

COMP
COPY

LIB

DAILY TRUST



Trust Is A Burden

www.dailytrust.com

TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 2009

VOL. 21 NO. 52

RABI'UL THANI 26, 1430 AH

N100

INSIDE



Where are the donkeys?

- PAGES 28&29



Why Vaswanis were deported - EFCC

- PAGE 3



Fuel scarcity: Yar'adua blames Fashola, tanker drivers

The Presidency yesterday blamed the fuel scarcity in some parts of the country on the face-off between the Lagos State Government and tanker drivers.

-Page 3

Abductors of Canadian say she is ill

-Page 2

N70bn textile fund on course - FG

-Page 27

FG shortlists Gazprom, 14 others for gas devt

-Page 25

DAILYTRUST STOCK INDEX

As at Monday, April 20

TOP GAINERS

Symbol	Price(N)	Gain
AP	84.50	+3.96
CAP	34.00	+1.23
Guinness	89.20	+1.10

TOP LOSERS

Symbol	Price(N)	Loss
UAC-PROP	17.41	-0.75
WAPCO	17.12	-0.68
ASHAKA	8.10	-0.40

Cap. N4,521,004,879,352.60

NAIRA EXCHANGE RATE

	Selling	Buying
EURO	210	208
POUND	262	260
DOLLAR	181	179

Source: B.A.T Bureau de Change, Lagos.

Media Trust titles wear new look

Media Trust Limited, publishers of *Daily Trust*, *Weekly Trust*, *Sunday Trust* and *Aminiya* is pleased to announce to its readers that we are offering crisp new look newspapers as from the 22nd of April 2009. This follows months of intensive work designed to give our loyal readers better looking papers that will be more pleasing to the eye and with improved content. We hope to provide our readers with better pictures and graphics that will make reading real fun. Our readers will also find new specialised pages including a richer, fuller and more colourful sports reporting. Readers of *Weekly Trust*, our Saturday edition will be treated to a glossy magazine insert on style, fashion and the latest society events like weddings, turbanings and anniversaries. With all these changes and to continue to serve readers better in the face of the rising cost of doing business, *Daily Trust* will from the 22nd of April be sold at 150 Naira which is the price of most other daily newspapers. *Weekly Trust* and *Sunday Trust*

will both be at 200 Naira as from the weekend of 25th April 2009. As a reward to our loyal subscribers Media Trust is offering them the unprecedented package of continuing to enjoy the Trust newspapers at the old price. This means that any individual or company who subscribes to any of the titles for a minimum of 1 year will have it delivered to his address at no extra cost at the price of 100 Naira for *Daily Trust* and 150 Naira each for *Weekly Trust* and *Sunday Trust* respectively. At the start the offer is limited to residents of Abuja, Lagos and Kaduna. Kano, Maiduguri, Port Harcourt and other cities will follow soon. Those interested in this fantastic offer in the 3 initial cities should text YES to the number provided against their respective cities.

Abuja - 08052100114
 Kaduna - 08037873505
 Lagos - 08059100270

SIGNED: MANAGEMENT OF MEDIA TRUST LIMITED

Yar'adua stops 2011 campaigns

• Obasanjo loses BOT chair monopoly

Campaigns for re-election in 2011 which have been noisily mounted in recent weeks for President Umaru Yar'adua and several governors across the country ran into a roadblock yesterday when Yar'adua asked all political aspirants in the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to discontinue them forthwith. He urged PDP's state governors and other officials to exercise restraint with regards to such campaigns in order to avoid a distraction.

Yar'adua spoke yesterday at the Eagle Square in Abuja, venue of the PDP's Special National Convention summoned to amend some aspects of the party's constitution. The 4,000 delegates at the convention easily ratified the amendment to strip former president Olusegun

By Suleiman Bisalla & Muideen Olaniyi

Obasanjo of virtual sole ownership of the Board of Trustees chairman, which he got by virtue of a last-minute amendment to the party's constitution which he rammed through a convention in December 2006. Obasanjo did not show up at yesterday's special convention.

Speaking on the 2011 campaigns, Yar'adua said focusing on them now would affect governance at all levels, thereby denying the people the much needed dividends of democracy. He asked all aspirants to wait until the middle of next year when the party national leadership will roll out a time-table for the conduct of primaries.

Cont. on Pg. 5



President Umaru Yar'adua casting his vote at the PDP convention in Abuja yesterday.

Reading is Fun!



REPACKAGED

Grab a Copy Tomorrow

1. Ch...
Denve...
the ball...
of Davie...
Orleans...
One of...
Confere...
durino th

NEWS

Police arrest 28 thugs in Katsina

From Lawal Ibrahim, Katsina

The Katsina State police command has arrested 28 suspected thugs within the past two days. Briefing newsmen, the state commissioner of police, Mr Dan Azumi Doma disclosed that the suspects were arrested at various locations in Sabuwar Unguwa, Kofar Marusa, Kofar Kaura, Gafai, Filin Samji and Tayoyi quarters in Katsina metropolis. He said the suspects were among those harassing people and disturbing the peace of the state. The commissioner who attributed the success to various calls from within the state said the police recovered various drugs and dangerous weapons from the thugs. While assuring to charge them to court for prosecution, Doma charged the judiciary to impose stiffer penalties on any of them found guilty to serve as deterrent to others.

Shagari, IBB condole Bafarawa

From Rakiya A. Muhammad, Sokoto

Former presidents Shehu Shagari and Ibrahim Babangida as well as the former Prime Minister of the Niger Republic, Alhaji Shehu Amodu have consoled former Governor of Sokoto State, Alhaji Attahiru Dalhatu Bafarawa over the death of his father, Alhaji Dalhatu Usman. Alhaji Dalhatu died Saturday after a protracted illness. Speaking yesterday at the residence of the deceased, the two former presidents described the death as a great loss not only to the family but to the entire country. They prayed Allah to grant him *Aljannat Firdausi* and his family the fortitude to bear the loss. Among other dignitaries that consoled the family were the former governors of Kaduna, Alhaji Ahmed Muhammad Makarfi, Zamfara, Alhaji Ahmad Sani Yariman Bakura and Niger, Abdulkadir Kure. Also represented was the Emir of Kano, Alhaji Ado Bayero who sent his son and *Hakimin Tsakar Gida*, Alhaji Aminu Ado Bayero.

Petrol sells for N120 per litre in Sokoto

From Rakiya A. Muhammad, Sokoto

Residents of Sokoto have continued to groan under the effect of fuel scarcity as the commodity now sells for about N120 per litre in most of the independent filling stations in the metropolis. A 5-litre gallon of petrol goes for about N600 at the black market while in most of the major marketers' filling stations where petrol is sold at the N65 government approved pump price, the product is not available. Also, very long queues of vehicles characterize the few major filling stations where the commodity is available and still sell a litre of petrol for N 65. At the NNPC Mega station, many motorists say they pass the night on the long queues with the hope that they would get to buy the commodity. The lingering fuel scarcity has forced some motorists in the metropolis to dump their cars and resort to the use of commercial vehicles. The fuel situation has also resulted in hike in the cost of transportation. For instance Commercial motorcycle operators now take N50 for a distance that was hitherto N30 while those which were N50 are now between N70 and N100.

Girl commits suicide over forced marriage

From Lawal Ibrahim, Katsina

A 19-year old girl, Asma'u Ibrahim of Kwado village near Katsina metropolis yesterday killed herself over her parent's attempt to force her into marrying someone she did not like. Asma'u hanged herself with a veil in their family compound after all the family members had gone to sleep. A source close to the family told our correspondent that the girl resisted attempts by her parents to force her into the marriage and even threatened to kill herself should the parents continue with their plan. The source said barely a few hours after the parents fixed a date of her marriage in a ceremony conducted at the family house, the girl made good her threat and hanged herself. The state commissioner of police, Mr Dan Azumi Doma who confirmed the incident to Daily Trust described the situation as unfortunate and said he hoped it would serve as a lesson to other parents who want to force their children into marriage.



Eighty-three-year-old blind gunman, Bala Joji, sits in front of guns he sold to criminals. He was paraded in Kano by foremost thief catcher, Ali Kwara. Pic: Ja'afar Ja'afar

Abductors of Canadian say she is ill

Mrs Julie Ann Mulligan, the 45 year old Canadian that was kidnapped in Kaduna last Thursday is in poor health condition and needs medication, her abductors said yesterday.

In a telephone conversation with a group of journalists, one of the kidnappers said unless the ransom was paid, Mrs Mulligan would not regain her freedom. According to him, the kidnappers were not the ones that reached the

From Ibraheem Musa, Kaduna

N20 million ransom, saying "it is what you people negotiated".

The kidnappers had collected Moses Kadeer's GSM phone and had been reaching out with it since the incident occurred. When the reporters called Kadeer's line, one of the kidnappers asked, "have you people organized

the money?" When he realized that the conversation was not going to the direction of ransom, the abductor switched off. When the reporters called back, he retorted; "you are not serious and I need a serious person to talk to."

Pressed further, the abductor angrily said; "I don't need those questions," adding; "what

I need is the money." When asked to mention the ransom amount, he asked the interviewers to "ask people that you collected the number from."

Meanwhile, the management of Kenfeli Hotel, the place where Mrs Mulligan allegedly lodged, has denied that the Canadian was their guest. Mr Felix Ojeka, the operations manager showed reporters the list of guests that in the hotel from Wednesday to Friday. Also, the Rotary club had no booking with the hotel.

AFAN crisis: Nyako, Shettima, Adamu face contempt charges

By Sunday Ejike Benjamin

Governor Murtala Nyako of Adamawa State, Defence Minister Dr. Shettima Mustapha and former governor of Nasarawa State, Dr. Abdullahi Adamu were yesterday slammed with contempt charges before an Abuja High Court for convening a meeting of the All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN) in spite of a court order restraining them from doing so.

The legal battle over the leadership of the farmers association took a different dimension yesterday when counsel to AFAN, I. K. Anyalewechi, approached the court with form 119,

being notice for the trio and a vice president of the association, Prince Ike Ubaka, to show why they should not be committed to prison for contempt of the court. Also before the court is a motion by AFAN in which the association prayed the court for an order granting leave to the association to join Nyako, Mustapha and Adamu as defendants in the case. The court headed by Justice Adebukola Abimbola Banjoko, had on March 6, 2009 made an order restraining the defendants from holding a meeting of the farmers association on March 7, 2009

in Abuja as advertised in the media.

The plaintiff said Ubaka, working together with Nyako and the Defence Minister, who are members of AFAN's Board of Trustees reconvened and went ahead to hold the meeting at Nyako's house.

At the said meeting, former governor Adamu was selected as the ad-hoc National President of AFAN while Ubaka was also picked as one of the association's vice president. This, the association said, infracts its constitution because it was done without the consent of the present

national president, Chief Femi Coker, who is responsible for convening such a meeting.

The plaintiff averred that Nyako and Shettima have been using Ubaka and former governor Adamu to subvert and destabilize the farmers association and the authority of the court.

Shettima is accused of high-handedness, abuse of office as vice president of AFAN, alleging that he refused to resign his position as the association's vice president after his appointment as Minister of Defence. Consequently, they said he now runs the affairs of the association from Abuja.

83-yr-old blind gunman submits self to Ali Kwara

An 83-year-old gunman, Bala Joji, has submitted himself to crime buster, Ali Kwara as he got wind that Kwara had perfected plans of arresting him in connection with some weapons he sold to criminals. Arraigning the octogenarian before newsmen in Kano yesterday, Kwara revealed that it was

From Jaafar Jaafar, Kano

the second time Malam Joji entered his net, saying he was later discharged the first time he arrested and handed him over to the police. The crime buster stated further that some robbers he apprehended recently linked him up to Joji, and on getting wind of the development, the old

gunrunner submitted himself to Ali Kwara. Kwara revealed that when the man came to his Bauchi residence, he demanded for pen and paper to write the confession. While giving up the illicit trade, Kwara said the blind arms dealer wrote the long list of those he sold guns to and where they can be traced.

According to Ali Kwara,

most of the guns were confiscated, alongside the bearers, in Adamawa, Taraba and Plateau States.

Revealing the methods he applied in arresting the robbers and the arm dealers, Alhaji Kwara added that he keeps the information he coughed out from the robbers to arrest the remaining ones at large.

Speaking to our reporter,

Joji revealed that he had been in the arms deal for about 25 years and despite the fact that he had been into the police net on several occasions he was never convicted by any court. "I lost sight about 10 years ago and I have been a gunman for about 25 years now. I can tell you the make, quality and value of any gun I touched. You

know the blind assess things by texture," he said.

Joji however alleged that the major source of his arms was the police in the state operates.

The Taraba-born arm dealer then revealed that he could not tell the enormity of the amount of guns he sold to robbers, ethnic warriors and other people who use guns for self-defence.

NEWS



Chief DSP Alamesegha (right) and Malam Danladi Bako during the PDP Convention at the Eagle Square, Abuja, yesterday. Pic: State House

'Why Vaswanis were deported'

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) yesterday said the Vaswani Brothers were deported finally from Nigeria for engaging in acts which constitute great threat to the economy of the country.

Chairman of the commission, Mrs. Farida Waziri, at a joint press briefing with the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) in Abuja, said the Vaswani Brothers Sunil, Harish and Mahesh whose deportation order was earlier revoked in anticipation that they have changed their characters for the better were finally deported because there were no remarkable changes in them as they continued to engage in fraudulent business transactions capable of plunging the economy into problems. She said the EFCC's recommendation for the final deportation of the Brothers was approved by the president.

The Vaswani brothers who were Indians also have the citizenship of Britain. She said 21 top officials of the Stallion Group, which belong to the Vaswanis, were repatriated on April 18th 2009 while another 7 were expected to be repatriated yesterday April 20th 2009. "These officials are banned from Nigeria for a period of 5 years," she said.

The EFCC Chairman said the NIS would ensure that the Brothers did not sneak back to Nigeria under assumed identities or pseudonyms. She said investigations into the case of the Vaswanis revealed that a total of nine vessels were involved in the importation of their rice and three namely MV Golden, MV Luckyfield and MV Goldmar were involved in the evasion of duty through manipulation of documents.

She said the documents of the vessels were signed by some officials of the Nigeria Customs Service before they dock in Nigerian ports to correspond with Federal Government's duty waiver for rice imports that lasted between May 7th and 31st October 2008. She said while MV Golden was expected to arrive Lagos and Port Harcourt on October 7th and October 30th 2008 respectively had all her accompanying documents including cargo manifest, ship's inward report, cargo stowage plan, Bill of Laden, Crew List, Port of call list and summary of discrepancies were stamped and signed by the officer in-charge of report seat of the Nigeria Customs Service, Area 1, Port Harcourt on September 26th 2008.

The Chairman said MV Luckyfield which was expected to arrive in Lagos and Port Harcourt on September 31st 2008 and October 25th 2008 respectively had all her accompanying docu-

ments stamped and on September 26th 2008 while the vessel arrived on November 9th 2008. She said MV Goldmar which was expected in Lagos and Port Harcourt on September 29th and October 12th 2008 respectively arrived on November 8th 2008 while all her accompanying documents were stamped and signed on November 8th 2008 by the officer in charge of Report Seat of Customs, Area 1 Port Harcourt.

She said another two vessels, MV Tolmi and MV Sanye that imported rice for M/S Popular Foods Ltd and arrived after the waiver period have dispute involving the price of rice in the international market with which the import duty was calculated by the Customs. She said while the importers claimed that the price was expected to be US\$450.00 per ton of parboiled rice, the Customs insisted on US\$850.00. The vessels were allowed to discharge in Apapa Port after the importers issued bank guarantee to cover the short fall of the import duty.

"This is a clear case of 'front loading' to evade duty on the rice consignments. A total of about N2.5 billion duty was evaded. This amount to criminal conspiracy and fraudulent evasion of duty punishable under section 164(a) and (b) of Customs and Excise Management Act CAP C45 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004 as well as Tax Evasion and the consequent Money Laundering Liability under the Money Laundering Prohibition Act 2004. The Directors of the company and some Customs Officers involved will be prosecuted for these offences," Waziri said.

She said the EFCC would ascertain the status of their companies in the Corporate Affairs Commission and failure to meet required expectations, the companies risk closure. She the N4 billion which the Brothers refused to pay government and the N2.5 billion duties on rice would be claimed by the government either through their monies in the banks or their assets.

The Comptroller of the NIS Chukwurah Joseph Udeh said the Minister of Interior signed the deportation of the Vaswanis and the NIS executed it. He said all the entry points into Nigeria and Missions were informed about the deportation.

"No matter how they disguise, we have their details in our computers systems, they cannot come back to the country. The 21 officials left Nigeria on Saturday to Dubai via Qatar airline while the rest were expected to be repatriated yesterday," he said.

...EFCC, FG violate court orders - Vaswanis

The Vaswani Brothers; Sunil, Harish and Mahesh owners of the Stallion Group of the Companies yesterday said their purported deportation along with 28 other expatriate employees by the Federal Government and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) violated Court Orders and due process.

A statement by Alhaji Tajudeen Olalere; one of the senior Nigerian Executive Directors of the Company said the purported action of the government was not only precipitated but also raised several questions on the adherence to due process.

The statement said "nobody expected such a harsh action by a

due process government when the matter is being heard by a competent court of law.

The company accused the EFCC of severally violating the order given upon an ex-parte motion dated 24th day of March, 2009, granted by Justice Dan Abutu.

The statement stated that as a small industrialists, it had provided bank guarantees as demanded by Customs pending the determination in dispute.

It added that it had no option but to leave these matters in the

Fuel scarcity: Yar'adua blames Fashola, tanker drivers

By AbdulFattah Olajide

The Presidency yesterday blamed the lingering fuel scarcity in some parts of the country on the face-off between the Lagos State government and tanker drivers, saying the country has enough supply of PMS (petrol) to meet its demand. Speaking on the fuel scarcity situation in Abuja, the Special Adviser to President Umaru Musa Yar'adua on Media and Publicity, Mr. Olusegun Adeniyi said "the president at the weekend met with the ministers of finance and petroleum as well as the Group Managing Director of the NNPC on the fuel scarcity, and he was assured the nation currently has enough supply of PMS to meet demand and that the fuel scarcity currently being experienced in some parts of the country arose as a result of the problem between tanker drivers and Lagos State government."

The fuel scarcity which has been lingering in Abuja and its environs since two weeks ago, did not hit Lagos until last Saturday when tanker drivers suspended the loading of petroleum products in Lagos to protest the arrest of four of their colleagues and the seizure by the Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA) officials of the 25 tankers allegedly parked illegally at Toyota

Bus Stop along Oshodi-Apapa Expressway for two days.

LASTMA officials had last Friday reportedly seized the trucks which allegedly blocked the service lane of the Expressway. Petroleum marketers had earlier suspended fuel importation to compel the Federal Government to meet their demand for N50bn Petroleum Support Fund.

The presidential spokesman said the president has mandated Vice President Goodluck Jonathan to meet with the ministers of finance and petroleum as well as the group managing director of the NNPC to find ways of checkmating the antics of the marketers who he said were out to blackmail government into paying questionable sums of money running into billions of Naira by refusing to import.

On the tanker drivers issue, Adeniyi said President Yar'adua was billed to meet with Governor Babatunde Fashola last night with a view to resolving the matter amicably. "The president is having a meeting tonight (yesterday) with the Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babatunde Fashola, to find out what the problems are and how to resolve them in the interest of all Nigerians", he stated.

Market gains N42bn

By Kayode Ekundayo, Lagos

Trading activities on the floor of the Nigerian stock exchange appreciated strongly with all share index and market capitalisation grow by 0.96 per cent.

Specifically, market capitalisation gained N42.290 billion to close at N4.564 trillion against last trading day of N4.521 trillion.

All share index also rose by 191.34 points to close at 20,174.43 against the previous day dealings of 19,983.09 points.

In all a total of 217,112 million shares worth N1.602 billion exchanged in 5,593 deals.

As usual, banking sub sector led other sub sectors with 142,774 million shares worth N1.166 billion exchanged in 2,783 deals were traded.

Shares of Guaranty Trust Bank drive the sector with a total of 50,642 million shares worth N508,465 million in 299 deals.

Insurance sub sector followed with 20,092 million

shares worth N15.890 million in 397 deals. Activities in the shares of AIICO Insurance drive the sector with 4,601 million shares worth N4.584 million in 162 deals

However, Africa Petroleum led others with N3.96 per share gain to close at N84.50 per share, CAP N1.23 to close at N34.00 per share, Guinness N1.10 to close at N89.20 per share.

On the osers' side, WAPCO led others with a loss of N0.68 to close at N17.12 per share, Ashakachem N0.40 to close at N8.10 per share, Union Dicon N0.39 to close at N8.10 per share.

Meanwhile, last week the market was buoyed by significant gains on the share prices of blue chip companies as reflected through the total market capitalization listed equities with appreciation by N16.04 billion.

hands of the court, in the belief that the cause of justice will be served and the government will, upon the outcome of the due process reverse the unfortunate line of action it has taken.

The company expressed full confidence in the Federal Government and the judicial process in the country, adding that that was the reason the group has invested heavily into many industries in Nigeria.

"We have a clean record for the past 40 years of business operations in Nigeria and other countries. And till date no single allegation of any wrongdoing has ever been proven," the statement added.

PDP SPECIAL NATIONAL CONVENTION

Double delegation from Plateau

At the Plateau State pavilion, some distance away from the VIP stand, there was a feud that nearly resulted in a boxing bout between two factions of the PDP but for the intervention of the FCT police commissioner, Mr. Haruna John. Governor Jonah Jang had taken possession of the pavilion with over a hundred state delegates including the party's machinery led by the chairman Prof. Dakum Shown when the rival faction led by Chief Emmanuel Mangni arrived to take their seats as well. "None for you," the Shown faction told them.

Members of both factions were, somehow, accredited to attend the convention. However, as expected, the Mangni faction met a stiff resistance which resulted in hot exchange that drew the attention of nearly the entire square.

By Suleimen M. Bisalla & Muideen Olaniyi

But the police commissioner intervened quietly and escorted Mangni and his team to another pavilion facing the VIP from a distance to prevent the situation from deteriorating. Both camps claimed to have voted when *Daily Trust* sought to know how they went, after all.

"The people of Plateau State are happy that we have come on board to stabilise the party, make it all inclusive and move it forward," Mangni told *Daily Trust*. Prof. Shown replied: "I feel sorry that he had to be escorted by the police."

However, former Governor Joshua Dariye said he hopes to unite the two warring factions.

Bode George causes stir at Ondo stand

A minor fracas temporarily disrupted the peace hanging over the Ondo State pavilion at the Eagle Square, venue of the PDP convention yesterday. *Daily Trust* gathered that the fight was occasioned by the visit of the former Deputy National Chairman of the PDP, Chief Olabode George to the pavilion, waving hands and hoping to acknowledge cheers. It turned out the other way. The rowdiness and shouting bouts that greeted him appeared to suggest that he was not expected, or more succinctly put, he was wanted.

It took the intervention of PDP's National Youth Leader, Otunba Muyiwa Collins and the National Legal Adviser, Olusola Oke to bring the delegates under control. But the Oyo State governor, Adebayo Alao Akala finally brought smiles to the faces of the seeming protesters against the presence of the former national officer when he whisked him away as he (Akala) walked round the venue with groups of merry making party members.

New faces

The special national convention also witnessed the attendance of newly baptised members of the party. Conspicuous among them were the governor of Bauchi State, Malam Isa Yuguda, Zamafara State Govern-

nor Mamuda Aliyu Shinkafi and the former governor of Plateau State, Chief Joshua Dariye.

Yuguda who decamped to the PDP from his former party, the ANPP, last week, went round the entire pavilions to acknowledge welcome-back-cheers from his new allies. He told *Daily Trust* he was only "back home." However, unlike Yuguda, Shinkafi was attending the PDP convention for the first time yesterday. But he obviously looked well adjusted in the party he joined in January. Both men are being challenged in court by their former party to relinquish the seats, saying they don't belong to the PDP.

Other attractions

The carnival-like convention was not without some other hiccups including the presence of urchins who were moving around the venue. People were singing and dancing in and around the venue of the convention while some even used the occasion to campaign by displaying pictures of President Umaru Musa Yar'adua, Governor Isa Yuguda of Bauchi State, Governor Godswill Akpabio of Akwa Ibom State and many others.

The event also witnessed severe rowdiness at the entry point and the seizure of the camera of Lagos Television (LTV) by security personnel.



A young man taking some beating from security men at the PDP Special National Convention in Abuja. Pic: Felix Onigbinde.



A journalist being rough-handled by security officers at the convention venue in Abuja.



A suspected pickpocket being dealt with by some men at Eagle Square, Abuja. Pic: Felix Onigbinde.



Security officer beating some men at the PDP Special National Convention in Abuja. Pic: Felix Onigbinde.



A civil defence officer preventing a delegate from entering the venue of the convention. Pic: Felix Onigbinde.

NEWS

Yar'adua stops 2011 campaigns

Continued from Page 1

He said the burden of responsibility and trust placed on the PDP by the people is quite heavy and urged the party functionaries at various levels to rise to the occasion and discharge their responsibility. He said the task requires discipline and demonstration of a great sense of responsibility as a political party.

"Time will come when the national leadership of the party, the National Working Committee (NWC) and the National Executive Committee (NEC) will come out with the timetable and programme for party nomination for all those aspiring to various offices in 2011. But this time has not yet come," Yar'adua said.

He added, "I am certain that the NWC and NEC will do this sometime in or after the middle of next year and till then we must be disciplined enough to concentrate on our mandate. When the time comes, and when the party comes out with a clear programme and says these are the criteria and from this date aspirants to various offices can start to campaign and aspire for these offices, then that is the time for politics."

"Now for the PDP, it is not the time for politics of 2011. Until then, from now to that time it is the time for every PDP member holding position of responsibility to concentrate on discharging the burden that is on us. Virtually all PDP leaders have one responsibility or another to this nation. Apart from the Federal Government, the presidency, ministers, special advisers, special assistants, chairmen of board of parastatals, members of boards of parastatals, governors and commissioners and their executive councils, chairmen of the board of state parastatals, members of the boards, local government council chairmen, councilors and other supervisory councillors have a burden of responsibility to discharge to the people of this country.

"And we cannot afford at this time to be distracted from facing up and exerting ourselves in the discharge of these responsibilities. There is time for everything and we must be disciplined to do what is right in the right time and whatever our aspirations to wait the time that the party will blow the whistle.

"And I am certain, I am not the national chairman or among the members of the NWC, but I am certain that it cannot be earlier than the middle of next year or in fact the third quarter of 2010. So until then, let us all concentrate in exerting ourselves to carry out as responsibly as possible and as much as we can according to our various abilities the mandate and the trust placed on us by Nigerians."

Yar'adua also asked all the state governors to initiate the process of reforming their state Independent Electoral Commission (SIECs).

He said the amended version (white paper) of the report of the Justice Muhammed Lawal Uwais-led Electoral Reform Committee (ERC) will be sent to the National Assembly next week as an Executive bill for electoral reform.

He stressed the need to reform the country's electoral system at all levels to achieve a culture of credible elections, assuring Nigerians that his administration will not play politics with electoral reform.

"Let me assure all Nigerians that this administration is totally committed to electoral reform and we are not going to play politics with it. We are serious, we are prepared and we want to help this nation evolve a credible democratic culture in the process of election in this country.

"This is an issue for which no Nigerian should play politics with. It is sacred to our democracy and the administration is committed, the PDP is committed.

He lauded the delegates and the leadership of the PDP for their strict adherence to the provisions of the party constitution, particularly the process that led to the amendment of some controversial provisions in the party constitution. He advised other political parties to emulate the PDP and democratise their parties internally.

He said: "All what has been done, has been done in strict conformity with the constitution of the PDP. The process of amending the constitution clearly demonstrates the principles of internal democracy within the PDP.

"Political parties in this country must contribute their quota to internalise democracy within themselves and this is being demonstrated today by the PDP. Nigeria's electoral process must be credible and a great responsibility falls on the nation's political parties.

He observed that credible electoral process began with processes within the various political parties.

"If we internalise credible democratic culture, we internalise credible electoral processes within our political parties, definitely it will help the nation to go a long way in establishing and internalising and achieving a credible electoral process."

Earlier, the PDP National Chairman Prince Vincent Ogbulafor had requested all PDP governors and other stakeholders who are funding front groups and associations to dissolve them immediately into the party to avoid all forms of anti-party activities.

Ogbulafor said those already in offices who may desire to continue in 2011 would only have the opportunity by demonstrating capacity through good performance and delivery of democracy dividends based on party manifesto, constitution and the President's 7-point agenda.

The amended PDP constitution now restricts the function of the Board of Trustees to mainly advisory. It also

deleted the provision that limited the qualification for chairmanship of the BOT to only former presidents or national chairmen of the party.

The position of chairman if is now open to all members of the Board with "proven integrity" and a record of "immensely contributing to the party" for a newly approved tenure of five years.

Obasanjo, who was the only party member that qualified for the chairmanship position of the Board under the 2006 constitution, was elected as chairman in March 2008 for a term of four years. He is, however, expected to complete his tenure which expires in 2011.

Though no formal reason was publicly given for his absence, Daily Trust learnt that the former president was very unhappy with amendments which have clearly whittled down his influence in the party.

Also, Daily Trust learnt that his absence may not be unconnected with security reports that the former president is likely to receive hostile treatment from delegates, especially those who worked to make the constitutional changes a reality.

Attempts to speak with party officials to find out if there was a formal notice from the former president indicating that he would not be present at the convention failed.

Moving the motion for the amendment of the constitution, PDP's National Legal Adviser, Chief Olusola Oke, said the significance of changes to the constitution was to inject more elements of democracy into the constitution.

"As the party in power, whatever we give out in our party is what is reflected in government. There are a few provisions in our constitution which we consider not too democratic. And we feel that because there is evolution of democratic culture in the country, our party must also be dynamic to reflect it," Chief Oke said.

Delegates to the convention, which for the first time in the history of the party was held in the afternoon and was snappy, voted on each of the three issues lined up for amendment. Concerning issue one which proposed amendment to composition of conventions and congresses, 3,897 delegates voted 'yes' while 12 delegates voted 'no'.

On issue two which proposed amendment to funding of the party saw 3,914 delegates voting 'yes' while 26 delegates voted negatively.

On the proposed amendment to the Board of Trustees (BOT), 3,916 delegates voted 'yes' while 15 delegates voted 'no'.

The results were signed by Prof. Julius Ihvobare and Chief Amadi Nweke and consequently announced by chairman of the electoral committee, governor of Rivers State, Mr. Rotimi Amaechi.

W/Africa now major drug route - Ibn Chambas

The President of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Mohammed Ibn Chambas said West Africa has emerged as major transshipment zone for Latin America drug cartels and their local accomplices seeking less protected routes into Europe and the US.

He made the statement at a four days conference on security Sector Reform sponsored co-jointly by ECOWAS and the Africa Centre for Strategic Studies (ACSS) of the United States of America, in Abuja.

He said in the last twelve months at least three jets laden with cocaine allegedly operated by Columbian drug cartels have been impounded in West Africa.

By Aisha Umar

They include the seizure of a jet laden with 700 kilograms of drugs with a street value of about \$60 million at Lungi Airport in Serra Leone in July 2008.

He stated that in September 2008, another drug-laden jet landed in the town of Boke in Guinea (Conakry). The governor of the town, commanders of the gendarmerie, police superintendent and mayor of the town were all arrested and conveyed to Conakry to answer question on the planes which often land in the town loaded with drugs.

He added that "it is in this regard that ECOWAS has taken the first major steps by articulating its concept of Security Sector Governance for the region. The challenge now is to develop a

regional plan of action to pave the way for the structured implementation of the plan."

In her speech U.S ambassador to Nigeria, Robin Renee Sanders said SSR for the region must be at the forefront of any resolution to these issues. She said "we have all seen recently the fragile environments in the some of the neighbouring states including a number of coups which have tried to set part of the region back. But we have seen how ECOWAS as well as Nigeria trying to ensure that clock does not get back and that democracy continues to become the order of the day for the region."

In his remarks minister of State for Defence, Mr. Ademola Rasaq Seriki said one of the major challenges that would continue

to face Nigeria and indeed West Africa would be the need for constant transformation of our security sector.

He said "we are faced with the challenges of having modern, efficient and comprehensive system of national security that would be modelled in consonance with best practices around the world."

In his speech commandant of National Defence College, Rear Admiral G J Jonah said Africa and particularly the West African sub-region, politicization of the security sector, degradation of professionalism, rampant impunity and loss of public trust contributed to, exacerbated, armed conflicts.

The absence of effective, democratic governance of the security sector has

been a significant causal factor in many cases of state fragile and civil war, as illus-

trated by the experience of numerous across West Africa.



ECOWAS President, Mohammed Ibn Chambas

NEWS

Monetisation: FG kicks off pre-payment verification

The Federal Government yesterday in Abuja kicked off pre-payment verification claims of monetisation arrears for parastatals and agencies funded through budgetary allocation.

The exercise, which will cover 64 parastatals and agencies is being conducted by a panel set up by the

By Francis Okeke

Presidency and is expected to authenticate claims by staff of the parastatals and agencies. The presidency had earlier approved the inclusion of the payment of the arrears in the 2009 budget.

A press statement signed by the Deputy

Director of Information in the Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (OSGF), Salisu Na'inna Dambatta states that the 13 member panel has Mr. U. D. Ambursa, a director in the OSGF as chairman.

Other members of the panel are drawn from the Federal Ministries of Finance, Labour and

Productivity, office of the Accountant-General of the Federation, Budget Office, as well as the Nigeria Labour Congress which has three representatives on the panel.

The panel has raised twelve teams of three members each to cover the whole country in order to conclude the exercise by May 10.

While calling for cooperation from the parastatals and agencies concerned, Mr. Ambursa noted that the verification

exercise was necessary to "ensure high accuracy and transparency in accordance with the directive of the President."

Maduekwe warns ambassadors

By Aisha Umar

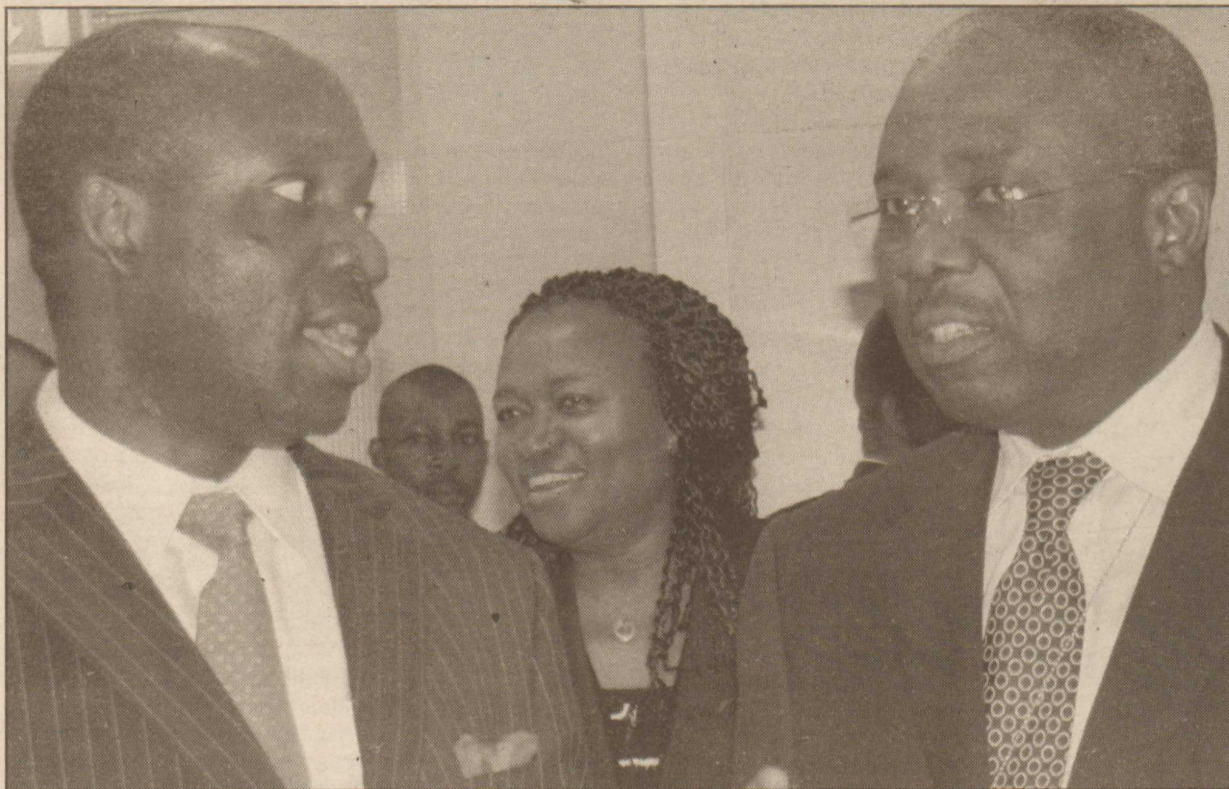
The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ojo Maduekwe has warned newly appointed ambassadors to concentrate on their primary assignment rather than dissipating energy and resources shuttling between their country of assignments and Nigeria to attend political meetings.

He made the statement yesterday at a workshop organised by the ministry for eleven newly appointed ambassadors.

He said the government

would not tolerate instances where ambassadors would abandon their designated countries and come back to Nigeria just to attend political meetings.

The eleven ambassadors are Aminu Bashir Wali, Adamu Daura, Isaac Onuh, Chief Lawrence Nwuruku, Nkoyo Toyo, Mr. Hussieni Abdullahi, Mr. Bature Lawal, Mr. Lawrence O. Akindele, Mr. Samuel F. Aiyedona, Mr. Rax Eze and Ghali Umar.



From left: CBN Governor Professor Charles Soludo and Deputy Governor, Corporate Services, Dr. Ernest Obi, at the press briefing on the 50th anniversary of the bank in Abuja

Pic: Kennedy Egbonodje

CBN's 50th anniversary is for sober reflection — Soludo

By Idris Ahmed

The 50th anniversary of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) which is slated for next month is not just for celebration but to soberly reflect on what went wrong during those years, the Governor of the Bank said yesterday in Abuja.

The Act setting up the CBN was enacted on April 9, 1958. Most of the appointments into the Board of the bank were also done in 1958. But the bank

commenced activities in July 1, 1959.

Professor Chukwuma Soludo did not say yesterday what those things that demanded sober reflections are but said Nigeria should wait till May 4 - 6 at a conference to commemorate the Golden Jubilee to find out.

According to him, former Governors of the banks would be invited to recount

their experiences at the three-day conference titled, "Central Banking, Financial System Stability and Growth".

He said: "50 years is enough period to reflect on where we are coming from and where we are going to. CBN has come of age, the anniversary is a sober reflection of the journey so far.

He called on Nigerians to join in that reflection. "Tell us what we have done, what

needs be to be done and where we should be in the next 50 years. This is an opportunity to look into the future", he said.

Soludo is the 9th Governor of the CBN. He brought about series of reforms into the banking sector. Some of the reforms include the consolidation in the sector which mandated banks to have a minimum capital base of N25 billion.

From 89 banks, the recapitalisation exercise which ended in 2005 reduced the banks to 24.

INEC postpones meeting with traditional rulers

By Abbas Jimoh

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has postponed a meeting with traditional rulers scheduled to hold between April 22 to May 6.

The meeting is intended to get the input of the traditional rulers on the ongoing

delineation and delimitation exercise.

The Acting Director, public affairs, Emmanuel Umenger, said in a statement that the meeting with the traditional rulers is very impor-

tant because as custodian of values in the society, they have a very important role to play in this very sensitive issue of electoral constituencies.

The meeting will now take place on May 6 2009 at Sheraton Hotel and Towers, Abuja.

MEND frees British hostage

A British hostage, Mr Robin Hughes, abducted

in 2008 at a location between Rivers and Bayelsa States, has been released by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND).

MEND's spokesman Jomo Gbomo announced the release in a statement sent online to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on yesterday in Yenagoa.

"MEND can confirm that

the British hostage has been freed," he said.

Hughes regained his freedom at about 5.30 p.m on April 19 after he was handed over to unnamed contacts, who in turn, handed him over to his captors.

hand him over to the military which may want to take some credit, because they are considered our enemy and has not played any role in the transaction.

"The credit for the release goes to Henry Okah, who requested that Hughes be released on compassionate grounds."

He said Okah's message was delivered through a reliable source, who MEND had no reason to doubt.

The remaining hostage, MEND will remain in our

notice. "We need to reiterate once again that no ransom was requested or received for the release, even though we were asked to name our price," he added. NAN

NEWS

Legislator empowers 30 youths in Bauchi

From Mahmud Lalo, Jos

A legislator representing Toro Federal Constituency in Bauchi State, Alhaji Haruna Ibrahim has empowered 30 youths in his constituency. Briefing newsmen in Jos over the weekend, the coordinator of the programme, Alhaji Abdullahi Shehu Tilde said the House of Representatives member distributed motorcycles, grinding machines, sewing/netting machine as well as bicycles. According to him, 30 bicycles, 20 grinding machines, 20 sewing/netting machines and a car were distributed to each of the districts of the local government. He said the member had sunk three boreholes in each of the 17 wards in the local government to alleviate the water scarcity in the area. He stressed that positive steps had been taken by Alhaji Ibrahim to repair the broken pipe that supplies water to Tilden Fulani as well as other surrounding villages. He urged the people of the area to avoid rumour mongering and cooperate with the present administration in the state to help Governor Isa Yuguda work effectively.

Shari'ah Court punishes man for contravening divorce law

From Lawal Ibrahim, Katsina

A Shari'ah Court in Funtua, Katsina State, has ordered that one Dayyabu Haruna be remanded in prison custody after imposing a compulsory fine on him for divorcing his wife more than the stipulated times stipulated by the Shari'ah legal system.

The presiding judge, Hamisu Lawal Malumfashi said the action showed lack of respect to the Islamic legal system and also ordered payment of a fine of N1,000. The judge said the conviction was to serve as deterrent to others to respect the dictates of their religion and that of the Shari'ah legal system. The divorcee, Hassana Ya'u had told the court that the husband had after a quarrel between them issued her a divorce letter.

Petrol scarcity: Passengers stranded at Nsukka parks

Hundreds of passengers in Nsukka parks wishing to travel to other destinations were yesterday stranded because of petrol scarcity that hit the town. As a result of the scarcity, there was a hike in transport fares as well as shortages of buses to cope with an upsurge in passengers wishing to travel. Mr Silas Ench, a passenger, told newsmen that he came out as early as 7 a.m. at the Peace Mass Transit Park to board a bus to Lagos but there were many passengers with few vehicles. "In spite of the fact that the fares were up from N1,800 to N2,000 there were few buses to cope with the many passengers," he said. Miss Chioma Ugwu, a student of University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN), said she had been on the queue at Ingrace Mass Transit, Ogige Park, for hours to board bus to Enugu but to no avail. "They said the fare from Nsukka to Enugu is N300 as against N220 charged previously," she said. A driver, who identified himself as Mr Ikechukwu Ani, said the hike in fares was a result of the increase in petrol pump price, which was now between N85 per litre and N95 per litre at filling stations. "It is not our fault, it is the fault of filling stations. After all, some of the passengers are our brothers and sisters why must we exploit them?" he queried. (NAN)

Rivers Police arrest suspected militant, 8 car thieves

The police in Rivers have arrested a suspected militant and eight car thieves. The spokesperson of Rivers command, Mrs Rita Abbey, disclosed this to newsmen in Port Harcourt yesterday. She said the militant, aged 25, was handed over to the police by the State Security Service. Abbey said on interrogation, the suspect from Buguma, a coastal community in Asarit-Toru Local Government Area, confessed to have taken part in three abductions of Agip and Saipem employees in 2006. "He also took the police to a hideout in Aku water side in Buguma where we recovered four rifles without ammunition. He also claims to be the provost of a youth organisation in his community. The police is still investigating his case," she said.

On the car thieves, Abbey said the suspects used a special key to open vehicles, steal and sell them in northern part of the country. "We have recovered three cars stolen from Port Harcourt and sold in the northern states. The cars are two Nissan saloon cars and a Volkswagen Golf," she said, Abbey said four of the suspects were receivers of stolen cars based in the Northern part of the country while the other four were car thieves. (NAN)



From right: Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum Resources, Mr. Femi Olaisade, Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, Mr. Odein Ajumogobia (2nd l) and special adviser to the president on petroleum matters (l) at Nigerian gas master plan investors briefing session in Abuja on Monday.

University students protest against fees increase

Students of Imo State University (IMSU), Owerri yesterday staged a demonstration against the 150 per-cent increase in their school fees.

The university authorities raised the fees of the returning students from N12,000 to N30,000, while the fresh ones are now to pay N50,000 instead of N30,000. The protesting students, who took over the major

roads of Owerri, singing solidarity songs, also matched to the Government House to register their protest.

Unconfirmed reports said that three students were killed by the police when they clashed with the students on the university campus.

But the Commissioner of Police in Imo, Mr Ahmed Usuf, said that no student

was killed, adding that some students were, however, arrested.

The Public Relations Officer of IMSU, Mr Henry Acholonu, told NAN that the decision to increase the fees was taken because of the current economic realities in the country. He nonetheless noted that the fees were the lowest, when compared with those of other universities in the

country.

Acholonu said the increase was made after due consultations between the university authorities and the leadership of the students' union.

Meanwhile, the main gate to the university campus is shut, while the university authorities are holding a meeting to discuss the next line of action as at the time of this report. (NAN)

Fuel scarcity: BRT, LAGBUS deploy 755 buses

In a bid to reduce transportation problem caused by the ongoing fuel scarcity in Lagos, Lagos State Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and the LAGBUS have rolled out 755 high-capacity buses.

The Lagos State government and the NURTW, operators of the scheme, deployed 220 BRT buses and 535 LAGBUSES.

Tanker drivers had on April 17, began a face-off with the government following the seizure of their tankers by LASTMA, a Lagos State agency, for parking in unauthorized places.

LAGBUS's Managing Director, Mr Babatunde Disu told newsmen that the organisations decided to intervene because of the current fuel scarcity in the

state caused by the strike.

"We decided to roll out all our buses as we anticipate that many cars might desert the roads due to the fuel scarcity this will go a long way to alleviating the suffering of the masses," he said.

Mr Lanre Akintilo, BRT Consultant External Relations, told NAN that they had to work on all their buses over the weekend in

preparation for the challenges posed by the action of the tanker drivers.

He said the BRT buses were carrying out faster shuttle services because of the drop in the number of vehicles on the roads.

"We urge commuters to cooperate with the bus officers and be orderly to be able to commute as many passengers as possible," Akintilo said. (NAN)

FRSC warns motorists against abuse of dual carriageways

The FRSC yesterday warned motorists against abusing traffic rules on the use of dual carriageways and major roads so as to reduce road accidents.

Mr Aminu Dutse, the Zonal Commanding Officer of the FRSC (North West zone), gave the warning, while speaking in an interview with newsmen in Kaduna.

Dutse, who bemoaned the rate of accidents

particularly on the Kaduna-Kano expressway, attributed the development to the motorists' ignorance of traffic rules and their recklessness.

"The left lanes of dual carriageways are meant for overtaking, while the right lanes are designed for all motorists. There is nothing like fast or slow lanes on our highways," he said.

He advised motorists to always exercise extra caution while overtaking,

adding that they should also refrain from speeding to promote safety on the roads. However, Dutse partly blamed inexperienced drivers for the increasing wave of road accidents.

He also said that the other categories of motorists responsible for the carnage on the roads included the "political class, elite, female drivers and under-aged drivers".

"These categories of

motorists are gradually becoming more notorious on our roads than drivers of articulated vehicles who are now responding to our (FRSC) public enlightenment campaigns," he said.

Dutse urged stakeholders, including NURTW, RTEAN, NARTO, public institutions and private drivers, to show more seriousness in efforts to ensure safety on the highways. (NAN)

NEWS

Zamfara students opt out of NANS protest

From Sadeeq Aliyu, Gusau

As the National Association of Nigerian Students prepares to stage a mass protest in Zamfara State today over non payment of backlog of students' allowances, the state chapter of the union has disassociated itself from the protest. In a statement yesterday signed by its president, Nasiru Ibrahim Dagaji, the state chapter of the Association categorically dissociated itself from the planned protest which the police had refused to grant permission for. The statement said the state chapter of the Association reached an agreement with the state government over payment of bursary allowances to students in the state which was the reason behind the protest. The Association said Comrade Bashir Mohammed Maru who is a factional leader, issued a statement in Abuja for staging the protest against police order, and was only trying to cause breakdown of law and order in the state. According to the Association, it was aware that Maru had planned to invite students from various states of the federation to come and distort peace in Zamfara. The body said whoever comes to Zamfara under the guise of students was acting on his own and not for students of the state.

