



STAR FEATURE
Buruku, the notorious river post
 Pages 20 & 21

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The Nigerian Export-Import Bank (NEXIM Bank) has threatened to publish the names of debtor companies and their directors if they fail to pay back the loans they collected from the bank within the next four weeks.
 The managing director

NEXIM threatens debtors, suspends loan facilities

By Anas A. Galadima, Reporter (Business)

and chief executive of the bank, Alhaji Baba Yusuf Ahmed, who made this known in Abuja yesterday, said the bank will not relent in its efforts to recover monies owed the bank which is put

at about N1.67 billion. According to him, the bank has recorded a high incidence of defaulting debtors

because of the "presumption by some beneficiaries and indeed many Nigerians, that NEXIM is a government bank and as such, accessing loans is part of the national cake sharing."

He add that henceforth, the bank has suspended its direct lending facility (DLF) "except to companies that have excellent records of repayment of facilities within the last two years in which

DLF has been in operation." Although the debtor companies have collaterals, he said "falling back on those collaterals will be the last resort. If they fail to pay within the next four weeks, then we take the next step," he added.

Contd. on Pg 2

Mantu accuses govs of undermining palliative c'ttee

Lagos denies allegation

By Isa Sanusi, Political Reporter (Senate)

The committee set-up by President Olusegun Obasanjo to cushion the effects of the incessant increases in the prices of petroleum products, yesterday expressed disappointment with the none implementation of its recommendations particularly blaming governors of the 36 states and the FCT for showing lack of willingness to contribute their counterpart funding for the procurement of commuter buses as recommended by the committee in its preliminary report.

Chairman of the committee who is also the deputy Senate President, Alhaji Ibrahim Mantu, told newsmen that "among the things that this committee recommended to the federal government was the purchase of commercial vehicles which will translate into cheaper cost of transportation. But I am sad that we are not yet there. In fact, none of the 36 states and the FCT has purchased the buses. It is sad that this committee's report has not been implemented," he said.

He further said "but this afternoon, we were briefed by the minister of finance and she told us that she has written to the state governors as-

king them to express their willingness to receive federal government's contribution and also make available their counterpart funding."

Senator Mantu then appealed to the governors to take up the matter seriously pointing out that after all, the intervention will bring suc-

cess to the people that voted them into power, saying if "the federal government has made the money available to them (governors), I think they should be anxious to receive it and procure the buses. "May I appeal to the governors to collect the money

from the federal ministry of finance and add their counterpart contribution."

He said his committee will consider adopting petroleum prices modulation to curtail further increases, adding that the committee has assigned a body to monitor tariff reliefs

Contd. on Pg 2

SOME STATE DELEGATES AT A GLANCE

Akwa-Ibom State Mr. Etim Inyang Mrs. Helen Esuene Dr. Asikpo Essien Dr. Ekeng Anam-Ndu Senator Akaninyene Ukpana Senator Emmanuel Essien Ibok-Essien	Delta State Mr. Gamaliel Onosode Prof. Itse Sagay Prof. Omafume Onoge Andrew Moemeke Rear Admiral Onah E.K. Clark
Anambra State Dr. Chukwuemeka Ezeife Mr. Zik Obi Senator Mike Ajegbo Mr. Gabriel Akweze Chief Obi Ogene	Borno State Alhaji Muhammadu Goni Alhaji Baba Ahmed Jidda Professor Nuru Alkali Alhaji Mohammed Alibe Alhaji Ibrahim Damcida Alhaji Lawal Buba
Benue State Gen. Victor Malu (rtd) Gen. Geoffrey Ejigah (rtd) Steven Okor Fred Orti	Gombe State Senator Uba Ahmed Alhaji Magaji Mu'azu

Contd. on Pg 2



Vice President Atiku Abubakar receiving a copy of the Director-General Securities and Exchange Commission, Alhaji Musa Ali Faki's address during the visit of the members of the commission to the State House, Abuja ...yesterday. Pix: Joe Oroye.

PDP dismisses Reps' stand on National Confab

Umaru Dikko canvasses more time

By Reuben Yunana, State House Correspondent & Aliyu Haruna, Correspondent, Kaduna

The ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), has dismissed the suit filed by 57 members of the House of Representatives challenging government's intention to hold a national political reform conference.

issue, chairman, PDP Board of Trustees, Chief Tony Anenih, told State House correspondents that the position of

the Representatives was not a hindrance.

"You just wait and see. How many of them (Reps) are saying that they will not pass the budget? Why don't you wait until the proposal

is rejected or accepted?", the PDP chieftain stated.

Anenih who was at the State House to confer with Vice President Atiku Abubakar and Chief of Staff to the President, Major-General Abdullahi Mohammed (rtd), also dismissed notions that

Contd. on Pg 2

FG dissolves NITEL, M-tel boards ahead privatisation

By Ahmed I. Shekarau, Group Business Editor

Following the termination of its contract agreement with Pentascope, the Dutch company managing Nigerian Telecommunications Limited (NITEL), the federal government, yesterday dissolved the boards of

directors of NITEL and the Nigerian Mobile Telecommunications Limited (M-tel). In place of the boards, the two organisations will be run by

a technical committee to be headed by the minister of communications, Chief Cornelius Adebayo, preparatory to their privatisation.

The boards of NITEL and M-tel were hitherto chaired

Contd. on Pg 2

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News

Mantu *Contd. from Pg 1*

and pharmaceutical products and related materials meant to ease the price increases accruing from hike in petroleum products prices.

The president of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Comrade Adams Oshiomhole, who is also a member of the committee, insisted that the committee has to address the issue of disparity in the prices of petroleum products between Lagos and other parts of the nation.

"There is no reason why people should pay for equalisation which amounts to billions of naira and the money is paid by every Nigerian. People in the North and East don't enjoy that equity. This subsidy is financed by the people. Government must ensure that the man in the North and the woman in the East enjoy the benefit."

In a swift response, the Lagos State commissioner for information and strategy, Mr Dele Alake told *Daily Trust*

that Lagos state government has not received any directives or communication in respect of the palliative measures.

Mr Alake who described the committee as only one of President Olusegun Obasanjo's tricks to fool Nigerians, also said Lagos state has not been contacted on the joint funding of the procurement of commercial buses as a palliative measure.

NEXIM *Contd. from Pg 1*

Alhaji Ahmed further explained that though some of those loans were collected by companies through some banks that are now defunct, NEXIM bank intends to recover such loans by tracing the debtor companies who collected the loans through such banks since the companies still exist.

He described the attitude of some debtors who collected loans over 14 years ago from the defunct Nigerian Export Credit Guarantee and

Togo's new President, Faure Gnassingbe, was sworn in yesterday after parliamentary deputies changed the constitution to allow him complete his father's term, after Gnassingbe Eyadema died during the weekend.

Mr Gnassingbe, 39, took oath of office in front of judges and MPs at the presidential palace in the capital, Lomé.

"I vow to preserve the

Togo swears-in Eyadema Jnr.

Elkanah Chawai,
Reporter (Foreign Desk)

integrity of the nation and to always be a faithful and loyal servant of the people," he said.

Deputies dismissed the parliament's speaker, who, under the constitution, should have assumed power after President Eyadema's death on Saturday.

The assembly changed the constitution, allowing Faure Gnassingbe, 39, to complete his father's term.

On Sunday, parliament voted to remove speaker Fambare Natchaba Ouattara, who had been returning to Togo from Paris when President Eyadema's death was announced on Saturday.

While the constitution stipulates the speaker should take power in the event of the president's death, he was apparently unable to enter the country because the borders were closed.

MPs also passed a change to the constitution so that there is now no legal requirement to hold elections in Togo within 60 days of a leader's death.

The new article states that the president of the national assembly succeeds the president and can stay in

transition in Togo was a threat to peace.

The UN, EU and for ruler, France had also demanded respect for the constitution.

France put West African alert while the EU warned with Togo could suffer.

The exiled Togo opposition leader, Gilchrist Olympio, has called for a presidential election to be held at the same time as a general election due this year.

Togo's army, which prospered from Eyadema's rule, has defended its actions.

Army Chief of Staff, General Zakari Nandja, said on Saturday that the decision to hand power to Faure Gnassingbe had been taken to avoid a power vacuum.

Eyadema, 69, Africa's longest-serving ruler, died while being evacuated for medical treatment abroad - reportedly from heart attack.

SOME STATE DELEGATES AT A GLANCE

Professor Idris Mohammed
Alhaji Abubakar Aliyu Deba
Alhaji Abubakar Muazu Hassan
Mr. Nuhu Poloma

Jigawa State

H.R.H. Alhaji Najib Hussain
Alhaji Sulaiman Bappa
Engr. Habu Gumel
Alhaji Aminu Ringim
Alhaji Tijjani Inuwa Dutse
Hajiya Fatima Mai Borno

Kano State

Alhaji Magaji Danbatta
Professor Auwalu Yadudu
Alhaji Sule Yahaya Hamma
Alhaji Isiaaku Umar Tofa
Dr. Haruna Salihu
Alhaji Musa Tanko Waziri

Kaduna State

Alhaji Umar Dikko
Dr. Chris Abashiya
Ja'afaru Makarfi
Emmanuel Toro (SAN)
Prof. Ango Abdullahi
Abdullahi Jibrin

Katsina State

Alhaji Ibrahim Coomassie
Alhaji Saidu Barda
Alhaji Garba Ja Abdulkadir
Alhaji Kabir Saidu
Barrister Ibrahim Shema
Alhaji Tukur Mani

Kebbi State

Col. Bello Kalici (rtd)
Alh. Isah Mohammed
Abdullahi Na'amo
Garba Mohammed Dan Diga
Abdullahi Ahman Zuru
Daidu Mohammed B/Yauri

Kogi State

Alh. Abdullahi Ibrahim (SAN)
Col. Ahmadu Ali (rtd)
Gen. David Jemibewon (rtd)
Dr. G.T.N. Ajakpo
Engr. Ahmed Onogo
Joseph Suleiman

Kwara State

Prof. Albert Ogunshola
Alhaji Mahmud Ibrahim
Engr. Kola Shittu
Alhaji Ayinla Folorunsho
Alhaji Abubakar Kawu Baraje

Alhaji Saidu Isa

Lagos State

Alhaji Femi Okunnu
Alhaji Sikiru Shitta-Bey
Olorunfunmi Bashorun
Ahmed Onipede
Tawa Williams
Chief O.B. Adebawale

NLC

Adams Oshiomhole
Sylvester Ejiofor
Peters Adeyemi
Emmanuel Ugboaja
Abdulkadir Salami
Salihu Lukman

Niger

Prof. Shehu Bida
Alhaji Dahiru Awaisu Kuta
Alhaji Abubakar Magaji
Alhaji Umar Kawu
Alhaji siyaku Jikantord
Gen. Garba Duba

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Osun State

Cheif Ebenezer Babatope
Justice Bola Babalakin
Professor John Ayoade
Chief Olu Alabi
Mr. Dosu Oladipo
Dr. Wale Oladipo

Plateau State

Mr. Danjuma Maina
Dr. Alexander Kebang
Malam Adamu Adio
Senator John Washpam
Chief Solomon Lar
Alhaji Mohammed Sambo

Taraba State

Tanko Bobbo Anadami
Luka Zanya
Ibrahim Abubakar
Emmanuel Bayoa
Yakubu Agbaizi
Johnny Atiku

Yobe State

Alhaji Adamu Fika
General Alwali Kazir (rtd)
Alhaji Sidi Yakubu Karasuwa
Gujibama Abubakar
Col. Mohammed Abdu (rtd)
Alhaji Aji Baitu Gapchi

Insurance Corporation, which was later replaced by NEXIM Bank, and are yet to pay back.

With regards to the suspended DLF loan facility, he said the bank will review its manual of operation so that when, in the future, the suspension is reversed, the bank will have a better implementation and debt recovery strategy.

Commenting on other areas of the bank's operations, the MD said the bank is currently working with the National Directorate for Employment (NDE), to train young graduates to enable them go into the import/export business as a way to curb unemployment and poverty.

PDP *Contd. from Pg 1*

the planned national dialogue was unconstitutional.

He pointed out that the planned confab was in line with the demands of Nigerians to sit down and dialogue with a view to find ways of ensuring lasting peace and progress.

He argued: "Is it everything you do that is constitutional? If the government feels like many other Nigerians that we should dialogue, so that we have peace people should come out and air their feelings. Those who are saying this is not right are the ones who are not right," he said.

Anenih said it was wrong for anybody to think that the Obasanjo would "make a mistake" by putting in place the national dialogue.

He pointed out that since wide consultations were being made on the issue, the nation would be better for it, adding that those opposed to it were selfish and unreasonable.

Commenting on the former national chairman of the PDP, Chief Audu Ogbah whom he pointed out was still a party stalwart, Chief Anenih said Ogbah's tenure would end this month. He refused to speak on Ogbah's successor.

Also speaking, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Alhaji Aminu Bello Masari, said those opposed to the conference were exercising their constitutional rights.

A member of the Makarfi-led committee which prepared the conference background paper, Governor Segun Agagu of Ondo State, noted that opposition to the conference has abated.

According to him, President Obasanjo means well for the country.

Meanwhile, the head of the Kaduna State delegation to the proposed national dialogue, Dr Umaru Dikko, has said that the three months time frame for the convocation of the dialogue will not be enough for a thorough

work.

Speaking after their inauguration in Kaduna by the state governor, Alhaji Ahmed Mohammed Makarfi, Dr Dikko said that past experiences in view of complex representation and emotion which have risen to high heavens on several areas to be discussed, the conference will require at least nine months.

Dr Dikko who was the minister of transport in the second republic, called on the federal government to ensure that the law is fully and properly taken care of, saying that the nation cannot afford to have a situation in which the supreme court will like the case of Oputa Panel, declare the exercise illegal, adding that it will be too embarrassing and will make the delegates a laughing stock.

He also called on the federal government to give proper, quick and due attention to the implementation of the recommendations of the conference.

Earlier in his inaugural address, governor Mohammed Makarfi had declared that the conference is not about resource control, saying that the constitution has already made provisions for the sharing formula.

He also said that the conference is not about ethnic and religious struggle, pointing out that the aim of the conference is to create a sense of belonging between the various ethnic groups in the country.

Governor Makarfi declared that the conference will also address the nation's electoral processes and the judiciary system, adding that it is a problem that cannot be addressed in one day.

The six man delegation inaugurated by the governor included Dr Umaru Dikko as chairman, Mr Christopher Abashiye, Alhaji Ja'afaru Makarfi, Mr Emmanuel Toro, Professor Ango Abdullahi and Alhaji Abdullahi Jibrin.

NITEL *Contd. from Pg 1*

by Engineer Vincent Maduka and Hajiya Halita Aliyu, respectively. But a terse statement issued by the office of the communications minister, yesterday in Abuja, announced the dissolution of the two boards, and the appointment of new management teams for each of the organisations.

The statement signed by the special assistant on media and publicity to the minister, Akinloye Oyebanji, said the dissolution of the boards, which is a follow up to the Pentascope contract termination was announced yesterday by Chief Adebayo.

The statement said further that: "The minister who was addressing the new management of NITEL and M-tel, told them to come up with plans requiring immediate attention so as to know what is on ground, and what needs to be done, for the imminent privatisation of the companies, which Chief Adebayo described as the most important thing at the moment".

The Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE), which is the implementation arm of the National Council on Privatisation (NCP), last week announced that it was conducting actuarial audits of the two companies in furtherance of the process of divesting the federal government's equity shareholding in them. Also, the BPE had late last year advertised for expressions of interest from prospective core investors bidding to acquire the federal government's shares in NITEL and at the close of the submissions, 26 companies submitted bids.

The new management team for NITEL, according to the statement issued yesterday, has Mr. Albert Jude Mashi as chief executive officer (CEO), Engineer S. Adekoya, as chief technical officer (CTO), while Alha-

ssan Garba Yar'Adua, who was recently appointed chief finance officer (CFO) retains his position.

Appointed to manage M-tel, however, are Edwin Moore Momife as CEO, Engineer S.A.C Longe as CTO, Mrs. Zainab Ahmed as CFO, while Prince Bola Apampa will serve as chief marketing officer of the mobile telecoms company.

Meanwhile, a two-page statement issued yesterday by the deputy general manager in charge of Corporate Communications in NITEL, Tayo Ekundayo, said the letter conveying Mashi's appointment mandates him to prepare the company for its privatisation later in the year.

It would be recalled that the federal government early last week terminated the management contract agreement with Pentascope over the government's disagreement with certain terms of the agreement which was signed during Malam Nasir Ahmad el-Rufai's tenure as director general of the BPE.

The current management of the BPE has already instituted legal action against the Dutch company, Pentascope, demanding refund of some huge sums allegedly arising from some breaches of the pact the management contractor had signed with the Nigerian government.



Chief Cornelius Adebayo, Communication Minister

News

Appeal Court rejects Dariye's plea for stay of proceedings

The federal court of appeal sitting in Kaduna, has refused to grant an indefinite stay of proceedings to the high court on the case between the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), even as the commission slammed fresh charges against the five accused bank employees yesterday.

The defence had on January 17, 2005, filed a motion on notice at the court of appeal praying it to order an ex-

From Sani Babadoko, Bureau Chief, (Kaduna)

tension of time within which to seek leave to appeal the ruling on December 16 last year, order to appeal the said ruling, an order staying proceedings in charge No. FHC/KD/144C/04, pending before Justice Abdullahi Liman of the federal high court, Kaduna.

The fifth prayer is for an order granting departure from the Rules of Court by allowing the appellant/applicant

compile the record of appeal and to admit the bundle of documents attached and compiled by the appellant/applicant and marked as exhibit 'Law2' as record of appeal with leave for the respondents to file any further documents they may consider necessary in addition before filling of the briefs of arguments and hearing of appeal.

The sixth prayer was for the compliance with the provisions of order six relating

to the preparation and filling of briefs be varied by the judgement of time for filing.

The kernel of the appeal was to order a stay of proceedings against the six accused bank employees since the high court had on 16/12/04, struck out the name of the first accused, Chief Joshua Dariye from the case. The appellant felt it was not proper to continue the trial without the first accused.

The presiding judge, Justice Mahmud Mohammed,

however said the appeal court was not competent to grant an indefinite stay of proceedings at the high court and called for an amendment of the motion.

He however granted prayers five and six and gave the appellant 24 hours to file their amendments and gave the respondents 21 days to make their arguments while giving five days to the respondents to file their briefs and adjourned the case to March 3, 2005.

A few hours later, the

prosecution slammed fresh charges against the five bank workers by amending the original charge in case No. FHC/KD/144C/04.

The charges were read to the accused person, Awe Odessa, Duate P. Iyabi, Lawson A. O. Okhotion, Odoney Robers and Osirweemi Samuel and the All States Trust Bank Plc.

They all pleaded not guilty and the presiding judge, Justice Abdullahi Liman adjourned hearing to March 2, 2005.

NUC threatens to sanction CETEP university

The National Universities Commission (NUC), has threatened to sanction one of the newly licensed universities, CETEP city university, Mowe, Ogun state, for breaching existing admission regulations for private universities operating in the country.

Executive secretary of the NUC, Prof. Peter Okebukola, who issued the warning in a statement in Abuja yesterday, accused the authorities of the university of attempting to admit students for unapproved de-

By Henry Omuu, Senior Reporter (Education)

gree programmes.

He said the university had on January 26, 2005, advertised for admissions into degree programmes, part-time and sub-degree programmes for the 2005 academic session.

The said advertorial, Prof. Okebukola said, runs contrary to the spirit of the approval granted the university by the federal government to operate a private university and therefore advised authorities of the school to retract the advertorial and modify it in line with approved guidelines.

"Failure to comply with the above might lead to a suspension of the commencement of academic activities in the university for a specified period," he said.

Prof. Okebukola said it was unacceptable to government for the university to advertise that it had "eight years pupillage in providing post-graduate education under any guise," adding that "for the avoidance of doubt, post-graduate admission must take place only after the university has graduated its first set of students.

At the take-off of a newly licensed university, the NUC secretary said it should only enrol students into programmes approved for phase one and not all the programmes that are expected to be run at maturity of the university.

Furthermore, he said admission into all programmes offered by the university must be in line with provisions in the approved academic brief of the new university and sourced through JAMB, while the offering of sub-degree programmes should be played down.

Also, Prof. Okebukola said the total enrolment for the take-off session for all categories of students should be 500.

On staff recruitment, he advised new private universities not to employ mediocre academic staff, just because lecturers want to attain certain academic heights without the commensurate experience or qualification.



Nigerian Export-Import Bank, managing director, Alh. Baba Yusuf Ahmed (l), the bank executive director, Mr. Edet Ekere (m) and the Nigerian Export-Import bank, board secretary, Mr. Timothy Oluwagbemi during a press conference on the activities of the bank held in Abuja...recently. Pix: Felix Onigbinde

Atiku says SEC central to govt reform programme

By Reuben Yunana, Senior Reporter

Vice president Atiku Abubakar, yesterday said the success of the ongoing government economic reform programmes is hinged on the functions of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

The vice president told members of the commission who called on him yesterday, "your functions at the Securities and Exchange Commission is very important, central, vital and essential to the success of the ongoing economic reforms of this administration you are therefore expected to rededicate yourselves to your duties to enable us realise the goals of the reforms".

According to him, government is committed to making the commission play a vital role in its ongoing reform programmes.

Speaking earlier, SEC director, general, Musa said the Alh. Faki delegation was in the Villa to update the vice president on the activities of the commission and solicit support for some of its programmes.

Al-Faki disclosed that a Capital Market Institute and three regional offices of the commission have been established while the federal ministry of finance has set up the investment and securities tribunal for speedy adjudication of disputes in the capital market.

He disclosed that the commission had recorded phenomenal growth since inception in 1979. According to him, total issues floatation, which stood at N2 billion in 1999 at the inception of this government rose to N17 billion in year 2000 and close to N200 billion in 2004.

He further disclosed that the capitalisation of equities increased from N295b in 1999 to close to N2 trillion while capitalisation of debt securities N184 billion from N5 billion in 1999. Total federal government recapitalisation grew from N300 billion in 1999 to N2.184 trillion, as at May 2004.

SON destroys substandard tyres in FCT

By Abdullahi M. Gulloma, Reporter

The Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON), yesterday destroyed 683 pieces of substandard tyres worth two million naira.

Head of enforcement unit of the organisation, Chief Felix T. Wyado, who supervised the destruction exercise, said the 683 tyres were seized from Jabi, Zuba and Gwagalada markets in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

According to him, the tyres were seized and destroyed because they were structurally deformed and could explode easily during high-speed.

"Their (the tyres) inability to endure stress and high speed during use is the cause of the frequent tyre burst we experience on highways. Many lives have been lost to this killer tyres and government cannot fold its arms and allow its citizens to commit suicide," he said.

Chief Nyada also disclosed that the organisation (SON) will continue to use a combination of public enlightenment and raids to address the problem of using substandards materials in the country.

He said that the in collaboration with other stakeholders would set up a micro credit scheme to enable private and commercial car owners to buy brand new quality tyres at reasonable price.

Lagos LG funds: Court joins CBN as defendant

By Kemi Ogadengbe, Judicial Editor

A federal high court sitting in Abuja, yesterday joined the Central Bank of Nigeria as one of the defendants in a suit filed by some members of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Lagos state over the local council funds withheld by the federal government.

The plaintiffs, all members of the PDP had filed a court process against the federal government asking the court to stop the release of the fund to Lagos state, even when supreme court had directed the federal government to release the funds to Lagos state.

But counsel to the plaintiffs, Mr. Tayo Oyetibo, had earlier prayed the court for an order adding CBN as the 65th defendant in the case and for an order granting leave to the plaintiffs to amend their originating summons.

The plaintiffs are praying the court for an order to restrain the Lagos state government from receiving the money from the federal government on account of funds for local councils until it had reverted to the 20 local government area councils.

In an affidavit deposed to by Alhaji Mohammed Murtala Ashorobi, the plaintiffs averred that they were aware that the minister of finance had given a directive

amending the 1999 constitution. He added that in view of the fact that the 57 local councils presently in existence in Lagos state have been declared by the Supreme Court to be in operative as contained in the judgement.

He averred that the plaintiffs opposed the release of the funds because Lagos state Independent Electoral Commission conducted elections into the 57 local government councils without an act of the National Assembly

"Traditional rulers key to positive 2005 census"

From Benjamin Auta, in Gusau

The chairman of the National Population Commission (NPC), Chief Samaila Danko Makama, has said that royal fathers in the country hold the key towards the positive mobilisation of Nigerians for the 2005 census.

He said, "the people consistently look forward to your for high inspiration and guidance as it is not given, nor renewable and cannot be taken away."

The NPC boss made the appeal when he paid a contesy call to the Emir of Anka, Alh. Attahiru Mohammed Ahmed, in his palace at Anka.

Chief Samaila also said that the NPC has resolved on make itself relevant to the nations economy as the 2005 census provided it with a fresh opportunity and a veritable tool in the battle against

poverty, ignorance and disease.

He further said that any member of a household that is not around will be visited by the enumerators in his house as it will be an offence to be counted.

He solicited the Emir's support in the areas for provision of temporary accommodation for its workers.

While responding, the Emir of Anka, Alh. Attahiru M. Ahmed, called, politicians not to interfere in the work of the NPC for success to be on achieved.

The Emir said that more staff especially indigenes should be employed in the enumeration areas while those employed must be wise and God fearing in the discharge of their duties.

News

Census of primary, secondary schools begins tomorrow

The federal government is to commence the census of public and privately owned primary and secondary schools in the country tomorrow.

The Minister of State for Education, Hajia Bintu Ibrahim Musa, who announced this in Abuja yesterday, said the census is aimed at gathering data that would help the federal, states and local governments to plan adequately for the education sector.

Code-named "Baseline 2001," the census is expected to produce data about every aspect of education in primary and post-primary institutions as well as aid Nigeria to achieve the global target of education for all by 2005.

"It is in this context that the issue of availability of relevant data for planning becomes most relevant, especially for a country such as ours that has not been well regarded in this area within the comity of nations," the minister said.

By Henry Omu Senior Reporter (Education)

She added that the federal government, in an attempt to redress that non-availability of data about primary and secondary education in the country, published the "Handbook of information on basic education in Nigeria" in 2003.

According to the minister, government expects data

collected during the census to be timely, accurate, consistent and must be concluded before the beginning of another school calendar in October.

Hajia Musa said states are the main beneficiaries of the census exercise, since the ownership of the data collected will reside with them, adding that the role of the federal government is limited to designing and

pointing the questionnaire, offering technical support to states in areas of personnel training, provision of software for data entry and analysis as well as the setting up of tactical committees in each state.

"The outcome of the whole exercise fully belongs to the states, one other important step the federal ministry of education taking to further reduce the possibility of

conflicting figures being utilised, is to encourage all its agencies and others stakeholders to use the data from this exercise as a basis for their education management and information systems," she added.

The federal government, she said, is not giving any room for the politicization of the census exercise,

explaining that government has created monitoring teams to check the inflation of data and the gathering of inaccurate data.

She said data gathered between 1997 and 2001 were not perfect, but "we set up a verification committee that visited five percent of school in states and we sometimes made corrections in data supplied."

Youths demand N45m from Shell

Youth associations from Olusini, Etem-Sangama and Soku communities of Akuku Toru local government area of Rivers state and Nembe local government area of Bayelsa state have given Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), 14 days to pay N45million to the youth associations or risk losing its

By Ikenna Emeka Okpani, Bureau Chief (Port Harcourt)

project in the communities.

In a statement, the youths said each of the three youths organizations should be given N15 million for the inability of the contractors hired by Shell to employ the services of youths of the area to fabricate major components of the eastern gas gathering system projects.

"It is the practice that youths from these communities where those projects are to be sited also partake and benefit from the project including these stages of fabrication of components. The competition action of your contractors have deprived our youths from work experience and financial benefits to which we are entitled to the state of work" the youths said in a letter to Shell.

The youths therefore demanded that N15 million be paid to each of the three youth association within two weeks.

The youths also said they will no longer tolerate use of the non indigenous workers, apart from expatriates when the firm mobilizes to the oil and gas fields.



L - R The Emir of Ilorin, Alhaji Sulu Gambari, Etsu Nupe, Alhaji Yahaya Abubakar and the Emir of Gwandu, Alhaji Mustapha Jokolo, exchanging views during the public presentation of the Biography of Justice Salihu Modibbo Alfa Belgore held in Abuja, Saturday.

By Kennedy Eghonjor

NLC tasks AU on Togo

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), has urged the African Union (AU), to restore constitutional rule in Togo, saying the seizure of power on Saturday by Faure Gnassingbe Eyadema after his father's death is unacceptable.

In a statement signed by NLC's head of information, Comrade Owei Lakemfa, the NLC described the succession by Faure as a coup, and a desperate attempt by the minority in the Togolese Army to continue its political rule which started in 1963 with the overthrow and murder of President Sylvanus Olympio.

The congress said the 'coup' which is an attempt to simultaneously create a political dynasty and a new life president in Togo must not be allowed.

"The coup in Togo is a danger to all Africa, therefore, beyond non-recognition, steps should be taken by the African Union to restore constitutional rule in Togo," the statement said.

It also urged all efforts to be taken to restore the speaker to his post and fresh election be conducted within two months in accordance with the constitution.

The NLC also demanded that the new elections should be all inclusive with opposition politicians allowed to freely participate and the army made to play a neutral role, adding that the future polity of Africa may be determined by how the Togolese situation is handled.

"President Eyadema had died in yet unclear circumstances and his death had conveniently coincided with the trip outside the country of the speaker, Fanbara Quattara Natchaba, who constitutionally, should have acted as president."

Obasanjo has warned the military authorities in Togo against any interference in the takeover of power

By Austine Odo, Senior Labour Reporter

following the death of the president.

In a statement he issued in his capacity as the current chairman of the AU, Obasanjo said that the AU would not accept any handover of power other than through laid down procedures.

Faure Gnassingbe was however sworn-in as president yesterday after Togolese lawmakers on Sunday approved him as Speaker of Parliament, paving way for his takeover after a motion to that effect was approved by 67 deputies present in parliament.

Rep cautions against refining oil abroad

The chairman of the House of Representatives sub-committee on National Petroleum Investments and Management Services (NAPIMS), Hon. Bethel Amadi, has cautioned that the earlier Nigeria turns away from the refining of crude outside the country the better for the nation.

Hon. Amadi said this when he led members of the Petroleum Sub-committee on a courtesy visit to government house, Port Harcourt.

The lawmaker noted that there are serious economic consequences on the nation when the refining of its crude and other ancillary products are done outside the country "It is the belief of this committee that we need to turn away from that policy and make the oil companies refine certain percentage of their products locally. According to him, it is the belief of members of the committee that within the next five years, 50 percent of refining should be done in this country.

"The most important thing

By Austine Odo, Senior Labour Reporter

is to ensure that the spin-off industries that grow from these refining companies take place in Nigeria", Hon Amadi said.

The lawmaker noted that the committee was also concerned about the relationship between the oil companies and their communities, saying that there was the need for the oil and gas companies to improve on their community relations by focusing on human development.



President Obasanjo

Kwara releases N1bn for roads

The Kwara state government, yesterday released about N1 billion as mobilization for the two construction companies handling the Kosubosu - Chikauda - Oyo boundary road project with an appeal to the federal government to adequately fund the project.

Releasing the cheques to KYFY Company (N456m) and SETRACO (N470m), at a brief ceremony at government House, Ilorin, and governor Bukola Saraki, said it was in fulfillment of his electioneering campaign promises.

He thanked President Obasanjo for his supportive role on the construction of the road project which he explained would transform the socio-economic lives of the people of Baruten and Kaima areas long forgotten by previous administrations in the state.

Consultant on the road project, Engr. Lanre Shagaya, Yolas Consultants, Ilorin, said out of nine contractors that bided for the road, KYFY and SETRACO emerged the two lucky companies to handle the project following the due process of government.

He assured the government that the project would be given serious attention to ensure completion on schedule, recalling when the governor called him on phone at midnight expressing his concern about the condition of the road which takes about nine hours to drive instead of one and a half

hours if in good motorable condition.

Speaker of the State House of Assembly, Hon. Isa Bio Ibrahim, thanked the governor for wiping the tears of the people of the area.

The state's Commissioner for Works, Engr. Yinusa Afolabi, signed the contract papers of the N6 billion road projects assuring that it would be completed under 29 months.

Police dismiss trigger-happy officer

The police in Zamfara state have dismissed a riot policeman who recently shot dead a young man in Tudun Wada Area of Gusau.

The timely intervention of the Police Commissioner, Alhaji Ibrahim Machi, who deployed armed policemen to the area, saved what would have been a bloody clash between youths and the police.

Machi announced the dismissal anti riot policeman while briefing newsmen at the weekend on preparations made by the command to rid the state of criminals.

Machi, who declined to give the name of the affected officer, said the officer would also be prosecuted.

The commissioner called

on the public to give the police necessary information that could lead to the arrest of criminals in the state.

"The public must give information to the police about criminals. This is the only way you can help us," Machi said.



Ehindero, IGP

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News

Kebbi to organise workshop on confab

The Kebbi State government is to organise a one-day sensitisation workshop on the proposed national political reform conference.

This was made known in a statement signed by the permanent secretary (Protocol), Government House, Abubakar Udu Idris, who said the workshop is scheduled to hold on Wednesday, 9th February, 2005.

The statement added that the purpose of the workshop is to brainstorm on the issues to be discussed at the proposed national political reforms conference in order to come up with a position that will be canvassed at the conference.

A fresh list of delegates made available to *Daily Trust* indicated that Colonel Bello Kaliel (rtd), Alhaji Isah Mohammed Argungu, Dr. Sa'idu Birnin-Yauwi, Abdullahi Ahman Zuru and Abdullahi Abubakar Na'amo,

From Kabir Dogon Daji, Correspondent (Birnin-Kebbi)

while Alhaji Garba Mohammed Dan Diga was dropped to be replaced by Professor Attahiru Jega were nominated as delegates.

A team of scholars were drawn from various universities to serve as resource persons, while all the nominated delegates were expected to attend.

Similarly, the statement added that all public office holders including members of the National and State Assemblies, members of the State Executive Council, High Court judges and Khadis, permanent secretaries and chairmen and secretaries of local government councils, are requested to attend the workshop.

It further added that the state deputy governor, Alhaji Suleiman Muhammad Argungu (*Jarman Kebbi*), would serve as the chairman of the occasion that is scheduled to hold at the auditorium of the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Birnin Kebbi.



Governor Peter Odili of Rivers State discussing with the Emir of Zazzau, Alhaji Shehu Idris, at Zaria, Kaduna State, during the Ed-el-Kabir celebration...recently

NGO gives ARV drugs to AIDS patients

By Sunday Ejike Benjamin, Health Reporter

A Non Governmental Organisation (NGO), the Rochas Foundation, has donated doses of anti-retroviral drugs worth several thousands of naira to a group of people living with HIV/AIDS.

