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STAR INTERVIEW

There is joy in retirement - *Adamu Ciroma*

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N55M BRIBERY SCANDAL

Senate rejects EFCC report

By Isa Sanusi, *Senior Political Reporter*

The Senate yesterday described President Olusegun Obasanjo's charges of corruption against some members of the National Assembly as baseless and a calculated attempt to subject the legislature to ridicule.

Deputy Senate President, Alhaji Ibrahim Mantu, who read the senate's position, noted that the Upper Chamber has not and will not reckon with what EFCC's investigation came up with and considers its members indicted in Obasanjo's speech as innocent of all charges levelled against them until proven otherwise by a competent judicial process.

The Deputy Senate President added that the Senate was not aware that the PDP has expelled the Senate President; Adolphus Wabara pointing out that the party has no reason to rush into taking such an action.

"While acknowledging the efforts initiated by Mr. President to fight corruption, the senates however, believes that a public broadcast of incidences of corruption affecting the National Assembly, where no such broadcast were made on more damaging allegations against many members of the executive, creates the impression that the National Assembly is being targeted for public and international ridicule."

Mantu added that the Upper Chamber feels sad that the presidential broadcast did not take into account the provisions of the relevant laws guaranteeing fair trial. "In this regard, it will be contrary to natural justice and indeed against the spirit of the letter of the 1999 constitution to pass judgment on accused persons and prescribe punish-

Contd. on Pg 2

I'm a victim of politics

•*Takes EFCC, others to court* - *sacked minister*

By Henry Omunu, *Senior Reporter (Education)*

Embattled former education minister, Prof. Fabian Osuji, who is the major actor in the N55 million bribery scandal, says he is being politically victimized by the presidency because of his perceived loyalty to Vice President Atiku Abubakar.

The allegation of being made a "scape-goat" of the political intrigues of the administration was contained in a three-page letter the minister wrote to the Chief of Staff to President Obasanjo, January 28, 2005, and which formed part of the annexure to the motion ex parte filed by the minister's counsel, Chief Chris Uche (CAN), Wednesday, at the federal high court, Abuja.

Prof. Osuji's lawyer had earlier referred to the same letter in his eight-point grounds upon which his client had filed his suit, and had stated that "the arrest, detention and humiliation of the applicant are acts of political victimisation as shown in the letters written by the applicant to the presidency since January 28, 2005.

"The applicant has been made a scape-goat and victim of political intrigues as a result of no fault of his," he

Contd. on Pg 2

Supreme court refuses feeding tube for brain-damaged woman

By Elkanah Chawai, *Reporter, Foreign Desk with agency report*

The United States Supreme Court yesterday refused to order Terri-Schiavo's feeding tube reinserted, rejecting a desperate appeal by her parents to keep their severely brain-damaged daughter alive.

The decision, announced in a terse one-page order, marked the end of a dramatic and disheartening four-day dash through the federal court system by Bob and Mary Schindler.

Justices did not explain their decision which was at least the fifth time they have declined to get involved in the Schiavo case.

The feeding tube that has been keeping Schiavo alive at a hospice in Pinellas Park, Fla., was removed last Friday. Doctors at the time said that unless it is reinserted, she will die in a week or two.

Contd. on Pg 2

Imoke is new education minister

The federal government has redeployed Senator Liyel Imoke to the education ministry to serve as minister.

Until is redeployment which was announced by the secretary to the fedferal government, Mr. Ufot Ekaete yesterday Imoke was the minister of power and steel. He takes over the education ministry from Professor Fabian

Contd. on Pg 2



Protesters rally after storming government headquarters in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Protesters sack govt in Kyrgyzstan

By Jibrin Abubakar, *Reporter (Foreign Desk)*

The opposition in Kyrgyzstan says it has taken control of the capital, Bishkek, after overrunning the president's palace.

Protesters confronted supporters of President Askar Akayev before flooding into government offices.

A prominent Kyrgyz opposition leader, Felix Kulov, made a televised appeal for calm after being freed from jail.

Demonstrations were stepped up after recent parliamentary elections which the opposition said were

Contd. on Pg 2



News

Reps *Contd. from Pg 1*

ment before the judicial processes are exhausted."

He further said the senate will wait for the report of its committee on Ethics investigating the matter while cautioning over possible prosecution of the affected senators.

"As soon as we receive such reports, all our colleagues found wanting or indicted, shall be appropriately sanctioned as we have done in the past," he said.

The briefing had in attendance, Senate Minority Leader, Senator Dalhatu Sarki Tafida, Minority Leader, Lawal Shua'bu, Deputy Minority Leader, Daniel Saror, Chief Whip, Udoma Udo Udoma, Deputy Minority Whip, Tokunboh Afikuyomi, Deputy Majority Leader, Jonathan Silas Zwingina and other senators who were unanimous that President Olusegun Obasanjo was on a mission to discredit the National Assembly.

The senate is of the position that the findings of the EFCC and ICPC are all inferior to the decision of a court of law noting that for now whatever's said on the affected senators stands only as allegation.

The leadership of the senate met and appraised the president's speech and recounted the numerous corrupt practices on the side of the executive which were ignored by the president even in the face of sufficient evidences.

The lawmakers have resolved to ignore the presidents position and allow its committee on ethics to investigate the matter.

Sources said the senate may decide to resume plenary sessions next week to give proper attention to the allegations even though Senator Mantu said the senate will not reconvene until after the two weeks break.

Debt burden an obstacle — *Obasanjo*

President Olusegun Obasanjo has described the debt burden as a direct obstacle to growth, development and the consolidation of democracy.

Obasanjo, who made this assertion yesterday in Abuja at the launching of the Millennium Development Project, called on development partners to take concrete action on the request for debt relief.

He said that progress made with the reform programme placed Nigeria in a good stead for debt relief.

"The crucial significance of debt relief in the release of resource to address the obstacles to the achievement of the MDGs cannot be overemphasised at this point in the struggle to overcome poverty," he stressed.

The President stated that Nigeria is a strong supporter of the MDGs contained in the Millennium Declaration adopted by 189 world leaders at a Millennium summit held in New York in 2000.

He said the government had been implementing programmes aimed at achieving the MDGs.

He noted that for example, the number of women in decision making positions had surpassed the recommended 30 per cent and said that he would do more because of their efficiency and effectiveness.

He also cited the economic reforms as embedded in NEEDS and SEEDs at the federal and state levels as well as the public sector reforms aimed at reinvigorating the civil service.

He said that "right sizing, re-tooling and ensuring professional outlook and focus would help to meet the challenges of current reforms and the demands of a fast globalizing world.

Furthermore, he said the nation had continued to show concern for peace, development and democracy by "our contribution to conflict resolution, peace-making and peace-keeping and regional integration".

He therefore urged the international community to increase aid to countries that have demonstrated track record of reform and commitment to reducing poverty.

The UK High Commissioner to Nigeria, Mr. Richard Gozny, said in a goodwill message said that debt relief for Nigeria was assured but that the debate was "when, how and how much".

He also said that the UK would make new laws that would make money laundering impossible in Britain and easier to track down those involved in the act.

American Ambassador John Campbell in his remarks commended the president's economic team, saying that they were laying a strong foundation for economic prosperity in future.

He also noted that the government was taking positive steps to strengthen democracy.

In his goodwill message, the resident coordinator of the UN system in Nigeria, Mr Tegegnework Gettu, observed that Nigeria was strategic to the fight against poverty in Africa and the whole world.

He said the UN was committed to assisting Nigeria to strengthen the national framework for poverty reduction and sustainable development.



Deputy Senate President, Senator Ibrahim Mantu (left) Senate Leader, Senator Dalhatu Tafida (middle) and Deputy Senate Leader, Senator Jonathan Zwingina during the press conference on the N55m bribery allegation against some senators, held at the National Assembly complex, Abuja... yesterday. *Pix: Felix Onigbinde.*

I'm a victim *Contd. from Pg 1*

added.

The ex-minister in his letter to the presidency, had recounted how on January 19, 2005, one Mr. Kayode Olatomide called him on his mobile handset, saying his (Osuji's) name was on a list of ministers allegedly loyal to Vice President Atiku Abubakar.

According to the ex-minister, Mr. Olatomide further said the appointments of such ministers suspected to be Atiku's loyalists were in jeopardy and thereafter demanded the sum of N1 million for himself and three others to assist delete his name from the list.

The letter which was copied to President Obasanjo, reads in part: "One Kayode Olatomide who claimed he was calling from the villa, on Wednesday, January 19, 2005, while I was at executive council meeting informed my secretary that I should call him immediately on 08043347138 for a very urgent and important issue.

"I did. He told me that my name was on a list of ministers who were allegedly loyal to the vice –resident, and whose appointments as ministers were in jeopardy, following reports that they visited the vice-president especially while he was reportedly indisposed.

"I told him emphatically that I had never been loyal to anyone else but Mr. President, my nation and my God. In my case, I stated that I have never paid any such visit. However, he told me to call one Dr. Omowumi, also ostensibly of the Villa, (08034275228) who would cooperate to reetify the report in my favour," the letter stated.

Thereafter, Prof. Osuji said Dr. Omowumi on behalf of three other members of his all powerful committee, requested for N250,000 each to remove his name from the list, whereupon the former minister said he could only pay N400,000.00.

The money, he explained was to be paid into the account of one Mr. Oladepo Babatunde with Standard Trust Bank, Plot 16, Shehu Makarfi road, Suleja in Niger State.

When Dr. Omowumi waited in vain for the transfer of the N400,000 into the STB account the minister said he requested for a rendezuous at the Sheraton Hotel and Towers on January 30, 2005, but failed to show up.

Meanwhile, education minister, Prof. Fabian Osuji sacked Tuesday night by President Olusegun Obasanjo for his alleged involvement in the N55m bribery scandal, has gone to court to restrain the federal government and any of its agencies from infringing on his right to personal liberty.

Prof. Osuji is seeking the order in a two-page motion ex parte filed by his counsel, Chief Chris Uche (SAN), at the federal high court, Maitama, Abuja, on Wednesday.

In the motion ex parte scheduled to be heard on Tuesday, March 30, by Justice Steven Adah, the plaintiff is praying the court to grant him the right to enforce his personal liberty which he claimed is being threatened with further infringement by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Attorney-General of the federation, all of whom are the defendants in the suit.

The minister is also asking the court to issue an interim injunction restraining the respondents or their agents from re-arresting or detaining him until the determination of the substantive application, having earlier been detained for four days from March 16-20, 2005, by agents of the defendants.

Counsel to Prof. Osuji further prayed the court to order the defendants and their agents to stay action on re-arresting or detaining the former minister, pending the determination of the substantive application.

The minister's lawyers, Chief Uche (SAN) however, explained in the motion that the reliefs being sought by his client excludes further investigations, decline of prosecution or discontinuance of investigation or prosecution.

But in his statement in support of the motion ex parte, the counsel is asking the court to declare the arrest, detention and harassment of his client as unconstitutional, wrongful and illegal, as well as an infringement on the fundamental rights of Prof. Osuji and contrary to Section 35 (5a) and (b) of the 1999 constitution.

While demanding a public apology from the respondents for a breach of the fundamental rights of his client, Chief Uche (SAN), wants the court to declare as unconstitutional, illegal and wrongful, threats by the respondents and their agents to re-arrest and detain the former minister.

Furthermore, he is seeking a declaration that the dismissal of Prof. Osuji via a national broadcast and proclaiming him guilty before trial is prejudicial and an act of political victimization which in his interpretation, constitutes an infringement because the former minister is on bail and has had his international passport seized.

Prof. Osuji, he pleaded has been made a scape-goat and a victim of political intrigues, as the allegation of the bribe he gave to the National Assembly does not warrant the treatment meted on him.

