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STAR INTERVIEW

The story of my life

-Abdul-Razaq (SAN)



Pages 8 & 33



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Nigeria is today possibly taking the first step towards perdition with the opening of the hastily convened, ill-defined, lopsided and ill-timed conference.

The proponents of the sovereign national conference, the remnants of the dedicated Northern haters from the South-West, personified by Wole Soyinka and Co., want to break up the country, to free the South West from the purported drag of Nigeria, more particularly the North. The President is offering a National Political Reform Conference, thus flying the nationalist flag. But the President's actions in the past six years including his pre-conference statement and the lopsidedness of his personal nominees numbering nearly 100 all point to tactical differences only with Wole Soyinka and Co. within a strategic consensus - the

FRONT PAGE COMMENT

National Conference

The road to perdition?

implementation of the Yoruba National Agenda through the back door.

The President, in his pre-conference broadcast, challenged us: "We should not discuss in fear and we should never fear to discuss". This is plagiarism of President Kennedy's famous quote: "let us not negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate". In Kennedy's case he was referring to a

foreign enemy - Communist Russia. How do you draw such an inauspicious analogy in a pseudo-constitution making conference within a country?

It is therefore demonstrably clear that the conference is being convened in utter bad faith and deliberately timed when the country is at its most volatile period, a volatility brought about by government's actions, characterized as they are by parochialism, separatism, provincialism and crude tactics.

Let us examine the political and economic antecedents of this government. Its entire leadership, the President and Vice President, the President of the Senate, his Deputy, all suffer a crisis of legitimacy, arising from a fraudulent electoral

Contd. on Back page

NATIONAL CONFAB

Monguno, Yakasai, others decry lopsided leadership

From Musa Kazaure, Kano, Sani Babadoko, Kaduna, Aminu Mohammed, Sokoto & Isa Umar Gusau, in Maiduguri

Prominent northerners have voiced their disapproval over the lopsidedness in the appointment of the leadership and nomination of delegates by the federal government to the national political reforms conference which opens

today in Abuja. A former minister during General Gowon's administration and an elder statesman (Dr) Shettima Ali Monguno has said that the appointment of the leadership of the national conference was against the expectations of

Nigerians. Monguno who was speaking amidst mixed reactions over the appointment of the chairman and secretary of the national conference, both of whom Christians, said that the appointments fall short of leadership distribution

which reflects "acceptable characters" in Nigeria. "In this country, we have quota when it comes to matters of ethnicity and religion. Right now we have a Christian president and a Muslim vice president. This to my mind has so far been

accepted in Nigeria. As such appointments should reflect such balance in all aspects of our national life. So those appointments to the conference do not fall within Nigerians expectations," Dr Monguno said in an exclusive interview with *Daily Trust*

yesterday in Maiduguri. The former minister and a retired politician said that it has since become accepted in Nigeria as a federal character principle, that leadership positions reflect balance in religions and

Contd. on Pg 2

... Women groups sue Obasanjo

Ten different women organisations over the weekend in Lagos dragged President Olusegun Obasanjo before the Lagos high court over the low number of women representative at the national conference.

The suit which was filed by Lagos lawyer, Mr Femi Falana on behalf of Professor Jadesola Akande, representing Women Law and Development Centre Nigeria (WLDCN), and nine others is seeking an order of court directing Mr President to reconstitute the national conference with the appointment of not less than 200 women forthwith.

The women are also praying the court for an order of perpetual injunction restraining the president from further subjecting women to discriminatory treatment in the execution of any law or administrative action in Nigeria.

Specifically, the women are asking for a declaration

From Adelanwa Bamgboye, Correspondent (Lagos)

that the appointment of 31 women out of 400 members of the national political reform conference is discriminatory, illegal and unconstitutional as it violates women's fundamental right to freedom from discrimination guaranteed by Section 42 of the 1999 constitution and Article 3 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Right.

According to the women, by virtue of the convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the government of Nigeria is under an obligation to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women so as to achieve equality of men and women.

The women explained that even though they (women) constitute 52 percent of the population of Nigeria,

Contd. on Pg 2



Emir of Zazzau, Alhaji (Dr) Shehu Idris with the Chief of Maroa, Malam Tagwai Sambo, at the opening ceremony of the 26th Kaduna International Trade Fair ...weekend.

Gen Adisa flown abroad after ghastly accident

Former Works and Housing minister, retired Major-General Abdulkarim Adisa was flown abroad yesterday following a spinal cord injury he sustained in an auto crash on Oro-Oke Onigbin road in the Irepodun local government area of

From Abdulrazaq Adebayo, Correspondent (Ilorin)

Kwara state.

Daily Trust learnt that the accident occurred at 7 p.m. Saturday after a rear tyre burst of the *Jeep* conveying him to Ilorin.

General Adisa was heading to Ilorin after attending retired General David Jemibewon's mother 95th birthday anniversary held at Iyah Gbedde, in Kogi state.

Daily Trust correspondent who was at the University of Teaching Hospital,

where he was admitted saw close associates including former military governor of Lagos, General Raji Rasaki, and officials of the Kwara state government battling to fly him abroad.

A team of doctors led by

Contd. on Pg 2

News

socio-ethnic groups, other wise, contrary acts are perceived as marginalisation.

Dr Monguno however said that the national conference seems not to be understood by Nigerians, or the agenda does not appear known to many people especially the non-elites.

He said the conference appears a proposition by politicians to make manipulations that would suit their political aspirations at the expense of other Nigerians. As a result, he said he holds reservations on the conference, especially as the delegates were not elected but selected.

"Let me tell you frankly, that any reform that may lead to change in the provisions of the Nigerian constitution should be done through the popular and freely elected representatives of the nation. I don't believe that anybody or group of people, will be more appropriate for socio-political reforms than people elected, rather than those handpicked or selected," Monguno expressed.

He stated that where elected people were not tasked for such reforms, a nationwide referendum should have been conducted without manipulations to collate the views of Nigerians on issues that border on their collective future.

On speculations that the conference may be targeted at constitutional amendments to pave way for a single five year tenure for President Obasanjo and state governors, Shettima Ali Monguno said that the national conference cannot decide such, except elected representatives or a referendum.

Speaking in Kano, elder statesman, Alhaji Tanko Yakasai, said the lopsidedness will have a negative impact on the deliberations of the conference.

He told *Daily Trust* yesterday in Kano that although he does not believe in boycotting the conference by Muslims in protest against the lopsidedness in representation as agitated in some quarters, yet the preference for Christian delegates even in states where there are Muslim majority was too glaring.

Alhaji Tanko Yakasai cited Kaduna state where the ratio of the population is two-third Muslim and one-third Christians, but the presidency gave the two positions of the federal delegates to Christians. He stated that demographic statistics have shown that four states in the southwest (Oyo, Osun, Ogun and Lagos) have Muslim majority, yet all their representatives are Christians.

The first, second and third republic politician said whatever the rationale behind such selections and especially with both leadership coming from a faith is wrong and may bring bad feelings to adherents of the religion that feel cheated. He noted that since Jama'atul Nasirul Islam (JNI) has pointed out that disparity to the government, he hopes that Presi-

Monguno *Contd. from Pg 1*

dent Obasanjo will adjust the representation since the list is not final.

Alhaji Tanko Yakasai said if the president cannot give proportional representation to followers of both faith, then he should at least give equal representation. He also berated government for giving fewer representations to states with high population like Kano and Lagos, while giving higher representation to states with less population like Ogun and Gombe.

On the conference itself, Alhaji Tanko Yakasai said the time frame of three month is inadequate considering the length of time it took past conferences which he attended. He noted that with the bulk of work before the conference, it will take at least nine-months to complete its assignment and another three-months for government to come out with a position.

Senator Mohammed Yushau Anka (ANPP, Zamfara West), said the President Obasanjo-inspired conference on political reforms opening today in Abuja is aimed at politically and economically marginalising Muslims as its membership is skewed in favour of Christians.

Anka told *Daily Trust* in Kaduna yesterday that from his analysis, the conference has 150 Muslims as against 226 Christians while the chairman and secretary are both Christians.

"When the issue of Sharia or any issue having to do with the welfare, economic and religious pursuit of Muslims come to a vote, you can see that Muslims are already at a disadvantage," Senator Anka declared.

"The situation where Christians outnumber Muslims at the conference by over 70 persons is lopsided and deliberately done by Obasanjo to marginalise Muslims who are the majority of in the country's population of about 130 million Nigerians.

"The conference has neither equity nor fairness and is aimed at dividing the country along regional and religious line. Besides, it is illegal and the president has no powers to appropriate funds to it without the approval of the National Assembly and called on northern delegates to refuse to be bought over.

"The conference is bound to end in controversy and acrimony that will threaten the peaceful co-existence of the country. The conference has a hidden agenda because the president doesn't mean all he is saying.

Alhaji (Dr) Abubakar Muhammad Sokoto, a politician in the second republic, and member of the Arewa Consultative Forum, said the conference is an attempt to cause misunderstanding as far as he is concerned.

He said, "we know those who stay in this country and in the north and south we have the Muslims and the Christians. If we mean to live together, we have to create harmony among ourselves"

CBN can't give banks tax waivers - FIRS

The Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), has said that the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), has no powers to give tax waivers to banks that merge in the on-going consolidation process in the banking sector.

Part of the incentives the CBN pledged banks that go through mergers and acquisitions under its consolidation policy are tax waivers.

An assistant director in the FIRS, Mr A. J. Bamidele, who stated this in Lagos on Thursday at a seminar organised by Ijewere and Company Limited. He said that there could be areas of tax relief for banks with the cooperation of all authorised agencies of government.

He hinted that the effort could even be made more stress-free with the support of the National Assembly, adding that mergers that did not in value cash payment as mandated by the CBN will not be liable to capital gains like tax waivers.

Speaking at the event which was attended by top bankers and consultants in the financial sector, Mr Emmanuel Adeleke also of FIRS, urged bankers to recognise the fact that mergers and

From Bright Ewulu, Deputy Editor (Business), Lagos

acquisitions are a management issue and emphasized strategies, people fitness, operational and systems etc.

He stated that the challenge is for mergers and acquisitions transactions to add value, stressing that unless a merger enhances synergy, it is bound to fail.

He was however emphatic that synergy is not automatic and may need to be intentionally worked out in the interest of the merged organisations.



A cross section of national conference delegates being accredited on arrival at Le-Meridien Hotel, Abuja ...yesterday. Pix: Kennedy Egbonolije.

Women *Contd. from Pg 1*

they have always been subjected to discriminatory treatment by the federal and state governments in Nigeria.

Out of the 216 delegates nominated by the 36 state governors, the women said only four women were nominated by Lagos, Ekiti and Akwa Ibom states.

According to them, despite of the public outcry against the discriminatory treatment meted to women, President Obasanjo decided to appoint only 31 women into the national conference, while 369 men were appointed.

In the opinion of the women, the issues of gender

inequality, citizenship, infant mortality, illiteracy, unemployment, indigeneship, popular participation, reproductive health rights, female genital mutilation, child trafficking, discrimination, discriminatory treatment under Sharia and customary law which are peculiar to women cannot be adequately protected in a male-dominated conference.

Apart from WLDCN represented by its executive director, Professor Jadesola Akande, other women groups suing the president are Abiola Akiyode-Afolabi of Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC) and NMA Odi for Rural Women Empowerment Network (RUWEN).

Others are Olabisi Olatere-Olagbegi of Women Consortium of Nigeria (WOCN), Judeth Mbadiwe from Women in Law and Development Africa (WLDFA) and Elizebeth Shonubi on behalf of Justice Development and Peace Commission.

The rest are Alhaja Raliat Roli on behalf of Denize Ajegunle Community Project, Dr Lyodie Umar on behalf of Gender Action Team, Kaduna, Tinu Oni-Ihama for Business and Professional Women Association and Rita Akinbode on behalf of Gender and Constitution Reform Network (GECON).

As at the time of filing this report, no court has been assigned to hear the suit.

The suit is also supported by a 7-paragraph affidavit of urgency deposed to by Abiola Akiyode-Afolabi of WARDC and an exparte motion seeking an order permitting the applicants not only to maintain the suit in representative capacity but also to serve the court processes through the Attorney General of the Federation care of liaison office, Federal Ministry of Justice, Marina, Lagos.

Adisa *Contd. from Pg 1*

the Chief Medical Director of UniLorin Teaching Hospital, Dr Suleiman Kuranga, battled to put General Adisa in stable condition before further arrangements for his trip abroad probably Britain at the instance of the Kwara state government.

Sources said doctors discovered that a bone had pinned down a portion of the spinal cord, hence the need to fly the general abroad where proper medical attention could be provided.

At the time of this report by 6 p.m. a plane to fly him abroad was still at the Ilorin International Airport.



General Adisa

Egyptian doctors remove baby's second head

Egyptian doctors said they removed a second head from a 10-month-old girl suffering from one of the rarest birth defects in an operation on Saturday.

Abla el-Alfy, a consultant in paediatric intensive care, told *Reuters* at the hospital in Benha, near Cairo, that Manar Maged was in a serious but improving condition after the procedure to treat her for *craniopagus parasiticus* a problem related to that of conjoined twins linked at the skull.

"We are still working on the baby. After surgery ... you get unstable blood pressure, you get fever. But she is stabilising," Alfy said. "We have some improvement."

As in the case of a girl who died after similar surgery in the Dominican Republic a year ago, the second twin had developed no body. The head that was removed from Manar had been capable of smiling and blinking but not independent life, doctors said.

Video footage provided by the hospital, a national centre in Egypt for children's medicine, showed Manar smiling and at ease in a cot with the dark-haired "parasitic" twin, attached at the upper left side of the girl's skull, occasionally blinking.

After the 13-hour operation, *Reuters* journalists saw the baby, her head in bandages and body wreathed by tubes, in an intensive care ward.

Alfy said the 13-strong surgical team separated Manar's brain from the conjoined twin.

Elkanah Chawai, Reporter (Foreign Desk) with Agency Report

cutting off the blood supply to the extra head while preventing increased blood flow to Manar's heart, which would have risked cardiac arrest.

Benha, 40 km north of Cairo, was chosen for its equipment and proximity to the girl's family. "The family of the child are from near here. We have the equipment. We assembled a team. So why not have the operation here?" she said, explaining the choice not to work in Cairo or at centres abroad with more experience with conjoined twins.

Alfy said Manar's skull has been reconstructed during surgery and her skin has been joined over the bone, leaving no need for further reconstructive surgery.

The doctors decided not to carry out Manar's operation soon after her birth: "We studied the babies well," Alfy said. "We had to study how the blood supply of the parasite is working."

Alfy disclosed that Manar will be kept in intensive care for up to 10 days: "Things are getting better but ... at any time things can go wrong."

The condition occurs when an embryo begins to split into identical twins but fails to complete the process and one of the conjoined twins fails to develop fully in the womb.

The second twin can form as an extra limb, a complete second body lacking vital organs, or, in very rare cases,

News

National Confab... National Confab... National Confab...

Delegates get N60, 000 sitting allowance each

Delegates to the national political reform conference beginning today in Abuja are to be paid N20, 000 monthly as sitting allowance. They are to sit for a period of three months.

Chairman of the conference, Justice Niki Tobi will on his part collect a total of N75, 000 as sitting allowance for the 90-day period at N25, 000 monthly.

Other highlights of the expenditure of the confab includes two return air tickets for the delegates at N20, 000 each; N40, 000 as local transport cost; and N20, 000 to each delegate for 90 days in lieu of accommodation.

A total of N1.7 million is also to be spent on the four members from the diaspora as cost of business class international flights from and

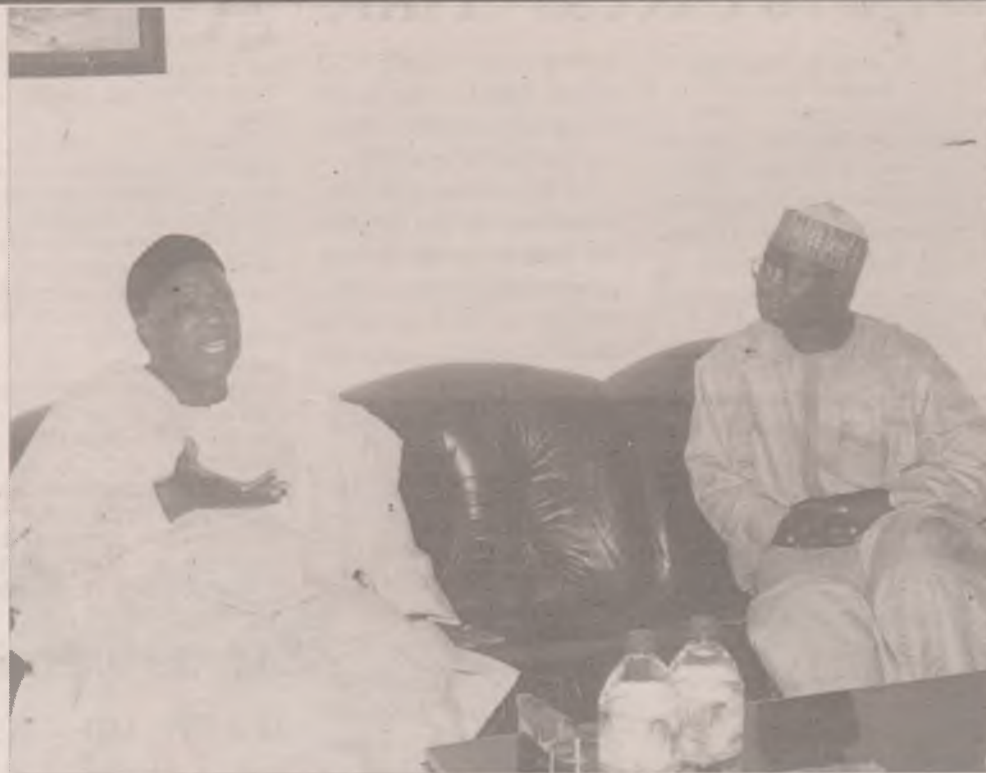
By Habeeb I. Pindiga, Political reporter

to London, Washington, Beijing and Johannesburg.

Government is also to spend N3.5 million to hire and fuel two CVU long wheel vehicles and four drivers, while N73.26 million will be paid to hire the Africa hall, banquet hall and two committee rooms at the International Conference Centre for the period of the confab.

Meals for the participants and secretariat staff, broken into two tea breaks and one lunch per day will cost N173.5 million, while stationery will gulp N5 million.

The total conference budget is N923 million.



Governor Abdullahi Adamu of Nasarawa state (left) stressing a point while the Executive Director, (Operations), Media Trust, Alhaji Isiaq Ajibola listens during the governor's courtesy call on Media Trust Headquarters in Abuja... recently. Pix: Kennedy Egbonodje

Women not marginalized - Dikko

From Aliyu Haruna, Correspondent (Kaduna)

The head of the Kaduna state delegation to the proposed national political reform conference, Dr. Umaru Dikko, has declared that the womenfolk are being represented by their husbands at the conference, even as he denied that have been marginalized.

Speaking exclusively to Daily Trust in Kaduna against the recent statement by the Minister of Women Affairs, Obong Rita Akpan, that women are being marginised, Dr. Dikko, said that they it is deal not to take women to the conference just because they are women.

According to him, nature has made women more suited to certain positions in the society, and also made more suited to other aspects of life, saying that we should always talk about suitability not representation.

He also said that when a job is best done by a woman, she should be sent for the job which if it is best done by man, he should go for it, adding that we should not just send people for job only to represent their sex.

He also said that nature has made it possible for every sex to do a particularly thing, citing the example of breast feeding a child which is the sole responsibility of women.

He declared that any person the society feels should do a particular job, such should be given to him.

Confab Constitutional - Etiebet

Abdullahi Bego, Regional Editor (Maiduguri)

The National chairman of Nigeria's largest opposition party, the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) has once again come to the defence of the federal government-organised national political reform conference, saying that the conference is 'absolutely constitutional and legitimate'.

Speaking to reporters in Maiduguri, Chief Etiebet explained that the constitution "allows a group of Nigerians to meet and discuss common problems" and that regardless of the opposition of members of the national Assembly, including those from his own political party to the conference, the ANPP will fully participate.

Chief Etiebet added that he will be meeting with delegates from ANPP-controlled states today (Monday) to harmonise positions both as members of the party and representatives from their individual state, prior to the full beginning of the conference.

Commenting on the opposition of the National Assembly members to the conference, the ANPP national chairman said that he could understand the apprehension of the NASS members but that "I have not heard that the guidelines given for the national conference would affect the work of the NASS. I have not heard that the conference replaces or is going to displace the NASS", Etiebet said.

Chief Etiebet, who maintained that members of the National Assembly would be acting unconstitutionally if they act to stop the conference, added that the legislators should not be afraid of anything with regard to the conference.

The ANPP chairman therefore called on the National Assembly members "to give the national conference a chance and to support it in all its ramifications".

Chief Etiebet was in Maiduguri to commission a road project undertaken by the ANPP-controlled administration of Ali Sherif.

Why we withdrew suit against Confab - Reps

57 members of the House of Representatives who went to court seeking an injunction restrain to President Olusegun Oba-sanjo from convening the national conference have said that their decision to withdraw the suit on Friday was to avoid giving the conference legal backing.

Addressing newsmen on Friday at the National Assembly where the group announced its decision to withdraw the suit,

From Zainab Alimi

the group's spokesperson, Hon. Victor Lar, said that going ahead with the suit will only ridicule the objective of halting the take-off of the conference.

He disclosed that the suit, which was filed on February 4, 2005, at the federal high court, Abuja, was slated for hearing on February 22, 2005, a day after the conference is slated for inauguration.

"From the foregoing, it is evident that it will be practically impossible for the court to grant the motion of injunction we are seeking before the inauguration of the conference," he explained.

Briefing newsmen along with three other members representing the 57 members who filed the suit, Hon. Lar said that the decision to discontinue with the case was a painful one,

but that it does not mean they are throwing their weight behind the conference.

Said he: "officially, none of the 57 members who filed this suit has dissociated himself from the legal action. We all still believe that there is no need for this conference. Rather, I personally believe that the President should convene a sovereign national conference."

Hon. Lar said that they still believe that other constitutional means can be sought to stop the conference, even as he said that the group had no reason to suspect any arm-twisting in the matter.

He added that the painful decision by the group to withdraw the suit followed serious deliberations and legal counseling. Members who appeared alongside him included Hon. Farouk Lawan, Hon. Farouk Adamu Aliyu and Hon. Ahmed Wadada.

ACF urges North's confab delegates to unite

The Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), has enjoined participants the proposed national confab representing various northern states to unite and focus on vital problems facing the region.

This call was made by a member of the ACF committee on implementation, Alhaji Tanko Wambai, while speaking on the Hausa service of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), monitored in Abuja yesterday.

Alhaji Tanko said, "we urge our delegates from the north to focus on the oil exploration which was abandoned due to politics." He added, "our delegates should also try as much as possible on agricultural development, issue of eradicating begging and other vices bedeviling the northern region."

According to him, apart from oil and agriculture, the North is endowed with abundant minerals resources that could sustain the economy growth and development of the country.

Wambai who argued that the north has been in crisis and disunity, announced that the northern delegates would meet and deliberate on issues a day before the commencement of the conference in Abuja. He expressed hope that all the

From Abubakar Haruna, Reporter (Abuja)

delegates from north would do every thing possible to ensure that all the problems bedeviling the north and northerners is deliberated upon and a lasting solution proffered for the good of the

region and the country.

In a related development, a cross section of aggrieved people from the Southern part of Bauchi state have written a letter to president Obasanjo complaining of alleged marginalisation in the political reform conference.

South-South charged on common interest

Members of the steering committee of the South-South Peoples Assembly (SSPA), have been charged with the responsibility of maintaining a common national interest that will ensure the attainment of the agenda of the region as a fall out of the national political reforms conference starting this week in Abuja.

The Akwa Ibom state governor, Arc. (Obong) Victor Attah, gave the charge on Friday while addressing delegates of the South-South zone to the national dialogue, elders and members of the South-South Peoples Assembly (SSPA) a meeting at the governor's office annex, Uyo.

