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NEWS

FG denies banning chloroquine for malaria treatment

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NIGERIAN POSTAL SERVICE



ANPP National Chairman, Chief Don Etiebet (middle) the party Deputy Chairman (North), Lt-Gen. Jerimiah Useni (rtd) (right) and the party Deputy Chairman (South), Chief Hamidu Ajibade after the reconciliation meeting held at the Kebbi State Governor's Lodge, Abuja ...yesterday.
Pix: Felix Onigbinde.

Obasanjo heads for Lome today

The chairman of the African Union (AU), President Olusegun Obasanjo and his ECOWAS counterpart, President Mamoudou Tandja of Niger Republic are heading for Togo today to persuade the new government to immediately reverse the change and respect the constitution which existed before Faure Eyadema came to power.

It will also urge the new government to adhere strictly to the constitutional order of succession in Togo before Saturday's death of President Gyassingbe Eyadema.

The high level ECOWAS delegation should express in strong terms to the Togolese authorities, the need to revert to the status quo ante by allowing the succession to President Eyadema to proceed in

Elkanah Chawal, Reporter (Foreign Desk) with Agency Report

compliance with the 1992 constitution of Togo as amended in December 2002.

A delegation of five heads of states and governments of the member states

Contd. on Pg 2

NPA signs N7.8bn part deal

The Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), has signed an agreement with Grimaldi Group of Italy for the development of a 60-million-dollar (about N7.8 billion) Roll-On-Roll-Off (RORO), port terminal in Lagos.

Contd. on Pg 2

ANPP factions reconcile

The protracted leadership crisis in the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), was resolved yesterday in Abuja, after a meeting of ANPP governors with the two factional leaders of

By **Abdu Labaran**, Group Political Editor

the party, with the national chairman, Chief Don Etiebet declaring that the crisis is over.

Flanked by his main rival, Lt. Gen. Jerimiah Useni (rtd), deputy national chairman (north) and Chief Ajibade, deputy national chairman (south), a smiling Chief Etiebet raised the hands of his former antagonists announcing that "ANPP is one."

After a marathon meeting that lasted several hours which took place at the Kebbi state government lodge, Asokoro, the ANPP national chairman said the about nine months leadership squabble that rocked the party has been settled in a family manner.

"Today is a day you all have been waiting for in the life of the ANPP and today, it has come. Thanks be to God. ANPP has been having family squabbles and we have resolved all issues that have bothered the party in the past.

"All of us have decided to sacrifice in the interest of the ANPP. No stone is too much to be borne for our party. Today, ANPP is one and the deputy national chairmen, Useni (north) and Ajibade (south) are back to the party," Etiebet said.

Also, he said in line with the resolution of the crisis,

all factions within the party have agreed to return to the national working committee, just as he congratulated Gen. Useni (rtd) for his resolve to bring the crisis to an end and

bring everyone back to the party.

Speaking later, both Gen. Useni (rtd) and Chief Ajibade confirmed that the crisis in the party is over.

"We have now resolved to put all our differences behind us in the interest of the party and to move forward. We now think, talk and

Contd. on Pg 2

Don't stop IBB, Buhari's allowances -Senate urges FG

Senators yesterday kicked against the provisions of a bill seeking to stop ex-military Heads of State from receiving pensions and other perquisites of office. They contended that military regimes were part of the nation's history that could not be wished away.

By **Isa Sanusi & Habeeb I. Pindiga**, Political Reporters

demanding that pensions and other benefits be given to former civilian and military rulers across board.

If Tafida had his way, all ex-military rulers, including Ibrahim Babangida and Abdussalami Abubakar would lose their pensions, police guards and other benefits as former leaders of

Contd. on Pg 2

SOME CONFAB DELEGATES

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| PDP | 9. Alhaji B. B. Faruk |
| 1. Dr. Samuel Ogbemudia | 10. Yusuf Suleiman |
| 2. Mr Venatius Ikem | 11. Sen. Adamu Mahadi |
| 3. Nze Chukwu Ozi Chukwu | |
| 4. Obinna Ogba | ANPP |
| 5. Prof. Femi Oyebanji | 1. Lt-Gen Jerimiah Useni (rtd) |
| 6. Mr Foye Olofin Tuiyi | 2. Alhaji Sani El-Katuzu |
| 7. Mrs Iyabode Pam | 3. Alhaji Bayero Bello |
| 8. Mr Humpherey Agba | 4. Chief Don Etiebet |
- See list on Page 35

Man fooled landlord for 5 years dressing as a lady

The Upper Shari'ah Court, Bompai sitting at Yan Kaba in Kano, was yesterday told how a 25 year old man, Abubakar Hamza, fooled his landlord for five years dressing in women's attires and passing as a lady tenant in the house where the landlord lives with his family.

Musa Umar Kazaure, Bureau Chief, Kano

over by Malam Ibrahim Isa Rabo, the prosecution opened a box filled with ladies

dresses allegedly owned by Abubakar Hamza which included two ball-like foams used as breasts by the accused to deceive his landlord

Contd. on Pg 2



Abubakar Hamza

News

ANPP *Contd. from Pg 1*

act as one," Useni stated.

He explained that an agreement was reached to end the crisis "because if you have crisis and there is no end to it, then it is useless".

Similarly, Chief Ajibade said "everyone of us has resolved to end the crisis, so there is no dichotomy between national officers of the ANPP any more."

Chief Etiebet said the over-riding factor for the truce in the party is the desire to reposition the party and capture power in 2007, to be able to genuinely address the myriad of socio-political and economic issues plaguing Nigeria.

He said the reconciliation meeting also gave its nod to the party's participation in the forthcoming national dialogue and has consequently submitted a list of the ANPP delegates to government.

In the list are, General Useni, national secretary of the party, Alhaji Sani El-Katuzu, Alhaji Bayero Bello

and Chief Etiebet.

The national chairman said the party has however formally complained to the federal government over the four slots allotted the ANPP and has requested for two additional slots to bring the number of delegates to six.

Chief Etiebet said the ANPP national executive committee is scheduled to meet on March 17, 2005, to articulate the party's position on the national dialogue after wide consultations with a wide spectrum of the party.

He dismissed insinuations that the national dialogue was unconstitutional and illegal, saying the "constitution empowers Nigerians to discuss national issues," adding that the conference is not working outside the National Assembly.

"I have not heard that the confab is going to replace or surpass the National Assembly. Believe it or not, there are problems bedeviling the country. Even the constitution contradicts itself," he added.

IBB, Buhari *Contd. from Pg 1*

the country.

Under the remuneration of former Presidents and Heads of State Decree 32 of 1999, all ex-heads of state without discrimination enjoy certain perquisites of office from public coffers.

But Section 5(1) of Tafida's bill defines former presidents as not to "include and shall not be construed to extend to any person who attained the office of president or head of state otherwise than by constitutional means."

This provision, however, came under heavy criticisms yesterday with many senators asking that it be expunged from the bill.

Senators Osiehieren Osunbor, David Mark, Abba Aji, Baba Tela, Sule Gandi, Isa Maina and Ugochuku Uba posited different reasons to reject the clause, contending that the former military rulers had left indelible marks on the nation's history.

Leading the debate, Tafida who is also the leader of the Senate, said the aim of removing ex-military rulers from those to be taken care of from the public till was to discourage coups and consolidate democracy gains. "The amendment to Decree 32 removes those who came to power through the bullet rather than the ballot box," he said.

Tafida said also that the bill provides pensions and other benefits to former heads of the Senate and House of Representatives and urged that senators and members of the House be also put on the pension list.

He lamented that few years after lawmakers leave the job, they become pauperised, suggesting that some former legislators have since become beggars. "We see some of them coming here asking for N1,000 or N2,000," he said.

Senators Udo Udoma and Jonathan Zwingina also made a case for former lawmakers, with Zwingina saying that Nigeria was about the only democracy where ex-legislators have no pension.

The debate initially appeared to have relegated

the issue of ex-heads of state, but Senator Aji raised it pointing out that denying them pensions would not discourage coups.

"I am not a military apologist but since the aim of this bill is not to punish past coups leaders but to discourage future ones, I think this should affect any one who stages a coup henceforth," he said.

Senator Clement Awoyelu backed Aji, arguing that the nation never operated with leadership vacuum and therefore the ex-heads of state would remain part of Nigeria's history. He said the Senate would be deceiving itself if it tries to re-write history.

But Wabara and Tafida interrupted by saying that senators were missing the point. Tafida argued that all ex-heads of state were generals who collect adequate pensions as former military officers.

Still Wabara interrupted, contending that the constitution mentioned presidents and heads of government and not military heads of state.

Mark faulted arguments in favour of the clause. He said the military never ruled alone, and that if Zwingina's argument that coup is equivalent to impeachment, then former President Shehu Shagari should also not benefit from pensions since the bill removed impeached presidents.

On his part, Gandi said if all military legacies were to be done away with, then the Senate chamber itself among several other structures built during military rule should be blown off.

While commenting on the recognition of former military rulers as members of the council of state, Wabara said they should not be there and urged President Olusegun Obasanjo to stop Buhari and others from attending the council.

The debate lasted about two and a half hours following which the bill was committed to a second reading and referred to the committee on national planning.

Boat mishap claims 18 children in Jigawa

A boat mishap along the River Hadejia has drowned 18 children travelling from Dudum village in Ringim local government area of Jigawa state. According to local officials in the area, 10 of the children said to be students on their way back to school.

Another road accident has also led to the death of five people while six were injured in a collision that involved two commuter vehicles in Gwaram local government area, local officials also revealed.

The boat mishap according to *Daily Trust* investigations, occurred after about 30 youths boarded it on their way from a market where they bought perishables from nearby villages.

According to eyewitness accounts, the boat capsized after it was overwhelmed by the number of people on board who were at that time carrying heavy loads from the market.

Local officials revealed that all the children aged between 13 and 18 were residents of Garki two who have been using such ferry in the transportation of their perishables in the area.

Although local fishermen who were present at the time of the accident quickly intervene to rescue the drowning children, 18 got drowned and died immediately while 12 were rescued. Six corpses have so far been recovered.

Already, officials from the area described the incident as unfortunate especially as the area is just recovering from a fight between farmers and Fulani herdsmen which led to the death of about six people in the area.

The lawmaker representing the area in the state

Man *Contd. from Pg 1*

and his lady friends. He also told the court that one of the prime witnesses, Umaru Aliyu, has died but sought the permission of the court to present his police statement as a witness in the case which the judge rejected on the grounds that a dead man cannot be cross-examined.

When asked by the judge on the charges of dressing as a lady which contravenes section 9 of the Prostitution and Immoral Act Law 2000, Abubakar Hamza pleaded guilty to the allegations but said that he was forced into such practice by the constant harassment and torture by his step mother. He told the court that since his mother left his father when he was just eight years old, he was maltreated by his step mother who always reported him to his father on false allegations.

The constant beating and torture, he said, led him to start escaping to neighbours and later to distant villages near Wudil town about 30 kilometres from Kano to seek refuge. He added that he found solace in company of girls at his tender age and that led him to start acting and dressing like them, especially in Fulani settlements where he sought refuge from his step-mother. He also told the court that it was

From Hassan A. Karofi,
Reporter (Dutse)

House of Assembly, Alhaji Sule Udi, described the these disasters as unfortunate and called on the communities to engage in prayers at a condolence visit he paid to the community.

Council chairman, Alhaji Muhammadu Sani Garko, also paid a condolence visit to the communities and prayed Allah to protect the community from further

disasters, even as he called for caution in the handling of any situation in the area.

Meanwhile, another auto accident involving a Peugeot J5 and a luxury bus also led to the death of five people while six were injured after their vehicles collided head on.

Eyewitnesses said the accident occurred as a result of an attempt to overtake another vehicle at a corner. Already, some of the victims

have been treated at the Birnin Kudu Medical Centre while some of the dead are still lying in the hospital's morgue.

Police have confirmed both incidents even as revealed that investigations are on to ascertain the real cause of the two accidents.

The force public relations officer, DSP Sunday Digha, cautioned motorists to be extra cautious while driving.

Missing ship: Reps ask EFCC to probe banks

The investigations into the missing ship, MT African Pride, took a dramatic turn yesterday as the House of Representatives committee on Navy invited the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), to probe some banks for suspected oil bunkering deals.

The panel also considered issuing a warrant of arrest on the managing director of Intercontinental Bank, the bank specifically indicted for complicity in alleged oil bunkering deal with Fabisco and Allied Products Nigeria Limited, the company that chartered the missing MT African Pride.

It would be recalled that a large cargo of stolen crude was on board the oil bunkering ship when it was arrested but was said to have been evacuated by the Nigeria National Petroleum Cooperation (NNPC) and sold out at a ridiculous price.

The panel established in the course of its investigation also noted that there were series of lodgements by Fabisco company in some banks,

By Hameed M. Bello &
Zainab Alimi, Reporters (Reps)

including the Intercontinental Bank and Guaranty Trust Bank among others.

The House panel at its meeting yesterday with representatives of some of the banks, crossed examined them for explanations on their connection with the suspected oil bunkering company

but they denied keeping any account of the oil bunkering company.

Representatives of Intercontinental and Guaranty Trust Banks, Mr Bola Olotu and Mrs Olushola Fagbure, both told the panel that they did not come prepared to brief the panel having not had prior knowledge of the definite agenda of the meeting.

NPA *Contd. from Pg 1*

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), learnt that the RORO terminal will be developed on a Build, Own, Operate and Transfer (BOOT), basis by the company.

Speaking at the signing ceremony yesterday in Abuja, the Minister of Transport, Dr Abiye Sekibo, described the project as a unique one, saying "this is the first time a company will be wholly building a port terminal in Nigeria".

Sekibo said the project to be completed in 18 months, would be funded by the company, noting that the federal government would not invest any kobo on the work.

According to him: "It is a Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and the company under the agreement has been given 25 years concession in order for them to recoup their investment before handing it over to the federal government".

He commended the company for choosing Nigeria to develop the facility, which he said, would boost international trade as well as create employment opportunities

and business for Nigerians.

Responding, Grimaldi's representative in Nigeria, Mr Adriano Geretto, said that the construction of the port facility would be undertaken by a Nigerian-based company, Travi Foundation.

Geretto said when completed, about 400 Nigerians would be engaged at the terminal to provide various services to port users in the country.

He also said that the RORO port terminal would serve as the company's central hub in the West African sub-region.

NAN reports that the ceremony was attended by the Minister of State for Transport, Alhaji Mohammed Musa, the Permanent Secretary in the ministry, Alhaji Nu'uman Danbatta and NPA's Managing Director, Chief Adebayo Sarumi.

Others were the Director-General of Nigeria Maritime Authority (NMA), Mr Ferdinand Agu, officials of the ministry and Grimaldi.

NAN reports that Grimaldi Group has been engaged in various maritime services in Nigeria for a long period.

Obasanjo *Contd. from Pg 1*

of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), was set up after the extra-ordinary meeting of the ECOWAS in the Niger capital on Wednesday.

A communiqué issued at the end of the Wednesday meeting attended by leaders from Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, Mali, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau and host Niger, strongly condemned the military intervention in Togo.

It said that the installation of Gnassingbe Faure as successor to the late president Eyadema "before the declaration of a vacancy created by the death of the President" was tantamount to a coup d'etat.

"The heads of state and government equally condemned the legislative manipulations of the constitution by the National Assembly manifested by the numerous amendments to the constitution undertaken on February 6," said the communiqué.

The ECOWAS heads of state and governments reaffirmed the principle of non-recognition of any government that comes to power by unconstitutional means and in that regard, recalled the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance of 2001 which prohibits obtaining and maintaining power by unconstitutional means, added the statement.

"After the visit, if Togo refuses to revert to the status quo ante, there will be sanctions to be imposed by ECOWAS, the AU, the UN and the international community," the communiqué warned.

The delegation includes Presidents John Kuffuor of Ghana, Ahmadou Toure of Mali, Matthew Kerekou of Benin as well as ECOWAS Executive Secretary Mohammed Ibn Chambas and Chairman of the AU Commission, Alpha Omar Konare.

News

Niger varsity to be sited at Lapai

From Kashim Sule,
Stringer (Minna)

The proposed Niger State University is to be sited in Lapai, the home-town of the state governor. Briefing journalists at a press conference after receiving the technical report of the committee headed by Mallam Abubakar Gimba, the state governor, Engineer Abdulkadir Kure, said the decision was part of the recommendations of the committee.

According to him, the university is crucial to the development of the state, saying that the foundation laying ceremony will be performed next month.

Governor Kure further disclosed that his administration has already coupled the necessary statutes which will be forwarded to the State House of Assembly to be passed into law.

Earlier, the committee leader, Mallam Abubakar Gimba had said that the report presented to the government was influenced by opinion of experts drawn from various institutions in the country.

He said the state university will not affect the state's college of education which is the first tertiary institution in the state as its will remain in Minna township.

Excessive campaign spending: Senate seeks party deregistration

The Senate has begun considering a bill for an act to regulate election campaign expenditure with a provision for de-registration of political parties that engage in excessive spending an elections.

Titled: "A bill for during act for the regulation of campaign finance in the conduct of election in Nigeria and for other connected purposes," the legislation pegged limits for spending during an election and penalties for defaults.

The spending limit for an individual presidential candidate is N1 billion, while the party can spend up to N1 billion on the same election.

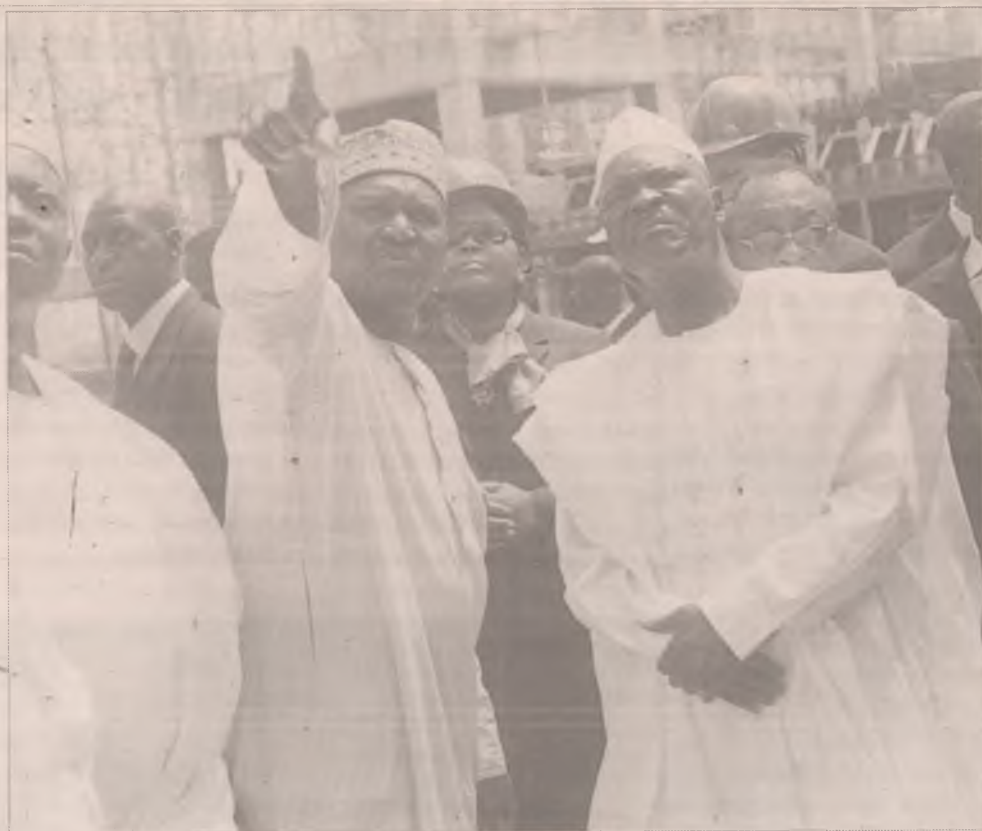
Others are N19 million for senatorial election; N6 million for House of Representatives election; N60 million for governorship election and N3 million for state House of Assembly election.

The bill also prohibits candidates or parties from collecting campaign donations from foreigners, public corporations, associations and defined in section 229 of the constitution, private and public companies, and government contractors.

Section 10 and 11 of the bill prescribes punishments for defaulting parties and candidates.

"(10) any political party which contravenes any provision of this act is guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction; (a) to be banned from fielding candidates at the next election immediately following such conviction or (b) to de-registration.

"(11) any candidate who contravenes any provisions of this Act is guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction (a)



The President/Chief Executive of Dangote Group of Companies, Alhaji Aliko Dangote (middle) conducting Governor Ibrahim Idris of Kogi State, the Speaker of Kogi State House of Assembly, Hon. Buba Umar Jibril the Managing Director of Oceanic Bank Plc, Mr Cecilia Ibru and others round the site of Obajana cement factory in Kogi State...recently
Pix: Kennedy Egbonodje.

FG denies banning chloroquine for malaria treatment

By Sunday Ejike Benjamin,
Health Reporter

The federal government says they have not banned the use of chloroquine in the treatment of malaria as being speculated by some people,

just as it denied ever saying anything about banning the drug at the interactive meeting with the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Group of the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (PMGMAN), held in Lagos recently.

"The fact is that we have found the level of efficacy of chloroquine to be so low and consequently, we have proposed the adoption of the Artemisinin-based combination therapy (ACT) as the first-line drug," the minister of health, Professor Eytayo Lambo, remarked yesterday in Abuja while addressing a press conference on the issue.

According to the health minister, the proposed policy change does not mean that chloroquine has been banned in the country, adding that the full "implementation of the proposed treatment policy for malaria will take at least two years and chloroquine is expected to be in the market during the transition period and beyond.

He said the process of malaria treatment policy change is gradual, lasting over a period of time and usually involves three phases, namely, the policy change proposal phase, which involves processes and procedures leading to the selection of the proposed new treatment, the transition phase, which comes after a decision on the new treatment policy has been made and the third phase, he said, is the full implementation phase which involves the rolling out of the new policy.

Prof. Lambo enthused that chloroquine, which has been the first line of anti-malaria drug has lost its efficacy due to the emergence of chloroquine-resistant parasite strains, adding that the drug efficacy studies conducted in six centres across the six geopolitical zones of the country showed treatment failures up to levels that necessitated drug policy review.

Effective case management, the minister noted is a key strat-

egy of the Roll-Back-Malaria initiative aimed at reducing morbidity and mortality rate in the country and hence, "the effectiveness of the strategy depends critically on the availability and access to safe and efficacious anti-malaria drug treatment."

He pointed out that with the level of failure of chloroquine in the treatment of malaria, where only four out of ten people treated with the drug will be cured, it will be unethical to maintain chloroquine as the first line drug for the treatment of malaria in Nigeria.

The health minister noted that the action of the government was borne out of its statutory responsibility for public health in the country, maintaining that the policy review is premised on the need to protect Nigerians, especially the vulnerable, against the scourge of malaria.

Jigawa revokes C of Os, sacks education secretaries

From Hassan A. Karofi
Correspondent (Dutse)

The Jigawa state government has announced the revocation of all certificates of occupancies that were issued between 1999 to date and directed all land owners in the state to await further directives from the government for recertification of the C of Os.

According to the state's commissioner of information, Abba Kukuma, government is worried about dubious land deals especially in Dutse, the state capital that has in recent times characterised the state's land administration.

Daily Trust investigations revealed that the scale of land fraud that brought about the emergence of a powerful syndicate in the state led to the suspension of the entire land ministry officials last year.

Already, a new ministry of land administration has been established to oversee the administration of land in the state with a view to formalise an effective land use in the state.

Government, according to the commissioner of information

Crisis in political parties threat to democracy - Atiku

Vice President Atiku yesterday warned that the crisis rocking virtually all the registered political parties in the country could pose a serious threat to the survival of democracy.

Speaking when the House of Representatives Committee on Intra/Inter party relations called on him at the State House, the Vice President blamed politicians for the crisis through their rampant disregard for party constitution and due process in the conduct and management of party affairs.

"I urge members of all the political parties to join hands to resolve party squabbles where they become inevitable, otherwise they may endanger our young democracy," Atiku warned, adding that party members must hold the party constitution sacred as the violation of party constitution by some members always leads to inter/intra-party crisis.

By Reuben Yunana, State
House Correspondent

He said, "parties should operate according to their constitution and any action in breach of the party's constitution may lead to problems."

The leadership of all registered political parties, he stressed, must ensure transparency and accountability in the conduct of party affairs so as to avoid unnecessary wranglings that have engulfed political parties in the country.

According to the vice president, "the leadership of all the political parties in the country must strive to carry all their members along in all their activities by being transparent, accountable and above all, live by example, members of all the political parties must at all times know what their parties are doing, such knowledge is bound to help prevent crisis."

Monetisation: Workers give FG 12 days ultimatum

By Austine Odo
Correspondent (Labour)

The federal government yesterday in Abuja, received a 12-day ultimatum to pay all its employees the monetisation package or risk a strike. A tripartite coalition of industrial unions, the NUJ, RATTAWU and AUPCTRE, gave the ultimatum at the end of a joint meeting held at the NUJ national secretariat, Abuja.

A communique to that effect was jointly signed by the national presidents and secretaries of the coalition, including messrs Abdulhamid Dembos, Smart Adeyemi and S. O. Ejiofor for RATTAWU, NUJ and AUPCTRE respectively.

According to the communique, the unions have agreed to commence the strike action from Feb. 23, if government fails to pay them the benefits.

No fewer than 33 federal parastatals, agencies are affected by the non-implementation of the monetisation policy. They include the NOA, NCAC, NAN, NTA, FRCN, VON, NYSC,

FHA, ITF, NPC, NTB, NUC and SON.

The coalition therefore enjoined the deprived agencies to ensure absolute compliance with or incur the wrath of member unions.

The coalition noted that government had by its "discriminatory policies on the implementation of the monetisation policy made the strike inevitable".

Dembos later said that all entreaties made to government, the National Assembly, the National Industrial Arbitration Panel and their representatives yielded no positive results.

While commending the media for its consistent support in fighting for deprived Nigerians, the RATTAWU leader advised government to strive to avert the strike. The NUJ president, Mr. Smart Adeyemi, also said, "We are totally committed to the struggle and I enjoin all members to join the strike until they are paid."

Smart explained that the battle was not against the management of the affected organisations but the failure by government to back the policy with cash.

On his part, AUPCTRE scribe, Ejiofor said: "we will perfect the dance we know best. Our action is not targeted at the various managements as they will also benefit from the scheme."

The NLC general secretary, Mr John Odah, assured that the central labour body was in support of the workers' cause.

He said employees of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Radio and Television Workers Union of Nigeria (RATTAWU), the Amalgamated Union of Public Corporations, Civil Service, Technical and Recreational Service Employees (AUPCTRE), took the resolution after a meeting on the matter.

NAN however gathered from the meeting that some parastatals, agencies earlier listed as some of the affected organisations, including INEC, the FCD-A, FCT water board and the Abuja council for arts, have commenced genuine efforts to pay the benefits by the end of the month.

News

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

CNPP rejects invitation

The Conference of Nigerian Political Parties (CNPP), yesterday rose from a one-day meeting rejecting government's invitation to participate in the proposed national political reforms conference.

By **Habeeb I. Pindiga**
Political Reporter

Secretary to the government of the federation, Chief Ufot Ekaette, had written to the conference asking it to nominate a delegate to the confab.

But at a meeting, attended by 15 political parties held at the CNPP's secretariat in Abuja yesterday, the group decided to boycott the conference and turn down government's request to send a delegate.

Although no official position was made known at the end of the gathering, *Daily Trust* learnt that several arguments were canvassed by member parties.

But sources at the meeting said most parties regard the proposed conference as ruse, and chose to opt out.

Those who attended yesterday's session included CNPP chairman, Alhaji Abdulkadir Balarabe Musa, secretary, Barrister Maxi Okwu and chairman of the United Nigeria Peoples Party (CNPP), Alhaji Sale Jambo, among others.

When contacted on telephone yesterday, Okwu confirmed that the meeting discussed and reached a decision on the confab.

Rep faults conference

From **Bisi Taiwo**
Stringer Osogbo

A member of the House of Representatives, Professor Sola Adeyeye, has faulted President Olusegun Obasanjo's resolve to convene the national political reform conference (NPRC), describing his efforts as a contraption hurriedly put together to silence people who have been agitating for the convening of a Sovereign National Conference.

The lawmaker who spoke with newsmen in Osogbo, the Osun state capital said he did not believe Obasanjo truly wanted this nation to have a national conference.

Adeyeye hinted that though he was not opposed to national confab, however, the type being put together was diversionary and inadequate to do this nation any good.

The lawmaker said he was convinced that Obasanjo would tinker with what might be the outcome of the confab.

According to him: "it is a huge joke. Nothing good will come out of it. First, because I don't believe Obasanjo wants the nation to have a national conference.

Mind who offer to serve the conference at the end of the day might have cause to regret their action.

According to him, "when you put serious minds in an assembly that has been up to fail, all you can do is to sympathise with such people."

He hinted that he has already spoken with Chief Ebenezer Babatope, one of the nominees, the "I will be praying for him," adding "if I were in his shoes, I would have known that, confab will fail because whatever their presentation may be there is no doubt that Obasanjo will tinker it.

With the lawmaker said he was disappointed that not a single woman was considered that to partake in the confab.

"I am disappointed that not a single woman is adjudged capable enough to be the voice of the people," he observed.

Civil society coalition reject confab

The Joint Action Forum (JAF), a coalition of civil society organisations, in collaboration with labour (LASCO) has called on Nigerians to shun the federal government's sponsored national dialogue slated to begin next Tuesday but rather prepare for a Sovereign National Conference (SNC), to be convened by the Chief Anthony Enahoro led pro National Conference Organisations (PRONACO), in June.

In a communiqué issued after an emergency meeting of the group held in Lagos and signed by its chairman, Mrs Ngozi Iwere and the general secretary, Dr. Sylvester Odion-Akhaine, respectively, rejected the forthcoming National Political reforms conference, describing it as narrow and undemocratic.

The communiqué tagged: Joint Action Forum Rejects National Dialogue", pointed out that "for instance out of the expected 400 delegates, President Olusegun Obasanjo alone will nominate 50 delegates, each of the state government's will nominate six delegates in addition to two persons from the Federal Capital Territory.

These add up to 268 persons representing more than half of the total number of delegates to the conference. In fact almost 70% of delegates", the communiqué stated.

While calling on all well-meaning Nigerians and the general public to align forces with the Chief Anthony Enahoro-led pro-national conference organisations (PRONACO), JAF disclosed that it has already contributed two volunteers to strengthen the PRONACO secretariat.

Among other things, JAF

From **Samson Ojo**,
Correspondent (Lagos)

recalled that the current regime has had similar initiatives such as the Oputa Panel, the Esu Nupe committee on local government reforms and the presidential committee on constitutional reform, without any of them producing any meaningful outcome in the interest of the country.

The communiqué commended the National Assembly for turning down President Obasanjo's N932 million budget request to fund the confab, saying nothing good will come out of the conference because the confab is under the strict control of the federal government and its agencies.

Grand Khadi cautions national confab on religion

Former Grand Khadi of Kwara state, Justice Abdulkadir Orire, has cautioned the national political reform conference members not to interfere with the status of Nigeria as a multi-religious nation.

"The entire Muslims in this country are opposed to making this nation a secular nation because it is against the spirit of Islam," Justice Orire told the gathering of Muslims who converged at the Ilorin stadium complex for the silver jubilee of Hijrah in Nigeria yesterday.

He also called on the National Assembly and state Houses of Assembly not to make laws which would tamper with the position of shariah, adding that "any legislator who that to legalise what Allah made illegal or make illegal what Allah makes legal has become a *kafir*, and an infidel.

