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Yar'adua speaks on BBC today

By Abdulmutallib A. Abubakar & AbdulFattah Olajide

RUMOURS and conflicting newspaper reports about President Umaru Yar'adua's health status could be dramatically altered today when the president speaks on the radio networks of the British Broadcast-

● VP: 'I spoke to him'

ing Corporation [BBC] and the Voice of America [VOA], his top aide and his son-in-law separately promised yesterday.

Both Chief Economic Adviser

to the President Tanimu Yakubu Kurfi and Member of the House of Representatives and Yar'adua's son-in-law Alhaji Badamasi Kabir were reacting to rumours which

swept the country again yesterday alleging that Yar'adua had died. Yar'adua's Special Adviser on Communications Olusegun Adeniyi also dismissed the rumours and said the president is alive and getting better by the day.

Late on Sunday night, in
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Discordant tunes in Senate over Yar'adua

By Abdul-Rahman Abubakar

AHEAD of today's scheduled debate in the Senate on President Umaru Musa Yar'adua's

health status, senators who spoke to *Daily Trust* yesterday expressed divergent views on the matter, with some saying the debate itself was unnecessary.

The last time such a move was contemplated to

debate the ill health of President Umaru Musa Yar'adua, which has kept him out of the country for 51 days, it suffered a defeat as Deputy

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PHOTO: NAN



CHIEF Imam of Gombe, Khadi Abdullahi Maikano, conducting prayers for the late Hajiya Aishatu Nafada, mother of the Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives, Usman Bayero Nafada in Gombe yesterday.

Obasanjo faults FG on terror listing

From Isa Umar Gusau, Maiduguri

FORMER President, Olusegun Obasanjo, has faulted the reaction of the Federal Government to the listing of Nigeria among countries whose citizens would face intense screening before entering the United States of America.

The US had days ago listed Nigeria alongside nine others

Afghanistan, Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia and Yemen as "countries of interest" in an intensified counter-terrorism policy.

Soon after the listing, the Federal Government came out strongly to condemn it, insisting that Farouk spent only a few minutes on its soil while Nigeria has been a key player in global coun-

ter-terrorism treaties.

Obasanjo however told the BBC Network Africa yesterday that he would have expected the government to come out and say what went wrong on the side of Nigeria's security system and announce measures to be adopted to prevent what he called the "brain washing" of its young citizens into engaging in terrorism to to pre-

vent a recurrence. He cited the response of the US after the alleged failed attack where the government admitted that something went wrong with its security system and has been trying to take measures to avert future occurrence.

Obasanjo said he had seen extremism in Nigeria on the part of some followers of the two major religions, Islam and Christian-

ity. He however noted that when he first learnt about an alleged attempt by a Nigerian to bomb himself inside a US bound plane, he received the news with disbelief but after unfolding developments his disbelief turned to shock because it was strange, maintaining that if the alleged attempt had succeeded it would have been very disastrous.



FORMER Vice President Atiku Abubakar (left) with former military President General Ibrahim Babangida during Abubakar's visit to Minna to commiserate with Babangida on the demise of his wife Maryam.

Boko Haram suspects plead not guilty

From Sharafa Dauda, Maiduguri

EIGHTEEN persons paraded before a Maiduguri Magistrate's Court yesterday for alleged involvement in the Boko Haram crisis that engulfed Maiduguri and some northern states have all pleaded not guilty to the charges.

Before commencing hearing, the presiding judge at the Magistrate's Court 5 in Wulari, Magistrate Waziri Wakili sought confirmation from all respondents on their correct names, calling each name one after the other. Each suspect affirmed to their correct identities before the charges were read out to them by the Registrar of the court in English, Hausa and Kanuri, because some of the suspects complained of their inability to understand English.

The suspects who had been kept in police custody at the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) in Maiduguri are allegedly members of a radical Islamic sect which abhors western education.

They were charged for involvement in illegal possession and use of firearms, killing of policemen on lawful duty, burning of police stations and government buildings, disruption of public peace, illegal and violent protest against constituted authority and accessory to the loss of innocent lives and destruction of property.

Hearing was adjourned till February 24, to enable the prosecutor prepare litigation against the accused persons in a court of proper jurisdiction, in this case, the High Court, while the defendants were to be remanded in prison custody.

US bent on humiliating Nigeria - Jibril Aminu

From Abdullahi Tasiu Abubakar, Yola

THE Chairman, Senate Foreign Affairs Committee Professor Jibril Aminu has said the Barack Obama administration in the United States placed Nigeria on the terror watch list because it was bent on humiliating the country.

The US government put Nigeria on the watch list following an alleged attempt by a 23-year-old Nigerian, Umar Farouk Mutallab, to blow up a US plane in Detroit on Christmas Day.

In an interview with journalists in his Yola residence, Professor Aminu, a former Nigerian ambassador to the United States, described the US decision as unfair, unnecessary and unjustified.

He said the Obama administration in particular came in with a negative agenda on Nigeria and used the failed bombing incidence to get at the country.

From the harsh and consistent criticism of Nigeria to shunning it in favour of Ghana and now placing it on the watch list, it is clear that

the Obama administration does not like Nigeria, Aminu alleged.

"From one insult to another, they keep on criticising Nigeria... Why should Obama administration do this to us? I think that is not fair; it requires correction," he said.

"Why should we have a better deal under (former President Bill) Clinton and (former President George) Bush than under our fellow brother from Africa (President) Obama.

It is unjustified," he said, alleging that there are some people in

the Obama administration who have a hidden agenda against Nigeria.

The former envoy noted that there were many countries whose citizens were involved in alleged terrorism but America conveniently ignored them and picked Nigeria.

He said there were many suspects from Europe, particularly Britain where a convicted shoe bomber, Richard Reid and many terror suspects come from, but nobody put Britain on the list.

EFCC increases charges against former bank MDs

From Adelanwa Bamgboye, Lagos

THE Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) yesterday increased the corruption charges against former Managing Director of Bank PHB Francis Atuche and Charles Ojo, former Managing Director of Spring Bank from 26 to 45 count criminal charges, accusing them of allegedly granting about N55 billion non-secured credit facilities.

The trial yesterday took a dra-

matic turn at the Federal High Court in Lagos as the new amended charges against them were read out but their plea was not taken.

Justice Akinjide Ajakaiye who presided said the new charge should be read out and the plea of the duo not taken because of the existing objections of the defence counsels to the new charge. Earlier, defence counsel, Tony Idigbe and Mike Ozkekome while opposing the new amended charge informed the court that they had filed two separate

applications. One of it is seeking the quashing of the charges against the accused persons while the other one is seeking the dismissal of the entire proceedings on the ground that the trial was politically motivated.

According to them, the amended charge cannot sail through because it has not received the blessing of the court, saying the prosecution had to first seek the leave of the court before proceeding with the amendment. In his response, EFCC's counsel, Kemi Pinheiro,

said once an amended charge had been filed it automatically displaced the earlier charge. He cited Section 163 of the Criminal Procedure Act (CPA) to buttress his claims, saying the defence counsels' observations were premature and hasty.

Pinheiro stated further that the two applications were seeking the same prayer and described the situation as an abuse of court process.

However, in a short ruling, Justice Ajakaiye said it was not fair to dismiss an application of a party

with a stroke of the pen when the applicant has not applied to withdraw the application.

"I will entertain the two applications but in order to save time, I will hear them together," the judge said.

He then ordered parties in the matter to file necessary papers and adjourned till the 26th of January, 2010 for the adoption of written address.

The accused persons are to continue with the earlier bail granted them by the court.

Why today's rally is necessary - SNG

By Muideen Olaniyi

SAVE Nigeria Group (SNG), the organizers of today's rally in Abuja, yesterday shed more light on why it thought it was necessary to organize protest against the long absence of President Umaru Musa Yar'adua.

Those expected at today's rally include Prof. Wole Soyinka, former Kaduna State governor Alhaji Balarabe Musa and Chief Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu. Others are Mr Olisa Agbakoba (SAN), a former presi-

dent of Nigeria Bar Association, Prof. Pat Utomi, Malam Uba Sani, Mrs Ayo Obe, Buba Galadima, Mr Clement Nwankwo, Mr Femi Falana and Hajia Naja'atu Muhammad, among others.

Addressing newsmen on behalf of the group in company of other members, a former Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, Farouk Adamu Aliyu, said they were worried about the way Nigeria is being governed at the moment, especially after the departure of President Yar'adua for medical treatment in Saudi

Arabia.

Aliyu said the group wanted the interpretation of the Section 144, 145 and 146 of the Constitution which delves into the way and manner by which the absence of Yar'adua should be handled, saying that nobody is in charge of government because the President did not hand-over power to Vice President Goodluck Jonathan before his itinerary.

He said the group would be happy to know who authorized the military to quell the recent violence in Cross River and

Bauchi States in the absence of Yar'adua who has the sole power to give such directive.

"We are already in court to seek the interpretation of Section 144, 145 and 146 of the Constitution on whether the Federal Executive Council (FEC) ought not to be compelled to check if the President could continue and to know if absence from office for more than 40 days does not amount to incapacitation. Since they refuse to do that, it means that their allegiance is to the President and not to the country," he added.

When asked to explain why the group did not think about protest before now, he replied: "Before this time, nobody has done this (protest). We are doing it out of patriotism. We have given these people enough time. This protest is not convened because the President is not around."

Aliyu, who said the march was going to be peaceful with the support of security agencies, added that the membership of the SNG was not based on North-South dichotomy or religious affiliations.



PIC: OLADIPUPO ODUNEWU

MEMBERS of the Nigerian Legion, Lagos State chapter, observing a minute's silence in memory of the fallen heroes, during the Armed Forces Remembrance Day celebration at the Chapel of Christ the Light, Alausa-Ikeja, Lagos, at the weekend.

...As Police prepare to ensure order during mass rally

THE police say they will provide adequate security to ensure that hoodlums do not back today's protest march by some eminent Nigerians to the National Assembly.

Mr Yemi Ajayi, Deputy Force Public Relations Officer, gave the assurance at a news briefing in Abuja yesterday.

The police said that they had information that the rally would start from Unity Fountain, near Transcorp Hotel, through Central Business District and end at the National Assembly complex.

"The instruction of the Inspector-General of Police is that we should man all strategic and key locations so that people don't take undue advantage of the event.

"And we are assuring Nigerians that there is not going to be any break down of law and order," Ajayi said.

He said the police would deploy enough manpower for the operation to ensure a crime-free rally.

Meanwhile, the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), an NGO, has said the planned rally by some Nigerians on the state of the nation does not warrant any police permit.

Malam Auwal Musa-Rafsanjani, Publicity Secretary of TMG, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Abuja yesterday that peaceful processions were in line with modern democratic culture.

According to him, a subsisting court decision reaffirms the fact that the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria allows the people to carry out peaceful protests to draw government attention to specific issues.

The people, who called for the rally under the aegis of the "Save Nigeria Group", include Prof. Wole Soyinka, Alhaji. Balarabe Musa, a former Gov of Kaduna State and Chief Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu.

Other personalities expected at the rally are Mr Olisa Agbakoba (SAN), a former president of Nigeria Bar Association, Prof. Pat Utomi, Malam Uba Sani, Mrs Ayo Obe, Mr Clement Nwankwo, Mr Femi Falana and Dr Tunji Abayomi. (NAN)

Court sets Jan 13 for mention in suit against Yar'adua

By Atika Balal

AN Abuja Federal High Court has fixed January 13 for mention in a suit challenging the absence of President Umaru Musa Yar'adua from office on health grounds since November 2009.

Abuja based lawyer, Christopher Onwuekwe, through his counsel Amobi Nzelu, is insisting that Vice President Goodluck Jonathan can lawfully discharge any of the functions of President Umaru Yar'adua who has been on a medical trip to Saudi Arabia since November 23 2009.

He is asking the court for a declaration that by the combined provisions of Sections 5 (1) and 148 (1) of the Nigerian constitution 1999, the Vice President

can exercise the executive powers vested in the President in the absence of the president having regard to the circumstances of the suit.

He is also asking the court to determine whether the Vice President can lawfully discharge any or all the functions of the President in the absence of the President in the interest of peace, order and good governance of the federation pending when the President resumes and takes over.

Counsel to the defendants, A. O Mbamali asked the court for time to enable defense respond to the originating summons which they received yesterday.

The suit has the Attorney General of the Federation and the Executive Council of the Federation as defendants.

Sacked bank CEO loses 7 more homes

By Boco Edet

ECONOMIC and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) continued the execution of a Federal High Court order to seize properties of sacked Managing Director of Intercontinental Bank Erastus Akingbola, sealing off seven more of his houses yesterday.

This brings to ten the number of homes owned by Akingbola all in Lagos which have been confiscated by EFCC since last week. EFCC's spokesman Femi Babafemi said of the homes sealed yesterday, four are located on the same street while two others are on another street.

Babafemi listed the houses as 210, A & B Isale Eko Street, Dolphin Estate, Ikoyi, 177 A, B, C & D Adaranijo Street, Victoria Island, Ikoyi and 23, Fayemi Street, Coun-

cil Area, Egbeda.

EFCC and Intercontinental Bank jointly sought an order with Intercontinental Bank to seize Akingbola's properties and freeze his bank accounts after it was discovered he was allegedly siphoning money from Nigeria abroad.

Akingbola who is worth over N346 billion is only entitled to N1.4m per month for living expenses as a Federal High Court in Lagos also ordered the freezing of his bank accounts.

The former bank chief was sacked by Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) on August 14 for issuing non-performing loans running into billions of naira. After EFCC intervened in the recovery of monies for banks, it discovered that he was allegedly involved in money laundering.



FEDERAL Capital Territory Minister Senator Mohamed Adamu Aliero (right) with the British High Commissioner to Nigeria Mr. Bob Dewar, during the high commissioner's visit to the minister at his residence in Abuja, yesterday.

Reps resume plenary today, discuss Yar'adua

MEMBERS of the House of Representatives will resume their plenary session today after their yuletide vacation which began on Dec. 17, 2009.

The long absence of President Umaru Yar'adua as well as the listing of Nigeria on the U.S. terror list, following the Dec. 25, 2009 airline alleged bombing attempt

would be tabled for discussion, the Chairman, House Committee on Business and Rules, Rep. Ita Enang, said yesterday.

Rep. Ita Enang said that his committee packaged the notice paper for two weeks to let the lawmakers know that the House will resume to full legislative business.

Enang said that aside from the 2010 Appropriation Bill, the House would be busy with more legislative duties relating to the passage of motions and bills.

The notice paper, made available to NAN indicated that the House will consider various

reports including that of the Special Ad hoc Committee on the Review of 1999 Constitution on Tuesday.

Other reports lined up for consideration include those of the Joint Committee on Petroleum Resources, Gas and Justice; Communications, Environment; FCT; Health and Drugs; Narcotics and Financial Crimes.

On Wednesday, the House is billed to consider the controversial Freedom of Information Bill as well as the Bill for an Act to Provide for Measures to Combat Terrorism.

The House is also billed to begin a novel series of sectoral debates, starting from Banking and Finance, Power and the Education sectors.

A check at the House of Representatives wing of the National Assembly in Abuja yesterday showed that many lawmakers' offices hitherto under lock and key, had been cleaned by workers and opened for use.

Also, some lawmakers and their personal aides were at their respective offices to attend to pending issues, ahead of today's resumption. NAN



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Missing motorcycles: 3 policemen arrested

By Misbahu Bashir

THREE policemen in Abuja have been arrested over the disappearance of motorcycles belonging to those who violated the law against commercial motorcycling in the city.

The policemen were said to have confiscated several motorcycles from their owners and instead of taking them to their office as exhibits resolved to keep them at a site in Maitama District Abuja. After some time all the seized motorcycles were taken away.

A source told Daily Trust that the FCT police authorities deployed detectives to monitor all policemen on duty and during the surveillance discovered the site in which seized motorcycles were hidden by the policemen.

He said several motorcycles were seized but only one was recovered while the rest were taken to an undisclosed location by the 3 policemen and a civilian accomplice. The source said the detectives and two top officers accosted the civilian and after his arrest revealed their modus operandi.

The source said the suspects are in custody at the Maitama Divisional Police headquarters. Others who participated in the act would be arrested.

The FCT authorities have banned commercial motorcycles in city centre and ordered the police to arrests motorcyclists and confiscate motorcycles. Commercial motorcycles are not allowed in the suburbs at night.



IGP Onovo

'Nigeria/China energy pact mutually beneficial'

By Aisha Umar

COOPERATION between Nigeria and China in the area of energy is just commencing but a lot more can be achieved jointly, Chinese Foreign Affairs Minister Mr. Jiechi Yang has said.

Speaking in Abuja at bilateral talks between Nigeria and China, Mr. Jiechi Yang said "China

and Nigeria have had great cooperation in the energy field, which is mutually beneficial to both parties. Progress has been made and we believe that it is important to translate the energy strong points of Nigeria into advantages of social and economical development. In China we do need to import oil from other countries including Nigeria,

The Minister of Foreign Affairs Ojo Maduekwe said just as China is the largest country in Asia, Nigeria is also the largest country in Africa, adding that "Nigeria has enjoyed close economic ties with China and the high point of that relationship is President Yar'adua's state visit to China within few months of his being in office".



NIGER State Governor Muazu Babangida Aliyu (middle) with the Etsu Nupe, Dr. Yahaya Abubakar (right) and Sarkin Sudan of Kontagora, Alhaji Saidu Namaska after the conferment on the governor of the title Agbayewa of the Source at Ile-Ife, Osun State, yesterday.

Governors meet over Yar'adua

By Muideen Olaniyi

THIRTY six governors yesterday held talks in Abuja over the continued absence of President Umaru Yar'adua from the country.

Though the governors said yesterday's meeting was to discuss the alleged attempt to bomb a US passenger plane by a Nigerian, sources said it was called to discuss the power vacuum Yar'adua's absence is generating.

Meanwhile, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Board of Trustees (BOT) meeting has been fixed for Thursday at the Banquet Hall of Presidential Villa possibly to discuss the controversy generated by the continued absence of President Umaru Yar'adua.

A statement signed by BOT Secretary, Dr Abdullahi Adamu said the meeting which would hold in the evening was meant for members alone.

Yar'adua speaks on BBC today

Continued from page 1

response to *Daily Trust's* enquiries, Media Assistant to the Vice President Ima Niboro said Dr. Goodluck Jonathan confirms that he spoke to Yar'adua on telephone last week. NEXT had said on Sunday that Jonathan told friends that he never spoke to Yar'adua, contrary to what he told the Federal Executive Council on Wednesday last week.

Kurfi told BBC yesterday that he had spoken to the president "countless number of times," and said, "I'm assuring you that the President is recuperating. I, my humble self, called him this (Monday) morning but he was yet to wake up from sleep. I will call him back, and God-willing, you (the BBC Hausa Service reporter Mansur Liman) will speak with the president and people will hear his voice on radio or television."

On his part, Alhaji Badamasi Kabir told the BBC that his last

contact with President Yar'adua was four days earlier (as at Monday), adding that his health was improving. "I spoke to them today and they said that the president will talk to Nigerians through the BBC and Voice of America so that Nigerians will have a rest of mind," he said.

The chief economic adviser blamed the rumour of the president's death on people who have hatred for the present administration's policies. "They should know that Allah gives and takes life at any time He wills. Being sick is entirely different from dying." Asked whether Yar'adua has suffered memory loss, Kurfi said, "How could a person who sits and discusses with people, reads, phones his deputy, ministers, relatives and friends, be said to have memory loss?"

"If you understand, all these are propaganda because some people feel unhappy on how the government activities are going.

Dr. Goodluck Jonathan has presided over Federal Executive Council meetings that awarded rail contracts from Kaduna to Jaba and revival funds for Textile industries."

He also said FEC awarded 20 road contracts at the cost of more than N70 billion, saying there were more than 40 projects that were on-going. The adviser was however silent on the day the president is expected to return. He said he will link the BBC reporter with the president so that he can ask him when he is coming back.

Alhaji Badamasi Kabir also dismissed the rumour that Yar'adua was in coma for several weeks. He even swore that it was the children that advised the president to go for medical checkup and persuaded him to stay in the hospital when he decided to go for pilgrimage.

"Even if the president should die today, we thank God because he endured illness for long. As

Muslims, we were told that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said that protracted illness expiate one's sins," he said.

He said if the president fails to speak to Nigerians by today, the opposition has every right to criticize government for concealing the true health condition of the president. He said Nigeria is not like some Western countries where whatever happens to their leader will be publicised. He cited what happened in Guinea when military ruler Captain Musa Dadis Kamara was shot, saying the Guinean leader's true health situation is not yet known.

Mr. Segun Adeniyi, who spoke to reporters from Angola, where he had gone for the opening ceremony of the African Cup of Nations, urged the public to disregard the story on the president's death, which he described as not only false but a figment of the writers' imagination.

"The speculations are false.

The President is alive and actually getting better. He is very much conscious, can talk and has been talking, including making phone calls to some people back home," he said.

Adeniyi said he travelled to Angola with the President's permission as a member of the Presidential Committee. "So, I am here officially but I am coming back home hopefully tomorrow because he has so directed", the adviser added.

Yesterday's rumours were sparked off by a claim in the internet based American Chronicle, which said Yar'adua died in Saudi Arabia on December 10 but that his wife, Hajia Turai, had been scheming to prevent the information from being known to the public. A day earlier, the Lagos-based NEXT newspaper had claimed that Yar'adua was brain-damaged and was no longer able to recognize anyone, including his wife.

Discordant tunes in Senate over Yar'adua

Continued from page 1

Senate Leader Victor Ndoma-Egba, who proposed the debate, could not get the support of one-fifth of senators to move the motion. Today's scheduled debate was announced in Minna at the weekend by Deputy Senate President Ike Ekweremadu. Speaking to *Daily Trust* on phone, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Public Accounts Senator Ahmad Ibrahim Lawan (ANPP, Yobe North) said the scope of the debate has not been defined and that has left senators in the dark as to theme of the debate.

He said, "What are we going to debate? Because I don't know. I only learnt in the newspapers

that there is going to be debate on the President's health. I don't see any reason for any haste on the matter now, as we are aware that the Senate President had a phone chat with Mr. President recently. So what do we want to know?"

He said the Senate may end up acknowledging the fact that President Yar'adua's health is improving and that he would soon be back to continue in office. "Otherwise, there is nowhere in the Constitution that stipulates that a President could be impeached on grounds of ill health. There are several other Presidents in the world that have medical concerns; it is not only Yar'adua," Lawan added.

Also speaking on the mat-

ter, Senator Satty Davies Gogwim (PDP, Plateau Central) said there is no basis for a debate on the health of President Yar'adua.

He said, "I don't think it is ripe and right to debate the President's health, unless of course we know the condition of health of Mr. President. Otherwise what are we going to debate on? You don't know what is going on and then you are going to just speculate. There is no medical opinion as specified in sections of the Constitution, and unless there is such medical opinion by a team of qualified persons, there is nothing anyone can do."

However, on their part, two senators from South East geo-political zone have said the

debate is necessary to determine the health condition of Mr. President. Senator Annie Okonkwo (PDP, Anambra) said there is the need for the Senate to debate the President's health to get to know his true condition. "Definitely we have to discuss the matter because we cannot as a Senate shy away from our responsibility. We have been hearing all sorts of information on the President's health, so as representatives of our people we have to know what the condition of Mr. President is," Okonkwo said.

For his part, Senator Anyimchukwu Ude (PDP, Ebonyi) said, "We have to debate the issue because we have all gone to our constituencies and we know their

complaints on the matter. We have all prayed for the President; now that has gone beyond us and we cannot just keep calm. A lot has been said, it is now time for us to know the true condition of Mr. President." He however said there can be no action against the President until the true situation of his health is ascertained because "we are not seers, it is after tomorrow that we are going to know the condition."

On his part, Deputy Senate Leader Victor Ndoma Egba said he had no idea on the matter to be discussed as revealed by Senator Ekweremadu. He said, "I don't know what is on the motion. It has to be tomorrow, when we get to the floor."

'Support constitutional roles for traditional rulers'

From Mustafa Abubakar, Ilorin

AN appeal has gone to political leaders in the country to support constitutional roles for traditional rulers.

The Principal Partner Marvel and Associates Dr. Praise Jaiyeola whose group has just concluded a roundtable on identifying roles for traditional rulers in democratic dispensation, made the appeal in Ilorin while speaking with newsmen.

He said it had become imperative that the three tiers of government and other stakeholders agree in earnest to give legal backing to some activities of the traditional rulers, saying it would enhance not only societal development at the

base level but also accelerate the peace building process in troubled areas of the country.

"One of the highlights of our review of that roundtable, which was approved by the Kwara State government, is that more than ever before, it has become necessary to constitutionally involve traditional rulers in the running of this country.

"We are not saying they should become politicians, in fact, our understanding is that they should downplay their latent political role, but then the political class also need to move them perhaps from the level of being mere advisers to a much more functional level as nature itself had granted them before the emergence of modern government."

Stay back home and fix our economy – Fashola

From Chris Agabi, Lagos

WHILE Nigerians have continued to criticise the US government's directive that its security agencies worldwide conduct extra security screening on Nigerians travelling to the US from anywhere in the world, the governor of Lagos State Babatunde Raji Fashola has advised Nigerians to remain at home and develop their country.

Fashola who was reacting to questions at a conference on renewing business confidence in Lagos said Western economies stand to lose more if Nigerians stop travelling.

"If you look at the international air business today,

I think Nigeria more than any race on this continent (Africa) contributes a large chunk to the profitability of the Western airlines. I think if Nigerians stop flying, the economies of the West will probably take a bigger bashing than they assume.

"I think this is the part of the world where business class and first class run by foreign airlines are fully booked by Nigerians. So the sustainability of those airlines depend more on Nigerians travelling than we not travelling at all. It would affect both economies."

He also condemned the decision of the US saying it is hasty and extreme.

Publisher, editor remanded in prison

From Ayegba Israel Ebije, Minna

THE Publisher of *Liberator* newspaper Mr Kelani Mohammed and Editor Mr Usman Saidu were yesterday remanded in Minna Prisons over a publication against the Secretary to the Niger State Government Dr Mohammed Kuta Yahaya.

According to the First Information Report, the two journalists were charged to the Magistrate Court in Minna by the Niger State Police Command for conspiracy, inciting public disturbance, defamation and giving false information to the public, contrary to section 97 of the Criminal Prosecution Code (CPC).

They were said to have published an article, saying the SSG acquired wealth illegally, a report the police said had been investigated and found to be false.

While asking the court to remand the two, Sergeant Mark Igwe said if they were not remanded, they could temper with the case which is still being investigated.

Council to the plaintiffs, Barrister Mohammed Ndayako, however argued that the outcome of the police investigation had been determined and that there was no need to keep them behind bars. In his ruling Chief Magistrate Salihu Tanko ordered that the two accused persons be remanded in prison till January 26.



LAGOS State Governor Babatunde Fashola (right), presenter of CNN's Inside Africa Isha Sesay (centre), and the News Editor (Africa) of *The Economist* Adam Roberts (right) during the Focus on Lagos One-on-One interview segment of the 2010 Economist Conference at the Federal Palace Hotel, Victoria Island, Lagos, yesterday.

Yuguda cautions aspirants on 2011 elections

From Muhammad Abubakar, Bauchi

BAUCHI State Governor Isa Yuguda has advised politicians aspiring to elective positions in 2011 to be cautious during campaigns not to make inflammatory statements but preach peace in the interest of the state.

Addressing residents of Zango when he went to sympathize with them over the recent Kala Kato crisis, Yuguda said though the state government had provided an enabling environment for all aspirants irrespective of party affiliations to campaign, there was the need for decorum.

He observed that there were some aspirants planning to overheat the polity through unpleasant utterances, actions and behaviors saying, "my administration is determined to check the excesses of such overzealous politicians for peace

to reign. We will not fold our arms and watch some selfish politicians attempting to destroy our state for their selfish desires".

According to the governor, though his administration was determined to carry every stakeholder along irrespective of differences, it would not tolerate a situation where the security of the state is threatened or played with.

Commenting on the Kala Kato incident, Yuguda described it as very unfortunate, saying, "it is rather unfortunate and sad to see people hiding under the cover of religion or tribe or politics to destroy others for selfish reasons.

"The religions we know and practice differ from the religions practiced by those extremists and agents of destruction. We will as a government be more determined in future to curtail such occurrence in the interest of the people".

Edo PDP ready for re-run election in Etsako

From Vincent Egunyanga, Benin

THE Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Edo State has said it is ready for the re-run election coming up next weekend for Etsako Central in the House of Assembly.

The party said this at a rally in Fugar, Etsako Central state constituency with an appeal to party members not to lose faith in democracy but defend it.

Speakers at the rally included former chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Party Chief Tony Anenih, Chairman of the party in the state Chief Dan Orbih, former Deputy President of the Senate Albert Lagogie, former Governor Oserheimen Osunbor, former Deputy Governor of the state who is now Principal Secretary to the Vice President Chief Mike Ogiadome and the Speaker Edo State House of Assembly Zakawanu Garba.

Speaking at the event the state chairman of the party Chief Dan Orbih said being the first election in 2010, PDP would win the election as a new year gift to its national leader.

While imploring party supporters to be peaceful during the election, he warned that they would return fire for fire if the Action Congress comes with their thugs to cause trouble.

He said the PDP had done a lot for the local government, especially in the provision of amenities like water, schools, hospitals and roads, so they should remain faithful to the party.

The former chairman Board of Trustees of the party, Chief Tony Anenih said during the Akoko Edo re-run election last year, the PDP preached peace but the Action Congress came with hooligans. He told the party that 28 of those hooligans were still in police custody and would soon be charged to court.

He said because of the crisis in the Akoko Edo election there is a bench warrant for the arrest of the winner of the election, Kabiru Adjoto of the Action Congress. He called on the Speaker of Edo State House of Assembly not to allow Adjoto sit in the house chamber when the House resumes today as he would be arrested.

Kogi government to assist people with eye defects

From Isaka Wakili, Lokoja

THE Kogi State Ministry of Health has concluded arrangements to embark on free eye tests and distribution of reading glasses to people living with eye deficiencies.

The Ministry in a statement in Lokoja yesterday said the exercise would hold simultaneously in the three senatorial districts of the state on January 13. Kogi West Senatorial District will hold the screening at the Lokoja Local Government Secretariat while Kogi East will have the screening at the Ankpa General Hospital.

The Ministry also added that Kogi Central would hold the screening at the Okene General Hospital, calling on those with reading problem to come to the general hospital, Abejokolo between January 14 and 16 for free operation and distribution of glasses.

Abia gov's aide wants court's protection against arrest

By Sunday Ejike Benjamin

THE Chief of Staff to the Abia State government Mr. Mascot Uzor Kalu has asked an Abuja High Court to make an order restraining the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) from arresting him over

an alleged breach of contract in the supply of 1,500 units of Chevrolet Aveo 1.5L cars to the Abia State government.

Mascot, a younger brother to the former governor of Abia State, Dr. Orji Uzor Kalu, in a motion-exparte filed yesterday through his counsel, Mr. Valentine, urged

the court to grant all his prayers to prevent the anti-graft agency from arresting him.

The motion was sequel to an invitation letter from the EFCC which is investigating the controversy trailing an Economic Empowerment Modern Taxi Scheme allegedly approved by the

Abia State government in 2007 to enhance public transportation system in the state after the ban on Okada operators.

In the application filed in the High Court, the Chief of staff accused EFCC of causing dislocations in the effective administration of that state by relying

on what he termed as, "frivolous petition".

Also joined in the suit are the Attorney-General of the Federation, Inspector-General of Police, Western Auto Parts & Service Center Limited and its Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Chuck Nwadeyi.

Group condemns protest against Yar'adua

By Abdulkadir Badsha Mukhtar

A group, Nigeria Youth Organization, said it is opposed to any protest against the absence of President Umaru Musa Yar'adua and has called on the concerned groups to call off such plans.

The group said it is unpatriotic for any group of people to disrupt the peaceful coexistence of Nigerians in the name of protest, adding that the King Faisal Medical team in Saudi Arabia has assured that Yar'adua is recovering quickly and will soon return to the country to continue his constitutional duties.

In a statement by the spoke person of the group Alhaji Gambo Ibrahim Gujunku, it described those behind the today's

action as "Highly unpatriotic group, involving Nigerians who had served in top positions in previous Governments, hiding under the guise of democratic license that gives the public in high and low places the right to bare their minds on political developments in the country."

According to the statement "It is clear to note that the President, despite his state of indisposition, had been up and doing to ensure that all the promises he made when taking the oath of office are delivered upon."

The group however, calls for National Prayers in all Mosques and Churches in the country for Mr. President's early recovery and safe return back to the country to continue with his official duties.

AC worries over Yar'adua

By Muideen Olaniyi

THE Action Congress (AC) yesterday expressed concern over the latest whirl of rumours surrounding the current status of President Umaru Musa Yar'adua.

AC National Publicity Secretary, Alhaji Lai Mohammed attributed the success which the rumour-mongers had made so far to the continuing lack of verifiable news about Yar'adua's condition, requested for immediate and concrete evidence on his state of health.

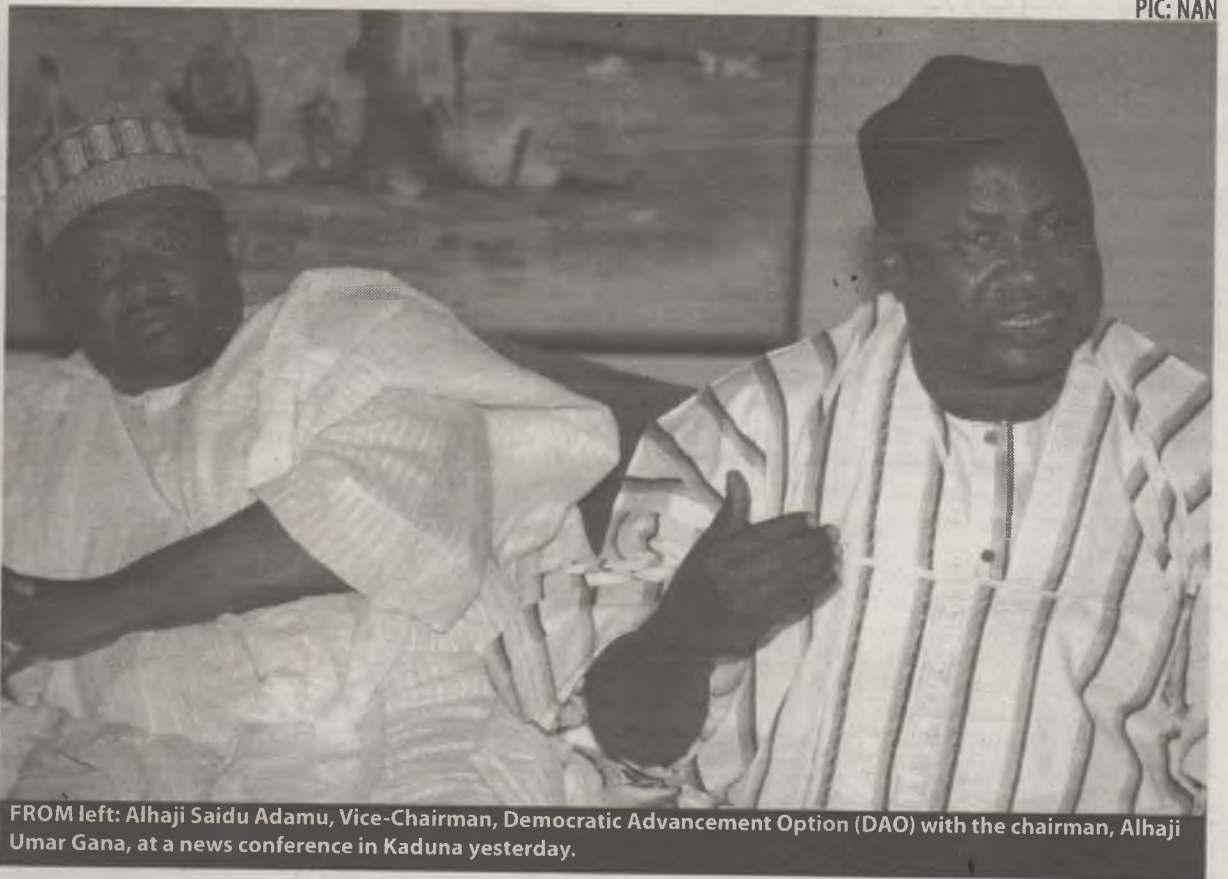
Mohammed said the fact that the government has neither denied nor challenged the media reports over the past 24 hours has raised fears that some cabal may indeed be holding Nigerians hostage.

The party was particu-

larly worried over the various reports in local and international media, saying 'the President is missing, brain-damaged or dead, and that a few people surrounding the President have woven an intricate web of lies and grand deception to hoodwink Nigerians.'

The party expressed dissatisfaction that government has refused to provide daily update on the President's health despite persistent calls by Nigerians, saying Nigerians wanted to know the truth.

It restated its stand that the only conclusive evidence of the President's well-being will be for him to address Nigerians via a date video, adding that anything short of that will be unconvincing to Nigerians.



FROM left: Alhaji Saidu Adamu, Vice-Chairman, Democratic Advancement Option (DAO) with the chairman, Alhaji Umar Gana, at a news conference in Kaduna yesterday.

Nigeria to adopt Israeli policing system

By Misbahu Bashir

POLICE in Nigeria are set to replicate the crime monitoring and prevention mechanism used by the Israel State police.

Minister of Police Affairs Dr. Ibrahim Yakubu Lame said after a meeting with the Israeli Minister of Public Security Mr. Yitzhak Aharonovitch recently in Tel Aviv that Nigeria acknowledges the high competence of the Israel police and wants to adopt same.

