

JULY DEMOCRACY WATCH

2007: Voter Registration begins September

20 parties sue INEC

INEC says it will commence the revalidation of voters register in all the states of the Federation in September. Preparation for the exercise has reached an advanced stage, INEC Resident Electoral Commissioner in Enugu, Alhaji Abdul Bulama, in an interview.

He said that enlightenment campaign for the review of the voters register would soon commence in the state while the recruitment and training of ad hoc staff for the exercise would also be undertaken. He expressed the commission's preparedness to conduct "the best election in 2007, taking into cognizance our country's experiences in previous elections. To that end, Bulama said that many things have been put in place to achieve the objective.

Meanwhile, 20 political parties have sued the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the Attorney General of the Federation to court over disbursement of N420m yearly grant meant to assist political parties to discharge their functions on the basis of the seats they occupy in the National Assembly. The 20 parties include Citizens Popular Party (CPP), African Democratic Party (ADP), All Peoples Liberation Party (APLP), Better Nigeria Progressive Party (BNPP), Community Party of Nigeria (CPN), Justice Party (JP), Labour Party (LP), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Masses Movement of Nigeria (MMN) and National Action Council (NAC).

Others are National Conscience Party (NCP), New Democrats, New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP), Nigerian Advance Party (NAP), Nigeria Peoples Congress (NPC), Peoples Mandate Party, United Democratic Party, United Nigeria Peoples Party, Movement for Democracy and Justice and Democratic Alternative.

The aggrieved political parties are faulting the sharing ratio of 10 percent equality and 90 percent proportion of seats in the National Assembly. Daily Trust, Monday July 24, 2006 pg1/4, The Guardian, Monday, July 24, 2006 pg 3

Politicians raised alarm over voters register

The absence of a credible voters register is raising alarm among opposition politicians who have accused the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) of hidden agenda. However, the electoral body has allayed such fears saying the register will be out in time for the elections. The national chairman of the Movement for the Restoration and Defense of Democracy (MRDD), Alhaji Gambo Jimeta, said it was a breach of the tenets of democratic practice that the register is not yet available. Daily Trust, Monday, July 03, 2006 pg 1/3

EU, UK, Canada Raise 30m Euros for INEC

Receives 22 new party application

The European Union, United Kingdom and Canada have sourced 30 million euros to assist the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) organize a credible election in 2007. The chairman of the commission Prof. Maurice Iwu disclosed this in London on Saturday, July 15, 2006. He said the grant would be used for voter education on gender issues, electoral violence and voter behaviour towards elections.

He said his commission is opposed to the Option A4 because it is bogus and archaic, and would never lead to free and fair elections in Nigeria. He also stated that he is nobody's boy, he vowed to uphold his reputation as a scholar and protect the dignity of his current office by ensuring that the elections are transparent, free and fair.

However, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Director of Public Affairs, Mr. Segun Adeogun, has confirmed that 22 new applications have been received by the commission for registration as political parties to enable them participate at the forth-coming general election in 2007. Thisday, Sunday, July 16, 2006 pg 1/8 Thisday, Monday, July 17, 2006 pg 1/4

2007: INEC parleys with religious group

INEC will organize a stakeholder's parley with all religious group in the country this month to get its message across to the grassroots. The INEC Director of Voters Education, Alhaji Ibrahim Biu, to the New Agency of Nigeria (NAN) that the parley will come up in Kaduna and Asaba.

He explains that the country had been divided into Northern and Southern part, where religious groups are expected to send their representatives. He added that each of the 19 northern states would send in a Muslim and a Christian representative each to the northern parley, slated to hold in Kaduna.

