

POLITICAL Platform

Obanikoro's comment on party offensive - Lagos PDP

Mudiaga Affe

THE Lagos State chapter of the Peoples Democratic Party, on Wednesday described as offensive a recent comment made by the Nigerian High Commissioner to Ghana, Mr. Musliu Obanikoro, where he described the party as comatose.

The party in a statement jointly issued by the state Chairman, Mr. Setonji Koshedo, and Publicity Secretary, Dr. Wale Ahmed, said such comment flouted the constitution of the party.

The state PDP said it regretted that its governorship candidate in the 2007 election could make such comment when in reality the party is currently better organised, more disciplined, cohesive, focused on strategic goals in providing a good alternative platform to the people of Lagos.

The party said, "Obanikoro in an interview published in The Punch, Monday, February 9, 2009, spoke disparagingly about the PDP in Lagos, where he said the party was comatose. Whatever image he intended to convey, it is obvious that his portrayal of the party is totally off the mark. If he knew what the word 'comatose' is he would not have used it.

Appeal Court upholds election of Delta speaker

THE Court of Appeal handling appeal applications for election into State House of Assembly presided over by Justice Saka Fabiyeye has upheld the decision of the lower tribunal which upheld the election of the Speaker of the Delta State House of Assembly, Mr. Martin Okonta at Asaba, Delta State.

The appellant, Mr. Kingsley Philip, also of the same Peoples Democratic Party as the speaker, had instituted a suit to challenge the election of Okonta as the member representing the Iba South State Constituency with headquarters at Agbor alleging a wrongful substitution of his name with that of Okonta.

Philip contended that he was the duly nominated candidate of the PDP for the Iba South Constituency represented by the Speaker, Okonta, in the House of Assembly.

He therefore prayed the lower tribunal in the suit fled against the Independent National Electoral Commission to upturn the election of Okonta as the representative of the area.

Delivering the verdict of the appellate court on the lingering legal tussle which had threatened stability of the leadership of the Delta State House of Assembly, the tribunal held that the lower tribunal was right in striking out the petition for lack in merit and for incompetence.

INEC board to have deputy chair, three women - FG panel

Olayinka Oyebo and Tobi Soniyi

THE Independent National Electoral Commission to be constituted after the reform of the electoral process would be coordinated by a board to be headed by a chairman and assisted by a deputy chairman.

The board will also comprise of six members nominated by the organised labour, civil society group and some professional groups.

Also, two of the six members of the INEC board are expected to be women, just as the chairman and the deputy chairman would not be of the same sex.

These are some of the recommendations of the Justice Muhammadu Uwais-led National Electoral Reform Committee which have been accepted by the white paper draft committee set up by the

Federal Government. The board has no representative from the political parties as being demarcated by the Conference of Nigerian Political Parties.

The recommendations also stipulate the role of the Nigerian Police in election activities and recommend a new approach to the appointment and removal of the Inspector General of Police.

The document, which was exclusively obtained by THE PUNCH, in paragraph 2.2.43, detailed the professional groups who would nominate members to the INEC board.

They include a member each from the Nigerian Union of Journalists, the Nigerian Bar Association, a female nominee from the National Council of Women Societies, and the Nigeria Labour Congress as well as a nominee from the civil society group, working in the

area of elections and accredited by the proposed Political Parties Registration and Regulatory Commission.

According to the document, the government rejected the recommendation of the panel that the chairman of INEC and other board members shall not be less than 50 years.

Instead, the government proposed an amendment of the 1999 Constitution to set the age of the chairman and deputy chairman of INEC at not less than 40 years and that of members at not less than 35 years.

It adds, "Once appointed, no organisation shall have the power to recall its nominee."

The document highlights the nomination process for the chairman of INEC. The committee had recommended that the National Judicial Council, the National Council of State and the National

Assembly would be involved in the nomination of the INEC boss.

According to the recommendation, the NJC would advertise the two positions, process received applications and shortlist three persons and forward the list to the National Council of State to select one from the list and forward to the Senate.

The chairman and deputy chairman shall have a five-year tenure that is renewable for another term.

The document, in Paragraph 2.12 dealing with provisions and other laws which impact on the quality and credibility of elections, stated that the Court of Appeal shall take necessary measures to protect witnesses in election petitions by concealing their identity to ensure their safety.

Also, the panel recommended that the

functions of police officers on election duties be incorporated into the Police Act.