The head of Kaduna state's delegation to the proposed political reform conference by the federal government, Dr. Umaru Dikko, has called on people of the state and various interest groups to submit to the secretariat their inputs for the national dialogue.

Speaking to *Daily Trust* in Kaduna, Dr. Dikko stressed the need to accommodate divergent opinions in order to have what will be regarded as a formidable stand and outcome at the conference.

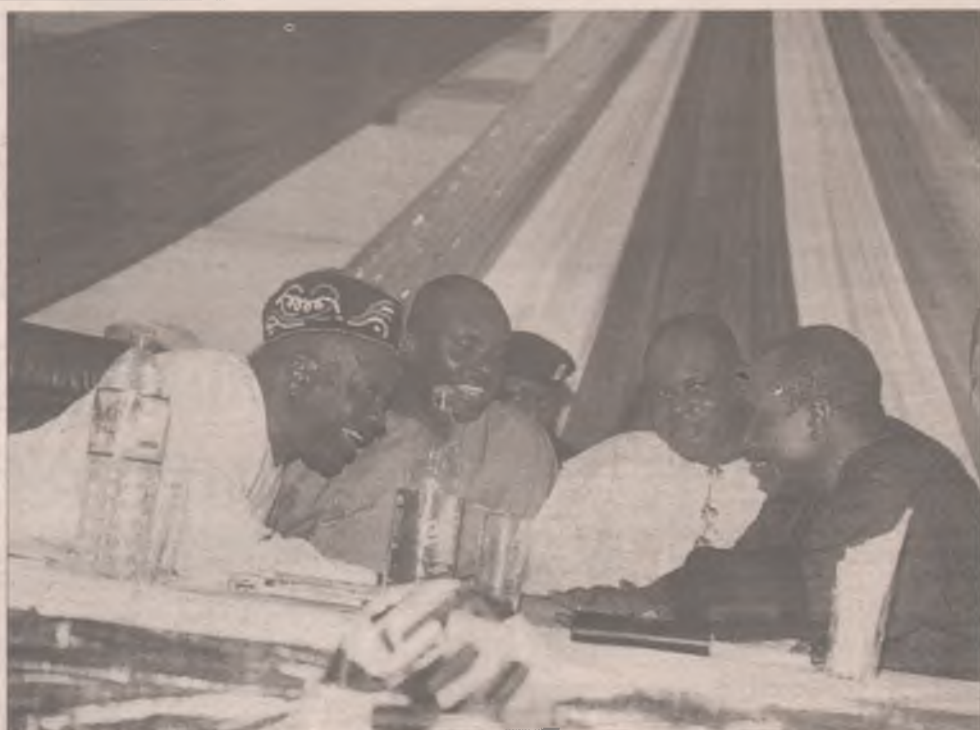
Dikko seeks public input to Kaduna agenda

From **Aliyu Haruna**,
(Correspondent Kaduna)

When asked to unveil the state's agenda for the conference, the former minister of transport in the second republic said it will be too early to speak on it, in view of the fact that they were just inaugurated by the state government on Monday.

He added that the diver-

gent views of people have to be represented in the dialogue adding that he could not make any categorical statement until they have commenced their job, while what they needed from the federal government is to ensure that the final outcome are fully complied with so that history does not repeat itself as with the Oputa Panel recommendations.



Governor Victor Attah (l-r), Chief James Ibori of Delta state, Chief Alamiyesigha of Bayelsa and Chief Peter Odili of River state in a group discussion at the just concluded south-south peoples assembly held in Yanegoa Bayelsa state.

National dialogue will strengthen democracy - A.T Ahmed

A member of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), board of trustees, and former senator, Alhaji A. T Ahmed, has said that the

By **Hammeed M. Bello**,
Senior Political

planned national dialogue on political reforms is an advisory body that will help strengthen the tenets of democracy in the country.

Senator Ahmed, a PDP chieftain from Kogi state said the national confab is an avenue for everybody to air views on the happenings in the country and does not see anything wrong with holding the conference.

Ahmed was answering questions in an interview with *Daily Trust* in Abuja when asked to comment on the criticisms against the conference by sections of the society and the National Assembly.

"There are issues that have been overlooked by the constitution or by even the present government and there are people outside that can even come together and discuss those issues as long as those issues are eventually taken to the National Assembly for consideration and approval. There is absolutely nothing wrong with the dialogue."

Commenting on the recent rejection of the confab by the National Assembly, Senator Ahmed said the

legislators should have viewed the dialogue as another body looking into Nigeria's problems from a different angle and shouldn't have rejected it because they will have an opportunity to look at the recommendations of the conference and deliberate on it.

"As far as the budgeting for the conference is concerned, I don't think any amount spent to improve governance on Nigeria is too much, after all, without political stability there can never be development.

So I believe that the National Assembly should look at the budget for the dialogue and approve it," A.T Ahmed said.

He said the proposed conference does not violate the constitution because its recommendations are subject to the approval of the National Assembly.

Ahmed who is one of those tipped for the PDP national chairmanship to succeed Chief Audu Ogbah till 2007 when the convention will decide on another substantive national chairman, also said that party discipline is a major consideration that can properly place the PDP ahead of 2007.

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Contd. From Back Page

Confab: Leaping before you look

On the type of Constitution, the nation needs only to rid the document of military interference and additions, and the result will be almost identical to the 1963 Constitution, which, of all the constitutions, is the only one that is the product of our elected experts. On the system of governance, we can say, without much grammar and legal niceties, that Nigeria should revert to the parliamentary system of governance. At least three things commend the adoption of the parliamentary system—lower operating cost, effectiveness of its checks and balances and the prevention of a winner-takes-all attitude.

On true federalism, the issues of respect for the constitutional power sharing principle and the size and resources available to the federating units are the most important considerations. Nigeria should revert to the former regions with some modifications, especially for the creation of a Middle Belt State in the eastern parts of North Central Nigeria. The new state may perhaps bisect the whole of North Central into two. If it does so along religious lines, that will be very unfortunate; but if that's what the people, in referendum, say they want, so be it.

On electoral reform, only one amendment needs to be made to provide for a two-month long interim government between any two presidential terms. Headed by people not standing election themselves, its function is to conduct the elections and hand over to the winner.

On resource control, people in riverine areas believe Nigeria's oil belongs to them. It doesn't. They call this resource control. And they also advocate that every part of the country should keep their resources to themselves. They shouldn't. That is preposterous; and unless things are pushed to the limit, and held by the most tenuous of con-federal threads, this should really be discountenanced.

But apart from paying toll after every few kilometres, entrepreneurs from the South must pay heavy taxes for access to the markets of Northern cities, and pay rent for land utilisation. As they say, one extreme position breeds another. And the solution is to adopt the principle of derivation for all onshore resources while revenues from all offshore resources go into the Distributable Pool Account. You can't have federalism in one breath and independence on the other.

On the issue of gender,

some people have already observed that too few women have been nominated. But, if men and women are the same and equal, why should it matter? Gender is the new song whenever a new cabinet is being formed or a committee is being constituted or reconstituted. And it is on its way to becoming some sociological law, having passed the stage of hypothesis.

By now they have succeeded in making gender an issue for us, with the help of United Nations bodies, foreign funding, Non-Governmental Organisations and even university curricula, where the in-thing now is gender studies. Once again we are reduced to mouthing slogans we ill-understand and the objective of which we are unable to fathom. Instead of fighting injustice in society they are setting up the sexes against each other.

We chorus "gender equality" not necessarily because we believe in it, or not even necessarily because we should believe in it in a way that is useful and wholesome for us; but because we have to do or say what is internationally politically correct, deliberately creating tension where none existed or exacerbating it where it already does. Instead of gender equality, it is probably gender hatred that they wish to create. The annoying thing about these gender-minders is that while they keep harping on the equality of the sexes, they become so insultingly patronising of women that they in fact end up proving, in their own illogic, the very superiority they wish to quash.

And while they pretend by endlessly speaking about the matter and even giving women cabinet seats as if this were a birthday present to womanhood, they intend, despite the great dignity and beauty that God has given them, to turn women into mere playthings. They don't even realise that in demeaning women thus—whether in the name of religion or outright, honest, undisguised hedonism—they are demeaning themselves—and all of us. But the real tragedy is that many women appear to welcome what is hitting them. Surely the destiny of womankind is greater than to be a plaything for anyone, or be turned into objects to make cabinet seats or be turned into a mere statistic deprived of dignity and human worth.

Surely representation at a conference or the ability to

work depends on competence and knowledge. In this case, knowledge of issues is gender-blind; there is nothing to suggest that women or men know any issue better than the other by virtue only of their being of their sex. What is needed to articulate the right issues well is not masculinity or femininity, but reasonable intelligence, lots of commonsense and a desire for public good. And if you don't have these qualities, you can't represent any sex successfully, even if you are a hermaphrodite.

For Heaven's Sake, gender is just but one attribute of human beings. Why then is no one championing the cause of short men? They are grossly unrepresented in Obasanjo's cabinet. And why is nobody taking up the fight on behalf of fair-skinned Nigerians? They are grossly unrepresented in politics. And only one or two of the past heads of state could be said to be light-skinned; so should we then drop everything, and clamour that it is now the turn of the light-skinned to be president, just on account of their complexion? That's exactly what we are doing with regard to gender; isn't it? Our summary concern on the issue of gender should probably be what Susan Anthony, that remarkable newspaperwoman, said in her definition of the true republic — "men, their rights, and nothing more; women, their rights and nothing less."

But despite all this, what is surprising is that no section of the country is boycotting the conference. Indeed, even the All Nigeria People's Party, ANPP, that is contesting the legality of Obasanjo's election, has endorsed the conference. The issue facing Nigeria right now is that of mis-governance. The nation has suffered the continuing destruction of its system along with all the institutions and the people are faced with a vicious circle of poverty and corruption. This issue is more acute, more immediate and more dangerous than any item on the agenda of the conference.

This conference should have been boycotted by all Nigerians but especially those in North, but everybody's attitude is, what if it succeeds without me? That's a "May be" attitude, the type that has killed our nation.

Though the decision by the North and the ACF to attend has been described by Awoniyi as "the triumph of hope over bitter experience, ACF will not despair [because] Nigerians are very patient people." But in this, Obasanjo may even be more patient, in the tradition of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher who in 1989 said, "I am extraordinarily patient, provided I get my own way in the end."

Opinion

Towards meaningful dialogue

By Bridget Okorodumu

The on going controversies over the proposed national political reform conference are healthy for the country and its people.

When President Olus-egun Obasanjo announced the proposed National Dialogue, one of the popular concerns lay with the nature and extent of the conference agenda. Having been virtually alienated by successive administrations, especially the military regimes, suspicion has expectedly been growing. Any skepticism against the proposed national dialogue is therefore, understandable.

Nigeria is a pluralistic society and it is expected that there would be a plethora of issues tabled before the conference. However, the agenda for the conference must be in tune with the realities of our situation. While we draw attention to how it was done in other countries, we should bear in mind that we are not the same as those other countries. We can learn from others, without copy them.

The Federal Government identified some 'No-Go' areas. For instance, the fact of Nigeria as an indivisible entity should not be negotiated. That is, discussions should not veer towards the dismemberment of the country. This disclaimer is necessary. First, it is very interesting to note that there is a high degree of integration among Nigerians at all levels. Secondly, we would be averting the emergence of warlords and so-called liberation movements supposedly dedicated to the self-determination of their peoples. And there are several ethnic and linguistic groups in Nigeria.

Apart from the guidelines provided by the government, it behoves on the conference participants to adopt agenda that would make their work meaningful. Issues in focus include what I wish to recommend to the participants:

Quality and character of leadership at all levels is an item that must not be ignored. Leadership is a very critical element in the development equation. An incompetent, bigoted or distorted leadership will become a cog around the country's neck, with adverse consequences for the socio-economic and political development of the country.

Link to leadership is the devolution of powers

The command structure and culture imposed on the country by the military has to be replaced with democratic practices. That way, the checks and balances associated with democracy would effectively come into play.

In the same vein, there is the issue of autonomy for the three arms and three tiers of Government. A dependent, rather than interdependent relationship among these organs and tiers does not promote democracy.

Religious crises have probably caused more damage to the nation and its people than any other problem. The matter has to be resolved beyond doubt. Is Nigeria a secular State or should it adopt certain religions as State religions? Corruption cannot take back-stage at any level of discussions on the state of the nation. It is not only a cankerworm, but has become a way of life. What is to be done to restore transparency and accountability in our public and private lives?

Revenue mobilization derivation and allocation are also vital areas to look into. We need to know what the country earns from all sources. Over time, attention has focused almost solely on petroleum crude oil (and lately liquefied natural gas). It will be interesting to note what revenue levels come in form non-oil products. By the time the public becomes aware of sources, derivations and allocations, we would better appreciate our strengths and weaknesses.

We need to develop and nurture healthy rivalry among the peoples of Nigeria. That would engender symbiosis, rather than predatory inclinations.

Indigeneship is also a major source of stress for many Nigerians. What are the limits of the rights and privileges of a visitor who has lived and worked for several years in another part of the country?

What constitutes human rights? Can Nigerians really look forward to exercising and being accorded their rights after this conference? Will women, children and the less privileged in our society have as much rights as the men folk?

The political party system in Nigeria is in dire need of reforms. The performance of several of the politicians in the past and present dispensation does no credit to the image of both the country and the political class.

The concepts of national service as an act of patriotism and nationalism has to be addressed seriously. Whether in the security apparatuses, youth service, technical aids corps or some other assignments, national service should attract the kind of emotional fulfillment, encouragement and acknowledgement we observe in most of the societies we admire so much.

Then, of course, there is the ubiquitous 'Nigerian Factor', which is an excuse for anything immoral, incompetent or appalling. Nigeria should set minimum standards of behaviour, comportment and performance for its citizens, visitors and people it does business with. We should have a national ethos based on sound moral values.

Participants at the conference will gain a lot of insight from the proceedings and reports of previous exercises such as the 1994 constitutional conference. Discarding the inclination to see no good in the past, they may be pleasantly surprised to identify issues and proposals that could help enrich their discussions at the on-coming exercise.

The erstwhile critics of the Obasanjo government must be commended for agreeing to participate in the conference. It is a national service and a collective responsibility. It is stakeholders' conference in which all well-meaning Nigerians should invest if we hope to leave worthy legacies for our children and future generations.

Discussions should be held with open minds. The aim of the conference should not be for the distribution of largesse or to determine who can outsmart the other. It should be focused on fashioning out ways to render the union of Nigerians mutually beneficial; eliminating those factors militating against our practice of true federalism.

The die is cast and as the saying goes, there is no time like the present. Laws are made for human beings and the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria should be a social contract between the State and the People of Nigeria.

We need a People's Constitution, and this can be achieved when the peoples ultimate interests form the basis of the agenda for the national political reform conference.

Okorodumu Writes from Olabisi Olabisi Onabanjo university, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State

Eventually our
Courageous minister
has turned almost every
Metre of land green

Kai! I wonder, that
man could make a
better botanist
instead.



Really, if you look at
it critically, it's like
Majority aren't happy with
his actions. Especially
Vendors and low income
earners

Yeah! It's possible but
he has to carry out
his duty no matter how.
After all he's an Inch
to make Abuja a
tourist haven



By the way how many
people must he send
to the hell of poverty
and dejection before
he achieves
that?



YOUR LETTERS

Revisiting indigene/settler syndrome

Most of our politicians and political leaders have directly or indirectly contributed to the spate of instability we have been witnessing in this country. Not too long ago, Nigerians were informed that a serving governor described his fellow Nigerians as settlers.

My question is, who is an indigene and who is a settler? Where do you classify some one who was born in a particular part of the country outside his ancestral home, attended school in the same place, married and born children in that area and lived all his life? It will an exhibition of irresponsibility for anyone to address fellow Nigerian as a settler.

Historians and scholars said that it was Lord Lugard that brought Nigerians together by the amalgamation of 1914. But we should know that Lord Lugard was only a tool used by God to fulfill His (God's) predetermined intention. If not the amalgamation would have failed. It is not by mistake that we are together but by design.

Tribalism and sectionalism were never in the character of Nigerians,

the late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was born in Zungeru Niger State (Northern Nigeria) meaning that his parents lived there for a very long time. So many other Nigerians have lived peacefully for a very long time outside their ancestral homes.

There has been inter state and inter-tribal marriages. For instance, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo a Yoruba man is married to an Edo woman (Mrs. Stella Obasanjo) General Ibrahim B. Babangida (rtd) an Hausa man is married to a woman from Delta State (Mrs. Mariam Babagida) Mrs. Bisi Shuaibu, a ground daughter of Herbert Macaulay, Yoruba woman is married to Alhaji Shuaibu Idris Sabon Birni, a director of the National Civic Registration, who is an Hausa man.

Major General Ike Umar Sanda Nwachukwu (rtd) an Igbo man has an Hausa mother and is married to a Yoruba woman.

Our late Head of State General Murtala Ramat Mohammed an Hausa man was married to Mrs.

Ajoke Mohammed a Yoruba, Vice President Atiku Abubakar an Hausa man is married to an Igbo woman. Mrs. Dais Danjuma an Edo woman is married to General T.Y. Danjuma (Rtd.) from which Babagana Kingibe an Hausa man is married to Mrs. Ireti Kingibe from South West. These are just few examples.

An average Nigerian is not tribalistic. Those who imported tribalism into our national lives did that purely for selfish reasons.

As Nigerians we have reached a stage where we should no longer look at ourselves on the bases of tribe or religion. We should see each other as one. We should see any person no matter his/her status in the society, who fans the embers of tribalism, as our enemy. Look around you, what has tribalism and sectionalism brought to you? Hatred, destruction, poverty, ignorance, disease and hunger.

Nigeria is not the only multi ethnic nation in the world. The United States of America has the largest concentration of different human race, yet they are

the greatest country in the world in terms of development. The Great Britain and even Japan are made up of different tribes. These nations were able to manage themselves so well. Even many Nigerians jostle to become citizen of these nations, but they forget (in absolute shallowness) that human beings like themselves made those Nations great.

We have no choice than to remain together as one and indivisible nation. Our political leaders must know that tribalism and discrimination are not part of our destiny but were imposed on, us by self

seeking and narrow minded politicians.

So the present and future leaders must do everything within their power to remove this disease (tribalism) which is more deadly than HIV/AIDS from our system. Some political scholars said that tribalism and sectionalism were instituted by the colonial masters who adopted the principle of 'divide and rule' system in the administration of Nigeria for the benefit of British government.

Let us assume that they are correct; my question is, whose interest are these Nigerians who still adopt

tribalism and divide and rule system? Those who still apply tribal and religious sentiments in order to win elections are they not worse than the colonial masters?

If Nigerians can live comfortably in countries like Canada, Cameroon, South Africa, Brazil, USA etc., why not live even more comfortably in Jos, Aba, Kano, Warri, Lagos and Bauchi? Whether you are a Muslim, Christian or a traditionalist, one thing you must know is that it is the same blood that flows in all of us and we do not have any other country than Nigeria.

Leonard A. Ogu
Plot 6, Samanga Street
WUse Zone 5, Abuja

SOS to Gov Abdullahi Adamu

I wish to draw the attention of the governor of Nasarawa State to the activities of the state urban development authority.

Sometime last year, officials of the authority came to demolish my property located on a plot of land at Jos Road in Lafia.

According to them, the government wants to acquire the land for public use. But to my dismay, no attempt has been made to compensate

me. They did not even contact me or, at least, inform me before demolishing my property.

Now, many months later, nobody seems to even care, officially, about compensating me.

I hereby use this medium to call on "the peoples governor," Alhaji Abdullahi Adamu to please intervene and let justice prevail.

Alhaji Muhammadu Hamza (Tafarkin Lafia) Federal High Court, Abuja.

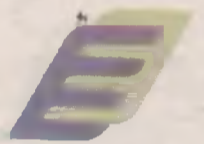
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Application forms are obtainable from Scholarship Board of the States of the Federation and the Directorate of Education (FCDA), Abuja. The forms can be obtained on the payment of a **NON-REFUNDABLE** sum of N2, 000 (Two Thousand Naira) in a Certified Bank Draft made payable to **PTDF in Abuja** from any Commercial Bank but preferably from First Bank PLC; Union Bank Nig. PLC; Bank of The North; and the United Bank for Africa PLC.

Candidates are to note that only those who meet the requirements would be short listed and invited for Aptitude Test. The PTDF will assist such qualified candidates secure admission onto suitable MSc courses only.

PhD Candidates are expected to have secured their respective admissions into the relevant related areas as listed and will be invited for interview to defend their Research Topics.

The Fund will sponsor only a limited number of scholars.

Candidates who do not meet the following conditions need not apply.

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1. A First Degree in a course related to Oil and Gas Industry.
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3. Must have completed the National Youth Service (NYSC).
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5. Candidates must be Nigerians.
6. Candidates must not be in receipt of similar scholarships.
7. Candidates above 30 years of age must not apply for the MSc sponsorship.
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9. Candidates must be computer literate.
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1. In addition to the above, candidates applying for PhD must have a Masters Degree in Engineering, Sciences, Oil & Gas, or Mineral Resources related disciplines.
2. Candidates are required to submit the transcript of their Masters Degree.
3. Candidates must not be more than 40 years of age.
4. Candidates with OND, HND and PGD must have an MSc to qualify for the offer.
5. Candidates are to submit their detailed Curriculum Vitae.
6. Candidates are to submit a copy of their MSc project.
7. Candidates are to submit evidence of admission for the PhD.

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| 2. Computing Information Engineering (UK) | 24. Mining Engineering (USA) |
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| 4. Diving and Underwater Technology (UK) | 26. Marine Computational Fluid Dynamics |
| 5. Engineering Geology (UK) | 27. Naval Architecture & Ocean Engineering |
| 6. Environmental Engineering & Sustainable Development (USA) | 28. Oil & Gas Engineering (UK) |
| 7. Economics of Technological Change (USA) | 29. Ocean Remote Sensing (UK) |
| 8. Engineering Technology Management (USA) | 30. Offshore Engineering (USA/UK) |
| 9. Energy and Geo - Environmental Engineering (USA) | 31. Offshore Ocean Technology |
| 10. Energy Finance / Economics (UK) | 32. Petroleum & Natural Gas Engineering (USA) |
| 11. Fire & Explosion Engineering (UK) | 33. Petroleum Reservoir System (Professional) (USA) |
| 12. Gas Pipeline Economics & Engineering (UK) | 34. Petroleum Accounting (USA) |
| 13. Geo - Environmental Engineering (USA) | 35. Petroleum Economics (USA) |
| 14. Geographic Information System (UK/USA) | 36. Process System Engineering (USA) |
| 15. Geo-Resources (USA) | 37. Reservoir Engineering (UK) |
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8. Sustainable Development (oil & gas)
9. Geology and Petroleum Geology
10. Marine Technology with Integrated Studies
11. Civil and Offshore Engineering
12. Ship building and Marine Technology
13. Oceanography

All completed application forms should be submitted to the State Scholarship Boards where it was purchased on or before March 4, 2005

SIGNED:
JACQUELINE N. GUYIL
For: Executive Secretary

Trust International

UN acts on sex abuse allegations in DR Congo, Kenya

UN peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of Congo have been banned from having sex with locals after claims of widespread abuse of women and girls.

The new rules were disclosed in a letter from UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to the Security Council.

Mr Annan also called for 100 extra military police and French-speaking investigators to "root out" the abuse.

Claims sexual abuse of girls as young as 13-year-old started emerging early last year.

The victims were usually given food or small sums of money in return for sex, a report by the UN watchdog,

the Office of Internal Oversight Services, said in January.

The UN has investigated 150 allegations, including gang rape, made against some 50 soldiers based in DR Congo's north-eastern town of Bunia.

It has not named the countries involved, but reports mention soldiers from Morocco, Nepal, Pakistan, South Africa, Tunisia and Uruguay, as well as a French civilian.

In his six-page letter to the UN Security Council, Mr Annan expressed his "personal outrage" at the abuses.

"I reiterate my stance - one which I know the members of the council share - that we cannot tolerate even one instance of a United Nations peacekeeper victimising the most vulnerable ones," he said.

His letter spelt out the new regulations for more than 12,000 military personnel from the UN Mission in Democratic Republic of Congo (Monuc).

The "non-fraternisation" measures included a curfew for military contingents, specialised training for all mission personnel and development of recreation and welfare opportunities "to alleviate the concentrated stress present in filed missions".

Mr Annan said Assistant Secretary General Angle Kane had been sent to DR Congo to conduct further investigations.

Meanwhile, the UN refugee agency and its partners

in Kenya have launched a project to strengthen existing actions to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence.

"Quite serious violations of the safety, security and dignity of refugees have occurred in many refugee programmes in the past," UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) country representative George Okoth-Obbo said in launching the Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in the Kenya Refugee Programme last week.

"It is an irony that refugees have fled their homes because they could not find safety, yet they arrive in asylum to find equally acute forms of danger, fear and anxiety."

He acknowledged that sexual and gender-based violence could happen in any refugee setting where the beneficiaries are vulnerable and rely on external parties to provide assistance and protection, noting that the new project is one of a series of steps taken "towards implicit and sustained ethical rectitude in the discharge of our responsibilities to our beneficiaries."

The project seeks to standardise the process of reporting and investigation when cases of abuse or exploitation arise. Representatives of the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), refugees and host communities are currently being trained in interview techniques and complaint investigation.



Caption: L-R, Laurent Gbagbo of Cote d'Ivoire, ECOWAS chairman, Mamadou Tandja of Niger, Yahya Djameh of Gambia, John Kuffour of Ghana, and President Olusegun Obasanjo in the 28th ordinary summit of ECOWAS heads of states held recently. Yesterday, ECOWAS condemned and refused to recognise the military appointment of Faure Eyadema in Togo.

Israel trains 15 Nigerian doctors

From Elkanah Chawai, Reporter (Foreign desk)

The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs Centre for International Cooperation (MASHAV) has trained fifteen Nigerian medical doctors over two years, the Israeli ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Noam Katz said.

The ambassador disclosed this at the first International Gynaecological Endoscopic Surgery workshop held at the National Hospital in Abuja.

He revealed that over 5,000 Nigerians in various disciplines have been sponsored to Israel through the MASHAV programme.

According to him, the MASHAV Programme which was established in the late fifties, with the main goal of sharing experience, know-how and technologies with people from other parts of the world, has trained over 205,000 course participants in Israel and many more in on-the-spot workshops overseas.

The ambassador pointed out that although the first international endoscopic surgery workshop is not a NASHAV programme, the first connection was made possible through Dr. Augustine Umezulike, who is a medical doctor at the National Hospital, Abuja an alumnus of MASHAV.

Mr. Katz commended Dr. David Soriano and Dr. Mati Zolti, both of the Israeli Endoscopic Training Centres and Sheba Medical Centre in Israel, for making it possible for the workshop, noting that "Israel has now been considered to be a strong force on the world stage in the field of medicine and other related sciences."

He said that the collaboration between Israel and Nigeria at state, institutional and individual levels, on the exchange of knowledge, skills and values would continue and strengthened with a view to promoting excellence and encourage extension services with modern techniques in science and technology, as well as in democracy.

NGO urges 'force' on Togo

Pan African leadership league (PALL), a non-government organisation (NGO), has called on the African Union (AU) to use force in order to reverse the unconstitutional transfer of power in Togo.

According to statement made available to *Daily Trust* in Kaduna, signed by Stephen Achi, executive director of PALL, the step became necessary in view of the fact that the army in Togo changed the constitution illegally in order to pave way for the son of the late Dr. Nesimba Eyadema to become president.

The statement declared that since the army refused to strictly respect the constitution to allow the speaker of the House of Parliament to take over as interim president the only a portion left open to Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS) and AU is to apply the use of force to return the country to democracy in order to serve as a deterrent to African countries.

PALL suggested that the international community should keep up the pressure, until the speaker is sworn in as specified in the constitution of the country.

The statement maintained that the constitution should be adhered to which stated

From Aliyu Hanna, Correspondence (Kaduna) & Maryam Musa Umar (Intern Kaduna)

that in the event of the death of the president the speaker of the parliament should be sworn in as the interim head of state for two months.

"The demise of late Eyadema should have opened up democratic process in Togo but the action of the military had resulted in an international condemnation across the globe," the statement declared.

The statement further called on the federal government of Nigeria to withdraw Nigerian Ambassador to Togo and also urged other African countries to do same.

Islam remains source for legislation in Sudan - President

Sudanese President Omar al-Beshir said that Islam will continue to be the main source of legislation in Sudan even after the peace deal with the mainly animist and Christian southern rebels.

He made the comments while addressing a crowd in al-Suqi in central Sudan, the official Sudan News Agency reported.

Khartoum and the rebel Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM) signed a peace deal on January 9 in the Kenyan capital Nairobi, end-

Gunmen kill journalist in Somalia

British journalist working for the British Broadcasting Corporation has died after being shot by unknown assailants outside her hotel in the Somali capital, police and medical officials said.

Kate Peyton, a producer based in Johannesburg, died on Wednesday while undergoing surgery at the Madina hospital in Mogadishu, a doctor there said.

"Unfortunately, the journalist (who was) shot passed away because of the injuries sustained," the doctor said.

A BBC statement issued in London confirmed that Peyton, 39, had died. BBC director-general Mark Thompson said he was "profoundly shocked and saddened" by the news, the statement added.

Medical sources said Peyton had two bullets lodged in her back but they had offered an initially optimistic prognosis for her recovery despite limited medical resources in Mogadishu.

Somalia has been wracked by 14 years of clan fighting.

Witnesses said the armed men, who sped off in a white saloon, shot her about 20 miles from the Sahafi (Arabic for journalist) hotel in southern Mogadishu.

The vehicle was found abandoned in the Barmuda neighbourhood of central Mogadishu, Somali acting police chief Muhammad

Warsame Duli said.

"Investigations have been started to arrest those cowards who killed the journalist for no apparent reason," he said.

"Since we got the vehicle used by the attackers, it will be easy for us to locate the gunmen and the owner of the vehicle."

Peyton had arrived in Mogadishu just a few hours earlier on Wednesday to join foreign reporters covering a fact-finding visit by a team of Somali lawmakers assessing conditions there for the relocation of the country's transitional government from exile in Kenya.

The BBC statement said Peyton had just arrived in Somalia with BBC correspondent Peter Greste to make a series of reports about the country.

Peyton, who was raised in Africa, had worked for the British broadcaster as a producer and reporter since 1993 and had been based in South Africa for a number of years, according to the BBC.

She had also worked as a producer and trainer for the South African Broadcasting Corporation in Johannesburg, the statement added.

"Kate was one of our most experienced and respected foreign affairs producers who had worked all over Africa and all over the world," said BBC Director of News, Helen Boaden. "She will be greatly missed, both professionally and personally."

N/Korea marks 63rd anniversary of Supreme Leader

The embassy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in Nigeria will next week mark the 63rd birthday anniversary of their supreme leader, Kim Jong il.

According to a statement made available to *Daily Trust*, it cautioned the US on nuclear crises of the Korean peninsula and urged the US to learn from the past US-North Korea row.

It stated that North Korea has gone through ordeals from the isolation and sanctions from "the allied forces of imperialism" which spurred a transformation that led to the Songun Policy.

The statement stated that the Songun Policy by Kim Jong il, which related to giving top national priority to military affairs and making the Korean people's arm the backbone of the revolution thereby promoting national defence, revolution and socialist constitution, suppressed the suffering experienced by the country.

Kim Jong Il was born of the 16th February 1942 in a secret revolution camp on Mount Paektu. He took up leadership on the 24th, December 1991 from his father Kim Jong Il who was known for his war against Japan and the US.

