

# 'Immigration jobs shared to governors, others'

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Most of the Immigration jobs that hundreds of thousands turned up trying to get on Saturday have already been allocated to well-connected politicians, including state governors and federal lawmakers, sources told *Daily Trust* in Abuja yesterday.

Only 240 of the 4,556 slots at the Nigerian Immigration Service remained for the 522,6752 "ordinary" applicants who trooped to the test centres and caused a stampede in which at least 16 of them died.

The Immigration Service had said a total of 522,652 applicants turned up at the venues spread around the country, battling for 4,556 jobs.

A source briefed about the recruitment process, which is being handled by the Board of Immigration, Customs and Prisons, told *Daily Trust* that among those who were already allocated job slots are governors, senators, House of Representatives members and ministers.

"They shared all the positions among governors, senators and others. What remains for those ordinary job seekers was 240," the source said.

Another source from one of the top anti-corruption agencies said the money collected from all the applicants amounted to about N7 billion.

"Look, each applicant paid N1,000. From the record 7 million applied, so they generated about N7 billion," he said.

When contacted, spokesman for the Immigration Service Mr. Chukwuemeka Obuah said he was not aware of sharing of the job slots, as the recruitment process was not even handled by the service itself.

"I don't know about that, I don't know about the issue of slots. The issue of this recruitment exercise was undertaken by the board, the Nigerian Immigration Service did not operate the board," Obuah said.

"What I know is that Nigerians lost their lives and it is tragic and unfortunate."

Efforts to get Senate's position were not successful as chairman of the Senate Interior Committee Atiku Bagudu did not answer telephone calls.

But the House of Representatives Interior Committee said if National Assembly members were given any allocation of job slots, they were entitled to them.

Committee chairman Rep Umar Bature (PDP, Sokoto) told *Daily Trust* by telephone yesterday: "People can say whatever they want to say. The National Assembly members are members of the public. So if they are given slots, I think they are entitled to it. But that is the issue that we would look at when we meet with the Senate committee. But I think we should not be looking at the scapegoat," he said.

He said the committee would investigate to find out causes of the incident.

On the criticism over monies collected from applicants, Bature defended the Immigration Service, saying all agencies routinely collect application form fees from job seekers.

**'Moro, Parradang must go'**

Meanwhile, criticism has trailed the deaths of jobseekers on Saturday, with individuals and groups calling for the



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sack and prosecution of the Interior Minister Abba Moro as well as the Controller General of Immigration David Parradang.

In a statement in Abuja last night, a group of 55 senior activists and politicians said the minister and the controller must be held to account for the deaths.

"If the lives of Nigerians mean anything, the leadership and management teams in the Ministry of the Interior and the NIS must be held to account for these deaths," the statement said.

"This tragedy was needless, foreseeable, and avoidable. The failures of the Ministry of the Interior and NIS to adequately manage the process and safeguard the safety and security of the jobseekers is inexcusable."

They demanded the sacking of Moro and Parradang, and urged the Attorney-General of the Federation, Inspector-General of Police and Director-General of State Security Service to open a joint criminal investigation into the deaths.

The statement was signed by Alhaji Bashir Othman Tofa, Dr. Ayesha Imam, Dr. Jibrin Ibrahim, Dr. Ishiyaku Mohammed, Dr. Chidi Anselm Odinkalu, Mr. Olusegun Adeniyi, Dr. Hussaini Abdu, Mr. Femi Edun, Dr. Abubakar Siddique Mohammed, Mal. Abba Kyari, Dr. Kole Shettima, Mrs. Maryam Uwais, Prof. Ebere Onwudiwe, Mal. Nasir Ahmed El-Rufai, Alhaji Yusuf Tuggar, Mr. Yemi Candide-Johnson, Alhaji Tajudeen Fola Adeola, Waziri Adio, Alhaji Bashir Yusuf Ibrahim, Iniruo Wills, Mrs. Ayo Obe, Yunusa Yau,

