criminal offence. The group is also asking government to investigate allegations of bribery against PDP officials.

Govt seeks court's nod to press graft charges against Atiku

A Federal High Court in Abuja has fixed February 9, 2007, to decide whether or not to grant the Federal Government permission to pose 37 questions to Vice President Atiku Abubakar, in relation to his alleged impropriety and abuse of office.

The trial judge, Abimbola Ogie, fixed the date after counsel to the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice Duro Adeyele (SAN), for the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Mr. Rotimi Jacobs and the Vice President's lawyer, Chief Adeniyi Akintola (SAN) had adopted their written addresses on the application filed by government and the EFCC. The interlocutory application arose from an action brought by Abubakar, seeking to nullify the reports of the EFCC and the administrative panel of inquiry, headed by the Minister of Justice, Chief Bayo Ojo (SAN) the two reports indicted Abubakar for abuse of office.

Kutigi is Acting CJN

• **Senate demands security report, full CV**

The Senate has deferred the screening of the Acting Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Justice Idris Legbo Kutigi, while citing absence of security report and clearance certificate by the Code of Conduct Bureau on assets

declaration in the documentation submitted to it by the Executive as reasons.

Although Kutigi he was sworn in recently as the Acting CJN by President Olusegun Obasanjo to replace Justice Alfa Belgore, however, he will continue to act in that capacity until he is screened by the Senate. He would then be formally sworn in as the substantive CJN. The Senate also said there was need for Justice Kutigi to update his Curriculum Vitae, as the one submitted to the Senate by the Executive arm on his behalf was scanty.

Presidency Accuses Atiku of Ridiculing Nigeria Abroad

The Presidency recently drew the attention of Nigerians to a letter purportedly written by Vice President Atiku Abubakar to the United States Senate Caucus in which he allegedly "ridiculed the entire country and maligned President Olusegun Obasanjo". Though Atiku has denied the existence of such letter but according to the Presidency, the Vice President, had in the letter, apart from making wild allegations against President Obasanjo, went a step further by what it described as going "to the ridiculous", but dangerous extent of creating the impression that Nigeria's democracy is in danger". While Speaking on behalf of the Presidency, the Special Assistant to the President on Public Affairs, Mallam Uba Sani has accused the vice president of taking his campaign of calumny against the President and the country too far, by even exporting it outside the shores of the country.

➤ Across Africa

Court sentenced Mengistu to life in jail

Exiled former Ethiopian ruler Mengistu Haile Mariam has been sentenced to life in prison on genocide charges. The former leader was found guilty last month after a 12-year trial. Mengistu is presently staying in Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe government said it would not extradite him, hence many fear he will never face justice.

It would be recalled that during Mengistu administration, a notorious campaign known as the Red Terror, thousands of suspected opponents were

rounded up and executed and their body tossed on the streets, before a more powerful force in Ethiopia overthrew him.

Somalia's parliament sacks speaker

Somalia's transitional parliament has voted overwhelmingly to sack its speaker, Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan. He opposed Ethiopia's intervention and fell out with both the interim president and the prime minister. He also called for peace talks with the Islamists who lost control of southern Somalia, including the capital, Mogadishu, in December. The speaker is currently in Europe where he criticised the recent imposition of martial law in Somalia. The vote at the parliament in Baidoa, was carried by 183 votes to nine. Several African countries have offered to contribute troops to a Somali peacekeeping force, the leaders of Ethiopia and Kenya have said. Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Ghedi named them as: Uganda; Nigeria; South Africa; Malawi and Senegal.

This Month's Politricks

As the game of wit begins

Welcome to the year 2007, a year every citizen of Nigeria and the world has been waiting for. The year that carries the placard of the Nigeria general election, which is why, the whole world's attention is on Nigeria. As the election draws nearer, there seems to be anxiety everywhere especially among the politicians, political parties, party's flag bearers and supporters alike as many of the have started strategizing on how to out do one another in their different campaign strategies and techniques to win the votes of the Nigerians electorates. As they strategize, let us examine the high art of the American political operators.

From 1948 to about 1990 in the United States of America, Murray Chotiner, Dick Tuck, Donald Segretti and Lee Atwater reigned in America as the fathers of the hard-hitting political campaign and dirty campaign tricks and pranks. They strategized and planned for every political campaign with devotion and professionalism.

Murray Chotiner was the man who managed Richard Nixon's successful campaign for the US Senate from California in 1950. Murray believes that when voters go to the polls, they vote against some candidates, and only incidentally vote for some candidates and that if you win an election, it is not because voters like you, but because they hate the gut of your opponent even more than they hate yours. He also believed that almost everything about a politician's life, service records, programmes and views are important to upset some particular voters, hence he says when you are campaigning, you should reveal as little as possible about yourself and instead reveal as many negative things as you can about your opponents so that many voters will vote against them and vote for you. Dirty games you will say.