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February 14th - 15th, 2005

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CHAIRMAN
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(Senior partner, Wali-Uwais & Co)
- **Mr. Kunle Elebute**
(Senior Partner KPMG, Nigeria)
- **Mr. Basil Omiyi**
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(Managing Director, Access Bank Plc)
- **Chief Sena Anthony**
(Secretary to the Board and Legal Adviser, NNPC)
- **Dr. Goke Adegoroye**
(Director General, Bureau of Public Services)
- **Ms. Elizabeth Moundo**
(Director, UNESCO, West Africa)
- **Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala**
(Hon. Minister, Fed. Ministry of Finance)
- **Senator Daisy Danjuma**
(Chairman, Senate Committee on Women Affairs & Youth)
- **Mr. Fola Adeola**
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- **Mr. Yemi Candide-Johnson (SAN)**
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Time: 10.00a.m.

Venue: ECOWAS Secretariat
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Trust International

NATO is united over Iraq -Rice

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has said that NATO foreign ministers have held their "best" discussion on Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussein.

Ms Rice, speaking after the meeting in Brussels, said the alliance was united and knew the work it had to do.

But she said the US still had concerns about the possible lifting of a EU arms embargo against China, and

Iran's alleged nuclear weapons programme.

US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld is also due to hold talks in Europe.

The secretary of state is nearing the end of an eight-day tour of Europe and the Middle East during which she has sought to soothe tensions with European nations, said BBC Europe correspondent in Brussels.

However, deep differences remain between the two, he said.

Speaking at a news conference with Ms Rice, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said relations between the US and its European allies over Iraq had "turned a corner" after landmark elections there last month.

After meeting with EU officials and European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso, Ms Rice said the US and EU had "unity of purpose and unity

of message" on the issues that mattered.

But Ms Rice also said that the US and the EU were "still in open discussion" about how to deal with proposals to lift an EU arms embargo on China.

"The United States has very specific concerns," she said, citing China's human rights record and regional stability.

"We do have to worry about the military balance in the region and we have concerns about technology and its transfer," she said.

Ms Rice repeated earlier warnings that Iran "must live up to its international obligations".

In a US television interview before she travelled to Brussels, Ms Rice said European countries needed to get tougher with Tehran in negotiations to bring a halt to Iran's nuclear programme.

The UK, France and Germany have offered Iran trade concessions if it gives up its nuclear programme. Iran has agreed to temporarily suspend its uranium enrichment activities as the negotiations continue.

Iran has signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which prohibits the development of atomic weapons. The United Nations Security Council has the power to impose stringent sanctions on Iran if it is found to be in breach of the treaty.

Odd World

Beer-bottle attack saves woman

A blow to the head with a beer bottle may have saved Sally Hampton's life. While doctors were examining her after the barroom attack, they discovered a brain tumor that could have killed her.

The tumor was removed, and Hampton, 64, is fully recovered.

On Monday, she testified against her attacker, Fidel Trujillo, who was convicted of aggravated battery with a deadly weapon and sentenced to 12 1/2 years in prison.

"It was one of the worst things that could happen to an elderly person, but in the end it saved her life," prosecutor Erik Lombillo said.

Hampton was attacked July 4 at a bar in Immokalee, a farming town in south-western Florida. According to prosecutors, she put her hand on Trujillo's shoulder to lead him out of the place when the bartender wanted to close up. Trujillo bashed her with a bottle and kicked her in the head and body when she fell.

Flying frozen chickens baffle Australian police

Australian police admitted yesterday they were mystified by a spate of apparent attacks on homes using frozen chickens as missiles.

Police in Newcastle, about 100 kilometres north of Sydney, said chicken carcasses had damaged at least three suburban homes in recent weeks.

They said the chickens hit the homes with great force, in some cases punching holes through tile roofs.

"If they hit anyone they could really do some damage," senior constable Tony Tamplin said.

Tamplin said one theory was that birds picked up the chickens at a nearby dump but dropped them mid-flight because they were too heavy.

But he said it was a most likely a prank by practical jokers who fired the frozen chickens from a giant catapult.

N/Korea quits nuclear talks

North Korea has said it has manufactured nuclear weapons to protect itself against a US attack and is suspending its participation in multilateral talks aimed at stopping its atomic programmes.

A North Korean Foreign Ministry statement carried by the official KCNA news agency on yesterday said the country would seek to strengthen its nuclear arsenal and accused the US of plotting to overthrow the government.

"We had already taken the resolute action of pulling out of the [Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty] and have manufactured nukes for self-defence to cope with the Bush administration's ever-

more undisguised policy to isolate and stifle the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (DPRK)," the statement said.

The statement added that Pyongyang would also suspend its involvement in six-nation talks.

"The US disclosed its attempt to topple the political system in DPRK at any cost, threatening it with a nuclear stick"

"We have wanted the six-party talks but we are compelled to suspend our participation in the talks for an indefinite period," it said.

The six nations taking part in the talks are North Korea, China, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the United States.

"The US disclosed its

attempt to topple the political system in DPRK at any cost, threatening it with a nuclear stick," the statement said.

"This compels us to take a measure to bolster our nuclear weapons arsenal in order to protect the ideology, system, freedom and democracy chosen by the people in the DPRK," the statement added.

The Foreign Ministry statement was Pyongyang's first official reaction to US President George Bush's State of the Union address last week.

In his key policy address before Congress, Bush avoided inflammatory language aimed directly at the Stalinist regime, saying only that Washington was working closely with its allies.

CONGRATULATIONS

Your Excellency, with the conferment on you today of the prestigious honorary degree of Doctor of Science by the senate of the University of Jos in recognition of your unequalled contribution in the field of information and communication technology (ICT) in Nigeria and West Africa, a golden feather has been added to your cap of success - yet another testimony of your foresight and qualities as a young and dynamic leader.

The occasion is a milestone and marks a turning point in your effort to make life more meaningful for the people of Jigawa State and the nation in general.

Your Excellency, it takes great strength, courage, and perseverance to implement what one believes in despite great opposition. I salute your courage, and I am extremely proud of your numerous achievements and all you stand for.

May Almighty Allah guide and protect you, and may you by His grace continue to succeed against all odds.

CONGRATULATIONS

HONOURABLE BASHIR ADAMU



His Excellency
Alh. Ibrahim Saminu Turaki
Executive Governor, Jigawa State



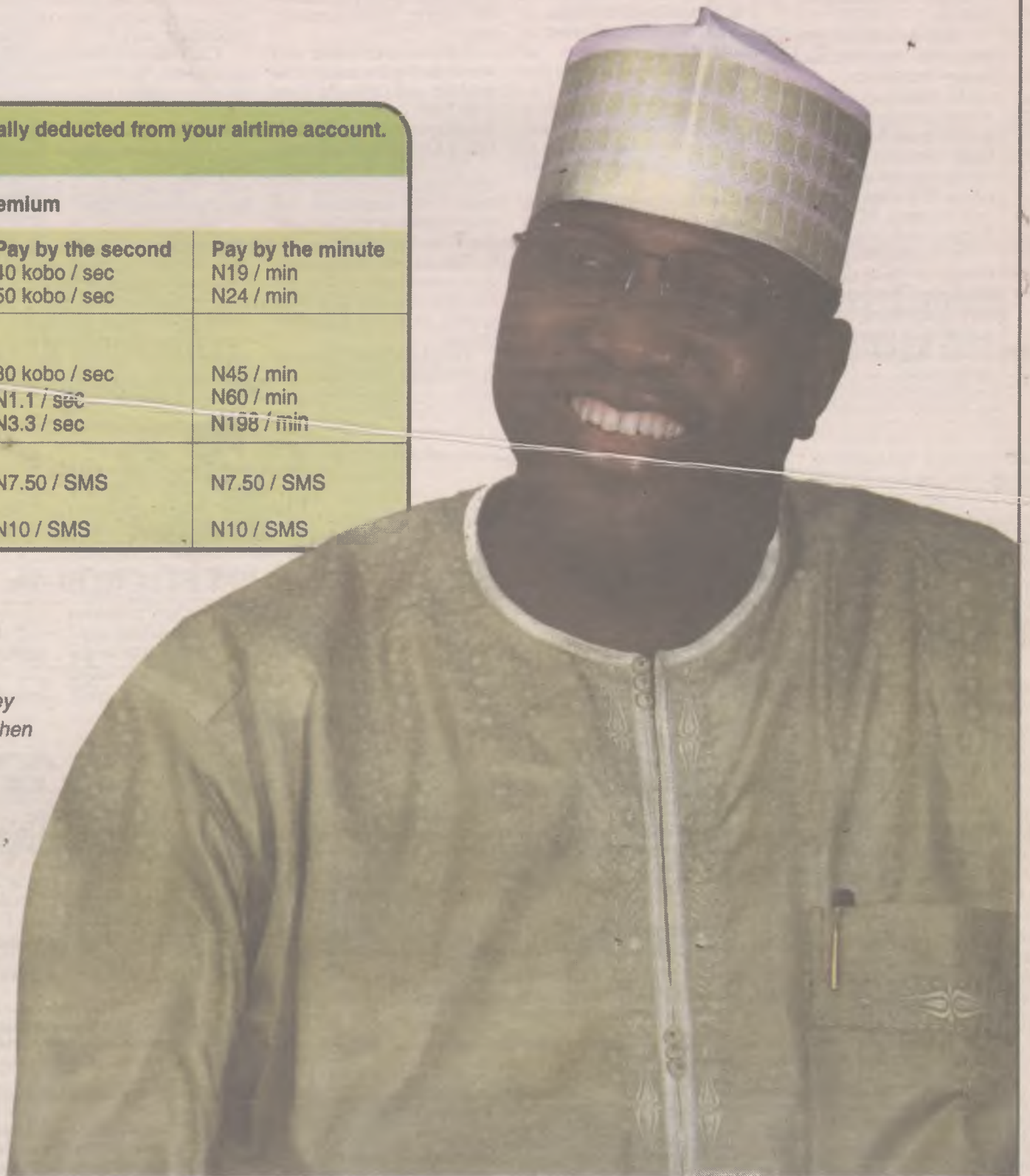
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Trust International

'Iran will stick to nuclear plan'

Iranian President Mohammad Khatami has said Tehran will never give up nuclear technology, as international pressure on his government continues to mount.

He warned of "massive" consequences if Iran was treated unfairly.

Mr Khatami said again that the nuclear programme was peaceful and needed to produce power, rejecting US suspicions that it is a cover for weapons.

EU powers wanted Tehran to end uranium enrichment - a key part of nuclear arms production - permanently.

"We give our guarantee that we will not produce nuclear weapons because we're against them and do not believe they are a source of power," Mr Khatami told foreign ambassadors in Tehran.

"But we will not give up peaceful nuclear technology," he added.

In the face of international pressure, the Iranian government has called for large numbers of its supporters to go out onto the streets on Thursday to mark the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic revolution.

In Washington, President George W Bush said a nuclear-armed Iran would be "a very destabilising force in the world" and urged the West to work together to stop such an outcome.

The message was reinforced by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice during a tour of Europe this week.

She said Washington had no deadline to refer the issue to the United Nations Security Council for possible sanctions, adding that diplomacy had to be given every chance to work.

While talks with Germany, France and Britain continue in Geneva, Iran has suspended uranium enrichment, which can be used to make weapons-grade fuel.

But in his speech Mr Khatami said that enrichment was "our clear right" and that Iran had suspended it only "to show our goodwill".

He added: "If we feel others are not meeting their promises, under no circumstances would we be committed to continue fulfilling ours."

"And we will adopt a new policy, the consequences of which are massive and would be the responsibility of those who broke their commitments."

The European countries would like to use a package of incentives to induce Iran to give up its nuclear ambitions, but Tehran has said it is disappointed with what is on offer so far.

It said it can only continue talks for a matter of months, not years.



A staff member of the Kalmunai Base Hospital, carries the tsunami survivor infant dubbed 'Baby 81' in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Israel halts security talks after fresh violence

Israel suspended security talks yesterday after violence erupted again when Palestinian activists launched two attacks against Israeli settlements and Israeli forces killed a Palestinian who sped through a roadblock near a Jewish settlement.

Just after the cease-fire announced in Sharm al-Shaikh summit in Egypt Hamas activists said they fired 36 mortar shells and 20 homemade rockets at the Jewish settlements of Neve Dekalim and Gedid in the Gaza Strip. The barrage caused no damages or injuries.

Palestinian security officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the mortars were fired from an area off limits to them. They added that it is very hard to prevent such attacks because they can be launched quickly. However, there was no indication that troops were pursuing the attackers.

Hamas said on its Web site that it fired the mortars in retaliation for the deaths of two Palestinians on Wednesday. One, a Hamas activist, was killed while handling explosives. The second, apparently a civilian, was shot dead by Israeli troops as he walked near a Jewish settlement in southern Gaza.

The death is the Palestinian boy was the second reported killing since a truce

was announced at Sharm al-Shaikh on Tuesday.

On Wednesday a Palestinian man died hours after he was wounded by gunfire from a Gaza Jewish settlement.

The 20-year-old from a Rafah refugee camp in southern Gaza was shot from the nearby illegal settlement of Atzmona, which has an Israeli army garrison.

An Israeli military source said troops had fired warning shots, suspecting an infiltration attempt.

The violence in Gaza prompted Israeli officials to call off a meeting with Palestinian negotiators Thursday, a Palestinian official said. The talks were meant to follow up on this week's summit in Egypt, where Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Abbas called for an end to four years of fighting.

Elsewhere, Sharon signalled in a newspaper interview yesterday he is ready to release large numbers of Palestinian prisoners involved in deadly attacks a significant Israeli concession if militants halt attacks during Israel's planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip this summer.

Sharon said Abbas stressed during their meeting earlier this week that the release of long-serving prisoners is a top priority.

Saudis vote in national polls

Saudi Arabia is holding its first nationwide municipal elections, as the government aims to introduce elements of democracy in the desert kingdom.

Voting is taking place in and around the capital, Riyadh, with later rounds to be held elsewhere over two months.

Overall, 1,800 candidates are vying for 592 seats in 178 councils. In Riyadh, 650 are fighting for just seven seats.

Women are excluded from the polls and only some 148,000 of 400,000 eligible men have registered to vote in Riyadh.

The polls can be seen as

a small step in Saudi Arabia's measured response to calls for reform, correspondents say.

Elections of some sort were held in a few major cities until the mid-1960s but these polls mark a turning point in this absolute monarchy, says BBC's Kim Ghattas in Riyadh.

The polls were postponed several times since they were first announced, but now there is no turning back, she adds.

The powers of the municipal council are not clear and half the council will still be chosen, as before, by appointment.

Despite a late flurry of electioneering in Riyadh, the

excitement of candidates has not been matched by that of their constituents, our correspondent says.

Candidates started campaigning only after voter registration ended and some Saudis say they now regret not having signed up to vote.

Delays have dogged the build-up to the polls, which were first due to have been held by October 2004.

Speculation that women may be allowed to run and vote in the elections was eventually quashed by the kingdom's rulers, but a promise was made that they would be able to play a bigger role in the next such polls in 2009.



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HRH, Victor Pam (DIG rtd)
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MAIN SESSION

Session Chairman: His Excellency, Chief Michael Botman, Deputy Governor of Plateau State.

Topic One: The Relevance of Satellite Technology to National Socio-Economic, & Industrial Development (Summary in major languages).

Presenter: Prof. R. A. Boroffice, Director General, National Space Research & Development Agency, Abuja.

Topic Two: Introducing Grassroot Masses To Science & Technology For Agriculture And Environmental Management Using Pilot Training Schemes From Satellite.

Presenter: Dr. J. A. Akinyede, Director Space Applications, National Space Research & Development Agency, Abuja.

Topic Three: Advancing The Course, Nature And Context of Mas Education Through Satellite Technology using the Nigeria Sat-1 Project for Local Community Agro-Allied and Scientific Development within Specific

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CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL & STRATEGIC STUDIES (CISS), ABUJA



On the

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Business Trust

Today's flight schedule

Albarka Air

| | |
|-------------------|----------|
| Lagos - Abuja | 07:20 |
| | 10:30 |
| | 15:15 |
| | 13:00 |
| Abuja - Lagos | 8:45a.m. |
| | 11:00 |
| | 13:15 |
| | 17:00 |
| Maiduguri - Abuja | 06:50 |
| Abuja - Maid. | 17:00 |

| | |
|--------------|----------|
| Lagos - Yola | 4:00p.m. |
| Abuja - Yola | 14:30 |
| Yola - Abuja | 15:30 |
| Yola - Lagos | 4:00p.m. |

Chanchangi Airlines

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| Lagos - Abuja | 8:15a.m. |
| | 11:00a.m. |
| | 12:10p.m. |
| | 4:45p.m. |
| Kaduna - Lagos | 8:30a.m. |
| P/H - Lagos | 9:00a.m. |
| | 4:30p.m. |
| Abuja - Kaduna | 2:30p.m. |
| Kaduna - Abuja | 1:30p.m. |

IRS Airlines

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| CBQ - Abuja | 8:00 a.m. |
| Abuja - Lagos | 9:45a.m. |
| Lagos - Kaduna | 9:30a.m. |
| Kano - Lagos | 7:30p.m. |
| Lagos - Kano | 11:15a.m. |
| Kaduna - Lagos | 11:00a.m. |
| Lagos - Abu/MM | 2:30p.m. |
| Abuja - MM | 1:45p.m. |
| MM - Abuja | 3:45p.m. |
| Abuja - CBQ | 5:15p.m. |
| Kano - Abuja | 1:15p.m. |
| Abuja - Kano | 2:30p.m. |
| Kano - Lagos | 3:45p.m. |
| Lagos - Kano | 6:00p.m. |

EAS Airlines

| | |
|---------------|-----------|
| Lagos - Abuja | 8:15p.m. |
| | 11:45a.m. |
| | 5:45p.m. |
| Abuja - Lagos | 10:15a.m. |
| | 7:15p.m. |
| Lagos - Jos | 11:45a.m. |
| Jos - Lagos | 2:30pm. |

Dasab Airlines

| | |
|-------------|-----------|
| Auja-Lagos | 8:30a.m. |
| Lagos-PHC | 10:30a.m. |
| PHC-Lagos | 12:30a.m. |
| Lagos-Kano | 2:30p.m. |
| Kano-Lagos | 4:30p.m. |
| Lagos-Abuja | 6:30p.m. |

ADC Airline

| | |
|---------------|-----------|
| Lagos-Abuja | 7:15a.m. |
| | 12:45p.m. |
| Abuja-Lagos | 8:55a.m. |
| Lagos-Calabar | 11:15a.m. |
| Calabar-Lagos | 7:20a.m. |
| P/H-Lagos | 9:45a.m. |
| Lagos-Sokoto | 8:55am |
| Sokoto-Lagos | 11:55am |

Most airlines operate the same flight schedule on week days.

Finance

Northerners tasked on banking industry

The need for northern businessmen to invest in the capital market especially the banking industry has again been stressed.

Former executive Secretary of African Development Bank (ADB), Professor Baita Yusuf who made the call during Assurance Bank stakeholders forum in Kano, said the north is lagging behind in investment in to the banking sector.

Professor Yusuf who was speaking as guest speaker said unless businessmen in the north take advantage of the current recapitalisation

From Musa Umar Kazaure, Bureau Chief (Kano)

process in the banking industry, they would be left out of the opportunities in the sector. He added that Assurance Bank offer such opportunity for investment which he said should be exploited by businessmen in Kano.

In his welcome address, the managing director of Assurance Bank Mr. Chika Mbonu said the bank was born in Kano 43years ago as

Arab Bank Limited of Jordan. It however renamed to Arab Bank Nigeria Limited in 1969 before it became Nigeria-Arab Bank Limited in 1980. The Bank he said, acquired its new name, Assurance Bank in 1998 before the new management acquired its major share as core investors in November 2002 under the federal government privatisation programme.

Since then, he said, the bank has grown from its straight to straight, injecting over 4 billion naira, overhaul

its structure, branches, personal, processes and technology industry leaders.

"This has translated into a rapid growth in our in our markets share and profitability. In the 18 months period between November 2002 and April 2004, Assurance Bank total asset given by 430 per cent to N9.6 billion, deposit by 130 per cent to N8.1 billion gross earnings by 580 per cent to N2.2 billion naira", as stated.

The managing director who spoke through Mr. Opara-

Ndudu, deputy managing director of the bank announced a proposal merger of his bank with three banks to form Astra Bank with a capital base of N50 billion. The other three banks, Guardian Express Bank, Manny Bank, and First Atlantic Bank have signed a memorandum of understanding with Assurance Bank he said, adding that the total asset base of the bank will be 150 billion naira with a deposit base of N100 billion.

...urged to form three mega banks

On the background of recent recapitalisation policy of N25 billion to the banking industry by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), North has been urged to work collectively to ensure the emergence of at least three mega banks of national franchise but northern extraction at the end of the exercise, just as Intercity Bank Opt for capital market to raise N15 to N17 billion.

Making the appeal at the Intercity Banks pre-AGM

From Lawal Ibrahim Correspondent and Ahmed I. Shekarau, Group Business Editor in Katsina

dinner/investors forum in Katsina the chairman board of directors of the Intercity Bank Plc Alhaji Falalu Bello said the appeal has become necessary for the region to develop economically at the face of its present reaches willing the nation's financial sector.

Said he, North as a region need a home based institution that will support its economic growth in terms of providing lending facilities for desired economic development and overcome important for the stakeholders to vigorously pursue this indigenous venue to ensure the region is not left out in the scheme of things in the country.

Alhaji Falalu Bello who though sees everything wrong with the new recapitalisation policy says its our wrong to want everyone be on the same size, irrespective of his status and a policy he consider as unnecessary coprege of the western world.

On the Intercity's decision to recourse to capital market, the chairman said as the first

bank with northern dominant shareholding to do that, the bank will soon still held on with continued discussion with institutions of like minds with a view consolidate into one strong Bank, where it goes to capital market for consolidation purpose in order to remain a bank with substantial Northern interest through National in outlook.

In his remark, the executive Governor Katsina State, Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'adua

assured the bank of the states government support and cooperation in their effort to meet the challenges put forth by the Anex Bank.

The Governor who applaud the decision to raise the required capital as one done in the collection interest of the north said the state will continue to agitate, mobilize and urge all it's people to acquire the shares about to be open by KB through public issue.

Consolidation: NAL Bank to raise N10bn, eyes foreign banks

The managing director, NAL Bank Limited, Mr. Ben Akabueze has expressed confidence that the plans by the bank to raise N10 billion from the capital market would be successfully, saying that the bank is solid and bound to come out of the on-going consolidation stronger.

Akabueze who stated that his confidence is based on the banks solid structure and its tentacles across financial services sector, stressing that NAL Bank will not disappoint its stakeholders.

From Bright Ewulu, Deputy Business Editor (Lagos)

Speaking in Lagos, recently, he praised NAL Bank's shareholders who he said are behind the bid to raise sum from the capital market adding that "from all interest and purposes the bank intends to up its capital base from the current N6 billion to about N16 billion before merging with another unnamed bank.

According to him the merger will solidify the bank and enable it either to go ahead with its partners or acquire other banks in order to ensure its presence among the top banks in the system. He said the partner is a Nigerian bank with a parent foreign bank.

Confirming his MD's position in a chat Mr. Hassan Usman, NAL Bank's head business and financial advisory services group said that the bank's over 40 years presence in the anal of the nation's banking industry is no joke and is bound to impact on its future.

Towards this end, he stressed that NAL's tentacles in the capital market insurance and investment banking enable it ensure an over subscription of its planned public offer.

He stated that NAL Bank is a bank that delivers in integrity and professionalism and that this will woe investors who are well sure of what they are investing is solid in structure and competence.



Professor Charles C. Soudo, CBN Governor

First Atlantic Bank offers N7.5bn shares for subscription

First Atlantic Bank Plc, has concluded arrangements to offer for subscription a total of 3 billion ordinary shares of 50 kobo each at N2.50 per share valued at N7.5 billion.

The approvals for the registration and listing of the new shares have already been obtained from Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE). The offer, which is being handled by Investment Banking and Trust Company Limited (IBTC) and Future View Securities Limited is expected to open on Monday, February 21, 2005.

A statement made available to *Business Trust* indicated that First Atlantic Bank became a public limited liability company on February 28, 2002 and was listed on the NSE on August 14, 2002 after a successful initial public offering.

"The banks business is structured along the following areas, e-banking, retail banking, structured finance, investment banking, corporate and treasury marketing" the statement said. adding that the bank currently has 53 branches, which are all linked information technology (IT) infrastructure.

It would be recalled that First Atlantic Bank signed a memorandum of understanding with three other (Guardian Express Bank Plc, Manny bank Plc and

Assurance Bank Nigeria Limited) on 10 October 2004 to form Astra Bank plc which is expected to be capable of competing with other major banks in the country.

At the completion board meeting, Wednesday in Lagos, Mr. Okey Nwosu, the managing director/CEO of the bank said that the officer is one of the strategic initiatives taken by the bank to strengthen its capital base ahead of the envisaged consolidation of the banking industry in 2005.

Why Citizens Bank's chairman was sacked-CBN

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has said the sacking of the chairman of the Citizens International Bank (CIB) Mrs. Joyce Dike Udensi Ifegwu from the board of the bank is due to serious misconduct and abuse of office.

However, the Apex bank in a statement made available to *Business Trust* signed by the deputy director, corporate affairs Mr. Tony Ede said the decision to remove the heads of the financial and international controls, Messrs Kerian Onwuzurike and Mike Sunday respectively was in line with the unsafe and unsound practices which are inimical to depositors interest.

The CBN's statement said "Citizen International bank has been sanctioned and fined N2 million for holding an unauthorized annual

general meeting (AGM), while the affected directors and officers have been warned. Other penalties and sanctions have also been imposed on the bank".

CBN said it undertook the decision in accordance with the powers conferred on it by the Bank and Other Financial Institution Act (BOFIA) of 1991 as amended.

It would be recalled that the

board of the directors of the CBN at it extraordinary meeting held on Wednesday, February 9, 2005 took the decision, stating, also, that CBN is conducting further investigations into the specific roles of the current and past managing directors/chiefs executives of the involvement in the misconducts and malpractise.



ICAN president Mrs. Mojisola Osiyemi (r) exchanges greetings with Mr. Herbert Agbebiyi, president, Association of Professionals Bodies in Nigeria, during a visit to ICAN secretariat in Lagos.

Business Trust

FG shops for N75bn to settle workers' severance package

The federal government is now shopping about N75 billion with which to settle the severance package for the 11,146 workers of the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) to be affected by the ports' concession exercise.

Chief Adebayo Sarumi, the NPA managing director, disclosed this recently in an interactive meeting held in Lagos with members of the National Economic Intelligence Committee who paid a visit to the authority to monitor budget implementation, due diligence and cost effectiveness.

It would be recalled that the commencement date of the Ports' concession exercise has been shifted for the third time. The exercise was to have started by March 2004 before it was postponed to the first quarter of this year, and further postponed to August 2005.

According to the Bureau of Public Enterprises time table, bid winners to the Apapa Ports Complex (APC) would have been notified latest January 12, 2005, for them to take full possession before the end of this quarter.

It was gathered that when the issue of N75 billion severance package was

Stories from
Adelanwa Bamgboye,
Correspondent (Lagos)

tabled before President Olusegun Obasanjo, he turned the request down, disclosing that there was no fund.

The NPA management has made it clear that it would only need 2,000 personnel to operate after the concession exercise, thereby forcing out 11,146 out of the existing 13,146 workers.

Police drag wharf 'rat' to court

A young man who was alleged to have broken into a press centre in one of the out-lets of the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), Apapa, has been dragged before an Apapa Chief Magistrate's Court.

The 21-year-old suspect, John Ajetmoshe, and others now at large, allegedly conspired on December 27, 2004, at about 0100 hours at the Apapa Port to burgle the press centre.

An offence contrary to and punishable under section 516 of the Criminal Code 42 Vol. II, laws of Lagos State.

According to the prosecutor, Sergeant Iyadi Edward, the accused persons broke into the Maritime Reporters Association of Nigeria

(MARAN) Press Centre with intention to commit felony, contrary to section 413 of the Criminal Code.

Section 413 provides that: "Any person who breaks and enters an office or building is guilty of felony, and liable to imprisonment for fourteen years."

The prosecution further alleged that the accused person and others still at large stole one bag of rice valued at N5,000; computer speaker valued at N20,000 and N70,000 cash, property of NMA, MARAN Centre contrary to section 390 (a).

Based on this, the accused was granted bail on N50,000, with two sureties while further hearing was fixed on February 14, 2005.

A member of the National Economic Intelligence Committee (NEIC), Princess Adenike Adeniran, has commended the management of the National Maritime Authority (NMA) for its potentiality in managing financial resources.

Princess Adeniran expressed this view while addressing NMA's management team shortly after she led NEIC's monitoring team to inspect the authority's record books and projects embarked upon recently.

She said that NMA's management had shown that it was possible for civil servants to judiciously utilise tax.

In her words: "the NEIC has visited several government parastatals and ministries, but what we have seen in NMA as regards financial management can be described as excellent. Transparency, integrity and commitment is evident in the way you are executing the construction of the multimillion naira National Maritime Resources Development Centre vis-à-vis the cost."

She however charged the authority's management not to relent on their efforts in maintaining the good conduct.

Responding, the acting Director General of NMA, Barrister Matthew Egbadon who doubles as the authority's legal adviser, assured the NEIC team that

NEIC commends NMA

the tempo of all achievements would be sustained.

The NEIC reference is to evaluate the level of budget implementation level of ministries and parastatals and

submit quarterly reports to President Olusegun Obasanjo.

The 14-member Committee has Professor Ibrahim Ayagi as the chairman.

Four new ports underway

The managing director of the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), Chief Adebayo Sarumi, has disclosed that four new ports are to be built on Built-Operate-and-Transfer (BOT) basis in the country alongside the concessioning efforts of the federal government in line with the ports reform programmes.

Chief Sarumi was speaking in Lagos recently during a meeting with members of the National Economic Intelligence Committee (NEIC) who paid him a visit to supervise budget implementation, due diligence and cost effectiveness of the authority.

He said that the federal government had given approval for the building of four new ports to be handled by Intels, Maersk Line and Grimald Group, while the fourth one would be located in Ondo State.

The NPA boss told members of NEIC of the

expected dividends that would accrue to the public after the concessioning of the terminal operation exercise, pointing out that it would lead to optimal and efficient services at the ports.

He noted also that although it was essential for Nigerian ports to be technologically advanced as obtainable in other parts of the world, it is a capital intensive venture involving heavy duty equipment.

Paying tribute to the federal government's Due Process programme, he said that before now, the purchasing system in the authority used to be bloated out of proportion, stressing that such wastages had been reduced to the barest minimum.

The NPA helmsman also alerted stakeholders to brace up for an era whereby ports operations would be highly automated, thus bringing about competitiveness in the sub-region.



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(Ministry of Cooperation & Integration in Africa)
The Presidency, Abuja.

A TWO-DAY NATIONAL WORKSHOP

Theme:

Technical Cooperation And Economic Integration: A Development Paradigm For Breaking The Trans-Boundary Divide in Africa.

Date: 15th and 16th February, 2005 **Venue:** Conference Hall, Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, **Time:** From 9.00 a.m. daily Airport Road, Abuja.

CHIEF HOST

Senator Lawan Gana Guba

Honourable Minister of Cooperation and Integration in Africa.

Key Note Address

His Excellency, **Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, GCON.**

Vice-President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

GOAL OF THE WORKSHOP.

The overall goal of the Workshop is to create a greater understanding and appreciation of the instrument of technical cooperation as enunciated in the vision, mandate, objectives and programs of the Directorate of Technical Cooperation in Africa and how to access them as a means of facilitating cooperation, integration and development of the African continent.

