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NATIONAL CONFAB

No hidden agenda against North

-Delegates

Some northern delegates yesterday dispelled rumours of a hidden agenda against the region at the ongoing political conference as a result of the lopsidedness in the leadership and number of delegates nominated by the federal government.

By Emmanuel Bello

Talban Bauchi, Dr Ibrahim Tahir, told *Daily Trust* that he regretted making negative utterances concerning the conference based on media reports. "I'm ashamed of what I've said in the past about this conference. I should have been silent on some issues because, as you

can see from the president's opening speech, most of my fears have been allayed," he said.

On the composition of the conference leadership, he said that there was no point in entertaining fears. "I don't think any serious minded person should be afraid of

the leadership composition or anything. People like me have no fears," he said.

He commended the choice of Justice Niki Tobi and Rev Fr. Mathew Hassan Kukah as chairman and secretary respectively and also lauded the vice chairman, Alhaji Sule Katagum, noting

that they were all dependable persons pointing out that the north should "maintain calm and sobriety we are known for and forget our fears so that we can have a good conference."

Speaking after the inauguration, Alhaji Iro Dan Musa, a federal government's delegate, told *Daily Trust* that he is encouraged by the choice

of the president in terms of the leadership. He said that as a mature politician, he was sure that the intention of government about the confab is at one with the hopes and aspirations of the people.

Similarly, Dr Bello Haliru, former minister of communications and delegate from

Contd. on Pg 2



L-R the Vacant Seat: Former Head of the State General Muhammadu Buhari's chair left vacant, former military president, General Ibrahim Babangida (rtd), former head of Interim Government, Chief Ernest Shonekan, during the inauguration ceremony of the political reform conference held at the International Conference Centre, Abuja ...yesterday. Pix: Joe Oroye.

Jerry Gana defends Tobi, Kukah's choice

Presidential adviser on political matters, Professor Jerry Gana, yesterday responded to allegations of religious bias in the selection of the leadership of the national political reforms conference, saying Muslims have gotten adequate representation in the deputy chairman, Alhaji Sule Katagum.

The conference is headed by Justice Niki Tobi with Reverend Mathew Kukah as secretary.

This led to several outcries from a number of Muslim leaders in the North, who alleged that Kukah's position should have gone to a Muslim from the region.

But making the position of the government known shortly before the inauguration of the conference, Professor Jerry Gana said the hierarchy puts the deputy chairman above the secretary and therefore, the Muslims have no basis to complain.

He told *Daily Trust* that as far as the government was

By Habeeb I. Pindiga, Political Reporter

concerned, there was no lopsidedness in the composition of the leadership.

"Mr President (Olusegun Obasanjo) was looking at it as a hierarchy. The chairman is from the South, a Christian;

Contd. on Pg 2

Conference adjourns till Monday

By Habeeb I. Pindiga, Political Reporter

The national political reforms conference has adjourned to next Monday, following a one and a half hour maiden session yesterday.

The conference kicked off at about 3.00 p.m., with its chairman, Justice Niki Tobi; deputy, Alhaji Sule Katagum and secretary, Rev Mathew Kukah, leading the session.

Following delegates submissions that there were no basic guidelines for the confab and that no clear-cut accommodation arrangements were made, Tobi adjourned the conference.

Earlier, a resolution was adopted to hold the conference from Mondays to Thu-

Contd. on Pg 2

I won't be used for hidden agenda - Niki Tobi

Chairman of the national political reform conference, Justice Niki Tobi, yesterday assured that he will not be used to push forward any agenda that could lead to the balkanisation of the country.

Tobi, who was speaking at the inauguration of the confab in Abuja yesterday, said rather than threatening the nation's unity, the conference will come up with ideas of strengthening cohesion and abolishing divisive tendencies.

"Let me assure that the conference will not deliberate on the possibility of dividing Nigeria, that will be a clear violation of the preamble to

By Abdu Labaran, Habeeb I. Pindiga & Emmanuel Bello

the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 and the totality of the constitution itself," he said.

The chairman also said that, "I want to assure all Nigerians that the conference will do everything possible to deliver better dividends of an egalitarian society where Nigerians will be talking of Nigeria and not ethnic or tribal groups... It is my hope that the conference will address the numerous economic problems of this great country with the goal of making Nigeria a better

Contd. on Pg 2

country."

Should the conference derail towards disintegrating the country, Tobi said, he would resign from the job.

He also said that partisan politics would not be allowed to creep into the conference,

explaining that as a jurist, the chairman has nothing to do with party politics.

Expressing confidence that the conference will douse the clamour for a sovereign confab, Tobi said there was

Contd. on Pg 2

Nigeria's unity non-negotiable - Obasanjo

President Obasanjo yesterday at the International Conference Centre, Abuja, flagged off the national political reform conference with a charge to the delegates not to do anything that will undermine the unity of the country dismissing the calls for sove-

reign national conference and conference of ethnic nationalities as parochial and divisive.

Inaugurating the conference, the president observed that certain issues that have resulted from decades of political engagements and contestations, dialogues,

conflict and negotiations, networking and confrontations with the stark realities that unite us "must by now be accepted as minimum issues that must be regarded as given."

Such issues, according to the president, include: "the

Contd. on Pg 2

News

No hidden agenda *Contd. from Pg 1*

Kebbi state, said that there is no hidden agenda in the conference. On the figures of the delegates showing a dominance of Christians against Muslims, he said that is not a problem. "I don't see any reason for misgivings. We should look at it with an open mind. It will be counterproductive to start differe-ntiating between north and south or between ethnic groups. The most important thing is to look at issues and the good of all Nigerians," he said.

Malam Abdulrahman Albasir, a delegate from Adamawa state, also debunked fears of a hidden agenda, noting that the north was capable of matching any agenda with the south. He said that states from the north will push for positions that will be of benefit to their people and observed that delegates from the north will be vigilant throughout the duration of the confab to ensure that the region is not shortchanged in any form.

He said that even though the north has no pre-arranged agenda, its delegates have come to the conference with an open mind but will respond in like manner if there is any cause to feel there are some hidden motives behind the exercise.

The north, according to him, does not feel disadvantaged in any respect and is not afraid of any issues that may be raised as long as the unity of the country is not challenged, adding that the north will give a good account of itself to defend those values cherished by all Nigerian regardless of religion or region.

Chief Solomon Lar, a delegate from Plateau state, said that the gathering will only entertain agenda that

foster the cooperate existence of Nigeria, arguing that the Middle Belt Forum has taken its stand, adding that he was not a member of the Arewa Consultative Forum. "I cannot discuss the agenda of the ACF. I'm not a member. But I'm sure that everything will be discussed in the interest of Nigeria."

In his submission, Alhaji Bukar Abba Ibrahim, executive governor of Yobe State said that he has no fears concerning the outcome of the conference. He said that the confab was not a sovereign national conference and will not make binding its decisions. "I'm not worried about this conference. After all, the decisions to be reached at this meeting will be considered by us: the federal government, the National Assembly and everyone concerned. So there is nothing to be apprehensive about."

He said that he was satisfied with the composition of the delegates, noting that the conference was convened in a hurry. "When you rush an important event like this, you're bound to have some loopholes here and there. But on the overall, "I'm satisfied."

Reacting to the issue of a southern agenda, he said that all the groups coming for the conference have one. "You can't be talking about a southern agenda. We're all here with an agenda. The issues are so many that we need to discuss everything."

He however was sceptical about the overall outcome of the conference, saying that the National Assembly would have been given the responsibility to hold the conference.

Jerry Gana *Contd. from Pg 1*

and the deputy chairman from the North, a Muslim. It was a question of balancing in terms of the hierarchy of chairman and deputy chairman and then secretary serving the entire conference.

"He (Obasanjo) wasn't looking at it as chairman and secretary. He is looking at it as chairman and deputy chairman, because the deputy has the last authority as chairman, because he is going to sit as chairman. So its that level he is balancing the leadership. The leadership is the level of the chairman."

"Its just like the president and the vice president, the secretary to the government can be anybody. So the chairman is a Christian, the dep-

uty a very powerful person - is a Muslim. As far as he (Obasanjo) is concerned, the presidency of the conference is complete," he said.

Yesterday's inauguration of the conference was attended by Vice President Atiku Abubakar, President of the Senate, Adolphus Wabara; Speaker of the House of Representatives, Aminu Masari; many state governors; members of the National Assembly; ministers and presidential advisers among others.

Gana, who is also a delegate to the conference, said the forum would be a refinery, where the nation's woes would be addressed for a better future.

Conference *Contd. from Pg 1*

rsday from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. with a break between 1.00 p.m. and 3.00 p.m.

Chief Solomon Lar (Plateau state) first suggested that due to lack of required documents, the conference should be suspended for sometime to give room for adequate preparations.

He got support from Senator Uba Ahmed (Gombe state), Magaji Dambatta (Kano state), Ibrahim Tahir (Bauchi state) and Ibrahim Shema (Katsina state).

On his part, Alhaji Umaru Dikko (Kaduna state) suggested that the conference should not sit on Fridays, to allow delegates to consult their people and Muslims to properly observe Juma'at

prayers. Dr Paul Unongo and Chief Barnabas Gemade (Benue state), urged that daily business schedule be provided to guide the conference, while Chief S. K. Babalola called for orderliness and decorum.

The maiden session was characterised by disorderliness, as delegates spoke even when they were not recognised by the chairman.

Also, the microphones were not working efficiently. At certain instances, the chairman had to shout before he could be heard.

A woman delegate, Joy Ngozi and Chris Abashiya (Kaduna state), called for a

Apparently worried by the growing opposition to its new policy on public procurements and contract implementation, the federal government is moving to enlist the support of diplomats and foreign missions in the country for the policy.

The Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit (BMPIU), the established by the presidency, otherwise referred to as "Due Process" has of recent attracted wide criticisms from various stakeholders who blame the process for unnecessary delays in execution of government projects, thereby hindering the implementation of the nation's national budget.

While some Nigerians alleged that the "Due Process" has made execution of capital projects "cumbersome," others say it has brought about additional costs in contract implementation.

About one month ago, Nigeria's foremost economist and former chairman of the National Economic Intelligence Committee (NEIC), Professor Sam Aluko, had punctured the policy, arguing that instead of adding values to the nation's economy, the "Due Process" mechanism has contributed to impoverishing a broad spectrum of the public by stalling implementation of capital projects appropriated for in the country's budget.

The senior special assistant to the president and head of the "Due Process" unit, Mrs Oby Ezekwesili, reacted to the professor's public pronouncements, insisting that the BMPIU mechanism has saved the country huge sums of money in inflated contracts.

Perhaps still worried by the deafening public dissent over the "Due Process," Mrs Ezekwesili yesterday invited and addressed members of the diplomatic missions and international agencies in Nigeria, where she publicly

oneness of Nigeria; federalism and federal system of government; presidentialism; multi-religiosity; federal character; popular participation; the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy; and separation of powers."

Urging the conference to feel free to strengthen, update and refine the issues in question in their recommen-

change of venue from the Africa Hall of the International Conference Centre to the former chambers of the House of Representatives.

Responding, Tobi announced that the next session will hold at the preferred venue.

Ruling on the adjournment, the chairman said by next week, issues of delegates welfare packages would have been ironed out and the secretariat would be fully ready.

Documents to be made available to the delegates include the 1999 constitution, the Ahmed Makarfi committee report on national dialogue and the Oputa panel report.

FG seeks diplomatic support for "Due Process"

sought their support for the policy.

"This forum therefore is to seek your support to explain to individuals and companies from your respective countries who intend or are already doing business in Nigeria that our public procurement reforms emphasises international best practices obtained in most of your countries," she appealed.

These best practices, according to her, include transparency, honesty, competition and value for money in all contract transactions.

Mrs Ezekwesili accused some international companies of collaborating with their Nigerian allies to abuse contract procedures just as she alleged that "at the BMPIU, we do get desperate

By Ahmed I. Shekarau, Group Business Editor & Anas A. Galadima, Business Reporter

calls from some missions asking us to bend the rules in favour of a company of their nationality."

On the other hand, she restated the achievements of the "Due Process" saying that in 2004, the BMPIU certified projects worth N290 billion out of a total of N349 billion in the 2004 capital vote, which represents about 80 percent performance.

She debunked rumours from some quarters that the due process has been decentralised or even relieved of its functions saying "this is false, the BMPIU is intact, functional and has even been given more powers following

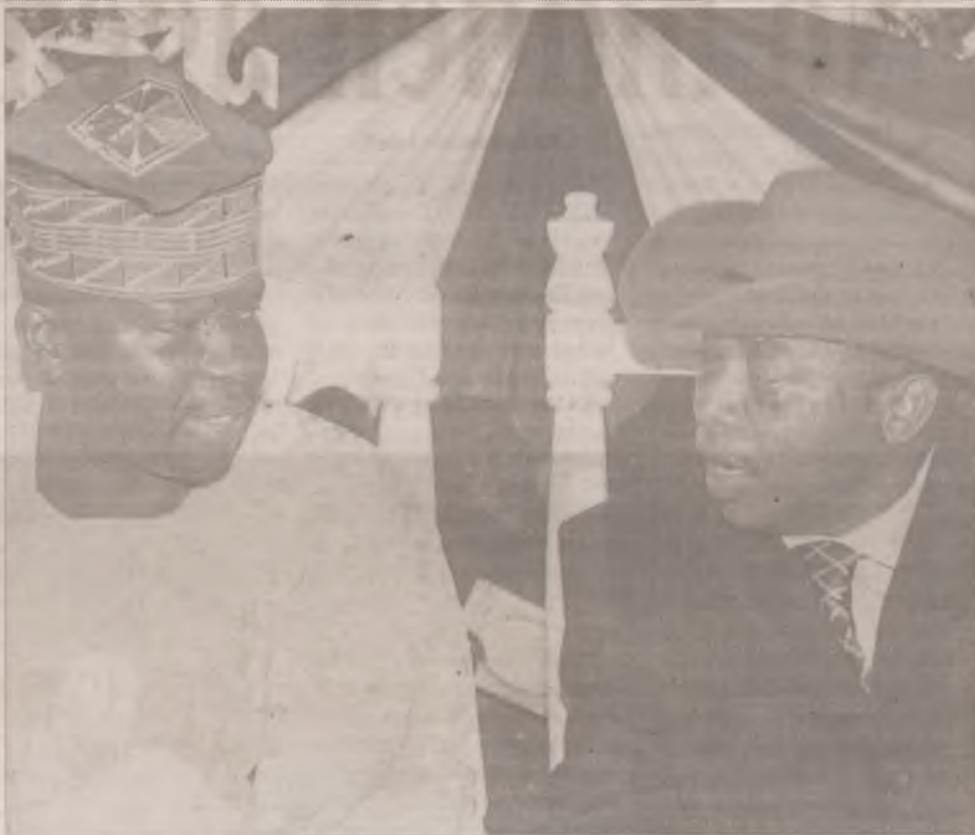
Mr President's directives that the NNPC and the NDDC operations be brought under the "Due Process" policy."

Speaking earlier at the occasion, the minister of the FCT, Malam Nasir Ahmad Rufai, commended the process for its achievements.

According to him, prior to the introduction of the "Due Process," most civil servants did not know what was meant by "to tender."

All they knew was that contractors come to lobby to get contracts and public officials simply award contracts to friend's, relatives and business associates, he said.

He said the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit (BMPIU) hold the keys to Nigeria's future.



Governor Ayo Fayose and his deputy, Mr Abiodun Aluko at a reception organised in honour of the governor at Ijero-Ekiti ...recently.

Nigeria's unity *Contd. from Pg 1*

endations, he however, warned that "nothing should be done to undermine our national integrity and sovereignty or weaken our national cohesion," asserting that these areas constitute the bedrock of our unity, identity and political praxis.

Taking a swipe at the advocates of a conference of ethnic nationalities and sovereign national conference, President Obasanjo said that Nigeria has gone beyond the antics and narrow interests of ethnic entrepreneurs.

"The people of Nigeria, since 1999, have twice elected representatives and leaders at the local, state and

federal levels. Each state in the federation is represented at the federal level. The Nigeria state is not collapsing or exhausted and our territorial and national integrity is fully intact and guaranteed," he declared, noting that the sovereignty of any nation rests with the people.

He said the purpose of the conference was to discuss and reach consensus on aspects of governance, arrangements for reinforcing the unity, cohesion, stability, security progress, development and performance of the Nigerian federation, stressing that the purpose is to enhance rather than diminish the present and future of every Nigerian.

According to President Obasanjo, the national political reform conference was not designed to dismember or disintegrate Nigeria nor is it a substitute for the executive or the legislature. Rather, it is a democratic path to consider all that is necessary to assist the constitutionally established legitimate structures of government to grow,

He, however, warned that no room would be given to injure the nation's unity and that interests contrary to Nigeria's cohesion would succumb.

become more dynamic, more accountable and more capable of delivering services to the populace.

Harping on the unity of the country, he noted that pluralism was the order of the day with globalisation, technology, moderation, and the politics of accommodation dictating that we must reject those ideas and arguments that seek to divide us and establish the interests of ethnic entrepreneurs as the sole interests of the people.

The president urged the delegates not to "waste this opportunity in casting aspersions, revising distracting issues, engaging in meaningless and fruitless debates, trying to denigrate what has been done, playing to the gallery or trying to divide our people on grounds of many identities that we should actually cherish."

He also urged the delegates not to be contaminated by negative ideas or allow their honesty and integrity to be compromised by extraneous and inimical influences and temptations, advising them to be steadfast, patriotic, hardworking and focused on goals at all times.

News

FG to approve seven new private varsities

The number of licensed private universities in the country may soon increase following the recommendations of the National Universities Commission (NUC), that the federal government grants approval to an additional seven private universities to commence operations.

In recommending the licensing of the new private universities, the NUC said in a statement in Abuja yesterday that the seven proposed universities have met all the guidelines out of the over 100 applications for the establishment of private universities that is being processed by the commission.

The NUC, gave the names of the proposed universities as Bells University of Technology, Badagry, Crawford University, Oye-Ekiti; Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Ajakueji; Wukari Jubilee University, Wukari; Renaissance University, Enugu, Crescent University, Abeokuta and University of Mkar in Benue state, adding that the universities, apart from being

By Hamisu Onunu, Senior Reporter (Education)

ready for take-off, were most aligned to the priority needs of the nation in terms of programmes on offer and have met all the conditions for licensing.

Consequently, the NUC said it has forwarded the names of the seven universities to its board, for onward passage to the federal executive council after it has accepted the recommendations of the standing committee on private universities which carries out the screening of applications for the setting up of private universities.

In ranking the proposed universities, the NUC scored Bells University first with 82.78 percent and concluded that the programmes to be offered by the school, including its facilities were adequate for its immediate take-off.

While making the same recommendations about the remaining six universities, the NUC however scored Crawford university (81.75%); Joseph Ayo

Babalola University (80.41%); Renaissance University (80.82%); Crescent University (77.11%); University of Mkar (77.20%) and Wukari Jubilee University (62.68%).

When government eventually grants the licence to operate, they are expected to offer courses in pure and social sciences, information technology and education.

In a related development, the NUC has named Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, as the premier university in the country because of the quality of the research and

published works by the academic staff, while the Federal University of Technology, Akure and University of Ibadan came second and third respectively.

To average tops, the OAU had a research score of 200, followed by FUT, Akure, 186, points, while university of Ibadan scored 154 points. The university of Lagos, University of Agriculture, Abeokuta and University of Ilorin were next with a score of 144 points, 74 points and 62 points respectively to place fourth, fifth and sixth.

They were followed by the university of Benin (50); Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (44); Rivers State University of Science and Technology, (32); Ladoko Akintola University (20); Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (18) and University of Uyo (14).

Barrack contractors warned over substandard building materials

Alhaji Sani Gidado, Chairman, Presidential Committee on Barracks Rehabilitation (PCBR), has warned contractors to desist from using substandard building materials.

The chairman who spoke to newsmen, said the supervisory and inspection team sent round various rehabilitation projects reported that some contractors used substandard building materials to save cost and derive maximum profits.

Alhaji Gidado said any contractor guilty of using fake or inferior products risks losing his money or have his contract revoked.

Gidado said the rehabilitation process taking

By Ruby Rabi'u, Defence Reporter

place in barracks across the nation will lift the morale of men in the force and assist them in their bid to re-professionalise, hence no set back will be tolerated from any contractor in this welfare exercise, he added.

He urged contractors to follow the exact recommendation made by the committee and abide by the bill of verification or materials used in the construction projects.

He told them to speed up the jobs so as not to coincide with the rainy season and he expressed satisfaction with some jobs already being completed in various areas and promised to pay

AG blames foreign ministry over ignorance of treaties

The Ministry of Justice yesterday disclosed that it has no knowledge or record of the existence of some treaties as they are not passed to their office by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Speaking on behalf of the attorney general of the federation and minister of justice, Mrs. Ekwueme from the ministry of Justice, said that the ministry, which has the responsibility to publish treaties and make them available to the public has its wings clipped due to the failure of the foreign affairs ministry to pass the treaties to the justice ministry.

She disclosed this at a public hearing organised by the House Committee on foreign affairs in collaboration with Open Society Justice Initiative on domestic obligations and implementation of international treaties ratified by Nigeria held at the National Assembly complex yesterday.

Mrs. Ekwueme added that to correct the confusing trend, the minister of justice, Chief Akinlolu Olujimi (SAN), has set up a committee to collate all treaties signed by all ministries for record keeping and classification in the ministry's depository.

In his welcome address, chairman of the House committee on foreign affairs, Dr. Usman Bugaje, queried how a country's ministries enter into agreements on behalf of the country without

By Zainab Alimi, Political Reporter

the ministry of Justice having knowledge of such treaties.

He also decried an act contrary to the provisions contained therein, saying that the situation is worrisome and irresponsible; adding that the public hearing was meant to educate all stakeholders on the range of agreements and implications of treaties and how to adopt and implement them and expressed displeasure over the habitual late coming of Nigerians to important events saying "it is a very serious business. If we cannot keep to time, we cannot deliver and we cannot progress in this country."

Delivering a paper at the event, the Head of Department of International Law, university of Lagos, Professor Akin Oyebo, said that a treaty cannot apply domestically without an enabling legislation in Nigeria, hence the National Assembly has a critical role to play pursuant to its oversight functions in foreign affairs as well as in ensuring the protection of National interest.

He advised that the noticeable lacuna in the requisite constitutional provisions regarding treaties need to discharge that responsibility with a high level of professionalism, requisite dispatch and optimal efficiency in order that Nigeria is enabled to realize its manifest destiny among the family of nations.



Vice President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, Rev. (Dr.) John O. Onaiyekan, Vice Chancellor of the Catholic University of Nigeria, Abuja, Prof. Afolabi Ojo and Arch Bishop Ignatius Kaigama of Jos observing the National Anthem during the N10 billion Fund raising ceremony in support of the Catholic University of Nigeria, Abuja project held in Abuja...recently

Pix: Kennedy Egbonodje

Reps explain Yerima's suspension

The House of Representatives yesterday explained that its decision to suspend Hon. Haruna Yerima was to safeguard the prestige of the House by discouraging actions that may bring it into disrepute.

A statement signed by Hon. Abike Dabiri, Chairman, House Committee on Media

By Hamed M. Bello, Senior Political Reporter

and Public Affairs, which announced the position of the House on the matter, said it was opposed to any action by members that threatens the collective integrity of the lower legislative chamber.

Hon. Yerima had last week accused individual members and committee chairmen of

taking gratifications in the form of complementary recharge cards from MTN worth N7,500 monthly for over six months for individual members.

Yerima, among other things also accused members of complacency in the face of alleged executive excesses and specifically fingered the deputy speaker, Hon. Austin Opara of bias in the conduct of voting exercises on sensitive deliberations of the House.

The House consequently resolved to suspend Yerima for one month to pave way for investigations, by the committee on ethics and privileges, the veracity of his allegations, even as Yerima said he stood by his statements and owed no one any apology.

Describing Yerima's outbursts as "detrimental to the House and disrespectful to its members", the statement said Yerima was suspended for one month for using coarse and disparaging language to describe his interpretation of legislative proceedings and individual members.

"The sweeping and generalized aspersions of Hon. Yerima were unprofessional, especially since the allegations were mere hear say and not supported by hard facts or substantive information."

By Hamisu Muhammad, Reporter (Business)

NNPC denies funding confab

The Group Managing Director, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Engineer Funsho Kupolokum, has described as unfortunate, suggestions that the NNPC is funding the ongoing national political reform conference.

Last week, the former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Alhaji Umar Ghali Na'abba had said that the federal government might have decided to ask the NNPC to fund the national conference, since both the upper and the lower legislative chambers declined to approve the budget for the conference.

According to the report, Na'abba said he was reliably informed that the NNPC would be instructed by the federal government to fund the conference because according to him, the corporation is not accountable to Nigerians

since the ministry of petroleum resources is controlled by the presidency.

But Engineer Kupolokum, while speaking with *Daily Trust* in Abuja yesterday, said his corporation would rather fund some vital agencies in the country like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), than the national political reform conference.

The Minister of state for finance Mrs. Nenady Usman revealed at the weekend that the consolidated revenue fund, which is the account of the federal government in the Central Bank of Nigeria has been used for the National Conference.

She also said "it is not true that the FAAC is providing funds from the federation accounts to fund the national political reform conference.

EFCC recovers N98 bn from fraudsters

By Hamisu Muhammad, reporter (Business)

The Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Malam Nuhu Ribadu, says that property and money worth \$700 million (N98 billion), has been recovered by the commission from 419ers and fraudulent activities.

Speaking at the chief officers management development programme (Course 033) by the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), yesterday in Abuja, Ribadu said the issues of 419 has tarnished the image of the country in the eyes of the international community.

According to him, major multinational corporations have no confidence in Nigeria thereby divesting from the economy and moving to other countries.

He said Nigeria is losing huge amount of investment as a result of the bad image it has. Stressing that even transparency international judgment on Nigeria as the third most corrupt nation was as a result of the negative image that the world over perceives of the country.

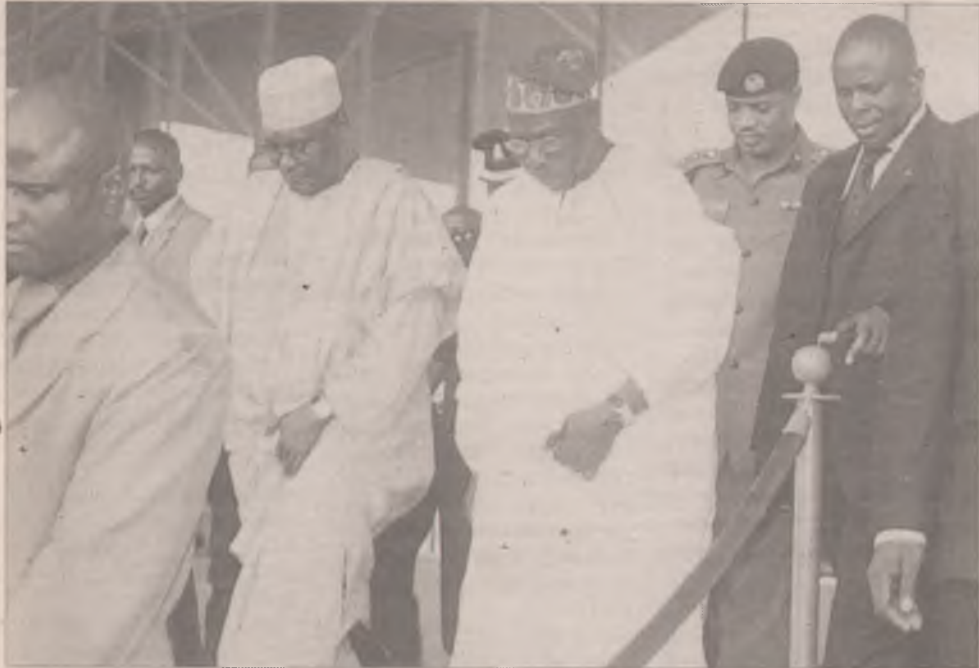
He said the commission will work collaborate with agency's in the country to trace the fraudsters and the people behind the 419 activities in the country.

"Unless we start building confidence in ourselves, believe in what we are doing, the country would not move forward," he stressed.

The EFCC boss also said that over 200 pipeline vandals were arrested by the EFCC in 2004, adding that some of the pipeline vandals are in court for trial.

Ribadu described the success as a collaborative effort between the EFCC and the Nigerian Navy especially in the Niger Delta areas.

National Conference inauguration ceremony



President Olusegun Obasanjo and his Vice, Atiku Abubakar with others leaving after the inauguration ceremony.



L-R: Former military Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, former President, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, ANPP National Chairman, Chief Don Etiebet and the Leader of Borno delegates, Ibrahim Damcida, discussing during the inauguration.



L-R: Former Leaders: General Ibrahim Babangida (rtd), Chief (Dr.) Ernest Shonekan and General Abdulsalami Abubakar (rtd).



Dr. Olusola Saraki (left), discussing with the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Mr. S.O. Adekunle (right).



Governors Shekarau of Kano State, Ahmed Makarfi of Kaduna State, Jolly Nyame of Taraba State (behind), George Akume of Benue State and Modu Sherrif of Borno State.



L-R: Chief Afe Babalola (SAN), Dr. George Korgba and Governor Rasheed Ladoja of Oyo State during the inauguration ceremony by President Olusegun Obasanjo held at the International Conference Centre, Abuja ... yesterday. Pix by: Joe Oroye & Kennedy Egbonodje.

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.

Management

News

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



Gov. Kalu of Abia state (right) with the Sokoto state Gov. Alhaji Bafarwa when he paid him courtesy call in his office.

JNI decries muslims marginalisation

The Jama'atul Nasril Islam (JNI), has decried the marginalisation of muslims in the just opened national conference.

In a letter dated February 19, 2005, sent to President Olusegun Obasanjo, JNI declared that there is lopsidedness in the composition of the leadership and membership of the conference to the "disadvantage" of the Muslim Ummah in Nigeria, especially against the background of the need for equity and fairness in governance of the country at all times.

The letter which was signed by Justice Abdulkadir Orire, the secretary general of JNI, said that out of 393 delegates selected, 233 are christians, a majority of 73 over the muslims.

JNI also said that to further entrench the imbalance is the appointment of the leadership of the conference, the chairman and the secretary who are the two top officials are christians, saying that the muslims are deliberately assigned the sub-ordinate positions.

We are inclined to view this as a disturbing sign of a pre-meditated agenda to sideline us and even subjugate the interest of the muslim Ummah of Nigeria at such an

Muazu sets Bauchi agenda

As the national conference on political reforms opened yesterday, Alhaji Ahmadu Adamu Mu'azu. The Bauchi state governor has charged Bauchi delegates to the conference to resist the temptation of being dragged into the issue of resource control.

He said the delegates should resist it with all their might, as realising such dream by the south would make the North perpetually "wretched".

Mu'azu, while inaugurating a 19 member local committee on the conference in Bauchi on Sunday, expressed dismay over the continued agitation for resource control, saying such agitators have lost sense of history.

According to him, it was the resources of the North that was used to develop "ports, Lagos flyovers and roads" saying that "we

From Abubakar Haruna in Kaduna

important forum for the possible re-drafting of the nation's constitution pertaining to crucial issues of governance of citizens, JNI declared.

JNI disclosed that the government had earlier acknowledged the need for equity and fairness in the representation of the two major faiths in the country when it ensured that the recent fund raising committee for tsunami victims and the ensuing Nigerian Inter-Religions Council (NIREC), have a co-chairmanship representing the two faiths.

JNI also believes that the lopsidedness in the nomination is a deliberate ploy to make members of the two major faiths to fight one another and sow the seeds of disunity along religious divide thereby fanning the embers of a deadly religious crises that cannot be extinguished in various parts of the country.

We cannot gloss over the underlying climate of distrust and animosity being expressed by certain provocative comments and veiled threats by other christian leaders and their nominees to the conference against the general interest of Nigerian muslims.

Scrapping of states dangerous for Nigeria -Dr. Tahir

By Hammeed M. Bello, Senior Political reporter

As the federal government pet project on national political reforms kicks off in Abuja, one of the delegates, Dr. Ibrahim Tahir, the *Talban Bauchi*, has cautioned against the abolition of the state government structure and its replacement by the regions because of the danger it will pose to national cohesion and integration.

[North] are left wretched and poverty-stricken in thatched houses" and counseled that what the country needs now is resource management, but not resource control.

"What we require today is resource management. We should talk about how to manage our resources better in the interest of all Nigerians.

We should talk about equity and fairness in leadership. We should talk about fairness in the distribution of resources and development projects", he added.

Mu'azu explained that the idea of having the local committee is to study debates at the conference and advise the Bauchi delegates on the state government's position on some of the issues raised in the debates.