Lame said he was in Israel together with the Inspector-General of Police,

Ogbonna Onovo to among other things, study the successes and challenges of implementing community policing and intelligence-led policing strategies as practiced by Israel with a view of adopting the system in Nigeria.

Also speaking, the Inspector-General of Police, Ogbonna Onovo said he was interested in the use and application of skills and resources to work and crime scenes to facilitate investigation, manage exhibits and enhance surveillance capability.

Responding, Mr. Aharonovitch explained that Israel has one national

police force devoted to fighting terrorist activities rather than traditional policing which is informed by their training and experience in terror activities, bomb disposal, forensics and use of modern technology to fight crime.

He further informed the delegation that Israel has embraced the Safe City Project which is being used in twelve cities and involves partnerships with other agencies and city Mayors and coordinated by the Ministry. The project, he said, involves the use of Close Circuit Televisions in the cities.

NUJ threatens court action over assault on journalist

By Misbahu Bashir & Yunus Abdulhamid

THE Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) has threatened to sue the Nigeria Police Force and Guarantee Trust Bank over the assault of one of its members, Desmond Utomwen.

Utomwen, a journalist in the Abuja Bureau Office of The NEWS Magazine, was allegedly beaten to stupor on December 11, 2009 by policemen and officials of the GTB for covering a peaceful protest by customers over alleged fraudulent withdrawals from

the account of one of the customers of the bank amounting to about N490, 000.

The withdrawal was allegedly done in one night with an ATM card, as against the N60, 000 daily withdrawal limit of the Bank.

In a letter written on its behalf and the victim by Festus Keyamo Chambers, which was copied to both the Inspector General of Police and the Guaranty Trust Bank, the Abuja chapter of the NUJ gave the duo a seven day ultimatum to accede to its demands or

face legal action.

The council is demanding that a full scale investigation be launched into the matter with a view to identifying the culprits and prosecuting them in line with the dictates of the law.

Some of the items allegedly collected from Utomwen include a digital camera, a digital recorder, official identity card and undisclosed sum of money.

The FCT Police Command Spokesman DSP Moshood Jimoh said the issue had been resolved.

Plateau teachers begin strike

From Mahmud Lalo, Jos

THE Plateau State chapter of the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) has commenced an indefinite strike following the non implementation of the 27.5% Teachers Salary Structure (TSS) by the state government.

Our correspondent who visited the St. Pauls Township

Primary School in Jos yesterday observed that class rooms and administrative blocks of the school were under lock and key. The story was also the same at the Baptist Primary School along Stadium Road as well as the Methodist Primary School.

Pupils with different school uniforms were seen along the streets in groups. The state

Chairman of the NUT Comrade Gunshin Yarnling had earlier said that the decision to embark on the strike was as a result of the failure by the state government to honour the October 26th, 2009 agreement entered with the union.

Reacting, the Special Adviser on labour Matters to Governor Jonah Jang, Hanssi H. Suleiman,

said there was a little misunderstanding between the union and the government, but that the matter had been resolved.

When contacted, Comrade Yarnling denied the statement, saying the matter had not been resolved. "As far as we are concerned it has not been resolved. We decided to go on strike because the 2007, 2008 and 2009

leave and transport allowances have not been paid.

The Adviser on Labour cannot claim that we have resolved the matter", he said. Yarnling said they had called their members for a meeting to brief them on what they discussed with the government, adding that their response would determine the next action.

PDP is after me, Agoro alleges

From Akinola Femi, Lagos

FORMER presidential candidate of the National Action Council (NAC) Dr. Olapade Agoro has alleged that some members of the Peoples' Democratic Party in the South-west are threatening him, following an interview he granted a national daily in which he advised President Umaru Yar'adua to resign or be forced out. Agoro however said the threat rather than deter him, had strengthened his resolve to fight for the masses.

Agoro said the PDP had made a mockery of Nigeria with its style of governance, adding that the inability of the party and the Federal Executive Council to tell the public the true situation of the president was a shame. Speaking on Farouk Abdul Mutallab's action and the reaction of Senator Jubril Aminu, Agoro said the former Foreign Affairs Minister did not have to be confrontational, saying Nigeria did not have the wherewithal to tackle the Americans.

Yuguda, Gabam reconcile

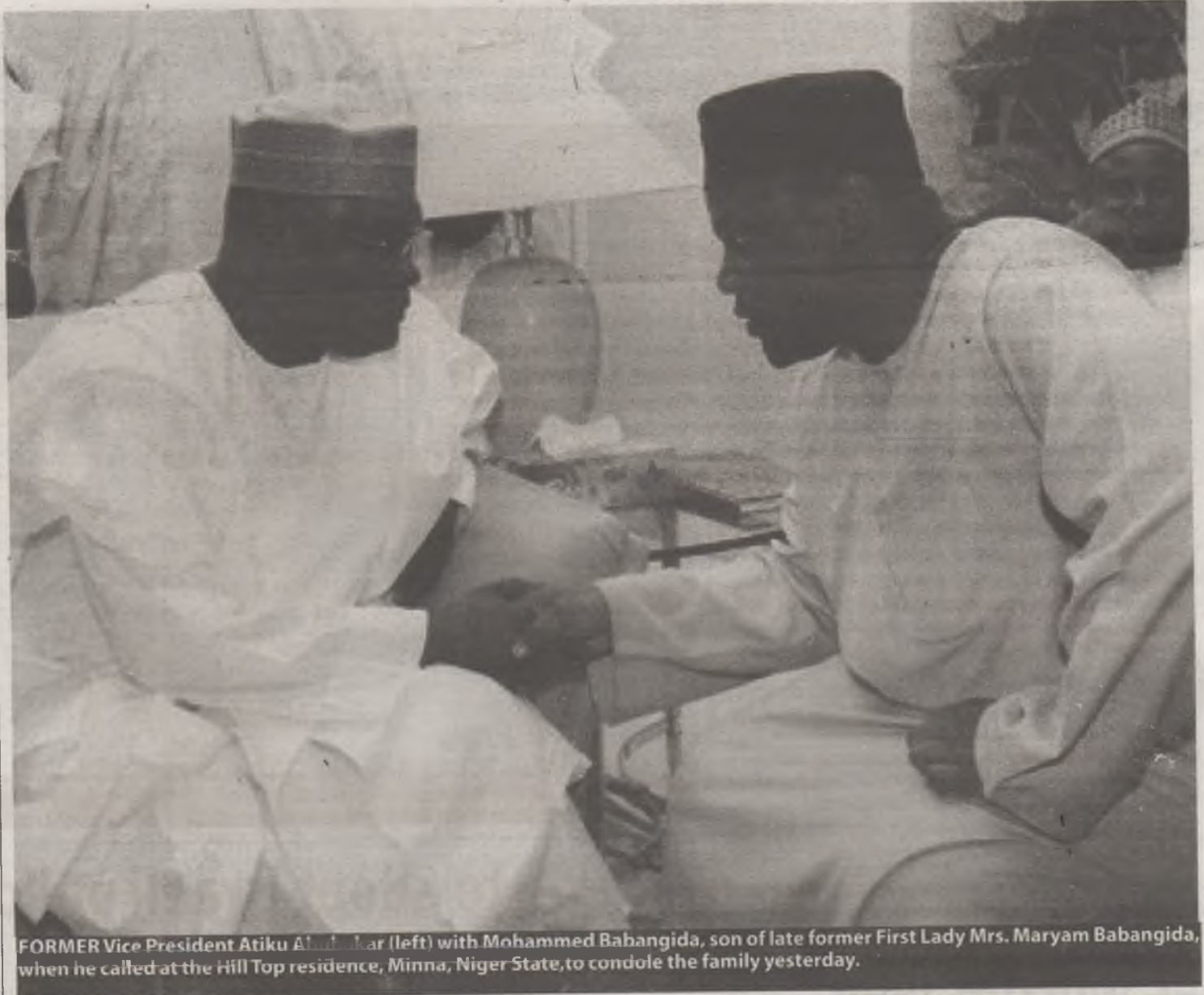
From Muhammad Abubakar, Bauchi

BAUCHI State Governor Isa Yuguda has reconciled with his former Chief of Staff Shehu Gabam who had his office scrapped in 2008, after he was said to have fallen out with his boss.

Yuguda then made Gabam a Special Adviser, a position he rejected. Addressing newsmen at a government guest house yesterday, Gabam who arrived the state Friday evening in company of party supporters said he was in the state to witness the naming ceremony of the governor's son, Umaru.

The former Chief of Staff who said differences were normal in politics maintained that the differences he had with his former boss had been resolved. He said his decision to reconcile with the governor was born out of his desire to support him in moving the state forward.

Gabam said he had no plans at the moment with regards to the 2011 elections.



FORMER Vice President Atiku Abubakar (left) with Mohammed Babangida, son of late former First Lady Mrs. Maryam Babangida, when he called at the Hill Top residence, Minna, Niger State, to condole the family yesterday.

Lawyers decry poor pay

From Andrew Agbese, Jos

THE Plateau State branch of the Young Lawyers' Forum has decryed the poor welfare package given young lawyers in the state and urged the state government to work out a better package for them.

Chairman of the Forum Ekomah Armstrong said poor salaries discouraged many lawyers who were called to the Bar from practicing, preferring jobs in other sectors.

Armstrong who spoke yesterday in Jos while on a courtesy call on the state Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice Edward Pwajok, said the law profession was losing many good

hands.

The Forum complained that their senior colleagues who were their employers were oppressing them by offering them poor pay while they were the ones doing most of the work.

The group also called on the NBA to look into the issue. Responding, the Plateau State Commissioner for Justice Edward Pwajok described as embarrassing the pay package, saying young lawyers needed to be encouraged.

He said the present administration in Plateau was aware of the plight of lawyers and had increased the bursary allowances for its indigenes in law school from N150, 000 to N440, 000.

Yar'adua: 'Protest will not help'

From Rakiya A. Muhammad, Sokoto

THE planned protest march against President Umaru Yar'adua will not solve Nigeria's problems, Chairman Sokoto State chapter of the ANPP Alhaji Abubakar Danfoluti Tambuwal has said.

Some Nigerians led by Nobel Laureate Professor Wole Soyinka have planned a protest march for today in Abuja to urge Yar'adua to resign as president due to his protracted ill-health. Speaking with *Daily Trust* in Sokoto yesterday, Danfoluti called for intervention by elders in the country.

"Look, we have elders in this country. Let them intervene. Their silence will not help us. Let them help us to get out of the problem", he said.

The ANPP chieftain harped

on the need for due process to be followed in addressing the issue.

"I am praying for him to come back alive and continue, but if he is not fit to continue, let us follow due process.

"Constitutionally, if Yar'adua is seriously sick and cannot handle Nigeria, he should hand over to the vice president," he said.



PRESIDENT Yar'adua

LG boss wants anti-graft agencies to probe predecessor

From Leye Adewumi, Akure

THE Chairman of Ondo East Local Government Area Mr. Soji Akindiose yesterday called on anti-graft agencies in the country to probe road contracts awarded by his predecessor, Mr. Charles Ade-

duro. Akindiose while addressing newsmen at Bolorunduro, the council headquarters yesterday urged anti-corruption agencies to beam their searchlights on the council.

He accused Adeduro's administration of awarding the coun-

cil township road network to incompetent contractors at the cost of N400 million. He alleged that N200 million was paid to the contractors in 2008 as 50 per cent mobilisation fee as against the state extant law.

According to him, the coun-

cil's road network was hurriedly awarded.

"The contractor after receiving the mobilisation fee of N200 million abandoned the job half way. It is wrong and unprofessional for a contractor after receiving the 50 per cent mobilization fee to leave

the job undone. Anti corruption agencies need to examine the road contracts awarded by the immediate past government. Apart from this particular contract was over-priced, the contractor handling the project has absconded", he said.

Nafada's mother buried

From Aliyu M. Hamagam, Gombe

THE remains of Hajia Aisha Bayero Nafada, mother of Usman Bayero Nafada, Deputy Speaker House of Representatives, who died last Saturday in Egypt after a protracted were yesterday buried in Gombe.

The funeral prayers for Hajia Aisha was led by the Chief Imam of the Gombe Central Mosque Khadi Abdullahi Maikano and attended by thousands of sympathisers including senators and members of the House of Representatives.

Governors of Gombe and Bauchi States Alhaji Danjuma Goje and Mallam Isa Yuguda were also at the funeral which was conducted at the palace of the emir of Gombe.

The deceased is survived by three children.

Tijjaniya to hold annual Zikr in Kano

From Halima Musa, Kano

THE Tijjaniya fraternity in Nigeria is to hold its annual national Zikr and prayer session on Friday in Kano. The event is scheduled to hold at the emir's palace. Chairman of the publicity committee on the annual Zikr, Mallam Tijjani Sani Shehu Mai Hula, said the Zikr and prayer session would be led by the Sultan of Sokoto, Saad Abubakar.

Mai hula said the zikr and prayer session is organised annually to pray for the peace, stability and development of the country.

He said they would also pray for the speedy recovery of the president.

Chief host of the Zikr will be the leader of the Tijjaniya order, Sheikh Isyaku Rabi'u. One of the expected guest is Sheikh Ahmad Tijjani Inyas from Senegal.



PIC: OLADIPUPO ODUNEWU
From left: Deputy Governor of Lagos State Princess Adebisi Sarah Sosan, retired Navy Commander Oluseyi Sosan and the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs and Culture, Mrs Caroline Bello-Aromire at the Armed Forces Remembrance Day Celebration Service in Lagos at the weekend.

NBA, others meet over Yar'adua

From Yemi Bamidele, Ibadan

THE Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) and other professional bodies in the country are meeting to discuss the absence of President Umar Yar'adua from the country.

Speaking in Ibadan Sunday at a dinner hosted by the Oyo State government in honour of presidents of three professional

bodies in the country namely the Nigerian Bar Association, the Nigerian Institute of Architects and the Nigerian Society of Engineers, the NBA President

Mr. Oluwarotimi Akeredolu said a constitutional crisis may erupt in Nigeria soon if care was not taken.

He said the president's absence without any communi-

cation to the National Assembly was worrisome.

Akeredolu who spoke on behalf of the presidents of the other professional bodies said professional bodies in the country were meeting over Yar'adua.

Responding, Governor Alao-Akala said the state would continue to abide by the constitution.

The governor used the occasion to showcase the activities of his administration since inception till date, saying he had touched the lives of the masses positively.

"By next year when we shall give account of our stewardship, God's willing, our work will speak for itself", he said.

Borno perm sec harps on girl-child education

From Yahaya Ibrahim, Maiduguri

ENROLMENTS of female children in schools and participation of women in politics in some states is still far from expectation and something must be done to address the issue.

The Permanent Secretary in the Borno State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development Hajia Fati Gambo Dori said this yesterday in Maiduguri while welcoming participants from all over the country to the 12th regular national council meeting on women affairs.

The meeting has the theme, "Women empowerment, child and social development legacies of the Yar'adua administration".

"As we begin our meeting, we should be mindful of our constituents that is, women, children, the disabled and destitute and the fact that they still pose a great challenge to our individual offices and by implication, government. We have to re-examine some of these challenges", she said.

She said the Borno State government had been doing a lot to address girl child education and

women participation in governance.

She added that the ministry among other things facilitated the establishment of the NAPTIP zonal office in Maiduguri.

Participants at the conference include permanent secretaries and directors of the Ministries of Women Affairs and Social Development, departmental agencies as well as Non Government Organisations.

Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development Hajia Salamatu is expected to address the gathering Wednesday.

As we begin our meeting, we should be mindful of our constituents that is, women, children, the disabled and destitute and the fact that they still pose a great challenge to our individual offices and by implication, government.

IWU'S PLOT TO BECOME GOVERNOR OF IMO STATE: A REJOINDER

The attention of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has been drawn to a manifestly biased story which appeared in the December 28, 2009 edition of an obscure magazine which carries the tag SCROLL NIGERIA. It was authored by one Bimbo Philips whose unprofessional handling of the report shows how degenerate journalism practice in the country has become.

As a Commission, we would as usual, have ignored this publication as a figment of the author's imagination but for certain allegations she has presented in a manner that tends to taint the hard earned reputation of Professor Maurice Iwu, the INEC Chairman and the Commission as an institution with a constitutional mandate to nurture and sustain our nascent democracy.

Besides, the painstaking efforts the publishers of this back water magazine have made by mailing copies of the publication, as well as photocopies of its December 7, 2009 edition to institutions and numerous stakeholders in the polity communicates a diabolic intent. It therefore elicits an unavoidable reaction from us in order to explain away these allegations which, going by their defamatory content, are actionable. And in doing this, we would have preferred taking the issues in their entirety but for want of space and time. However, we would like to address the most crucial issues raised by Bimbo Philips as follows:

It is inconceivable for any sane mind to imagine that Professor Maurice Maduakolam Iwu, after all his internationally acknowledged achievements, his age and all that he has done to advance the electoral process, would aspire to occupy the position of a state governor. According to Bimbo, Iwu desires this position in order to "take a soft flight from prosecution". The question however is, does the INEC Chairman enjoy any immunity at the moment? The answer is certainly no. And if this is the case what has stopped prosecutorial agencies from bringing him to justice if he is indeed guilty as being charged by his traducers (Bimbo inclusive)?

It would seem as though these wilders of tar brushes have exhausted their product and can now latch on anything in a vain effort to elicit odious feelings from the society against INEC and its leadership. This effort, we hasten to say, betrays a profound lack of integrity and sophistication. In other words, it shows how ossified and bird-brained Iwu's critics have become.

Bimbo and her sponsors have also, mindlessly characterized Professor Iwu as a desperate man. Desperate in what sense if we may ask. She claims the INEC Chairman is working frantically for a second term by allegedly "throwing money around to bureaucrats, legislators and the powers that be". But can Iwu, by any stretch of imagination, be working covertly to be the prospective Chief Executive of Imo State and at the same time scheming to head the Commission if Bimbo is to be taken seriously?. This again betrays the absurdities that have characterized all criticisms being heaped at the person of the man, Iwu. It seems Iwu's critics have run out of ideas. If not why have they resorted to invectives and character assassination?.

Sylvester Odigie's patented rights: This is an extraordinary patent which Odigie says "he is the sole and duly registered owner" by virtue of Certificates of Patent Registration, Industrial Design Registration and of Extension of copy right in design allegedly issued to him by the Registrar of Patents, Federal Ministry of Commerce.

Hiding behind the façade of these certificates, the Bedding Holdings Chief Executive is praying the law courts to restrain INEC from looking elsewhere to get value for its money for the supply of transparent ballot boxes even after the Commission had fulfilled its contractual obligations by paying the company the sum of N360,000,000 (Three Hundred and Sixty Million Naira) for the transparent ballot boxes it supplied to INEC in 2003. As the Commission had stated in its letter

to the out gone IG, Mike Okiro, the payment was done in the spirit of good business relationship with Bedding Holdings which we desire to sustain.

INEC has persistently refrained from discussing this issue on the pages of newspapers because to do so would amount to an infraction of the on-going court process. Be that as it may, the global patent being canvassed by the management of Bedding Holdings has no antecedent anywhere in the world. To be specific, no patent issued in a democratic setting would give such exclusive rights for the manufacture and sale of a product. To do so would amount to killing the competitive spirit which is a very important plank of capitalism. Nigeria has embraced free market enterprise as its operational principle. Odigie wouldn't take any of these virtues and hence his determination to tie the Commission to his company's apron strings nilly-willy. INEC is however hopeful that the outcome of the on-going adjudicatory process will vindicate its position on the matter.

Ironically, the management of Bedding Holdings, sensing the bankruptcy of its case, has resorted to blackmail with a ludicrous claim that INEC is truncating the speedy hearing of the case through the instrumentality of technicalities. It therefore behooves the organization to make public these much touted technicalities in order to afford discerning analysts a profound opportunity to appraise how the "technicalities" have truncated fair adjudication on the case before Abuja High Court.

The bankruptcy of the company's complaints is further exposed by their characterization of INEC's innocuous letter to the former Inspector General of Police, Mike Okiro as a petition and a threat on the life of Odigie. Curiously, there was nothing in the tenor of the said letter that was either suggestive of a threat or a petition. If anything, it was a official request to the then number one Police Officer of the Federation to restrain Bedding Holdings from its sustained campaign of calumny against INEC which, to all intents and purposes, was diversionary. It is shocking that the Police High Command then, rather than investigate the issues raised in our letter, turned over the material to the company.

Bimbo, in an attempt to pander to the whims of her pay master Odigie, claims the INEC Chairman has the propensity for disregarding "judicial pronouncements, judgments, proceedings and indulge(sic), in acts capable of causing the break down of law and order". As a commission, we are not aware of any single instance of such alleged abridgement of the law. In any case, Bedding Holdings or its lackey Bimbo is at liberty to disclose such instances, if any. We challenge the company to do just that if its Chief Executive could be audacious enough to lay claim to honor and integrity. Dim Chukwumeka Ojukwu's recent statement which Bimbo has, with relish, used as a reference point is too generalized to be taken seriously. If anything, it is the ritualistic trade mark of the Nigerian politician who revels in sweeping statements in the absence of anything cogent enough to say.

We have refrained from commenting on the rather invidious references to what Bimbo says was allegedly said about the Commission by its former head, Sir Abel Ibude Guobadia. This is because we have tremendous respect for the Commission's past leaders (Guobadia inclusive). We therefore consider it most imprudent to take issues with him on the pages of newspapers as Bimbo Philips would want us to do. If some contractors and the CNPP have accused Iwu of impropriety in award of contracts, it is left for the courts to determine based on the burden of proof which lies with those who have made such allegations. In fact, it is not in our character as a Commission to discuss such trivialities with idle fellows who revel in frivolities.

Bimbo also talks about a consensus to the effect that the INEC Chairman has failed in the discharge of his duties. Whose consensus, if we may ask? Is it the consensus of the vocal minority whose stupendous financial resources have guaranteed sustained campaign of

calumny against INEC through the numerous media platforms they control? Is it the consensus of the African big man who perceives electoral contests as a do or die affair; who finances and promotes violence during elections which must be won at all costs or who frowns at intra-party democracy and prevents the women folk from being part of the electoral process? Bimbo is, here again, at liberty to tell us whose consensus she is talking about.

On whether or not INEC, as it is at present, is properly constituted, we have time without number proffered explanations quoting relevant sections of the law. Ironically, this present Commission which Bimbo has characterized as illegal, has organized re-run and bye-elections which have produced governors and other representatives of the people. Anyone who is not satisfied with the status quo is at liberty to seek legal interpretation via the law courts since the adjudication of an issue as sensitive as proper constitution of INEC on the pages of newspapers is at variance with the dictates of the rule of law.

On the sudden departure of IFES from the country, we do not have an immediate explanation. IFES alone has reasons as to why they have stopped operations in Nigeria. It is however not correct to say that the international non-governmental organization funded some of our operations during the 2007 General Elections. If anything, the Commission refused to be arm-twisted by some of the so-called donor agencies and even spurned outright overtures as were expressed through unsolicited financial assistance with obvious strings attached.

Finally and more importantly, the Commission is appalled at the treatment of sundry issues in the publication that could, regrettably, not be treated in detail as we would have done if permitted by space. These issues include, Professor Soludo's candidacy in the impending Anambra Governorship Election which, apart from being an intra-party affair, has already been settled by the Supreme Court, the initial setbacks he had experienced in his governorship bid which Bimbo in a most bizarre manner has blamed on alleged vindictiveness of Professor Maurice Iwu albeit without proof. Her libelous and grossly unverified claim to the effect that the INEC Chairman accepted gratifications during Kogi Governorship re-run in 2008, smacks of jungle journalism, an adjunct of agitation literary culture which should be resisted by all decent Nigerians.

It must be emphasized that freedom of expression is not synonymous with crass irresponsibility in journalism practice as has been exhibited by Bimbo in this publication. And as we had said earlier in this rejoinder, the libelous thread which runs through the entire corpus of this mendacious publication has proved beyond any doubts the absence of professionally inspired editorial direction of this magazine. It is therefore not surprising that the Abuja Bureau Chief of Scroll Nigeria magazine, Mr. Salmon Salami, acting in protest against this unorthodoxy, had to resign to save his professional integrity. The journalist's grouse is that the story was concocted in Lagos Office of the magazine without input from Abuja Bureau Office.

This development notwithstanding, it is most disheartening that after fifty years of its vibrant existence, Nigerian journalism practice which many believe has come a long way, is fast experiencing a lowly descent into rascality. It is time the Nigerian Press Council moved fast to save the image of those credible compatriots who, over the years made concrete contributions to the evolution of vibrant journalism in this part of the globe.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT,

INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL
COMMISSION, HEADQUARTERS,
MAITAMA, ABUJA

Jos North poll: 'Muslims whipped up sentiment'

From Andrew Agbese & Ahmed Mohammed, Jos

THE Plateau State government yesterday appeared before the retired General Emmanuel Abisoye panel of investigation into the 2008 Jos crisis, blaming the impact of the crisis on the "misuse of religious sentiments" by some Muslim Ulama who "equated the election to a jihad which must be won at all costs."

The state government said

it was in possession of security reports and audio cassettes of inciting preaching confirming that some Muslim Ulama threatened mayhem should their anointed candidate lose the election. The Director of research and Planning in the Plateau State government Gyang Pwajok who represented the Secretary to the State Government said while presenting the memorandum of the state government at the sitting of the panel yesterday accused the

Federal Government of selective approach in handling the Jos crisis, wondering why other crises in other parts of the country had not elicited a presidential panel of investigation.

"The November 28, 2008 unrests in some parts of Jos North seemed to have been singled out as a special case. Crises have happened in some states before and after the November 2008 unrest. Instances are the Boko Haram unrest in Bauchi, Borno, Kano

and Yobe States and the most recently Kala Kato in Bauchi which have not been visited with the nature of investigation which this panel is conducting. It is therefore our considered opinion that a selective approach to such issues impact negatively on our national security", he said.

The state government representative maintained that the numerous investigative panels set up by the federal and state governments on the crisis had

brought in confusion in a matter that should have been guided by the constitution and rule of law. The state government also re-asserted its earlier claim on the involvement of foreign nationals in the Jos crisis, saying it believed this to be so because there was a noticeable influx of people from outside the state before the crisis while several foreign nationals were arrested and detained at the Jos prisons during the unrest.

Minister laments poor representation of women

From Hamza Idris, Damaturu

MINISTER of Women Affairs and Social Development Hajiya Salamatu Hussaini Suleiman yesterday lamented that women in Nigeria were not given the opportunity to actualize their potentials.

Speaking at an interactive ses-

sion with women groups, NGO's and other vulnerable groups in Damaturu, the minister said the meeting was aimed at addressing social, economic and political predicament of women and children.

She identified economic empowerment, increased participation in politics, improved maternal and

child health, passage of the Child Rights Act, harmful traditional practices and increased budgetary allocation to issues affecting women as areas that need serious attention from stakeholders.

She said there was the need for progressive agitation for 30 per cent affirmative action in favour of

women in order to bridge gender gaps in both elective and appointive posts at all levels by 2011.

The minister lamented that as at now, women occupy just about 10 per cent of decision making positions in the country. "Out of 109 Senate members in the National Assembly, we have only

9 women, of the 360 House of Representatives members, only 25 are women, out of 41 cabinet ministers, only 6 are women, of 1,002 State House of Assembly members nationwide, only 54 are women, of 774 local government chairmen, less than 100 are women", the minister said.

Obasanjo frustrated Lagos IPP -Fashola

From Femi Akinola, Lagos

LAGOS State Governor Babatunde Fashola says the state would have been enjoying uninterrupted power supply if former President Olusegun Obasanjo did not frustrate efforts of his predecessor.

Fashola said this yesterday as he wondered how his Akwa-Ibom counterpart, Godswill Akpabio, was able to generate uninterrupted power supply for the metropolis.

Answering questions from participants at the two day Economic Summit Conference held in Victoria Island Lagos, Fashola stated, "I'm still surprised about how the Akwa-Ibom power project is delivered."


He said there was a plan to restore uninterrupted energy in Lagos being the economic nerve center of the country but regretted that the Obasanjo-led government frustrated all efforts made by the state.

He said Lagos was the first to embark on Independent Power Project (IPP) noting that up till today, the state has only been able to commit 2.5 megawatts which was passed to the national grid.

The governor noted that the state would have done better than this since the idea was muted by the immediate past administration in the state but that the Obasanjo government frustrated her efforts.

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Supabod Building
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Port Harcourt
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www.mdx.ac.uk/mauritius

Report: North West has more 'stunted' children

By Benjamin Auta

ABOUT 53% of children under the age of five in the North West of the country are stunted in height compared to other parts of the country, a survey report shows.

The National Demographic Health Survey (NDHS) 2008, which was finally released last year, reveals that 52% of women between the ages of 15 and 49 years in the South-South are more prone to experience violence compared to women in the South-South as against 13% in the North

West of the country.

The commission said the general percentage of children under five is 41% with children from the South East having the least percentage of stunted under five with 22%.

The report further said that the South South and the South West have 31% of stunted children while the North East and the North Central have 49% and 44% respectively.

Physical or sexual assault on women by their husbands or partners with the South-South also tops the chart with 39% as against the North West with 7%.

The survey also said that violence against women by their husbands/partners is more prevalent in the rural areas with 19% as against 18% in the urban areas.

The survey which also took the weight and height measurement of women from the age of 15-49 in the country said 12% of Nigerian women are too thin while 22% are overweight or obese, adding that the proportion of overweight women is almost twice as high in the urban areas than in the rural areas (31% compared with 17%).

PIC: OLADIPUPO ODUNEWU



SOME of the participants at the Economic Conference CEO Agenda in Lagos yesterday.

PPA warns against divisive tendencies

By Ibrahim Chonoko, London

THE Chairman of the UK Chapter of the Progressive People's Alliance (PPA), Mr Festus Opara has warned those wishing to divide Nigeria into fragments to desist from harbouring such thoughts.

In an interview with the Daily Trust in London, Mr Opara lamented that some unpatriotic Nigerians were harbouring divisive tendencies following the present political logjam arising from the illness of President Umaru

Yar'Adua.

He warned that fragmenting the country would only serve the interest of Nigeria's enemies, stressing that Nigeria must continue as a united country in the interest of Nigerians and Africa as a whole.

Opara however said the present political vacuum due to the absence of President Yar'Adua was creating a bad image for the country. "It's not doing Nigeria any good", he said, adding: "the gaps within the administrative system were taking Nigeria backwards".

'Why NGO's lack support'

By Maureen Onochie

ILLEGAL migration and involvement in drug deals in Austria are the reasons why nongovernmental organizations are having difficulty raising funds from Austrians, the Youth Care International has said.

Chairman of the Austria NGO, Dr Barbara Rupp said Austrians do not trust Nigerians due to the negative attitudes of those living illegally in their country.

Speaking at a news conference, Dr Rupp

said they are having problems raising funds to continue with the projects they have started, but which have been grounded due to lack of fund.

She said the group already has a project in Nigeria, Holy Trinity in Uromi, Edo State, and the fees are made affordable so that the poor can have access to quality education.

Dr Rupp said the aim of the NGO is to ensure that more Nigerian children are educated in Nigeria without going abroad in search of elusive greener pastures.

Niger Republic cuts mobile licence over poor service

NIGER Republic has cut the duration of two mobile phone operators' licences in a row over quality of service, the northwest African country's communications ministry said yesterday.

The 15-year licence awarded to Kuwaiti telecommunications company Zain in 2000 has been cut by five years, and the 15-year licence awarded in 2000 to Moov has been cut

by three years, the ministry said.

Moov is a brand name of West African mobile operator Atlantique Telecom, majority owned by Abu Dhabi-based Etisalat.

MSS: Maryam was more than a mother to us

By Lami Sadiq

THE Muslim Students Society (MSS) of Nigeria, Igbinedion University Okada Chapter, has commiserated with former military president General Ibrahim Babangida over the death of his wife, Maryam.

The group said in a condolence letter addressed to the family that "Maryam was more than a mother to us at Igbinedion University

Okada. She supported us in many ways and championed our course and indeed that of Islam in many ways. The peak of which was her securing a piece of land for our central mosque and in fact building the mosque to near completion."

In the letter jointly signed by DanMusa Idris and Abdulkareem Fadun, Amir and Secretary General, respectively, the group prayed to Almighty

*Allah to accept Maryam's acts of ibadah as sadaqatul jariya, forgive her shortcomings and grant her *Aljannat Firdaus*.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly **HABEEB IDRIS**, now wish to be known and addressed as **HABEEB IDRIS PINDIGA**. All former documents remain valid. The general public to note please.



UNITED NATIONS
Office on Drugs and Crime
Nigeria



EXTERNAL VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (Nigeria) announces the following vacancy:

Post Title: Information Technology Assistant
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UNODC is committed to achieving workforce diversity in terms of gender, nationality and culture. Individuals from minority groups, indigenous groups and persons with disabilities are equally encouraged to apply. Qualified women are encouraged to apply. All applications will be treated with the strictest confidence.

Online Reactions

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ON www.dailytrust.com



Soyinka, Ojukwu, Musa march against Yar'adua

WHY won't Mr President be left alone? We are all human and equally liable to fall sick or even die at any time. I think Soyinka and the rest are just trying to take undue advantage of every situation.

Adam B. Bababe
adambababe@yahoo.com.au

The fragility of our democratic structures is being shown by the indecisive way the FG is handling the President's absence. The opposition are being given reason to unnecessary create tension.

Baba Mustapha
mustaphasi60@gmail.com

With the calibre of people staging the rally the Police have no option but to grant them the permission. After all they are making a case for all Nigerians including the police themselves and it is going to be a peaceful one at that.

Nigerians need to know where the country is heading to and not just sit and wait for a handful of the populace rule their lives.

Samira
sdegoshie@yahoo.com

The constitutional way is always the best. I have a strong suspicion about the goal of



PROFESSOR Wole Soyinka

this latest struggle for power in Nigeria. It is time the authorities summon courage and do the right thing.

Prof. M. Garba
magakatagum@yahoo.com

This is unnecessary. Many people are doing so in order to have clips of their images shown



CHIEF Chukwemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu

by the ever ready media. For long we have been left on our own, and no one or group cared about it. The fule situation is suffocating us but that to some of them is a non-issue. If President Yar'adua's absence is their concern, we have an easy and straight forward answer through the FEC provided by the constitution.

Anyone or group that wants to address president Yar'adua's continued absence should target the FEC. Going to the street now is misconceived and a potential danger going by our history. The police shouldn't allow such gathering on our streets.

Adzu Midlu
adzumails@yahoo.com



US President Barack Obama

Dear brother Obama, think again

UCHE said it all. Well-written and balanced views. We are no terrorists. Nigerians must continue to condemn Faruk's plan against humanity as well as US's grouping of Nigeria with such countries as Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan. We must rise to defend our integrity as a nation.

Zaiyanu
zaiyanuusmanu@yahoo.com

'Public Procurement Act hinders infrastructural devt'

THE Public procurement act is nothing but a control measure of executing infrastructural development, the absence of which will just give way for continuous undue influence and bias in awarding contracts (business as usual).

In my opinion, it should be strictly adhered to so as to earn maximum possible value for every kobo spent from the public treasury.

A.S. Muhammad
asmuhd27@yahoo.com

Yar'adua spoke to Mark on phone – Aide



SENATE President David Mark

HOW can we be sure that this information is true and authentic since we have not heard anything from any of them all this while?

Abubakar Chika Maru
abubakarsuleiman2009@yahoo.com

Speaking to the Senate President is not the issue. The President should speak to Nigerians

via a media. There is something called video conferencing. The Senate President, VP and Speaker are not the only people living in Nigeria.

Samira
sdegoshie@yahoo.com

If Mr. President can speak on the phone with VP, Senate President and Speaker House

of Representatives, what stops him from also speaking to Nigerians to allay their fears? We need to know that our 9 days prayers as declared by Senator David Mark has been answered so that we can stop praying and start thanking God for answered prayers!

Okobasi
okoobasi@yahoo.com

Senate debates Yar'adua tomorrow

THE National Assembly has already shown the nation its honorable way of handling this situation. Is there anything else to debate about? The man is sick and he needs prayers. That is all.

Adam B. Bababe
adambababe@yahoo.com.au

Braithwaite calls for interim govt

ANYBODY calling for an interim government needs to be checked. This is because he is trying to create an avenue for Nigeria's disintegration. What we want is for our constitution to be fully implemented and it requires that the vice-president should take over. PDP must be very careful with the way they are handling things now because what goes around comes around. We are trying to lure investors into Nigeria and we can't implement what our own constitution has clearly stated? How then do you think investors can entrust their hard

earned money into this kind of system? We are destroying what we are preaching and spending resources on ourselves. Let us not keep bending what does not require bending. In fact we must begin to straighten things now and fast too. They keep saying that governance is moving well without any problem and the PDP secretary even confirmed that the vice president is doing excellently; why can't he then take over full leadership pending when the president gets well?

Aji Isuwa Suleiman
suleimanaji@yahoo.com

NBC urged to relax radio, TV licence fees

IF Nigeria is to achieve its mission of attaining vision 20:2020, liberalization of broadcast licenses should be at the fore front. The media is very critical in the attainment of this vision as it is the bridge between all the other sectors. Access to information and sharing is fundamental in nation building. An informed society makes a better political judgment and this speeds up the developmental process of a nation.

Badamasi Haiba

badhaiba@yahoo.com

I wish to express my views about the lack of background in this news report. The writer should have researched more and found out what the current NBC TV and Radio license fee are. This will enable the readers to understand the situation of would-be license applicants.

This will further enlighten the readers and promote objectivity.