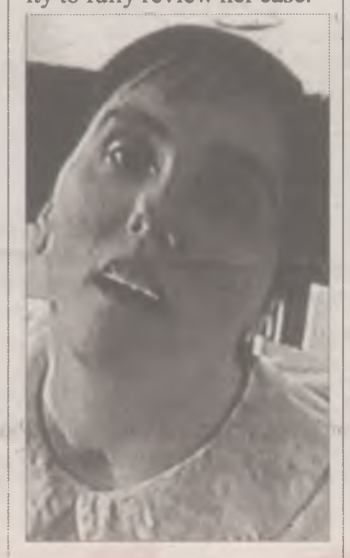
The counsel claimed further that the ex-minister did not collect any money for himself nor offer any money to procure any advantage to himself and that there is no evidence suggesting his client stands to benefit personally if his ministry's budget was passed.

Chief Uche (SAN), argued that since his client is willing to cooperate with the respondents in the investigation of the bribery scandal and is ready to present himself whenever needed, it was inappropriate to subject his client to another round of arrest and detention when the defendants can investigate and prosecute the case without hindrance from his client.

US *Contd. from Pg 1*

The high court's decision was the latest in a string of losses in state and federal courts for the Schindlers, who say their 41-year-old daughter faces an unjust and imminent death based on a decision by her husband to halt nourishment without proof of her consent.

The Schindlers' emergency high court filing also argued that Congress intended for Schiavo's tube to be reinserted, at least temporarily, when it passed an extraordinary bill last weekend giving federal courts authority to fully review her case.



Terri Schiavo

Protesters *Contd. from Pg 1*

rigged.

An unconfirmed report by Interfax News Agency said Mr. Akayev and his family have left Bishkek by helicopter.

Kyrgyzstan's Supreme Court has annulled February's controversial elections and recognised the former parliament as the legitimate legislature, Russia's Itar-Tass news agency quoted court chairman, Kurmanbek Osmonov, as saying.

At the palace - also the seat of government - police melted away as hundreds of protesters flooded into the compound.

People have lost the patience to live in poverty with no hope for any change.

Some appeared in windows, waving flags and throwing out documents.

Mr. Akayev had been due to hold talks on the crisis in Bishkek with a special envoy from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), but the meeting did not take place.

Mr. Kulov, a former vice-president who was jailed for embezzlement in 2000, appealed to Mr. Akayev to "meet with opposition leaders in order to peacefully and constitutionally transfer power".

Observers say Mr. Kulov is emerging as the leader of what is a fractious opposition.

The *BBC* correspondent for Central Asia Monica Whitlock, says events have moved at lightning speed, from a quiet demonstration in the morning to a full-scale insurrection.

The demonstration in Bishkek grew rapidly from a few hundred people to as many as 10,000.

Protesters chanting "down with the Akayev clans" marched through the capital to the presidential palace known as the White House.

Security forces surrounding the building repelled an initial attempt to storm the compound, but offered little resistance when the demonstrators fought back.

Clashes erupted between protesters and government supporters in nearby Ala Too square and there were reports of some injuries.

Imoke *Contd. from Pg 1*

Osuji who was sacked Tuesday over his involvement in the N55m bribery scandal.

Although the federal government did not say who takes over the power and stell ministry, there are strong indications that minister of state in the ministry, Professor Babalola Aborishade may be named to succeed Imoke.

It will be recalled thawt Professor Aborishade was the minister of education during President Obasanjo's first term in office. He had appointment as Minister of State came after he had been twice rejected for ministership by the senate.

News

Senator denies involvement in N55m scam

By Isa Sanusi,
Senior Political Reporter

Senator Emmanuel Okpede (PDP/ Nasarawa South), indicted in the N55million bribery scandal has denied taking any money even though he said he was at the meeting held with the minister at the senate president's house.

Senator Okpede said he has not been quizzed by the EFCC or any other security outfit in respect of the scandal.

The lawmaker who was the vice chairman of the senate committee on education when the bribe was said to have been given both said the president and the EFCC lied by saying he was interrogated: "No arm of government or whatever. Nobody has ask me questions, security or whatever so I only heard his broadcast and I just want to wait and see what will happen. I am alive, am not dead and transactions are done with living people. Isn't it?

But I want to say that never in the history of the world, you go to the press, and president of the federation to pass sentence on people on whom you have not even heard from. He (Obasanjo) said that we have been interrogated by the EFCC. I am telling you as I stand here, up to this moment nobody has asked me a single question and I have not discussed with anybody.

As I tell you I was vice-chairman of the Education Committee. I do know that on the last day that we had a joint sitting of the two Houses, we concluded our budget. I don't know how the minister of education that one thing we did in the interest of Nigeria was that last year, 2004 we introduced the Direct Teaching and Research Cost (DTRC), in the budget, which was not brought by the Executive. We decided to move monies from overhead, which were money being expanded on transport, on paying claims and not actually in addressing teaching and consumables for laboratories. So we decided to put money and created a sub-head i.e. TRC, for all universities, all polytechnics and all colleges of education. During our oversight visit, we discovered that all the academics in all these institutions were pleased with that allocation. But when the 2005 budget came, again this DTRC column was allocated zero-zero and the overhead was loaded with money again, so we decided to move them back since this is what will make teaching more effective. Somehow we closed our issues.

In the evening I was called to attend a meeting at the senate president's house. I don't know for what purpose. I came there and met the minister of education. He said that he learnt that the budget has been concluded and that he still has complaints. He layed his complaint but the committee had closed and that had already finished its work. From that day till now that I am talking to you to the committee never reconvened to reconsider any other matter. That was my last day to see the minister (Osuji).



The chief of staff, Gen Abdullahi Mohammed and Governor Atahiru Bafarawa of Sokoto state at the State House Abuja...yesterday *Pix: Joe Oroye*

Muslim leaders to meet over national confab

Muslim leaders nationwide will meet in Kaduna to review their stand over the composition of national confe-rence and the appointment of muslims into various positions in government.

The meeting stated for Monday, March 28, is organised by the Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), and the Jama'atul Nasir ul-Islam (JNI).

The NSCIA President, the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammadu Maccido will preside.

Also expected at the meeting are muslim governors and their deputies.

Similarly, all muslim delegates to the national conference and the council of Ulamas and Alfas are expected to attend the meeting.

Sources at the NSCIA secretariat told NAN in Abuja that they will review their last meeting with President Olusegun Obasanjo.

The muslim leaders recently complained to Obasanjo over added lopsidedness in the composition of delegates to the national conference against the Muslims and on imbalance in the political appointments.

Following the complaints, presiding officers at the national conference have been increased from four to six with Muslims and Christians having three slots each.

84 million Nigerians homeless-*FMBN boss*

From Rakiya A. Mohammed,
Correspondent Jos

Latest findings on maternal health in Nigeria shows that Nigeria has the worst index maternal maternity even as the number of women has risen from 800 to 2, 000 per 100, 00 delivery.

The research which was conducted across the six geopolitical zones of the country indicated that the situation is the same in the various states where the survey was conducted.

President of the society of Gynecology and Obstetrics of Nigeria (SOGON), Professor James Akuse, disclosed this at the SOGON safe motherhood project dissemination workshop held at the Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH), yesterday.

Professor Akuse who noted that the maternal health situation 10-15 years ago was not as bad as today, lamented that "we have gone backwards and the problem is now gigantic".

He identified poverty as the drive of the maternal mortality in Nigeria, warning that unless the economic status of Nigerians was improved maternal deaths will continue to rise.

The SOGN president who noted that priority attention needs to be given to maternal health to check the prevailing situation, said the goal of reducing maternal mortality rate by three quarters by the year 2015 may not be met if concerted efforts is not put in to achieve that.

Also speaking, the Plateau state coordinator of SOGN Safe Motherhood Project, Professor Innocent Ujah, called for a total commitment on the part of policy makers, medical professional and other stakeholders to ensure that maternal mortality is reduced drastically.

The states that were used for the research include Lagos from the South West zone, Enugu, south East zone, Cross River, South-South zone, Plateau, North-Central zone, Kano from North West and Borno, North East.

Progressives plan new party

Regional Editor (Jos)

Progressive persuasion converged in Makurdi, Benue state capital , last week with the aim of forming a political party with which to fight the 2007 general elections.

The meeting which was held at the Mid Way hotel in Makurdi on Wednesday and Thursday last week, was to bring together all politicians in the progressive divide who are scattered in the 30 registered political parties under one formidable party for the 2007 elections.

A top source at the meeting told *Daily Trust* exclusively in Jos yesterday, that the group met under the tentative name of Social Democratic Forum (SDF), with Chief Alexis Anielo as the national co-ordinator.

The source said the forum has targetted progressives from the defunct Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP), Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) and the Ppeoples Redemption Party (PRP), all in the second republic.

It also includes the progressive in the Social Democratic Party (SDP), of the aborted third republic and the Congress for National Census (CNC) which flourished during the late General Sani Abacha administration.

The current dispensation, the forum intends to bring in progressives in the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), Conscience Party, Justice Party, Labour Party and others with strong progressive leanings.

Our source explained that the forum's aim is to get the progressives out of all the current political parties to confront president Olusegun Obasanjo in 2007 even if he intends to going for a third term.

According to the source, the Makurdi meeting which was attended by 22 representatives of states governors across the nation, two top politicians from the presidency, several senators, one of who delivered the keynote address and members of the House of Representatives inputs the lawmakers and the representatives of the governors made "valuable" on how to move the forum forward.

The sources said it had become necessary to bring the progressive forces together because they, as "true democrats" have been "short-changed" by past military regimes and the present administration of Obasanjo.

They also regretted making the Yar'adua political structures available to him to win the past two presidential elections only to turn round to frustrate them and also had bitter words for Vice president Atiku Abubakar who turned over the 'Yar'adua structures to Obasanjo and thereafter abandoned them.

"Atiku who was our leader abandoned us and now that he needs us he is coming back to woo us," the source who said he was at the high table at the meeting alleged.

However, he said that prominent politicians of the progressive failed to attend the Makurdi meeting. They include Alhaji Abubakar Rimi, Alhaji Balarabe Musa , Chief Solomon Lar, Chief Jim Nwobodo, Chief Mrs. Titi Ajanaku, Alhaji Muhammed Goni, Chief Dapo Sarumi, Chief Paul Unongo (even though the meeting took place in Makurdi), Dr,. Olusola Saraki, Chief Yomi Edu, among others.

Convention holds at national mosque tomorrow

By Habib I. Pindiga,
Political Reporter

This year's annual Muslim Ummah convention has been scheduled to hold tomorrow at the national mosque, Abuja.

An Unsigned statement by the Abuja Muslim Forum made available to *Daily Trust* yesterday, said the occasion will be chaired by Justice Bashir Sambo, chairman of the Code of Conduct Tribunal.

The convention theme is "The ideal Muslim and the Problems of the Nigerian Nation".

The convention include the Kano state governor, Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau who will special guest of honour, and Dr. Suleiman Kumo, guest speaker.

The invitation to the convention was made by the National Islamic Centre, Zaria.

Nigeria worst in maternal health-*survey*

By Ahmed Tahir Ajobe,
Correspondent Lokoja

No .fewer than 84 million Nigerians are currently homeless, with an average occupying rate of six people for a typical NIgerian household.

The managing director of the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria, Alhaji Tanimu Yakubu disclosed this in a key note address at the first Kogi State Housing Summit in Lokoja yesterday.

Alhaji Yakubu in a paper entitled "The New Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria and The Cchallenges of Housing Delivery Tthrough NHF," noted that the reality of this outright homeless clearly purs "housing as constituting more than 70 per cent of our national problems and lend credence to the claim that the homeownership rate in Nigeria is more than 25 per cent of the total population of the country at the current estimate of 137million people".