Similarly, the southern meeting will hold in Asaba, with all the 17 southern states participating. Daily Trust, Monday, July 10, 2006 pg 8

WASU Task INEC on 2007 Polls

The West African Student Union (WASU) has urged the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to make the 2007 general elections historical challenge by ensuring the kind of rigging witnessed in the last elections does not repeat itself. This was made in a press statement signed by its president Daniel Onjeh, he said that 2007 election is an opportunity for Prof. Maurice Iwu to either emblazon his name in gold or vitiate the good name he has earned previously and relate himself to the trash bin of history, the choice is his. Thisday, Monday, July 10, 2006 pg 6

Lar faction moves to stop INEC from releasing funds to Ali

The Solomon Lar led National Interim Management Committee (NIMC) of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has filed a suit before an Abuja High Court seeking to prevent the

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) from releasing subvention to the Senator Ahmadu Ali leadership. The Lar faction is also seeking an interlocutory injunction to stop the Ali faction from organizing any congress or convention for the party in respect of the 2007 general elections.

In a latest development, an Abuja High Court has struck out a motion filed by Chief Solomon Lar-led faction of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), seeking to restrain the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) from releasing subventions to the Col. Ahmadu Ali national leadership of the party. The Guardian, Friday, July 07, 2006 back page/ Daily Trust, Tuesday, July 04, 2006 pg 40

2007: EFCC and ICPC Join Forces to checkmate corrupt aspirants

The EFCC has reiterated its stand to checkmate aspirants gunning for the 2007 general elections. Speaking at a two-day capacity building workshop for Civil Society Organization (CSOs) on “public Sector Expenditure Performance Evaluation,” EFCC Chairman Nuhu Ribadu said, “Nigerians with questionable character would be disallowed from seizing power in the country. Ribadu stated that the commission would only achieve its desired goals if it partners with the CSOs.

According to him, government should not carry out the campaign against corruption alone but collectively noting that the vision that connects the citizenry and the law enforcement agencies is to provide a secure environment.

Meanwhile, the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) has joined forces with the EFCC, to ensure that corrupt politicians are barred from contesting the 2007 elections. The Joint Special Task Force for the commissions would fast track investigation of some corrupt politicians whose petitions were pending before the ICPC and the EFCC. Daily Trust, Tuesday, July 25, 2006 pg 9/Thisday, Monday, July 24, 2006 pg 7

Southern leaders insist on Presidency

Southern Leaders Forum on Monday, July 3 said President Olusegun Obasanjo has a right to endorse his successor even as it reiterated its earlier position that the power must remain in the Southern part of Nigeria. The Secretary General of the group Chief Dejo Raimi who said the southern part of Nigeria was determined to make sure that power shifted to either the south-south or the south-east as a way of giving every part of the country sense of justice.

The southern leaders in a reaction to the much-trumpeted claim by their northern counterparts that the presidency of Nigeria should return to the north at the expiration of the Obasanjo’s administration. The northern politicians have on several occasion claimed that there was a meeting sometime before the 1999 election to the effect that there was an agreement that presidency would return to the north at the expiration of the Obasanjo administration, but the southern Leaders Forum has challenged the northern politicians to show proof of such a meeting. The Guardian, Tuesday, July 04, 2006 pg 1/2 ThisDay, Tuesday, July 04, 2006 pg 1/4

South-South Presidency demand legitimate – CAN

The General Secretary of the Christian Association of Nigeria, (CAN) Mr. Samuel Salifu, says the quest for the Presidency of Nigeria by the people of the South-south geo-political zone is legitimate. Mr. Salifu who was speaking at the inauguration of the South-south zone of CAN said the people of Nigeria should support the demand for a south-south president for equity, justice and fair play to prevail the polity. He said the zone has sustained the nation with its resources over the years and it is only natural that such contribution should be appreciated and encourage by Nigerians. Daily Trust, Monday, July 10, 2006 pg 5

Youth Coalition Wants South to Retain Presidency

A Coalition of youths from the 17 Southern States of Nigeria met on Monday, July 25, 2006 Ibadan, Oyo state insisting on the south producing the president come 2007. The Southern Youth Leaders Forum comprises the Igbo Youth Grand Alliance, South-south Youth Coalition and National Committee of Yoruba Youths. The youths admonished Nigerians, irrespective of their ethnics, religion and cultural persuasion to join hand with citizens of good conscience to support the position that the presidency should remain in the south. The Guardian, Tuesday, July 25, 2006 pg 3

