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Governor Abdullahi Adamu of Nasarawa State (right) and Alhaji Aminu Dantata, during their courtesy visit to President Obasanjo at the presidential villa, Abuja ...yesterday. Pix: Joe Oroye.

EFCC probes PDP officials over campaign funds

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), has interrogated some national working committee (NWC), members of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), over a N10-million donation it (the party) allegedly received from the Bank of the North (BON) in 2003.

Those who were quizzed, according to *Daily Trust* investigations, include the national treasurer, Alhaji Lawan Kereto and the national organising secretary, Alhaji Inuwa Labaran.

The embattled former managing director of BON, Alhaji Mohammed Bulama, had in 2003, with the approval of the bank's board of directors, donated N10 million to

the PDP as part of its contribution to the Obasanjo/Atiku success in the presidential elections of that year.

Inside sources at the EFCC confirmed to *Daily Trust* that the commission had last week interrogated the PDP national treasurer and organising secretary, Alhaji Lawan Kereto and Inuwa Labaran, over the transactions which it suspected smacks of corporate irresponsibility, disregard for financial accountability and prudence.

The reliable source said those quizzed agreed that the PDP received the money as alleged, but that they insisted it was part of a voluntary donation the party received

Contd. on Pg 2

Bomb blasts rock Kaduna barracks

For more than two hours yesterday evening a series of bomb blasts rocked the Dalet Barracks of the First Division of the Nigerian Army in Kaduna.

Daily Trust gathered that the explosion started at about

From Sani Babadoko,
Bureau Chief, Kaduna

5.45 p.m. from the armoury within the barracks sending fearful residents from their homes.

The blast which is rem-

iniscent of the Ikeja Cantonment incident in Lagos four years back could be heard from all over Kaduna town.

As at the time of this report last night the explosions were continuing and armed soldiers cordoned off

the barracks which is not far from the site of the ongoing Kaduna International Trade Fair.

Daily Trust learnt that as soon as it started the barrack was evacuated as well as a mammy market adjoining and traffic was diverted from Kawo and surrounding areas.

One of the soldiers interviewed said he does not suspect foul play pointing out that the excessive heat from the sun could have triggered off the explosions.

The new General Officer Commanding (GOC) of One Division, General Azzarzi could not be reached for comments as a voice on the phone said he was away directing affairs at the barracks.

Unconfirmed reports said four people died and several buildings were destroyed.

Governor Mohammed Makarfi, in a television broadcast to the people of the state, appealed for calm, assuring that the situation is under control.

He said the military authorities were trying to evacuate the unexploded ordinances and described the explosions as an unfortunate incident.

FG proposes 100% tax on luxury goods

The federal government has proposed a 100 per cent increase on Value Added Tax (VAT) payable on all luxury consumer goods, justice minister, Akin Olujimi (SAN), has said.

Olujimi disclosed this yesterday while briefing newsmen at the end of the meeting of the federal executive council (FEC).

He said the proposal was part of the recommendation by the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) which also recommended the enact-

By Rueben Yunana, Senior Reporter (State House)

ment of six key Bills to enhance its operations.

The minister, who gave highlights of nine proposed Bills that will soon be sent to the National Assembly, said the increase in VAT charges will affect only those Nigerians who have extraordinary taste for luxury goods.

He did not name the items that would be affected by the increase but said that items

Contd. on Pg 2

National Confab: NSCIA decries Muslims marginalisation

The apex umbrella organisation of Muslims in Nigeria, the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), has risen against the apparent discrimination and marginalisation of Muslims in the selection of delegates to the national conference on political reforms which opened in Abuja on Monday.

The NSCIA, in a letter to President Obasanjo dated February 22, 2005 signed by the secretary general, Dr Abdul-Lateef Adegbite, faulted the apparent discrimination against Muslims by the Obasanjo government's federal appointments like ministers, special advisers and ambassadors, and specifically took exception to the injustice in the selection of

By Hammeed M. Bello,
Senior Political Reporter

"In the light of the above, we respectfully urge Your Excellency to halt the creeping marginalisation of Nigerian Muslims. In particular and in the interest of fairness and to assure the credibility of the work and resolutions of the national conference, Mr President should as a matter of urgency, reconstitute the membership and leadership of the conference."

The NSCIA also said it would no longer accept the injustice and lopsidedness in appointments by the Obasanjo government into federal positions which it said is targeted at frustrating Muslims and Islam in the country.

another Islamic body, the National Da'awah Coordination Committee, yesterday addressed a press conference in Abuja, decrying alleged orchestrated design to subdue Islam which has already manifested in appointments to key positions

Contd. on Pg 2

....Yadudu fears failure

One of the delegates of the National Political Reform Conference representing Kano state, Professor Auwalu Yadudu has predicted that the national conference may not succeed owing to procedural and legal complications.

In a televised programme of the Nigerian Television

By Jibrin Abubakar,
Reporter, Foreign Affairs

Live, and monitored in Abuja, Yadudu said although there is nothing wrong in coming together to discuss national problem but that the problems of legality, representation and procedure may render it fruitless.

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News

EFCC *Contd. from Pg 1*

from individuals and organisations, which greatly sustains the party's continued existence.

The quizzed PDP officials however agreed to return part of the money as the investigation advanced and according to the EFCC sources, the investigation into the matter continues, even as he clarified that many of those quizzed were detained.

The spokesman of the party and national publicity secretary, Barrister Venatius Ikem, denied knowledge of the matter and referred to those said to have been quizzed whom he said would be in a better position to react.

When contacted yesterday, the national organising secretary, Alhaji Inuwa Labaran, agreed that he was quizzed sometimes last week by the EFCC but that he told the commission that his

office had no dealings with financial matters and neither did he handle financial matters of the party. He said his job is that of organising and directed our reporter to meet the treasurer who will make clarifications on the matter.

Several efforts on difference days, including contacts by phone to reach the treasurer failed but according to the PDP legal adviser, Col Yohana Madaki (rtd), who was later contacted, the EFCC has not officially written the party, although he said it came to him as a rumour. "If anybody working for the party is involved in party affairs and EFCC wants to interrogate him, they will write the party. Anything done should be passed to the party. There is no formal complaint lodged to me and there is no matter like that," Madaki said.

FG *Contd. from Pg 1*

like medicaments, basic foods and educational materials would not be affected.

He said that the president will soon send an executive Bill and amendments on nine areas that directly affects the smooth function of the FIRS which is seeking autonomy to hire and fire as well as remunerate its workforce.

The minister named other proposed amendment Bills as the personal income tax Act; the company income tax Act; abolishment of the education tax Act and the automotive council Act.

Also for amendment is the customs and excise tariff consolidation Act and the amendment of the national sugar development council Act, which seeks to abolish the collection of the sugar development tax.

including the armed forces and other sensitive establishments. The committee therefore called on the leader of Muslims in Nigeria, His Eminence, the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammadu Maccido, to withdraw the participation of Muslims in the ongoing national conference.

According to the NSCIA letter to the president, they urged him to halt the creeping marginalisation of Nigerian Muslims in the interest of fairness and to ensure the credibility of the work and resolutions of the national conference.

"Mr President should as a matter of urgency reconstitute the membership and leadership of the body so as to achieve a proper religious balance between Muslims

FEC also approved N756 million for the supply of Antiretroviral drugs (ARV), to people living positive (PLP) with HIV/AIDS.

Health minister, Prof. Eytayo lambo, who announced the approval, stated that three pharmaceutical companies; Vaccine Nigeria, Strike Vital and Hetro Worldwide, were awarded the contract.

Lambo said that the number of PLPs on ARV will increase during the year following the generous approval of funds by President Olusegun Obasanjo.

The minister also said that government was encouraging three pharmaceutical firms, Evans, Achypharma and May and Baker that are engaged in efforts in the local manufacture of generic ARVs.

NSCIA *Contd. from Pg 1*

and Christians in consonance with the established Nigerian practice in these matters," the letter said.

The letter, while commending the president for the decision to convene a national conference of political reforms to strengthen economic and social growth, however regretted certain steps by the president which has dampened the morale of Nigerian Muslims.

"Specifically, presidential nominations to the membership and appointments to the leadership of the conference manifests a blatant religious insolence to the detriment of the Muslims.

According to the statistics in the letter which it described as "chilling and unpalatable," of the 46 presidential nominees to the conference, 29 are Christians while 17 are Muslims and out of the 20 nominees from the south, only one is a Muslim while 19 are Christians.

And out of the total of 382 nominees to the conference, 217 are Christians against 165 Muslims. This gives the Christians two-third majority. In addition, the letter said the two principal officers of the conference, the chairman and secretary are Christians.

Hundreds of railway workers wives in Bauchi, Wednesday defied the scorching sun to protest the non payment of their husband's salaries and emoluments by the management of the Nigeria Railway Corporation (NRC).

Dressed mostly in rags and holding their children, the women under the auspices of the Nigerian Association of Railway Women, pleaded with the Bauchi state government to intercede on their behalf as they alleged that they have been rejected by the society.

Mrs Uza Uloba, spokeswoman of the group, explained that the NRC has not paid their husband's salaries and other emoluments in the past six months, which she said has resultant effects on them as they cannot feed properly while some their children have developed strange illness due to malnutrition.

"For six months now, salaries and pensions of 27 months have not been paid to our husbands and some of our members who are railway workers", she said, adding that "the corporation has made things worse for some of our family members. They have been driven away from their official quarters and some of our men have developed stroke".

Consequently, she asked the Bauchi state government to intervene before "we perish".

"Help us. Let them pay our husbands their sweat, their entitlements. Somebody has worked for months and has been suffering. Why should we continue suffering?" she queried.

Mrs Uloba, while revealing their pathetic situation,

"We hasten to observe that never in the history of Nigeria have the Muslims been treated so inequitably," the letter said.

"Viewed against the background of recent appointment of ministers, advisers, special assistants, ambassadors, heads of federal parastatals, security outfits and service chiefs, the lopsidedness in the membership and leadership of the national conference confirms a pattern of religious discrimination against the Muslims which is most disturbing in a country whose constitution enhances the fundamental rights of Nigerians.

Addressing newsmen yesterday, the acting coordinator of National Dawah Coordination Committee, Ishaq Kunle Sanni, towed the same line with the NSCIA, adding that it was an affront on Muslims.

"The purpose of this press briefing is to let the world know that President Obasanjo's Christianisation agenda may lead to the end of this country if nothing is done to call him to order. It is also meant to searchlight this odious trend which did not start with the composition of the national confab but since the genesis of his second term in office," he said and described it as sadistic.

Rail workers' wives protest non-payment of husbands' salaries

explained the one of their husbands lost the battle of his life last week, "because he could not afford five hundred naira".

"We are rejected by the society. If we go to the market to buy some provisions, nobody would sell it to us on credit because they know that they will not get their money at the end of the month.

"Please daddy help us. We are peace loving Nigerians. We are not here for violence and we will never engage anything violence,

From Tashikalmah Hallah, Correspondent, Bauchi

but we need your assistance.

"Let them pay our husbands. Look at our children, they have developed kwashiorkor and malnutrition. We cannot take them to the hospital because we have no money, we are at your mercy, please help us," she concluded.

Alhaji Abdulmalik Mahmood, Deputy Governor of Bauchi state while sympathising with the women, explained that the state

government will try and see that justice is done to them.

According to him, the state can only advise and try to persuade the NRC since it is a federal government parastatal to pay its workers their entitlements, stressing that, "I share your plights. Its too bad. We will try our best to see that the federal government acts very fast to see that justice is done to your husbands".

However, he cautioned them to always be peaceful as this is the only way that demands can be made.

Union Bank targets N100bn capitalisation

...Opens London Subsidiary

The group managing director of Union Bank Nigeria Plc, Dr. Godwin Oboh, has revealed that the bank is targeting N100 billion capitalisation in the next few months, just as he disclosed that the bank has incorporated its London Operations making it a full fledged subsidiary.

The GMD who made this revelation at the occasion of the presentation of the new subsidiary, (Union Bank UK plc) to the Nigerian business community, said although the bank is currently at the forefront of the consolidation, it is still making efforts to get some banks together to become a bigger bank.

"We are not a bank of N40 billion capitalisation," he said, "in the next few months we will be a bank of N100 billion capitalisation."

This, he said, will enable the bank to remain at the fore-

By Anas A. Galadima Reporter (Business)

front in the banking industry as well as enable it provide better services to its teeming customers.

Meanwhile, the Union Bank, Nigeria Plc's London branch has now been incorporated into a full fledged subsidiary of its own with the name Union Bank UK plc.

According to the GMD, the new London subsidiary has a capitalisation of \$60 million (about N8 billion) and that they do intend to raise its capitalisation to N25 billion in the near future.

"With this", he said, "we now have a bank that is supposed to match any bank in the UK. That means more work and responsibility for us."

He commended customers of Union Bank for standing by the bank over the

years adding that "in international business, those who do business with us know that we do better than the high street banks in the United Kingdom.

"This", he said, "is because we as a bank in the UK understand Nigerians better than the banks in UK."

Speaking at the occasion earlier, the chairman, UBN Plc, Prof. Musa Gella Yakubu, explained the reasons for the incorporation of the new subsidiary, saying, "we realised that if you want to do business in the UK and you want to do all transactions from Nigeria, it will cause delay. So we are introducing this new bank located in London to serve its customers."

Union Bank Nigeria commenced operations in the city of London in 1983 by establishing a branch which has now been incorporated into a full fledged subsidiary after about 22 years of operations as a branch.

on aspect of governance, arrangement for reinforcing the unity, cohesion stability, security progress, development and performance of the Nigerian federation.

Earlier, 57 members of the House of Representatives who went to court seeking an injunction to restrain the president from convening the national conference was withdrawn, saying that that does not mean that the house is throwing its weight behind the conference.

While Muslims and the north raised eyebrow over what they described as marginalisation in the leadership of the conference, Dr Bala Usman, Professor Wole Soyinka and Chief Anthony Enahoro rejected their nomination.

Yadudu *Contd. from Pg 1*

Nigeria a bit further.

"The validity would be determined to the end. There is nothing extra-ordinary about calling a nation to discussion. No nation or government can solve all its problems," he added.

The reform conference has been adjourned to next Monday after its maiden session on Monday.

At the opening session, President Olusegun Obasanjo had warned that "nothing should be done to undermine our national integrity and sovereignty or weaken our national cohesion."

He said the purpose of the conference was to discuss and reach consensus

He reminded that one of the contrasts is the National Assembly's rejection of the appropriation of fund for the confab, adding that the conference also put to question the usefulness of the National Assembly.

According to him, the conference might have become necessary given the inability of the members of the National Assembly to make amendments and correct the lopsidedness in the 1999 constitution.

"To me the conference is an indictment of the entire administration," he said.

Speaking also at the interview session, Dr Tonje Abayomi, a legal practitioner, said the government should be commended as it moves

Two Sierra-Leonean amputees fault Charles Taylor's asylum

Two Sierra Leone amputees yesterday said that the asylum granted the former Liberian president, Mr. Charles Taylor, violated established principle of the administrative law and should be revoked.

The plaintiffs, David Anyale and Emma Egbena, represented by their counsel, Mr. Tunde Faybonunwu, prayed the court to apply its discretionary powers to review the asylum granted to Mr. Taylor.

At the resumed hearing of the suit yesterday, the plaintiffs, through their counsel, said that it was relevant

for the respondents to say that they had not violated the fundamental human rights of the plaintiffs.

He said, "the fact that the stationary power is discretionary does not render the court from its exercise of the court's supervisory jurisdiction through the process of judicial review granted to Taylor.

He listed three circumstances which exists to warrant the review and revocation of the asylum granted to Mr. Taylor, which include a situation where the authority tasked with statutory discretion did not take into

consideration all matters that was pertinent before granting the asylum.

Fagbohunwu said that the federal government ignored deliberately vital matters that the governing statute on the asylum ought to be taken before Taylor will be allowed to stay in Nigeria.

He noted that the federal government allowed itself to be misguided by irrelevant matters when it granted the asylum to Taylor.

Fagbohunwu added that government did not act reasonably and disregarded the due process and rule of law when the asylum was granted.



President Olusegun Obasanjo

News

National Confab: Nigerians speak

**It's Obasanjo's self-suc-
cession agenda'**
Hassan Yusuf, Lugbe,

Abuja: Well! My opinion on the national dialogue or conference is that the whole exercise is a contraption hurriedly put by Mr. President perhaps for the self-suc-cession agenda that has been speculated by Nigerians.

I don't think the president truly wants Nigeria and Nigerians to have a genuine national conference. Because I am of the belief that the president will tinker with what might be the outcome of the conference. And that means the whole thing will be an exercise in futility.

'It will strengthen Nigeria's democracy'

Alhaji Mahmud Tanko a Kano state, businessman, Kubwa, Abuja: I think the national conference is a welcome idea because it will go a long way to strengthen the nation's democracy. The conference to my mind is timely and it will achieve the objectives for which it was formed, it is capable of dis-uniting Nigerians".

Mr. Gabriel Moses, Gwarimpa, Abuja: I am afraid and very sceptical about the whole thing. The conference will cause chaos in the country because everybody wants to make sure that he or she gets the best share of

**By Abdullahi M. Gulloma,
Labour Correspondent**

the nation's resources. And the conference is an avenue to table that kind of sentiments. So, I look at the whole exercise as capable of dis-uniting the people of this great country.

'National Conference is not good for democracy'

Ibrahim Inuwa: My opinion on this national conference is that the federal government is trying to destroy the fabrics that hold this nation. The conference is not good at all for the survival of democracy in this country.

Again, it appears that the convener of the conference has a hidden agenda because from all indications, the conference is planned to achieve certain objectives of the convener.

'Conference is undemocratic'

Abigail Ezera: The national conference being sponsored by the federal government to my mind, is undemocratic because the whole thing is a usurpation of the constitutional responsibilities of members of the National Assembly.

I learnt that the National Assembly refused to approve the budget for the conference because ordinarily, the things that will be dis-

cussed at the conference can be handled by members of the National Assembly without additional cost to government.

Another thing that makes the conference undemocratic is the use of unbudgeted public funds to sponsor a conference that will be of no use to the generality of Nigerians.

'Will it bring food to the poor man's table?'

Micheal Ogaba, Mpape village, Abuja The questions I want to ask is, will the conference bring food to the poor man's table? If the conference is designed to help there common man in the long run, then I am in support of it. But if it is not for the overall interest of the common man, I am not in support of it. That is my opinion on the national political reform conference.

'Conference will unite Nigerians'

Habiba Anas, Garki, Abuja: My opinion on this national conference is that it will unite Nigerians. There are a lot of issues that we need to sit down and discuss.

As a people, we have a right under the constitution of this country to meet and discuss any issue under the sun in order to move the country forward.

'It's a waste of resources,

energy'

Saratu Abdullahi, Jabi, Abuja: If you look at the whole thing critically, you will agree with me that this national conference is going to be a waste of resources, energy and time.

I thing priorities of Nigerians does not go beyond qualitative education, good health, facilities and roads that are not death traps. These are the basic things that our leaders failed to provide for us. So, this conference is nothing but a diversion.

'Conference will tackle problems of ethnicity, religion'

Venda Shiakut Amos, Wuse II, Abuja: My opinion about the national conference is that it will be an avenue to discuss the issues of ethnicity and religious differences that have always been a source of worry to Nigerians.

I believe that delegates to the national conference will discuss issues of national integration, nation-building, peace and stability. So, the conference is timely and it will put an end to the problems facing this country.

'We need education not conference'

**Balaraba Ismail, Apo vil-
lage, Abuja:** I think what we need most in this country is education not conference. The money budgeted for the conference should have been channelled to the education sector of the nation's economy to address the problems of incessant strike ac-

tion by lecturers in tertiary institutions and teachers in primary and post primary schools.

'Conference is designed to weaken the north's strength'

Nuhu Mohamemd, Blantyre Street, Wuse II, Abuja: Mr. President is jealous of the strength of the region that voted massively for him in 1999. Now that he wants to perpetuate himself in power, he is employing all tactics to weaken the strength of the north, which is more politically active than the other regions.

I don't think the president is really interested about the unity of this country because, his appointment of political office holders is biased.

In fact, everything about the present government is more disposed towards the Yorubas. So, the national conference is one of the structures that the president is putting in place to perpetuate himself in power.

'It is a gimmick'

Chukwuemeka John, Zone 7, Abuja: We should not deceive ourselves on this national conference because the exercise is a gimmick. In fact, the conference should be tagged "Obasanjo's conference" because all things that will be discussed at the conference will not have positive impact on the lives of the ordinary Nigerian like you and me.

The whole thing is just a waste of the tax payers money.

Uni Agric, BSU join ASSU warning strike

**From Hir Joseph,
Correspondent (Makurdi)**

Lecturers in both the University of Agriculture (UAM) and Benue State University, (BSU), in Makurdi, yesterday joined their counterparts in both federal and state Universities nation-wide to observe the on-going three day warning strike.

The two chapters of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), rose from respective meetings yesterday when they passed resolutions to that effect.

Daily Trust could not reach the chapter chairman, Dr. Ona of UAM and Dr. Joseph Kerker, of BSU respectively for comments. However, other members who volunteered information to Daily Trust said the decision to join their counterparts nation-wide received unanimous approval from members.

They said their resolution was justified by the federal government's refusal to fully implement the ASUU/FGN agreement of June 30, 2001.

The federal government's refusal to review the agreement, according to them, was another step that will negation affect the country's education system



Vice president Atiku Abubakar exchanging greetings with the FCT Minister Mallam Nasir Ahmed el-Rufai, the sports minister Col. Musa Mohammed and the information minister Chief Chukwuemeka Chikelu during the FEC meeting held at the State House Abuja...yesterday. Pix: Joe Oroye

200 coys raise N567 bn from capital market - SEC

Over 200 companies in various sectors have raised over N567.8 billion from the capital market between 1981 and 2004, Director-General of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Mallam Musa Al-Faki, said.

He said at the 26th Kaduna International Trade Fair yesterday that this was accessed through the primary market while secondary market provided liquidity for 207 companies quoted on the stock exchange which had a market capitalisation of N1.93 trillion as at January 31, 2005.

Mallam Al-Faki who was represented by Mr. Sylvester Akele, SEC director, research and market development,

**From Sani Babadoko in
Kaduna**

measures to support commerce and industry ranging from streamlining rules and regulations guiding the issue of surveillance and monitoring of the market.

He said the efforts of the commission and other stakeholders over the years have enhanced the role of the Nigerian Capital Market as a source of long-term ingestible funds, especially for industry and infrastructure.

He said to ensure transparency the commission in collaboration with the Corporate Affairs Commission, launched the code corporate governance in 2003.

discipline in the market, the commission reviewed and re-constituted the Administration Proceedings Committee (APC), in 1999 to adjudicate over disputes arising from the market and also instrumental in setting up the Investment and Securities Tribunal (IST) in 2003.

He said the commission is also working to create the requisite environment for the effective operation of the establishment of the commodity exchange (COMEX) and Capital Trade Points (CTPS).

The SEC, he said, has also encouraged the development of the venture capital which is specifically geared to finance small and medium scale companies and has therefore put in place the necessary rules to regulate

One killed as hunters raze Wase settlement

**From Jibril Daudu,
Correspondent Jos**

Ethno-religious crisis was averted weekend when a group of bandits who razed a Fulani settlement in Mavo, Wase local government area of Plateau state, turned out to be hunters.

One person was killed and goods estimated at over N2 million destroyed in the make while several people were arrested by policemen and soldiers stationed to keep peace in the area following last year's conflict.

It took the intervention of the chairman of Wase local government council, Alhaji Saidu Musa and his counterpart in Langtang north, Mr. Amos Kumtal, to convince people of the state that what happened last Saturday was not an ethnic or religious conflict but a group of hunters who engaged in bush burning while searching for game.

While narrating what happened, leader of the Fulanis, Ardo Isa Abdu, said the hunters numbering about

during bush burning, fire spread to the settlement and burnt huts killing one person and destroying goods which he estimated at over N2 million.

He confirmed that it was not the first time that the hunters had come to the areas to hunt for game.

He commended the chairman of Langtang north, from whose domain the hunters came, for his prompt action and condolence visit to the Fulani settlement and pledged that they would not tamper with the peace in the area.

In his remarks, the chairman of Langtang North warned that anyone caught burning bushes while hunting would face the wrath of the law including those already arrested.

While sympathising with the Fulanis over the incident, the chairman said he learnt of the incident from security agents who came to inform

him at about 11 p.m. He said he immediately went along with the security agents to see the suspects arrested by the army in the area.

He said he would henceforth deal decisively with anybody caught burning the bush in his domain and that he would liaise with his Wase counterpart to find ways to compensate the Fulanis.

The Wase local government chairman who was represented by his deputy, urged the people to desist from spreading rumours regarding what happened because it had no religious undertones.

He assured that adequate measure, were being put in place to protect people's lives and properties and advised them to report movements of suspicious people to the appropriate authorities.

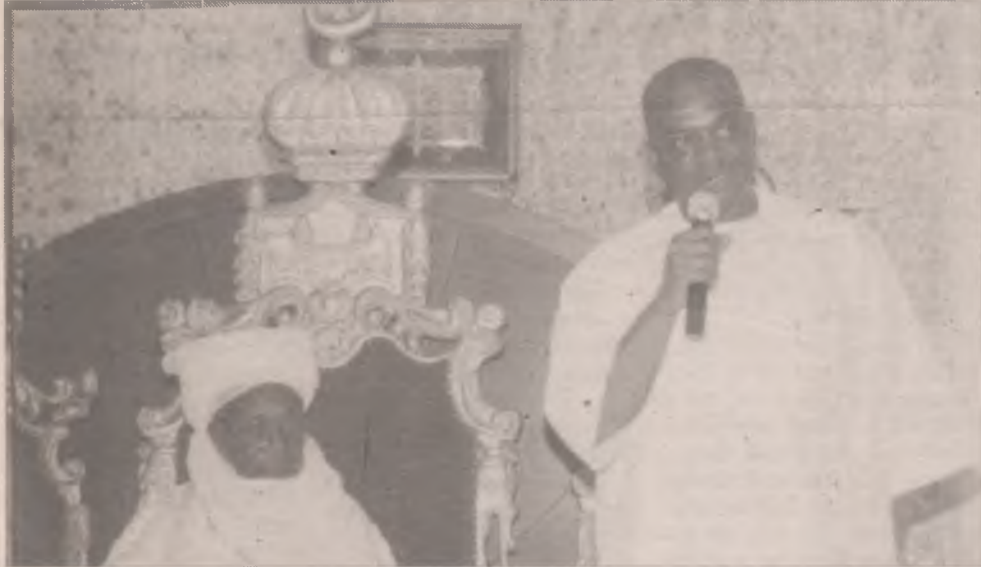
The officer commanding the peace keeping troops in the area also allayed the fears of the fulanis and assured them of adequate protection. "My officers arrested the hunters which is to show you our commitment to your safety," he further assured.

News

National Confab

National Confab

National Confab



Abia state Governor, Dr. Orji Uzor Kalu making a speech when he paid courtesy call on Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammadu Maccido at his palace recently

Resign now, Speaker tells NASS leadership

For attending the opening session of the national conference on political reforms, Speaker of the Bauchi State House of Assembly, Alhaji Tanko Ibrahim Jallam, has asked the leadership of the national Assembly to

resign their posts for betraying the legislators.

Alhaji Jallam in an interview with *Daily Trust* on Tuesday, explained that he was "highly disappointed" in the leadership of the National Assembly, who chose to attend the opening ceremony of the conference despite presiding over a House which had earlier denounced the conference.

According to him, "both the Senate and the House of Representatives passed a resolution condemning the convocation of the conference and they even refused to appropriate money to it, yet the leadership

of the National Assembly were there, cheering president Obasanjo while declaring open the conference. What hypocrisy!" he added.

"The Speaker was there, the Senate President was there. All the leadership of the National Assembly were there clapping for the president when he was reading his speech. What were they clapping for? Were they happy that the president has constituted a conference to take over their job? I think this is a shame for the country and democracy and the leadership of the National Assembly should apologise to Nigerians and resign their posts".

He said that both the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Alhaji Masari and the president of the Senate, Adolphus Wabara, symbolize democracy, and "are being hailed by the people when both the Senate and the House refused to recognize the legitimacy of the conference, but their presence at the opening ceremony was a slap on the face of democracy".

He also explained that "I

From Tashikalmah Hallah,
Correspondent Bauchi

was there at the opening ceremony, and there was nothing in the president's speech to warrant the conference at the first place, talkless of spending our money.

"All those things that the President has highlighted are things that have been said before and the National Assembly can handle them even better. To me, this conference is another way of promoting corruption in this country".

The Speaker of the House of Assembly also called on President Obasanjo to make

public the recommendations of the previous committee reports on the proposed amendment of the constitution if "he is genuinely in love with the country and does not have any hidden agenda".

Although a PDP member, Alhaji Jallam explained that the central government has succeeded in promoting corruption, insecurity in the country and mass unemployment and advised that the government should

have concentrated on addressing issues bordering on unemployment, corruption, insecurity, rather than engaging in wasteful spending.

APGA defies CNPP, attends confab

By Habeeb I Pindiga,
Political Reporter

Contrary to directives by the Conference of Nigerian Political Parties (CNPP), for its members to stay away from the national political reform conference, the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), yesterday said it will attend the confab.

Chairman of the party, Chekwes Okorie, who disclosed this at APGA's secretariat in Abuja, said his party was not bound by CNPP's decision, adding that there was never a time a unanimous resolution to boycott was adopted.

Okorie, who said CNPP chairman, Abdulkadir Balarabe Musa, had protested his (Okorie's) nomination to the confab to the secretary of the government of the federation, added that APGA has right to dissent.

"Balarabe Musa petitioned the SGF and said no CNPP member will participate in the conference, therefore I was not qualified to participate. To this I replied that APGA has never ceded its registration to CNPP and that there was never a time we agreed to stay away from the conference," he said.

Okorie also explained that the convocation of a

conference was in APGA's manifesto and therefore the party has no reason to boycott this confab in spite of its flaws.

In any case, he said, his nomination was not through the CNPP, but that it was because he was chairman of the fourth largest political party.

Explaining attempts to stop him from the confab, Okorie said APGA's break-away faction also petitioned the SGF on the grounds that the chairman has been expelled.

This, he said, led the SGF to write the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), which promptly responded by saying that Okorie was the authentic APGA chairman.

He said he was also quizzed by the State Security Services (SSS), where he was accused of championing secession of a Biafra nation. This, Okorie said, was not true, as he has always believed in Nigeria's unity.

Following INEC and SSS clearance, Okorie said he will participate in the conference to seek ways of making Nigeria better.

On the mumblings in the party, - the chairman announced an across board amnesty to all those expelled, but added that they could not reclaim their leadership positions in the party.

NULGE 'll canvass LG autonomy -Scribe

By Abdullahi M. Gulloma,
Labour Reporter

The general secretary of the Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE), Comrade Abdulkadir A. Salam, said yesterday that the union will canvass for local government autonomy at the national political reform conference.

Comrade Salam who is also a delegate to the conference representing the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), said that the union will re-examine the set backs of local government administration with a view to make them independent of manipulations by other tiers of government.

According to him, the present local government structure was brought under what he referred to as "the whims and caprices of state government's administration."

"We are going to re-examine the omission of local government in the constitution at the national political reform conference. The federal and state governments are operating independently of each other. But the local government administration is brought under the whims and caprices of state government's administration."

"The local government

which is the grassroots government is not allowed to manage its resources properly. This is retarding development projects and the success of local government administrations in the country," he said.

Comrade Salam also disclosed that the joint state/

local government account not properly adhered to by most state governors and that the union will canvass its abolition at the conference.

He also called on the federal government to establish local government services commission to address the problems of local governments across the country.

Speaker says confab is long over due

The Speaker of the Plateau State House of Assembly, Chief Simon Lalong, says the ongoing national conference was long over due.

Speaking to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), on Tuesday in Jos, Lalong said this was because Nigerians were yearning for dialogue.

According to him, the president means well for the unity of the country by organising the conference.

He said that the conference of northern Speakers had long opposed the much-talked about sovereign national conference.

Lalong said the speakers believe in the corporate existence of the country.

Lalong stated that the state assembly did not have any inputs in the nomination of the state's delegates but believes that those nominated by government were capable of giving good representation.

Shehu Shagari @ 80



Alhaji Shehu Usman Aliyu Shagari

Nigeria's former President, Alhaji Shehu Shagari will by the special grace of God mark his 80th birthday anniversary on Friday, February 25, 2005.

This is a moment of joy for the elder statesman who has meritoriously served the nation with utmost humility and sincerity.

To commemorate the landmark event, Media Trust Limited, the publishers of *Daily* and *Weekly Trust* will publish a special publication Of tributes to this venerable leader and gentleman.

We invite individuals, organisations, business political associates, governments and people of Nigeria to send felicitations and goodwill messages to this man of honour.

For enquiries and booking of space, please call the Special Projects on the following Nos: 0803-703-8663, 0804-214-5839, 0803-503-9527, 0804-334-1144, 0803-317-5421, 0802-849-4170 or 09-6720346.

Management

News

Religious leaders meet over peace in Jos

Not fewer than 40 Christians and Islamic religious leaders converged in Jos yesterday to brainstorm on how to manage conflicts and find lasting peace in Plateau and Kaduna states.

The religious leaders will arley for three days in a workshop organised by a non-governmental organisation (NGO), International Centre for Gender and Social Research (Inter-Gender).

Organisers of the meeting said participants would be imbued with the capacity to serve as mediators of conflicts in their respective communities.

During the three-day meet, the religious leaders would be taken through conflict handling techniques, processes of negotiations and building relationships among various communities.

Executive Director of Inter-Gender, Professor David Ityaver, said religious leaders have important roles to play in conflict resolution because their followers take them

From Jibril Dauda, Regional Editor

seriously and command respect even outside their societies. They should therefore lead the peace crusades and understanding in the country and be vehicles for peace-making.

Participants spoke on how to achieve lasting peace in Plateau and Kaduna states that have been affected by ethno-religious crises in recent times.

They drew a connection between poverty and conflicts, pointing out that people whose basic needs are not met are capable of generating energy that can bring about conflicts.

They also suggested that victims of conflicts in Yelwa Shendam should be counselled and convinced to return to their homes.

Meanwhile, although Christian and Muslim leaders have signed a peace treaty to signify an end to all hostilities

in the area at the weekend, the paramount ruler of Geomai, Hubert Shaldas II, has refused to accept all apology tendered to him by the Yelwa community.

He cited insults and humiliations he suffered in the hands of the Hausa community before and during last year's conflict.

According to him, he had been humiliated severally in the last few years by the Hausa community in Yelwa who he alleged, called him "sarkin arna" meaning, "chief of infidels" whenever he passes through the town to his farm.

After much persuasions by the state governor, Chief Joshua Dariye and Interfaith Mediation Committee, organisers of the Yelwa Shendam Peace Demonstration, the paramount ruler conceded that he has forgiven everybody who had offended him. He, however, pledged to watch the "miscreants" in Yelwa town as to whether they had changed their attitude towards his stool or not.



Chairman, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Hon. Usman Bugaje, Hon. Adeyeye and Hon. Binta Goje, during the public hearing on Domestic Obligation and Implementation of International Treaties ratified by Nigeria, held at the National Assembly Complex, Abuja ... recently.

Pix: Felix Onigbinde

Farmers Fulani clash claims 10 lives

Farmers and Fulani clash has again claimed 10 lives in Taura local government area of Jigawa state Tuesday, few weeks after a similar incident claimed more than 12 in Ringim.

Daily Trust learnt that a group of Fulani herdsmen moving with over 500 cows invaded several villages destroying farmlands, houses and other properties.

Reports from the area further revealed that about five villages were destroyed by the invading Fulanis believed to be travelling from the Niger Republic.

Officials of the local authorities gave reporters definite number of the death that affected Darmanawa,

From Hassan A. Karofi, Correspondent (Dutse)

Mallamawa, Taura and Gunka. Two people were killed in Darmanawa, two killed in Mallamawar Taura and two killed in Gunka.

Additional information revealed that one person was equally killed in Taura, three in Zangon Kanya while others sustained injuries.

The state's commissioner of social security, Alhaji Safiyanu Jahun, confirmed the incidents and decried the attitudes of traditional rulers in the area for their inability to alert the government on time.

He said such could have averted the continuous loss of lives and properties in the area.

Already, a detachment of mobile policemen were deployed to the area to forestall loss of more lives and properties.