The federal mortgage bank boss however said the housing problems though dauting is not insurmotable as the federal government has undergone some reformation aimed at meeting the housing defrait currently estimated between 12 and 14 million units.

The FMBN and the National Housing Fund (NHF) as key organs in the sector, he said, have undergone reforms aimed at repositioning both to facilitate mass and affordable housing delivery through a responsive mortgage finance system.

"The milestone of the FMBN reform is that the bank is now restructure into a secondary mortgage institution with a mandate to carry on secondary mortgage operations and capital market fund to spearhead the entrenchment of a robust housing finance system in the country", he noted.

By this development, he said, the bank is sell mortgage capital market products gurated by the federal government to institutional investors to raise funds on-leading to developers and primary mortgage originators.

The FMBN, he reiterated, was poised to mobilise funds through NHF and capital market for cheap and affordable housing for Nigerians who meet the condition of continuous contribution of 2.5 per cent of income over a minimum period of six months aspire to own their personal houses through the bank's robust mortgage loan facility.

News

Makarfi warns over Atyap chiefdom

From Sani Babadoko, *Bureau Chief (Kaduna)*

The governor of Kaduna state, Alhaji Ahmed Muhammad Makarfi, has warned groups and individuals threatening the fragile peace in state over the appointment of *Atyap* chief to desist or face decisive action.

Speaking at a media roundtable organised by the Arewa Media Forum (AMF), in Kaduna, Wednesday, Makarfi said, "government cannot be intimidated. We will take decisive action against any group or persons threatening crisis over the Atyap chieftaincy impasse."

'Don't look at my frail frame and think we cannot take decisive action. We sleep with one and half eyes open and we are ready to deal with any group threatening the peace over the matter," Makarfi declared.

He said when the government created the new chiefdoms it was aware that some of them do not have any process of succession be it inheritance or re-orientation, while some do not have the king makers.

The governor said the government was in the process of making a law to take care of the situation when the Atyap chief died and some people started insisting that their candidates must be make the next chief.

"No one can choose a king for this government," Makarfi declared in anger, leaving no one in doubt that government will resist attempts to the chieftaincy tussle to cause trouble acknowledging that the crisis has the potential to capitalise on create intra-communal conflicts.

On the fate of the New Nigerian Newspapers, Makarfi said President Obasanjo has written to the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE), to formalise the handover to the northern states governments but said the delay to effect the handover was due to the change of leadership at the BPE and gave an insight into the problems faced by the northern governors which he said induced lack of cooperation by groups and individuals who would refuse to attend meetings when those they do not approve of were in attendance.

Bribery scandal: APGA, textile workers back FG

By Austine Odo, *Assistant News Editor*

The All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) and the National Union of Textiles Garment and Tailoring Workers Union (NUTGTWN), say they are behind the federal government's position over the N55 million alleged bribe scandal involving some principal officers in government.

In separate reactions, the two bodies commended President Obasanjo's attack on corruption.

The NUTGTWN's acting general secretary, Alhaji Umaru Muhammad, described the unfolding scenario as a sad commentary that officers of the executive and legislative arms of government are involved in the criminal diversion of funds through unwholesome deals over budgetary matters.

He said textile worker support President Obasanjo over the development and joined the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), to salute the courage and enthusiasm demonstrated by the President in exposing the deal.

The union pointed out that the handling of the incident represented the degree of decisiveness expected from government over issues of such nature and stressed the need for a thorough investigation of the culprits and subsequent prosecution.

"On behalf of the national executive council of the union and the members, we commend Mr. President for his commitment to the war against corruption and assure him of the union's support and cooperation in the efforts to stamp out corruption in governance and our national life," Alhaji Umar Muhammad said.

APGA national chairman, Chief Chekwas Okorie, said it was also reassuring and noteworthy of commendation that the usual undue regard accorded to "sacred cows" has been jettisoned.

He noted that the law should not respect anybody and commended government's decision to refer those indicted to the appropriate organs for necessary action.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), quotes Chief Okorie as saying that APGA "will at all times, support progressive measures and policies, while maintaining our constructive criticism of any action or policy thrust of government."



Senator Iya Abubakar exchanging greetings with Senator Dalhatu Sarki [illegible] visit to the State House Abuja...yesterday. [illegible] Ribadu, EFCC chairman. Pix: Joe Oroye.

Osuji's sack won't help Obasanjo – *Naja'atu Muh'd*

By Abubakar Haruna, *Reporter*

A chieftain of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), Hajiya Naja'atu Muhammad says the dismissal of education minister, Fabian Osuji by President Obasanjo "will not help his anti corruption crusade"

Fabian Osuji was last [illegible] dismissed by the President for allegedly giving N55 million bribe to the Senate President, Adolphus Wabara.

Hajiya Naja'atu who made this known in an interview with the *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC),* Hausa service monitored in Abuja yesterday, said "you cannot campaign against corruption if you are not truthful look at the millions of naira Obasanjo has earmarked for the National Confab such will not help him succeed in his anti corruption crusade," adding that "if Obasanjo wants to reform this country, he should start with himself. Let him prove to the world that he is elected into the position he is now occupying."

According to her, the only way out was to allow the judiciary work for justice without undul interference, while the police should carry out their duties without demanding bribes.

Sokoto police kill 3 armed robbers

From Aminu Muhammad, Regional Editor, Sokoto

Three armed robbers were this week short dead by the police in Sokoto while attempting to escape from custody.

The robbers were part of a five-man gang which stormed the state capital Tuesday night and robbed a pharmacy at the Ahmadu Bello Way, Sokoto before storming the biggest supermarket in the town popularly known as Double 7 where they shot, and killed the managing director of the place, Hassan Tahir.

Addressing newsmen in Sokoto on Wednesday, the states police Commissioner, Alhji Idris Mohammed, said the Armed Robbers were five in number and that the police were still looking for the remaining two who escaped,

The robbers who first stormed the Ahmadu Bello Way later besieged the Abdullahi Fodio Road at the "Kartin Daji" area at about 9:00 pm. Tuesday where the biggest supermarket owned by late Hassan Tahir , a Lebanese is situated.

According to an eye witness account, the robbers entered the supermarket and began shooting sporadically which attracted the attention of the late Managing Director, Hassan Tahir who came out of his office to find out what was happening.

On sighting the robbers the Managing Director was said to have turned back to escape when they operated fire on him and he was hit by two bullets and died instantly,

Meanwhile, investigations by the police are still going on and the state police command his assured the people of the state of their safety adding that everybody should go about his or her normal business without fear

Katsina engages road consultants

The Katsina State government has engaged the services of an engineering consulting firm to supervise some ongoing road projects for a N70.5 million fee.

The Commissioner for Information, Alhaji Abu Mashi, announced this while speaking to newsmen at the end of the state Executive Council meeting in Katsina on Wednesday.

Mashi said the roads included phase two of the Katsina township roads, Shargalle/Ingawa road with two bridges, state secretariat/Isagero/WTC roundabout, as well as the Yaukara/Faskari and

Faskari/Maigora/Mando roads.

He recalled that contracts for those roads were awarded last year at the cost of N3.4 billion, and adding that they are now at various stages of completion.

Mashi said in order to reduce traffic congestion on the Funtua/Bakori road, the government has awarded contract for the rehabilitation of the Baker bye-pass at the cost of N500 million adding that government has also awarded contract for the rehabilitation of the 26-km Adamu/Dragoon/Mbabane MTM road at N500 million.

Mashi said another contract has been awarded for the construction of drains and asphalt surfacing at the 272 housing units in the Katsina metropolis at the cost of about N91 million stating that contract for another 29-km road has been awarded to Luck Kurfi and Charanchi at the cost of more than N1.3 billion.

In addition, a contract for the rehabilitation of seven roads in the state capital had also been awarded, he said.

Gov kicks against under-age driving

Governor Bukar Ibrahim of Yobe has directed local government chairmen to desist from allowing their under-age children and unskilled wives to drive official vehicles.

Ibrahim gave the directive on Wednesday in Damaturu, while allocating 40 cars and buses valued N229 million to council chairmen.

"The FRSC and Vehicle Inspection Officers will ensure that this directive is complied with," the governor stressed.

"In the past, vehicles issued to government officials have been misused," he said, adding: "the practice has to stop."

The governor tasked council chairmen to ensure that rural dwellers benefit from the buses, especially for socio-economic activities as well as security.

Alhaji Mai Aliyu Usman, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government, said the 40 councils jointly bought the vehicles to ease transport problems facing by rural dwellers and promised that state government will put in place a monitoring system to check the abuse of the vehicles.

Bandits kill two policemen, drivers at checkpoint

Four persons, including two mobile policemen died in an attack by bandits at a checkpoint on Mayo-Belwa-Ngurore road in Adamawa state on Wednesday.

Addressing newsmen yesterday in Yola, the state's Commissioner of Police, Alhaji Hafiz Ringim, said three security personnel and a civilian have been arrested over the incident.

"We have arrested someone dressed in army uniform who has mentioned members of a security agency as accomplices in the killings," Ringim said.

He said the state's police command have drafted a police detachment to the Mayo-Belwa-Ngurore highway to check the activities of criminals.

Ringim also confirmed plans by the state government to revive the army/police joint patrol to curb banditry.

He however condemned the activities of some vigilante groups "who operate as a parallel government agency and extort money."

"Definitely, the police will not tolerate people taking the law into their hands," he warned.



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OPEN LETTER TO THE EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR OF KWARA STATE DR. ABUBAKAR BUKOLA SARAKI

11th February, 2005

His Excellency,
Dr. Abubakar Bukola Saraki,
Executive Governor,
Kwara State,
Ilorin.

Your Excellency,

OFFA INTRA-RELIGIOUS CRISIS

We, the entire Ratibi Imams of Offa Grand Mosque, with humility and respect want to bring to your notice how officials of the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs who came to Offa on Tuesday 4th January, 2005 to conduct an election to elect a Chief Imam for Offa, eliminated our side and exhibited flagrant partiality resulting in the "election" of Muideen as Chief Imam.

Firstly, we were not given the letters of invitation from the Ministry while all letters of invitation were directed to Olofa's side who used it for their side. We were not given the opportunity to see the voters list. We thought that the verification of Ratibi Imams taken by the SSS or that taken by the Chairman of the Offa Local Government would be used.

To our utter dismay there was an announcement at the gate of the venue by the coordinator, in person of Alhaji Abdulahi Ibrahim, a director in the Ministry of Local Government that the list he has and to be used contained the names of only those approved by the Government. After this, the Police were ordered to disperse us.

We wish to point out that Olofa appointed Muideen as Chief Imam wrongly because he has no such right being a traditional Chief himself. Chief Imamship is not a traditional Chieftaincy and can only be appointed by those who will pray behind him. Islam already laid down the system in the Hadith of Prophet Muhammed (SAW) and the Shariah of Allah. Nothing can change this and we will not agree to its being changed.

With Your Excellency's approval of Muideen's appointment, you have created a situation whereby, majority of Muslims in Offa are not allowed to pray in the Central Mosque because prayers behind an Imam forced on the people is not allowed in Islam.

We are therefore calling on Your Excellency to please review your decision which is based on a partial, fraudulent and undemocratic election.