The NGO, through its reach-out-and-touch-initiative programme weekend, also gave financial assistance to people living with HIV/AIDS, widows, orphans, disabled and the less privileged persons with special skills that can be developed.

The Rochas Foundation also announced special scholarship to a seven year old girl, baby miracle faith who is the sole survivor in a family of nine that perished as a result of the dreaded HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Established about ten years ago, the Rochas Foundation, owned by Owelle Rochas Okorocho, has been contributing to the development of mankind, especially in the area of providing of free medicare, education, economic empowerment as well as in the promotion of peace and conflict resolution in the country.

A blind man from Katsina, Mallam Mohammed Mukhari Bello also won the Rochas Foundation scholarship to study computer science, an area which he showed special ability.

Mr. Nyeyere Anyim who made presentation on behalf of the president and founder of the Rochas foundation, Owelle Rochas Okorocho, urged beneficiaries to make wise use of what was given them, just as he reiterated the group's commitment to the development of humanity through its activities.

Dismissed judge pleads for reinstatement

Justice Christopher Senlong, who was dismissed last year from the federal judicial service, yesterday prayed a federal high court sitting in Abuja, to set aside the dismissal and order his reinstatement.

Counsel to Senlong, Mr. J.B. Daudu (SAN), who filed an amended statement of claim, prayed the court for a declaration that the proceedings and recommendations of the investigation committee set up by the National Judicial Council at its meeting on October 6 and 7th, 2003 comprising Kehinde Sofola as the chairman, Justice I.H. Sotunum and J.J. Olomigho Okpoko, and Grand Khadi U.Y. Abdullahi, was unconstitutional, illegal, null and void.

The plaintiff also prayed the court to declare that his purported removal as a judge of the federal high court by the president and conveyed to him in writing by the chairman of the National Judicial Council, was unconstitutional, null and void.

That the National Judicial Council and president of Nigeria, lacked jurisdiction to try or investigate the plaintiff for charges of corruption and is an attempt to pervert the course of justice.

He said that these offences were punishable under the corrupt practices and other offences Act No. 5 of 2000 and Criminal Code pursuant to the petition of Justice M. Adamu, erstwhile chairman of the Akwa Ibom governorship election tribunal.

When the case came up yesterday, Senlong counsel filed an application to amend the statement of claim which was not opposed by Mr. C.A. Ajuyah, who appeared for

Foundation battles poverty in Idomaland

A community-based effort to encourage and promote empower-

From Austine Odo, Senior labour Reporter

ment schemes as well as capacity building among the Idoma people of Benue state has taken off with the aim of minimizing poverty and deprivation in Idoma land.

Known as the Young Alhaji Foundation, the community based organisation which is non-profit but charity base, seeks to utilize the resources available to it to alleviate poverty and improve the living standard & self-reliance of the Idomas.

The foundation which is conceived and monitored by Alhaji Usman Abubakar, an Idoma, has the goal of helping the less privileged to achieve their full potentials by providing the needed assistance that may be required for their social and economic advancement.

A source close to Alhaji Usman Abubakar, Mr. Donny Roberts Onoja, told *Daily Trust* that the organisation which has its headquarters in Otuopko, has the vision to assist in the alleviation of poverty thus helping in the

realisation of a just, equitable and egalitarian Idoma society where no one is left behind in the march towards socio-economic growth and self-reliance.

Mr. Donny Roberts said the foundation would attempt to influence legislations and public policies aimed at alleviating poverty and improving the living standards of the Idomas.

Asked how the Young Alhaji Foundation has strategised for these exploits, Mr. Roberts said the foundation would among other things, assist communities to take the lead in determining how they wish to eradicate

poverty and infrastructural decay and establish other community based groups charged for the distributions and maintenances of resources to be provided by the foundation.

Daily Trust reports that the Idomas constitute the second largest ethnic group in Benue state and has a few well-placed individuals but lacks meaningful spread of infrastructure. Despite the massive support by the Idomas successive administrations, no viable industry is located in the area, resulting in massive migration of healthy Idomas to other parts of the country to seek better living.

Proposed national conference artificial-bishop

The Catholic Archbishop of Jos, Most Rev. Ignatius

Kaigama, has described as artificial the proposed national political reform conference, suggesting that a conference of all ethnic nationalities should be summoned first that would actually centre on problems faced by people at the grassroot.

He also noted that the prevailing socio-economic conditions in the country, which he described as tragic, has remained so because there is no political goodwill to address the situation.

The archbishop while speaking with our correspondent yesterday, expressed scepticism about the national confab, adding that people selected for the conference "are those at the top, those who have been in the circle for so long they are going to say the same old story".

Most Rev. Kaigama said he would appreciate a situation where they start the grassroot

From Rakiya A. Muhammad, Correspondent Jos

and gradually climb to the top, and prepare optimism than a conference of all ethnic nationalities in the country was possible. "We did it in Plateau state, we took all the 40 and above ethnic groups".

He was of the view that if the ethnic groups across the country meet and discuss genuinely and love for the country not teleguided, would prepare ground for a conference at the national level.

"I am not saying the conference is bad, but it is like climbing a tree from the top," he asserted, stressing that the grassroot was his concern.

Most Rev. Kaigama who expressed concern about the prevailing socio-economic and political situation in the nation, decried the situation where religious leaders are called to pray after things have been allowed to degenerate.

Akume tasks youths on farming

Governor George Akume of Benue state has called on the youths to start exploiting farming potentials as a profitable employment option.

Governor Akume gave the advice at the weekend in Makurdi, while inaugurating a multi-million naira rice mill.

In addition, the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), reported that the governor charged the new management to be business-like in running the mill, saying he expected the place to make profit.

The mill would be run on behalf of the state government by a private firm, Olam Nigeria Ltd, he said.

By Hassan Idris, Reporter (Agriculture)

He said "the agricultural programmes of the state government has opened up opportunities in the production of food and cash crops for domestic and international markets."

He added that there is a high demand for soya beans in Nigeria and for export, advising youths to cultivate the cash crop to raise their income.

He pointed out that the establishment of four cassava processing plants and juice processing factories has placed a huge challenge on them to provide enough raw materials for the plants.

MUHAMMAD AL-GHAZALI

ON TUESDAY
tempthist@yahoo.com

Opinion

Before the mother of all confab...

Nigeria, it must be restated for the umpteenth time, is a nation of absurdities. Incredibly, in this age of macro-economic sophistication, proponents of the SNC who also claim to be among the most educated in the land, view the nation's wealth and contributions to the GDP, purely in terms of oil revenue alone!

And so, as the North braces itself for the mugging that would surely come, you will excuse me if in the process of addressing the matter, I feel disinclined to pull punches, or have little time for niceties because, it is far too obvious that decades of selective propaganda has made the North receptive to endless insults and abuse from their compatriots in the South, regardless of their tribe, education or creed.

Even our president did not help matters, when in a recent speech he muttered something about the inordinate ambition of certain sections within the polity, which clearly was a direct reference to the North. I also remember quite vividly, my personal experience while on a visit to my elder brother at the Nigeria Air force in Ikeja in the late 1990's. I happened to be on my old Nitel mobile phone when one of his course mates from the Niger Delta waltzed into his sitting room. My brother wasn't home and as I waved the man towards a chair before I concluded my call, he took one look at me and blurted that he didn't really blame me; after all, without their oil in the Niger Delta, I wouldn't have afforded a mobile phone in the first place! My response quite predictably, was swift and uncompromising. When my brother later returned and was told what transpired, he was so upset he barred the man from his house from that day. To this day, people with similar mindsets after visiting Abuja, often conclude that it is a purely Northern affair, while also lamenting that their resources were diverted to build the city as if Lagos, which is located in the Southwest, was built over time from proceeds from Cocoa alone!

Although the mobile phone was seen as a status symbol at the time, the GSM system was already operational in most West African countries including Benin, Togo and Ghana. None of these are oil-producing countries, and Benin republic in particular, is a net importer of food! Ghana despite its limited resources has already emerged as a model of economic prosperity despite its ethnic plurality, not to even mention South Africa. In the greater Diaspora, Switzerland and Belgium are also models of efficient states irrespective of their ethnic diversity.

Also, regardless of the poverty of their foreign policy, citizens of the United States are Americans first and foremost, before they are Irish, Chinese, Italian or even African-Americans. What the people of these nations have in common is the sense of belonging to one super-state or federation, in which their personal or selfish considerations have become

subservient to mutual or common interests, which guarantees the type of security and economic prosperity unrealisable if they had gone their separate ways. In such systems, competence and ability are major determinants while power shift, zoning or ethnic considerations pale into insignificance.

Sadly, in Nigeria, greed, selfishness, and irresponsible grandstanding, has created a motley crowd of so-called progressives and dubious activists who claim to be democrats, while those that oppose their narrow interests are dismissed as feudalists and apologists of the old order. In the process, they conveniently forgot that those they seek to humiliate have centuries of experience in states-craft and nation building dating beyond the time their ancestors wandered naked in the bush, at least until the arrival of European evangelists.

Significantly, what the British met on the ground in the North were not rowdy, axe wielding savages and Chiefs who bartered their consciences in return for gin and whiskey; they encountered modern administrative structures, which predated even those in Western Europe and could rival those at Westminster for efficiency! It came as a little surprise therefore that the British in their wisdom, adopted the indirect rule system in official recognition of the efficiency of the Emirate system they met. That legacy and administrative savvy enabled the late Sardauna to mould the Northern region in which minorities such as the late Aliyu Makaman Nupe and Sunday Awoniyi to name a few, played prominent roles.

But more important still, their foray into the Nigerian hinterland met with far greater resistance in the main because the natives were an amalgamation of ethnic 'nationalities' albeit with Islam as a common bond. But Islam also brought along with it a definite culture, education and dignified carriage, which ultimately rubbed off on even those who did not accept the faith.

As the TIV riots showed, they first sought to undermine the region through its soft underbelly in the form of the numerous and mainly Christian minority tribes, whom they played up against the larger groups in the region. When, that failed, a badly planned conspiracy, led to a failed secession bid by the Igbo, encouraged in the main, by ethnic chauvinists such as the late Tai Solarin and Wole Soyinka.

Till today, the main access road to Solarin's Mayflower School at Ikene, which was the hometown of the late doyen of tribal politics Obafemi Awolowo, is named after Major Chukwuma Nzegwu. Nzegwu of course, was the misguided Major hailed in the south as a patriot and progressive, who not only overthrew our first elected government but also orchestrated the callous murder of Sir Ahmadu Bello, Tafawa Balewa and scores of unarmed civilian and military brass in the name of fighting

corruption and nepotism. Time has already exposed the lie in such claims. But they now demand that the nation should be restructured, and have attempted in the process, as if we are idiots, to give a different interpretation to democracy simply because its exact interpretation, does not suit their agenda. For people who claim to be progressives, they see noting wrong in rotational presidency in a representative democracy. At a time nations like Malaysia have become models of democracy and economic prosperity despite their ethnic and religious diversity, they crave a retreat back into their ethnic cocoons where incompetence and mediocrity could triumph.

And so, as delegates prepare for this mother of all national confabs, which the president after extensive consultations with his kit and kin, has finally decided to convene, the North must brace itself for the eventual outcome. Forget the antics of people like Anthony Enahoro to the effect that the endeavour falls far short of their demand for SNC, I perceive from the antecedents of this president the cunning and vindictive person who must not be underestimated. I am also curious and apprehensive that he waited until his second term before calling for the confab. To that extent therefore, the North must be resolute in its unity. We must be deaf to the cheap and exploitative distinction between our peoples. Above all, the imbeciles in our midst misled into the false belief that their salvation lies in a fabled Middle Belt should pause to remember Zaki-Biam! They must also not forget that the gruesome ethnic killings in the South recently did not distinguish between our tribe, religion or creed.

But if in the end, it is agreed that the nation must be restructured along ethnic lines and the agitations for resource control becomes a fait accompli, then the North must insist on a ten-year moratorium during which the oil reserves in the region must be fully explored and developed. Last week, Itse Sagay a leading member of the delegates nominated from the Niger Delta declared that "Getting oil proceeds without any productivity has rendered the North now totally dependent on resources outside their region...they can generate their own economy, resources and welfare without getting hand-out from Delta oil proceeds" Forget the insult from a supposed Professor, someone obviously forgot to educate the man that all this while, he did not survive by drinking oil alone. But beyond that, must the peasant farmer in the north be made to pay for the neglect of agriculture by succeeding governments since our independence? In any case, who would be prepared to put up with insults if it were possible to make a fortune from the exports of agricultural products? Still, as the late Franklin Roosevelt would say, given our landmass, and abundant resources, the North, has absolutely nothing to fear, but fear itself!

Enter Arewa's first lawyer

By Nasir Dambatta

The first lawyer from northern Nigeria has ever produced is today celebrating his 50 years anniversary of call to the bar. The 78-year old Alhaji AbdulRazak (SAN), beyond being a source of pride for the north exemplifies the fruits of hardwork and uprightness.

Born 13th November 1927, Abdulrazak (SAN) attended Kalabari National College, Buguma in Port Harcourt, Rivers State between 1944 and 1947, before proceeding to the University of Ibadan in 1948 as foundation student. He was also at Trinity College of the University of Dublin, Ireland.

His efforts saw him rising through various positions, from being the first and only National Legal Adviser to the government of northern Nigeria's party, the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) to membership of all constitutional conferences held in United Kingdom and Nigeria. His foray into politics saw him rising to become member of parliament in Northern Nigeria's House of Assembly before his appointment in 1962 as Nigeria's Ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire.

Between 1964 and 1966, he was member Federal House of Representatives and later became Federal Minister of Railways.

An interesting aspect of Alhaji AbdulRazak's life is that he did not confine his efforts to touching the lives of others through politics or legal practice alone. In 1967, he founded and became the pioneer principal of Ilorin College, which later came to be known as Government High School.

It is for this school project, he turned down an offer to be chief justice. He said the appointment into the

position of a justice has its gains at the individual level only, while the school project has gains for many at community levels. This initiative kick-started his major contributions to intellectual growth in Ilorin in particular and the North in general.

Then came a bigger responsibility. In 1968, he became Nigeria's delegate to the 23rd Assembly of the United Nations Organisation (UNO) in New York.

Coming back to his immediate constituency, he served as pioneer commissioner for finance in the Kwara State government between 1967 and 1971. he was also commissioner for health and social welfare, before becoming a member of the Constitution Drafting Commission (CDC). He was part of that commission otherwise known as "the 39 wise men."

The history of Nigeria's constitutional development in 1979 would perhaps have been incomplete without his role as chairman of the legislature and executive committee of the constituent Assembly that made the country's constitution.

A chairman and member of the Board of Directors of many Public Corporations and private companies, Alhaji AbdulRazak was also the President of the Nigerian Stock Exchange between the year 2000 and 2003.

A first awardee of Kwara State Government's Merit Award in 1984, he holds two traditional titles, namely *Tafidan Zazzau of Zaria* and *Mutawallen Ilorin*. This is in addition to another medal of honour from Cote d'Ivoire, tagged GOON.

Having cut his teeth in the legal profession, politics and education, this pioneer

lawyer from Arewa now lives a quiet life.

Interestingly, though he had most of his academic and political stint outside the North, Alhaji AbdulRazak (SAN) returned home and put in his best in the region's development. He was a founding member of the Arewa Consultative Forum and several other organisations that have the North at heart, and remains proud to be a Nigerian.

Unlike some Nigerians that see themselves as champions of ethnic hegemony, this Arewa's first legal huminary has a broader mind. This much he told Irene Christian Lynch (wife Ambassador John Lynch, the Irish Ambassador to Nigeria) in her treatise tagged "Treasures of Elders." His words: "Being a Nigerian means a great deal to me and I have always worked hard to maintain its unity. I have always felt free in any part of the country."

He remains one of the few surviving heroes of Northern Nigeria today that has lived long enough to celebrate his 50th Anniversary of call to the bar.

Undeniably, he represents a role model for present generation of Nigerian lawyers and politicians who wish to become great in the Nigeria of tomorrow. Painfully though, his ilk in the North can only be counted on finger tips.

In a personal letter to Alhaji AbdulRazak (SAN), former President Shehu Shagari said the lawyer "has seen it all and participated prominently among pioneers of progress in Nigeria" and added: "We are indeed proud of your achievements in life especially when you opened the doors of modernity for many others to follow, through the last half century in the service of your people."

In a personal letter to Alhaji AbdulRazak (SAN), former President Shehu Shagari said the lawyer "has seen it all and participated prominently among pioneers of progress in Nigeria" and added: "We are indeed proud of your achievements in life especially when you opened the doors of modernity for many others to follow, through the last half century in the service of your people."

Olu, I think the wise market demolitions is to send the poor men packing from the PCT

But don't you think a bigger one like in Alaba should be built?

Don't you like that?

Haba Aboki. Perhaps they want to clear routes for fire trucks during disasters

Ah! If you do that, there will be less robberies

Yes! But the more the robberies, the more budget for official bullet-proof cars.



YOUR LETTERS

Why Atiku should decamp to AD

Please allow me space in your widely read news paper to comment on the current PDP crises viz-a-vis Atiku's fate come 2007.

Recently there was a move which appeared in the national dailies about Atiku's planned decamping in ANPP or AD.

Deducing from the current happenings in the PDP the party no longer require the services of the VP. For he was elevated from his governorship seat to the juicy seat of vice president so that he would bring votes to the PDP from his constituency "The North East". Now IBB is likely the PDP's candidate who seem to stand between the VP and the PDP's candidature the above I strongly advice the VP to decamp to AD and refine its name to United Peoples Alliance Party UPAP, for the better.

If only he still wants the prestigious seat of "Baban Nigeria".

Ibrahim Abubakar Bolari Quarters Gombe
 ibrahimmba2k2@yahoo.com

Confab: Zamfara governor's blunder

The Federal Government recently called on each State Government to nominate 6 persons to participate in the forthcoming National Political Reform Conference. The essence of this representation is to project, defend and protect the interest of the people of these areas by bringing out issues at stake and proffering solutions.

For this to be effectively achieved, the representatives must be capable, knowledgeable, courageous and confident to carry out the assignment. Above all they should be people who are patriotic and understand the needs of their communities, the complexity of our existence as a nation and how to move our country so that everyone would have a sense of belonging.

Since we are in the era of party politics, it is expected that political sentiments naturally come into play in selecting the representatives. No one however thought it would be to such a degree that, considering the weight of the issues at stake and the benefits of the conference that people who do not meet the above criteria are nominated. Unfortunately that absurdity is exactly what the Governor of Zamfara

State did by presenting a group of people majority of whom do not fit into the equation and who are far from the best within their respective zones and local governments. This makes one wonder if His Excellency Governor Yarima really understands the purpose of the forum or even the sensitiveness of the issues at stake.

With the caliber of the people nominated, what is certain is that limited consultations were made prior to the selection. Consequently, it is hardly possible that the wishes and aspirations of the people of Zamfara State will be adequately and articulately presented. It beats one's imagination to think of the criteria used in the selection.

To be fair, each one of those selected by Governor Yarima has some qualities which could qualify him for some particular jobs or assignments at varying levels. Without prejudice or ill feelings to the nominees and their integrity however, there is an array of people that can provide better, more effective representations in an esteemed National Conference such as the one they have been selected for. Let us consider the issues according to the respective zones.

Take the case of Central Zone. What is the rationale behind picking Malami Aliyu Yandoto and Yusuf Garba from the Central zone where you have veterans like Dr Garba Nadama, Alhaji Usman Dan Gwaggo (Dan Madami), Alhaji Ahmed Gusau (Zabarma), Dr. Bawa Gusau, Professor Aliyu Bilbis, Dr Kabir Tsafe, Alhaji Muhammed Lugga, Alhaji Muhammed Jekada Maru, Dr. Bello Aliyu Gusau etc?.

Yusuf Garba is supposed to be a seasoned civil servant but he does not have the required grassroot base to really understand what Gusau community needs, compared to the array of personalities listed above. It is even worse in the case of Malami Yandoto, who is neither experienced in any vocation nor educated to an acceptable standard to warrant his serving in such an enviable national forum. Moreover, his comportment and temperament do not make him suitable since it was not long ago that he allegedly fermented trouble in Tsafe and was made to sign an undertaking so that peace could reign in the area.

The case of the Northern zone is even more pitiable. Governor Sani simply used political loyalty against competence and relevance by nominating his Secretary to

the Government and a certain young man who finished secondary school as recent as in the 90s and just recently appointed a commissioner.

How else could one view the issue of this zone that boasts of the former presidential aspirant and NSO boss Alhaji Umaru Ali Shinkafi, Professor Jafaru Makau Kaura, Alhaji Abdullahi Jao Zurmi, Alhaji Sule Dan Ali, Dr. Abdullahi Shinkafi among many others?

The western zone could be said to have got a fairer deal. The nominees are a head above the rest, though by no means the best in the area. While Mal. Yahaya Abdulkarim is a seasoned civil servant before being elected governor of former Sokoto State in the early 90s, Alhaji Muhammadu Sani Takon is an lawyer of considerable experience.

However, considering the fact that there are personalities like Ambassador M Z Anka, Alhaji Aliyu Abara Gummi, Dr. Abubakar Dogo, Ambassador Jabbi Maradum, Barrister Mani

Salihu Bakura, Alhaji Salihu Mafara, Alhaji Ibrahim Bagobiri and such other polished intellectuals, technocrats and academics, it is my view that the selection could have been better.

Governor Sani should have opened his mind and considered the fact that the interest of the State transcends political sentiments and personal loyalty. Zamfara as a young and growing State needs the best representation it could get in national fora.

As one who even has the ambition of ruling this country, this selection sends a frightening signal as to what lies in stock.

Finally, I wish to advise Governor Ahmed Sani, Yarima Bakura to review his selection and inject the proper personalities into the conference to enable Zamfara State have proper representation. Or haven't his Excellency seen the calibre of people nominated by his colleagues in other States?

Kabiru Yahaya Faru, Kwanar Albarka, Behind Ali Akilu Square, Tudun Wada, Gusau, Zamfara state
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Reactions to articles published in this paper may be directed to the editor via the email address: editor@dailytrust.com



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Opinion

Kwankwaso, Shekarau war: Apropos to Alibi

By Maje Idris Shahuci

I must say that despite my strong reservations about their distasteful tendency to presume omniscience on matters of public interest, some on which they have sparse information, others on even less understanding, I always look forward to reading Idang Alibi's thoughtful and balanced opinions in *Daily Trust*. He has credibility, quite unlike most others. And not even my strong disagreement over his position on the Shekarau-Kwankwaso conflict would lower the esteem I have cultivated for him. Generally, I perceive column journalism as armchair pseudo-intellectual posturing. It is one thing having something important to say but entirely another when one writes an opinion because one's paid to.

As I said, I strongly disagree with Mr Alibi on the central premise of the article "The Shekarau, Kwankwaso war" of Thursday December 30, 2004, that by setting up a judicial panel to probe his predecessor. Engineer Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso, Shekarau, whom he compassionately adjudged 'a man of God in government' was pursuing a vengeance policy against a man he had already defeated; that the probe procedure reveals 'a streak of vindictiveness' unbecoming of a 'man of God', and that generally, probe as a government review instrument is energy-sapping, diversionary and malicious. To me, this is a dangerous misappropriation of religious morality in addressing a purely temporal dilemma. At first the use of the term 'Man of God in Government' appears seductive but when the aim is to dissuade a public officer from pursuing a just and

conscientious cause, the term becomes an inhibitive label, a badge of mediocrity.

I for one am thoroughly disappointed that what ought to be a dispassionate discourse on judicious application of due process in government review mechanism could so casually degenerate into metaphysics in this age of reason.

At first, Shekarau opted for an administrative panel called "the Committee on Review and Verification of Projects, Transactions and Contracts awarded between May 1999 and May 2003" with Engineer Ibrahim Khalil Inuwa as chairman. An administrative panel, unlike a judicial commission of Inquiry, is a quiet in-house instrument for fact finding.

Its activities are never conducted in public and government is not bound to make its recommendations public either. The idea is to use the experience of top bureaucrats to get to the root of a matter and guide/advise government appropriately without the distraction of publicity.

Kwankwaso and his henchmen should have accepted this face-saving option with some humility and even gratitude but when summoned to appear before the Administrative panel they refused flatly, and instead, hired lawyers to go and represent them. Pride blinded their reason and hurt blurred their finer sense of judgement part of the problem is that the manner and extent of Kwankwaso defeat in the April 2003, gubernatorial election deflected his self-confidence and left his camp demoralised so, much that they

I still will not accept that Shekarau, a green horn without political pedigree, a 'common' classroom teacher without a godfather, a political upstart, a man he contemptuously demoted from the position of Permanent Secretary to classroom teacher is now his governor and chief executive. Shekarau defeated Kwankwaso by well over 900,000 votes which Kwankwaso freely interpreted as a total rejection by an ungrateful electorate, for indeed, despite his numerous shortcomings as governor, had worked hard to deliver democracy dividends.

Some of the revelations of the administrative panel shocking and in the ill-advised absence of Kwankwaso and his officials who should have shed more light on them, caused alarm in government circles. For instance, it was discovered that Kwankwaso's government hurriedly withdrew N157m at the counter or a commercial bank two days before the gubernatorial elections, for security purposes; that whereas the state Primary Education board received N18 billion it could only account for N12 billion; feasibility studies alone for two plants of 15.2 mega watts each at the Tiga and Challawa hydro power projects cost N115million; that N134m was spent to upgrade a 3-5 tonne fertilizer blending plant to 15-18 tonne capacity etc. It was only after several attempts to get Kwankwaso and his officials come and clarify these matters that the panel recommended that government set up a judicial panel of inquiry where they can bring as many lawyers as they wish. This panel, under Mr. Justice Badamasi has completed its assignment and

a white paper has been issued. It is regretful that Kwankwaso, a former governor could forget the enormity of government power irrespective of who was governor. By refusing to meet the administrative panel privately, he allowed his haughtiness becloud his sense of judgement and set the stage for his indictment. His lawyers used up all their antics in going from one court to another seeking restraining injunctions against the panel in the true Nigerian fashion of obstructing justice, but met with failure.

The Shekarau-Kwankwaso war, as Mr Alibi called it, is a war between what is right and what is wrong, between what can be tolerated in the conduct of government business and what should never be, a war waged at a higher rational moral level. It is not, and must never be, misconstrued as a personal act of vendetta. The money misappropriated does not belong to Mallam Shekarau or his family; it belongs to the people of Kano state.

Shekarau is superintending the public treasury on trust, should he fail to reconcile the conflicting claims between all outgoing government and contractors/suppliers and goes ahead to make double or spurious payment, he is liable of financial impropriety for which a future government could call him up. Corruption has rightly been identified as the most critical factor militating against development in Africa but the greatest impediment to the fight against corruption in Nigeria and most African nations is the inability of imposing strict legal sanctions on public treasury theft or misuse. Public officers who loot the treasury are never

called upon to account for their misdeeds either in office or out, due to the weakness of institutional checks and loose application of anti-graft legislation, where they exist. Matters are worsened when journalists and columnists begin to interpret any courageous act in ensuring accountability as vindictiveness.

In conclusion therefore, Mr Alibi is holding the wrong end of the stick by his criticism of Shekarau's good intentions. Probes can be useful instruments for unearthing wrongdoing in government and set a good example of how public funds should be handled. According to Francis Bacon, men are not punished for stealing horses but so that they may not steal horses. Without deterrence laws are hollow and ineffectual. And without laws, we are no better than primates in the jungle. Even Kwankwaso himself knows this very well, and that is why as soon as he took power in 1999, he instituted a panel of inquiry against his military predecessor Colonel Isa Kontagora over the cloudy manner Daula Hotel was refurbished and the controversial allocation of stalls at the Abubakar Rimi Modern Market in Sabon Gari Kano. I am sure the Defence minister himself would be mildly embarrassed by this unsolicited misrepresentation by Mr Alibi because he holds firmly the belief that probes serve useful purposes for governments who take the issue of probity and transparency very seriously.

What led the Shekarau government to set up the Justice A. T. Badamasi Judicial Panel of Inquiry has been severally explained to the point of boring repetition. I will

furnish Mr Alibi with a few embarrassing examples of how Kwankwaso and, his cohorts forced the hands of the Shekarau government to probe them.

On assumption of office in May 29 2003, Shekarau was suddenly faced with conflicting claims of payments and denials for contracts executed under Kwankwaso. The outgoing governor, it turned out, deliberately set out "to mislead the incoming administration, claiming in his handover note that he was leaving behind a tidy sum of N3.923billion (consisting of N2.322b and N1.6b for the state and local governments joint account respectively) and after 'honourably' settling several contractor and supplier obligations. Were this claim true he would have been hailed as a prudent administrator but it turned out to be an impious deception.

And how did Shekarau know? A transition committee he set up after his landslide victory consisting of experienced civil servants compared notes with officials of the outgoing government and discovered that Kwankwaso's claims were not only spurious and hollow but were outrightly mischievous, indeed intended to mislead the new government. Take another example, a prominent construction company based in Abuja has till date refused to hand over the keys of the 'completed' Kano Governor's Lodge in Abuja, claiming that it has not been fully paid whereas in his handover note Kwankwaso claimed to have discharged all financial obligations regarding that project.

Shahuci writes from Tarauni quarters, Kano.

Masari and the drums of Oduduwa

By Adamu Marshal

Recently, the Source, Ile-Ife, the Ooni of Ife, Oba Okunade Sijuade rolled out unseen drums of the House of Oduduwa in recognition of the wisdom of the speaker of the House Representatives, Honourable Aminu Bello Masari. It was one of the ceremonies of our time when the Speaker was conferred with the chieftaincy title of the *Akinjagunmolu* of the Source and cradle of the Yoruba race and tradition which means a brave warrior who had fought and won a war.

Others who bagged titles before Masari are the former military head of state, General Yakubu Gowon and the Vice President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, the *Aare-Adimula* of the Source who had stepped into Ile Ife temple of wisdom and were honoured in recognition of their distinguished activities in the development of Nigeria. What this means in essence is that Honourable Aminu Bello Masari, the *Dallatun Katsina* and the *Eyindi namba 1 of Ebuwana Edda* of Afigbo in Ebonyi State, has again been

confirmed as a true leader of hope for the future of the people both in his immediate environment and the larger Nigerian nation.

His qualities had been emerging until it blossomed on June 3, 2003 when unanimously, the collective wisdom of the members of the House of Representatives brought to fore the shiny light of a great leader. His humility has since impacted positively on leadership in the country within the short time of being in office as the Speaker.

No moment or occasion could have been more appropriate than the grand ceremonies of the 24th anniversary of the *Olubuse II* which carried along with it, the colour and trappings of an event of honour.

It was also clear when the Ooni of Ife proved that chieftaincy is not given on the basis of the highest bidder but on merit and that only those who are qualified are singled out for honour. He noted that in the case of the speaker, the council of the Imperial majesty

of the Source consulted within the Yoruba kingdom and outside including the Sultan of Sokoto Alhaji (Dr.) Muhammadu Maccido, the Emir of Kano Alhaji (Dr.) Ado Bayero, the Emir Zazzau Alhaji (Dr.) Shehu Idris and the Emir of Katsina Alhaji Mohammed Kabir Usman. They were unanimous in the approval of the recognition of the Speaker as the *Akinjagunmolu* of the Source and also received the blessings of the *Olubuse II* for more protection, prosperity and progress in the conduct of the affairs of the House of Representatives and the nation in general.

The Ooni made special mention of the style of leadership of the Speaker which he said has been distinct and rewarding than the previous ones and commending that the House of Representatives has been more independent and cooperative.

The speaker himself has repeatedly noted that "you do not slap your wife at the market square to show the people that she is your wife, and only to prove the ownership of the

Woman, even when you will go back to say I'm sorry to her at home". But he has also clearly noted that along the line disagreement will surface and they will be taken as they come with both sides coming out of it dignified and respected while the country is the better for it.

In his acceptance speech in Ife, the Speaker openly acknowledged the support of members of the House of Representatives and their respective contributions toward the achievement of the House. He added that "my recognition today as the *Akinjagunmolu* of the Source is the recognition of the entire member of the House of Representatives without whose support and understanding this honour would not have been conferred on me". This was another opportunity for Hon. Masari to stand out as a unique leader when he told the gathering of the dignitaries that "as leaders, one day our actions will be judged positively in the interest of the country, the people Ile Ife and the Yoruba race generally because we have

done our best, but we also can make mistakes and if they are pointed out to us we will accept and make corrections".

He noted that any individual, whether a Royal father, government official or not, has the responsibility to play a role in ensuring that Nigeria remains one and indivisible entity and you do not have to occupy a position before you can do something for your country.

The House, in the pursuit of due process, has been able to, without much noise, revolutionise law making in the country aimed at making laws that are not only for the people but good laws that will stand the test of time particularly evident in the just passed labour bill.

The bill took an ad-hoc committee of the House to embark on a wide range of investigations and consultations toward the effective amendment of the Labour Act so as to have a better labour in the country.

The revelation of the missing (MT African Pride) ship saga by House Committee

on navy, the House vision for Nigerians, the efforts towards ensuring the security of lives and property, the stamping out of corruption and the deliberate legislation on the economic reform agenda of Nigeria for greater heights are only possible due to the activities and qualities of the leadership that have been recognised in the East, the North, and being honoured in the West by the Source of the Yoruba race and tradition.

The final lap of the event that will linger on and on in the memory of dignitaries that grace the occasion is the king of Afro Music, Sunny Ade who was there in person to put the icing on the cake, with a Superb rendition of praises. This brought out the imperial dancing steps of the humble Speaker, Hon. Aminu Bello Masari, whose conferment Completed the tripod in recognition of the bridge builder across the nation's dividing blocs.

Adamu Marshal is the Special Assistant Media to the Speaker.

Trust International

ECOWAS condemns violations in Togo

The Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), President Mamadou Tandja of Niger, and the Executive Secretary, (ECOWAS) Dr. Ibn Chambas, have condemned the violation of the constitution in Togo and called for respect for the institutions of the Togolese republic.

In a statement made available to *Daily Trust* in Abuja, Dr. Chambas called on the political class to depict wisdom in giving the ongoing discussions between political forces a chance with a view to preserving the peace, stability and unity inherited from the late Togolese President, Gnassingbe Eyadema.

The statement was sparked by the ascension of the late president's son, Faure Eyadema, as the president of the country, which was described by the African Union as a "military coup."

The statement stated that ECOWAS was inconsonance with the Chairman of AU, President Olusegun Obasanjo, on the events in Togo and urged the Togolese people to pay tribute to the late Eyadema by a peaceful transition of power in conformity with the Togolese

By Elkanah Chawai, Reporter
(Foreign desk)

constitution, the ECOWAS declaration of political principles and the Algiers Declaration of 1999.

