

MAY EDITION OF DEMOCRACY WATCH

News titbits

7 Governors Absent at Handover

•4 suspected to be on the run

No fewer than seven former governors failed to show up at the handing over ceremonies in their respective states, while four were suspected to have fled the country for fear of being arrested by operatives of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). The four are ex-governors Joshua Dariye of Plateau state, Boni Haruna (Adamawa), Saminu Turaki (Jigawa) and Chimaroke Nnamani (Enugu).

Three others, who were believed to still be in the country but stayed away from the handover ceremonies, apparently for political reasons were ex-Governors Peter Obi of Anambra state, Chief Rasheed Ladoja (Oyo) and Alhaji Attahiru Dalhatu Bafarawa of Sokoto state.

In Plateau, former Governor Joshua Chibi Dariye, who had assured his people that he would personally hand over to his successor, Air Commodore Jonah David Jang, did not keep to his word as he had fled Jos the previous night, leaving his estranged deputy, Michael Bot-Mang, who had hibernated after Dariye's reinstatement, to perform the rite. Dariye, who fled with his family on Monday night was said to have disguised himself as a traditional chief to avoid being arrested by EFCC operatives and men of the London Metropolitan Police who had come to lay siege on him.

In Adamawa, the swearing in ceremony of the new Governor, Admiral Murtala Nyako (rtd) took place without the outgoing Governor, Mr. Boni Haruna, as he was speculated to have fled to the Republic of Benin on Sunday May 27, 2007. The former governor, who allegedly left Yola, the state capital, in a chartered flight on Sunday afternoon after a thanksgiving mass at the EYN Church, Jimeta-Yola, in his honour, ostensibly to attend the national valedictory and investiture dinner in Abuja never showed up at the nation's capital. Instead, he allegedly escaped through Cotonou, the Beninoise capital taking the famous "NADECO route." The former Governor, who has been on the EFCC list for a long time, was alleged to have fled the country to avoid his imminent arrest by operatives of the anti-graft commission.

The estranged former deputy Governor, Alhaji Bello Tukur, performed the handing over process and inspected a guard of honour mounted by men and officers of the Nigerian police force.

In Jigawa, speculations that the former Governor, Alhaji Ibrahim Saminu Turaki may be one of the governors that have fled the country to avoid EFCC arrest were fueled by his absence at the swearing in of Governor Sule Lamido at the Police Parade grounds in Dutse.

Turaki had started several months' accumulated leave early February. Then, he had handed over the reins of government to the Secretary to the state Government (SSG), Alhaji Lawan Ya'u Roni. The leave had generated some controversy then as some people interpreted it as part of the Governor's plans to avoid arrest by the EFCC. Then, analysts had envisaged that he would be far away from the state when his immunity would expire on the 29th of May. His aides had dismissed the suggestions as character assassination engineered by his political enemies. In the words of one of them, "Turaki cannot abandon his people." The former Governor also gave credence to the belief that he would not run away when he resumed from his leave immediately after the general election. Many had believed that he would attend the inauguration to personally hand over to the new Governor and shame his detractors by showing them that he was not hiding from anybody. The program was also prepared with the expectation that he would be part of the ceremony. Many are now wondering if he would show up, clear his name and take up his position as a Senator of the Federal Republic in the National Assembly inauguration.

However, in Enugu, the new State Governor, Barrister Sullivan Chime was sworn-in by the Chief Justice of the State, Hon Justice Innocent Umezulike. Also sworn in was the Deputy Governor, Mr. Sunday Onyebuchi speculated to have been on the wanted list of the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC). Onyebuchi who has been out of scene for months now, even during the electioneering campaign, was said to have been first sworn in at about 8.02am in the Government House by the Chief Judge of the State, Justice Umezulike, in what appeared as a tactics of stopping any moves by the operatives of the EFCC from arresting him. He was again sworn-in at the Okpara Square in what was seen as simply ceremonial.

Nnamani's absence from the ceremony was not surprising as he has been reported as having fled the state over the allegations of massive corruption against him and the fear that he would be arrested by the EFCC with the expiration of the immunity he has been enjoying as governor.

In Oyo, former governor Ladoja was conspicuously absent at the ceremony. Only Chief Kolapo Ishola, chairman of the Transition Committee was at the stadium among the former civilian chief executives of the state. The former governor in a valedictory comment from his residence said his actions were sincere and informed by the need to move the state forward.