Lagos civil servant found dead in bedroom

From Bola Ojuola & Ayo Adepoju, Lagos

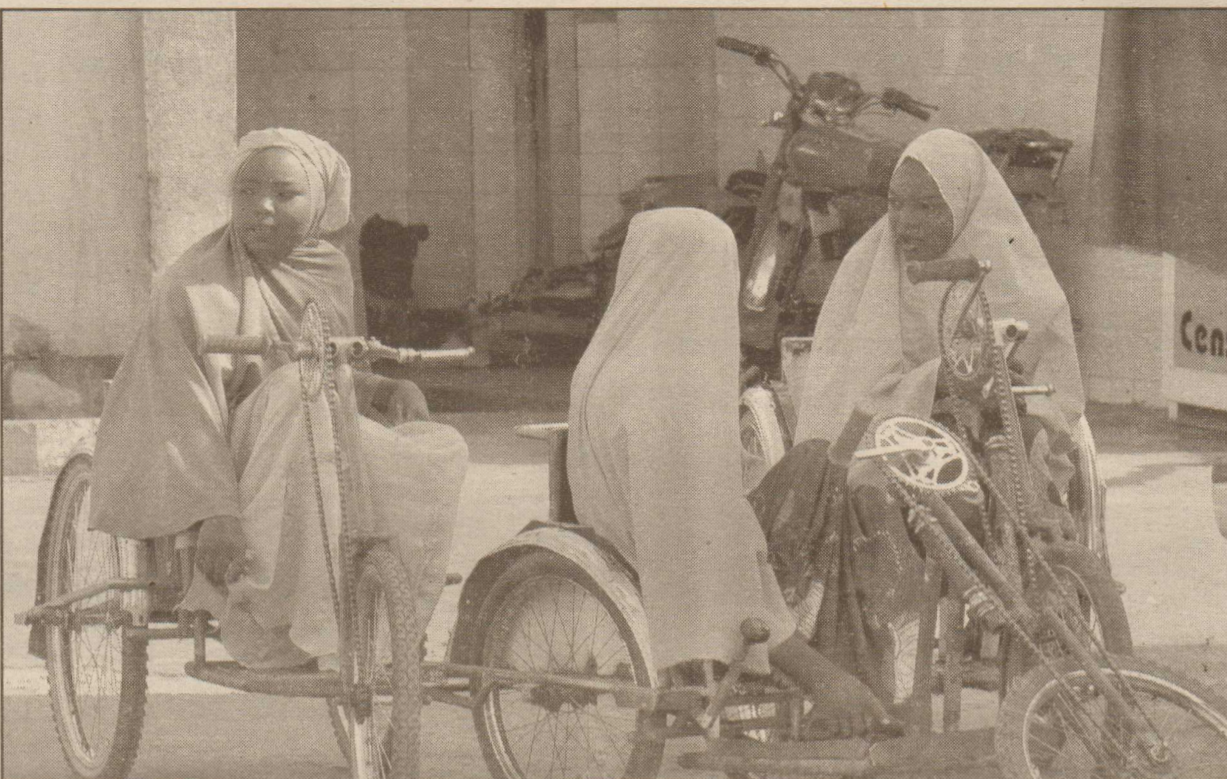
A senior staff with the Lagos State Ministry of Education, Bolade Oshodi was found dead in his house in Agbado Ijaye area of Lagos at the weekend. The body of the deceased, popularly known as Baba Dema was discovered on Saturday evening by neighbours who became worried since he couldn't be found for days. When *Daily Trust* visited the house on plot 2, Titus Jane lane off Hassan Ogunmola street, Ahmadiya bus-stop Ijaye yesterday, neighbours said they became suspicious due to the stench from the apartment of the deceased and decided to find out what was wrong. The deceased who was in his early 50's was said to be living alone in the one bedroom apartment since his wife and children left after an undisclosed misunderstanding. One of the neighbours told *Daily Trust* that when the door was opened the body of Baba Dema was found on the bed. The corpse was later removed from the apartment to an undisclosed mortuary by policemen from Miran police station on Sunday evening. It was taken away in an ambulance with registration number AA 683 JBY (Katsina state) to a mortuary in Otta, Ogun State.

Fashola inaugurates pensions commission

Lagos State Governor, Mr Babatunde Fashola yesterday inaugurated the State Pensions Commission with an assertion that his administration has taken the boldest step to secure the future of public servants in the state with the body. Governor Fashola who spoke at the inauguration of the Commission also appealed to all public servants to provide their Personal Identification Numbers (PINs) which would enable the system function effectively. Governor Fashola said he had received several reports that some public servants have not provided information about their PIN, stressing that remittance can only be credited based on individual PINs supplied. A Government House statement said the government noted that the processes leading to the inauguration of the Commission started in 2006 with the enactment of a law on contributory pensions scheme by the administration of Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu and the appointment of Pension Fund administrators. Governor Fashola added that the state had also ensured a strict remittance of the contributory pensions both from salaries of public servants and obligations imposed by law on the state to also contribute 7.5 per cent at both state and local government levels. He described the inauguration of the Commission as representing a very important milestone in the Pensions Reform process of Lagos State adding that the members of the Commission have been chosen to bring their very rich integrity to the operations of the body.

...urges fair treatment of accused persons

The Lagos State government yesterday donated 12 operational vehicles to the State Command of the Nigeria Prisons Service (NPS) just as Governor Babatunde Fashola said accused persons must be treated fairly until proven guilty. The vehicles consisting of four 30-seater Toyota Coaster buses and eight Toyota Hilux pick-up vans, were donated under the auspices of the State's Justice Sector Reforms in fulfillment of a promise made earlier to the Command by the state government. A statement from the Lagos Government House said while speaking at the handover ceremony Fashola said in making the donation, the government took cognizance of the fact that there were constitutional safeguards to ensure that people who violate the laws of the land and charged with offences are treated fairly. "We recognize that within the provisions that require that sanctions be effected, there are constitutional safeguards to ensure that people who violate these laws and charged with offences are treated fairly", the governor said, pointing out that the people were entitled constitutionally to expeditious and fair trials. "The buses you now have are a marked departure from the Black Maria. They are air-conditioned buses. They are important because until those people accused of crime are proven to have committed the crime, they remain innocent and must be treated as ordinary citizens who have a case to answer", the governor said.



Some physically challenged girls on their way to school

Pic: Afolabi Sotunde

Physically-challenged complain of discrimination in Gombe

The Chairman of physically-challenged persons in Gombe State, Alhaji Umaru Ali-Goro, has accused the state government and members of larger society of discrimination against his members.

Ali-Goro told newsmen in Billiri in Gombe State that his members were being stigmatised and shunned in all endeavours.

"We are being discriminated against and stigmatised. No matter how educated our members are, they are hardly considered for employment in the state," Ali-Goro alleged.

He said that though 2.5 per cent vacancies, either in places of work, or schools were expected to be reserved for physically-challenged, but the story was different

in Gombe State.

According to him, physically challenged women suffer greater discrimination and isolation more than their male counterparts.

"I pity the women because no matter how beautiful they are, once they are disabled, nobody will be willing to marry them. They cannot secure employment and even within their families, they are often treated differently," he said. Ali-Goro cited a case of a female member, whom he said has a Diplomain Computer and had been trying to get employment in her local government in the past three months, but to no avail.

"I have been struggling to make a case for her as a member of my association but I have been blocked from

seeing, even the council chairman," he said.

He also alleged that all efforts by officials of his association to pay a courtesy visit to the state governor to explain some of their predicaments were being frustrated. Ali-Goro said that local authorities were also not helping matters as they hardly involve them in programmes they designed to assist the less privileged members of the society. He reminded members of the Society at large, especially those in positions of authority, that some of the physically-challenged were once able persons, but found themselves in their current situation following one tragedy or the other.

"Some of my members became blind at the later part

of their lives.

Others became crippled due to accidents and diseases. It is not that God created us this way," he said.

Reacting to the allegations, the Director of Social Welfare in the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, Mrs Dije Reubeno, said the Ali-Goro was unfair to the state government. She said that they were not prevented from seeing the governor as alleged, but that there were protocols to be followed in doing this.

"Whoever wants to see any leader must take time, book an appointment and wait for response because they are very busy people and their schedules are always tight," she explained. (NAN)

Armed robbers besiege Enugu-Onitsha road

For almost two hours, some armed robbers held commuters hostage on the Enugu-Onitsha expressway early yesterday. Eyewitnesses told newsmen that the robbers, who reportedly wore masks, operated near the Okwe village junction, in Ugwuoba, Enugu State, at about 8 a.m. unchallenged.

They said that the robbers, who suddenly emerged from the bush, were armed with some automatic rifles and locally made pistols.

The witnesses said that the bandits blocked both sides of the road and forcibly dispossessed the hapless commuters of their belongings.

An eyewitness, who hails from Okwe village, said that such nefarious activities had become very rampant on the dual carriageway in recent times.

Mr Patrick Amuni, a driver

of one of the raided buses, told NAN that the incident was shocking.

Amuni recalled that he was conveying his passengers to Onitsha from Oboloafor in Enugu State when two young men standing by the roadside flagged him down.

He said that as soon as he stopped to carry the two men, believing that they were passengers, four men emerged from the bush and overpowered him and other drivers of oncoming vehicles.

He said that three more bandits emerged from the other side of the bush and joined in the operation.

"They started robbing us and for over one hour, there was no help. They were shooting sporadically in the air; they took money, handsets and injured some people with machetes.

"Apart from the robbers who covered their faces with masks, the others painted their faces black and they all had guns, ready to shoot anybody who dared to resist them," he added.

One trader, Baba Audu, who claimed that he was travelling to Onitsha to buy some wares, said that he was robbed of N100,000.

Mr Johnson Egbe, a passenger who was wounded, said that the robbers inflicted some machete cuts on him because he had no money to give them.

The robbers reportedly ran into the bush when they sighted a military/police patrol team heading towards the area.

When contacted, Mr Amaraizu Ebele, the Police Public Relations Officer in Enugu State, confirmed the incident and said that the police promptly responded when

they got the information about the robbery.

He said that policemen were promptly mobilised from the Orji River Divisional Police Office, while men of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and the combined police/military team were deployed to the area.

On why it took the police such a long time to arrive at the robbery scene, Ebele said that the police command received information about the robbery late.

"As I talk to you now, my men have gone into the bush in search of the robbers. Just give me 24 hours, I am sure we will have a positive result; it's really unfortunate," he added.

Ebele said that no life was lost in the robbery, adding that the police had now adopted a new strategy to tackle the rising wave of highway robbery in the state. (NAN)

NEWS

NAHCON urges clerics to train intending pilgrims

By Abdulkadir Badsha Mukhtar

The National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) has urged Islamic scholars across the country to organize training and orientation programmes for intending pilgrims for this year's hajj. NAHCON Chairman, Alhaji Muhammad Bello, made the call in Abuja when he received the executive members of the Supreme Council of Shariah in Nigeria in his office. He said Islamic scholars should assist both the commission and their respective states in enlightening intending pilgrims ahead of their departure to Saudi Arabia because many pilgrims neglect hajj duties while in the Holy land. On his part, the Vice President of Supreme Council for Shari'a in Nigeria, Sheikh Abdur-Rasheed Hadiyatullahi, emphasised the council's readiness to partner with the commission in the enlightening intending pilgrims with a view of achieving a successful hajj operation.

Turai in Los Angeles for health summit

First Lady, Hajiya Turai Yar'adua on Sunday arrived in Los Angeles, U.S. to attend the African First Ladies Health Summit on improving maternal and child healthcare and tackling HIV/AIDS in Africa. The North America correspondent of the *News Agency of Nigeria* (NAN) reports that Yar'adua is leading the Nigerian delegation. The delegation included the wife of the vice president, Mrs Patience Jonathan and the Minister of Health, Prof. Babatunde Osotimehin and some state governors' wives. The president's wife, NAN learnt, will hold talks with her counterparts on African health problems, as well as meet with NGOs and other summit participants. The two-day summit, organised by U.S. Doctors for Africa (USDFA) and African Synergy Against AIDs, an NGO formed by 22 African first ladies, will also discuss issues affecting women in Africa. About 15 first ladies from Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Swaziland and Zambia are attending the summit.

Maternal deaths caused by ignorance - Iyabo Obasanjo

By Ruby Rabi

The chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Senator Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello has attributed the increasing maternal deaths in the country to ignorance of the implications and the consequences Obasanjo-Bello said most Nigerians view deaths as a normal phenomenon and not a problem that needs drastic measures to correct. Speaking to newsmen on her pet project, themed Mother's night aimed at creating awareness on the issues of maternal mortality, she said that it was time for every Nigerian to do something positive to save a life of a woman. Obasanjo-Bello explained that the only way the Senate can make a law that can effectively address the issues of maternal mortality is if the people themselves advocate for law. Her words, 'this project is partly a National Assembly commitment to address the issue of the increasing number of women dying, but the truth is the National Assembly can't create laws in a vacuum'. 'this is because people are not aware that there is problem, so they are not agitating for anything, so it becomes difficult for the senate to do anything about it, but with this mother's night, an awareness will be created and people will be forced to make commitments on areas to improve our health indices. Professor Emmanuel Otolurin, of the Access to Clinical and Community Maternal, Neonatal and Women's Health Services said already plans were under way to ensure that the right data that represent the number of women who lose their lives or that of their infant at child birth is being complied.

Agitation for Edu state hots up

By Muideen Olaniyi

People from 15 Local Government Areas, drawn from Niger and Kwara states, have risen to renew agitation for the creation of Edu state.

At an extra-ordinary general meeting of Azza Development Association in Gulu, Niger state at the weekend, over 2,500 representatives of the various communities in the proposed state, including 61 District and Village heads, Community and Clan leaders who thronged the venue, unanimously endorsed the creation of Edu state.

In attendance at the extra ordinary meeting too were the Niger state commissioner of Health, Dr. Isah Yahaya

Vatsa, member of the Niger state House of Assembly representing Azza constituency, Hon. Usman Magaji, the Vice Chairman of Lapai Local Government Council, Alhaji Mohammed Abdullahi Evuti and other top government officials.

The National Chairman of Azza Development Association, Alhaji Bello Kolo Atsu said that the proposed Edu state is made up of Agaie, Agwara, Bida, Borgu, Edati, Edu, Gbako, Katcha, Lapai, Lavun and Mokwa local government areas of Niger state, and Lafiagi, Patigi, Songa and Tsaragi Local Government

Areas of Kwara state.

"Available records revealed that agitation for the creation of Ndaduma state (now Edu state) is an age-long request, and it dated back to 1970. This agitation by the Nupes, in the 70's led to the creation of the present Niger state in 1976," he said.

Alhaji Kolo stated that of all the states created from the Northern Nigeria in 1976 by the government of late General Murtala Muhammed, only Niger state, with its peculiar large size, had remained intact to date, explaining that Sokoto, an extraction of the North Western state like Niger state, had been split into Kebbi, Zamfara and Sokoto states;

kano had been split into Kano and Jigawa states while Borno state had been divided into Borno and Yobe states.

"Similarly, Benue is now Benue and part of kogi states; Plateau state is now Plateau and Nasarawa states, and Kaduna state is now Kaduna and Katsina states. In terms of land mass, Niger state has the largest land area of all the states in the Federation."

The Chairman remarked that the proposed Edu state has an abundant natural and excellent human, material resources, as well as huge economic potentials for rapid take off and fast development.

The Secretary-General of the Association, Alhaji Zaik Mohammed Eshi spoke on behalf of Azza people, saying that at least two new local governments would need to be created in Azza land when the new state comes on stream, adding: "This is one of the conditions we will like to give."

Another condition, he said, was that the capital of the proposed Edu state should be sited in a neutral and less developed place like Baro in -Agaie local government area of Niger state, adding that all the traditional rulers in the new state would need to be upgraded.

The Niger state Commissioner of Health, Dr. Isah Yahaya Vatsa brought the solidarity of Governor Babangida Aliyu Mu'azu to the people of Azza and asked them to pray very hard for the state to materialise.

Atiku, DPP commiserate with Bafarawa

By Abbas Jimoh & Muideen Olaniyi

Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar has commiserated with the former Governor of Sokoto state, Attahiru Bafarawa, over the death of his father last weekend.

The Democratic Peoples Party (DPP) has also condoned former governor of Sokoto State and presidential candidate of the DPP, Alhaji Attahiru Dalhatu Bafarawa over the death of his father last Saturday.

Alhaji Abubakar's condolence message was contained in statement yesterday in Abuja by his Media Office.

Atiku said the death of Alhaji Dalhatu Bafarawa, the District Head of Bafarawa, was a big loss to the family and to Sokoto State as a whole.

"As an orphan myself, I know how painful it is to lose

such an important figure in one's life," Atiku said.

"At 85, Alhaji Dalhatu Bafarawa lived a long and fulfilling life. Leaving behind children such as former Governor Bafarawa, I have no doubt that the late Bafarawa's legacies would be sustained".

Atiku prayed to Allah to grant his soul eternal rest and to give the Bafarawa family the fortitude to bear the loss.

The late Alhaji Dalhatu Bafarawa, 85, was until his death the Sarkin Gabas of Bafarawa and District Head of Bafarawa in Isa local government area, Sokoto State.

Acting Director of Media and Publicity of the DPP, Malam Abubakar Ateeku

Yusuf, said that the decease died at the Usmanu Danfodiyo University Teaching Hospital (UDUTH) Sokoto after a protracted illness and was buried according to Islamic rites in his home town, Bafarawa.

Yusuf said that the national chairman of DPP, Lt. Gen. Jeremiah Useni (Rtd.) commiserates with former governor Attairu, who is also the chairman Board of Trustee (BOT) of the party.

"The national chairman of DPP, Lt. Gen. Jeremiah Useni, on behalf of the party commiserates with the entire Bafarawa family over the sudden death of their beloved father, may his soul rest in peace," Yusuf said.

The late Sarkin Gabas of Bafarawa is survived by four wives, 53 children and many grandchildren.

NYSC, FG to partner on re-branding

By Atika Balal

Director General of the National Youths Service Corps (NYSC), Brigadier General Maharazu I. Tsiga has solicited for partnership with the Ministry of Information and Communication in its effort to re-brand the nation.

Speaking when he paid a courtesy on the Minister, Professor Dora Akunyili, Tsiga said the collaboration would yield positive results within the shortest possible time as "corps members are the most effective foot soldiers that can spread the message of the initiative to over 10 million Nigerians, particularly those at the grassroots in no time."

Stressing the importance of youth mobilization in the national project, he said corps members would be made to

set up re-branding Nigeria clubs in secondary schools and tertiary institutions so that through interactive sessions they can play a major role in its success.

While describing NYSC's endorsement of the campaign as a boost to the project, Akunyili said their willingness to cooperate with the ministry shows great patriotism.

She said the ministry would appoint a liaison officer to work with the NYSC to ensure that messages are conveyed effectively to the youths across the country since their understanding of the core values and contents of the project and ability to deliver are guaranteed by their high level of education.

Disclaimer



Mallam Musa Diso

This is to inform the general public that **Mallam Musa Diso** a reporter with **Aminiya Newspaper** and whose photograph appears here is no longer a staff of **Media Trust Limited (Publishers of Daily Trust, Weekly Trust, Sunday Trust and Aminiya)**. Anybody who transact any business with him for or on behalf of Media Trust Limited, does so at his or her own risk.

Signed:
Management.

NEWS

Malaysian minister cautions on arms build-up

From Sam Egwu, Lokoja

The Chief Minister of Melaka State in Western Malaysia, Dartuk Mohammed Rustam has advised world leaders to focus more attention on poverty eradication instead of acquiring destructive weapons. He gave the advice while commissioning the laboratory complex of the Faculty of Agriculture in the Kogi State University, Anyigba during his three day visit to the state. He said leaders should eradicate poverty by focusing more on agriculture. Rustam commended Kogi State for lifting education and promised the assistance of the Malaysian Government to support the effort under the bi-lateral relationship between his state and the Kogi State. In his address, the Vice Chancellor of the University, Professor Hassan Isah said shortage of funds was the major challenge facing the University. He appealed to stakeholders as well as the international community to give financial and moral assistance to the University for the expansion and consolidation of its achievements.

NACOMYO to establish skills acquisition center in Kogi

From Sam Egwu, Lokoja

The Kogi State chapter of the National Council of Muslim Youth Organisations of Nigeria (NACOMYO), in collaboration with the National Directorate of Employment, is to establish a skills acquisition centre for Muslim youths. Chairman of the Council, Malam Sulaiman Dantsoho disclosed this at a press briefing yesterday in Lokoja. Dantsoho said the centre which would be located in the Eastern senatorial district of the state would provide the necessary training for youths to make them less dependent on government for employment. He pointed out that the initiative which had the backing of Kaduna, Katsina, Kwara, Kano and Kogi States was aimed at complementing government's efforts in youth empowerment through impartation of knowledge for employment generation. Dantsoho added that apart from taking care of the economic empowerment of the youths, the centre would address issues of degenerating moral values and poor attitude to scholarship among Muslim youths. Also speaking at the occasion, the pioneer chairman of the association, Alhaji Salihu Adaji said the effort was part of the Muslim Ummah's contributions to the development of humanity.

VC warns UNN students against cultism

The Vice Chancellor, University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN), Prof. Chinedu Nebo has urged newly admitted students of the university to shun cultism, and other social vices capable of obstructing their academic pursuit. Nebo made the call in Nsukka on the occasion of the matriculation of over 5,000 students. "It is a common knowledge that some tertiary institutions in the country have become a safe haven for cultism, prostitution and other social vices," he said. Nebo advised the students to report to the university authorities any student or group that "wants to force them to enlist in one cult or any bad group", for appropriate disciplinary action. He said the Senate of the University had made it compulsory for every student to obtain a class attendance of not less than 75 per cent before he or she would be qualified to write any examination in any of the courses. "This university will only issue its certificate to those found worthy both in learning and character," he said, appealing to parents to continue to exercise parental role on their children, stressing that it would be unfair for parents to abandon them to the university. (NAN)

Ondo gets new commissioners

From Leye Adewumi, Akure

The Governor of Ondo State Dr. Olusegun Mimiko will today administer oath of office on the new commissioners confirmed by the state House of Assembly. The commissioners include Engr. C.O Faboyede-Ifedore, Chief Jukius Akinyede Akinnigbagbe-AkokoN/E, Mr. Adetola Wewe-Ese Odo, Adegbemiro Lawrence Adeola-Akoko south, Mr. Olawale Richard Akinjo - Ondo east, Mr. Sola Amodeni - Akoko S/E, Mr. Akin Adaramola-Akoko N/W. Others are Chief Omolebi Augustine Adepiti - Ilaje, Mr. Akinterinwa Adewale Olumuyi - Ile Oluji/ Oke Igbo, Pastor Omogunwa Olatunbosun Yele - Irele, Hon. Yekini Olanipekun-Akoko N/W. The others are Oye Alademehin-Okitipupa, Kunle Asaolu - Akure south, Mrs. C. B. Tenabe - Ondo west, Alhaji Basaru Sikiru - Owo, Mr. Akin Akingbesote-Idanre, Mrs. Fatogun Adenike Temitope - Akoko S/W. A release issued by the Chief Press Secretary, Mr. Kolawole Olabisi said the ceremony is slated for the state sports stadium in Akure. Two of the nominees who have petitions against them are being investigated by the state Assembly to determine the authenticity of the petitions after which they may be sworn in.

Lagos imposes N7.5m fine on tanker drivers

From Kayode Ekundayo & Abdulhakeem Akinola, Lagos

For towing 50 trucks from undesignated areas, the Lagos State government has asked owners of the trucks to pay N50,000 each. The fine totals N7.5 million. The trucks were impounded by officials of the Lagos State Transport Management (LASTMA) Friday from Folawiyo loading depot, Apapa and Toyota, along the Oshodi expressway for causing obstruction. Commissioner of Transportation Prof. Bamidele Badejo told journalists yesterday that what led to the current face-off between LASTMA and the tanker drivers was that NUPENG wanted to show that it was above the state's law prohibiting illegal parking.

He said prior to LASTMA's action, his

ministry received text messages, letters and read comments on pages of newspapers about illegal parking by trailers on the Oshodi-Apapa highway. Prof. Badejo said the tanker drivers were not the only haulage operators on Lagos roads. He said there were other haulage operators like breweries and industries that comply with the 'No illegal parking' rule. "There can't be two laws for haulage operators in the state. While owners of trailers being used by breweries and industries adhere strictly to the laws of the state, petrol tanker drivers too must adhere to simple laws".

At the time of filing this report, a meeting was called

by the state government over the issue "If at the meeting, after showing them the clips of what led to the impounding of some of the trucks, if they can point at any truck that was not impounded legally, we will release such trucks unconditionally." Badejo said.

Corroborating the commissioner's explanation, the Special Adviser to the governor on Transportation, Mr. Kayode Opeifa debunked the allegation by NUPENG that LASTMA impounded their trucks to generate revenue for the state government. He said the state government had constructed a park named Bola Ahmed Tinubu Park at Sari-Iganmun where all tanker drivers are expected to park their trucks. He

however said the park had remained under-utilized since it was commissioned about two years ago.

Opeifa noted that LASTMA officials were drafted to Toyota area along Oshodi - Apapa expressway last Friday to remove several tankers parked on the highway illegally. He said members of the tanker drivers restricted the operation. "They rained stones on our men and wounded some of them. But we succeeded in impounding 27 of their trailers while three members of their association were arrested by the police," he said.

The Special Adviser said the 27 trucks were picked legally, adding that NUPENG went on strike without notice; thus breaching the agreement between the union and the state government.



Grazing in the city.

Pic: Felix Onigbinde

Linguists warn on threat to Nigerian languages

Linguist, Prof. Ohiomamhe Elugbe, has advised parents to ensure that their children are versed in their mother tongues, to save indigenous languages from extinction. The Professor of languages at the University of Ibadan (UI) told newsmen on Saturday in Ibadan that some Nigerian languages could be heading for extinction. "My mother's tongue - Ghotuo - spoken in Akoko-Edo area of Edo State, is unfortunately one of the languages threatened by extinction," Elugbe stressed.

According to him, Ghotuo, a minority language, is being ignored by children in the area, who are being taught English from kindergarten classes in private schools. "The small size of Ghotuo speakers is shrinking further as our children are not being taught the language. "It is an example of a language at risk; a tongue is alive in its speakers.

"Should its speakers die without passing the language to their children, it ceases to exist, except it has been adequately documented", Elugbe said. According to him, it has been scientifically proved that a child's education is better, if its foundation is the mother's tongue. He described language as a strong vehicle for culture, arts and the general way of a people, and urged government to preserve Nigerian languages by empowering them. "Put money into the language - let it have literature. Encourage its culture; make it vibrant; develop

it; make it cope with science and technology. A language with alphabets, literature, dictionary and above all, continuity, is not likely to become extinct," Elugbe stressed. He explained that unlike many minority languages, the three major Nigerian tongues - Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo - were not at risk because of the large population of their speakers. "Microsoft is already working with a Nigerian organisation to create the necessary database to make Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo computer languages, and this will be an added advantage to their survival," he said. In the same vein, Dr Demola Dasylva of the Department of English, UI, described educated Nigerians, whose children could not speak their mother tongues, as "ill-literate suffering from colonial mentality." Dasylva said:

According to Dasylva, it was Prof Festus Egbohkhare who coined the words "ill-literate" and "ill-literacy". "It means that though learned, their education is misplaced. It is not right. It is an education that does not transform and advance one's culture in a positive light. It is ill-education," he said. Dasylva suggested that a more drastic policy on indigenous languages should be put in place to redress the current trend. According to him, a credit grade in a Nigerian language in WASCE or NECO examinations, can be made a prerequisite for admission into the nation's tertiary institutions, whatever the course of study. (NAN)

NEWS

NOA boss attributes crime wave to unpopular policies

Imo State Director of the National Orientation Agency (NOA) Mr. Vitus Ekeocha has attributed the high level of crime in the country to the policies of some state governors and the current economic meltdown.

Ekeocha told newsmen in Owerri yesterday that the situation had pushed many into crimes such as kidnapping and armed robbery

From Johnkennedy Uzoma,
Owerri

which they see as a means of making a living. He called on government to map out programs and policies to ameliorate the situation and discourage people from indulging in crimes. He called for palliative measures to provide an enabling environment for private establish-

ments to create employment for unemployed youths. Ekeocha advised the state government to change some of the policies that affect commercial motorcyclists in the state. Some of the ways of alleviating problems of the Okada operators in the state according to Ekeocha is provision of loans to enable them set up their own businesses.

He stressed the need to strengthen NAPEP for its services to be felt by the common man and condemned the idea of distributing sewing machines to the wrong people by government.

Ekeocha advised government to go beyond that, adding that most of the items were not given to the right people, but to the servants of politicians. He said that if government meant well for the people, it should go to the community heads to nominate those at the rural level who need those items.

JCCE advises on 7-point agenda

President Umaru Musa Yar'adu's 7-point agenda may not be attainable until the shortcomings of the nation's education system are effectively and urgently addressed, the chairman of the Joint Consultative Committee on Education (JCCE), Alhaji Musa Yashi has said.

Speaking at a meeting in Kaduna yesterday, he said only a sound and efficient national education system would provide the needed gains of democracy and an enduring infrastructure to enhance productivity and

From Ismail Mudashir,
Kaduna

diversify the economy for the actualization of the vision.

The JCCE chairman whose message was read by Dr. Umar Hussaini of the Department of Policy and Planning Management of the Federal Ministry of Education pointed out that the quality of education significantly affects the performance of all other sectors of the economy and determines the rate of national development, saying any act that affects the development of the

sector would indirectly affect other sectors.

He said presently, government resources and efforts as well as the scope of private sector support and intervention had fallen short of the requirements urgently needed for revamping and repositioning the education system.

Yashi said the "support a public school" programme which was introduced in 2007 as part of the reform initiatives of the ministry had started to yield the desired result as schools in many communities had received

support courtesy of the programme.

Declaring open the meeting, Governor Mohammed Namadi Sambo reiterated the commitment of his administration to the enhancement of the standard of education in the state by allocating 27 percent of the state budget to the sector.

Represented by the Head of Service, Alhaji Balarebe Yakubu, the governor said he had approved the recruitment of 2000 additional teachers for primary and secondary schools in the state to meet the teachers' requirement.

Councilors to hold summit June

By Ben Atonko

Councilors of all 744 local government areas in Nigeria will converge in Abuja in June for the first ever National Councilors Legislative Enhancement Summit, the National Councilors' Forum of Nigeria (NCF) has announced. A communiqué issued yesterday after the forum's national executive council meeting in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State last Wednesday said the forum had set up a constitution review committee, comprising six members from the six geo-political zones of the country. The constitution review committee was mandated to gauge views of councilors in the federation and prepare a memorandum to be submitted to the National Assembly Committee on Constitution Review.

The communiqué signed by the president of the councilors' forum, Ejimaji Friday thanked the governor and Speaker of Akwa Ibom State, Mr Godswill Akpabio and Ignitius Edet for successfully hosting the meeting. The forum agreed to visit each zone monthly to identify the major problems facing the councilors of such areas, especially on welfare and proffer solutions. Councilors' forum was founded in 1999 with the aim of bringing all councilors together to discuss matters bordering on legislation at the grassroots and to promote good governance at that level.



LAGOS UNIVERSITY TEACHING HOSPITAL
PRIVATE MAIL BAG 12003, LAGOS, NIGERIA.

ADVERTISEMENT FOR ADMISSION INTO THE BASIC DENTAL NURSING PROGRAMME

Applications are invited from qualified candidates for admission into the Basic Dental Nursing programme of the Hospital.

MINIMUM ENTRY QUALIFICATION

Five credits in Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination/GCE 'O' Level in the following subjects:

English Language, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, and Physics.

METHOD OF APPLICATION

Applicants should note the following:

- Pay N5,000.00 (Five Thousand Naira) only, to the Cash Office (LUTH) and obtain a receipt.
- Make two photocopies of the receipt of payment with applicant's passport photograph on the left hand corner of the receipt.
- Submit form with photocopies of credentials, three (3) passport photographs and two (2) photocopies of receipt of payment enclosed in a big envelope to the office of the Co-ordinator, School of Basic Dental Nursing: Prefab Old Dental Block, LUTH.

(Combination of results should not be more than two sittings of the same examination body e.g. GCE/GCE, WAEC/WAEC, NECO/NECO).

- Submission of application forms will close within three (3) weeks of this advertisement

Examination Date	-	Saturday, 16th May, 2009.
Venue	-	Hall 36, LUTH
Time	-	9.00a.m.

Applicants should bring along pencil, eraser, ruler, pen and original receipt issued by the Cashier with the attached certified passport photograph to the examination venue.

- Only applicants who have satisfied the conditions for admission will be called for interview.
- Course Fees:** Details will be provided on admission.

Prof. Akin Osibogun
Chief Medical Director



ABUJA MUNICIPAL AREA COUNCIL
ABUJA, NIGERIA

INVITATION TO TENDER.

INTRODUCTION

Abuja Municipal Area Council hereby invites bids from reputable facility Managers to provide Cleaning and Security Services for the Council's Primary Health Centres.

COLLECTION OF TENDER DOCUMENTS

Interested Companies are to pay a non refundable fee of N35,000.00 to Abuja Municipal Area Council's Account in Aso Savings and Loan, Garki II Abuja as pre-requisite for collection of Tender Documents.

SUBMISSION OF TENDER

Completed Tender Documents must be enveloped, sealed and addressed to the Secretary Tender Board Abuja Municipal Area Council, FCT Abuja on or before 12.00 noon on Wednesday 13th May 2009, with Company's Profile and other relevant documents.

OPENING OF TENDER

Tender would be opened at 12. Noon on Wednesday 13th May 2009 at the Abuja municipal Area Council Marriage Registry in the presence of all bidders or their representatives.

Signed
Management

OPINION

Yuguda: At long, long, long, last!

Malam Isa Yuguda, the Bauchi State Governor, has finally gone back or decamped to the ruling PDP after several months of speculations and rumour mongering. It was a historic event and will continue to vibrate and provide not only food for thought for politicians especially of the ANPP "brand", but also for commentators and those who know him from school days. How the ANPP allowed him to slip away in broad day light is a subject of conjecture. It was a dream that turned into a nightmare. We are not sure whether to offer them our condolences or congratulations. Anyway, we will come back to this issue, shortly.

How Yuguda joined politics and the PDP brand after a successful career in banking will continue to marvel some us for a very long time. But now that this has happened, let us reflect a little and ponder on how it happened! Only time will now tell us what Yuguda was equally cut for apart from banking. When the PDP messed him up and denied him the well deserved ticket to contest for the governorship, it was a relief when the ANPP came to his rescue. And as God would have it, Yuguda revitalized the party and galvanized it to victory. He made history for teaching Nigerians how to drag a meat from the Lion's mouth: how to democratically wrestle power from the ruling PDP through the simple mechanism of the protection of the sanctity of votes.

Like the late Mallam Aminu Kano of blessed memory who taught the *talakawa* of Kano how to say "NO!" right before independence, Mallam Isa taught the Bauchi masses in 2007 the philosophy of how to protect their votes. He it was who popularized the philosophy a votes protection by following them from the polling booth to the INEC state headquarters just to ensure their safety and sanctity against any illegal tampering (*A KASA! A TSARE!! A RAKA!!!*).

His journey from the PDP to the ANPP is

Ujudud Shariff

ON TUESDAY

ujushariff@dailytrust.com

well known and we will not unnecessarily bore you with the details. Depending on how you look at the whole scenario, you cannot escape going back to the Scriptures on the simple truth that it is the Almighty God who gives and takes away power to whom He likes and the time He likes. Because the whole unfortunate story could be reduced to friendship went sour and how some people wanted to play God. The simple fact was how the hitherto excellent friendship between him and former governor Ahmadu Adamu Mu'azu went sour. How friendship turned into enmity and the consequences thereof.

Between Mua'zu and Yuguda, only God knows who helped the other the most in a friendship that spanned several years. What we can claim to know is that Yuguda assisted Mua'zu in one of his greatest hour of need on the verge of the 1999 Governorship elections at the time when Yuguda was the managing director of the then Inland Bank. He was said to have bailed out Mua'zu in his most hour of need that saw him to victory. To reciprocate the good gesture, Mua'zu was said to have nominated him for a ministerial appointment. Everything went well until when suspicion, jealousy and envy gradually took over a blossoming relationship. The gossip merchants took over and continued nurturing the tree of enmity with all sorts of lies and fabrications.

We pray one day God will expose the devils that bred the disharmony between the two friends that caused so much pain and distrust within the good people of Bauchi State as a whole. This state of affairs led Mua'zu to

plot the denial of PDP ticket to Yuguda in a very bitter contest. The rest is now history as the chicken has gone back home to roost. Yuguda left PDP and joined the ANPP that gave him an automatic ticket and contested the elections and won. Almost two years later, he rejoined the PDP after a very bitter and acrimonious divorce tango.

Meanwhile, it was time for a return match or payback time as a judicial commission on enquiry was set up to investigate Mua'zu's handling of some finances. We do not know what will happen to the outcome of the report panel, one thing is very clear that reconciliation between the two is inevitable. The PDP in Bauchi must unite, if it wants victory in 2011. They should learn from Kano where the party is sharply divided between its leaders and victory continues to elude them since 2003.

With his return back to PDP, what are gains and promises? For one, we readily fathom an improvement in the Bauchi-Katsina relations as a result of the marriage between Yuguda and Nafisat Yar'adua a few months ago. With the matrimonial relationship between the families of the two *Matawalles* of Katsina (Yar'adua) and *Mutawalle* of Bauchi (Yuguda); we expect increased understanding and friendship including marriages between the two emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate. Secondly, we expect to see and hear about more Federal Government projects in Bauchi State. By the way, did you hear anything about the wedding gift of President Yar'adua to Mallam Isa? Though unsolicited, I think the President should as quickly as possible see to the commencement of the Kafin Zaki Dam

project in Bauchi. The realization of this dam in Bauchi will create wealth, alleviate poverty as well as eradicate hunger in sections of Bauchi and Yobe States. The president should also intervene in the misunderstanding between the two states that the proposed dam has created.

Though not an engineer or an expert in dam matters, my proposal is that irrigation activities should commence from the downstream section of the dam in Yobe state. This will assure the people of Yobe that no harm will befall them as water will continue to flow. The farmers and fishermen will find out that no ill-will is intended. Senator Ahmed Ibrahim of Yobe who champions the opposition against the dam has done very well in enlightening the world about the likely consequences of the proposed dam to his people. It is time he reduces the rhetoric and cooperates for compromise as suggested above.

Another presidential gift we expect to hear is the dualisation of Bauchi-Gombe road. This will ease transportation especially with the beginning of scheduled flights to Gombe International Airport. The dualisation of the road will enhance traffic flow and reduce accidents between the two cities and in the whole North East Zone. From all indications, it is dawn in Bauchi State and we have hopes by the time the sun rise.

Finally, we congratulate Yuguda for exercising his right and free will to decide what he thinks is better for his people. We hope to see the realisation of all the good promises enunciated by Alhaji Mahmud Yayale Ahmed, the Secretary to the Government of the Federation while welcoming Yuguda back to the PDP. Our condolences to the ANPP and wish to caution them on the gathering storm in two more states. Whether the storm will lead to rainfall, we only wait and see. They must continue to pay the price of greed, selfishness, nepotism, visionless and hopeless leadership.

Police: Nigeria's endangered specie?

By Kabiru Inuwa Tsakuwa

Even though I'm not a questionable character who for some well-known reason always avoids coming into contact with the police, nevertheless, I have neither try to strikes a good personal relationship with members of the Nigeria Police Force; nor have I intend to do so in the very near future, having unjustly suffered from their high handedness and zealotry many times over.

It is true that the activities of some members of the Nigeria police force have always combine to dent their image in the overall perceptions of the average Nigerian. Every day, one is regale with one gory tale or the other of the police going beyond the line of duty. Cases of frequent accidental discharges; frequent shooting of innocent commuters on account of the most flimsy of all excuses, like the failure to give out a miserable N20 bribe; frequent practices of double speak, arrest without warrant, conniving with criminals to evade justice, close parlay with dictators, both military and civilians to perpetrates injustices as is often the case whenever Nigerians legitimately tries to agitates for their democratic rights and many other unwarranted atrocities have combined to always project them in bad light.

In fact the brutalities being committed by the Nigeria police have reached an extent that, avoiding them at all cost like some incurable communicable diseases, is in my own candid view, one of the wisest of all known Nigerian survival wisdom!

However, despite our cat and mouse

relationship which has been in existence for a long time with the police, the mere fact that we have a thoroughly compromised organization which is saddled with the responsibility of ensuring our collective security is in itself quite reassuring. Forget about the fact that, they have been recording one failure or the other in many areas, like the often disastrous incapability of containing the marauders' deadly escapades on several occasions. And forget the fact that, the men of the under world are now more organized, more discipline, more secretive and more protected ammunition-wise than the Nigeria police force.

It is on that premise alone that one can view the news about the frequent killing of police in many part of the country in active duty as becoming very disturbing. In fact the ugly trend is getting so rampant and heart rending to every patriotic Nigerian that, concerted efforts need to be garnered urgently to checkmate the ugly trends.

How come, if I may have the liberty to ask that, within the month of March alone, sixteen (16) police officers and men were reported to have been liquidated by the men of the under world just like chickens. Six in Kano, two in Anambra and eight in Edo states respectively. Why must the police forces almost always expose her men to danger with out enough safety outlets? Indeed, to me, this is an indictment of the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Mr. Mike

Okiro and all the top-echelon of the police force for their failure to provide adequate logistics, first-class co-ordinations, sophisticated and enough covering fire, to enable them discharges their onerous duties effectively.

For if such gory episodes had happened in other more organized and responsible climes, the IG of police and all those responsible for the management of internal security must have honorably resign their commission in order to give way for some fresh, talented and incorruptible officers to take over and overhaul the past deteriorating system!

Now in retrospections, if the police can be killed at will just like Sallah-rams without qualms, how about the ordinary man on the street? Who will then protect him from the now very confident and daring daredevils? Indeed, our collective security has so much been jeopardized and compromised to the extent that the hunter has effectively become the hunted and the provider of our safety and security life-line has himself become endangered specie. Our collective fate has therefore become so precariously on the line such that, only a resort to prayer for divine protections can spring the much desired magic.

Today, Nigerians can not recall easily when last they have slept soundly with their two eyes closed and if the current unfortunate trends is allowed to continue un abated, I fear that, we may one day completely loose the only luxury left to us which is sleeping

with a single eye closed, and this portends ominous trouble ahead in the polity unless the slumbering President summons enough courage to do the right thing urgently, confidently and at the most appropriate time with out fear or favour!

It is now very evident that, with the manner in which the Nigerian police rank and files are being decimated on a daily basis, one day we may all wake up to find an empty police force and I doubt if young Nigerians like me can willingly enlist in the police force in the future to replenish the depleted entity. And I doubt if parents can allow their wards to join even if they show a keen desire to do so, unless if government want resort to forced recruitments which may not be tenable under the prevailing circumstances; for the force had lost all the prestige, glamour and appeal, to attract and ensure a satisfying and rewarding life of services and sacrifices to the people completely.

In conclusion, my heart truly goes to the falling heroes who, despite the many obvious shot comings in terms of poor welfare packages, high-handedness, lack of motivations, endemic corruptions and palpable danger inherent in their job; have continued to sacrifices everything's in the services of the fatherland. May the families left behind and indeed Nigerians have the fortitudes to bear the irreparable loss? Ameen!

Tsakuwa writes from Hausawa, Sabon Titi, Bawo Road, Kano.

EDITORIAL**The Ekiti run-off**

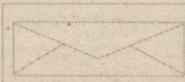
On Saturday, some parts of Ekiti will go to the polls in a re-run that would determine not just who governs the state but what party governs the state. This election is peculiar in more ways than one. The former governor, Segun Oni was ordered to vacate his seat on the orders of the appeal tribunal which ruled that the irregularities in some polling areas of the state did not give him the required votes to make him keep his seat.

On the strength of the votes validated by the tribunal ruling, the opposition candidate and his party are in a comfortable lead. If the pendulum swings for the deposed governor, it would be a plus for the ruling party at the centre because it would be the only state left of the states of the south-west which the ruling party believed it had captured but which, by court rulings have now been given back to the opposition. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) is doing everything in this weekend election to show itself as a popular party not only in the north, the traditional base of the President, but with a comfortable presence in all geo-political areas of the country. A week ago the top hierarchy of the party made what seemed like a strategic visit to Ekiti to bolster support for the party.

On its part, the opposition believes it needs a win in the remaining areas and capture the state to show its strength as the party to beat in the south-west. Already, there have been a few violent clashes over these polls in a region where electoral violence is historically common. These clashes are being used as an excuse by some to call for the mobilisation of soldiers for peace-keeping roles at this weekend's polls. We are of the opinion that this should not be necessary. A situation in which soldiers are deployed may create credibility problems for the PDP if it were to win. For, the opposition might rightly claim that it was a ploy by the deposed government buoyed by its federal might to bully it into submission. It may also create a crisis of credibility for the Independent National Electoral Commission, (INEC) with responsibility for organising this re-run.

It is for these reasons that we call on all parties involved in this run-off to play by the rules and mobilise Ekiti voters to come out and exercise their civic responsibilities in an atmosphere of peace, tranquillity and with a deep sense of civic responsibility. We believe that these polls would serve as a litmus test for the Independent National Electoral Commission to show its impartiality and neutrality. For the PDP, being the party at the centre, this is also an opportunity to show its practical commitment to electoral reform. By ensuring that these polls conclusively take place without rancour or acrimony, all parties would be sending a good signal that indeed, democracy is a game of numbers and that in every electoral contest, there is naturally a winner and a loser.

Since all parties are aspiring to govern Ekiti and give to the people the basic necessities of life, they should play by the rules knowing that whoever wins at the end of the day would have won a mandate to serve all the people of the state. Let the winners of these polls see their mandate as a call to service for all the people of Ekiti. They should realize that the people of Ekiti are more than their individual or group ambitions. They should therefore do everything to ensure that these elections do not lead to any form of bitterness or acrimony – after all, all contestants are Ekiti citizens seeking a mandate to serve the good people of Ekiti State.

**Your Letters****That bad news from Niger State**

One is saddened to hear about his home state boiling needlessly on religious ground. To me this is yet another bad news from Niger State which made headlines over Masaba, the super-polygamist. Nobody has the right whatsoever to do what my Muslim brothers allegedly did. Destroying people's properties will not help their cause.

Islam is a peaceful religion. After all, Allah (SWT) has enjoined us to call people to His path with wisdom and good admonitions. Violence has, therefore, no basis in Islam.

Muslims are expected to live according to the dictates of Quran and Sunnah. But this type of needless violence will only confirm the negative mindsets and

stereotypes some people associate with Islam.

Our leaders in the state from the governor, emirs and elites of all shades must sum up courage and be fair and just to all. They should take a lesson from former Governor Ahmed Makarfi of Kaduna State by being firm,

fair and just to all. Leaders must be bold enough to reward those that deserve to be rewarded and punish those that deserve to be punished.

I therefore wish to commend the promptness of arraignment the suspects before the courts of law and

the judiciary should be firm, fair and just to all. This is one bad news one would not want to hear occurring again in Niger State.

Abdulrahman Mohammed Alfa, No 12, Afaka Road, Layin Bappa Memorial School, Barakallahu, Kaduna.

On Halliburton bribery scandal

Allow me a space to comment on the ongoing Halliburton bribery scandal. Anybody who thinks that the present administration will reveal the identities of the culprits of the Halliburton bribery scandal and eventually bring them to justice is doing nothing but swimming in the ocean of illusion. Similar bribery scandals have been committed in the recent past

and the culprits have never been brought to account. Take the following examples: the bribery scandal of the Siemens, the scandal in the Ministry of Health, the scandal of car purchase in the House of Representatives, the scandal in the Power sector, just to mention but a few. All the culprits have gone scot-free. In fact some are being 'rewarded' with top

government appointments. Therefore, the way the previous culprits were left moving freely should give us an inkling as to how the present ones will be treated. The culprits can only be punished if they are not do-or-die politicians or excellent election riggers come 2011 elections.

Mahmud Zakaria, Abuja.

Text us on 08059100257**Yar'adua and electricity**

President Yar'adua must act fast and do something about power supply in the country. We are tired. Imagine the PHCN office having no light to sell prepaid recharge cards to customers. What a shame!