Obong Attah who lauded the members of the South-South Peoples Assembly for coming out with the South-South agenda, one document he noted would form the basis of deliberations by delegates, from the region to the national confab, highlighted issues including the Akwa Ibom agenda for

From Edet Ekanem (Uyo)

discussions at the conference to includes amongst other things: 50 per cent derivation, resource control, fiscal federation, revenue allocation,

federalism, environment, federal courts, and local government.

He said the issues if properly articulated at the confab will reunite to a large extent, the amendment of SSPA agenda so as to

accommodate the interest of all the states in the region.

The group opined that the meeting of the Assembly be held regularly but advised that such meetings should be rotated around the six member states.



Segun Olaleye, former NANS president and spokesman of the Congress of National Youth Leaders protesting FG's youth nominees to the national confab to the minister of Inter government Affairs, youth development and special duties, Mr. Frank Nweke Jnr... recently

News

FG shares 50% excess crude revenue

By Anas A. Galadima,
Reporter (Business)

The federal government has disclosed that 50 percent of excess crude oil revenue accruals from January to December last year has been shared among the federal, state and local governments as agreed at the meeting of the National Economic Council in Abuja. The 50 percent of excess crude totals about N318 billion.

The minister of state for finance, Mrs. Nenadi Usman, who disclosed this in Abuja on Friday, said the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), had a

delay in payment because they were trying to decide whether it should be paid on a monthly basis or on a quarterly basis. It was finally decided that it should be paid on a quarterly basis.

Also, the Federal Account Allocation Committee (FAAC), has recommended N232 billion for sharing, among the three tiers of government for the month of January 2005.

According to a communiqué issued at the end of the FAAC meeting in Abuja on Friday, this amount

reflects a drop from the N242 billion shared for the month of December 2004 thus showing a drop of N10 billion.

A breakdown of the recommended amount for sharing shows that the federal government will get 52.68 percent which amounts to about N102 billion, while the state governments will get 26.72% which amounts to about N52 billion.

Also, the local governments will get 20.6 percent which amounts to about N40 billion while derivation (13% mineral revenue) amounts to about N25 billion.

Mrs. Usman further explained that the drop in the monthly allocation "is a function of the rise and fall of crude oil prices."

On the delay of the payment of monetisation benefits of workers in the federal government parastatals, she said the monetisation scheme started with core ministries. That it was not too long also that parastatals went into monetisation.

That, according to her, is why there has been some delays in the payment of monetisation benefits of workers in government parastatals.

FG warns ASUU against strike

By Henry Omonu Senior
Reporter (Education)

The federal government has advised the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), to shelve its proposed three-day warning strike in the interest of lasting peace in the nation's university system.

Permanent secretary in the federal ministry of education, Alh. Ibrahim Talba, in a statement in Abuja yesterday, said government was aware of the planned ASUU strike from February 23-25, even though the union had no genuine reasons to embark on the strike.

Government, he said, regrets that the planned strike will interrupt the peace that has pervaded Nigerian universities in the last 18 months and which Nigerians have applauded as signalling a new beginning between staff, student unions and the university management.

He accused ASUU officials of not canvassing the issues in contention with government before starting the strike, adding however that "government has taken steps create an avenue for discussions with the ASUU leadership."

The government has therefore summoned ASUU officials to a meeting with the minister of education, Prof. Fabian Osuji, scheduled for 12 noon at the federal secretariat, Abuja today.

Expressing worry over the strike threat, government said the grounds for the strike by ASUU are subject of ongoing judicial action. "Indeed, one of such grounds the 44 lecturers who were disengaged by the University of Ilorin has been contested by the ASUU branch of the university and the proposed strike action publicly denounced by the UniIlorin branch of ASUU", Alh. Talba said.

While calling for dialogue to resolve of the contentions issues, the permanent secretary urged ASUU to shelve

the proposed warning strike "in the interest of peace and continued stability of the university system and the desire to pursue an agenda of improved delivery of quality university education."

ASUU, he said, should obey the rule of law in calling its members out on strike, as government will continue to implement the "no-work-no-pay" policy during strikes.

National Mosque

rehabilitation plan on course

-Gov. Adamu

By Abdu Labaran,
Political Editor

The chairman of the fund raising committee for the rehabilitation of the national mosque, Governor Abdullahi Adamu of Nasarawa state, has assured that the planned rehabilitation of the national mosque was very much on course.

The governor, who gave the assurance during a courtesy call on the management of *Media Trust* last week, also disclosed that the initial opposition to the involvement of President Obasanjo in the programme has now given way to cooperation from all those involved in the exercise.

Attributing the slow pace of progress in the entire programme, the initial lack of commitment, limitation of funds and misrepresentation of the president's intent in getting, himself involved, governor Abdullahi however said all these problems have been overcome and that everybody involved in the programme was now fully committed.

The just concluded 2005 pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia also slowed down the pace of preparations as many of the organising committee members performed the religious exercise, he further explained, disclosing that the Hajj exercise, necessitated

the postponement of the appeal fund launch from December 16, 2004 to March 3 2005.

He said efforts at sensitizing the muslim community has been intensified with muslim groups and individuals within and outside the country being contacted.

The fund raising chairman said that the initial opposition to President Obasanjo's involvement in the programme was due to misrepresentations of his intent but assured that everybody involved in the programme was now in support of the president's involvement.

"I think there was some misrepresentation at the initial stage, but thank God that has been cleared and there is no voice known to us that is against the position of the president anymore."

"As the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, he is the president of muslims, christians and pagans. So anybody who is a Nigerian today God has placed us under Obasanjo," he declared, calling on all muslims in the country to cooperate and make the event a success.

As the Shariah legal system clocks five years in Zamfara state, Governor Ahmed Sani has reiterated the pressure from within and outside the state.

He also disclosed that he is ready to accept corrections from any group or individuals aimed at strengthening the system, as well as constructive criticisms that is meaningful to its sustenance.

Ahmed Sani made the declaration over the weekend in Gusau, the state capital, at the occasion of the 5th year anniversary of the re-introduction of the Shariah legal system held at the premises of the J.B Yakubu secretariat.

He explained that there is no amount of pressure that can stop his government from practicing the Islamic system in the state.

No pressure can stop shariah-Zamfara gov

Salisu Zakari Maradun,
Gusau

According to him, the continued existence of the system does not only rely on him alone, it involves all the Muslim Ummah entirely, "and therefore, it is a collective responsibility and all hands of Muslims should be on deck to ensure its sustenance," he added.

The governor further maintained that the constitution of the federal Republic of Nigeria stated clearly that every religion in the country, especially Islam and Christianity should be practiced without any hindrance.

"At this juncture therefore, we have not breached

or gone beyond what the constitution has stated. I am therefore confident and optimistic that with what we have put on ground and the success we've so far recorded as a result of Shariah implementation in the state, we will continue to achieve same in future so long as the Shariah remains," Ahmed Sani emphasised.

Also at the occasion, Sultan Muhammad Maccido, Abubakar the third called on the entire Muslims to ensure unity, peace and love.

Sultan Maccido explained that Muslims all over should respect each other and speak with one voice so as to succeed in whatever they want to achieve.

Adultery: Kaduna Assembly member alleges frame up

From Aliyu Haruna,
(Correspondent Kaduna) and
Maryam Musa Umar Intern
(Kaduna)

A member of the Kaduna state House of Assembly Honourable Muhammed Sani Iliyasu, has denied allegations that he impregnated a 16 year old girl, Hadiza Tasalla Dauda out of wed lock, even as he expressed readiness to fight and bring to book the culprits.

Addressing newsmen at a press conference in Kaduna, Hon. Iliyasu said that it was a deliberate attempt to set him up and rubish his integrity and personality.

Honourable Muhammed Sani Iliyasu who represents Kawo constituency, said that since he revealed to the press

certain financial misappropriations in the House his life has been under threat from people believed to be against his principles and stand.

The honourable member who was dragged to the Upper Sharia, court Tudan-Wada, Kaduna, for alleged adultery, claimed that some people whom he refused to mention their names, are behind the problem due to his principle and disposition, adding that it is a deliberate and cheap blackmail against him.

He disclosed that the summons with regard to case was since given to the "Clerk

of the House", who invariably refused to give him on time.

Honourable Iliyasu added that he knows the gangs of his framers, pointing out that he will not mention their names because the case is already in court.

He expressed confidence in the credibility of the judge in the court, saying he believes justice will surely prevail.

It will be recalled that members of the Kaduna state House of Assembly, few weeks ago set up a committee under the majority leader of the House, Honourable Abdullahi Adamu, to Ikara to investigate alleged financial misappropriation by the leadership of the House to the tune of over N200 million.

Shehu Shagari @ 80



Alhaji Shehu Usman Aliyu Shagari

Nigeria's former President, Alhaji Shehu Shagari will by the special grace of God mark his 80th birthday anniversary on Friday, February 25, 2005.

This is a moment of joy for the elder statesman who has meritoriously served the nation with utmost humility and sincerity.

To commemorate the landmark event, Media Trust Limited, the publishers of *Daily and Weekly Trust* will publish a special publication Of tributes to this venerable leader and gentleman.

We invite individuals, organisations, business political associates, governments and people of Nigeria to send felicitations and goodwill messages to this man of honour.

For enquiries and booking of space, please call the Special Projects on the following Nos: 0803-703-8663, 0804-214-5839, 0803-503-9527, 0804-334-1144, 0803-317-5421, 0802-849-4170 or 09-6720346.


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REFLECTIONS

By ISSA AREMU

Opinion

Let no talk turn assunder

Whatever the assumptions that informed the 11th hour National Political Reform Conference, let there be no official illusion that we are only set to witness reform of the polity with today's talk-shop. The main political reform started with the proclamation of the constitution in 1999. The bane of Nigeria's political discourse is that once we are weighed down by the shortcomings of the moment we often forget the eventful past and even the most recent progress recorded. With all its imperfections and ambiguities, the proclamation of the constitution in 1999, was a leap forward away from the era of governance by decrees! This was a reform of great significance. Subsequent inaugurations of national and states' parliaments consolidated this political reform and marked the beginning of a democratic dispensation. For all we care let's continue the debate on the performance or (lack of it!) of the democratic actors and institutions, but let nobody deny that we now have institutions of checks and balances contrary to the blatant dictatorship of the military regime.

The concept of nascent democracy is certainly a misnomer. Democracy is not measurable by how long but how well the institutions and actors perform. The legislators opposed to extra-parliamentary platform like national conference have a point. Why inventing an extra-parliament when we are not short of parliament at Federal and state levels? But what should be a concern to these legislators is the reason why parliament suddenly proved unattractive and a conference provides vent for the electorate?

One great political reform that has also taken place deals with the formation of political parties. Following the landmark judgement of Supreme Court on freedom of association, INEC has been

compelled to register additional 27 parties, making the country a multi-party democracy. For all we care, let this confab improve on the performance of parties, transform them from vehicles for power and power alone, to vehicles for developmental ideas and real development of a country that perpetually lives on its potentials rather than actualities. But nobody should ever doubt that we now have parties as platforms for political advocacy as distinct from the unknown vested groups of military regimes.

The challenge should be to further liberalise the political space rather than restrict it as being wrongly advocated by the Federal Executive which fervours deregistering some parties on the ill-informed reasons that they have no electoral base. The right to party formation is already reassured by the Supreme Court judgement; let no confab engage in political revisionism or any reactionary move to violate rights by deregistering parties. This conference will not make any impact unless it comes to terms with where we are coming from, where we are and how we can improve on the existing reality.

Significant to note are the reforms promoted by activist judiciary since 1999. The role of the judiciary since democratic dispensation remains problematic. But let nobody be in doubt that more than ever before we have witnessed judicial activism; *from revenue allocation formula to presidential election tribunal, from right to strike to Local government funds.* The challenge of the conference is to deepen the independence of the judiciary, ensure prompt but fair judgement delivery and purge the sector of corrupt judges as the Judicial Council has commendably done more than once in recent time. Again it is

debatable whether we need debating months to do this, but if one more talk will strengthen the judiciary, then it worth's all the kobo.

The naughtiest issue is elections and their controversial outcomes. Even then we would not have known how nasty elections could be if we had had none as military dictatorships denied us freedom of choice for decades. This confab must look at the recent elections and draw conclusion for free and fair elections. The critical challenge lies in reforming the INEC and the entire electoral system.

The last critical issue is federalism. Let no talk turn asunder what has been woven together by fate, history and enterprise and if we must have full disclosures; by corruption, greed and poverty! This confab must once and for all put paid to the falsification of federalism by both the government and the champions of so-called ethnic nationalities. There is nothing like 'true' or 'false' federalism; federalism is federalism! There is no federalism without its challenges either. The challenges of Nigerian federalism call for creative reengineering and not some despondent doubt about unity. In any case if united Nigeria raises so many problems, it is a basic common sense that a disunited Nigeria (God forbids!) can offer no solution to its advocates and its victims alike!

All said, all talk without food, light, jobs and housing make no new Nigeria. Put in another language, confab and long talk while NEPA load-sheds what by any standard is NOT a load (3000 megawatts!), and long talk when 10,000 apply for any accidental vacancy impress no tax payer. The ball is in the court of the delegates to show that talking when we must be working worth the time. Let them prove that talking equals working and adding value.

ISSA AREMU can be reached at (issaaremu@yahoo.com)

As we mourn Malcom X today

By Nasir Dambatta

It is hard to overlook the symbiosis in the struggles of Malcom X, Patrice Lumumba and reggae music maestro Robert Marley. These musketeers gave their lives to the fight against injustice on a global scale.

Today, February 21st marks the day Malcom X breathed his last. He was shot on February the 21st 1965. The month was also a bad month for Patrice Lumumba, who was said to have been abducted from a United Nation's camp and murdered. The official position, however, was that Lumumba simply died on 12th February 1961.

Robert Nesta Marley, a.k.a. Bob Marley used his music as campaign tool for equity and justice until his eventful life was cut short by cancer. Sadly though, recent remembrance celebrations of the reggae maestro in Ethiopia were subjectively covered. Both the CNN, BBC and others had nothing to report about Marley beyond his private Indian Hemp smoking life and his death from cancer. This lends credence to the alleged disdain with which the West looks at people with revolutionary ideas. It therefore becomes imperative to take a second look at the political impact the reggae maestro has made while alive and even in death. May we take the musketeers, one after the other?

The Afro-American revolutionary, Malcom X was in the shoes of Marcus Garvey. Malcom extended his initially-localised policy to one that would call for the unity of black people all over the world. When Malcom X joined the Nation of Islam, having accepted orthodox Islam, he used his speeches to spread its gospel among black people in Africa and the rest of the world. He was also in the forefront of the condemnation of America's involvement in the Congo. So determined was Malcom to fight injustice against the blackman that he had taken the war to the media. For instance, in one of his many interviews he sums up the difficulty in blackman gaining freedom: "No negro leader has fought for civil rights, they have begged the Whiteman for freedom. Anytime you beg another man to set you free, you will never be free. Freedom is something you have to fight for, yourself."

And then the final warning: "Until the American negro lets the whiteman know that we are really ready to pay the price that is necessary for freedom, our people will always be walking the streets like what you will call 20th century slaves."

To Malcom's credit, you have people like Kofi Annan sitting comfortably as UN's secretary general today. A reporter also asked brother Malcom to explain what he meant by "the price of freedom," to which he re-

plied: "death." This was the price he paid for freedom. Prior to that, he was one of the 22 million black people that were "the victims of Americanism." Malcom therefore asserted, "I see America through the eyes of a victim."

Malcom's power was on the rise, up to the time of his assassination. Two bad incidents occurred, before his death, according to an ace documentarian and Pakistan intellectual, Alif Kaba Khan. "The other day he was to address a summit/conference of African prime ministers in Cairo, he collapsed from severe stomach pains," embarrassingly. A week before his death, his house was fire-bombed. It is still assumed that Malcom's death was the product of a sectarian revenge, but to the academic, "it was a political act with international implication." His successor, Leon Amir, who, shortly after Malcom's death, pledged to name his predecessor's killers was also found dead the next morning.

But even in death, Malcom represents a major offensive against injustice in the world.

Patrice Lumumba was no doubt a man whose vision for equity and justice was unmistakable. He wanted to raise his country to the highest pedestal but was caught in the web of cold war. But then, Congo-Brazzaville, like all other Belgium colonies had its own fair share of widespread chaos and Lumumba's should not be an exception. It was a matter of time that his arch-rival Tishumbe, embarked on an offensive that shook Lumumba's balance. When the United Nations troops failed to control the army of Lumumba's arch-rival Tishumbe, Lumumba fell back on the USSR. Guovara, and Fidel Castro, helped Lumumba with the Gorilla fighters that formed the Patrice Lumumba Battalion.

Lumumba could not survive the insanities of cold war era. He ended up a captive at a UNO camp wherefrom unofficial sources say he was abducted and killed on 12th February 1961. Nigeria's prime minister, Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa even sent a telegram to Dr. Hammarskjold, the UN secretary, condemning the "assassination" of the former premier of Congo. Sir Balewa wrote: "I have heard with deep shock and regret the unhappy information about the death of Mr. Lumumba. On behalf of the government and people of Nigeria, I wish to express our strongest condemnation of the circumstances, which permitted and resulted in this deplorable development. Nigeria believes in a peaceful settlement of political differences and cannot regard any form of coercion or violence as an acceptable method of reaching lasting solutions in such matters."

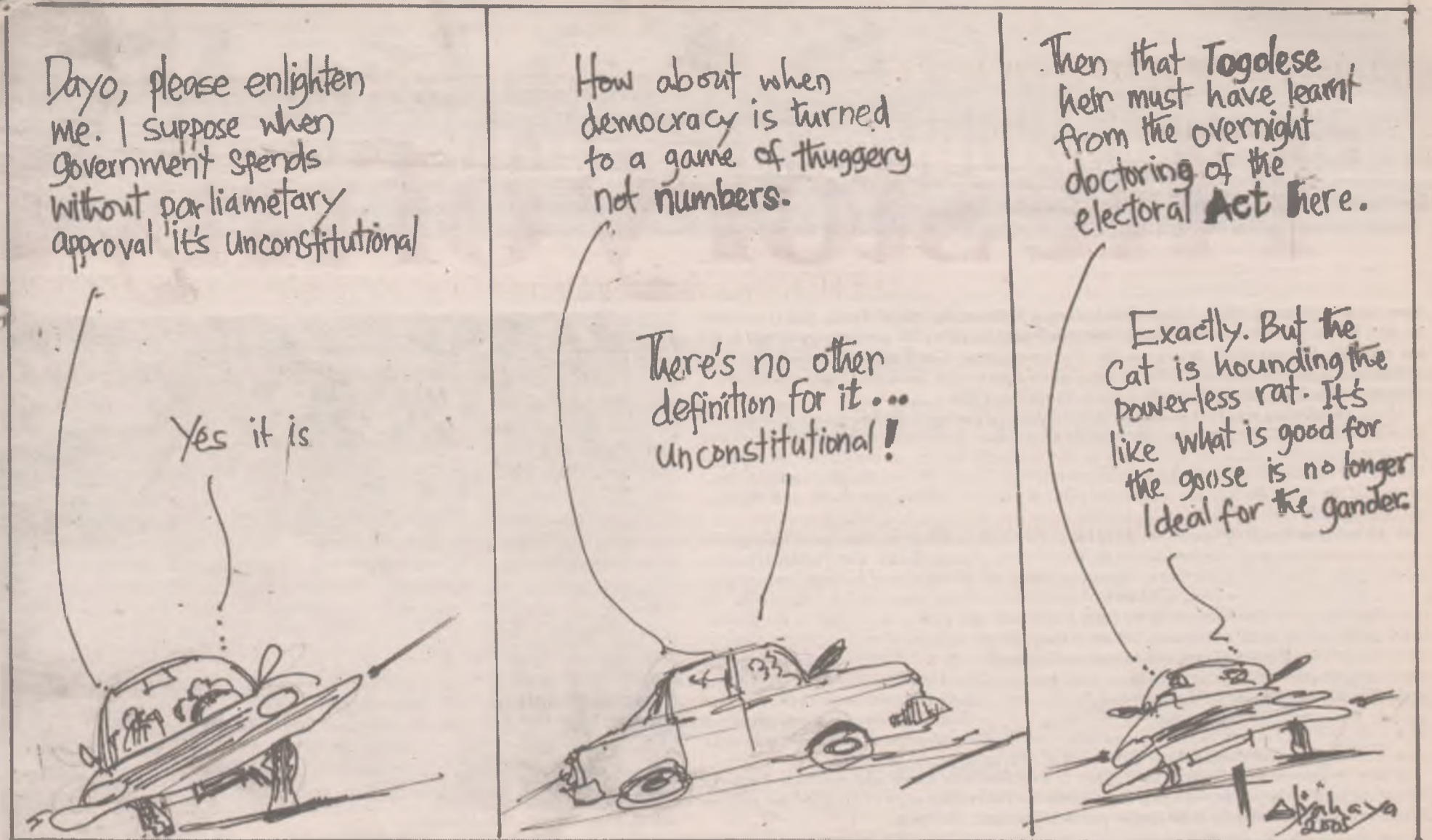
The third of the musketeers is late musician Bob Marley. Beyond his unfortunate ganja-led private life he has made impact on the global quest for peace. At least, his best-selling albums were devoted to campaign for peace and fairness in humanity. He deplored war with songs like "so much trouble in the world." He campaigned for a more United African continent with songs like "Africa Unite," wherefrom one can see the synergy between this Marley philosophy and Malcom X's. He had the vision of an Africa free from the clutches of neo-colonialism with his blockbuster, "Redemption song." All these and a lot more show that he was more than just a music genius that led a life of weed smoking.

The United Kingdom-based documentarian, Nicholas Moore also captured the place of the late reggae maestro in global politics, thus: "He (Marley) revolutionized the world with his music. He used his art form as a conduit for social awakening." Khan went on to say that Marley wrote uncompromising songs for and about the disenfranchised people of the West Indian slums and remained an icon of honour and hope for those that had none.

Khan also described Marley as someone who stood as a conscious figure in Jamaican politics "when he united the hands of Michael Mandley and Edward Siaga." Beyond that, he explains further, "his (Marley's) popularity with the people extends across the seas and he became a spokesman through his lyrics; crying out against depression, slavery, injustice and war." Moreover, he was "enthusiastically" invited as the only guest artiste, by President Robert Mugabe to celebrate Zimbabwe's independence. Khan caps it all: "he (Marley) was greatly admired throughout the world for his message of African unity and civil justice."

If these three musketeers were alive, they would have probably been vociferous in their condemnation of the fact that after the cold war, over 500,000 children died from US sanctions; innocent children hidden from the eyes of the media and the tears of the outside world. Let alone the Palestinians that are consumed daily by the antics of a heavy-handed Israeli government. They would perhaps have deplored the alleged US control of over 70 per cent of the international weaponry market; or the fact that of the 48 regional wars going on today, 39 involve US weapons and that since world war II, over 40 million people have died in these conflicts-largely women and children. They would generally have challenged the political repression by the traditional hierarchies of power in Latin America and Africa among other parts of the world. Adieu, brother Malcom, Lumumba and Marley!

The challenges of Nigerian federalism call for creative reengineering and not some despondent doubt about unity. In any case if united Nigeria raises so many problems, it is a basic common sense that a disunited Nigeria (God forbids!) can offer no solution to its advocates and its victims alike!



YOUR LETTERS

A vote for deregulation

I subscribe to the practice of journalism to embrace developmental theory with economic development and nation building as overriding objectives. The purpose of the media is not so much to provide information or allow expression of opinion but to coordinate information and communication efforts that are geared towards national development.

To be precise, the Federal Government after series of consultation embarked on deregulation and liberalization of the downstream oil sector which yielded some measure of success easing supply and distribution and products availability. However, this laudable step was misunderstood and opposition was mounted against the government and some of the agencies responsible for midwifing the deregulation policy.

Nigeria media pitched its tent with the opposition and reported any dissenting view against deregulation while little or no space was given to government explanation or where ever it exist, was put in a way that elicited further controversy thereby painting the government black.

Today, that with discordant views have changed due to the many positive effects of deregulation as against what they were misled by the Labour movement and other civil society that deregulation will pauperized the citizenry.

The cheering news today is that refineries, depots and retail outlets are springing up across the country, the positive effects of this enormous ranging from products availability to employment generation, infrastructural developments, as well as provision of social amenities worthy of mentioning is the resuscitation of the Nigeria Railway Corporation which has become moribund for years, Oando and Total oil marketing have started haulage of their products to the north through rail system

after about fifteen years of comatose, thanks to deregulation.

