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NEWS
Useni drags FG to court over seized properties
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50 feared dead in OPC/Muslims clash

By Olumide Bajulaiye, Correspondent (Lagos)
 No fewer than 50 persons were feared dead on yesterday in Ipakodo area of Ikorodu, a suburb of Lagos State in a religious mayhem between members of the Oodua Peoples Congress and some Muslim faithful which occurred in the area.
 Investigations by *Daily Trust* revealed that the fight which occurred at about 6.00pm had a mosque burnt down as a result of desecration of the praying ground prepared by Muslims ahead Thursday's *wallah* celebration in the area.

It was further learnt that several Muslims have fled their homes for fear of being attacked by the OPC. One Barrister Shai who spoke with our correspondent said all his family have fled and he could not even locate their whereabouts.

In the process over 50 persons were said to have been mached to death while several others sustained various degree of injuries and are currently receiving treatment at yet to be disclosed hospital. *Daily Trust* further gathered that efforts by members of the Muslim body to get officials of the Nigeria Police to come to their aid proved abortive as they were said to have reluctantly ignored them while the OPC unleashed terror on the Muslims.

ANAMBRA CRISIS Court restrains Oyinlola panel

An Abuja high court yesterday restrained the PDP panel investigating the Anambra crisis from dealing in any manner whatsoever with issues of governorship election in the state.
 The interlocutory order of injunction was granted by Justice Ishaq Bello at the resumed hearing of a suit filed by APGA, challenging the competence of the committee. The panel, chaired by Governor Olagunsoye Oyinlola of Ogun State, was set up by the PDP on January 4, to investigate the root causes of the lingering political crisis in Anambra.
 APGA instituted the suit against the PDP, its national chairman, Chief Aduki Ogbek, Anambra State governor, Chris Ngige, Chief Chris Uba and members of the probe panel.



President Olusegun Obasanjo (left) conferring with the chairman of the Economist round table, Mr. Nenad Pacek (right) during the first business round table conference held with the government of Nigeria in Abuja... yesterday.

As at the time of filing this report efforts were still being made to get the state commissioner of police to react, but an officer who prefer anonymity said the command is not aware of the clash.
 It would be recalled that there was similar crisis between the two bodies last year where a Muslim leader was hacked to death by members of the OPC.

Tafa Balogun retires

Mr. Sunday Ehindero, a deputy inspector general of police has taken over as the Acting Inspector General of Police.
 This follows the retirement yesterday from the force by Mr. Tafa Balogun who handed in a notice of retirement with effect from March 6, 2005.
 However, a statement signed by the secretary to the government of the Federation (SGF) said that Mr. Balogun will start his retirement leave from today, January 18, 2005.
 In accepting inspector general's retirement, according to the statement, President Olusegun Obasanjo expressed appreciation on behalf of the nation for his services and wished him a happy retirement.

Hajj: Saudi takes measures to prevent stampede

Pilgrims who perform this year's hajj which begins today, will have no trouble with the ritual of "stoning the devil," because in place of one single stone column, the Saudi authority have now erected a long high wall at each of the three locations.
 The Saudis conducted members of the international media to see the three new look *Jamra* at Mina yesterday, ahead of the annual pilgrimage which officially begins today. The replacement of the stone columns by walls means that targets are larger and could be struck by pilgrims without getting too close to them.
 The crash of pilgrims each trying to find these targets has often led to death and injury at this symbolic ritual

Bonke crusade raises tension in Plateau

Tension rose in Jos, the Plateau State capital as Muslims prepare for the Eid-el-Kabir festival just as German evangelist Reinhard Bonke is scheduled to hold a crusade during the week.
 This is against the backdrop of frequent commotions experienced in most of his crusade venues around the country.
 However, Muslim and Christian leaders in Plateau State have allayed fears of any clash over the Reinhard Bonke gospel crusade which has been scheduled to hold the same period with the Muslim Eid-el-Kabir prayers.
 While the Muslim Eid prayer is to hold Thursday 20 and Friday 21 the crusade is to come up between Wednesday 19 and Sunday, 23.
 Besides the period, there is also a coincidence in the venue as the venue of the crusade the Race Course field in Jos, is also the venue that the entire Yoruba Muslim community in Jos use for their prayers.
 However, while the Eid Prayer, which is to hold on

Obj solicits foreign investments

Thursday will come up in the morning, the crusade is scheduled to take place at 3 pm.
 Speaking with *Daily Trust*, chairman of the Yoruba Muslim Congress promised that, "there will be no problem. We have ironed everything out with the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), chairman in Plateau State, Rev. Yakubu Pam.
 This we have discussed with the director of state security services and ironed out everything."
 He assured that adequate security arrangements have been made.
 Also speaking on the event, CAN chairman, Rev. Yakubu Pam, while also maintaining that there would be no problem, said the crusade was being conducted for peace, reconciliation, restoration and unity.
 He said the need to have all men reconciled to God and to one another became important.
 Speaking at the First Business Roundtable with Government of Nigeria initiated by the Economist Group, publishers of *The Economist* news magazine yesterday in Abuja, the president also maintained that his administration's economic and political reform programmes were critical to

From Kabiru A. Yusuf, in Jos, Aliyu Haruna, Correspondent (Kaduna) & Yusha'u Adamu Ibrahim, Correspondent (Kano)
 Contd. on Pg 2

which is central to the hajj. Last year, nearly 200 pilgrims mostly from Asia were trampled to death at the *Jamra* *Kubra*, the biggest of the three in the place where this ritual normally begins on the second day of the four-day hajj.
 Meanwhile, the airlift of
 Contd. on Pg 2

By Ahmed I. Shekarau, Group Business Editor
 Contd. on Pg 2

News

UBA, STB to merge

By Ahmed I. Shekaran,
Group Business Editor

The Nigerian banking landscape may soon be fundamentally altered with the groundbreaking news of an agreed merger between two very strong banks, United Bank for Africa (UBA) Plc and Standard Trust Bank (STB) Plc.

An impeccable source in STB told *Daily Trust* yesterday that the board of directors of the two banks, at separate meetings over the weekend, approved arrangements for a merger between them.

Although a definite date for the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU), to formally signify the merger is yet to be fixed, another credible source in UBA confirmed the agreements to *Daily Trust* yesterday.

According to the sources, "the impetus for the merger plan is to create the leading bank in West Africa and one of the largest banks in Africa with a formidable asset base, offering the full spectrum of local and international private and institutional investors, including Banque Nationale de Paris,

Bankers Trust (Deutsche Bank), Banca Nazionale del Lavoro, and Monte dei Paschi di Siena and was formed to take over the banking business carried on in Nigeria since 1949 by the British and French Bank Limited.

UBA also has a legendary and enviable pedigree as the bank for 'wise men and women' with strong representation in the corporate and wholesale markets. It has a large and established retail franchise and two foreign branches in New York and Grand Cayman Island.

Standard Trust Bank Plc is a leading 'new' generation bank (licensed in 1990). Its growth has been phenomenal in the last few years and it now ranks among the 10 largest banks in the country by most indices.

It has over 100 branches spread across the country in what is described as the largest online real-time banking network in sub-Saharan Africa. It is often referred to as Nigeria's neighbourhood bank. This derives from its

national orientation in terms of geographic spread and continuing national expansion.

The enlarged bank will have close to five million customers, making it about the biggest bank in the country and it could build on the strengths of both institutions and rapidly seek to dominate in areas of national advantage.

Chief amongst these areas of strength is the retail and consumer finance space.

The respective boards, our sources disclosed further, believe that the enlarged institution could build an investment and wholesale banking operation that will be regarded as the foremost franchise in Nigeria, leveraging UBA's existing strength and international presence and reputation.

The sources hinted the merger has the blessings of the regulatory authorities.

Shareholders of the two banks are likely to benefit immensely from the merger, based on the envisaged synergies of the combination of assets of the two banks, the many opportunities for economies of scale and the sheer size of the union.

Bonnye

perative given the battered image of the state previously noted for peace and hospitality.

"Today, God has decided to re-direct our steps towards

Contd. from Pg 1

the path of good neighbourliness so as to remove the caveat of hatred and distrust that permeated our togetherness which was the hallmark of our existence."

Anambra crisis

court that the motion papers were duly served on them with proof of service and that they willingly neglected to file their defence or send a representative.

He urged the court to allow him move his motion contending that "when there is no counter motion, the court is to hold that all the averments of the plaintiff are deemed to be accepted by the defendants."

His request was granted by the court and the judge

Contd. from Pg 1

subsequently granted the plaintiff's order as prayed. In a related development, Justice Bello has struck out the motion filed by APGA faction led by Victor Umeh, challenging the basis for the suit.

The motion was struck out on the grounds that Umeh's suit was not a party to the fact and that they failed to file a requisite application for a joinder.

Justice Bello adjourned till February 8, for hearing of the substantive suit.

Haji

intending pilgrims in the 2005 haji at the Kaduna zone has been concluded, with the last flight taking off at about 8 pm with 490 passengers on board at the Kaduna international airport.

Shortly before his departure to the holy land, the zonal coordinator of the directorate of Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, federal ministry of Foreign Affairs, Alhaji Ahmadu Coomasse, in a telephone interview, told our correspondent that about 7,264 intending pilgrims were airlifted.

Alhaji Ahmadu Coomasse said that the last batch of pilgrims consisted of mainly staff of IA and IB officials of both states, zonal and federal pilgrims welfare board.

He said that the airlift of the pilgrims in the zone has been a success despite hitches encountered as a result of haze and dust from the harmattan in the early part of airlifting of the pilgrims.

The zonal coordinator disclosed that the airlifting of the intending pilgrims back home will commence on Sunday, January 23, 2005, in order to conclude the haji process on time.

He also said that the staff shall remain in Saudi Arabia to ensure that all pilgrims are airlifted back before they come home.

It will be recalled that the airlift of pilgrims experienced a setback as a result of the harmattan dust and haze that engulfed Kaduna and many cities in the northern part of the country.

Also the federal government has been advised to put in strong measures to punish defaulting airlines that left their passengers stranded for haji operations in future.

Alhaji Sabo Yakubu, one of the pilgrims who spoke to *Daily Trust* yesterday at The Malam Aminu Kano International Airport (MAKIA) said most of the delay caused by such airlines was due to improper arrangements.

Alhaji Sabo who expressed disappointment with private airlines suggested that the federal government should put in serious measures to punish any airline that fails to airlift passengers to the Holy land with a view to bringing sanity to the system.

He explained further that government should in the first place revoke its licence and retrieve the passengers money as according to him, there is an element of dishon-

Contd. from Pg 1

esty in their activities. The passengers who even though expressed hope to participate in this year's haji said that some of the intending pilgrims would not participate in this year's operation.

He therefore advised that government should after every year's operation, investigate thoroughly about stranded pilgrims and identify all defaulting airlines and punish them accordingly.

Everybody's knows that these airlines have no aircraft until when they collect people's money then they start looking for aircrafts. Therefore, government should punish whoever fails to make proper arrangements for pilgrims, he said.

Another contributor, Alhaji Mandoruhu told *Daily Trust* that they were at Makia for three days and no official has come to them for explanations.

He said over 200 pilgrims that paid their H & B have given up for this year's haji operation since yesterday was the deadline of the extended 3-days given by Saudi authority.

Daily Trust also learnt that the Jigawa State intending pilgrims were as of yesterday stranded at Makia.

Daily Trust also learnt that 42 intending pilgrims from Nasarawa State were disappointed by their airline who left them stranded.

The stranded pilgrims were later taken back to their state by the state government after they spent about a week in Kano in search of their airline yet to be identified.

Source at MAKIA told *Daily Trust* that the pilgrims have paid over N100,000 each to the unidentified airline.

Meanwhile, the remaining 900 pilgrims from Katsina State were yesterday airlifted to the holy land by Kobo Air.

Speaking to *Daily Trust* at MAKIA, a member of the national haji committee in charge of Kano zone, Alhaji Idris Kallamu Hadejia, disclosed that Kobo air brought two Boeing 744 aircrafts for the airlifting of Katsina state pilgrims.

He disclosed also that by the grace of God, all intending pilgrims from Katsina State would be airlifted to the holy land by the closure of King Abdul Aziz international airport, Jeddah.

FG concludes railways privatisation plan

From Adelanwa Bamgboye,
Correspondent (Lagos)

The federal government has concluded plans to concession the Nigeria Railway Corporation (NRC), the managing director NRC, Alhaji Abdul-Rahman Abubakar has said.

Speaking in a chat with *Daily Trust* yesterday at the headquarters of the corporation, Alhaji Abubakar said that the concessioning of the NRC would take the form of privatisation.

He explained that the Bureau of Public Enterprises has already put in place machinery to work hand in hand with the NRC with a view to invite the private sector to invest in order to give the nation a better service.

The NRC boss said that the federal government has provided funds to procure spare parts to reactivate more locomotives noting that the corporation does not earn much money.

He also disclosed that the NRC has entered into serious discussions with some oil companies including Conoil and APPlc with a view to assist in the haulage of petroleum products from the south to the north.

the survival of Nigeria as a country and are therefore "irreversible".

"I want to assure you that this country is peaceful and very safe for business", Obasanjo said, stressing that though the country has not reached a stage where the citizenry would be pleased with, a lot of the ills associated with Nigerians are now things of the past.

For instance, president Obasanjo said that the spate of armed robbery in the country has reduced by 50 per cent.

The Economist conference, which will be rounded up today, offers opportunity for direct and productive dialogue between the Nigerian government and the interna-

Senators, want review of PDP constitution

* as stakeholders shun reform c'ttee

By Hammed M. Bello,
Senior Political Reporter
(Reps)

Senators and other members of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) yesterday insisted that the constitution of the party must be reviewed to expunge obnoxious clauses believed to be sources of crisis impeding the growth and sustenance of the ruling party.

These were part of the submissions at the opening of a two day public hearing held by the committee set up to restructure the party ahead of 2007 but which was not properly attended.

Major stakeholders of the PDP at all levels expected to make presentations at the public hearing were absent but a member of the reform committee and former transport minister, Chief Ojo Maduewe, said that about 15 memoranda were before the committee, suggesting that those absent might have sent in their memoranda.

Government at all levels was expected to make presentations at the public hearing, but only the senate was represented, without any representation from the federal and state governments and the House of Representatives, at the hearing by the reform committee set up on Friday, December 3, 2004 and headed by Alhaji Iro Dan

Musa, a board of trustees member of the PDP.

In a position paper presented to the committee by Senator David Mark on behalf of the PDP senators, they said the review of the party's constitution was necessary to check the low level of discipline and near total disregard for party supremacy by members.

The senate recommended that the party constitution be enforced to the letter, without regard to any individual, no matter his economic power or level of authority.

The senate also recommended that a post election control mechanism be established to keep elected and appointed officials in check and within the party manifesto and constitution.

Apparently alluding to the recent crises rocking the party, the senate prescribed that an internal mechanism be put in place to ensure democracy in party governance and electoral process; in addition to the acceptance of the rule of law under which all members must be equal irrespective of position.

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Contd. from Pg 1

tional business community.

Obasanjo said further that Nigerians have always respected and protected foreigners, adding that the private property of such foreigners had at no time been illegally appropriated.

"Even in our most trying times, foreigners have always been respected and protected and private property belonging to foreign investors have never been illegally appropriated," he said.

According to the president, the reforms did not only evolve from a dire need to change the ways Nigerians are doing things in the past, but also enjoyed wide consultations and popular participation.

"For instance, the NEEDS is the product of the most consultative and inclusive process in the history of the country."

"The reforms have also been founded on a clear vision, sound values and enduring principles," he added.

Also speaking, the managing director of Nigeria Breweries Ltd, Festus Odimogwu commended the economic agenda of the Obasanjo administration and urged foreign investors to come to the country.

Chief Odimogwu said that since the advent of this administration, the profit margin of private companies operating in the country have witnessed phenomenal in-

creases.

Federal capital territory (FCT) minister, Malan Nasir Ahmad el-Rufai, said the reforms were not imposed by the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as often speculated, saying: "This is our own idea of moving Nigeria forward."

Most members of the economic team such as the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) governor, Professor Charles Soludo, Minister of State for Finance, Mrs. Nenadi Usman, captains of industries, economic adviser to the president, Professor Ode Ojowa and some notable private sector stakeholders were in attendance at the opening session of the two-day conference.

News

Useni drags FG to court over seized properties

Former FCT minister, retired Lt-Gen. Jeremiah Useni, yesterday asked a federal high court in Abuja to declare government action confiscating his properties illegal.

The retired general is also asking the court to quash a summons issued on him by the Code of Conduct Tribunal alleging abuse of office and corrupt acquisition of the properties.

The suit which was filed by his counsel, Mr. Dele Oye, came up before Justice Stephen Adah.

Arguing his motion, Oye contended that government confiscated his client's houses and landed properties located

in prime areas of the FCT.

"We urge the court to compel them to release all the documents relating to these properties which they purported as gifts from my client," he said.

He said that government forcefully took the properties from his client on the pretence that they were gifts.

The plaintiff also asked the court to declare null and void the setting up of a tribunal by the Code of Conduct Bureau to try allegations of abuse of office and corruption against him.

His counsel contended that the Act setting up the tribunal was in conflict with the 1999 constitution and therefore inconsistent and a nullity.

He argued that the office of the National Security Adviser investigated the allegations against his client before it was transferred to the Bureau for trial.

Oye said the tribunal had no constitutional powers to try

allegations investigated by a different body other than it.

The plaintiff's counsel argued that the tribunal had no powers to try a non public officer or a former public officer.

He said that his client retired in 1998 while the charges were preferred against him in 2002, four years after his retirement.

"The tribunal is set up to try public officers in full employment, if the respondent feel they have a case against my client, they should try him under the criminal law and not otherwise," he submitted.

Defendants in the suit includes the attorney general of the federation, code of conduct tribunal, its Chairman, Justice Bashir Sambo and three other members of the tribunal.

They were neither in court nor represented by counsel at the hearing.

Adah ordered that the defendants be put on notice and he adjourned February 28, for their reply and address.

Muslims enjoined to fast on Arafat day

The Amir (President) of the Movement for Islamic Culture and Awareness (MICA), Justice Abeebe Adewale Abiru, has enjoined Muslims in the country to "fast and pray fervently" tomorrow (Wednesday, January 19) which is the day Muslims on pilgrimage will ascend mount Arafat as part of the Hajj rites.

In a statement issued in Lagos yesterday, Justice Abiru stated that fasting on Arafat day is a highly rewarding practice of Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

He explained that in accordance with the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), fasting on Arafat day erases the sins of two years for whosoever fasted on that day.

According to Justice Abiru, the Arafat day fast was prescribed by the Prophet for only the Muslims who are not on pilgrimage.

The MICA president advised Muslims to seize the opportunity of the Arafat day fast to seek favours and more blessings from Allah (SWT) through prayers.

Said he: "The Prophet has told us that the prayer of a person who is fasting sincerely for Allah's sake does not go unanswered. So let us seize the opportunity of the Arafat day fast to beg Allah for more favours and blessings."

FG concedes 7% revenue to NCS

The federal government has finally breathed a new lease of life into the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) and the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), with the approval of the cost of collection approach to funding the service.

Impeccable sources informed *Daily Trust* that the Federal Government has now conceded about seven percent of the customs service total revenue generated to be retained by the service.

This is to serve as an incentive to the NCS which has suffered untold hardship under paucity of funds.

Investigations revealed that the NCS yearly revenue collection into the federal government purse is about N200 billion. But hitherto, it was not allowed to retain any part of the huge revenue as an incentive to be ploughed back into the service.

The FIRS was not equally given any better treatment in terms of funding.

However, with the recent approval by the Federal Executive Council (FEC), the two services would now have extra budgetary provisions which will adequately take care of their needs including personnel and capital cost requirements.

Maritime industry experts are

Adelawwa Bamgboye,
Correspondent (Lagos)

of the view that when properly funded, the NCS would be able to earn more revenue for the government.

Similarly, it is believed that if customs officers are well remunerated, many areas of revenue loss would be plugged, thereby beefing up government purse.

The sources, on revenue being generated by the NCS include; import duty collection; Value Added Tax (VAT), 5 percent, Port Levy 7 percent; sugar levy, National Automobile Council (NAC) levy 2 percent; rice levy 10 percent; Comprehensive Import Supervision Scheme (CISS) 1 percent and the NDCC.

Red Cross opens tsunami relief account

The Nigerian Red Cross Society has opened a reception account in four banks across the country to receive donations for the rehabilitation of victims of the Tsunami disaster.

Addressing newsmen yesterday in Abuja on the ongoing relief efforts for the victims of the Tsunami, the national president of the



Former Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon and former President Alhaji Shehu Shagari going through some documents during the Council of State meeting at the State House, Abuja ...recently.
Pic: Joe Oroye

New gas needed for constant power supply — NEPA MD

The Managing Director of the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA), Mr. Joseph Makeju, yesterday said that the development of new gas fields in the country was necessary to ensure uninterrupted supply of the commodity.

Mr. Makeju said this while addressing newsmen shortly after meeting with the House Committee on Gas Resources, on the reduction of gas supply to the Nigerian Gas Company (NAC) by Shell, Chevron and Texaco.

He said that, "it has become necessary to fund expansion of gas facilities so that there can be adequate gas in the country," adding that every year, the money paid by NEPA for gas to NGC increases by about 10 percent.

He explained that the increase came about because the amounts paid to NGC as revenue is insufficient and

this will invariably make NEPA pay more from its own revenue.

He warned that tariff on NEPA services may increase in future due to the situation but restated that the supply of gas to NEPA by NGC is so bad now and must improve considerably well before any increase can be made.

The chairman of the gas resources committee, Honourable Mercy Almona

recalled, won as the party's national chairman in the Lagos convention but this did not go down well with Senator Mojisoluwa Akinfemiwa, who rushed to the federal high court seeking nullification of the election and recognition of the Abuja convention as demure which produced him as the national chairman of the party.

Akande thereafter contested the jurisdiction of the court to entertain the matter and proceeded to the Court of Appeal.

But while ruling on the application for stay yesterday, the trial judge observed that the issue of jurisdiction of the court to entertain the matter and the counter claim had been contested since its inception.

He explained that when the applicant discontinued their entire claim on the 21st of September 2004, the counsel submitted that this is because there was no longer any counter claim before the court that could stand on its own saying that he overruled him.

He held as follows, "that the proceedings are hereby stayed pending the hearing and determination of the appeal in the Court of Appeal against the ruling of this court delivered on October 8 and 19, 2004 on two conditions that the applicant could diligently pursue their appeal."

Mohammed Shosanya,
Judicial Correspondent
(Lagos)

By Sunday Ejike Benjamin,
Health Reporter

Nigerian Red Cross Society, Dr. Ibrahim Tahir, said the accounts will accommodate cheques, money orders and other convertible instruments and appealed to those who want to pay in cash at any of the banks to ask for the NRC's Tsunami Relief Fund.

The banks, according to NRC's national president are, First Bank of Nigeria Plc, with account number, 237203000B11, United Bank for Africa Plc, account number 0122080000660, Bank of the North Limited, account number 5033489, and the Zenith International Bank Limited with account number 6012609316.

Dr. Tahir who commended the former Head of State, General Muhammadu Buhari (rd) for donating to the fund the sum of N100,000 also congratulated members of the House of Representatives for levying themselves N20,000 each in support of the

Tsunami victims and called on the Senate President, Chief Adolphus Wabara to borrow a leaf from the House of Representatives and effect similar contributions from the Senate.

While stressing the need to contribute to the fund to bring succour and happiness to Tsunami victims, the Nigerian Red Cross Society, he noted, has targeted eminent Nigerians like Alhaji Aliku Dangote and the Dangote Organisation, Owelle Rochas Okorocho and Alhaji Arisekola Alao for immediate support for the fund raising campaign and mobilization of Nigerians.

He said these arrangements are made as a Nigerian Red Cross Society initiative to the consolidation of the main national effort and announced that most donor countries have indicated interest to contribute more in support of the victims.



Officials of the Nasrul-Lahit-Fathi Society (NASLAF), with President Olusegun Obasanjo (57 left), at the State House, Abuja during a courtesy visit...recently.

News

FG earmarks N64bn for roads

The minister of works, Chief Adegoye Ogunlewe, yesterday stated that N64 billion has been set aside for road construction this year just as he said that roads which have reached 70% completion will be accorded priority from the money.

Chief Ogunlewe was addressing the House committee on appropriation during

By Zainab Alimi, Political Reporter (Reps)

his ministry's budget defence at the National Assembly, where he also told the committee that a report on the second Niger bridge is ready and will soon be presented.

He added that N4.5 billion was provided for the reconstruction of the Bayelsa road and the amount has been dis-

bursed on it since 1999 although the construction work there is difficult due to the terrain.

The chairman of the appropriation committee, Hon. Gabriel Suswan, commended the ministry for its high performance in 2004 and expressed hope that there'll be better performance this year.

He lauded the national road development programme which will rehabilitate 5,000 kilometers of road and maintain 32,000 kilometers, but warned that those projects which the ministry is sure to work on are outlined and the committee properly notified to avoid a situation whereby monies meant for a particular project will be vied to another.

The ministry of works plans to complete in phases, roads of which each zone in the country will benefit two each, depending on the approved allocations to the ministry from the 2005 budget.

The dualization of the Lokoja-Abuja road will also begin this year but is not expected to be completed during the tenure of the present administration.

Gov Saraki tasks Kwara Muslims on patience

Muslims in Kwara state have been enjoined to exhibit patience and other virtues of their faith to sustain the atmosphere of peace and harmony now existing in the state.

Kwara State governor, Dr. Abubakar Bukola Saraki, in a message to mark the Eid-el-Kabir celebration, urged all Muslims to rededicate themselves to the injunctions of love and selflessness as epitomized by the sacrifice made by Prophet Ibrahim (AlaHim Salan).

Recalling the background to the annual sacrifice by Muslims, Dr. Saraki reminded parents to always obey Allah's injunctions and advised children to be obedient to their parents as exemplified by Prophet Ibrahim who wanted to sacrifice his only son, Ismail, in obedience to an instruction from Allah.

The Governor thanked the people of the state for their cooperation and support for his administration since its inception in 2003 and assured them of the unflinching determination to revamp the economy and infrastructures of the state.

From Abdulrazaq Adebayo, Correspondent (Ilorin)

He expressed optimism that the various economic empowerment schemes of the state government and its agricultural development programmes would usher in an era of prosperity in the state.

While congratulating every Muslim on the occasion of the Sallah celebration, Dr. Saraki enjoined them to be steadfast in their prayers for those in constituted authority and governments at all levels.

Nigeria, Brazil negotiate areas of cooperation

Nigeria and Brazil yesterday began negotiations towards a pact on economic, social and political cooperation.

The negotiating teams led by the two nations' foreign affairs ministers, Olu Adeniji and Celso Luiz Nunes, for Nigeria and Brazil respectively, would form the basis for a Nigeria/Brazilian joint commission expected to take off in May.

According to Celso, his country is prepared to negotiate in the areas of oil, machine tools, maritime transport, labour and industry.

Other areas are health and education.

Celso identified cassava cultivation as one area his country would seek close ties with Nigeria, noting that it was a major and staple crop in both countries.

He said that both nations shall look into the area of cultural cooperation and also work towards assisting each other on peace keeping missions abroad.

Brazil also reminded Nigeria of its candidature in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and solicited support to achieve that quest.

Adeniji in his remarks, lauded the bilateral relationship between both nations, especially on the political front.

He welcomed the idea of exploring the cassava potentials, saying that Nigeria was looking into ways of using the crop for bread making.

The minister said that Nigeria would also examine strategies adopted by Brazil that reduced by half, the mortality rate resulting from the HIV/AIDS epidemic, malaria and tuberculosis.

Adeniji said that both nations shall also work towards better maritime transport, immigration, trafficking and money laundering.

Both ministers agreed to enhance their resolve to end conflicts in their regions with Brazil leading Nigeria's role in Africa and Nigeria praising Brazil's role towards a stable Haiti.



R-L: The wife of Editor of Daily Trust, Mrs Sa'adatu Modibbo Karwa, her sister Amina Muhammad and Mrs. Olamide Olawepo during Media Trust Limited 2nd Annual Trust Dialogue held in Abuja recently. Pix: Kennedy Egbosode

NASFAT urges govt to hands off Hajj

The chairman, Board of Trustees of Nasrul-Lahi-il-Fathi Society of Nigeria (NASFAT), Alhaji Abdul Lateef Olasupo, has called on the government to gradually withdraw from hajj as is the practice in other countries.

Alhaji Olasupo made the call last week when members of the organization paid a courtesy call on President Olusegun Obasanjo at the State House in Abuja.

Alhaji Olasupo in his address, urged the government to withdraw from hajj operations to mitigate the hardships that pilgrims face yearly evident in the on-going hajj exercise.

He urged the president to keep up his good works just as he restated the organisation's commitment to render services on issues affecting youths and Muslims in general whenever the need arises.

Receiving members of the executive committee of the organization, President Obasanjo lauded their achievements in such a short time and urged them to continue with the good works they are doing.

He said that he was impressed with the composition of the executive committee adding that they strike him as a focused group even as he promised that government will consider and address all their requests.

Three youths docked for setting man ablaze

Kaduna magistrate has remanded three youths who allegedly took part in setting ablaze a man said to have stolen a child in Tudun Wada area of Kaduna.

Police prosecutor, John Odeh, told the court that the deceased, Bashir Umar, of Tudun Wada, was attacked and killed by nine youths.

He named the accused as Mohammed Sani, Shuaibu Abdullahi, Shehu Gambo, Ado Usman, Aminu Rabu, Abdurahman Abdullahi, Chindo Umar and Gambati Odeh told the court that the

NASFAT was formed 10 years ago with a mission to develop an enlightened Muslim society nurtured by a true understanding of Islam for the spiritual upliftment and welfare of mankind.

With 145 branches across Nigeria and 1.2 million members in and around Nigeria, the organization, among other things, have embarked

upon anti-corruption crusade, economic empowerment of people, AIDS campaign, Hajj/Umrab operations, NASFAT village, spiritual and social responsibilities with the recent one being the registration of the proposed fountain university to be located at Osogbo, Osun state.

Ethnic dialogue panacea for peace, stability - Trust Dialogue

Dialogue among the entire ethnic nationalities has been described as the panacea for peace, stability and economic growth in Nigeria. This was contained in a thirteen-point communiqué issued at the end of the second annual Trust dialogue held in Abuja recently.

According to the communiqué signed by three editorial board members of Media Trust Limited namely Sanusi Abubakar, Idang Alibi and Ujudad Shariff, "the economic empowerment to eradicate poverty and ensure self-sustaining growth should be at the centre of any reform efforts," and that the need to keep the naira strong and save it "from continuing devaluation and bastardization

is more compelling today than ever."

The statement added that "the public service must be reformed and turned into its former glory, have its remuneration reviewed to reflect the prevailing cost of living and be provided with security of tenure and that the due process should be decentralized and instituted in all ministries, departments and in all the three tiers of government.

On the issue of debt relief, the communiqué said "Nigeria should negotiate its debt directly with its creditors individually, and not through cartels like the Paris or London clubs."

According to the communiqué, the stakeholders at the dialogue further called for a "fairer distribution of national wealth between all sectors and among persons for the economic stability and growth of Nigeria's economy" and that "the government should reduce waste and extravagance and be more frugal in managing the nation's resources."

The communiqué concluded that Nigeria's economy needs more than simple transformation and that Nigeria should go beyond merely following economic paradigms but "should look inwards for its development."

Dep speaker blames neglect for Niger Delta crisis

The deputy speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Austin Okpara, has said that the main problem in the Niger-Delta is 'protracted neglect' and has lauded the United Nation's efforts to aid the resolution of the crisis in the region.

Hon. Okpara said this while receiving the United Nations' Assistant Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), Mr. Marcel A. Boisard, who paid him a courtesy visit in his office yesterday.

"There can't be a better time for the UN to come in" he said. "The youths in the Niger-Delta are not gainfully occupied and the region is yearning for development. I believe that with the training you will be bringing in, they will be empowered to become useful assets to the society."

Mr. Boisard had earlier briefed the deputy speaker on the objectives of UNITAR, saying that it presently engages about 80,000 trainees mostly youths, in capacity

building of regions, conflict resolution, ecological evolution and sustainable development in 125 training programmes all over the world.

He said that his visit to Nigeria was centered on how possible assistance could be rendered to the youths particularly in the Niger-Delta region by UNITAR.

"This" he said, "would be accomplished through feasibility studies and inventory of training needs in government which would be undertaken by Nigerian university graduates for local, regional and bilateral training."

Hon. Okpara pledged his assistance for the proposed training programme adding that it would go a long way to complement Federal government's efforts in the region through its Niger-Delta Development Commission (NDDC) which has however suffered inadequate funding.

He also called on other international organizations to emulate UNITAR and help divert young minds from indulging in violent crises.

For the Record

2nd Annual Trust Dialogue

'Reforming Nigeria, Which Model?' - Communiqué

The second Annual Trust Dialogue organised by Media Trust Limited (publishers of *Weekly* and *Daily Trust* newspapers) was held on Thursday the 13th of January 2005 at the Ladi Kwali Hall, Sheraton Hotel and Towers, Abuja under the chairmanship of the former Head of Interim Government, Chief E. A. O. Shonekan. The theme of this year's Trust Dialogue was: **Reforming Nigeria, Which Model?**

The Special Guest of Honour, Vice President of Nigeria, Atiku Abubakar was represented by the Honourable Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Mallam Nasir El-Rufai who also was the Chief Host at the occasion. The Royal Father of the Day was HRH Etsu Nupe, Alhaji Yahaya Abubakar. Also on the high table were the Governor of Yobe State, Alhaji Bukar Abba Ibrahim, the Minister of Cooperation and Integration in Africa, Alh. Abba Gana Guba, the Minister of Sports and Social Development, Col. Musa Mohammed, the chairman of Arewa Consultative Forum, Chief Sunday Awoniyi, former Senate President of Nigeria, Dr. Anyim Pius Anyim, former Speaker, Hon. Ghali Umar Na'Abba, representative of Honourable Minister of Information, Dr. Okey Ikwehukwu, representative of the Governor of Kano State, Dr. Tijjani Naniya, representative of the Honourable Speaker, House of Representatives, Dr. Yahaya Abdullahi, the NLC President, Comrade Adams Oshimhole.

