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PDP NEC MEETING

Ogbeh escapes impeachment

Ngige, Uba suspended

By Abdul Labaran, Group Political Editor; Isa Sanusi, Hammed M. Bello & Habeeb I. Pindiga, Political Reporters

Temporary respite yesterday came the way for the national chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Chief Audu Ogbeh, as moves to sack him along with the entire National Working Committee (NWC) members failed.

Plans, including all levels of lobbying, consultations, horse trading and propaganda, perfected yesterday

to ensure that Audu Ogbeh does not continue in office as the PDP national chairman did not however see the light of day. It was stood down indefinitely.

But Governor Chris Ngige of Anambra State and his estranged political godfather, Chris Uba, were suspended from the PDP by NEC for 30 days and seven man com-

mittee headed by Otun State Governor, Oluksunsoye Oyindola, was set up to investigate the Anambra crisis and recommend permanent solution to the committee.

Sources at the NEC meeting, which started at about

11:00 a.m. and ended at about 3:30 p.m., and was attended by President Olusegun Obasanjo and Vice-President Atiku Abubakar, Chief Audu Ogbeh and all NWC members, including all the PDP state governors and board of trustees members, told Daily Trust that the issue of the sacking of Ogbeh was only

mentioned as an aside, but was not given any accelerated hearing. This was confirmed by the publicity secretary of the PDP, Barrister Venustus Ikem.

The sources said the party's Board of Trustees chairman, Chief Tony Anenih, who raised the issue of removal of Ogbeh as the national chairman, said it was needless discussing the

issue as it was unanimously agreed it should be set aside for now.

But President Obasanjo was said to have remarked that though the issue was rested, it may however be raised sometimes someday.

Fielding questions from newsmen at the end of the meeting, Venustus Ikem, the PDP spokesman, said the

Contd. on Pg 2

Controversy trails meeting outcome

Obasanjo saves Ogbeh's job - Aide

It is a lie - Ogbeh's aide

Few moments after yesterday's supposedly peaceful meeting of the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) ended, fresh controversy has erupted on how the party's national chairman, Chief Audu Ogbeh, survived impeachment at the meeting. Competent source close to the presidency told Daily

Trust that the subject of Ogbeh's impeachment was not raised at the NEC meeting because he, Ogbeh, prior to the meeting, made an undertaking to President Obasanjo to resign from his post as the national chairman of the party.

According to the presidential aide who did not want his name in print, it was President Obasanjo who actually saved Ogbeh the humiliation of impeachment when he directed that the matter be not discussed during yesterday's NEC meeting.

The source disclosed that there had been an all night meeting on the eve of the NEC meeting by the NEC members during which Chief Ogbeh allegedly offered to voluntarily resign when a vote on his fate was taken.

According to the source, the vote to suspend Ngige had 84 in support with four voting against while 12 abstained from the vote.

According to the source, only the governors of Edo, Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom and Adamawa States supported Ngige. The anonymous source added that what

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Alhaji Abubakar Rimi (right) discussing with the chairman of PDP reform committee, Alhaji Iro Abubakar Danmusa (left), after the party's NEC meeting held in Abuja...yesterday. Pix: Kennedy Egbondjie.

Baghdad regional governor assassinated

By Jibrin Abubakar, Senior Reporter (Foreign Desk), with agency report

Baghdad Governor Ali al-Haidri has been shot dead in a roadside ambush in the Iraqi capital, the highest profile assassination there since May.

Attackers shot at his motorcade platoon that from different directions as his convoy drove through northern Baghdad. Violence has been escalating ahead

Contd. on Pg 2

Police manhandle journalists, one hospitalised

The ugly side of the Nigeria Police was yesterday demonstrated at the national headquarters of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) when some journalists were mercilessly brutalised as a result of which one of them suffered leg fracture and was hospitalised.

Mr Segun Olatunji of the Nigerian Tribune, who was beaten to a state of coma and later rushed to Euro Hospital at Zone 1, Wuse, Abuja, was one of the seven journalists beaten by the police with the six others leaving their careers

smashed. Mr Akin Orimolade of Tall Magazine and three other journalists lost their telephone handsets during the brutal charge on the journalists by the police.

Trouble started when, at

about 11:30 am, the embattled Anambra State Governor, Dr Chris Ngige, arrived at the venue of the PDP/NEC meeting upon which cheers of "Peoples' Governors" from the crowd filled the air. There

upon a scuffle broke out between the governor's security details and some policemen on duty, a development that attracted the interest of newsmen, particularly came-

Contd. on Pg 2

Doctors' strike: Hospitals record 20,000 deaths

Government hospitals in the country have recorded more than 20,000 deaths since Dec. 6, 2004 when the National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD) embarked on a nationwide strike.

The National President of

the association, Dr Jerry Oguzie disclosed this in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Abuja yesterday.

Oguzie said the figure was based on situation reports received from the state chapters of NARD as at

January 1, 2005.

He explained that the dead were mostly those who were brought to the hospitals with the hope that they would be attended to by the doctors who had been on strike

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News

Ogbeh *Contd. from Pg 1*

only item on the agenda of the meeting was Anambra State crisis.

"We agreed that major actors in the Anambra crisis be investigated and we also resolved to suspend them for 30 days while investigations go on. We also agreed that the Inspector-General of Police, Tafa Balogun, should properly investigate the matter so that we bring the culprits to book," Ikem said, and listed Chris Uba and Governor Ngige as the actors he referred to. The police investigation however extends beyond 30 days, he added.

When asked, he said the issue of Ogbeh's suspension was not discussed because there was only one item on the agenda. He explained that the PDP's constitution only allows for suspension of members for 30 days on a preliminary investigation.

The deputy national chairman (south), Alhaji Shuaibu Oyedokun, told newsmen at the end of the meeting that the Oyinola committee was mandated to investigate both parties and a positive action would be taken in the overall interest of everybody.

"We owe it as a matter of responsibility to the nation to create a difference and make a clean breast of what actually happened," Oyedokun said, which he added would be the basis of the decision of NEC on the Anambra crisis.

When asked to comment on the status of Ngige as the governor during the period of suspension, Oyedokun said, "it was a constitutional issue; he was suspended from the party; he will remain as the governor but will not take part in any party activity."

The national secretary of the PDP, Chief Vincent Ogbufor, also responded to

questions as to whether or not the setting up of a committee to investigate the Anambra crisis was an indictment of the NWC, saying the NWC had reported the matter to NEC which in turn set up the investigation committee.

When asked when the NWC would be dissolved following allegations of corrupt practices, Ogbufor said NWC would not be dissolved and that they still had one more year to go.

President Obasanjo and Chief Audu Ogbeh left the venue of the meeting in the same vehicle and sources said they headed for the House of Ogbeh for launch.

It would be recalled that President Obasanjo and Audu Ogbeh had engaged each other in a controversial exchange of letters which elicited public reaction, and has apparently provoked a no-love-lost relationship between the two.

Ogbeh had in his letter drawn the president's attention to the worsening state of the polity which must be tackled to save any drift to anarchy while the president, in his reply, condemned Ogbeh's letter as unwarranted and ill-intentioned. Subsequently, several reports came alleging corrupt practices and mismanagement by Ogbeh and the NWC, hence the call for their removal.

But in a swift response, the chief press secretary to Governor Ngige described the suspension as shocking. According to Mr Chuks Akunna, the suspension of Ngige was not yet communicated officially by the PDP hierarchy, even though the governor was at the meeting yesterday.

"Until that is done, we don't have any official reaction," he said.



R-L: PDP chairman of the Reform Committee, Alhaji Iro Abubakar Danmusa, former Minister of Aviation, (Mrs) Kema Chikwe, former Kwara State Governor, Alhaji Sha'abu Lafagi and other PDP members queuing-up to be checked into the party's national secretariat, during the NEC meeting held in Abuja -yesterday. *Pix: Kennedy Eghonofe*

According to him, a large percentage of the deaths were those who sustained serious injuries in motor accidents that occurred during the Christmas period.

Oguzie also said that the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Enugu, which is currently under lock and key, and the Lagos University Teaching Hospital, recorded the highest number of casualties.

As a result of the strike, he said most of the government hospitals across the country stopped admitting new patients three weeks ago.

In Abuja, Oguzie claimed that the mortuary at National Hospital was already full and

Strike *Contd. from Pg 1*

that the hospital was now rejecting corpses, while a similar facility at Maitama Hospital, was also full.

He said that most of the lives lost, especially those involved in accident, would have been saved if doctors were on duty.

Citing an example, Oguzie said that a male accident victim bled to death at Wuse General Hospital on New Year's day because there was no doctor to attend to him.

He said that nurses on duty could not help the victim because "they cannot operate beyond their brief."

On why consultants could not bridge the gap,

behaviour of police was as a result of "the situation on ground. We are partners in progress and we shall continue to be so".

He asked the press to put down their grievances on paper and send to the Inspector-General of Police, pleading further that "to err is human; to forgive is divine".

After listening to a number of journalists narrate their harsh experiences in the hands of police, Olakpe left.

He later came back together with Alabi, who exonerated himself from the attack, and apportioned blame on pressmen whom he said had overstepped their boundaries.

"I have a right to maintain order, and access is very important here. Even governors were asked to park away from the entrance. I only said move back... If I allowed you (pressmen) to move too close to the gate, it's like I have failed in my duty," he said.

While the enraged newsmen shouted disapproval to Alabi's explanations, the commissioner in charge of Federal Operations kept repeating: "I have the duty to maintain law and order".

He however denied taking part in the police attack.

Controversy

Contd. from Pg 1
unfolded was a struggle between the President and his Vice, Atiku Abubakar.

The presidential aide added that the president wanted "a soft landing" for Chief Ogbeh, hence his decision to oppose any move to impeach the embattled chairman during the NEC meeting.

However, an aide of Chief Ogbeh dismissed this claim as a lie, saying it is a face saving spin from the president's team which did not stand any chance in their plot against the PDP chairman.

Speaking to *Daily Trust* on condition of anonymity, the aide confirmed that there had been "immense pressure on Ogbeh to resign" but denied that he had offered or even agreed to resign.

Insisting that Chief Ogbeh never gave any undertaking to resign despite the pressure on him to do so, the aide disclosed that the chairman expressed his readiness to face "whatever would happen at the NEC meeting".

According to him, Chief Tony Anenih, the acting chairman of the PDP's Board of Trustees, moved the motion to step down the issue of the petition against Ogbeh which was quickly

seconded by President Obasanjo, because they realised that the president "would have been roundly trounced and lose face, disclosing that out of the 28 PDP governors, 22 have lined up in support of the national chairman".

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Baghdad *Contd. from Pg 1*
of elections planned for 30 January.

In a separate incident, at least 10 people have been killed and more than 50 others wounded in a bomb blast at a police post in Baghdad, officials say.

Reports say a truck caused the blast near the Green Zone, the heavily fortified government and diplomatic compound. The morning explosion shook the city and plunged the immediate area into an inferno, says *BBC* correspondent in Baghdad.

Officials said most of the victims were from a recently formed elite Iraqi commando unit, made up of experienced military men.

Mr Haidri is the most senior Iraqi official to be assassinated in Baghdad since the head of the Governing Council was killed by a suicide bomb in May last year.

At least one of his bodyguards was also killed in the attack, in the Hurriyah district on the west bank of the Tigris River.

Iraqi insurgents have repeatedly targeted government officials around the country.

Mr Haidri escaped assassination in a roadside bomb attack in September.

Yesterday's attacks came a day after at least 20 people were killed across the country.

There were at least two suicide car bomb attacks on Baghdad on Monday.

Three Britons and an American were among those killed.

Another suicide car bomb targeted the offices of interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, killing another four people.

Police *Contd. from Pg 1*

Immediately the journalists moved closer to the scene of the altercation between the SSS details of Governor Ngige and policemen, they were descended upon by the police who freely used the butt of their guns and batons on them (journalists).

Even when the *Tribune's* Olatunji was writhing in pain on the ground, clutching his leg and moaning "my leg!" repeatedly, the police kept on beating and kicking him, while Mr Lawrence E. Alabi, a police commissioner in charge of operations, watched on without stopping them.

While the victim was groaning in pain, some policemen were heard saying: "He is only pretending, deal with him well so that he can have real cause to cry."

And mistaking this reporter for a politician, some policemen said to me that "this (violence) is the only way to deal with these journalists because they think they are better than everybody."

When the journalists gathered themselves to protest the police harassment, a chief superintendent of police, Mr F. A. Awoseni, who watched while the police brutality on newsmen was going on, came to explain that the police got

order from the PDP to send journalists away from the venue of the meeting.

When a three man delegation of newsmen contacted the national publicity secretary of the PDP, Mr Venustus Ikem, he confirmed that journalists were needed then but denied that the police were directed to send journalists away.

The six journalists whose cameras were smashed by the police include Mr Kennedy Eghonofe of *Daily Trust*; Obenga Abiodun of *Daily Independent*; Francis Ojo of *The Champion*; Yomi Fayese of *The Guardian*; Ibrahim Isma'ila of *The Punch* and Monday Emoni of *The Comet*.

Meanwhile, the Abuja council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) has condemned the police action "as not only barbaric, inhuman and criminal, but also a gross violation of the fundamental human rights of the affected journalists."

In a statement signed by its secretary, Iyobosa Uwugiaren, the Abuja NUJ called on the Inspector-General of Police to immediately bring the perpetrators of the "uncivilised" conduct to book.

The council also urged

the Inspector-General of Police to "within seven days" arrange to replace the smashed cameras of the affected journalists and settle all their medical bills, warning that if the demands were not met, "NUJ Abuja council will not hesitate to drag the Nigeria Police Force before a competent court of law and the Human Rights Commission for necessary legal action."

But the Inspector-General of Police, Mr Tafa Balogun, yesterday defended the police action on journalists, saying it was necessary to ensure peace and tranquillity at the PDP secretariat during the party's NEC meeting.

Balogun, who spoke through the force public relations officer, Mr Chris Olakpe, said though the police attack was lamentable, the newsmen should not have crossed the security boundaries.

"When a security measure is put in place, we have to respect it. You will get your news, but what we must protect is peace. The police are here to protect you," Olakpe said amidst angry interruptions from a crowd of press men.

Appealing for understanding of journalists, the EPRO explained that the

News

Calls for Ngige's resignation unconstitutional - Speaker

The Speaker of the Anambra State House of Assembly, Mr Mike Balonwu, yesterday in Awka described calls on Governor Chris Ngige of the state to resign as unconstitutional.

Balonwu said that the purported confession of election rigging by an interested party and calls for the governor to resign was not only unconstitutional, but illegal and undemocratic.

"Instead, the Nigeria Police should arrest and prosecute the man who made the confession that he rigged the election in Anambra State because there is no need for further investigation on the matter, having made the confession," he said.

Balonwu told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) that

only three conditions would make the governor quit office: voluntary resignation on grounds of ill-health, impeachment by the House if found guilty of acts of misconduct and through the election tribunal.

Balonwu said that allegations that the National Executive Committee of the PDP would ask the governor to resign was untrue, because the party's NEC lacked the constitutional powers to take such action.

"The governor of Anambra State is not the governor of the entire state which comprises other political parties. Therefore, the National Executive Committee of the PDP lacks the authority to ask Ngige to resign," Balonwu said.

He said that if such an action ever took place, it would be a mockery of democracy and the whole world would laugh at the country because the wishes of a few people had been allowed to prevail to the detriment of a greater number of people.

The speaker argued that it would be absurd to ask the governor to resign after two years in office and having been sworn-in by the chief justice of the state, stressing that the motives of those making such moves were nothing but selfish and aimed to cause confusion.

"Nobody has given any good reason to warrant the governor's resignation," he said, arguing that the man who made the alleged confession that he rigged the election lacked power to ask for the governor's resignation.

"He does not work for INEC; he is not a returning officer, an electoral officer or an agent and he was not a candidate. So on what grounds is he making the confession?" he queried.

Balonwu called on the police to arrest the man who made the alleged confession instead of being allowed to parade the streets with dozens of armed police escorts putting fears into the minds of the people.

"As a result of this development, the House will reconvene very soon instead of the January 27 date we fixed to look seriously into the matter," he added.

FG raises c'ttee on Tsunami, donates 41m

By Suleman Mohammed, Associate Editor, (South)

President Olusegun Obasanjo yesterday constituted a twelve member national committee saddled with the responsibility of raising resources for the victims of the Tsunami disaster which claimed over 150,000 lives in Asia and parts of Africa.

The committee co-chaired by the sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammadu Maccido and Archbishop Peter Akinola, president of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) also include the Emir of Gwandu, Alhaji Mustapha Jokolo, Archbishop John Onayekan, Governor Victor Atah of Akwa Ibom State and Governor Ibrahim Shekarau of Kano State.

Other members are, Mr. Jim Ovia, Mr Ayo Obe, Ms. Bilikisu Yusuf, Chief Ajibola Ogunwala, Alhaji Umaru Muttalab and Engineer Abba Gana.

Inaugurating the committee, President Obasanjo described the disaster as monumental and unusual, saying the federal government has already contributed \$1 million to the UN relief fund for the victims.

"We are also contributing additional funds to the African Union (AU) relief fund for the same purpose," he said.

According to the president, since the disaster touches the heart of all men and women of the world, there was need for all to contribute to the fund individually or as a group.

President Obasanjo said the committee would receive donations in cash and kind to support the victims, stressing that the committee is expected to file weekly reports on progress reached in their assignment.

He said the assignment requires full attention of committee members, and urged Nigerians and foreigners residing in the country, particularly business men and industrialists to stand up "and be counted in this task of showing concern, compassion, and care by contributing very generously to this effort."

President Obasanjo while expressing government sympathy to the families of victims, he said, "we try to share their pains and sorrows in true reflection of our belief in collective action, mutual support, and humble belief in the power and infinite knowledge of our creator."



President Olusegun Obasanjo (centre) his Vice Alhaji Atiku Abubakar (left), the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Mohammed Maccido (2nd left), the Emir of Gwandu Alhaji Mustapha Jokolo (2nd right) and Chief Audu Ogben chairman PDP after inauguration of the national committee to raise resources to support the victims of the Tsunami disaster in South Asia held at the State House Abuja, yesterday. Pic: Joe Oroye.

3,425 Nigerian pilgrims arrive in Saudi Arabia

About 3,425 pilgrims from Nigeria have so far arrived in Saudi Arabia to perform this year's Hajj.

A correspondent of the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in the city of Medina reports that 1,800 are from Sokoto; 1,500 from Nassarawa and 125 from Ondo States.

In an interview with NAN, the leader of the delegation from Nassarawa, Group Capt. Usman Jibrin (rd), said all the pilgrims had been adequately accommodated.

Jibrin said the state government had concluded arrangements to set up a clinic in Mecca for its pilgrims.

Similarly, the Secretary of Ondo Pilgrims Welfare Agency, Alhaji Yakubu Obara, and an official of Sokoto State Pilgrims

Agency, Alhaji Isa Danbaba, assured that their pilgrims were receiving adequate attention.

NAN reports that about 500,000 pilgrims from all over the world have so far arrived in the holy land to perform one of the cardinal pillars of Islam.

According to the country's Minister of Hajj Affairs, Iyau Maddani, 400,000 pilgrims arrived by air while

100,000 came by sea.

NAN further reports that traffic is building up on roads leading to Medina as pilgrims travel to the city to visit the Holy prophet's mosque.

However, the IRS Airlines Chairman, Alhaji Rabiu Isyaku, told NAN in Abuja by telephone that the airline was making efforts to resolve the aircraft clearance issue with the NCAA.

"We are hopeful that by today, everything will be resolved so that we commence Hajj operations as scheduled," Isyaku said.

On Dec. 28, IRS Airlines, one of the two air carriers contracted for the 2005 Hajj, had blamed the NCAA of delaying its participation in the exercise.

"We could not commence Hajj operations as scheduled because the NCAA refused our aircraft entry into the country," the IRS chairman was quoted as saying last week.

He blamed IRS' inability to begin operation on schedule on the inability of the airline to obtain clearance for its planes to come into the country to begin the exercise.

But an official of the NCAA had said IRS was not allowed to begin operation because the aircraft it intended to use had not undergone the required checks.

"This has to be done before the aircraft could be allowed entry into the country," he told NAN.

A total of 65,000 Nigerians are billed to perform the Hajj, out of whom IRS is expected to transport 20,000.

The transportation of pilgrims to the Holy Land began on December 29 last year and will end on January 13.

... NCAA restates restriction order on IRS

The Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) yesterday restated its order restricting IRS Airlines from transporting pilgrims to Saudi Arabia for this year's Hajj.

NCAA, in a statement made available to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Ikeja, said the airline could not transport pilgrims as records provided by the lessor of its aircraft were scanty.

The statement, signed by Mr. Sam Adurogboye, the Media Assistant to the organisation's Director-General, said with such scanty records, the air-worthiness status of the

Boeing 747 airplanes could not be established.

"Therefore, the airplanes have been declared unsafe for Hajj operation. However, the management of IRS and NCAA have reached an agreement for IRS to present another aircraft that will be inspected immediately and certified for the continuation of the 2004/2005 Hajj operations."

"This is to assure the Nigerian public that the NCAA and Federal Ministry of Aviation will continue to carry out their statutory responsibility of ensuring safe skies and aircraft operations

in line with International Civil Aviation Organisation standards and recommended practices," Adurogboye stated.

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Mrs Abacha, Masari, ANPP condole Nas' family

By Isa Sanusi Political Reporter (Senate) and Lawal Ibrahim, Correspondent in Kaduna

The family of the late head of state, General Sani Abacha, led by his son, Muhammadu Abacha, and the widow, Hajira Maryam Abacha, yesterday paid a condolence visit to the family of the late federal politician, Alhaji Wada Nas, describing his death as shocking while praying for the repose of his soul.

The eldest son of the deceased, Aminu Wada Nas also received sympathisers that include the former governor of Kaduna State, Alhaji Abba Musa Rimi, the former inspector general of police and Saradana of Kaduna, Alhaji Ibrahim Ahmadu Coomassie, the former minister of agriculture, Aihaji Garba Ja Abdulkadir, Major General Amadi Remawa, Alhaji Lena Jibrilla, Professor Asuwalu Yadudu and a delegation of Sokoto State government.

The President of the Senate, Chief Adolphus Wabara, in a statement signed by his Chief Press Secretary, Mr. Henry

Ogbole, described the late Alhaji Wada Nas as a forthright and fearless politician whose constructive criticisms of the PDP-led federal government immensely helped in deepening Nigeria's nascent democracy.

Chief Wabara, who said the death of the deceased would create a huge vacuum in the polity, also condolees the government and people of Katsina State, saying that Wada Nas was no doubt one of the accomplished sons of the state.

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) in a condolence statement signed by its Secretary, Mr. John E. Odoh, said the late Wada Nas had in the last five years of his life displayed gift of tenacity and courage to express his convictions, which always ranked him among the most vocal and vibrant political personages.

NLC also said the deceased

had contributed immensely in opposition politics and visibility, saying that Nigerian politics would certainly be the worse for the loss of Alhaji Wada Nas.

Similarly, the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) said the death of Alhaji Wada Nas is a great loss for democracy considering his patriotic efforts to see that Nigeria is entrenched with genuine democratic norms embedded in good governance and the rule of law.

The National Secretary of the party, Alhaji Sani Abdullahi Shinkafi, in a condolence statement, added that APGA prayed Allah to grant him eternal rest.

In its condolence, the Progressive Action Congress (PAC) said those in the opposition would not forget Alhaji Wada Nas who throughout his life remained consistent and fearless politician whose ideals and methods

ods of operation remained civil while praying for the repose of his soul.

Also, the ANPP yesterday in Abuja described the death of the PSP leader and former special duties minister, Alhaji Wada Nas, as a national tragedy.

Nas died in the early hours of Monday in Kaduna after a brief illness at the age of 66.

Commemorating with Nigerians, the national Publicity Secretary of the ANPP, Chief Nnamdi Okebara, described the demise of the late politician as "an irreparable national tragedy".

Okebara told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) that Nas was "a great patriot, unifying factor, detribalised Nigerian and consistent personality".

"We (ANPP) received the sudden news of the death of our elder statesman and comrade with rude shock. Alhaji Wada Nas died at a time when he was most needed by the country and his actions in the struggle for an enduring democracy," he said.

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News

FG urged to resolve doctors' strike

Five weeks into the industrial action by the resident doctors in the country, the Plateau State Commissioner for Health, Dr. Patrick Dakum, has called on the federal government to find a lasting solution to their demand.

Resident doctors across the country had gone on strike since last month following persistent shortfall in

their salaries.

The strike had consequently paralysed activities in teaching hospitals across the nation.

Speaking to *Daily Trust* in Jos, Dr. Dakum said there was need for the federal government to address the issue of emolument of staff on its pay roll.

"A sincere approach to it is better than the rhetorics

that we are seeing," he said. Dr. Dakum described staff emolument as a very volatile issue which should be handled carefully, adding "it is very difficult for anyone to understand if any part of his salary is taken away".

He then urged the federal government and the doctors to come to a roundtable and agree on redressing the situation.

Plateau Ulama condemn killing over land dispute

The Plateau State Ulama Elders Council has condemned the killing of Engineer Bulle of Gana Ropp in Barkin Ladi local government area of Plateau State, describing his death as shocking.

It called on government and security agencies to ensure that those who perpetrated the murder incident are brought to book.

This was contained in a statement signed by the secretary of the council, Barris-

ter Muhammad Lawal Ishaq, and made available to *Daily Trust* in Jos.

The statement asserted: "This council condemns the incidence in its entirety that led to the killing of Mr. Bulle and calls on the Plateau State government and the security agencies in the state not to leave any stone unturned in fishing out and adequately punishing the culprits in accordance with the law."

It stressed that this would arrest any attempt by some miscreants bent on re-farthing the efforts being made at bringing lasting peace in the state.

The group described Engr. Darau Bulle as a peaceful man who always reached out to all his associates irrespective of religious or ethnic leaning.

It extended its condolence to the family of Engr. Bulle and the entire good people of the state, while wishing the deceased's wife, Mrs. Mary Bulle, and others wounded as a result of the incident quick recovery.

NEPA owes FG N8bn in taxes

The National Electricity Power Authority (NEPA) owes the federal government N8 billion in unremitted taxes. This was disclosed by the chairman of the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), Mr. Ifeako Omoigui, in Abuja yesterday.

The chairman also revealed that the FIRS is yet to audit the tax books of Halliburton because the books were only made available to the FIRS recently and that the FIRS will henceforth get four per cent commission from non-oil revenue.

Speaking during the opening ceremony for a preliminary course for inspectors of taxes in Abuja, the chairman said that the FIRS was in dialogue of reconciling figures with NEPA officials and "we have had several meetings on ways in which the monies would be paid," she said.

Explaining further, she said, "We already have approval on how the backlog would be treated and we are currently pursuing that with

By Anas A. Galadima, Reporter, Business

both the MD of NEPA, Mr. Joseph Makoju, as well as the minister of power and steel, Senator Liyel Imoke".

"It is an on-going process," she said. "We intend to pursue every single tax payer to a logical conclusion. NEPA is not the only one that owes us. The Nigerian Ports Authority is another one that owes us quite a lot of taxes," she added.

On the Halliburton scan, the chairman explained that at a point, the tax books of the company were not given to the FIRS. As a result, the FIRS imposed a debt/judgement assessment and that took it to the body of appeal commissioners.

"Recently," she added, "I understand that the books have now been made available for us to audit. So we hope in this quarter we would have audited the books and be able to give feed-back on how the process has gone to the body of appeal commis-

sioners who will be meeting in February, 2005."

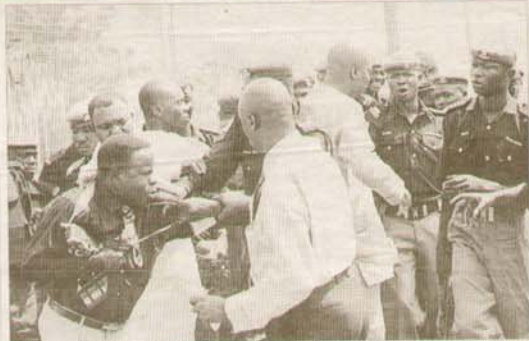
The chairman further disclosed that following the introduction of tax reforms by the federal government, the FIRS is expected to receive four per cent commission from all revenues generated from non-oil sources.

She said this was part of the tax reform bill, which the president had asked the National Assembly to ensure that it was passed within the first quarter of this year.

The commission, according to her, would among other things, enable them "to improve the reward structure for staff so as to discourage members of staff from colluding with companies to evade tax or commit tax fraud".

She added that the FIRS intends to greatly improve the security of its documents "to make them more secured and less prone to fraud. This we will ensure when next we print our new documents," said she.

How police manhandled journalists at PDP NEC meeting...yesterday.



Daily Trust photographer, Mr. Kennedy Eghonode (left) being rough handled by armed mobile policemen.



Henry the SAN's photo-journalist being confronted by an armed policeman.



Bewildered Daily Independent photographer, Mr. Odeniga Abiodun after his ordeal in the hands of mobile policemen.

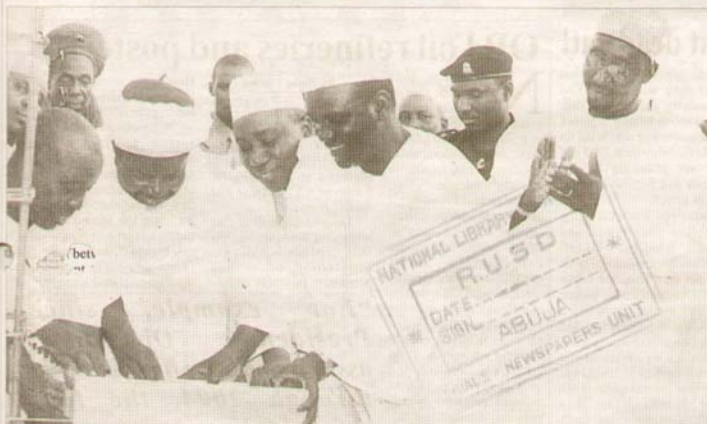


Angry journalists walking out of PDP national secretariat after the incident. Pic: Kennedy Eghonode.



Guardian photographer Mr. Yami (middle) facing the wrath of armed mobile policemen.

News



Governor Ibrahim Shekarau of Kano State (second from right) laying the foundation stone of GGSS Argungu, he is being assisted by Governor Adamu Aletro and the Emir of Argungu, Alhaji Sama'ila Muhammed Mera (left).

Farmers doubt government's commitment to agriculture

Farmers yesterday expressed apprehension over government's commitment to accord priority to agriculture this year. A survey conducted by *Daily Trust* indicated mixed feelings about agricultural development, saying that it was not given proper attention last year.

They however expressed **Ogun registers 1,562 pilgrims for Hajj**

From Kayode Ajibola, Stringer, (Abeokuta)
The Secretary to the Ogun State Government (SSG), Alhaji Safaradeen Tunji Ishola, has disclosed that one thousand five hundred and sixty-two people will perform this year's pilgrimage from the state. Alhaji Tunji Ishola disclosed this while fielding questions from newsmen at his residence in Abeokuta, the Ogun State capital.

He denied rumours that the intending pilgrims have not travelled to Mecca due to failure of the Ogun State government to release their Basic Travelling Allowance (BTA).

Alhaji Tunji Ishola said those in the first batch have collected BTA, adding that the delay was due to grounding of IRS Airline by the aviation authorities.

The secretary to the Ogun State government while, appealing to the intending pilgrims, disclosed that the first batch will be airlifted Wednesday morning.

According to him, it was better to delay the airlift than to risk the lives of pilgrims in a bad aircraft. "The safety of the pilgrims is more important to us than the early airlifting," he said.

From Hassan Idris, Agric Reporter
happiness with the federal government's announcement that it will reposition agricultural production through better incentives and services in 2005.

"If Nigerian government gives agriculture the maximum support in 2005, it will realise a bumper harvest", adding that farmers will produce enough food for the citizenry as well as export the surplus.

A farmer based in Abuja, Mr. Michael Ogaba, said that most rural farmers hardly depended on government. According to him, it was not possible to rely on

government because the Ida and Oju Agriculture Development Projects offices in Benue State almost collapsed due to negligence by the authorities.

Another farmer, Suleman Nagwada, said that farmers were forced to relax in their efforts to produce enough food because of government's negligence to agriculture over the years. He stressed the need to support farmers through adequate budgetary allocation to the agriculture sector in 2005 so that they can be hopeful, pointing out that only N2.0 billion was budgeted last year and that was the least over the years.

Similarly, a farmer from Rontom in Bebeji local

government area of Kano State complained that when government brought fertilisers in 2004 to their village, he only got less than five kilogram sold at N55.

NLC cautions FG over economic reforms

The federal and state governments have been advised to handle the ongoing economic reforms with caution so that no section of the society suffers," he emphasised.

According to him, the retrenchment of workers in the implementation of the economic reforms will no doubt erode the successes recorded by the democratic governments in the country.

"Well, it is our hope that the government will be committed to the economic development of the country by coming up with good policies and programmes that will boost our economy," he said.

Idris stressed the need for the federal and state governments to be more committed to the exploitation of both their human and natural resources in the quest for development as it was being done in other countries.

Nigeria, Canada to cooperate on boundary matters
Canada said it is seeking areas of cooperation with Nigeria toward easing the resolution of boundary matters. The Canadian Ambassador to Nigeria, David Angell, who paid a visit to the National Boundary Commission (NBC) in Abuja yesterday, said that his country was facing similar boundary disputes like Nigeria.

He described boundary matters as "very complex," saying that they became even more complicated when they are maritime boundaries.

Angell said that his country's boundary commission would soon set a machinery to examine ways both commissions could gain from each other.

In his response, the Director General of the NBC, Alhaji Dahiru Bobbo, said that the NBC was looking forward to exploiting the advantages from a good relationship with its Canadian counterpart. He listed areas of possible cooperation to include the development of documents, scientific information, maps, and geographic information system.

Bobbo urged the ambassador to help the NBC in the areas of visa pursuits to enable his men to travel to Canada for more training.

Anambra probes 2004 mayhem

The Anambra State government has set up a six member judicial commission to probe the November 10, 2004 large scale looting and destruction of public property in the state.

Headed by Justice Kenneth Keazor (rtd), the commission's other members include Mrs. Oguguo Ikpeze, a lawyer; Mr. Bob Moh, an architect; Mr. Ezidinma Ifejiaka, a retired assistant inspector-general of police, and Mr. Don Onyenji, acting chairman of the state's branch of the Nigeria Labour Congress.

Mr. Anene Onejeme, the Permanent Secretary in the state's Ministry of Information, will serve as the secretary.

In a statement, Mr. Alex Chukwurah, the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), said the commission would investigate the causes of the mayhem. It would also ascertain the nature and scale of damage suffered by the state government and any individual or person during the rampage.

In addition, the SSG said the panel would identify those

From Beatrice Onuchukwu, Stringer, (Awka)

responsible for the riots and determine the roles played by the culprits, including members of the law enforcement agencies.

"It would make recommendations to forestall a repeat of the mayhem," Chukwurah said, adding that the panel had been given 45 days from its first sitting to submit a final report.

The commission will be inaugurated on a date to be announced later.