It recommended that the appointment of the Inspector General of Police be done by the President on the recommendation of the Police Service Commission to the National Police Council. The NPC will in turn forward the recommendation to the Senate for confirmation.

The removal of the IG will also be effected by two-thirds majority vote of the Senate, after an investigation must have established his or her misconduct.

The section also recommended that the Nigerian Police Force should include in its training curriculum, a course on the role of the police during elections.

It added, "The guidelines for the conduct of police officers on election duties as published by the PSC should form a framework for this curriculum."

Meanwhile, women, writing under Nigerian Feminists Forum, have asked President Umaru Yar'Adua to ignore the recommendation by his National Security Adviser, Gen. Sarki Muhammad, seeking to remove the reservation of certain electoral offices for women which is contained in the panel's report.

The women, in a letter to the President, signed by Mrs. Beoma Obiti on behalf the NFF, pointed out that over the years, Nigeria had relegated women to the back door in electoral process.

The letter stated, "We use this medium to call for the complete disregard of the recommendations of the NSA as mentioned above in favour of the well-thought out and progressive recommendations of the Electoral Reform Committee."

Also, government on Wednesday set up another committee to consider the report of its white paper committee.

Mimiko: PDP's plan to rule for 60 years in jeopardy - Banjo

Olaekan Adetayo

THE governorship candidate of the National Conscience Party in Ogun State in the 2007 elections, Mr. Larso Banjo, has said that the sack of Dr. Segun Agagu as Ondo State Governor by a Court of Appeal sitting in Benin, Edo State, has again scuttled the desire of members of the Peoples Democratic Party to impose themselves on the nation for 60 years.

In a statement released from his Washington, D.C. United States of America base on



•L-R: Consultant to the London-based Nigerian group, AriseNigeria, Mr. Charlie Eze; Chairman, House of Representatives Committee on the Diaspora, Mrs. Abike Dabiri-Erewa; and a coordinator of the group, Mr. Remi Idowu, during an interactive session by the committee in London...on Sunday.

Rerun: South-West leaders of AC in Ekiti, determined to fight the battle ...Condemn PDP's campaign committee headed by VP

Bisi Olaniyi, Ado-Ekiti

THE South-West leaders of the main opposition Action Congress were in Ekiti State on Wednesday, preparatory to the rerun in 10 out of the state's 16 local government areas ordered on February 17 by the Court of Appeal, Ilorin within 90 days.

The AC chiefs, led by the National Vice Chairman, South-West, Mr. Tajudeen Okusi, said they were determined and ready to fight the battle, for Dr. Kayode Fayemi's stolen mandate to be returned to him, through the votes of the electorate at the rerun.

Okusi urged all the leaders and members of the party in Ekiti, especially the youths, to be steadfast and never to be afraid of intimidation, threats to their lives or blackmail, maintaining that the party would emerge victorious.

He also condemned the 25-member committee on re-

election of Mr. Segun Oni, put in place by the national leadership of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party and headed by the Vice-President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, because of rerun in just 64 out of the state's 177 wards.

The AC's national vice chairman also wondered why the serious business of governance and urgent state matters would be abandoned by the VP and other leaders at this period of economic meltdown and be involved in the party's governorship candidate's campaigns and mobilisation.

Okusi noted that members of the presidential campaign committee of President Umaru Yar'Adua, were far less than the awkward campaign "contraption" of the PDP in Ekiti, alleging that Jonathan's inclusion was an indication that

an idle federal government was being run.

The consultative meeting held in Ado-Ekiti by the AC on Wednesday was attended by a former governor of the old Ondo State, Evang. Bamidele Olumilua; the party's governorship candidate in Ekiti (Fayemi); his running mate, Mrs. Fummi Olayinka; and Ekiti AC chairman, Chief Jide Awe.

Others included AC chairman in Lagos State, Chief Dole Ajomale; his counterparts in Oyo state, Mr. Samuel Farinu; and Ogun state, Mr. Tajudeen Belle; the party's National Youth Leader, Chief Segun Adesegun; the representative of the Lagos state governor, Rev. Tunji Adebisi; and the zonal Secretary, Chief Ranti Oyeboke; among others.

The national vice chairman further said, "We are at the war front, but the battle is not new. All

those waging war against us now, when Dr. Fayemi becomes the governor very soon, by God's grace, we will carry them along and ensure good governance.