In Anambra, the swearing in which took place at the Alex Ekwueme Square in Awka, commenced at about 10.25am and was done in the absence of the former governor Mr. Peter Obi who was suppose to hand over to the incoming administration.

In Sokoto, former Governor Bafarawa was conspicuously absent at the inauguration ceremony of the new administration. He however pledged to offer any form of assistance to the new administration to ensure stability and progress

in the state. Bafarawa, who was represented by the state Deputy Governor, Alhaji Chiso Abdullahi Dattijo expressed gratitude to the people for giving him the opportunity to serve, stressing that the new government should make efforts to propel the state forward.

Yar'Adua sacks Ehindero

Moments after he was sworn in, Nigeria's new President Umaru Yar'Adua has replaced the Inspector General of Police Mr. Sunday Ehindero. The President did not give any reason for his decision. As he ordered that the most senior officer next to Ehindero to take over in acting capacity pending the appointment of a substantive IG. The retired IG has served the Nigeria Police for 35 years. A farewell parade will be organized for the IG in Abuja. Meanwhile, Okiro has taken over as the Acting Inspector General of Police.

Ehindero was appointed by Obasanjo in February 2005 following the removal of his predecessor Tafa Balogun over corruption claims.

Atiku inspects INEC materials Buhari files petition

The Action Congress [AC] recently began the inspection of electoral materials used in the April elections as part of the process to challenge the results of the election which gave the Peoples Democratic Party [PDP] a landslide victory just as the All Nigeria Peoples Party [ANPP] presidential candidate Major General Muhammadu Buhari also files his petition before the Election Tribunal.

Meanwhile, the Africa Liberation Party [ALP] has also joined those calling for the sack of the chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Maurice Iwu. The Action Congress and other opposition parties and election monitors have also denounced the election alleging massive rigging in favour of the ruling party. A court order was secured before the electoral commission allowed aggrieved candidates to inspect election materials.

Deputy governor-elect, nine others arrested

Jus before he was sworn in as the Deputy Governor of Oyo State, Mr. Taofik Arapaja, was among the 10 suspects arrested by the police over an attack on the headquarters of the State Independent Electoral Commission.

It was gathered that Arapaja, a member of the House of Representatives before his election, was taken to the state police command headquarters by men of the Criminal Investigation Department and quizzed to ascertain his alleged involvement in the attack, after which he wrote a statement and thereafter warned against getting involved in any act unbecoming of his status.

He was released the next day on bail and directed to report back to the command for further investigations.

Election: Appeal Court hears Atiku's, Buhari's

The Court of Appeal sitting in Abuja serving as the Presidential Election Petition Tribunal has begun separate hearing but on similar applications brought by Vice-President Atiku Abubakar and Gen. Muhammadu Buhari, seeking the court's order to compel the Independent National Electoral Commission to produce for inspection, electoral materials used for the April 21 presidential poll.

This is the preliminary step taken by the duo to void the election of the Peoples Democratic Party's presidential candidate and winner of the presidential election, Alhaji Umar Musa Yar'Adua. The tribunal had earlier refused to accept the applications on the grounds that it was not accompanied by a petition.

NLC demands Iwu's prosecution

The Nigeria Labour Congress has demanded the immediate removal and prosecution of the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Prof. Maurice Iwu, and top officials of the electoral body over the conduct of the April poll. It also called for the arrest and trial of those, who perpetuated violence, which led to the death of over 200 Nigerians.

The NLC President, Mr. Abdulwahed Omar, at the end of an emergency meeting of the National Executive Council of the congress recently held in Abuja alleged that INEC deliberately sabotaged the elections through illegal disqualification of eligible candidates, poor organization and subversion of the electoral process. He said, "Thugs, the police, armed forces and the security services were used to perpetrate violence in order to intimidate opposition candidates and the electorate and ultimately subvert the will of the people.

"The 2007 election was characterized in many cases and places by severe shortage of ballot materials, under-age voting, declaration of results even in places where elections did not hold, ballot box snatching and stuffing and intimidation of voters." Describing the poll as a conquest of the electorate's will, Omar said, "The election was fundamentally flawed and therefore unacceptable."

CNPP faults N'Assembly over PTDF

The Conference of Nigerian Political Parties (CNPP) recently came down hard on the National Assembly for what it called its "shameful handling" of the Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF) probe and its reaction to the recently conducted general elections in the country.