We remain,
Your obedient followers,
The authentic Ratibi Imams of the
Offa Grand Mosque

S/N	MOSQUE NAME	NAME OF IMAM	SIGNATURE
1.	Baba Oyo	Mudathir Olumo	
2.	Awudere	Ganiyu Yusuf	
3.	O.G.S.	S. O. O. Ibrahim	
4.	Lanlu	Raji Kolawole	
5.	Balogun	Abubakar Balogun	
6.	Bale Oke	Salawu Woliyi	
7.	Idi Isin	Hassan Badru	
8.	Onise	Alh. Muhammed Jamiu	
9.	Adebiyi Mosque	Lamidi Olaloye	Alh Lamidi Olaloye
10.	Olowa Akeke	Alh. Yinusa	
11.	Iwalewa	Lawal Elemona Aiyegbami	
12.	Isale Lawe	Alfa Bashiru Afolabi	
13.	Baba Isale	Lamidi Oyeyemi	
14.	Bugba Araromi	Alh. Mohammed Raji	
15.	Obada	" Shittu Oye	
16.	Kowamudeen	Alfa Isiaka	
17.	Imam Mosque	Oreku Falali	
18.	Aduanigba	Ganiyu Mohammed	
19.	Fiwakesin	" Dauda	
20.	Oluwanisola Amuyo	" Luqman	
21.	Total	Raji Amototo	
22.	Ojomu Doyin	Kamaldeen Alliy	
23.	Sanni Aba	Alfa Rafiu Ayepe	
24.	Allahu Akbar	Badmus Are	
25.	Obatiwajoye	Alh. Solihu Giwa	
26.	Oye Balogun	Alh. Tajudeen Busrah	
27.	Plumber	Alfa Usman Yasin	
28.	Temidire	Issa Adeyeye	
29.	Ejisun Akeke	Jimoh Aliu	
30.	Isale Ago	Alh. Tahir Mohammed	TAITU
31.	Olohunsogo	Yusuf Amuda	
32.	AWA G.R.A.	Alh. Wasiu Jimoh	
33.	Owode Market	Alfa Sarafadeen	
34.	Owode Garage	" Mustapha Salman	
35.	Temidire Ikotun Garage	" Luqman Ibrahim	
36.	Ibadul Rhaman	" Fatai Afolabi	Fatai Afolabi
37.	Apeke GRA	" Bashir Olose	
38.	Akorede	" Khalifa Ahmad Akorede	
39.	Alafiatavo	" Rafiu Ola	
40	Allahu Whaidu	" Ganiy Olowo	
41	Ajao	" Rasaq Kareem	
42	Gedegbe	Alfa Jamihu Sanni	
43	Ilesowapo	" Musbau Lateef	
44.	Khalwa	Alh. Tirimisiyu	
45.	Izalatu Bidiah	Masud Adegboye	
46.	Kajola	Alh. Esu-Ola	
47.	Ojeke	Ustaz Taofiq	
48	Olohunsogo	Alh. Wahabi Raji	
49	Afelele	" Solihu Afelele	
50.	Adepoju	" Yekeen Opeloyeru	
51.	Alhaja Zulikat Memorial	" Ibrahim Kadiri	
52.	Bay Star	" Muraina	
53.	Mayowa	" Yusuf	
54.	Alubata Oju-Irin	" Kamaldeen Adebisi	
55.	Halu Sunah	" Ismaila Zakariyau	
56.	Esso Pataki	" Jimoh Olarewaju	
57.	Ayodele	" Rafiu Ayodele	
58.	Uda Mudawatul	" Raufu Bello	
59.	Bolohunduro	" Murtala	
60.	Obanibasiri	" Abdul Rasheed Bello	
61.	Nasir-Lahi Mosque	" Azeez Adeyeye	
62.	Iranlowo Oluwa	" Jamiu Olohuntoyin	
63.	Irewole Mosque	" Ahmad Irewole	
64.	Omu Ivadun	" Abdul Lateef Orimope	
65.	Olohunsogo	" Ridwanu	
66.	Sirotul Mostaqim	Isiaka Oluyemo	
67.	Olohunsogo Baale-Oke	Salawu Atunde	
68.	Ajia-oke-oro	Mustapha Keulere	
69.	Obanimomo	Alfa Zaeed	
70.	Oganla	Raheem Usman	
71.	Aiyegbami	Mohammed Oye	
72.	Ifelodun	Mohammadu Mudashiru	
73.	Bolude	Mohammed Raji	
74.	Shawo Arowerale	Hamzat Bolaji	
75.	Gbagba	Abdullahi Gbagba	
76.	Obadawoye Arefa	Solihu	
77.	Olohunsogo	Ibrahim Abanise	
78.	FEDPOFFA	Waheed Adeyemi	
79.	Folarin	Alfa Mashood Bolaji	
80.	Ifedapo	Abubakar Sanusi	
81.	Olasinde	Azeez Jolaiya	
82.	Oyawoye	Abdul-Waheed Yusufu	
83.	Temidire Omolere	Lateef Solihu	
84.	Bele-ore-okeoro	Mustapha Olore	
85.	Tariq Najat	Abdullahi Awal	
86.	Zumurat Suadhai	Solihu bakare	
87.	Asaba Isale Ade	Muhammed Bello	
88.	Tolani A.U.D	Ganiyu Afolabi	
89.	Olawumi	Azeez Olawumi	
90.	Gidado	Jamiu Kundi	
91.	Emiola	Alh. Bahiru Oladotun	
92.	Adebayo	Alh. Soliy Akanbi Fulani	
93.	Ofearan	Wasiu Obakeu	
94.	Gaa Olorogun	Kadir Mohammed	
95.	Oladuntoye	Salihu Amari	ALI AMARI
96.	Alilu	Alh. Abdullahi	
97.	Busranul Arifina	Muhydeen Kabara	
98.	Imotedo	Abdullahi Oluokun	
99.	Shawo Olarewaju	Musbau Usman	
100.	Anwair-Fiaidat	Ganiy Oluokun	
101	Munirat Memorial	Jamihu Yusufu	
102.	Gbobaniyi	Abdullahi Amoko	
103.	Gboyega	Musbau Olowa	
104.	Adebisi Memorial	Khalifat W. Adebisi	
105.	Rasaq Memorial	Ayanlere	
106.	Awere	Ibrahim Awere	
107.	Ike Oluwa	Alfa Azeez	
108.	Riliwanu	Abdu-Rhaman Aro	
109.	Allahu Akbar	Tajudeen Olatunde	
110.	Allahu Lateef	Mubaraq Amoko	
111.	Abanise	Alh. Amusa	
112	Ike-Oluwa	Alh. Ejiwumi	
113.	Olohunsogo	Akorede Salman	
114.	Nurul Darein	Alfa Nurain	
115.	Halullahi	Suraudeen Salahudeen	
116.	Ifayabale	Jimoh Ajilo	
117.	Alesinloye	Abdul Lateef Salawu	
118.	Faham	Tiamiyu Gbedemuke	
119.	Hajiya Halimo Yusuf	Gazali Moronkeji	
120.	Ibrahim Memorial	Sherifdeen Amukuhde	
121.	Ike-Oluwa	Ganiyi Salman	
122.	Surulere Mosque	Akeem Mustapha	
123.	Doiapo Mosque	Lukman Zakariyah	

News



Alhaji Dahiru Bobbo the chairman Boundary Adjustment and the special assistant to President Obasanjo on Petroleum Alhaji Ja'ataru Paki during their meeting with president Obasanjo held at the state House Abuja Wednesday. *Pix: Oroye.*

Five chiefs upgraded in Taraba

From Ado Adamu *in Jalingo*

Five second class chiefs in Taraba state have been upgraded to First class status.

Similarly, the state government has approved the creation of 11 chiefdoms with Third class status and one hundred and sixty seven districts across the state.

The second class chiefs upgraded to first class status includes, the Chief of Zing, Chief of Gashaka, Chief of Donga and the vacant stool of the Chief of Mambilla and Takum.

The chiefdoms to be created which are of Third class status includes; Dakka, Mumuye, Bakundi, Gassol, M/Biyu and Lau. Others include; Wurkum and Old Muri district, all from Muri emirate.

Other chiefdoms to be created are; Ibbi from Wukari traditional council while Kurmi chiefdom is to be created out of Mambilla traditional council.

Already, a letter from governor Jolly T. Nyame addressed to the Speaker of the state House of Assembly through the Special Adviser to the Governor on legislative and legal matters, Barr. Ibrahim Elsudi, seeking the confirmation of the upgraded chiefs and the newly created chiefdoms and districts has been delivered for the House's final approval.

He said though the commission has recommended the creation of over one hundred chiefdoms, the government rejected it because of its financial and other implications.

El-sudi said that government has decided to allow all the existing emirates and traditional councils intact because of their historical linkages.

On the vacant stools in Takum and Sardauna local government area, the governor informed of house the government's arrangement to resolve the chieftaincy problems in the two areas, stressing that the matter will be address before expiration of his tenure in office.

Meanwhile, members of the House, after receiving the governor's letter, have agreed to deliberate extensively after consultations with the various communities and their constituencies.

Wabara should be probed – *Tsav*

From Musa Umar Kazaure, *Regional Editor (Kano)*

Former Lagos State.com missioner of police, Alhaji Abubkar Bula Tsav has commended Obasanjo for dismissing former minister of education, Professor Fabian Osuji.

He however said that the senate president's resignation is not enough as a key player in the N55m scandal. "Even though Wabara has tendered his resignation, but I think the resignation should not be sufficient. He should also be investigated if found to be involved, should be taken to court. After all, he did not win the election," Bula Tsav posited.

The former police boss-turn-anti-corruption crusader, told *Daily Trust* in Kano that the president seems to have woken up to his responsibility on seriously fight corruption and expressed hope that the president will not be selective in his latest corruption crusade but will sustain the momentum.

Alhaji Abubakar Tsav reminded the president that nothing short of arraigning former Inspector-General of police Tafa Balogun before the court will be acceptable to Nigerians, adding that the former IGP should have been dismissed like the minister of education because Tafa's corruption is much more than what the education minister did.

He added, "by asking him to resign, it is like saying he should go and enjoy the money he embezzled. If he takes others to court and refuses to take others to court, it means that he is discriminatory in the application of the law of corruption."

Alhaji Bula Tsav said if the president is really serious about fighting corruption in Nigeria, he should give teeth to the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission and cited an example of the petition he wrote attached with documents to the ICPC against the governor of Benue State but nothing has been done by the ICPC since he gave the petition three years ago and promised to get the petition from the ICPC to the president for action if he is serious about anti-corruption in Nigeria.

NEPA's privatisation, key to energy dev –*Sambo*

By Hamisu Muhammad, *Business Reporter*

The Director General, Energy Commission of Nigeria (ECN), Professor Abubakar Sani Sambo, says the privatisation of the National Electricity Power Authority (NEPA), will provide abundant opportunities and encourage energy sector development in Nigeria.

He said several ways to generate power supply through Energy exists but have remained untapped as a result of monopoly in the power sector.

Speaking to *Daily Trust* in his office yesterday, Prof. Sambo said energy impacts greatly on every aspect of life and is essential to the production of goods and services to achieve economic development.

Analysing the power generation by NEPA, Prof. Sambo said, stations operated at less than 30 percent maximum capacity for a while. "This implies that supply from the national grid has been less than 2,000MW, which fell short of the estimated peak demand of 2,500mw."

He attributed this shortage to poor maintenance and unimplemented grid expansion programmes, stressing that lack of funds have been reasons advanced for inadequate supply.

Sambo said if private firms will be in operation in the sector, the situation will improve and the economy can attract more investors.

He commended federal government's efforts privatised NEPA by approving national energy policy for the country.

Katsina to re-afforest 10,030 hectares of land

From Lawal Ibrahim *Correspondent (Katsina)*

The Katsina State gov ernment plans to re-afforest 10,030 hectares of land in about twelve frontline local governments of the state.

Meanwhile 2.2 million tree seedlings are to be planted this year covering 846 hectares of about 114 belt, while gum arabic plantation will be planted in all the three senatorial districts covering 2,400 hectares.

Governor Yaradua who inspected the seedlings ready for plantation at Kabatawa nursery in Katsina state accompanied by the state commissioner of Agric, Alh Ali Hussain Dutsinma and the director, forestry in the ministry, Alh. Yusuf Umar, was told that if successfully implemented, the entire state would be re-afforested and prevented from the threat of desert encroachment.