In the statement, the executive secretary extolled the life of the late president, stating that late President Eyadema devoted energy to ECOWAS and worked for peace and security in the sub-region, and that he was an untiring artisan of West African integration.

The late President Eyadema was actively involved in the resolution of conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau and Cote d'Ivoire.



Faure Gnassingbe, 39-year-old son of deceased former Togolese president Gnassingbe Eyadema, who has assumed power in the west African nation following his father's death.

Ngugi attack: Kenyan govt under pressure

By Crispin Oduobuk, Group
Literary Editor

The Kenyan government is under pressure by a collective of top international academics to "prosecute not only the direct attackers, but all those involved" in the August 2004 attack on world-renowned Kenyan writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and his wife Njeeri Wa Ngugi.

The pressure group, known as the Ngugi and Njeeri Solidarity Committee, is

led by Gabriele Schwab, chancellor's professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Irvine, USA. Other members include the renowned Ann Kaplan, professor of English and Comparative Literature and director of the Humanities Center at SUNY Stony-Brook, USA and the poet/writer and

professor of Native American Studies and Creative Writing at the University of Toronto, Simon J. Ortiz. The committee is asking the Kenyan government to treat the attack on Ngugi with the utmost seriousness.

Meanwhile, some suspects arrested in connection with the assault on Ngugi and the rape of his wife Njeeri are undergoing trial in Nairobi. However, according to the newsletter of the African Review of Books (africanreviewofbooks.com) website, the solidarity committee is insisting that it has become "increasingly clear that the attack was a politically motivated assault on a leading international intellectual and his wife."

The committee goes on further to say, "This is not only an issue of paramount importance for political liberties and the rights of intellectuals. It is also a critical test case for overcoming a culture of silence and impunity surrounding violence against women in Kenya (and, in many ways, the world at large)."

In a related development, the prosecutor handling the Ngugi attack case recently

Garang to help with Darfur crisis

John Garang, veteran leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in southern Sudan, has said he is prepared to help seek a solution to a bitter conflict in Darfur, in the west of the vast country.

"The role that we can play is moral and political. We are neither part of the government nor of the resistance movement," said Garang late on Saturday after

talks with leaders of the African Union at the body's headquarters in Addis Ababa.

"I'll listen to the government and the resistance and I'll be happy to play that role," he said.

Garang, who last month signed a peace settlement for southern Sudan after decades of war, said he would be willing "to see how the agreement on the southern Sudan can be adapted to solve the problems of Darfur and eastern Sudan."

He spoke after talks with Oumar Konare, president of the African Union's executive Commission.

Darfur has been in the throes of a murderous civil war for the past two years, and the government in Khartoum is also battling rebels in eastern Sudan.

Adam Thiam, a spokesman for the AU, said Konare had asked Garang to help settle the Darfur conflict via his future role as a vice-president in a new Sudanese government.

The SPLM leader is also due to represent Sudan at upcoming meetings of the UN Security Council devoted to the Darfur conflict.

"President Konare asked (Garang) to ensure that the government of national unity that is to be set up in the coming weeks put the settlement of the crises in Sudan at the top of its agenda," Thiam said.

"That means Darfur, but also the east and south of the country," he added.

After visiting Addis Ababa, Garang was due to travel on to Eritrea on Sunday.

Somalis approve foreign troops for govt

The Somali government has approved the deployment of at least 5000 foreign troops to help restore the first national administration in 14 years, but powerful tribal chiefs have balked at the plan, officials said.

The plan to send between 5000 and 7000 troops to stabilise Somalia was put to a vote at a cabinet meeting chaired by President Abd Allahi Yusuf Ahmad in the Kenyan capital. The decision will have to be taken to the country's parliament for final approval. Thirty-eight out of 47 ministers voted in favour of the deployment, but nine of them voted against, including powerful tribal leaders in the cabinet, a

minister said.

The African Union (AU) last month agreed in principle to deploy a peace support mission.

The plan was approved by a cabinet chaired by Ahmad At the AU summit in Nigeria last week, leaders said the regional Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which groups Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda, Djibouti and Sudan, will initially provide troops and equipment for the mission.

"The contentious issue in the deployment plan is the participation of troops from neighbouring countries that have geopolitical interests in Somalia," the government minister, who asked not to be

named, said.

Somali factions have repeatedly accused neighbouring states of supporting their rivals in the past. Ahmad, himself a former tribal leader and president of the northeastern region of Puntland, is backed by Ethiopia, a fact that irks Mogadishu tribal chiefs.

The timetable for deployment will be prepared after parliament approves the decision, according to Somali officials.

The mission, which will be the first multinational force in Somalia since the end of a failed UN-mandated intervention in 1995, is expected to help install the country's transitional government, so far based in neighbouring Kenya for security reasons.

A team of Somali lawmakers this week rejected the planned deployment when they travelled to the war-torn capital Mogadishu to ease the way for the government's eventual relocation from Nairobi.

"We reject the deployment of foreign troops in Mogadishu. Therefore you should create a peaceful environment for the relocating Somali government," faction leader Muse Sudi Yalawow said on Wednesday, voicing a position widely held by faction leaders, even those in cabinet.

"Please do not create reasons for the need for outside forces to pacify Mogadishu," added Yalawow, whose faction controls areas of southern and northern Mogadishu.

Malawi president quits ruling party

Malawi's president Bingu wa Mutharika has quit the governing party, saying he is tired of criticism about his high-profile anti-corruption campaign.

The United Democratic Front (UDF) party had been due to decide whether to expel Mr. Mutharika for alleged misconduct.

It is the first time a president of Malawi has not been a member of a political party, which is thought to raise several constitutional questions.

He chose national anti-corruption day to announce his resignation.

"I have decided to resign from the UDF with immediate effect because firstly I no longer have support within

the party... my sin as far as the UDF is concerned is because of my anti-corruption stand," he said.

His supporters said Mr. Mutharika's tough stance had made him many enemies in government and within his own party.

On Friday, Mr. Mutharika sacked three cabinet ministers widely seen as allies of his political rival, former mentor and President Bakili Muluzi.

He has also implicated Mr. Muluzi in what he alleged was a plot to kill him.

Analysts say Mr. Mutharika's decision does not come as a great surprise as the UDF had come close to expelling him last week.

It is thought Mr. Mutharika - who came to power just nine months ago - will form a new party in the coming weeks.

Mozambican govt vows campaign against corruption

Mozambique's new Minister of the Interior, Jose Pacheco, has promised a battle "without quarter" against corruption inside the police force.

Speaking to reporters shortly after President Armando Guebuza had sworn him into office, Pacheco said his task was to install morale and ethics in the police. He would work on a plan to ensure a ruthless struggle to root out corruption within the force.

Although no examples of police corruption were cited, Pacheco could hardly not have been thinking of the four police officers, three of them very senior, who are facing charges of drug trafficking in

the southern province of Inhambane.

A further inevitable concern must have been the police complicity in the two escapes by the country's most notorious assassin, Anibal dos Santos Junior ("Anibalzinho"), from the Maputo top security prison.

Asked if he would make changes in the top leadership of the police, Pacheco said it was "premature" to talk of such matters.

"But if changes are needed we will not hesitate to make them", he added. As for the illegal "presidential guard" of the former rebel movement Renamo, consisting of a couple of hundred armed men, who were never demobilised, and

still exert a destabilising influence in the central districts of Maringue and Cheringoma, Pacheco promised to work on the issue so that it ceases to perturb the country's social, political and economic life.

The Minister for Planning and Development, Aiuba Cuereneia, pledged "we will not cheat the electorate". He told reporters that everything would be done to implement the promises contained in the election manifesto that the ruling Frelimo Party put to the voters.

He said he thought it possible to implement the election pledges, which was why he had accepted Guebuza's invitation to join the government at the head

Trust International

US pledges \$40m aid to Palestinians

The US has pledged to give \$40m (£21m) in the next 90 days to the Palestinian Authority amid new peace hopes.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the US would also appoint a "security coordinator" and peace monitors to help Palestinian reform.

Ms. Rice was speaking at a news conference after talks with Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas in the West Bank.

Mr. Abbas welcomed US intervention and called on Israel to take its own measures to work

towards peace.

He said he hoped his meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on Tuesday (today) would help advance the process.

The Israeli-Palestinian meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh - without any US involvement - will be the highest-level talks between the two sides since the intifada broke out in 2000.

Ms. Rice said the US "will be very active" in new efforts to find common ground between Israel and the Palestinians.

She announced that both Mr. Abbas and Mr. Sharon had

accepted invitations to visit President George Bush at the White House in the spring.

She said that of some \$350m promised to the Palestinian Authority last week by Mr. Bush, \$40m would be handed over immediately for a "quick action programme" to create jobs and rebuild infrastructure.

She announced the appointment of US Lieutenant-General William Ward to "encourage resumption of bilateral security co-ordination".

He is expected to visit the region in the coming weeks.

Mr. Abbas said Palestinians were working to implement their commitments under the internationally-backed "roadmap for peace", and "we hope the Israeli side will do the same".

Asked whether the unofficial ceasefire undertaken by militants would last, he said: "I believe everyone is committed to this ceasefire and they showed this in the past few days."

She commended Israel on its "historic" decision to withdraw from the Gaza Strip, but reminded it of the need to live up to its roadmap obligations.

The peace process has been given new life since the death of former Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, correspondents said.

Both Mr. Sharon and the US had refused to negotiate with Arafat, branding him an obstacle to peace.

Throughout her press conference with Mr. Abbas, Ms Rice referred to him as "President Abbas", marking a break with recent history, and the title bestowed on "Chairman Arafat".

Yesterday the Israeli army reopened the Karni crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip, allowing vital cargo shipments to the Palestinians to resume.

The crossing was closed after six Israelis were killed in a militant attack there in mid-January.



Mahmoud Abbas

Car bombs kill 26 in Iraq

Two car bombs have exploded in Iraq, killing 26 people and injuring 20, police revealed.

A car bomb explosion in the Iraqi city of Mosul yesterday killed 12 policemen as they queued to receive their monthly pay, police said.

The blast took place near the city's main hospital.

"Eleven policemen were killed and six others wounded in the explosion. They were gathered to receive their pay near the hospital," said police Captain Qasim Muhammad.

Hasan Tahsin al-Ubaidi, Director of Mosul's al-Jumhuri hospital told *Aljazeera* a bomber had arrived at the hospital and asked all policemen there to gather for military statistics purposes. The bomber then blew himself up killing the gathered policemen.

A large crater was blown in the road and at least five cars were destroyed.

Another car bomb exploded outside police headquarters in the town of Baquba, north of Baghdad, killing 14 and wounding a further 14, police said.

"A car bomb exploded in front of one of the entrances to Diyala police headquarters slightly before 11am," said Muhammad Hasan.

"Fourteen people were wounded," said fellow policeman Ali Mahmud.

Husain al-Mujamaai, an Iraqi journalist, told *Aljazeera*, volunteers had gathered near Diyala police directorate, which also serves as the headquarters

for the US military police.

Although the building is surrounded by barracks and wires, the driver of the booby-trapped car managed to reach the volunteers, near one of the building's gates.

Al-Mujamaai said a large number of policemen had quit the police force over the last few months because of security concerns.

Baquba, 60km northeast of Baghdad, is the capital of Diyala province.

Reports said ambulances had arrived at the scene to tend to the victims.

Fighters trying to overthrow Iraq's US-backed interim government have mounted frequent attacks on Iraqi security forces.

An al-Qaida wing in Iraq has said one of its fighters killed at least 11 Iraqis in Mosul, according to an internet statement.

"A lion in the Martyrs' Brigades of al-Qaida Organisation for Holy War in Iraq attacked a gathering of apostates seeking to return to the apostate police force in Mosul near the hospital," said a statement carried on a website. The origin of the website could not be confirmed.

"The martyr was wearing an explosives belt and blew himself up after he entered the crowd," the group said, vowing to carry out more attacks on "apostates and their masters".

Yesterday's blast in Mosul was the deadliest attack since last week's elections.

Opposition accuses Kurds over Iraqi vote

Turkmen and Arab political parties in the Iraqi city of Kirkuk have accused Kurds of fixing the result of provincial elections held on the 30 January.

Official results for the election held on the same day as Iraq's national vote have not yet been released.

But Turkmen and Arab parties in the northern city on Sunday said that Kurds from other parts of the country flooded the city on election day to inflate the community's vote.

According to local Kurdish media, the Kurdish list expects to get about 63% of the vote for the Tamim provincial council which includes Kirkuk.

"The elections lack credibility because of the major violations and the absence of international observers," a Turkmen candidate for the provincial election, Saad al-Din Arkaj, said after a meeting of Turkmen parties in Kirkuk.

Arkaj said the Iraqi election commission should review the whole vote count and investigate the complaints of Arab and Turkmen parties. "The results

fixed by the Kurds will cause a catastrophe," he warned.

"The Turkmen cannot accept this plot through which the Kurds want to join Kirkuk to Kurdistan," added Arkaj.

An Arab candidate for the provincial council, Abd al-Rahman Munshid al-Assi also called the election organisation a "plot".

He said thousands of Kurds had been brought to the city from Sulaimaniya and Arbil provinces

on 30 January "to vote a second time in Kirkuk".

"They are aiming to attach Kirkuk to Kurdistan and we Arabs and Turkmen reject this," he said after a meeting of Arab and Turkmen parties on Saturday night.

"They are aiming to attach Kirkuk to Kurdistan and we Arabs and Turkmen reject this."

Abd al-Rahman Munshid al-Assi, an Arab provincial candidate.

"We are examining all options as we will not have a real presence on the provincial council. Two thirds of the seats will go to Kurds," Assi predicted.

Kurdish leaders deny any vote fraud.

"Unfortunately, the Arabs and Turkmen do not understand democracy," said Rajkar Ali, a candidate for the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) for the election.

EU warns against Iran strike

A military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities would be "a mistake", the European Union's foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, has warned. "That will complicate enormously the situation," he told Britain's ITV television network.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said last week a strike on Iran was "not on the agenda at this point".

Ms Rice also urged Europe to show "unity of purpose" with Washington in opposing Iran's nuclear programme.

The US accuses Tehran of trying to develop nuclear weapons. Iran has repeatedly denied the charge, insisting that its nuclear programme is for civilian use.

The EU has been negotiating with Tehran over its nuclear activities, but the US has urged a tougher stance.

France, Germany and Britain are trying to persuade Iran to turn a freeze on its nuclear enrichment activities into abandonment.

Odd World

Fireman's joyride ruins fire emergency

Embarrassed emergency officials are investigating reports a Sydney fire station was unable to respond to an alarm because a fireman had taken the station's only fire truck to pick up a pizza and give some friends a joyride.

Fire officials said there had been no risk to the public even though the fire station in the beachside suburb of Maroubra had been unable to respond to a call three weeks ago because the truck was missing.

But they confirmed they were investigating media reports that the fireman on duty had gone to pick up a pizza and then took some friends for a spin in his shiny red truck.

"This is extremely rare," said New South Wales Fire Brigade assistant commissioner John Benson. "I would say that this incident is unheard of in the New South Wales Fire Brigade in regards to utilising fire appliances in an inappropriate manner and ... it's being thoroughly investigated," he told Australian Broadcasting Corporation radio.

A fire engine from a neighbouring station had already responded to the emergency call, described as a fire door alarm, before the Maroubra truck's absence was noted, Benson said.

Man hides from cops, calls for help

Jerry Wayne Till managed to get away from sheriff's deputies and elude them briefly until he called them for help after he got lost in the woods.

A sheriff's deputy tried to pull over Till on Wednesday evening, for speeding, but Till drove away, exceeding 100 mph at times, before eventually abandoning his vehicle and running into the woods according to the arrest affidavit.

Deputies brought in search dogs, but couldn't locate till until he called the sheriff's office from his cell phone asking for help because he was lost.

Deputies still couldn't find him, until a nearby resident heard him crying for help and called the authorities.

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Trust International

Thai leader claims victory in polls

Thailand's Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has claimed victory in Sunday's election after television exit polls projected a landslide win for his ruling party.

Meanwhile, opposition leader Banyat Bantadtan has conceded defeat. "I was shocked when I saw the exit polls, that Thai Rak Thai (TRT) managed to win 399 (seats) and the Democrats won only 80, but we have to accept what the public gave us," he said.

"I would like to congratulate Thai Rak Thai. We have to accept the outcome because that is the voters' will."

Banyat added: "We know today that we will be the opposition, and we will be as vigorous an opposition as we can. Thai Rak Thai will have a single-party government."

Thaksin offered his thanks to voters as he arrived at his party headquarters. "I thank the voters for their

overwhelming support of my party," he said.

The announcement came after Thai television released exit poll results within 90 minutes of polls closing at 3pm showing TRT had won 399 of the 500 seats in the House of Representatives.

At the Democrat headquarters in Bangkok, a dozen party supporters watched as the results came in on a big screen.

Abhisit Vejjajiva, a rising star for the opposition, also conceded defeat but expressed hopes for an accountable government and solid opposition.

"Personally, I hope the Democrat Party ends up

with more seats than the exit polls showed," Abhisit told local television.

"But whatever the result is, we have to accept it and work as we have worked in the past to be our Abhisit added, "Since Thai Rak Thai has secured an overwhelming majority, guaranteeing its stability in parliament, I ask the prime minister to open up his government for checks and balances."

"I ask the prime minister to open up his government for checks and balances"

A Bangkok deputy governor-nor, Samart Rat-chapolisitte, said the party's drubbing meant it would have to sit back and analyse

where it was headed.

"If the actual results match the exit polls then we have to think about how to improve the party. It might be that we have to find the reasons that the results are like this. We have to sit and talk to analysts."

In Thailand's restive southern provinces, voting was conducted under heavy security.

Voting was by and large peaceful in insurgency-hit south Thailand

Voters trickled into polling stations under the watch of about 2000 special police deployed across Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat and Songkhla provinces, where a Muslim insurgency has

raged since January last year.

No violence was reported in the first hours of voting, as security forces in the provincial capital Pattani made themselves highly visible, with military Humvees patrolling the streets and armed guards watching over polling stations.

The mainly Muslim southern provinces in predominantly Buddhist Thailand have suffered almost daily killings since the insurgency broke out 13 months ago, leaving more than 580 dead.

Thaksin has faced tough criticism for his heavy-handed response to the

insurgency, notably two controversial clashes that ended with the deaths of hundreds of separatists or protesters.



Thailand's Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra

US urges Russia on democracy

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Russia must do more to show it is committed to democracy if it wants deeper relations with Western nations.

Speaking before a working dinner in Turkey with the Russian foreign minister, Ms. Rice said it was no secret that Washington had concerns.

She said Russia must show it is intent on strengthening the rule of law and permitting a free press.

Ms. Rice was in Turkey on Saturday night on the fourth leg of a whirlwind tour.

In Poland earlier, where she met her Polish counterpart, Adam Rotfeld, Ms. Rice said: "The United States does have, in fact, productive relations with Russia.

"It is a relationship that will deepen and broaden, particularly if democratic values can find a way to take hold in Russia."

"Everyone wants Russia to be a prosperous, democratic state that is fully integrated", and there are many signs that "Russia has the same vision of the future," Ms. Rice added.

"And when we have differences, as we sometimes do, we have to work through those with respect for the differences, respect for both sides."

A state department official said Ms. Rice, who as an academic specialised in Soviet affairs, had a two-and-a-half hour working dinner with the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov at her hotel in the Turkish capital Ankara.

Although Ms. Rice speaks fluent Russian, the two spoke only in English, the US official said.

For his part, Mr Lavrov said Russia and the US remained allies in the fight against terrorism, illegal drugs and the spread of weapons of mass destruction.



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Lagos - Abuja	07:20
	10:30
	15:15
	13:00
Abuja - Lagos	8:45a.m.
	11:00
	13:15
	17:00
Chanchangi Airlines	
Lagos - Abuja	8:15a.m.
	11:00a.m.
	12:10p.m.
	4:45p.m.
Kaduna - Lagos	8:30a.m.
P/H - Lagos	9:00a.m.
	4:30p.m.
Abuja - Kaduna	2:30p.m.
Kaduna - Abuja	1:30p.m.

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

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

Dasab Airlines	
Abuja - 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.
PHC - Lagos	9:45 a.m.

Most airlines operate the same flight schedule on week days.

Aviation

Airline operators, NGO plan Nigeria-US direct flights

The Airline Operators of Nigeria (AON) and a United States based non government organization, the Foundation for Democracy in Africa (FDA) are working out ways of floating direct flights from Nigeria to America.

In furtherance of this plan the FDA in collaboration with the Miami International Airport will be hosting the US-Africa Air Transportation summit from June 6-8, this year in which Nigeria as well as other African aviation regulators and operators carefully participating.

Also, in line with this, FDA president, Fred Oladinde and other members of the body held a two-day meeting with the Nigerian air operators and regulators between Tuesday to Wednesday last week in Lagos.

By Ahmed I. Shekarum, Group Business Editor

Briefing newsmen at a dinner held in Abuja to mark the end of the two-day meeting in Nigeria, Mr. Oladinde said they had extensive deliberation on how the direct Africa-US flight will be operated, with much attention focused on Nigeria.

He said they coordinators of the planned direct flight operations do not have any specific air carriers who would fly the route(s) in mind, but that any interesting airlines are welcome to partake.

Listing some of the benefits derivable from the route, particularly from Miami Airport in Florida, he said the airport has the second highest turnover international passengers in the whole of the United States every year, adding that the Miami Airport

has the highest annual cargo tonnage of two million tons in the US.

According to the FDA president, though Nigeria is not a very lucrative route to operate, the Nigeria-Miami route has great potentials, and that any airlines who operate it could break-even easily in view of the passenger turnover.

Other speakers at the dinner include secretary general of the AON, Captain Mohammed Joji and assistant director, business development of the Miami-Dade Aviation Department, Mr. Miguel Southwell.

Issues to be discussed at the planned summit scheduled to hold at the Sheraton Biscayne Bay Hotel

in Miami, Florida in June, include aviation safety and security in pursuit of category 1, emerging challenges for US/Africa bilateral agreements, the marketing of Africa-to-US direct air service, and analysis of aviation infrastructure project profiles to sustain growth in air service.

Chanchangi unveils new Boeing 737

From Aliya Haruna, Correspondent (Kaduna)

Chanchangi Airline has launched another Boeing 737 aircraft, bringing the total number of the company's planes to nine.

The aircraft which has the capacity to airlift 130 passengers is to operate a domestic flight on Kaduna-Lagos-Port Harcourt route, according to the chairman of the airline, Alhaji Ahmadu Chanchangi.

Alhaji Ahmadu assured all customers of the company of continued improvements of the services it provides, pointing out that efforts are being made to ensure total safety standards in line with laid down rules in the aviation industry.

Performing the launching of the new aircraft at the Kaduna International Airport, Governor Ahmad Muhammad Makarfi of Kaduna state commended the efforts of Chanchangi Airline on the role it plays in the air transportation sector, which he said is impacting positively on the nation's socio-economic drive.

It will be recalled that a

recently, Chanchangi Airline recorded a set back as one of the aircraft in its fleet, a Boeing 727 was suspended from operating in the country,

following some technical faults it encounter in the process of landing. The aircraft was however cleared to continue operations after investigators gave it a clear bill of health.

717 shutdown hits Boeing profits

Boeing expects its commercial unit to recover in 2005 and 2006. Boeing's profits fell 84% in the fourth quarter because of charges related to the shutdown of its 717 programme and the loss of a Pentagon contract.

The company's profits hit \$186m (£98.79m) after charges, down from \$1.13bn in 2003.

Despite the deep fall, Boeing beat market expectations thanks to its defence unit, now its main business.

The US giant expects a strong recovery in 2005 and 2006, especially in its commercial unit.

The company has said its sales in the last three months of 2004 rose 1% to \$13.31bn.

It also explained that a tax

benefit helped it to avoid a further profit fall.

Boeing forecasts revenues of \$58bn in 2005 and between \$62bn and \$63bn in 2006. Sales in 2004 were \$52.5bn.

Boeing expects to sell 320 commercial aircraft in 2005, up from 285 in 2004.

The company expects to sell between 370 and 385 commercial planes in 2006, higher than analysts' expectations.

"They said they had 78 percent of those sold, so in the next year they only have to sell another 90 or 100," said Paul Nisbet of JSA Research.

"They probably know that those orders are going to be picked up by some of the 737 fleets, like Southwest or Ryanair," he added.

BA profits fall on higher fuel costs

Record fuel prices almost halved British Airways' (BA's) third-quarter profits, but Europe's No.2 airline raised its full-year revenue forecast on Friday as passenger numbers and its cargo business both improve.

Reuters reports that BA, which has been forced to cut fares amid tough competition from low-cost rivals, also warned that ticket prices were still expected to decline, but a recovery in first and business class travel was helping offset some of the pain.

BA shares, trading at their highest level since June last year, rose 1.8 percent to 275-1/4 pence by 4:08 a.m. EST in a cautious response to the result, which beat most forecasts.

Analysts said it was a solid performance, but remained concerned about falling ticket prices, and high fuel and employee costs.

"It is quite good on the revenue side and it shows the impact of fuel surcharges and a positive cargo development, however, operating margins down and cost impact of fuel are very strong," BNP Paribas analyst Nick Van den Brul said.

BA said pretax profit for

the three months to the end of December was 75 million pounds (\$141 million), compared to 125 million pounds a year ago.

Chief Executive Rod Eddington attributed the improvement to higher passenger numbers and a continuing improvement in premium travel through January.

Fuel costs in the period jumped 47 percent to 330 million pounds in the period but part of the burden was offset by surcharges on passenger tickets and cargo the airline introduced last year when oil prices hit record highs.

The airline's "other revenues," which Eddington said included surcharges, rose 50 percent to 226 million pounds.

BA said it has hedged 80 percent of its fuel buying at \$32.00 for the remaining three months to March 2005, 55 percent at \$36-\$37 a barrel for rest of the year end-December 2005 and 24 percent at \$38 a barrel throughout 2006.

Employee costs in the period increased 3.2 percent due to higher pension contributions.

...makes special valentine offer

British Airways has announced a special fare to London and the UD for its Lagos and Abuja passengers.

A statement from the airline's office in Nigeria said Abuja passengers are to pay \$699 to London and \$749 to Europe. From Lagos and Abuja, passengers are to pay as low as \$1,100 to New York, Washington, Baltimore, New Jersey and Boston. Fares to Chicago, Miami and Atlanta starts from \$1,400, while passengers for San Francisco, Houston and Dallas Fort Worth are to pay from \$1,500, it added.

It said further that passengers have a minimum stay of 5 days and maximum

stay of 30 days until 31st March when outbound travel must end for both London and US passengers.

"Though the sales of London fares from Abuja ends 28 February, passengers on World Traveller Plus are to enjoy an extended selling period till 18 March, 2005," the statement said, adding that children and infants are to pay 75% and 10% of applicable fares respectively.

Kola Olayinka, British Airways manager, Abuja and Northern Nigeria said: "This special offer is a demonstration of British Airways' responsiveness to the need of its market, just as we expect leisure travellers to avail themselves of this price in a year offer."

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Toyota gives hybrid vehicle tech to Subaru

Japan's top automaker Toyota Motor will provide hybrid-vehicle technology to Subaru-brand carmaker Fuji Heavy Industries, helping it exploit the key North American market, a report said.

Toyota plans to supply its hybrid power system to Fuji Heavy, which will use it to make hybrids a mainline product in the North American market, which accounts for 35 percent of its group sales, the Nihon Keizai Shimbun said.

Fuji Heavy for its part is considering supplying to Toyota the technology on lithium-ion batteries it has developed with electronics maker NEC for use in hybrid vehicles, the economic daily

said without citing sources. Working-level talks on the technical cooperation have already been taking place, with Toyota president Fujio Cho and his Fuji Heavy counterpart Kyoji Takenaka set to enter negotiations soon, it said.

A Toyota spokesman said the automaker was "having talks with various companies (over hybrid technology) but nothing has been decided." He declined to disclose the names of these companies.

Hybrid vehicles have both a gasoline engine and an electric motor which come into use depending on driving conditions, making them much more economical and environmentally-friendly than conventional petrol driven cars.

Toyota has pioneered the use of green technologies with its Prius, the world's first mass-produced hybrid car.

US auto giant General Motors, the top shareholder in Fuji Heavy with a 20 percent stake, has formed a partnership with German-US carmaker DaimlerChrysler to jointly develop hybrid vehicle technology.

The Nihon Keizai said that the alliance was likely to focus on technology for use in large vehicles rather than vehicles with engine displacements of around three liters, Fuji Heavy's strength.



Subaru Impreza 2005

EU wants cars equipped with emergency transmitters

The European Union (EU) executive unveiled plans to equip all new cars sold in the EU with an emergency transmitter to ensure rapid medical help in the event of a crash.

Around 2,000 lives could be saved a year once the automatic emergency call ("eCall") technology is in place, the European Commission said, targeting a start date of 2009 for the devices.

The transmitter would be activated automatically by pressure sensors that would detect a sudden impact, or manually by an injured

occupant of the car, and send an SOS via the EU-wide emergency call number 112.

The emergency services, through specially adapted call centres, would receive the signal and immediately locate the car by satellite to dispatch an ambulance crew.

"With this technology, your car could save your life," EU Information Society and Media Commissioner Viviane Reding said.

The commission unveiled its plan after contacts with EU governments and the auto industry which it said showed that the eCall technology

could be fitted in all new cars "as soon as 2009".

The devices would be embedded in the car's electronics with only a button visible on the dashboard, Brussels said.

The commission said it would like to see field tests carried out next year.

But for the technology to work throughout the EU by 2009, member states' emergency services will need to upgrade their call centres "at the latest in 2007".

The commission, however, said the plan already had more than 20 signatories drawn

from the EU and the auto, telecoms and insurance industries all committed to its success.

"Advanced information and communication technologies have great potential to improve road safety in Europe," Reding said, pointing to the commission's legal green light given last month to anti-crash radar technology.

The technology could spell the end of smashing into the car in front, or bumping into out-of-vision obstacles in car parks, according to Brussels.

BMW to recall faulty diesel cars

BMW is to recall all cars equipped with a faulty diesel fuel-injection pump supplied by parts maker Robert Bosch.

The company said the faulty part does not represent a safety risk and the recall only affects pumps made in December and January.

BMW added that it was too early to say how many cars were affected or how much the recall would cost.

The German company is to extend a planned production break at one of its plants due to the faulty Bosch part.

The Dingolfing site will now be closed all next week instead of for just two days.

The additional three-day stoppage will mean a production loss of up to 3,600 vehicles, BMW said, adding that it was confident it could make up the numbers later.

Bosch has stopped production of the part but expects to restart by 2 February.

The faulty component does not represent a safety risk but causes the motor to stall after a significant amount of mileage.

When asked if BMW would be seeking compensation from Bosch, the carmaker's chief executive Helmut Panke said: "we will first solve the problem before talking about who will pay".

Audi and Mercedes Benz were also supplied with the defective diesel fuel-injection pumps but neither of them have to recall any vehicles.

A spokesman for DaimlerChrysler, parent company of Mercedes Benz, said it will however have to halt some production.

It is to close the Mercedes factory in Sindelfingen on Monday and Tuesday.

Audi said it had been hit by production bottlenecks, due to a shortage of unaffected Bosch parts.

Opel launches new Astra OPC at motor show

The new Astra OPC from Opel makes its world premiere at the Geneva Motor Show (March 3 - 13, 2005). This production version of the Astra High Performance Concept study revealed in Paris is based on the Astra GTC and takes the dynamic potential of the new compact class generation to new heights with its striking looks and state-of-the-art technology. With its 176 kW/240 hp 2.0-liter turbo gasoline engine, the arden blue Astra developed by the OPC team is one of the most powerful compact front-wheel

drive cars on the market. The engine develops maximum torque of 320 Newton meters and delivers strong pulling power at low engine speeds. The Astra OPC comes with a six-speed manual transmission, accelerates from zero - 100 in less than seven seconds and reaches a top speed of more than 240 km/h.

Hans H. Demant, Managing Director, Adam Opel AG: "The new Astra OPC is the first of several sporty top models that we will be presenting in the coming months. With the new OPC range we want to show

the high dynamic potential in the Opel portfolio."

The new Astra OPC's engine is based on the 200 hp 2.0-liter turbo gasoline unit with maximum torque of 262 Nm, the top motorization for the other Astra variants. The OPC's increased power is a result of optimizations to the intake and exhaust manifold, use of highest quality engine components as well as enhancements to the turbocharger and injection system.

The engine's power is matched by the IDSPlus chassis (Interactive Driving

System) with electronic CDC (Continuous Damping Control) and integration of all driving dynamics controls, which has been made even more agile and sporty for the new Astra OPC.

Special 18-inch alloy wheels and 225/45 R 18 tires are standard, 19-inch wheels (235/35 R 19) in the design of the Paris show car are available as an option. Brake calipers painted in characteristic OPC blue emphasize the powerful brake system (internally ventilated disks at front: 321 mm / disks at rear: 278 mm).

The impressive power hidden beneath the top performer's exterior is apparent at first glance thanks to design features such as the front section which has a more muscular appearance than the Astra GTC. Its look is defined by a much wider and lower air intake, a honeycomb grille as well as a bumper with a clearly accentuated spoiler lip and integrated fog lights in the pronounced side apertures. At the same time, these provide a harmonious connection to the side sills which are more strongly profiled towards the rear of the car. The rear of the Astra OPC looks as powerful as the front. It is accentuated

by a distinctive roof aerofoil, for increased down-force, two side cutouts with a lattice structure and the trapezoidal center tailpipe.

Eye-catching sporty details are also found in the interior. The most striking are the Recaro seats, which are designed for maximum lateral support. They are available in two-tone leather/fabric or leather upholstery. The seat surfaces are in arden blue or silver, while the side bolsters and head restraints are charcoal black. Other interior highlights are a new leather gearshift knob, chrome-ringed instruments with blue needles on black dials and stainless steel door sill trim - all with the new OPC logo. Door on the instrument panel and in the floors is available in arden blue, silver or black.

The Astra OPC was developed by engineers at the International Technical Development Center (ITDC) in Rüsselsheim in close cooperation with the OPC (Opel Performance Center) team. Between 2001 and the end of 2004, over 15,000 OPC models based on the Astra, Astra station wagon and Zafira were delivered. The new Astra OPC will be launched in the fall 2005.



Opel new Astra OPC

www.autoindex.org

BAT investments in Nigeria hit N38.6bn

The managing director, British American Tobacco (BAT) Nigeria, Mr. Richard Hodgson said his company's investments into the economy has reached N280 million (about 38.6 billion) since inception in 2001.