The CNPP, according to its National Publicity Secretary, Mr. Osita Okechukwu, regretted that the National Assembly had unwittingly ended its final phase "in the hall of infamy by handing over to Nigerians an unworthy parting gift." Commenting on the PTDF report, the CNPP said: "The Senate failed to expose the various accounts opened at the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) as conduit pipe to fund the PDP; the MOFAS, Marine Float and sundry accounts used as slush funds by the President, Vice President and their cohorts."

Oshiomhole vows to give PDP govt. hell in Edo state

Action Congress governorship candidate in Edo State, Comrade Adams Oshiomhole, has threatened that the opposition will make the state ungovernable for the in-coming PDP-led administration. Oshiomhole who spoke at the presentation of Kunle Oyatomi's book, Finger Prints: Nigeria's Tangled Transition to Nationhood recently held in Lagos.

Oshiomhole said: "I have one assurance that PDP will not be able to govern that state. We'll create confusion that will make that state useless to them. We have the capacity to do so." Speaking further on the election in which Professor Osarhieme Osunbor emerged winner; Oshiomhole described the exercise as a total fraud and vowed to contest the result at the election tribunal. He said: "I will not give up. I still have hope. I want Nigerians to realize that we must stand up and defend our decision, our votes, so that it would be possible to send to prison people like Iwu and others who have disgraced all of us in front of the international community. My mandate cannot be stolen."

On whether he has trust in the tribunal that would look into the results, the AC candidate answered in the affirmative. "If there's anyone who has an eye for justice, there's no way our case would not be upheld. If I look at the happenings in the recent times, I believe things are changing for better in the judiciary," he said.

AC dumps Lam Adesina, hand over party to Ladoja

National Secretariat of the Action Congress (AC) has dumped the Oyo State leadership of the party, led by former governor of the state, Alhaji Lam Adesina, over the party's non-performance in the just concluded 2007 general elections in the state.

In what a very reliable source described as post-election appraisal exercise by the party secretariat, AC has now been handed over to the incumbent governor of the state, Senator Rasidi Ladoja. To reinforce the decision of the national secretariat of AC, a letter has been written to the state chapter of the party, directing its members to effectively participate in the controversial Local Government election in the state, now fixed for May 19, 2007.

Lagos Assembly impeaches Pedro

Notwithstanding the Lagos Deputy Governors, Pedro's decision to tender his resignation letter, the Lagos State House of Assembly made good its threat and adopted a motion impeaching him. The impeachment move which was carried out by 33 lawmakers (including the Speaker of the House) out of the 40 members that constitute the House was done after the adoption of the report of the panel set up by the Chief Judge of the State Adetula Alabi, to investigate allegations leveled against the deputy governor by the House. In his findings submitted

before the House, the chairman of the seven-man panel, Alhaji Muhammed Adebola Badmus, said since inauguration of the panel on Monday 7, 2007, they swung into action, but the deputy governor or his lawyers were not around to defend the allegations leveled against him.

While justifying the decision of the House to impeach the deputy governor despite his resignation, Abdulhakeem said once an impeachment process is initiated; only a court of law can stop it. He said, letter of resignation at the executive level does not affect the business of the House to impeach because the impeachment is about an offence already committed. "The purported resignation has nothing to do with the impeachment, once an impeachment proceeding commences it is only a court of law that can set it aside.

Among allegations leveled against Otonba Pedro as contained in the notice of allegations referred to the panel by the Chief Judge are that the deputy governor, Mr. Femi Pedro is guilty of gross misconduct in the performance of the functions of his office. That at one of the meetings of the Council of State held in Abuja, he had, contrary to the provisions of the 1999 Constitutions and overt abuse of fiscal provisions of the Constitution as well as a grave violation of his oath of office.

It was also alleged that the deputy governor at a press conference addressed at his Park View Estate last April alleged that Governor Tinubu is planning to terminate his life and those of 18 members of his family. The allegation has greatly compromised the integrity of the government, the House alleged. Meanwhile, Pedro has described his impeachment by the Lagos State House of Assembly as "an act of futility and an action in vain." He said the legislature has not only been suborned and emasculated but has in effect become an appendage of the executive arm of government."

Senate clears President, indicts Atiku over PTFDF scam

VP dismisses indictment, \$20m traced to PDP account

The Senate finally laid to rest the long standing PTFDF issue when it declared that Vice President Atiku Abubakar acted illegally in the management of the Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF) funds. But it made no recommendation against him.