The government was told that the seedlings selected for the exercise which included Neem and Gum Arabic trees also have the potentials to boost employment for the local communities as well as attract some foreign exchange.

The local government selected for the exercise are Ma'adua, Zango, Baure, Jibiya, Katsina and Mashi while the rest are Batsari, Karta, Dutsi, Daura and Sandamu local government areas.

'Why INEC redeployed staff"

Aliyu Haruna, *Correspondent, Kaduna and Manjam Musa Umar, Intern Kaduna*

The Kaduna State Resi dent Electoral Commis sioner, Barrister Aliyu Marafa, says has said that the recent redeployment of 60% of its entire workforce from grade level 07-14 by the commission is to strengthen the quality of the workforce across the federation in preparation for the 2007 general elections.

Barrister Marafa disclosed this at the Maiden meeting of the commission with the newly redeployed local government electoral officers in Kaduna.

He advised the redeployed staff to take their postings in good faith and as part of their official duty which they undertook to perform anywhere in the country adding that in August 2003 after the general elections, the commission organised a post-election retreats in Kaduna with all the stakeholders and later all INEC state officers organised workshops and seminars and papers presented were analysed and compiled into a Draft Electoral Amendment Bill and has since been submitted to the National Assembly and recently a copy was given to the National Political Reform Conference (NPRC).

Barrister Marafa also said that other measures have been taken by the commission which will help conduct a free and fair elections and explained the conduct of continuous registration of voters which INEC intends to commence as soon as funds are made available.

He stressed that the aim of the continuous registration of voters is to specifically register those who have attained the voting age but could not register in the last election's and those who have relocated out of the registration areas and to remove the name of the deceased from the register.

He also stressed the need for the electoral officers to settle down and familiarise with their stations, and all registration areas (wards) and units in order not to encounter problems during the elections.

He further urged the officers to work hard towards actualising a free and fair election in the state as seasoned, experienced and exposed election administrators.

FG inaugurates c'ttee on TSA

By Mohammed S. Shehu, *Reporter Travel & Leisure*

The federal government has inaugurated the National Tourism Satellite Account Implementation (TSA), committee for the collating of database to measure the size of the economic sectors that are not defined or included as industries in the national account.

Inaugurating the committee yesterday in Abuja, the minister of culture and tourism, Amb. Frank N. Ogbuewu, said the committee was constituted to enable Nigeria gather reliable statistical information to measure the contribution of tourism to the economy.

"The need for a satellite account for tourism arose because tourism as a service industry, is not defined in the system of national accounts in the way other industries are classified. It is associated with demand-based concepts, not by its outputs, but by its use," Ogbueweu stressed.

He said TSA when fully utilised would provide a mechanism by which those economic aspects of tourism could be drawn out and analysed separately.

Ogbuewu expressed hope that the TSA committee will produce a permanent tourism database that will create a high profile for tourism statistics in Nigeria.

Speaking on the project, the director of the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC), Mrs. Fidelia Oyahkhilome, stated that with the implementation of the TSA, Tourism Gross Domestic Product (TGDP), Tourism Ranking, Tourism Employment, Tourism Investment, Tax Revenue, and Tourism Consumption will be easily determined and qualified.

Lagos gets new police boss

By Bola Ojuola, *(Stringer Lagos)*

A new commissioner of police (CP), Mr. Ade Ajakaye, has been appointed for the Lagos State police command.

Mr. Ajakaye, until his appointment was the commissioner of police in Borno State. The new police boss takes over Lagos State from Mr. Irael Ajao who has just been promoted Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIG).

Ajao is expected to take over from AIG Gazali who has been posted to Benin to head Zone 5.

Mr. Ajakaye told *Daily Trust* on telephone yesterday that he will resume office immediately after the Easter break.

Meanwhile, a lot of changes are being made by the present leadership of the police to enhance the performance of officers, said the Force Police Relations Officer (FPRO), Mr. Emmanuel Ighodalo, a superintendent of police (SP).



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Opinion

Confab, ethics and history

By Moses Kolade

For those who think, life is a comedy; for those who feel, life is a tragedy.- Anonymous

As the nominees discuss at the on-going Political Reform Conference, it is important to make some observations. Firstly the bias for political reform underplays the seriousness of our problem today. What do we do with political reforms when the foundational aspects of our collective existence are yet to be reformed? If the purview is to extend beyond political reforms, then why limit people's imagination by the choice of christening?

One hopes that the discussants will be able to come up with meaningful recommendations, what with the fact that most were nominated by PDP apparatchik who make them feel obligated and also the litter of no-go-areas that threatens the discussions.

According to Edmund Burke, for evil to flourish, good people have to do nothing and evil shall flourish. It is pertinent to point out the fact that if we are reasonable, we should be bothered about the legacy we are leaving for our very impressionable children. Let's concentrate on the children (maybe 15 years and below) and begin to demonstrate to them that we are serious about those things preached at churches and mosques every Sunday and Friday.

I do not want to term the suggestion as brainwashing, though what is required is just that. But it is important to show with empirical evidence when we say crime does not pay, also to depict vividly the end result of drug-abuse, armed robbery, bribery and corruption on the society at large. Better still the impressionable students ought to be convinced that fairness, justice, equity and transparency are the only principles that can assure their survival.

The only avenue that this can be done is by tinkering with the educational curriculum. Firstly by making the study of Nigerian contemporary history compulsory at every level, like it is in the United States of America, we would be learning from our past. How could we have banished relevant history in the first place anyway? Is it not criminal that history has faded into non-existence as a national subject? The last time I checked, most schools do not have the teachers and so do not bother.

How can a man know where he is going and how much farther he has to go if he doesn't know where he is coming from? And they say when you don't know where you are heading, any road leads to your destination, which is most likely destruction. I am not talking here of history deliberately distorted for the enjoyment of the holders of power, but such as is presented in the plainest manner that leaves a lot of room for analysis. In these days when reading as a culture has almost hit zero this is something that should be left to individuals to choose. In the teaching of History lies the cohesion of this country. It is not enough to wish unity when we are afraid of the ghosts of the past.

In my own foray down the historical road for example, I discovered the roles of the colonial masters and how they operated. I recall reading Prof Kole Omotosho's depiction of why the colonialists deliberately stunted western education in the north of Nigeria just because the southern guys were already standing up to them. Many of the British administrators then understood and could speak our local languages better than many of us.

I also discovered the role that the fathers of many of our public office holders today played in getting the country to its present state, for good or ill. The most shocking part may arguably be the acquisition of this National Debt, most of which disappeared into people's pockets, whose children in turn flaunt our yoke in our faces today. History is everything. It's proper analysis sets events in proper perspective. How can we ensure that children of 419 scammers, fraudsters and armed robbers do not buy votes with their ill-gotten money and become our leaders tomorrow? By developing and studying our contemporary history and by entrenching it in our curriculum. How do we ensure that the children of the looters of our commonwealth, who collected debts from foreign banks on behalf of all of us but diverted all to their Swiss accounts, do not bamboozle us and install themselves as maximum rulers tomorrow? Simply, by going back to History.

Having discovered the critical role of History in a nation's life, it surprises me less that Nigeria, a great nation ordinarily, has been going round and round in circles. And they say that insanity is the tendency to do something in the same manner and expect different results. Are we then an insane society? We see a situation where Government consistently and repeatedly takes on the people, the academia, and labour and everything suffers. And then just as you heave a sigh of relief, another local war begins again.

I insist that rather than share oil windfall to discredited state governors, and allow such huge funds disappear once again, we can invest in this idea of a lifetime. Can this be appreciated? I doubt, but the alternative is horrifying! According to Theodore Roosevelt, to educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society. The third of the seven deadly sins listed by Mahatma Ghandi is 'knowledge without character', which is what we manufacture here everyday.

Need I say that the inability of most traditional Afr- document their history was what gave the colonialists more power and the ability to then distort history to suit their imperial purposes. On the other hand, our Government may decide to privatize the learning of History anyway, since the World Bank has told them that that is the way to go. But the World Bank operatives will not dwell on the values that we need to build in order to sustain the economic gains as is done in their home country. The issue is not just corruption and financial crimes. Those are mere symptoms of a lack of constructive and systematic ideology.

In *'if you want to be rich and happy'*, Robert Kiyosaki brought to the fore the fact that schools even in USA do not teach Ethics and Positive Attitude as a subject. He posited that because of this the schools are churning out millions of people who believe it's a dog-eat-dog world and set about perfecting the kind of world they have been taught rather than make it a better place through cooperation. He also talked about the fact that nobody teaches about the meaning, importance and management of money and personal finance which is why most people fail in life in spite of their education.

In a most urgent fashion, I wish somebody could see the light and insert some sort of subject in our children's curriculum where they can be taught the benefits of service, sacrifice, honesty, modesty, mutual respect, self respect, hardwork, meditation and thinking, self-restraint, the uses of their youth and energy, positive thinking, can-do attitude and so on. I'm not talking religion here. Though many of these values are illustrated in the religious books, but a deeper impact will be achieved if they are taught in classes on a daily basis and on a lighter note. Up till now, with the kind of reality we have exposed our children to, the adults had better lived forever. Because even if Nigeria turns out good in the future, these children cannot handle it. Why?

These are children who are aware of the powers of corruption and cutting corners. These are children who saw their fathers fail for being honest, and then succeed when they were dishonest. Impressionable minds, who have been made to see that hardwork is nothing but 419 is something (3 secondary school students who successfully swindled an Australian were caught recently), who have been made to feel the injustice of society and are ready to get back at just anybody by joining armed robbery gangs. Parents try to ensure their children do not believe what they see, but at best replace the messages with those of parochialism, religious segregation and unnecessary peer competition. The unfolding scenario frightens the living daylight out of me.

Kolade, wrotes from Plot 661/4 Yauri Close, Garki II

Corruption as reason and excuse

By Paul Adujie

It is beginning to dawn on me that corruption as phenomenon and scourge has become a catch-all phrase or an omnibus term with which some Nigerians and non-Nigerians use to frequently describe actions and inactions, and to encompass what has occurred in the past, what is occurring now or will occur in the future in Nigeria, nay Africa and by extension, the rest of the developing world. Corruption explains abject circumstances in Africa?

Corruption has come to mean something that embodies some sorts of excuse and or defense for those who are, in the first place, unwilling to take act, those evidently incapable of acting or taking meaningful actions, to begin with, those in these categories, also include persons and institutions, local or foreign, who are unable to act, neglected to act or have actually refused to act, whether for internal or externals reasons.

Among some Nigerians, at home, and abroad, there seem to be this shared-belief that the only reason the Americans and Europeans do not blare Nigerian music at American and European Airports, (Nigerian music is never played at foreign airports), and so, you will never hear music such as Fela Kuti, Bongos Ikwe, Celestine Ukwu, Bala Miller, Sonny Okosun, DanMaraya Jos, Osita Osadebe, Rex Lawson, I.K Dairo, Sunny Ade, Ebenezer Obey etc at American and Europeans Airports or other public space, but Nigerians are all- too-happy to play American and European music in public space and at public events, apparently, because there is corruption in Nigeria?

The reason Poland, a small country in the then communist atheist eastern Europe produced a Catholic Pope some thirty-years ago, before Nigeria had a chance to produce a Catholic Pope, is also because of corruption in Nigeria? This, even though there are more Catholics in Anambra state than in Poland even after communism fell that eastern European country. This even though we know there of course more catholic in all of Nigeria than many European countries put together; In fact, there are also more catholic devotees in Mexico than in the Roman Catholic Rome, Italy and St. Peter Basilica is not in Cancun or Gualahara or Nnewi! Ah, it is because of corruption!