Ozemoka Aminat
ozikenoya@gmail.com



By Bukar Ibrahim

2011: PDP's challenge in Borno

Except in 1999 when the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) came close but failed to secure victory, at no other time did the PDP seem ready to give the ruling ANPP a good run for its money than the current party reunification and realignment effort orchestrated by the Minister of Interior, Dr Shettima Mustapha, the PDP leader in Borno state. The minister has lately been able to put the pockets of discontent in check and as it is today. The party is beginning to harvest a litany of crossovers of some formidable political personalities most of whom have a formidable followership and support base capable of winning elections for the party.

The PDP has variously been described as its own worst enemy as it has failed to organise its formidable wider support base and the plethora of strong backbone which should have provided the firepower to conclusively win elections. The rancour within its leadership that has refused to die due to the personal ambitions of some of the leaders and the apparent leadership failure has always worked against its larger interest of achieving electoral successes which will have provided the mandate for the party to deploy its clout, confidence, connection and reach to give Borno

The ANPP has found Imam an easy hurdle to cross owing primarily to his lack of popularity with the electorate

the first class governance required to uplift the living condition of the majority of the people. The blame of whatever kind of mediocre government Borno finds itself with due to the PDP's internal squabbles and incapacity to assume power, must be located within the self centeredness of the leadership of the PDP at the state level.

On the two occasions it came close to winning, this same internal inter party activities of the elements that could just not work together because of petty jealousies and selfishness came into play and scuttled it. Again, the Kashim Ibrahim Imam connection and the political liability he represents, in addition to the wild allegations of selling the ticket away have equally combined to make things more difficult for the party. The ANPP has found Imam an easy hurdle to cross owing primarily to his lack of popularity with the electorate.

Both in 2003 and 2007, Kashim was fielded as PDP's flag bearer only for him to get beaten by Ali Modu Sheriff on both occasions in a contest that was PDP's to lose. These avoidable loses had polarised the party and discouraged its

supporters who legitimately felt let down and completely dismayed by the unpatriotic activities of the top echelon of the party. The fact is that Kashim Imam, who is still dreaming of vieing for the 2011 ticket is likely not to get it now owing to the general consensus that the party must completely break away from the past and go shopping for a more amenable, popular, acceptable, charismatic and likable fresh person who will use appeal and charm to win hearts and minds so that a new dawn will be heralded.

The maturity, experience and total commitment to the cause of

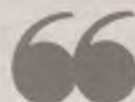
If the PDP made the mistake of losing it again this time around, that would sound the death knell for the party in Borno state

the party brought into the party by Dr. Shettima Mustapha and the selfless zeal with which he sought to bring every stakeholder on board is a testimony that given the support of the presidency and the national secretariat of the party, the PDP stand to gain the upper hand in the 2011 elections. This is made more prominent by the urgent need by the people of Borno state to quit opposition politics and embrace mainstream national politics so as to join the larger Nigerian family and benefit from central funded projects.

As at now, one cannot pinpoint any single federal project in any part of the state worth the name. Coupled with the failure of the ANPP government to inject funds more funds to fast-track development, things were compounded for the people of the state, already challenged socio-economically for the past seven years. It is in the light of the need to check the dangerous slide to retrogression that it has become incumbent on all and sundry within the PDP family in Borno state to sheath their sword and eschew personal pursuits, and allow the party to move steadily through normal sequences to take over power in the state and liberate the people from the shackles of poverty they have been condemned to. It is only when the gladiators and big men of the party abandoned personal pursuits that the chain that has bonded the party will be broken.

The challenge for Dr Shettima Mustapha is to get the backing of the people in order to unite the party and position it to mount a good fight in the next election. The issue now is the need to win election and deal with the problems of underdevelopment in Borno state. If the PDP made the mistake of losing it again this time around, that would sound the death knell for the party in Borno state.

Bukar wrote from Gamboru Ngala, Borno state.



By Matekai Lawrence Karka

Re: It's reckoning time for Adamawa senators

The widely-read *Daily Trust* newspaper carried the above-titled article on January 5, 2010, by one Abdulrazaque Ballo-Barkindo. In that article, he made several unsubstantiated and misleading assertions about distinguished Senator Grace FJ Bent. The self-acclaimed indigene of Adamawa State must be a stranger even to his domain in the face of tangible evidence of the extra-ordinary projects Senator Bent has brought to the people of the Southern zone in spite of the fact that she not monetary vote as a Senator.

The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria is clear of the role expected of a legislator, namely to enact laws and carry out oversight functions on the executive arm of government. In this sense, the writer was wrong to compare Adamawa to the over 300-year-old democracies like America and Europe.

Yes, the Southern Zone had an A-team in the highest decision-making arm of government in 1999-2007, when Jada produced the Vice President of Nigeria; and the most vocal Senator and a Principal Officer of the Senate also represented the Southern zone. However, Bello-Barkindo failed to tell his readers that the duo couldn't exert the much needed influence to smoothen the eyesore and tortuous road that linked Yola-Numan-Gombe for the entire eight years of their tenure. On the other hand, in only two years of being a member of the National Assembly, Senator Bent brought succour to the Southern Zone with the relentless pressure she singlehandedly exerted on the executive arm

The famous *Sardauna* Magazine has recognized her as such, and gave an award for it

to see the timely relief of this burden to the people of Adamawa South that have been robbed of visible good leadership for a very, very long time.

The awesome contributions of the distinguished Senator on the floor of the hallowed chamber is second to none since the inception of the democracy in Nigeria; her visibility and relevance have been recognized by the media, political diehard critics and the general public to the chagrin of her detractors. The famous *Sardauna* Magazine has recognized her as such, and gave an award for it, as *Sardauna Senator of the Year* at a well publicised event at Transcorp Hilton in May 2009.

Some of the projects on which she was singled out for the prestigious award are as listed below. I challenge Bello-Barkindo to verify this.

Empowerment of party chairmen with 10 cars, 150 motorcycles to the ward chairmen in the nine local government areas of her senatorial district; 120 GSM phone booths, 120 sewing machines recently doled out; another batch of 250 motorcycles for youth empowerment in the zone; skills acquisition training for widows; fer-

tilizer distribution to rural farmers to the tune of N4 million, an annual event.

She also provides educational resource materials to all the 9 L.G.As in her constituency annually; food items to both Christians and Muslims during the annual Lenten and Ramadan fast periods to cushion their abstinences; provision of knapsacks for insecticides in the treatment of pests and herbs in their farmlands.

She commissioned over N186 million worth of medical equipment, from needles theatre equipment; textbooks, drugs etc sponsored by the Senator from the MDG's quick-win constituency projects of 2008 in Numan, Mayo-Belwa and Demsa for the 9 L.G.As on the 18 October, 2009.

There are more:

12 youth recruited into at Nigerian Army/Nigerian Navy, 30 able bodied youths absorbed into the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), 20 youths at the Nigerian Immigration Service, 12 youths with the Nigerian Prisons' Service, 5 youths with the National Environmental Standard and Regulation Agency (NESREA); 6 youths with the National Oil Spillage and Detection Response Agency (NOSDRA); 6 youths with the National Food Reserve Agency.

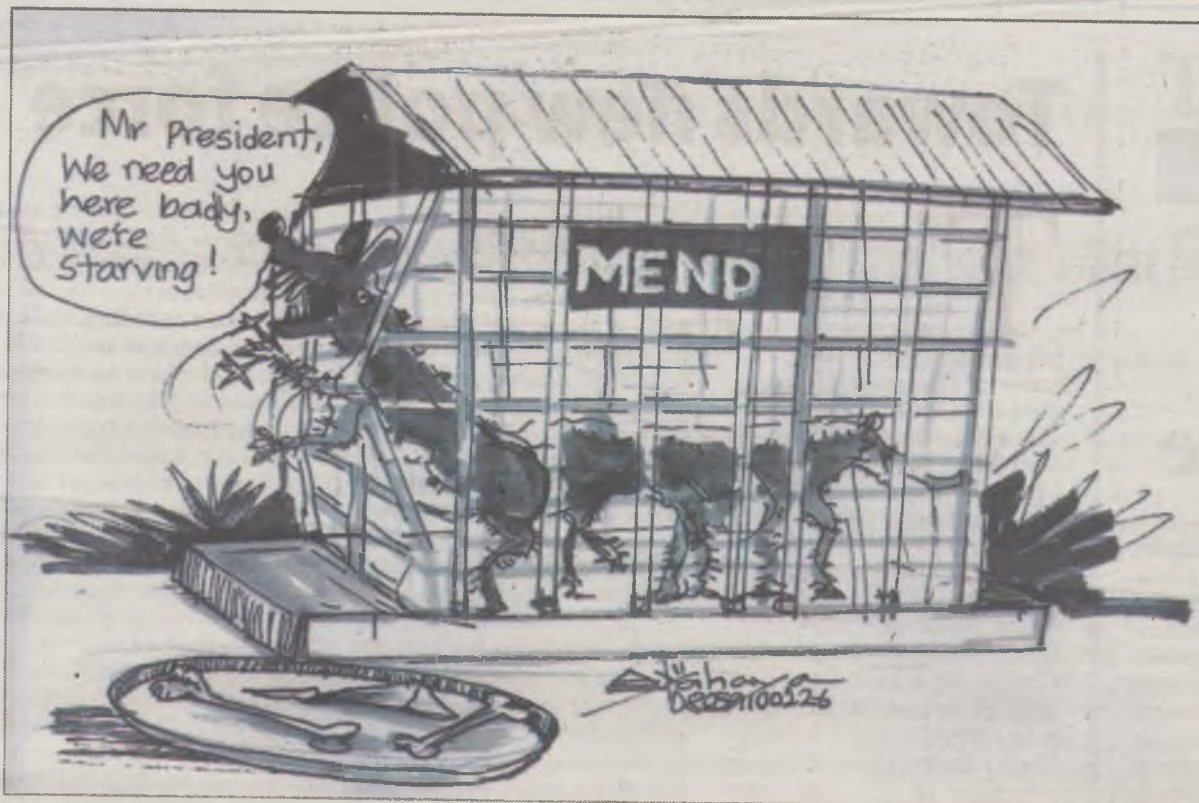
Senator Grace Bent also introduced some community intervention projects, like the resuscitation and rehabilitation of the NTA transmission station at Ganye, provision of books and medical equipment to schools and health clinics, etc.

I wish to also reiterate that the collective exertion of the of the intelligence, the bond of fellowship displayed in the election of such a potent political force as Grace Bent, the right to choose and the ethics of inclusion were brought to bear to the chagrin of the over assertive political lords of the impoverished region was a plus for the democratic transformation of Nigeria. Because of Senator Grace Bent's endearment to the people, they christened her "Goggo" (a Fulani term referring to a very cherished Auntie or mother in Fulani) and the eventual emergence though her leadership of a new political class, no wonder the desperate sponsoring of the naive Bello-Barkindo to hastily write without investigating his subjects.

As regards her role in influencing life-saving projects as Chairman, Senate Committee on Environment and Ecology, she has worked assiduously in making sure the following projects are located in her constituency and almost all in their completion stages: The Imburu erosion project that has devastated the Imburu people and left them homeless for years, the Numan roundabout erosion project in Demsa, the Jamtari river erosion project in Mayo Belwa, Jada erosion project, Ngurore flood channelization project, which isn't even in her constituency.

We can see from the foregoing that our amiable Senator is a worthy legislator who understands that in the current dispensation, she can only persuade the executive branch to perform its duty to the people of Adamawa and to her constituents in particular. If Mr Bello-Barkindo has issues with the developmental strides of the state, he should raise them with the executive, not the legislative, arm.

Karka is Special Assistant Media & Publicity to Senator Bent.



Your Letters

North should revive tourism

Recently I read the above topic in one of the Nigerian dailies, in which the author analysed on the nature, facilities and lots more about Obudu Ranch Resort in Cross Rivers State, which is located in the Southern part of this country. The raised some very vital issues concerning the potentials of this country and how it lost its glory, opportunities and endowments, and how these can be regained and revived. Foreign attraction and I don't care attitude by government led to the neglect of all these potentials. Notwithstanding, even in the Northern part of Nigeria there are abundant physical and natu-

ral attraction ranging from hills, waterfalls, springs, resorts, rocks and mountains etc. These have been preserved by patriotic, selfless and committed Northerners to provide relaxation, job opportunities and tourism centres. Take the Gembu Resort in Taraba state, Yakari National park in Bauchi state, Kainji lake in Kwara state, Kamuku National park at Birnin Gwari local government Area in Kaduna state; Lake Chad Basin in Yobe and Borno state, Baturiyi bird species in Jigawa State and the Hadejia Jama'are river Basin along Kano, Jigawa, Bauchi, Yobe, states routes respectively, among others, for example.

Government should encourage agriculture and protect the environments from destruction, because of the present global threat of food shortage, inflation, poverty and unemployment,

especially in developing countries.

The F.G and particularly Northern governors should go back to the drawing board in order to rescue the Northern region from these deprivations, to seek out the natural resources and revive them for the benefit of the region.

I hope the northern governors can do something with sincerity of focus to restore, boost and maintain the agricultural, industrial sectors and traditional occupations establish and revive some potential in the region, as they flagged off some summit in recent past aimed at uplifting the entire northern region and the country as a whole

Adamu Muhd Usman, Kafin-Hausa, Jigawa State (adammusman@yahoo.com)

Text us on 08 131 8000 30

What irony!

WE are looking for scanners in our hospitals, and now they are suddenly available in abundance at airports because of some international conspiracy. What does this mean? Protect the Western countries and deprive Nigerians of essential health tools? 07038993300.

...And this too

IT baffles me that Africans risk their lives working as slaves in farms in Italy, when there are vast acres of arable land here in Africa to occupy all their time as their own masters. LEO Katagum, 08032016425.

Who is a terrorist?

AMERICA is a terrorist country,

because they are terrorising the life of innocent persons in Iraq and Afghanistan. Why then complain of a little practice of their vocation from a little boy like Umar Faruk? SULEMAN Musa Gasy, 08087195328.

...Well...

FARUK is one and anybody who denies this is an accomplice. JOHN Batah Wakil, Utako, Abuja, 08034116389

What's Soyinka up to?

BY organizing a march-rally in Abuja, Soyinka seems to seek to settle his score with the North; those northerners who join him are traitors to the region. DANLAMI Baban Takko, Bauchi, 08030539506.

Is this the latest craze?

FIRST it was Bankole's wife giving birth in Ghana; now it's Yuguda's in the U.S. For crying out loud, who will be next? Talakawa, you are on your own. ABDULRAZAK, Kaduna, 08060856055.

Correction, please

60,000 forms sold at N6, 500 amounts to N390 million, not N3.9million (Daily Trust, Friday, January 8, 2010, at page 26); and 100,000 dollars does not exchange for 150 million Naira but probably N15 million (Sunday Trust January 10, 2010 page 2). LADAN Mohammed Shehu, Animal Production Programme, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Bauchi, 08060555404.

By Ngozichukwuka B. Ugo

Whither Nigeria, best interest or phenotypic legalism? (II)

Cont'd from last Friday.

It is worthy of note that the unprecedented frequency /spate of impeachments - (Senate - Presidents - Enwerem - Okadigbo - Anyim - Wabara - Nnamani - all southeast), House of Representative Speakers (Buhari - Na'Abba - Masari- all north west), PDP Chairmanship (Lar- Gemade - Ogbeh - Ali - all Middle Belt etc) that besieged the above political office holders during their tenure, was enough reason for the positions to be thrown open for other contestants from other zones, in the belief that the given zones had abused their quota, but that did not happen. The senate presidency remained for the southeast, the speaker for the northwest, while the PDP Chairmanship slot remained the preserve of the middle belt.

Even in the current dispensation, with the position of the Speaker of the House of Representatives zoned to the southwest, when the former speaker - Patricia Etteh was impeached, the replacement remained the exclusive preserve of the southwest.

It is therefore surprising, all the succession hullabaloo arising from the unfortunate ailment of our President.

Does it not stand to reason that in the unlikely event of a change of presidential baton within this very presidential term and the next (going by the eight year PDP ruling party zoning period as stated above), that the presidential slot belongs to the north and it will be repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience to contest that under whatever guise. What is good for the goose is equally good for the gander. Let us strive to be ruled by objective reasoning and not unnecessary emotions. For mischief makers calling for whatever power shift or interim power arrangement under sections 144 and 145 of the 1999 constitution, it is tantamount to courting the hornets nest and fanning the embers of discord. In interpreting constitutional provisions, emphasis should be placed on both the letter and the spirit (the intentment) of the legislation.

The letter of the law does not always effectively capture its spirit; hence there are conventions, traditions and other supplementary arrangements. The power-sharing arrangement / rotation formula that has been adopted since the last political dispensation is noted to have produced relative peace at the various levels of government where it has been adopted and implemented since 1999 till date and any attempt to deviate from that will amount to chewing the word of discord.

We must bear in mind that by the peculiar feature of the Nigerian state (a country of more than 250 multi-ethnic / multi-linguistic groups), attempts to base our democracy wholly on the models of the British parliamentary or the United States presidential / congressional system, have always met with failure. The current political logjam is reminiscent of a scrambled jig-saw-puzzle, with different players plying their game cards, some belching fire and others (internal and external) hanging around like vultures to devour.

The choice is ours, if we're prepared to mortgage the peace and stability of our motherland for whatever selfish (internal and external) interests and replicate Somalia or adopt our convenient home grown / best interest zoning road map to our peaceful co-existence as a nation. Do we cave in to the various misinterpretations of the letters of dormant law books or tow the path of greatness of emphasizing our collective interest and replicating the Mandela's, the Obama's of our world. 50 years since independence, are we able to manage our affairs or choose to remain perpetual infants, caving in to the heavy weight of neo-colonialism. The world is fast evolving at a lightning speed and the international community is watching. Destiny has bestowed on us a great leadership role of emancipating the Black race (the global weeping child). Of the three major human races (Caucasians, Mongols and Negroes), only the Negroes are yet to produce a developed nation by current world standards and its unconnected with our cultural subservience to other races, but the lack of will to succeed and put round pegs in round holes.

Japan, with only 120 million people, have emerged the world's second largest economy despite lacking mineral resources and arable land. This is aside their being regularly assaulted by natural disasters, earthquakes, typhoons, tsunamis etc. We're blessed with abundant human, material and mineral resources, yet we're still struggling to meet the world's minimum standard of development. Our future is in our hands, to make or to mar it.

... "We do not need to proselyte either by our speech or by our writing. We can only do so really with our lives" ---Mahatma Gandhi. A stitch in time saves nine. The clock is ticking. Let's make hay while the sun still shines.

Concluded.

Ugo is a UN conflict resolution expert and Visiting Professor at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs.

DAILY TRUST

EDITORIAL

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The failed 6000mw promise

One of the cardinal programmes of the present administration at its inception in 2007 was improved power supply in the country by December 31, 2009. The government set a modest target of generating 6000mw by then. The nation's hope for such improvement was however dashed when Vice President Goodluck Jonathan, in New Year message Nigerians apologized for the inability to meet the target, attributing it to "unforeseen and unavoidable" reasons.

On the other hand, officials of the Ministry of Petroleum Resources and their counterparts in the Power Ministry do not seem to agree on where the blame for the failure lies. The Petroleum Ministry blames lack of infrastructure such as pipelines to deliver gas to various power plants, while the Power Ministry ascribes it to inadequate gas supply from the Nigeria Gas Company. Meanwhile officials of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) assert that there was enough gas in the country to meet the power target and that infrastructure was basically responsible for the failure.

The vice president's apology, for what it's worth, is well taken; but it is one excuse too many. Government from the onset was expected to have factored in all the challenges it envisaged on the path to achieving the target when it made the commitment to Nigerians. Was the promise not based on feasibility studies, which should have taken cognizance of existing infrastructure in the power sector? If Nigerians felt disappointed and betrayed with the turn of events, they have our sympathy and understanding. Too much of the country's resources have been sunk into this all-important sector, with little to show for the effort.

The current power generation capacity, according to the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) is about 3,700 megawatts, which is far below what the country needs to power sustainable economic development. Paradoxically, the present administration desires a lofty vision to launch Nigeria into the league of twenty largest world economies by the year 2020! This is a very tall order for a country challenged with so little capacity to compete with continental rivals, like South Africa, which has a current generating capacity of 39,000mw. Nigeria requires further commitment and sincerity of purpose to be able to join or remain even within the confederation of twenty largest economies in Africa. To achieve even that limited goal, deliberate and concrete steps must be taken to tackle corruption which has been the bane of development in Nigeria.

The effect of a collapsed power sector on the country's economy cannot be over-emphasized. Its multifaceted impact extends to other sectors, with severe consequences on the living conditions of the citizens. When manufacturing industries are run on generators instead of the national grid, it results in high cost of production, which consequently leads to soaring prices of commodities. In specific terms, information and communication technology which propels global economy requires stable and sustainable power supply. Above all, the administration's 7-point agenda and Vision 20:2020 programme require efficient power sector to succeed. Nigeria is today one of the largest importers of generating sets, due to the country's inefficient power management and corruption.

It is time to buckle up. The relevant government departments should end their bickering and do what is statutorily required of them in the power generation and distribution. The National Assembly should hasten action and conclude all legislative procedures to pass the long-awaited Petroleum Industry Bill now before it. Although the Presidential Economic Adviser, Tanimu Yakubu, has announced a new target of 10,000mw to be achieved this year, such pledges would amount to empty promises if no effort is made to meet it. With this administration, we have had too many promises, most of them not kept. It is vital that this one should be for real.

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Towards new police force

By Ogbonna Onovo

The Nigeria Police Force is reputed globally for excellence in international assignments. Since independence in 1960 when it undertook peacekeeping operations in Congo Brazzaville, it has won admiration as perhaps the best police in the world. It has habitually won the most prestigious prizes for peacekeeping operations in Namibia, former Yugoslavia, Liberia, Haiti, etc. This fact has bolstered Nigeria's image. I remember how proud I felt in 2008 in New York when I led the Nigerian delegation to receive a coveted United Nations prize for the heroic performance of our officers in Haiti. There are a number of Liberians, especially the female folks, eager to join their country's police force, who are daily inspired by the spectacular conduct of Nigerian policemen and women serving in their country under the UN peacekeeping office. I am proud also to note that the first person to win an Olympic Gold medal for Nigeria, Chioma Ajunwa, is a police officer.

It is a supreme irony that the excellence which the Nigeria Police Force has demonstrated on the global scene has yet to be reflected adequately at home. What police officers serving at home receive as salaries and allowances are a fraction of what they get while on international engagements where they are paid promptly and their lives well insured. There is always an abundance of state-of-the-art work facilities when carrying out international assignments. In addition, their office and living accommodations are of standard; and the people in their host countries cooperate with them most effectively by supplying them with critical information and intelligence reports.

It is, therefore, a thing of joy that the Nigerian government has finally taken concrete steps to address the major obstacles against the maximum performance of the police at home. The government set up in 2008 a committee of experts led by a brilliant former Inspector General of Police, M.D. Yusuf, to look into ways not just to modernize the police force, but also reform it. The committee made 125 recommendations, which the government has accepted and is, in fact, implementing. The recommendations cover areas as wide and diverse as recruitment, training, re-training, logistics, and welfare, among others. I will in the New Year rely on the White Paper as the "Road Map" to effective and efficient policing in Nigeria. My administration has also adopted an intelligence-based policing approach, which has proved to be one of the best policing strategies in the world. We need to partner with all stakeholders, especially the local communities in our quest to achieve our

desired results. This is because such pro-active approach reduces crime, makes for better security and safety and overall enhancement of quality service delivery.

To fulfil its obligations as the primary law enforcement institution in the country, the force under my leadership is focused on returning the Nigeria Police to its core values of discipline and professionalism which are fundamental to our main roles of crime prevention and maintenance of law and order. To achieve these measures, I have concentrated on capacity building of the entire personnel of the force in order to propel the Nigeria Police to meet the chal-

peacekeeping operations, making Nigeria the largest police contributing country in Africa and the third in the whole world after Jordan and Bangladesh. In order to continue to fulfil this mandate, the force has increased the capacity of its Peacekeeping Training School in Wuye, Abuja, to maintain a pool of personnel for deployment on short notice.

Despite the various security measures undertaken and successes recorded, I am not under any illusion that there is need for improvement in the fight against crime and the revitalization of police operations to meet increasing security demands. Major challenges inhibiting the onslaught against crime remain inadequate funding and logistic problems. Current efforts of the government aimed at enhanc-

The FIFA U-17 World Cup hosted by the country was a resounding success at least in terms of security

lenges of the 21st Century.

The Human Rights section of the force is being strengthened with a view to aligning the activities of members of the Force with internationally acceptable standard. The force is emphasizing the importance of micro-accountability as a way of subjecting the conduct of police officers to the dictates of the rule of law. The impact of this awareness is the fall in the number complaints on rights' abuses and litigations against the Police. I have also established a Special Monitoring Unit to checkmate the excesses of overzealous and erring personnel.

In acknowledging the dedication to duty by police personnel who work relentlessly in pursuit of the goals of maintaining law and order, I have approved various welfare initiatives for them to be paid monthly.

The force is improving on its inter-agency partnership with other security agencies in the country to consolidate the fight against crime. This cooperation is being strengthened through joint crime operations and training programmes. The Nigeria Police are conducting training for officers of the Nigerian Customs in Kaduna and Lagos, Air Force and Naval personnel at the Police Detective College in Enugu while police trainers are deployed to the EFCC Training School to assist operatives on weapon handling and musketry.

The Nigeria Police, continue to play a very important role in global

ing budgetary allocation to the Police and seeking alternative funding sources to implement the White Paper on Police Reforms are steps that would mitigate some of the challenges we face.

Various pro-active measures put in place in the last few months have yielded positive results. In general, there has been a marked decrease in the rate of crime in the country. Cases of thugs, ethnic clashes and other violent crimes are declining. Also, we are irrevocably committed to ensuring the successful implementation of the amnesty programme of the Federal Government in the Niger Delta Region.

We have recorded successes in the course of our onslaught against violent crimes in the country.

Furthermore, faced with the serious issues of kidnapping and armed robbery in the South-eastern part of Nigeria, I deployed several units of PMF personnel to stabilize the situation. The results have been encouraging.

The FIFA U-17 World Cup hosted by the country was a resounding success at least in terms of security. The 15 000 men and women in both mufti and uniform trained to provide security in all the venues ensured that there was not one single ugly incident anywhere. FIFA has sent commendation for this achievement.

Onovo is the Inspector General of Police.



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Course Contributors

The course will be administered by two course directors who will be responsible for the entire course including the syllabus, instructors,

presentations and course materials Mr. Vidmantas Jankauskas has served as course director on ERRA trainings. Dr. Gábor Szőrényi is Chairman of ERRA and Director at the Hungarian Energy Office. Dr. Szőrényi has remarkable international experience in energy regulation with special emphasis on transitional economies. They will be supported by highly qualified instructors with varied experiences in energy regulation in Europe and professional backgrounds in regulation, economics, law and engineering.

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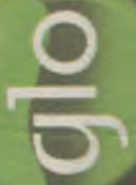
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INTERNATIONAL

Congo mine collapse kills 6, including 5 children

A UN radio station says six people — including five children — have died in a tin mine collapse in southeast Congo. U.N. Radio Okapi says the collapse at an

abandoned mine yesterday also left two people missing.

The radio station says the collapse also killed a woman who is survived by three children. It was

unclear if any of the dead were related to each other.

Congo is awash with gold, diamonds and metals such as cassiterite and coltan used to weld

small pieces together in electronics.

The sprawling country, which is the size of Western Europe, also lacks basic infrastructure like

transnational roads.

Many of its mines are difficult to access, making it nearly impossible to monitor for safety hazards and child labour.

Rival Somali Islamic militias clash, killing 14

At least 14 people have been killed in clashes between rival Islamic militias battling for control of a strategic western Somali town, witnesses said yesterday.

A moderate Islamic group allied to the government, Ahlu Sunna Waljama, launched an attack Sunday against its rival in Belet Weyne, which borders Ethiopia and is on a major road leading to the capital, the witnesses said. The clashes between Ahlu Sunna Waljama and Hizbul Islam continued yesterday.

Belet Weyne resident Omar Adam said he saw the bodies of eight people, mostly civilians, on the streets. Another resident, Ibrahim Qayle, separately said he has counted six bodies belonging to Islamic fighters. Saida Ahmed, a nurse at Belet Weyne Hospital, said more than 20 wounded people, mostly civilians, have been admitted at the hospital because of the fighting. Many businesses in the town are shuttered because of the fighting and no public transport is available.

For months, rival Islamic groups and the government have battled for control of Belet Weyne, which is the capital of the central Somali region of Hiran. Islamic insurgents control much of southern Somalia and have been trying to expand the territory they control. The fighting is part of the chaos that has engulfed Somalia since 1991 when warlords overthrew longtime dictator Mohamed Siad Barre.



SUPPORTERS of Charles Massi who is being detained in a prison in the capital Bangui, a military source told the media yesterday.

C/Africa imprisons rebel leader

THE Central African Republic's ex-minister of mines turned rebel leader, Charles Massi, is being detained in a prison in the capital Bangui, a military source said.

Massi was "arrested in Chad between January 1 and 2 and turned over to the Central African authorities" and "is being held in a Bangui prison," the military source said on condition of anonymity.

"Charles Massi is not dead

like some people are saying," the military source added, alluding to rumours that were circulating Sunday in Bangui.

"When he (Massi) was transferred across the border between Chad and Central Africa, one person with him was shot for refusing to comply with the instructions of those transferring him to Bangui," the same source explained. Massi was a minister in the government of Centrafrican President Ange-

Felix Patasse, who was ousted in 2003 by the current president, Francois Bozize.

He heads the Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (CPJP), a rebel movement active in northwestern CAR that has not signed up to a peace process in the country.

In May 2009 Massi was arrested in southern Chad and imprisoned for "fraudulent entry" and "attempted destabilisation of

a neighbouring country", Chad's Interior Minister Ahmat Mahamat Bachir told AFP at the time. He was later released in July.

CPJP fighters have clashed with the Centrafrican army several times in 2009 in the northwestern Ndele region.

The fighting has led to population displacement and the creation of a refugee camp for about 6,000 people at Daha on Chad's side of the border.

Al-Qaeda threatens to execute French hostage in Mali

AL-QAEDA said it will kill a French hostage held since November unless Mali frees four of its militants from jail within 20 days, two US monitoring groups said yesterday.

The groups which monitor Islamist websites said Al-Qaeda issued its ultimatum in a statement dated January 10. "The mujahedeen have decided to

inform the French and Malian governments of their only demand to release the French hostage Pierre Camatte -- the release of our four prisoners..." one of the sites, Intelcenter, quoted the ultimatum as saying.

But according to an intermediary involved in the negotiations for the Frenchman's release in Mali, Al-Qaeda is also claiming

a ransom for Camatte.

They are demanding "a lot of money to free the French hostage," the source said, without specifying the amount. The intermediary, who declined to be identified, also said "the Malians and the French were informed more than a week ago" of the demands. "We've brought them the news and proof of life of the French-

man." "If people are talking like that, it's a negotiating technique," said another source involved in negotiations to free three Spanish aid workers kidnapped the same week as Camatte in neighbouring Mauritania. Facts: Al-Qaeda in North Africa.

The 61-year-old Camatte, from the Vosges area in eastern France, was abducted from his

hotel in Menaka, more than 1,500 kilometres (1,000 miles) from the capital Bamako, during the night of November 25. "Let France and Mali be forewarned, that we give 20 days to fulfill our just demand, or the two governments shall be fully responsible for the life of the French hostage," the Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb ultimatum said.

International

Iran says US general's attack remarks 'thoughtless'

TEHRAN yesterday dismissed as thoughtless comments by a top US general that Iran's atomic sites could be attacked if the nuclear issue remains unsolved, the official IRNA news agency reported.

"His comments are thoughtless and it is better that any statement made in this regard take a constructive approach," foreign ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast was quoted as saying. General David Petraeus, head of US Central Command (CENTCOM) that oversees the Middle East, told CNN on Sunday that Iran's nuclear facilities "certainly can be bombed," even though they are reported to be heavily fortified.

"The level of effect would vary with who it is that carries it out, what ordnance they have, and what capability they can bring to bear," Petraeus added.

Petraeus said the United States had contingency plans to address Iran's nuclear ambitions if negotiations falter between the Islamic republic and Western nations. "It would be almost literally irresponsible if CENTCOM were not to have been thinking about the various 'what ifs' and to make plans for a whole variety of different contingencies," he told the

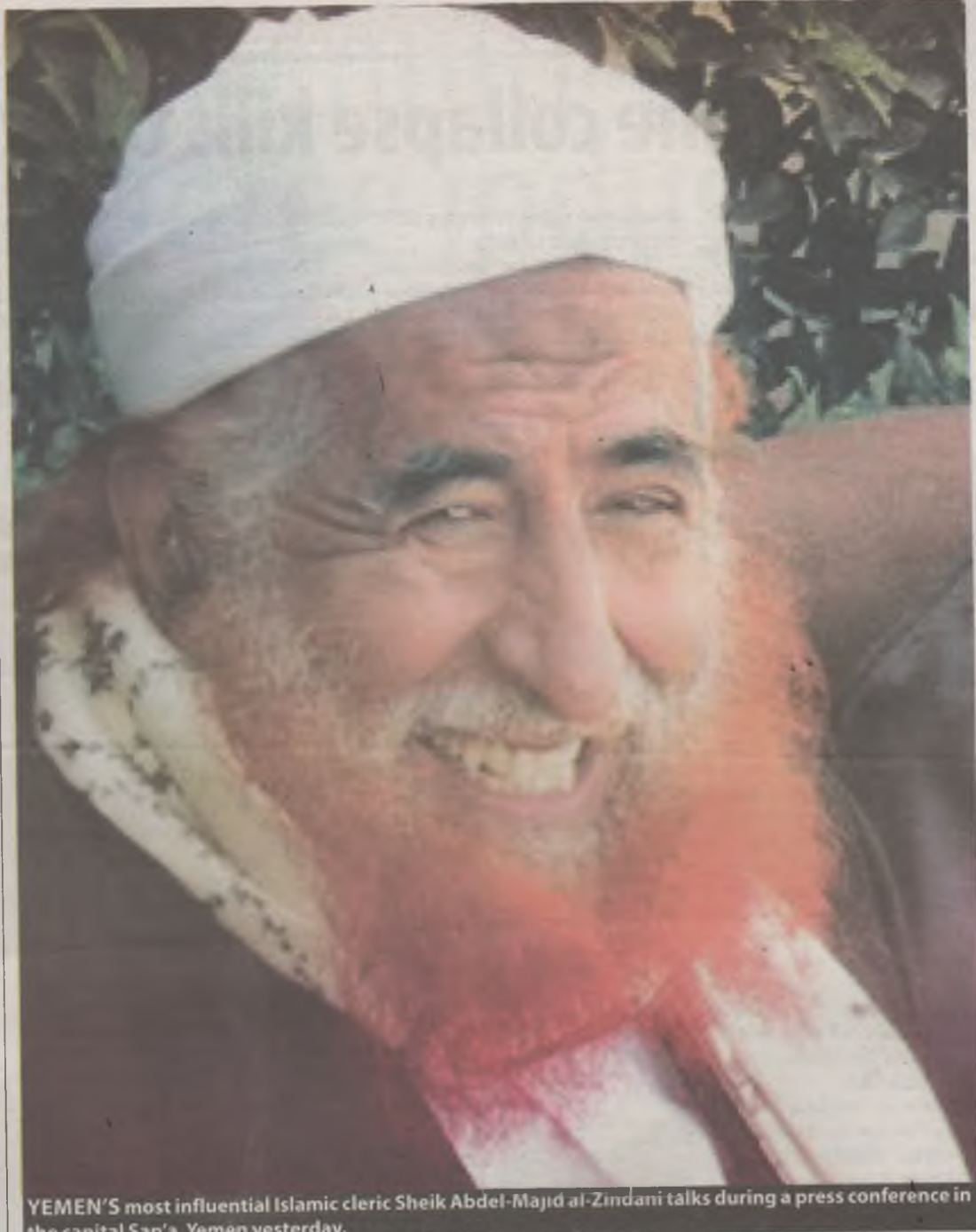
broadcaster.

But he would not comment on reports that Israel, which says Iran presents an existential threat to the Jewish state, may attack its arch-foe's nuclear facilities. Tehran is at loggerheads with Western nations, which believe it is developing nuclear weapons under the cover of a civilian nuclear energy programme. Iran denies the charges.

Without elaborating on the contingency plans, Petraeus said it could be some time before Washington decides whether to execute them and that diplomatic efforts would continue in the meantime.

The United States is leading efforts to impose a fourth round of UN sanctions on Iran after it failed to meet an end-of-year deadline to accept a deal offered by five permanent UN Security Council members -- Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States -- plus Germany.

Iran has given the West until the end of January to accept its own proposal of a gradual swap of its low-enriched uranium (LEU) for further-enriched uranium to fuel a Tehran research reactor. Mehmanparast reiterated that Iran was ready for "staged swap"



YEMEN'S most influential Islamic cleric Sheik Abdel-Majid al-Zindani talks during a press conference in the capital San'a, Yemen yesterday.

Yemeni radical cleric warns of foreign occupation

YEMEN'S most influential Islamic cleric, considered an al-Qaida-linked terrorist by the United States, warned the government yesterday against allowing "foreign occupation" of the country in the growing cooperation with the US against the terror group.

Sheik Abdul-Majid al-Zindani's comments reflected a deep mistrust among Yemenis of Washington's intentions as it ramps up counterterrorism aid and training for San'a to combat al-Qaida's offshoot here.

Al-Zindani, a radical cleric who once associated with Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan, is highly influential among Yemenis and the government is careful to maintain at least his tacit support.

"We accept any cooperation in the framework of respect and joint interests, and we reject military occupation of our country.