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Session Four: A Framework for Harnessing and Mobilizing the Diaspora for Africa's Development.

Target: Ministries and Parastatals, Senate and House Committee Members on Cooperation and Integration in Africa/NEPAD, African Embassies and Foreign Missions in Nigeria, Other Collaborating Organizations/Institutions, NGOs, Nigerians and Africans in Diaspora and the Nigerian Public.

All are cordially invited

For further enquiries, please contact

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Business Trust

BCC: Production resumes amidst community disturbances

At last, the privatised Benue Cement Company (BCC) in Gboko has resumed production but amidst a chair of disturbance from Mbayion, the host community.

Core shares in the cement factory was, after a prolonged impasse, sold to Dangote Industries Limited (DIL) which promised to resume production after a carefully planned effort to pay off company's workers. The effort was however, allegedly thwarted by greedy Benue indigenes who were said to have cornered a substantial part of the workers' settlement.

However, test production kick-started late January 2005, with the host community rising up with demands for which members are insisting must be met or the investor risks plunging the company in another stretch of crisis.

Daily Trust gathered that both elders and youths of the community have risen up with shopping lists ranging from community projects to monetary dues.

The elders, according to the councillor representing Ukpeke council ward where the factory is cited, Hon. Barrice Osu, are particularly worried that environmental and water pollution would constitute serious health hazards with the start of production, and are therefore

From Hir Joseph, Correspondent (Makurdi)

calling for a dialogue during which they (elders) would present their list of demands.

The councillor also passed the community's demand that the investor should resuscitate the abandoned BCC staff clinic, as he said the facility would immensely benefit the host community.

The representative said the investor should not dare think of combining with the policy of the company when it was under government ownership, saying the neglect of the host community would be faced with stiff opposition.

Equally, youths in the area have risen up with demands for monetary settlements, saying any loaded trailer leaving the factory would have to pay the sum of N4,000 as indigene due.

MTN turns pensioner, 20 others to millionaires

No fewer than twenty (20) millionaires including a 68-year-old pensioner, Mr. Gani Bolarinwa Odedare have emerged in the just-concluded MTN life is beautiful Sallah/Christmas promotions.

Odedare was one of the five persons that won N3 million being the star prize in the promotions. Other winners who have collected their N3 million cheques from MTN included Esther Evbierhurhoma, Azeeza Jamiu, both petty traders and Ajayi Francis.

"This is the work of God and I thank God for using MTN to make it possible now my dreams have come true, all thanks

By Adelanwa Bamgboye, Correspondent (Lagos)

to the best network, MTN," Odedare said as he collected his cheque during the final presentation at MTN friendship centre, Ikoyi, Lagos.

The MTN life is beautiful Sallah/Christmas promotions also made 15 subscribers instant millionaires as each of them won N1 million during the draws.

Emmanuel Ekponeyen, a security guard with ALSCON in Ikot Abasi, Akwa Ibom State who won N1 million, said it was the fulfilment of a prophecy.

Over 15,000 others also won various prizes ranging from 21inch plasma TVs set, Camcorders, DVD players, Mobile phone handsets, recharge cards and other prizes worth millions of naira.

Presenting the cheques to

The chairman, senate committee on industry, Senator Kola Ogunwale, has said that his committee opposed the privatisation of the National Fertiliser Company of Nigeria (NAFCON), Onne, embarked upon by the Bureau for Public Enterprises (BPE) despite the hope to rehabilitate the company.

A forth nightly publication, the "National Agriculture Focus" reported Senator Ogunwale (PDP, Osun) as putting the book valued of NAFCON at N97 billion, saying that everything needed for the rehabilitation

NAFCON: Senate c'tte opposes privatisation

By Hassan Idris Senior Reporter (Agriculture)

of the company was put in place.

He suggested that the fertiliser plant should be rehabilitated towards ensuring inflow of foreign exchange for the country, adding that the committee's effort towards restructuring the company for increase in fertiliser production is guaranteed and that would in

the end pay off for the country. He stressed that NAFCON as a gigantic edifice should belong to Nigeria and that should not be sold, adding that all the spare parts that are needed by the company to produce fertiliser are on ground there.

He said, "I think we should look for trustworthy Nigerian engineers that can put these things together so that we can at least start production of ammonia for exports that can earn income for the country instead to rely on petroleum alone.

He pointed out that "BPE is trying to fellow the policy of government, the senate is part of government, and BPE is to carry out the policy as decided by the executive, the senate or the judiciary."

He urged government to get good engineers to make NAFCON produce ammonia for exports.

the winners, Mr. Afam Edozie, Chief marketing and strategic officer of MTN Nigeria, said the *Life is Beautiful* promotion is about people and how MTN wishes to impact their lives positively, while adding value to its services.

He stressed that life is good when people are able to nurture and enhance

meaningful relationships.

The millionaires, who stormed the MTN centre Ikoyi, Lagos friendship centre with their relations from different parts of the country turned the premises into a carnival-live ground as they were full of praises for MTN as they collected their cheques.

Mr. Biggs, GSK joint promo ends

The national draw of Glaxosmithkline, makers of brand Lucozade/Ribena; and Mr. Biggs joint promo has finally produced five lucky winners.

According to a release signed by Femi Iraoyah, the national joint promo which commenced November last year offered consolatory prizes ranging from branded

notepads, recharge cards, exercise books, keys, rings, Silver Bird Cinema tickets, chicken wings, Xmas cakes etc. to customers.

The statement said the five lucky winners emerged, Mr. Egbe Jude of Festac Town, Lagos; Mr. and Mrs. N. Xavier of Ikosi, Lagos; Mr. Adams Clement of Agip, Port-Harcourt; Mr. Michael Orsu

of Chika-Abuja and Mr. Ajileye Muritala of Kano.

Speaking after the draws, Mrs. Adenike Adebola, the Marketing Manager, Mr. Biggs, said that the timing of the promo was deliberately designed to give back to customers as a way of saying "thank you for your patronage"

DFID: Joint wetlands livelihood project

The Department for International Development (DFID) is the UK government's department responsible for promoting development and reducing poverty through sustainable economic growth, better education, better health services, and better management of natural resources. Its Joint Wetlands Livelihood (JWL) project in Nigeria is looking to recruit a suitably qualified person to join its team combating poverty in one of the major wetlands regions in the north of the country. The successful candidate is to support the office administrator in the day-to-day administration of the Hadejia field office, Jigawa State. He or she will operate from a computerised field office in Hadejia, and will need to travel occasionally.

Minimum Qualification & Experience

1. HND in secretarial administration, business administration, accounting, or other social sciences.
2. Computer literacy, with basic working knowledge of Microsoft Office tools, particularly Word and Excel.
3. Five (5) years cognate experience and excellent references.

Competences

1. Integrity, responsibility, accountability, and commitment.
2. A team player with a pleasant personality, who gets on very well with people.
3. Ability to deal discretely with confidential matters.
4. Strong command of spoken and written English.
5. Fluency in Hausa (essential).
6. Concern for the welfare of the poor in Nigeria, and for the development of Nigeria as a whole.
7. Must be prepared to relocate to Hadejia

Remuneration

An attractive remuneration package to be negotiated according to the candidate's qualification and experience.

Selection Procedure

DFID/JWL is an equal opportunities employer and welcomes applications regardless of gender, ethnic origin religion, or political persuasion. Preference will however be given to candidates hailing from the project region.

Closing date for receipt of application is 2 weeks from the date of this advert.

To apply, please send your CV, a supporting letter, photocopies of credentials, and the names of three referees, one of whom must be a previous employer, to:

The Project Manager

DFID-JWL Project


Opposite Deputy Gov's official residence,

Yadi GRA, PMB 7098,

Dutse, Jigawa State

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Business Trust

Energy

Oil prices up as IEA sees tighter supply

Oil prices jumped yesterday as the International Energy Agency (IEA) said faster-than-expected demand and disappointing world supply growth threatened to keep the strain on world supplies.

The IEA's monthly Oil Market Report cut its forecasts for non-OPEC supply growth, especially from Russia where supply has boomed recent years.

The agency, which advises industrialized nations on energy policy also revised up its 2005 oil demand

forecast and reported a heavy fall in oil stocks during December.

US light crude was 69 cents higher at \$46.15 a barrel following the report. London Brent crude was up 69 cents at \$43.82.

Lower expectations for Russian production growth and ongoing problems in other non-OPEC producers threatens to maintain the supply strain that fueled last year's 34 percent oil price rise.

"While 2004 was characterized by surprises

in demand, 2005 has begun with changed to the expected supply," the Paris-based agency said. The IEA also revised upward world oil demand growth estimates by 80,000 bpd to 1.52 million bpd, based on a robust Chinese and South Asian outlook.

The IEA warned however of

the danger of an economic slowdown, adding: "The impact of the oil price rise over the past year has been felt and will continue to be felt in 2005."

Latest official data Wednesday had shown that crude stocks in the United States are more than 20

million barrels above year-ago levels, while inventories of gasoline were nine million barrels in surplus to last year.

Dealers said news that top exporter Saudi Arabia would maintain supplies at current levels in March had reduced the chance of an imminent cut in output by the

OPEC producers' cartel.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries is due to review production policy on March 16 in Iran. Dealers had been wary that rising supplies and any sharp fall in prices may trigger an early OPEC cut agreement by telephone.

Total backs deregulation of downstream sector

The chairman, Total Nigeria Plc, Mr. J.D. Royere has expressed his company's support for the liberation of all downstream oil activities in Nigeria.

Speaking at the official commissioning of Lekki 1 Total station at the weekend the chairman said that gesture will guarantee fairness both to oil and marketers and the public in the long term which will thrive well for the development of the country.

He disclosed that his company shall continue to work with the federal government to realise the success of the exercise.

To advance the concept of Total stations being one-stop centres for our customers," the managing director said the company has planned to introduce an ATM machine on the station this year.

He further said that the commissioning of the station is a manifestation of his company commitment to developing Nigeria's

From Mohammed Shosanya, Correspondent (Lagos)

economy as well as visible encouragement to other major marketers in the downstream sector to continuously strike to invest in the development of standard and state of the art service stations.

He said the objective of the company remain committed to his policy of investment and growth in the country.

"By 1st April 2006, Total Nigeria Plc would have operated in Nigeria for 50 years. In all these years, thus company has continued to invest in Nigeria and her economy as well as to develop able Nigerians who are today the pride of the nation," he said.

Speaking on the new service station, the managing director of the company, Mr. C. Des said it was constructed at a cost of N70 million and has a potential for over N800 million of white products.

... opens new service station

Poised to increase service delivery to its numerous customers nationwide, Total Nigeria Plc has opened a new service station at Lekki Phase 1 in Ajah, Lagos.

Speaking at the official commissioning ceremony of the station recently, managing director of the company, Mr. C. Des, hinted that the gesture is a manifestation of Total's commitment to developing the nation's economy as well as visible encouragement to other oil majors to wisely invest in the development of standard and state of the out-service stations.

He said thus is with a view to assisting the government achieve the objective of effective national distribution of products.

According to him, the new service station was constructed at a cost of N70

million and has the potential for over N800 million of white products.

He disclosed that can also boast of banjour shop, an Auto Express Tube bay and a professional car wash centre which features a vacuum cleaner.

In his own speech, the chairman of Total Nigeria Plc, Mr. J.D. Royere remarked that on station network, the company bring its international experience and competence to bear on matters such as safety and care for the environment in design and operations.

We make bold to say that our service stations we built, maintained and operated with the ultimate satisfaction of our customers in mind. From the bright and attractive colours of our logo to the traditional quality service of our personnel, we take



Governor Peter Odili of Rivers state handing over a souvenir to the managing director of Total Upstream companies in Nigeria, Mr. Jacques Marraud Des Grottes, during a courtesy call to government house, Port Harcourt.

BPE names consulting firms for EPCL privatisation

The Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) has short listed three Consulting firms for advisory work on Eleme Petrochemicals Company Limited (EPCL), preparatory to its privatisation this year. The firms are African Merchant Bank/Belgilaise Consortium, Credit Suisse First Boston/

By Hamisu Muhammad, Reporter (Business)

Foster Wheeler Consortium and FBN/Standard Bank Consortium.

A statement from the deputy director and head of BPE's Communication and Marketing Unit, Mr Adesoji Adesugba, said "BPE is yet to receive the final "No Objection" of the World Bank on the selection process..

Adesugba explained that the BPE would soon make public, name of the winner after a rigorous evaluation of the Request for Proposal (REP) sent in by the three applicants. He said the three Consulting firms were shortlisted from a list of five International and local investment banking consortia that applied for advisory job, a critical privatisation process by the BPE.

Adesugba further explained that the eventual winner would lead a consortium of multi-national firms to carry out due diligence on Eleme Petrochemicals Company, business valuation as well as assist the federal government through BPE in developing strategic options to successfully privatized Eleme Petrochemicals.

pride in the globally acknowledged. Pursuit of excellent for which our group is well known," he said.

He noted that his company remain committed to his policy of investment and growth in the country while expressing this believe that only true liberation of all downstream activities will guarantee market fairness to oil marketers and the public in the long run.

Global fleet MD bags award

The chief executive director of Global fleet oil and gas, Mr. Jimoh Ibrahim has been nominated for the 2005 prestigious Kwame Nkurumah Leadership Award an annual extent jointly organised by West African International Magazine and Dr. Kwame Nkurumah foundation in Accra, Ghana.

According to a press statement signed by Global Fleet Oil and Gas Ltd,

From Bukola Oladiji, Freelancer (Lagos)

administration manager, Mrs. Yetunde Adedoyin, Mr. Ibrahim will join other notable world personalities to receive the award on 28th April 2005 at the Accra international conference centre, Accra, Ghana.

The award ceremony which also marks the 33rd anniversary of Dr. Kwame Nkurumah will have Nobel

Laureate, Wole Soyinka as the guest speaker with other eminent speaker as chief Gani Fawehinmi and Professor Akilakpa Sawyer.

As the press release stated past recipients of Kwame Nkurumah Leadership Award includes; General Yakubu Gowon, General Abdulsalam Abubakar, President Gnassingbe of Togo, former President Jerry Rawlings, Chief Gani Fawehinmi among others.

Abuja that the project would reduce power losses in the area. Igbo said that the project currently being test run in Lagos would bring about improvement of voltage profile and loading of power transformers in major sub-stations in the state.

transformers in major sub-stations in the state.

She said that the project, known as capacitor compensation and valued at 5.5 million dollars would improve voltage at the 132KV station situated at Akangba and the 132KV sub-station at Ogba.

Other areas and sub-stations that would benefit from the project according to the spokeswoman include 33KV capacitor banks located at Ogba, Ijora, Isolo, Akoka, Ejigbo, Alausa, Alimosho and Otta.

Igbo said that the project apart from complementing the generation from the 330/132KV sub-station would act as a major boost to power supply in Lagos.

Business Trust

1ST-TIER SECURITIES

THE NIGERIAN STOCK EXCHANGE

REPORT AS AT THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2005

| COMPANY NAME | NO OF DEALS | QUOTATION(N) | QUANTITY TRADED | VALUE OF SHARES | TOP 10 TRADES YESTERDAY |
|--|--------------|--------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| AGRICULTURE/AGRO-ALLIED | | | | | SYMBOL |
| THE OKOMU OIL PALM COMPANY PLC | 14 | 16.70 | 83,889 | 1,392,708.00 | VOLUME |
| PRESCO PLC. | 12 | 12.00 | 32,500 | 379,545.30 | VALUE |
| Sector Totals | 26 | | 116,389 | 1,772,253.30 | TRADES |
| AUTOMOBILE & TYRE | | | | | UBA |
| DUNLOP NIGERIA PLC. | 33 | 2.00 | 652,647 | 1,321,858.69 | 1,253,394.00 |
| R. T. BRISCOAE PLC. | 7 | 7.22 | 61,266 | 442,340.52 | 1,322,561.00 |
| Sector Totals | 40 | | 713,913 | 1,764,199.21 | 1,394,268.00 |
| BANKING | | | | | IMB |
| ACCESS BANK PLC. | 10 | 3.42 | 102,602 | 350,898.84 | 1,649,000.00 |
| AFRIBANK NIGERIA PLC. | 9 | 6.63 | 51,138 | 339,044.94 | 2,150,024.00 |
| FIRST ATLANTIC BANK PLC | 1 | 3.41 | 633 | 2,158.53 | 2,238,564.00 |
| CHARTERED BANK PLC | 4 | 3.90 | 67,000 | 261,300.00 | 3,035,686.80 |
| COOPERATIVE BANK PLC. | 5 | 1.92 | 9,950 | 19,104.00 | 2,359,700.00 |
| FIRST BANK OF NIGERIA PLC. | 463 | 23.73 | 1,394,268 | 33,257,063.42 | 2,150,024.00 |
| FSB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC. | 42 | 1.40 | 2,150,024 | 3,035,686.80 | 2,572,984.00 |
| GUARANTY TRUST BANK PLC. | 278 | 11.66 | 2,572,984 | 30,570,423.11 | 2,651,982.00 |
| GULF BANK OF NIGERIA PLC | 31 | 0.85 | 2,359,700 | 1,944,614.34 | 4,618,518.00 |
| INTERNATIONAL MERCHANT BANK PLC. | 29 | 0.59 | 1,649,000 | 980,522.68 | |
| INLAND BANK (NIGERIA) PLC. | 1 | 1.34 | 20,000 | 26,800.00 | |
| INTERCONTINENTAL BANK PLC. | 4 | 7.81 | 2,420 | 18,900.20 | |
| LIBERTY MERCHANT BANK | 5 | 0.80 | 425,000 | 340,000.00 | |
| LION BANK OF NIGERIA PLC. | 8 | 0.70 | 185,900 | 129,921.00 | |
| MANUFACTURERS BANK NIGERIA PLC. | 33 | 1.11 | 2,651,982 | 2,917,212.36 | |
| NAL BANK PLC. | 1 | 2.80 | 200,000 | 560,000.00 | |
| OCEANIC BANK PLC | 2 | 6.05 | 53,000 | 320,650.00 | |
| OMEGA BANK (NIGERIA) PLC. | 22 | 1.55 | 927,507 | 1,427,097.45 | |
| STANDARD TRUST BANK PLC | 18 | 7.41 | 204,393 | 1,514,552.13 | |
| TRANS INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC. | 12 | 1.73 | 495,438 | 867,593.48 | |
| TRADE BANK PLC. | 4 | 1.35 | 5,833 | 7,874.55 | |
| UNITED BANK FOR AFRICA PLC. | 94 | 10.00 | 1,253,394 | 12,533,940.00 | |
| UNION BANK NIGERIA PLC. | 361 | 20.00 | 1,322,561 | 26,544,220.22 | |
| UNIVERSAL TRUST BANK PLC | 6 | 0.85 | 41,000 | 33,400.00 | |
| WEMA BANK PLC. | 19 | 3.93 | 47,626 | 187,170.18 | |
| ZENITH BANK PLC | 266 | 13.65 | 4,618,518 | 61,891,635.68 | |
| Sector Totals | 1,728 | | 22,811,871 | 180,081,783.91 | |
| BREWERIES | | | | | TOP 10 GAINERS |
| GUINNESS NIGERIA PLC. | 196 | 99.98 | 683,677 | 69,920,874.77 | SYMBOL |
| INTERNATIONAL BREWERIES PLC. | 1 | 0.90 | 44,440 | 39,996.00 | LASTCLOSE |
| NIGERIAN BREWERIES PLC. | 621 | 39.65 | 2,238,564 | 88,554,550.44 | YESTERDAYSCLOSE |
| Sector Totals | 818 | | 2,966,681 | 158,515,421.21 | CHANGE |
| BUILDING MATERIALS | | | | | TOTAL |
| ASHAKA CEMENT PLC. | 70 | 23.30 | 496,485 | 11,440,258.68 | NB |
| BENUE CEMENT COMPANY PLC. | 3 | 4.28 | 95,181 | 407,374.68 | NBC |
| CEMENT CO. OF NORTHERN NIG. PLC | 18 | 7.09 | 147,325 | 1,034,305.00 | UNIPETROL |
| NIGERIAN ROPES PLC. | 2 | 1.57 | 1,346 | 2,113.22 | 7UP |
| WEST AFR. PORTLAND CEMENT CO. PLC. | 35 | 10.51 | 156,874 | 1,708,544.24 | JBERGER |
| Sector Totals | 128 | | 897,211 | 14,592,595.82 | OKOMUOIL |
| CHEMICAL & PAINTS | | | | | ASHAKACEM |
| BERGER PAINTS PLC. | 15 | 4.94 | 180,248 | 898,415.54 | CCNN |
| CAP PLC | 7 | 7.00 | 62,067 | 434,292.66 | EVANSMED |
| D. N. MEYER PLC. | 5 | 5.35 | 12,996 | 69,528.60 | |
| NIGERIA-GERMAN CHEMICALS PLC. | 3 | 4.30 | 20,000 | 86,000.00 | |
| Sector Totals | 30 | | 275,311 | 1,488,236.80 | |
| COMPUTER & OFFICE EQUIPMENT | | | | | TOP 10 LOSERS |
| NCR (NIGERIA) PLC. | 2 | 1.30 | 1,000 | 1,300.00 | SYMBOL |
| Sector Totals | 2 | | 1,000 | 1,300.00 | LASTCLOSE |
| CONGLOMERATES | | | | | YESTERDAYSCLOSE |
| A. G. LEVENTIS NIGERIA PLC. | 4 | 1.05 | 65,500 | 68,565.00 | CHANGE |
| C F A O NIGERIA PLC. | 20 | 4.75 | 63,517 | 307,658.25 | AP |
| JOHN HOLT PLC. | 5 | 0.85 | 6,000 | 5,140.00 | MOBIL |
| UNILEVER NIGERIA PLC. | 151 | 16.39 | 746,511 | 12,276,508.04 | GUINNESS |
| P. Z. INDUSTRIES PLC. | 76 | 13.25 | 224,476 | 3,056,696.73 | NOLCHEM |
| S C O A NIGERIA PLC. | 1 | 1.19 | 1,000 | 1,190.00 | PZ |
| U.A.C. NIGERIA PLC. | 51 | 14.17 | 481,715 | 6,825,901.55 | WAPCO |
| U.T.C. NIGERIA PLC. | 5 | 1.15 | 106,000 | 116,900.00 | CFAO |
| Sector Totals | 313 | | 1,694,719 | 22,658,559.57 | UBN |
| CONSTRUCTION | | | | | BCC |
| COSTAIN (W.A.) PLC. | 2 | 0.94 | 807 | 758.58 | DELGLAS |
| JULIUS BERGER NIGERIA PLC. | 8 | 14.70 | 57,744 | 848,836.80 | |
| Sector Totals | 10 | | 58,551 | 849,595.38 | |
| ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY | | | | | |
| NIGERIAN WIRE AND CABLE PLC. | 1 | 0.92 | 7,600 | 6,992.00 | |
| Sector Totals | 1 | | 7,600 | 6,992.00 | |
| FOOD/BEVERAGES & TOBACCO | | | | | |
| 7-UP BOTTLING COMPANY PLC | 23 | 24.80 | 42,024 | 1,014,836.00 | |
| CADBURY NIGERIA PLC. | 154 | 56.99 | 252,899 | 14,408,167.16 | |
| FLOUR MILLS NIGERIA PLC. | 20 | 16.61 | 59,439 | 987,281.79 | |
| NIGERIA BOTTLING COMPANY PLC. | 74 | 55.00 | 149,025 | 8,131,900.04 | |
| NESTLE FOODS NIGERIA PLC. | 59 | 147.51 | 59,220 | 8,744,905.60 | |
| NORTHERN NIGERIA FLOUR MILLS PLC. | 2 | 15.78 | 5,380 | 84,896.40 | |
| Sector Totals | 332 | | 567,987 | 33,371,986.99 | |
| HEALTHCARE | | | | | |
| CHRISTLIEB PLC. | 1 | 0.56 | 43,998 | 24,638.88 | |
| EKOCORP PLC. | 3 | 0.79 | 21,075 | 16,649.25 | |
| EVANS MEDICAL PLC. | 8 | 3.36 | 158,500 | 518,160.00 | |
| MAY & BAKER NIGERIA PLC. | 6 | 5.55 | 22,500 | 124,775.00 | |
| NEIMETH INTERNATIONAL PHARM. PLC. | 17 | 3.66 | 115,870 | 430,774.20 | |
| GLAXOSMITHKLINE CONSUMER NIG. PLC | 22 | 8.80 | 156,420 | 1,378,507.88 | |
| Sector Totals | 57 | | 518,363 | 2,493,505.21 | |
| INDUSTRIAL/DOMESTIC PRODUCTS | | | | | |
| ALUMACO PLC. | 1 | 2.00 | 58 | 116.00 | |
| NIGERIA ENAMELWARE COMPANY PLC. | 1 | 3.40 | 1,000 | 3,400.00 | |
| FIRST ALUMINIUM NIGERIA PLC. | 11 | 1.01 | 317,010 | 302,790.70 | |
| B.O.C. GASES PLC. | 6 | 2.75 | 60,000 | 169,130.00 | |
| VITAFOAM NIGERIA PLC. | 39 | 3.50 | 585,327 | 1,970,374.53 | |
| Sector Totals | 58 | | 963,395 | 2,445,811.23 | |
| INSURANCE | | | | | |
| AICO INSURANCE PLC. | 10 | 2.15 | 25,536 | 54,601.47 | |
| CORNERSTONE INSURANCE CO. PLC. | 7 | 1.50 | 35,900 | 54,885.54 | |
| CRUSADER INSURANCE PLC. | 5 | 1.20 | 159,405 | 191,286.00 | |
| LASACO ASSURANCE PLC. | 1 | 0.83 | 3,307 | 2,744.81 | |
| LINKAGE ASSURANCE PLC | 7 | 1.81 | 171,000 | 309,510.00 | |
| N.E.M. INSURANCE CO. (NIG.) PLC. | 1 | 0.86 | 4,000 | 3,440.00 | |
| NIGER INSURANCE CO. PLC. | 5 | 3.05 | 15,754 | 47,332.48 | |
| PRESTIGE ASSURANCE PLC. | 1 | 1.97 | 5,000 | 9,850.00 | |
| ROYAL EXCHANGE ASSURANCE PLC. | 9 | 3.53 | 42,792 | 155,338.32 | |
| STANDARD ALLIANCE INSURANCE | 1 | 1.32 | 25,000 | 33,000.00 | |
| UNIC INSURANCE PLC. | 8 | 1.12 | 105,412 | 121,009.20 | |
| WEST AFRICAN PROV. INS. COY. PLC. | 14 | 2.39 | 179,318 | 433,619.56 | |
| Sector Totals | 69 | | 772,424 | 1,416,617.38 | |
| MANAGED FUNDS | | | | | |
| C & I LEASING PLC. | 4 | 1.55 | 35,000 | 54,250.00 | |
| Sector Totals | 4 | | 35,000 | 54,250.00 | |
| PACKAGING | | | | | |
| AVON CROWNCAPS & CONTAINERS PLC. | 2 | 1.15 | 50,000 | 57,500.00 | |
| NAMPAK NIGERIA PLC | 1 | 1.52 | 2,000 | 3,040.00 | |
| BETA GLASS COMPANY PLC. | 1 | 4.50 | 20,000 | 90,000.00 | |
| POLY PRODUCTS (NIGERIA) PLC. | 7 | 0.96 | 143,000 | 134,739.92 | |
| Sector Totals | 11 | | 215,000 | 285,279.92 | |
| PETROLEUM(MARKETING) | | | | | |
| AFROIL PLC. | 6 | 0.85 | 87,450 | 73,820.50 | |
| AFRICAN PETROLEUM PLC. | 129 | 62.00 | 231,167 | 14,617,523.07 | |
| ETERNA OIL & GAS PLC. | 10 | 2.04 | 50,655 | 103,336.20 | |
| MOBIL OIL NIGERIA PLC. | 30 | 180.76 | 20,819 | 3,801,876.86 | |
| CONOIL PLC. | 93 | 120.00 | 134,757 | 16,351,737.38 | |
| TEXACO (NIGERIA) PLC. | 27 | 163.89 | 13,880 | 2,244,591.70 | |
| TOTAL NIGERIA PLC | 30 | 181.80 | 27,972 | 5,038,760.75 | |
| OANDO PLC. | 172 | 91.10 | 219,872 | 20,024,064.15 | |
| Sector Totals | 497 | | 786,572 | 62,255,710.61 | |
| PRINTING & PUBLISHING | | | | | |
| UNIVERSITY PRESS PLC. | 2 | 1.65 | 15,000 | 24,750.00 | |
| Sector Totals | 2 | | 15,000 | 24,750.00 | |
| REAL ESTATE | | | | | |
| UACN PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT PLC. | 43 | 8.71 | 384,730 | 3,379,094.10 | |
| Sector Totals | 43 | | 384,730 | 3,379,094.10 | |
| Overall Totals | | 4,169 | 33,801,717 | 487,457,942.64 | |

Philippine oil companies

overcharge consumers -Report

A Philippine independent think tank said on Tuesday that the country's oil companies overcharged consumers with overpriced petroleum products.

The companies overcharge by around 1.73 pesos (0.03 U.S. dollar) per litre from January to September last year, the local television network ABS-CBN News reported.

The IBON Foundation said despite the continuing volatility of world petroleum prices, oil firms could still afford not to raise local pump prices if only to offset the overpricing.

"On the average, retail prices have already increased by 3.77 pesos (0.068 U.S. dollar) per litre for the first nine months of 2004. But IBON estimates that the ideal adjustment should have only been about 2.04 pesos (0.038 U.S. dollar) per litre during the same period," the statement said.

IBON said its estimate is even "very conservative." It pointed out the calculation assumes that posted world prices reflect the true cost of oil, which is not the case.

"Dubai crude, for instance, is overpriced by around 20 US dollars per barrel in the world market," IBON added.

IBON said its recent study shows crude oil exploration and production costs may be as low as 15 to 17 U.S. dollars per barrel in the world market.

"Spot prices, on the other hand, range from 38 to 52 US dollars per barrel in October. Such disparity is not as a result of a widening gap between actual supply and demand, but due to the combined impact of price manipulation of the largest oil companies in the world as well as aggressive market speculation," it explained.

Agu is still NMA's DG -Minister

The Minister of Transport, Dr Abiye Sekibo, yesterday in Abuja debunked reports making the rounds that the Director-General of the Nigerian Maritime Authority (NMA), Mr Ferdinand Agu has been removed.

"As I am talking to you now, Ferdinand Agu remains the director-general of the NMA, he has not been removed from office as reported by some newspapers," the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) quotes Sekibo as saying.

He said that he was surprised to read in some dailies that Agu was sacked and the transport ministry had confirmed it, saying "it is a blatant lie and there is no iota of truth in it".

According to him: "It is also a rumour and government does not deal with rumour mongering", adding that the report was planted to ridicule the director-general and the federal government.

He advised journalists to always cross-check their stories before going to the press, noting that "yellow journalism will not augur well for the growth and development of the country".

NAN reports that Agu, an architect, was appointed head of the foremost maritime agency in 2001 and re-appointed last year after a four year term.

He was reputed to have introduced sweeping changes to the maritime industry, including the facilitation of the enactment of the Nigerian Coastal and Inland Shipping Act, otherwise known as the Cabotage Law.

Indomie

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HOW YOUR SCHOOL CAN WIN

Promo Mechanics:

Schools have to collect Indomie pack wrappers from pupils/students and submit to De United Food Industries Ltd.

Category D

Schools with 15,000 - 29,999 wrappers.

1 Microscope or TV and 5 cartons of Indomie.

Category A

Schools with 60,000 wrapper & above.

2 Computers, 2 Printers, and 5 cartons of Indomie.

Category B

Schools with 10,000 - 14,999 wrappers.