The skepticism of many who doubt whether deregulation will have effects on the masses has been largely because the media have not been able to inform the masses. This is a challenge to our esteemed media men.

The underlying thought here is that if media institutions could change their apathetic attitude towards national development and make it possible for positive and analysis of developmental messages to

reach the masses through problem identification and proffer experimented solution, Nigeria will be a better place.

To build a nation properly, we need men and women of the fourth estate of the realm who cherish positive development and are prepared to sacrifice, in reporting national issue, deregulation will transform our economy and improve quality of life of an average Nigerian.

Christopher Abanikanda, 4, Wuye District Finance quarters, Abuja.

Letter to President Obasanjo

It edified me each time I heard of your regular trips abroad in search of foreign investors. This will go along way to create tremendous job opportunities, the larger effect of astronomical increase in the value of our dear Naira.

It has however, continued to appear to me like a mirage that all these moves have since 1999 not translated into action for reasons, I believe, are best known to your excellency.

What has gone wrong with "our own" SLOK airline? Our own in the sense that the investor(s) could have gone off the shores of this country to establish business. It therefore sounds contradictory to me that SLOK which is a big-time indigenous investment has been grounded. The net effect is that thousands of Nigerians concerned could have been

rendered jobless? Pathetic! Rumors flying on the pages of newspapers have it that it was a political move. If this is true (I stand to be corrected) your excellency, are we treading on the right track? Are we sincere about investment? Whatever dimension the entire scenario might have taken should be granted a reconsideration.

The "demokratik" go-

vernment under your "rulership" should bear the responsibility of harnessing local investment opportunities and serve as an apparatus for studying the dynamics of the existing ones. Enough of this hardship!

Ojonimiile Theophilus, Department of Metallurgical Engineering, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Re: Nigeria's debt trap

I read with interest your Editorial on Nigeria's growing debt trap (I), *Daily Trust* of 8th February, 2005 and would like to add a few points.

With all due respect, Professor Peter A. Nyongo, the Kenyan Minister of Planning and Development is entitled to his opinions and preferences.

But I totally disagree with his assertion that African Countries should go to the

World Bank and IMF and ask for loans. The fact remains the same, that it is the member countries that finance the Fund. True, all members are equal, but some are more equal than others.

The lending power of the IMF was limited in size and scope; that it was headquartered under the US Treasury's watchful eye in Washington DC.

I read in the *Sunday Sun* of February 13, year 2005, where Gani Adams said; He was not part of the reconciliation arrangement by one organization known as "Organization for Lasting Peace in Nigeria" and that the organization was sponsored by Dr. Fredrick Faseun to Ife.

We are now asking the whole Yorubas, particularly the Elders, that even if it is true that Chief Faseun sponsored this group, is it not a good thing from Chief Faseun to make peace? What is bad in that? Why can't Gani Adams accept the pronouncement of His Royal Majesty Oba Okunade Sijuwade - The Ooni of Ife, The Arole of Oduduwa, Other Kabesis' High Chiefs, and Elders, that pronounced that, killings, bloodshed, burning of houses, are all over. His refusal of this pronouncement amounts to lack of respect.

Is killings and blood shed the main purpose of establishing OPC? Elders should look at Ejigbo frakers of few days ago from Gani

Yoruba elders, call Gani Adams to order

Adams faction where three (3) people died as we read in the papers.

We are advising the Elders to please call Gani Adams to order, as early as possible or do you elders want him to kill all Yorubas including yourselves and your family before calling him to order?

We want to appeal to Gani Adams himself to please come back home. After all your father is from Niger state here, Tapa in Nupe land.

You were even invited to take decision for the Yoruba confab as OPC leader, what an insult to all of us!

Prophetess Kehinde Omowunmi, Suleja, Niger State.

Economic Planning and Development by any means.

May God save the African continent.

Abba Ibrahim Ali, Municipal Local Government, Kano.

Reactions to articles published in this paper may be directed to the editor via the email address: editor@dailytrust.com

The story of my life

Born 13th November, 1927, Alhaji Abdul-Ganiyu Folorunsho Abdul-Razaq (SAN) remains the first lawyer from Northern Nigeria, who celebrated his fifty year anniversary of call to the bar recently. He was legal Advisor to the Northern People Congress (NPC), was Nigeria's ambassador to the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire, federal minister for Railways (1966) and Nigeria's delegate to the 23rd Assembly of the United Nations in 1968.

Alhaji Abdulrazaq was first in many respects. He was pioneer commissioner of finance of Kwara State in 1967. He was 'first' awardee of Kwara state government's performance award. He formed the first students union ever in the country's history, at the University College, Ibadan. He was the first to set up a private school in the North. He was the first and only legal adviser of the NPC. He has two traditional titles in his kitty: Mutawallin Ilorin and 'Tafidan Zazzau of Zaria'.

While celebrating his fifty years of call to the bar, President Olusegun Obasanjo had cause to sign a personal letter of congratulation to Alhaji Abdul-Razaq (SAN). The President's letter reads in part: "As the first Northern Nigerian to attain the distinction of becoming a barrister, your call to the bar was an event of historical significance. Since then, you have made valuable contributions to the development of the legal tradition in our nation, ascending in the process to the zenith of the noble profession." Prior to that, Second Republic President, Shehu Shagari also sent a flowery letter of congratulations, which read in part: "How I wish I can have the opportunity to participate actively in the ...celebrations of the Anniversary of your appearance as the Northern star in the field of Law and Justice. Your subsequent roles in the field of politics were no less significant in the history of our struggle to freedom, progress and prosperity of our dear country. I feel I must squeeze time and what remains of my physique to make an appearance even in a brief manner during the second week of February".

In this encounter with Daily Trust Editor, Is'haq Modibbo Kawu and Assistant Features Editor, Nasir Dambatta, Arewa's first lawyer tells the interesting story of his life-from politics to law and discloses why he is no longer politically active. Excerpts:



Alhaji Abdul-Ganiyu Abdul-Razaq

As you mark your 50th anniversary of call to the bar, may we know who is Alhaji Folorunsho Abdul-Razaq?

Well, like every human being I have gone through the three major circles of life; namely childhood, adulthood and old age. But I was born in Onitsha.

How did your parents get to Onitsha that you were eventually born there?

My parents went to Onitsha for business. Our house then was along New Market Road. However, the spot, today, has a post office and so it is easily identifiable. Somewhere along the line, my grandparents wrote numerous letters in Arabic to my parents, insisting that they would want to see their grandson. You see, my grandparents were learned in the Arabic language. In fact, I studied the Qur'an and other aspects of Islamic knowledge under my grandfather - who was a scholar. After a few weeks my father went to inform my grandfather that we were set to return to Onitsha. But my grandfather said I should be left behind to complete my Qur'anic studies before ever stepping out of the house. The school is today in our family compound. I learnt the Qur'an for four years and my parents had to adjust.

This illustrates the fact for the slow pace of the educational progress of the North. So, you would not be allowed to acquire western education without being versed in Qur'anic studies. Our grandparents had the fear that if you go to a missionary school, and there were many of them, you risked losing touch with your Islamic knowledge or identity.

Where and how did you start schooling?

Well, my aunt, who was staying with my parents - eventually, got married and I was sent to accompany the iyawo to her matrimonial home.

This turned out to be a blessing for me. Her husband, Mr Balogun, was educated. So, while I was there, he insisted that I should go to school. He first took me to United Africa School in Ilorin, having completed my Qur'anic education. Indeed, that was my first contact with Western education.

Can you recall the years sir?

That was between 1932 and 1933. I was there for two years, until my parents decided to take me back to Onitsha. A year later, I got admission into CMS Central School, Onitsha, which Dr Zik of Africa himself attended. I started in 1939 at the infant school. In 1943 I had to take common entrance exam into one of the only available missionary schools. I proceeded for interview at the CKC mission school with a Reverend Priest, who was Vice Principal. When it was my turn, his first question was what was my name. I said Ganiyu Razak. He asked which church I was going to and I replied that I am a Muslim. He then said, "this is no school for you," without mincing word.

In fact, the school was established strictly for Roman Catholic - meaning that not every Christian could even get

admitted. Well, I was disappointed.

I proceeded to DMGs, which is Anglican, for another interview. The vice principal asked similar questions to those of the other vice Principal and narrated the same way - that as a Muslim, I stood no chance of being admitted. I was really disappointed. I then complained to my former scout's master, who happened to be a lecturer in DMGs. While I was at the elementary level I belonged to the fifth Onitsha group of boy's scouts. Not long after we parted ways with the scout's master, the new Grammar School was opened in Okrika and one Ayu Izona of the Anglican faith was made principal. My scouts master Paul Biabe, was transferred there as vice principal.

He offered to help me out and when I told my parents they said it was worth trying. I was given a letter to Abdulsalamu Edun Abubakar who was from Ilorin. He was the highest ranking black police officer in Nigeria while we were still deep in colonialism. Abubakar became extra link for me with Paul Biabe. In the end, I could not get admitted because the

missionaries wanted their children to be in the majority. But I eventually got admission at the Kalabari National College in Buguma. Some of my classmates at that time included Graham Douglas and his brother Donald Douglas, who became the chief judge of Rivers State among others. That was a community school but they were open to anybody.

How did you feel as a Muslim child, to be in that kind of setting?

It was unusual to the extent that you were more or less an Island. But there was a small Hausa community in Buguma, which maintained a small outdoor mosque where I prayed. There were also a few Yoruba men and women. Immediately after I had left, came Mr Justice Karibi Whyte, the retired justice of the Supreme Court as teacher. Another teacher was Justice Chukudifu Oputa. It was at this point that my mother kept on writing me, that I should come back home. So, I went home for Christmas once and I enjoyed it. I went back to school in January, only for my parents to write to me again in February that they had got a school for me and I should come back. That started my

entrance into Africa College.

Had it just been established?

Yes about two or three years earlier, when I was being rejected by the Christian missionary schools. So, it was established by a Roman Catholic man, P. E. Chukwura whose son today a professor working with the Boundary Commission. I rose to become the senior prefect of the school.

Independent investigations reveal that when you went in search of the golden fleece abroad, you were actually going to study to be a teacher. How did you switch over to law?

My last year in Africa College was 1947 and it was then the British colonial government decided to have the first university in West Africa for British West Africans, located in Ibadan. It was going to be University College. So, when we sat for common entrance, I was fortunate to pass and became one of the foundation students of that university. Meanwhile, my mother had moved to Lagos, where we had a relation from Ilorin. So, I went for holidays there and I roamed the streets for nine months, for want of what I should do as job. I ended up taking a job from the Akmadiyya Mission. This Islamic body was establishing its first secondary school in Lagos, in honour of Saka Tinubu, a relation of governor Bola Tinubu. I was one of the pioneer teachers then. Others included late Justice Dosunmu and many others. I liked teaching so much. The father of Fela, Ransome Kuti was then the principal of Abeokuta Government School. He thus became a role model for us. Most important of all positions then, was school principal and I looked forward to becoming just that.

The aim of my study abroad was to become a teacher. I first

went to Oxford seeking for admission only to be told I was late. By 1949, a professor, who was the principal of Modelling College said he would have admitted me if I had not come late. I said "what do I do sir" and he said if one could not get Oxford, the next best was Trinity College, founded by Queen Elizabeth.

In the end, I did history and political science.

Interestingly, whenever it was time for convocation ceremonies there, Nigerian law students dominate the scene. I remember that when I was there, my contemporary was Professor Olikoye Ransome Kuti who eventually became minister of health and many others I cannot remember immediately. At that time, you were not reading law; you are called "illiterate." The law students were so proud of the course to the point of being boastful. If you get thirty people attending a party, at that time, you would discover that about twelve of them were lawyers and maybe one or two as doctors. They were all boastful and I developed interest in the course.

A friend was arguing with me, at one time, that I would never be able to read law. So, I said we should bet, that I would do all my courses and combine with law. In fact, he laughed and said "see this illiterate talking" and we all laughed. I betted him for one pound. I did my honours in history and political science before returning to the law school for my LLB. Fortunately for me, we did it together and I beat him to it. When I saw him again, I said "my learned friend, where is my one pound?" That was how I became a lawyer. I also decided to do post-graduate higher diploma in Education which every principal in Nigeria required.

Were you not swept by the wave of the nationalist movement during this



Alhaji Abdul-Razaq stressing a point during the interview

Pictures by: Kennedy Egbonodje

How Will the Pension Reform Act Affect Public Sector Employees?

Pension Reform: Implications for the Public Sector

Day 1: Tuesday, February 22, 2005
(By Invitation Only)

Special Guest of Honour:
Alhaji Yayale Ahmed
Head of the Civil Service of the Federation

Day 2: Wednesday, February 23, 2005
(Employees of Public Service, Union Leaders,
Representatives of Cooperatives & Thrift Societies)

Venue:
Nicon Hilton Hotel, Abuja, FCT.

Time:
9:00am

Guest Speakers:

Mr. Rotimi Okpaise (CEO, HR Nigeria and Vice President, APFN)

Mr. F. N. Akpe (President, APFN)

Mr. Funso Doherty (CEO, Provident Alliance Ltd.)

Mr. Olaleye Adebisi (Partner, Aluko & Oyebode)

For additional information, contact:
Aminu Tukur: 08033008559 or Chioma Okigbo: 08033139022

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In line with the on-going privatization programme, the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the National Council on Privatization (NCP), hereby re-advertises the planned sales of 51% shares of NICON-HILTON hotel, Abuja, to a well-resourced core investor.

NICON-HILTON hotel, which commenced operations on 14th April 1987, is situated within a 40-minute drive from the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport in one of the most developed parts of Abuja, Nigeria's new Capital City. Since Abuja is emerging as the central location for many international meetings and seminars in Africa, all-year-round patronage of good hospitality firms is assured in the city. NICON-HILTON hotel, the outstanding icon of hospitality service in Nigeria frequently hosts several of these international events as it did for the 8th All-Africa Games and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in 2003. Its marketing profile, rating and image reflect the HILTON- culture of luxury, excellence and premium-quality service for its high net-worth customers, as it is the only 5-star hotel managed by HILTON International in Nigeria.

The hotel, occupying an expanse of 199,500 square meters of prime-value land, has 670 rooms and suites spread on ten floors of the three-winged, 12-storey edifice. All the rooms and suites are equipped with mini-bars, television sets, satellite channels, direct-dial telephones and voice-mail facsimiles. The conference and banquetting facilities include a 1200-person-capacity hall, 4-track simultaneous lingual translations, 24 meeting rooms, along with a modern business and office center, 3 restaurants and bars, a night club, a casino, a water fountain, an outdoor swimming pool, a volley ball and a tennis court, 3 outdoor squash courts and a fitness center with male and female saunas, a mini golf field, an excellent plant nursery and a handicraft village etc.

PREVIOUS PRIVATISATION EFFORTS

Past efforts to privatise the Hotel were abandoned due to low quality of financial and technical bids. A bid of \$61.71m was for instance submitted at the inconclusive bid process for 51% shareholding in the hotel in October 2002. Since then, the Hotel has appreciated in value due to the renovation carried out on it preparatory to the hosting of CHOGM in December 2003, and the current renewal project. Essentially the project involves technical work like installation of new generators, modernization and upgrade of lifts, internet data high way and interactive TV system. It also includes soft upgrade of furnishing and interior decorations of rooms & restaurants.

BIDDING PROCESS

The criteria for short-listing the prospective core group investors among those responding to this advertisement include verifiable evidence in respect of the criteria stated below:

- Record of successful investment and management of hotels of higher or similar international profile backed with long-standing technical/management relationship with one or more internationally renowned hotel management chains.
- Strong financial resources and managerial competence to sustain the hotel's business growth and enhance shareholder value.

Interested core group/strategic investors should respond to this advertisement by providing the following information:

1. Name of the company and the contact person, postal address, telephone, fax & e-mail addresses
2. **Ownership structure**
Names of major shareholders, and their individual/collective Percentage holding.
3. **Marketing competence/capability**
 - ❖ Outstanding achievements in hospitality care for relevant customer groups in the hospitality and/or tourism sectors.
 - ❖ Demonstration of capability for leveraging the international marketing expertise in the management of the hotel.
4. **Financial strength**
 - ❖ Annual turnover Total Assets
 - ❖ Net income Net assets
 - ❖ Liquidity ratio
 - ❖ Audited accounts for the past 5 years
 - ❖ Statement on sources of funding for acquisition including evidence of commitment by involved parties
5. **Company's Experience and capabilities**
 - ❖ Years of operating in Africa
 - ❖ Number of Other countries covered by operations
 - ❖ Number of professionals employed

Prospective investors are required to pay a non-refundable fee of \$10,000.00 for bidding documents prior to their admission for due diligence.

Only qualified bidders will be contacted to carry out due diligence on the hotel within 6 weeks before submitting their bids. On receipt of bids from the qualified bidders, the NCP shall invite only bidders who are adjudged qualified from the evaluation of the technical proposals for financial opening.

The Expressions of Interest should be addressed and delivered not later than 5.00 pm on Friday, March 4th, 2005 at Room 115 of the address shown below. All enquiries should also be directed to:

Dr. Julius J. Bala
Director General, Bureau of Public Enterprises
Member /Secretary, National Council on
Privatisation
Hamza Zayyad House, 1 Osun Crescent
Off Ibrahim Babangida Way Maitama, Abuja
Tel: 234-9-4134670, 4134656, 4134636 - 46
Fax: 234-9-4134671 - 2
E-mail: jbala@bpeng.org

Attention: Elder Archibong Udofiah

Trust International

ECOWAS imposes sanctions on Togo

The ECOWAS chairman, President Mamadou Tandja of Niger has announced the imposition of sanctions on Faure Gnassingbe government, while the Federal government has hinted that it will deploy troops to Togo.

In a press statement made available to *Daily Trust*, President Tandja said that the sanctions will include suspension from ECOWAS, the recall of ambassadors from Togo, a travel ban on the Togolese leadership and an arms embargo.

The chairman revealed that a committee comprising of Benin, Ghana, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria will work with the Executive-Secretary of ECOWAS, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, to determine modalities for the implementation of the sanctions.

The regional body said Mr Faure's promise to hold elections within 60 days was not enough.

Mr Faure originally said he would serve his father's full term until 2008, but on Friday promised to hold presidential elections in the next two months.

Mr. Chambas underscored the need for speedy return to constitutional legality, adding that ECOWAS will continue to work with the Togolese government towards realisation.

Earlier on Saturday Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo - who currently chairs the African Union - told a Togolese delegation that Mr Faure should step down immediately.

Meanwhile, the Minister of Defence, Dr. Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, has said that Nigeria will not hesitate

By Elkanah Chawai, Reporter (foreign desk) and Sani Babadako Bureau Chief Kaduna with agency report

deploy troops to Togo to maintain peace and stability and protect the two million Nigerians in Togo.

He said this in Kaduna

while at the 26th Kaduna International Trade Fair on Saturday: "It is the intention of President Obasanjo as the chairman of AU to see that there is stability in Togo and if the need to move troops arises, we will do so to protect the two million Nigerians there."

On the defence Industries

Corporation of Nigeria (DICON) which recently celebrated its anniversary, the minister said it was unfair to compare the organisation with its counterparts elsewhere, adding that it should be compared with local industries in Nigeria.



ECOWAS chairman and Niger's President, Mamadou Tandja

Bangladesh ferry mishap kills 82, 150 missing

At least 82 people were killed and nearly 150 were missing after a Bangladesh ferry capsized in a storm on a river near the capital Dhaka, police and officials said yesterday.

The ferry M.V. Maharaj, which officials said was believed to have been carrying some 200 people, had been sailing to the southern town of Chandpur from Dhaka when it was caught in a tropical storm on the Buriganga River late on Saturday.

Only two or three people were known to have survived.

"Bodies have been recovered and some more might be found when we will be able to pull the ferry out of the water," Saiful Haque Khan, a director of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority supervising the rescue operation told Reuters.

Most of the passengers and crew were feared drowned. "But we would not know the exact number of casualties until the ill-fated ferry is fully salvaged," an official on the scene told reporters.

"Also will remain unknown the exact number of people on board when the disaster hit.

Most of the Bangladeshi ferries do not keep passengers' lists. So they carry more people than listed capacities," he added.

Rescuers piled up bodies on the banks of the Buriganga.

Police used batons to disperse hundreds of mourning relatives who thronged the water's edge, angry at the slow pace of the rescue.

"I am waiting to know the fate of my missing mother, sister and five other relatives. But no one is able to tell me anything," said survivor Shahidul Islam.

"Why they are taking so long to bring the ferry out of water? How long shall I have to wait?"

Rescuers said they expected the wreck to be salvaged by yesterday afternoon.

Survivors said the ferry had been packed with people heading home for a holiday to mark the Muslim religious festival of Ashura.

Bangladesh Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain visited the spot and asked mourners to remain calm.

He pledged a quick investigation and to punish those responsible. Bangladesh lacks salvage and safety equipment, and ferry disasters claim hundreds of lives each year.

Bombings mar Iraq's Shi'ah festival

Suicide bombers have killed more than 30 people in Iraq as Shi'ah Muslims marked Ashura, their holiest day. Religious processions, mosques and funerals were struck, in a second day of attacks targeting Ashura.

In the deadliest incident, at least 17 people were killed when a suicide bomber walked onto a bus in a northern district of Baghdad, police said.

But major security in Karbala seemed to have prevented attacks, as thousands of Shiites converged on the holy city.

Security was tightened this year after more than 180 people were killed in bombs in Baghdad and Karbala during last year's festival.

Checkpoints were set up around Karbala, where the main commemorations took place, and cars were banned from a wide area.

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Suite 2B, Morobe Shopping Plaza, Aminu Kano Crescent/Kashim Ibrahim Way, P.O. Box 1598, Wuse 2, Abuja.

Tel: 09-6708166, 08033705202

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124, Okigbo Road Opp. Glass House, Umuahia, P.O. Box 187, Owerri, Imo State.

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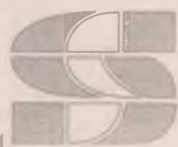
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What's this **self-service** all about?

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In today's service world you serve yourself at buffets, you serve yourself at supermarkets, you serve yourself at shops. You 'serve yourself' at banks' transaction points (ATM) and in so many other ways this concept is being exploited.



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- the end of people management as you know it?

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As for your employees, they are in for a most exciting experience that will distinguish you as an employer of choice. They can now have direct access to all necessary information about your organisation, policies, business direction and how their jobs fit in. They need not bother HR to view their comprehensive information as exists in your HR files. They can view these directly themselves and request updates as may be required. They can advise you on new additions to their family - *whether na boy or na girl*.

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Even your ex-staff can catch up with Alumni information and advise you, for instance, on changes to their address and other relevant details. They can view their old payslips, while retirees, with on-going pension, can view current payslips.

Your HR can announce vacancies, communicate with applicants and managers and manage the recruitment cycle. They can set up induction and training courses, set up new appraisal forms, and approve training nominations. Your Payroll personnel can easily set up rules for taxes, deductions, allowances and loans, and modify benefits entitlement of employees and ex-staff where applicable. All these can be done by them according to predefined permission rights.