Daily Trust can authoritatively reveal that the continuous clashes between farmers and Fulani in the state has claimed more than 50 lives this year, forcing government to establish a committee to prevent the clashes.

RATTAWU suspends nationwide strike

The Radio, Television, Theatre and Arts Workers Union (RATTAWU), has suspended its planned nationwide strike action following agreements with the federal government on how best to address the concerns of workers in the broadcast sector of the nation's economy.

It would be recalled that RATTAWU, in collaboration with the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), and the Amalgamated Union of Public Corporations, Civil Service, Technical and Recreational Services Employees (AUPCTRE), gave the federal government a strike notice on the issue of the non-implementation of monetisation and fringe benefits in parastatals/agencies funded by the government.

President of RATTAWU, Comrade Salihu A. Dembos, told labour reporters that the union decided to suspend the strike action due to federal government's commitment to

M.D. Yusuf vs Obasanjo Election tribunal set to hear petition

The presidential elections petition tribunal will be reconstituted to hear the

petition

From Kemi Ogedengbe, Judicial Editor

petition of Alhaji M.D. Yusuf challenging the re-election of President Olusegun Obasanjo.

The presiding judge of the tribunal, Justice Isa Ayo Salami, said three new judges will be appointed to fill the vacancy seats, one was created by the exit of Justice O.O. Obadina, another vacancy will exist by another judge who is to retire by March, while Justice Mahmud Muhammed may be elevated to the Supreme Court to fill the vacancy created by Justice Uthman Mohammed, from Kebbi State, who retires on Monday.

He therefore fixed April 15 for definite hearing of the petition, which he said shall be on a daily basis at the Court of Appeal.

The panel that heard the petition of Governor Muhammadu Buhari was dissolved to pave way for a new panel to hear the second petition, which was yet to be heard.

Alhaji M.D. Yusuf, who

contested the 2003 presidential elections on the ticket of the Movement for Democracy and Justice (MDJ), is challenging the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), results declared for President Obasanjo as the winner of the 2003 presidential election.

When the case came up yesterday, Abiodun Jelili Owonikoku, who appeared for Alhaji Yusuf, said his witnesses were already in court while he was ready to proceed with the case.

But Chief Gboyega Awomolo (SAN), who appeared for President Obasanjo, raised an objection to the facts that the petition was disjointed since the Supreme Court had already struck out some paragraphs from it, saying that the petitioner's counsel ought to put all his claims together before the court begins adjudication.

Justice Salami, who presided over the petition and who agreed with the argument of Awomolo, however hinted that the panel will still have to be reconstituted because of a member who had retired and another to retire by March this year.

Govt refutes death of General Adisa

The Kwara state commissioner for health, Dr. Bola Olaosebikan yesterday dismissed rumours of former works and housing minister, Major-General Abdulkarim Adisa's death in Britain.

Fielding questions from newsmen at Ibadan Government House, Ilorin on state of health of General Adisa who was flown abroad following a ghastly motor crash on Oro-Oke-Onigbin road, last Saturday, Dr. Olaosebikan said the General is still alive and "we are in touch every hour," with the Chief Medical Director of Unilorin Teaching Hospital, Dr. Suleiman Kuranga who is staying with him in London.

"I am involved in getting him out of Nigeria, and up till yesterday (Tuesday), I still know he was okay, and alive and around 4 p.m., I was informed he was on his way to the theatre for operation. So as at last night I was not told that anything has happened," Dr. Olaosebikan added.

The commissioner said General Adisa had undergone both minor and major operations, explaining that the minor operation was to enable him have enough oxygen pass through his air track and prevent blockage.

Students say treatment of corrupt officials selective

The Nigerian Students Coalition for Sustainable Democracy (NSCD), has described as "selective", the treatment of some government officials in the fight against corruption.

The body said this in a statement in Dutse on Tuesday, noting that "such selective treatment of corrupt officials casts doubt on the efforts of government and remains a threat to democracy".

Its national coordinator, Mr Atiku Abubakar, and Secretary, Mr Daniel Okpanachi, who signed the statement, expressed concern over what they termed "gradual promotion of corrupt officials by the government."

"Such an attitude is however, contrary to the spirit of government's war against corruption," the statement said.

The students urged the federal government not only to distance itself from such public officers, but also to commence immediate investigations of all former leaders with a view to punish those found to have corruptly enriched themselves.

The measure, they noted, will serve as good an example and a warning to others.

The NSCD demanded the immediate release of Maj. Hamza al-Mustapha and others "in the spirit of national reconciliation and forgiveness".

By Abdullahi M. Gulloma, Labour Reporter

solve the problem amicably. He said that if any mistake the federal government delays the implementation of the agreement reached between it and the trade unions, RATTAWU would go on strike without notice.

The federal government and the trade unions, after exhaustive deliberations at a meeting held at the instance of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Chief Ufot Ekaette and the minister of labour and productivity, Dr. Hassan Muhammad Lawal, agreed on the following terms.

"That the monetisation policy of the federal government extends to all parastatals funded by the federal government as it applies to the core civil service in keeping with the provisions of circular with reference number HCSF/SW/HM/H/021/S.829/T of December 15, 2003 and salaries, wages commission circular with reference number SWC/S/04/S.167/126 of 12th February, 2004.

"All such parastatals would submit the financial cost of monetisation to the federal ministry of labour and productivity for collation and submission to the budget office within one week.

"The budget office would quantify the amount and present same to Mr. President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria. The government will source for funds and pay as agreed.

"Implementation will be effected as soon as the National Assembly approves. The budget office will ensure that the submission will be made to the National Assembly on or before 31st of March, 2005."

Polio immunisation kicks off Saturday

The National Programme on Immunisation (N P I), has scheduled the first round of National Immunisation Days (NIDs) for Saturday, February 26, to March 1, 2005 in all the states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

A statement by the director, communication and essential services, Hajia W.O. Giwa made available to Daily Trust, said this phase of the house-to-house polio immunisation exercise is the last effort to interrupt the transmission of wild polio virus and eradicate poliomyelitis by the end of this year.

The statement advised mothers and caregivers to

By Sunday Ejike Benjamin, Health Reporter

welcome vaccinators into their homes to ensure that all children aged 0-59 months are reached with two drops of the oral polio vaccines during the period of the house-to-house immunisation implementation.

Hajia Giwa pointed out that it is by doing that, "we would be extending to our children their God-given right to survival."

The NPI director of communication and essential services in the statement, called on all and sundry to collaborate in this final push to kick polio out of Nigeria, Africa and the world.

Idang Alibi on Thursday

idangabili@yahoo.com

Nigeria's Finest Hour

I consider myself as a truly privileged witness of history as I was there live at the International Conference Centre, Abuja, venue of the inauguration of the National Political Reforms Conference which took place last Monday.

I was able to capture, first hand, the mood of the delegates. And this mood was set, principally, by President Olusegun Obasanjo's speech and the response, on behalf of the delegates, by conference chairman, Justice Niki Tobi.

Many Obasanjo watchers who have often complained that his speeches are often dry without any quotable quotes, will certainly agree that the one he gave inaugurating this conference was a major departure from his usuals.

Although long, it was not tedious or tortuous. I also noted that this one was one of his best delivered speeches with many quotable quotes. The substance and delivery of that speech underline the seriousness with which he and his government take that national talkshop. But I would like to leave the analysis of that President speech to men and women who are trained in such matters.

Given the applause that greeted Obasanjo's speech, it was clear that he had answered many of the questions that had agitated the minds of many Nigerians, questions that had created cynicism, fear and suspicion in many a compatriot's heart.

To those who had feared that the conference was called to pursue a hidden, if not possibly, sinister agenda, the President said pointedly that his government had no hidden agenda. The sense of relief which descended on the august gathering which was visible to all who could see, attests to the fact that that fear was deep and real.

Another major fear which the President's speech addressed was one that the Confab would lead to the dismemberment of Nigeria. When he deliberately paused for effect and declared that one no-go area for the conference was a discussion as to whether Nigeria can be divided, the hall erupted in rapturous applause.

Justice Niki Tobi's response was an icing on Obasanjo's cake. He told the gathering, or more appropriately, the President, that if at any point he senses that he is required to preside

over the execution of a hidden agenda or of a scheme to divide Nigeria, he will resign and leave that job for the President to execute. This elicited some cheerful laughter but the message was serious.

These two speeches which said clearly that Nigeria's sovereignty is not negotiable, did a lot to calm the nerves of delegates who came obviously spoiling for war. They said in a nutshell that all such persons should put their swords in their sheathes.

As an observer, the event represented Nigeria's and Obasanjo's finest hour. With the mood that was set, those delegates who came with extremist negotiating positions will certainly moderate their views.

My faith in the unity and future greatness of Nigeria was renewed as the right mood for the re-invention of our country was set. As an enthusiastic supporter of the Conference, I felt somehow vindicated even when the talks are yet to commence in earnest.

Something tells me that at the end of the day, every one of us will have cause to thank God that the conference held as I am very optimistic that the discussion will bring forth workable ideas that will give birth to a new and better Nigeria.

When recently I wrote about this Conference, I made the point that we Nigerians have grown so distrustful of our governments over the years that we are not prepared for one moment to give them the benefit of the doubt.

I also said that we are so impatient and so quick to come to judgement and while doing so, we think the worst of the intention of those who are in authority over us.

One of the things that led me to this assertion was the conspiracy theory going on then that President Olusegun was irrevocably committed to the adoption of the parliamentary system of government in place of the rather very expansive presidential system now in place.

The pundits who purveyed this view said this was one of Obasanjo's hidden and selfish agenda; that he was committed to dismantling the presidential system so that he will forever remain the last of Nigeria's powerful leaders. That no one coming after him will exercise the kind of enormous powers he wielded or dominate the political space the way he did.

Surprisingly, during Obasanjo's inaugural speech, one of the no-go areas he gave the conference delegates was the presidential system. The conference is not to think of doing away with this admittedly expensive system but to find a way of making it work better for Nigeria.

It is very unfortunate that over the years, most of our governments have given us several causes to become distrustful of government. However, whatever good reason we have been given to become this extremely cynical, the truth remains that it is necessary for government to be instituted among men for the orderly conduct of our affairs.

Given this reality, we must learn to give the benefit of the doubt to those who are in authority over us. As humans, they may have their selfish agenda sometimes. They may make genuine mistakes sometimes. The Holy Books recognise this which is why they counsel us to pray for and co-operate with those who are in leadership positions so that they can act in our interest.

For me, I think that God is the ultimate manipulator. He can use any leader who has his selfish and hidden agenda to accomplish His (God's) mission. Whatever may be the selfish desires of those who have convoked the present Conference, it is my fervent hope that in the end, this talkshop will achieve larger goals for Nigerian than its conveners may have desired.

It is noteworthy that following the stage that was set for a robust discussion of the fate of Nigeria, some of those who were noted antagonists of the Conference have started singing a new song. Dr Ibrahim Tahir, one of Nigeria's elder statesmen told the *Daily Trust* last Monday that he regretted making negative utterances concerning the Conference based on media reports. Said he: "I am ashamed of what I have said in the past about this Conference. I should have been silent on some issues because, as you can see from the President's opening speech, most of my fears have been allayed."

The lesson in this and our general attitude of cynicism is that we must learn not to be too hasty in running into conclusion until we have gotten all the facts. Impatience and running into hasty conclusion have done a great deal to build the culture of unhealthy scepticism which is fast becoming our trade-mark today.

Opinion

Of regionalism and political confab

By Yusuf Ibrahim Gamawa

This conference must not accommodate ethnic issues if it is to become a success. One of the major problems facing the nation is disunity and as such any action that would aid it should be avoided.

Even the onshore /off-shore oil dichotomy which the Governors from the North are challenging, should be abrogated not because of the north, but for the fact that there should be equality in the system. This notion of north and south must not be encouraged by such policies, but that we must be seen as Nigerians equal before God and man, and our resources must be collectively ours. At this very period of our history, we must struggle to instill patriotism and Nationalism in our peoples, and how do we do all this? Is it by emphasizing our differences that we attain it? No. whatever resources we may have, without this feeling of nationalism we can never develop as a nation.

The conference must strive to correct and remove Policies that have hindered our progress as a people, like the immunity clause in the constitution which has aided the corruption of our leaders hence the underdevelopment and exploitation of our Nation and resources. These are issues that are of collective nature and as such must be part of the agenda of the conference. Other issues must be the general reformation of the nation, in attitudinal terms.

We must be realistic and sincere in our outlook regarding our nation, for it appears Nigerians are a luxurious people, and a lazy and unpatriotic people cannot build a nation, A nation can only be built on sacrifice and the sacrifice is the suffering and hardship that we will endure as a people on the path to national development. But if we cannot endure and do away with our luxurious life styles, which patriotism should take its place, then Nigeria

shall forever remain a poor, under developed nation and a dumping ground of foreign goods.

Eventually to the disintegration of the nation sets in due to our unpatriotic ethnic and religious intolerance. We do not have an ideology as a nation and yet we are talking about development. We must have a picture of how and what we want our country to be and the principles that will guide us to these paths of development must be identified. Our educational system must be restructured from primary school to the university level. Our children must be trained to share in the responsibility of Nation building and must therefore know that they are not just studying to graduate and sustain themselves and their families but to contribute in the task of nation building, in innovation in their various fields and as such even our teaching philosophy must be changed.

Like Balarabe Musa said, if we believe in ourselves and in our capabilities, in forty years, Nigeria will be like one of the European Nations that we are always looking up to. But we need to be practical and this requires sincere, disciplined and focused leadership and a patriotic subject on the other hand. Any continued reliance on foreign investment is a waste of time and a further enslavement of our economy and our conscience to neo-colonial imperialism.

While we endure the suffering on the path to development, we must take solace, in the fact that we are creating a country with our collective wills and in sacrifice for future generations. These must be some of the issues that must factor in the political reforms conference and not some *Arewa, Ohaneze* or *Afenifere* agenda.

What many of us advocated for was a sovereign national conference and it appears as if the nation

would not be ready for such, due to the ethnic issues being raised by the various groups and therefore chose to support conference on political forms. We must trust our President, for it appears he means well to the Nation, Nevertheless he should not have much to do with the delegates, but it remains his duty to sit with the delegates and discuss the agenda and goals of the conference in confidence with them before it takes off.

The aims of the conference must not be undermined and as a result even those that are kicking against the conference like the members of the National Assembly should understand its importance and the reason's behind the nomination of the delegates, if they themselves mean well to the nation. Besides, the President has made it clear that it is the house that will at the end of the day determine whether the deliberations of the conference become practical or not. So what do they want?

There are people whose experiences are needed and they are not members of either the house or the senate and are in-fact not even politicians. At this critical period of our history the knowledge and expertise of every single person in the Nation must be cherished and courted. Mr. President should go ahead with the conference based on his executive power and the honorable members and Senators must reason over the deliberations of the conference as Nigerians.

Regionalism and ethnicity must be de-emphasised at the conference and nationalism should take its place instead, so that the conference will be successful and should mark the beginning of new Nigerian and a government of National unity, peace, progress and stability.

Gamawa writes from Plot 117, Monrovia Street, Wuse II-Abuja, and can be reached at ibrahimgamawa.2000@yahoo.com

Regionalism and ethnicity must be de-emphasised at the conference and nationalism should take its place instead, so that the conference will be successful and should mark the beginning of new Nigerian and a government of National unity, peace, progress and stability.



YOUR LETTERS

Confab: Shehu Musa's crocodile tears

The statement credited to Alhaji Shehu Musa Makaman Nupe, erstwhile member of the discredited Independent National Electoral Commission as reported by the *Daily Trust* of Wednesday 2, February, 2005, alleging an attempt to put the north in an undue disadvantaged position in the National Political Reform Conference is as interesting as it is pitiful. The statement only goes to reaffirm the belief that the Nigerian elites particularly northern elites have lost sense of history.

After his experience with INEC his next move is search for relevance to incite the people (as usual with most elites) by evoking the emotions and sentiments of North and the Shari'a. We know these sentiments meant little to him as his past national assignments including the recent one at INEC do attest to the fact. The tradition of the North, we are told, is about honour and integrity. The essence of the Shari'a is about justice, transparency and good conduct in both public and private affairs of an individual. From the judgement of the court and the majority opinion of the Nigerian public, it is debatable whether these values guided the conduct of those who managed INEC especially during the last elections. As a national commissioner, Alhaji Shehu Musa, now a new convert of the Shari'a, was alleged to have spearheaded the rebellion of INEC's top hierarchy against the late Justice Akpata. He was alleged to have not only refused to identify himself with the

election convention of the PDP but went further to alert the Presidency to stop the late honourable Justice from going public with his stand. Of course what happened is now history.

If INEC had been consistent and transparent after the demise of the patriot Justice, the history of the Nigerian political landscape would have been different today. In his bid to win the sympathy of Northern Muslims, Musa said that the "Judicial reform agenda of the conference was aimed at annihilating the Shari'a legal system introduced by most of the Northern States".

In a society already enslaved by the harsh economic and political programmes of a corrupt and uncaring leadership, coupled with the large army of unemployed youth such a statement coming from the Makama is, to say the least, shocking. The statement is indeed a disservice to the community.

Infact, if the Makama has forgotten, many Nigerians have not. In his first interview, immediately after the declaration of the Presidential election results of April 2003, the *BBC* Correspondent, Mallam Mannir Dan Ali, asked him whether to the best of his knowledge, the result as they had announced it, was a true reflection of what had happened. He refused to answer the question. Yet this is a man of over 70 years, highly experienced, holding a prestigious traditional title of a community that is rich in history, culture and bravery.

whether the Shari'a has a lacuna which allows experienced and knowledgeable public officers to do what they did, but chops the limb of an ignorant peasant, like citizen Jangebe on account of goat theft.

This "North" of Shehu Musa which is likely to suffer some "undue disadvantage in the nation's socio economic development at the forth coming national dialogue" ostensibly in the hands of Southerners and possibly Christians must rise up to "forge a common stand," in a way that its interest would be protected. This is a familiar warning indeed.

If we care to go into history, we will remember similar warnings handed on the people during the two conferences of Babangida and Abacha. Of course, at the end of the day the battle ready northern and religious chauvinists along with their compatriots on the other side of the divide who were also equally battle ready, laid down their arms.

The result of this truce translated into oil block allocations, Abuja plots, ministerial appointments, including Census Board Chairmanship. The drums of war being beaten once again, may not be unconnected to the increased premium for the delegates. However, it is up to the people of the north wherever they are, the language they speak and the faith they profess to believe him and to speculate the benefit he and his likes are likely to derive from Obasanjo's talk show. As a former editorial consultant

the art of propaganda. We were told by Musa recently that Obasanjo is the most patriotic, honest and reliable leader we can have around. Unfortunately, he based his comment not on Obasanjo's performance but on account of their friendship of nearly four decades. I will not be surprised therefore if Shehu Musa's name appears on the list of Obasanjo's "delegates" to the conference. In that case your prediction

is as good as mine on the type of "common stand" that will come out for 2007.

Ordinarily, one will expect Musa's retirement activities to be dedicated to constant prayers to God, especially in relation to his last assignment. At his age, tears from his eyes - crocodile or otherwise - is the least expected.

Ya'u Shehu Darazo, No.4 Gana Street, Maitama, Abuja.

Nigeria's most lopsided confab

I wonder where justice and equity were when selection of delegates to the conference commenced. How can we have 187 southerners against 213 northerners, 148 muslims against 252 christians, 25 women against 375 men, 20 youths against 380 elders and expect fairness?

Babangida Dangora
Kano State
babangidadangora@yahoo.com

Dr. Yerima is my representative of the year 2005

Allow me a space in your paper to choose my representative of the year in the person of Dr. Haruna Yerima, representing Biu North federal constituency.

I have been following the activities and pronouncement of Dr. Yerima since he was forced out of NDA by President Obasanjo up to the time he was elected by the people of Biu.

Dr. Yerima's appointment with the NDA was terminated because of his people-oriented criticism of the Obasanjo administration. Many people thought that he will be silenced by the luxury and avarice in the House of Representatives but my Dr. Yerima remained himself.

In the House he has been very vocal as always speaking the truth. He has found acceptance and love with the Nigerian masses through his comments on *BBC* Hausa Service., the *Daily Trust*, the *Daily Tribune* and the *Newswatch* magazine.

Representatives, which he belongs is doing nothing but fooling the masses and that even if the President asks the House to go and sweep Aso Rock, it will do so. Yerima was speaking the truth. What is the House doing today to improve the living condition of Nigerians? Nothing.

Dr. Yerima won my heart when he said in *Nigerian Tribune* that "we have fooled Nigerians", "we have failed Nigerians". No representative has ever said this truth.

When he returned Dariye's hampers with a letter indicating that he could see "blood and ill-gotten-money" in the bas-

ket, he made my day. In the House, he brought motions on the police controversy over the arrest of labour officials in the premises of the National Assembly. He has been contributing meaningfully on the floor of the House.

I was tempted to choose Datti Baba Ahmed representing Zaria as my representative of the year, but after this analysis, Dr. Haruna Yerima is my representative of the year.

Sanusi Mohammed,
Togo Street, Malali, Kaduna.

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

Nigeria's agricultural policies: Where is

Successive administrations in the country since independence have had various agricultural policies and programmes aimed at boosting self sufficiency in food production and revenue collection. Hassan Idris of the Agriculture Desk reviews some of these policies and programmes and assesses if they have served their purposes.

The beef of agricultural development is the sustainable agriculture growth for food security, which is the most important factor in sustaining its quality of life. From all indications, Nigeria is achieving a steady agricultural production increase every year.

The secretary general of the world meteorological organisation (WMO), Professor Godwin O. P. Obasi, has argued that, "in order for development goals to be achieved, agriculture growth must take place in a way that safeguards the natural environment."

According to him, this is underscored by the fact that in addition to being a significant source of food, agriculture is also the primary way of life in Africa. He writes: "about 70 per cent of the populations live on farming and 40 per cent of exports are agricultural products." In the light of this, however, where is the beef of agriculture development in Nigeria?

Beef can be interpreted as the national agriculture output which is the end result of both crops and the output of cattle breeding after putting some investments in agriculture. Beef is regarded as the element of self-development. Therefore, only the agricultural beef can stimulate the country's growth and enable it to have a strong

and virile workforce in national development.

However, some many Nigerians think the beef of agricultural development is not available in reasonable quantity and quality. Beside that the produce is very expensive. Therefore, more efforts ought to be directed towards this development. Nigerian farmers and the authorities responsible for agricultural development need to tighten their belts to achieve more and more remarkable progress in this direction.

Nigerians may still reminisce over the whole scenarios in agricultural development from 1976 when President Obasanjo initiated the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) to date, as well as the current pledges made by the President for the revival of the agricultural sector in his 2005 new year speech.

Nigeria is one of the most endowed countries in the world in terms of agricultural potentials. In other words, Nigeria is predominantly an agrarian country. According to statistics, it is estimated that about 80 per cent of the working population engage in agricultural production.

Before oil was discovered in commercial quantity about 60 per cent of the country's export was made from agriculture. In addition, agriculture also

provides not less than 50 per cent of the total national domestic products (NDP). Unfortunately, this agricultural heritage seems abandoned. The management of agriculture seems largely left in the hands of the peasant farmers.

This has led to the breakdown or failure of agricultural production, and that is the reason Nigerians are unable to feed themselves without relying on foreign foods.

The OFN was launched on May 21, 1976 to mobilize the nation towards self-sufficiency and self-reliance in food production. The "Green Revolution" was also launched to fulfill the cardinal objectives of self-sufficiency in agricultural production by the President Shehu Shagari administration in 1979. They all had the same vision for agricultural development, but where is the beef?

President Obasanjo recently remarked at the launching of the *Economist* magazine that development may not have been satisfactory to the citizenry. He admitted that in economic development, "this undoubtedly poses a serious challenge to the present administration." Definitely, there is a challenge for change to feed the nation and go the extra mile to export the surplus for more foreign revenue.

It is a fact that Nigeria is blessed with variety of food and cash crops. But the bad state of the economy is apparently responsible for low agricultural production.

The decline in agriculture has been attributed to some factors like neglect due to the oil boom, which offered better employment to the farmers in



Pineapple, one of the agricultural products of Nigeria

the seventies, and the trend has endured. For instance, oil palm and groundnut production declined due to the rapidly expanding population which consumed the exportable surplus of the produce without increase in production.

Another contributing factor is the smuggling of the nation's export produce, for example, food crops across the borders into the neighboring countries such as Niger, Cameroon, Chad and Benin republics. The minister of agriculture, Mallam Adamu Bello has said that the world food programme buys 3000 tons of sorghum in Nigeria for its emergency operation in Chad. Mallam Bello said further that the various initiatives by the federal government in the agricultural sector are meant not only to achieve national self-sufficiency in food production but also reach out to markets within Africa. For example, there is an arrangement to export maize to flour mills in Libya.

However, these could be regarded as positive or negative developments. It all depends on the sustainability of the agriculture beef to the nation. Many Nigerians prefer to see more of the agriculture beef on their tables. Some are tired of hearing about Nigeria exporting food without seeing the impact economically.

The food and agriculture organisation (FAO) of the United Nations (UN) has said that out of the country's total land area of over 98.3 million hectares, about 34 million hectares are of medium and high

agricultural productivity. And by making necessary improvements combined with modern technology it could be raised to 72 million hectares. Unfortunately, about 50 per cent of the total cultivable land is at present unutilized, according to the FAO.

To further buttress this fact, a member of the newly created UN has committee on private sector and development, Mr. Hernando de Sato, has mentioned that an estimated \$9.3 trillion in land value largely in the hands of the poor countries remain unexploited. He however, pointed out that it could have served as collateral to spur investment and growth.

Nigeria is among the under developed countries in terms of agricultural economics. Over the years, leaders of the country have not been unaware of the problem of food production in order to fight hunger and also eradicate poverty. But what have successive and the present governments done positively to achieve sustainable success in this regard? Certainly, various agricultural plans and policies have been formulated and implemented by each administration since independence in 1960 to date. Their common objectives are to produce cheaper food and to provide sufficient quantities for domestic demand as well as exporting the surplus to earn foreign exchange. If these are achievable, then we can get the beef of agriculture in Nigeria.

However, in an attempt to do a benchmarking of the successive administrations and their achievements, steady im-

provements were vividly observed.

Apart from the OFN of 1976 and the Green Revolution of 1979 the agricultural policy of the military administration of retired General Muhammadu Buhari in 1983 insisted on the country's self sufficiency in food production. There was a propaganda appeal for a mass return of the people to the rural areas to take up farming. The result was minimal in that regard. Accordingly, food production rose by two per cent in 1984. In addition, General Buhari proposed and provided greater financial incentives to attract foreign investors to participate in agricultural development in Nigeria. These efforts

The food and the United Nations country's total hectares, about 3 and high agriculture necessary improvements technology it could. Unfortunately, available land is at present FAO.

were all aimed at providing the beef of agriculture development.

In the same vein, the military administration of retired general Ibrahim Babangida, in 1983 established agricultural development projects through structural adjustment programme (SAP), including the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRI). The main objective of the di-



Dofa Ayisa's 80kg giant scale fish dragged out of the boat

Opinion

National confab and the misgivings

Continued from yesterday

By Shehu Musa

Against the background of the foregoing I offer the following comments under respective subject items listed in Mr. President's letter to Mr. Governor of our state:

Constitutional Reform

Whatever reform Mr. President or any other stakeholders may want to put forward ought to be made a public issue to afford open debate and consensus to guide the National and State Assemblies and indeed the Conference to facilitate suitable constitutional amendments. What I am saying is that the way to constitutional reform and eventual amendment must not be through the conference alone. A multi-prong approach will ensure that the amendment resulting from wide consultation is likely to endure in the statute books that the hurriedly knocked reforms flowing from inadequate consultation.

Political Party Reform

The one important factor requiring urgent reform is the almost complete lack of respect and in adherence to the democratic process in the running of political parties. Political parties should be a dependable base for democratic practice if they will be trusted to run governments they control

democratically. The other important factor is the virus of intra-party squabbles which in many instances turn so sour and violent that registered parties get fractionalized - creating instability which take long time to resolve, if at all, by the courts or the Electoral management bodies. The obvious reform necessary is to empower electoral bodies to discipline the erring faction(s) by suspending or even canceling registration certificate.

We are all witnesses to the flow of cash during the 1999 and (more so) 2003 elections the phenomenon of "cash and carry". The 1999 constitution has not made adequate provision for management, control and auditing of party funds. For level playing ground to all parties, the fund raising rules, level of actual expenditure for campaigning and other expenses must be regulated. Another area beckoning for attention is the equal opportunity for parties to access state owned media system. The universally known procedure of equal debate time for party candidates is yet to be firmly entrenched in the Nigeria electoral tradition.

Electoral Reform

This is a very wide area requiring close examination

with a view to ensuring that the field of play is level and refereeing process is unhindered. Political parties and civil society pressure groups should therefore be given ample opportunity to contribute to debate through public hearing for the needed reforms. In particular, the conference should examine the aspects of the Electoral laws pertaining to:

(i) Appointment and discipline of Commissioners and other Electoral Staff.

(ii) Financing of the Electoral Body to safeguard its independence in the performance of electoral duties.

(iii) Possibility of borrowing leaf from the Ukrainian law withholding formal declaration of winner in Presidential and Gubernatorial election until petition thereon are resolved by the courts of appropriate jurisdiction.

(iv) The overbearing role of the security personnel: police, military and even SSS should be thoroughly reviewed.

(v) The electoral law ought to provide for stiffer penalties for electoral offences.

Judicial Legal Reform

I imagine that law reform is an on-going exercise and need not be subject conference. If however, it must be discussed, the judicial arm of the government must be

involved in special way. In a true Federation that we aspire to live in, the federating units' legal framework must not be unduly tempered with to ensure respect for cultural differences. We must remember the Great Saradauna of Sokoto's famous declaration during the Queen's visit but not uniformity" Nigeria in 1956: "we seek unity

Civil Society Reform

What is lacking in the existing statutes concerning the establishment and modus operation of civil society groups in Nigerian is the absence of clear guide lines which will remove operational overlapping of activities of the groups and political parties as well as religious/ethnic societies. Registered groups should operate within the limits of their mandate. An umbrella monitoring authority may be considered desirable to keep track of their activities on course. Labour movements reform should be revisited.

Consultation and Consensus Building

The famous principle of "federal character" in important National institutions is a base for meaningful consultation which is bound to bring about reaching decision by consensus. Of course decentralization of powers concentrated in the Presidency ought to be

reviewed and Advisory Bodies such as the National Council of State, National

Economic Council, National Council for Education, Health, Information, and Establishments etc. should be brought in focus to achieve high quality consultative process and National consensus on important policy matters.

Police Prison Reform

Given the very terrible and terrifying security situation with criminals, both violent and white collar offenders, having a field day in Nigeria reform in this sector is begging for priority attention. The conference should be able to examine this subject and come up with a blue print to guide a professional ad hoc body that the Government should put in place to bring about the desired reforms.

Structure of Government! Governance

This is the area many people I discussed the reform agenda with, express fears that the joker of the conference might well be hidden here to make or mar the corporate existence of Nigeria. The new structures that may be adopted by the conference may void existing stipulation of tenure of elected public officers for example to give them: freedom to embrace new dispensation a fresh. The conference must exercise

caution in discussing the subject to avoid extreme changes that threaten the corporate existence of the country. Under this heading, room should be provided for discussion of creation of new states and local government to relax the stipulations of the 1999 constitution, thereby satisfy the lingering yearnings a "nd aspirations of ethnic Nationalities.

Conclusion

I am privileged to present this paper for the consideration and possible adoption with amendment as the mandate of Niger State delegation the conference/dialogue. In particular, I wish to revisit my proposal on suggesting discuss "natters arising" out of the inexhaustive subjects listed in the paragraph concerned, it should be noted that Niger State's survival as a viable federating unit is dependent on the equitable performance of the Federal Government on those items.

Finally, I wish to thank the Executive Governor of Niger State for assembling the cream Nigerlite to deliberate as stakeholders representing our people. Long live Niger State, long Live the Federal Republic of Nigeria. May the Almighty Allah help us with leaders that will lead us to prosperity in peace?

Alh (Dr) Shehu A. Musa,
The Makaman Nupe, writes
from Niger State.

Borno: Between opposition and the press

By Mala Atuman

Governor Ali Modu Sheriff of Borno State has lately been in the news for the wrong reasons. Since his famous "I had 76 jeeps before I became Governor" rumour, he has also received some knocks from a number of newspaper columnists who were unanimous in their condemnation of what they considered as the Governor's unnecessary chest-beating antics. Only recently his one-time political soul mate, Hajiya Fati Ibrahim Bulama known as Kakinna took the governor to the cleaners, vowing that 2007 will see to his exit from power.

As an insider in Borno politics I will attempt to give an objective account of what is really going on in my state. In the process, I hope to put an end to the negative warfare on the pages of newspapers.

What people call the opposition in Borno today are, at best, politically irrelevant people who are so few. We tend not to have any significant problem with the mainstream PDP or AD elements and these are the real opposition groups in Borno. The problem of the ruling party or its government is basically with idle and mentally-lazy political nitwits whose cup of mischief got full to the brim.

Kakinna, the Borno woman-politician alleged that her properties including

parcels of developed lands were confiscated by the state government due to political differences. Surprisingly, the press went to town with story. But the truth is that no such things ever happened. The Borno woman politician was actually rehabilitated by Governor Ali Modu Sheriff. Prior to winning the 2003 elections, Kakinna was politically castrated by the report of a commission of inquiry into her stewardship as a councillor in the Maiduguri Metropolitan Council. She was pardoned by this government as a result of which she stood for elections. She was also made a commissioner in the Mala Kachallah administration at the behest of Governor Ali Sheriff. Quite a number of other benevolent acts of Governor Sheriff were responsible for her ultimate rehabilitation and re-branding to bring her back into the fold. That she was allowed back into the Ali Sheriff fold despite this was enough an act of unprecedented magnanimity.

The land issue she spoke about in many Nigerians newspapers was a case of a deal gone awry. She and some few other power-drunk members of the previous government manipulated due process and cornered parcel of lands belonging to government. A committee

that was set up to scrutinise these allocations - following public outcry, found the allocation in various parts of the state in the breach and recommended a reverse to *status quo*.

The last government was notorious for father-Christmas tendencies in many respects not only where land is involved. It was difficult keeping mute over these illegalities. If one of the lands affected belongs to Kakinna, who was a com-missioner in the last government, then too bad. But the important thing is that many others who suffered the same fate chose to accept government's explanation knowing that the allocations were in the first place wrong.

Most of the lands were carved out of government buildings. Imagine a space where a Zoo is situated, which housed plant nurseries and a family recreation centre was sub-divided and allocated to the woman politician who, began erecting hotel structures in them! Another land belonging to the State Radio Television Station was equally given out regardless of the fact that Radio antennas are spread in that parcel of land. Many others are equally unimaginable. I have not yet been able to rationalise how any government can be doing business with land grabbers.

Back to 76 jeeps tale. It is unfortunate that the press

celebrated that statement in the manner it did. The governor likes being humorous, particularly at public functions whenever he observes dull moments. When the press briefing in which he was quoted to have made that statement was about to take place, the journalists around engaged the Governor in what was all agreed to be "off-record discussion", which I believed meant that all that was to be said then, will not be published. In situations like that, people including the journalists were at liberty to be generous in statements. I remember vividly that someone brought up the issue of jeeps and true, the Governor made allusions to owning some jeeps but not out of any desire to present himself as super-rich or to beat his chest in self adulations. It is unfortunate that out of all the newsworthy things the Governor said during the formal interview sessions were expunged and in their place, discussions made in a gentlemanly-agreed scenario were over-blown with the unmistakable intention to do mischief.

What is clear is that the old order, in which a clique of a very few but selfish group of people who have cornered all the wealth of the state arrogated to themselves the power of hire and fire has long been dismantled and replaced

with a more pro-active and responsible manner in which the people are the ultimate deciders of their fate.

The other day, someone even said the state's Accountant-General is appointed to the position because she is a sister to the governor's wife. I laughed because it was part of a grand design to give a dog a bad name in order to hang it. Agreed, she is a relation of the Governor's wife. But what people like him failed to tell the world is that the Accountant General is also one of the most qualified chartered accountants in the civil service of Borno State. She rose steadily through the ranks as Accountant in various government ministries and parastatals. When she was appointed she stood shoulders above her peers. So do we assume that the most qualified person should be discriminated against on the basis of his or her relationship with government officials? All other allegations of selective and partial political appointments are as misplaced as the one above. But as I have pointed out earlier, politicians of yesterday, whom he has defeated in an open election, are busy trying to bring down the roof over the entire state simply because their insatiable appetite has been put in check by new policies and programmes.