Other dignitaries that graced the occasion included: Dr. Ibrahim Tahir, Col. Habibu Shuaibu (ret), Alhaji AbdulMumin Bello, Chairman, Media Trust Limited, Ambassador of Palestine, Alh. Isiaq A. Ajibola, Executive Director, Media Trust Limited, Dr. Usman Bugaje, Ambassador of Sudan, 3rd Sec of

Egyptian Embassy, Alh. Yarima Abdullahi, former Ambassador to Malaysia, Alh. Dauda Abari, Mr. Ndanusa Aloo, Managing Director of New Nigeria Newspapers, Alh. Ismaila Isa Funtua, Engineer Ibrahim Ali, Hon. Abike Dabiri, Mr. Charles Oputa, President, PMAN, Hon. Alh. Mustapha Imam representing Kogi State Governor, Alh. Shehu Malami and Mrs. Oby Ezekwesili the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Budget Monitoring and Due Process.

The three guest speakers invited to present various papers at the conference were:

1. Mal. Sanusi Lamido Sanusi on: **Reforming the Nigerian Economy: Which Model? A theoretical critique of Nigerian Economic Policy from 1986 to 2004.**

2. Prof. Sam Aluko on: **Reforming Nigeria, Which Model? The Economic Dimension.**

3. Prof. Mike Kwanashie on: **Reforming Nigeria, Which Model?**

Chief (Dr.) Ernest Shonekan, in his opening remarks as the chairman of the occasion, welcomed the special guests and distinguished participants. He praised the dialogue as apt and timely pointing out that reform is inevitable if Nigeria is to survive and realise her manifest destiny. He pointed out that reforming Nigeria entails focusing on three dimensions namely, socio-cultural, economic and political. To end the irony of poverty and misery in the face of such rich human and natural resources endowment, he urged the participants to focus on reforms of our federal system, dialogue among our people to resolve pressing issues, and economic empowerment of the majority of our people for sustainable and meaningful development.

The Vice President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar GCON as the

Special Guest of Honour outlined the government's efforts aimed at achieving macro-economic stability, fighting corruption and enthrone transparency and accountability. These reorientation and restructuring include privatisation, NEEDS (The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy), deregulation, fixing broken infrastructure, new pension scheme, and the establishment of private universities. Government, he pointed out, would continue to reduce the role of the state and refocusing it for better service delivery, leaving people free to invest and create jobs guided by private sector and the markets, based also on consultation and dialogue.

Sanusi Lamido Sanusi in his paper presented a theoretical critique of Nigerian Economic Policy from 1986 to 2004. He emphasised the need to reform Nigerians, and not just Nigeria pointing out that such reforms must start with the leaders. A model cannot work unless those responsible for its implementation allow it to work. He pointed out that our policy makers have misunderstood and misapplied economic theory, and the underpinning economic policy is untenable. He argued that the CBN has missed a unique opportunity to provide macro-economic stability and made concrete suggestions for the future.

Similarly, Prof. Mike Kwanashie, in his presentation urged Nigerians to be realistic. Reforms take place within a context. Current initiatives, genuine and realistic as they are, he said, can only bear fruit if we take the global economic and ideological contexts into account. The weak, transitional, social formations of our country face to face with the forces of

globalization can only lead, if care is not taken, to domination and subordination. He further said that the people must own the reform process.

Prof. Sam Aluko, in his paper, insisted that reform should be multi-dimensional and encompass social, political, economic, administrative, cultural and religious attitudes as well as international relations; and added that the current reforms are too self-serving to the ruling class. They are merchantilist, not market-oriented, and emphasize short-term activities, consumption and distribution as more important than production. The reform has been a disaster and we need to go back to the drawing board, putting the welfare of the majority above all else.

The following points of consensus emerged from the Dialogue.

It was noted that:

* For any economic model to work, its implementers must be dedicated, patriotic, honest and selfless.

* Increasing money supply without commensurate economic growth leads to inflation, low standard of living, poverty and unemployment.

* A n y effective economic programme must squarely fight the cancer of corruption.

* Government alone cannot carry out successful economic reform programme without a strong participation of the private sector.

* Nigeria is still largely a dependent economy with high propensity for consuming foreign goods and services.

* N i g e r i a should go beyond merely following economic paradigms, but should look inwards in order to ensure that such paradigms conform to our social, political and cultural circumstances.

* N i g e r i a n s must imbibe modern

work ethics and cherish the dignity of labour.

* T h a t Nigerians are not basically corrupt; the majority are upright.

* T h a t Nigeria's external debt is fraudulent as we obtained \$18 billion loan, paid over N46 billion, and still have to pay N34 billion more.

* The retrenchment of workers by government at every opportunity is not healthy for economic growth, poverty alleviation and overall development.

* T h a t a dedicated and selfless leadership is what Nigeria needs to move it forward.

* T h a t for any reform to be successful in Nigeria, it must be rooted in the people especially the rural communities.

The Dialogue recommended as follows:

1. That dialogue among the entire ethnic nationalities is the panacea for peace, stability and economic growth.

2. That economic empowerment of the vast majority of the people to eradicate poverty and ensure self-sustaining growth should be at the centre of any reform effort.

3. There should also be economic diversification and the promotion of appropriate technology for moving the economy forward.

4. That the need to keep our currency strong and save it from continuing devaluation and bastardization is more compelling today than ever before.

5. That the public service must be reformed and returned to its 1970's glory, have its remuneration reviewed to reflect the prevailing cost of living, and be provided with security of tenure.

6. That Nigeria's economy needs more than simple reformation but fundamental transformation.

7. That Nigeria should negotiate its debt directly with its creditors, individually, and not through cartels like Paris or London clubs.

8. That Nigeria needs a national ideology to guide its national policies.

9. In view of the continuing slide in Nigeria's economy in the past 16 years of the IMF inspired Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), Nigeria should urgently revert to the idea of National Development Planning as was the case between 1956 and 1985.

10. That there should be fairer distribution of national wealth between all sectors and among persons for the economic stability and growth of Nigeria's economy.

11. That due process should be decentralised and instituted in all ministries and departments in all the three tiers of government.

12. That the government should reduce waste and extravagance and be more frugal in managing the nation's resources.

13. That Nigeria should look inwards for its development.

Signed by the following Editorial Board members:

MUHAMMAD AL-GHAZALI

ON TUESDAY
tempthist@yahoo.com

Ogbeh: Between the thief and the receiver...

Last week, I wrote that the president, along with the PDP hierarchy, opted for a peaceful ending to the simmering crises in their party, when they backed down from the earlier threat to remove, or even disgrace their Chairman. My reasoning was that an open disagreement over the issue would have further weakened the party and deepened public disenchantment in an already over-heated polity. However, no sooner had my piece gone to press than news broke that Ogbeh had resigned to save the party from self-destruction. Was he coerced at gunpoint as alleged in some quarters, or was he even blackmailed into doing so? Ogbeh has already gone on record to say that neither was the case, but one thing is evident from the manner of his exit. The president avoided humiliation by not forcing the issue during the meeting of the party's National Working Committee. Some governors backed by a certain Aliko Abubakar at the head of the now vanquished PDM political machine, were known to have arrived the meeting armed with their own agenda to settle a few scores with him.

In achieving his goal, the president's strategy which craftily avoided a frontal attack, was not entirely dissimilar to the pincer movement in military terms. Significantly, the Chairman was trapped between the overwhelming pressure from the president and his minders particularly Anthony Anenih, the supreme and indefatigable Capo in the president's camp, and the fear of possible investigation and prosecution by the EFCC. In Obasanjo's twisted logic, the resignation could also pass for his favoured 'soft landing' approach. Either way, what could not be achieved through the front door was eventually accomplished via the back while his opponents snored in their executive mansions. The lie could of course be put to my theory if the EFCC eventually takes action against Ogbeh.

Still, if the president is under any illusion that he has effectively dealt with the Chairman quietly he is dead wrong. In the coming days and months the issue is sure to expose the party's own inherent public ridicule and deepen the cleavages within it. He may have had his way, but he deludes only himself if he thinks Nigerians were hoodwinked by his moral grandstanding over the entire sordid affair. It is all too obvious that Ogbeh's removal was a vain attempt to distance the president from the scandal that arose over their mutual disclosures on the smouldering Anambra crises. But the idea will not wash for several reasons, least of which has to do with the fact that the massive electoral frauds of 2003 were not restricted to Anambra state alone.

But nemesis can be a terrible thing especially to a known transgressor. Digesting some of Ogbeh's comments after his resignation, I couldn't resist the urge to laugh aloud. I was astonished he could even refer to himself as an idealist while at the same time offering us a glimpse into how the PDP which he led conducted its affairs. In his words: "How can these people who say they are fighting for principles go around in the night distributing money for people to vote for them. What kind of principle is that? I find it very embarrassing." Now that he is down to earth, somebody

receiver...

should please remind the man that he merely expressed the view held by over a hundred million Nigerians over the conduct of state affairs since the return of democracy in 1999. Better still, someone should cajole the Idoma chief to conduct a post-mortem of all PDP primaries since 1999, including the one which elected him chairman barely three years ago. In the meantime, all I have to say to him in his own dialect is 'Arya' for his efforts and attempt at self-delusion. Among the first things he did after tendering his resignation letter last week, was to visit the FCT Minister to perfect the title documents of his landed property in Abuja. Now, how about that for idealism!

The president's political adviser Jerry Gana was to maintain the same fallacy when he also said, "Ogbeh has not resigned by force or in protest but for certain reasons of principles." He went further to infer that the act was to restore the party's dignity and honour. But again, such comments are ridiculous for the simple reason that if there is anything that is antithetical to the PDP or the present administration, it must be those same values he referred to. It is not possible for one to be idealistic or principled and condone electoral fraud at the same time.

Also, far from strengthening the party, the circumstances, and not necessary Ogbeh's departure, has further weakened it. In the same vein, if the president was correct in comparing the act between Chris Uba and Ngeje to that between mutual robbers over loot, the impasse between himself and Ogbeh was essentially a disagreement through the very man who supervised the theft of the people's mandate in 2003, and the principal receiver of the proceeds who happened to be no other than Olusegun Obasanjo.

But I was also deeply troubled by the larger implications of Ogbeh's forced exit. If ever there were any doubts that Nigeria is now a full-blown dictatorship, they no longer exist as we shall see presently. I won't even bore you with the theoretical expectations of the party within an assumed democracy because in our particular case, the party for all practical purposes exists, only on paper! What is alarming and should be of primary concern to us is that the nation is now effectively in the vice-like grip of an unrepentant bully and dictator of the meanest hue. Some jokers even dared to compare the leadership crises in the PDP to the Asian Tsunami, but in reality, nothing could be further from the truth. A Tsunami is a natural catastrophe which is also spontaneous albeit with some degree of deception as the waves rose and receded. But the mess in the PDP started in Jos more than six years ago when it threw up Olusegun Obasanjo as its presidential candidate. The fifth in the party became evident a few years after when several good men such as Sunday Awoniyi were forced to flee the party to salvage what remained of their honour and integrity. The fifth degenerated into a terrible odour when Auda Ogbe replaced Banabas Gemade as party chairman and became an inebriated stench soon after the infamous 4/19 elections.

Through all these events, our democratic structures and institutions were systematically weakened to the benefit of a single individual in the person of Olusegun Obasanjo. Ogbeh's fall therefore was merely another epoch in our gradual slide into the dark abyss.

Within the same period, the nation witnessed the unparalleled use and abuse of state resources to enshrine mediocrity and incompetence. This was manifest in the manner Evan[s] Ewemren was enthroned as Senate President. It was also obvious when Chuba Okadigbo was impeached and very much the same in the scandalous attempt to dislodge Ghali Na'abba from office. While all these events unfolded, never in the history of this vast and diverse nation, did we earn so much from oil revenue and yet had nothing but tears, sorrow and blood to show for it. Now, except we live in dreamland, there was no spontaneity in all these. Our predicament, born from the cold and calculated planning and conspiracy of a few septuagenarians who reaped bountifully from the best their nation could offer in the past five decades, and have also secured the future for their progeny for generations to come.

We reaped grief and despair because we were hostages to an ego the size of Mount Everest. We wallowed in the squall of our collapsed social infrastructure because courage and even conscience deserted the men and women 'selected' to represent us in the National Assembly. We are in anguish because men like Auda Ogbeh decided to put their personal comforts ahead of the national interest. Sadly, in his primitive logic, we were told he capitulated to strengthen the party while in reality, apart from massaging the president's king-sized ego, he only succeeded in weakening the entire democratic process.

Rather painfully, we were told he was ordered to type the initial handwritten resignation letter he submitted to the president. Only a man who had thoroughly compromised his position, and was also inhibited by the circumstances of his emergence as party chairman could stomach the same degree of humiliation. Perhaps he knows a few things we may not be aware of on how irritants were dealt with by the party in the past and choose to go quietly without much fuss. He even pleaded that we accept his predicament in good fate and let sleeping dogs lie. But that is only possible if he was merely the chairman of his farm in Onurkpo and not the PDP whose candidate he helped to rig into office. His attitude also explains why we may never produce a Nelson Mandela from these shores.

Regardless, the entire system needs to be fleeced of depots and opportunists masquerading as democrats. When Nigerians covered before Abacha, they knew he had few democratic credentials. But the tragedy is that this president wants the world to believe he is the finest democrat since John Locke while exhibiting the same repressive tendencies as Josef Stalin in his prime. More than anything, what the face-off between Obasanjo and Ogbeh has thought us is that the PDP for all practical purposes is now a mere organ of the presidency. When you add that to a thoroughly subordinated National Assembly under its current leadership and a judiciary reeling from the effects of bribery allegations, you end up with a ship of state effectively marooned on the high seas and whose fate could be worse than that of the *Titanic*. That ship sadly, represents Nigeria at this present and most infamous time.

Opinion

Whither the Voice of Nigeria?

By Kehinde Oduase

Our life is a transient reality because long after we leave this world, most of the structures that keep the world going shall remain. Even the founders of the greatest institutions on earth had to die while those institutions remain. Sometimes we make passing reference to them depending on how they tried to immortalise themselves through their work, this is while we talk of leaving one's footsteps on the sand of time.

The Voice of Nigeria, founded in 1961, is one of the institutions that were created to last for a very long time. Like such institutions everywhere, it is bound to witness many Chief Executives who will contribute their own block to the development of the edifice. Just last year, the Director General of the place, Mr. Taiwo Alimi retired, after piloting its affairs for many years. In order not to create a vacuum, which "nature", according to a popular saying, "abhors", Mallam Abubakar Jijiwa, the Director of Finance and the most senior director was appointed the Director General in acting capacity.

Jijiwa's appointment did not arouse any ill-feeling or negative reactions among Nigerians or the staff of VON as the staff of any organization normally react when confronted with appointment they do not like; instead, the staff rejoiced. In truth, it can be likened to the appointment of Mr. Kola Abayomi as the Director General of the Nigerian Law School. Besides his experience, the normal line of succession was followed. Thus, it will be beyond substantiation to allege ethnic, fiduciary, political or other considerations. If you look at President Olusegun Obasanjo's appointment so far, you will discover a certain tendency to satisfy

all the channels through which staff problems are communicated to the Director General. He has made it clear that he is not only a "directive-issuing" Chief executive, but also a listening Chief Executive.

I understand the process of appointing a substantive Director General for VON is on. One is compelled to ask: What qualities are required from interested candidates? Like in appointments of such magnitude, clearly experience, strong character traits, independence, good interpersonal relationship, etc will be considered.

Talking about experience, no doubt, many Nigerians are equally high fliers in their own rights. Likewise Jijiwa is also experienced.

The Voice of Nigeria ought to be the most important broadcast medium in Nigeria because, like the British Broadcasting Corporation, Sudan National Radio Corporation, Deutsche Welle Radio, Radio France International, Channel Africa (South Africa), it is designed to showcase Nigeria to the world. This task becomes all the more vital because of negative publicity, some of which are prompted by ill will, which Nigeria is subjected to in foreign media. It is about time we realised that the task of building our country is ours. To sit down and mourn the violence done to our collective image is defeatist.

What we require is strengthening our own structures through which our voice will be heard by the rest of the world. Clearly this will be through strengthening of the Voice of Nigeria by appointing the right person.

With his experience and ability to understand the dynamics of the media world, Mallam Abubakar Jijiwa is qualified.

If his appointment is confirmed, it will restore hope to the people who cherish merit, as he is the next person in the line of succession.

Oduase writes from 22 Desalu St., Ebute-Metta West, Lagos.

"The Voice of Nigeria ought to be the most important broadcast medium in Nigeria because, like the British Broadcasting Corporation, Sudan National Radio Corporation, Deutsche Welle Radio, Radio France International, Channel Africa (South Africa), it is designed to showcase Nigeria to the world."



YOUR LETTERS

Audu Ogbe, the whistle blower

The PDP National chairman's letter to President Obasanjo is an eye-opener for true Nigerian democrats. Ordinarily, it takes an extra ordinary courage to speak truth to power.

In a country where the resources of the Government is a weapon, only a few are possessed of Ogbe's great courage. In Nigeria, such courage is close to madness when the person speaking the truth is supposed to be in the inner sanctum of the man in authority. In the president's reply to Audu Ogbe's letter, it was clear that he instigated the Fani-Kayode, EFCC, I.C.P.C and the SSS of levelling the Chief Audu Ogbe as being corrupt. And why does it take Mr. President so long to reveal this?

But in all, Chief Audu Ogbe should be watchful, for the suspension of Governor Nigge and Chris Uba is a ploy to satisfy him, and also to buy back angry Nigerians. If not, why the sudden moves after Ogbe's letter? In any case, Ogbe's face-off with Obasanjo has made Nigerians to come to terms with the reality that president Obasanjo has not learnt his political lessons six years after.

Interesting enough, people like late Wada Nas have been vindicated, when they said Nigeria's president is never a listening one.
A.B. Aremo Box 71 Keffi Nasarawa state.

2007: The bad and ugly

Even though 2007 election is far away those angling for various elective posts are directly or indirectly widening their area of influence.

Key among those eyeing the presidential seat are former military dictator President, General Ibrahim Babangida and Vice President Atiku Abubakar. Their supporters are trying all they could to convince Nigerians that their candidate is the best. Different kinds of organisations and associations are springing up to garner support for them, as it has become a sort of venture that some monies could be pocketed in this trying period of economic hardship and widespread poverty.

But the questions to ask are, what has General Babangida and handbag of the President, Vice President Atiku Abubakar have to offer to Nigerians? General Ibrahim Babangida has ruled this nation for eight years. During his regime, among other things for the first time, Nigerians understood what really is poverty, thanks to his Structural Adjustment Programme (S.A.P). Naira lost its value to foreign currencies, workers were retrenched; religious and communal crisis became order of the day, politicians were ban and unbanned, corruption was institutionalized, students were killed all over the country during Anglo Must Go struggle, opponents were thrown into prisons and some died in mysterious circumstances, democracy which led to June 12 crisis etc.

Abubakar is the second citizen of the present administration. An administration that has forced down the throats of Nigerians cycle of increases of petroleum products, noted for corruption and was awarded first, second and third positions globally. Frequently there were religious crisis that had led thousands to their early graves, insecurity which led prominent Nigerians to be among those assassinated and yet the government could not bring to book the culprits.

He has never voiced out his opposition to the various policies that increase poverty and untold hardship to Nigerians.

The agitation for the presidency to return to Northern part of the country will be a clamour in vain as the two major contenders for now cannot boast of improving the lives of common Nigerians talkless of the North.

General Ibrahim Babangida and Vice President Atiku Abubakar are not for now the type of leaders that we want to return Nigeria back on track to economic well-being, development and security after President Obasanjo in 2007.

Nigerians at this stage have to take their destinies into their hands. The meager amount giving to some to collaborate in imposing leaders that do not care about improving their lives should be food for thought.

The various anti-people policies since when General Babangida seized power continues down to the present administration in which he (Babangida) played a significant role in making sure that President Obasanjo

look over from General Abdulsalam Abubakar. General Babangida had never once spoken on behalf of the Nigerian people that the masses are suffering. And for the first time in our history as a nation many are committing suicide as they

could no longer cope with the harsh condition of living today in Nigeria. As for Vice President Atiku he is part and parcel of all the right or wrongs of this administration.

Nigerians should know that the coming generations

of unborn Nigerians will never forgive us if we fold our hands and allow our country to be pauperised through institutionalization of poverty as the two duos are birds of the same feathers.

Shehu Mustapha Chaji
PO Box 248 G/Gyadi, Kano.

Udawas return: Governor Goje

At the inception of this administration in 2003, the energetic Governor Danjuma Goje of Gombe state made a promise to revamp agriculture. He reorganised the civil service including the agric departments, he promised better condition for farmers including adequate supply of inputs. He promised institutional support and government's direct but pos intervention. The farmers took him seriously and cleared their land.

They planted food crops like maize, millet and guinea corn, they also planted extensively, cash crops like groundnuts and especially cotton among others. God was kind and crops did very well. Farmers, apart from those in the northern parts of the state where yield was poor, were happy waiting to what they planted. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

During the governments of Group Captain J.I Orji and Col. M.J Bawa one of the major challenges Gombe faced, was to wade of invading Udawas, the nomadic cattle rearsers mostly from the neighbour, Niger Republic. They perennially move across the country from north south and vice versa depending on the season. They carry their c through farmlands and cut up

whatever is on their way. This normally up in bloody clashes between the farmers and the unwanted visitors. Weapons ranging from guns to swords, spears and bows and arrows freely deployed. They are also believed to be bearing charms and then invincible. Their mere mention sends terror in the minds of the villagers farmers. At times they even rape women and cart away foodstuff. They always a nightmare.

In 1999, it was a major campaign issue and the then ANPP candidate Abubakar Habu Hashidu used it effectively. He promised not only to chase the Udawas but to phase them out of the state and the surrounding. It worked, for he won the election. He carried out his promise and till he left the incidences were minimal. He flaunted it as his major achievement. The PDP this time around (2003) did not give him the privilege of taking advantage of the issue, they also promised to keep the Udawas at bay in addition to bringing physical development to the state, an area where Hashidu was

adjudged weak. The promising Governor Goje won the election with promise to maintain the security of lives and property.

However, what is happening today is disturbing. The Udawas are menacingly back, this time with a vengeance. They devastated farms in Akko and Yamattu/Deba local government areas heading south. They are going, they may probably by now be in Billiri, Kaltungo, Shoni and Balanga local council areas of the state. The villagers and farmers cursing. They are recalling the good old days of Hashidu. They are bothered much about the billions allegedly spent on the construction roads or the rehabilitation of the hospital in the capital city, they bothered about their lives and livelihood. The police are never there to come to their aid, they are possibly busy in Gombe town containing the equally big menace of the political thugs, Yankalare, the urban version of Uda.

Abdullahi Maikano
Baari Kuto Quarters Deba, Bauchi state.

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



NIGERIAN PORTS AUTHORITY

PUBLIC NOTICE NO. 3565

INVITATION TO TENDER FOR THE REHABILITATION OF LAGOS LIGHT HOUSE.

The Nigerian Ports Authority hereby invites tenders from reputable companies for the rehabilitation of Lagos Light House Station at Tarkwa Bay.

(A) SCOPE OF WORK: To carry out total rehabilitation of the entire structure including entrance.

(B) DETAILS OF WORK: Details of work to be carried out include the following:

- (i) Installation of fibre glass housing the revolving lights.
- (ii) Fixing railings and guides.
- (iii) Rehabilitation of Solar Panel Deck.
- (iv) Fixing of iron mounting deck for the Recon Beacon.
- (v) Installation of Battery bank of (20 Nos. of 1.5 volts).
- (vi) Reinforcement of foundation floor and entrance road within the light house fencing.
- (vii) Renovation of Generator House.
- (viii) Building of office accommodation for the light house keepers.
- (ix) Sinking of a bore hole at site to provide potable water.

(C) QUALIFICATION FOR TENDERS:

- (i) Have a valid and subsisting Nigerian Ports Authority Registration Certificate.
- (ii) Have a Registration with Corporate Affairs Commission.
- (iii) Evidence of previous similar assignment with Nigerian Ports Authority in particular and Nigeria in general.
- (iv) Each tender must be accompanied with evidence of payment of non-refundable fee of N100,000,00 (One Hundred Thousand Naira) only payable in Bank Draft in favour of Nigerian Ports Authority except those who have previously paid this to N.P.A. for the above job.

SUBMISSION OF TENDERS: All completed tenders are to be addressed to the Secretary/General Manager Legal Services, Nigerian Ports Authority, Corporate Headquarters, 6th Floor, 26/28 Marina, Lagos and should be submitted in sealed envelop marked at the top left corner "Tender for the Rehabilitation of Lagos Light House".

The sealed envelop should be deposited in the Tender Box on the 6th Floor, Nigerian Ports Authority, Corporate Headquarters, 26/28 Marina, Lagos not later than 14 (fourteen) days from the date of this publication.

OPENING OF TENDERS: All tenders will be opened in the presence of tenderers or their representatives on the next working day after the date of closure of the Tender period in the Board Room, 6th Floor, Nigerian Ports Authority, Corporate Headquarters, 26/28 Marina, Lagos at 10:00 a.m.

SIGNED: MANAGEMENT

NIGERIAN PORTS AUTHORITY

Trust International

Sudan, opposition sign agreement

The Sudanese government and an alliance of opposition groups on Sunday reached a tentative agreement on Sudan's political future that builds on a peace accord already signed with southern rebels.

The power-sharing deal struck by Khartoum and the SPLM rebel group to end 21 years of civil war allocates a proportion of seats in a new national government to other parties.

Sunday's agreement with the opposition National Democratic Alliance (NDA)

will pave the way for discussions on how to divide up those seats and how to integrate opposition armed forces into the national army.

NDA spokesman Hatem al-Sirr Ali said the two sides would set up joint committees to deal with both issues.

"On the military forces, it was agreed to form a joint committee between the government and the NDA to reconcile the points of view," he told Reuters.

The committee on political representation will discuss the proportion of posts the

NDA will hold in the legislative and executive bodies during a transitional period, he added.

Apart from the SPLM, the other main group in the NDA is the Democratic Unionist Party, one of the big traditional parties in the Arab north.

Other members include the Sudanese Communist Party, the Baath Party, the Beja Congress from the east of Sudan, the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) from Darfur in the west and an alliance of southern parties independent of the SPLM.

Sudan's other big northern party, the Umma Party, is not a member.

The proportion of SPLM seats has already been fixed in the power-sharing deal signed last week as have arrangements for integrating former SPLM rebel fighters into one of two armies.

The NDA was a serious challenge to Khartoum in the 1990s, when it launched a military campaign into the east from Eritrea. Ali said it still had thousands of fighters under arms.

The agreement enshrines basic principles of governance such as pluralist democracy, the equality of citizens and the peaceful transfer of power from government to government.

Talks between the NDA and the Sudanese government have taken place in Cairo on and off for months, in parallel with separate negotiations in Kenya with the southern SPLM and in Abuja with two Darfur rebel groups, including the SLM.

Ali said the agreement was signed by NDA deputy chairman Abdel Rahman Said and Sudanese Minister of Federal Relations Nafie Ali Nafie. A complete agreement will be signed at a higher level on Feb. 12, he added.

...Garang-makes Darfur plea

Sudanese rebel leader John Garang has again said that a change of government policy is needed to stop fighting in the western region of Darfur.

Mr Garang, whose SPLM rebels signed a comprehensive peace deal a week ago to end the 21-year war in southern Sudan, was speaking in a BBC interview.

He said the planned national unity government had to move fast to resolve the Darfur conflict peacefully.

Mr. Garang becomes vice-president under the peace deal signed in Kenya.

Khartoum has been criticised by the international community for failing to disarm Arab militias, who have been accused of massacring civilians in the region.

There has been slow progress in peace talks in the Nigerian capital, Abuja, between Khartoum and representatives of rebel groups operating in Darfur.

Fighting has been continuing in Darfur despite a ceasefire deal.

Mr. Garang said he does not think the Darfur conflict would jeopardise the peace deal between the SPLM and the Khartoum government.

However, he said there is a need for a similar comprehensive peace accord for the Darfur region, based on justice and fairness.

The United Nations said it believes the conflict in Darfur is a threat to the peace deal, as continued fighting may lead to an exodus of refugees to the south.

The UN estimates that nearly one million people are expected to return to their homes in the south this year.

The SPLM leader said he supports the cause of rebel groups fighting in Darfur and hopes the first priority for the new coalition government will be to resolve the Darfur

issue.

"There has to be a change of policy, a policy that is based on peaceful settlement, a fair and just political settlement achieved through peaceful means, not through war - addressing the concerns of all the groups in Darfur, both the African nationalities and the Arab nationalities," he told the BBC.

The former rebel leader said southern Sudan faces many challenges, among them the reconstruction of the region following more than two decades of civil war.

He said the first priority for an SPLM administration in the south will be the voluntary repatriation of refugees and the provision of basic humanitarian needs.

The UN said there are about four million people who fled the south because of the conflict and who are expected to return.

Many of the relief agencies operating in the south said they have begun preparing for a massive influx of returnees back to their homes.

Ethiopia committed to boundary resolution

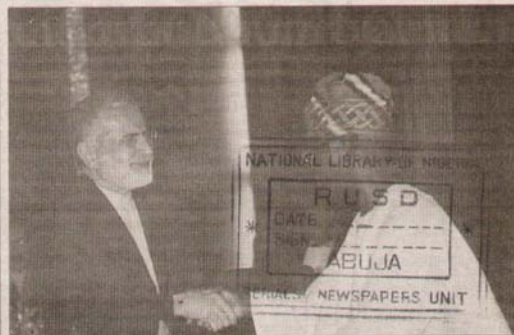
with Eritrea - Envoy

The Ethiopian Ambassador to Nigeria, Yohannes Genda Ginbi has said that Ethiopia has agreed to pay her dues to the Ethiopia-Eritrea boundary commission and that dialogue will immediately commence with Eritrea towards implementing the commission's decision as it affects the promotion of sustainable peace and brotherly ties between the two countries.

The ambassador disclosed this last week when he paid a courtesy visit on the Speaker, House of Representatives, Alhaji Aminu Bello Masari. He said that his country has

adopted a five-point peace proposal following her conviction that the establishment of lasting peace between the two countries will make significant contribution towards making the horn of Africa a peaceful region.

The five-point peace proposal include the resolution of the dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea only through peaceful means, resolution of the root causes of the conflict through dialogue with a view of normalising relations between the two countries,



Nigeria's Foreign Affairs Minister, Ambassador Olu Adeniyi exchanging documents with his Iranian Counterpart during the signing ceremony of the memorandum of understanding held at the State House, Abuja between the two countries...recently
Pic: Joe Oroye

'Mandela canvass more support for Africa'

The UK Chancellor, Gordon Brown, has said that former South African President Nelson Mandela will personally urge the world's richest nations to do more to help Africa.

The Nobel Peace Prize winner will visit London in February to speak to the G7 group, Mr Brown said in South Africa.

Mr. Mandela agreed to the visit during a private meeting with the UK chancellor at the Nobel Peace Prize winner's home.

Mr. Brown is nearing the end of his tour of the African continent where he announced debt relief measures.

During 2005, the UK will hold the rotating presidencies of the G7, as well as the enlarged G8 which includes Russia, and the European Union.

Speaking to the BBC, Mr. Mandela applauded the UK chancellor's pledges and ideas for Africa which have been dubbed a "new Marshall plan".

"My first impression is that it is a good scheme and I wish

more people would have a Marshall plan for Africa," he said.

Mr. Brown told BBC News 24 that Mr. Mandela is a hugely influential figure.

He said: "I believe there is growing support in the international community for the plans being put forward."

Mr. Mandela "carries a huge authority around the world and I know when he talks to leaders in America, Europe or elsewhere he persuades them it's necessary to take action," Mr Brown went on.

"I think he wants to bring to their attention that the Marshall Plan is one way forward to be able to deal with the problems that he for his whole life has felt passionately about, that we take action to reduce infant and maternal mortality, tackle HIV/Aids and reduce poverty in many parts of Africa."

On Saturday, Mr. Mandela attended the funeral of his last surviving son, Makgatho, who died of Aids, aged 54.

Mr. Mandela said the stigma of AIDS must be removed and it should be treated like any other disease.

He said: "The only way of doing so is to treat AIDS as

an ordinary disease like Tuberculosis.

"There was a time when we thought someone with Tuberculosis was gone but today they can recover."

Mr. Mandela added: "I am one of those who had Tuberculosis who spoke openly and nobody stigmatises me for that."

The chancellor met children orphaned by AIDS during his visit to Africa.

He said that money, better research and healthcare were not enough to tackle the disease and a change of attitude was required to end the stigma.

Morocco seeks EU aid over migrants

King Mohammed VI of Morocco has said the EU should do more to help his country tackle the problem of illegal migration to Europe from its shores.

Speaking to the Spanish newspaper *El Pais*, the king said Spain was a good advocate of Morocco's cause in Europe.

However, he said the EU as a whole had greater resources to help.

King Mohammed said illegal migration was a danger for Morocco as well as Spain, as many heading for Europe from sub-Saharan Africa ended up in Morocco.

"We have always asked Spain and the whole of the European Union to provide us with the means necessary to combat this plague. Right now we lack them," the king said.

Spain and Morocco reintroduced joint sea patrols last year, but human rights groups estimate that more than 500 migrants died trying to reach Spain in 2004 - the highest number in 10 years, according to Reuters.

The king and queen of Spain are due to make a state visit to Morocco.