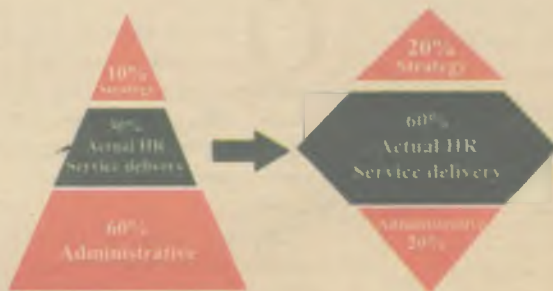
Your top management will be freed from routine paper shuffling to face strategic issues. They are now carried along about HR & Payroll happenings in the office regardless of where they are on the globe as long as they have Internet access. They can respond to requests, send notices or perform appraisals from any location within or outside the office environment



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Business Trust

Finance

Today's flight schedule

Albarka Air	
Lagos - Abuja	07:20
	10:30
	15:15
	13:00
Abuja - Lagos	8:45a.m.
	11:00
	13:15
	17:00
Maiduguri - Abuja 06:50	
Abuja - Maid.	17:00
Lagos - Yola	1:00 p.m.
Abuja - Yola	14:30
Yola - Abuja	15:30
Yola - Lagos	4:00 p.m.
Chanchangi Airlines	
Lagos - Abuja	8:15a.m.
	11:00a.m.
	12:10p.m.
	4:45p.m.
Kaduna - Lagos	8:30a.m.
P/H - Lagos	9:00a.m.
	4:30p.m.
Abuja - Kaduna	2:30p.m.
Kaduna - Abuja	1:30p.m.
IRS Airlines	
CBQ - Abuja	8:00 a.m.
Abuja - Lagos	9:45a.m.
Lagos - Kaduna	9:30a.m.
Kano - Lagos	7:30p.m.
Lagos - Kano	11:15a.m.
Kaduna - Lagos	11:00a.m.
Lagos - Abu/MM	2:30p.m.
Abuja - MM	1:45p.m.
MM - Abuja	3:45p.m.
Abuja - Cal	5:15p.m.
Kano - Abuja	1:15p.m.
Abuja - Kano	2:30p.m.
Kano - Lagos	3:45p.m.
Lagos - Kano	6:00p.m.
EAS Airlines	
Lagos - Abuja	8:15p.m.
	11:45a.m.
	5:45p.m.
Abuja - Lagos	10:15a.m.
	7:15p.m.
Lagos - Jos	11:45a.m.
Jos - Lagos	2:30p.m.
Desub Airlines	
Abuja-Lagos	8:30am
Lagos-PHC	10:30am
PHC-Lagos	12:30am
Lagos-Kano	2:30pm
Kano-Lagos	4:30pm
Lagos-Abuja	6:30pm
ADC Airline	
Lagos-Abuja	7:15am
	12:45pm
Abuja-Lagos	8:55am
Lagos-Calabar	11:15am
Calabar-Lagos	7:20am
P/H-Lagos	9:45am
Lagos-Soloto	8:55am
Soloto-Lagos	11:55am

Most airlines operate the same flight schedule on week days.

FSB international Bank Plc has returned to profitability, having posted a profit after tax of N227.4million during the financial year-ended March 2004. This represents a 109 percent growth over the 2003 performance.

It would be recalled that the bank recorded a loss of about N2 billion in the financial year ended March 31, 2003.

A statement from the bank said this year's result "is a positive response to the profit

FSB returns to profitability

By Ahmed I. Shekarau, Group Business Editor

improvement strategies, which was anchored on aggressive debt recovery and low cost deposit mobilization."

Despite the loss of N471.8million recorded after extra-ordinary charges of N699.2million, the fundamentals of the bank's balance sheet also showed improvements.

The bank's deposit liabilities increased by 18 percent to N28.024billion from N23.743billion recorded in 2003. Similarly, the bank's total assets and contingents

increased by 32 percent to N61.2billion from N46.3billion in 2003.

The new management team, according to the statement, "has put in place, a number of strategic initiatives aimed at growing the profitability of the institution and positioning it to meet the challenges confronting the banking industry today".

Some of these initiatives,

it said, include a major realignment of the bank's delivery model to bring service delivery closer to the customers, aggressive mobilization of low cost deposit and recapturing its market share, cost containment and deduction, recovery of provisioned risk assets and the deployment of superior products.

With regards to the going consolidation, the statement said management reviewed its options and embarked on a two-pronged strategy, which includes shoring-up the bank's capital base, and holding discussions with like-minded institutions with a view to achieving a merger that would enhance the interest of its stakeholders.

Oceanic Bank opens Bauchi, Minna, Katsina branches

Oceanic Bank International Plc recently opened three new branch offices in Bauchi, Minna and Katsina. This brings the bank's total branch network nationwide to fifty-six.

The opening of these branches in the Northern part of the country, according to a statement, is part of the bank's "strategic move not only to boost its presence in that region but also to ensure that it has at least a branch in all state capitals of the federation."

The statement said the bank is an acknowledged leading investor in the Small and Medium Scale Equity Investment Scheme (SMIEIS).

It said further that the recently published financial statements of the bank for the year ended September 30, 2004 shows that it maintains its proud tradition of posting impressive results at the end of each year.



Cecilia Ibru, Oceanic MD



Charles Soludo, CBN boss

FG's economic reforms will boost capital market - Bank chief

The deputy managing director of First City Monument Bank (FCMB), Mr. Ladi Balogun has said that the on-going federal government's economic reforms will further improve the nation's capital market.

According to him, the reforms will see the financial services industry growing in leaps and bounds, adding that the areas of growth for that sector of the economy would include pension funds administration, insurance etc.

Speaking at the bank's investment forum at the Muson Centre, Onikan, Lagos, Balogun stated that Nigeria's economy is currently at its best and that

First Atlantic Bank emerges most active stock

First Atlantic Bank Plc emerged the most active stock among the 207 companies listed on both tiers of the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) in 2004.

According to a release from the bank, the month-on-month review of the official "monthly stock market review" of the NSE showed that the equities of the bank were toasts of investors in 2004, with transactions in excess of 1.51 billion ordinary shares, about 46 percent above 1.04 billion ordinary shares recorded by second

most active stock, also a banking stock.

Transactions on equities of First Atlantic Bank accounted for 7.9 percent of aggregate turnover of 19.21 billion ordinary shares recorded during the year.

The review showed First Atlantic Bank ahead of nine other banks on the year's 10

most active stocks (by volume) including IMB International Bank, Liberty Bank, Union Bank of Nigeria, First Bank of Nigeria, Omega Bank, Access Bank, United Bank for Africa and Guaranty Trust Bank while several other companies trailed the bank on the "20 most active stocks" list.

Bank arraigns staff over alleged fraud

Some members of staff of Eko International Bank Plc, Badagry branch, Lagos, suspected to have conspired with other people now on the run, have been charged before an Ebute-Meta Chief Magistrate Court for alleged stealing.

The suspects are Giwa Olarenwaju, Sule 25, Oguntuae Motunrayo 30, Alli Abdulrahman 34, Ogimlana Olakumle 29 and 25-year-old Adeyemo Adekunle Obafemi.

The accused persons allegedly conspired with others still at large between January 2004 and September 2004 at Eko International Bank Plc, Badagry branch, Lagos to commit felony, to with, stealing, contrary to section 516 of the criminal code, Cap 77 of 1990.

It was also alleged that the suspects on the same date, time and place, in the Lagos magisterial district with intent to defraud, obtained

From Adelanwa Bamgboye, Correspondent (Lagos)

N5,217,875.00 property of ASCON Oil Company Limited and thereby committed an offence punishable under Section 419.

Section 419 provides that any person who by any false pretence, and with intent to defraud obtains from any person anything capable of being stolen is guilty of a felony and is liable to imprisonment for three years.

It also provides that if the thing is of the value of N1,000 or above, he is liable to imprisonment for seven years.

Specifically, the accused persons were alleged to have stolen N5,217,875.00 being property of ASCON Oil Company Limited contrary to section 390 (9) of the criminal code.

All the accused persons pleaded not guilty. Further hearing has been fixed for March 2, 2005.

DIARIES

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&
30
Years on
the Throne

*His Royal Highness
Alhaji (Dr) Shehu Idris CFR
Emir of Zazzau*

On the occasion of your 69th Birthday
and 30 years on the throne.

Your 30 years of purposeful rulership has brought peace, progress
and tranquility to the people of Zazzau Emirate and Nigeria
as a whole. I pray that ALLAH (SWT) will continue
to bestow His mercies and grace on you.

Congratulations!

SIGNED:
Senator (Dr)
Dalhatu Sarki Tafida OFR
The Senate Leader
Federal Republic of Nigeria.



Business Trust

Maritime

Port concession has no place in law -Rep

Stories from Adelanwa Bamgboye, Correspondent Lagos

The chairman, House of Representatives Committee on Privatisation, Hon. Celestine Nnaemeka Ughanze has called for the amendment of the ports Act to accommodate the on-going port reforms saying that the concessioning exercise has no place in the Act.

The law-maker stated this in Port-Harcourt, Rivers state capital recently during a chat with newsmen after the pre-bid conference for the concessioning of Port-Harcourt port terminals.

"There are two laws involved, the privatization Act passed recently which provides for port concession as an aspect of commercialization of the ports. But already, we have a law that is regulating what is happening at the ports and that is the ports Acts".

He explained that many years ago when the ports Act was passed concessioning was not in place, but that government ownership held sway adding that as Nigeria is talking of private ownership and concessioning, the law needs to undergo some amendments.

He said that the Act when amended would also provide regulatory standards in handling over ports to private



Julius Bala, BPE DG

terminals operators. The chairman said further that the era of government monopoly of every facet of business is over, stressing that private sector type of economy now flourish and prevail the world over.

He added that the new privatization Act provides for concessioning and that the Nigeria Ports Authority (NPA) is one of the enter-

... We're committed to it, says NPA

The management of the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) has reiterated its commitment to the implementation of the on-going federal government planned concession of the nation's seaports.

NPA's assistant general manager, public affairs, comrade I. A. Suwaid stated this while reacting to a publication in a national newspaper with the caption "Finance minister, NPA boss oppose port concessioning... says ports are not viable".

The NPA spokesman said in the publication, the story reportedly gave the very erroneous and misleading impression that the FG and the management of NPA have "jettisoned the idea of the concessioning of the ports" because according to the report. "The ports are in a state of disrepair and therefore not viable for concessioning".

This is coming on the heels of several postponements by the federal government of handling over the nation's seaports to private terminals operation.

The port concession initially billed to take off in the first quarter of this year has again been postponed to August 2005.

It was gathered that the decision to shift the commence-

ment date of the programme was taken recently by the presidential task force on Ports reform.

However, Comrade Suwaid stressed that "for the avoidance of any doubt, the management of the NPA is committed to the implementation of the on-going FG concession of the nation's seaports.

He said that the chief Adebayo Babatunde Sarumi led management of the authority, has since its inception, been strategizing, in collaboration with other appropriate government agencies, on the best way to ensure the successful implementation of the process, which will ultimately result in the emergence of (private) operators who will be seen to be more capable and operate more efficiently than the present operators.

He said that in order to scheme this as a management, the managing director has been in close liaison with the supervising ministry, other government agencies as well as carry along the house unions to ensure the resolution of all critical issues which are necessary in the transition of the authority, especially as it relates to payment of over N75 billion severance packages and the enactment of the enabling law.

Similarly Hon. Emeka Ihediora chairman House committee on Marine Transport corroborates his counterpart saying that the due process be followed.

According to Hon. Ihediora, the house of representatives is committed to the on-going concession of the nation's Seaports but due process should be followed.

Two members of a gang suspected to have specialised in flying containers out of the port have been charged with stealing before an Apapa chief magistrate court.

The suspects are 41 year-old Gani Abolaji and 43 year-old Murtala Gbadamosi. They were alleged to have conspired with others now at large on November 18, 2004 at the new terminal complex Apapa to commit a felony to wit stealing.

Prosecuting police officer, Iyadi Edward said that the alleged offence is punishable

Port police smash suspected container fraud syndicate

under section 516 of the criminal code cap31, vol. 11 laws of Lagos state.

The prosecutor further alleged that the duo on the same date, time and place in the Apapa magistrate district stole 1x20ft container No. TEXU 222632-0 containing used motorcycles valued ten million naira (N10, 000, 000) property of Victor Nwokuka.

It was gathered that the two suspects allegedly sold the said container which does not

belong to them to unsuspecting members of the public.

However when the matter was reported to the police, detectives traced some of the stolen items inside the container to a shop, only to discover that the stolen items had been sold.

The accused persons pleaded not guilty before they were released on bail.

At the resumed hearing of the case, on Monday, the court fixed trial for February 28, 2005.



President Olusegun Obasanjo (m) flanked by Governor Ibrahim Idris of Kogi state (l) and the CSO to the president (r) during a visit to the Obajana Cement Factory in Kogi state...recently
Pix: Kennedy Egbonodje

Stakeholder sues port compol

The Commissioner of Police (Compol), Ports Authority Police (PAP) command, has been dragged before an Apapa chief magistrate court over the detention of a trailer with registration No. XA 676 JJJ, which was involved in an accident that caused the death of a tally clerk.

In a 15 paragraph affidavit in support of the suit, the applicant, Olufemi Ogunowo said that the trailer has been in police custody since 15 August 2004 when the unfortunate accident occurred.

He said that the accident occurred while the driver, 29 year old Idowu Olaniyi, was reversing the trailer which claimed the life of the deceased who was at the back of the vehicle.

He informed the court that

already, the driver of the trailer (Idowu Olaniyi) is facing criminal charges before the court adding that he has made repeated demands on the police to release the trailer.

The court was told that the applicant hired the trailer and makes monthly installment payment to his elder brother Olushola Ogunowo who gave the trailer to him.

Due to non-completion of final payment through the monthly installments, change of ownership has not been affected, hence the particulars are still in the name of the elder brother.

The applicant is praying the court to make an order directing the Divisional Police Office (DPO) at the container terminal police station Apapa to release the trailer, detained since 15th August 2004.

Specifically, the driver-Idowu Olaniyi was alleged to have driven the trailer in the container terminal in a dangerous manner and caused the death of William Samuel, having regard to all the circumstances of the road and use of public terminal at the time and the amount of traffic which is expected to be at terminal.

The accused trailer driver pleaded not guilty to the court charge before he was admitted to bail.

At the resumed hearing, chief magistrate A.O Soledoye (Mrs.) berated the police for not living up to expectation. The judge noted that it was on record that the police have been served but the police prosecutor said he has not received such directives.

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Oil prices rise above \$48

Crude oil futures prices rebounded above \$48 a barrel in thin trading Friday on the back of bargain-hunting by traders following a drop in prices the previous day.

Still, analysts said that after the volatility of the past few days, sparked by tensions over Iran and a relatively bullish Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) report, markets would likely settle into a narrow range in the coming days.

On the New York Mercantile Exchange, light sweet crude for March delivery rose 81 cents to settle at \$48.35 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange, erasing Thursday's 79 cent decline. March heating oil prices rose 3.65 cents to \$1.3493 a gallon on Nymex, which closed early at 1 p.m. ahead of the Presidents Day holiday in the United States.

Brent crude for April delivery rose 52 cents to \$46.34 on the International Petroleum Exchange in London.

By Ahmed I. Shekarau,
Group Business Editor, with
Agency report

Victor Shum, oil analyst at Purvin & Gertz, an energy consulting agency, said that trading volumes will remain sluggish until Presidents Day on Feb. 21. "Because of the public holiday, we can expect trading volume to be thin for the next few days," Shum said.

In London, oil price strategist Adam Sieminski of Deutsche Bank said he expected "lack of news" to dominate next week. "So maybe the price will calm down a bit," he said. "But the underlying fundamentals are still very robust, so if the price does go down, it won't be by very much."

Prices had surged following a prediction from the OPEC that daily global demand would rise to 83.8 million barrels this year, a 5 percent increase on the group's estimate last month.

Separately, an explosion in Iran briefly spiked oil

prices on Wednesday, reflecting traders' jitters about the possibility of attack.

Oil prices have been rising on most days over the past week on worries that OPEC — which controls 40 percent of world oil exports — might cut production at its

March 16 meeting in Isfahan, Iran. OPEC acting secretary-general, Adnan Shihab Eldin has said the group may cut up to 1 million barrels a day. But Nigeria and fellow OPEC member Algeria have suggested no major reductions are needed.

According to the US Energy Information Administration, oil demand in the United States averaged nearly 21.1 million barrels per day over the last month, 3 percent above last year's level. Crude stocks were at 296.4 million barrels per day

for the week ending Feb. 11, up 22.6 million barrels per day from a year ago.

While Nymex crude oil prices remain about \$7 lower than the all-time closing high of \$55.17 set in late October, they are nearly 40 percent higher than a year ago.

In other Nymex trading Friday, March unleaded gasoline rose 2.69 cents to settle at \$1.2634 a gallon, while March natural gas fell 1.5 cent to \$5.908 per 1,000 cubic feet.

Ex Boeing CFO bags jail sentence

A former top Boeing Corporation's executive was sentenced to four months in prison Friday for illegally negotiating a \$250,000-a-year job for an Air Force contracting officer while she held sway over a potential multibillion-dollar contract sought by the huge aircraft manufacturer.

One-time Boeing chief financial officer (CFO) Michael Sears, 57, pleaded guilty in November to a single count of aiding and abetting illegal employment negotiations. Specifically, Sears negotiated to hire Darleen Druyun at the same time she was reviewing Boeing's bid for a \$20 billion contract from the Air Force for refueling tankers.

Federal sentencing guidelines called for a prison term

of zero to six months. Prosecutors sought incarceration for Sears, while his lawyers sought probation.

US District Judge Gerald Bruce Lee said jail time was appropriate, though he acknowledged that Sears' conduct wasn't as severe as that of Druyun, who initiated the job negotiations and was sentenced to nine months in prison.

"Yours is not equal to hers," Lee said.

Lee also imposed a \$250,000 fine and 200 hours of community service for Sears.

Druyun is serving her sentence at a minimum-security prison camp for female offenders in Marianna, Fla. Her expected release date is Oct. 1.

At the hearing, Sears

apologized to the Air Force, the Department of Defense, his friends and family and the citizens of the United States for his actions.

"I take full responsibility for this bad decision," said Sears, Boeing's CFO until November 2003, when the company fired both him and Druyun after an internal investigation. "I know what I did was wrong."

Sears' lawyer, Ted Poulos, said his client was put in a bad spot by Druyun, who had already negotiated a job deal with a Boeing competitor even though she was still overseeing the tanker contract. Because of Druyun's clout in the Air Force procurement process, she was considered an ideal job recruit by numerous contractors.

US Attorney Paul J. McNulty said Sears "had the choice of putting the interests of the Boeing Co. ahead of the taxpayers. He put Boeing's interests first and that was the wrong choice."

Boeing shares fell 88 cents to close at \$52.78 in Friday trading on the New York Stock Exchange, up 39 percent from its 52-week low of \$38.04 last March. Lockheed Martin shares fell 11 cents to close at \$59.19 on the NYSE.

Trend TV displays at Kaduna Fair

Nigeria's foremost cable and satellite television broadcasting company, Communications Trends Limited (CTL) is participating at the on-going 26th edition of the Kaduna International Trade Fair which commenced last Friday in Kaduna.

Communications Trends Limited provides direct-to-home (DTH) television broadcasting under the brand name "Trend TV". Trend TV Digital Satellite Television Service offers a mix of News, sports, movies and entertainment and poses strong competition to Multi-choice DTH television broadcasting services (DSTV)

Reforms essential to sustainable devt - Lukman

Former Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) secretary general, Dr Rilwanu Lukman says reforms in developing countries remain essential for sustainable development. He made the declaration in a paper titled "Pathways to Sustainable Development," presented to delegates attending the African Petroleum Producers Association (APPA) conference today in Algiers.

He said a good example of what was required to be done to ensure sustainable development was Nigeria's New Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) currently in place.

"This initiative seeks to generate sustainable macro-economic development, reduce poverty, increase growth level and improve the delivery of social services," he said.

According to him, Nigeria has also focussed attention on balancing its national budget, reduction of oversized public sector and stabilizing the exchange rate, privatisation of public entrepre-

ises and encouragement of an active private sector.

He said national oil companies (NOCs) in Africa must explore areas of cooperation with international oil companies (IOCs) in order to derive the maximum benefit of hydrocarbon resources in the continent as well as to guarantee technology transfer.

Consumer council vows to fight poor services

Director-general of the Consumer Protection Council (CPC), Mrs Ify Umenyi has assured consumers in the country that the era of low quality of manufactured foods and poor services would soon be over as the CPC would seek legal redress for consumers whenever such cases are established.

Mrs. Umenyi who gave the assurance while on a courtesy call on the director general of NAFDAC, Dr. Dora Akunyili, said henceforth, NAFDAC would not be left alone in the fight against fake and adulterated drugs and food items as the consumer

Africa needs extra \$50bn to meet MDGs - UK treasury scribe

The chief secretary to the UK treasury, Paul Boateng has disclosed that additional \$50 billion will be required annually in order for Africa to be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Mr. Boateng made this revelation at a press conference held at the British Council in Abuja on Thursday. According to him, Chancellor Gordon Brown has proposed

By Anas A. Galadima,
Reporter (Business)

an international finance facility (IFF), that would provide the additional \$50 billion a year that is needed upfront.

"The IFF," he said, "would enable us to make necessary investments in infrastructure, in education, in health to ensure that countries do not need external finance to drive their development in the long term."

He said Africa, as a continent, is currently not on track to meet any of the millennium development goals that almost every country signed up to in 2000.

The United Kingdom, he said, will through the Blair Commission for Africa, partner with African countries to ensure that the MDG are achieved.

He commended the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) on its efforts towards fighting corruption as well as other financial crimes like money laundering.

He said Nigeria's request for the repatriation of looted funds is being considered by the British government and that relevant documents have been sent to the Nigerian government for consideration.

By Andrew Agbese,
Reporter (Business)

protection council would join them to protect the interest of consumers.

She said though the challenges of dealing with the problems are enormous, they are not insurmountable and would require the collaboration of all stakeholders in the country to tackle.

Responding, the DG of NAFDAC, Dr Akunyili said it would be a relief to have more agencies and organisations in the country fighting the menace of fake and adulterated drugs and food items.

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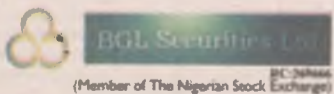
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NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE SCHEME (NHIS)

Design, Development and Implementation of e-NHIS Enterprise System (National Health Insurance Scheme Transactions/Benefits Management Information System) Request for Expression of Interest

1. The National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) wishes to design, install and operate a robust e-health insurance transaction/benefit Management Information System (MIS) software package and database systems, for the comprehensive operation of the National Health Insurance Scheme. The NHIS will strategically source and engage the service of a qualifying health IT firm, using a PPP (Public Private Partnership) business model and processes that emphasizes long term mutually beneficial business arrangement between the NHIS and the private sector partner (or consortium) involving shared governance, accountability, risks and rewards in the e- NHIS enterprise.

2. The scope of work for the selected firm(s) shall but not limited to:

a. Build a platform for managing the health care financing system for the nation. The system should be on a scaleable and flexible platform that takes cognizance of extant rules of engagement of key stakeholders and to monitor the financial transaction data across the entire enterprises, including among other things: integration with banks and financial institution/HMOs; auditing and tracking funds disbursement, claims and access; early warning system - fraud detection; and integration with third-party software processes.

b. Benefit management and administration integrating with multiple HMOs and Primary Healthcare providers (PHCP), with a mission to manage risks through automated integrated data environment

c. Rich in modules, including voice enablement to NHIS call-center.

d. Include web-enabled application deployment virtual private network for secure access, with a grid to link Zonal/Area offices of the NHIS.

e. Built-in functionality for monitoring system use and to control fraud; will also permit drill-down to private-beneficiary level. The proposed solution would also have full functionality for the following - access rights and privileges, audit trails and flexible user-configurable reports.

f. The entire technology solution must be built on open standards and technologies that are compliant with current industry trends.

g. Share information securely on a need-to-know basis.

h. Create statutory reports for the entire NHIS program /products, and share information securely on a need-to-know basis.

i. Must demonstrate how system reinforces administrative structure between NHIS and participants, system must accommodate collaboration amongst multiple organizations.

j. Provide for an auditable system that enables NHIS, HMOs, PHCPs to bill and receive settlements in an integrated financial network, while generating real time utilization and billing information to financier-NIH Fund, employers and subscribers.

3. **Submission of Expressions of Interest (EOI):** The NHIS hereby invites qualified firms interested in the preferred PPP business-model for the e-NHIS Enterprise System, to indicate their interest in providing the above-mentioned services. The EOI proposal should specify the following minimum information as a basis for pre-qualification to be considered for invitation to submit a detailed **Technical and Financial proposal** as per the Terms of reference (TORs) and Request for Proposal (RFP) to be issued by the NHIS:

a. Evidence of Firm's track record in similar business-model assignments carried out in the last five (5) years, including role of firm, description of outcome and references of staff in the assignment cited.

b. Indication of availability of appropriate skills among staff proposed for the assignment.

c. Overall approach to the assignment.