The other thing is the fear

that the governor may have been warming up for 2007 even when he is not yet half way into his term of 4 years. As an insider, I know that he has not even given a thought to any re-election. The multi-dimensional problems he inherited are so tasking and challenging that it is just impossible for him to begin to waste time on frivolities. The opposition can afford to waste time dreaming dreams and building castles in air because they are idle. But if he decides at the appropriate time or if the pressure from the people keeps mounting, then a re-election for him is a foregone conclusion.

Having succeeded in developing a thick skin against distractive and vindictive arm-chair allegations, he has leant the art of evading poisonous arrows. No amount of sinister diatribes emanating from people of questionable character will distract my state's leadership from rising to the top. So the sponsored articles and sponsored interviews will remain the rantings of people who don't have my state at heart. When the time comes, history will judge Kakinna, the newspaper columnists and the governor.

Atuman writes from 3,
Leventis Building, Sir
Kashim Road, Maiduguri,
Borno State.

Trust International

Can you cast your mind back to the moment you first visited Nigeria in 1957?

At that time it was my first visit outside South Africa, my own country, and it was extremely exciting for a young white South African to come to a free African non-racist society, and I loved being here. I spent six weeks in West Africa. As I said in my lecture this morning, I was impressed by the friendship and warmth, and concern about what was happening during those times, which were some of the worst years. I was befriended by people going to dances, and also meeting with faculty and students. I was still an undergraduate student. It was a wonderful experience.

Did your visit to Nigeria change your vision of life in any significant way?

It did not change my thinking. Because I had become very strongly opposed to any form of racial discrimination before then. Then I became a student. I was in my second year before I came here, and I had already achieved a position of student leadership, and I was active in the student anti-apartheid movement. But what I saw here confirmed that this was the sort of society I wished to see in my own country.

Can you compare the various tribunals upon which you served at various times?

There are comparisons which you can make on various levels. From illegal point of view, one was dealing with mainly international law. The other was dealing with a civil war situation. It was much more difficult to set up the Rwanda tribunal. Rwanda had been completely smashed physically and mentally by the genocide, and conditions in Kigali in December 1994 were not very pleasant. So everything was closed down. Stores and schools were closed. It was difficult to get people to travel to Kigali to work there. It was also difficult, because the government of Rwanda was not happy about the manner in which the tribunal was set up. It was therefore important for me to get the cooperation of the government. But they were truly very cooperative and assisted very much in setting up the office. It was also difficult because the court is in Arusha and I had to set up my office as the prosecutor in Kigali. It is about 250 miles between Kigali and Arusha as the crow flies. Eventually the Norwegian government assisted us with a chartered plane. But there were the hardships, but they were all in many ways similar, and it was in some ways different.

Money shortages were very similar to both tribunals. At that time the United Nations had very little money because the United States

US opposes global Court - Goldstone

Recently, Richard Goldstone was in the country upon the invitation of the Macarthur Foundation and the Federal Ministry of Justice. A South African, he was born in 1938 and has served on various international tribunals such as the UN International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, where he was Chief Prosecutor. In this interview with Tadaferua Ujorha, he comments briefly on his career, and casts his mind back to the legal work in Rwanda and Yugoslavia.

was not paying its dues to the UN.

How successful have these tribunals been?

Well, all the tribunals have been pretty successful. Most of those summoned engaged in self-denial at the beginning. When I began in Yugoslavia, the Croats, Serbs and the Bosnians, all denied that they had committed atrocities. They all blamed the others. Today, because of the work of the tribunal, having the witnesses providing evidence, everybody now accepts that there were war crimes committed on all sides, I think that is very important if one is building a peaceful future. About Rwanda, it was similar that very many people denied that there was genocide, particularly Europeans. I had Belgian experts, French experts coming and saying, there wasn't genocide, it wasn't planned. This was spontaneous and boiling over, tribal difference in Africa. Again, there were people who felt more comfortable believing that colonial legacies were achieved. Today, because of creating friction between the Hutus and Tutsis and the evidence that has been proved beyond any question, shows that it was a very carefully, very efficiently executed genocide.

The other perspective has been with regards to establishing of the International Humanitarian Law, the law of war. From Nuremberg to the Hague, there was no International Court. So the success proved that international tribunals can work, and I think our success played a role in establishing the International criminal court, a permanent, a formal criminal court which was set up in 1998.

In your lecture you described the 20th Century as a horrible century, what impressions have you of the 21st?

I am cautiously optimistic. I think there are more democracies in the world than ever before in Africa, Latin America and Central Europe.

Justice has almost become a mini industry around the world, and that is a good thing. Most of these societies have gone from oppression to democracy, and that is a good thing because democracies are most likely to make laws. Democracies are less likely to commit terrible war crimes. I don't say they don't do it, but they are far less likely to do it. That is the one reason I am

optimistic. The second is the exciting movement towards international criminal justice. As I said the crime rate depends on the efficiency or the inefficiency of the police and the criminal court. The

gave the example of the bombing in Kosovo which was illegal, but had to be seen as moral, because it was used to save the lives of hundreds of people.

Earlier you referred to a



Richard Goldstone

more efficient these are, the lower the crime rates are, the lower the crime rates, and the other way round. The more efficient the international criminals justice system is, the number of war crimes will come down. That is why I think it is very important to support the work of the international criminal court. As I said this morning, I am proud that Africa leads the number of members of the Assembly of such parties in the international Criminal Court.

In your lecture you referred to a gap between law and morality. Can you comment on this?

In an ideal society all the laws should have a moral base, which should be regarded by people as being moral, as being in favour of helping a society to live at peace with itself. The greater the gap between law and morality, the greater the chance is for the law falling into disrepute, and the criminal justice system eventually breaking down. It is in that context that I have the example of the apartheid laws, where there was a gap between law and morality, and the effect that had on the criminal justice system. In the international legal scene I

distinction between the functions of the police and the army in different countries, please expand on this point.

Well, it depends on the situation, and ideally the military should not be used for civil protection. The culture in the police force is very different. The police force is people-friendly, should be trusting, and I think it is so in most countries.

But then it depends. In

Of course, in France, it is very clear, because of course, half the French fall under the department of the Interior, while half the police fall under the department of Defence. Every country has its own internal arrangement.

How successful has the International Criminal Court been?

The International Criminal Court has just begun its work, and I think it is too early to judge. The court, I hope it will do well, I expect it to do well. The dream of an International Criminal Court started at Nuremberg, at the end of the Second World War, and it was assumed that there will be such a court. The Genocide convention of 1948, the anti-apartheid convention of 1973, etc assumed an International Criminal Court. Nothing came of it because of the cold war. It was only in 1993 with the horrors happening in Europe, and the cold war coming to an end, that the Security Council was able to set up the first ever International Criminal Court.

Having been in Iraq at the time, can you shed light on the oil for food Programme of the early 90s?

In 1991 the Security Council imposed stiff sanctions on Iraq because of its attack on its own people. Saddam Hussein seems to have committed the worst horrible genocide against his own people. The Security Council imposed sanction and stopped all member states from purchasing oil or anything else from Iraq. Reports started coming out of Iraq that children were starving, and there was no food to eat, and no proper medicine! There was no money; people could not sell oil. Therefore, the Clinton administration pushed to help the people of Iraq by having the oil for food programme, whereby Iraq would sell its oil to the United States, and the money from the oil would go

We haven't yet reported on that. Our investigations are at the final stages and we would in future be reporting on whether there was any conflict of interest.

What about the Darfur crises?

Kofi Annan set up a committee of experts to take a look at what happened in Darfur. They reported back about two weeks ago, and they said they did not find clear evidence of genocide, but agreed that terrible crimes against humanity were certainly committed by the Sudanese government in cooperation with the Janjaweed. They recommended to the Security Council that they should refer the whole case to the International Criminal Court, and that the ICC should investigate it and bring the case against the people responsible. That commission had a secret list of 51 people to be prosecuted. That is of course a sensible suggestion, but there has been a delay mainly because the United States does not like the International Criminal Court.

According to their spokes-man, they did not want to give legitimacy to the court by referring to it. The US has put forward two alternatives. The one is to extend the jurisdiction of the Rwanda tribunal in Arusha. The other is to set up a new ad-hoc tribunal in Arusha. Anything but the International Criminal Court. I think it is a cynical approach because the Rwanda tribunal is more than fully occupied right now. They will need 18 months in order to begin work if they set up a new tribunal. The International Criminal Court can start litigations tomorrow. It is an idea which I hope the African Union and the African Nations will just reject. We don't want that, we want the International Criminal Court that is what it is for.

What explains America's unusual attitude to this context?

Their attitude is justified by the fact that they don't trust international organiza-

Their attitude is justified by the fact that they don't trust international organizations which they think are going to be biased against the United States. They think the international criminal court will start investigating and indicting American leaders, American military generals on fabricated charges. That is basically all there is about it.

some countries, I think there is no distinction. In some countries the military and the police are the same. I don't like to generalize but I suppose it is the same in other European countries, and I guess it is the same in China, but I am really not sure.

to a bank account in New York, and humanitarian goods, food and medicines will be purchased direct from the money in a New York bank, and it will all be controlled by the UN. The sale, the money being paid in, and also the inspection of goods and oil.

tions which they think are going to be biased against the United States. They think the international criminal court will start investigating and indicting American leaders, American military generals on fabricated charges. That is basically all there is about it.

Trust International

Earthquake kills 420 in Iran

A powerful earthquake has struck southeast Iran, killing 420 people, injuring hundreds and turning remote mountain villages into rubble.

The tremor, with a magnitude of 6.4, centred on the town of Zerand, about 700km southeast of Tehran.

It revived painful memories of the devastating quake just 14 months ago in the nearby desert citadel city of Bam that killed 31,000 people.

Distraught and weeping villagers carried dead bodies wrapped in bloodied blankets and bed sheets, and dug with their bare hands through ruins in search of friends and relatives.

Hampered by heavy rainfall, relief teams raced to reach remote villages on the side of snow-capped mountains and provide shelter for thousands of people left homeless.

"Some areas are still inaccessible," Kerman province governor Ali Karimi told state television. "Our priority is to give those affected tents and heating and shelter as soon as possible." Karimi put the official toll at 289 but said it was bound to rise.

Masud Ghadipasha, head of the Kerman province forensic medical department, said 384 burial permits had already been issued and another 18 bodies had yet to be identified.

"It's at 1800 metres here. It's cold and has been raining. There's no shelter, nowhere for people to stay." Another

local official said nearly 400 had been killed.

"It's completely devastated. There's almost nothing left of the buildings," Kari Egge, Unicef representative in Iran, said from Douhan village, about 20km from Zarand.

Egge said locals estimated at least 200 died in Douhan alone. "There are still people unaccounted for, that's for sure," she said.

While the mud-brick villages crumbled in the early morning tremor, major towns and cities in the area escaped heavy damage, meaning the toll would not match the many thousands killed in Iranian quakes in the past, officials said.

Following Islamic tradition, villagers immediately began burying their dead.

"I saw four children, wrapped in blankets, being buried," said a Reuters photographer in another village.

"My whole family is dead," one man cried in images broadcast on state television.

Egge said survivors would need to move to nearby towns and villages to find shelter before nightfall.

"It's at 1800 metres here. It's cold and has been raining. There's no shelter, nowhere for people to stay."

Some 40 villages, which had

a combined population of about 30,000 people, were affected, local officials said.

Groups huddled together in the rain, striking their heads and chests in grief. Some picked through the ruins of rubble and twisted corrugated sheeting in search of belongings.

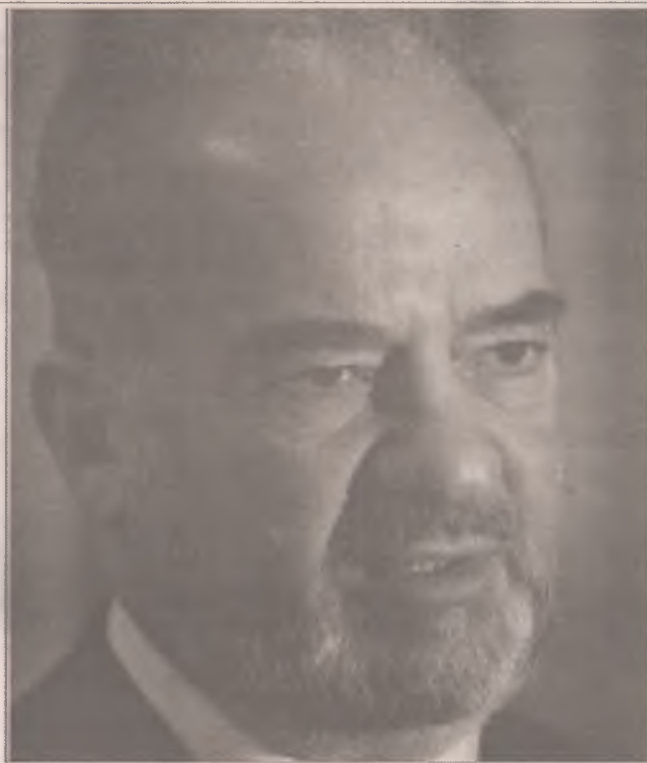
Others sat silently weeping in front of what used to be their homes.

Television showed nurses

wiping blood from the faces of children in cramped and chaotic hospital hallways.

Some of the injured were taken by train to Kerman where bandaged and crying children clutching bags of serum stood at the railway station. But Tehran said it had no need for international assistance.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs agreed that local authorities, backed by the Iranian Red Crescent had the relief effort under control.



Ibrahim al-Jafari

Shiite names al-Jafari as Iraqi PM

Iraq's main Shiite alliance has named Ibrahim al-Jafari as its candidate for

prime minister in the new government, *Aljazeera* has learned.

Al-Jafari, currently the vice president of Iraq in the interim government, is a religious Shiite and head of the Islamic Dawa Party.

He had faced competition from inside the alliance from former exile Ahmad Chalabi, once favoured by the Pentagon, but Chalabi withdrew and the alliance's 140 members unanimously approved al-Jafari, alliance sources said.

Some of Chalabi's aides, including Qaisar Witwit, have suggested he may be offered the post of deputy prime minister in charge of economic and security affairs.

When asked about the reported deal, Chalabi said simply: "We will see."

Al-Jafari still faces a challenge from incumbent interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, but Allawi's list won only 14% of the vote in last month's election.

The Shia alliance won 48% and has insisted it must have the prime minister's job, and looks certain to get it.

Al-Jafari has said dealing with anti-US fighters and re-establishing security would be his main priorities if he became prime minister.

"The security situation is the first matter we will address," he said.

The Shia parties, which failed to win an outright majority, have been in intense negotiations with each other

over who would be chosen as prime minister.

Last week, talks were suspended for the Shia holy festival of Ashura, commemorating the martyrdom of the Prophet Muhammed's grandson al-Husain.

But al-Jafari's ties with Iran and presumed support for a more Islamic state have sparked concern.

"Doctor Ibrahim al-Jafari was unanimously chosen," said Abdul-Aziz Hakim in a press conference.

The cleric, who led the United Iraqi Alliance to victory in the elections and heads one of the main Shia parties - the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), is closely affiliated to the religious clergy in Iran.

In a thinly veiled warning to al-Jafari, Allawi aide Imad Shabib warned that whoever filled the role would have "to behave as an Iraqi. He has to be loyal to Iraq and not to another country."

"Religion is a dangerous thing for Iraq. We don't want the Lebanese [civil war] story to be repeated here. There are Shias and Sunnis in the same tribes, in the same families, but if we go down this road, we will create divisions," Shabib added.

Despite the religious Shia bloc commanding a majority, there may be staunch opposition from some secular groups elected to the new parliament.

Odd World

Behold! Toilets with music, newspapers

Malaysian state will soon build public toilets equipped with piped music and newspapers for people to enjoy while using the bathroom.

Officials in the northeastern state of Kelantan on Tuesday announced that "Happy and Healthy Toilets" would be built in popular spots, with facilities "guaranteed to make users happy," Malaysia's national news agency Bernama reported.

State public administration official Takiyuddin Hassan said the toilets, to be completed within three months, would have newspapers so that "users can keep up with current issues while performing their business, while being entertained by music."

People would also need to wear special slippers provided in the toilets to maintain hygiene; Takiyuddin was quoted as saying by Bernama.

It was not clear how many such toilets would be constructed.

Nude man steals police car

Police chased a naked man through the city's slushy streets early Monday after he allegedly stripped off his bathrobe, bit an officer, and then stole a police cruiser in an attempt to escape.

The man was captured after he smashed the cruiser into several parked cars, abandoned the vehicle and tried to get away in his bare feet.

The episode unfolded at around 1:30 a.m. when police were called to a block in North Philadelphia to investigate complaints about a person screaming in the street. Officers arriving on the scene said they found a man running about in his bathrobe in the freshly fallen snow.

The officers gave chase. The man shed his robe, then allegedly bit a female officer on the arm, climbed into her patrol car and hit the gas. He drove only a few blocks before crashing, police said.

Police did not immediately release the suspect's name. He faces charges including car theft and assault.

Thieves steal built-in swimming pool

A Norwegian family's swimming pool wasn't just bolted down, it was in the ground, but that was impediment to a band of determined thieves.

When the Nicolaysen family visited their mountain cabin over the weekend, they discovered a big hole in the yard in place of the swimming pool that had been installed 20 years ago.

"This can't be, we thought," Arild Nicolaysen told state radio network NRK on Monday. "We didn't think it was possible. No one can steal a swimming pool."

At some point between early November, when the family closed up the cabin for the winter, and the weekend, their pool, 16 feet in diameter, and all its equipment was uprooted and stolen.

"It must have been a terrible job to disassemble such a big pool. There is steel lining all the way around, plus there is a plastic liner and then there was a skimming system, a filter system and a lot of bag hoses, and pipes," said Brit Nicolaysen, who owns the cabin with her husband.

Couple delays wedding to make arrest

A South African police couple who were planning to get married arrived late for their own wedding after they stopped on the way to church to arrest three armed men holding up a motorist, police said.

Inspector Gustav Myburgh and Constable Barbara Beogner were being driven to their wedding near Johannesburg on Saturday when they spotted a crime in progress, police spokesman Eugene Opperman said.

"He was in uniform, she was in her bridal gear, when they saw a hijacking taking place," Opperman said.

"They had to make a decision were they going to church or were they going to help this other person being hijacked. Of course they chose to help."

The pair and a third policeman acting as their wedding chauffeur stopped immediately and confronted the men, who jumped into a truck and sped away.

The wedding party gave chase and eventually forced the assailants off the road, arresting three men and confiscating an illegal firearm. They then continued on to the wedding.

"They ended up being 45 minutes late for their own marriage," Opperman said. "There is no doubt they have made all of the police force proud."

Policemen too weak!

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi urged police Tuesday to toughen up after a television news report showed two police officers fleeing from a man brandishing what appeared to be a baseball bat.

"When the culprit came toward them, they didn't try to restrain him but ran away. I was surprised and amazed when I saw this," Koizumi told reporters.

The incident was embarrassing, Koizumi said, adding that he had ordered the nation's public security chief to step up police training to prevent recurrences.

Television footage showed the two officers approaching a car that had crashed into a building in Tokyo's Daiba waterfront district only to flee when the driver came toward them brandishing the weapon after smashing the vehicle's windows with it, media reports said.

Syrian minister warns of Bush 'plot'

Comments made by President George Bush on the first day of his EU tour are part of a plot to reshape the Middle East, a Syrian minister has said.

Bush's keynote speech branded Syria an "oppressive neighbour" to Lebanon and insisted Damascus "end its occupation" there.

EU foreign ministers separately underlined their support for a UN resolution calling on Syria to withdraw its troops.

Syria's expatriate affairs minister Buthaina Shaban said Bush's statement was part of a plot to reshape the region.

"What has happened in Lebanon is an inseparable part of the plan to restructure the Middle East. This causes real worries to the people of this region," Shaban told *Aljazeera*.

The United States and the European Union demanded the immediate application of a UN resolution calling for the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon, Luxembourg Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker said on Tuesday.

"We spoke about the Middle East and especially Lebanon ... to vigorously condemn against the attack which claimed the life of

former prime minister (Rafiq al-Hariri), to demand respect for the (UN) Security Council resolution and its immediate application," he said.

Juncker, whose nation holds the rotating EU presidency, was speaking during a joint news conference with Bush after the EU-US summit.

A group of Syrian scholars, among them opposition figures, called for a cooling-down period for Lebanese-Syrian relations.

Michel Kilo, one of the scholars who signed the statement, told *Aljazeera*: "An atmosphere is being created in this region that takes us to an all-out stand-off, particularly in Lebanon."

"An atmosphere is being created in this region that takes us to an all-out stand-off, particularly in Lebanon"

"Such a development will lead to the isolation of our country and placing it before a challenge which it could not be able to counter."

Kilo said the Syrian government was considering the implementation of the Taif accord.

Kilo's group supports the accord, which calls for Syrian troops to be redeployed to the Bekaa Valley as a first step to an eventual withdrawal, but with no timetable.

Trust International

Africa

Mbeki criticises US over Zimbabwe

South African President Thabo Mbeki has said the US was wrong to describe Zimbabwe as an "outpost of tyranny".

The US decision to place Zimbabwe alongside Cuba, Belarus, Burma, Iran and North Korea in a list of ty-

...Four journalists flee after raids

Four journalists working for international news organizations have fled Zimbabwe after they were threatened with arrest during police raids on several news offices.

Zimbabwe's Central Intelligence Organization, the country's secret police, threatened the journalists with arrest for transmitting "material prejudicial to the state," and alleged they were spies.

The raids and subsequent threats of arrest were seen as an attempt ahead of the March 31 parliamentary elections to silence the foreign media, one of the last independent voices remaining in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe forced the country's only independent daily newspaper, the *Daily News*, to close last year despite court orders that it be allowed to reopen. All other broadcast news and daily newspapers in the country are controlled by the state.

On Feb. 15, 10 police officers searched the office shared by Angus Shaw, a freelancer who contributes to *The Associated Press*, Jaan Raath, who contributes to the *Times of London* and Bryan Latham who contributes to *Bloomberg*.

A fourth journalist, Cornelius Nduna, a Zimbabwean freelance television

rannical states was "an exaggeration", he said.

The US and EU accuse Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe of election rigging and human rights abuses.

But Mr Mbeki said quiet diplomacy rather than outspoken criticism would lead

producer who works for a number of foreign news organizations, left the country after secret police raided his office a week earlier and said they were looking for him.

The police, who did not have a warrant, searched the office of Shaw, Raath and Latham, and examined the computers over the objections of a lawyer for the journalists, Beatrice Mtetwa, who was present during the search.

Police returned two days later with a search warrant that said they had grounds to believe the journalists had filed false stories "prejudicial to the state" and that they had illegal communications equipment. The police also alleged the journalists were working illegally without a license from the government.

Under Zimbabwe's media laws, a story considered "prejudicial to the state" or working without applying for a government license is punishable by imprisonment.

The journalists denied any wrongdoing and were able to present evidence that they had applied for government licenses to work as journalists.

No warrants were issued for their arrests. However, the three journalists, all Zimbabwean, decided to leave the country after police told Mtetwa that they would return and arrest the journalists.

to real change in the country. "To put all these countries together and say Zimbabwe's one of these outposts of tyranny - how do you justify that?" he told the *Financial Times* newspaper in an interview.

"It doesn't mean that there's nothing that's gone wrong in Zimbabwe, but to describe it as an outpost of tyranny..."

The Zimbabwean government has dismissed the comments - made by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice - but warned the US would be in trouble if it tried to invade the country.

The US has imposed targeted sanctions on the Zimbabwean leadership - banning President Mugabe and his associates from travelling to the US, and freezing assets.

The European Union - which has accused Mr Mugabe of using violence against the political opposition and perpetrating human rights abuses - has also renewed its sanctions against the country.

Mr Mugabe accuses the US and the EU of opposing black rule, citing criticism of his policy of seizing the land of white farmers for redistribution to blacks.

Mr Mbeki said the way land distribution is being handled was "incorrect" but said aggressive criticism would not resolve the conflict.



ST. GEORGE'S AMBULANCE FOUNDATION INVESTITURE ON IBB

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Gen. Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, GCFR mni,

The Board of Trustees, the Governing Council and the National Executive Council of the St. George's Ambulance Foundation hereby announces that the proposed investiture of the grand Patron of the Foundation, on His Excellency, PRESIDENT IBRAHIM BADAMASI BABANGIDA, GCFR mni, has been postponed.

While we regret the inconvenience the postponement has caused our numerous invited guests, friends, and well-wishers, we wish to state that the new date for the investiture will be announced soon.

The St. George Ambulance Foundation seizes this opportunity to congratulate our Christian and Muslim brothers and sisters for the successful completion of their Holy pilgrimage.

Alhaji (Dr.) Lateef Jakande
Chairman Board of Trustees

Prof. Jubril Aminu
Patron

Gen. John Shagaya
Member Board of Trustees

General Sambo
Patron

Gen. Abdulkareem Adisa
Patron

Signed
Adams Hamzat

National Coordinator 08033173075, 08033119137

Ethiopia calls for closer Eritrean ties

Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has called for the normalisation of his country's ties with Eritrea.

In an interview with *Aljazeera* to be broadcast next Friday, Zenawi cautioned that the existing tensions between the two countries could escalate into a new cycle of violence, unless the two moved to normalise bilateral relations.

Zenawi said he could see no reason why Eritrea could not join the Sanaa Group - formed by Ethiopia, Sudan

and Yemen - but insisted that it should first give up attempts to disrupt stability in the region.

Ethiopian authorities, meanwhile, said four people had been arrested in connection with the killings last month of two opposition members before the country's May general elections.

"Four people have been arrested and taken into custody," Kemal Bedri, the chief of Ethiopia's national election commission said.

The killings, which took place in the northern Gojam region in January, were the most serious violence to be reported since the beginning of the electoral process.

An opposition umbrella group, the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) has accused the ruling Ethiopia People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) of Prime Minister Zenawi of being behind the killings.

The CUD, which groups three opposition parties, said its supporters had been killed by a pro-government mob in an orgy of destruction that included looting and the torching of huts.

Bedri said the four suspects were indeed allied to the EPRDF and that the murders had occurred during a 19 January clash between supporters of the party and the opposition.

The May elections will mark the third time that Ethiopians will vote directly to elect leaders since Zenawi's EPRDF took power in 1991.

The campaign got under way on 16 February with 77 political parties and 25 million

Rwanda, Sudan to discuss Darfur conflict

Rwandan President Paul Kagame began a three-day visit to Sudan, which will include a visit to the war-torn western region of Darfur, Sudanese presidential sources said.

Kagame held a meeting with his Sudanese counterpart Omar al-Beshir in talks that covered regional and international issues, as well as

Rwanda has an estimated 400 troops in Darfur serving as part of an African Union force of 1,700 military observers and troops, monitoring a ceasefire between government forces and rebel fighters.

Kagame was scheduled to meet with a number of senior officials in Khartoum and then travel to El-Fashir, the capital of North Darfur state, where the AU mission is



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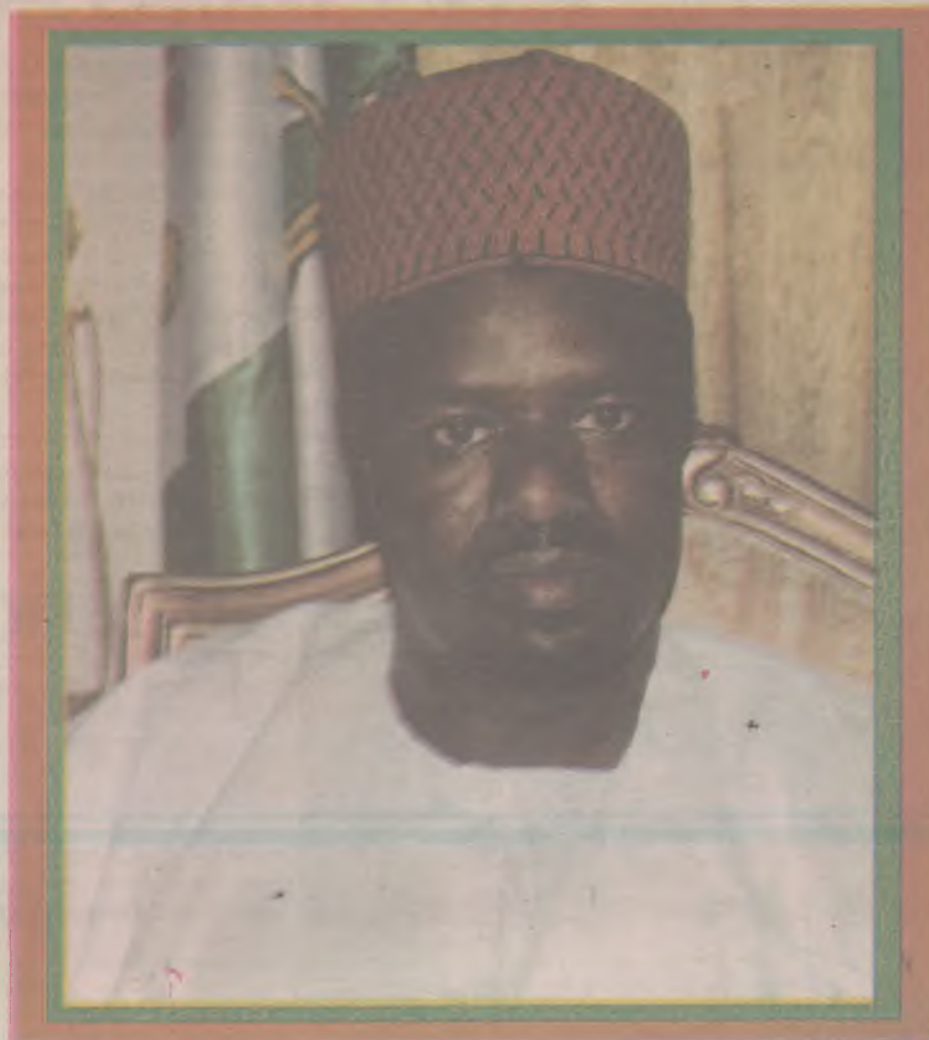
Congratulations

The Chief Executive Director of Gonaco Ent. Nig. Ltd., MR ISAAM E. AL-ABDEH and the entire members of his company wish to amalgamate with other million well meaning Nigerians in congratulating His Excellency, the Executive Governor of Jigawa State, Alh. Saminu Turaki for his deserved award of Honorary Doctorate Degree in Sciences.

This is to let Nigerians believe that the recognition of your contribution to the nation is yet to come.

As we join others in celebrating with you, we pray that Allah in his infinite mercy crown your efforts and generosity with higher blessing and awards.

Signed
Mr. Isaam E. Al-Abdeh



His Excellency,
(Dr.) Ibrahim Saminu Turaki
Executive Governor of Jigawa State



JIGAWA STATE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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HONOURS DUE! HONOURS AWARDED! CONGRATULATIONS SIR!

The Lands are just spectacular

- * Paving the way for ICT application in Nigeria
- * State of the art Broad Band Access Network (BBAN) Installation and networking for Internet Service statewide.
- * Initiating state-wide telephone and televisual services.
- * Founding the first Information Technology University in Nigeria now at advanced stage of completion
- * Established Kazaure Information Institute
- * Enabled JSOCOE to offer Pre-NCE and NCE in Computer Science
- * Enabled JSOCOE to offer Certificate and Diploma in Computer Science.

- * Enabled most institutions statewide to be on the via the state Galaxy information and technologies Ltd., Dutse
- * Digitalized Science Education in the State
- * Initiated the first Computer Secondary School for Girls in Roni.
- * Founded three junior Science Secondary Schools (boys/girls)
- * Initiated Computer training in various primary schools.
- * Established satellite computer Schools in Dutse, Hadejia, Gumel & Ringim.
- * Transforming the educated into Computer literates statewide.
- * Bringing Internet services to the doorsteps of the citizenry

These anecdotes and more are conspicuous and worthy of note for worthy discrete and corporate bodies and hence;

- * Your selection as IT man of the Year by the Federal Ministry of Science & Technology.
- * Your conferment with Doctor of Science (DSc) by the Unijos.

As the State went agog and aglow basking in your aptly reflected glory, the Provost Staff and Students of the legendary Jigawa State College of Education, Gumel wish to join other millions of Nigerians in rejoicing with you and to wholeheartedly wish you Allah's guidance as you march the New World State into a 21st Century status.



His Excellency,
(Dr.) Ibrahim Saminu Turaki
Executive Governor of Jigawa State

Congratulations SIR!



Prof. A.T. Sulaiman
Hon. Commissioner for Higher Education



Adams Y. Ibrahim
Provost

Business Trust

Today's flight schedule

| Albarka Air | |
|-------------------------|------------|
| Lagos - Abuja | 07:20 |
| | 10:30 |
| | 15:15 |
| | 13:00 |
| Abuja - Lagos | 8:45a.m. |
| | 11:00 |
| | 13:15 |
| | 17:00 |
| Maiduguri - Abuja 06:50 | |
| Abuja - Maid. | 17:00 |
| Lagos - Yola | 1:00 p.m. |
| Abuja - Yola | 14:30 |
| Yola - Abuja | 15:30 |
| Yola - Lagos | 4:00 p.m. |
| Chanchangi Airlines | |
| Lagos - Abuja | 8:15a.m. |
| | 11:00a.m. |
| | 12:10p.m. |
| | 4:45p.m. |
| Kaduna - Lagos | 8:30a.m. |
| P/H - Lagos | 9:00a.m. |
| | 4:30p.m. |
| Abuja - Kaduna | 2:30p.m. |
| Kaduna - Abuja | 1:30p.m. |
| IRS Airlines | |
| CBQ - Abuja | 8.00 a.m. |
| Abuja - Lagos | 9:45a.m. |
| Lagos - Kaduna | 9:30a.m. |
| Kano - Lagos | 7:30p.m. |
| Lagos - Kano | 11:15a.m. |
| Kaduna - Lagos | 11:00a.m. |
| Lagos - Abu/MM | 2:30p.m. |
| Abuja - MM | 1:45p.m. |
| MM - Abuja | 3:45p.m. |
| Abuja - Cal | 5:15p.m. |
| Kano - Abuja | 1:15p.m. |
| Abuja - Kano | 2:30p.m. |
| Kano - Lagos | 3:45p.m. |
| Lagos - Kano | 6:00p.m. |
| EAS Airlines | |
| Lagos - Abuja | 8:15p.m. |
| | 11:45a.m. |
| | 5:45p.m. |
| Abuja - Lagos | 10:15a.m. |
| | 7:15p.m. |
| Lagos - Jos | 11:45a.m. |
| Jos - Lagos | 2:30p.m. |
| Dasab Airlines | |
| Auja - Lagos | 8:30 a.m. |
| Lagos - PHC | 10:30 a.m. |
| PHC - Lagos | 12:30 a.m. |
| Lagos - Kano | 2:30 p.m. |
| Kano - Lagos | 4:30 p.m. |
| Lagos - Abuja | 6:30p.m. |
| ADC Airline | |
| Lagos - Abuja | 7:15 a.m. |
| | 12:45 p.m. |
| Abuja - Lagos | 8:55 a.m. |
| Lagos - Calabar | 11:15 a.m. |
| Calabar - Lagos | 7:20 a.m. |
| P/H - Lagos | 9:45 a.m. |

Most airlines operate the same flight schedule on week days.

Finance

CBN mops N64.7bn excess liquidity

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) last week withdrew a total sum of N64.7 billion excess liquidity from the financial system.

According to the figures made available by the CBN, the lion share of the withdrawals were by way of the Primary Market auction (PMA) which saw the removal of N56.2 billion while N8.5 billion was withdrawn through the daily



Charles Soludo, CBN gov

From Bright Ewulu, Deputy Business Editor, Lagos

Open Market Operation (OMO).

Reason for the above was due to the fact that there was no transactions in the daily OMO auction for Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, meaning that trading only held on Monday and Friday last week.

Last Monday transaction activities saw investors taking up N500 million worth of treasury bonds and N8

billion worth of bonds on Friday. Although CBN receives bids to the tune of N14.5 billion last Thursday, no transactions were negotiated even through the range of bids rates stood between 12 to 12.5 percent.

On Monday the range of bids rates stood of 11 percents, issue rates 11 percent and true yield 11.0697 percent. Friday saw the rates moving respectively between 11.2480 to 12.5 percent.

The PMA with 182 days

tenor recorded a total sale of N14.9 billion while the 91 days tenured segment recorded N41.2 billion and saw the repayment of investors to the tune of N28.8 Billion.