Nigeria would have since assumed permanent member status at the United Nations' Security Council with veto or reserved powers at the UN were it not for corruption in Nigeria! Ah! The reason most non-Nigerian do make ANY efforts to pronounce or say our name correctly or properly, is because, you guessed it! Corruption, corruption is the reason we will not receive debt cancellations, reparations or investments or reason a Nigerian was denied his Olympic gold in Australia? Oh please! Snake oil good for all ills?

It seem to me that too many Nigerians these days, are unwilling to contemplate Nigeria's bounteous and they are unwilling to portray Nigeria in best lights, so that everything Nigerian in frequently given a downward definition by these folks.

Matters pertaining to economic and political development are always said to be unsustainable in Nigeria, such issues are then promptly discussed I almost fatalistic terms and too often, many are too quick to conclude, even without a scintilla of survey, planning or strategy and efforts haven been expended, they will pronounce every new idea dead on arrival, these pessimists and cynics are apt to announce their predictions and forecasts in the negative territories, as they insist on the improbabilities of every idea in Nigeria about everything Nigerian, be it business investments, sports, tourism or medicine or infrastructures.

We have been bombarded with why it is implausible to have economic, political and even cultural renaissance, rebirth and renewal; We are always informed always! Always pointedly informed, that Nigeria is irredeemable, because corruption, immorality and blight have festered and festooned upon Nigeria, all over Nigeria, for far too long.

Nigerians it appears, are told, and too many have come to accept, that corruption was born, planted, fertilized, raised and nurtured in Nigeria, corruption is a Nigerian word like tuwo, elubo or isi-ewu, its tap roots are deep in our beloved country's fertile soil and it will never depart? Insistently, they tell us, the anti corruption campaign being waged by the current federal government, despite obvious results or dividends by way of recovered funds previously looted by some public office holders, all effort are condemned as not vigorously intense enough.

All these pessimisms are delivered in tones replete with moral certainties or certifiable certitudes by those who prefer to believe that Nigeria is sleep-walking into hell-fire or we are a nation facing an impending calamity of unimaginable proportions akin only to apocalyptic Armageddon!

It has come to pass, that some Nigerians as well as their foreign counterparts, see no future for Nigerians and Nigeria, if at all, there is any future, they forecast it to only include, doom and gloom, and a continued decay, neglect of previously abandoned public infrastructures and systems, these Nigerians and their foreign supports, cannot even concede seeing a possibility of hope for the multitude of Nigerians in Nigeria, under any circumstances whatsoever! In my opinion, the persons with this sorts of mindsets, cannot even sell cold water to a thirsty person or as Phyllis Diller once said of her loser former husband, these are the sorts of persons, "who could not even sell Windex to a peeping Tom" irked by rumors that her loser former husband pretentiously claimed to be her manager, handler and business agent, her husband she said, failed to recognize or appreciate her renowned and boundless creativity and ing, piano playing, comedy and writing....just as too many Nigerians fail to appreciate the fact that Nigeria is a pearl and diamond of exquisite attributes and qualities!

As too many Nigerians and their non-Nigerian cohorts continue to wallow in only things negative on the one hand, there are many Nigerians and non-Nigerians who have been investing in Nigeria and they continue to profit from such business ventures, I read a story recently in *ThisDay*, in which an India investor and producer of juices in Nigeria for Nigerian and foreign consumption, recounted how his friends tried but failed to dissuade him from coming to Nigeria, where he has now made and continues to make fortunes. Foreign airlines are jostling for positions, and profits in Nigeria's lucrative travel routes, Foreign Banks in Nigerian are making huge profits as well, the technology and communications sector have all been making gigantic profits and Nigeria remains a growth-growth destination for major telecommunications companies, especially of the GSM kind. If you have no money to invest, or if you are racist, do not use corruption as excuse!

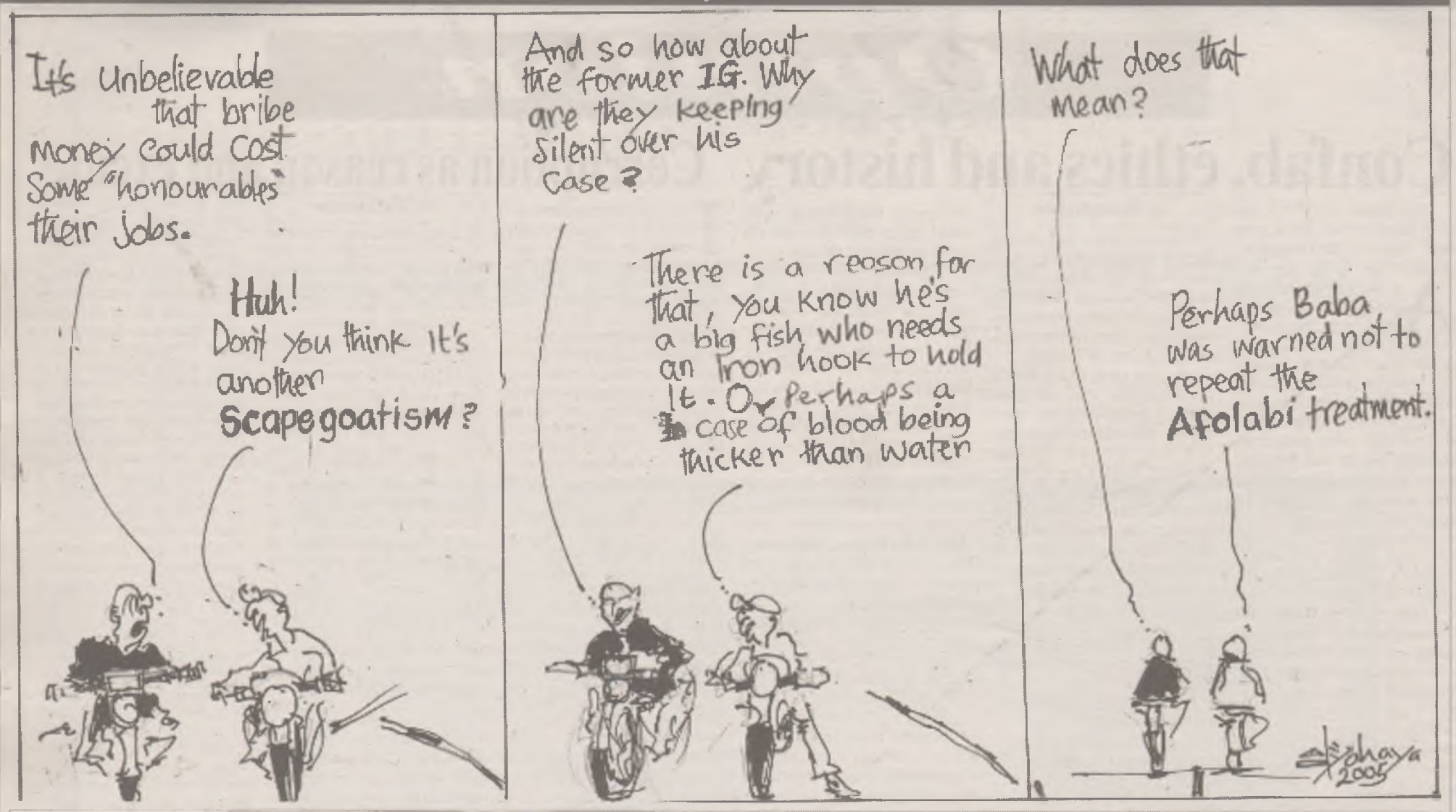
There are many who are taking who are taking advantage of the wondrously wonderful opportunities Nigeria presents to the world, in all sectors of our economy and of human endeavor, Nigerians and Nigeria remains the most hospitable people and country on earth, Nigerians are world renowned as ever affable, amiable, cordial, and most charitable! What exactly is it? That makes some Nigerians misunderstand the difference between acknowledging the challenges or difficulties a person or country may face, on the one hand, and the clear and ceaseless hopelessness, and more proclamations of continuing hopelessness on the other hand? They engage in these predictions of the sky-will-fall, while they proffer no solutions whatsoever!

Imagine if we were all to adjudge all of the current policies of government ineffective or ineffectual, or pronounce that the sundry reforms as useless as pouring water into a basket, as they are condemned as half-hearted, while similarly insisting that is pervasively endemic, as some are now adamant that corruption interferes with regular sunshine and rainfall? What would the rest Nigerians, who are not cynical, pessimistic or suicidal, would be very discouraged and should do what?

Self-fulfilling prophecies and as a man thinks, it is said, so he is, help a child, instead repeating he going to amount to nothing, the child may internalize such diminishing mindset and fail!

If you have nothing usefully constructive to say or write about Nigeria, please say or write nothing! Constructive criticisms are desirable, but destructive criticisms have gotten nobody or no nation, anywhere fast! We are Nigeria, Nigeria is us, change and reform begins with us!

Culled from:



YOUR LETTERS

Re: Kudos to Yoruba House Members

As the National Political Reform Conference progresses, many important issues will be raised, such as the relationship between "ethnic nationalities."

Here, Ujudud Shariffs article captioned "Kudos to Yoruba House members" *(Daily Trust,* November 23, 2004) therefore becomes very instructive. The article in question was written on the heels of the opposition by Yoruba members of the House of Representatives to the virement motion transferring N200 million from Lagos Bar Beach project to some projects in Katsina, Yobe and Borno States.

While congratulating the Yoruba House members for their xenophobia, the writer, himself a northerner, lampooned past Nigerian leaders from his part of the country for failing to northernize the national resources as much as the Yoruba are currently doing. He did not end there, as he advised other ethnic nationality groups to copy the Yoruba model whenever it becomes their turn to produce the president of Nigeria. In concrete terms, Ujudud's solution to the problem of marginalization reads: "an eye for an eye, naira for naira, and appointment for appointment" (whatever that means).

The intention here is not to criticize Shariff's opinions. Rather, it is used as a preface because the issues raised represent the feelings of a majority of Nigerians, not least the Yoruba. The use of positions of power and offices of public trust to empower people from the same group as the power holder, or if and when possible to victimize people from other parts of the country, is not new in Nigeria. If anything, the problem has continued to worsen often taking dimensions that could consume us all unless reason prevails over parochial and anachronistic sentiments of some people in authority.

For instance, why should the Lagos Bar Beach assume the status of a Yoruba heritage which preservation must be championed by Yoruba parliamentarians alone? Are Yoruba people the only inhabitants of Lagos such that they alone would suffer if the ocean overflows its bank? Why should northerners alone worry about desertification as though people from other parts of the country do not reside there and are as a result similarly threatened by the consequences of desert encroachment?

Again, why should the Onitsha/Owerri road be dubiously called a South East road which maintenance must be the concern of people from that geo-political zone? Recall that members of Abia State House of Assembly had embarked on hunger strike to draw sympathy from the Federal Government to repair the road. One then asks, are people from the zone the only ones traveling by that road? What about the environmental degradation in the Niger Delta that has become the exclusive problem of the Ijaw and other ethnic nationality groups in the area?

Why should Directors look the other way when drivers are being sacked enmasse in the name of public service reforms? If all of us are equal and must collectively make sacrifices for the common good, why should the presidency, leading by example, not-dispense with the array of Special Advisers, Special Assistants and most recently, Special Cases, whose roles, if any at all, are at best in conflict with the roles of Ministers? And talking about sacrifice, between the overfed and the already starving segments of the society, who should make the most sacrifice for the common good?

The National Political Reform Conference provides an opportunity for Nigeria to right the wrongs of the past and build a country where the values of equity, equality and justice form the basis of state policy. One way of doing so is to first define and understand what we mean when we refer to someone as a Nigerian. And it is hoped that delegates to the conference should be able to address this aspect of the many and diverse challenges of nation building.

Ochenna Osai, No 1, Dallas Drive Chika, Airport road Abuja.