Usman Aziz, U/Rimi, Kaduna, 08028435016

Police and peace in Okene

Thank you Nigeria Police Force. Yes we now have law and order in Okene, Kogi State. I hope the Kogi State government will think of ways to help the police in sustaining the peace we now enjoy in the area. Please keep it up.

Adeiza O., 08033199921

To INEC boss

Professor Maurice Iwu deserves our gratitude for the skills he employed in the delimitation exercise of registration units/areas in Katsina State, particularly Safana local government. It will pave the way for the implementation of the electoral reforms.

Zaharadden Mohammed Runka, Safana, 08068736122

INEC and 2011

Let us use the 2011 elections to right the wrongs of the previous elections. This can be done through the organisation of credible, free and fair elections in the country. We can do it if we are sincere.

Nura Sale Tukunawa, Minjibir, 08036884498

Haba Governor Jang

Please stop behaving like an untrained soldier by making inciting comments. You said an arms cache has been seized

in Plateau State, but the police commissioner has denied that claim. You are expected to promote peace, not to destroy it.

Abdullahi Aminu, Jos, 07037605456

What we now want to hear in Plateau State is not the interception of arms cache as Governor Jang said. What we need to know is what the government is doing about genuine peace and reconciliation as well as good governance.

Dr. T. K., Kafanchan, Kaduna State, 08057097398

To Arewa leaders

The leaders of Arewa should not be selfish. They must rise and defend the region's interest and not wait until their personal interests are threatened. The people are counting on you, so don't disappoint them.

Alhaji Danladi, 08036780770

11 years to year 2020

The ruling People's Democratic Party is not serious about improving the living standards of the people of this country. About 11 years to year 2020, no vision, no plan, no money...oh God, save Nigeria from bad leaders.

Dini Manchester, Kankarofi, Kano, 08035347384

G20 and Yar'adua

Mr. President must have made the statement that he is sad over the non invitation of Nigeria to the G20 summit in London. As another summit is set for September, the government needs to be more serious on its infrastructural development. Till then the world will never take Nigeria serious.

Babakura Abba, Corp Member, FCT, 08038523177

Opinion

Of University of Abuja council and new VC

The university council is a very important organ in the workings of the university system and administration. As the highest decision-making body of the university, its absence usually leaves a vacuum in institutional developments. This explains why Nigerian universities had remained uncomfortable during the period that the councils were dissolved by the administration of Alhaji Umaru Yar'adua, shortly after he came to power in 2007. Consequent upon that dissolution, promotion of staff in the federal universities, particularly, had been suspended until now that the universities have started attending to it.

A couple of months ago, the Federal Government reconstituted the councils and on 10th February 2009 precisely, inaugurated those of 27 Federal universities, 21 Federal polytechnics and 21 Federal colleges of education. Perhaps, because of its status as the only federal university in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, the University of Abuja, appeared to have stolen the show at the Sheraton Hotel and Towers, Abuja where many trooped in to witness the occasion and give support to their council members. What also appeared to make the University of Abuja Council thick was that it was headed by a one-time University of Ibadan Chairman of Council and Pro-chancellor, Professor (Senator) Iya Abubakar. With Abubakar as members were Prof. Egiri Ejembi, Mrs. Ify Ozoani, Senator Haliru Idris and Alhaji Moshood A. Adegoke Salvador. The Vice Chancellor of the University, Professor Nuhu Yaqub, OFR; Deputy Vice Chancellor (Administration), Professor James O. Omole; Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic), Professor Joe Nwabueze and Dean, Veterinary Medicine, Professor O. P. Ajagbonaa were members as well.

Others include the Director, Development Office, Professor Mabel Ewvwerhoma; Dean,

By Adam S. Jude

Faculty of Sciences, Professor S. Kakulu; Dean, Student Affairs, Dr. Suleiman Muhammed; the Chairman of the Uniabuja chapter of the Academic Staff Union of

Universities (ASUU), Dr. Abu Malam and the Principal Assistant Registrar (PAR) in the Registrar's Office, Dr. Idris Jibrin, representing the congregation.

At the inauguration of the council members, the Minister of Education, Dr. Sam Egwu, on behalf of President Umaru Yar'adua, aptly tasked them thus: "The subsector is at present beset with some inadequacies which affect its capabilities for the actualisation of government's policy objective for national development. Problems regarding declining academic standard, inadequate and crumbling infrastructure, unstable academic calendar, examination malpractices and inadequate deployment of modern innovations such as ICT, have all impacted negatively on the development of tertiary education in the country". The Minister could have included cultism, immorality, fraudulent admission exercises, etc, as part of the problems besetting this subsector and yet would not have exhausted the list.

Indeed, the problems of education in Nigeria are multifarious, with each part having its own peculiarity. Though the University of Abuja, for instance, could be said to have overcome some of these aforementioned problems since unstable academic calendar, examination malpractices, cultism, etc have been fought almost to a stand-still, the Minister's declaration of "inadequate and crumbling infrastructure", seems to point to the University of Abuja, specifically.

It is sad to note that for twenty-one years, this University was restricted to what it calls the Mini-Campus, Gwagwalada, which is over-

bloated and characterized by crumbling infrastructure - features which typify it as nothing but a "glorified secondary school". The lukewarm attitude of successive federal governments and the non-chalance of the University administrators towards improving its structural and physical development could be blamed considerably for the above deplorable state. In other words, while paltry funds were earmarked for the institution, the University authorities never cared to effectively utilize it to develop its infrastructures.

However, as from 2004, when Professor Nuhu O. Yaqub, OFR, came in as Vice Chancellor, remarkable changes began to set in. With unequal determination and enthusiasm on his part and that of the entire management, he succeeded in not only making the Mini-Campus more conducive to learning, but moving the University to the Main Campus, situated at Airport Road, Giri, Abuja. This is a feat which in the last 21 years, had never been achieved by his predecessors.

Now academic and administrative activities have begun on this Main Campus in earnest, since March 2009. The Faculties of Arts and Sciences, the Central Administration Block, etc are some of the beautiful structures erected here and now in use. More faculties we are told are due to join soon. Most of my fellow students that I have spoken to are of the conviction that one of the best things that has happened to them is the coming of this dynamic vice chancellor, Professor Nuhu O. Yaqub, who has also been able to exorcise the evil of cultism on campus; reduced corruption and indiscipline in their various ramifications to the barest minimum; established four new faculties such as Engineering, Agriculture, Medicine and Vet. Medicine and helped to steady the University's academic calendar. There is more!

Now, this VC who has achieved thus far is leaving the University of Abuja, precisely by

May 31 2009, when his tenure of office expires. The University is looking forward to having a personality who can fit into his big shoes as a vice chancellor. And this appears to be one of the main tasks of the Professor Iya Abubakar-led Council now: Shopping for a new vice chancellor for the University. Already an advertorial has been placed in some national dailies calling for competent and able individuals to occupy this soon-to-be vacant position.

I am not in a position to know how far the response to this advert has gone, as a student, I only hope that it would be impressive. With the calibre of people in the Uniabuja Council, I am confident that competent Nigerians, who have the interest of the university at heart, would be appointed.

Indeed, there are a few universities in the country now whose Vice Chancellors would be leaving office this year. They include Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria; Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU), Bauchi; Federal University of Technology, Yola and University of Benin, etc. We only pray that those who would be appointed to replace these vice chancellors would be prepared to do more than their predecessors. But perhaps it is not about prayers alone.

The Council needs to do a thorough job to come up with these people. We are tired of having vice chancellors, who are reluctant to add value to what their predecessors have left or who take pleasure in undoing what their predecessors have done. It is time for our universities to stop crawling and walk to join the rest of the developed world. Good development always starts from the initiatives and determinations of good leaders. Since universities are said to be the microcosm of the larger society, let good governance start from here.

Jude is of the Political Science Department, University of Abuja.

What's the fate of Ajaokuta Steel Company?

In December 2008, President Umaru Yar'adua did a cabinet reshuffle with a view to removing the dead woods and replacing them with some dynamic, diligent and result-oriented members. It was this exercise that moved Mrs. Diezani Alison-Madueke from the ministry of transport to that of mines and steel development. It is amazing that four months after her assumption of office, she has not deemed it necessary to pay a familiarisation visit to Ajaokuta Steel Complex and National Iron Ore Mining Project, Itakpe (NIOMP) both of which are the key parastatals under her ministry. There is no gainsaying the fact that the justification for the existence of the ministry depends largely on the life of these projects. However, shortly after taking over the office, she attended seminars that border on mines and steel in far away South Africa and Canada. Further more; she has set up a re-structuring committee to down-size the staff strength by 80% without providing answers to some fundamental questions of:

1. Which way forward for these projects of enormous potentials for transforming the nation's technological and economic base?
2. When the salary arrears of over 7 months shall be paid to the staff?
3. When and how the entitlement of the staff that may be affected by the ill-conceived disengagement exercise shall be paid to them?
4. What manner of re-branding Nigeria shall her ministry reflect?

While shying away from addressing the thought provoking questions, the Minister has been busy casting aspersions on the staff in her meetings and on the pages of newspapers for non-productivity. She needs to be informed that the non-performance by the companies is due to some misconceived and corruption-centred conduct of the ministry and her agents over the years.

During the regime of former President Shehu Shagari, the conception of the earlier regimes of Gen. Yakubu Gowon and the first coming of Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo to revolutionize Nigeria's technological growth was significantly translated into practical terms within the first tenure of his

By S.O. Odege

regime. The Administration built Ajaokuta Steel Complex to a level of 98% technical readiness. The units such as Wire Rod and Light Section Mills, Repair Shop Complex, Thermal Power Plant with the capacity of generating 110mw electricity, Utility Department among others were completed, commissioned and put into operation. Mining activity was also in top gear in NIOMP Itakpe. During the period, the foreign contractors such as Tiaj Promo Export (TPE), B+b plc, FFN Plc testified to the sense of ingenuity, hard-work and discipline demonstrated by Nigerian workers. Emoluments of staff/workers were paid promptly.

Beyond 1983, intrigues at high level set in and coupled with the down turn in the Nigerian economy which affected the funding of the projects, the work in the plant site slowed down steadily until 1996 when the contract with the main contractor, TPE came to a halt. All the past Nigerian Heads of state/ government visited the steel plant and expressed their conviction that Ajaokuta steel plant is actually the bedrock of Nigeria's industrialization, but lacked the required commitment. During the periods, the company was used as haven of unbridled corruption, reckless financial embezzlement and personalization of public goods by Executives in the parent ministry and other top government functionaries.

Chief Olusegun Obasanjo's return to government under a democracy in the period 1999-2007 witnessed a grand design to kill the company to the best advantage of the on-going huge investment on a steel company in Ogun State. In the year 2003, Solgas Energy Ltd whose sponsor was said to be Gen. Obasanjo's son, Mr. Gbenga and whose history had no link to any steel venture was given the concession to complete, reactivate, commission and operate the gigantic plant. The dangerous level of gambling by the Solgas Energy Ltd with this Nigeria's huge asset engineered the massive protest by the patriotic staff which led to the helpless termination of the concession. When it was obvious that the contract was

due for termination, the same masquerade that brought Solgas quickly went for an Indian company initially called ISPAT. This company, in the face of some investigations and constructive criticisms by some prominent Nigerians, shamelessly metamorphosed into Global Infrastructure Holdings cum Global Infrastructure Nigeria and entered into a corruption-driven concession agreement with the ministry. Nevertheless, the Indian company was able to prove to Nigeria that Nigerians can be capable if enabled and that Ajaokuta steel complex can be a gold-mine if properly and honestly managed. And that contrary to the erroneous opinion of some unpatriotic, un-informed and self-centred people, Ajaokuta steel complex is not a scrap. The company made billions of naira from the operation of the Rolling Mills, Thermal Power Plant, Repair Shop Complex, Steel Township with the full support of the Utility Department. At the time this company sensed that their inability to meet some conditions under the agreement shall lead to an irrevocable termination, they started exploiting the open ended sections of the agreement thereby wrecking havoc on both Ajaokuta Steel Complex and National Iron Ore Mining Project by cannibalizing and carting away very valuable equipment and spare parts from these companies to destinations of their choice, inclusive of Delta Steel Company which now belongs to the Global Infrastructure Holdings.

As the immediate victims of the series of havoc done to Ajaokuta Steel Company and looking at the remote consequences on the nation, Nigeria, the workforce and notable members of the public complained, but to the deaf ears of the ministry until the Presidency got to know of the shady business. Our listening President immediately ordered the setting up of Magaji Inuwa committee which investigated and confirmed the wreckage and several other acts of criminality perpetuated by the Indian company. Consequently, President Umaru Yar'adua in consonance with his due process mantra ordered the termination of the criminal agreement with the global

infrastructure holdings Ltd. This brought about the full return of Ajaokuta steel complex and National Iron Ore Mining Project (NIOMP), Itakpe to the Federal Government in February 2008.

It is regretful to note that more than one year after the agreement was terminated; the ministry is yet to fashion out a way forward. On the contrary, the Hon. Minister is working assiduously to actualize her ambition of sacking about 80% of both ASCL and NIOMP staff who protested against the criminal activities in the companies. If the singular act of protesting against evils by the work force can be seen as a crime, the Hon minister may want to inform the nation on the fate of those top ministry officials and their agents who midwived the drafting and the signing of the unpatriotic, open ended and corruption-driven concession agreement that traded out Nigeria's huge investments. She may also wish to inform the nation as well on the fate of those top-level government functionaries who took cover under the Ajaokuta steel complex to bargain for millions of naira bribe from the concessionaire.

It is very saddening to recall that in December 2004, a massive disengagement of staff was carried out as directed by the ministry. Today, those so disengaged are suffering the non-payment of 28 months pension arrears, having been left jobless for over one year before their gratuity was paid in January 2006. Many of those Nigerians died of pains, frustration and curable minor ailments within that year. What an inhuman treatment?

I sincerely urge the Hon. Minister to accept the fact that the provision of funds, responsible management, the right technical partner and enabling environment which are the bane of the companies are her responsibilities. I have the conviction that Nigerian workers in both Ajaokuta steel complex and NIOMP in collaboration with identifiable few foreign experts can make Nigeria proud as a major producer of steel and its products in the world.

Barr. Odege, Secretary, Dynamic Wheelers Club, writes from Okene, Kogi State.

TRUST INTERNATIONAL

AFRICA REPORT

Somali pirates release Lebanese ship

Somali pirates have released one more ship but still held 19 others on Monday, as foreign navies chased sea brigands around the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean at the height of the "hijacking season".

The Togo-flagged Lebanese-owned cargo ship MV Sea Horse, captured a week ago while on its way to pick up food for the World Food Programme (WFP), was released on Friday, a spokesman for the UN agency told AFP.

"We have heard from the operators that it was released on Friday," Peter Smerdon said, adding that the exact whereabouts of the vessel were not immediately clear.

Andrew Mwangura, who heads the East African Seafarers Assistance Programme, said that a ransom of 100,000 dollars (77,100 euros) may have been paid.

The Lebanese operator, Sealink SARL, said the ship's owner was a Syrian national and could not confirm the amount of the ransom.

Mwangura also said that a Maltese-flagged bulk carrier was attacked about 30 miles (50 kilometres) off the coast of Yemen early Monday but managed to escape from 12 pirates on two small skiffs who opened fire.

NATO naval ships Sunday foiled a pirate attack on a Norwegian tanker, catching up with the would-be hijackers after a seven-hour pursuit.

The dramatic overnight chase in the Gulf of Aden came after seven pirates on a skiff tried to board the 80,000-tonne MV Front Ardennes but fled when foreign ships approached. First on the scene was a British Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessel, the Wave Knight, but it was a Canadian frigate, the Winnipeg, which then gave chase.

"The pirates who initially had weapons and what appeared to be climbing gear threw all of that overboard," said NATO maritime spokesman Commander Chris Davies.

"When the Winnipeg finally caught up and stopped them.... I am told there was sufficient evidence that these were pirates." The suspects were held and questioned but could not be charged with any offence because doing so was not within Canada's jurisdiction.

The MV Sea Horse's quick release still left 19 foreign vessels and more than 300 seamen in the hands of Somalia's growing fleet of ransom-hunting pirates. The latest addition to the pirates' haul was a Belgian stone-carrier seized on Saturday north of the Seychelles in the Indian Ocean.

A reconnaissance flight by a Spanish naval helicopter revealed that the MV Pompei was towing a much smaller vessel — thought to be a pirate boat — and was heading towards the Somali coast. The MV Pompei would likely arrive there Wednesday, said Belgian officials.

"Like all hostage cases, there are several possibilities that will be examined in the coming days," said Jaak Raes of Belgium's crisis management centre. Government ministers would discuss the matter on Monday, he added. The captain of the vessel is Dutch, and the rest of the crew comprises two Belgians, three Filipinos and four Croatians.

Dutch marines, meanwhile, thwarted a pirate attack on a Greek-owned tanker in the Gulf of Aden on Saturday, freeing 16 Yemeni fishermen in the process. A Dutch defence ministry spokesman said a British naval vessel intervened, keeping its guns trained on the pirates until Dutch commandos arrived under NATO orders to board.

"The marines found 25 people on board, nine of them suspected pirates," spokesman Robin Middel told AFP. The remaining 16 were Yemeni fishermen.

They seized and destroyed seven AK47 assault rifles and a rocket launcher. but the suspected pirates were later released.

DR Congo opposition party demands leader's release

A small opposition party in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Union of Republicans (UR), yesterday pressed authorities to free its leader, who has been detained for more than six weeks.

"The UR demands the immediate and unconditional release of its national president Norbert Luyeye," said the party in a statement, adding that without news it "fears very much for his life and physical and mental health." Luyeye was on March 4 detained by the security services at

Limete in east Kinshasa, two weeks after he organized a peaceful march against the presence of Rwandan and Ugandan troops on DR Congo soil, according to his party.

The Kinshasa government invited Ugandan troops to help them oust Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels last November, and also enlisted Rwanda's help in tackling Rwandan rebels in January. The Rwandans began pulling out in February, while the Ugandan troops withdrew in mid-March. However, the joint military operations with

its neighbours led to protests in Kinshasa from people who still considered Rwanda and Uganda as invasion forces after both countries gave military backing to DR Congo rebels in a war across the vast country from 1998 to 2003.

The UR, which is too small to be represented in parliament, said that "on the day he was detained, Mr Luyeye was brutalised and beaten up by agents" of the National Intelligence Agency (ANR). "Clothes returned to his wife were torn and stained with blood."



Singer and actress Madonna and her son David Banda leave the Kabbalah Center in New York City. The Malawi Supreme Court will next month hear an appeal by the US pop diva over the star's failed bid to adopt a second child.

South Sudan clashes leave more than 170 dead

Clashes between rival ethnic groups in south Sudan have left more than 170 people dead, a district official said yesterday. Armed fighters from the Murle ethnic group in remote Akobo county in eastern Jonglei state attacked Lou Nuer villages over the weekend, county commissioner Doyak Chol said. "We have found 177 bodies dead, and we are expecting many more, even as high as 300 in total," Chol told AFP by satellite telephone. "Many are unaccounted for, whole villages have been burnt to the ground. "The destruction is terrible." It was the second outbreak of deadly violence between the two ethnic groups in Jonglei in a month. In March, as many as 750 people were killed in clashes in

Pibor county further south.

Chol said that the areas attacked had been left vulnerable after a government-backed disarmament campaign collected guns from one area, but not from other rival groups.

"The Murle came with guns, but the people here had nothing to defend themselves with," he said. "I think that this was a revenge attack," he added. Jonglei state was one of the areas hardest hit in Sudan's two-decade-long north-south civil war, which ended in 2005.

But the state remains awash with small arms and there are frequent clashes between rival groups. Authorities struggle to maintain order in the sprawling state, which is the size of Austria and Switzerland combined.

Malawi to hear appeal on Madonna's failed adoption

The Malawi Supreme Court will next month hear an appeal by US pop diva Madonna over the star's failed bid to adopt a second child, a court official said yesterday.

High court registrar Joseph Chigona said three judges in Blantyre will hear the appeal filed earlier this month after a court turned down Madonna's request to adopt a three-year-old girl.

"The hearing is set for May 4," he said. Madonna's Malawian lawyer Alan Chinula said he had filed several grounds for appeal, including that Madonna, who already adopted a Malawian toddler David Banda three years ago, would have given Chifundo Mercy James a "good life".

Lilongwe high court Judge Esmie Chombo threw out the application, saying allowing the adoption to go ahead could inadvertently expose Malawian children to the threat of human traffickers.

Zuma urges big turnout in S/Africa polls

South Africa's ruling party leader Jacob Zuma yesterday called for a big turnout for this week's general elections, which are expected to launch him to the presidency. "Vote in numbers to give the party the authority and power to change things," Zuma told a meeting with the transport industry.

"If people don't vote for ANC, they will deny the party a majority, which will mean it can't take correct decisions."

With elections just two days away, the leader of the African National Congress (ANC) was enjoying a wave of publicity and public enthusiasm following the surprise appearance of anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela at a rally Sunday.

Even though the ANC is expected to easily win the general elections, 90-year-old Mandela gave a moral boost to the party which has been ripped apart by in-fighting and clouded by allegations of corruption against Zuma.

"My prediction is that the ANC going to get over 60 percent of the votes," said political analyst Aubrey Matshiqi.

Trust International

FOREIGN & DIPLOMATIC

UN unearths Israel war crimes in Gaza

Investigators mandated by the United Nations have reported that Israel did commit serious war crimes against an unarmed civilian population in the 22-day-long military assault on the Gaza Strip.

The U.N. Human Rights Council, in a report released in the third week of March, has concluded that Israel violated a range of fundamental human rights, including the targeting of civilians and the use of children as "human shields". The council has called for the immediate lifting of the Israeli blockade of Gaza which disallows the supply of desperately needed humanitarian aid. It also called for an international investigation into the Israeli assault.

Radhika Coomaraswamy, the U.N. Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, states in her report, which forms part of the larger U.N. report, that civilian targets, "particularly homes and their occupants, seem to have taken the brunt of the attacks, but schools and medical facilities have also been hit".

She cites one case in which Israeli soldiers shot a father after summoning him out of his house. They then turned their fire on the occupants of the house, killing a son and wounding the mother and three other siblings. She highlights another incident in Tal-al-Hawa town, where Israeli soldiers forced an 11-year-old boy to act as a human shield for several hours.

Other U.N. investigators, who included specialists on the right to health, food, housing and education, and violence against women, give similar reports citing the excessive use of force by the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) during its assault from December 27 to January 17.

The report by Richard Falk, the noted expert on international law and the U.N.'s Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, concludes that Israel subjected unarmed civilians in Gaza to an "inhuman form of warfare that kills, maims and inflicts mental harm".

He describes the 22-day bombardment as "a massive assault on a densely populated urbanised setting". More than 1,400 Palestinians were killed and 100,000 people have been left homeless. Two months after the assault, they are still living in flimsy tents, braving the elements.

Falk in his report calls for an independent experts group

By Charles Onunaiju

to probe possible war crimes in Gaza and suggests that the U.N. Security Council set up an ad hoc criminal tribunal to establish accountability for such crimes.

Falk emphasises that Israel's military offensive in Gaza "would seem to constitute a war crime of the greatest magnitude under international law". Israel is not a signatory to the Rome Treaty establishing the International Criminal Court.

Falk points out that the Geneva Convention requires armies at war to distinguish between military targets and civilians. Israel claims that in a densely populated place such as Gaza it was difficult to distinguish between civilian and military targets. Falk says in his report that if it was really the case, then "launching the attacks is inherently unlawful". Falk, like Radhika Coomaraswamy, reports that Israel targeted "schools, mosques and ambulances" and used prohibited weapons, including white phosphorus, in its military offensive.

Falk confirms that it was Israel that broke the truce with Hamas and should therefore not claim the right of self-defence. According to his report, the war on Gaza was a "crime against peace". This was the principle charge against the Nazi leadership at the historic Nuremberg trials.

The IDF's claim that it observed discipline and high moral standards during the military offensive has been rebutted by Israeli soldiers themselves. Accounts by IDF soldiers who were on the ground have backed up reports of atrocities against the civilian populace. Their testimonies have been widely reported in the Israeli media.

A testimony by an Infantry squad leader, reported in the Haaretz newspaper, graphically describes an incident in which an Israeli sharpshooter shot a Palestinian mother and her two young children in cold blood. Another Haaretz report was about Israeli soldiers describing the ransacking and destruction of civilian property by the IDF in Gaza.

Israeli soldiers, who have had the courage and the conscience to speak out, have said that the general "atmosphere" among the troops was that the lives of Palestinians were "very, very less important than the lives of our soldiers".

An Israeli squadron leader



Israeli Prime Minister, Mr Benjamin Netanyahu

in his testimony said that the orders from above "was to enter a house, with an armoured vehicle, to break the door down and starting shooting inside... I call it murder... Higher ups said that it is permissible because everyone left in Gaza City is culpable because they didn't run away.

I don't really understand. On the one hand they have really no place to flee to, but on the other hand, they are telling us that they hadn't fled, so it is their fault." The squadron leader also recounted how IDF soldiers routinely scrawled anti-Arab graffiti on the walls of Palestinian homes.

The Israeli government has reluctantly ordered an inquiry. This happened only after Haaretz first published the stories in late March, three weeks after the testimonies had reached the government. Meanwhile, Ehud Barak, the former Defence Minister, continues to insist that the Israeli army is the "most moral army in the world". A report in the Israeli media revealed that the IDF had approved of its soldiers wearing T-shirts with racist slogans against Arabs.

A T-shirt for infantry snipers carries the slogan "Better use Durex" (a brand of condoms) next to a picture of a dead Palestinian baby and his weeping mother. Another T-shirt, sported by an Israeli sharpshooter, shows the picture of a pregnant Palestinian woman with a bull's-eye superimposed on her belly. The slogan on the shirt was: "One shot, 2 kills". The pictures of

the soldiers wearing these shirts have been published worldwide.

The Guardian released three documentary films on the carnage in Gaza on March 22. The films, by Clancy Chassay, provide more graphic evidence on the atrocities the IDF committed against civilians. The footage shows Palestinian teenagers being used as human shields, white phosphorus being deployed against hospitals and schools, and drones being used in the indiscriminate targeting of civilians, including women and children. One family, the Samunis, lost 29 members after Israeli soldiers forced them into a building, which they then targeted.

In the last week of March, the New York-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) added its voice to the rising international demands that Israel be investigated for war crimes.

A report released by the HRW says that Israel fired munitions "deliberately or recklessly" over densely populated areas. The HRW also calls for international investigations into Israel's use of white phosphorus during the offensive. The report points out that the chemical ignites on contact with oxygen and can burn away flesh from the bone.

The report emphasises that the use of white phosphorus was in "violation of the laws of war". The HRW has urged the U.N. to conduct speedy investigations on the use of white phosphorus and asked the U.S. to stop all military aid to Israel.

Dr. Nassif Abu Shaaban, working in Gaza's Shifa Hospital, told Al Jazeera that many bodies with burns were brought in. "Complete families came to us, burned to death," said Shabaan. Israel initially denied using white phosphorus but in the face of overwhelming evidence the IDF said that it would conduct an internal investigation into the "improper" use of the chemical.

A Palestinian being treated for white phosphorus burns at Nasser Hospital in the Gaza Strip. The chemical ignites on contact with oxygen and can burn away flesh.

Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi, the IDF's Chief of Staff, has said that his "moral army" would never intentionally harm Palestinian civilians. Amira Haas, the Haaretz correspondent who has been reporting from the occupied territories for years, wrote in the third week of March that one of the rules of Israeli military engagement during the Gaza assault was "Open fire also upon rescue".

According to her report, a handwritten note in Hebrew detailing this instruction was found in a house in Gaza that was occupied by the IDF during Operation Cast Lead. Many reports during the military operation described IDF soldiers shooting at Palestinian and Red Cross rescuers. As a result, many of the injured civilians and the dead could not be evacuated. Hundreds of Palestinians are reported to have bled to death for lack of medical attention. Bodies lay unattended for up to two weeks in Gaza.

Only the Barack Obama administration has seen it fit to jump to Israel's defence. The U.S. State Department's spokesperson, echoing the views of the Israeli government, has characterised Falk's report as "biased".

At the height of the war, the U.S. abstained from voting on the resolution calling for an "immediate and durable" ceasefire and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza.

But the George W. Bush administration had no compunctions about the bloodletting by the Israeli forces. Much of the weaponry for the IDF was any way of American origin, paid for by the American taxpayer.

However, Israel seems to have been finally put on notice by the international community. A group of 16 judges and legal luminaries - most of them former members of war crimes' tribunals formed to try those responsible for crimes against humanity in Rwanda, East Timor and Yugoslavia - have written an open letter, "Find the Truth about the Gaza War", to the U.N. Secretary-General and the Security Council.

It urges the formation of an international commission to investigate the violation of international law by "both sides". The judges declared that the events in Gaza "have shocked us to the core". The letter demands that the proposed commission "provide recommendations as to the appropriate prosecution of those responsible for gross violation of the law" in Gaza.

Trust International

MIDDLE EAST

Iran orders probe of jailed US journalist's case

Iran's judiciary ordered a full investigation yesterday into the case of an American journalist imprisoned for allegedly spying for the U.S. and allowed the woman's parents to visit her for the first time since she was sentenced to eight years in prison.

The developments in the case of Roxana Saberi appear to be the latest signs that some senior Iranian officials want to ensure tensions over the case do not derail moves toward a dialogue with the Obama administration to break a 30-year diplomatic deadlock between the two countries.

In Washington, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton renewed calls for Iran to release Saberi said she hoped for positive action from the judiciary chief's investigation order.

"We believe she should be freed immediately, that the charges against her are baseless and that she has been subjected to a process that has been non-transparent, unpredictable (and) arbitrary," Clinton told reporters.

Saberi, who was born in the U.S. and grew up in Fargo, North Dakota, was convicted of espionage last week after a one-day trial behind closed doors. Her Iranian-born father, Reza, told The Associated Press that he and his wife visited their daughter in Evin prison north of Tehran.

"She seems to be OK," he said. "She was looking forward for the appeal because she knows that this kind of verdict was too heavy for her."

The judiciary chief's order came a day after President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad sent a letter to Tehran's chief prosecutor urging him to ensure Saberi be allowed a full defense during her appeal. It was a rare request from an Iranian president and came at a time when President Barack Obama has been seeking engagement with Iran's leaders.

However, Iran's Foreign Ministry took a swipe Monday at President Barack Obama, saying "those who studied law" should not comment on the case without seeing the context. It was a clear reference to Obama, who has a law degree from Harvard University and taught constitutional law at the University of Chicago before becoming president.

Some analysts have said the mixed messages emerging from Iran may be an indication of political divisions in the leadership, with hard-liners in the judiciary trying to hamper government moves toward closer relations with the U.S. by pressing the Saberi case.

Saberi had been living in Iran for six years and worked as a freelance reporter for news organizations including National Public Radio and the British Broadcasting Corp. Because Saberi's father was born in Iran, she received Iranian citizenship.

Bin Laden deputy slams Obama plan for Afghanistan

Al-Qaida's No. 2 leader has ridiculed President Barack Obama's plan to increase troop numbers in Afghanistan in a new Internet audio recording released yesterday. Ayman al-Zawahri also urged al-Qaida in Iraq to "break the borders" of neighboring countries and liberate Jerusalem from the Israelis, whom he called "crusader invaders."

Al-Zawahri's comments were posted on a militant Web site yesterday and came as the Obama administration plans to increase troop levels in Afghanistan and start withdrawing forces from Iraq.

"What Obama is doing by increasing the troops is adding more fuel to the fire that is already burning," he said.

Osama bin Laden's top lieutenant also criticized Pakistan's U.S.-allied government for its attempts to make deals with Muslim fundamen-

talists along its border with Afghanistan in hopes of draining support for extremists.

He accused Obama of encouraging Pakistan's government to make such deals, calling the strategy "a delusion." "Obama is cheating you, the problem will not end there. It will escalate," he said.

The U.S. has expressed concern about the Pakistani government's peace efforts in the region. Al-Zawahri also warned the Obama administration against any cooperation with Iran in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

"The more you cooperate with Iran, the more hatred you will generate from Muslims," he said. In the 41-minute recording, al-Zawahri also criticized Egypt's mediation in talks between rival Palestinian factions. He said those talks are aimed at pressuring the Islamic Hamas group to accept peace with Israel.



Reza Saberi, right, and his wife Akiko, parents of U.S. journalist Roxana Saberi, who has been convicted of spying and sentenced to eight years in prison, sit at their home in Tehran yesterday.

Bomber strikes US soldiers meeting Iraqi officials

A suicide bomber wearing an Iraqi military uniform struck a U.S. military delegation visiting the mayor of violence-wracked Baqouba yesterday, injuring at least eight American soldiers and nine others.

Police officials claimed the attacker was disguised as a soldier — a tactic used in the past to pass through checkpoints — but U.S. forces have faced attacks from actual members of the security forces as well.

In February, two police officers opened fire on U.S. soldiers in the northern city of Mosul, killing one and raising worries about insurgent infiltration in security forces.

The Baqouba attack occurred as a group of Iraqi officials, led by Mayor

Abdullah al-Hiyali, waited at the main gate of the municipal building to greet the U.S. soldiers, said Raad al-Dahalaki, the deputy mayor.

"When the U.S. soldiers left their vehicles and started to walk toward the building, a man wearing a military uniform mingled with the crowd of U.S. soldiers and Iraqi policemen and set off the explosion," said al-Dahalaki. The U.S. military said at least eight soldiers were wounded in the blast.

Iraqi security officials said at least nine civilians were also hurt. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to media.

Baqouba, 35 miles (60 kilometers) northeast of Baghdad, is the capital of the Diyala province —

which remains one of the centers for the Sunni insurgency despite an overall drop in violence around the country.

U.S. and Iraqi security forces have stepped up offensives in Baqouba and the northern city of Mosul in attempts to break the last insurgent strongholds.

In Baghdad, more than 60 mourners attended the funerals of three jewelry store owners killed Sunday in daylight robberies by gunmen carrying weapons with silencers. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki ordered a special task force to investigate the slayings.

Iraqi authorities are under pressure to show a decisive response to security threats as U.S. forces increasingly pull back from frontline roles. Although

violence is sharply down compared with past years, a wave of high-profile attacks have brought worries that the relative calm may not last.

An insurgent network linked to al-Qaida, the Islamic State of Iraq, claimed responsibility for one of the largest attacks this month in a statement posted on jihadist Web sites Sunday, according to the SITE Intelligence Group, which monitors militant claims and activities.

The Islamic State of Iraq said it carried out last Thursday's suicide attack on an Iraqi military base in Habbaniyah, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) west of Baghdad. Iraqi officials said the blast injured at least 38 Iraqi soldiers — reversing earlier reports of fatalities.

Israel protests to Switzerland over Iran meeting

Israel recalled its ambassador to Switzerland yesterday for "consultations" to protest the Swiss president's meeting with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad ahead of a U.N.-sponsored racism conference in Geneva.

It also summoned the head of Switzerland's diplomatic mission to Israel, Monika Schmutz-Kirgoz, for an "urgent discussion" to convey Israel's deep displeasure with the meeting Sunday between Ahmadinejad and Swiss President Hans-Rudolf Merz. "The meeting between the president of a democratic country with an infamous Holocaust-denier such as the president of Iran, who calls for Israel's destruction, does not mesh with the values that Switzerland represents and that are supposed to be represented at the U.N. conference on racism," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Ahmadinejad has suggested the Holocaust never happened and has called repeatedly for Israel's destruction. He is

scheduled to address the conference later Monday, coincidentally as Israel marks its annual Holocaust Remembrance Day. In a radio interview Monday, the Swiss president defended his meeting with Ahmadinejad and said criticism was unjustified.

"Switzerland is neutral and not part of any alliance," Merz said, adding that it is part of his country's national tradition to offer its mediation services. Swiss Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Nadine Olivieri said Merz "sharply and unmistakably condemned" Ahmadinejad's denial of the Holocaust and his remarks on the right of Israel to exist when the two leaders met Sunday evening. Switzerland represents U.S. diplomatic interests in Iran since the two countries broke off diplomatic relations in 1980. President Barack Obama said Sunday that Washington would be in contact with Iran about jailed American journalist Roxana Saberi through its Swiss intermediaries.

Trust International

ASIA REPORT

Doctor still considering Indian twins' operation

A prominent Singapore doctor said yesterday it was "premature" to rule out an operation to separate Indian twin sisters joined at the head despite a warning from his own country's health minister.

Neurosurgeon Keith Goh, who had been asked by the state government of Andhra Pradesh in India to separate five-year-old twins Vani and Veena, said he was still in discussions with doctors and officials in Hyderabad on the case.

Goh said he would not be able to confirm any surgery until more thorough investigations had been carried out. But he disagreed with published remarks by Singapore's Health Minister Khaw Boon Wan cautioning that an operation is more likely to harm the patients than improve their situation.

"I think that Mr Khaw is entitled to his opinion... but that it is a little too premature to close our minds to the possibility of doing such an operation, especially when the full evaluation and all the investigations have not been done," Goh told AFP. He also disagreed that separating conjoined twins amounted to changing the course of nature.

"Nature never intended for any of us, humans or animals, to be conjoined to another individual," Goh said. The Indian twins "represent a most extreme form of congenital malformation and deformity, and should be considered an aberration of what nature intended," he said.

"If such patients ask for help to correct their abnormalities, I feel that we, as doctors, owe it to them to see what we can do."

Health Minister Khaw said in remarks car-

ried by the *Straits Times* yesterday that in certain situations, it may be better not to operate on conjoined twins.

He also said that in some cases, surgeons have to pick one twin to die in order to save the other, and the survivor is often left with brain damage. In 2001, Goh was involved in a 97-hour operation that separated 11-month-old Nepalese twins Ganga and Jamuna Shrestha, who were born with fused skulls.

The surgery left Ganga with brain damage and Jamuna unable to walk. It also left a hole in Jamuna's skull covered only by a layer of skin.

Ganga survived for seven years before dying last year from respiratory problems at a hospital in Kathmandu.

Goh was also involved in the tragic operation of 29-year-old Iranian twins — Ladan and Laleh Bijani — in July 2003. Both women, joined at the head, died from severe blood loss following a 52-hour operation.

"Let me point out that Ganga and Jamuna both survived the separation surgery, and that Ganga's survival after the surgery was seven years, dying only because of a chest infection," Goh said. "Jamuna is still surviving and is a happy, intelligent and delightful child, although she has some limb weakness."

Goh said his preliminary assessment of Vani and Veena showed their clinical condition is very similar to that of the Nepalese twins.

He believes a "better outcome" can be achieved with the Indian pair because "the collective experiences and knowledge of all the centres worldwide which have done such conjoined twins surgeries is much more than in 2001."



Singaporean neurosurgeon, Keith Goh (R) greets five year old conjoined twins Vani and Veena while Indian surgeon A. Goh, who had been asked by the state government of Andhra Pradesh in India to separate the five-year-old twins, said he was still in discussions with doctors and officials in Hyderabad on the case

Thai PM rules out talks with exiled Thaksin

Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva yesterday ruled out holding any talks with exiled former leader Thaksin Shinawatra after clashes between troops and anti-government protesters last week.

His government had earlier this month raised the possibility of negotiations with the fugitive ex-premier, who was toppled in a military coup in 2006 that triggered three years of political unrest.

But on Tuesday it issued a warrant for Thaksin's arrest accusing him of inciting violence, following the storming of an Asian summit by his

supporters and subsequent riots in Bangkok which left two people dead.

Thaksin is living in exile, mainly in Dubai, to avoid a jail sentence for corruption. The government cancelled his passport earlier this week but it emerged that Nicaragua had granted him another travel document.

"I have no idea what we would talk about. The government will only talk with people who abide by the law and will not talk with people who use violence or incite violence," Abhisit told reporters when asked about talks with Thaksin.

He said any future amnesty under efforts to forge national reconciliation would only apply to political offences and not criminal violations.

Abhisit said Sunday that the government would over the next two weeks look at possible changes to the law or to a constitution adopted in 2007 under the junta that ousted Thaksin — key demands of Thaksin's supporters.

The protesters, known as "Red Shirts" because of their colourful attire, demanded Abhisit's resignation and new elections.

China launches new English-language newspaper

A new English-language paper published by China's Communist Party hit newsstands on yesterday — part of Beijing's efforts to raise its profile on the global stage and find an international audience for the party line.

The inaugural English edition of the *Global Times* led with stories about public support for naval development and how the Great Wall of China was even longer than thought.

An editorial titled "Dis-

cover China, discover the world" said the paper aimed to continue its Chinese edition's tradition of "presenting news from a Chinese perspective, in a fair, insightful and courageous manner."

"We strive to reveal a complete and true picture of China. We are dedicated to conveying the original voices of Chinese people," it said. The new English-language paper's launch reflects China's recent "soft power" drive to build its global reputation, muffle for-

ign criticism and broadcast the leadership's particular views on issues such as democracy, human rights and Tibet.

Along with media, China's propaganda campaign includes academic, cultural and sports exchanges, highlighted by last year's Beijing Summer Olympic Games.

The effectiveness of such efforts has yet to be proven, however. In media, Beijing hasn't yet hit on a formula to connect broadly with Western audiences.

IAEA: Obama good for solving N/Korea nuclear issue

The head of the U.N.'s atomic watchdog expressed confidence yesterday that President Barack Obama's approach to North Korea and Iran will eventually help resolve international disputes over their nuclear programs.

"While I am distressed because, of course, what has happened in North Korea is a setback, I am optimistic about the new environment," International Atomic Energy Agency chief Mohamed ElBaradei said in Beijing.

ElBaradei spoke after Pyongyang last week vowed to quit six-nation nuclear negotiations and restart its atomic program in anger over the U.N. Security Council's criticism of its April 5 rocket launch. It also kicked out all international monitors of its nuclear facilities. His remarks also came a day before North Korea and South Korea were set to hold talks on a troubled inter-Korean industrial complex amid an overall worsening trend in relations.

Tuesday's meeting was to be their first government-to-government dialogue since conservative South Korean President Lee Myung-bak took office in February last year with a pledge to get tough with Pyongyang and its nuclear ambitions. The nuclear issue, however, was not on the agenda for the meeting and it was unclear what attitude Pyongyang would take.

The U.S. and North Korea have yet to achieve any breakthroughs under Obama

and he has publicly criticized the rocket launch, saying it threatened the security of countries "near and far."

Relations have been further complicated by the North's apprehension last month of two U.S. journalists. Pyongyang says it will try the two women on charges of entering the country illegally and engaging in "hostile acts."

Still, ElBaradei mentioned what he saw as Washington's new openness to dialogue with countries like North Korea and Iran, in contrast to the previous administration of George W. Bush. "I am extremely pleased that there is a reversal in the policy of the United States from one of confrontation to one of dialogue and mutual respect," he said of overtures to Iran.

U.S. openness to Teheran could provide an opportunity "to resolve the Iranian issue, not just the nuclear issue but the whole regularization of relations between Iran and the international community," he said.

North Korea has reacted angrily over the U.N. Security Council's condemnation of the rocket launch. It says the rebuke is unfair because the rocket fired a satellite it says is allowed under a U.N. space treaty. But the U.S. and others say nothing entered orbit and the launch was really a test of long-range missile technology in violation of a U.N. resolution banning the North from any ballistic activity.

ElBaradei said "it could be a question of months" when asked how soon North Korea could restart its nuclear facilities — a move that could yield weapons-grade plutonium.

Trust International

WORLD REPORT



Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez, right, listens to US President Barack Obama during the 5th Summit of the Americas in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

Cuba, Obama elbow economic crisis off summit stage

Latin American nations may be slipping into recession and the Caribbean's tourism lifeblood may be drying up, but the region's economic crisis has been overshadowed by the political developments at a summit of the hemisphere's leaders.

Heads of state gathered in Trinidad and Tobago were well aware of predictions that another 15 million Latin Americans could fall into poverty this year in the absence of urgent action.

But while saying the economic crisis was important, they gushed more about how the United States drew closer to Cuba and a diplomatic push toward ending an icy relationship between the U.S. and Venezuela.

Presidents from Argentina to Central America beamed when they spoke about how much they like President Barack Obama. The warm reception for Obama's pledge of a new partnership of mutual respect could ease Latin America's longstanding us-versus-them relationship with Washington.

But little concrete progress was made on working toward ways to protect vulnerable economies from the world turmoil, especially in Central America and the Caribbean, analysts say.

Among the few commitments made were a pledge by Obama to free up \$100 million to help small entrepreneurs, and Brazil President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's an-

nouncement that the region's finance ministers will meet in July in Chile to deal with the meltdown's impact.

"There was nothing announced in terms of economics that was significant. It was all pretty symbolic," said Michael Shifter of the Inter-American Dialogue think tank. "It was a missed opportunity because the region is facing tough times and negative growth this year, and this should have been on the top of the agenda."

The only leader who criticized the lack of proposals to protect Latin America's economic health was Ecuadorean President Rafael Correa.

His nation has been hard hit by a decrease in remittances sent home by migrants, lower prices for the oil that funds 40 percent of its budget and disappearing foreign investment.

Correa, a U.S.-trained economist, blasted "the lack of a discussion at the summit about the causes, consequences and alternatives" of the crisis and how to buffer the region from resurging poverty.

While Silva managed to get the regional meeting of finance ministers moved forward to July instead of a pre-planned 2010 date, analysts questioned why it wasn't changed to May or June.

"Why don't they meet now instead of waiting?" asked David Fleischer, a political scientist at the University of Brasilia. "They are not taking it that seriously."

Iran's leader sparks Western walkout at UN meeting

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad accused the West of using the Holocaust as a "pretext" for aggression against Palestinians, prompting European diplomats to walk out yesterday from a speech disrupted by jeering protesters in rainbow wigs tossing red clown noses at the hardline leader.

A U.N. racism conference on the eve of Israel's Holocaust Remembrance Day disintegrated into chaos moments after Ahmadinejad became the first government official to take the floor. Two protesters in wigs tossed the noses at Ahmadinejad as he recited a Muslim prayer to begin his speech.

A Jewish student group from France later took credit for causing the disturbance, saying members were trying to convey "the masquerade that this conference represents."

Ahmadinejad restarted his talk and delivered a speech that lasted more than a half-hour, saying the United States and Europe had helped establish Israel after World War II at the expense of Palestinians. "They resorted to military aggression to make an entire nation homeless under the pretext of Jewish suffering," he said.

That prompted a walkout by some 40 diplomats from Britain and France and other European countries that had threatened to leave the conference if it descended into anti-Semitism or other rhetoric harshly critical of Israel, which marred the U.N.'s last racism gathering eight years ago in South Africa.

The United States and eight other Western countries were already boycotting the event because of concerns about its fairness. Ahmadinejad went on to accuse Israel of being the "most cruel and repressive racist regime."

Protesters held placards reading "This is a circus. A racist cannot fight racism," and repeatedly interrupted the speech with shouts of "Shame! shame!" and "Racist! racist!"

Later, about 100 members of mainly pro-Israel and Jewish groups tried to block Ahmadinejad's entrance to a scheduled news conference.

U.N. chief Ban Ki-moon met with Ahmadinejad before his speech and said he had counseled the Iranian leader to avoid dividing the conference. Ban

later said he was disappointed Ahmadinejad had used his speech "to accuse, divide and even incite," directly opposing the aim of the meeting.

The Israeli Foreign Ministry condemned Ahmadinejad's speech and Ban's meeting with the Iranian leader.

"It is unfortunate that U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon deemed it appropriate to meet with the greatest Holocaust denier of our time, the head of a U.N. member state who calls for the destruction of another UN member state. This matter is especially severe, as it took place on the eve of Holocaust Memorial Day," Israel said. Ahmadinejad has been praised by some in the Muslim world for calling for Israel's destruction and for other anti-Israeli comments. The hard-liner has often used international forums to criticize Israel including at last year's U.N. General Assembly where he said Israel was on "a definite slope to collapse."

But his comments yesterday could also further strain efforts to improve relations with the United States, Israel's top ally. Iran has been mostly lukewarm to overtures from President Barack Obama, but last week Ahmadinejad said the Islamic Republic was ready for a new relationship with Washington. Alejandro Wolff, the U.S. deputy ambassador to the United Nations, denounced "the Ahmadinejad spectacle" and the Iranian president's "vile and hateful speech."

"It's inaccurate. It shows disregard for the organization to which he is speaking, the United Nations, and does a grave injustice to the Iranian nation and the Iranian people," Wolff told reporters at U.N. headquarters in New York.

"We call on the Iranian leadership to show much measured, moderate, honest and constructive rhetoric when dealing with issues in the region, and not this type of vile, hateful, inciteful speech that we all saw ... this morning," he said.