The 182 days tenured segment had a range of bid rates between 12.5 to 14.25 percent, issue rates 12.5 to 13.04 percent and true yields of 13.9465 percent while the 91 days department had rates of 11 to 12.75 percent, 11 to 12.5 percent and 12.9026 percent respectively.

Comparatively, it would seem that the moderation of the minimum rediscount rate to 13 percent by CBN is not showing investment in the securities market yet.

Experts had contended that the reduced MRR will see the flow of funds to the capital market and the real sector generally, but this seems not to be an indication that investors are more security conscious presently, which is expected as the budget is not yet approved.

Inflation rate now 10%, says FOS

The federal office of statistics (FOS) has confirm that the inflation rate is currently at 10 percent FOS in their latest release made available to Business Trust in Lagos said that the year on year average consumer price level as at December 2004 upped by 10 percent.

It stressed that the above was the same as was its observation in November 2004, adding that the "corresponding urban and rural indices rose by 11.8 and 9.3 percent" over the period of review.

The release indicated that the average composite Consumer Price Index (CPI)

for the twelve-month period ending December 2004 over the average of the CPI for the twelve month period ending December 2003" was 15 percent.

This, according to it, was lower than that recorded by making similar comparison in November 2004.

Also, it revealed that the composite food index rose by only one percent in the review period, saying that this reality was caused by increases in the prices of staples, diary and poultry products, vegetables and non-alcoholic beverages.

It noted that the level of the food index was higher than that of the corresponding period a year ago by 12.1 percent, revealing that the average yearly rate of rise of the index in question was 14.5 percent for twelve-month period terminating December 2004.

FOS, further explained that its research of retail price increases in the urban and rural areas in the period, showed an increase of 1.7 percent as the average level of prices stood at 129.7 in December as against 127.6 recorded in November.

According to it "the increase in the index was caused by rise in the prices of some food items, alcoholic beverages, clothing and services.

"The urban all items monthly index fell by 1.7 percent over the period while the rural all items index rose by 3.2 over same period," it stated.

JAIZ moves to raise capital base

From Yusha'u A. Ibrahim, Correspondent (Kano)

JAIZ International Bank Plc, the first proposed Islamic Financial Institution in Nigeria, has opened its investors forum in a bid to meet up with N25 billion banks capital requirement introduced by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

Speaking at the first investors forum in Kano, the chairman, Board of Directors of the proposed Islamic Bank, Dr. Umaru A. Mutallab stated that the institution will meet the new capital requirement, since it earlier met the N2 billion capitalisation.

He charged investors, particularly Muslims to buy JAIZ shares to enable it meet the N25 billion recapitalisation fixed by the CBN.

Also speaking at the forum, Alhaji Aminu Dantata stated that they will ensure that JAIZ meets the target. He also implored wealthy Nigerians to patronise the Bank.

Meanwhile, the bank's management statement that already, a memorandum of understanding has been signed between the bank and the Islamic Bank of Bangladesh (IBBL) to provide technical and management services to JAIZ, with emphasis on skills development.

The financial institution which submitted its application to CBN in 1999 for approval to operate a recognised bank, also issued 2.5 billion ordinary shares as Initial Public Offer (IPO), which was over subscribed by about 120 percent.

The shareholders of the bank includes Muslims and Non-Muslims.

N25bn recapitalisation: Prudentbank goes to capital market

In compliance with the ongoing consolidation programme in the banking sector, Prudentbank Plc says it has concluded plans to raise funds from the capital market.

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) gave December 31 this year as deadline for all banks in the country to raise their capital base and shareholders' funds to N25 billion.

The assistant general Manager of Prudentbank, Mr. Timothy Oguntayo, said in Lagos on Tuesday that the board of management of the bank had given its approval for it to raise funds from the capital market.

Oguntayo said that the bank was only awaiting the approval from the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) to go to the market in March.

He disclosed that the shareholders funds and the capital base of the bank was about N4 billion and that over N3.5 billion was expected from some of the bank's shareholders and institutional investors, who are waiting for the bank to go to the market.

He said that the bank, which has performed creditably well, "is noted for its pioneering projects in real estate development, recorded largest volume in value cards and a leader in the ATM".

Prudentbank, which signed a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) in Lagos last year for a merger

with four other banks- Magnum Trust Bank, NBM Bank, Trust Bank and EIB International Bank to form Sterling Bank, has as its strong points, brand power and real estate business.

The other unique assets of Prudentbank are commercial consumer and retail banking with a network of 37 branches.

Speaking on the merger, Oguntayo said that the group was looking at between N35 billion and N40 billion as capital base and shareholders' funds and that the other member banks were also gearing up to raise funds from the capital market.

He said that the outlook of the post consolidation era for

the banking sector was bright and assured that the real sector would be supported by banks.

Apart from the unique assets of Prudentbank, its partners in the Sterling Group are equally strong in certain areas.

For instance, NGM has good corporate banking competence, good public sector collections and strong financial backing of the Fortis Group.

EIB is joining the alliance with its strong government support, strategic repositioning, experienced board of directors and quality management staff and strong shareholders funds.

Magnum Trust Bank and Trust Bank have strong capital base and good retail banking as strong assets.

First Atlantic, Chattered Bank open-offers

The public offers of First Atlantic Bank Plc and Chattered Bank plc opened Monday across the nation as the banks move to raise funds from the capital market on the way to meeting Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) mandated capital base.

According to Chattered Bank plc officials during its completion board meeting, 2.4 billion ordinary share offer of 50 kobo each at 3,40 kobo is a bid to raise N8.4 billion in order to beef up its capital base.

The offer will be over seen by the issuing houses IBTC and FBM (Merchants) Bankers with a multitude of securities firms acting is

stock brokers to the offer.

First Atlantic Bank which is the leading bank in the proposed Astra Bank plc made up of Assurance Bank Limited, Guardian Express Bank and Manny Bank plc is making a bid to raise the over N5 billion mandated on each bank in the group.

The offer which goes for N2.50 kobo per share according to the bank's CEO, Mr. Okey Nwosu, is bound to be a success, saying that the offer price should be a great encouragement to investors.

He stated that the offer proceeds will enable the bank up grade its IT capacities, expanding its franchise and provide needed administration costs.

First Atlantic is noted in the industry for its capacity in the areas electronic and telephone banking.

The bank's offer is spear headed by IBTC and Future View securities Ltd as dual issuing houses.

It hopes to raise N6.9 billion from the offer to further up its shareholders fund from its current position of N4.3 billion.

Nevertheless, the First Atlantic offer for subscription of 3 billion ordinary shares of 50 kobo each at N2.50 per share which opened on Monday, February 21, will close with the Chattered Bank plc offer on Monday March 21, 2005.

Business Trust

International

Ex WorldCom boss

bullied staff - Witness

Former WorldCom Incorporated's CEO, Bernard Ebbers, derided his finance chief as a "short man" and criticized him for being too conservative when he spoke with stock analysts about the company's outlook, according to testimony at his fraud trial on Tuesday.

Scott Hamilton, a former investor relations manager at WorldCom who is one of the final witnesses for the prosecution, also described Ebbers to jurors as an "intimidating" boss with a temper.

In one incident, Hamilton testified, he received an e-mail from a "crazy" person with an illegitimate offer to buy the company. Rather than bringing the e-mail to Ebbers' attention, Hamilton forwarded it to the company's lawyers.

When Ebbers found out about it, "he was very upset" that he had not been immediately alerted to the e-mail, Hamilton testified.

"He cursed and told me not to ever f'ing do that again," Hamilton told jurors. "He told me if there was ever an f'ing offer to buy the company, I'd better take it directly to him."

Hamilton also said Ebbers charged with fraud in connection with WorldCom's \$11 billion accounting

scandal-often ridiculed Chief Financial Officer Scott Sullivan.

"He talked regularly about Sullivan's stature, calling him 'short man' behind his back," Hamilton said. At other times Ebbers would criticize the finance chief because "he felt Scott Sullivan was too conservative in guiding analysts" about the company's earnings.

Federal prosecutors have argued to the jury that Ebbers was obsessed with the company's earnings guidance, and refused to lower it even when WorldCom's finances began to deteriorate.

Instead, they charge, he orchestrated a massive accounting fraud that eventually involved hiding billions of dollars in expenses so the company's earnings could meet Wall Street's expectations.

Ebbers insisted on meeting those estimates, prosecutors charge, because he was concerned that any failure would result in a steep drop in WorldCom stock-which made up the bulk of his personal wealth and with which he secured personal loans of more than \$400 million.

Investigators uncovered the accounting fraud in

2002 and the company was forced to file for bankruptcy protection. Six senior executives were eventually indicted for fraud.

Ebbers is the only one of those executives to plead not guilty. He faces up to 85 years in prison if convicted on all counts.

Nokia says it plans no price cuts

The world's top mobile phone maker, Finland's Nokia, plans no new price cuts this year after clawing back some global market share and expects strong sales in booming China to help drive future growth.

Nokia Chief Executive Officer Jorma Ollila told reporters that tactical price cuts on some products in the first half of 2004 had a positive impact on sales and market share in the latter part of last year.

"Price cuts are not part of our (overall) strategy this year," Ollila said during a visit to mark two decades of Nokia doing business in China.

Last year's price cuts had "only a minor impact on our margins year-on-year," he said, without elaborating.

But underscoring heated competition in the global handset market and continued pressure to keep prices low, Ollila said price reductions in the industry were likely to

Oil prices fell yesterday but held above \$51 a barrel, retaining some of the previous day's surge as traders fretted about the impact of a weaker US dollar on energy markets.

Analysts said continuing cold weather in the Western Hemisphere as well as supply concerns also set a high floor for crude.

Prices pulled back yesterday as the president of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) sought to quell concerns that the group would cut back on production. Sheik Ahmad

Oil prices hold above \$51

Fahad al Ahmad al Sabah, who is also Kuwait's oil minister, said OPEC won't allow prices to "surge to record levels."

Light sweet crude for April delivery fell 22 cents to \$51.20 a barrel by midday in Europe in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Heating oil for March delivery was down more than a cent at \$1.4285 a gallon.

Brent crude was down 12 cents at \$48.50 on the International Petroleum Exchange.

In response to Tuesday's spike of nearly \$3 a barrel - to a more than three-month high - Al Sabah said OPEC would react to help cap any surge in prices, but gave no specific details. His comments tempered lingering concerns about a possible supply cut next month when OPEC members gather in Iran on March 16.

OPEC collectively produces more than a third of the world's crude, and its decisions on raising or lowering output quotas can have a significant impact on prices.

But market participants are looking past the OPEC meeting and are starting to worry about longer-term supply, said Michael Guido, director of commodity strategy in New York for French bank Societe Generale.

"Spare production capacity has always been an issue, but if these global oil demand forecasts are on the money, can supply keep up?" he asked. "OPEC seems to be

at (maximum) capacity right now."

Speculative trading by hedge funds also helped drive crude prices higher Tuesday.

"We saw prices go up a dollar in the morning based on colder weather and when we saw prices rally in the afternoon, some people blamed it on the dollar weakness," said analyst Deborah White of SG Securities in Paris. "There is also the sentiment that demand growth is not slowing."

The US currency swooned against leading counterparts Tuesday after the South Korean central bank said it was diversifying its foreign currency holdings. Yesterday, South Korea denied that it would sell the dollar to do so.

A weaker US dollar generally triggers a rise in crude prices because oil is priced in that currency, making it relatively cheaper when bought in yen, won or other currencies.

"That currency shift could raise demand because it's actually cheaper" for countries like Japan to buy crude, said Victor Shum, an analyst in Singapore for energy market consultants Purvin & Gertz.

Oil is now 50 percent more expensive than a year ago due to robust global demand, limited spare production capacity and concerns about disruptions to output, especially in insurgency-ridden Iraq and strike-hit Nigeria.

Dollar bounces back against Euro, Yen

The dollar bounced back against the euro and the yen yesterday after South Korea said long-term plans to diversify its foreign exchange reserves did not mean it would sell the US currency.

The dollar's recovery gained momentum after a Japanese Finance Ministry official told Reuters that Japan had no plans to diversify its foreign exchange reserves-the largest in the world at almost \$850 billion-by buying euros.

On Tuesday the dollar suffered its biggest one-day fall against major currencies since December as the market seized on reports South Korea's central bank planned to spread its \$200 billion of reserves, the world's fourth largest, among a wider array of currencies.

The currency volatility prompted the Bank of Korea to clarify yesterday that its reserve diversification plans were not new and did not mean the central bank would soon sell dollars for other currencies.

"The market has been trading on speculation, as opposed to hard facts," said Shahab Jalinoos, senior currency strategist at ABN Amro.

"Yesterday's news hit the dollar but today's comments from South Korea are more

opaque and the market has become more sanguine."

The euro dropped a third of a percent from the US close to \$1.3208 by 3:23 a.m. yesterday, off earlier six-week highs of \$1.3273.

The dollar rose two thirds of a percent against the yen to 104.71 yen, recovering from a 1.5 percent slide on Tuesday.

The euro was also up over a third of a percent against the Japanese currency at 138.60 yen after hitting a seven-week high above 138.80 yen.

The closely watched Ifo pan-German business climate index for February is due at 4 a.m. yesterday, forecast to show a rise to 96.75 from 96.40 in January.

A three-year decline in the U.S. currency has been fueled by worries the world's central banks, especially in Asia, are shifting their reserves away from the dollar and making it more difficult for the United States to fund its current account gap.

"Given the magnitude of the dollar's fall yesterday there's a potential for a rebound as South Korea makes it clear that it has no intention to dump dollars," said Hideaki Furumaya, forex manager at Trust and Custody Services Bank in Tokyo.

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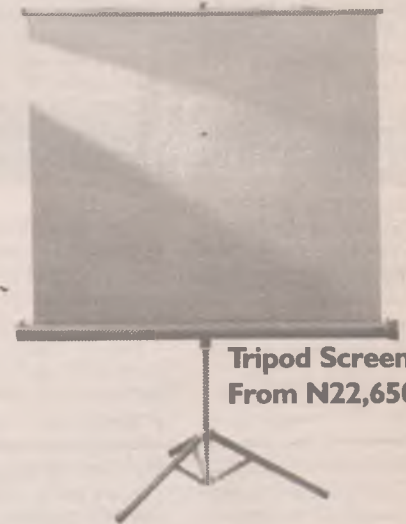
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Business Trust

Why Soludo's banking reform is faulty – Falalu Bello

Foremost banker and former managing director of Habib Nigeria Bank Limited, Alhaji Falalu Bello is the current chairman of Intercity Bank Plc. Alhaji Falalu who was also managing director of the Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB) before he voluntarily resigned, spoke to newsmen shortly after the 15th annual general meeting (AGM) of Intercity Bank held penultimate Thursday in Katsina.

He faulted the Soludo-induced recapitalisation of banks and pitched tent with the Senate on categorisation of banks, saying that is the most realistic option for Nigeria. The ex-bank chief also explained why banks shy away from lending to the real sector of the economy, why Intercity is going to the capital market to raise N17 billion, and many more. Our Group Business Editor, Ahmed I. Shekarau who was at the briefing, reproduces part of it for publication.

Excerpts:-

The Senate recently amended the Central Bank of Nigeria Act and approved the categorisation of banks into big, medium and small. How do you look at such categorisation?

Thank you very much. From legislative history in Nigeria, this categorisation thing is nothing new. If you go by the subsisting banking law in Nigeria, there are basically four categories of banks. They are listed in the context of their capitalisation. They listed them as merchant and commercial, profit and loss, and community. And each of those categories of banks is ascribed some capital.

And my own personal view is that I welcome that categorisation. Basically because I personally don't believe that banks in Nigeria should have the same size. There should be room for very big, medium and small. Infact, you can go and look elsewhere. We (Nigeria) were a British colony. So a lot of the things we do in Nigeria today are traceable to the British happening, in terms of economy and politics. Of course, over time, things have changed here and there. In Britain for example today, there are over 560 banks. And these banks do not have the same capital base. Out of these 560, there are only five that are called clearing banks. All the rest are not in clearing, which means all the rest are not of the same size. So I don't see any reason why we should legislate the same size for all banks in Nigeria. That is my view on this as an individual.

As an institution, we (Intercity) have banks that we use for our correspondences in the United Kingdom. One of them is a high street bank – one of the big banks. And the second one we use is a bank that has only a single branch in London. It is healthy. And it has a capital base of #13 million. And it is operating. Now if an economy the size of Britain's economy can allow a bank of that size to operate because they need its services, I don't see any reason why we should, in the process of reform, kill the ones we have. We should allow them to operate at that level and let the big ones operate at a big level. And let the medium ones operate at a medium level.

In the light of the senate's categorisation of banks, what will Intercity Bank do?

Our position is that we want to be in the league of the mega banks. We've already taken decisions at both our board meetings and general level. There is every reason for us to be there. I believe based on our

discussions with another bank, we have decided to merge even before Soludo. Then Soludo came with his N25 billion which made us to go back to the drawing board because even if we had merged with the other institution, we wouldn't have gotten the N25 billion which is now the prescribed minimum capital. So

governments in Katsina State. I don't believe that more than 5 of them have banking services. So there are about 30 virgin potential branches that are not there.

So if we are able to do that, sky will be the limit. What is important, by the time we finish this capitalisation, we do the



Falalu Bello

we began to talk to others. It is on record that our group was perhaps the first group that was formed within the first six weeks of this policy. So we are still discussing with some banks. I believe in the not too distant future we may come out to make a public pronouncement of a merger with at least a particular bank. I wouldn't give the name now because we are not there. Even if we merge with that bank and if our public issue succeeds, well be there with N25 billion.

But believe me, we are not looking only at N25 billion. Since we've decided to be a mega bank, what we are looking at is more than N25 billion. We believe that if our two issues succeed, we are looking at a figure of N30 billion. And if you are able to get N30 billion then we have passed the stage of survival. We look at this thing in stages, the state we are in now is the stage of survival. Because until you get N25 billion you are not surviving. Then we will talk about consolidation, expansion, specialisation and then excelling. I believe once we are able to get to that level of N25 billion we can compete, looking at it from what I said, whether we like it or not, whether we say it or not, the fact remains that 80 per cent of our operations is in northern Nigeria. I can't run away from that fact today maybe we can change it later, that's a different matter. And I believe this particular society is grossly under banked. I'm not talking of banking in the context of number of banks. I'm talking about banking in the context of availability of counter service. I am from a village. I don't know whether you are from one, but there is no bank in my village. And I believe if a bank opens a branch in my village it will be profitable.

We are just from the emirs palace to pay a courtesy call and tell him why we are here and one of the needs which he made to us is that he hopes and prays that in his own lifetime we shall have branches in at least four local governments in his emirate. I can tell you that there are 34 local

merger, we get to the level of N30 billion, we that are here, we fashion out and direct the bank to where it should be. We leave the rest to history. So we have not ruled out the option of merger, we are still in discussion. I cannot tell you the bank because I don't have the mandate to announce but we shall soon call you to announce.

This issue of capitalisation is a very troublesome word for the banks. We can see everybody running around and you are talking of Katsina State, you are talking of a bank that has its roots in the north. There are lots of other banks that have their roots in the north and all of them perhaps are equally in the process of recapitalisation. Now, one would have expected that one or two of these banks would have come together put their efforts together be in a position to look beyond the north. Let us get one or two bigger banks from the south and come up. Why are you not looking in that direction?

You cannot say you cannot sensitise and mobilise people to invest in shares. Assuming we come to the market at a price of x amount. I can assure you that x amount is not going to be more than the price of a newspaper that you are selling. What is important is one, to demonstrate the importance of banking in a modern society. As far as I'm concerned, I cannot see any society that can grow without financial intermediation. In other words, financial intermediation is a necessity for the economic growth of any society today. "Our responsibility, we that are privileged to have worked in the banking industry, is to sensitise our people, of the importance of banking of the importance of having these institutions in their midst. I'm not saying others wouldn't open branches here, look we are all human beings. For example, if you go into any branch of a bank like National bank, by the nature of the people you see, you know it is owned by people from the South West. It is just a natural thing. It has its

roots, target catchments is there. Similarly if you go into any branch of Intercity, by the nature of the workers you see, are from this part of the country. That is equally a reality we cannot change. So even if you don't want intermediation, you are rich enough, do you business alone, which is not true, at least you want an avenue for your children to be employed. So that alone, is another reason why people should invest in the banking industry. So what is critical is for us who are privileged to have worked in the banking industry to sensitise our people on the need for them to come and invest in these issues when they come into the market. And that's exactly what we are doing, or why are we here with you? It's not because you want to see my face. It's because I want to talk.

We want to exchange ideas, we want to tell you what is our thinking. So that you will go and tell others because you have the mouth bigger than mine, the capacity larger than mine to talk to the public. And I think we are in the process. I don't know whether you were at our dinner yesterday, if you were, at least the highest representation that can come from Katsina State, is the governor. He was there, he spoke along these lines because that is the reality. If at the end of this exercise, we don't have one two three banks from this part of the country, I believe it will be a big blow to the economic survival and growth of Northern Nigeria. That is the fact that I can say anywhere without any apology. So what is critical here is for us to realise that there is no going back on this policy. What the senate has done is just to modify the policy, they haven't abolished it. Lets take the courage and do it and that's exactly what we are doing. Interm of how do we get there?

– by sensitisation, by legwork, by going to talk to people, telling them, showing them and I believe that is what we are here to do. If we all do this I believe we will succeed. As to your question on why not merger then capitalisation? I believe these are all options. I believe you and me, we have tried both like I said earlier, even before Soludo, Intercity Bank was talking to merge with another bank because we saw the opportunity in size. So we wanted to be bigger. Yes we can get bigger by continuously instead of given dividend, keeping it to recapitalise the bank. That is possible. I mean first bank that is at N40 billion, has attained N40 billion in a period of 105 years.

Given what you have said so far regarding the N25 billion recapitalisation policy which has made many bank executives running helter-skelter, what are your fears for the Nigerian banking industry?

Maybe I should begin by saying what did the industry do? And I think that is relevant. Despite the passion that the industry has been having for a long period of time, I think it has been a very vibrant growing industry in the last almost 20 years. Don't forget, for example, the north here until 1982 we only had one bank – Bank of the North in the entire northern Nigeria, owned by the northern Nigerian government. From 1982 to about 1987, we had only an addition of three banks – Societe Generale Bank from Kwara, BCCI headquarter in Kano and Habib Bank, headquarter in Kaduna.

Now let us look at what happened since the liberalisation of the sector. From four banks, we have 17 banks today before

Soludo, that we can call northern based because at least 50 percent ownership of those 17 banks is northern. So this is an industry that has grown and as it grows, it brought about changes typical example is the abolishment of rural banking scheme which as far as I'm concerned was a mistake. Banks were forced to go to rural areas. I was MD of Habib bank between 1994 to 1998 and I know we had 10 of such rural branches. And nine of the ten were making profits.

I am a villager. And I do know that in those rural communities these banks made the difference. I can tell you that in between Hunkuyi and Makarfi there is a village called Kayole where Habib Bank then was financing farmers. We stated financing them a cooperative farmers group, dry season farmers. We started them with mere N2,000, and within the first two years that farmers' group was able to acquire its own tractor at about N24,000 then. Now that is development. So overall I can say, that the banking industry despite all the bashings has done well in terms of wealth creation in Nigeria. There are problems and mistakes, but it has remained a very vibrant developing sector in the economy, making huge contributions towards development of the gross domestic product (GDP).

Now, I'll agree that the banking industry has not done well towards developing the real sector of the economy. But then I'll go to defend it. Not because I'm an operator. But because it is the reality. It is so because I believe the government has failed to make the real sector viable. Take for example agriculture. If you are a banker..., because what is banking? Banking is taking money from people that have the surplus and giving it out to those who borrow. It's a link between these two stakeholders. We have the responsibility of making sure that whatever area we invest in, the money comes back.

Now agriculture in Nigeria is not economically viable. That, equally, is a statement of fact. Why? It is so because it is the fault of the government. That I'll make bold to say it anytime, anywhere. Two key things are wrong. Yield and pricing in our Nigerian context. There's no economy in the world today, including the most capitalist of the capitalist economies where you don't have support for agriculture. The American government today subsidises agriculture to the extent of \$1 billion a day; not a week or a month. Ask all the governments in Nigeria how much do they support agriculture with. That is what has made agriculture viable in America. And don't forget that the entire population of those in agriculture in America are not more than 5 percent of ours. Here you have 76 percent of your population involved in agriculture – primary and secondary. What do we do to agriculture to make it viable?

Now, if you make agriculture viable I bet you the bankers will run to finance agriculture. But it is not viable. Ditto manufacturing. Except if you are in the beer industry, or pharmaceuticals to some extent, most of these industries are not viable. I'm in some that have collapsed. Because there are policies that are wrong. But it's very easy for somebody in government or the regulatory authorities to say you are not financing the real sector. How do you do it when the real sector is not economically viable? Which is the fact.

Business Trust

International

Ore costs hit global steel firms

Steel prices rose by 8 percent globally in January, and by 24 percent in China. Shares in steel firms have dropped worldwide amid concerns that higher iron ore costs will hit profit growth.

Shares in Germany's ThyssenKrupp, the UK's Corus and France's Arcelor fell while Japan's Nippon Steel slid after it agreed to pay 72% more for iron ore.

China's Baoshan Iron and Steel Corporation said it was delaying a share sale because of weak market conditions, adding it would raise steel prices to offset ore costs.

The threat of higher raw material costs also hit industries such as carmakers.

France's Peugeot warned that its profits may decline this year as a result of the higher steel, plastic and commodity prices.

Steelmakers have been enjoying record profits as demand for steel has risen, driven by the booming economies of countries such as China and India.

It sparked worries that steel makers might not be able to increase product prices.

The boom times are far from over, but analysts say that earnings growth may slow.

The share price fall was initially triggered by news

that two of the world's biggest iron ore suppliers had negotiated contracts at much-higher prices.

Miners Rio Tinto and Cia. Vale Do Rio Dolce (CVRD) this week managed to boost by 72 percent the price of their iron ore, a key component of steel.

Analysts had expected Japan's Nippon to agree to a price rise of between 40 percent and 50 percent.

Steel analyst Peter Fish, director of Sheffield-based consulting group MEPS, said the extent of CVRD's price rise was "uncharted territory", adding that the steel industry "hasn't seen an increase of this magnitude probably in 50 years".

Analysts now expect other iron ore producers, such as Australia's BHP Billiton, to seek annual price rises of up to 70 percent.

"It sparked worries that steel makers might not be able to increase product prices further [to cover rising ore costs]" explained Kazuhiro Takahashi of Daiwa Securities SMBC.

In Europe, Arcelor shed 2.1 percent to 17.58 euros in Paris, with ThyssenKrupp dropping 1.7 percent to 16.87 euros. In London, Corus fell 2.2 percent to 55.57 pence.

Japan's biggest steel company Nippon Steel lost

2.5 percent to 270 yen, with closest rival JFE Holdings down 3.4 percent.

China's Baoshan, the country's largest steel producer, said that the uncertainty surrounding the industry has prompted it to pull its planned share sale.

The firm had been expected to offer 22.5bn yuan (\$2.7bn) worth of shares to investors. No date has been given for when the 5 billion shares will come to the market.

Baoshan stock climbed on news of the delay and its decision to increase the price of its steel by 10 percent.

European airline, Air France-KLM, founded in May by Air France's merger with its Dutch rival KLM, has been named airline of 2005 by Air Transport World air industry magazine, for its "remarkable" transformation and "philosophy of aggressive global growth."

Air France-KLM president Jean-Cyril Spinetta and vice president Leo Van Wijk accepted the award late Tuesday during a ceremony that also gave awards to regional low-cost air carriers Air Asia and Virgin Atlantic.

"The merger with KLM and the subsequent privatization of AF are worthy of special recognition," ATW Editorial Director J.A. Donoghue said at the cere-

Air France-KLM named airline of the year

mony. "Combining two of Europe's legendary flag carriers into the largest airline in the world should begin the much-needed rationalization of capacity while providing substantial benefits from the merger," he added.

In a brief speech, Spinetta recalled what prompted the merger of the two companies: "we were at risk because we were middle weight champions in a heavy weight business."

He also praised the United States as "a country that symbolizes optimism and dynamism," and stressed that as the largest economy in the world, "the US is a key market for us."

Other air carriers to carry off awards from ATW included Air New Zealand for its remarkable resurgence after skirting with bankruptcy in 2001, and Luxembourg's air-freight carrier Cargolux and Mesa Air, which serves the North American region.

Ten farmers bag BAT awards

As part of its initiatives to encourage farmers to improve crop quality and quantity, BAT Nigeria, through its subsidiary company, BAT Iseyin Agronomy (BATIA) has awarded prizes to 10 registered farmers for their excellent performance in the 2004 crop year. A statement signed by Aliyu Ma'aji, press relations manager of BAT said, each of the five first prize winners went home with a brand new motorcycle, while the five second prize winners were each given a portable electricity generator set.

The event, tagged Farmers' Productivity Day, was the first of its kind and was held at the BATIA office in Iseyin Township, Iseyin Local Government Area of Oyo State. It was attended by important dignitaries including the traditional monarch of Ago Are town, the Are, of Ago Are, Oba Jubrila Oyesiji.

At the occasion, Alhaji Fatai Okunlade, emerged the overall best grower in the 2004 crop year. He achieved a total yield of 3,306 kilograms of tobacco per hectare and sold the highest quantity of tobacco, 8,597 kilograms. He also

planted 300 trees and has been a positive influence on his colleagues in the area of food production. For his feat, Alhaji Okunlade was presented with 50,000 Naira cash, in addition to his motorcycle.

Meanwhile, BAT said in another statement that it is has launched the second phase of its Proudly Nigerian Corporate Advertising Campaign.

The campaign was flagged off by Hon. Abike Dabiri, chairman, Federal House of Representatives Committee on Media and Publicity at a

ceremony held at the Ocean View Restaurant in Victoria Island, Lagos.

In her speech, Dabiri, commended BAT Nigeria for the company's commitment to the country's development. "There are so many things in this country which we take for granted. It is necessary for us to start exploiting our God given resources, talents and special attributes with which we have been so bountifully blessed. We need to appreciate and project these values. I am pleased that BAT Nigeria has harnessed such attributes and is presenting them in an impressive way for the greater good of this nation."