Dr. Tahir also said that the council of states as it operates today, has abused the essence for which it was originally set up and must be reviewed to stop it from assuming the status of an organ of government.

Dr. Tahir, former minister in the second republic, also nominated to represent Islamic interest at the conference, spoke to *Daily Trust* exclusively at the weekend in Abuja.

He said he accepted to participate in the conference when president Obasanjo and the Sultan of Sokoto, His Eminence, Alh Muhammadu Maccido and others he described as "symbol of the nation" nominated him, but warned the conference against views he considered dangerous for the country, including the introduction of regional governments.

He said advocates of anti-multi state structure who have been lobbying for creation of six or eight regions are pursuing an agenda for the dismemberment of Nigeria, adding, "as you know, *de ja vu*, we have been there before and we came out with continued violence, disorder, the threat of disintegration

Report must only be recommendations for review -Gov. Ibrahim

The reports to be presented or advanced by delegates at the "just commenced National reforms conference must only be recommendations that should be subjected to thorough review by all elected organs of government both at the federal and state levels. This was declared by governor Bukar Abba Ibrahim of Yobe state at the weekend in Damaturu.

Speaking on the occasion of pre-national political reform conference organised by Yobe state government on Saturday, governor Ibrahim who was represented by his deputy, said that only elected representatives should make final deliberations on the agenda for the conference especially on issues relating to constitutional reforms.

"One must say that the National Assembly is right by saying that constitutionally, it is authorised to amend the constitution and discuss all anomalies therein. I feel to be fair to the National Assembly in particular and other elected organs of government, the report of this committee (confab) must just be recommendations to be thoroughly subjected to review by all organs of government, both at the federal and state levels" governor Ibrahim said.

He noted that the deliberations at the conference must be carefully dualised with a view to find solutions to Nigeria's problems, adding

From Isa Umar Gusau, Damaturu

that the conference will create an atmosphere for aggrieved persons and groups along with the general public to present their perceptions on issues which will result in a positive direction. "I am optimistic that this conference will make a good attempt to address this nation's fundamental political problems and serve as a step to usher in the rule of law and justice governor Bukar Abba Ibrahim maintained.

He said that President Olusegun Obasanjo had with stakeholders at the council of state, agreed that the national reforms, conference should address issues of constitutional Reforms, political party reform, electoral prison sys-

tem reforms, consultations and consensive building, along with reforms of the structure of government and governance.

Governor Ibrahim said that pre-national conference organised in Yobe state was aimed at involving people to create avenue for individuals to make public their views on issues relating to the conference agenda so that delegates from the state would represent these views the conference proper.

The one day pre-national conference which took place at Wawa Hall, government House, Damaturu, witnessed the presentations of ten papers by different professionals, all of whom touched on the various agenda for the national political reforms conference.

North-east zone gets think-tank

A think-tank to articulate the position of the north east zone of the country at the national political reform conference has emerged.

Daily Trust sources revealed that the think-tank which was set up at the meeting of the north-east zonal caucus held in Abuja, has as its chairman, Senator Uba Ahmed.

Members include Dr. Sani Ahmed, Abdulkarim Al-Bashir, Prof. Alkah and Prof. Laraba Gambo Abdullahi.

From Rakiya Mohammed Correspondent Jos

Others are Yakubu Tukur, Dr. Ibrahim Tahir, Dr. Adamu Fika and Professor Bogoro who is to serve as secretary of the think-tank.

The nine member think-tank is to formulate and harmonise the position of the north east zone for articulation at the conference.

Daily Trust learnt that the Bauchi state governor's lodge, Abuja, will serve as the secretariat of the think-tank.

Confab numbers and trivia

By Crispin Oduobuk, Group Literary Editor

It's hardly surprising the women are up in arms. At the states level, only Akwa Ibom deemed it expedient to nominate more than one woman to the conference. The state is fielding two. In the list of 391 delegates (including three abstainers) released by the federal government last week, there are ostensibly, 30 women in all. This represents 7.6% of the total figure. Viewed from this perspective, the clamour by women groups for more delegates cannot be glossed over. However, how they are going to redress this imbalance when the conference is already underway remains to be seen.

Meanwhile, it appears delegates from Benue State were selected on the basis of having English first names. In other words, a potential delegate from that state seemingly stood no chance whatsoever if he or she (yes, there's a Benue woman on the FG list) lacked an English first name. Check the stats: Benue is fielding a Jack (Tilley-Gyado), a Victor (Malu), a George (Korgba), a Fred (Oti), a Geoffrey (Ejiga) and a Stephen (Oto). And the woman? She's a Margaret (Itchen).

For Abia and Ondo states, the magic ingredient to be qualified for selection apparently had to do with what appellation comes before your name. Both states are fielding four delegates each whose names carry the 'Dr' prefix. Precisely what exact status (medical, academic or honorary?) the 'Dr' represents is, understandably, not immediately within grasp.

Ebonyi and Enugu have come to confer with four chiefs in each state's delegation. Bauchi is making do with a modest double ambassadorial presence in its team. Akwa Ibom, presumably, couldn't do without the two former senators in their group. Ekiti State knows this is a talk-shop that's going to need some legal jaw-splitting so they've got a comfortable number of three barristers to watch out for their legal interests.

Not to be outdone, Delta is betting on two professors and Katsina is certainly not under-represented in the numbers of Alhajis; the state is fielding five.

In a related development, the honourable Justice Niki Tobi is being greeted as the "most prominent nominee to be brought in by subterfuge." Meanwhile, Dim Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu is clearly the favourite contender for the most vocal disappointed non-delegate. He has reportedly declared his non-inclusion in the conference "a national tragedy." Expect more trivia as the talk-shop progresses or fails to do so.

MUHAMMAD AL-GHAZALI

ON TUESDAY
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Opinion

Confab? Stupid blackman! Makarfi's opponents and posterity

Want to be become the nation's next Amirul-Hajj in the event the on-going national confab fails to shatter the country into smithereens? Simple, stab your best mate in the back and conjure his impeachment from high office; Sale your conscience for peanuts and assist the president to subvert the constitution by committing thirty-seven impeachable offences within his first term alone and; be accused of involvement in a multi-million Naira bribery scandal over the screening of an aspiring Minister of the republic! Seems far-fetched doesn't it? Not a chance. The black man's legendary romance and macabre tango with mediocrity and disorganization has become so pervasive, not even affairs to do with our creator are spared. But my grouse this morning is not about the sordid tales, which trailed Mantu's performance as Amirul-Hajj, but about all of us. What is it about our psyche and mentality that militates against straight thinking or the ability to overcome incompetence and base sentiments in all spheres of our national life? Why have our leaders brought us grief, misery and poverty, in place of peace and prosperity? Why have we collectively failed to shame the typical western stereotypes, which suggest our leaders are buffoons, visionless and corrupt?

In the last half century for instance, while most countries in Asia reaped bountifully from visionary and competent leadership which enabled the region to shed the shackles of underdevelopment, Africa was afflicted with the colossal abuse and debauchery of shameless dictators in the mould of Central African Republic's Bokassa who inexplicably proclaimed himself emperor after his hero Napoleon Bonaparte; Idi Amin who needs no further introduction; Mobutu who pummelled Congo into a state of coma from which it is yet to recover; Samuel Doe and Johnny Kromah who turned Liberia and Sierra-Leone into the world's capital of teenage amputees and Eyadema I and Eyadema II who if the efficacy of the genetic code is to be believed, would soon send political refugees streaming across our porous borders. In saving the best for the last, Nigeria also had its own dose of dictators with the latest being of course, Olusegun Obasanjo, who delights in exporting democracy and good governance, only to exhibit the most dictatorial and flagrant abuse of the constitution at home.

Only last week, the president, in clear defiance of the senate and the constitution, illegally diverted or appropriated funds, which could have been more judiciously utilized on social projects to finance the National Conference, which commenced yesterday. It remains to be seen how he expects aggrieved interest groups in the polity to accept

the outcome of the confab if it fails short of their expectations. In the first place, the delegates were selected, and cannot claim to be truly representative of the people by any stretch of the imagination. Second, the president by executive fiat simply appointed the confab's chairman and secretary instead of allowing the matter to be settled by the delegates, the obvious flaw in their selection notwithstanding. Third, the list of nominees was so hopelessly tilted against the north and Islam in particular, one is left to wonder how the Christian Association of Nigeria would have reacted if the president were to be a Muslim and the statistics were against them? Also, the fact that it was not budgeted for in the first place says volumes about the quality of our leadership and the confab's exact motives. In more civil climes such ineptitude and criminal appropriation of funds and resources, would be sufficient grounds for the president's speedy impeachment. But thanks to his scheming and endless shenanigans, he will go scot-free not the least because the Senate is now clearly divided between the North and the South. No wonder the CIA came up with its damning intelligence report on the bleak prospects of the nation last week.

The delegates also included scores of senile octogenarians, whose involvement in public life predated our independence, and who may even have forgotten that the earth is round. The same people incredibly, will once again, attempt to shape our future at the dawn of the 21st century! In an increasingly dynamic and interdependent world, in which economic blocs like the European Union have become fashionable, what can the droves of tribal irredentists on the list, with their iron-cast insistence on a federation restructured along ethnic lines teach us about nation building or statecraft? Will our lot be bettered if the president hailed from our villages? Clearly, from the performance of ordinary Local Government Chairmen across the land, it is easy to conclude that the question itself is unnecessary. But it is precisely such strong emphasise on ethnic differences, often laced with a flawed and vulgar sense of superiority, that has brought the nation to its knees. Last week, I read an interview, in which Ben Gbulie one of the Majors who overthrew our first elected government in 1966, referred to his Igbo ethnic group as a superior race. Well, if we didn't know all about the Okija shrines and Otokoto, he would perhaps be taken seriously. Better still, the disgraceful events in Anambra state further suggests the man urgently needs to see a shrink. Having inexplicably escaped prosecution and hanging in 1966, what Gbulie and his ilk deserve in the present circumstances is a hole in the

head or a place in the hall of shame and ignominy. In my opinion, their tunnel vision and stone-age mentality constitutes the greatest obstacle to our development as a nation.

That aside, there can be few doubts that heightened tension in the land, coincided with the president's biased or incompetent handling of ethnic killings, which commenced with the OPC massacres during his first term, along with his selective approach to the fight against corruption. The administration earned nearly fifty billion Dollars in oil revenue in the last six years alone. Ordinarily, that would have been sufficient to transform any other nation on this broad planet. But health care is comatose. Urban and interstate transportation remains chaotic, while Governors expend more funds in advertisement the construction of culverts and boreholes. The crisis in the education system has remained unresolved deep into his second term. The latest trend in town is that Nigerians now send their children to schools in strange outposts such as Cyprus and Ghana! That alone should have been enough for our leaders to hide their faces in shame. But they continue to true to their stereotype in western capitals. After the charade that was the Oputa Panel, we must also pay for their monumental failures through a diversionary confab when the funds expended on COJA and the last CHOGM were not subjected to due process and have not been fully accounted for. They award obnoxious contracts to their girlfriends to clean and paint our streets only when Western [not African] leaders come calling. In the process, we unwittingly ascribe value to our self-respect and decency.

Regardless, as the delegates commence their deliberations, my message to them is clear and unambiguous. We are generally very poor students of history and it amazes me just how our leaders have failed to realize the inevitable linkage between or destiny and those of blacks in the Diaspora. If this confab fails and the nation descends into anarchy, our hopes along with those of the black race would be sealed. The west, which presently craves democracy, would scramble to sale arms to all parties. And, while we shoot ourselves to pieces, they would take their time drinking tea and coffee in New York and Geneva to discuss what to do with the bloody mess. As we saw in Liberia and elsewhere, they would teach us an unforgettable lesson on selflessness and efficiency in

the manner their nationals would be speedily evacuated. Not a single white soldier would set foot on our shores to maintain the peace. At best, U.N. peacekeepers from Ghana, Rwanda, Benin Republic or even Togo would be sent to loot or rape our wives and daughters! Even by our own standards, nothing could be more humiliating. Yet, it is the precise scenario that stares us in the face, this hazy morning.

In the beginning, governor Ahmed Mohammed Makarfi, of Kaduna State, was written off by his opponents as someone who has nothing to offer the State. The campaign to stop him had it that he lacked the wherewithal to take the number one seat.

However, since 1999, Makarfi, determined to prove his opponents and critics wrong, never looked back in his efforts to change the dwindling fortunes of the State. What captured the attention of the governor and his team, was first and foremost, integrated rural development, road rehabilitation and construction, with special emphasis on rebuilding the bumpy road networks in Kaduna Metropolis. The list of his footprints since he took over the reigns of power in the state is all over the place for everyone to see.

The performance of the Governor caught the attention of the National Economic Intelligence Committee (NEIC) which took cognizance of his efforts in providing social amenities like electricity, fuel supply, telephone services, water supply, roads and transportation. He was rated excellent above all governors in the country (*Sunday Tribune* 12 December 2004, page 3). The NEIC report was fully endorsed by the House of Representatives.

On the other hand, the people of the State are moving close to an unpredictable intervening period. This is due to the Constitutional provision that forbids a third term of office for public officers. In essence, this provision will rob them of the services of a shrewd, tested and conscientious public officer, in the person of governor Makarfi who is currently running his second and final term.

It is therefore not surprising, that the people of State are neck deep in a web of agitation that the Governor should prepare and step into a new area of national life. They have pledged their unflinching support to his future aspirations as a mark of

By Douglas Yakubu
appreciation for the services rendered by this public officer who has touched them in a special way.

Indeed, even those who seldom agree with the governor are usually rendered speechless by the changes he has wrought on the political and socio-economic landscape of the hub of Nigeria's former Northern Region. He has made significant strides in the areas of human and infrastructural development. Truly, the people have never had it so good. The entire gamut of his administration's policies constitute a fitting memoir for generations yet unborn.

Of course, as it is applicable to any human institution, possible human mistakes may have been made. But even then, such mistakes would appear to be those of the head, and not of the heart. This is evidenced by the fact that the strengths of the administration far outweigh whatever could be mischievously perceived as its weaknesses.

Political analysts, who are conversant with the workings of governor Makarfi's mind, say that he portrays an attitude of profound fulfillment for his unblemished services to the people. They say that he is a strong believer in his faith and the Will of his creator. They argue that contrary to what detractors would want the world to believe, he is power-shy and holds the view that his future role in Nigeria's politics is better decided within the philosophical context that "power belongs to God" He gives to whosoever He so wishes, and takes away when He so desires.

However, people of goodwill have continued to insist that without prejudice to this belief, the time has come when the Governor should mingle his belief with faith and step out to be counted. His people have rejected out of hand, any unthinkable suggestion that the Governor should take a rest after the current term. They are of the more sensible view that if the Governor were to deprive Nigeria of his political wisdom, it will be a disservice to the development of a healthy

political future for our people. They point at his array of achievements at the State level to buttress their point.

Top officials of the respected governor, continue to insist that he has so far remained uncommitted to the strident calls by numerous Nigerians of electoral value. Worried observers who are disturbed by the Governor's stubborn reluctance, have continued to ask this question: "Would it not have been a political tragedy of immense historical proportions to the Chinese nation, if Chairman Mao Tse-tung, had abandoned the Great Trek, midway?"

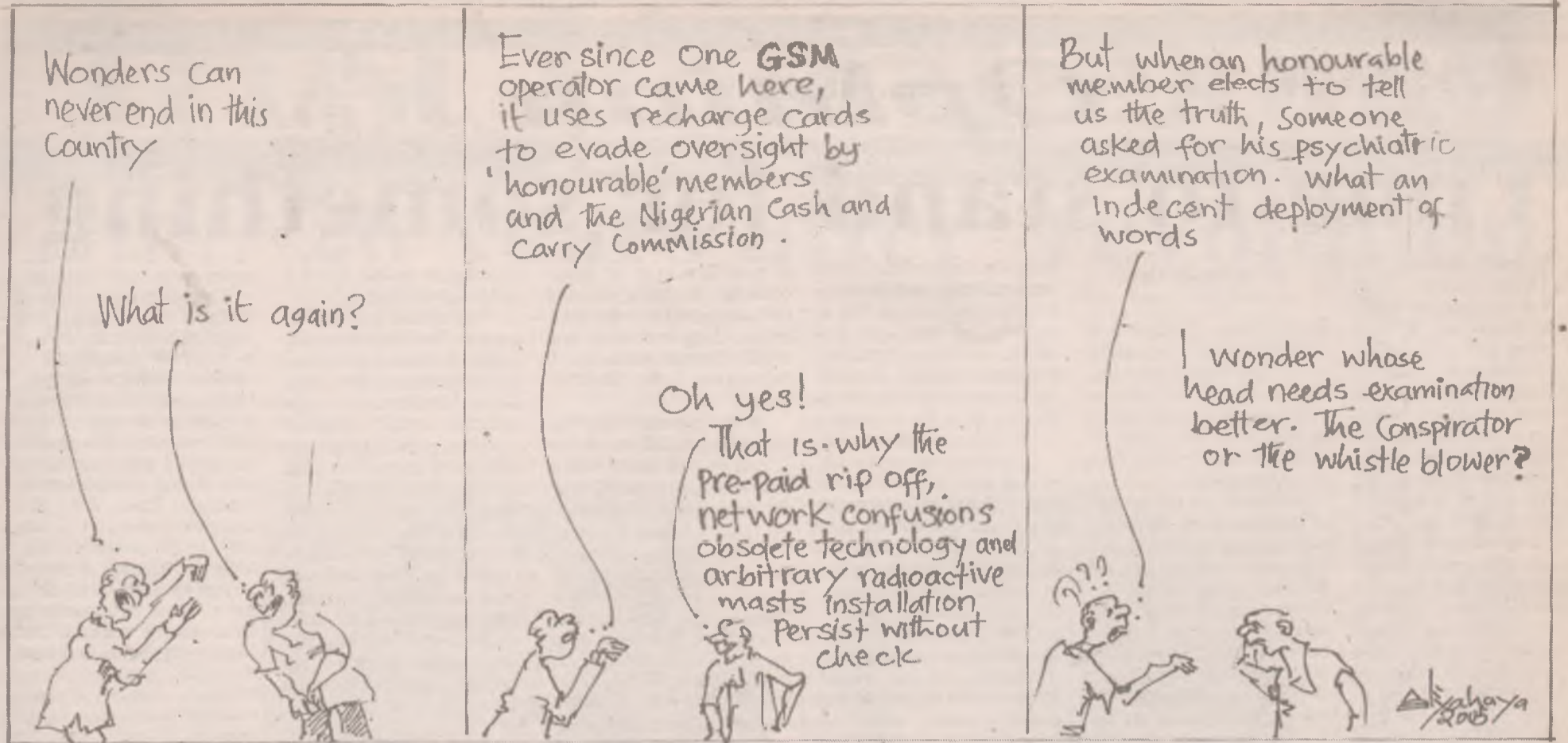
Similarly, analysts have continued to ask whether it will not be catastrophic for our nation, if this "Apostle of rural and urban transformation" abandons the multitude of his followers at a critical stage of Nigeria's Great Trek towards national salvation? They say that at a time when the entire country deemed it fit that Governor Makarfi's aura should be the ray that beam its light towards the direction of national consensus, the political correctness of a national assignment to consolidate on the gains made cannot be in doubt.

Recently, the story was told about a tea-break gossip in diplomatic circles. One of the diplomats, a respected voice on Nigerian affairs, had argued that what the country needed most ahead of 2007, was a clean break from the current disabling internecine squabbles for political power. He made a strong case for the emergence of a non-controversial public figure, with broad national appeal, who can hold the country together.

Some keen observers of political events in Nigeria and abroad, have insisted that these were the attributes that recommended governor Makarfi for his recent call to national service as Chairman of the National Dialogue Committee. Perhaps, what our two sensible Nigerians were simply reminding us, is that the cap fits Governor Ahmed Mohammed Makarfi, and that he should not shy away from wearing it.

Yakubu writes from suite 22, NIDB building, Waff Road, Kaduna

On the other hand, the people of the State are moving close to an unpredictable intervening period. This is due to the Constitutional provision that forbids a third term of office for public officers



YOUR LETTERS

Nigeria's economic reform and the IMF

In July 1944, delegations from 44 countries gathered in the New Hampshire resort of Bretton Woods to lay the institutional foundations for the post-war economic order. Last year, in October 2004, delegations from 184 countries gathered in Washington for the 60th annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. However, the past decade has not been a happy one for the fund. A succession of financial crises in emerging market countries undermined its reputation for promoting global economic stability. The IMF

has learned and applied many lessons from the past 10 years. But critics still question whether its methods, financing and governance are appropriate to a world very different from 1944. The IMF, as its new managing director and former Spanish Finance Minister Rodrigo de Rato Figuerado, has said, should be regarded as a "political" institution. It is essentially a political institution, run and financed by member governments. The Fund was badly hurt during the economic crises that hit several developing countries during

the 1990s. It revealed a secretive, timid organisation. The IMF believes that flows of capital - like flows of trade was a good thing, providing finance for countries with scarce domestic savings and offering higher returns to lenders. But it became clear in Mexico (1994-95), Asia (1997-98), Russia (1998), Brazil (1999), Turkey (2000) and Argentina (2000) that what flowed in could all too quickly flow out again, causing immense economic and social disruption. If the so-called foreign investors had come to Nigeria with their poisonous

capital, the country would have been left in a state of chaos. And the country would have been in an awkward or worse position than Argentina or Brazil. Therefore, one can say that the refusal or unwillingness of the foreign investors to come to Nigeria is a blessing in disguise. Unfortunately, the government's economic team has failed to provide answers to some basic questions, namely why is the country in this economic mess? Why did the boom of early 1980s turn to doom? Is the same mistake likely to happen again? Until and unless we un-

derstand these questions, any economic reform will be a shot in the dark. As Dr. Kabir Mato rightly said, "We prayed at the beginning of the year that in the Name of God, let there be peace in the

economy, polity and society," Nigeria needs such prayers because she is suffering from a massive brain haemorrhage. **Abba Ibrahim Ali, 2 Nyhangu Road, Nassarawa GRA, Kano.**

Good luck conferees, but...

Kindly allow me a space in your widely read newspaper to forward my best wishes to all the nominees to the on-going National Political Reform Conference. In addition to best wishes, I advise the members to be sincere and hon-

est in order to find lasting solution to the multi-faceted problems facing Nigerians now, for the benefit of future generations. I wish them good luck!

Yusufu Sani Yassanta, P.O. Box 249, Funtua Street, Katsina.

Gusau, Awoniyi: Like teacher, like student

James Matthew Barrie said it, that "those who bring sunshine to the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves." This proves to be true in the life of an octogenarian, who, more than forty years ago played prominent roles in the moulding of the destiny of many in the North. This man, described as 'compassionate, articulate, brilliant' by Chief Sunday Awoniyi, is none other than the Shettiman Sokoto and Wazirin Zamfara, Malam Yahaya Gusau. Malam Yahaya, according to Chief Awoniyi, has the gift to impart knowledge into young students, carrying them along in simplicity. In one of my privileged meetings with the Aro of Mopa, he game me an account of how he walked to Malam Yahaya in his early days at Barewa College, Zaria, and said, "sir, I don't like mathematics," in response, he said Malam looked at him for some moment and said, "Sunday, you are not supposed to like mathematics, you are to master it." Encouraging words, calm spoken to rouse con-

fidence, still remembering over forty years since it was spoken, explains why this man taught many of the finest men this nation ever produced. Yakubu Gowon, Sunday Awoniyi, Murtala Mohammed, Mohammed Bello, Liman Ciroma and many others is still sought after to make public appearances at over eighty years of age. As Awoniyi, who many people see as tenaciously fastidious in issues of principle, paid glowing tribute to Malam Yahaya, I wished he had taught me. Moreso, when I read his keynote address presented at the Arewa Consultative Forum's inauguration on November 30th, 2004. The explicit content of the note convinced me that Malam did not only teach his students mathematics, he also taught them godly principles and humane service to humanity. In that address, Malam said, "Ladies and gentlemen, my response to the request for a talk at this meeting was unambiguously no. Not surprisingly, Sunday and his group felt disappointed. I had to talk

to make them understand. I told them I had realised rather painfully that it was pointless, perhaps unwise, to talk simply out of the expectation that one won't be around to talk tomorrow. Expecting that one won't be around tomorrow cannot be good enough reason to talk today. Speaking will be useful or desirable only if the people being spoken to consider it worth the while to listen and to apply some of the ideas in a sincere search for solutions to the problem bedevilling our region and the country." Reading through Shettima's address reminds me of Nigeria's new status as the country of seminars, lectures and various kinds of jamboree conferences where people talk in glowing languages and panel beat words to earn shallow applause from unsuspecting audience, which in the end brings no fruits to the populace. From there I concluded that, except there is a revival of the compassionate leadership style of Ahmadu Bello, Tafawa Balewa, Obafemi Awolowo

and Nnamdi Azikiwe, men who listened to, tolerated and acted on the national contributions of their people, we might as well forget about meaningful development; in the face of the present increasing waves of criminality and the piling pressure of unemployment. The frequent religious and ethnic insurgencies, the sinking economic fortunes, corruption and all other societal ills in our nation. For Malam Yahaya Gusau and Sunday Awoniyi, it is, like teacher like student, Malam was the first indigenous secretary to the executive council of Northern Nigeria. Awoniyi later occupied the seat. Malam bagged the Commander of the Federal Republic (CFR), Awoniyi bagged the Commander of the Order of the Niger (CON). Malam became Shettiman Sokoto, Awoniyi became Aro of Mopa, both prestigious titles. As for integrity, courage and frankness, you have heard the Shettima, now hear the Aro at the conclusion of a six day seminar he co-ordinated at the in-

stance of President Obasanjo a week before his swearing-in, in May 1999 at Sheraton Hotel, Abuja, with the president in attendance. "All the conclusion and recommendation of the last six days will be idle platitudes (as was often the case in the past), unless there is a truly concerned and purposeful leadership, backed by a knowledgeable and effective government machinery to convert them into action. Similar conclusion and recommendations from this kind of gathering had been made in the past, only to be still born, all because the political leadership was indifferent to the ills they were designed to cure? Today, I believe most of the recommendations are still born, and only few of the man in attendance on that day like Awoniyi,

Ezeoke, Isyaku Ibrahim are consistent in speaking up in the face of the charade our democracy is turning into. Others, as we all know have become ideological turncoats, preferring to sit comfortably on dunghill so far they are patronised. I hope Nigerians can learn from the teacher and his student to speak up the truth. It is unfortunate, how those we look up to as heroes kept quite this long, how they have compromised collective cause for personal gains, forgetting the word of the holy books that "whatever you compromise to gain, you shall loose." It is so unfortunate and this generation must reject their teaching style. **Samuel Elere, No. 6 Victory Street, Makera GRA, Kakuri, Kaduna.** Eleresamuel@yahoo.com

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

Opinion

Time to stand for something

Nigeria is bleeding. The high level of hemorrhage, in highly skilled personnel, is both disturbing and debilitating. Many Nigerians now weep for their country. If the embassies of foreign countries in Abuja and Lagos, particularly those of the industrialized countries relax their immigration policies, our country will be drained of whatever is left as our young men and women queue endlessly at the gates of foreign embassies, day after day, in a desperate attempt to leave the country. Our pregnant mothers are not left out as they suffer any indignation and endure any hardship to travel abroad to have their babies so that their children could be citizens of foreign countries.

In the past six years, this situation has persisted and to some degree has worsened. Before 1999, many of those who left the country did so for political reasons. But since 1999 those who left the country did so for economic reasons. We are losing to foreign countries some of our most daring, adventurous, resourceful and enterprising men and women. We deny ourselves the wealth they would have created at home if they stayed behind. It is a source of great worry to see our young people thinking that there is no future for them in their own country. This cannot be right. How can a land of plenty, the giant of Africa, become the land of scarcity, poverty and

By Ogbonaya Onu

deprivation? Things have indeed fallen apart. We must sit up and give hope to the young and old alike. If we make our young people feel that there is no hope in the future, then we have succeeded in killing them softly and slowly.

Nigerians now live in a state of insecurity. Even the mighty and powerful are not spared. Governors are no longer safe when traveling on our highways. They are no longer sure that their offices will not be burnt before they return on a journey. Ministers, when they sleep in the bedrooms of their private houses, are no longer sure of waking up the following morning. If it has become so unbearable for the mighty, no wonder the average Nigerian has resigned himself to fate.

To compound our problems, we live at a time when there are many contradictions. In the history of our country, the price of crude oil has never been as good as it was in the past six years. Yet, year after year for the past six years, this administration has been running huge deficits. This has crowded out the private sector from getting credit at a reasonable rate as well as building up our national debt for our children to pay. What is most worrisome is that it is not easy to see what the money has been spent on. It is disturbing that during the day we travel

round the Capital Cities of the industrialized countries asking for debt forgiveness, but at night we seek fresh loans. It is unbelievable that we grant loans to Equatorial Guinea when our ambassador to that country is ejected from his residence because his rent was not paid.

It is even amazing that our leaders have said that in our rural areas there are no Nigerians who do not have something to eat the next meal. Those who live in the rural areas know that the hardship in the country has become so bad such that there are many Nigerians who are not sure about their next meal. They are also others who are sick and desire to go to the hospital but decide against doing so because they cannot afford hospital bills. Our leaders have forgotten the widows who struggle to look after the children their dead husbands left behind. They no longer remember all these because they have been in power for so long that they have lost touch with the people.

Even with this sad state of events in the country, one leader after the other of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, comes to lecture Nigerians on why the country would be ruled by the party for a very long time to come. They keep mentioning different countries where one political party dominated politics for a long time. They have failed to see the difference between Nigeria and those countries. They have also failed

to note that even in those countries, the ruling political parties respected the will of their people. They conducted free and fair elections and remained in power only by the will of their people.

It is important for the governing political party in the country to think more of what is good for the nation. Most of the problems in the hot spots in the country can be traced to fraudulent elections. Most of the tension in the country will go away when we allow people choose those they want to govern them. So long as some few people sit down somewhere and determine who holds what office, so long as Nigeria would continue to miss the healing balm of good politicians who would put the country on the fast track of integration, development and in order to ensure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated, the political arena should be restructured to ensure that the interest of the nation is put before the interest of either a political party or an individual. Competition in the political arena should be strengthened to ensure that those in power should not take the people for granted but rather should always sit up to meet the needs of majority of the people. True democracy can only come when those in government see the people as their masters and are continuously afraid of what the people can do. On the other hand, when the people are afraid

of those who govern, then it is a clear sign of dictatorship.

The time has come for all the opposition political forces in the country to come together and form a coalition to give a new direction to our country. Such a coalition would comprise opposition political parties and civil society organizations that are dissatisfied with the way things are going in the country. The Conference of Nigerian Political Parties, CNPP, would be a part of this grand coalition. Organised labour, the human rights organizations and other sundry organizations could constitute the coalition. This new coalition will help move the country towards two strong parties where two major candidates will fight future elections. Other smaller political parties that want to go it alone can still do so.

This coalition should fight and defeat the PDP on the battleground of ideas. It should develop solutions to the numerous problems confronting the country. It should be able to show how it could solve the problems of insecurity, unemployment and poverty. It should also show how it could create prosperity, make Nigerians happy and bring our people together because this country, since the end of the civil war, has never been as divided as she had been in the past six years. This way, it will reassure the country that if given power, it can give hope to the people and create new

opportunities for all Nigerians.

One of the major benefits of the coalition is to help mobilize Nigerians to resist any attempt by the PDP government to conduct fraudulent elections. From the experience of the past one year in how bye-elections were conducted, it is obvious that the PDP government on its own would be reluctant to conduct free, fair and transparent elections as was done in Botswana, Ghana, Malawi, Republic of Benin, Senegal and South Africa. There has to be an overwhelming force, which a well-mobilized citizenry represents, to compel the PDP government to conduct free, fair and transparent elections in the interest of peace and the stability of the nation.

Many of the problems in troubled spots in different parts of the country including Anambra, Benue, Plateau and Rivers States can be traced to the side effects of holding fraudulent elections. The warlords, armed militia and armed gangs making life difficult for Nigerians on our roads, in our homes and even on our waterways are products of fraudulent elections.

The inability of the numerous policies of this administration to translate into visible, tangible and sustained development are traceable to fraudulent polls. We cannot continue this way. Our generation will champion the crusade for the birth of a new Nigeria - I hope.

National dialogue and national security

Notwithstanding one's objection to the National Dialogue on the ground that there is nothing it can achieve that an informed and purposive regime could not achieve, there is still the obligation to draw attention of delegates to the most crucial challenge of their assignment, which is to excise this country from the strangle hold of President Obasanjo's economic strategy which he has canvassed to the conference in his speech inaugurating the Dialogue. The adoption of SAP/NEEDS as instrument of governance contrary to the constitutional provision that the economy should not be managed in a way that concentrates wealth in the hands of a few is what is tearing the country into pieces, gradually, painfully but assuredly, not lack of a constitution. After all, there exist a country in Africa, which had only a six-page constitution. The Weimar constitution in Germany remains one of the most democratic constitutions, yet it produced the most ruthless dictatorship in history so far. Constitution is vital but even more vital is the management of the national economy.