Prime Minister Gordon Brown's spokesman said Britain would return to the talks but "unreservedly condemns his offensive and unacceptable remarks."

"He ascribed all the problems relating to racism in the modern world to Israel and the Jewish state, and that was enough for me to walk out," British Ambassador Peter Gooderham said.

Gingrich slams Obama over Chavez

Former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich tore into President Barack Obama yesterday for his friendly greeting of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, saying Obama is bolstering the "enemies of America." Gingrich appeared on a number of morning talk shows comparing Obama to President Jimmy Carter for the smiling, hearty handshake he offered Chavez, one of the harshest critics of the United States, during the Summit of the Americas.

"Frankly, this does look a lot like Jimmy Carter. Carter tried weakness, and the world got tougher and tougher, because the predators, the aggressors, the anti-Americans, the dictators — when they sense weakness, they all start pushing ahead," Gingrich said on "Fox & Friends."

Two Republican senators, Judd Gregg of New Hampshire and John Ensign of Nevada, joined in the criticism yesterday, with Ensign calling Obama's greeting of Chavez "irresponsible."

Obama addressed such criticism before he left the summit in Trinidad and Tobago on Sunday, noting his "great differences" with Chavez and expressing concern for the Venezuelan president's "inflammatory" rhetoric toward the United States and interference in neighboring Latin American countries.

"It's unlikely that as a consequence of me shaking hands or having a polite conversation with Mr. Chavez that we are endangering the strategic interests of the United States," Obama told reporters at a news conference. "I don't think anybody can find

any evidence that that would do so. Even within this imaginative crowd, I think you would be hard-pressed to paint a scenario in which U.S. interests would be damaged as a consequence of us having a more constructive relationship with Venezuela."

While the White House felt Obama's first foray into Latin America went well, officials seemed concerned that so-called "picture seen 'round the world" of Obama greeting Chavez at the summit would generate such criticism back home. The criticism is déjà vu for the Obama team. It is along the same line of what Obama's opponents — Hillary Clinton, now secretary of State, and Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz), said of him during the campaign, that he was too willing to talk to U.S. adversaries. Obama defended that, too, on Sunday before returning from a four-day trip to Latin America.

"We had this debate throughout the campaign, and the whole notion was, is that somehow if we showed courtesy or opened up dialogue with governments that had previously been hostile to us, that that somehow would be a sign of weakness — the American people didn't buy it," Obama said. "And there's a good reason the American people didn't buy it — because it doesn't make sense."

By Saturday afternoon, Chavez had gifted Obama a book critical of U.S. involvement in Latin America, the images were being replayed on television, and the White House had a new talking point: that handshakes and smiles are not enough, that actions speak louder than words.

LAW



Land use Act needs amendment - S. S. Ameh

Dr. Samson Sani Ameh is frontline legal luminary and a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) who taught law, particularly the land tenure law at the Ahmadu Bello University for about ten years before commencing law practice in 1980. His practice covers different aspects of the law, from litigation to solicitor's work and to arbitration. Ameh who has an office in the District of Columbia in the Washington DC, the capital of the United States of America (USA) was called to the Washington DC bar on 17th December, 2007. A number of Justices of the Supreme Court and those of the Court of Appeal had, at a time passed through the tutelage of the Dr. S. S. Ameh. In this interview with Sunday Ejike Benjamin, the Senior Advocate of Nigeria spoke extensively on the need to amend the nation's Land Use Act. He equally spoke on other burning issues in the nation's judiciary. Excerpts:-

One important programme of the present administration is the enthronement of the Rule of Law in the country, as a SAN and a teacher of law, what is your view on the way the government is going about the Rule of Law in the country?

What is there is for every one, all a sundry to properly understand the approach of Yar'adua to public life. His approach is that it should be based on principles, proceedings, procedures and conviction so that whatever we do, will last over time rather than been casual and being dependent of a particular personality or upon a particular government. He wants things to be based on principles and that is his concept on the rule of law. Being a former lecturer, I believe that what he wants is for people to understand what they are doing, to appreciate what they are doing and to differentiate between right and wrong and to also accept to stick to what is right, rather than people being pushed about being beaten by cane to fall in line to do the right thing. He wants people to be convinced that what they are doing is right thing. Once, we accept the Rule of Law, we will do what is right all the time, we will have an objective but will get to that objective through the right way, that is Yar'adua's concept on the Rule of Law. I remember Keyinde Sofola of the blessed memory gave a lecture in Enugu to the NBA and he said the different between the developing countries and the developed countries is that law is observed in developed countries but in developing countries, people are enforced to observe the law. That is where we should understand Yar'adua, he doesn't like the enforcement process. He wants observance process and that is the Rule of Law.

Do you see the AGF, being the Chief Law Office of the Country, pursuing the Rule of Law in line with the constitution?

That is a good question. The problem with the legal system is that it is slow and laborious. The problem that the AGF may have is that

people want things to happen over night and it is not possible for things to happen like that. When a matter is in court, the AGF will say they should wait until the court decides. Some people, by popular opinion might have decided who is right and who is wrong and will be anxious that the AGF should condemn somebody whom they have judged to be wrong. It was Justice Kayode Esho, in one of his famous statements who said, on the Rule of Law, that before you condemn somebody, he must be heard because God who knows everything knew that Adam has sinned and before he condemn him, he asked him why he ate of the forbidden fruits and Adam said it is the woman that made him eat the forbidden fruit. People are anxious and may think that the AGF is not doing the right thing, he is not doing this, he is not doing that. I know that he has a difficult appointment, it is a difficult job to be an AGF of a country, because if anything goes wrong, it is the AGF who takes the blame, but if things go right, nobody remembers the AGF.

To an average Nigerian, the Rule of Law means having access to justice and good governance, how can the Rule of Law deepens democratic governance in the country?

You are right as you have said, the significant or importance of the Rule of Law is to have access to justice and where is justice dispensed?, it is the judiciary, it is the court system and we have a constitution which gives liberal access to the court system to the judiciary because section 36(1) of the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria states clearly and boldly that in the determination of his civil rights, a person is entitled to a fair hearing, he must be heard. The court has been dispensing justice without fear or favour. For instance, in the election petition cases, there were so many of them and yet, the courts were faced with two problems of congestion. The courts had to work several hours, work overtime to make sure that



Dr. Samson Sani Ameh, SAN

they conclude as many election cases as possible. That shows the freedom Nigerians have in going to court, no matter how frivolous their courses may be, they still have access to the courts. That shows that the judiciary is doing a lot. I am not saying that there may not be one or two matters that may not be decided satisfactorily. The fact that one case goes wrong or awry does not mean that the whole judiciary is condemned. On the balance, the judiciary has done very well. I did one election petition case and I was impressed at the knowledge of those young Judges, they were young men that I know their fathers, but they may not know me. I didn't know that they were so educated, so thorough in their knowledge of the law. We have the best Judges in this country.

You have taught law and the constitution for over a decade, how do you see the call for amendment of the constitution, which section do you think needs amendment to be in tune with the present realities?

I had the opportunity to be invited by the government of Kogi State to give a lec-

ture to those people going to the constitutional conference in 2005 and then had the opportunity to take a second look at the constitution. I don't think reviewing the constitution should be the priority of the country now, except in two critical areas. In 1985, when General Babangida was military President or Head of State, he made a constitutional draft based on a report of a committee of intellectual people like professor Elaigwu of the University of Jos which he commissioned. The report was incorporated in the constitutional proposal for amendment in 1985. One critical area it proposed for a change is that the local government system should be recognised as the third independent arm of government. At the moment, the status of the local government is not clearly yet defined. It is subsumed under state government and as result, there are complaints that the state government messed up with the local government. The local government is just as an appendage of state government and it should not be so. The relationship between the federal and the state government

should be the same between the state and the local government. Babangida's constitution of 1985 which clearly define the existence and functions of local government should be part of the amendment to the present 1999 constitution. That is one; the other area that needs to be amended is the land use Act. The Act needs to be amended because it is incorporated into the constitution as an entrenched exception which means that the Act itself cannot be amended without amending the constitution. There are proposals now to amend the land use Act in critical areas which I fully agree. From my own background as a member of the Land use panel which submitted a report to Alhaji Shehu Musa Yar'adua, the Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters on behalf of president Obasanjo in 1978. We propounded the principles of land Use Act, and on the basis of our report, the military government of that time promulgated the land use decree no 6 of the 1978 which is now Act since we are no more in the military. The report is still valid because our principle is that land, as President Yar'adua has said is very valuable and key resource in the government of the country. Land is very important and if you have such an important resource, the management becomes crucial. We felt that government should have an interest on land rather than leaving it for anybody to do what he likes. One area that the law has to be quickly amended is the issue of consent, especially for commercial transactions. Under the military regime, it was automatic because the military governor is not interested in any party. He gives consent like a civil servant, is a routine but now, I understand that consent takes 6 to 7 years, no business can wait for 7 years to get governor's consent before a loan can be granted. Secondly, is the signing of the certificate of occupancy. I will recommend strongly the removal of the signing of C of Os by the governor and conferring the power on the permanent secretary in the

Ministry of Land & Survey. There is no need to even issue a R of O, let him directly issue a C of O with a sketch or survey plan of the land precisely attached so that everybody will know where his rights stops and ends. Those are the three critical areas that the land tenure law land use Act as it is now called should be amended and I will recommend this to the commission established by President Yar'adua.

What do you think is or are responsible for the poor turn-out of law graduates in the country?

At our own time, every thing we did was based on merit. Before I entered law, I took a screening examination apart from having the required qualifications. So, when I was recruiting people, I look at their character, their qualifications to make sure that people who come to read law are the best you can get, both in character and in learning when they graduate. Am happy and proud that any where I go to, I see my student at the echelon of whatever profession they are in. I am a proud teacher of two Supreme Court Justices, a number of Justices of the Court of Appeal, and host of others in the judiciary.

But now, the situation has dramatically changed because students get admission through fraudulent means and secondly, they pass exams through fraudulent means and the number of people in the class are so large to supervise. To them, merit doesn't matter when they come out of school because they have connection to get jobs after graduation.

What can be done to improve the quality of law training in the country?

Simple. Perhaps, like the Judges are doing, some sort of referential course, lawyers should be sent back for re-training and re-certification. That is one possibility. Judges are doing so and are upgrading their skills; lawyers also should be given the same opportunity for improvement. To be fair, it is not only in the legal profession, it is all the professions, it is the product of the society, so, we may have to start from the primary school.

LAW 

4th Business Law Conference: As NBA moves towards speedy justice delivery

By Atika Balal & Ibrahim Khalil Aminu

The fourth Business Law Conference of the Nigerian Bar Association took place recently in Abuja, where legal luminaries who delivered speeches at the occasion stressed the need to fast-track judgment delivery in the country and transparency amongst others.

In its bid to promote transparency and efficiency in the Nigerian judicial system, members of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), have agreed that the process of justice delivery must be fast tracked by the use of state-of-the-art technological and scientific gadgets as well as jettison irrelevant conventional impediment and technicalities which hold back delivery of justice in the society.

Presenting a paper titled 'The Business of Judging' at the 4th Business Law Conference, Fellow of Royal Society of Arts and part-time judge of the Crown Court London, Professor Oba Nsugbe said there was need to train the media and allied bodies to ensure that what is being fed to the public is a true reflection of rulings and judgment of courts.

He noted that fast adjudication of business cases and even

ordinary matters will create much confidence in the judiciary and by extension the country promoting it.

Prof. Osungbe also stressed the need for judges to go beyond the conventional method of researching into latest judgments of local and international courts, saying that it would be much better if efficient internet facilities are provided for the judges.

Also speaking, Chief Judge of the Abuja High Court, Justice Lawal Gumi who was represented at the occasion said efforts should be made to facilitate and enhance the process of justice delivery by discarding technicalities and processes that do not aid justice.

He specifically noted that a situation where defense lawyers insist that their clients be served in person or where corporate organizations insist that they be served at their corpo-

rate headquarters before they can put up their defense was no longer needed in the modern system of justice delivery.

He apportioned some blame to appellate courts, who sometimes tend to rule in favor of an appellant who wants to waste the time of the court by asking for extension of time within which to file court processes out of time when ordinarily they could have filed the same documents without qualms after they were given reasonable time by the trial court.

He also stressed the need for judicial officers to be carried along when Bills are being fine-tuned into laws, saying it would go a long way to avoid bringing into the laws encumbrances in the processes of applying such laws.

Following various investigations and controversies that have arisen over \$180 million Halliburton bribery scandal,



Chief Justice of Nigeria Justice Idris Kutigi (left) with President of the Court of Appeal Justice Umaru Abdullahi during a refresher course for the judges and khadis in Abuja recently. Pic: Felix Onigbinde

the NBA said the government has not been transparent in handling the scandal.

NBA President, Rotimi Akeredolu (SAN), in his speech stated that where the government talks about the rule of law, transparency which is fundamental to the rule of law must be evident.

Hear him: "The government has not been transparent in the handling of the Halliburton scandal, they should be open and let Nigerians know what happened, Nigerians want to know who and who were involved and these people should be tried no matter how highly placed they are; the matter has already been tried in a United States Court so there should really be no secrecy about the names of Nigerians who were involved in the scandal."

He said the NBA insists that investigations should be followed to its logical conclusion

and should not be swept under the carpet and the government must disclose the names of those Nigerians who were involved in the scandal.

Describing most leaders as corrupt people who pay lip service to the issue of rule of law and have benefitted and 'still benefiting' from the proceeds of corruption, he noted that the struggle for the economic emancipation of Africa must be fought from all fronts as there is no doubt that Africa's development has been wasted by poor leadership.

Akeredolu, who spoke on the passage of the Freedom of Information Bill (FOI), accused members of the National Assembly of showing little or no commitment to its passage.

His word: "Presently the NBA has a legislative group that is lobbying the National Assembly to ensure the passage of that important legisla-

tion. As for unethical conducts among lawyers we have set up Disciplinary committees in all the states of the Federation as against the three that was in existence and we are working in consonance with the Legal Practitioners Privileges and Ethics Committee to flush out these bad lawyers. We are prepared and ready to weed from our body members who fall within the minimum requirements for lawyers."

Also speaking at the conference, immediate past President of the International Bar Association, (IBA), Fernando Pombo called for collaboration among nations to fight the menace of corruption.

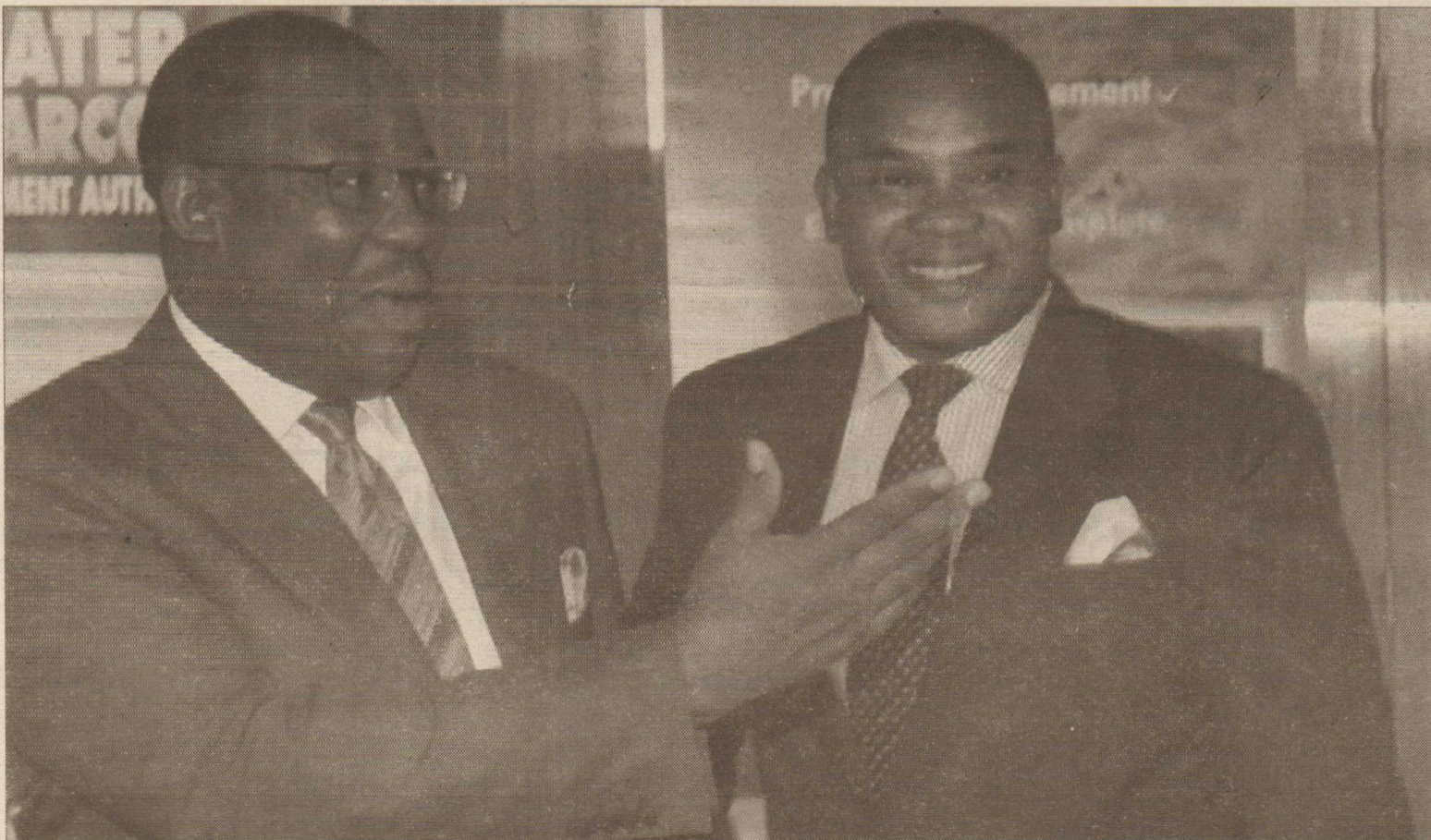
He said "The more the rule of law is in effect in any country the more the fundamentals of good governance is guaranteed, the more the rule of law is in effect the more foreign investments are guaranteed, people will come to invest and the economies of such nations will in turn grow."

While noting that the global economic meltdown was as a result of super optimism over super opportunities and the euphoria over good economic times which created inactivity that led to artificial economic boom, he urged the government to handle the Halliburton scandal openly, democratically and transparently.

Pombo blamed financial institutions over what he called lending more money to people who over valued their investment portfolios which resulted in the burst of the bubble and eventually the economic recession.

He also warned lawyers against engaging in acts capable of tarnishing the image of the profession.

"Lawyer's obligation to his client to close a deal has its limitations not to the extent of committing a crime; anything beyond a legal advice is no longer part of a lawyer's duty to his client as lawyers are part of the fight against corruption and abuse of power."



President, Abuja Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Barrister Dele oye (left) and Chairman, Section on Business Law (SBL), Mr. George Etomi, during the 4th Business Law Conference in Abuja recently. Pic: Felix Onigbinde

FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC, OKO ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

VACANCY FOR THE POSTS OF RECTOR, REGISTRAR AND POLYTECHNIC LIBRARIAN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ADVERTISEMENT

Applications are invited from suitably qualified candidates for the posts of Rector, Registrar and Polytechnic Librarian.

1. RECTOR

The Rector is the Chief Academic, Administrative and Accounting Officer of the Polytechnic. He has powers to exercise general authority over both staff and students and he is responsible for discipline in the Polytechnic, subject to the general control of the Governing Council.

QUALIFICATION

Candidate must

- i. Hold a Masters or a Doctorate degree in any of the disciplines offered in the Polytechnic with a minimum of fifteen (15) years professional and administrative experience at least five of which must have been gained in an institution of comparable status.
- ii. Be a Chief Lecturer with not less than five years experience on that cadre.
- iii. Demonstrate evidence of strong academic and administrative leadership, initiative and creativity in policy formulation, good human relations and positive managerial attributes.
- iv. Provide evidence of membership of reputable professional body/bodies in Nigeria.
- v. Provide evidence of scholarly publications in reputable Journals as well as presentation of invited papers at educational conferences, seminars and/or workshop.
- vi. Be able to attract research grants and development facilities to the Polytechnic.
- vii. Present evidence of medical fitness (from a Government Hospital).
- viii. Not be more than fifty-five (55) years of age at the time of assumption of duty.
- ix. Be proficient in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) packages and capabilities.

TERMS OF APPOINTMENT/CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

The appointment is for a term of four years in the first instance and renewable subject to satisfactory performance for another term of four years and no more. The salary is consolidated and the appointee shall enjoy other benefits of office as may be approved from time to time by the Federal Government.

2. REGISTRAR

The Registrar shall be responsible to the Rector for the day to day administration of the Polytechnic. He shall be the Secretary to the Council and Academic Board and shall perform such other duties as the Rector may from time to time assign to him.

QUALIFICATION AND EXPERIENCE

Candidate for the post of Registrar must hold a good Bachelor's degree from a recognized institution of higher learning with at least 17 years cognate experience, or a Master's degree with 15 years cognate experience or a doctorate degree with 12 years cognate experience.

TENURE/CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

The appointment is for a term of five (5) years in the first instance and may be renewed for only a further term of five (5) years. Conditions of Service are as applicable in all other Federal Polytechnics.

SALARY: CONTISS 14 (N2,185,778.00 – N2,902,440.00 per annum).

3. POLYTECHNIC LIBRARIAN

The Polytechnic Librarian shall be responsible to the Rector for the administration of the Library and the co-ordination of the library services in the teaching units.

QUALIFICATION AND EXPERIENCE

Candidates must hold:

- i. A Bachelor of Library Science degree (BLS) with 18 years cognate experience OR
- ii. A good honours degree with 18 years cognate experience OR
- iii. A Master of Library Science degree (MLS) with 15 years cognate experience OR
- iv. Any professional Library qualification with 17 years post qualification experience.

TENURE/CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

The appointment is for a term of five (5) years in the first instance and may be renewed for only a further term of five (5) years. Conditions of Service are as applicable in all the Federal Polytechnics.

SALARY: CONTISS 14 (N2,185,778.00 – N2,902,440.00 per annum).

METHOD OF APPLICATION

Candidates are to submit twenty (20) copies of applications with Curriculum Vitae including statement of their own vision for the Polytechnic and photocopies of credentials. Applications should contain names and addresses of three (3) references who shall be required to forward confidential reports on the candidates.

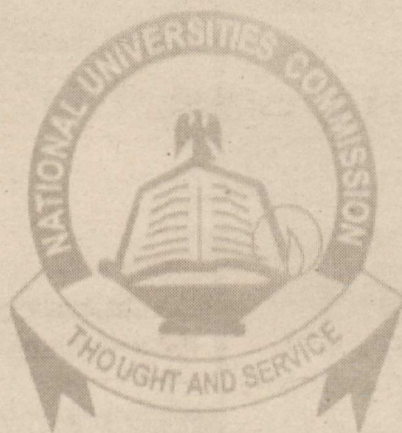
Applications are to be submitted in sealed envelope and marked "POST OF RECTOR", "POST OF REGISTRAR" or "POST OF POLYTECHNIC LIBRARIAN" as the case may be, at the top left hand corner, to reach:

**The Registrar
Federal Polytechnic
Okoko
P.M.B. 021
Aguata
Anambra State**

Applications should be submitted not later than six (6) weeks from the date of this publication.

**BEN C. OKECHUKWU
ACTING REGISTRAR/SECRETARY TO COUNCIL**

NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES COMMISSION



PRESS RELEASE

(A PUBLICATION IN THE 'THISDAY NEWSPAPER' OF 19th APRIL, 2009)

The attention of the National Universities Commission has been drawn to the THISDAY Newspaper publication of Sunday, 19th April, 2009, captioned "Minister, 29 Others under Probe". Although the publication stated that it was not clear as to the breaches of the procurement act committed by the Commission, we find it necessary to make the following clarifications:

- (a) One of the capital projects proposed in the 2008 appropriation and approved by Government was "Proposed Office Extension in NUC Secretariat";
 - (b) Following the approval of that project, a design of a four storey building was undertaken by our team of Consultants;
 - (c) An advertisement for prequalification of contractors was posted on Federal Tenders Journal on Monday, May 26th to Sunday June 8th 2008, as required by law;
 - (d) A number of contractors submitted expressions of interest, but on closer examination, the Management of NUC believed that none of them had the capacity to execute the project. A letter was consequently sent to the Bureau of Public Procurement expressing this concern. The final list of four contractors that were eventually invited, for the commercial bid, was based on the advice received from the officials of the Bureau of Public Procurement, to the effect that from their experience, there were a few of the companies which had previously worked for the university system.
 - (e) When, eventually, the commercial bids were opened, Messrs Gabcon Enterprises (Nigeria) Limited which submitted the lowest bid was forwarded to the BPP for 'Certificate of No Objection'.
 - (f) It is also on record that our inability to present the project to the Federal Executive Council was partly due to the delay in the issuance of 'Certificate of No Objection' by the Bureau of Public Procurement resulting in the loss of the sum appropriated in 2008.
 - (g) With the non-approval by the Federal Executive Council and consequent loss of the sum of N156,302,083.00 appropriated in the 2008 appropriation, the project was therefore regarded as aborted.
 - (h) In the 2009 appropriation, the sum of N41million only was provided, ostensibly for the continuation of the 2008 aborted project. With the size of this allocation, the only option left for the management was to decide to modify the existing staff canteen instead of complete demolition of facilities as earlier planned, in the aborted project. The canteen had become dormant, following government policies on monetization, and was being proposed as a conversion into Conference room, with few offices. Consequently, modification designs and tender documents were produced and rather than advertising for new expression of interest, the contractors that were shortlisted for the 2008 project were invited to submit commercial bids.
 - i. Rather than respond to the invitation to re-tender, Messrs Gabcon Enterprises (Nigeria) Limited chose to write a petition against the Commission, asking the Bureau to intervene on its behalf, and direct the Commission to award the new contract to them.
 - ii. The reason to re-invite pre-qualified contractors, to re-tender was to have a good basis to establish fair cost of the modification project as was dully communicated to all contractors, including the petitioner, Messrs Gabcon Enterprises (Nigeria) Limited.
 - iii. Also it is noteworthy that due to the redesign, the specifications, design elements and other features of the 2009 modification project, these issues were considered not being exactly the same as in the 2008 project that was aborted. Hence a new Bill of Quantities became necessary to be produced.
- Furthermore, negotiating with one contractor will certainly amount to a contravention of Section 58 (4) d-g part XII, for the scaled-down project, which the Bureau had earlier quoted copiously in its letter to the Commission.
- iv. The BPP would also recall that each time the Commission had doubts, it always sought clarifications from the Bureau of Public Procurement as attested to by our letter of 22nd August, 2008 and their response of 23rd October, 2008.
 - (j) We believe it was rather hasty on the part of BPP to have reached such grave conclusions as contained in its letter of 14th April 2009 on a process that was still on-going as no contract had been awarded, neither on the 2008 project which was aborted nor the 2009 project. The Management of NUC would have expected that BPP had carried out an early procurement review to resolve the issues raised as provided for in the Procurement Act.
 - (k) The Commission feels highly embarrassed by the letter from BPP and the publicity it has been given by the Bureau of Public Procurement by releasing contents of the letter to the media without hearing from the Management of NUC. The Bureau had even adjudged the Management of NUC guilty by reporting the Commission to the Attorney-General's office for "possible prosecution" again without waiting for our reaction which would have formed part of the documents the Bureau forwarded to the Attorney-General's Office for consideration and further necessary action.
 - (l) It is curious that the Bureau of Public Procurement reached such conclusions and condemned the entire Management of the National Universities Commission, based on a petition from a contractor without a fair-hearing from the Commission. As the government arbiter in resolving conflicts resulting from public procurement, one would have expected BPP to request for our comments on the letter from Messrs Gabcon Enterprises (Nigeria) Limited before accusing the Management of NUC of such serious offences as "..... **central splitting, altering the procurement document with intent to influence the outcome of a tendering procedure and bid rigging**".
 - (m) NUC Management wishes to assure BPP and the general public that all the steps taken on this project, so far were in good faith. We have always been very diligent and transparent in our actions. This attitude has usually guided all NUC Management meetings decisions and consultations in our dealings so as to ensure that due process was complied with.

Arc. Bola Balogun MNIM mni
(Deputy Director, Special Duties)
For: Management



THE CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF TAXATION OF NIGERIA

(Chartered by Act No. 76 of 1992)

21st INDUCTION CEREMONY

This is to inform all candidates whose application for admission into the membership of the Institute had been approved that the 21st Induction Ceremony is scheduled to hold as follows:

Date: Thur, 21st May, 2009

Venue: Airport Hotel, Ikeja Lagos. (Oranmiyan Hall)

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Programme Fee: (Graduate Members ₦85,000) (Direct Membership ₦150,000)
(Covering 3-Day Special Training, Induction Materials & Lunch)

Method of Payment

Candidates are advised to make payment on or before 8th of May, 2009 to Account No. 00960310000083 in any branch of United Bank of Africa Plc. and to Account No. 4482030003995 in any branch of First Bank Plc. Nationwide. Payment could also be made at the Institute's Secretariat. Candidates are advised to pay early to ensure their names appear in the event's brochure and other materials.

Special Training Programme

The Special Training Programme is compulsory for all candidates and its attendance is a prerequisite for Induction and issuance of membership certificate. The 3-Day training is slated for **Monday 18th - Wednesday 20th May, 2009 by 9.00 a.m. Daily** at the venue of the Induction Ceremony.

Hints on Upcoming Events

ANNUAL TAX CONFERENCE: Wed., 6th - Sat., 9th May 2009
@ Nicon Luxury, Abuja.

IBADAN MPTP: Wed., 27th - Thur., 28th May 2009 @ Premier Hotel,
Mokola Ibadan, Oyo State.

For Induction & Fellowship enquiries, call: For Annual Tax Conference enquiries, call:

Yetunde - 08038825979

Lizzy - 08023244395

For Ibadan MPTP and Portharcourt MPTP, call:

Ronke - 08037848138 or Gbenga - 08058033896

For further details, contact:

Femi Fajolu, FCTI

Registrar/Chief Executive

THE CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF TAXATION OF NIGERIA

3rd & 4th Floors, 11, Ikorodu Road, (Opposite CPI-Moore Limited) Maryland, Lagos.
Tel: (234) 01-4935054, 7741273, Fax: 4935059. Email: citn@citn.org Website: www.citn.org



NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION AND RESEARCH LIAISON SERVICES

FEDERAL MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND WATER RESOURCES
AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY P.M.B. 1067, ZARIA NIGERIA

Ref: NAERLS/ADMIN/D-7

INVITATION FOR TENDERS FOR PROJECTS BY SUITABLY QUALIFIED CONTRACTORS FOR 2009 APPROPRIATION

In compliance with Federal Government 2007 Public Procurement Act, The National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Services (NAERLS), Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria hereby invites reputable and experienced Contractors to tender in respect of its approved projects under the 2008 Appropriation.

The areas are:

- A REHABILITATION OF HEAD QUARTERS AND 2 ZONAL OFFICES
 - GENERATOR FOR ADMIN BLOCK
 - PAINTING OF SW ZONAL OFFICE, IBADAN
 - PAINTING OF NC ZONAL OFFICE, BADEGGI-BIDA
- B SUPPLY OF FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT FOR LIBRARY INFORMATION, DOCUMENTATION AND CIRCULATION
 - SMART PROJECTORS AND DISPLAY BOARDS
 - PHOTOCOPIERS
 - FARMBROADCAST EQUIPMENT
 - PORTABLE PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM
- C SUPPLY OF EQUIPMENT FOR SKILLS ACQUISITION CENTRE
 - SERICULTURE & MORICULTURE EQUIPMENT
 - APICULTURE EQUIPMENT
 - AQUACULTURE & FISH PRODUCTION EQUIPMENT
 - POULTRY EQUIPMENT
 - TRACTOR OPERATION & MAINTENANCE EQUIPMENT
 - FOOD FORTIFICATION EQUIPMENT
 - ANIMAL TRACTION EQUIPMENT
 - EQUIPMENT TOOLS & MACHINE FABRICATION EQUIPMENT

2 REQUIREMENTS

Interested Companies are to collect Tender Documents from the Institute upon payment of N20,000.00 only in the Institute Cash Office.

Submission of the Tender Documents should be made in a sealed envelope indicating on the top left hand corner of the envelope the code provided against each area of interest as listed above along with the following documents:

- (a) Evidence of registration of Company with Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria
- (b) Certificate of incorporation from the Corporate Affairs Commission.
- (c) Evidence of membership of relevant professional bodies (e. g. COREN, NIA, NIOS, CORBON etc) as the case may be.
- (d) Possession of tax clearance Certificate for the past three years.
- (e) Value Added Tax (VAT) Registration Certificate.
- (f) Bank reference letter indicating evidence of accessibility to credit facility.
- (g) Copy of audited account for the past three years.
- (h) Comprehensive company profile indicating the CV of key personnel.
- (i) Verifiable evidences of past job experiences in similar projects of interest in the past 5 years indicating the contract sum and evidence of satisfactory job performance.
- (j) Any other evidence/document that would confirm the skill/competence of the individual contractors.

3. SUBMISSION OF TENDER DOCUMENTS

Three copies of the Tenders Documents should be sealed in separate envelopes and labeled "Tenders Document: Lot" to be sent not later than 2:00 p.m, six (6) weeks from the date of advertisement addressed to:

Institute Secretary
National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Services
Ahmadu Bello University,
P.M.B. 1067,
Zaria.

4. ISSUES TO NOTE:

- a) Documents submitted after six (6) weeks from the date of this advert will automatically disqualify the applicant(s).
- b) The Institute is neither committed nor obliged to write any company to tender nor award any contract to partners, contractors, consultants or agents.
- c) The Institute is not bound to accept the lowest of any tender submitted.
- d) The Institute shall not be responsible for any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of documents.

MANAGEMENT

BUSINESS TRUST

● **Meltdown: Firm proffers anti-recession strategy**—Page 30

● **PHCN writes off N1.5bn customer's debt in Katsina**—Page 33

● **Stock Market Report**—Page 32 & 33

Hotline: 08051000536



Flight Schedule

Chanchangi Airlines

Lagos-Abj: 07.15, 10.00, 13.10, 15.30, 16.45
Lagos-Kad: 10.00
Lagos-Owrr: 08.00, 10.00, 14.30
Kad-Abj-Lagos: 10.30, 11.45
Abj-Lagos: 08.10, 13.40, 15.00

IRS Airlines

Lagos-Abj: 09.45, 11.45, 12.45, (Mon-Fri) 09.30, 12.45 (Sat & Sun)
Lagos-Kano: 06.15 (Mon-Fri), 16.30 (Sat & Sun)
Kano-Lagos: 07.30 (Mon-Fri), 10.30 (Sat & Sun)

Aero Contractors

Lagos-Abj: 06.50; 13.30; 16.30; 19.45 (Mon-Fri/Sat/Sun); 12.30 (Sun) 16.45 (Sat).
Abj-Lagos: 07.30; 13.30; 19.00 (Mon-Fri/Sat); 10.30; 14.30; 19.30 (Sun) 18.30 (Sat).
Lagos-Ben: 07.45; 11.00; 15.30; (Mon-Fri/Sat/Sun) 12.30; (Sun); 15.30 (Sat).
Ben-Lagos: 09.15; 12.30; 17.00 (Mon-Fri/Sat/Sun); 17.00 (Sat); 14.00 (Sun)
Lagos-Cala: 13.15; (Mon-Fri/Sat); 08.30; 19.00 (Sun)
Cala-Lagos: 14.45; (Mon-Fri/Sat); 10.30 (Sun)
Lagos-Enu: 09.30; (Mon-Fri/Sat); 15.00 (Sun)
Enu-Lagos: 09.30; (Mon-Fri/Sat) 16.45 (Sun)
Lagos-PHC: 07.30; 09.30; 15.00 (Mon-Fri/ Sat/ Sun)
PHC-Lagos: 11.15; 17.30 (Mon-Fri/Sat) 18.00 (Fri)
Lagos-Warri: 07.45; 16.00 (Mon-Fri/sat) 09.15 (Sun)
Warri-Lagos: 09.15; 17.30 (Mon-Fri/Sat) 10.45 (Sun)

Virgin Nigeria

Lagos-Abj: 07.15, 09.00, 11.30, 14.00, 15.50, 17.00, 18.00 (Mon-Fri/Sat/Sun)
Abj-Lagos: 07.00, 09.30, 10.15, 11.15, 13.35, 16.15 (Mon-Fri/Sat/Sun)
Lagos-PHC: 07.40, 09.30, 10.00, 12.20, 13.30, 14.00, 16.00 (Mon-Fri/Sat/Sun)
PHC-Lagos: 10.50, 11.20, 12.45, 15.30, 16.15, 17.15 (Mon-Fri/Sat/Sun)
Abj-Kano: 18.00 (Mon-Fri)
Kano-Abj: 08.20 (Mon-Fri)

Bellview Airlines

Lagos-Abj: 06.50, 12.55, 17.00 (Mon-Fri) 16.40 (Sat) 17.00 (Sun)
Abj-Lagos: 07.40, 14.50, 18.25 (Mon-Fri/Sat/Sun)
Lagos-Kano: 06.50 (Mon-Fri/Sat/Sun)
Kano-Lagos: 10.10 (Mon-Fri/Sat/Sun)

Arik Air

Lagos-Abj: 07.30, 10.20, 14.20, 16.45, 17.45, 18.05 (Mon-Fri/Sat/Sun)
Abj-Lagos: 09.20, 09.30, 10.30, 12.15, 16.20, 17.45, 20.05 (Mon-Fri/Sat/Sun)
Abj-Cal: 10.25, 17.25 (Mon-Fri/Sat/Sun)
Cal-Abj: 08.50, 15.50 (Mon-Sat) 19.00 (Mon-Fri/Sat/Sun)
Abj-Ben: 10.35 (Mon-Fri)
Ben-Abj: 12.00 (Tue-Fri)
Lagos-Ben: 08.00, 11.45, 15.30 (Mon-Fri/Sat/Sun)
Ben-Lagos: 09.15, 13.35, 17.00 (Mon-Fri/Sat/Sun)
Lagos-Cal: 07.00, 14.05 (Mon-Fri/Sat/Sun)
Cal-Lagos: 12.00, 19.00 (Mon-Fri/Sat/Sun)
Lagos-Enu: 07.30, 14.30, 16.00 (Mon-Fri/Sat/Sun)
Enu-Lagos: 09.30, 18.00 (Mon-Fri/Sat/Sun)
Lagos-Jos: 11.30, (Mon-Fri/Sat/Sun)
Jos-Lagos: 13.15 (Mon-Fri)
Kano-Lagos: 15.30 (Mon-Fri/Sun)
Lagos-PHC: 07.20, 07.50, 09.15, 11.30, 12.30, 15.10, 15.55, 16.45, 17.00 (Mon-Fri/Sat/Sun)
PHC-Lagos: 07.00, 08.30, 09.15, 11.10, 13.40, 14.30, 15.00, 17.05, 17.50 (Mon-Fri/Sat/Sun)

FG shortlists Gazprom, 14 others for gas devt

Russian gas giant Gazprom and Shell are among the 15 shortlisted companies for Nigeria's gas monetisation and development programme under the proposed Nigeria Gas Master Plan.

Other shortlisted companies are: British Gas, Centrics of British, EoN Rhugas German, Statoil Hydro of Norway, Chevron USA, Gas Natural, UnionFenosa of

By Hamisu Muhammad

with the shortlisted investors yesterday. Minister of State for Petroleum Resources Odien Ajumogobia said the Nigerian Gas Master plan (NGMP) aim to address issues relating to infrastructure, attainment of market led gas pricing, supply availability for the domestic, regional and export markets.

He said the meeting with

centre stage shortly with the assurance that the government has a roadmap to realize that potential and comfort that the FGN is unequivocally dedicated to the realization of that roadmap.

He said the new players are being sought to partner with the FGN in unlocking this potential.

Also speaking the Group Managing Director of the NNPC, Dr Mohammed S. Barkindo said the NGMP

For helicopter flights to Anywhere in Nigeria call:

OAS HELICOPTERS

Nnamdi Azikwe Airport, Abuja

GSM: +234 803 446 3432
+234 705 666 9020

Web: www.oas-helicopters.com
E-mail: contact@oas-helicopters.com

investor and gas owner in the Nigerian gas sector.

"It owns about 60 % of the proven gas reserves within the Joint ventures and its sole concessionaire in the Production Sharing Contracts," he said.

He said NNPC is therefore strategically committed to this initiative.



Fuel queue yesterday at Mobil Filing Station, Agidingbi Lagos as a result of tanker drivers' strike.

Pic: Oladipupo Odunewu

Spain and Gail International.

Also among are PTT of Thailand, Kogal of Korea, Global Energy/ Hanover, Oando Nigeria Plc and Sahara Energy Nigeria Plc.

The names of the companies was made available yesterday in Abuja at the meeting between the federal government and the potential investors showing that the 15 companies were shortlisted out of the 46 interested that indicated interest for the gas development last year.

The bidding process, according to the time table will commence May, 8, 2009 and will last till October 23, 2009.

Speaking at the meeting

the potential investors is to avail them with the huge potential that exists in Nigerian Gas and that Nigeria is poised to be World's gas

provides the platform that glues all of NNPC's aspirations for gas.

Barkindo said NNPC is the singular largest equity

The shortlisted companies

1. Gazprom
2. Shell
3. British Gas
4. Centrics of British
5. EoN Rhugas German
6. Statoil Hydro of Norway
7. Chevron USA
8. Gas Natural
9. UnionFenosa of Spain
10. Gail International
11. PTT of Thailand
12. Kogal of Korea
13. Global Energy/ Hanover
14. Oando Nigeria Plc
15. Sahara Energy Nigeria Plc

AGRIC BUSINESS

N200bn agric loan: How CBN sidelined 22 banks

Two banks have been selected to administer the N200billion agric loan, but other banks are protesting quietly, while small and subsistence farmers say it is a wrong decision to shut them out

By Jibrin Abubakar

The recent move by the Federal Government to make a concrete effort towards diversifying the nation's economy through the establishment of commercial agricultural credit scheme may soon hit the rocks, with a looming controversy over the choice of only two out of the country 24 banks as managers of the over N200 billion set aside for the scheme.

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) penultimate week announced that it would soon disburse the N200 billion, which is an agriculture bond to be issued to farmers.

Making this disclosure during a Town Hall Meeting with the theme, "What next for the Naira," organised by Vanguard newspapers in Lagos, CBN Governor Chukwuma Soludo said the fund would be distributed to commercial farmers to boost large-scale farming, adding that some selected banks would manage the fund under full monitoring of the CBN.

"The CBN is aware of the need to create alternative revenue base for the country. This has been reflected by our policies towards lending to the manufacturing sector and more recently, the floating of the N200billion Agriculture Bond.

"It is a national aspiration to grow the manufacturing sector in Nigeria, and we are also aware that agriculture plays an important role in the growth and development of any economy and also helps to boost Gross Domestic Product", Soludo said.

But while the CBN in conjunction with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources are getting set to disburse this fund, a recent paid announcement in some national newspapers, on the selection of First Bank of Nigeria (FBN) Plc and United Bank for Africa (UBA) Plc to manage the N200 billion meant for the scheme stoke up protests by some other banks, purporting betrayal of the original plan to engage 10 banks for the project.

Daily Trust's investigations revealed that there were series of meetings between the coordinators of the scheme and the 10 banks earlier listed for participation as fund managers.

The banks earlier listed for participation, according to our investigations are: Union Bank Plc, Zenith Bank Plc, FBN Plc, Unity Bank Plc, Fidelity Bank Plc, UBA Plc, Bank PHB, FinBank Plc, Intercontinental Bank Plc and Sterling Bank.

The 10 banks had, at their last meeting with the coordinators of the scheme, made up of representatives of the CBN, the Federal Ministry of Agric, the National Food Reserve Agency, and other agencies like the office of the Accountant General of the Federation, agreed on modalities for the disbursement of the fund. Some officials of the eight banks allegedly shut out of the proposed N200billion commercial agric credit scheme who spoke to our correspondent said it was curious that while discussions on the modalities for the disbursement had not been concluded, an advertisement was sneaked into some newspapers last week, purporting that First Bank and UBA have been chosen as the scheme's fund managers.

The modus operandi of the scheme, according to our findings, showed that: The participating Banks shall: Appraise the farm-



CBN Governor Chukwuma Soludo

Pic: Kennedy Egbonodje

ers' applications, disburse funds at reasonably determined interest rates, and monitor performance.

Others are: collect principal and interest payments and remit principal and interest to government, while retaining 0.5% interest payment as fee, pay interest at Minimum Rediscount Rate (MRR) + 2% on outstanding balance on fund in the bank and the incentive for banks to appraise, monitor and collect payments is the float income and 0.5% interest they enjoy as fee. The Federal Ministry Agric & Water Resources will technically review and endorse all applications to ensure compliance to guidelines stipulated by the implementation committee and the National Food Security Strategy.

Apart from this, the Government, through the CBN, shall independently monitor performance of banks and beneficiaries and sanction infractions. For Banks that fail to disburse (or disburse poorly in order to enjoy float income), sanction shall include withdrawal of fund, including outstanding interest and cancellation of participation by Government. But the officials of the allegedly excluded banks, who pleaded anonymity for fear of victimization, wondered what criteria was used in selecting the two banks. They argued that there are a number of the other excluded banks who are well qualified to manage the funds, stressing that, "by choosing only two banks, the Government has narrowed down the choice for farmers spread all over the country, many of who might not necessarily have accounts with UBA and First Bank."

Some of the officials spoken to by our reporter cited Union Bank, Unity Bank and FinBank among those that are in the forefront in agricultural financing, in addition to First Bank.

They cited, for example, that the Union Bank Model of Agric Finance, which is anchored on the Development of Small Medium and Large Scale Commercial Agriculture, has been on for decades. One of our sources said the strength of the Bank's model lies in the strict processing, appraisal and monitoring of projects financed under

the scheme. This was achieved through the engagement of dedicated officers, specifically assigned to man agric desks in all the states of the federation, adding that, "the bank is able to achieve over 98% recovery of its agricultural loans through the strict appraisal process, monitoring of all the facilities and compliance with regulations." They also relate very well with the CBN Agric department, and benefit from the 75% guarantee under the Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme Fund (ACGSF), which has been on since the 1970s. They also utilize properly the Nigerian Agricultural Insurance Corporation (NAIC) Insurance cover against losses.

With respect to Unity Bank Plc, the source said having enormous experience in small, medium and large scale agricultural financing and with an experienced agricultural personnel and well packaged agricultural products for the past 37 years under its legacy institutions, "it is also well positioned to partner with the Government under this credit guarantee scheme."

The sources said while not doubting the competence of UBA and FBN Plc to manage part of the N200 billion for the scheme, the pertinent question is: w

What criteria did the CBN use to narrow the choice to only two banks, in a big country like Nigeria with 24 banks? Why did the CBN single-handedly make this choice when there is a Committee with a mandate to coordinate the entire exercise comprising its representatives and those of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, the National Food Reserve Agency as well as the office of the Accountant General of the Federation, among government agencies?

But the CBN could not answer these questions despite efforts made by this paper since Saturday to get its response. The said advert was also published in the Friday edition of the Daily Trust.

When contacted for comments on Saturday, spokesman of the CBN Mr. Festus Odoko declined comment on the matter, saying he would prefer the issue discussed on Monday. Several calls put to him yesterday

were not answered. When contacted also on Saturday Malam Isa AbdulMumin an official of the CBN who is also in the information department could not comment on it. Efforts to talk to Governor Chukwuma Soludo at a press briefing yesterday to mark 50th anniversary of the CBN failed, as he refused to answer questions from newsmen.

Daily Trust can report that the ACGSF was established by Decree No. 20 of 1977, and started operations in April, 1978. Its original share capital and paid-up capital were N100 million and N85.6 million. The Federal Government holds 60% and the CBN, 40% of the shares. The capital base of the Scheme was increased to N3 billion in March, 2001. The Fund guarantees credit facilities extended to farmers by banks up to 75% of the amount in default net of any security realized. The Fund is managed by the Central Bank of Nigeria, which handles the day-to-day operations of the Scheme. The guidelines stipulate the eligible enterprises for which guarantees could be issued under the Scheme.

Between 1978 and 1989 when the government stipulated lending quotas for banks under the Scheme, there was consistent increase in the lending portfolios of banks to agriculture, but after the deregulation of the financial system, banks started shying away by reducing their loans to the sector due to the perceived risk. In order to reverse the declining trend, several innovations and products were introduced under the Scheme such as: the self help group linkage banking, trust fund model and interest draw back.