Confab, North and fiscal federalism

There has been endless advocacy for fiscal federalism/Resource control from almost all delegates of the southern part of the country at the ongoing national confab. This cannot be separated from their quest to control funds acruing from oil which is the major source of revenue for the country. Fiscal Federalism as defined by Dr. A.P Odofin of The Ahmadu Bello University Zaria can be seen as "a situation where the component units of the federation own, control and manage their resources". From this definition we can thus deduce that it's a situation where various states of the federation wholly control their resources.

Since the commencement of the National Political Reform Conference almost all the agenda's of the southern states, southern socio-cultural organizations, ethnic associations and all other groups from the south has been advocating for resource control/ fiscal federalism and restructuring of Nigerian Federalism from the present states units to regional units.

In case of achieving this set objective of theirs the implication could be very devastating to the Northern part of the country. Oil has been the major source of revenue for the nation for more than two to contribute predominantly to the nation's revenue had been abandoned with the discovery of oil in commercial quantity. The discovery of oil has stalled agricultural development in the country and we in the North had been largely responsible for the sorry state of agricultural sector.

Our leaders in the North had abandoned the sector and had made little effort in revitalizing it. They have done little in industrializing the region despite the large chunk of oil money they have embezzled while in office. Agriculture, Education, Agro-Allied Industry, Textile, Media, Solid minerals and other vital sectors that could have improved the life of the common people had been greatly abandoned with each one of them waiting for Government to use oil revenue to "develop" the region.

It is sad that our leaders don't want to participate in the developmental process of the region, they believe in the "top-down" development policy where by the government chart and implement a developmental plan for the country. No government in the world had successfully developed its people, genuine development is carried out by the people with government assisting, and this is self-generating development which is independent.

And now our delegates who through one way or the other in the North are ganging up against southern aspirations of fiscal federalism. They are determined by all means to see that it doesn't come to life. They want us to continue to depend on oil for our sustenance largely because they are not ready to contribute to the development of the region. It's sad that those that fight in our names don't believe in us but rather they prefer the Swiss people. They prefer to be giving little alms and cash gifts to the people so they could meet their immediate needs.

The North has had all opportunity to revive the economy and make it functional and buoyant. our leaders had made lots of money off oil revenue every rational human being would expect them to use to put our economy to use and invest those resources in the region, but rather they invested in banks abroad.

The main agenda of this confab is political reform with some little No-Go-Area; secession and co. But its like our delegates from the North have more No-Go-Areas, one hardly knows what their agenda is. But I guess their agenda is to counter Southern objectives, they want to maintain status quo, they don't want change they are conservatives as Wada Nas classified them.

I guess this is the right time to put sense into our leader's head this confab. Immediately after the confab I suggest there should be a Northern Economic summit to address issues that stalled development in the region and also persuade our wealthy ones to invest in the region.

The Vice President should again chair this summit His Abti-American University is a good way to address educational backwardness of the region and others should emulate by embarking on such similar projects that will benefit the people of the region. Surely if our human and mineral resources are fully utilized in the region we will not be afraid of fiscal federalism/resource control but as long as we remain dependent on oil revenue for our sustenance we will never make any efforts to utilize our own resources in the region and. we will continue to be threatened by fiscal federalism/resource control and other separatist tendencies.

I will conclude by praying for good leaders to emerge in 2007 who have the people at their heart who understand the yearnings and aspirations of the majority *talakawa*.

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

Opinion

Of debt repudiation and official corruption

By Ahmed B. Sa'id

The latest in the entertainment series of how the cookies are crumbling in high places over corrupt practices appear to have not only given our loud clamour for debt forgiveness the ingredients for reflection, but interestingly, struggle for relevance.

If this appears far from the truth, how else do we reconcile the seeming coincidence in the twin events of a Senate President's Roundtable on Debt, Development and Democracy, organised in collaboration with the Debt Management Office, with a Presidential broadcast on perhaps the greatest episode in Nigeria's official scam, which I would rather tag the *gate* of all in the *gates*, in the evening of the same day?

Close to what appeared pre-emptive of what was to come, Vice President Atiku Abubakar had taken a swipe on the legislators on corruption at the opening ceremony of the event at Nicon Hilton Hotel in almost as terse a tone as that of his boss whom he had held brief for at that event. That event is significant, I think, as Right Honourable Adolphus Wabara's last official public function in the capacity of senate president, depending on April 5th 2005 when the National Assembly reconvenes.

Now, to the debt question: it is established that before 1975, the debt issue was not a crisis. Some analysts have in fact tied the debt palaver to our nation's oil exploration. While the debts have remained largely questionable in certain quarters owing to the nature and dynamics involved, particularly trade debts, and the fact that records on them are spurious as alleged, having emerged from creditor sources, truth is, a larger chunk of them accrue to fines, fees, penalties on defaults, interests and so on which all amount to the obvious: unsustainable. The issue, as it were, has moved beyond total debt servicing, to options which are now being determined through negotiations at bilateral and multilateral levels by creditor and debtor nations.

Moral arguments on the debt issue have continued to tie emotional sentiments to it, particularly with regards to yardsticks which determine categorization of states into the debt forgivable strata. It is true that to a certain extent, creditors are as responsible as debtor nations, for widely acknowledged push and pull factors. But the hue and cry for debt forgiveness by Nigeria is justifiable. Some cases are pertinent here. One: our role in peace keeping operations in the continent over the years with enormous human and financial commitment. Two, democratisation of structures of government. Three, institutionalisation of economic reforms even to the detriment of the people. Four, enthronement of a new public culture of transparency accountability, probity and due process, and more importantly, the war against graft.

A quick appraisal: many lives have been lost and resources drained in peace keeping operations in Liberia, Sierra Leone, e.t.c. Our democracy is gradually being nurtured with all the attendant mistakes. Present reforms have dehumanised more Nigerians than the era before it, with more indigenous factories closing shops while massive privatization of state owned parastatals and businesses and export of human and material capital have held sway, amidst dilapidating national values and basic infrastructure. Then to the more crucial, an apparently ironical philosophy in leadership: while the struggle for transparency and accountability mounts, the same political class is frustrating it. The Fiscal Responsibility and Due Process Bills meant to replace the old "ways and means" have been major sources of insomnia to our lawmakers. The Executive on the other hand has kept mute on proceeds from the privatization exercise and recovered stolen funds, still thinking, perhaps, about what to do with it. It is on record that proceeds from Australia's privatization exercise put paid to its over $500 billion debt within a period of five years. Lastly, Nigeria's fight against corruption, is getting broader and consuming more of the leadership class that instituted it.

In retrospect, August 2003, Malam Nasir Ahmed el-Rufai, Minister,FCT alleged that Deputy Senate President Ibrahim Mantu and Senator Jonathan Zwingina had demanded N54 million for him to be cleared as ministerial nominee. For want of evidence, the duo got a clean bill from their colleagues after 'thorough' investigation.

February 16, 2005, Honourable Haruna Yerima, member, House of Representatives accused his colleagues of taking bribes from ministers and heads of agencies to pass their budgets and approve their requests, in addition to the MTN recharge cards scandal. Investigations, still on-going, Yerima, since suspended.

Yerima's suspension did not come as a surprise, since our lawmakers are known for getting rid of anyone who stands on their way. Recall how they all went for el-Rufai's head over his unsavoury comments, before President Obasanjo's intervention and el≤Rufai's celebrated apology. A more recent example quite fresh in our memory is, face≤off with Kaduna State Governor, Ahmed Mohammed Makarfi. For a better under-standing of the nexus between the deepening debt crisis and the leadership question in Nigeria, it can be easily appreciated that the former is largely a function of the latter.

Today, I am told that from .a profile of $11 billion as at 31 st December 1983, our debt stands at $35 billion, December 2004, in spite of enormous servicing. Our foreign reserve is put at some $20 billion. Mind you; more debts are still being sourced.

Its is even more pathetic that while some of our creditors have good enough reasons to think that we are not a poor country, hence liable for the obligation, the reality on the ground shows otherwise, even though our leadership continues to offer creditors justification for the usurpation of the *status quo ante*.

The debt issue has no doubt become a strategic weapon of international diplomacy and politics, accounting for failure of third world economies on one divide. On the other divide, the debtor has been a willing tool in the perpetuation of the dominant hegemonic interest of the super creditor clubs and nations who in any case, owe us a moral obligation to cancel these debts that amount to insignificance when compared to the reparation on the injustices of slavery and colonialism we ought to be vigorously demanding.

Be that as it may, the end to these debts seems near. In spite of the fact that the goal post would continue to shift, it is easy for us to leave our creditors to worry about the challenges of realising the 20 IS targeted Millennium Development Goals, amidst the realities of ailing and stunted third world nations. The British government has shown concern in its leadership of the crusade to write off Africa's $300 billion debt, beginning with $80 billion by July this year. Its specific interest is however another issue entirely. At least we know the interest behind Iraq's 30% debt stock reduction and subsequent reliefs proposed as championed by the US!

Now that the die is cast the challenge is of the Nigerian leadership and its institutions. The President has taken the first step. What happens on the floors of the National Assembly on April Sth remains until then. The same tests lie with the respective service commissions, the EFCC, the ICPC, and ultimately, the Judiciary, all of which are saddled with the burden of proof and sanction.

It is about time government reconsiders a strategic pruning down of the cost of securing public offices and running governments, which necessitates the lacunae for official stealing in the first instance. More risks should be tied to public offices via total abrogation of the immunity clause from the constitution - one task already in the menu of the on-going National Political Reforms Conference, instead of an elusive quest for debt forgiveness.

Sa'id is of the Writers' Collective (WC) and writes from Lugbe, Abuja.

Beyond the noise on referendum

By Ignatius Orisewezi

The National Political Reform Conference (NPRC) which was inaugurated February 21, 2005 by President Olusegun Obasanjo has as its first assignment the debate of the inaugural speech of Mr. President. This is an important starting point. If the delegates are to fully appreciate the spirit of the conference, the philosophy behind it, and the mindset of the convening authority, it is imperative that they thoroughly read, digest and share their understanding of the issues raised in the inaugural speech among themselves.

Recognizing the delegates as peak performers and authorities in their own rights, I feel there is need to join issues with some of them who want the outcome of the conference, subjected to referendum. One is however emboldened by the fact that the President has enjoined every Nigerian not to be afraid to discuss our problems, challenges, fears and aspirations as a people.

Prominent voices for referendum including Chief Afe Babalola Dr, Olufemi Ologbugbcl of Nigerians in Diaspora Organisation and Prof. Francis Idachada, the former Vice Chancellor of University of Agric Makurdi, contended that they would not want the report of the confab to suffer the fate of the Oputa Panel, fearing that the outcome of the conference might not be implemented. Some of the proponents of the refe-rendum said that con-sidering the hostility of the National Assembly to the conference, manifesting in legal battle and refusal to appropriate fund for the confab, if subjected to the whims and caprices of the National Assembly, the outcome would be jettisoned.

With due respect, it is too early in the day to be cynical about the outcome of the conference which is just beginning.

Much as they have their rights to express their misgivings, it needs be stressed that the challenges before the delegates are too monumental to begin to think of the outcome of a process that has not started. It is like putting a cart before a horse. Our fathers say that a woman who has secured a place to sleep should not begin to look for a mat.

In the hierarchy of issues before the confab, the issue of where or to whom the report will be submitted is down the line. It should not be a matter to distract the members of the conference. The Conveying authority has advised members of the conference to avoid wasting the opportunity in diverting and distracting issues, engaging in meaningless and fruitless debates trying to denigrate what has been done.