1 Public Address System and 5 cartons of Indomie.

Category C

Schools with 45,000 - 59,999 wrappers.

1 Computer, Printer and 5 cartons of Indomie.

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Schools with 5,000 - 9,999 wrappers.

10 cartons of Indomie.

Category E

Schools with 30,000 - 44,999 wrappers.

1 Computer or Generator and 5 cartons of Indomie.



Promo is open to Abuja schools only.
Lasts from February 14 - April 8, 2005.

Indomie
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EURO

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SHAKE HANDS WITH MICKEY MOUSE!
DANCE WITH PINK PANTHER!
SING WITH SCOOBY DOO!

HOW TO WIN:

Each pupil must collect at least 10 Indomie wrappers every week.

- Top four (4) pupil/student collectors at the end of week 2 shall be rewarded with Indomie lunch pack containing different combinations of coolers, exercise books and biros.
- At the end of week 4 of the promotion there shall be a raffle draw for all pupils/student with a minimum cumulative collection of 40 wrappers. Eight (8) lucky pupils/students shall win instant gifts of Indomie lunch packs.

- Wrapper collection continues from week 5 till end of the promotion.

END OF PROMO

Grand Finale with over 500 pupils/students selected around Abuja via raffle draw to win any of these gift items.

1016 WINNERS emerged from LAGOS. Now in ABUJA how many more joins the winning train?

10 computers

25 bicycles

400 cameras

100 cassette players

2,500 cartons of Indomie



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Promo open to Abuja schools only.

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Tastes Great ... Can't say No

THE HOMIE FRONT

FRAGMENTS

By Safiya I. Dantiye, Woman Editor
safiyaadantive@yahoo.com

Between love, food and clothes

It is the responsibility of a husband to provide food, clothes and shelter for his wife and at a glance if these things are provided, in the event of any misunderstanding between a couple, the wife is reprimanded and admonished, that since the husband provides her with these basic needs she should be more tolerant.

As a result of this, many women suffer in silence, because not all their problems have to do with lack of food and clothes or even an expensive perfume.

Important as food is, its provision is not what usually holds a marriage together, but love which is the basis of the marriage in the first place.

It is interesting that a man who has sympathy for women told me that if only husbands would show love and care for their wives, then women would not suffer from a lot of ailments.

When I kept quiet contemplating what he said, he explained further. "Men don't seem to bother to find out about women, taking them for granted, and assuming wrongly that since they've married the women, they don't need any more attention. And this affects the women."

I told him that parents and everybody feel that a woman ought not to complain of her marriage, if the husband provides food and clothes for her.

"That is nonsense, because wasn't she eating food and wearing clothes before you married her?" He dismissed.

This brings the crucial question of why do women get married. Is it for love (reproduction of the human race), or to get somebody to feed them and clothe them?

I recall many years ago, my sister-in-law said to me that the reason people got married was to have children, insisting that because in your parents' house you will have food and clothes, but not children.

In any case, as the man above implied, anybody will have food to eat since God has created him. And based on his need for food to live, God will provide that food for him. Thereafter as much as important food is, it should not be used to hold women to ransom, so to speak. Infact love should be, but certainly not food!

I mean I have never seen a married man suffer from lack of love from his wife. But from the outset, a woman is at a disadvantage, being a 'liability' on another person. And if the man refuses to be kind and affectionate, she loses her confidence and gets assailed by disturbing thoughts.

That was why I disagreed with my colleague who insisted that in marriage it was the husband who was more tolerant than the wife, because he was responsible for providing food and clothes for her.

"If a man tells me that since he feeds and clothes me that is why he is being tolerant (patient?) in living with me, I will leave him, because that is an insult. After all any man worth his salt and if he can afford to, can feed and clothe his household without qualms. So why should providing these things for me be a big deal? And certainly men shouldn't throw that at our face" I retorted.

Another man intervened and said "let's be frank, it is not always the men that are patient, the women too are patient. By the way, didn't you go and sought for her hand in marriage? And was she not eating food before you married her?"

Another man once told me that women could be very simple because they didn't have a hard heart. So if you were kind and caring to your wife she would be happy and overlook some of your lapses.

Some may argue that men too need love so why the focus on women? This is because since men are the providers of food and clothes, they are the 'providers' of love too. Besides they enticed you to marry them through that love. So it may not be wrong to assume that women need love more than the men.

I mean I have never seen a married man suffer from lack of love from his wife. But from the outset, a woman is at a disadvantage, being a 'liability' on another person. And if the man refuses to be kind and affectionate, she loses her confidence and gets assailed by disturbing thoughts.

Some women react in a negative way; by neglecting to take care of themselves, after all the men don't spare them a second glance, let alone an affectionate word. And in turn they will be blamed for becoming lousy, since their husbands provide food and fine clothes for them.

This is not by any means saying that food is not important or a man should not provide clothes for his wife, but just to show love and affection to her. She cannot live on love alone, but why can't the men balance them? Who knows that man may be telling the truth by saying that love could cure many women's ailments.

Church assists mentally handicapped children in Zaria

The Bethel Global Outreach Ministries in Zaria has made cash and kind donations to mentally handicapped children at the Bett-torrey Home Zaria.

Presenting the donation which is meant for the upkeep and welfare of the inmates of the home, to Mr. Yusuf Audu, one of its custodians, the general overseer of the church, Pastor J.A. Onalapo said the gesture was part of the church's annual events and contributions to the less privileged members of the society.

The church's five-man delegation which expressed deep affection for the inmates, commended efforts of the

From Waziri Isa Gwantu,
Correspondent (Zaria)

workers for looking after the handicapped in the same way as they look after their biological children.

The church which tagged the programme "Bearing one another's burden," also organized special prayers for both staff and inmates of the home.

Commenting on the donation on behalf of the beneficiaries and staff of the orphanage home, Mr. Yusuf Audu paid glowing tribute to the church and thanked the general overseer for such rare humanitarian gesture.

He called on the church

not to relent in its efforts in showing practical love and affection to the less privileged in the society irrespective of their ethnic, religious and social background.

Mr. Audu also enjoined

the affluent in the country and religious organizations to emulate the good gesture of Bethel Bible Church by using their resources judiciously in taking care of the less privileged, noting that such efforts do not go unrewarded.



Mrs Esther Mangzha, director general, national center for women development

DG decries women's marginalization

The director-general of the National Centre for Women Development, Abuja, Mrs. Esther Mangzha has expressed dismay over the nomination of women to the proposed national political reform conference.

Mrs. Mangzha made the expression in a press statement made available to *The Homefront* yesterday.

She said "women who constitute half of the nations' population are not happy with the development."

She added "so far only two states, Akwa Ibom and Jigawa have nominated one woman each."

She appealed to state governments to consider women in their submissions for ensuring gender equity and fairness in the country.

The director general

By Kanu Ndidiamaka,
(Intern)

called on state governments, particularly those that are yet to submit their nominees, to give women opportunity to participate in shaping the future of their country.

Anambra to assist FIDA's delegation to Beijing conference

Anambra State governor, Dr. Chris Ngige has assured government's resolve to assist women delegation to the forthcoming United Nations Beijing Conference in the United States of America, even as he elugised the women lawyers association in the state.

Ngige made the remark

From Beatrice Onuchukwu,
Correspondent (Awka)

last week while receiving a delegation of International Federation of women lawyers (FIDA), Anambra State chapter, who paid him a courtesy call at the Government Lodge, Awka.

"Government has concluded arrangements to assist FIDA, particularly funding representatives to New York in USA for the Beijing conference this year," he said, adding that government would support other programmes initiated by the association.

Ngige who also restated government's resolve to embark on projects that would benefit Anambra citizens especially women and children counseled FIDA to explore ways of co-opting corporate organisations to assist in financing their projects.

He commended the women lawyers for embarking on such a visit to show support and solidarity to the government, adding that they had laid the foundation as partners in progress in the march towards development and progress.

He further urged FIDA and other stakeholders to use their position as mothers to bring sanity in the judicial system, which according to

him had suffered some setback due to incessant strikes by judicial worker

Earlier in her address, chairperson of FIDA, in Anambra, Mrs. Ugo Ezekwen had called for a massive attack to the HIV/AIDS scourge which she said was raving people in the state.

"We advocate for an aggressive programme to combat spread of HIV/AIDS scourge now fast spreading amongst our youth and the general populace," Mrs. Ezekwen said.

Mrs. Ezekwen who is a magistrate stated that FIDA had come to show support and appreciation to the governor for all his efforts to transform Anambra State which "we can see from the massive development of infrastructure and people oriented programmes such as network of quality roads, prompt and regular payment of salaries and pensions and the ability to restrain the citizens from reacting violently when hoodlums attacked and destroyed government's property."

The chairperson had also appealed for government's assistance to enable its members send delegates to the forthcoming United Nations Beijing Conference slated to hold in New York, USA this year.

Former minister extols family unit

Negative attributes bequeathed by parents would ultimately contribute negatively to the social development of the nation. This warning was made by the former minister of science and technology, Dr. Sam Momoh at the couple of the award ceremony organized by Fountain Counselling service in Abuja within the week.

In a paper he presented at the occasion entitled "a nation is as happy as its families," Dr. Sam Momoh called on parents to be of good morals, so that their children could copy a worthy perception of life, adding that for a country to be peaceful and to record the desired political and socio-economic development, the family as the smallest unit of a nation

By Emeahara Nkechi Hope,
(Intern)

needed to be brought up in an orderly and peaceful manner.

He also observed that situations had forced mothers, who previously were the building force in the home front to be actively involved in policies and various careers which inadvertently prevented them from carrying out their statutory roles as mothers.

The former minister further likened a family to a group of patriotic citizens with like minds and could make things happen in the best interest of the nation, while calling on Nigerians to put the interest of the country first for rapid socio-economic development of the country.

THE HOME FRONT

Minister wants reproductive health given priority

The Minister of State for Health, Princess Olufunke Adedoyin, stressed the need for sexual and reproductive health to be given priority attention in the nation's policies.

Adedoyin gave the indication yesterday in Abuja at a meeting with 14 states health commissioners to revise the 2005 work and procurement plan in line with Millennium Development Goals (MDG) frame work.

He urged participants to focus more on activities that

would improve maternal health and reduce child mortality in the country.

"I urge you to promote reproductive health in your work plan and ensure that sexual and reproductive health is given the utmost priority in all development and poverty reduction debates and policies," he said.

The minister further charged the state commissioners to develop capacity building in emergency obstetric care, life saving skills, community health workers

provision and training.

She also wants an improvement in the procurement of medical equipment and drugs, community mobilization and various studies, and rehabilitation of health facilities in the nation's health centres.

"The nation's health system is too fragile and fragmented to deliver the required volume and quality

of services to those in need," she noted.

Earlier, the director of planning and research in the ministry, Dr. Shehu Sule, had called for cost effective intervention that would have impact on major causes of diseases through integrated care.

"Despite the change in demographic and epide-

miological profile, the 10 causes of morbidity and mortality has not changed significantly in the last three decades and since Alma Ata declaration of 1978 and HFA by 2000 which has eluded us," he said.

Sule said that there was need for more effective partnership with multilateral and bilateral donor agencies

since there was always a gap between financial means and financial needs in the country's health care intervention programme.

"This meeting should provide the catalyst to further explore ways and means of providing the best intervention to the silent poor who most need the services," he said.

Commissioner urges governments to invest in girl child education

The Anambra Commissioner for Women Affairs, Mrs. Nnoye Nwangwu, has called on governments at all levels to invest in girl child education to ensure a bright future for the nation.

Nwangwu told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Awka today that "though girls out-number boys in our schools at the moment, girls still have several hurdles to cross in their quest to get good education".

"We are aware that the number of girls in our schools out-number the boys, but we are still saying that the education of the girl child is still obstructed by early marriage and other societal constraints," she said.

"I am happy that President Olusegun Obasanjo has found wisdom in appointing Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Dr. Dora Akunyili, Mrs. Remi Oyo and Dr Oby Ezekwesili to work in his cabinet," she said.

She said the appointment of these women into sensitive government positions showed the importance of girl child education and a realisation of the genuine loyalty and commitment inherent in women.

The commissioner said if government at all levels ensured that one quarter of those appointed into sensitive positions were women, corruption and ineptitude would be a thing of the past.

"I am happy to note that the Anambra State government has recognised the importance of women and it has promised to appoint more women in decision-making organs in the state," she said.

She added that if women were appointed into positions where they would be part of

policy making and implementation, the nation's programmes would be fully implemented.

Nwangwu stressed that given the high degree of commitment and dedication by women to national assignments, they would in no distant time help in raising the status of the nation and also take the nation to greater heights.



Minister of State Finance, Mrs. Nenadi Usman and her education counterpart Hajiya Bintu Musa during the FEC meeting held at the State House, Abuja... Wednesday.

Pix: Joe Oroye.

World confab on women: Task before Nigeria's delegation

By Abubakar Haruna,
Reporter (Women Desk)

The country's delegation under the leadership of the Minister of Women Affairs, Obong Rita Akpan to the world conference on women scheduled to take place from February 28 to March 11, this year in New York, the United States of America (USA) has a great task before it in portraying the good image of this country.

The forthcoming conference, which expects various women delegations from over 183 countries across the world, will commemorate the ten-year anniversary of the fourth world conference on women in Beijing in 1995 and the adoption of the Beijing declaration and platform of action. It is also the thirteenth anniversary of the first world conference on women held in Mexico in 1975.

The 49th session of the conference will be a regular session and will provide women the opportunity to assess government's implementation of the Beijing platform. It will also give voice to issues important to

women, to unite them for common agenda for peace, human rights and social justice across the globe and to push for women's full equality at the United Nations and in local, national, regional and global processes.

Though the names of the members of the Nigerian delegation were not specified but the agenda of the conference issued by the ministry of women affairs indicated that they could include the minister of women affairs, minister of finance, heads of national machineries for women, women's/gender equality commissions, parliamentary caucuses and non governmental organizations (NGO) groups and networks.

To that effect, there are broad argument over the actual number of the delegates and who will be sponsored by government, as well as the actual number of the non governmental organizations (NGO), to

participate in the conference. However, there are strong indications that more people will be sponsored by government at various levels. Recently, the Anambra State governor, Dr. Chris Ngige, assured that his government would sponsor more women in the state to participate in the conference.

The confusion and misunderstanding that bedevilled the last Beijing conference will remain indelible in the minds of women, coupled with the alleged embezzlement of public funds without achieving the main objective of the conference.

Though the minister of women affairs announced that plans had been put in place to avoid "mistakes" during the forthcoming US conference, it is imperative to mention here that a lot need to be done to shun any act that could tarnish the image of the country.

The Nigerian delegation has a great task to make good contribution during the conference and participate in the various discussions of

women advancement which include, the review of the implementation of the Beijing platform for action, the outcome documents of the special session of the general assembly entitled "Women 2000" the current challenge and forward looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women in the world.

Similarly, some people have become sceptical over the credibility of the Nigerian delegations due to the fact that most of them participated in the last Beijing conference, and nothing good would come out for the betterment of the teaming women in the country.

The delegation has another task in convincing the world on how far Nigeria has gone in implementing the Beijing platform for action which concentrated on some key issues identified as representing a fundamental obstacle to the advancement of the majority of women in the country.

These key issues include: women's health, media, violence against women, qualitative education for women and poverty etc.

Another challenge still facing our delegations to ensure that the two high level round-table and seven high level panels held in favour of Nigerian women at the grass root level.

After the conference, government should organize a workshop to appraise Nigeria's participation at the conference and to develop a national platform for action in line with the United States platform for action.

This intensive workshop will attract full and active participation of the cross section of Nigerian women, experts and practitioners in the area of women development consequently, in order to consolidate the achievement or the gains of the United States conference, the government should design a programme through her technical committee to address the major critical areas of concern of the US conference.

THE HOME FRONT

'Girls should be enrolled in school' – Binta Masari

Hajiya Binta Aminu Bello Masari was born in Katsina at Kofar soro in 1978, she had her primary and secondary education in Katsina.

In this interview with Safiya I. Dantiye, she talked on her proposed pet project and about her visit to VVF center in Katsina State. She also talked on pressing issues like how to curb prostitution, to improve girl-child education, (how) to reduce the culture of hawking among others.

Excerpts:-

Who is your role model, either a man or a woman whose ideals, ideologies, way of life you like to emulate?

Why, my husband of course. My husband is my role model, as I believe a wife should try to be one with her husband by taking to all his finer points, and frankly speaking my husband has many. Wives should try to emulate their husbands because in the course of living with him she ought to find a particular habit in him that is good for her to emulate. So for me, my husband is definitely my role model.

Does your husband's work affect your social life?

Frankly speaking, that is only to be expected because we are talking about the office of the number four citizen in the land. It can be very tough, because most times he is under pressure and I try to understand and appreciate his position. Because if a man is under pressure or has a very demanding job, you cannot expect him to be all smiles everytime he comes home. So rather than complain and nag I try to make him feel relaxed by talking to him and offering advises where necessary. I call on women to do likewise.

The nature of his work really affects my social life, because I have to get involved. For example if people come to see him, sometimes I have to take them to see him. Also sometimes I try to do what I could for the people, without even him knowing it.

In what ways do you contribute in helping your husband with his demanding job?

My contribution is by advising him, by not complaining, by encouraging him, by attending to some engagements that he may not have the time to attend.

During the recent Eid-el-Kabir you visited the VVF hospital in Katsina, what has inspired you to go and see the patients?

The nature of their illness is heart rendering which is developed by prolonged obstructed labour. That is

why people in the rural areas suffer it more, as they are far away from health facilities, while some may insist to give birth at home.

Wealthy people should assist them as most of them are very poor with nobody to cater for their basic needs. Their plight is even more pathetic in view of the fact that a lot of them do not get the attention of their husband and/or family. In other words, they are abandoned by those that are supposed to be close and dear to them in their hour of need.

Apart from offering them money and items, in what ways do you think these patients can be further helped?

The best way is to establish skill acquisition centers in such hospitals, where the in-patients can learn sewing, knitting, soap making and such like trade. It is better for them and the society if they learn skills to take care of their needs, because if you give them money, they will spend it and it ends there, but if they are skilled, they can always use that skill to earn money to take care of their daily needs.

Do you have an NGO or belong to one whose goal is the upliftment of women and children?

Right now I don't have an NGO, but I have a plan to form one soon. The main objective is the economic empowerment of women, where even if they stay at home they can have something doing to help themselves and their families.

Besides, it will give them a sense of worth.

Prostitution is an old



Hajiya Binta Masari

social vice, young women come to Abuja to engage in it regardless of the reality of HIV/AIDS. How do you think this menace can be curtailed especially as it affects us women, and it erodes our dignity?

Prostitution is a very

disheartening thing. And no matter what, religious leaders have a very important role to play in the crusade against prostitution. They should redouble their seriousness and preaching against the vice. And parents should try as much as possible to inculcate good behaviour in their children.

On the other hand some are instigated by poverty, for example, you'll see a man with about five grown up daughters, and he doesn't

All the same, parents can never be exonerated from blame, and there is no excuse enough for prostitution. As you've said it is an old vice and therefore it cannot be stopped overnight, especially nowadays where children easily get access to pornography through the Internet and by watching films, so it is a herculean task.

Apart from formal education, young girls should be trained in acquisition of skills, where

The men too should be cautioned, because if they don't patronize them the prostitutes will eventually stop doing the 'business'. And the men get infections and infect their innocent wives at home.

Poor girl child education, hawking and begging are the bane of the north, what would you suggest in solving these problems?

The most important thing is for girls to be enrolled in school. And to reduce the level of hawking, parents should sell their items from home, or get involved in trade such as sewing and knitting. So I call on men to help their wives in forming home-based business, so that the girls will not have to hawk, which is another way that makes these girls to become wayword.

On the issue of the *almajiri*, the government, wealthy people and corporate bodies should be involved by helping to feed them.

And that they should be assisted like other formal schools, especially by teaching them vocational skills in order to be able to sustain themselves and reduce being a burden on their community.

What advice do you have for women, being the managers of the home front and who take care of the children?

They should be good to their husbands and offer them good advice. As managers of the home, they should take good care of their house and instill good behaviour in their children. Because if children are not well trained they become nuisance to the society and bring heartache to the parents, especially to the mothers.

Days of idleness are over, even if you don't go to work, learn some skills to do at home. It is better to have something doing, you can help yourself, your husband and your children and the society at large.

"All the same, parents can never be exonerated from blame, and there is no excuse enough for prostitution. As you've said it is an old vice and therefore it cannot be stopped overnight, especially nowadays where children easily get access to pornography through the Internet and by watching films, so it is a herculean task."

News

National Health Insurance Scheme kicks off May 29

The much talked about National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) will kick off nationwide on May 29 this year just as the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) gives its full support to the health scheme, the Executive Secretary, Dr.

From Dele Ogunyemi, Freelancer (Ibadan)

Muhammed Mustapha Lekky, said at Ibadan on Wednesday at an interactive meeting of NHIS with stakeholders by the trade union movement led by the NLC President, Mr. Adams Oshiomole.

According to the Nigerian Labour Congress, this would go a long way in checkmating the poverty raving the masses if well implemented.

Labour however cautioned that the management of the National Insurance Health Scheme should be scrupulously pursued so as not to go the way of other schemes, such as the highly detested housing scheme.

While announcing the May 29 take off date of the NHIS, the executive secretary announced that the employees would be made to the scheme to contribute 5 per cent of their salaries to the scheme benefit.

Comrade Oshiomole appreciated the need for health insurance for Nigerian workers, assuring that the NLC would support the scheme most dispassionately.



Musa Mohammed, Minister of State Transport, Minister of State Finance Mrs. Nenadi Usman, Minister of Inter Government Affairs Mr. Frank Nweke and Alhaji Saleh Shehu Minister of State, Works during the FEC meeting, held at the state house Abuja...recently

Pix: joe Oroye

Ibibio Patriach calls for closer ties

From Edet Ekanem, Freelancer (Uyo)

Ibibio sons and daughters within and in diaspora have been challenged to the development and sustenance of Ibibio heritage in order to restore their lost glory.

The Patriach of Ibibio and the Chairman of Akwa Esop Imo Isong Ibibio, Ntisong Sebestain Umoren who made the call on Wednesday during the formal inauguration of sub-committees for the Ibibio conference coming up on February 26, this year, stated that the conference will be the first ever for the sons of Ibibio to pursue common front towards the unity of the tribe as the fourth largest ethnic group in Nigeria.

He announced that during the occasion, funds will be raised to build Asan Ibibio (the highest traditional Ibibio palace).

Also, speaking, the Chairman of the organisation committee, Chief Engr. Udo Mbozo, lamented that Ibibios have refused to maintain their glory given them by God by their failure to identify with the Ibibio Union over the years.

Chief Mbozo decried a situation where a piece of land was acquired for the building of the Asian Ibibio but because of their reluctance for togetherness, no development was actualised.

He said the committee has worked out plans to successfully launch N25 million as estimated cost for the building of the palace on the said date.

FG sets up agro-aviation wing against pests

By Hassan Idris, Agric Reporter

In a bid to check pests and locust invasion on agricultural fields in the country, the federal government has set up an agro-aviation department to fight the menace.

The Minister of Agriculture, Malam Adamu Bello, who made this known at a news forum in Abuja, said

that the new department with its base in Kaduna had already been fitted with the necessary aviation facilities.

He said that government decided to establish the agro-aviation wing in order to deal with the huge losses incurred due to pests and infections on agricultural products annually.

He said, "Before the end of the year, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture will have an agro-aviation department with full complement of four aircraft and a hangar in Kaduna, which is our base station".

He said that when it takes off, the agro-aviation outfit

would address the problems of Quelea birds, grasshoppers, locusts and other parasites affecting farming activities in parts of the country.

According to him, "the building for the hangar has been completed, while one of the aircraft that will be used for aerial surveillance and spraying of pesticides and other chemicals against the pests has been delivered".

The minister also disclosed that the ministry is currently training the pilots and other crew members as well as staff of the new department to enable them carry their duties.

Dariye tasks NIPSS on political reform

From Rakiyya A. Muhammed, Correspondent Jos

The Plateau State Governor, Chief Joshua Dariye, has challenged the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) to champion the political reforms in the country.

Dariye who gave the charge when the participants of the senior executive course 27 paid him a courtesy visit at the Government House, Jos, on Wednesday said the new set of participants should work towards recommendations that would enhance current policy reforms in the country.

He said as participants in the nation's highest decision making institute, Nigerians expect much from them in the reformation process.

Governor Dariye however commended the institute for its contribution to the nation even as he pledged the state

support to the institute.

He disclosed that the academic work for the senior executive course 27 which has 43 participants would be for 10 months.

The participants, include individuals from various fields such as military, academics, organised private sector, government among others.

government readiness to assist the institute in the task of fashioning out policy for good governance.

The Director-General of NIPSS, Major General Martins Osahor (rtd), earlier in an address commended the Plateau State governor for its

Gombe councils get township roads

From Muhammad Abubakar, Correspondent Gombe

The Gombe State government is to spend over N1.6 billion for the construction of 19 township roads in four of its local government councils.

Speaking at a ceremony to flag off the construction of four roads in the first phase

of the project in Billiri local government council, Governor Mohammed Danjuma Goje said he was fulfilling part of his campaign promises of ensuring even development in the state.

The construction of the four township roads awarded to Eighteenth Engineering company limited (EEC) at the cost of N362, 073, 502: 35 is to be completed within seven months.

The roads are that of local government secretariat-market roundabout, market roundabout-Filiya road with spur to general hospital, market roundabout towards Poshiya-but a very short distance of 1/2km and that of market roundabout by the western side of Wazin's house through Larobit road up to main road coming from the local government secretariat to the market.

Other local government councils to benefit from this project include Akko Dukku

L G awards contract for Bida motor park construction

Contract valued at about N20.4 million has been awarded by the Bida local government council for the construction of the Bida motor park.

Conducting the chairman of the council and newsmen round the construction site, the Chief Executive of De Mahmud Global Engineering Limited, the firm handling the project, Alhaji AB Mahmud (Dangaladiman Nupe), promised that the job will be executed according to specifications.

He also promised that before the commencement of the rainy season, the motor park will be completed and handed over to the council.

The contractor explained that the job includes the surface dressing of the entire motor park estimated at about 3,000 square metres to be surrounded by drainages and culverts. The project is being supervised by the head of department in charge of works, Engineer Musa L.T.

In his comments after inspecting the progress of

the Bida local government, Malam Mustapha Edota, said the council had to embark on the project in order to provide the ancient city of Bida with a standard motor park comparable to any that can be found in other parts of the country.

The chairman disclosed that the contract was awarded in November 2004 with a delivery period of six months.

However, after three months at the site, the project he said has reached about 80% completion.



Thousands of motor cycles procured and distributed to thousands of beneficiaries, by the Borno state

News

"Inability to access funds, bane of SMEs"

The inability of SME operators to access the Small and Medium Enterprises Equity Investment Scheme fund is responsible for the low contribution of the sub-sector to the nation's economic development. The Chairman, Nigerian Association of Small Scale Industrialists (NASSI), Abuja chapter, Mr Josiah Ijeoma, made the observation in a chat with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Abuja.

Ijeoma said that the inability of SME operators to access relevant industrial funds has affected their efforts to bridge the gap created by the recent ban on some imported items by government.

NAN recalls that the committee of bankers in Nigeria in 1999 in appreciation of government economic reforms decided to set aside 10 per cent profit before tax to assist SME development in the country.

The fund known as the SMEIS which has since grown to over N10 billion has not been easily accessible to SME operators due to stringent measures adopted by the bankers.

Ijeoma regretted that large scale industrialists were the ones benefiting from the various industrial funds while attempts by small scale operators were being subjected to unnecessary protocols.

"In the FCT, no SME operator has benefited from any credit facility while large scale operators that are not contributing anything in areas of jobs are given preference by the banks," he added.

He said that SME operators in the country were in better position to implement government poverty eradication programme based on their wealth and job creation potentials.

He said that the association has planned a lot of programmes involving training and skill acquisition and expositions that would en-

gage youths and make them contribute meaningfully to the society.

He urged government to articulate policies that would compel all-tiers of government and the organised private sector to give priority attention to the development of SMEs.

The chairman also called on government to establish a committee on technology transfer incorporating SME operators to enable them have first hand knowledge of any technology imported into the country.

Mr Kanu Agabi, the Presidential Adviser on Ethics and Good Governance, says the country's law enforcement machinery is ill-equipped to tackle high-level corruption.

"The level of corruption is very deep; and unless the law enforcement machinery is strengthened, the fight against corruption in the country will have limited success," Agabi said in Ikeja recently.

Fielding questions from newsmen at a workshop on corruption, he however, lauded the Obasanjo administration for some successes recorded in the fight against the scourge.

Law enforcers ill-equipped to fight corruption -Agabi

The workshop was organised by the Lagos State House of Assembly and the Transparency and Anti-Corruption Campaign International.

"We are dealing with a high level of corruption which has developed over the years of military rule," Agabi said.

The former justice minister disagreed that the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences commission was a "toothless bulldog", stressing that the

body is actually making impact in the fight against corruption. "We have several judges and senior advocates on trial and such has never happened before."

Agabi called for institutional checks to prevent corrupt practices by political office-holders.

He, however, called for sincerity by the leaders and citizens in prosecuting the war against the scourge, saying the people should speak against corruption rather than turn a blind eye.

Agabi lauded the Lagos State House of Assembly for organising the workshop and urged the executive arm of government to take a cue from it to strengthen the fight against corruption.

FG restates commitment to Cocoa restoration

From Dele Ogunyemi Stringer, Ibadan

The federal government has reiterated its determination to restore the lost glory of cocoa production in Nigeria with a view to making it a feasible alternative to crude oil in foreign exchange earning for the nation.

The Minister of Agriculture, Mallam Adamu Bello, disclosed this at the opening of the national cocoa rebirth exhibition in Ibadan recently that government has been working assiduously to increase, cocoa production in the country from 170,000 metric tonnes per annum presently to 600,000 tonnes per annum in the long run.

"The thrust of the intervention is to increase cocoa production from 170,000 metric tonnes (in 2001) to 320,000 tonnes per annum in the short term and 600,000 tonnes per annum in the long run," he stated.

In this regard, the minister said, the blueprint of the National Cocoa Rehabilitation Programme has the overall objective of increasing cocoa and also improving its quality with a view to improving cocoa farmers income, diversifying foreign exchange earnings and improving the national economy.

Niger commits N6.1b to road projects

The Niger State government has awarded contracts worth N6.1 billion for building and repairing of various roads, says the Works Commissioner, Alhaji Abdullahi Mahmoud.

Mahmoud told newsmen in Minna recently, after inspecting the ongoing projects across the state, that the contractors in charge had 18 months to complete the

jobs.

According to him, the projects include the complete rehabilitation and laying of asphalt on a 103-km road linking Lapai-Gulu-Muye with parts of Kogi, awarded to SOJECT Nigeria Ltd at N2.7 billion.

"Another road project linking new Wuse to Bwari through Gwaram at a cost of N240 million is an attempt to shed traffic off the Kaduna-Abuja expressway."

Mahmoud said the Bida-Kateregi-Minna road rehabilitation project, awarded by the government in 2003 at N1.6 billion, had reached more than 50 per cent completion stage.

Meanwhile, work has resumed on the repair of the Minna township network, awarded to Julius Berger at a cost of N1.6 billion, the commissioner said.

With regard to housing, he said that government had revived the Zuma housing project, awarded four years ago but abandoned at the inception stage.

Mahmoud explained that under the project, the government would build 220 units of 2-bedroom and 3-bedroom flats, at a total cost of N690 million.

"Another housing project comprising 250 units of 2-bedroom and 3-bedroom units was awarded at a total cost of N1 billion, including infrastructure.