Dick Tuck was the father of political pranks and he reigned between 1950 and 1970s. In 1950, he worked for Richard Nixon who was contesting the Senate seat with the liberal Democrat's candidate Helen Gahagan Douglas. Dick Tuck, who was Mrs. Douglas supporter, infiltrated the Nixon campaign and was hired as a campaign advance man in charge of Santa Barbara, California. When Nixon was coming to do a campaign rally in Santa Barbara, as a campaign advance man, Tuck hired an auditorium of 4000 seat auditorium, and deliberately did poor publicity so that only 40 people turned up at the rally. Then Dick then rose to introduce Nixon, and then delivered a rather boring speech that made half of the 40 people leave the venue before inviting Nixon to the stage and made him talk on an issue that most people found uninteresting. He worked based on where his interest was.

In 1956, Richard was President Dwight Eisenhower's vice president, and when they were running for the re-election, Dick Tuck went to San Francisco, where the Republican Party was holding its convention. He hired some huge garbage trucks to drive right past the convention centre while each of the truck spotted a huge banner saying "Dump Nixon". On another occasion, Nixon was doing a whistle stop campaign tour by train. At each small town, he will stand on the train's rear platform and address the crowd, at one of the towns Dick donned the uniform of a train conductor and signaled the driver to move and the train suddenly pulled out of the station while Nixon was still speaking.

In the 1970s, and 1980s, American Republicans tried to produce a Dick Tuck of their own, and in 1971 President Richard Nixon White House Staff put

together what they called the "Dick Tuck Capacity" under the command of Donald Segretti for Bob Haldeman, White House Chief of Staff, the campaign was a wide ranging operation which directed its energy at infiltrating the campaign organization of all Nixon's opponent. Its primary purpose was to disrupt and maneuvered the campaigns of opponents. Segretti succeeded in planting Trojan horses in many opponents' campaign organisations and began sabotaging campaign schedules, stealing speeches and memoranda, planting false rumors and hiring pickets to disorganize Democratic Party meetings, among other acts of sabotage.

1980 was the turn of Harvey Leroy Atwater, better known as Lee Atwater, who was the mentor of current top Republican strategist Karl Rove. One of his dirty tricks was during the 1988 American election, where he crafted the strategy to ensure that Republican candidate George Bush Sr. close the gap of 17 points with which he trailed his Democratic opponent, Michael Dukakis through the controversial Willie Horton television advertisement, engineered by Atwater through an independent organization where millions of Americans saw on their screens the bearded face of black felon Willie Horton, a convicted murderer who was serving a life sentence in a Massachusetts prison, but was released on furlough under a programme worked out by the liberal governor of the state, Dukakis, and while on furlough, Horton raped a woman. Though Bush campaign organization distanced itself from the advert, it nevertheless benefited from it.

It is certain the campaigners are now lurking around politicians to show the stuffs they are made of to outdo one another, however, they must know that Nigeria electorates will not be fooled by strategies as we have come along way.

We country Stori

My country people, una welcome inside year 2007 wey we don tanda dey wait for. How una Christmas and Sallah, some people say dem kill fish and pome for de Christmas and Sallah, de tin be say weda na fish or meat you kil protein don enter ya body so no wahala. My people seh una don ready for dis year

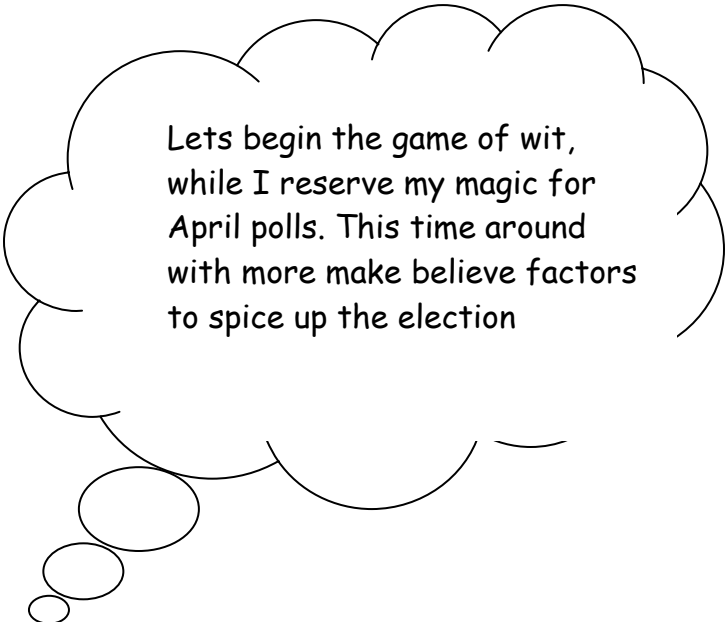
becos me I don tie my wrapper well well and I no say e go betta for dis we county. True talk be say na dis year we go elect the people wey go dey in charge for we obodo country for anoda four years. And I dey hear say some people talk say dem go run go dem village go stay inside hole becos dem dey fear say yawa go gas for we country. Na lie yawa no go gas, Yoruba say de person wey no chop gbee no go die gbee. So stay mak ya vote mata.