Daily Trust gathered that the scheme was introduced to enable farmers exploit the untapped potentials of Nigeria's agricultural sector, reduce inflation, lower the cost of agricultural production (i. e. food items), generate surplus for export, increase Nigeria's foreign earnings as well as diversify its revenue base. At national level, the scheme operates through a Central Implementation Committee (CIC) while at the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and State levels, the Scheme operates through State Implementation Committees (SICs) instituted to ensure that the objectives of the scheme is realized without hindrance.

To access loans under the scheme, applicants (practicing farmers and agro-allied entrepreneurs with means) are encouraged to approach their banks for loan through the respective state chapters of farmers associations and State Implementation Committees. However, large scale farmers are allowed under the scheme to apply directly to the banks in accordance with the guidelines.

The commercial agric credit scheme funds are disbursed to farmers and agro-allied entrepreneurs at a single-digit interest rate of 8.0 percent. At the commencement of the project support, banks will grant loans to qualified applicants at 14.0 per cent interest rate. Applicants who pay back their facilities on schedule are to enjoy a rebate of 6.0 per cent, thus reducing the effective rate of interest to be paid by farmers to 8.0 per cent.

The implementation guidelines are usually determined administratively as soon as a decision is taken on the proposed fund.

Many farmers interviewed by the this paper said the exercise could be deemed to have failed on arrival for one, shutting out the banks and second, targeting big time commercial farmers while the small farmers who are the backbone of agriculture in the county are left to their fate.

INDUSTRY BUSINESS

Northern CCIMAs seek micro-credit scheme for SMEs

From Mohammed Shosanya, Lagos

The Conference of the Northern States Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture has implored the Federal government to create a scheme that would facilitate micro-credits for small scale businesses in the country.

The Chamber said doing so would enable small scale businesses thrive.

Chairman of the Chamber Alhaji Jani Ibrahim who spoke at a stakeholder meeting in Lagos said facilitating micro-credits for small scale businesses would also have a beneficial economic implication for the country.

He said such measure was taken in India recently and is already yielding requisite dividend.

He advised the Federal government to toe this path, adding that the country has the climate for such business to grow.

He said: "Micro credits small scale business can make a change. The government of India had done it and it pays them. There is no reason why we cannot replicate same in Nigeria".

ITF trains staff on business plan for SMEs

From Ruqayyah Yusuf Aliyu, Kano

Industrial Training Fund (ITF) has embarked on a seven-day training on Small and Medium Entrepreneurs (SME) business skills writing for its training development officers from across the nation.

Speaking during the opening ceremony of the workshop, director general ITF, Prof. Longmas Sambo Wapmuk noted that SMEs are the backbone of any economic development.

Prof. Sambo who spoke through the director, business training and development Mr. Joe Bitrus Musa added that while 80% of the businesses in Nigeria are SMEs, their major problem is lack of proper coordination.

He further observed that for these SME to grow, it has become necessary for the development officers to assist the entrepreneurs in drafting a good business plan using the skills they will acquire during the training.

Prof. Sambo further commended the efforts of the Small and Medium Entrepreneurs Development Association of Nigeria (SMEDAN) in its effort to ensure proper coordination of SME.

Speaking to *Daily Trust* after the opening ceremony, the head of training, Industrial skills and development centre Kano Mr. Chris Adikwu said the aim of the training is to equip the development officers with the basic skills and rudiments of business plan writing.

According to him, "the training is aimed at equipping the development staff of the basic skills of writing business plans for small and medium entrepreneurs and this is because a good plan is the foundation for any successful business which is in line the seven point agenda of the federal government".

Mr. Adikwu further noted that one of the major problems with development of SME is lack of a good business plan which hinders their access to loans from banks and other finance institutions.

He said: "It has been established that one of the major problems with the growth of business enterprises in Nigeria is lack of access to loans from banks and other financial institutions and this mostly is as a result of lack of a good business plan. Therefore ITF decided to train its development staff on business plan so that they can assist the business owners in drafting a good, realistic and convincing business plan".

Investment confab opens in Kaduna

From Hassan A Karofi, Kano

The first national conference on public relations and investment security in Nigeria aimed at reforming the corporate social responsibility practice among Nigerian companies and other corporate institutions will open in Kaduna from 22nd to 23rd of this month.

The event which is being organized by the Business Day newspaper in conjunction with PR value consulting Nigeria is aimed at ensuring effective corporate social responsibility initiatives by Nigeria's corporate institutions.

According to a statement issued to *Daily Trust* in Kano and signed by Bashir Ibrahim Hassan, the conference will discuss the need for government and stakeholders to offer stable business environment that is transparent and in compliance to both foreign and local investors.

The statement said the decision to hold the conference in Kaduna was due to the fact that the region is left behind in terms of CSR initiatives and in economic and financial development generally.

"We believe there is urgent need to open the northern part of the country to the economic agenda of the nation and pave the way for them to actively and fully participate in economic activities of the country," the organizers added.

N70bn textile fund on course -FG

From Kayode Ekundayo, Lagos

Fear that the proposed N70billion revival fund for the textile sector would be jettisoned by the Federal Government has been dispelled by the Minister of Commerce and Industry Chief Achike Udenwa.

Udenwa said the Federal government is still desirous of making the fund available to textile manufactures and called on Nigerians to be patient.

The government had recently proposed the N70billion revival fund to save the sector from extinc-

tion. It pledged to release the fund to the manufacturers last month but failed to do so.

In an exclusive interview with *Daily Trust*, Director General of Textile Manufacturers Association of Nigeria Chief Olarenwaju Jolayemi expressed doubt about the intention of the government to release the fund, saying that the Bank of Industry which the government intends to route the fund through has not been

briefed.

But Udenwa, the former Governor of Imo State, who spoke at a stakeholder forum in Lagos said his Ministry in collaboration with the Bank of Industry is still working on the fund and exploring modalities to get the fund disbursed appropriately.

He said the government is being cautious with the fund so that it will not end up in wrong hands.

He said, "The Bank of Industry is actually working round the clock on the fund. I do agree that it has taken time. I do agree that there are

certain expectation but whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well.

"There have been many government's intervention in this country-agriculture, manufacturing, housing etc. It takes a lot of attention on the part of the government".

Udenwa, who disclosed government's plan to lift ban on vegetable oil also said government is still committed to the implementation of industrial cluster concept.

He revealed that government intends to drive the policy through the four industrial centres located in the country.



From left: Guy Chaperon, Project Director, Lafarge Cement WAPCO Nigeria Plc; Olukorede Adenowo, Director, Origination & Clients Coverage; Chike Onodugo, GM, Energy & Commodities; Taiwo Shote, Snr. Relationship Manager, all of Standard Chartered Bank Nigeria at the inaugural Lenders' Meeting for the multimillion Euro Lafarge Lakatabu Project held in Lagos recently.

Fake products: FG engages

foreign firms

The Federal Government says it has engaged a German and a French firm to help it in checking the spate of importation of substandard goods.

Disclosing this in Lagos at the weekend while signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with TUV International (Germany) and SGC (France), the Minister of Commerce and Industry Chief Achike Udenwa said the two Standards Service Provider (SSP) was part of government efforts to increase easy access to standard service for exporting countries.

He decried the influx of substandard goods into the country, saying the practice is a big hazard and economic sabotage.

The minister said that it was better to destroy 100 containers stocked with substandard products to save

From Mohammed Shosanya, Lagos

one life if possible and commended the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) for exhibiting high professionalism in the conduct its duty.

He enjoined the two firms to ensure only quality products are imported into the country, adding that the two companies are widespread.

Also speaking, Dr. John Akanya Director General SON said that the engagement of the services of SSP was meant to encourage genuine foreign manufacturers to trade with Nigeria.

He said his organisation had introduced SON's Conformity Assessment

Programme (SONCAP) to check certain regulated products imported into the country.

He noted that the programme was designed to protect Nigerian consumers from unsafe products.

Besides, Akanya said that SON had introduced online products certificate validation to achieve the importation of quality products into the country.

According to him, the customs, banks and CBN could easily access the validated certificate online to protect local manufacturers from unhealthy competition.

He said that the organization has trained some banks executives and stakeholders on the application of the system that the aim was

to ensure importation of quality products into the country.

He disclosed that the scheme was a paradigm shift from the old way of allowing the influx of substandard goods into the country.

According to him, the new method will enable Customs, banks and CBN access the validated certificate online before allowing the goods into the country adding that it would go a long way to drastically reduce the destruction of substandard products which had caused the country huge capital flight.

He solicited total compliance with the scheme to achieve the desired benefits adding that the scheme would aid the government destination inspection objective and compliance with DTI.

STAR FEATURE

Where are the

Why is the population of the donkey, the most efficient beast of burden in several human societies, depleting in Northern Nigeria?

Alhaji Hamza Sarkin Shanu: "They've been devoured by humans."

Malam Mansur Haruna: "Modern vehicles of haulage have usurped their functions."

By Uthman Abubakar, who was in Dambatta

Since the beginning of the domestication of animals by man in the time immemorial, the donkey has been one of the most popular and economically most utilised beast of burden in the human societies of Africa and Asia where it is, perhaps more than anywhere else, noticeably domesticated and used for haulage and other related purposes. The camel is another.

Among many of such societies, where the camel is not such popular, or its population is not as high, the donkey is the most popular and most economically used for such purposes among all domesticated animals.

In Northern Nigerian communities, for example, merchants, since the olden times, would organise large caravans with tens of donkeys carrying their merchandise in trading shuttles between, say, the lands of Kano, Kastina, Sokoto and Zazzau to, say, the land of Gwanja, or between the land of Borno to markets in deeper locations of the Central Sudan.

Depending on his status of wealth and volume of traded merchandise, a merchant heaps the merchandise on his donkey, or donkeys, during his network of trading forays among intra and inter communities markets on all or most market days within the communities conveniently coverable for him.

The farmer, depending on his volume of wealth, or even the peasant farmer, carries compost and other available types of local manure, sacks or wraps of seeds and many farming implements on his donkey, or donkeys, to the farm, right from the eave of the farming season, through the months-long season to the harvest time. He will hoist all such materials and even mount on the donkeys with some members of his family to the farm.

At the end of the day, he will heap bundles of firewood or many other odds and ends used in domestic life on the donkey or donkeys as he retires home with whoever among the members of the family follows him to the farm.

The pauper will simply ride on his donkey to the bush, collect bundles of firewood or thatch, return to the village or town, or herd it to the surrounding villages or towns, combing the streets and hawking them to make ends meet. A richer fellow in the community may also hire him and his donkey to haul some wares for him to or from the farm or the market of any village or town.

He may also be hired with his donkey to carry sand or mud or any other building materials in his *Mangala* (a woven bag-like local container used to carry loads on donkeys) from the village or town outskirts to wherever is his construction site of the fellow who hired him in the village or town.

Abject paupers in remote rural communities, who cannot afford transport fares for modern means of transportation, find it convenient to convey their ailing relations to any healthcare delivery institutions in the towns, even if at the risk of the ailing dying on the way.

So numerous have been the social, but, much more importantly, the economic, uses of the donkey to the human societies domesticating it over the ages that it seems to have substantially shaped their socio-economic cultures and environments.

A popular *Tandu* musician in Hausa land sums up the economic significance of the donkey in a music he played for it: "Nayi mai kidi, sarkin suntular kaya; in bida akai jaki ba a tausai nai"

This means:

"I play the music for the master of the load; in the field of trade, no one has mercy for the donkey."

So significant has been the performance of the donkey in the sphere of trade in its societies of domestication over the ages by transporting massive volumes of commodities among commercial and farming locations over time that it could conveniently take the credit of facilitating massive economic achievements in those societies over the ages.

Alas! In Northern Nigeria, where the donkey has been an integral part of cultures and environments of most communities, the more modernity eats into the society, the more the population of donkeys seems to deplete.

What is happening to donkeys in the society?

"People have devoured them," Alhaji Hamza, the Sarkin Kara



This huge donkey could cost over N20,000

(chief of livestock market) of Dambatta in Kano State, responded swiftly with sharp humour, stressing, "Our fellow Nigerians who eat every kind of meat have devoured the donkeys."

The livestock market superintendent reviewed the donkey trade over the recent decades, recalling how, especially from such popular far Northern Nigerian markets as Illela, Charanchi, Mai-adua, Kafur, Dambatta, Badume, Wudil, Maigatari, Gadar Maiwa and many others, truck-loads of donkeys are bought and carried to other parts of Nigeria where donkey meat is consumed as lawful due to population leap without commensurate increase in meat production to meet leaping demand.

This trade in donkeys came to be known in Northern Nigeria over the decades as *Ujhelli* (Ughelli, a principal town in Delta State — it is called 'Ughelli' because when the donkey trade started, the first set of traders are recalled to have said that they were carrying them to Ughelli for sale and consumption).

"Are you asking me why the population of donkeys is reducing (laughing)? This is due to recent trends. The persistent poverty has been pinching the owners of donkeys in this part of the country, forcing them to sell the donkeys to our fellow Nigerians in the south who consume donkey meat as lawful. We don't eat donkeys here, do we? It is not lawful for us here."

Alhaji Hamza recalled: "Before the recent decades, you would always see a very large number of donkeys in every *Kara* (Kraal) you go to. Now, you will see a paltry number. Our southern brothers have eaten them all, and you cannot blame them. It is lawful for them, and they need meat. We also consume the meat that is lawful for us."

According to him, the more the population of donkeys depletes, the higher the price at the livestock market rises, saying,

"You cannot afford a donkey in any *Kara* if you go there with your small amount of money. It is too expensive now. A huge donkey now sells for, at least, twenty thousand Naira. In decades past, it sold for just about three pounds. That was when the most admired beast could sell for, at most, five pounds. I can tell you that now; a very big donkey sells for even much more than twenty thousand Naira."

He noted that some livestock merchants have over the decades shifted from cattle trade to donkey trade because "they make immense gains. Now even our people buy and carry donkeys down South. In our *Kara* here in Dambatta, we have now banned the sale of donkey to anyone observed as going to slaughter it for the meat to be eaten. That is why they come here, buy the donkeys as though they are going to use them for the purpose of haulage and carry them to other markets such as Mai-adua and Daura where they can gather and carry them in trucks down to places where they are consumed."

Alhaji Hamza Sarkin Shanu lamented the depletion of donkeys: "The poor becomes poorer because he cannot afford any modern means of transportation, like the pickup van, to carry his local manure to the farm, and he cannot carry the load on his head. If he buys a donkey, he has bought his slave, because it can do all these things for him at his own economic level. He can only buy his hoe and *Mangala* and pack his manure to the farm. Now the poor farmer cannot afford a donkey because it is too expensive for him. Poor farmers are now in deep distress. They can only pray to God for succour. They can do nothing more."

Malam Magaji sells donkeys at the Dambatta *Kara*. "I have been trading on donkeys in many markets for about twenty years now, but I can tell you that I don't sell to any person I observe

Are we losing the donkeys?



This merchant displays his donkeys to buyers at the Dambatta Kara

...ades on it for its meat to be eaten. I believe I am only selling donkeys to those who will use them for economic purposes like farming or hauling wares. My intention is to sell for its economic use. Eating it is the business of the person buying it to eat. That is never been my intention."

He retorted: "People say the population of donkeys is depleting, but they don't say donkeys also give birth to many donkeys. A donkey can give birth to many donkeys before it is brought to the market to be sold."

Malam Mansur Haruna is a teacher in Dambatta. He believed that apart from *Ujile*, modernity has confined donkeys to very remote rural communities.

"Many modern vehicles of haulage, like motorcycles, pickup vans, tippers and trucks, which are now available in most communities, including even the very remote communities, have usurped the age-old function of the donkey for haulage purposes," Malam Mansur offered, reasoning, "with your motorcycle or pickup van, which can convey load faster or in larger quantities than the donkey can convey, or even do both, it cannot be a wise decision for you to herd forth any donkey for its purpose. Before a donkey complete a haulage trip with just about two big bundles of commodities, a motorcycle or pickup van could have completed several trips, hauling multiples of such commodities on the increasingly available network of feeder roads among communities."

According to him, "with these more efficient means of transportation, the donkey has been pushed down to the remotest rural areas where poverty is high among the people. So, apart from *Ujile* itself, which actually consumes this beast of burden, the availability of modern vehicles is contributing to the gradual disappearance of donkeys from the streets and households of many communities in Nigeria. There is nothing anyone can do about this development. If the rural dweller, like the peasant, can afford to buy or, at least, hire any of the modern means of transportation, he will abandon his donkey himself and, eventually, even sell it to be eaten by those to whom its meat is useful. I think you can see how these situations add up."

Muhammadu Lawal Musa hails from Gwarjo in Matazu Local Government Area of Katsina State. He shared views with Malam Mansur. According to him, "the reason for the depletion of the population of donkeys is that motorcycles are so many now. There is also *Keken Shanu* (Ox-drawn cart). Even in the rural areas, the *Keken Shanu* is now used by many farmers to convey manure to the farm and convey farm produce home from the farm. This is also one of the reasons for the depletion of the population of donkeys even in the rural communities."

past, in our community, everyday, between three and four truck-loads of donkeys would leave for the Southern part of Nigeria where its meat is consumed."

He lamented: "The decrease in the population of donkeys, I can say, has had some negative impact on our cultures. All our cultures associated with the economic uses of the donkey are waning. Hitherto, the donkey would carry traded wares around markets of neighbouring communities. Now, motorcycles carrying loads is the common sight along the bush paths of rural communities. The trader used to heaping his wares on the donkey now heaps them on a motorcycle, hired or his own."

According to Salisu Yahaya, who hails from Kankara in Katsina State, "Poverty is the cause of the rapid depletion of the population of donkeys in our society. What do I mean by poverty? A household head wakes up in the morning having nothing to sell to earn some money to afford some basic necessities of life, like food items. He observes that if he has to sell anything, then it has to be his farm. But if he observes that apart from the farm, he also has a donkey, he will immediately rush the beast to the market instead of the farm. I don't mean to say that he is pleased to sell the donkey, because it carries sand and manure for him, but because he is necessitated by the poverty and the situation of having to choose which one he can afford to sell between the farm and the donkey."

Malam Salisu explained the necessity further: "The donkey also helps him in hauling some goods, say, from the market in a situation where he cannot hire a motorcycle or pickup van. So, most times, when you see the peasant selling his donkey, it is out of very high necessity. Most peasants will sell their donkeys with sadness."

He believes constituted authorities and community leaders should ban the sale of donkeys to ensure that enough population of this beast of burden is sustained for the future, stressing, "Such leaders should seriously warn against the sale of the donkey because it is impacting negatively on our economic cultures. If this measure is not taken, we may wake up one morning to see not a single donkey. I believe if our leaders talk, it can be stopped or, at least, reduced to the barest minimum. The peasant majority cannot even reduce, let alone stop, it."

Has any constituted authority ever reviewed the economic significance of the donkey over the ages and now observe the lamentable depletion of its population to contemplate taking measures to rescue it from extinction over time?

The mason also believed that *Ujile* is the main factor in the depletion of the population of donkeys, saying, "Compared to the availability of modern vehicles of haulage, *Ujile* is more responsible for the disappearance of the donkey from the streets and households of the Northern Nigerian communities. In years



Donkeys waiting for buyers at the Dambatta Kara.

BUSINESS TRUST

Suleja NIPOST becomes shopping plaza

The Nigeria Postal Service (NIPOST) has signed an agreement with a Kaduna-based properties developer, Calf Presentation Nig. Ltd. to rebuild the Suleja Post Office destroyed in 1993 as a plaza at a cost of N80 million.

The post office block was demolished by irate youths in a violent protest which flared up in the town following the enthronement of the present Emir, Alhaji Awwal Ibrahim.

During the handing over of the ruined site to the developer in Suleja last Thursday, the Post-Master General, represented by the Abuja Area Postal Manager, Aliyu Bashir Mahmoud, described the reconstruction of the structure into a shopping mall as NIPOST's new

By Uthman Abubakar

approach to the development of its properties for various other uses for the communities where such properties are located.

"The reconstruction of the destroyed post office block is based on a build-operate-and-transfer idea," Arc. Husaini Ladan, the managing director of the developing firm, told Daily Trust after the handing over of the premises to the firm, explaining, "This means after the reconstruction, I will operate it for 21 years, and then I will transfer its ownership to NIPOST. For the 21 years, it will remain the property of the company. We will operate it to regain our money, make our profit and also

pay the loan we took from Finbank."

Arc. Husaini said the firm took a loan of N30 million from the bank and it will source the remaining N50 million from other financiers "so that the interest value will be low, which means we will not have to pay heavily to the bank. The bank's interest rate is 23 percent. You can see that we will only have to pay interest on just the N30 million we took from the bank so that we emerge from the deal not crushed by heavy interest."

The rebuilt structure will comprise a shopping mall, a bank, a restaurant, business and various other uses on a Public-Private Partnership with NIPOST which may continue to operate with such businesses.

A Lagos-based firm, Workforce Management Centre said one of the ways organizations could survive the ongoing economic downturn is for them to identify their core competencies and use it to improve their overall bottom-line and sustaining power.

Speaking with Daily Trust in Lagos yesterday, Management Director of Workforce, Mr. Peter Adetunji said organizations can only go the route of competency modeling in getting the best value from their staff.

According to Adetunji, competency modeling is a useful tool which will help organizations identify their core competencies and use it to improve their overall bottom-line and sustaining power.

He said that competency models help in defining/developing organisational goals and visions,

Meltdown: Firm proffers anti-recession strategy

From Zakariyya Adaramola, Lagos

productive job descriptions, accurate performance review and reward systems, proper recruitment and hiring standards, and ideal curriculum / training selection processes when necessary.

Being one of the newest ways of thinking, Mr. Adetunji explained that world class organisations embracing the competency approach will gain high performance for a significant period of time.

"The model will help organizations develop competitive advantage in a systematic and structural way thus reshaping the organisation into a competent one. Such an organisation will be provided with the ability to structurally and systematically coordinate resources for the realization of various organizational goals by creating & distributing customer value;

with a view towards achieving phenomenal success irrespective of the current meltdown", he said.

He said In a bid to assist organizations implement the competency modeling strategy, Workforce Management Centre is organizing an Introductory Competency Modeling Seminar from the 5th to the 7th of May 2009.

According to him, the seminar will focus on helping organisations launch the competency model strategy and the effective use of the model for organisational review and audit." The competency Model embodies the core values of a business, aiding in the communication of values throughout the organization and helping to align its business culture with its corporate identity. The Seminar is open to Managers of organisations who play strategic roles in Human resources, training, recruitment, and corporate strategy", he said.

CIBN admits 73 new fellows

From Kayode Ekundayo, Lagos

Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN) said 73 members of the banking community- including chief executive officers, top management staff of banks and non banking institutions in the country would formally be admitted into the Fellowship category of the institute on Saturday in Lagos.

The Fellowship Award, according to a statement by the Head of Corporate Affairs of the Institute, Ben Igbokwe, is in recognition of the awardees' meritorious services, commitment to professional responsibilities and valuable contributions to the industry in particular and the economy in general.

On top of the honour list of the distinguished awardees are: Mr. Oladele A. Alabi, MD/CE, Ecobank Uganda, Hon. James J. Idachaba, Member, House of Representative, Mr. Samson O. Thomas, MD/CE, Union Homes Savings and Loans Plc, Mr. Abdulrahman Yinusa, MD/CE, UBA (Sierra Leone) Ltd., Mr. Bankole S.B. Ogunsola, MD/CE, Bank PHB Mortgage, Mr. Soji R. Olagunju, MD/CE, Union Registrars Ltd., among others.

Unity Forum tasks CBN on BDCs

By Abubakar Buba

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has been urged to broaden consultation with relevant stakeholders in the Bureau De Change segment of the foreign exchange market in order to ensure that its policies are not seen to be discriminatory to any section of the country.

The call which was made by Unity Forum last week viewed with concern the way and manner CBN is creating difficulties for operators of the Bureau de Change (BDC) in the country. A statement by the Chairman of the forum, Mr. Musa Maigida Abdu, said that the development in the BDC segment has created an impression in the minds of many Nigerians that policy is tilted towards undermining the north.

"The BDC reform, the north believes, rightly or wrongly, is the final onslaught since most of the current players that will be thrown out of the sector come from the northern zones of the country.

"We in the Unity Forum will not want to believe that the government or any of its organs will come up with a policy that will deliberately alienate any section of the country", the statement said.

It added that the notion by most people maybe a mere insinuation considering the outcome of the banking consolidation in 2004 and 2005.

The statement said that for stability to reign, no section of the country should feel alienated, adding "an economic imbalance is far worse than political imbalance."

Education 
SCOTLAND
Innovative. Individual. Inspirational.

Edinburgh Napier
UNIVERSITY

You are cordially invited to meet with
Edinburgh Napier University

Representatives will be visiting from Edinburgh Napier University, Scotland's number one university for graduate employability, to meet interested students, teachers, parents and the general public. The team from Scotland's vibrant capital city will explain programmes and answer any questions that you may have about studying in the UK. On the spot admissions will be made for postgraduate programmes.

ABUJA: British Council Offices, Plot 3645, IBB Way Maitama, PMB 550, Garki, Abuja on Tuesday 28 April 11h00 - 18h00

LAGOS: Eko Hotel & Suites, Plot 1415 Adetokundo Ademola Street, PMB 12724 Victoria Island on Thursday 30 April 10h00 - 17h00 and the Sheraton Hotel, 30 Mobolaji Bank Anthony Way, P.M.B 21189, Ikeja, Lagos on Friday 1 May 10h00 - 17h00

A wide selection of courses are available including:
Project Management Business Management
Facilities Management Computing...and many more.

For further information please contact:

Accelerated Learning Systems, The Learning Centre, 3, Tokunbo Macaulay street off Emmanuel Keshi Road, Magodo G.R.A. Lagos.

Tel: 234-8023150165
Email: mdevf@alsng.com / napier@alsng.org

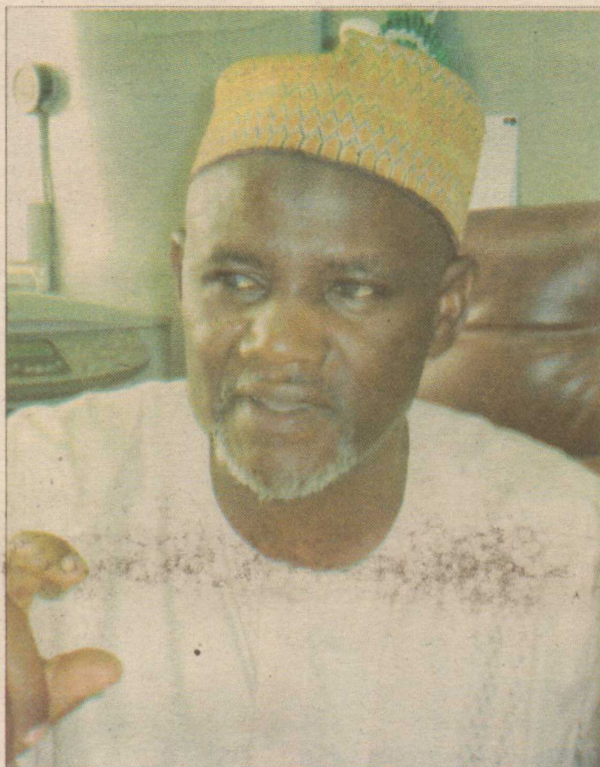
Edinburgh Napier University is a registered Scottish charity Reg. No. SC098273



NORTHERN BUSINESS



North and the 'wonder maize'



Prof Tanimu Balarabe, Director, IAR, Samaru Zaria

An affiliate of the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria Institute of Agricultural Research (IAR) has come out with a new variety of maize that will make farming easier in the North and Nigeria by extension.

The "wonder maize" can be harvested four months after planting.

The Institute which announced the new maize varieties during this year's Cropping Scheme meeting, said (SAMMAZ 15 and 16) have maturity of 110 to 120 days respectively, with yield potentials of 6.9 t/ha and 6.4t/ha. Some characteristics of the maize include good quality seed, resistant/tolerant to striga, drought and streak virus. Also released is a cowpea variety (SAMPEA-10) with 60-70 days maturity and 2.5t/ha.

The meeting is an annual event that usually brings together farmers, researchers, manufacturers and other stakeholders to brain storm on the challenges of ensuring appropriate agriculture programme for the country.

The good news is that with its short maturation period many farmers in the arid states like Yobe and Borno states could plant their maize without entertaining fear of losses.

Commenting on the significance of the new varieties of maize, the IAR Director, Professor Balarabe Tanimu told *Daily Trust* that they contain not only carbon hydrate but also amino acid that is required by the body for healthy growth.

"They have other qualities; they can withstand drought for some time and some diseases such that if ordinary maize is grown together with it the ordinary maize will die off. The yields are good, some of them have more than 7 tons per hectare so with enterprising farmer you may get more than that", he said.

He said the new varieties of crops was available in the market but it was for the seed manufacturing companies to make them available in large quantity for the farmers.

The project which was conceptualized in the wake of persistent reduction in rainfall in the north and was intended to assist farmers in the extreme northern states to produce more grains because of its short maturation period and resistance to pests and diseases.

Daily Trust learnt that the project about 15 years of intensive research.

About 60 research projects are carried out yearly by the Institute of Agricultural Research (IAR), Samaru, Zaria in a bid to boost food production in Nigeria. A large portion of the projects are on irrigation technology with others on cultivation and production of cereals, pest and disease management, food processing, preservation and storage, *Daily Trust* also learnt.

Professor Tanimu said the new emphasis on irrigation technology was in response to the growing threat of climate change. He observed that "The rainfall distribution was becoming shorter," stressing that there was need for the states

By Abubakar K. Mommoh

to think more about irrigation techniques, which was the reason why the states were taking more irrigated related sub projects this year.

He explained that following the Cropping Scheme meeting the seven mandate states, comprising : Sokoto, Kaduna, Kebbi, Katsina, Kano, Zamfara and Jigawa had agreed to take home about 45 sub projects in irrigation, adding that it had never happened in the history of the institute.

He said "before it was not like that, they would take 4 or 5 projects, you can see the effect of climate change, the rainfall distribution is becoming shorter and there is need for states to think more seriously about irrigation technology. For example this year they are taking 45 sub projects in irrigation"

According to Professor Tanimu, IAR is charges with responsibility of "generating, disseminating and imparting improved agricultural technologies for enhanced crop and utilization to achieve national self-reliance in food and industrial raw materials and have surplus for export"

The Institute of Agricultural Research came into existence in 1924 during the colonial period as a research arm of the defunct Northern Region Ministry of Agriculture. It has witnessed a series of transformation but its main focus is unchanged

On establishment in 1924, IAR's mandate covered all agricultural sector in the northern region, but following the establishment of other research institutes over the years its mandate shrank in scope. From 1975 her mandate covers sorghum, maize, cowpea, ground nut, and castor oil, and cotton, sunflower among others. The full mandate of the institute now is in the genetic improvement of the major crops in addition to the farming system research.

Some of the most important crop varieties released by the IAR over the years include 9 varieties of cowpea for different ecologies, 13 cotton varieties, 23 varieties of ground nut developed in collaboration with ICRISAT, 14 maize varieties for different ecologies, 45 varieties of sorghum.

Prior to the 1987 reorganization of the National Research Institutes, IAR Samaru had recorded significant achievements in other crops including millet, wheat, tomato, onion, pepper, grape vine and kenaf varieties.

For rapid agricultural development to take place, local inputs such as technology generated on continuous basis through research and development must be ensured. A large proportion of agricultural produce, particularly perishable horticultural produce like tomato, pepper and even fresh fish are lost annually due to inadequate storage. Consequently, the institute has produced a simple technology for drying tomatoes and is currently touring the major tomato producing areas for demonstration.

According to Professor Isa Onu, Deputy Director of the Institute the technology was in two stages. He said the essence of taking the facility around was to enable the farmers appreciate it so that they can later teach them on how to construct it themselves.

"The next stage has to do with biotic agents, that is storage of crops that normally take place because of damage from other living organisms such as insects and diseases. A lot of work has been done here. We have been able to device ways by which we can combine moisture content of the food and period of harvesting with minimal use of pesticides to ensure that protection is achieved for the produce. Time of harvesting, time of maturity and minimal use of pesticide are the three things we have combined into a technology that farmers when they adopt it would reduce unnecessary loses will be reduced"

He said the response was positive, observing that even tomatoes or peppers that are stored, processed and preserved in the device retain the normal quality of redness over time and that was the quality usually attract buyers. He argued that the method of preservation was by solar energy while the normal vitamins and other minerals were also preserved.

Professor Tanimu informed *Daily Trust* that the institute was working hard to make the device available to farmers, adding that it was collaborating with states Agricultural Development Projects and other international agencies on the improvement of agricultural productivity in Nigeria.

He concluded that the institute was ready to partner private organizations particularly manufacturers of farm machineries for mass production, noting that the strategy would lead to growth of the sector. Apart from training, the organization also provide advisory services... for farmers. This is in line with the federal government's desire to ensure that Nigeria produces cheap and affordable food for its citizens.



Sammaz 15, the new 'wonder maize'.

FINANCE BUSINESS

THE NIGERIAN STOCK EXCHANGE

REPORT AS AT MONDAY, APRIL 20, 2009

Company Name	No of Deals	Quotation(N)	Quantity Traded	Value of Shares	Company Name	No of Deals	Quotation(N)	Quantity Traded	Value of Shares
APPRINT NIGERIA PLC	6	0.86	19,331	16,945.20	NIG PLC	5	16.50	6,116	104,836.80
FTN COCOA PROCESSORS PLC	31	1.05	1,020,104	1,031,652.88	MAY & BAKER NIGERIA PLC.	12	3.87	60,835	235,637.45
LIVESTOCK FEEDS PLC	9	1.15	149,675	172,126.25	NEIMETH INTERNATIONAL				
THE OKOMU OIL PALM CO. PLC	1	29.61	3,500	98,455.00	PHARMACEUTICALS PLC	1	1.68	200	320.00
PRESKO PLC	5	5.00	8,600	44,906.00	UNION DIAGNOSTIC & CLINICAL SERVICES PLC	27	0.70	1,665,957	1,107,050.41
Sector Totals	52		1,201,210	1,364,085.33	Sector Totals 55			1,836,241	1,679,106.64
AIR SERVICES					DOMESTIC PRODUCTS				
NIGERIAN AVIATION HANDLING COMPANY PLC					B. O. C. GASES NIGERIA PLC				
	143	7.25	337,002	2,420,700.27		3	16.96	4,700	78,490.00
Sector Totals	143		337,002	2,420,700.27	Sector Totals	11		117,726	490,713.51
AUTOMOBILE & TYRE					INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION & TELECOMMUNICATION				
DUNLOP NIGERIA PLC					CHAMS NIGERIA PLC				
	16	0.50	986,628	493,314.00		37	1.20	3,922,000	4,614,742.55
Sector Totals	16		986,628	493,314.00	Sector Totals	71		13,512,849	22,174,639.94
BANKING					INSURANCE				
ACCESS BANK PLC					AIICO INSURANCE PLC.				
	203	4.68	13,943,062	64,427,728.75		162	1.00	4,601,421	4,584,641.39
AFRIBANK NIGERIA PLC					CONTINENTAL REINSURANCE PLC				
	51	5.10	925,579	4,733,812.71		1	0.79	300	228.00
DIAMOND BANK PLC					CORNERSTONE INSURANCE CO. PLC.				
	77	4.20	3,974,656	16,898,783.14		6	1.22	135,153	162,652.60
ECOBANK NIGERIA PLC					CUSTODIAN AND ALLIED INSURANCE PLC				
	6	27.96	14,931	417,470.76		14	2.09	599,827	1,239,305.43
FIRST CITY MONUMENT BANK PLC					EQUITY ASSURANCE PLC				
	70	5.09	2,128,291	10,614,040.18		1	1.55	34,000	50,320.00
FIDELITY BANK PLC					GOLDLINK INSURANCE PLC				
	71	2.24	1,537,376	3,382,026.06		3	0.50	99,000	49,500.00
FIRST BANK OF NIGERIA PLC					GUINEA INSURANCE PLC.				
	637	14.60	6,957,772	98,744,867.70		8	0.51	612,700	314,927.00
FIRST INLAND BANK PLC					CONSOLIDATED HALLMARK INSURANCE PLC				
	24	2.22	1,526,558	3,388,958.76		7	0.54	135,944	75,209.76
GTBANK PLC					INVESTMENT AND ALLIED ASSURANCE PLC				
	299	10.09	50,642,496	508,465,215.15		6	0.50	715,240	357,620.00
STANBIC IBTC BANK PLC					INTERNATIONAL ENERGY INSURANCE COMPANY PLC				
	19	5.55	553,734	2,990,870.32		35	0.90	1,904,960	1,750,854.89
INTERCONTINENTAL BANK PLC.					LASACO ASSURANCE PLC.				
	129	7.79	6,791,382	51,524,989.45		18	0.73	553,335	407,049.55
OCEANIC BANK INT. PLC					LAW UNION AND ROCK INSURANCE PLC.				
	185	6.25	3,941,218	24,141,315.07		1	1.29	40,000	49,200.00
BANK PHB PLC					LINKAGE ASSURANCE PLC				
	90	5.09	8,214,962	40,724,899.38		1	0.50	5,000	2,500.00
SKYE BANK PLC.					MUTUAL BENEFITS ASSURANCE PLC				
	105	4.00	10,198,436	40,516,683.05		34	0.56	4,152,035	2,342,629.60
SPRING BANK PLC					N.E.M. INSURANCE CO. (NIG) PLC.				
	3	5.59	6,205	34,685.95		27	0.57	3,238,683	1,778,452.48
STERLING BANK PLC					NIGER INSURANCE CO. PLC.				
	30	1.40	830,756	1,131,070.65		9	1.61	59,432	93,855.52
UNITED BANK FOR AFRICA PLC.					PRESTIGE ASSURANCE PLC.				
	286	8.70	13,008,400	110,781,443.83		2	4.18	10,000	39,800.00
UNION BANK OF NIGERIA PLC					SOVEREIGN TRUST INSURANCE PLC				
	160	10.65	1,924,603	20,372,161.88		10	0.68	633,642	432,878.56
UNITY BANK PLC					STANDARD ALLIANCE INS. PLC				
	25	1.38	3,937,939	5,707,529.88		22	0.66	487,821	308,258.07
WEMA BANK PLC					UNIC INSURANCE PLC.				
	14	2.58	300,156	774,402.48		17	0.70	1,605,882	1,090,170.10
ZENITH BANK PLC					UNIVERSAL INSURANCE CO. PLC				
	299	13.99	11,415,980	156,460,881.75		6	0.54	145,137	78,373.98
Sector Totals	2,783		142,774,492	1,166,233,836.90	Sector Totals	397		20,092,250	15,870,139.83
BREWERIES					LEASING				
GUINNESS NIGERIA PLC					C&I LEASING PLC				
	40	89.20	507,709	45,494,910.10		1	5.74	2,000	10,920.00
INTERNATIONAL BREWERIES PLC					Sector Totals				
	12	2.95	54,149	160,761.90		1		2,000	10,920.00
NIGERIAN BREWERIES PLC					MARITIME				
	84	38.86	1,079,365	42,037,600.65	JAPPAUL OIL & MARITIME SERV. PLC				
Sector Totals	136		1,641,223	87,693,272.65	Sector Totals				
BUILDING MATERIALS					100				
ASHAKA CEMENT PLC					DAAR COMMUNICATIONS PLC				
	52	8.10	400,735	3,329,905.05		91	1.57	3,317,890	5,148,930.46
BENUE CEMENT COMPANY PLC					Sector Totals				
	23	21.00	932,789	19,524,529.15		91		3,317,890	5,148,930.46
CEMENT CO. OF NORTHERN NIG PLC					MORTGAGE COMPANIES				
	9	8.00	38,293	289,112.15	ASO SAVINGS AND LOAN PLC				
LAFARGE WAPCO PLC					UNION HOMES SAVINGS AND LOANS PLC				
	44	17.12	1,798,748	31,904,197.90		7	0.93	291,400	269,752.00
Sector Totals	128		3,170,565	55,047,744.25	Sector Totals	66		3,183,769	4,681,801.72
CHEMICAL & PAINTS					PACKAGING				
BERGER PAINTS NIGERIA PLC					NIGERIAN BAG MANUFACTURING COMPANY PLC				
	3	6.31	10,479	62,874.00		632	1.41	703,194	986,712.32
CHEM. AND ALLIED PROD PLC					Sector Totals				
	10	34.00	194,400	6,679,360.00		632		703,194	986,712.32
DN MEYER PLC					PETROLEUM (MARKETING)				
	2	9.88	3,070	28,827.30	AFRICAN PETROLEUM PLC.				
Sector Totals	15		207,949	6,771,061.30		69	84.50	127,956	10,382,344.19
COMMERCIAL SERVICES					CHEVRON OIL NIGERIA PLC				
RED STAR EXPRESS PLC						6	94.81	2,991	283,576.71
	6	1.81	100,209	187,612.41		6	67.23	1,776	113,433.12
Sector Totals	6		100,209	187,612.41		9	96.61	2,109	213,936.96
COMPUTER & OFFICE EQUIPMENT					OANDO PLC				
OMATEK VENTURES PLC						47	69.50	377,768	26,102,310.23
	6	0.76	332,649	254,344.51		3	149.97	5,820	819,688.80
TRIPPLE GEE AND COMPANY PLC					Sector Totals	140		518,420	37,915,290.01
	2	7.39	43,000	302,290.00	PRINTING & PUBLISHING				
Sector Totals	8		375,649	556,634.51	UNIVERSITY PRESS PLC				
CONGLOMERATES						11	4.78	122,615	559,319.30
PZ CUSONS NIGERIA PLC					Sector Totals	11		122,615	559,319.30
	41	15.50	816,484	13,314,677.22	REAL ESTATE				
TRANSNATIONAL CORP OF NIG PLC					UACN PROPERTY DEV CO. PLC				
	43	0.50	8,458,962	4,332,397.62		19	17.41	453,580	7,896,827.80
UAC OF NIGERIA PLC					Sector Totals	19		453,580	7,896,827.80
	29	31.00	818,460	26,070,790.86	REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT TRUST				
UNILEVER NIGERIA PLC					SKYE SHELTER FUND				
	74	8.55	1,795,016	15,058,226.64		1	105.46	1,000	100,190.00
Sector Totals	187		11,888,922	58,776,092.34	Sector Totals	1		1,000	100,190.00
CONSTRUCTION					ROAD TRANSPORTATION				
COSTAIN (WA) PLC					ASSOCIATED BUS COMPANY PLC				
	41	4.60	367,239	1,670,678.53		3	0.96	80,300	77,100.00
JULIUS BERGER NIGERIA PLC					Sector Totals	3		80,300	77,100.00
	20	22.01	165,232	3,718,798.41	THE FOREIGN LISTINGS				
MULTIVERSE RESOURCES PLC					ECOBANK TRANSNATIONAL INCORPORATED				
	21	0.52	200,812	101,239.84		32	8.56	273,563	2,309,354.96
ROADS NIGERIA PLC					Sector Totals	32		273,563	2,309,354.96
	1	3.71	10,000	38,900.00	Overall Totals	5,593		217,112,070	1,602,567,768.09
Sector Totals	83		743,283	5,529,616.78					
ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY									
CUTIX PLC									
	3	6.72	24,600	157,194.00					
Sector Totals	3		24,600	157,194.00					
FOOD/BEVERAGES & TOBACCO									
7-UP BOTTLING CO. PLC									
	12	38.00	134,134	4,828,223.90					
CADBURY NIGERIA PLC									
	11	10.00	26,497	278,025.85					
DANGOTE FLOUR MILLS PLC									
	116	7.33	1,377,377	9,671,453.00					
DANGOTE SUGAR REFINERY PLC									
	143	16.22	5,535,112	87,718,867.51					
FLOUR MILLS NIGERIA PLC									
	61	16.00	419,196	6,585,629.26					
NATIONAL SALT CO. NIGERIA PLC									
	22	3.88	462,560	1,742,316.80					
NIGERIAN BOTTLING CO. PLC									
	8	23.00	5,334	117,817.18					
NESTLE NIGERIA PLC									
	25	150.50	28,293	3,958,190.70					
TANTALIZERS PLC									
	4	0.89	28,650	24,352.50					
UNION DICON SALT PLC									
	1	7.58	100,000	758,000.00					
Sector Totals 403		8,117,153		115,682,876.70					
HEALTHCARE									
EKOCORP PLC									
	1	5.87	777	4,335.66					
EVANS MEDICAL PLC.									
	1	2.66	600	1,518.00					
FIDSON HEALTHCARE PLC									
	8	2.22	101,756	225,408.32					
GLAXOSMITHKLINE CONSUMER									

FINANCE BUSINESS

NACRDB gives N25m loan to rice farmers

The Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank has disbursed N24,858,198 loan to 389 members of the Rice Farmers Association of Nigeria at the weekend as part of the N400 million set aside for the association.

In his address at the ceremony in Abuja on Saturday, Managing Director/CEO of NACRDB, Mr. B.U. Girei said his bank gave the loans in recognition that rice has now become a popular staple food in Nigeria and in commitment to the Federal Government's quest for national self-sufficiency in the produce.

Similarly, he said, the bank has, as at January this year, disbursed over N34 billion to micro, small, medium and large scale farmers across the country with

By Abubakar Ibrahim

N6.08 billion going to Kogi, Kwara, Benue, Plateau, Nasarawa, Niger and the Federal Capital Territory in the North Central Zone. FCT alone has got N1.613 billion so far.

He also said that six states of the South West have collaborated with the bank to "bring much needed credit resources to their teeming farming communities".

"The collaboration with RIFAN is part of a broader strategy to reach more farmers with greater impact at considerably low cost to create that needed quantum leap in agricultural output to address the food security challenges", he said.

Also speaking, National Chairman, Rice Farmers Association of Nigeria thanked

NACRDB for the loan and pledged to repay the loans adding that RIFAN has a programme tagged "Operation produce more and eat Nigeria rice" whereby farmers are mobilised to produce rice while Nigerians are persuaded to prefer local rice than imported ones.

"The loan distribution is done at the community level where three group leaders jointly sign undertaking first identifying members in the group, the ensures that the group repays its loans", he said.

Kate Onu, a farmer from Gosa village in the FCT and member of a 10-man cooperative group, Pioneer Farmers of Nigeria under RIFAN who got N80,000 from the loan expressed happiness and promised to boost her rice production.

PHCN writes off N1.5bn customer's debt in Katsina

The Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) is to write off N1.5bn from the backlog of previous debt its customers owe it in Katsina State as part of its data base cleaning exercise in the country.

The debt ranges from poor billing record of the organisation, the dormancy of some accounts from the customers as well as the general lack of response, inadequacy of supply and complaints by customers among other factors that necessitated the exercise in the country.

The manager of Katsina business unit of the power holding company of Nigeria (PHCN), Engr Mansur Mohammed Musa who confirmed the exercise to *Daily Trust* said the management has conducted on the spot assessment of the power usage in relation to the demand of every customer to determine the appropriate billing and clearing to be enjoyed by individual customers in the state.

Some of the customers are to get as much as sixty percent (60%) written off from their debt backlog and others to enjoy fifty of forty percent depending on the grading based on the assessment. The exercise which began since last year has so far cleared up to N800m out of the

From Lawal Ibrahim, Katsina

targeted N1.5bn backlog.

Engr Mansur who said the agency has about 90,000 customers and about 52,000 active ones however said hardly up to 10,000 customers pay their monthly bills in the state.

He said the company is engaging in mass disconnection to improve on the bills collection even as the exercise assist in creating marginal increase in customer response adding that, despite the scarcity in supplies the company hardly recoup its investment in term of the supply given out to customers in the state.

The company has the least average target of ninety million naira (N90m) monthly but ended up with average collection of forty million naira (N40m) as revenue collected. He admitted however that, the company often end up with ten to fifteen (10-15) megawatts supply out of the ninety five (95) required daily in the state.

He nonetheless associated the inefficiency of the PHCN to poor response of customers in settling their monthly power charges and said government institutions remain the highest debtors.

Kilimanjaro rewards food lovers

One of the leading restaurant brands in Nigeria, Kilimanjaro has launched a sales promotion aimed at rewarding its customers and food lovers generally.

Mr. Nnamdi Opara-Head, Marketing, in a statement said that the promo which had commenced April 1, 2009 and ends on April 21, 2009 was designed to extend its appreciation and gratitude to its patronous customers for their patronage and unalloyed loyalty.

To participate in the promo, prospective and existing customers of the company were expected to buy two packs of chicken and chips and in return the company gives one free.