Hodgson revealed this last Thursday in Abuja while launching the company's Social Report 2004 during the Nigeria Investment Forum, saying that their new factory in Ibadan and Zaria consumed part of the amount and the remaining were invested in social responsibility projects and programs in various communities within the nation.

Part of the projects BAT embarked upon Hodgson said include the poverty reduction project in Kaduna targeted to economically empower enterprising adults with technical skills in order to be self-employed and Ago-Are agricultural development project aimed at assisting Nigerians in the economic development of their communities through the provision of necessary know how to improve the yield of food crops.

He said the company has engaged in social development projects especially in the host

By Hamisu Muhammad
Reporter Business

communities through the provision of potable water, educational assistance, environmental, health and safety.

"BAT Nigeria is partnering with the federal government in the campaign against desert encroachment. We have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with federal ministry of environment to provide 100,000 seedlings annually to help fight desertification"

"As part of the its reforestation scheme, BAT Nigeria maintains 2 tree plantations in Iseyin and Ogboro in Oyo state with a total planted area of 1,130 hectares and over 1 million trees" he said.

In providing job opportunities to the local farmers BAT said in its report that over 1,900 farmers registered with its subsidiary company, British American Tobacco Iseyin Agronomy Limited (BATIA) were being provided with seed and advice on all aspects of crop production and environmental practice.

Hodgson also mentioned that through

BAT Foundation which is the new initiative on poverty reduction, the company committed \$1 million, stressing that the initiative has already made impact on the lives of the benefiting communities.

Responding, the chief executive officer of the Commonwealth Business Council, Dr. Mohan Kaul commended BAT Nigeria on its social responsibly initiative adding that the company has done very well in attracting the attention of foreign investors in Nigeria.

W/African accountants, auditors urged on transparency

Accountants and auditors in West African sub region have been urged to ensure high quality accounting information and produce timely, accurate and reliable financial statements that will prosper transparency and good governance in the sub-region.

The call was made in a communiqué issued at the just concluded Forum of Accountants-General and Auditors-General in West Africa held in Abuja.

The participants observed that in helping to foster integration and create wealth in the sub-region, it is necessary for accountants and auditors to perform their duties in accordance with the principles

High oil prices boosted Shell's profits in 2004. Soaring oil prices last year have helped Shell report a record annual profit for a UK-listed company.

The Anglo-Dutch energy giant generated income after tax of \$17.5bn (£9.3bn) in 2004, up 38 per cent on the year before.

However, Shell also said it was downgrading its proved energy reserves for 2003 by 1.4 billion barrels.

Shell reduced its reserves several times in 2004, leading to the departure of its three most senior executives including chairman Sir Philip Watts.

Shell pumps out record UK profit

The record profits were fuelled by the surge in crude oil prices in 2004 which hit more than \$55 a barrel last October.

"2004 was a year of extremes with the reserves reorganisation on the one hand and record net income and cash generation on the other," said chief executive, Jeroen van der Veer.

In light of the bumper profits, Shell intends to pay out \$10bn in dividends to shareholders in 2005.

However, the market responded cautiously to

Shell's figures and its shares finished down 1.7 per cent at 471.75p.

Analysts said a likely fall in oil prices this year and the difficulty Shell could face in boosting its reserves would make 2005 a much harder year.

"The reserves debacle led to a loss of three senior executives and tarnished the reputation of the company," Tony Shepard, an analyst with Charles Stanley, told the Press Association.

"Although a line may finally be drawn under this sad episode, Shell still needs to improve its operating performance, especially its reserves replacement ratio."

Shell has completed its review of its energy reserves following last year's crisis which resulted in the resignation of the company's chairman, finance director and production director.

It is downgrading its 2003 reserves figure by 10 per cent, having previously reduced its 2002 estimate by 23 per cent.

It will publish figures for its 2004 reserves later this week, on Monday that will show a \$25.3bn increase over 2003.

Shell's 2004 reserves will be a £5.5bn increase on 2003, will be published later in the week.



PUBLIC NOTICE

FEDERAL MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT (FMENV)

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) OF THE PROPOSED QUARRY PROJECT FOR THE OBAJANA CEMENT COMPLEX BY DANGOTE NIGERIA LIMITED

In accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Act No. 86 of 1992, which makes it Mandatory for proponents of all new major development activities to carry out Environmental Impact Assessment of proposed projects, the Federal Ministry of Environment hereby announces a twenty-one (21) working days Public Notice for information and comments on the draft EIA Report submitted by Dangote Nigeria Limited.

Project Description/Location

The proposed project, located near Oyo-Iwa Village, will involve exploitation of abundant limestone deposit required for the Obajana Cement Factory located about 9 kilometres from the quarry.

VENUES OF DISPLAY

- i) Kogi State Ministry of Environment, Lokoja, Kogi
- ii) Lokoja Local Government Area Headquarters, Lokoja, Kogi State
- iii) Federal Ministry of Environment Office, Lokoja, Kogi State
- iv) FMENV Liaison Office, Games Village, Surulere, Lagos.
- v) FMENV Office, Plot 444, Aguiyi-Ironsi Street, Maitama, Abuja

DURATION OF DISPLAY

Date: 12th January-10th February, 2005
Time: 8:00a.m. - 4:00p.m

ALL COMMENTS SHOULD BE FORWARDED TO THE PERMANENT SECRETARY, FEDERAL MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT ON OR BEFORE 10TH FEBRUARY, 2005.

SIGNED

PERMANENT SECRETARY

FOR: HONOURABLE MINISTER



DANGOTE INDUSTRIES LIMITED

Flour Mills

Invitation for the supply of

In line with the Federal Government Policy on the inclusion of 10% of edible cassava flour in wheat flour milling, we urgently require for our Flour Mills in Lagos, Kano and Calabar the aforementioned, in commercial quantities, with the following specifications:

- Appearance: Fine flowing powder
 - Colour & Odour: White and typical of unfermented cassava
 - Moisture Content: Maximum 10%
 - Crude Fibre: Minimum 7.0%
 - Starch Content: Minimum 70%
- The physical, chemical, mineral composition and microbiological analysis shall conform with the NIS 344:2004 standard for edible cassava flour.

For further information, please contact the following lines:

- LAGOS: 08033483663, 08023367732
- KANO: 08034502250, 08037863931
- CALABAR: 08056349748, 08037049947

GENERAL LINES 08033828849, 08035600136, 08023138439

Business Trust

1ST-TIER SECURITIES

THE NIGERIAN STOCK EXCHANGE

REPORT AS AT MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2005

COMPANY NAME	NO OF DEALS	QUOTATION(N)	QUANTITY TRADED	VALUE OF SHARES
CUTIX PLC	5	1.36	300,000	402,000.00
Sector Totals	5		300,000	402,000.00
AGRICULTURE/AGRO-ALLIED				
LIVESTOCK FEEDS PLC.	1	2.83	100	283.00
THE OKOMU OIL PALM COMPANY PLC	18	16.52	138,772	2,298,049.59
PRESKO PLC.	7	11.80	10,380	120,474.00
Sector Totals	26		149,252	2,418,806.59
AUTOMOBILE & TYRE				
DUNLOP NIGERIA PLC.	22	2.04	319,318	639,076.97
R. T. BRISCOAE PLC.	5	7.22	5,431	39,211.82
Sector Totals	27		324,749	678,288.79
BANKING				
ACCESS BANK PLC	19	3.42	396,440	1,355,824.80
AFRIBANK NIGERIA PLC.	16	6.63	667,772	4,427,328.36
CHARTERED BANK PLC	5	3.90	57,675	224,932.50
COOPERATIVE BANK PLC.	2	1.92	5,250	10,080.00
EIB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC.	1	2.26	1,000,000	2,260,000.00
FIRST BANK OF NIGERIA PLC.	412	23.94	1,045,897	25,046,203.11
FSB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC.	20	1.42	233,332	330,289.71
GUARANTY TRUST BANK PLC.	192	10.81	1,345,898	14,468,209.49
GULF BANK OF NIGERIA PLC	3	0.75	191,541	143,655.75
INTERNATIONAL MERCHANT BANK PLC.	20	0.60	910,000	547,915.00
INTERCONTINENTAL BANK PLC.	4	7.81	12,000	93,720.00
MANUFACTURERS BANK NIGERIA PLC.	7	1.27	676,000	874,440.00
NAL BANK PLC.	7	2.80	87,500	245,000.00
OCEANIC BANK PLC	1	6.30	2,065	13,009.50
OMEGA BANK (NIGERIA) PLC.	6	1.35	350,068	485,581.50
STANDARD TRUST BANK PLC.	17	7.41	3,709,890	27,490,284.90
TRANS INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC.	1	1.78	500	890.00
UNITED BANK FOR AFRICA PLC.	80	10.00	720,170	7,201,700.00
UNION BANK NIGERIA PLC.	297	20.35	1,615,648	32,931,577.27
UNIVERSAL TRUST BANK PLC	3	0.89	9,207	8,266.30
WEMA BANK PLC.	13	3.93	45,680	179,522.40
ZENITH BANK PLC	280	12.81	1,949,930	24,889,619.00
Sector Totals	1,406		15,032,463	143,228,049.59
BREWERIES				
GUINNESS NIGERIA PLC.	133	99.95	231,490	23,122,072.18
NIGERIAN BREWERIES PLC.	299	34.49	1,220,179	41,923,044.35
Sector Totals	432		1,451,669	65,045,116.53
BUILDING MATERIALS				
ASHAKA CEMENT PLC.	82	23.25	772,354	17,913,269.57
BENUE CEMENT COMPANY PLC.	1	4.84	991	4,687.43
CEMENT CO. OF NORTHERN NIG. PLC	11	7.00	54,548	383,965.00
WEST AFR. PORTLAND CEMENT CO. PLC.	14	11.64	23,763	274,288.49
Sector Totals	108		851,656	18,576,210.49
CHEMICAL & PAINTS				
BERGER PAINTS PLC.	11	5.20	257,102	1,366,836.42
CAP PLC.	4	6.65	2,882	19,165.30
D. N. MEYER PLC.	3	5.25	11,800	61,950.00
NIGERIA-GERMAN CHEMICALS PLC.	5	4.00	24,517	98,068.00
Sector Totals	23		296,301	1,546,019.72
CONGLOMERATES				
A. G. LEVENTIS NIGERIA PLC.	3	1.09	13,000	14,170.00
C F A O NIGERIA PLC.	6	5.30	26,558	140,757.40
CHELLARAMS PLC.	1	1.71	10	17.10
JOHN HOLT PLC.	8	0.89	87,914	78,243.46
UNILEVER NIGERIA PLC.	140	17.39	332,239	5,694,876.45
P. Z. INDUSTRIES PLC.	96	13.35	928,336	12,671,436.62
U.A.C.NIGERIA PLC.	85	14.17	1,971,753	27,939,740.01
U.T.C. NIGERIA PLC.	7	1.10	91,577	100,944.70
Sector Totals	346		3,451,387	46,640,185.74
CONSTRUCTION				
COSTAIN (W.A.) PLC.	1	0.94	6,000	5,640.00
JULIUS BERGER NIGERIA PLC.	8	14.20	71,897	1,027,879.53
Sector Totals	9		77,897	1,033,519.53
ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY				
NIGERIAN WIRE AND CABLE PLC.	2	0.90	2,200	1,900.00
Sector Totals	2		2,200	1,900.00
FOOD/BEVERAGES & TOBACCO				
7-UP BOTTLING COMPANY PLC	24	24.00	12,287	304,192.50
CADBURY NIGERIA PLC.	145	56.49	499,793	28,062,522.57
FLOUR MILLS NIGERIA PLC.	33	16.61	269,392	4,474,601.12
NIGERIA BOTTLING COMPANY PLC.	65	52.00	243,321	12,621,017.84
NESTLE FOODS NIGERIA PLC.	63	146.98	123,089	18,092,075.86
Sector Totals	330		1,147,882	63,554,409.89
HEALTHCARE				
CHRISTLIEB PLC.	1	0.56	53,998	30,238.88
EKOCORP PLC.	3	0.91	44,000	40,040.00
EVANS MEDICAL PLC.	6	3.37	76,870	259,051.90
MAY & BAKER NIGERIA PLC.	8	5.30	54,320	288,928.00
NEIMETH INTERNATIONAL PHARM. PLC.	33	3.85	255,295	971,649.31
PHARMA-DEKO PLC.	1	4.50	40,006	180,027.00
GLAXOSMITHKLINE CONSUMER NIG. PLC	31	8.70	223,827	1,946,872.66
Sector Totals	83		748,316	3,716,807.75
INDUSTRIAL/DOMESTIC PRODUCTS				
ALUMACO PLC.	7	2.00	5,000	9,828.60
NIGERIA ENAMELWARE COMPANY PLC.	1	3.40	2,000	6,800.00
FIRST ALUMINIUM NIGERIA PLC.	2	1.00	25,000	25,040.00
B.O.C. GASES PLC.	4	2.82	36,856	103,933.92
VITAFOAM NIGERIA PLC.	29	3.50	290,050	1,026,093.52
Sector Totals	43		358,906	1,171,696.04
INSURANCE				
AICO INSURANCE PLC.	8	2.11	245,637	519,919.07
BAICO INSURANCE PLC.	1	1.01	9,000	9,090.00
CORNERSTONE INSURANCE CO. PLC.	7	1.43	255,000	363,000.00
CRUSADER INSURANCE PLC.	13	1.08	217,800	235,204.00
LAW UNION AND ROCK INSURANCE PLC.	1	1.26	500	630.00
LINKAGE ASSURANCE PLC	8	1.93	35,000	67,550.00
MUTUAL BENEFITS ASSURANCE PLC	1	0.93	140,000	130,200.00
NIGER INSURANCE CO. PLC.	3	3.12	21,712	67,741.44
PRESTIGE ASSURANCE PLC.	3	1.97	80,000	157,600.00
ROYAL EXCHANGE ASSURANCE PLC.	4	3.91	50,000	195,500.00
STANDARD ALLIANCE INSURANCE	1	1.52	15,260	23,195.20
UNIC INSURANCE PLC.	12	1.13	238,863	269,915.19
WEST AFRICAN PROV. INS. COY. PLC.	5	2.75	71,000	198,050.00
Sector Totals	67		1,379,772	2,237,594.90
MANAGED FUNDS				
C & I LEASING PLC.	10	1.60	435,295	696,543.00
Sector Totals	10		435,295	696,543.00
PACKAGING				
AVON CROWNCAPS & CONTAINERS PLC.	2	1.21	8,950	10,829.50
NAMPAK NIGERIA PLC	1	1.45	2,409	3,493.05
BETA GLASS COMPANY PLC.	1	4.70	1,000	4,700.00
POLY PRODUCTS (NIGERIA) PLC.	6	0.84	182,800	152,880.00
VAN LEER CONTAINERS (NIGERIA) PLC.	1	2.25	19,000	22,500.00
Sector Totals	11		204,359	194,102.55
PETROLEUM(MARKETING)				
AFROIL PLC.	5	0.75	125,780	95,165.00
AFRICAN PETROLEUM PLC.	91	65.30	141,216	9,231,905.54
EIERNA OIL & GAS PLC.	8	2.04	44,000	91,596.00
MOBIL OIL NIGERIA PLC.	35	182.00	27,861	5,065,099.00
CONOIL PLC.	61	125.00	86,323	8,253,887.50
TEXACO (NIGERIA) PLC.	21	183.00	6,072	989,415.00
TOTAL NIGERIA PLC	26	179.00	86,727	15,513,232.20
QANDO PLC.	153	90.00	138,585	12,444,023.64
Sector Totals	390		639,477	51,782,018.93
PRINTING & PUBLISHING				
DAILY TIMES PLC.	2	0.63	2,511	1,581.93
LONGMAN NIGERIA PLC.	1	2.22	1,000	2,220.00
Sector Totals	3		3,511	3,801.93
REAL ESTATE				
UACN PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT PLC.	20	8.90	101,330	909,070.20
Sector Totals	20		101,330	909,070.20
TEXTILES				
UNITED NIGERIA TEXTILES PLC.	1	7.80	10,000	78,000.00

TOP 10 TRADES YESTERDAY

SYMBOL	VOLUME	VALUE	TRADES
IMB	910,000.00	547,915.00	20
PZ	928,336.00	12,671,436.62	96
EKOBANK	1,000,000.00	2,260,000.00	1
FIRSTBANK	1,045,897.00	25,046,203.11	412
NB	1,220,179.00	41,923,044.35	299
GUARANTY	1,345,898.00	14,468,209.49	192
UBN	1,615,648.00	32,931,577.27	297
ZENITHBANK	1,949,930.00	24,889,619.00	280
UACN	1,971,753.00	27,939,740.01	85
STB	3,709,890.00	27,490,284.90	17

TOP 10 GAINERS

SYMBOL	LASTCLOSE	YESTERDAY'SCLOSE	CHANGE
NB	33.02	34.49	+1.47
NOLCHEM	124.00	125.00	+1.00
UNIPETROL	89.50	90.00	+0.50
CADBURY	56.00	56.49	+0.49
GUINNESS	99.51	99.95	+0.44
NESTLE	146.65	146.98	+0.33
PRESKO	11.50	11.80	+0.30
AP	64.99	65.20	+0.21
EVANSMED	3.21	3.37	+0.16
NIG-GERMAN	3.88	4.00	+0.12

TOP 10 LOSERS

SYMBOL	LASTCLOSE	YESTERDAY'SCLOSE	CHANGE
NBC	53.01	52.00	-1.01
7UP	24.78	24.00	-0.78
ASHAKACEM	24.00	23.25	-0.75
PZ	13.90	13.35	-0.55
OKOMUOIL	16.94	16.52	-0.42
CCNN	7.30	7.00	-0.30
CFAO	5.57	5.30	-0.27
PHARMDEKO	4.70	4.50	-0.20
ZENITHBANK	13.00	12.81	-0.19
BERGER	5.35	5.20	-0.15

BT offers equal access to rivals

BT was warned to shake-up or face break-up by regulators BT has moved to pre-empt a possible break-up of its business by offering to cut wholesale broadband prices and open its network to rivals.

The move comes after telecom regulator Ofcom said in November that the firm must offer competitors "real equality of access to its phone lines".

At the time, Ofcom offered BT the choice of change or splitting into two.

Ofcom is carrying out a strategic review aimed at promoting greater competition in the UK telecom sector.

BT's competitors have frequently accused it of misusing its status as the former telecoms monopoly and controller of access to many customers to favour its own retail arm.

This latest submission was delivered to the watchdog ahead of a deadline for the second phase of its review.

The big question now is whether the industry, and particularly Ofcom feels BT's proposals go far enough

"Central to the proposals are plans by BT to offer operators lower wholesale prices, faster broadband services and transparent, highly-regulated access to BT's local network," the former monopoly said in a statement.

"The United Kingdom has the opportunity to create the most exciting and innovative telecoms market in the world," BT chief executive Ben Verwaayen said.

"BT has a critical role to play, and today we are making a set of far-reaching proposals towards that framework," he said.

BT wants lighter regulation in exchange for the changes, as well as the removal of the break-up threat.

The group is to set up a new Access Services division - with a separate board which would include independent members - to ensure equal access for rivals to the "local loop", the copper wires that run between telephone exchanges and households.

The company also unveiled plans to cut the wholesale prices of its most popular broadband product by about 8% from April in areas of high customer demand.

It added that it plans to invest £10bn in the next five years to create a "21st Century network".

To meet the growing demand for greater bandwidth, BT said it would begin trials in April with a view to launching higher-speed services nationally from the autumn.

Telecom analysts Ovum welcomed the move, saying BT had "given a lot of ground".

As long as BT can change the dynamics of the whole broadband market at will, the process of opening up the UK's local telephone network to infrastructure investment and competition remains fragile.

"The big question now is whether the industry, and particularly Ofcom feels BT's proposals go far enough... Now the

FEDERAL MINISTRY OF POWER AND STEEL

PUBLIC NOTICE

IPP/Gas Pipeline Policy, Strategy & Implementation

UNIT COORDINATOR POSITION

The Federal Government of Nigeria is in the process of applying for a facility from the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) towards the cost of establishing a unit to be responsible for developing strategy and policy and overseeing the implementation of Independent Power Producers (IPP) Gas Pipeline Project. It is intended that part of the proceeds of this facility will be applied to eligible payments for hiring the services of a Unit coordinator to assist in the take-off and implementation of the unit.

Role and Responsibilities of the Unit Coordinator

The Unit will be under the Ministry of Power and Steel and will be guided by a committee that includes senior representatives of NEPA, NNPC, NGC and BPE under the chairmanship of the Minister of State for Power and Steel.

This position requires a dynamic team leader with proven experience in setting up outfits that combine strategy and policy development with implementation of complex projects that involve public-private partnership reporting directly to the chairman of the implementation Unit, the Unit Coordinator's responsibilities will include the following:

- The coordinator will be accountable for the Unit's smooth operation and is expected to assume primary responsibility for organizing and coordinating the workflow, overseeing and managing the work program of the unit staff and ensuring quality and timeliness of work output.
- The preparation and quarterly updates, the annual work programme for the approval of the committee under the chairmanship of the Minister of State for Power and Steel, and thereafter be responsible for its implementation are in accordance with World Bank guidelines for the implementation of World Bank assisted projects.
- Overseeing the preparation of TORs for the engagement of consultants, selection of the latter, negotiation of contracts for carrying out the services and supervision of those services - all in accordance with world Bank guidelines.
- Liaising with all stakeholders whose activities have significant impact on the work program of the unit, including NNPC, NEPA, NGC and the BPE.
- The preparation of an annual evaluation report of the Unit's work performance, including achievement of work programme goals and expenditures, for review by the Committee and the World Bank.
- The setting up of the Unit under the guidance of the Chairman. This area of responsibility includes making recommendations for the hiring and firing of staff to the Chairman who endorses and ultimately takes the final decision regarding staff.
- Undertaking of any other task or responsibility required to ensure the achievement of the objectives of the position within the overall objectives of the Independent Power Producers (IPP) Gas Pipeline Policy, Strategy and Implementation Unit.

Qualification and experience for the position

- A Masters degree in engineering, economics or management from a reputable institution of higher learning.
- At least 15 years of relevant post-graduate work experience (preferably in the public & private sector).
- Minimum of 10 years work experience on all concepts, principles and approaches to international procurement and of public procurement systems including sound knowledge of public procurement functions and practices.
- Strong interpretational skills and orientation as a team member.
- Strong written and verbal communication skills with ability to prepare, present and discuss findings in written and oral form.
- Ability to function effectively in multi-disciplinary teams within a matrix management environment and to promote collaboration in providing a range of services.
- Good knowledge of World Bank Group options and in particular of critical linkages and relationships between procurement processes and business operations and objectives; and
- Proven analytical and evaluative skills.

The position will be for period of 18 months in the first instance, and is open to Nigerian nationals only. Salary and other benefits will be commensurate with experience and abilities.

Criteria for selection

Individual applying for this position should submit their

application and detailed curriculum vitae (including names and contact addresses of three referees not later than 14th February, 2005 to the address below.

Applications received after the deadline date will be summarily rejected.

ENERGY ECONOMIST POSITION

The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) is in the process of applying for a facility from the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) towards the cost of establishing a unit to be responsible for developing strategy and policy and overseeing the implementation of an Independent Power Production (IPP) Gas Pipeline Project. It is intended that part of the proceeds of this facility will be applied to eligible payments for hiring the services of a qualified experienced Energy Economist to assist the Unit to develop an integrated strategy and policy for gas transmission and usage by independent power producers taking into account existing centers and future demand for power throughout the country. The position will be located in a specially created Gas Pipeline Independent Power Production Strategy, Policy and Implementation Unit.

The Implementation Unit will be under the Ministry of Power and Steel and will be guided in its work by a Committee that includes senior representatives of NEPA, NNPC, NGC, AND BPE, and will operate under the chairmanship of the Ministry of State for Power and Steel. The position will report through the Unit Coordinator to the Chairman of the Implementation Unit. A Unit Coordinator to be responsible for the smooth operation of the Unit, is being appointed under a separate position description.

Role and Responsibilities of the Energy Economist

This position requires a seasoned Energy Economist with proven experience in leading teams that can develop strategies and policy positions for the power sector to inform final decision by the Ministry of Power & Steel. The successful candidate would most likely have worked in a similar position in a major public sector organization in the energy sector or in a consulting firm specializing in the energy sector or in a major energy company.

The responsibilities of the post will include

- Preparation of terms of reference for a long term national gas utilization study and supervision of such study.
- Using the results of the study, along with a parallel study of a long term national electricity forecast being undertaken by NEDA, to develop:
 - (a) A national power generation development strategy for the Ministry of Power and Steel.
 - (b) A guide post for the routing of gas pipeline system from the gas producing areas to major load centers of power demand emerging out of the NEPA forecast.
 - (c) A policy frame work for the Ministry for the encouragement of private sector investors for wholesale power production.
- Develop generic templates of Gas Delivery Agreement and Power Purchase Agreement that would be used as the basis for negotiating gas and power delivery.
- Liaising with the major stakeholders whose activities impact on the proposed Gas Pipeline Independent Power Production Project (NEPA, NNPC, NGC, etc) to assure their buy-in into the Ministry's evolving strategy and policies for the power sector.
- Undertaking of any other task or responsibility required to ensure the achievement of the objectives of the position within the overall objectives of the Independent Power Production (IPP) Gas Pipeline Policy, Strategy and Implementation Unit.

Qualifications and experience for the position

- A minimum of a masters degree in economics from a reputable institution of higher learning (A Doctorate Degree will be an added advantage)
- At least 5 years of work experience in the power sector relating to strategy and policy development.
- Good knowledge of the international energy consulting services as well as concepts, principles and approaches to procurement of international consulting services.
- Strong interpersonal skills.
- Strong written and verbal communication skills with ability to prepare, present and discuss findings in written and oral form.

The position will be for a period of 18 months in the first instance, and is open to Nigerian nationals only. Salary and

other benefits will be commensurate with experience and abilities.

Criteria for selection

Individual applying for this position should submit their application and detailed curriculum vitae (including names and contact addresses of three referees not later than 14th February, 2005 to the address below. Applications received after the deadline date will be summarily rejected.

FINANCIAL AND ACCOUNTING SPECIALIST

PROCUREMENT SPECIALIST

The Federal Government of Nigeria is in the process of applying for a facility from the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) towards the costs of establishing a unit to be responsible for developing strategy and policy and overseeing the implementation of Independent Power Producers (IPP) Gas Pipeline Project. It is intended that part of the proceeds of this facility will be applied to eligible payments for hiring the services of a Financial & Accountant Specialist and Procurement Specialist to assist in the take-off and implementation of the unit.

FINANCIAL AND ACCOUNTING EXPERT

The consultant will be in charge of the general accounts of the unit including donor-funded activities. Overseeing the finance officers working in departments: Internal control, budgetary control, preparation of audited accounts, management accounts, quarterly reports, cash flow forecasts, centralized treasury and computerized accounting control over revenue accounts and statutory deductions are the main responsibilities of the Adviser.

Qualification

As a minimum, the person appointed should:

- (a) Have a relevant university degree.
- (b) Have a professional accounting qualification (e.g. ACA) and;
- (c) Have at least 5 years post-professional qualification experience as a principal accounting officer in a World Bank assisted project.

Proficiency in computer applications relating to financial accounting, payroll and inventory control besides MS-World and Excel is essential. Proven communication/interpersonal skills, apart from leadership qualities are essential for this assignment.

PROCUREMENT SPECIALIST

The consultant will support the unit during project preparation and project implementation (including preparation and advice on all procurement documents and decisions) in accordance with the World Bank rules and procedures.

Qualification:

Basic degree with a major in a relevant discipline (e.g. Engineering, Law, Procurement, Finance, Business or Commerce) with at least five (5) years of relevant work experience (preferably in a World Bank assisted Project) and a good knowledge of all concepts, principles and approaches to international procurement and of public procurement systems, including sound knowledge of public procurement functions and practices.

The position will be for a period of 18 months in the first instance and is open to Nigerian nationals only. Salary and other benefits will be commensurate with experience and abilities.

Criteria for selection

Individual applying for this position should submit their application and detailed curriculum vitae (including names and contact addresses of three referees not later than two weeks from the date of this publication to the address below). Applications received after the deadline date will be summarily rejected.

Signed:

Chairman IPP/Gas Pipeline Policy, Strategy and Implementation Unit, Office of the Hon. Minister of State, Federal Ministry of Power And Steel, Federal Secretariat complex,



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Loading at the crossing point of Buruku.



An overloaded and ranshacked wooden boat with under-aged boys as operators

Buruku, the no

Life along the banks of any river anywhere is full of interesting stories. The fluctuating weather caused by the changing seasons as well as the hustlers and growing pressure to make ends meet among the folk, the predatory wild life, which often make the area dangerous for human habitation, the beautiful scenery and the penny pinching business along the river bank combine to attract attention and inspire passionate appreciation by anyone.

Indeed, life by the river side is a world of its own. From the Niger and Benue Rivers to their confluence at Lokoja down the creeks of the Niger Delta, it is the same tale of adventure and bravery. However, none of such situations anywhere in the country could be compared to the daring lifestyle of the various peoples of Benue. This is particularly at a location called Buruku, an ancient town in the North Central part of the state.

Inhabited by the Tombo clan of the Tiv nation, Buruku, with a population of over 15,000, according to unofficial figures, was founded by the British and Hausa merchants when they met at that location to trade with the natives on agricultural products including cotton and benniseed groundnuts, dresses, armaments and other imported household items. Buruku has remained till today, one of the popular commercial towns along the country's second largest river.

Oral tradition has it that even in the olden days, the town was a major stop-over and a link to various areas of Tiv land that were not easily reachable. Boat loads of goods arrived the ancient town almost every two weeks when various agricultural products were exchanged for export by British Merchants who were said to be ever prepared not to lose

From Hir Joseph, Correspondent (Makurdi)

any chance of fleeing with a handful of natives as slaves.

The riverside town of Buruku today has many of the British ware houses known in a popular local parlance as Kenti, now monuments, and the people whose forefathers enjoyed the arrival and the take off of engine boats navigating in the River Benue, are now largely engaged in such riverine activities as water ways transport business and fishing.

Although a large population of the Buruku folk are farmers, many are still engaged in water transportation and fishing while a few, particularly the Hausa settlers, are into petty trading with a large army of illiterate and unemployed youths daily jumping in to join the already explosive number of miscreants loitering in the town day and night.

As is the practice everywhere in Africa, the inconsequential educated population is far cut off from the river bank and ancient town as the growing pressure to make ends meet, among other excuses, including the mad quest for the golden fleece, have driven them all into the big cities.

What then remains of the town throughout the seasons, except for end of year when the educated return for a re-union, is the large number of miscreants, the aged, who are into peasant farming and, very notably, the high-headed and dreadful youths scratching out a living at the bank of the river as commercial boatmen. A few barely educated persons are still very much around. But

they are the teachers managing the few public schools around.

Interestingly, the teachers themselves are truants like the wards they are paid to bring up. Not unaware of the complete absence of a thorough supervision from the education authorities, the teachers have taken a pre-occupation on their large farmlands on which their pupils or students, as the case maybe, are labourers.

Now, the schools the teachers are paid to manage are nothing short of citadels for the propagation of free ignorance as majority of the children end up being drop-outs with the girls going straight into marriage and, in most cases, to their farmer-teachers, as the husbands while the boys join the band wagon down the river banks where Buruku's main attraction lies.

At the river banks, the boys have simply created a world of their own. Like pirates, they have constituted themselves into a law of which they are both enforcers and the court. Their preys are the traders who have no other option than taking the risk of submitting themselves to be conveyed across by the miscreant boatmen.

At both banks, they have taken over everything, and are in full control, a development which has made it completely impossible for visitors to repeat a visit to the area with the hope of crossing over.

To worsen the already irredeemable situation, the miscreants are now operating under the aegis of an unregistered body known as Tombo Maritime Nigeria Workers Union (TMNWU) through which

they carry out their illegal activities with impunity. With TMNWU fully in charge under a die hard chairman, called Kur Uking and his deputy, Kimbir Dzerem, as well as an array of other unconventional office holders, the waterways of Buruku have become a complete no go area even to the law enforcement agents.

Our correspondent, who kept an eye on the illegal activities at the waterways, observed during a recent visit to the area that the marine police unit of the police command in Makurdi, the state capital, has been completely helpless on what to do. With all the over 90 members of the maritime union as boat owners and drivers, in most cases, it has always been difficult for the ill-equipped marine police to look into the faces of the boys and still do the law enforcement job without themselves as passengers in the overloaded boats where the smart lads threaten every passengers, including the law enforcement agents. A yam seller who spoke to *Daily Trust* on board an overloaded cargo boat conveying traders across from Buruku market, said she made a mistake of her life when in November, 2004, she was travelling to Ugba, a neighbouring market in the adjoining Logo local government area. Said she: "I have always crossed here to Ugba to buy yams for sale in Port Harcourt or Lagos, since there is no other easy link to the market than Buruku. But then, I have been doing that with a risk on my life because mid stream, the boys can turn inhuman. They will simply put off their engines and complain that they have run out of die-

sel. Passengers will have no option than to double, and in most cases, triple their fares as is always the case before the boys would reluctantly start the engines to continue the journey.

"But on this day, I noticed three marine police men on board one of the boats and I quickly joined them as did other passengers with the hope that at least we would be saved from threats. But that was a risk which we took. Midstream, the engine stopped as usual, and then came the usual threat to abandon us if nothing more was added to the initial fare we paid. With the police around, we thought we had a protection, and so we were blatant in our refusal. The police made an attempt at calling the boys to order and before you know it, one after the other, the four-man crew dived into the river, leaving us and the police in the boat. One of them even removed the plugs and one other thing from the

engine, and handed it to a little boy before diving into the water," said the female trader who gave her names as Doowuese Ulam.

Doowuese Ulam, who refused to speak to *Daily Trust* above whispers for fear of hurting the emotion of the no-nonsense lads, added: "for close to twenty minutes, we were abandoned inside the boat midstream, while the boys swam round, with some of them even going under the boat to toss it left and right while it floated with a calm wave.

"And the police," added Doowuese, "could not utter a word. They were more afraid than we the ordinary passengers. They had to compel us to cough out hundred naira each after which they now begged the boys to return on board to complete the journey." Our correspondent could not have the opportunity of hearing more from Doowuese. The boat had at this time hit the opposite bank

"Midstream, the engine stopped as threat to abandon us if nothing more paid. With the police around, we thought we were blatant in our refusal. The police called the boys to order and before you know it, the four-man crew dived into the river, leaving us and the police in the boat. One of them even removed the plugs and handed it to a little boy before the female trader who gave her name as Doowuese Ulam, who refused to speak to Daily Trust above whispers for fear of hurting the emotion of the no-nonsense lads, added: 'for close to twenty minutes, we were abandoned inside the boat midstream, while the boys swam round, with some of them even going under the boat to toss it left and right while it floated with a calm wave. 'And the police,' added Doowuese, 'could not utter a word. They were more afraid than we the ordinary passengers. They had to compel us to cough out hundred naira each after which they now begged the boys to return on board to complete the journey.' Our correspondent could not have the opportunity of hearing more from Doowuese. The boat had at this time hit the opposite bank



Empty boats awaiting loading on a bad day.