Trust International

Asia tsunami death toll now 175,000

Asia's tsunami death toll soared past 175,000 yesterday, as Sri Lanka confirmed thousands more dead, while fears re-emerged over the safety of aid workers in Indonesia's shattered Aceh province.

Denmark said it had information "imminent" terror attacks were planned against aid workers in Aceh, where U.S. and other foreign troops have joined relief teams clearing rubble from the Dec. 26 disaster which killed 115,000 in that province alone.

"We have received information from sources abroad that somebody would be planning an attack today," Danish Foreign Ministry official Niels Erik Andersen told Danish radio.

Indonesia's foreign minister dismissed the report as "unfounded rumour." But it reignited fears that aid workers might become political targets in Indonesia, which has seen both a separatist rebellion in Aceh and deadly bomb attacks targeting Westerners blamed on an Islamic group linked to al Qaeda.

U.S. Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz urged political opponents in both Indonesia and Sri Lanka - facing a separatist rebellion of its own - to put aside their differences and concentrate on relief work.

"Hopefully they will realise on all sides that the stakes that they are fighting for are relatively trivial," he said on arriving in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lankan officials said another 7,275 people were now known to have died in the Dec. 26 catastrophe, taking the national total to 38,195. The jump was not due to the sudden discovery of more bodies, but rather a backlog of figures from remote areas.

Sri Lanka announced a reconstruction drive to build 15 new towns on its southern and eastern coasts. The government will help people rebuild in safe areas, or simply construct new towns.

"We were not prepared at all ... to face a disaster like this," said President Chandrika Kumaratunga. "The people of this country faced it effectively; they are in a position to rebuild."

Some Sri Lankans were already rebuilding, defying a government ban to put up houses and hotels close to the shore.

Relief work rumbled on in Indonesia's Aceh, and one senior international aid official said the province was rebounding so well from the disaster that emergency assistance could wind up fairly quickly.

"I think we are fortunate that things are not as bad as we feared," said Patrick

Webb, chief of nutrition at the United Nations' World Food Program (WFP).

"Malnutrition is not widespread. Diseases are not rampant yet," he said in the Acehese capital, Banda Aceh.

"They are fortunate that there has been this massive response, which will make recovering a lot faster than it ever has got a chance of in Darfur for example, or Afghanistan." In Banda Aceh, monsoon rains flooded tsunami-scarred streets as overloaded drainage ditches ceased working. While the half of the city that took the worst damage from the wave remains largely closed, shopkeepers who did open reported good business.

Jakarta officials promised to overhaul the country's relief program amid fears of mismanagement and corruption might divert some of the aid dollars pledged by donors around the world.

Information Minister Sofyan Djalil said the reorganization would include a "credible" oversight scheme to monitor the huge sums earmarked for Indonesia, long ranked as one of the most corrupt countries in the world.

Indonesia is expected to receive the bulk of more than \$7 billion from governments, corporations and individuals pledged for tsunami aid.

Former Chinese communist leader passes on

Beijing. Although the ruling party discredited his political reform plans, his economic reforms in the 1980s set the stage for the opening up of China's economy and 25 years of dramatic economic growth.

Zhao was last seen in public on May 19, 1989 when he visited Tiananmen Square and urged the

students to leave. The next day the government imposed martial law, leading to the assault by troops on the night of June 3. Hundreds, if not thousands, of unarmed citizens and protesters were gunned down during the assault. The government, including Wen, continues to maintain the crackdown was necessary to safeguard political stability for ongoing economic reforms.

Former Communist Party leader Zhao Ziyang, who put China on the road to economic reform but was purged for opposing the bloody 1989 crackdown on the Tiananmen democracy movement, died aged 85 after nearly 16 years under house arrest.

Zhao had been seriously ill in a Beijing hospital for a month with a lung problem and lapsed into a coma on Friday after suffering a stroke. His death was confirmed in a short dispatch by China's official Xinhua news agency.

"Comrade Zhao Ziyang died of illness in a Beijing hospital yesterday," said Xinhua. State radio and television did not mention his death in their evening prime time news broadcasts.

Vice President Zeng Qinghong paid a pre-dawn visit to Zhao about an hour before he died, the Hong Kong-based Information Centre for Human Rights and Democracy said, citing members of Zhao's family.

Zhao had served as communist party secretary general and prime minister for much of the 1980s. But he was unceremoniously stripped of his party post after he opposed using military force to end the six-week-long student-led protests in Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

After his removal from power, Zhao lived under house arrest in a tightly guarded compound in central



Former Chinese premier Zhao Ziyang.

VACANCIES

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 (Education will be implemented in Kano, Nasarawa, and Lagos). In order to achieve their objectives they require the services of highly motivated individuals for the following positions:

NGO Trainer

Position Location: Kano, Lagos, and Nasarawa

Position Summary

The NGO Trainer will coordinate and train NGOs in implementation and monitoring of program activities. She/he will also work closely with the Institutional Capacity Building (ICB) Specialist to provide trainings to NGOs to increase their institutional capacity. She/he will assist in monitoring grants administered through NGOs in the areas of PTAs, teacher trainings, girls scholarships, etc.

Required Skills and Qualifications

Degree in Education or Business Management related field. Experience working with NGOs and CBOs. Experience working in capacity and institution building. Demonstrated ability in training and coaching. Experience working in Education sector.

PTA Community Participation Coordinator

Position Location: Abuja, Nigeria

Position Summary

The PTA/Community Participation Coordinator will direct and project all PTA related activities for COMPASS, working through the state level PTA Support Coordinators, for the development and strengthening of PTAs. She/he will work closely with the central level Training and Curriculum Specialist and Materials Development Specialist to develop training modules and materials in areas of Girls' Education, Health, and other educational areas. She/he will coordinate with the COMPASS Community Mobilization team to develop and implement a package for organizational strengthening activities specifically for PTA development that can be delivered by NGOs and CBOs throughout the life of the COMPASS Program and beyond.

Required Skills and Qualifications

Degree in Education related field. Experience working with PTAs. Experience working with NGOs and CBOs. Demonstrated ability in training and coaching.

PTA Grants Administrator

Position Summary

The PTA Grants Administrator will oversee the overall management of small grants in the education component of the COMPASS project and will serve as the focal point at the state level for the coordination of small grants activities aimed at engaging PTAs in improving education quality, and the overall day to day affairs of schools.

Required Skills and Qualifications

Bachelor or Master's degree or equivalent in Education. Minimum of five years experience in managing a donor-funded education project or similar experience at a national level, including project planning and management. Successful experience in promoting health and nutrition at the school level; M & E design and/or community mobilization. Demonstrated ability and willingness to establish and maintain productive partnerships and coordinate activities with partner organizations and clients, with local and international project partners, communities, and USAID. Extensive knowledge of and sensitivity to cultural practices and issues of different target populations represented in the project. Fluency in English-excellent communication skills, both verbal and written. Proficiency in use of word processing and spreadsheet software and use of internet. Experience and knowledge of USAID procedures.

Application Instructions

Please send resume by email to: educationjobs@call@yahoo.com with the title of the "POSITION" on the subject line. Please note, only finalists will be contacted.

Trust International

16 Iraqis die in pre-election attacks

Gunmen killed eight Iraqi National Guard soldiers at a checkpoint in central Iraq yesterday, and eight people died in a suicide car bombing at a police station north of Baghdad, as insurgents struck at Iraqi security forces ahead of national elections.

Some of the latest violence, including a series of weekend attacks along a highway southeast of Baghdad, occurred in provinces which U.S. and Iraqi authorities have deemed safe enough to hold the elections and appear to be attempts to scare the country's majority Shiites away from the Jan. 30 polls.

Undercutting these security concerns, Shiite politician Salama Khafaji, who survived an ambush in central Baghdad, Sunday, by gunmen wearing police uniforms, said she's

cancelled campaigning in the south after her staff discovered terrorist checkpoints on major routes.

"What we fear now most is terrorists wearing police uniforms," Khafaji told The AP yesterday. "The uniforms and body armour used by the police are available on the market for anyone to buy," she said.

She said the security situation was so bad that she had shelved plans to tour mainly Shiite cities in central and southern Iraq starting yesterday. "We sent people out today to check roads in the area but they have reported back that terrorists have set up some road checkpoints."

"Generally I cannot go out and meet people or knock on door to get out the vote like they do in the West," she lamented.

The eight Iraqi National Guard soldiers' deaths occurred at a checkpoint outside a provincial broadcasting center in Buhirah, about 35 miles northeast of Baghdad. Four other Iraqi soldiers were injured in the attack, said an official at the nearby Baquba hospital, Ali Ahmed. The area is considered a hot spot of the insurgency as violence flares before the Jan. 30 balloting.

The suicide attack occurred at a police station in Beiji, about 155 miles north of Baghdad on the main supply route north. Eight people were killed and 25 were injured, according to a hospital official, but it was unclear if they were police or civilians.

Several of the bloodiest attacks in recent days have taken place in provinces that U.S. and Iraqi officials have classified as secure enough to hold elections.

U.S. and Iraqi officials have insisted that the elections go ahead as scheduled. Interim President Ghazi al-Yawer said that if the elections were postponed for six months, there

was no guarantee the violence would wane. The insurgents "might lay down for two or three months, then carry out attacks again," he said.

Exiled Iraqis began registering to vote yesterday in their homeland's first independent election in nearly 50 years, with dozens arriving at polling stations from Australia to Britain.

Iraqis can vote abroad in 14 countries and there is a seven-day registration period that ends Jan. 23. Voting will begin Jan. 28 and continue until the Jan. 30 election in Iraq.

Odd World

Woman, 66, becomes world's oldest mom

A 66-year-old Romanian woman gave birth to a baby girl Sunday after years of fertility treatment and was claimed by Romanian media to be the world's oldest mother ever.

Adriana Iliescu, a university professor and author of children's books, had been pregnant with twin girls. One died in the womb and doctors decided to perform a cesarean section in the 33rd week of pregnancy to save the other. "We wanted to wait until the 34th week of pregnancy, when the children's lungs would have reached full maturity, but we noticed Saturday that the heart of one of the little girls had stopped beating," Dr. Bogdan Marinescu, chief of the Gilest maternity hospital in Bucharest, told a news conference.

"We decided to proceed with the operation to save the second girl," Marinescu added. Marinescu said both the mother and the child, who weighs 3.1 pounds and whose name is Eliza-Maria, were in stable condition but the little girl would have to spend up to six weeks in hospital to reach two kg in weight.

Iliescu, who will be 67 in May, became pregnant via a vitro fertilization and doctors said this was her third attempt at carrying a pregnancy to term.

He said the eggs and sperm used had come from "healthy young people."

"From a biological point of view, Ms Iliescu proved that she can carry a pregnancy to the end," Marinescu said. "We managed to solve a case which made us all very nervous."

Two years ago, a 65-year-old retired schoolteacher in India gave birth to a baby boy.

Man finds nail in skull

A dentist found the source of the toothache Patrick Lawler was complaining about on the roof of his mouth: a four-inch nail the construction worker had unknowingly embedded in his skull six days earlier.

A nail gun backfired on Lawler, 23, on Jan. 6 while working in Breckenridge, a ski resort town in the central Colorado mountains. The tool sent a nail into a piece of wood nearby, but Lawler didn't realize a second nail had shot through his mouth, said his sister, Lisa Metcalfe.

Following the accident, Lawler had what he thought was a minor toothache and blurry vision. On Wednesday, after painkillers and ice didn't ease the pain, he went to a dental office where his wife, Katerina, works.

"We all are friends, so I thought the (dentists) were joking... then the doctor came out and said 'There's really a nail,'" Katerina Lawler said. "Patrick just broke down. I mean, he had been eating ice cream to help the swelling."

He was taken to a suburban Denver hospital, where he underwent a four-hour surgery. The nail had plunged 1 1/2 inches into his brain, barely missing his right eye, Metcalfe said.

"This is the second one we've seen in this hospital where the person was injured by the nail gun and didn't actually realize the nail had been embedded in their skull," neurosurgeon Sean Markey told KUSA-TV in Denver. "But it's a pretty rare injury."

Lawler was recovering Sunday in the hospital, where he was expected to spend several more days.

Despite his lack of medical insurance and hospital bills between \$80,000 and \$100,000, Katerina Lawler said her husband is in good spirits.

"The doctors said, 'If you're going to have a nail in the brain, that's the way you want it to be,'" she said. "He's the luckiest guy ever."

German bankers learn to find lovers

They may be good at raking in loads of money, but lonely heart bankers in Frankfurt are going back to school to learn how to land a lover.

The community college in Germany's financial and singles capital says its "Flirting, the art of seduction" course teaches people how to "express desire," send body signals and develop their own flirting style through role-playing.

Course instructor Flaminia Ionescu told Reuters she wanted to bring a little southern European passion into the lives of northern bankers good with a spreadsheet, but bad with banter.

"People from the south of Europe are more open and quicker to smile or pass a compliment," she said.

"But in the north, they are not exactly bursting with charm. I show them how they can ask questions and switch the conversation if the other person is nodding off."

The course, attended mainly by 20 to 30-year-olds, is one of the most popular offered by the college. And so far at least four of Ionescu's students have found romance with classmates, a group that includes bankers and academics.

Wife's photos cost deputy sheriff's job

A sheriff's deputy was fired after his wife posed next to his patrol car.

A computer disc containing photos of Danion Gregory's wife posing near the patrol vehicle surfaced at the Franklin County Sheriff's office in early December. Gregory was fired Dec. 14, and the reason was released Thursday.

A supervisor who knew of the photographs was demoted from apparent to paid deputy.

"As soon as this came to our attention, the sheriff took action," said Chief Deputy James Hamilton. Gregory said he won't appeal his firing for violating department policy and conduct regulations.

"The sheriff's department wants to apologize to each and every citizen for any embarrassment or loss of confidence," Hamilton said.

US frees Taliban prisoners in Afghanistan

US forces in Afghanistan have freed 81 Taliban prisoners from a jail at the Bagram air base, north of capital Kabul.

An Afghan Supreme Court official had said earlier that the men were released from the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. However, the chief justice said the suspects never left Afghanistan.

"They have been released from Bagram," Chief Justice Fiaz Hadi Shirwani said on Sunday. "We will give them clothes and then send them home."

He said US authorities had said they would free their remaining Afghan prisoners.

"There are another 400 Taliban in Bagram and they have promised to release all Taliban from Bagram and Guantanamo Bay," he said.

Prisoners deemed to be the greatest security risks were taken bound and shackled, to Guantanamo Bay while others were kept at US bases across Afghanistan.

Accusations of mistreatment of prisoners have dogged US military jails from Iraq, to Afghanistan and its base in Cuba.

"I have very bad memories of the interrogation because they were torturing us," said Abdul Marwan, 35, from Kunar, in eastern Afghanistan. Marwan was among the prisoners released on Sunday.

"But after the interrogation period was over, everything was all right," he said outside the

Supreme Court in Kabul. A Taliban spokesman said all Afghan prisoners should be freed.

"All the prisoners under the custody of the Americans, either inside or outside Afghanistan, they are innocent people, they are not Taliban," Taliban spokesman Abdul Latif Hakimi said by satellite telephone.

Abbas orders activists to join security service

Mahmud Abbas has given orders for members of resistance group al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades to be incorporated into the security services, a senior security official said.

"The decision has been made to put members of the al-Aqsa Brigades in the Palestinian security services," the official said on condition of anonymity. "Abu Mazin [Abbas] told us that this must happen as soon as possible," said the official.

The Brigades, an armed offshoot of Abbas' own Fatah movement, are the second largest of the Palestinian armed factions and have been behind hundreds of resistance attacks.

A Palestinian cabinet minister later said Abbas had ordered his security apparatus

to prevent attacks on Israeli targets.

"Abbas and the cabinet gave clear instructions to the security chiefs to prevent all kinds of violence, including attacks against Israel," minister without portfolio Qaloum Fares told Reuters.

Earlier, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) called on other resistance groups to halt their attacks, saying they gave Israel an excuse to block the peace process.

But Hamas quickly dismissed the call to halt attacks, saying such a move helped Israel justify its military operations in the occupied territories.

"We are sorry to say that some people are using this name [the PLO] to issue a demand which is at odds with the aims of the Palestinian people," spokesman Sami Abu Zubair said.

As Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon accused PLO chairman



Interim President Ghazi al-Yawer

Israel attacks targets in Lebanon

Israeli warplanes attacked suspected Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon on yesterday after the guerrillas detonated a bomb in an Israeli bulldozer in a disputed area near the border, Israel and the guerrillas said.

Lebanese security officials said fighter jets fired two air-to-surface missiles at targets in the area of Qa'ir, about four miles from the Israeli border. Hezbollah's Al-Manar television station said two Lebanese women were wounded in the airstrike, which targeted a border area separate from the Chebaa Farms where the bulldozer strike occurred.

But there was no immediate

confirmation of casualties from Lebanese security officials.

In Jerusalem, the Israeli army confirmed that the air force "responded" against a Hezbollah target in Lebanon, but it would not give the location or any other details. The military said there were no casualties in the bulldozer bombing.

Al-Manar television said the explosive device planted by the guerrillas destroyed a bulldozer in the Chebaa Farms area near the Lebanese-Israeli border. It said there were "definite casualties" among the Israelis, adding that Israeli ambulances rushed to the area shortly after

the early afternoon bombing. "The report said Israeli artillery gunners fired in apparent retaliation for the attack."

Lebanese security officials in the area reported Israeli shelling on suspected guerrilla strongholds but did not immediately know the reason for it. The officials said on condition of anonymity that at least 25 shells fell near the village of Kfar Chabun near the Chebaa Farms.

It was the second such incident this month. On Jan. 9, a French officer serving with the United Nations was killed and a Swedish officer and a Lebanese man were wounded by Israeli shelling shortly after a Hezbollah bomb killed an Israeli soldier in the disputed area.

Business Trust

Finance

Today's flight schedule

Albarka Air	
Lagos - Abuja	07:20
	10:30
	15:15
	13:00
Abuja - Lagos	8:45a.m.
	11:00
	13:15
	17:00
Maiduguri - Abuja	06:50
Abuja - Maid.	17:00
Lagos - Yola	1:00 p.m.
Abuja - Yola	14:30
Yola - Abuja	15:30
Yola - Lagos	4:00 p.m.
Chanchangi Airlines	
Lagos - Abuja	8:15a.m.
	11:00a.m.
	*12:10p.m.
	4:45p.m.
Kaduna - Lagos	8:30a.m.
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 - CBQ	5:15p.m.
Kano - Abuja	1:15p.m.
Abuja - Kano	2:30p.m.
Kano - Lagos	3:45p.m.
Lagos - Kano	6:00p.m.
EAS Airlines	
Lagos - Abuja	8:15p.m.
	11:45a.m.
	5:45p.m.
Abuja - Lagos	10:15a.m.
	7:15p.m.
Lagos - Jos	11:45a.m.
Jos - Lagos	2:30p.m.
Dasab Airlines	
Auja - Lagos	8:30 a.m.
Lagos - PHC	10:30 a.m.
PHC - Lagos	12:30 a.m.
Lagos - Kano	2:30 p.m.
Kano - Lagos	4:30 p.m.
Lagos - Abuja	6:30p.m.
ADC Airline	
Lagos - Abuja	7:15 a.m.
	12:45 p.m.
	8:55 a.m.
Abuja - Lagos	11:15 a.m.
Lagos - Calabar	7:20 a.m.
Calabar - Lagos	9:45 a.m.

Most airlines operate the same flight schedule on week days.

NAICOM terminates VISER contract

With the sack of Chief Oladipo Bailey as the commissioner of Insurance concluded, the National Insurance Commission (NAICOM) has terminated the contract awarded to Rocstone International Limited, (London) for the printing of Vehicle Insurance Sticker (VISER).

Addressing journalists in Abuja over the weekend, the new helmsman at NAICOM, Chief Emmanuel Chukwulozie disclosed that the commission had terminated the VISER contract awarded to Rocstone International.

In terminating the Rocstone contract, Chukwulozie emphasised that the terms and conditions of the terminated contract would apply but revealed that Rocstone would be made to refund money for jobs not executed in the second phase of the VISER contract which generated a lot of controversy in the commission.

The commission he said would be demanding for refund because Rocstone has only delivered 70,000 of the over 400,000 copies of the VISER certificate for which some initial deposit had been made. Rocstone he said has been contacted on the refund but the commission is yet to receive a reply from the London based company.

With the termination of the contract, Chukwulozie noted that the next stage in the introduction of the VISER will be the advertisement for reputable printers to express interest in the job of printing VISER.

Expressions of interest he said would be welcome from local and international printers. In his words "the best company will get the job" suggesting that the process of selecting the printer for the VISER job will be transparent.

To guard against the continued forgery of the existing VISER certificates, Chukwulozie stated that the new VISER will have configurations that designed

to be forge proof and ensure "smooth and uninterrupted flow of VISER."

The new NAICOM he pointed out will be "flexible and innovative to bring positive change to the industry with greater resolve to fight fraudsters who fake VISER. The commission he added will continue with the VISER programme where Bailey left off.

Chief Chukwulozie described the VISER as safety net put in place to secure the car owner from the antics of fraudsters and also protect the industry from manipulation. Speaking on the recently introduced recapitalisation requirement for insurance

companies in the country, the NAICOM boss has ruled out any plans to underwrite that risk.

According to Chukwulozie, "underwriting will not be done out of sympathy but rather will follow scientific procedures" AIDS just like other diseases he said is not being singled out as risks excluded from insurance cover in Nigeria. He however noted that there were some specialized insurance companies with the right manpower and technical capabilities to handle such risks in other parts of the world.

However hope for sufferers of the dreaded Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) getting insurance cover in the country any time soon

appears deem as the NAICOM boss has ruled out any plans to underwrite that risk.

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Investigations further reveals that the NCS has not recruited for almost 10 years now which may have worsened the present situation

Customs groan under staff shortage

The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) is presently groaning under inadequate personnel to carry out its operational activities in the newly reformed serviced oriented regime.

This is coming on the heels of the dismissal of 149 senior Customs officers and the retirement of 39 others including deputy comptrollers, assistant comptrollers, superintendents, and inspectors as well as the suspension/interdictions of 92 senior and junior staff whose cases are pending before the disciplinary committee set up by the new management of the NCS.

Earlier, 218 officers ranging from the ranks of deputy comptroller-general to Customs assistants were retired by the Presidential Implementation Committee on the Reforms and restructuring of the service.

Mr. Jacob Gyang Buba, Comptroller General of NCS also confirmed the inadequate personnel shortage currently facing the service while receiving a delegation of the Association of Bonded Terminal Operations of Nigeria recently.

The C-G specifically noted that there is shortage of junior staff others to carry out certain functions like escorting of containers and good and running of errands which is usually reserved for the rank and file.

He lamented that these duties have been taken over by senior officers like inspectors and superintendents.

It would also be recalled that sometime ago, the Customs Service laid off all its cleaners, office assistants and other manual activities personnel thereby leaving senior officers with minor junior cadre who are either being used as orderlies by the very senior officers or as security personnel.

Similarly, scores of customs officers have been

From Adelanwa Bamgboye, Correspondent, Lagos

sent to their early graves while on anti-smuggling campaign. In a telephone conversation with our correspondent, Wale Adeniyi, NCS spokesman disclosed that plans are in the pipeline to recruit new hands.

Manny Bank records 22.4% profit

Manny Bank Plc has recorded 22.4 per cent increase in Profit After Tax from N67.2 million in year 2003 to N204.6 million in year 2004.

Chairman of the Bank, Chief Steven Lawani disclosed this at the 14th Annual General Meeting of the bank in Jos on Thursday.

He said Gross Earnings of the bank rise by 11.7 per cent from N2,535 billion last year to N2,833 billion at the end of the financial year, while total asset rose from N8.84 billion to N10.94 billion, representing a 23.7 per cent growth rate.

Chief Lawani added that total liabilities of the bank also grew in year 2004 from N6.036 billion in the previous year to N8.031 billion during the period under review.

However, shareholders fund rose from N2,803 billion in March 2003 to N2,911 billion in March 2004, the chairman stated.

Zenith Bank posts impressive half-year result

The result of Zenith Bank's performance for the half-year ended 31 December 2004 released on the floor of the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) last week showed that gross earnings increased from N124 billion to N18.3 billion while profit before taxation increased from N3.39 billion to N5.01 billion representing 48 & 48 per cent growth respectively over the same period ended 31 December 2003.

Stockbrokers and the investing public greeted the announcement of this result with

This according to him becomes imperative in order to replace those who have left the service either through natural death or retirement after the mandatory retirement age.

Investigations further reveals that the NCS has not recruited for almost 10 years now which may have worsened the present situation

From Rakiya A. Muhammad, Correspondent (Jos)

Chief Lawani said the results "though modest, are however, by no means insignificant."

He assured that the board of directors is working with management and staff of the bank strives to improve significantly on the result during the current financial year.

"The immense opportunities for value creation and income generation that still exist in the industry would be scrupulously converted by the bank for the benefit of all the stakeholders."

Chief Lawani disclosed that the bank had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with three other banks to meet the new capitalisation requirement, expressing optimism that the bank would not only meet the capitalisation requirement but surpass it in collaboration with other likeminded banks.

great enthusiasm, as this is a strong renaissance of the bank's ability to meet and outperform market expectations for the financial year ending 30 June 2005.

This is an eminent testimony that the management of the bank is judiciously applying the proceeds of the recently concluded IPO with target fact and skill for the good of all stakeholders.

The bank's promise of returning superior value during the IPO a few months ago, now seems very tangible and sustainable over the short, medium and long term.



Ngezi Okunjo - Inset, Finance Minister

Market Indicators

Nigerian Inter Bank Foreign Exchange (NIFEX) Rates			
Quotes as of: 14/01/2005			
	Bid(\$=N=)	Offer(\$=N=)	
Spot Fixing	132.7	133	
Tenor (Days)	Swap Points	Forward Fixing	
30	1.9104 / 1.9147	134.6104 / 134.9147	
60	3.8130 / 3.8217	136.513 / 136.8217	
90	5.7080 / 5.7209	138.408 / 138.7209	
180	11.3472 / 11.3729	144.0472 / 144.3729	

Nigerian Inter-Bank Offered Rate (NIBOR)

Quotes as of:	14/01/2005.
7 Days	19.2917
30 Days	19.7500
60 Days	19.8333
90 Days	20.6667
180 Days	20.3750
270 Days	0.0000
365 Days	20.1250

Open Market Operations (OMO Auction) held on 13/01/2005

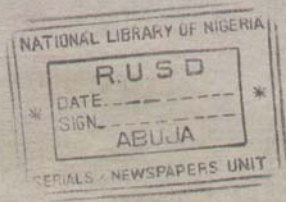
Rates	
Security NTB	
Tenor	28 DAYS
Maturity Date	10/02/2005
Total Amount of Bids received	N 9500 Million
Total Amount Sold	N 7000 Million
Range of bid Rates	13.9500% - 14.2500%
Stop Rate	14 %
True Yield	14.1516 %
Weighted Average Rate	Nil

Central Bank of Nigeria Rates as of: 11/01/2005

NCurrency	Buying	Selling	CentralUS DOLLAR
131.85	132.85	132.35	POUND STERLING
247.6934	249.572	248.6327	EURO
173.5146			
174.8306	174.1726		SWISS FRANCS
0	0		JAPANESE YEN
1.2722	0.2544	0.2644	0.2594
			WAUWA
199.8009	201.3163	200.5586	SAUDI
RIYAL	35.1544	35.421	35.2877



Chairman/Chief Executive Officer
Muhammad Idris Yabawa



Directors

Chairman/Chief Executive Officer
Muhammad Idris Yabawa

Managing Director
Suleman Yabish

Managing Director
Funto Lawal

Managing Director
Richard M. Makari

Managing Director
Lassan A. Sani

Managing Director
Ahmad S. Mansah

Managing Director
Nuhu Yaku

Managing Director
Sani Duada

Managing Director
Zakari Ibrahim

Exceptional Performance...

earns investor confidence and customer loyalty

When the Bank commenced operations in June, 2001, we made a promise to offer efficient and exceptional services that will delight our valued customers.

In barely three years, our vision has translated into excellent performance that has continued to earn for the Bank the confidence and loyalty of our investors, customers and other stakeholders.

Take a look at our comparative performance highlights as at **30th April, 2003 and 2004**

As a promising bank with great potentials for uncommon accomplishments, we have identified and set out to explore the great opportunities inherent in the growth sectors of the economy such as Oil & Gas, Telecoms and IT, Real Estate, Manufacturing, Construction, Power and Steel, Capital Markets and Off-Shore Branch Network. We are confident that, in the years to come, our strong business focus and management strategies will lead us to the pinnacle of growth.

We value your partnership

Your're welcome.

www.nubank.com

Performance Indices		2004	2003
	% Growth	₦,000	₦,000
Gross Earnings	61.98	1,853,789	1,144,449
Profit/(Loss) Before Taxation	191.19	441,301	151,552
Profit/(Loss) After Taxation	137.37	343,129	144,552
Deposit Liabilities	50.23	8,565,242	5,701,230
Loans and Advances	45.67	2,848,010	1,955,110
Total Assets	43.47	11,560,124	8,057,401
Earnings Per Share	142.86	0.34₦	0.14₦

NUB International Bank Limited

...the never stop serving you

Head Office: Plot 554, Adekunle Ademola Crescent, P.M.B. 5095, Wuse II, Abuja, Nigeria. Tel: 09-5237051, 0900651
Head Office Annex: Plot 271A, Ayode Adesogan Street, Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria. Tel: 01-2704754

Business Trust

Motoring

Automakers slash prices in China

The outlook for China's once sizzling auto market has cooled, prompting both foreign and domestic automakers to scramble to undercut their competitors by slashing prices by up to 20 percent.

Both production and sales of vehicles in China are forecast to rise about 10 percent in 2005 to about 5.6 million units, state-run media reported Friday, citing the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

The association reported that China's total vehicle output climbed 14 percent over a year earlier to 5 million units, with passenger car production rising 12 percent to 2.3 million units. Total vehicle sales were up 15 percent, also at 5 million units, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

Though still robust by international standards, that growth outlook is anaemic compared with the 75 percent jump in passenger car sales in 2003.

The fervour driving soaring sales over the past few years has languished amid government-ordered curbs on bank lending. With auto makers slashing prices, many consumers are thought to be waiting for prices to drop further.

Toyota Motor Co. recently announced cuts of about 20,000 Yuan (\$2,400) on 19 different versions of its Corolla midsize sedans and Vios subcompacts made in China. The price cuts amount to up to about 20 percent of sticker prices.

Earlier this week, German luxury automaker BMW AG announced it had cut prices on some China-made passenger vehicles by up to 50,000 Yuan (\$6,000) to 100,000 Yuan (\$12,000).

Average prices in the domestic car market fell by about 13 percent last year and by about 8 percent in 2003, the Xinhua report said.

The China Association of

Automobile Manufacturers forecasts that passenger car output and sales in 2005 will climb 12 percent over last year, to 2.6 million units, it said.

Association spokesman Zhu Yiping characterized the frenzied growth of recent years as "explosive" and an anomaly. Sales have slowed because much pent-up purchasing power and demand has already been exhausted.

"Last year's growth and the growth expected this year are smooth and reasonable, although they are much lower than the figures in 2003 and 2002," the report quoted Zhu as saying.

"The industry will remain on a steady and healthy track if the domestic auto market grows by more than 10 percent annually in coming years," she said.



Peugeot 306, a 3G convertible car that will hit auto market this year.

PAN thanks Nigerians with new 306

By Hamisu Muhammad, Reporter (Business)

Peugeot Automobile of Nigeria (PAN) in continuation of its "Thank you Nigeria" promotional campaign is offering another model in the 306 range.

Tagged the Limited Edition 2, the model on offer, has an efficiently equipped 1.8 litre capacity engine with more added features such as rain sensitive windscreen wiper, dual air bag, air conditioners central lock with remote control, alloy wheels, power steering, power windows and rear spoiler.

A statement made available to *Motoring* signed by Tunde Niyi acting group head, media CMC connect said this offer is coming at the heels of the earlier successful first phase of the campaign that ended on December 31, 2004. Then all of the 200 units of Peugeot 306, 1.4 litre model offered were sold out at the price of N1.59 million each VAT exclusive.

The present campaign with the theme "Even More Value for Money" has an

offer price of N1.995 million VAT exclusive. A similar version would ordinary cost about N2.5 million.

The Limited Edition campaign is designed by PAN to make available to Nigerians at affordable prices, limited number of its

Auto parts makers foresee 2005 pains

Auto parts makers said they would remain under pressure from rising raw materials costs and North American light vehicle production cuts in 2005, with some offering weaker outlooks than Wall Street expected.

Suppliers were pressured in late 2004 by North American production cuts by Ford Motor Co. and General Motors Corporation and both automakers plan to cut output in the first quarter as well.

specific models.

In the words of Mr. Francois Sere, the Managing Director/ CEO of Peugeot Automobile Nigeria Limited while speaking on the new offer, "We are encouraged by the tremendous support and public response to our "Thank You Nigeria" promotion. It was a wonderful experience with

the limited stock on-offer meeting with the demand for the Limited Edition 1 and therefore we feel compelled to introduce the 306 Limited Edition 2 with a 1.8 litre capacity vehicle which offers even more value for money because of its enhanced features".

Earlier at the launch of the scheme last year, he had

described it as a pay back scheme for present and potential customers of PAN.

"With the public support and patronage we will by all means possible, continue to assist our fellow citizens in owning a brand new car. The Limited Edition campaign is therefore in line with this pledge", he said.

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Toyota Echo.

Toyota to replace unpopular Echo car

Japanese automaker Toyota Motor Corporation will replace its unpopular Echo compact car with two European-styled small cars in 2006.

Toyota spokesman Mike Michels confirmed the plans but said the company was not ready to offer any more specifics about the two replacements.

Toyota, Japan's No. 1 automaker, sold fewer than 4,000 Echos in 2004, down from 26,167 the year before, according to Autodata Corporation despite the sharp decline. Toyota's overall US sales rose 10

percent last year.