2007: No credible South-south candidate-Forum

The Southern Forum, a political association set up to advocate and screen presidential aspirants from south-south, said it was yet to pick or identify any. The forum rose from its executive meeting on Friday maintaining that picking a candidate now will not only be prejudicial but dangerous to the zone. The chairman Ambassador Mathew Mbu who spoke on behalf of the forum said the its has adopted a timetable where the credible candidate to represent the south-south in the presidential race will be picked soon after the conventions of political parties. Daily Trust, Monday, July 10, 2006 pg 5

Nigeria's long list of curious killing

The list of suspected political killings in Nigeria, since the return of civil rule in 1999, is long, I mean very long. Unfortunately, in all the killings, neither the killers, nor their sponsors have been brought to justice.

The most prominent of them, has been the gruesome murder of the then Minister of Justice and Attorney-General of the Federation, Chief James Ajibola Ige in 2001, the National Vice Chairman (South-south) of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Chief Aminosoari Dikibo; a Chieftain of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), Chief Marshall Harry, a couple Barnabas and Abigail Igwe and the unresolved murder of Mr. Victor Nwankwo, the younger brother of a prominent politician.

In 2004, a prominent aviation activist and former president of the National Association of Pilots and Engineers, Jerry Agbeyegbe, was shot and killed, the chairman of the PDP in

Kwara State, Ahmad Pategi was killed in 2002, in the same year, Isyaku Mohammed, chairman of the then newly registered United Nigeria Peoples Party in Kano state was also killed.

A common feature of all these cases was that nothing was taken from the victims to indicate a motive of robbery. All the victims also had strong political views or affiliation to justify the tag of political assassination. The Guardian, Friday, July 28, 2006 pg 1/4

Governorship aspirant murdered in plateau

Barely three weeks after an unsuccessful murder attempt of a governorship aspirant of the Advanced Congress of Democrats (ACD), in plateau State, Arc. Pam Dung Gyang, another contender was found dead on Sunday, increasing the wave of political assassination. The aspirant Mr. Jesse C. Aruku, a former Chairman of Bassa Local Government Council's body was found in a bush path.

The state Police Commissioner, Mr. Richard Chime Confirmed the murder but failed to give details pending the outcome of investigation. This incident came up in less than a week after the Berom Democratic Forum (BDF) at a media briefing in Jos raised an alarm on the high wave of political assassination attempts in the state and tasked law enforcement agencies to curb the trend.

Meanwhile, the Plateau State police Command on Monday, July 03, 2006 said it has arrested three suspects, in connection with the assassination at the weekend of a chieftain of the Advanced Congress of Democrats (ACD), Mr. Jesse Yakubu Aruku. The Guardian, Monday, July 03,/ July, 04 2006 pg 3/7

And yet another killing: Funsho Williams is Stabbed to Death

Shock and disbelief enveloped Lagos State on Thursday, July 27, 2006 as Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) gubernatorial frontrunner in the 2007 race, Chief Funsho Williams, was murdered by yet to be identified assailants less than 24 hours after a peace meeting between the Assistant Inspector General of Police, zone 2, Mr. Adebayo Adeoye, and the party's governorship aspirant.

Four people have been arrested in connection with the murder, including two of his close confidants and two mobile police officers. A member of the family said the politician was killed in the early hour of the day, he was tied, stabbed and strangled by his killers inside his bedroom. Thisday, Friday, July 28, 2006 pg 1/4

Northern Youths Insist on South-south Presidency

Northern Youths have stated their resolve to force the 19 governors in the North to rescind their decision for power shift and support South-south President in 2007. this is the stand of Northern Democratic Coalition and Justice (NDJC) and the Socialist Front (SF), whose leaders, Mallam Umar Farouk and Mallam Shehu Sani respectively stated the position of the organization in Kaduna.