Tagged "Kilimanjaro Easter Promo", the promo, according to the statement offered customers the opportunity to

From Kayode Ekundayo, Lagos

have a feel of its repackaged and world class chicken and chips products.

Kilimanjaro is a premium quick service restaurant brand owned and operated by Sundry Foods Limited (SFL) - an integrated food services company with its head office in Port Harcourt.

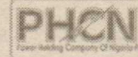
According to the statement, this is not the first time that Sundry Foods would float a promo during a festive season. Over the years especially during Christmas and Sallah festivities, the food services giant had organized similar promotions as its own way of saying "thank you" to its numerous customers.

Mr. Opara also explained that Sundry Foods was committed

to offering Nigerians the highest quality food products with excellent customer delivery service because these were the reasons that informed the establishment of the company.

Currently, the company is based in Port Harcourt where it operates its restaurants at several location across the Garden City and also runs a standard bakery with installed capacity of 10,000 loaves a day.

"Our target is to open 10 additional outlets in Lagos, Abuja and other cities in the South-South/South East regions of the country over the next 12 months" the statement said, adding that the expansion programme would mark the commencement of the company's strategic effort to take its quality products and services to the doorstep of its customers across the country.



YOLA ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION COMPANY PLC

NO. 2 ATIKU ABUBAKAR ROAD, YOLA

ADDENDUM TO ISSUANCE OF GENERAL PROCUREMENT NOTICE FOR 2009 PROJECT EXECUTIONS

1.1 RE: INVITATION FOR PRE-QUALIFICATION FOR 2009 FISCAL YEAR

Yola Electricity Distribution Company Yola wishes to invite interested, reputable, experienced, original equipment manufacturers and contractors to be pre-qualified for works that were not advertised in our earlier adverts in Federal Tender Journal of 6th April, This Day of 3rd April and Daily Trust of 1st April 2009 respectively.

1.2 DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

- i) Supply/Installation of Communication Equipment in various locations of the company.
 - ii) Trace clearing and widening of both 33KV and 11KV lines company wide.
 - iii) Haulage of heavy equipment from seaport to Yola Electricity Distribution Company, Yola, the equipment to haulage are:
 - a) Power Transformers
 - b) Distribution Transformers.

2.1 SUBMISSION OF DOCUMENTS

All pre-qualified documents must be submitted in sealed envelopes indicating the Lot(s) number as contained in the advertisement and mark "pre-qualification for 2009 procurement" and addressed to;

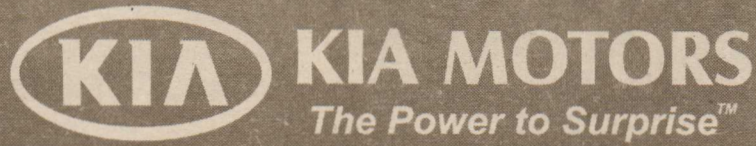
*The Chief Executive Officer,
Yola Electricity Distribution Company,
No. 2 Atiku Abubakar Road,
Jimeta, Yola.*

e-mail: i_s_yanzah@yahoo.com; GSM: 08034012924

NOTE:

- i) We need original equipment manufacturers to respond to pre-qualification for Power and Distribution Transformers in our earlier adverts mentioned above.
- ii) The bid will be opened on the 27th April 2009 by 12.00 noon.

We regret any inconveniences this extension might caused you



KIA vs ?



Picanto
1.1 Litre Engine



OPTIMA
2.0 Litre Engine



Rio
1.4 Litre Engine



Kia - The Fastest Growing Automobile Brand in the world and always the No. 1 in Nigeria



CARENS
2.0 Litre Engine



CERATO
1.6 Litre Engine



SORENTO 4x4
3.3 Litre Engine



MOHAVE
3.8 Litre Engine

3 Years or 100,000 km
KIA PLUS Warranty

Up to 5 years Finance Available
Lease Hotline: 01-8133160
* Terms and Conditions Apply

THE PREMIUM CAR BRAND OF KOREA AND THE NO. 1 CAR IN NIGERIA

Website: www.kiamotorsnigeria.com

Service Numbers: 01-8179595, 01-8179596, 01-8947489
Lekki: 01-7748000, 01-7749585, 01-7742080

Email: kia@danagroup.com

Lagos: 0805 535 9999 / 0803 534 9999 / 0803 676 8888
Ikeja: 0805 999 8190
Lekki: 0702 931 0211 / 0803 288 8882
Surulere: 01-7276083-4
Abuja: 0807 709 3404 / 0802 776 9999 / 09-314 9694
Aba: 0803 571 7804 / 0702 965 6788
Abakaliki: 0806 835 5717 / 0807 903 1913 / 0807 903 2667
Akure: 0705 611 1334

Asaba: 0803 738 5553 / 0706 070 3754
Benin (1): 0805 857 8789 / 0805 531 5145 / 052-450 479
Benin (2): 0705 563 6183 / 0705 563 6185
Calabar: 0803 363 1210 / 0805 814 0271
Enugu: 0803 635 4641 / 0807 513 1813 / 0807 061 4504 / 042-325 618
Ibadan: 0703 404 7494 / 0807 979 5335
Ilorin: 0802 307 5692

Kaduna: 0803 680 5245 / 0805 320 2667 / 062-243 522-24
Kano: 0802 776 3333 / 0805 676 2222 / 064-897 753
Katsina: 0803 712 7232
Oshogbo: 0807 979 5337 / 0705 611 1336
Port Harcourt: 0803 676 3333 / 0805 676 3333
Uyo: 0803 644 2483 / 0802 304 1192
Warri: 0806 588 7771 / 0803 357 8540

Trade-in: 0702 877 7398, 01-732 9999



DANA MOTORS OFFERS YOU 18 DEDICATED KIA AFTER SALES SERVICE CENTRES NATIONWIDE



DIGEST

US scientists to grow brussels sprouts on Moon

US scientists are planning to grow vegetables such as brussels sprouts on the Moon in an experiment to see if a future colony could produce its own food.

Paragon Space Development Corporation in Arizona unveiled plans to land mini-greenhouses on the Moon which would be capable of growing flowers and hardy vegetables from the brassica family, such as sprouts and cabbages. These could ultimately be used to feed livestock.

Paragon, which has worked with Nasa, describes its 1.5 ft tall space greenhouse as a "Lunar Oasis".

Growing fruit and vegetables: Small spaces offer big rewards. It is designed to safely land a laboratory plant on the lunar surface, and protect it while it grows.

The miniature greenhouse is to be launched into space no earlier than 2012 by Odyssey Moon Ltd, a participant in the Google Lunar X Prize, which will reward any project which can launch, land and operate a rover on the lunar surface.

Because brassica goes from seed to flower in just 14 days, it can complete its life cycle in a single lunar night.

"Colonising the Moon

or Mars seems so far away, but it is important that we do this research now," said Jane Poynter, the president of Paragon.

Nasa, which will retire its Space Shuttle fleet at the end of 2010, has committed to two new goals: returning astronauts to the Moon by 2020, and a manned mission to Mars by 2030.

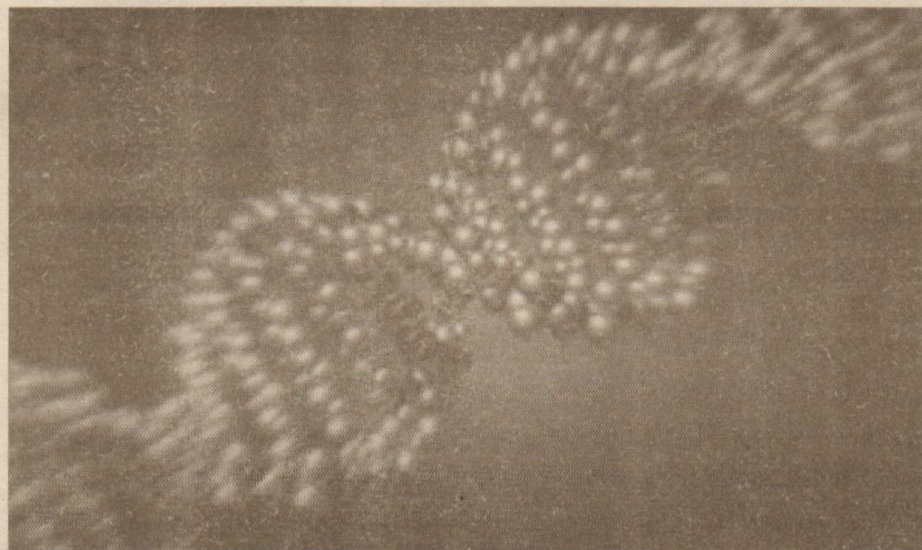
The Moon greenhouse has been compared with an experiment at the South Pole, where conditions include a high-altitude, low air-pressure environment, and wind-chill factors of minus 100C.

The South Pole greenhouse, now in its fifth year, allows workers living in the coldest place on Earth to dine on tomatoes, peppers, lettuce, strawberries and herbs.

Culled from telegraph.co.uk



Paragon, an Arizona company that has partnered with NASA in previous experiments has unveiled what it called the first step toward growing flowers, and eventually food, on the Moon. Photo: GETTY



Genetic brakes: Scientists at the University of Edinburgh believe the discovery will enable them to stop the growth of tumours

Discovery of genetic 'brakes' could slow development of MS and cancer

Scientists have found the genetic 'brakes' which could slow down or stop diseases like multiple sclerosis and cancer, it is claimed.

Researchers at the University of Edinburgh said their findings could also lead to new treatments for such illnesses.

It was previously thought a select group of 'master' genes was responsible for controlling the growth of cells which can cause the

conditions.

But the study discovered that there are actually hundreds of genes which interact with each other.

Scientists said they believed variations in this network explained why people could develop diseases in different ways.

The team hopes that by identifying weak spots in the gene structure they will be able to stop the growth of tumours,

enabling the growth of healthy cells.

Professor David Hume, of the University of Edinburgh's Roslin Institute, who led the study, said: "This study has effectively shown us where the brakes are, which could slow down or stop diseases like cancer and multiple sclerosis."

"We believe this could lead to treatments and cures for many diseases of the immune system."

The findings are published in the Nature Genetics journal.

Culled from dailymail.co.uk

World's most accurate clock unveiled

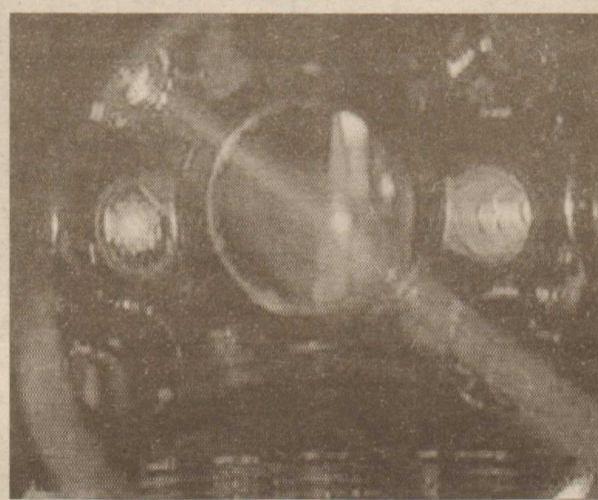
Perfect timekeeping has taken a step closer to reality after scientists developed a clock that loses just a second every 300 million years.

The researchers claim the new atomic clock is more than twice as accurate as timepieces currently used to regulate international time zones and satellite systems.

Like its predecessors, the strontium atomic clock at the University of Colorado, harnesses the natural - and extremely consistent - vibration of atoms to keep track of time.

But it makes the "pendulum effect" of atoms even more consistent by holding them in a laser beam and freezing them to almost minus 273 degrees - the temperature at which all matter stops resonating.

"An atom consists of a nucleus and some electrons that spin in clearly defined orbits around the nucleus," said Professor Jan Thomsen, a



Ultra-cold strontium atoms in an atomic clock Photo: PA

nuclear physicist at the University of Copenhagen, who has worked with the new experiments together with researchers at the University of Colorado.

"By using the focused laser light one can make the electron swing back and forth in a clearly defined way between these orbits, and it is that which forms the pendulum in the atomic clock".

Even though the increase in accuracy represents only a

small fraction of a second, it has great potential in areas to do with the determination of great distances - for example, measuring the distance to distant galaxies in space.

Now the team want to go a step further.

"We dream of getting an atomic clock with perfect precision," said Prof Thomsen.

Culled from telegraph.co.uk

Keeping slim is good for the planet, say scientists

Maintaining a healthy body weight is good news for the environment, according to a study which appears April 20 in the International Journal of Epidemiology.

Because food production is a major contributor to global warming, a lean

population, such as that seen in Vietnam, will consume almost 20% less food and produce fewer greenhouse gases than a population in which 40% of people are obese (close to that seen in the USA today), according to Phil Edwards and Ian Roberts of the London School of Hygiene &

Tropical Medicine's Department of Epidemiology and Population Health.

Transport-related emissions will also be lower because it takes less energy to transport slim people. The researchers estimate that a lean population of 1 billion people would emit 1.0 GT (1,000 million tonnes) less carbon dioxide equivalents per year compared with a fat

one.

In nearly every country in the world, average body mass index (BMI) is rising. Between 1994 and 2004 the average male BMI in England increased from 26 to 27.3, with the average female BMI rising from 25.8 to 26.9 (about 3 kg - or half a stone - heavier). Humankind - be it

Australian, Argentinian, Belgian or Canadian - is getting steadily fatter.

"When it comes to food consumption, moving about in a heavy body is like driving around in a gas guzzler", say the authors. "The heavier our bodies become the harder and more unpleasant it is to move about in them and the more dependent we become on our

cars. Staying slim is good for health and for the environment. We need to be doing a lot more to reverse the global trend towards fatness, and recognise it as a key factor in the battle to reduce emissions and slow climate change", they conclude.

Culled from sciencedaily.com

DIGEST

SUDOKU PUZZLE

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.

EASY

63.

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

SOLUTION TO SUDOKU PUZZLE No. 62

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

SIGN LANGUAGE



Road cut short (due to economic meltdown)
Photo location: Lowestoft, England, by StuList
Culled from the telegraph.co.uk

FIND & CIRCLE JUMBO

FIND & CIRCLE JUMBO puzzles are solved by finding all the hidden words in the diagram. The words are always in a straight line and may read up, down, forward, backward, or diagonally. Cross a word off your list once you have circled it. Many words will overlap.

52

Musical Pulitzer

U	W	E	R	N	I	C	K	S	T	U	C	K	Y	O
P	R	G	T	W	Y	N	E	R	M	O	G	N	U	N
E	E	E	A	Z	K	N	Q	V	P	A	A	N	O	A
H	K	R	Y	E	S	O	E	L	A	M	D	I	A	I
C	L	S	L	N	V	C	A	N	E	R	O	A	D	L
O	A	H	H	E	O	N	H	L	I	J	O	R	A	G
T	W	W	A	F	D	L	O	W	O	R	U	M	O	I
R	K	I	R	B	I	C	D	L	A	C	O	U	W	R
E	I	N	B	R	V	C	L	S	K	N	L	U	O	O
B	R	C	I	A	A	E	U	M	T	D	T	U	W	C
R	C	O	S	N	D	H	A	A	V	N	S	N	X	M
A	H	N	O	T	G	N	I	L	L	E	R	H	E	E
B	N	O	N	M	S	N	S	C	H	U	L	L	E	R
D	E	L	T	R	E	D	I	C	I	V	E	S	S	O
A	R	E	N	G	A	W	O	N	I	T	R	A	M	R

- Husa
- Ives
- Kirchner
- La Montaine
- Lang
- Martino
- Moore
- Moravec
- Perle
- Reynolds
- Rorem
- Rouse
- Schuller
- Schwantner
- Stucky
- Toch
- Wagner
- Walker
- Wernick
- Wuoriner
- Wyner

- Adams
- Barber
- Brant
- Coleman
- Copland
- Corigli-
- ano
- Davidov-
- sky
- Dello Joio
- Del
- Tredici
- Druck-
- man
- Ellington
- Gershwin
- Gould
- Harbison

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE No. 51

M	A	X	W	E	L	D	G	L	I	D	D	E	R
B	E	I	N	I	A	D	R	U	O	P	P	W	I
Y	S	R	Q	J	E	N	K	I	N	S	S	G	A
E	G	F	G	M	E	N	D	E	L	E	E	R	T
W	M	I	S	E	N	B	A	C	H	I	N	E	T
E	G	T	D	C	N	Q	M	O	R	S	E	B	A
D	L	R	O	I	W	T	P	I	W	E	F	N	F
N	A	O	P	O	R	O	H	O	D	R	E	E	E
B	O	A	H	W	F	E	B	A	E	O	L	T	R
M	H	S	N	S	C	T	E	T	L	E	D	U	A
C	A	F	R	Y	H	U	H	I	K	E	E	O	I
C	I	N	N	A	E	U	S	G	L	I	B	H	L
T	M	I	N	R	E	Q	C	F	I	A	N	V	L
X	L	T	R	L	C	P	N	L	L	C	E	E	E
P	Y	E	L	K	C	O	H	S	B	V	E	S	S

PROPERTY

HOTLINES:
08064416006, 08035946883

Dubai property expo conference holds in May

By Abiodun Jimoh, Lagos

The 4th edition of the Dubai International Property Facilities Management Expo and Conference has been slated to hold between May 24 and 28, 2009 in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The facilities expo with the theme "Focus on the Growing Property Management and Facilities Management," is billed for Dubai International Exhibition Centre from May 24-26, while the conference tagged "Developing a Successful Facility Management Strategy in the Current Economic Climate," will hold at Murooj Rotania hotel, Dubai, on May 24h-28. At a media briefing in Lagos, the Chief Executive Officer of Domme Facility Management Limited, Engineer Muhammed Balogun, stated that the event is being packaged by Streamline Marketing Group and DMG World media. Balogun in his speech noted that the expo would serve as ample opportunity for Nigeria as the real sector of the economy is going down on a daily basis in which a lot of manufacturing companies have closed down just as more may be if there is no serious efforts at infrastructural development and provision of power supply, the economy could grind to a halt.

When speaking further, he stressed that the global recession and state of security in the country has affected the economy, including macro-economy, stability, deregulation and liberation.

NITDA to site software centre in Kano

Satisfied with the efforts of the government of Kano state to set up the first ICT Park in the country, the National Information Technology Development Agency, (NITDA) is to sit up a software testing center in the park. The agency will also establish in the park a software development center, ICT training center as well as a zonal office of NITDA which currently has no other office complex besides its headquarters in Abuja. The Director-General of the Agency, Professor Cleopas Angaye, who disclosed this during a visit to the Governor of Kano state, Malam Ibrahim Shekarau, said the projects will commence soon.

He said: "NITDA is 100 percent satisfied with the efforts of the Kano state government in the development of the ICT Park. If every state had done like that, we would have actually moved forward". Professor Angaye said Nigeria is blessed with huge resources that will enable it rub shoulders with other emerging economies, pointing out that ICT is the foundation of success which the country must take advantage of. Responding, Governor Ibrahim Shekarau said the state government will continue to hope on expert support from NITDA for the success of its ICT Park, disclosing that an ICT agency will soon be set up by his administration to oversee the management of the park.

Malam Shekarau said the state ICT policy which is the first of its kind in the country, gave birth to the ICT Park, expressing optimism that with the intention of key ICT players to establish their presence in the park, it will propel the state to the next level.

Kwara to stop erection of buildings under high-tension cables

From Mustafa Abubakar, Ilorin

The Kwara State Supervisory Commissioner for Rural Development, Alhaji Zakari Mohammed, has disclosed that a law to stop the erection of residential buildings and shops under high and low tension lines is underway in the state.

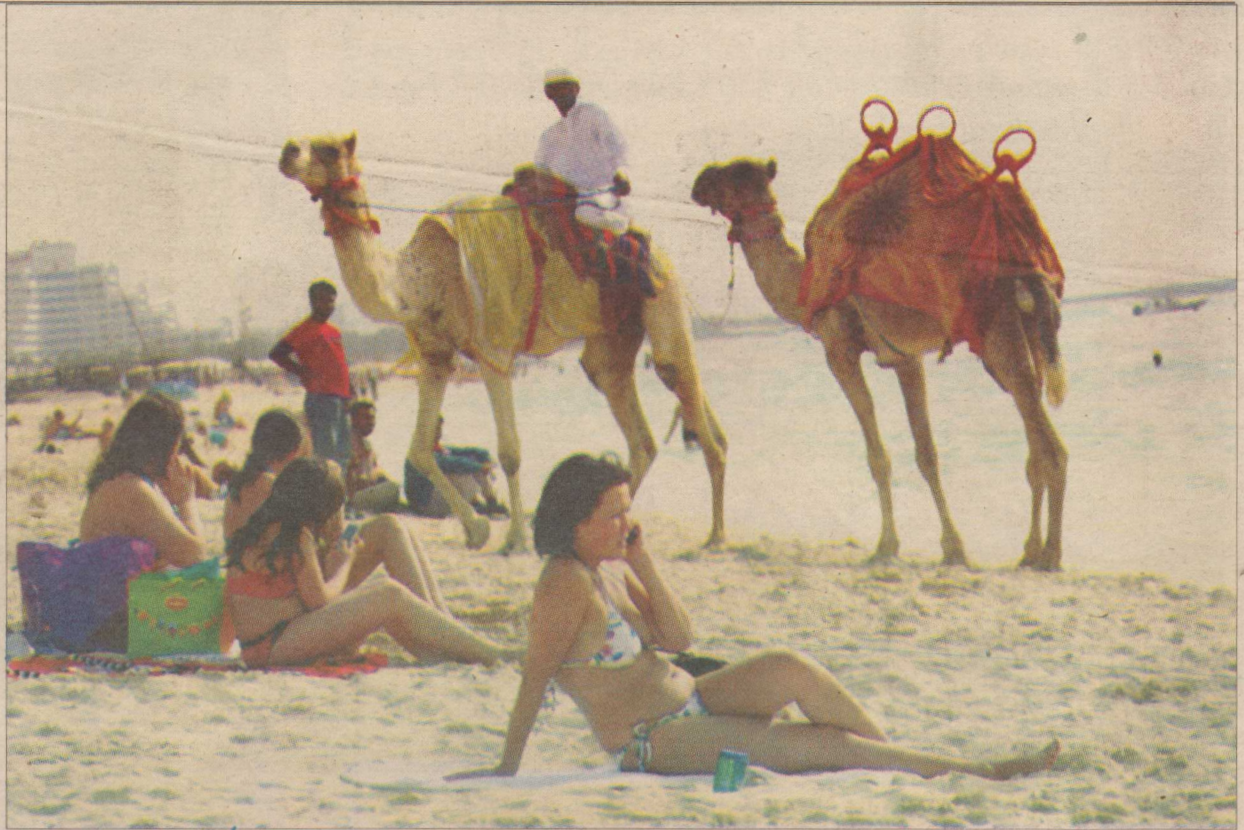
Alhaji Zakari who disclosed this during an on-the-spot assessment of the area of the recent high-tension wire that cut and fell on one little Bidemi Azeez along Umar Saro Road, Sawmill, Borin, Ilorin. Zakari who also consoled the parents of the deceased, prayed God to give them fortitude to bear the loss. The commissioner who had earlier visited the Sawmill Power Transmitting Station, was informed of the vandalism of the station by some mob.

The commissioner condemned the attitude of the mob in serious terms, saying that the ugly incident was not the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) official's making.

While stressing the need for the people not to be too emotional in reacting to any issue, he said they should not put laws into their hands in any circumstances.

He also spoke of the government's intention to avert across the nook and corners of the state by intensifying effort in sensitizing and educating the public not to build under low and high-tension lines because of the inherent danger. Conducting the commissioner round the station, the Technical Engineer in charge, Williams Adelemoni, told him that two official vehicles including three other vehicles belonging to the staff were seriously damaged by the mob as a result of the incident.

He said the officials on duty were beaten to coma and rushed to the hospital, saying that he has been recuperating.



Camel riders mix with tourists on a beach in the Gulf state of Dubai

Demolition of school structures cause tension in Jos North

From Mahmud Lalo, Jos

The demolition of 27 shops belonging to the Sardauna Memorial College at Farin Gada in Jos North by the officials of the Jos Metropolitan Development Board (JMDB), has generated a lot of tension in Jos North metropolis.

The shops which were annexed to the premises of the school which is also under Jama'atul Nasril Islam (JNI) were reduced to rubble last Thursday morning when the JMDB officials accompanied with armed securitymen demolished them, an eye witness said.

Some of the eyewitnesses who spoke with our correspondent alleged that the demolition of the shops was a selective and premeditated act by the state government who is not comfortable with the existence of the school as there are many structures within the area that were not demolished.

Daily Trust

investigations also revealed that the action is being viewed by the Muslim community as a purported plan to hinder the development of the school as the issue continues to generate debate and tension in Jos North.

According to Hamisu Sani Mikaila who secured the piece of land through lease from the JNI, said he was supposed to develop the land by building a shopping complex.

He added that he was not served any prior notice of demolition by the board, stressing that ideally, notices were suppose to be served to him before the board could commence any demolition exercise, stating that the construction has reached the decking level leading to loss of huge amount of money.

Reacting to the matter, the Public Relations Officer of the JMDB, Yakubu Gomos, stated that the

school authority did not in the first place, seek permission from the Board to undertake the construction adding that the road will soon undergo expansion which was why the shops were demolished.

He further added that the required metres allowed between the road and any construction is usually 30 metres, "and the metres between the road and the shops are less than 30 metres."

Gomos also called on people to desist from associating developmental issues with sentiments, adding that every structure that was marked for demolition has been served prior notice.

Mikaila however maintained that he has followed the laid down building regulations before embarking on the construction. "There is a setback of 23 metres between the main highway and the shops, which is enough if compared to other structures

within the area that have less than three metres besides that, the shops were built inwards within the school premises not outwards."

"There are many shopping complex built within Jos metropolis that are less than three metres away from the main road yet they were not demolished, take for instance, the ECWA shopping complex near Challenge bookshop, the St. Murumba Secondary school shopping complex and the Unijos shopping complex on Bauchi road are all very close to the road yet they were not demolished."

According to Mikaila, the school shops which have reached the decking level were earlier destroyed during the 28th November crisis which were reconstructed and later demolished by the JMDB last week, while the school's land has been suffering from constant encroachment by the host community who claim ownership of the land.

NIM to build N1bn office in Abuja

The Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM) says it will need about N1 billion to construct its proposed Abuja office which will serve as a centre for excellence. The President of the Institute, Sir Peter Edeogbon, said the money will be sourced from members of the institute as well as other well wishers. To achieve the target sum, Sir Edeogbon said a fund raising committee has been raised to mobilise resources for the edifice

which will meet international standards. He said funds raising for the Abuja office started since February and that they have secured a land for the structure from the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA).

Edeogbon said: "We intend to raise fund for the building by tasking our members and soliciting from our members in government for help. What we need is not less than N1 billion naira.

He said that the new

management house would contain an administrative block, six class rooms with modern equipment and hostel for resident students.

"The conference room we are thinking of would be able to contain about 1,000 to 2,000 people", the President said.

He said by the time the institute's building is constructed, management courses that are obtained overseas will be domesticated.

"We will train people on development management courses that could promote excellence. We intend to domesticate overseas courses since overseas courses we offer are getting smaller", he said.

NIM is one of the largest professional bodies in Nigeria with over 100,000 members, but is the only association that is yet to have an office in Abuja, the nation's federal capital territory.

ENVIRONMENT



A disused train line above New York is being transformed into green space

LG commissions N70.6m earth trucks

The Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State has procured eight earth trucks, worth N70, 690,000 to improve the council's Internally Generated Revenue (IGR).

The earth trucks include a roller truck, a Leyland Haab Lorry, one Grader Machine, two DAF Double cab tippers and three Toyota single-cabin tippers.

Speaking during the official commissioning of the trucks at the council's secretariat in Ilorin, the local government chairman, Alhaji Muhammed Toyin Sanusi, said the project was embarked upon with a view to boost the council's internally generated revenue and complement efforts of the

From Mustafa Abubakar, Ilorin

state government.

"It is our hope that the equipment would be used judiciously for the benefit of our people", he said

According to the chairman, the council will continue to pursue people-oriented policies, saying, "we are determined to make meaningful impact on the lives of the people through the provision of basic infrastructure.

"The council will not relent in its efforts to support the state government by providing essential equipment and amenities to make life more meaningful to the people."

Sanusi said, "with these

trucks at our disposal, the people of the local government area can be assured of better roads, prompt rehabilitation and maintenance of existing roads, as well as regular evacuation of refuse on our streets. "Governance at the grassroots is increasingly becoming more challenging and we cannot pretend to be deaf to the needs and wishes of our people.

"These newly procured truck are part of the infrastructure we require to be able to meet some of the urgent needs of our people", he remarked.

The chairman expressed confidence that they will generate more revenue from the equipment, as they would be hired out to

interested members of the public.

"We don't want to depend solely on Federal Government's monthly allocation. This is why we decided to invest on the project," he said.

He enjoined companies and organizations to avail themselves of the opportunity provided by the council to hire the equipment at a token fee.

The council boss also commended the state government for being very supportive of his administration.

"On our part as a council, we would continue to work assiduously to compliment efforts of His Excellency to meet the desire of the people of the council."

More wealth in waste management – John Odey

The Minister of Environment, Mr. John Odey, has called on Nigerians to take the issue of waste management more seriously because of its inherent benefits in wealth creation and job opportunity.

He made this appeal while speaking to journalists during an inspection visit to a solid waste bailing plant at Mpape, Abuja. Mr. Odey noted that apart from promoting healthy living, wastes are veritable sources of income generation and employment.

The Minister said that the Ministry has trained staff who will manage and maintain the facility in line with the present administration's policy adding that the plant, apart from managing wastes in an efficient way, will also provide job opportunities for Nigerians.

The project is designed to complement the Federal

Capital Territory (FCT) waste management effort through waste recovery and bailing of reuse/recyclable waste for easy transportation to final disposal site. After completion, the plant will be transferred to the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA). The cost of the project is N275.9 million.

The Minister also inspected a medical incinerator being constructed under the National Hospital (Healthcare Waste Disposal Intervention Scheme at the National Institute of Pharmaceutical Research and Development (NIPRD), Idu, Abuja.

The project was conceived and implemented by the Department of Pollution Control and Environmental Health of the Ministry. Similar projects are located in Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH), University Teaching

Hospital, Ilorin and Federal Medical Centre, Owo. They were designed to properly manage wastes generated from health institutions.

The total cost of the incinerators is N174.8m and are being funded by the Ecological Fund Office.

Meanwhile, the Federal Ministry of Environment has stepped up efforts towards a more sustainable integrated waste management in Nigeria.

Minister of Environment, Mr. John Odey, disclosed this at an interactive session with investors handling the second phase of the Integrated Waste Management Projects across the country. According to the Minister, the Federal Government is totally committed to ensuring an efficient and functional waste management system in view of its enormous benefits both to Nigerians and the economy.

Mr. Odey called on the

investors to enlist the support of state governments in their respective project sites towards the successful execution as well as fulfilling of the Millennium Development Goals as a key component of the present administration's development programmes.

He assured the investors of government's determination to ensure early completion of the waste management facilities in all the seven cities. Also speaking at the occasion, the Director, Pollution Control and Environmental Health, Dr. Olusegun Dada, appealed to all the investors to form a forum that will enable them share ideas especially in the areas of acquisition of new technology which he said abound all over the world. The seven projects are cited at Ota, Kaduna, Maiduguri, Uyo, Lagos, Kano and Onitsha.

Tomorrow is Earth Day

Earth Day is April 22 and the watchword is "sustainability." This is not a "new" word or idea for farmers. We need to pursue agricultural and conservation policies that make sense for the long haul.

Earlier this year, the United Nations Environmental Program released an eye-opening report. It estimated that by 2050, one-quarter of the world's food production may be lost to "environmental breakdowns." The most likely culprits will be land degradation, urban expansion into farmland, water scarcity, high prices for fertilizer, and climate change.

After outlining these problems, the report went on to offer a variety of potential responses. The quality of its ideas was decidedly mixed: We hardly need a global regime of price controls on staple crops, for instance.

Yet we certainly should take a long-term approach to the challenges that this UN agency has identified. That's true even if the worst-case scenarios it has described turn out to be only half right.

A generation ago, the Green Revolution delivered a jolt to farm productivity through the improved use of irrigation, fertilizer, and crop breeding. Today, we must rely on biotechnology to deliver many of the same benefits in what might usefully be called the Gene Revolution. The genetic enhancement of crops already has brought us large increases in yield. More is on the way, especially if we allow biotechnology to take advantage of all it can offer, from drought tolerance in wheat and maize to biofortification in rice. This situation simply is not—for lack of a better word—sustainable. If the world turns toward protectionism, green or otherwise, we will find ourselves poorer than we should be and viewing our natural resources with craving rather than concern. And if we refuse to make the most of biotechnology, we will suffer the ramifications of embracing ignorance rather than science.

-Truthabouttrade.com

Blocked drainages worry Lagos residents

Lagos residents have expressed concern over the various blocked drainages in the metropolis and the likely impact of flood, as the rainy season sets in.

The residents expressed fear that the development would cause flooding of unimaginable magnitude except urgent measures were taken to clear the drains.

They blamed the problem on the carefree attitude of people living around the drains and passers-by, accusing them of indiscriminate dumping of refuse in the waterways.

Mrs Bidemi Ajayi, a resident of Badiya area, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), that the mini drainage around her house has been completely blocked by refuse dumped by the residents and passers-by.

"The narrow drains around my house has been blocked because people dump waste anyhow in it. I fear it might cause flooding which will get into my room soon," she said.

Ajayi said that during the previous rainy seasons, the whole area was over flooded so much so that every compound was littered with heaps of refuse washed from the drains. She therefore urged the government to act fast, especially now that the rains have started.

Mr Jamiu Kazeem, a resident of Ipaja, expressed frustration, saying that the rains sometimes caused problems for most Lagos residents.

He counseled the residents against indiscriminate dumping of refuse in the waterways, pointing out that such habits pose lots of environmental challenges.

Kazeem also tasked the government to be particularly responsive to waste management during the rainy season to prevent flooding often experienced in the city.

FG, firm to install \$12.8m weather radars

The Federal Government and a United States-based firm have concluded plans to embark on the installation of a \$12.8 million six doppler weather radars at strategic locations in the country.

The installation of the equipment, according to the Minister of Aviation, Mr. Babatunde Omotoba, would ease the turbulence often encountered by pilots which has led to crashes across the world.

Disclosing this to Daily Trust at the weekend, the Minister said he went to Alabama, USA, to negotiate with the firm, adding that three of the state-of-the-art equipment will be installed by November.

"I just came back from Easter vacation from where I went to Alabama on another project on our doppler weather radar."

"Even though the project was conceived five years ago, we are going to put on the weather radar in about six locations," he said.

The minister said the project had been slow, adding that President Umaru Yar'Adua has released the balance of the money needed for the project in the budget.

PROPERTY

Legislator aides N300m electrification project

A member of the House of Representatives, representing Bursari/Geidam/Yunusari Federal Constituency of Yobe state, Alhaji Goni Bukar Lawan has facilitated the commencement of rural electrification projects in parts of his constituency, valued at over three hundred million naira.

The project forms part of constituency allocations to National Assembly members by the federal government in

From Isa Umar Gusau,
Maiduguri

the 2008 and 2009 budgets, says the reps member while responding to questions from news men yesterday in Maiduguri.

Lawan said he requested electrical engineers from the Federal Ministry of Power to visit Yobe and assess electrification requirements in his constituency where many villages were not connected to the national

grid which was after about N155million was set aside for his constituency project last year, while about N184million was also set aside in the 2009 budget meant for him to identify a project of interest for the federal government to execute. He noted that the funds were part of bulk allocations to the House of Reps which the 360 lawmakers shared in

budgetary terms.

The reps member noted that work has since been going on with a target of connecting Dapchi, the headquarters of Bursari local government and Yunusari local government area to the national grid, a project that covers about 100 kilometres. He also said that some eight villages were identified to benefit in the project.

Hon. Lawan said he solicited for electrification project because many parts of his constituency relied on rural electrification boards, maintaining only the headquarters of Geidam and Bursari were connected to the national grid while other areas in the councils were not connected. He declared that the worst case was that of Yunusari where no part of

the local government area including its headquarters was connected to the national grid.

The reps member said the people of his constituency were before the project completely isolated in enjoying power supply, a development he said, constituted threats to their socio-economic well being and to social security.

Aso Savings opens branch in Rivers

Aso Savings and Loans Plc have opened a new branch located at No. 12, Aba Road, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

The Rivers State Governor, Mr. Rotimi Amaechi, at the occasion, said the state government has sealed a Public-Private Partnership initiative with the management of Aso Savings and Loans Plc for the provision of affordable housing in the state. Already, he said the government is working on a plan to deliver over 7,000 low-cost housing units for low income earners in the state in addition to other housing programmes under the PPP model.

He said, "We are ready to partner with you to provide housing to our people. But we are unable to sign the deal because of the absence of the Commissioner for Housing at the moment.

"We are committed to the provision of affordable houses to our people. Already, we are working with First Bank in the construction of a major housing estate within the city."

Addressing the gathering, the Managing Director of the bank, Mr. Hassan Usman, said the occasion was historic for being the first branch to be opened in the South/South zone.

Delta requires N52bn for school furniture

From Monday Osayande, Asaba

The Delta State Government says it needs N52 billion to provide chairs and benches for all the primary and secondary schools in the state. The state Governor, Dr. Emmanuel Uduaghan, who disclosed this recently in Asaba at the Unveiling/Public Presentation of Uniform Schemes of Work on Reading, Writing and Mental Arithmetic (3Rs) in primary and junior secondary schools, said the state is taking a gradual step to provide the needed infrastructure to revamp the dilapidated schools. "We are trying to change the whole infrastructure of the schools so that when you enter the school environment, you will know that these are schools", he said. According to the Governor, the shortfall of teachers in public schools will soon be a thing of the past. "Over 10,000 teachers are needed in the secondary arm of the public schools. We are recruiting not less than 5,000 for now and the bulk of it will go to the rural communities".

The governor who was obviously agitated at the condition of some schools where only their principals teach the students, in the rural areas (riverrine areas) of the state, when he visited them, promised that teachers' welfare will be given priority. Corroborating the Governor, the chairman of the occasion, Gen. Dominic Oneya (rtd) and former Governor of Benue and Kano state who filled the vacuum created by Prof. (Mrs.) Grace Alele-Williams, former Vice Chancellor of the University of Benin, said he was optimistic that with the development (re-birth of 3Rs), the state's policies on education would be boosted.

But he urged the governor to quickly usher in sanity to rescue the fallen standard of education.

Prof. Emmanuel Nwanze, immediate past Vice Chancellor of UNIBEN, who was a guest speaker at the occasion, maintained that education is everything, as according to him, education is from cradle to the grave.

His words, "education is the only commodity that correlates positively with good governance, good health and mental orderliness. But it correlates negatively with ignorance. In other words, education negates ignorance".

Acknowledging Awolowo's educational policies, he said, "I couldn't have been better packaged than this if Awo's primary education had not been implemented".

Earlier, the host, Mrs. Elizabeth Ovoh-Gardner, Commissioner for Education (Basic and Secondary), noted the re-birth of the 3Rs in the state was pivotal to the attainment of Uduaghan's vision 2020, as according to her, "it will confer on the pupils the ability to further their education and compete favourably with their colleagues anywhere in the world".



A six-storey house up for sale for a record £100m

Fashola okays 10-lane Lagos-Badagry expressway

Governor Babatunde Fashola (SAN) of Lagos State has said the construction of the 10-lane Lagos-Badagry expressway and provision of ferry services in the state are two major projects currently on the priority list of his administration.

Fashola who fielded questions from journalists at the Murtala Mohammed Airport, Ikeja, on his way to Ekiti state, declared that work will soon commence in earnest on the Lagos-Badagry expressway as the contractor has been fully

paid and will soon move to site.

He disclosed that the ferry services of the state will soon be formally launched with work rapidly progressing on the construction of jetties and provision of operational platforms for them.

According to the governor, "There are two major projects on our priority list.

One is the Lagos-Badagry expressway. The contract has formally been awarded; the contractor has been fully paid and will

move to site within a very short time".

"The second is the ferry service which will be formally launched very soon, even as we are constructing the jetties and providing operational platforms for them," He added that a lot was currently going on across the state by way of infrastructural renewal.

Calling on Lagosians to be law-abiding in order to create the right environment for development, Fashola declared, "We just continue

to appeal to Lagosians to be tolerant, to be law abiding as they have always been and we think they will not regret it".

The governor added that if the people continue to maintain the atmosphere of peace, they would not regret the outcome of the current infrastructural renewal going on across the state.

"A lot is going on, but we will like to finish before we say we are ready. Clearly, we have been better for it in the last 23 months and we will be better for it in the future" he said

Kano land ministry honours staff

The Kano State Ministry of Land and Physical Planning has honoured its staff in recognition of their good performance in the discharge of their duties.

They were selected based on their outstanding performances, credibility, dedication and, punctuality exhibited since they were employed as staff of the ministry.

The state's Commissioner in the ministry, Alhaji Yakubu Ali Bashir, said during the occasion held at the ministry's conference hall, the ministry recognised and honoured the staff as a role

model to encourage other staff to intensify efforts and trustworthiness towards pushing the ministry's activities forward.

He pointed out that since he was appointed commissioner in charge of the land ministry, he observed that the ministry is blessed with peace-loving workers who are strongly committed to their duties.

He then advised the entire workers of the ministry, particularly those not selected for the award, to bear with the ministry before their turn.

He also called on junior staff of the ministry to restore their credible attitude of

respecting the senior staff, stressing the need for the senior staff to maintain justice in their deliberations.

However, after the recognition of the staff, the ministry also honoured former permanent secretary of the ministry, Alhaji Lawan Muhammad Usman, for his wonderful role during his days at the ministry.

The awardees included; Ahmad Aminu Bichi, deputy director; Muhammad Inuwa Gaya; Ali Abdussalam Sumaila, Mustapha Muhammad Yahuza, Malam Garba Adamu, Abdul Na Sambo and Salisu Abdu, a former director.

In his response, Alhaji

Lawan Muhammad Usman, said he was overwhelmed and proud of the ministry for choosing him as one of the recipients of the award and thanked the ministry for constructing the conference hall, appealing to other ministries in the state to emulate his ministry in executing such projects.

Those who graced the occasion included the state's Head of Service, Alhaji Rabi'u Zakariya, who was represented by the permanent secretary, manpower, Alhaji Zubairu Imam Galadanchi and other directors of the ministry, among others.

HEALTH REPORT



email:healthreport@dailytrust.com

Less than five million Nigerians have healthcare insurance - MD, Healthstone

What is your assessment of the national health insurance programme since its inception?

The national health insurance programme which was flagged off by the former President Olusegun Obasanjo in June 2005 has been successful, at least at the level where it is currently covering; that is the federal government employees and some private sectors.

Today, about 90% of employees of federal government are covered by the health insurance programme. However, if we are to talk about its success across the country, we could say only Bauchi and Cross Rivers states have introduced the scheme, and that leaves so many questions to be asked.

Although several other states are at various levels of readiness to join the programme, it could be said that two states out of thirty six is seriously inadequate. However, I know that when all the programmes are fully implemented, then we will see how effective or otherwise it has been.

Right now the students programme is about to start as well as the community social health insurance programme which is yet to pick up. All these levels have

Dr Mustapha M. Zakari, Managing Director and CEO of Healthstone, a newly approved HMO in Nigeria, reveals in this interview that Nigeria has a lot to do before it can make healthcare insurance scheme impact on Nigerians.

From Hassan Karofi, Kano

not been covered and that has brought a lot of challenges. Therefore, the success will be measured when all these programmes are on board, especially the community social health programme which is meant to cater for the people in the informal sector.

Your company, the Healthstone, was recently approved as one of the health insurance providers, what areas of the scheme are you going into that were not accessed by other providers?

Before we ventured into the scheme, over 90% of federal institutions had been covered. The state governments, students of tertiary institutions and community based sectors, those in the informal sectors, such as trade associations, rural communities and so on, are largely yet to be covered. These are the people we will be concentrating on.

How will your organization reach out to these people?

They are placed under the vulnerable group programme. These people at



Dr Mustapha M. Zakari

the informal sector are really the challenge in this programme. The whole concept of social health insurance programme is normally based on contribution by the participants within each group.

Now, the employees of states and federal government have their contributions from their basic payments, while the employee contributes five percent of his earnings, the employer contributes ten percent. But

the challenge is these people in the informal sector do not have a known monthly earning; the challenge is how to determine their contributions.

There has to be solution because these segments of Nigerians represent the majority and there has to be a way that they could contribute so that they too could enjoy this programme.

There are also international development partners who can make some contributions to the healthcare of these groups of people as well as foundations which can come together to make some contributions for these groups of people.

One major problem facing this programme is the quality of services being provided by the health care providers, how can this be improved?

During accreditation exercises, those responsible must ensure that only hospitals that have adequate facilities are brought into the programme.

There should also be periodic monitoring to ensure that the accredited hospitals keep the quality in a consistent manner. Additionally, the

HMOs must also monitor these hospitals and see that quality services are given to the people.

Would you say that the HMOs have enhanced the healthcare delivery system of the country?

It is a bit too early to start assessing the system. It needs time to stabilize before we could begin to see the real impact. We also have to know that up to now out of the over 140 million Nigerians, only less than five million are accessing services under this programme, so we cannot really see the impact of the programme until it is able to reach many more Nigerians. However, there have been benefits to those who are participating in it.

Another benefit is that unlike in other circumstances where hospitals require one to pay deposits before medical services are provided, under this health insurance programme, there is no such demand because once you require medical attention, all you do is go to the hospital and you will be attended to.

Additionally, the primary health care providers get adequate capitation. Whether a patient goes to the hospital in a month or not, they get their pay. This allows for improvement of facilities.

Osotimehin in UK to share Nigeria's malaria experience

By Ruby Rabi

Minister of Health, Professor Babatunde Osotimehin is to speak at a conference on Malaria which will be taking place between Wednesday 15th and Friday 17th April 2009 at Wilton Park, United Kingdom.

The Conference which has the theme, 'Malaria: Getting to Zero', will see Professor Osotimehin sharing Nigeria's experience in the control of malaria alongside other distinguished world

leaders like Tony Blair, former Prime Minister of UK; Ray Chambers, the UN Special Envoy for Malaria; Richard Feachem, immediate past Executive Director of the Global Fund; and Hiroki Nakatani, Assistant Director General of WHO

The Nigerian Minister of Health will be speaking on the progress in the control of Malaria in Nigeria to a high profile audience that in-

cludes President Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania and the Health Ministers of Ghana, Zambia, Morocco, Namibia, Sri Lanka, Botswana and Zanzibar, among others.

Also participating are senior government leaders from countries achieving significant successes in either aggressive control in the heartland or elimination at the margins. Leaders of key non-governmental and private sector collaborators in

those countries are also expected.

The event is the 967th Wilton Park Conference and is organized in cooperation with the Global Health Group and UCSF Global Health Sciences of San Francisco.

According to information provided by the organizers, the Wilton Park's annual meeting focuses this year on unprecedented global effort to curb the outbreak of malaria.

Free medicare for women, children in Sokoto

By Ruby Rabi

Pregnant women and children under five years in Sokoto state will henceforth get free medical care even as the state joined the National Health Insurance Scheme project.

Flagging off the programme, Minister of Health Prof. Babatunde Osotimehin, said that the project is a product of collaboration between the office of Senior Special Assistant to the President on MDGs and the National Health Insurance Scheme to utilize part of the Debt Relief Gains

to provide healthcare for pregnant women and children under five.

He said that Sokoto State was selected from the North West-Geo- Political Zone, and explained that the project will cover about 100,000 pregnant Women and Children under five in the State.

The minister lamented the Nigerian health System profile which led to WHO ranking it low, and pointed out that the inadequacies led to

the creation of National Health insurance Scheme with responsibility of providing access to quality healthcare service.

Earlier the Executive Secretary, National Health Insurance Scheme, Dr Dogo Muhammed, said the Project has the potential of positively transforming the health indices in the country. He said the expenditure on health is still mainly financed from out of pocket which is retrogressive and hampers access to quality healthcare, especially among

the vulnerable groups.

Dr Mohammed added that in the last two years the NHIS has made significant progress in its efforts to achieve the presidential mandate of universal coverage for all Nigerians by 2015, noting that the Scheme has covered over ninety per cent of the Federal Civil Service, and that that two states of the Federation, Cross River and Bauchi, have already folded into the Scheme with twenty one other states at various stages of joining the scheme.