The honest and true situation is that the President has reached a cul de sac in the economy because he has been experimenting with half-truths and devastating practices in that aspect.

By Adagbo Onoja

Generally, no matter the gloss Mister President put on the National Political Reform Conference, aka National Dialogue, in his speech inaugurating the talk-shop, everyone knows it is an admission of failure. Failure of the Nigerian state and those who animated it in the last five years. Above all, the failure of President Obasanjo and his heritage of politics.

There is no consensus as to which constitutes President Obasanjo's heritage or core tradition of politics. Some say it is his military background and, hence, his interpretation of politics as conquest or victory instead of the transformation of conflicts or incongruence from mutually exclusive to mutually inclusive outcome.

Others say that central to OBJ's politics is acting as agent of imperialism, arguing that this tradition itself is organic part of the military profession in the still classic third world states whose military officers are subtly trained in Western military academies in those days to act as a bulwark against communism. The contrary observation here is that the imperialists are no longer happy with him again and that this is most manifest in *The Economist* of London recently nominating Thabo Mbeki as the African leader

instead of OBJ in the week in which OBJ retained the Chairmanship of the African Union. The journalism of *The Economist* in this matter cannot be taken lightly since it articulates the sentiments of the godfathers of imperialism.

Yet, a third argument is that OBJ's politics is that of his ethnic group - the Yorubas. Those who privilege this say that this time in power, he has been playing a Yoruba card. One school of thought says that he is bowing to the wisdom that "whoever came to power in 1999 would have had to compensate the Yorubas". Another says he has been won over into becoming tribalistic. This argument is stretched to President Obasanjo's adoption of market reforms instead of nationalist mobilization for independent industrialization. A columnist in *The Comet* wrote around 2001 that the Southwest was with OBJ because he had come round to do what Awo wanted to do, which was privatization.

But President Obasanjo is not doing what Awo would have done. In fact, what he is doing is confusing. On the one hand, he is credited with meaning well for Nigeria in the sense that, according to Professor Aluko, "he wants a united country, he wishes for a more rapid growth rate and increased standard of living..." (*The Comet*, December 9, 2001, p.16) But as Aluko also

said, his methods contradict the essence and are sometimes completely destructive even of the fabric of the nation. So much so that one has to keep seeking meaning for some of his actions in Chinua Achebe's novel, *The Anthills of the Savannah*, the book now believed to have been written in anticipation of Obasanjo.

Whatever tradition of politics he subscribes to has clearly not been successful at all as evidenced by this resort to a National Dialogue as a way of forging a new consensus, the old consensus negotiated in 1998 having been ruptured by the OBJ Presidency and political styles.

Some little history may be worth it on this issue. A central reality since the 15th century has been the destabilizing impact of external pressures on social processes in Africa. From the Atlantic slave trade to the so-called legitimate trade, to direct colonialism, to neo-colonial dependency immediately after independence and now Globalization (SAP/NEEDS), this has been a same story. The result has been a life of agony and misery resulting from food insecurity, poverty and associated competition for scarce resources, access to and utilization of the environment as well as denial of human rights, justice and internal good governance.

The resultant scenario is one of violent ethnic conflicts, genocides, massive humanitarian and refugee crises, etc all over Africa.

At the last count, 11 out of 24 genocide/ethnocide worldwide between 1960 and the 1980s were in Africa, where 19 full-fledged civil wars were also fought involving over 4 millions dead and the continent accounting for 43 per cent of the global refugee population. Of the 32 peace-keeping operations launched since 1989, says Kofi Annan, 13 have been in Africa and this is more than anywhere else in the World. This life of ordeal and misery for the African poor in particular has been the reality captured by Zaire, Nigeria, Angola, Mozambique, Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, Chad, Somalia, Liberia, Algeria, Rwanda, Burundi, Sierra Leone and the DRC at one level but also South Africa, Cote D'Ivoire, Cameroon, Togo, Senegal, Ghana, Mali, Chad, Niger at another level.

In the meantime, the Globalization train, the latest external assault on social process in the poor countries, got moving, demanding of the abrogation of the African state which they advised "to do less in those areas where markets work, or can be made to work, reasonably well". Although it is kicked against all over the world such as the Nordic voice that shouted in

1991 that "the Bretton Woods criteria for structural adjustment are perfect for Sweden but are completely wrong-headed for countries such as Zambia and Mozambique", it relies on a pack of pseudo intellectuals, para-experts and soldiers of fortune inducted into the administration of IMF/World Bank shock therapy to the mass of citizens whom poverty and misery have reduced to conditions unworthy of human beings. These ones are opposed to the option of 'state intervention in the major sectors of the economy in order to promote a self-reliant and dynamic economy in agriculture, industry and commerce, in monetary and fiscal policies, in education, sciences, and technology, at home and abroad'. They say that state run enterprises do not run well and that they should be privatized, thereby giving the people retrenchment when it is employment they want.

Even President Obasanjo made reference to ideology, methods and language that have been transcended, his own way of saying that nationalist economic strategy is no longer correct.

This recklessness has reduced the typical African state to one of mere juridical existence, one that absolutely serves no purpose... (*To be continued*)

Trust International

Foreign and Diplomacy

Iran: 26 years after revolution

By Ephraims Sheyin

Twenty-six years after the Islamic Revolution that over-threw the Shah regime and established the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), Iranians the world over are once again in a festive mood as they count the blessings from that victory.

The revolution, which ended 2,500 years' rule by several dynasties and resulted in the February 9, 1978 referendum that established the Islamic republic in Iran, was led by Ayatollah Imam Khomeini.

Iranian Ambassador to Nigeria Javad Torka-badi, who addressed journalists to mark the anniversary in Abuja recently, said the past 26 years had been very eventful as the IRI had concentrated on building internal abilities and playing an important role on the international scene.

"The revolution made it possible for the IRI to be self-sufficient in all directions as we produced practically everything we need to make us fully independent," he said.

According to the country's representative, Iran also produces power generating plants, capable of generating 160 mega watts of electricity.

He said that in addition, its 67 million people were being covered by a comprehensive medical service insurance scheme.

Meanwhile, UNICEF and World Bank records showed that Iran, with 122 medicine producing factories, had been able to manufacture their own medicine, while also hosting 730 hospitals with 111,000 beds.

The record also showed that the IRI had also been able to manufacture helicopters and planes.

Other areas of progress, since the revolution, include the construction of big dams, production of 20 million tonnes of iron and two million tonnes of aluminum annually to feed the local industries.

IRI will soon be host to the tallest building on earth as the giant structure, standing at 470 metres, is under construction in Tehran.

In the area of power supply, the IRI, located in the heart of the Middle East, currently generates 38,000 mega watts of electricity, a haulage, Torkabadi says, is far below the 120,000 MW, already targeted.

In the area of politics, Torkabadi says that his country, under its democratic system, had held 25 elections, with seven each for Presidency and the National Assembly.

He quickly added that participation in elections in Iran were "usually very high". But one area over which Iran has received global knocks is its attitude to women. Critics say Iranian women have suffered heavy marginalisation spanning successive regimes.

The critics also allege that the Iranian women are treated as a second class citizens, whose views and feelings do not matter, when national decisions are taken.

But Torkabadi does not

double standards, which, in the past several years, have resulted in an illogical and unfair practices, leading to the adoption of politically motivated resolutions by the UN General Assembly and the Committee on Human Rights. "We believe that such an

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and their reports have confirmed that they are no threat.

"For the avoidance of doubt, I want to state here that the nuclear plants in Iran are for civilian use. The claims by George Bush are totally false

and even the Americans know that themselves," he said.

He accused the Americans of working against Iran's total independence, saying that American had done a lot, including an attack on a civilian airplane, just to put pressure on his

country. "We have the rights to build our country by developing our capabilities and we shall never accept America's hegemony," he said.

He dismissed allegations that Iran was supporting terrorists, saying his country had suffered terrorist attacks more than any other country in the world.

Torkabadi also spoke of his country's bilateral links with his host, Nigeria, and explained the recent visit of the Iranian Head of State Mohammed Khatami had paved the way for several economic pacts, especially on agriculture and electricity supply.

Already, the two nations have established a joint commission with the inaugural session held in Abuja last month, while the next meeting is to be held in Tehran by March.

As the IRI celebrates yet another anniversary, most pundits agree that the Islamic nation has a potential to become a super power in the near future if the present tempo of resource exploitation is sustained.

NAN



Iranian President Mohammed Khatami



Late Ayatollah Khomeini

think so. "IRI has incorporated a gender perspective in macro policies and programmes, including an allocation of special budget for women's affairs in the national budget".

"We have also formulated a national plan of action for the advancement of women with emphasis on the issues of strengthening of institutional mechanisms on issues of women rights, while a special commission has been created on women affairs and family in the parliament."

Records from women NGOs actually confirm that more than 3,000 women are holding top administrative posts, while 34 per cent of the total number of University professors in Iran are women, a sharp de-parture from the near zero percent, during the pre-revolution period.

As parts of the gains from the pro-women policies, UNICEF records show that 60 per cent of the students in Iran are women.

The UNICEF records also show that access of the Iranian woman to elementary education has also shot up from 40 to 96 per cent.

But Iran has also been accused of various human rights abuses, with some government actions sometimes seen as "inhuman".

Torkabadi, however, says it is wrong for critics to talk of human rights situation without considering the cultural, historical and religious backgrounds of the society.

"We are critical of the policies of confrontation, politicisation, selectivity and

approach is doomed to fail and can in no way create proper conditions conducive to the promotion and protection of human rights," he declared.

He says that to check human right abuses, "the IRI in 1994 established an Islamic Human Rights' commission, through the initiative of a number of independent jurists with the members of parliament and judges as members."

Meanwhile, freedom to publish has also been enhanced with the licensing of 69 newspapers and many radio and television houses. "Iranians were not only free but being encouraged to air their views on all issues provided they were not anti-Islam," the country's spokesman says.

But while a study of Khomeini's views reveals that he believes in the prominent role and status of the media in the transformation of the society, Article 3 of the press laws defines constructive criticism as one that must "avoid insult, sabotage and destruction."

Only the IRI authorities determine what is "insultive and destructive".

Iran has also faced severe attacks and threats from the U.S and Israel over its alleged nuclear plants.

America's President, George Bush recently threatened to attack the IRI in the bid to destroy its nuclear plants, which he saw as a threat to world peace.

But Torkabadi finds such fears unnecessary.

"There is nothing to fear about the IRI's nuclear programme. The nuclear sites are being supervised by the

NIGERIA'S MOST RELIABLE SUPPLIERS OF POWER GENERATORS AND SERVICE COMPANIES

Power generation and distribution in Nigeria have been grossly inadequate to meet the electricity supply requirements, despite the huge investment and attention by the authorities to revive the sector.

As a result, the epileptic and erratic power supply has forced several organisations to source for alternative power. Giving its critical role to the nation's industrial and economic growth, the participation of the private sector has become imperative and desirable.

Recognising the contributions of the private sector in this troubled sector. **Media Trust Limited**, the publishers of *Daily and Weekly Trust Newspapers* will publish a special supplement on the major dealers/marketers and servicing companies of power generating sets and accessories in Nigeria. The focus is to sensitize the public on their contributions /achievements to the nation's economy, promote their image and identify challenges facing the sector. The publication date is Monday, February 28, 2005. For further enquiries and participation, interested companies are requested to call the **Special Projects Department** on any of the following nos: **08028494170, 08037038663, 08042145839, or 09-6720346.**

Trust International

Africa

EU, US back ECOWAS sanctions on Togo

The European Union and the US have backed a decision by West African states to impose sanctions on Togo unless President Faure resigns.

The regional grouping, ECOWAS, said a promise by Mr. Faure to hold elections within 60 days was not enough.

But Togo's authorities have reaffirmed that he is needed to preserve law and order until the poll is held.

The new leader was installed after the death on 5 February of his father, President Gnassingbe Eyadema, who had ruled Togo for 38 years.

The move drew immediate condemnation from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union, as well as the US and EU.

...Kassongov calls for reconciliation confab

By Elkanah Chawai, Reporter (foreign desk)

The leader of Pan-African people's True Democratic Council for World Peace, General Kassongov Martin-Luther, has urged African Union and ECOWAS to convene a national conference of reconciliation for Togolese government and opposition inside and outside Togo to fashion a way forward.

General Martin-Luther stressed that Togolese administration needs total reform following years of sole leadership of the Late Eyadema, adding that the administration was froth with tribalism and mal-administration.

He called on the Chairman of the African Union, President Olusegun Obasanjo and the Chairman of ECOWAS, President Mamdou Tandja of Niger to re-enact the reconciliation process used in Chad in 1978 and in Liberia in 2003, adding "Obasanjo should use the reconciliation in Chad as a solution for Togo in 2005."

He added that the current imposition of sanctions on Togo is not the solution because it will only hurt the Togolese people.

He enjoined the organisations to make the conference all inclusive especially involving the exiled opposition leader, Gilchrist Olympio who is currently living in France.

Kassongov also suggested that the conference should take place outside Togo, while urging AU to solve Togo's problem without foreign intervention.

nally said he would serve his father's full term until 2008 - later promised to hold presidential elections in the next two months.

But this was rejected as insufficient by ECOWAS on Saturday.

The group imposed sanctions, including a travel ban on Togolese leaders and an arms embargo.

On Sunday the EU said Mr Faure and his supporters were responsible for the country's growing isolation.

"I exhort them to restore constitutional order without delay," said EU Development Commissioner Louis Michel said.

Washington also endorsed ECOWAS tough stance.

"The United States has ended all military assistance to Togo," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said.

"We are reviewing all aspects of our relationship," he added.

Togolese Foreign Minister Kokou Tozoun told Reuters new agency: "Can we be without a president for 60 days."

He added: "We prefer to

have sanctions and be in peace and stability rather than descending towards civil war."

One of the main opposition parties has accused France - the former colonial power - of failing to use its influence to resolve the crisis.

Meanwhile, a joint Libyan/Egyptian delegation made up of Mr. Ahmed Gadhafi, special envoy of the Libyan leader, Muammar Gadhafi, and Dr. Osama al-Bas, political adviser to President Hosni Mubarak, arrived in Abuja, Sunday, bearing a message on the Togolese affairs from the two leaders to President Obasanjo, chairman of AU.

They discussed with the President on the political development in Togo. This joint initiative comes in the framework of the African efforts to solve the Togolese problem in the African way - as African problems require African solution.

The delegation left Abuja for Lome-Togo, where it would engage in constructive dialogue with the Togolese authorities with a view to resolving the issues.

Mugabe sacks minister over election bid

Zimbabwe's Information Minister Jonathan Moyo has defied his party by registering to be an independent candidate for March's elections.

As a result, the minister has been sacked from the cabinet and the Zanu-PF party, President Robert Mugabe said.

Mr. Moyo had been barred from running in the Tsholotsho constituency as it was reserved for a woman Zanu-PF candidate.

The decision was said to be linked to a row over Mr Mugabe's choice of candidate for vice-president.

People cheered on Mr. Moyo as he handed in his nomination papers on Friday.

Mr. Mugabe said Mr Moyo's decision meant he "automatically ceases to be a member of Zanu-PF, the

party which sponsored him into government in the first place".

The country is due to hold parliamentary elections on 31 March.

Mr. Moyo was disciplined by Zanu-PF in December and dropped from the top policy body after campaigning against Mr Mugabe's choice for vice-president, Joyce Mujuru.

Mr. Moyo is the architect of tough media laws, which have seen the expulsion of foreign correspondents, the closure of the most popular daily paper and the threat of prison terms for journalists who work without a state licence.

Senior Zanu-PF officials at the nomination court were surprised by Mr Moyo's action, the BBC's correspondent reported.

Libya, Egypt support AU over Darfur crisis

Libyan leader Moamer Gadhafi and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak backed an African solution to the crisis in Sudan's war-ravaged Darfur region during two rounds of talks in Cairo, presidential spokesman Suleiman Awad said.

The two leaders "agreed on the need to support efforts by the African Union to resolve the crisis in Darfur within an African framework," Awad said as Gadhafi left Cairo for Tripoli.

At least 70,000 people and possibly tens of thousands more have died during

two years of fighting in Darfur, where the government and its proxy militias have brutally battled a rebellion launched in February 2003.

Awad said the talks also covered relations between Libya and Saudi Arabia, strained after the kingdom expelled Tripoli's ambassador over a purported Libyan plot to assassinate Crown Prince Abdullah.

"President Mubarak has not stopped to exert efforts aimed at containing this difference or others, either before or during the visit of Colonel Moamer Kadhafi," said Awad after the two leaders held a final round of talks.

Germany has joined the US in suspending funding for Kenya's increasingly discredited anti-corruption programme.

German ambassador Bernd Braun said changes made to Kenya's cabinet had not gone far enough to prove President Mwai Kibaki's resolve to deal with graft.

He said the \$6.5m (500m shillings) aid would not be released until Mr Kibaki sacked ministers found to be corrupt. Kenya's presidential press service said the cabinet's war against corruption would "continue relentlessly".

Germany's decision comes after the resignations

Germany cuts Kenya anti-graft aid

of at least four members of Kenya's National Anti-Corruption Campaign steering committee.

The committee's director, Jane Kiragu, stepped down on Friday because she was frustrated by lack of funding from the government, a spokesman said. Committee member Tom Mshindi, who is chief executive of Kenya's Standard newspaper group, also resigned.

Mr Kibaki's chief anti-graft adviser, John Githongo, had already stepped down


earlier this month - reportedly because he felt the government and the president were no longer committed to stopping corruption.

Gladwell Otieno, the head of the Kenyan branch of corruption watchdog Transparency International, resigned in November.

In a news conference broadcast on Kenyan television, Mr Braun said Germany did not feel Mr Kibaki's cabinet reshuffle on Monday had proven his determination to fight corruption.

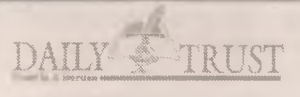


From left: Isiaq Ajibola, Executive Director of Media Trust; British High Commissioner, Richard Gozney; and the new Ambassador of Algeria, Noureddine Bardad-Daidj in a reception held for the visiting United Kingdom Treasury secretary, Paul Boateng at the ambassador's residence...recently.

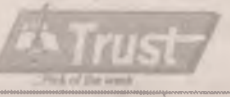


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Trust International World Report

US wants me assassinated – Chavez

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has threatened to suspend oil exports to the US if someone tries to assassinate him.

"If they kill me, there will be a really guilty party on this planet whose name is the President of the United States George Bush," Chavez said on Sunday during his weekly radio programme "Hello, Mr. President."

"If, by the hand of the devil, those perverse plans succeed... forget about Vene-

zuelan oil, Mr Bush," he said. Chavez said he was convinced that Washington was "sketching out the assassination plans" before his Bolivarian Revolution advances in Venezuela and Latin America.

Chavez revealed a week ago that Cuban President Fidel Castro had warned him of a US assassination plot.

"Now, I am going to say it. Neither Fidel Castro nor I talk nonsense."

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice recently

called Chavez "a negative force" in Latin America, and the State Department backed Colombia in a recent dispute between the Caribbean neighbours over the arrest of a Colombian rebel in Caracas by Colombian officials without Venezuela's knowledge or consent.

"If something happens to me, I blame the president of

the United States," Chavez said.

"If they kill me, there will be a really guilty party on this planet whose name is the President of the United States George Bush"

"I will not hide. I am going to be in the streets with you. I entrust myself to God, but I know that I have been condemned to die," Chavez

said.

"Each second of my life I will spend in the struggle and God's will be done," he said.

Castro said on 12 February: "If Chavez is assassinated, the blame will fall on Bush."

"I say that as someone who has survived hundreds of the empire's [assassination] plans," he said.

Chavez also recently accused the US of being involved in an April 2002 coup, which removed him from power but only for two days.

Venezuela is the only Latin American member of the Organisation of the Petroleum Producing Countries or OPEC, and sells about 1.5 million barrels daily to the US.



President Hugo Chavez

Portuguese socialists win polls

Portugal's opposition Socialist Party has won a convincing election victory, ousting the governing Social Democrats.

Near complete results gave the Socialists 118 seats, giving them an absolute majority in the 230-seat parliament for the first time.

Prime Minister Pedro Santana Lopes has only been in office for seven months, and this is his party's worst result.

Socialist leader and Environment Minister Jose Socrates has pledged to

kick-start the ailing economy.

Unemployment stands at 7% and Portugal is seeing EU subsidies and foreign investment diverted to eastern Europe.

The snap general election - called more than a year earlier than needed - will install Portugal's fourth government in three years.

The BBC's correspondent in Lisbon said turnout seems to be well up on the last election in 2002, when it reached 62%.

As polls closed, a Socialist Party spokesman

welcomed exit poll projections as indicating "an absolutely memorable result" and noted that turnout appeared to have risen by five percentage points to 67%.

This showed voters wanted not just to get rid of a bad government but to give their backing to the Socialist Party by handing it a clear majority, he said.

On the eve of the vote President Jorge Sampaio spoke of a "crisis" facing the country.

Mr. Sampaio, a Socialist, said he had lost confidence

in the centre-right coalition government.

In his address to the nation, President Sampaio recalled the concerns that prompted him to dissolve parliament in December.

He said the need for structural reforms to get the economy back on track meant a fresh mandate was required.

Mr. Santana Lopes has been in office since July, when his predecessor, Jose Manuel Barroso, left to head the European Commission.

VACANCY

A dynamic and fast-growing professional services firm that specializes in international development is presently running a USAID-funded project to integrate education and health with the aim of improving the quality of health and education services in Nigeria. The project will work through a community-based strategy to empower communities to improve the quality of the services provided by both health and educational institutions. In order to achieve its objectives, the organization requires the services of a highly motivated individual as a **Community Mobilization and Demand Creation Program Coordinator**.

Position Location: Kano State

Position Summary

The Community Mobilization Program Coordinator will support local NGOs, FBOs and other Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to develop their capacity to mobilize communities and advocate for change. She/he will collaborate with intermediary NGOs and community coalitions to identify health and education needs at the community level and develop plans for community mobilization and demand activities through the Community Action Cycle (CAC).

Primary Responsibilities

1. Develop programs and provide support supervision to build the community mobilization skills of local institutions.
2. Provide on-site programmatic and administrative backstopping for community mobilization and demand generation activities.
3. Provide technical assistance to CBOs in the use of CBO training packages.
4. Provide technical assistance to intermediary NGOs to strengthen their use of CAC and CIS and to strengthen their ability to lead CBO/Coalitions through these processes and to generate demand.
5. Assist in all phases of community mobilization and

participation in the areas of program development, implementation and monitoring.

6. Develop and coordinate the implementation of the work plan on community mobilization and participation.
7. Plan and develop core materials, including training tools, media programs and advocacy materials.
8. Develop formal and informal networks with community organizations.
9. Coordinate formal and informal network with community organizations.
10. Coordinate with other officers in identifying community participation needs.
11. Provide necessary research and analysis needed for community participation.

Required Skills and Qualifications

1. A degree in social sciences with public health experience or a suitable combination of training and experience.
2. Experience working with NGOs and CBOs.
3. Demonstrable ability in training and capacity building.
4. Knowledge of Kano State terrain is an added advantage

Method of Application

Interested candidates should submit a written application together with detailed curriculum vitae to reach the address stated below not later than two weeks after the date of this publication.

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Neni Hall
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Plot 389, Cadastral Zone A. O.
Central Area, Abuja, Nigeria.

Note: Only short-listed candidates will be contacted.

Trust International

Middle East and Asia

Israel releases 500 Palestinian prisoners

Israel has started releasing 500 Palestinian prisoners as part of a ceasefire agreement between both sides, military officials said.

The detainees were taken to the Ketziot military jail in the southern Negev desert before their release.

They were then to travel by bus to border crossings in Gaza and the West Bank where they would be reunited with their families.

The releases are being supervised by the army and prison authorities.

Yesterday, several buses escorted by police and ambulances left the military prison camp, near the border with Egypt.

Israeli military officials said all 500 prisoners were

expected to have been released at drop-off points on the edges of the Gaza Strip and West Bank by midday local time.

"The army and prison authorities must jointly go ahead on Monday with the release of 500 Palestinians from the Gaza Strip and West Bank," the Israeli military said in a statement.

"These releases will take place, in co-ordination with the Palestinian Authority and conforming to arrangements reached with Palestinian security officials."

The list of prisoners to be freed was drawn up by a

ministerial commission as part of steps to build confidence with the Palestinian Authority.

Of the 500, 382 were Palestinians who had been sentenced to prison terms and 118 were being held in "administrative" detention.

The move is part of a package of measures agreed between the Israeli and Palestinian leaders at a ceasefire deal earlier this month.

Under the agreement, a further 400 Palestinian prisoners are scheduled to be released within three months.

Further strengthening Abbas, legislators from his dominant Fatah movement approved a keenly awaited new Palestinian cabinet that puts his loyalists in key positions.

Palestinians moved a step closer on Sunday to taking full control of the occupied Gaza Strip after Sharon's cabinet gave vital approval for a withdrawal from settlements under a plan touted as a possible springboard to peace negotiations.

Sharon gave the order for evacuations to start on July 20.



A nurse holds an Egyptian baby named Manar Maged in a hospital in the city of Banha, north of Cairo. Egyptian doctors said they removed the second head from the girl, who was suffering from the rare birth defects in an operation on Saturday.

Russia backs Iran in nuclear row

Russian President Vladimir Putin said recent moves by Iran have convinced him it is not trying to build nuclear arms.

He said Moscow would continue working with Tehran in all fields, including nuclear power, adding that he had accepted an invitation to Iran.

His comments came at a meeting in Moscow with chief Iranian nuclear negotiator Hassan Rowhani.

Moscow is helping Iran build a nuclear reactor - a project which has been heavily criticised by the US.

The Americans accuse Iran of seeking nuclear weapons. Iran denies this, saying its nuclear development programme is purely for peaceful, energy-generating purposes.

Under an agreement announced on Thursday and due to be signed this month, Moscow will supply Tehran with the nuclear fuel it needs.

The spent fuel will be returned to Russia. This was the last issue delaying the start of operations at the Russian-built reactor at Bushehr, in southern Iran.

The US believes that the Bushehr reactor - when completed - could enable the Iranians to extract weapons-grade plutonium.

The BBC's correspondent in Moscow said Russia has close ties with Iran, dating back to Soviet times, and it is determined to continue co-operation despite US opposition.

After his talks with President Putin on Friday, Mr Rowhani said Russia's role may prove "rather useful" in moving ahead discussions on Iran's nuclear programme with Germany, Britain and France.

The three have offered to replace a heavy-water nuclear reactor - which can be used to make weapons-grade nuclear material - with a light-water reactor.

Low grades of uranium are used for nuclear reactor fuel, but higher grades can be used in atomic bombs.

Tehran suspended uranium enrichment temporarily in November, as part of the dialogue process.

Al-Qaeda gives conditions for peace

Al-Qaeda's number two has said governments cannot stop its attacks and that the West's security depends on respect for Islam and an end to aggression against Muslims.

Ayman al-Zawahri said in a videotape broadcast by Aljazeera on Sunday that the "new Crusader campaign" would end in defeat as others had in the past.

Al-Zawahri, wearing a white turban and seated with a machine gun next to him, said his comments came three years after the first prisoners were taken from Afghanistan to the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

"If you Western nations believe that these cartoon governments will protect you from our responses, then you are deluded. Your real security lies in cooperating with the Islamic nation on the basis of respect and ending aggression," al-Zawahri said.

"Your new Crusader campaign will end, God willing, in defeat as did those that preceded it but after the deaths of tens of thousands, the destruction of your economy and exposing you in the pages of history," he added.

Al-Zawahri said US calls for democracy in the Middle East were a farce after allegations of abuse of prisoners in Iraq, Afghanistan and in Guantanamo Bay, which holds hundreds of suspects detained during the 2001 US-led war to oust al-Qaeda and the ruling Taliban from Afghanistan and in

other operations.

"It has been three years since the first group of Muslim prisoners were sent to Guantanamo prison... One may ask why all this interest in Guantanamo when our countries are filled with a thousand Guantamos under US observation," he said.

"It is because it exposes the truth of reform and democracy that America claims it aims to spread in our countries.

"The reform which emerges from US prisons like

Bagram, Kandahar, Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, and from the launch of cluster bombs and rockets and the appointment of the likes of Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai and Iraqi interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi," he said.

Al-Zawahri and al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Ladin, believed to be hiding in the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan, have eluded capture since the 11 September 2001 attacks on the United States, claimed by al-Qaeda.

Indonesia landslide buries 13, 100 missing

At least 13 people have been killed and more than 100 are missing following a landslide in Indonesia.

Officials said heavy rains had caused a municipal dump to collapse, dislodging tonnes of earth and rubbish which buried dozens of people living nearby.

Other victims are believed to be scavengers, who earn a living sifting through rubbish for anything valuable.

The accident happened in Cimahi, near the West Javan town of Bandung, 180 km (110 miles) south-east of Jakarta.

Army, police and local residents are searching the area in the hope of rescuing those still trapped beneath the debris.

"The situation is still grave but we will continue rescue efforts while the weather still

allows us to do so," Police Commissioner Susiyanti told the French news agency AFP.

"We believe that there are 139 people still buried under the garbage... it appears that all of them are buried and it is very likely that they are all dead," she said.

But she admitted that the recovery effort was being hindered because rescuers were wary of triggering further landslides if they disrupted the already unstable ground.

Local village chief Saiful Bagir told Indonesian television that the authorities had promised many times to relocate the rubbish dump.

Landslides are relatively common in Indonesia, especially during the rainy season.

In April 2004, about 40 people died in a landslide in west Sumatra.

Odd World

Mistakenly freed inmate returns to prison

An inmate released by mistake by jail officials in Ohio arranged his own way back to the prison in Colorado where he still has two more years to serve. He even called to say he was on his way.

Stark County jailers let Ricky Lee Claycomb go last Tuesday after he was acquitted of a rape charge he had been brought to Ohio from Colorado to face. Jail officials apparently never saw the paperwork to return him to the prison.

"We don't know exactly what happened," Sheriff Tim Swanson said.

Claycomb, 37, called his mother in Henderson, Colo. "He told them at the jail that he was supposed to be taken back to Colorado," said his mother, Jill Claycomb. "He said they told him he was done in Canton and it was his problem to get back."

She sent him money for a bus ticket. After the two-day trip to Colorado, Claycomb visited her long enough to have oatmeal and peaches for breakfast and pizza for lunch, and then his brother drove him to Colorado's Fremont Correctional Facility in Canon City.

"He was nice enough to call ahead," said Katherine Sanguinetti, a spokeswoman for the Colorado Department of Corrections. "I think he was afraid we would shoot him or something, but it wasn't his fault Ohio let him go."

Claycomb was serving time in Colorado for robbery, and was brought to Ohio to stand trial on a 1994 rape charge after a crime database indicated a DNA match.

However, Claycomb testified that he had consensual sex with the woman the day before the alleged assault, and jurors acquitted him.

Jill Claycomb said that soon after her telephone conversation with her son, Stark County authorities called to find out if she knew where he was.

"I told a detective what happened, that he was coming back to Colorado on his own," she said. "He just said 'Bless Ricky's little heart.'"

Landlord gas tenant in eviction dispute

A landlord in an eviction dispute with a tenant allegedly broke windows at his rental property and threw a tear gas grenade into the residence, police said.

Joseph Hammock, 69, of West Point, Ga., was taken into custody early last Wednesday after a 1:30 a.m. dispute at the Lanett rental property. Police said the tenant was not injured.

Officers arrested Hammock near his Georgia home on an unrelated arson charge and took him to Troup County Jail, said Lanett Police Chief Ron Docimo.

Deputies found additional materials for building explosive devices and literature for survivalist techniques in Hammock's Georgia residence, said Troup County Sheriff's Lt. Rick Massie.

Docimo said Hammock will be extradited back to Alabama on a felony charge when he makes bond in Georgia.

Man blows up car with cigarette

A man barely escaped serious injury Thursday after a lit cigarette he tried to toss out the window while driving across the Bay Bridge blew back in and ignited the vehicle, according to the California Highway Patrol.

The unidentified man was driving westbound at about 10:40 a.m. when he tossed the cigarette out the window of his Ford Expedition, said CHP Officer Shawn Chase.

Carried by the wind, the cigarette landed in his back seat and almost immediately burst into flames. The man quickly pulled to the side of the road, and leapt from the flame-filled SUV, which continued rolling into a guard rail, Chase said.