4. Five copies of the EOI proposal must be submitted in a sealed envelope clearly marked "Expression of Interest:e-NHIS Enterprise System" and delivered not later than 5:00pm Friday 25 February, 2005 to following address/contact:

Dr. Muhammed Mustafa Lecky

Executive secretary/CEO

National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS)

Coree Bay Crescent, Opp. Custom close

Off Adetokunbo Ademola Crescent, Wuse II,

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HP, Nokia team for mobile forms initiative

Hewlett-Packard and Nokia have partnered to develop a method of processing forms using

mobile technology.

The mobile forms Initiative offers a way to acquire and communicate data in the field, according to the companies.

For example, a salesperson visiting a client's warehouse can create forms based on a client's needs, collect data to fill in the form, and then send the information back to home base to fulfill orders or spark further action.

The initiative will combine HP's print-on-demand technology and forms-creation products with Nokia's mobile devices.

As part of the initiative, a number of HP and Nokia products come into play.

On the HP side, the company will be contributing technology surrounding printing, form layout and design, and digital-paper controls.

It also includes a service controller that manages users, digital pens, forms and security through a GPRS connection.

Nokia's primary contribution is its Digital Pen, which handles like an ink-based ballpoint pen. The tool communicates with a Nokia mobile device via Bluetooth when a user completes a form.

HP and Nokia have noted that the initiative addresses the need for real-time data transfers, which can be critical in the health care, insurance, and public-safety sectors.

"The goal is to give customers the ability to efficiently transform paper-based workflows to truly digital, mobile and virtual processes," says Eric Chariot, HP vice president and general manager of its Digital Pen and Paper Organization division, in a statement.

e-nnovate expo to hold March

From Zakariya Adaramola, Correspondent (Lagos)

The coordinator of a Lagos-based IT and telecoms consultant firm, Accelerated Communications Solution, Mr. Callistus Okhoruwa has announced the new date of March 21st and 22nd, 2005 for the two day value added services expo earlier scheduled to hold between February 3rd and 4th, 2005.

Tagged, e-nnovate 2005 expo, the event according to Mr. Okhoruwa was postponed to March in order "to enable participation by many other willing organisations in the country and outside."

The coordinator hoped that the postponement would afford willing participants, corporate bodies and government agencies to take part fully in the coming event.

His words: "To enable participation by many other willing organisations, the e-nnovate expo has been postponed to March 21st and 22nd, 2005. We regret inconvenience we might have caused our visitors who had kept date with the former schedules. We took the decision to ensure that everybody gets the best out of the expo."

Mr. Okhoruwa, who explained that there is so much to gain in the forthcoming expo, said participants would learn how to make money through ICT.

"There is so much to gain from the expo. You know there is so much more to your phone and computers than you probably realised" will surely learn how to make more money with their computers and phones. They will also learn how to move their offices with them wherever they go. They will also know how to access their bank account while on the move," said the Mr. Okhoruwa.

According to him, participants at the event include GSM companies, IT and communications companies, banks and financial institutions, embassies, universities, examination bodies and national and international telecommunication experts.

e-nnovate 2005, it would be recalled is jointly sponsored by XLRS and the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC).



Mr. Mohammed Jameel, Chief operation officer, Glo Mobile (left) receiving the company of the year award from Dr. Doyin Abeola at the ThisDay award ceremony...recently.

NCC reviews VoIP, VSAT regulations

By Hamisu Muhammad, Reporter (Business)

The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) has reviewed its decision on the restriction of the Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), International Access/Gateway and distinction of licence operations of Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) in the country.

According to the new notice issued by the commission and signed by the NCC boss, Engr. Ernest Ndukwe recently, said inline with the new guidelines to regulate services rather than technology. Thus allowing industry practitioners to decide whatever technology to employ to provide the services for which they are duly authorised, the deployment of VoIP in Nigeria shall not be restricted.

The commission said in the notice that it took the it has conducted an industry consultative workshop on VoIP technology and its impact on international access and international gateways. Thereafter constituted an industry study group drawn from all areas of telecommunications and

anchored by a consultant to come up with a report.

The new declarations on VoIP by the NCC said international access has been liberalized subject to obtaining the relevant authorization, "there will henceforth be two categories of authorizations for International Access which are: full gateway authorization which will be valid for international signalling point code assignments and International Data Access (IDA)"

Also, the scope of the

IDA licence shall include the right to provide voice and data services and full interconnection to Public Switch Telephone Network (PSTN), there may be a need to enter into separate interconnect agreement for the transmission (transit and termination) of international traffic with other operators, which should include provision for full disclosure of the volume of such international traffic.

The NCC, however, declared that operators shall not discriminate and/or reject requests for interconnection or transit by other entities that are duly authorised to

provide international services.

Others declaration mentioned was, there shall be no distinction between domestic and international VSAT licences authorizations for development of VSATs do not automatically connote international access adding that if any VSAT licence requires links outside Nigeria, it must obtain an IDA licence and the operators with partial gateway rights such as digital mobile licenses, shall be granted full gateway rights, thus allowing them to carry third-party traffic; in addition to their own traffic.

APC introduces InfraStruXure into Ghana

From Bright Ewatu, Deputy Business Editor (Lagos)

Society (WSIS) Africa regional conference that took place in Accra, Ghana.

Called InfraStruXure, the solution is an integrated architecture for the computer room, data centre, incorporating the rack, cooling, power, management and services components that make the data centre's infrastructure an open and adaptable solution.

The general manager of Saap-Tech Ghana Limited Mr. Innocent Abba explained that the APC InfraStruXure allows IT managers to choose from components to create a customised solution.

This approach according to him provides the reliability, affordability and predictability, of standardised solutions, yet is completely customised to meet specific needs. It also allows additional capacity to be purchased and installed when needed; allowing a company to purchase only what is needed at present while still permitting future growth.

Charles Iyo, district manager Nigeria and Ghana at APC said the initiative for APC presence at the Ghana ICT events was based on APC decision to educate its Ghana clients on how to gain the highest level of availability from their networks.

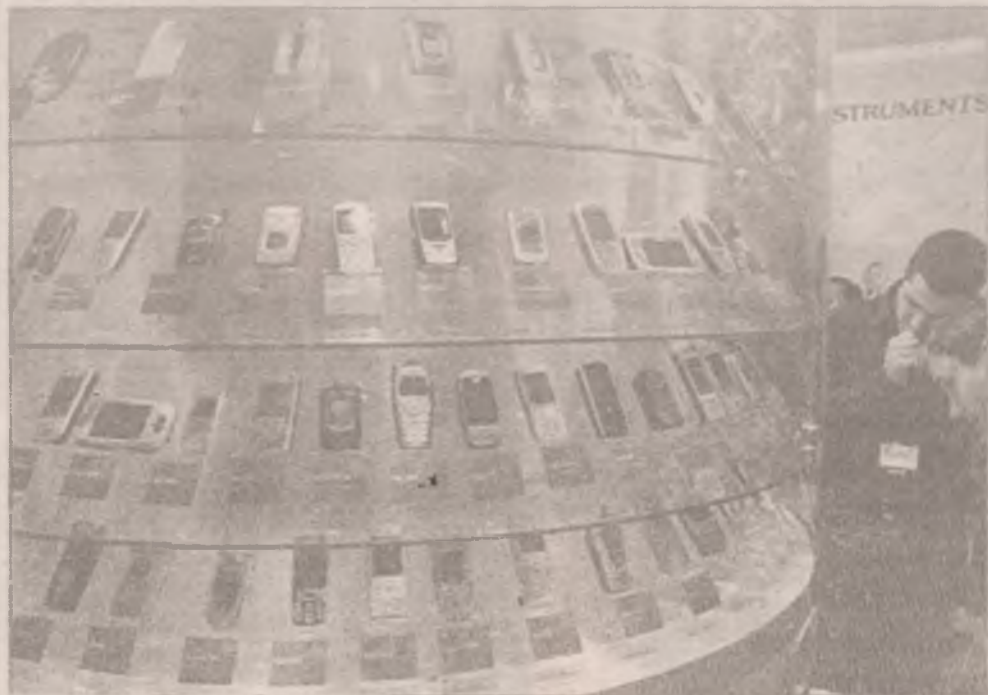
Omahosting launches services in Nigeria

Omahosting, a global web-hosting services company has launched its services in the country. The company which has offices in the United State, United Kingdom has offered to provide dependable hosting services for web designers.

A statement from the company, made available to IT world said Omahosting has put together several

hosting packages that will suit any designer's needs, from small business to large corporate type-sites.

It said the servers used by the company allowed it to offer faster download speeds and an uptime guarantee, stressing that package pricing also includes domain name registration, and optional monthly payment schedules, made its services very attractive to use.



The PEBL and RAZR were among the hottest new phones unveiled at the influential 3GSM World Congress technology trade conference. Picture shows some visitors at the congress.



WELCOME MR. PRESIDENT



His Excellency President Olusegun Obasanjo (GCFR)



Alhaji Abdullahi Adamu (Sarkin Yakin Keffi)
Executive Governor Nasarawa State

The Executive Governor of Nasarawa State, His Excellency **ALH. (DR) ABDULLAHI ADAMU** (*Sarkin Yakin Keffi*) on behalf of the Government and the entire people of the State warmly welcome His Excellency, the President and Commander in Chief of the Armed-Forces, Federal Republic of Nigeria, **CHIEF OLUSEGUN OBASANJO GCFR** to the Commissioning Ceremony of Karu Housing Project on Monday 21st Feb, 2005.

This multimillion Naira Housing Project comprising 146 mixed residential units of 2 and 3 bedroom flats with all facilities under the auspices of the Nigerian Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF), a parastatal of the Federal ministry of Labour and productivity is located at Mararrabar Gurku Karu Local Government area of Nasarawa State.

As host of this magnificent project, Nasarawa State under the leadership of our Executive Governor **ALH (DR) ABDULLAHI ADAMU** (*Sarkin Yakin Keffi*) register our profound appreciation to the Federal Government for siting the housing Estate in Karu, the closest neighbour to the Federal Capital Abuja. We are confident that this is the beginning of more Federal presence in our developmentally oriented State.

We seize this forum to restate our unalloyed support to Mr. President and his economic reform Agenda.

We also wish our president and his entourage of distinguished personalities a memorable commissioning ceremony and journey mercies.

You are welcome, Mr. President to Nasarawa State.

SIGNED

SULEIMAN A. ADOKWE
Hon. Commissioner for Information
and Internal Affairs



COMMUNIQUE OF THE INTERACTIVE FORUM BETWEEN THE NHIS AND STAKEHOLDERS IN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT, 9TH FEBRUARY, 2005 IN IBADAN, OYO STATE

1. The National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) organized a one-day interactive forum with trade unions affiliated to the Nigeria Labour Congress, Trade Union Congress and the Congress of Free Trade Unions.

2. The forum represents a new level of engagement between the NHIS and the organized labour in furtherance of government's commitment to ensuring the effective take-off of the Scheme. The meeting was also convened to take on-board the views and concerns of organized labour, which the Scheme has identified as the preeminent stakeholders.

3. The meeting was used to brief the Nigeria Labour Union movement about the state of the Scheme and to highlight ways that the unions can contribute to its take-off and ensure a stakeholder-driven approach to the operation of the Scheme.

4. The leadership of NLC, TUCN and CFTU and their affiliates attended the interactive forum.

5. The forum received goodwill messages from Ambassador T. B. Hart, Perm Sec, Service Welfare, Office of the Head of Service, and Mr. Umaru Aji, PS Ministry of Health, as well as a keynote address by Mr. Adams Aliyu Oshiomhole, NLC President.

6. Presentations were made by the ES/CEO of the NHIS, Dr Muhammed Mustafa Lecky and Mr. Tom Adeoye, DGM-Formal Sector, NHIS, while participants made contributions.

7. At the end of the interactive session, the forum reached the following resolutions:

a. There is a need for the National Health Insurance Scheme in order to ensure quality, affordable and accessible healthcare in the country. b. The forum endorsed the plans for the scheme to take off on May 29, 2005. c. The forum also endorsed the incremental and phased approach to the implementation, including a moratorium period of 2 years within which there would be no deductions from workers, with a view to earning public trust and confidence.

d. The forum called for the commencement of the Scheme in the private sector within 1-year from May 29th, 2005.

e. The forum commended the efforts of the NHIS to disseminate information and enlighten the public, and resolve to join it in the advocacy for a well-run, stakeholder-driven health insurance scheme;

f. The forum identified some critical concerns of workers. Among these are:

i. the need for adequate representation of stakeholders on the board and management committees of the NHIS to guarantee transparency, efficiency and empower them to have effective ownership;

ii. the scheme should not offer inferior benefits to the contract of employment of workers in the public and private sectors, where employers currently provide fully for the healthcare of their employees; the premium should be fully borne by employers in both public and private sectors, since they currently fully provide for the treatment of their employees;

iv. the need to revisit the scope of ailments covered by the scheme to adequately provide for the well being of workers;

v. The 10% premium currently being contemplated by the Federal Government falls short of its current healthcare expenditure commitments and is inadequate to fund the scheme meaningfully;

vi. while noting the renewed commitment of the new leadership of the scheme, the NHIS management needs to do more to earn the trust and confidence of workers through transparent, effective and prudent approach to administration of the funds and operations.

vii. In particular, the leadership of the NHIS scheme is strongly advised to avoid unnecessary and wasteful spending such as is being contemplated on the production of ID cards, to the detriment of the effective take-off of the Scheme;

viii. In order to address the identified concerns and deepen the engagement and partnership between the NHIS and organized labour, the forum resolved to set up a Joint Committee of NHIS and Stakeholders. The committee would study in greater details the NHIS resolve contentious issues and other concerns.

ix. Forum further agreed that the review of the NHIS Act be put on hold to allow the proposed committee to work and afford stakeholders the opportunity to have their views taken on board.

Dr. Muhammed Mustafa Lecky
Executive Secretary, National Health Insurance Scheme

Adams Aliyu Oshiomhole
President, Nigeria Labour Congress

Emmanuel Epenyewa
Deputy President, Trade Union Congress

Didi Adodo
General Secretary, Congress of Free Trade Unions



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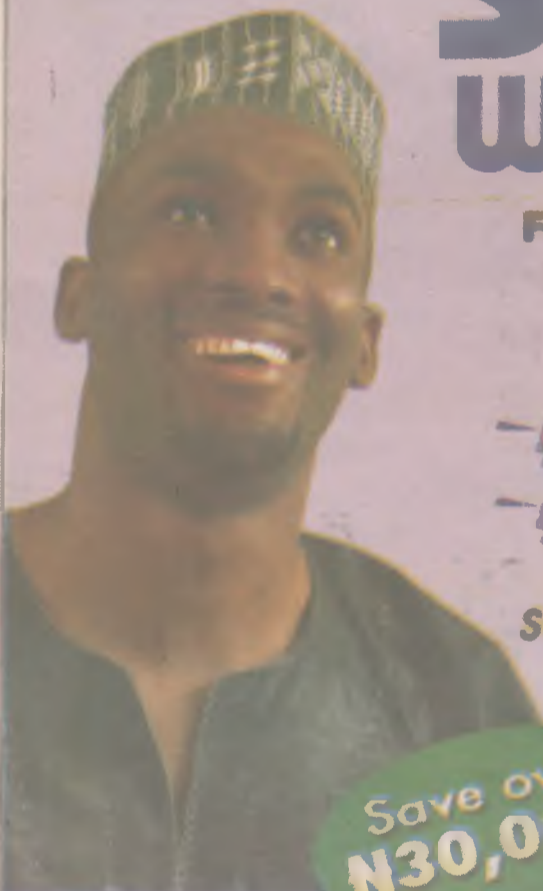
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ABUJA TRUST

'Do something,' LG boss appeals to FCT water board

Worried over the worsening water scarcity situation in his council, the Gwagwalada area council chairman, Alhaji Zakari Angulu, has appealed to the FCT water board "to do something".

Making the appeal while speaking with the *News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)* on Friday in Gwagwalada, Angulu said his office was daily receiving complaints over the water situation.

He said it was in order to address the issue that his office was making a formal appeal to the FCT water board

to expedite action on providing water to the council.

He said that he had made an official appeal through correspondence to the water board but was yet to receive any response.

He explained that the council had taken steps to provide water to residents in the council by rehabilitating three comprehensive water schemes in Dogi, Zuba and Paiko Kore areas.

He added that the council had also rehabilitated hand-pumped boreholes in eight communities within the council.

"Though the council will try to provide water to resi-

dents, the FCT water board should expedite action to resume water supply to the council," he stressed.

el-Rufai challenges institute on trans-national communication

The FCT minister, Mallam Nasir Ahmed el-Rufai, has challenged the National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO) to use its intellectual ability to fight the influence of trans-national communication so as to preserve our cultural heritage.

The minister gave this challenge when the management of NICO led by its acting executive secretary, Mr. J.B.

The Bwari area council of the FCT has distributed instructional materials worth N7 million to students in the council.

Distributing the materials in Bwari on Wednesday, the council chairman, Mr. Isah Dara, said the materi-

als were to improve learning in the council.

Dara said that due to the economic situation of parents in the council there was the need to assist them in training their wards.

He said the materials to be distributed to all pupils include textbooks, notebooks and other reading aids.

Bwari LG distributes N7m materials to students

als were to improve learning in the council.

Dara said that due to the economic situation of parents in the council there was the

need to assist them in training their wards.

He said that the materials were to give the youths, who were future leaders of the country, a solid foundation to take their position as leaders.

He added that education is one task that needs the co-operation of both government and parents to succeed.

He said due to the pivotal role of education in the sphere of things the council had placed education as one of its priority areas.

"Efforts will be intensified to ensure that every child in Bwari area council is educated," he said.

FERMA requires N100m annually for FCT roads

By Godwin Tyonongo, Stringer, Abuja

About N100 million is required yearly for the proper maintenance and rehabilitation of all federal roads in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

The FCT controller of the Federal Road Maintenance Agency (FERMA), Alhaji Mohammed, told newsmen in Abuja that in 2005, allocations would be used mainly for vegetation control and rehabilitation of some federal roads in the territory.

Mohammed noted that 95 percent rehabilitation and maintenance work for year 2004 was completed on schedule with the entire quarterly allocation put at about N4 million.

In his words: "I am satisfied that we did a very good job; that's why we knew the Christmas and New Year festivals would be enjoyed by commuters because of the good smooth repair works carried out on roads."

Contributing, FERMA's chief maintenance engineer in the territory, Mr. Robinson O. Ibe, said the federal roads in question include; Dei-Dei, Gwagwa, Karmo, Zuba, Abaji, Abaji Toto, Zuba-Madalla-Suleja, Giri-Airport among others noting that in some cases, direct labour was adopted for the filling of potholes and construction of culverts.

Ibe, who expressed satisfaction with the repair works by the construction firm, Bulletin Construction, also urged government to include more of its roads in the territory on retainership basis.

Reacting, chairman monitoring team of FCT FERMA, Alhaji Abubakar Sadiq said the committee was quite satisfied with the work already done but complained that the only job being delayed was that of Old Karmo road, which he said, was due to lack of asphalt.

He warned on the urgent need for the Ministry of Works to find a lasting solution to the lingering problem

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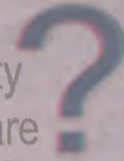
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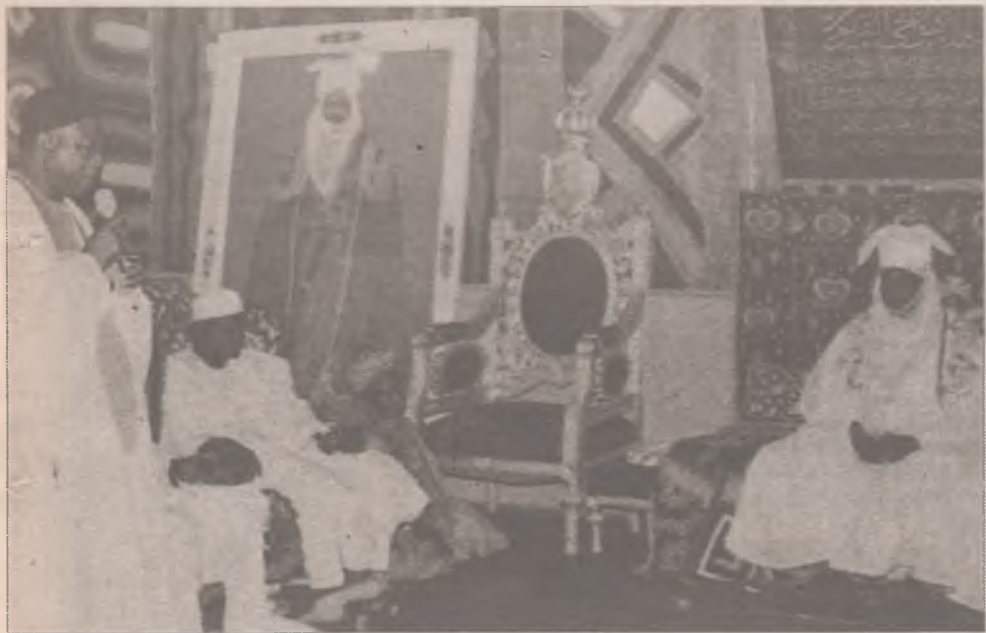
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KANO TRUST



Governor Abdullahi Adamu of Nasarawa State delivering his speech while the Emir of Kano, Alhaji Ado Bayero and Kano state governor, Malam Ibrahim Shekarau listen during a courtesy call on the emir in his palace ... recently

Woman bags prison term for selling alcohol

A middle-aged woman, Miss Joy Chinaka, was sentenced to two months imprisonment with the option of N5,000 fine for selling alcoholic drinks in Kafin Maiyaki town of Kano local government area. She has become the first non-Muslim woman to be sentenced under the Kano state 2004 Sharia law banning the sale and consumption of alcoholic drinks throughout the state. While delivering the judgment the presiding magistrate, Muhammadu Idris of the Kafin Maiyaki magistrates' court, said that all the evidence brought before the court put it beyond reasonable doubt that the accused had contravened the Sharia legal code. He observed that the punishment should serve as deterrent to others, saying the court was always ready to exercise justice and fair play in dealing with defaulters.

Responding to the judgment, the Chairman of the local government, Alhaji Ali Datti Yako, applauded the Hisbah committee for the steadfastness and courage in arresting the woman. While saying that the committee will be duly rewarded by Almighty God, he expressed the council's

determination to accord the law enforcement agencies appropriate support for the successful implementation of the law.

The council has expressed its resolve to revitalize the implementation of Sharia and urged the people to report the defaulters so that they would face the wrath of the law.

Kano schools enjoy rehabilitation work

Over 100 million naira was expended in the rehabilitation of 200 blocks of both primary and secondary school classrooms. The governor of Kano State, Malam Ibrahim Shekarau, disclosed this at a training organised by All Nigeria Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANCOPSS) who were on a mandatory continuing professional training programme at Sani Abacha Indoor Sports Hall in Kano recently.

By Ahmed Abubakar (Kano)

He said that over N3, 500 furniture were made available to schools while 27 new junior secondary schools were provided to curtail the problems of influx of children from primary to secondary schools in the state.

Ibrahim Shekarau called on principals to make available their professionalism for the upliftment of educational sectors in the state, and charged all stakeholders to join in his bandwagon crusade to emancipate the people from the shackles of negative attitudes.

He however, emphasised human developmental programmes as the basic tool for his administration in collaboration with the Societal Reorientation Directorate in order to address the menace of moral decadence among people of Kano State.

Said he, "We chose human development as our central focus towards achieving the entire trend especially on democracy, and quoted the late Mallam Aminu Kano that, "any democracy which does not focus on human development is not a democracy."

Meanwhile, the Commissioner of Education, Hajiya Balaraba Bello Maitama, stressed the need for principals to come up with new developmental strategies in education as to achieve meaningful results. He that said ANCOPSS as a professional body should continue with the good work of enhancing the standard of education in the country and the world at large.

The Chairman of ANCOPSS (state chapter), Alhaji Sani Ali Yarimawa,

VOA establishes Kano health reporting centre

The Voice of America (VOA) has established a

reporting centre in Kano, which aims at broadcasting health information in Hausa to the city of Kano and its environment. Commissioning the centre in Kano, Mrs. Dawn Liberi of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) estimated that more than thirteen million Nigerians listen to the VOA Hausa service. She said the US government is committed through the VOA and USAID to providing accurate news and information about healthy lifestyles to people across northern Nigeria and beyond. According to her, the centre would be used to train journalists cutting across all ethnic, cultural, and religious groups. The current programme of the centre focuses on the training of female journalists to cover issues of health.