And we don't accept the return of colonialization," al-Zindani told reporters. "Yemen's rulers and people must be careful

before a (foreign) guardianship is imposed on them," he said. "The day parliament allows the occupation of Yemen, the people will rise up against it and bring it down."

President Barack Obama said he does not plan to send American combat forces to Yemen, and San'a has said it will not allow such a deployment.

"I have no intention of sending U.S. boots on the ground in these regions," Obama said in an interview with People magazine to be published Friday. U.S. military personnel are helping train Yemeni counterterror forces and gave Yemeni forces intelligence and logistical help in heavy airstrikes last month against suspected al-Qaida hideouts that Yemen says killed dozens of militants. Al-Zindani is a controversial figure in Yemeni politics.

The United States has labeled him a "global terrorist," alleging he helps fund and recruit for al-Qaida and that students from Iman University — which he heads — were involved in past

attacks. But Yemen's government courts his support.

The deputy prime minister last week denied al-Zindani is a member of al-Qaida. Addressing a news conference held at his San'a home, al-Zindani denied U.S. accusations against him, saying "it's become well known among the people that a lot of lies come out of" Washington.

He also denied any knowledge of al-Qaida's activities in Yemen. He also denied he had any influence on an American-Yemeni radical preacher Anwar al-Awlaki, who is being hunted by Yemeni forces for alleged al-Qaida links.

Al-Awlaki is a young cleric popular among extremists for his calls for jihad, or holy war, against the Americans. Yemeni officials say he may have met with Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab in Yemen before the 23-year-old Nigerian allegedly tried to blow up a U.S. airliner on Christmas Day. Al-Qaida's offshoot in Yemen is accused of plotting that attack.

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International

Sri Lanka court frees Tamil editor on bail

SRI Lanka's court of appeal yesterday freed on bail a Tamil editor whose 20-year prison sentence last year for supporting "terrorism" drew international criticism, a court official said.

J.S. Tissainayagam, who edited North Eastern Monthly magazine in Colombo, was told to surrender his passport and to post 50,000 rupees (437 dollars) in bail pending a full appeal hearing, the official said. Tissainayagam has appealed his conviction in August on charges of raising money for terrorism and of causing racial hatred through his writings about Tamils affected by the country's 37-year separatist conflict.

The sentence of 20 years in jail with hard labour was condemned by the European Union, the United States and international press freedom groups. In May, US President Barack Obama cited Tissainayagam, who also wrote for the Colombo-based Sunday Times newspaper, as one of the "emblematic examples" of a persecuted journalist.

In October, Sri Lankan courts

acquitted North Eastern Monthly's publisher S. Jaseeharan and his wife on the charges of supporting terrorism. All three were detained in March 2008 for articles published in the magazine.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists selected Tissainayagam as a recipient of a 2009 International Press Freedom Award, and he also won an award for courageous and ethical journalism set up in memory of AFP journalist Peter Mackler.

The United Nations estimates that up to 100,000 people were killed in Sri Lanka's separatist conflict that erupted in 1972 when Tamil Tiger rebels took up arms in their quest for a Tamil homeland. Government forces wiped out the Tiger leadership in May after months of fierce fighting in the northeast of the country.

Official figures show nine journalists have been killed and another 27 assaulted in the past three years in Sri Lanka while activists say over a dozen journalists have been killed.



SRI Lankan prison officials escort Tamil journalist J.S. Tissainayagam (R), whose 20-year prison sentence last year for supporting "terrorism" drew international criticism.

China says missile defence system test successful

CHINA'S military successfully tested a system for intercepting missiles in mid-flight yesterday, state media reported.

Few details were given about the test, with the official Xinhua

News Agency saying only that "ground-based midcourse missile interception technology" was tested within Chinese territory and achieved the expected objective. "The test is defensive in nature

and is not targeted at any country," Xinhua said. China's military is in the middle of a major technology upgrade, spurred on by double digit annual percentage increases in defense spending. Missile tech-

nology is considered one of the military's particular strengths, allowing it to narrow the gap with the U.S. and other armed forces.

Xinhua did not further identify the system tested, although

China is believed to be pursuing a number of programs aimed at shooting down stealth aircraft and downing or disabling cruise missiles and precision-guided weapons.

N/Korea calls for peace talks, end to sanctions

NORTH Korea proposed yesterday that a peace treaty to formally end the Korean War be signed this year, saying a return to negotiations on its nuclear program depends on better relations with Washington and the lifting of sanctions. The North has long demanded a peace treaty, but President Barack Obama's special envoy for human rights in North Korea said in Seoul yesterday that the communist regime must improve its "appalling" human rights record before any normalization of relations.

Washington and Pyongyang have never had diplomatic relations because the 1950-53 Korean War ended in a truce, not a peace

treaty, thus leaving the peninsula technically at war. North Korea, the U.S.-led United Nations Command and China signed a cease-fire, but South Korea never did.

The United States has resisted signing a treaty with North while it possesses nuclear weapons. Washington has said, however, that the subject can be discussed within the framework of six-nation negotiations aimed at ridding Pyongyang of atomic weapons. Those talks have not been held for more than a year.

But the North indicated yesterday it won't rejoin the nuclear forum until talks begin on a peace treaty. The communist country pulled out of the nuclear talks last

year to protest international sanctions imposed for its launch of a long-range missile. South Korea is also suspicious of the North's calls for a peace treaty, calls for which Seoul has said are a tactic to delay its denuclearization.

The North's Foreign Ministry said in a statement the absence of a peace treaty is a "root cause of the hostile relations" with the U.S. The ministry called for a peace treaty to be signed this year, which it emphasized marks the 60th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War. The proposal comes after a landmark visit to North last month by Stephen Bosworth, Obama's special envoy for the country.

Japan to come clean on secret nuke deals with US

TO the government's critics, it was a long and shocking act of official bonewalling: Agreements long hidden in Foreign Ministry files allowed nuclear-armed US warships to enter Japanese ports, violating a hallowed principle of post-war Japan. Yet their very existence was officially denied.

Now, in a clear break from the past, a new prime minister has gone where none of his predecessors dared go: He has ordered a panel of ministry officials and academics to investigate the secret agreements. The findings, due out this month, are part of Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama's wide-ranging campaign to wrest power

from the bureaucracy and make government more open than under the conservatives, who ruled Japan for most of the past 50 years.

They also could intensify public debate about the future of Japan's long-standing security alliance with the U.S., which has bases here. Hatoyama, a liberal who took office in September, has called for making the relationship more balanced, starting with efforts to evict an unpopular U.S. base from the island of Okinawa. Suzuki held top political posts at the Foreign Ministry, yet although he had heard about the secret documents, he said that even he could not pry them out of his officials.

KOWA

...no be for we hand e dey?

A CALL TO DUTY

An Open Letter to the Vice President and Members of the Executive Council of the Federation

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For 50 days running, Nigerians have, at your behest, prayed for the full recovery and safe return of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. We continue to share this sentiment, and we wish his family well.

Nevertheless, you must admit, as patriotic women and men, that the current situation where the President has been on an unplanned absence of indeterminable length, with nobody wielding executive authority, even in an 'acting' capacity, is untenable and unsustainable. We must remember that the office of the President is a vital national institution that transcends the person of its present occupant. Its integrity must be preserved at all times.

As nation-builders, it must be clear to you by now that 50 days ago, when the President left the country for Saudi Arabia, he should have been well advised to comply with Section 145 of the Constitution. He did not do so. And perhaps he could not.

Section 144 of the Constitution is quite clear about your duty and responsibility to the Nigerian nation and the Nigerian people under the circumstances in which we have found ourselves. We find it hard to fathom why it has taken the Executive Council of the Federation so long to faithfully implement the provisions of the Constitution.

While it is possible to locate this reluctance in the context of your loyalty to the man who appointed you into office, which is both understandable and humane, we must remind you that you swore an oath of allegiance to the Federal Republic and the Constitution, invoking, at that time, the help of God. You must now do the right thing by fulfilling the requirements of that oath. So help you God.

The president's prolonged absence and inability to personally dispel rumours that persist would suggest that he is, in the words of the Constitution, "incapable of discharging the functions of his office." You owe it as a duty to the nation therefore, to immediately trigger the process that will determine his fitness for office and allow the transfer of the leadership of the Federal Republic to the Vice-President in accordance with the Constitution. To extend this situation any longer would be to invite anarchy; perpetuate a dangerous vacuum that could be an invitation to extra-constitutional adventurers, and prolong the agony of our country.

It is fine to display admirable loyalty to the President who appointed you. But no one can argue that your primary loyalty is to your nation and its people. What Nigeria expects at this time is that you do your duty by the Constitution. That is how nations are built.

Act now.

God bless Nigeria.

Signed:

Dr. Salihu Abubakar
Fola Adeola OFR; mni
Professor Bene Madunagwu

Caretaker Committee
KOWA PARTY

International

Berlusconi back in Rome after attack

PREMIER Silvio Berlusconi returned to a busy political schedule yesterday after a month long recovery from an attack that broke his nose and two teeth.

Berlusconi said he was feeling well as he arrived at his Rome residence, cheered by a group of supporters holding up a "Welcome Back" banner. He met with his coalition allies to set the agenda for the new year, including fiscal and justice reforms.

The image-conscious Berlusconi touched his left cheek and pointed out to reporters that there was hardly any scar visible on his face. Berlusconi was hit in Milan on Dec 13, when a man threw the statuette of Milan's cathedral at his face during a rally. The 73-year-old leader was hospitalized for a few days and has largely remained away from the public.

Berlusconi's popularity has increased after the attack in Milan, polls have shown. The

images of his bloody and frightened face raised sympathy, as did photos of the premier leaving the hospital with bandages on his face. Berlusconi says he has forgiven attacker Massimo Tartaglia, who has been described as mentally ill and remains in custody.

The attack also pushed to the back burner a sex scandal that had engulfed the premier over his purported fondness for young women.

"I believe that modernizing the country is indispensable. It's worth working on this for all of us," Berlusconi told reporters upon his arrival from Milan.

The justice reform has been in the works for months, since legislation granting immunity from prosecution to the premier and other top officials while in office was thrown out in October. As a result, Berlusconi faces two trials in Milan, one on tax fraud and the other on corruption.



ITALIAN Premier Silvio Berlusconi smiles as he arrives at his private residence for a meeting with his allies on possible tax and justice reforms, in Rome, yesterday.

Minister's niece on trial for murder in France

THE niece of Britain's junior defence minister told police she was a "monster" after plunging a knife into a young Frenchman she picked up in a bar, a French court

heard yesterday. Jessica Davies, the 30-year-old niece of multi-millionaire junior defence minister Quentin Davies, looked pale and drawn on the first day of her

trial for the November 2007 murder of the 24-year-old man. "I just wanted to cut him a little but the knife went in by itself," Davies told police, according to a charge sheet

read out at the start of the two-day trial in Versailles, west of Paris.

The police who arrived in the early hours of November 11, 2007 found her kneeling naked on the

bed of her apartment in the chic Paris suburb of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, trying to stem the flow of blood from the body of Olivier Mugnier.

French Guiana, Martinique reject autonomy proposal

VOTERS in Martinique and French Guiana overwhelmingly rejected a proposal yesterday to give local government more autonomy while remaining a part of France.

Election officials in Martinique said 80 percent of voters rejected the plan, with 55 percent participation, according to preliminary results. Some votes remained to be counted, but officials did not expect the results to change significantly. In French Guiana, 70 percent voted "no," with 48 percent turnout.

Some Martinique officials viewed the proposed autonomy as an opportunity for the Caribbean island to make decisions in areas such as development, education and employment. They argued the remote French government did not know what was best for the island.

"Martinique and French Guiana missed a date with history and passed alongside

a reform that would have allowed them to better understand their future," said Claude Lise, president of Martinique's General Council, one of two legislative bodies.

But opponents — including leaders of the Progressive Martinique Party founded by the late Aime Cesaire, a renowned poet and politician who long supported autonomy — said the referendum was neither the opportunity nor the solution to emerge from tough economic times. An estimated 50,000 people are unemployed on Martinique, which is home to 400,000 inhabitants.

The ballot measure in each of the two French Caribbean departments called for giving local government more administrative leeway.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy would have determined the extent of the autonomy.

Groundbreaking gay marriage trial starts US

THE first federal trial to determine if the US Constitution prohibits states from outlawing same-sex marriage gets under way yesterday, and the two gay couples on whose behalf the case was brought will be among the first witnesses.

The proceedings, which are expected to last two to three weeks, involve a challenge to Proposition 8, the gay marriage ban approved by California voters in November 2008.

Regardless of the outcome, the case is likely to be appealed to the US Supreme Court, where it ultimately could become a landmark that determines if gay Americans have the right to marry.

The judge who will render a decision, Chief US District Judge Vaughn R. Walker, has asked lawyers arguing for and against the ban to present the facts underlying much of the political rhetoric surrounding same-sex marriage.

VACANCY

An international Universal Basic Education School in Lafia requires the services of:

1. Administrator
2. Head Teacher
3. Class Teachers

Qualifications should not be lower than 1st degree in the field of Education.

Interested candidates should submit their applications and curriculum vitae to the school at Shendam road adjacent to the Customary Court of Appeal, Lafia not later than one week from the date of this publication.

MANAGEMENT

08033142865

07060737416

08055680140



INNA LILLAHI WA INNA ILAIHI RAJI'UN



APPRECIATION

LATE ALHAJI MUSA MAIUNGUWA MANDARAGIRAU

The family of late Alhaji Musa Maiunguwa Mandaragirau wishes to thank the following people for their sympathy through personal visits, phone calls, text messages and prayers during our period of grief, following the passing on of our Octogenarian father, grandfather and great grand father whose sad event took place on 25th November 2009:

The Deputy Governor Borno State – Alh Adamu Shettima Dibal,
Her Excellency the Deputy Governor Plateau State, Mrs. Pauline Tallen,
Comptroller General Nigeria Customs Services (NCS) Alh Abdullahi Inde Dikko,
Members of the Management of the Nigeria Custom Services (NCS), Alh Ibrahim Damcida,
Senator Mohammed Sanusi Daggash,
Chairman House Committee on Customs Hon. Yakubu Dogara,
Their Royal Majesties: Shehu of Borno, Alh Abubakar Ibn Umar Garbai; El-Kanemi,
Emir of Biu - Alh Umar Mustapha Aliu,
Shehu of Bama, Alh Shehu Kyari Umar Ibn Ibrahim El-Kanemi,
Gwom Gwom of Jos: Da Jacob Gyang Buba,
Akran of Badagry: De Wheno Ahonu Menu-Toyi 1 Akran of Badagry,
District Heads of Buratai Maina Garga,
District Head Biu,
District Head of Mandaragirau – Mohammed Maina,
District Head of Mirnga Alh Maina Sanda,,
Formal Comptroller General NCS Alh A. A. Mustapha,
Alh. Ahmed Kojoli,
Dr. Bernard Shaw Nwadialo,
Justice Tijjani Abubakar,
Justice Al Hassan,
Justice Ibrahim Auta,
Hon. Sabo Nakudu,
Hon. Adamu Kalba,
Hon. Positive,
Ambassador Saidu Piñdar,
Alh Ibrahim Biu,
Alh Maimadu Maidugu
Chairman Jos North LocalGovt. Timothy Buba,
Chairman Biu L.G.A – Alh. Umar Kadafur
Alh Adamu .K. Wawa,
Alh Abba Habib,
Alh Hassan Kantoma,
Opanka,
Edward Masha,
Hon. Madu Damcida,
Alh Ali Mohammed,
Alh Abdul Wakili,

Mohammed Lawan,
Alh Ahmed Rijija,
Alh Ibrahim Usman,
Alh A. G. Abubakar,
Alh Mohammed Buba
Alh Y. A. Lawan
Alh Abaji Usman
Alh Ibrahim Durbundi,
Alh Nuhu Isah,
Alh Madu Y. H
Alh Ali Yakaku
Chief G.U. Okeke
Prince Sunny Aku
Chief Bishop,
Eng. Sunny .S. Abel
Chief Fano
Maina Ibrahim
Abba Habib
Alh Abdullahi Zaifada
Alh Ibrahim Zaifada
Madu Zaifada
Barrister Makeri
Arch Isa Garuba
Engineer Ahmed Musa Kida
Alh Bukar Usman
Maina Hamidu
Maina Ibrahim
Alh Mohammed Biu
Navy Commodore Inusa
Air Commodore Zanna
Abba Ali
Zanna Mustapha
Ali Galadima
Bukar Galadima
Brig. General Ojiji
Sanda Galadima Usman
Col. Adamu Biu
Hamza Bukar Biu
Mohammed Duada Biu
Madu Yakubu
Alh Muri Shitta
Mustapha Damcida
Alh Abubakar Sanni Nuhu (Rtd)
D.C.G Adamu Rabi (Rtd)
D.C.G Ogilo
Alh M.T Bello
Alh Ayanlaja
Alh A. A. Sadiq
Aliyu Arga
Ibrahim Gwary
Chief Ombe
Chief Omodara
Otunba Dehinde Banjo
Barr Shellang A.A
Chief Kpagih B.C
Chief Ade Fadahunsi
Chief Okeniyi Ezekiel
Chief Akinnosi
Mr. Adebayo
Alh Aina
Mr. Onadipo Demola
Chief Jide Olojo
Comptroller Hamza Ladan
Comptroller A.A Ahmed

Comptroller Dan Ugo
Comptroller G.T Aliu
Comptroller Bitrus Kuhi
Comptroller Abubakar
Comptroller U.K Bello
Comptroller Sahabi Sadiq
Comptroller Dan Kuffi
Comptroller Audu Zaka
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Comptroller Kane Dede
Comptroller Sam Aneke
Comptroller Austin Warikoru
Comptroller Abdul Rasheed
Comptroller Sunny Opure
Comptroller Tukura
Comptroller Ahmed Jammu
Comptroller Maina
Dr. Yusuf
Comptroller Sulaiman Idris
Comptroller Adewuyi
Comptroller Olu
Ogunojemite
DC Mamud Haruna
D.C Bello Liman
DC Hassan Gangua
D. C K.O Adesanya
D. C Usman Sule
Comptroller (Mrs.)
Ogunfwoke
Comptroller (Mrs.) Eytayo
Mr. Joel Onaolapo
Mr. Abiodun Ajayi
Captain Bello
Abdullahi Kyafe
Abba Shuwa,
Aliyu Sarki
Prince Usman Mustapha
Mohammed Magistrate
Hussaini Saidu
Alh Bukar Maimai
Alh Tijani Garba
Alh Adamu Wakili
Alh Umoru Gunda
Musa Debiro
Yakubu Debiro
Brig. Gen. Debiro
Brig. Gen. Dilli
Brig. Gen. Bukar
Air Commodore Oche
Commissioner of Police Borno State,
Commissioner of Police Federal Capital Territory F.C.T,
Commissioner of Police Enugu
Zakari Biu
CSP Bukar Madu
Sunday Bada
Col. Yerima
Mallam Haruna Audu
Mallam Maman Audu
Sale Mari
Mohammed Umar Maina
Musa Mshelgaya

Bukar Mohammed Magaji
Hamidu Idrisa
Alh Haruna Kodya
Madu Ali Gogwa
Ibrahim Abubarkar
Hamidu Thelefur
Musa Saleh
Salihu Abubakar
Baba Yerima
Zarma Audu
Manu Auta
Abdullahi Auta
Adamu Musa
Idi Abubakar
Alh Yusuf Adamu
Ali Yakaku
Barr Musa Adamu
Madu Umar
Adamu Umoru
Haruna Umoru
Yakubu Hassan
Mamuda Sulaman
Baba Ali
Tukur Mohammed
Sani Ibrahim
Bukar Yusuf
Haruna Yusuf
Mallam Yusuf
Alh Mari Maina
Dr. William
Prof. Aminu Dorayi
Prof. Dili Dogo
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Alh Bishi
Femi Ibrahim NTA
Members of SEC 30
National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) Kuru
1976 set Government college Maiduguri
Officers and Men of Federal Operations Unit F.O.U Zone 'A' Ikeja
Maritime Reporters Association of Nigeria
MARAN
Maritime Reporters Congress MARCON,
League of Maritime Editors league and others too numerous to mention.

May Allah (SWT) reward you abundantly.

Signed :
Alhaji Adamu Musa
For the family.

BUSINESS

0805 1000 536

Workers' unions vow to picket banks over mass sack

WORKERS' unions in the banking industry yesterday said they would picket banks that failed to recall workers sacked without due consultation with labour.

In separate interviews with News the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), the unions commended the Jan. 7 statement by the Federal Government criticising the sack.

The government had directed banks which recently sacked thousands of employees to recall all workers sacked without due process or face sanctions.

The government gave the directive after a meeting with labour representatives, workers' unions and representatives of the affected banks on Jan. 5 in Abuja.

Mr Jarvis Eromhosele, General Secretary, Association of Senior Staff of Banks, Insurance and Financial Institution (ASSB-IFI) said the government's directive was in line with the unions' demands.

"We will picket any bank that does not comply with the government's directive," Eromhosele told NAN.

The general secretary hoped that the government's decision would stop the mass sack embarked on by banks following recent financial instability in the sector.

Mr Hassan Adeleke, President, National Union of Banks, Insurance and Financial Institutions Employees (NUBIFIE), said the union was insisting that bank workers sacked without due process should be recalled.

Adeleke urged financial institutions to endeavour to dialogue with labour unions while taking decisions concerning their workers. (NAN).



ADETOKUNBO Kayode, Minister of Labour and Productivity

CBN orders banks to submit deposit, lending rates weekly

From Kayode Ekundayo, Lagos

THE Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has directed banks to submit henceforth their average deposit rates on weekly basis. The apex bank, in a circular on Monday stated that the directive is in line with its previous circulars numbers BSD/DIR/GEN/CIR/02/019 dated January 29, 2009 and BSD/DIR/GEN/CIR/01/023 dated October 14, 2009.

The memo signed by the director of banking supervision, Samuel Oni, explained that CBN would publish the rates on Wednesday of every week in some of the National dailies and post same on its website to enable the public and other relevant stakeholders monitor the actual lending and deposit rates of banks. In line with the current practice, banks should continue to publish their interest rates on their websites.

"Also, going forward the CBN will, in addition to undertaking spot checks on banks to verify the accuracy of the rates being published, carry out direct third party confirmation from the users of these funds as the need arises." He said any bank that is found to have rendered inaccurate interest rate returns capable of misinforming and misleading the public shall be sanctioned. Sanctions will be publicized by the CBN. "Consequently, banks are directed to submit their weekly average interest rates returns before the close of business of every Monday following the preceding week.

Consequently, banks are directed to submit their weekly average interest rates returns before the close of business of every Monday

Oni explained the policy is in line with CBN policy of ensuring transparency and accountability are entrenched in the banking sector. CBN had left the country's benchmark interest rate unchanged at 6.0 percent at the last monetary policy committee (MPC) meeting in Abuja. The apex bank also keep its 2 per cent corridor for lending and deposit rates around the benchmark rate (MPR) to 200 basis points above the MPR for lending and 400 basis points below the MPR for borrowing.

| CBN EXCHANGE RATES | | | | BUREAU DE CHANGE RATES | |
|--------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|------------------------|------|
| | Buying (NGN) | Central (NGN) | Selling (NGN) | | |
| CFA | 0.3048 | 0.3148 | 0.3248 | BUYING | |
| DANISH KRONER | 28.4713 | 28.5681 | 28.6649 | DOLLAR..... | N152 |
| EURO | 211.9711 | 212.6916 | 213.4121 | EURO..... | N220 |
| POUNDS STERLING | 238.3167 | 239.1268 | 239.9368 | POUNDS..... | N252 |
| RIYAL | 39.2267 | 39.36 | 39.4933 | SELLING | |
| SDR | 230.6087 | 231.3926 | 232.1764 | DOLLAR..... | N153 |
| SWISS FRANC | 144.1592 | 144.6492 | 145.1392 | EURO..... | N223 |
| US DOLLAR | 147.1 | 147.6 | 148.1 | POUNDS..... | N255 |
| WAUA | 230.0676 | 230.8496 | 231.6316 | | |
| YEN | 1.5916 | 1.5971 | 1.6025 | | |

| Stock Market Index | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Date : | Monday, January 11, 2010 |
| Index: | 21,658.69 |
| Deals: | 6,419 |
| Volume : | 307,437,865 |
| Value: | N 2,260,073,375.22 |
| Cap. : | N 5,188,585,008,987.84 |

Source: S&P Bureau de Change, Wuse Zone 4, Abuja.

Business

Schlumberger donates \$12m software to 8 varsities

From Mohammed Shosanya, Lagos

ENERGY giant Schlumberger Limited has announced the donation of \$12 million worth software application to eight universities in Nigeria as part of its contribution to the GeoScience Workroom project in the nation's institutions of higher learning.

The project, which was initiated by ExxonMobil entails the construction of mini-Geosciences

workrooms in the Geosciences department of benefitting universities.

The benefitting institutions include; Nmandi Azikiwe University, Awka, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, University of Ife, University of Benin and University of Calabar. Others are Delta State University, University of Ilorin and Federal University of Technology, Owerri.

Speaking yesterday at the

training of lecturers from the beneficiary universities, General Marketing Director of Schlumberger, Bunmi Omole, explained that the software will enable institutions to include the use of industry standard software in teaching their students in modern ways of finding oil in the most efficient manner.

Commenting on the workrooms, Ufuoma Ewherido, General Manager, Operations, Technical Geosciences, said the device

are equipped with four interpretation duck stations, discussion table with six revolving chairs, a manager's desk and writing board.

"Once the workrooms are prepared, the following hardware are then deployed to each of the beneficiary universities: 4 Sun Blade Unix machines, 1 DLT tape drive, 13com, 16 ports switch, 1 HP Design jet Plotter, 1 Dell 19" flat screen, 1 high and PC and 1 APC UPS[1.5kva]," he said.



STRATECH Roses Limited, an Abuja-based business and technology centre, had its End of the Year Retreat/Customer Awards Ceremony recently. Picture shows (from left), Mr. Moses Obisesan, Managing Director of Stratech Roses Limited, Mr. Peter Adepoju, Customer of the company and Award Winner, and Mr. Frederick Apeji, Managing Director of Eli Branding, at the event.

Spring Bank directors assume duty

By Yunus Abdulhamid

TWO of the three Executive Directors appointed by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) for Spring Bank have assumed duty. They are Dr. Kabir Ahmed, Executive Director, Business Development and Mr. Gbenga E. Fakile, Executive Director, Risk Management and Subsidiaries.

The directors who have since settled down for work have a rich background of banking experience, which saw them climb to the pinnacle of their different careers before their appointment, as statement from the bank said.

Ahmed is a distinguished academic with multi-disciplinary competencies who has held various strategic positions in the banking sector and meant to strengthen the new management team constituted by the apex bank to reinvigorate Spring Bank.

He is a graduate of ABU, Zaria with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English in 1978. He holds an M.A. Degree in Modern African Literature from the University of Sheffield (1978) and a Doctorate Degree in English from the University of Kent, Canterbury (1989).

Foodstuff, prices remain high—survey

A week after the festivities, foodstuff prices have remained high in Auchi, Edo, a market survey by the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) has shown. According to the survey, sellers are complaining of low patronage. With the exception of tomatoes and pepper that recorded price reductions, other food items remained as high as they were during the Christmas period.

A basket of tomatoes now sells for N4,000 as against the N5,500 it was sold during the Yuletide period, while pepper reduced by N500 from N4,000 a bag to N3,500. However, there was a sharp increase in the price of garri, rising from N4,500 to N6,000 per bag, but the prices of rice, beans, groundnut oil and palm oil remained stable.

Mrs Blessing Sule, a rice trader, told NAN that they were not expecting any fall in the prices of rice and beans because of the high cost of transportation.

She said: "Because of the high cost of fuel, we spend a lot in transporting our goods from the point of purchase to our warehouses. This cost is built into the selling prices of the goods; so I do not see us reducing the prices soon."

According to reports that no reason was given for the sudden increase in the price of garri, but the reduced prices of tomatoes and pepper were attributed to the season.

Royal Exchange pays N3bn insurance claim

From kayode Ekundayo, Lagos

ROYAL Exchange General Insurance Company Ltd recently paid a N3.241bn insurance claim to leading Insurance Brokers, Hogg Robinson Nigeria Ltd in Lagos.

The amount, which represents the biggest insurance claims payment in the history of insurance in Nigeria, and in the West African sub-region, is in respect of a fire disaster which occurred at the Benin plant of the Nigeria Bottling Company Plc on December 18th 2008.

A statement issued by the Acting Managing Director of Royal Exchange General Insurance Company Ltd, Olutayo Borokini, said that on the schedule of insurance cover for the NBC facility, Royal Exchange led the consortium of co-insurers with 47.5 per cent. A number of professionals such as loss adjusters, valuers, quantity surveyors and engineers from within and outside the country were engaged

in the assessment and adjustment of the loss initially estimated at N13.5 billion but eventually adjusted to N6.824 billion.

The statement said that while claim was being investigated, two interim payments amounting to N2 billion were made to the insured out of which Royal Exchange contributed N950 million in addition to a sum of N52.464 million paid wholly by Royal Exchange to the professionals that worked on the claims. The consequential loss aspect of the claims, the insurance firm said is being rounded up by the loss adjusters and Royal Exchange General Insurance Company Ltd is expected to pay up its proportion as soon as this is concluded, the statement added.

Receiving the Royal Exchange cheque, the Executive Director of Hogg Robinson, Alhaji Saheed Egbeyemi, noted that the sum of N3.241 billion is by far the biggest claims cheque ever received in the history of broking in Nigeria.

Oceanic leads bank stocks recovery

By Sunday Williams

OCEANIC Bank International Plc's equity is leading the recovery of bank stocks on the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) in the opening days of trading in 2010, a statement from the bank said.

By close of trading in the first week of 2010, the share price of Oceanic Bank has appreciated by 26.04 per cent, the highest in the sub-sector. But the Central Bank Governor Sanusi Lamido Sanusi had said in an interview that shares performance is not a yardstick for judging a bank.

Oceanic share price, which closed 2009 last year at N1.69, rose to close at N2.13 per share last Friday. Market operators said investors are already taking advantage of the low price of the bank considered to have very bright future prospects.

"Oceanic Bank is a good brand and the current management is already putting strategies in place to return the bank to profitabil-

ity. Discerning investors are now swooping on the shares ahead of the expected improved fortunes in the not too distant future," a leading stockbroker said.

Speaking on the development, John Aboh, Group Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer, Oceanic Bank International plc, said the bank's management was committed to creating value for its shareholders through the implementation of a robust recovery plan.

Aboh said the upward movement of the bank's share price was indicative of growing customer and investor confidence in the ability of the Bank to return to profitability and create wealth for all its stakeholders.

The Oceanic Bank chief said the Bank would soon embark on consistent shareholder engagement sessions that will be geared towards carrying all stakeholders along as the Bank continues to take strategic steps towards accelerated recovery.

DAILY TRUST

presents

7TH ANNUAL TRUST DIALOGUE

Theme:

The African Woman and Politics

Date: Thursday, 21 January, 2010

Venue: Congress Hall, Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja

Time: 10.00 am

Guest Speakers

Mrs. Winnie M. Mandela
Anti-Apartheid Fighter and
Member of Parliament



Hajiya Naja'atu Mohammed
First Female President of ASU Students Union
and Political Activist



Senator Kofo Buknor-Akerole
Former Deputy Governor, Lagos State
and PDP Stalwart



Mrs Samia Nkrumah
Member of Parliament, Republic of Ghana

Attendance/ Participation is FREE

Star Feature

Inside the 'Valley of Death'

For motorists and other travellers who ply the Abuja-Lafia-Makurdi road, the portion of the road between Akwanga and Nassarawa-Eggon which is characterised by dangerous bends, and is commonly known as 'Many Have Gone', is a familiar one. Daily Trust's **Fidelis Mac-Leva** recently visited the place also described as the 'Valley of Death'. His report:

TWO traffic signposts by the roadside caution the approaching motorist. "You are at Many Have Gone Hill. Slow down. No overtaking. Remember your loved ones", reads the first sign post. Some meters farther ahead another one reads: "Many have gone. Do not overtake at the brow of the hill. Drive carefully to stay alive."

Motorists and other travellers who ply the Abuja-Lafia-Makurdi road are quite familiar with that dreaded portion of the road with dangerous bends, that has come to be known as "Many Have Gone." Also referred to as the "valley of death," the approximately forty kilometre distance of the undulating road which meanders through the landlocked hills and valleys between Akwanga and Nassarawa-Eggon in Nasarawa State, is certainly not a traveller's delight.

Driving through the valley of death for the first time, reveals that it is not only a rugged place, it is a driver's nightmare. It is characterized by rocky hills and mountains that are buried in thick forests. The communities living along the road are made up of peasant farmers, who also engage in hunting, fishing, as well as petty merchandising.

Going by the accounts and testimonies of these roadside communities, the naming of this particular portion of the road as the valley of death, does not necessarily amount to indulging in an hyperbole. Over the years the horrors of the grave were said to have closed in on thousands of passengers, who travelled through the road to their various destinations, especially during festive seasons.

According to some motorists, travelling through this valley of death could be like signing one's death warrant. As you approach the dangerous bends, the rugged hills appear to stand guard on both sides of the road.

It is not easy to ascertain the level of compliance by motor-

ists to the quintessential warning traffic signs at the Valley of death. One fact remains that over the years many lives had been lost through uncountable fatal accidents along the road. Those who survived such terrible accidents, were either maimed, or left with one physical disability or the other.

Villagers living along the dreaded road have attested to this. Some of the villagers who spoke with this reporter said apart from accidents, armed robbers as well as other criminals, also take advantage of the rugged nature of the road, to attack and unleash terror and paranoia on innocent travellers.

Danjuma Audu, a hunter who lives in one of the sprawling settlements within the neighbourhood of the dangerous road, said he has had cause to come out from the forest where he hunts on several occasions, on rescue missions during fatal accidents.

Audu also recalls an unforgettable incident in 2004 in which a Governor's convoy was attacked, while passing through the valley of death. He was referring to the inci-



Files driving through the 'Valley of death.'

dent that occurred on Wednesday March 2, 2004, in which former Benue State Governor, George Akume [now a Senator] escaped death by the whiskers, when his convoy was attacked by suspected assailants while passing through the valley of death. Akume was lucky to have cheated death. But not his bosom friend and former managing Director of the Nigerian Airways, Andrew Agom, and one Sergeant Joseph Ngam, who were killed by the attackers' bullets.

For Binta Kilo, a middle aged woman who has a Cassava farm within the neighbourhood of the valley of death, noth-

“ Audu also recalls an unforgettable incident in 2004 in which referring to the incident that occurred on Wednesday March death by the whiskers, when his convoy was attacked by suspected cheated death. But not his bosom friend and former managing who were killed by the attackers' bullets.



“But things appear to be changing for the better at the Valley of Death. The Federal Government has since awarded a contract for the dualisation of the road. When this reporter visited “Many Have Gone”, construction work was progressing. Some motorists and villagers who spoke on the development, commended the government for awarding the contract, and expressed the hope that when successfully completed, the plight of travellers along the dreaded road would be reduced.

ing has shocked her more than an accident she witnessed along the dangerous road sometime in 1995. According to Binta whose face bore the signs of grief as she recounted the incident, more than forty passengers perished in the said accident! “There was a head-on collusion between a luxury bus and a petrol tanker at one of the dangerous bends ,and both vehicles burst into flames, killing almost everybody on board”, she said.

Apart from the bad nature of the road as evidenced by the dangerous bends and potholes, Road Safety experts have also

blamed the accidents on what they refer to as the nonchalant attitude of road users. Motorists, according to the experts, do not obey road safety rules while driving through the valley of death. “Most of the drivers tend to ignore the warning signs with respect to speed limits and overloading”, said Habila Moses [not real names], a Road Safety Corps Marshall, who spoke with this reporter.

Perhaps it is in an attempt to regulate the speed limit and enforce other road safety rules so as to reduce the rate of fatal accidents at the place, that the Federal Road Safety Commis-

sion, FRSC, has decided to station some Corps Marshals at the dangerous bends around the valley of death.

One of the Marshals on duty who spoke with this reporter, but wouldn't want her name mentioned, described as unprecedented the nature and number of fatal accidents that had claimed lives at the valley of death over the past years.

But things appear to be changing for the better at the Valley of death. The Federal Government has since awarded a contract for the dualisation of the road. When this reporter visited “Many Have Gone”, construction work was progressing. Some motorists and villagers who spoke on the development, commended the government for awarding the contract, and expressed the hope that when successfully completed, the plight of travellers along the dreaded road would be reduced.

ch a governor's convoy was attacked, while passing through the valley of death. He was 2, 2004, in which former Benue State Governor George Akume [now a senator] escaped suspected assailants while passing through the valley of death. Akume was lucky to have ing director of the Nigerian Airways, Andrew Agom, and one Sergeant Joseph Ngam,

Business/Interview

How Nigeria will fight poverty in 2010 - Kpakol

Senior Special Adviser to the President and Coordinator of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) Dr. Magnus Kpakol says in this interview that his agency is winning the war against poverty and lots more.

By Jibrin Abubakar & Sunday Williams

THE year 2009 has come and gone but poverty remains in Nigeria. Your agency is charged with the responsibility of fighting the menace in the country. How has it been?

Basically, the fight against poverty is a continuous fight. Even in the advance economy they still have poverty and that's because of the way poverty is defined. We know of the typical absolute poverty definition where any person whose income is below that threshold is poor. For instance, you could get a situation where everybody else is making N10 million per month and you are only making N3 million a month, you are a poor person because you fall below the average for everybody else. So that makes the war against poverty a continuous one. Also, it is not very appropriate to measure the fight against poverty on a year-by-year basis because what we do in any one year is built upon what we have done in the year before.