"He thought he had thrown it in park, but he didn't and it just kept going," the officer said. "It was in flames by the time he got out. He had some of his hair singed on the back of his head. It burnt down to the frame. There was nothing left."

The incident forced the closure of the Harrison Street off-ramp and one lane of traffic flowing into the city for about an hour.

He said the man will likely face a misdemeanor charge for littering.

"We see people throwing cigarettes out the window all the time but never a situation like this where it comes back in," Chase said. "This guy was lucky."

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Business Trust

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.
PH - 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	2:30pm.
Dasab Airlines	
Auja-Lagos	8:30a.m.
Lagos-PHC	10:30a.m.
PHC-Lagos	12:30a.m.
Lagos-Kano	2:30p.m.
Kano-Lagos	4:30p.m.
Lagos-Abuja	6:30pm.
ADC Airline	
Lagos-Abuja	7:15a.m.
	12:45pm.
Abuja-Lagos	8:55a.m.
Lagos-Calabar	11:15a.m.
Calabar-Lagos	7:20a.m.
PH-Lagos	9:45a.m.
<i>Most airlines operate the same flight schedule on week days.</i>	

Finance

\$118 Debt: Court rejects ILL's objection

By Ahmed I. Shekarau,
Group Business Editor

The High Court in Lagos has put at bay an action embarked upon by Investors International (London) Limited (IILL) to stop First Bank of Nigeria from securing legal seal to recover \$118,821,947 debt owed it by IILL.

The debt is the aggregate sum of the principal, accrued interest and underwriting fees due to First Bank over a loan granted and guaranteed by IILL in the aborted acquisition of controlling 51 per cent stake in Nigerian Telecommunications Limited (NITEL).

First Bank had in a suit (LD/1408/2004) filed before Justice A. Olateru-Olagbegi of the Lagos High Court sought a "summary judgement" to

CBN clears N139bn in Sokoto zone

From Abdulfatai Abdulsalami, Correspondent (Sokoto)

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Sokoto clearing house comprising Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara states, has said it had recorded 250 clearing sessions where 70,793 items valued at N139,044,770.32 were exchanged.

Speaking at the 2004 annual bankers dinner/lecture held at Giginya Hotel, Sokoto, the CBN Sokoto branch controller, Alhaji Ahmed Muhammadu said that, the year 2004 will for a long be remembered in the history of banking in Nigeria.

The CBN branch controller said that the year witnessed series of restructuring in the apex bank, as well as deployment of up-to-date information technology to facilitate the discharge of its core functions.

Alhaji Ahmed said that the introduction of settlement and non-settlement banks enhanced the clearing system in the country, adding that the automated transfer of daily balances to their head offices brought an end to complaints about uncredited or undebited accounts.

Commenting on the agricultural credit guarantee scheme fund (ACGSF), the branch controller said in the year 2004, a total of 4,076 loans valued at N155,020,000.00 were guaranteed in Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara states, stressing that out of this, 2,661 loans valued at N67,302,500.00 were fully repaid during the same year (2004).

This, the controller said, represented the largest number and value of loans guaranteed under the scheme in the country, adding that the Small and Medium Industries Equity Investment Scheme (SMIEIS), as at October 31, 2004 made cumulative investment of N9.3 billion in 17,173 projects.

enable it exercise its lien on the assets of IILL to recover the debt.

However, IILL, represented by Professor Gabriel Olawoyin (SAN) challenged the jurisdiction of the court in a preliminary objection, which he insisted must be taken in isolation of the other numerous interlocutory applications before the court, inclusive of First Bank's motion for judgement in default of defence filed on its behalf by Dr. Konyin Ajayi (SAN), over the substantive issue brought by the bank.

The justice state in his 10-page ruling a copy of which was made available to *Business Trust* that "the learned Senior Advocate for the defendant, Professor Olawoyin submitted that the peculiar nature of their objection to territorial jurisdiction of the court makes it imperative that the issue of territorial jurisdiction should first be resolved before any step is taken in this suit."

Besides, "he argued that the rationale for this position was that should the

defendant take any other step apart from challenging the jurisdiction of the court by filing a preliminary objection, as for instance, filing a statement of defence or counter-affidavit to controvert the facts alleged by the Claimant, it may be taken that the defendant have waived their rights to challenge jurisdiction."

Justice Olateru-Olagbegi ruled in the judgment dated February 7, 2005 that the defendant should have filed its defence, which could then be taken simultaneously with its objection to territorial jurisdiction.

According to the justice, "the argument of learned counsel for the defendant is that they did not file a statement of defence nor a counter-affidavit to contradict the claims of the claimant because that would amount to a waiver of the rights. I am unable to agree with the premise of the learned counsel's argument."

"It is well established in our jurisprudence that the issue of jurisdiction can be raised at any time before judgement. Therefore a defendant party who initially submits to jurisdiction is still

at liberty to challenge the court's jurisdiction even after participating in the trial and before judgement. The issue of jurisdiction may even be taken for the first time in an appellate court.

"I am of the view therefore that the defendant could have validly filed a statement of defence in response to the claimant's summary application and pursuant to Order 1, Rule 4 of the rules or filed a counter-affidavit pursuant to Order 39 Rule 1 (3) in opposition to the claimants without prejudice to, but in addition to their challenge to the jurisdiction of this court. This course of action would endure towards a more expeditious determination of a suit."

Justice Olateru-Olagbegi stated that "considering the guidelines of the appellate authorities on this issue, mindful of the limited time that I have for the consideration of applications filed by the parties here, it is my view that taking the two applications together will be a more judicious and economic management of the time of court than taking them one at a time."

Briefs

NBM Bank

NBM Bank officially commissioned its Abuja and Kaduna branch offices on February 8 and 9, 2005 respectively, and also launched its Western Union Money Transfer and Bweb services.

A statement from the bank said, at the Abuja and Kaduna official commissioning, the bank used the opportunity to intimate its customers of its merger plans and ongoing efforts to meet the N25 billion recapitalisation ordered by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

The bank informed customers of their appointment as the 9th direct agent of Western Union Money Transfer in Nigeria. The customers were assured that money can be collected in dollars, pound or any currency of their choice.

UBA

The United Bank for Africa (UBA) Plc, has opened a cash office to render full banking services at the 2005 Kaduna International Trade Fair which opened February 18, 2005 at the Kaduna International Trade and Investment Centre, Kaduna.

In a release signed by its head, Branch Management & Corporate Affairs, Mr. Ogie Eboigbe, the bank said it is showcasing its various services and products, among which are opening of savings and current accounts and the UBA Save for School products for savings account customers.

It stressed that UBA's MoneyGram product, an international money transfer service, through which people can receive money from friends and loved ones in over 120 countries abroad will be available at the pavilion, as well as other products like e-banking business suite.

Afribank

Afribank Nigeria Plc said it is providing services to its teeming customers, exhibitors and participants at the Kaduna International Trade Fair which kicked off on Friday, February 18, 2005. Already, the bank said it has mobilised its entire customer facing units and relationship management groups to make strong appearance at the fair.

According to the management of the bank, various financial services of the bank are available to both the institutional and individual customers of the bank.

Mr. Lanre Alabi, the bank's head corporate affairs in a release in Lagos said that the traditional services of the bank and specialised services of the Afribank Group will be available to customers at the fair.

MARKET INDICATORS

Nigerian Inter Bank Foreign Exchange (NIFEX) Rates

Quotes as of: 18/02/2005

Spot Fixing	Bid(\$/ N-)	Offer(\$/ N-)
	132.792	133.092
Tenor (Days)	Swap Points	Forward Fixing
30	1.55357	134.3452 /
	1.5571	134.6488
60	3.1003 /	135.892 /
	3.1073	136.199
90	4.6403 /	137.432 /
	4.6508	137.7425
180	9.2201 /	142.0118 /
	9.2410	142.3327

Dutch Auction held on 16/02/2005 rates

Total Amount Offered	US\$ 100000000
Total Amount Demanded	US\$ 89949254.4
Total Amount Sold	US\$ 86426375.71
Lowest Successful Bid Rate	N 132.85 / 1 US\$
Highest Successful Bid Rate	N 133.05 / 1 US\$
No. of Successful Applicants	540
No. of Unsuccessful Applicants	39

Naira official exchange rates as of: 16/02/2005

Currency	Buying	Selling	Central
US DOLLAR	131.85	132.85	132.35
POUND STERLING	248.8273	250.7145	249.7709
EURO	171.7214	173.0238	172.3726
SWISS FRANCS	0	0	0
JAPANESE YEN	1.2542	1.2637	1.25895
CFA FRANCS	0.2526	0.2626	0.2576
WAUA	199.0535	200.5632	199.80835
SAUDI RIYAL	35.1544	35.421	35.2877

Bureau De Change rates as of: 03/02/2005

Location	Dollar		Pounds	
	Buying	Selling	Buying	Selling
Lagos	139.00	140.50	258.50	259.50
Ikeja	138.00	139.00	257.00	258.00
Airport	139.00	140.50	258.50	259.50



NATIONAL PENSION COMMISSION

NOTICE TO PROSPECTIVE APPLICANTS FOR LICENCE TO TRANSACT BUSINESS AS A PENSION FUND ADMINISTRATOR (PFA) OR PENSION FUND CUSTODIANS (PFC)

NOTICE is hereby given to the General Public and Prospective Operators in particular that the National Pension Commission (PenCom) has released Requirements for Licencing of Pension Fund Administrators (PFA) and Pension Fund Custodians (PFC).

1.0 Regulatory Requirements and Guidelines

Interested members of the Public, Organisations and Prospective Operators are invited to visit the Commission's website: www.pencom.gov.ng and down load the following documents:

1.1 Pension Fund Administrator (PFA)

- a) Licencing requirements for PFA (Form No. APP/01/PFA).
- b) Application Form for PFA (Form No. APP/02/PFA).
- c) Checklist for submission of Application Form for PFA (Form No.APP/03/PFA).

1.2 Pension Fund Custodian (PFC)

- a) Licensing Requirements for PFC (Form No.APP/01/PFC).
- b) Application Form for PFC (Form No.APP/02/PFC).
- c) Checklist for submission of Application Form for PFC (Form No.APP/03/PFC).

1.3 Personnel Profile Form (Form No.APP/PPF/01).

1.4 Guidelines for Appointments to Board and Top Management Positions of Pension Fund Administrators and Pension Fund Custodians (GL/APPT/01).

2.0 Application Procedure

2.1 Any organisation wishing to transact the business of a Pension Fund Administrator (PFA) or Pension Fund Custodian (PFC) in Nigeria must apply and be duly licensed by the National Pension Commission (PenCom) in accordance with Sections 44, 46, 47, 49, 50,51 and 97 of the Pension Reform Act 2004.

2.2 Application for a licence to transact business as a PFA or PFC shall be made in the prescribed manner as determined by PenCom.

2.3 An application for a licence to transact business as a PFA or PFC shall be made to the Director General, National Pension Commission.

2.4 After meeting the requirements for the grant of a licence for a PFA or PFC, an Approval-In-Principle (AIP) may be granted to the applicant, which shall be valid for three (3) months only.

2.5 The satisfactory fulfilment of the requirements for commencement of operations would lead to the grant of a licence.

3.0 Submission of Completed Application

3.1 Duly completed application form and supporting documents shall be submitted in both hard and soft copies in sealed envelopes to the following address:

Director-General
National Pension Commission
Plot 2774, Shehu Shagari Way
Maitama District
PMB 5170 Wuse
Abuja
Telephone: 234-9- 4133363, 4133364, 6720091 & 6720095.

3.2 All enquiries should be referred to the above address.

Business Trust

Motoring

PAN claims leadership in Nigeria's auto market

The managing director of Peugeot Automobile Nigeria (PAN), Kaduna, Mr. Franciose Sere has said with a sale of 5,500 cars last year, the company remains the leader in the new car market in Nigeria.

At a briefing at the 25th Kaduna International Trade Fair at the weekend, Mr. Sere said however that the Nigerian market is not dynamic at all.

He said though PAN sales last year represent 35 per cent of the new car market in Nigeria, market is very instable.

Mr. Sere said there cannot be any reduction on the company's products because it has not aimed an economics of scale in adding that "it is only when you attain massive production such a reduction can be considered."

The French managing director said the period under review was tough for the economy but that PAN has survived with good management supervision.

He expressed confidence that the current reform measures taken by the federal government will create a conducive environment adding that, "though 2002, 2003 and 2004 were hard periods we are

From Sani Babadoko,
Bureau Chief Kaduna

optimistic that 2005 will be better because of the current economic reforms.

He said the reforms in the banking sector will help revive business activities in the country in the long run.

Mr. Sere said the federal government is working out a deal between PAN and the ministry of defence for purchase of its products, but said the deal was yet to be finalized.

He dismissed the insinuation that PAN vehicles were meant for the cities, denying that they have been priced out of reach of the ordinary Nigerian worker.

He said the sector in capital intensive that the current period were the lowest in the new car market.

Mr. Sere said the Nigerian industrial class was plagued by systemic imbalance which has resulted in the company expending between N2million and N3million on power generation and water supply alone.

He also said lending rate in Nigeria which stood at about 20 per cent is far high than in other countries where it was three per cent.



A driver turns the steering wheel to park a car while looking at a monitor display attached to the dash-board during a test drive of Nissan's new technological features yesterday, Feb. 21, 2005

Nissan's 'smart' cars return to lanes

A car that swerves back into lanes on its own and a video system that makes parking a breeze were part of technological features on display by the Japanese automaker Nissan Motor Co.

The technology that reporters tried out in test drives yesterday at a research center outside Tokyo is part of Nissan's efforts to make driving safer. Similar smart-car features are in the works at most of the world's top automakers, including Japanese rivals Toyota Motor

Corporation and Honda Motor Co., as well as General Motors Corp. of the United States and others.

One of the features shown was a more sophisticated version of an existing warning system — already available in Nissan luxury cars in the United States and Japan — that buzzes when the car veers out of the lane.

Lane Departure Prevention combines a camera and computerized devices that control braking for front and rear wheels that nudge the car in the right direction. No deci-

sion has been made on when the new system will be available.

The feature turns off when you hit the turn signal, so you will be able to change lanes or make turns without the system kicking in.

Takao Kubozuka, general manager at the research center, said the problem with such safety features is making sure the driver doesn't rely on them too much and start driving recklessly.

"We have to strike the balance between making driving safe and letting people get away with no-hands driving," he said.

Nissan also showed a system to make squeezing into parking spots easier. No more running over kitty or smashing into fences while you back up as four cameras in the front, back and side-mirrors relay live video.

Nissan's Around View Monitor shows what's surrounding the car on a display attached to the dashboard.

Images from all sides are shown the way they appear from above — with the vehicle displayed as a computer graphic in the middle of the screen.

Vehicles that use a monitor to show images of a driver's blind spots taken on cameras aren't new, but Nissan's system puts together the images to create the aerial view.

Nissan hasn't decided when to offer the feature, although Kubozuka said it will probably be more attractive in Japan, where streets and parking spaces are narrow, than in the United States.

Among other new technologies Nissan displayed was a fuel-cell stack — the key component for pollution-free fuel-cell vehicles, which run on the energy produced when hydrogen, stored as fuel in a tank in the car, combines with oxygen in the air to make water.



The 2005 Mercury Montego makes its world debut, at the Chicago Auto Show, February 4, 2004.



GM's Envoy XUV

GM to end production of Envoy XUV

General Motors Corporation said it is ending production of the Envoy XUV, a five-passenger sport utility vehicle that can also be used as a pickup truck.

The plant said it will continue to make seven-passenger versions of the Envoy, including the Envoy Denali, a luxury version of the vehicle, Kathy Odem, a spokeswoman at the plant that makes the vehicle, said Friday.

Inalfa Roof Systems Incorporate, which makes the sliding rear roof for the XUV, said GM told its suppliers last week that it would stop making the vehicles amid lackluster

sales. Production, which began 18 months ago, will cease March 31. The XUV is made exclusively at the company's Oklahoma City plant.

The company said the decision will not affect jobs at the plant. GM employs more than 2,200 people in Oklahoma City. Workers also assemble seven-passenger versions of the Chevrolet TrailBlazer and Isuzu Ascender.

GM shares rose 9 cents to close at \$37.30 in Friday trading on the New York Stock Exchange. The stock has traded in a 52-week range of \$35.85 to \$50.04.

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Citizens' Forum For Constitutional Reform (C.F.C.R.)

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“National Political Reform Conference: A Dangerous Road to Self-Succession?”

by the Citizens' Forum for Constitutional Reform (CFCR)

The Citizens' Forum for Constitutional Reform (CFCR) is hereby addressing the recent announcement by President Olusegun Obasanjo, and subsequently by some Governors, coming out of a National Council of State Meeting, to the effect that the country will soon hold a National Political Conference. The position of the CFCR is that the proposed national dialogue, narrowly focused on political reform issues and largely dictated by the executive, is not only a diversion from fundamental national issues, but also appears to be a grand design by the executive to succeed itself and subvert the democratic yearnings and aspirations of Nigerians.

It is the considered view of CFCR that what the President has proposed is essentially flawed considering the following:

1. The proposed Conference faces the problems of legitimacy and legality because it is largely a product of the initiative of the President and Governors using the platform of the Council of States, an advisory body, rather than emanating from the legislature following the normal legislative process of passing a bill.
2. The timetable of the National Conference is unrealistic and politically dangerous, as it gives no space for pre-conference dialogue and other feedback activities that would enhance deliberations and participation.
3. It would appear that from the very beginning the outcome of the proposed conference is pre-determined as restrictions already imposed on issues of national unity and federalism would mean that Nigerians cannot openly discuss these two fundamental challenges of the polity.
4. Finally, there is no provision in the announcement on the National Conference for a referendum at the end of the process, which gives the impression that the President could use his enormous influence to pressure the National Assembly into incorporating induced resolutions into the Constitution.

Although it is commendable that a decision has been taken about convoking a Conference, considering the plethora of agitation and popular clamour for it, including token representations offered to civil society groups, the conception and philosophy are flawed and should therefore be rejected by Nigerians and all those who genuinely believe in a national dialogue as a solution to Nigeria's festering political and social crises. As it is presently conceived, the Conference reflects the dominant interests of the executive branch of government. For instance, the vast majority of participants are going to be nominated or appointed by the President and Governors. It is obvious that the six representatives from each state are going to be determined by the Governors, while the President will nominate 50 persons. That the Conference will be subject to the control of the President is further demonstrated by his announced powers, which include possible extension of the duration of the Conference beyond the three-month duration. Worse still, in the deliberations, issues of national unity and federalism are “no go areas” and, therefore, cannot be debated at the conference.

The speed with which the Executives – the President and Governors, who are late converts to the idea of a National Conference are now moving suggests that the primary objective of the President and Governors is to sidetrack the fundamental issues of governance in this country and manipulate the Conference to debate such issues as terms of office and the structure of government through which they can achieve the long suspected ambition of perpetuating themselves in power.

CFCR considers a National Conference as an occasion for the Nigerian People to collectively take decisions on critical issues affecting the polity. We therefore propose the way forward on the National Conference as follows:

1. What the Nigerian people want and have consistently demanded is a genuine National Conference that will discuss all aspects of the Nigerian polity as opposed to a narrowly defined National Political Reform Conference
2. The timetable needs to be reviewed to provide for a pre-Conference mapping exercise, which would enable organisations and groups to hold an internal dialogue. This would ensure that they: (i) **Prioritise the thematic issues to be addressed at the National Conference**, (ii) **Discuss the identified issues and take “bargaining positions” which will be presented as group positions**, and (iii) **Elect their representatives to the National Conference**. This kind of internal dialogue would enable each group to prepare a negotiating platform, and create an atmosphere at the start of the conference that would make it clear that the only road to success and progress is through dialogue and negotiations.
3. In order to enhance the legitimacy of the National Conference, it should be convened through a bill that is passed into law by the National Assembly. The National Conference Act should provide for the establishment of a Constitutional Review Commission, the membership of which should include representatives of the following: the Government, Civil Society Organisations, Labour/Trade Unions, the Organised Private Sector, Professional Associations, Students Groups, Ethnic Nationalities, Women's Groups, Youth Groups, Groups of Persons with Disabilities, Religious Leaders, Traditional Rulers, the Military and Paramilitary Establishments.
4. Furthermore, the Act should allow the Government to appoint only its own representatives to the Commission, and its members should appoint the Principal Officers of the body. While working on the modalities for the convocation of the National Conference, the Commission shall also collate the views of the people of Nigeria on the issues that would be discussed at the Conference to guarantee inclusiveness and participation.
5. In addition, the report of the Committee will, thereafter, be debated at the National Conference of elected representatives and representatives of special interest groups, and the proceedings will lead to the production of a draft Constitution. The draft constitution will then be subjected to a referendum. For this reason, the proposed Bill ought to provide that once the referendum is successful, the National Assembly is duty-bound to pass it into law.

It is for these reasons and the imperative of moving the democratic project forward through the convocation of a genuine national conference that the CFCR calls on all Nigerians and lovers of democracy to reject this manipulative strategy. As presently conceived, the only possible outcome is that the President and Governors will achieve their narrow political ambition and calculation to remain in power beyond 2007 regardless of the implication of this for democracy, peaceful coexistence and development of Nigeria.

DR JIBRIN IBRAHIM – *Convenor*

CHIEF PINI JASON – *Member*

DR SAM EGWU – *Deputy Convenor*

JOHN IKUBAJE – *Secretary*

Business Trust

1ST-TIER SECURITIES

THE NIGERIAN STOCK EXCHANGE

REPORT AS AT MONDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2005

COMPANY NAME	NO OF DEALS	QUOTATION(N)	QUANTITY TRADED	VALUE OF SHARES
CUTIX PLC	1	1.30	6,000	7,800.00
Sector Totals	1		6,000	7,800.00
AGRICULTURE/AGRO-ALLIED				
THE OKOMU OIL PALM COMPANY PLC	3	16.50	28,550	470,175.00
PRESKO PLC.	4	12.00	10,327	123,924.00
Sector Totals	7		38,877	594,099.00
AUTOMOBILE & TYRE				
DUNLOP NIGERIA PLC.	13	2.07	38,000	77,982.68
R. T. BRISCOAE PLC.	3	6.52	11,579	71,833.32
Sector Totals	16		49,579	149,816.00
BANKING				
ACCESS BANK PLC	10	3.42	85,572	292,656.24
AFRIBANK NIGERIA PLC.	17	6.63	410,266	2,720,063.58
FIRST ATLANTIC BANK PLC	7	3.41	66,400	226,424.00
FIB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC.	1	2.26	60,000	135,600.00
FIRST BANK OF NIGERIA PLC.	555	23.20	1,647,782	38,187,088.34
FSB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC.	26	1.34	588,339	794,909.37
GUARANTY TRUST BANK PLC.	293	10.25	4,641,228	49,049,229.40
GULF BANK OF NIGERIA PLC	1	0.65	15,000	9,750.00
INTERNATIONAL MERCHANT BANK PLC.	32	0.57	3,623,410	2,067,488.28
INLAND BANK (NIGERIA) PLC.	11	1.27	9,360,964	11,888,424.28
INTERCONTINENTAL BANK PLC.	3	7.81	14,400	112,464.00
LION BANK OF NIGERIA PLC.	5	0.68	169,500	115,260.00
MANUFACTURERS BANK NIGERIA PLC.	5	1.21	303,000	367,080.00
WAL BANK PLC.	2	2.80	23,037	64,503.60
OCEANIC BANK PLC	12	4.47	85,986	384,357.42
OMEGA BANK (NIGERIA) PLC.	3	1.61	25,030	40,298.30
STANDARD TRUST BANK PLC	9	7.41	39,400	291,954.00
TRANS INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC.	11	1.62	473,015	752,443.10
TRADE BANK PLC.	2	1.35	4,358	5,883.30
UNITED BANK FOR AFRICA PLC.	42	10.00	183,305	1,833,050.00
UNION BANK NIGERIA PLC.	303	19.80	1,702,514	33,881,714.89
UNIVERSAL TRUST BANK PLC	9	0.77	441,500	336,155.00
WEMA BANK PLC.	10	3.93	30,391	119,436.63
ZENITH BANK PLC	215	13.70	4,686,659	63,278,553.89
Sector Totals	1,584		28,681,056	206,954,787.62
BREWERIES				
GUINNESS NIGERIA PLC.	139	99.99	262,925	26,292,178.31
NIGERIAN BREWERIES PLC.	476	38.85	1,610,124	61,889,158.25
Sector Totals	615		1,873,049	88,181,336.56
BUILDING MATERIALS				
ASHAKA CEMENT PLC.	74	23.05	615,710	14,260,770.45
CEMENT CO. OF NORTHERN NIG. PLC	16	7.45	92,412	667,670.20
WEST AFR. PORTLAND CEMENT CO. PLC.	37	10.52	105,664	1,142,453.79
Sector Totals	127		813,786	16,070,894.44
CHEMICAL & PAINTS				
BERGER PAINTS PLC.	9	4.87	136,392	681,733.67
MAP PLC.	11	7.00	40,906	282,452.04
P. N. MEYER PLC.	2	5.00	5,000	25,270.00
NIGERIA-GERMAN CHEMICALS PLC.	7	4.25	29,298	124,231.50
Sector Totals	29		211,596	1,113,687.21
CONGLOMERATES				
G. LEVENTIS NIGERIA PLC.	11	1.00	240,073	240,073.00
F A O NIGERIA PLC.	5	5.34	16,936	90,352.82
DHN HOLT PLC.	6	0.84	14,930	12,541.20
NILEVER NIGERIA PLC.	130	16.20	776,888	12,416,600.47
Z. INDUSTRIES PLC.	81	13.40	674,032	9,157,947.71
A.C.NIGERIA PLC.	63	14.17	325,270	4,609,075.90
I.T.C. NIGERIA PLC.	2	1.16	210	243.60
Sector Totals	298		2,048,339	26,526,834.70
CONSTRUCTION				
OSTAIN (W.A.) PLC.	1	0.98	500	490.00
ULIUS BERGER NIGERIA PLC.	2	14.51	3,890	58,036.40
Sector Totals	3		4,390	58,526.40
ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY				
NIGERIAN WIRE AND CABLE PLC.	2	0.88	26,200	23,056.00
Sector Totals	2		26,200	23,056.00
FOOD/BEVERAGES & TOBACCO				
UP BOTTLING COMPANY PLC	25	24.15	39,825	940,440.73
ADBURY NIGERIA PLC.	133	57.00	162,241	9,266,402.01
LOUR MILLS NIGERIA PLC.	32	16.61	71,548	1,188,412.28
NIGERIA BOTTLING COMPANY PLC.	62	53.70	102,996	5,499,452.24
NESTLE FOODS NIGERIA PLC.	57	142.03	87,006	12,617,157.55
Sector Totals	309		463,616	29,511,864.81
FOOTWEAR				
ENNARDS (NIGERIA) PLC.	1	0.77	10,000	7,700.00
Sector Totals	1		10,000	7,700.00
HEALTHCARE				
KOCORP PLC.	6	0.67	256,000	171,520.00
WANS MEDICAL PLC.	6	3.25	26,290	86,300.90
AY & BAKER NIGERIA PLC.	7	5.23	16,505	86,321.15
HEMETH INTERNATIONAL PHARM. PLC.	20	3.35	199,147	662,745.75
ARMMA-DEKO PLC.	1	4.50	2,000	9,000.00
LAXOSMITHKLINE CONSUMER NIG. PLC	21	8.50	135,153	1,117,666.88
Sector Totals	61		635,095	2,133,554.68
HOTEL & TOURISM				
TURIST COMPANY OF NIGERIA PLC	2	4.49	50,000	224,500.00
Sector Totals	2		50,000	224,500.00
INDUSTRIAL/DOMESTIC PRODUCTS				
NIGERIA ENAMELWARE COMPANY PLC.	1	3.40	1,200	4,080.00
FIRST ALUMINIUM NIGERIA PLC.	3	0.90	114,000	102,480.00
O.C. GASES PLC.	6	2.85	21,333	59,597.29
TAFOAM NIGERIA PLC.	32	2.98	230,257	687,492.08
ONO PRODUCTS PLC.	3	1.90	2,333	4,432.70
Sector Totals	45		369,123	858,082.07
INSURANCE				
ICO INSURANCE PLC.	7	2.01	30,830	61,968.30
ICO INSURANCE PLC.	2	1.00	15,450	15,432.00
ORNERSTONE INSURANCE CO. PLC.	5	1.43	121,978	174,468.54
USADER INSURANCE PLC.	2	1.16	10,056	11,164.96
ASACO ASSURANCE PLC.	1	0.83	5,445	4,519.35
LAW UNION AND ROCK INSURANCE PLC.	1	1.32	7,000	9,240.00
PACKAGE ASSURANCE PLC	14	1.51	229,700	347,745.00
MUTUAL BENEFITS ASSURANCE PLC	2	0.93	11,000	10,230.00
E.M. INSURANCE CO. (NIG.) PLC.	1	0.80	500,000	400,000.00
GER INSURANCE CO. PLC.	4	2.88	20,500	59,040.00
DYAL EXCHANGE ASSURANCE PLC.	6	3.45	19,058	65,750.10
ANDARD ALLIANCE INSURANCE	3	1.00	45,100	45,100.00
IC INSURANCE PLC.	7	0.97	62,500	61,000.00
EST AFRICAN PROV. INS. COY. PLC.	6	2.84	62,884	178,590.56
Sector Totals	61		1,141,501	1,444,248.81
MACHINERY(MARKETING)				
LACKWOOD HODGE (NIGERIA) PLC.	1	0.67	100	67.00
Sector Totals	1		100	67.00
MANAGED FUNDS				
ERLEASING PLC.	7	1.40	146,437	201,805.14
NIGERIAN ENERGY SECTOR FUND	1	889.00	100	88,900.00
Sector Totals	8		146,537	290,705.14
PACKAGING				
AMPAK NIGERIA PLC	8	1.66	526,480	874,356.80
ETA GLASS COMPANY PLC.	5	4.07	2,708	11,014.48
AN LEER CONTAINERS (NIGERIA) PLC.	4	2.25	17,277	38,873.25
Sector Totals	17		546,465	924,244.53
PETROLEUM(MARKETING)				
PROIL PLC.	3	0.78	53,077	42,197.28
AFRICAN PETROLEUM PLC.	103	64.20	485,171	31,487,465.42
ETERNAL OIL & GAS PLC.	22	2.04	937,292	1,912,075.68
OBIL OIL NIGERIA PLC.	40	180.06	11,629	2,096,489.52
ONOIL PLC.	58	120.21	23,224	2,834,654.63
XACO (NIGERIA) PLC.	29	160.00	21,562	3,441,514.40
ITAL NIGERIA PLC	32	181.20	21,839	3,989,115.00
ANDO PLC.	204	96.50	501,599	46,961,510.71
Sector Totals	491		2,055,393	92,765,022.64
PRINTING & PUBLISHING				
NGMAN NIGERIA PLC.	2	2.11	5,000	10,350.00
Sector Totals	2		5,000	10,350.00
REAL ESTATE				
CN PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT PLC.	22	8.89	136,052	1,187,011.00
Sector Totals	22		136,052	1,187,011.00
TEXTILES				
A TEXTILE MILLS PLC.	1	0.91	240	218.40
PRINT NIGERIA PLC.	1	0.46	2,500	1,150.00
UNITED NIGERIA TEXTILES PLC.	6	2.18	35,000	76,300.00
Sector Totals	8		37,740	77,668.40

TOP 10 TRADES YESTERDAY

SYMBOL	VOLUME	VALUE	TRADES
PZ	674,032.00	9,157,947.71	81
LEVBROS	776,888.00	12,416,600.47	130
ETERNAOIL	937,292.00	1,912,075.68	22
NB	1,610,124.00	61,889,158.25	476
FIRSTBANK	1,647,782.00	38,187,088.34	555
UBN	1,702,514.00	33,881,714.89	303
IMB	3,623,410.00	2,067,488.28	32
GUARANTY	4,641,228.00	49,049,229.40	293
ZENITHBANK	4,686,659.00	63,278,553.89	215
INLANDBANK	9,360,964.00	11,888,424.28	11

TOP 10 GAINERS

SYMBOL	LASTCLOSE	YESTERDAYSCLOSE	CHANGE
UNIPETROL	93.00	96.50	+3.50
AP	62.50	64.20	+1.70
NBC	52.50	53.70	+1.20
TUP	23.00	24.15	+1.15
OKOMUOIL	15.85	16.50	+0.65
SKBEECHAM	8.10	8.50	+0.40
CCNN	7.10	7.45	+0.35
CFAO	5.09	5.34	+0.25
UAC-PROP	8.71	8.89	+0.18
ROYALEX	3.29	3.45	+0.16

TOP 10 LOSERS

SYMBOL	LASTCLOSE	YESTERDAYSCLOSE	CHANGE
NESTLE	147.51	142.03	-5.48
TOTAL	184.00	181.20	-2.80
NOLCHEM	122.00	120.21	-1.79
CADBURY	57.78	57.00	-0.78
PZ	13.90	13.40	-0.50
ASHAKACEM	23.50	23.05	-0.45
GUARANTY	10.54	10.25	-0.29
BERGER	5.12	4.87	-0.25
OCEANIC	4.70	4.47	-0.23
WAPCO	10.74	10.52	-0.22

US Dollar up slightly against Euro

The US dollar edged up against the euro Monday as President Bush embarked on a five-day European trip urging greater trans-Atlantic cooperation.