"The current Echo certainly hasn't met expectations,"

Michels said. "We need a mainstream, very affordable product below the Corolla."

Hoping to revive demand for its flagship Avalon sedan, whose North American sales were off 28 percent last year, Toyota introduced a redesigned version of the car during the media preview at this week's North American International Auto Show in Detroit.

Also this year, Toyota will launch hybrid versions of its Toyota Highlander and luxury Lexus RX sport utility vehicles.

However, Borg Warner

still expects in 2005 to meet

or beat results from each

quarter of 2004, Adams said.

Warner

expects earnings

growth of more than 10

percent in 2005 excluding its

recent acquisition of a 63

percent stake in Berni AG, a

German maker of diesel

starter and tire pressure

monitoring technology. That

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Business Trust

Industry

Customs seize 40m cigarettes

From Adelanwa Bamgboye, Correspondent (Lagos)

No fewer than 40 million counterfeit cigarettes were seized by the anti-smuggling unit of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) during the last quarter of 2004.

Managing director of British American Tobacco Nigeria (BAT), Mr. Richard Hodgson said this over the weekend in Lagos at an interactive session with senior media executives.

He said that a lot of the cigarettes confiscated by the NCS during this period were counterfeit of BAT products adding that this year, BAT plans to work closely with the media and regulators in a collaborative effort to fight product counterfeiting and smuggling.

His words "we believe that our efforts will be better rewarded if the public is well enlightened about the ills of economic sabotage. We have been providing logistic support to the NCS and the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) in this regard. It is my belief that to consolidate on the successes we have recorded, the media could play an important role in informing the public about the risks associated with the consumption of substandard goods."

Richard Hodgson said

further that smuggled and counterfeit products may carry cheap price tags, but they are never a substitution for authentic brands.

"Tobacco use is risky, but counterfeit cigarettes are lethal. The public need to be well informed about these realities" the BAT boss said.

Business Trust gathered that about 4.1 per cent of this country's total population are smokers.

On the recent ban on outdoor product advertisement in the industry, he said that BAT has in compliance with the directive of the governing council of the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APC-ON) stopped outdoor products advertisement with effect from January 1, 2005.

BAT according to him however intends to continue using its network of over 300 bill boards nationwide for corporate brand communication.

On the plans for the year 2005, he said that the company would upgrade its website, www.batnigeria.com, to provide stakeholders with up-to-the-minute information on its operations.

Akwa Ibom predicts economic boom in 2005

From Eder Ekanem, Stringer (Uyo)

The Akwa Ibom state commissioner for economic development, Dr. Ebebe Ukpong has predicted that Akwa Ibom state will soon enjoy global attraction as a result of concrete ideas, export potentials and economic blue prints packaged by the state government.

The commissioner said following global trends, by 2007 and beyond there will be specific things to which the attention of the world will be focused.

Dr. Ukpong made the prediction during a chat with *Business Trust* recently in Uyo, reassuring that apart from the presence of oil, IT revolution is capable of purging all in the state towards the transformation of poverty into wealth "gas is not a big time player within the context of a developing society like Akwa Ibom, you can't employ many people within the gas industry, not many people can exploit the technology. With IT, you can generate quite a number of jobs."

"We also have the best brains in Akwa Ibom, we could raise a generation that would not only work in Akwa Ibom but would also be competitive globally wherever they are. That's the plan of the state," he noted.

Dr. Ukpong noted that with the availability of stable power supply generated from independent power plant soon

to be commissioned, investor's would have been created, because according to him, that would bring down significantly, the cost of production causing the margin of profit to increase.

He further noted, "we have also been able to prepare the basic profiles of the possible areas in which



Left-Right: Managing director of DN Meyer Plc presenting a gift to a customer at the recently concluded Dealers' Forum organised by the company at Grand Hotel & Resort, Asaba ...recently.

NNDC reshuffles management positions

By Hamisu Muhammed, Reporter (Business)

As part of the efforts to improve operational efficiency and enhance the performance of the company in delivering quality service to its stakeholders, the board of the Northern Nigerian Development Company (NNDC) as mandated by the 19 owner sta-

tes governments, has reintroduced the position of executive directors under the newly approved structure of the organization.

Following this development, the position of general manager in the company has been scrapped and all the occupants have accordingly been retired from service with immediate effect.

This decision was the outcome of the 146th meeting of the board of directors of the company held on Thursday, 6th January, 2005 in Kaduna.

A statement from the company's deputy general manager, corporate relations, Mohammed A. Haruna said,

under the new organogram, NNDC would have a new organizational structure with three functional directorates namely: Business Development/Corporate Planning; Investment Supervision and Management Services to be headed by Executive Director who would report to the group managing director/chief executive officer. Furthermore, two additional divisions have been established. They are petroleum & solid minerals/energy promotion, and information technology & telecommunications respectively to enable the company exploit the untapped opportunities that abound in these sectors of the national economy.

Besides increasing efficiency, the restructuring of the company was aimed at reducing cost and meeting company's mandate of mission as NNDC had prior to the restructuring, operated a Group structure that was top heavy, expensive and ineffective.

It read: This restructuring

was the outcome of far reaching exercise to reposition the NNDC group on the path of sustainable progress as the leading Development Finance institution in the region as well as to enable the company face the challenges of the future.

The statement added that management has taken due care to ensure that the rights and obligations of the affected staff retired have been duly respected as all their retirement benefits including gratuity, three months in lieu of notice and pension have already been computed for immediate payment.

It would be recalled that the Northern Governors' Forum in September last year approved the appointment of a new group managing director for the company in the person of Alhaji Aliyu A. Alkali, *msi* and Malam Mohammed A. Sheriff as executive director. Two additional executive directors are expected to be appointed soon.

Commerce council lauds CAC on service delivery

The national council on commerce has commended the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) for effective services delivery in registration of companies in the country.

The council in its communiqué issued at the end of the 12th National Council meeting in Kaduna described the initiatives taken to transform the commission into a modern and efficient company's registry as a step in the right direction.

The council noted that the review of the services, relocation of the commission's headquarters from Garki to a befitting serene environment in Wuse Zone 5, introduction

of a new certificate to check fraud in corporate registration, the on-line system, the same day incorporation process and the production of the first ever code of corporate governance in Nigeria are glaring efforts to improve corporate governance.

The council meeting which was presided over by the minister of commerce Ambassador A. D. Idris Waziri and attended by all stakeholders including state commissioners expressed delight that the above achievements led to the commission being classified by a team of experts constituted by the federal government as the best example of how service delivery can work.



(Standing) Deputy governor of Edo state, Chief Mike Okiadonhe making his remarks at the recently held Nigeria Economic Summit round table in Benin City. Sitting first left is the director-general of the Nigeria Economic Summit Group (NESG), Dr. Mansur Ahmed; his vice, Dr. Imo Israel, seated next to him, while the director, federal fisheries, Alhaji T. A. Shimara



Intercity Bank Plc

Balance Sheet as at 30th June

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 JUNE

	2004 =N='000	2003 =N='000
ASSETS		
Cash and Short Term Funds	9,045,545	5,488,829
Bills Discounted	6,165,652	9,875,195
Investments	151,465	199,386
Loans & Assets	8,046,956	7,056,604
Other Assets	1,468,152	1,126,620
Fixed Assets	823,738	798,322
Total Assets	25,701,508	24,544,956
LIABILITIES		
Deposit, Current and Other Accounts	18,430,095	14,909,229
Tax Payable	69,150	116,927
Proposed Dividend	151,599	119,891
Differed Taxation	66,450	50,700
Other Liabilities	4,467,917	7,200,076
	23,185,211	22,396,823
CAPITAL AND RESERVES		
Called-Up Share Capital	1,515,983	1,198,909
Share Premium	13,950	-
Statutory Reserve	631,616	485,076
Reserve for Small Scale Industries	185,070	129,648
Revenue Reserve	18,080	34,773
Bonus Issue Reserve	151,598	299,727
Shareholder' Funds	2,516,297	2,148,133
Capital & Liabilities	25,701,508	24,544,956
Confirmed credits and other obligations on behalf of customers and the corresponding liabilities thereon.	6,462,358	8,617,043
PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED AT 30 JUNE		
	2004 =N='000	2003 =N='000
Gross Earnings	3,888,077	4,447,852
Profit Before Taxation	554,216	560,874
Taxation	(65,750)	(85,500)
Profit After Taxation	488,466	475,374
APPROPRIATIONS		
Statutory Reserve	146,540	142,612
Reserve for Small Scale Industries	55,422	56,088
Proposed Dividend	151,599	119,891
Revenue Reserve	134,905	156,783
	488,466	475,374

AUDITORS' REPORT

TO THE MEMBERS OF INTERCITY BANK PLC

We have audited the Financial Statement of intercity Bank Plc ("Bank") as at 30 June, 2004 and the related profit and loss account and statement of cash flow for the year then ended, prepared under the historical cost convention and on the basis of the accounting policies set out in the financial statement.

RESPECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES OF DIRECTORS AND AUDITORS

In accordance with the Companies and Allied Matters Act 1990 the Bank Directors are responsible for the preparation of financial statements.

In doing so, directors are required to:

- * select suitable accounting policies and apply them on a consistent basis, making judgements and estimates that are prudent and reasonable.
- * follow applicable accounting standard and
- * prepared the financial statements on a going concern basis

The directors are responsible for ensuring that proper books of account are kept and that adequate internal controls are maintained in order to safeguard the asset and prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.

It is our responsibility to form an independent opinion, based on our audit, on the financial statements and to report our opinion to you.

Basis of Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance generally accepted auditing standards. An audit process includes:

- * examination, on a test basis, of evidence related to the amounts and disclosures in the accounts.
- * assessment of the significant estimates and judgements made by the directors in the preparation of the financial statements and
- * considering whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Bank's circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

We planned and performed our audit so as to obtain all the information and explanation which we considered necessary, in order to provide us with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity or error. Informing our opinion, we also evaluate the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the financial statements, and assessed whether the bank's books of account had been properly kept. We have obtained all the information and explanations and have received proper returns from branches not visited by us for the purpose of our audit. The assets of the bank have properly valued and adequate provision made for diminution in value therefore.

An analysis of insider related credits as required by the Central Bank of Nigeria is set out in Note 25 in the annexed account, in accordance with CBN Circular BSD/2004.

Bank and Other Financial Institutions Act 1991

During the year the Bank contravened certain sections of the Bank and Other Financial Institutions Act 1991 and Central Bank of Nigeria Circulars Nos. BSD/FEL/28/VOL/1/14 of 28/10/01 and TED/AD/78/98 of 23/7/98. The contraventions have been reported and appropriate assessed and paid.

Opinion

In our opinion,

- (i) The Bank's books of account have been properly kept.
- (ii) The financial statements referred to above, which are in agreement with the books of account, give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Bank as at 30 June, 2004 and its profit and statement of cash flow for the years then ended, and comply with the Bank and Other Financial Institutions Act, 1991, relevant Central Bank of Nigeria circulars, relevant Statements of Accounting Standards issued by the Nigerian Accounting Standards Board and the Companies and Allied Matters Act, 1990.

Alhaji Palatu Bella OFR - Chairman

Alhaji Lamis S. Dikko Acting Managing Director/(CEO)

PKF

PANNELL KERR FORSTER
(Chartered Accountants)
Kaduna - Nigeria

Date:



Date: 30th December 2004



Intercity Bank Plc

Notice of Annual General Meeting

NOTICE IS HEREBY given that the 15th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Intercity Bank Plc is scheduled to hold as follows:-

Date: Thursday 10th February 2005
 Time: 11:00 a.m.
 Venue: Liyafa Hotel, Katsina

The AGENDA of the meeting is as follows:-

ORDINARY BUSINESS

1. To receive and consider the Statement of Account for the year ended 30th June 2004 and Report of the Board of Directors
2. To receive the Report of the Audit Committee
3. To consider the Directors' recommendation for declaration of Dividend and application of profit
4. To re-elect Directors
5. To authorize the Directors to fix remuneration of the Auditors
6. To elect members of the Audit Committee
7. To transact this special business:-

Adoption of Ordinary Resolution of capitalize N299,306.00 as follows:-

that the sum of N151,598,297.15 from the General reserve of to company be capitalized and that same be capitalized in making payment in full at par for 303,196,594 shares each in the capital of the company ranking in all respect paripassu with the existing ordinary shares of the company such shares to be allotted and distributed among the persons who are registered as holders of the ordinary shares in the capital of the company by the close of business on 17th January, 2005 in the proportion of one (1) fully paid share for every 10 (10) shares of 50k (fifty kobo) each held by such shareholders and that the Directors be and are hereby authorised to give effect to this resolution.

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD

SAIDU M. JALLO
 COMPANY SECRETARY/LEGAL ADVISER

Date this 17th day of January 2005

REGISTERED OFFICE
 11, Intercity Bank Street,
 Mopani City Centre,
 Off Alhuda Bello Way,
 Kaduna.

Notes: (a) Proxy
 Only members are entitled vote or to be represented at the meeting. A member entitled to attend and vote at the General Meeting is entitled to appoint a Proxy in his/her stead. A proxy needs not be a member of the company.

To be valid, the Proxy Card attached to the Annual Report must be returned duly stamped, to the Bank's Registrar, IDN SECURITIES of 0601 Ariko House (5th Floor), No 5, Idowu Taylor Street, Victoria Island, Lagos not later than 48 hours prior to the time of the meeting.

(b) Nomination of Audit Committee
 In accordance with Section 359(15) of the Companies and Allied Matters Decree, 1990, any member may nominate a shareholder as a member of the Audit Committee by giving notice in writing of such nomination to the Company Secretary at least 21 days before the Annual General Meeting.

Intercity Bank Plc
 -Totally at your service-

1, Intercity Bank Street, Mopani City Centre, Off Alhuda Bello Way, P. M. E. ZONE, Kaduna.
 Tel: +234(82)2013447 (3 lines), Fax: +234(82)201348 E-mail: info@intercitybank.com, Website: www.intercitybank.com.



NATIONAL INSURANCE COMMISSION

HEAD OFFICE:
 Shippers' Plaza, Michael Okpara Street
 Wuse Zone 5, P.M.B. 457
 Garki, Abuja, Nigeria.
 Tel:(09)523-8268, 523-8269
 Fax:(09) 523-8260
 E-mail: naicom@abuja.rci.nig.com

LAGOS CONTROL OFFICE:
 Ikoyi Road, Alagbon
 P.M.B. 80144
 Victoria Island, Lagos
 Tel:(01) 267-2497,267-9531
 FAX: (01)267-2468

INVITATION TO PRE-QUALIFICATION FOR THE PRINTING OF SECURITIZED VEHICLE INSURANCE STICKER (VISER)

The National Insurance Commission, in continued pursuit of a *healthier insurance industry in Nigeria* and in accordance with Due Process rules and regulations, hereby invites experienced and reputable companies to submit pre-qualification documents for the printing of securitized Vehicle Insurance Sticker (VISER). The pre-qualification documents should consist of and include the following:

1. Profile of the company
2. Organizational structure including list of key personnel and their qualifications
3. Copy of certificate of incorporation
4. Evidence of financial capability reference from a reputable bank
5. Evidence of registration with Corporate Affairs Commission
6. Veritable experience in printing materials of similar nature and scope.
 Evidence of executed work will be an advantage
7. Tax clearance certificate for the past three years
8. VAT certificate if any
9. Payment of a non refundable registration fee of N1,000,000 to the Finance & Planning Directorate of NAICOM, Abuja.

Please note:

- Notwithstanding the submission of the pre-qualification information, NAICOM is neither committed nor obliged to include your company on any bid list or to award any form of contract to your company and/or associated companies, sub contractors or agents.
- Only short listed companies shall be invited for tendering
- NAICOM will deal only with authorized officers of the tendering companies and NOT through individuals or agents
- Quotations must be received within two (2) weeks from the date of this notice.
 The bids will be opened a day after the two (2) weeks at 12.00 noon.
- This advertisement of "invitation for pre-qualification" shall not be construed as commitment on part of NAICOM, nor shall it entitle applicants to make any claim whatsoever and/or seek any indemnity from NAICOM and/or any of its partners by virtue of such applicants having responded to this advertisement.

The pre-qualification application should be submitted in a sealed envelope with the title "*pre-qualification documents*" clearly labelled on top left hand corner and addressed to:

**THE COMMISSIONER FOR INSURANCE
 NATIONAL INSURANCE COMMISSION
 SHIPPERS PLAZA, MICHAEL OKPARA STREET
 WUSE ZONE 5, ABUJA**

**SIGNED
 MANAGEMENT**

Business Trust

THE NIGERIAN STOCK EXCHANGE

REPORT AS AT MONDAY, JANUARY 17, 2005

1ST-TIER SECURITIES

COMPANY NAME	NO OF DEALS	QUOTATION(S)	QUANTITY TRADED	VALUE OF SHARES
2ND-TIER SECURITIES				
CUTIX PLC	4	1.43	15,561	22,364.23
Sector Totals				
AGRICULTURE/AGRO-ALLIED	4		15,561	22,364.23
OKITIPUPA OIL PALM PLC	2	0.73	200,000	150,000.00
THE OROMI OIL PALM COMPANY PLC	4	14.71	2,400	35,304.00
PRESKO PLC	2	11.40	1,610	18,354.00
Sector Totals				
AUTOMOBILE & TYRE				
DUNLOP NIGERIA PLC	32	1.98	938,676	1,808,672.40
R. T. BRISCOAL PLC	5	7.22	7,000	50,540.00
Sector Totals				
BANKING	37		945,676	1,859,212.40
ACCESS BANK PLC	12	3.42	264,886	905,910.12
AFRIBANK NIGERIA PLC	9	6.63	30,672	203,355.36
FIRST ATLANTIC BANK PLC	2	3.41	142,000	484,220.00
CHARTERED BANK PLC	2	3.90	12,000	46,800.00
COOPERATIVE BANK PLC	15	1.55	82,036	124,830.00
EBB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC	2	2.26	40,001,000	90,402,260.00
FIRST BANK OF NIGERIA PLC	349	24.00	388,310	2,445,335.00
FNB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC	18	1.32	368,526	483,340.46
GUARANTY TRUST BANK PLC	78	11.69	962,499	11,251,613.31
GULF BANK OF NIGERIA PLC	4	0.98	906,000	887,880.00
INTERNATIONAL MERCHANT BANK PLC	16	0.69	1,176,697	1,184,200.93
INLAND BANK (NIGERIA) PLC	3	1.07	260,000	278,200.00
INTERCONTINENTAL BANK PLC	2	7.81	40,400	315,524.00
LIBERTY MERCHANT BANK	2	0.84	12,000	10,080.00
MANUFACTURERS BANK NIGERIA PLC	11	1.20	662,700	843,240.00
NAL BANK PLC	61	2.01	3,870,993	7,383,626.04
OCEANIC BANK PLC	4	5.30	388,310	2,445,335.00
OMEGA BANK (NIGERIA) PLC	13	1.27	354,250	449,697.50
STANDARD TRUST BANK PLC	3	7.41	10,573	78,345.93
TRANS INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC	15	1.53	702,245	1,067,165.66
UNITED BANK FOR AFRICA PLC	94	9.31	5,716,776	49,823,138.26
UNION BANK NIGERIA PLC	272	21.03	1,515,603	31,866,341.52
UNIVERSAL TRUST BANK PLC	14	1.09	748,400	790,286.00
WOMA BANK PLC	2	3.91	89,600	351,124.00
ZENITH BANK PLC	67	15.69	924,668	14,508,040.92
Sector Totals				
BRUWERIES	1,079		60,069,558	239,335,011.89
GUINNESS NIGERIA PLC	117	109.00	825,774	92,782,054.61
NIGERIAN BRUWERIES PLC	412	40.00	1,097,011	43,831,280.18
Sector Totals				
BUILDING MATERIALS				
ASHAKA CEMENT PLC	70	24.00	319,775	7,817,743.27
BENUE CEMENT COMPANY PLC	4	4.30	11,866	51,023.80
CEMENT COMPANY OF NORTHERN NIG. PLC	30	7.05	235,264	1,649,948.00
WEST AFRICAN PORTLAND CEMENT CO. PLC	19	12.00	48,995	578,915.10
Sector Totals				
CHEMICAL & PAINTS				
BERGER PAINTS PLC	21	5.09	312,134	1,560,575.00
CAP PLC	2	6.70	33,640	225,388.00
D. N. MEYER PLC	9	5.00	2,400	11,952.50
NIGERIA-GERMAN CHEMICALS PLC	4	3.98	65,200	259,800.00
Sector Totals				
COMPUTER & OFFICE EQUIPMENT				
NCR (NIGERIA) PLC	2	1.44	5,250	7,402.50
Sector Totals				
CONGLOMERATES				
A. G. LEVINTS NIGERIA PLC	8	1.04	141,020	145,220.00
C F A O NIGERIA PLC	5	5.88	10,575	62,181.00
JOHN HOLT PLC	2	1.05	1,981	2,080.05
UNILEVER NIGERIA PLC	170	18.38	1,060,566	19,337,415.20
P. Z. INDUSTRIES PLC	43	12.00	74,730	896,421.31
S C O A NIGERIA PLC	7	1.25	42,585	53,231.25
U.A.C. NIGERIA PLC	33	14.17	98,262	1,406,874.54
U.T.C. NIGERIA PLC	3	1.20	4,426	6,511.20
Sector Totals				
CONSTRUCTION	271		1,455,754	21,903,934.55
COSTAIN (W.A.) PLC	5	0.92	97,607	89,798.44
G. CAPPA PLC	1	2.23	4,800	10,704.00
JULIUS BERGER NIGERIA PLC	2	15.20	5,400	82,080.00
Sector Totals				
FOOD/BEVERAGES & TOBACCO				
7-UP BOTTLING COMPANY PLC	30	24.48	52,166	1,267,192.32
CADBURY NIGERIA PLC	104	59.00	141,512	8,233,861.92
FLLOUR MILLS NIGERIA PLC	31	16.61	99,719	1,656,232.59
NIGERIA BOTTLING COMPANY PLC	61	32.63	184,685	9,997,641.26
NESTLE FOODS NIGERIA PLC	68	148.52	191,623	28,621,641.19
NORTHERN NIGERIA FLOUR MILLS PLC	2	15.82	714	11,785.48
Sector Totals				
HEALTHCARE	296		670,419	49,787,944.76
EVANS MEDICAL PLC	25	3.14	275,348	865,776.72
MAY & BAKER NIGERIA PLC	10	5.40	11,250	378,750.00
MORISON INDUSTRIES PLC	2	1.13	64,206	72,552.78
NEUMETH INTERNATIONAL PHARM. PLC	8	2.71	207,500	583,850.00
GLAXOSMITHKLINE CONSUMER NIG. PLC	23	9.00	160,085	1,440,615.79
Sector Totals				
INDUSTRIAL/DOMESTIC PRODUCTS				
NIGERIA ENAMELWARE COMPANY PLC	1	3.40	15,000	51,000.00
FIRST ALUMINIUM NIGERIA PLC	8	1.05	106,296	112,134.64
B.O.C. GASSES PLC	12	2.99	257,335	762,897.07
VITAFOAM NIGERIA PLC	3	4.90	644,105	3,156,114.50
Sector Totals				
INSURANCE				
ACEN INSURANCE COMPANY PLC	50	0.60	1,230,400	738,240.00
AICO INSURANCE PLC	16	2.17	325,700	713,669.00
CORNERSTONE INSURANCE CO. PLC	13	1.24	490,184	611,937.78
LINKAGE ASSURANCE PLC	5	1.78	51,333	91,372.74
PRESTIGE ASSURANCE PLC	1	1.97	1,000	1,970.00
ROYAL EXCHANGE ASSURANCE PLC	9	3.20	46,474	148,716.80
UNIC INSURANCE PLC	9	1.20	210,350	257,895.18
WEST AFRICAN PROV. INS. COY. PLC	17	2.99	182,857	540,364.65
Sector Totals				
MANAGED FUNDS	122		2,538,298	3,104,166.15
C & I LEASING PLC	6	1.68	81,745	137,331.60
Sector Totals				
PACKAGING	6		81,745	137,331.60
BETA GLASS COMPANY PLC	2	5.21	10,000	52,100.00
POLY PRODUCTS (NIGERIA) PLC	5	0.60	20,000	11,704.00
Sector Totals				
PETROLEUM/MARKETING				
AFROIL PLC	18	0.94	566,679	550,673.42
AFRICAN PETROLEUM PLC	107	66.00	776,151	51,716,064.90
ETERNA OIL & GAS PLC	8	2.22	56,142	124,385.24
MOBI OIL NIGERIA PLC	65	177.00	110,443	19,347,421.64
CONOIL PLC	58	128.90	69,200	7,578,819.98
TEXACO (NIGERIA) PLC	15	168.70	17,966	3,019,813.60
TOTAL NIGERIA PLC	27	179.01	98,934	17,920,501.00
OANDO PLC	184	104.00	104,538	10,846,117.33
Sector Totals				
PRINTING & PUBLISHING	482		1,790,084	111,103,937.11
UNIVERSITY PRESS PLC	5	1.89	80,000	151,200.00
Sector Totals				
REAL ESTATE				
UACN PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT PLC	31	9.00	478,803	4,309,212.60
Sector Totals				
TEXTILES				
UNITED NIGERIA TEXTILES PLC	20	2.75	118,458	331,810.84
Sector Totals				
Overall Totals	3,182		73,225,017	588,674,965.03

TOP 10 TRADES YESTERDAY

SYMBOL	VOLUME	VALUE	TRADES
FIRSTBANK	962,272.00	23,087,376.88	349
GUARANTY	962,499.00	11,251,613.31	78
LEVBROS	1,060,566.00	19,337,415.20	170
NB	1,097,011.00	43,831,280.18	412
ACCESINS	1,230,400.00	738,240.00	50
UBN	1,515,603.00	31,866,341.52	232
DMB	1,716,697.00	1,184,200.93	16
NAL	3,670,993.00	7,383,626.04	61
UBA	5,216,776.00	49,823,138.26	94
EKOBANK	40,001,009.00	90,402,260.00	2

TOP 10 GAINERS

SYMBOL	LAST CLOSE	YESTERDAY'S CLOSE	CHANGE
CADBURY	57.00	59.00	+2.00
NOLCHEM	127.40	128.90	+1.50
LEVBROS	17.51	18.31	+0.87
TEXACO	168.00	168.70	+0.70
UBA	9.35	9.81	+0.46
SKBECHAM	8.60	9.00	+0.40
CFAO	5.60	5.88	+0.28
VITAFOAM	4.67	4.90	+0.23
ENAMELWA	3.25	3.40	+0.15
WAPIC	2.85	2.99	+0.14

TOP 10 LOSERS

SYMBOL	LAST CLOSE	YESTERDAY'S CLOSE	CHANGE
TOTAL	182.00	179.01	-2.99
NBC	55.00	52.63	-2.37
UNILEVER	105.00	104.00	-1.00
GUINNESS	110.00	109.00	-1.00
MOBIL	178.00	177.00	-1.00
ASHKACEM	24.30	24.00	-0.30
UBN	21.30	21.05	-0.25
NIG-GERMAN	4.18	3.98	-0.20
AP	66.15	66.00	-0.15
PFEIZER	2.82	2.71	-0.11

First Interstate Bank eyes other countries, raises N17bn

First Interstate Bank has concluded plans to expand its business horizon into the Gulf of Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, Equatorial Guinea and Angola all in the first phase of its regional expansion strategy.

This move forms a pivotal part of the Business Transformation Programme ("BTP") of the bank which started with the recruitment of a new Managing Director/Chief Executive (CEO) in the person of Mr. Olukeyode Pitan.

A statement from the bank made available to *Business Trust* said the bank is expected to raise about N17 billion through a combination of Rights Issue to its existing shareholders and Private Placement to institutional investors and high net worth individuals.

"This is to position the bank to be a relevant player in the emerging landscape."

The bank plans to channel the proceeds of this offer to some value added initiatives, part of which is to finance its regional expansion into other African countries. The proceeds will also be utilized by expanding its branch network with the introduction of 40 additional branches; investing massively in Information Technology; strategic investments in its subsidiaries for optimum return; strategic investment involving controlling stake in identified insurance companies and a primary mortgage institution; investing and making impact in some key business Areas of the economy such as Energy, oil & gas, telecoms, real estate, infrastructure financing; etc.

Committee on monetisation summits report

A report on further implementation of the monetisation policy has been submitted to the federal government. A source in the Presidency told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) yesterday in Abuja that the report has been submitted to the office of the Head of Service of the Federation (HOSFE).

The source, who asked for anonymity said that the committee set up by the federal government to study the problems associated with the policy, made far reaching recommendations. The source debunked rumours making the rounds that civil servants who have benefited from the programme have been asked to refund such monies.

He said that civil servants yet to collect their money would still do so as "it would be unreasonable for some to benefit while others do not". He however said that the implementation of the recommendations made by the assessment committee would depend on the office of the head of service.

NAN reports that the full implementation of the policy which began in some of the federal ministries last year was yet to take off in parastatals and other government offices.

It would be recalled that government had proposed 2005 as take off date for the commencement of the policy in such agencies and parastatals.



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P.M.B. 12544, Lagos, Nigeria. Telephone: 01-2611262, 2612088, 2616682, 7744619. Telefax: 01-2612945, 2611083.



MORE FACES AT TRUST D



L-R: Alh. Rabi'u Garba, Mal. Umar Abdullahi (both Directors Media Trust), Mal. Kabiru Yusuf, Managing Director/Editor-in-Chief, Mal. Abdulmumin Bella, Chairman Board of Directors and Alh. Isaq Ajibola, Executive Director Operations welcoming Guests at the 2nd Trust Dialogue Venue.



Malam Saliu I. Mohammed, Group Advert Manager and Malam AbdulMumin Isa, Corporate Affairs Manager-Media Trust Ltd.



Mal. Bilya Bala (in glasses) Director Media Trust and Mr. Sam Nda Isalah, Publisher of Leadership Newspaper at the Dinner



Honourable Edmund Macebuh, with former Senate President, Hon. Anyim Pius Anyim and former Speaker Ghall Na'abba.



Former Senate President, Hon. Anyim Pius Anyim, Former Speaker House of Reps, Ghall Umar Na'abba and Minister of Cooperation and Integration in Africa, Alh. Lawal Guba standing up for the National Anthem



HRH Etsu Nups, Alh. Yakaya Abuhakar (R) discussing with the Former Speaker, House of Reps, Hon. Ghall Umar Na'abba (L) during Media Trust 2nd Annual Trust Dialogue held in Abuja.



From L-R, Hon Ghall Na'abba, Former Speaker House of Reps., Alh. Umar Abdullahi, Director Media Trust and Mal. Wada Maida, former Managing Director, News Agency of Nigeria at the pre-Dialogue Dinner.



The Representative of Vice President at the occasion, MFCT Minister, Malam Nasiru El-Rufa'i exchanging pleasantries with HRH. Etsu Nups, Alhaji Yakaya Abuhakar, watching is the Chairman of the occasion and former head of Interim Government Chief Ernest Shonekan.

From and 7

Talib (TBC)

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L-R Plat

DIALOGUE AND DINNER



Executive Director of Nigerian Media Trust, Alb. Abdulmumilu Bello discussing with Alb. Isiaq Ajibola, Executive Director and Mal. Is'haq Modibbo Kawa, Editor Daily Trust.



L-R Editor Daily Malam Is'haq Modibbo Kawa discussing with Mal. Salisu Bappa of ABU Zaria immediate left and Alb. Abbas Hassan (extreme right), Special Assistant to the Kano State Governor.



From L-R Dr. Naru Yakubu, Executive Secretary, NBTE, Alb. Rub'u Garba, Director Media Trust and Mal. Abdulfraaq Adu at the dinner.



L-R The representative of Minister of Information, the representative of Kaduna State Governor, Mal. Muktar Sarajo and Hon. Commissioner of Information Rivers State who represented the State Governor at the occasion.



Talhan Bauchi, Dr. Ibrahim Tahir and Alhaji Sule Yahaya Hamma of the Buhari Organisation (TBO)



The Master of Ceremony, Mr. Tunde Asaju introducing guests at the occasion.



The Chief of Staff, Yobe State, Government House, Alhaji Mohammed Barka and Malam Ibrahim Jirgi, Special Assistant Media to Yobe State Governor at the occasion.



Alhaji Wada Kachako MD/Editor-In-Chief National Outlook Magazine and Alhaji Mustapha (Zannan Dutse) at the dialogue.



L-R Ambassador Yarima Abdullahi, Col. Habibu Idris Shuaibu, former Military Administrator of Plateau State and Colonel Musa Shehu (Rtd) also former Military Administrator.



Deputy Editor Weekly Trust, Hajja Aisha U. Yusuf and Safiya I. Dantiye, Women Editor Daily Trust at the pre-dialogue Dinner.



THE PRESIDENCY

Bureau of Public Enterprises

The Secretariat of the National Council on Privatisation

Hamza Zayyad House, 1, Osun Crescent, Off Ibrahim Babangida Way
Maitama District, P.M.B. 442, Garki-Abuja, Nigeria

Tel: (234-9) 4134636-46, 4134640-6

Fax: (234-9) 4134657, 413-4671-2

E-mail: askbpe@bpe.org

Web site: <http://www.bpe.org>

Press Statement

Assessment of the BPE: Director General of Nigerian Stock Exchange completely missed the point.

The attention of the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) has been drawn to various newspaper publications including the Vanguard of 10/1/2005 under the headline, "NSE slams BPE over delay in implementation of privatization programme" credited to the Director General of the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) Dr. (Mrs.) Ndii Okereke-Onyulko.

While the BPE concedes that the Director General of the NSE as a highly placed stakeholder has the freedom to comment on the privatization programme, the Bureau is concerned that the statements credited to her might have been taken out of context or guided by wrong information. One would have thought that such a public figure would be more circumspect especially as she does not play a supervisory role over the activities of BPE. As a major stakeholder, a call to the BPE would have placed her in a better position to appreciate the achievements of the BPE.