Meanwhile, the Nigeria Labour Congress, Anambra State council, has cautioned against move to forcefully remove Governor Chris Ngige from office.

NLC said it was worried by the current campaign by "a small but highly connected clique" to force the governor out at office on account of alleged "confession" by Chief Chris Uba.



Governor Joshua Dariye of Plateau State (left) with his Deputy Chief Michael Botmag at a meeting with secondary school principals at Azu Nyako Youth Centre, Jos.

Soliloquy

WITH
A. B. Ahmed
dulmedha@canada.com

Fe-Fa-Fe-Fo-Fum: I smell a fat dead rat!

You can put this down to my perpetually suspicious nature if you like, but something smells outrageously phony about the sudden frenzy of good behaviour on the parts of both our ruling party and its presidency these days. And no matter how cautiously I sniff around all this nice aroma of inexplicable willingness to clean house and hold a 'national conference' at long last, I still get a strong whiff of a rotten fat dead rat oozing through the makeover room fragrance.

It is not very often that I see eye-to-eye with Alhaji Balarabe Musa, former PRP governor of Kaduna State, who still holds the dubious singular honour of being the only governor in Nigerian history to have been successfully impeached out of office. But in this particular matter, I am strongly inclined to echo his rather hasty identification of the panel which OBJ recently set up to work out the modality for convening a 'national dialogue' which the Yoruba media are already jumping the gun by daubing it nearly a 'sovereign national conference' even before Obasanjo quite finished inaugurating it, as a sham.

Even at a cursory glance, the composition of the panel does not inspire great confidence in anybody that I know of, except the smart-Alecs who formed it in the dark corridors of Aso Rock Villa. Panel chairman Ahmed Makarfi, governor of Kaduna State certainly is not any Nigerian's concept of a towering paragon of intellectual or political strength, beyond the plain fact that he is one of Obasanjo's loyal supporters. Other members of the panel are similarly complaisant office holders and beneficiaries of the Obasanjo Semi-Dictatorship, even including the conceptually grizzled and formerly non-sensense Cornelius Adebayo, the Minister of Communications.

You could, of course, wave off all preliminary

protests by arguing that this panel is nothing much more than a kind of headquarters secretariat whose main function is to draw up the rules of the dialogue; a kind of coterie of desk-flyers, pen pushers and file keepers [never mind the intimidating number of professors in their ranks; a stooge is a stooge is a stooge]. Before you realise it they could confront us all with such an infuriatingly jejune list of do's and don'ts for the putative dialogue that no self-respecting genuine leader of an ethnic nationality in the country would agree to talk under such a suffocating set of no-go-areas and topics that cannot be raised under the ground rules with which they confront us. All of which would indeed render the dialogue a sham and a non-starter, exactly as Balarabe Musa so hastily called it.

As a matter of cold fact already, it is crystal-clear that what OBJ and his PDP have in mind is not in the least related to a national conference, whether sovereign or non-sovereign. By the adroit use of linguistic *legerdemain*, the man has just simply set up a panel of clerks to draw up the framework and ground rules under which an even larger committee of hand-picked nominees of his government will *review and reform* the 1999 Constitution to make it more palatable for Nigerians to swallow in a continuation of the PDP's self-perpetuation in power.

Strip the guidelines which he gave the Makarfi Panel of all the solemn and ponderous verbiage of official double-speak and obfuscation, and what you are left with is a bald statement of the intent and firm commitment of the Obasanjo Administration NOT to consider, permit or tolerate any fancy national conference at which there will be free-for-all fights by ethnic jingoists, regional do-gooders and self-seeking oil producing zonal champions to query the very basis of Nigeria's present political power composition or to let

people specify under what terms they will freely and voluntarily choose whether they want to belong together in one country or not. What do people foolishly think OBJ and PDP are planning to do: abdicate and commit *harakiri* both at once?

Now, you listen carefully, my fellow countrymen and women. What the Makarfi Panel has been mandated to do is to set up a structure under which Obasanjo's hand-picked men and women [including a sprinkling of hotheads to add controversy, excitement and a semblance of crisis to the proceedings] to go to Abuja and enjoy federal largesse for some months, while they debate furiously on such matters as they are allowed to discuss. Matters like reforms in the political arena, aimed at 'deepening, widening and strengthening' the [existing] structures, institutions and principles of good governance such as OBJ and the PDP are already giving us in such superabundance anyhow!

Also the confab is expected to "review the 1999 Constitution" with a view to strengthening the military-imposed document to become the magical instrument which will turn our polity and PDP politics into a highly principled, sharply focused, well-organised, effectively managed etc. etc. instrument for genuine democracy and national progress! Personally, I see absolutely nothing in this jungle of fancy words to suggest anything even remotely related to the kind of national conference which will enable Nigerians to talk, negotiate and create for themselves a constitution of their own fashioning. So, from what kind of magician's hat did all this talk of a national conference or dialogue emerge?

Well, Nigerians love to deceive themselves with naive and wishful thinking anyhow. But while my people continue to indulge themselves in this hypocritical and futile pastime, I reserve the right to keep my suspicions healthy and perpetually alive. And I insist that I still smell a big, fat dead rat in this forthcoming national

er-em-dialogue-!

"Now, you listen carefully, my fellow countrymen and women. What the Makarfi Panel has been mandated to do is to set up a structure under which Obasanjo's hand-picked men and women [including a sprinkling of hotheads to add controversy, excitement and a semblance of crisis to the p. proceedings] to go to Abuja and enjoy federal largesse for some months, while they debate furiously on such matters as they are allowed to discuss."

Opinion

OBJ oil refineries and posterity

By Nuhu Yar'wa

Nigeria has four refineries; two in Port Harcourt generally called old and new. One is in Warri, Delta State; while Kaduna hosts another. This figure is actually inadequate given that Nigeria is the sixth oil producing and exporting country in the comity of Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Iran for example, controls almost 30 refineries of different sizes.

Between 1970s, when oil was discovered in Nigeria in commercial quantities and tapped qualitatively and quantitatively for economic growth, through the 80s and 90s when sole dependence on oil was over-stretched till this millennium age that government departments and responsibilities have quantum: the tale of the nation's refineries is unspeakably tragic. Oil boom seems clearly to be a doom for the nation. Oil prospect, exploration, exploitation, refining, pricing and distribution locally or nationally remain very tragic.

For example, since President Obasanjo's assumption of office in 1999 through 2004, the four refineries have consumed an estimated N96 billion in repairs and what technically is called *Turn Around Maintenance* (TAM). This colossal amount is spent to maintain the four refineries, whose combined capacity allows for only 18 million liters per day, out of the estimated required national consumption of 30 million liters a day! This figure clearly shows that the four refining companies produce only half the requirement of the nation per day.

The shortage in supply is therefore automatically sourced by importations. What all these portend is that oil prospect and utilization-marketing and distribution - remains a problem to the government as it is to the citizenry.

Even then, the four refineries are now at different stages of disrepair or mal-functioning. This is after roughly a whipping N63 billion had been spent on the Four conglomerate oil firms for the purposes of TAM.

A break down reveals that an indigenous local firm, Chrome, got in 1998 the contract for the TAM project of Port-Harcourt refinery at 26 million naira, Kaduna refinery gulped N23 billion, as French firm, TOTAL got the TAM contract while Warri's N14 billion TURN AROUND MAINTENANCE (TAM) went to EDNN.

Sadly the Nigerian

National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) had already spent additional N33 billion Construction of distribution and Jetty facilities at Abaji (FCT), Escravas (Delta Area) and Apapa (Lagos).

Despite expending this whopping amount, Nigeria still depends heavily on importation of refined petroleum products simply

Hence, the introduction of the much-disputed N3.50 Fuel Tax or "Petrol Levy".

Nigerians are indeed in a sorry watching how scandalously government expended huge finances to propel all the four refineries to work, but alas! Where do we start the blame? With much-advertised financial rule tagged "Due Diligence" of Obasanjo's administration; the Financial and economic

"For example, since President Obasanjo's assumption of office in 1999 through 2004, the four refineries have consumed an estimated N96 billion in repairs and what technically is called Turn Around Maintenance (TAM)."

because the essential component to refining, the Fluid Catalytic Cracker (FCC) of all our four local refineries are in various stages of disrepair.

The FCC is a major part in the production of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) or simply Petrol; the Automotive Gas Oil (AGO) simply Diesel well as Dual Purpose kerosene (DPK), simply Kero.

This huge problem combined with incessant price increases of petroleum products, witnessed by calls for labour strikes by the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) supported by the dual Oil Workers Unions; the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association Of Nigeria (PENGASSAN); and the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) have made Nigeria a sorry State.

Gaus Obaseki, Immediate Past Group managing Director of the NNPC had simply condemned our refineries as scraps as he apparently argued for their public auction.

The new boss of the conglomerate oil firm, Mr. Funsho Kopolokun however, told the nation on assumption of office early in the year that the four refineries would be fully functional by April 2004. This was never to be, and so, the ANPC latter fiscal September 2004. This simply created anxiety, frustration and disrepair. Analysts: the country is looming for collapse, energy-wise, if there is any drastic drop in import dependence.

To the government, she can not continue to burn or lavish her foreign reserve over one pretty national item without additional petty cost on the consumer - citizens.

sanitization drives through Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), the continued collaboration with the long claws of the

Interpol; and Obasanjo's self-dictated Messianic leadership; posterity therefore demands that for Obasanjo's regime to be fairly judged as Messianic, corrective, progress-inclined and indeed nationalistic, its current stance of total indifference to calls that refunds be made back to Nigeria of all such monies expended on the refineries for which the Multi-Nationals performed poorly, leaving the country in economic shambles-must have to change to that of *Probitry*.

Nigerians need full value for the billions expended on their behalf to explore and exploit the energy sector by elected political leaders.

This position is necessary as it will enhance political capacity of Mr. President; infuse confidence in the psyche of the citizenry regarding democracy project and leaderships attitude to public governance via accountability. Already, poor or lack of accountability through probity is costing more on political engineering through labour strikes occasioned by frequent fuel pump price increases by government.

Again, instead of confidence building between all government-citizens policies and pronouncement; in reality, what obtain disrepair, hopelessness and fear. Fear of today and the uncertainties of tomorrow.

For goodness sake, there should be a break between *Drifting and Shifting*, for even a steady one-step forward is *PROGRESS* in life.

Yar'wa is a Public Affairs Commentator in Abuja.



KUKAN KURCIYA

King Oki's resurrection: The chickening of a witness

The hereafter is beginning to have a second thought on Oki's return to the kingdom for a second chance. The aftermath of his earlier existence is causing a lot of havoc in the land. He had sowed so much evil during tenure, disaffection; divide and rule, sorcery and sheer incompetence that even the good lord had to give it to Oki for his uncanny ability to misuse the freewill that every human was born with. The good lord was particularly unhappy at the way Oki used to take his name in vain! It wasn't past Oki to claim everything he did in the name of God while he worshipped the devil of Akija in the nocturnal privacy of his misrule. He would genuinely forget that the lord who made him was infallible and could see what was in the heart of his creature by kneeling down, holy book in hand, and earnestly praying for success in a venture known from the beginning to be dubious.

He would go on the pulpit and declare that he could defend before God and man whatever actions he took, whatever commissions or omissions he made and his honest desire for his country's greatness. But all would be a sham and a lie. Oki was an accomplished fraud. The hereafter once more played back Oki's earlier life and was mildly amused at Oki's attempt to hoodwink even the omniscient. He was dubious through and through was definitely not in doubt. Whatever he did had an ulterior motive. That the hereafter had always known. Jokers were drawn to him for what little worldly respite they got. Like Dr. Faustus, they sold their souls to Oki for a few moments of a job or contract and by the time he finished with them their regret was forever.

By Bilyu Bala
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The journalist had always been warned. He had been asked to look at all the inconsistencies surrounding Oki's rule. He has been asked to look at all the double speaks, but a soul committed was usually blinded by its own preferred assumptions. A yoke of deception has been placed under his chin and therefore how could he see? The journalist's desire to belong, and the thought that people like Oki could make it possible for one to succeed in such endeavors, was too much a blinding tonic for Danggalibi to see the stark danger in those presumptions.

For a brief moment, his naked encounter with Oki's incompetence and mismanagement of the kingdom, epitomized by Danggalibi's hospital experience, was in that flashing moment an eye opener. But the deceptive yoke of desire forced the head up and the journalist could no longer see! He is on his galactic way to the hereafter now, albeit with mixed feelings. What was he going to tell the Creator, a lie? No never. He is a born again Pentecostal Christian isn't he? He and Oki, when the latter was alive, both belonged to the sacred order of the Pentecost, though Oki's belonging was only self-serving. No matter, a balance between God and man ought to be struck. He smiled at this. A balance is a nice word to camouflage one's real motives. Everything needs balance. Every thesis has antithesis and locking closely is a synthesis. Ingenious! What a balance the journalist thought.

Meanwhile Oki has lost count how many moons he had spent in the tiny abode. The grave could be a miserable place, especially for erstwhile

kings whose words were commands in the ephemeral life on earth. No brimming goblets, no scantily dressed young girls pounding their feet on the podium floor of the banquet hall of the villa in response to invited musical band to celebrate another pyrrhic electoral victory. The bulbous agbada with which he was hurriedly buried had been eaten by worms and other visitors of the grave. His more than large gut has shriveled and his turbulent sex, which on more than one occasion had pitched him against madam in the palace, now has almost but disappeared.

The hereafter would more often than not forget him and leave him with the regular visitors of a grave. Large, luminous and hungry worms, lizards, snakes that could not dig their own holes and the continuous smoky billows from the gates of hell where the occupier was likely to end up there after judgment were constant companions of the king. Most nights, as if the grave has daylight, Oki would crouch at the far corner trying to avoid his companions. The bites, showing even on his dark leathery skin, and the terror on his mahogany chiseled out face showed he had not been successful in that regard.

He had been told that the hereafter was awaiting only few more complimentary evidences and a favorable judgment might be entered in his favor. One of those witnesses was the journalist, Danggalibi. Not knowing what Danggalibi went through during his illness, Oki had put all his salvation eggs in the journalist's basket. The boy would be his savior he thought. He smiled at the gullibility of most people when confronted with a superior deception. If not, how could a

political neophyte like the journalist bet his professional judgment against Oki's dubious duplicity?

Anyway, if Danggalibi believed Oki meant well for a wretched kingdom, that would be his own funeral, thought the king. Let the boy quickly come and give his salvation evidence and go back to his dreary dreams so that Oki could bounce back. There are few more new scores to settle once he got back. Things like that chairman who disgraced him in public, Oki held his breath and thought, "Whoever double crossed Oki didn't know him, ha! ha! ha!" he guffawed. Even in the semi hellish condition of the grave Oki could laugh if he saw a chance to undo others.

The angel bearing Danggalibi asked the journalist to tighten his grip as they had passed supersonic and were approaching the speed of light. Galactic travel though normal with angels could be uncanny and definitely frightening to humans. "We are closing in on the sixth heavenly realm and the sight of untrimmed angels in their act of glorifying the omniscient might be unsettling to human eyes no matter how repentant they had been in their earthly life. I advise you to hold tight and do not look" concluded the angel as he swishes with a lightening speed through space with his human cargo.

Oki winced as he turned from one raw side to another. A couple of ribs had been broken when he tried his famous anger on the angels the day he was brought from the world of the living. A breath from one angel flung Oki across the court room where he broke two ribs, sustained the dislocation of a femur and generally got bruised. Since then he could not lay for too long on one side in the grave.

Now with multiple bites from the companions of the grave things were even more difficult. He was contemplating begging for the good lord's cure when the usual angel emerged from the floor of the abode. He looked at the miserable figure of Oki crouching back in fear and shout for him to sit up. The angel told him that the journalist was at the seventh realm then and would be in time for hearing fixed that afternoon. "This would perhaps be your last chance of getting a reprieve and going back to earth." Said the angel threateningly, even as he disappeared in to the vowels of the earth.

Soon Danggalibi and his conveyer angel approached the seventh heaven and were put in orbit by the omniscient to await clearance before docking. As they orbited the heavens, Danggalibi wondered at scenery. The angel deliberately passed by a station where all those who helped Oki while on earth were gathered together and each narrating his encounter with the dubious king. The journalist listened with mouth agape at the tales of woe as experienced by each narrator. That again confused him the more. He is yet to make up his mind whether to support the doomed king or uphold what he experienced and heard about the king.

The angel docked on a sub-station and asked the journalist if he would like to have a peep at the future as it concerned the subject of his

galactic travel which Danggalibi readily agreed to. He was given a telescope not very much unlike the one placed on high buildings in some great cities in the world to give the visitor a panoramic view of the cities. He was told that his would be a few seconds slide show of the future under the continuous rule of Oki. The angel hoped it would strengthen the resolve of the journalist to say the truth once he was in the witness box of the hereafter.

The first video clip was that of the chairman of the King's party being dragged in chains on the dirty streets of the kingdom and Oki on a high pedestal chucking at the distress of the chairman. Before the journalist could comment the picture had shifted to a burning inferno of a city Danggalibi thought he recognized. "Wasn't it the plateaus?" He queried his mind. He saw the blur of a hand which looked like that of the king stoking the embers of the inferno. The next slide was that of a shrine with human bones and skulls littering everywhere. The priest was pointing a wizened finger at two figures; one with a goatee and the other figure in the background looking like that of the king. The commentator said the king's deliberate negligence and selfishness were the cause of all those demised souls whose bones litter the floor of the Eastern shrine.

Another slide was to come in to view when the angel told the journalist that they had been cleared to commence descent in to the hereafter and as such they had to go.

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

Opinion

2007: The Middle Belt factor

During the first republic, the Middle Belt Forum became popular among elements in old Benue-Plateau, Gongola and Kaduna provinces. They were eager to break ranks by not allying with the conservative Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) led by Sir Ahmadu Bello, the *Sardauna* of Sokoto. A political party, the Middle Belt Congress was even formed at the time.

After the first republic, the Middle Belt movement went into limbo until the second republic when it was dusted up for socio-political reasons.

With the demise of the second republic in 1983, the Middle Belt movement again lost its zest and valve. Another development, which led to a resurrection of the movement, was the introduction of the controversial Sharia system by some state governments in the north under the present political dispensation.

As the 2007 presidential elections draw nearer, it has been deemed auspicious by some politicians in the area to revive and juggle the multi-purpose movement for mainly political reasons.

Thus the Middle Belt Forum between 26th and 27th of November 2004, in Jos, held a "National Leadership Retreat." The general theme of the meeting was "Reengineering the Middle Belt Forum for Regional Development."

The retreat attracted representatives from 14 out of the 19 northern states, Plateau, Benue, Nasarawa, Adamawa, Taraba, Kogi, Kwara, Niger, Borno, Yobe, Kebbi, Kaduna, Bauchi and FCT were in attendance. The five northern states excluded were Sokoto, Zamfara, Kano, Katsina and Jigawa.

But rather than summon a meeting of the political leaders of a particular zone, they

By Nosike Ogbuanyi

decided to meet under the canopy of the unstable but pervasive Middle Belt Forum.

At the end of the Forum's consultative meeting held in the Plateau State capital, a resolution was adopted. Predictably, the most topical national issues discussed at the meeting, were the 2007 presidential contest and the orgy of ethno-religious disturbances plaguing the region.

The Belt's meeting coincided with the confirmation by the chairman of Board of Trustees (BOT) of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Chief Tony Anemih, of "a gentleman's agreement" conceding the presidential ticket of the ruling party in the 2007 presidential election to the northern part of the country.

The National chairman of the Middle Belt Forum, Chief Isaac I. Shaabu, a Second Republic Minister of Communications, firmly asserted that the Belt would do its best to ensure that the person who succeeds President Olusegun Obasanjo as the president of Nigeria in 2007 is a middle belt.

The communiqué issued at the end of the meeting was uniquely expressive of this. It averred, "that having thoroughly reviewed the political support and contributions which the Middle Belt has consistently made towards the emergence of past and present rulers, the Middle Belt as the true agent for Nigeria's stability and unity decided to establish a Tactical Committee that will work for the emergence in the 2007 elections of a democratically elected Nigerian president who will be a competent patriot and a truly committed Middle Belt."

Feelers from the meeting indicated that supporters of

the two leading presidential aspirants from the north, Vice President Atiku Abubakar and former military president, Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, were quite visible at the meeting. The other notable aspirant from the area, Brigadier-General Baba Marwa (rtd) attended in person.

None of the gladiators could afford to trifle with the meeting despite the fact that none of them was known to have identified with the aspirations of the controversial Forum in the past.

But now they have seen in it a possible avenue for some political advantage. Suddenly they are claiming indigeneity of the Middle Belt. An IBB supporter narrated how his mother was a Middle Belt Gbagyi woman from Wushishi village in Niger state while his father, said to be a migrant from a far away town, allegedly passed on when the former President was still a toddler.

Similarly, Vice President Atiku Abubakar was said to be a product of mixed parentage, one a migrant Fulani and the other an indigenous Middle Beltler from Ganye, in Adamawa. Both Atiku and IBB, in their separate calculations, were said to be approaching the issues with tact to avoid injuring the sensibilities of the core north to which they are also linked ancestrally.

With the foregoing arguments, the questions arise: Who is a middle belt? What geographical area constitutes the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria? Is the Middle Belt synonymous with the North Central zone or not? Does Middle Belt really exist in the Nigerian context or is it a mere utopian contraption for pursuing selfish political ends?

Truly, different persons viewing it from different sides of the prism have subjected the

Middle Belt to varying definitions. Some perceive it as a vague concept whose definition varies from time to time and from place to place depending on exigencies.

For instance, the politician seeking political power circumscribes the Middle Belt differently from the theologian under the influence of his doctrinaire belief. Some people ascribe the Middle Belt toga to all the minority ethnic groups in the old northern region excluding the two major ones, Hausa, and Fulani.

Not a few perceive it as a term contrived by those who are bent on destroying the heritage of a monolithic north. Yet many consider the dawn of the Middle Belt as an emancipating and fortuitous occurrence for their people politically, economically and socially.

In many ways, the definition of Middle Belt is at variance with the geopolitical mapping of the North Central zone in contemporary Nigerian politics. But it is incontrovertible that the North Central represents the heartland of the Middle Belt concept.

Most proponents of the Middle Belt theory define it not according to geographical contiguity but in line with some historical, social, religious and cultural factors. Thus parts of Borno, Bauchi, Gombe, Kaduna, Niger, Kebbi, Yobe, Taraba, Adamawa and the whole of Plateau, Benue, Nasarawa, FCT, Kogi and Kwara are often grouped under the Middle Belt region.

Whichever way one chooses to look at the Middle Belt theory so be it. But here, the issue of discourse is the resurgence, once more, of the Middle Belt phenomenon in our politics as we journey towards 2007.

At their recent retreat in Jos, leaders of the Middle Belt

were unmistakable that it was their turn to produce the next president for the country in 2007. The implication of this is that the group would support the aspiration of any presidential contender from any of the areas identified as falling under their definition of Middle Belt.

However, a twist appears imminent concerning the yardsticks to utilize in deciding who is a Middle Beltler and who is not. That kind of confusion will manifest more when the proponents come to the realization that some of the candidates favoured to clinch the presidency may not fit into their archetypal definition of a Middle Beltler. This kind of confusing scenario is possible in virtually all the states represented at the Jos meeting of the Forum.

Be that as it may, the likelihood is that whether for ill or good, the Middle Belt will continue to be a veritable political instrument in the approach to 2007 presidential contest. The leading contenders from the region and outside will continue to appeal to the familiar sentiment by regularly throwing up the concept for political reasons.

For now the leading presidential aspirants from the north under the PDP are from the so-called Middle Belt region. They are Vice President Atiku Abubakar (Adamawa), former military President, General Ibrahim Babangida (Niger), and Brigadier-General Mohammed Buba Marwa (Adamawa).

If the speculated presidential ambition of the Deputy Senate President, Alhaji Ibrahim Muntu and the Nasarawa state Governor, Alhaji Abullahi Adamu (both of whom were present at the meeting) were anything to go by, then the number of contenders from the area would have increased by two.

As 2007 draws nearer and with the ruling PDP having reportedly conceded the topmost position to the north, it is likely that more presidential contenders will emerge from the Middle Belt area.

For now, it will be imprudent for any serious presidential aspirant to write off the politics of Middle Belt as inconsequential notwithstanding how loose the belt may seem.

But beyond this, the Middle Belt due to its ill-defined character and shape is bound to be an open and malleable ground where the battle for the 2007 presidency will be very fiercely fought and perhaps won. In other words, a political recrudescence of some sort is underway in the Middle Belt as 2007 approaches.

The Middle Belt proponents have their points in demanding that the presidency shifts from the south to the north and their area precisely. They contend that they have contributed so much to the unity and stability of the Nigerian nation.

The Jos retreat posited that "the expensive investments which the Middle Belt region has made to provide military and political stability to Nigeria are not being significantly appreciated or compensated by the federal government and other national interest groups."

Just like the people of Niger Delta in the South, though minorities, they consider themselves a major stabilizing force in the Nigerian polity. The Middle Belter, they argue, are the intervening buffer between the radical Sharia-based core north and the liberal westernized south.

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The media and census 2005

By Onukwugh E. Osuji

As an index of human society, population is a critical element in development planning. In its macro or micro forms, population provides the basis for statistics, which assist policy makers, researchers, students, indeed the entire society to formulate their programmes of action ill their various pursuits and endeavours.

The success therefore, of the planning process and by implication its final outcome, will depend largely on the quality of a population verification exercise known as Census. Where the statistics so derived are unreliable or unavailable, planners would be literally stumbling in the dark. In this light, it is not only the conduct of a Census that makes the difference, but the integrity of the exercise as well.

In the Nigerian experience, Population Censuses to date have not commanded decent levels of acceptance from

national project such as the forthcoming census. More than even government structures, the media provides wide-ranging means of communicating the essence of the exercise [as any other policy or programme to the generality of the people]. It can encourage and empower the people to participate in the conduct of public affairs [such as elections and census] through information dissemination, education and enlightenment.

Being the vital communication link to the people, especially at the grassroots, the media can help dispel the negative sentiments that made a mockery of past censuses in independent Nigeria.

The successful and satisfactory fulfillment of our proposed census would, therefore, be traced, in part, to the role of the media in aligning the people to the attributes of a transparently conducted exercise. That way, the nation

and its people can further develop a culture of positive thinking and acceptance of population census as a platform for national development.

The active involvement of the media in the oncoming census will help checkmate political interference in the exercise, in order to make it a census for the people of Nigeria. With the media in the vanguard of advocacy, the Nigerian people must be mobilised effectively to participate in this important project.

To enhance its contributions towards a successful census, the media should collaborate with the relevant government organs, including the National Population Commission, the Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation and its agencies as well as civil society organisations and other interest groups.

All said, the census

exercise can be said to be partly a media event, which course and outcome will be influenced by the media.

It is heartening to note that the Government [through its agencies] has packaged a comprehensive public enlightenment programme for Census 2005. It is, however, pertinent for government to instil in its officials, be they enumerators, supervisors or security agents, the fact that this is not a government affair, but a project of the people of Nigeria in which everybody should be encouraged to participate fully.

Government and Nigerians in general should also be sensitised to rise above parochial sentiments of ethnicism and other forms of bigotry, to appreciate the long-term benefits of a credible census.

The international community, particularly friends of Nigeria, should lend their support to this historic project by providing their expertise,

facilities and other relevant resources towards a successful exercise.

The last census under a democratic dispensation in Nigeria was over four decades ago, with adverse consequences for the nation and its people. The successful conduct of Census 2005 under another democratic government, will mark a watershed in our collective march to progress. This exercise is a Nigerian stakeholders Project, in which the media should be a major role player in many respects. It is therefore, the responsibility of the media to be actively involved from start to finish in this critical phase of our mission to sustainable growth and development. As the world statesman, Mahatma Gandhi would say: "The press is a great power. The sole aim of journalism is service". Nigeria and Nigerians urgently need the media.

Osuji sent this piece from Lagos.

Trust International

Thriller in Palestine

By Jibrin Abubakar,
Senior Reporter (Foreign)



Leader of Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) and frontrunner in the upcoming January 9 presidential election, Mohmoud Abbas popularly known as Abu Mazen. Before him is a Palestinian child wearing a traditional dress.

On Sunday January 9, 2005, Palestinians will go to the polls to elect a new president who will fill the empty vacuum left by the late Palestinian President, Yasser Arafat, who died on November 11, 2004 in Paris, France.

The election is the second of its kind in the entire history of the Palestinian people since the one of 1996.

The usefulness and significance of the election, analysts say cannot be over emphasised given the political state of the Palestinian people and their struggle. It is a day of electing, probably "another Arafat" that will be saddled with the affairs of the Palestinian struggle. According to the Palestinian law, a successor must be elected within 60 days of the deceased of a leader.

Midway into Arafat's illness and his consequent transfer to a Paris hospital, outpour of comments on possible successor was rife. Now few days into the election, the gladiators are warming up, dusting and putting their political machineries into top gears as they prepare to own up the presidential seat of the yet-to-be independent Palestinian State. Like late Arafat once said: "No doubt sooner or later we will have our independent Palestinian State".

The candidates earlier registered for the top job are: Mahmud Abbas, Marwan Barghouti Mustapha Barghouti Abdel Sattar Qassem, Bassan Salhi, Tayssir

Khaled, Abdel Karim Shbier, Hassan Khreishet, Abdel Halim al-Ashqar and Alsaïd Barakah.

Following the withdrawal of some candidates, the Central Elections Commission announced on December 15, 2004—the last day to submit withdrawal from the race, those seven candidates remained in the competition for the presidency. Four candidates are running as independents and three are backed by Palestinian political parties.

The seven candidates to wrestle in the presidential ring are: Mahmud Abbas, also known by his *nom de guerre*, Abu Mazen, is of the Fatah movement. He is said to be a proven leader who understands what it takes to build a government and to line up various Palestinian factions through diplomacy. A long time Palestinian authority stalwart, Abbas, who is also chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) is the man tipped to revive the peace process and is favoured by Washington as a potential peacemaker with Israel. Counted among the moderate Palestinian, Abbas became the first Palestinian Prime Minister in 2003, but resigned five months later. He is the overwhelming favourite to win the election.

The first independent candidate who may likely pull some sort of trigger is Mustafa Barghouti, a human rights activist and secretary of the Palestinian National Initiative. Dr. Barghouti is said to be the second popular candidate. Second only to



Marwan Barghouti is one of the presidential candidates who withdrew from the race. He is currently serving a five life jail term in Israel

Abu Mazen, the independent candidate Barghouti announced his candidacy for the Palestinian authority presidency on November 27, 2004 promising total and complete reform, a fight against any form of corruption and mismanagement, and the consolidation of the rule of law. Although he says he represents "Silent Majority" of the Palestinian reformists but recent survey placed him far behind Abu Mazen.

Equally bidding for the top job is the candidate of the Palestinian peoples' party, Mr. Bassan al-fathi. He will be running for the elections as the leader of his political party, a small PLO faction with alleged communist roots. Apart from Marwan Barghouti who is being jailed for five life sentences in Israel; Bassan is the second presidential contender to have been detained by the Israeli security forces since the start of the campaign. He belongs to a social but respected class of Palestinian resistance against Israeli occupation.

In the same vein, the fourth presidential candidate is Taysir Khalid of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Khalid joined the Marxist-Leninist group of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine in 1969 after splitting from the popular front for the Liberation of Palestine. The party's goals are revolutionary change in the Arab world and solidarity with all national liberation movements that oppose imperialism and reason. He was elected to the PLO executive committee in 1991, but quit two years later to

protest against the Oslo Accords negotiated between the PLO and Israel.

Other independent candidates for the big post are: Abd al-kasim Shabiar, Abd-al-Halim a-Ashqar and Alsayd Barakah.

Above all, pundits posit that Palestinians are nurturing a political system devoid of class struggle, victimisation and vendetta. A politics of a nation without state. Mahmoud Abbas, also known by his *nom de guerre*, Abu Mazen is almost assuming the status of consensus candidate to succeed Arafat. He is tipped to be the preferred candidate by Washington and Tel Aviv.

Despite skepticism, the forthcoming is believed to be very central to the survival and future of the Palestinian people. It is a believe that is being nursed by key players in the international community.

Prominent along this line is the Egyptian



Mustapha Barghouti is one of the presidential candidates that may likely pull on important trigger in the election.

President, Hosni Mubarak who called for unity among the Palestinians and urged them to set their differences aside. Like many others, President Mubarak also predicted that Abu Mazen will win the presidential election scheduled for January 9, 2005. "At the end Fatah has nominated Abu Mazen and I think he will win," he said.

In a different twist, the Palestinian activists group, HAMAS is threatening to boycott the election. Already it has announced that it will not put forward a candidate, just as it urged its supporters to boycott the election.

HAMAS said it had pushed for a general election, voting for presidential, municipal and legislature candidates. It is also rejecting the elections because of its opposition to the creation of the Palestinian Authority in the Oslo Peace accord.

According to the election committee, so far 71 per cent

of the eligible voters have registered to vote.

Similarly, as the election approaches, Israel has urged the easing of restrictions in the run-up to the election, ordering its army to pull out of the Palestinian cities. The announcement came as presidential frontrunner Mohmoud Abbas again urged an end to Palestinian violence, saying Palestinians could only achieve the independence through peaceful means.

Hence, there are indications that the election will not go in the Ukrainian way. A landslide victory is almost assured for Abu Mazen given the seemingly Wahsington and Tel Aviv consensus. However, whether Mazen will sell out to international community against the will of his people remain to be seen. Already sceptics say he is wearing a moderate and an anti-intifadah posture.

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Trust International

Sudan to sign final peace pact Sunday

African leaders and representatives from the rest of the world will gather in Kenya on Sunday to witness the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM/A), Kenya's regional cooperation minister said on Tuesday.

The pact is expected to end more than two decades of civil war that has killed hundreds of thousands of people, displaced many others and prevented development in southern Sudan.

"This Sunday, we have a very big celebration [in Nairobi] - the signing of the comprehensive [peace] agreement before the international community," Kenya's minister for East Africa and regional cooperation, John arap Koeth, told reporters in the capital. "The number of dignitaries that is going to be in Nairobi will be many."

The signing in Nairobi, Kenya on Friday of a permanent ceasefire between the government and the SPLM/A, and an agreement on how the various peace protocols so far signed would be implemented, paved the way for the conclusion of the final deal.

"We are going to replace war with peace and hence enhance economic development in the region," said Koeth, adding that intra-regional trade in eastern Africa was bound to increase with the restoration of peace in southern Sudan and the expected installation of a

government in strife-torn Somalia.

The southern Sudan peace process, sponsored by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a regional grouping of six states, began in 1994. Several previous attempts by other mediators to end the conflict had failed.

Khartoum and the SPLM/A had pledged, in a memorandum initiated at an extraordinary session of the UN Security Council on 18-19 November in Nairobi, to reach a comprehensive peace agreement by 31 December 2004.

The two parties signed six protocols last May on key issues relating to the peace process, including power-sharing arrangements and the administration of three contested areas during a six-year interim period that will precede a referendum to determine whether the south will remain part of Sudan. Those protocols will form part of the comprehensive peace agreement.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan welcomed the signing of the permanent ceasefire agreement at the weekend and the initialling of the deal on the implementation modalities, saying he looked forward to the final settlement.