The 12-nation currency bought \$1.3048 in late-afternoon European trading, down from \$1.3067 in late New York Friday. US markets were closed Monday for the presidents day holiday.

The dollar was off slightly against other major rivals, with the British pound up to \$1.8951 from \$1.8947 on Friday and the US currency buying 105.55 Japanese yen, down from 105.64.

The euro soared from about \$1.20 in September to an all-time high of \$1.3667 at the end of December, powered by concerns over the US budget and trade deficits. It has since leveled off around \$1.30.

Analysts believe the euro will continue to rise this year, and European leaders have expressed concerns that continuing dollar weakness could start to seriously harm their economies by making exports more expensive or cutting into manufacturers' profits.

It was not clear whether they would use the opportunity of face-to-face talks with Bush this week to push their case.

While the Bush administration has professed a "strong dollar" policy, many believe it has been tacitly letting the currency fall because it helps boost US exports by making them less expensive.

Bush began his European trip in Brussels, Belgium, home to the European Union and NATO, where he called Monday for stronger trans-Atlantic relations.

"In a new century, the alliance of America and Europe is the main pillar of our security," he said.

Kebbi to establish small-scale industries

Kebbi government said that arrangements have been concluded for the establishment of small

Congratulations



His Royal Highness,
ALHAJI (DR.) SHEHU IDRIS,
Emir of Zazzau,

On behalf of myself, Government and people of Zamfara State,
ALHAJI AHMAD SANI YARIMAN BAKURA *Sardaunan Zamfara*,
Executive Governor of Zamfara State, heartily congratulate His
Royal Highness, the Emir of Zazzau, ALHAJI DR. SHEHU IDRIS for
attaining 30 years on the throne, and being the 18th Fulani Emir
of Zazzau.

May the Almighty Allah continue to fortify your tenure and
grant you more prosperous years of service to humanity.

Long Live the Emir of Zazzau,

Allah Ya Ja Zamanin Sarki, Amin Summa Amin.

SIGNED,
His Excellency,
ALH. AHMAD SANI, Yariman Bakura
1st Executive Governor,
Zamfara State



His Excellency,
ALH. AHMAD SANI (Yariman Bakura)
Executive Governor,
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ALDER

LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT

Union wants confab to bridge societal gap

Delegates to the national political reform conference have been urged to ensure that the conference adequately addresses and narrow the wide gap between Nigeria's rich and poor.

The delegates have thus been charged to prioritise the interest of the masses, bearing in mind that both the rich and the poor have a stake in this country.

Speaking at a rally to declare support for the confab in Abuja on Friday, the chairman, FCT chapter of the motorcycle transport union of Nigeria, Comrade Obi Nwaogwugwu said the delegates should critically examine the plight of people at the grassroots, "look inwards and see what is happening, because a lot of people pretend to know that the masses are suffering greatly."

"We want the delegates to seriously examine how this country can be well-governed for every citizen to benefit from her resources, we want the delegates to examine how corruption and favouritism can be checked in this country. It is like a racist country, but we want to see a re-integration and re-engineering of the country, we want the gap between the poor and the rich to be narrowed," he said.

According to Comrade Nwaogwugwu, the motorcycle transport union of Nigeria FCT chapter supports the confab because many ethnic groups in the country have embraced it wholeheartedly and are ready to take the ensuing dialogue beyond the estimation of government.

"In specific terms, they

By Austine Odo, Senior Labour Reporter

appear to be ready to address all the knotty issues that previous governments had shielded, including true federation which is believed would solve the problem of corruption and undue dependence of government at the central level by the

states, as well as boundary problems which are said to be partly responsible for the ethno-religious crises in some parts of the country, the resource control issue and marginalisation," he said.

Over 3000 Okada riders were at the rally to declare support for the conference. They told *Labour Trust* that though the confab delegates

were not going to generally patronise Okada, their support was still necessary because they are an integral segment of the masses who need practical re-direction of the machinery of governance in this country.

The FCT command public enlightenment officer of the Federal Road Safety Commission, Officer Adetunji Oki used the occasion to remind the Okada riders to be of good behaviour, obey traffic rules, avoid over-speeding and over-loading, and above everything ensure good relationship with God on a daily basis.

AUPCTRE seeks legal redress for FUMTA staff

By Godwin Tyonongo (Stringer)

The Amalgamated Union of Public Corporations (AUPCTRE) has vowed to seek legal redress over what it described as the injustice done to staff of the defunct Federal Urban Mass Transit Agency (FUMTA).

In a chat with *Labour Trust*, the acting chairman of (AUPCTRE), Mr. Julius Komgbenda decried the situation where the staff are being owed three months salary from August to October 2004, even as it is being rumoured that the staff will forfeit their arrears of salary.

The chairman lamented that the some staff lost their promotions for more than six years without the ministry of transport addressing it.

He said, "as law abiding people, we felt we can't cause confusion, so we have already approached our lawyers, we will approach National Assembly, we are going to meet the Public Complaint Commission and the Industrial Court because these officials have been in service for more than 20

years, so they know the law."

He wondered why a parastatal that was scrapped by government would absorb all its directors in the federal civil service, and abandon the intermediate staff to suffer.

A document made available to *Labour Trust* revealed that when the company was scrapped by the federal government in 2002, a memorandum prepared by the minister of transport to the Federal Executive Council with number EC (2002) IS3 Copy no. 101, dated 25th June, 2002, stated that the purpose of the memorandum was to seek council's approval for the implementation of the report of the winding up committee and that of external auditors/reporting accountants. The memo stated in paragraph four that FUMTA was set up in 1993 with the principal aim of meeting the challenges of the deteriorating urban mass transportation Nigeria but "that it failed in this primary objective is inconvertible and

justifies government's decision to wind it up.

According to the ministerial committee which was appointed to carry out a personnel audit and determine the staff strength, mode of entry and state of each staff, FUMTA had a staff strength of 545 out of which 232 were recommended for immediate disengagement from service, while the remaining were 313 were to be sent to the office of the Head of the Civil service of the federation for absorption and subsequent redeployment.

The ministry, *Labour Trust* learnt, responded swiftly to the recommendation as all the 232 staff recommended for immediate disengagement from service were sacked leaving the remaining 313.

However, all the FUMTA directors, except the sole administrator who was accused of corrupt practices, have been reabsorbed and posted by the head of civil service to various ministries.

Those directors, the report stated, include Mrs. C.B. Idowu, Dr. V. Viblima, Alhaji Abdullahi Bu. Others are, Mrs. E.O Ade yemi Alhaji Babura, Dr. A.A. Abubakar, Alhaji Barau B. Gafai and Dr. Shehu Mahmud.

According to the report, 313 staffers who were recommended to be sent to the office of the Head of Civil Service of the federation for absorption and subsequent redeployment were however, sacked.

Labour Trust further gathered that directors are owing a backlog of debts without any effort to pay them.

Forum examines implications of pension reform Act

By Austine Odo, Senior Labour Reporter

The implications of the new pension reform Act on the public sector will today and tomorrow in Abuja receive focus at a public forum at the NICON Hilton Hotel.

Sponsored by Provident Alliance, the Association of Pension Fund of Nigeria and Aluko and Oyebo, the forum will have the head of civil service of the federation, Alhaji Yaya Ahmed as special guest of honour.

The forum will today be open to invitees only while on

NUTGWUN urges patronage of Nigerian textiles

The national president, National Union of Textile and Garment Workers of Nigeria (NUTGWUN), Comrade Reginald Agulanna Uwa has urged Nigerians to patronise made in Nigeria textiles to avoid the collapse of the Nigerian textile industry.

Agulanna Uwa who spoke to *Labour Trust* at the



Reginald Agulanna Uwa

weekend in Kaduna said the closure of over 80 per cent of textile factories was largely due to poor patronage of Nigerian textiles by Nigerians who prefer foreign goods, apart from the high cost of production and facilities like water and electricity. The national president opined that for the factories to be alive again, the government should protect it by banning imported materials and proper policing of the porous borders where smugglers pass through with their contraband goods.

Comrade Uwa lamented that the textile industry used to be the largest employer of labour next to government but today the reverse is the case.

He disclosed that for a way out, the union would strive to hold a meeting with the government and textile

News

Association condemns govt involvement in road transportation

By Abdullahi M. Gullama, Labour reporter

The national operations coordinator of National Association of Road Transport Owners (NARTO), Alhaji Lawal Isa, has condemned the plan by the ministry of Federal Capital Territory (MFCT) to get involved in public transportation.

Speaking to journalists in Abuja, Alhaji Isa said that government should not be part of public transportation, as according to him, the business is "private sector affair."

"Government has no business in road transportation. It is a private sector affair. The present administration has a new policy which they call public-private sector partnership (PPP).

"If we are going by this policy, the government is supposed to involve Nigerian transporters. Granted that Nigerian transporters may not have the necessary financial muscle to bring as much as these 1000 buses you are talking about. This is where the joint partnership with the government is required," he said.

He said further that it was risky for the government to go into the road transport sector.

"If government is realistic on its policy of privatisation and commercialisation then they have no business in the transport industry.

Government should empower businessmen within the sector to develop," he said.

NITEL mgt committed to staff welfare -Mashi

NITEL's new managing director Mr. Albert Mashi, has said that the present management of the Company is committed to improving staff welfare despite the prevailing problems and challenges facing the company.

Mr. Mashi, who disclosed this during an interview with *NITEL News* recently explained that the present management had looked at the issues and problems of the Company and after careful deliberation concluded that it "will not retrench any of the 11,000 staff of the company except those that retired voluntarily or have reached the age of retirement as well as those who had to leave due to disciplinary action".

Said Mashi, "management has good intention, like the review of staff salaries and improvements in other facilities like the new staff buses in spite of the serious problems and challenges facing the company.

Therefore management has to prioritize programmes for the company and approach issues carefully and systematically". Speaking further, he said that, "even in the company's approved business plan, there is a plan to adjust staff salaries accordingly based on the company's operational performance and improvement".

Mr. Mashi, who listed lack of achieving expected network expansion level, uncertainties, poor work attitude and fraud as some of the problems facing the company; stressed that "these problems are not the fault of the managers but those of the system".

He however assured that despite the obvious challenges and the prevailing problems facing the company, the picture and the general state of the company will change for the better in 2005/2006 adding: "the situation will definitely improve if management is able to secure the loan to finance the various on-going projects, otherwise it is going to be difficult speaking candidly."

LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT

Railway workers send SOS to FG over pay

The Nigeria Union of Railway men (NUR) has called on the federal government to come to the rescue of its members who are being owed over six months salaries.

Speaking at the weekend, the acting secretary general of the union, Comrade Akinyanju R.A. said that majority of railwaymen have been sent out of their houses because they could not pay rent's and that their children no longer go to schools or pay hospital bills.

While disclosing the workers preparation for the federal government's plan to retrench about 50 per cent of the corporations workforce, the NUR scribe urged the federal government to pay their outstanding salaries pending the time the government will carry out the retrenchment exercise.

He told *Labour Trust* that the union had already sent a delegation to the presidency and the minister of labour and productivity to come to the aid of the workers.

Said he: "Our plea is bear with us, consider that we have families to feed, most of us have turned into destitutes and many have died because of the hardship."

While lamenting the inability of the Nigeria Railway Corporation (NRC) to break-even, he blamed the federal government for not providing the necessary infrastructure that will make the corporation self sufficient.

Comrade Akinyanju recalled that before the civil war, the NRC had 52,000 workers and they were paid as at when due. "The NRC was even in a position to give loan to the government (the British colony, government and the Lagos colony government," he said.



Abiyi Sekibo, Transport Minister



A cross section of MFCT staff during a demonstration on non-payment of their allowances at the FCT minister's office in Abuja. Pix: Felix Onigbinde.

Monetisation: FG receives ultimatum from SSAUGSGOC over FRCN workers

The Senior Staff Association of Utilities, Statutory Corporations and Government Companies (SSAUGSGOC) has given the federal government one week to effect the payment of benefits of the monetisation policy and allowances of staff of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) or face the workers' wrath.

SSAUGSGOC in a letter dated February 14, 2005

From Samson Ojo, Correspondent (Lagos)

addressed to the director-general, Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) said the ultimatum was necessary in order to save the lives of the suffering workers.

The letter signed by the assistant general secretary of the union, Comrade C. Eke on benefits from the monetisation policy and other issues stated that it could no longer accept

disservice to its members in FRCN. "We seek the immediate action of your management to redress such issues by approving payment of the benefit of the monetisation policy and allowances as well as negotiations with the relevant unions to evolve a new salary structure so that staff of FRCN are adequately motivated on the job. The union should not be blamed for any measure it deems fit to take with other unions in FRCN in order to obtain redress."

RTEAN moves to check illegal toll collection

The Road Transport Employers Association of Nigeria (RTEAN) has inaugurated a task force to check illegal collection of tolls in parks and bus-stops across Lagos State.

Disclosing this in an interview with *Labour Trust*, the RTEAN general secretary, Rev. Lawyer Edeme explained that the move was in line with the directive from the Lagos State government aimed at ridding the state of all sorts of indiscriminate levies imposed on commercial drivers.

The RTEAN scribe said that the task force was raised by the caretaker committee for Lagos State branch of the association, following the dissolution of the former executive council led by Prince Wale



L-R: Comrades Innocent Chukwuma Gabriel Ojuman and Bamidele Aturu, singing solidarity songs during the dialogue on security threat to political stability in Nigeria, organised by the United Action for Democracy in Lagos...recently. Pix: Oladipupo Odunewu.

The Congress of Trade Unions of Nigeria (CFTU) has condemned the federal government's policy of commercialisation and privatisation of the education sector.

CFTU in a communiqué signed by its general secretary, Comrade Didi Adodo described the government's policy as an attempt to prize education out of the reach of the children of the working people in the country.

The three-page communiqué stated that "the NEC in session regrets the attempt by the government at prizing education out of the reach of the children of the working people of Nigeria in particular and the poor in general through its policy of commercialisation and privatisation."

Trade unions flay govt policy on education

This policy which is the brain child of the IMF and World Bank is being implemented through increase in school fees and privatisation of hostels."

CFTU in the communiqué called on what it referred to as "progressive minded individuals and organisation" to reject the federal government's plan to prize education out of the reach of the poor and also called on government to rescind the decision immediately.

Suggesting a way out of the problem, the CFTU urged the federal government to call a meeting of stake-holders to resolve the issue.

CA seeks 50 months pay arrears for NigerCem workers

The Ebonyi State government needs to pay up 50 months salary arrears owed workers of the Nigeria Cement Company (NigerCem), Nkalagu, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), has said.

In a statement issued in Abakaliki, the Ishielu local government chapter of CAN described the level of human misery at NigerCem as "alarming".

According to the association, "death is already the gratuity of some of these workers who put their youthful age in NigerCem."

The association urged the Ebonyi State government "to do everything humanly possible to revive NigerCem, which has yet to witness the dividends of privatisation".

LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT

Is the NDE delivering?

The National Director of Employment (NDE), has again come under the criticism of a cross-section of Nigerians for the directorate's seeming inability to live up to its expectations in combating the visible tide of unemployment in the country.

Besides loan applicants who have alleged high level bias and discrimination in the disbursement of loans to qualified applicants who wish to set up their own businesses, other Nigerians, including even staff of the directorate believe that all is not well with the present management of the NDE.

For instance, Nigerians who spoke to *Labour Trust* feel that it is not enough for the NDE to claim that it has trained 749,997 unemployed youths and only 700,000 graduates without empowering them.

According to Mr. Nduka Ogbu, a Lagos-based labour leader, before one could assess the veracity of NDE's effectiveness in the fight against unemployment, there should be a comparison of figures of the so-called trained unemployed youths with the population of the unemployed in the country.

"When they say NDE trained so-so number of people, what is the ratio of these trained people to the population of graduates and even school leavers that are produced every year?" he asked.

Another labour leader, Mr. Tayo Olabumi told *Labour Trust* that the figures being produced by the NDE as the number of trained Nigerians is unrealistic in the

By Austine Odo, Senior Labour Reporter

context of the present situation.

"It is like a man who earns N1 million a month and can feed only two children out of the 10 that he has. I expect the NDE to perform better than this," he said.

Mr. Titus Okoro, an Economics graduate who owns an electronics shop in Suleja, Niger State told *Labour Trust* that was hoping on the NDE to bail him out of unemployment but was frustrated by certain attitudes of the officials that were supposed to arrange employment counselling services. *Labour Trust* gathered that following the Ahmed Joda review of the status of poverty alleviation programmes in the country, the NDE had to streamline its strategy to address certain targeted areas including the employment counselling services which bridges much of the psycho-physical problems associated with poverty, underemployment and disillusionment particularly for the youths.

But Tayo argued that this service, like others of the NDE, has been ineffectively carried out and as a result, has not been very valuable for those it was meant. He said following the disappointment he received from his attempt at receiving NDE assistance, he managed to raise a loan of N200,000 from friends to start a trade.

Labour Trust also



Alhaji Yayale Ahmed, Head of Service.

gathered that as at September 2004, only 10,000 graduates of tertiary institutions across the country had the *start your-own-business* training in basic account and book-keeping, marketing of products and services, sources of start-up capital and resourcing management skills. One would then be left to wonder if these 10,000 were from only one state in the federation or if they are the only unemployed ready to receive such training.

The NDE, it was learnt, deposited N3,000,000.00 in each state branch of the

Nigerian Agricultural Co-operative and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB) to enable trained beneficiaries of NDE programmes have access to NDE loans. Out of 11,000 feasibility project reports received by the NDE, only 420 were recommended to the NACRDB for financing with each project not expected to exceed N250,000. Some graduates of the training programmes have, while speaking with *Labour Trust*, expressed great disillusionment in assessing these loans without any reasonable explanation from



Dr. Hassan Muhammad Lawal, Minister of Labour and Productivity

the NDE. It was gathered that the loan beneficiaries are selected from the NDE headquarters and must be favourites of the leadership.

Labour Trust was told by some staff who preferred to remain anonymous that their salaries had been reduced by 27.5 per cent under the guise of a new pension scheme, but government only approved a mandatory deduction of only 7.5 per cent from staff salaries for that purpose.

Though this was not independently verified, an employee told *Labour Trust* that employment in the NDE

is carried out according to the dictates of certain officials at the top, without professional considerations resulting in the replacement of "square pegs in round holes," hence the present confusion.

Efforts by our labour reporter to get management's reactions were frustrated.

Staff who spoke prayed to God to redirect the leadership towards attaining set goals and improving staff welfare. For now, the rest of the citizens are wondering, "has the NDE delivered or is it delivering, and when will it deliver?"

Transporters demand better welfare for police

Nigerian transporters want Mr Sunday Ehindero, the acting Inspector-General of Police, to rid the force of corruption by paying special attention to police welfare.

Alhaji Gidado Hamman, president of the National Union of Road Transport Workers, took this stand in a weekend chat with newsmen in Abuja.

He said: "Our police are rated very high while on international assignments, and that shows that they have the capacity to excel and do so without compromising standards, if given the right atmosphere."

The NURTW boss, who is also a member of the Police Performance Monitoring Unit, tasked Ehindero "to ensure that the

rank and file of the force are given their dues.

"It is when such dues are denied that the police men vent their anger on the innocent public," he stressed.

Hamman wants the new police management "to ensure that entry books are available at police stations, if bail is to be truly free.

"Investigating materials should also be made available, to avoid situations where litigants purchase such materials and interfere with reports," he said.

Other necessary steps to improve the police force, he said, included "a deep research into the backgrounds of persons to be recruited, to ensure that rogues are not engaged.

"Also, Ehindero should base promotions and other rewards strictly on professional merit."

Hamman described police housing as "an eyesore" and called for befitting barracks.

He decried the dearth of vehicles for the police force, noting that "it is dangerous to have to be on the same vehicle with civilians while holding arms". In his view, "the police need to work towards prompt response to distress calls, and to be friendly to win public confidence in order to get information on the whereabouts of criminals".

Hamman wants the federal government "to ensure effective funding of the force, because that would aid the force's desire to serve with integrity".

A pioneering series of intensive courses on coating and cathodic protection was recently by staff of the Shell petroleum company held in Port Harcourt with seven SPDC materials, Corrosion and Inspection (MCI) engineers passing out in flying colours.

The two courses, organised by the National Association of Corrosion Engineers (NACE) International lasted two weeks with instructors from the United States and Egypt taking courses.

SPDC sponsored seven MCI engineers-Jonas Anjou, Bola Baker, Cliff Irony, Smart Ogbulie, Nwankwo Okereke, Dele Okunoye and Najim Oyeleke and they came out with an average score of 85 to 91 per cent. Head of engineering disciplines, Ray Maslin said: "The localised training is a good example of where we can improve competencies of our staff in a cost effective manner."

The Coating and Cathodic Protection courses were previously held in the

Shell staff hold courses

United States but were imported for the first time into the West African sub-region to increase the number of beneficiaries and achieve best value for money.

Early last year, a cathodic protection facility in IA Port Harcourt was reconfigured in the semblance of the

practical test station in Houston normally used for the aspect of the course. The pioneer courses combined theory and fieldwork as well as logging while the coating practical was done in the workshop of Advanced Coating Technology Limited, an oil servicing company.

PENGASSAN, NUPENG liaise with PPPRA on oil stability

The Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN) and the Nigeria Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) have agreed to set up a smaller body to liaise with the Petroleum Products Pricing Regulatory Agency (PPPRA) on issues bordering on refining, supply and distribution of petroleum products.

The body, according to a communiqué issued at the end of the meeting between the ministry of labour and

productivity and the stakeholders, would liaise with the PPPRA in areas of promoting cost recovery and self-sufficiency in the refining, supply and distribution of petroleum products.

The body, whose membership would be drawn from relevant stakeholders is to also make recommendations to the PPPRA on factors that would mitigate the negative social impact that may arise from rising prices of petroleum products, a quarterly publication of the PPPRA has said.

YOUR HEALTH

USAID takes HIV/AIDS fight to rural areas

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) country director in Nigeria, Ms Dawn Liberi, has said that the agency, in conjunction with the country's ministry of health will establish what she called a national logistics system that would ensure that the agency's impact is felt in every nook and cranny of the country.

Ms Liberi who disclosed this recently in Abuja during the visit of USAID's assistant administrator for Africa, Mr Lloyd O. Pierson, noted that USAID's programme on HIV/AIDS will be extended to 22 states of the federation.

According to her, a network module will be used in the programme to ensure that anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs get down to communities in the rural areas across the country.

"By so doing, people living in rural areas can have equal access to the drugs," she pointed out, adding that 241 sites have already been identified and this will continue until the programme goes to nooks and

crannies of the society. This she said will be carried out in conjunction with the federal ministry of health and the National Action Committee on AIDS (NACA).

USAID's country director, also pointed out that specific plans will be drawn out in consultation with appropriate authorities, so that each site that will be provided treatment, care and support will have specific plans that would be developed with a view to identifying specific needs of every site and subsequently addressing those needs.

USAID, she said wants to make sure that drugs and necessary equipment for the fight against HIV/AIDS get to right places and at the right time, depending on the need and use in such areas. She also added that a national system will be put in place to help in monitoring the needs of every site identified.



Hon. Dr. Wole and Hon. T. J. Faniyi, members of the House Committee on Health, conferring during a recent retreat for House Health Committee members on the National Health Bill, organised recently in Kaduna by PATHS.

Lambo warns against female genital mutilation

As Nigeria marks the 2005 International Day of Zero tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), the minister of health,

Stories by Sunday Ejike Benjamin, Health Reporter

Prof. Eytayo Lambo, has issued a strong warning to health

professionals in the country to desist from performing the act as it is against medical ethics to wilfully cause harm to those whose lives and health they swore to protect.

Addressing newsmen at the joint ministerial press briefing to commemorate this year's international day of zero tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Prof Lambo declared government's commitment to eliminate FGM practise in Nigeria, pointing out that, the practice

is a violation of the basic human and health rights of the girl child.

He lamented that those who perpetrated the practise do so out of ignorance as no right thinking individual would deliberately cause harm to his or her loved ones in the name of culture and tradition and therefore called on Nigerians to contribute to the efforts aimed at abolishing FGM in the country.

"We need to focus a lot of energy towards convincing the

populace including women to give up the practise," he appealed, just as he noted that those who carry out this act tie it to their culture and traditional beliefs.

According to Prof. Lambo, government, as a way of phasing out this practice, has been organising seminars and workshops for health professionals and the curricula of schools of nursing, midwifery, public health nurses and community health officers have also been reviewed to include FGM prevention and management of its complications.

Although ten states of the federation had legislated against it, while efforts are on to get a national bill passed by the senate, the minister pointed out that legislation alone will not solve the problem unless deliberate efforts must be made by everyone to ensure its enforcement.

Also speaking at the occasion with its theme: "FGM, a call to eliminate the practice," the minister of information and national orientation, chief Chukwuemeka Chikelu, lamented that Nigeria remains one of the countries in Africa with a national prevalence rate of 41% among adult women and regional variations ranging from 3 to 98%.

Chief Chukelu, pointed out that the FGM practice has serious physical, social, economic and psychological implications on the well-being of Nigerian women describing it as a non-medical practice with dangerous health implications, including the risk of infections and even death due to the unhealthy conditions under which it is performed.

Cross River intensifies campaign against HIV/AIDS

The Cross River state government has intensified its campaign against the spread of the HIV/AIDS scourge in the state.

The effort, *Daily Trust* learnt is as a result of the terrible report of the zero prevalence survey conducted by the federal ministry of health which put Cross River at 12% rate of spread of the pandemic

It would be recalled last year that the state governor, Mr Donald Duke, had declared open the first ever HIV/AIDS summit in the state, followed by a two-day workshop for selected participants from the 18 local government areas as well as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in the state.

Already, efforts have been geared towards intervening in the spread of the dreaded disease. State commissioner for

From Bassey Ita Correspondent (Calabar)

health, Dr Joseph Ana stated at a capacity building workshop on HIV/AIDS for primary healthcare workers in the local government areas, that treatment with Anti-Retroviral drugs (ARVs) in the state general hospital complex will commence soon.

According to him "standardised Voluntary Confidential Counselling and Testing (VCCT) sites and prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT) service will also be put in place in all our general hospitals in 18 centres to cater for pregnant women."

Dr Ana maintained that three centres have been selected to start these services while the workshop will enable participants build their knowledge of the delivery of these service.

"The workshop is therefore part of the efforts to train our healthcare providers at the local government level, on how to manage HIV/AIDS infection," the commissioner said.

On the area of monitoring to ensure articulation of the programme of government in the local areas, Dr Ana said that the local government AIDS programme will be strictly monitored by the State Action Committee on AIDS (SACA) as well as the ministry of health for maximum result.

The commissioner, expressed appreciation to all collaborative groups including NGOs and the World Bank for their financial assistance in the campaign against the spread of the deadly disease.

NHIS, Labour unions fine-tune smooth take-off of NHIS scheme

The National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) met with trade unions affiliated to the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Trade Union Congress (TUC) and the congress of free trade unions to put finishing touches to the smooth take-off of the national health insurance scheme.

The one-day interactive forum, represents a new level of engagement between NHIS and the organised labour in furtherance of government's commitment to ensuring the effective take-off of the scheme.

According to a communiqué made available to *Daily Trust* at the end of the meeting held in Ibadan, the Oyo state capital, the meeting provided an avenue for NHIS to brief NLC movement on the state of the scheme and it also highlighted ways that the unions can contribute to the take off of the scheme to ensure a stakeholder-driven approach to its operation.

The communiqué which was jointly signed by the ex-

ecutive secretary of the NHIS, Dr. Muhammed Mustafa Lecky, NLC president, Comrade Adams Aliyu Oshiomhole, deputy president of the trade union congress, Emmaus Ikpenegwa and the general secretary, congress of free trade Unions, Didi Adodo stressed the need for the scheme to ensure quality, affordable and accessible health care in the country.

The forum, according to the communiqué further endorsed the incremental and phased approach to its implementation, including a grace of two years within which there would be no deductions from workers, to earn public trust and confidence.

The meeting which had the leadership of NLC, TUCN, and CFTU in attendance called for the commencement of the scheme in the private sector one year after its launch on May 29th, 2005, stressing also the need for adequate representation of stakeholders on the board and management committees of the NHIS to guarantee transparency, effi-

ciency and effective ownership.

The premium, the forum noted should be fully borne by employers in both public and private sectors since they fully provide for the treatment of their employees adding that the 10% premium currently being contemplated by the government falls short of its current healthcare expenditure commitments and is inadequate to fund the scheme meaningfully.

It charged the leadership of NHIS to strive to earn the trust and confidence of workers through transparent, effective and prudent approach to administration of the funds and operations.

"The NHIS scheme is strongly advised to avoid unnecessary spending such as is being contemplated on ID card production, to the detriment of the effective take-off of the scheme," the forum noted and contended that the review of the NHIS act be put on hold to afford stakeholders the opportunity to have their views taken aboard.



Prof. Eytayo Lambo, Health Minister

YOUR HEALTH

Akwa Ibom receives 128,000 insecticide treated nets

The federal government in collaboration with the World Health Organisation (WHO) has allocated 28,000 Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) to Akwa Ibom state.

The Akwa Ibom state commissioner for health Dr. Edet J. Attih, who announced this at the occasion of the launching of the massive promotion of insecticide treated bed nets awareness campaign (IMPAC) in Uyo, said the nets when properly used will assist in the reduction of childhood and maternal death arising from malaria attacks in the state, the nets were shared to all local government areas as well as ministries and parastatals in the state.

Dr. Attih explained that the awareness campaign has become necessary following President Olusegun Obasanjo's directives during an awareness campaign of 14th May 2003 in Abuja that state governments should do

CMD applauds Zamfara govt for establishing dialysis centre

From Zakari Maradun, Correspondent (Gusau)

The chief medical director of the federal medical centre, Gusau in Zamfara state, Malam Nasir Bakure, has applauded Zamfara state government for the establishment of dialysis centre in the hospital.

Malam Nasir explained that the foresight of the state government to establish the centre, which will be the first of its kind in the northern states is highly commendable, especially now when its use is in high demand.

According to him, when the dialysis centre is established, it will go a long way in saving the lives of kidney patients, the disease, he noted has killed many in the state.

During a question and answer session with journalists the CMD further explained that the centre will not only save kidney patients from untimely death, but will shorten the distance for those travelling to far places for treatment.

He said while Zamfara state government is ready to provide the dialysis centre with all the installation needed, the hospital on its side will provide necessary manpower, accommodation as well as logistics for effective take off of the centre.

The chief medical director also commended the managing director of Italcobuilder Nigeria Limited, Mr. Itako Italcobuilder for drilling a borehole for use in the premises of the hospital adding that the drilling, if completed, will ensure that water is made sufficient for the use of patients in the hospital.

From Edet Ekanem, Correspondent (Uyo)

same in order to provide intervention among the groups in Nigeria.

He said IMPAC will assist in fighting plasmodium falciparum cases of malaria attack in the state, adding that its concept if properly utilised will boost routine immunisation coverage among children under five years and antenatal attendance of pregnant women who stand to benefit from Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs).

The commissioner also maintained that malaria which constitute 50 percent of out patient department cases

has killed almost 100 children under one year and 203 children under five years out of every 1000 annually in Nigeria.

He further stated that more than one in ten deaths among pregnant women are traceable to malaria stressing that a considerable proportion of low birth weight babies born to stand the risk of dying from other childhood illnesses.

The state commissioner who also launched the awareness campaign against malaria through ITNs expressed optimism that the effort will be a rewarding one since according to him, recent study of an area in western Kenya

with intense, year round malaria transmission has shown nearly 25% reduction of infant mortality through the use of ITNs.

"Use of ITNs by pregnant women has also been found to reduce anaemia by 47%, placental malaria by 23%, and low birth weight by 28%, there are documented evidence of community benefit, since those who were not sleeping under a net, but whose neighbours were, also derive, some protection from anaemia," he added.