On the indicting recommendations made concerning President Olusegun Obasanjo, in the report of the Senate Review Committee on the Ad hoc Committee that investigated the PTFDF, the Upper House threw them out when an overwhelming number of the lawmakers declined to uphold the recommendations.

However, the \$20 million for which Atiku Abubakar was indicted was traced to a Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) account, according to one of the members of the Review Committee, Senator John Azuta Mbata.

Even though, its Review Committee recommended concerning the Vice President thus, "With regards to the approval which the Vice President gave in respect of

the \$20 million on 14th October, 2003 , without the authority of Mr. President, the Committee views the approval of the Vice President as illegal and therefore recommends that the Vice President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar be referred to the Code of Conduct Bureau for further action," the Senate deleted the aspect that he be sent to the Code of Conduct because of subsisting court judgments that he had immunity.

Meanwhile, the Vice President's Campaign Organization has dismissed the Senate's position on the issue saying they were misguided. The campaign organization also described the action of the legislative chamber as "sad, shameful and a dishonorable last act of the legislative body." While adding that it was evident from the on-set that the panel was not interested in doing justice on the PTDF matter.

On the other hand the Senators answered with a loud 'No!' rejecting the Review Committee's report that said: "In respect of some projects commenced by PTDF in 2006 viz: Incorporation of Galaxy Backbone; Purchase of Computers for Civil Servants under the Computer for all Nigerians Initiative; Defence Industry Corporation of Nigeria (DICON) Rehabilitation for which Mr. President gave approval and later got them ratified retroactively, the Committee views the action of the President, C-in-C, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, as illegal and therefore refers Mr. President Chief Olusegun Obasanjo to the Code of Conduct Bureau for further action." Another recommendation that found the President and the Group Managing Director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation culpable of opening illegal accounts for the PTDF was thrown out with a loud No! by majority of members.

Meanwhile, the Tsauri committee received some hard knocks from many senators who believed that the committee went beyond its bounds. Victor Ndoma-Egba who was chairman of the first ad-hoc committee that investigated the PTDF said it was wrong for the Tsauri review committee to try to investigate monies that did not originate from the PTDF. He asked the Senate to throw out the report for lack of merit saying: "I do not see anything in this report that can be sustained."

Obasanjo faults criticism of Nigeria's polls, says he is stepping out

President Olusegun Obasanjo is not happy about the criticism of his administration over the conduct of just concluded general elections. The President, at the opening of a new National Assembly office complex in Abuja, dismissed the criticism of the election, by both local and foreign monitors, as lacking deep knowledge about Nigeria's peculiar circumstances. He declared that Nigeria has a long history of disputed polls, and that the raging allegations of rigging are only true to the character of the citizens.

He has also charged members of his Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), who will again constitute the majority in the incoming National Assembly, to show

"absolute loyalty to the ruling party". President Obasanjo said that the lawmakers in the National Assembly had no choice but to be loyal to the PDP, which nominated them for elections in the first place. While adding that the PDP has now been so reformed that the practice of being disloyal would not be there again.

He also preached the concept of executive and legislative collaboration to enhance good governance saying that the situation where the National Assembly constituted itself into an opposition to the government of which it was part would not augur well for the nation. "I believe that if the National Assembly is an arm of government, National Assembly should not be an opposition to the Executive arm of government. They should work together particularly when they are now from the same party."

Bidding the lawmakers farewell, the President said he was committed to his promise to quit governance permanently on the May 29. "I do not know whether we will have another opportunity like this before I go; I have said that I am not stepping aside; I am not stepping back; I am not stepping forward; I am stepping out (and he jumped forward to demonstrate that he is stepping out)..."

The Federal Capital Territory minister, Malam Nasir el-Rufai, said the project was conceived to correct the imbalance in terms of infrastructural development, between the legislature and executive.

Council polls: PDP asks tribunal to void ANPP candidate's victory

The Peoples Democratic Party and its chairmanship candidate for Gwagwalada area council of the FCT, Alhaji Saidu Garba, have petitioned against the results of the chairmanship polls held on April 14. In the petition filed before the FCT Area Councils Election Tribunal sitting in Abuja, the petitioners asked for the nullification of the results, which gave victory to ANPP's Zakari Angulu.

The petitioners are seeking nullification of the results on the ground that at the time of the election, Angulu was not qualified to contest the polls being an officer indicted by an administrative panel according to section 110 (1) (h) of the Electoral Acts 2006 which disqualifies an indicted officer from contesting elections.

