

► SPOTLIGHT

Macky Sall

The pragmatist politician hopes to provide a serious challenge to President Abdoulaye Wade in Senegal's presidential polls in February, and provide a rallying point for a divided opposition in the second round

IN THE RUN-UP to Senegal's February elections, all eyes are on the men who will challenge President Abdoulaye Wade at the polls, and Macky Sall carries more weight than most. Over the past decade the country's opposition has been made up of two groups: the older, traditional leaders such as *Parti Socialiste* leader Ousmane Tanor Dieng and the head of *Alliance des Forces de Progrès*, Moustapha Niasse; and those younger, more fiery leaders who have fallen or been pushed from grace during Wade's 12-year rule.

Of the latter, no one has quite the footprint in the rural areas and the political support in the cities to match Macky Sall. Since his dramatic departure from the party in 2008, Sall has been winning support through a tireless campaign.

A geologist by training, Sall headed the *Société des Pétroles du Sénégal* before becoming Wade's special adviser for energy and mines. A loyal PDS member, Sall rose to become prime minister and led Wade's successful re-election campaign in 2007, an election that few expected Wade to win. A combination of hard work, loyalty and pragmatism made him a favourite to take over from Wade who, entering his 80s and growing increasingly frail, seemed to be looking for a successor. After Idrissa Seck's dramatic exit from that

11 December 1961
Born in Fatick

December 2000
Named director general of Société des Pétroles du Sénégal

April 2001
Appointed mines and energy minister

April 2004
Appointed prime minister

June 2007
Became president of the National Assembly



SEYLLOU/AFP

potential post, including a seven-month jail term on accusations of embezzlement, Sall looked set to pick up the mantle.

But as soon as the legislative elections were over, Sall was removed from his post and became president of the National Assembly instead. In 2008, after Wade's deeply unpopular son Karim began to take a leading role in everything from business to

politics, and after Sall requested that Karim submit the accounts for the massively over-budget Organisation of the Islamic Conference summit that he organised, Abdoulaye Wade reduced Sall's mandate from five years to one. By the end of 2008, Sall left the party, set up the *Alliance pour la République* and joined the ranks of those potential successors pushed out from Wade's political family.

Sall has worked tirelessly since then to reach out to the rural areas, which contain around two-thirds of the electorate. Senegal's political landscape is not traditionally based on ethnic allegiances, and Sall has not resorted to the kind of religious rhetoric of Idrissa Seck, but instead he pledges reforms such as a reduction in the amount of foreign embassies and the separation of family and state. These are not the radically attractive promises that would tempt much of the electorate – an unrealistic promise to end the energy crisis within a few months delighted many in electricity-starved Dakar – but instead point to Sall's pragmatism, which could be influential were he to make it to the second round.

A late entry to the presidential race was music icon Youssou N'Dour, an event that has turned an international spotlight on Senegal's political story and inspired the opposition – up until then disorganised and complacent – to take action. N'Dour might not have the political background or support to manage a government, but he has both popularity and funds, things no one else in the running has.

N'Dour's entry to the race should help to unite the opposition when it comes to the planned second round on 18 March. In the meantime, analysts, journalists and political commentators are chanting the motto 'all against Wade'. N'Dour's camp remains tight-lipped about who he might fall behind, but for now he is not even considering the possibility of failing to make the second round. What is sure is that whoever makes it to the second round will gain the support of millions of voters who are desperate for a change in 2012. ●

Rose Skelton in Dakar

**The Lijadu Sisters Knit one, sing two**

NIGERIAN SINGING TWINS Taiwo and Kehinde are back on the scene. The sisters, who are cousins of the late Fela Kuti, toured Europe and the United States in the 1970s and 1980s with the likes of King Sunny Ade and Ginger Baker. They released their debut album *Danger* in 1976 and are set to re-release all four of their albums with US label Knitting Factory Records. ●

**MONCEF MARZOUKI**

Many are fêting the pragmatism of Tunisia's Islamist party *Ennahda*, but Marzouki, the new president, has turned his into an art form, batting away complaints from secular liberals and building bridges with the new leaders in Libya.

**ISAIAS AFEWERKI**

Despite the toughening of UN sanctions in early December, an upswing in gold investment and mining revenue set to benefit the state-owned mining company could help shore up the isolated government of the Eritrean president.

**KWESI BOTCHWEY**

The chairman of Ghana's National Gas Development Task Force presided over the award of a \$700m contract with the China Development Bank for the gas processing plant near Takoradi (see page 52 for more on gas in Ghana).

**VERÍSSIMO PINTO**

As part of a massive investigation into the drugs trade and money laundering, Cape Verdean police arrested Pinto, the head of the national stock exchange, and six others on 20 December for suspected links to a cocaine-smuggling ring.

**YVES MICHEL FOTSO**

The imprisoned former director of Cameroon's national airline faced another blow as liquidators announced in December that they are looking for new investors in Commercial Bank Cameroon, formerly an important holding of the Fotso Group.

**SAMUEL SAM-SUMANA**

Allegations aired in an Al Jazeera documentary about illegal logging in Sierra Leone pointed to bribery within the office of the vice-president. Vice-president Sumana has refused to resign ahead of national elections in August.

Malam Bacai Sanha Guinea-Bissau president dies in Paris

THE 64-YEAR-OLD PRESIDENT of the troubled West African nation died on 9 January in a Paris hospital, where he had been in intensive care since December. Army officers had tried to stage a coup during his absence. Sanha is the second successive Guinea-Bissau president to die in office – his predecessor João Bernardo Vieira was assassinated in 2009. Sanha's death makes an already fragile political situation even more precarious and the international community will push for reconciliation. ●