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Business Trust

1ST-TIER SECURITIES

THE NIGERIAN STOCK EXCHANGE

REPORT AS AT WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2005

| COMPANY NAME | NO OF DEALS | QUOTATION(N) | QUANTITY TRADED | VALUE OF SHARES |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| CUTIX PLC | 1 | 1.30 | 20,000 | 26,000.00 |
| Sector Totals | 1 | | 20,000 | 26,000.00 |
| AGRICULTURE/AGRO-ALLIED | | | | |
| THE OKOMU OIL PALM COMPANY PLC | 11 | 17.00 | 194,477 | 3,281,953.60 |
| PRESKO PLC | 5 | 11.46 | 7,530 | 85,162.20 |
| Sector Totals | 16 | | 202,007 | 3,367,115.80 |
| AUTOMOBILE & TYRE | | | | |
| DUNLOP NIGERIA PLC. | 17 | 1.90 | 134,062 | 263,145.45 |
| R. T. BRISCOAE PLC. | 3 | 6.52 | 2,803 | 17,411.56 |
| Sector Totals | 20 | | 136,865 | 280,557.01 |
| BANKING | | | | |
| ACCESS BANK PLC | 41 | 3.42 | 908,358 | 3,106,584.36 |
| AFRIBANK NIGERIA PLC. | 20 | 6.63 | 54,012 | 358,099.56 |
| COOPERATIVE BANK PLC. | 1 | 1.92 | 1,625 | 3,120.00 |
| EIB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC. | 3 | 2.26 | 178,237 | 402,815.62 |
| FIRST BANK OF NIGERIA PLC. | 607 | 23.70 | 2,427,416 | 57,661,765.58 |
| FSB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC. | 27 | 1.33 | 954,700 | 1,292,546.32 |
| GUARANTY TRUST BANK PLC. | 246 | 10.70 | 2,829,671 | 29,727,140.85 |
| GULF BANK OF NIGERIA PLC | 14 | 0.60 | 887,300 | 546,830.00 |
| INTERNATIONAL MERCHANT BANK PLC. | 14 | 0.57 | 1,128,003 | 642,961.71 |
| INLAND BANK (NIGERIA) PLC. | 18 | 1.39 | 461,489 | 641,469.71 |
| INTERCONTINENTAL BANK PLC. | 10 | 7.81 | 21,300 | 166,353.00 |
| LION BANK OF NIGERIA PLC. | 3 | 0.68 | 58,428 | 39,731.04 |
| MANUFACTURERS BANK NIGERIA PLC. | 13 | 1.20 | 1,529,919 | 1,768,178.75 |
| NAL BANK PLC. | 30 | 2.80 | 77,890 | 218,092.00 |
| OCEANIC BANK PLC | 48 | 4.35 | 4,219,734 | 18,079,209.50 |
| OMEGA BANK (NIGERIA) PLC. | 49 | 1.60 | 20,039,294 | 33,988,178.28 |
| STANDARD TRUST BANK PLC | 12 | 7.41 | 55,984 | 414,841.44 |
| TRANS INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC. | 1 | 1.62 | 266 | 430.92 |
| UNITED BANK FOR AFRICA PLC. | 18 | 10.00 | 47,470 | 474,700.00 |
| UNION BANK NIGERIA PLC. | 352 | 19.88 | 1,053,585 | 20,969,747.07 |
| UNIVERSAL TRUST BANK PLC | 5 | 0.74 | 36,256 | 27,024.88 |
| WEMA BANK PLC. | 6 | 3.93 | 105,684 | 415,338.12 |
| ZENITH BANK PLC | 251 | 13.65 | 7,116,701 | 96,844,715.69 |
| Sector Totals | 1,789 | | 44,193,322 | 267,789,874.40 |
| BREWERIES | | | | |
| GUINNESS NIGERIA PLC. | 163 | 96.44 | 450,374 | 44,260,799.56 |
| NIGERIAN BREWERIES PLC. | 471 | 37.50 | 1,646,844 | 62,642,798.01 |
| Sector Totals | 634 | | 2,097,218 | 106,903,597.57 |
| BUILDING MATERIALS | | | | |
| ASHAKA CEMENT PLC. | 76 | 23.99 | 561,379 | 13,168,838.50 |
| BENUÉ CEMENT COMPANY PLC. | 3 | 4.35 | 3,816 | 16,599.60 |
| CEMENT CO. OF NORTHERN NIG. PLC | 22 | 7.41 | 119,430 | 887,784.30 |
| WEST AFR. PORTLAND CEMENT CO. PLC. | 39 | 10.00 | 184,626 | 1,879,269.26 |
| Sector Totals | 140 | | 869,251 | 15,952,491.66 |
| CHEMICAL & PAINTS | | | | |
| BERGER PAINTS PLC. | 9 | 4.52 | 55,941 | 252,853.32 |
| CAP PLC. | 5 | 7.00 | 5,550 | 38,850.00 |
| D. N. MEYER PLC. | 2 | 5.00 | 800 | 4,000.00 |
| NIGERIA-GERMAN CHEMICALS PLC. | 6 | 4.25 | 34,400 | 143,750.42 |
| Sector Totals | 22 | | 96,691 | 439,453.74 |
| CONGLOMERATES | | | | |
| A. G. LEVENTIS NIGERIA PLC. | 4 | 1.00 | 14,001 | 14,001.00 |
| C F A O NIGERIA PLC. | 20 | 5.60 | 41,259 | 225,659.56 |
| CHELLARAMS PLC. | 1 | 1.71 | 625 | 1,068.75 |
| JOHN HOLT PLC. | 8 | 0.80 | 27,523 | 21,562.04 |
| UNILEVER NIGERIA PLC. | 162 | 16.04 | 927,332 | 14,830,847.97 |
| P. Z. INDUSTRIES PLC. | 80 | 12.98 | 499,799 | 6,463,258.00 |
| U.A.C.NIGERIA PLC. | 78 | 14.17 | 572,402 | 8,110,936.34 |
| U.T.C. NIGERIA PLC. | 4 | 1.11 | 199,969 | 221,965.59 |
| Sector Totals | 357 | | 2,282,910 | 29,889,299.25 |
| CONSTRUCTION | | | | |
| GOSTAIN (W.A.) PLC. | 6 | 0.98 | 8,055 | 7,893.90 |
| JULIUS BERGER NIGERIA PLC. | 5 | 14.70 | 60,107 | 883,427.90 |
| Sector Totals | 11 | | 68,162 | 891,321.80 |
| ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY | | | | |
| NIGERIAN WIRE AND CABLE PLC. | 2 | 0.84 | 10,000 | 8,232.00 |
| Sector Totals | 2 | | 10,000 | 8,232.00 |
| FOOD/BEVERAGES & TOBACCO | | | | |
| 7-UP BOTTLING COMPANY PLC | 17 | 24.00 | 20,000 | 485,555.00 |
| CADBURY NIGERIA PLC. | 150 | 54.46 | 213,675 | 11,873,385.65 |
| FLOUR MILLS NIGERIA PLC. | 26 | 16.61 | 44,473 | 738,696.53 |
| NIGERIA BOTTLING COMPANY PLC. | 81 | 52.57 | 138,505 | 7,336,909.57 |
| NESTLE FOODS NIGERIA PLC. | 86 | 145.00 | 181,484 | 26,014,951.51 |
| Sector Totals | 360 | | 598,137 | 46,449,498.26 |
| HEALTHCARE | | | | |
| CHRISTLIEB PLC. | 2 | 0.56 | 101,164 | 56,651.84 |
| EKOCORP PLC. | 6 | 0.61 | 255,500 | 155,855.00 |
| EVANS MEDICAL PLC. | 4 | 3.33 | 57,340 | 190,942.20 |
| MAY & BAKER NIGERIA PLC. | 2 | 5.30 | 2,500 | 13,000.00 |
| MORISON INDUSTRIES PLC. | 1 | 1.08 | 7,000 | 7,560.00 |
| NEIMETH INTERNATIONAL PHARM. PLC. | 10 | 3.30 | 108,600 | 358,380.00 |
| GLAXOSMITHKLINE CONSUMER NIG. PLC | 20 | 8.56 | 55,646 | 482,353.71 |
| Sector Totals | 45 | | 587,750 | 1,264,742.75 |
| HOTEL & TOURISM | | | | |
| TOURIST COMPANY OF NIGERIA PLC | 1 | 4.49 | 250 | 1,122.50 |
| Sector Totals | 1 | | 250 | 1,122.50 |
| INDUSTRIAL/DOMESTIC PRODUCTS | | | | |
| ALUMACO PLC. | 1 | 1.72 | 155,416 | 267,315.52 |
| FIRST ALUMINIUM NIGERIA PLC. | 4 | 0.98 | 81,233 | 79,608.34 |
| B.O.C. GASES PLC. | 5 | 2.90 | 10,518 | 30,232.20 |
| VITAFOAM NIGERIA PLC. | 28 | 3.01 | 152,340 | 463,693.44 |
| VONO PRODUCTS PLC. | 6 | 1.90 | 11,859 | 22,532.10 |
| Sector Totals | 44 | | 411,366 | 863,381.60 |
| INSURANCE | | | | |
| ACEN INSURANCE COMPANY PLC | 2 | 0.60 | 1,002 | 601.20 |
| AIIICO INSURANCE PLC. | 6 | 2.10 | 50,000 | 104,976.78 |
| CORNERSTONE INSURANCE CO. PLC. | 1 | 1.40 | 2,540 | 3,556.00 |
| LINKAGE ASSURANCE PLC | 1 | 1.51 | 4,000 | 6,040.00 |
| MUTUAL BENEFITS ASSURANCE PLC | 1 | 0.93 | 1,000 | 930.00 |
| NIGER INSURANCE CO. PLC. | 13 | 3.02 | 1,982,803 | 5,450,185.57 |
| ROYAL EXCHANGE ASSURANCE PLC. | 4 | 3.62 | 17,251 | 62,321.97 |
| STANDARD ALLIANCE INSURANCE | 2 | 0.92 | 20,000 | 18,400.00 |
| UNIC INSURANCE PLC. | 4 | 0.97 | 22,702 | 21,880.56 |
| WEST AFRICAN PROV. INS. COY. PLC. | 2 | 2.84 | 2,303 | 6,540.52 |
| Sector Totals | 36 | | 2,103,601 | 5,675,432.60 |
| MACHINERY(MARKETING) | | | | |
| BLACKWOOD HODGE (NIGERIA) PLC. | 1 | 0.67 | 50 | 33.50 |
| Sector Totals | 1 | | 50 | 33.50 |
| MANAGED FUNDS | | | | |
| C & I LEASING PLC. | 1 | 1.40 | 50,000 | 70,000.00 |
| Sector Totals | 1 | | 50,000 | 70,000.00 |
| PACKAGING | | | | |
| BETA GLASS COMPANY PLC. | 2 | 3.87 | 799 | 3,092.13 |
| POLY PRODUCTS (NIGERIA) PLC. | 1 | 0.95 | 200,000 | 190,000.00 |
| Sector Totals | 3 | | 200,799 | 193,092.13 |
| PETROLEUM(MARKETING) | | | | |
| AFROIL PLC. | 3 | 0.78 | 6,500 | 5,055.00 |
| AFRICAN PETROLEUM PLC. | 94 | 62.00 | 161,224 | 10,157,299.44 |
| ETERNA OIL & GAS PLC. | 7 | 2.04 | 64,000 | 130,560.00 |
| MOBIL OIL NIGERIA PLC. | 50 | 180.01 | 90,166 | 16,300,158.03 |
| ONOIL PLC. | 73 | 120.00 | 47,543 | 5,698,729.69 |
| TEXACO (NIGERIA) PLC. | 19 | 158.00 | 12,437 | 1,927,555.40 |
| TOTAL NIGERIA PLC | 33 | 183.00 | 32,878 | 6,035,750.16 |
| ONDO PLC. | 183 | 89.60 | 270,877 | 24,568,026.72 |
| Sector Totals | 462 | | 685,625 | 64,823,134.44 |
| PRINTING & PUBLISHING | | | | |
| DAILY TIMES PLC. | 4 | 0.66 | 100,444 | 64,779.72 |
| Sector Totals | 4 | | 100,444 | 64,779.72 |
| REAL ESTATE | | | | |
| JACN PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT PLC. | 33 | 8.90 | 168,554 | 1,496,023.35 |
| Sector Totals | 33 | | 168,554 | 1,496,023.35 |
| TEXTILES | | | | |
| UNITED NIGERIA TEXTILES PLC. | 14 | 2.18 | 141,825 | 309,270.40 |
| Sector Totals | 14 | | 141,825 | 309,270.40 |
| Overall Totals | | 3,996 | 55,024,827 | 546,758,454.48 |

TOP 10 TRADES YESTERDAY

| SYMBOL | VOLUME | VALUE | TRADES |
|------------|---------------|---------------|--------|
| UBN | 1,053,585.00 | 20,969,747.07 | 352 |
| IMB | 1,128,003.00 | 642,961.71 | 14 |
| MANNYBANK | 1,529,919.00 | 1,768,178.75 | 13 |
| NB | 1,646,844.00 | 62,642,798.01 | 471 |
| NIGERINS | 1,982,803.00 | 5,450,185.57 | 13 |
| FIRSTBANK | 2,427,416.00 | 57,661,765.58 | 607 |
| GUARANTY | 2,829,671.00 | 29,727,140.85 | 246 |
| OCEANIC | 4,219,734.00 | 18,079,209.50 | 48 |
| ZENITHBANK | 7,116,701.00 | 96,844,715.69 | 251 |
| OWENABANK | 20,039,294.00 | 33,988,178.28 | 49 |

TOP 10 GAINERS

| SYMBOL | LASTCLOSE | YESTERDAY'SCLOSE | CHANGE |
|-----------|-----------|------------------|--------|
| NOLCHEM | 118.99 | 120.00 | +1.01 |
| ASHAKACEM | 23.50 | 23.99 | +0.49 |
| MAY&BAKER | 5.05 | 5.30 | +0.25 |
| LEVBROS | 15.80 | 16.04 | +0.24 |
| OKOMUOIL | 16.77 | 17.00 | +0.23 |
| GUARANTY | 10.50 | 10.70 | +0.20 |
| JBERGER | 14.51 | 14.70 | +0.19 |
| ROYALEX | 3.45 | 3.62 | +0.17 |
| UAC-PROP | 8.75 | 8.90 | +0.15 |
| NIGERINS | 2.88 | 3.02 | +0.14 |

TOP 10 LOSERS

| SYMBOL | LASTCLOSE | YESTERDAY'SCLOSE | CHANGE |
|-----------|-----------|------------------|--------|
| UNIPETROL | 93.50 | 89.60 | -3.90 |
| GUINNESS | 99.79 | 96.44 | -3.35 |
| MOBIL | 183.00 | 180.01 | -2.99 |
| CADBURY | 56.50 | 54.46 | -2.04 |
| TEXACO | 160.00 | 158.00 | -2.00 |
| NBC | 54.00 | 52.57 | -1.43 |
| AP | 63.40 | 62.00 | -1.40 |
| NB | 38.50 | 37.50 | -1.00 |
| TOTAL | 184.00 | 183.00 | -1.00 |
| WAPCO | 10.50 | 10.00 | -0.50 |

Weak dollar trims Cadbury profits

The world's biggest confectionery firm, Cadbury Schweppes, has reported a modest rise in profits after the weak dollar took a bite out of its results.

Underlying pre-tax profits rose 1 percent to £933m (\$1.78bn) in 2004, but would have been 8 percent higher if currency movements were stripped out.

The owner of brands such as Dairy Milk, Dr Pepper and Snapple generates more than 80 percent of its sales outside the UK.

Cadbury said it was confident it would hit its targets for 2005.

"While the external commercial environment remains competitive, we are confident that we have the strategy, brands and people to deliver within our goal ranges in 2005," said chief executive, Todd Stitzer.

The modest profit rise had been expected by analysts after the company said in December that the poor summer weather had hit soft drink sales in Europe.

Cadbury said its underlying sales were up by 4 percent in 2004.

Growth was helped by its confectionery brands - including Cadbury, Trident and Halls - which enjoyed a "successful" year, with like-for-like sales up 6 percent.

Drinks sales were up 2 percent with strong growth in US carbonated soft drinks, led by Dr Pepper and diet drinks, offset by the weaker sales in Europe.

Cadbury added that its Fuel for Growth cost-cutting programme had saved £75m in 2004, bringing total cost savings to £100m since the scheme began in mid-2003.

UNAAB, Nestle support Soybean production

Soybean production among rural farmers in four South-West states of Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti received a boost on Tuesday with the donation of soybean threshing machines.

The donation was made by the University of Agriculture (UNAAB), Abeokuta, with the support of Nestle Nigeria Plc.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that UNAAB has been involved in the popularization of Soybean production among rural farmers in the South-West states.

The machines were meant to assist the farmers in the threshing of Soybeans, which has been a major constraint to Soybean harvesting.

The project, is also aimed at providing employment and enhancing the welfare and income of the rural populace.

Speaking at the presentation, the Vice-Chancellor of UNAAB, Professor Israel Adu, said that the collaboration between UNAAB and Nestle commenced when Nestle approached the University to grow soybean for the company as raw material for some of its products.

He explained that after three years of research, UNAAB evolved a better variety of soybean and went on pilot trials with farmers on the field.

Advertorial

RE-GIRL CHILD EDUCATION MRS MASARI'S PREJUDICE

My attention was recently drawn to the media interview by Safiya I. Dantiye of the Daily Trust with Hajiya Binta Aminu Masari, the wife of the Hon. Speaker, House of Representatives, on Friday, 11th February, 2005.

As a professional journalist Safiya Dantiye's selection of questions and chronology cannot be doubted as she stroke at areas that directly affects the plight of women in our society today. Girl child education, morality and the predominant menace of girls hawking were the focal point.

Precisely, I become worried about the respondents conception and analyses of the issues raised. There is no iota of doubt in our minds that the girl child literacy often substituted by hawking is a menace that remains a clog in our wheels of development. Subsequent discussions and interviews with people in authority and women NGOs always stops at condemnation of the practice without any in-depth study on why the phenomenon persist and what is to be done to overcome the impeding factors that fuel the resistance, most of us forget deliberately or due to oversight what constitutes the traditional Hausa rural economy. Perhaps because a great majority of discussants on the subject matter have lost touch with the rural areas or the interest is just not there.

Women are active participants in traditional Hausa rural micro economy and because their production industry base is their homes, their daughters are used to sell the product by hawking. In the modern industry set up for instance, the products, say flour or maggi cubes are not directly sold to consumers by the factory itself. The companies register dealers who are given allocations of the product in large quantities and down the ladder are distributors and retailers who sell the product directly to consumers. In the rural Hausa economy, the Hausa wife produces forage (Fura-Fura), ground nut oil, Awara and so forth. These items are mainly sold in urban and semi urban towns where there is higher economic activities and solvency.

The women in the village homes find it easier to load these items in a calabash containers or trays for their daughters to sell, while the male children either follow their fathers to the farms or sent to Qur'anic schools on Almajirci far away from home. The girl child hawking is therefore an integral component of the ordinary rural women economic activity. The profit made from this activity is virtually very meager but it satisfies these women to even prepare for their daughters marriage, most men in this areas shun the basic responsibility

on them to assist their wives even in providing the daily requirements of the house.

We should therefore, understand or acknowledge the interlocking relationship of the girl child hawking visa-viz the rural economy and the impact of this marriage on the social, spiritual and economic development. Other social and economic problems faced by the women are illiteracy, widowhood, poverty, lack of marriage, unemployment, prostitution e.t.c are all important areas that deserves our prompt attention with sincere enthusiasm.

The role of women generally have often been de-emphasized in all aspects of societal development but this is not actually the case. The Islamic jurisprudence has bestowed on women enormous rights and privileges, but these rights are not being pursued by true and committed enlightenment campaigns and foundations to assist girls who drop-out from schools due to financial resources.

I could vividly remember the days of the Better Life for Rural Women and Family Support Programmes, where in each case elitist women used the target beneficiaries to usurp money behind the shadows of seminars and conferences held at NICON NOGA and Sheraton Hotels. The poor rural women were only used and dumped in a cooler.

In my view, the continued advocacy that women should learn home base businesses is not enough commitment to solve their economic under development. The rural industry status needs to be looked into and proffer/introduced modern ways to remove the hook of the hawking tradition of the girl child's throat. Talking and talking alone cannot solve this issue, even though the present situation favours some women who prefer to seek for notice only. I see no reason why we cannot design and build industries which can process Fura-Fura (forage) into yoghurt forms, constitute its producers into cooperatives to feed the industry as it is done to fruits for juices e.t.c. This is exactly the thinking we require, if the industry can consume the Fura production the girl child will go to school and the economic status of these women would be boosted.

Gradually, we can industrialize what the rural or semi urban women produced locally, we shouldn't allow politics and seeking for notices distract our minds from the responsibility we owe the society.

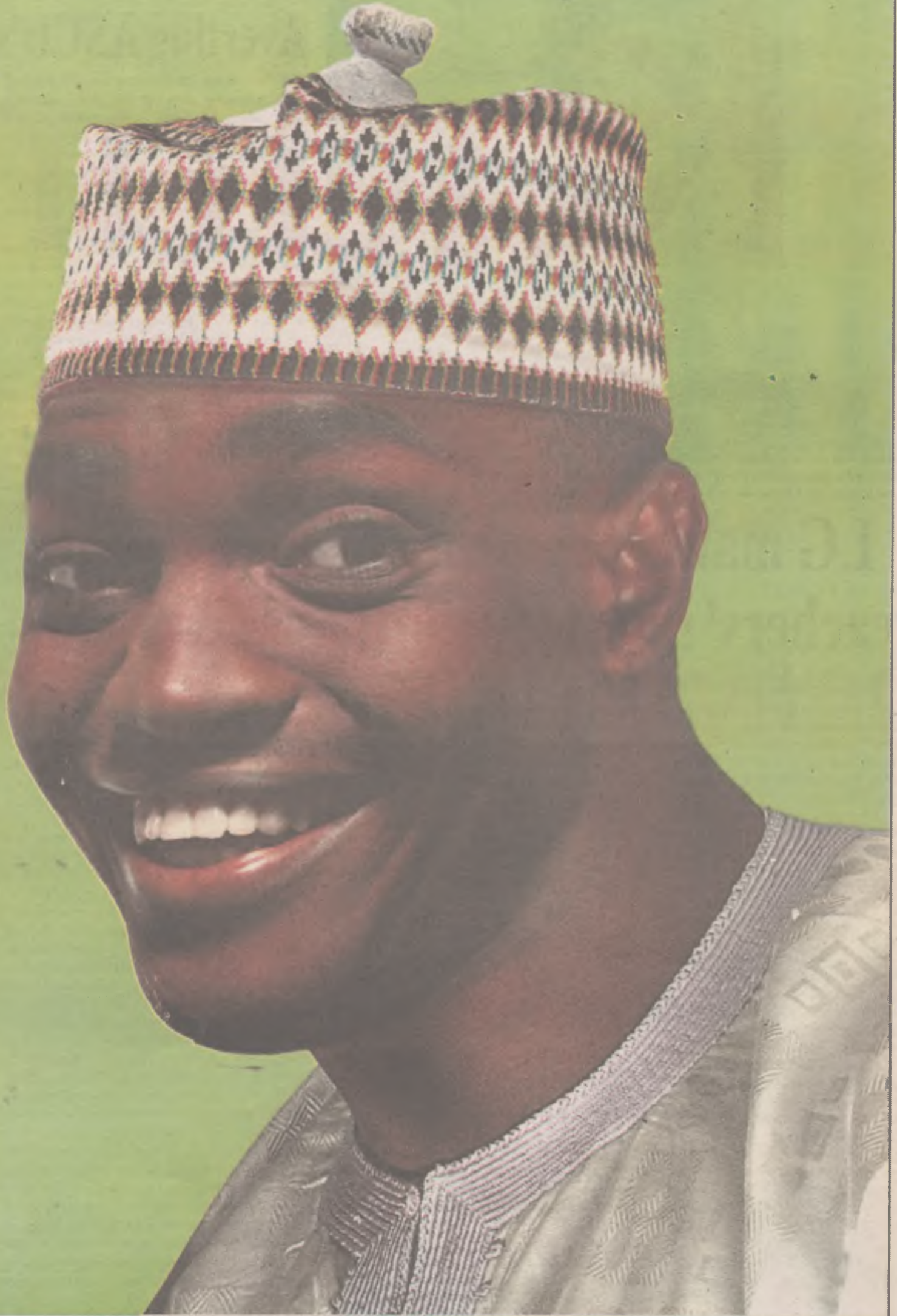
Signed
Ya'u Ahmed Soja
Katsina Youth Front
145 IBB Way Katsina

Kaduna and Zari

live on your 0805 netv

You can call family, friends and business associates around the country and rest of the world. We tower above others wherever we go.

a
work.



ry



with pride

Science & Education



President, University of Ibadan, Alumni Association, Otunba Stephen Ogundipe (l), Mr. Jacob M. Ajetigbe, managing director, First Bank; Sir Remu Omotoso and Prof. Ade Odejide at the 2005 annual alumni lecture of the University of Ibadan, Lagos branch, held at the Muson centre, Lagos ... recently.

LG makes payment of teachers' salaries priority

Dr Basil Ejidike, Onitsha-South local government transition committee chairman, says prompt payment of primary school teachers' salaries is now a priority for the council.

"As you would have noticed, teachers' salaries are now paid at the same time or even before those of other council workers," Ejidike said in Onitsha, while addressing headmasters and headmistresses.

He recalled that the council had cleared all salary arrears owed teachers, assuring that delayed salary payment for them would now be a thing of the past.

He said that the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme was an important milestone in the country's educational history and urged teachers to leave no stone unturned toward its

successful implementation. "We do appreciate the important role you have played and will continue to play in UBE and similar schemes and you should not relent in your laudable efforts," he said.

Ejidike urged them to explore career development opportunities, saying that the council would always support such efforts as they

would help improve the quality of teachers and teaching.

He said the council had worked out an award scheme for teachers to further boost excellence among them.

He commended Gov. Chris Ngige for his "due emphasis on the payment of workers' salaries in spite of the ongoing massive development of roads and other infrastructure."

University to take delivery of 17 hostels

The Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike is to take delivery of 17 new hostel blocks.

The news about the hostels was contained in the January 31, issue of the university's newsletter, "MOUAU UPDATE".

The hostels were built under a pilot project of the federal ministry of housing and urban planning to provide 1530 rooms for students.

It stated that the hostels to be constructed under Build-Operate and Transfer (BOT) agreement, in line with the ministry's university hostel development Scheme, would be completed within 12 months.

It explained that the hostels

would be built by private developers, who would operate them for 25 years before handing over to the university.

Contracts for the construction of the buildings were signed by the developers, the Ministry of Education and the university on December 21, 2004.

It said that 10 private developers had been allocated sites for the buildings.

Meanwhile, stakeholders have agreed that a bed space in the proposed hostels, would cost N28,000 per annum.

Only four students would live in a room, while eight students would share a toilet and bathroom and have their television sets connected to satellite and generating sets.

Higher Education This Week

By Dr. Isaac N. Obasi, zikobasi@yahoo.com

Averting ASUU's warning strike

This column celebrated the non-occurrence of a national strike last year 2004 by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and fervently wished that this year 2005 would also be a strike-free year. It is however necessary to observe that the non-occurrence of a national strike did not in any way mean that all was well with the higher education sub-sector during the period. Yet it was worth celebrating given our historical experience of instability in the higher education sub-sector for well over 25 years. We saw such a strike-free year as the beginning of a new culture of constructive relations between the state and academics as different from the antagonistic relations that characterized the past. We were convinced that there was a dire need for a paradigm shift in Federal Government-ASUU relations not minding that not much has changed in the reactionary ideological character of the government which was in conflict with ASUU's radical ideology. We had thought that since the old model of antagonistic relations which lasted for well over 25 years did not achieve much in real terms, it was wise for ASUU as an organization of intellectuals to experiment with a new model of constructive relationship. This does not in any way mean defeat or sell-out but rather a reflection of an understanding of the limit of strategies and tactics in a rapidly changing world.

This was one of the bases of our own paradigm shift as any critical observer would have noted in this column especially in some of our articles in the year 2003 following the aftermath of the last protracted national strike. The fundamental basis of our paradigm shift which we laboured much to articulate in our last article provides yet another impetus for why we do not see any reason for a continuation of the type of positional bargaining relationship that characterized Federal Government-ASUU relations for over a quarter of a century. We sincerely wish that both the government and ASUU would come to terms with the imperative of constructive relations in the 21st century. The old way of seeing each other can still remain but the new realities of the 21st century characterized by the forces of globalization and ICT cannot be simply wished away. Many nations and institutions all over the world are constantly adjusting to these new realities by finding ways of smoothening their modus operandi and we think that there is a limit to which Nigeria can remain dogmatic.

Our hope for a strike-free 2005 is already threatened. Indications so far have given us reasons to be worried. First, it began early in the year when the violent students demonstration at the University of Lagos broke the 'virginity' of 2005 thereby leading to the closure of the institution. The demonstration spread to the University of Ibadan, but was averted in good time without any serious casualties. Secondly, ASUU came with a widely publicized signal to go on a national strike if the federal government fails to meet its demands for the implementation of the 2002 agreement. Thirdly and more worrisome is the widespread opposition to the government policy on the privatization of the hostels which is yet to be resolved peacefully. Although the situation is very discouraging, there is still hope that the situation can be brought under control if necessary precautionary measures are taken by the government with the cooperation of ASUU.

Reading the views of ASUU national President Dr. Abdullahi Sule-Kano (see THISDAY, Thursday, February 10, 2005, front page & page 6) one cannot but feel the same way he was after the federal government failed for the second time to appear at the Abuja Federal High Court thereby leading to another adjournment. Why for instance would the government not appear in such a serious matter? This is against the spirit of constructive relations which recognizes the need for mutual respect on both sides.

But more importantly, the downward trend in the funding of the universities since 1999 is not indicative of seriousness on the part of the government. In absolute terms, the government appears to be doing a lot but this should be seen in its global context across the years. According to ASUU, the picture of government funding of the universities since 1999 is one of declining trend as illustrated with these statistics: 1999 (11.12%), 2000 (8.76%), 2001 (7%), 2002 (6.1%), 2003 (4.75%) and 2004 (4.54%). If these statistics are correct, then the situation is unacceptable. The National Universities Commission (NUC) that usually gives us comparative absolute figures of government funding should confirm these statistics to enable us appreciate the magnitude of the funding problems amidst the numerous claims about increased funding since 1999. This is necessary because we would like to be properly guided. For instance, we would like to know if the statistics by ASUU include the various special contract awards by the Federal Executive Council for the rehabilitation of infrastructure in various universities which we have commended many times in this column. If they are inclusive of such contract awards, then the government needs to do much more.

One major problem with the government over the years is that sometimes it is never coordinated in its dealings with ASUU. Different bodies handling ASUU problems at times work at cross-purposes. Why would the officials of the Ministry of Labour and Productivity not appear in court thereby creating a serious problem of frustration on the part of ASUU officials who after traveling from far distances at the risk of their lives only find that government officials in Abuja failed to appear? Yet another government body the Federal Ministry of Education operating from its own side is appealing to ASUU not to go on strike because according to its Permanent Secretary Alhaji Ibrahim Talba, "the dons have not exhausted all avenues of dialogue before declaring the strike" (see <http://www.guardiannewsngr.com/news/article05>). And according to him, "government has however taken steps towards creating an avenue for discussion of the issues with the leadership of ASUU" (Ibid). Can someone somewhere intervene to avert this impending strike by getting both sides together once more to trash the issues out? The Honourable Minister of Education has to come in here because it is not enough to direct the universities to ensure full implementation of the rule of no-work, no-pay if the three-day warning strike takes place. This simply gives the impression that the government is helpless and is actually not doing anything to avert the strike. From experience, such a threat would not help matters because it can never deter ASUU members from embarking on the strike and if any thing, it would rather fuel the spirit and enthusiasm for the strike. It is usually believed in ASUU circle that strike is the only language the Federal Government hears and understands. This time honoured statement of a former ASUU national President, Dr. H. Assisi Asobie is again under empirical test here. Do not say we told you - the lesson from the history of ASUU strikes is that no threat ever stops an impending strike rather it acts as fuel to the fire of enthusiasm for the strike.

Note: For lack of space again today, we shall say few words as a tribute to Prof. Donald Ekong who passed away recently in our next column.

Dr. Obasi writes from the Department of Political and Administrative Studies, University of Botswana, Gaborone, Southern Africa



Gov Chris Ngige

Science & Education

Slow implementation of UBE worries FG

The minister of education, Professor Fabian Osuji, has expressed federal government's dissatisfaction over the slow pace of implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme at the state level.

Speaking at the fourth UBE national steering committee meeting in Abuja, Professor Osuji said he was surprised that in spite of the free hand given to states to participate in the project, its implementation has remained a problem.

The uniqueness of this project rests on

By Salaudeen Ozigi, (Intern)

strengthening the capacity of states to articulate, prioritise their needs and implement them," he added.

The minister blamed the slow pace of implementation of the UBE scheme on administrative bottlenecks, coupled with the lack of capacity to manage it at the state level, which has forced the World Bank and federal government to call for the re-constructing of the project.

Professor Osuji, maintained that the meeting was crucial as it has direct impact on the life of the project.

He disclosed the World Bank's willingness to increase funds, subject to the performance of the

present UBE project.

"We know that the education sector will stand to gain if more funds are made available for future projects, especially the proposed sector wide project in primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education."

Professor Osuji therefore, urged states to increase the monitoring of the progress of implementation of the project especially through monthly and quarterly reports.

The Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA) has extended a \$3million life-line to the educational sector in Niger State.

Announcing the assistance in Minna, the first secretary in the Japanese Embassy, Mr. Yoshihiro Mizutani, said the amount will come in materials, which will be used to build primary schools for Korokpa community in Paiko local government.

Mr. Yoshihiro, added that the agency had offered assistance in other sectors before and has also decided to assist in the area of education as this is the crucial

Japan to build \$3m schools in Paiko LG

From Kashim Sule, (Freelancer)

need of the people in Korokpa community.

The Japanese first secretary who later performed the foundation laying ceremony of the school, said the school, design was sponsored by the agency, adding that all materials to be used will be sourced locally.

According to him, the schools when completed would consist of 78 classrooms with toilets.

Responding, the state

commissioner for education, Alhaji Usman Gwarjiko, who stood in for the state governor said the project was conceived with the Japanese in the year 2000.

He said at the completion of the project, space would be provided for training science and mathematics teachers.

Ijaw community donates computers to Islamic varsity

From Lawal Ibrahim, Correspondent (Katsina)

The Ijaw community in Katsina State has donated 10 computer sets and accessories to the Katsina Islamic university.

The donation was announced during the conferment of a traditional title on the governor of Bayelsa State, chief ASP Alamiesegha in recognition of the contributions of Ijaws to the development of Katsina State.

Leader of the Ijaw community in the state, Mr. Joe Dappa, said while presenting the 10 computers and other accessories to the Emir of Katsina, Alhaji Muhammadu Kabir Usman in his palace, that the gesture is aimed at promoting computer literacy in the state.

Mr. Dappa said for the over 20 years that the Ijaws have been resident in Katsina State, no Ijaw son or daughter has suffered any deprivation or harassment despite the many sectarian and ethnic violence that have rocked the country and praised the level of tolerance and mutual co-existence amongst the various ethnic groups in the state.

In response, the Emir of Katsina Alh. Muhammadu Kabir Usman, praised the Ijaw community for being the first community in the state to make such philanthropic gesture and assured them that the Islamic university will make judicious use of the items.

Meanwhile, a delegation of Bayelsa State government led by its secretary to the state government, Chief Azikue and the special adviser to the governor on political affairs, Chief T.K.O Okorotie were at the emir's palace to thank him for the conferment of the traditional title of (CANYEN KATSINA) on Gov. Alamiesegha who will be turbaned on March 12, 2005.

Speaking to newsmen shortly after the visit, Okorotie said the gesture serves as an extension of the hand of fellowship and bond of friendship between the Ijaws and Katsina people which dates back to the days of amalgamation.

"The country needs unity, and we have to continue to build bridges across both sides of the Niger, in order to be one family devoid of the division that is daily eroding the country, so blessed by God," he said.

Unijos introduces new post-graduate course

The University of Jos is to introduce postgraduate course on peace and conflict studies, as part of its contribution towards ensuring harmonious co-existence among diverse groups in the country.

The Vice-chancellor of the institution, Professor, Monday Mangwatt, disclosed this at a workshop organised by the Africa Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, university of Bradford, in conjunction with university of Jos.

Prof. Mangwatt, who was represented by the deputy dean, school of postgraduate studies, Dr. Bulus Gyang, stressed that there is nothing more important than a peaceful environment to ensure steady progress and bring about development.

He expressed regret that youths have been used to foment trouble in the past, but expressed optimism that the same youths could be used as catalyst for peace.

Also speaking at the occasion, Plateau State coordinator: National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Mr. Diket Plang, urged government to include in the school curriculum the prevention of conflicts and peace education in the nation's secondary and tertiary schools.

Mr. Plang emphasised that efforts towards poverty eradication in Nigeria can never be successful in the absence of peace and the ability to manage conflicts.

He said peace and conflict management in Africa have become a "strong variable for growth, stability and development," adding that the war against poverty is a

From Rakiya A. Muhammad, Correspondent (Jos)

collective responsibility which requires collective efforts to achieve success.

Mr. Kenneth Omeje, of the University of Bradford, said they decided to maintain a link with the University of Jos to foster peace and unity among youths by organising seminars and workshops.

According to him, there exists a relationship between poverty and conflict, which is why the poor in the society are usually mobilised to participate in crises.

Mr. Omeje said youths are the most vulnerable members of the society during conflicts, and therefore urged them to take advantage of the programme.



The registrar JAMB, Prof. Bello Salim (l), Education Trust Fund (ETF) executive secretary, Mustapha Jaji, minister of state for education, Hajia Bintu Ibrahim, minister of education, Prof. Fabian Osuji and Guinness managing director, Chief Keith Richards during the public presentation and launching of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board U.M.E past questions and answers in Abuja...recently. Pix: Felix Onigbide

No division in ASUP, says official

The Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) says the union would continue to represent and protect the interest of polytechnic's academic staff nationwide and would not allow the union to disintegrate because of selfish interests.

This is coming on the heels of the recently concluded 8th biennial conference of ASUP during which members of the union from the south west zone were alleged to have staged a walkout.

ASUP in a statement signed

by its national publicity secretary, Victor Dawurung in Jos, said it was unfortunate that some of the contestants from the south west "found it difficult to apply their minds to the principles of democratic elections and resorted to the use of cheap blackmail."

Mr. Dawurung, called on the south west zone to join hands with the present leadership of the union in order to move ASUP to greater heights.

Meanwhile, the new national officials elected to

pilot the affairs of the union are Mallam Muhammad Umar Kibiya from Kano State Polytechnic, Kano, as national president and surveyor, Chris Madu of the Federal Polytechnic, Nekede, as vice-president.

Others include, Mr. John Ojeyokan from the Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi, national secretary-general; Mallam Ibrahim Kagara from the Niger State Polytechnic, Zungeru as financial secretary and Mr. Sylvanus Okonkwo from The Polytechnic Oko, as national assistant secretary.

Mr. Essien Edumma, of the Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Esuruwa was returned unopposed for a second term while Mr. Peter Garba of the Chemical and Leather Technology College, Zaria was elected national internal auditor.

The position of the national publicity secretary went to Mr. Victor Dawurung, Plateau State Polytechnic, Barkin Ladi.

Zonal coordinators were also elected, with Mr. Andrew Michael Gaye of the Abubakar Tatarri Ali Polytechnic Bauchi incharge of the north-east.

Others are Mallam Buhari Abdullahi Maiyama of the Waziri Umaru Polytechnic Birnin Kebbi, as zonal coordinator, north-west and Mr. Chukwumeka Ojo, of the Abia State Polytechnic Aba, coordinator south east zone.

Banker canvasses more private sector funding for varsities

The managing director of First Bank of Nigeria Plc, Mr. Jacobs Moyo Ajekigbe, has called for increased private sector partnership in the funding of university education.

Delivering a lecture tagged: "the Nigerian graduate yesterday and today" at the 2005 Annual Alumni Lecture of the university of Ibadan, held at the Shell Hall Musin Centre, Lagos, he lamented that the quality of education in Nigeria has steadily worsened over the past 20 years.

He pointed out that despite the fact that in the past 20 years the students

From Samson Ojo, Correspondent (Lagos)

intake into universities has increased astronomically, there has not been any corresponding increases in the funding and as a result, standards have fallen.

According to him, "a lot of employers have to refrain the graduates from the Nigerian educational system in order for them (graduates) to fit into their employers' system as a result of the poor quality of education and the inadequate curriculum that does not address the needs of the employers."

Reflecting on his personal experience in recruiting graduates, Mr. Ajekigbe stated "I believe I have had a profound

insight into the quality and competence of the modern graduates through our annual graduate recruitment exercises."

Commenting on how the private sector can be more involved in funding universities to improve standards in the country, he said it could come in form of aids, grants and endowment funds to facilitate research within the universities.

Speaking further, he said "First bank has provided a veritable example, it has over the years, endowed professional chairs in 15 universities nationwide with the current value of the endowment totalling over N300 million.

Science & Education

Nigeria Sat-1 will enhance good governance —Anyim

The former Senate president, Chief Anyim Pius Anyim, has expressed optimism that the launch of the Nigeria satellite project would enhance good and effective governance in the country.

Chief Anyim who is the vice-chairman of the board of Trustees of the Centre for International and Strategic Studies (CISS) was speaking at the national grassroots awareness Policy Seminar on Nigeria, 'Sat-1' held in Jos.

While noting the need for timely and accurate data in national development, Chief Anyim observed that the right data at the right time would lead to good decision making.

He described the launch of the satellite as one of the great watersheds in the technological advancement of the country, urging Nigerians to rise to the challenges of information-

From Rakiya A. Muhammad, Correspondent (Jos)

driven development at national and international levels.

Also speaking at the occasion, the Plateau State Governor, Chief Joshua Dariye, said the challenge before the nation's scientists was to explore the potentials to maximum advantage to provide Nigeria with the full benefit of its satellite project.

Chief Dariye, who was represented by the deputy-

governor, Chief Michael Botmag, expressed hope that Nigeria Sat-1 would provide opportunity for early warning systems which would help prevent devastating conflict or other socio-political crisis inimical to the polity.

Alhaji Yahya Abubakar who was chairman at the occasion expressed hope that the satellite project would translate to an improvement in the lives of ordinary Nigerians.