It would appear that the Director General of the NSE sees privatization only through the prism of the capital market and stock offering. Nothing could be further from the truth. The BPE is charged with the dual responsibility of reforming Public Enterprises and the divestiture of government shares. Divestiture takes various forms including Restitution (returning nationalized property to its former owners); Auction/Direct Sales (to core investors); Liquidation (through legal abolition); Employee/Management Buyout; Marketization/Demonopolization (by engendering competition); Leasing/Concessioning/Contracting; Public-Private Partnership (PPP) and of course, Stock Offering (through the stock exchange). The rationale is to reduce government shareholding in these enterprises and, ipso facto, reduce government transfer of funds to them.

The 1999 privatization and commercialization act enjoins the BPE to seek and implement best ways and practice in the sale of government shares. It would therefore amount to standing truth on its head to assume that if government shares are not sold by way of Stock Offering (through the NSE) that privatization and reform of Public Enterprises are not taking place. The activities of the Bureau helped to deepen the Capital Market at the early phase of the current program (1999-2001) when government shares in enterprises already listed on the NSE (with government as minority shareholder) were sold. Such privatizations are appropriately called "low hanging fruits" since they do not require much work to accomplish them. However, the exercise entered the more complex and challenging phase since 2002. Perhaps this explains why no enterprise was privatized in 2002 and 2003. It is definitely not true as the Director General of the NSE would have the public believe that the "programme was stalled during the year 2004". The facts speak for themselves as the following enterprises were privatized in 2004:

- West Africa Refinery Company of Sierra Leone (April, 2004)
- Daily Times of Nigeria PLC (June, 2004)
- Central Hotels, and its Hostels (July, 2004)
- National Trucks Manufacturing (NTM). The transaction started in December, 2002 but was concluded in June 2004.
- Ore-Irele Oil Palm Company (September, 2004)
- NPA Quarters (October, 2004)
- Return of New Nigerian Newspapers to its former owners
- Nigerian Airways Limited (whose privatization was stalled several times between 2000 and 2003)
- Besides, through appropriate conflict resolution mechanisms, the BCC which was sold to Dangote Group since 2001 (but could not be handed over) was successfully handed over in 2004. As in marketing, where a sale is only complete when the consumer pays and receives goods/services, privatization is complete when the new owner takes possession.

In addition to these privatization success stories, the BPE in 2004 pushed the privatization of two major sectors of the economy - Ports and Electricity which have been in the doldrums since 2000 - to a near point of no return. Following

the harvest of 110 Expressions of Interest, in October, a well publicized due diligence and data room exercise for Aprapa Ports was carried out by 61 prospective Concessionaires. Final bids are due on the 22nd of this month after which the first ever concessioning for Nigerian Ports would be done. Also the much anticipated power bill has been passed by both houses of the National Assembly. Harmonization of differences is expected within a fortnight. And once signed into law by Mr. President, what promises to be the watershed in Nigeria's electricity sector, nay the economy as a whole, will commence.

Whereas the BPE would rather focus on the job at hand and not be dragged into ad hominem by the Director General of the NSE as she alleged that "no significant achievement has been recorded by the Bureau since the former Director General, Mallam Nasir el-Rufai left the office", some basic facts are worth recalling. The present management at BPE is painstaking in both the sale of government shares and management of the Bureau.

Perhaps, it might interest the Director General of the NSE to note that the World Bank (a major financier and stakeholder) after its first review of the Bank's Privatization Support Project (which commenced in 2001) indicted the Bureau and threatened to withdraw its support when it noted that "the most important Public Enterprises, in terms of economic and social impact, have yet to be divested. Moreover, the Bank expressed serious concerns about inadequate transparency in some transactions (e.g., NITEL), and failure to comply with FGN's privatization procedures in a consistent fashion. In addition, fiduciary oversight and accountability of the Privatization Proceeds Account (PPA) have been inadequate to date, and the audits of these accounts are overdue". The World Bank in the same review also noted that "there is no proper internal audit arrangement for the project; a manual financial system is currently being used; there were major lapses in the retirement of advances; charges made by the project commercial bankers are deemed excessive and inconsistent with the concerns of effective management of IDA's resources, especially given current FGN's regulations that prohibit transaction charges on government bank accounts; interests have not been credited on Special Account balance; expenses that date back to late 2001 and 2002 were submitted in January 2004; expenses were incurred before no-objection was sought from the Bank".

On the basis of these assessments, the Bank adjudged the performance of the Bureau "unsatisfactory". Contrast this with the Bank's report in August 2004 where it enthused: "Over the last few months, BPE has achieved strong progress towards meeting the key criteria for High Case Scenario. BPE brought 10 Public Enterprises up to the point of sale, exceeding the initial target of seven enterprises agreed upon during the MTR in April. A compliance review suggested that these transactions were carried out with adequate due diligence".

While the BPE would continue to strive to help deepen the capital market through privatization by stock offerings, the Bureau would only do this in the interest of the enterprises and the investing public. Given the well publicized problems of the Pentascope contract and NITEL, prudence demanded that the earlier proposed Initial Public Offer of NITEL shares (through the Stock Exchange) be shelved for a later day. Doing otherwise in order to bolster the capital market would have amounted to public deceit. Against this background, the Bureau is presently implementing a well thought out Core Investor sale of 51% of NITEL to strengthen the organization before the sale of 49% to the general public later. Also, to help the survival of Afribank (in the wake of the N25bn minimum capital requirements) the Bureau suspended its sale of 34% government shares through the stock exchange to allow Afribank management access the capital market first.

As a public institution charged with reforms and economic management, the BPE's role is to ensure public good to the greatest number of Nigerians. This is our mandate and we shall continue to implement it transparently and without fear or favor.

Adesoji Adesugba
Head Communications & Marketing
Bureau of Public Enterprises

LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT

We'll not give up protest - NLC

Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) president, Comrade Adams Oshiomhole, said that the labour movement will not give up staging a protest over the fuel hike until the federal government achieves what he called "the petroleum equalisation fund" in the country.

Oshiomhole, who stated this to *Labour Trust* during what he described as "a thank you visit" to the head office of Media Trust (Publishers of Weekly Trust and Daily Trust newspapers) in Abuja, last week, said that there is imbalance in the oil prices in both southern and northern parts of the country and the enforcers of Petroleum Price Regulatory Agency (PPRA) could not compel the directors of major oil marketing companies who are the major players in the system across the nation to sell petrol to motorists at N49 per litre as jointly agreed by the government and NLC.

According to him, most of the filling stations across the nation sell their fuel to motorists at their own favour prices without proper check by the men of the PPRA.

NLC president who said that the labour can not fold its hands and look until the imbalance in the oil prices goes out of control said "we have gone out to picket some filling stations across the nation so as to ensure compliance with the control of pump prices and we will continue on the struggles until Nigeria becomes a kind country."

Speaking on the brazen refusal by oil marketers to revert to previous oil Prices as agreed upon by labour and government, through the Ibrahim Mantuled com-

AbdulWahab Deji
Ajikobi, stringer (Abuja)

mittee, Oshiomhole challenged Nigerians to investigate the ownership of the six major oil marketing companies to know who are behind them, as they turn into sacred cows by violating the provisions of the petroleum Act, in the face of government's helplessness.

He, however, cautioned those dismissing the work of the committee as a worthless exercise, saying that the committee and even Mantu as an individual have done well, saying that it would be up to the government to act on the report of the committee, expected to be submitted by the end of next month.

The labour leader who commended Nigerians over their support during the previous fuel hikes strikes said although he realised that the commoners inflicted pains during the strike period and tired of staying at home but "we must force our leaders in the authority to listen to the voice of the masses."

In his response, the Managing Director of the Media Trust Limited, Mallam Kabiru A. Yusuf, who assured the NLC of his support said he believes that what NLC was doing is right, urging the labour leader to continue the struggle for good governance and better Nigeria.

The NLC president, who was received at Media Trust Limited by its MD, Mallam Kabiru Yusuf, was accompanied on the visit by, among other officials, comrade Issa Aremu and Mr. Owie Lakemfa.

No compromise on public enlightenment

The Corps Marshal of the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), Major General Haladu Hananiya (rd) has said that the commission will not compromise the role of public enlightenment campaign in reducing road accidents.

Maj. Gen. Hananiya (rd) stated this in Jos at a one-day workshop for public education officers of the commission that the role of public education in the reduction of carnage on the roads could not be compromised.

"This is because of the evolving trends in the nation's road traffic administration," he said.

He stated that the commission's desire was to

reposition its public education department to road safety in the interest of the corporate image of the organization.

The FRSC Chief executive explained that the workshop was designed to ensure that public awareness machinery became more effective and fell in line with contemporary global trends.

Hananiya who was represented by the Director of Operations, Mr. Yemi Ogoro, advised the public education officers to register with the Nigerian institute of public relations in their respective states to be on a par with their contemporaries activities.

Earlier, Governor Joshua Dariye had commended the



NLC President, Comrade Adams Oshiomhole (L) discussing with the Editor-In-Chief of Media Trust, Mallam Kabiru Yusuf (R) during the former courtesy visit to Media Trust headquarters in Abuja ... recently

Nigeria witnessed industrial tsunami in 2004

The Acting Secretary General of the National Union of Textile, Garment and Tailoring Workers of Nigeria, Comrade Issa Aremu has said that the deplorable condition of industries in the nation with respect to textile sub-sector have moved from bad to worse in 2004, saying that the nation truly witnessed industrial tsunami, which led to unprecedented closures of factories and mass joblessness.

Comrade Aremu who was speaking to newsmen at a press briefing on the state of the nation industry, the union and challenges for 2005, in Kaduna, said that the development is tragic and unfortunate, pointing out that no government seems to have shown interest and invested time and energy to revive the industry in recent time like President Olusegun Obasanjole federal executive.

According to him, when government showed adequate interest in the revival of industry in 2002, barely 50 companies were operating at 30 percent capacity

From Aliyu Haruna,
Correspondent (Kaduna)

utilisation compared to 175 mills in mid-1980s, adding that it was sharp industrial decline which in turn made President Obasanjo to set up an interventionist technical committee.

He disclosed that within the last two years, more than half of the remaining 50 mills had further shot down leading to additional 7,806 workers losing their jobs, adding that as many as 100,000 workers have lost their jobs from 1997 to date.

He said that the factory closures undermine the government policy of National Economic empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) to promote non-oil export, pointing out that one cannot export while domestic productive capacity is atrophied through factory closures.

Comrade Aremu said that factory closures worsen communal poverty, in-

creases destitution and hopelessness in all the industrial cities affected.

He suggested that there should be two years time frame for industrial revival just as a two-year frame is fixed for banks capitalisation, adding that Bank of Industries (BOI) must be recapitalised and strengthened to save the collapsed companies.

He commended the effort of the president of the Nigeria Labour congress (NLC), Mr. Adams Oshiomhole for his historic role in defending the right of Nigerian workers.

Comrade Aremu said the federal government should desist from criminalizing labour protest, saying that it is through such struggles that government gets all picture of the impact of its policies on people which scyophants in government prevent President Obasanjo from knowing.

The secretary-general however welcome the

Issa Aremu

proposed national dialogue, adding that one more dialogue cannot be too many for a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-dimensional country as Nigeria.

Kebbi teachers resume strike

The primary school teachers in Birnin-Kebbi local government of Kebbi State have resumed an indefinite strike to demand payment of annual and promotion increments.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), reports that the teachers were irked by the council's refusal to pay them promotion and annual increment.

The teachers told NAN that they had gone on strike last December for the same reasons but suspended following the intervention of highly placed persons, who gave assurance that the council would settle outstanding debt.

However, the Chairman of NUT Birnin-Kebbi Chapter, Mr Sanusi Umar, said the teachers resumed the strike because the council refused to honour the agreement reached with the union.

"It is now three weeks since we entered into an agreement but the Council is adamant on the issue," he told NAN.

According to him, "only Birnin-Kebbi Local Government has refused to effect the payment of teachers' promotion and annual increments, as directed by the state government."

FRSC initiates raffle to sensitise Okada riders

The Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) with the Amalgamated Commercial Motorcycle Owners and Riders Association (ACOMORAN) has given Okada riders in the Federal Capital Territory what it called "safety orientation programme" through the provision of FRSC raffle ticket.

Disclosing this to *Labour Trust*, the FCT chairman of the ACOMORAN, Alhaji Faroukh Naseer A. Datsama, who said that the commission directed the union to sell the ticket to each member at sum of N150 said it is aimed at training members so as to acquire knowledge on the safety while riding.

By AbdulWahab Deji
Ajikobi, Stringer (Abuja)

Alhaji Datsama said that the union sells each ticket with a tape cassette that contains some questions on road safety and traffic regulations.

The participants, he said, having played the tape, will write the answers on the sheet of papers and submit it to the union.

This, he said, is part of the methods adopted by the men of the commission to sensitise Okada riders and other road users of their safety.

He revealed that the emerged winners will be given motor car, motorcycles, computer system and other gifts

LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT

NULGE commends Katsina joint account system

The Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE), Katsina branch, has described Katsina State as operating the best local government joint account system with seven billion naira credit balance in its account.

The National secretary general (NULGE) Mr. A.A. Salam made the observation during a one-day meeting held in Katsina.

Mr. A.A. Salam said the national secretariat is quite abreast with the operations of Katsina State joint account system under the management of the department for local government and chieftaincy affairs and therefore rated it as best in the country compared to non-transparent operation in most of the states in the country.

He said where most states governors use local government monies at their own whims and caprices is unacceptable and further negates the enshrined principles of the joint account system in the country.

He praises the permanent secretary of the department, Alh. Abu Dan Mallam Karobi for his prudent and honest disposition in the management of local government funds, urging him to sustain the tempo in the best interest of the state.

Earlier in his address, the state chapter chairman of the union, comrade Bashir Isiyaku Karare appealed to the state government to help complete the abandoned house project of the late

Lawal Ibrahim Katsin,
Correspondent (Katsina)

deputy national vice president to accord his family an opportunity to shelter themselves after the loss of their breadwinner.

He described the late Bakori as a great unionist who will be remembered for his courage and steadfastness in negotiating and concretising the rights of his union members and a partner in the developmental process of Katsina State and the country at large.



L-R: Counsel to NLC, Chief Femi Falana, NLC President, Comrade Adams Oshiomhole and Chief Gani Fawehinmi discussing outside the court premises during the case between Labour and Federal government over the hike in the pump prices of petroleum products held at the federal high court, Maidama, Abuja...recently.

Passengers urged to desist from motorcycles without plate numbers

The FCT chairman of the Amalgamated Commercial Motorcycle Owners and Riders Association of Nigeria (ACOMORAN) Abuja branch, Alhaji Faroukh Nasseer A. Datsama has urged patronizing passengers of Okada riders in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) to

By Abdulwahab Deji Ajikobi,
Stringer (Abuja)

desist from climbing motorcycles without plate numbers.

Alhaji Datsama who gave this advice in Abuja while addressing branch chairmen of the association in his office said the executives of ACOMORAN, Abuja branch will engage on enlightenment

campaign in the six area councils across the FCT to sensitise the passengers on the need to beware of some Okada riders that operate without having the plate numbers.

The ACOMORAN chairman who described some of these Okada riders as touts and perpetrators dubious said

passengers find it difficult to trace them in case of any eventuality.

According to him, some perpetrators robs many passengers in the name of Okada business and efforts made by the union to address the problem proved abortive because of different bodies that manage Okada business in the FCT.

"We have concluded plans to educate passengers at various Okada bus-stops to desist from patronising quacks," he said.

Alhaji Datsama who told *Labour Trust* that the bonafide members of the union must operate with plate numbers said the union, during the registration of their members, ensures that members register their Chassis number, Engine number and plate number in their registration forms.

He revealed that due to some base line data of mem-

bers in the record of the union, the ACOMORAN recovered some stolen motorcycles for their members.

He added that about three motorcycles which were recovered recently by the union from thieves are in the custody of the police.

According to him, the union combat the increased numbers of perpetrators in the Okada business by providing their members a uniform that will distinguish them from touts. "ACOMORAN members will start operating with uniforms the moment, President Olusegun Obasanjo commissions the reflective vests next month," ACOMORAN chairman said.

He, however, directed all his branch chairmen to report any Okada rider is operating without plate number to any law enforcement agent.

Unions will provide drivers' welfare -DWCN

The National President of Drivers Welfare Club of Nigeria (DWCN), Comrade Monday Elimigbe has said that the club, National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), Road Transport Employers Association of Nigeria (RTEAN) and Nigerian Association of Transport owners (NARTO) will promote the welfare of the drivers across the nation.

Comrade Elimigbe who made this known to *Labour Trust* in Abuja said the club will work hand in hand with all the transport unions that manage transport business to set a standard for those engaged in driving profession.

According to him, the club which is after the welfare of drivers cannot achieve its set objectives without cooperation of transport unions across the nation, urging the executives of the unions to

use the club as a body that will pave ways in the transport industry and not an enemy of progress.

Speaking on drivers that are not doing well in their driving profession comrade Elimigbe expressed the club's readiness to form partnership with federal government and transport unions to ensure that a training acquisition centre will be set up for such drivers to make them useful to the society.



FCT ACOMORAN chairman, Comrade Faroukh Nasseer, National Grand Patron Sen. Col. Isah Kachako and FCT Minister Mel. Nasir Ahmed el-Bajel, Special adviser to the minister during a visit to the minister of FCT.

MTUN to arrest members over dangerous riding

The Motorcycle Transport Union of Nigeria (MTUN) Abuja branch, has directed members of its safety monitoring team to arrest any Okada rider that involves in dangerous riding in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

The chairman of the MTUN, Abuja branch, Comrade Obi Nwaogwugwu who stated this in a chat with *Labour Trust* said the union had ordered the team following the increasing number of accident victims the union recorded last year.

Comrade Nwaogwugwu

who told *Labour Trust* that the union spent about N600,000 on 100 accident victims last year, said the men of the team were directed to position themselves at various strategic places to ensure that the union's members caution to abide by the traffic regulation and that any Okada rider that violates the traffic or involves in a dangerous riding should be arrested.

Also speaking on those riders that usually play while riding, the chairman of the team Mr. Joel Oyinbo decried the way some Okada

riders engaged in what he described as "riding drama" on the road.

The safety monitoring team, he said, has designed a punitive measure to check the bad practice in the Okada business.

Mr. Oyinbo revealed that any member arrested by the team for committing traffic offences will be fined and suspended.

He urged the Okada riders to help the union to reduce the accident to its barest minimum in the federal capital territory.

YOUR HEALTH

Health interactive

With Dr Aminu Magashi

NACA, national NGOs and HIV spread

The defunct Kano based NGO newsletter, *The Nucleus*, in its July-September 2001 edition, carried an editorial comment which I believe is relevant to this discourse. It was entitled: '10 Billion Naira and NACA'. The editorial, amongst others, mentioned that the activities that will bring the realisation of crushing the effect of HIV epidemic in Nigeria which National Action Committee on AIDS (NACA) is championing go beyond NACA organising conferences and seminars at hotels and other places. What is expected is to conduct assessment across the nation and appreciate how socio-cultural and religious values affect the disease and henceforth, provide services to children orphaned by AIDS; provision of micro-credit for People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA); subsidy for anti-retroviral drugs; awareness creation and advocacy, and establishment of HIV centres for testing, counselling and research.

It concluded by saying that it is only through these measures that the masses would appreciate the impact and rationale behind collecting the credit on their behalf, even though the credit has added to the country's foreign debt. It is hoped that at the end of the three years implementation of the HIV emergency action plan, it will be assessed with gladness; not with condemnation and mobilisation of shame to the implementers.

It is almost four years since that editorial and keen observers of events surrounding HIV/AIDS in Nigeria will agree with me that condemnation and mobilisation of shame to NACA and its national collaborators should be the least expected from the masses. NACA came in to being due to the political will of this current administration to tame the spread of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. In the year 2000, it is created as a committee under the presidency to work out modalities of programmes implementation and action towards prevention and control of HIV in Nigeria. The committee, which then was chaired by Professor (Mrs.) Ibironke Akinsete who was formerly in the Lagos University Teaching Hospital, developed the three year HIV Emergency Action Plan (HEAP) with the technical assistance of Policy Project of Futures Group International and also support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). HEAP document was a very fantastic blueprint which when implemented would surely let our country out from the doldrums of HIV saga.

Nigeria, through NACA, was able to submit that document to the World Bank and secured a credit to the tune of N10 billion towards the end of 2001. Zonal meetings were also organised by NACA and UNDP to mobilise, advocate and help states develop their State Action Committees on AIDS (SACA).

This writer attended one of such zonal meetings in December 2001 at Benue Hotel in Makurdi, Benue State. In summary, the HEAP document approach is to work with states through SACA, federal ministries, inter-ministerial departments, parastatals and NGOs through HIV funds. Before the commencement of the implementation of the HEAP document, Professor Akinsete was replaced by Professor Babatunde Osetimehin, formerly in the University College Hospital, Ibadan.

The World Bank Credit is being managed by the National Project Team (NPT), a smaller committee under NACA of three people or so and it is quite disheartening to say that with respect to HIV funds which are being provided to national NGOs, it is characterised with anything than good, transparency and accountability. To the NPT, from my assessment, a national NGO means that such organisation is able to secure a registration and certificate from Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC); that organisation may not necessarily have any branch in another state or geopolitical zone; may not even have undertaken any project outside where it is situated before coming on board to be a partner with NACA. Majority of the so-called national NGOs are those organisations that some of the directors of NACA and its chairman have either founded or

are members of such bodies, or more worrisome, a powerful politician has wielded his influence and recommended an organisation, which at the time of such recommendation, may not have any record of implementing any activity related to HIV/AIDS.

Another conterminating behaviour being exhibited by the NPT is to provide grant to NGOs and the body in return bring to them 10 per cent of the total money collected. It means that such organisation will undertake a project of N9 million, but at the end, will retire and submit a report of N10 million. The organisations will have to cook up a false activity backed by receipts, payment vouchers and audited report.

The reader will agree with me that an NGO which collects that money would not be expected to spend it on any meaningful activity that will impact positively on the lives of the vulnerable people.

This is the 'shenanigan' activity that is taking place among those who are shouldered with the responsibility of championing the course of reducing and mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. As I said many times on these pages, I am not at all surprised why the HIV prevalence in Nigeria over the last six years is not appreciably coming down. In the last six years, we are still fighting with the prevalence of 5 per cent and every day, people get infected with HIV and children are being orphaned. The latest finding puts Nigeria at having 800,000 children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. The disease is ravaging our societies by continuously eliminating the workforce. With these happenings, some people are having honey-moon with borrowed money which all of us have to account and pay for sooner or later.

In conclusion, I believe that NACA needs to be overhauled to provide the needed services desired and also there is the need for it to transform into an agency by enacting an act through the National Assembly to enable it to survive this administration.

Remedy for Blocked fallopian tubes

Please I will like to know the remedy for blocked tubes. I am told that I have blocked tubes and was treated, but I am yet to conceive after a year. What drug should I take?

Ms NN

Among the causes of blocked fallopian tubes are pelvic inflammatory diseases due to gonorrhoea, puerperal sepsis (infection during pregnancy), post-abortion infection, tuberculosis as well as abdominal surgery, like removal of appendix, ovarian cyst and peritonitis, which result in laying of fibers (adhesions).

If your tubes are flushed and still the problem that led to the blocked tube is not treated, in some situation, the procedure of flushing tubes may provoke inflammatory process which will also lead to formation of adhesions.

Another angle is that your tubes may be potent, but your partner may be having problems; or you don't engage in regular intercourse (male factor). This can also prevent you from conceiving. I advise you to visit a gynecologist with your husband for another review of your condition.

Semen analysis and fertility

Can someone with sperm motility of 10 per cent active, 40 per cent sluggish and 50 per cent dead impregnate a lady? Also, what are the causes of low sperm count, remedy and the food that one will take to boost sperm count?

A karaye and Co

The minimum criteria for normal semen capable of leading to conception are the volume of the semen to be 1.5 ml and above; the cells that are motile to be about 60 per cent and the normal cells to be about 60 per cent. There should also be absence of other cells in the semen, apart from sperm cells and a sperm count of 20 million cells per milliliter or

more. In the scenario you mentioned, the motility being 50 per cent (10 per cent active and 40 per cent sluggish) means it is defective by 10 per cent.

However, final diagnosis is based on quality semen after 3 consecutive analyses. A lot of factors can give false results. Among them are collections of the semen using condom, and examination, and storage in refrigeration.

Among the causes of low sperm count is testicular failure, which is confirmed when the follicle stimulating hormone and leutenising hormone are found to be high and it could be due to exposure to irradiation, mumps orchitis (viral infection) and exposure to excessive heat, blockage of semeniferous duct or tubules (pathway of the sperm), which could be due to infection with tuberculosis (genital) and sexually transmitted diseases

Another cause could be anti-sperm antibodies in the blood.

The remedy of low sperm count will be a detail evaluation of the patient and instituting a proper management and of course, taking protein and fatty diet in moderation will boost the count and improved the motility of the sperm cells.

Dexamethasone and breast feeding

Please is it safe to take dexamethasone while breast feeding and will it affect the baby?

Adama

Dexamethasone (a synthetic form of glucocorticoid which is a hormone) is used in the suppression of inflammatory and allergic disorders and also cerebral oedema (swelling) due to head injury. During breast feeding, the use of it is not contraindicated, but however, one will take it with caution. As such, do not take such drug without the prescription of a medical doctor.

Breast dissimilarity

I will like to know if one breast can grow a little bigger than the other one. Is it normal?

Hamidyya

Anatomically, there is a slight dissimilarity between the two breasts, only that one hardly notices the difference. Unless the difference is significant with other complaints such as pain, change of skin colour, milk discharge or hardness of one of the breasts, that is when one can assume there is problem. I encourage ladies to learn how to examine their breasts by themselves and report any anomaly to their doctors.

Premature ejaculation

I have been married for the past ten years and have three children. However, I have never experienced pleasure during intercourse and presently, I don't even like the exercise.

Worried Lady

I want to believe that your problem could be resolved without resorting to divorce. For someone who stays in marriage for ten years, you have really put a lot of investment to squander it now. However, relating with your husband should be mutual. Have you ever told your husband or discussed this predicament with him? If you could not summon the courage to initiate such discussion, have you written it down and place it where he can read it?

Your husband, from your history, is suffering from premature ejaculation, which is inability to delay ejaculation long enough for his partner to have an orgasm. The problem of premature ejaculation is among the commonest problems of male partners and it could be due to anxiety during intercourse, fear of failure and hostility towards women (partners). The problem leads to frustration and tension and can lead to secondary impotence. Both of you can play a role in helping your relationship to develop and refresh. You can start by discussion with him or writing to him as I mentioned earlier on; also, prolongation of fore-play will alleviate anxiety and at times, a man can use condom temporarily which will help in reducing sensation.

Write in confidence to healthinteractive@hotmail.com or send text message to 08023810589 or P.O. Box 14807, Kano, Nigeria.

YOUR HEALTH

Mrs Babangida tasks NGO on health care delivery

Former first lady of Nigeria and the founder of the Better Life Programme for the African Rural Woman, Dr. (Mrs.) Maryam Babangida has challenged the Africa Women's Health Initiative (AWHI) to translate its idea of improving the quality of health care delivery system for Nigerian women into reality through good planning and follow up zeal.

Addressing the inaugural consultative meeting of the NGO out to champion the promotion of better health care for African women in Abuja recently, the former first lady noted that the AWHI

By Sunday Ejike
Benjamin Health Reporter

deserves respect for its focus on the health of the women in Africa.

According to Dr. (Mrs.) Babangida, the impact of globalisation have rubbed poorly on many Africa countries, pointing out that globalisation is one of the most exceptional forces of change of this millennium, noting that, "even in addressing the needs of local communities and rural women, globalisation has to be seen as the point of departure for any programme."

She pointed out that no

FG commences modernisation of teaching hospitals

The federal government has commenced the modernisation of its health institutions in the country to bring them to global standard. Consequently, teaching hospitals across the country would record some remarkable improvement by the end of the year.

This was disclosed by the Chairman of the House of Representatives Committee on Health, Dr Aminu Safana, while answering questions during the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) forum at the weekend. Safana said eight hospitals had already been selected in the first phase of the programme.

He listed the benefiting hospitals as, University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital, Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital, Zaria, University of Jos Teaching Hospital and University of Ibadan Teaching Hospital.

Others were University of Lagos Teaching Hospital, Enugu University Teaching Hospital, University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital and Uni-

versity of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital.

He explained that the hospitals would be provided with modern diagnostic and medical equipment of international standard, adding that the remaining seven teaching hospitals would be taken up in the second phase of the programme.

Apart from teaching hospitals, Safana said, the federal government would also embark on another programme of equipping federal medical centres and specialised hospitals very soon.

He noted that the programme was part of government's response to the deteriorating conditions at the nation's tertiary health institutions.

He regretted that Nigeria was ranked low on the UN Human Development Index in the provision of health services to the citizens.

He expressed the House's health committee's determination to improve the health sector through adequate budgetary allocation.

Patients get free drugs in Garko

Delight and joy have pervaded patients suffering from various diseases in Garko local government area, following the council's resolution to distribute drug free of charge to the tune of N1 million.

Towards this end, patients have been directed to report to dispensaries and model health care centres for onward collection of the drugs.

The area chairman, Alhaji Yaha Adamu Garun-Ali, who disclosed this to newsmen, added that the gesture became imperative in order to come to the rescue of patients who are unable to afford medical cost.

He observed that no responsible elected political

From Mustapha Isah
Kwaru Correspondent
(Kano)

office holder will fold his arms and allow the people to wallow in difficulties, saying this has encouraged the council to adopt the measure.

Alhaji Garun Ali pointed out that the council, since its inception has unveiled several strategies to improve the health sector, so that electorates will feel a sense of belonging.

He frowned at the growing influx of drugs and other medical facilities in the country, warning that unless appropriate authorities take drastic measures to halt the problem, the life of the people will be in danger.

individual, group or community can pretend to exist outside the global effect of information and communication technology, neither can the far reaching capacities of global capital and investment be ignored.

Her NGO, the Better Life Programme for the African Rural Woman, she noted has a vision to see that Africa is poverty free and the living conditions of rural dwellers, particularly women is significantly improved to enable them participate actively in all strata of social, political and economic development.

Presenting the concept of the organisation (AWHI) to the meeting earlier, the coordinator, Chief (Mrs.) Rita Chris-Garuba said the organisation which is a subsidiary of African Women Development Initiative (AWDI) holds a holistic perspective about the health of African women and believe that it must be taken out of medical classification and placed firmly at the heart of development.

She said the health of the woman is the health of the family, the community and that of the nation at large pointing out the woman's peculiar economic, social and political limitations constitute the obstacles militating against the achievement of her good health.

Chief (Mrs.) Rita Chris-Garuba is of the view that the share of individual national economies devoted to women is not commensurate with the contribution of women to the development of the country, saying that, good health is a development issue and a fundamental right of both male and female citizen of the country and as such, should be an enforceable right.

The AWHI president and coordinator noted that the country cannot achieve meaningful development if families and communities are not living healthy and peaceful lives.

The local government boss, and enjoined people of the area to join hands with the council to save the lives of the people from total collapse, through execution of solid developmental projects.

Also speaking, the executive director of National Primary Health Care Development Agency, Dr. Shehu Mahdi commended the local government for its prompt intervention in the health sector.

He explained that the federal government in its crusade to revamp the health sector at the grassroots, has approved N1 million each for the health-free and successful execution of community base health centres in the area.



(l-r) Mr. Edward Oghene, Ustaz, Sideeq Abubakar, Gidado Yadda during a sensitisation lecture on HIV/AIDS held at the National Mosque Abuja...recently.

HIV/AIDS spread worries KNSG

Kano State government has expressed concern over the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS in the nation just as it pledged its assistance to victims of the killer disease in the state.

Speaking at a public presentation of a book: "how to care for people living with HIV/AIDS," jointly organised by Family Aids Programme and NUJ, Kano, the state deputy governor, Engineer Magaji Abdullahi said HIV/AIDS epidemic is seriously attracting the state government attention.

From Yusha'u Adamu
Ibrahim Correspondent
(Kano)

Represented by the state commissioner of water resources, Alhaji Salihu Sagir, Magaji said government would do every thing possible within its range to assist whoever falls victims of the killer disease in the state.

He pointed out that no responsible government will fold its arms watching its people dying from HIV/AIDS.

The deputy governor explained that it is government responsibility to protect lives

of its citizens and called on stakeholders in the state to put heads together in the war against HIV/AIDS as well as assisting the victims of the disease.

Speaking also at the occasion, the secretary to the NUJ, Kano chapter, Malam Isma'ila Amman Mai-Zare who described HIV/AIDS as weapons of mass destruction said that fighting against the scourge is every body's responsibility.

Malam Amman maizare therefore appealed to the government and the general public to extend their financial assistance to facilitate the provisions of more copies of the book for free distribution across the state.

The NUJ secretary also disclosed that such assistance will enable victims of the disease buy anti-retroviral drugs for their daily consumption.

On his part, the chairman, voice of the hopefuls, an association formed by victims of HIV/AIDS, Malam Ubale said their main problem include lack of adequate drug at the Mallam Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital Kano, one of the federal government's centre for the collection of HIV/AIDS free drugs.

He explained that only 6000 patients are receiving drugs from the Kano centre while the figure of victims had risen to over 5,000 people.

Malam Lawal disclosed that another problem was that, some of the victims of the killer disease particularly female and orphans can not afford to purchase the drugs on their own and therefore called on the federal state and local governments to come to the aid of victims. He also appealed to wealthy individuals to assist toward that direction.

Pharmacist donates N.1m books to ABU

The National Chairman of the Ahmadu Bello University Pharmacy Alumni Association (ABUPAA) Pharm. Ahmed Tijani Mora has donated reference books and other publications worth N104,000.00 to the faculty of pharmaceutical sciences of the Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, Kaduna state.