"The Madalla housing units will be under a tripartite funding scheme by the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria, the state government and Syntax Nigeria Ltd," the commissioner added.



Son of vice president Atiku Abubakar, Adamu Abubakar handing over the key of the science secondary school Jada, built by Atiku Abubakar, to the deputy governor of Adamawa state, Alhaji Bello Tukur in Jada Adamawa state recently.

Tribunal strikes out chairmanship petition for Kabba/Bunu council

The Kogi Local Government Election Tribunal sitting in Lokoja has struck out a petition challenging the result of the chairmanship polls into Kabba/Bunu local government in December last year.

The petitioner, Prince Adegboyega Stephen, the AD chairmanship candidate, had sought the nullification of the result which was declared in favour of Joseph Dada-Jimoh of the PDP.

In the petition, in which the chairman, Kogi State Independent Electoral Commission and 25 others were joined as respondents, the petitioner had prayed the tribunal to return him as chairman, Kabba/Bunu council area.

The counsel to the respondents, Mr Salisu Umar in a counter motion, supported by a 10-paragraph affidavit, had urged the tribunal to strike out the petition on the ground that it was filed out of time.

Mr. B. Olorunfemi, the Counsel to the petitioner in his reply contended that his clients' petition was filed within the 30 days as provided for in the laws of the federation of Nigeria, 1990.

The law, according to him, provides that computation of time should start a day after the event in question, arguing that since Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays were work-free days, they ought to be excluded from the computation.

In his ruling, the Chairman of the Tribunal, Hon. Alaba Omolaye Ajileye, said that the 30 days allowed by law had lapsed on January 5, 2005.

Omolaye Ajileye said that since the petition was not filed within the time stipu-

lated under section 72 of the Kogi State Electoral Law 2004, "it was statute barred."

He said "an attempt to exercise jurisdiction over this petition is to embark on a self-serving, fruitless and thankless mission. No reasonable tribunal will embark on such an unworthy pursuit."

The tribunal chairman therefore, struck out the petition for want of jurisdiction and upheld the election of Jimoh Dada Joseph as Chairman, Kabba/Bunu local government council.

China pledges support for Nigeria's anti-piracy war

China has indicated its willingness to collaborate with Nigeria in the bid to check the menace of international piracy and its adverse effects in negating the socio-economic contributions of the creative industries to national development.

The Cultural Counsellor of Chinese Embassy, Mr. Jiang Weiming, disclosed this in Abuja recently during a courtesy visit to the Director-General of Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC), Mr. Adebambo Adewopo.

The director-general had indicated that a new copy-

right intervention programme called Strategic Action Against Piracy (STRAP) has been mapped out to intensify the fight against the scourge of piracy across the country.

The Chinese envoy assured that his home government was willing to assist the NCC to perform better in the areas of copyright administration and enforcement.

According to him, his mission was to facilitate necessary consultations with a view to identifying critical areas for bilateral collaboration and intervention to boost Intellectual Property (IP) pro-

tection locally and internationally.

Responding, Mr. Adewopo said that the NCC was committed to teaming up with the rest of the international community in the global fight against the scourge of piracy and its negative effect on world economy.

"Coming against the background of the current international concert against the global scourge of piracy, this new thrust of bilateral interaction is strategic as Nigeria registers its participation in world anti-piracy campaign through STRAP," Adewopo stated.

Govt rolls out tankers to solve Zaria water problem

The Kaduna State government has procured tankers to supply water to the inhabitants of Zaria and its environs to address the acute shortage of the commodity.

Governor Ahmed Makarfi declared this on Wednesday when he paid a congratulatory visit to the Emir of Zazzau, Alhaji Shehu Idris, who marked his 30th anniversary on the throne.

Makarfi said the use of tankers was part of a temporary measure to address the perennial water problem in Zaria.

He said both the federal and state governments were trying to find a lasting solution to the problem, and expressed the hope that the tankers would ease the hardship occasioned by the water shortage.

He congratulated the royal father and prayed God to continue to guide him in the running of the affairs of the Zazzau emirate.

Responding, the emir commended the Makarfi administration for providing social amenities to the people of the emirate council and the state at large.

ABUJA TRUST

Demolition: Trauma of the residents

Ordinarily, hearts should bleed at the on-going demolition exercise at the Wuse Model Market otherwise known as the old Wuse Market for the obvious reason that most of the victims are those struggling to survive the unemployment situation in the country.

These are men and women trying to make the most out of a bad situation and have chosen to display their merchandise at the hub of the Federal Capital Territory's commercial activity.

Given the high customer patronage it enjoys from the high and low and its near monopoly as the only modern and decent general market in the capital, there is obvious magnetic attraction to ambitious traders who did everything to obtain every little space available for attachments and container installations.

They couldn't have got those spaces without the consent and approval of the regulatory authorities. What should have been most worri-

By Abubakar Ibrahim
 some is whether the traders' presence has official approval or not. The story goes that authority over the market is shared between the Ministry of the Federal Capital Territory and the Abuja Municipal area council both

line the messy nature of the market as the craze for survival blinds traders from decency and order.

But in as much as these anomalies are reprehensible and require correction, the government should have taken certain steps. It is its social responsibility to en-

Like education, healthcare, transportation and agriculture, the burden lies on government owing to their cost intensive nature, to provide basic infrastructure including building markets to encourage committed and dedicated Nigerians ready for self-employment.

People admire the commitment, dedication and will of FCT minister, Malam Nasir el-Rufai in carrying out unimaginable actions like the demolition of structures in wrong places of the city's master plan and the review or computerisation of certificates of occupancy, his reaction to the senate confirmation scam and lots more that stand him out as a rare breed of Nigerian in this generation of greed and graft.

Feature

of which had discordantly asserted their authorities through allocations and counter allocations of every available space.

Besides this, allocations of lock-up shops were made to government officials who sub-let them at exorbitant rates. Even some of the shops meant for a trader are partitioned for two with the aim of improved rent.

This apparent disorganisation turned the market to a huge junkyard of humans and materials with vehicular traffic compounding the already dense and tense situation. Millions of naira of materials lost to fire on several occasions under-

sure good governance and comfort of its citizenry through people-friendly policies that betters and not horrify life.

It has to take responsibility for those services that involve the highest number of citizens due to inequality of income and avert social problems capable of distracting it from other fundamental objectives of state.

But actions without appropriate soothing alternative only demonstrates the usual governments insensitivity to Nigerians' plight home and abroad. A new ultra-modern market is long overdue in the federal capital to ease pressure from the small existing ones and should have been budgeted for long ago rather than organise jamborees like the All African Games and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) or the controversial National Dialogue that may gulp more than N900.

Conversely, the private sector should be courted to provide these markets on Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) basis. Verily, firms or individuals will jump to the opportunity. A case study is the Johannesburg Stadium built by the First National Bank of South Africa.

...APGA condemns demolition

The All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), FCT chapter has condemned the recent demolition of old Wuse Market and Karmo Village by the FCT minister, Mallam Nasir el-Rufai.

In a press statement made available to *Abuja Trust* yesterday and signed by APGA's FCT chairman, Obiora Chidozie, the party said: "We view with great concern the economic tsunami that was unleashed on the good people of the Federal Capital Territory by the el-Rufai's led demolition task force."

According to APGA it "does not subscribe to the idea of people erecting illegal structures in FCT," saying however that the erection of these structures was approved by previous governments in the country.

"Structural mistakes, of over two decades cannot be corrected overnight. Efforts ought to have been made to re-locate the affected persons before the demolition," the statement further stated.

The party called on President Olusegun Obasanjo, the National Assembly, religious leaders and traditional rulers to call el-Rufai to order "before he (el-Rufai) doubled the existing crime rate in Abuja and its environs."



Some of the demolished shops at the Wuse Old market...last week.

Dress Code: UniAbuja begins implementation

Authorities of the University of Abuja have begun implementing a dress code for all students of the institution.

The *News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)* reports that the university has finally started implementing the dress code announced for students two years ago.

The code, which prohibited students, especially female students from wearing clothes that exposed the sensitive parts of their bodies became fully operational in the institution last Wednesday.

NAN reports that security officers who turn back students considered to be indecently dressed now man all gates to the institution.

All students were thoroughly screened to ascertain their compliance with the dress code before being allowed entry into the institution.

To ensure full compliance, all female students wearing shirts are asked to raise their hands to ensure that even in such posture their dresses cover their bellies.

Female students, whose bellies were exposed after raising their hands, were turned back by the stern looking security officers.

NAN reports that male students with plaited hair or those wearing earrings or shorts instead of trousers were also turned back by security officers.

The enforcement of the dress code is receiving a lot

been expressing concern over the manner students, mainly female students dress.

Visitors to the institution who were not well dressed were also turned back by the security officers manning the gates in spite of pleas that they came from long distances.

The situation appears to be creating a new market for those selling clothes in the area, as many students were seen purchasing long skirts, trousers and other types of dresses.

In his comments, the vice-chancellor, Prof. Nuhu Yaqub, said that the enforcement would

be continuous in order to ensure that the students who were the future leaders of the country imbibed good morals.

Anenih chairs Catholic university launch

The acting chairman of the board of trustees of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Chief Tony Anenih, will be chairing the launch of the N10 billion Appeal Fund for the proposed Catholic University of Nigeria (CUNA). The occasion, which is scheduled to hold on February 17 at the Ladi Kwali Hall of the Sheraton Hotel and Towers, Abuja, will also have President Olusegun Obasanjo as the guest of honor.

Industrialists plan jobs for FCT residents

The Nigeria Association of Small Scale Industrialists (NASSI) plans to create jobs for 3,000 indigent Nigerians in the Federal Capital Territory. NASSI chairman, Abuja chapter, Josiah Ijeoma made this known to the *News*

Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Abuja.

He said that the association planned to organise workshops for the training of school leavers and graduates to acquire skills in various crafts and trades to enhance their financial status.

Ijeoma said that the skill acquisition workshop would be an opportunity for the unemployed to undergo training that would equip them with new skills for self-reliance.

The workshop scheduled for Abuja in April would also afford small Scale industrialists the opportunity to meet with policy makers on how to access funds for small and medium scale businesses.

Ijeoma said that small scale industries have great potential to contribute to national development through job and wealth creation.

"There is no gain-saying that 90 per cent of the nation's workforce are involved in small scale businesses which range from agriculture, fabric-making, welding, fabrication to hairdressing," he said.

Ijeoma said that with the necessary support and collaboration small scale industries would eradicate poverty, which, he noted, was the focal point of the Obasanjo

agenda.

He called on the government to assist the association in its quest to improve members' livelihood through the provision of land for the construction of an industrial village.

The village, he said would contribute greatly to issues such as technology transfer and provide a site for industrial activities in the territory.

Ijeoma said that the inability of small scale industrialists to access funds set aside for the development of the SME sub-sector remained the greatest challenge facing the sector.

He said that various banks kept using the slogan "unbankable project" to deny small scale industrialists access to fund earmarked for SMEs.

"How can you qualify a project as unbankable when you have not even given the project a trial or the operator an opportunity to show you

This was disclosed to newsmen in Abuja by one time governor of Bauchi State, Gen Chris Garba (Rtd) who is chairman, CUNA's finance committee. Speaking on event, General Garba said it is going to be a grand national occasion.

Also speaking at the occasion, the project director, Prof Charles Ofoegbu said the seed of CUNA was sown at the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBN) held in Lagos in 1991.

governing council chairman, Prof Gabriel Afolabi Ojo said "the vision of CUNA is to build a dynamic institution that will epitomise the traditions of catholic higher education in its achievement of intellectual, cultural and moral excellence through the pursuit of a broad spectrum of academic disciplines and production of globally competitive graduates imbued with love of universal truth toward the service of god and humanity.

Among other dignitaries expected at the event are the Senate president, speaker of the House of Representative

ABUJA TRUST

2005 Census: Bwari sets up enlightenment c'ttee

In a bid to ensure the success of the 2005 national census, the Bwari area council of the FCT has set up a 30-man enlightenment committee.

Inaugurating the committee in Bwari last Wednesday, the council chairman, Mr. Isah Dara said that the committee would enlighten residents on the benefits of being counted during the exercise.

Dara said that the committee which had members drawn from the council staff, political leaders, traditional rulers and youth organisations was expected to educate residents on all matters relating to the census.

He said that in line with the terms of reference, the committee members would meet every fortnight to access the progress made so far and initiate programmes to overcome any difficulties encountered.

He added that the committee would assist staff of the National Population Commission in the discharge of their duties.

"Members are to assist NPC staff in all activities

New Karmo for demolition

By Rabi Othman (Intern)

The renewed demolition of illegal structures will soon be extended to New Karmo, a suburb of Abuja, Abuja Trust authority gathered. Already, some houses have been marked for demolition.

Mrs. Amaka who braids hair in new Karmo and a mother of four told our reporter that "now that my house is among those marked I have no other option than to go back to my home town with my children.

Mrs. Amaka, who was widowed a couple of months ago told our correspondent that she takes the sole responsibility of the four children."

Many of the residents who spoke to of correspondent pleaded with the authorities of the FCT to provide them with alternative accommodations in legal areas as most of them have no where to go to.

relating to the successful conduct of the 2005 census," he said.

The council chairman called on all residents of the area to cooperate with NPC staff and ensure they were counted during the exercise. He said that future government planning; development and federal fiscal allocation would be dependent on the figures generated during the census.

"All residents should ensure they are counted so that the council is not left behind in planning or

short-changed in fiscal allocation," he said.



Another section of old Wuse Market after the demolition...last week.

Lawmakers of the Karu local government council of Nassarawa State are asking for an explanation on what is to happen to the marked buildings along the Abuja-Keffi express way, the fenced area around the

Karu lawmakers demand explanation on marked buildings

By Godwin Tyonongo, Stringer, Abuja Trust

Mararaba Market and the bridge along Aso road.

The lawmakers who called on the managing director of Karu Area Planning Authority (KAPA) recently stated that as representatives of the people, they ought to be kept abreast and involved in activities that relate to the development of the people.

KAPA is the body saddled with the responsibility of the physical planning Karu area. However,

as bulldozers continue to pull down structures considered as illegal along the Mararaba-Karu axis, KAPA officials said, the process would continue to give a befitting appearance to the area and boost economic activities.

On allocation of plots at the Peninsula Estate, the officials told the legislators that the allocation of plots is carefully done to discourage illegal land deals. They said emphasis is laid on allocating the plots to those that can develop them.

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KANO TRUST

GSM users in Kano speak on poor services

By Aliyu Saleh Machika

Kano being one of the strongest business cities in Africa is a fertile ground for communication business. So far all the four-major Global System for Mobile communication (GSM) operating in Nigeria (MTN, Globacom, V-Mobile, M-tel.) are already competing for the over one million potential GSM customers in Kano metropolis alone. This is in addition to two other cellular companies, Inter-cellular and Starcom that are also thriving in the ancient city and making the hitherto cumbersome telecommunication systems in Kano state a more accessible and affordable service to many.

Despite their being well equipped with financial capability and raking in millions of naira from their subscribers, in Kano the services are yet to meet the expectations of the general populace, especially with the deterioration of the services of some of the networks recently. The is no particular GSM service among all of them that is immune to such headaches to the subscribers. But, rather the problems are identified with all of them.

The problem has to do with the issue of poor service generally. This depended largely on the various service providers and in their different ways of handling responsibilities. Some of these problems may either be technical in nature and some administrative depending upon their nature of occurrence.

Our correspondent who went round the Kano metropolis to sample opinions of GSM users gathered that although there has been a tremendous improvement in tele-communication service in the city since the advent of the GSM, but there are lots of problems encountered by the teeming subscribers which are largely that of general poor service, especially in the area of interconnectivity between the four different service providers in the state.

Mallam Hamisu Garba, a textile seller at Kantin Kwari market said MTN has been reliable except for some shortcomings which include problems with loading of recharge cards and forcing others to subscribe to other networks. "MTN has been good because of its interconnectivity with other networks, except with V-Mobile. But I think they should sort out their differences with V-Mobile for the sake of their teeming customers. Also the issue of over-charging the cost of their recharge cards of 750 should be looked into.

How can a big company like MTN said that they have a card for N750 while you can only buy it for N800. It looks as if MTN is conniving with the dealers to dupe its customers by not warning against selling those cards higher than its original price."

Despite MTN's promise to introduce a new denomination card like N400, nothing serious has been done relating to this. It is expected that with the introduction of the N400 cards, it will reduce the dependence on the N800 cards.

Another GSM subscriber, Farouk Ahmed of Kano municipal, narrated his experience with V-Mobile which he said has been giving him problems. In his words: "Many times I felt bad as when I make calls, the receiver will not hear my voice or what I am saying but still V-Mobile company will be deducting my money. And often times when I call their customer service centre, they will put me on a standby until after a long time before considering me." He added that "sometimes you will be calling a number of another network but instead to link you to that number, it diverts to another number which you have no business with, what you will hear is 'wrong number, please', but they keep bombarding us with their adverts. People are not fools, you know."

Also, another GSM subscriber, Idris Daudu, a civil servant who happens to be using M-tel network has also disclosed his own story to our reporter. "I bought M-tel because I can use it here in the city and also when I go to my village where only M-tel service is obtained. Their problem is mainly of interconnectivity with other GSM networks, but you can always get Nitel lines easily. I am also surprised that it is difficult to get M-tel GSM numbers with my M-tel, I don't know if this problem is peculiar to me alone, but I find it very funny because MTN to MTN, or Glo-to-Glo, or V-Mobile to V-Mobile, is very easy to get, but not M-tel. They should seriously look into that."

Another subscriber, Amina Sani, complained that the four major GSM networks are competing on interconnectivity without having the interest of their customers at heart. She added, "They are busy under-cutting themselves on this interconnectivity. Just look at V-Mobile, it has deteriorated from the number one GSM to the worst. You cannot get anywhere with V-Mobile except to their own network because they don't



Achaba Riders in Kano celebrate the coming of Globacom to Kano.

Pix: Musa Kazanire.

want to enter into genuine agreement with their competitors. I was forced to switch to Globacom which was launched recently in Kano, much as I detested leaving V-Mobile. When it was called Econet, it was even better" She added.

Well, for the Globacom users, they are saying that their services are good so far except for some hitches here and there. Abubakar Muhammed is a 3rd year student of BUK, Kano, and stated that, "I was given Glo by my father because all the people in our house uses MTN or V-Mobile and the interconnectivity of Glo to them is very good. The only problem I have with Glo is their charges, they charge virtually on everything, especially their 'Magic Plus'. If you load N500 today, by the evening it will be gone, that is if you use those services. I think they should bring down their tariffs. I also have problem of call divert with Glocerom unlike when I was using MTN, but generally their services are very efficient and their interconnectivity with other networks is fair compared to others."

Another GSM subscriber, Alhaji Magaji Nuhu, a businessman who says he has all the four GSM lines said. "MTN is number one, followed by Globacom, then V-Mobile before M-tel. M-tel is last because you cannot get any other network except at night when the traffic is low. But one credit to M-tel is the best to call Nitel lines and for international calls because of

their low tariff and good connection for international calls. V-Mobile is having serious problem with its interconnectivity with others and even within its own network. Some times I use Glo to call V-Mobile because I could not get through with their own network."

Reacting to all the barrage of problems highlighted by Kano GSM users on Globacom, one of the technical officer in-charge of Kano zone, Mr. Malek explained that Globacom office in Kano has never received any complaint regarding call diverts problems with Glo, adding that call divert is a feature of the handset and not that of the service provider. He stated that such cases must be isolated. He also noted that Globacom has no problem with interconnectivity to all the major GSM network in the country, adding that even the cellular networks in Kano can be accessed from Globacom network.

Meanwhile, effort to get the V-Mobile manager in Kano was not successful as at the time of this report, but another senior staff of V-Mobile who declined to mention his name said some of the problems raised by the subscribers are true while others are due to lack of real knowledge of using the cell phones. He described one technical term called, 'E1' as responsible for making calls difficult, which he said are being released at a different capacity from one service to another. That, he said, led to congestion of the trucks on the network and people would expe-

rience some interconnectivity problems and especially is peculiar with the V-Mobile services. But when asked whether the trucks (E1) can be released equally by all the networks? He described the situation as very uneasy since it depends on the capability of the individual company. But that may be with the intervention of the National Communication Commission (NCC).

On the issue of silent call, he described it as a one way traffic which is being influenced by some other factors such as transmission problems, location and so on. According to him, some of these problems are emanating from the ignorance on the part of the customers, as most of them are using cell phones for making and receiving calls or text messages, and that cell phones goes beyond that. Citing example with the issue of call diverting, he said many times people mistakenly or out of ignorance press some buttons on their cell phones and divert their call into a different number. He therefore concluded that there is need to embark on public campaign and awareness on the effective use of cell phones.

On his part, M-tel which is considered more of a national carrier in the tele-communication industry, said its problems emanated from lack of completion of its projects in Kano by the main contractor, Motorola, which was only recently carried out through the initiative of the officers in charge of Kano zone. According to the Area Manager, M.K. Yusuf, congestion is

one of the major problems of lack of communication between M-tel-to-M-tel users. But that it would soon be a thing of the past, as only one week ago, his team of engineers had successfully erected 8 Base Transmission Stations, BTS around Kano and other strategic locations like the Bayero University, Kano. The 8 base stations added to the already existing 26 BTS, he explained, has drastically improved communications linkage for M-tel subscribers in Kano.

On the problem of interconnectivity with other GSM networks, the area manager said there is serious politics on the issue, as some of the major networks are under-cutting M-tel, using their contacts in high places to subvert M-tel into submission to unfavourable agreements. He cited how M-tel was made to pay for the use of Nitel premises for the installation of its facilities while other networks like Globacom in Kano was allowed to use the Oando premises in Kano to install its facilities. He added that the other major networks are deliberately trying to strangle M-tel by denying its inter-connectivity which it has always paid despite conflicting figures.

All effort to get MTN response on its customer's complaints proved abortive as the senior officers insisted that they will not speak to the press unless with clearance from their headquarters. Several visits later still did not yield any result as they still said they were awaiting response from Lagos.

EKO TRUST

Lagos motor parks: Haven for criminals, drugs, alcoholism

Motor parks, apart from providing a safe parking space for vehicles, also serve the purpose of loading and off loading of commuters. This is meant to prevent the ugly scenario whereby vehicles are parked on the roadsides, thereby resulting in unnecessary traffic jams. However, in Lagos, motor parks have gradually been converted to a heaven for criminals. One common feature of motor parks in Lagos metropolis is the array of smoking shacks that dot every corner.

From Agege to Ojodu, Iyana Ipaja, Ojota, Oshodi, Yaba, Ojuelegba, Obalende and Mile 2, there is hardly any motor park without a smoking joint where Indian hemp (Marijuana) and other hard drugs are on sale in the open and with impunity.

On several occasions the irritating odour of Indian hemp often fills motor parks, suffocating and forcing commuters to either leave the scene or use handkerchiefs to cover their nostrils.

These smoking joints are mostly patronised by commercial bus drivers, conductors, commercial motorcyclists, popularly referred to as Okada riders and touts who are mostly teenagers whose ages range between 15 and 25 years.

Investigations by *Eko Trust* revealed that commercial *danfo* bus drivers normally through the joints as early as 5am to drink and smoke before they even start the day's work. Some of them are often drunk before they get to the steering.

This explains the rate of recklessness always exhibited by the drivers while driving, which usually leads to fatal accidents.

Many motor parks are no longer safe in the Lagos metropolis. Apart from the high rate of fighting among different factions of touts in various motor parks on one hand and between the touts and drivers on the other hand, there is also the problem of pick pocketing and bag snatching.

Eko Trust findings showed that some of these teenagers patronising smoking and drinking joints at the motor parks often go into full fledged robbery at night, maiming, killing and dispossessing people of their hard earned belongings.

Most of the teenage girls selling local gin (*ogogoro*) and hawking wares in the motor parks often serve as agents to the criminals.

Last year, a teenage girl-hawker was arrested at the Ishaga Motor Park in Iju/Ikoko local government with guns and several rounds of ammunition. She later confessed that she was an

By Olumide Bajulaiye

agent of a robbery gang, which had been terrorizing residents of the area for a long period.

At Mile 2 Motor Park in Ojo local government, two teenage girl-hawkers were arrested in a similar circumstance. They were caught with three locally made guns and ammunition. They later confessed to the police that they were agents working for a gang of robbers in the area.

Only recently some hoodlums raped a girl to a state of coma at the Obalende Motor Park in Obalende local government area of Lagos State. *Eko Trust* was informed that the girl was returning from an evening lesson when the motor park touts kidnapped her and forcefully had carnal knowledge of her. The roll call is endless.

The insecurity to life and property at various motor parks across the state is giving residents of the state serious concern.

Sometimes last year both the state government and the police under the AIG Young Arebamen promised to outlaw the sale of alcohol and other hard drugs at motor parks across the state, but this still remains a mirage as nothing is being done about it.

The state ministry of transportation had at one time promised to prosecute anybody found selling alcohol at motor parks, but this has not deterred them from carrying out their acts.

Commenting, the public relations officer of the state ministry of Transport, Mr. Segun Adedeji, said most of the policies made by the state could not be implemented to the letter due to uncooperative attitude of the law enforcement agents.

This, according to

Adedeji, had been the impediment to some of the laws in the state, "if you make a law and there is nobody to enforce it, it becomes useless and nobody will respect such. Without the cooperation of the police we are handicapped," he said.

The problem now is that

how would the state rid motor parks of these miscreants? Adedeji added that many efforts by the state to get them arrested are at times jeopardised by the police who release them few hours after their arrest, "before you know it they are back on their beat. In this

regard we could do less."

The police on its part blamed the federal government for expunging "vagrants law" from the Nigerian Constitution. According to them the scrapping of the law has made it impossible to arrest miscreants and vagabonds on the street.

FG to provide barriers on Lagos highways

Major highways in Lagos are to be provided with barriers by the federal government to ease traffic congestion by illegal turning and obstruction.

Also in the pipeline is median barrier along the Lagos-Ibadan expressway up to Sagamu interchange to eliminate perennial logjam around the axis usually caused by the activities of religious organisations.

Notable among the highways to be provided with the barriers are Ikorodu road from Ketu to Mile 12 and the Lagos-Abeokuta expressway from Abule-Egba to Sango.

Special assistant to the Works minister, Alhaji Babatunde Rotinwa, said in Lagos that the idea behind the road median was to ensure free flow of traffic.

"On the Lagos-Ibadan expressway we are going to put median barriers all the way to Sagamu just to prevent people the expressway and creating traffic jam. This is in addition to the one or more lanes that we are providing on each side of the road.

"Similar step is also being taken along Abeokuta expressway, starting from Abule-Egba. We are going to put median barrier all the way to Otta.

"Of course, we are also going to add one more lane to the road. So instead of two lanes, by the end of the year, we are going to have three lanes. Julius Berger is already working on that," he said.

On Ikorodu road, the special assistant said that traffic logjam is being experienced around mile 12 and Ketu axis.

To solve the problem permanently, he said that Works minister, Adeseye Ogunlewe has approved that median barrier should be constructed between the service lane and the expressway as well as the dual carriageway.

Rotinwa said that the problem at Ojota is not because of the absence of median barrier, but the refusal of commercial bus drivers to make use of the service lane for picking or discharging passengers.

According to him, it is within the purview of the

Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) to prevent the commercial bus drivers from congesting the road.

The construction of the

barrier, he added is expected to begin by the middle of next month with the completion time of not more than one month.

Ministry clarifies air over rumour on LG fund

The Lagos State Ministry for Finance has cleared the air that the state has no intention to deduct 40 percent interest on funds accrued to local government areas in the state seized by the federal government.

The ministry appealed to all citizens of Nigeria to mount pressure on the federal government to obey the rule of law and release the about N19 billion seized local government allocation.

The commissioner for Finance, Dr. Adebayo Adewusi in an interview with newsmen in Lagos, described as untrue allegations that the state planned to deduct 40 per cent interest on the allocations when they are finally released.

He said, "It is absolute nonsense, whoever says that, it is not true and it can

never be true. As a state government we have obligations to assist the local government and nobody is going to charge anybody any interest rate for whatever assistance we've given them.

"Nobody has asked them to pay any 40 percent. It is ridiculous for anybody to say such thing. What is the rate in the banking industry? It is not true", he said.

The commissioner said that since the seizure of the allocations, the state government had strived to fulfill its obligations to the local government areas, adding that the December financial backing to them had been paid.

Adewusi said that the state government had done what it had to do as a democratic entity on the recalcitrant attitude of the federal government to the withheld allocations.



News

\$242m scam: EFCC, counsel argues over Nwude's health

Hot argument ensued Wednesday between the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the counsel to Chief Emmanuel Nwude, one of the principal accused in the \$242 million scam against a Brazilian bank over the status of his health.

The accused, who was arraigned alongside Chief Nzeibe Okoli and Mrs. Amaka Martina Ananjemba, was visibly present in the court, having missed three proceedings as a result of the ailment he suffered while being remanded in Ikoyi Prison.

When the matter was called, Mr. H.A. Ganjua, who held brief for Dr. Alex Iziyan (SAN), Nwude's counsel, told the court that his client was not ready for the trial because he was still medically unfit to withstand the rigour of the trial exercise. According to him, when he called the Abuja National Hospital (where the accused was receiving treatment) last Tuesday, the report he got was that Nwude would not be in Lagos on Wednesday for the continuation of the trial. He submitted that the presence of his client in the court revealed that probably he was forced out of the hospital, contrary to the advice of the medical

From Mohammed Shosanya, Stringer (Lagos)

doctor administering treatment on the accused.

Besides, he posited that he forgot his file containing documents to advance the day's proceedings, adding that the lead defence lawyer, Dr. Iziyan, was not even present and it will not be just to proceed the trial.

But the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission counsel, Rotimi Jacob (SAN), denied the fact that the accused was forced to Lagos for the trial, contrary to medical report. According to him, on January 19 this year, when he visited the Abuja National Hospital, its medical director confided in him that Emmanuel Nwude was fast responding to medical treatment, and was further assured that in a few days, he would be certified fit and discharged.

"Since then, we have been in contact with the doctor that was treating him," he said.

He further told the court that the EFCC drafted a surveillance arrangement to monitor the activities of the accused within the hospital premises, stressing that the report they got was that Nwude was hale and hearty.

Jacob asserted that he was sure beyond doubt that the accused was relatively more comfortable with the hospital environment in Abuja than the Ikoyi Prison in Lagos, hence his surreptiveness shows that he was forced to attend his on-going trial in Lagos.



(L-R) Prof. H. Abdulakareem, Alh. Mohammed Takori, Commissioner for Justice, Zamfara state and Alh. Abdulahi Marafa of the Sharia Court of Appeal, Bauchi state at the Launch of selected Judgements of Lagos state independence Sharia Panel. Pix: Oladipupo Odunewu

Coronation of Borgu Emir postponed

The coronation ceremony of the Emir Borgu in Niger State scheduled to take place on the 19th of this month has

been postponed. A statement issued by the state government through the Commissioner for Information, Alhaji Umar Ragada, on

Wednesday said that the government had suspended the coronation indefinitely. When *Daily Trust* sought the view

Niger stops Hajj sponsorship, announces 2006 fare

Embarrassed by the disappointment that characterised the 2005 Hajj pilgrimage in Jigawa State, the state government has announced the cancellation of Hajj sponsorship henceforth, even as 2006 Hajj fare was announced by the government. According to the government, the huge financial commitment in the sponsorship would henceforth be channeled to the provision of social

amenities such as water, roads and other infrastructural development of communities. The statement said the decision was to ensure smooth running of the Hajj exercise, provide early and adequate time for intending pilgrims as well as enable a systematic approach to the Hajj issue as from next year.