The GIA has already been weakened by internal rivalries, the statement said.

The ministry statement did not give precise details of Mr Boudiafi's arrest or of the killing of Mr Younes.

But it said his arrest followed the killing of Mr Boudiafi's predecessor, Rachid Ouakli, alias Abu Tourab, in July by his own men so that Mr Boudiafi could take over.

The GIA was the most radical of Algeria's armed Islamic movements, says the BBC's Mohamed Arezki Himeur in Algiers.

He hailed the "relentless

diplomatic efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, led by its Chief Mediator, Gen Lazarus Sumbeiywo, which were instrumental in bringing about a final agreement". Annan also thanked the Kenya government for its "sustained support for the negotiations and other governments for their substantial assistance".

The war in the south erupted in 1983 when the SPLM/A took up arms against the government, based in the north, to demand greater autonomy and access to resources. The conflict displaced hundreds of thousands of people within Sudan and forced many others to become refugees in neighbouring countries.



Burundi President Domitien Ndayizeye.

Bus crash claims 25 in Burundi

At least 25 people have been killed after a bus overloaded with passengers crashed on a road in Burundi.

Most of those on board were said to be students returning to the capital Bujumbura after the Christmas break.

Officials said the bus had more people on board than it had spaces for and was speeding along the road some 18 km (11 miles) north of the capital.

At least six cyclists were reportedly also killed on the spot when the minibus overturned.

Provincial governor Ignace Ntwembarira said the driver lost control of the vehicle as it was going down a slippery hillside road.

The vehicle, which had the capacity to carry only 18 people, was transporting 24 passengers - including three people who were crammed behind the driver's seat and made it difficult for him to have full control of the car," he was quoted by the Associated Press as saying.

Eighteen people died on the spot and another died later in the hospital, said officials.

New national army for Burundians, the integrating and disarming of armed men will take four years.

Burundi's largest armed groups have formed a single national army after more than a decade of war.

All but one of the Hutu rebel groups and the Tutsi dominated government army are brought together.

The move is a major step in the long process to end the crisis in Burundi that has claimed more than 300,000 lives during an 11 year civil war.

But a BBC reporter said it will take at least four years before the process of forming the new army is complete.

President spokesman Pancrace Cimpaye said that in theory all armed fighters in Burundi were now the responsibility of the government, which would feed, clothe and pay them.

President Domitien Ndayizeye signed two laws on Friday setting up the new army and a new police force.

President Ndayizeye, a Hutu, leads a transitional government, the Burundi Armed Forces will now be known as the National Defence Force.

The BBC correspondent in Bujumbura says that from now on the term rebel will only apply to the National Liberation Forces (FNL).

The rebel movement led by Agathon Rwasa are still active on the outskirts of Bujumbura.

Reform of the army was one of the key demands of Hutu rebels, and the peace deal specified that there should not be more than 50% of Hutus or Tutsis in the army.

In December, the government and the United Nations began the process of disarming some 40,000 soldiers and former rebels.

Algeria arrests 'radical' Islamic leader

The leader of an Islamic 'rebel' group in Algeria has been arrested and his deputy has been killed, the Interior Ministry has said.

Security services detained Nourredine Boudiafi, head of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), in the eastern Algerian suburb of Bab Ezzouar in November.

His deputy, Chaabane Younes, was killed in Chief, 210km (160 miles) west of Algiers, the ministry added.

The GIA has already been weakened by internal rivalries, the statement said.

The ministry statement did not give precise details of Mr Boudiafi's arrest or of the killing of Mr Younes.

But it said his arrest followed the killing of Mr Boudiafi's predecessor, Rachid Ouakli, alias Abu Tourab, in July by his own men so that Mr Boudiafi could take over.

The GIA was the most radical of Algeria's armed Islamic movements, says the BBC's Mohamed Arezki Himeur in Algiers.

It has been behind the majority of attacks and assassinations targeting intellectuals, journalists and foreigners.

The group was also responsible for the bloody hijacking of an Air France Airbus in December 1994 at Algiers airport, and a series of civilian massacres in several parts of the country during the 1990s.

But its power started to wane at the end of the 1990s following the death of leader Djamel Zitouni by Islamic rivals in an ambush, says our correspondent.

The battle for the leadership led to internal divisions and rivalries that sparked the establishment of other armed groups.

The Salafist group, GSPC - considered today to be the most important armed Islamic movement - was born in 1998 out of the wrangling of the GIA. Gun-toting Malawian leaders held.

Three senior members of Malawi's ruling party have been arrested for carrying guns to a meeting with the president.

The three politicians were arrested as they entered the presidential palace.

The talks were about a growing rift between President Bingu wa Mutharika and United Democratic Front leaders over an anticorruption drive.

Deputy transport minister Roy Cumsay, Harry Thomson and MP Alfred Mwechumu have been charged with breach of the peace and released on bail.

One of the politicians said he always carried a gun for his personal security.

The BBC correspondent said that President Mutharika's relationship with the ruling party has been deteriorating since his election last May.

Several top UDF leaders have been arrested in connection with corruption and fraud scandals.

The meeting on 3 January, which was also being attended by former president Bakili Muluzi, was intended to end the rift but was abandoned after the weapons were discovered.

BBC

Ugandan govt seeks peace talks abroad

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has said the government will only talk to rebels outside the country.

Mr Museveni told mediators and local leaders in northern Uganda that a ceasefire would not be extended.

Mediators said the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) wanted more time to study a proposed memorandum of understanding.

But the government accused the LRA of rejecting a deal meant to pave the way for peace talks. The army then accused the LRA of staging an ambush.

Some 1.5 million Ugandans have been displaced during 18 years of fighting.

The LRA, led by Joseph Kony, stands accused of abducting more than 20,000 children, making the boys fight and the girls work as sex

slaves, and of mutilating and burning its civilian victims.

Ugandan Interior Minister Ruhakana Rugunda says he remains optimistic a peace deal can be reached with the LRA, despite the resumption of hostilities.

He had earlier described how rebel and government negotiators had embraced during the first direct talks between the two sides for a decade.

The two sides are still understood to be in contact with each other.

But the BBC correspondent said the president's call for the rebels to surrender is unlikely to succeed with neither side wanting to admit defeat.

The United Nations, Britain, Netherlands and Norway have been sponsoring the talks

Somalis not ready to leave Kenya - leader

Somali leaders said they are not ready to end their exile in Kenya because it is not safe to return home.

Kenya has hosted a two-year peace process that led to the forming of a Somali cabinet last year.

In a New Year message, Kenya's leader said Somali politicians should stop worrying about wrangles and instability and return to rebuild their country.

But Somali Deputy Speaker Prof Dalha Omar said they were still struggling to win over some warlords in the country.

"The difficult thing that we are afraid to face is the

security issue," he told Kenyan television.

He said they needed help from the international community to disarm the militias and to rebuild a country, which has seen its infrastructure destroyed.

A Kenyan minister told the BBC that he was expecting to hear by the end of the week when the government planned to leave Kenya.

Somali MPs in Nairobi have still to approve a new cabinet, after rejecting a previously appointed government.

In an address, Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki signalled his growing frustration with delays in securing a date for the cabinet

to return to the capital, Mogadishu.

"They must return because we were making a government, not to stay in Nairobi, but to return home and reconstruct that country," he said.

During the past 13 years, rival warlords have battled for control of the country and Somalia has been divided into a patchwork of fiefdoms.

All the major warlords are involved in the two-year peace process in neighbouring Kenya that led to President Abdullahi Yusuf's election, raising hopes that Somalia could soon return to normal.

Trust International

Airport accident causes relief delay in Aceh

Badly-needed relief efforts on the Indonesian island of Sumatra have been hit by an accident at a key airport.

The only airport in Aceh province was closed early yesterday after an aid plane hit a cow on the runway.

Air links are vital to supply aid to remote areas struck by the 26 December earthquake and tsunami.

The death toll - currently at 140,000 - is set to rise further. In Meulaboh alone, the tsunami hit closest to the epicentre, 40,000 are feared dead.

Before the disaster the remote town had a population of 95,000.

Map of affected countries and their death tolls.

The BBC correspondent, one of the first journalists to reach the scene, speaks of complete devastation, with almost every house destroyed.

"In many cases all you see is the outline, the foundation of the house," our correspondent reports.

"The walls and everything that remained has been swept away by the surge."

US President George W. Bush asks his two immediate predecessors, George Bush Senior and Bill Clinton, to lead a private charitable fund-raising effort in the US.

The UK proposes an immediate moratorium on debt repayments from tsunami-hit countries, to be discussed by the G8 group of industrialised countries.

The first planes bringing home the bodies of some of the 52 Swedes known to have died in the tsunami disaster are expected to arrive in Stockholm.

US Secretary of State Colin Powell - who is touring the region with President Bush's brother, Jeb - pledged America's full support in the relief effort.

"Each country has a different set of needs and what we are going to do is assess those needs," Mr Powell said after visiting the stricken Thai resort of Phuket on Tuesday.

The airport accident in the provincial capital, Banda Aceh, occurred when a cargo plane hit the cow after landing, and rested two-thirds of the way down the runway.

The military says the en-

gine and landing gear are badly damaged and without heavy lifting equipment, the airport remains closed to fixed-wing aircraft.

The UN has already expressed its concern at the airport's limited capacity. Civilian and military planes have to share the same runway.

Pilots fear the airport may remain closed throughout the day.

The US Navy - which is helping ferry aid by air - says there is enough food and medicine in Banda Aceh to move by helicopter to outlying areas.

But officials make it clear that opening the runway is a priority to the aid operation.

Aid workers have warned of the threat of disease among survivors living in dire conditions.

What will be final toll we will never know, but we may be talking of tens of thousands of further deaths.

Tito Mitra, emergency response director for Care International, told the BBC that sanitation facilities in the town of Banda Aceh were appalling.

"In these camps here

we've got 3,000 people, and there's four toilets for 3,000 people, and normally you'd want for 20 people one toilet."

If these conditions are not improved quickly, he adds, a "serious situation" could develop in the camps.

UN relief co-ordinator Jan Egeland said the death toll is likely to "grow exponentially" once aid workers can fully assess the extent of the damage on Sumatra's western coast.

More than 1.8 million need food aid, and about five million are homeless as a result of the undersea earthquake off Sumatra and the tsunami it triggered.

Around \$2bn in aid has been pledged by governments and international agencies.



Ariel Sharon, Israeli Prime Minister

Israeli army kill seven Palestinians in Gaza

Seven Palestinians have died from Israeli army fire in farmland in the northern Gaza Strip.

Israeli forces fired a tank shell after Palestinian militants launched a mortar attack on an Israeli industrial zone.

Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas responded to the deaths with a strong verbal attack on the "enemy" Israel.

The presidential candidate - seen as a moderate by Israel and the US - prayed for the "martyrs who fell today to the shells of the Zionist enemy".

We are praying for the souls of our martyrs who fell today to the shells of the Zionist enemy.

Mr Abbas was speaking to thousands of supporters at a rally in Khan Younis, a stronghold of Palestinian militant groups.

Mr Abbas, viewed by the US and Israel as a best partner for peace negotiations, is heavily tipped to become Palestinian president in an election on Sunday.

The seven men were killed by Israeli fire near the town of Beit Lahya, close to Gaza's border with Israel.

Palestinian reports said that the dead were local farm workers, including three teenagers.

The Israeli army says that it opened fire at a group of masked men who were equipped with missile launchers.

Hospital sources said that some of the dead were so mutilated that it will be hard to identify them.

The army said that it was responding to Palestinian mortar fire that had targeted a nearby Israeli-controlled industrial zone.

One Israeli civilian was reported injured in the attack.

Palestinian activists have been waging a four-year intifada or uprising against Israel, whose forces have occupied the Gaza Strip and West Bank since 1967.

Israel Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is planning to pull out all 8,000 Israeli settlers and the troops who protect them from 21 fortified enclaves in Gaza. Israel will maintain control of Gaza's borders, coastline and airspace.

Turkey, Israel to strengthen ties

Turkey's foreign minister has spoken of Syria's readiness for peace talks, during a landmark visit to Israel.

Abdullah Gul is meeting Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and other Israeli leaders in Jerusalem to discuss the prospects for reviving Middle East peace talks.

Syria "expressed willingness to resume negotiations without preconditions" with Israel, he was quoted as saying.

Mr Gul is also on a mission to repair Israeli-Turkish ties after a chill last year over Israel's crackdown in Gaza.

He is the most senior Turkish politician to visit Israel since the Justice and Development Party - a moderate movement rooted in Islam - came to power in Turkey November 2002.

The Syrian signals are serious and their intentions are good.

Tensions escalated last May, when Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan condemned as "state terror" an Israeli raid in the Rafah area of the southern Gaza Strip.

Before the row erupted Turkey was a close regional ally of Israel. They signed a military co-operation agreement in 1996.

Referring to the row, Mr Gul said "we need to put all that behind us".

Mr Gul began his Jerusalem itinerary with a visit to the al-Aqsa Mosque complex, the third holiest site in Islam which is also revered by Jews as the Temple Mount. He then met Israeli President Moshe Katsav.

On Wednesday, he is due to visit Ramallah in the West Bank for talks with Palestinian officials, including Mahmoud Abbas, the head of the Palestine Liberation Organisation and the man widely tipped to win the Palestinian presidential elections at the weekend.

Mr Erdogan paid a high-profile visit to Damascus in late December and, according to Mr Gul, "the Syrian signals are serious and their intentions are good".

Mr Gul spoke of a "new atmosphere" concerning the stalled Middle East peace process, saying "contributing to this process would be Turkey's greatest duty".

Mr Sharon insists that Syria close the Damascus headquarters of the Palestinian militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad before Israel will consider resuming peace talks.

Guru pledges \$23m tsunami relief

One of India's most famous women gurus has pledged a billion rupees (\$23m) to help survivors of the Asian tsunami.

Mata Amritanandamayi, also known as Amma or Mother, says the money will be used to rebuild homes destroyed in the disaster.

Her charitable trust says each new house will consist of two rooms, a kitchen, a small veranda and a toilet.

The news came as India's government said the disaster had left at least 9,571 dead and 5,914 missing.

"Amma is moved and anguished by the colossal tragedy," a spokeswoman for her trust told the Associated Press news agency.

The trust's website says that as thousands of people in southern India have been made homeless, work has already begun on building temporary shelters to house some of them until the new homes are completed.

It says that it is allocating \$23 (1,000 rupees) to each family in the Amritapuri area who had a home that was destroyed.

Correspondents say that the money pledged is higher than the amount promised by many international aid groups and business leaders.

It has also announced that free education and counselling will be provided to those children who have lost both parents in the tragedy.

Mata Amritanandamayi is

best known for hugging people as a form of blessing and therapy.

She is estimated to have to have hugged at least 21 million people in the past 30 years.

Her trust - which provides homes, schools and medical care - operates in 15 countries including Canada, France, Germany, Italy and the United

Kingdom.

The international community has so far pledged more than two billion dollars in disaster aid, but the UN has warned that some nations and donors may not honour their promises.

"At the end of the day we will not receive all of it," UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said on Monday

Britons killed in Iraq attacks

The latest eruption of violent attacks in Iraq has left three Britons dead, BBC correspondent reports.

Two of the victims worked for a US security firm Kroll, while the third worked for a private company.

A vehicle carrying them and an American civilian, who also died, was wrecked in the suicide bomb blast at a checkpoint manned by US troops.

The attack took place on the edge of the heavily protected "green zone" in the heart of Baghdad.

A spokeswoman for Kroll Inc said: "I can confirm there were four people killed in an incident today. It was a suicide attack on a convoy involved in routine personnel movement."

"Two of them were working for us and two were working for a client. Obviously our thoughts are

with the family and friends of the people who were killed."

The company was "proud of the professionalism and the dedication of these people", she said.

The Foreign Office confirmed that three Britons had been killed but would not give any more information until next-of-kin have been informed.

There were no reports of any of the US troops manning the checkpoints being hurt in the blast.

The bombing formed part of a wave of violence in Iraq which seems to have been gathering momentum with the approach of controversial elections scheduled for 13 January, the BBC correspondent said.

It came on a day when at least three other suicide car bombs and a number of other attacks claimed at least 30 lives throughout the country

Trust International

Powell hails quake relief effort

US Secretary of State Colin Powell has pledged America's full support in the Asian quake and tsunami relief effort.

He was speaking in Thailand at the start of a visit of the most affected nations, before attending a summit on the crisis in Jakarta on Thursday. "The US will certainly not turn away from those in desperate need," he said.

Earlier, the UN warned the number killed in the disaster, about 140,000, could rise sharply as aid had not yet reached some remote areas.

Relief efforts in the worst-hit area, Indonesia's Aceh province, suffered a setback early on Tuesday when an

accident closed the Banda Aceh airport runway.

An Indian helicopter dropping food and water over the remote Andaman and Nicobar Islands is attacked by tribesmen using bows and arrows. The first planes bringing home the bodies of some of the 52 Swedes known to have died in the tsunami disaster are expected to arrive in Stockholm.

More than 1.8 million need food aid, and about five million are homeless after the earthquake nine days ago.

Mr Powell and the US president's brother, Florida governor Jeb Bush, are visiting Thailand, Indonesia and

Sri Lanka to see for themselves the worst affected areas.

The US secretary of state said the aftermath of the devastating earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean was a "tragedy for the entire world".

He said the US would help Thailand and other countries to establish a tsunami early warning system, and if more aid was needed, it would be provided.

Earlier on Monday, President Bush joined two of his predecessors, Bill Clinton and George Bush Senior, to urge Americans to aid the Asian tsunami's victims. Around \$2bn in aid has been pledged by governments and international agencies.

He confirmed the number of dead was about 150,000, but warned the number could "grow exponentially" as aid agencies finally get to remote parts of Sumatra, closest to the quake's epicentre.

It was previously thought the town of Banda Aceh, in Sumatra's Aceh province, had been the worst affected, he said. But a team from the Red Cross and Red Crescent fears 40,000 people - about 80% of the population - have been killed in the town of Meulaboh, 150km south of Banda.

A commercial cargo plane hit a cow as it landed and came to rest two-thirds of the way down the runway, leading to the closure of the airport.

Court backs Pinochet murder trial

Chile's Supreme Court has ruled the country's former President Augusto Pinochet is fit to stand trial on murder and kidnapping charges.

It upheld a lower court move to throw out a defence motion arguing Gen Pinochet, 89, was not mentally able to defend himself.

The ruling brings the former military ruler one step closer to trial.

However, Gen Pinochet's defence team will still have other opportunities to block the proposed trial.

October 1998: Police in UK arrest Pinochet on Spanish warrant; long legal battle over fitness for trial.

March 2000: Deemed unfit for trial, returns home. Days later effort begins to try him in Chile.

August 2000: Supreme Court strips his immunity. Later declared fit to stand trial.

July 2001: Charges suspended and later dropped on grounds of health. May 2004: Court strips Pinochet of immunity.

...as criminals target victims

They have already survived an experience that most people can scarcely imagine. But the victims of the Asian tsunami now face a new danger - criminals and opportunists trying to cash in on their misfortune.

"Unfortunately it's a golden opportunity for people to make money," said criminal psychologist Mike Berry.

"Some people will be incredibly depressed and that makes them easy targets. They are very vulnerable," he told the BBC News website.

Given the scale of the disaster, it is remarkable that only isolated examples of crime have emerged so far.

But for the already traumatised victims, the impact can be devastating.

There are already reports of looting in many of the affected countries - with homes, shops and even dead bodies being targeted.

And in Sri Lanka, some of the disaster victims have allegedly been raped in refugee camps. One of the most disturbing allegations is that criminal gangs are befriending children orphaned by the tsunami, and selling them to

sex traffickers.

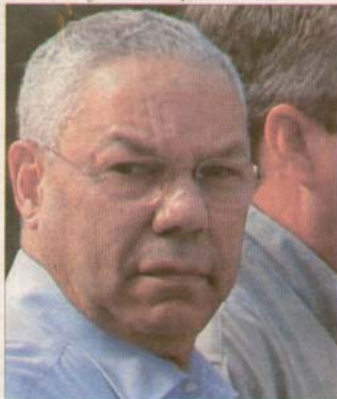
A spokesman for Unicef in Indonesia, John Budd, said there had been one confirmed case of a child being smuggled from the devastated Indonesian province of Aceh to the nearby city of Medan for trafficking purposes.

He said that as a matter of urgency, Unicef was setting up registration schemes around Aceh to account for all children currently on their own.

The threat to children is not confined to Aceh. There are reports that a 12-year-old Swedish boy injured in the tsunami in Thailand may have been kidnapped from a hospital.

The boy's American father flew to Thailand to find him. But although staff said he had been there the day after the disaster, there was no longer any trace of him.

According to Unicef, a man in India who claimed to be one child's uncle turned out to be a fraud. In Sri Lanka, the National Child Protection Authority is investigating reports that two girls were sexually abused at a shelter in Galle, and a separate report that another woman was gang raped.



Colin Powell

Police arrest rebel leader in Peru

The leader of a group of renegade soldiers who stormed a police station in Peru and held at least 10 police officers hostage has been arrested.

Former army major Antauro Humala turned himself in while negotiating surrender, an interior ministry spokesperson told the Associated Press.

He and a group of up to 200 seized the station in the southern Andean town of Andahuaylas on Saturday.

They were demanding the resignation of Peruvian president Alejandro Toledo.

Maj Humala was arrested during negotiations with national police chief Felix Murazzo at the town hall of Andahuaylas, 400 kms (250 miles) south of the capital, Lima. "I have been placed under arrest by military order and in the next few hours I will be taken to anti-terrorist police headquarters in Lima," he told the AFP news agency by telephone.

It was unclear whether any of his followers have also given up.

The BBC correspondent earlier reported that an operation by Peru's security forces to re-take the police station was suspended after a request by the human rights

ombudsman.

A representative for the ombudsman as well as a Catholic priest had been in negotiations during Monday with Maj Humala.

The rebels are former members of the military or national police, who include veterans of conflicts with Ecuador and Peru's own leftist rebels.

They stormed the police station on Saturday, which led to the deaths of four police officers and 19 wounded. Ten policemen were also reportedly held hostage.

Earlier on Monday, Maj Humala agreed to lay down arms in return for a guarantee of safety for his men but he later retracted his offer, accusing the government forces of firing at them.

As Peru's security forces surrounded the police station, the authorities declared a curfew in and around the town.

Our correspondent reports that the rebels accuse President Toledo of corruption and of selling out to business interests in Chile, which is Peru's historic rival.

But the group's broader aim, he adds, is to establish a nationalist indigenous movement modelled on the ancient Inca Empire.

Odd World

Elephants save tourists from Tsunami

Agitated elephants felt the tsunami coming, and their sensitivity saved about a dozen foreign tourists from the fate of thousands killed by the giant waves.

"I was surprised because the elephants had never cried before," mahout Dang Salangam said on Sunday on Khao Lak beach at the eight-elephant business offering rides to tourists.

The elephants started trumpeting — in a way Dang, 36, and his wife Kulada, 24, said could only be described as crying — at first light, about the time an earthquake measured at a magnitude of 9.0 cracked open the sea off Indonesia's Sumatra island. The elephants soon calmed down. But they started wailing again about an hour later and this time they could not be comforted despite their mahouts' attempts at reassurance.

"The elephants didn't believe the mahouts. They just kept running for the hill," said Wit Aniwat, 24, who takes the money from tourists and helps them on to the back of elephants from a sturdy wooden platform.

Those with tourists aboard headed for the jungle-clad hill behind the resort beach where at least 3,800 people, more than half of them foreigners, would soon be killed. The elephants that were not working broke their hefty chains.

"Then we saw the big wave coming and we started running," Wit said.

"The mahouts managed to turn the elephants to lift the tourists onto their backs," Kulada said.

She used her hands to describe how the huge beasts used their trunks to pluck the foreigners from the ground and deposit them on their backs.

The tsunami drove up to 1 km (1,000 yards) inshore from the gently sloping beach which had been so safe for children it made Khao Lak an ideal place for a family holiday. But it stopped short of where the elephants stood.

On Sunday, the elephants were back at work giving rides to the tourists on whom the area depends.

German Ewald Heeg, who said he came from a small town near Frankfurt, said his charter company had offered his family — wife, two daughters and one of their boyfriends — the chance to go straight home, but he had turned it down.

"Our family is OK so we stay here to make our holiday," he said.

Woman starts fresh career at 96

It's never too late to start a new career, even if you're 96 years old — and the new job is modelling cosmetics.

Irene Sinclair, a Guyana-born pensioner living in London, is appearing on billboards around Britain this month, wrinkles and all, to help sell Dove, a popular brand of facial cream.

"I've never felt beautiful in my life, but I feel I am now," said Sinclair, quoted in the Daily Mirror newspaper Tuesday. "It's all about growing old gracefully."

Her secret? "I don't stay indoors," she said. "I try and get fresh air as much as I can by going for walks."

Sinclair is the latest of a number of women — including a half-dozen with "real curves" — which Dove, a Unilever brand, is using to promote itself among women put off by the idea that beauty is defined by flat skinny supermodels.

Last year a survey for Dove, conducted among 3,200 women in 10 countries, found that 31 percent thought they looked "natural" and 29 percent "average" — compared to two percent which replied "beautiful".

Tsunami hero arrested

An Australian hailed as a hero for allegedly rescuing more than a dozen tsunami victims in Thailand was arrested Monday as he returned home by police who recognized him as a suspected burglar.

Thomas David Connell was handcuffed and arrested by Queensland state police after he stepped off the plane at Brisbane International Airport.

Police said they recognized Connell, whom they had been seeking for two years, after he gave a television interview from Thailand that aired in Australia last week. The said he is wanted on assault and burglary charges.

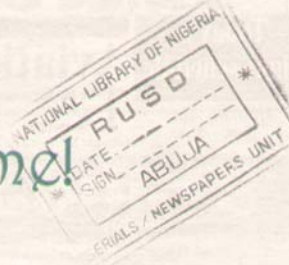
The 32-year-old businessman was dubbed by local media as "the good samaritan of Patong Beach" for his role in allegedly saving as many as 20 people during the Dec. 26 tsunami that smashed over the island resort of Phuket.

Connell appeared in Brisbane Magistrate's Court late Monday and was granted bail until his next court appearance in February. Connell said he spent most of the day in a holding cell suffering flashbacks of his ordeal, and that police had mistaken him for someone else.

"To be a life saver, saving 20 people, and then come back to my home country and I'm going straight into a bloody jail cell with hoodlums all day," Connell told Channel 10 television network. "I'm not a bloody hoodlum."



A gift of a lifetime!



Dear Nigerians,

I, Professor Babatunde Osotimehin, Chairman, National Action Committee on AIDS (NACA) wish you peace, harmony and the joy of this yuletide season.

As is customary during this season, the National Action Committee on AIDS (NACA) is giving to all Nigerians the best gift you can give to loved ones.

A gift of a lifetime!

And so, I say to all Nigerians old and young in this festive season, Protect yourselves against HIV/AIDS.

To youths particularly, the future is ahead of you, don't throw it away with irresponsible behaviour that could put you at risk of HIV/AIDS. Please zip up!



The fight against HIV/AIDS is a collective one, and we must all join hands to wage it. The National Action Committee on AIDS (NACA) will continually be in the vanguard of this battle.

Once again, I thank President Olusegun Obasanjo for his care and support of our activities and wish all Nigerians a Happy New year and an HIV/AIDS free 2005.

Yours Sincerely,

Osotimehin

Prof. Babatunde Osotimehin,
Chairman National Action Committee on AIDS.
(NACA)



Prof. Babatunde Osotimehin,
Chairman, National Action Committee on AIDS
(NACA)

National Action Committee on AIDS

Plot 823, Ralph Shodehinde Street, Central Area, Abuja.
Tel: 09-2904413-9
Website: www.nacanigeria.org

Business Trust

Today's flight schedule

Albarka Air	
Lagos - Abuja	07:20
	10:30
	15:15
	13:00
Abuja - Lagos	8:45a.m.
	11:00
	13:15
	17:00
Maiduguri - Abuja 06:50	
Abuja - Maid	17:00
Abuja - PHC	9:00a.m.
PHC - Abuja	11:00a.m.
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.
Abuja - Kano	3:45p.m.

EAS Airlines	
Lagos - Abuja	8:15p.m.
	11:45a.m.
	5:45p.m.
Abuja - Lagos	10:15a.m.
Yola - Abuja	7:15p.m.
Abuja - Yola	11:15a.m.
PH - Lagos	2:00p.m.
Dnab Airlines	
Abuja - Lagos	8:20 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.
Abuja - Lagos	8:55 a.m.
	11:15
Lagos-Sokoto	8:55am.
Sokoto-Lagos	11:55am.
Calabar - Lagos	7:20 a.m.
PH - Lagos	9:45 a.m.

Most airlines operate the same flight schedule on week days.

Aviation ministry targets N3.1bn revenue

The federal ministry of aviation has targeted 23 million dollars (about N3.1 billion) as revenue in 2005 from additional frequencies to foreign airlines operating in the country.

Aviation minister, Isa Yuguda made this known in Abuja in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on the ministry's projections for the new year.

"My ministry has projected generating the sum of 23 million dollars from extra flights in the 2005 financial year due to a surge in demand for international air travels since the restoration of democracy in 1999," Yuguda said.

He said that the projected revenue would accrue from the payment of royalties and other aviation charges to the relevant aviation agencies in the country.

He said that the additional frequencies to be granted to the foreign airlines were outside their Bilateral Air Services Agreement (BASA) entitlements.

According to him, additional frequencies are given to alleviate the difficulties usually suffered by passengers on international routes "During peak seasons passengers on such routes are normally

stranded, including those connecting flights through Nigerian international airports".

On BASA, the minister said that the Federal Executive Council (FEC) had approved 10 of them, which, he noted, had since been signed with ten countries in order to establish direct air links with them.

Although, he did not give the names of the countries, he said that they were located in Africa, Europe and the Middle East.

The minister of aviation, Malam Isa Yuguda, made this known at the weekend in Abuja, while briefing newsmen on the activities of his ministry in 2004 and projections for 2005.

"MMA is being promoted for a hub status in the region and we are currently putting in place the necessary machinery to achieve that objective," Yuguda said.

According to him, "the ministry is assiduously working toward achieving this goal by striving to make the aviation industry in

Yuguda, therefore, said that the action had eased the difficulties hitherto experienced by the travelling public on those routes.

He said that the BASA had resulted in increased commercial activities and improved bilateral relations with these countries.

"The new airlines designated to Nigeria as a result of the agreements have established local offices and are also creating employment

opportunities for our people, he added.

In addition, the aviation agencies have also benefited from the improved revenue arising from charges paid by the airlines, while the airports are recording increased patronage and operations, the minister noted.

"We are also working on 10 additional BASAs, which are currently awaiting clearance from the Federal Ministry of Justice as a precursor to obtaining FEC

approval," Yuguda told NAN.

He said that when approved, direct links would be established with Cape Verde, The Gambia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Sao Tome and Principe, Equatorial Guinea, Qatar and Belgium.

NAN learnt that it is envisaged that the air agreements would accelerate national economic growth and development as well as bilateral relationship between Nigeria and other countries.

Lagos airport to serve as sub-regional hub - Yuguda

Nigeria's main gateway, Murtala Muhammed International Airport (MMIA), Lagos, is being repositioned to serve as a hub for the West African sub-region.

The minister of aviation, Malam Isa Yuguda, made this known at the weekend in Abuja, while briefing newsmen on the activities of his ministry in 2004 and projections for 2005.

"MMIA is being promoted for a hub status in the region and we are currently putting in place the necessary machinery to achieve that objective," Yuguda said.

According to him, "the ministry is assiduously working toward achieving this goal by striving to make the aviation industry in

Nigeria the best in Africa and Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos, a hub in the region".

He said that the choice of MMIA was informed by it constituting about 80 per cent of Nigeria's aviation traffic.

Yuguda added that 75 per cent of aviation revenue was generated from the airport and that about 90 per cent foreign investment potential travel through the MMIA.

He said that the airport houses the headquarters of the critical aviation agencies and other aviation service providers in the country.

The minister said that the ministry and the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) had adopted a number of measures aimed

at making the airport more user-friendly and secured as well as attract investment opportunities.

He also said that the facilities at the airport had been rehabilitated, while others were being upgraded to meet international standards.

Yuguda said that the main prerequisites for a hub included large connections to all parts of the world and state-of-the-art facilities.

He noted, however, that the country's aviation authorities were working closely with the airlines to facilitate effective scheduling and connecting flights.

"This will reduce cost, open up new markets and provide better services for the airport users," he added.

He further stated that the government was making

efforts to establish industrial development zones at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Nnamdi Azikiwe International and Port Harcourt International Airport (PHIA).

"Also, efforts are underway to develop properties that will attract economic benefit from the proximity of MMIA and PHIA to major harbours and tenants who require commercial, industrial, office and retail accommodation near the airports," the minister said.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that modern cargo villages are planned for MMIA, NAIJA and PHIA to boost import and export businesses.

Tsunami: Chinese airline continues emergency airlift

China Southern Airlines, the largest airline in the People's Republic of China, is continuing its 747 freight airlift of emergency medical supplies to the affected areas of Indonesia and Sri Lanka.

China Southern has taken both of its 747-400 freighters off-line from its standard Europe/China and USA/China commercial service and has pushed them into emergency airlift duty to Colombo, Sri Lanka, and Medan, Indonesia.

The first China Southern freighter landed in Colombo on 30 December at 16:55 local time; while the airline's second freighter landed

(same day) in Indonesia at 21:53.

A third freighter flight left on 2 January from Beijing bound again for Indonesia and was expected to arrive at 21:53.

"We are pleased to be part of our nation's ongoing commitment to aid the hardest hit areas of last week's tidal wave," said Mr. Li Kun, Executive Vice President, China Southern Airlines.

Mr. Li added, "Each of our freighters is stuffed full with medicines, including sterile gauzes and bandages, as well as food and emergency tents."

He also said that each 747-400 freighter lift has also

included local language interpreters.

All facets of China Southern Airlines' operations are participating in this unprecedented airlift of emergency supplies and medicines to these flood-ravaged areas, including the

Operations Control Center at the new Baiyun International Airport, which is coordinating all air logistics and country clearance approvals.

The largest airline in The People's Republic of China for the past 15

Southern Airlines (www.cs-air.com/en) connects more than 80 cities around the globe. Major business and vacation destinations served in China include: Beijing, Chengdu, Guangzhou, Gullin, Hong Kong, Kunming, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Wuhan, as well as international service, including: Amsterdam, Bangkok, Fukuoka, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Islamabad, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, Los Angeles, Manila, Melbourne, Moscow, Osaka, Paris, Penang, Phnom Penh, Seoul, Singapore, Sydney and Tokyo.

For China Southern Airlines reservations and information, please contact your local travel agent.

American airliner flew 4.3bn RPMs in 2004

Southwest Airlines Company announced yesterday that the company flew 4.3 billion revenue passenger miles (RPMs) in December 2004, a 13.1 billion RPMs flown in December 2003.

RPMs flown in December 2003. Available seat miles (ASMs) increased 12.2 percent to 6.9 billion from the December 2003 level of 6.2 billion. The load factor for the month was 62.9 percent, compared to 64.0

percent for the same period last year.