In 2009 as a country, we built on what we did in the previous years and it is not just the responsibility of NAPEP. When NAPEP speaks about the fight against poverty and about our success in the fight, it is not just because of what NAPEP did itself but what as a country we did. NAPEP job is mainly to be demonstrating. We are supposed to show what need to be done by other people and we are supposed to coordinate basically what is happening nationwide and suggest the kinds of approaches that we should take in the fight against poverty.

So it is not fair to NAPEP to ask how much poverty we have wiped away last year. But the better question should be what kind of success did we recorded against poverty up to say the end of 2009 and what kinds of new things did we do in 2009 against poverty to show that we are really very serious in the fight against poverty.

On that account up to 2009, we have done some creative things in the country. One of the things I always hammered on that I think is good for people to see is that every state now has a poverty eradication office which was not the case before.

It means that everybody is more purposeful in the fight against poverty. So the efforts nationwide are much stronger and



DR. Magnus Kpakol NAPEP boss

gained a lot of attention as we saw literally every state is doing something.

For example, Cross River state has started a programme called comfort, their own COPE (conditional cash transfer) programme that was not there before and they introduced it alongside other micro-credit programmes.

Again, states like Kebbi are putting out significant amount of money also for conditional cash transfer programme in their zakat programme to also fight poverty.

You see in Jigawa State where the Governor even called a conference on the poor and asked them to discuss it. These are things that were not there before and what came out of that is greater attention to the poverty situation in Jigawa by the Governor and also by other people.

So, in the states, everybody is doing a lot more in the fight against poverty to create jobs and at the Federal government level, you have to look at the work done say by Bank of Industry, SMEDAN, NDE etc in whatever they do, they pay a little bit more attention in the fight against poverty.

All of these things are not happening in a vacuum. Maybe we are not doing it enough but I think a reasonable person watching should be able to notice that a lot of these things are happening because of the leadership that we are providing in the fight against poverty from NAPEP.

Many people are doing things because we are talking to them. We talk to the Governors directly or indirectly and we use the media.

We have been talking about National Champions, Community Champions, personalities that can do significant things in their communities and nationwide and we have seen other agencies adopting

it. Last year, we built on our village solutions programmes, given a lot more attention to it. We stressed the COPE programme and also started talking about the village trust fund and I hear others agencies and the states beginning to look at Trust Funds where they invest money for the purpose of using the proceeds to take care of say education or health.

To cap it up for 2009, we then set the stage for what we are going to do in 2010 where we are going to promote the idea that it is a little bit more effective when a private sector is really empowered to be a leader in the fight against poverty and the government should take the supportive role and not to be the one to disburse money to people.

So we are going to fine tune our strategies this year whereby government agencies are really going to be supportive of financial intermediaries to be sure that they are lending in the way they are supposed to do.

With some of these efforts in 2009, what is the poverty rate in Nigeria?

The actual data is collated by the National Bureau of statistics and they are supposed to come up with the new survey this year. So, nobody knows the actual rate but by looking at the situation of the country and the various indices

and variables personally, I think that it is below 50% but it is safe to say is around 50%.

The poverty rate has dropped because for example if you look at the economy, and look at what happens in say agriculture, you realise that there is decent growth in the sector last year and that growth in output means something happen there.

If you look at retail growth area, if you look across board, you will see that there is overall GDP growth rate. The economy grew by about 6% and I thought it will be about 5%. All of that growth took place in the non-oil sector where you have people getting jobs.

The oil sector suffered negative growth because of the Niger Delta and global problems compared to the year before. We had a decline in output and revenue from the oil sector in 2009.

So if we manage to grow the oil sector which accounts for 30% of the economy which has declined and yet we were able to get 6% growth rate, it means that the other sectors had significant growth rate.

So if you take that and add to the consistency in the economic growth rate that we had since 2000 which help to bring the poverty rate from 70% in 1999 to 54.4% in 2004, and the momentum continues, then it is not unreasonable to believe that the poverty rate must have dropped more than 4 points between 2004 and 2009.

If between 1999 and 2004 that is 5 years the poverty rate dropped 16 points, it is not unreasonable to think that in another 5 years, the poverty rate couldn't have dropped more than 4 points.

As an economist, doing the back of the envelop calculations, I know at the back of my mind, that unless we change the yardstick that we use in measurement, the poverty rate will be under 50% but it is safe for me to say 50%.

Has the absence of President Yar'adua affected your work?

Obviously not. The country is moving ahead, activities are moving, the President is in touch with the appropriate persons and everything is working as it should.

Do you see our population as an impediment in the fight against poverty?

No. I see our population as a great asset to the country. One of the reasons why people respect

Nigeria all over the world is its potential of over 150 million people. That means there could be two people that could just come out and do some wonders.

You have a greater chance of getting two people out of over 150 million than two people out of 5 million for example. It also means that you have a large population of workers that can produce things and provide good amount of output for the economy and for the world.

So if you give our people the education and skills, then we can be as competitive as any country in the world so the population is a good thing for us.

What should Nigeria expect from NAPEP in 2010?

This year we are going to make sure for very significant changes that will be transformational in the way government approaches the provision of credit in the fight against poverty.

We believe that it is not very efficacious to use government money directly in providing credit to poor people. Otherwise, what we should do is to promote private enterprises and to support the capacity of micro-finance institutions and other intermediaries that are in the position to provide resources to the poor people.

What we are going to do this year with our limited resources, is to use it in partnership with the Local governments, states and National Assembly who are closer to their constituencies to try to get micro-finance and commercial banks to commit more resources.

We are going to provide incentives to Micro-Finance and other financial intermediaries to provide more resources for agricultural processing in our communities because of the comparative advantage in getting the raw materials.

We are going to put great efforts on that for basically leading to rural industrialization. Our resources will be given to cooperatives but not in the manner that we have done before. We will instead, use the money to provide incentives for people to set up processing activities and provide incentives for micro-finance banks to lend to people.

We will share the NAPEP money equitably among the six-geopolitical zones for local governments, Micro finance banks and individual people in the zones to compete to leverage that money. It can be cooperatives but it could also be individual. We will not be involved in the disbursement of the loans. We will not be involved in the selection of the people that get the loans because we have found out that that process is not efficient.

“If we manage to grow the oil sector which accounts for 30% of the economy which has declined and yet we were able to get 6% growth rate, it means that the other sectors had significant growth rate

Business/Oil & Gas

Deregulation will end fuel scarcity — Aminu



CHAIRMAN, Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs Professor Jibril Aminu

From Abdullahi Tasiu Abubakar, Yola

CHAIRMAN Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs Professor Jibril Aminu has said that the best way of tackling fuel shortage problem in the country is to deregulate the petroleum industry and allow free market competition to flourish.

Professor Aminu, a former petroleum minister, told journalists in Yola that deregulating the industry and allowing it to run freely, as in the case of the mobile phone industry, will end fuel scarcity and guarantee price stability.

He said "there is no absolute shortage" of petroleum products in the country, but that government regulation and market's manipulation were responsible for the artificial scarcity.

He alleged that the marketers manipulate the market, hoard the products on speculation of government's plan to remove subsidy and make money out of the situation.

However, he said, if the government removes subsidy

and deregulates the market, manipulation will end and the price of the products could even fall on the long run.

"Eventually, if you introduce deregulation, price will stabilize; competition will force the price to fall," he added.

Professor Aminu said the case of mobile phone industry was the classic example of how deregulation proves beneficial to consumers.

"If it is excellent in the telephone (industry), why won't it be good in the petroleum (industry)...From the telephone experience, we find that the price of regulation is higher than the price of deregulation," he said.

He also noted that refining crude oil in the country alone will not automatically bring down the price of fuel as long as the price of the crude remains high in the international market.

However, he said, the benefit of local refining are that the cost of transport, demurrage and insurance would be saved and the price of the product would go down.

Oil prices rise to \$84 a drum

OIL prices rose 1 percent on Monday, hitting a fresh 15-month high near \$84 a barrel, supported by data showing China's crude oil imports surged by nearly 25 percent in December and as the dollar weakened.

The prolonged cold snap in the U.S. and Europe continued to boost demand for heating fuel, lending support to oil prices.

U.S. crude for February delivery rose \$1.12 cents to \$83.87 a barrel by 1150 GMT (6:50 a.m. EST), off an earlier peak of \$83.95, the highest price since October 2008.

London Brent crude gained 94 cents to \$82.31.

But oil is still 43 percent below its July 2008 high of more than \$147 a barrel.

"The weak U.S. dollar, cold weather and robust Chinese import data are all supporting oil today," said Carsten Fritsch, oil analyst at Commerzbank in Frankfurt.

"At the moment the market is only looking at positive data, not negative numbers," he added.

China, the world's second-largest energy consumer, imported over 20 million tonnes of crude for the first time ever in December, up almost a quarter from November, according to Customs data published on Sunday.

Asian equities rose to a 17-month high on Monday as a strong rebound in China's exports raised optimism about the region's economic outlook, while the dollar fell 0.53 percent against a basket of currencies.

A weaker U.S. currency makes commodities priced against the dollar, like oil, cheaper for those holding other currencies.

For a graphic on the negative correlation between the U.S. dollar and crude, click here: [here\\$CR0110.gif](http://here$CR0110.gif)

Tensions in Nigeria's main oil producing region have removed some supplies from the market, supporting prices, and traders will be watching carefully for further developments.

Chevron said on Saturday it had been forced to shut down 20,000 barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil production in Nigeria, a day after security sources said gunmen had attacked a pipeline operated by the U.S. firm.

Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter, will keep crude supply to major Asian and European buyers largely steady in February, as the kingdom sticks to OPEC supply cuts, industry sources said on Monday. *REUTERS.*

'NNPC monopoly caused fuel scarcity'

From Mohammed Shosanya, Lagos

THE Lagos Chambers of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) has blamed the ongoing fuel scarcity in the country on the continued dominance of the downstream sector by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC).

President of the Chambers, Ogunba Femi Deru, said the Nigerian economy would be incapacitated if nothing meaningful is done to check the dominance of the sector by the NNPC.

He said: "The truth is that as long as the NNPC continues to play a dominant role in the procurement, refining, distribution and marketing of petroleum products, the Nigerian economy would remain burdened by the sorry state of affairs in the sector. This situation manifests in profound inefficiency, characterized by grave integrity and transparency issues."

The President further noted that the current fuel scarcity has manifested in the inability of private sector importers to secure the

quarterly import permit for the fourth quarter until late November 2009.

He also attributed fuel crisis to the comatose state of the domestic refineries and heavy indebtedness of the Petroleum Product Pricing Regulatory Agency (PPPRA) to the marketers under the Petroleum Support Fund (PSF).

"There is also the sad reality that the entire country had to rely on petroleum products from the Lagos Ports, which have to be distributed by road. The horrendous cost and logistics implications are bet-

ter imagined, particularly with the poor state of our roads," he added.

According to him, the NNPC should disengage completely from retailing petroleum products.

The ongoing acquisition of retail outlets by the NNPC, he contended, is totally inconsistent with the proposed reforms in the sector, adding that retail outlets, is the least of the problems in the sector.

He also suggested that the Petroleum Equalization Fund be scrapped, while there should in place

a creative incentives for the private sector to set up refineries both for domestic consumption and for export as well as engagement of private sector agencies to manage and maintain the pipelines.

According to him, the refineries should be immediately privatized, with labour issues adequately addressed, adding that there should be a strong regulatory institution with clear guidelines to guide investors in the sector and protect the interest of the consumers.

'NNPC saves N20 billion in one year'

From Hamisu Mohammad & Mohammed Shosanya, Lagos

THE Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) has saved N20 billion in projected annual recurrent budget in the last one year, its Group Managing Director Mohammed Sanusi Barkindo has said.

Barkindo, who revealed this in Abuja yesterday, while giving a one year assessment

of his stewardship as NNPC helmsman, said the corporation was able to save the cost through a medley of cost-efficient strategies across the departments and strategic business units of the Group it introduced.

"For instance, part of the money was saved from the Exploration and Production Directorate through the renegotiation of con-

tracts with suppliers and the elimination of unnecessary committee meetings that incurred huge travel costs," Barkindo stated.

A statement from the Corporation's spokesman Levi Ajuonuma said in the Directorates of Corporate Services (CS) and Refining and Petrochemicals (R & P) the cost-saving measures introduced include the rene-

gotiation of contracts with suppliers and the reduction of chemical consumption through a cutback in steam losses and overheads.

According to him, at the Pipelines and Products Marketing Company, PPMC huge amounts were also saved through the cut in demurrage costs and interest on late payments.

He said the Finance and

Accounts Directorate also benefitted from the cost-saving measures through the imposition of a budget cap to limit spending, while the Nigerian Gas Company, a subsidiary of the NNPC, had its revenue boosted through the collection of debts from the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) and other commercial debtors.

Business/Economy

Will Mutallab saga affect Nigerian economy?

From Kayode Ekundayo & Chris Agabi, Lagos

NIGERIA has been classified by the United States among one of the 14 "countries of interest."

Since the alleged attempt on Christmas Day by a 23-year old Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, to blow up a commercial airliner over Detroit, Michigan there have been wide condemnation of the act by the young Mutallab from the Nigerian government, its citizens-both home and abroad. The plane had taken off from Amsterdam with 273 passengers and 11 crew members. On Friday Farouk pleaded not guilty before a court.

Unfortunately, despite the condemnations, the US government on Monday rolled out Nigeria's name among 14 countries whose passengers forms "countries of interest" and those from Cuba, Sudan, North Korea, and Syria, which Washington said will be subjected to enhanced screening at the airports with techniques that include full-body pat-downs, carry-on bag searches, full-body scanning and explosive detection technology.

Four other African countries - Algeria, Libya, Somalia and Sudan - are also subject to the new measures. Nigeria has condemned in strong terms the tough screening imposed on Nigerian passengers wanting to fly to the US.

Many economic experts also berate US on its latest action and said that the decision by the Barrack Obama-led government to include Nigeria on the terrorist list has wide range implications on the nation's economy.

Omwumi Ilebare, associate professor, Energy Economics and Policy Research, Louisiana State University, US in response to email enquiries said everything depends on the reaction of the government in Nigeria.

"The bulk of the direct investments from the US to Nigeria is primarily in the oil and gas sector. I do not see any correlation between oil and gas investment flow and this action of the US government. Of course, everything depends on the reaction of the government in Nigeria. If the government of Nigeria wants to flex its muscle by retaliating with an oil embargo to the US, then you may have ripple effects that may ultimately affect direct investment. Certainly, travel out of Nigeria will be extremely taxing relative to travelling out of other places. But this has always been the case anyway, although at a different level. Nigeria was blacklisted in the US in the days of Abacha and it survived it. So this too shall pass", he said.

Ilebare noted that US has not listed Nigeria as a terrorist country but as a "country of interest" with respect to airline travel security.

"The impact of the US's decision to list Nigeria as a "country of interest" on the nation's economy depends on how the Nigerian government reacts. The US has only called for greater scrutiny of all passengers, especially Nigerians, travelling from anywhere to the US. They have not classified the international airports in Nigeria as unsafe to American travellers. There is also no sanctions against Nigeria in economic terms."

He said if the government in Nigeria reacts negatively with a threat to assets owned by American companies and to American interests in Nigeria, then we have a different story with respect to the impact on the economy. Listing Nigeria as a "country of interest" as they did is not the same as banning direct flights to and from the US.

He said, "I do not see any economic implications of this US action on Nigeria, but it somehow might have strained the cordial relationship between the two nations. The US with this action is trying to say indirectly that Nigeria is no longer of importance in its fight against terrorism and its strategic policy for Africa. The former is inconsequential because Nigeria is not a terrorist nation, but the latter, in my opinion, is a big mistake by the Obama administration. I do not see how a strategic policy of the US on Africa can be effective without Nigeria in the picture. Time will tell."

"I do not see how this young man's action is relevant to the investment climate in Nigeria. The majority of investors are smarter enough to know that Nigeria did not sponsor or train this young man and neither does the government of Nigeria support terrorism. It is like blaming or equating Maddoff and the former Enron's CEO behaviour in business as the pre-

vailing American's culture and blacklisting the US for direct investment from the UK, Asia and even Africa. I think the greediness of bank executives, selfishness elites, and the ineptitude of the political structure in Nigeria have far greater consequences on investment decision in Nigeria than the junior Mutallab's attempted terrorist act. Certainly, the thought process in Nigeria of what a young mind can do or not do has changed forever. I used to think that no Nigerians is prepared to die for any cause".

On a side note, looking at the level of accomplishments and contributions of many naturalized Nigerians in the US society, and if naturalized Nigerians in the US are united, the Obama administration would have thought twice before classifying Nigeria as a "country of interest" when it comes to air travel security because of just one single individual's behavior. A Briton was caught a while back for a terrorist act and Britain as a nation was not designated as a country of interest. The lack of a united focus among naturalized and resident Nigerian elites in the US is the primary reason for this act of humiliation by the Obama administration in my opinion!

Mr. Ubong Awah, the chief accounting officer/managing director XDS credit bureau on his part said Farouk didn't travel as a Nigerian citizen in the first place, so why is his misbehaviour been generalised to include all Nigerians.

However, he noted that it is a burden that will affect all Nigerians including businesses. "Nigerians will experience difficulty doing business elsewhere, particularly with the strict travel conditions."

According to him, "Ultimately, what Nigeria is experiencing now is a cocktail of problems. When you add all the political problems, the socio-economic problems, religious, the Farouk Mutallab incidence, and others, no doubt it will affect us economically because of the lost of integrity and credibility."

He said whether we like it or not, as a Nigerian, you are guilty until proven innocent as it were, adding that with that sort of an image, Nigerians would be suspect even in the comity of nation and the business environment.

He however advised that, a strong credit information culture be introduced using robust credit bureau system where people who perpetrate criminal acts can be isolate and dealt with rather than branding everyone a criminal because of the activities of a few bad people.

He chided the federal government uncoordinated approach in handling the incidence.

Frank Ogiamen of Partfinder Securities explained that the US's action has a far reaching implication on the nation's economy. According to him, foreign investors would be wary of doing business with Nigerians in Nigeria adding that investor would begin to look at Nigeria as a country where terrorists hatches their plans and launch them on the US.

Managing Director Fresh Field Asset management limited Abdurashheed Abubakar said obviously America will begin to look at Nigeria as unsafe for travel and business because Americans take security seriously. It also impact on the Nigerian brand - now, Nigeria is not only corrupt but now Nigeria is linked with terrorism.



UMAR Farouk AbdulMutallab

His action also devastates the little gains we have achieved. 2009 was remarkable for instance in air safety records of Nigeria. But that significant achievement has been buried under this unfortunate case," he said.

"Personally, I am a victim of US visa policy against Muslim and that experience is demeaning. I am not a fan of USA."

A journalist based in Lagos, Suleiman Idris says: "Every Nigerian seeking to travel now will experience the worst kind of security scrutiny. This issue has rubbished our rebranding efforts. The implication is grave on Nigeria because America is particular on security."

Also a businessman based in Lagos Ndubisi Okeke said, because few Nigeria's actually export to USA it wouldn't affect trade between USA and Nigeria.

"If for anything, they have an edge over trade with Nigeria. They are the highest beneficiary of Nigeria's oil. We use more of American goods than they use Nigeria's. And with growing China's economic influence in Africa, America wouldn't want to completely hands off Nigeria's market to China. America will not sever economic relations with Nigeria on account of this. I only see harsher travel policy for Nigerians into US and European countries going forward."

However, he noted that it is a burden that will affect all Nigerians including businesses. "Nigerians will experience difficulty doing business elsewhere, particularly with the strict travel conditions."

Business/Finance



Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE)

Monday, January 11, 2010

| COMPANY | No of Deals | Quot. (N) | Quantity Traded | Value of Shares (N) |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 2ND-TIER SECURITIES | | | | |
| CAPITAL OIL PLC | 10 | 0.56 | 5,502,500 | 3,081,400.00 |
| JULI PLC | 1 | 3.37 | 100,000 | 337,000.00 |
| SECTOR Totals | 11 | | 5,602,500 | 3,418,400.00 |
| AGRICULTURE | | | | |
| AFPRINT NIGERIA PLC | 1 | 0.86 | 500 | 430.00 |
| FTN COCOA PROCES. PLC | 4 | 0.63 | 364,000 | 229,320.00 |
| LIVESTOCK FEEDS PLC | 3 | 0.67 | 100,145 | 67,097.15 |
| PRESKO PLC | 11 | 5.60 | 153,337 | 855,634.29 |
| SECTOR Totals | 19 | | 617,982 | 1,152,481.44 |
| AIR SERVICES | | | | |
| AIRLINE SERV. AND LOG. PLC | 19 | 2.40 | 1,494,750 | 3,587,400.00 |
| NIG. AV. HAND. COY PLC | 74 | 8.19 | 1,297,985 | 10,525,469.90 |
| SECTOR Totals | 93 | | 2,792,735 | 14,112,869.90 |
| AUTOMOBILE & TYRE | | | | |
| DN TYRE & RUBBER PLC | 23 | 0.50 | 11,254,393 | 5,627,196.50 |
| INCAR NIGERIA PLC | 1 | 3.22 | 101,000 | 325,220.00 |
| R. T. BRISCOE (NIGERIA) PLC | 15 | 5.98 | 117,720 | 737,121.00 |
| SECTOR Totals | 39 | | 11,473,113 | 6,689,537.50 |
| BANKING | | | | |
| ACCESS BANK PLC | 223 | 7.99 | 20,182,995 | 161,618,022.43 |
| AFRIBANK NIGERIA PLC | 114 | 3.02 | 7,568,455 | 21,582,216.25 |
| DIAMOND BANK PLC | 93 | 7.50 | 19,098,517 | 142,016,856.84 |
| ECOBANK NIGERIA PLC | 9 | 10.10 | 46,525 | 446,640.00 |
| FIRST CITY MON. BANK PLC | 60 | 7.53 | 3,460,555 | 25,883,297.06 |
| FIDELITY BANK PLC | 133 | 2.58 | 7,509,007 | 19,357,881.98 |
| FIRST BANK OF NIG. PLC | 975 | 15.50 | 32,553,042 | 498,964,132.56 |
| FINBANK PLC | 102 | 0.61 | 24,388,137 | 14,728,883.57 |
| GTBANK PLC | 353 | 16.10 | 13,677,106 | 219,862,917.29 |
| STANBIC IBTC BANK PLC | 40 | 7.50 | 2,138,964 | 15,928,548.81 |
| INTERCONT. BANK PLC | 61 | 1.99 | 4,292,627 | 8,541,996.73 |
| OCEANIC BANK INT. PLC | 83 | 2.23 | 6,150,337 | 13,715,251.51 |
| BANK PHB PLC | 82 | 1.73 | 4,073,546 | 7,046,824.58 |
| SKYE BANK PLC | 132 | 5.79 | 6,988,358 | 39,733,069.23 |
| SPRING BANK PLC | 5 | 0.73 | 18,167 | 13,806.92 |
| STERLING BANK PLC | 47 | 1.30 | 4,294,714 | 5,554,766.66 |
| UNT. BANK FOR AFRICA PLC | 292 | 11.40 | 13,829,204 | 157,701,026.56 |
| UNION BANK OF NIG. PLC | 164 | 6.50 | 7,121,653 | 45,164,165.35 |
| UNITYBANK PLC | 24 | 0.97 | 4,209,899 | 4,159,625.01 |
| WEMA BANK PLC | 50 | 1.16 | 2,388,971 | 2,719,199.32 |
| ZENITH BANK PLC | 272 | 15.40 | 9,135,158 | 138,418,404.43 |
| SECTOR Totals | 3,314 | | 188,126,937 | 1,543,157,533.09 |
| BUILDING MATERIALS | | | | |
| ASHAKA CEMENT PLC | 70 | 13.75 | 1,400,586 | 19,147,890.09 |
| BENUE CEMENT COY PLC | 27 | 45.78 | 330,429 | 15,139,384.36 |
| CEMENT CO. OF N/NIGE. PLC | 34 | 13.75 | 848,829 | 11,744,754.41 |
| LAFARGE WAPCO PLC | 25 | 29.55 | 625,700 | 18,307,799.00 |
| SECTOR Totals | 156 | | 3,205,544 | 64,339,827.86 |
| CHEMICAL & PAINTS | | | | |
| BERGER PAINTS NIG. PLC | 1 | 3.20 | 1,000 | 3,360.00 |
| CHEM. & ALL. PROD. PLC | 3 | 28.00 | 6,000 | 166,610.00 |
| SECTOR Totals | 4 | | 7,000 | 169,970.00 |
| COMMERCIAL/SERV. | | | | |
| AFROMEDIA PLC | 2 | 0.76 | 400,000 | 304,000.00 |
| COURTVILLE INV. PLC | 2 | 0.50 | 101,000 | 50,500.00 |
| RED STAR EXPRESS PLC | 15 | 2.50 | 201,000 | 502,500.00 |
| SECTOR Totals | 19 | | 702,000 | 857,000.00 |
| COMP. & OFFICE EQUIP. | | | | |
| NCR (NIGERIA) PLC | 2 | 8.51 | 13,750 | 119,637.50 |
| OMATEK VENTURES PLC | 4 | 0.52 | 106,666 | 55,466.32 |
| SECTOR Totals | 6 | | 120,416 | 175,103.82 |
| CONGLOMERATES | | | | |
| A. G. LEVENTIS (NIG.) PLC | 9 | 2.46 | 293,041 | 727,514.78 |
| PZ CUSSONS NIG. PLC | 40 | 26.00 | 360,059 | 9,181,256.20 |
| SCOA NIGERIA PLC | 3 | 8.81 | 10,500 | 87,885.00 |
| TRANS. CORP. OF NIG. PLC | 42 | 0.55 | 8,538,971 | 4,452,982.63 |
| JAC OF NIGERIA PLC | 37 | 38.00 | 311,619 | 11,823,028.19 |
| UNILEVER NIGERIA PLC | 56 | 22.10 | 944,943 | 20,883,240.30 |
| SECTOR Totals | 187 | | 10,459,133 | 47,155,907.10 |
| CONSTRUCTION | | | | |
| COSTAIN (WA) PLC | 77 | 4.41 | 1,899,310 | 8,375,957.10 |
| JULIUS BERGER NIG. PLC | 27 | 28.00 | 501,569 | 13,512,206.60 |
| MULTIVERSE RES. PLC | 4 | 0.50 | 230,420 | 115,210.00 |
| SECTOR Totals | 108 | | 2,631,299 | 22,003,373.70 |
| ENGINEERING TECH. | | | | |
| CUTIX PLC | 8 | 3.63 | 397,500 | 1,442,925.00 |
| SECTOR Totals | 8 | | 397,500 | 1,442,925.00 |
| FOOD/BEVERAGES & TOBACCO | | | | |
| 7-UP BOTTLING CO. PLC | 8 | 29.40 | 10,007 | 294,205.80 |
| BIG TREAT PLC | 9 | 0.81 | 1,570,000 | 1,271,700.00 |
| CADBURY NIGERIA PLC | 32 | 11.18 | 289,914 | 3,241,238.52 |
| DANG. FLOUR MILLS PLC | 409 | 13.18 | 4,691,646 | 61,714,863.32 |
| DANGOTE SUGAR REF. PLC | 90 | 15.15 | 3,289,514 | 49,825,275.56 |
| FLOUR MILLS NIGERIA PLC | 59 | 40.95 | 626,853 | 25,146,595.21 |
| H/WELL FLOUR MILL PLC | 43 | 8.49 | 210,600 | 1,780,242.00 |
| NAT. SALT COY NIGERIA PLC | 20 | 5.79 | 422,601 | 2,446,859.79 |
| NIG. BOTTLING COY PLC | 23 | 23.64 | 54,266 | 1,321,795.15 |
| NESTLE NIGERIA PLC | 29 | 251.47 | 820,628 | 206,363,323.16 |
| N/NIG. FLOUR MILLS PLC | 1 | 22.94 | 500 | 10,900.00 |

| | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------|--------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| TANTALIZERS PLC | 12 | 0.93 | 848,984 | 789,555.12 |
| UTC NIGERIA PLC | 8 | 0.90 | 117,000 | 103,284.40 |
| SECTOR Totals | 743 | | 12,952,513 | 354,309,838.03 |
| HEALTHCARE | | | | |
| EVANS MEDICAL PLC. | 4 | 1.00 | 4,041 | 4,157.00 |
| FIDSON HEALTHCARE PLC | 29 | 2.06 | 1,233,289 | 2,578,229.09 |
| GLAXOSM. CONS. NIG. PLC | 7 | 22.40 | 19,080 | 445,630.00 |
| MAY & BAKER NIGERIA PLC. | 14 | 4.46 | 112,510 | 501,794.60 |
| NEIMETH INT. PHARM. PLC | 7 | 1.55 | 43,000 | 63,640.00 |
| UNION DIAG. & CLIN. SERV. PLC | 18 | 0.67 | 427,363 | 285,652.87 |
| SECTOR Totals | 79 | | 1,839,283 | 3,879,103.56 |
| HOTEL & TOURISM | | | | |
| CAPITAL HOTEL PLC | 1 | 1.51 | 50,000 | 75,500.00 |
| IKEJA HOTEL PLC | 4 | 0.99 | 30,000 | 30,900.00 |
| SECTOR Totals | 5 | | 80,000 | 106,400.00 |
| IND./DOMESTIC PROD. | | | | |
| FIRST ALUM. NIGERIA PLC | 2 | 0.50 | 5,000 | 2,500.00 |
| VITAFI NIGERIA PLC | 13 | 5.27 | 205,250 | 1,075,952.90 |
| SECTOR Totals | 15 | | 210,250 | 1,078,452.90 |
| INF. & COMM. TECH. | | | | |
| CHAMS PLC | 8 | 0.73 | 1,679,983 | 1,226,387.59 |
| IHS NIGERIA PLC | 2 | 4.24 | 380 | 1,531.40 |
| STARCOMMS PLC | 31 | 1.99 | 2,364,260 | 4,648,530.68 |
| SECTOR Totals | 41 | | 4,044,623 | 5,876,449.67 |
| INSURANCE | | | | |
| AFRICAN ALLIANCE INS. PLC | 1 | 0.83 | 620,000 | 514,600.00 |
| AIICO INSURANCE PLC. | 189 | 0.87 | 2,333,870 | 2,023,651.86 |
| CONTINENTAL REINS. PLC | 26 | 1.10 | 10,514,229 | 11,057,440.45 |
| C/STONE INSUR. CO. PLC. | 15 | 0.55 | 1,667,500 | 909,200.00 |
| CUST. & ALLIED INS. PLC | 9 | 2.95 | 521,500 | 1,529,980.00 |
| EQUITY ASSURANCE PLC | 2 | 0.50 | 10,000 | 5,000.00 |
| GREAT NIGERIA INS. COY PLC | 1 | 0.50 | 5,000 | 2,500.00 |
| GOLDLINK INSURANCE PLC | 9 | 0.83 | 2,515,000 | 2,087,450.00 |
| GUARANTY TRUST ASS. PLC | 23 | 2.10 | 2,776,800 | 5,922,243.90 |
| GUINEA INSURANCE PLC. | 2 | 0.50 | 32,000 | 16,000.00 |
| INT. ENERGY INS. CY PLC | 58 | 0.66 | 5,896,243 | 3,788,942.24 |
| LASACO ASSURANCE PLC. | 38 | 0.56 | 3,632,928 | 1,965,195.12 |
| LAW UNION & ROCK INS. PLC | 7 | 0.50 | 645,000 | 325,400.00 |
| LINKAGE ASSURANCE PLC | 1 | 0.50 | 25,000 | 12,500.00 |
| MUTUAL BENEFITS ASS. PLC | 4 | 0.64 | 600,000 | 384,000.00 |
| N.E.M. INS. CO. (NIG.) PLC. | 31 | 0.55 | 3,115,946 | 1,693,560.84 |
| NIGER INSURANCE CO. PLC. | 2 | 0.97 | 1,046 | 1,012.78 |
| PRESTIGE ASSURANCE PLC. | 3 | 3.99 | 242,173 | 955,944.53 |
| REG. ALL. INS. COY PLC | 1 | 0.50 | 600 | 300.00 |
| STAGO INSURANCE PLC | 2 | 1.14 | 5,000 | 5,450.00 |
| STANDARD ALL. INS. PLC | 31 | 0.69 | 2,178,901 | 1,473,992.37 |
| UNIC INSURANCE PLC. | 4 | 1.00 | 157,685 | 157,685.00 |
| UNITY KAPITAL ASSUR. PLC | 1 | 1.96 | 50,000 | 98,000.00 |
| UNIVERSAL INS. COY PLC | 7 | 0.50 | 310,535 | 155,267.50 |
| INTERCONT. WAPIC INS. PLC | 12 | 1.05 | 1,512,313 | 1,598,078.65 |
| SECTOR Totals | 479 | | 39,369,269 | 36,683,395.24 |
| MEDIA | | | | |
| DAAR COMMUNIC. PLC | 30 | 0.56 | 722,500 | 417,160.00 |
| SECTOR Totals | 30 | | 722,500 | 417,160.00 |
| MORTGAGE COMPANIES | | | | |
| ASO SAVINGS & LOANS PLC | 6 | 0.69 | 184,400 | 127,236.00 |
| RES/SAVINGS & LOANS PLC | 3 | 0.50 | 600,000 | 300,000.00 |
| UN/HOMES SAV. & LOANS PLC | 40 | 0.95 | 1,730,989 | 1,659,383.57 |
| SECTOR Totals | 49 | | 2,515,389 | 2,086,619.57 |
| OTHER FINANCIAL INST. | | | | |
| CRUSADER NIGERIA PLC. | 4 | 1.43 | 15,500 | 21,080.00 |
| D/CAPITAL MAN. & TRUST PLC | 2 | 2.02 | 500 | 1,010.00 |
| NIG. ENERGY SECTOR FUND | 2 | 552.20 | 150 | 78,688.50 |
| ROYAL EXCHANGE PLC | 10 | 0.60 | 3,974,851 | 2,502,556.13 |
| SECTOR Totals | 18 | | 3,991,001 | 2,603,334.63 |
| PETROLEUM (MARKET.) | | | | |
| AFRICAN PETROLEUM PLC. | 46 | 34.57 | 253,666 | 8,816,244.61 |
| BECO PETROL. PROD. PLC | 6 | 2.41 | 13,300 | 30,457.00 |
| CHEVRON OIL NIGERIA PLC | 16 | 69.79 | 67,262 | 4,717,777.48 |
| CONOIL PLC | 22 | 31.98 | 208,451 | 6,663,482.22 |
| ETERNA OIL & GAS PLC. | 39 | 6.02 | 714,208 | 4,299,532.16 |
| MOBIL OIL NIGERIA PLC. | 22 | 99.95 | 33,366 | 3,296,693.36 |
| OANDO PLC | 8 | 93.99 | 40,076 | 3,766,743.24 |
| TOTAL NIGERIA PLC | 6 | 150.00 | 149,702 | 22,431,940.55 |
| SECTOR Totals | 165 | | 1,480,031 | 54,022,870.62 |
| PRINTING & PUBLISHING | | | | |
| ACADEMY PRESS PLC. | 7 | 6.24 | 110,880 | 665,478.00 |
| LONGMAN NIGERIA PLC | 4 | 8.58 | 7,590 | 66,684.40 |
| UNIVERSITY PRESS PLC | 1 | 5.21 | 10,000 | 50,000.00 |
| SECTOR Totals | 12 | | 128,470 | 782,162.40 |
| REAL ESTATE | | | | |
| UACN PROP. DEVEL. CO. PLC | 5 | 20.50 | 26,200 | 518,170.00 |
| SECTOR Totals | 5 | | 26,200 | 518,170.00 |
| ROAD TRANSPORTATION | | | | |
| ASSOCIATED BUS COY PLC | 8 | 0.71 | 83,000 | 60,130.00 |
| SECTOR Totals | 8 | | 83,000 | 60,130.00 |
| THE FOREIGN LISTINGS | | | | |
| ECOBANK TRANSN. INCORP. | 39 | 14.86 | 2,697,069 | 39,783,387.54 |
| SECTOR Totals | 39 | | 2,697,069 | 39,783,387.54 |
| OVERALL Totals | 6,419 | | 307,437,865 | 2,260,173,375.22 |

What is Changes in Stock List
Any modification to the list of tradable issues of an exchange. These modifications include: new listings, supplemental listings, substitutional listings, deletions, name changes, and stock symbol changes.

Google

| GAINERS | |
|-----------|-------|
| NESTLE | 11.97 |
| FLOURMILL | 1.95 |
| CONOIL | 1.52 |
| UNILEVER | 1.05 |

| LOSERS | |
|----------|------|
| BCC | 0.72 |
| WAPCO | 0.45 |
| POLYPROD | 0.22 |
| JULI | 0.17 |

DIGEST

Migraine breakthrough: Scientists say there is light at the end of the tunnel...

SCIENTISTS have worked out why light makes migraines worse, paving the way for new treatments for the crippling headaches.

The drugs would also allow sufferers to endure light without pain - removing the need for them to shut themselves away in a darkened room when battling a migraine.

Migraines feature in the World Health Organisation's top 20 most disabling lifetime conditions and affect one in eight men and women. They lead to more sick days than any other illness - at a cost to the economy of more than £2 billion a year.

The intense headaches, which can be accompanied by nausea and visual disturbances, as well as photophobia or sensitivity to light, can take up to three days to pass, and one in seven sufferers believes that time off due to migraines has affected their career. The latest research, from the U.S., could make the condition more bearable for millions.

In a series of experiments, the researchers, from the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Centre in Boston, showed that light intensified migraine pain in partially blind individuals but not in totally blind ones.

Researcher Professor Rami Burstein said: 'This suggested to us that the mechanism of photophobia must involve the optic nerve, because in totally blind individuals, the optic nerve does not carry light signals to the brain.'