The minister for science

and technology, Professor Turner Isoun, decried the low level of awareness on the importance of the satellite project and emphasised that the project is important for socio-economic development, among other advantages.

The purpose of the seminar was to create a wider public information network meant to expatiate values and importance of space technology for Nigeria.

Among participants at the seminar were secretaries to state governments, commissioners and directors-generals across the 19 northern states and the Federal Capital Territory.

NGO launches new educational initiative in Kano

The Junior Achievement of Nigeria (JAN) is billed to launch two programmes in Kano State, namely the company program and economics of staying in school to reach more students.

Last year, over 1,000 new students in 56 schools were reached in Abuja and Plateau States.

"JAN gives the students an opportunity to experience their hands on how business and economics work in the real world and they have lots of fun while at it," said Christine Chundusu, the regional coordinator of Junior Achievement of Nigeria.

"JAN programmes enable participants to prepare for the world of work by empowering them with the skills and experiences. It teaches children how they can impact the world around them as individuals, workers and consumers; this is necessary in our nation's current economic dispensation and for value reorientation.

We are happy to launch the economics of staying in school programme in our area and we look forward to the impact this new programme would have in reducing the rate of school drop-outs in the middle belt and northern states of Nigeria," Chundusu said.

Junior Achievement of Nigeria is affiliated to Junior Achievement based in the United States. It is the world's largest and fastest-growing organisation dedicated to educating young people about business and economics and operates in over 100 countries.

It started operations in Nigeria in 1999 and has since reached over 50,000 students in Nigeria through its various economic education programmes for young people from the age of five through age-appropriate curricula.

Meanwhile, for the third time since 1999, Junior Achievement Nigeria is sponsoring over 100 Nigerian students to seat for the Young Enterprise / Junior Achievement International Examination.

This examination is conducted and awarded by the Oxford Cambridge and Royal Society for the Arts (OCR) and the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate (UCLES) in the U.K.

This examination had been in place since 1966, as a prototype to catch the experiential and developmental knowledge gained over a 15 week programme, measures the skills of students and enables them to transfer these skills in a variety of ways.

Students decry selective treatment of corrupt officials

The Nigerian Students Coalition for Sustainable Democracy (NSCD) has decried what it termed selective treatment of government officials in the fight against corruption.

The body said this in a statement in Dutse on

Tuesday, noting that "such selective treatment of corrupt officials casts a bad light on the efforts of government and remains a threat to the nascent democracy".

Its national coordinator, Mr Atiku Abubakar, and secretary, Mr Daniel Okpanachi who signed the

statement, expressed concern over what they termed gradual promotion of corrupt officials by the government.

"Such an attitude is, however, contrary to the spirit of government's war against corruption," the statement said.

The students urged the federal government not only to distance itself from such public officers, but also to commence immediate investigation of all former leaders with a view to punishing those found to have corruptly enriched themselves.

The measure, they noted, would serve as good example and a warning to others.

Fedpoly Nassarawa matriculates 4,500 students

The Federal Polytechnic Nassarawa, in Nassarawa State, has matriculated 4,500 newly admitted students with 1,785 National Diploma, 175 Higher National Diploma and 2,000 part-time students.

Speaking at the matriculation ceremony, the acting Rector of the polytechnic, Mr. Pius Salami, said education must be seen from a general perspective in the development of the human character and inculcating value systems.

Mr. Salami therefore advised the new students to see education as being more than attending lectures and passing examinations, but

that such values as integrity, hard work, honesty, resilience and hospitality were an integral part of education.

"Indeed, the African values long upheld are now crumbling and our youths are now growing up devoid of these values such as integrity, hard work, honesty, resilience and hospitality," the acting rector said.

He said institutions of learning must strive to inculcate these values in their students to produce a complete educated being, who is motivated and oriented towards moulding a goal oriented society.

The acting rector gave the example of Japan and other

Asian countries and how they have used education and technology to propel and transform their national economies.

"It is my belief that education is everything. The difference between the educated and uneducated is like that of the living and the dead. However, we also have to build values necessary to produce a complete educated being, a motivated and oriented being, who would eventually form the building block of a goal-oriented society.

"We must therefore endeavour to imbibe these values in our students, in addition to the academic work. Lecturers have a great task ahead in ensuring the development of the students entrusted to them, to inspire them and give them a sense of direction in life and not to harass or exploit them," he added.

On students' welfare, Mr. Salami said the issue of shortage of water in the school was being addressed, while he said the federal government has released N45 million for the construction of two block of hostels for students.

He however called on government to expedite action in the establishment of a national polytechnics commission as recommended by the national education summit, as this according to him would be a watershed in educational development in Nigeria.

"The establishment of the national polytechnic commission, removal of all barriers for HND graduates, introduction of the HATISS 15 to the polytechnic sector and such other progressive positions adopted by the summit would indeed go a long way in transforming the nation's technological base," he stated.

Kano govt distributes furniture to school principals

The Kano State government has distributed new office furniture worth N12 million to 86 school principals across the state.

The items included cushion chairs, executive tables, refrigerators, standing fans and curtains.

Distributing the items, Governor Ibrahim Shekarau said the state government was concerned over the poor state of the offices of the school principals.

He explained that about 85 per cent of school principals in the state had been using old and dilapidated furniture for years, "hence the decision to provide furniture and other materials to them".

The governor said the gesture was to make the offices lively, comfortable and conducive for better running of the schools.

He reiterated the state government's determination

to improve the education sector through the provision of teaching and instructional materials to schools.

The governor also expressed the state government's commitment to mass employment of teachers, noting that 1,500 teachers were recently employed to ensure sound teaching and learning in schools.

Shekarau gave an assurance that the employment would be a continuous exercise and said the government was committed to improving the welfare of teachers in the state.

"Very soon allowances would be enhanced for all teachers and new allowances would be introduced," he added.

The governor urged principals to reciprocate the gesture by being more dedicated and committed to the educational growth of the children put in their care.

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ABUJA TRUST

Vandals strike again on NEPA transmission line

NEPA overhead conductors on the 132KVA transmission line linking Apo and Keffi, Nasarawa State, have again been carted off by vandals.

The *News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)* recalls that vandals had in January vandalised the same transmission line leading to two weeks of blackout in Nasarawa State.

NEPA manager for Karu service station, Mr. Abednego Emenike, told newsmen on Tuesday in Abuja that five-span of the item was carted off during the operation.

According to him, the damaged lines are "almost two kilometres in length".

He said that the attack took place between Ungwan-Zakara and Auta-Balafi villages along the Keffi-Abuja highway.

The NEPA manager said that it would take NEPA a minimum of N5 million to replace the removed items.

Emenike regretted the effect the attack had on NEPA, the consumers and the state's overall economy, saying that all was being done to avoid a repeat.

He said that NEPA had started mobilising people to protect power installations and warned that communities

that allowed the theft of such items would be left in the dark, as NEPA had no money for replacements.

According to the manager, the present vandalism, which occurred at the exact location of the January incident, is purely an act of sabotage.

Speaking on the increasing vandalism on its network, NEPA's chief operating officer for Abuja zone, Edward Ikwu, described the incident as a "national tragedy".

"Can you quantify the material losses and the inconveniences suffered by the consumers for no fault of theirs?" he asked.

Ikwu decried the activities of the vandals, who, he said, were almost bringing NEPA to its knees, and called on the

public to always alert the authorities whenever they suspected strange movements.

The NEPA official said that the authority was into a joint effort with the police toward ending the vandalism of its installations, adding that the menace would be minimised.

He called for information from the public to help the joint committee to tame the trend, saying that the police could not do anything without the right information.

Ikwu, however, wondered why anybody could risk electrocution by tampering with high-tension cables.

"It amazes me to no end. Honestly, the risk they take is far higher than the value of the wires they take away," he added.



Head, enforcement unit of Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) Engineer Felix T. Nyado (left) and head, corporate headquarters of the organisation, Chief James Udobang, fielding questions from newsmen shortly before they invaded Zuba Spare Parts Market Abuja...recently.

Suspect runs amok at Lugbe police station

By Nasir Imam, Property & Environment Editor

A suspect, one Mr. Franklin Okoye, yesterday brought activities at the Lugbe police station almost to a standstill. Mr. Okoye failed in his attempt to escape from police custody naked but ended rather receiving severe beating in the process.

The wife of Mr. Okoye told *Abuja Trust* that trouble

started last Tuesday night at about 8pm when she was attempting to fetch water from a tap close to their residence in Lugbe, a suburb of Abuja along airport road.

Mrs. Okoye said that as she was fetching water with two buckets, her husband came and assisted her in carrying one of the buckets of water. She said that her husband told her that as he was greeting one of their neighbours' wives, the woman started abusing him.

Mrs. Okoye said as her husband was telling her this, the neighbour's wife suddenly emerged and started shouting at her husband to desist from talking to her and that he, Mr. Okoye, "should leave me alone O!"

Mrs. Okoye said that in a split second, her husband, who was half naked from head to the waist, engaged their neighbour's wife in a brawl.

Mrs. Okoye said that after several attempts to separate the two failed, she rushed to pick their only child only to come back to the scene to see her husband completely naked and attempting to enter the room of the neighbour's wife.

"I had to rush to our room and collected his cloths which I rushed back and begged him to wear since people had gathered by then, but he refused to listen to me and remained clinged to the other woman, whose husband was obviously absent," Mrs. Okoye narrated.

Eventually, neighbours and onlookers were able to separate the duo, but Mrs. Okoye said, their neighbour's husband and the pastor of their church later came in the night with a policeman, arrested her husband, and took him to Lugbe police station.

Events, however took a bizarre twist yesterday morning as the suspected adulterer was being interrogated by policemen at the station.

He was said to have demanded to ease himself and was led out of the station to a spot some meters away where he was directed to ease himself in the open.

Upon removing his trousers, *Abuja Trust* witnessed, Mr. Okoye who was in handcuffs, suddenly bolted naked into the bush and several policemen pursued, caught him and beat him mercilessly with sticks, batons and iron rod.

In the process, Mr. Okoye bit a policeman and grabbed

any available object with his hands, and attempted to retaliate on the severe beating he was receiving.

The incident attracted a large crowd at the Lugbe police station as onlookers watched helplessly as the stocky Mr. Okoye was beaten to a near state of coma before being carried back into the police station by about six policemen, in the presence of a hysterical Mrs. Okoye and child. The police said investigation into the matter is still going on.

Education secretariat to take over occupied schools

The education secretariat of the Ministry of the Federal Capital Territory (MFCT) has expressed dismay over the recalcitrant attitude of some organisations that occupy some of the public schools in the FCT.

Based on the goodwill of past ministers in the FCT, the MFCT had several years back granted some institutions the permission to occupy some of its completed public schools pending the completion of their own properties.

Some of the properties include the American International School, Mañama, the NUJ National Secretariat at Area 11, the Hajj Camp belonging to the FCT Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, Gwagwalada.

Investigation by *Abuja Trust* revealed that as far back as 1994 some of the institutions were given approval to take over the completed schools, which were then under-populated without any

for the properties.

The MFCT authorities through the education secretariat however sent the affected organisations quit notices to which only one of them, Precious Gem Nursery and Primary School, has complied.

The American International School, which asked for renewal of the period of occupation, said it still has plan for its permanent site on the drawing board, failed to turn up for a meeting with the education secretariat.

MFCT says it has given the American International School up to the end of this session (i.e. July 2005) to vacate the schools' premises, the FCDA says it expects vacant possession of its premises at the expiration of the deadline.

The ministry had, at several fora, said that it may eventually resort to forceful takeover of its schools once all avenues of achieving an amicable settlement with the

FG to make Abuja carnival epoch event

The minister of culture and tourism, Amb. Frank N. Ogbuewu has reiterated the determination of the federal government in making the forthcoming Abuja Carnival an epoch making event with tremendous opportunities for job creation and national identity.

According to him, the maiden edition of the carnival billed for November, is one of the steps taken by the federal government for the promotion of a virile and sustainable tourism industry.

The minister who disclosed this in Abuja at the opening ceremony of the National Conference on the development of domestic tourism, called for collaboration of the private and public sec-

By Mohammed S. Shehu, Reporter (Travel & Leisure)

tor in packaging the carnival.

"The Abuja carnival, taking place in November 2005, requires the collaboration of the private and public sector as well as other institutions in forms of content, packaging, facilitation, security, hospitality, health, logistic, among others," Ogbuewu said.

He added that the carnival which he termed the "pride of Africa" would if successfully hosted generate a huge income and development of a vibrant domestic tourism.

Ogbuewu also disclosed plans for a 53-week TV documentary episode in collabo-

sensitise both the Nigerian and international audience as well as the private sector on the tourism potentials in Nigeria.

"Happily enough, God has richly endowed our great country with a lot of resources, good climate, evergreen tropical forest, good savannah grassland, beautiful mountains, hills etc."

Speaking earlier, the chairman of the seminar, Alhaji Aliyu Akwe Doma, said that it was high time, tourism practitioners and stakeholders recognised the challenges of tourism in the modern world.

"We all must take up the challenge by demonstrating new creativity, innovation and stamina in tourism development," Doma emphasised.

Shagari urges support for el-Rufai

Former president, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, has commended the FCT minister, Malam Nasir el-Rufai, for re-certifying Certificates of Occupancy in the FCT.

Speaking in Abuja on Tuesday when he visited the

Abuja Geographic Information Systems (AGIS) to collect his re-certified certificate of occupancy, Shagari said that the exercise was aimed at making Abuja a city of pride.

"I feel satisfied that I have finally received my certificate of occupancy without being found to be a fake," he added.

"I commend the minister for the good job he is doing to bring back our plans to make Abuja a city of pride and I urge all Nigerians to support him," he said.

He stated that it was unfortunate that some Nigerians were behind the forgeries discovered during the exercise and urged every Nigerian to avoid cheating and remain law abiding. "If you cheat in Abuja, you are cheating the whole country," he said.

Shagari, who said that he was convinced that the exercise would make people to be more careful in future, advised people against looking for short cuts to realise their goals.

KANO TRUST

Human development is our concern

-Shekarau assures NAFDAC boss

The Kano State government has pledged to support any parastatal or agency that focuses on programmes on human development. This was disclosed by the state governor, Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau, while receiving the director-general of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) on a courtesy call at the Government House yesterday.

He said his administration would be focused on issues and programmes that are centred towards human development. He described the decision of NAFDAC to take its programmes to the grass-

By Aliyu S. Machika,
Correspondent, Kano

roots level as a focus for grass-roots development, saying that even though the drugs are more prevalent in cities, there are lots of innocent victims at the rural areas and that this decision is good and commanded.

He further said that taking the campaign to the grass-roots would also help the local authorities to mobilise its citizens and enlighten them orally, not only when reading on newspapers or other means of communications, as many of them do not have access to that.

Governor Shekarau how-

ever stressed that the government and people of Kano State would continue to support the NAFDAC towards achieving its responsibilities of protecting and promoting public health by guaranteeing the quality and safety of all products regulated by the agency in Kano state, in particular, and Nigeria in general.

He added that through this sensitisation workshop NAFDAC has organised would certainly help to increase the people's confidence and understanding of the goals of NAFDAC and make them cooperate more with the agency in its fights against fake and counterfeit

drugs and other regulated products. Adding that people are now less suspicious of the genuineness of the drugs and other products they are buying.

In her response, the Director-General of NAFDAC,

Mrs. Dorah Akunyili, said they were in Kano to flag up a NAFDAC grass-roots consumer awareness and sensitisation campaign which aims at changing the social behaviour and mindset of Nigerians, especially youth who are

the highly affected victims of drug abuse and so on.

She also commended the reform programme of 'Adai-daita Sahu' established by the state government under Shekarau administration that focused on the issues at stake, in line with the policies of NAFDAC, which are both targeted at developing humanity.

She then thanked the government and people of Kano state for their support.

1000 hernia patients get free treatment in Takai

By Ahmed Abubakar,
Correspondent, Kano

Over 1000 people suffering from hernia disease have received free medical treatment and medication in Takai local government area. The chairman of Takai, Alhaji Inusa

Abdullahi Dambazau, disclosed this to newsmen in his office that the council is geared towards providing the people of the area with adequate medical facilities and medication as a gesture to the people.

Alhaji Inusa Dambazau said that the council is making efforts in upgrading a medical health centre in the area to a general hospital where the people would enjoy hospital services as be-

ing provided elsewhere.

Dambazau also assured his council's support to Shekarau's administration in areas of human developmental projects and called on people of the area to utilise the social amenities provided for them in the area.

Earlier, speaking to *Daily Trust*, one of the hernia patients expressed delight to the kind gesture from the council, and appealed to well-meaning individuals in the community to emulate the council's efforts.

Kiru LG pledges more support for education

By Mustapha Isah Kwaru,
Correspondent Kano

Kiru local government area has expressed intention to strive for the general overhaul of education, the council's chairman, Mallam Sagir Abdulkadir Panshekara, dropped the hint while distributing teaching materials to primary school headmasters.

He pointed out that the council resolved to dole out the materials apparently

realising that no nation would attain rapid socio-economic development when its educational sector is surrounded by predicaments.

The chairman observed that education is the legacy that any country would give to its citizens, warning that failure to do so will not augur well for its development.

Other modalities to be executed for the revamp of education according to him were the construction of additional classrooms, provision of furniture to both primary and secondary schools and education department of the council, initiating incentives for teachers as proactive measures to redouble their performance.

Malam Panshekara argued that such policies if implemented would boost the morale of teachers and promote the performance of the pupils.

The local government boss explained that developing education should not be perceived as a sole mandate of government rather than stakeholders and the general public have an important role to play.

While lamenting the 'I don't care' attitude of parents towards bringing their children to school and monitoring their movements, Mallam Panshekara reminded them to note that they would appear before Almighty God to explain all they knew on how the children were brought up.



Kano regional manager of Total, Alhaji Usman Abdullahi, celebrating the victory of Kano's zone of the company in a competition...recently
Pix: Musa Kazaur

Tsunami relief c'ttee to hold fund raising dinner in March

The national Tsunami Relief Committee set up by the federal government to generate donations for the victims of Tsunami disaster has concluded arrangements to hold a Tsunami disaster dinner in favour of the victims on March 4, 2005. Speaking at a press conference yesterday in Kano, Governor Shekarau of Kano state said that the dinner organised to be held in Banquet Hall, Presidential Villa, would have President Obasanjo as the Chief host of the occasion.

Governor Shekarau who was the chairman, publicity and enlightenment sub-committee, said all money generated during the dinner will go to Tsunami victims accounts, as the dinner was meant for sourcing money for the victims.

Shekarau who disclosed that the dinner will commence at 7:30pm, said that it will also be held in 3 categories, 250,

From Yusha'u Adamu
Ibrahim, Correspondent
(Kano)

150 and 50 thousands naira per plate.

The governor therefore implored all state governors, ministers, chief executives of the federal and states parastatals, executives of banks,

companies, corporative industries and other well-meaning citizens to attend the occasion of the fund raising dinner.

It could be recalled that the federal government set up a Tsunami Relief Committee under the able leadership of the Sultan of Sokoto.

LG boss wants Bagwai clinic to be upgraded

Demands for Bagwai Health Clinic to be upgraded to general hospital have been made to the Kano State governor, Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau, in order to reach the demands of patients needing serious medical attention in the area.

The call, which was made by the Chairman of the council, Alhaji Yusuf Badan, said the clinic needs to be converted to a general hospital for serious attention of people living in the area.

Alhaji Badan also added that over (300) three hundred patients comes to the clinic

on daily basis for one ailment or the other of which some of them can only be handled in general hospital.

He said if the state government would convert the clinic to a general hospital, it would go a long way in alleviating the problems faced by people in traveling a long distance to a general hospital, especially when they are being referred there.

He also said that drugs worth over five hundred thousand naira are being purchased monthly by the council for free distribution to the clinics and other dispensaries

Kano urged to intervene on rates of shops

By Jamilah Nuhu
Mohammed, Correspondent,
Kano

The Kano State government has been asked to address the problem of high rates of shops at the Mallam Kato motor park.

The call was made to the chairman of the Mallam Kato motor park Traders Association, Alhaji Sani Abdullahi, during the annual banquet party of the association. He

said that the situation had led to the closure of most of the shops, when petty traders cannot afford the high rates.

Alhaji Sani Abdullahi explained that the shops which were rented between 50 thousand naira and 70 thousand naira in other places cost at least 120 to 150 thousand naira at Mallam Kato motor park.

In his words "out of 133 shops only 44 were occupied due to the high rates". He therefore urged the Kano state government to intervene in the matter.

Meanwhile the federal central facilitator of the polio programme, Alhaji Auwalu Ibrahim Sokoto, who was on a courtesy call at the chairman, called on the council to provide all necessary working materials to ensure a hitch-free polio immunisation exercise within the area.

During the occasion reknown traders, Alhaji Garba Muhammed Garba, Alhaji Musa Mai Cassette and Mr. Apex, who is vice chairman of the association donated N5000, 00 each for the development of the association.

EKO TRUST

Ogunlewe picks holes on 4th Mainland bridge

The possibility of the proposed Fourth Mainland Bridge by the Lagos State government may remain a pipe dream if the position of the federal government on the project is anything to go by.

A bridge, which will link the Lekki axis with the Third Mainland Bridge and expansion of the existing roads, are being favoured by the federal government.

Faulting the rationale adduced by the Lagos government on the project, the minister of Works, Senator Adeseye Ogunlewe, during a press briefing in Lagos recently said there is no justification for the proposed Fourth Mainland Bridge.

According to Ogunlewe, the conceptualisation of the project is not only faulty, but also fails to put into consideration the technical and financial involvement of such project.

Expressing the concern of the federal government to the fast spate of physical development in the state, Ogunlewe singled out Maroko-Lekki axis as the most fastly developing area in the

By Olumide Bajulaiye,
Correspondent (Lagos)

state that requires an urgent alternative road network.

The difficulty inherent in traffic movement in the area, from Ozumba Mbadiwe in Victoria Island, to Ikoyi and the Mainland cannot be solved by Fourth Mainland Bridge, which is proposed to connect Lekki peninsula to Ikorodu.

The design of the Third Mainland Bridge, according to the minister had put into consideration possibility of its link with another bridge from Lekki.

"The design is available, and what was the concept? The design included building of coastal road from Ahmadu Bello Way in V.I that passes through Eleko in Ibeju-Lekki area, to Ondo State boarder and to Warri.

If the original design should be followed, the entire bottleneck in Ikorodu and Lagos end in Shangisha and other areas in the state will vanish.

The minister noted that the construction of Coastal road and a link bridge to the third mainland bridge are the options mostly favoured by

the federal government.

"Are they not going to create another bottleneck in Ikorodu? The community has been grappling with traffic congestion in recent times. So, where are the feasibility studies carried out?" he asked.

"Where is the statistics which back up the study to show that the proposed fourth Mainland Bridge will solve traffic congestion in the state? Besides, where is the fund and how would a private developer(s) who will put down the fund recover their money without creating financial hardship to the

users of the bridge?

"We should not look at every criticism from political angle. A state that is not capable of maintaining its existing roads, that is not capable of providing the necessary infrastructure, partly due to financial constraint and partly to the size of population should not contemplate a project that its completion is not certain," he said.

He added that it would be difficult for the federal government, the World Bank or any external creditor to give its approval to the project.

Only recently the state

commissioner for Information and Strategy, Mr. Oladele Alake in an interview with newsmen disclosed that the state government had found some consultants and foreign partners who are willing to fund the project.

The concept, according to Alake was that the construction of the bridge will take nine years to complete.

The project was conceived to be executed on the Build, Operate and Transfer system, while a consortium of financiers who indicated their interest had set aside, about 26 million US dollars.

LASG warns against illegal structures

As illegal structures continue to come down all over the state, the Lagos State Government has declared that erection of such structures after the clearing exercise is unpardonable and will attract dire consequences.

The task force involved in the demolition exercise descended on illegal structures along the Oko Oba Road on Tuesday leaving in its wake broken shops, stalls and debris.

Shop owners and residents of the neighbourhood were seen watching as men from the state demolition force, made up of men from the government monitoring team, and officials of the state Physical Development Authority were seen hacking away at structures along the road set back in the area.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with our correspondent, the General Manager of the agency, Mr. Layi Raheem, said the state had increased the tempo of their monitoring activities and were not ready to let any area escape the sledgehammer of the town planning law.

He said, "We intend to maximise the political will of the Lagos State, Bola Tinubu. He is in support of the activities, if not we will not have the guts but we intend to instill discipline in the state in respect of the town planning laws".

He warned that any area where illegal structures are demolished and these structures are later erected would be made to bear the cost of the demolition exercise, which is about N100,000.

He said, "We will have to ensure the recovery of the cost for going back the second time. Going back the first time was avoidable in the first instance, going back the second time is unpardonable".

We are aware that in some areas some military personnel are flaunting this rule, "there is no going back, there will be no sacred cow, no exception in this clearing exercise".



Mrs. Dupe Koka (2nd from left), chief nursing officer, Nigerian Institute of Medical Research, Ibadan, is sensitising traders at Oshodi Market in Lagos on HIV/AIDS...recently. Pic: NAN

Good Samaritan killed while separating fighting neighbours

By Bola Ojuola

A middle-aged man who attempted playing the role of the good samaritan in a fight between two neighbours in Mushin area of Lagos at the weekend had got himself killed in the process. The victim, Tajudeen Akinto, a resident of No. 15 Williams Ladega street, Mushin, was said to have died from injuries he sustained in an attempt to separate the two neighbours.

Daily Trust gathered that, one Akeem and Muritala Akintola had engaged themselves in an exchange of words last week Friday at Ojuwoye market, Mushin, which later degenerated to physical combat where weapons were freely used by both men.

The late Tajudeen Daily Trust further learnt had appealed to both parties to maintain peace. During an attempt to separate the two men, he was said to have received some blows from one of them. He later died from injuries sustained from the

fight at a nearby private hospital.

Meanwhile detectives from Mushin Police Station have arrested Akeem while investigations to the matter were already on.

The Lagos State Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Ademola Adebayo who confirmed the story to Daily Trust said that the corpse of the deceased was removed to the public mortuary for autopsy by policemen from Mushin Police Station.

Road accidents claimed 1,733 in 2004

No fewer than 1,733 persons were killed in about 7,763 road accidents in Lagos State from January to December 2004.

The Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), which disclosed this said out of this total number of accidents, 1,368 were fatal while 3,908 were not serious.

The '2004 Traffic Accident Report' released by the RS2 Command of the

commission, comprising Lagos and Ogun states, showed that 5,497 persons were injured within this period.

Month-by-Month analysis of the report showed that September recorded the highest number of deaths, which was put at 263, followed by March with a close figure of 223, and January came third with 156 deaths.

Other months include October 166, November 149, December 144, June 129, May 128, April 124 and February 109.

The report showed that the month of July recorded the least number of accidents, the least number of injured persons.

The breakdown of the report showed that January recorded a total of 710

accidents, February 491 and March 617, other months include April 664, May 656, June 514 and July 126.

Others are August 581, September 659, October 565, November 606 and December 593.

The number of fatal accidents are: January 113, February 90, March 132, May 128, April 136, June 114 and July 26, August 100,

September 114, October 213, November 104 and December 100.

The corps marshal and chief executive of the FRSC, Major-General Haldu Hananiya (rtd), said last Monday that the decision by President Olusegun Obasanjo to separate FRSC from the Nigerian Police has reduced corruption in the commission.

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News

Reps vote against bill on public procurement

An executive Bill before the House of Representatives seeking for the establishment of a National Council on Public Procurement and Bureau for Public Procurement as the regulatory authority responsible for monitoring and oversight of public procurement yesterday failed to pass its second reading due to majority vote against it by House members.

The House was divided over the Bill when deputy Speaker, Honourable Austin Opara, put the question of whether the proposed bodies should be established to harmonise existing government policies and practices by setting standards and developing the legal framework for public procurement in the country.

The Bill, which was moved by House leader, Honourable Abdul Ningi, and supported by mostly Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) members, was however thrown out when a vote of 69 to 84 was passed against it.

Prior to this, Honourable Opara had moved that votes against the Bill stood over votes in support of it, but Honourable Ningi contested the decision, prompting the deputy Speaker to call for members to take sides of the floor for or against the Bill so that a count can be established, the end result of 69 to 64 finally drew the curtain on the Bill much to the

From Zainab Alimi, Political Reporter

approval of the opposition.

Earlier, Honourable Ningi had canvassed support for the Bill while moving it, saying that its passage would give legal backing to due process and help eliminate corruption in the process of awarding contracts in the country.

"Federal jobs and abandoned projects which have constituted hazards in the country as well as excessive waste of government's resources will be checked by this Bill as it will prevent any move to

circumvent the Due Process," he said.

Although some members supported the Bill, saying that it was pro-active and would enhance transparency, most of them however kicked against a clause in the Bill which sought to make the President chairman of the proposed national council on public procurement.

Others also held the opinion that creating a national council on public procurement will be tantamount to creating another federal executive council.

On the other hand, members opposed to the Bill

who are mainly All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and Alliance for Democracy (AD) members argued that fighting corruption could not be achieved through the establishment of more federal bureaucracies, but rather through political will and courage to fight it.

They said that the purpose of the Bill would be defeated if the said council and bureau are established just as it would amount to the House handing down its oversight functions to the structures, granting them too much power in the process.

Members who argued for and against the Bill include

Hon Abdul Ningi, Gilbert Nnaji, Mohammed Kumalia, Halima Agoda, Abubakar Momoh, Ahmed Salik, Datti Baba Ahmed, Abdul Oroh, Emmanuel Aribesola and Prof. Shola Adeyeye.

The opposing groups tried to woo members who chose to remain neutral in the matter to their side to increase their number when it was decided by the deputy speaker that sides should be taken to determine a truce on the matter.

Following majority votes against the Bill, Hon. Shola Adeyeye addressing newsmen after the plenary session, said that he was

happy that for the first time, the House set a precedent over an executive Bill. "I think it is beautiful, on at least five occasions, the will of parliament has been circumvented. I am glad that today, that did not happen. With such limited resources, we cannot afford to create more bureaucracy."

But Hon. Emeka Atuma expressed displeasure over the outcome of the debate on the Bill, saying that, "it shows complete party division, which Nigeria does not need. It doesn't send good signals to Nigerians. What it means is that the opposition does not want due process."

Distribution of ID card begins in Adamawa

The distribution of National Identity Cards in Adamawa will begin on March 1, the Director of the Department of National Civil Registration (DNCR), Mallam Shu'aibu Birni, has said.

Birni, who spoke with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Abuja yesterday, said that the distribution in Benue state which started on February 14, was currently going on.

He said that the exercise in the state had initial hitches because those carrying it out were not properly tutored.

Birni, however, said that everything had now been sorted out and that work was progressing smoothly.

NAN reports that the distribution of the I.D. cards in Adamawa will bring to six the number of states so far covered by the department. States already covered are Bayelsa, Yobe, Ogun and Benue and the FCT where the exercise started on April 19, 2004.

Reacting to reports that some foreigners were registered during the nationwide exercise, the Director said that it was difficult to avoid such mistakes given the insincerity in the society.

"We did everything humanly possible to avoid such errors, but the number and nature of foreigners in the country posed a complex situation," he said.

Birni, however, said that such cheats were being discovered with the assistance of officials of the Immigration Service.

"Each time we come across such people, we seize their I. D. card," he said, adding that such incidents were more rampant in Ogun state, because of its proximity to the border with Benin Republic.

According to him, 52 I.D. cards in the state were discovered to have belonged to foreigners.



The Chairman, Umuma Local Government of Rivers State, Chief Nwuke Anucha receiving the keys of the Toyota bus won as the overall winner of the Year 2004 NIDEPMA Special award from Senator Iyabo Anisulowo, Chairman Senate Committee of states and local government affairs during a ceremony held at the International Conference Centre, Abuja recently. Pix: Joe Oroye

Commissioner explains governor's continuous absence

The Delta State Commissioner of Information, Magnus Onyibe, has justified Governor James Ibori's continuous absence from the state, saying the governor worked wherever he was.

He said governance of a state entailed moving around and making contacts for its development and explained that such could not be done "sitting down in the state".

Onyibe told newsmen in Asaba on Tuesday that those branding Ibori as an absentee governor were "mischievous" and challenged them to show where government's activities were lagging because of Ibori's frequent absence.

He said technology had helped tremendously as activities of the state could

be accessed on the Internet, giving opportunity for assessment of the government.

Besides, Onyibe said when outside the state, the governor was always in touch with the state functionaries through telephone and e-mail.

He said: "My dear friends, this is technology age where Internet and other means are helping in all facets of life and this keeps the governor in touch with the state, wherever he is."

"The man is working hard daily, making contacts and reaching agreements to ensure that dividends of democracy get to all Deltans.

These executives are always in Abuja and abroad, discussing and negotiating strategies for the success of their states," Onyibe stressed.

Yobe to review land charges

Yobe State government has plans to review annual fees charged on private and industrial land, Gov. Bukar Ibrahim, has said.

Ibrahim said recently in Damaturu that the N200 fee paid per annum on plots of land was "ridiculously low".

He pledged to reverse the trend in such a way that the ordinary man would not suffer.

to the state considering that land speculators who sell plots for between N150,000 and N200,000 end up paying a paltry N200 per annum to government," he said.

Ibrahim appealed to residents to support the revenue generation drive of the state, considering that government had provided free basic amenities for the public.

Monetisation: FG asks agencies to submit financial cost

The federal government has directed its parastatals and agencies to submit the financial cost of monetisation immediately. The cost implication is to be submitted to the Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity for collation and submission to the budget office within one week.

This is contained in a communique issued on Wednesday in Abuja at the end of the tripartite meeting between government and representatives of the three trade unions in the agencies, RATTAWU, NUJ and AUPCTRE.

According to the communique, "the budget office would quantify the amount and present same to President Olusegun Obasanjo to enable government to source for funds and pay as agreed".

"Implementation will be effected as soon as the National Assembly approves. The budget office will ensure that the submission will be made to the National Assembly on or before 31st March 2005," it added.

"The monetisation policy of the federal government extends to all parastatals funded by it as it applies to the core civil service," the communique further said.

It added that this was "in line with the provisions of circular Ref. No. HCSF/SW/HM/H/021/S.829/T of December 15th 2003 and Salaries, Income and Wages Commission Circular

Ref. No. SWC/S/04/S.167/126 of February 2004".

Amongst those who signed the communique on behalf of the federal government were the Secretary to Government of the Federation (SGF) Obong Ufot Ekaette and the Minister of Labour and Productivity, Dr

Hassan Lawal.

The ministry's Permanent Secretary, Dr Timiebi Koripamo-Agary and the acting Permanent Secretary in the Economic Affairs Department, Mr Boye Ilori and the Director-General, Budget Office, Mr Olabode Agusto also signed.

Airspace closure: FG to sanction erring pilots

The federal government would start sanctioning pilots who violated the stipulated time limit for hovering over an airport before landing.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) learnt that some pilots are in the habit of hovering over airports for hours beyond the stipulated time limit whenever there is VIP movements or airspace closure.

"The maximum time allowed by international convention for hovering over an airport is 30 minutes and any pilot that hovers more than that time will be sanctioned," Aviation Minister

Isa Yuguda said in a statement issued today in Abuja.

The statement signed by the ministry's spokesman, Mike Nwokoro and made available NAN, stated that "pilots who hover in the air for more than 30 minutes violate aviation regulations". Nwokoro said that the

aviation minister had already directed the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) to investigate and sanction pilots for contravening the regulations.

He described the conduct of some of the pilots as "unprofessional", which, he said, called for appropriate penalties to check the trend.

He also said that the ministry had designated alternate airports to enable airlines to land and take-off whenever there is VIP movements or closure.

The alternate airports are Minna for Abuja, Ilorin for Lagos, Owerri for Port Harcourt and Kaduna for Kano.

According to him: "These alternate airports although grossly under utilised are open for 24 hours for the use and comfort of authorised airlines and passengers."

"Airlines are instructed to use them whenever there is VIP movements or airspace closure," Nwokoro added.



Governor Ibori



FEDERAL AIRPORTS AUTHORITY OF NIGERIA

FEDERAL AIRPORTS AUTHORITY OF NIGERIA

PUBLIC NOTICE

INVITATION TO TENDER FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF FAAN PLOTS AT ABUJA

The Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria hereby invites tenders for the development of its various residential sites located in MAITAMA, Abuja, FCT. on a Build, Operate and Transfer basis.

The tender documents are available from the office of the Board Secretary FAAN HQ, Ikeja, Lagos, from 22nd February, 2005, at 10 a.m upon the payment of a non-refundable fee of N100,000.00 (One Hundred Thousand Naira only) per location.