He therefore urged all heads of councils to adopt the Roll Back Malaria (RBM) programme and arrange to flag-off similar campaign in their respective domains



L-R, Mr Nworu Melie, head, Laboratory Services, Dr. Richardson Ajayi, managing director and Ms Olatubosun Alo at the media presentation of the Eso TUV certification by the Bridge Clinic in Lagos...recently.

Medical expert discovers new causes of infertility

By Sunday Ejike Benjamin, Health Reporter

A medical expert, Dr. Oluwabukola Ashaolu has discovered new causes and methodology of managing both male and female infertility.

In a statement made available to *Daily Trust* Dr. Ashaolu, who is the medical director of Labo Medical Imaging based in Lagos, identified factors like the uterine, ovulatory, cervical, and pelvic complications as likely causes of infertility.

He explained that the major cause of infertility in women, especially in Nigeria is not tubal blockage stressing that with the new breakthrough in modern medicine, the American National fertility directorate has been able to integrate recent research finding in changing the old concept as to causes of both male and female infertility diagnosis.

The American trained medical expert, according to the statement broke the causes of female infertility into four main categories with the uterine and ovulatory factors as the two most impor-

tant causes, according to a research coordinated last year by the American fertility directorate, adding that the cervical and pelvic factors (tubal, endometriomas, adhesions, masses, adnexa, adhesions and fibroid) also constitute what causes female infertility.

"successful management of infertility is completely dependent on accurate diagnosis of these factors," he noted adding that, these factors, affect fertility either single or in combination with other factors, pointing out that the treatment of infertility becomes easy if the causes are accurately diagnosed.

The medical expert stated that uterine cause include abnormality in the uterine cavity lining. This abnormality, he pointed out could be thinning, thickening or irregular outline of the uterine cavity, while anatomical problem is a major secondary cause.

Dr. Ashaolu, who is the chief Sonologist explained

that attempt to treat infertility without considering uterine factors will not yield any success, pointing out that the main equipment for proper diagnosis of infertility is advanced contrast enhancement ultra sonography and 3D hysteroscopy which he noted are all imaging devices.

He noted that the ovarian factor is the most complex of them all, as it involves problems within and outside the ovaries which affect the functions of the ovaries. He also added that the cervical factor on its part prevents sperm cells passage through the mouth of the uterus (womb) due to the displacement or damage to the cavity stenosis, infection and immune attack.

Dr. Ashaolu who noted that pelvic causes of infertility consist of endometriosis, presence of infection and adhesion in the adnexa, blocked tubes and fibroid in the uterus that displaces the fimbriae ends from the ovaries also called on medical practitioners in developing countries to discard the tubal factor as a major cause of infertility



PILES

The occurrence of piles is unique to, human beings. It presents with varicose veins in the rectum and around the anus causing possible protrusion, which is very painful and may bleed. Various factors have been attributed to it, such as long time sitting or standing, genetic weakness, obesity, lack of exercise, food allergies, liver damage, pregnancy and poor diet.

Symptoms include itching, burning pain, inflammation, swelling, soreness and bright red bleeding.

Treatment

1. Buckwheat/Saracen com: Infusion of 3-10 grams dried or fresh herbs is taken three times daily.
 2. Leaves of basil, peppermint and stinging nettle (*Kaikayi koma kan mashekiya* [Hausa]): Infusion of any of these herbs is taken as one teacup three times daily.
 3. Hamamelis ointment (Witch hazel) - This should be applied externally to the affected part.
 4. Calendula (Marigold): The poultice of the herb is applied. This is prepared by taking one dessertspoon of dried herb and moistening with boiling water. When cooled to a tolerable temperature, apply to the affected area externally.
 5. *Aloe vera gel*: Applied directly for at least seven days promotes healing. A solution of the gel can be taken three times daily.
 6. Common club moss taken as tea is recommendable.
 7. Infusions of the seeds of sweet basil and hairy basil are taken three times daily.
 8. Garlic segments prepared by the removal of the dry outer skin from garlic bulb is scraped to allow juice to exude, inserted into rectum as suppository on retiring to bed, and allowed to remain in the body all night. It will be expelled the next day. Repeat as needed.
 9. Parsley/red grape/bayberry leaves: Tea of any of these when taken two to three times daily is beneficial.
 10. Red raspberry is a good tonic and astringent and it promotes healing because of its iron-citrate content especially in prolapsed haemorrhoids.
 11. A plain water enema is fast acting and relieves discomfort.
 12. Potatoes: Uncooked potatoes cut into cone shapes, exude fluid which heal and relieve pain from pile when inserted into the rectum.
 13. Castor/olive oil: Apply any of these to the anal area to relieve and soothe the area. Use 1-2 teaspoonfuls twice daily.
- It is advisable to combine herbal treatment with diet rich in fibre fruits and vegetables.

ORAL CAVITY CARE (TEETH AND GUMS)

Good oral hygiene is necessary for healthy teeth, gum and fresh breath.

Treatment

1. Licorice root: The root of licorice plant can be used as a good brush for the teeth while the extract produces pleasant taste with anti-inflammatory effects that soothe inflamed gums.
 2. Cashew nut tree (*Kaju* [Yoruba], *Akwe-olu* [Igbo], *Kanju* [Hausa]): The bark of this plant is chewed slowly to cure toothache and sore gums.
 3. Velvetblack (Tamarind [tsamiya [Rausa], Awin [Yoruba]): The roots are used as chewing sticks and produce same effects as (2) and (1) above.
 4. Neem tree: (*Dogonyaro* [Rausa], *Eke-Oyinbo* [Yoruba]): The young stem is chewed as toothbrush for healthy teeth.
 5. Cardamom/dill/cloves: Since infection in the teeth can cause toothache, inflammation of the gum and bad breath, seeds obtained from cardamom, dill and cloves when chewed and left in the mouth for a while, aid relief. Also of note is the use of clove solution as a mouthwash/refreshener, while the oil dropped directly in the cavities relieve aches.
 6. Sour sop (*Gwanda daji* [Hausa], *Ubuni-acha* [Igbo], *Abo* [Yoruba]): The infusion of stem bark of sour sop plant is used as a mouthwash to relieve toothache.
 7. Lime leaves: Simple chewing of few sprigs of lime cures bad breath. The leaves of eucalyptus plant are also effective.
 8. Bitter kola/Henna leaves: The roots of bitter kola is suitable for toothache and tooth cleaning when chewed, while the infusion from henna leaves, *Lalle* (Hausa) is used as an astringent mouthwash.
 9. Stinging nettle/mango leaves/horseshoe/locust bean: Mouth ulcers (soreness of gums, tongue and throat) are healed by the use of stinging nettle water infusion held in the mouth at regular intervals as needed. The bark and leaves of mango tree infusion is used for toning the tongue because of its astringent property.
- The juice of the root of horseradish tree used as frequently as possible is suitable for care of dental caries. The powdered bark of West African locust bean (*Dorawa* [Hausa], *Igba* [Yoruba], *Oyinlo* [Igbo]) is used by filling the caries with the powder to effect healing.
10. Toothbrush tree: (*Aswaki* [Hausa]) is good for strengthening the gums when used routinely.
 11. Ginger/nutmeg: A piece of ginger applied directly relieves toothache while nutmeg causes sweet breath if chewed and held in the mouth.
- In 1636, Gerald's herbal referred to the fact that gingivitis can be treated with gargles of oak bark and sage. He further confirmed the effectiveness of onion and lime juices in various preparations for mouth gargling to relieve gingivitis, toothache and or any form of mouth infection. Also confirmed is the use of nutmeg for sweet breath and masking bad breath, if chewed and held in the mouth.
- Other additional factors that will aid the above mentioned use of herbal treatment include proper chewing of food, wearing of loose fitted clothes, and not eating late in the night.
- Hajiya Zainab Sheriff writes from Zee's Herbal Pharmacy, Suite 12, Angels Plaza, Garki II, Abuja.
E-mail: -zeeherbal@zwallot.com

YOUR HEALTH



Members of the Nigerian surgeons in America offering free treatment to Lagosians...recently Pix: Oludipupo Odunewu

PMG-MAN assures availability of ACT drugs soon

The Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Group of the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (PMG-MAN) has assured of its preparedness to make the Artemisinin based Combination Therapy (ACT) drugs, which will soon replace chloroquine in the treatment of malaria, very much available and affordable in Nigeria.

The federal government had proposed the change of chloroquine as the first line drug in the treatment of malaria due to the emergence of chloroquine-resistant strains leading to the loss of lives of malaria patients.

The government, *Daily Trust*, gathered had earlier met with PMG-MAN to share the results of the test carried out to ascertain the efficacy of chloroquine which, it noted was not favourable leading to government's decision to change the malaria treatment policy in the country in the in-

Stories by Sunday Ejike Benjamin, Health Reporter

terest of the generality of Nigerian populace.

Mr Nnamdi Okafor of the PMG-MAN told newsmen in Abuja, recently, that the group is working assiduously with the World Health Organisation (WHO) to ensure that 60 percent of Nigerians have access to the ACT drugs as an alternative to chloroquine in treating malaria, just as he informed that PMG-MAN was aware of the non-efficacy of chloroquine and Fansidar in handling malaria cases.

Mr. Okafor who is the executive director of May and Baker Plc, a pharmaceutical company, pointed out that PMG-MAN has no problem with government's decision to replace chloroquine with ACT drugs as the first line drug in the treatment of malaria in the country and main-

tained that the group will support and cooperate with the government to ensure that policy change is successful like in every other countries having drugs as its first line of drug in treating malaria.

The minister of health, Prof Eytayo Lambo had, during a press conference

charged pharmaceutical manufacturing industry in the country to manufacture at least 80 percent of drugs consumed in the country locally, the just as he pledged government's readiness to create enabling environment in the achievement of the desired goals.

Resident doctors call for integration into NHIS, NPI

The National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD) has called for the integration of its members in the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) and the National Programme on Immunisation (NPI) of the country.

The national president of the association, Dr. Jerry Oguzie, who disclosed this recently in Abuja while fielding questions from newsmen lamented that resident doctors are left out of these programmes even though they

constitute the highest number of the medical workforce in the country.

He explained that doctors are supposed to be on hand to give instructions as to how national immunisation should be carried out effectively, "but as it is now, resident doctors are not involved in the exercise," just as he called on government to involve resident doctors in programmes that has to do with the health of Nigerians.

Commenting on the activities of some medical and chief medical directors of tertiary hospitals to cause disaffection among members of the association, Dr. Oguzie said NARD will resist any attempt to dis-member the association and warned M/D's and CMD's involved in this act to desist or have the entire association to contend with.

According to him, NARD is an association of like minds, comprising of doctors below the rank of consultant, irrespective of place of work, from primary healthcare centres to teaching hospitals, pointing out that nobody can dismember the association.

Earlier, Dr Oguzie called on government to pay up shortfalls, owed doctors in 11 tertiary health institutions in the country which, members are yet to receive a kobo before next week or be ready to face another round of strike action by resident doctors.

UNFPA treats 200 VVF patients

The United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) has flagged off campaign for the control, management and eradication of Vesico-Vaginal Fistula (VVF) in Kano, with free treatment for 200 patients.

Speaking at the ceremony for the commencement of the surgery held at Murtala Mohammed specialists hospital, the UNFPA assistant country representative, Dr. Lucy Idoku, said the exercise is to cover Kano, Kebbi, Katsina and Sokoto states, adding however that Kano has the highest allocation in terms of number of patients considering its vast population growth.

She disclosed that three Nigerians and one foreign doctor are to treat the patients which were drawn from the 44 local government areas of the state.

Dr. Idoku, observed that the treatment is part of the UNFPA global humanitarian activities, explaining that treatment of obstetric fistula has had a long history in Nigeria spanning over five decades and many of the pioneers in the field of fistula repairs worked in the country as well as contributed to the existing knowledge on the disease.

She pointed out that

From Mustapha Isah Kwaru, Correspondent (Kano)

UNFPA has provided support and facilitated the development of the framework on the possible modalities to be unveiled towards halting the spread of VVF, which was developed with full involvement of multi-sectoral stakeholders.

The UNFPA assistant country representative noted that in a bid to ensure that women do not travel for the treatment, the fund is supporting the expansion of treatment to ten additional state through the provision of equipment and training of doctors and nurses, while discussions are underway with the ministries of women affairs as well as National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) to strengthen rehabilitation services for women who need them.

Dr Idoku, identified ignorance, poverty female genital mutilation and practices of traditional birth attendants as some of the principal factors behind the VVF, just as she implored men to expedite action towards motivating their wives.

The state commissioner for women affairs, Hajia Gaji Fatima Dantata applauded UNFPA for the kind gesture describing it as long over due.

The commissioner enjoined wealthy individuals, stakeholders and NGO's to offer contribution to eradicate the plight of the VVF patients, adding that the state government has accorded appropriate attention for the rehabilitation and treatment of the patients.

C'ttee to review NHIS law set up

The National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) has set up a committee to review the enabling law that set up the scheme with a view to signing same into law after undergoing due process.

The executive secretary and the chief executive of the scheme, Dr Muhammed Mustapha Lecky disclosed this recently in Abuja while responding to questions from newsmen during a press briefing to clarify the reasons for the postponement of the formal launching of the scheme in the country.

According to Dr. Lecky, the committee which has since commenced work will present its report to stakeholders in the NHIS for discussion before being forwarded to the National Assembly for necessary action.

He said the draft of the review will be out by the first week of March, 2005, noting that the essence of the review of the enabling law establishing the scheme is for it to serve the Nigerian populace

effectively.

Dr. Lecky also maintained that people living with HIV/AIDS will have a cause to smile if the scheme is launched on May 29, 2005 as the treatment of opportunistic infections will be incorporated in the project of the NHIS along with other programmes that would be reeled out to boost healthcare delivery in the country.

The NHIS boss said the coast is now cleared for the smooth take-off of the scheme, pointing out that the period of the postponement of the launching of the scheme was used to address gray areas that may possibly hinder its smooth take-off.

He noted that with cooperation of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), organised private sector, public sector and other stakeholders, the national health insurance scheme will strive in the country as Nigerians, irrespective of status will have access to affordable and effective healthcare services in the country.



The Executive Governor of Plateau State Chief J. C. Dariye (right) in a warm handshake with the Director, Clinical Care and Research of the Institute of Human Virology Baltimore (USA), Robert Redfield at the commissioning of Plateau State Human Virology Research Centre (Plasvirec) sited at Plateau Specialist Hospital, Jos.

SENATOR (DR) IBRAHIM NASIRU MANTU CFR

58TH BIRTH DAY ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION AND INAUGURAL LECTURE

The Planning Committee cordially invites the general public to the 58th Birthday Anniversary Celebration of His Excellency.

SENATOR (DR) IBRAHIM NASIRU MANTU CFR
Deputy President of the Senate

Under the Distinguished Chairmanship of
HIS EXCELLENCY, SENATOR ADOLPHUS WABARA
The Senate President.

Chief Guest of Honour,
HIS EXCELLENCY, PRESIDENT OLUSEGUN OBASANJO GCFR
President Federal Republic of Nigeria

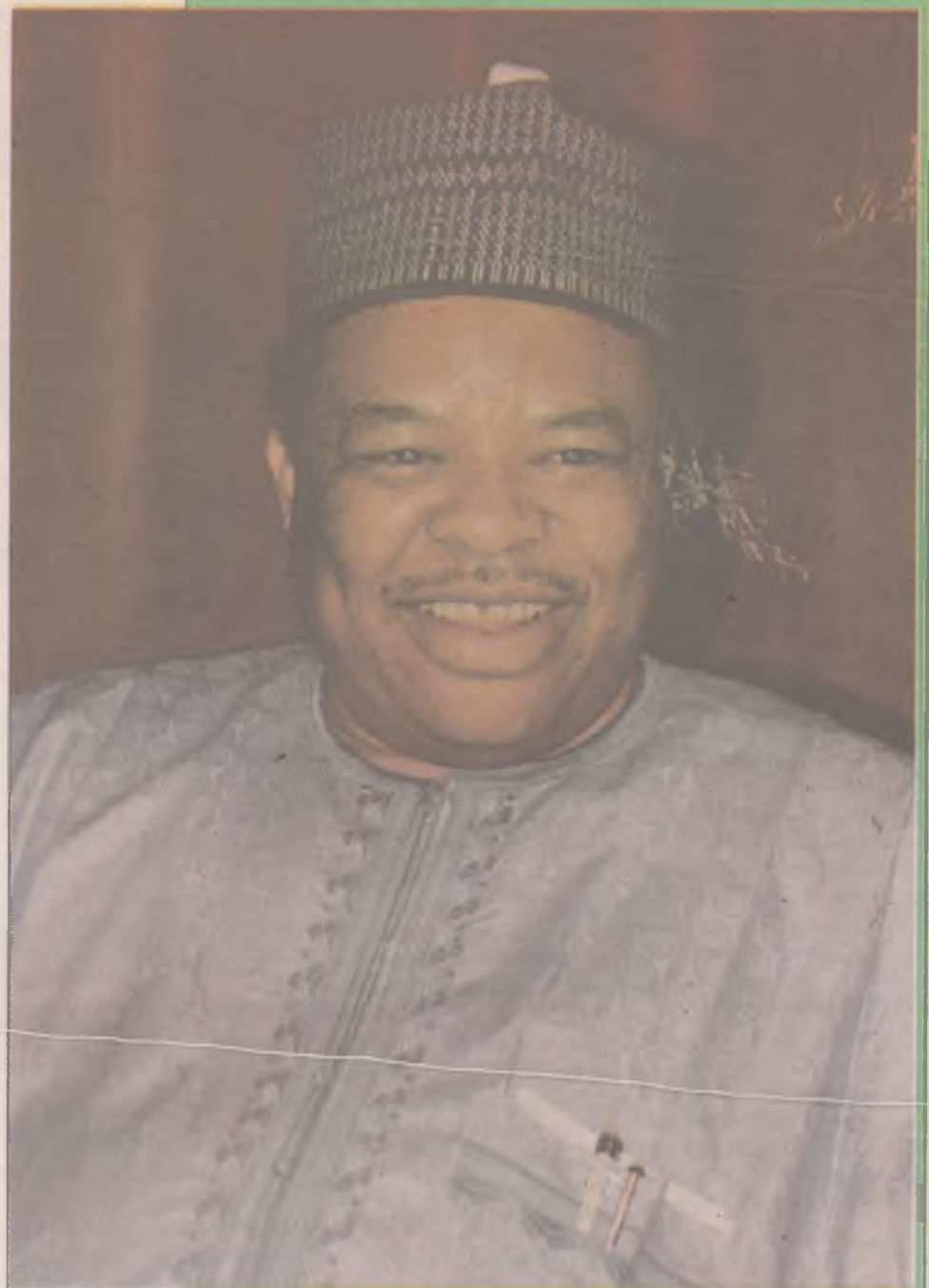
Special Guest of Honour
HIS EXCELLENCY, ALHAJI ATIKU ABUBAKAR GCON
Vice President Federal Republic of Nigeria

Guests of Honour
HIS EXCELLENCY, HONOURABLE AMINU BELLO MASARI
Speaker Federal House of Representatives.

HONOURABLE JUSTICE MOHAMMED UWAIS
Chief Justice of the Federation.

HIS EXCELLENCY, HON. AUSTIN OPARA
Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives.

Distinguished Guests.
All Members of the National Assembly
All State Governors (Former & Serving)
All Honourable Ministers (Former & Serving)
SGF and HOSF
Chief of Defence Staff and Service Chiefs
Captains of Industries
Members of the Diplomatic Corp
Executive Secretary ECOWAS
Hon. Speaker, ECOWAS Parliament and other Heads of ECOWAS Institutions.
Heads of Political Parties and Party Chieftains
Honourable Speakers and Members of State Houses of Assembly.
Heads of Federal Parastatals and Extra-Ministerial Departments.
All Local Government Chairmen (Former and Serving)
Heads of Labour and Civil Society Organizations,
Religious and Traditional Rulers



Featuring

SENATOR IBRAHIM MANTU'S INAUGURAL LECTURE FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

TOPIC: "Good Governance, Ethics, Justice and Peace As Vehicles For Achieving Sustainable Democracy and National Peace"
By: **PROFESSOR GREEN NWANKWO**
Chairman ACB International Bank Plc.

Moderator: **PROFESSOR NUHU O. YAQUB**, Vice Chancellor University of Abuja.

And

Presentation of the Book

Titled: "Institutional Governance: Behavioural and Ethical Issues"
Author: **DR. RONALD IWU-EGWUONWU**
Reviewer: **PROFESSOR PETER OMOLUABI**
Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Lagos

Chief Launcher
CHIEF HOPE UZODINMA
Chairman, Niger Global Engineering Technical Co. Ltd.
And Other Chief Launchers

Venue: Main Auditorium, ECOWAS Parliament, International Conference Centre, Area II, Garki Abuja.

Date: Wednesday, 23rd February, 2005

Time: 1:00 pm prompt.

NB: This Announcement serves as invitation to all those who have not received formal invitation.

Signed:
PLANNING COMMITTEE

Congratulation @ 80

PRESIDENT SHEHU SHAGARI, GCFR AT 80: SALUTE TO A TRULY REMARKABLE STATESMAN

As you mark an epic day in a truly remarkable life of accomplishments and service to humanity, I want to humbly on behalf of myself and family, wish you a very happy birthday, which comes up on the 25th of February 2005.

Going down memory lane, I recall with nostalgia your humility, forthrightness and leadership qualities during your tenure as Nigeria's first democratically elected Executive President.

You upheld and protected the concept of the separation of powers by not interfering in the affairs of the National Assembly and the Judiciary.

You upheld the sanctity and independence of the party by not whimsically deciding on who becomes the leader of our great party, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN).

You upheld and tolerated a vibrant even if sometimes hostile opposition parties and the media thereby strengthening your belief in the practice of true democracy in Nigeria.

Most importantly, you upheld and defended the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and operated within the limits of the powers conferred on you by the Constitution.

Yes, during your administration, Nigeria was truly moving in one direction towards greater unity and brotherhood. And there were no political prisoners!

I am proud to have associated with you all through the years and to have drank from your inexhaustible fountain of knowledge, wisdom, tolerance, good governance and patriotism.

**May you live long,
MR. PRESIDENT!!**



**Alhaji Shehu Usman Aliyu Shagari GCFR,
(Turakin Sokoto)
First Executive President
Federal Republic of Nigeria**



Alhaji Isyaku Ibrahim

ABUJA TRUST



Old Wuse Market as it was initially meant to be.



The market being cleaned up after the demolition...last week. Pix Felix Onigbide.

Area One traders lament impending demolition

The Garki, Area One Traders Association have described as executive highhandedness the decision of the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) chairman to revoke the allocations of their shops and further demolish them.

A press statement issued by the executive of traders' association and signed by its chairman, Mr. Andy Chukwu, traced the genesis of the prob-

lem to Friday, February 11, 2005, when the AMAC chairman, Zephaniah B. Jisalo, publicly announced that what happened in Wuse Market would soon happen at Garki Area One.

The AMAC chairman, the statement further said, some few days later, announced the immediate revocation of all allocation papers of all shops in Area One, and gave all the traders up to

March 15, 2005 to quit the market.

Mr. Andy Chukwu however said that the chairman had since January met with them and informed them of the council's intention to rebuild the Area One Shopping Centre to bring it to the standard befitting Abuja, and solicited for their support. He said that the AMAC chairman told them that it would be a year's project and as-

sured them of getting their shops back after paying the rebuilding fee yet to be determined.

The area one traders said that they subsequently met the AMAC chairman and informed him of their decision to renovate the shopping centre in the area of uniform roofing, painting and fencing, and that if allowed, they would do this on their own with the authorities' supervi-

sion.

Events, the traders said, however took a new turn when the traders requested AMAC to put their proposal in writing for the benefit of their lawyers, which obviously annoyed the AMAC chairman who they said flared up and boasted that he would mobilise every arsenal available to him to ensure that area one is demolished and rebuilt.

The traders, who ex-

pressed dismay at the unwarranted aggression the AMAC chairman expressed, wondered why he wanted to demolish the shopping centre as according to them, "he used to own shops here and later sold them to some of our members."

They said that some of them had stayed in the market for more than 15 years and have been paying their rents regularly to AMAC annually.

We did not set fire to Bakassi Market —MFCT

Authorities of the Federal Capital Territory have debunked the rumour that they deliberately set up the fire, which gutted the abandoned Wuse New market, popularly called Bakassi Market, last week. Speaking on behalf of the FCT minister while fielding questions from journalist, the coordinating executive secretary, Engr. Mohammed Sanu Alhassan, described the allegation as baseless and untrue, and wondered why anybody could imagine the FCT authorities employing such a criminal act.

He said the administration strongly condemns bush burning and has continued to run jingles warning people on the dangers of bush burning, emphasising "we cannot do such a thing."

"The fire is the handiwork of some miscreants meant to discredit the good intentions of this administration," Engr. Alhassan said. According to him, the traders were given notice over a month ago to relocate to the Dei-Dei mar-

ket and so far almost all of them had complied by removing their structures and wares from the market. Even at that, he continued, "we have principles guiding all our activities, including demolition of illegal structures. We moved all the equipment to the site and ensured that legally approved means were em-

ployed to remove affected structures.

Alhaji Mohammed Alhassan maintained the preparedness of the present administration of the FCT to build a world-class mega mall at the present site of the Bakassi market, adding that land preparation and survey works would soon commence.

FCDA completes N1.5bn satellite town road project

Construction work on the N1.57 billion road project for the Kuje satellite town has reached advanced stage as the major roads have been completed.

The minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Mallam Nasir el-Rufai, represented by the coordinating executive secretary in the Federal Capital Development Au-

By Nasir Imam,
Environment editor

thority (FCDA) who was conducted round the project site on Thursday, expressed satisfaction with the quality and progress of work on the road project in Kuchiyako III district.

He said that with the completion of the major roads, the next stage is to work on the local roads that would link the already completed ones. He stated further that there are five districts within the Kuje satellite town which is just one of the ten new satellite towns to be developed by the Satellite Town Development Agency (STDA).

When completed, the layout of the districts would be completed and allocation of plots of land would commence in such districts, and that the original settlers and inhabitants would be integrated into the master plan of the satellite towns.

The project manager of the firm handling the project, Impresit Bakolori, Mr.

Passarin Luciano, told newsmen that the 17-kilometre road has reached 94 per cent completion. He said that so far N1.2 billion have been paid to his firm, while the balance is yet to be paid for the project expected to be completed next month.

The STDA administrator, Engr. Buhari Dikko said that other infrastructures like electricity would soon be provided, with the source of water to come from a dam being constructed at the moment.



Jibrin Wowo, Kuje LG boss

Head of orphanage calls for understanding with underprivileged

The head of Abuja Orphanage Children's Home, Karu, Mr. Isa Adi, has stressed that it is good for children from privileged homes to cultivate the habit of identifying with those of the less privileged. According to the head of the orphanage, who is also called 'Father Image', this would make them have a sense of belonging. He said this over the weekend when the children from Abuja Capital International College

By Maimuna Yusuf,
Reporter (Abuja)

visited the orphanage home at Karu, a suburb of Abuja, and presented them with gift items worth N200,000.

The gift items include rice, gari, toiletries, baby food, clothes, shoes, beverages and toys.

Presenting the gift items on behalf of the principal, Abuja Capital International College, the boarding coordinator, Mr. Okara Moses, said that the visit was to

show empathy for the children, by identifying with them.

He revealed further that this is going to be a yearly visit to all the other orphanage homes within the FCT. According to him, "this would go a long way to meeting up with their needs."

The father image received the items on behalf of the chairlady, Abuja Orphanage Home, Hajiya Hadiza el-Rufai, thanking them for the kind gesture.

EKO TRUST

Lagos disburses N25m to skilled trainees

Lagos State government has disbursed the sum of N25 million to graduates trained in different vocations under its skill acquisition programme.

The graduate each was empowered with the sum N5,000 with all the necessary materials as well as a cash donation of N5,000 each to enable them to set up their own businesses.

This was disclosed by the state commissioner for Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Mrs. Joke Orelope-Adefulire, in her key note address at the closing ceremony of a two-week skill acquisition programme and awareness campaign on breast cancer for women in Badagry.

Adefulire described the gesture as a practical demonstration of the state administration to enhance women's economic status to enable them to contribute to the development of the state and the nation as a whole.

The commissioner said that the government through

the ministry was constructing a skill acquisition center where young school leavers and dropouts would have the opportunity to acquire free training in any vocation of their choice such as barbing, tailoring, fashion design and computer education.

She however, urged the organised private sector and non-governmental organisations to always collaborate with the government in the drive to reduce poverty especially among women in the state.

In her welcome address, permanent secretary of the ministry, Mrs. Omolara Osibodu, advised the graduands to emulate their predecessors by putting the various skills acquired into practice.

Chairman of Ojo local government, Senior Apostle Solomon Akin-Aina, called on the state government to establish a craft center in the division since there are abundant raw materials in the area.

LAHA calls on FG to set leadership example

The Lagos State House of Assembly has called on the Federal Government to set an exemplary democratic leadership role worthy of emulation by leaders in the African continent.

The chairman of the House committee on local government administration, Mr. Adullateef Hakeem made this call in Alausa at the resumed briefing of local government functionaries at the state house of assembly.

According to him, as the chairman of the African Union, President Olusegun Obasanjo, has a duty to unconditionally comply with the judgment of the apex court in the country that ordered the immediate release of funds meant for local government areas in the country and give the necessary impetus and encouragement to other African leaders to obey the rule of law in their states.

Hakeem described the unconstitutional imposition of the son of the late Togolese president, Eyadema on the people of the country as a child's play compared with the enormity and severity of the unprecedented level of hardship imposed on the people of Lagos.

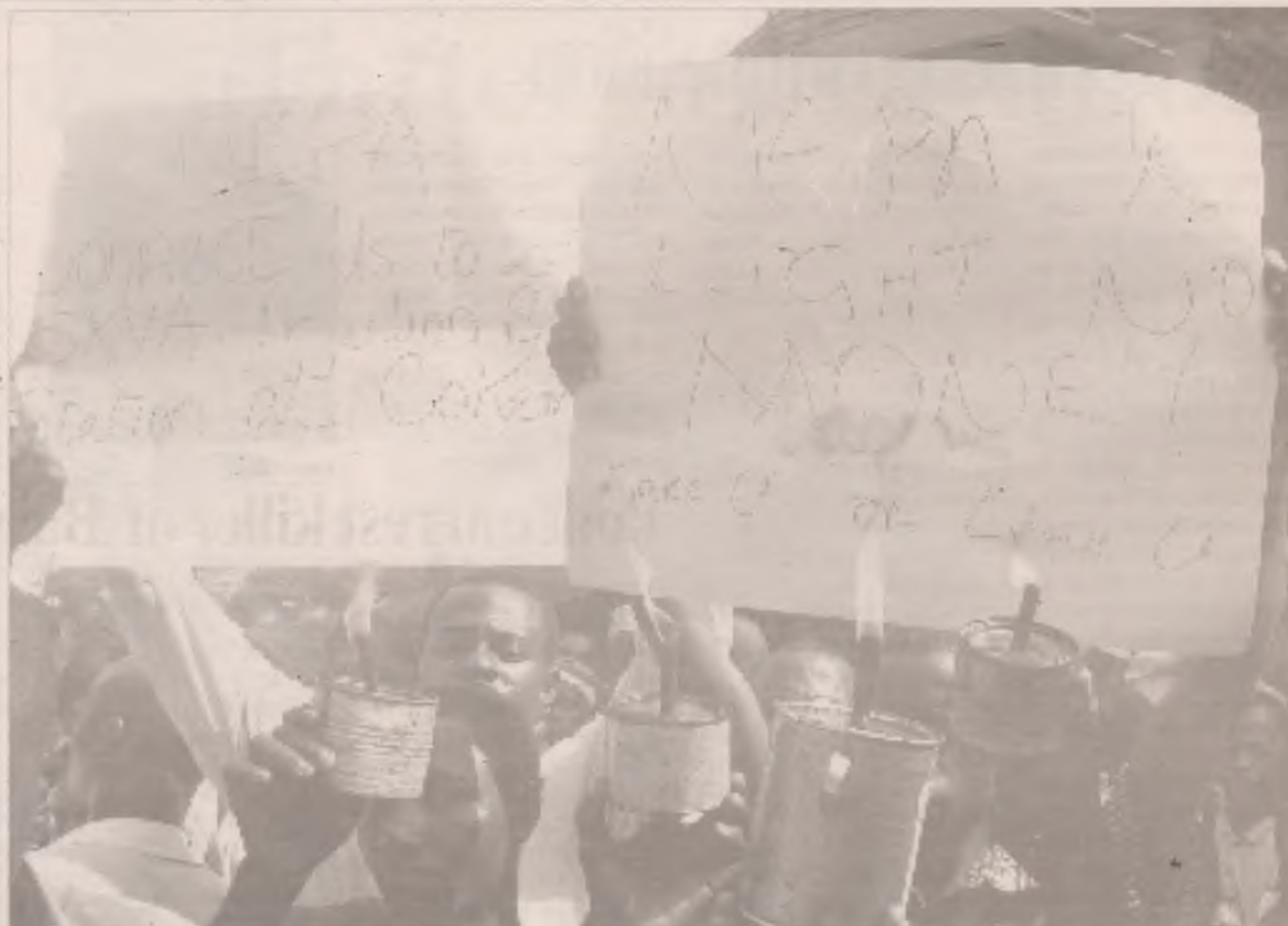
In another related development a United States based non-governmental organisation, Vision for Nigeria, said President Olusegun Obasanjo's insistence on the restoration of democratic governance in the Republic of Togo would lay to rest insinuations that the Nigerian leader was angling for a third term in office.