For the fourth quarter 2004, Southwest flew 13.1 billion RPMs, compared to the 11.7 billion RPMs recorded for the same period in 2003, an

increase of 10.5 percent to 20.2 billion from the fourth quarter 2003 level of 18.3 billion. The fourth quarter 2004 load factor was 65.0 percent, compared to 63.8 percent for the same period last year.

Market Indicators

Nigerian Inter Bank Foreign Exchange (NIFEX) Rates

Currency	Bid(S=N)	Offer(S=N)
Spot Fixing	133	133.3

30	1.4822 / 1.4855	134.4822 / 134.7855
60	2.9586 / 2.9652	135.9586 / 136.2652
90	4.4292 / 4.4392	137.4292 / 137.7392

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Accra - +234 21 8118789

www.bcr.8110

Business Trust



Members of the board of directors taking the National Anthem during the annual general meeting of the Cement Company of Northern Nigeria (CCNN) otherwise known as Sokoto Cement recently

Trade Bank takes debtors' case to Presidency

Trade Bank Plc, groaning under bad debts, has decided to enlist the support of the presidency in the bid to recover debts owed by some government agencies.

Chairman of the board of directors of the bank, Alhaji Alarape Salman (SAN) who disclosed this during a visit to the Kwara State deputy governor, Chief Joel Oganjeki in Ilorin yesterday, named NAFCON as one of the big debtors of the bank.

The chairman said "we have decided at the board level that we are going to write the CBN governor to follow us to Mr. President to discuss the money owed the bank by NAFCON".

He said NAFCON can not presently pay the debt "but unfortunately we have to make provision for that money being owed and the money is so much, and the law does not permit me to disclose it publicly, but it is affecting the bank."

Alhaji Salman said the development had affected the health of the bank, warning that if action was not taken, it could lead to negative implications on the operations of the bank.

"We intend to seek the grace of Mr. President to see what the federal government can do on behalf of NAFCON", the bank chairman added.

Alhaji Salman also mentioned Kwara Polytechnic, Ilorin as another debtor and hoped that the situation would be rectified.

He said Trade Bank had commenced talks with some banks in the bid to recapitalize in accordance with the directive of the

Central Bank of Nigeria assuring that nothing would be done to jeopardize the interest of the state's shares.

The chairman while commending the non-interference policy of the state government which he described as "peoples government" called for more support for the bank in its recapitalization programme.

NEPZA boss laments policy inconsistencies

The managing director,

Export Processing Zones Authority (NEPZA), Mr. Sina Agbougbe has condemned frequent policy tinkering on Free Zones saying that it may drive away investors from Nigeria.

Delivering a paper entitled "Nigeria Free Zones, Customs Service and Micro Service Development" at the last Comptroller General Conference which took place recently in Calabar, he stressed the need for better understanding of the Free Zones Scheme by all stakeholders.

He said that the main purpose of Free Zones World wide, is to promote industrialization and international commerce through the provision of a conducive macro and micro business environment.

To achieve productivity, he said Nigeria has widened the scope of coverage of Free Zones to include commercial,

From Abdulrazaq Adebayo, Correspondent, Ilorin

Responding, the deputy governor pledged that the government would do everything possible to assist in the debt recovering drive saying the banking industry should not be seen as a national cake.

He also addressed the management and the board to strengthen its debt recovery sector and urged Kogi state to take higher interest in the bank.

From Adelanwa Bamgboye, Correspondent, Lagos

industrial/export processing zones, Free ports, special economic zones, single factory enterprise vs export processing factory, etc.

He noted that this country makes money from the sales of crude oil which does not create jobs adding that the Free Zones must create jobs.

Another reason for the existence of Free Zones according to him, is international competition which offer some form of extraterritorial status to goods stored and processed in such areas.

He stressed that Nigeria needs the Free Zones Scheme to function effectively well for economic development adding that the Nigeria Customs Service is a necessary companion in the nurturing of our pet project the Free Zone Incubator.

According to him, the role of the Nigeria Customs in trade facilitation and development is so vital in the Free Zones. For this reason he said that the government should de-emphasize Customs Service in revenue collection as there are many other jobs for them.

Cross River has great economic potentials

The High Commissioner of Trinidad and Tobago to Nigeria, Mr. Manniram Rombissou, has said that Cross River State has great economic potentials.

He described the state's economy as strong, when he visited some sites of economic and tourism importance in the state, during the Christmas period.

The high commissioner said his country and Nigeria had a lot in common in terms of climate, culture and economic potential.

He said it was regrettable that communication between both countries

could as three days on the Atlantic Ocean, instead of six hours, due to absence of direct flights between them.

Rombissou said he hoped that bilateral

agreement between the two countries would make it possible for Virgin Nigerian to ensure such flights.

Gov. Donald Duke said he was impressed by the sight of Africans in Diaspora coming home to enjoy Christmas in Cross River.

Duke, represented by his deputy, Mr. Walter Eneji, said the relationship between Nigeria and the Caribbean was

- Envoy waxing stronger, adding that the Christmas celebration was a family reunion for the Caribbeans.

The governor called for a strong economic link between Nigeria and the Caribbean in view of the similarities in culture, climate, vegetation and history.

...to generate N500m tax

Cross River State Government says it intends to generate about N500 million every month from urban development tax.

Gov. Donald Duke disclosed this while inspecting the urban renewal programme and the road under construction in Ogoja Local Government Area of the state.

Duke said the tax would be paid in urban areas of the state, where the renewal programme was implemented.

The governor was conducted round the road project

by works commissioner Mr. Ekpo Okon.

He said the tax would cover tenement rates, sanitation tariffs and ground rent.

Meanwhile, the government has already designated Calabar, Ugep, Ikom, Ogoja and Obudu council areas as urban development areas for the purpose of collecting the tax.

Duke said the development programmes would come to full realisation in 2020, by which time the government would disengage from economic ventures.



CENTRAL BANK OF NIGERIA TENDER NOTICE

NIGERIAN TREASURY BILLS

Notice is hereby given by the Central Bank of Nigeria that 91-day Federal Government of Nigeria Treasury Bills amounting to N45,000,000,000 will be issued by an auction-based system on Thursday, 13/01/2005

Interested Authorised Dealers (Commercial/Merchant Banks, Designated Discount Houses and Brokers) are invited to submit tenders to reach the Issues Office, Central Bank of Nigeria, Lagos, not later than 1.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 11/01/2005.

Each tender must be in multiple of N1,000 subject to a minimum of N10,000 per tender. Authorised Dealers are allowed to submit multiple bids and quote multiple rates. A tender may be for own account of Authorised Dealers or made on behalf of interested members of the public, who are advised to apply to their banks or brokers for the bills.

Tenders for the Bills should be submitted on the prescribed printed forms in duplicate and in sealed envelopes clearly marked "TENDER FOR BILLS." The result of the tender will be announced before the close of business on Wednesday 12/01/2005. The Bank reserves the right to reject any tender in part or in full.

Allotment letters will be issued to successful tenderers on Thursday, 13/01/2005. Payment in full for the amount of the accepted tenders must be made to the Central Bank of Nigeria not later than 1.30 p.m on the issue date 13/01/2005. This will normally be effected by direct debit to the accounts of the affected Authorised Dealers which should ensure that their accounts with the Bank are adequately funded for this purpose.

Issues Office
CENTRAL BANK OF NIGERIA
Timubu Square
Lagos.

Business Trust International

Saudi oil reserves may top 461bn barrels

The Saudi Arabia's oil reserves, the world's largest, could increase by almost 77 percent to top 461 billion barrels in a few years, the nation's oil minister said Sunday.

"There are big chances to increase the kingdom's producible oil reserves by

200 billion barrels," Ali Naimi said in a statement issued after he inaugurated new oil fields in eastern Saudi Arabia. "This will come either through new discoveries or through increasing production from known deposits."

Saudi Arabia says its registered reserves amount

to 261 billion barrels.

Naimi reiterated promises to continue meeting consumer demand for world crude.

"The Kingdom is keen to ensure a balance between supply and demand and the stability of the market... so that producers benefit and consumers do not lose," the official Saudi News Agency quoted him as saying.

The newly inaugurated Qatif Producing Plants, operated by the Saudi national oil giant Aramco, is believed to have a capacity of 800,000 barrels per day. The plants will also provide 370 million standard cubic feet (10 million cubic meters) of associated gas.

The onshore part of the field has the capacity to provide 500,000 daily barrels of Arabian light crude, the statement said.

The new offshore Abu-Sa'fah field contains an estimated 6.1 billion barrels of oil reserves and will produce 300,000 bpd (barrels per day) of Arabian medium crude.

Naimi has said the kingdom plans to increase its oil production capacity to 12.5 million bpd from the current 11 million over the next few years. The desert kingdom sits on a quarter of the world's proven oil reserves.

New York stocks struggle amid dollar rally, merger

Investors extended their new year's profit-taking into a second session Tuesday, pushing stock indices lower despite continued strength in the dollar and new merger activity.

Wall Street was cheered as Rayovac Corporation announced the first major acquisition of 2005, a \$476 million purchase of United Industries Corporation, a privately held lawn care and pet supply company. The deal continues a growing trend of merger and acquisition activity since the post-election rally began.

The dollar, having tumbled to record lows last month, showed signs of resilience, moving slightly higher against the euro and the Japanese yen. While the dollar is still at historic lows, benefiting exporters, signs of strength will help importers of raw materials as well.

However, basic materials stocks fell alongside metals and other commodities, spurred by the stronger dollar. And investors were more interested in collecting profits after the past two months of gains, rather than making new bets.

"Right now, I do think investors remain optimistic, but the markets are overbought and we'll need something fairly positive to happen to push the market higher," said Michael Sheldon, chief market strategist at Spencer Clarke LLC.

The Dow Jones industrial average was up 1.55 points, or 0.01 percent, in morning trading, while the broader Standard & Poor's 500-stock index was off 0.84 points, or 0.1 percent. The tech-rich Nasdaq composite index slid 9.83 points, or 0.5 percent.

The nation's industrial sector continues to gain traction, according to a new economic report. Factory orders were up 1.2 percent in November, the Commerce Department said, better than the one percent gain economists had expected.

Automakers were expected to garner attention on Wall Street as they announce their December sales figures throughout the day. Ford Motor Co. fell 4 cents to \$14.67 and General Motors Corporation slipped 46 cents to \$19.84, while DaimlerChrysler added 27 cents to \$47.95.

The stronger dollar weighed on raw materials prod-

ucers, which could see their margins squeezed should the trend continue. Dow component Alcoa Inc. lost 38 cents to \$30.61.

Rayovac gained \$5.34 to \$34.90 on the news of its agreement with United Industries, which includes the assumption of \$880 million in debt. The move will strengthen Rayovac's consumer products offerings and allow wider distribution of United Industries' products, analysts said.

Krispy Kreme Doughnuts Inc. fell as a shareholder lawsuit alleged the troubled doughnut maker frequently padded its sales figures by over shipping doughnuts to its wholesalers, knowing that many would be returned. Krispy Kreme, which said it plans to restate earnings for its past fiscal year, lost \$1.27 to \$11.01.

Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda sign tax-free trade pact

A customs union linking Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda comes into force at the weekend following six years of negotiations.

The new trading bloc is a first step towards a common market and will gradually enable goods to pass between the three countries tax-free.

The member states hope it will also lead to a common currency and eventually a political federation.

The union is an attempt to revive the East African

community which collapsed 10 years after it was set up in 1967.

Correspondents say the three countries' farm-based economies are considered stable when compared to their war-devastated neighbours.

The treaty setting up the East Africa Community (EAC) Customs Union was signed last March.

Under its terms, Kenya will pay duty on its goods entering Tanzania and Uganda for the first five years, to compensate for its



Mobile phone makers partner to produce super 3G handset, picture shows one of the 3G handset.

Libya signs holiday complex deal

Italian property services firm Gruppo Norman has signed a deal with Libya's government to build and manage one of the country's largest tourist resorts.

The Farwa Island Project

is among the first major non-oil related project with a foreign firm since the thaw in the country's relations with the West. The resort on the Mediterranean will be sited near the Tunisian border.

The complex, expected to cost about \$268m (£137m) to complete, will accommodate up to 3,800 holidaymakers.

Construction is expected to take between five and six years, Gruppo Norman said.

Turkey beats IMF-backed inflation target

Turkey said inflation in 2004 had been 9.32 percent, well below the 12 percent year-end target set in a strict IMF backed economic recovery programme and underscoring the country's hard-fought battle against decades of high prices.

Cutting chronic inflation is a key element in a 16-billion-dollar stand-by deal Turkey signed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) after a severe financial crisis in 2001 plunged the country into its worst recession since World War II.

The programme is set to expire in February, becoming the first stand-by deal Turkey has completed after failing on 17 other occasions.

Last month Turkey and the IMF agreed on a new three-year arrangement worth 10 billion dollars (7.4 billion euros) to bolster economic recovery.

Tariff levels against goods from countries outside the grouping will be harmonised.

BBC East Africa correspondent Adam Mynott says it has not been easy to get this far and on a number of occasions it appeared agreement would be impossible.

But the leaders of the three countries recognise that tariff-free trade promises increased economic growth, our correspondent says. Ultimate goals also include an East African central bank.

The reform saved Turkey from the embarrassing record of having the world's largest note in circulation, namely a 20 million Turkish lira bill. One YTL is now worth 0.74 dollars or 0.55 euros.

The anti-inflation struggle will also be a principal component of the new arrangement with the IMF, which is expected to be approved by the Fund's executive board early this year.

Under the new programme, Turkey is aiming to bring inflation down to eight percent in 2005, five percent in 2006 and four percent in 2007.

Despite the spectacular recovery some analysts fear the tide could turn if Ankara eases on spending.

But the government has vowed on several occasions that it will not deviate from its tight austerity programme.

"We will do our utmost to achieve targets for 2005 and later years, we will not make concessions on our budget and monetary policies and we will achieve the set targets, even though there may be small deviations," Babacan said.

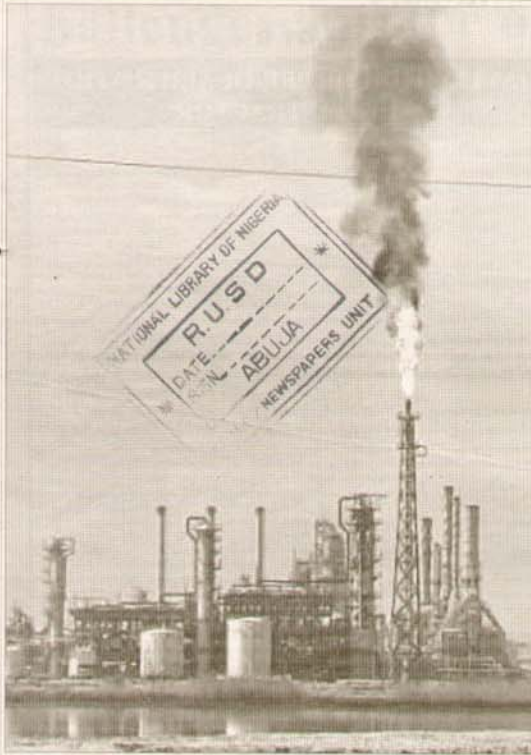
Both the yearly and monthly increases were well below expectations established in a survey of some 70 economists, bankers and business leaders carried out by the central bank last month.

The interviewees predicted that consumer prices would increase by an average



Textile and garment industries are to benefit more in the tax-free pact sign by the east African countries.

Business Trust International



An oil extraction facility at an oil field.

US-Asia imports not hit by Tsunami

The movement of goods from tsunami-ravaged Asian countries to the United States — everything from furniture to clothing — have continued to flow because big manufacturing centers for the most part were not damaged.

But some economists said a breakout of disease in the region could further strain economies in the Asian countries and possibly begin to affect exports.

Eight days after the devastating December 26, 2004 disaster, private economists, U.S. companies, government officials and others were still struggling Monday to assess its economic impact.

The AFP reports that the disaster is expected to have little affect on the US economy. But tourism in the region, especially Thailand and Sri Lanka is expected to be hard hit, economists said.

Many companies in the United States rely on factories in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, India, Thailand and other countries in the region to make clothing, home textiles and wood furniture.

However, big manufacturing centers were not hit by the

tsunamis. "We have not seen any disruption whatsoever to manufacturers in those countries," said Rick Darling, president of Li & Fung USA, a Hong Kong-based firm that finds manufacturing plants for US companies.

Kohl's, Bed, Bath & Beyond, and American Eagle Outfitters are among its clients, Darling said.

A spokeswoman for US Customs and Border Protection said ports in Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore are operating normally. In India, some shipments have been rerouted away from the port of Chennai, which suffered some damage, to Mumbai, in Bombay, said Darling.

Dan Hess, founder and chief executive officer of Merchant Forecast, a research firm covering the retail sector, said he was not aware of any major disruptions of raw materials from Asia to US companies.

The impact of the disaster on the US economy "should be fairly limited," said Lynn Reaser, chief economist at Banc of America Capital Management.

The spread of disease is a

primary risk at this point, Reaser said. "Countries' economies could see more prolonged damage and a drain on their resources to care for the ill."

Indonesia and perhaps other countries in the region could see depressed economic activity in the current January-to-March quarter, said Reaser. But she added that economic activity also may get a lift from efforts to rebuild roads, bridges, hotels and homes.

Samsung develops world's largest organic LED panel

South Korea Samsung Electronics has developed the world's largest organic light emitting diode (OLED) display panel for high-definition televisions.

The 21-inch (53.34-centimeter) OLED panel outperforms existing liquid crystal displays (LCDs) in brightness, slimmness and power efficiency, the firm said.

Organic LED screens generate their own light, eliminating the need for back lighting and allowing equipment makers to develop slimmer and more power efficient

Britain proposes G8 debt moratorium for Tsunami countries

Britain unveiled a proposal to its partners in the Group of Eight most industrialised nations for an "immediate moratorium" on debt repayments from countries hit by the tsunami disaster in the Indian Ocean.

The AFP reports that Britain's finance minister, Gordon Brown said the freeze on about three billion dollars "initially" in annual debt repayments from the hardest hit nations would be part of a broader package of emergency aid and reconstruction funds.

"What we are suggesting is an immediate moratorium on debt repayments from the afflicted countries," Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown told BBC radio.

"That would then lead to an analysis of the debt needs of these countries with the possibility of some write-off of debt, and at the same to insure that the money goes to the areas and people in greatest need in these countries,"

Brown said.

On January 1, Britain assumed the chairmanship of the G8 group of richest countries, which includes Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States.

Canada on Thursday put in place a unilateral debt moratorium for nations hit by the Asian tsunami catastrophe with "immediate effect," said Foreign Minister Pierre Pettigrew.

Brown said he had the support of the United States for the "first idea of freezing debt repayments."

The chancellor added that the debt repayment freeze would be followed by complementary steps.

"The International Monetary Fund will offer emergency assistance, particularly to the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Indonesia that could be worth up to a billion dollars," he said.

"The World Bank, which has made an initial contribution for emergency relief, will

add to that very substantially over the next few days with money for reconstruction that the president of the World Bank will announce," he said.

Dollar bounces back

The dollar bounced higher on yesterday as investors closed bets on further losses in the US currency which hit a series of record lows against the euro in the final days of 2004.

Renters reports that the greenback extended the previous day's rebound to \$1.3359, recovering three cents from an all-time low against the euro hit late last week.

It also pulled away from last month's multi-year lows against the yen, Swiss franc and British pound.

"Momentum and technical funds are bailing out of short dollar positions," said Ian Gunner, head of foreign exchange research at Mellon Bank.

The dollar has now notched up three consecutive years of losses and most analysts expect the currency to fall further in 2005 in order to correct the United States' huge current account deficit.

However, the speed of the dollar's decline in the past two weeks meant some correction was not unexpected.

"We had some fairly sharp moves amid thin liquidity so it's unsurprising we've seen a bit of profit-taking and a bit of a bounce back," said Mital Kotecha, head of global foreign exchange research at Calyon.

At 6:25 a.m. yesterday the dollar was up 0.65 percent at 103.38 yen and over half a percent up at \$1.3385 per euro.

Inflation in the euro zone rose to 2.3 percent in December, making it harder for the European Central Bank (ECB) to consider cutting interest rates in response to the euro's strength.

The ECB, which aims to keep inflation close to but below 2 percent, is expected to keep interest rates unchanged at its next meeting on January 13.

Friday's non-farm US jobs data is the big theme of the year's first trading week, with a rise of 175,000 forecast in December after a gain of just 112,000 in November, according to the median forecast of a Reuters poll.

Oil prices steady in New York, dive in London

Crude oil prices steadied after falling heavily a day earlier as milder weather in the United States helped to ease concerns about low supplies of heating fuel during the northern winter.

AFP reports that London's Brent oil price fell sharply as traders, returning to their desks for the first time since December 31, played catch up with their counterparts across the Atlantic.

New York's main contract for light sweet crude for delivery in February was unchanged at 42.12 dollars a barrel in electronic dealing

around 0920 GMT after closing down 1.33 dollars on Monday. In London the price of Brent North Sea crude oil for delivery in February slumped 1.36 dollars to 39.10 dollars a barrel.

In the United States, weather forecasts indicate warmer conditions in the country's northeast region, which accounts for 80 percent of the nation's heating oil usage.

Traders were meanwhile gearing up for the latest weekly snapshot of US commercial crude inventories, to be released on Wednesday.

positioned well to be a leader in the market for large-sized OLEDs for TVs," said Jun-Hyung Souk, senior vice president of the LCD research and development centre.

Samsung said the OLED display features resolution of 6.22 million pixels and uses active matrix-based (AM) technology for low power consumption and high-resolution.

The global market for organic LEDs is forecast to grow to 830 million dollars this year from 330 million dollars last year.



UNIVERSITY OF ABUJA

P.M.B. 117, ABUJA, NIGERIA.

LOT A

INVITATION FOR PRE-QUALIFICATION OF CONTRACTORS

Introduction:

The University of Abuja is desirous of commencing the development of Phase One of the following projects at its Permanent Site:

- i) Faculty of Science (UA/PS/06)
- ii) Central Administration Building (UA/PS/07)
- iii) Central Library (UA/PS/08)

Accordingly, applications are invited from interested and reputable construction companies for pre-qualification adhering strictly to the conditions set hereunder:

SCOPE OF WORK

(i) **Faculty of Science:** The Faculty of Science is a two storey concrete framed building partitioned with sandcrete block work. The building is intended to house the science-based departments of the University.

(ii) **Central Administration Building:** The Central Administration is a rectangle-shaped three-floor building structure designed to house the administrative organs of the University.

(iii) **Central Library:** The Central Library building is the focal point of the Academic core of the institution. It is a three-floor structure consisting of a basement, three floors of reading spaces and offices accommodated at the top floor. The building is designed to be ICT compliant with specialized sections and associated provisions.

PRE-QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

A. General

- i) Evidence of registration with Corporate Affairs Commission as a building/civil/engineering company.
- ii) Evidence of current registration with the University of Abuja in Category E
- iii) Tax clearance certificate for the last three years (originals may be required for sighting).
- iv) Certified audited company accounts for the last three years (originals may be required for sighting).
- v) Evidence of registration with the Federal Ministry of Works as a civil/building engineering contractor.

B. TECHNICAL COMPETENCE

- i) Bidders must show evidence of three (3no) contracts of value not less than N300m each executed in the last four (4) years, two of which must have been completed. Bidders must attach photocopies of the letters of award and completion certificates or final payment certificate as evidence. The University reserves the right to verify accuracy of submissions.
- ii) Bidders must provide evidence of core top management and key professional staff of the company with their designations clearly shown within the organizational structure of the company. The CV of the key professional staff for the project must be included in the submission.
- iii) All bidders must provide a list of certifiable civil/building/electrical engineering equipment for the project proposed. These must be listed as owned, hired or leased. Bidders must be ready to show this equipment at short notice to assessors during the period of prequalification.

C. General Conditions

- i) All prequalification documents are to be bound and sealed in an envelop with the title "Prequalification Documents for the project."
- ii) Candidates interested in more than one project must apply separately for each project in line with the criteria outlined above. However, candidates are not to apply for more than two projects.
- iii) For further clarification on the contents of these prequalification criteria, please contact the Department of Physical Development and Management, University of Abuja, Mini Campus, Gwagwalada Abuja between the hours of 10 am - 2 pm Monday to Friday from the date of this advert to the close of the Prequalification period.
- iv) The scoring criteria for this prequalification shall be 85% of the Tendering Process of which bidders must score at least 51% to be considered for the next stage.

D) PRE-QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENT

- i) Bidders will be required to pay the sum of N50,000.00 (Fifty thousand naira) as pre-qualification fees. The documents can only be submitted upon showing the evidence of payment for prequalification which must also be included in the pre-qualification documents.
- ii) Payments for the prequalification fee can be made in cash or certified cheque at the Cash Office of the Bursary Department, University of Abuja, Mini Campus, Gwagwalada, Abuja.
- iii) The prequalification Documents shall be collected from the Department of Physical Development and Management upon the presentation of the evidence of payment of the prescribed fees in the University Bursary. Completed forms are to be sealed and marked at the top right corner of the envelope "prequalification document for project" and hand delivered to:

The Registrar
University of Abuja
Abuja

Submissions of Prequalification documents must reach the above address on or before 12 noon on the 19th of January 2005. The documents so presented will be publicly opened at 2.00 p.m. of the same day at the Senate Chambers of the University's Mini Campus Gwagwalada Abuja. All Bidders are required to be present on the day and time of opening.

- (v) Successful companies deemed to have been pre-qualified will be notified within two weeks of the opening, to proceed to the next stage of the process.
- (v) Bidders are to note that participation in the prequalification exercise does not grant any company the right to be considered for Tender.
- (vi) The University reserves the right to disqualify any or all prequalification documents.

LOT B

INVITATION FOR PRE-QUALIFICATION OF CONTRACTOR

Introduction:

The University of Abuja is desirous of commencing the development of Phase One of the following projects at its Permanent Site:

- i) Students Centre (UA/PS/09)
- ii) Lecture Theatre (UA/PS/10)
- iii) Faculty of Arts (UA/PS/11)

Accordingly, applications are hereby invited from interested and reputable construction companies for pre-qualification, adhering strictly to the conditions set hereunder:

SCOPE OF WORK

(i) Student Center

The Student Center consists of a phased bungalow type building housing cafeteria etc, with interconnecting walkways and associated conveniences.

(ii) Lecture Theatre:

The Lecture Theatre consists of a large theatre seating approximately 750 students with associated toilet facilities.

(iii) Faculty of Arts

The Faculty of Arts is a two storey L-shaped building partitioned with concrete block work. The building is intended to house faculty offices and lecture rooms.

PRE-QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

A. General

- i) Evidence of registration with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC).
- ii) Evidence of current registration with the University of Abuja in Category E
- iii) Tax clearance certificate for the last three years (originals may be required for sighting).
- iv) Certified audited company accounts for the last three years (originals may be required for sighting).
- v) Evidence of registration with the Federal Ministry of works as a civil/building engineering contractor.

B. TECHNICAL COMPETENCE

- i) Bidders must show for projects (i) & (ii) above three (3 Nos) separate building contracts of a value not less than N75 million in the last four years one of which must have been completed. Photocopies of the letters of award and final payment certificate must be enclosed as evidence. The University reserves the right to verify accuracy of submissions.
- ii) Bidders must show for project (iii) above, evidence of three separate (3No.) contracts valued not less than N200 million each executed in the last four years two of which must have been completed. Bidders must attach photocopies of the letters of award and completion certificates or final payment certificate as evidence. The University reserves the right to verify accuracy of submissions.
- iii) Bidders must provide evidence of core top management and key professional staff of the company with their designations clearly indicated within the organizational structure of the company. The CV of the key professional staff for the project must be included in the submissions.
- iv) All bidders must provide a list of verifiable civil/building/electrical engineering equipment for the project proposed. These must be listed as owned, hired or leased. Bidders must be ready to show this equipment at short notice to assessors during the period of prequalification.

C. General Conditions

- i) All prequalification documents are to be bound and sealed in an envelop with the title "Prequalification Documents for- project."
- ii) Candidates interested in more than one project must apply separately for each project in line with the criteria outlined above. However, candidates are not to apply for more than two projects.
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- iv) The scoring criteria for this prequalification shall be 85% of the Tendering Process of which bidders must score at least 51% to be considered for the next stage.

(v) Successful companies deemed to have been pre-qualified will be notified within two weeks of the opening, to proceed to the next stage of the process.

(v) Bidders are to note that participation in the prequalification exercise does not grant any company the right to be considered for Tender.

(vi) The University reserves the right to disqualify any or all prequalification documents.

SIGNED

Alhaji Umar Bappah
Ag. Registrar

MEDIA TRUST LIMITED

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INVITES THE GENERAL PUBLIC

To the

2nd Annual Trust Dialogue

Topic:

Reforming Nigeria, which Model?

Speakers

Professor Mike Kwanashie
Professor Sam Aluko
Malam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi

(Special Adviser to the Vice President on Economic Matters)
(Former Chairman National Economic Intelligence Committee)
(DGM Risk Management Department UBA)

Chairman of the Occasion

Chief Ernest Shonekan
(Former Head of Interim Government)

Special Guest of Honour

Vice President Atiku Abubakar
Turakin Adamawa

Chief Host

Malam Nasir el-Rufa'i
FCT Minister

Royal Father of The Day

His Royal Highness
Etsu Nupe, Alhaji Yahaya Abubakar

Other Important Guests include:

Senate President and all Senators, Speaker House of Representatives and members, House of Representatives, Ministers, State Governors as well as Speakers of State Houses of Assembly.

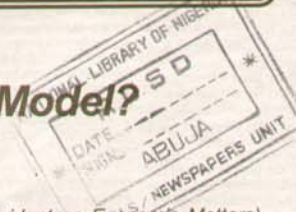
The occasion will also witness the Formal Presentation of the book, *Carrying a Burden* which is the proceedings of the 1st Annual Trust Dialogue held on January 15, 2004 by the Special Guest of Honour, Vice President, Atiku Abubakar

Venue: Ladi Kwali Hall, Abuja Sheraton Hotels & Towers

Date: Thursday 13th January, 2005

Time: 10:00am

Signed
Management
 09-5235787, 5236054, 6705987



Prof Oyibo: Home coming of

"The Nigerian people sent me on a mission to the outside world, and I have delivered the message and accomplished the task. The accomplishment has placed the country in an exalted position and has made the country a king in the world, because the feat you have achieved is so far insurmountable". These were part of the few words uttered by Professor Gabriel Adu Oyibo, to Nigerians who for hours waited at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, in Abuja to receive him. The Nigerian born United States based scholar, and scientist was the gentleman whose latest scientific discovery has reawakened consciousness worldwide, and will most certainly open a new vista that will overhaul the world of science going by the popular comments, both nationally and internationally, regarding his breakthrough in science. He was in Nigeria recently at the instance of the National Universities Commission (NUC) to address the academia on his discovery, which, he claimed, if well funded, would, among other things, provide scientific answers to all intractable human and universal problems, including the deadly HIV/AIDS. The Professor of Mathematics and Physics was in Nigeria on government invitation to consider and workout modalities for the establishment of a workshop for the teaching of his discoveries, which are already gaining popularity in the USA and some parts of Europe.

Upon arrival in Nigeria at about 9:50 pm on Monday, November 22, 2002, members of the National Assembly, government functionaries, officials of the NUC, representatives of Kogi State government, his kinsmen and various cultural dance troupes from Kogi State, including masquerades, received Prof. Oyibo at the local wing of the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport. Although the atmosphere was agog and convivial, with beautiful renditions of music and displays, the celebrated Professor of Mathematics, who was apparently stunned by the tumultuous crowd of admirers that thronged the airport to welcome him, could not say much. He was treated like a king of sorts as he was hurriedly given cover and led away by security men and NUC officials to a convoy of cars that drove him off to the city centre of Abuja, where he was to meet, beginning from the following

By Hammed M Bello,
Senior Political Reporter

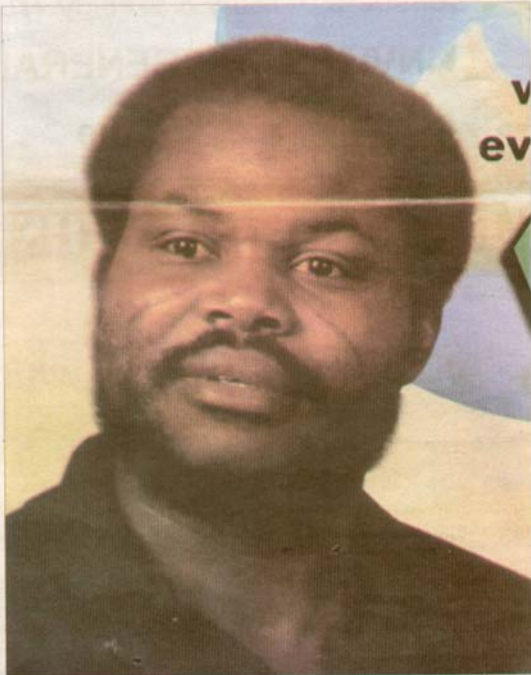
day, with members of the academia, government officials and stakeholders in the education sector.

During his two-weeks visit to the country, Oyibo delivered several lectures and scientifically proved his newfound theory. His major scientific discovery, christened God Almighty Grand Unified Theorem (GAGUT), otherwise known as the theory of everything, is believed to be a demystification of the scientific quest for a holistic and all encompassing general formula for everything, which Albert Einstein tried effortlessly to find via his theory of relativity between 1905-1915.

Scientific research has for ages dictated the pace and modelled the life of man and his existence, and virtually every aspect of human endeavour, ranging from manufacturing, academia, technology, military, warfare and other sundry fields, are in one way or another dependent on the dictates of science, or at least to some level of data collection, observation, measurement and verification. Also, scientists have for ages been engaging in painstaking research in a bid to better understand the universe, matter, man, and the underlying philosophy of creation. Professor Oyibo's latest discovery is yet another input in the continuous scientific research into the secret of creation and existence, and if it endures, (though there has so far not been any tangible objection to it), Professor Oyibo's GAGUT is a testimony that Nigeria has become the contemporary intellectual nerve centre of the world, and the unifying factor of universal scientific philosophy.

In retrospect, Isaac Newton (1642-1727), born in Woolsthorpe, England, the same year that Galileo died, was acclaimed to be the greatest and most influential scientist who ever lived. When Newton was a teenager, his mother took him out of school, hoping that he would become a successful farmer. Fortunately, she was persuaded to send him back to school because his principal talents lay elsewhere, consequently, at eighteen, he entered Cambridge University where he acquired knowledge in science and mathematics, and progressed to his independent research, when he laid the foundation which subsequently revolutionised the world of science.

In the middle of the seventeenth century for instance, the invention of the telescope had revolutionised the entire study of Astronomy, and the English philosopher, Francis Bacon,



Prof. Oyibo

and the French philosopher, Rene Descartes had both urged scientists throughout Europe to cease relying on the authority of classical Greek's Aristotle, but to personally experiment and observe. Although Copernicus and Galileo had cleared the air on some of the misconceptions of ancient science, and contributed to a great understanding of the universe, no set of principles had been formulated that could turn these collections of seemingly unrelated facts into a unified theory with which to make scientific predictions. It was Isaac Newton who supplied that unified theory, and set modern science on the course, it had followed since. This, probably, explained why Michael Hart, in his book, *The 100. A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*, placed Newton as second most influential person so far in the world history, next to Prophet Mohammed (SAW).