The tender invitation is for a Build, Operate and Transfer concept,

- Based on the client's (FAAN) designs as in the tender documents.

OR

- Based on developers own concept

Note: All tenders are to include a viability survey report from a reputable Estate Valuer, to justify the economic suitability of the proposed development on each landed property

All tenders must be accompanied by the following:

- ▶ Evidence of payment of non refundable tender fee
- ▶ Evidence of company registration with the Federal Ministry of Works, Category D, and also with FAAN.
- ▶ Company profile and evidence of previous experience on similar construction projects.
- ▶ Evidence of company income tax payments in the last three (3) years.
- ▶ Technical Proposal
- ▶ Financial Proposal
- ▶ Operation / Maintenance Proposal.
- ▶ A tender bid bond of 2 ½ per cent of the tender sum.

Please note that the successful tenderers shall be required to produce a bank guarantee for the full value of the project including working capital required for maintenance from an acceptable bank, before the signing of the contract agreement. This is to show proof of the ability of the successful tenderer to execute the project and operate it within agreed time and cost.

The completed tenders must be submitted in four (4) sealed envelopes. (One original and three copies) marked "CONFIDENTIAL: TENDERS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF FAAN PLOTS" on the top left hand corner, to the same office on or before 22nd March, 2005 and not later than 12 noon. Tenders shall be opened by 12 noon on the same date, in the Board room of the Authority.

Further enquiries, should be directed to THE BOARD SECRETARY, Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), Headquarters, P.M.B 21607, Ikeja, Lagos.

Signed:
Management



FEDERAL AIRPORTS AUTHORITY OF NIGERIA

FEDERAL AIRPORTS AUTHORITY OF NIGERIA

PUBLIC NOTICE

INVITATION TO TENDER FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF FAAN OFFICE COMPLEX AT CBD, ABUJA

The Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria hereby invites tenders for the construction of its commercial office complex on a Build, Operate and Transfer basis.

The complex is to be located in the central business district of Abuja.

The tender documents are available from the office of the Board Secretary FAAN HQ, Ikeja, Lagos, from 22nd February, 2005, at 10 a.m upon the payment of a non-refundable fee of N500,000.00 (Five Hundred Thousand Naira only).

The tender invitation is for a Build, Operate and Transfer concept,

To be based on the client's (FAAN) designs as in the tender documents.

All tenders must be accompanied by the following:

- ▶ Evidence of payment of non refundable tender fee
- ▶ Evidence of company registration with the Federal Ministry of Works, Category D, and also with FAAN.
- ▶ Company profile and evidence of previous experience on similar construction projects.
- ▶ Evidence of company income tax payments in the last three (3) years.
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- ▶ Financial Proposal
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The completed tenders must be submitted in four (4) sealed envelopes, (One original and three copies) marked "CONFIDENTIAL: TENDERS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF FAAN OFFICE COMPLEX" on the top left hand corner, to the same office on or before 22nd March, 2005 and not later than 12 noon. Tenders shall be opened by 12 noon on the same date, in the Board room of the Authority.

Further enquiries, should be directed to THE BOARD SECRETARY, Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), Headquarters, P.M.B 21607, Ikeja, Lagos.

Signed:
Management

News

States want dismissal of revenue commission's suit

Some state governments yesterday asked a Federal High Court to dismiss the suit filed against them by the Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) over misuse of local council funds.

Specifically, three states have filed a preliminary objection to the suit. They are Rivers, Imo, and Delta. They said the suit should be dismissed, while other states made intention to reply asking for dismissal of the suit.

Justice Steven Adah however adjourned the matter to April 27, 2005 for argument on those objections. RMAFC had filed a suit praying the court for an order that no state in the country has the power to underpay any of its local government councils.

Listed as the defendants are the 36 state governments. The plaintiff said that all the 36 state governments had no

By Kemi Ogedengbe, Judicial Editor

power to allocate less or underpay any of their representative local government councils from the amount standing to the credit of local government councils from the federation account, and that the state Houses of Assembly had no power to redistribute the amount standing to the credit.

When the case came up yesterday to states, including Federal Capital Territory were represented by legal practitioners, they were; Benue, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Delta, Ebonyi, Yobe, Ekiti, Imo and Ogun.

The counsel to RMAFC, Chief Adeniyi Akintola, SAN, however hold the court that four states had replied to the suit, Abia, Cross River, Benue and Akwa Ibom had filed their processes while others were yet to reply the court.

Adeniyi said that if all the

36 state filed their counter affidavit and objection, then, the court can give direction on the case.

But the counsel to Delta State, Mr. Nwabueze Ogbogu, said their own objection was based on the facts that RMAFC can not institute legal action against state since Justice Steven Adah however ruled that the matter has been set down for preliminary objections and ordered that any state which is yet to reply court processes should do so before the next hearing filed for April 27, 2005.



Vice president Atiku Abubakar (right) in a discussion with the Lamido of Adamawa Dr. Aliu Mustafá during a function in Yola recently.

Gombe Assembly orders probe on water scarcity

From Mohammed Abubakar, Stringer (Gombe)

The Gombe State House of Assembly has given its Committee on Water Resources one week to investigate the water scarcity being experienced in the state. In a motion to the House which resumed sitting Tuesday after a 2 month recess, a member representing Gombe north constituency, Alhaji Shehu Durbi, said people were suffering from water scarcity.

He alleged that some drivers of the government owned

Water Relief Agency were diverting their vehicles from beats assigned to them.

According to the lawmaker, "these drivers were diverting the water to areas they believe they would make extra money."

Alhaji Durbi, who also attributed the scarcity to poor electricity supply in the state, called for an investigation into the matter.

Responding to questions from journalists recently on the issue, the state Commissioner of Water Resources and Environment, Mr. David Albashi, attributed the scarcity to low level of underground water which results in poor supply to boreholes.

He said government would put those grounded water tankers, out of the eleven meant to service the various wards on the metropolis to shape, to ease the

situation before the completion of the Dadin Kowa Water Project at the end of this year targeted to end the scarcity once and for all in the state.

Investigations by Daily Trust revealed that the scarcity which hit the state in recent weeks was more prevalent in remote areas where a 25kg of water that sold for less than N10.00 now sells for between N15.00 and N20.00 subject to availability.

Akume gives motorcycle loans to workers

The Benue State Governor, Dr. George Akume, yesterday in Makurdi, flagged-off the distribution of 10,000 motorcycles acquired by the state government in continuation of its soft loan scheme to state and local government workers. The acquisition and distribution of the motorcycles which cost the state over N900 million, according to the Chief Executive Officer of the Facilitating Firm Windwall International groups, Chief Mrs. Nkoli Imoh, brought to 15,000 the number of bikes awarded to Benue workers on loan basis.

Performing the commissioning of the distribution, the governor said the soft loan credit scheme was initiated by the administration in order to alleviate the everyday problem of transportation faced by workers in the state.

Dr. Akume who disclosed that the motorcycles would be distributed through workers' union with the amount deducted from beneficiary's salary (at source), over a period of two years, added that the initiatives was in recognition of the strategic role played by civil servants in the implementation of government development policies.

The state chapter Chairman of the Nigeria Labour Congress, Comrade Boga Abuul, expressed appreciation with what he called "the labour friendly administration as demonstrated in the acquisition and distribution

From Hir Joseph, Correspondent (Makurdi)

The head of Benue States civil service, Dr. Fedelis, urged workers union to cooperate with the government to ensure the best result from the scheme.

Group backs creation of chiefdom in Plateau

As criticism greets the creation of a new chiefdom and appointment of a new traditional ruler for the Bogghom people in Kanam local government area of Plateau State, a group in the local council, Bogghom Development Association, has kicked against the government's action.

It would be recalled that another group under the aegis of Concerned Bogghom Citizens had at a press conference in Jos last week condemned the proposed creation of chiefdom and the appointment of a new traditional ruler for them.

But addressing a press conference in Jos yesterday, the National President, Bogghom Development Association, Johnson Paah, said government action in creating Bogghom chiefdom and approving the appointment of Pangkwai Bogghom had met the yearnings and expectations of the Bogghom nation.

He stressed that before the introduction of colonial rule, the Bogghom people had never lived under any unified traditional rulership as claimed by the Concerned Bogghom Citizens, and that they do not belong to same

From Rakiya A. Muhammad, Correspondent Jos

Kanam ruling house produced by the emirate council during the installation and presentation of staff of office of the present Emir, Alhaji Muhammadu Ibrahim, showed they were migrants from Kano.

"Evidence abounds to prove that the Bogghom and Khinpyi IKanam are not the same. Whereas the Bogghom people originated from the Kwararafa and were the original settlers in the present Kanam local government, the later originated from Kano and were later settlers," he asserted.

He asked that if the Khinpyi people were Bogghom, "then the stool of the emir would have been opened at least to all Bogghom chiefs, but rather they hold it as their exclusive right," adding "to worsen matters, the Bogghom people were not included in the college of collectors."

According to the Bogghom Development Association, the claim by the Concerned Bogghom Citizens that the demand for Bogghom chiefdom was to promote Christian religion is

Free for all fight as two cult groups clash

The Ibaa town in Emohua local government area was thrown into confusion when two cult groups engaged themselves in a free for all fight at about 3am. Although police report did not indicate if there were casualties; it identified the cult groups as De-well and De-gbam who have been rival cult groups in the area.

A statement from the police signed by the Public Relations Officer of the command in the state, Mrs. Ireju Barasua, said the timely intervention of the police led to the arrest of four of the suspected cultists, adding that investigations was in progress on the issue.

Cult activities in Rivers State has been assuming a dangerous dimension, leading to serious clashes between rival cult groups in Port Harcourt and other parts of the state. Daily trust gathered that most of the cultists were youths in their early twenties and thirties. Last year at the peak of the clashes, our reporter gathered that it was a regular sight to see people running for their dear lives on the streets.

In related development, police has announced the arrest of one Lebari Gbaraedo who allegedly robbed tenants along TTC road, Bori

From Ikenna Emeka Okpani, Bureau Chief, Port Harcourt

that it received report of an armed robbery operation at the Rd Road, Rumukwursi and on arrival, was engaged in a gun battle with the suspects in the process of which

one of the suspects identified as Jeremiah Ofodo was gunned down. "Efforts are in top gear to apprehend the fleeing suspects. Items recovered from him include one local made pistol", the police said.

PUBLIC NOTICE

MANGROVE ENGINEERING NIGERIA LIMITED

PLOT 35, TRANS AMADI INDUSTRIAL LAYOUT PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE.

The management of the above named company hereby wishes to inform the Ministry of Water Resources and general public that ENGINEER STEFFIE. M. IBRAHIM of Plot 1211, Samaro Machel, Asokoro, Abuja, appointed as a Consultant to our Company has long been withdrawn since 6th June 2003.

The Ministry of Water Resources is hereby notified that the said consultant is no longer the representative of the Company and has no power to act on her behalf in any capacity.

This notice is required because our company shall not be liable for whatever acts and deeds of Engineer Steffie. M. Ibrahim and whoever deals with him does so at his her own risk.

Signed

News

Anambra Assembly okays 2005 budget

The Anambra State House of Assembly has passed the 2005 budget bill setting aside the sum of N30, 615,261,500 which is about N1.3 billion above the three N29,204,327,500 presented to the House by the Governor of Anambra state, Dr. Chirs Nigige.

The passage of the bill was sequel to the report of the House Committee on Finance budget appropriation presented by the Chairman, Hon. Ifeatu Nwokoji, which was seconded by the

Chairman of the House Committee on judiciary.

The appropriate bill which would take effect from 31st day of January, 2005 provided for the sum of N14, 264,361,500 to be paid out of the consolidated fund of Anambra state during the year ending.

Oro Ughanadu, urged the state government to have comprehensive computerization of all offices in the state.

Bona Orakwue, opposed the motion as improper and frivolous for one to propose

the motion, urging that the bill has already been passed for computerization of officers.

According to the bill, the Accountant-General warrants the commissioner for Finance and Economic Development, presented by the Governor; pay out that sum being the total of the amount set forth against Heads. The bill stated that the said sum mentioned in section two of the law should be appropriated to the purposes in the manner indicated in the first schedule to the law.

The on-going multi billion naira Gombe Regional Water Supply project is being considered to serve as dedicated line from Gombe to Dadin-Kowa by the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA).

The approval for the dedicated line was given by the Managing Director of the National Electric Power Authority, Mr. Joseph Makonju, when the Gombe state Governor, Alhaji Mohammed Dajuma Goje paid him a courtesy visit in his office at NEPA headquarters, Abuja.

Speaking during the visit, the state governor informed the managing director that the entire Gombe Metropolis and environs is experiencing a serious inadequacy of power supply, hence the necessity for the visit. The problems, according to the

Gombe water project to serve as dedicated line - NEPA

By Abudkarim Baba Aminu
governor, include poor distribution.

While presenting the Gombe state electricity supply problems, Governor Danjuma Goje commended the management of NEPA for taking new measures to ensure sustainable electricity supply in the country.

Receiving the governor, the managing director and chief executive of NEPA, Mr. Joseph Makonju, informed the governor that the management of NEPA would soon find a lasting solution to Gombe state power supply problem and granted the request presented to him by the governor.

Mr. Makonju, further

commended the governor for the visit and prayed for the cordial relationship between the management of NEPA and Gombe state government, assuring that NEPA is committed to ensure adequate power supply in the country.

The governor was accompanied during the visit by a member representing Yamaltu-Deba federal constituency, Barrister Idris Abdullahi Umar, who is also the chairman House Committee on Power and Steel and the state commissioner for Rural Development, Alh. Ismaila Muazu Hassan, as well as special assistant to the governor.

2007: Gov Sani campaigners begin consultation in Kaduna

The Central Working Committees for the actualization of Governor Ahmed Sani of Zamfara state (Yerima Bakura) is contesting the 2007 presidential election have commenced a nation-wide consultation for the first time in Kaduna.

Addressing newsmen in a press-briefing in Kaduna, the chairman of the CWC, Alhaji Ahmed Rufai Hassan, said that the committee comprises of people from all walks of life, who are also from different parts of the country.

According to him, the committee is being funded by private individuals for the purpose of creating awareness and making publication for actualization of Governor Sani presidential election in 2007.

Alhaji Ahmed said that the committees has been

From Aliyu Haruna
Correspondent (Kaduna)

charged to tour the length and breadth of the country seeking for people's opinion over the achievement of Governor Sani since the inception of his administration in 1999.

He disclosed that the aim of choice of Governor Yerima Bakura for 2007 presidential election is for total change for the nation.

The CWC chairman said that the course is not that of All Nigeria People Party (ANPP) but a general affair of Nigerians irrespective of tribe and religion.

On the speculation that President Obasanjo is trying to get Governor Sani to emerge as his Vice in his third term ambition, Mallam Ahmed denied such information, saying that it is baseless and could not be substantiated.



The Minister of state for works, Alhaji Saleh Shehu and the minister of State Foreign Affairs, Alhaji Samaila Sambawa during the FEC meeting held at the State House, Abuja ... yesterday

Pix: Joe Oroye

ANPP chairman expresses dismay over adultery case against legislator

The Kaduna state chairman of the All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP), Alhaji Kabir

From Aliyu Haruna
Correspondent (Kaduna)

Umar has expressed grief over the recent allegation of adultery against a member of the state House of Assembly representing Kano constituency. Hon. Muhammad Sani Iliyasu, was allegedly accused of impregnating a 16 year-old girl in Kaduna.

Alhaji Kabir who was speaking to newsmen when he paid a solidarity visit to Hon. Sani, an ANPP member at the state Assembly said that such allegation is devastating and disheartening to his party.

According to him, Hon. Sani is a very responsible man who does not deserve to be framed up with such unwarranted and unsubstantiated allegation.

The ANPP chairman said that the party will not allow anybody to tarnish the hard earned reputation and integrity of any of the members of his constituency and the state in general.

Alhaji Kabir maintained that as a party, there are many problems which affect members, adding that he is ready to stand by

which the case has been fixed for further hearing on March 9, 2005.

Similarly, Hon. Sani in a press conference last week attributed the frame-up to people who are against his principles, which he declined to mention their names.

Ekiti earmarks N40m for farmers, youths

Ekiti state government has earmarked N40 million out of year 2005 budget for youth and farmers, empowerment to effect rehabilitation of farm settlements and to resuscitate interest in agriculture.

The commissioner of finance and budget, Mr. Toyin Ojo, who disclosed this while giving detailed analysis of year 2005 budget in Ado-Ekiti said the programme is also designed to empower the average peasant farmer in the state.

Ojo who pointed out that Ekiti state is endowed with available land suitable for farming said another N20 million has also been set aside out of total sum of N775 million budget for the agric sub sector this year for schools agricultural

From Femi Oladipo,
Stringer (Ado-Ekiti)

secondary schools to engage in farming.

Speaking on the efforts to boost the production of cash crops, the commissioner disclosed that N4.5 million has been set aside as the state's counterpart contribution to the National Cocoa Development Committee (NCDC) out of N7 million earmarked for produce development in the budget.

He added that this year, the state government will release N1million for the Rural development department of the state ministry of agriculture to procure publicity equipment for mobilization of people to participate in rural

Jigawa NAFDAC threatens closure of water factories

The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control NAFDAC, Jigawa state office, has warned pure water producers to operate within stipulated rules or face closure.

In a release made available to Daily Trust and signed by NAFDAC Ozigio A. Abdulsalam, said recent survey conducted in the state has shown that out of the 25 water packaging factories, only nine (9) complied with the treatment requirements.

This according to him represents 53% while 8 out

From Hassan A. Karofi
Correspondent (Dutse)

of the 17 in operation met the laid down requirements.

Ozigu warned that despite many workshops, trainings and seminars on application of Hazards producers have still failed to utilize the training given.

"The companies that failed to comply with the requirement have therefore been given compliance directives to correct the observed lapses while also imposing sanction on the

factories as deterrence.

The coordinator also asked the consuming public to be vigilant on where they buy packaged water and ascertain in their right to ensure correct packaged water date, marking and labeling and the public should reject products that do not comply with detailed statement, labeling.

The statement therefore, added that henceforth, factories that are found not to comply with good labeling practices will not only be sanctioned but closed down and the product

IBB endorses UK group

Former president, Ibrahim Babangida, has agreed to make himself personally available towards any effort that would move Nigeria forward.

The former president made the pledge while receiving a 15 point blue print from the United Kingdom Chapter of the Nigeria project - groups urging him to

While meeting with the group in Abuja yesterday, the former president commended the group for preparing the blue print which touches on aspects of national life saying it is always his pleasure to work with people who have great ideas.

"If there is anything I like, it is working with people who can generate ideas

in the document you have prepared and I will sit down and study it." Babangida said.

On the purpose of the group being in Nigeria which is to put pressure on him to contest the 2007 elections, the former president said that he would work with the group to achieve their aim adding that their reason for coming to Nigeria is informed by the

Is the beef increase?



ever, the beef of his efforts was still not seen. No statistical data available to show it.

The late general Sani Abacha (Rtd) military administration came in 1994, and set up agricultural development working machinery through assisting small- and large scale farmers. These included provision of machinery for land preparation, as well as cultivation during the farming period. When General Abdulsalami Abubakar's military administration came, it continued with the national agriculture policy, plans and strategies formulation through the Vision 2010 projection of agriculture development. In three years from 1996 to 1999, before handing over to the present democratic government of President Olusegun Obasanjo, the country only achieved little beef of the agricultural development.

Directorate was to get involved in getting the peasant farmers to go and find lasting solutions to the country's agricultural problems. The main emphasis was the provision of rural infrastructure and basic amenities, the provision of feeder roads for easy evacuation of farm produce and the procurement of production inputs such as fertilizer as well as its distribution to the small scale farmers.

Alhaji Lateef Kayode Jakande in the preface of the Nigerian Economic Review 1986 wrote, "the Nigerian economy is in doldrums. The decline began in the 1980s, and since then the economy has continued to slide deeper and

Therefore, Nigerians need more of the beef of agricultural development in the period of the present Obasanjo administration. In spite of the existing and very good potentials this country has for increasing agricultural production, every thing is moving at a snail speed. Improving yields from the existing areas and expanding the areas under cultivation have all failed or achieved little success. Over the last two decades, Nigeria has been battling to produce enough food to combat hunger and meet other economic needs of the people. Apart from food shortage, prices continue to increase with high inflation rates.

As a result, supplies of

agriculture organisation (FAO) of Nations (UN) has said that out of the land area of over 98.3 million hectares are of medium agricultural productivity. And by making improvements combined with modern technology, it could be raised to 72 million hectares. About 50 per cent of the total cultivated land is present unutilized, according to the

deeper into grave situation. The successive governments over the past six years have been gripped with the problems of the Nigerian economy, but their solutions have proved to be non-salutations." Similarly, the chief Earnest Shonekan administration, which was very short, took the bull by the horn and did its best to develop agriculture in Nigeria and the result was encouraging. How-

agricultural produce for domestic consumption and industrial use as well as export have declined. That, consequently, would have spur the nations foreign exchange earnings. Fortunately, the foreign exchange is picking up. According to the minister of agriculture, recently Nigeria sold about \$800,000:00 worth of agricultural produce to WFP for supply to the victims of Darfur

crisis in the Sudan. It means the foreign exchange is no more deplorable at the moment.

It is imperative to beam a search light on agricultural development as embarked upon by individuals and organisations including the governments in Nigeria. It is praiseworthy to note that successive governments accord high priority to agriculture development in this country. They claimed to have achieved improvements in the national economy.

A quarterly publication known as the Nigerian Economic Review 1986 states that approximately, two thirds of agricultural production come from crops, one quarter from livestock, one-twelfth from marine and riverine sources with the rest from extractive forest production. As such, the beef of agricultural production is about 66.6 per cent then. It was followed by livestock itself being the foremost yield of beef having 25 per cent. Next is the extractive forest production with less than 24 percent, while the marine and riverine beef of agriculture production hit about 9 per cent only.

According to sources from the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS), rate of GDP are, 26.07, 1984-25.89, 1983-24.05, 1982-23.28, 1981-20.52 and 1980 is 21.10.

From the above statistics it is easy to deduce the upward trend of the national GDP in which agriculture is the next contributor after oil resources. It is a commendable development. And from the statistics, it could be observed that in 1985 Nigeria as a whole got the largest beef of agricultural production. In the third national development plan, in terms of agricultural statistics, about 6.6 per cent was allocated out of the total ₦=33 billion investment proposal for the public sector programmes.

The essential analysis is on the beefing up of agricultural production. The food strategy mission report on 1980 to 1985 revealed that population growth stood at 2.5 per cent per annum and real income growth by two per cent per annum. In addition, the report said that the gross supply of all food items has been increasing at the rate of 3.5 per cent per annum. With these statistics, the beef of agricultural development was for the same period growing at the rate of one per cent per annum. Generally, it is worthy to note that the gross supply includes input seed, animal feeds, manufacturing requirements, storage losses and other wastages.

To be continued.



Heaps of Yam at a market after harvest



Cows ready for slaughter on the slab.



27 tractors purchased and distributed to the Farmers in one of the states of the country.

Inside Politics

Confab: Can it divide the Senate?

By Isa Sanusi

The decision of President Olusegun Obasanjo to hold the National Political Reform Conference may have been made since 1999 but at about the end of his first term he brought up the idea and discussed it with his close associates. The President has never at any point indicated that he wants to be advised on whether to hold the conference or not but he always seeks advice on when and how to hold the conference only. Where the President's conviction on the viability of the conference comes from only God and himself knew. A source even said that holding the conference is one of the conditions on which the late Minister of Justice, Bola Ige joined the last cabinet.

Obasanjo, even lawmakers attested has now learnt to a little bit consult with the National Assembly before going about taking position on fundamental issues that require legislation. Before making public his will to hold the conference, the President was said to have assigned his Attorney-General to prepare a bill that will be presented to the National Assembly on the National Conference. In the bill it was proposed that the delegates to the conference will be selected from the national assembly, state assemblies, local government councils and others. When the idea of the bill was presented to the leadership of the two chambers of the national assembly they instantly told the President that the whole bill and what it wants to achieve are flawed and will never see the light of the day if presented to the national assembly. Then president saw the rashness of the still born bill and reasoned with them. That was how the conference came the way it is fashioned.

Senates Opposition to the Conference

It is no longer a new thing that the leadership of the senate is crippled and has no clouts to reject whatever request the President may make to the National Assembly. In fact before President Obasanjo presented his request for an approval of N932 to fund the conference at several meetings were held between the Presidency and the leadership of both the Senate and the House and as usual the President wants the leadership to push his request through the throat of the lawmakers. When the

leadership particularly of the house consulted its members they vehemently opposed the idea and even threatened that they may impeach the leadership if they in any way they support the conference. The senate last week in a

saying that they will not approve funds for the conference is an instance of doublespeak.

The Stand of Northern Senators

The Northern Senators Forum is a 58 member caucus that has membership of senators representing the 19

position on Tuesday but Senate President Adolphus Wabara refused to allow it and ultimately aborted the motion, some say on instructions from the presidency.

Southern Senators Back Stab

Throughout this week southern senators under the

This is perhaps the first time that the southern senator's forum is agreeing on an issue.

Will the Senate Ever Be The Same Again?

It is now clear that the senate will have to contend with refreshed divide along North/South schism. In fact a

seems marks the beginning of a deep division that may shatter the senate. Importantly Northern Senators have change their ways to match this onslaught of the forum of Southern senators. There seems to be lack of the political will among Northern senators to even make public their position on such an issue. Many of them will not want to openly oppose a conference endorsed by their governors. Some have more allegiance to the presidency than even the people that voted for them. The boldness of the Southern senators has now made it clear that whichever way the is no way other than for the Northern senators to stand up to their people even at the level of only barking without the will to bite. After all the presidency has using Wabara denied them their right of expressing their position on this conference and their Southern counterparts had their way smartly through the back door. Or were the Northern senators not aware that Obasanjo has severally met with senators from Yoruba states in connection with the conference?

One often finds it difficult to understand the kind of politics the Northern Senators were playing with the future of their people. When they held their last retreat in Sokoto they came up prominently with the position that power must shift to the North come 2007 as if that is or was the beginning and end of the problems confronting the region. No one it seems is bothered with the issue of the poverty ravaging people of the region as a result of low education and that enduring culture of laziness. As senior lawmakers the Northern senators have to look at politics beyond a mere jostle for power. The legislature is a platform that they can use to put in place machinery of addressing several of the socio economic problems confronting Northern states.



President Obasanjo

closed session disassociated itself from the conference and said it will not approve the president's request for funds. Many of the lawmakers were of the opinion that if the President is truly interested in moving the nation forward he should have used the outcome of so many of such adhoc panels to move the nation forward. They always cite none implementation of Oputa panel report, Local governments reform committee report and even the vision 2010 which has answers to so many of the issues the president always advances to justify the conference. On the other hand they also argue that they are the representatives of the people and therefore in better position to handle whatever political grievances the people that elected them may have. They also believe at the end of the day whatever the conference may come up with has to be approved by the National Assembly. Therefore it amounts to waste of time and funds to go about the conference. One also may observe that lawmakers were not comfortable with the conference because it seemingly amounts to passing a vote of no confidence on them. The resolution of the two houses

northern senators. This aside there exist caucuses of senators of North west, east and central. On Wednesday last week the Northern senators meet for over two hours and deliberated extensively on the implications of the national conference to the interests of the north. Many at the meeting were of the firm belief that Obasanjo has a hidden agenda of using the conference to either have a third term or create an atmosphere that will make it impossible for any northerner to rule the nation again. Many were of the opinion that the President might have summoned the conference to help those intent on the idea of reducing the number of local governments in the North and even adjusting the representation from the North at the national assembly. At the meeting some prominent senators close to the President said even if he has a hidden agenda for convening the conference they don't know anything about it. It was then agreed that the conference is unnecessary and will not in anyway improve the nations polity. All senators agreed to the position.

The forum concluded to move a motion stating this



Adolphus Wabara, Senate President

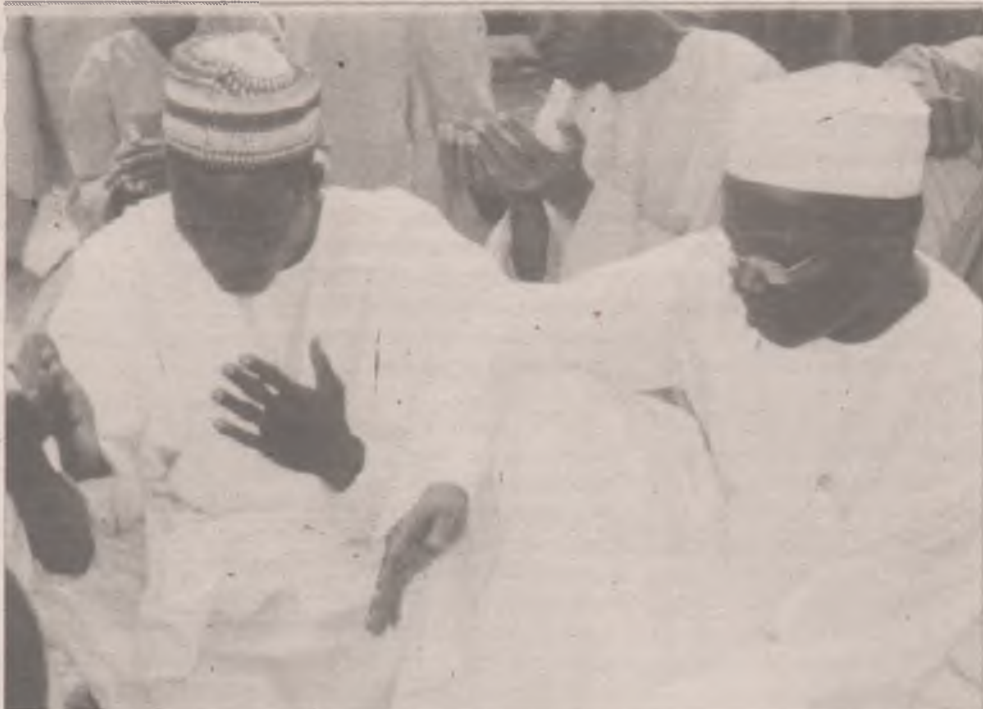
leadership of Senator Ifeanyi Araraume have been meeting at a restaurant in Maitama and they unanimously agreed that the conference is necessary and they should support it. They have the belief that it will address what they said is the political structure that favor the North. The Southern Senators share the popular belief of most of the proponents of the conference from that side of the country, that Northern states were having more than they deserve from the nations oil wealth. This position of the Southern senators came even though they are party to the earlier decision of the senate to kick against the conference on constitutional ground.

member of the Southern Senators Forum, Senator Chris Adighije expressed fear over it by saying "It is worrisome that we should still be talking of Northern Senators Forum or Southern Senator Forum at this stage of our socio political development. This development should not be encouraged because it is not good for our nascent democracy neither is it good for our dear country's stability". Senator Adighije described the new trend as dangerous.

The secretary of the Northern Senators Forum Senator Saidu Dansadau described the position of the Southern Senators as "unparliamentary". This, it

Importantly, Northern Senators have to change their ways to match this onslaught of the forum of Southern senators. There seems to be lack of the political will among Northern senators to even make public their position on such an issue. Many of them will not want to openly oppose a conference endorsed by their governors.

Inside Politics



Member House of Reps, Hon. Lawal Garba (left) and Alhaji Bala Salisu during the Hon. Lawal constituency tour to commissioning some projects in Katsina... recently.

Rep urges electorate to check elite

A member of the House of Representatives, Hon. Garba Lawal, representing Daura central constituency has called on the Nigerian electorate to copy the Ukrainian example and rise against the Nigerian ruling elite as the only option left for the entrenchment of justice and the survival of democracy in Nigeria.

Hon. Lawal Garba who spoke to *Daily Trust* in Katsina via telephone shortly after the conduct of a Katsina local government legislature bye-election last Saturday, said survival of democracy is

From Lawal Ibrahim, Correspondent (Katsina)

under serious threat. He described as sympathetic the attitude of government in the just concluded legislative bye-election describing as unbecoming of top government functionaries who are being used to intimidate voters and steal away

ballot boxes.

The legislator lamented that, a situation where the commissioner and a permanent secretary have descended to the level of stealing ballot box is most unfortunate, and urged the well meaning people of the state whose political future are being threatened by disgruntled elements.

Gov Sani's posters flood Makurdi

Posters bearing the photographs of Zamfara State governor, Alhaji Ahmed Sani have flooded Makurdi, the Benue state capital.

Coming in various colours, the posters bear Sani's photographs in different attires, with inscriptions in the three major Nigerian languages, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.

The posters bearing messages in Igbo are produced by a group simply called *Concerned Citizens*.

They are posted in strategic locations across the state capital.

Daily Trust observed that like the posters of former military ruler, General Ibrahim Babangida and those of

From Hir Joseph, Correspondent (Makurdi)

General Buba Marwa, Sani's posters have defaced those of Vice President Atiku Abubakar.



Gov. Ahmed Sani

2007: NDP puts up IBB for presidency

The National Executive Committee (NEC) of the National Democratic Party (NDP) rose from a one-day meeting in Abuja, yesterday, endorsing former military ruler, General Ibrahim Babangida for presidency in 2007.

Making the party's position known to newsmen at NDP secretariat, Chairman of the party, Alhaji Aliyu Habu Fari, said Babangida was the preferred candidate and that they would work for him in the next elections.

He said the ex-head of state has given NDP the go-ahead to fly his campaign kite.

Reminded that the former head of state is a member of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), Fari contended that Babangida

By Habeeb I. Pindiga, Political Reporter

never belonged to any party other than the NDP.

He said the party was putting up the former ruler because PDP has failed to meet expectations of Nigerians.

According to him, Babangida refused to contest in 2003 because his former boss, President Olusegun Obasanjo was contesting.

He said, however, that should the president go for a third term, Babangida would challenge him.

"I tell you categorically that IBB has never been a member of the PDP and I tell you that he will contest the presidential election in 2007 under the NDP. Even if Obasanjo decides to go for a

third term as is being speculated, IBB will challenge him.

"Its not true that he registered as number 007, because PDP membership numbers must begin with 61. So it's not true. And I tell you, go and verify IBB has given us the go ahead to endorse him. Our party has always been IBB and we will continue as such." Fari said.

Speaking on the ongoing national political reform conference, the chairman said the whole thing was a plan to paper over the failures of the PDP government.

"The NEC also condemned in strongest terms, the National Political Reforms Conference, which has further exposed the prostrate leadership of the PDP Government. Whatever the agenda of the conference, the

NDP would resist any attempt to impose 'innovations' that are designed for the selfish interest of one man alone in the name of perpetuity. Apart from being illegal and unconstitutional, the representatives are a bunch of tired and fatigued Nigerians who have nothing to offer a new generation such as ours." He said.

Mantu marks birthday with lecture on democracy

Professor G.O. Nwankwo, in a lecture to mark the inauguration of the Senator Ibrahim Mantu annual lecture on good governance, peace and democracy, said the on going national political reform conference is an opportunity for Nigeria to retrace its steps and have a shift to good governance.

The event which also marks the 58th birthday of the Deputy Senate President, Alhaji Ibrahim Mantu, also witnessed the launching of a book on good governance and democracy.

Professor Nwankwo noted that: "The way ahead is clear. If Nigeria wants to exploit and maximise her full potentials as the giant of Africa, if she wants to realise her dream of a great society and beacon of hope for the black race, then the sleeping giant must be aroused and

By Isa Sanusi, Political Reporter

unchained."

In a brief remark, the President of the Senate, Adolphus Wabara emphasized that good governance

is the only way of sustaining democracy while describing his deputy, Alhaji Ibrahim Mantu, as a principled politician whose life is entirely devoted to promoting democracy and bringing development to his people.

Better life reforms not political

The North Central coordinator of the Better Life for African (Rural) women programme, Hon. Zainab Abdul Malik, has said that the ongoing repositioning of the programme has nothing to do with the 2007 general elections.

Honourable Malik who made statement while speaking at the first quarterly meeting of the programme in Lafia, Nasarawa State, said the aim of the repositioning to continue with the good works of her excellency, Dr. Maryam Babangida which has affected women pristinely in Nigeria.

She said rather than assure the programme was

By Hammeed M. Bello, Political Reporter

being repositioned for political reasons, people should encourage the founder of the programme for the sacrifice she has made towards repositioning the programme which scope has been batted to other African countries.

The zonal coordinator reminded the women of the fact that most first ladies in the past preferred to sit back and enjoy the spoils of office, and called for selfless service for the realisation of the better life programme.