PDP is asking the tribunal to declare its candidate, Garba, who came second in the polls, as the person duly elected. Alternatively, the petitioners asked for a bye-election to be conducted by INEC. The petition filed by Chief Karina Tunyan, on behalf of the petitioners, has Angulu, INEC and ANPP as respondents. The petition was the first to be received by the tribunal.

Angulu was, however, said to have obtained the judgment of an Abuja high court in February 2007 quashing the indictment.

Yar'Adua sworn in as Nigeria's new president

UMARU Yar'Adua was sworn in as Nigeria's new president and Commander-Chief on May 29, 2007 along side his Vice, Jonathan Goodluck at the Eagle square in Abuja amidst colorful ceremony and opposition from other political parties and civil society organizations. The inauguration marked the first transition from one elected leader to another since Nigeria's independence from colonial power Britain in 1960.

The president after been sworn in immediately pledged that his government would tackle the unrest in the Niger Delta that has caused a 25 per cent drop in the oil-rich country's crude output. He assured Nigerians that he would "find a way to achieve peace and justice" in the Delta region, where around 180 foreigners - mostly oil workers - have been taken hostage by armed groups in the past 18 months.

Mr Yar'Adua, 55, the outgoing governor of Katsina state, succeeds Olusegun Obasanjo who stepped down after eight years in office. The ceremony was well attended by both African heads of states and Ambassadors of various countries. The election in April that brought Mr Yar'Adua to power was widely seen as rigged and he will have to move quickly to pacify an opposition still bitter over the result.

The struggle for the Senate President's seat begins

As the race for the Senate Presidency, which has been narrowed down to the North-Central geo-political zone begins, new challenges are beginning to rare its head for politicians from the zone. It is gathered that the race had intensified with three out of the seven ranking senators getting favourable mention. The seven ranking returning senators from the zone are: Nicholas Ugbane, Sunday Ajibola, Ahmed Mohammed, Gbemisola Saraki, David Mark, Abubakar Sodangi and Nuhu Aliyu. But investigations showed that four of them: Saraki, Mohammed, Ajibola and Aliyu might not receive President Olusegun Obasanjo's blessings because they went against the party by opposing the tenure elongation plot. Obasanjo's support as chairman of the party's Board of Trustees is crucial in the choice of Chief Ken Nnamani's successor. This calculation leaves three senators as frontrunners: They are: Ugbane, Mark and Sondangi. Kogi State Governor, Ibrahim Idris and his Kaduna State counterpart, who is also a Senator elect, Alhaji Ahmed Makarfi, are likely to join forces to rout for Ugbane.

Senator David Mark is said to enjoy tacit support from Obasanjo because of his loyalty to the party and the President. Some have argued that the President may be favourably disposed to Mark to protect his interest when he leaves office. A source said, "Don't forget, Baba is a general. Unknown to many he is a student of history. Babangida left Abacha behind when he was forced out of office in 1993. Baba will need Mark in the Senate to ensure that Yar'Adua does not act funny."

Ugbane was positioned as chairman of the Senate Committee on INEC and is expecting a reward for "a job well done".

Election petitions: Appeal Court issues guidelines

The Court of Appeal has issued guidelines to be followed by candidates wishing to file election petitions. In the guidelines, titled 'Practice Directions,' all petitions must be accompanied by:

A list of all the witnesses that a petitioner intends to call in proof of the petition; Written statements of oath of the witness(es); and Copies of the list of every document to be relied on at the hearing of the petition.

The practice directions also empower the secretaries of the election tribunals to reject any petition which does not contain the three conditions stated above. The document also contains many innovations aimed at shortening the time it will take to hear and determine a petition. One of such innovations is that witnesses will now write their testimonies and will merely come to the witness box to adopt their statements which must be on oath.

Section 285 (3) of the 1999 Constitution and Paragraph 50 of the 1st Schedule to the Electoral Act 2006 empower the President of the Court of Appeal to set up electoral tribunals and issue the practice directions for the tribunals to follow. The practice directions also empower the tribunals to dismiss a petition if the petitioner or his legal representative fails to attend a pre-hearing session or obey a pre-hearing order.

I'm ready to go to jail to nullify Anambra poll Ngige

Former Anambra State Governor, Dr. Chris Ngige, has said he would rather choose to be arrested and detained than allow the results of the April 14 governorship and House of Assembly elections to stand. Ngige also said he was prepared to reconcile with the governor-elect and Peoples Democratic Party candidate, Dr. Andy Uba, "if only he accepts the fact that there was no election and he comes back for a proper contest."