According to Hart, Newton is famous for a number of reasons. The first of his discoveries to be published was his groundbreaking work on the nature of light. He discovered in a series of experiments that ordinary white light is a mixture of all the colours of the rainbow, and also made a careful analysis of the consequences of the laws of reflection and refraction which were used in 1668 to design and build the first reflecting telescope, the type used in major astronomical observations today. Newton's major accomplishments were however in mathematics and mechanics. He invented the integral calculus, considered the most important achievement of modern mathematics, which laid the groundwork for modern science. His most important discoveries, however, were in the field of mechanics, the science of how material objects move. Galileo had discovered the first law of motion, which describes the motion of objects if they are not subjected to any exterior forces. In practice, of course, all objects are subject to exterior forces, and the most important question in mechanics is how objects move under such circumstances. This problem was solved by Newton in his famous second law of motion, which may rightly be considered the most fundamental law of classical physics.

The second law (described mathematically by the equation $F=ma$) states that the acceleration of an object, the rate at which its velocity changes is equal to the net force on the objects divided by the object's mass. To those first two laws, Newton added his famous third law of motion which

states that for each action - there is an equal and opposite reaction). The most famous of his scientific laws, the law of universal gravitation.

This set of four laws, taken conjointly, form a unified system by means of which virtually all microscopic mechanical systems, from the swinging of a pendulum to the motion of the planets in their orbits around the sun, may be investigated, and their behaviour predicted. Newton did not merely state these laws of mechanics; he himself, using the mathematical tools of the calculus, showed how these fundamental laws could be applied to the solution of actual problems.

Newton's laws can be, and have been, applied to an extremely broad range of scientific and engineering problems. During his lifetime, the most dramatic application of his law was made in the field of astronomy. In this area, too, Newton led the way. In 1687, he published his great work, the mathematical principles of natural philosophy (usually referred to simply as the *principia*), in which he presented his law of gravitation and laws of motion. Newton showed how these laws could be used to predict precisely the motions of the planets around the sun. The principal problem

of dynamical astronomy - that is, the problem of predicting exactly the positions and motions of the star and planets - was thereby completely solved by Newton in one magnificent sweep. For this reason, Newton is often considered the greatest of all astronomers.

Nigeria's professor Gabriel Oyibo, by popular views, appears to have transcended the feat of Newton and Einstein. Born in Idah, Kogi state, August 27, 1950, Oyibo had his early education at the St. Boniface Primary School Idah and St. Augustine's college, Kappa, both in Kogi state. He obtained his Ph. D in Aeronautics and Mathematics from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute [R. P.I] Troy, New York, where he worked for four years on NASA/AFORS sponsored research, and made several contributions in aircraft design aerodynamics, aero elasticity and mathematics. He taught several courses in highly professional and scholastic areas.

Professor Oyibo has solved the toughest problems in at least three disciplines. For instance, he propounded the Navier-Stokes equation [mathematics], Turbulence [Aeronautics]; and the theory of everything or the Unified field theory, bold [mathematical physics].

He introduced the concept of Affine Transformations into the field of aeroelasticity in aeronautics, which is used by prominent research and aircraft companies around the world.

He also discovered that hydrogen is the only building block of the entire universe and briefed United States Senate on Unified Theory on January 27, 2000 in Washington, D.C.

Oyibo received numerous awards, fellowship and honours, based on enormously painstaking research publications that have translated into the development of humanity.

In more specific terms, for which he is lately honoured, he has developed new group theory methods in mathematics. The methods from the new group theory were first used to solve the full Navier Stokes equations, as well as Reynolds Averaged equations for turbulence. The results of this finding were compiled and published in a research monograph entitled "New group theory for mathematical physics, Gas dynamics and Turbulence" (MR 9076112).

He edited two books entitled, "Applied Mathematics methods and applications" (MR 97m00015) and "Advances in Mathematics Research".

Using the newly developed theory methods, he generalized and proved Einstein's (theory) in an article entitled "Generalized Mathematical

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of world's latest science icon

Proof of Einstein's Theory Using A New group Theory which was published in a Russian and an American journal. This proof of Einstein's theory has been recognized by the American Mathematical Society (AMS) in its mathematical reviews (MR) journal, Mr 98e3007.

The committed scholar has discovered the Unified field theory or the "Theory of Everything", the theory Albert Einstein searched for unsuccessfully most of his life, which Oyibo has published in the book, entitled, *Grand Unified Theorem* bold $G_{(I'ij)'=0}$ already recognized by the American Mathematical Society (AMS) and the European Mathematical Society (EMS). In 2002, he published *Highlights of the Grand Unified Theorem*; formulation of the Unified Field Theory or the Theory of Everything bold $G_{(I'ij)'=0}$.

Professor Oyibo has been involved in research and teaching at the Polytechnic University beginning in 1986, serving as an Associate Professor of Aeronautics. He is currently a professor of Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences at the OFAPPT Institute of Technology and at the University of Bridgeport in Connecticut.

At the community level, he has received the key to Miami Dade country of the New York City Council and the Huntington, NY Town Council, USA. In his home base, he has also been honored by His Royal Majesty, Alhaji Aliyu Obaie, the Atah of the Igalala Kingdom, in Kogi State, Nigeria.

The Igalala National Solidarity Association (INSA) has bestowed on Professor Gabriel Oyibo an Excellent Award. Most importantly, reports recently showed that he has several times been nominated for a most coveted Nobel Prize in Physics. A piece by Adeyeye Joseph in *ThisDay* newspaper of Saturday, July 31, 2004, entitled *Another Nobel Laureate in the making*, compared the fate of Oyibo to that of Copernicus, another great scientist who blazed the trail six centuries ago. According to Joseph, "Copernicus, one of the greatest minds medieval Europe ever produced, committed intellectual kamikaze. His attempt to change the body of knowledge that was his status quo then resulted in his immolation. An immolation so total and destructive that its import could only be succinctly captured in kamikaze: the Japanese word for the crazy and deliberately suicidal Japanese pilots who rammed their planes into US war ships during the world war II.

"Six centuries after Copernicus' new theory turned the world against him, and led



Prof. Turner Iosun, Science and Technology Minister

to his isolation by his contemporaries, Nigerian born, US-based mathematician, Professor Gabriel Oyibo is treading his path. Oyibo, like all scientific cum revolutionary trailblazers, has come against the walls of conventional wisdom in his quest to supplant the old with the new. Almost six centuries after Copernicus' theories dominated discourse in science and the church, Oyibo's theories are objects of much discussion and analysis all over the world.

"Copernicus' scientific hypothesis and theories stumped the civilisation of the time and altered the course of man's search for the unknown, forever.... At present Copernicus' claim that the earth revolves round the sun is a fact an average primary school kid easily recites. But conventional wisdom then held that the earth was the centre of the universe....

"It would take years after his demise before his works were taken off the shelves again, and even then, his person got only a scant mention. (Twenty five years after Copernicus died, Galileo took his dusty tomes off the shelves and amidst trials and criticisms bequeathed to the world the seeds of the fruitful science, which we presently enjoy)"

Joseph Adeyeye observed in his piece that like his great predecessor, the world scientific establishment seems to take little notice of Oyibo and his accomplishments, even as Nigerians celebrated the emergence of another Nigerian, who seems poised to emerge the winner of the world's most coveted intellectual prize. He explained that "the reason for this unusual silence is located in Oyibo's multifarious claim to fame and the prize, particularly his ground breaking GAGUT, which like most of Oyibo's recent daring scientific findings and postulations, are earth shaking and revolutionary. It

has only succeeded in capturing the imagination of a few of the West's leading scientists. The rest have refused to be convinced and preferred to pooh-pooh Oyibo's claims.

But according to Adeyeye, rather than give up in the face of the combination of criticisms and condescension that his works have received, Oyibo brought his unusual intellect to bear on the problem. The equation he has fashioned out to solve this problem is "a combination of prodigious penmanship and a continuous if not strenuous espousal of his works. At the last count, Oyibo has published several

articles in some of the world's leading scientific journals (two of his scientific books are best sellers) and he has set up the Institute, OFFAPIT, in New York to promote and teach his findings.

"Within the select, high tech world of aerodynamics, and mathematical scientists in the US, Oyibo is not entirely unknown. It is a world dominated by white, highly cerebral male, one with attitudes powered by outdated and unformed stereotypes....", Adeyeye said, adding: "Before his revolutionary theorems made him a lone ranger of a sort in this world, Oyibo proved himself among his peers. He became known and respected, for the first time, for his advanced works in the field of aerodynamics. While studying Aeronautics and Mathematics at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) Troy, New York, he worked for four years on NASA/AFOSR sponsored research, and made several contributions in aircraft design, aerodynamics and aero-elasticity".

Considering the landmark achievements of Oyibo in the face of apparent discrimination, prejudice and western hypocrisy in according him the desired recognition and reward, the suggestion by Hon Anthony Agbo, Ebonyi State Commissioner for Public Utilities, is instructive in this context: "African Heads of state should meet to create an international prize with financial value higher than the Nobel Prize in which Prof. Oyibo should be the first winner. This prize shall subsequently take care of the political discrimination in the award of the prestigious Nobel Prize."

Agbo had written an open letter to President Obasanjo on the implication of Oyibo's theory to the image and identity of the African which was published in *The Guardian* newspaper of Saturday, August 7, 2004, in which he also suggested that Oyibo should be convinced to establish an affiliate of his OFAPIT Insti-

tute of Technology in Nigeria, for scientific research and training of African students.

"It was however clear within scientific circles that the relativity theory discovered by Einstein, though popular, does not represent a destination for science, but only a route to the grand but intricately hidden destination, called the Unified Field Theory or the Theory of Everything, Albert Einstein, after discovering the relativity theory, spent the rest of his life toiling to formulate the unified field theory, but he could not until his death. After his death, it became the hottest race among different races and nations of the world - America, Britain, Russia, China, France, Germany, and the whole of Europe, as to which people and individual can discover this theory."

According to Agbo, the elusive and highly prized unified field theory is the prize God has given Nigeria and Africa through Prof Gabriel Oyibo, the Kogi State born, American-based Mathematician and scientist.

"Prof Oyibo in an interview has stated that if funds are available, his equation can produce cure for AIDS and cancer within 3 years. Today the cure for AIDS and cancer can generate unimaginable economic sensitivity and awesome political bargain. We should not wait for the powerful nations to provide this fund and reap the economic benefits. It is apparent today that the world's most advanced nations could already be confused as to what to do with Prof Oyibo. He may not even be given the Nobel Prize because the world's great nations will feel that doing so will bring him and his discovery to the limelight, and make it obvious to every world citizen that black Africa has produced the greatest human being that walked the earth, from the stone age period to the present.

"God has placed a monumental prize in our hands that could open stupendous doors of economy and politics. The black race could be at a critical juncture in our chequered history. We could be stepping into the threshold of dignity, pride and respect among the world community."

"Six centuries after Copernicus' new theory turned the world against him, and led to his isolation by his contemporaries, Nigerian born, US-based mathematician, Professor Gabriel Oyibo is treading his path. Oyibo, like all scientific cum revolutionary trailblazers, has come against the walls of conventional wisdom in his quest to supplant the old with the new. Almost six centuries after Copernicus' theories dominated discourse in science and the church, Oyibo's theories are objects of much discussion and analysis all over the world."



PROPERTY & ENVIRONMENT

PICTURES FROM THE TSUNAMI TRAGEDY



The scene at Aceh after a boat was washed off the coast of the Indian Ocean after the Tsunami.



Elephants are being used to search for survivors or bodies from the rubbles in Indonesia.



An Acehese child rubs her eyes as she rummages through a destroyed shop in the Indonesian town of Meulaboh on Aceh's west coast.



Indian fishermen take a fishing net out of the sea at Tsunami-devastated Akkrapatui. The fishermen of nagapattinam district - the worst-hit spot in India mourning almost 6,000 dead - had not faced the waves since they destroyed community after community along the coast of southern India on December.



Two young Muslim girls watch as an excavator clears a path on a street destroyed by the Tsunami in the town of Kadiamalai on Sri Lanka's east coast. An army of aid workers raced on Tuesday to supply food and water to millions of tsunami victims and the United Nations warned a death toll of 150,000 would climb as more bodies are found and disease stalks survivors.



Sri Lanka people receiving treatment in a field hospital set up near the coastal town of Galle, southern Sri Lanka, by a team from the Italian Pisa Hospital to help survivors of a Tsunami.



Seen through a boat broken by the force of Tsunami, fishermen carry a fishing net to go out for the first time into the sea since the disaster in Nagapattinam, India. Hundreds of thousands of people have lost their homes as the December 26 tsunami in southern Asia and eastern Africa killed about 150,000 people.



Two elephants clear debris in Indonesia's Tsunami-hit city of Banda Aceh. eight days on, hungry and sick survivors of the Indian Ocean tsunami are waiting for food and medicine in growing desperation as a multinational aid operation tries to reach remote towns ravaged by the waves.

PROPERTY & ENVIRONMENT

“Sustainable housing delivery in Nigeria: the challenges and the opportunities”

I have chosen to speak on the topic “Sustainable Housing Delivery in Nigeria: The Challenges and Opportunities”. This is informed by the fact that the issue of sustainable housing delivery is at the forefront of our national development agenda. Housing as we all know, is a fundamental human right and a basic requirement of man, next only to food. The right to adequate housing is a social responsibility of all governments and is rightly embedded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and major international human rights treaties such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and also in the Habitat Agenda, the Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development. By being party to these instruments and declarations, the Nigerian Government has an obligation to “take steps by all appropriate means” to ensure access to a secure home for every citizen.

The imperative of renewed attention to the realization of housing provision for Nigerians takes an added urgency when we consider that several million of our people live in inadequate housing conditions in both our urban and rural areas. In the course of this address, I intend therefore to discuss the various challenges which we face in housing provision, as well as the various opportunities and possibilities available in the housing sector. No doubt, a number of challenges had largely been responsible in the past and some still exist presently, in achieving effective housing delivery. These mainly include access to land for building, long term finance for housing development, infrastructural and services deficiencies, availability of affordable building materials, access to mortgage facilities and the largely uncoordinated institutional arrangements for housing delivery. However, it is worthy to note that since the inception of President Olusegun Obasanjo's Administration in May 1999, a series of reforms have been embarked upon aimed at propelling Nigeria to greater heights among the comity of nations. These reforms are also meant to be of immense benefit to all Nigerians in the short and long terms, such that our citizenry would not live a life of penury and hardship, but a life of abundance and security which will lead to the creation of a buoyant economy and the general sustainable development of Nigeria.

One critical component of the reform agenda is the increasing awareness and significant developments in the Housing Sector. The reforms are designed to completely redirect the housing sector by transforming it from one that

By Chief (Mrs) Mobolaji Osomo

was formerly virtually dormant, to one that is now extremely vibrant. This is because Government believes that the housing sector has a major role to play in uplifting the economy substantially, because of its catalytic effects. It is also based on the understanding of the very fundamental and important links between the housing sector and the overall economy as clearly articulated in the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) of the Federal Government. If policies affecting the housing sector are favourable, the sector contributes to economic development, and consequently the gains of economic development are translated into sectoral improvements.

Guided by this rational economic principle, there have been radical transformations and shifts in government policy focus for the housing sector. These reforms range from institutional, financial and regulatory to improved modus operandi of housing delivery to majority of Nigerians. As you are all aware, the Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development created in July 2003 demonstrates the commitment and responsibility of the administration to translate Government's housing policy objectives into tangible benefits for the citizenry by ensuring that “All Nigerians (irrespective of class and status) own or have access to decent, safe and sanitary housing accommodation at affordable costs”. The new policy on Housing recognizes a shift from direct construction of houses for sale to the public by government agencies, to providing mass housing for Nigerians, through private sector real estate developers, and on the basis of mortgage financing.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, let me briefly take you through the aspects of this Administration's reform agenda that impact on the housing sector. Government has made some notable institutional reforms, which should leverage the capacity to deliver houses more efficiently. In line with the privatization policy and quick delivery of services, activities in the housing sector would henceforth be private-sector driven and facilitated by government through fiscal, regulatory and sundry incentives that would make the housing sector investment-friendly. To facilitate this process, Government has aided the formation of the Real Estate Developers Association of Nigeria

(REDAN) with the primary concern of active involvement in housing delivery to the generalality of our citizenry at affordable cost. REDAN as a key stakeholder and operator in the housing sector will be given the necessary support in housing delivery under the various mass housing facilitation programmes of the Ministry to be implemented through partnership between the Public and the Private Sector. These programmes include the Prototype Housing Scheme and the Universities Students Hostel Accommodation Scheme which the Ministry has embarked upon. Already, available Government lands in the States have

ner.

Finance is also a vital component for achieving sustainable housing delivery. Because of the high costs, housing is highly independent on credit or borrowed capital. Sourcing funds for housing finance therefore is an imperative of housing delivery strategy. This Administration is not oblivious of this fact, and in response has taken appropriate steps to strengthen existing and relevant institutions for optimal performance. The Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN) as the apex bank for mortgage banking operations has been restructured and re-



Some of the three bedroom duplexes being built by EFAB properties in Abuja being financed nationwide by the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN).

been identified, planned and cadastral surveys completed, in readiness for allocation to prospective estate developers. Some of the locations are in Abuja, Lagos, Kaduna, Port-Harcourt, Awka, Yenagoa, Benin-City, Abookuta and Akure. Furthermore, in preparation for its take-off, the Ministry has set out detailed guidelines for participation of interested developers and investors. This is one area where the input of your professional body, and indeed all professional bodies in the built environment come into play since you all have specialized roles to perform in achieving housing delivery. I therefore join you to make this information available to your entrepreneurial members to explore their participation in these worthy joint ventures.

Another notable area of reform in the housing sector is in the area of affordable building materials. The formation and launching of the Building Materials Producers Association of Nigeria (BUMPAN) in March this year was spearheaded by my Ministry, in collaboration with the now defunct Presidential Technical Committee on Urban Development and Housing. It is hoped that BUMPAN will enhance domestic production of building materials in a coordinated and regulated man-

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positioned to operate solely as a secondary mortgage institution. Through this policy change, it has become possible for FMBN to extend its frontier of lending operations to include more stakeholders in housing delivery such as the REDAN, Housing Corporations and Housing Cooperatives. If all these key stakeholders have access to funds at concessionary interest rates, more housing delivery activities would be precipitated for the good of the national economy and the end users of housing. To further demonstrate exemplary leadership, the Federal Government has also commenced the monetization of fringe benefits for all Civil Servants with effect from January 2004. Under this new reform package, residential accommodation for Civil Servants has been monetized at 100% of their annual basic salary. The reform's ultimate objective is to encourage homeownership among Civil Servants while still in service and to minimize the fear of homelessness after retirement. We are also encouraging the formation of Housing Co-operatives and Housing Associations in all the states and 774 Local Governments to promote housing delivery and a better maintenance cul-

ture. Moreover, we are encouraging all qualified Nigerians to contribute to the National Housing Fund, to which we are receiving positive responses. Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, as private-sector involvement in housing delivery cannot thrive in a constricted and rigidly regulated economic environment, my Ministry has embarked on the exercise of examining all existing laws related to housing in order to expunge such provisions that might not augur well for a private-sector led market economy, and in particular, the operation of a vibrant mortgage finance sys-

which has a very well established and enduring system. Furthermore we are creating linkages and targeting opportunities within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, housing delivery requires the input of all professionals in the sector. In my opinion, no better body than the various professional institutions with their technical expertise in various diverse fields can assist us in translating our housing policy goals into reality. I recognize here in particular the essential role of the surveyors in providing surveying information and maps which are vital pre-requisites for physical planning and indeed economic development, as they form the basis for rational and pragmatic decisions on land administration, urban planning and land use policies. As handlers of the valuable resource of land, I consider you as very important professional partners in the implementation of the new Housing Policy of Government.

I am not however unaware of the limitations and challenges which you currently face in pursuing your professional activities by way of obsolete equipment and instruments, insufficient funding and, an ineffective institutional framework. We are prepared to dialogue with you in finding solutions to these problems. For instance, I know that the last National Atlas of Nigeria and most of our maps were produced over twenty years ago. Yet we need current maps and geographic information using digital technologies for planning and development purposes. This is a major vacuum and needs to be urgently addressed. I am also aware of your request for a National Policy on Surveying and mapping as well as a National Surveying and Mapping Agency - the Bill of which I understand is already before the National Assembly. We shall provide you with the required support to overcome these obstacles and enhance your contributions to the housing sector, as nothing must deter us in our efforts in achieving our goals in building a vibrant and sustainable housing sector. I enjoy you all to join the team and collaborate with my Ministry in building strong and sustainable cities which we will all be proud of. This is a duty we owe ourselves, our people who are looking up to us, as well as the future generations of Nigerians. May God help us in our quest.

Being address delivered by the honourable minister of housing and urban development, Chief (Mrs) Mobolaji Osomo, as guest speaker on the occasion of the 2004 fellows investiture ceremony of the Nigerian Institution of Surveyors, held at the NICON-Hilton Hotel, Abuja.

Chief (Mrs) Mobolaji Osomo, Honourable minister of housing and urban development Abuja.

PROPERTY & ENVIRONMENT

Pure water sachets generate 30 percent Lagos waste

More than 30 percent of wastes generated in Lagos State have been attributed to the pure water sachet, which has become a household name all over the country.

According to the Chief Executive of the Lagos State environmental enforcement outfit, Kick Against Indiscipline, (KAI) Bola Iori, the inability of the materials with which the water is packaged to decay, has continued to constitute a major problem to waste management in the state.

Speaking with newsmen in his office, Iori lamented what the consumption of the commodity had done to militate against the efforts of the state government to combat environmental pollution.

The former executive secretary of the defunct

International summits over Tsunami holds Jan

Two international summits are scheduled to hold this month aimed at brain storming on the way to avoid recurrence of the tsunami which penultimate week which claimed thousands of lives and properties in southern Asian and part of Africa countries.

The summit is slated for Thursday 6, in Indonesia emergency meeting objective is to discuss the reconstruction of the disaster-hit Indian Ocean region as well as collection of additional aid, Mr. Anwarul Chowdhury of United Nations disclosed.

While lamenting the impact of Tsunami (fast tidal waves caused by earthquake, sudden eruption or land slide water waves) disaster on small island developing states he said Maldiver which has shown remarkable socio-economic progress over the years has now faced a serious setback stating that a nation of hundreds of small tourist resort island is one of the countries affected by Tsunami.

Earlier, the UN Chief has expressed shock and despair at the loss of lives and destruction caused by a series of earthquake and tidal waves in the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean in recent times. "Destruction of lives and property to the low lying coastal area once again highlights the vulnerability of the small island of the developing states, Mr. Anwarul pointed out.

According to him the recent mishap had nothing to do with vagaries of the weather, as an earthquake resulting from a rather violent interaction involving the Eurasians, Australian and probably also the Indian tectonic plates triggered the tsunami.

Choydsburg revealed that latter in the month the second summit will be holding in the African Island nation of Mauritius, a different but related scenario to the impasse will be tabled for discussion at the United Nations International

Stories by Olamide Rajulaye Correspondent (Lagos)

Alimosho Local Government said if the war against filth must be won in the state NAFDAC has to order repackaging of the product.

"NAFDAC has to come into it and do something with the manufacturing, because they have become a major problem in this town. NAFDAC must tell them to change the packaging. The nylon with which they are being packaged is not biodegradable. It never decays till after 25 years. So that means that every NS pure water people drink, we are incurring 25 years trouble."

Iori argued that the manufacturers now had no right to sue to source for other materials to package

water, since the price of the commodity had increased.

According to him NAFDAC has to move in now to ask the manufacturers to increase the quality of their packaging materials to make it biodegradable.

"That will help the state a lot. If you visit our dumpsites, you will understand the magnitude of the problems posed by pure water sachets to Lagos environment."

He explained that the problem is not only that of decay but that any material it stands on would also not decay, thus posing a great problem for the entire waste management programme of the state government.

The problem Iori added was not restricted to the dumpsites alone but also extends to even the waters that surround the state, "if you go to the ocean lines and see what pure water has done to the ocean lines, you will pity this city. And you begin to ask yourself what would happen in 10 years time."

"It is not only waters. The drainages are blocked. And most of the flooding we are having in the state if you look at it pure water packages contributed 30 percent of it. During the dry season all other materials would have decayed. But the pure water nylon would be there." The state, he added had remained helpless to the menace because the country had not attained the technological level in other countries, such as sorting of wastes.

Speaking on the same vein, Mr. Kofi Annan, secretary general to UN said "it is an unprecedented global catastrophe which requires an unprecedented global response."

The word "Tsunami" implies harbour wave in Japanese tongue while in English it connotes destructive sea waves generated by an earthquake or volcanic eruption which can be produced when the sea floor suddenly deforms and vertically displaces the underlying water.

Geologists had said the earth surfaces is divided into seven large and many small moving slabs or plates. These tectonic plates are about 50 miles thick, move relatively one to another on an average of few inches per year. Sounding a warning note to Nigeria that it is not entirely immune from such occurrence based on the fact.

The line of fault separating African plate and South America plate runs deadily close to the continent's West Africa profusion. Hence on under water quakes along the fault would produce Tsunami that will be more devastating to West Africa coastline than its South America neighbour.

Tectonic earthquakes are particular kind of earthquake associated with earth crust deformation. When these earthquakes occur beneath the sea, the water above the deformed area is displaced from its equilibrium level.

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Architects trade words over building plan approval

Port-Harcourt based design expert, Patrick Elikwu has disagreed with a professional colleague, Dr. Femi Olomola who said Architects are in no position to approve building plans.

According to Patrick, a professional architect are by their training receptive to different ideas no matter how shocking they may appear to others. Debunking the claim by Dr. Femi that architects have misused the opportunity to approve plans by compromising the authority vested in them to endorse plans with their signature and architect council registration of Nigeria (ARCON) seal, Elikwu pointed out that ARCON seal does not foreclose abuse or rule out the possibility of sharp practices by unscrupulous quacks which the architect in the approval process is better placed to unearth.

This feud between the two professionals ensued as a result of Olomola's response to issues raised by the Lagos State Chapter of Nigeria Institute of Architect (NIA) during a courtesy visit to the general manager of the Lagos State physical planning authority who want to ascertain whether architects should play a more active role in the building plan approval process, need to commission a building regulation authority to access the nifty-gritty of approval of building in view of broader aspects of set backs, density, coverage, height which are town planning concerns.

Earlier, Patrick has pointed out that architects are governed by a code of professional conduct which they could enlist the assistance of the society including Dr. Olomola to enforce adding that if he has been following issues that there is a running case in court being prosecuted by ARCON of a quack taking illegal possession and abusing the seal of a deceased architect.

Patrick said "physical planning is a multi-facet, multi-disciplinary procedure led by experts at the peak of their professional experience. Its primary focus is to harmonise the co-existence of people in a nation by guiding the overall distribution of the population (demographic) and employment opportunities and by considering the geographical location of its natural resources towards sustainable development. Nigeria being a federation utilising a five level physical planning structure."

He enumerated the five level physical planning as: National, state, regional, urban and local physical plans stating that they work inter-related with the lower plan forming an element of the higher. The National, Regional and Urban plans specify the policies and intentions of government while the local plan defines



Keeping Abuja clean: Members of Abuja Environmental Protection Board (AEPB) with the helping hand of some corp members keeping Abuja Street clean.

New Lagos road to boost socio-economic activities -Controller

The construction of the Lagos outer ring road recently approved by the Federal Executive Council will be a major project which would boost socio-economic activities in Lagos.

The Federal Controller of Works in Lagos State, Dr. Adedolapo Adeniji who stated this in an interview with our correspondent on Friday also hinted that its design would be concluded within the first quarter of this year.

Adeniji said that the minister of Works, Chief Adeseye Ogunlwe supported and made recommendations for the construction of the road

contrary to speculations that he was not in support of the project.

He said the road which would take off from the Nigerian Ports area in Apapa and terminates near Ibeju along the Lagos - Ibadan Expressway, would serve as easy access for heavy duty vehicles and tankers conveying containers or petroleum products meant for other states from Apapa.

According to him, cases of containers frequently falling on the road and causing serious traffic congestion would be greatly reduced when the road is completed.

He said the heavy duty vehicles would no longer have any business passing through the Lagos metropolis when coming or going outside the state as they would have a direct access to their destinations using the outer ring road.

Adeniji noted that the activities of the vehicles account for most of the perennial traffic congestions being experienced daily by motorists around Apapa, Ijora, Western Avenue, Ikorodu road, Agege Motor road and the Toll gate end of the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway.

He said the operation 1000 roads had taken off in the state and pledged that the ministry would ensure prompt and adequate fixing of all identified bad portions on federal roads in the state this year.

Adeniji also said additional lanes would be constructed by the federal government this year on all dual carriage ways in the state adding that the expansion become necessary in order to make them last longer.

He blamed the pot-holes developing on Lagos-Ota road, three months after it was rehabilitated due to increase pressure on it.

He said, "The road was old and it needed to be reconstructed. The asphalt overlay gets cracked after some time due to increased pressure on them."

He said new designs were being produced which would provide for the construction of drainages and additional lanes in order to strengthen the roads.

The Controller said the Ikeja end of the road which was reconstructed by Messrs Julius Berger few years ago was able to stand the test of time because additional lanes were created while drainages were also constructed.

He said the Majidun - Ipakodu road which is being constructed by the Federal Roads maintenance Agency would also boost socio-economic activities in Ikorodu as motorists would be saving lots of man-hour being lost to traffic congestion within Ilorodu metropolis, when completed.

Speaking further Elikwu stressed that architect is the first point of call by any client on any area of land use regarding build up space due to the fact that he really understand land topography into his designs.

Elikwu called on his fellow architects to take the bull by the horn and correct the anomalies in the building approval process adding that both town planner and architect need work as a team for the development of a better and more beautiful environment.

Drawing disparity between the town planner function and architect, Elikwu said the former is primarily concerned with local (land use planning) stage which involves detailed layout of the various zones of an urban plan such areas include residential neighbourhoods, industrial, institutional cultural, commercial and recreational zones with transportation routes and access road networks inclusive. It is through this local plan that the general policies and broad proposal contained in the national, state, regional and urban plans are detailed out to guide the public and private land developers, Patrick said adding that the town planner authority covers wide range of building set backs, density, coverage and height.

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THE ARTS

2004: Books enjoy a great year in Kenya

Kenyan society attracted immense attention from scholars throughout the year, with major local and international presses publishing books and journal articles on topics ranging from Kenyan history to urban hip hop (about our good discos later in this conversation).

And despite complaints about school textbook vetting, the sense of hope ushered in by the end of the intellectually stifling Kamu dictatorship in December 2002 and Nare's rise to power is beginning to bear fruit on the cultural scene. Local publishers stopped mark-timing and released major books, and various editors say they have new titles lined up for release in 2005.

Sasa Sema Publications brought out pre-unit activity books, an area that is largely neglected despite its contribution in "catching Kenyans young" into a reading culture. The titles are Moki and Monki and Njeri Visits Grandmother.

Child-centred, the books seek to empower kids to be active participants in the creation of the text. Sasa Sema also published a Swahili story, Kobole, by Ruth Wairimu. Shaka Zulu by Stanley Gazemba appeared in their Lions series which presents fictionalised versions of African heroes' biographies. Their previous biographies include Jomo Kenyatta's, Elijah Masinde, Dedan Kimathi's, Katana Ngala's, Mohammed Amin's, and Bildad Kaggia's. According to publisher Lila Luce, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga's biography will come out in 2005.

The second issue in two years of the half-yearly Nairobi Journal of Literature came out in July. The editors should however consider adopting a more rigorous peer-review process.

By Evan Mwangi
complete with blind reviewing of each essay by different experts, where the name and affiliation of the writer don't appear on the essays assessed. This way, the editors will avoid publishing substandard essays and also set a good example of ethical scholarship and cultivate respectability among students.

The publication of the creative-writing journal Kwani? remains the year's most innovative literary event. Although this year's edition was not as strong as last year's (no equivalent of Adhiambo Owuor's haunting Weight of Whispers), the 2004 issue has some good verse and cartoons, not to mention the racier back-cover teasers.

One critic says that the group's monthly open-mic readings at Kengeles (near the YaYa Centre) "go from strength to strength." Better, the group says it's planning to move into new-blood writing workshops in the New Year to inject youth and compliment (not counter?) older artists. But, to avoid unnecessary squabbling, they should be more aggressive in accommodating the young and the old, especially when there's something to be eaten.

Jared Angira's collection of poetry, Lament of the Silent, was released by East African Educational Publishers alongside Malawian David Rubadiri's An African Thunderstorm and Other Poems in September. Angira's poems sound disillusioned with many things, including what one poem calls "the multiparty confusioncracy. Referring to revolutionaries like South African Alex la Guma, the poetry foresees a time when oppressive forces "will lie down in style/Dead, dead, cold silent."

Phoenix publishers were



Formal presentation of the book "Abdulsalam Abubakar" A Legacy of Honour by President Olusegun Obasanjo at the Abuja Sheraton Hotel and Towers, Abuja. Pic shows: Vice President Atiku Abubakar representing the President, presenting the book Pic: Kennedy Oghomofe.

quite active. They began the year with the release of explosive poetry by Stephen Partington (SMS & Face to Face), Eric Mwangi (Harvesting Gold) and Kinuthia Murugu (Feelings, Just Feelings). The hallmark of these collections is the use of simple language to apprehend ordinary people's complex experiences.

Tips to overcome depression

Phoenix later published Stress in Daily Life by renowned psychiatrist Dr Frank Njenga, in which he offers tips on how to overcome depression in different family and professional contexts. They also brought out Operation Kamaliza by Munro Katui, a novel about the kidnap of Ida Hansen, the six-year old daughter of an Eldoret-based South African business magnate.

The editor, Kariuki Wangai, says we should expect more titles in 2005. Among them is a new title by David G. Mailla. Entitled Precious Blood, the novel is about Katilo's determination

to fight adversity and provide for her family. Shaza's Trials by Ngumi Kibera is, according to Phoenix editors, about Shaza's carefree ways that lead him to be infected with the Aids virus.

Internationally, major books on Kenya are expected to enter the market early in the year. These include David Anderson's Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of the Empire (2005). Published by Norton, the 320-page book details the atrocities visited upon Kenyans by the British in the 1950s. Authorisation for such policies, the Oxford University professor of African Studies says, came from the highest reaches of the British government.

A forthcoming book that is similarly critical of the British colonial practices is Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of the End of the Empire in Kenya (2005) by Caroline Elkins, a Harvard professor of history. Published by Henry Holt, the 496-page book says the British war to suppress the fight against colonialism in Kenya was the bloodiest in colonial history.

Another forthcoming book likely to cause ripples is David William Cohen and E.S. Atieno Odhiambo's The Risks of Knowledge (2004; in press). Revolving around the investigations into the death of Robert Ouko, the book reveals how bureaucracy silences small stories. The authors contest hierarchical ways in which official history is created.