The state government's owned Benue Links ferry lying dead in Buruku

Pix: Hir Joseph

torious river post

traders hurriedly left it to rt for Ugba, since it was dnesday, the market day m where she earns her liv-

However, further inquiries m other foes of the boat ys, including sellers of ar-cane, food and alcohol he river bank, revealed that ving received various fright- ing treatments in the hands the die-hard lads, the police now avoiding them like a gue. A sugar cane seller o pleaded not to be men- ned in print, disclosed that e sergeant Ali of the marine lice, who had once received beating of his life for at- mpting to make arrests for pected illegal activities by boys, have since learnt to p the river bank at arms gth.

In fact, the sugar-cane ler who said he has been in business at the river bank about a decade now, dis- sed further that apart from ngerous reptiles and par-

ticularly large snakes, which appear mostly during the rainy season, the boys are not afraid of anything as they have al- ways challenged anybody they have hurt to go and res- urrect Noah if he or she so wishes. Noah, according to the Biblical account, constructed the great ark in which mankind and animals (made and female) survived the first and deadly flood. The sugar-cane seller said they had, had many in- stances where large snakes made frightening appear- ances, disrupting businesses at the river bank. He recalled the lat- est incident just last year when a large snake capsised an en- gine boat with two boys on board. The boys, he said, were smart enough to swim out un- hurt.

In their response to *Daily Trust* questions, the unrepent- ant miscreants operating in a large number as members of the unregistered Tambo Ma- rine Nigeria Workers Union (TMNWU), said they owe no-

body any explanation for their deeds at the waterways. The chairman, Kur Uking and his deputy Kimbir Dzerem were away in Makurdi at the time of visit, however one Terngu Adeen, himself an owner and operator of boats, told *Daily Trust* they were ready to use all means available to them to keep both the police and offi- cials of the National Inland Water Ways Authority (NIWA) at arms length. Ac- cording to Adeen, who is in his late 20s, without authorising documents to show on duty, NIWA had been using the police under one Sergeant Ali to milk them dry through what he called "illegal collection of money."

Adeen, who also gave his designation as "chairman, gen- eral executive," admitted that indeed, most of them had not met the requirement to use the waterways. He however, said their shortcomings were as a result of lack of money in most cases and distrust of the regu- lating officers in some cases.

According to the National Inland Waterways Decree No 13 of 1997, which empowers the agency to regulate activities at the country's waterways, op- erators must attain a certain age, licenced and permitted to use the waterways. Also the type of boat used must meet the requirement of the agency. What that means is that boats are surveyed and certified to be river worthy, and are at all times installed with life jackets according to the number of people they are certified to carry, just as they are also given load line or limit which operators must not exceed. To be able them to function, ac- cording to the decree, the

agency has placed tariffs which operators are expected to pay to inspectors on duty. The tariffs range from N600 to N6,000 annually for boats ac- cording to capacity and type.

Adeen, who was flanked by other officials of the union in- cluding his deputy, Tersugh Ikyereve, Orgina Gbewha, the treasurer and Terkinbi Aso, also called Aso Rock, told *Daily Trust* that the people, who come for survey of their boats, do not do so with au- thorising documents. "without anything to show that they are officials of the waterways au- thority, they just come and start demanding money from us. We have complied in most cases, especially when they come with marine police, but now we have made it a rule that nobody in Buruku will give these men a dime unless they bring the receipts for such tariffs," said the official who disclosed further that inspite of the periodic headaches they receive from the inspectors and their police, the river busi- ness has been smooth as each of the over 30 boats in the union's yard makes between nine to 20 trips daily including night travels which, as ex- pected, attract higher charges.

He also admitted that due to the accident-prone nature of their boats as they are all wooden, with makeshift provi- sion for goods and vehicles of all sizes including lorries and long buses, they had had quite a number of mishaps, the lat- est of which occurred last De- cember with 10 passengers los- ing their lives and goods worth thousands of naira washed away.

Speaking frankly about their attitude at work, Adeen admitted that indeed, they had

been highly unruly but said to be able to do the river business, one needs to be a little rough. He also spoke about the na- ture of the boat, which had been a source of concern to both passengers and the au- thority. He said their wooden boats, which are used both as barge and ferry, are mounted with small Yamaha engines within the capacity of 20 and 25, which, he admitted should not be used for the purpose of carrying vehicles and large goods.

"But we have no option but to carry on. After all, govern- ment provided a ferry for that purpose several years ago but could not manage or maintain it. It has long been packed. So what should we do? Fold our arms and watch our people suffer for lack of transport means? no way," said Adeen, who showed our correspond- ent to a dilapidated and long packed ferry belonging to Benue Links, the state govern- ment own transport corpora- tion.

Then came the reaction of NIWA area manager, Alhaji Rabi Abubakar Abba spoke to *Daily Trust* in his uncom- pleted area office beside Rive Benue in Makurdi.

After reading out the rel- evant laws to buttress his points, Alhaji Abu Bakar Abba carefully noted the illegality of the operations at the Buruku crossing point, pointing out that the boys had fallen short of the expectation of every sec- tion of the decree 13 which es- tablished and empowered the NIWA to inspect and ensure compliance of all river users. The area manager, who particu- larly expressed shock at the nature of boats used for cargo lifting, just as he pointed out

that the boats were often over- loaded, vowed that he would reach all heights to bring the boys to fully comply with laid down regulations or risk clos- ing down Buruku for water- ways activities.

He also expressed sadness that all his attempts to get the backing of the second class chief of the area, chief Afaityo Ajoko failed as the traditional ruler instead supported his boys by accusing the federal government for, after all, fail- ing to provide a bridge across the river, several years after the contract was reported to have been awarded. This, Alhaji Abubakar Abba said, was a pointer to the fact that his visit at the palace of the chief was unwelcome. "And so we left," he added, while disclosing that on that same day, his field men, who were in the area to survey the boats, had an attempt at their lives when one Godwin, popularly called "Trouble", and his colleague called Ageva, bathed them (inspectors) with petrol and threatened to set fire on them. They were, however, arrested by the police later on.

during his constituency briefing in the area last Decem- ber, Gebriel Tarhule Nev, rep- resenting Buruku federal con- stituency in the National As- sembly, disclosed that the Ap- propriation Bill, 2005 has the proposal to finally construct a bridge across the river, while seeking the support of the na- tives to aid the federal govern- ment in the implementation. However, while the people keenly await that, they are also of the opinion that the state government should revisit the issue of river transportation as it has done on roads, with the view to acquiring ferries at the Buruku crossing point.

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LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT

NIPOST honours 23 retirees

The Nigerian Postal Service (NIPOST) has started a new effort at motivating its workforce with the honouring on Saturday of 23 of its retired workers.

The number represents the staff that retired from both the corporate headquarters and the headquarters annex in Lagos out of the total of 105 who retired from the service in 2004. The remaining 85 were expected to be honoured sameday in their



Aliyu Abubakar Argungu, postmaster general

By Austine Odo, Senior Labour Reporter

respective territories.

Postmaster general of the federation, Alhaji Abubakar Musa Argungu said the decision to honour the retirees in a most affectionate way was taken by management late last year. He said like the staff merit award scheme that was introduced in 2002, the send-off or honour for retirees who have contributed to the success of NIPOST would be an annual event and would be held in all territories including the corporate headquarters.

The event which was said to be first of its kind in NIPOST is aimed at promoting loyalty and dedication by the workforce.

According to the postmaster general, NIPOST is one of the parastatals which has taken staff motivation very seriously as exemplified by the payment of pension to its retirees up to December

"For us in NIPOST, today marks a turning point or new beginning in the efforts of management to motivate the entire workforce so that they begin to see themselves as stakeholders and work assiduously for the progress and overall success of the organisation," Alhaji Argungu said.

Several gifts including a 29 inches flat screen television, a giant refrigerator, 14 inches colour television sets, Honda electric generators and Sony radio cassette recorders were given to the retirees according to their grade levels.

He said NIPOST management placed high premium on staff development and motivation based on its understanding that the targets which had been set for the organisation could only be attained with the co-operation of the staff who are well trained, motivated and aware of their responsibilities at all times.

According to him the management had ensured the training of more than 90 percent of the total number of NIPOST staff since it came and in addition, given approvals for acquisition of higher qualifications through part-time studies.

The president, Senior Staff Association of Utilities, Statuary Corporations and Government-owned companies, NIPOST branch, Comrade Chris Adewumi told *Labour Trust* after the ceremony that the management gesture was reflective of the cordial relations in NIPOST, saying the management had been upbeat in workers' welfare.

"If you look at it critically you will see that we have not had any problems with NIPOST management of recent because they have turned NIPOST around, and if you look at it the postal service has come to limelight and public glare," he said.



Labour leaders dialogue with security agents during a protest in Abuja

PENCOMM to invest N16bn after licensing

Investment of the N16 billion generated from the contributory pension fund will begin as soon as the National Pension Commission (PENCOMM) completes issuance of licence of pension fund administrators and custodians.

The director-general of the commission, Alhaji Mohammed Ahmad who disclosed this at a recent stakeholders' Forum in Lagos, said every intending pension fund administrator or custodian must make the yet to be stated statutory minimum paid-up capital deposit to the Central Bank of Nigeria.

In addition, he is expected to establish the fund as a subsidiary company that would be run separately.

Alhaji Ahmad pointed out that the commission still had a long way to the guidelines to licensing which would take more than three months from now, adding that all pension funds administrators must be

By Austine Odo, Senior Labour Reporter, with Agency Reports

fully segregated from the original business of the applicants, even as the commission is yet to fix the prices of the paid up capital licensing fee and registration form processing fees.

The director general explained that deductions

were made from salaries of federal civil servants before the scheme became operational in order not to lose funds since government had it self made a financial commitment.

The stockholder's forum according to the DG, was premised on the need to solicit inputs from stakeholders on their expectations from PENCOMM.

Pensioners demand prompt payment

The Nigerian Union of Pensioners has advised state governments to emulate the Yobe State administration in the prompt payment of pension to retired civil servants.

The national president of the union, Alhaji Ali Abacha, gave the advice in Damaturu when he paid a courtesy visit on Gov. Bukar Ibrahim.

He said corruption and embezzlement of funds by government employees was due to fear of insecurity, arising from non-payment of pension.

According to him, Yobe is the only state that has paid pension benefits to retired civil servants promptly, adding: "The state had equally paid N200, 000 to the union as levy for state

offices."

"It is the fervent hope of our union that all tiers of government would pay pension to workers, especially considering that lack of such security had led workers to be corrupt," he added.

Responding, the governor reiterated his resolve to promptly pay pension to retired workers, considering that their active years had led to growth in the state.

He pledged to provide a piece of land and vehicle to the union to ensure that the interests of retired workers were protected, adding: "We will ensure conducive atmosphere to workers to perform as well as their entitlement after retirement."



Casual workers under the aegis of National Oil Workers' Association who were disengaged from service protesting in front of NNPC headquarters in Abuja, late last year.

Pension: Benue restores payment to 295 retirees

The 295 employees of the Benue State government who were retired in 1995 and re-absorbed in 2003 will once again enjoy their pension from next month.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the workers who were re-absorbed into the state civil service during the 2003 electioneering campaigns received their salaries for

only four months. Alleging irregularities in the recall exercise, the state government ordered that their salaries be stopped.

For the past 18 months when they went without neither salary nor pension, the state NLC fought relentlessly for them to receive their entitlements.

On Jan. 15, children of the affected workers thronged the office of the NLC in Makurdi pleading with labour leaders to take immediate steps to end the hardship they were being exposed to.

Addressing the issue at a news briefing last week in Makurdi, shortly after the state executive council meeting, the Commissioner for Information, Mr John Uzer, said government had decided that the workers should revert to their old status as retired employees.

"What it means is that rather than being paid salaries they will be paid pension pending when the state government will take a final decision on the matter," he said.

He said this was a "temporary measure" taken to alleviate the sufferings of the affected workers and their families.

He said the state's pension office had been directed to take immediate steps to ensure that the workers were paid pension from next month.

NITEL to become pension administrator

NITEL will soon be registered as a Pensions Fund Administrator (PFA), so that it can operate independently while other smaller companies can join it for the management of their funds.

NITEL News reports that the head, human resources and corporate services (HR&CS), Mr. Albert Mashi, said this during an interview.

He explained that the pensions law applies to all companies, government ministries and parastatals and that any of them that fulfils certain conditions laid down by the Pensions Commission could be registered as a pensions fund administrator.

He stressed that with the registration as PFA, "you can now operate independently and other smaller companies will join you, so that you can

help manage their funds." He added that NITEL is already working towards being registered as a Pensions Fund Administrator. Said Mashi; "NITEL is already working to be registered as Pensions Fund Administrator. We will endeavour to meet the conditions set by the Pensions Commission to ensure that we properly register NITEL Pensions Trustees with the Corporate Affairs Commission. With our asset base in terms of cash and landed properties, there will be no impediment to getting registered".

He said that NITEL pensions programme is one of the best managed in the country, adding that anytime there is an upward review of salaries in the company, that of the pensioners is automatically adjusted, even though the percentage may not be the same.

LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT

NDE plans employment data bank

Ideas are being proffered by the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) for the establishment of a comprehensive employment data bank to replace the existing data capturing instruments in all states of the federation as a means of achieving cohesiveness and conforming to a single pattern of data rendering throughout the country.

Disclosing this in a two day national workshop organised by senior officers of the

From Lawal Ibrahim, correspondent, Katsina
 directorate in Katsina recently, the director, planning research and statistics, Malam Abubakar Mohammed said the aim is to improve on statistical data collection and compilation as well as improve policy formation.

Malam Abubakar said the review became necessary in view of the attending lapses that have characterised the previous format which has

been in use for over a year now.

Said he; "Apart from the basic required ability of manpower to generate, analyse, summarise, fictionally illustrate and make intelligible prevention as well as cross check internal consistency of administrative statistics and notice quantitative information, the principle of questionnaire design is very vital to the concept of planning, research and

statistics in this IT driven world in order to bring real statistics that would be useful to a relevant concepts in development objectives.

Previous workshops he noted have tried to lay a foundation of the establishment of NDE data bank as part of the core mandate assigned to the PR and S department in the CAP 250 of 1989, establishing the NDE but hoped that this workshop would provide a lead way in achieving the set target, especially with the past records of computerising all NDE operations.

In a message the director general of the NDE, Engr. S.O Adelodun appreciated the contributions of planning, research and statistics department for the overall progress of the directorate and hoped the workshop will emerge with the new developments in the area of research techniques in modern times as well as cross fertilization of ideas on better ways of handling their official schedules in poverty reduction in the country.

...to register unemployed

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) is set to register unemployed persons to update its records, an official has said.

Malam Abubakar Mohammed, the NDE's director of planning, research and statistics, announced this to a mid-week workshop for senior officers in Katsina.

The exercise would be held in the second quarter of 2005, he said, adding that "the registration programme is meant to serve as a follow-up to the one held in 2002."

The workshop was timely in view of the programmes

lined up for implementation by the NDE this year, including the registration exercise, he said.

According to Mohammed: "The workshop was organised to keep participants abreast with the role of research and planning in the ever-changing world order, and the economic reform agenda of the federal government."

The forum was also aimed at providing a platform for participants to interact, in order to strengthen their individual capacities in carrying out research projects.

In declaring the workshop open, the NDE Director-General, Dr S.O. Adelodun, lauded the contributions of officers of the planning, research and statistics department.

The successful implementation of employment generation programmes of the directorate depended highly on reliable and timely statistics, he stressed.

RATTAWU threatens blackout over trade dispute

The Radio, Television, Theatre and Arts Workers Union of Nigeria (RATTAWU) says the federal government is playing with a likely total media blackout if it continues to ignore its trade dispute.

The President of the union, Mr Salihu Dembos, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Abuja that members were fed up with the "slave treatment" meted out on them by the federal government.

Citing the wide gap between the salaries of workers in core federal ministries and those of parastatal offices, Dembos said workers in those parastatal offices were ready to down tools "any time from now".

The salary disparity emanates from the government's monetisation policy being implemented in the ministries since last year.

"The disparity is too much and we do more work than ministry workers. Moreover, we go to the same markets and pay the same bills.

"We are collaborating with other unions in the various parastatal offices and there is no going back until we achieve our aim.

"Since the government is never ready to discuss with

workers until there is a strike, we are ready to do just that if our (14-day) ultimatum expires," he said.

The union, along with the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) and Amalgamated Union of Public Corporations, Civil Service Technical and Recreational Services Employees (AUPCTRE), declared a trade dispute with the government and gave the ultimatum with effect from Jan. 28.

Dembos said the unions first wrote to President Olusegun Obasanjo in July last year on the matter but that nothing had been said by the federal government ever since.

He said that the trade dispute was communicated to all those concerned, including the heads of the various parastatal offices, ministers in-charge, ministry of labour and the presidency.

According to Dembos, the unions would meet on Feb. 10, to review their strike plans if the government failed to respond to the trade dispute.

Some of the 33 affected parastatal offices are FRCN, NAN, NTA, Voice of Nigeria, NAFDAC, National Universities Commission, National Orientation Agency and National Population Commission.

Obasanjo pledges youth employment

President Olusegun Obasanjo has said that his administration would not relent in encouraging job creation activities, by laying sound economic foundation.

In an address read by the MFCT Permanent Secretary, Mr Deji Omotade, at the passing out ceremony of the NYSC 2004 batch 'A' members in Abuja, Obasanjo said unemployment had become a worldwide

concerted efforts of all to overcome.

He said exposure to national service was bound to contribute significantly to the emergence of new voices and new leadership with commitment to the ideals of service, democracy and development.

"The Nigerian experience demonstrates that the youth when consciously mobilised can accelerate the pace of

Briefs

Coy recalls 15 sacked workers

Zaria Industries Ltd has recalled 15 of its 16 former workers who were initially dismissed for various offences.

Mr Abdulganiyu Koledoye, the firm's managing consultant said at the weekend in Kaduna that "only one ex-worker, Mr Godwin Makun, was summarily dismissed for failure to attend work in excess of five months".

"Ten of the affected workers had their appointments terminated with full benefits," he said, "while three were called back to their duties and two were placed on redundancies".

Koledoye explained that "the decision of the company to show mercy followed the intervention of well-meaning Nigerians, including the National Union of Textile and Garment Workers of Nigeria, as well as the Zaria People's Forum".

Allegations that the company had refused to pay the terminal benefits of retired workers were false, he stressed.

According to him, "Zaria Industries Ltd will continue to remain a responsible corporate body, engaged in positive activities to ensure its survival and continuity".

Last August, some staff of the firm were sanctioned by the management for various offences, including industrial sabotage and abandonment of duties.

NOA seeks transport workers' support for 2005 census

The National Orientation Agency (NOA) requires the active support of road transporters in Ondo State for the 2005 population and housing census, an official has said.

Mr Bode Famose, the state director of the NOA, made the demand at the National Union of Road Transport Workers' state headquarters in Akure.

Transport union executives have a crucial role to support the National Population Commission with vehicles whenever they are called upon to do so, he stressed.

In his reaction, the union chairman, Mr Solomon Adejayan, pledged the full support of members "for the success of the 2005 head count and all other programmes of the government".

The state government's assistance in providing new vehicles on loan to union members was highly commendable, he said.

Adejayan also thanked the Akure South local government for building an ultra-modern commercial motor vehicle park in Akure.

He told the NOA boss that his union recently employed some 50 youths as part of ongoing efforts to solve the problem of unemployment.

The union has meanwhile formed a cooperative society for the benefit of members, the chairman announced.

Adejayan called for the government's support to the union "through the provision of soft loans for the purchase of new tyres, engine oil and repair of worn-out engines".

Fraudulent staff to forfeit pay

Staff of the Anambra State Board of Internal Revenue who divert, embezzle or misappropriate revenue accruable to the government will now forfeit their salary.

The board chairman, Mr Charles Onyeagba, told newsmen in Awka that the measure was to reduce the incidence of diversion of revenue due to government.

He noted that some fraudulent staff issued fake receipts without remitting the revenue to government.

Onyeagba said the board, currently generating N60 million monthly, may increase its target to N80 million in March, with a target of N100 million by June as internally generated funds.

He regretted that people from Anambra West Local Government Area were the highest tax evaders, but said measures were being put in place to compel them to comply.

The chairman explained that personal income tax, capital tax and road taxes of all descriptions were under Act 21 of the 1998 law which was under the exclusive list of the state government.

3000 get jobs at CFTZ

More than 3000 people have been granted employment at the Calabar Free Trade Zone (CFTZ) within the last three years, the general manager of the Zone, Mr. Chris Ndibe has disclosed.

Mr. Ndibe who made the disclosure at a dinner for media men in the home state of the CFTZ also said that so far twenty-four companies are fully operational at the zone while sixteen only are

From Bassey Ita, Calabar

the customs services worth N280, 000 was raked in as licensing fees within the same period.

Also, according to the general manager more than N450 million was generated



Dignity in labour: Abdullahi Idris (top) and Stephen Goja, (below), undertake repair work on NITEL cables over the River Benue; they took enormous risks by suspending themselves over the river to repair faults in the joints of a primary cable measuring about 165 metres which had

LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT

Monetisation: FG workers lose N.4m monthly

Employees of the federal government outside the core civil service whose offices are funded from annual federal budgets collectively lose at least N429,960.63 monthly as a result of the non-implementation of the monetisation of the fringe benefits policy of the federal government in their respective organisations since October 1, 2003.

The figure is derived from a computation of the differentials of the monthly take home pay of the affected workers from grade level 03 step 1 to level 17 step 1 in federal government parastatals, commissions, extra ministerial departments and agencies.

A grade level 14 officer for example, loses N22,608.13 per month where he is not paid the monetised benefits, just as a worker on grade level 12 step 1 loses N15,772.83. At the same

By Austine Odo, Senior Labour Reporter

time, a worker on grade level 08 step 1 who is not paid the monetised benefits also loses N10,850.75 every month while his counterpart on 06 step 1 also loses N2,583.17. This is such that while a monetised level 14 officer goes home every month with at least N59,770.63, his counterpart collects N37,162.50.

Already, the Amalgamated Union (AUPCTRE), the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) and the Radio, Television, Theatre & Arts Workers Union of Nigeria (RATTAWU) have collectively written a second letter on the subject to President Olusegun Obasanjo, Senate President Adolphus Wabara, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Alhaji Aminu Bello Masari dated Jan. 17, 2005 to correct the disparity.

According to the unions, the existing disparity has created a situation where employees of the federal government outside the core civil service are subjected to inferior conditions of service, particularly in salaries and wages.

The unions pointed out that the disparity could no longer be justified because both categories of workers are paid from the same budget, and employees in parastatals work under

conditions that are challenging while they provide quantifiable and strategic services.

"These two factors, among others, 'necessitated' why most parastatals were carved out of the civil service... in our opinion therefore it will not be a rational policy of tactics to subject employees of parastatals and agencies outside the civil service to conditions that are less favourable to what obtains in the core civil service," the unions said.

The letters to the president and National Assembly which were signed by Comrades Iliyasu Boyi, national president (AUPCTRE), A.S. Dembos, national president (RATTAWU) and Smart Adeyemi, national president (NUJ) and their secretaries said the unions had been at pains and had done everything humanly possible to pacify their members who see the trend as de-motivating and unfair.

This, they said, had made it increasingly difficult for the unions to continue to sustain industrial peace in the effected federal parastatals and agencies.

It would be recalled that a circular from the president ref: press/36/1 dated December 9, 2003 addressed to the head of civil service of the federation conveyed the approved rates of the monetised fringe benefits which included the parastatals, extra -ministerial departments and agencies.

The National Union of Banks, Insurance and Financial Institutions Employees (NUBIFIE) has commended the action of the senate in categorising the banking sector into mega, medium, small-scale and specialised operations.

The NUBIFIE national president, Comrade Lawal A. Ahobi disclosed this at the weekend while addressing a press conference held in Lagos.

According to him, "the position of the senate in this

NUBIFIE lauds categorisation of banks

regard is to map out the new capital base of each category and not to compel all of them to recapitalise with N25 billion.

He recalled that his union had represented a similar position to the federal government in the heat of the controversial N25 billion capital base formula of the Central Bank of Nigeria

(CBN) early last year.

Said he; "you could also see that if the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) categorised the banking sector stipulated in the recent every strata of the Nigerian citizenry would benefit from the form of efficient banking services throughout the country."

Commenting on the recent leadership changes in the union, he disclosed that both the former national president of the union, Mr. Babayola Mohammed and the national treasurer, Mr. James Ile were suspended by the national administrative council (NAC) for carting away financial records of the union to an unknown place and also obstructing the work of the audit panel duly constituted by the union to check their financial records in 2003/2004.

Among other things, Comrade Ahobi accused the key officers of secretly selling the shares of the union and diverting its proceeds to their personal accounts.

Asked to give the actual estimate of the alleged shareholding of the union, sold by the suspended officers, he replied; "the shares is one million, five hundred and seventy naira."

NULGE wants motorcycle loans for workers

From Mustapha Isah Kwaru, Correspondent, Kano

Abasu local government area in Kano State has been called upon to initiate a motorcycle loan scheme for its workers. The council branch chairman of the National Association of Local Government Employees (NULGE) Alhaji Salisu Ali made the plea while on a courtesy call on the chairman. He observed that the measure became imperative in order to minimise the transportation problem that affects the staff particularly those on the low ranks.

He lamented that transportation incapability has drastically hampered zeal and readiness of the workers for improved performance.

The NULGE boss conceded that although the council since its inception, had exercise, series of developmental projects for the general over haul of people's welfare, prompt modalities should be

unmasked for the workers benefit.

He also alerted the chairman over the council's failure to pay outstanding debts and other allowances for the workers, saying the morale, hard work and dedication could only be revamped under a conducive atmosphere.

Responding, the chairman of the council, Alhaji Musa Tahir Hungu said, appropriate measures will be evolved for the total eradication of workers plight.

He said, the issue of motorcycle loan and debt settlement will be looked in to with utmost concern.

TUCN faults labour's representation in national confab

The Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUCN) has condemned the allocation of six representatives to the

proposed national dialogue to the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) alone, saying the arrangement is unfair and undemocratic.

TUCN in a press conference addressed by its president-general, Dr. (Mrs.) N. Peace Obiajulu in Lagos called for a review of the allocation to include all facets in the labour movement.

Dr. Obiajulu in her address tagged; TUCN MUST BE represented at the confab," rejected the current representation of labour by only the NLC.

The text of the statement read in part: "we call on the federal government to correct this anomaly by including representatives of the senior staff under the aegis of the TUCN in the confab list."

The congress supports and would want to participate in the confab in order to contribute its own quota to national development."

She however added that with the present composition in what the Nigeria Labour Congress alone was given the six-slot allocation, the labour movement will not be truly represented.

She implored the federal government to quickly correct the mistake in order to allow the views of the senior staff in the public and private sectors to be heard.



Alhaji Ahmed Yayale, head of civil service

Welders, fitters demand enforcement of expatriate quota

The Nigerian Welders Association and the Nigerian National Fitters Association have called on the federal government to enforce the law of expatriate quota in order to reduce unemployment in the country.

The two associations at a joint press conference delivered by the president of NWA, Mr. Moses Akande, lamented the rate at which major contractors in the country have been violating labour laws and the constitution over the usage of unqualified foreign nationals in the execution of major contracts at the expense of highly skilled Nigerian professionals.

According to him, this practice is more evident in the construction industry where Indians, Japanese, Lebanese, Egyptians and Bulgarians have allegedly taken over the jobs that can

From Samsom Ojo, Correspondent, Lagos

successfully be executed by Nigerians.

Said he; "the indiscriminate use of illegal

immigrants in the name of expatriates has since pauperised the members of our unions due to loss of jobs to these foreigners.

"It is evident that thousands of those employed are being formented with fear of being made redundant as a result of an over glorified

policy of economic reforms by the government of President Obasanjo in form of privatisation, commercialisation and liberalization which have destroyed the basic foundation of meaningful economic development of the country."

He disclosed that the associations have written several letters to inform the federal government of the situation, and declared that the unions have resolved to embark a mass protest if the government fails to enforce the laws guiding expatriate quota.

NLC commends Swazi workers' fight against tyranny

The Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) has commended workers in Swaziland on the renewed offensive against feudal tyranny and patriarchal despotism in their country.

In a letter addressed to the general secretary of Swaziland Federal Trade Unions (SFTU), Brother Jan Sithole, the NLC assured the SFTU of its support and

By Abdullahi M. Gulloma, Labour Reporter

solidarity. The letter signed by the president of the NLC, Comrade Adams Aliyu Oshiomhole, said that the congress is proud of the leading role played by the SFTU in the recent two-day mass campaign based on the demands for the initiation of constitutional rule and democratic political order



Comrade Adams Oshiomhole NLC president

that guarantee respect for human and trade union rights.

It would be recalled that the people of Swaziland are waging a struggle for democracy and against absolute monarchy. Swaziland lives under feudal oppression.

The SFTU tabled a list of 27 demands focusing on trade union rights and democratic freedoms. The king and government of Swaziland have made no meaningful attempt to address these demands.

YOUR HEALTH

Health interactive

With Dr Aminu Magashi

UNFPA and fistula operation

On Friday, 4th February, 2005, around 4:30 pm, I entered the premises of Radio Freedom to listen and collect a radio jingle for a proposed *Hausa- Health Talk* which is about to commence weekly at Radio Freedom on Maternal and Child Health of which I will be the leading discussant. But unknown to me, a live programme was just about to commence and hurriedly one of the discussants in the programme sported me and could not resist but to bundle me in to the studio. For the respect I have for him and the media house, I accepted my fate to be among the discussants.

In the studio were Dr Hussein Ismail Mustapha of Bayero University, Kano; Dr Rahmat Hassan Mohammad, the Executive Director of FORWARD, Nigeria and the Kano State Honorable Commissioner for Women Affairs, Dr Fatima (Gaji) Pantata. The topic of discussion was 'Vesico-Vaginal - Fistula' and it was in connection with the proposed massive fistula operation which will hold simultaneously in Kano, Katsina, Sokoto and Kebbi states free of charge being championed by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), other development partners and the states that are affected.

As it was reported by *Triumph* newspaper of Tuesday, February, 1st, 2005, captioned, *UNFPA Plans Campaign against Obstetric Fistula*, it was mentioned that the agency plans a two week campaign to end obstetric fistula in Nigeria. Announcing the plan in Abuja, the UNFPA Assistant Representative, Dr Lucy Idoko, said that the campaign would be carried out in Kano, Katsina, Sokoto and Kebbi states because already, VVF repairs centres exist in such location and 14 volunteer doctors would conduct operations on patients suffering from the VVF. Among the 14 doctors, four would come from outside Nigeria.

Also the UNFPA country representative, Dr Niangoran Essan, was quoted by the paper to have said that the Japanese government had donated \$ 1.8 million for the construction of a repair centre and train personnel for the repair. Our one hour discussion centered on the impending massive fistula operations and of course, the causes of social stigma attached to the problem vis-à-vis the possible way out for the affected people. Both my good friend, senior brother and colleague, Dr Mustapha, and the honorable commissioner for Women Affairs were excited about such fistula operation, and even though I am not condemning or discouraging such exercise, I am neither excited nor impressed about that gesture by UNFPA. In fact, I termed such intervention: *Window Dressing Intervention and Publicity Seeking Exercise* by the stakeholders.

Nigeria has an estimated population of 126 million where high fertility rate is valued and a woman's status is determined by her reproductive capacity with a total fertility rate which remains as high as 5.7 children/woman. Unfortunately, reproduction occurs under conditions that threaten the life and well-being of women, resulting in very high level of maternal deaths. Nigeria's maternal mortality ratio of 948/100,000 with a range of 339/100,000 to 1716/100,000 is one of the highest in the world. For each maternal death that occurs, 15 to 20 other women suffer either short or long term maternal morbidities. Prominent among these morbidities is Obstetric Fistula and the major one is the Vesico-Vaginal - Fistula (VVF).

The commonest cause of VVF in Nigeria is obstructed and prolonged labour and this accounts for between 80 to 95 % of all the cases seen. VVF resulting from obstructed labour occurs when a young woman with prolonged labour due to cephalo-pelvic disproportion and cannot get timely Caesarian section to relieve the obstruction. Other cause of VVF which is also common is Gishiri Cut, a traditional cut done by traditional birth attendants to increase the size of the private part of a lady during labour when there is obstruction.

In this country, there are about 400,000 Nigerian women who are suffering from VVF, and majority of them will be found in rural areas where even the primary health care services are grossly inadequate, inaccessible and at times, not available at all. Some of the women are young who are not opportune to have even primary school education; and, of course, poverty is also playing a key role in worsening the situation. The scenario is such that when a woman in rural area is in labour, she stays at home for about 2 to 3 days trying to give birth; the family or the husband may decide to take her to the nearest hospital, but on reaching there, no facilities for emergency obstetric procedures and at times, no competent personnel to handle the situation. All these problems culminated

in to the scenario of continuously having cases of VVF, particularly in northern Nigeria where the policy makers take a lot for granted in trying to improve the lots of their people.

As a development agency, I expected UNFPA to address the cause of VVF (prolonged/obstructed labour and Gishiri cut and the rest), that is to genuinely assist those states that are having high level of VVF through advocacy, policy reform and service delivery towards provision of timely and emergency obstetric care, meeting the un-met needs of contraceptive services and massive awareness raising campaign on the importance of ante-natal care.

To organise massive fistula operation across northern Nigeria will not in any way reduce the prevalence of VVF. It is like addressing an effect of a problem and living the cause. The likes of Dr Mustapha, Dr Rahmat of FORWARD and the Commissioner for Women Affairs of Kano, Dr Fatima (Gaji) Dantata, and her colleagues in Sokoto, Kebbi and Katsina should endeavour to use that period of fistula operation to engage UNFPA officials and other stakeholders to dialogue about how to resolve the issue of VVF by addressing the causes rather than the effects.

Erectile problem and Diabetes

I am suffering from erectile problems as a result of Diabetes Mellitus. Please help.

Ladan

Erectile Dysfunction or impotence is one of the complications of Diabetes Mellitus and it is due to damage to the nerves that supply the blood vessels and erectile tissues of the penile organ (autonomic neuropathy). Normally improved control of Diabetes rarely results in amelioration of symptoms and the problem affects about 30 % of all Diabetic males, and often the cause of it is multifactorial. Psychological factors like depression, anxiety and reduced libido may be partly responsible for the impotence.