It noted that Obasanjo's position in the Togo succession crisis has absolved him of plans to elongate its tenure beyond 2007.

The organisation's chairman, Mr. Elvis Ndubueze, who described Obasanjo as a true democrat argued that it would be wrong of the president to champion the respect for the rule of law in Togo and at the same time extend his tenure in Nigeria.

Ndubueze said: "I don't think it is true that the president is pursuing a third term ambition. His positions on the current Togo crisis that constitutional democracy must be restored have vindicated him.

"The constitution is clear on the terms of tenure, Obasanjo won't do that and would not encourage it," he said.



Residents of Alaba Oro community in Ifelodun/Coker local government area of Lagos State, protesting to NEPA officials at Amukoko service centre for non-provision of electricity to the community...recently. Pix: NAN

Lagos confab delegates to demand release of LG funds

Delegates representing Lagos State at the National Political Reforms Conference, which began on Monday, have been told to demand the release of the withheld Local Government funds belonging to the state in compliance with the judgment of the Supreme Court.

Lagos State governor, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, made the call over the weekend at a meeting with the delegates.

Governor Tinubu reminded them that as delegates representing the state, they have the moral responsibility to demand that before any other business is discussed at all, the federal government must comply with the decision of the supreme court and release the illegally withheld local government statutory allocation due the state.

The governor said further that the conference is the best way for the president to demonstrate his sincerity and willingness to respect the will of the people, abide by the decisions of the conference and be an authoritative moral voice in Africa on the imperatives of constitutionalism and legality.

While urging the delegates to ensure the emergence of a new Nigeria built on the foundation of truth, equity and justice; Tinubu said such could emerge only in an

environment of constitutionalism which gives premium to the rule of law.

According to him, the will of the people, in whom sovereignty resides, will prevail, adding that the move away from total opposition on the part of the federal government "to any conference in whatever form to this idea of a national conference is welcomed."

The governor, who drew attention to the position of the Alliance for Democracy in its call for a sovereign

national conference, also said "a genuine peoples' conference with authority and freedom to discuss all issues concerning Nigeria's polity and restructure the country to guarantee the security, happiness equity and prosperity of the component parts" will remain imminent.

He explained that there was a need to draw attention to the peculiar situation of Lagos State alongside the common position that had been adopted by the South West.

He insisted that the right interpretation of constitutional principle especially in the areas of

compensation for road repairs and demarcation of state/federal government roads, resource control and fiscal federalism, ownership of law, urban planning and regulation, and the local government issues, are of paramount importance.

He further urged the federal government to ensure that unlike the Oputa Panel Report the decisions of the conference are implemented.

Responding on behalf of the delegates, a foremost constitutional lawyer, Femi Okunnu said the delegates would in partnership with others contribute their quota to building a new Nigeria.

HIV/AIDS awareness: LASG signs MOU with 41 NGOs

The Lagos State government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with 41 accredited non-governmental organisations to execute a World Bank-assisted awareness project on HIV/AIDS.

The state has also through its agency; Lagos State Action Committee on AIDS (LSACA) launched an HIV/AIDS fund (HAF) to further enhance AIDS awareness campaign at the grassroots.

Chairman of LSACA, Dr. Aderemi Desalu, disclosed this while addressing participants at a one-day workshop and contract signing held in Lagos at the weekend.

Dr. Desalu stressed that

By Olumide Bajulaiye, Correspondent, Lagos

HAF was a programme development project aimed at taking awareness campaign and enlightenment on HIV/AIDS to the rural communities in the state.

He said that the objective of the workshop was to provide some general capacity building in basic information on HIV/AIDS reporting requirements, financial management and basic procurement for the project.

According to him, the first phase of the scheme would be to access the level of achievements by the NGOs in getting the project to the targeted audience.

The LSACA boss explained that the NGOs have been contracted to carry out

their assignment between three and nine months.

These activities that are to be executed in stages include prevention of HIV/AIDS, education and enlightenment, care and support for those already living with HIV/AIDS.

He hoped that the NGOs will do a good job so that the people of Lagos State will feel their impact.

To make the project achievable, the World Bank had made available a huge sum of money in form of loan for the programme and LASACA is acting as a guarantor for the 41 NGOs.

The funds earmarked for the project are in various forms, which ranged between N350,000 to N4 million within one year.

News

Kebbi commended over Quranic recitation competition

The 19th national Quranic Recitation Competition hosted by the Kebbi State government has been described as the best organised and most widely attended in the history of the competition in the country. This was contained in a letter of appreciation to the state Governor, Alhaji Muhammad Adamu Aliero, signed by Professor Tijjani Bande, the Vice Chancellor of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, the organisers of the annual national competition.

A press statement signed by the Senior Special Assistant on Media and Publicity to the governor, Alhaji Abdullahi Idris Zuru, said the vice chancellor has noted with satisfaction the report of the competition presented to him by the centre for Islamic studies which adjudged the last competition as the best organised in the history of the competition.

The vice chancellor expressed appreciation of the university to Governor Muhammad Adamu Aliero for the support given to the local organising committee which made the competition a huge success. Another major factor responsible for the success of the competition according to Professor Bande was the governor's personal commitment to the event.

While praying Allah (SWT) to reward Governor Aliero and all those who worked for the success of the competition, the vice chancellor also prayed to Allah (SWT) to continue to guide the governor in his relentless effort in steering the affairs of Kebbi State.

It could be recalled that the competition was held in December, 2004 and was attended by the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Atiku Abubakar, six state

governors, the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammadu Maccido and other traditional and religious leaders from the 36 states of the federation. Similarly, six brand new cars and other valuable prizes provided by the Kebbi State government were won by different categories of the participants who were drawn from the 36 states of the federation.



Gov Aliero

September 11 attack strengthens Islam in US

By Isiaq Ajibola

A renowned Islamic scholar from the United States, Dr. Iqbal Unus has said that the September 11 attacks had strengthened Islam and Muslims in the US.

The scholar, who was speaking at a lecture presented to the congregation of NASFAT, Islamic body, said that the attacks had made the Muslims to increase their interaction with other

religious groups.

"This is more so that some of the Christian groups have had great influence on American politics in the recent time," he said.

The scholar recalled that the last presidential election in America witnessed an unprecedented support for President Bush.

The increase in interaction as well as the creation of awareness resulting in the propagation of Islam, has, according to him, brought about many people reverting to Islam. He said that Islam has had good support from moderate Christians who defended Muslim's places of worship from being destroyed during and after September 11 attack.

Dr. Unus urged Muslims to regard themselves as leaders in all their endeavours, saying they should be ready to take leadership position, even as he stressed the need for good followership.

Dr. Unus, a nuclear physician was the past president of American Muslim Society and current director of an Islamic Institute in Washington.

Police arrest killer of Bassa LG boss

From Ahmed Tahir Ajoba
Correspondent (Lokoja)

The self-confessed killer of a former chairman of Bassa local government council of Kogi State, Mr. Luke Shigaba, has been arrested by the police in Lokoja. He was arrested on Wednesday last week and detained together with four others said to have been implicated by him during the confession at a church crusade in Oguma, headquarters of the local government area.

Daily Trust Correspondent gathered that the principal suspect (names withheld) also confessed to the killing of a young lady in the area for ritual purposes. He was reported to have said that he was being chased particularly by the blood of the young lady (name withheld) and urged the pastor to pray for him for God's mercy and forgiveness.

In a telephone interview with Daily Trust Correspondent, the state commissioner of police, Mr.

Bamidele Thomas, confirmed the arrest of the self-confessed killer and four others implicated by him for interrogation following the latest development on the assassination of Mr. Shigaba in his bedroom about a year ago by suspected political thugs. He said that it was too early to give details since investigation was still in progress. It was however gathered that the self confessed killer gave a fifteen-page written statement to the police implicating himself and some other people on the matter.

Also commenting, the

incumbent chairman of the local government and younger brother of the late chairman, Mr. Bako Shigaba was full of glory to God that the truth has started to come out at last. He urged police to do their best to fish out the killers of the late chairman and appealed to the people of the area to remain calm and to avoid any act likely to jeopardise police investigations into the matter.

It would be recalled that the PDP Chairman of Bassa local government council, Mr. Luke Shigaba was assassinated in his bedroom on the eve of the local government election in March last year.

UK youth facilitate posters of British mosques

A reporter with the Daily Trust, Aliyu Machika, working with a United Kingdom-based student of photography, Hamim Miah, has created the basis for the first ever set of posters of British mosques to be issued under the British Council's Connecting Futures programme. Machika now attached to the Kano bureau of the Trust newspapers, met Miah, who is studying at the Nottingham Trent University, in London during a representation of Islam project tour undertaken in September 2004 in relation with the Connecting Futures programme.

By Crispin Oduobuk,
Group Literary Editor

programme, said in a press release that "the exhibition reflects the ethos of the programme, which seeks to build mutual understanding, learning and respect between young people with different cultural backgrounds in the UK and other countries."

Working with material drawn from their two-week interview and photography trip around the UK, during which time Machika and Miah visited seven towns and cities, the London-based designer, Paul Khera, has produced a series of posters depicting not only the distinctive architectural hallmarks of British mosques and the people who work and worship in them, but also words and scripts in two languages.

Some of the cities visited by Machika and Miah include homes of world-famous football clubs; Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham.

As a prelude to a four-city tour of exhibition which will pass through Abuja, Kano, Katsina and Gusau, a formal launch of the series of posters is being planned by the British Council for Monday, February 28, 2005 in Abuja. Gillian Belben, Director of British Council, Kano, and Head of the Nigerian arm of the Connecting Futures

Achaba boys attack Jigawa FRSC office, injure 30 officers

From Hassan A. Karofi,
Correspondent (Dutse)

Angry Achaba boys numbering about 500 yesterday attacked the headquarters of the Federal Road Safety Commission with dangerous weapons demanding for the release of a motorcycle leading to a fight that led to over 30 road safety officers sustaining injuries.

When Daily Trust visited the area. The Achaba boys were seen carrying weapons after they had barricaded the road, preventing motorist from using the Dutse-Azare road for over 2 hours.

Daily Trust reports that the incident began after an arrest of a motorcyclist by the road safety official on Sunday for traffic offence. According to one of the protesters who claimed anonymity, said that they decided to attack the road safety office because of what he called high handedness of the road safety officials.

The rampaging Achaba boys who continued to throw stones and other weapons at the FRSC office were however, over powered by the road safety officials who managed to use sticks and other available weapons to disperse the attacking youths. For four

consecutive times, the boys would re-converged, gathered more stones and sticks and attempted to take over the FRSC headquarters, but were again over powered by the FRSC officials.

Confirming the incidents, the Sector Commandant, Shehu Usman Umar, revealed that they were having a meeting when some people in their hundreds came to retrieve a motorcycle they claimed was accosted by the road safety officials.

"They barricaded our office, throwing stones and disrupting traffic flow." He revealed. And added that the commission had already invited the police as the issue was now a criminal offence.

According to him, despite attempts by the vice-chairman to cool down the rampaging boys, they refused to listen to him. Adding that one motorcycle was however apprehended.

While the leadership of the Achaba boys promised to cooperate with the police in arresting those responsible, the Chairman of the union, Alhaji Abbas Abdulkadir, described the incident as unfortunate.

URGENT JOB OPPORTUNITIES

A local representative of an NGO field agent for the implementation of a small scale irrigation project which covers the states of Kaduna and Katsina, requires for immediate employment Agric/ Hydraulic Engineer, Welder and Secretary.

AGRIC/HYDRAULIC ENGINEER:

Minimum Requirements

- At least a bachelor degree in water resources management, Hydraulic or agricultural engineering or other equivalent degree in relation to the sector.
- Two year experience in the installation, maintenance and repair of water lifting devices (preferably treadle pumps) in rural areas
- Good knowledge of the rural project area (Katsina and Kaduna States).
- Ability to express oneself, clearly and concisely in English and Hausa
- Must know how to ride a motorbike

Documents Needed:

- Application letter, Copies of Certificates, CV
- Contact Phone Number,
- E-mail Address

WELDER:

- Secondary School level certificate
- Welding qualification (preferably a technical degree)
- 6 years practical experience of welding in a workshop
- Fluent in English and Hausa

SECRETARY:

- Secondary School level certificate, Diploma
- 2 years experience
- Fluent in English and Hausa

Applications should be sent to:

EWV P.O. Box 76
Samaru,
Zaria.

Successful Applicants will be contacted for interview not later than Tuesday 1st March, 2005.

News

FG signs N190m Akwa Ibom road project

By Nasir Imam, Property and Environment Editor

The federal government last Thursday signed a N190m contract for the rehabilitation of Okopedi-Oron-James Toun road in Akwa Ibom State. The contract was awarded to Mother Cat Nig. Ltd.

The Minister of Works, Senator Adeseye Ogunlewe, who signed the contract on behalf of the federal government, said the road was of great social and economic importance to the people of Akwa Ibom in

particular, and Nigeria in general.

The scope of the rehabilitation, the minister said, includes site clearance of existing bushy shoulders and removal of top soil; scarification of existing failed bituminous surfacing and disposal of the scarified materials as appropriate.

Senator Ogulewe said the road was of great social and economic importance to the people of Akwa Ibom State because it would enhance the

evacuation of fish from fishing terminals at Edugho, Oron and its environs.

The road, the minister said, has a total length of 44 kilometres and comprises three sections: the Okopedi-Oron section, the Marina road spur section, and the Ewang to James Toun section.

In his speech, the Governor of the state, Obong Victor Atta, said that the rehabilitation of the road would also improve accessibility to federal establishments in the state like the Maritime Academy, the Oron Museum, Customs and Immigration and the Naval Base at James Toun. He said the Okopedi-James Toun road had been a death trap for several years, and that just recently, a petrol tanker somersaulted and caught fire beside a market along the road burning several people in the process.

The Permanent Secretary in the ministry, Dr. Hakeem Baba-Ahmed, in a vote of thanks, said the contractor handling the project, Mother Cat Nig. Ltd., had successfully handled similar projects for the ministry, hence believed that the contract terms would be accomplished.

The project is expected to be completed in six months' time.



Cardinal Authority Olunmi Okogie (r) discussing with the representative of the chief launcher at the occasion, Elder Magnus Odion Ogbesia, minister of solid minerals development during the N10bn naira fund raising ceremony in support of the Catholic University of Nigeria, Abuja project in Abuja on Thursday 17/02/2005
Pix: Kennedy Egbonodje

Fuel scarcity hits Benue

From Hir Joseph, Correspondent (Makurdi)

The scarcity of petroleum products which began in Benue State about a week ago has worsened as marketers are reluctant to sell the commodities following speculations that the federal government may make an upward review of the prices.

The state's Controller of the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR), Engr. Olaitan Adebawale, was not available for comments on the issue. However, some of his subordinates who spoke to the Daily Trust on anonymity attributed the problem to greed among marketers. They disclosed that the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) depot in Makurdi had met the requirements of marketers in the state. According to them, marketers had stocks in full supply contrary to the speculation that the scarcity was natural.

Daily Trust could not get the managers of the various petrol stations in Makurdi for comments just as officials of the Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria (IPMAN) refused to make themselves available for comments. However, investigations showed that marketers were hoarding the products in anticipation of an upward price review.

The development has led to severe hardship in the state capital and its environments. Furthermore, it has resulted in high level black market activities as a litre of petrol now sells for as much as N102 outside filling stations.

Meanwhile, the Benue State government monitoring team, led by its Chairman, Rev. Yiman Orkwa, has intensified efforts to stem the

tide to alleviate the difficulties which the residents are passing through as a result of the scarcity.



Governor George Akume

Islamic scholar seeks to fight crime with prayers

A prominent Islamic scholar in Zamfara, Sheikh Dalla-Dalla, has asked Muslims to offer special prayers as part of measures to fight criminals in the state.

Dalla-Dalla's call for prayers came in the wake of a resurgence of armed robbery in recent times, during which the hoodlums raided about 50 houses and carted off property estimated at millions of naira.

According to him, "the time is ripe for the people to come out and protect themselves, since the police have failed in their duties."

"We need to offer special prayers for these criminals, since the security agencies have failed in discharging their responsibility."

Dalla-Dalla, the chief Imam of Yardole Central Mosque in Gusau, asked Muslims 'to form vigilante groups in their respective wards'.

"In fact, if you kill an armed robber, you have killed an infidel who will go to hell straight," he said.

Last week, a gang of robbers ransacked Maru and Bakura towns in Zamfara. The hoodlums carried out a house-to-house operation in search of money, wounding several people in the process.

Alhaji Lawal Bala, the acting Chairman of Maru local government council, told newsmen the hoodlums broke into five offices of the local government. "Two of the suspects had been arrested and were already assisting the police in their investigations," he said.

When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Adamu Muazu, confirmed Bala's account.



Governor Ahmed Sani of Zamfara State

Dariye commits N11b to road construction

From Rakiyya A. Muhammed, Correspondent Jos

The Plateau State government has since its inception in 1999 committed a total of N1 billion to the construction of roads and bridges within the state. The state's Commissioner for Works, Mr. Neol Donjur, disclosed this at the flagging off ceremony of the construction of Pankshin township roads in the state.

He reaffirmed the administration's determination towards the provision of rural roads across the state in line with its philosophy to develop rural areas in a bid to stimulate enterprise, empower the rural populace and reduce rural-urban drift as well as promote agriculture activities.

The commissioner noted that the flag-off of the Pankshin township road marked the commencement of efforts in upgrading rural roads. He listed a number of rural roads and bridges which had been executed by the administration and asserted that other road projects such as Mangu-Gindiri-Chanso road, Maro-Shimankar-Bemben, Bakinchiyawa-

Kwande phase one would be given adequate attention to ensure a quick completion.

The commissioner also promised that his administration would reactivate for completion projects that have been dormant, including the Dokan-Tofa and Dokan Kasuwa bridges.

The Chairman of Pankshin local government area, Chief Anthony Goyol, stressed the need to ensure that rural roads were made accessible to ease movement within the localities. He disclosed that the local government council had completed the rehabilitation of 9.1km road network in Pankshin town at a cost of over N15million.

Cross Rivers spends N300m on boreholes

From Bassey Ita, Correspondent, Calabar

About N300m has been spent by the Cross River State government for the sinking of about 500 boreholes across the state. The boreholes, which were sunk to perfect the on going water project in the state, are meant to enhance the provision of potable water to the people of the state.

Also, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) has been endorsed between the state government and the Tulsu Chanrai Foundation on the maintenance of all broken water boreholes in the state. Speaking after signing the MOU, the Governor of the

state, Donald Duke, said more water boreholes would be provided in six months' time when the rehabilitation exercise might have been concluded, adding that government had set aside 2% of its budget for rural water programme. Duke hinted that government was desirous of rehabilitating existing boreholes before initiating new ones, and revealed that Tulsu Foundation would be involved in the maintenance and management of the boreholes.

NEPA staff clash with students over disconnection

Attempts by NEPA officials in Lafia to disconnect electricity supply to the Nasarawa State School of Nursing and Midwifery at the weekend sparked a clash between NEPA staff and students of the institution. The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) gathered that NEPA officials had gone to the male hostel with a mandate to

disconnect electricity supply.

However, students of the school who were preparing for their examinations pleaded with the officials not to disconnect the power supply until after the examinations. It later deteriorated into squabble with NEPA officials resorting to the use of police to enforce the disconnection. But the students resisted during

which sticks and other dangerous objects were used, leading to serious injuries.

The NEPA's business manager in Lafia, Mr. Aminu Bello was not immediately available for comments on the matter.

Last year, an officer of NEPA was almost burnt alive at Rimi Ukwu neighborhood of Lafia township, as he tried to disconnect the electricity supply of defaulting consumers.

...warns against harassment of staff

From Mohammed Abubakar, Stringer (Gombe)

The district Manager of National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) in Gombe, Engr. Dalahul Patrick, has warned members of the public against harassing his men while in the conduct of their duties. Engr. Patrick claimed that his men were harassed, molested and beaten up for no fault of theirs while effecting disconnections of defaulters.

He attributed incessant power outages in the state to drastic reduction in power

generation from source due to fall in water level caused by draught. He also disclosed that while the state required between 40 and 41 megawatts, at times only 5 megawatts were available.

He explained that the situation would improve before the end of the first quarter of the year. He said at the moment, even if the required megawatts were

allocated to the state, there were no facilities to absorb them until the 40mba 132 kv 33kv transformer being expected was installed and called on consumers to cooperate with the authority and settle their bills promptly for a better service.

Irate youths in November last year attacked NEPA officials in Deba local government council when they were out carrying out repairs on one of the transformers in the area.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Loss of Document

This is to inform the general public that Original Land Allocation Paper No. MFCT/2001/MISC of Plot No. 288G, Belonging to M/s Kiddies Family Club and Parks of HB Yedaserem Street, Maitama Abuja is missing. If found please, return to the nearest police station or Jidda & Associates, suite 120 Lozumba Complex Area 10, Abuja

Signed

Adeola Adedaji Orolugbagbe
Proprietress

Inside Politics

'Strengthening the structures of democratic governance in Nigeria'

Being a text of an address by His Excellency President Olusegun Obasanjo GCFR at the inauguration of the National Political Reform Conference.

It is with a very deep sense of responsibility and commitment to those cherished bonds and aspirations that bind us as a people that I address you today at this inauguration of the National Political Reform Conference here in our nation's capital, Abuja.

We are once again, at the threshold of history. History has presented us with the opportunity to reassess, refocus, redefine and redesign our political landscape in a direction that would strengthen the bonds of unity, enhance the processes of democratic consolidation, strengthen the structures so as to solidify those values that promote democracy, good governance and good neighborliness; and open boundless opportunities for all Nigerians to be, and to feel that they are part of the evolving political process and socio-economic advancement.

As you all know, we have put in place a holistic economic reform agenda covering accelerated privatisation, public and civil service reforms, and a war against corruption. I am pleased to state that these reforms are yielding results even though we are not yet where we would like to be. We cannot become what we need to be by remaining where and what we are.

Let me use this opportunity to thank you all for your patience, understanding, support and encouragement. If we stay the course and remain passionately resolute, we are all bound to reap the benefits of our sacrifices and investment in the reform agenda.

As recent key macro-economic indicators show, we have started to turn the corner in economic reform and in our economic management. For the first time in decades, in 2004 we either met or surpassed our key economic targets. Growth rate in 2004 was over 6% better than the targeted 5%; Federal fiscal deficit/GDP ratio on cash basis was 1.9% as against the targeted 3%; inflation rate was down to 9.5% in December 2004. Our stock of external reserves rose from US\$3.7 billion when we came into office in 1999 to US\$18.4 billion as at 31st January 2005.

These data and more, represent cheering news that should encourage us to work harder, be more prudent and disciplined in the management of our economy, and

further encourage investors. The opportunities thus created by improving economic realities have potentials for wealth creation, job creation, and poverty eradication. If we are going to continue to be successful and as a team reach our maximum potential, we must all together put the team agenda ahead and above our individual, sectional or ethnic agenda. There is a price to pay and sacrifice to make individually and collectively for the attainment of the Team Agenda.

The socio-economic reforms would achieve little without appropriate people-driven and people-centred political reforms. As has been established long ago, there is a direct correlation between economic and political reforms.

A bad and undemocratic political environment can undermine, damage and destroy a buoyant economy and vice versa.

This is equally in line with our realisation that our current political arrangement has some identified distortions, defects, and limitations that call for urgent, focused, and realistic attention, hence this initiative on political reform.

Our history as a nation shows very clearly that we have been through some difficult times. We have missed great opportunities.

Our historical experience at constitution making and political reform shows that we may have some structural defects that require adjustment so as not to continue to constrain the deepening, widening and consolidation of democratic values and practices.

Indeed, some of the contradictions and challenges bequeathed by the colonial administration have continued to pose problems for us to this day.

Our constitution making efforts must go down to the grassroots to deal with the issues of inclusion, popular participation, ownership, and legitimacy.

While we have managed to work with available instruments and institutions over the years, some of the imperfections in the system and the constrained legitimacy of the instruments have culminated in seeming alienation of some constituencies. These, over time, had led to coups and counter-coups, political manipulation, weak political parties, poor leadership, corruption and the inability of the state



President Olusegun Obasanjo

to meet the basic needs of the people.

In the process we tried to adjust to the weaknesses of the system and equally adapted to doing without some of those fundamentals that really ought to drive the political process.

Almost as we were commencing this new democratic dispensation, there were deafening calls for a sovereign national conference essentially based on the agenda of avoiding the repeat performance of the events and experiences of the mid-1990s.

For reasons that will be adduced, we rejected the call for a sovereign national conference. But we had remained open to constructive, positive and purposeful discourse on how to move our nation forward.

We adopted a strategy of widespread consultations on virtually every issue with strategic stakeholders as a way of obtaining inputs into our planning and policy implementation processes.

However, we refused to be stampeded, until we believed that the time was ripe, our democratic dispensation was reasonably firm and stabilized, and the economy was on firm footing.

We believed that it was unfair to the Nigerian people to confuse frustrations and agitations against the illiberal conducts of past regimes with the need for a reasoned, well-organised, rational, truly patriotic, and genuinely open discussion of the past, present and future of our dear country.

After almost six years of operating our constitution and working with existing government arrangements, we can identify some areas of weakness. We consider it opportune and timely to think and talk together to strengthen our structure, system and arrangement. It is

time to confront these challenges with honesty, courage, commitment, realism, understanding and patriotic disposition for the good of the nation.

Some issues that have emerged include, but are not limited to, the challenge of constitutionalism and constitutional reform; the opportunity to bring all stakeholders together to discuss the preferred political path for the nation; the challenge of building new, accountable, responsive and focused leadership; and how to build, operate and sustain real political parties. Other issues are those of nationality, identity, freedoms and liberties, social justice, rights and obligations; electoral reforms that ensure credibility and respectability of elections; relations between tiers of government; performance of government and how to ensure truly democratic governance for all.

In all of these, the central challenge is still how to strengthen the social contract between the custodians of state power and the governed.

These are not theoretical issues to be exploited in political grandstanding. They are concrete issues that confront our nation and people and it is only appropriate that we seek the right time and moment to embark on a collective quest to reposition our nation politically for democracy, participation, positive leadership, and sustainable development. That time is now.

The Federal Government has no hidden agenda in this exercise. This effort is the product of widespread consultations with salient stakeholders including the leadership of the National Assembly and the National Council of State. We have paid

attention to and insisted on integrity, track record, capacity and ability to articulate relevant issues. We are not at war with any constituency or interest group. Rather, we are laying bare, opportunities for all Nigerians to be part of a historic process of working for sustained democracy, positive change and enduring polity. This is even more important given our deep concern about the successor generation and the foundations that we lay today.

Of course, not all segments, constituencies and individuals will be or can be totally satisfied. This is normal.

However, I call on all those who are yet to learn that the military era is over, that we must begin to see the Nigerian cup as half full rather than half empty and that the best way to express maturity, patriotism and relevance is not to stick to a culture of perpetual attacks, cynicism, aloofness, arrogance, ego-centrism and bad politics. Rather, it is more profitable to join the process, make contributions, educate the public positively, and stop the unhelpful culture of attempting to throwaway the baby with the bathwater all the time.

Our country has grown far beyond these opportunistic grandstanding strategies that rely on ideologies, methods, language and ideas of the past that have been transcended all over the world. I want to urge all Nigerians to participate, contribute and to take full advantage of this opportunity to be part of reforming our political process. Let us learn to look up and look forward and to see the Nigerian cup as half full with boundless potentials as against seeing it as half-empty.

Representation has been organized in such a way as to ensure the participation and contribution of all communities and constituencies.

In cases where representation has been by selection by specific constituencies, such selection must have considered the component parts of the State so that the "State Character" would have been adequately and fairly reflected. Other bodies have been picked on the basis of diverse interests and composition of the bodies.

Given that we have gone far away from the practices and realities of the Greek City States where participation involved everyone directly and at all times, representation, utilizing extant structures of political demarcation and delineation is the most feasible today. We have even gone beyond that to look at specific groups and interests in civil society and socio-cultural groups.

We know that unless we call all Nigerians out to a conference, which is not possible, we may not be able to cater for everybody's interest or for every group. But we believe that the composition of this conference as designed, should be representative enough and views and ideas can be made available for consideration to the conference by any individual or any group.

The selection of representatives from the Diaspora, women, the youth, and persons that are physically challenged has been done taking into account geographical representation and balances.

The Conference is free to design non-time wasting ways of increasing the participation of other constituencies as well as access to its work provided its plan and timetable are not compromised. Our goal is to strengthen the oneness and unity of Nigeria on the basis of the most important asset to our nation - the people who are the subject and object of all our endeavours.

Fellow compatriots, we believe that the idea of representation at this conference solely by ethnic configuration is rather unrealistic, inequitable and unworkable. We do not need to and must not deny our ethnic origins because we do share more in common than we are often willing to admit. However, given that Nigeria has well over 350 ethnic or so-called nationality groups, how do we seriously balance the larger and smaller, even micro-ethnic groups?

What are the guarantees that by some unexpected alignment and realignment of interests the majority groups would not come together to preserve the status quo? What about those that do not wish to be represented on ethnic, but on other form of identification - class, identity, profession, trade, difference, and gender for instance?


It is my view that our country has gone beyond the antics and narrow interests of ethnic entrepreneurs. We have moved far away from those that do not want to face realities that most Nigerians may have a permanent address in their villages but survive on the basis of other identities at the places of work, business, leisure and other interaction and engagement. We should consolidate these positive webs and networks of solidarity, compassion, tolerance, inclusion, organisation, mobilisation and collective dedication to the common good rather than reifying ethnicity in a nation and world that is changing rapidly.

To be continued tomorrow

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

SUSPENSION OF HON. HARUNA YERIMA



It is so often said that in democratic societies, the role of the legislature to inform is as important as the role of the legislature itself. The leadership of the House of Representatives of the Federal Republic of Nigeria recognizes and tries to abide by this adage throughout its professional maturation process and quest for stability. It is incumbent upon all House Members to ensure that the prestige of the House is protected by avoiding actions that may bring the House into disrepute.

On 17th February 2005, the House of Representatives moved to discipline one of our Colleagues for statements that were indeed detrimental to the House and disrespectful to its Members. The Honourable Haruna Yerima (ANPP Borno) has been suspended for one month for using coarse and disparaging language to describe his interpretation of legislative proceedings and individual Members. The sweeping and generalized aspersions of Hon. Yerima were unprofessional, especially since the allegations were mere hearsay and not supported by hard facts or substantive information.

The House recently adopted a code of conduct which Members have to abide by the allegations made against the Chairman of the House Committee on Communications on MTN recharge cards had been forwarded to the Committee on Ethics one week before Dr. Yerima's sweeping allegations. The outcome of that investigation, as well as other issues is being awaited by the House.

The House of Representatives is not immune from or against criticism from any quarter. We simply believe that in an effort to maintain a respectable and professional level of performance on behalf of our country, unsubstantiated allegations and innuendo must not be cast or misinterpreted as the truth.

The House of Representatives under the leadership of the Speaker, Rt. Hon. Aminu Bello Masari has raised the bar on ethical standards and conduct and has much to be proud of in its accomplishments.

Hon. Abike Dabiri

Chairman, House Committee on Media and Public Affairs

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY COMPLEX

Three Arms Zone, PM.B. 141, Garki Abuja, Nigeria.



**FEDERAL CAPITAL
TERRITORY
WATER BOARD
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR**

**Water Board Head Quarters, Area 3,
PMB 164, Garki, Abuja, Nigeria.**

**PRE - QUALIFICATION FOR THE SUPPLY
AND INSTALLATION OF AUTOMATED
METER READING (AMR) SYSTEM FOR
FCT WATER BOARD. ABUJA.**

The Federal Capital Territory Water Board is desirous of employing recent metering technology in improving customer data collection (meter reading, location identification etc), billing and reduction of non-revenue water (control of leakages). It is envisaged that this information can be accessed from remote locations and where necessary automatically.