For her part, Tabitha

Kanogo examines in African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya (2004; in press) the patriarchal control of women by denying them physical, social and educational opportunities. Expected in March, Kanogo's book also celebrates the means women put in place to overcome the obstacles.

The return to Kenya in August of veteran novelist Ngugi wa Thiong'o from 22 years of exile enjoyed great support from the public but was marred by an attack on him and his wife. However, the brutal assault in which his wife Njeri was raped (matter in court) didn't dampen Ngugi's love for his country. He visited again in November to seize and reclaim his position as a Kenyan son of the soil.

East African Educational Publishers released Ngugi's Gikuyu language epic, Murogi wa Kagoogo (Wizard of the Crow), and a new essay of his on indigenous languages was published in Genius of Language: Fifteen Writers Reflect on their Mother Tongues (2004), which is edited for Pantheon by Wendy Lesser.

Death stalked the literary world to claim the best. Gichora Mwangi, an influential voice in Kenyan theatre and a talented poet, died on September 24. Dr Mwangi was 38. Mulk Raj Anand passed away on September 28. He was 99. The Indian writer is best known in Kenya for his novel Coolie which was studied in secondary schools in the 1980s. Wabome Mutahi wrote

an incisive study guide on the novel.

Jacques Derrida died in October, prompting a complaint in the Press by Stephen Partington - Kenya's eloquent, if a little controversial, literary commentator - that our scholars haven't read Derrida's writing or the new theories dominating literary criticism since the 1980s. Derrida, an Algerian-born French philosopher, is best known for the "deconstruction theory" - a way of reading that teases the text to reveal its hidden meanings through careful unpicking of language.

Derrida was on the panel that interviewed Ngugi for his current job at the University of California, Irvine. Playing on words and joking regularly about the most serious of issues, Derrida taught us to turn texts on their head, over-read everything, collapse the supposedly opposed categories such as "popular" art and "serious" writing. Indeed, through the use of Derrida, you are able to read newer writers who are marginalised through the domination of literary studies by "serious" canonical guns.

Extremely mischievous and at times deliriously obscure, Derrida's theory is known in Kenya through the writings of Professor Peter Amuka of Moi University, a thorough-going deconstructionist who light-heartedly illuminates modern literary theory using African discourses.

Called from Africa Arts, Culture and Entertainment.

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THE ARTS THE ARTS THE ARTS

Author explores faith and country in acclaimed new novel

By Norah Vawter

Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's first novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, has received much critical acclaim, having been short-listed for the Orange Prize and long listed for the Booker Prize. Adichie recently completed her master's degree in creative writing at Johns Hopkins University, and now splits her time between Nigeria and the United States. After a lively reading in a Baltimore bookstore.

When did you start writing *Purple Hibiscus*?

She said she started writing in 2001 when she was in her senior year of college.

"I was twenty-four. It's such a cliché, but [my age] really doesn't have much to do with the number. Now that this book is out, I'm constantly resenting being labeled the 'young writer.' I didn't write *Purple Hibiscus* because I was young. When people label you as young, there's the baggage that comes along with it. 'Maybe she got published because she was so young.' Then it's not about the work. So now I say to people, twenty-seven really isn't that young."

I think this concept of coming of age is really a marketing tool. I sometimes don't quite accept that label of coming of age, because that's not how I see it. So when you say the family story, that's closer to what I think it is. It was important for me that she tell the story, because I wanted it to be a story that was told in quiet but - more than quiet - I wanted to leave some things unsaid for the reader. For that to happen, I needed a narrator like Kambili who has every reason to tell the story in this muted form, because she's traumatized and she's shy and she's weak." But she described the weakness as debatable, saying but she's traumatized. It's something that I did consciously, because it would have been a very different story if Jaja had told it, for instance.

Adichie spoke of her style of writing the book, identifying that it was in multiple perspectives "no. It just came in the first person, and I liked it. Sometimes something comes and it doesn't work, and you know it just isn't in the right form. But the novel just came in the first person in this quiet voice, and it worked, and I never rethought the decision."

She spoke of the Kambili character further "I don't think Kambili is weak. It's

interesting for me as well. I read her in a particular way, and it's fascinating for me to listen to some people in how they read her in an entirely different way. I guess it's the magic of literature. But some people are frustrated with her. They find her too knowing, and I didn't find her so knowing at all.

It's nice to hear somebody who gets the book. Kambili is someone who will not do anything incredibly dramatic, she just won't. But clearly she knows she's doing something she knows her father won't be pleased with. She's doing it quietly, which is her style."

Speaking about the book, the author observed "the magical thing about *Purple Hibiscus* is that many times the characters did things that

as a bad father. I imagined him as a complicated man, a complicated father. He clearly adores his children [and] is fiercely protective of them. I think he's turned out the way he is because well, I don't know. It's up to the reader. But his isn't easy cruelty, that is, cruelty for cruelty's sake. He's not someone who's got a cigarette and puts it out on his child's skin because he's had a bad day. It doesn't become good and bad-it becomes, from Kambili's point of view, helpful and less helpful. There's something that her father gives her that those [other father] characters don't. She loves her father differently.

The differences between good and bad or helpful and less helpful seem to be mirrored by the differences in her father's public and private

sense. Yes, but we are the ones observing him, and we can see that this is wrong. It's sort of like the people that do horrible things in God's name, and their actions seem right to them."

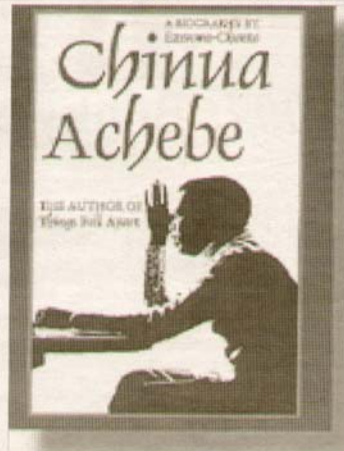
Speaking on the father's religious beliefs affecting the story, she said "I didn't want to explain too much in the book. I think that Eugene's story is like so many in my father's generation, who had the first contact with the missionaries. I think it was disastrous. If you wanted to go to school, you had to become Christian."

This is what Achebe's work deals with too. You prove what a good Christian you are by showing us how much you hate your own people's customs. In Achebe's work he had characters going to kill the sacred python, which is never done, to prove how Christian they were to the missionaries. I think with Eugene it wasn't just that the priests were kind to him and helped him. They taught him a faith that came with self-hate. Perfection can destroy you."

She spoke on the religious perspective of *Purple Hibiscus* "I don't think God has to be a book that it is about the Catholic Church or Islam. When a book is, in a very subtle way, about goodness and justice, for me, that is also about God. Over all, *Purple Hibiscus* is not so much about religion as about being spiritual."

That's the point I hoped people would get, but there are Africans who are very angry with me that animism and Christianity can even be equated. People are very angry about that because in their eyes, Christianity is far superior."

Several ideas prompted her to write "I think the first thing that came to my head was the idea of Jaja, narrator Kambili's brother, not going to communion, and that caus-



Chimamanda Achebe

ing something huge in the house. The second thing was the idea of the communion giving Jaja bad breath, because that was just so silly, and I knew that it needed to be juxtaposed with the drama. My brother once said in church that it gave him bad breath, so he stopped going to communion for a while. I started to think about not going to communion too. After church you stand up and hug people, and I think he was worried that there would be a girl behind us who would smell his bad breath.

Adichie does not have a schedule for writing "I don't have a schedule. I'm always amazed at writers who need to light a candle or something. I like to write on the train. Sometimes I like to write at night. Whenever I'm alone and the house is silent. I need to know that I have the time to write, that I have the whole day. That's probably also why I work best at night, because I know that I don't have to go anywhere at 3:00 in the morning, or take care of my nephew, or cook for anybody."

Silence is very important in her writing "the kind of literature I love has a lot of silence. The power of the things left unsaid. I think really Pur-

ple Hibiscus is about Kambili finding her voice."

She spoke also of how much promotion of the books has done in Nigeria, her home country "because the book is going to be published in Nigeria next month, I did a few promotional readings. This wonderful woman who owns a private library she set up herself asked me to come and meet students and talk to them. For some reason, I just expected they would be students from the good schools, who would be very neat and wear uniforms and ties, and be very comfortable with computers. They weren't. They were kids from low-income schools where the uniforms are not all entirely neat or clean. I sat there and read to them. First I read a Nigerian children's book, and then I read the story that Papa Nnukwa tells about the tortoise and why he has a cracked shell. We did a question and answer. I was so impressed by them, and how eager they were. Sometimes I get so stupidly emotional, you wouldn't believe, and I was almost in tears. These are kids who have nothing. Afterward we did the writing contest, and I judged their writing."

Culled from *Africa Arts, Culture and Entertainment*

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Wole Soyinka

surprised me. When I tell this to some of my friends, they say, 'Oh god, you writers are crazy. You wrote the bloody book,'" explaining, however, that she remained emotionally detached from the written-about family.

"I felt that I was a step removed. I felt that I was an observer, that I was peering through the window. I often felt that. With Kambili, I watched her, and I also marveled at how different I was from her and how I would never do the things that she did."

Dismissing the observation that here seemed to be several father figures-the father, Eugene, the grandfather, Papa Nnukwa, and perhaps the priest, Father Amadi, saying that there are no motifs of a good father and a bad father in the book

I didn't imagine [Eugene]

life. Adichie spoke on the importance of public and the private spheres in the book "

"I think we're all like that. It's funny, when we think about it. We're not just complex. We're irrational. There are people, like the father figure, who outside their homes are pillars of the community, and inside behave differently. But in his case, I don't think it's a contradiction because both behaviors stem from the same thing-this need to do right. Outside the home, this translates into publishing this newspaper, which talks about injustice and the need for justice. Inside the home, this drives him to hit Kambili, because he needs to show her the right way. The need to do right makes him punish his wife, because she needs to know the right way to act.

So, from his perspective, everything he does makes



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STATE OF PDP ACCOUNTS

In the last few days a lot of frivolous allegations about Party finances have made the headline in many newspapers. Ordinarily one is tempted to ignore all the allegations and insinuations since they are baseless.

However, in order not to allow the malicious intentions of the authors hold sway we wish to state for the record as follows;

- That the NWC had earlier submitted the full audited accounts (2001-2003) of the Party to NEC
- That the External Auditors of the Party are Akintola Williams @ Co.
- That INEC has also audited our accounts.
- That accounts of 2004 will be audited soon.

Finally anyone who has questions to raise about the accounts should exercise patience till the committee to investigate the Party accounts to be set up by NEC submits its report.

Thank you.

Signed

Alhaji Umar Kareto Lawan
National Treasurer

ABUJA TRUST

Kabo Airline rescues stranded FCT pilgrims

Kabo Air has diverted two of its aircraft to transport stranded intending FCT pilgrims to Saudi Arabia for the 005 Hajj, the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports.

Alhaji Salihu Ashara, Director, FCT Pilgrims Welfare Board, told NAN in Abuja that the decision to engage Kabo air followed the inability of IRS to perform.

IRS was originally contracted to transport pilgrims from FCT among others, to the holy land, but the pilgrims had been stranded in camp since Tuesday due to inability of IRS to provide aircraft.

"IRS has failed to make planes available, so, I and the Director, Directorate of Pilgrims Affairs met with the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Alhaji Abubakar

Tanko, and it was decided that Kabo should be invited to assist," Ashara said.

He said that the first batch of 492 pilgrims from FCT left in a Kabo aircraft early today and that the second flight is expected to have taken off tomorrow.

NAN gathered that before now the pilgrims had already been issued with IRS tickets.

"We have decided to retrieve the IRS tickets from the pilgrims and issue them with Kabo tickets, but we will reconcile them later," Ashara said.

NAN recalls that on Dec. 28, IRS Airline, one of the two air carriers contracted for the 2005 Hajj, had accused the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) of delaying its participation in the exercise.

"We could not commence Hajj operations yesterday because the NCAA refused our aircraft entry into the country," IRS chairman Rabiu Rabiu, had said.

Rabiu blamed IRS' inability to begin operation on

scheduled on the inability of the airline to obtain clearance for its planes to come into the country to commence the exercise.

But an official of the NCAA, had told NAN that IRS was not allowed to begin operation because the aircraft it intended to use had not undergone the required checks.

"This has to be done before the aircraft would be al-

lowed entry into

the country," he said.

Rabiu, however, denied NCAA's allegation, saying that the planes the airline intended to use for the Hajj operations were taken to South Africa for maintenance.

"The aircraft were taken for checks and they were certified fit and a certificate of release was issued to certify them air-worthy for the exercise," he said.

Rabiu claimed that Saudi officials who were in South Africa to inspect the aircraft had certified them fit to fly into their country.

A total of 65,000 Nigerians are billed to perform the Hajj, out of which IRS is expected to transport 20,000. The transportation of pilgrims to the holy land began on Tuesday and will end on Jan. 12, 2005

Abaji area council budgets N1 billion for 2005

The chairman of the Abaji area council has said that it has budgeted over N1 billion for its capital and current expenditure for the year 2005.

Chairman of the Area Council, Alhaji Mohammed A. Loko, addressing newsmen in his office, said that of the amount budgeted for, N493 million is for current expenditure and N550 million for capital expenditure. Alhaji Loko said that since assumption of office on May 3rd, 2004, his Council inherited a liability of N22 million with activity in the Area Council at a standstill until they sat down to map out strategies of addressing the problems.

The Abaji Area Council Chairman listed the achievements of his administration to include the purchase and distribution of 400 metric tonnes of fertilizer which was sold to farmers at a subsidized rate, in addition to the rehabilitation of clinics, the purchase of agro chemical sprayer, and the refurbishing of three tractors.

In the area of education, Alhaji Loko said that the sum of N8 million have been earmarked for scholarship for students from the Area Council, with students on special courses like engineering, medicine, etc. to receive N25,000 each, arts students to receive N20,000 while certificate students are to receive N10,000 each.

In addition, the Chairman said the Area Council devoted a primary school to a Federal Government Girls' College in the territory, while at the same time construction of several classroom blocks is in progress in several schools within the Area Council.

Alhaji Loko said emphasis would be laid on girl-child education with emphasis laid on compulsory education for females who would benefit from a free compulsory boarding which is expected to prevent such girls from taking in the daytime.

The Abaji Area Council Chairman who said that at the inception of his administration there was no light,

From Nasir Imam, Property & Environment Editor

or water, however said that presently 3 kilometres of township roads have been constructed with drainages and street lights to complement them.

Contract for the drilling of borehole, Alhaji Loko said, is in progress in Pandagi and the low cost housing estate in the town, in addition to the purchase of a brand new water tanker for the Niko Community.

Construction worker caned for stealing N95,000

A worker of the Major Stanley Construction Company,

Abuja, one Agun Johnson was given six strokes of cane by an Abuja Chief Magistrate sitting in Jabi, for stealing the sum of N95,000 in the room of one Flying Officer of the Nigeria Air Force (NAF) attached to NAF Camp, Abuja, one Ibori.

The prosecution told the court that the accused person broke the door into the complainant's room when he went to the office.

According to the prosecutor, the complainant reported the matter to Lugbe police station on December 24, 2004 at about 4.00 pm and the accused gave the sum of N7,500 out of the stolen money to his friend, one Rasaq Rufai.

The prosecution informed the court that the accused is charged with joint act, house breaking and theft contrary to Sections 79, 334 and 288 of the Penal Code Law.

The prosecution revealed that the sum of N53,000 was recovered from the accused person.

The accused who was not represented by any counsel pleaded guilty to the charges, stating that he stole the sum of N70,500 not the said amount as alleged and that his brother promised to

By Abdulwahab Deji Ajikobi, IT Student

pay the complainant the sum of N17,500.

The accused who pleaded forgives, pledged that he would not commit such act again.

The presiding Senior Magistrate, Hadzat Dodo sentenced the accused to 30 days imprisonment or to pay N2,000 fine and also he should pay N42,000 compensation to the right owner.

Two persons loses private parts to beggars

A middle-aged man lost his manhood after giving a beggar the sum of N40.00.

The incident which happened weekend took place in front of the National Population Commission (NPC) headquarters, Abuja.

According to eye wit-



Tafu Balogun, IGP

The ever busy Herbert Macaulay Way is seen empty due to the public holiday last Monday to usher in 2005 New Year in Abuja.

Picture: Kennedy Egbonodie

Gwagwalada area council procures cholera vaccines

Authorities of the Gwagwalada Area Council said that its health department have provided vaccines for the control of the recent outbreak of cholera and other diseases associated with

gastro-enteritis.

Chairman of the Gwagwalada Area Council, Alhaji Zakari Angulu, addressing newsmen during an end of year press briefing, said since assumption of office seven months ago, there was poor revenue generation which prompted the Council to seek way's of generating revenue.

Represented by his vice-chairman at the occasion, the chairman said the council had to disengage the revenue consultant it inherited from the previous administration, due to non-performance.

Alhaji Zakari Angulu also said that the council has engaged a consultant for the collection of tenement rates expected to kick-off this year.

The chairman listed some of the achievements within the year 2004, to include the renovation of the LEA secretariat which was burnt down during an NLC strike several months ago.

He also said that reno-

vation work on the Paiko-Kore Clinic have been completed as well as reactivation of street lights around Gwagwalada town, which he said is on-going.

Alhaji Zakari Angulu said the council within the year, purchased 6 nos feeder pillars of street light, rehabilitated the Dukwa-Wuna road, constructed clinics at Dibi and Dukwa, including the maintenance of roof leakages, all completed 100 per cent.

Other on-going projects, he said, include construction of clinic at Giri, rehabilitation of drainage at Gwagwalada motor part, and extension of electricity at old Kitunke.

This year, Alhaji Angulu said, the area council would purchase cows intended for dreadfully purpose, and arrange for the establishment of farm settlements to embrace youth while women would be given adequate recognition in the scheme of within the council.

News

First Lady tasks 16yr old mother over education

A 16-year-old SSII student of Uyo High School, Uyo, Miss Dorothy Boniface Umoh, who became a mother was advised against abandoning her studies for promiscuity which resulted in an unwanted pregnancy.

The wife of Akwa Ibom State Governor, Nnenyin Alison Attah, who described the practice as disgusting and frowned at the sexual drive by young girls.

Plateau to privatise tourism

From Rakiya A. Muhammad, Correspondent (Jos)

Plateau State Government is to privatise or at least commercialise existing tourists attractions in the state for efficient and profitable management.

The state Governor, Chief Joshua Dariye, who disclosed this while speaking on plans for the tourism sector this year, said towards this end, N323.1 million has been proposed for rehabilitation and completion of various projects in the sector.

Such projects include completion of Indoor Theatre, Solomon Lar Amusement Park, expansion of Jos Wild Life Park, rehabilitation and expansion of the Pandam Game Reserve and Tourist Village, purchase of vehicles for Pandam and Jos Wild Life Park as well as fencing of the Rock Hotel and Ray field Holiday Resort.

Governor Dariye assured that the state government would leave no stone unturned in the mobilisation of public and private sector resources for the development of the hospitality industry, by way of providing the enabling environment for the private sector to operate profitably and provision of recreational facilities.

He said it was in its effort to boost tourist activities and tourism for the purpose of taking full advantage of the advantages in the tourism sector that government acquired new animals of various species for the Jos Wild Life Park, last year.

The governor added that various animals enclosures had been constructed and expanded in the Jos Wild Life Park, while arrangements had reached advanced stage in developing facilities in the Mado, Pandam and Wase tourist sites.

He said government was conscious of Plateau's potential and abundant comparative advantages in the tourism sector and that it is poised to tap them for the overall benefit of the state.

From Edet Ekanem, (Stringer in Uyo)

Nnenyin Attah who caught sight of the girl on Saturday when she visited St. Luke's Hospital, Anna, Uyo, however, gave her New Year prize to Dorothy's child who was born at 01.30 hours on Saturday as the first baby of the year 2005.

The prize include, among other things, a basket of assorted baby items and undisclosed sum of money.

The governor's wife advised Dorothy's mother, seated at her daughter's bedside to ensure that the teenage mother return to school to complete her educational programme.

She also called on mothers not to take pleasure at their children's promiscuous acts, because according to her, it is unbecoming for unmarried children of teens to have a child especially at this time when Nigeria needs a good number of educated and hardworking women.

Nnenyin Attah expressed her benevolence on nurses who were on duty that day by presenting cash gift including one Mrs. Mary Asuquo to enable her settle the outstanding medical bill of N13,000 of her six year old daughter, Nse Obong.

The mother, Mrs. Asuquo explained that Nse Obong was detained in the hospital for her inability to settle the bill, explaining that her daughter Nse Obong was involved in an accident and had to undergo two surgical operations at the hospital.



Governor Adamu Aliero of Kebbi State presenting keys of a new car to the winner of the female category at the 19th National Qur'anic Recitation Competition, Zahra'u Ahmed from Kano State in Birnin Kebbi...recently.

FRSC urges repair of office complex

Almost one year after Governor Bukola Saraki directed some officials to effect the renovation of an office building allocated to the Zone 8 of the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) headquarters in Ilorin, no action has been taken.

This was the complain of the Zonal Commander, Alhaji Baba Goni, who lamented that millions of Naira was being lost in form of revenue to the state government as a result of inaction despite

From Abdulrazaq Adebayo, Correspondent (Ilorin)

Governor Bukola Saraki's directive.

Speaking to newsmen on a fact finding mission about production of number plates, Alhaji Baba Goni who conducted newsmen round the office building located within the licence office on Ahmadu Bello Way, Ilorin, said work could not begin due to lack of certain basic needs.

"In this Zone 8, comprising Kwara, Kogi and Ekiti States, we have a mini plant for the operation and printing of number plates, we can also replace missing or broken number plates, we have the machinery and personnel, hence motorists have no business going to Lagos," he stated.

"Unfortunately, the place given to us by the Kwara State government has not been renovated, there is no electricity connected to the building, no windows, hence up till today, we cannot produce a single number plate for replacement, meaning we are being dragged behind," the zonal commander lamented.

He said "the governor gave only one week under the chairmanship of the secretary to the state government to liaise, discuss and bring up all our requirements so that Governor Bukola Saraki will endorse and the office can be operational".

"Up till today we cannot get a single number plate for replacement which is actually

making the state to lose millions of Naira as revenue to the government," Alhaji Goni asserted.

The commander described activities of road safety in the last four months of last year as the most successful with nine accidents and one death recorded.

He said stiffer sanctions now awaited road users who contravened safety rules and regulations with charges ranging from N5,000 to N20,000.

The commander also warned road safety officials against taking bribe as such acts would attract summary dismissal.

Ladoja tasks workers on service

The Oyo State Governor Rashidi, yesterday, in Ibadan tasked civil servants "to re-dedicate themselves to service for maximum results in the new year".

Ladoja spoke during an inter-religious service at the government secretariat as part of events to usher in the new year.

The governor, represented by his Deputy, Mr Adebayo Alao-Akala, said his administration would continue to pay due attention to the welfare of workers as reflected in the 2005 budget.

"Salaries, allowances and other payments would continue to be promptly made," he pledged.

Ladoja expressed the appreciation of his government to the state chapter of the National Union of Local Government Employees "for shelving its proposed industrial action and opting for dialogue".

Niger Fadama project targets 200 communities

Niger State Government has selected 200 rural communities for participation in the National Fadama Development Project designed to enhance rural economic empowerment. The state Co-ordinator of the project, Alhaji Usman Kutigi, disclosed this yesterday in Minna while presenting 40 motorcycles and mobile phones to the project facilitators.

Kutigi said the project had the capacity to "turn around the economic fortunes of the rural populace within a very short time".

He said beneficiaries of the project were selected after verifying all interested Fadama user groups to ensure strict compliance with the guidelines of the World Bank, which is funding the programme.

Kutigi said the distribution of motorcycles and mobile phones to its facilitators was to ensure that they had access to those communities in the hinterland participating in the project so as to offer technical advice.

He said the requests for the provision of boreholes, earth dams, market stalls, agro-processing machines, irrigation pumps as well as infrastructure at the project

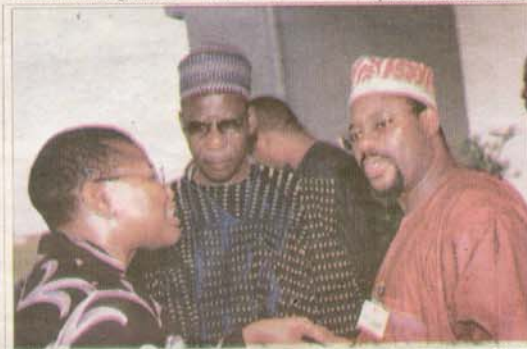
sites, sent by the benefiting communities, were being processed.

The coordinator urged the prospective beneficiaries to team up with the officials of the projects so as to enjoy maximum benefits from the project and enhance their economic status.

Also speaking, the state Commissioner for Agriculture,

Alhaji Ahmed Aliyu Garafini, warned the facilitators against misusing the facilities.

He assured the World Bank, the project coordinating unit and the communities of the state government's prompt payment of its counterpart funding, to ensure the sustenance of the project to enhance economic growth and rural development.



Honourable Ahmed Musa Ibejo, Deputy Chairman House Committee on Power and Steel, discussing with Due Process Committee Chairman Dr. Oby Ezekwesili in Abuja...recently.

KANO TRUST

Ungogo LG to eradicate begging, unemployment

Ungogo local government council has pledged it is support to eradicate begging and unemployment in the area.

The Acting Chairman of Ungogo, Alhaji Ibrahim D. Muhammad, revealed this to pressmen in the state that his council has ensured necessary methods to remove the nuisance of street begging and unemployment among youths of the area.

Alhaji Ibrahim said so far his council has taken note and enlisted disabled members of the council as beneficiaries of

By Ahmed Abubakar, Correspondent, (Kano)

a monthly allowance programme of N2,000 in an effort discourage street begging among them.

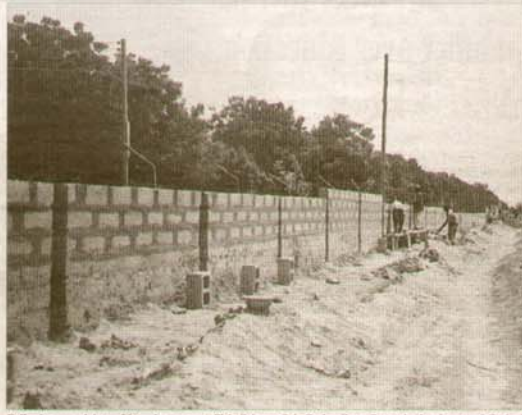
He also said the council has disbursed money for necessary working tools for self-help groups in the area to facilitate in their community developmental work. Again his council has donated an amplifier to the 'Juma'at mosque of the area to ensure wide coverage of Friday prayers in and outside the mosque.

In response to the

gesture, one of the disabled in the area, Mallam Iliyasu Fari said, although the money is little compared with the economic situation of the country and with what they used to earn before on the streets while begging, saying however it is a commendable effort as demonstrated by the local government council.

Fari also hoped that there should be continuity and constant review of the allowance in the future, and also asked other local governments in the state to emulate the Sharia compliance gesture of Ungogo local government.

In the same vein, the chairman of Ungogo LG reaffirmed his council's effort in improving the quality of life in the area by procuring drugs worth one million naira which were distributed to all medical and health centres in the area. Whereas education sector of the area received exercise books for primary school pupils and construction of blocks of classroom for a secondary school is underway.



Following complaints of intruders at govt Girls Science Col. Garko, Kano State, the local govt. of Garko is undertaking the entire fencing of the college. Pict: Musa Kaituma

Jigawa Assembly considers Justice Sector reform bill

Jigawa House of Assembly is considering a bill for the establishment of a Justice Reform Commission to enhance access to justice in the state.

The bill, when considered, will facilitate access to justice for the disadvantaged and other vulnerable groups.

The bill, submitted to the Assembly by the state governor, Alhaji Saminu Turaki, seeks to evolve a system of justice which is fair and easily accessible to all.

The majority leader of the House, Adamu Ahmad, told NAN that the bill would help establish a platform for a justice system which "respects human dignity and meets the aspiration of

the society."

It would also provide a framework for the commission to work together with other organisations for the improvement of the justice system.

It is also aimed at strengthening the work of the police, prison, bar and the courts to facilitate efficiency, timeliness in disposal of cases.

Women advised to circumcise children in hospitals

Women in Kano State have been advised to take their children to hospital for circumcision instead of patronising local barbers (wanzama).

The chief medical director of Murtala Mohammed specialist hospital made the call

From Jamilah Nuhu Musa, Correspondent, (Kano)

following complications experienced by a 7 year old boy who was circumcised by a local barber.

The 7 year old Umar Murtala had bled for about 10 days non-stop before he was brought to the hospital

District head tasks parents on education

Parents in Nasarawa local government area of Kano State have been enjoined to unveil appropriate and timely approach aimed at ensuring that their children obtain both Islamic and Western education.

The district head of the local government, Alhaji Salihu Bayero, who gave the charge at the graduation ceremony of 42 Qur'an

By Mustapha Isah Kwaru, Correspondent, (Kano)

students of Chediya Islamic school, added that the call become imperative because no society could develop under an atmosphere of illiteracy.

His words "I call on the parents to prioritise educational status of their children over any other issue for the general overhaul of the country. It is an obligation on

them to employ all necessary strategies to ensure that their children confront the challenges of Islamic and western education, failure to abide by such advice will not augur well for nation building."

Also speaking, the executive secretary of the state primary education Board (SPEB) Alhaji Ibrahim Muhammad solicited the local government's support towards the provision of a land so that the school will develop its permanent site.

He faulted the change of the location of the school site, pledging that the education ministry will shoulder the responsibility of constructing the school when the council doles out the land.

Responding, the council chairman, Alhaji Nasiru Muhammad, reiterated his zeal and readiness for the improvement of Qur'anic and Islamiyya studies.

He gave assurance that the local government will soon expedite action for speedy provision of land for the construction of permanent site of the school, saying the mandate is a collective responsibility.

Man sentenced to 50 strokes of cane for theft

A Dutse Sharia court has sentenced a 28-year-old farmer, Muhammad Abdullahi, to one year imprisonment for stealing a bag of rice.

The court also ordered that the convict be given 50 strokes of the cane.

In his ruling, Sharia Judge Auwalu Taura said on Thursday that the offence contravened Section 23 of the Sharia act.

Prosecuting Police Officer Umar Adamu had informed

the court that the suspect was apprehended after he had broken into a house and stolen a 50kg bag of rice at Sakwaya village in Dutse Local Government Area.

The police claimed to have recovered the rice, valued at N5,200 from the convict.

Abdullahi pleaded guilty to the charge but sought for leniency; the court however sentenced him and enforced the canning also.

The canning was carried out before a large crowd at the state's secretariat



Bus 10 seater donated by Kano State government to Sharia commission Quranic recitation competition (Musabaha)

EKO TRUST

One killed in area boys Boxing day fracas

Two factions of social area boys last weekend during the Boxing day engaged each other in a free for all fight at Orile-Iganmu Lagos during which a member of one of the gang was murdered in cold blood.

Investigations by *Eko Trust* revealed that the two factions of the street urchins were slugging it out over who controls Orile-Iganmu and its environs and this culminated in a showdown between the parties at Afaigbon Street, Sari Iganmu.

The swift response of the police from Orile division prevented the attack from degenerating and the situation was brought to a halt.

By **Oluamide Bajulaye,**
Correspondent (Lagos)

Meanwhile in what appears to be a show of supremacy between two contending transport union workers over the control of motor-parks in Epe town of Lagos state snowballed into a free for all fight last weekend during which property worth millions of Naira were destroyed.

Sources at the police command, informed that the two contending parties, NURTW and RTEAN were embroiled over the control of CMS and Ajah Units in Epe.

Before setting for a showdown with the leadership of the other party, which

was said to be having upper hand over the two motor parks, a group of unidentified hoodlums numbering about 50 stormed the parks and razed them down.

As if the attack was not yet over, the arsonists besieged the residents of two notable leaders of one of the unions and attacked their properties.

Owing to the prompt response of a team of policemen from Epe Divisional Headquarters to the scene of the attack that brought the situation under control while three suspects alleged to be their ringleaders and 13 others were arrested in connection with the incident.

In another development,

a four man armed robbery gang operating on two motorbikes attacked and shot a security guard attached to the sectional head in charge of Ejigbo depot of the Nigerian National Petroleum

Corporation NNPC, at Cele bus stop on his way to resume for work.

During the attack, the guard, identified as Alhaji JM Shebu, was shot in his left leg before a wristwatch and the

sum of N58, 000 and other personal belongings were snatched away from him.

The victim is said to be currently receiving treatment at the NNPC Hospital, Victoria Island.

Withdrawal of airport bus operators 'cheap blackmail' - LASG

Commissioner for Transportation, Muize Banire, and the Lagos State Government have described as "cheap blackmail" the withdrawal of services by operators of the Airport Shuttle buses over the sanctioning of some erring transporters along the route.

According to Banire, the contravened operators vio-

lated state traffic regulations by converting the Ikeja under bridge as Motor Park as against the concession granted to them.

He said the transporters plying the Ikeja-Airport route were only allowed to use the place as bus stop to discharge passengers.

Explaining what transpired between the shuttle bus drivers and officials of

the state vehicle inspection officers VIO on December 21, Banire insisted that the operators were contravened for traffic offences.

He pointed out that any commercial bus that must operate in Lagos State should wear the Yellow and Black colour and where such are shuttle buses like those of the Airport, Military Barracks and Educational Institution Campuses, Banire said they are to be restricted to the perimeter fence of such area.

The contravention of the vehicles according to the Commissioner was necessitated by the need to ensure free flow of traffic along the axis, "because the drivers are fond of clustering on the roads while calling out for passengers thereby making a mess of the traffic management measures in and around the area leading to unnecessary traffic snarl."

"The traffic nuisance they constitute around the place has increased the incidence of robbery around the area as passengers coming from the airport have become easy target in the traffic."

The commissioner also noted that several lives that could have been saved had been lost in the unnecessary traffic snarl.

All these have been brought to their attention severally with the aim of appealing to their conscience so that they could consider other road users but because of their selfish interest, all appeals had fallen on deaf ears."

While dismissing the allegation that the buses would be made to pay N60, 000 before they are released, Banire said the arrested vehicles would have to renew their particulars, as most of them had no single vehicle particulars.

Their association, according to him, would have to enter into agreement with the state government that they would comply with the state traffic rules.

... reinstates finance coy as parastatal

Determined to shore up industrial development of its domain through the Small/Medium Enterprise SME, the Lagos State government has announced the reinstatement of the Industrial Development Finance Company LSIDFC as a parastatals under its commerce and industry ministry.

The Commissioner in charge of the ministry, Prince Lanre Balogun announced the development during the commemoration of the Africa Industrialisation Day and the end of year appreciation to 25 outstanding SME operators.

According to him, the state government would be widening opportunities for SME operators through the establishment of more industrial estates.

Said he: "The year 2005 will mark a watershed in the improvement of the solid economic development of the state. As one of the key institution to facilitate this has just been returned to the ministry for management and that is the Lagos State Industrial Development Finance Company."

"In addition, we shall be re-engineering our industrial estates and will explore the opportunity of adding to the stock of estates under the purview of the state government."

Balogun urged operators in the state to take advantage of the unfolding globalization

trends and liberalisation of the world economy.