They vowed to present the position of the people of the North to the governors when they hold the next Northern Governors Meeting in August 2 and 3, 2006. The Mallam Sani-led Socialist Front cautioned the northern governors to rescind their decision for power shift to the North and support the South-south presidency in 2007 for the sake of national unity and development. The Guardian, Sunday, July 23, 2006 pg 1/4

2007: A New Plan for Tenure Elongation

A new plan to elongate the tenure of President Olusegun Obasanjo beyond 2007 is being arched by a former Governor of Anambra state, Dr. Chukwuemeka Ezeife. According to him, the possibility of holding a successful and credible election in 2007 is uncertain, hence the option open for Nigerians was an interim government to take over the three tier of government for a minimum period of two years.

Ezeife whose administration was aborted in 1993 when the late General Sani Abacha overthrew the Ernest Shonekan-led Interim National Government says though the idea may not be pleasing but that it was possible to work out.

Meanwhile, a call has gone to the Federal Government to take steps at denouncing those who are now agitating for the institution of an Interim National Government at the expiration of President Olusegun Obasanjo's tenure in 2007. this call was made by the Atiku Campaign Organization, it also urged the Federal Government to put in place modalities that would demonstrate its willingness to organize a free and fair elections early next year. Thisday, Thursday, July 27, 2006 pg 2/ Thisday, Wednesday, July 26, 2006 pg 5

Fire guts PDP's national secretariat

The National Secretariat of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Wadata Plaza Abuja was gutted by fire on Tuesday, July 4, 2006. The incident an eyewitness said began at about 1.30pm when a switchboard installed close to the staircase of the third floor of the building caught fire. The fire was said have spread to the office of the party's treasurer, Alhaji Ali Wurge, before the staff notice the fire. The Punch, Wednesday, July 05, 2006 pg 7.

Ojukwu: I will fight again

The chairman, Board of Trustees of the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), Dim Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, has threatened to fight again if anyone or party attempts to steal the party's votes during the general election in 2007. Ojukwu made the vow at the launch of APGA's new membership registration in Abuja, that election riggers would not reach their homes alive from the polling centers. The Punch, Wednesday, July 05, 2006 pg 1/9

2007: Riggers Should Write Their Will, says Buhari

Retired General Muhammadu Buhari has threatened that anyone who tries to rig next year's elections or repeat the widely acknowledged fraud that denied him victory in 2003 will have to

face dire consequences. The Presidential aspirant of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) in the 2003 election says: “whoever wants to rig the 2007 elections should write his will because Nigerians will no longer accept the massive fraud that characterized 2003 election”. He said after a defeat of third term, Nigerians must remain vigilant to ensure a free and fair elections in 2007, if need be, defend their vote after casting their ballots. Daily Trust, Thursday, July 27, 2006 pg 1/4

ACD, AD continues merger moves.

The Alliance for Democracy (AD) and the Advance Congress of Democrats (ACD) have received the report of the special committee set up to work on the merger plans between the two parties. The Lagos State Secretary of the AD, Alhaji Lateef Raji, who disclosed this said the merger announcement, was delayed because the parties were awaiting the submission of the committee report. He said all is set for the convention where the announcement would be made. Daily Trust, Friday, July 07, 2006 pg 8

ACD adopts option A4, denies merger with ANPP

The Advance Congress of Democrats (ACD) said it has adopted the Option A4 for all its congresses in the local, state and national levels. Secretary of the party in Jigawa state, Alhaji Faruk Dalhaltu said the measure is meant to ensure transparent selection of candidates and develop a “grassroots devolving mechanism” that will ensure only acceptable candidates emerged for elective positions within the party. He said unlike before where politicians impose candidates on the electorates, the ACD has placed premium on transparent electoral process backed by honest and credible candidates so that Nigerians will have stronger representatives. Meanwhile, the Chairman of the party in the Jigawa state Ambassador Daudu Suleiman has also denied merger plans with All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP), saying the party is only working to bring together genuine democrats scattered with the existing parties. Daily Trust, Tuesday, July 04, 2006 pg 40

ANPP, PRP fused in Niger

The People’s Redemption Party (PRP) in Niger state has dissolved into the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) to form a formidable force that would wrestle power from the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2007 elections. The state Chairman of the PRP, Alhaji Garba Dogo, led the remaining members of the party to defect to the ANPP, explaining that the move was to strengthen the party ahead of the 2007 elections. Daily Trust, Monday, July 10, 2006 pg 6