Management is to ensure psychological counselling and reassurance and use of drugs such as Phosphodiesterase inhibitors. I will advise you to visit your doctor and explain the situation.

Absence of menses

My wife delivered one year ago and still her menses have not returned. Is anything wrong?

W.M

If your wife is breastfeeding her baby regularly for the last one year, that could be the reason why she is not experiencing any menses. Breast feeding leads to release of Prolactin (a hormone responsible for the production of milk). That hormone inhibits the action of other hormones that are released from the brain and are responsible for ovulation, hence absence of menses (the situation is called Lactational Amenorrhea or in some circle it is called the Natural Family Planning).

Vertigo and deafness

Please can vertigo lead to deafness and what are its causes, effects and curative measures?

I.M Deba

Vertigo can be described as feeling of dizziness and abnormal perception of movement of the environment. Also it can be described as a feeling of faintness, alteration of consciousness or unsteadiness.

Vertigo is caused by an alteration in function of the vestibular organs which are found within the ear cavity or it could be due to the central control mechanism of balance and posture that is faulty.

The vestibular organ which can be called labyrinth, if it is inflamed due to infection (Labyrinthitis) will lead to vertigo and it is one of the commonest causes of severe vertigo which also presents with vomiting, fever and ataxia (slow movement).

Another cause of vertigo is meniere's disease in which the patient presents with tinnitus (musical sound around the ear), distorted hearing and attacks of vertigo. That answers your question whether vertigo can lead to deafness.

If the vestibular nucleus (the place that controls balance

and posture in the brain) is damaged either due to disease condition or Seizures or the nerve and its pathway that supplies the labyrinth in the ear has a problem or blocked (Acoustic neuroma), the patient will present with vertigo. Treatment is based on the causative factors.

Pregnancy and intercourse

I am newly married with four months' pregnancy. I used to experience pain during intercourse with my husband. Is it normal?

Mrs. H Mohd

The first three months of pregnancy (first trimester) usually comes with some discomfort, such as easy fatigability, nausea, vomiting and fever and within that period, implantation of the fertilized eggs within the uterus has taken place and undergoing growth and development. Excessive body movement and fever at that period can result in miscarriage. I will advise you and your husband to relax and abstain from intercourse till you pass that first trimester and also try and do pelvic scanning. You will find it very useful when you commence ante-natal care.

Breast lump and pain

Please I have a lump in my breast which is very painful and I feel discomfort when ever it is touched.

Mercy.

Lump in the breast could be due to physical injury, infection which leads to inflammation, and it could be a tumor (abnormal growth of the breast tissue which could be benign or malignant and cancerous).

From your history, the likely problem you have is mastitis (inflammation of the breast due to invasion by micro-organisms. Please visit your doctor for treatment and let him/her teach you how to examine your breasts to ensure positive living and prevention of breast tumor).

Yellowish discharge

Please I have a yellowish discharge from my private part and it smells and itches. Please what do I do?

MNN

From your description, you may be suffering from sexually transmitted disease. I advise you to do microscopy, culture and sensitivity of high vaginal swab and to abstain from intercourse till after the investigation and treatment. If you have a regular partner, he also needs to be investigated and treated as well. Please visit your hospital.

Write in confidence to healthinteractive@hotmail.com or send text message to 08023810589 or P.O. Box 14807, Kano, Nigeria.



Eyitayo Lambo, Health Minister

Enugu govt receives 17 motorbikes to fight leprosy

The German Leprosy Relief and Tuberculosis Association has donated 17 motorbikes to the Enugu government for Tuberculosis and leprosy supervisors in the 17 local government areas of the state.

The donation was made in Enugu recently through the Partnership for Transformation of Health Systems (PATHS) of the British Department For International Development.

Speaking at the handover ceremony, the representative of the association, Mr Klaus Gilgen, said the bikes would assist the supervisors in carrying out their work. Also speaking, the state Commissioner for Health, Dr Festus Uzor, praised the donor agencies, adding that the donation had become necessary because of the resurgence of Tuberculosis as a result of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The commissioner added that all interventions in the fight against Tuberculosis and leprosy contributed to the overall intervention in HIV/AIDS.

In her speech, Ms Angy Rogues, the PATHS team leader, said the handover of the bikes showed an excellent ties between the donor agencies and the Enugu state government.

Responding, Governor Chimaroke Nnamani, represented by the Secretary to the state government, Dr Dan Shere, gave the assurance that the bikes would be strictly deployed for what they were meant for.

Gombe awards N364m contract for hospital equipment

The Gombe State government has awarded a N364-million contract for the purchase of basic and specialised hospital equipment.

The Commissioner for Health, Dr Isah Umar, who disclosed this recently told newsmen that the equipment would be distributed to the two newly constructed general hospitals at Deba and Mazada, as well as the rehabilitated hospitals in Billiri, Kumo and Kaltungo.

He explained that the equipment would arrive in the state in March. Umar said the equipment included theatre and X-ray machines and other vital casualty items, laboratory and pharmaceutical equipment.

He explained that the contract would be executed by two companies, and stressed the state government's determination to provide quality health care delivery.

Road safety establishes accident emergency clinics

The Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) has established an accident and emergency clinic in Gerbi local government area of Adamawa state. Speaking through his deputy during the inauguration of the clinic, Governor Bomi Heruna said the clinic would assist in saving the lives of accident victims.

"The clinic could not have come at a better time than now in view of the high death rate recorded in recent years from road accidents," he said. And lamented the loss of material resources running into billions of Naira every year on the nation's



(L-R) Mr. Adegoke Adedamola, and Mr. David Ayegba (middle) of the Youth Awareness Movement Against AIDS in Africa, presenting an award to the Minister of Health, Professor Eytayo Lambo

FG checks foreign medical trips

...upgrades facilities in teaching hospitals

In a bid to checkmate the high rate at which affluent Nigerians travel abroad to seek medical treatment in foreign countries, the federal government has provided a whopping sum of eight million Euro to the nation's teaching and federal medical hospitals with a view to upgrading the facilities to make the services be at par with what is obtained abroad.

Disclosing this in Ibadan recently, the Chief Medical Director of the University College Hospital (UCH), Professor Abiodun Ilesanmi, stated that the fund was earmarked for the procurement of equipment and renovations of the various hospitals.

Professor Ilesanmi who was speaking at the guest Forum of the Correspondents Chapel of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Oyo State chapter, explained that the various medical equipment procured by the federal government were sophisticated, adding that bilateral arrangement had already been made to allow expatriate stay in the country for about five

From Dele Ogunyemi
Stringer (Ibadan)

years for the maintenance of the equipment before they are handed over to local engineers.

According to the chief medical director, the objective of the ongoing renovations and upgrading of facilities at the teaching hospitals is to make facilities available so that Nigerians would not have any cause to travel abroad for medical treatment.

He further explained that in order to ensure privacy of wealthy Nigerians who can afford quality and private treatment, the University College Hospital Ibadan, had already

ready begun the establishment of private clinic within the hospital to meet the demand.

The CMD enjoined Nigerians to pay more attention to their health saying, that more emphasis should be placed on preventive, rather than the curative aspect.

Professor Ilesanmi scored the federal government high in its contributions to health care development, stressing that "in spite of the problems and challenges facing the nation's health sector, the present administration had done more than any government in the past to keep the system going."

Minister makes case for PLWHs

By Sunday Ejike
Benjamin Health Reporter

Anti-Retroviral (ARV) therapy for people living with HIV/AIDS should be adequately articulated to include prevention strategies of Behaviours Change Communications (BCC), Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) and blood safety, the Minister of state for Health, Princes Olufunke Adedoyin, has said.

Addressing the national consensus meeting and workshop for the development of the health sector strategic plan for HIV/AIDS in Abuja recently, Prince Adedoyin reminded participants not to come out with strategies that would accommodate the current government scale, but rather, to focus on interventions in a strategic manner.

Monitoring and evaluation, the minister said, must not be overlooked and should be detailed in the plan with clear indication from the onset.

According to her, the end of the strategic plan development will herald the commencement of the development of implementation plans by various stakeholders in the health sector.

Earlier in his welcome address, the Director, Public Health in the Federal Ministry of Health, Dr. Edugie Abebe, pointed out that the consensus meeting and workshop was about the first time that stakeholders come together to chart a strategic direction within the framework of an overall multi-sectoral national plan, since the adoption of the multi-sectoral approach to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Nigeria. He said the health sector does not only account for over three quarters of the entire multi-sectoral response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, but also possess the required institutional memory, with a large proportion of the strategic information required by other sectors in its domain.

The director, public health of the PMOH further noted that the health sector has, at its disposal, established an extensive infrastructure in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions, unmatched by any other sector within the multi-sectoral response.



REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM A. MENSTRUAL PROBLEM

This syndrome presents as *painful episode, lack or infrequent period/excessive flow*. The presentation of menstrual syndrome is often linked with varied systems, but basically related to hormone regulated organs. However, hormonal changes thus described are influenced by factors such as stress and anxiety, and can delay menstrual periods for up to two weeks or more. Protracted menstrual periods leading to great loss of blood and hence anaemia must always be thoroughly investigated.

Treatment

1. False unicorn root/Angelica root/cramp bark: Infusion of any of these plants is taken in small quantities to relieve pain from spasms of the uterus.

2. Aloe vera: The juice obtained from Aloe vera taken in a glass of water 2 - 3 times a day relieves pain and improves scanty menstrual flows.

3. Red raspberry/rosemary herb/peppermint: The leaves of any of these plants is infused and taken as 2 - 3 cups 3 times daily to relieve spasm.

4. Ginger: Chopped ginger in sufficient quantity of honey is thoroughly mixed and taken as 1 tablespoonful 4 times daily for 2 - 3 days to relieve menstrual congestion. Also improves menstrual flow particularly in women with scanty menstrual flow.

5. Sarsaparilla/Corn silk: Generally, there is the possibility of water retention in some women (oedema). These plants are taken as infusions to effect diuresis, thus relieving menstrual congestion.

6. Climbing black pepper: (*Oziza* [Igbo], *Iyere* [Yoruba], Masoro [Hausa]): The application of this plant when generously taken as infusion helps to relieve localised heat syndrome, eg (lower abdomen) during menstruation.

7. Mistletoe: Hormonal imbalance in most women leads to heavy menstrual flow. Infusion of the leaves of this plant taken 1 - 2 cups daily will relieve and reduce the flow. A handful of the fresh herb of 1 teaspoonful of dried herb in a teacup of boiling water, allowed to simmer for 5 - 10 minutes is very effective.

8. Purslane: The infusion of this plant when generously taken helps to relieve localised heat syndrome, eg (lower abdomen) during menstruation.

9. Stinging nettle/black cohosh/catnip (*kaikeyi koma kan mashekeiya* [Hausa]): The infusion of any of these plants given as 2 - 3 teacups daily also reduces heavy menstrual flow and the accompanying pain.

10. Sorrel flowers (*Zobo* [Hausa], *Isapa* [Yoruba]): Considering loss of blood during menstrual period, the infusion, cold or hot supplies a lot of iron and thus prevents anaemia.

11. Thyme/valerian/stinging nettle/hamamelis/cotton plant/ African cucumber: The infusion of any of these herbs when taken as 2 - 3 teacups 3 - 4 times daily increases menstrual flow and thus reduces congestion.

12. Beetroot: Of particular note is the juice which is a good food for the liver and also converts oestrogens to the less active form, thereby improving circulation, building the blood and regulating menstrual flow.

13. African cucumber/balsam pear (*Ejinrin wene* [Yoruba], *Alaase* [Igbo]): The leaves of this plant are washed like bitter leaf and the juice is taken as 2 teacups daily, morning and evening. Please store in a cool place. This is particularly helpful in relieving dark and scanty menstrual flow.

B. MENOPAUSE

Menopause is not a disease but a natural process in a woman's life referred to as 'changing of life'. It occurs when the ovaries are no longer active, with subsequent drop in the production of the hormone oestrogen. This hormone is responsible for various female system responses. Its deficiency results in flushing, night sweats, weight gain, irritability, fatigue, headaches, dizziness, poor libido and depression.

The herbal treatment involves the correction of the resultant lowered oestrogen level and its effects is as listed below:

1. Lady's mantle/mother wort: 2 - 5 gm or a handful of any of these herbs infused and taken 3 times daily with 1 tablespoon of honey relieves anxiety, hot flushes and similar menopausal symptoms.

2. Aloe vera gel/slippery elm: The dried herb of each of these plants are powdered, mixed together to form a consistency like toothpaste. This is applied by inserting into vagina to relieve vagina dryness, a common occurrence in menopause.

3. Damiana/cherries/cedar/dandelion/green nettle/seaweed/date/sesame seeds: The infusion of any of these herbs taken in a teacup three times daily for short duration will improve libido and prevent osteoporosis.

4. Anise/cornel/hyponocel/marjoram/sage/wild yam: These are natural oestrogen promoters. Infusion of any of them is taken as 2 - 3 teacups daily.

5. Ginseng: Use as tea infusion and taken 2 times daily to promote production of oestrogen and improve generalised body system. (Not recommended for hypertensive patients.)

6. Vitamin E extracts: The oil or the fluid containing high concentration of Vitamin E is applied for vaginal itching as well as taken in capsule form as 4 capsule daily. Vitamin E can also be applied for vaginal lubrication.

7. Mistletoe: The leaves and soft stem infusion is taken as 1 - 2 teacups daily to relieve depression in menopause.

It is advisable to drink about 6 - 8 glasses of quality water daily to prevent dryness of skin mucous membrane

Hajiya Zainab Sheriff writes from Zee's Herbal Pharmacy, Suite 12, Angels Plaza, Garki II, Abuja.

YOUR HEALTH

High cost of lab tests worry PLWH

People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWH), an association comprising HIV infected persons, has cried out over the high cost of laboratory tests before accessing the anti-retroviral drug (ARV) in the country. The victims noted that the cost has prevented them from knowing their HIV status as well as accessing drugs, which help in prolonging their life-span.

This issue, along with others related to HIV/AIDS treatment, was the focus of the January 2005 journalists' roundtable discussion organised by Internews Local Voices office in Abuja recently. The roundtable discussion, with experts in the fight against HIV/AIDS pandemic in attendance, analysed HIV/AIDS drug treatment and efforts to overcome the barriers of providing treatment to persons living with the pandemic in Nigeria.

According to the Internews Director, Cece Modupe Fadope, the roundtable was aimed at providing an under-standing of the current HIV/AIDS treatment policy and to update the public on managing HIV cases safely. She called for slashing of laboratory test costs for HIV/AIDS to enhance easy access to anti-retroviral drugs (ARV) and medications.

In a paper on "How to make advanced HIV treatments affordable for millions of people in poor countries" presented by Hans P. Binswanger, he stressed that 'the most urgent challenge in

the fight against HIV/AIDS is to bring life-saving drugs to the millions of people whose lives and well-being are in danger'.

He pointed out that the treatment of HIV/AIDS patients involves the treatment of opportunistic infections, prophylaxis against some of them and anti-retroviral (ARV) therapy with three or more drugs simultaneously. He stressed the need for regular check-ups, tests and treatments.

Binswanger advocated the reduction of the price of the drugs by major pharmaceutical companies, and pointed out that generic imports can assist millions of people in the country to afford ARV treatment by the use of health insurance coverage.

According to him, "even with radical price reductions, many poor patients will lack access to ARV therapy" and noted that the gap could be bridged by the initiation of programmes targeted at the tests. This, he said, includes free drugs and testing by government, charitable foundations, grants and PLWH associations.

Dr. Emmanuel Anteyi, a medical consultant at the National ARV Project, Abuja, who was also at the roundtable as a resource person, noted that the 25 ARV centres in the country were inadequate, considering the increasing spread of the pandemic. He said the initial idea was to make the drugs affordable, and noted that even with the subsidy on the drugs, they would still not be affordable to some persons living with the disease.



Governor Joshua Dariye of Plateau state (centre) cutting the tape to officially open the human virology research centre at the Plateau Specialist Hospital Jos being assisted (right) by Dr. Patrick Dakum, Plateau state Health Commissioner, Dr. Abdulsalam Nasidi representative of the Minister of Health (left). Extreme left the Speaker PLHA, Hon. Simon Lalong.

Reagents scarcity causes loss of lives of TB patients

Stories by Sunday Ejike Benjamin, Health Reporter

Scarcity of reagents has led to the death of five persons suffering from tuberculosis at the Gwagwalada Specialist Hospital, Abuja. The Head of the tuberculosis clinic, Dr. Otokpa Aboh, disclosed this when the Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Mr. Lloyd O. Pierson, visited the hospital to ascertain the extent of success between the US

government and Nigeria's joint efforts to combat HIV/AIDS as part of the emergency plan for AIDS' relief. Dr. Aboh told the visiting team, which included the USAID Mission Director in Nigeria, Mis. Dawn Liberi, that no fewer than 84 TB patients were treated at the clinic last year, and pointed out that the

lack of reagents has impeded the dispensary of services to them.

Responding, the USAID assistant administrator commended the management and staff of the Gwagwalada Specialist Hospital for their appropriate handling of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and health issues at the hospital.

Addressing newsmen after the assessment tour of various departments in the

hospital, Mr. Pierson said the US government was poised to fighting HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. He pointed out that Nigeria was among the countries that the US government was in cordial partnership with, having committed \$59million last year to fight the scourge. He revealed that his government will this year commit about \$81million to the fight against HIV/AIDS in Nigeria.

'Govt's no work, no pay policy may induce strike'

Another round of strike action may soon be experienced in the country's health sector if the federal government decides to enforce the "no work, no pay" policy on doctors who participated in the just suspended National Association of Resident Doctors' strike.

Daily Trust's investigations indicate that resident doctors are poised to mount strong resistance should the government refuse to pay them for the number of days the strike lasted. Already, a statement from the Acting General-Secretary of the Senior Staff Association of the University Teaching Hospital Research Institutions (SSAUTHRI), Comrade Moshood Alkinade, warned the government against such decision, or be ready to contend with another round of strike in the nation's public health institutions.

It read in parts, "It has come to the notice of the national secretariat of the SSAUTHRI

that the officials of the federal ministries on pay parade are contemplating on not paying workers for the period of strike. The union seriously warned against such devil's advocate, and also declared unequivocally that it will order immediate resumption of strike action if full payment of outstanding shortfalls ranging between 12 and 15 months in personnel emoluments and allowance is not paid."

Meanwhile, the verification and payment team constituted by the Federal Ministry of Health to ascertain the true staff status of the ministry has maintained that it would work according to the mandate given to it by the federal government.

The Head of the team, Hajija Usama Abdallah, and the deputy director, Supplies in the Federal Ministry of Health told newsmen at the Gwagwalada Specialist Hospital that her committee would not have anything to do with January payment as

its mandate did not include January 2005, but to pay shortfall of salaries and allowances of last year and beyond. She dispelled the rumour that members of the committee would be paid incentives at the end of the exercise, and added that 'We in the committee consider the job as a part of our work schedule as civil servants, and as such, do not expect any kind of incentive'.

The national President of the Nigerian Association of Resident Doctors (NARD), Dr. Jerry Oguzie, who monitored the activities of the verification and payment team at the Gwagwalada Specialist Hospital, Abuja, commended the members for doing a good job, and called on the team to hasten its exercise so that resident doctors could be paid without further delay.

On whether NARD will go on strike should the federal government refuse to pay resident doctors, Dr. Oguzie said the national executive council of the association would decide on what action to take if the government decided to take such action.

NHIS wants law establishing it amended

The national consultative meeting of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) has called for the amendment of the law establishing the scheme to enable it to meet the tasks ahead.

The meeting, with the theme: "Restoring Stakeholders' Confidence towards the Successful Take-off of the National Health Insurance Scheme", also prayed that the section of the law which relates to payment of contributions by employees and employers directly to the accounts of the designated Health Maintenance Organisations (HMO) be



Professor Ephyra Lumba, Health Minister

retained. It noted that payments through a third party would violate the spirit of the scheme.

In a communiqué made available to Daily Trust in Abuja at the end of the consultative meeting, the scheme noted that Decree 35, which established the scheme, was silent on the informal sector and subsidy programmes and called for their amendment to ensure coverage of disadvantaged groups of the society.

According to the three-page communiqué, the mechanism of fund collection should be by deduction at source by the Federal Ministry of Finance for the sector and remitted directly to the NHIS (fund manager), while the funds collected for the private sector from employee/employer contributions be remitted to the HMO. It noted that since the scheme was a social insurance programme, its participation should be made compulsory to every employee and employer in the country.

The meeting also recommended that the percentage of contribution payable to

major stakeholders should be designed in such a way that 12 per cent would be for service provision; 1.5 per cent HMO; 1.0 per cent, NHIS; and 0.5 per cent as reserve funds. It added that the 0.5 per cent reserve funds should be kept by the NHIS while the reimbursement would have to be approved by the NHIS council.

The meeting also urged stakeholders to become acquainted with the rules guiding the implementation of the scheme, and assist in disseminating same to the Nigerian public. It recommended the establishment of a standard committee to ensure a total quality management as provided in the law.

While the meeting called for intensive public enlightenment and mobilisation of all stakeholders and the public, it also recommended the establishment of 'a robust Management Information System (MIS)', which should include identity card systems for an effective implementation of the scheme, and stressed the need for effective and constant evaluation of the progress to enhance sustenance.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR WORTHY EMIR AS HE CELEBRATES 3 DECADES ON THE THRONE



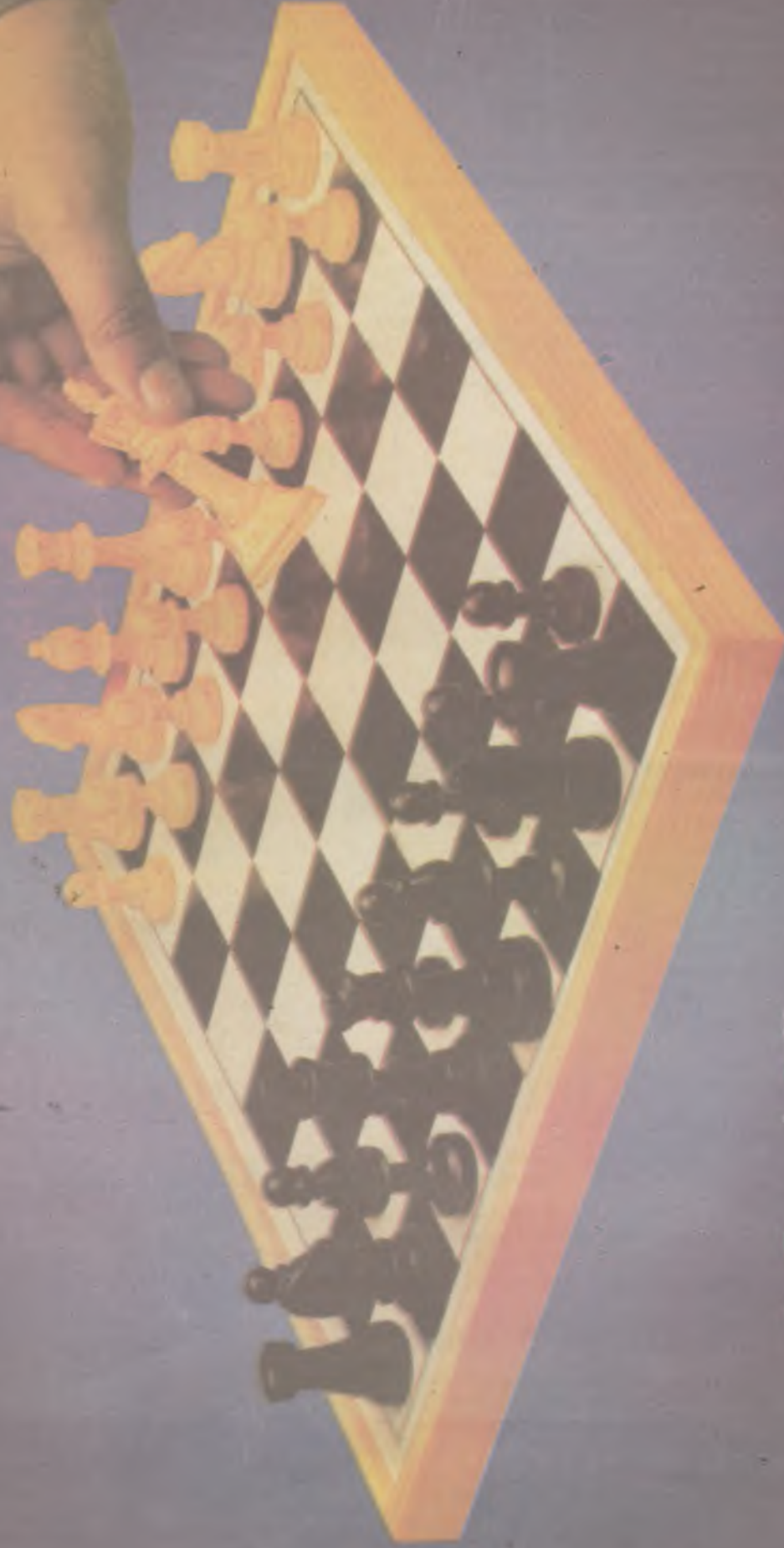
His Royal Highness,
ALHAJI (DR.) SHEHU IDRIS CFR
Emir of Zazzau

On behalf of the Council, the staff, and the people of Zaria Local Government, I wish to felicitate with His Royal Highness, ALHAJI (Dr.) SHEHU IDRIS, CFR, Emir of Zazzau and Chairman of Kaduna State Council of Chiefs, on his 30th anniversary on the throne.

We are proud to be associated with you and identify with your exemplary leadership qualities. May Allah (SWT) continue to guide you and give you the wisdom to further champion the cause of peace and progress in the Zazzau Emirate of Kaduna State and the country at large.

Signed
ALHAJI YAHAYA AMINU
Executive Chairman,
Zaria Local Government

One SMART MOVE
can turn you into a Grand Master.



...A Grand Offer is coming your way tomorrow!

GET READY!

ABUJA TRUST

Abaji youths raze police Jeep over accident, robbery

Abaji, a satellite town of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), was last Saturday night thrown into confusion when angry youths in the town burnt down a highway patrol Jeep believed to have caused a head-on collision between

By Nasir Imam, Property & Environment Editor

two trucks on the Abaji-Gwagwalada road, which resulted in the death of one person.

Abubakar Sadiq Isa, a resident of Abaji town, who

witnessed the incident and spoke to *Abuja Trust*, said that trouble started when a police highway patrol Jeep with registration number PF 737 HQ, at about 9.45 pm on Saturday, attempted to stop a Dangote truck on the Gwagwalada-Lokoja road.

The driver of the Dangote truck with Lagos registration number XH 757 AAA allegedly refused to stop, which caused the highway patrol Jeep to pursue the moving truck, and in the process of

overtaking it, forced a Mercedes Benz truck with registration number XB 279 RSH carrying sachet water and coming from the opposite direction to collide head-on with the Dangote truck.

Residents of Abaji town, on hearing the impact of the crash, rushed to the scene of the accident, and on noticing that the policemen have abandoned the scene by running away, smashed the windscreen of the Jeep and later burnt it down completely.

Malam Abubakar Isa said that about seven persons sustained serious injuries as a result of the accident, but

the driver of the Dangote truck later gave up the ghost at the St. Peter's Catholic Hospital, Abaji.

The area commander in-charge of Abaji, Aliyu Ahmadu, who spoke to *Abuja Trust*, said investigation was going on and that two persons have been arrested over the incident.

Meanwhile, a few hours later on the same Abaji-Gwagwalada road, a robbery incident took place at about 3.30am Sunday morning, where men of the underworld who carted away money and valuables from their victims attacked four vehicles.

One of the victims, Mr.

Elias Opute, who said two of the robbers stopped the bus in which he was travelling to Lagos, but the driver refused to stop which made the robbers to shoot the tyre of the bus and forced it to stop with the driver escaping into the bush.

Mr. Opute, who said that bullets from the gunshot wounded his hand, said he lost the sum of N125,000, three GSM sets, and the sum of 2 million CFA.

Though no life was lost in the robbery incident, the DPO in-charge of Abaji, Mr. Hyacinth Agegba, was not available for comment as at the time of filing this report.

Court discharges CAC staff over forgery allegation

An Abuja Chief Magistrate Court presided over by Mrs. C.N. Orji, has struck out a case of conspiracy and forgery preferred against a staff of the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), Mr. Hilary Ekpo and one Mr. Obiorah Umeh, for want of diligent prosecution.

Mr. Ekpo and Mr. Umeh had been charged to court for alleged conspiracy and forgery contrary to sections 97 and 314 of the penal code law.

The two men, lawyers by profession, were alleged to have forged a certificate of registration number RC 5186, dated August 2, 2002, bearing Luxury Bus Owners Association of Nigeria (LUBOAN).

The presiding magistrate said she had to strike out the case and discharge Mr. Hilary Ekpo, a staff of the CAC, because the prosecution had consistently failed to open the case, and present evidence and witnesses to carry on the prosecution.

Both men had pleaded not guilty when they were arraigned before the court last year.

Meanwhile, Barrister Obiorah Umeh has in a letter, dated December 20, 2004, addressed to Mr. Hilary Ekpo, ex-

onerated him of the alleged conspiracy and forgery offences.

According to the letter, Mr. Ekpo was informed that in "the course of the reconciliation of the two rival Luxury Bus Associations (LUBOAN and NLBOA), it became apparent that you (Ekpo) did not forge or participate in the alleged forgery of LUBOAN certificate".

However, following the discharge of Mr. Ekpo and the letter from Barrister Obiorah Umeh, dated December 20, 2004, the counsel to Mr. Ekpo, Barrister Samuel Etukakpan, has written to Mr. Umeh to make some demands.

He demanded that, "a more sincere, comprehensive and exhaustive remorseful letter of apology and retraction be addressed to our client and copied to the Corporate Affairs Commission and the media.

"Meanwhile, if Mr. Umeh fails to meet the above demands, the counsel to Mr. Ekpo has threatened to go to court to seek redress, report the matter to the disciplinary committee of the NBA in Lagos and Abuja, and also to the police in both Lagos and Abuja.



Twenty-one gun salute in honour of fallen heroes during the Armed Forces' Remembrance Day held at the National Arena, Abuja, recently. (PT: An Onyiah)

Abuja MTN subscribers decry delay of service accounts

Subscribers to one of the GSM operators, MTN, have decryed the 72-hour delay from the network

in correcting the figures on faulty recharge cards.

Investigations by the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) showed that subscribers, who bought the newly introduced bio-degradable cards and mistakenly scratch off the figures had to wait for three days to get their accounts credited.

"We have been having complaints from customers that the new cards easily pill off with the figures when

customers scratch the surface of recharge cards," a recharge card vendor in Abuja, Mr. Monday Ijeh, said.

"Problems like this occur once in a while in our business with other networks too, but it has been persistent with MTN recently and all you get when you call the customer service is to wait for three-days.

"But how many customers have the extra money to buy another card and then wait for three-days before their problematic cards can be credited," he queried.

Ijeh told NAN that he usually left faulty recharge cards with the customers to sort out themselves with MTN friendship centre as replacing the cards would amount to extra cost.

"I hope you know that we have to pay when we call MTN friendship centre to correct anomalies for customers and that does not favour me," he said.

At the MTN Customer Service Centre in Abuja, several customers were seen lodging complaints on the same issue.

"Those who supply these

cards to us should be banned," a staff of MTN who picked up one of the faulty cards from a customer for documentation, said.

Another official, who pleaded anonymity, said the complaints on mutilated figures became persistent when the company ordered for cards that were bio-degradable.

"We are in business to make money so it affects us as well when our customers cannot load cards, because they get defaced when scratching.

"Nevertheless we have been placing adverts to enlighten customers that the quality of the cards have changed and they should scratch with care," he said.

On the 72-hour tenure given to subscribers before corrections would be made, he said it was designed to give the company sufficient time to clear with the real owners of the recharge cards in case of theft.

"It is for security reasons, because sometimes somebody might just pick someone else's PIN number and try to play a fast one," he said.

Prisons tour stalls court proceedings in Abuja

Court proceedings were yesterday suspended at the magistrate courts in Abuja due to what our correspondent gathered was a tour of prisons in the FCT judicial district.

As a result of this, the case of 22 year old Zainab Suleiman, standing trial for alleged culpable homicide and causing grievous hurt to four sisters in their room in 2003 could not hold. The case was mentioned last year December 15 and adjourned to February 7, 2005 for hearing.

In the last adjourned date, the prosecutor handling the case had told the court that the police have completed investigations on the matter, and that the case had suffered series of adjournments.

The presiding Chief magistrate, Othman Musa, at the last adjourned date, disclosed his dissatisfaction with the manner justice was being de-

By Saidat Tella

layed on the matter. He sought to know the position of the parents of the deceased persons on the case.

According to the First Information Report, Zainab Suleiman, sometimes in October 2003, set a house ablaze, while four sisters, Fatima, Hajara, Amina and Sadiyyah, were asleep in their room, at about 11p.m.

The information revealed further that the accused got some quantity of petrol with which she used to set the house ablaze while she locked up the door of the house with padlocks outside.

The four sisters were said to have sustained various degrees of burns and were rushed to the National Hospital, Abuja, where two of the victims were reported dead.

It was also reported that

Zainab carried out the attack with the belief that one of the victims, Fatima now deceased, had snatched her lover.

Abuja Trust reported in October 2003 that it took the combined efforts of the occupants of the closer resident to open the door secured with padlock by Zainab before the victims were rushed to the hospital.

Zainab, who then admitted committing the act, claimed that her aim was to attack Fatima only, but unknown to her, she (Fatima) and her sisters were in the room.

The accused person held in Suleja prisons since October, 2003, was brought to court yesterday for the commencement in hearing of the case, but was returned to the prison when hearing could not hold.



Engr. Ernest Ndukwu, Exec. V.C.,

KANO TRUST

Corps members pass out without monthly allowance

The Outgoing NYSC members in Jigawa State celebrated a bleak passing-out ceremony last week due to the non-payment of their allowances. The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that both batches A and B corps members serving in the state have not been paid their allowances in the last three months.

The Jigawa State gov-

Jigawa builds new NYSC camp

The Jigawa State government is set to construct an ultra-modern National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) orientation camp, says the Information Commissioner, Abba Umar Kukuma.

The government had already approved funds for the project, he announced on Thursday in Dutse.

Kukuma said the project would involve the building of orientation and transit camps, both to be completed within nine months. He lauded the corps members for contributing to the socio-economic development of Jigawa, noting that "your performance impacted positively on the state's rural development policy".

Kukuma noted, however, that "companies and financial institutions need to employ corps members to complement government's drive towards poverty reduction in the country".

The NYSC has operated from a temporary orientation at Teachers College, Gumel, since the state was created 17 years ago.

ernment had in 2002, raised the monthly allowance to N5,000, to encourage those who read science and technical subjects to remain in the state.