In a press conference after the state's executive council meeting, Commissioner of

Information Abba Kukuma disclosed that the decision was in view of the controversies surrounding the exercise.

Daily Trust reports that allegations of seat diversion, outright sale of allocated seats, and inability of over 120 pilgrims to attend the holy land from the sponsored pilgrims caused so much disappointment to the government.

The government, according to the commissioner, has decided to forestall re-occurrence of the disappointment so that an earlier preparation would be put in place to enable hitch free Hajj in the state.

"To forestall the situation which nearly marred this year's pilgrimage to Mecca, the Jigawa State government has kicked off preparation for the 2006 Hajj," he said.

Already, government has announced N320, 000 and N270, 000 as the fares for two categories of Hajj seats ahead of the 2006 pilgrimage. This, according to the commissioner, was meant to make the Hajj operations affordable to all.

Jigawa NEPA launches anti-corruption campaign

From Hassan A. Karofi, Correspondent (Dutse)

Disturbed by the rising cases of corruption among staff and officers of the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA), the Jigawa State district office has launched the state's anti-corruption campaign with the aim of wiping out cases of extortion, favouritism and ineffective services. Launching the campaign in Dutse, the Head of NEPA's anti-corruption unit in the Kano zonal office, Engr. Richard Obi, said the campaign was flagged off to rid the organisation of cases of corrupt activities which he revealed led to the declaration by the Transparency International that NEPA is the second most corrupt organisation in Nigeria.

Engr. Obi called on NEPA staff to re-assess themselves, and ensure the eradication of any corrupt tendencies from the organisation. The anti-corruption boss also warned that corrupt practices of some members of the organisation could ruin the entire system, and cautioned against any inducement, favour, extortion, failure of quality service and any other action that could jeopardise the success of the anti-corruption committee.

IBRU: Court rejects Rabo Lawal access to statement

Lagos High Court presided over by Honourable Justice Kayode Oyewole Wednesday turned down the application of a former superintendent of police, Rabo Lawal, urging it to compel the Lagos State government to release certain confessional statement he made on September 29, 1999, regarding his on-going murder trial.

Rabo Lawal, who alongside the former chief security officer to the late Sani Abacha, Major Hamza Al-Mustapha; former chief of army staff, General Ishaya Bama; former commissioner of police, Lagos and Ogun, James Danbaba; and former MILAD of Zamfara State, Jibrin Bala Yakubu, were being tried over an attempted murder on the life of *The Guardian* publisher, Mr. Alex Ibru, told the court that at the last adjourned date that he made the statement in question before Special Investigation Tribunal voluntarily. He said he needed same to exonerate himself from the alleged offence.

But while ruling on the application, the trial Judge, Justice Kayode Oyewole, held that the September 29, 1999 date the accused claimed he made the confessional statement was ambiguous and could not be validly relied upon in law as a substance material to give weight to his application. He held that the onus was on the 5th accused person, Rabo Lawal, who made the statement to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the same was in existence.

"Thus, the application has failed and is hereby dismissed."

The trial judge further posited that in the interest of fair hearing and justice, prosecution should write the appropriate authorities to get the initial statement made by the accused person, adding that the statement should be copied by the counsel in the matter.

Earlier in the proceedings, state's counsel, represented by Mrs. Kafilat Shitta-Bey, told the court that the accused person actually made two confessional statements on September 21, and October 12,

1999, respectively, adding that they were attached to the proof of evidence. She submitted that the state did not have any knowledge made on September 29, 1999 by the accused person, and prayed the court to turn down his application.

Countering the submission of the state's counsel, Barrister Olalekan Ojo, the counsel to Rabo Lawal, told the court that the statement in issue was the one made by the 5th accused person on September 29, 1999, which was mistakenly taken as the initial statement he made contained in the prosecution's proof of evidence. He also stated that the content of statement of motion made by Rabo Lawal was materially different from that of proof of evidence.

According to him, the prosecution has not adduced any evidence to tilt the scale in his favour in the case on the materials before the court, adding that when any issue of fact is tried by affidavit evident, the court is limited to the material contained in the affidavit.

Census exercise to gulp N34.5bn

From Abdulfatai Abdulsalami, Stringer (Sokoto)

Close to N34.5 billion to be expended in the 2005 census to be conducted by the National Population Commission (NPC). Speaking at a news briefing in Sokoto recently, the Chairman of the National Population Commission (NPC), Chief Samaila Danko Makama, said the amount was the total budget needed for successful conduct of the exercise. The NPC boss told newsmen that the amount had been carefully worked out between the country and development partners and other stakeholders, and mentioned the development partners to include United Nations for Population Activities, European Union, DFID and others.

Chief Makama stated that the amount was work out meticulously, adding that the international committees were much interested in 'our census and the development partners too are to intervene with financial and technical supports'. He stressed further that the Department for International Development of the British government (DFID), a wing of the British government, is supporting 'us with satellite imaging that will be used for the area enumeration demarcation'. This, he said, was valued at N7.5 million.

The European Union, he said, 'is also supporting us with close to N20 billion', adding that all these would not come directly to the NPC account. He said that the European Union and other parties concerned agreed that UNDP would be the agency through which the money would be channeled into the country.



Chief Samaila Makama

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News

FG denies scrapping Due Process unit

The federal government has denied media reports which indicated that it had cancelled the Due Process mechanism in the award of contracts. It could be recalled that President Olusegun Obasanjo introduced a Due Process unit in the Presidency as a means of ensuring probity in the award of government's contracts, but recent media reports indicated that the idea might have been shelved.

However, a statement signed by the Head of Civil Service of the Federation, Alhaji Yayale Ahmed yesterday, said categorically that the media reports were untrue.

"My attention has been drawn to reports in some sections of print media that the federal government has cancelled the Due Process mechanism in the award of contracts by its decision to establish a cadre of procurement officers in all ministries, extra-ministerial departments and agencies. I wish to emphatically say that the reports are untrue," Yayale's statement said.

The head of service said: "The establishment of the cadre of procurement officers in government's ministries and agencies is a part of government's efforts at

By Rueben Yunana, State House Correspondent

institutionalising the Due Process mechanism in all procurements and award of contracts in public sector."

He explained that hitherto, Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit of the Presidency as well as ministries, extra-ministerial departments and agencies were using the services of consultants in the enforcement of the Due

Process mechanism. As a result, he said, government has now decided to institutionalise the mechanism by creating a cadre of procurement officers who would be trained in the application of the Due Process to all public sector procurements and contract awards to superintend the process of procurements and contract awards in all ministries, extra-ministerial departments and agencies.

NITEL staff declare fasting over job losses

Fears of a retrenchment exercise have heightened at the Nigerian Telecommunications Limited headquarters in Abuja following the recent termination of the management contract between Pentascope International and the federal government. As a result, the Abuja branch of the Senior Staff Association of Utilities, Statutory Corporations and Government Companies yesterday declared a three day fasting and prayer for good leadership and security of jobs.

A circular signed by the leadership of the staff union

Austine Odo, Senior Labour Reporter

said the fasting and prayer sessions were for NITEL's survival. 'All forces working against the survival of NITEL should be destroyed,' so said the circular, which called for prayers to that effect. The prayers are being said by both Muslims and Christians of the company.

Pentascope International of the Netherlands was contracted in March 2003 to manage NITEL and M-tel and revamp the two companies to world class status. This followed the failure to sell the company to Investment

London Limited (ILL) of the UK by the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE). Daily Trust recalls that on the day the management contract was signed, staff of NITEL embarked on a mass protest, saying it would mortgage their future into the hands of an incompetent company. The protest delayed the agreement which was scheduled for 10:00 am to 2:15 pm.

But the then director general of the BPE, Malam Nasir el-Rufa'I, and the then chairman of the board of directors of NITEL, Dr. Anieze Chinwuba, assured the staff and other Nigerians

Fraud: NAHCO suspends GM, HOD Accountant

The Managing Director of the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), Engr. Muhammad Gambo Umar, has announced the indefinite suspension of the General Manager of the Nigeria Aviation Handling Company (NAHCO), Musa Agboneni, and the head of accounts (name withheld) over alleged gross misappropriation of the company's funds. Disclosing this in Abuja on Wednesday, the FAAN boss, who doubles as the chairman of the board of NAHCO, said the prompt action was to procure further dissipation of

By Muhammad S. Shehu, Tourism Reporter

funds of the company and to give room for investigation into the alleged malpractices.

Although the amount of funds alleged to be involved was not disclosed by the chairman, impeccable sources revealed that the action may not be unconnected with the proposed privatisation of the company.

"I am sure whoever is planning to buy NAHCO will be grateful to us for taking this action because we will not like to sell a company that is not worth what is stated in books," Umar disclosed.

According to him, the financial improprieties as supported by documentary evidence disclosed a prima-facie of misappropriation, and would be further investigated by panel of investigations to be instituted soon. He said that a chartered accountant firm was to audit the company to ascertain its assets and liabilities.

"This measure is to present the true picture of the company to whoever wants to buy it during the privatisation process," said Umar. He further disclosed that whatever is established sequel to the investigation, the relevant government agencies would take over the case.



Conelius Adebayo, communications minister.

CONGRATULATIONS

Vision, hard work, and great skills constitute the hallmarks of great leaders. Communication is power, and those who have mastered its effective use can change their own experience of the world and the world's experience of them. For all behaviour and feelings are rooted in some form of communication. Those who affect the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the majority of the people have indeed changed our world.

Your Excellency, you have taken your vision to the people of Jigawa state with telling effect and have influenced the way they think and act.

As the Senate of the University of Jos confers the prestigious honorary degree of Doctor of Science on you in recognition of your contribution in the field of information and communication technology, I join millions of your well-wishers in saying

CONGRATULATIONS!



His Excellency
Alh. Ibrahim Saminu Turaki
Executive Governor, Jigawa State



Hon. Danlami Hamza

Inside Politics

Proposed conference designed to short-change north – Gambo Magaji

Alhaji Gambo Magaji, the Secretary of the Board of Trustees (BOT) of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) is a politician who says what he means and means what he says, which makes him a rare specie among politicians. In this interview with ABDU LABARAN MALUMFASHI, our Group Political Editor, the retired Federal Permanent Secretary spoke on the proposed National Political Reform Conference, his party's position on the conference and the crisis rocking the hierarchy of the ruling Peoples Democratic party (PDP).

Excerpt:-

What do you think about the proposed national political reform conference?

Well, to be honest with you, I was very surprised to see the federal government which for long had been against the convening of a national conference all of a sudden change its position. The capitulation of the government to hold a national conference, to me, is suspect.

There are so many schools of thoughts regarding this conference.

One, is the fact that if you observe the policies and programmes of this government since its inception in 1999, you will see that they are decidedly anti-north. Take a look at the agricultural sector. All the key areas of government attention currently is based on products which are not grown in the north, cocoa and cassava. We all know this is being done so as to cripple the economy of the north. Nothing has been done in respect of grains or any other product that is produced in the north. Attention is only being given to crops which are not available in the north or can hardly thrive to contribute meaningfully to the economic well being of the people.

Secondly, if you look at the issue of citing of industries everybody knows that when you are talking of tobacco leaves right from colonial days, when NTC and other companies were around, everything was in the north as it was the major producer of tobacco leaves. But when British American Company came to establish a factory to resuscitate what was NTC, it was directed to go to the south and cite its factory. Our investigation also reveal that the waivers the British American Tobacco Company was given in order to establish in Ibadan, even you, Abdu Labaran with no experience, if you can be given even half those waivers and facilities, you can also do the same. To be frank with you, Nigerians are worse off in this venture, and I challenge the government to come out and tell Nigerians what facilities, waivers and other inducements were given to British American Tobacco to open shop in Ibadan.

If you look also in the area of mineral development nothing tangible is being done in respect of solid minerals all this time. Before this government, the issue of solid minerals was being looked into but when the government came in 1999 they directed their attention to bitumen extraction in Ondo state. Already, the attention of the Federal Ministry of Solid

Minerals is only focused on Ondo State to bitumen extraction, the quantity of which is very negligible compared to the abundant solid mineral resources available in the north.

And again, all the hues and cries about resource control is also directed against the north. I can assure you that the solid minerals in the north can last the next 1000 years. I can also assure you that we have petroleum in the north but the fact is that there is not the political will to ensure the exploration and exploitation of the product, and that is why we are not getting them.

So if you are talking of resource control, I can assure you in the next 50 years the oil resources we have in the south are going to reduce, they are not going to be as much as what we have today. Whatever is there, I am sure, will not last up to 100 years.

For Nigeria to be on a solid and sure path of economic recovery we should give due attention to the exploitation of solid minerals particularly in the north. Look at the sorry state of electricity supply in this country. We have coal in abundance but is not being used to generate power. In developed economies, they use coal among other things for the generation of electricity. We have coal in abundance in the north. In Kogi, and Benue states the deposit of coal is so abundant that you don't need to dig deep to mine it, all you have to do is to remove little overburden to reach the coal. But no attention is being given to this valuable resource.

So the whole essence of the proposed conference is to belittle the north, disgrace the northerners to the extent that we forget about the political leadership of the country. This is being planned in the face of the north not thinking seriously of the consequences of the actions of President Obasanjo. I want to assure you, at the end of the day you find that the composition of the membership of the national conference will be skewed against the north. The north will be disadvantaged right from day one.

Secondly, you will also discover that the whole exercise is only in the interest of not the whole country but a few individuals who feel they have to continue to rule this country. A few days ago, the acting chairman of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Chief Tony Anenih said that they had to do the conference regardless of the groundswell of opposition against it.

And also, if you observe PDP stalwarts beating their chest insisting that the conference must hold, it makes you wonder what the real motive of the exercise is. Is it a PDP affair or is it a Nigerian project? So if you look into all these things and the current problem in the PDP hierarchy are all directed against the north, because at the end of the day, they will muddle the whole thing

unfortunately, the governors are dancing to the tune of the president because he controls the PDP where majority of them belong to. Just look at the delegates selected by the states. You will find that in most northern states those selected do not belong to the first 11. Some of the delegates from the north are secondary school drop outs, and already there are deluge of complains from some states in

reject them. So, like I said, most of those going from the north are only going to do the bidding of those who nominated them.

There is a groundswell of opposition against the conference with the National Assembly rejecting the president's request for fund to finance it with some of the lawmakers in the lower chamber even dragging the president to court challenging the legality of the conference. Now, do you think this will deter the president from going ahead with the conference?

Well, if you look into our (Nigerian) constitution, section four gives the National assembly the right to all these issues. And if the government is really serious, there are so many ways of having these things done but not in a surreptitious manner. To me by convening this conference it is an acceptance by the government they did not win the 2003 election and are therefore not the true representatives of the people. Apparently, this is what is haunting them and they are trying to legitimise their position by convocating something.

But if they are really serious about this conference then the presidency, the National Assembly, the governors and the state Houses of assembly should step aside and the Chief Justice of the federation should head the country and the Chief Judges should take over the states and delegates to the conference must be elected by the people. All this must be done so that we can convocate something based on the representation of the people elected by the people. Only then can we say we have a national conference and whatever comes out of it will be said to be the decision of Nigerians, for Nigerians by Nigerians.

So the position taken by both the Senate and the house of representatives is correct, is right, is proper otherwise if you are convocating a national conference then dissolve the National Assembly because it has got no place under the circumstance.

But despite this seeming setback the government appears unwavering in its determination to go ahead with the conference. Do you see anything stopping the conference?

Well, this government is not a government of the people. It is a government of few individuals and they are not interested in Nigerians and anybody who feels otherwise is deceiving him-self. It is a PDP government, and PDP stand for "People Destroying People" and that is precisely what they are doing all over the place. If the government is really for the people then they should listen and heed to the yearnings and aspirations of Nigerians and if you can get the opinion of Nigerians nobody is interested in this stupid conference because it is not going to do anything positive for the country. So if at the end of the day there is a problem, I believe Obasanjo has something up his sleeve to spring on Nigerians. Obasanjo is acting like Gorbachev who

destroyed his country in the name of reforms. Obasanjo wants to destroy Nigeria, he wants to dismember this country.

So this being his covert motive, let us sit down and agree on how to divide the country. Let us give ourselves five years like what Sudan has done now. We sit down and divide the country so that the southerners will go to the south and the northerners will go to the north, and we all go our different ways because the southerners think we northerners are parasites because we don't have oil. One state was given N9 billion last month while the whole of the six north eastern states got less than N9 billion to run their affairs. But if you go to these states in the south-south you can not see a project of One billion naira executed and that is why their people are always crying that the north is cheating them conveniently forgetting that it is their own people that are cheating them.

The proposed conference has exposed the crisis within your party, the all Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) with the two factions making opposing statements about the party's position regarding it. While Chief Don Etiebet claimed that the party has endorsed the conference, General Jeremiah Useni (rtd) however, refuted that claim insisting that ANPP is still to take a stand on the matter. So what is the exact position of the ANPP regarding the conference?

Abdu, there was never a time ANPP as a party sat down to decide that we are going or we are not going for this conference. So far Don Etiebet, to sit down and say we are going is his personal view. As far as the party is concerned there was no place or time where we met and took the decision to attend. And I challenge him or anybody to tell the world where we met and took the decision to attend.

I am the secretary of the Board of Trustees (BOT) and I asked my chairman, Admiral Augustus Aikhomu (rtd) whether he was privy to such a decision and he answered that he too was not aware. So the issue is it is the personal view of Etiebet. So as far as I am concerned, what the senate caucus of the ANPP said was right and proper.

Finally sir, are you happy that the PDP is also embroiled in a leadership crisis that seems to be even greater than the one in your party?

No, I am not pleased with it. You see, we knew there was going to be crisis in the PDP and we predicted it. But the thing is the way it has gone, is not in the best interest of the country, because if somebody can just sit down and start changing party chairmen like he changes his underwear then it is not good for democracy. So I am not happy with it.



Alhaji Gambo Magaji, CON that neither Atiku, Babangida nor Marwa will become the candidate of PDP. Their calculation is to bring somebody from the south and lead this country again.

This is essentially the reason why the South-South people are talking about resource control, the South-East is talking about something else and all these drum beatings are all being directed towards making the north to concede the leadership of the country.

But based on the number of states, the north should have more representatives at the conference. So one expects that the north will also use the opportunity to fight for and protect those positions it holds dear. Don't you see it that way?

Well, the issue is, we are not going to have any advantage of number, because the president is going to select 50 people. Those 50 people, and the slots given to other organizations such as the NLC, the civil society and the rest of it, the north will be short changed. And you can be sure that the chairmanship of the conference is going to be given to somebody from the south and the secretary to a nonentity from the north who will not be acceptable to the north. So the whole thing is tailored to disadvantaged the north. And

the north. So even before the commencement of the conference the north is already left behind because while the south have selected their best brains we in the north are putting all sorts of people because of political patronage and such other considerations which is not in our own interest.

So what do you suggest as the way out for the north?

Well, if there is really no ulterior motive behind this conference, then people should be allowed to elect their representatives (delegates). But this situation where the people are not allowed to have any input in deciding who represents them is no conference of representation. It is a conference of the president and the governors, because both the president and the governors have their own agenda and they have selected only those people that they know will do their bidding. Most of the nominees are so close to Aso Rock or the government houses that they will not do anything which is not in the interest of their nominators. Mind you, I am not castigating the caliber of our people, but the point I am making is that majority of them will not be there if the representation will be determined by election because the community will

Inside Politics

SIECS decry non-inclusion in confab

The Forum for State Independent Electoral Commissions (FORSIECS) has expressed disappointment at being excluded as a body from participation in the forthcoming National Political Reform Conference calling on the Federal Government to rectify the situation as a matter of urgency.

The Forum's position was made known yesterday in Abuja at a press briefing addressed by its National Chairman, Alhaji Malami Aliyu Yandoto, who is also the chairman of the Zamfara state Independent Electoral Commission.

The Forum's Chairman said that FORSIECS was surprised and disturbed at the none inclusion of its members as delegates to the conference believing that the "serious" omission is an oversight that needs to be rectified before the commencement of the event. SIECS, said the chairman, were too important to the survival of democracy in Nigeria to be left out of a national dialogue that seeks to address electoral shortcomings in the polity.

By **Abdu Labaran, Group Political Editor**

According to him, any attempt at such an exercise that does not take SIECS into confidence is bound to meet with little or no success as members of the body are better informed on the workings, strength and short comings of the SIECS.

Alhaji Yandoto further argued that involving only the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) without extending similar treatment to SIECS would not help the situation because both commissions are necessary to the survival of democracy in Nigeria.

Boasting of Professors, PhDs and retired High Court

judges in its fold the Forum is as eminently qualified to make an informed input as any group nominated for the conference, added the chairman.

Calling on the federal government to in the interest of fairness and equity rectify the oversight, the group canvassed for at least six slots based on the geo-political zones in the country.

The Forum's chairman, Alhaji Yandoto disclosed that the body would take its complain to the Secretary of the Government of the Federation (SGF) believing that the government will reason with them and rectify the "serious oversight".

PDP is a failure

—ISSODIV

Mohammed S. Shehu, Reporter

The international society for Development of Democratic Ideals and Values (ISSODIV) has accused the leadership of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) of selective justice in handling national issues with particular reference to the Anambra crisis.

Accusing the leadership of lacking in vision, cohesion and dedication in the pursuit of the Nigerian cause.

A statement from ISSODIV, signed by Mr. Tony Okorocho and made available to Daily Trust described the leadership response to critical issues effecting the party and the policy as very poor and inimical to the policy.

The statement cited the holding of Anambra political

crisis as one of such political manoeuvres used by some of its National officials to canvass their selfish interest using the party as their platform.

"The unfolding events on the political crisis in Anambra is disturbing and damning. The response of the national leadership of the PDP to the critical issues is very poor. The dangers which the Anambra political crisis poses to our recent democracy is very inimical to our polity."

The statement further described the recent action of Barrister Venatius Ikum, the party's image maker, on the Anambra problem as unfortunate.

"We see this latest development as bad politics. Why should a ruling party image maker consciously work to further wreck the little image left for his party. This is unthinkable in a serious political party. PDP is falling, should it fall, then our democracy is threatened."

ISSODIV therefore called on the Nigeria Bar Association (NBA) to urgently prosecute all perpetrators of the Anambra arson and wanton destruction of government properties.

The statement also called on the Independent National Electoral Commission INEC to come out and make its position clear on the whole crisis especially as it affects the "confession of rigging."

If it is rigged in Anambra state as affirmed by Venatius Ikum, and the Federal Court ruled that Presidential election result in Ogun state is questionable, perhaps it is reasonable to conclude that there was indeed a nation wide rigging for PDP across board," the group declared.

Rep petitions PDP chairman over Ajaokuta LG Primaries

directed that the decampees in Ajaokuta local government council be registered before any primary election but that the state PDP ignored the directive and conducted what he referred to as a "Kangaroo Primary."

"Article 21 of PDP's constitution clearly states that only the National Executive Council (NEC) has the final authority for resolving all disputes for any elections for any public office in the federation. This is not the case now in Ajaokuta local government area.

"Kogi state government/PDP has arrogated this function to itself to perpetuate this illegality and it should not

be allowed to go. It is on your record that the NWC's approved list for the election has not been changed. What the Kogi state government/PDP has done is to put aside the NWC's list for their own as they please," he said.

Hon. Okino therefore appealed to the leadership of the PDP to sack members of the council in Ajaokuta local government council and the declare it illegal.

He also called for the dissolution of the executive committees of Ajaokuta local government area as well as the wards and that a caretaker committee should be put in place to register the decampees.

SOME CONFAB DELEGATES

Akwa-Ibom State

Mr. Etim Inyang
Mrs. Helen Esuene
Dr. Asikpo Essien
Dr. Ekeng Anam-Ndu
Senator Akaninyene Ukpama
Senator Emmanuel Essien Ibok-Essien

Anambra State

Dr. Chukwuemeka Ezeife
Mr. Zik Obi
Senator Mike Ajegbo
Mr. Gabriel Akweze
Chief Obi Ogene

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Professor Peter Okebukola
Professor Nimi Briggs
Prof. Cletus Nwazuruike
Dr. Nuru Yakubu
Dr. Kabir Isyaku

Benue State

Gen. Victor Malu (rtd)
Gen. Geoffrey Ejigah (rtd)
Steven Okor
Fred Orti
George Korgba
Jack Gyado

Borno State

Alhaji Muhammadu Goni
Alhaji Baba Ahmed Jidda
Professor Nuru Alkali
Alhaji Mohammed Alibe
Alhaji Ibrahim Damcida
Alhaji Lawal Buba

Civil Society

Professor Audu Idris
Malam Shehu Sani
Mr Idris Miliki Abdul
Chief Mike Ozekhome
Barrister Mike Nwocha
Mrs Bisi Ogunleye

Delta State

Mr. Gamaliel Onosode
Prof. Itse Sagay
Prof. Omafume Onoge
Andrew Moemeke
Rear Admiral Onah
E.K. Clark

Gombe State

Senator Uba Ahmed
Alhaji Magaji Mu'azu
Professor Idris Mohammed
Alhaji Abubakar Aliyu Deba
Alhaji Abubakar Muazu Hassan
Mr. Nuhu Poloma

Jigawa State

H.R.H. Alhaji Najib Hussain
Alhaji Sulaiman Bappa
Engr. Habu Gumel
Alhaji Aminu Ringim
Alhaji Tijjani Inuwa Dutse
Hajiya Fatima Mai Borno

Kano State

Alhaji Magaji Danbatta
Professor Auwalu Yadudu
Alhaji Sule Yahaya Hamma
Alhaji Isiaku Umar Tofa
Dr. Haruna Salihi
Alhaji Musa Tanko Waziri

Kaduna State

Alhaji Umar Dikko
Dr. Chris Abashiya
Ja'afaru Makarfi
Emmanuel Toro (SAN)
Prof. Ango Abdullahi
Abdullahi Jibrin

Katsina State

Alhaji Ibrahim Coomassie
Alhaji Saidu Barda
Alhaji Garba Ja Abdulkadir
Alhaji Kabir Saidu
Barrister Ibrahim Shema
Alhaji Tukur Mani

Kebbi State

Col. Bello Kalief (rtd)
Alh. Isah Mohammed
Abdullahi Na'amo
Garba Mohammed Dan Diga
Abdullahi Ahman Zuru
Daidu Mohammed B/Yauri

Kogi State

Alh. Abdullahi Ibrahim (SAN)
Col. Ahmadu Ali (rtd)
Gen. David Jemibewon (rtd)
Dr. G.T.N. Ajakpo
Engr. Ahmed Onogo
Joseph Suleiman

Kwara State

Prof. Albert Ogunshola
Alhaji Mahmud Ibrahim
Engr. Kola Shittu
Alhaji Ayinla Folorunsho
Alhaji Abubakar Kawu Baraje
Alhaji Saidu Isa

Lagos State

Alhaji Femi Okunnu
Alhaji Sikiru Shitta-Bey
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2007: Atikus aide for Benue guber race

There are strong indications that Vice President Atiku Abubakar's special duties aide, Hon. Shima Ayati may have finally bowed to pressure to declare interest in the gubernatorial race for his home state - Benue, come 2007 elections.

Although Hon. Ayati has consistently declined comments on the 2007 gubernatorial contest, Daily Trust however, gathered that following intense pressure, the vice president's aide may be having a second thought over the matter.

Sources close to him hint that the politician had a rethink of his earlier decision not to begin consultation, in respect of the 2007 election when top notches of the Benue political clan tipped him for the governorship position.

Daily Trust has reliably gathered that chieftains of Benue politics have been

From **Hir Joseph, Correspondent (maknrtd)**

meeting to consider Governor George Akume's successor, and prominent among the names on the list of likely candidate is Hon. Ayati, who is also a close associate of the governor and a political son to internal affairs minister, Dr. Iyorchia Ayu.

Daily trust could not reach the vice presidential aide for reaction, but one of his admirers, Comrade Joseph Aondona Mtom, who is also the national president of Benue Youths Forum (BYF), said he would not be surprised if the leaders of Benue tipped Hon. Ayati.

Comrade Mtom, who recently led over 200 youths belonging to various pressure groups on a courtesy call to Hon. Ayati, added that his track record far surpasses those of other likely candidates who are already including consultations in respect of the 2007 election.

SPORTS

No Robben reliance

Eidur Gudjohnsen is confident Chelsea are strong enough to cope with the loss of flying winger Arjen Robben.

Robben, 21, is likely to miss most of February and March after breaking two bones in his foot but 26-year-old striker Gudjohnsen is not alarmed.

"The team exists of more players than Arjen. We managed well without him at the start of the season and we will do so again," said Gudjohnsen.

"He's a special player and brings a lot of quality but we have a big squad."

Robben limped out of Chelsea's 1-0 win over Blackburn at Ewood Park and the Londoners failed to find

-Gudjohnsen

the net in their next match - a goalless draw at home to Manchester City.

And although the Iceland striker knows Robben will be missed, he is confident that Chelsea have more than enough strength in depth to cope.

Gudjohnsen added: "We will just have to make sure that the players which are fit do their jobs and play to the best of their capabilities."

"It is a blow, obviously, and it is a blow for him as well because it is his second serious injury in his first year for Chelsea.

"He has shown this year what he is capable of and time is on his side.

"He is very young, so there is a lot more to come from him, as there is from the team."

Robben missed the first 12 games of the season with an ankle injury but has been in explosive form since his return.

The Dutch winger has played a big part in helping the Blues establish a nine-point lead in the Premiership as well as make progress in the Champions League and both domestic cup competitions.

Singh eyes Pebble Beach repeat

World number one Vijay Singh sets to work on his long list of title defences at the Pebble Beach National Pro-Am.

The 41-year-old Fijian, who won nine times in 2004, arrives at the three-course event with the Sony Open crown already in the bag.

Four of the world's top 10 are entered, as Davis Love, Phil Mickelson and Mike Weir join Singh at the tournament.

There is also a strong British presence which includes Darren Clarke, Luke Donald, Brian Davis and Lee Westwood.

"I'm one better than last year," said Singh, who won last month's Sony Open with a birdie on the last hole.

"I'm feeling good about my game. I'm looking forward to the season.

"All I need to do is go out there and play my game and see what happens. I don't see why I shouldn't do as good as last year."

Playing with Singh this week in the pro-am format is his long-time amateur partner Teddy Forstmann, a friend and sponsor who has recently bought the IMG sports agency founded by the late Mark McCormack.



Singh

The three courses used - the Pebble Beach Golf Links, Spyglass Hill and Poppy Hills - are all par-72s. The final round is played at Pebble Beach.

World number four Mickelson, the winner here in 1998, won last week in Phoenix, his first tour victory since the Masters.

Tiger Woods, Stuart

Appleby and Justin Leonard, all winners on the PGA Tour this season, are not taking part.

But only three of the last 21 winners at Pebble Beach have not won a major. No other regular PGA Tour event over the last 20 years can boast of so many winners with major titles to their names.

Man Utd fans stage Glazer protest

Manchester United fans staged a demonstration at Old Trafford on Wednesday evening to protest against Malcolm Glazer's takeover bid.

More than 400 fans joined the protest after word was spread using the internet and

mobile phones.

More than 100 fans ignored police requests to clear the road outside the stadium's main entrance and carried out a sit-down protest.

Two men were arrested for public order offences during the demonstration.

The protest follows the latest attempt by Glazer to buy the club.

The American billionaire, who owns the Tampa Bay Buccaneers NFL team, has been interested in taking over the Premiership side for the last 12 months.

His previous bids for the

club, which supporters opposed, were rejected by the board because of the high level of debt they would incur.

But Glazer has made a third attempt which is being discussed by the board.

The fans during Wednesday's demonstration

were reportedly well-behaved but sang songs, which included threats to Glazer.

Police kept a low key presence as protesters marched around the stadium.