He explained that the 25 SMEs operators were rewarded over their efforts which were in tandem with the industrialization policy of the state government.

Besides, he said the gesture was to encourage others to be alive to their responsibilities as the engine of growth in the Nigerian economy.

Balogun explained: "we have added another element to this year's programme and that is the end of year appreciation of 25 SME operators, which are performing at 100 per cent capacity in our industrial estates."

"We are encouraged to do this because their individual effort have gone a long way in supporting the industrial policy of the present administration in the state. It is our belief that this will encourage others to similarly support by the government to refocus and energize their business."

A lecture on "Techno Venturing and the future of entrepreneurship in Nigeria. A case for strategic government intervention" was organized to commemorate this year's event.

It was delivered by the consulting manager of the Lagos State Chamber of Commerce and Industry LCCL, Mr. Akin Aluko.



Dr. Ade Odiakosa (left) chairman, action health incorporated, board of trustees discussing with Mrs. Ada Agwu-Ude, director Gender and Development Action (GADA) during a media chat in Lagos... recently. Pix: Oludalapo Odunrewo.

Students decry imposition of internship fees

Part-time students of the School of Communication at the Lagos State University (LASU) have decried the imposition of internship fees on them by the authorities.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) learnt that fourth year students of the school have been asked to pay

N5,000 each to participate in a mandatory six-month industrial training.

Some of the students who spoke with NAN on conditions of anonymity condemned the development and urged the university authorities to reconsider the policy.

"We are supposed to be paid for internship instead of

paying for it," one of the affected students argued, adding, "Some time ago, they collected N3,000 from us for examination materials consisting of only a sheet of paper."

"It is wrong for LASU to impose these fees on us after we have paid our school fees under this harsh economic situation in the country," another student lamented.

The students urged the authorities to request the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) to sponsor the internship, saying, however, that they would have to grudgingly pay the fee if they have no other option.

Reacting, the Dean of the School, Prof. Idowu Shobowale explained that the ITF did not sponsor internships in the field of communication.

Shobowale, a former Commissioner for Education in the state, said that the essence of the industrial training was to enhance the quality of the university's graduates of Mass Communication.

Shobowale stressed that the internship programme was a compulsory six-credit-unit-course for the students.

Earlier, the Sub-Dean of the School, Mr. Jimi Kayode, told NAN that the fee was to enable the school to put in place necessary logistics and supervision for the industrial training.

Kayode said that the ITF did not cater for the industrial training of part-time students.

NGO institutes N5m scholarship scheme

Non-governmental organisation, Jifeson foundation is to award scholarships worth N5 million to five primary school pupils and five secondary school students in Lagos this year.

The President of the foundation, Mr. John Festus told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Lagos at the weekend that the scholarship scheme, restricted to recipients in public schools, would be an annual event.

Festus said that arrangements had been concluded for the take off of the scheme, adding that beneficiaries who must be indigent but brilliant, would be selected through tests and 'lucky dip.'

"We are working in collaboration with several public schools' administrators and principals on the mode

of operation, in order to achieve maximum results," the president said.

Festus said that the foundation had already spent more than N3 million in providing books and other teaching and learning materials to some schools in the state.

According to him, schools that benefited from the assistance include, Anglican Girls Grammar School, Surulere, St. Joseph's Primary School, Apapa, and Lagos State University, Ojo.

Others are, the Nigerian French Language Village, Badagry, Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School, Ojuelegba, Surulere; and Ire-Akari Estate Model Primary School, Isolo.

He said that the locally funded foundation would extend its assistance to schools and students in other parts of the country.

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FOR THE RECORD

Justice necessary for reconciliation - Oputa

The Justice Chukwudifu Oputa-led Human Rights Violations investigations commission was one of the hallmark of the Obasanjo administration's efforts to address the issue of human rights violations in the country. It also serves as an avenue to reconcile parties involved in an effort to find peace. The panel submitted its report in May 2002 to the federal government. Below is the summary of the report as presented by the panel.

BY THE CHAIRMAN HON. JUSTICE CHUKWUDIFU A. OPUTA CFR, JUSTICE EMERITUS SUPREME COURT OF NIGERIA

"Ill fares the land, to hast'ning ill a prey, where wealth accumulates, and men decay..."

Oliver Goldsmith (*The Deserted Village*)

This was the lament of Oliver Goldsmith about "the deserted villages". In a sense, this Report is also a lament. However, unlike Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*, this particular lament is a lament, not about the disappearance of village life but about the aftermath of military rule in Nigeria and the consequential disappearance and violations of the human rights and essential freedoms of Nigerians. Like Oliver Goldsmith, I can then say:

"Ill fares the land, to hastening ill a prey, where might tramples over right."

And essential freedoms decay.

For much the greater part of the period covered by this Report, Nigeria was under military rule. During this period, most of our rulers' principal motivation and pre-occupation were not service to country but the accumulation of wealth and personal gratification.

This personal accumulation of wealth led to the decay of our society. Public and private morality reached its nadir; and the casualties included human dignity, human rights and our basic freedoms. We also experienced institutional and structural decay.

This Report has attempted to provide an over-view of the extent of our moral, physical and institutional decay under military rule. The proscription and circumscription of our human rights and freedoms under military rule were symptomatic of a much serious malaise. The departure from constitutional or limited government and with it the absence of accountability and transparency in public life. This was the ultimate decay involving the personalization of the governmental process around the military ruler.

The return to democratic civilian rule on 29 May 1999 provided the opportunity for us to rise above this decay, to break the silence of the past and to forge ahead, determined to lay to rest the ghost of this dark and painful period in our national history.

But we must be prepared

to a national *risorgimento*, then our work will not have been in vain.

We, therefore, hope that the Report will offer a credible perspective on our past, while also serving as a road map for our future. We do not claim that we have said all

It has been the privilege of this Commission to explore a part of that landscape and to represent the truths that emerged in the process. And we have tried, in whatever way we could, to weave into this truth about our past some essential lessons for the people of this country. Be-

cleansing and purifying possibilities it offers, at the individual psycho-cultural level and at the wider community and national levels.

This is not to deny that public hearings are inherently problematic. For example, during our public hearings in Abuja, Lagos and Port Harcourt, alleged perpetrators of human rights abuses and violations blatantly denied the human rights abuses and violations alleged against them by their victims and families.

To this extent, it was not possible or easy to extract from some alleged perpetrators the measure of remorse and plea for forgiveness so vital for forgiveness and reconciliation to take place.

Yet, all is not lost. Public Hearings still have their redeeming aspects. Thus, there are denials, which make no difference to the facts. When so many witnesses from different ethnic and geographical backgrounds allege unlawful arrests, illegal detentions and torture against the same set of persons or security agencies, such witnesses cannot all be lying and the alleged perpetrators cannot all be witnesses of truth. In such situations, the Commission had to read between the lines.

And, as one witness pointed out, it takes more than human courage to admit one's wrong-doing. And so the Commission found out!

In trying to discover the truth, we commissioned research teams of lawyers, historians and social scientists to write background papers for the Commission on various aspects of our mandate and terms of reference. The research reports submitted to us have been useful in the preparation of this Report.

Let me now turn briefly to some of the important issues raised and discussed at length in the Report.

TRUTH, RECONCILIATION & JUSTICE

Public perceptions and expectations about the work and mandate of the Commission varied enormously. But a common denominator was the concern with Justice. In some cases, justice was equated with revenge.

This is understandable and is not unique to Nigeria. Indeed as is clear from our comparative analyses of the work of truth commissions in Argentina, Chile, Guatemala, South Africa and Uganda in Volume 2 and Volume 5 of this Report, any society that has gone through the trauma of unbridled human rights violations and abuses is invariably confronted with a choice among two options: (a) Revenge and/or Nuremberg-type trials; and (b) Forgiveness and Reconciliation.

Which option is chosen will depend on what each

truth commission is set up to accomplish. Indeed, of the five truth commissions referred to above and analyzed in Volume 2 and Volume 5 of this Report, it was only in the case of Argentina that there were criminal prosecutions of members of the military junta and their collaborators for gross human rights abuses. In the other four cases, Chile, Guatemala, South Africa and Uganda, the aim was for people to know what happened in their respective countries during the dark days of military rule.

Which option should Nigeria choose? The answer is clear from the Commission's mandate, its terms of reference and the President's Address at the inauguration of the Commission: *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*. *Reconciliation was the key word in the President's Address. Our quo warranto is the search for this reconciliation.*

To forgive and to reconcile is not necessarily to deny justice. We should not confuse or conflate justice with prosecution and with criminal or retributive justice. Viewed in the broader perspective of legal theory or jurisprudence as well as moral and political philosophy, reconciliation represents not the antithesis but the triumph of justice.

Nigeria now has a nascent and fledgling democracy, with all its imperfections and teething problems. Managing the transition from military to democratic civilian rule requires deft and dexterous navigational skill to avoid land mines and treacherous waters. To manage the transition successfully and to consolidate it may require that we sacrifice criminal justice for the higher moral imperative of reconciliation and to avoid the trauma, anguish and pain criminal prosecution will give rise to.

In short, Recrimination and Revenge are, have always been and will forever be, poor chisels with which to hue out of stones of reconciliation, unity and peace.

If we try, we can achieve reconciliation and the onus is on all of us to try and do so. We are encouraged in this respect by our own experience on the field during the Public Hearings in reconciling warring communities. One or two examples will suffice.

During our sessions in Lagos, Lagos State, we reconciled the quarrelling communities of Maroko Village. We also recorded our first major break-through when the warring Ife and Modakeke communities in Osun State signed a Memorandum of Understanding and a Joint Declaration (see appendix to the report pledging to live in peace and harmony

Cont on Page 33



Hon. Justice Chukwudifu A. Oputa

there is to be said about our past and our future. Much, perhaps, remains to be said, and will be said by present and future chroniclers. This is as it should be, if only because history is forever unfolding itself, as new evidence arises, as new interpretations confront old ones and as, the ineluctable march of science brings forth new tools for unscrambling the past.

The following apt observation by the Most Revd. D.M. Tutu, Chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa in the *Foreword* to his Commission's Report, at paragraphs 17-19 of Volume 1 of the Report, underscores this point so well that I quote it in *extenso*:

"The past... is another country. The way its stories are told and the way they are heard change as the years go by. The spotlight gyrates, exposing old lies and illuminating new truths. As a fuller picture emerges, a new piece of the jigsaw of our past settles into place.

Inevitably, evidence and information about our past will continue to emerge, as indeed they must. The Report of this Commission will now take its place in the historical landscape of which future generations will try to make sense-searching for clues that lead, endlessly, to a truth that will, in the very nature of things, never be fully revealed."

cause the future, too; is another country. And we can do no more than lay at its feet the small wisdoms we have been able to garner out of our present experience.

A word on our approach to our mandate is pertinent here. In searching for the truth about our past, we tried to adhere scrupulously to the requirements of due process and fair hearing and to the canons of historical and cultural scholarship.

We provided the platform, through our Public Hearings and Special Sessions, held across the various geo-political zones of the country, for alleged victims and alleged perpetrators of human rights abuses and violations to bare their minds in public. But we were careful not to take their accounts at their face value.

We had to devise means of corroborating them. We wish to underscore this point, if only to disabuse the minds of critics who accused the Commission of reopening old wounds by providing this platform. We realize that this is partly a matter of methodology and perspective, regarding how we should unscramble and come to terms with the past.

We firmly reject the view that we should simply forget the past. As I have already observed in this *Foreword*, we need to talk about the past, no matter how painful, in order to move ahead and because of the cathartic or

FOR THE RECORD

Justice necessary for reconciliation - Oputa

Start from Page 32
 money and to adopt only peaceful means in pursuing their respective rights and entitlements. It was unfortunate that the media did not give the life/Modakeke reconciliation the prominence it deserved.

During our session in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, the Commission succeeded in brokering a Peace Accord among the warring factions and groups in Ogoniland. In particular, we managed to unite and amalgamate the **Ogoni Four** and the **Ogoni Nine** into the **Ogoni Thirteen**. As the New Nigerian Editorial of Friday, 16th February 2001 observed:

"The Peace Accord signed by the warring factions in Ogoniland... will go down in the sociopolitical development of this country as one of the landmark achievements of the Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission."

While I do not wish to over-dramatize or generalize from these examples, what needs emphasis is that unless we try, and try, we cannot even start the long journey to national reconciliation, and maintain its momentum. The flash points of communal unrests in our country constitute albatrosses around our necks. Let us with the crossbow of the Commission shoot down each albatross in the interest of the peace and unity of our country and for the sake of the survival of our nascent democracy. Let us all adhere to the message of our 1960 national anthem:

"... Though tribes and tongues may differ in brotherhood we stand... Nigerians all"

The President's Address at the inauguration of the Commission made repeated references to *Our Nation; Our Land; and Our Country*. These references presuppose a common citizenship and the existential reality of a geographical entity called Nigeria.

Yet Petition No. 1648 submitted to the Commission by Oha-naeze Ndigbo and the responses to it by the Arewa Consultative Forum, the Joint Action Committee on the Middle Belt, the Afenifere, the South-South and the Government of Rivers State, Ogbakor-Ikwere Convention provide telling illustration of how divided we are as a country and of how suspicious and afraid we are of one another.

What is also clear from this is that the various ethno-communal groups in the country, including the major ones, complain of marginalization in the scheme of things.

I cannot address the issue of citizenship and marginalization in this Foreword other

than to observe that they are central to the consideration of human rights as group, ethno-cultural, ethno-religious or collective rights as well as to the foundations of federalism in the country, going as far back as the mid-1940s and the fears of domination expressed by minority ethnic groups in the penultimate years of the decolonization process in our country.

As one of our research teams pointed out, quite correctly, our national experience with federalism shows that the problem of marginalization is at the bottom of minority ethnic group fears of the curtailment or violation of substantive human rights-the right to self-determination, the right to the promotion of their cultural rights, and their citizenship rights, especially the right to equitable participation in the cultural, economic and political life of the country.

Under simple majoritarian, first-past-the-post competitive democratic electoral processes, and much more so under authoritarian regimes ethnic minorities all too easily and themselves excluded by the structure of power and the rules of the electoral process, making them less competitive and denying them access to the State and its enormous patronage.

A refreshing and confidence-building fall-out from the work of our Commission is the raising of the issue of minority rights as a core dimension of gross human rights violations and bringing it on the agenda of national debate. In this way, such public consciousness may engender well-thought out remedial public policies and constitutional guarantee of minority rights, thereby facilitating national reconciliation.

These interrelated citizenship aspects of our constitutional and political history-their origins and trajectories, and how best to confront them at the constitutional and policy levels are extensively covered in Chapters Two and Three of Volume One, and in Volumes Three and Seven.

I only wish to observe here that we need to distinguish between marginality, which is a self-imposed constraint to full citizenship participation, and marginalization, which is imposed from the outside by wielders of political and economic power and is therefore historically deep rooted and structurally-determined.

While marginality can be redressed by affirmative-type action, consistent with the federal character clauses of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the problem of marginalization is best solved by the political restructuring of our federal system of govern-

ment, underlined by equitable and fair resource allocation and distribution.

PROFESSIONALISM, LOYALTY AND THE CULT OF THE HEAD OF STATE

The military is a great and ancient profession, which requires appropriate deman-

to protect the Head of State and his family as well as the State of Government, even if it calls for my making the supreme sacrifice." General Sabo also said in his evidence that the Head of State is but an extension of the State.

These are troublingly menacing views, which if con-

the country, as detailed in Volumes One, Three and Five of this Report.

I find it instructive to say a further word about the cult of the Head of State, in the context of our experience with military rule and the institutional and moral decay I referred to at the beginning of this Foreword.

Military rule is absolute rule. It subverts and undermines the institutions of the State, imperceptibly initially but surely and gradually. It leads inevitably to moral and political corruption, alongside the decay of time-honoured loyalties and values as well as institutional decay. In due course and as a manifestation of this deepening decay, cruelty and murder become norms of governance. Good faith and truthfulness become childish scruples while force and craft become the keys to success. Selfishness, naked and unadorned, need only succeed to supply its own justification.

This sums up the character and odious dimension of military rule in the country, as elsewhere. The fall-out, in our case, was the gross violations of the human rights of Nigerians, which are enumerated and elaborated upon in this Report, particularly in Volumes Two, Four, Five and Six.

THE NON-APPEARANCE OF 3 FORMER HEADS OF STATE AND OTHER TOP GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONARIES

The non-appearance of three former Heads of State and a number of former top government functionaries, when summoned by the Commission, put to test the theory that in a democracy all men are equal before the law, that the rule of law and not the rule of man should prevail. In addition to not appearing, these former Heads of State filed civil actions challenging the Commission.

The former Heads of State are: Generals Muhammadu Bhuari, Ibrahim B. Babangida, and Abdulsalami Abubakar. The former top functionaries are: Colonel Halilu Akilu and Lt-Colonel A.K. Togun.

Many in Nigeria and, indeed, in the international community, wondered why these highly placed Nigerians, who had held high public office, refused to appear and testify in person before the Commission.

Although the Commission had the power to issue warrants for their arrest, it refused to do so, in the over-all interest of national reconciliation.

The spirit of the Commission's mandate and terms of reference are implicitly both against impunity. For impunity makes social reintegration, rehabilitation and reconciliation difficult. It repre-

sents the triumph of might over right.

APPRECIATION

I must express my delight at the *esprit des corps* with which we worked together as members of the Commission. It shows that, when all is said and done, there are innumerable Nigerians who apply themselves to work conscientiously and with dedication.

We thank the President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (GCFR) for the opportunity given to us to serve this country and the confidence reposed in the members of the Commission.

Our gratitude also goes to the Honourable Ministers of Justice and Attorney-General of the Federation, first Hon. Mr. Kanu Agabi (SAN), then the late Hon. Bola Ige (SAN) and, then again Hon. Kanu Agabi, for the keen interest they showed in our work and, more specifically, for their support. We regret and are saddened by the assassination of Chief Bola Ige (SAN) and wish his equally eminent wife and family the continued guidance and Grace of God.

We thank the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Obong Ufot Ekaete for his understanding and support.

In the same vein, we thank all the government departments and their staff at federal, state and local government council levels for facilitating our work, whenever we needed their assistance.

No less important and encouraging has been the keen interest shown in our work by a number of foreign missions and international governmental organizations. We particularly thank the Ford Foundation for their immense financial support throughout the duration of the Commission's assignment. Our gratitude also goes to CDD, IDEA, British Council and German Embassy for their support.

We thank the various national and international non-governmental organizations that worked closely with us, providing useful insights into the nature of human rights abuses in the country.

Our work would have been much more difficult and tedious but for the cooperation we received from all those who submitted memoranda and petitions and all those who testified before us. We thank them all.

We owe special gratitude to the electronic and print media for highlighting our work and bringing our deliberations, especially the public hearings to the attention of millions of our people.

We were fortunate to have had a good team of researchers and resource persons, who worked with us. To them, we say a big thank you.

To be continued



President Olusegun Obasanjo

NEWS

Jigawa export free zone ready for operations —Turaki

Arrangements has been concluded for the take off of multi-million naira Jigawa State owned export free processing zone, the Maigatari free zone, Governor Ibrahim Saminu Turaki has said.

The free zone according to the governor is 90 per cent completed as over ten prototype factories including the provision of electricity and water supply has been completed while warehouses and trade areas are ready for operations.

The governor also revealed that transformers, as well as standby generators have been provided and connected to the factories in order to ensure non stop energy supply to the prototype factories.

He also revealed that security operatives including the Nigeria custom service, police, immigration offices have all been provided as banking facilities have also been established within the border free zone to make business transactions easier.

Governor Turaki added that internet facilities and road networks have reached advanced stages of completion as prospective multi national companies have issued their proposals for the setting of businesses in the border free zone.

Prospective investors have been issued with operation licenses to set up their enterprises, industries and other major business establishment in the zone.

The border free zone according to Governor Turaki would earn the state substantial foreign exchange, promote employment and enhance trans ECOWAS trade apart from the development of social infrastructures and economic

From Hassan A. Karofi
correspondent in Dutse

activities along the sub Saharan Africa.

Already, Governor Turaki revealed over 50m dollars worth of sesame produce is currently underway for exportation through the zone and will increase to hundreds of dollars in the next few years as government get set to promote sesame production and other cash crops.

In order to ensure effective running of the zone the governor added, some

reputable companies have been invited to facilitate the attainment of the project's objectives in terms of employment generation, revenue accrue ment, ECOWAS trade promotion and general growth of the state's investments.

This, he further added would go along way in making the state economically viable socially strong and its people's living condition more secured and enhanced through the provision of employment opportunities.

Kadpoly gets Deputy Rector

From Aliya Haruna,
correspondent in Kaduna

The minister of education, Professor Fabian Osuji, has approved the appointment of Mrs. Rahila Ladi Mohammad as Deputy Rector for Kaduna Polytechnic for a period of two years.

Mrs. Rahila whose appointment took effect from 2nd November, 2004, started her working career with Integrated Education for Development Van Leer Foundation with the then Benue/Plateau State government before joining Kaduna Polytechnic as a lecturer II in 1976, and rose through the ranks to the post of Chief lecturer in 1988.

She served as Head of Department of Social Development and Cooperative Studies from 1986 to 1995; Dean, School of Administrative and Social Studies from 1992 to 1995.

Shortly before her appointment as Acting

Deputy Rector in May, 2004, she was elected as Dean, School of Administrative and Social Studies in April which was in addition to other academic and administrative position she held within the polytechnic community.

Born in Mangu local government area of Plateau State, Mrs. Rahila started her primary education at Panyam Primary School from 1951 to 1953, then to Gindiri Girls Primary School 1954 to 1955, she also attended Queens College Ilorin, from 1956 to 1961, before proceeding to Surbiton in Surrey, Unniversity College Swansea, South Wales from 1967 to 1969.

She was also at the University of Reading, Berks between 1969 to 1971 in the United Kingdom, and to the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, between 1972 to 1974.

Until her appointment, Mrs. Rahila L. Mohammed was the Acting Deputy Rector of Kaduna Polytechnic, She possess BSc Political Sciences and many academic certificates.

A statement made available to Daily Trust in Kaduna signed by Mr. B.Z. Bustwat, Registrar of Kaduna Poltechnic, said Mrs. Rahila has since assumed duties.



Mrs. Rahila Ladi
Mohammad

Minister introduces scholarship scheme for orphans

From Edet Elkanemi,
Stringer in Uyo

About 30 orphans from the three senatorial districts of Akwa Ibom State are to enjoy scholarship beginning from this year.

The Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Obonganwan Rita Akpan, who announced the package in Uyo said the scholarship will only be for female orphans up to secondary school level.

Obonganwan Akpan noted that in no distance time, boys and those in the universities will also benefit from the scheme.

The women affairs minister explained that she demonstrated the gesture for orphans in order to offer them education, to guard against

teenage pregnancy, as well as HIV/AIDS.

Obonganwan Akpan accordingly directed the State Ministry of Women Affairs to work in partnership with other women organisations in the state to evolve modalities for the selection of deserving beneficiaries, and promised to assist women achieve their goals.

"I will not die until I have furnished my vision for women" she vowed. She commended commenced Akwa Ibom women for their supports and willingness to support the administration achieve its goal of developing women in the state and the country at large.

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

Central Business District

Tower 421, Constitution Avenue, Abuja

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE TO ALL ISSUING HOUSES AND ISSUERS OF SECURITIES IN THE NIGERIAN CAPITAL MARKET: SUSPENSION OF RULE 64(4)a OF SEC RULES AND REGULATIONS AND PROHIBITION OF UNAPPROVED ADVERTISEMENT

The Securities and Exchange Commission hereby notifies all Issuing Houses and Issuers of securities in the Nigerian capital market that Rule 64(4)a of the Commission's Rules and Regulations is hereby suspended. Consequently:

- All Issuing companies who want to make public offers of their securities from January 1, 2005, should note that they must state the specific amount they require in their prospectus.
- The Commission will no longer allow the absorption of excess proceeds on any Offer. Over-Subscription must therefore be returned after allotment.
- All Issuing Houses are hereby advised to provide for underwriting facilities to the issues they manage, in order to avoid large scale under subscription.
- The Commission further warns that all advertisements and marketing materials in respect of public offers for both local and foreign media must be submitted to, and approved by the Commission before release to the public.

SIGNED

MANAGEMENT

Inside Politics

Youth forum demands Ogbeh's resignation

A non-governmental association, the Northern Youth Leaders Forum (NYLF) has demanded for the immediate resignation of the National Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) over the face-off between himself and president Obasanjo on one hand, and the controversy between Adamawa state governor, Boni Haruna and his Nassarawa state counterpart, Alhaji Abdullahi Adamu on the other.

The second National chairman of the NYCF, Comrade Elia M. Afiyu, addressing a press conference in Abuja on Monday, said the Ogbeh/

Obasanjo face-off was embracing and wondered what prompted Chief Ogbeh to resort to letter writing when as party chairman, he has unhindered access to the president.

The NYCF Chairman said that "apart from the fact that Chief Ogbeh was fully aware of the genesis of the Anambra crisis and the steps taken by president Obasanjo towards the amicable resolution of the crisis, yet, Chief Ogbeh decided to write to the president instead of taking the president one-on-one, as well as leaking the letter to the press.

"These questions and many more confirm our conviction and conclusion that chief Ogbeh's letter was written with sinister motive and intention which is tantamount to betrayal of trust and smacks of suspicion, indiscipline and administrative incompetence," Comrade Afiyu said.

El-Amin Little drops PRP for PDP

From Musa Umar Kazure
Regional Editor (Kano)

The Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) gubernatorial candidate for 2003 governorship election, Kano State, Alhaji Ibrahim Ali Amin Little, has officially decamped to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

Confirming the development, Kano State chairman of PDP, Alhaji Uba Jigo, said Little's decamping would add a great deal to PDP chances in future elections in Kano State, describing the former ANPP grassroots mobiliser as an asset to any political party.

"We are happy that Ibrahim Little decided to join the right party, the winning party. We can use his grassroots mobilisation skill and it is hoped that he will show unflinching commitment to the party as we move to strengthen our position in Kano State which is known as a PDP state," Uba Jigo added.

In a telephone chat, Alhaji Ibrahim Ali Amin Little said that decision to decamp to PDP followed consultations he had with his close political associates and all stakeholders.

"I never take decisions without consulting with my constituency and supports who have been very supportive in my political career. We looked at all the options available to us and analysed all the political parties before deciding to pitch camp with PDP, the young politician explained.

A formal rally to receive the erstwhile ANPP chairman is being arranged by PDP in Kano that is expected to be attended by all the party's chieftains in the state.

Obasanjo towards the amicable resolution of the crisis, yet, Chief Ogbeh decided to write to the president instead of taking the president one-on-one, as well as leaking the letter to the press.

"These questions and many more confirm our conviction and conclusion that chief Ogbeh's letter was written with sinister motive and intention which is tantamount to betrayal of trust and smacks of suspicion, indiscipline and administrative incompetence," Comrade Afiyu said.

Omrade Afiyu added that Northern tradition demanded that we avail ourselves and exhaust every available means of advising and correcting our leaders in such a way that would be acceptable to our leaders and also be considered as decent and respectful.

On the Governor Adamu and Haruna face-off, the forum described as baffling why Governor Boni Haruna would describe Governor Abdullahi Adamu as Judas, saying such choice of damning words is unbecoming of an executive governor of a state.

The forum however, commended Governor Adamu for his intelligent, well articulated and responsible reply to Governor Boni Haruna.

The forum called a northern politicians, especially those in positions of high responsibility to shun campaigns of personalities and instead concentrate on issues, especially with the North as an entity facing its greatest political challenge towards 2007 presidency.

The Arewa Women and Youth Forum (AWYF) has renewed its determination to draft the former military president, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida to contest the presidency in 2007.

Towards this end, the AWYF members comprising over 50 youths and women organisations across the country have embarked on voluntary saving of ten percent of their weekly earnings toward buying the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Presidential nomination forms when the party begins to sell them.

The president of AWYF, Hajija Maimunatu Lata Tombayi told Daily Trust in Kaduna that members of the group include motorcycle operators and petty traders "who are expressing their desire to draft IBB to contest to save the deplorable state of public education in Nigeria and the North in particular."

The woman activist and educationist said in 2002 the group "IBB Vision 2003" which she leads, bought a nomination form No 0071 to draft IBB into the 2003 race but could not get his nod

2007: AWYF vows to draft IBB

From Sani Babadoko, Bureau Chief (Kaduna)

adding that, "they are undeterred and want to show that their call is genuine by contributing money to buy the declaration form for the 2007 race and hope IBB will not disappoint them."

She disclosed that members of the AWYF in the universities around the country had also been saving by cutting down on their

feeding just to ensure, through their sweat, to convince IBB to contest the 2007 presidential election.

"Most of them are those I gave scholarship from my school to complete university education. Some are Okada riders and petty traders who declare their faith in the leadership of IBB and believe that when he comes back as a civilian president will restore our educational

glory because they believe I can persuade him to do more for education than is presently the case," she added.

Hajija Tombayi said, the money is not what to consider but the spirit and commitment behind it adding that women and youths were at the receiving end of the poor educational system and the unemployment that result.



Governor Joshua Dariye of Plateau State (right) in a heart to heart discussion with Arch. Abdullahi Magaji, PDP vice chairman North Central Zone during a solidarity visit on the governor.

Senator wants more autonomy for LGs

Senator Musliu Obanikoro, representing Lagos Central Senatorial District, has advocated for increase in Local Government autonomy in Nigeria just as he called for return to town council system practice in the country in recent past.

Obanikoro, who spoke on radio programme monitored by Daily Trust, asserted that only the gesture would bring the tier closer to the citizens and allow them to mould their sense of belonging through full participation in project Nigeria.

According to him, the positions of local government nowadays is that of slavery subjugated by state governments nationwide.

This development, he stressed, portended a dangerous precedence to division of powers among the tiers of government as codified in the constitution of

the country, adding that democracy stands to be imperilled if the status quo is not changed.

The Senator, who is the former chairman of Lagos

Island local government, dismissed the insinuation that local government chairmen are dump declaring that most of them are full of administrative acumen and intellectual capacities diminished by the burden placed on them by the

illogical federating arrangement.

He enjoined Nigerians to be tolerant, and patient — which the local government administration as there are sign post of hope and rejuvenation ahead.

Katsina ANPP supports Buhari's plan for appeal

The All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) Katsina state chapter has endorsed the plan by its presidential candidate General Muhammadu Buhari (rd) to appeal the judgement passed by the Court of Appeal to the Supreme Court of Nigeria.

Rising from a joint meeting of the state Exco and the party caucus in Daura local government area of Katsina state, the party expressed satisfaction with General Buhari's response as articulated in his press briefing a day after the Court

of Appeal verdict as well with "the good work and commitment of the term of lawyers led by chief Mike Ahamba (SAN) that represented the party and its presidential candidate."

The meeting, which also adopted a disciplinary committee report recommending the suspension of the immediate past state chairman of the party, Alhaji Nafi'u Sani Dandagora also dissolved the executive councils of Daura, Musa and Danja Local

Governments for what it called "unfortunate conduct" during the last election and appointed a caretaker committee to run the affairs of the party in the two local government areas.

The party also condemned what it called "the wanton" killing and destruction of its supporters and property during the last local government election and set up a committee to visit and sympathize with the victims and their families under the chairmanship of Dr. Yushu' Armaya'u.

2007: South-South politician supports Northern presidency

The South-South Coordinator of Project Nigeria and front line politician cum business man in Edo State, Prince Dr. H. Omorodion has commended shift power to the northern part of the country in 2007.

Prince Omorodion who is the South-South national Coordinator of Project Nigeria, told Daily Trust in Port Harcourt that the option of shifting the presidency to the north in 2007 was in the best interest of the nation

From Muhammad Ajah
Correspondent (PHC)

since, according to him, the region has produced the best presidents in the past.

He, therefore, urged the north to chose the most saleable personality that would patriotically work with all segments of the Nigerian society adding that the former head of state, General Ibrahim Babangida would do better.

Expressing optimism that 2007 will be like a normal political year, Omorodion said there would not be any crises as Nigerians have learnt so much from the 2003 electoral malpractices.

"North has produced the best presidents of this country. People like Shagari, Buhari, IBB and Abdulsalami did well for our nation. But to me, IBB ruled better than any of them because of the bulk of experience and international exposure. He

also carried every Nigerian along and was detribalised," he opined.

On the allegations against the former military president, Prince Omorodion said that the people would always condemn leaders when they have left office because the power of incumbency would have not given the chance to do so.

Citing an instance with the present government whose policies have made life hard for ordinary citizens of the

country, he predicted that series of books would be published at the end of the regime in 2007 as it has been happening in the past.

Prince Omorodion noted that the South-South presidency was not feasible in 2007 since the zone is still faced by fundamental problems that do not signal national unity, advising the people of the zone to accept the power shift to the north in good faith for national unity and stability.

SPORTS

Rusedski to face Federer in Qatar

Greg Rusedski began his 2005 campaign with victory over Jan Hernych at the Qatar Open, and the Briton next faces world number one Roger Federer.

The British number two battled past his Czech opponent 6-3 7-5 to set up the daunting second-round encounter.

Federer was below his best but still thrashed David Ferrer of Spain 6-1 6-1.

Sixth seed Ivan Ljubicic eased past qualifier Stanislas Wawrinka 6-3 6-4, and seventh seed Feliciano Lopez beat Filippo Volandri 7-5 6-3.

"I'm still excited about 2005," said Rusedski. "It is great to be healthy. I worked very hard during the off-season and it's paying off."

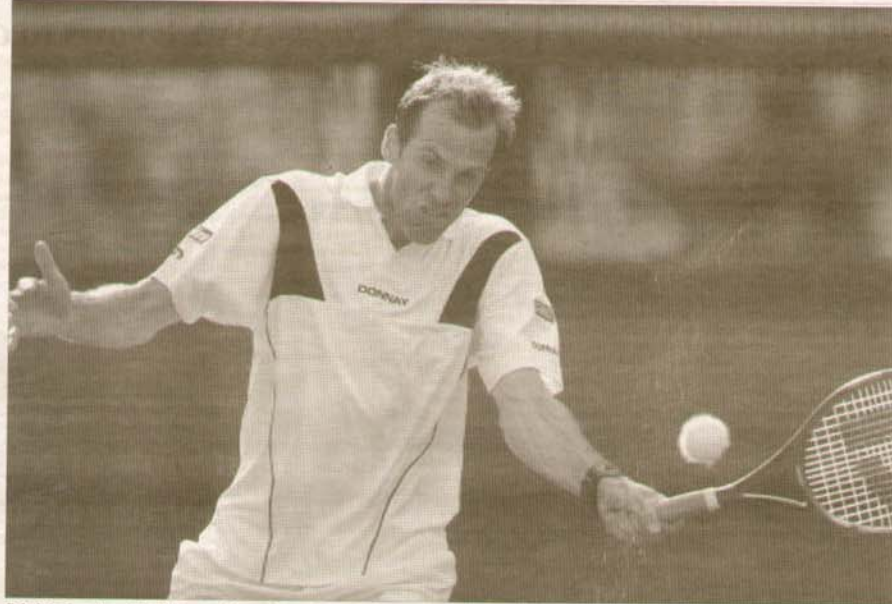
Federer never found top gear against Ferrer and slammed his racket into the ground in frustration at one point, but was always in command of the match.