CPP wants INEC dissolved

The Citizens Popular Party (CPP) has joined the Coalition of Conference of National Political Party (CNPP) in calling for the dissolution of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). CPP rose from a National Executive Committee meeting recently with a call “for the dissolution and reconstitution of INEC to include representatives of the 37 political parties”. This statement was released by the National Publicity Secretary of the CNPP, Chief Henry Akpan

Obot who said the dissolution of INEC is the only way there would be a level playing field in the 2007 elections. Daily Trust, Tuesday, July 04, 2006 pg 40

Army prepares for 2007 Polls, Suspends Exercise

The Nigeria Army has announced the suspension of all its major field exercises till further notice, saying it needs to concentrate on how to deal with security challenges that may arise in the run up to the 2007 general elections. The Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Andrew Azazi announced this on Thursday, July 6. at a parade held in Lungi Barracks in Lagos as part of the activities to mark the 2006 Army Day Celebration. Thisday, Friday, July 07, 2006 pg1/4

PDP Chieftain wants name change for DPP

A chieftain of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has asked the an Abuja Federal High Court to compel the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to change the name and symbol of the Democratic People Party (DPP) for being similar with that of the PDP. Tony Anyanwu, who is an aspirant of for the Imo state governorship on the platform of the PDP also want the court to order INEC to cancel DPP registration. The Guardian, Monday, July 17, 2006 pg 3

The Southern Senators Want Constitution Amendment Revisited

The Southern Senators Forum (SSF) on Friday July 7, 2006 demanded a revisit of the constitutional amendment process “as soon as Practicable to specifically address the removal of all the ambiguities in sections 8 and 9 of the 1999 Constitution to pave way for the creation of an additional state in the south-east. The group, which comprised of 51 senators, also sought the revisit of the constitutional amendment to raise the bar of deprivation from the present 13 per cant to 25 per cent in revenue sharing as well as guaranteeing financial autonomy of the legislature at all levels of government in the country. Thisday, Saturday, July 8, 2006 pg 1/4

A Revisit to the 2003 Rigged Election

Governor George Akume on Monday, July 24, 2006 revisited the 2003 elections that produced President Olusegun Obasanjo, the 36 States governors as well as members of the national and states assemblies and submitted that the elections were rigged at all levels. Akume stated this while delivering a paper on 2007 Elections and the Future of Democracy in Nigeria at the General Assembly Session of the Northern Union. According to him the 2003 general election like the previous one were characterized by large scale malpractices, including rigging at all levels. He said security personnel who were expected to keep the peace and protect electoral material and personnel turned a blind eye while electoral malpractices and violence being perpetrated by politicians. While stressing that the nation could achieve a free and fair election in 2007, Akume asserted that the registration of over 40 political parties as well as continuous registration of more parties is unwieldy and could become unmanageable. Thisday, Tuesday, July 25, 2006 pg 4

2007: Conference of Speakers Seek Free and Fair Polls

The conference of Speakers of the 36 States Houses of Assembly has called on President Olusegun Obasanjo to consolidate on his on going reform programme by ensuring that the 2007 general elections are conducted in free and transparent manner. The Speakers urged Obasanjo to direct the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to be diligent and fair in the conduct of the election. They also want the President to direct the Inspector General of Police, Mr. Sunday Ehindero to curb violence associated with political activities as the nation moves towards organizing another election.

Meanwhile the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Prof. Maurice Iwu has reassured the nation of the determination of his commission to conduct a free and fair election in 2007 saying that his commission will resist pressure from any quarter to do anything that will affect the credibility of the elections. Thisday, Tuesday, July 18, 2006 pg 6/Thisday, Sunday, July 23, 2006

Fracas in Kano Assembly

Mace broken

The Kano State House of Assembly was on Monday, July 24, 2006 thrown into disarray as a fight broke out on the floor of the House. The ceremonial mace of the House was destroyed; the lights in the chambers were put off in desperate attempt to prevent the public from witnessing the chaos.