In his remarks, the Deputy Governor of Kano State, Engr. Magaji Abdullahi, thanked the VOA and the US government for establishing the centre in

From Aliyu Machika, Correspondent (Kano)

Kano. He said the government and the people of Kano state would continue to support and cooperate with the centre, especially as it focuses on health issues, particularly issues pertaining to the HIV/AIDS pandemic that is devastating the African society and economy. He hoped that the centre would help in mobilising and educating people on the dangers of the HIV virus.

The state's commis-

sioner of the health, Dr. Sanda Muhammad, who was represented by the acting permanent secretary, Alhaji Shuaibu Umar Yola, hailed the potential of information and communication technology (ICT) to disseminating health and other scientific information.

He then said that the Kano office of the VOA would receive the support of all in Kano state to enhance its capacity to serve the good purposes intended.

Flood victims get land in Kumbotso

By Mustapha Isah Kwaru, Correspondent Kano

No fewer than 1, 250 victims of last year's flood disaster in Kumbotso local government area have received plots of land, the council's chairman, Mallam Sagira Abdulkadir Panshekara disclosed this while presenting certificates of occupancies (C of O) to the beneficiaries. He conceded that the gesture was not unconnected with the council's zeal and readiness to come to the rescue of the flood disaster victims with a view to minimising their plight. He expressed sympathy for the victims and implored them to see the tragedy as an act of Almighty God.

The council's boss, who noted that the donation would make the victims to feel a sense of belonging, assured them of the local government's determination towards

developing the plots, just as he directed the Works and Housing department to connect the area with national grid and potable drinking water.

In his address, the District Head of the area, Alhaji Ahmed Ado Bayero, applauded the chairman for concerned on the deplorable condition of the flood victims, and enjoined the beneficiaries to make good use of the plots, even as he charged them to offer support and cooperation to the council so as to realise set goals.

Responding on behalf of the beneficiaries, Malam Hamidan Dauda expressed his appreciation, saying they would shun acts capable of crippling the council's effort towards the development of the area.

NULGE commends Rimin Gado over bikes donation

The chairman of Rimin Gado local government area of Kano State, Alhaji Haliru Abdullahi, has been commended for donating over 15 motor-cycles to the Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE).

The NULGE chairman of the area, Comrade Auwalu Rimin Gado, who made the commendation, said the gesture was timely in view of the lingering transportation problems that bedevilled them. He observed that the gesture would revamp the performance of the staff as to move the council forward.

He pointed out that the council has proved to be working for the general welfare of people irrespective of political or religious affiliation, adding that the projects execution was drawn from every nooks and crannies of the area. And that the council's assistance to the NULGE has made their relationship cordial, adding that

By Mustapha Isah Umar, Correspondent, Kano

amicable resolution of possible disputes would continue to guide its activities.

He noted that the local government since assumption of office has never withheld staff allowances and other entitlements.

He further added that adequate vaccines and logistic materials have been made available to all the 44 LGAs and that the state government have also committed funds as its counterpart contribution to the tune of N4.7 million for the success of the exercise.

He then called on all the people in the state to assist and cooperate with the government to achieving a better healthy situation as it is said 'prevention is better than cure,' adding that the cost of curing is always higher than that of prevention in addition to sufferings or death.



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EXTENSION OF LATE ENTRY FOR MARCH / MAY 2005 FELLOWSHIP EXAMINATIONS

This is to inform all candidates, residents and training institutions that the date for submission of late entry forms for the March / May 2005 Fellowship Examinations of the College has been extended to Monday 28th February, 2005.

All training institutions are requested to bring this information to the attention of the resident doctors.

DR. A. A. KALEJAIYE, FMCGP
Ag. College Registrar

EKO TRUST

Extortion: Task force arrests LG officials

No fewer than twenty five officials of some local government councils in Lagos State have been arrested by the state task force for alleged extortion from motorists, even as the police in the state have launched a manhunt for a council staff who allegedly killed a motorist in Lagos.

Investigations by *Eko*



Sunday Ehindero, IGP

Trust revealed that the council workers were arrested at various points in the state while attempting to extort money from them.

The state government last week ordered all the council chairmen in the state to call their men to order following series of allegations of extortion from general public particularly motorists in an attempt to generate money to their council areas.

Speaking with our correspondent, the public relations officer of the state ministry of Transportation, Mr. Segun Ogundeji, the men were arrested while trying to extort money from people, which the state government had kicked against.

The men according to the PRO would be charged to court and prosecuted. Meanwhile the police in the

state have launched a manhunt for a local government staff that allegedly killed a motorist in the state.

The yet-to-be identified Mushin local government staff alleged to have hit one Alexander Onoja with a wooden object on his head last Monday over traffic offence.

The deceased said to be driving in a Mercedes Benz car marked XT 260 ENZ when the incident occurred at Cele Bus Stop along Oshodi-Apapa expressway he was reportedly to have died on the spot following the injury he sustained during the attack.

The suspected assailant however fled the scene of the incident before the arrival of the police from Itire Police Station, who removed the corpse and deposited at a public mortuary.

Unregistered vehicles, spare parts dealers face prison term

Henceforth any motor vehicle dealer or motor spare parts dealer who fails to register with the Lagos State government will be liable to a fine of N150,000 and N25,000 respectively or an option of six months imprisonment.

This was contained in the new law regulating the activities of motor vehicle and motor vehicle spare parts dealers within the state, which has been accented to by the state governor, Bola Tinubu and gazetted in official gazette Extraordinary No. 31, vol. 37.

Information exclusively gathered by *Eko Trust* showed that any motor vehicle dealer operating in the state that fails to register within 30 days from the date of commencement of the law commits an offence "and shall be liable on conviction to a fine of one hundred and fifty thousand naira and in addition the premises used for the business shall be sealed up."

The law also stated that any motor vehicle dealer who contravenes the provisions of section 5(2) of the law shall be liable on conviction to have the premises demolished or confiscated by the state government; and "bear the cost of demolition by the state government."

"If an offence under this law is committed by an

By **Olumide Bajulaiye,** Correspondent (Lagos)

incorporated or unincorporated body, every director, manager or secretary of the company shall be liable on conviction to a fine of N50,000 or to imprisonment for six months."

Eko Trust also gathered that any motor spare parts dealer who fails to register within 30 days with the ministry shall be liable to a fine on conviction to the sum of N25,000 and have the premises being used for such business sealed up.

Over 50 OPC members in police net over clash

More than fifty people suspected to be members of outlawed Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC) are now in police custody following penultimate week's clash in Mushin area of Lagos in which three people were killed.

The Lagos state police spokesman, Mr. Ademola Adebayo, told *Eko Trust* in Lagos that additional set of people were arrested recently from the Faseun and Gani Adams factions with dangerous weapons.

He said one locally made single barrelled gun, a pistol, life cartridges, four locally

"Where the offence under this law is committed by an incorporated body, every director or manager or secretary of the said company shall be liable on conviction to a fine of N25,000 or to imprisonment for three months."

Confirming the new law, the public relation's officer of the state ministry of Transportation, Mr. Segun Ogundeji, said soon the enforcement of the law would begin, adding that with the new law the state is set to sanitise the transportation system of the state.

By **Bola Ojuola Stringer,** Lagos

made cartridges, assorted charms, a dagger and six cutlasses were recovered from the fifteen men who were.

It would be recalled that apart from the three persons killed during the crisis which broke out last Thursday several other persons including policemen were injured while some houses were also set ablaze.

The clash broke out between two factions of the OPC following a misunderstanding that allegedly arose during a meeting organised to broker peace between them.

Worried by the atrocities being committed in Ikoyi in the recent time, the Ikoyi/Obalende local government area of Lagos State has embarked on massive clampdown on lunatics in the area.

The council chairman, Dr. Folarin Gbadebo-Smith who confirmed this in an interview with our correspondent on Thursday, explained that 21 of them had been picked up from different locations for rehabilitation.

Gbadebo-Smith said the arrested mad men and women were currently being rehabilitated at the expense of the council using the state government facilities at Majidun Village in Ikorodu.

He recalled instances where by the lunatics harass and attack innocent residents who were going about their lawful activities within their neighbourhood.

He said: "A woman living in Dolphin estate was attacked four months ago by one of the lunatics and even attempted to rape her. She was jogging in the early hours of that day when the lunatics attacked her."

Gbadebo-Smith noted that the attack on the woman was not the reason for the programme but that it was

Ikoyi/Obalende LG clamp down on lunatics

designed as part of the council's social responsibility to the residents of the area.

He said the council was solely responsible for their rehabilitation, feeding, treatment and accommodation in Ikorodu at the moment.

The chairman said, the council would commence another programme aimed at ridding the streets of Ikoyi of beggars when it was true with the lunatics.

He said, "When we are true with the lunatics programme, we will move to the beggars. I do not think that our streets should not be filled with people who would rush at your cars when in traffic to demand for money."

"These people are unfortunate, they deserve assistance, they deserve help but these things should be done in an organised manner," he said.

Gbadebo-Smith pledged his administration's commitment to the faithful implementation of its policies

and expressed the hope that private firms in the area would come to its aid.

"It's either the individual and corporate residents of Ikoyi are happy seeing lunatics walking on their streets and harassing them or they are not. We all live there and we have to do something about it together," he added.

A resident of Gerrald Road, Mr. Femi Babawale, described the policy as a welcome development saying it would go a long way in making people develop confidence of walking alone at nights without fears of



Gov. Tinubu

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News

Emir takes Goje to Appeal Court

As part of the battle to regain his throne, which he lost on May 12, 2004, the deposed Emir of Akko, Gombe State, Alhaji Mohammed Baba Ahmed, has taken the state government to the Court of Appeal in Jos. Alhaji Ahmed's latest move was at the behest of a high court ruling in Gombe, which had refused to grant him application granting him freedom to appear before the court in Gombe to prosecute his case.

The High Court presided by Justice Hamma A. Barka, while ruling on the application, averred that "I would in all the circumstances and deductions make hold that the applicant [Mohammed Baba Ahmed] has not made case to warrant this court exercising its discretion in his favour; consequently, his application is refused."

Earlier, the applicant, acting through his counsel, Mr A.A Sangei, has asked the court to grant him an interlocutory injunction restraining the defendants or its privies or those acting under them from arresting or tampering with his movement pending the determination of the case.

Alhaji Ahmed advanced that he needed to be

From Tashikalmah Hallah,
Correspondent, Bauchi

physically present at the court to put in argument for his case, but the law under which he was deposed and banished on exile to Bauchi had made it impossible for him to go to Gombe, as this would result in his arrest.

He said that the law was not in concord with section 35 of the constitution.

But Mr. T.K Turaki [SAN], the counsel to the new Emir of Akko, Alhaji Umaru Baba Goro Muhammed, explained that the deposed Emir was never prevented from entering his former domain as he claimed. He therefore appealed to the court to



Gov. Danjuma Goje

dismiss the application, which was upheld.

However, not satisfied with the judgement, Ahmed appealed the judgement at the Court of Appeal in Jos, stating that the High Court in Gombe had erred in law.

Alhaji Mohammed Baba Ahmed, the pioneer secretary to the Gombe State government, was deposed in May last year as the Emir of Akko following an audit report on the Emirate, which implicated him in the misappropriation of over seven million naira.

Although, the deposed Emir denied any complicity in the charges, the Gombe State government went ahead to depose him with three others in what political watchers in Gombe saw as politically motivated.

Retired judge crushed to death

Tragedy struck in Ilorin Thursday when a retired high court judge, Justice Anthony Ekundayo, was first stung by bees and then crushed to death as a water tank in his residence gave way. *Daily Trust* learnt that the late judge had contracted a plumber to effect repairs on the leaking water tank in his compound, which he personally

From Abdulrazak Adebayo,
Correspondent, Ilorin

supervised. was hale and hearty prior to the fateful events that claimed his life. Sources said that in attempting to balance the mended tank the plumber's hammer dislodged the scaffold, which tore into a beehive before collapsing on the retired judge. Bees

Obasanjo opens Kaduna trade fair

From Sani Babadoko,
Bureau Chief, Kaduna

The Minister of Commerce, Ambassador Waziri, spoke on the need to focus more attention on the productive sector than on marketing, which is what the fair was all about. He said that marketing *per se*, without productivity, could not develop our economy. The minister emphasized the vital role of the agricultural sector in Nigeria's drive toward production, adding that public/private sector collaboration should be encouraged in areas where Nigeria has comparative advantage over other countries. For that such is the panacea for poverty eradication and national development.

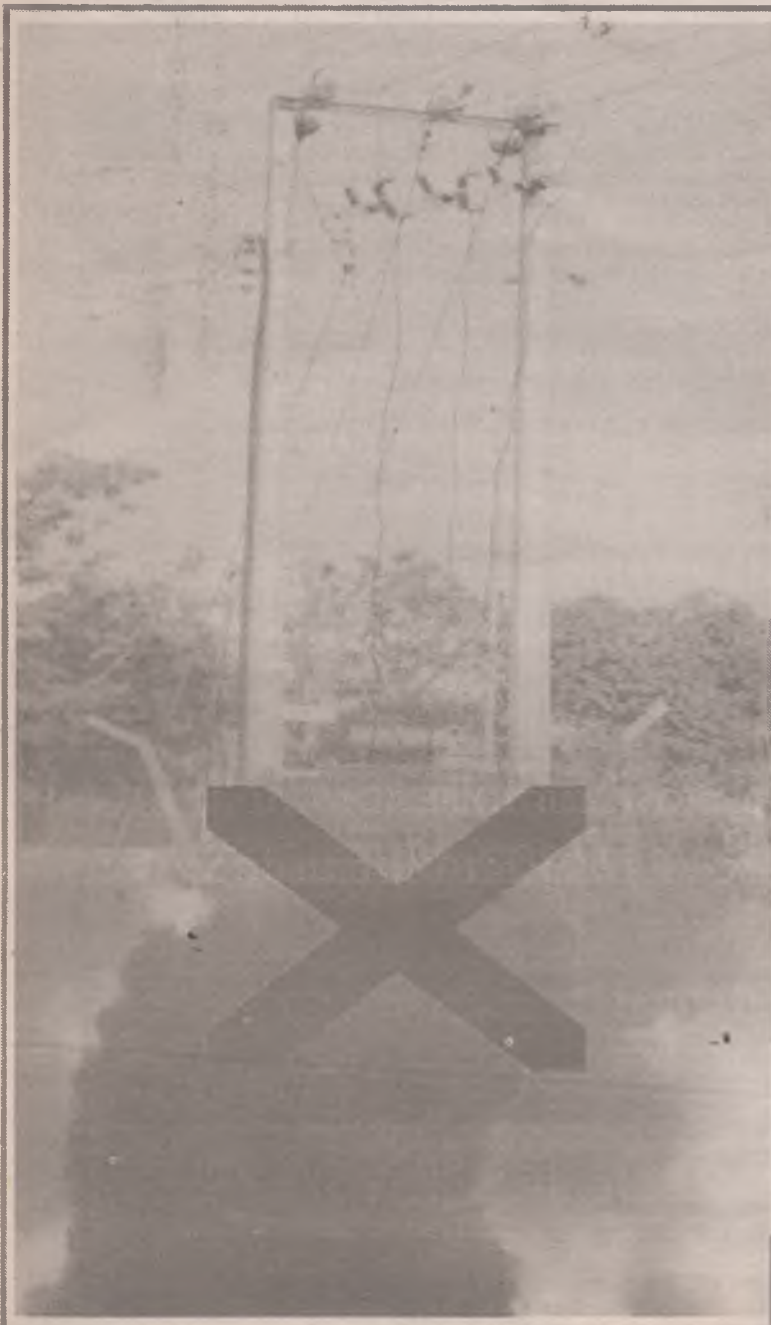
Ambassador Waziri urged Nigerian producers to add value to their agricultural products to make them more competitive in the world market. He observed that petroleum, on which the country's economy relies, has been partly responsible for our socio-economic problems by making the citizens lazy. The trend should be reversed by opening up other sectors such as solid minerals, agriculture, and small scale industries.

The Chairman of the Kaduna Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, Alhaji Manir Ja'afar, blamed the low industrial output of the Nigerian economy on the 'inconsistency' of the federal government's policies.

swarmed the whole house, but the plumber was reported to be safe. Justice Ekundayo's body has since been deposited at the morgue of the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital. He was retired from service in 1984 by the military administration.

The Chairman of the Ilorin branch of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) Ilorin,

Barrister Wahab Egbewole, described Justice Ekundayo's death as tragic. He said that the vacuum created by his loss would be difficult to fill: "It is just unfortunate. We saw his lordship during the week over a programme we are planning for March, in which he was to play a major role. We will dearly miss him. The vacuum he has left behind would be hard to fill."



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fe - Abdul-Razaq (SAN)

elsewhere. He described us as leaders of tomorrow and admonished us to join the crusade to chase out "these white people" Politics was then kindled in me.

At which point did you begin to identify with Northern Nigeria?

Having been "recruited" as a politician by Zik, I started the first students union in Nigeria at the University College in Ibadan. The school authority then called us and said no politics here. Young as I was, at that time, I said let us beat them to it. We changed our name to society for the study of Nigerian languages.

I could speak and write Igbo, I could speak and write Yoruba and Hausa. I was elected president and senator Tunji Tegbeye as secretary-general of the organisation. Students of Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa extraction all joined us. Again, the school principal, Dr Mellamby sent for us and warned us. We went underground. We were meeting between 1a.m and 2a.m at the compound of water works building, vacated by some colonial masters.

The very first week I entered Trinity was the time Nigeria students were going to present a petition and we were going to demonstrate against the British massacre. They were asking, who would carry the banner? While everybody was reluctant, I said I would carry it. The next day, my picture with the banner appeared on all the national newspaper in Irish land.

In 1955, one Saturday morning, a long American car parked in front of my house. The man who drove in it was asking of me. I called him into my poor, little flat at that time. He introduced himself as Inuwa Wada, who later became federal minister of works, of defence and Magajin Gari Kano. As a lawyer at that time, I asked my guest what case he had for me. Inuwa Wada then said: "I have on the orders of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa been asked to invite you to come and see him."

Then, I used to ride bicycle because I could not afford a car. At other times I joined buses. I said I would come on my bicycle but Inuwa Wada said he was instructed to come with me. He drove us to Tafawa Balewa's residence at No 11,



Alhaji Abdul-Razaq making a point during the interview

Marina in Lagos. When I entered, he said "look this is a message from Ahmadu Bello, the leader of my party, and he told me to ask you to come to the North" He said they needed my services as a lawyer and asked when I would like to start working. When I asked him to suggest appropriate time, he asked whether I could resume the next day. I said oh, that will be too early for me.

They later put me in a train at Iddo and welcomed me at Kaduna station, where from I proceeded to No 7, Sokoto Road and then reported to Sardauna, who repeated what Balewa said. He disclosed that a week later the NPC would have its convention in Maiduguri and that he wanted me to come along with him. I went and on the 5th of June 1955 I was elected National Legal Adviser of the party. I held that position till the military staged its first coup, by which Nzeogwu abolished all political parties. Prior to that there was no town I didn't go to do cases for the NPC. I praise my wife's patience because she hardly saw me because if I am in Maiduguri today, I would be in Kano the next day, doing cases.

You have first hand experience on happenings during the first Republic. What kind of personalities were Tafawa Balewa and Sardauna?

Well, they were naturally humans like you, but what I

admire about them is that they were in politics genuinely for service to humanity. None of them to the best of my knowledge joined politics to make money. They all died without leaving riches behind. Even if they had such intention, the money wasn't there, don't forget we are talking about the early 50s and 60s when we had no oil.

After the first coup and the counter-coup of July 1966, states were created and of course the civil war. How did these impact on our lives?

Military coup, not only of 1966 but more particularly because it was our first experience was a hindrance to our progress. The politicians then, led by Sardauna, Tafawa Balewa and others had no example to follow except their British colonial master. And the colonial masters had nothing to teach you except what they practised in their own country - which was straight forward democracy - based upon service and not upon making money.

We started practicing the democracy but they didn't even give us enough time to learn before they cut us off. It is my belief that if there had been no coup Nigeria would have by now become a first class state. The impact has been negative.

You hold two traditional titles, namely Mutawallen Ilorin and Tafidan Zazzau. What do you think is the place of the traditional institution today?

During the first republic, the institution was very, very influential but when the first coup came, three or four important powers of traditional rulers were removed from them. Consequently, that lowered their sphere of influence. The first was, all first class emirs ran the native courts - which in those days we call the Alkali

courts. They appointed Alkalis and ran the courts with some form of judicial powers. That, unfortunately, is no more. I say unfortunately because they know more about the character of their community than any lawyer. Lawyers were trained in the British common law, still in use today. We apply this law on the psyche of our society. Secondly, these traditional rulers ran the native police alongside the Nigerian police force. And the bulk of the area in which native authority police practiced was almost ninety percent and ten percent was covered by the Nigeria police force. Go to Zaria, Kano or Katsina and you find that the town is segmented into three basic sections. You see the city wall where the so-called natives live. Immediately after the city wall, you find what is called Tudun Wada, you then have Sabon Gari where people from elsewhere stayed. You have a fourth one created by colonialists, which they call township. This is where you have white workers and others.

So, the jurisdiction of the Nigeria police force was limited to the township - designed to protect the colonialists. The rest of Tudun Wada, Sabon Gari and the city were handled by the emirs with their native authority police. And the emir did it very efficiently. The coup removed such powers of the emirs.

Thirdly, everywhere in the north, no land transaction could take place without the knowledge of the emirs. I don't mean lands belonged to the emirs. The land owner and the new buyer need the emir as witness otherwise the transaction would be incomplete. The emir or his agent's signature takes care of the conflict in future. That power has also been usurped by the military with its land use decree. Talking about police,

the present emir of Kano used to be Wakilin Doka.

Now, they are no longer in the scheme of power games, as powerful as they used to be. Yet, the people, especially those in the rural areas, still believe in the abilities of their traditional rulers than the council chairman.

Following the crisis of economic existence and the crisis of the legitimacy of military rule, people seem to be clinging to regional and ethnic ladder. In the North we have the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF). Why are you not active at that level?

I know my contribution in the writing of the ACF constitution with Justice Mammam Nasir and Major-General IBM Haruna at the early stage. I developed cold feet for three reasons. First, in the active years of the ACF, I was devoted to the affairs of the Nigerian Stock Exchange - as its president and didn't have much time. Secondly, we had agreement, when we were trying to document the constitution, the implementation of which I disagree with. I held the view that we do not permit any northern with political party ambition to be member of ACF because it will tear itself into pieces. Its chairman, M. D Yusuf, formed a party and contested for presidency.

Why then are you not in politics generally today?

I am from Ilorin and we have a saying that "an elephant in the bush does not blow its own trumpet while its father is blowing his own trumpet." Here I am, I have adult children in their 40s. one of them was the gubernatorial candidate for Kwara, Dr. Alimi AbdulRazak. My daughter is a Senator, another one, Aisha was the first lady of Kwara. When I have these, what position would you want me to contest?

period?

I was. On the 7th of May 1946, Herbert Macaulay died. Before his death, he was President-General of the NCNC and the secretary-general of that party was Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe. Before his death, NCNC was concentrated in the Lagos area only, because Lagos was the hotbed of politics in the 40s. So, they decided it was time they opened branches across Nigeria. You had media like West African pilot and Daily Express all in Lagos. Zik arrived Onitsha to launch the party. As young men at that time, I mobilised my people, as a senior prefect in school, to go and welcome Dr Zik. It was not officially approved by the principal but a matter of my personal initiative because of how I feel about the Zik of Africa. With our neat uniforms, we stood by until Zik came. We joined his entourage, chanting "Zik, Zik of Africa," right into his family compound.