In view of this, the FCT Water Board is inviting competent and interested vendors for pre-qualification for the provision and installation of Automated Meter Reading System.

Scope of work:

The Board proposes to employ the Metering Scheme throughout the entire area of its service coverage.

Pre-qualification

Interested and reputable vendors are hereby invited to submit pre-qualification documents containing the following:

- a) Evidence of registration with Corporate Affairs Commission,
- b) Evidence of similar projects handled in the past in relevant areas, including status of the project.
- c) Copies of tax clearance certificate for the last three years.
- d) Evidence of registration with the FCDA/FCT Water Board.
- e) Company profile, which should include CV of key personnel.
- f) Evidence of affiliation with Companies providing the technology to be applied.
- g) Financial capability including Audited account for the last three years and name of bankers.

Submission of Pre-qualification Documents

The pre-qualification documents must be in sealed envelope clearly marked "PRE-QUALIFICATION FOR THE SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF AUTOMATED METER READING (AMR) SYSTEMS FOR FCT WATER BOARD, ABUJA.

The pre-qualification documents will be returned to the office of DIRECTOR, FCT WATER BOARD, AREA 3, GARKI, ABUJA on or before 12.00 noon of Monday, 25th March, 2005.

Please note that this is not an invitation to tender. Full tendering information and instruction shall be given only to pre-qualified vendors that are found suitable in executing the job.

Director
FCT Water Board, Abuja



**FEDERAL CAPITAL
TERRITORY
WATER BOARD
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR**

**Water Board Head Quarters, Area 3,
PMB 164, Garki, Abuja, Nigeria.**

**FEASIBILITY STUDIES AND DESIGN OF
ADDITIONAL SOURCE(S) OF POTABLE
WATER SUPPLY TO THE SOUTHERN PART
OF THE FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY**

The under listed consultants have been pre-qualified to submit Request for Proposal (RFP) for the Feasibility studies and Design in respect of providing additional source(s) of potable water supply to the southern part of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

S/No	Name
1	Messrs GKW Nigeria Ltd
2	Messrs CIWAT Engineer Consulting
3	Messrs AIMS Consulting Ltd.
4	Messrs REID Crowther Ltd.
5	Messrs SGI Consulting Engineer
6	Messrs Tahal Consultants (Africa) Ltd.

All successful consultants are to collect their invitation letters from the 21st February, 2004, at the office of the Director, FCT Water Board, Area 3, Garki - Abuja.

Signed

FCT Water Board, Abuja

Sports

Bridge could miss rest of season

Chelsea left-back Wayne Bridge could miss the rest of the season with a suspected broken ankle.

The England international, 24, was hurt in an innocuous challenge with Alan Shearer during the Londoners' FA Cup defeat at Newcastle on Sunday.

"We think it's a big injury," said Jose Mourinho, whose Chelsea team this week meet Barcelona in the Champions League and Liverpool in the Carling Cup final.

William Gallas and Damien Duff could also miss the Barcelona game.

France defender Gallas and Ireland winger Duff both picked up their injuries in the closing stages of Chelsea's 1-0 defeat at St James' Park.

With Bridge having gone off after Mourinho used all three substitutes, those knocks plus Carlo Cudicini's red card meant Chelsea finished the game with seven able-bodied players.

Cudicini would not have played against Barcelona,

but had been promised a game in the Carling Cup final, although he will now miss the Cardiff showpiece through suspension.

The manager is not planning to add any new names to his squad ahead of the trip to Barcelona, even though he has few options to replace Bridge at left-back.

It could be that Paulo Ferreira, usually a right-back, is switched to left-back with Glen Johnson, who ended the Newcastle game in goal, playing on the right.

Youngsters Ben Hudell, Joe Keenan and Sam Tillen would be options should Mourinho decide to call up a replacement, but it is unlikely he would risk an untried prospect in a Champions League tie.

Bridge's injury also means Mourinho, who reportedly wants to sign Ashley Cole from Arsenal, will not have a specialist, senior left-back for the run-in to the season.

"He (Bridge) has no chance of playing against Barcelona, probably will not play against Liverpool (in the

Carling Cup final) and maybe not for the rest of the season," he said.

"The medical department will try to do everything to recover Gallas and Duff. We will have to wait and see, but I won't cry about injuries because we will have 11 play-

ers to play on Tuesday."

Shearer said he was unsure what caused Bridge's injury.

"I don't know what happened," he said.

"It was just a shame. I don't think we even touched each other."

"By all accounts it's pretty serious. I went into the dressing-room after the game and wished him all the best."

Mourinho, whose team are chasing three trophies, has already lost winger Arjen Robben to a serious injury.



Chelsea's left-back Wayne Rooney stretched off the field during their FA Cup tie at St. James Park.

Mauresmo fights back to win title

World number two Amelie Mauresmo came from a set down to beat Venus Williams and win the Diamond Games in Antwerp.

Mauresmo, who lost to Dinara Safina in the final of the Paris Indoor Open last week, beat the third seed 4-6 7-5 6-4 for her first title of the season.

The Frenchwoman produced some superb volleys in the final set and claimed victory on her fifth match point after two hours and 18 minutes.

"This was a great final for a great tournament," she said.

"I am so happy because the quality of my game went up and up during the whole week until the final, this is the result of all the work I have done with my coach."

Williams was seeking her third title in Antwerp having won it on her two previous visits in 2002 and 2003.

The defeat means she has now gone 11 tournaments without a title, the longest drought of her career.

"Amelie deserves her win, she played so well," she said.

Federer wins title in Rotterdam

World number one Roger Federer won the World Indoor Tournament in Rotterdam with a battling 5-7 7-5 7-6 victory over Ivan Ljubicic on Sunday.

The Swiss star was made to work hard by Ljubicic, who also lost to Federer in last month's final in Doha.

"The Croatian broke his serve for the first time in the tournament to take the first set, but Federer hit back and took the decider on a tie-break.

He has now won his last 15 finals after triumphing in two hours and 42 minutes.

Federer said: "Today it was very close and it could have gone either way but I'm happy I fought through because this might be a crucial victory for me for the rest of the season."

"I knew I had to fight hard today and that's exactly what happened."

"I played one shocking game to be broken. He took advantage of it and broke me to love but I still felt I gave that game away."

"That haunted me all the way, right until match point. I fought well today so I'm happy."

Iverson stars as East beat West

Allen Iverson led the Eastern Conference to a 125-115 win over the Western Conference to pick up the MVP award at the NBA All-Star Game in Denver.

The Philadelphia star collected 15 points, 10 assists and five steals as the East ended their rivals' three-game winning streak in the event.

Jermaine O'Neal of the Indiana Pacers also had 15 points for the East, with Dwyane Wade of Miami contributing 14 and LeBron

James of the Cleveland Cavaliers 13.

At 20, James was the second youngest starter in the history of the All-Star Game.

Seattle's Ray Allen led the scoring for the West with 17 points while LA Laker Kobe Bryant had 16.

It was a wide-open contest which featured plenty of scoring and little defence.

Miami's Shaquille O'Neal put on an entertaining display for the East in his 12th All-Star appearance.

He danced as he was introduced, struck a pose before missing a foul shot and clowned around with hip-hop stars sitting in the front-row seats.

He also unveiled a new

size-22, red and white shoe phone.

O'Neal and former Lakers team-mate Kobe Bryant ignored each other, but exchanged hugs and hand slaps with the other starters

before proceedings got under way.

Bryant hit two three-pointers to close the deficit to 110-105 late in the game, but the East cruised to a comfortable win.

BOXING

Eastman: Bidding his time

The fans flocked to the Bernard Hopkins-Howard Eastman fight having been promised fireworks.

What they got was a consummate display of ring-craft from the champion, happy to play matador to Eastman's tormented bull.

It was not thrilling and Eastman may gripe, but why go into the trenches when you can orchestrate the war from behind the lines like some scheming general?

Hopkins, 40, will have been mindful of bigger battles ahead, the final push in a career that has spanned 17 years and included 20 defences of his world middleweight crown.

The 34-year-old Eastman says Hopkins has offered him a rematch, but the truth is "The Executioner" has bigger fish to fry.

A fight against young pretender and fellow American

Jermaine Taylor, so impressive on the undercard in Los Angeles, would be a sure-fire money spinner and capture public imagination Stateside.

And Hopkins is likely to fight the winner of May's clash between Felix Trinidad and Winky Wright before calling time on a magnificent career.

With consensus light heavyweight champion Glen Johnson also in the frame, Eastman will have to wait until Hopkins retires before landing a third world-title tilt.

Not that the "Battersea Bomber" fluffed his lines in front of the Hollywood greats and boxing legends sat at ringside.

The champion was just too cute, squirting out of corners like a bar of soap when Eastman tried to cut down the ring and launching lightning-quick sorties before retreating from range.

Like the 13,000-strong

crowd at Staples Center, which greeted the cagey opening with boos, Eastman expected a dust-up and struggled to adapt when Hopkins got on his bike.

When Eastman was lured into an attack, Hopkins would unleash short hooks and jabs before dumping rights over the challenger's low-slung left.

Hopkins used to be a feared puncher but has developed into a wily veteran - that is why he is still fighting at the age of 40 and why he looks 10 years younger.

Eastman is unlucky to have shared an era with one so great but if he can keep himself active while Hopkins winds down, his time will come again.

Post-Hopkins, the middleweight canvas will be patchy and Eastman, who won admirers in Los Angeles with his strong heart and chin, can make his mark.



Iverson, right, leads the Eastern Conference to a 125-115 win over the Western Conference

Sports

Knockout round to revive Champions League sparkle

Barcelona host Chelsea, Real Madrid take on Juventus and Manchester United meet AC Milan as big-match glamour returns to the Champions League this week in the first knockout round.

Bayern Munich tangle with Arsenal in yet another showcase first leg game as the best 16 clubs in Europe start what should be a thrilling race to reach the quarter-finals.

Holders Porto and Monaco, who contested last season's lacklustre final in Gelsenkirchen, face Inter Milan and PSV Eindhoven respectively.

Bayern could be one of three Bundesliga sides to qualify as Bayer Leverkusen face Liverpool at Anfield and Werder Bremen start with home advantage against Olympique Lyon.

The Nou Camp could well be hosting the best game for

entertainment value, pitching together Europe's two form teams in Barcelona and Jose Mourinho's cash-rich Chelsea.

Barca, who knocked Chelsea out of the Champions League quarter-finals five years ago, have been in scintillating form nearly all season thanks to Brazil World Cup-winner Ronaldinho.

Frank Rijkaard's men have rattled up a seven-point lead in the Primera Liga with a top-scoring attack, led by African Footballer of the Year Samuel Eto'o, that reached 49 goals in Saturday's 2-0 win over Real Mallorca.

Chelsea are nine points clear at the top of the Premier League, though they suffered their first real setback of the season when a mainly second-string side were knocked out of the FA Cup fifth round by Newcastle United on Sunday.

They also lost England

wingback Wayne Bridge to a serious ankle injury at St James' Park, adding to injury woes that have already ruled out influential Dutch forward Arjen Robben and made Ivory Coast striker Didier Drogba a major doubt.

Barca's Liga title rivals Real Madrid endured a 2-0 defeat by Athletic Bilbao over the weekend as they prepared to face their former boss Fabio Capello, now in charge at Juve.

However, it was their first setback after a run of seven victories had put them firmly on Barcelona's trail and key players Zinedine Zidane and Raul were rested. Ronaldo was benched for failing to train properly during the week.

Manchester United, whose fans plan a torch lit protest before kickoff over a takeover bid by U.S. tycoon Malcolm Glazer, will be in a bullish mood at Old Trafford.

Unbeaten since October in the Premier League, where they lie second behind Chelsea, United have also been busy defending the FA Cup with a 2-0 win at Everton on Saturday that booked them into the quarter-finals.

Alex Ferguson should deploy on-form teenager Wayne Rooney in attack and will hope Dutch striker Ruud van Nistelrooy returns after being sidelined by injury since November.

United will also be buoyed by the knowledge that their defence is safe from Milan's European Footballer of the Year, Andriy Shevchenko, who is out after suffering a facial injury in Saturday's 1-0 win over Cagliari.

Former Old Trafford favourite Jaap Stam will be back in Manchester wearing a Milan shirt after a falling out with Ferguson led to the Dutch defender's unexpected exit in

2001.

Arsenal return to the scene of one their worst European performances when they take on Bayern at the Olympic Stadium.

Beaten 1-0 in a poor 2001 display, Arsenal now have injury problems at the back and are sweating on the fitness of their

talismanic France striker Thierry Henry.

Their defence should be equally worried about the prospect of facing Bayern's Dutch striker Roy Makaay, who scored a hat-trick and set up two other goals in Saturday's 5-0 over Borussia Dortmund.

Bayern's Ballack likely to miss Arsenal clash

Germany captain Michael Ballack is likely to miss Bayern Munich's Champions League clash with Arsenal on Tuesday because of a thigh muscle strain.

"It's increasingly unlikely he'll play," Bayern coach Felix Magath said.

"He's an important player but bringing him back too soon could take so much out of him

that we'd lose him for more games."

Ballack was scarcely missed in Bayern's 5-0 win over Borussia Dortmund on Saturday but his absence on Tuesday would be a big worry for Magath.

The midfield playmaker was unable to train once again on Sunday and Magath will make a decision on whether to include him in the squad later on Monday.

Trust Classified

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Ehada Mohammed M. of Nigeran Union of Pensioner (NHQ)

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This is to inform the general public that the Original Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) with plot No. 691 Garki II district Cadastral Zone A. In the name of **The Grand Mirage Limited** along with some vital documents are missing.

All effort to trace the said documents proved abortive. Anyone who finds them should please forward to **Managing Director Grand Mirage Limited**. Plot 691 Port-Harcourt Crescent, Garki II Abuja.

Change of Names

I, formerly known and addressed as **MR. JOSEPH OLAWOLE OTUJIYA**, now wish to be known and addressed as **MR. JOSEPH OLAWOLE OLUKOYA**. Former documents remain valid. NITEL Limited and general public please note.

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Sports

Decree 101: FIFA warns Nigeria over delay

World football ruling body, FIFA, has written to the NFA over the delay in the abrogation of Decree 101, the operational instrument currently governing

By Patrick Andrew,
Senior Sports Reporter

football administration in the country. FIFA, in a letter written on

February 18, sought to know the reasons for the delay in effecting needed abrogation of the decree, which came into effect since 1989.

FIFA equally inquired about the statute of the Nigeria Football League (NFL), seeking to know specifically whether the NFA, mandated to peruse through the contents of the draft forwarded to it and ensure it conforms to international standard before ratifying it, has done so.

NFA chairman, Alhaji Ibrahim Galadima, confirmed the receipt of FIFA's letter, adding that since the onus lies not with the NFA but the National Assembly to abrogate the existing

operational instrument, the letter has been forwarded to the relevant authorities.

"We have written to the relevant agencies attaching FIFA's letter on the abrogation of the Decree. We had to approach the matter that way because abrogation of the Decree basically lies with the National Assembly.

"Thus, we have accordingly informed the Sports Ministry and the National Assembly. We have attached FIFA's letter for their attention as well."

Galadima explained that when eventually the Decree is abrogated to pave way for a more democratic statute, the new law would take effect from

November this year.

The chairman equally said the NFL statute is being worked on by the panel the board instituted to peruse through the draft to ensure that it conforms to universal standard before consigning it to the board for ratification.

Meanwhile, the three-man panel set up to investigate allegation of financial impropriety and administrative lapses against the suspended NFA management will present the report tomorrow.

Galadima said yesterday that the presentation was delayed until tomorrow to enable sufficient copies to be made for relevant authorities.

Trustsports recalls that the panel was given three weeks to complete the assignment but following the death of Colonel Joro Yabilsu, it suspended sitting and later sought for one week extension, which expired exactly a week ago.

Similarly, the panel on the NFL statute is equally to present its report tomorrow, according to Galadima, who said that both reports would be attended to with despatch.

"The board will meet on March 1 or 2 to deliberate on these reports. We do not intend to delay them in view of the seriousness of the matters involved."



Amokachi

Okocha vote: NFA admit guilt

Confronted with the existence of damning evidence that the voting form for the CAF African

Footballer of the Year award was actually received by the NFA, board member Suleiman David all but admitted

that the NFA was guilty. Speaking with KICK OFF in Aba after the CAF Super Cup, David, who was mandated by

the board to investigate the scandal, attempted to skirt the question but still admitted that the facts were undeniable.

"We are in a technological age and it is easy to verify something like that. If one fax machine sends a message to another, of course there is bound to be a delivery report. What CAF has is a document showing that the machine they sent the fax to did actually receive it."

And did that machine belong to the NFA or not?

"It could have been our machine, but we are still investigating," David said.

Suleiman was quick to remind, though that the NFA voted Okocha.

"The important thing is that we got our vote in, whether we used the CAF nomination form or the NFA letterhead is not the issue."

Reminded in return that the form had Christian Chukwu's name but no signature, David went polemic. "It is not who votes, but the fact that Nigeria voted that we should consider."

In the event, the NFA's vote proved immaterial, as Okocha still lost the award to Cameroon's Samuel Eto'o Fils, placing third behind Cote d'Ivoire's Didier Drogba.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Kwara Utd, Lobi go top

High riding Kwara United of Ilorin Saturday forced home side, Elkanemi warriors to a 1-1 draw in far away Markurdi.

The result, coming after the 3-0 demolition of Nationale of Owerri in week 1, puts the Kadiri Ikhana tutored side, ahead of the pack with 4 points

same also with Lobi stars but with an away goal advantage, reports.

Lobi had also secured a 3-0 home victory in week 1 and with the 0-0 barren draw recorded in Abeokuta comes in close 2nd behind Kwara united with both sides clashing in week 3 at the Ilorin township stadium. The match has been dubbed a titanic battle.

Rejuvenated 3SC is in 3rd position also on 4 points but with inferior goals advantage as the team had in week 1 beaten Nassarawa FC by 3-1 before pulling a surprise 1-1 draw with Sharks of Port Harcourt at away. 3SC of Ibadan should however expect a stiffer challenge from the reigning CAF champions league

winner Enyimba who has just added the Super cup to their list of trophies with a 2-0 spanking of Accra Hearts of Oaks from Ghana when both sides clash next weekend in Ibadan.

The Oluyole Warriors will be praying for a repeat of last season's opener where the visiting Aba side fell 0-2 at the Adamasingba stadium.

Sharks and Niger Tornadoes however remain on a point each after losing their respective away games. Niger Tornadoes lost 0-1 to Wikki Tourists of Bauchi last weekend after playing a 1-1 draw with Enyimba at home in week 1 while Sharks of Port Harcourt had also lost 0-1 to Zamfara at away.

I'm not broke - Amokachi

Former Super Eagles striker, Daniel Amokachi has debunked insinuations that he is being rehabilitated by the Nasarawa State government.

The Nasarawa United assistant coach and player revealed to Trustsports last weekend in Lafia after his team secured a 1-0 win over NPA FC of Lagos, that he is not broke and can take adequate care of himself and his family.

Amokachi also added that he is in Nasarawa United on mutual consent between him and the state government and he is willing to assist the team reach greater heights.

"I am bailed by Nasarawa state government? What do you mean? I don't understand what you are talking about. Do I look like somebody who is starving? Look, I'm com-fortable, I am okay, I can fend for myself and my family any day, so people should stop insinuating," the former Eagles captain said.

Amokachi, who was active on the sideline dishing out instructions to the players, commended the players after their hard fought victory over the Seaside.

He, however, decried players' poor marksmanship which saw them squander several scoring chances created during the game.

"The boys played well to win. It is not easy winning such a game. They did what was asked of them, only that they did not convert the chances that came their way. Obviously the goals will come later. The victory is a

By Abdul-Raheem Aodu,
Sports Reporter

good thing for the boys, for Nasarawa United and the whole people of Nasarawa state, particularly the governor who has been our staunch supporter. "You can see that we created

22 goal scoring chances out of which we scored only one. That is something we have to work with but I am sure they would get better as the league progresses. However, there is no cause for alarm because Nigerian strikers hardly score more than 13 goals per season," he added.

Nasarawa grab first points

Premier League debutants Nasarawa United secured their first three points with a lone goal victory over NPA in front of 5 000 fans at the Lafia Township Stadium.

The visitors looked good to carry the day at the beginning of the game, but loss of concentration in the vital area robbed them of scoring, with Emmanuel Atobasi as the chief tormentor running rings round the 'Solid Miners' suspect defense, but no goal to show for it. Even, Tunde Daniel's pile drive in the 15th minute was not good enough to beat Nasarawa's Uche Ogbonna.

As the visitors continued to mount pressure for the opener, the hosts resorted to counter attacks, but wasted most of their chances until the 32nd minute when skipper Andrew Eseluka in a solo effort left three NPA defenders stranded before he tucked the ball into the far corner beating Chigozie Agbim for the only goal of the game.

Thereafter, it was the hosts dictating the pace, but Andy Ogwuche lived up to expectation in the Sea Siders'

rear with keeper Agbim saving his team from conceding more goals.

Nasarawa would have scored a handful of goals, but Zubeiru Kazeem did not help matters missing several scoring chances.

Coach Ben Duamlong said

though he is satisfied with the three points, the performance of the boys is not satisfactory. "We are still working on the boys, especially the finishing. Throughout last week we concentrated on our finishing and I think we will continue until we get it right," the technical

director told KICK OFF.

NPA skipper Andy Ogwuche told KICK OFF: "The game was not bad, but if we had utilized our chances maybe we could have got a draw. Since the season is just beginning all we need to do is to win a match and we will find our rhythm."

Nationale pip Dolphin

Dolphin Football club of Port Harcourt on Sunday at the Dan Anyiam Stadium did not have the best of starts to their 2005 league campaign as they fell by a lone goal to Iwuanyanwu Nationale of Owerri.

Nationale got their lone winner in the 30th minute when an overhead kick in the box by Mangus Mbawas sailed over the outstretched hands of Austin Brown in goal for Dolphin.

However, four incidents could have, changed the course of the match if not for terrible refereeing decisions and cat like reflexes on the part of Austin Brown.

In the second minute, Brown dived full length to save a header by Emma Agbo and stretched again to parry the rebound for a corner.

Four minutes later, Mangut tried to chip over Brown and in what could be described as a miraculous save, the Dolphin returnee keeper leaped from a new impossible position to tip the ball over for a corner.

Just before Nationale scored, Endurance Idahor had jabbed home a pullout from Kelechi Osunwa which went over the head of Keeper Longinus Duru, but after the ball had clearly crossed the line, Duru scrambled it out and even though the linesman had

point for goal, the referee waved play to go on.

And late in the game, Bola Bello scored what would have been an equaliser but after the referee pointed to the centre, the lines man over ruled the goal.

After Dolphin survived the early onslaught, they took the drivers seat, controlling the tide of the game but had a momentary setback when Kingsley Williams was taken off injured in the 20th minute.

Technical Adviser of Nationale, Alfred Elundina told nigeriasports.com after the match that it was good to win his first home match of the season, especially against a

club like Dolphin.

"Our strategy was to attack and attack and I am happy it paid off against the league champions."

Team manager of Dolphin FC, Diepreye Fiberesima, blamed the referee for the loss saying the goal they scored should not have been disallowed.

"The players did well, the fans were supportive from both sides, but I'm afraid the same refereeing problem with Nigerian football reared its ugly head, and I'm afraid, that problem would remain for a long time because it seems there is no solution in sight."

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TUESDAY COLUMN

Tuesday, February 22, 2005

EDITORIAL

Privatisation of hostels

In recent times, there has been no small agitation in various quarters over the proposed privatisation of hostel accommodation in Federal Government-owned institutions of higher learning. At the core of this crisis is the fact that there is a dire shortfall between available hostel space and the accommodation requirements in these institutions and the government apparently does not want to even attempt redressing this imbalance.

It is true that since the late 1970s, the fees paid by students in tertiary institutions have been relatively stable at an affordable N90.00. When the Federal Government declared that N10,000.00 will be charged per bed space every session, there was widespread resistance to the idea. However, going by a recent speech by Professor Israel Adu, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, government has—covertly it would seem—adopted the Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) concept. This not-so-new idea supposedly involves the private sector investing in building hostels which they will operate and then transfer to the school authorities once they have recouped their investments.

Apart from the notoriety of the so-called private sector's involvement where housing matters are concerned in this country, there is the simple fact that not too many things should attract government's serious attention as the proper education of the citizenry. This notwithstanding, in the heat of the current debate, some curious suggestions have been put forward by people both within and outside the government system. One suggestion that hardly merits thinking through is the call for a drastic restriction on the number of students admitted into the nation's higher institutions on the dubious grounds that the number of Nigerians who leave secondary school and proceed directly to university is proportionally higher than that obtained in some first world countries like the UK, the USA and Germany.

While we do not condone deliberate overcrowding of school facilities, we wonder why our fortunes should perpetually be viewed in the light of other so-called advanced countries. Moreover, if it is not sufficiently clear by its very nature that education at all levels should be treated as a matter of strategic national importance, we strongly suggest that all stakeholders need to reappraise this situation in the collective interest of the nation. Also, while it may be old hat, the truth is that many of our leaders in government do not have their children schooling in our midst. Their children, inexorably, are to be found in the best schools in the UK, USA, Germany and increasingly South Africa and Ghana. This may explain government's reluctance to invest in education at financial levels that it ought to.

We are one with the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) which has declared that the proposed privatisation of hostel accommodation is a misguided ploy. President of ASUU, Dr. Abdullahi Sule-Kano, recently reminded everyone that, "Two years back, government said it would invite private sector developers to build student hostels under a build, operate and transfer arrangement. But up to date, no single hostel like that has been built in any institution where there is accommodation problem." As the ASUU president pointed out, it is even more troubling that, "Government has refused to invest in accommodation for students, but it now wants to hand over the already built hostels to people who have never contributed anything to hostel development to now extort money from students."

On our part, we wish to state for the record that commercialising the processes of education any more than what already obtains in the land is a move we consider inimical to the progress of the nation and as such we are staunchly opposed to the idea. To this end, we reiterate that education is a matter of very significant strategic national concern and tertiary hostel accommodation should not be turned over to profit-motivated organisations as a matter of state policy.

If anything, government ought to retrace its steps and commence a massive hostel building programme as only the government is in the best position to provide adequate and duly subsidised accommodation for students. Government cannot plead lack of funds. These are the halcyon days of immense excess crude oil funds presumably lying virtually idle in state coffers.

We readily concede that the days of N90.00 per bed space are over but we strongly urge that those days should not be replaced by a conscienceless arbitrary approach that sees in the act of privatisation the cure-all for every problem. The reality we have witnessed in several sectors like telecommunications, power and steel show clearly that using the privatisation genie to attempt solving every problem is not a reliable approach to developing this nation.

Yerima and the whistle on corruption

By Ujudud Shariff
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Watching him on television telling his honourable members of House of Representatives point blank that some of them are corrupt, especially Yemi Arokodare the chairman House Committee on communications, and walking majestically out of the green chamber of the House after being slapped with one month suspension instantaneously made him my legislator of the month. Hon (Dr.) Haruna Yerima, an ANPP member from Borno State exposed what looked like a racket involving 2.7 million Naira MTN recharge cards that are monthly given to Arokodare by the GSM provider for distribution to the members of the House as "complimentary gifts". Though he confessed to be collecting the cards on behalf of the members, it is not clear how many of them have collected or benefited from the gratification.

Rather than earning commendation for blowing the whistle, Yerima was rewarded with a month suspension. Rather than being hailed as an anti-corruption crusader, Yerima was vilified and forsaken by his colleagues. Like the former acting Auditor General of the Federation who lost his job for blowing the whistle for corruption by ministries, Yerima either by omission or commission joins the league of anti-corruption crusaders in Nigeria. They called him several names and described his action as "sacrilegious" and even tantamount to inviting a military coup. By suspending him, it would appear, they are making him a hero of the moment. The MTN cards scandal is an ill wind, a tsunami that could devastate the whole House if not handled very well. The House must be transparent in its investigation of this serious allegation against its honour and integrity. Granted that Yerima chose the media in blowing the whistle rather than the internal channel of communication, the facts remain that he did a great service to the House by exposing this corruption. Certainly, Yerima should have reported the matter to the House Ethics Committee instead of washing the dirty linens publicly. One can therefore understand the anger of the House over this revelation, as most probably not all of them would have been involved. Yerima also did not help matters by publicly condemning his colleagues describing the legislative debate as not more than "bear parlour debate". It is not clear whether his public postures are genuinely borne out of frustrations with the very slow progress everywhere or simply publicity stunt. If his public posture and utterances were truly borne out of frustration and genuine concerns for the masses, he is certainly not alone. Many of us are saturated to the brink about the degeneration of the system and the ravaging poverty staring at our faces. We daily thank Almighty God for keeping our sanity. Many compatriots are going crazy, as it is becoming a common sight to see people walking and talking to themselves.

All these notwithstanding however, the damage has been done and the challenge before the House is to publicly clean itself and punish all the culprits. Any member that has ever collected this gratification must pay back and the money returned to the MTN with a serious warning never to seek to bribe members of the National Assembly. The House must set high moral standards for itself and seriously work to redeem and protect its public image. The public perception of the House leaves much to be desired in spite of the efforts to build a favourable reputation. As we all know, in a number of cases, perception is reality to most people.

It is amazing how the chairman of the communications committee does not know the difference between gifts, bribe, gratification and corruption. What he has been collecting from the MTN authorities is plainly, bribery to induce favour and sympathy from the honourable members. MTN would not have given them the recharge cards every month if they were not getting or expecting something in return. This is what makes it simply a bribe. I am sure MTN did not extend their largess to the lectures of University of Abuja or any other university for that matter because they are not expecting anything in return. As difficult as it might be distinguished, the thin line between gifts and bribery

can still be drawn and recognized. Public officials must at all times be very careful about collecting any gift whatsoever, whether Christmas, new year, sallah or any festivity. One should certainly not collect these gifts from those he or she either supervises or investigates in the course of his or her duties. The honourable members should learn from the tribulations of Professor Tam David West, a former petroleum minister, who went to jail for receiving a "gift" of gold wristwatch and drinking a cup of tea from a contractor. In all sincerity one cannot see how the communications committee could do its oversight functions diligently over the MTN. It is no wonder MTN is doing what it likes in extorting its subscribers and providing poor services. I cannot see how this committee can convince Nigerians that they are not compromised by the MTN. In this regard, it is our considered opinion that the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Aminu Bello Masari should dissolve this committee and reconstitute a new one with immediate effect. The House should re-brand and market itself as an anti-corruption vanguard with zero-level tolerance. The leadership of the house must put their feet down in enforcing their own code of conduct. They should ensure one hundred per cent compliance especially for members on oversight functions. The nasty experience of last year in which members were slapping themselves and struggling to visit particular institutions where they expected financial returns must not be repeated. Members must be careful about their private and official conduct so that they are not compromised or be seen to be so. They should learn a lesson or two from the conduct of Nuhu Ribadu, the EFCC boss who refused to accept a lorry load of cows and rams "gifts" from one of the state governors during the last Sallah. Also during a private visit to another state, he refused to take the state government accommodation preferring to take a hotel and pay for himself. His reason is simply that he does not want to be obliged to any governor as the call to duty might demand the investigation of that governor by his agency. This to my mind, this is a good model of public behaviour for government officials. One should never put himself where his integrity can be questioned or his sense of judgment impaired because of a favour he received from someone.

The cancer of corruption that has eaten very deep in our body fabric must be fought and eradicated if Nigeria is to rise to its historic destiny. There is corruption everywhere from our homes to the offices, from schools to hospitals, from mosques to churches and you name it. Corruption is virtually responsible for most of our national problems and underdevelopment. Resources that could have been used to improve the living standards of the people are stolen and kept away in foreign banks. The recent revelation of how Governor Joshua Dariye of Plateau State milked his state and laundered the money to London is still fresh in our minds. In spite of setting up agencies like the anti-corruption commission (ICPC) and EFCC, in several government establishments, it is business as usual. For example, just consider the revelations about the mind-boggling money discovered with the immediate past Inspector General of Police, Tafa Balogun. Government officials these days steal with impunity and with no sense of morality whatsoever. They steal money they don't need and could never spend it all in their lifetime. In the process, they kill the spirit of their children as they could hardly ever be productive with their lives as they know daddy has accumulated so much and there should therefore no need for them to work hard.

Given the embarrassments bedeviling the House, Speaker Masari should rise to the occasion and be counted. He should as we mentioned earlier, re-brand and re-energize the House by creating a new image for the lower chamber of the national legislature. They should be seen to be at the front-line in the war against corruption by first purging themselves of all suspicions and semblances of corruption. The time to use the big stick is now when the honor and integrity of the House is at stake and the whole world watching to see how the drama triggered by Yerima and his suspension therein will be handled.