Trouble was said to have started when the Speaker read a letter from the state ANPP indicating the removal of the Majority Leader, Alhaji Ahmed Tambaya Dawanau, from his position. The house members went for each other's throat after splitting into two groups when the Speaker Alhaji Balarabe Saidu Gani, announced the decision of the ANPP to remove the Majority Leader to be replaced with Barrister Haliru Danga from Rimin Gado/Tofa constituency. Daily Trust, Tuesday, July 25, 2006 pg 1/4

2007: Mantu opposes zoning

The Deputy President of the Senate, Alhaji Ibrahim Mantu, has cautioned against zoning of the presidency, saying a leader who emerges through zoning may not have anything to offer the country. He said "Nigeria should not be reduced to fragmentation. Those campaigning on the basis of zones or regions must rethink, except if they have nothing to offer," he said what Nigeria needs is the right person, God fearing and the capacity to carry everybody along. Daily Trust, Tuesday, July 25, 2006 pg 8

PDP moves to reduce incumbency factor at polls.

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has taken measures that will reduce the influence of sitting elected officers over elections. The national chairman of the party, Senator Ahmadu Ali disclosed this while speaking at a meeting of PDP youth leaders in the

country. Ali said as part of the ongoing reforms in the party, its constitution had been tinkered with to provide a level playing field in the subsequent elections, he noted that the party had received complaints that sitting elected officers at the various levels had in the past used their power of incumbency to have an edge over other aspirants because of the provision of its constitution which makes some category of persons automatic delegates.

Alhaji Ali disclosed that part of the amendment to the constitution is that governors would only be allowed to come to the convention with 10 commissioners and 10 special advisers instead of the entire team. The Guardian, Tuesday, July 25, 2006 backpg

UK returns N250m seized from Alamieyeseigha

Britain on Thursday, July 6 returned to Nigeria, the sum of N250m (E1million) seized from former Bayelsa State Governor Diepreye Alamieyeseigha. The amount was given in cheque to the Nigerian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Dr. Christopher Kolade, represents the total sum recovered from Alamieyeseigha and from his London home after his arrest at the Heathrow Airport in September 2005. The Guardian, Friday, July 07, 2006 pg 1/2

Obasanjo: My Choice of Successor'll Remain Unknown

President Olusegun Obasanjo has said he would not disclose his preferred choice for the nation's number one job until after the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) presidential primaries. He said this while responding to the Chairman of Ogoni Traditional Council, King Godwin Giniwa, who led the delegation, the president said that even if his mouth was forced open with a knife, nobody would have an inkling of who he would want to succeed him in 2007. He told the delegation that his preoccupation now is to secure a level playing ground for all the aspirants. Thisday, Tuesday, July 18, 2006 pg 1/4

THIS MONTH'S POLITRICKS

Political Alliances

The political atmosphere is cloudy again. There are ominous sighs in the air. A new season is about to debut, while the political climate is characterized with alignments and merger talks. There are no doubt the seasons of alliances. Talks, deliberations, collaborations, alignments and re-alignments are the thematic pre-occupation. Politicians of varying complexions are now courting one another. It is all in their ultimate desperations to capture power and secure both their individual and parties relevance at the forthcoming 2007 general elections.

At the forefront of alliance and merger talks today are the Alliance for Democracy (AD), Advance Congress of Democrats (ACD), the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), Afenifere, the pan-Yoruba socio-political organization, Ethnic Nationality Movement (ENM), the yet to be registered Democratic Peoples Alliance (DPA) among others. The center idea of aligning and merging organization is uniform, to strip the

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) of power by all means in 2007 and deliver Nigeria from the perceived grip of anti-democratic forces.

The objectives of these various group seeking alliance, though the same, their ideologies, principles and backgrounds are always largely different. This situation has been generating fears in the polity about what the general output might be. This is more so that alliance and merger talks in the history of party politics in Nigeria have never recorded any success. The development quickly brings about reminiscences of the Nigeria's political history which has since inception been characterized by one alliance move or the other. Alliance moves since the First Republic have always been spurred by the desire of particular individuals or groups of individuals to achieve certain political aims or aspiration.