And the Swiss star made a surprise announcement afterwards when he revealed that Australian Tony Roche will work as his coach for 10 weeks of the year.

"It's good to know that there will be help there because I need someone to analyse and help improve my game," said Federer.

"I have no clue what I would do (without him). It's a relief that there will be help at times when I want it."

Roche had originally turned down the offer because of the travelling involved, and the arrangement will last for just one year for the time being.



Britain's Greg Rusedski will face world number one Roger Federer of Switzerland in the quarter-finals of Qatar Open in Doha.

James stars in Cleveland win

LeBron James wore a plastic mask to protect his face but it did not prevent him playing a lead role as Cleveland Cavaliers beat the Charlotte Bobcats 92-83.

James suffered a facial fracture last week after being elbowed in the face last week by Houston centre Dikembe Mutombo.

But it did not hinder his

form as he scored a game-high 26 points, grabbed eight rebounds and dished out six assists.

Drew Gooden added 19 points and 14 rebounds for the Cavs, who found out earlier in the day that long-time owner Gordon Gund has agreed to sell the franchise.

Gund agreed to sell the team for a reported US\$375m to a group of investors headed by Daniel Gilbert, who is the chairman and founder of Quicken Loans and Michigan-based home

lender Rock Financial.

Chris Bosh tied his career-high with 25 points and grabbed 12 rebounds, as the Toronto Raptors started a five straight home-game stint with a 105-94 victory over Orlando.

Morris Peterson added a season-high 21 points and Rafer Alston went 4-of-7 from

three-point range for 12 points. Paul Pierce recorded a triple-double with 19 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists, as the Boston Celtics defeated the New Orleans Hornets, 108-90, at FleetCenter.

Ricky Davis had 23 points and Raef LaFrentz contributed 14 points and 12

boards for the Celtics, who outscored New Orleans 62-44 in the second half en route to their fourth straight home win.

Boston's Gary Payton missed the game with a strained left hamstring, suffered during Sunday's loss at Detroit. He had played in 305 consecutive contests.

Hewitt angry at Aussie officials

Lleyton Hewitt directed another angry outburst at Australian tennis officials as the men's season began in Adelaide.

The world number three repeated his recent attack on the pace of the courts at the

forthcoming Australian Open.

"I'm baffled by the whole thing, I really am," said Hewitt. "And I've had a guff of it to tell you the truth."

Hewitt lost a doubles match at the Australian Hard-court Championships on Monday, but opens his singles campaign against Arnaud Clement on Tuesday.

After teaming up with coach Roger Rasheed to lose 7-6 (7-3) 6-7 (5-7) 6-2 to Jordan Kerr and Jim Thomas, Hewitt turned his attention to the Rebound Ace surface in Melbourne.

"McNamee's not going to change his mind," he said of the Australian Open tournament director Paul McNamee.

"It doesn't worry me. At the end of the day I've got to go out there and try to win the Australian Open and I plan to try to do that on whatever I've got to play on."

In the opening day's singles matches, third seed Nicolas Kiefer of Germany beat Dutchman Sjeng Schalken 6-2 4-6 6-3 in a match twice interrupted by rain.

Seventh seed Florian Mayer, eighth seed Jurgen Melzer and Thomas Engst were other first-round winners.

Australian Open courts will be fastest ever-organisers

The Australian Open courts will be faster than ever this year, whatever Lleyton Hewitt believes, Tennis Australia president Geoff Pollard said on Tuesday.

Pollard was responding to criticism from former world number one Hewitt that the Melbourne Park hard courts were too slow and would hamper his chances of winning his home grand slam.

"We spent a substantial amount of money on making some modifications to the surface to make it faster," Pollard told a news conference in Adelaide.

"It would appear it's not fast enough to what Lleyton prefers... but it's very hard to create a perfect surface for everyone."

Hewitt said he wanted special treatment because of his achievements and was upset that Open organisers had some making-it-help him.

"I thought I may have had

a bit of pull (influence) after being number one in the world for two years and winning a couple of slams, but obviously not that much," he said on Monday.

"I'm baffled by the whole thing. I really am and I've had a gut full of it to tell you the truth."

Hewitt won the U.S. Open in 2001 and Wimbledon a

Maccarone makes switch to Siena

Middlesbrough striker Massimo Maccarone has joined Italian side Siena on loan for the rest of the season.

Maccarone, 25, had been on loan at Parma but made few appearances for them and is delighted to be with Siena.

"I'm delighted because this is a return to Tuscany," Maccarone told Siena's website. This part of the country has always brought me luck.

year later but has not won a grand slam since. He has never made it past the fourth round of the Australian Open in eight attempts.

The last Australian man to win the national championship was Mark Edmondson in 1976. Edmondson won the title when the Open was played on the grass courts of Kooyong.

"I saw my new team against Inter and they impressed me," he said of the 2-2 draw before Christmas.

Maccarone went on to explain why his move to Parma after two disappointing seasons at Boro had not worked out.

"At Parma I had weight problems when I signed for them," he said.

"I had to be very fit to play in the position they wanted me to play but sadly I wasn't in the best of shape."



Melbourne Park... the 2005 Australian Open courts will be fastest ever.

Sports

Redknapp looks to son Jamie to beat the drop

Relegation-threatened Southampton have signed Tottenham midfielder Jamie Redknapp to help them beat the Premier-ship drop.

Saints boss Harry Redknapp, who accepted Everton's six-million-pound bid for striker James Beattie on Monday, also bagged Tottenham defender Calum Best on loan.

Tottenham released Redknapp so he can link up with his father Harry at South-

ampton. The 31-year-old former England midfielder has spent three years at Spurs since moving from Liverpool, making 53 first-team appearances and taking over as club captain from Teddy Sheringham in 2003.

Tottenham chairman Daniel Levy praised Redknapp for his efforts at White Hart Lane.

"Jamie has been an outstanding ambassador for our club. During his time with us he has always shown commitment

and enthusiasm," said Levy.

"He proved to be an excellent club captain with his positive attitude and fostering of team spirit.

"We would like to thank Jamie and wish him well at Southampton."

Redknapp admitted he had decided on the move in order to get regular first-team football.

"I have enjoyed my time at Tottenham but, as the team has developed, there has been a healthy increase in competi-

tion for places and I have found myself on the bench more than on the pitch," he told the Tottenham website.

"At this stage in my career I want to be playing more so I had a chat with Frank (Arnesen), Martin (Jo) and the chairman and asked them to let me go.

"They were great about it and Martin even said when I finish playing to come and talk to him and about a coaching role."

Benitez confirms Morientes interest

Liverpool manager Rafael Benitez has confirmed the English Premiership club's desire to bring Real Madrid striker Fernando Morientes to Anfield during the January transfer window.

"It is a possibility. He says he wants to come here," Benitez told Sky Sports after seeing his team go fifth and drop Norwich into the relegation zone with a 2-1 win here at Carrow Road on Monday. Last month Liverpool's official website reported Morientes as saying: "I am going to England - I have decided."

"I will go to Liverpool and for many reasons. The main reason is the coach Rafa Benitez. He is Spanish and knows me perfectly, which is worth a lot for a professional.

"We have asked Real Madrid to make a fast solution and I don't want to expand

any further, except to say I am already looking through the English dictionary."

But the player's agent later denied his client had made any such comments and Benitez stressed that while he was looking for new players he would make do with his current squad, just three points behind local rivals Everton and well in the hunt for the fourth Champions League

place available to English clubs. "This week we are working hard and trying to buy new players to increase the level of competition between the players but I am very happy with the squad," he said.

"If we find some players, then OK but if we don't find (them) then we will go on with our players."

Second-half goals from Luis Garcia and John Arne Riise sent Liverpool on their way to before Norwich ensured a nervous finale for the Reds after 18-year-old substitute Ryan Jarvis pulled a goal back two minutes before full-time.

Victory meant Liverpool had bounced back at the first opportunity following their 1-0 defeat at home to leaders Chelsea but Benitez was still bewildered by the congested Christmas and New Year programme which has no parallel in European football.

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"We try to use different players but I don't understand why (there are so many fixtures). It is not just me, all the professionals say the same."

"We have had a good Christmas though. We are winning more games away, we are more consistent and we have more confidence."

Norwich manager Nigel Worthington, whose team held out for a draw in their previous match against Portsmouth despite playing most of the game with 10 men, praised his players' character.

"They never dropped their heads. We got a great goal to come back into it and might even had a penalty."

"Over the last four games we have worked very hard but with little return - but that is the Premiership."



Redknapp

Villa 'set to sign' Pompey's Faye

Aston Villa are set to complete the signing of Portsmouth midfielder Arndy Faye, according to the player's agent.

Willie McKay says the 27-year-old Senegal international has passed a medical and is on the brink of joining Villa for a fee of around £2m.

Middlesbrough were also linked with a bid for Faye, who made 50 appearances for Pompey after joining them

from Auxerre for £1.5m in August 2003.

But McKay told the Daily Express: "I'm sure something will happen at Villa." Faye could be the first of a number of departures from Fratton Park.

Czech Republic midfielder Patrik Berger, whose contract runs out in the summer, has been linked with Southampton, who are managed by former

Pompey boss Harry Redknapp.

Israeli midfielder Berkovic is known to be wanted by Maccabi Tel Aviv, while striker Yakubu could also be targeted by other Premiership clubs.

But Portsmouth coach Joe Jordan hopes to keep most of his squad. He said: "We've had one or two inquiries and we can't afford to be in a position where we lack cover in certain positions for half a season."

Oliveira replaces Luxemburgo at Santos

Oswaldo de Oliveira took over as coach of Santos on Monday, replacing Vanderlei Luxemburgo after he left the Brazilian champions to

join Real Madrid last week. Oliveira, who was Luxemburgo's assistant earlier in his career, had been out of a job since he was fired by Vitoria in August.

"I'm very happy to be back on the path to victory as my six-year career has seen more of them than defeats."

"I also hope to get back on the path to victory as my six-year career has seen more of them than defeats."

"I'm not worrying about being compared to Vanderlei, after all I've already shown my potential."

Oliveira won the Brazilian championship with Corinthians in 1999 and was also in charge of the team which won the FIFA world club championship held in Brazil the following year.

But last year was unsuccessful for Oliveira and he was sacked by both Corinthians and Vitoria during the Brazilian championship.

Having returned to Corinthians at the start of last year, he was fired in May following a 5-0 home defeat by Atletico Paranaense.

He took over at Vitoria less than one month later but was sacked after only 14 games in charge.

Santos became the 12th of the 24 teams in last year's Brazilian championship first division to change coaches since the competition ended two years ago.



Oliveira takes over from Luxemburgo at Brazilian Champions Santos.

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YOUNG PROGRESSIVE STAR ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA

The general public is hereby notified that the above named Association has applied for registration under Part C of the Companies and Allied Matters Act of 1990.

The trustees are:

1. Mr. Jimoh Mustapha	2. Mr. Dullamini Yakub
3. Alhaji Tajudeen Akiwole	4. Mr. Mafiatu Abiodun
5. Alhaji Adams Amuda	

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

Signed:
 Mohammed Anwar Nurudeen Esq.
 Wahab Eghewale & Co. (Solicitor & Advocate)
 232, Nicoll House, Ibrahim Taiwo Rd, Ikorin

Change of Names

1. Formerly known as GRACE KAKAWUSA JIYA now wish to be known as MRS GRACE KAKAWUSA YISA. All former documents remain valid. General public should please to note.

2. Formerly MISS EASTER OLUCHI OKEKE, now wish to be called MRS OLUCHI EASTER OKOLI. All former documents remain valid. Nassarawa Polytechnic, NYSC and general public to take note.

3. Formerly MODUPE OLUKUNOLA OSHODIPE, now to be called MODUPE OLUKUNOLA BABATUYE-OKENEYE. All former documents remain valid. General public to take note.

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Sports

Blatter ready to head FIFA until 2011

FIFA president Sepp Blatter is ready to stand for a new term as the head of soccer's governing body until 2011 and will make suggestions to change the rules about offside at an International Board meeting next month.

"Let's first complete the 2006 World Cup. And then, if I'm still in good health, I will still feel like continuing my work at FIFA because I was seriously hampered in my first term," he told soccer magazine France Football in an interview to be published on Tuesday.

Blatter, 69, has repeatedly insisted he would only remain FIFA president for two four-year terms, but he made it clear he had changed his mind.

"The first half of my first term (1998-2002) doesn't count. If national associations tell me to go on, why shouldn't I stand once again?" he said.

Swiss-born Blatter added he still felt young enough to

go ahead but that the decision would belong to the FIFA Congress.

"If I run for presidency and the Congress say they have seen enough of me, then I'll go," he said.

Asked if he would stay until 2011 if the Congress accepted the idea, he said: "Yes".

In the meantime, Blatter will plead for changes in the game's laws, including offside.

"You must make the offside rule simpler," he said. "How? In my mind by saying that only the player who receives the ball can be ruled offside."

"There should not be passive offside anymore. If the player who gets the ball is not in an offside position, nobody is offside."

"Which means that a player without the ball cannot be ruled offside. Purists will scream, but it's a simpler

rule."

Blatter said he was against the idea of video assistance for offside but favoured electronic devices to decide whether the ball had crossed the goal line.

"One thing that is possible and for which we're looking for an acceptable solution is the control of the goal line to find out whether the ball was in or out," said Blatter, who linked the device to equipment used for line calls in tennis.

Blatter said FIFA would try a new system invented by Adidas using an electronic microchip in the ball.

The system will be tested during the English League Cup final in Cardiff on February 27, Blatter said.

Commenting on recent racist incidents in soccer arenas, Blatter exemplified Arsenal and France striker Thierry Henry as an ambassador against racism.

At a high-profile news conference before FIFA's centennial World Player of



Blatter

the Year gala last month, Henry sent a clear message of support in the fight against racism in soccer when he wore a black-and-white

bracelet.

He said he was wearing it as a symbol of his support for any moves that prevent fans' continued racist behaviour.

Wenger sees test ahead for Chelsea

Arsène Wenger last night warned the Chelsea manager José Mourinho of the psychological pressures his side will face as Premiership leaders.

Despite two previous title campaigns under Wenger, Arsenal's runaway Premiership success last season was the first time they had led from the front to capture the trophy, having lost a six-point Christmas lead to Manchester United in 2002-03.

Such memories caused Wenger to dismiss suggestions that Mourinho's side are already champions-elect after pulling five points clear of Arsenal. "There is no easy way to [win the title] from my experience," he said. "The only thing I know from experience is that many teams have been in front in January and not won the championship."

"Five points is not a lot with 17 games to go. When you are in front you can only lose it, as everyone says you have won it already. So you have to face that prospect, that you can lose it." However, Mourinho could retort that, having won titles in 2003 and 2004 in exactly that manner with Porto, he is not uninitiated.

Although Wenger conceded that a Premiership-record 100 points is a mathematical possibility for Chelsea, he believes it not to be a realistic total, suggesting that "they look in the games recently that it's not easy for them."

Certainly it could have been harder for Chelsea. Liverpool's Jamie Carragher suggested that the referee Mike Riley, in denying the Anfield side a clear penalty against Chelsea on Saturday and in failing to dismiss Rio Ferdinand during Arsenal's visit to Manchester United, had personally engineered a six-point swing in Chelsea's favour. "That Riley has made a mistake; he cannot hide from that in those two games," said Wenger, and he went on to promote the case for introducing video technology.

"You cannot say that in 2005 with 600 million people watching a game, the only man who can't see what is happening is the referee. That is not football, that is injustice."

Wenger yesterday confirmed his interest in the Manchester City winger Shaun Wright-Phillips. On the eve of the two sides' Premiership fixture at Highbury this evening the Frenchman said: "I have said many times that I follow his progress. But his progress is much quicker than expected and unfortunately his price has gone up. According to what I read, [City] say about £20m, so that has gone to levels we cannot afford."

Arsenal's Swiss teenager Philippe Senderos is set to make his Premiership debut against City tonight after Sol Campbell was ruled out with an ankle injury. Justin Hoyte will deputise at right-back for Lauren, Robin van Persie should continue in attack and Robert Pires will return.

Cech's balance helps tighten Chelsea's grip on the title

Whose gloves on the Premiership trophy? Should Chelsea go on to take the title, Petr Cech's handling will be one of the most significant factors in the side's grip on power. Amid all the consternation over the penalty that Liverpool were denied on New Year's Day, there was too little regard for another key moment of the Anfield afternoon.

When Tiago rattled a clearance against Antonio Núñez the ball had only a few yards to fly to the top corner of the net. It needed sharp reactions for anyone just to turn and gawp, but Cech did better than that. He had the hairtrigger reflexes to get to that rogue rebound.

We are getting used to that sort of intervention from the

Czech goalkeeper. Tottenham Hotspur, according to the Chelsea manager José Mourinho, parked the team bus in their penalty area for the goalless draw at Stamford Bridge in October, but had it not been for Cech the visitors could still have run Chelsea over. The response to Robbie Keane's close-range header reduced spectators to disbelief.

Cech will not even turn 23 until the summer and his youth may account for the ability of Chelsea to agree what was, for them, a knockdown £7m fee with Rennes in the course of last season. By investing in someone who was supposedly still to mature, the Premiership club pulled off one of their increasingly rare pieces of bargain-hunting.

Mourinho, who had no part

in recruiting Cech, often extols his players, but at least he knows how to brag perceptively. "Petr is magnificent," he said. "He is a keeper for a big team. Sometimes a goalkeeper is great in a small team where he has 30 saves to do during a game and he goes to a big club and because he has one save in each half he loses concentration. Petr can be half an hour without the ball but when a difficult ball arrives he is mentally ready for the save."

"He is tall but without losing agility. Normally tall people are heavy. He has safe hands, reads the game well. You see in crosses, he arrives in the place before the ball. He has timing. Another great quality I like in him is that he doesn't play for the photographers. No, he just does what he has to do.

He doesn't do silly, magnificent saves. He is stable and plays for the team."

Cech's effect on the rest of the back four is underrated and not even John Terry, William Gallas, or Ricardo Carvalho could defend with such calmness if they had doubts about the man behind them. Mourinho suggests diplomatically that the presence of Carlo Cudicini keeps his first-choice goalkeeper on his toes, but Cech, as well as being taller at 6ft 5in, transmits reliability.

That is a precious attribute. The other challengers for the Premiership are uneasy about their goalkeepers. At Arsenal Manuel Almunia has taken over from Jens Lehmann without persuading anyone that he is Arsène Wenger's final answer. Manchester Unit-

ed's Tim Howard faltered after an encouraging year and Roy Carroll's hesitation over the new deal he may soon sign showed doubt over his standing at Old Trafford.

There seem to be better goalkeepers further down the Premiership, but that may be an illusion. We do not know how, say, Antti Niemi, Jussi Jaaskelainen or Robert Green would bear the burden of inactivity at a top club. Mourinho is wise to note that concentration can collapse under the weight of empty time.

It is a worry for the national team that suitable English men are scarce. Sven-Goran Eriksson is always willing to speak with anticipation of the prospects of Chris Kirkland, but weekend reports that Liverpool are ready to sell him have plausibility because an array of injuries have stunted his development.

Promises have been dashed before and Richard Wright, only back in the Everton side because of Nigel Martyn's calf strain, used to be Eriksson's hope for the future. The England manager, who must pray that Paul Robinson stays well, has had to scramble and even named Ian Walker in the England squad while he was down in the old First Division with Leicester.

Iker Casillas and Gianluigi Buffon may impress us but good goalkeepers are increasingly scarce in all countries and it will, for instance, be a blow to Germany if they are still picking between Oliver Kahn, who now makes memorable mistakes, and Lehmann, who seldom makes a memorable save, when they host the World Cup finals next year.

A top-flight goalkeeper is far tougher to find than a high-class forward. Lucky Chelsea. Culled from *Guardian Online*



Safe hands: Chelsea's Czech keeper Petr Cech is one of the most significant factors in his side's grip on the title.

Sports

NFA reforms

Ogunjobi drums up support for new mgt

NFA, Chief Taiwo Ogunjobi, yesterday in Abuja urged the staff to support the Odeghami-led interim management in the interest of the country.

Ogunjobi made the appeal at a valedictory meeting with the staff following his removal by the sports

ministry. Sources told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) after the meeting that Ogunjobi apologised to the staff for "any mistake" probably committed by his sacked management.

The meeting was attended by the out-going Director of Finance and Administration,

Olabode Oke while other heads of departments had since vacated their offices.

"He wished us well at the NFA and asked us to cooperate with the new management so that soccer will grow in Nigeria," a source said.

The sacked management was expected to hand over the

association to the new team yesterday but as at mid-day, none of the new members turned up to receive Ogunjobi's notes.

The Sports Minister Musa Mohammed had on Dec. 23, 2004 announced a major shake-up in the association that swept away its entire management.



Kanu

NFA crisis won't distract us - Siasia

Coach of the Flying Eagles Samson Siasia, says the controversies over the on-going reforms in the NFA will

not distract the team from its build-up to the African Youth Soccer championship.

The national Under-20 team, currently camping in Abuja, is scheduled to file out at the continental competition slated to kick off on Jan. 15 in Benin Republic.

Siasia, a former Super Eagles striker, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) yesterday in Abuja, that the players had remained focused in spite of numerous problems in their camp.

Metz target

Ogbeche Nigeria international striker Bartholomew Ogbeche is on the shopping list of French club Metz as he is out of favour at Paris Saint-Germain.

"Bartho" does not figure in the immediate plans of coach Wahid Halilhodzic at Paris Saint-Germain and has made no secrets of his wanting out during the January transfer window which opened Saturday so as to get regular first-team football.

"I always work on their psychology by making them believe that what matters most to them is to make history by qualifying for the World Cup.

"We try all the time not to get distracted by the transitional problems of NFA by paying more attention to qualifying for the World Cup," he said.

The squad is slated to play the Ranch Bees FC of Kaduna, a pro-league division one outfit, tomorrow in a friendly match at the National Stadium.

Metz, 14th in the standings with 23 points from 19 matches, are believed to be interested in the 20-year-old striker, if they fail to land Toiflou Maoulida from another French club.

WBA must play to win, says Kanu

Rennes and they are reported to be mulling a loan deal for the Eagles star till the end of the season.

Nwankwo Kanu has said his rock bottom English Premiership team must now take risks and play to win if they are to beat relegation this season.

West Bromwich Albion are rooted at the bottom of the standings in the English top flight with 13 points from 22 matches after they were held to a scoreless draw at home by Newcastle on Monday night.

But Kanu has backed manager Bryan Robson after he lined up three strikers for the first time this season as WBA went all out for a win against Newcastle.

"We know draws are not good enough and we're disappointed because we've had so many games where we could have won and we've given goals away in the dying minutes," said Kanu, who played alongside Geoff Horsfield and Robert Earnshaw in a three-man strike force on Monday night.

"January is the month where we have to win games - and that's what the gaffer wants. We are playing to win which is why we played with three strikers against Newcastle - something we don't normally do," he continued.

Disu, 14th in the standings with 23 points from 19 matches, are believed to be interested in the 20-year-old striker, if they fail to land Toiflou Maoulida from another French club.

Ikhana rejects N80m for Kwara

Former Under-23 coach Kadiri Ikhana has said that he turned down a contract worth over N80 million from South African Premier Soccer league side Black Leopards to

stay with Kwara United. "They (Black Leopards people) came here, we had discussed terms and everything came to about eighty million naira. But they

took too long to get back to me and by the time they did, I had already given my word to Kwara United," Ikhana disclosed.

According to him, officials of the South African side offered to refund the money he had collected from United, but Ikhana insisted on respecting his contract.

"Maybe I am just old fashioned, but I believe that whenever I give my word, I should respect it. It is not always about money."

Ikhana, who guided Enyimba to the 2003 Caf Champions League, says his immediate target is to keep Kwara in the Premier League.

"That is my first priority as we go to the play-offs. After that, the rest of the league should prepare for serious battles whenever they meet Kwara, either home or away."



Ogbeche

Disu: I'll prove my critics wrong

Empty National Stadium awaits staffers

The National Sports Association offices located within the National Stadium, Lagos, was devoid of the usual hustle and bustle yesterday, the first working day of the year.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that many staff failed to report for duty after the Christmas and New Year break, with most of the offices locked.

The liaison officer of the Ministry of Sports and Social Development, incharge of the Associations, Mrs Hauwa

Newly-engaged technical adviser of Lobi Stars, Tunde Disu, has said that he opted for the Benue State Government-owned club so as "to make impact and to prove my critics wrong in the New Year. The former NFA technical director told KICK OFF: "Since I left the NFA as the technical director a few years ago, some critics have cast doubts on my competence as a technical man. I want to use the challenge of my appointment to prove them wrong." He went further: "I am not going to Makurdi because of the

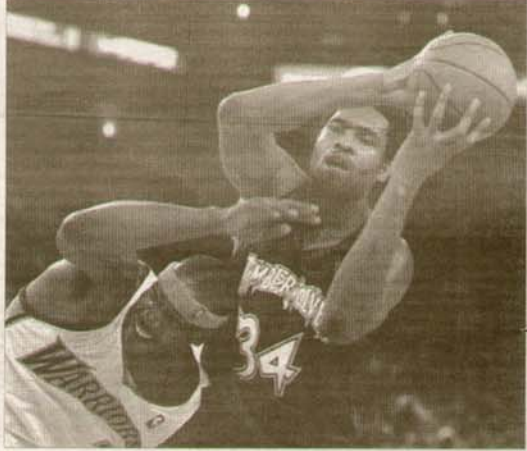
money the club are offering me. Other teams that approached, especially Shooting Stars offered me more money, but I want to take the challenge to tap the abundant talents in that part of the country."

Disu hailed the team's chairman, Dominic Iorfa, for the matured manner he approached him for the job.

He added: "The chairman called from London on this job and he spoke to me with some measure of respect. I told him that it would be nice working with him again.

looking forward to bringing up more of such players from that part of the country. A disciplined coach like me can bring the game to a higher level there, and that is what I intend to achieve with Lobi."

"That is my first priority as we go to the play-offs. After that, the rest of the league should prepare for serious battles whenever they meet Kwara, either home or away."



Minnesota Timberwolves Nigerian star Michael Olowokandi, right, struggles for a rebound against Clifford Robinson of Golden State Warriors during an NBA clash, recently.

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DAILY TRUST

WEDNESDAY COLUMN

Wednesday, January 5, 2004

The press, the president, Oputa and the generals

By Mohammed Haruna

Last Monday at least two newspapers, *The Guardian* and *The Vanguard*, started the serialisation of the hitherto secret report of the Human Rights Violations Investigations Commission (HRVIC), otherwise known as the Oputa Panel, (OP), after the name of its chairman, retired Supreme Court judge, Chukwudifu Oputa. In publishing the OP report, the two papers merely followed the lead of *The News* weekly newsmagazine, which used the report as the cover story of its December 6, 2004 edition.

Top of the highlights of the report for both *The News* and *Vanguard*, was the OP's severe censoring of former heads of state, Generals Muhammadu Buhari, Ibrahim Babangida and Abdulsalam Abubakar, for rejecting its summons. *The Guardian* did not do any story but merely announced on its front page that it was beginning the serialisation of the OP report in the day's edition. In addition to its own story, which was on the front page, *Vanguard* also started the serialisation of the OP report.

Between *The News* and *Vanguard*, the newsmagazine cast the more sensational headline, "IBB Banned," it screamed on its cover which carried a pensive looking picture of General Babangida. The bold headline was preceded with the rider, "Oputa Panel's Verdict," followed by the kicker, "The report OBJ wants to kill."

In announcing its decision to serialise the OP report, *The Guardian* captured what was supposed to be the essence of OP. It also mentioned how long government has sat on its report. "The Justice Chukwudifu Oputa-led Human Rights Violations Investigations Commission," said the newspaper, "was a cardinal plank of the Obasanjo administration's effort to resolve the causes and nature of human rights violations in the country and reconcile aggrieved parties in an effort to find peace. Two years ago, in May 2002, the panel submitted its report and recommendations to the government. Beginning from today, *The Guardian* publishes the summary of the report... Pages 23, 24, 41 and 42."

What both *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* did not do was to join *The News* in accusing President Obasanjo of wanting to bury the report. Now that it has been published, at least three questions may be raised on and about the report. First, what is the legality and morality of what *The News* and Company have done? Second, how useful was OP and how useful will its report be in curbing human rights abuse and bringing about national reconciliation among our ethnic and religious groups? Third, what implications does it have for the political fortunes of the three generals it severely censured?

In the preface to its cover story, *The News* itself raised the first question. "Is the publication of this document, before it has been officially made public, not against the laws of the land?" it asked. The simple and straightforward answer is that it is. Forty-four years after independence, our law books still carry the Official Secrets Act which criminalises the publication of any document or information government deems secret. More than two years after OP submitted its report, the government kept it as a secret—indeed it pointedly ignored repeated calls, including from the chairman of the panel and Father Mathew Hassan Kukah, one of its prominent members, to publish the report.

So going strictly by our books, *The News* and Company are in breach of our laws and if President Obasanjo is so inclined he can easily prosecute them. He will, however, not do so either because he is complicit in the publication of the report or because it would be a foolish thing to do. Not that his administration has not done more foolish things before, but right now, with his letter exchanging episode with the chairman of his party, Chief Auda Ogbeh, still hanging fire, he needs all the peace he can get.

If the publication of the OP report by *The News* and Company is illegal, it is far from immoral. On the contrary the media had a moral duty to have published, not only the OP report, but such other similar reports, long ago. OP sat in public. The public therefore had a right to know its findings and recommendations. Even if OP did not sit in public, government still owed the people the publication of its report for without such

publication its objectives would be impossible to achieve.

The moral of all this? The National Assembly should immediately repeal the Official Secrets Act from our books. In a democracy it is an idiot law, given its sweeping nature. It also contradicts the Freedom of Information Bill, which has been crawling its way through the National Assembly all these five years. In any case the law has since become so moribund that even the military never bothered to use it—they simply banned any publication they didn't like without reference to any existing laws—and has only served as a Sword of Damocles

ant and *Daily Trust* columnist, Ujudud Sherrif, have said, of identification and punishment of abusers of human rights, not reconciliation. This much is evident from what has been the highlight of its recommendations, i.e. the ban of Buhari and Company from public office for life.

Third was the panel's hardly-any-holds-barred procedure, which invariably led it to become more of a carnival than a commission. Forth was the composition of the panel itself, out of a panel of seven, only one was a Muslim. Ordinarily this should not have mattered. And personally I don't think Obasanjo was after General Abacha, Buhari, Babangida and Abubakar necessarily because of their region and religion.

Even then it was clearly insensitive of the president to have ignored religion as a factor in composing OP when it was obvious that allegations of religious persecution would come up before the panel. The predictable result was that while the panel's report talked about discrimination against Hausa Christians in the north, it said absolutely nothing about the plight of Muslim minorities in the South East and South-South or of even the voiceless Muslim majority in the South-West.

Fifth, even though Obasanjo set up OP barely two weeks into his presidency, it was unable to sit for over two years, leaving himself open to suspicions that he wanted its report to be as close enough as possible to the 2003 presidential elections.

Now, given the president's apparent reluctance to publish the OP report, it sounds illogical to accuse him of wanting to use it as a tool for vengeance and politics, especially when the report had terrible things to say about his potential political opponents. The simple answer to this is that, because of its complexities and complications, politics is all too often blind to logic. However, to the extent that even (political) madness has its own



Hon. Justice Chukwudifu A. Oputa

President Olusegun Obasanjo

over the heads of Nigerians. Even as a disguised sword, it should be discarded if we want to strengthen our democracy.

All of which takes us to the question of OP's usefulness as an instrument for curbing the abuse of human rights and reconciling our warring ethnic and religious groups. This may sound unkind, but beyond its therapeutic value for petitioners and beyond the collective therapy it provided for the public while it sat in public—during those sessions the public regaled in seeing the wings of the high and mighty being clipped—the panel seems to have served little purpose. Government itself proceeded to abuse the rights of its citizens in places like Odi, Delta State, and Zaki-Biam, in Benue State, even as Oputa sat. And Nigerians themselves continued to kill each other along tribal and religious lines in places like Plateau, Nassarawa and Adamawa states and the Delta region. Also government did not feel deterred by OP from muzzling several newspapers and magazine, including most recently, *Insider* newsmagazine, for publishing stories government regarded as seditious or even merely awkward.

If OP has not deterred government from abusing the rights of citizens and if it has also not stopped ethnic and religious violence in the country, the reasons are not difficult to see; OP was essentially about revenge and politics. OP, as I said on these pages on November 7, 2001, was a personal thing for President Obasanjo. He had felt wronged by General Sani Abacha for framing and sentencing him to death, later commuted to life, as a treasonable felon. He was saved from spending the rest of his life in prison only by divine intervention in the form of Abacha's sudden and mysterious death. One needed a large heart to resist vengeance and it is well-known that even as a self-proclaimed Born-again Christian, a large heart is not one of Obasanjo's virtues.

Not only was OP for Obasanjo more about vengeance than human rights and national reconciliation, it was also essentially a tool for keeping potential political opponents in check. OP was essentially vengeance and politics for the president for at least five reasons. First, unlike South Africa's commission which OP sought to emulate, it was set up in undue haste; Nelson Mandela took four years and lots of public debate to set up his own while Obasanjo was barely two weeks in office when he set up his. Second, the emphasis of Oputa, regardless of what its members, and its media consult-

logic, it can be argued that it was more useful for Obasanjo to let the public speculate about OP's potential damage to his opponents than to publish its report and expose it as a paper tiger, or worse, as a double-edged sword.

For more than two years the public was left to speculate about what damage the OP report would do to the political ambitions of the generals the panel had censured. Now that we know its recommendations in this respect, it seems to me that the dangers were more apparent than real. Indeed the dangers seem potentially more damaging to the president than to the generals.

Easily the most potentially damaging recommendation of OP against the generals is that they should be banned from public office for life. "We recommend to the federal government," said OP, "that all the former Heads of State be considered to have surrendered their right to govern Nigeria and Nigerians at any other time in the future. It is left for Nigerians to judge."

If OP, as I have said, is essentially vengeance and politics for Obasanjo, for the members themselves this recommendation suggests sheer vindictiveness. It is vindictiveness because the crimes of the generals is no worse than their rejection of the panel's summons.

Justice Oputa himself and Sheriff, have described this rejection as an act of impunity. But was it? When they were first summoned, the generals variously requested to appear through their lawyers mainly because the public sitting had degenerated into a circus. For some inexplicable reason, the panel insisted on their personal appearance. Naturally the generals sought and obtained court protection, obviously to the great annoyance of the panel. Oputa may disagree with the decision of the court but it beggars belief that a former Supreme Court judge would condemn someone protected by the courts as acting with impunity.

By allowing themselves to be blinded into recommending a life-ban on the generals, OP has now succeeded in putting Obasanjo in a quandary. If he obliges the panel, he will be infringing on the fundamental rights of the general, something they are bound to challenge in court and are likely to win. If he does not oblige the panel, he will be accused by the more vocal sections of the country as inaction.

For Obasanjo OP has turned out a double-edged sword that he has to swing very carefully. Perhaps this largely explains why he has been reluctant to publish its report.

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