Oliver Houston, vice-chairman of the fans pressure group, Shareholders United, said: "Our message to Manchester United is to close the book on Malcolm Glazer.

"He wants to know where the money is coming from within the club. Well it comes from us, the fans.

"If he takes over there won't be any coming in because we will not buy the merchandise, we will not go to the matches and United will not get the income they get now."

Serena cruises into third round

Top seed Serena Williams reached the third round of the Open Gaz de France in Paris after a straight sets win over France's Stephanie Aloro-Cohen.

The Australian Open champion was too good for her rival, winning 6-3 6-2.

Third seed Maria Sharapova withdrew from the tournament earlier on Wednesday through illness.

The Russian arrived in Paris from Tokyo on Monday following her victory in the Pan Pacific Open the day before, and had been due to face Tatiana Golovin.

Fourth seed Nadia Petrova, fifth seed Nathalie Dechy and seventh seed Silvia Farina Elia all made progress.

Williams, in her first match since winning her second Australian Open title in

Melbourne, had seven double faults and smashed a racquet on her way to victory.

"I have a problem, I think I have anger issues," said Williams, who raced into a 3-0 lead in the first set before Cohen-Aloro fought back.

"I also had a 24-hour bug and I'm just trying to get over it.

"I've just switched to a new racquet. The new one breaks easier, even if you bounce it. I've smashed so many racquets but this is the first one here."

Sharapova, who beat world number one Lindsay Davenport in Tokyo, said that she was suffering an upper respiratory illness.

Misfiring Roddick claims victory

A below-par Andy Roddick reached the second round of the San Jose Open with a 6-4 6-4 win over Paul Goldstein.

The top seed made 21 unforced errors against his fellow American, who saved three match points.

German third seed Tommy Haas advanced to the quarter-finals with a 6-1 6-3 sec-

ond round win against Canadian qualifier Frank Dancevic.

Haas was playing his second match in 20 hours, having defeated Gregory Carraz of France in a late match on Tuesday.

Fourth seed Vince Spadea also advanced, easily overcoming fellow American James Blake 6-3 6-0.

In other first-round

matches, Belarussian eighth seed Max Mirnyi struggled against Peter Wessels but eventually went through 6-7 (6) 7-6 (4) 6-3.

Cyril Saulnier beat Jiri Novak, 6-2 6-2, and Xavier Malisse, coming off his first ATP title at Delray Beach last week, defeated Yen-Hsun Lu 6-2 6-3.

Roddick played an aggressive but sometimes er-

ratic match against Goldstein, making 31 winners and 21 unforced errors.

"I felt like I hit the ball pretty well, especially my forehand, which essentially won me the match," he said.

"I have to be aggressive. I had to enforce myself on him and not give him as many chances. That's what gave me the break in the second set."



Gudjohnsen is confident that Chelsea can cope with the loss of Arjen Robben

Sports

Crespo brilliance denies Germany at the death

Germany's miserable run against top nations continues as Argentina twice came from behind to net a 2-2 draw in their friendly at the LTU Arena.

AC Milan striker Hernan Crespo showed his killer instinct in front of goal converting a penalty and producing a magestic late chip to deny Germany.

Torsten Frings put the 2002 World Cup finalists in front after 28 minutes, before Crespo levelled, and Brazilian-born Kevin Kuranyi

restored Germany's lead until Crespo's late intervention.

The draw means Germany have not defeated a top nation in over four and half years with October 2000 the last time Germany triumphed over one of the big guns.

England were the victims as Dietmar Hamann's goal saw them ease 1-0 at Wembley.

"It is disappointing to concede right at the end," confessed German manager Jurgen Klinsmann. "But I am happy with how we played, and feel we are moving in the

right direction."

Despite the absence of inspirational captain Michael Ballack - sidelined by a bout of flu - Germany controlled possession and carved two good openings in the first quarter hour with Frings and Bernd Schneider going close.

Argentina looked jet-lagged but almost took the lead against the run of play with Monaco's Javier Saviola springing the German offside trap in the 20th minute only to see his low shot saved by Jens Lehmann.

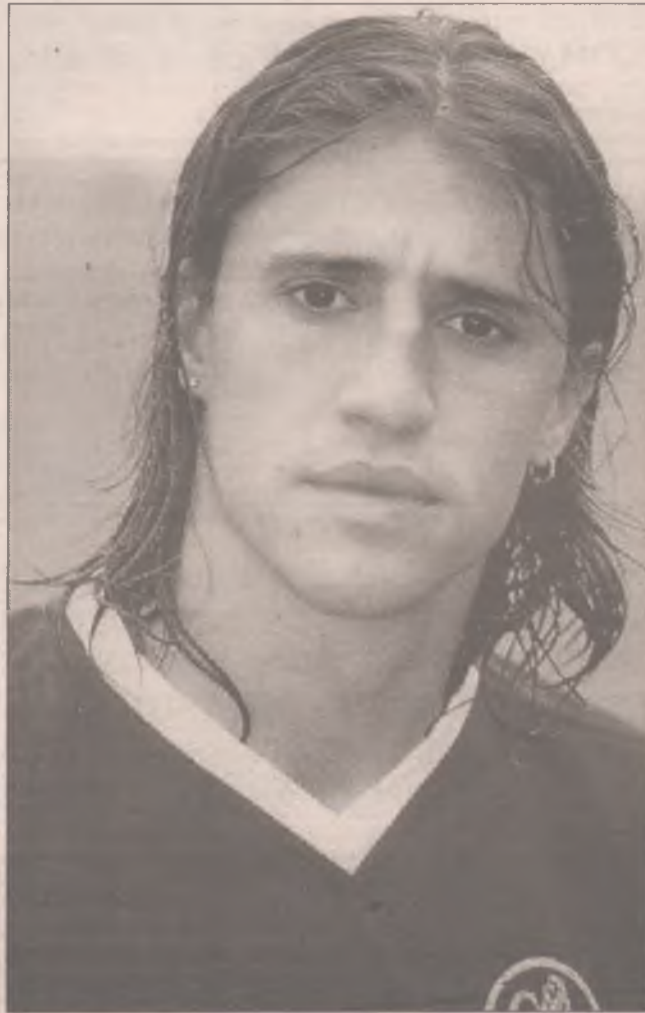
The Arsenal custodian was a surprise starter with Bayern Munich rival Oliver Kahn watching from the substitutes' bench.

After 28 minutes Germany got the breakthrough although Italian referee Stefano Farina played a helping hand awarding a suspect penalty kick.

A corner from the right was whipped into the danger area and VfB Stuttgart Kevin Kuranyi collapsed in a heap following a challenge from his marker.

Farina pointed to the spot - to the fury of the Argentina players - and Frings dispatched with aplomb.

Penalties have a habit of coming in twos and with 40 minutes on the clock Juan Pablo Sorin was chopped down by a cluster of German defenders and Crespo drilled home the resulting spot-kick. "The determination of



Crespo scored twice for Argentina against Germany

both sides was there for all to see," explained Argentina coach Jose Pekerman.

"It was two of the world's most successful footballing nations out there and both

sides came out of the game with credit."

With seconds remaining in the first half Germany regained the lead with Kuranyi placing a shot under goalkeeper Roberto Abbondanzieri as the visitors switched off.

Immediately after the break Olympic champions Argentina almost equalised with Manchester United defender Gabriel Heinze spurning a great chance, heading over the crossbar when left unmarked in the centre of goal.

On the hour mark Crespo appeared to be felled by Lehmann in the box but the referee chose not to award a third spot-kick claiming there had been no contact.

The trickery of Saviola and Villareal playmaker Juan Roman Riquelme was a delight for the capacity 52,000 fans but not German defenders perplexed by their nimble footwork.

"Argentina really turned on the style in the final 20 minutes," acknowledged Klinsmann.

Argentina's attacking quality is undoubtedly their strength and in the 81st minute a brilliant move carved the German backline apart.

A quickly taken free-kick released Crespo and he produced a sublime lob over Lehmann to equalise.

Germany will rue throwing away a lead twice but have the chance to make amends against Argentina when the pair meet in the 2005 Confederations Cup on June 21 in Nuremberg.

Supersubs swing it for Italy

Alberto Gilardino and Simone Barone scored after coming on as second-half substitutes to give Italy a 2-0 win over Russia in a lively international friendly here on Wednesday.

After a goalless first-half in which Italy twice hit the woodwork, Parma striker Gilardino broke the deadlock, firing home a right-footed shot from an acute angle.

Palermo midfielder Barone increased Italy's lead shortly afterwards with a spectacular 25-yard thunderbolt that hit the inside of the post before crossing the line.

Gilardino was delighted to get on the scoresheet and give coach Marcello Lippi a selection headache for Italy's World Cup qualifier against Scotland next month.

"I am very happy for my goal and for the victory," he said. "We all know the value of Christian Vieri and Francesco Totti, but I always give 100 per cent when I wear the Italy jersey and I hope I have given the coach something to think about."

Barone was equally pleased with his stunning effort that put the result beyond doubt.

"I saw the space, my first touch was good and so I gave it a go. This is an unforgettable day for me and I dedicate my first Italy goal to my family," he said.

The match was held at Cagliari's Sant'Elia stadium in honour of Italian legend and

current national team general manager Gigi Riva, whose 21 goals in 28 games helped the Sardinian club to their one and only Serie A title in the 1969/70 season.

Riva, whose robust style and powerful shot earned him the nickname 'Rombo di Tuono (Sound of Thunder), also scored 35 goals in 42 matches for Italy.

A ceremony took place prior to kick-off in which Cagliari retired the number 11 shirt which Riva used to wear.

Italy came within inches of taking the lead in the 35th minute. Vincenzo Montella's cross picked out Christian Vieri, but the Inter Milan striker's looping header struck the post.

The woodwork came to Russia's rescue again four minutes before half-time. Francesco Totti was brought down just outside the penalty box and Andrea Pirlo's curling free-kick smacked against the crossbar.

Gilardino finally broke Russian resistance in the 56th minute.

After a neat exchange of passes with Mauro Esposito, the 22-year-old marksman was forced wide of the goal but somehow managed to hook the ball past Russia keeper Viatcheslav Malafeev.

Russia fell further behind six minutes later. Marco Materazzi's header fell nicely for Barone who took one touch before smashing a right-footed shot that whistled past a statuesque Malafeev via the post.



Gilardino

Agony for Wright-Phillips as Dutch hold England

Shaun Wright-Phillips's first international start turned into a nightmare as England were held to a goalless draw by an inexperienced Holland side at Villa Park.

A match that had been partly billed as an opportunity for Wright-Phillips to present his credentials as a potential successor to David Beckham on the right of England's midfield could scarcely have gone any worse for the Manchester City winger.

Deployed as part of a three-pronged attack, Wright-Phillips was curiously devoid of the sparkle that has characterised his club displays this season.

And his memories of his first start for his country will be blighted forever by his failure to convert either of the two straightforward first half chances that fell to him.

On the plus side, Sven-Goran Eriksson will have been cheered by one of Beckham's more impressive recent performances in an England shirt. On this form, the Real Madrid midfielder is unlikely to be usurped by Wright-Phillips, or anyone else, anytime soon.

Both Eriksson and his counterpart Marco van Basten declared themselves satisfied with their sides' performances.

"England had some big names, we didn't have ours at the moment but all our players are capable of playing football and we showed we have some good possibilities," van Basten said.

The former AC Milan striker was delighted with the way his defence coped with the threat posed by England's attackers.

"I think we did our homework quite well. We didn't create a lot of chances but we can be satisfied with our defence."

Eriksson was happy to see his side improve on the woeful performance they produced when they lost 1-0 to Spain in Madrid in November.

"It was a much better performance today than it was in Spain. We played much better, created a couple of good occasions and should have scored."

Eriksson admitted Wright-Phillips had looked

nervous but backed the winger to bounce back.

"I suppose it is normal to be nervous starting for England because the career of Shaun Wright-Phillips has gone up, up, up very quickly. I can understand it but next time he will be less nervous."

With the exception of the two chances spurned by Wright-Phillips, England created few real chances and Holland, who hit the woodwork early in the match, might easily have claimed victory if Roy Makaay had taken their best chance shortly after half-time.

England's decision to start with a three-man midfield ensured Holland were able to slip quickly into a comfortable passing rhythm and the

Dutch were unlucky not to capitalise on their early dominance when Feyenoord forward Dirk Kuyt's 20-yard drive came back off the inside of the post in the tenth minute.

England responded with a swift counterattack down the right that concluded with Wayne Rooney's intelligent cutback finding Steven Gerrard, who lifted his shot over the bar from just inside the Dutch area.

As Holland's early zip subsided, England gradually began to take control.

But the nerves suggested by Wright-Phillips's tentative first few touches were confirmed by the hash he made of England's best two chances of the match.

France show signs of return to form

While France failed to snatch a much-needed home victory in their 1-1 draw with Sweden on Wednesday, they showed encouraging signs of reproducing the form that took them to world and European success.

The French dominated the match against a strong Swedish side and showed flashes of inspiration which had not been seen since playmaker Zinedine Zidane retired last year.

Striker David Trezeguet, back from a six-month injury layoff, constantly bothered the Swedish defence and rekindled the dangerous striking partnership with Arsenal's Thierry Henry that was lacking during Euro 2004.

The performance of the pair, however, confirmed that France will need both to be in top form to ensure they qualify for next year's World Cup finals in Germany.

"I don't want to name any player," coach Raymond Domenech said. "But I'm satisfied with what I saw."

"We showed more will, more pace and much more inspiration than any of the previous matches we have played since I'm here."

While Zidane's influence can not be replaced, AC Milan midfielder Vikash Dhorasso proved a more than adequate replacement in the playmaker's role.

"It's nothing new to me," Domenech said. "I knew what Vikash was worth. It was just a matter of giving him the

chance to prove himself on the pitch."

Dhorasso was ably supported by Barcelona's Ludovic Giuly first and by Girondins Bordeaux's Camel Meriem in the second half in the attacking midfield roles.

Domenech must also be impressed by the defensive midfield performances by captain Patrick Vieira and Benoit Pedretti, with the Marseille player more than proving his selection with his workrate and coolness under pressure.

The French coach's main concern appears to be in the centre of defence where the Monaco pair of Sebastien Squillaci and Gael Givet have to live up to the reputations of the now retired Laurent Blanc and Marcel Desailly.

Trust Classified

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B.A. SALIYUK
Brigadier General

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Ashi Akainjo 7 Co.
Lgal Practitioners, Kaduna.

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ASHIE. APPAH
Ashi Akainjo & Co.
Lgal Practitioners, Kaduna.

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Sports

PREVIEW OF PREMIER LEAGUE OPENER

Everything to play for, as night turns to day

The Premier League season kicks off across the country this weekend and with the numerous positive measures adopted by the stakeholders towards enhancing the league, fans cannot wait to watch the action. Beside the efforts, the fact that the format was enlarged to 20 teams make the whole programme doubly interesting.

Though African Champions, Enyimba seem complete with new buys which include Ranger's former captain and U-20 goal keeper, Sam Okoye,

From Okechukwu Eze,
Sports Correspondent (Lagos)

Lobi Stars former captain, Odeh Oghah, and Nojoem Raji fresh from assisting Kwara United back to the elite class, the fact that they travel to Minna against Tornadoes makes it all exciting. The Minna-based team powered by young and dynamic team manager, Alhaji Usman Garba may not have Enyimba financial muscle but being the opening game, all necessary pep talk would be administered to the side in large dosage. The chairman, David

Suleiman, knows the method to psyche his players and he has always achieved that even when the team goes on banishment. This is a match that will go a long way in shaping the destiny of Enyimba which for the third straight time goes in contention in the wider African football, championship.

In Makurdi, where former Eagles coach, Tunde Disu holds sway after a long lay off, Lobi Stars host El-Kanemi Warriors of Maiduguri. Though much has not been heard about El-

Kanemi which ruled the domestic scene in the early 90's, Lobi which recently lost the services of reliable defender Taye Taiwo now with French giants, Olympique Marseille may be shocked at the Aper Aku Stadium, venue of the encounter. But Disu will go extra miles to avoid the shock knowing the temperament of club boss, Dominic Iorfa.

The Garden City will be busy for the week with double champions, Dolphin FC hosting Confederations Cup challengers, Insurance of Benin. Dolphin which has started well in the Champions League having mauled visiting Renacement of Equatorial Guinea 3-0 at home for sure would not want any stain and the presence of Victor Babayaro from Wikki Tourist of Bauchi is a plus. The petit midfielder would benefit from the immense talents of Kenedy Chinwo, Bola Bello, Joe Eyimofe, Kelechi Osunwa, Ochuko Ojobo and keeper Chijioke Ejiogu. Godwin Uwua and his boys shared points with Pillars in Kaduna in a pre-season match and could aim for that too in Port Harcourt.

However, the most exciting game comes up in Ibadan, as Shooting stars hosts newly promoted Nasarawa United which has former international, Daniel Amokachi as player/coach. "The Bull" as he is fondly called remains a crowd puller which makes

it more thrilling. The Nasarawa miners may be newcomers in the elite class - their pre season matches against Sharks (1-1) in Lafia, Zamfara United (1-1) and Kano Pillars (1-1) justifies that but the fact that Amokachi is around may turn things around against the Coach Godfrey Esu-tutored Oluyole Warriors. The Ibadan fans would hope on new signings Seyi Ogunsanya (N2.5 million) and Ebenezer Ojo (N1.8 million) from both Enyimba and Rangers respectively to check the miners.

In Aba, Gabros hopes to stain Rangers of Enugu. The Gabriel Chukwuma-owned outfit which have remained a middle class operators in the premier category may not have it easy against Rangers, inspired by former team captain Davidson Owumi not just on the grounds of brotherly rivalry but because the fans in Enugu know as that losing the opener will affect the psyche of the squad.

That will anger the fans which lost the services of regulars-Ebenezer Ojo, Sam Okoye, Prince Igweokolo to 3SC, Enyimba and Sharks respectively. Perhaps Ladi Gasper that joined from Lobi could quench the desire of Flying Antelopes as they besiege Aba, a neutral ground of a sort to both sides.

In Gusau, Zamfara United without Coach Godwin Obinyan whose expertise catapulted them to the elite class host Sharks of Port Harcourt. Zamfara United and Sharks both finished tops last season in their re-

spective pro league tables to qualify for the elite class Sharks tutored by former Super Eagles Coach, Shuaibu Amodu and boasting new acquisitions Obinna Ajoku (Kano Pillars) and Prince Igwe Okolo (Rangers) may spoil party for the hosts.

Another interesting encounter comes up in Lagos where nearly relegated NPA FC host Kano Pillars. The Seaside's has new coach in Belgian Maurice Cooreman who took Lobi to the Confederations Cup last year. During their screening in Lagos, more than 1,500 footballers besieged the arena and whether Cooreman picked the right players from the lot will show today against Pillars.

The city of Gombe will be agog with their game against neighbours, Wikki Tourists, inspired by former internationals Best Ogedengbe and Patrick Pascal.

Also in Ilorin, Coach Kadiri Ikhana and his re-turnee team, Kwara United lay in wait for Coach Alfred Ekandina and his boys. While Ikhana enjoys the boom generated by his triumph in the play-off both from his players and club chairman, Dr. Ayo Bello, the Naze boys, seem to lack talents and vision. Midfielder Kelechi Okoye told our correspondent that their hope is on new boy Godwin Chobi from JC Raiders. That will be difficult if sensational midfielder, Duke Udi and attacker Sunday Okoh could arrive on time to support Femi Babatunde and Amafe Edebiri.



All is now set for the commencement of the new league season

Meridian Cup: Africa on the learning curve

Europe may have won this year's edition of the Meridian Cup in convincing fashion, but Africa's vanquished sides are still delighted with their experience in western Turkey.

In a competition where each continent's total points are added up to determine a winner, Europe leads 34-1 with just one round of games (and 12 available points) left.

Yet when Cameroon, Egypt, Nigeria and Sierra Leone take to the field on Friday, the African sides will be content to see just one of their teams win a match.

In the last 45 games in a tournament pitting under-19 sides from the two continents against one another, Africa has won just once.

The Meridian Cup is a joint venture hosted by the governing bodies of Euro-

pean and African football, Uefa and Caf respectively, and Uefa's technical director Andy Roxburgh believes there is no real problem in Africa's lack of victories.

"This is not about producing a champion, this is entirely about the teams having the chance to encounter different styles of play," the former Scotland coach told BBC Sport.

At present, hosts Turkey, Portugal, Spain and reigning European under-17 champions France are enjoying the experience slightly more than their African counterparts.

Only the Egyptians have managed to avoid defeat so far, drawing 0-0 with Portugal in their second match.

"There is a real gap between the European and African teams," said Sierra Leone coach Abu Sankoh, whose team - along with Egypt - have been the continent's most impressive in Turkey.

"The gap exists because the European teams are well-prepared, well-organised, well-disciplined and have all the facilities, so that gap ought to be there all the time."

Yet one of the most important factors separating the continent's teams is their age.

"The Africans didn't

bring the teams that played the African under-17 Championship in 2003, but the teams that are going to play under-17 this year," Roxburgh explained.

"The European teams are the ones that were involved in last year's European under-17 championship, so this is a crucial factor because the African teams are immediately less experienced."

Only Nigeria will be performing in the African Junior Championship in May but Cameroon and Sierra Leone also brought mainly 16-year-olds, while Egypt's squad is a couple of years older.

Another disadvantage facing the African sides is the bitterly cold weather in eastern Europe.

The Turkish capital Istanbul recently encountered such a heavy downpour of snow that Wednesday's senior international friendly between Turkey and African champions Tunisia - the Meridian Cup's planned Gala match - had to be cancelled.

Cameroon coach Engelbert Mbarga also pointed out that Africa is being held back by the scarcity of matches the continent's juniors currently play.

"Africa only has the under-17 tournament and this necessitates two rounds, and

only four matches, to qualify," Mbarga explained.

"Players in a team that does not qualify play only four, or in some cases just two, games."

"Europe has different tournaments everywhere so that a team can play 10 or 15 games a year - which is a massive difference at this level."

Despite all the differences between the two continents Roxburgh is convinced that the event is useful.

"All the coaches say that the Meridian Cup is an extremely worthwhile exercise because it gives invaluable experience to all these young players," Roxburgh explained.

"The Europeans want to test themselves against different methods and styles, while the Africans are playing against older players who are more professional in their view and so this helps to raise their standard."

"Sierra Leone's Abu Sankoh told me that his players are getting better in every match, because they are beginning to realise that they have to concentrate for the whole match, so it's a great learning experience for both sides and that's the purpose of this."



Getting set for the Premier League kick-off



Roxburgh

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Friday, February 11, 2005

EDITORIAL

Wuse Market demolition

In the early hours of Thursday, February 3, 2005, the Department of Development Control of the Federal Capital Development Authority (FGDA) descended on old Wuse Market and destroyed shops they described as attachments and those who use them as illegal traders.

Before they did this, they mobilised over four thousand police officers who cordoned off the market and closed all roads leading to the market.

While we commend the efforts of authorities of the Federal Capital Territory, particularly under Mallam Nasir el-Rufai, for their efforts to sanitise the city and restore its master plan, we deplore the manner in which the demolition of shops at the market was carried out.

Although the FCDA explained that it was compelled to take the demolition option after it failed to convince the attachment traders to peacefully dismantle their shops and shift to other markets, it is crude that the FCDA chose the surprise option by not allowing the traders to salvage their goods before bulldozers rolled into the market tramping wares worth millions of naira. By this the FCT authorities have destroyed the means of livelihood of many families and sent several thousands into the unemployment market.

While we do not condone illegality, as the attachment traders were said to have illegally acquired the spaces and built their shops on, we wish to state that the traders built those shops with the approval of relevant authorities of the FCDA or the Abuja Municipal area council (AMAC).

The Wuse Market which was initially built with only 1,800 shops became choked with 13,000 additional shops that had made human and vehicular traffic both within and outside the market a nightmare for residents who patronise the market or those who ply the roads within the parameters of the market.

We therefore believe that it would have been more appropriate and civilised if the FCT minister had set up the panel of enquiry some days after the demolition before embarking on the demolition. The minister must have known that the traders wouldn't have got access to the market without the approval and connivance of officials from the Ministry of Federal Capital Territory or its relevant agencies.

That the minister instituted the panel of enquiry is accepting the fact that he erred, even though his action is like putting the cart before the horse. No matter the outcome of the enquiry, whether it is compensation or free allocation of shops in other markets, what those whose shops were destroyed may have gone through in the past one week is to say the least traumatic.

We also deplore the closure of the market five days after the demolition. Apart from depriving many residents access to the market, many of the so-called legally allocated traders have been deprived of their only means of survival many of who depend on their daily transactions at the market. That the ministry did not put this into consideration to make adequate logistic preparation that would make the exercise a short one is enough indication of its care and concern for public interest.

We urge the authorities of the FCT to be cautious in the future when handling issues that touch the lives of many with utmost care and compassion. While the damage has already been done, we call on the minister to initiate strategies that would cushion or mitigate the plight of the affected traders whose means of survival may have been destroyed.

Confab: Leaping before you look

By Adamu Adamu

In his speech at a book presentation by Alhaji Ahmadu Kurfi, *Maradin Katsina*, on Saturday, February 5, 2005, Chief Sunday Awoniyi, *Aro of Mopa*, said Nigerians were a "May be" people, who were always very patient with their governments. May be?

May be he meant Nigerians were an extroverted and confident lot as individuals, but timid and docile as a people; who were afraid of, rather than patient with, their government; who were diligent and hardworking in pursuit of their individual goals, but careless and utterly carefree in guarding or advancing communal and national interests. Always expecting things to work out well, even when they hadn't done their homework well. Always leaping, without knowing they will fall.

No doubt, there are precious few reasons, anyway, why they should wish to leap; but if they have to, there are right ways to jump. Right leg forward, knees bent double—muscles all tense and eyes wide open. On your toes, get set—jump! That's one "May be". And that's the way it goes—planning, strategy and then action.

But, contrary to the dictates of conventional wisdom that said, "Look before you leap," this nation had always leapt before it looked. With eyes closed, muscles relaxed, knees straight, and with left leg forward, it had several times tried to jump. And just see where it landed itself. And that's the other "May be."

That last "May be" might be the miracle of salvation that the nation expects in three months from the person who, in five years, had sunk the country deeper in all kinds of problems.

When Chief Olusegun Obasanjo invited the nation to participate in the National Political Reform Conference, there were many things the nation could have done. But the only right thing was to boycott it. And there were many good reasons to justify boycotting the conference. One, an unpopular government, whose legitimacy is still an open question, was not the best or most qualified entity to attempt to determine people's future. With a shaky mandate, it would only be adding insult and salt to an open injury.

Two, as Chief Awoniyi said, Nigerians are suspicious of the sudden, hasty, almost desperate call to conference; and "they do not have confidence that Obasanjo will not manipulate the conference and bring undue influences and inducements to bear on the conference in favour of particular changes he desires" to favour some parts of the country—or, indeed, advance the other personal, formerly hidden, but now open agenda of his wish to succeed himself.

Three, there is the question of the conference being sovereign. The oppositional case, which used to be championed by the National Democratic Coalition, NADECO, rejected General Sani Abacha's National Constitutional Conference on the grounds that it was not sovereign. It said that it would only attend a conference with powers to decide its agenda, programme and leadership. While NADECO is nowhere to be seen today, its successor-organisations—the Alliance for Democracy and *Afenifere*—have curiously reconciled with Obasanjo, heightening apprehensions and suspicions of a hidden agenda.

Of course, nowadays, insistence on a sovereign national conference is no longer shrilled with the previous intensity; and the primacy of the so-called ethnic nationalities has been greatly downplayed. Clearly, if what they wanted from a sovereign national conference was to end the rule of a Northerner and install a Southerner, they had received even more than they expected.

Hadn't five years of Obasanjo got them more than anything a purely democratic, open competition would have given them? But as Gbenga Olawepo, a former deputy national secretary of the People's Democratic Party said, some of the arguments are already falling apart. Writing in the *Daily Trust* [2/2/2005] Olawepo said, "In a very nauseating manner, faulty assumptions, such as the need to redress alleged marginalisation of some Southern ethnic groups by some imaginary power oligarchs, still continue to be their justification for a sovereign national conference of ethnic nationalities, in spite of the obvious reality that a Southerner today sits at the top of the PDP executive government [Obasanjo] along side another Southerner at the top of the legislature [Senator Adolphus Wabara]."

But if, despite this, the call for such a conference

continues to be made, perhaps the nation should have the courage to exorcise the ghost and call off this blackmail of a bluff by convoking the sovereign national conference. Those who still oppose it, like Olawepo, do so on the ground that such conference "cannot be sovereign because the elected institutions of state that today exist are the repository [sic] of sovereignty of the people."

The reality, however, is that in the eyes of the people, the credibility of the government is not higher than that of the military regime, in opposition to which the idea of a sovereign conference was conceived. But even without the question of sovereignty, there is the question of competence. Isn't it too much to expect a government that has failed to conduct free and fair elections and had woefully failed to rectify National Electric Power Authority, NEPA, to be able to rectify the myriad of political problems befalling Nigeria?

Four, there is the question of how delegates to the conference should be chosen, and how much time the agenda of the conference will require. Well, it should have been obvious to anyone that the weight of what they are expected to decide requires that they must be elected. And the fact that it ought to have been a sovereign conference in the first place would have obviated their being appointed by government.

It was only to be expected, for instance, if a military government feared an expression of the popular will, but when a supposedly democratic government lost faith in its people to the extent that it couldn't trust their true representatives to decide their own destiny, because they wouldn't or couldn't or feared to organise elections to choose them, then we know that the way to a perfect tragedy was being laid.

No doubt, Obasanjo fully well knew the implications of the lack of elections, and couldn't have been unaware of the probable duration for such a conference. He himself had said in 1994, because, not on the hot sit, he could see objectively and clearly then.

"These issues should be dealt with once and for all and most democratically", he said in his keynote address at the conference on *The State of the Nation and the Way Forward* in Kaduna in 1994. "What our situation demands is a National Conference by elected representatives of the people of Nigeria to discuss all major issues, subject to one condition, that whatever is agreed must be referred to a national referendum. If we opt for a genuine National Conference that will examine all aspects of our national life, it may last longer than one year."

Obasanjo is not an eleventh hour convert per se, unless of course we decided to pick up matters from the time he began opposing the issue of the conference after he became head of state in 1999. As already seen, he had supported the idea of the conference in 1994. But why did he choose this time to stage the conference? There was of course the small matter that he would like something big to take away attention from the Supreme Court that would open hearing in General Muhammadu Buhari's challenge to his election.

Realising that a conference is a conference, Obasanjo might also have decided to stage the National Political Reform Conference to assuage Southern advocates of the Sovereign National Conference, by, at the same time, running away from it. In this, he seemed to have succeeded so well that, after a brief meeting with him, *Afenifere*, the Yoruba Council of Elders and Dim Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu announced their readiness to attend.

The other agenda is of course his well-known desire to get five more years so that he will be able to do within them what he failed to do in eight. With the correct inducement and sufficient subterranean pressure, Obasanjo can get the conference to suggest any amendment to the constitution that he likes, and the National Assembly to incorporate these matters in the revised Constitutional document. And since there will be no referendum; and since there is no sovereign national conference; and since we are a "May be" nation, we will take all this in our stride.

But to be fair to Obasanjo, we really don't need a Sovereign National Conference to effect the changes needed to make the nation wake up. But, by the same token, we probably don't even need the National Political Reform Conference either. Perhaps we don't even need anything at all. In other words, right here, I can spell out the solutions to the problems without attending any conference. Anyone can. Aren't the main issues the type of Constitution, the system of governance, true federalism, electoral reform, resource control and now even gender issues?

(Continued on page 6)