When Zik eventually finished addressing the crowd, he went in to meet his father. We did not leave the compound even after the crowd dispersed. I think someone told him that some youngmen sitting outside would not go. So, we were called into his father's parlour. I introduced myself and my group. That was in fact the day I regard as having been indoctrinated into politics. He related his experiences in Ghana, America and

What I admire about them is that they were in politics genuinely for service to humanity. None of them to the best of my knowledge joined politics to make money. They all died without leaving riches behind. Even if they had such intention, the money wasn't there, don't forget we are talking about the early 50s and 60s when we had no oil

News

Kabo Air completes pilgrims

airlift

The Kabo Air yesterday announced that it had completed the airlift of

ABU SSANU disburses 150 cars to members

From Waziri Isa Gwanta (stringer) Zaria

Following the inability of the university system to grant car loans to its staff in recent years, and the refusal of federal government to implement its monetisation programme in universities, the Ahmadu Bello University branch of the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian University (SSANU) has introduced a car loan scheme for its members on a higher purchase basis.

Speaking at the second phase of the disbursement ceremony of the cars, the Chairman of the union, Comrade Samuel Kolade Joef, said "while 138 members of the union drove home cars of different models in the first phase of the scheme in the year 2004, 22 more members are going to benefit from the scheme today." He disclosed that the scheme, which was introduced as a part of the intervention efforts of ABU SSANU during his stewardship as the chairman, has also purchased and disbursed 197 motorcycles and 48 computers to members.

The chairman, who claimed to have achieved within five years what his predecessors could not achieve since the establishment of the premier university, however declined to continue for a second tenure. In separate comments, both the vice-chancellor and the SSANU national president commended the leadership of the union for its foresight and commitment to better the lot of its members, especially in areas where both the government and the institution failed.

about 51,280 pilgrims who performed this year's pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia. According to the Executive Director, Operations, of the airline, Alhaji Aminu Aliyu, the figure represented the total number of pilgrims from states allocated to the airline as one of the airlines contracted for the year 2005 Hajj.

He disclosed that the airline deployed about 106 flights for the operations, and completed the exercise with the evacuation of Kano and Sokoto pilgrims from Mecca as earlier promised.

Alhaji Aliyu said the airline was already planning for about 15 more flights that would be used to convey the luggage of all the pilgrims that performed the pilgrimage through the Kabo Air arrangements.

For 2005 operations, the Kabo Air lifted pilgrims from Kano, Bauchi, Jigawa,

Gombe, Nasarawa, Lagos, Kaduna, Yobe, Zamfara, Plateau, Kogi, Benue, Sokoto, Kebbi, Taraba, Yola, and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

Mrs. Atiku commissions WOTCLEF's office in Nasarawa today

The wife of the vice-president and founder of WOTCLEF, Mrs. Amina Titi Abubakar, will on Tuesday, February 22, 2005, commission the WOTCLEF's office in Lafia, Nasarawa State, and inaugurate the executive council of the foundation in the state.

A statement from the Nasarawa State's office of the WOTCLEF signed by its Secretary, Mrs. Joyce Yepwi Gabasa, indicated that during the visit, Mrs. Abubakar would lay the foundation stone of the youth's vocational training centre in Lafia

AKHA passes into law N87.172bn budget

The Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly has passed into law a budget of N87, 172,400, 90 for the 2005 fiscal year. The budget, which has an increment of 4.7% from the original estimate of N83.283 billion, has a breakdown of N62, 815,080,240 for capital expenditure, and N24, 357,327,850 for recurrent services.

Giving reasons for the increment, the Chairman, House Committee on Finance and Appropriation, Mr. Adasi Obolom, representing Eastern Obilo Constituency in the House, said apart from the fact that many sectors were not adequately allocated with funds in the original estimate, the committee needed to allocate funds to the newly created Ministry of Culture and Tourism that did not reflect in the original estimate.

The committee chairman lamented that the 2004 budget that was not fully imple-

From Edet Ekanem Correspondent (Uyo)

mented failed to impact positively on the lives of the people, but hoped that the 2005 budget would improve the lives of Akwa Ibom people.

Speaking also, the Speaker of the House, Mr. Nelson Effiong, lamented that the budget proposal as presented by Governor Obong Attah over a month ago, suffered delay because of unexpected developments in the state. Such developments, the speaker said, included holidays, reshufflement of the state's executive council and the creation of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

The speaker, who challenged the executive on the successful implementation of the budget, also called on the executive to adhere strictly to the pattern of expenses as stipulated.

The Plateau State Police Command has arrested one of the suspected killers of the late Bala Ahmed, a lecturer in the University of Jos, who was assassinated in November last year by unknown assailants.

Speaking with journalists in Jos, the Plateau State Com-

Police arrest suspected killer of UniJos lecturer

From Rakiya A. Muhammad, Correspondent, Jos

missioner of Police, Joseph Apapa, said the suspect, who claimed to be a student of the University of Jos, was arrested in Kaduna. The police however did not disclose the name of the suspect, but added that the suspect was assisting the police to get his accomplices in Port-Harcourt.

The command also paraded 12 other suspects for various crimes.

Among them was a 400 level student of the Accounting Department, University of Jos, Godspower Dennis, who was caught in possession of illegal arms, and one Tasui Sanni, a dismissed police officer who specialised in snatching cars.

During the operation, one Jincheng motorcycle was recovered from another gang of armed robbers who confessed to have been involved in various robbery operations in the state.

Water Aid expends N135m in Plateau

From Jibrin Daudu, Regional Editor, (Jos)

Water Aid, an international non-governmental organisation engaged in the provision of potable water and sanitation to rural communities, has expended over #547,000 or N135,109,000 in urban water supply and sanitation projects in Plateau State between 2000 and 2005.

Its coordinator in the state, Mrs. Charity Dandak, said at the opening of a two-day workshop in Jos recently that in the 2005/2006 financial year commencing in April, Water Aid would spend an additional #167,000 or N41,249,000 in support of

Plateau State. She explained that Water Aid had improved access to safe water supply, basic sanitation facilities and good hygienic practices in 40 communities in six local government areas since it began operations in the state in 2003.

Dandak added that the organisation had been operating through the state's water board and the state's rural water supply agency as well as other local NGOs such as Country Women Association of Nigeria (COWAN) and the Bol Development Association (BOLDA) in Langtang north.

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Mr Michael Omoyinmi will be at the following hotels between 10am and 3pm

Chelsea Hotel, Central Business Area, Garki, Abuja - 23 February
Presidential Hotel, Port Harcourt, River State - 25 February

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President Obasanjo in warm handshake with Director-General AASRDA, Prof. Robert Ajiyi Boroffice during a function in Abuja recently.



Federal Ministry of Education Headquarters-Abuja Inauguration of UBEC Board

The President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, GCFR, has approved the constitution of the Board of the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) with the following as members:

- | | | |
|--------|---|---------------------------------------|
| (i) | Prof. Anezi Okoro | Chairman |
| (ii) | Alhaji N. Gambo | Member (North Central) |
| (iii) | Hajiya Toma Ibrahim. | Member (North - East) |
| (iv) | Alhaji Aliyu Shika | Member (North - West) |
| (v) | Prof. Egwu U. Egwu | Member (South - East) |
| (vi) | Barr. Bolawaji Kunlere | Member (South - West) |
| (vii) | Mrs. Eme Ekaette | Member (South - South) |
| (viii) | Chief (Mrs) N. Nwabueze | Member (Women Group/Societies) |
| (ix) | Dr. O. N. U. Ekennia | Member (Special Interest) |
| (x) | Alhaji Mohammed Yelwa Azare | Member (Special Interest) |
| (xi) | One Representative each from the following organizations: | |
| (a) | Nigeria Union of Teachers | |
| (b) | National Parents Teachers Association of Nigeria. | |
| (c) | National Teachers Institute | |
| (d) | National Commission for Colleges of Education | |
| (e) | Nigerian Education Research and Development Council | |
| (f) | National Commission for Nomadic Education | |
| (g) | National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education | |
| (h) | Federal Ministry of Education | |
| (i) | Federal Ministry of Finance. | |
| (xii) | Executive Secretary of the Commission - Member/Secretary | |
| (xiii) | Deputy Executive Secretary (Technical) | |
| (xiv) | Deputy Executive Secretary (Services). | |

The Board will be inaugurated by the Honourable Minister of Education at 10:00am on Thursday, 24th February, 2005. Venue will be the UBE Conference Hall, 1st floor, UBE Building, IBB Close, Wuse Zone 4, Abuja.

For those Members residing outside Abuja, accommodation will be reserved for two nights at Chelsea Hotel, Central District, Abuja. Such Members are advised to check-in at the Hotel as from 12:00 noon on Wednesday, 23rd February, 2005.

Signed:

I. Talba

Permanent secretary

Federal Ministry of Education



MINISTRY OF FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY

HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT HEALTH
SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT II
(WORLD BANK ASSISTED PROJECT)

SPECIFIC PROCUREMENT NOTICE. CREDIT NO. 3653 UNI

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB) **PROCUREMENT OF WORKS: RENOVATION AND UPGRADING OF 6 NO. PRIMARY HEALTH CENTERS IN SIX AREA COUNCILS OF FCT.**

1. This invitation for bids follows the General Procurement Notice for this project that appeared in *Development Business* Issue No. 608 of June 16, 2003.

2. The Federal Government of Nigeria has received a credit from the International Development Association (IDA) towards the cost of FCT Health Systems Development Project II, intend to apply part of the proceeds of this credit payments under the contract for the procurement of works: Renovation and upgrading of six no. (6) Primary Health Centres in 6 Area Councils of the FCT.

3. The FCT Health Systems Development Project II, now invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the procurement of works as already stated in 2 above.

4. Bidding will be conducted through the International Competitive Bidding (ICB) procedures specified in the World Bank's Guidelines: *Procurement under IBRD Loans and IDA credits*, and is opened to bidders from eligible source countries as defined in the guidelines.

5. Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information from the office of the Project Manager, FCT Health Systems Development II, Plot 83, Kaltungo Street, off Amurie Omanje street, off Ladoke Akintola Boulevard, Garki II, Abuja and inspect the bidding documents at the same address.

Telephone: 08043420705, 08036011384, 08035926336

6. A complete set of bidding documents in English Language may be purchased by interested bidders on the submission of a written application to the address above and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Fifteen Thousand Naira (15,000.00) only, in Bank Draft or cash to the Federal Capital Territory Health Systems Development Project II, Account No. OIO1301006182 with Oceanic Bank Int., Zone 6, Wuse-Abuja. Any bid submitted without the specific amount stipulated would be rejected.

The bidding documents will be available from 21st Feb., 2005.

7. Bid shall remain valid for 30 days beyond the bid validity period and must be accompanied by a bid security as specified in the schedule of requirement, and shall be delivered to the office of the Project Manager, FCT Health Systems Development Project II, PLOT 83, Kaltungo Street, Off Akintola Boulevard, Garki II, Abuja on or before 12.00pm on 4th of April, 2005; at which time they will be opened in the presence of the bidders who choose to attend.

Signed:

Project Manager,

For: The Executive Secretary

Health and Human Services Secretariat

Inside Politics

Even with NASS in place confab still desirable - Barrister 'Yandoto

Barrister (Alhaji) Malami Aliyu 'Yandoto is the new National Chairman of the Forum for State Independent Electoral Commissions (FORSEICS) and chairman of the Zamfara State Independent Electoral Commission (ZAMSIEC).

Barrister 'Yandoto, who spoke to our Group Political Editor, Abdu Labaran Malumfashi on various topical issues took particular exception to the non-inclusion of the Forum in the on going National political Reform Conference believing that it is a serious oversight by the government which needs to be rectified urgently, as according to him, it is illogical that a political reform conference is taking place without the participation of the SIECS.

Exerpts:-

After the nationwide local government election conducted by the State Independent Electoral Commissions (SIECS), the commissions came under severe attack for conducting what many see as an unfree and unfair exercise that was manipulated by the various ruling party in the states. How fair is this observation?

Well, those who are pursuing this line of argument are not aware of the historical evolution of the electoral system in Nigeria. After the election of 1954 there was a lot of agitations against the conduct of that election particularly by the opposition leading to the overhaul of the electoral system in 1958. But even after the 1958 and 1961 general elections in Nigeria, there was a lot of complain about the conduct of the election. This continued upto the 1979 election. Immediately after the (1979) election, there was a lot of criticism against the conduct of the exercise. The same thing happened in 1983 which culminated in the coup d'etat that overthrew the government. The 1999 general elections were also trailed by criticisms. Even the 2003 conduct of election by the National Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) is not without those criticisms.

The fact is that the SIECS are an innovation of the 1999 constitution and it was not made out of vacuum. It was motivated by democratic happenings in the entire world. So the thing that we should do is to make sure that we give the system all the necessary support so that it may succeed. We have been vindicated certainly, because so many people expected that SIECS would not be capable of conducting the elections. But we have proved the sceptics wrong. In some states not even a lizard was affected by any negative distraction.

You see, the local government election conducted by SIECS was very historical because most of the elections conducted in this country was marred by electoral violence, hooliganism and so on. But quite a number of SIECS conducted election without such bitter experiences.

Of course, there could still be room for improvement particularly when one considers that this is the first time SIECS are conducting elections in the country. But that does not mean that we should be condemned in toto. It is a clear test for acceptability in any election where violence does not follow the declaration of result. None of our election is characterised by violence either before or after the pronouncement of result. Those elections that are categorised as rigged are usually met with a lot of violence and rancour that usually lead to violent overthrow of that government. None of us has experienced such things. But like I mentioned earlier, this being the first experience, there are certainly a number of areas that need some improvement and I think we are working towards making sure that the improvements are attained.

But why was it that in all

the states the party in power won almost everything?

But the fact is that simply because you want somebody to appreciate your work you can not impose on people what they do not want. I think this is the traditional pattern of any democratic structure. It is only where people express disaffection with the existing government that those people will take the option of voting against that government.

I think this is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. In other countries the only reason why they change their voting pattern is of course, where they express one disaffection or the other. I think the reason why most of the states were able to win their election was because at the time when local government election were conducted in this country last year, most of the governments were pursuing people oriented programmes so for that reason people felt there was no need at all to have a change. That is also why I told you that if people believed what was declared was not what was voted, they would have reacted, but I have not seen much of such reaction during the local government council elections.

Of course you can not compare the conduct of election by our sister organisation in this country. You and I are living witnesses to what happened during the 2003 general elections. It has got to the extent that they are admitting that they did wrong. Look at the Anambra issue and so many senatorial election cases before the tribunal, and so on.

So simply because people felt SIECS are introduced to checkmate their ambition does not mean that they should condemn totally the activities of SIECS. Those who are busy pursuing campaign of calumny against SIECS because they have not been allowed to manipulate election at the local government council because of the insistence of SIECS to conduct the election according to rules should better have a rethink. They should not be condemning in toto an experiment that has proven to be that it is worthwhile.

Are you saying SIECS were purposely introduced to checkmate the ambition of some people?

No, SIECS were established to really give people a sense of belonging, to give people the pride of place in the sense that they will now be allowed to conduct their own affairs in their own way. I have had causes to argue that as far as I am concerned I was born and bred in Zamfara, for example. I have no any other state to go to other than Zamfara. I can not do anything that is going to put Zamfara State on fire. So if Zamfara State should now be on fire I know that it will have to affect me and my family because in the entire length and breadth of the country I have no house anywhere outside Zamfara State. I think the reason why the 1999 constitution introduced this innovation is that if you commit any act of rigging certainly nobody will allow you to have peaceful sleep

in your house. And for that reason I can not accept to rig an election that is going to put myself and my family in perpetual danger. So to that extent those who thought that they could use electoral bodies through the back door to rig elections to their favour are now finding it very difficult.

You said there was room for improvement in the performance of SIECS. In what areas do you think there is room for improvement?

You see, we need to see improvement in the area of funding. That is the most critical area because in most cases funds are not released in good time for the purposes of effective preparation and logistical delivery of the election itself.

We thought that it was better to probably provide funds for the workings of SIECS under the first line charge of the consolidated funds, rather than asking SIECS to present their budget and only to allow for a piecemeal release of funds by the state government as it deems fit. Sometimes that has created a lot of problems and I think it is even militating against the success of some of the SIECS. You see, sometimes you find that after you have expressed your budget and it is approved both by the executive and the legislature in the state, the money is not timely released. You find that sometime funds are released maybe two months to elections. So how do you expect the SIECS in question to really galvanise into action to make sure that it meets all requirements within that period? So, there is need for a reform so that immediately a budget is approved now that money will be reserved in the first line charge so that anytime the need arises for that money, you just extend your hand and get it for the conduct of your activities.

So how would you quantify the success of the maiden outing of the SIECS?

It was no doubt successful compared to all other new experiences in electoral activities in the country. Like I told you, from 1954 to date we have had quite a number of experiences particularly on matters of elections and electoral management and I think the kind of upheaval that characterised the 1954 maiden election in Nigeria leading to the loss of so many lives is incomparable to what we had after the SIECS maiden outing in March last year. The local government election conducted by SIECS last year was largely peaceful. Of course, it is only to be expected that some of the political parties must complain because all the 34 registered political parties expect to be declared winner whenever they contest elections. But you will agree that the peaceful conduct of the election was in itself a huge success.

What is the position of the Forum for State Independent Electoral Commissions (FORSEICS) regarding the forthcoming National Political Reform Conference?

You see in our (FORSEIC's) meeting which took place on the 9th and 10th of this month, we discover with dismay that one of the basic agenda in the political reform conference has to do with

electoral reforms, and the government did not deem it fit to invite us to participate in a dialogue that is going to have political reform as one of its basic considerations. You see, I think there can not be political reform without involving SIECS. These (SIECS) are important innovations of the 1999 constitution and our contribution towards the survival of democracy in the country within this period can not be over quantified. It is only too proper if government includes us in the discussion that is about to take place. Besides, we have some of the best line of citizenry of this country in the forum. We have quite a number of retired judges of the high court, we have a sizeable number of professors and PhDs. So I wonder how somebody can just decide overnight that we are not fit to participate. It is a very, very strong and big oversight and I think government should take step to make sure it is rectified so that at least we will now be in the position to advise it faithfully as to the desirability or otherwise of having SIECS in the constitution. Again, if SIECS



Alhaji Malami Aliyu 'Yandoto

are to be scrapped, I think we are in the best position to advise government as to the best way to do it. I think it is quite illogical that this kind of a discussion should take place without involving SIECS.

Do we really need the conference?

I laugh a lot when people start to argue whether there is a need for this dialogue or not. I think it is not a sovereign national conference where all sovereignty and all powers are divested by the constitution in the executive and the National Assembly. This is just a dialogue where people will now come and discuss issues of common

importance, to discuss ways by which they could resolve all problems that there may exist. Anybody who thinks that simply because the National Assembly exists there is no need for this dialogue does not mean well for this nation.

You see, all the lawmakers in the National Assembly are elected vide political parties and as you are aware it is argued that we have over 250 million people in the country out of which we have about 110 million voters. So even if all the 110 voters have participated in voting for the federal lawmakers then it means only between 40 percent to 45 percent of the population has participated in electing the National Assembly members. So we have a greater number of our population that have not participated because of one argument or the other even against the existing political experience. So now we are saying we should give these people, all Nigerians the opportunity to come and discuss. You see, some people are even arguing against the existence of this country as it is now because they feel somehow cheated. Now let them come and explain how they are cheated. Some people feel marginalized simply because they have not produced the president. So let us come and discuss all these things so that we can put all these issues behind us and concentrate on moving the country forward in the right direction.

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In compliance with the Federal Government directive given to all Flour Mills in the country to incorporate 10% of Cassava Flour to their wheat flour with effect from 1st January, 2005 we hereby invite Cassava Farmers and Cassava Suppliers to supply us cassava flour of the following specifications:-

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Bompai Industrial Estate
KANO.
E-mail: norflourmills@yafm.com

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Operator of the NNPC/MPN Joint Venture



Challenging Career Opportunities in the Oil & Gas Industry

Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited, a subsidiary of ExxonMobil Corporation, requires suitable qualified Nigerian Nationals for the following positions:

1. Drilling Engineers
2. Drilling Supervisors
3. Supervisor, Field Aviation
4. Accountants

1. Drilling Engineers - Ref.: DRLG/001/05

Job Description: The primary responsibility of the Drilling/Completions Engineer is to ensure the application of the best available economical technology in drilling and completions operations. Other responsibilities include well-cost estimates, surveillance and improvement of daily progress, follow up assessments and equipment selection and application. From time to time, provides rig site technical assistance to Drilling Supervisors during critical well operations.

Other specific duties include:

- Monitors drilling operations according to safety and quality control standards, environmental regulations, corporate policy, and contract terms.
- Devises cost-effective techniques to drill, complete, and rework company-operated wells.
- Interfaces closely with subsurface teams, completions/subsea teams, and 3rd party suppliers to ensure that the well is drilled on time and within budget.
- Prepares final well reports with strong emphasis on lessons learned.

Education, Experience & Skills

- Candidates should possess a Bachelor's degree (B. Sc./B. Tech./B. Eng.) with a minimum of second class upper (2.1) division in any of the following disciplines - Mechanical, Chemical or Petroleum Engineering. Must possess NYSC discharge or exemption certificate.
- The ideal experience range for this position is 5 to 10 years of drilling and related operations experience with at least two (2) years working in offshore drilling activities. In addition to the drilling experience, the position requires an individual who brings a well-rounded knowledge and exposure to completion and workover activities. Qualified candidates must be able to work in, and develop all phases of drilling; from well design and engineering, to drilling and completion activities. Successful candidates must possess good written and verbal communications skills, uncompromising integrity, be zealous and quick to learn new expertise through training. Such candidates must be willing to work on rotational basis and spend a large part of their career offshore on the rigs.

Age range: 25 - 35 years

2. Drilling Supervisors - Ref.: DRLG/002/05

Job Description: Reporting to the Drilling Operations Superintendent, the primary responsibility of this position is to provide day to day on-site supervision of drilling operations. He will be the primary contact with the rig and third party personnel at the rig site to ensure operations are performed in accordance with the drilling program and in a safe and cost-effective manner.

Basic functions shall include the following:

- Ensure drilling procedures are followed as planned and conducted in an optimum manner
- Organises and orders the necessary services and equipment to conduct drilling and testing operations.
- Will be responsible for safety and health procedures being continuously enforced and in making capable decisions during emergency situations to prevent well catastrophes as well as significant additional cost.
- Ensures that the rig and third party equipment is adequately and properly maintained. Maintains inventory of all equipment/materials/supplies to ensure smooth ongoing operations.
- Is responsible for complying with all government and other appropriate regulations.
- Ensures accurate and adequate reports and records are kept regarding operations, equipment and evaluation.

Education, Experience & Skills

- Candidates should possess a Bachelor's degree (B. Sc./B. Tech./B. Eng.) with a minimum of second class upper division in any of the following disciplines - Mechanical, Chemical or Petroleum Engineering. Must possess NYSC discharge or exemption certificate. Experience range for this position is 5 - 10 years' cognate operational experience in the field.
- Tool pushers experience with a drilling contractor and or other drilling service provider
- Good leadership skills are a must for this position.

Age range: 30 - 40 years.

3. Supervisor, Field Aviation - Ref.: LOG/001/05

Job Description: The position will report to the Superintendent, Field Aviation. The functions of the position will include but are not limited to the following: oversight, inspection and repair of 76 helidecks, fuel systems and ancillary equipment. Successful candidate will also be responsible for the oversight of remote operations in Lagos, Port Harcourt and expected mobile aviation drilling unit's helidecks.

Education, Experience & Skills

- Candidates should possess a Bachelor's degree (B. Sc./B. Tech./B. Eng.) with a minimum of second upper class division or HND or its equivalent in any of the following disciplines - Mechanical, Chemical or Petroleum Engineering. Must possess NYSC discharge or exemption certificate
- Knowledge of helideck inspection requirements in accordance with CAP 437 and general maintenance will be an advantage.
- Knowledge of OPITO (Offshore Petroleum Industry Training Organisation) standards for helideck operations.
- Knowledge of OPITO standards of personnel training
- Working knowledge of UK Offshore Operations Association Guidelines.
- Good knowledge of industry Helicopter operations
- Working knowledge of CAP 437 Guidelines for Helicopter Landing Areas.

4. Accountants - Ref: Contl 001/05:

Job Description: Key responsibilities of our position will include among others; balance sheet account analysis and Business Practice Indicator Coordination, fixed asset analysis of prepayments and well cost, Audit Coordination with internal and third parties, Joint Venture and Profit Sharing Contract Accounting Interface, Field Capital Expenditure and Operations Expenditure Analysis and Inter-company balance Analysis and settlements.