Down the line of history, notable alliance moves in Nigeria politics was championed by the foremost politicians, the Yoruba legend and the first premier of the Western Region, the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo. Awo's Alliance conception was inspired by the severe defeat of his party, the Action Group (AG) at the 1959 pre-independence federal elections. Awo suffered a major defeat during the elections. Then there were three parties, which included the Action Group led by Awolowo, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) led the Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello and the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe.

Consequent upon Awo's AG's gallant loss at the pre-independence elections, Awo accosted Zik for a possible coalition, with a view to weakening the strength of NPC, which emerged the victorious party at the election. However, Zik rejected Awo's proposal, Awo had opted to concede the position of the premier to Zik, while he himself envisaged serving as the Minister of Finance in a coalition idea, Awo alternatively decided to serve as the Leader of the opposition at the National Assembly. At which point Awo vacated the post of the leader of the Western Region to his deputy Chief Samuel Akintola, soon after the duo parted ways over Awo's undue interference in the politics of the region. This led to the fictionalization of AG. Akintola with his own faction of AG and the dissident group of the NCNC led by Chief Remi Fani-Kayode, Akintola formed the Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP). With his NNDP Akintola entered into an alliance with the ruling NPC hence giving birth to Nigeria National Alliance (NNA), the NCNC led by the then Premier of the Eastern Region, Michael Okpara along with Awo's AG and other opposition parties which comprised the minority groups in the Middle Belt and the Mid-Western region formed the United Progressive Grand Alliance, the first republic was therefore, characterized with the two alliances made up of NNA and UPGA respectively.

Also the in Second Republic, after the victory of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) at the presidential election, Zik's Nigeria People's Party (NPP), Ibrahim Waziri's Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP) and Awo's Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) formed an alliance against the NPN, whose presidential candidates Alhaji Shehu Shagari had been declared winner in controversial circumstances. However, shortly after the alliance, NPP abandoned Awolowo who came second at the presidential election to enter into another alliance with the NPN. In this new romance with NPN, the NPP agreed to become a junior partner in the government of NPN and co-share important appointments with it in the government. The NPN-NPP alliance did not last into the 1983 general elections as NPP along with UPN and other progressive political parties

entered into another alliance, which gave birth to Progressive Peoples Alliance (PPA), the alliance was borne out of the move to get the NPN out of power in 1983. But the alliance did not last long as none of the presidential candidates was ready to step aside for the other.

In 1999, the union between the Alliance for Democracy (AD) and the All Peoples Party (APP) was another instance of failed alliance. The alliance, which fielded Chief Olu Falae as the presidential candidate, failed to achieve the desired results, as facts were rife that members of the APP in the North reportedly frustrated its effectiveness by voting for Obasanjo, against Falae that their party fielded.

Going by all these past developments on alliance, the coming together of political parties has been viewed as an idea which has never worked. This accounts for why the ongoing alliance talks across the polity have not stimulated any excitement. One factor has always led to alliance or merger talks proving fiasco over the years, is the manner of people involved in the plans. An exploration of the party alliances in Nigeria since inception has revealed that party alliances are usually the fall out of the defeat of weak parties or renewed bids to break the invincibility of the winning party. It is desperation to achieve a common agenda that always brings them together as against sharing the same ideological principle. Thisday, Monday, July 24, 2006 pg 23/24

ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

DR Congo Begins Historic Election Campaign

The campaign for what would be Democratic Republic of Congo's first elections in 45 years has officially opened. Political parties are meeting to discuss their concerns at the polls but President Joseph Kabila's party is not taking part. The election follows the official end of DR Congo's five-year war in 2003. After years of conflict and misrule, holding the elections will be a major challenge. There are no roads or railways linking one side of the country to the other. Thirty-two candidates are opposing President Kabila in the first round of the presidential vote.

