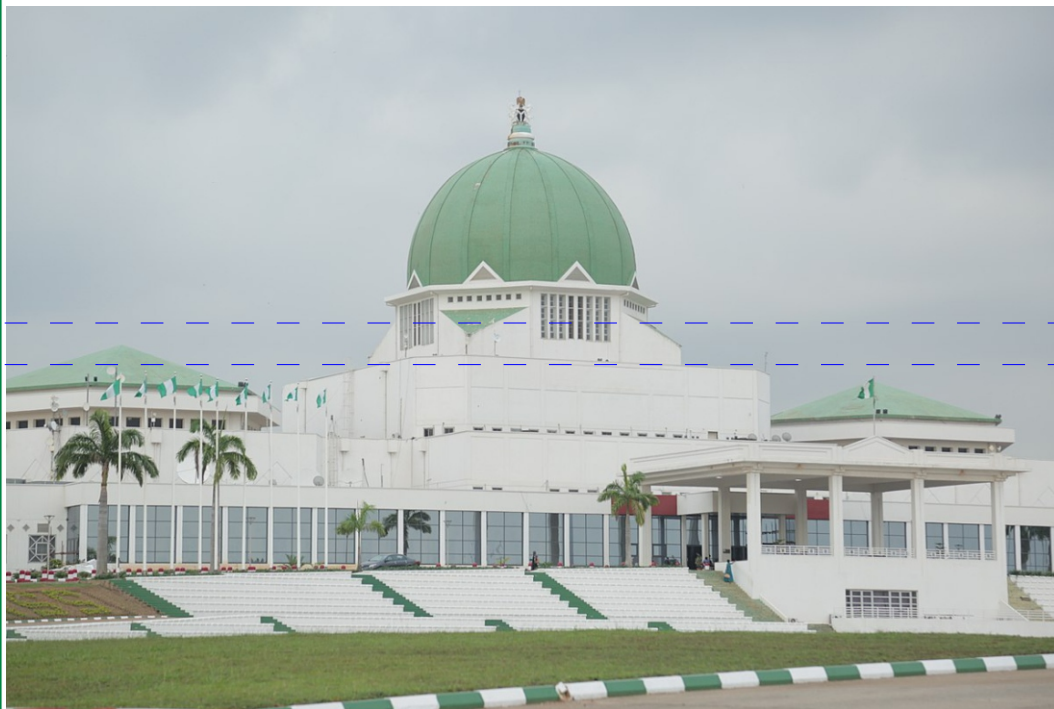


What are Nigerians benefitting from lawmakers?

By Kene Obiezu



Nigeria's independence in 1960 provided a momentous occasion for the country to pause, re-evaluate its excision from Britain's clogged colonial policy and make a dash for a decorated, prosperous future. The dash was frighteningly and forcefully promising until the military abandoned their barracks to truncate Nigeria's future between 1966 and 1970 and for long periods after that. Those wounds have simply refused to heal. Gratefully, Nigeria returned to democracy in 1999. With the reinstatement of democracy, elections returned, as did institutions of government. The executive, judiciary, and legislature have been up and running since then. At the federal level, it is the National Assembly that makes laws. The state Houses of Assembly

take over that task in the states. However, to say that since 1999, Nigerians have been repeatedly embarrassed by the lack of class and composure shown by many of those who represent them at the federal and state legislature is to put it mildly. Again and again, the supposed representatives of the people have shown by their words and conduct that they are not worth their salt, many times, of course, with the executive shamefully compelling them or conniving with them. The latest assembly that is more akin to a lunatic asylum is the Lagos State House of Assembly. Weeks ago, the long-standing and grandstanding speaker, Mudashiru Obasa, was removed and replaced by Mojisola

Meranda. But he has refused to back down or go down quietly, insisting that his removal was flawed and he deserves reinstatement. The fiasco has unsettled the assembly, with security personnel moving in to lock out the legislators and their staff some days ago. What a slap to the face of the people of Lagos State. It is a big slight to President Bola Tinubu, who is showing impregnable fortitude in trying to fix Nigeria's problems in Abuja, that legislators in his home state are indulging their whims and caprices and are instead behaving like spoilt school kids. This embarrassment

that is made in Lagos is coming very early in the year, but Nigerians have been there many times before. Rivers State was the last to provide such an embarrassing theatre. Legislators in the Benue State House of Assembly are not exactly at one another's necks, but their attempt to remove the state chief judge is one of such extensive theatrics that can only come from an overbearing and overexcited state House of Assembly. It is in the best interest of Nigerians that those elected to represent them at any level show themselves as people worthy to bear such sacred responsibilities.

This is key. They must show themselves consistently as people of excellent character. No matter the temptation, they must refuse to reduce themselves to the level of touts and truants, which would cast great indignity on their office as legislators. As for the overbearing executives who lean too hard on the legislature to make it impossible for them to work freely, it is important to remember that separation of powers is the hallmark of the constitutional democracy Nigeria is trying to operate. It is not about one person. It goes beyond anybody and extends to the health of democracy in Nigeria. If the institutions, which underpin democracy in Nigeria, perform optimally, the country will be in the best place possible eventually. Kene Obiezu writes via keneobiezu@gmail.com @ThePunch