Oya mak we talk, my country people how una tak de see all de ting wey dey happen for dis we country, some people ask me say wetin mak dem choose oga yaradua and jonathan, wen people boku lik sand sand for we obodo country, de ting wey I tell dem be say dat one no be my problem now becos I no no why I go dey tak alabukun for another man headache, dem even say baba no wan go so him wan com use style put drum and stick for Rock City so dat im go com dey beat de drum. De tin be say no be my mouth una go hear say oga patapata dey wash toilet. But de true talk be say if we register and vote de correct people, even baba sef go no say karki no bi ponmo becos him and all dose people wey dey tief our money go know say we don wake up. Weda na small tief dem bring or na big tief, mak we look well well he go get one wey nefa get talent for tief tief wey we fit vote, so mak we shine we eye well. Na for here I go stop today February na anoda month for we talk but you fit send question to me or you fit contribute ya quarter to me to take mak dis we country beta. Na una sista 'Seyi dey say shine ya eye well well. (Send message to seyi4tmg@yahoo.com)

Oluwaseyi Ojo (TMG)

CARTON FOR JANUARY

Choice of candidate



Lets begin the game of wit,
while I reserve my magic for
April polls. This time around
with more make believe factors
to spice up the election



➤ OTHERS

Etiaba defies Assembly, swears in new Acting CJ

The rift between the executive and legislative arms of the Anambra state government appears to have taken a new turn as Governor Virgy Etiaba disregarded an early morning resolution of the House of Assembly urging her and the National Judicial Service Commission to retire Justice Umegbolu Nri-Ezedi "without further delay". Instead, of retiring Justice Nri-Ezedi, the governor swore him in as the Acting Chief Judge recently. Her action was in obedience to the advice of the immediate past Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Alfa Belgore urging her to appoint a new CJ following the suspension to the former CJ, Justice Jideofor Okoli who was indicted for his role in the impeachment of Mr. Peter Obi as governor late last year.

Violence at Oyo House as Hoodlums beat up Senator

Recently there was pandemonium at the Oyo State House of Assembly as people suspected to be supporters of some lawmakers went wild and beat Senator Lekan Balogun and his loyalists to a pulp. The hoodlums who had taken over the premises of the House of Assembly for about two weeks now recently, attacked Senator Balogun, a chieftain of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the state who had earlier convened a reconciliatory meeting.

The Senator it was gathered, was at the House of Assembly complex to meet with the 19 pro-impeachment lawmakers on how to reconcile the group with the pro-Ladoja group in the House when the supporters of the legislators pounced on him, beat him up and tore his clothes while one of his security men was given a machete cut on his left shoulder. Two of the buses that conveyed the senator and his entourage to the House were vandalized.

But for the policemen who rescued Senator Balogun from the hands of his attackers he might have been killed.

Oyo still a restless land

The declaration of the seats of the 12 members of the Oyo state House of Assembly loyal to embattled Governor Rasheed Ladoja as vacant by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has heightened tension in the state as the 12 lawmakers vowed to keep their seats against all odds. The commission said it would hold elections to fill the vacant post created by the 12 pro-Ladoja lawmakers. The election is slated for January, 2007 and the other 18 lawmakers loyal to the state political godfather, Chief Lamidi Adedibu have expressed their readiness for the election that will fill the purported vacant seats in the House while insisting that their colleagues were no longer members of the House as INEC has declared their seats vacant for allegedly abandoning their duties for over 12 months.

Court halts INEC's verification exercise

A Federal High Court in Abuja recently ordered a halt to the ongoing Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) verification exercise to screen political office seekers contesting under various political parties. An Interim order aimed at preserving the *res* was filed by Vice President Atiku Abubakar and the Action Congress (AC) through Chief Adeniyi SAN, challenging the powers of the commission to carry on with the verification exercise. The trial judge, Justice Babs Kuewumi, ordered the parties to maintain the status quo until the determination of the matter before it.

Registration machines found in Adedibu's house

No fewer than six Direct Data Capture Machine (DDC) meant for the ongoing voters' registration exercise in Oyo state were allegedly found in and retrieved from the Molete home of People Democratic Party (PDP) chieftain, Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu by officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) recently. Adedibu on his part has denied the allegations saying it's not true.

AC flays voters' registration exercise

The Action Congress (AC) said it had lost confidence in the ongoing voters' registration exercise, following the discovery of 8 Direct Data Machines in the private residences of PDP officials in Ogbomoso and Ibadan within a week. In a statement by the National Publicity Secretary, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, in Abuja Thursday, the party said only a thorough investigation by the police to determine the extent to which the ruling party's officials have hijacked the machines for illegal registration and the full prosecution of those implicated in the fraud could restore its confidence in the exercise. AC warned that Nigerians would resist any move by PDP officials, INEC or the police to sweep under the carpet the discovery of the registration fraud, which has now called into question the integrity of the forthcoming elections. The party said it was particularly miffed that the alleged suspected kingpins of the fraud, identified in newspaper reports as Saka Balogun and Lamidi Adedibu were yet to be arrested by the authorities. "We can only imagine what would have happened if those who took the machines home were members of the opposition," it said. AC said the discovery of the machines and the illegal registration of hundreds of voters had heightened its fears that the PDP could resort to massive rigging out of desperation to stay in power.