Other experiments pinpointed the light-sensitive cells in the eye involved and the pain-generating brain cells or neurons.

'When small electrodes were inserted into these "migraine neurons", we discovered that light was triggering a flow of electrical signals that was converging on these very cells,' said Profes-

sor Burstein. 'This increased their activity within seconds.'

Importantly, the brain cells remained fired up for some time after the light was switched off, the journal *Nature Neuroscience* reports. The professor said: 'This helps explain why patients say that their headache intensifies within seconds after exposure to light and improves 20 to 30 minutes after being in the dark.'

Piecing together the pain pathway opens up new possibilities for treating the condition, which affects more women than men.

Professor Burstein said: 'Clinically, this research sets the stage for identifying ways to block the

“We discovered that light was triggering a flow of electrical signals that was converging on these very cells”

pathway so that migraine patients can endure light without pain.'

People who get migraines are also more prone to other health problems. Studies have shown that men who get migraines are 25 per cent more likely to have heart problems, including heart attacks.

Migraine sufferers are also more than twice as likely to develop life-threatening blood clots, deep vein thrombosis, as other people.

This may be because their blood is more prone to clotting. Alternatively, migraine sufferers may be more likely to be overweight, smoke and do little exercise - all factors that increase the risk of circulatory problems.



DISABLING: A woman with a migraine

New breast cancer error disclosed

THE number of women wrongly given the all clear for breast cancer at a hospital has risen.

Accrington Victoria Community Hospital, which gave the all-clear to 18 women with breast cancer after screening errors, has now admitted another case was missed.

In September it was revealed the women had been misdiagnosed by a radiologist at the hospital. But it has now been disclosed that another woman, Susan Gilmore, was also called back and later had a mastectomy.

East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust

has admitted she is the 19th woman who was misdiagnosed and has apologised.

Mrs Gilmore, from Earby in Barnoldswick, Lancashire, was given the all-clear by the same radiologist at the hospital in 2002 and 2005, outside of the period under review. She found out that she had the disease after being recalled for a third time in December 2008 to a different consultant.

'It was only after I read about it, because I wasn't one of the 18 who were [originally] recalled,' she told the BBC's Inside Out North West programme, to be screened in the North West region on

Monday.

'Once I'd read those reports I started to mull things over in my mind and thought, it's going to be this man, it's going to be this same consultant who sent me home twice.'

The original blunder came to light through internal monitoring in the screening service which sparked an independent investigation, revealed in September 2009.

Of the 355 cases reviewed in the study, 85 women were retested and 14 were diagnosed with invasive breast cancer. A further four had a non-invasive cancer which had not progressed.

The radiologist involved last screened patients in December 2008 and has been suspended since April 2009.

Dr Richard Dobrashian, director of the East Lancashire breast screening programme, said: 'We have now included Mrs Gilmore in the reviewed ladies so the 18 has become 19 in the misdiagnosis by this particular radiologist.'

Seven of the women who were wrongly given the all-clear have instructed solicitors to fight for compensation. BBC Inside Out North West will be broadcast on BBC One at 7.30pm on Monday.

Sign Language



What does this mean?

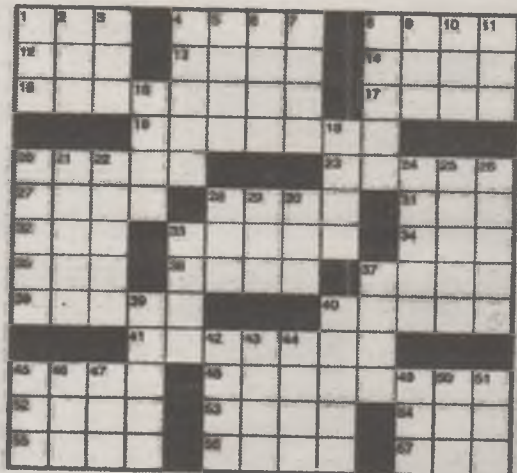
Photo location: Kowloon, China, by Tom Gee

Culled from www.signspotting.com

EASY CROSSWORDS

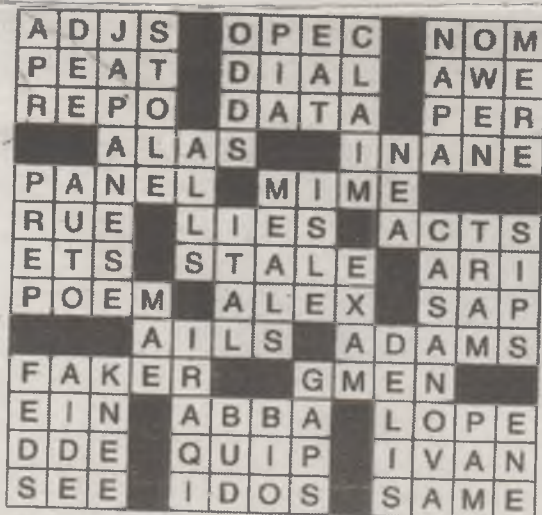
- ACROSS**
1. Lost driver's need
 4. Skyscraper, e.g. (abbr.)
 6. Heap
 12. ___ to Pieces" (2 wds.)
 13. In ___ of (replacing)
 14. Returned to earth
 15. League without the DH
 17. Subjects of society news
 18. Tot
 20. King's domain
 23. Ogres amorously
 27. Greet
 28. Western Indian
 31. Trumpeter Severinsen
 32. Snaky letter
 33. Dog's disease
 34. Student's concern
 35. Address book abbr.
 38. Nick Charles's pet
 37. Banana skin
 38. Tire marking
 40. Father
 41. Soft hats
 45. Denim designer Strauss
 48. "Beetles for Sale" cut (3 wds.)
 52. 52 weeks
 53. Weather-
- DOWN**
1. Opposite of max.
 2. Turkish title
 3. Melting ___
 4. Blossom
 5. Singer Jenny
 6. Not working, as a battery
 7. Seaside scavenger
 8. Pedro's father
 9. ___ du Diable (Devil's Island)
 10. Women's
 11. SAT org.
 16. ___ cost you
 19. Writer Wiesel
 20. Scarlett's Butler
 21. Tension reliever
 22. Super-market path
 24. Narrowly defeated
 25. Tied
 26. Like a fish
 28. Possesses
 29. Canadian prov.
 30. Phil Mickelson's gp.
 33. Manufactured
 37. El ___
 39. Burning valleys
 40. Broad valleys
 42. Aria performer
 43. Eppe of "House"
 44. Rage
 45. Alkaline material
 46. Poet's "always"
 47. Kilmer of "The Saint"
 49. Distress signal
 50. NYC summer setting
 51. Home (abbr.)

50



Solution to Easy Crosswords

49



SUDOKU

The Sudoku puzzle consists of a 9x9 square grid made up of smaller 3x3 square grids (regions). The numbers already present within the puzzle are "given"- these are there to start you off. The aim is to complete the puzzle by filling the empty cells. Every digit from 1-9 needs to fit in each row, column and region of 9 squares. Each row, column and region must contain just one instance of each number, 1-9.

62

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| | 8 | | | | | | | 7 |
| 4 | 5 | | 8 | | | | | 3 |
| | 9 | | 6 | | | | | |
| 1 | 3 | | 4 | | | 2 | | |
| 5 | | | | 9 | 1 | 3 | | 6 |
| | | 8 | | | | 7 | | 5 1 |
| | | | | | | 6 | | 3 |
| 3 | | | | | 1 | | 8 | 5 |
| 5 | | | | | | | | 1 |

Solution to Sudoku 61

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 9 | 4 | 8 | 2 | 7 |
| 7 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 9 |
| 8 | 9 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 5 |
| 6 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 9 | 8 | 4 |
| 9 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 8 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 2 |
| 2 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 6 | 9 | 5 | 7 | 3 |
| 3 | 2 | 9 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 7 | 5 | 6 |
| 4 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 1 |
| 5 | 7 | 1 | 9 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 8 |

News Extra

Michael Jackson WAS murdered



A coroner has officially ruled that singer Michael Jackson's death on June 25th 2009 was homicide

... Death certificate amended by coroner after police investigation

law firm building his defence. Police affidavits say he admitted loading up Jackson with Propofol and other drugs in the hours before his death.

Miranda Sevcik, a spokeswoman in Houston for Murray and his lawyer, Edward Chernoff, said Friday the doctor had no comment and reiterated that Murray neither prescribed nor administered anything that should have killed Michael Jackson.

Jackson died while under Murray's care as the singer prepared for an ambitious concert schedule.

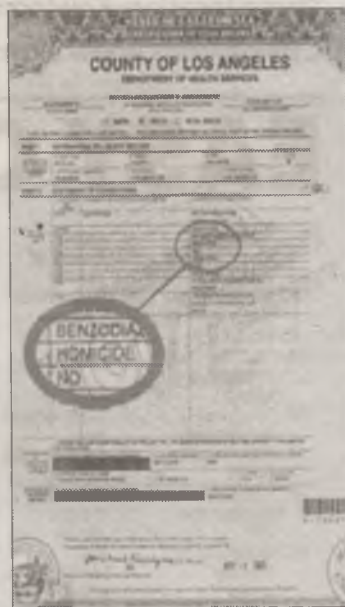
The district attorney's office is waiting for Los Angeles police to turn over the case before presenting it to a grand jury, the law enforcement source said.

A spokeswoman for the district attorney's office, however, denied that any decisions have been made.

'We have been working closely



THE singer's death certificate with 'homicide' listed as cause of death (right) as it emerges that Conrad Murray (left) could be charged with manslaughter



Michael Jackson's death has been officially ruled as murder, it was revealed Sunday.

The cause of death on the 50-year-old's death certificate has been amended to 'homicide' after months of speculation.

According to the document the King of Pop died from 'acute Propofol intoxication' due to an 'intravenous injection from another'.

On the original certificate issued on July 7 deputy coroner Cheryl MacWillie refused to give a cause of death.

However after further investigations, the certificate was amended and re-released in August by medical examiner Christopher Thomas. It now states the cause of death on 25th June 2009 as 'homicide'.

A source said that the Jackson family are 'keeping faith with the police', adding: 'We still feel that there is more than one person responsible for Michael's tragic death.'

'Joe won't give up on getting justice for his son and a lawsuit is his focus.'

The news comes after it emerged that the singer's doctor Conrad Murray is expected to be charged with manslaughter.

Dr Murray could be prosecuted for 'gross negligence' for his treatment of the pop star during

his last hours, police sources said.

Murray, a cardiologist, was with the star at his rented Los



THE Jackson family with Michael's children at his memorial service last year

Angeles mansion in June and tried to revive him when he was found unconscious.

Murray already has a Houston

with the Los Angeles police during the pendency of this investigation,' spokeswoman Sandi Gibbons said.

To prove a charge of involuntary manslaughter, authorities must show there was a reckless action that created a risk of death

'There is no case before us at present and no final decision has been made.'

or great bodily injury.

If a doctor is aware of the risk, there might also be an issue of whether the patient knows that risk and decided to take it.

A large number of witnesses have been interviewed by police,

“The news comes after it emerged that the singer's doctor Conrad Murray is expected to be charged with manslaughter”

including those who were present during Jackson's last days and those who worked with him in preparation for his comeback concert, 'This Is It'.

Authorities have also lined up medical expert witnesses who will testify about the normal standard of care in a situation such as Jackson's and will give opinions on why Murray's actions constituted gross negligence, the source said.

The police investigation was substantially completed by the end of December, the source said.

News Extra

You can only run for president if you quit smoking

... What fed-up Michelle told Barack Obama

The entire course of history could have been altered by something as simple as a smoking habit, a new book has revealed.

For, the book claims, Barack Obama would never have run for president had he not received his wife Michelle's backing - and Michelle would not have given it had he not promised to quit smoking.

Being home on Sundays, attending parent-teacher meetings, and going to his daughter's music recitals were also part of the price tag that came with the chance to run for the most powerful job in the world.

But even once Mr Obama had secured his wife's support, he himself still had doubts, the new book entitled 'Game Change' claims. In January, 2007, he told his chief adviser: 'Being Barack Obama [as opposed to being president] isn't a bad gig.'

The revelations in the book have already caused controversy in Washington, dropping Bill Clinton into the centre of a race storm after he was accused of denigrating Mr Obama.

The former president allegedly claimed during the hard-fought Democratic primary race: 'A few years ago, this guy would have been getting us coffee.'

He is said to have made the racist remark in a phone call entreating Senator Teddy Kennedy, the party's vastly influential elder statesman, to endorse his wife, Hillary, in the delicately balanced 2008 nomination battle.

But the call so offended Senator Kennedy that it backfired and helped make up the veteran Washington power broker's mind to throw his complete support behind Mr Obama's historic bid for the White House, according to a new book.

Mr Clinton was once lauded by African-American admirers as America's 'first black president'.

But the 'coffee' controversy has opened old wounds from the campaign trail when Mr Clinton was accused of being racially dismissive about the underdog who went on to derail his wife's White House dreams.

At the time, Mr Clinton scorned Mr Obama's primary election victory in South Carolina, noting that Jesse Jackson



THE explosive claims are contained in Game Change, which was released yesterday.

had also carried the state in his failed presidential bid two decades earlier.

The former two-term presi-

“The former president allegedly claimed during the hard-fought Democratic primary race: 'A few years ago, this guy would have been getting us coffee.'”

dent angrily denounced critics who suggested the comments were racially motivated and still seethes about the rumpus it caused to this day.

Sunday night, he was unavailable for comment about the new claim, which is featured in the



U.S. President Barack Obama holds hands with daughters Malia (L) and Sasha as First Lady Michelle Obama walks behind upon their return to the White House in Washington January 4, following their vacation in Hawaii

new book about the presidential election called 'Game Change.'

American political writers John Heliemann and Mark Halperin claim in the book, which was published in the US yesterday, that Mr Clinton made the call to the late 'Lion of the Senate' on the day after Mr Obama won a key primary in Iowa.

'He phoned Kennedy and pressed for an endorsement, making the case for his wife. But Bill then went on, belittling Obama in a manner that deeply offended Kennedy,' they wrote.

'Recounting the conversation later to a friend, Teddy fumed that Clinton had said, 'A few years ago, this guy would have been getting us coffee.'

The book also claims Mrs Clinton, now in Mr Obama's Cabinet as US Secretary of State, was keen to seize on claims of her rival's past drug use to try and press home an advantage.

She is depicted as being pleased when her New Hampshire campaign chairman Bill Shaheen mentioned that Mr Obama took drugs as a young man. 'Good for him,' she is quoted as saying. 'Let's push it out.'

She was later persuaded by her staff not to try and capitalise on the controversy.

The top Democrat in the US Senate was also in hot water last night over racially insensitive

comments he made during the campaign about Mr Obama that are quoted in 'Game Change.'

Senate Majority Leader

worked as hard as I can to advance President Obama's legislative agenda,' he added.

Senator Reid remained neu-



SENATOR Harry Reid (left) and former US President Bill Clinton have come under fire for comments they are said to have made about Barack Obama



Harry Reid yesterday apologised for describing the then Senator Obama as 'light-skinned' and 'with no Negro dialect, unless he wanted to have one.'

He said: 'I deeply regret using such a poor choice of words. I sincerely apologise for offending any and all Americans, especially African-Americans for my improper comments.'

'I was a proud and enthusiastic supporter of Barack Obama during the campaign and have

tried during the nomination contest, but is said to have initially urged Mr Obama to make a run for the presidency.

The book also quotes aides to Republican nominee John McCain describing the difficulties they faced with vice presidential pick Sarah Palin. 'You guys have a lot of work to do,' one of Mr McCain's top advisors reportedly said, adding: 'She doesn't know anything.'

News Extra

Uncovering the multi-million dollar fake degree industry

With competition still fierce in the jobs market, some people might be tempted to beef up their resume by buying a fake degree.

The problem of fake degrees is nothing new, but the Internet has made it easier than ever to obtain a bogus qualification.

George Gollin, a board member of the U.S.-based Council for Higher Education Accreditation, told CNN he estimates that more than 100,000 fake degrees are sold each year in the U.S. alone. Of those, around one third are postgraduate degrees. He added that a bogus degree will typically cost \$1,000 (about N1.5 million).

By trade, Gollin is a physics professor at the University of Illinois. He first became interested in degree mills after being spammed with offers of fake college degrees.

According to a story in *Wired Magazine*, his interest turned to outrage after he stumbled upon news of a forensic psychologist who had purchased her degree. "Here's this person who's untrained doing therapeutic interventions," he told *Wired*. "I thought, 'Jesus, this is really bad.'"

The institutions that sell these fake qualifications are known as either diploma mills or degree mills. Diploma mills issue fraudulent diplomas supposedly granted by real universities, while degree mills pose as real universities.

According to Gollin, setting up a degree mill is simply a matter of creating a Web site that looks like it belongs to a genuine university. The Web site includes a way for customers to pay for their qualifications online and a place for prospective employers to contact to verify the degree is genuine.

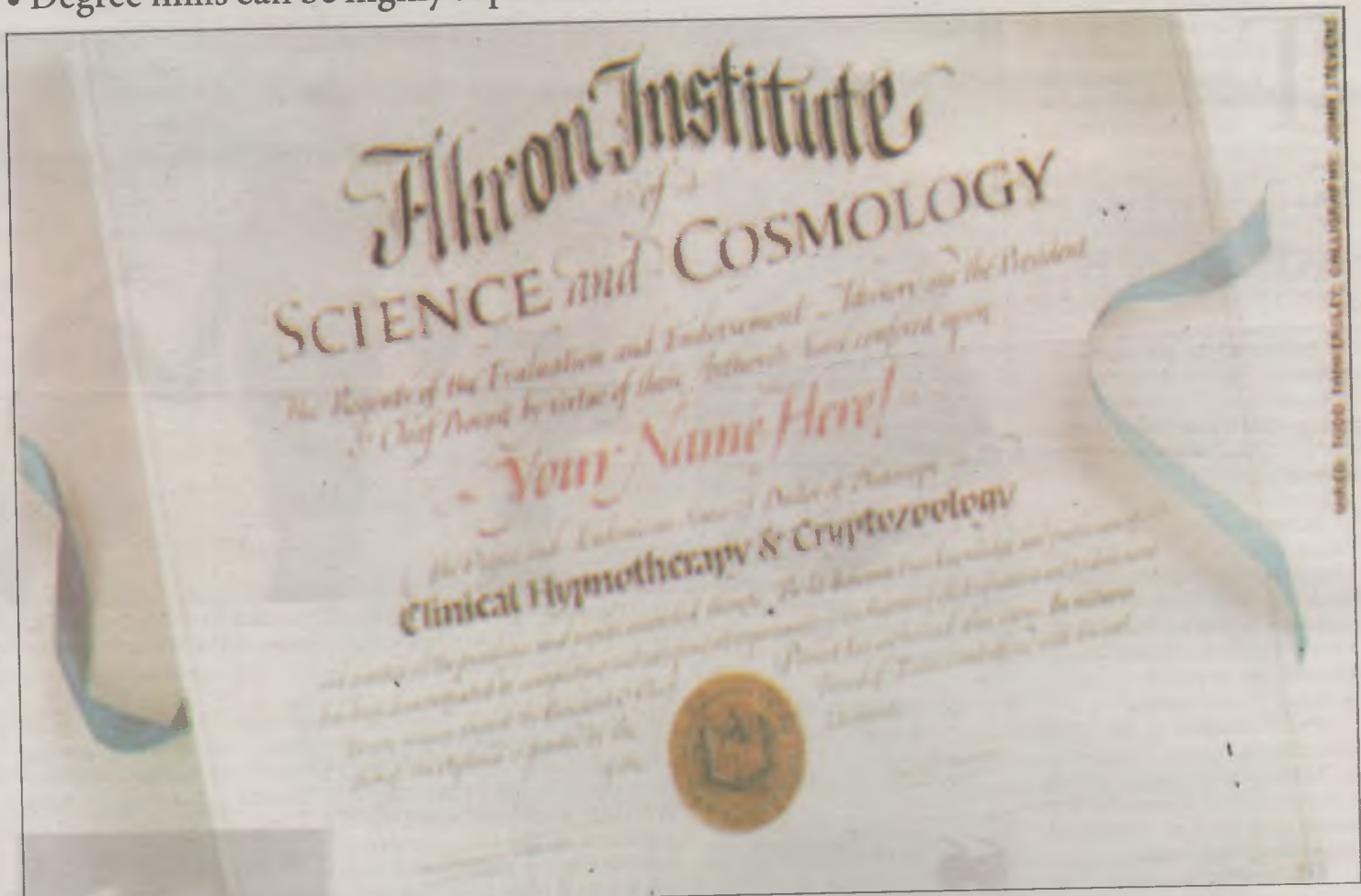
Some degree mills award degrees on the basis of the buyer's supposed "life experience," while others require a small amount of coursework. One degree mill required about a week's worth of coursework to earn a masters degree.

Gollin said this token coursework is largely for the customers' benefit -- to help them convince themselves they have earned their qualification.

While some people might be duped into believing they are obtaining a legitimate qualification, Gollin said that almost everyone buying from a degree mill knows they are getting a fake.

"Anyone who's had any contact with a real college curriculum knows how hard you have

- Degree mills sell bogus qualifications online, often without requiring any study
- An expert says at least 100,000 fake degrees are sold in the U.S. each year
- Degree mills can be highly sophisticated and hard for authorities to shut down



FOR some, knowingly buying a fake degree is seen as an easy way of improving their job prospects.

to work," Gollin told CNN. "If you can get a whole PhD over the course of one week and you don't know that's not legitimate, then you're just dumb."

But for some, knowingly buying a fake degree is an easy way of improving their job prospects.

"Generally, fake degrees are usually bought for economic advantage for people who are seeking promotion or seeking to get jobs where the employer wants them to have a degree," Gollin told CNN.

Those people come from all walks of life. Gollin gave the example of one American who bought a Bachelor's degree in nuclear engineering, and who's now working in the control room of a nuclear power plant.

He also cited a U.S. degree mill that sells fake PhDs to real medical doctors for \$10,000, and added that unqualified doctors have been jailed in the U.S. after attempting to practice medicine with a medical degree bought online.

According to the story in *Wired*, Gollin was instrumen-

In 2008, the couple behind the Saint Regis degree mill were each jailed for three years.

tal in the case brought against a degree mill which operated various bogus universities, including Saint Regis University.

The "Saint Regis" degree mill was estimated to have made \$7 million from selling fake qualifications to more than some 9,600 customers in 131 countries, according to *Wired*.

In 2008, the couple behind the Saint Regis degree mill were each jailed for three years.

In the U.S., and other countries, it is illegal to issue what purports to be a university degree without the approval of a government agency. But degree mills are often set up in such a way that makes it very hard to track down the people running the operation.

Gollin warned that degree mills are becoming increasingly sophisticated, often carrying official-seeming accreditation that makes them appear to be genuine universities. The catch is that the accreditation is supplied by bogus organizations -- "accreditation mills."

If it's difficult for the authorities to keep tabs on the degree mills, it can be even harder for employers to spot if a potential employee has fake qualifications, but Gollin said there are steps that employers can take to guard against fraudsters.

Many countries have government-run web sites where you

can easily check if a university is officially accredited. But because diploma mills offer fake degrees from real universities, it is essential that employers also check with someone at the university that the degree was actually issued.

If someone claims to have an advanced degree for which they should have written a thesis, they should be able to produce a copy of that thesis. If they can't provide contact details for their graduate studies advisor, be suspicious.

But separating the real from the fake becomes even more complicated if a job candidate has a qualification obtained overseas.

Not only can it be heard to verify that a foreign university is genuine, Gollin said there have been cases of professors at real universities in West Africa selling degrees on the side. He added that some legitimate U.S. universities are unwittingly partnering with degree mills that operate abroad.

Gollin said, "This is a very sophisticated problem and I think it will continue to be a concern as international education becomes more significant."

ENVIRONMENT

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'Board generates N80m from waste monthly'

THE Abuja Environmental Protection Board (AEPB) generates between N70 million and N80 million monthly from waste management, Alhaji Abubkar Yabo, a Director in the board, has said.

Yabo made this known in Abuja on Thursday while briefing newsmen on the board's

determination to enforce the ban on hawking and destitution in the FCT.

Although the director declined to disclose how much residents of the territory owed the board, he expressed the commitment of the administration to sanitise the territory's environment.

Yabo said the FCT ministerial taskforce on the ban on hawking had been directed to arrest vendors, beggars and destitute persons who flout the ban.

The director urged vendors to restrict the sale of newspapers to their stands.

"Any vendor caught criss-

crossing or running after moving vehicles at traffic lights will be arrested and prosecuted by members of the ministerial task force," he warned.

Yabo said the administration had also provided 6,000 waste bins to be sold to residents at the cost of N16,000 each.

He said the waste bins being sold in the market at N22,000, had been subsidised to enable residents to buy them.

Yabo solicited the cooperation of residents in ensuring that the FCT was rid of illegal trading, destitute persons, hawking and begging. (NAN)

The world's most polluted places (7)

FROM lead in the soil to toxins in the water and radioactive fallout in the air, The Blacksmith Institute has created a list of the world's worst ecological disaster areas

Norilsk, Russia

NUMBER of people potentially affected: 134,000

Type of pollutant: Air pollution — particulates, sulfur dioxide, heavy metals, phenols

Source of pollution: Major nickel and metal mining and processing.

Norilsk was founded in 1935

as a Siberian slave labor camp, and life there has pretty much gone downhill since.

Home to the world's largest heavy metal smelting complex, more than 4 million tons of cadmium, copper, lead, nickel, arsenic, selenium and zinc are released into the air every year.

Air samples exceed the maximum allowance for both copper and nickel, and mortality from respiratory diseases is much higher than in Russia as a whole.

"Within 30 miles (48 km) of the nickel smelter there's not a single living tree," says Fuller. "It's just a wasteland."



COMMUTER train struggles through snowbound Mossley in Greater Manchester



THE Nadezhda nickel smelter pumps smoke over a pool of industrial water near Norilsk

Environmentalist warns on indiscriminate bush burning

By Hussein Yahaya

AN environmentalist, Mr. Toyin Peter Ajayi, has warned Nigerians against indiscriminate bush burning to reduce cases of fire mayhem being experienced during the dry season.

In a telephone chat with our reporter in Abuja, Mr. Ajayi observed that apart from fire disasters, researches have shown that indiscriminate bush burning can cause other ecological problems in the society.

He particularly called on the hunters, Fulani herdsman, farmers and other people that work directly in the bush not to allow their activities to endanger their working environment, alleging that such categories of people are noted for indiscriminate bush burning. The environmentalist called on various tiers of government to mount aggressive campaigns against unauthorised bush burning in the media, using various local dialects. Speaking on the global ecological prob-

lems, Mr. Ajayi, wants Nigeria to continue to take part in the series of global summit, workshop and seminar organised to address the problem, adding that policy makers will gain a lot in such workshops.

He urged Nigerians especially those in the Northern part of the country not to expose themselves to the present weather condition, observing that excessive exposure to the present cold weather can endanger the health of the inhabitants.

Greenwatch trains communities on climate change

From Hir Joseph, Lafia

GREENWATCH Initiative, one of the implementing partners of the Building Nigeria's Response to Climate Change (BNRCC) pilot project, is taking the challenges of climate change to rural communities with an awareness training targeted at enhancing

their understanding of the climatic issues.

Greenwatch, which has pilot projects in two rural communities - Falgore in Kano State, Daudu in Benue State, had told *Daily Trust*, while the world took bold steps to reduce greenhouse gas emission with the Copenhagen Summit on Climate Change, that "the extent

of impact of Climate change on rural communities in the tropical countries demands a holistic and pragmatic commitment from the Copenhagen climate change conference towards mitigation and adaptation."

The awareness training in Daudu and Falgore communities, according to Greenwatch's Execu-

tive Director, Emmanuel Tembe will enhance the understanding of the rural communities to climate change causes, impacts and possible remedies.

"This knowledge will provide the basis for the successful implementation climate change adaptation best practices for sustained improvement in the quality

of life of the people and the environment.

"The well attended training sessions is being supported by members of the Project Implementation Committees (PICs) in the two communities and the Local Government Area councils (Guma LGA in Benue state & Doguwa LGA in Kano state)", Tembe added.

ENVIRONMENT

Lagos warns on noise pollution

LAGOS State government has again frowned at the high rate of noise pollution engendered by activities of various religious organisations, music studios and video clubs in the state.

The state government warned that those concerned should reduce the noise level

from their activities or face severe consequences.

It noted that noise pollution is injurious to public health and should, therefore, be discouraged.

The warning was contained in a communiqué issued at the weekend after a three-day

Performance Review Retreat organised by the state Ministry of the Environment at the Peninsula Resort, Ajah.

The Commissioner for Environment, Muiz Banire, said the ministry had received several complaints from the public about inconveniences caused

them by noise pollution.

He said: "Noise pollution has a lot of negative consequences on the health of the people such as human hearing impairment, restlessness, high blood pressure, lack of concentration, body fatigue and loss of sleep and the resultant

hypertension and subsequent death".

The commissioner added that a recent finding in some public schools showed that over 60 per cent of pupils there have impaired hearing as a result of their daily exposure to noisy environment.



NO alternative form of energy is efficient enough to compete with fossil fuels.

Erosion: Council boss urges agencies to intensify effort

From John Kennedy Uzoma, Owerri

THE Chairman Transition Committee of Orsu Local Government Council of Imo State, Barr. C.O.C Akolisa have called on relevant agencies in the country to intensify effort to unravel erosion menace in the area.

Akolisa in a chat with Daily Trust in Awo Idemili his country home today said that series of feasibility studies have been undertaken including the Federal Road Maintenance Agency (FERMA) yet nothing seri-

ous has been done. He enumerated four communities affected by the erosion including Umuoka ubirielelem, Assah Ubirielelem, Amanaogu, and Okwu-Amaraihe stated that the Okwu-Amaraihe erosion site is expected to consume a sum of N300m to tackle.

According to him the erosion site since inception had caused untold hardship to the people of the area, noting that if nothing is done urgently some communities might be cut off completely from neighboring communities.

The Chairman regretted that the same erosion site that caused later fever in the past, adding that there is urgent need for immediate action to avoid repeat of similar problem.

Speaking the lawmaker representing Orsu State Constituency Bro. Stan Dara said that he has taken a comprehensive documentation of all erosion site in Orsu Local Government Council.

He assured that he will pursue it to the later to ensure that attention of both state and Federal Government are attracted to it for quick action.

IFAD reiterates negative impact of climate change on agriculture

DR Rodney Cooke, Director, Technical Advisory Division, IFAD, on Tuesday reiterated the negative impact of climate change on agriculture in developing countries.

Cooke said that agriculture, which was the main source of livelihood for citizens of developing countries, was susceptible to climate change.

"Poor rural people, who live on ecologically fragile land and depend on agriculture, livestock, fisheries and forestry are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

"We are already seeing the impact of climate change on agriculture in the developing countries.

"Crop failures and livestock

deaths are causing higher economic losses, contributing to higher food prices and undermining food security with ever-greater frequency," he said.

Cooke noted that 95 per cent of African agriculture depended on rainfall and said that rain fed-crop yield would drop by 50 per cent by 2020 in some countries if not checked.

He stressed the need to double food production in the developing countries "in order to meet the demand for food and to ensure food security".

Cooke said that if nothing was done to check the impact of climate change on agriculture it would put more people at the risk of hunger and compound the problem of food insecurity.

2010 is year of biodiversity

THIS year, 2010, has been set aside as the International Year of Biodiversity. Today, Monday 11, witnesses the official launch in Berlin, Germany. It throws up opportunities to increase the tempo of activities towards finding real solutions in protecting the natural environment, which forms the bedrock of human existence.

This year had been the target set for actualising a significant reduction in the loss of biodiversity - diversity of life on earth as represented in plant and animal species. The current state of affairs

with regard to the global environment has made a mockery of this target. Climate change with its plural environmental consequences seems to have been recognised as the most serious environmental challenge facing humanity today.

The World Conservation Union, also known as IUCN, posits that the world is facing a global extinction crisis with potentially devastating effects on the natural environment and vulnerable communities. The body therefore calls for a stronger Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) to safeguard life on earth in all its forms.

Farmers caution govt on climate change menace

FOLLOWING the positive manifestation of climate change effect on some farmlands at various local government areas of Kano state, farmers have called on the state government to take urgent measures to mitigate its impact.

The spokesman of the farmers, Malam Almu of Kwa town in Dawakin Tofa local government area, said the effect of climate

change last year had seriously effected the growth of their farm produce, due to the poor harvest in the area.

According to him, it's a pity that last year, almost all the farmers in that area got in adequate output in terms of grand nut, G/corn, maize and beans, he said.

He disclosed that he, has been farming for the past 30 years and

had never experienced such a sad derivation of farm produce.

"As a result of the danger of the manifestation of climate change in the area, there is the need for government to, with immediate effect, to intervene by addressing the problems, he stressed.

The farmer added that climate change effect has put some farmers into compulsion and in search

of a new way to earn a living rather than rely on farming.

Almu said, in line with such effect in agricultural sector, farmers at lower level have been faced with abject poverty, hunger and calamities. He requested government to come to their aid through modern agricultural techniques and methods in such away that the area would become a free zone.

He also stressed the need for the state government to provide farmers with improved seeds and counseling to stop much use of fertilizer, as well as complete avoidance of illegal felling of trees in the state.

To this end he urged the farmers and other stakeholders to resume the adaptation of manure on the farms in both seasons of farming activities.

CITY NEWS



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PIC: ABUBAKAR SADIQ ISAH

AN accident scene involving a police vehicle at Kamadin Junction, along Kwali-Lokoja highway.

Student wants to marry girl he abducted

By Abubakar Sadiq Isah

A 19-year-old student, Sule Salihu, last Wednesday entered into a marriage bond with the parents of a 16-year-old female student he abducted for three days.

The bond was entered into at an FCT Magistrate Court at Gwagwalada.

Salihu, a third year Senior Secondary School student was accused of abducting Jemima Yohanna, a third year Junior Secondary School student of the same school, at his brother's house for five days without the consent of her parents.

Prosecutor Modupe Musa told the court that the accused had in February 2009 kept the girl in his brother's house for three days and was arrested as well as warned never to go near the girl before his release from the police station.

She said Salihu was again arrested on December 26, 2009, following a complaint at Gwagwalada Police Area Command by the girl's father that his daughter has been abducted by the accused for five days.

The prosecutor said the accused was arraigned on a one count charge of keeping a minor without the parent's consent.

When the charge was read to the accused, he pleaded guilty to the charge.

The abducted girl's father then appealed to the court to find out if the accused wants to marry his daughter and if so, he should enter into a bond in court that he will marry her.

The father further complained that he has spent so much money for medical test since the inception of the case.

In his ruling, Magistrate Lamido Kabiru ordered the accused to enter into a bond with the girl that he would marry her and that both of them would be separated, pending when their families are satisfied with the marriage plans.

The magistrate adjourned the case to January 20 to assess the extent of settlement reached by the families of both students.

7 injured in Ahoko auto crash

By Abubakar Sadiq Isah

SEVEN persons were seriously injured in a motor accident that occurred at Ahoko village, along the Abuja-Lokoja highway on Sunday morning.

An eyewitness said the accident happened when a commercial Hiace

bus with registration number XK 443 BEN lost control after its tyre burst and crashed into a ditch injuring seven occupants of the vehicle on the spot.

Our reporter learnt that the bus belongs to Osas Motors Limited and was filled up with a lot of loads when the crash happened.

Abaji Unit Commander of the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), Mr Joseph Ojerinde, blamed the accident cause on the driver, who he accused of overloading.

He said the load carried by the bus consisted of bags of rice, jerry cans of oil and other luggages, adding that they have been impounded,

while the FRSC has informed the transport company's management to write an undertaking never to carry overload again before the loads are released.

The FRSC unit commander said the seven accident victims were immediately taken to Abaji General Hospital.

Thugs impound vehicles at Area 1

By Abubakar Yakubu

THUGS, who claim to be members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) now impound vehicles that drop passengers at Area 1, Abuja.

The thugs arrest such motorists and take them to Area 1 Garage, where the vehicles are impounded and the tyres deflated until such motorists pay N8, 500 that are not accepted for.

An Abuja based media outfit's staff that took his neighbours from Masaka to Area 1 Wednesday afternoon was apprehended by the thugs, who forcefully took him and his vehicle to Area 1 Garage, where he was mercilessly beaten.

"They impounded my vehicle with a luggage inside and in the process of the assault, my mobile phone and N6, 000 cash got missing," the

assaulted motorist lamented.

Our reporter who accompanied the victim to Garki Police Station observed that the desk policeman on duty did not document the case but rather alerted the divisional traffic officer on duty, who detailed some policemen that later expressed fears to go to the garage Wednesday evening.

The following morning, two policemen sent to invite the thug that assaulted the media outfit staff could not effect his arrest as the assailant bluntly told the policemen not to disturb him but meet his assistant.

When the policemen returned to Garki Police Station to report back to the officer, the officer requested to know from the victim what else he wanted the police to do.

It took the intervention of the FCT NURTW Chairman before

the victim's car was released.

Adebayo Saliu, one of those arrested by the thugs at the weekend, said the police are helpless in arresting the situation because of a contract NURTW has with them to sell 'police stickers' for a sporting competition.

According to him, it will only take the intervention of another security arm of government such as the State Security Services to flush out the thugs from Area 1 before they turn the area around.

Saliu stated that some members of the group smoke Indian hemp openly at the garage and boast that nobody can do them anything.

"The rate at which vehicles are brought to Area 1 Garage daily coupled with the amount this group make is something that should not be encouraged because the money is not paid as revenue to govern-

ment," he reasoned.

Saliu warned the FCT Administration to investigate activities in the garage before it gets out of hand and consumes the entire city, adding that during the time of Sunday Ehindero as inspector-general of police, the thugs were flushed out of Area 1 and some of their members arranged before courts.