MEGA We Care

Health Tips

Get Your Vitamin B



B vitamins can help your body cope with stress. They can also boost the immune system and counteract fatigue. Look for a B complex pill with 400 mcg of folic acid and 50 mcg of all other B vitamins...

Source: Nutrition in Clinical Care Volume 4 Issue 4, 2001.

Issued in public interest by the makers of

GINSOMIN & Medicoff

Good health everyday Cough syrup in a capsule



MEGA LIFESCIENCES NIGERIA LIMITED

Shakimbi Plaza, 23 Ajao Road, Ikeja, Lagos
+234 01 791 6611
for more information contact: mshahidi@megawecare.com

City news

NEWS ABOUT
YOUR
CAPITAL CITY

email: citynews@dailytrust.com

Hotlines

0803-3493-462

0803-8927-513

World Bank to install ultrasound machines in hospitals

The Health System Development Project II (HSDP II), a World Bank assisted programme is making preparations to install ultrasound machines in Asokoro, Maitama and

By Hamisu Muhammad

Wuse General Hospitals. The hospitals will also be equipped with dental chairs in order to boost the services they offer to the public.

Project Manager of HSDP II, Dr. Jamilu Isa Yankwashi disclosed this Friday at the opening ceremony of the bid for the supply of the equipment in Abuja.

He lamented the dearth of necessary equipment in the

hospitals, adding that that is one of the major reasons that deprive Nigerians of proper health services, which HSDP II wants to correct by providing the needed equipment.

According to Dr.

Yankwashi, other items to be supplied to the hospitals are 11 vehicles and each will be distributed to the FCTA hospitals and area council hospitals.

Dr. Yankwashi commended the efforts of the FCTA administration under Mohammed Adamu Aleiro for providing healthcare facilities in the capital city and area councils, saying that the HSDP II/FCTA partnership has really changed the health service delivery in the FCT.

"This year alone the HSDP II will award at least 50 different contracts for the upgrading and equipping of hospitals in Abuja and area councils.

Participants at the bid

opening session commended the process for its openness and transparent manner.

Alhaji Abdullahi H. Isah, chairman, United International Technical Ltd said he has been participating in the bid process for over 30 years and he judged the one conducted by HSDP II as the most opened and transparent.

Over 18 contractors participated in the bid for the supplies of medical equipment and projects vehicles for the FCTA hospitals.

The project manager assured the participants that the names of the winners will be announced soon after the post bidding verification is concluded.



Dr. Jamilu Isa Yankwashi, Project Manager, FCT HSDP II (left) and Mrs. Aisha Abdullahi Awawo, FCT HSDP II Project Accountant, during the opening bid for the purchase of medical equipment for FCTA hospitals in Abuja recently.

Fuel scarcity: Commuters groan over hiked transport fares

Due to the perennial fuel scarcity in Abuja, commuters and travellers at Gwagwalada and Abaji Area councils are lamenting the hike in transport fares by commercial drivers.

A civil servant, Mr. Ayodele Sayeed, who stays at Gwagwalada and works inside the capital city, said he pays between N200 to N250 instead of N120 to the city.

"I have decided to stop entering commercial vehicles at the motor parks and now board commercial vehicles by the road side.

It is time this government find a lasting solution to the problem by sending officials of the Ministry of Petroleum to filling stations to ascertain if they have fuel or not but if they find out that fuel is hoarded, such stations should be sealed up," he said.

At Abaji, our reporter observed that the transport situation was similar as transport fares from Abaji to Gwagwalada increased from N350 to N450 or N500, depending on the vehicle type.

Malam Suleiman Yakubu, a commuter, lamented that he has been waiting for a vehicle to Gwagwalada for the past one hour and could not board the few because of in-

By Abubakar Sadiq Isah, Hussein Yahaya & Ibraheem A. Fatai

creased transport fares.

One Tanimu Hassan said he bought a four litres of petrol in the black market for N700, instead of N300.

Meanwhile, black market business is booming as most filling stations in Abaji and Gwagwalada are not selling fuel except Al-Asad and Slan filling stations at Yangoji that where seen selling with long queues of vehicles and motorcycles.

At Bwari, investigation carried out by *City News* revealed that four litres of fuel in the black market sold for between N1,000 and N1,200, while 20 litres jerry can sold for between N5,000 and N6,000 in the area.

Malam Yakubu Usman, a marketer, said he enjoys good patronage from motorists when ever there is fuel crisis in the country.

Another marketer at 16-16 junction said they make more profits whenever fuel is scarce in filling stations.

Meanwhile commuters in Bwari have appealed to relevant government agencies to put a stop to the so called artificial scarcity, adding that the scarcity has caused many people, especially the poor a lot of hardship.

Hotel manager in court over phone theft

A 27-year-old hotel manager, Jide Olarewaju, recently appeared before an Abuja magistrate court for allegedly stealing a mobile phone belonging to one Noah Michael and inflicting injuries on him.

Prosecutor Jeremiah Elijah told the court that on April 5, one Noah Michael of Federal Housing, Lugbe, Abuja, reported to the police that on March 22, 2009, he went to Angle 90 Hotel to enjoy himself and while at the hotel, the accused and two others now at large, attacked him and collected his Nokia handset valued at N9, 500 and a wallet containing an identity card.

"During police investigation, the said items were recovered from the accused

By Ibraheem A. Fatai & Hussein Yahaya

person's possession," the prosecutor added.

According to the prosecutor, the offence committed by the accused is punishable under Section 79 of the Penal Code Law.

When the charge was read to the accused, he pleaded not guilty and requested for bail.

Following the denial, the prosecutor asked the court for a hearing date for the case to commence.

Magistrate Aminu Mohammed granted the accused bail in the sum of N100,000 with a surety in like sum that 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 May 13 for hearing.

In another case, a 27-year-old man, Adewale Emmanuel was yesterday arraigned for allegedly stealing a Nokia handset belonging to one Ibrahim Salawudeen.

Prosecutor Jeremiah Elijah informed the court that on April 14, 2009, one Ibrahim Salawudeen of Lugbe Zone 2, Abuja, reported to the police that the accused came to his shop to charge and download some music into his handset.

He said the complainant left the accused in his shop and entered his room to do something, adding that when

he came back he discovered that his Nokia handset, valued at N7,000 was no where to be found.

"The accused ran away immediately he stole the handset and committed an offence punishable under Section 288 of the Penal Code Law," the prosecutor argued.

When the charge was read to the accused, he pleaded not guilty and asked for bail.

Magistrate Khadijat Mustapha granted him bail in the sum of N5,000 with a surety in like sum that 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 May 6 for hearing.

City news

Two families in court for fighting

The police last Friday arraigned members of two families before an Abuja magistrate court for fighting in public and attempting to injure each other.

The accused persons, Razaq Ibrahim, Razaq Amina,

By Sikiru M. Jimoh,
Hussein Yahaya &
Ibraheem A. Fatai

Christian Ene, Jacob Ene, Chidinma Ene and Anthonia Ene were charged for engaging each other in physical

combat and disturbing public peace.

Prosecutor Stephen Eimoga had earlier informed the court that on March 26, one Ayuba Bona of Karu village, Abuja reported to the police that in the evening of

the same date, the accused persons publicly engaged each other in a fierce physical combat in their neighbourhood.

When the charges were read to the accused persons, only one of them pleaded not

guilty.

The prosecutor told the court that the accused persons are in the habit of fighting and granting them bail will not be in the best interest of the police as the police are still investigating the case.

"We shall be praying for a very short date as we don't want any death in that environment," the prosecutor said.

The caretaker of the building the accused persons reside was equally in court to testify and he told the court that they have been to the police station twice for fighting.

Magistrate Fatima Usman Mukhtar ordered that Razaq Ibrahim, Amina Razaq, Jacob Ene, Chidinma Ene and Anthonia Ene be remanded in prison custody awaiting formal bail application.

"It is not in the best interest of peace for them to be admitted to bail today," the magistrate ruled and granted bail to Christian Ene in the sum of N4,000 with a credible surety that must reside within the FCT.

"He must also undertake to produce the accused person in court when required," the magistrate ruled and adjourned the case to May 2 for hearing.

In another court, a 40-year-old auto-mechanic, Ibrahim Usman was yesterday arraigned for allegedly collecting N180,000 from a client to buy a forklift engine and converting the money to his own use.

Prosecutor Monday Akor informed the court that on April 13, 2009, one Goddy Donatus of No 14, Pipeline, Dawakit, Abuja, reported to the police that he gave N180,000 to the accused to help him buy a forklift engine.

He said instead of the accused to buy the said engine, he dishonestly converted the money to his own use.

The prosecutor stated further that the offence committed by the accused is punishable under Section 312 of the Penal Code Law.

When the charge was read to the accused, he pleaded not guilty and applied for bail.

Magistrate Hafsat Soso granted the accused bail in the sum of N80,000 with a surety in like sum that 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 May 20, for hearing.



A building destroyed by heavy flood at Abaji recently.

Pic: Abubakar Sadiq Isah.

Heavy traffic in Abuja as PDP holds convention

The Federal Capital City, Abuja, yesterday witnessed a heavy traffic following the influx of people into the territory for the PDP's special convention.

The convention is to amend the PDP's constitution.

The News Agency of Ni-

geria (NAN) reports that major roads leading to the Eagles' Square, venue of the convention, were blocked as the delegates struggled to get to the venue.

NAN reports that civil servants on their way to work at the Federal Secretariat were stopped by armed security

officials who prevented them from driving into the parking area.

Some commuters, who spoke to NAN, complained of the choice of a Monday instead of a weekend for the convention.

Mr. John Ajang, an official of one of the ministries, said

he had to park his car away from the secretariat and walked to his office.

Mrs. Gina Abah, a civil servant, said she decided to go back home as the convention created chaos around her office.

"The situation is even worst at junctions were there

are no traffic lights caused by shortage in power supply and traffic wardens," Abah lamented.

NAN reports that some civil servants, out of curiosity, abandoned their jobs to attend the convention uninformed as some offices were empty. (NAN)

...As traders make brisk biz at convention venue

The venue of the PDP special National Convention held at the Eagle Square in Abuja on Monday was taken over by traders who made brisk business.

A correspondent of the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the traders took over all available space inside and outside Eagle Square, offering their products to the convention delegates.

Prince Fke Macha, a tie

seller, expressed optimism about the convention pointing out that it was an opportunity for him to sell his wares to the party delegates.

Malam Sadiq Musa, a suya (meat) seller, said the different people that came for the convention have been patronising his wares since morning, adding that he had made a lot of profit.

Mrs. Chidinma Okereke, a packaged water seller, said the product was most needed in the area as most of the rep-

resentatives "complained about the hot weather."

Musicians, who came to cheer their delegates at the Square where not left out in the business opportunity of the day. Mr Benjamin Sunday, the leader of Sunny Sudan International Band from Adamawa State, said they were there to sing praises to their state governor, Alhaji Murtala Nyako.

Sunday said the convention was the second outing by the band and that they

were in Abuja to highlight the achievement of Governor Nyako who, they, noted had transformed the state.

Malam Bello Dabai, a Supervisory Councillor of Danja Local Government Council of Katsina State, told NAN that the convention was aimed at establishing unity amidst party members.

Mrs. Ann Egwu, a PDP delegate from Enugu East Local Government Council, expressed optimism about the convention, and called on

government to resolve the current fuel problem in the country.

Mr. Ajibade Williams, a PDP representative from Constituency 1, Surulere, Lagos State, said that the convention would look into various matters of concern to the public.

NAN reports that more than 5,000 PDP members from all over the country attended the one day convention which was called to amend the party's constitution.

City Photospeak



A fisherman casting his net to catch fish at Bwari recently. Pic Abubakar Yakubu.



A trumpeter entertaining guests at Old Parade Ground recently. Pic: Felix Onigbinde.



Children having fun at Wonder Park, Abuja recently. Pic: Felix Onigbinde.



Mock rescue operation organised by the National Emergency Management Agency at Nnamdi Azikwe Airport, Abuja recently. Pic: Abdulkadir Badsha Mukhtar.



Students at a parade in Lugbe recently. Pic: Abubakar Yakubu.



Underaged boys chopping wood at Mararaba recently. Pic: Felix Onigbinde.

City news

NUT wants TSS implemented

By Abubakar Sadiq Isah

The FCT wing of the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) has called on the Federal Capital Territory Administration to implement the 27.5 percent Teachers' Salary Structure (TSS) approved by government as soon as the FCT appropriation bill is accented to.

In a communiqué jointly signed by the union's Chairman, Comrade Hassan Jibir, Secretary, Comrade Zakari N. Adams and the Publicity Secretary, Comrade Ayis K. Musa and issued to news men at the end of the union's state executive council meeting in Abuja recently, the union resolved that all the Local Education Authorities (L.E.A) in the FCT should pay the 40 percent rent arrears for 2007 and 2008 to the teachers concerned with immediate effect.

Also, the union resolved that scheduling rent payment in arrears breaches the monetization policy and is against the interest of teachers in the FCT.

The union appealed to the FCTA, education secretariat and its agencies to consider their resolutions for immediate action, adding that the union executives are likely to meet before the end of this month to consider the next line of action to be taken in order to see that their demands are met.

Traders at neighbourhood centres worry over demolition

By Abubakar Yakubu

Traders at various shopping centres in the Federal Capital Territory yesterday lamented the proposed demolition of the centres by the Abuja Investments Company Limited.

The investments company is the principal investment agency of the FCT administration that is incorporated as a limited liability company to facilitate and engender commercial activities in Abuja.

Some of the traders regretted that the company

intends to demolish the shopping centres at a time when the economic situation in the country is terrible.

Mr. Chidi Nwafor, a trader at Area 3 Neighbourhood Centre, told newsmen in Abuja yesterday that the action is ill-timed.

"I have done business in this premise for over 15 years and what they are planning is already creating anxieties among our colleagues here as this business is what sustains

their families," he said.

Another trader, Nkechi Charles criticized the FCTA for their insensitivity, adding that why the FCTA should demolish existing structures when about 90% of Abuja land has not been developed.

"It will aggravate the dwindling plights of people who earn their living here and increase unemployment," she said.

Another trader, Musa Lawal called on the FCT minister to help them, adding that it will be better to renovate the structures

instead of demolishing them as they were opened about 18 years ago.

"The company should replicate what it did at the Area 7 Neighbourhood Centre by giving it a face-lift as the design of the Area 3 Neighbourhood Centre is in the Abuja master plan," he added.

It would be recalled that the AICL placed an advert in a national daily where it called for partnership to redevelop existing shopping centres within the FCT to world-class standards.

Motorists want FCTA to reconstruct Mpape road

By Suleiman Musa

Motorists and commuters that ply through narrow Mpape road in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) have urged the FCT Administration to expand and rehabilitate the road in order to reduce accidents.

A motorist, Mallam Jafar Isa lamented that the lives

of motorists and passengers that pass through the road are at risk as the road witnesses frequent accidents.

Another motorist, Mr Bilya Mato said heavy duty trucks that carry rocks from the quarries in the area are

responsible for the high accident rates.

Chinedu Obazi, a resident at Mpape community, said he is always frightened whenever he uses his small car to pass the area as the sharp bends coupled with ditches act as death traps.

"We the residents of the area are seriously

disturbed about the present state of the road," he added.

Chinedu appealed to the federal government to take adequate measures by awarding the reconstruction contract to reputable companies like Julius Berger so that the road can be expanded.



Ministry of Police Affairs

10th Floor, Federal Secretariat (Phase 3)
Shehu Shagari Way, Maitama, Abuja

INAUGURATION OF COMMITTEES

The Honourable Minister of Police Affairs, Dr Ibrahim Yakubu Lame Cordially invites all stakeholders and the general public to the Inauguration of the following committees:

1. Ministerial Implementation Committee on the Reform of the Nigeria Police Force.
2. Committee to advise Government on the Transformation of the Police Academy, Kano to a degree-awarding Institution.

Date: Thursday, 23rd April, 2009.

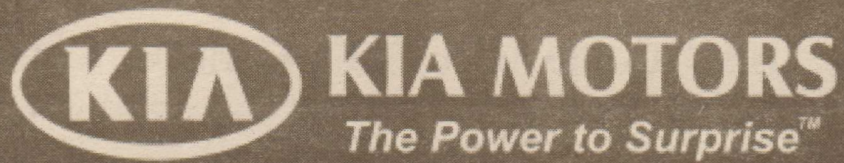
Venue: Rockview Hotel, Abuja

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Members are to note that accommodation has been booked for them at the hotel from Wednesday 22nd of April, 2009.

RSVP

Dr E.O. Oyemomi 08022230627
Permanent Secretary 08066848630
08078399665



KIA RULES



STARTING AT
N33,300/Month Picanto



STARTING AT
N56,070/Month OPTIMA



STARTING AT
N39,960/Month Rio



STARTING AT
N79,020/Month CARENS



STARTING AT
N49,500/Month CERATO



STARTING AT
N92,070/Month SPORTAGE

- 10% Down Payment
- Repayment Plan of up to 60 Months
- Preferred Interest rates
- No Hidden Charges



SORENTO STARTING AT **N125,460/Month**



STARTING AT **N147,780/Month MOHAVE**

3 Years or 100,000 km
KIA PLUS Warranty

Up to 5 years Finance Available
Lease Hotline: 01-8133160
* Terms and Conditions Apply



THE PREMIUM CAR BRAND OF KOREA AND THE NO. 1 CAR IN NIGERIA

Website: www.kiamotorsnigeria.com

Service Numbers: 01-8179595, 01-8179596, 01-8947489
Lekki: 01-7748000, 01-7749585, 01-7742080

Email: kia@danagroup.com

Lagos: 0805 535 9999 / 0803 534 9999 / 0803 676 8888
Ikeja: 0805 999 8190
Lekki: 0702 931 9211 / 0603 288 8882
Surulere: 01-7276083-4
Abuja: 0807 709 3404 / 0802 778 9999 / 09-314 9094
Aba: 0803 571 7804 / 0702 965 6768
Abakaliki: 0806 835 5717 / 0807 903 1913 / 0807 903 2667
Akure: 0705 611 1334

Asaba: 0803 738 5553 / 0706 070 3754
Benin (1): 0805 857 8789 / 0805 531 5145 / 052-450 479
Benin (2): 0705 583 6183 / 0705 563 6185
Calabar: 0803 363 1210 / 0805 814 0271
Enugu: 0803 635 4641 / 0807 513 1813 / 0807 081 4504 / 042-325 618
Ibadan: 0703 404 7494 / 0807 979 5335
Ilorin: 0802 307 5692

Kaduna: 0803 680 5245 / 0805 320 2667 / 062-243 522-24
Kano: 0802 776 3333 / 0805 676 2222 / 064-897 753
Katsina: 0803 712 7232
Oshogbo: 0807 979 5337 / 0705 611 1336
Port Harcourt: 0803 676 3333 / 0805 676 3333
Uyo: 0803 644 2483 / 0802 304 1192
Warri: 0806 588 7771 / 0803 357 8540

Trade-in: 0702 877 7398, 01-732 9999



DANA MOTORS OFFERS YOU 18 DEDICATED KIA AFTER SALES SERVICE CENTRES NATIONWIDE





UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION COMMISSION (UBEC)

7, Gwani Street, Wuse Zone 4, P. M. B. 5086, Post Code 900284, Abuja Nigeria
E-mail: ubecnigeria@yahoo.com URL: www.ubeconline.com



RE: ICPC RECOVERS N3b MISAPPROPRIATED UBEC FUND

The attention of the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) has been drawn to publications in some dailies in respect of the recovery of 'N3b Misappropriated UBEC Fund' being statements credited to the ICPC Chairman at a recent public function. UBEC wishes to state that the pronouncement by the ICPC Chairman does not refer to any fresh incidences at UBEC or any of its State counterparts but a reference to findings made by ICPC when it investigated UBEC and the 36 State and FCT Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) in 2007. The investigation covered the period **January 2005 to December 2006**.

Fact of the Case

Following a petition by the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) in January 2007, ICPC commenced an investigation and system study on UBEC activities and that of the 36 State and FCT Universal Basic Education Boards. At the conclusion of its investigations ICPC issued a report which detailed its findings and recommendations. Importantly and as contained in the various publications on this subject, ICPC recovered a total sum of N2.31b from some SUBEBs who were involved in illegal and unauthorised utilization of funds disbursed to them by the UBE Commission. As at the time ICPC released its report (February 2008), the sum of N1.01b was yet to be recovered from 6 SUBEBs.

Details of recoveries by ICPC

SN	Item	Amount (N)	Remarks
1.	Payments made to ICPC Accounts	95,819,540.57	These represent various sums illegally utilized by SUBEBs in Lagos, Ebonyi, Imo, Niger, Osun, Delta, FCT, Enugu, Kano, Plateau, Taraba, Kogi, Ogun, Bauchi, Jigawa, Borno and Oyo SUBEBs. These sums were paid into ICPC accounts between 27/07/07 and 13/09/07.
2.	Direct lodgement to SUBEB Accounts	421,217,301.43	These represent various sums illegally utilized by SUBEB functionaries and returned to SUBEB accounts in Zamfara, Cross River State, Nasarawa and Kwara SUBEBs.
3.	Payments of withholding tax to Ondo State Board of Internal Revenue	25,355,220.26	These represent withholding taxes not deducted from contract awards.
4.	Transfer to CBN by UBEC, Abuja	1,763,100,000.00	This represents undisbursed funds retained in UBEC accounts for UBE project components which were either yet to take off or halted for one reason or the other. (e.g. Curriculum Development)
5.	Cash recovered from UBEC	5,414,202.50	Of this sum, N5m was meant for data capturing for personnel audit of teachers in public schools which at the time of the ICPC investigation was yet to be completed. N414,202.50 was cash advance for infrastructural repairs at UBEC headquarters by direct labour.
Total Recoveries		2,310,906,264.76	

Details of outstanding recoveries (as at February 2008)

As indicated in the ICPC report, Benue, Borno, Kebbi, ~~Nasarawa~~, Sokoto and Yobe State were yet to refund the sum of N1,016,601,133.08 being funds that were variously misappropriated or illegally utilized.

Conclusion

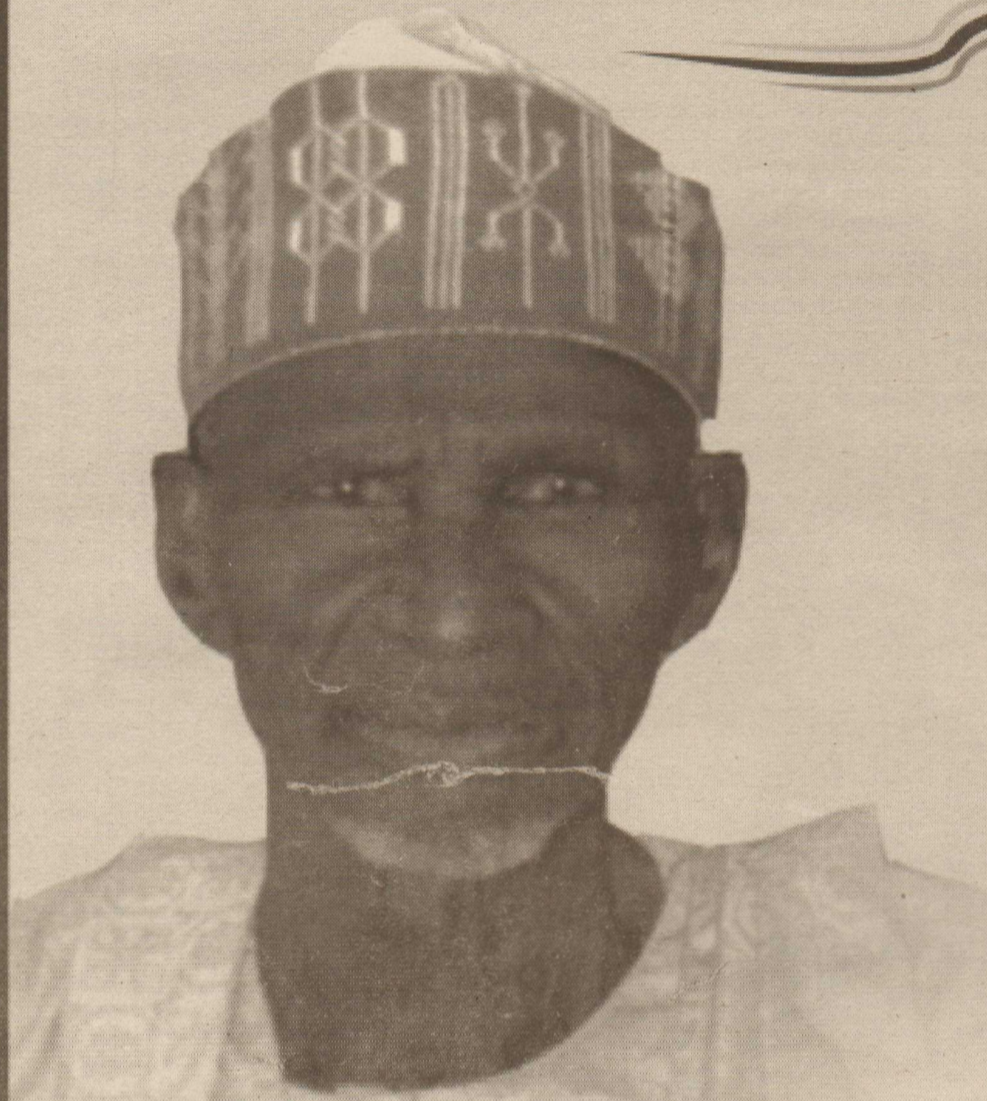
From the foregoing, ICPC's investigation in 2007 on UBE activities for **2005 and 2006** revealed various financial improprieties in the entire basic education system and particularly at the SUBEBs. Following the investigation the total sum of N2,310,906,264.76 was recovered from a total of N3,327,507,397.84 expected to be returned to UBEC, SUBEB and Tax Offices across the nation. In all fairness, the sum linked to UBEC and its officials during the ICPC investigation were found to have been retained far longer than necessary, warranting ICPC's directive that such sums be lodged at the CBN accounts.

It is important to stress that following the observations and recommendations made by ICPC, UBEC took adequate measures to address the issues raised in the report. The monitoring and financial management procedures of UBEC have since been improved upon thereby blocking all possible leakages in the system. Much progress has also been made in line with reducing incidences of financial impropriety within the system. To the best of our knowledge therefore, there has not been any recent case of financial mismanagement at the UBE Commission. Rather, and in line with Mr. President's resolve to eliminate all forms of corrupt practices, the current Management of UBEC and indeed most of the SUBEBs have taken corrective measures to entrench transparency and accountability in the operations of both UBEC and the SUBEBs. While not attempting to shield UBEC officials from fair reporting, it is important to note that the public have sometimes been erroneously fed with the assumption that whatever happens at the SUBEB level is an act traceable to the UBE Commission and its officials.

It is evident therefore that statements credited to the ICPC Chairman and reported in the media in respect of the above subject matter are mere references to events of **2005 and 2006** whose essential details are listed above. The pivotal role education is expected to play in the attainment of Mr. President's 7-Point Agenda, has all the more ennobled UBEC's determination and strong commitment to rid the system of all identified ills and weaknesses and to do its best in upholding the tenets of prudence and accountability in the discharge of its functions.

Signed: **MANAGEMENT**

INNA LILLAHI WA INNA ILLAIHI RAJIUN



Late Mallam Ahamadun Ningi

We members and staff of the Ad-Hoc committee on Niger Delta Crisis, commiserate with our chairman, Hon. Abdul A. Ningi on the passage to glory of his father, Mallam Ahamadun Ningi aged 125 years old

We pray that Allah in his infinite mercy grant the departed soul Jannattul Firdaus and that he grants our chairman and the family the fortitude to bear the loss.

NAMES OF MEMBERS

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Hon. Bello Emmanuel | 14. Hon. Salako Olakunle Kazeem |
| 2. Hon. Abba Dawud Lawan | 15. Hon. Albert Abiodun Adeogun |
| 3. Hon. Isah Shaba In Bello | 16. Hon. Adedeji Emmanuel Omojoko |
| 4. Hon. Emmanuel Jime | 17. Hon. Rufus Omeire |
| 5. Hon. Tsegba Terngu | 18. Hon. Chukwumaeze N. Nzeribe |
| 6. Hon. Abubakar Garba Shehu | 19. Hon. Oguakwa K. Graham-Bur |
| 7. Hon. Aminu Shehu Shagari | 20. Hon. Monguno Mohammed Tahir |
| 8. Hon. Alhassan Ado Garba | 21. Hon. Takori Mohammed Sani |
| 9. Hon. Halima Hassan Tukur | 22. Hon. Bmitosahi Mikail Al-Amin |
| 10. Hon. Daemi Kunaiyi Akpanah | 23. Hon. Olajumoke Okoya Thomas |
| 11. Hon. Eyiboh Esem Sunday | 24. Hon. Olaka Olaka |
| 12. Hon. Uchendu Andrew I. | 25. Hon. Mutu Nicholas |
| 13. Hon. Doris Uboh | |

Mrs Hajara I. Salim, Ph.D
Secretary – Ad-hoc Committee on Niger Delta

INSIDE POLITICS

Ekweremadu assures Nigerians

abroad of voting right

Nigerians living abroad will soon be able to vote in all elections, Deputy Senate President Senator Ike Ekweremadu has said.

Ekweremadu was speaking at the weekend when he received a delegation of Nigerian in Diaspora Organization Europe (NIDOE) led by its chairman, Dr. John George.

He said NIDOE should work to remove constitu-

By Turaki A. Hassan

tional and legislative constraints to the realisation of this goal.

"The process of realising voting rights for Nigerians in Diaspora should take into consideration provision of the Electoral Act and the Constitution," he said.

Ekweremadu urged them to liaise with relevant committees of the National Assembly especially the com-

mittees on INEC, Foreign Affairs and the Judiciary.

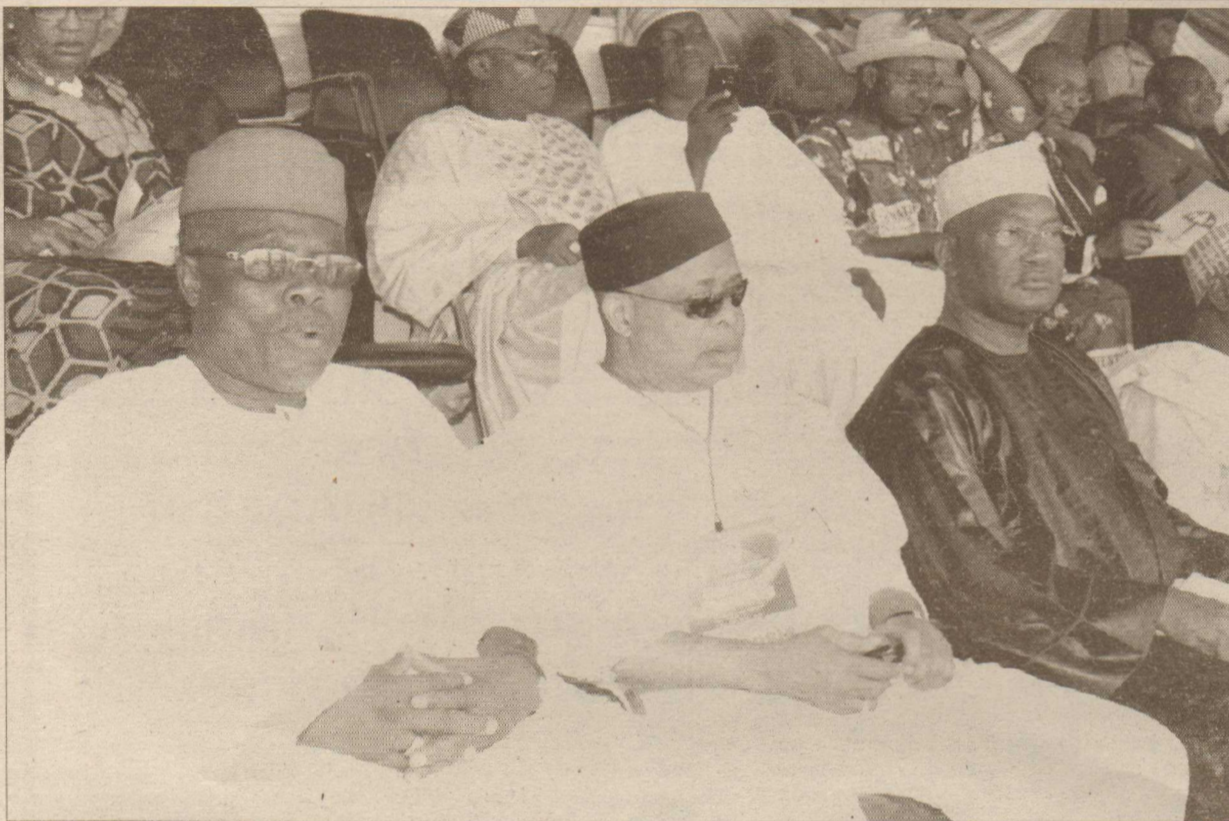
He commended them for the initiative to compile a data base on Nigerians in the Diaspora, and urged them to relate with the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs on matters concerning foreign-based Nigerians.

Ekweremadu regretted that several years after the establishment of the Volunteer Service Agency, Nigerians living abroad were yet

to take advantage of the agency to further its welfare and social integration.

Earlier, the Chairman of NIDOE said they were at the National Assembly to seek partnership on its programmes including the N200 million Diaspora Investment Fund being managed by Bank PHB.

Other members of the delegation are Dr. George Manuwike, Director Nigerian Affairs (Middle Europe), Mrs. Lola Mabogunje, Chair NIDOE, Dutch Chapter and Mr. Gray Okute, board member of NIDOE Europe.



From left: Former Senate Presidents Chief Adolphus Wabara and Chief Dr. Ken Nnamani, with former Chief of General Staff Rear Admiral Mike Akhigbe, at the PDP national convention in Abuja, yesterday.

No apology for Aondoakaa—AC

By Muideen Olaniyi

The Action Congress (AC) has said it would not apologise to Attorney General of the Federation Mr. Mike Aondoakaa over its accusation against him that he was sabotaging the war on corruption.

Aondoakaa had asked AC to apologise for falsely accusing him of plotting to sabotage the Halliburton bribery probe when he said \$150 million of the bribe money was traced to a bank in Switzerland. A Swiss envoy last week confirmed that the money was blocked by the authorities in Zurich.

"We will not apologise and we maintain our stand that Mr. Aondoakaa, in his official capacity, remains the biggest obstacle to the anti-corruption fight," AC's National Publicity Secretary Alhaji Lai Mohammed said in a statement in Lagos yesterday.

"If the demand for apology is meant to intimidate or silence us, it has backfired as we will not relent in demanding that all those involved in the Halliburton scandal, as well as Siemens and Wilbros scandals before it, should be identified and prosecuted, in line with the Yar'adua administration's stated zero tolerance for corruption," Mohammed said.

"Minister Aondoakaa's record in fighting corruption is there for all to see. In the fullness of time, he will be judged by his scorecard, not by the content of the threats being thrown around by his aides or the increasingly boring assertion of his designation," he added.

Yar' adua to close PDP campaign in Ekiti

President Umaru Yar'adua will formally close the campaign of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the re-run of the Ekiti State gubernatorial election on Thursday.

State Chairman of PDP Chief Bola Olu-Ojo said yesterday in Ado-Ekiti that the president will address party supporters at Ido-Ekiti in Ido/Osi Local Government Area of the state.

Olu-Ojo said that the President's visit, the second in one month, was to "finally mobilise and sensitise" the electorate in the state to vote for the PDP candidate, Mr. Segun Oni.

The PDP chairman said Vice-President Goodluck Jonathan, who is the chairman of the PDP re-election committee, would accompany the president on the campaign.

Others, he said, will include the party's national chairman Prince Vincent Ogbulor, Senate President David Mark and Speaker of the House of Representatives Mr Dimeji Bankole.

"I can confirm that President Umaru Yar'adua will be in Ekiti State on Thursday, April 23 and will address the final rally of the PDP Candidate in the re-run election," he said.

The Court of Appeal on February 17, annulled the election of Oni and ordered fresh election in 63 wards in 10 local government areas in the state.

Olu-Ojo expressed optimism of the party's victory in Saturday's re-run but warned that the people of the state must avoid violence during and after the election. (NAN)

Why Jang has political problems, by Shagaya

From Andrew Aghese, Jos

Senator John Shagaya (PDP, Plateau South) has said the Governor Jonah Jang was having many political problems because he refused to give other political office holders in the state their due respect and recognition.

Shagaya said the governor's refusal to embrace all the stakeholders in the state as a leader was the major reason he is failing to achieve meaningful progress in the state.

Shagaya told newsmen at a thanksgiving reception in his country home in Langtang that since Jang came to office nearly two years ago, he has been behaving as if he didn't have anything to do with federal and state legislators.

This, he said, "is a disastrous leadership failure" on the part of the governor.

Shagaya said the current political crisis in the state PDP chapter was a family affair. "We must always misunderstand ourselves to understand ourselves for the better," he said.

The thanksgiving service was attended by Senator Satty Gogwim, Rep Beni Lar, speaker of the State House of Assembly Mr. Istifanus Mwanat and members of Emmanuel Mangni-led PDP exco in the state.

Defections not good for democracy, says Rep

A member of the House of Representatives, Godfrey Gaiya (PDP Kaduna), says mass defections from one political party to another is not good for the growth of democracy.

"As a loyal PDP member, I should be happy that the political party is getting stronger with more members. But, as a true democrat, I will say that such defections are not good for competitive democracy," Gaiya said in Abuja.

The PDP has continued to receive new members with Governors Aliyu Shinkafi and Isa Yuguda of Zamfara and Bauchi states respectively, defecting to PDP. Both were elected governors on the platform of ANPP.

Many members of ANPP, AC and other Political parties, have also defected to the PDP in recent time.

But Gaiya said that democracy would have been better served if the political parties in Nigeria's multi-

party setting organise themselves to give PDP some clear-cut competition.

"With a stiff competition and a standby alternative, the PDP is sure to do a better job of providing democracy dividends toward pleasing the electorate," he said.

He lamented that such a competition, which could have promoted democratic values, was being thrown away.

According to him, the defections, if not properly handled, can polarise the party along the lines of founders, loyalists and joiners.

He blamed such mass defections on the electoral act that allow people occupying elective posts to defect without forfeiting their offices.

Gaiya suggested that, to minimise this, there should be an amendment to the Electoral Act. He said this would ensure that elected officials were forced to implement only the manifestoes of the

parties that elected them to office.

Gaiya suggested the formation of political parties based on ideologies, saying

that defections would be impossible once people choose political parties based on some strong political beliefs and convictions. (NAN)

AC accuses police of partisanship

By Muideen Olaniyi

National Publicity Secretary of the Action Congress (AC) Alhaji Lai Mohammed has accused the police of political partisanship. He said in a statement in Lagos that an indication of police partisanship played out last week, when the Inspector General of Police Mr. Mike Okiro said the force had not investigated the allegation of treason levelled against the opposition by the PDP because there was no petition brought before it. "It is trite law that once there is an accusation of treason, there is no need for the police to wait for any petition before swinging into action," he said. Mohammed said the recent decision by Okiro to disown the police security report on the Osun gubernatorial election, which AC's candidate in the 2007 election had sought to tender at the tribunal, was another instance of partisanship. "Is it not curious that the police that never had anything against the tendering of that report while the case was being tried at the tribunal has suddenly made a U-turn to disown the same report, now that the Court of Appeal has ruled that all the documents rejected by the tribunal should be admitted?" he queried. Mohammed warned that the police must stay away from politics and be fair to all in the discharge of its constitutional role.

SPORTS

Hotline:

08059100030 (Text Only)

Poor planning bane of Nigerian football - Amunike

Former Super Eagles left winger Emmanuel Amunike, has blamed Nigeria's soccer woes on poor planning.

Amunike noted that football required long-term planning to achieve success.

The former international, who currently handles Julius Berger FC of Lagos, said the country's soccer authorities failed to build on the achievements of the 90's by planning ahead.

He noted that short-term planning could bring immediate success but such success would not last, saying it would "backfire" on the long run.

"That is what is affecting our football," he said.

He said long-term planning produce the desired results, adding that the soccer authorities' failure to plan ahead showed that they did not realise that other countries were working hard to improve their structures.

"Our country failed to plan well, forgetting that other countries were springing up also," the fiery left footer said.

Asked why Nigeria had been unable to produce left winger of his class since his exit, Amunike described it as unfortunate, but blamed it on lack of programmes to bring out the best in players.

"It is not that there are no players to play on the left side, but we do not formulate programmes to bring out the best in them.

"For years, we failed to realise that football is changing and we kept on relying on the old players," he said.

He also faulted the country's penchant for winning at all times.

"Football is not all about winning, but the ability to create viable programmes that would be beneficial in future.

"Football has gone beyond what we think, it is all about planning, organisation and well-structured environment," he said.

Amodu: I'm not a miracle worker

Super Eagles chief coach Shaibu Amodu has hit out at his critics who are expecting an immediate transformation of the team. The ebullient tactician also adds that he is not to blame for the problems in the team.

"It's a generational thing. We cannot reap where we have not sown and the players we have, if you take them from their clubs one on one and bring them to the Nigerian National team and compare them to the players we

had in the past, you'll appreciate the level we are now," Amodu said in an exclusive interview with Complete Sports.

This downwards trend Amodu attributed to the wrong premise on which the

national team had been built in recent years.

"Imagine that we inherited the national team from level zero which means our values are wrong. When (Austin) Eguavoen was in-charge of the national team, our value was bronze. When (Christian) Chukwu was also in charge, our value was also bronze. By the time I inherited the team, our value had gone from bronze to almost zero if you take our performance at the last African Cup of Nations as the benchmark for analysing the team.

want your formation now, you cannot get it. If you ask me where my first eleven is, I will tell you I don't still have one".

The former BCC lions handler therefore pleaded for the patience and understanding of all Nigerians so that the team will develop into world beaters.

"I keep saying you (Nigerians) should be very patient even though we are not giving the best, we still have to psychologically nurture the team to full maturity. In football sometimes you need to do more talking to the players to



Indian batsman Virender Sehwaj of Delhi Daredevils plays a shot during the IPL Twenty 20 match against Kings XI Punjab at the Newlands Cricket Stadium in Cape Town, South Africa, yesterday. Rain and floodlight failure took the gloss off the second day of the Indian Premier League's double-header weekend.

When (Austin) Eguavoen was in-charge of the national team, our value was bronze. When (Christian) Chukwu was also in charge, our value was also bronze. By the time I inherited the team, our value had gone from bronze to almost zero

Amodu then queried the pressure being mounted on him and the team after just one game in the qualifying series.

"Given the above scenario, Nigeria still want me to perform miracles in one year. We've drawn one, won six games even if it wasn't the best of performance but we managed the situation," he said.

The coach also admitted that he does not have a first team on ground as the team is still a work in progress.

"This team must transit from one stage to another before they stabilise and if you

understand and appreciate what is expected of them. Even when you do talk, it would take some time before they can imbibe and translate what you are saying"

Amodu is of the opinion that with proper camping, the team will begin to play as a unit.

"When we have the time to stay in camp for 2 to 3 weeks to prepare for a championship, perhaps all the little flaws we are noticing in the team would be addressed. There is no way you can correct this in five days," he said.

Today's Eagles lack our fighting spirit, says Imenger

Former Super Eagles star, Coach Barnabas Imenger has said that for Nigeria to qualify for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, the present Eagles must develop the kind of commitment and fighting spirit that the Eagles of old displayed anytime they were called upon to play for the country.

Speaking to Trustsports yesterday, the coach who played for the Super Eagles under Dutchman Clemence Westerhof observed that Nigeria has quality players that can easily qualify the nation for the world but the 2005 debacle would repeat itself if the cur-

By David Ngobua

rent Eagles refuse to change their attitude to national team assignment.

In addition, he said that after he watched the Super Eagles match in Maputo, he discovered that the team lacks unity and the kind of commitment that can fetch it the desired results.

His words, "I didn't see unity in that team. There are some players in that team with unnecessary ego. Two, the players are not committed. The fighting spirit is not there. There are three basic elements in football. You have the tech-

nique which is the skill, tactics and physical fitness. And to put everything together, fighting spirit is necessary".

He maintained that no matter how good a player is, if he does not have the required fighting spirit, he will not be able to achieve anything in the game.

Imenger said in his days it was a thing of pride to put on the green white green jersey but now it is no longer so as most players now prefer their foreign clubs to their country of birth.

"Players these days don't consider it a thing of pride to play for this country. In our

days, playing for Nigeria was a great honour. It is expected that when you put on the national colours, you fight to the end. You fight to protect the image of the country. Unfortunately, the story today is a different one," he said.

Imenger who played professional football in Saudi Arabia lamented that to make matters worse, the present Eagles lack a playmaker that can motivate the rest of the team.

He said after the exit of Austin Jay-Jay Okocha, everybody expected John Mikel Obi to take over from him but the story is not the same because

Chelsea of England have converted him from a play maker to a holding mid-fielder.

Consequently, the coach observed that the youngster has lost all the creativity he exhibited at the 2005 FIFA U-20 World Cup in Holland.

"Chelsea of Holland have converted Mikel from a player maker into a ball holding player and he has lost his creativity. He has mastered the art so much that he now feels more comfortable winning the balls and distributing".

Imenger therefore advised that the coaches should forget about Mikel and look elsewhere for a playmaker.

Police disperse crowd with tear gas

Unruly soccer fans in Kaduna on Sunday forced the police to fire tear gas to disperse the crowd at the final of the State Challenge Cup.

The trophy was not presented to the winners, Kaduna United, as a result of the fans' behaviour.

Premiership side Kaduna United, overcame arch-rival Ranch Bees 4-1 by penalties after a scoreless draw in regulation time.

Gov. Namadi Sambo's representative, Alhaji Shehu Adamu, the Commissioner for Sports, left the Township stadium without presenting the

trophy.

Kaduna executive council members including the Commissioner for Inter Governmental Relations, Alhaji Abdurazeez Mohammed, were among dignitaries, who left the stadium under a haze of tear gas.

Some of the fans donning Ranch Bees vests, claimed that their team

was robbed of victory by the referees' handling of the game.

Trouble started at half time when the fans attempted to invade the pitch, throwing missiles into the pitch but were repulsed by the mounted policemen at the entrance to the field.

Nigerian cricketers leave for Zambia Friday

Nigerian U-19 cricketers and officials to the World Cup African qualifier will leave Lagos for Zambia on Friday for the competition, holding from April 25 to May 6.

The contingent, comprising 14 players and two officials, will travel aboard South Africa Airlines, according to Dans Adokiye, Secretary of the Nigeria Cricket Federation.

Adokiye also told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Monday in Lagos that the National U-13 cricket team left Lagos on Sunday for Ghana by road. He said that the team would participate in the North West-Africa Cricket Championship (NWACC), which is being organised by the African Cricket Association (ACA).

According to him, the contingent is made up of 10 players and three officials. "We have a team manager, a coach and an accompanying umpire on the trip," Adokiye said.

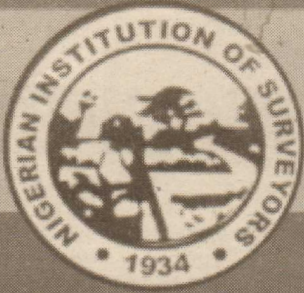
He said that everything the players and officials required to succeed had been provided. "The kits were made available before the Ghana-bound team departed yesterday (Sunday).

"They (two teams) are not lacking in competition requirements; they have prepared very well," Adokiye said.

Quote of the Day

This team must transit from one stage to another before they stabilise... If you ask me where my first eleven is, I will tell you I don't still have one.

- Super Eagles Chief Coach, Shaibu Amadu, hitting out at his critics, who are expecting an immediate transformation of the senior national team.