NIGERIAN RAILWAY CORPORATION

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Management of the Nigerian Railway Corporation wishes to inform the general Public that it has been brought to its notice that some fraudsters (419) are perpetrating acts aimed at duping foreign firms who are coaxed to believing that NRC is disposing some of her wasted assets (scrapped metals).

These fraudsters have gone as far as parading pictures of new rails stacked within the Railway Compound, Ebute-metta and other parts of the country as rail scraps for sale.

The Public is hereby informed and advised to be weary of fraudsters circulating false information about the sale of railway assets and scraps.

There is an existing Federal Government embargo on sale of scraps for export. Please be warned.

SIGNED
MANAGEMENT

SPORTS

Torrential rain delays start of Match Play Championship

The start of the WGC-Accenture Match Play Championship was pushed back 24 hours on Tuesday due to the near-record rainfall pounding southern California.

First round matches

scheduled for Wednesday at Carlsbad's La Costa Resort and Spa will now be played on Thursday, while the second and third rounds will be staged on Friday.

Quarter-final and semi-final matches will go ahead on

Saturday with the final on Sunday.

It will mark the second consecutive year that rain has wiped out opening day action at the \$7.5 million event.

Starting Thursday, how-

ever, the forecast is for mostly sunny skies offering hope there will not be a repeat of last week's PGA Tour event in Los Angeles where heavy rains reduced the Nissan Open to just 36 holes.

More than six inches of rain has lashed across southern California since last Thursday leaving devastation and chaos.

Golfers arrived in Carlsbad to find fairways submerged and bunkers transformed into small lakes forcing the cancellation of practice rounds on Monday and Tuesday.

When play begins, Tiger Woods will be bidding

for an unprecedented third consecutive title and a return to the top of the world rankings.

The former world number one has triumphed in his last 12 matches here, while his overall record in the event comprises 20 wins and just three losses.

He has made a habit of thriving in the World Golf Championships (WGC) arena, with eight victories in 16 starts. In contrast, his biggest rival this week, top-ranked Vijay Singh, has yet to win one.

While Woods' record at the La Costa Resort and Spa is second to none, Fijian Singh has never progressed beyond the second round in five at-

tempts.

Woods, Singh, U.S. Masters champion Phil Mickelson and U.S. Open winner Retief Goosen, as the top four seeds, have been placed in different groups with the elite field divided into four sections.

Singh, a nine-time winner on the 2004 PGA Tour, will take on Japan's Shingo Katayama in his opening match while Woods will launch his title defence against Zimbabwean Nick Price.

Mickelson meets fellow American Loren Roberts and Goosen comes up against Australia's Stephen Leany.



Despite an afternoon of rainstorm, Vijay Singh continues his practice while working on his fairway bunker shots at World Golf Championship's Accenture Match Play Championship on Tuesday. Singh, the world number one rated player, meets Japan's Shingo Katayama in the first round.

Rose so sweet for Raptors

Jalen Rose scored 30 points and played some solid defence to guide the Toronto Raptors to a 100-82 victory over the New Jersey Nets.

Rose shot stole the show against former Toronto favourite Vince Carter, who only made eight shots out of 25 attempts on the night.

Chris Bosh added 16 points and 12 rebounds for the Raptors, who seemed

to play with extra motivation with Carter on the opposing team at East Rutherford.

It was only Toronto's fifth win on the road in 26 games this season.

In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Richard Hamilton and Tayshaun Prince collected 19 points apiece to lead the streaking Detroit Pistons to a 97-88 win over the New York Knicks.

Detroit have now won five straight games and 10 out of

11.

In Orlando, Jermaine O'Neal registered 20 points in only 22 minutes as the Indiana Pacers routed the Magic 108-84.

Fred Jones contributed 18 points for the Pacers.

Meanwhile, Michael Redd amassed 39 points to carry the Milwaukee Bucks to a 112-102 triumph over the Charlotte Bobcats.

And in Chicago, Ben Gordon collected 29 points as the Bulls beat the Miami Heat 105-101 in overtime.

The Heat lost Shaquille O'Neal early in the first quarter when he hobbled off the court.

He was later diagnosed with a left knee strain and will be re-evaluated Wednesday.

Ray Allen scored 29 points, including two free throws with 16.7 seconds left, as the Seattle SuperSonics edged the Rockets 87-85 in Houston.

Finally, in the late-finishing games on the western seaboard, there were home wins for both the LA Lakers and the Sacramento Kings.

Stam still bitter over United exit

Three and a half years may have passed but the wounds created by Jaap Stam's abrupt departure from Manchester United have still not healed completely.

That was evident as the giant Dutch defender prepared to run out at Old Trafford for his new employers AC Milan yesternight.

The 32-year-old can still not quite understand why it was that Sir Alex Ferguson was prepared to accept a 16-million-pound bid for him from Lazio in the summer of 2001, just two years after he had helped United lift the Cham-

pions League trophy on that unforgettable night in Barcelona.

"Manchester United know they made a mistake in selling me," Stam claimed.

Given that Stam prospered in Italy while United endured a trophy-less 2001-02 campaign, that view will be shared by many of the club's fans.

But Ferguson is not about to admit that he got it wrong. Asked if he had any regrets about selling a player at the peak of his powers, the Scot snapped: "I wouldn't go into that," having just seconds before claimed not to

have been surprised by Stam's success in Italy.

"He was still a young man (when he left) and he's had a great career in Italy. I'm not surprised."

Stam, now 32, insists he bears no grudge against Ferguson or the United directors.

"There have been opportunities to confront them but I have turned them down," he said. "What would be the point? I know I made a mistake and they do too."

"I was very settled at Manchester United. I had even just ordered a new kitchen but if a club wants to

sell you, there is nothing you can do. You can be sold like cattle.

"In what other industry can a good employee be ushered out of the door against their wishes?"

Stam's reference to his own mistake relates to the contents of his autobiography, which contained a number of indiscreet snippets about life in the Old Trafford dressing room as well as the revelation that

the United boss had made an illegal approach to him when he was still playing for PSV Eindhoven.

That is widely seen as having sealed his fate, although that version of events was denied by Ferguson in his autobiography, where he claimed that Stam had been sold because he believed the player had passed his best and could be replaced by Laurent Blanc, then available on a free transfer.

Safin slumps to shock Dubai loss

Marat Safin suffered a shock loss to unseeded Nicolas Kiefer in round one of the Dubai Tennis Championships.

Playing his first match since winning the Australian Open, Safin showed some good touches but was beaten 7-6 (7-2) 6-4 by the in-form Kiefer.

The German got on top in the first-set tie-break, striking a sweet forehand to win the first point against serve.

And he maintained the momentum early in the sec-

ond set, breaking the Russian with the help of an inspired volley.

Spain's Feliciano Lopez lined up a second round clash with Andre Agassi by beating Thailand's Paradorn Srichaphan.

Lopez, who lost in three sets to Roger Federer in last year's final, won 6-2 3-6 6-3.

Former champion Fabrice Santoro of France was beaten 6-3 6-0 by sixth seeded Russian Nikolay Davydenko.

There were also wins for two other Russians, Igor

Andreev and seventh seed Mikhail Youzhny.



Safin

Martinez sets up clash with Myskina

Former Wimbledon champion Conchita Martinez rallied from a set down to beat Roberta Vinci of Italy 5-7 6-0 6-2 in the first round of the Qatar Open on Tuesday.

The Spaniard, ranked 37 in the world, now meets world number five and third seed Anastasia Myskina, champion in Doha for the last two years.

Top seed Amelie Mauresmo, number two seed Maria Sharapova and fourth seed Alicia Molik will also take to the court on Wednesday after first

round byes.

"I needed to change the pace of my shots. I was playing quite low in the beginning," Martinez said. "Only when I started mixing it up things began to happen in my favour."

Looking ahead to the Myskina clash, she said: "She (Myskina) is a great player and I am sure it will be a tough match. I know I will have to fight for every ball."

In other first round matches, Australian Nicole Pratt beat Selima Sfar of Tunisia 7-5 6-2 while Japan's Ai Sugiyama defeated

...in Qatar

Australia's Samantha Stosur 6-2 6-3.



Martinez

Sports

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Vieira still hopeful after Arsenal's Munich nightmare

Captain Patrick Vieira believes Arsenal still have a chance of reaching the Champions League quarter-finals despite a 3-1 defeat at Bayern Munich that almost reduced

his manager Arsene Wenger to tears. Wenger said Tuesday's performance was the English champions' worst in the competition and he had felt like crying before a late goal

by defender Kolo Toure revived hope ahead of the second leg on March 9. Arsenal's defending was abject, particularly in the second half when they shipped two goals and could have conceded at least two more. Toure was at fault for the first goal and injured England defender Sol Campbell was badly missed.

"It is frustrating to concede too many goals and we need to work on that as a team," Vieira said. "We need to defend better if we want to progress."

"Sol is important to the team but he was not there and we have to cope. It is frustrating because Bayern were not better than us."

Arsenal failed to have a meaningful shot on target in the first half and once again in a match that mattered, key players like striker Thierry Henry, and midfielders Vieira and Robert Pires could not impose themselves.

"We were very, very disappointed with the quality of our performance," was Wenger's verdict.

Claudio Pizarro scored the first two goals for the home side and Hasan Salihamidzic added a third in the 64th minute before Toure redeemed himself partially by stabbing home late on.

"At 3-0 down, it would be 95 percent that you have no chance of going through," Vieira told the London Evening Standard. "Now we have hope with that last-minute goal."

"It will still be difficult but not impossible. We can score goals and we now have to believe in ourselves."

Campbell, who has made only 19 appearances this season because of leg injuries, is doubtful for the return at Highbury because of an ankle problem.

Wenger conceded that the London side's defence, and Ivorian Toure in particular, needed an injection of confidence after conceding 45 goals this season in all

competitions.

"Pascal Cygan did well but Sol Campbell, with his experience, makes everybody better," Wenger said.

"Kolo has a bit of a doubt in his mind at the moment. He has lost a little bit of his confidence and we have to pump him up again."



Bayern Munich's keeper Oliver Kahn, right, shakes hands with Arsenal's Jens Lehmann after their Champions League tie in Munich.

Luxemburgo puts Real win down to attitude, preparation

Real Madrid coach Vanderlei Luxemburgo put their 1-0 victory over Juventus down to the players' determined attitude and his own detailed preparation for the Champions League knockout round match.

"I was delighted with the attitude of my players," Luxemburgo said after the first leg. "In games like this you can't just play at 99 percent, you have to play at 100 percent and that's what we did tonight."

Real dominated at the Bernabeu but only pierced the Juve defence once when centre back Ivan Helguera sent a glancing header into the top corner after David Beckham whipped in a trademark free kick from the left just after the half-hour mark.

"We tried free kicks like the one Beckham took 30 or 40 times behind closed doors in training yesterday because we knew it would be very important and it paid off," said the Brazilian, who was making his debut in European competition.

"For me Real played a great game and 1-0 was a good result for us," he said. "But I felt we had enough chances to have scored two or three."

"I expected Juve to play on the break like they did and to try and use long balls up front to their forwards. But we were ready for that and always had five players covering back to deal with

their counter-attacks."

However, Luxemburgo, who guided Santos to the Brazilian title before joining Real at the end of last year, is well aware that the tie is far from over yet.

"This is a game of 180 minutes and all we've done is won the first half. The important thing is to think that the key to qualification will be in Turin not here in Madrid."

His opposite number Fabio Capello was not unhappy with the result but said he was disappointed that Real had caused his side so many problems from set pieces.

"It was not a bad result for us despite the fact that we lost the game," said the former Real Madrid boss.

"We played moments of good football but I was disappointed that we suffered so much at dead ball situations."

"The goal came from a free kick and (Real's Walter) Samuel headed against the bar from a corner. We shouldn't have allowed their players to have challenged for the ball."

Capello also stressed the loss of playmaker Pavel Nedved after a clash of heads with Real defender Raul Bravo just three minutes after the goal had limited Juve's ability to respond.

"While Nedved was on the pitch we looked dangerous in attack but when he went off it took his replacement (Ruben Olivera) a long time to warm up."

Benitez defends Dudek after blunder

Liverpool boss Rafael Benitez has absolved his error-prone goalkeeper Jerzy Dudek from blame for the late goal that handed Bayer Leverkusen a Champions League lifeline.

Benitez's side appeared to have killed off the Germans at Anfield on Tuesday night when Dietmar Hamann added a late free-kick to first half goals from Luis Garcia and John Arne Riise.

But the nature of the second leg in Germany in two weeks time was transformed when Dudek failed to hold a volley from Dimitar Berbatov and allowed Leverkusen substitute Franca to prod home a goal that means a 2-0 win on home soil would put Liverpool out. Benitez however insisted that Dudek deserved credit for the saves he had made earlier in the game.

"If we had scored all the chances we had we would not be talking about the goal we conceded," the Spaniard said.

"It was a difficult shot that bounced in front of him — in my opinion Jerzy had a good game."

Despite the late setback, Benitez was delighted to see his side's stop-start season click back into gear five days before they face Chelsea in the League Cup final.

"Sure 3-0 is better than 3-1 but if you had offered me this score before the match, I would have signed for it," he said.

"Of course now we will have to play the second leg a little differently because we

know that a 2-0 defeat will put us out. But when you score three goals in the Champions League it gives you confidence for sure."

The fact that Liverpool coped so well without the influence of their suspended captain, Steven Gerrard, will also have been encouraging for Benitez.

But he will also be aware that Leverkusen created enough chances to have given the night a radically

different complexion if it had not been for the wastefulness of their two strikers, Dimitar Berbatov and Andrej Voronin.

"My view is that we were a little unlucky to lose by that margin," said their coach Klaus Augenthaler.

"At 3-0 the tie was virtually dead but our goal has given us a lifeline and given that, in the group stage, we produced wins against Real Madrid, Roma and Dynamo

Kiev when we needed them, we have a chance."

"Now we just have to get this game out of our system."

The quality of Garcia's 15th minute strike belied what had been a shaky start by Liverpool and Leverkusen might have gone ahead when Robson Ponte blasted over from 15 yards in the 11th minute.

At that stage, Liverpool's prospects of keeping the tie alive for the return of Gerrard for the second leg looked bleak.

The outlook suddenly improved however courtesy of a superb piece of improvisation from Gerrard's stand-in Igor Biscan.

Collecting the ball just inside the Leverkusen half, the Croatian midfielder evaded challenges from Paul Freier and Carsten Ramelow before threading an exquisitely judged pass in behind the visitors' back four.

Garcia's run to meet it was perfectly timed and the Spaniard's shot was equally deft, the ball slipping between the legs of Jorg Butt.

Liverpool had a huge let-off just before the half-hour mark, when Steve Finnan's misguided header gave Berbatov a free run at goal, which he squandered by directing his shot wide of the post.



Liverpool goalkeeper, Jerzy Dudek was absolved from blame for a late goal that handed Bayer Leverkusen a Champions League lifeline

Del Piero: Juve need 'perfect' show to beat Real

Juventus striker Alessandro Del Piero says his team need to deliver a "perfect" performance if they are to overturn a 1-0 deficit from the first-leg of their Champions League tie with Real Madrid.

Although Real dominated Tuesday's game, a 31st minute glancing header from Real defender Ivan Helguera was all that separated the sides leaving the Italians with a chance of making the quarter-finals.

"The only recipe for beating them in Turin is to produce a perfect performance," said Del Piero, who was often left isolated in attack as Juve came under pressure from the Spaniards.

"We only managed that in part in Spain, we had some good chances and so there is a bit of regret that we didn't get a better result," added the Italy international.

"We kept things together well for the first half hour but then we stretched out and when you give players like they have plenty of space then it is over."

"In the return game it will be vital to close down space and attack their defence. But we can do it."

Juve's task in the return game has been made harder due to their failure to get a goal in Madrid, which means they need to score twice while not conceding at the Delle Alpi stadium.

If Frenchman Zinedine Zidane, a former Juve player,

is in the same form as on Tuesday that will be a mighty task.

"Zizou had one of those Zizou nights," said Juve coach Fabio Capello. "Along with Roberto Carlos he was their main threat."

"In the second leg we will have to keep a very close eye on both of them and above all to the threat on the counter-attack that is the biggest danger."

Juve should have their French striker David Trezeguet fit in time for the return on March 9 after he missed the first leg with flu.

Czech midfielder Pavel Nedved, substituted in the first half after a clash of heads with Raul Bravo, should recover in time for the second-leg.

Sports

Kenya sack Harambee Stars coach

Kenya have sacked coach Twahir Muhiddin just five months after he was tasked with reviving the fortunes of the Harambee Stars.

The dismissal follows Kenya's 5-1 defeat to Morocco in a World Cup qualifier on 9 February.

Kenya Football Federation (KFF) chairman Alfred Sambu said on Wednesday that Muhiddin's two assistants, John Bobby Ogolla and Rishadi Shedu, had also been sacked and replacements would be named within 24 hours.

"It was a bad result and the coaches are to-blame. There was an element of incompetence and indiscipline," said Sambu.

Kenya lost to Group Five leaders Morocco in Rabat and are third in the table,

three points adrift but with a game in hand.

They play Botswana in Nairobi at the end of next month.

Muhiddin, who was appointed in October to replace the outspoken Jacob Mulec, said Sambu's preference for a foreign coach was responsible for his dismissal.

"When Sambu became



Muhiddin

the boss he made it clear that he wanted a foreign coach, so I'm not surprised that he has removed us," he told BBC Sport.

"However, he should know that's not the solution. What we need are adequate preparations and incentives for the players.

"I want the KFF boss to know that we have had foreign coaches before but they've not taken us anywhere.

"He'll come, get a big house, a car and fat salary but at the end he'll be sacked because I believe African coaches know our problems better than foreigners," the sacked coach said.

Muhiddin guided the Harambee Stars to a 2-1 win over Guinea but the team then finished fourth in last year's Cecafa Senior Challenge Cup in Ethiopia.

O'Neal injured in Heat loss

Miami not only lost a game against the Bulls on Tuesday night, they also found out how much they rely on their centre Shaquille O'Neal. The Heat lost 105-101 in overtime and O'Neal left the court early after he went up for an alley-oop pass from Dyane Wade and fell on the Bulls' Othella Harrington.

Ben Gordon and the Bulls took advantage of O'Neal's absence as the Chicago guard collected 29 points including 3 three-pointers in the fourth quarter. Shaquille O'Neal was later diagnosed with a left knee strain and will be re-evaluated Wednesday night before the Heat's game in Indiana.

Vince Carter was overplayed by former teammate Jalen Rose in New Jersey's 100-82 home loss against Toronto.

Rose of scored 30 points and played solid defense against former Toronto favorite Vince Carter to guide the Raptors. He shot 12-for-15 and stole the show against Carter, who notched 22 points in his first game against his old team but only shot 8-for-25.

Chris Bosh added 16

points and 12 rebounds for the Raptors, who seemed to be extra motivated with Carter on the opposing team at East Rutherford. Toronto won on the road for only the fifth time in 26 games this season, improving to 22-32 overall.

Jason Kidd picked up 20 points for the Nets, who had no one else in double figures.

New Jersey slipped to 23-31, one game ahead of Toronto in the Atlantic Division.

In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Richard Hamilton and Tayshaun Prince collected 19 points apiece to lead the streaking Detroit Pistons to a 97-88 win over the New York Knicks.

Detroit has now won five straight games and 10 out of 11. Chauncey Billups added 15 points and eight assists for the NBA champion Pistons.

Jamal Crawford scored 23 points for the Knicks, who have lost 20 of their last 25 outings.

Jermaine O'Neal registered 20 points in only 22 minutes as the Indiana Pacers routed the Magic 108-84 in Orlando.

Fred Jones added 18

points for the Pacers, who shot 50 percent. Jeff Foster contributed 12 points and 11 rebounds. Jameer Nelson had 15 points for the Magic, who suffered their worst loss of the season.

Michael Redd amassed 39 points to carry the Milwaukee Bucks to a 112-102 away triumph over the Charlotte Bobcats. Desmond Mason added 20 points for the Bucks while Maurice Williams had a career-high 14 assists.

Brevin Knight scored 19 points to lead Charlotte. Eddy Curry added 16 points for the Bulls. Dwyane Wade had 21 points and 11 rebounds for the Heat.

Ray Allen scored 29 points, including two free throws with 16.7 seconds left, as the Seattle SuperSonics edged the Rockets 87-85 in Houston. Rashard Lewis added 23 points for Seattle while Yao Ming had 30 for Houston.

Chris Webber posted 30 points to steer the Sacramento Kings to a 114-104 home victory over the Atlanta Hawks. Mike Bibby scored 23 points and Brad Miller added 16 points, 14 rebounds and seven assists for Sacramento, which has won two of its last eight games. Al Harrington's 25 points led Atlanta.

Lamar Odom had 21 points and 11 rebounds as the Lakers rallied to beat the Boston Celtics 104-95 in the Staples center. Kobe Bryant also had 21 points for the Lakers. Ricky Davis and Paul Pierce led Boston with 25 points each.



Shaquille O'Neal

Egypt opt for Saudi Arabia

Egypt will face Saudi Arabia in a friendly on 14 March, after refusing to meet Portugal's financial demands for a friendly in Cairo.

The runner-up at the 2004 European championship had asked for an appearance fee of US\$2million, which Egypt's FA said they were unable to pay.

"We were hoping to play against them but unfortunately we cannot meet their demands," said Samir Adly, the administrative manager of the national team.

Egypt's away game against Saudi Arabia, which will be played in Dammam, is in preparation for their forth-

coming 2006 World Cup and African Cup of Nations qualifier against Libya in Cairo.

"We wanted to play against a team that has a similar style to the Libyans," said Adly.

"I believe the experienced Saudi team is the right choice."

The Saudis are also using the game to prepare for their Asian World Cup qualifier match against South Korea.

Egypt are currently fourth in Group Three with seven points, five adrift of leaders Ivory Coast.

Ivory Coast, Benin, Cameroon and Sudan are the other teams in the group.



NIGERIAN PORTS AUTHORITY (NPA)

The Gateway to the Nation's Economy is at the 26th Kaduna International Trade Fair.

For all your shipping and related activities, visit our stand at the Federal Ministry of Transport Pavilion.

NPA.....The Gateway to the Nation's Economy

Management

SPORTS

The NFA has surrendered all contract documents on the league to the Nigeria Football League management committee.

NFA board chairman, Alhaji Ibrahim Galadima confirmed yesterday that documents of all contracts on the league including the Globacom Premier League

NFA surrenders contract documents to NFL

By Patrick Andrew, Senior Sports Reporter

sponsorship and with MINAJ, which expired last November, were consigned to the NFL on Monday.

The leadership of the NFL had requested for the docu-

ments some weeks ago. However, the request had generated hiccups between the NFL and Galadima because the latter had referred to the former as an organ without any legal status.

Galadima had argued that

it would amount to illegality to hand over legal documents to the NFL which statute was yet to be ratified by the NFA board.

Even then Galadima had asserted that the NFA would not surrender any

contract documents on the league to the new league body because the said contracts were with the NFA not the NFL.

But yesterday, Galadima said the details of the contracts were forwarded to the NFL in response to an earlier

request, stressing that such details would be equipped them with necessary information needed to either review or reject any of the contracts.

But he insisted though that the MINAJ contract had expired last November even as MINAJ failed to service the terms of the contract.

He observed that the management of the MINAJ had in a meeting last May, 2004 agreed to pay \$220,000 to have the contract extended to 2006.

"The agreement was to allow them to enjoy an extended contract until 2006 to make up for the two years they were unable to service the contract.

"The NFA asked them to show evidence of commitment by paying over \$220,000 within 25 working days. MINAJ boss (Mike Agae-gbo) agreed to raise a personal cheque to us some that when eventually he obtains a bank draft, the personnel cheque would be withdrawn, something we found untidily. Yet they were unable to pay the money forcing us to terminate the contract when it lapsed November, last year."

Consequently, Galadima said the NFL may choose to renegotiate with whoever they feel inclined to do business with noting that the details of the contracts would serve that purpose.



Real Madrid's midfielder David Beckham prepares to take a corner kick during their first leg of the Champions League knockout tie against Juventus at Madrid's Santiago Bernabeu Stadium on Tuesday.

Rangers boss banks on youth

Nugu Rangers boss Davidson Owumi has stated that the team do not have the financial muscle to compete with millionaire club sides for the recruitment of top rated players for the season but rather, they will bank on the youthful talents they have been able to recruit to see them through the season.

In a chat with KICK OFF, he affirmed the club's resolve to achieve its aim this season with the youthful but highly dependent bunch they have put together.

"We are not in the class of clubs who recruit players with over N2.5 million. We just go for rookies who are willing to exhibit their talents to the fullest. With the array of players we have put together, Rangers are destined for the top this season," the young club boss boasted.

Meanwhile, Rangers have welcomed back to their fold run-away attacker,

Edward Ofere, who had in the past few weeks been involved in a big battle to lace boots for double champions Dolphin.

The player, who trained with the team before they travelled to Aba for their Premiership opener against Gabros, told KICK OFF that he was happy to be back to Rangers, stressing: "I am very happy to be back to the coal city. Though I must appeal to all aggrieved persons over my conduct on the now rested issue to show understanding. I hope to use my talent to help the club achieve their target this season".

Reacting to the return of the player, Rangers CEO Davidson Owumi said: "The player's return was for his own good. I thank God for giving him the wisdom to do a rethink. He would however, have to prove himself good enough for a starting place in the team. He would be given a fair chance."

NFL clears Kwara Stadium

Nigeria Football League (NFL) management committee has approved the mini stadium Ilorin for Premier League matches this season.

NFL executive secretary, Salihu Abubakar disclosed to Trustsports yesterday, that the stadium which was placed on ten-days ultimatum by the NFL has now met the standard and specifications required to host Premier

By AbdulRaheem Aodu, Sports Reporter

League matches.

Abubakar added that the NFL inspection team, who went to inspect the stadium were surprised by what they met as they did not expect the stadium to have undergone such a renovation in 10 days.

"The Kwara mini stadium is now fit to host league matches. The NFL inspection

team who went to Ilorin on Tuesday were satisfied with the facilities provided by the stadium. The pitch is now lush green, water is now running, the toilets are sparklingly clean and in good condition. The broken seats in the popular stand has also been replaced, in fact the inspection team called the new state of the stadium the ninth wonder of the world," he disclosed.

The fate of Adamansingba stadium Ibadan, the home ground of Shooting Stars of Ibadan will however be decided today. According to the NFL boss, the inspection team having completed their duty in Ilorin will move to Ibadan on Wednesday while their report will be submitted today.

He also added that Dan Anyiam Stadium Owerri which was found wanting last weekend following Iwuanyanwu Nationale/Dolphin match has been given ten days ultimatum to put the sandy pitch in order.

"The inspection team will visit Adamansingba Stadium in Ibadan today (Wednesday). We expect them to submit their report on Thursday. In the case of Dan Anyiam Stadium in Owerri, Imo State, the management has been given till next week to put things in order to forestall a ban being placed on the stadium," he concluded.

Abubakar denies report on reversal of referees payment

Salihu Abubakar, Secretary of the Interim League Management Board, yesterday denied reports that the board was considering going back to the old practice of making the Premier and Professional league clubs pay the indemnities of referees.

In a telephone interview from his Abuja base, Abubakar told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) that the board had not changed its mind on paying the referees allowances.

Abubakar described the

report by a Lagos radio station as "a wicked rumour".

"There is nothing like that, we have been paying them (referees) since the beginning of the new league season and we intend to continue the payment.

"We are responsible for the payment of the indemnities of the referees handling matches in the Premier and Professional League while the NFA takes charge of the

amateur league," he said.

Abubakar, who refused to disclose how much had been spent on referees emoluments after two weeks of the league, said: "That is for our internal consumption."

In a bid to ensure fair officiating, the new league board decided that clubs would no longer pay the indemnities of referees, a practice which, pundits say, had tainted the league in the past.

Hayatou in flight scare

CAF president Issa Hayatou and other members of the CAF team that came to Aba for the Super Cup match between Enyimba and Hearts of Oak Port into flight problems at the Port Harcourt Airport on Monday after "technical problems" forced a cancellation of their flight to Lagos.

The Bellview plane Resilience with number 5N-BFN which arrived Port Harcourt by 2:00pm, was scheduled to return to Lagos one and half hours later. But the aircraft's automatic system failed soon after landing, shutting down the engines.

A manual system was used to start the plane, and with

everything set for take-off, the engines again shut down and the captain was forced to inform passengers that "there was a slight electrical problem, but we are working on it."

A second aircraft was flown in from Lagos to carry the CAF officials and other passengers to Lagos.

"We had to wait for another aircraft to be brought in from Lagos to take us while the engineers worked on the other aircraft," CAF spokesman Habuba Sulaiman told KICK OFF.

Officials of Bellview at the Port Harcourt Airport declined comments on the issue.

RESULTS

Premier League

| | | | |
|---------|---|-------------|---|
| Enyimba | 3 | Zamfara Utd | 0 |
| Dolphin | 2 | Insurance | 0 |

UEFA Champions League

| | | | |
|-------------------|---|-------------|---|
| Barcelona | 2 | Chelsea | 1 |
| Manchester United | 0 | AC Milan | 1 |
| F.C. Porto | 1 | Inter Milan | 1 |
| Werder Bremen | 0 | Lyon | 3 |

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DAILY TRUST

THURSDAY COLUMN

Thursday, February 24, 2005

"I believe that certain issues must by now be accepted as minimum issues that must be regarded as given These are issues that are central to the oneness of Nigeria and that are core to our stability, security, peace, growth and developmental processes. They include: federalism and federal system of government; presidentialism; multi-religiosity; federal character; popular participation; the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy; and Separation of Powers".

- President Olusegun Obasanjo, speaking at the inauguration of the National Conference.

The President Obasanjo who declared open the National Conference on Political Reforms, must be adequately deconstructed to appreciate the issues which Nigerians will have to confront over the next few months. This is because, despite all the posturings, these are not the best of times for Nigeria under Obasanjo's watch.

Those who have a disposition for a Freudian flight of fancy might immediately recognise that our President is carrying a troubled consciousness, if you ask me, a self-inflicted problem, arising from the way that he has managed Nigeria since his return to power in 1999. Save for his coterie of hangers-on, most Nigerians just refuse to believe that our country has fared well under the Presidency of Obasanjo.

These are facts that must have been very disturbing for a President who not only relishes the attention of the international community, but has a perception of the high worth of his understanding of the problems of the Nigerian state and society, and one who almost instinctively believes he alone knows the answers to the problems that afflict our country. So excessively self-assured is our imperial President, that the other day, while swearing-in his Special Advisers, he also said that he is not obliged to take their advice anyway. Presumably, they have just been given their positions in the true spirit of "come and chop", and they are then expected to take the next logical step, "clean mouth!"

Anyway, the reality around the Obasanjo Presidency, as a result of that tragic flaw of personality and attitude, has seen a harvest of woes: the electoral process has been totally compromised as a result of the massive riggings of 2003; the political party system has been stifled of inner party democracy; the economic structure is not working for the Nigerian people, despite record earnings from unusually high prices of petroleum products; the corruption perception index has not significantly improved the rating of the government and the country.

Around the country, the forces pulling the country towards anarchy have become emboldened as a result of the deepening crisis of legitimacy of the Nigerian state. Although not exactly the same as the regime's electoral and political illegitimacy, but dialectically related, the crisis of state legitimacy has a more profound effect on the nation and its future. The roots of this deepening crisis of state legitimacy must be sought in the philosophical directions that Obasanjo opted for, after his inauguration as President after 1999.

This choice of a neo-liberal economic paradigm and its concomitants, meant a continuation in a more uncaring manner (surprising for an elected government!) of the policies that the military regime of General Babangida imposed on the country, from 1986, with the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). The roll back of the state in vital sectors of economic life, the cut in social spendings, etc, mean that there is really no social net for the poor.

Huge sections of the Nigerian society are not protected by the state; they in fact see the state as an enemy, against which all kinds of crime can be committed. These include the ever increasing numbers of the urban and rural poor; the small scale businessman who has no access to credit to keep afloat; the ruined urban proletariat who is increasingly

A background for the National Conference

becoming a lumpen and declassé mob; youths without hope for a future in a society that is not absorbing them into a national work force; not to mention the rural poor. It is this mass that everyday questions the legitimacy of the Nigerian state through acts of banditry, religious and ethnic violence, and sundry acts of 'luddite' destructiveness which affect the cohesion of the country.

Unfortunately for the nation's political elite, even the welfarist vision that the manifesto of the ruling party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), had hoped to implement was set aside by an erstwhile, nationalist Obasanjo now turned apostle of neo-liberal capitalism.



President Olusegun Obasanjo

Obasanjo's team has stifled inner party democracy and has eliminated the capacities of the PDP as a thinking, living organisation able to channel creative and critical ideas for the growth of the party and by extension the country. An authoritarian pall has firmly been placed on the party system, reflecting the worst element of the Obasanjo persona.

The main loser in this scenario can only be the nation's political system. The reason is simply that over the past five years or so, Obasanjo has gradually destroyed the consensus built by the nation's political elite, which ended the military administration, and which the most idealistic members of that elite, like Chief Sunday Awoniyi and other founding fathers of the party, saw as an historical opportunity to begin to build a new country on the basis of a democratic political culture nurtured around basic values of decency, ethical correctness and consensus building, as against the brigandage of the politics of the past, which always guaranteed a return to military rule.

But even Chief Awoniyi with all his brilliance and idealism did not seem to understand that Nigeria had changed completely. The military period had not only created a new elite which had made stupendous wealth from the 'privatisation' of the state in an environment of institutionalised violence; but the international conditions of globalised neoliberal capitalism has also numbed the capacity of the elite for compassion. In this new condition, it is party chieftains without any

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known principles, but survival and ruthlessness that can survive. If you then have a President like Obasanjo, whose peasant roots has also flowed into an authoritarian upbringing in the military doctrines sourced from a colonial military machine, a recipe has been prepared for the conditions that the nation's leadership has imposed on the country today: despair, crisis and alienation!

But we must also admit that our President also possesses in abundance, what many call native intelligence and he instinctively knows how to play the survival game. This is the backdrop, from a psychological perspective, that explains the imperative of the conference. Obasanjo destroyed the consensus which brought him to power, through his numerous acts of intolerance and anti-democratic spirit.

However, with an eye towards his place in history on one hand, and if the suspicion of those who don't trust him must be believed, on the other hand, hoping he could perpetuate himself in power post-2007, through cobbling together a new consensus, he has put in place his National Conference. How this pans out remains to be seen.

What is interesting is the contradictory content to the character of President Obasanjo. If we look at the quotation at the opening of this column, they help to place in bold relief that contradictory character which Obasanjo carries like a cross and which affects his husbandry of statecraft since he came into power in 1999. Let's examine the issues cursorily.

Our President talks of federal system of government, yet he is an incurable unitarist; he speaks of multi-religiosity but can't stop playing the religious card, and manipulating religious feelings to secure or retain advantage; Obasanjo lauds popular participation but emasculates a robust political process; he waxes lyrical about the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy.

He obviously didn't read the relevant clauses of that very well, including such aspects of the economic objectives section 16 (2 C & D) which say, the state shall direct its policy towards ensuring "that the economic system is not operated in such a manner as to permit the concentration of wealth or the means of production and exchange in the hands of few individuals or of a group," and "that suitable and adequate shelter, suitable and adequate food, reasonable national minimum living age, old age care and pensions, and unemployment, sick benefits and welfare of the disabled are provided for all citizens."

It is the same President that is privatising our national asset, though his unconstitutional embrace of the policies of neo-liberal capitalism. What will suit Nigeria is to take up the challenge which Obasanjo has thrown by the participants at the National Conference.

If these distinguished ladies and gentlemen work conscientiously, they could be affirming the tenets of democracy and also be challenging the surrender to the orthodoxy of market-place capitalism. Obasanjo would have dribbled himself into a cul-de-sac, and for once Nigerians might just find the liver to construct a new consensus which leads onto the highway of national liberation. This is a challenge that must be at the heart of the National Conference, not the hidden agenda which Obasanjo is said to have been nursing that pushed him towards the conference in the first place.

But the question is do we have an assembly of individuals able to look Obasanjo in the face and tell him that he is not in tune with the feelings of the Nigerian people? Can they offer Nigeria a respite through a different programme that pushes policy choice away from the disastrous neoliberal NEEDS platforms which cannot solve the problems at the root of the deepening crises of legitimacy facing the Nigerian state today? It is in the interest of the elite to save the nation now so that we would not harvest an apocalypse