Reacting FCT Police Spokesperson, Moshood Jimoh, a deputy superintendent, said the police has not issued any permit to any group or individual to arrest anyone that commits a crime.

He said whenever such person is arrested, he should be handed over immediately to the police.

The police spokesperson expressed concern over the activities of some group of persons that claim to be NURTW members at Area 1.

Chisco staff denies stealing energy drinks

By Hussein Yahaya & Ibraheem A. Fatai

A 39-year-old staff of Chisco Transport Company, Utako District, Abuja, yesterday in court denied stealing five cartons of 'Black Horse' energy drink belonging to a passenger.

The accused, Obioma Otugo, was alleged to have dishonestly stolen the items that belong to one Oriaku Ebubedike, a passenger on transit in the company's bus.

Prosecutor Amikor Obed stated in court that on December 9, 2009, the accused stole the drinks valued at N25,000 and was later apprehended and handed over to the police.

"Oriaku Ebubedike reported at the Utako Police Station that the accused stole five cartons of Black Energy Horse drink valued at N25,000, an offence punishable under Section 289 of the Penal Code Law," the prosecutor stated.

When the charge was read to the accused, he pleaded not guilty and requested for bail.

Magistrate Aminu Abdullahi granted him bail in the sum of N100,000 with a reasonable surety in like sum, who must reside within the court's jurisdiction and swear to an affidavit to produce the accused in court on the adjourned date.

The case was adjourned to February 9 for hearing.

FCT Administration to get permsec soon

By Nasir Imam

FCT Minister Senator Aliero has disclosed that anytime the new federal permanent secretaries are sworn-in, the FCT Administration would be posted one.

Senator Aliero made this revelation on Monday after the 2010 maiden edition of the FCT EXCO bi-weekly meeting in Abuja.

He said the FCT executive committee has set up a committee to work out acceptable criteria for the award of meritorious service award to the staff of the FCT Administration.

The minister revealed that the committee is expected to work out all modalities for selecting benefitting staff

on either merit or outstanding performance that would improve service delivery to the residents of the territory.

He said the award is meant to motivate staff to improve on their productivity, adding that all staff of the FCT Administration are to be carried along, so that they have sense of belonging in their workplace.

According to him, the three-man committee will be chaired by the incoming permanent secretary of the FCT Administration, while members will include the Executive Secretary of the Federal Capital Development Authority, Engineer Muhammad Sani Alhassan and the Director of Establishment & Training, Mr. Nuhu Ahmed.

Driver jailed for recklessness

By Usman A. Bello, Romoke W. Ahmad & Foluke Ojomu

A 30 year driver, Victor Evans, was yesterday sentenced to two weeks imprisonment by an Abuja magistrate court for damaging a car belonging to one Musa Kayal.

Prosecutor Philip Akogwuhad told the court that Victor drove his Honda Bullet car with registration number BD 677 GWA in a manner that was dangerous to other road users while approaching Area 11 junction.

He said as a result of the accused person's recklessness, he hit and damaged a vehicle belonging to Musa, who was on his lane.

"During investigations, it was discovered that the accused, who was approaching the junction from a minor road did not consider other road users on their right of way," the prosecutor said.

When the charges were read to the accused, he pleaded guilty and begged the court to temper justice with mercy.

The prosecutor urged the court to try the accused under Section 157 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC).

Magistrate Folashade Oyekan sentenced the accused to four weeks imprisonment with a fine option of N2,000.

The magistrate also ordered the accused to repair the damaged vehicle for the complainant.

In another case, a 18-year-old security guard was arraigned for alleged negligence of duty, an offence contrary to Section 196 of the Penal Code Law.

Prosecutor Adamu Abdullahi told the court that the accused was detailed to guard one house at Wuse Zone 4 but negligently allowed unknown persons to make away with a gas cylinder valued at N21,000.

The accused pleaded not guilty and requested for bail, which was not objected to by the prosecutor.

Magistrate Aminu Ari granted him bail in the sum of N20,000 with a surety in like sum and adjourned the case to January 18 for hearing.



A cross view of Utako Motor Park recently.

PIC: KENNEDY EGBONODJE

Student accused of making wooden gun for robbery

By Abdulmutallib A. Abubakar

A 22-year-old student, Shedraku Enemudia, was on Thursday arraigned before an Abuja Area Court for allegedly being in possession of a constructed wooden gun in preparation for a robbery operation.

Prosecutor Malik informed the court that on December 14, 2009, at about 9 pm, one Inspector Francis Andina reported to the police that while on surveil-

lance patrol along Jabi-Kado area, they arrested the accused with the wooden object.

He accused the student of being part of a robbery gang, adding that the offence is punishable under Section 306 of Penal Code Law.

When the charge was read, the accused pleaded not guilty and requested for bail, which was not objected by the prosecutor.

Judge Umar Kagarko granted the accused bail with a surety in like sum, who must reside within

the court's jurisdiction.

The case was adjourned to April 4, 2010 for hearing.

In another case, two hotel employees, Osuyah David and Chinedu Niw were recently charged for alleged house breaking, assault and mischief.

Prosecutor Emmanuel Edet told the court that one Joseph Akin Aladesiye reported to police that the accused persons broke into his office and removed as well as damaged all his office equipment

valued at N2.4 million.

He said the complainant sustained injury after the one of the accused bite him, adding that they both committed offences contrary to Sections 29, 256, 347 and 327 of Penal Code Law.

The accused persons were released on bail by Judge Umar Kagarko after they pleaded not guilty when the charges were read to them.

The case was adjourned to February 17, 2010 for hearing.

Police intensify patrols in FCT

By Misbahu Bashir

THE police over the weekend said they have intensified patrols in all entry and exit points of the Federal Capital Territory.

They said strengthening of patrols in the territory is aimed at monitoring the movement of

people as well as identifying and arresting mischief makers.

Assistant Commissioner of Police in charge of operations in the FCT, Wilson Inalegwu, said more policemen have been drafted at all entry and exit points of Abuja, adding that since the deployment, crime and

violence has been reduced.

He said the police would look out for future criminals and spread their details among themselves as well as other security outfits in a bid to monitor their activities.

"During this exercise and other regular operations, the

police will also look out for drivers who speed and also those who drive dangerously and carelessly," he added.

He said the police would also target those found guilty inside the criminal justice system with the aim of preventing them from committing offences again.

PIX: KENNEDY EGBONODJE



AN accident victim being carried into an ambulance at Utako on Sunday.



BEGGARS asking for alms along Dutse-Alhaji-Bwari road recently.



BARROW pushers having a busy day at airport road, Lugbe yesterday.



TRADITIONAL dancers at the FCT Police Command recently

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HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY ON THE PROPOSED 2010 BUDGET

Muharram 7, 1431A.H / December 23, 2009

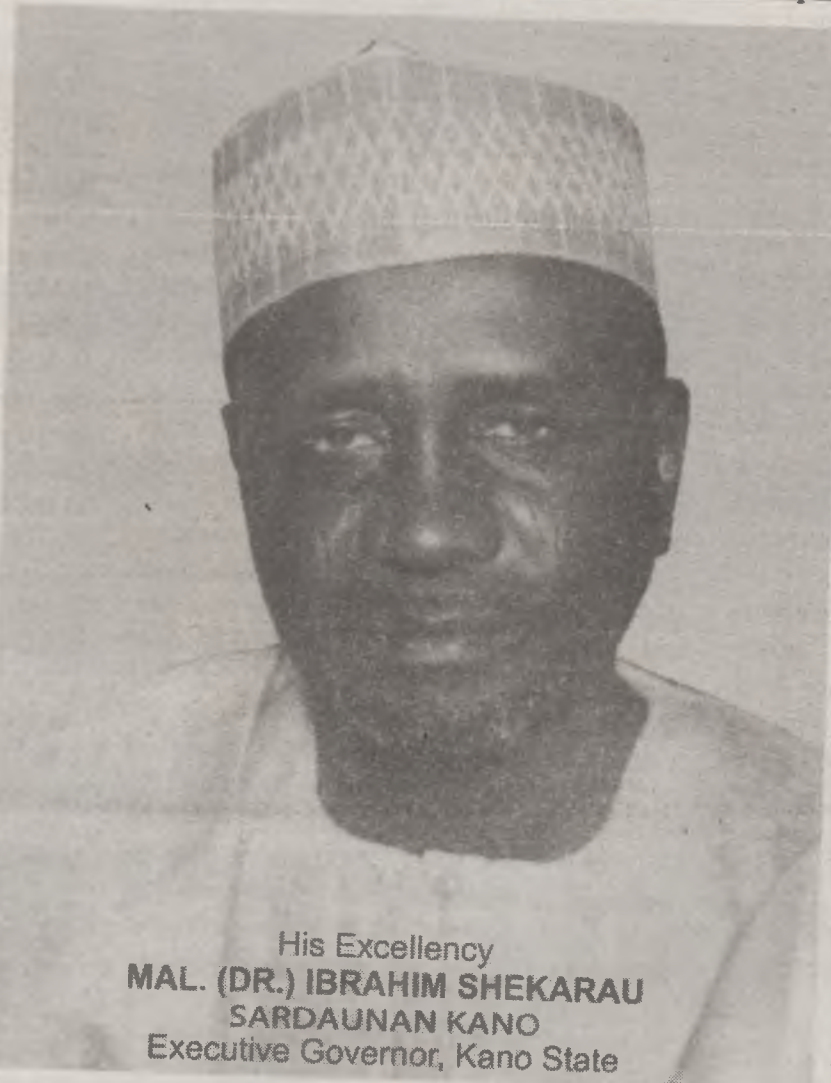
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Courtesies,

All praise and gratitude are due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. May the blessings of Allah be upon our exalted Prophet, the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam, his companions, the members of his family and all those who tread their path till the Day of Judgement.

2. Mr Speaker, when I first addressed this House six years ago, I pledged before you the commitment of my Administration to serve and to uplift the lives of citizens of Kano State. I pledged to work closely with you all, as representatives of the people, in partnership not partisanship. I also pledged before you the commitment of my administration to work with all people of goodwill to realize those objectives for which we were voted. Some members who first heard of that pledge have gone, having served their mandate; and some have remained, to continue the duty of public office.

3. As we come to the frontiers of a new decade, I wish to restate to you and to the good people of Kano that so long as I am governor, every day and on every public matter brought before me, the quest for building a better future for our people will shape all our decision. On this enterprise, our administration will continue to keep faith; and to strive to serve all our people without discrimination, acrimony, fear or favour. And for this enterprise, I submit myself; and I ask you all to let this be the basis of our cooperation.



His Excellency
MAL. (DR.) IBRAHIM SHEKARAU
SARDAUNAN KANO
Executive Governor, Kano State

4. Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members of the House, today I am pleased to stand before you to present the 2010 Appropriation Bill tagged "Budget of Sustainable Economic Growth and Development 2010". The year 2009 has its good side, but it has its fault, too, at least in terms of revenue required to fund the budget. It is common knowledge that the world economic meltdown had meant less income for our federation, and in turn for our state. Thus the consequence of dependence on revenue from the Federation account, that has continued to characterize the status of our state, clearly underscores the urgency for doing all we can, the executive branch, you, the

legislative branch of government and the people to make Kano a self-reliant and sustainable state.

5. We must diligently work cooperatively to change that irritating status of Kano from a state largely funded by Federal allocation to one funded mainly by its internally generated revenue. I am confident this can be done without returning to the decades long abolished poll tax regime; but through strengthening the capacity of our internal revenue agency, and provided businesses, commercial institutions, property owners and the media discharge their civic responsibilities.

6. Also, in face of poor revenue performance of the outgoing year, the contribution to the Roadmap for Economic Growth programme envisaged for the year did not prove possible; with local governments struggling to meet their commitments, the six billion naira contribution from that tier of government was not received. As a result of this, it was not possible to embark upon all the projects of the Roadmap slated for this year. While this sordid experience had imposed limitations on our plans and programs for the development of our dear state, we remain focused in our vision and determination to continue to build a credible foundation for the sustainable economic growth and development of Kano State. It is against this background that I find it relevant to reflect on some of the accomplishments made in the implementation of the 2009 Budget.

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Review of the Implementation of the 2009 Budget

7. Honourable Members, in the area of Shari'ah implementation, our agencies have continued to attract commendation from various organizations outside the state as their programs have been adopted by other states. Administrative Secretaries have been appointed for the Islamic Centers in the Local Government Areas, thus making the centers functional. The Shari'ah Commission has extended empowerment packages worth N130 million to 2,685 Imams, their deputies and Muezzins. In line with the teachings of the Shari'ah, the Government has remained consistent in settling pension claims hence over N3.4 billion has been expended as payment for monthly pensions, gratuity, pension arrears and final death benefits in 2009.

8. In the area of human resource development additional 5868 workers have been employed by the State Government bringing the total number of State employees to 37,388. The sum of N400,062,986:88 was expended in training over 600 members of staff of various organizations in the year 2009. For the first time in the history of our dear state some of our specialized Medical personnel were sponsored for training in collaboration with the University Teaching Hospital Magdeburg Federal Republic of Germany. Similarly, salary packages were reviewed upwards from HATISS to CONTISS for tertiary institutions and CONAUSS for Kano State University of Science and Technology. While some allowances were enhanced for Health Sector workers and the new teachers salary structure has been fully implemented.

9. We have continued to accord Education the highest priority at all levels in our human development efforts. The State Government provided funds to the State Polytechnic to meet the accreditation requirements and fortunately many of the courses have been accredited. Similarly, the Kano State College of Arts and Remedial Studies has been adjudged as one of the best of such schools in Nigeria scoring the best position in the IJMB Examination in many science and arts courses. Over 30,000 continuing students have benefited from scholarships allowances worth over N300 million.

10. Similarly, over N70 million was extended to over 400 post graduate and undergraduate students pursuing various courses outside the country. The State Government also paid N30 million registration fees for 150 Law Students. The State Secondary School Management

Board recruited 2974 additional academic staff for our secondary schools in 2009. In our efforts to expand science education a new science secondary school has been established and 73 additional academic staff have been recruited for the science and technical secondary schools. The State Universal Basic Education Board expended the sum of over N1.3 billion on capital projects in 2009. The Board has constructed 143 new classrooms and renovated 224 others.

11. Consistent with our commitment to improve human capacity and infrastructure in our health institutions we have recruited additional 525 medical personnel. We have also initiated post graduate training, for the first time in the history of the State, in Murtala Muhammed Specialist Hospital; and the program has been accredited. More than 500,000 have benefitted from our free maternity program and this helped in reducing our maternal mortality rate. Similarly, more than 90,000 accident and emergency victims have benefitted from our free healthcare services. We have also collaborated with development partners who assessed our health facilities and commitment to healthcare delivery and supported our Drug Revolving Fund Program in which drugs and consumables worth over N600 million were distributed in 2009.

12. Agriculture is the most productive sector of our economy and it has always received the attention of our administration since we assumed office in 2003. In the 2009 Budget we committed more than 9% of our total expenditure to agriculture and the sector has performed creditably. The sum of N3.2 billion was expended in the purchase of assorted fertilizer at the subsidized rate of N1000 per bag. Over 2,000 metric tons of assorted grains were also purchased and sold to the public to contain shortages. Similarly, 272 new tractors were purchased at the cost of over N600 million and distributed to farmers and farmer groups at 50% subsidy.

13. In our efforts to make agriculture a viable sector of the economy we obtained the services of the world renown MARDITECH of Malaysia who assessed our dams, designed the irrigation fields they command and also carried scientific soil mapping of the areas; this was the first time a detailed soil mapping was carried out in the history of our state. Similarly, our Paddy Rice Program has commenced with two successful pilot schemes; the aim is to increase rice production from the current rate of 250,000 metric tons per annum to annual rate of over 600,000 metric in the next few years.

14. Mr. Speaker, honourable members, in our efforts to attract investments to our central business district to boost economic activities contracts for the rehabilitation and

reconstruction of major roads in the metropolis have been awarded, and work has reached advanced stage in most of these roads. Similarly, many on-going urban roads have been completed in 2009. Already some investors have indicated their interest in providing hospitality services; this I am happy to note is partly as a result of the improvement in infrastructure in the metropolis.

15. The State Government has paid compensation for land worth over N1 billion for development projects including the Kanawa Market, Mass Housing Scheme at Umarawa Village and University of Medicine in Bichi. These projects were initiated under the Public Private Partnership initiative of our Administration as a result of the confidence the investors have in the management of the affairs of Kano State.

16. Some strategic roads linking our local government areas have also been completed. These include Tofa to Dawakin Tofa, Yan Audu to Lajawa, Kibiya to Garko, Dungurawa to Tattarawa to Jalli, Gidan Sarki to Dorayi Link Road and Zaria Road to Dawakin Kudu. Bridges along Janguza to Durum to Kabo to Karaye have been awarded at the cost of N1,425,367,656:45. Nata'ala Bridge in Tudun Wada Local Government Area has also been awarded at the cost of N721,932,091:24.

17. In the area of Rural Infrastructure, we committed the sum of over N3.8 billion which was expended by the Ministry of Rural and Community Development and its agencies in the provision of rural infrastructure which include access roads, boreholes and electricity transformers and facilities. As a result of these commitments, more rural communities have been provided with potable water and electricity.

The 2010 Budget

18. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, coming at the turn of the decade, the 2010 budget represents a milestone; once again, an opportunity for all of us elected representatives of the people to renew our commitment to the good people of Kano. So that every day and on every public matter brought before us, public purpose alone will shape our decisions. Only if we do that can we live up to the expectations of our people, and only if we do that can we help build Kano State of the future, the Kano we want for ourselves and for generations yet to come.

19. The year 2010 is indeed critical to our Administration because, in keeping our pledge, we intend to complete the projects that we initiated before we hand over in 2011 insha-Allah. Moreover, our administration is working to strengthen governance and to develop a 10 year development plan based on the aspirations



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of our people as inscribed in our Economic Development Roadmap and Rolling Plan. The aim of this exercise is to harmonize and articulate these development aspirations in a single document that we call Kano State Roadmap for Development [KSRD]. Over all, this is motivated by the prospects of implementing a long term plan for Kano irrespective of the government in power. The 2010 Budget draws its inspiration from this Economic Development Plan.

20. Mr. Speaker, Honorable members of the Assembly, the Budget I am presenting to you is tagged "**Budget for Sustainable Economic Growth and Development 2010**" in continuation of our pursuit for economic growth, so that in the coming years Kano State will prosper and become self reliant. The total size of the proposed budget is **N110,304,351,470** made up of a recurrent expenditure of **N48,867,547,508** and capital expenditure component of **N61,623,803,962**. The proposal is expected to be funded from a total recurrent revenue receipt of **N89,391,244,914** (Federally Collected Revenue and IGR) and capital receipts of **N21,100,106,556** (Grants and Miscellaneous Capital Receipts). Therefore, the **Budget for Sustainable Economic Growth and Development** is a balance budget

21. Mr. Speaker, in line with our vision to build a virile and sustainable Kano State, let me again crave your indulgence to present our planned programs in the various sectors for 2010.

Agriculture

22. Mr. Speaker, you may kindly recall our vision, contained in our Economic Development Roadmap that I introduced in my first Budget Speech to this Honourable House in the second term of our administration. The vision is to integrate and expand agriculture far beyond its current subsistence level and make it a major source of economic growth and development. Over the last three years, we have initiated the steps that will make us achieve this goal. For the year 2010 we are committing a total of **N9,300,000,000** to Agriculture.

23. As part of measures to create wealth for our rural populace we intend to commence rehabilitation of our dams and development of **9000** hectares of existing irrigation land. Government will similarly undertake the construction of **1500** hectares of irrigation land for the expansion of rice cultivation and other food and cash crops. When completed the program is expected to provide an all year round employment for thousands of farming families as well as reinforce our current drive to establish an enduring food security for our citizens and for our nation. This undertaking will cost **N5.5billion**, and when completed it will stand out as the largest single intervention in

the development of irrigation infrastructure in the state and by any state government elsewhere in the country.

24. Working with the World Bank and other donor partners we intend to extend further support to commercial agriculture by expending the sum of **N869.6million** in the year 2010. The intervention is expected to consolidate our efforts on the initiative and bring into the fold additional participants and beneficiaries. Similarly, in furtherance to our commitment at providing basic agricultural inputs, seeds and chemicals to the farmers, the sum of **N2billion** is being committed to the procurement of fertilizer for the 2010 farming season. As you are all aware, we have maintained an unwavering commitment to provide subsidy on fertilizer to our farmers, such that Kano State so far remains the only state in the Federation where the state government sells all brands of fertilizer to its farmers at the rate of **N1000** per bag. In our effort to encourage our farmers to produce surplus commodities we are committing the sum of **N200million** for the purchase of grains as buffer reserve in the year 2010.

Education

25. Mr. Speaker, Honorable Members, providing quality education to our youth remains an all time priority of our Administration. Consistent with our resolve to continuously revitalize the sub sector we intend to expend over **N23.7billion** which is more than 20% of the total Budget in the sector. From the amount, we intend to expend **N8.4 billion** on infrastructure and instructional materials while **N11.5billion** goes to personnel emoluments and manpower development.

26. In our quest to build a strong foundation for education at the grassroots the sum of over **N2.4billion** is being allocated to the Universal Basic Education. Out of the amount, the sum of **N1.18billion** is being committed to the construction of new classrooms, rehabilitation of existing ones as well as general infrastructure in the basic schools. Another sum of over **N690million** is being dedicated for the acquisition of teachers/students furniture, textbooks and other instructional materials.

27. In furtherance of our efforts to decongest classrooms and create additional space for student enrolment, the sum of **N1.75billion** is being voted for the completion and furnishing of **1000** classrooms under our program of providing quality education of the Economic Development Roadmap. And working with donor partners the State Government is committing another **N550million** to the renovation of Basic Schools in nine Local Government Areas comprising Kiru, Rogo, Wudil, Makoda, Rimi Gado, Garun Mallam, Ungogo and Minjibir. And as part of our resolve to enhance the learning environment in some six selected secondary schools across the state, another of sum of **N1.61billion** is earmarked for the completion of renovation

work started last year.

28. Mr. Speaker, in keeping with our resolve to promote girl child education, the sum of **N700million** is being earmarked for a special program of promoting girl child education for the least privileged families in the State. Through this initiative we hope to fast track educating the women folk in our society to enable them render the desired contribution in the development process.

29. In line with the ongoing drive for promoting science and technical education in the state, the sum of over **N1billion** is being proposed for various undertakings in our science and technical schools. The amount includes the sum of **N118million** for the completion of vocational training centres at Albasu and Doguwa, while another sum of **N150million** will be expended on the continuation of construction works at Girls Boarding Science College, Karaye.

30. As a follow up to the Administration's efforts for revitalizing our institutions of higher learning to ensure they produce manpower requirement for the state's development, the sum of over **N7.3billion** is earmarked for the sub sector. Out of the provision, the sum of over **N1.8billion** is allocated to the Kano State University of Science and Technology. Out of this amount the sum of **N1.2billion** is voted for instruction materials, manpower development, staff welfare and other essential services, while the sum of **N649** is voted for infrastructure development.

31. Furthermore, this administration will continue to maintain an unwavering resolve and commitment to turn around other tertiary institutions in the state through infrastructural development, provision of instructional materials and capacity building of academic and non-academic staff in those institutions to ensure they meet the standards of centers of excellence. To this end we are voting the sum of **N418.8million** to Aminu Kano School of Islamic Legal Studies, **N322million** to Audu Bako College of Agriculture and **N693million** to College of Arts, Science and Remedial Studies. In the same vein, we are proposing, for your consideration, to expend **N1.5billion** in Kano State Polytechnic and another **N1.3billion** in Sa'adatu Rimi College of Education Kumbotso.

32. In line with our decision to accord every citizen free and unfettered access to scholarship, this administration decided to remove all encumbrances that hitherto existed in the process of scholarship awards to citizens, since then students, especially from the less privileged families have benefited and are today contributing their quota to the growth and development of our dear state. In furtherance to this objective we are voting the sum of **N1.1billion** to consolidate the gains arising from the decision.

Health

33. Mr. Speaker, standing before you in this chamber last year, I reiterated the pledge of our Administration to continually improve the human capacity, infrastructure and service

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delivery in our healthcare institutions. Today, there is no gainsaying the fact that we are steadily moving to accomplish those objectives. Accordingly we intend to expend another sum of N8.8billion in the health sector in the year 2010. Out of this amount about N2.94billion will be spent to construct and or improve on healthcare infrastructure particularly hospitals and equipments. We are proposing to also expend the sum of N838.9million in the provision of drugs and medicaments while the sum of over N5billion will be committed to human capacity building and staff welfare.

34. Sequel to our resolve to dedicate attention on eradicating child killer diseases through massive public enlightenment and immunisation, Kano State has recorded significant improvement in the coverage. For the coming year, we intend to improve on this year's accomplishments by committing additional resources to ensure total eradication. Consequently the sum of over N168million is being proposed for immunisation and malaria control. We are also spending another sum of N120million to sustain free ante-natal services and to provide free medical care to victims of accident and other emergencies. In the same vein, a handsome provision has been made to cater for a number of health programmes.

Urban and Regional Planning

35. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the task of repositioning Kano's physical environment through urban renewal initiatives constitutes one of the major undertakings by our Administration recently. We shall continue to accord priority to this initiative realizing that Kano's prosperity rests squarely on the safety of its environment for business and development to thrive. When we commenced the task of urban renewal, our initiative was applauded by many; yet, early on, some expressed pessimism.

36. Today, about two years since the commencement of the initiative, Allahamdulillah, we are recording significant progress as several roads have been expanded, thereby easing traffic flow, while related road infrastructure such as street lights, pedestrian walkways and traffic lights are giving Kano the desired effect and facelift to attract more investments. Indeed, we are presently witnessing a remarkable shift away from pessimism to optimism, even amongst the pundits who initially expressed misgivings and apprehension.

37. In a renewed bid to realize our objective, we propose to expend the sum of over N12.782billion in the coming year. From the amount the total sum of N4.66billion is being committed to capital undertakings covering the construction and expansion of additional roads as well as completing ongoing ones. Amongst those being targeted especially in the Central Business District are Bello Road, Niger Street, Post Office Road, Palmer Road, Yolawa Road, and Lagos Street.

38. Consistent with our vision to expand the scope of urbanization to all corners of the state we are also proposing to spend the sum of

N427million out of the amount to provide roads and other related infrastructure to Gwarzo, Toranke in Gezawa, Rano, Ajingi and Bunkure towns while another N6.35billion is earmarked for the completion of the ongoing reconstruction work of six major roads in Kano Metropolis under the Roadmap for Economic Development.

Rural Development

39. Mr. Speaker, since the advent of our Administration in 2003, we pledged to accelerate the phase of transformation of our rural areas to semi-urban and urban status. Since that pledge we have committed a lot of resources to improve the quality of life of our rural populace. We have constructed asphaltic roads, undertaken water supply and electrification projects in hundreds of communities. I can report to you that we have covered significant grounds and impacted positively on the lives of our highly respected rural citizens.

40. In furtherance of our objective to improve the lives of our people in the rural areas, we are proposing to expend in the coming year, the total sum of N15billion for various undertakings in the rural areas. Out of the amount, the sum of over N10.7billion is for capital projects including the completion of ongoing roads and bridge works; construction and rehabilitation of Mosques and Islamiyya Schools; electrification of rural towns; as well as provision of potable water. In keeping with the resolve to provide affordable shelter at both rural and urban areas, the sum of over N4.3billion is being set aside for the provision of affordable shelter to citizens.

41. Working with private investors, we also intend to revitalize public transport sector by introducing high capacity buses for intra city commuting. Our Administration believes that a modern, efficient and affordable mass transit system is an essential prerequisite for achieving economic growth and prosperity envisioned in the Economic Development Roadmap.

Water Resources

42. Mr. Speaker, when we assumed office in 2003, we made a solemn commitment to the good people of Kano State to provide them with clean, safe and potable water for domestic, industrial and irrigation purposes. Allahamdullilah, we are delivering on that commitment and today a significant proportion of our citizens in urban and rural areas have access to this important commodity. We are not resting on our oars, as we are aware of the need to do more in order to extend these services to other communities that are yet to be served.

43. In pursuing this objective, we have since initiated the construction of a new 75million litres per day water works at Watari, and we are currently expanding reticulation networks to ensure free flow of water to communities in various parts of the state. To compliment these efforts we propose to expend another sum of N1.3billion on other water supply undertaking.

44. Out of this amount N750million is allocated for the continuation of work on the new Watari Water Treatment Plant upon which significant progress has been recorded. We are expending another sum of N400million on the procurement of water treatment chemicals, while the sum of N200million will be used to improve water supply in greater Kano. In an

effort to expand the scope of supply of water into Kano metropolis and the environs, the sum of N100million is being earmarked for the design of new intake at number 11 stations.

Environment

45. Mr. Speaker, amongst the most prominent challenges facing humanity today is climate change and its attendant adverse effects on the environment. Such effects manifest as floods, erosion, desertification, cessation of rains etc. Conscious of the danger of this to our existence as a people, this administration had since accorded significant attention and resources in safeguarding our environment to mitigate the effects. We have already made huge investments, both human and material on refuse disposal, pollution control, desertification control and public sensitization since the advent of this administration.

46. As a further follow up on these modest efforts, we are proposing to commit another sum of N968.3million to the sub sector. Out of the amount over N783.3 million will be expended on the construction of new drainages and cleaning of the existing ones for free flow of storm waters. And as the menace of gulley erosion increases with climate change the sum of N100 million is being earmarked to address the scourge in erosion prone areas of the state comprising Shagari Quarters, Kurna Asabe, Dawakin Tofa, Tudun Wada and Gwarzo towns. To consolidate on our strides towards containing refuse disposal in the State another N200million is earmarked for the purchase of Refuse Buckets.

Commerce and ICT

47. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, promoting commerce and ICT to fast track the development of Kano's economy is part of the cardinal objectives of our Roadmap for Economic Development. Already, we have put in place several initiatives including feasibility studies by Multimedia Development Corporation of Malaysia on the interface between commerce and ICT. Government has studied the report and it is taking appropriate steps to implement some of the recommendations. This is one of the major tasks of the newly established Ministry of Science and Technology.

49. As you are aware, for commerce and manufacturing to thrive, certain basic infrastructure such as good road networks, sufficient electricity, security and water are essential. You are already aware of our efforts to expand our major roads under the urban renewal scheme, while water supply in Kano and environs has since received significant boost. Hinging our hopes that the Federal Government's pledge for electricity supply nationwide to reach 6000MW by end of December this year, we are also pursuing other alternatives through Public Private Sector Partnership which the Honourable House graciously endorsed in the 2009 Budget amendment.

50. It is for these reasons that the sum of N1.3billion is proposed for undertakings in the sub sector. Out of this amount the sum of over N950million is being proposed for capital works that include IT infrastructure with a provisional cost of N150million, another N100 million for the procurement and installation of internet bandwidth, while the sum of

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N200million is set aside for the establishment of the state-wide electronic data bank. Similarly we intend to expend another sum of N140million to construct additional pavilion at Kano Trade Fair Complex.

51. In furtherance to our commitment to create jobs for our teeming populace we plan to expand our partnership with some selected multi-national corporations such as PZ, Nigeria Bottling Company, Starcomms to empower 6000 citizens through capacity building and provision of seed capital.

Information, Sports and Culture

52. Mr. Speaker, freedom of information, free speech and expression are inalienable rights for all citizens as enshrined in our constitution. That our Administration upholds and promotes the exercise of these rights by citizens is never in contention. The greatest challenge, perhaps, remains that of judicious application of those rights without disturbing the peace, which is an essential prerequisite for growth and development. Concerned by the apparent drift by some vocal citizens among us in exercising these rights, I found it necessary to admonish all, in my state wide address on the occasion of 1st Muharram, the new Islamic Year 1431, to choose the path of civility. It is pertinent to stress once more that as a civilized society we must recognize where our rights end and where the rights of others begin; we must avoid trespass, transgression and aggression.

53. The successful hosting by Kano State of the recent FIFA Under 17 World Cup and the accolades from FIFA and the Federal Government are valid testimonies to the positive impact of Shari'ah implementation and A Daidata Sahu (Societal Reorientation) program on our people. Indeed all the teams that played in Kano left with good memories of the hospitality and support extended them by our fans. It is on record that Kano was adjudged the best centre of all the centres that hosted the tournament nation-wide. I wish to, on behalf of the government and the entire people of Kano State thank all those who contributed to the success of the hosting. I wish to in particular commend the Kano local organizing committee for a job well done.

54. To consolidate our modest accomplishments in information dissemination, sports development and culture the sum of N700million is earmarked. Out of this amount the sum of N700million is set aside for manpower development and staff welfare while the sum of N695million is for the provision of essential goods and services. We are again proposing to expend, out of the amount, the sum of N157 million on capital projects to reinforce our initial investments in the sub sector.

Shari'ah Implementation

55. Mr. Speaker, Shari'ah implementation remains an important pillar of our Administration, it remains a veritable guide to us since we assumed office in 2003. The contribution of Shari'ah in sustaining the peace, tranquillity and development of our state are quite visible, felt and appreciated by all and sundry. I wish to commend the leadership and dedication of our revered Ulama and elders at Shura Council, Shari'ah and Zakat Commissions and the Hisbah Board. Their efforts are not in vain. The Societal Reorientation drive; Zauran Shawara and Public Complaints and Anti-

Corruption Commission have added vigor to Shari'ah implementation and have once again reinforced the all time truth that the Muslim Ummah guided by Shari'ah provides the best model of government. The people of Kano State remain ever grateful to Allah for the peace we continue to enjoy.

56. As we strive to maintain the tempo in shari'ah implementation, it is important to render additional support for unfettered services and contributions to the society. Accordingly we propose to spend the sum of N2billion in the coming fiscal year on Shari'ah implementation. From the allocation the sum of N1.1billion is for capacity building and staff welfare, N510 million for essential goods and services while N818million will be expended on capital works and other essential social undertakings on behalf of the entire society.

Women and Youth Development

57. Mr. Speaker, Honorable Members, women and youth constitute a very important segment of our society. And acting on the teachings of the Shari'ah, our administration had accorded women and our youth priority attention by initiating several programs aimed at empowering them and harnessing their potentials for the development of the state. The Millennium Development Goals Initiative by the United Nations requesting member states to accord priority to issues affecting women and youth further reinforces our Administration's resolve to address the needs of this segment of our society.

58. Consequently, the sum of N800million is proposed for various programs for women and the youth in the 2010 Fiscal Year. Out of this amount the sum of N520million is proposed for capital undertakings; these include special empowerment package for women under the Economic Development Roadmap initiative with an allocation of N100million, continuing construction works on ultra modern Women Centre with an allocation of N420million. When completed, the State Women Center is expected to provide the much needed space for our women folk to learn vocations and skills as well as pursue continuing education.

59. The youth component of this initiative is also vital as it involves skill acquisition, capacity building and empowerment; ultimately the idea is to make it possible for our youth to be productive and contribute to the development of our dear state. Accordingly, the sum of N250million is proposed for youth empowerment under the Directorate of Youth. We also intend to continue to work with development partners and the private sector for funding and support to build the capacities of youth for self employment and for self reliance.

General Administration

60. Mr. Speaker, our administration recognizes that for economic growth to be realized, at least the type that every citizen is given an equal opportunity to benefit from, we must limit the scope of government and strengthen governance. This is critical not only for the success of our home grown development plan, but also to the Nigeria Vision20:2020; the realization of which can only be possible if all the states in the federation do their part. And you will agree with me Honourable Members, that given our enviable mercantile ancestry and standing in commerce, Kano must be at the centre of the pursuit of the Nigeria Vision20:2020 to make it a reality.

61. In facing that challenge, we are working with

development partners including the DFID, the EU, the World Bank and the MDGs Office to strengthen planning, advocate the adoption of better tools for conducting the operations of government and in the case of MDGs Office to intervene directly with pro-poor programs especially in health, sanitation and education.

62. Specifically, we are further developing the Kano State Roadmap for Economic Growth and Development; strengthening the planning process through capacity building and advocacy for adopting better tools for policy formulation; strategic planning; project and program management; as well as project monitoring and evaluation. The idea is to effectively move away from impulsive and annual plans to long term planning. We must recognize that only long, enduring plans diligently implemented can propel our state to real sustainable growth. A situation where every year and every government plans its own programs without recourse to any perspective plan will not allow us to attain our vision for a better Kano State.

63. Mr. Speaker, as we enter a new year, and a new decade in our journey for state building and development, we must all make the momentum to propel us to new and better future. Apparently, the momentum lies with our people and can be realized if every citizen does his or her duty to the state. And to do that swayed only by the understanding that the building of a better future for Kano falls upon us all, and that no one working alone, not even the government, can do it.

64. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, surely, it is only when we work together, each earnestly doing his part as a stakeholder can we build a better Kano State. Given our common destiny as a people, we must not allow detractors to slow down or hamper our progress. And given the enormous challenge we face, the time has come that if someone or group, in the name of opposition, resorts to rancour and cheap propaganda the people should pay no heed to their despondent call. Kano State belongs to all of us, it is here we shall continue to live and to raise our children, We must always say, through our actions not words, that the interest of all is bigger, by far, than the interest of any one group, whatever its demeanour and however powerful.

65. We must refuse any one who says the government alone can make economic growth and development happen. Development and real improvements in the quality of life of the people is only possible if everyone will do his duty, by giving what is due to his neighbour, his community, his state and his country. Rights must go with responsibility; we must all therefore rise up to our responsibility in order to make our state great.