Some of the affected corps members expressed concern over the situation and described it as worrisome, as it exposed them to hardship during their stay in the state.

The 901 corps members who passed out collected their certificates of service without receiving the outstanding allowances.

Speaking at the passing-out ceremony, the state's commissioner for Information, Alhaji Abba Kukuma, said the state government was determined to pay the outstanding allowances.

"We express deep concern over the delay in paying the allowances," he said, pledging that the allowances and other entitlements would be paid in due course.

Kukuma reiterated the government's readiness to improve the well-being of corps members, pointing out that the NYSC scheme was essential to the socio-economic development of the state.

In an address, the NYSC Director in the state, Mr. Gabriel Isu, said 901 corps members completed the one-year national service. He said four of them bagged the state chairman's award for outstanding performances, while 10 others received commendation for their contributions to the uplift of the communities.

Isu, however, said that a number of corps members did not pass out due to various offences committed during the service year. The director, who did not give further details, said the offenders would be punished according to the rules governing the scheme.



The New ultra-modern Badawa Jumu'at Mosque equipped with , Library, Medical Clinic and hostel for new converts. Pixs: Musa Kazaure



The Emir of Kano, HRH, Alhaji (Dr.) Ado Bayero, emerging from his palace on his way to Panisau, one of the historic sites in Kano.



Emir of Kano's traditional drummers, 'Yan Tambura, during 'Hawan Daushe', last Sallah

EKO TRUST

Mayor of Atlanta to visit Lagos

The mayor of the US city of Atlanta, Mr. Shirley Franklin, has expressed interest in visiting Lagos within the next few months.

The General Secretary of the Atlanta-Lagos Sister City Committee, a non-governmental organisation (NGO), Mr. Bashir Agunloye, disclosed this in an interview with newsmen at the weekend.

He said that Lagos and Atlanta have one of the oldest relationships, which was consummated in 1974 when the late mayor, Maynard Jackson visited Lagos to sign the sister city relationship. The relationship, which is anchored on the cultural and educational axis, spans economic development, trade, and technical dimensions.

The purpose of this relationship, according to Mr. Agunloye, was to promote better understanding

between the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the United States of America. 'It was on record,' he said, 'that the relationship between the two cities was a prime factor in the acceptance of the proposal of the city of Atlanta to Nigerian government in 1980 to establish Nigeria's first consulate-general of an independent Nigeria in Atlanta.'

The relationship had also brought about the signing of the pact between Georgia Power Authority and the Nigeria Electric Power Authority for the provision of technical assistance.

'This project,' according to Mr. Agunloye, 'was facilitated by our counterpart in Atlanta and managed by the U.S. energy partnership and funded by USAID. As a result, a team of Nigerian power executives visited Atlanta for a week-long training in facets of the programme,' he added.



Mr. Oladipupo Odunewu (right) Daily Trust photo-journalist (Lagos) receiving an award from Chief (Mrs) Joke Dosunmu at the 2004 Fujifilm African press photo awards at Sheraton, Ikeja...recently.

15 NYSC members abscond

The Lagos State Director of National Youth Service Corps, Mrs. Clara Babatunde, has said that fifteen National Youth Service Corps members posted to Lagos in the batch A 2004 group absconded before the end of their service.

Babatunde spoke in Lagos, while giving an account of the activities of the youth corps, after a parade to mark the end of their service year.

She stated that apart from the 15, who absconded, 25 others, of the 1,164 members, which made up the batch, were sanctioned for various offences.

The NYSC state director congratulated the corps, who were successfully passed out and expressed hope that the skill they had acquired would assist them in becoming self-reliant.

Earlier, Governor. Bola Tinubu of Lagos State, in his message, charged the outgoing NYSC members to put in their best in any area of life in which they found themselves.

Governor Tinubu, who was represented by Mr. Opeyemi Bamidele, the state's commissioner for youths, sports and social development, urged the corps members to put into practice all the skills acquired during the programme.

He said the state was issuing certificates of commendation to eight of the out-going youth corps for being outstanding in their contributions during their period of service.

The governor listed beneficiaries of the award as Anne Itohan, Rasaki Bolatimi, Jayibo Robert, Hauwa

Olusanya, Adefashola Adekemi, Nzereogu Justine, Ilenreh Oluwayemisi, and Dr. Aniegbu Nwagbaranta.

Nwagbaranta, who was named as the best youth corper in the batch, was officially presented with her own certificate at the passing out parade.

The medical doctor, who distinguished herself in the provision of humanitarian services, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), that she would continue to carry out such services in any area in which she finds herself.

NAN learnt that while in service, the University of Port-Harcourt graduate of Medicine and Surgery, carried out free malaria treatment, assisted People living with AIDS (PLWA) and offered free Blood Pressure check.

FG approves 12 pedestrian bridges in Lagos

The federal government has approved the construction of 12 modern pedestrian bridges in certain strategic areas of the Lagos metropolis, including Awolowo Road in Ikoyi, Ozumba Mbadiwe Street on Victoria Island, Kingsway bus stop along Bank-Anthony Way in Ikeja, Ojodu-Berger bus stop in Ikeja, the Charley Boy bus stop along the Gbagada-Oshodi expressway, and other locations on the Third Mainland Bridge and the Lekki-Epe expressway. Announcing this in an exclusive interview with our correspondent, the Federal Controller of Works in Lagos State, Dr. Adedolapo Adeniji,

By Olumide Bajulaiye, Correspondent, Lagos

said that officials of the Federal Ministry of Works recommended the design of the bridges after a careful study. 'A letter has been written to Lagos State government by the (federal) ministry,' he disclosed, 'asking them to liaise with the office of the federal controller of works in the state before they start the construction of those bridges.' Mr. Adeniji also announced that his ministry had rehabilitated all the steel pedestrian bridges in the Lagos metropolis, and hoped that that would finally lay to rest the disagreement between the state and federal governments over the issue.

The director of planning and design at the Lagos State Ministry of Works, Mr. Bamgbose Martins, told our correspondent in an interview that the state government, worried by the carnage on its roads and the traffic obstruction caused by pedestrians that crossed the major highways at random, had planned to build 29 modern pedestrian bridges in partnership with some private firms. Mr. Martins pointed out that the old pedestrian bridges in the Lagos metropolis were in a dilapidated condition and had virtually been taken over by the mentally deranged, street urchins, traders, and advertisers who cover the

railings with their wares and messages. 'That, in addition to their unsanitary condition and insecurity at night, may be responsible for the refusal by many to use the bridges,' he surmised. He disclosed that a memorandum of agreement was signed last year between his ministry and Signplast Nigeria Limited to replace the existing steel pedestrian bridges along Ikorodu road and Western Avenue, as well as provide new ones in other major locations the metropolis. The company would be responsible for the construction of concrete bridges with modern facilities, including transparent rooftops, sidewalks, standby electricity generator for lighting, security stands, telephone booths, and security personnel.

While signing the memorandum of understanding with the company late last year, the state commissioner for works and infrastructures, Alhaji Rauf Aregbesola, had disclosed that the project would be constructed in phases of 4 bridges per quarter or 16 bridges in a year, and that the entire 29 bridges would be completed within two years. He said that the agreement enables the firm to operate the bridges over an agreed period to recoup its investment through advertisement rights on the bridge structures, stressing that pedestrians were not expected to pay for using the facilities.

LG boss explains burial fees increase

The chairman of Ikoyi/Obalende local government area of Lagos State, Dr. Folarin Gbadebo-Smith, has said that the recent increase in burial fees at the Ikoyi cemetery was to enable it to continue to maintain the beauty of the place.

Gbadebo-Smith in an interview with our correspondent said the amount for burial fees before the recent review was as low as N500, which he described as ridiculous and incapable of maintaining the facilities at the cemetery.

He said the council has been responsible for the maintenance of the place, which suffered serious neglect when funding was not forthcoming as a result of non-release of allocations to

local governments in the state by the federal government.

He said the place became unkempt, dirty and neglected making some officials to start indulging in sharp practices, adding that the council then decided to restructure the place to make it self financing.

With the latest restructuring, Lagos residents wanting to bury their beloved at the cemetery will have to cough out about N145,000 as interment rate payable to the council.

Gbadebo-Smith said corpses could be interred by the relatives in different categories at the cemetery namely; The Elite class, the middle class, the ordinary class, the sympathetic class and the pauper class.

He said anybody who wishes to bury a deceased

person in the elite category of the cemetery is required to pay N90,000 for a three-chamber vault space allocation with fence and additional N5,000 burial permit adding that the erection of memorial stone permit attracts a rate of N20,000, and an annual maintenance fee of N10,000 and special cemetery development levy fixed at N20,000.

In the middle class category which attracts N85,000, the chairman said a single vault space allocation with or without fence and having two chambers attracts a rate of N50,000, burial permit N5,000 erection of memorial stone, N10,000 [minimum], and an annual maintenance fee of N10,000 and special cemetery development levy of N10,000.

In the ordinary category which has a total package of N50,000, he said, a single vault space allocation there was fixed at N25,000, and that the rates of burial permit, inscription of memorial and annual maintenance fee were put at N2,000, N10,000 and N8,000 respectively.

Relatives of the deceased interred in middle class section, according to him, are also expected to pay special cemetery development levy of N5,000.

He added that a temporary space allocation in the sympathetic category, costs N10,000 and an additional burial permit of N2,000 while paupers burial attracted no rate as they were to be done free of charge by the burial section of the council.



KADUNA STATE GOVERNMENT
CONGRATULATIONS AS
YOU CELEBRATE 30 YEARS
ON THE ZAZZAU THRONE

Since you mounted the throne of your forebears 30 years ago, the Zazzau Emirate has never been the same again. As a result of the purposeful leadership you have always provided, the emirate has recorded a tremendous number of positive developments in these thirty years. You have all the while remained visible and committed to the development of our people, and both the state and the nation at large have benefited immensely from your great wealth of experience as a leader and an acknowledged peacemaker.

On behalf of the government and good people of Kaduna State, I join all people of goodwill in wishing you continued good health, Allah's guidance, and protection as you mark the 30th year on the Zazzau throne. May you continue to render service to our people as Emir of Zazzau and Chairman of the State Council of Traditional Rulers.

ALLAH YA JA ZAMANIN SARKI

Signed

Alhaji Ahmed Mohammed Makarfi
Executive Governor, Kaduna state.



His Royal Highness,
ALHAJI (DR.) SHEHU IDRIS CFR
 Emir of Zazzau



His Excellency,
ALHAJI AHMED MOHAMMED MAKARFI
 Executive Governor, Kaduna State

News

Gov Saraki dedicates award to Kwarans

Winner of *ThisDay* newspaper best governor award, Dr. Bukola Sarki of Kwara State breezed into Ilorin yesterday with the trophy saying "I dedicate the award to all Kwarans both living and dead who contributed to the struggle which brought me to power."

Fielding questions from newsmen shortly on arrival at the Ilorin International Airport, governor Saraki described the award as a source of motivation to do positive things towards improving the quality of life of the citizenry.

"A change has started,

Gov Turaki bags UNIJOS ICT award

From Hassan A. Karofi, Correspondent (Dutse)

Governor Ibrahim Saminu Turaki of Jigawa State has bagged an award of Doctor of Science (Hon) from the university of Jos for his continued contribution towards the upliftment of information and science technology in the country.

According to the letter of award signed by Professor Manguwat, the Vice-Chancellor of the university, the award serves as a motivation in an administration that strives to establish, nature and lead in the development of ICT and training of personnel.

The award according to the letter comes up on the 12th of this month "the nomination of governor Turaki for the award enjoyed a smooth approval by the university senate in view of his immense contribution on ICT development," the letter added.

While reacting to the award, the Alhaji Ibrahim Aima, director press and public relations told *Daily Trust* that governor Turaki deserved the award for his untiring efforts that saw to the establishment of the first broad band Access Network in sub-saharan Africa and the informatics institute which is currently affiliated with over 50 universities world wide for the training of people on ICT.

It could be recalled that the governor had in the past received several prestigious awards, on medicine, teaching, housing etc from various professional bodies in recognition of his immense contribution in the areas of several endeavours.

The federal ministry of science had of recent awarded him with a national award on ICT development in Nigeria.

From Abdulrazaq Adebayo, Reporter (Ilorin)

we will continue to take Kwara to greater heights and make it the number one in the Federal Republic of Nigeria," he declared.

Governor Saraki told Kwarans to expect the best from his administration in the determination to make the state the most progressive and prosperous.

"We will continue to work as a team with the legislature, party elders, the civil service and the traditional rulers," he added.

Asked to comment on pockets of sceptics of the Zimbabwean farmer's initiatives, governor Sarki said "like any new thing, there would always be opposition, different views, but most importantly governance sometimes is not about popularity but about the interest of the people."

Emphasising agriculture as the way out for Nigeria, governor Saraki said opportunities abound to build on agriculture as a source of job creation rather than oil and gas which absorbs population of unemployed citizens.

He said the success of the agricultural revolution in Kwara would spur other states to take a cue from its success and appealed to the people to give the programme a chance and ensure its success.

Ministry trains retiring civil servants on fish farming

A five-day training workshop on Homestead Fish Farming for retiring and serving Civil Servants has opened in Abuja with the objective of creating awareness about the wealth-creating potentials of fish farming and its set-up and management.

Organised by the Fisheries Department of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the workshop seeks to refocus retiring Civil Servants to look forward to a more engaging and fulfilling life in retirement through fish



Malam Adamu Bello, agriculture minister



Governor Ali Modu Sheriff, flanked by the Borno state commissioner, ministry for poverty alleviation, Alhaji Mai Sheriff at a poverty alleviation function in Borno State...recently.

2005 democracy day: Yobe to commission 100 projects

The Yobe state government has concluded arrangement to commission over 100 selected projects, in many parts of the state to mark this year's democracy day.

According to a statement signed by Alhaji Ibrahim Jirgi, special assistant on media and publicity, to governor Bukar Abba Ibrahim said that

multi-billion naira projects ranging from roads, housing, education, sports and water supply plus electricity will all be commissioned between the months of March and May this year across the state.

Governor Bukar said in the statement that the projects will be commissioned by former heads of state, serving and former state governors, and senate president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chief Adolphus Wabara.

A committee to select projects for the commissioning has already been set up to further work out modalities, the statement also disclosed.

He said the visits by such elder statesmen and prominent political bodies are aimed at strengthening the broad socio-cultural ties among country.

According to the statement, the event is expected to take place during the 6th anniversary of the democratic governance in the state.

This is the first time in the history of the state, the Nigeria's who is who are being invited officially to participate in the commissioning of various projects that have direct bearing with the masses of the state.

The minister said that Nigeria and FAO had so far committed N296 million to boost the production and income of small-scale farmers in the country.

He said, "We are quite impressed by the performance of the programme at the various sites and this is attested to by the evaluation of the FAO officials so other parts of the country will soon get to enjoy the programme".

The minister said that Nigeria and FAO had so far committed N296 million to boost the production and income of small-scale farmers in the country.

Food security: FG, FAO undertake scheme on 109 sites

By Hassan Idris, Senior Reporter

The federal government and the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) have map out strategies for carrying out a food security programme on 109 agricultural sites across the country.

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Malam Adamu Bello, made this known to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) forum at the weekend in Abuja.

Bello said that the programme, which is community-based, was initiated by the government in collaboration with the FAO, to help farmers to identify their areas of need for government support.

According to him, the main objective of the programme was to make the farmers self-sustaining as well as boost food production in the country.

The programme would soon be expanded to more sites in order to cover the entire country and to enable other farmers benefit from it, he said.

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Bauchi employs 20 corps members

From Tashikalmah Hallah, Correspondent (Bauchi)

Twenty medical doctors who have completed their youth services under the batch 'A' have been spared of the trouble of going into the saturated labour market as the Bauchi State government announced the offer of automatic employment for them on Thursday at the passing out parade ground.

The acting governor of the state, Alhaji Abdulmalik Mahmoud who made the announcement also directed the concerned corps members to go to the state ministry of Health to carry out the required formalities and obtain their appointment letters.

He also assured the outgoing corps members particularly those who won the various categories of award, of the state's interest to assist them would they be interested in staying back.

However, the deafening

clapping ovation that characterized the announcement was punctured as one of the corps members on parade slumped and was rushed to hospital for medical attention after the first aid to revive him by his colleagues failed.

The acting governor who read President Olusegun Obasanjo's message informed the passing out corps members of the challenges ahead and the role they have to place to make Nigeria a better play to live.

Earlier in his speech, the state coordinator of the NYSC, Barr. Epenyong Nkping, commended the state government for the various assistance it rendered to both the corps members and the directorate's office in the state.

According to him, the Batch 'A' 2004 corps members deployed in the state were

851, adding that one of them died in the cause of the service but expressed happiness the rest 850 were alive to experience the ceremony.

Nkping commended the outgoing corps members for their high level of discipline, dedication to duty and ability to adapt and live peacefully with their host communities, calling on them to keep the candle burning anywhere they go.



Governor Mu'azu

News

SIWES programme gulps N866.1m

The Industrial Training Fund (ITF) has recorded 84 percent performance rate for the Students, Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) even as a total of N866.1 million was paid out under the scheme.

Director General ITF, Professor Olu Akejola, disclosed this at the 2004 Annual Award Ceremony of the Fund held in Jos on Friday.

He said a total of N718.3 million was paid out as students allowance to a total of 79,883 students and over 147 million as supervisory allowances under the Scheme.

According to him, the surge in the performance rate for SIWES orientation exercise

From Rakiya A. Muhammad, Correspondent, Jos

tallied with the number of institutions and student participating in the scheme, with a total of 45 universities, 76 colleges of Education.

The ITDG expressed optimism that the SIWES would continue to be significant in bridging the gap between theory and practice in the teaching and learning process in the institutions of higher learning in the country, but stressed the need to reform the scheme to suit current and future learning dynamics in school and at work.

Professor Ikere Jola, disclosed that during the year under review, the ITF achieved a success rate of 65.7 percent in the development and test-running of new training programmes and 62.9 percent performance rate in the installation and harmonization of appearance training programmes in the industries.

The fund, he noted implemented 177 scheduled training programmes and 101 unscheduled ones in year, 2004 just as it monitored 1,720 in-house programmes applied for companies.

He said ITF was committed to the realization of government's monetisation policy which it had already started implementing for the benefit of its workers, describing the policy as one of the ways to empower workers to enhance the quality of their working lives.

Ilorin Zone completes pilgrims airlift exercise

From Abdulrazaq Adebayo, Correspondent Ilorin

Ilorin Zone has concluded the airlift of pilgrims from the Holy land, thus becoming the first zone to complete the exercise.

Speaking with newsmen in Ilorin, Manager of the Ilorin International Airport, Alhaji Garba Ringim said a trial of 1,768 pilgrims including officials were airlifted from Saudi Arabia to Nigeria.

Alhaji Ringim said the zone was expecting two cargo flights to transport pilgrims luggage from the holy land to Ilorin saying this year's Hajj operation recorded a positive change in terms of smooth out bound and inbound exercise.

"The zone performed well because of the commitment and corporation of the agencies involved, the airport manager stated while comparing the previous year's exercise with 2005 hajj operations.

He commended Kobo Airline for its commitment to the smooth air lift operation in the zone which contributed tremendously to the success record.

Meanwhile, some pilgrims from Kwara state have complained about poor treatment by the officials of the board while in the holy land.

The pilgrims who complained about provision of inadequate accommodation in the holy land were surprised that the board officials could not provide adequate accommodation despite knowing the number of Pilgrims that were supposed to perform the hajj.

Kwara donates car, generator to NTA Ilorin

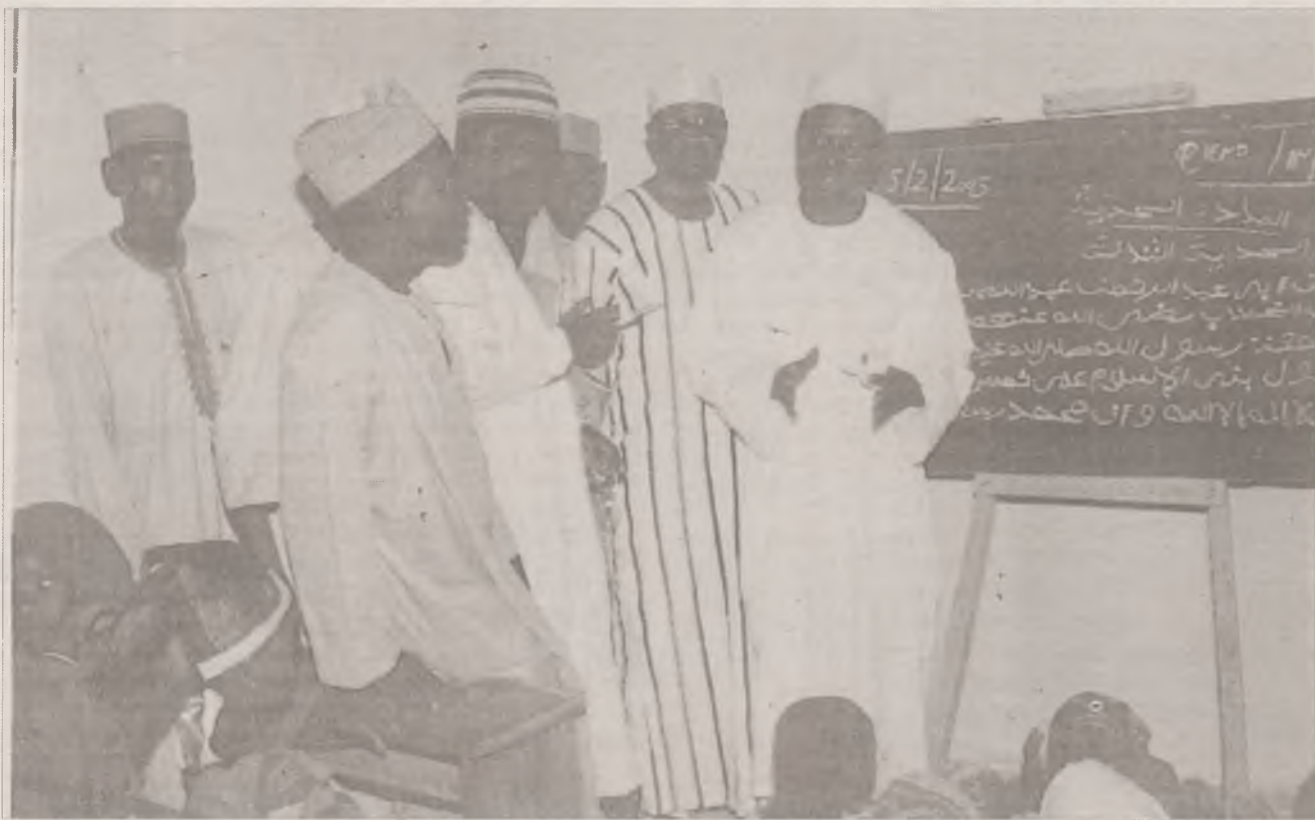
From Abdulrazaq Adebayo, Correspondent Ilorin

Kwara state government at the weekend donated a 504 station wagon car and 160 KV generating set to the Nigeria Television Authority Ilorin.

Presenting the station wagon car to the Zonal General Manager of NTA, Mrs. Vicky Ohemidi, governor Bukola Sarai said the event was a statement showing the type of government in power in the state in terms of fulfillment of standing promises.

He said it was equally a symbolic commitment for partnership between the state and federal government to ensure NTA performed well in the state and Nigeria as well and hoped that the state and Nigeria as well hoped that the assistance would improve its news coverage in Kwara.

Receiving the donation,



From (R-L) Member House of Representative, Hon. Lawal Garba, Alh. Sani Iro Daura, Alh. Kassim Soja, after the commissioning of Kozawa mosque and Islamic school in Kozawa ward, Daura, during his constituency tour to the Katsina State ...recently

Confab is a diversionary tactics

-AMBON President

The National President of the Association of Muslim Brotherhood of Nigeria (AMBON), Sheikh Abu-Sufyan Ibn Abubakar has said that the proposed national dialogue by the federal government is just a diversionary tactics from real issues that bedeviled the socio-political economic development of the country.

Sheikh Abu-Sufyan who was speaking at a one-day national seminar and the launching of *Hijra* Calendar organised by AMBOM yesterday in Kaduna, said that the dialogue is not the best way to address the real

From Aliyu Haruna, Correspondent Kaduna

problems of the country. He suggested that the best way to address the problems, is through institutionalization of justice, which should be translated into our political affairs, saying that absence of equity and justice led to the present inconsistency of government policy.

Also speaking at the occasion, the national Financial secretary of the Forum of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN), Hajija Bilikisu Yusuf in her lecture entitled; *The Challenges Facing Muslims in Nigeria*, said that Muslims unity can be enhanced through outreach activities at community levels using the community leaders and Ulama to preach peace and unity of the Ummah.

Hajija Bilikisu who was represented by Hajia Asma'u Muhammed commended the organisation already involved in coordination and *Da'awah* efforts pointing out that more networking activities should be organised.

According to her, Muslims need unity of purpose to be able to assess our needs, articulate our views, in order to identify priorities, for the

purpose of developmental plans and direction of resources to the right projects.

She called for the establishment of efficient *Zakat* collection and distribution bodies by the

Ummah, so that the proceeds should be used in funding Islamiyyah schools and reformation of traditional Qur'anic schools.

Hajia Bilikisu also suggested that Muslim professional organisations should establish think tank that will draw-up a blue print for all sectors which Muslim can use to make input into policy making.

Forum advocates reform of customs, excise duties

Participants at the Nigeria Investment forum have called for "major reforms" of customs and excise duties in the country.

A statement issued at the end of the business conference stressed the need to intensify ongoing efforts by government to privatise public enterprises in the country.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the three-day investment forum was organised by the Commonwealth Business Council (CBC) and Nigeria Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC).

It was organised to showcase Nigeria as a key destination for direct foreign investment.

It also provided avenue for potential global investors to interact with the country's businessmen and senior government officials with a view to exploring business links.

The forum's statement was read in Abuja at the weekend by Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, member board of CBC.

In the statement Ramaphosa, said that the forum urged the Nigerian government to implement necessary legislation that would make it attractive for foreigners to invest in Nigeria.

"The enabling environment for doing business in Nigeria remains constrained," he said, adding that "business leaders often find regulations unclear and sometimes inconsistent, unpredictable and subject to corrupt practices," Ramaphosa said.

According to Ramaphosa, who is also chairman, Shanduka Group in South Africa, the forum provides a "powerful statement from business leaders that Nigeria is in a true process of change and merited a fresh appraisal."

More than 400 delegates, many of them from overseas, attended the conference.

Ogun to train 18,000 workers on e-governance

The Ondo State government has short-listed 18,000 workers for training in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) "to make them e-governance compliant".

The Commissioner for Information and Sports, Mr John Mafo, said in Akure at the weekend that the state government had set aside N60 million for the programme in its 2005 budget.

He explained that the e-

governance would take off before the end of the year, but noted that for it to be effective, "some categories of public officers must be trained to be e-governance compliant".

He said the state's Head of Service, Mr Alaba Isijola, had been directed to forward the names of 18,000 workers for the ICT training.

Mafo also said the training would be in three categories for workers on grade levels 07-09, grade levels 10-13 and grade levels 14-17.

Meanwhile, the State Executive Council had awarded a N22-million contract for the redesigning and construction of its indoor fish hatchery at the government fish farm in Alagbaka area of Akure.

The commissioner said the government had directed that the production capacity of the hatchery be raised for the farm to produce one million fingerlings annually as against the less than 100,000 fingerlings at present.

Inside Politics

Nigeria to generate N800m annually from new pension scheme - Hon. Sha'aban

The chairman of House of Representatives committee on Pensions, Honourable Sani Mahmud Sha'aban, has said that the country could generate over N800 billion annually through the new



Hon. Sani Sha'aban

contributory pensions scheme.

"Though the contributory pensions scheme, we are talking about collecting over N800 billion annually. Nothing can give you that amount in Nigeria except the sales of crude oil. Even that cannot give you as collective as neater as the pensions fund will give," he said.

Alhaji Sha'aban, who disclosed this to *Daily Trust* in Abuja, disclosed that the pensions fund would be reinvested in the country's economy in order to uplift the standard of living of the contributors to the fund.

He said that the 7.5 percent contributory pensions scheme by both the employers and the employees would in no small measure assist the employees after their productive years, noting that the scheme is aimed at ensuring that

Nigerian employees have something tangible to fall back to after their retirement from active service.

Alhaji Sha'aban also described as "untrue" remarks that the new pensions Act came into effect to enrich certain individuals favoured by the federal government.

"Nigerian workers are expressing their anxieties and fears thinking that the pensions act is a new scheme where most of their funds are going to be siphoned by certain individuals.

"While I sympathise with the fears of employees across the country, I will want to urge them to have faith, confidence and the belief that the house committee on pensions will make sure that the policies of the new pensions Act are being implemented to its logical conclusion.

A member of the National Assembly, representing Kachia/Kagarko Federal Constituency, Kaduna State, Honourable Caleb Zagi, has cautioned the convener of the proposed National Conference, not to politicise it, but use it as a forum to proffer solutions to national problems that have prevented the country from moving forward over the years. In a statement made available to the *Daily Trust* in Abuja yesterday, the lawmaker observed that although the

Don't politicise National Confab - Rep

planned National Conference lacked legal backing of the National Assembly, Nigerians should see it as an opportunity long sought for, to air our their view on the way forward.

While noting that the confab should have first received the blessing of the National Assembly as part of its constitutional responsibility, he wondered why the National Assembly which was left out of the planning, should now be made to

approve fund for the conference.

Honourable Caleb advised that it was time we begin to approach contentious with seriousness issue rather than adopting 'fire brigade' approach stressing after about six years of democracy, the leadership should have acquired experience to handle issues through the instrument of laid down rules and processes.

Ethnic nationalities urged to embrace confab

Ethnic nationalities across the country and advocates of a sovereign national conference have been enjoined to embrace the forthcoming National Political Reform Conference as a means of finding a lasting solution to Nigeria's many problems.

A PDP chieftain in Katsina and member of the Jos Steel Rolling Mill governing council, Alhaji Bala Kuku Junior, who made the call in Katsina, asserted that any

From Lawal Ibrahim, Correspondent (Katsina)

attempt to allow this golden opportunity to pass away will mean the quest for having a Nigeria of our dream will remain unrealised.

He said rather than being sceptics, Nigerians should look at the national dialogue as an issue that transcends ethnic or religious consideration and see it as an opportunity to address all those

areas that have pitched Nigerians against one another.

He also urged Nigerians to see the decision of Obasanjo to convene the conference as a demonstration of his total commitment to the survival and progress of Nigeria against the backdrop of the challenges and constraints imposed on Nigeria by its many religious, ethnic and cultural diversities.

National confab, a duplication of NASS duty

Ambassador Yahya Kwande is a former Nigerian Ambassador to Switzerland and a founding member of the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). In this interview with our correspondent in Jos RAKIYA A. MUHAMMAD, he bares his mind on the proposed National Political Reform Confab.

Excerpt:-

What is your opinion about the proposed national confab?

I believe there should be a dialogue because people in many parts of this country have talked about dialogue So much, but whether the group that would be meeting should be responsible for that dialogue is another matter. Usually you have constitutional conference of civilian representation when the administration is military. When Obasanjo was head of state, he constituted a conference to look into the constitution of this country to have the impact of the civilian because it was a military government, and when Babangida was in power, he constituted a conference because the administration was military and when Abacha came in, he constituted a conference because the military was in power. Whether Obasanjo now being a civilian administrator with National Assembly in place should have another assembly to discuss the constitution of this country is another matter, that's why I have my reservation.

What's your reservation?

I did say at the beginning that the dialogue is right but the method to have the

dialogue... Whether the group that would be meeting should be the one responsible for that dialogue. I feel the dialogue should be with the National Assembly, the representatives of the people of this country. I would have preferred that the executive should prepare its mind knowing the wishes of the people of this country and hand it over to the National Assembly to jaw-jaw on it because they are the people who are entitled to discuss it. It would be a duplication of effort for you to have a separate civilian but unelected group that is not representing anybody except those who nominated them.

Would you then say that the nomination of delegates to the national confab is like passing a vote of no confidence on the National Assembly which you have said is supposed to handle the dialogue?

The answer should come from the National Assembly if they think they need another body of civilian assembly to assist them. It is their responsibility. I don't think I have a right to say no or yes.

But don't you think that the idea of a national confab could have been informed by the realisation that the National Assembly may not

have the capacity to handle the situation?

It is a shame not to have confidence in the apex law making body of your country put in by the masses of this country. Politics is a matter of wish. It is not a matter of one

"I feel the dialogue should be with the National Assembly, the representatives of the people of this country. I would have preferred that the executive should prepare its mind knowing the wishes of the people of this country and hand it over to the National Assembly to jaw-jaw on it because they are the people who are entitled to discuss it. It would be a duplication of effort for you to have a separate civilian but unelected group that is not representing anybody except those who nominated them."

person's opinion. The people who are in the National Assembly today are elected by their people. It is up to you to think they are not working or they are working. In the constitution of this country, you have means of changing them. If your representative is not doing well recall him. It is in our constitution. It is definitely very unfair on our apex law making body for people to accuse everybody

there of not being able to handle the situation.

In spite of the reservation you have, how would you assess the quality of representation from Plateau State to the confab?

The representation to me is acceptable because it is a mixture of both old and the young and it has taken into consideration the political diversity, religious inclination of the people in the state.

Generally, how do you see the representation across the country to the conference?

I would tell you the representation is qualitative

- Amb. Kwande

seen recently the Nigerian woman has come of age not to beg for representation but to be represented.

What do you think the delegates from the Middle-Belt region should present?

If the confab is ever to hold, underlined, if it is ever to hold, I would ask the representation from the North Central states, which you now call the Middle-Belt, to make sure of the corporate existence of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

You have just expressed doubt that the confab would hold, what informed this doubt?

From what I read on the pages of the national dailies, between the National Assembly and the executives, and those who are expressing view, Pros and Cons, that's why I have a doubt in my mind.

Still on the Middle-Belt, Chief Solomon Lar has reported to have said the region is going to work as team and speak with one voice, the issue is the much sought after identity for the middle Middle-Belt. What's your comment on this?

How do you have an identity without an organisation. You cannot have identity without organisation, what is the organisation. We know the idea is there, the myth is there, but whether the reality is also there is another matter. All that we know is that we have a leadership, a very strong leadership led by Chief

Solomon Lar, and whether the organisation has left the headquarters and gone down to the ordinary middle-belt is another matter but I know he is capable and he has been in the past, to harness the minds of Middle Belt representatives to focus on a target.

If the conference ever holds, what are the issues you would want addressed for the nation?