Ngige, who was the governorship candidate of the Action Congress, spoke in Awka, the state capital, shortly after he filed a petition at the Governorship and Legislative Houses Election Petitions Tribunal, challenging the declaration of Uba as the winner of the poll. He went to the premises of the tribunal in company with his running mate, Mr. Phil Agbasi, his lawyer, Chief Emeka Ngige (SAN) and top officials of the AC.

Assembly member-elect dies in Ondo

Barely two weeks after he won an election into the Ondo State House of Assembly, a member elect representing Akure North constituency, Mr Akindele

Alasoadura death has been announced. Alasoadura, the younger brother of the State Commissioner for Finance and Economic Planning, Chief Tayo Alasoadura, died in the early hours of Sunday after an undisclosed ailment. He was a supervisory councilor for health in the Akure North Local Government until his election as a legislator representing the local government in the state House of Assembly.

Nigerians in UK to protest polls

A coalition of pro-democracy groups and opposition political parties based in Britain will kick-off a three days of activities in protest of the recent flawed general elections.

The activities include procession, political awareness raising campaign and intensive contact with the international media, to register their disgust with alleged rigging that characterized the elections and their call for a re-run of most of the elections under an unbiased umpire.

April polls: AC vows to launch big battle

The Action Congress (AC) has vowed to start a big battle to reclaim what it described as “the people’s stolen mandate” The party in a statement issued recently pointed out that the battle “will undoubtedly be an epic battle, the mother of all battles to be fought on political, constitutional and legal fronts.”

The statement reads in part: “We do not know how long the battle will last, but we do know that the criminally rigged elections, adjudged by local and international observers and the world media as the worst ever, will not stand! We are not fazed by the long line of AGIP (Any Government in Power) people streaming to Abuja to pay ‘solidarity visits’ to the so-called President-elect, Umaru Musa Yar’Adua. We are also not surprised by foreign envoys that are in a hurry to shake hands with him (Umaru MusaYaradua) but we warn those who have any reputation to protect to beware.

They must not forget the lessons of our recent history. All those who rode and trampled on June 12 were eventually consumed by it, one way or the other. They lost their reputation to their indiscretion forever - right from the last days of the Babangida regime, through the interim government of Shonekan and the Abacha years to the time of Abdulsalami Abubakar. That fate awaits all those who want to do business as usual on the basis of the brazen rigging, criminal manipulation and sponsored violence that accompanied the last election. AC also replied those who had urged the party to embrace peace saying” there can be no justice, peace and stability without fairness and equity. An edifice built on a faulty foundation will not stand.

S/Africa's new opposition leader denies report on party

Cape Town's respected mayor who won the leadership of the white-dominated main opposition has denied her party is too white and middle class. Helen Zille said the accusation that the Democratic Alliance (DA) was a white party was propaganda used by the ruling African National Congress (ANC).

The newly elected DA leader said that at least half of the delegates who voted in the leadership election were not white people. Ms Zille who succeeded Tony Leon after 13 years, will have to work hard to dent the loyalty of South Africa's black majority to the party that ended apartheid. Her DA generally wins less than two per cent of the black vote, and South Africa has been without a strong opposition since white rule ended in 1994.

Zille was both a journalist and an activist during the struggle against apartheid. In more recent years, as a Democratic Alliance MP, she worked in Khayelitsha, one of the most impoverished areas of Cape Town. Zille, born in Johannesburg to German parents, peppered her speech with Xhosa, the tongue of many black South Africans. She recalled that her experiences as a journalist during the apartheid era had shown her "the danger of too much power in too few hands."

Opposition leader pledges robust Kenya

Kenya's most high-profile presidential challenger has vowed to give the country its post-colonial dream of development, unity and peace more than 43 years after it won independence from Britain.

At the launch of his campaign for Kenya's 2007 elections, Raila Odinga also drew heavily on his late father's legacy as a nationalist hero and his own history as a political prisoner who served eight years for protesting against one-party rule.

6 Nigerian soldiers killed in Darfur

Nigeria will not withdraw its peacekeepers from Darfur soon, the outgoing presidential adviser on Darfur crisis, Alhaji Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, disclosed recently. Kwankwaso said this in spite of the killing of six Nigerian soldiers since they arrived in Darfur and with another declared missing.