66. Mr Speaker, may we then as compatriots join hands and stand up for action, for pursuing the Budget of Sustainable Economic Growth and Development 2010; for making Kano an indomitable commercial hub; for building a self reliant Kano State; for working for the attainment of the Nigeria Vision2020 we set for ourselves, so that Nigeria grows in plenty, with a pride of a new image, and take its 20th position in the ranking of world largest economies.

67. May I on this final note, Mr Speaker, submit the Budget for Sustainable Economic Growth and Development 2010, confident that this noble House will accord it expeditious hearing in the spirit of partnership I thus avow.

Wassalam Alaikum.

HEALTH REPORT

Exercise may prevent incontinence from prostate surgery

A healthy weight and regular exercise may help protect men from one of the most common side effects of prostate cancer surgery, a new study suggests.

Researchers found that among 165 men who had their prostate glands removed due to cancer, those who were not obese and were getting regular exercise before surgery had the lowest prevalence of long-term urinary incontinence.

What's more, even among obese men, those who had been physically active before surgery were less likely to be incontinent one year after surgery.

All of the men in the study had undergone radical prostatectomy, where a surgeon removes the prostate gland and some of

the surrounding tissue. Urinary incontinence and sexual dysfunction are common side effects, though both often improve over time.

So far, most efforts to prevent lasting side effects have focused on improving surgical techniques -- limiting damage to the nerves, muscles and blood vessels around the prostate gland.

But these latest findings suggest that there are also lifestyle measures men can take to cut their risk of lingering urinary incontinence, said lead researcher Dr. Kathleen Y. Wolin, an assistant professor of surgery at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis.

"This is another reason for men to get up and get active," she

told Reuters Health in an interview.

In general, men with prostate cancer, like all other men, are encouraged to follow a healthy lifestyle, which includes regular exercise. A study published last month found that among men with prostate cancer, those who got as little as 15 minutes of exercise per day had lower death rates than inactive men during the two-decade study period.

"We strongly recommend that men with prostate cancer talk with their physicians about how to fit physical activity into their lives if they are currently sedentary," Wolin said.

For their study, published in the *Journal of Urology*, Wolin and her colleagues looked at uri-

nary incontinence rates among 165 men roughly one year after radical prostatectomy. Before surgery, all of the men had reported on their exercise habits; those who said they exercised for at least one hour per week were considered active.

Overall, the researchers found that obese, sedentary men had the highest rate of long-term incontinence, at 41 percent. Active, non-obese men had the lowest rate, at 16 percent.

Among obese men who were physically active, one-quarter were incontinent, which was identical to the rate among non-obese, inactive men -- suggesting, the researchers say, that exercise can offset the negative effects of obesity.

Exactly why exercise might prevent incontinence is unclear. One possibility, Wolin said, is that exercisers have better overall muscle tone, which may help with bladder control.

Another potential reason is that long-time exercisers are more likely to follow their doctors' advice on performing post-surgery Kegel exercises, which strengthen the pelvic-floor muscles and may improve incontinence and sexual function.

According to Wolin, more studies are needed to see whether certain types and intensities of exercise are more effective than others -- and how exercise habits after prostate surgery may affect long-term incontinence risk.

Source: *Journal of Urology*

Swine flu update (Global)

THE following table lists the cumulative number of laboratory-confirmed human deaths (By December 30, 2009) of the swine flu strain of influenza formally known as H1N1 as reported to the Geneva-based World Health Organization (WHO).

| | DEC. 30 2009 | Dec. 23 2009 | Dec. 18 2009 | Dec. 11 2009 |
|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| CONFIRMED Deaths | | | | |
| DEATHS, Total | 12,220 [^] | 11,516 | 10,582 | 9,596 |
| % change | 6.1% | 8.8% | 10.3% | 9.4% |
| AFRICA | 130 | 109 | 109 | 109 |
| AMERICAS | 6,670 [^] | 6,670 | 6,335 | 6,131 |
| EASTERN Mediterranean | 693 | 663 | 572 | 452 |
| EUROPE | 2,422 [^] | 2,045 | 1,654 | 1,242 |
| SOUTH-EAST Asia | 1,056 | 990 | 892 | 814 |
| WESTERN Pacific | 1,249 | 1,039 | 1,020 | 848 |

SWINE flu update (Africa)

AS of December 28, 2009, 29 countries have officially reported 16,660 laboratory confirmed human cases of pandemic (H1N1) 2009, including 131 deaths. The breakdown of confirmed cases and deaths by country (in Africa) is given in the table below.

| COUNTRY | Cumulative total | | Newly confirmed | |
|------------------------------|------------------|------------|-----------------|----------|
| | CASES | Deaths | Cases | Deaths |
| ALGERIA | 476 | 24 | 0 | 0 |
| ANGOLA | 37 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| BOTSWANA | 23 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| BURUNDI | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| CAMEROON | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| CAPE Verde | 62 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| CONGO | 21 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| COTE d'Ivoire | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| DEMOCRATIC Republic of Congo | 222 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| ETHIOPIA | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| GABON | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| GHANA | 54 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| KENYA | 417 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| LESOTHO | 65 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| MADAGASCAR | 877 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| MALAWI | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| MAURITIUS | 69 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| MOZAMBIQUE | 101 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| NAMIBIA | 72 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| NIGERIA | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| RWANDA | 341 | 0 | 6 | 0 |
| SAO Tome & Principe | 41 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| SEYCHELLES | 33 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| SOUTH Africa | 12636 | 92 | 1 | 1 |
| SWAZILAND | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TANZANIA | 692 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| UGANDA | 261 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| ZAMBIA | 90 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| ZIMBABWE | 41 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 16660 | 131 | 11 | 1 |

Doctors donate N5 million medical equipment to UITH

From Mustafa Abubakar, Ilorin

TWO physicians working abroad have donated medical equipment worth N5 million to the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital (UITH), Ilorin, Kwara State.

The physicians are Dr. Tunde Odutoye, a consultant surgeon on Ear, Nose, Throat (ENT) Head and Neck at St. George's Hospital, University of London; and Dr. Jeroen Kerrebijn, consultant surgeon on Head & Neck and Chief of

the Division of Head and Neck Surgical Oncology at Erasmus University Hospital, Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

The physicians made the donation during a recent Head and Neck Dissection Course organized by the ENT Department of the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital.

The equipment donated include Zeiss Operating Microscope, Diagnostic Clinical Audiometer and 2-point Electric Powered Heinz Otoscopes.

Father of hole-in-the-heart girl cries for help

From Mustafa Abubakar, Ilorin

A classroom teacher Malam Oseni Akanbi has appealed to the Kwara State Government and philanthropists to come to the aid of his daughter, two-year-old Akanbi Aishat who has a hole in the heart.

Akanbi who teaches at Government Technical College Ilorin told journalists in Ilorin that he had been battling with Baby A'ishat since she was born.

"We in the family have tried all we could, we exhausted all the money we could raise before getting the contact of the paediatric cardiologists in India who have accepted to

do the surgery at estimated cost of N1.5 million, but we don't have the money," Akanbi said.

He called on the State Government, the wife of the governor through her pet project Alafi Kwara and other philanthropists both within and outside the country to help save his daughter.

"As a teacher in a state school my salary is not much and I am battling with the feeding and school fees of the other children, so it has been very difficult surviving; I have even sold all my belongings that anyone would buy in the course of the last two years," Akanbi said.



PEOPLES DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDP)

Power to the People

Motto: Justice, Unity and Progress

National Secretariat: Plot 1970, Wadata Plaza, Michael Okpara Street, Wuse Zone 5, Abuja Tel: 09-5232569, 5233429, Fax: 09-5231299

32ND MEETING OF THE PDP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Notice is hereby given that the 32nd Meeting of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Board of Trustees (BOT) has been scheduled as follows:

Date: **Thursday, 14th January, 2010**

Venue: **Banquet Hall, Presidential Villa, Abuja**

Time: **8pm prompt**

Please, note that attendance is for members only

Signed:

DR. ABDULLAHI ADAMU, CON

Secretary, BOT

Inside Politics

Mass protest against Yar'adua undemocratic – Ogbulafor

From Isiaka Wakili & Sam Egwu, Lokoja

THE decision of some prominent Nigerians to organize a mass protest against President Umaru Musa Yar'adua has been described as undemocratic.

The National Chairman of the ruling People's Democratic Party, Vincent Ogbulafor, said this yesterday in Lokoja, the Kogi State capital at a reunion rally in honour of members of the opposition who decamped

to the party.

Ogbulafor, who was represented by Alhaji Bello Haliru, National Deputy Chairman of the party, said those calling for interim national government, mass action and Yar'adua's resignation have lost hope in the due process of electoral system.

Ogbulafor commended Governor Ibrahim Idris for his exemplary leadership, stressing that his good performance had attracted the opposition to identify with

the PDP in the state.

In his welcome address, the state chairman of the PDP, Mallam Hassan Salawu, identified indiscipline as the bane of party politics in the country.

Warning the decampers to shun indiscipline and insincerity, Salawu charged them to work with the leadership of the party in order to help build internal democracy.

Also speaking, Governor Idris con-

gratulated the defectors and appealed to them to cooperate with his administration to move the state forward.

Among the decampers are Prince Olushola Akanmode from the Action Congress (AC), Chief Merab Abdul from the All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP), Senator Salihu Ohize (AC) and Honourables Abdulkareem Salihu and Abdul Kokori from Adavi-Okene and Okene Federal Constituencies respectively.

Senate to swear-in Omisore, Bagudu today

By Abdul-Rahman Abubakar

THE Senate is likely to administer oath of office to two new members that recently won elections conducted by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Kebbi and Osun states to fill in two vacant seats today.

Senator Iyiola Omisore (PDP, Osun) won re-run election conducted late last year after his election of April 2007 was quashed by the Appeal Court and he is set to take oath a second time after his swearing-in of June 5, 2007.

The other senator to be sworn in is Alhaji Atiku Bagudu (PDP, Kebbi Central) who is to replace Senator Adamu Aliero that left the Senate to become Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) last year.

Senator Omisore chairs the Senate Committee on Appropria-

tion before he was sacked by the court and is billed to immediately takeover the position from his vice, Senator Ahmed Maccido (PDP, Sokoto) who has been acting in his absence.

Speaking to *Daily Trust* shortly before the re-run election, Senator Omisore expressed optimism that he would return to the Senate to participate in consideration of the 2010 budget which is majorly handled by his committee.

Senator-elect Atiku Bagudu clinched the ticket of the PDP to run for the vacant seat of Kebbi Central senatorial district after stiff contest from several prominent politicians from the area. He has about 17 months to be in the Senate. After swearing-in he is expected to resume as vice chairman of the Senate Education Committee which was the position Aliero vacated.



SENATOR Iyiola Omisore

I'll announce my political move soon – Fayose

FORMER governor of Ekiti State Ayo Fayose said on Monday that he would soon announce his political ambition.

Speaking in Ado-Ekiti, Fayose said that he had yet to decide which of the political parties to join to realise his political ambitions.

Fayose became the governor of the state in 2003 on the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) but was impeached in October 2006.

"Very soon and at the appropriate time, the whole world will know where I belong and what my political ambitions are.

Issues, time and events will tell the whole world where I belong. At the appropriate time if I am joining the Labour Party (LP), it will not be a hidden event. But as at today, I have not made any announcement of joining any party," he said.

The former governor added that he did not regret his roles during the April 25, 2009 governorship re-run election in the state, saying: "that was the wish of the people of the state".

"I will say it. I have no regrets so far. I did what the people of Ekiti people wanted and I have no regrets for my action," he said. (NAN)

Kebbi Central: DPP candidate files court papers

By Suleiman M. Bisalla

CANDIDATE of the Democratic Peoples Party (DPP) in the December 19 Kebbi Central Senatorial re-run election Barrister Sambo Aliyu Nasarawa has concluded legal preparations to challenge the candidature of Senator-elect Atiku Bagudu in the tribunal for the rerun election. Bagudu is expected to take oath of office in the senate today.

Aliyu who came second in the election is challenging the qualification of Bagudu as candidate for the election, saying the antecedents of the PDP candidate have disqualified him for the contest.

Speaking to *Daily Trust* yesterday, Aliyu said he was aggrieved by the conduct of the election and was poised to use legal means to challenge his PDP opponent on technical ground.

Shortly after the election in December last year, Aliyu had vowed to proceed to the tribunal and "prove former President Olusegun Obasanjo right" regarding the standing of his opponent of the PDP.

According to him "this same candidate was nominated by the PDP to contest the same seat in 2007 but the then President Chief Olusegun Obasanjo severely scolded the Kebbi PDP leaders and told them to immediately go and substitute the

candidate given his antecedents. Obasanjo warned them not to disgrace the PDP by fielding such a candidate."

Aliyu said the information which Obasanjo relied upon to call for Bagudu's disqualification in 2007 is available to him and he will produce them at the tribunal.

The DPP candidate was in court for over two years challenging the election of Senator Adamu Aliero until the Appeal Tribunal ruled in favour of Aliero. Now he has only one and a half years to pursue the latest case. He however told *Daily Trust* that it would not take him long to prove his case in this matter.

“ This same candidate was nominated by the PDP to contest the same seat in 2007 but the then President Chief Olusegun Obasanjo severely scolded the Kebbi PDP leaders and told them to immediately go and substitute the candidate given his antecedents.

PDP wins re-run election in Oyo state

THE PDP has won the re-run election into the Ogbo-moso North State Constituency of Oyo State held on Saturday.

Mr Martins Okunfolami, the INEC Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) in the State, announced the result in a statement issued in Ibadan on Sunday.

The statement said that the PDP candidate, Mr Solomon Oyeleye, scored the highest number of valid votes totalling 35,523 to beat other candidates. It listed other parties' results as follows: AC 163; ANPP 1,282; LP 28; and NDP 24 votes respectively. The REC declared the election process as peaceful, orderly and hitch-free. Okunfolami commended all participants including voters and candidates for their peaceful conduct before, during and after the election.

Only credible election will bail out Anambra –PPA

By Abdulmutallib A. Abubakar

THE National Secretary of Progressive Peoples Alliance (PPA), Dahiru Musa Abdullahi yesterday said that most of the politicians in Anambra State are pursuing personal ambition at the detriment of the welfare of the electorate. He said only credible election on February 6 would liberate the situation.

Re-affirming the statement of the Inspector General Police, Ogbonna Onovo, that some politicians in Anambra were planning to ruin the February 6 election, the PPA scribe said a number of politicians who believe that they must be leaders have been working to subvert

the election.

He however said his party will do everything possible to ensure that election is not hijacked by such politicians. He also emphasized though the PPA is determined see that a free and fair election is achieved in Nigerai, there must be an electoral body that is truly independent, in terms of appointment and funding to compliment the effort.

On the state of the president Umar Yar'adua health, Abdullahi advised the President to avail himself of the provisions of the constitution if he cannot function; stressing that national interest should supersede any other interest. He however wished the President a quick recovery.

SPORT

Super Eagles
ready to soar
Page 55



SUPER Eagles striker Victor Obinna Nsofor celebrates after scoring against Mozambique in the World Cup qualifiers in Abuja. Nigeria will play against Egypt in the 2010 African Nations Cup Group C match in Benguela, Angola tonight

Nigeria, Egypt begin title chase

By Orkula Shaagee

THE Super Eagles of Nigeria and the Pharaohs of Egypt will clash today in the Angolan city of Benguela in the opening group C game of the ongoing 27th Africa Cup of Nations tournament.

While Egypt would be all out to win and make amends for the country's failure to pick a ticket to the World Cup in South Africa, would be aiming cap her glorious football run with the third African crown.

Both Nigeria and Egypt have towering credentials in the biennial soccer championship, with Egypt having an edge over Nigeria, having won the title six times, as against Nigeria's two.

The Eagles of Nigeria were champions in the 1980 edition held in Lagos and the 1994 edition in Tunisia.

Nigeria have not lost to the Pharaohs since 1963 when Nigeria made their debut appearance in the AFCON, Egypt taught the Eagles a footballing lesson which ended 6-3. Since then, the two countries have played six times with Nigeria nicking three

wins and three draws.

The last time they played at this level was sixteen years ago in Tunisia where their last game in the group ended scoreless with the Nigerians going on to lift that year's tournament.

After enjoying dominance in

Both Nigeria and Egypt have towering credentials in the biennial soccer championship

the 90s, when the Super Eagles qualified for their first World Cup and won a second Africa Cup Nations trophy in Tunisia, Nigeria has since suffered a decline in fortunes, missing out on the world arena in Germany 2006.

Once one of Africa's most feared sides, coaching, manage-

rial and administrative problems have since conspired to render them incompetent at times.

At the last edition of the tournament in Ghana, Nigeria's technical deficiencies were exposed, as they lost to Ivory Coast in the first game, played out a goalless draw with Mali and managed a hard fought 2-0 win over Benin before succumbing to an inspired ten-man Ghana, 2-1, in the quarter-finals.

That singular outing earned the once almighty Eagles the derogatory appellation 'Super Chickens' among many African football fans and beyond.

Egypt, the most decorated side in the tournament and current holders of the African soccer show title, are favourites going into today's encounter, but with the absence of three key members of the team that triumphed in Ghana two years ago could be their greatest undoing in a tournament that has so far recorded tremendous upsets.

The Pharaohs' Chief Coach, Hassan Shehata has left out Mohammed Aboutorika, Mido and Amr Zaki from the squad to

the Angola tournament.

Zaki and Aboutorika contributed immensely to Egypt's fifth title in Ghana two years ago, and their absence could cause a scare on their title defence in Angola.

Playing with an injury-hit attack, Egypt will be relying on Mohamed Zidan up front in its quest to win a record third straight African Cup of Nations title.

Shehata, whose target is to win today's tie against Nigeria, says "Winning the first match of the tournament makes it easier in the rest of the matches as you enter the remaining two matches of the group stages more confident".

Aboutorika's absence could open the door for other midfielders, including Hossam Ghaly and Shikabala, who makes a return after a one-year international ban.

Nigeria on her part will also miss the services of goal monger; Ikechukwu Uche who emerged the country's highest goal scorer in the qualifying series before a stubborn injury denied him a place in Nigeria's squad to Angola.

Coach Shuaibu Amodu, who has won the reputation of a saviour for the Nigerians national

team any time the country is in danger of being humiliated, is not a new comer to the tournament at all.

Amodu led the Nigerian side to the 2002 edition in Mali, where they ended up with a bronze medal that tasted like gold; therefore he is expected to unleash on his opponent a team with winning pattern.

Wolfsburg of Germany attacking sensation, Obafemi Martin whose two goals in Kasarani earned Nigeria a place at the South Africa 2010 World Cup is expected to combine well with tireless Osaze Odemwingie to cause nightmare to the Egyptians.

On their part, Egypt would rely on the goal scoring prowess of Borussia Dortmund strike force, Mohammed Zidan who has scored 7 international goals for his country in 28 appearances to cause the Eagles early setback in the competition.

Shehata is a veteran of African football, having spent years with Egyptian giants, Al Ahly; and knows what to apply in getting the results in a high profile match of this magnitude.

Oliha tips Eagles for final

By Ibraheem A. Fatai

EX Super Eagles international, Thompson Oliha, has tipped Super Eagles to defeat the Pharaoh of Egypt and go all the way to lift the African most coveted trophy in Angola. Making this statement yesterday in Ilorin, former Bendel Insurance FC midfielder, said considering the high level of enthusiasm in the camp of the Eagles, after securing the World Cup ticket, it may be very difficult for any team to stop Nigeria.

Member of the Tunisia 1994 Africa Nations Cup winning team noted that the array of experienced players in the team to Angola and the youthful exuberance of Obasi Ogbuke and others will propel the Amodu-tutored men to becoming a team to beat.

"There is a great zeal in the players, most of who love to win the Trophy for their father's land and put their names in the history book like those of us who won the cup for Nigeria in 1980 and 1994. The boys are rearing to go and looking forward to silencing their critics, who have tagged them as no-hoppers.

"People should forget about the ups and downs the Super Eagles passed through while the qualification for South Africa 2010 lasted. This is going to be a different ball game, where the most highly rated team may turn out to be a huge disappointment, while teams like Nigeria that is not given any chance may surprise everybody," he said.

Kaita ready to surprise critics

MIDFIELDER Sani Kaita has no doubt that he will make a splash if selected by Nigeria coach Shuaibu Amodu to play at any time during the African Nations Cup.

"I have done it before so why cant I do it now? I have been training hard and I am ready. If I get a chance to play, everyone will see it too," Kaita told KickOffNigeria.com on the eve of Nigeria's opening game of the tournament.

His inclusion in the squad ahead of Groninger's Femi Ajilore has been one Amodu's most criticised squad selection decisions, but the Lokomotiv Moscow midfielder says he will make his critics eat their words when he gets chance to step out on the park.

"Well, the coach picked me and when I get the chance to get on the field, they can all see it when I am on the field," he said.

Nigeria travelled to Angola with an unusually low expectation from the fans, but Kaita insists that he and his team mates are there for the big prize.

"For me, I am here to win the gold medal and the same with my teammates too. The team is doing great and we believe that we can win it."

He also took the time to pour cold water on questions of player commitment to the cause," he said.



2010 AFRICAN CUP OF NATIONS

Victory will be vital for Group C underdogs

DESPITE carrying the unenviable tag of 'underdogs' in a group that has Nigeria and Egypt as the top dogs, Mozambique has the potential of causing an upset against the other three teams in the group. It was only last year that the Mambas forced a 1-1 draw at home to the mighty Nigerians before going down 1-0 away in Abuja in the dying minutes of the game. They also did their pride a great favour when they hit Tunisia 1-0 in the last match of the 2010 AFCON/World Cup qualifiers. The win saw them march to Angola, whilst ending Tunisia's dreams of making an appearance at the World Cup. With such a performance, it will be foolhardy for anybody, least of all Benin, to underestimate the Mozambicans.

The Mambas, who are ranked 72nd in the FIFA World Rankings will be making their fourth appearance at the continental finals and, under the tutelage of Dutch coach Mart Nooij, this time round they have better ammunition that could see them sail to the quarter-finals for the first time. Up front the team has the lethal striker Manuel 'Tico-Tico' Bucaune to lead the onslaught, with the assistance of the dependable midfield pairing of Elias Pelembe and Simao Mate Junior of Greek giants Panathinaikos.

Benin had a disastrous outing in the last AFCON meeting in Ghana when they quickly disappeared from the action after losing all three first round games. But Michel Dussuyer's charges will this time be angling to make a difference by picking up their first point when they face the Mambas



BENIN star Razak Omotoyossi, right, hopes to inspire the Squirrels against Mozambique.

today.

The Squirrels, who are ranked 59th in the FIFA rankings are making their third appearance at the continental festival in Angola 2010. They have lost every match in their two previous appearances. And interestingly, they have only scored one goal in the six matches they have played in Africa's finals. Tuesday will be an opportune moment to change this dismal record, by not only picking up the three points, but also scoring a few goals to improve their continental tally. Like Mozambique, the west Africans don't have any big name players in the league of Ivory Coast's Didier Drogba or Cameroonian Samuel Eto'o but teamwork and togetherness will

work to their advantage because most of the players are home based.

The France-based duo of Metz's Razak Omotoyossi and Stephan Sessegnon of Paris Saint-Germain, plus the highly rated youngster Mohamed Aoudou, will not only provide inspiration for Benin but also the elusive goals that have been missing in the past. With the experience of players such as Seidath Tchomogo, who has 34 caps, Mouritala Ogunbiyi with 32, and Jocelyn Ahoueya (43), Benin go to the match with a lot of confidence.

PLAYERS TO WATCH
Mozambique
Manuel 'Tico-Tico' Bucaune will be carrying a heavy burden of

not only needing to provide leadership, but also lead the offensive line in search of goals. The Jomo Cosmos striker has been the engine that has pushed the team during the qualifying struggle. He scored the single goal against Kenya in Maputo which later became decisive as the two sides fought for the continental finals spot. His experience will start to count when the Mambas take to the field on Tuesday.

Benin
Razak Omotoyossi has already scored 14 goals in 28 international appearances for the national team. The Squirrels will be placing all of their hopes on the striker, who scored a record eight goals in the 2010 qualifying campaign.

Malawi Flames burn Algeria

THE Fennecs of Algeria took on the Flames of Malawi in the African Nations Cup yesterday, and it was the southern Africans who surprisingly triumphed with a trio of unanswered goals against the World Cup bound Algerians.

The second game of the Angola tournament began with Algeria pushing forward and putting pressure on a nervous Malawian defence, forcing Swadick Sanudi to stay alert in the Flames goal, making his first save from a long range Abdelkader Ghezzal effort in the 4th minute.

Malawi coach Kinnah Phiri looked nervous on the sidelines, but his side soon found an opening on the counter attack, as a cross found a darting Russel Mwfulirwa whose header under pressure went just wide of Fawzi Chaouchi's goal.

In the 15th minute Algeria showed how dangerous they could be with a clever team move that saw Rafik Saifi crack a volley from just outside the box, but an alert Sanudi saved the ball well. Less than a minute later it was Russel who scored the opening goal of the game, as a mix up between Algerian keeper Chaouchi and Madjid Bougherra forced the latter to blast his clearance onto a Malawi player before Russel slotted into the back of the net.

Algeria attempted to respond quickly, but Saifi wasted a chance when he found himself one on one with the Malawi keeper, hitting his lob over the bar. The passing of the Malawians improved over time, with confident strides forward becoming more frequent.

A disappointingly empty sta-

dium produced little in terms of atmosphere, with a few drums and vuvuzelas filling the air as Malawi built on their lead, scoring a surprising second with a fine header from Elvis Kafoteka after Algeria were slow to react to a short corner.

The second half saw Malawi looking increasingly confident on the ball, with players like Josephy Kamwendo attempting to create more up front. Sloppy defending from Algeria allowed Malawi to score a third, as a scramble in the box saw Russel hit the post before Dave Banda received the ball and slotted into the bottom corner of the goal, getting injured in the process after a fierce tackle from an Algerian defender.

The Algerians went into this tournament expecting little and aiming only to get out of the

group, but they were not looking like the same side that guaranteed a spot in the World Cup after a hard fought play-off against Egypt.

In the 54th minute it looked like Algeria would pull one back with a header from Ghezzal, but Flames keeper Sanudi did extremely well to stretch and tip the ball out for a corner before the Serie A based player could redirect it towards goal.

Malawi defended well to keep Algeria from getting on the score sheet, and at the end of 90 minutes it was the Flames of Malawi who found themselves with three points in the bag after an impressive 3-0 win. Considering the fact that Malawi's best result in the competition was a 2-2 draw with Nigeria, this is a wonderful win for a deserving Malawi side.

CAN 2010 ANGOLA **2010 AFRICAN CUP OF NATIONS**

Super Eagles ready to soar



By Ismaila Lere

ALL is now set for today's crunch Group C match between African champions Egypt and continental power house, Nigeria at the ongoing African Cup of Nations in Angola.

The Super Eagles have not lost to the Pharaohs since 1963 when Nigeria made their debut appearance in the African Cup of Nations, Egypt taught the Eagles a footballing lesson which ended 6-3. Since then, the two countries have played six times with Nigeria nicking three wins and three draws.

The last time they played at this level was sixteen years ago in Tunisia where their last game in the group ended scoreless with the Nigerians going on to lift that year's tournament.

Egypt will hope they can nick their first victory against Nigeria in 47 years as the Pharaohs begin their title defence. Egypt have won the prestigious African Cup of Nations a record six times and have always been made up of home-based stars.

The present squad will not be much different and Nigeria will come up against a team that is very comfortable playing with each other having been together under Hassan Shehata for over six years.

Many expect that narrowly missing out on qualifying for the World Cup in June will spur the Pharaohs to achieve a third consecutive victory in Angola.

They will be expected by their teeming fans to make up for the heartbreak that ensured that Africa's most successful football nation missed out on the biggest football event to be hosted on the continent by bringing home the title as a consolation prize.

To say the least, the match is going to be cagey as the two countries know each other well from playing continental club competitions annually.

The north Africans will be foxy as usual and will try to win the match by frustrating the Eagles while the Nigerians will try to impose their physical style of play on the game.

It sure will make for a spectacular game of football, an encounter one would have expected in the knockout stages of the tournament.

Playing in the 35,000-seater Benguela stadium will be a great opening to the group where both teams will aim to establish their dominance early enough.

TEAM NEWS

Egypt

Egypt have come to this tournament without the services of their star midfielder Mohamed Aboutreika who is nursing an injury. It will be interesting to see how Shehata works with a new creative midfielder who can fill the shoes of the influential Al Ahly strongman. Also missing are Mohamed Barakat, Mohamed Homus (scorer of the lone goal victory over Italy at the Confederations Cup) and Amr Zaki. Dortmund striker Mohamed Zidan is rearing to start from where he left off in Ghana 2008 when he scored a brace in the 4-2 demolition of Cameroon in the group's opening game.

Nigeria

Nigeria will be banking on the return to fitness of strikers Yakubu Ayegbeni and Obafemi Martins as well as the recovery of Osaze Odemwingie from a sore throat during camping in Durban.



NWANKWO Kanu... can he lead the Eagles to glory in Angola?

Nigeria



Egypt



HEAD2HEAD

MARTINS V ZIDAN

NIGERIA

| | | |
|---------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Dec 11, 1991 | Date of Birth | Oct. 28 1984 |
| Lagos | Place of Birth | Port Said |
| 5ft, 7in | Height | 5ft, 9in |
| 70kg | Weight | 70kg |
| Forward | Position | Forward |
| 28 | Int'l Caps | 28 |
| 16 | Int'l Goals | 7 |
| June 5, 2004 | Int'l Debut | Sept. 2, 2006 |
| VfL Wolfsburg | Current Club | Borussia Dortmund |
| 18 | Games Played | 15 |
| 5 | Goals | 2 |
| 0 | Assists | 2 |

EGYPT

● Mohamed Zidan is the hope of Egypt, and now that their live wire Mohamed Aboutreika is out due to injury, and with the absence of Amr Zaki and Mido.

Strengths: Great technique, silky skills and tenacity in front of goal. Weaknesses: Individualistic style had proved a difficult puzzle to solve for many coaches.

● Obafemi Martins is a strong contender for the top goal scorer's crown.

Strengths: Blistering pace and possesses a furious shot. Weaknesses: Tendency to drift in and out of games.

BY ISMAILA LERE

THE TUESDAY COLUMN

Sanusi Abubakar

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On conspiracism, Yar'adua and other not-so-funny claims

It is heartened that my sister and colleague on the Trust Editorial Board, Aisha, responded in a very scholarly way to my aside on the tendency for us in this part of the country to revert to conspiracy theories whenever we are confronted with events we find difficult to comprehend. Unlike many contributors who believe they must employ insults to make their points, she was civil and thorough. Which goes to show that we can disagree without resorting to invectives. However, despite taking her time to state her position, I am yet to be convinced. My main problem is: even if I were to accept the evidence she cited, a critical question still remains. Why would the Americans drug a young Nigerian, stage an airline bombing attempt just to embarrass us? Why us? What is so special about us? Let us stop fooling ourselves; we are not that special.

This is like the previous claim that someone in Christendom or Zionist Israel had laced the anti-polio vaccine to make us northerners sterile. We seem obsessed with this idea that the West is out to get us as if we represent the main threat to anybody. Do we need to be reminded that we have actually failed as a political and economic entity? We cannot offer education, health, food, water, jobs or housing to our talakawa, yet we keep talking as if it is someone's fault? Now, faced with a difficult to explain phenomenon, we resort to blaming someone else.

Like many people, we chose conspiracy theories because they are comforting simplifications of complex realities. Besides this epistemic foundation, there is also a tendency to prefer information that confirms our preconceptions or postulations, without regards to whether it is true or not. Repeated consistently within a group, these preferred theories reinforce perceptions and attitudes by selectively collecting new evidence that confirms what we want to believe, and by interpreting evidence in a biased way.

Simplicity and communal reinforcement works both for true and false concepts or ideas. As someone pointed out, "the fact that many people in a given community believe a certain thing is not indicative of its truth or falsehood, for just as a false concept or idea can be accepted as fact in a community via communal reinforcement, so can a true concept or idea".

So how do we differentiate? Besides accepted scholarly methods we can avail ourselves of basic police practice. When a crime is committed and detectives are trying to solve it they ask certain basic questions. "Who has the motive, the means and the opportunity?" How did someone drag this kid to Ghana, kept him for some weeks, drug him and convince him to fly to Lagos and Amsterdam, and on to Detroit, under the influence, successfully avoiding detection at all these places, ensure the bomb did not explode fully, and then captured him just on time? Finally, what does America, or anyone else, stand to gain by doing this to us? Or, for that matter, what do they gain by targeting northern Nigerian fertility by lacing polio vaccines as is popularly claimed? Yes, there is still a lot we don't know about the Faruk Mutallab saga, but I believe that a proper trail, not conspiratorial speculations, will bring out the facts.

Speculating on the motives and actions of secretive groups or some hostile nations, interesting as that may be, cannot replace conclusive evidence provided by historical accounts, scholarly materials and current, accurate media reports. It is not the machinations of the Jews, Freemasons, *Illuminati*, or International Communism that ultimately determine the fate of this world but social forces and collective struggles. Bruce Cummings got it right when he said "...if conspiracies exist, they rarely move history; they make a difference at the margins from time to time, but with the unforeseen consequences of logic outside the control of their authors: and this is what is

wrong with 'conspiracy theory.' History is moved by the broad forces and large structures of human collectivities."

To my mind I still believe we have to find a solution to this habit of sending children away from their parents, some at 8 years or even younger, for whatever reason, to school abroad or to *tsangayas*. We should not keep on blaming others.

So what has Yar'adua got to do with it?

Let us take a recent example of a conspiracy and see whether it fits into what we are saying. It is a rather simple example, I must admit, but an important one nevertheless. President Yar'adua left for Saudi Arabia over 50 days ago, for routine medicals. Besides wishing him quick recovery I did not comment on his absence because, frankly I did not see the point. He should come and sing a budget, preside over FEC weekly contract award meetings? Of what significance are those to the life of the struggling masses? In the beginning there was a conspiracy of silence about his condition. Who are we to demand to be told anything? Then came a few weeks of disinformation; that he is recovering and will soon be back. And then they tried to insult our intelligence by insisting that he can govern forever from anywhere. Now, even the conspirators don't know what to say anymore. The truth is they were not very good at conspiracy. In any case, even if they succeed in getting their way it will not be because they are any good in manipulations and machinations, but because we would have abdicated our responsibilities as citizens of a free democracy. It will be a failure of our institutions and social forces, not the supremacy of conspiracy as a method or as an explanatory framework. The next few weeks will be really interesting as it is very clear there is no way we can continue with this silence about the fate of the President in the face of some constitutional and political implications. (No more false claims please. Where is he? How is he? Can he govern? Nigeria is not some banana republic; the nonsense has gone far enough.)

... And 300 false claimants for Pfizer's million \$\$

And now, to Kano. Some months ago I had to raise an alarm in this column regarding certain people who I said were planning to steal or squander part of the multi-million dollar settlement in respect of the experimental anti-meningitis drug, Trovan, reached between the manufacturers, Pfizer, and the Kano State government. I stated then that some people were lining up to falsely claim that they were victims, so as to get a share of whatever was subsequently offered. I was called names by some so-called journalists for rising what they said was a false alarm. Now the truth is out. Following the mutually agreed settlement, Pfizer and Kano State Government set up a trust fund to compensate victims of the clinical trial. According to a recent NTA News Report, the Executive Secretary of the Fund, David Odiwo, says that now DNA test is inevitable. Approximately 200 people actually took part in that clinical trial. As of last week, there were over 500 people claiming to have taken part. To make the process transparent and scientific, DNA test is now one of the conditions that must be satisfied. Luckily, Pfizer kept DNA samples for all those who were involved in the clinical trials.

We allowed some people to "capture" the president, keep information away from us, and do what they did. They got away with it, and will get away with worse if we don't sit up. Those in Kano that conspired to get compensations they are not entitled to could only have succeeded if Pfizer had no records or DNA samples or if they had not insisted on a joint Trust Fund Secretariat and credible trustees. In each instance, we should focus on our strengths and weaknesses, actions and omissions, and not on some groups trying to bring us down.

“Simplicity and communal reinforcement works both for true and false concepts or ideas. As someone pointed out, “the fact that many people in a given community believe a certain thing is not indicative of its truth or falsehood”

SPORTS REPORT



ABEDI Pele

Abedi Pele warns Ghana

Abedi Pele has warned Ghana not to consider the three team system they now have to deal with as an advantage after Togo's pull out from the Nations Cup.

The three-time African Player of the Year tells KickOffGhana.com of his sadness at the Togolese incidents but says the opening game in which Mali and Angola drew 4-4 in a thrilling affair would have gone a long way to focus the attention on the football.

"What happened to the Togolese was painful but the opening game reminded us again what the Nations Cup is about: the colour, the quality of football and the thrills it provides", he said.

"After this Ghana must simply focus on playing and doing well. Three teams in a group can be more dangerous than four before when you make a mistake you don't have an opportunity to correct it. So for Ghana the margin for error is even smaller now."



EMMANUEL Adebayor

Togo will be disqualified - CAF

The latest twist in the on-going saga in Angola is that Togo will be disqualified from the African Nations Cup finals as they did not show up for yesterday's Group B African Nations Cup match against Ghana in Cabinda.

Togo's opponents Ghana were told to proceed as if the match, scheduled to kick off was still going ahead, even though Togo left Angola on Sunday evening to return home following the deadly attack on their team bus last week.

"We have not heard anything official from them. They have never officially told us they are not going to play or they are going to play. We are only hearing from them in the media," a senior CAF official told Reuters earlier yesterday.

"The referee has been ordered to start the match and if Togo are not there, then they will be declared to have withdrawn and be disqualified."

Yesterday's Group B match in Cabinda was scheduled as the second part of a double header. Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast play the first match at the new Chazi Stadium.