Donating the books, Pharm. Mora re-instated the association's preparedness to contribute meaningful to the teaching, learning and research in pharmaceutical sciences in the university said in Nigeria at large.

According to ABUPAA national chairman who is also the registrar of the pharmacist council of Nigeria (PCN), the reference books would be very useful to students, teaching and technical staff in laboratories, library and lecture rooms.

Pharm. Mora pointed out that the selection of the books, which he said are the latest volumes was based on the need for both staff and students to have the latest ad-

vancement in pharmaceutical sciences with ease.

The list of the books donated by Pharm. Mora include: martindale-the complete drug reference, pharmaceutical codex, adverse drug reactions, teacher's guide, globalisation and access to drugs and public-private roles in the pharmaceutical sector.

Others on the list of the donation include, health reform and drug financing, emerging issues in water and infection disease, international non-proprietor name (INN) for pharmaceutical substances and the introduction to drug utilisation research.

Receiving the books and the publications, the dean, faculty of pharmaceutical science, ABU, Dr. H. A. Kaita promised to put the items donated into effective use, by both staff and students of the faculty of pharmaceutical sciences of the institution, and thanked Pharm. Mora for the kind gesture just as he called for other pharmacists to contribute to the teaching and learning of pharmacy in the country.

YOUR HEALTH



(R-L): Chairman, Pharmacists Council of Nigeria (PCN), Prof. F.A. Ogunboba, President, National Association of Patent and Proprietary Medicine Dealers (NAPPMED), Chief Sam U. Isime (middle) and registrar, Pharmacists Council of Nigeria (PCN), Pharm. Ahmed T. Mota, at a sensitisation workshop organised by PCN for NAPPMED executive in Abuja, recently.

Doctors may call off strike this week as nurses suspend planned strike

There are strong indications that the National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD) may call off its nationwide strike action this week, in the interest of Nigerians.

These indications were coming on the heel of the release of about N8 billion by the federal government last week for the payment of the shortfalls owed resident doctors in the country.

The minister of health, Prof. Eyiayio Lambo, shortly before he left for Geneva for the meeting of the five polio endemic countries last week announced that the federal government, through the budget office in the ministry of finance, had in a letter with reference number BD/AIE/010/vol.1 and dated January 10, 2005, specifically released an Authority to Incur Expenditure (AIE) of N7,994,399,123,000.00 to the ministry of health to settle the outstanding owed resident doctors.

Prof. Lambo, in a press conference assured NARD that the arrears of doctor's entitlements will be paid into their accounts latest this week. He explained that, "the payment will be done simultaneously in 4 to 5 tertiary health institutions and the whole payment will be effected before the end of this month."

Meanwhile, Daily Trust gathered that the national executive council of the National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD) was not comfortable with the staff audit arrangement by the ministry of health before payment will be effected.

NARD's national president, Dr. Jerry Ogunzie who confirmed that an Authority to Incur expenditure (AIE) had been issued for the money required to settle the shortfalls owed doctors, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) that the staff audit directive before payment by the minister of health will delay payment and as such will make the strike to linger more than necessary.

Stories by Sunday Ejiike Benjamin, Health Reporter with Agency Report

Dr. Ogunzie wondered why the minister was now insisting on a staff audit instead of allowing the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to remit monies to the various hospitals for the doctors to be paid the backlog of their salaries which has been accumulating since August last year.

According to him, NARD's national executive council had put up a notice for a meeting to call off the strike, but observed that,

"since the minister had taken over the mode of payment, the strike will continue."

However, if the assurance given by the minister of health last week is anything to go by, accounts of resident doctors should have been credited with their shortfalls early this week to enable NARD call off the strike, since that will be the only means by which the seven weeks strike would be called off.

Consequently, the National Association of Nigerian Nurses and Midwives has called off its planned nation wide strike

action in solidarity with the resident doctors.

The national president of the association, Comrade Linus Sabulu in a statement directed nurses and midwives to disregard the earlier directives which directed them to go on strike if the federal government failed to pay the shortfalls owed resident doctors after the expiration of the one week ultimatum which the association gave.

The decision to call off the planned strike followed government's release of about N8 billion to pay all the entitlements due to resident doctors in the country.

Harsh conditions, cause of women's post reproduction illness - Minister

Many illnesses of women in post reproductive years have been attributed to the cumulative effects of the harsh conditions which women experienced in earlier years.

Disclosing this in Abuja in a keynote address delivered at the inaugural consultative meeting of the African Women's Health Initiative, the minister of state for health, Princes Olufunke Adedoyin (mni) identified cancers, arthritis, osteoporosis, hypertension, diabetes, post menopausal syndrome and mental depression as major diseases that caused childbirth complications in women.

The minister who was represented at the occasion by the director of community development and population activities in the ministry of health, Dr. Adenike Adeyemi said a national policy and plan of action have been put in place to eliminate female genital mutilation in the country.

The policy, she noted has been approved by the federal executive council and 10 states in the country have already passed bills against the Female Genital

Mutilation (FGM) adding that efforts are on to get the bill passed by the National Assembly to ban the act in the country.

Princes Adedoyin who announced that February 6th of every year has been declared the international day of zero tolerance to female genital mutilation also stated that a national strategic framework and plan for the eradication of Vagina Vessico Fistula (VVF) have been finalised as doctors, nurses and several workers are being trained to provide preventive, curative and rehabilitative services to victims.

The ministry of health, she said has developed evidence based plan of action with specific interventions to achieve the five health related Millennium Development (MDGs) approved by the government for implementation.

These intervention plans, she said include, halving the maternal mortality rates by improving access to qualified birth attendants and increasing hospital and medical centre based deliveries, education of mothers in child bearing skills through free antenatal treatments to reduce child

mortality, distribution of Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) through antenatal clinics to address malaria, re-introduction of ORT to address diarrhoea in children and increased routine immunisation at the primary healthcare facility level.

Earlier in his speech, the chairman of the occasion, Prof. Emeritus Umaru Shehu stressed the need for a research into the health and economic status of Nigerian women to get accurate information of their health status.

Currently, Prof. Shehu said women bear heavy burdens of diseases and illiteracy which result to poverty. These, he noted, impose serious constraints to development, health and education which are prerequisites for economic development.

According to him, the literacy of the mother will contribute to the reduction of child morbidity and mortality in the country and stressed the need for girl-child education.

He charged AWHI to display high level of commitment and sacrifice in the attainment of its goals and solicited the support and encouragement of well-meaning Nigerians.



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 (*Kuju* [Yoruba], *Akwu-odu* [Igbo], *Kanji* [Hausa]): The bark of this plant is chewed slowly to cure toothache and sore gums.

3. Velvet/black (*Tamarind* [*tsamiya*] [Hausa], *Awin* [Yorub a]): The roots are used as chewing sticks and produce same effects as (2) and (1) above.

4. Neem tree (*Dogonyaro* [Hausa], *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/refresher while the oil dropped directly in the cavities relieves aches.

6. Sour sop (*Gvundar dari* [Hausa], *Ubanachi* [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 bear: 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 horseshoe tree used as frequently as possible is suitable for care of dental caries. The powdered bark of West African locust bean (*Dorowa* [Hausa], *Igba* [Yoruba], *Oyilo* [Igbo]) is used by filling the caries with the powder to effect healing.

10. Toothbrush tree (*Awala* [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 infection. Also confirmed is the use of nutmeg for sweet breath and muzzling bad breath, if chewed and held in the mouth.

Other additional factors that will aid the above mentioned us of herbal treatment include proper chewing of food, wearing of loose fitted clothes, and not eating late in the night.

Respiratory conditions

Respiratory system has its key functional organs as nose, mouth, throat and respiratory tract. Diseases affecting this system therefore can interfere with inhalation and exhalation of air.

Common cold

Mostly caused by viruses. Symptoms include head congestion, itchy nose, watery discharge, sneezing, restlessness and cough. Usually, cold cannot be cured but symptoms can be relieved and the immune system boosted to relieve the condition. Constant cold in adults indicates that the immune system is not working properly.

Treatment

1. Garlic/thyme: Eat garlic cloves or drink thyme infusion to kill bacteria. Chew two fresh segments of garlic three times daily. The segments when chewed and retained in the mouth for five minutes instantly clear the throat, nose and ears by penetration of the oil.

2. Lime tea/Ginger root: The tea infusions of lime or ginger root or both taken as 3-4 cups daily for two-three days boost the immune system.

3. Eucalyptus oil: Steam inhalation of eucalyptus oil should be encouraged by using 6 drops in a cup of boiling water and inhaling the steam.

4. Peppermint/basil/lemon grass/cloves: Mint tea (*Na'ana* [Hausa], *Ehinmwene* [Yoruba], and sweet basil (hairy basil), *Ehinmaja* [Yoruba], lemon grass tea or a mixture of these is taken in sufficient quantity as much as four-five times daily. Also, lemon juice in hot tea sweetened with honey is also beneficial.

5. Violet tree: A mixture of violet tree powder (*Sama* [Hausa] *Kyirto* [Yoruba]) with honey prepared: 300 3 tablepoonsful of honey mixed with 1 teaspoonful powder, and taken 3 times daily for 3-5 days.

6. Herbal mixture (ginger, cloves, cayenne, garlic): 2 tablepoonsful of honey mixed with half teaspoonful of the mixed spices is taken 3-4 times daily.

7. Onion: Juice from half loaf of onion with half teacup of honey thoroughly mixed and taken as one tablepoonsful 3 to 4 times daily.

8. Hibiscus: Infusion of garden hibiscus flowers is taken as tea (*Kobere* [Yoruba], *Flara* [Igbo]).

9. Ginger/Garlic: Tea infusion of ginger/garlic is mixed in equal portions, sweetened with honey, and taken as 2-3 cups daily.

10. Mixed spices (ginger, cayenne, clove, nutmeg, cinnamon etc): Powder of these spices prepared as soup is taken to boost the immune system.

Hajjia Zainab Sheriff writes from Zee's Herbal Pharmacy, Suite 12, Angels Plaza, Garki II, Abuja. E-mail: zeeherbal@zwallot.com

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We have received instructions from one of our clients, a major property developer to sell by voluntary auction through an invitation for BIDS, the following properties.

LOT 1: BLANTYRE STREET, WUSE II – ABUJA

This Estate, located at 577/578, Blantyre Street, Cadastral Zone A7 sitting on a land area of 10,000 square metres, comprises of 4 Blocks, containing a total of 32 units of two-Bedroom Luxury apartments and four unites of three Bedroom Luxury Penthouse apartments. The Penthouses have all rooms ensuite, two living rooms and a tastefully furnished kitchen. The entire estate also has a 500KVA transformer and other support facilities.



LOT 2: UDO-UDOMA STREET, AOSKORO-ABUJA

This Prime Property comprises 4 units namely: (a) A Six Bedroom House on 3 floors with 2 living rooms, A Dinning Room, A Study, all furnished with marble and tiles (b) A Four Bedroom House on 2 floors, also with living rooms, a dining room also finished with P.O.P. (c) 1 Block of 4 One-Bedroom Flats. (d) House help quarters. All sit in a large compound with adequate parking.



LOT 3: NELSON MANDELA STREET, ASOKORO, ABUJA – DUPLEXES

Choice piece of real estate with 2 duplexes each comprising 5 bedrooms, with large living and dining rooms respectively. This property has a larger car park and the fence is finished with American barbed wire for additional protection. There is also a 2 Bedroom Boys Quarters.



LOT 4: TARGUS CLOSE, MAITAMA, ABUJA – DUPLEXES

Prime piece of property. Two multi-level Duplexes each comprising of 4-bedroom all ensuite, living room, dining room, complemented by a tastefully furnished kitchen. The surrounding is beautifully landscaped. A 2-Room Boys Quarters also sits on the property.



LOT 5: USUMA CLOSE, MAITAMA, ABUJA

One duplex comprising 5-bedrooms ensuite, with a large living room. The kitchen is tastefully furnished and a back-up generator sits atop a large car park.

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Bid documents are available at a cost of #50,000.00/lot.

Bidders are allowed to bid for single or multiple numbers of lots. Reserve prices for each of the properties are available in the bid documents. All bids must be returned to the Royal Niger Properties Limited, Block A, Flat 3, Plot 577/578, Blantyre Street, Off Adetokunbo Ademola Crescent, Wuse II, Abuja by 5.00 p.m. on the 25th January 2005 at the same venue. The properties are available for viewing from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m., Mondays to Fridays

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0803-499-1221

ABUJA TRUST

22 yr-old farmer remanded for murder

A 22-year-old farmer, in Riba village Abaji, Abuja has been remanded in prison, by a senior magistrate court for allegedly shooting to death, one Garba Musa in vengeance for the destruction of his crops by cows.

The accused, a gwari man in the same village, Abaji Area Council, was said to have deliberately shot Garba of the same village with a Dane gun on December 12, 2004, around 6 pm when he discovered that

cows have destroyed some crops on his farm.

According to the prosecution, the accused is charged with culpable homicide contrary to Section 221 of the penal code.

The FIR stated that the accused farmer who shot Garba on the chest was prevented from shooting him (deceased) by his brothers but he refused.

The accused denied the charge and told the court that he did not have any intention to kill the man.

The Prosecutor, Asst. Superintendent of Police (ASP), Joseph Umoru, asked for a day for hearing in view of the plea of the accused.

Presiding senior magistrate, Hadiza Dodo remanded the accused in prison custody. The case is adjourned to February 24, 2005.

FCT completes Muslim pilgrims airlift

The airlift of the 2,800 pilgrims from the FCT to the holy land by the territory's Muslims Pilgrims Welfare has been completed.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the last batch of pilgrims from the zone departed for Mecca today at about 5:00am on board a Kabo airline plane.

The deadline issued by the Saudi authorities over airlift of pilgrims to the holy land is Jan. 15, while the Nigerian authorities have asked for a 2-day extension.

NAN reports that some staff of the board billed to accompany the pilgrims were airlifted with the last batch of 300 pilgrims to make up the 480 capacity plane.

Speaking to NAN, the board's spokesman, Alhaji Usman Aliyu, confirmed that all

intending pilgrims from the area have been airlifted adding that the remaining staff of the board were expected to leave for the holy land tonight.

He commended the pilgrims for their patience and understanding during "the trying period" in the airlift.

He assured that adequate arrangement would be put in place to ensure that such a situation does not repeat itself.

He said that the board would ensure that pilgrims behave well in order to promote a good image for the country.

According to him, the board would commence preparation for the home bound journey in good time to forestall any delay.

He however warned that pilgrims with excess luggage would be made to pay for such as the board would not allow any body's action to truncate or even delay its operations.



From left, Senate President, Adolphus Wabara, Speaker, Alhaji Aminu Bello Masari, the Chief Justice of the Federation, Mohammed Uwais, defence Minister, Dr. Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso, his Minister of State for defence, Rowland Orisejofor and the FCT Minister, Mallam Nasir Ahmed el-Rufai during the Armed Forces Remembrance Day held at the National Arcade, Abuja Saturday. - Joe Oroye.

Chief wants water project commissioned

By Benjamin Auta, (Crime Reporter)

He made this plea in an exclusive interview Abuja Trust yesterday in his Palace.

Mallam Ibrahim, said that the community had been suffering untold hardship due to the nonavailability of water.

He said that the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), had earlier sank a borehole in the village which is grossly inadequate in the supply of water to the teeming population of the area.

On the area of education, the Chief decried the lack of a secondary school in the whole area, saying that pupils from the area have to go along distance.

He said "our children have to go to airport which is very far for them to go to secondary school, which has enormous risk to their lives."

Mal. Ibrahim further said that previous FCT Ministers had promised to build some secondary schools in the area but have not fulfilled their promise.

He also called on the government to offer scholarships to the various cadre of indigene students in the FCT as the parents can no longer afford to send their children to school due to the fact that their lands were taken from them.

Mal. Ibrahim further said that only one percent of indigenes have been offered admission in the university of Abuja which has reflected in the capital and federal civil services as only others area given opportunity.

Speaking further, an elder in the village, Mal. Marius Chori, called on the government to help the small scale farmers with farm imputes as most still depend on their farms for their livelihood.

He said "even though they have taken most of our land we still have small portion which we cultivate to keep body and soul together.

The Esu Aleiyita, Mal. Ibrahim Y.G. Aleiyita has called on government to commission the already completed water project that was finished two years ago in Aleiyita.

Nigerian Legion decorates el-Rufai with emblem

From Benjamin Auta, (Crime Reporter)

money was used to assist the need in the society.

He said that it has become imperative to decorate the minister as one of the patrons of the Legion and get his blessings for the 2005 Armed Forces Remembrance Day.

Similarly, the Minister of the FCT, Mal. Nasir El-Rufai has promised to take up the cause of one Jina Linus Ogbo, lying critically at the Gwarimpa Hospital as a result of injuries sustained from an acid attack.

Mal. El-Rufai, gave the indication last week when he visited the girl in the hospital.

He described the case of the girl's attack with acid by



Time to go home, commuters struggle to board a bus

KANO TRUST

110,000 pupils move to sec schools

From Ahmed Abubakar, Correspondent (Kano)

Over 110,000 students are to be absorbed into various Secondary Schools for 2005/2006 academic calendar in Kano state.

The Commissioner of Education, Hajija Balaraba Bello Maitama Sule, revealed this while briefing Kano State Governor Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau some school constitution site in the State.

Hajija Balaraba Belo said from the statistic at hand there is an indication that there would be more intakes from primary to secondary schools in the state from about 42,240 in 2004/2005 to 62,680 candidates in 2005/2006.

Hajija Maitama said the upsurge in admission is not unconnected with the adequate machineries put in place in providing adequate education various areas of schools in the state.

She said the government is making problems of congestion in classes, inadequate classrooms furniture and infrastructure to guarantee more intake and conducive atmosphere in the schools.

Meanwhile over 500 million naira has so far been expected on the construction of blocks of 208 classrooms, and renovation of 30 more classrooms with provision of furniture.



Kano D'Gos. Magaji Abdullahi receive gift from FADE Chairman Chief Newton Jibunoh on the occasion of the former's visit to Tree planting site at Makoda; pic: Musa Kazare

Vigilante group urged to monitor criminal activities

From Yusha'u Adamu Ibrahim, Correspondent (Kano)

Vigilante group in Kano have been enjoined to continue to monitor criminals activities with a view to ensuring total wipe out of crimes in the state.

The Special Adviser to Governor Shekarau on Security Affairs, Major Abdullahi S. Garba (rtt) made the call during a meeting with vigilante groups in the state.

Major Garba said present administration is doing its best towards ensuring security in the state therefore vigilante groups should complement Government's effort in that respect.

He explained that since the inception of the Shekarau administration, he has been making all efforts to ensure peace and harmony through out the state.

Earlier, the Assistant Commandant of the vigilante group, Alhaji Tafida appealed to the state Government to

extend its dividend of democracy to the group by assisting them with equipments.

Alhaji Tafida said as a security group that has significant role to people in improving security in the state, provision of equipment to them will enhance

crime control and will ensure members of the group will redouble their efforts in the course of their primary assignment.

The Assistant Commander therefore appealed to the Special Adviser to table their request to the state Governor, Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau, for further actions.

He also assured adequate promises of security from members of vigilante groups with a view to protect lives and properties of people in the state.

Nassarawa LG pledges more support for Islamiyya Schools

From Mustapha Isah Kwaru, Correspondent (Kano)

Islamiyya and Quranic schools in Nassarawa local government area of Kano State will receive a boost, as the council has promised to earmarked additional modalities in order to promote the moral performance of both teachers and the students.

The council chairman, Alhaji Nasir Yusuf Gawuna, dropped the hint at the

monitor of the school, Mallam Abdullahi Bin Isa, said the school was established in 2001 with two classrooms, adding that presently it has over 400 students.

He made a passionate plea to wealthy individuals to come to the rescue of the school for qualitative education, saying the local government has been promoting Islamic affairs.

Towards this end, the council boss said a special committee will soon come to existence which will be saddled with mandate of identifying the problems of the scholar for onward recommendation on how to leave them off.

Alhaji Gawuna observed that any responsible political officer holder would not succumb to accord adequate attention to educational sector aiming at gaining rapid development.

He said the council will not relent in its efforts to give both Islamic and Western Education privilege so that the Nation would develop.

The chairman, therefore solicited the support and cooperation of the LG and stakeholders in its crusade against illiteracy, saying the mandate is a collective responsibility.

Earlier speaking, the Head

FG earmarks N66m for Kano-Gwarzo road

From Ahmed Abubakar, Correspondent (Kano)

The Federal Government is to spend N66m naira on the Kano to Gwarzo road in order to ease transportation problems in Kano State.

The Minister Federal Capital Territory Abuja, Mallam Nasir el-Rufai disclosed this while briefing pressmen after the federal

executive council meeting held in Abuja.

Mallam Nasir el-Rufai who was accompanied by his counterpart revealed that 6.5 billion naira was approved by the federal government for rehabilitation of about 13 roads across the country in which Kano to Gwarzo federal road is also included.

Explaining further, the Minister of Works Senator Adeseye Ogunlewe said government planned to carry out rehabilitation works of 13 roads at the cost of 5.5 billion naira under the National Road Development Programme (NRDP).

Senator Ogunlewe also said the sum of N1 billion will be used in the purchase of seven asphalt plants that will be used by contractors across the 6 geographical zones of the country.

Council approves N425m for mass transit

From Ahmed Abubakar, Correspondent (Kano)

Over 425million naira was approved by the Kano State Executive Council for the purchase of 100 buses and 500 tricycles to boost transportation system in the State.

The State Commissioner for Local Government, Alhaji Abdullahi Sani Rogo, disclosed this to the members of the press on the out come of the state executive council weekly meeting that the gesture was aimed at alleviating incessant problems associated with transportation in the state.

Alhaji Abdullahi Sani Rogo said the council has approved the sum of N425,800,000 for the purchase of 100 commuters buses and 500 tricycles in an effort to curtail the problems associated with

transportation in the state.

Alhaji Rogo further explained that about N110,800,000 was earmarked for the purchase of commuter buses while the sum of N315,000,000 was approved for the purchase of tricycles.

He further said the vehicles will be sold at 45 and 40 percent discount rates of their actual prices to the members of the public. Adding that all vehicles will bear different colour for either men or women to facilitate compliance with the ethics of Sharia Legal System.

However the first day of Muharram is set aside for the official launch of the vehicles.



Chief Newton Jibunoh, FADE Chairman in his tent at Tree planting location at Makoda, Kano State

EKO TRUST

EFCC probes two civil servants over N30m fraud

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission has commenced investigations into an alleged N30 million scandal involving an official of the National Electric Power Authority and a staff of the Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, attached to 1004 estate on Victoria Island.

The Head, Media and Publicity of the commission, Mr. Oyinla Nwajah, confirmed the development to our correspondent on Thursday during a telephone interview.

Nwajah said the commission swung into action immediately it received a petition dated November 11, 2004 from the residents alleging financial misappropriation of funds paid as NEPA bills by some officials of the estate management.

By Olumide Bajulaiye,
Correspondent (Lagos)

The image maker refused to confirm whether any arrest had been effected but maintained that full investigation of the matter was on-going.

Investigations by our correspondent revealed that the indicted officials whose identities were still being kept secret, were arrested last month by EFCC following the petition written by the 1004 residents association signed by their chairman, Mr. Abdul Kohol and Secretary, Mrs Ruth Bodung.

According to the petitioners, a NEPA bill of N6 million was sent to the association in February last year as the outstanding amount of their bills for some months.

The Residents stated that they went to NEPA management for explanation because

they have always settled their monthly bills promptly whenever it was sent to them.

They said NEPA officials explained that their bulk metre on the estate to which only the officials of the estate management had access to, had been tampered with.

They however said they

decided to pay the bill directly to NEPA instead of paying through the estate management to prevent any sharp practice.

The residents said they took the decision so that all amount paid as NEPA bills would go straight to the coffers of the authority, an action

which they claimed was kicked against by the management of the estate who insisted that they should revert to the status quo.

They said, "Just as this protest was going on, NEPA sent us a shocker that the cumulative sum of money that the Estate Management has

defrauded them of, amounts to the tune of N30 million which they expected the residents to offset. How can we poor civil servants off set the bills we do not incur.

"We have therefore decided to bring this complaint to you, expecting that you will use your good offices to investigate this matter on behalf of the residents and bring the culprits to book." The petition added.

Officials of the estate management kept sealed lips over the matter when our correspondent visited their office which is located within the sprawling estate while attempts to get official reaction from the estate manager proved futile.

The manager was said to have gone out on the three occasions that our correspondent called at his office.

However, the chairman of the residents association, Mr. Abdul Kohol confirmed that the letter was written to EFCC since the issue at stake bothered on financial crime.

He said the association would ensure that justice was done on the matter to prevent future occurrence.



Barrister Muiz Banire (left) commissioner for transportation briefing the press on the activities of his ministry with him is Mr. Sammy Oki, director, press and public relations, Min. of Information. Pic: Oladipupo Odunwaju

Fire guts three-storey building in Ikeja

An early morning fire in the heart of Kodesho, Ikeja local government area razed the top floor of a three storey building, destroying property worth millions of naira while four workers narrowly escaped death.

The fire outbreak that started at about 7:15 am in the morning would have caused severe damage to life and property at the popular Computer Village in the Ikeja area but for the intervention of youths in the area who were said to have doused the fire.

According to eyewitness report given by one Mr. Akinwale Akinlabi, the fire at the top floor of 'Olayia House' No 4 Idowu Lane, Off Kodesho was first spotted when clouds of smoke were seen emitting from the ceiling and air conditioner compartment of the building, the floor housing Angels Tech Ltd, a computer and communication outfit.

"The smoke was sighted by some of us that reside on the street who had gathered to listen to the early morning newspaper report".

He said the youths dashed to the floor to see the cause of the fire but the workers who had already resumed for the day were trapped in the smoke struggling to get at the fire extinguishers, which had been placed in four strategic locations of the office.

According to him, there was pandemonium in the area as some hurried to save some of the computer monitors, accessories, laptops and other computer equipment from the raging blaze; others tried frantically to alert the police, the fire service so as to douse the fire.

"There was pandemonium, people rushed in from everywhere, some were throwing what they could retrieve of the computer equipment from the top floor to some people down stairs, others were running with several bags of pure water and throwing it into the fire."

Another eyewitness, Mr. Adelajaja Adesanya of the Ikeja Neighbourhood watch said that about three fire service vehicles came to the scene of fire but could not control the fire because they were unable to reach the top floor.

At least three people have been reported dead while more than 20 sustained diverse injuries when two factions of miscreants known as area boys clashed in Lagos Island at the weekend.

The incident occurred at Keffi Street at Obalende area off Ikoyi - Obalende local government area of Lagos state.

According to eyewitness, the fracas broke out over the death of a gang member identified as Ola a member of the Oodua Peoples Congress was alleged to have been killed two weeks ago for armed robbery.

However, members of the faction which the deceased belonged were said to have accused their rival group of exposing their member as an armed robber. Sources at the scene of the incident said the cold war that had existed between the two factions escalated when members of the two groups engaged in a fierce fight.

Reports said various dangerous weapons including guns, machetes, broken bottles, sticks and stones were freely used during the fracas.

The entire Keffi Street, it was learnt, was turned to a battle field throughout the two hours that the fight lasted.

Commercial activities in

the area and its environs were paralysed, while residents were forced to go to bed early.

Eko trust gathered that no fewer than three persons were killed in the process, while 20 others sustained critical wounds.

Reports said the anti-riot policemen drafted to the scene later brought calm to the area.

Meanwhile the popular Isale-Eko area, the centre of commercial and social activities in Lagos Island is currently under the siege of various violence, which has claimed several lives and left many injured.

Investigations by the Eko Trust revealed that the violence was the direct effect of a battle for supremacy among the various groups in the area over territorial control.

Our correspondent gathered that over the years, the Church Street boys have allegedly been parading them-

selves as the strongest group on the Island, according to our sources; the boys have assumed notoriety for displaying arrogance and molesting perceived weaker groups.

It was learnt that the current state of violence began when the notorious Church Boys allegedly attacked a group known as California Boys.

The resultant revenge attack that followed this incident has left Isale-Eko area of Lagos Island in disarray as different groups have now joined in the struggle and battle for supremacy.

Eko Trust learnt that the violence has now become al-

most on weekly affair as rival groups attack each other with dangerous weapons like axes, cutlasses, machetes and cudgels.

When our correspondent visited the area at the weekend stern looking armed mobile policemen were seen patrolling the area, they were said to have been sent there to stop further breakdown of law and order.

The activities of hoodlums has virtually paralysed social activities in the hitherto ever bubbling and lively Isale-Eko as residents now prefer to stay indoors at night for fear of being attacked by the rampaging youths.

Area boys clash leaves three dead

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NDLEA arrests 186 over illicit drugs

No fewer than 186 persons including a student of the University of Lagos (UNILAG) have been arrested by the Lagos State command of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) over illicit drugs.

Briefing newsmen Wednesday at a special press briefing to present their score card for the year 2004, Abiodun Adesola, Lagos State commander NDLEA said that the suspects were arrested throughout the state.

The 186 suspects arrested in 2004 when compared to the 123 suspects arrested in 2003 shows that 63 more suspects were apprehended last year, 2004.

The NDLEA Lagos sector commander said that the

By Adelenwa Bamgboye,
Correspondent (Lagos)

police in Lagos as well as the department of state security were of tremendous assistance to the command during the period under review.

"The department of state security provided this command with very valuable intelligence which we worked on to get this for" Abiodun Adesola said.

Similarly, he commended the security department of the University of Lagos and other tertiary institutions located within the Lagos State command.

Specifically, he commended Unilag security department in arresting and transferring drug peddlers arrested on their campus to the state command.

PUBLIC NOTICE

AREWA HORSE RACING ASSOCIATION

The General Public is hereby notified that the above named Association has applied for registration under Part "C" of the Companies & Allied Matters Act, 1990.

The trustees of the Association are:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| 1. H.R.H. Aib (Dr) Ado Bayero CFR, LLD, JP | - Grand Patron |
| 2. Aib. Bashir Mohammed Dalbata | - Chairman |
| 3. Aib. Tajuddeen Aminu Dantata | - Vice Chairman |
| 4. Aib. Kwarangwa Jada | - Member |
| 5. Aib. Muiz Ja'afaru | - Member |
| 6. Aib. Mohammed Uba Kari | - Member |
| 7. Aib. Nasir Daudadi Bako | - Member |
| 8. Aib. Nasir Ado Bayero | - Member |
| 9. Aib. Mohammed Adama Abaja | - Member |
| 10. Sen. Ahmed Mukhtar Arawa | - Member |
| 11. Dr. Aliyu Modibbo | - Member |
| 12. Aib. Mohammed Adama Waziri | - Member |
| 13. Aib. Bala Zakariya'a | - Member |
| 14. Dr. Babangida Aliyu | - Member |
| 15. Aib. Faruk Darama | - Member |
| 16. Aib. Aminu Misgarfi | - Member |
| 17. Aib. Kabir Mukhtar | - Member |
| 18. Aib. Isaiya Ajibola | - Member |
| 19. Aib. Faruk Dalbata | - Member |
| 20. Aib. Abdulrazzaq Sa'idi | - Member |
| 21. Aib. Ahmed Shuaibu Gura | - Executive Secretary |

Any objection to the registration should be forwarded to the Registrar-General Corporate Affairs Commission, Wave Zone 5, P.M.B. 199 Garki, Abuja within 28 days of this publication.

News

Brief

Nigeria
Nigeria will host the first Mid-Term Assembly of the African Union in Abuja from 30-31 January, 2005. It will be chaired by President Olusegun Obasanjo, the current Chairperson of the AU.
The decision to convene a Mid-Term Assembly in January was taken in view of the wide range of issues deliberated upon by African leaders and the necessity for timely appraisal. The assembly will afford African heads of state and government the opportunity to review the level of progress recorded in the implementation of previous decisions and address other major developments on the continent since the last session.
The Mid-Term Assembly will be preceded by the 6th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council, comprising the foreign ministers of AU member states, which will be chaired by His Excellency Oluwemi Adeniji, CON, the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Gusau
Lack of good roads in Gusau metropolis has been attributed to the constant accidents and the death of school children who always find it difficult crossing such roads.
A member representing Zamfara Central in the House of Representatives, Alhaji Sani Muhammad, made the disclosure while answering questions from newsmen at the launch of "Child School Safety" campaign in Gusau, the Zamfara State capital.

Cross River
Agreements have been completed for the provision of infrastructural facilities at the Tinapa Business State in Calabar, Cross River State.
The Tinapa project, which is the Cross River State government's pet tourism project, was initially contracted to Messrs Auto Construction Ltd. for excavation and earth works, including piling.
The provision of facilities such as cinema, sports and other recreational facilities, as well as the development of the forest belts and lakes around the project site at Adabo is to be developed by Messrs Julius Berger Nigeria Limited at the cost of N26 billion.

UniGahana
The University of Ghana has declared that only the University Admission Board has the power to admit students. Prospective students should therefore not pay money to anyone claiming they could assist them to gain admission.
A statement issued in Accra and signed by the Registrar of the University, Mr. U.A. Konu, said some unscrupulous people were going about extorting money from applicants and claiming they had the ability to facilitate their admission into the University.
The statement further states that application fees are as follows: 1. Sub-degree and bachelor degree programme = \$350,000; post first degree law programme = \$400,000; master programmes = \$400,000; MBA/MPA/PH.D = \$50,000.

Gani says NBA is docile

ALagos lawyer and human rights activist, Chief Ganiyu Fawehinmi (SAN), has said that Nigerian bar profession is docile and lacked the steam to engineer revolutionary change in the nation's body polity. The social crusader, who made this known at the weekend while speaking at a lecture organised for him by the Ikeja chapter of the Nigerian Bar Association entitled: 'Fawehinmism, the Challenges of Legal Activism in Nigeria', noted that the development is unfortunate for the members of the bar who ought to be in the vanguard of socio-economic emancipation.