He said Nigerian troops would remain in Darfur because Nigeria desired peace in the countries around it. According to Kwankwaso, the Nigerian troops in Darfur made up of three battalions were in high spirits. He praised the outgoing Obasanjo government for its assistance to the troops and the armed forces in particular, expressing the hope that the incoming government would do more.

WE COUNTRY STORI

My country people, how una dey oh, hop say una dey fine as I dey for here? My body full cloth I nefa slim down, and as I dey hear so my country people dey

kampe like katampe hill wey dey Abuja. Una congrat oh for we new president we don swear say na we own im go dey do, even though na magomago and wuruwuru dem take put am there, de man say im go take im hand do im sef well.

Na one of my country broda talk say mak we give de man chance ma im do we im sabi do, na im one of my country sista com take mouth talk say if we no gif am chance, de man don already tak de chance befor we gif am we own na mak we dey pray am for inside prayer say mak God touch im mind so mak im for fit remember we country people. My own be say I happy say no be big big thief dem put for their, na small one. If im thief small he go rest na im be the contribution of one of my country people wey join me enta one bus wey dem dey call El Rufai bus for Abuja.

My people, too much talk na lie dem say e dey bring, I no wan talk too much now on top dis we new president, de man jus dey enta "aso cave" mak I let am sidon well befor I put fire or ice block for im yash, mak we com join all dem de prayer warriors wey dey for dis we obodo country dey pray for de man mak God no let am trowey dis we country for inside river. Anyhow de tin be, una go dey hear from me next month. Na me una sista 'Seyi Ojo dey say mak una nefa start to dey tak alabukun for anoda man headache.

Niger Delta groups back mass action against electoral fraud - South-South

Leading civil society groups in the Niger Delta on Wednesday gathered in Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital, and declared their support for the mass action against the last election, in which the ruling Peoples Democratic Party was declared the winner. The groups, which met in Port Harcourt under the aegis of Niger Delta Civil Society Coalition, called on all Nigerians to take active part in the protest against the elections, which they claimed was below any known standards. At a press conference to signal their endorsement of the two-day sit-at-home on May 28 and 29, 2007, the spokesman for the groups, Mr. Anyakwee Nsirimovu, said that the protest was to draw the attention of the world to the high level of fraud and intimidation that characterized the so-called election and the need to reverse the results.

Nsirimovu, who is the Executive Director of the Port Harcourt-based Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, condemned those who collaborated with the ruling PDP, the Independent National Electoral Commission and the security agencies to rob Nigerians of the opportunity to freely elect their leaders. The spokesman said, "The elections of April 2007 shattered hope and confidence in the system. It was a complete system failure. If we are not to become a completely modern day slave society, we must join others nationwide in the peaceful campaign to reject slavery. "After so many years of intimidation and grave threat to democracy in Nigeria, civil society change agents have learnt that its only salvation lies in united action. The groups asked Nigerians to wear black attires on the two days as a sign of their opposition

to the rape on Nigeria's democracy by those saddled with the task of conducting the election. They explained the action was aimed at impoverishing them but to geared towards driving out the looters of Nigeria's treasury, slave drivers and destroyers of Nigeria's democracy.

The groups warned Sunday Ehindero, the Inspector General of Police, not to interfere with the peaceful protest under any guise, as the so-called Public Order Act, had been rendered impotent by the court. They described as undemocratic threats by Ehindero to use maximum force on innocent Nigerians who want to shun violent and use peaceful means to protest the result of the fraudulent elections. The groups that attended the meeting in Port Harcourt were, Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, Environmental Rights Agenda, Niger Delta Project for Environment, Human Rights and Development, Stakeholder Democracy, Kabetkache Women Leading civil society groups in the Niger Delta on Wednesday gathered in Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital, and declared their support for the mass action against the last election, in which the ruling Peoples Democratic Party was declared the winner.

The groups, which met in Port Harcourt under the aegis of Niger Delta Civil Society Coalition, called on all Nigerians to take active part in the protest against the elections, which they claimed was below any known standards.

At a press conference to signal their endorsement of the two-day sit-at-home on May 28 and 29, 2007, the spokesman for the groups, Mr. Anyakwee Nsirimovu, said that the protest was to draw the attention of the world to the high level of fraud and intimidation that characterized the so-called election and the need to reverse the results.