In a later report, more than half the presidential candidates for Congo's landmark elections this month have called for the suspension of campaigning in a row over the printing of millions of extra ballot papers. Nineteen candidates said the printing and distribution of an extra five million ballot papers, which are meant to replace those that could be lost or destroyed, puts the credibility and transparency of the July 30 poll in danger. Candidates are advocating that the extra ballot papers should be publicly destroyed as there is no guarantee of where they would end up or that they would not be used to rig the election. The Guardian, Saturday, July 1, 2006 pg 15/Daily Trust, Thursday, July 6, 2006 pg 16.

Congolese weathered the storm at election

Congolese Police fired warning shots on Tuesday, July 25, 2006 to disperse rioting opposition in Kinshasa who tore down election posters and demanded the postponement of historic polls set for Sunday, July 30, 2006. The demonstrators who want Democratic Republic of Congo's first multi-party polls in 40 years to be delayed because of political tensions and accusation of flaws, threw rocks and petrol bombs, blocking the highway into the city.

The clashes were certain to increase fears that violence could disrupt voting in Sunday's landmark presidential and parliamentary polls in the vast, mineral-rich but war-scarred former Belgian colony in Central Africa. The elections are being supervised and protected by the largest U.N peacekeeping force in the world at a cost of more than \$400 million.

Meanwhile, the long awaited Congolese election scheduled for July 30, 2006 finally took place as millions of Congolese flocked out to vote in their first free elections in four decades on Sunday, July 30, 2006, hoping to put an end to years of war, corruption and chaos that have the country to its knees. Protected by the biggest peacekeeping operation in the world, polls in the Democratic Republic of Congo were the most complex and expensive ever organized by the United Nations at a cost \$460 million.

From the sprawling capital Kinshasa to the jungles of the Congo River basin and the mist-shrouded peaks of the east, voters braved threats of violence from marauding rebels, bureaucratic hitches and rain to cast their ballots.

Apart from incidents in the south central diamond-mining province of East Kasai, where a polling station was burned and voters were threatened, voting was generally peaceful, orderly and enthusiastic, according to witnesses, election officials and UN radio. Turnout was heavy in the violence plagued east. Results are expected to be out in three weeks time.

Daily Trust, Monday, July 31, 2006 pg 18/Thisday, Wednesday, July 26, 2006 pg 55

Ailing Zambian Leader says He is Fit to Run

President Levy Mwanawasa on Thursday, June 29, 2006 declared himself fit to run for a second five-year term despite suffering a mild stroke earlier this year. Meanwhile, opposition leader have urged Mwanawasa who has a history of hypertension to step down because of poor health. But the president has pledges to travel throughout Zambia to win support ahead of elections expected before the end of this year. The Guardian, Saturday, July 01, 2006 pg 15.

Seychelles Islanders go to polls

Seychelles Islanders will vote on Friday, July 28, 2006 in a three-day presidential poll likely to be a tight fight between the incumbent and a popular Anglican Priest. President James Michel and clergyman Wavel Ramkalawan are joined by lawyer Philippe Boule as the three candidates vying to run the Indian Ocean archipelago of 81,000 famed as a tourist paradise of white sands, palm trees and coral reefs.

A total of 64,026 people are registered to vote on the country's 115 mostly tiny coralline island. Polls open on more remote isles at different time on Friday, July 28 and Saturday, July 29, 2006 before Sunday, July 30, 2006's main vote on Mahe and La Digue islands where 98 percent of Seychellois live. Daily Trust, Thursday, July 27, 2006 pg 18

Sao Tome votes for president

Tiny Sao Tome and Principe voted on Sunday, July 30, 2006 in presidential polls with incumbent Fradique de Menezes tipped to secure another 5-year term that could see the poor Atlantic archipelago off Africa's west coast strike oil.

An opinion poll showed de Menezes well ahead of his main challengers Patrice Trovoada, a for president's son 20 years his junior.

Some 83,000 of the volcanic islands' 180,000 people are registered to vote in the country's second national elections. Many polling stations opened well after Sunday's scheduled 7am local time start because electoral officials turned up late. **Daily Trust, Monday, July 31, 2006 pg18**