He wondered why Nigerian lawyers kept sealed lips over the annulment of June 12 1993 presidential election; the murder of the late Ken

From Mohamed Shasonya
Judicial Correspondent
(Lagos)

Sarowiwa; serial killings of prominent citizens and gross misuse and misgovernment which have characterised the present administration. He pointed out that it will not augur well for the society if the bar continues to shirk its responsibility.
To him, none of the nation's leaders since independence had the focus and agenda on how best to solve the problems besetting the people while they continued to fail the people.

He advised the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) to constitute a monitoring committee towards safeguarding the interest of the masses in the proposed national dialogue by the federal government.

Agric. ministry provides farmers incentives

Farmers in Nigeria can now be hopeful as the Federal Ministry of Agriculture has unbundled a package of incentives for their benefits nationwide. The Minister of Agriculture, Alhaji Adamu Bello, made this known in an interview with the BBC Hausa Service monitored in Abuja at the weekend.

Alhaji Adamu Bello explained that the incentives available for the benefit of farmers include better agricultural equipment, fertiliser provision services, among others.

He noted that the provision of agricultural equipment support services became inadequate in some rural areas, adding that his ministry was poised to spread its tentacles

By Hassan Idris, Senior Reporter (Agriculture)

so as to achieve a wider service delivery. He called on farmers to cooperate with government so that excellent results will be achieved in the 2005 farming season.

Earlier, a peasant farmer, Ahmad Bulama Vijaye, had complained that lack of adequate agricultural equipment and fertiliser was hampering agricultural production in rural areas, adding that continuous migration of the youth to cities in search of white collar jobs has negatively affected the progress of agricultural development.

He called on government to support peasant farmers in rural areas to develop agriculture nationwide through the provision of infrastructure and other incentives.

FG committed to completion of Argungu bridges - Minister

The federal government has expressed its commitment to the completion of the three bridges across the River Rima in Kebbi State. The Minister of Works, Senator Adeseye Ogunlwe, disclosed this while receiving the Deputy Governor of Kebbi State, Alhaji Suleiman Muhammed Argungu (Jarman Kebbi) who visited him to remind him of the pledge he made in 2004 to complete the projects.

The minister informed the visitor that the federal government had given approval for the contract on the Argungu bridges to be terminated and re-awarded to a more competent contractor since the original contractor,

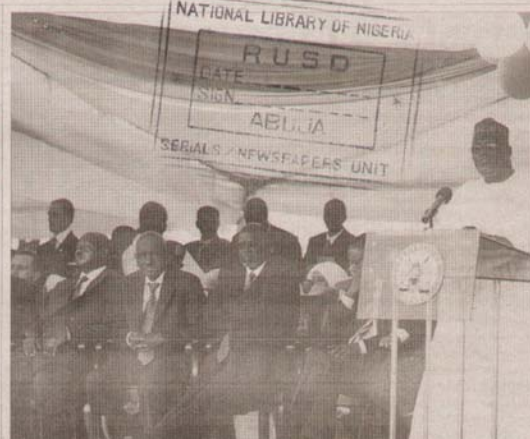
BY Nasir Imam (Property and Environment Editor)

Messrs Stirling Civil Engineering (Nig) Ltd., has proved incapable of executing the contract.

He said the ministry was only waiting for due process certification to finally terminate and re-award the projects, and that as soon as this was done, the contract would be re-awarded.

Senator Ogunlwe stated that he was aware of President Obasanjo's pledge to complete the bridges during his visit to the state in 2003.

The deputy governor also raised the issue of the 70 kilometre Kalgo-Bunza-Niger Republic border road, which was equally abandoned and



Vice President Atiku Abubakar addressing A. U. member during the signing ceremony of the Sudanese Comprehensive Peace Agreement held at Keruya recently. Other are John Garama of SPLS, Vice President Ahmed Taha of Sudan and President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda at the ceremony.

Experts call for observance of traffic regulations

Civil engineering experts have called for strict observance of traffic regulations as the only way to protect the Nigerian roads from dilapidation, even as they accused road users of most of the problems facing roads in Nigeria.

In an exclusive interview with Daily Trust, the Managing Director of the Abdul Jalil Hajaj and Sons, Alhaji Abdul Nasir Abdul Jalil, said the continuous use of roads in the country without regards to laid down rules, especially by heavy duty vehicles, have been responsible for the dilapidation caused to Nigerian roads.

Hassan A. Karofi
Correspondence (Dutse)

He said although road constructions in Nigeria are still the best in the world, considering rigorous work done before they are put into use, the inability to observe certain regulations has been causing longevity problem to them.

The construction expert said most of the road users in the country take up 60 tonnes instead of the regulated 25 tonnes, thereby putting immense pressure on the roads, leading to their short lifespan.

"There is nowhere in the world where weighing system is not being used to protect the roads; but in Nigeria, lorries, trucks, pay-loaders and other vehicles ply the roads with at times triple tones beyond regulated weight, yet no one cares to see to the pro-

tection of the roads," he said, and added, "If the roads have to be qualitative, I believe a systematic regulatory application must be introduced before our roads could be protected," he further said.

Also in his assertion, the Managing Director of the Nigerian Roads Construction, NRC, Alhaji Abbas Jalil, called for re-orientation towards road usage in the country and the establishment of a well-planned road reform initiative so that roads in the country would be protected to meet the needed contribution for national development.

Daily Trust investigations revealed that while in other countries of the world, roads are built at a minimum of 10 inches thick, in Nigeria, it is not beyond 4 inches. In a similar vein, 10 years is the recommended duration for any road, but Nigerian roads live up to 30 to 50 years.

UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, ILORIN, NIGERIA
POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
Postponement of the date of Qualifying Examination for Admission into Postgraduate Programmes for 2004/2005 Academic Session
The earlier date for qualifying examinations for admission into Postgraduate Programmes for 2004/2005 Academic session i.e. Saturday 22nd January, 2005, is hereby postponed to Saturday 12th February, 2005.
However, the venues of the examinations remain unchanged.
SIGNED
OLUFOJAKE O. OYEYEMI (MRS.)
Registrar

INDEPENDENT CORRUPT PRACTICES AND OTHER RELATED OFFENCES COMMISSION

INVITATION TO BID FOR THE SUPPLY OF OFFICE EQUIPMENT

The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission hereby invite tenders from reputable firms for the supply and installation of the underlisted Equipment.

A. DETAILS AND SPECIFICATIONS OF ITEMS REQUIRED

LOT	QTY
LOT 1	
(i) Air-Conditioners (Panasonic 2HP Window Unit)	27
(ii) Panasonic 2HP Split Unit	20
(iii) Sony M560V (Voice Activated) Midget Tape Recorder	70
(iv) Sony CFS 828S Radio/Tape Recorder	39
(v) Sony Video Recorder/Player	12
(vi) KDK Standing Fans	12
(vii) 21" Sharp Colour Television (21EM3)	35
(viii) Thermocool Refrigerator Model HR.245U	17
(ix) Casio DR-140N Heavy Duty (Colour Print Calculator	10
(x) Casio Table Calculator DJ-120 12 Digits	54
(xi) Kombo Spiral Binding Machine	5
(xii) Sanyo SBS-650 Shredding Machine	35
(xiii) CG 242 Paper Cutter	8
(xiv) Digital Video Camera with DV Player- NV-MD 9000 EN	2
(xv) CANON EOS 66 Photographic Camera	1
(xvi) NIKON F55 Photographic Camera	1
(xvii) SEKAKU Rechargeable Wireless Public Address System With Cassette Recorder/Player, Two Wireless Microphones In-built Trowley	2
LOT 2	QTY
(i) SHARP AR-5316 Photocopier	28
(ii) Intercom Handsets (Siemens Euroset 2005)	23
(iii) Panasonic KX-FM 87BX Fax Machine	12
LOT 3	QTY
(i) Standard 4-Drawer Filing Cabinet	30
(ii) 4-Drawer Gubabi Fire Proof Cabinet	14
(iii) Gubabi Safe No. 106	2
(iv) Chairs: Board Room (Ex-Chair, Leather -Pancy No. 218)	20
(v) Chairs and Tables: -Ex-Chair, High-back, Leather No. 215) -Ex-Table (NAD) 5ft	20
(vi) Secretary's Chair (MBR58GH & Tables (NAD 4 ft)	22
(vi) Metal Leather-covered Armchair with attached Polish Folding Desk	40
LOT 4	QTY
(i) Zinox Computer: Pentium 4, 2.8GHZ, 17" TFT Flat Screen Monitor, -256MB, 40GB HDD, 144MB FDD, DVD/CD ROM Writer, NIC 10/100 Ports, 2x USB, 2x Serial, 1x Parallel, Keyboard & Wheel Mouse, Full Multimedia, WIN XP HE & LIPS - APC 600	50
(ii) HP LaserJet (4200N) Network Printer	11
(iii) HP COMPAQ Business Note-Book Computer NX 9010, P4, 2.8Hz, 256MB HD, DVD/CDR, 15.1" Screen, WINXP PRO, 0.5 Network Modem	1
LOTS	QTY
(i) Sound Proof 40KVA (Perkins) Electricity Generator	4

B. QUALIFICATIONS FOR TENDERS

- Each Company wishing to tender must have a valid and subsisting ICPC Contractor's Registration Certificate
- Each Tender must be accompanied with evidence of payment of a non-refundable fee of N10,000.00 for each LOT in Bank Draft in favour of Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission.

C. SUBMISSION OF TENDERS

All completed Tenders are to be submitted to the Office of the Secretary to the Commission, ICPC Headquarters, Plot 802, Constitution Avenue, Central Business District, Abuja. All Tenders should be submitted in sealed envelopes deposited in the Tender Box on the 2nd Floor of the Commission, not later than 14 days from the date of this publication and marked at the right hand corner "TENDER FOR THE SUPPLY/INSTALLATION OF EQUIPMENT".

D. OPENING OF TENDERS

All Tenders will be opened in the presence of Tenderers or their representatives on Thursday 3rd February, 2005 in the Commission's Auditorium at 12:00 noon. Tenderers are to note that the ICPC is not bound to accept lowest or highest tender and shall not be bound to offer any explanation for the rejection of any tender.

(Signed)
Management
Independent Corrupt Practices and Other
Related Offences Commission (ICPC)

UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, ILORIN, NIGERIA

Admission into the 2004/2005 Remedial Programmes in Agriculture, Arts (French), Education, Engineering & Technology and Science

Applications are hereby invited from candidates who are interested in 2004/2005 Remedial Programme In the faculties of (I) Agriculture; (II) Arts (French); (III) Education; (IV) Engineering and Technology and (v) Science

A. VENUES OF PROGRAMME

- The venues of the Programme shall be off-Campus located outside the two Campuses of the University. Information on these venues will be provided during registration at the MBA School, Sabo-Oke, Ilorin.
- Remedial students shall not be provided accommodation. They must, therefore, not be found in either of the two Campuses hostels.

B. QUALIFICATIONS

- Agriculture, Education, Engineering & Technology and Science** An applicant must have passed SSCE/GCE/NECO equivalent in English Language, Biology, Mathematics, Chemistry and Physics with credit pass in at least three (3) of these subjects at not more than two (2) sittings.
- Specific Faculty Requirements**
 - Faculty of Agriculture will accept credit pass in Agricultural Science in lieu of credit pass; in Biology
 - Faculty of Engineering & Technology requires credit pass in Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics

C. FRENCH PROGRAMME (IN ARTS)

Previous knowledge of French is desirable but NOT mandatory. However, credit pass in English Language and at least credit pass in three (3) other Arts/Social Science subjects at the SSCE/GCE/NECO equivalent (at not more than two (2) sittings) is compulsory for all Intending French candidates.

D. ELIGIBILITY

The programme is primarily open to candidates from the catchment areas of University of Ilorin, namely, Benue, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Sokoto and Zamfara States.

E. METHOD OF APPLICATION

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REGISTRAR

Inside Politics

Ogbeh: Time out for a maverick?

The anti-climatic outcome of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) National Executive Council (NEC) meeting Tuesday penultimate week, did not fool many Nigerians and indeed any keen observer of the unfolding crisis rocking the ruling and, by its leadership's boasting, largest political party in Africa.

Given the media hype that preceded the PDP's NEC meeting and especially, the disposition of the two principal actors in the drama. President Obasanjo and National Chairman of the party, Chief Adu Ogbeh, nobody believed that the last word had been heard about the crisis triggered by the exchange of letters between the two when members of the NEC came out of the Tuesday meeting hugging one another.

With Obasanjo's notoriety for vindictiveness and Ogbeh's famed pride, that the combatants only sheathed their swords without heads rolling at the end of the meeting was seen by many as only the calm before the storm.

Supposedly, it all started one month ago when the PDP national chairman wrote a somewhat indicating letter to the president over the state of the nation. In his letter dated December 6th, which somehow found its way to the press, Chief Ogbeh asserted that the nation was sliding towards anarchy for which Obasanjo's administration seems not to be doing enough to arrest. Ogbeh cited the protracted Anambra crisis to buttress his point.

Ogbeh summed up his letter thus: "But the back stops at your table and in my position, not only as chairman but also as an old friend and loyal defender of your development programmes which I have never stopped defending. I dare to think that we can either by commission or omission allow ourselves to crash and bring to early grief, this beautiful edifice called democracy."

And in his characteristic manner, President Obasanjo responded threateningly in a lengthy December 10th letter stating thus: "I am amused and not surprised by your letter of December 6, 2004 because after playing hide and seek games over a period of time, you have finally, at least in writing, decided to unmask and show your true colour."

In disagreeing with Ogbeh, the President wrote in part, "Whatever may be the ulterior motive for your letter, if and when in my capacity as president of Nigeria duly calls for me to act, I will not shirk my responsibility and we will at the end of the day be at the bar of the public, both at the party level and national level. Let me also say that it is, indeed, unfortunate that you make so many unnecessary and unwarranted insinuations in your letter about our great country. I have taken judicial note of the ominous comparisons you made between a government in which you participated that was overthrown in a coup d'etat and this present administration."

"I wonder if that is your wish since you may not now go out penniless. But whatever agenda you may be working at, God is always in charge and in control. Warped perception

By Abdu Labaran, Group Political Editor

must be differentiated from reality. Perception created and manipulated for a sinister purpose cannot be reality. The greatest danger to any country is putting truth out of favour, extolling evils of lies, deceit, treachery, disloyalty, un-patriotism, corruption and unconstitutionality. That is my greatest fear for Nigeria and it should be yours and that of any right-thinking Nigerian. Not too long ago, I challenged you to think beyond the ordinary, the expected and the self. I still put that challenge on the table."

Clearly, the president's venomous response confirms what many all along suspected: that Chief Adu Ogbeh is only a political pawn, an expendable one at that, in the power struggle between President Obasanjo and his vice, Atiku Abubakar, whose desire to succeed his boss in 2007 is the most kept political secret in the land.

So Adu Ogbeh's resignation as national chairman of PDP Sunday morning, whether forced (as is being alleged) or voluntarily "to save the party" (as he insists) did not come as a surprise.

Calls for Ogbeh's head started soon as his and president's letters went public reinforced by a petition to the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) signed by 16 NEC members of the PDP accusing him (Ogbeh) of misappropriating a substantial part of the party's funds amounting to some five point two billion Naira (N5.2 billion).

Shortly after the NEC meeting when both President Obasanjo and Chief Ogbeh emerged with broad smiles on their faces before driving away in one car to Ogbeh's house for a shared pounded yam meal, the "Ogbeh must go" lobby had it that the PDP chairman was saved the humiliation of impeachment by the president.

According to them, on the eve of the Tuesday meeting, NEC members had met through the night during which Chief Ogbeh allegedly voluntarily gave an undertaking to the president to resign as party chairman at the end of January.

This claim was however denied by the Ogbeh support group which countered that although there was immense pressure on him to resign, he never gave any undertaking to the president to resign, insisting that Ogbeh would remain put as chairman up to the end of his tenure in November when the party would convene to elect new officials.

Why the rumble in PDP?

The current leadership tussle in the ruling PDP is believed to have its roots from the PDP December 2002 convention where President Obasanjo won the party's ticket to contest for re-election. But, according to party sources, it was a victory that came with a price for the president as he allegedly had to go down on his knees to beg his vice, Atiku Abubakar to allow him run for his second and final term. Atiku, who also wanted to contest, grudgingly rescinded his decision.

According to an informed source close to the president, Atiku's decision not to run even

as he allegedly had the support of most of the party's governors, was his most fatal political mistake.

The PDP crisis, according to the source, "is all about cutting the vice president to size to make sure that his dream of succeeding his boss remains just that."

Corroborating this assertion, another pro-Obasanjo source alleged that the president had vowed to make sure that Atiku does not succeed him in 2007. According to this source, the president has enlisted the support of one of the speculated presidential aspirants to frustrate his vice and truncate his presidential ambition.

The first clear public move by the President to cut the wings of Atiku, according to a competent Presidency source, was made some two or so months ago, long before the "letters" episode when in the presence of PDP NWC members, he told Ogbeh face to face that "I can not work with you Mr. Chairman."

According to the source, some of those courageous enough asked the President the reason for his declaration to which he explained that he could not work with someone who was not loyal to him but to somebody else. Thus began the real trouble for Ogbeh and the pressure on him to voluntarily throw in the towel.

Those who read the President's lips believed this ominous message was meant for Atiku, who allegedly responded by directing the PDP national chairman to write his December 6th, 2004 letter to the President "so as to give Ogbeh the upper hand in the public court," as one source put it.

The pro-Obasanjo forces, thoroughly annoyed by this frontal attack on the President, mounted the offensive against Ogbeh by instigating some NEC members to petition the EFCC accusing the PDP national chairman of mismanaging party funds.

Armed with "volumes" of vouchers, receipts and other "documentary evidence" the anti-Ogbeh forces accused the national chairman of running the party as his "private estate" in which he expended funds without recourse to party laid down procedure and due process.

They argued that according to PDP's constitution, any expenditure more than N1 million must be approved by the NWC of the party while for any amount over N5 million, the matter must be referred to the NEC. Also, the PDP constitution makes it mandatory for the chairman to draw annual budget for the party and work by it after approval by the necessary organs.

But according to the anti-Ogbeh forces, "in his more than three years as national chairman of PDP, Chief Ogbeh never drew a budget nor referred to the NWC and NEC for expenditure above his authority."

This allegation is corroborated by a former senior national officer of the party who, incidentally, belongs to the pro-Ogbeh group and a staunch supporter of the vice president too.

He confirmed to *Daily Trust* that Ogbeh's unmaking was his unilateral handling of party affairs, especially in matters of

expenditure to the exclusion of NWC and NEC.

He said that the national chairman centralised most decision making so much so that even matters that should be handled by state chapters of PDP were referred to him, a situation that, according to him, led to so many crises in some states.

Confronted by the mass of documented evidence of financial irregularities, Chief Adu Ogbeh was said to have finally agreed to resign and which he allegedly did in a letter addressed to the President in the morning of the day of the NEC meeting two weeks ago.

But upon realising that the letter was improperly addressed, a situation that could be exploited by the Ogbeh supporters to void the resignation, President Obasanjo was said to have paid a visit to Ogbeh's residence on Sunday last week shortly after his (President's) return from Dafur, Sudan. During the visit, the President was said to have regaled the PDP chairman with accounts of his Dafur trip before he invited his host for a return visit to the Villa later in the evening of same day.

According to our source, before the arrival of Chief Ogbeh to the Villa, the President had allegedly directed a secretary to draft a resignation letter for the PDP chairman. On his arrival and after the exchange of pleasantries and more accounts of Dafur, the President was said to have told Ogbeh that the resignation letter he wrote earlier was improperly addressed and therefore one needed to be written and addressed to the NEC through the National Secretary of the party.

Ogbeh was said to have been given the drafted letter to append his signature by the President, who however, requested that Ogbeh copy the letter in his own handwriting and sign same so that there may not be any doubt about its authenticity.

Soon after however, despite the claim of the outgoing PDP chairman that he voluntarily resigned, his supporters alleged that he was forced to write the resignation letter at gun point in the Villa. Even Ogbeh himself added spice to this line of thinking when he hinted that he was put in some kind of home arrest with visit to his house restricted to certain hours of the day. Even members of his family were allegedly banned from visiting him during his period of ordeal before he was "forced" to resign.

However, some of his NEC colleagues who had petitioned the EFCC denied that Chief Ogbeh resigned under threat. In a signed press statement, four of them, Alhaji Ahmed Gussau, Deacon Elijah Afolabi, Dr. C.N. Obioha and Chief Oluola Okunola, all ex-officio members and Dr. Dayo Dairo, Deputy National Treasurer, said that no gun was used to force Ogbeh to resign. They maintained that "if there was any gun that made Ogbeh to resign, it is the mass of cheques, vouchers, internal audit query and hard evidence of financial impropriety, amounting to about 5.2 billion unaccounted for and irregular expenditure that are in possession of most NEC members."

Then Thursday last week, Ogbeh also lobbied another missile at his opponents accusing them of taking bribe to oust him from office. In the most radical departure from his earlier position yet, the outgoing PDP national chairman told journalists in Abuja that some chief-tains of the party gave out monetary and landed property bribes to those who spearheaded the move for his ouster. The bribery was allegedly given on December 15, 2004 and on 2nd and 3rd January, this year.

Challenging those agitating for his probe to tell Nigerians how much money and houses they received to effect his removal during the last two NEC meetings, he queried: "If all these petitioners were that genuine themselves, how much did they collect on 15th December, before the first NEC meeting?"

"How much did they collect on the 2nd and 3rd January before the second NEC meeting to procure my removal from the party. How many of them have got houses in Owarinpa These are men calling for probe of impropriety but their hands are full of filth themselves."

But reacting to Ogbeh's latest allegation on behalf of other NEC members, three ex-officio members, Engineer Dr. J.O. Abu, Deacon Elijah Afolabi and Chief John N. Igboke dismissed it as typical Adu Ogbeh antic to "shift position on issues per second" saying that the allegation is "a falsehood in its entirety, and a calculated attempt to dent the good image of distinguished members of NEC and bring our great party into disrepute."

According to them, "this practice of inconsistencies is consistent with the way Chief Ogbeh handled the party affairs to the utter displeasure of the NEC members. Mr. Ogbeh cut the image of a pathological liar, master of double-speak and grand standing. The one who gives a speech to impress the gallery and does exactly the opposite."

Fallout

Even before the eventual resignation of Chief Adu Ogbeh, some PDP governors were said to have threatened to leave the party if he was removed as national chairman. Those said to be in this group are most governors from the south-south, the north-central and the north-east.

Sources said that soon after hearing of Ogbeh's resignation some of the governors in the south-south allegedly commenced talks with the Alliance for Democracy (AD) while some of their Northern counterparts commenced similar talks with the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) with a view to ditching the PDP.

A member of the party's Board of Trustees and founding member, who is close to the vice president, told *Daily Trust* pessimistically that things would never be the same in the PDP. Confirming the possibility



Chief Adu Ogbeh

of a backlash against the resignation of the erstwhile party chairman, the member asserted that it "would take some magic for the PDP to remain the same."

No doubt, the fall of Chief Adu Ogbeh has demystified the invincibility of the PDM power block within the PDP whose arrowhead in both party and government is the vice president.

However, eventhough the PDM group of the PDP may seem to have back knocked down at the moment, it is by no means knocked out. Already, members of the Group of 34 (G34), the precursor to the PDM, many of whom are PDM, have scheduled two meetings for today and Friday 21st to discuss the high jacking of the PDP by President Obasanjo among other topics. Also, PDM governors sympathetic to the PDM and, particularly its leader, vice president Atiku Abubakar, have also scheduled a meeting on 22nd January in Lagos, just a day after the G34 second meeting.

Way forward

The way forward, according to the party's men, is the president's way as "he is the undeniable leader of the party." According to one of them, "no matter how strong or powerful a deputy may be, he cannot be stronger or more powerful than his boss because he only has delegated power and once he loses confidence of his boss, he loses everything. Once the boss demonstrates his power, the deputy loses all his power and all political actors then begin to gravitate towards the president, the real source of power."

But the vice president's men see things differently as they believe that for PDP to weather the crisis without much damage to its hegemony, some kind of compromise must have to be made. Their thinking is that whoever will succeed Ogbeh as party chairman must be someone who both sides "can do business with without having to look over their shoulder at every turn."

According to one of them, those being touted as likely successors to Chief Ogbeh, like Colonel Amadu Ali (rid), General Onoja (rid) are not people the Atiku group is comfortable with adding that any attempt to impose somebody not acceptable to them will be rejected by them.

Inside Politics

PDP stalwart chides OBJ over leadership

A stalwart of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), Alhaji Musa Musawa has deplored the attitude of President Olusegun Obasanjo over his style of leadership since the inception of his administration in 1999.

Alhaji Musawa stated this over the weekend at a public lecture and award presentation to some eminent Nigerians, organised by Vanguard for Democratic Orientation (VDO) at Handala Hotel in Kaduna.

Alhaji Musawa, who was former Nigerian Ambassador to Philippine, said the

From Aliyu Haruna, Correspondent Kaduna

leadership style of president Obasanjo had not been in the interest of ordinary Nigerians as most of the decisions taken according to him, is not people friendly.

He urged Nigerian youths not to allow themselves to be used by selfish politicians who subordinate national interest to their personal interest even as he observed that no society could develop without the contribution of its youths as they constitute the bulwark on whose

shoulders future aspiration of the society rests.

The former National Treasurer of the defunct Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) asserted that the focus, direction and style of the Obasanjo administration was diametrically opposed to the vision and mission of the founding fathers of the PDP.

In his address, the National Chairman of VDO, Alhaji Isiaaku Abdulkamilid disclosed that the organisation was non-tribal non-religious and non-partisan and that its interest is purely the development of democratic structures and institutions in the country.

He said that the organisation decided to honour those eminent Nigerians on account of their invaluable contribution to the development of democracy and youth empowerment in Nigeria.

Among those honoured by VDO are Architect Aminu Dabo, former Managing Director of Nigerian Port Authority (NPA), Alhaji Ibrahim Gashua, Sardaunan Matasa, and Minister of state for finance, Mrs. Nemadi Usman among others.



L-R: Governors Segun Agagu of Ondo State, Joshua Dariye of Plateau State and B Tinubu of Lagos State during the Governors' meeting with President Obasanjo, at State House, Abuja...recently
Pic: Joe Oroye

Lawmaker lauds Ogbeh's resignation

Chairman, House of Representatives Committee on Capital Market, Hon. Ahmed Aliyu Wadada has lauded the registration by the chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Mr. Audu Ogbeh, saying that it is an example worth emulating for the survival of democracy in Nigeria.

The lawmaker, representing Keffi/Karu/Kokona Federal Constituency of Nassarawa State, told Daily Trust the sacrifice made by the outgoing PDP Chairman who came from the North Central geo-political zone, was in line with the historical antecedent of the zone for the unity of Nigeria.

"The people of the North Central zone, comprising Plateau, Benue, Nassarawa, Niger and Kogi states have historically contributed to the country's unity. During the three year civil war the zone had more soldiers in the war front.

"Indeed, General Yakubu Gowon, who led the war and consolidated the peace to keep Nigeria one, is from the North Central zone.

"After the fall of Shagari it was General Ibrahim Babangida from the zone that rescued the country when the country's unity become fragile as a result of the draconian rule that followed Shagari's fall.

"General Abdulsalam Abubakar to whom the credit for the current democratic dispensation is due is also from the North Central zone," declared the lawmaker.

Hon. Wadada urged Nigerians from other geo-political zones to imbibe the virtues of sacrifice for the sake of the country's unity pointing out that if Audu

From Sani Babadoko, Bureau Chief (Kaduna)

Ogbeh has decided to sit tight if could have spelled doom for the party and Nigeria.

He called on the political class to always consider the country's interest above selfish interest adding that Nigeria was above and individual or section of the country.

Wadada expressed the hope that a new PDP chairman will emerge from the zone whose citizens he said had shown greater commitment to the unity and sustenance of democracy in Nigeria.

Inter-city Bank Chairman joins PDP

The Chairman of Inter-City Bank PLC, Alhaji Falulu Bello (Sarkin Ban Zazzau) has over the weekend brought to an end the speculation whether or not he would contest the 2007 governorship elections in Kaduna state, as he formally picked membership card of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP).

The occasion took place in a colourful ceremony attended by his friends, associates and well wishers at the Rigachikun Ward office of PDP in Igabi local government area of the state.

Alhaji Falulu, who had hitherto remained non-partisan, said that has decision to join active politics was informed by the desire to contribute his quota towards the development of the state and the nation in general.

On whether or not he wants to contest the 2007 governorship election, he philosophically answered that "power comes from Allah" and he would

therefore not object to any offer from his people to serve them, urging all members of the party to rededicate themselves to the cause of the PDP as he announced a donation of one million naira (N1m) to the party.

Also speaking, the chairman of Igabi local government area, Alhaji Musa Dangarba, who received the new entrant, asserted that PDP would benefit immensely from the leadership experience of the bank chairman.

Earlier in his speech, the Rigachikun Ward chairman of the PDP, Malam Nuhu Balarabe expressed his appreciation to the new member for deciding to join the party.

Meanwhile, the campaign posters of Alhaji Falulu Bello have already flooded most streets in the Kaduna metropolis, to compete with those of other aspirants who also have their sight set for the Sir Kashim Ibrahim House come 2007.

Canada to assist Nigeria on democracy-ngo

The Canadian envoy to Nigeria, Mr. David Angell has given assurance of his country's readiness to support Nigeria in her quest to establish an enduring democracy.

David Angell gave the assurance yesterday when he paid a courtesy visit on the Special Adviser to the President on National Assembly (NASS) matters, Senator Ita-Giwa, a statement from the office of the Special Adviser and signed by the Special Assistant, Mohammed Adamu has said.

The Canadian envoy, who recalled his country's withdrawal of diplomatic services to Nigeria in the late 90s, a gesture which he said was intended to protest continued military rule in the country, said that Canada had long resumed full diplomatic activities in Nigeria.

He said that Canada was open to all bilateral initiatives towards sustaining democratic governance in the country, citing Canada's collaboration with Nigeria to encourage the new partnership on African Development (NEPAD) initiatives, even as he pointed out that his country had opened up to quite a lot of products from Nigeria tariff free in the spirit of NEPAD.

Earlier in her welcome speech, Senator Ita Giwa, while commending the Canadian government for supporting democratic governance in Nigeria, gave the envoy a countdown on president Olusegun Obasanjo's new initiative in the legislative process.

She cited the instrumentation of dialogue,

By Zainab Alimi, Political Reporter (Reps) consultation and information sharing as key elements in the administration's new premeditated approach to

legislation and the legislative process attributing the unusually smooth and rancour-free passage of executive bills to the government's proactive attitude towards legislation and the legislative process.

2007: New Pro Atiku group debuts

A new support group for the Vice-President Atiku Abubakar has debuted with a resolve to leave no stone unturned to draft the Turaki Adamawa into the 2007 Presidential race.

Known as "Scheme for Atiku 2007", the group, according to a statement signed by its Director of Organisation, Planning and Publicity, Mr. Sanni Liman, was formed to ensure that the political, economic and socio-cultural dreams of every Nigerian, especially the downtrodden masses are fully realised through the emergence of Atiku Abubakar as president in 2007.

The statement described the Vice-President as a great personality endowed with

abundant talent, political sagacity and concern for the Nigerian state and its people.

"As a politically dynamic, sure and persuasive strategist, Atiku has brought to his office and the nation many enduring qualities and strengths that grossly propelled the degree of success during the last five years of this administration," the statement added.

The statement called on Nigerians irrespective of tribe, race, religion or party affiliation to team up and support Turaki's presidential bid in 2007, maintaining that as somebody who is a symbol of loyalty, respect for the rule of law, acceptability across the length and breadth of the country, the Vice President remained Nigeria's best choice for president in 2007.

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SPORTS

Milan cut Juve's lead, Chelsea romp clear

AC Milan slashed Juventus's Serie A lead in half while Chelsea stretched 10 points clear of Premier League champions Arsenal in domestic European soccer action this weekend.

In Spain Barcelona maintained their seven-point lead over Real Madrid after both teams earned battling victories but champions Valencia lost ground.

Juventus's lead at the top of Serie A was cut to two points after they conceded a late equaliser in a 1-1 draw at Cagliari. Gianfranco Zola struck a minute from time to cancel out Emerson's 54th-minute goal for the Turin side, who have 44 points.

Champions AC Milan (42) are breathing down Juve's necks after coming from behind to beat third-

placed Udinese 3-1 at the San Siro.

Andriy Shevchenko and Kaka scored for Milan either side of an own goal by Marek Jankulovski after Antonio Di Natale had given Udinese a ninth-minute lead.

Lazio suffered their first defeat under recently appointed coach Giuseppe Papadopulo when they lost 3-1 at home to Palermo, who moved up to fifth in the division on 28 points.

Zola's old club Chelsea look destined to become English champions for the first time in 50 years after a 2-0 win at Tottenham Hotspur left them clear at the top of the Premier League.

Two Frank Lampard goals and a shock 1-0 defeat for champions Arsenal at Bolton Wanderers means only a sudden collapse can deny

Chelsea an historic end to their Centenary season.

Chelsea, who also became the first club to win six consecutive Premier League games without conceding a goal, did just what their title hopes needed after 10-man Manchester United won 1-0 at Liverpool with a Wayne Rooney strike.

They are now top with 58 points, with Arsenal on 48 and United third on 47, pressing Arsene Wenger's side for the second automatic slot in next season's Champions League.

Barcelona striker Samuel Eto'o atoned for missing an early penalty by heading an 81st-minute winner to give his side a narrow 1-0 success over 10-man Real Sociedad at the Nou Camp.

Barca were also indebted to some fantastic saves by

goalkeeper Victor Valdes.

Real Madrid had to dig deep to come from a goal down to claim a 3-1 win at home to 10-man Real Zaragoza.