Nasir Ladan, Dr. Jeremy Weate, Prof. Nsongurua Udombana, Dr. Charmaine Perreira, Saka Azimazi, Dr. Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, Mrs. Funke Adekoya, Jibrin Okutepe, Chief Ziggy Azike, Roland Ewubare, Mrs. Stella Ugboma, Prof. Ernest Ojukwu, Chukwuma Odelugo, Dr. Solomon Ebobrah, Afolabi Kuti, Mrs. Victoria Ibezim-Ohiaeri, Ms. Seember Nyagher, Dr. Joan Oviawe, Ikeazor Akaraiwe, Auwal Musa Rafsanjani, Doueyi Fiderekumo, Dakorim Boma Odunuga, Alaezi Nmezi, Dele Aloko, Mrs. Ozioma Izuora, Ms. Lola Shoneyin, Mal. Bilya Bala, Dr. Aliyu Modibbo Umar, Uba Saidu Malami, Obinna Anaba, Ms. Wumi Asubiaro, Alhaji Suleiman Adamu and Mr. Obi Akaraiwe.

Also yesterday, the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC) said the jobseekers' deaths were a direct consequence of "15 years of misrule by the PDP-led Federal Government."

In a statement in Lagos, APC spokesman Alhaji Lai Mohammed said the Interior Minister must bear direct responsibility for the incident and must step down from his position or be sacked.

"Despite huge yearly budgets rolled out since 1999, the PDP-led Federal Government has failed to create jobs for our teeming youth, and the number of those who are jobless has now reached such an alarming rate that a job emergency may have to be declared to avert an impending cataclysm," the statement said.

In his reaction, speaker of the House of Representatives Aminu Waziri

Tambuwal said in a statement there was need for the authorities concerned "to investigate the remote and immediate cause of the tragedy, and to map out strategies to prevent future occurrence."

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) described the deaths of applicants as a national disaster.

TUC president Bobboi Kaigama, who said the congress is "extremely grieved" by the deaths, called for immediate investigation into the matter as well as a probe of allegations of money collected from applicants.

The Conference of Nigerian Political Parties (CNPP) also said the tragedy at the recruitment faulted government's claim of having created 1.6 million jobs in 2013.

CNPP spokesman Osita Okechukwu said in a statement that the tragedy "is the outcome of Federal Government of Nigeria's nebulous and inchoate economic policy."

"Otherwise, if the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) led Federal Government had in the past 15 years invested our unprecedented oil and gas revenue to critical infrastructures like refineries, modern railways, power supply, there is no way over 4,000,000 youths will pay N1,000 to chase less than 3,000 jobs in a single department of the state across the country."

In its reaction, the Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA) urged President Goodluck Jonathan to order the arrest and prosecution Interior Minister Moro and the Controller General of Immigration.

HURIWA coordinator Emmanuel Onwubiko and the media director Zainab Yusuf also demanded the immediate dismissal of the top officials of the Nigerian Immigration Services and the Federal Ministry of Interior for "negligence which led to the high fatality rate at the ill-fated recruitment exercise by the NIS."

"The Federal Government must also pay heavy compensation of not less than N10 million to the families of each of the dead because their deaths were occasioned by the total official dereliction of function committed by officials," they said in a statement.

**Moro: Probe panel coming**

Moro yesterday visited the National Stadium in Abuja, where some of the deaths occurred on Saturday, saying the stampede was "unfortunate and a national tragedy."

"The situation we have found here is very unfortunate, because if you look at the gate of the stadium and the surroundings, it is a clear indication that some people had the intention to break into the stadium forcefully," he said.

"In the process people were trampled upon and unfortunately some persons lost their lives. This is an exercise that was organised primarily to forestall this kind of incidence that we have seen today."

Moro said adequate security was provided to maintain orderliness in all the test centres, but that "people who did not apply for the exercise tried to cash in on the openness of the exercise. Several unauthorised persons came in here, especially pregnant women; and in a paramilitary examination that involves physical exercise, I am surprised that a pregnant woman will come to partake."

He said a committee would be set up today to look critically at the situation.