I was privilege to be one of the 19 people selected by Abacha to put up an agenda for the conference then. When we were doing this, we were frightened of putting an item on the agenda which was the corporate existence of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. We deliberately put the agenda at the end because we thought it would break the country, break the conference. To my surprise and to the surprise of everybody when they reached it was the least discussed because every part of Nigeria want the indivisibility of the existence of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and if that would be the end of the dialogue it would reassure every citizen of Nigeria, the confidence they would give the body. But I don't see anything that cannot be discussed in the National Assembly. You are not going to bring Indians or manufacture other Nigerians that would come into our country. We are in the process of learning and our Assembly should pick from the citizens of the country.

Sports

Morocco fancied to go top of World Cup group

Unbeaten Morocco could go top of African zone Group Five if they win against Kenya in their rescheduled World Cup qualifier in Rabat on Wednesday.

The tie was postponed from last year after Kenya were banned from FIFA competitions because of government interference in the running of the country's football association. The ban was

lifted last August.

Morocco, who have appeared at the World Cup finals on four occasions, are two points behind group leaders Guinea, with six points.

Coach Badou Ezaki has recalled Walid Regragui to the squad after the Spanish-based defender made a quicker than expected recovery from a broken leg.

Regragui was a key mem-

ber of the side that finished runners-up at last year's African Nations Cup in Tunisia.

But Morocco are without Charlton Athletic defender Talal El Karkouri, who is suspended after being booked in the last two qualifiers, and have not been able to include strikers Ali Boussabon and Said Boukhtar.

The former Dutch junior internationals have not had

their application to change their international status heard by FIFA.

The hosts are heavily fancied to beat a Kenyan team, who go into the match after finishing a disappointing fourth in December's East and Central African Senior Challenge Cup tournament.

Danish-based striker Emmanuel Ake misses the match after an administrative error meant he failed to join

up with his team mates before they left Nairobi for Morocco on Sunday.

Defender Philip Opiyo was dropped for failing to arrive from his South African club in time.

Wednesday's match is the only World Cup qualifier in Africa this month. A full programme of qualifying matches is to be played at the end of March.

Cassano withdraws from Italian squad

AS Roma striker Antonio Cassano has withdrawn from Italy's 22-man squad for a friendly against Russia in Cagliari on Wednesday just hours after being recalled to the side.

The 22-year-old, who earlier played for the full 90 minutes of Roma's 1-1 draw with Bologna, withdrew from the squad with a knee injury a few hours after receiving his first call-up from national coach Marcello Lippi for the match.

The 22-year-old, who has a reputation for being difficult to manage, had failed to add to his previous six caps for the Azzurri since Lippi replaced Giovanni Trapattoni as coach shortly after Euro 2004.

Lippi said earlier this week that Cassano could provide the "stroke of genius" to spearhead Italy's challenge at next year's World Cup in Germany.

Inter Milan striker Christian Vieri was recalled to the squad after he continued his recent good form by scoring his 100th Serie A goal in Inter's 2-2 draw with Parma on Sunday.

Italy lead European Group Five on nine points, two ahead of Norway, while Russia are third in Group Three on seven points, six behind leaders Portugal, in their bids to qualify for the 2006 World Cup finals in Germany.

FA launch inquiry into Cole row

The Premier League revealed that they have launched a formal inquiry into allegations that Chelsea made an illegal approach for Arsenal and England full-back Ashley Cole.

Media reports have claimed that the player met with Chelsea chief executive Peter Kenyon and manager Jose Mourinho at a London hotel to discuss a potential move.

League officials are now to carry out a thorough investigation, having received "further information" from the News of the World.

"The board of the FA Premier League convened today (Sunday) and have decided to launch a formal inquiry into allegations that Chelsea FC may have acted in a way so as to breach Premier League rules regarding approaches to players already contracted to another club," said a statement released by the Premier League.

"The board is finally able

to establish a clear position from Arsenal FC and are grateful for chairman Peter Hill-Wood's confirmation that his club want the Premier League to investigate the matter and that they will cooperate fully with any inquiry."

Chelsea have neither confirmed or denied the story while Arsenal insist they want the Premier League to get to the bottom of the claims, fearing that their wealthy London rivals have 'tapped up' one of their most prized assets.

Earlier Sunday, Arsenal vice-chairman David Dein said there was "a huge credibility gap" between what Kenyon has told him and newspaper reports concerning the alleged approach for Cole.

Cole is reported to have met Kenyon, Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho and agent Pini Zahavi at a London hotel 10 days ago while

Cole's agent Jonathan Barnett was also reported to have been present.

"When the News of the World broke the story last week I spoke to Peter Kenyon, Pini Zahavi and Jonathan Barnett. They were all in denial," he told the News of the World on Sunday.

"However, from the evidence I have seen so far there is a huge credibility gap."

Cole has insisted he is committed to Arsenal.

The 24-year-old is currently in negotiations on a new contract with the champions and has two-and-a-half years to run on his existing deal.

Cole told the club's official: "I'm under contract here for another two years so I just want to get back to playing football and trying to win the league."



Joud Zairi, Morocco's influential midfielder

Mickelson back on top with Phoenix Open win

Phil Mickelson fired a final round three-under 68 to score a comfortable five-stroke victory at the \$5.2 million Phoenix Open on Sunday, claiming his first tour title since last year's U.S. Masters.

Mickelson, who began the day with a four-shot advantage over South Korea's Kevin Na, maintained his edge with a controlled performance in front of boisterous

galleries at the Tournament Players Club in Scottsdale, Arizona to finish at 17-under 267.

"To have this win in a tournament I value and cherish so much, it really means a lot," Mickelson said.

Scott McCarron had the best round of the day, a six-under 65, and vaulted up the leader board to finish joint second with Na at 12-under

272. David Toms, Steve Flesch and Tim Herron finished a shot further adrift at 11-under 273.

"I probably didn't strike it nearly as well today as I did the last couple of days, but the score was OK. All I wanted to do was get the 'W' (win) and I did that," Mickelson added. An Arizona State alumni, Mickelson enjoyed a distinct home

course advantage, every shot cheered on by the raucous Phoenix crowd, which is rated the rowdiest on the PGA Tour.

The lefthander set the stage for his 24th career victory during Friday's second round when he equalled the course record with a sizzling 11-under 60 after a disastrous opening 73.

"It was such an unlikely win, given the first nine holes, that I was fighting to make the cut," he said.

"To be able to turn things around and shoot 60 in the second round was just an incredible experience."

Na kept pace with Mickelson early on, opening his round with a birdie at the first but the 21-year-old was unable to close the gap despite finishing with birdies on two of his final four holes to card a two-under 69.

Mark Calcavecchia, a three-time winner here, initially stayed in contention but faded down the stretch and finished with an even par final round, nine shots behind Mickelson on 276.

World number one Vijay Singh closed with a three-under 68 to join a group of eight golfers tied for 11th at seven-under 277.



Ashley Cole

Philadelphia suffers Super Bowl hangover after latest flop

Disconsolate fans of the Philadelphia Eagles filed onto the streets late on Sunday after their team failed to win the city's first sporting championship for 22 years, losing 24-21 to New England at Super Bowl XXXIX. The Eagles, who reached the NFL title game for the first time since 1981, had raised the hopes of the city — which has a history of losing major sporting competitions — to fever pitch.

Some 700 fans in Chickie's and Pete's, a popular sports bar in South Philadelphia, erupted with joy when their team scored

against the Patriots in the game played in Jacksonville, Florida but fell silent when their opponents rallied to win.

The outcome seemed to be the latest confirmation of Philadelphia's inability to win sporting trophies in a city known for its passionate sports fans.

"You need to go through pain to feel glory but this city is still haemorrhaging," said Bryan Wheatly, a Gettysburg-based student who drove two and a half hours to watch the game in the bar. "It's really tough to live with," said 21-year-old Kevin Krieger, adding that a

win would have restored the self-esteem of a city that considers itself overshadowed by New York and Washington.

"It would give us a sense of pride and put us on the map of the nation," he said.

One fan put a brave face on the result, noting that the Eagles had done well to get to the Super Bowl after losing the NFC championship for the previous three seasons.

"I think it's really good that Philadelphia has made it this far," said Stephanie Rogers, a 21-year-old student at Temple University.

"We'll be back next year."

Sports

Crespo's last-gasp winner puts

Hernan Crespo scored in the fourth minute of stoppage time against his former club to give AC Milan a dramatic 2-1 home win over Lazio.

A last-gasp winner from the Argentine striker, who spent three seasons at Lazio, completed a remarkable victory that enabled the title-holders to cut Juventus' lead at the top of Serie A to just two points.

With the match heading for a draw, Kaka's shot came back off the post and Crespo, who is on loan from English Premiership leaders Chelsea, was on hand to tap home the rebound.

Massimo Oddo's penalty had given Lazio a second-half lead before Andriy Shevchenko's superb 25-yard free-kick levelled the score 18 minutes from time.

With 15 games left to play, Juventus have 50 points and reigning champions Milan have 48, eight more than Udinese who won 1-0 at struggling Brescia.

Lazio went ahead to take the lead 11 minutes after half-time.

Dutch defender Jaap Stam mistimed his tackle on Tommaso Ricchi and the Lazio striker tumbled to the ground. Referee Roberto Rosetti had no hesitation in awarding a penalty which Oddo converted despite Nelson Dida getting a hand to the ball.

Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti responded by bringing on Shevchenko,

heat on Juve

who missed Wednesday's 4-1 win at Messina with a right ankle injury.

The arrival of the European Footballer of the Year paid off almost immediately, beating Angelo Peruzzi with a sublime set-piece.

With nerves fraying, Milan bombarded Lazio's goal and were rewarded when Crespo picked up the pieces after the excellent Kaka was thwarted by the woodwork.

Inter Milan preserved their unbeaten league record by fighting back from two goals down to draw 2-2 at Parma.

Inter drop to fourth on 39 points, one ahead of Sampdoria, who beat Fiorentina 3-0 on Saturday.

Roma's push for a top four finish stalled after they were held to a 1-1 draw at home to in-form Bologna.

Vincenzo Montella put Roma ahead in the ninth

minute for his 18th goal of the season, but Luigi Della Rocca took advantage of some poor defending to slide in an equaliser in the second half.

In Sunday's other matches, Reggina maintained their unbeaten start to the year, battling back from 3-1 down to draw 3-3 at home to Siena, while bottom club claimed only their second win of the season by defeating Livorno 1-0.

Franco Brienza's 13th-minute goal gave Palermo victory against the 27-time champions on Saturday.

Gianluigi Buffon could only punch Eugenio Corini's free-kick out as far as the edge of the box where Brienza was standing unmarked. The 25-year-old midfielder took one touch before sending a left-footed curler back past the outstretched hand of the Juve keeper.

Liverpool raise stakes for

Liverpool chief executive Rick Parry has revealed they would turn down a 50 million pound bid for Steven Gerrard who is seen as top of big-spending Chelsea's summer priorities.

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho fuelled speculation about a summer bid by saying last week he would sign one of the world's greatest players.

Gerrard

But Parry told BBC Sport: "Steve is above money. He is the future of Liverpool."

"It doesn't matter if it's 30 million, 40 million or 50 million, we will not accept offers. But we are also realistic enough to know we can't keep Steven against his will."

Parry said Real Madrid asked for an option on the England midfielder during negotiations for striker Fernando Morientes.

But he expected Gerrard to be with Liverpool next season.

"We have re-affirmed recently to Steven that we are trying to build a team around him. We crave success as much as he does. We know he's ambitious and nobody can argue with that."

"I think Steven would dearly love to win things with Liverpool more than he'd like to do anything else."

"We all want to see progress by next season. He's not alone in that. There are a lot of other players who feel the same, so we all have a common aim."

Parry denied Liverpool had opened negotiations with Chelsea over Gerrard last summer.

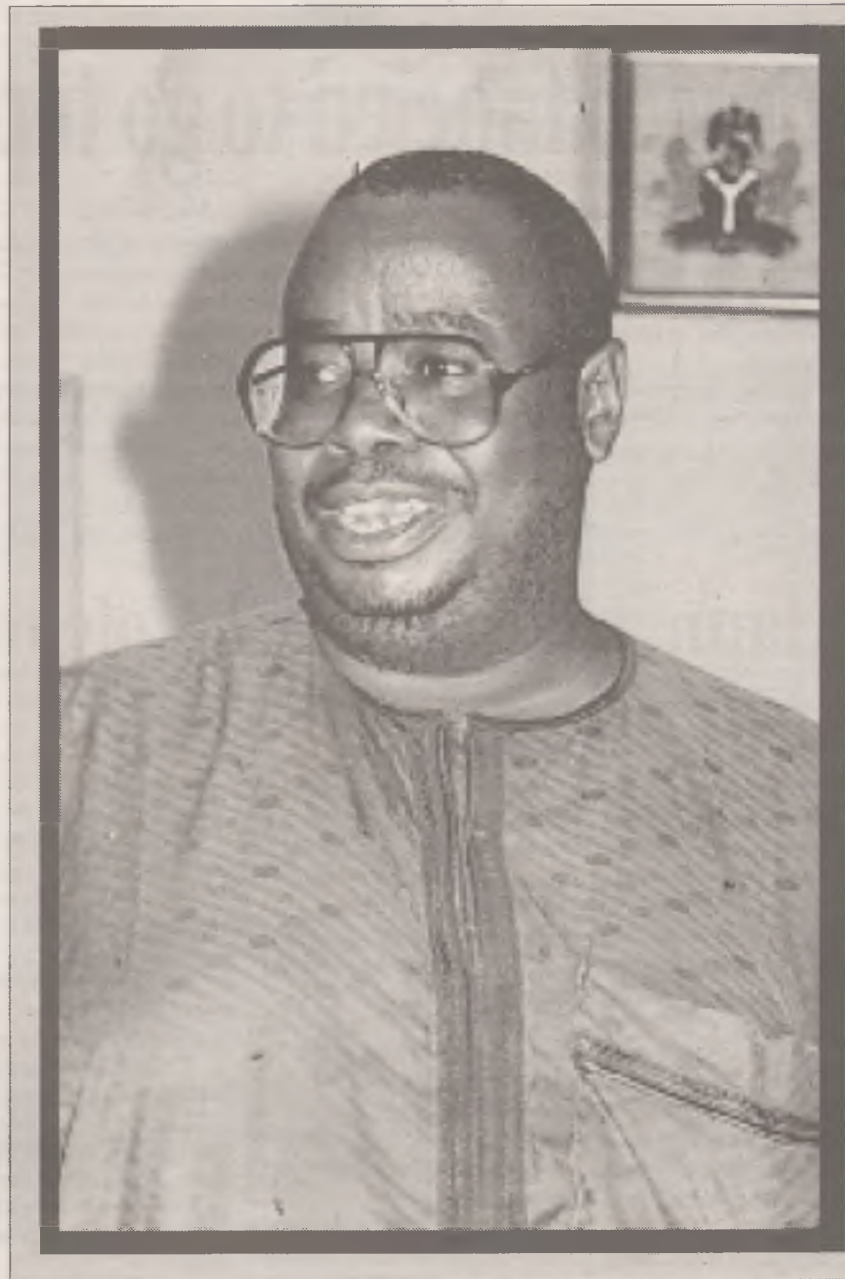
"We had told Chelsea that as far as we were concerned he was not for sale and we didn't want to sell him. In reality it didn't go beyond that."

But he admitted it would be hard to hang onto Gerrard if he decided to go.

"Our position is we want Steven to stay, but we are also realistic enough and have enough respect for Steven - and he has enough respect for us - to know that it is his decision that will be crucial," Parry said.

"You are not going to keep a player like Steven against his will. That just doesn't work, but any idea we are going to accept offers for Steven and then tell him 'by the way we've decided to sell you' is not on the agenda. You can forget that."

INNA LILLAHI WA INNA ILAIHIR RAJI'UN



LATE MALLAM MOHAMMED YAKUBU.
(1960-2005)

The management and entire staff of Projects Coordinating Unit (PCU) of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Abuja wish to announce the death of a beloved colleague and dear friend, MALLAM MOHAMMED YAKUBU. He passed away on Saturday 15th January, 2005 in his residence in Kaduna after a brief illness. He was aged 44 years, and is survived by his aged mother, wife and six (6) children.

Until his death, Mallam Yakubu was the Unit Accountant of the Project Coordinating Unit (PCU) of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Abuja.

Grief cannot take away the happiness we shared for almost 20 years. Our sorrow will fade in time, but our love for you remains for ever.

May Almighty Allah (S.W.T.) continue to shower you with His Mercy and grant you Al-Janna Firdausi

Signed
MANAGEMENT

Chelsea miss Robben's cutting edge

Arjen Robben was certainly missed when Chelsea were held 0-0 at home by Manchester City on Sunday, even if coach Jose Mourinho was loathe to put the result down to the Dutch winger's absence with a suspected broken foot.

"The fact that they didn't have Robben in the side made a big, big difference," said City manager Kevin Keegan, whose side are the only team to have beaten Chelsea in the league, 1-0 in October.

Chelsea's lead in the standings was reduced to nine points over second-placed Manchester United with 12 games to go.

Robben suffered a foot injury just before scoring in Chelsea's 1-0 win at Blackburn Rovers on Wednesday and watched from the Stamford Bridge stands on Sunday.

Chelsea fear Robben's foot may be broken although they will not know the true extent of the damage until he has undergone a scan once the swelling has gone down.

"I just don't know," Mourinho repeated several times to persistent questions about the injury.

The versatile Robben, a roving winger, has been a

key player in Chelsea's drive towards the Premier League title, scoring seven goals in 14 league games since recovering from a previous foot injury.

"I accept that Robben is a magnificent player and any team will miss a magnificent player," Mourinho said.

He was reluctant, however, to accept that the absence of Robben and striker Didier Drogba, who has scored eight league goals and is nursing a bruised thigh, had a bearing on the result.

"In terms of creativity and quality of play, I think so, but even without them we had enough chances to score goals and win the game," he said.

"So I prefer to say that my players in finishing situations were not lucky and in David James (City) had a goalkeeper who made some incredible saves."



Robben

Sports

Wikki budgets N120m for new season

Bauchi State owned soccer outfit, Wikki Tourists Football Club has put machinery in motion to put up a strong challenge for the Premier League title at the end of the 2005 season.

Wikki, the last team to be confirmed for the 2005 Pre-

By AbdulRaheem Aodu, Sport Reporter
mier League season following its 1-0 victory over Mighty Jets of Jos in the replay of their play-off last Thursday, is set to challenge for the 2005 League title. The Governor Ahmadu Muazu boys have also vowed to

avoid the perennial relegation battle that has bedevilled it in recent years.

Wikki chairman, Alhaji Abdullahi Danbaba told Trustsports that the management of the team is poised to maintain its position in the Premier League, with the support of the state government,

who has made available to the team the sum of N120m for this season's Premier League campaign.

With this boost from the government, he said, Wikki will challenge for honours on all fronts this season, as good players have been recruited to assist the team achieve its aims.

"We would remain in the Premier League at the end of the season with the calibre of players we now have. The state government has made available to us the sum of

N120m for our league campaign, this would allow us to pay our players and the coaching crew as well as prepare adequately for the season," he said.

Alhaji Danbaba, who doubles as the Bauchi FA chairman said some players who have been discovered not to have the ability to cope with the rigours of the Premier League, will be dropped to allow others come in. This, he added, will put the team in good stead to put in its best in the coming season.

Chukwu to try unknown players

Super Eagles coach, Christian Chukwu has said that he will give opportunity to some Nigerian players who ply their trade in the lower leagues.

According to the 'chairman' the inability of the NFA to get the team friendly games makes it difficult to try out some of these players.

"Thanks to the last Kick Off magazine (December/January 2005 edition) I was able to see many names and performances of some Nigerian players in Europe and Africa.

"I won't mind trying some of them out and that's the reason why I always call for friendlies, without such games we cannot have the opportunity of trying them out.

As the Super Eagles resume qualifiers for the 2006 World Cup in March, the former international skipper insists the door is still open for some invitations.

"As long as they are Nigerians, we will keep encouraging them and try them out. If we didn't give such opportunity to a player like Makinwa who plays in the Italian Serie B we won't be able to assess his ability", he said.

Polo's growth unprecedented -Ojora

The former captain of Lagos Polo Club, Mr. Dapo Ojora, has described the growth of polo in Nigeria as unprecedented in the history of any game.

Ojora who spoke against the backdrop of the celebration of a hundred years of polo in Nigeria said polo, which hitherto, was a game exclusively reserved for foreigners, has now grown to an extent that foreign players jostle to participate in Nigerian tournaments.

"The 100 years we are celebrating in polo in Nigeria has been years of solid development. Polo is not declining and this is shown by the number of teams participating in the centenary tournament," he said.

The former captain of Lagos Polo Club added that game is erroneously referred to as a game for the rich but membership of the club cuts across all strata of the society.

Captain of the Lagos Polo Club, Mr. Francis Ogboru, said over the years, the standard of the game had improved tremendously.

ACC boss promise new tracks

President of the African Athletics Confederation (AAC), Colonel Malbourn Ahmed Kalkaba has promised new tracks at the National Stadium, Lagos and the Ahmadu Bello Stadium, Kaduna from the continental body.

This promise was made when the Cameroonian boss of African athletics came into the country during the week for a meeting with government top functionaries and stakeholders on the forthcoming Team Africa Versus Team America athletics challenge billed for the federal capital, Abuja next month.

The challenge, which will see American athletes storm the Nigeria administrative capital for the second time in

20 months, is billed for March 12, and will see each of the two teams fielding three athletes in each of the 21 events to be competed for in a three-hour period.

"He has promised us new tracks in Lagos and Kaduna and that would be good so that athletes in the two cities can train easily and be ready for competitions.

"We don't really get much from the AAC but we can proceed from this platform and get more, and the Team Africa Versus Team America extravaganza in Abuja will go a long way in focusing the spotlight on Nigeria and we can then begin to really demand for our due from both the AAC and the IAAF", said Dan Ngerem, President of the Athletics

Federation of Nigeria and Vice-President of the Africa Foundation, organizers of the meet.



AC Milan's Argentinian striker Hernan Crespo exults after scoring the winning goal against Lazio in the Italian Serie A at the San Siro stadium in Milan.

Referees to sue clubs, hooligans over assault

The Nigeria Referees Association (NRA) will sue clubs, players, officials of state FAs and persons involved in any act of violence against its members during the 2005 league season.

The new approach to incidences of assault against its members to the leadership of the NRA is to protect referees hooligans, clubs who are in the habit of inciting fans to attack referees.

NRA President, Dr. Sam Sam Jaja said the decision to resort to the civil courts for redress was taken against the backdrop of increased violence against referees in the past seasons.

"We have resolved to sue teams, player, clubs and state FA officials, indicated for assault on any of our members.

"We do not intend to allow some clubs, their officials, players and hooligans to sustain the habit of man handling our members just because the referee and his assistants have failed to do their biddings in gross violation of the laws of the game," Dr Jaja said, noting that fear of assault rather than incompetence is bane of referees.

"Nigerian referees rate among the best and the worst in the world depending on situations. Most of our members refer matches under duress, clubs, players, and hooligans hold them hostage and threaten the life out of them. Yet the same people expect football

By Patrick Andrew, Senior Sports Reporter

to grow and when they talk they blame referees for all the woes.

"No, referees are not always responsible and it is high time we (referees) stood up against these elements for the sake of football and the Nigeria people who want to watch quality football, can not continue to allow bad eggs among clubs, players and soccer fans to ruin our reputation and the game," he added.

Administrative insincerity, bane of Nigeria league

Administrative insincerity and political intrigues are the bane of Nigerian League, according to the Chief Executive of Enyimba FC, Chief Felix Anyansi Agwu.

The chairman of the CAF Champions League team said



Agwu

administrators of various clubs were often to blame for the poor performance of their clubs, noting that they would rather amass unmerited points than work to produce a team worthy of its name.

"No, our league is not the best or the worst, what one observes is that team officials do not really plan to build solid teams for the league. It seems their chief concern is to justify the huge amount collected from their respective governors.

"Even then, they want to resort to all sort of means to achieve victory, largely off the pitch. So they do not build their clubs, and have no definable programme of growth for their teams.

"Little wonder, they past

a good chunk of the time at the NFA secretariat to lobby for boardroom points and are always ready to shift blame instead making proper plans for their teams to perform in the pitch," he said.

Agwu, who is just returning from South Africa asserted that unless there officials who are mostly from state-owned clubs desist from using clubs are political platforms to win favour to their governors, football clubs will not be developed in Nigeria.

"Because their objectives are short term and political, they do not work to lay solid foundation for clubs to assume business status and yield dividends," he said, noting that football is a huge investment with potentials

-Agwu

for huge profit.

"We do not need fantastic facilities to have a grand league. What is needed is truth and sincerity on the part of clubs officials to build their teams, for the future.

"Most club officials are not thinking about their club's future but immediate gains, political interests of their governors and as such they collect so much and do so little for their clubs. Infact, they are insincere about managing clubs," he added.

Agwu asserted that with aggressive marketing, true professional football can yield so much money without depending in governments for support.

This Space is
for Sale

DAILY TRUST

TUESDAY COLUMN

Tuesday, February 8, 2005

EDITORIAL

Nigeria's growing debt trap (1)

At a lecture delivered to the students and members of the University of Abuja community on the 31st of January, 2004, Professor Peter Ayang-Nyong, the Kenyan Minister of Economic Planning and Development asserted that it is a mark of irresponsibility for anyone to argue that African countries should not go to the World Bank and IMF and ask for loans. The Honorable Minister's argument was borne out of the belief that as stakeholders in these enterprises, African nations are by right supposed to borrow money from these cartels.

The Minister argued further that what African nations and leaders need or must do is to employ some measures to win the confidence of these institutions by being credit worthy. Of course international capitalism thrives on credit economics and therefore every member of the community must borrow if only he or she is to maintain some relevance within the scheme of global politics and economics.

We are concerned about such a position from the new breed African leaders who by virtue of their skills, knowledge and exposures to international economic interactions ought to be the pivots on whose horizon the much desired economic war and liberation of African societies is to be realized and achieved.

No doubt Africa's debt has become a very serious issue of concern that has been fingered as responsible for the continent's backwardness. It is argued however that in as much as that assertion could be true, the continent's calamities could be also as a result of the nature and character of the ruling classes that hold sway in the continent.

We recognize the views of the state as they relate to the necessities of borrowing from these multi-lateral agencies as partners and stake-holders. The argument being that if African states don't borrow, then, they are at a disadvantage because, international economic relations are anchored on the principle of lending.

However, the tragedy seems to be that there is no significant direct correlation between the funds that are borrowed with the realities of social, economic and political projects in the continent. This development results in huge debt realization with little or nothing to show for it.

The politics of debt has assumed very strategic dimension in view of the role that is played by both the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, International Monetary Fund/IMF, the Paris and London Clubs and other so-called creditor agencies in determining the character and pattern of economic development on the African continent. It is argued persistently that unless Africa disengages from the strangulations of these western monetary agencies, the issue of development will continue to remain a mirage.

Of all the countries in Africa, Nigeria's debt crisis seems the most pathetic in view of the abundant natural and human resources on ground. Apart from being the most populace nation on the continent, Nigeria has the largest deposit of oil in Africa. It is clear also that oil has been the dominant factor in international capitalist agenda in the last several decades. It is oil that moves the capitalist machine. The ruling class has been unable to turn the abundance of oil into a positive advantage that could economically empower the governments and the citizens.

Instead, there is growing agitation for debt relief and debt cancellation by a ruling class that seems recalcitrant despite the outright international rejection of these calls. The Debt Management Office recently announced that the country needs as much as N1.2 trillion to service its debts in 2005. This sum, no doubt is very colossal and breath taking especially when placed against the competing demands for such monies in the area of education, health, agriculture and other infrastructures critical for the much desired economic growth and development.

There is the need for the Nigerian state to critically reassess its priorities especially as they relate to international monetary obligations along a path that is honorable and in tune with the realities of time and aspirations of the citizenry.

One cannot comprehend the current realities as they relate to the total loan portfolio of the nation. From the 1970s, we were recently told, Nigeria borrowed from external sources a little over \$38 billion. Out of this amount, a repayment of about \$45 billion has already been made with yet a balance of about \$34 billion. This type of economics is definitely unfriendly and totally against the interests of the third world nations and peoples.

We view Nigeria's debt crisis as very disturbing and critical and therefore requires a very concerted effort on the part of the state and its citizens to debate possibly and come up with a more appropriate methodology of resolving the problem.

We question the authenticity of a lot of this debt for that matter. It appears as if the government itself is not in control of the economic variables of its total debt. The present situation in which the entire national economic management is conducted in tune with the directives of Nigeria's creditors is most unacceptable to the people and a sure road to the total collapse of the economy.

Random thoughts on national dialogue

By Ujudud Shariff
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With a couple of weeks to the inauguration of the National Political Reform Conference, the air of uncertainty is still blowing across the political terrain as only few outside the corridors of powers could tell you with relative certainty what the conference is actually intended to achieve. A child of secrecy, conceived in controversy is most likely to be an illegitimate child not so much on its paternity but more on its morality and legality. Here is a major national conference that was neither on the electoral campaign manifesto of the ruling PDP nor on the lips of its presidential candidate during the electioneering campaigns in 2003. From the blues, Nigerians are with a twinkle of an eye asked to come to Abuja to talk about predetermined issues within a span of just three months.

Several issues kept on raging in my mind any time I thought or visualized the modality or conduct of this forthcoming conference that only a few people outside Abuja understand or welcome. These range from its credibility, legality, objectives and likely outcome. One issue that is already hitting the headlines is its poor representations, not only regarding the quality of the representatives but also the flagrant bias against women. There are outcries all over regarding the non-inclusion of women by several states. How could a conference said to be organized to politically reform Nigeria discriminate against such a significant portion of the population? Secondly, there are also other criticisms regarding the quality of the nominated delegates to the conference. Majority of them are men of yesteryears that should not have been delegates but advisors to the delegates. Considering their advanced ages, it is very unlikely if they could withstand the rigours of the high politicking and the anticipated rancorous conference atmosphere. Also at a more fundamental level, these nominated delegates can rightly be said to only be representing themselves or the president or the governors that nominated them. They cannot be called or regarded as the representatives of the people as they never obtained their mandate. In a democracy that we are practicing, it is very odd to say the least that the people do not elect the delegates. So whatever the outcome of the conference, it lacks legitimacy and therefore also lacks credibility. Also as we pointed out earlier, the issue of this conference was never part of the PDP manifesto during the electioneering campaign and could therefore not be regarded as being endorsed through the election of their candidates. Just like other federal government policies like privatization of public enterprises that were not part of the 1999 PDP manifesto were overnight imposed on the polity. Ditto the N25 billion recapitalization of banks and other serious economic policies.

From the realm of lack of legitimacy of the conference, my mind also pondered its legality as the over fifty members of the House of Representatives are asking the court to interpret for them. Given the serious issues the delegates are expected to discuss, the conference should have been given legal teeth. With our experience of Oputa Panel still fresh in our minds where millions of Naira was expended and several hours of public hearings in five cities for a span of about a year in addition to tons of exhibits and other documents, the seven-volume report was thrown into the archives. All the *wahala* we suffered was turned into a waste for reasons that neither make sense nor justifiable. Because part of this issue is already before the court, we cannot discuss it any further but await the court's ruling. Suffice it to just observe that the opposition from the National Assembly consist of members of all the leading parties: PDP, ANPP and AD. In a nutshell, what this means is that as we earlier suspected, this conference is not a PDP program hence the stiff opposition from its members in the National Assembly as well as the deep silence from the PDP headquarters in spite of the knocks their president is getting from their members at the National Assembly. I am also worried about the money being proposed for the conference at a time when poverty continues to ravage the land. With nearly one billion naira slated to be spent on the conference, one is certainly entitled to do a cost and benefit analysis and see whether

the end justifies the means

My mind is also equally worried about the time allocated to the conference to discuss all the issues listed on the agenda all within three months. Though I believe in miracles, I cannot see how the conference can conclude its sittings within three months. Secondly, looking at the agenda, one is equally confused about some of the items. These items like the issue of onshore/offshore dichotomy already before the Supreme Court beats our imagination. If you recall about twenty two state governors have gone to court to challenge the law that gives revenues from the offshore oil exploration to the littoral states instead of taking the whole chunk to the federation account to be shared by all the states of the federation. So, why bring this issue that is before the court? One can only imagine the acrimony and bad blood that the matter will generate between the North and the oil producing areas of the south south. With 2007 around the corner, is the matter deliberately included so as to create political friction between the hitherto historical allies? Another issue bothering my mind is even the contemplation of changing to parliamentary system from the existing presidential system. The argument I hear most against the presidential system is that it is very expensive. But the fact of the matter is that no matter the system we adopt, Nigerians have the capacity to make it expensive. The issue therefore is corruption that makes the system very expensive and not necessarily the system per se. In this regard, one wonders why after practicing the presidential system for several years, including the military era, someone wants us to experiment with another system that the majority of the operators now are not familiar with. This is therefore an invitation to anarchy: it is not the hood that makes the monk.

From here my mind shifts to the likely outcome or consequences of the conference given the already charged political atmosphere. One of my fears is that holding this conference at this time would further polarize the country along ethnic and regional lines. Every section seems to be strategizing on how to maximize its gains. From some pronouncements of leading politicians, it would not be an exaggeration to state that the North is likely to be on the receiving end as the other sections are likely to gang up against it. The conference from all intent and purposes is taking us back to the 1950s and 60s where regionalism held supreme. Delegates are more likely to be more bothered about what is good for their regions rather than what is good for Nigeria. But as the conference is becoming inevitable, let every state prepare to fight its own interests and God is there for Nigeria. Let my Kano delegates fight against the abolition of the onshore/offshore dichotomy, fight for the setting up of Desertification Commission and ensure the retention of local government councils. I have the feeling that the reports of the presidential committee on local government councils might find its way to the conference. Let them insist on justice and equity in running the affairs of the nation. Let them insist the federal government should have programmes to revitalize groundnut, cotton and wheat just as much as we have similar programmes for cassava and cocoa. Let them be vigilant and never take anything for granted.

In conclusion, my mind keeps vibrating as to why this conference must take place now rather than organize it well with the delegates properly elected and an open agenda with all the issues under the sun placed on the table? My "satanic thoughts" suddenly shifted to the ANPP and General Buhari presidential election case pending before the Supreme Court. I suddenly began to wonder whether this conference and the re-election of the president to lead the African Union and the court case might have some relationship. The timing of the conference either by coincidence or design is coming when the Supreme Court would start hearing the appeal. But as we know from Justice Chukwudifu Oputa's popular axiom about justice being a three-way traffic: to the accused, plaintiff and the overall society? Would national interest therefore not over-ride any other interest with such an important conference under way against the newly re-elected president of Africa? How could in this circumstance the 2003 presidential election be annulled as the minority opinion of the Appeal Court? Only time could tell.