Nsirimovu, who is the Executive Director of the Port Harcourt-based Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, condemned those who collaborated with the ruling PDP, the Independent National Electoral Commission and the security agencies to rob Nigerians of the opportunity to freely elect their leaders.

The spokesman said, "The elections of April 2007 shattered hope and confidence in the system. It was a complete system failure. If we are not to become a completely modern day slave society, we must join others nationwide in the peaceful campaign to reject slavery.

"After so many years of intimidation and grave threat to democracy in Nigeria, civil society change agents have learnt that its only salvation lies in united action. The groups asked Nigerians to wear black attires on the two days as a sign of their opposition to the rape on Nigeria's democracy by those saddled with the task of conducting the election.

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The entire family of the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) wishes to say happy birthday to Miss Nnenna Eke whose b-day came during the month. Best wishes.

This Month's Politricks:

THE FATE OF BUHARI AND ATIKU

As we all reminisce about the ills of the National eyesore tagged the Nigeria general election that was just concluded, the fate of our "political heroes" needs to be viewed under a magnifying lenses. Our heroes, who though lost the election to the almighty riggers called PDP, fought the good fight of faiths as far as the Presidential election was concern. The election in retrospect has thought us lessons, and most importantly, it brought back history to our door steps, and updated us especially the young ones who were not conscious of their political environment during the military era and the early part of our nascent democracy 1999-2003.

While adding my voice to those of the domestic and international observers who have in all sincerity condemned the general elections, as it was a case of riggers all, as all the political parties joined forces to rig the general election, at various wards and polling units but were outsmarted by the Peoples Democratic Party because of their rigging antecedents and power of incumbency. The PDP demonstrated a 'do or die' attitude during the election, as it rigged its way back to remain in power, leaving the other parties with no other options than to either congratulate and join their party or go to the unending path of the tribunals. The foolish ones amongst them have gone cap in hand congratulating and stylishly

begging for one appointment or the other. While the heroes have put their fate in the tribunal and are willing to follow up appeals with the hope that someday the truth about our election will come out of the mouth of the tribunals and courts.

The truth is that the election brought to play our leaders antecedents and hence leading them to a state of repentance and a change of principles even from our very own stiff neck leaders, who before now carried the pales of tribalism, religious fanaticism, misguided words and sectional confidence on their heads. For instance, Major General Muhammadu Buhar before now would have sworn that the day he enters a church, the same day he dies, and all those in that service would in turn pay with their blood for not stopping him, but the post 2007 Presidential election saw Major General Muhammadu Buhari not only to the door post of a church but inside the church on a solidarity visit to his friend Gowon. It quickly brought to mind the General's words, in 2003 - let Muslims vote for Muslims and Christians should vote for Christians. This was from the mouth of an ex head of state of a secular state as Nigeria. Not to mention the sponsored political advert on the dailies, on the General's antecedents during his reign as a military head of state. The General really messed up, and his opponent sure knew how to catch up on his history. Before the April 21, Presidential election, Nigerians where on a cross on who they should vote for, it was a case of between the devil and the red sea, many were quick to say Buhari is the best candidate, but that he is an extremist, and that the faith of non Muslim would not be guaranteed with religious fundamentalist turning vampires by the day and secondary school students in the north turning Clifford Orji. Hence Nigerians particularly the non Muslims and Southerners jumped at the other option, which is the red sea with hope that they might swim across to the other side. This is a lesson for our General to learn from, and be more patriotic to other religions and tribes outside his.

Well for Atiku, the PDP learnt greatly from him before discarding him, as he was the backbone of the 2003 rigging that returned him and Obasanjo to Aso Rock Villa. The PDP learnt from the masters and used it against him. Atiku should also bear in mind that the opinion of the domestic Observers concerning the general elections that he is relying so much on today where also giving at the 2003 general elections, when the observers said the elections was a sham, and Atiku said the observers where bunch of jobless and hungry people who formed themselves into civil society in other to get small chops from foreign organization. Now the reports of this hungry men and women have become so important that our honorable VP is relying on them to fight for his mandate. The choice of Yaradua comes as a choice of choosing the red sea option. Not that he is the best candidate. He should have it in mind that Nigeria is not katsina that he ruled from the comfort of his room, he has to move out and work hard for this nation to move forward.

The paste at which Nigeria politics is going now is becoming more interesting, all eyes and ears are open, and what men do or say live with them. The evils that men do or say now lives with them and even hunt them. **SEYI OJO (TMG)**