Education, Experience & Skills

- Successful candidates must have one or all of the following educational qualifications:
- B.Sc. of not below Upper Class Division with 2 - 7 years' cognate operational experience in the field. Additional qualification/professional certification as well as Oil and Gas industry experience will be of advantage.
 - **Relevant skills** required are analytical skills, computer proficiency, skilled in accounting in the Oil & Gas sector. Other must-have skills include oral and written communication, interpersonal skills, initiative, and ability to work under pressure and manage changing priorities. Flexible work location is a plus.

Age range: 25 - 35 years.

Remuneration & Career

The Compensation and benefits package for these positions is very competitive in Oil & Gas industry with great opportunities.

Method of Application

If you consider yourself an exceptional fit for any of these positions, send your CV of not more than 2 pages indicating **position sought and reference Number** through this email address: upstreamnigeriarecruiting@exxonmobil.com; attaching also your personal & job data complying strictly with this 1-row excel spreadsheet format shown below.

Surname	First Name	Middle Initial	Sex	Date Of Birth (Mm/Dd/Yyyy)	State Of Origin	Institution	Qualification & Discipline	Year & Class Of Degree	Professional Qualification	Current/ Previous Employer(s)	Work Years	Telephone Number	Email Address	Address 1 (Street Address)	Address 2 (State)	Test Center (Lagos/Iyo)
Tamuno	Dagogo	A	Male	09/06/1965	Rivers	University Of Abuja	B. Sc. Economics	1999 & 2.1	CIPM, NIM, COREN, ACA	Daily Public & GOS Consultants	8	9800000000	applicant@yahoo.com	12, Osodi St, Kaduna.	Kaduna	Lagos

Please Note:

The following applications will not be entertained:

1. Applications that do not conform to the above format,
2. Applications not received through the e-mail address provided above,
3. Multiple applications,
4. Applications received after 2 weeks from date of this publication
5. Applications that do not meet specific requirements for each position

Only successful candidates will be contacted and candidates are advised to check their email from the 4th week of this publication.

Trust Classified

NIGERIA ASSOCIATION OF MUSLIM LAW STUDENTS

Notice is hereby given to the general public that the above named Association has applied to the Corporate Affairs Commission for registration under Part 'C' of the Companies and Allied Matters Act of 1990.

The trustees are:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Hon. Justice Raliat Elelu Habeeb | 2. Hon. Justice Ibrahim T. Muhammed |
| 3. Ganiyu Adetola Kazeem (S.A.N.) | 4. Hon. Bala Ibn Na'Allah |
| 5. Prof. I. O. Smith | 6. M. I. Saheed |
| 7. F.A.R. Adeleke Esq. | |

Any objection to the registration should be forwarded to the Registrar- General Corporate Affairs Commission, Wuse Zone 5, P.M.B. 198 Garki Abuja within 28 days of this publication.

Signed:
F.A.R. Adeleke Esq.
Public Concern Chambers
29/31 Awolowo Way, Ikeja, 08023132428

Association of Succour for widows in Nigeria (ASWIN)

The general public is hereby notified the above named association has applied to corporate affairs commission for registration under part 'C' of companies and allied matters decree 1 of 1990

Trustees:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Abiola Folashade Rebecca | 2. Salami Benedicta Adefunke |
| 3. Maciver Mulikat Adedoyin | 4. Ojomu Helen Oluwakemi |
| 5. Tella Olubisi Christiana | |

Any objection to the registration should be forwarded to the registrar general corporate affairs commission P. M. B 198 Garki, Abuja within 28 days of this publication.

Signed
Secretary

Auction sales!

On the approval of the chairman board of Nitel, there will be sales of some obsolete generators at Ilorin in Kwara state.

Items purchased are to be removed immediately.

Sam Agwungwu

Auctioneer:
08043463864

Loss of C of O

This is to notify the general public of the loss of C of O in respect of registration No. FCT/ABU/04 532 plot No. 681 Maitama. All efforts to trace the missing documents prove abortive, please if found contact Moh'd Suleiman Sada of DD5 Ramat Close Unguwan Rimi Kaduna or nearest police station.

Signed:
Moh'd Suleiman Sada

Loss of Document

Right of occupancy of plot of about 1, 980m plot No. 880 within Dakibiyu District, belonging to Emily Iribhoa O. Dept of land, planning and survey, FCDA, Abuja, dated 6/5/98 file no. MFCT/LA/94/

loss of Document

A certificate of occupancy No. BO/2916 belonging to Alhaji Abba Dawud is reported missing. Anybody who comes across it should kindly return to the ministry of land and survey, Borno state.

loss of Document

This is to inform the general public that a land document, offer of terms of grant/conveyance of approval, titled 1, 350m2 (plot no. 520) within Kaura District allocated to Muhammed Musa Dawah is missing. If found, please return to Mohammed Musa c/o Tamadi Dalhat, Nipost services, Area 10 Garki, Abuja or nearest police station

loss of Document

This is to inform the general public that the original offer of terms of grant/conveyance of approval bearing the name of Ayebayi Buba covering plot no. 116 Lugbe 1 layout in Abuja municipal area council in FCT is declared missing. Any vital information about the said document should be channelled to land dept. Abuja municipal area council or chief Micheal Onu on 08056018931 or P. O.Box 1840 Garki Abuja.

CHANGE OF NAMES

I, known as HAUWA'U ZUBAIRU MUHAMMED, now wish to be known as MISS HAUWA'U ALIYU ABBAS, Kaduna polytechnic, NYSC and general public to note.

I, formerly known as BINTU BABA ZARMA, now wish to be addressed as BINTU BABA AMINU. All former documents remain valid. Public to note.

I, formerly SANDRA AGBONIFO, now wish to be called MRS.SANDRA AJOKI ODUFUWA. All former documents remain valid. STB Bank, University of Abuja, NNB Int'l Bank and general public should note.

NIGERIAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS LIMITED



INVITATION TO TENDER

Nigerian Telecommunications Limited has planned to execute the underlisted projects:

S/N	PROJECT	TENDER FEE N
1.	New Payroll System	50,000.00
2.	Electronic Document System	50,000.00
3.	Maintenance of all NITEL Computers and Desktops	50,000.00

Interested Suppliers are advised to :

- (i) Collect a slip from the Tenders Secretariat, NITEL Corporate Headquarters at Plot 251, Herbert Macaulay Way, Central Business District, Abuja on presentation of Certificate of Incorporation and Tax Clearance Certificate.
- (ii) Pay the non-refundable Tenders Fee to NITEL Cashier at the Company's Headquarters, Plot 251, Herbert Macaulay Way, Central Business District, Abuja.
- (ii) Collect Tender Documents from the Tenders Secretariat, 3rd Floor, Room 307, at the above address on production of the receipt for non-refundable Tender Fee.

Completed Tender Documents are to be submitted along with photocopies of the following documents.

Current Tax Clearance Certificate
Certificate of Incorporation
Receipt for the payment of Tender Fee

The envelope for each tender should be sealed, waxed and marked at top left hand corner "TENDER FOR THE....." "SPECIFY THE PROJECT" and delivered to:

The Secretary,
Management Tenders Committee,
Nigerian Telecommunications Limited,
Corporate Headquarters,
Plot 251, Herbert Macaulay Way,
Cadastral Zone AO, Central Business
District, Abuja.

Between 9.00 a.m. and 12.00 noon on Monday, 14th March, 2005.

(This Tender Closing date cannot be extended)

Please NOTE that NITEL is not bound to accept the lowest or any tender, and tender sent by Courier or Post will not be accepted.

NITEL MANAGEMENT

SPORTS

UNITYCUP

Siasia: No promises in Mali

Head coach of the Flying Eagles Samson Siasia has admitted that it would be difficult to predict victory for his team at the four-nation WAFU tournament in Bamako, Mali, due to inadequate preparation.

The Unity Cup involves Nigeria, who will parade their Under-20 team, hosts Mali, Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire with the Nigerians setting the ball rolling on Thursday against Senegal.

Siasia, who released the 18 player squad that will represent the country in the championship to KICK OFF, revealed: "We will try and do our best in Bamako not to disgrace Nigeria. Though we are not really prepared for this championship.

"But we have to rise up

to a national call. If we are called upon to represent Nigeria, we don't have a choice than to do it to the best of our ability.

"Though I am not promising Nigerians we will win the championship, this team will not disgrace Nigeria." Speaking on his missing players, Siasia disclosed: "Yinka Adedeji and Kolawole Anubi could not make the trip because they are out of the country on trials and you know that I will never stop any player from moving

out to improve his career. "Ogbonna Abosi is still injured while Monday James has fully recovered. The new players who joined have shown great potentials and I hope they will prove themselves in Bamako," he said.

Seven new players have been called by the ex-Super Eagles striker to reinforce the

team, who will also be missing two professionals in Solomon Okoronkwo and Olubayo Adefemi.

The new players are defenders Danjumah Abdulahi from Nitel Lagos; Obinze Ebere from Ranchers Bees and Nimi Ateze from Lobi Stars.

Others include midfielder Kaita Sani Aruna from Kano

Pillars and strikers Chukwu Nonso from First Bank Lagos, Kelechi Osunwa of Dolphin FC and Ezeogu Amunike from NPA.

Siasia has also kept with 11 of the players who won him the African Youth Championship in Cotonou last month. They are goalkeepers Ambrose Vanzekin and Daniel Akpeyi as

well as defenders Apam Onyek-achi, Chinwo Kenedy, Johnb-ull Edeki, Dele Adeleye and Monday James.

Also on the trip to Mali are midfielder Bazuaye Daddy, captain Promise Isaac, Solomon David Abwo and Joseph Emmanuel.

The team will depart for Bamako on Tuesday.

3SC steal point from Sharks

Shooting Stars Sports Club of Ibadan, on Saturday at the Port Harcourt Liberation Stadium were forced to a 1-1 draw by Premier League returnees, Sharks in a week 2 match of the Globacom Premier League.

Coming to Port Harcourt on the heels of their 3-1 spanking of Nasarawa United last week, Shooting drew first blood as early as the 10th minute when Soga Sambo chest trapped a pull out from the left and found space between a static Sharks central defensive duo of Monday Inebia and Emeka Lucky to walk in to the eighteen yard box and slot the ball behind a hapless keeper Martins Datoru in goal for Sharks.

Before that goal Sharks had piled the pressure on Shooting but strikers Charles Omokaro and Obinna Ajoku frittered away chance after chance.

There was also a battle on the left as fifteen year old

Sharks' attacker, Akeem Yakubu gave Yomi Adigun a lot of work to do.

Returnee defender, Seyi Ogunsanya also had total control of his area, ensuring all loose balls were knocked away.

The second half started with Obinna Ajoku blasting wide in the box with only keeper Kola Ige to beat.

Three minutes later, Ajoku cashed in on a defensive blunder by Oluwale Johnson but blasted on Kola Ige while the rebound was booted into the skies by Akeem Yakubu.

Akeem Yakubu in one of his teasing runs, freed Charles Omokaro in the box and Ige had to foul him for a penalty which was converted by Endurance Alaboru in the 62nd minute for the equalizer.

At this point the game could have gone either way as Ibrahim Omotayo and Ladi Gasper terrorized Sharks with enough support from Ebenezer Ojo and Kingsley Elvis who marshaled the midfield efficiently.

Sharks' Technical Manager, Shaibu Amodu told nigeriasports.com after the game that Shooting Stars came to Port Harcourt with a game plan that worked for them.

"It was a good match, not withstanding the result. We conceded an early goal which obstructed our plans and it takes a good team to come back in a match of this magnitude."

"It's still early days yet and I would not advice the fans to get restive because anything can still happen in the league."

Coach Godfrey Esu told nigeriasports.com that he is happy his boys are beginning to get a new mentality as regards playing on away turf.

"I have always tried to make them understand that they can win anywhere and I am happy with the result that even though we did not win, we got away with some spoils."

"We actually came to Port Harcourt for three points and

I told them to come out here with that mentality. We can only get better from here."

In other results from Saturday, Elkanemi ended it 1-1 at home to Kwara United, Gateway drew goalless at home to Lobi and Insurance of Benin beat Gabros 2-1 in Benin.

Wikki Tourist of Bauchi were 1-0 winners over Tornadoes in Bauchi while Kano Pillar pipped Julius Berger 2-1 in Kano

Sharks line up: Martins Datoru, Endurance Alaboru, Valentine Nwabili, Peter Ibibor, Emeka Lucky, Monday Inebia, Sampson Auta/Austin Igweokolo(70th), Obinna Ajoku, Charles Omokaro/Ezioha Okereke(70th), Segun Jatto, Akeem Yakubu

Shooting Stars: Kola Ige, Yomi Adigun, Taiwo Ajibola, Oluwale Johnson, Seyi Ogunsanya, Chijioko Orjiakor, Ebenezer Ojo/Wilson Oboh (83rd), Ibrahim Omotayo, Ladi Gasper/David Abidoye (72nd), Kingsley Elvis, Soga Sambo/Shakiru Lawal(62nd)



Defending champion, Bernard Hopkins holds his championship belts after defeating Britain's Howard Eastman in the middleweight championship bout in Los Angeles, USA on Saturday. Hopkins defended his middleweight title for the 20th time.

Wikki tame Tornadoes

Spectators at the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa Stadium in Bauchi, had to wait till the dying minutes of the encounter between Wikki Tourists and Niger Tornadoes before their team snatched the much-needed three points courtesy of Sirajo Ladan.

The visitors went forcefully into the game and were more adventurous than the hosts with occasional forays into the Tourists' defence, but Jude Ebitogwa and Yakubu Abubakar gave keeper Cornelius Gopar good coverage.

The first stanza no doubt belonged to the visitors, but no goal to show for their

efforts, as Abdul Abdullahi's free kick in the 43rd minute went off target.

On resumption, coach Bitrus Bewarang replaced Thomas Ekoja for Abdul Haruna, who changed the tempo of the game in favour of the host team with Ladan Sirajo as tormentor-in-chief on the left flank. Twice the

winger rattled Tornadoes defence, but keeper Emmanuel Achuka was on hand to save the situation.

However, in the 65th minute, Tornadoes' Michael Vangreg was sent off by referee Samuel Alafin for a late tackle. It was a decision that did not go down well with the visitors' bench.

Thereafter, it was Wikki all the way as they bombarded the visitors' rear with consistent pressure. In one of such forays, Ladan hit the base of the pole in the 86th and a minute later, he put smile on the faces of the fans with a superb low drive for the only goal of the match.

Coach Bitrus Bewarang saluted his young lads for the late goal while he attributed the team's not too impressive outing to his rebuilding process. "We are just trying to put the team together and as the season continues, we will improve with every

Former NFA boss, Ikpeazu, laid to rest

Justice Chuba Ikpeazu, two-time NFA chairman, was at the weekend in Onitsha buried amidst pomp and pageantry, even as officials of the country's soccer governing body were conspicuously absent.

It was a carnival of sort at the country home of Pa Ikpeazu before and after the burial as the entire compound was packed with people from all works of life.

There were different types of traditional dances and a show of Onitsha custom, with

trying to steal the show.

Pa Ikpeazu was lowered into the mausoleum at about 2.05 p.m. with the representatives of NFA and sports ministry not present.

The chairman of Anambra State Football Association, Chief Mike Umeh who was present at the wake keep was said to have gone back to Lagos for an important engagement.

But Mr Victor Nwangwu, state football association secretary said that as at Friday they were in contact

Chairman, Alhaji Ibrahim Galadima, who said he would be at the burial.

He said that Galadima, the acting Secretary, Mr Fanny Amun, and two others were to represent the NFA, but they did not show up adding that hotel accommodation and transport had been arranged for them.

Mr Martin Nwosisi, consultant to the Ikpeazu family on NFA for the burial, who was physically worried also collaborated Nwangwu

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AKOKA Kola Herb 100% Pure 100% Natural 100% Effective 100% Safe 100% Healthy	KANO Kola Herb 100% Pure 100% Natural 100% Effective 100% Safe 100% Healthy
IBADAN Kola Herb 100% Pure 100% Natural 100% Effective 100% Safe 100% Healthy	IJESU-ODE Kola Herb 100% Pure 100% Natural 100% Effective 100% Safe 100% Healthy
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NOTE - AGENTS WANTED NATIONWIDE

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is for
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DAILY TRUST

MONDAY COLUMN

Monday, February 21, 2005

The (not so) national conference

By Kabiru A. Yusuf
kabiruyusuf@dailytrust.com

Contd. from page 1

process. In the sphere of economic planning and management the government's record is dismal. In spite of the unprecedented revenues that have accrued to the country in the last six years, Nigerians have never had it so bad. We have been reduced to penury and destitution.

On the international stage, we are the most corrupt nation, or the third most corrupt if you count failed states like Haiti. Of 60 destinations of foreign direct investment, we are No. 60 according to the 2003 edition of World Investment Prospects of the London Economist Intelligence Unit. In the World Economic Forum's Africa Competitiveness Report 2004, Nigeria could not make it to the top ten. A recent report of a U.S. Think tank, the Commission on Weak States and US National Security, rates Nigeria as a weak state and ranks it at the bottom of 20 percent of countries that have failed to meet the basic needs of their people. This puts Nigeria in the company of such failed states as Somalia, Sierra Leone and DR Congo. That President Bush appears to endorse Obasanjo, does not detract from the fact that Americans know the government is undemocratic and incompetent.

It is hardly surprising that this government is characterized by graft, deceit and fraud; it has woefully failed to put in place any fundamental reform for the welfare of the people. Its economic reform, characterized by selling-off our assets, has only compounded the hardship of the people.

It is elementary that neither a reform programme nor a market economy can be simply conjured up or decreed when the network of institutions, legal provisions or adequate domestic consensus about internal measures that are necessary for success, are conspicuously absent.

As if his economic management was not bad enough, his political bungling and messy interventions have defied belief. In quick succession he has appointed and removed two Party Chairmen, two Presidents of the Senate and spent a lot of time and resources in his first term trying to dislodge the Speaker of the House of Representatives. By appearing to support Chris Uba in the atrocious conflict in Anambra State, he has put his weight behind thuggery, political skullduggery and downright treason.

It is against the backdrop of the above that delegates should view the conference. The terms of reference of the Makarfi Committee on Political Reforms include a "Sound Political Reform Agenda for Nigeria". However, the personal agenda and objectives of the President are known to be different: he wants to change the system so as to remain in power to enable him to deploy federal funds to the South-West as he has been doing for the last six years to the detriment of the North and the East. In short, the president's dubious agenda is to consolidate the economic foundation of Oduduwa Republic simultaneous with the deliberate pauperization of the North and East and even the oil-rich South-South whose political elite he has tried to placate with derivation money.

The long-term objective of all this is for a confederation and ultimate disintegration of the country after the South-West's strategic requirements for a nation-state are in place.

Delegates must be wary of this possible agenda and must not be used to destroy or unwittingly lay the foundation for splitting the country, because the consequences are too grave and catastrophic to contemplate.

It is still possible to go along with Chief S.B. Awoniyi's dictum that, as the delegates proceed with their deliberations, hope may triumph over bitter experience. What is imperative is that despite its shaky constitutional foundations, Nigerians should rescue the conference from the hidden agenda that led to its conception, to make it serve the needs of a genuinely democratic polity.

The National Political Reform Conference, which begins today in Abuja, is going to be more about the form than substance. Yes, a reform movement is needed in Nigeria. Yes, it is useful if representatives of our elites could begin this process by seeking common ground on issues that divide us. And yes, imperfect as the arrangement is, this is the only game in town, so it is guaranteed a certain level of participation by the busy-bodied and the bored.

However evidence of bad faith on the part of the organizers is growing by the day. It is bad enough that those



President Obasanjo

attending the conference have no mandate from their constituencies but were handpicked by the President and the 36 governors. So in many states people are not happy with the choice of the six delegates, and not just for selfish reasons. Many of the state delegates are not noted for interest in public affairs, nor any particular expertise in any area of human endeavour. They are for the most part friends of the government, who can be counted upon to look out for the interest of their benefactors.

A similar thing inevitably happened at the centre. Obasanjo has chosen people in his own image, except in areas where that would be untenable. So out of the 46 persons known to be nominated by the President based on North-South regional representation, 17 only are Muslims while 29 are Christians. And while from the 26 nominated from the north, 17 are Muslims and 9 are Christians, of the 20 Presidential nominees from the south, 19 are Christians with Alhaji Serene Dokubo as the only Muslim from the South. This is despite the fact that in the South-west, the President's home region, at least half of the population is Muslim. In fact there is no Muslim representation in the state nominations from Edo, Ondo and Ekiti. On the other hand, Niger state, which also has a substantial Christian population, did not include any on its list of 6 nominees.

As this newspaper earlier reported, the President had settled on the choice of Justice Niki Tobi from Rivers State and Reverend Mathew Kukah, from Kaduna, as Chairman and Secretary of the conference respectively. It would be unprecedented for two Christians to be given leadership of such a sensitive national assignment. Certainly in previous Constitutional tinkering under Muslim Presidents, the Chairmanship has always gone to the Southern Christian with a northern Muslim as a scribe to ensure balance. The government, according to some reports, at first, hesitated to go ahead with these appointments after the story was leaked to the media. Certainly Niki Tobi's name was

not in the list of the 382 names released by the government last week. However after this feint, and a suitable interval to weigh public reaction, the President has gone ahead with his original choice.

Justice Niki Tobi, may be most prominent nominee to be brought in by subterfuge, but he is not the only one. Remember only 383 names (including Niki Tobi's) have been officially announced so far, with 17 still outstanding. I know that the Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN), of which I am an executive member, nominated only Nduka Obaigbena of *Thisday* to represent it. However, when the government list was released, we noted that Chief Ogunshola, the Chairman of *Punch*, has been added as the second NPAN nominee by the Presidency. There may be many other such quiet nominations made to achieve some special purposes.

It is such brazenness, even in areas like the media, where secrets cannot be expected to be kept, that leads one to assume that Obasanjo himself wants to undermine the credibility of the conference before it even begins. He knows that Muslims are unlikely to accept the decisions of a conference where the President (who did most of the nominations) and the Chairman and the Secretary are so pointedly Christians. He knows that the delegates he has gathered in Abuja, who are mostly leaders without a following, do not have the trust or mandate of their communities to make any far-reaching compromises on fundamental political reform. So everything and everyone will revolve around him and his Political Advisers, especially the ubiquitous Jerry Gana. It is in small meetings with groups of delegates at the behest of the Presidency, that the real decisions will be taken. How far-reaching they will be and how they could be presented and 'sold' to the wider public remains to be seen.

Meanwhile there will be much huffing and puffing among the delegates for public consumption. There will be thunderous speeches and heated debates, but not much light on the way forward. The media will add to the cacophony by taking sides and blaming the victims. In this regards, the choice of Reverend Kukah, who is as much a product of the media as he is that of the Catholic Church, is well made. Kukah has good connection with the media and has the skill to tele-guide its coverage of the conference, though to what end remains to be seen. The media, in any case, has its own agenda, and since it is mainly based in Lagos, all you need to have it eating from the palm of your hands is to emphasize the north-south difference on revenue allocation, ethnic autonomy and zoning, power rotation and role of religion in national life.

Northern delegates will be at a serious disadvantage because they would find themselves being assailed from all sides. The Conference is being held due to pressure from the Southwest, which has articulated an agenda for a return to regional structure that Nigeria had in the 1960's. The Yoruba, then in opposition, were the ones most vehemently opposed to the old regional structure, but now they have done an about-turn and want autonomy for themselves and others. I personally think we should take up this offer, though, of course, the so-called six-zonal structure is a non-starter.

The worst thing is for the delegates from the north to go into the conference blindly supporting the status quo. If nobody wants the structure as presently constituted, we should all accept to change it. But the devil, as the saying goes, is in the details. This is where our consent has to be sought, possibly in a referendum. But no one should be deceived that some sort of narrow agenda can be imposed on our people through the back door. That is why to some extent many people are sanguine about the conference. Obasanjo can call together whoever he wants to deliberate on any subject under the Nigerian sun. But there are certain values that a thousand conferences cannot alter in our lives.

So adopting a long-term view, I say, welcome to the delegates of our not so-national conference. The stage is yours for a few months to do what you can. If you follow the dictates of your conscience and do the right thing for your fellows, it is for your own good. If not, again, the loss is yours. The human stage is finite and fickle. No one can stem the tide of events.