NIGERIAN INSTITUTION OF SURVEYORS

The President
Surv. Dr. Olusola Atilola Ph.D, fnis
 On behalf of Council

Invites Members and the Public to the

44th Annual General & Conference Meeting

Theme

**"Surveying and Mapping:
 Towards Successful Implementation of
 the 7 Point Agenda"**

Programme Of Events

Monday 20th April, 2009

ARRIVAL AND REGISTRATION OF DELEGATES

Date:

Monday 20th - Friday 24th
 April, 2009

Tuesday 21st April, 2009

**PRE-AGM MANDATORY CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL
 DEVELOPMENT (MCPD) PROGRAMME**

Venue:

Micheal Okpara Auditorium
 Umuahia, Abia State
 "God's Own State"

Theme: **"Developing National Mapping Policy for Nigeria"**

Wednesday 22nd April, 2009

OPENING CEREMONY

Conference Hotel:

Royal Hotel Damegret
 Umuahia

Keynote Address **Gen. Ike Nwachukwu (rtd)**
Fmr. Minister of External Affairs

REGISTRATION:

- Members=N= 20,000.00
- Students=N= 10,000.00
- Accompanying Person(s) =N=5,000.00
- Non-Members=N= 30,000.00

Thursday 23rd April, 2009

TECHNICAL SESSIONS

Theme: **"Surveying and Mapping: Towards Successful
 Implementation of the 7 Point Agenda"**

- Sub-Themes:
- Development and Improvement of Critical Infrastructure
 - National Security
 - Human Capital Development
 - Land Reforms
 - The Niger Delta and Wealth Creation
 - Food Security

17.00hours – 20.00hours **CULTURAL EVENING**

Friday 24th April, 2009
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

ANNUAL DINNER

Abia Hotels Ltd. (Open Space)
 Guest Speaker: Prof. Ikenna Onyido.fas
 Vice Chancellor, Abia State University of Agriculture,
 Umudike

Saturday 25th April 2009

- 09.00 hours Delegates depart
- 11.00 hours Post AGM Press Conference
- 12.00 hours Visit to Charity Home

Signed:

Surv. (Dr.) Gertrude Nnanjar Njar mnis, mfn
 Publicity Secretary

Sports

Heartland comfortable with slim win - Emetole

In spite of the tight rope Heartland FC of Owerri are walking after Sunday's slim 2-1 win over Cameroon's Cotonsport in their CAF Champions League, the club said there was no cause for alarm.

In a post-match interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) at the Dan Anyiam Stadium, Owerri, Heartland's chief coach, Kelechi Emetole said he was comfortable with the result.

"I am okay with the result. We will go back to the drawing board to study the game and prepare for the second leg in Cameroon," Emetole said.

Blaming fatigue for the team's performance, the coach said the players and technical crew would not rest on their oars until they achieved their ambition of clinching the trophy.

"This is football, in the next match we will try to stop them to play and also try to secure victory.

"We are still leading, although they have one goal against us, we are still comfortable, we are equal to the task.

"We will go to camp, study our opponents and make sure they do not damage us in the return leg," he said.

Emetole admitted that they failed to convert their chances, adding that they were aware the competition would become tougher as the stakes became higher.

Cotonsport chairman, Gabriel Mbairrobe, expressed satisfaction with his side's performance.

"Heartland are good, but we did our best to put them in check.

They will not be lucky in the return leg because we will play with home advantage.

"It was a good and physical match, both teams played well, but unfortunately we lost," Mbairrobe said.

Stanley Okoro shot Heartland into the lead in the 21st minute but the visitors leveled scores in 57th minute.

Emeka Nwanna increased the scoreline four minutes later.

Nwosu ready to hands off Eaglets job

Chief Coach of Nigeria's U-17 football team, the Golden Eaglets, Henry Nwosu has expressed readiness to hands off the job of

By David Ngobua

preparing the team for the 2009 FIFA U-17 World Cup, if the unwarranted criticisms that have

continued to trail his activities continue unabated.

The former Green Eagles Captain has come under heavy criticisms following his

team's failure to win the just concluded four nation invitational tournament in Dubai.

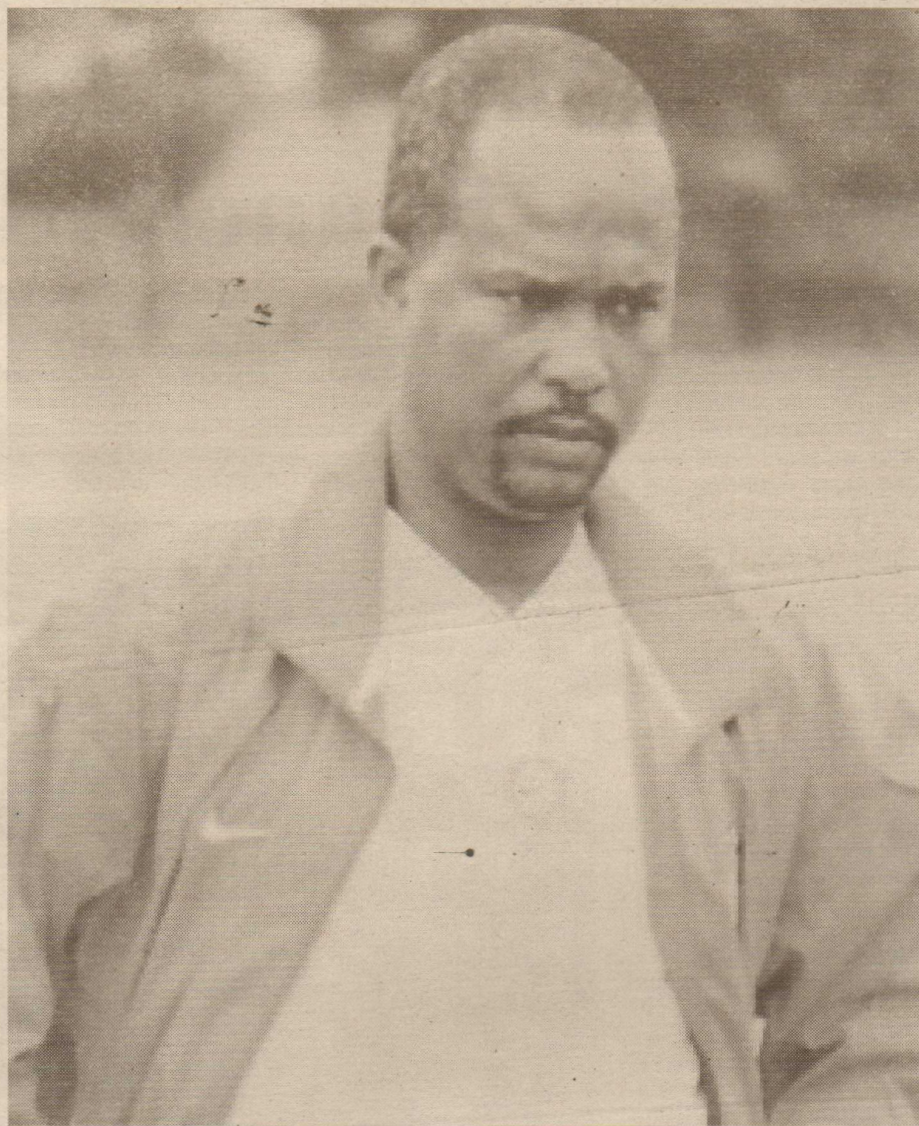
Moments after the competition in which the Eaglets won a match and drew one to clinch the third position, the Chairman of NFF Technical Committee, Chief Taiwo Ogunjobi and the leader of delegation to the Dubai invitational championship descended heavily on the team's technical crew describing the coaches and their players as naive and incompetent.

The leader of the delegation received full support from another board member of the NFF Mr. Dominic Iorfa who in his characteristic manner condemned everything about the team.

However when he spoke yesterday on phone to Trustsports, Coach Nwosu argued that such comments did not come to him as a surprise because in Nigeria, anytime, a dog is to be hanged, it must be given a bad name.

Nwosu said those who are making such comments know what they want to achieve and if tomorrow he is asked to leave the job, he would not be surprised because he knows what most Nigerians are capable of doing.

"In Nigeria, before a dog is hanged, it must be given a bad name. I know everything that is happening because I am used to the system," he said.



Golden Eaglets coach Henry Nwosu said he is ready to step down following harsh criticisms trailing his team's dismal outing at the Dubai Four Nation tournament.

Howard looks beyond FA Cup for 3SC

Shooting Stars Sports Club (3SC) of Ibadan have declared that they were looking beyond the Challenge Cup and had their sights on promotion to the premiership.

Franklin Howard, chief coach of the Ibadan side, said in Ibadan on Sunday after their 2-0 victory over Afijio FC of Jobele in the final of the Oyo State FA Challenge Cup, that the club's priority was promotion to the Premier League.

Howard said their task this season had now increased with Sunday's victory, as they had the double assignments as Oyo State representatives in the National Challenge Cup as well as quest for promotion.

"We are happy to win the state Challenge Cup, but our priority for now is still to gain promotion to the premiership.

"We are currently second in Group B of the league and with seven matches still to go in the league, we will put every resource at our disposal to ensure we gained promotion," said the former international.

Howard said he had expected more goals than the two from his boys, adding that they became complacent after Timothy Idogbe and Ado Mohammed strikes in the 14th and 17th minutes respectively.

He said they would improve on their strategies in future.

Gara Gombe wants NFF board sacked

Renowned sports commentator and critic, Alhaji Shaibu Gara Gombe has advised the Federal Government to sack the board of the Nigeria Football Federation executive committee led by Alhaji Sani Lulu Abdullahi for what he called criminal negligence.

The former Gombe State Football Association, who made the call in a chat with reporters in Abuja at the weekend, said also noted that he was in support of the National Sports Commission's decision to set up a committee to probe the missing fund.

According to Gara Gombe, who said the committee was set on a fraudulent foundation

...over missing \$236,000

By Orkula Shaagee

and deserves to be shown the way out, it was also mischievous for some individuals to ascribe to the setting up of the probe committee as interference in the affairs of the federation.

Gombe, who is also aspiring to the NFF presidency, argued that as a parastatal under the National Sports Commission, the commission has the moral obligation and statutory power to query wrong doings in its finances.

While dismissing threat that FIFA would descend on

Nigeria for setting up a committee to probe funds missing in the NFF coffers, Gombe informed that even FIFA does not tolerate criminality in its dealings; hence it has severally sacked its top officials over fraudulent activities.

"I am 100% in support of the NSC decision to set up a committee to probe the \$236,000 missing in the NFF secretariat because the NSC has the statutory powers and duty to ask questions about the finances of the NFF.

"So, it is an insult to Nigerians, the Federal Government

and the National Sports Commission for anybody to contemplate of saying the action was interference; and you are all aware that Decree 101 is still in place which is why the government is still heavily involved in the funding of the activities of the Nigeria Football Federation. Even the statutes of the NFF clearly spell out the functions of the National Sports Commission over the federation.

"So, those saying that the NSC is interfering the activities of the NFF are looking for trouble because even the 2009 budget allocation requires the

NFF to write to the NSC for the funds to it. So, why not write to FIFA but NSC?" Gombe noted.

On why the NFF executive committee should be sacked, Gombe explained that the committee was fraudulently put in place by former FIFA Secretary General Uls Linsi, who was equally sacked by FIFA.

"The NFF executive committee should be sacked by the government because it was fraudulently put in place, Uls Linsi the former FIFA Secretary General who installed them was dismissed by FIFA, so why should our government keep the NFF. So, now that the issue of missing money is here is the right time for us to do so", Gombe added.

Cross River to raise pro golf through annual tourneys

Cross River State Government (CRSG) says its target is to raise professional golfers through annual Mary Slessor Golf Tournament, the brain child of the state's First Lady, Mrs. Obioma Imoke.

In addition to that, the state government intends to upgrade the annual Calabar

By Orkula Shaagee

Open to an international championship that would encourage youths in the state to take to professional golf.

Disclosing this in a chat with Trustsports at the IBB Golf and Country Club, Vice Captain of the Calabar Golf Club, Igbe Aruku revealed that

Governor Liyel Imoke has approved the upgrading of the Calabar Open to an international golf fiesta that attract professional golfers across the globe.

He explained that the decision is to ensure that youths in the state begin to embrace the sports and take active part in it.

Aruku, who is also the Chief of Protocol in Cross River State, disclosed that a recent golf clinic organized to woo youths in the state to the sports was attended by over 500 youths, an indication that the sports would soon become acceptable in Cross River State.

Aside that, Aruku said the

state government has embarked on a mission to recruit professionals in the state Sports Commission as part of efforts to improve the fortunes of sports in the state.

"The Cross River state government under Governor Liyel Imoke has been doing a lot to make golf a widely accepted sport in the state. He

has approved that the Calabar Golf Open, first held last December be upgraded to an international tournament, in addition to the Mary Slessor Golf Tournament for the Youths to encourage youths in the state to begin to participate in the sport", Aruku stated.

Sports

Safina emulates brother by reaching top spot

Russia's Dinara Safina was confirmed as world number one in the WTA rankings published on Monday to complete a famous double for her family.

Safina, 23 next Monday, was assured earlier this month of becoming the 19th world number one since the rankings started in 1975 and she is the second Russian to

hold the position after Maria Sharapova.

Sisters Serena and Venus Williams have both held top spot but Safina's ascent makes it the first time a brother and sister have led the rankings. Marat Safin first became men's world number one in November 2000.



Injured Garnett faces play-off misery

Boston Celtics star forward Kevin Garnett could miss the entire NBA play-offs after failing to recover fully from a long-standing knee injury, the defending champions coach Doc Rivers said Thursday.

"I saw him train and he's not going to be ready," Rivers told a Boston radio station after watching Garnett

work out for 20 minutes.

"We going to move on without him. If

he can't get through biking and working out without swelling and his leg locking, I don't know how you can play in the playoffs."



Polo horse death toll hits 21; cause unknown

Seven more polo horses have died overnight to bring the death toll to 21 animals that were supposed to play in a Florida tournament.

Veterinarians were waiting for test results yesterday to determine why the horses fell ill and died in a short time before their match.

The International Polo Club in Palm Beach, Florida said the horses from the Ven-

ezeuela-based Lechuza Caracas team were being unloaded from their trailers Sunday when two collapsed and others acted dizzy and disoriented.

Seven of the horses died on the polo club grounds and the rest died after they were taken away.



Man U, Liverpool in 'financial doping'

Heavily indebted Premier League clubs Manchester United, Chelsea and Liverpool were accused by a British parliamentary committee Monday of engaging in "financial doping."

In 27 recommendations at the end of a yearlong inquiry, legislators urged England's soccer authorities to curb "ludicrous levels of borrowing" and the use of profits to service large debts.

The All Party Parliamentary Football Group is calling for heavy scrutiny of business plans ahead of any club takeovers, echoing the agenda of soccer's world governing body FIFA.

The group also backed FIFA's "six-plus-five rule" that would impose limits on foreign players, urging the British government to lobby the European Union to overlook its treaties on free movement.

The key warning in the report is that while soccer appears to be weathering the initial impact of the recession, the meltdown in the markets that has claimed major financial institutions operating risky business models should serve as a warning to the clubs.

"The financial world has learnt a serious lesson in the last year that living by the old adage, 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it' can lead to catastrophic

results," said governing Labor Party legislator Alan Keen, who chaired the inquiry. "There is a real danger that English football could go the same way. Corrective action needs to be taken now to address serious weak-

nesses in the governance of the game as well as severe financial imbalances.

"Lack of proper governance and financial instability are the two fundamental vulnerabilities to the success that English football has en-

joyed in recent times. Our report includes tough measures to improve the way the game is run and to combat 'financial doping' whereby short term success can be bought at the expense of long term financial stability."

Lakers cruise past Jazz, Nuggets pound Hornets

The Los Angeles Lakers lived up to their status as the top Western Conference team as they cruised past Utah 113-100 in the first game of their National Basketball Association playoff series.

Kobe Bryant scored 24 points, Trevor Ariza chipped in 21 and Pau Gasol scored 20 as the Lakers stayed in

Only Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (4,070) and Jerry West (4,457) have scored more points in the playoffs with the Lakers.

Carlos Boozer led the Jazz with 27 points and Deron Williams added 16 points and a career playoff-high 17 assists.

However, both were plagued by foul trouble, with Boozer getting his third just

giving them an edge."

In Denver, the Nuggets made the most of their first home-court advantage in a playoff series in 21 years as they trounced the Hornets.

Chauncey Billups scored 36 points and made a career-best eight three-pointers for Denver, who notched the second-biggest blowout in the club's playoff history.

Billups sank four of his three-pointers in the third quarter, when the Nuggets took control of a once-close game.

Denver used a 21-0 scoring run bridging the third and fourth quarters to build a 95-69 cushion.

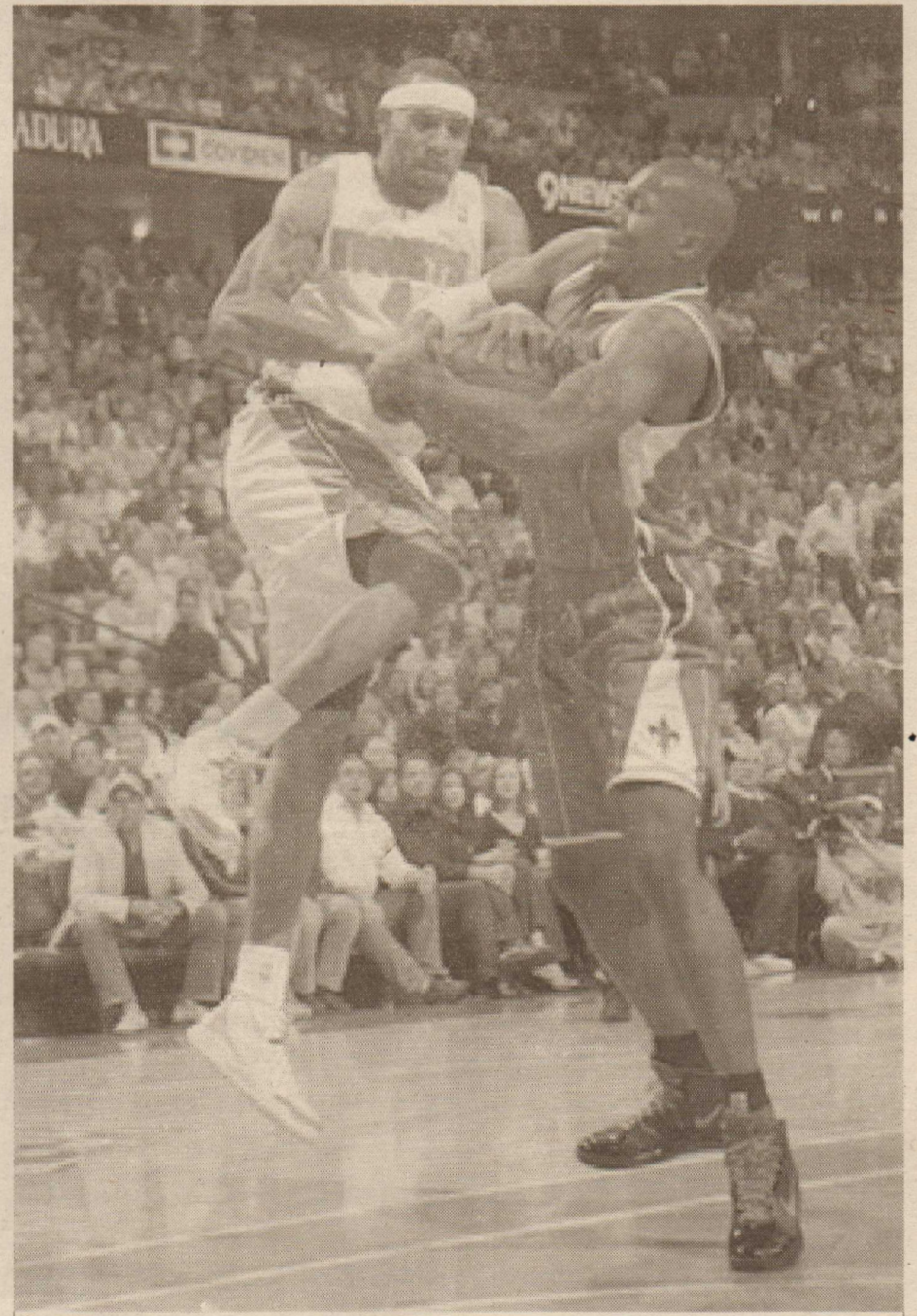
Billups, who won an NBA title and NBA finals Most Valuable Player honors with Detroit in 2004 - looked assured as he scored 16 points in the first quarter.

Soon his teammates settled down, and the Nuggets led 55-47 at halftime.

Denver then turned it into a rout by holding New Orleans without a point for almost seven minutes.

"I just got it going," said Billups, a Denver native who joined the Nuggets shortly after the start of the regular season. "It's just one of those special nights that you have sometimes."

"What Chauncey did wasn't a surprise. He's done it throughout his career. He's very good at making that shot and he made a lot of them tonight," the Hornets' James Posey said.



Denver Nuggets forward Kenyon Marlin, left, tangles with New Orleans Hornets forward David West during Game 1 of the NBA Western Conference playoff series in Denver, Colorado, United States on Sunday.

A big game from point guard Chris Paul wasn't enough for the Hornets. Paul finished with 21 points and 11 assists.

Hornets center Tyson Chandler, who had played just 20 minutes since he was sidelined in early March 2 with a left ankle injury, started

and played 27 minutes.

He scored six points with five rebounds and committed five fouls.

Denver host game two on Wednesday, and Billups cautioned that the Nuggets couldn't expect another blowout.

"You'd like to think you

can do it again, but you probably can't.

Paul said the Hornets could only focus on trying to level the best-of-seven series.

"That's the best thing about tonight: we lost by 29 points tonight, but it's just 1-0," Paul said.

“The Jazz twice crept within nine points in the second half, but the Lakers promptly responded.”

control throughout.

Western Conference second seeds Denver also opened their postseason campaign in emphatic style, with a 113-84 rout of New Orleans.

Los Angeles, who had secured the top seed in the West with two weeks to play in the regular season, led the Jazz by 22 points at halftime.

The Jazz twice crept within nine points in the second half, but the Lakers promptly responded.

"They kept knocking on the door and we just never let them in," Bryant said.

Bryant's total gave him 3,710 career postseason points, moving him past Magic Johnson and into ninth on the NBA's list.

before halftime when Williams already had two.

Utah also missed Mehmet Okur, who sat out with a mild right hamstring strain.

Game two in the best-of-seven series is on Tuesday, and Lakers coach Phil Jackson will be hoping to see even more from his team, who were outscored in the second half.

"It wasn't a coach's delight, that's for sure," he said of the victory.

Utah coach Jerry Sloan, however, had even less to like.

"They kicked our butts off the floor," Sloan said. "We gave up 62 points in the first half, and it's virtually impossible to beat this team

Sports

Juve apologise over racist Balotelli chanting

Juventus have apologised over the racist chanting directed at Inter Milan's teenage striker

Mario Balotelli during the pair's clash at Turin's Stadio Olimpico on Saturday. Balotelli, an Italian under-

21 international, was born to Ghanaian immigrant parents but was brought up by an Italian family, whose sur-

name he goes by—his real parents' surname is Barwuah. The striker is an at times

controversial figure who angered home fans in Turin throughout the game, particularly for his role in the sending off of Juve midfielder Thiago.

Balotelli was playing keep ball on the touchline with Muntari Sulley, a Ghana midfielder, when Thiago let his frustrations get the better of him and kicked both of them, earning a straight red card.

Balotelli, who fell down from Thiago's fairly innocuous kick, earned the wrath of a small section of the home fans.

But Juventus president Giovanni Cobolli Gigli condemned the chants.

"On behalf of Juventus and the great majority of our fans I want to strongly condemn the racist chanting against Inter Milan's Mario Balotelli," he said in a statement on Monday.

"There are no excuses or justification for this type of behaviour. Football fans can get het up but episodes such as this are inexcusable.

send out the right signals and educate the people," he said.

"The racist chants directed at Balotelli are very serious, UEFA and FIFA are always talking about eliminating them.

"Referees don't have the power to stop a match but they can report on the events to the right authorities."

Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon said that Balotelli's character made him a target.

"I promise that I'm against racist chanting but there are two aspects to consider here," he said.

"One good: Balotelli is young, he has a lot of room for improvement in his behaviour in the future.

"And one bad: with this character he knows how to be respected but he risks compromising moments of a career that promises great things because he has all he needs to be great.

"But I have to say that he's a good kid, before and

“ Racism is a terrible thing but you feel it more in football because there are players from all over the world. The fans want to let off steam but they do it in the wrong way ”

"Together we must all try to promote a sporting culture that puts respect for the adversary at its core and fights against racism."

Italian police are studying video evidence of the racist chanting to try to identify those responsible.

Marcello Nicchi, president of the Italian Referee's Association (Aia) said the chants were very serious.

"There are 16,000 matches played in Italy every weekend, we have to

after the match he was joking with everyone."

Brazil coach Dunga said football was a goldfish bowl that exaggerates the problem of racism.

"Racism is a terrible thing but you feel it more in football because there are players from all over the world. The fans want to let off steam but they do it in the wrong way," he said.

"Football needs to take tangible steps to combat racism."



Inter Milan striker, Mario Balotelli, an Italy U-21 international, but with a Ghanaian descent, was subject of racial abuse by some Juventus fans during the top-of-the-table clash between Inter Milan and Juventus on Saturday

Van Gaal savours sixth league title

Louis van Gaal put an end to a decade-long trophy famine by guiding AZ Alkmaar to the Dutch league title on Sunday and he promptly hailed the achievement as arguably the highlight of his career.

Van Gaal, who won back-to-back Spanish titles with Barcelona in 1998-99, said on Monday: "This was perhaps the most notable because it is the most unexpected.

"I am truly very proud." Since leaving Barcelona in 2000 the 57-year-old had struggled to make his mark, failing to qualify Holland for the 2002 World Cup in his stint as national coach.

A brief return to the Nou Camp between 2000 and 2003 came to nothing after which he had a spell as technical director at Ajax, a club he had guided to three Dutch titles between 1994 and 1996.

But the call of the dug out proved too strong and in 2005 he returned as manager at AZ Alkmaar where his managerial career had begun back in 1986.

"When I arrived here there was still an old 8,000-capacity stadium which was almost never full," recalled van Gaal who has achieved success on an annual budget of 20 million euros, the sixth lowest in the Dutch first division.

"Since 2008 we've had a new ground for almost 20,000 fans and since last season we've had a full house at each game."

He added: "The aim now is to turn AZ into a big national club and one that is known in Europe. The president wants to do things in stages which touches every domain and not merely results on the pitch."

Van Gaal, who is under contract until 2011, is key to the club situated 40km outside Amsterdam and which came into existence in 1967 with the amalgamation of Alkmaar '54 and FC Zaanstreek.



Van Gaal

In Brazil, Santos on hot streak But season not over yet

Perhaps losing in the CONCACAF Champions League semifinals was a good thing for Santos.

In two games since their tough ouster from the regional championships at the hands of Atlante, Santos have won both of their league games. On Sunday, Santos destroyed Atlas by a 4-1 score.

Santos scored twice on either side of halftime. Christian Benitez scored goals number two and four while Atlas contributed an own goal to the hosts' cause.

Santos improved to 4-4-6 and moved to within five points of third-place Monterrey. With three

Jornadas remaining, Santos' work is difficult but the club still have a fighting chance.

Santos manager Sergio Bueno said the victory was significant for that reason.

"It motivates us," Bueno said. "We have three very important games left and our hope is to win all three. We can't get ahead of ourselves, though, but after victories the week's worth of work is made easier."

Despite the seemingly comfortable victory, Bueno said the visitors were a handful.

"Throughout the entire

game, Atlas were dangerous and played well," Bueno

said. "They forced us to remain disciplined and fo-

Inter boss chides Juve fans for racist chants

Inter Milan president Massimo Moratti said he would have pulled his team off the field if he had been present at Saturday's 1-1 draw at Juventus, where striker Mario Balotelli was racially abused by home fans.

The 18-year-old scored Inter's opener in the top-of-the-table clash and was subjected to racist chants questioning his nationality.

Balotelli, an Italy under-21

international, was born in Palermo but is of Ghanaian descent.

"If I had been at the stadium, at a certain point I would have left my seat in the stand, I would have gone onto the pitch and I would have pulled the team off," Moratti told Monday's Gazzetta dello Sport.

cused."

Atlas, meanwhile, remained in second place in Group 2 as Jaguares and San Luis both lost.

"They seemed proud and happy to sing those things. This is terrible."

Juventus will find out on Tuesday if they face sanctions from the league. Racist abuse is not uncommon in Italian soccer and small fines are usually handed out.

Juve president Giovanni Cobolli Gigli apologised on Sunday and said Serie A had to end the culture of racism among fans.

Sports

SHOTSTOPPER

Sir Alex Ferguson is not a man who second-guesses his decisions. To the winners go the spoils, and the Manchester United manager's career is plated with the silverware of domestic and international success.

We will never know, but as he contemplated the end of his opportunity to win a historic five trophies this season, Ferguson might have wondered if he got it wrong with American goalkeeper Tim Howard.

Howard's penalty-saving heroics earned Everton a shootout victory in Sunday's FA Cup semifinal at Wembley Stadium and knocked at least one pot out of his former employer's trophy cabinet.

When Ferguson gave up on Howard in 2006 and was happy to ship him off to Everton, first on loan and then permanently, it seemed like a

sound decision. Howard was inconsistent during his spell at Old Trafford and United had just acquired a proven goalkeeping star in Edwin van der Sar.

But since his departure, Howard has blossomed into one of the finest keepers in the English Premier League. Now a goalie of world-class ability, he is arguably the best player on the U.S. national team, so when USA coach Bob Bradley tries to figure out how to compete with the best at the World Cup next year, between the posts is one area he need not be concerned with.

Howard's improvement may be the result of added experience or sheer hard work, but the feeling within the Everton camp is that manager David Moyes has instilled in the New Jersey native a sense of confidence that Ferguson never could.



Dumped by Manchester United, goalkeeper Tim Howard paid back his old club by ending its quintupled bid in Everton's FA Cup win.

Title to be decided in 'Clasico', Diarra says

The Primera Liga title will be decided by "El Clasico" between leaders Barcelona and second-placed Real Madrid at the Bernabeu in just under two weeks, according to Real midfielder Lassana Diarra.

Barca have a six-point advantage over the champions with seven matches left and

for the Getafe match, said it was perfectly possible Barca would drop points against Sevilla and at in-form Valencia, in fourth, on Saturday before they come to Madrid the following weekend.

"Barcelona have two very hard matches and then the Champions League (semi-final against Chelsea) but the

hunt for a third consecutive title and hoping Barca's packed schedule would cause them to slip up.

Barca are still alive in three competitions—Spanish league, King's Cup and Champions League—and midfielder Xavi said he was feeling neither physically nor mentally tired.

"It's a privilege to have a calendar as packed as ours and to have a chance to compete for glory," the Spain international told the club's website (www.fcbarcelona.com).

"They (Real) are talking about something hypothetical whereas I talk about realities," he added. "We are the ones who are in front and we are the ones with the six-point lead."

Barca's task against Sevilla will be made easier by the absence of the Andalusians' first-choice goalkeeper Andres Palop and defender Adriano Correia, who are suspended.

Valencia play at improving Real Betis on Wednesday on a run of four straight league wins that has lifted Unai Emery's side above Atletico

Madrid and Villarreal into the fourth Champions League qualification spot.

On Thursday, Villarreal host struggling Recreativo Huelva and Atletico travel to Santander to take on Racing. Recre are in 18th on 30 points and Espanyol and Numancia fill the remaining two relegation places on 29 and 28 points respectively.

Inter, Juve fight for unloved Italian prize

The much-maligned Italian Cup has suddenly become important for Inter Milan and Juventus who will be pulling out all the stops to reverse deficits in this week's semi-final second legs.

Inter, almost certain to secure their fourth straight league title, were less sure back in March and also had the Champions League on their minds when they lost 3-1 at Sampdoria in the first leg.

Juve were also still in Europe and the title race when beaten 2-1 in their first leg at Lazio.

Now, after Manchester United and Chelsea dented their Champions League ambitions, the chance of a double for Inter and Juve's last hope of a trophy this season make the unloved Italian Cup a prize worth fighting for.

"There was a time when teams tried to avoid playing in this competition at all costs but now it has been given a new lustre and more attention is being given to winning it," Juve goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon told reporters ahead of Lazio's visit to Turin on Wednesday (1845 GMT).

"We want to win it because we do not want to ruin months of work in 20 odd days."

Real have a chance to cut the Catalans' lead in half when they host city rivals Getafe on Tuesday

can move a step closer to a first Spanish title in three years with victory over third-placed Sevilla at the Nou Camp on Wednesday.

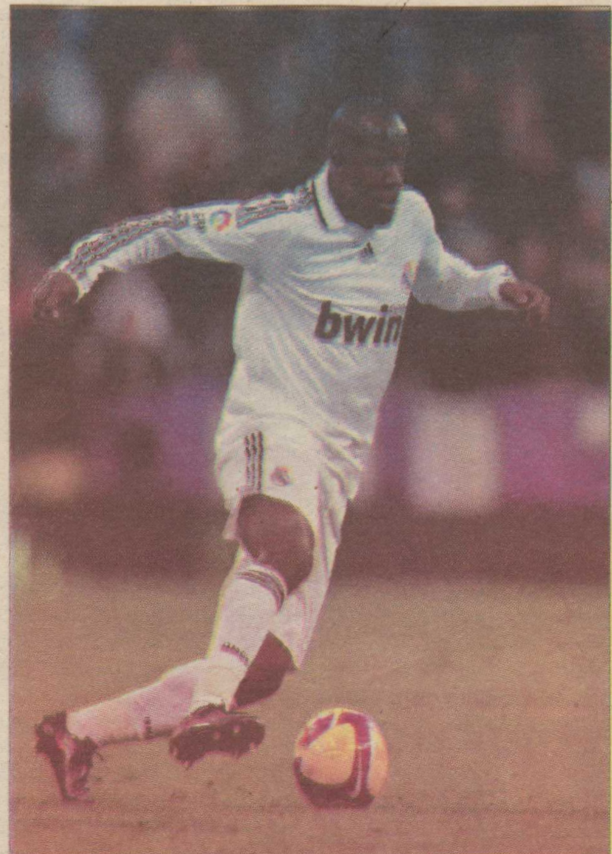
Real have a chance to cut the Catalans' lead in half when they host city rivals Getafe on Tuesday and know that the clash against Barca on May 3 could be a last chance to prevent Pep Guardiola's side taking their league crown.

Diarra, who is suspended

title will be decided in the Real Madrid-Barcelona match," Diarra said in an interview published in Monday's Marca newspaper.

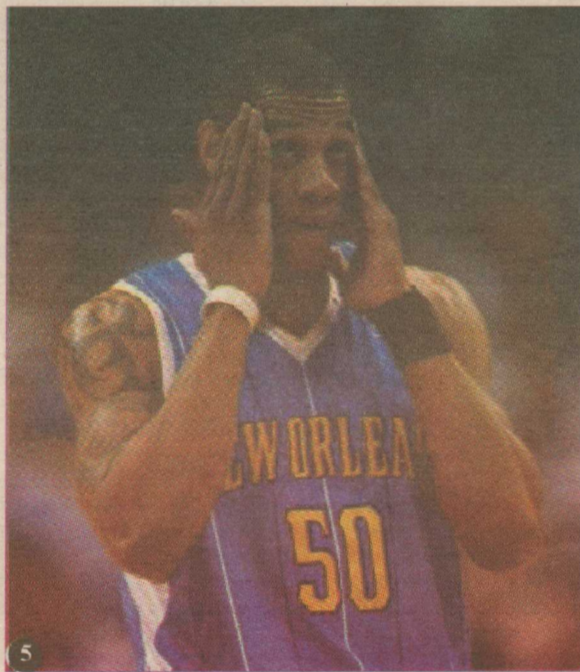
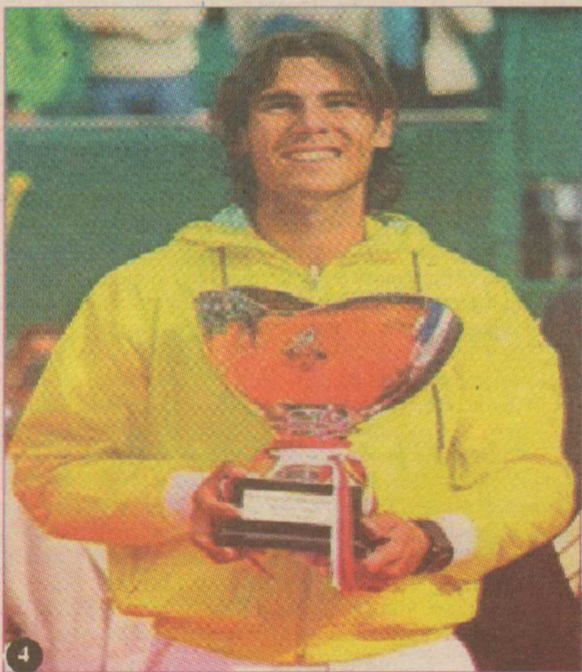
"It very much has that look about it and it's going to be a spectacular game," the French international added.

Under coach Juande Ramos, Real have won 15 of their 16 league matches since losing 2-0 at the Nou Camp in mid December, staying in the



Lassana Diarra

Sports Illustrated



CAPTION

1. Chauncey Billups of the Denver Nuggets controls the ball against the defense of David West of the New Orleans Hornets in Game One of the Western Conference Quarterfinals during the 2009 NBA

Playoffs at Pepsi Center in Denver, Colorado. Billups had a game high 36 points as the Nuggets won 113-84.

2. Deriba Merga of Ethiopia poses for photographers after winning the men's division of the 113th running of the Boston

Marathon in Boston. 3. Boston Red Sox's Jason Varitek returns to the dug out after hitting a solo home run in the second inning of a baseball game against the Baltimore Orioles, Monday, April 20, 2009, in Boston. The Red

Sox won 12-1. 4. Spanish world number one Rafael Nadal poses with his trophy after the Monte-Carlo ATP Masters Series final, in Monaco. Nadal won his fifth successive Monte Carlo title by beating Serbia's Novak Djokovic 6-

3, 2-6, 6-1. 5. New Orleans Hornets guard Antonio Daniels holds his head as time runs out in the fourth quarter of the Denver Nuggets' 113-84 victory over the Hornets in Game 1 of a Western Conference first-round

playoff basketball game in Denver. 6. Womens winner Salina Kosgei of Kenya is crowned with the laurel wreath by Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick at the finish area in Boston at the 113th running of the Boston Marathon.

- ADVERT - 0805 210 0453, 0805 910 0276
- MARKETING - 0805 210 0114, 0805 910 0270, 0805 910 0218
- BUSINESS - 0805 910 0210, 0805 910 0282
- NEWS ROOM - 0805 910 0241, 0805 410 2934, 0805 910 0373

SPORTS Bits

Ethiopia's Merga, Kenya's Kosgei win Boston marathon

Ethiopia's Deriba Merga overcame the disappointment of his Olympic fade to win the Boston Marathon on Monday, and Kenya's Salina Kosgei won the closest women's race in the history of the event.

Merga, who was passed in the last quarter-mile and finished fourth in Beijing, pulled away before Heartbreak Hill and won in 2 hours, 8 minutes, 42 seconds—almost a full minute ahead of Kenya's Daniel Rono and American Ryan Hall.

"I've never experienced anything like this," said Hall, who took the early lead and was shoulder-to-shoulder with the leaders until they passed from into Newton, with about 10 miles to go. "And I've been in the Rose Parade, so that's a pretty big deal."

Kosgei won a sprint with defending champion Dire Tune, trading the lead several times in the final blocks of Boylston Street before hitting the tape less than a stride ahead of the Ethiopian in 2:32:16. American Kara Goucher led the three as she crossed the MassPike into Kenmore with one mile to go, but she was down the stretch and finished 9 seconds back.

they Square outkicked back.

Adebayor out of Liverpool clash

Arsenal will be without leading scorer Robin van Persie (groin) and striker Emmanuel Adebayor (hamstring) for the trip to Anfield. Full-back Bacary Sagna has recovered from a virus and could feature along with fit-again Croatia forward Eduardo.

Polish goalkeeper Lukasz Fabianski will again deputise for the injured Manuel Almunia (ankle). Defenders Gael Clichy (back), William Gallas (knee) and Johan Djourou (knee) are all sidelined.

Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard will miss out as he needs another seven to 10 days to overcome a groin problem.

After a week's rest boss Rafael Benitez may stick with the same side knocked out of the Champions League by Chelsea.



Cavs' Brown named NBA Coach of the Year

Mike Brown, who guided Cleveland to a league-best 66-16 record this season, was named National Basketball Association Coach of the Year on Monday. The Cavaliers' season marked just the 12th time an NBA team has won so many games. They also finished with the best home record of 39-2, including 23 straight victories to open the season.

In voting for the award, Brown received 355 points, including 55 first-place votes, from a panel of 122 sports reporters and broadcasters throughout the United States and Canada.

The Cavaliers' 21-game improvement over last year's 45-37 record matched the 1971-72 Los Angeles Lakers for the second biggest improvement among teams with at least 45 wins in the previous season.

Brown is in his fourth season with Cleveland, where he has guided the Cavaliers to 45 victories or more in each of his first three seasons.

Brown previously spent two seasons as associate head coach for the Indiana Pacers and was an assistant coach in San Antonio when the Spurs won the 2003 champion.



PDP: Where's the opposition?

Who will stop the PDP express from steam-rolling its way to a comprehensive victory at the next general elections in 2011? The PDP, for all practical purposes, has actually never had it so good in spite of the down-turn in the economy and the general disaffection of the citizenry. In fact going by the general mood of delegates at its special convention yesterday, the confidence in the party has never been this high. And why not? There is no formidable opposition to the party in sight.

Until he recently astounded us all by sleepwalking into the humiliating embrace of his former boss Olusegun Obasanjo, and subsequent political obliteration, Atiku Abubakar, of all the heavyweights with an eye on the presidency, stood the best chance of inflicting maximum damage on the PDP juggernaut ahead of the next elections. Today, he is in political limbo.

Today, as I write this, apart from Buhari, the only audible voices from the opposition belong to Anthony Enahoro and Balarabe Musa. Yet, despite their noises, how many legions have they? Sadly, even the custodians of our traditional institutions assumed to be the barometers of our finest values in the past have also dived for cover.

For our traditional leaders, the lesson came early in the manner the former Emir of Gwandu, Mustafa Jakollo was deposed. Sadly, while no high profile member wants to be a deposed hero, like ordinary Nigerians, they also survive on the patronage of any government in power.

But emerging from the 2007 elections, Atiku Abubakar offered more hope for an appropriate resistance to the rapidly expanding PDP hegemony in the land. Despite his early miscalculations, he genuinely endeared himself to many in the camp of the opposition even if they considered his fight against Obasanjo's Third Term plot as unprincipled.

Whereas Buhari's support was largely restricted to the ranks of the deprived and politically impotent class of Nigerians no thanks to our Stone-age electoral system, Atiku's leadership of the Action Congress (AC) until recently, offered a fine blend of the good, the bad and the ugly, capable of giving the PDP a bloody nose in 2011, especially in the Southwest.

Far from the regional party it is fast evolving into, with greater political sagacity, Atiku Abubakar could have resolved his little differences with Bola Tinubu and worked to turn the AC into a formidable national opposition party by mobilizing whatever remained of the goodwill he still enjoyed in the North, his primary constituency.

He could have worked more closely with the Buhari faction in the ANPP and supplemented for whatever the General lacked in material resources to make a difference. Working together, and with the AC in control of key states in the southwest, they would certainly have ruffled feathers in the PDP hierarchy. The strategy may not be enough to secure a bed-space for Atiku in the Aso-Rock Villa for sure, but at least, it would make him a formidable force on the national scene to make life difficult for the PDP.

As it were, the former V.P., in his desperation for the ultimate price, chose to tread the easier way back to the PDP where the door was swiftly slammed in his face. In a tragedy of monstrous proportions, Atiku was made to discover that he had become a spent force without even knowing it!

Therefore, unless we delude ourselves, how can we blame the PDP leadership for feeling smug after their national convention yesterday? Like it or hate it, the party is still very much a Nigerian phenomenon. The party did not evolve from outer-space. In that respect, while most commentaries on its excesses tend to treat the party like an extra-terrestrial contraption, it remains an absolute fact that the Nigerian in all of us led to the evolution of the PDP in its present form. We all share a collective responsibility for its present preponderance in our national consciousness.

From the look of things, Chief Vincent Ogbulafor was rather conservative in saying that the PDP will rule Nigeria for the next 60 years! What with the inertia, laziness, parochialism of the other so called political parties? The ANPP which most Nigerian saw as an alternative to the destructive tendency of the PDP is as good as dead, and indeed buried. In fact, it appeared jinxed right from its inception. Its pioneer chairman, Alhaji Mahmud Waziri severely stabbed the APP (as it then was) in the back. But because he had some modicum of conscience, Waziri subsequently abandoned ship and voluntarily went into political oblivion.

The same, obviously, cannot be said of the treacherous hands of Chief Don Etiebet who did not waste time in selling the party into captivity. He, too, met his Waterloo during the gubernatorial elections in 2003 and chose to leave us in peace. But where Waziri and Etiebet chose to leave us in peace after acting out their scripts, Chief Edwin Umezuo, elected to be the perpetual undertaker!

TUESDAY COLUMN

with Muhammad Al-Ghazali

ghazalism@dailytrust.com, 08052100432 [SMS only]

He not only buried the party, even after the heinous political murder he committed, he remains armed with a sledge hammer and sits by the ANPP grave, intent, no doubt, on foreclosing the prospects of the party from ever resurrecting!

The continued pussy-footing of General Buhari in seeking an alternative political party and seeming unwillingness to provide rallying platform for the army of his disaffected and disillusioned supporters in the short time remaining before the next elections has also not helped matters. It is a disturbing trend in fact.

On the other hand, in the genial visage of Prince Vincent Ogbulafor, it is obvious that the PDP somehow managed to install a chairman whose outward comportment effectively cloaks a quite, yet ruthless and efficient streak. Without employing the garrison tactics of his predecessor, it is obvious that the PDP is richer today than it was three years ago when many of its high profile members left the party in droves.

In fact, so confident is the feeling among the rank and file of the party these days that the sole contentious issue as they descended on Abuja last weekend was not on the chances of the party winning the presidential elections in 2011, but on whether to allow the incumbent to seek a second term in office.

The controversy surrounding the defection of the Bauchi state governor Isa Yuguda apart, the party is also recruiting the brightest politicians in the land ahead of the opposition parties. In Zamfara, the party has certainly secured a winner in Mamuda Shinkafi, whose policies and programmes has already won him many accolades and should easily be re-elected in 2011 purely on his track record in the past two years.

In the Southeast political turf likely to require serial resurfacing in the next few months as Ojukwu's APGA and Orji Kalu's PPA slug it out, the PDP has also scored a major coup in luring the popular and charismatic Chief Ikechi Emineke back to its fold as the Abia gubernatorial candidate for 2011, among several other big wigs.

Apart from being a first-class economist, Emineke, like Olusegun Mimiko in Ondo state, enjoys tremendous grassroots support. A former Editor in New Breed Organization (publishers of the President and New Breed magazines), he was also the Editor-in-Chief and Managing Director of Business in ECOWAS magazine, Africa's first bilingual magazine.

Today, he is the publisher of several international renowned titles including *The African Economy* magazine, *Banking & Finance in Africa* magazine, *Annual Meetings Daily* and the London-based, *The African*. He is the only black man ever to be appointed as official publisher of the World Bank/IMF, sole official publisher of African Development Bank annual meetings as well as World Trade Organization (WTO) among others.

Put simply, in 2011, what the PDP has done in the choice of Emineke, is to ensure potential choice for indigenes of Abia state will be between a man of such immense qualities and the incumbent Theodore Oji of the PPA whose only claim to fame was being pictured clothed only in oversized under-pant standing at the infamous Okija shrine!

Anyhow, the important message from the latest activities of the PDP in the Southeast is that the party is fully conscious of the reversals it suffered in recent times and is trying its best to reverse them, at a time the opposition appears inactive and immobile. Today, except at the center and a few states in the southwest, the PDP governors have done much to advance the profile of their party ahead of the next elections.

In Adamawa, the retired Admiral Murtala Nyako, 'Baba Mai-Mangoro' has put his initial disagreements with members of the State House of Assembly behind him and has achieved much less than two years than his predecessor Boni Haruna managed in eight years. The situation is also the same in Sokoto state, where the incumbent Aliyu Wammako, has equally outperformed his predecessor within a short period.

In Niger state, the Chief Servant has just been re-nominated for a second term, while in Gombe, it will be almost an impossible task for any party to beat the PDP on account of the way arm-manner the governor Muhammad Danjuma Goje has completely transformed the state. My only prayer for the indigenes of the state, among who are my many friends, is that whoever succeed the incumbent governor will have the same sense of vision and dedication to its people.

On that score, I am tempted to conclude that unless something very dramatic happens pretty soon, the race for the next general elections may well have ended even before it started. It may turn out to be the greatest landslide in our electoral history with the PDP the ultimate winner. The party may not be perfect, but we can hardly deny that the opposition has done very little to displace them from the high pedestal on which the PDP currently sits.