Valencia are now nine points behind Barcelona after a 0-0 draw at Osasuna. The match was overshadowed by the sudden death of the young daughter of Valencia defender Marco Caneara shortly before the kickoff.

In France, two goals in the last six minutes by Juninho

and Bryan Bergougnoux gave Olympique Lyon a 2-0 home win over Metz and kept them six points clear at the top of Ligue 1.

Lyon, the only unbeaten team, are on 45 points with Lille staying second after a 3-1 win at Girondins Bordeaux. Monaco are third, nine points adrift, after crushing Caen 5-2.

Peguy Luyindula scored twice to give fifth-placed Olympique Marseille a 2-0 home win over Nice.

FA set to probe Boro, Everton brawl

The Football Association (FA) are expected to launch an investigation into an unsavoury melee involving almost every player that marred the end of Middlesbrough's hard-fought 1-1 draw with Everton at the Riverside Stadium.

FA officials will review video evidence of the incident before deciding what action to take but both clubs can expect to face disciplinary action following the ugly scenes here Sunday involving 21 players.

Duncan Ferguson sparked the wrestling match in Mark Schwarzer's goal after accidentally kicking the Australian keeper while going for a loose ball close to the goal-line.

Middlesbrough players took offence and charged towards Ferguson en masse as supporters looked on in disbelief.

Remarkably referee Dermot Gallagher refused to book a single player despite lecturing both captains but that is unlikely to be the end of the matter.

Middlesbrough manager Steve McClaren praised his players for sticking up for each other but revealed that his side's draw had come at a cost.

Ugo Ehiogu faces the prospect of missing the rest of the season after damaging knee ligaments while Michael Reiziger suffered a broken toe and could be sidelined for several weeks.

McClaren said: "Ugo has damaged knee ligaments. He will go for a scan later this week but it could be long term, we just don't know yet."

"We don't seem to have too much luck with centre halves and especially Ugo. Michael Reiziger has broken a toe as well so we could be without him for a while."

"I thought the draw was a fair result. We had chances in the first half especially but Everton came back strong at us after the break and we very direct."

"We did everything we could to keep them out and matched them in all departments but then Duncan Ferguson came on and things changed."

"I don't have a problem with what happened in the goalmouth. The players were just backing each other and that is what you expect."

"It showed to me two sides at the top end of the table with lots of spirit and attitude. I thought it was a great show of togetherness."

Diop late show stuns West Brom

Fulham striker Papa Bouba Diop's injury-time header condemned bottom of the table West Brom to a heartbreaking 1-0 defeat at Craven Cottage.

West Brom dominated the first half and could have easily won the game themselves.

But in the first of four minutes of injury-time their otherwise hard-working defence inexplicably switched off and Diop was allowed a free header from a corner.

The result left the Baggies in the Premiership basement, two points behind second bottom Southampton with Fulham now 12 points clear of their luckless opponents who have won just once in 23 league games so far this season.

West Brom dominated the first half but despite creating a host of chances failed to find a way past impressive Fulham keeper Edwin van der Sar while Robert Earnshaw and Baggies debutant strike partner Kevin Campbell both went close.

Fulham were rocked early on through the 19th minutes loss of French midfielder Steed Malbranque with what appeared to be an ankle injury.

His departure gave substitute Lee Clark the chance to make a comeback after 18 months sidelined with a calf problem.

Campbell, who joined Albion on a free transfer from Everton, replaced Geoff Horsfield in the only change from the FA Cup win against Preston.

Fulham manager Chris Coleman, by contrast, made five changes from the FA Cup draw against Watford.

Andy Cole was out with a one-match ban and Tomasz Radzinski, Zesh Rehman, Papa Bouba Diop and Mieritz Volz were all recalled to the starting line-up.

In the 10th minute former Cardiff forward Earnshaw was left free to shoot before Zat Knight could make a tackle but the strike went straight at van der Sar.

And worse almost followed for Fulham when Knight made a mess of clearing a routine cross from Jonathan Greening only for van der Sar to dive at Earnshaw's feet.

The veteran keeper, touted by many as a solution to Arsenal and Manchester United's problems between the posts, performed further heroics to keep out Ronnie Wallwork's 20-yard shot.

Fulham responded with a Luis Boa Morte-inspired break which ended with his shot being turned away by Albion keeper Russell Hoult for a corner.

Campbell then looked as if he was about to score on his debut only for van der Sar to block once more after Clark was dispossessed.

However, Fulham almost twice scored through Boa Morte towards the end of the first half when Hoult saved his powerful strike before the Portuguese former Arsenal player saw a header slide wide of the post after Radzinski's cross.

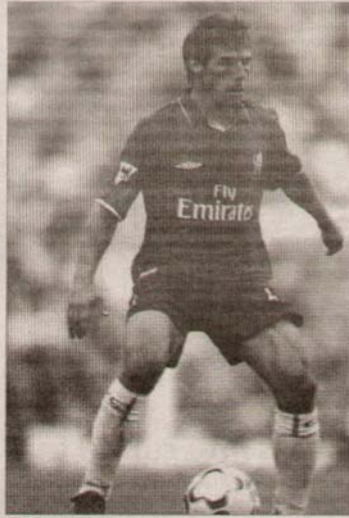
France's Dhorasoo makes his mark at Milan

AC Milan's French international midfielder Vikash Dhorasoo is making his mark with the Italian champions after a quiet start in Serie A.

"I've just played three games in eight days. (Clarence) Seedorf, who is someone in this club, has been left on the bench,"

Dhorasoo told French sports daily L'Equipe on Sunday.

When he arrived from French champions Olympique Lyon in the close season, Dhorasoo faced a tough fight for a place in a midfield usually occupied by Italy internationals Andrea Pirlo and Gennaro Gattuso and Dutchman Seedorf.



Gianfranco Zola

He saw little first team action until this month but has played in Milan's last three games, a 5-2 win over Lecce and a 0-0 draw at Palermo in Serie A and a 2-0 victory over Palermo on Wednesday in the third round of the Italian Cup.

But Dhorasoo, who began his first division career with Le Havre and has been capped three times by France, says he is not competing against anyone in the Milan squad.

Rooney fate in police hands

Wayne Rooney could face FA disciplinary action depending on the outcome of a police report into an incident at Anfield where a mobile phone was thrown at the striker.

The phone was thrown as Rooney celebrated his goal in Manchester United's 1-0 Premier League win against Liverpool.

Home fans were incensed by the way Rooney, who used to play for Liverpool's arch rivals Everton, celebrated his goal by cupping his ears in a defiant gesture after

"Having been picked by them is a huge source of pride," he said. "Everything happening to me is fabulous."

"I am just so pleased to be part of this great team."

"I believe in my game, in my qualities. The other day, I heard an Italian journalist say 'Dhorasoo? I never saw him play like he does now'."

"But I'm playing the same way I did with Lyon."

being on the receiving end of plenty of verbal abuse from the stands.

One spectator was arrested but on Saturday a Merseyside Police spokesman said it had not been confirmed that it was the same person who threw the mobile phone.

The police spokesman said: "We have recovered a mobile phone from the pitch. We are not sure whether it was thrown at anybody. We are making inquiries."

"One person has been arrested for a throwing incident but I am not sure whether it was connected."



Dhorasoo

Sports

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Players deny doping allegations

Russians Svetlana Kuznetsova and Elena Dementieva and Frenchwoman Nathalie Dechy have denied reports that one of them has failed a drugs test.

Belgian sports minister Claude Erdekens said on Monday that one of the four players at an exhibition in Charleroi last month failed a test.

He ruled out Justine Henin-Hardenne, the other player at the event.

The International Tennis Federation and Women's Tennis Association say have

not been informed of any positive test.

Speaking at the Australian Open in Melbourne, Dementieva said: "I don't know anything about it. They didn't speak to me, so it wasn't me."

Dechy added: "We had an unexpected test (in Belgium). They told us that, if there was a problem, they would contact us two or three weeks later."

"I haven't heard anything and nor have the French Federation. I think I am clean. I have no idea about the others."

US Open champion Kuznetsova said: "I heard yesterday that somebody wrote something in the newspaper but nobody knows anything yet, nobody contacted me."

"I am pretty sure that I am fine with everything. I was

tested 11 times last year, I think I was the player most tested."

"I am not worried that much about it because the truth comes out anyway. I am pretty sure myself I am not using any anabolics of whatever it is called."

"I am definitely not using anything to push myself up. I am pretty sure about this, I am pretty calm."

Federer opens with crushing win

Defending champion Roger Federer showed why he is an overwhelming favourite for

the Australian Open with a crushing win over Fabrice Santoro on Monday.

The world number one,

who has not lost a match since the Olympics last August, came through 6-1 6-1 6-2.

Santoro struggled in the hot conditions but was never able to threaten Federer, who already looks to be in top form.

The Swiss star will face Takao Suzuki next after the Japanese player beat Jan-Michael Gambill.

"I was quite nervous before today's match," said Federer.

"But I started fantastically. I think I won the first 12 points, and once I'd won the first five games I was OK."

In other matches, seeds Dominik Hrbaty, Ivan Ljubicic and Mario Ancic made comfortable progress, but former French Open champion Albert Costa lost to Bjorn Phau.



Dementieva

Moya suffers shock defeat

Fifth seed Carlos Moya was the first big name to fall at the Australian Open as he went down to fellow Spaniard Guillermo Garcia-Lopez on Monday.

Moya began the year with victory at the Chennai Open but looked out of sorts from the start in the Melbourne heat.

Garcia-Lopez, ranked 106 in the world, dominated from the outset and withstood a third-set rally from Moya to hang on for a 7-5 6-3 3-6 6-3 victory.

The 21-year-old plays Kevin Kim or Lee Hyung-Taik in the second round.

Four-time champion Andre Agassi began what could be

his last Australian Open with a convincing win over German qualifier Dieter Kindlmann.

The 34-year-old American, who had been struggling with a hip injury earlier in the week, stormed to a 6-4 6-3 6-0 win.

Agassi will play France's Olivier Patience or Germany's Rainer Schuettler - the man he beat in the 2003 final - in the next round.

"No one was more concerned (about the injury) than myself," said eighth seed Agassi.

"I'd worked hard to be down here and ready. But the last few days, I've pushed

through the injury and it seemed to do pretty good."

In other matches, world junior champion Gael Monfils made use of his wild card with a magnificent 1-6 6-3 6-4 7-6 (8-6) win over American Robby Ginepri.

The 2002 champion Thomas Johansson fought back to beat Peter Luczak 7-6 (7-5) 4-6 6-3 4-6 6-0, and French Open champion Gaston Gaudio beat Justin Gimelstob 7-6 (7-3) 6-4 6-3.

Seeds Dominik Hrbaty, Ivan Ljubicic and Mario Ancic made comfortable progress, but former French Open champion Albert Costa lost to Bjorn Phau.

Baltacha battles into round two

Britain's Elena Baltacha broke new ground with victory over Slovenia's Katarina Srebotnik at the Australian Open on Monday.

Baltacha reached the second round of a Grand Slam outside Wimbledon for the first time with a hard-fought 5-7 6-4 6-4 win against the world number 66.

The Briton, ranked 185, broke serve first in the opening two sets but had to battle through a tense decider.

Baltacha next faces France's Stephanie Cohen-Aloro, who beat Mary Pierce.

The 21-year-old Baltacha, who came through three rounds of qualifying, held her nerve in a dramatic final

set. Baltacha was twice a break ahead before being pegged back each time but edged ahead again at 4-3 and served out for the match after two-and-a-half hours.

"It was such a tough match, I'm really chuffed to have done it on hard rather than on grass at Wimbledon," she told BBC Five Live.

"There were a couple of sloppy games from both of us but she raised her standard and I had to raise mine."

"I haven't been serving great but in the qualifying it didn't matter so much, but I was returning well."

And despite being out on Court 10, Baltacha was cheered on by a vociferous British contingent.

"It was so nice, there were so many of them and they kept lifting me. The atmosphere was unbelievable."

And Baltacha insisted she has "nothing to lose" in the second round hearing in mind the health problems she has had in recent years, in particular with a liver disorder.

"I'm really glad I've had the chance to come back from illness," she said.

"It was difficult but I've had unbelievable people around me."

Serena powers into second phase

Serena Williams swept past Camille Pin in the opening match on the Rod Laver Arena at the Australian Open on Monday.

The seventh seed struggled with her serve early in the second set but was always in control from the baseline as Pin failed to exert any real pressure.

Williams powered to a 6-1 6-1 win to set up a clash with Dally Randriantefy, who beat Zuzana Ondrasikova.

Elsewhere, fifth seed and US Open champion Svetlana Kuznetsova hammered American Jessica Kirkland 6-1 6-1.

Kuznetsova won in just 43 minutes and goes on to face Frenchwoman Marion Bartoli, who beat Claudine Schaul of Luxembourg 6-1 6-

3. "I definitely wouldn't be here if I didn't think I could win," said Williams. "I'd rather stay home."

"I always see myself as someone that's come here for seriousness and to win the tournament."

Russian fourth seed Maria Sharapova was too strong for 15-year-old Bulgarian Sesil Karatantcheva, coming through 6-3 6-1.

Japan's Ai Sugiyama was the first seed to fall, the number 16 going down 7-5 6-4 to Slovakian Martina Sucha.

Flavia Pennetta, the 30th seed, followed with defeat to Petra Mandula, before Stephanie Cohen-Aloro upset 24th seed Mary Pierce.

PRINTERS OF REPUTE IN NIGERIA

The printing industry in Nigeria has been providing monumental printing designs that projects the creativity of the industry thereby justifying its efforts in bringing out colourful and beautiful prints for the use of their various class of clients. Indeed, the last four decades has witnessed their astronomical development at improving the nation's economy.

In spite of their impacts and contributions to the economic development of the country, due to lack of adequate publicity, the activities of most printers are not known to majority of Nigerians.

Giving the appreciable efforts of the players in the industry both public and private, suppliers of printing machines and equipment, accessories, etc, and in spite of the harsh economic environment under which they operate, there is the need to appraise the contributions of the industry, X-raying its challenges as well as publicise their achievements and activities.

Media Trust Limited, the publishers of *Daily* and *Weekly Trust* Newspapers plans to feature some of the reputable and outstanding printing companies, manufacturers and suppliers of printing machines and accessories in a special project package. The date of publication is **Monday, January 24, 2005.**

For participation and further enquiries, please contact the **Special Projects Department** on any of the following nos: **08037038663, 08042145839, 08023262061, 08028494170 or 09-6720346, 5235787 extensions 124 or 117.**

Sports

AFRICAN YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIP

Tragedy hits youth fiesta

The African Youth Championship in Benin has been rocked by the death of a player just two days after the start of the tournament.

Benin's under-20 goalkeeper Yusuf Campos died in a private clinic in the capital Cotonou on Monday morning.

Campos' death comes after he was attacked by unknown assailants in his hotel on Sunday night. He was apparently admitted to the clinic with

neck and arm injuries from the attack.

The goalkeeper was part of the Benin team that lost 3-0 to Nigeria in their opening game at the African Youth

Championship on Saturday. Thousands of home fans left the stadium before the end of the game, furious at the poor display of the team despite so much investment in the side's preparations.

It is still unclear as to whether the attack was in any way linked to Saturday's loss.

The Benin Football Association is yet to decide on what action to take next.

Morocco dump hapless Lesotho

Morocco, champions in 1997, defeated little Lesotho with two second-half goals in the second match of Group B of the African Youth Championship in Cotonou on Sunday.

After a scoreless first half, Morocco finally opened

scores in the 63rd minute through man of the match Tiberkanine Rachid.

The Junior Atlas Lions increased the tally after 81 minutes through late substitute Bendamou Tarik, who would have added a third but impressive Lesotho's goalkeeper

Mokhesi Philemon denied him with a fine save.

However, before their second-half collapse, debutants Lesotho were the toast of fans here at the African Youth Championship in Benin with their purposeful football which unsettled Morocco,

one of the favourites at this year's Under-20 tournament.

The youngsters from Lesotho played out their hearts in this entertaining match little wonder they ended the first 45 minutes with a clean sheet.

In the 21st minute Lesotho even forced Morocco's goalkeeper Bourkadi Mohammed to scramble to corner a goal-bound shot. The ensuing corner was then cleared out of danger by Morocco's Zouchou Yassine.

Seven minutes later, Egypt responded through Yassine, who took on two Lesotho defenders, but his effort came to naught.

The North Africans pressed for a goal as the first half wore on but somehow their opponents held on.

First, on 35 minutes Mokhahlane Philemon brought down a Moroccan player, but the resultant free-kick was wasted and then five minutes later Morocco won three corner-kicks in quick succession, but Benjeloun Abdessalam who was booked in the 27th min for foul play, headed the third attempt wide.

And as the pressure from Morocco continued, Lesotho goalkeeper Philemon committed a foul outside the box but Rabeh Youssef booted off target.

Probe panel quizzes NEA HODs

Remembrance of activities were noticed at the NFA Secretariat yesterday as the probe panel instituted to investigate allegations of financial impropriety leveled against the NFA management began sitting.

The three-man panel began the search for the truth by subjecting the heads of departments to harrowing hours of questioning. Those arraigned before the panel were required to back up their defense with documents.

First to appear before the Chief Gabriel Chukwuma-led panel was the public relation officer, Mr. Samuel Kaalu. The former staff of the Benu Cement Company, who replaced Austin Mgbolu in the immediate past reforms initiated by late Mark Aku, sweated for hours to fill in lose gaps in the line of arguments as well as his specific functions under the Chief Taiwo Ogunjobi-led management.

Kaalu, who had the protocol unit hacked off his department following the indictment of his subordinate staff in visa scam, was said to have exonerate his

department from both administrative lapses and financial impropriety.

Trusts also learnt that Kaalu's compatriots, Alhaji Tukur Babangida and Lizzy Onyenwenwa equally took their turns before the panel.

Before this development, all the HOD's except Ogunjobi and Kaalu had been rarely seen at the Secretariat.

The situation had engendered chilling doldrums at the secretariat as all activities administration and otherwise were reduced to almost zero.

Not a few staff had lamented the uneasy calm and what it could portend to Nigeria especially following the growing dissension against the government reforms.

Meanwhile, the HOD finance and administration, Olabode Oke, who was said to have broken down in tears when the sack of the management was announced, was yet to take advantage of the temporary reprieve to return.

Enyeama off to Europe

Super Eagles goalkeeper Vincent Enyeama left for Europe last week as his quest for a European deal gathers pace during this year's transfer window.

Enyeama, who had to battle domestic flight problems, arrived Lagos from Uyo Wednesday, and left the country two days later.

The player, who is in England now, has received firm offers from England, France and a close confidant of the player told KickOffNigeria.com that Enyeama is certain to land a lucrative deal before the transfer window closes, although he insists that money was secondary to playing time in the keeper's list of priorities.

"He has received some very good offers and is considering all of them," the source said. "But his priority is to go to somewhere that he can be guaranteed regular playing time. He doesn't want to go where he will sit

on the bench because that may not be good for his place in the national team."

Enyeama's contract with African champions Enyimba ran out last year and was not renewed. The player has not been registered for the new campaign by the Aba side.

Sports Minister Col. Musa Mohammed may inject a new lease of life into the domestic league with the inauguration of 15-man interim pro-league management board today at the Le Meridien Hotel, Abuja.

The board, which is intended to run a semi-autonomous league billed to kick-off early next month, would be required to formulate such policies and programmes likely to ginger



Kaduna El-Amin players, from left, Bello Buba, Dawule Baba and Ibrahim Mohammed acknowledging during the just concluded Port Harcourt Polo tournament.

Minister inaugurates interim league board today

The domestic pro-league which has been in doldrums since its inception in 1990.

The minister had, as part of the reform programme to bolster both the technical and administrative aspects of domestic football scene, set up the interim board but it caused no little ripples as club owners fiercely fought against their exclusion.

Consequently, the government bowed to the pressure from FIFA to accommodate them and

expanded the initial nine-man team to 15 by withdrawing three members to make way for nine members from the club owners.

The board has already elected Chief Onyiuki Obaseki as its chairman, with Lumumba Aded, who had spear headed agitation for clubs owners inclusion, as the vice chairman.

Mallam Salisu Abubakar, the pro-league scribe in the immediate past dispensation was named the secretary of



Mohammed

the interim board. Alhaji Sani Lulu Abdullahi, Ade Ojeikere, Aisha Falode, Faruk Abubakar are nominees of the government.

The board is expected to forge the frame work for the take-off of the semi-autonomous league, create a functional marketing structure capable of generating funds outside the coffers of government for the league and would facilitate the election of elected board next November.

2005 PORT HARCOURT POLO TOURNAMENT

ROLL OF HONOURS

Gen Hassan Katsina Cup

- Winners: Kaduna El-Amin
1. Aminu Alhaji +1
2. Bello Buba +5
3. Dawule Baba +3
4. Ibrahim Mohammed +4

Runners Up: Lagos MRS

1. Sayyu Dantata +4
2. Bashir Musa +4
3. Madugu Dantata +2
4. Ali Hassan +4

President's Cup

- Winners: PH V/Mobile
1. Ahmed Shahimi +1
2. Musa Yahaya +1
3. Usman Idris +2
4. Yusuf Katako +2

Runners Up: Lagos Agad

1. Madugu Dantata +2
2. Adamu Yaro +4
3. Saïdu Umar +3
4. Aminu Ismail -1

Governor's Cup

- Winners: Ibadan Challenge
1. Femi Awolaja +1
2. Saïdu Umar +3
3. Bola Adeyemi -1
4. Ahmadu Umar 0

Runners Up: Kat. Gohara

1. Galadima Kurkujan 0
2. Aminu Gaggare +3
3. Abdulwahab Sami 0
4. Shehu Lawal Kaita +1

Gen. T.Y. Danjuma Cup

- Winners: Yola ABTI
1. Zulqarnain Mohammed 0
2. Hartman Adama +1
3. Mohammed Baba -1
4. Abubakar Mallam -2

Runners Up: Crushed Rock

1. Nelson Amieye -1
2. Binkari Musa +1
3. Shehu Palm Beach +1
4. Nanilo Sunday -2

SELECTED MATCHES

V/Mobile Cup

Winner: Le Meridien Hotel.

Crushed Rock Cup

Winner: Rock Song Eng.

Le Meridien Cup

Winner: Crushed Rock team.

Rock Song Eng. Cup

Winner: Hotel Presidential.

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for Sale

EDITORIAL

Abu Mazen's Palestine: Opportunity for peace?

A widely expected, Palestine Liberation Organisation chairman Mahmood Abbas, better known as Abu Mazen, easily won the 9th January 2005 Palestinian presidential election. He won well over sixty percent of the votes cast in the election while his closest challenger, Dr Mustafa Barghouti who ran as an independent candidate, won about twenty one percent. Five other candidates registered scores way below ten percent each.

With this victory, sixty nine year-old Abu Mazen, a long-time associate of the late Yasser Arafat who shares many of the latter's views, emerged president-elect of the Palestinian Authority. Following a swearing-in ceremony in Ramallah on the 15th of January 2005, Abu Mazen now has an official mandate to lead the people of Palestine to peace with the state of Israel. While we congratulate him on his victory, we wish to note that his assignment, without doubt, is an easy mission.

Unfortunately, Abu Mazen's task is further complicated by allegations of coercion during the elections made by some members of the Palestine Central Election Commission (CEC) against Abu Mazen's supporters. Indeed, to drive home their point, forty six members of the CEC, including senior executive, resigned on the same day Abu Mazen was being sworn in. The seriousness of the matter is further underscored by the statement released by the radical group, Hamas, which declared, "These mass resignations put a big question mark on the credibility of the voter turnout and the results."

Furthermore, it is our duty to note that the search for peace with Israel by an Abu Mazen-led Palestinian Authority is neither going to be aided by the widely-reported cases of Israeli restrictions, and even arrest, of other presidential candidates during the campaign period, nor Israeli outright disenfranchisement of many Palestinians living in East Jerusalem. Indeed, if anything, these incidents only add to the complexity in the matter of establishing concord between Israel and Palestine on fair terms.

Already, Hamas is insisting on an immediate investigation into the allegations of coercion, a call to which we add our voice. Indeed, this newspaper wishes to reiterate that elections, wherever they may be held, must be conducted in an atmosphere of freedom and fairness. Anything less is a robbery of the people's wishes. In pursuit of this standard, we urge all aggrieved parties in turn to the law in seeking redress in whatever area they believe that they have been short-changed.

While these lingering issues are being sorted out, we urge Abu Mazen not to postpone the beginning of meaningful talks between Palestine and Israel towards finding lasting peace in the region. It is good and well that Abu Mazen is seen in many quarters as a man acceptable to the West. In fact, soon after his electoral victory, President George W. Bush called Abu Mazen and invited him to the White House, an invitation that Bush, now on the verge of commencing his term, never extended to the late Arafat.

Interestingly, while the USA did nothing other than vilify the late Arafat, and Israel on several occasions almost killed him in his Ramallah quarters, these same states have been making positive noises about Abu Mazen. While nothing in the persuasion of Palestine/Israeli relations have ever been permanent, except perhaps the unending cycle of violence, it is our hope that Abu Mazen can manage to turn his good relations with the traditional adversaries of his people into a meaningful agreement to better the lot of Palestinians and secure peace in the region.

To this end, we wish to signal our support for all genuine efforts to find a just resolution to the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. It is time for both sides to disengage from the cycle of mutually destructive retaliatory strikes. Abu Mazen, who shares the late Arafat's dream of "a Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, and the right of Palestinian refugees and their families to return to their homes in Israel," has a duty to pursue all fair avenues available to him in achieving these goals. On his part, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon should halt military strikes against Palestinians as this only prolongs the cycle of violence. In this regard, Sharon owes humanity a debt of history for he is the major catalyst of the present *Intifada*, which has so far claimed over four thousand Palestinians and over a thousand Israelis.

It is not only pointless for the two sides to continue the unwarranted fatalities, *Daily Trust* wishes to remind the world that, if, as it was said at the time of his death, Arafat was a major impediment to the peace process, that excuse can no longer be tendered with Abu Mazen in the saddle. Now is the time to resolve the Palestine question.

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TUESDAY COLUMN

Tuesday, January 18, 2005

Ogbeh: A plot within a conspiracy

By Ujudad Shariff
(ujshariff@yahoo.com)

Reviewing the history and circumstances of his emergence as the chairman of the ruling PDP and the circumstances of his not so sudden "resignation" a couple of days ago will certainly make a thriller in Hollywood. To a Nigerian movie-maker, this story could also be a classic drama of the popular adage about riding the back of the tiger and ending up in its belly. In a nutshell, the Audu Ogbeh story in another narration in the saying that 'whatever goes around, comes around'. This essay is therefore in essence, the story of the untold story!

The history of Chief Audu Innocent Ogbeh's emergence as the chairman of the PDP can be traced to far away Switzerland where the seed was planted in a meeting between President Olusegun Obasanjo and Benue State Governor, George Akume. According to reliable sources, or dependable oral traditions since we are reconstructing history, it was a chance meeting as Governor Akume was there on holidays and President Obasanjo on a state visit. On learning that the president was in town, Governor Akume decided to visit the President. It was during this visit that the President was said to have talked to Governor Akume about the need for leadership changes in the PDP complaining on the unsuitability of the then incumbent chairman, Barnabas Gemade into his overall national vision. He then suggested to Akume to bring out one of his two former ministers of communications, Audu Ogbeh or Isaac Shahu to be made the national chairman of the party. By sheer coincidence at the time, there was a struggle for supremacy between Gemade and the governor in the Benue State politics where Gemade was planning to support another candidate for the governorship to replace the governor. It therefore provided Akume a golden opportunity to reduce Gemade to size. The conspiracy therefore began when Dr. Iyorchia Ayu was conscripted into the scheme and re-baptized as he was earlier dropped as a minister. One thing led to the other and before you knew it, Ogbeh was declared the winner of the PDP in a contest that was in all material circumstances a no contest. He was anointed heir apparent to the throne in a contest that the winner was pre-determined by the powers that be. So right from day one, it was Obasanjo that engineered, facilitated and paved the way for the installation of Ogbeh as the PDP chairman at the 2001 PDP convention.

The choice of Ogbeh was certainly not a coincidence as they were friends and business associates. Just recall that Ogbeh was a poultry farmer like Obasanjo and was said to be one of the valuable customers of the Ota Farms where Obasanjo was the proprietor. Indeed, their business relationship was quite mutual with Ogbeh even enjoying some credit facilities. The political marriage looked like it was made from heaven with Ogbeh expected to join by the script. Somehow along the way, Ogbeh was enticed to join the Atiku Abubakar's camp within the PDP and began scheming and plotting for the race to the villa in 2007. This is the beginning of the end as the conspiracy to remove him began by forces opposed to the Atiku presidency. While this was going on in 2002, the question of Anambra State governorship candidature reared its ugly head as the general consensus was reached that the then governor, Dr. Mbanandjui, was not to be presented for second term by the PDP. It was at this point that Ogbeh presented Chris Ngige to Obasanjo as the preferred candidate to succeed Mbanandjui. I bet you know the details from Obasanjo's letter to Ogbeh.

The plot to remove Ogbeh, as we mentioned, has its roots in his overt and covert support for Atiku Abubakar. The PDP, I doubt if it can be rightly called a political party, is generally an association of conspirators and plotters. They are always scheming or plotting against each other or conspiring for favour of somebody. It is in this polluted atmosphere that Obasanjo and his deputy are struggling for supremacy with the president said to be opposing his succession by his outhrowing loyal deputy. Asking several PDP faithful as to why Obasanjo does not want to be succeeded by Atiku, chances are that you are likely to get as many answers as many people you might have asked. But the popular answer seems to be that the president wants to get even with his deputy for the humiliation he suffered few days before the 2003 PDP convention where he lost control of the party and even the government. In those few days before the convention, Atiku made the president undergo so much stress and humiliation in the hands of some governors who were determined not to get him nominated for second term but for the intervention of Atiku. Obasanjo was for once so humbled that he had to go round states liaison offices in Abuja to beg the governors and their delegates. Thus, as the November 2005 PDP convention draws nearer, the anti-Atiku forces have gone into

the offensive to ensure the dislodgement of Atiku loyalists at the helm of affairs.

At the beginning, Chief Tony Anenih was suddenly appointed the Chairman, Board of Trustees and before you knew it, he began touring the states and issuing out Orders to the governors. Chief Ogbeh had to be woken from his slumber to realize that the leadership of the party was slipping away from him. Informed sources said the primary objective of the Anenih tour was "to cut Atiku's supply lines", meaning to isolate him from the governors who were his power base. Hence, from nowhere all the perceived Atiku sympathizers came under fire with Governors Ibori, Timubu, Harmata and Orji Kalu on the firing lines. It was after some outcries that a joint meeting between the Board and NEC was set up for visiting the states. While that was going on, the Atiku followers were not sleeping but also struggling for survival and supremacy.

It is not very clear why Audu Ogbeh wrote that letter to the President the way he did and the time he did. Clearly, from the tone and content of that letter he was trying to exonerate himself from the tragedy that befell Anambra. If that was the case, there is no way he can absolve himself completely considering the role he played in the emergence of Ngige as governor. Not only that, the fact that he was part and parcel of shielding criminal and treasonable acts and reducing it to a "family affair", readily qualifies him as equally liable as Obasanjo who refused to act as the nation's chief security officer. Hence, could there have been something he was scared of to have made him wash his hands off the happenings in Anambra and shifted all the blame on the President? But what was crystal clear was why the President reacted the way he did as well as his taking "judicial note" of some of Ogbeh's assertions. In deed, I also had to take a "journalistic note" of the President's letter because of its pregnant underpinnings. Nevertheless, it is instructive to recollect that Audu Ogbeh was not the first PDP chairman to write the president and complain about the state of the nation or the happenings within the party. Way back on July 19, 1999, in a letter titled "Improving Relations Between the Party and Government", Chief Solomon Lar had cause to bitterly complain to Obasanjo how he was marginalizing the party and undermining its leadership. Chief Lar asserted that "I am at pains to explain to millions of party faithfuls and supporters what went wrong in the case of their leaders who now seem to have been outsmarted by new comers into the party and government". In a swift reply on August 7, 1999, Obasanjo lashed his party chairman for daring to raise the issues he did. If you want to read the details of the Obasanjo-Lar face-off, look for the *Crystal Magazine* edition of November 1999, barely six months into his presidency. Who would now dispute the fact the "leopard does not change its spots"?

Ogbeh's resignation is undoubtedly bad news for the Vice President who was just coming back to the country after a vacation in the United States. It is not very clear whether his sudden disappearance from the public and his reported sickness have anything to do with the happenings in the House of Intrigues that is ironically called *Wadada House* (prosperity house). It is quite clear that the ambers are getting hotter and the stakes quite too high between now and the November convention. Already pundits are speculating the split of the PDP, as Atiku and his governors are feared to be heading to another party. Some are even mentioning ANPP where Atiku and Buhari could join forces against Obasanjo and Babangida who from all indications stand to be the greatest beneficiary of the current crisis. Colonel Ahmadu Ali (of the Ali-Must-Go) notoriety and Prof Jerry Gana are being mentioned as the top runner-ups in the succession struggle for Audu Ogbeh. And as is usual with PDP, there are several plots being hatched and several conspiracies being plotted against and between all the major gladiators. Whoever succeeds Ogbeh, as PDP chairman should remember that Lar, Gemade and Ogbeh were there and left unceremoniously.

As November draws nearer, all men and women of good-will must pray for the split of PDP to save Nigeria from perpetual crisis. It is also very clear the way PDP is presently constituted, it cannot provide Nigeria the leadership necessary to transform the nation into a glorious future. In the present circumstances, while Obasanjo is employing all manner of military strategies to over power an "enemy", it would be naive to expect Atiku to watch the house he built crumble or allow himself to be pushed out from a house he built by a stranger. Head or tail therefore, peace would continue to elude the PDP as its top echelon continues to plot, scheme, conspire and undermine one another. But, whichever way, let our lords and kings who are not better than an observe our rights and liberties, if not...!