The conference is an advisory body, not a tribunal, a court or an arbitration panel, and not a substitute for the executive or the legislature. The Conference is a democratic path to consider all that is necessary to assist the constitutionally established legitimate structures of government the executive, judiciary and legislature - to grow and become more dynamic and more capable of delivering service to the populace. Therefore if the outcome of the conference is to contribute to the strengthening of our democratic enterprise, it is important to ensure that due process is followed. The confab is expected to make recommendations to the convening authority, who will utilize the report in proposing legislations to be forwarded to the National Assembly for enactment. Therefore, the thought of by-passing the legislature because it did not initially show support of the Conference is in bad faith and against the spirit of the exercise.

One of the expressed fears of the lawmakers about the confab is that the conference may grow hydra headed and abolish the National Assembly. The Confab should allay this fear. If the referendum idea is bought, the delegates might be confirming the fears of the lawmakers. The cynicism that the outcome of the confab will go the way of Oputa panel is unfortunate, as it smacks of lack of faith in the personality of Mr. President who fought against all odds to convoke the conference. And if there is anything he could be accused of it is not the lack of, courage and will power.

The essence of the confab is to generate ideas as input towards constitution making and the reordering of our polity in its various ramifications.

It is borne out of our realization that our current political arrangement has some identified distortions, defects, and limitations that call for urgent, focused, and realistic attention, hence this initiative on political reform, Our historical experience at constitution making and political reform shows that we may have some structural defects that require adjustment, so as not to continue to wallow in the political wilderness. We have the challenge of constitutionalism and constitutional reform; challenge of building new accountable, responsive and focused leadership; how to build, operate and sustain real political parties, issues of nationality, identity; credibility and respectability of elections, relations between tiers of government and how to ensure truly democratic governance for all. In all these, the central challenge is how to strengthen the social contract between the leadership and the governed. These are the challenges facing the confab delegates and they are onerous. They should not be preoccupied with whom to submit their report to. Let us not behave like the proverbial man carrying elephant on his head and using his toes to dig for an ant.

Orisewezie, writes from Abuja

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Iraqi parliament and Washington stooges

By Peter Symonds

For all the rhetoric about "democracy", the first session of Iraq's National Assembly last Wednesday could not hide the body's subservience to the US occupiers, its impotency and its deep-seated factional differences.

Even under the British Raj, the leaders of the Indian Congress last century used the limited representative forums to challenge their colonial masters. At last week's assembly, there was not a hint of opposition or protest as the representatives of various parties, all of which supported the US invasion, took their seats.

In Washington, President George Bush described the session as a "bright moment" in the constitutional process. In Baghdad, Washington's political stooges parrotted the same line.

US-installed interim prime minister Ayad Allawi, who is due to step down, proclaimed the country to be "at the gate of a new reign of freedom, dignity and democracy". Dawa Party leader Ibrahim al-Jaafari, who is likely to become the next prime minister, declared: "This day marks a new birth for all Iraqis."

But the circumstances of the gathering speak otherwise. The session had to be held in the convention centre in the heavily fortified Green Zone-headquarters for the US occupation. Police set up checkpoints and a security cordon throughout central Baghdad, banning the presence of vehicles. Delegates had to walk to the hall and submit to body searches. US Apache helicopter gunships hovered overhead. Despite the heavy security, several mortar rounds landed in the Green Zone as the assembly was due to convene.The next government will be just as dependent militarily, politically and economically on the US as the Allawi regime. It will be bound by all the edicts and regulations issued by former US occupation chief, Paul Bremer, including the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), which establishes the framework for elections and a new constitution. All significant decisions about Iraq's future will not be made in Baghdad, but in Washington.

The Bush administration only agreed to elections following mass demonstrations by the Shiite supporters of Ayatollah Ali Sistani, who was demanding a popular vote. The poll on January 30 took place under a state of siege. The overwhelming majority of Sunni voters, who make up about 20 percent of the population, boycotted the election. Overall, only 57 percent of registered voters cast a ballot.



US President George Bush

The United Iraqi Alliance (UIA), based among Shiites, who comprise about 60 percent of the population, won a narrow majority of seats. Even though it's major constituents-the Dawa Party and Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI-backed the Iraq invasion, the UIA had to appeal to anti-US sentiment by promising to end the occupation.

The narrow base of support for the US presence was underscored by the small vote for Washington's preferred candidate-the incumbent Allawi. Despite an aggressive campaign against the UIA's Islamist program and Iranian links, his Iraqi List was only able to secure 14 percent of votes-that is, about 7 percent of the population. The party of current president Ghazi al-Yawar mustered less than 2 percent of the vote.

The Kurdish Alliance (KA), comprising the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party, won 26 percent of the vote by fostering the illusion that regional autonomy would put an end to the persecution and poverty of the Kurds.

None of these parties have any solution to the social disaster caused by the US invasion. Two years after the invasion the majority of Iraqis lack jobs and, in many cases, the basic necessities of life. The country's infrastructure-electricity, water and sanitation-as well as essential services such as education and health are in a state of collapse.

The competing factions of the Iraqi ruling elite are each stirring up sectarian and ethnic differences, firstly, to deflect popular anger and hostility over living standards and the occupation and, secondly, to augment their own privileged position.

Dominant sections of the Shiite political and religious establishment regard the UIA and the demand for an Islamic state as the means to secure their state control for the first time. However, they have come into sharp conflict with the KA, which wants to strengthen the powers of an autonomous Kurdish region that would include the northern city of Kirkuk and neighbouring oil-rich region.

The most striking aspect of last Wednesday's National Assembly was its failure to take the first step toward establishing a new government-the appointment of a new president and two vice-presidents. After seven weeks of backroom haggling, the UIA and KA failed to finalise any agreement. The televised session, which lasted a mere 95 minutes, consisted of banal speeches following a formal swearing-in. The parties could not even agree on the appointment of a permanent assembly speaker.



Ibrahim al-Jaafari, likely to be the next PM

The protracted negotiations are necessitated by the requirement in the Transitional Administrative Law of a two-thirds majority for the appointment of the president and vice-presidents, who in turn select the prime minister. The prime minister and cabinet then require the approval of a simple majority in the assembly before taking office. This complex indirect mechanism was one of several safeguards insisted on by Kurdish and Sunni politicians to give them an effective veto over a potential Shiite majority in the assembly. As a result, the UIA needs the support of the KA, or a combination of smaller parties, in order to form government.

While the Bush administration and the international media have sought to play down the difficulties, negotiations between the UIA and KA have bogged down on basic issues. Kurdish politicians have stopped short of demanding full independence, but are seeking to maintain the substantial de facto autonomy they enjoyed when US and allied warplanes protected the northern "no-fly zone" from the Iraqi military under Saddam Hussein.

As well as seeking the incorporation of Kirkuk into the northern Kurdish region, the Kurdistan Alliance is demanding substantial local powers, including policing and finance, and the right to maintain the Kurdish militia as a virtual standing army. To ensure a strong voice in the government, the KA is seeking the presidency and key ministerial posts such as foreign affairs.

The UIA has sought to delay any decision on Kurdish issues until after the national assembly has drawn up a new constitution, to be ratified by a referendum, in preparation for national elections next January. Shiite politicians, who opposed the guarantees for Kurdish and other minorities in the Transitional Administrative Law, are hoping that fresh national elections under a new constitution will put them in a strong position. Even if a compromise enables a government to be formed, the same disputes will emerge again in the writing of a constitution.

These issues are explosive ones, not just for Iraq, but the broader region as a whole. The sharp disagreements between the UIA and KA contain the seeds for bitter sectarian and ethnic conflicts and possible descent into civil war. Any substantial concessions to Kurdish autonomy have political ramifications for Iraq's neighbours-Iran, Turkey and Syria-which all have significant Kurdish minorities. Turkey has already threatened military action if Kirkuk and its oilfields are integrated into the autonomous Kurdish region.

The lengthy delay in forming a new government is fuelling further alienation and hostility. In comments to the press, ordinary Iraqis expressed deep scepticism that the next government would address any of their concerns.

Haithm Ali, a blacksmith, told the *New York Times*: "I don't expect any government to be formed. And they won't find any solutions to the situation we find ourselves in... The president and the cabinet won't do anything for this neighbourhood [pointing to sewage-flooded streets]. They are only looking out for their own interests."

Bassem Abdul Ahad, a spare parts merchant, exclaimed to the Washington Post: "Why can't we have electricity 24 hours a day like other civilised countries? Why can't we feel secure in our own homes? If those people put aside their personal interests, then we are in good shape. But if they remain centred on their personal concerns, then I feel pessimistic about this whole thing."

In an interview in the *Los Angeles Times*, Awad Abid Zubaida, 35, scathingly referred to those who backed the US invasion. "You know, we've never had any real government and now this is not a real government either; these are all the people who came riding on American tanks. They did nothing before and they will do nothing in the future. We don't really know who is in charge or whether a government will be formed," he said.

Currently Allawi remains in power as the caretaker prime minister and he has not ruled out putting together a ruling coalition that includes the KA and breakaway UIA factions. The longer the negotiations between the UIA and KA drag on, the greater the room for Allawi to manoeuvre and exploit divisions in the UIA. He certainly has backing from the Bush administration for his political scheming.

To date, no deal has been reached between the KA and UIA. A new session of the national assembly has been mooted for Thursday, but there is no guarantee, even if it is convened, that it will be any more successful than the one held last week.

WSWS

Trust International

Africa



President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt

'Mubarak's son won't run for presidency'

President Hosni Mubarak's son tried to end public speculation about his political ambitions by declaring Wednesday that he won't run as a candidate in this fall's presidential elections.

He said his father — who made the surprise announcement earlier this year to allow multi-candidate balloting — had yet to say whether he himself will run for the post again.

"I'm not a candidate," Gamal Mubarak said at a news conference at the headquarters of the ruling National Democratic Party. Gamal, 41, heads a powerful policy-making committee in the NDP.

Also Wednesday, the the banned Muslim Brotherhood — Egypt's oldest and largest Islamic political group — set the stage for a confrontation with authorities by demanding more constitutional amendments and declaring its intent to demonstrate in the streets, where it is not allowed to congregate.

Egypt is witnessing unprecedented heated political debate since Mubarak, 76, ordered the constitutional amendment that would allow more than one candidate to run for president — the first since "yes" or "no" referendums since the 1952 military coup.

Presidential elections are scheduled for September, with parliamentary elections due in November.

Speculation has been rife, even before the constitutional amendment was ordered, that Mubarak was grooming his son to succeed him, something that had riled local opposition groups.

Gamal Mubarak sought to dismiss the conjecture.

"This talk has no basis of truth, with the amendment (there was talks) about a new stance, I'm saying this is baseless. Before that they talked about succession, not only I said, but the president too said this has no element of truth ... We are a democratic republic system reinforced by the constitution," he said.

AU proposes Pan-African force

The African Union (AU) began drawing up plans on Tuesday to establish a 15,000-strong African stand-by force by June 2006. The entire contingent should be able to be deployed within 30 days of an order from the AU's Peace and Security Council.

A draft roadmap on peacekeeping in the continent, released by the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, said five brigades of 3,000 men each would be in place by next year. The roadmap was presented to conflict-resolution experts at the start of a two-day meeting to draw up guidelines for the force.

These experts, who represent regional bodies in Africa, are expected to endorse the roadmap and draw up plans to improve cooperation between the continent's regions.

Said Djinnit, the AU's peace and security commissioner, said it was critical that Africa addressed its own conflicts by "harmonising" its regional peacekeeping forces.

"We need to agree on a roadmap for an African stand-by force," he told the experts. "It is extremely important we all move forward in the same direction."

In addition, a "robust" rapid-reaction force, able to be deployed in 14 days, would be set up by 2010 to prevent genocide if the international community failed to step in, according to the roadmap.

The five brigades of the stand-by force, whose troops would be based in their countries of origin, were expected to be comprised of up to 750 men and 120 military observers, plus helicopter units, engineer units, logistics, military police and medical staff.

A police force would also work with the peacekeepers for more difficult missions.

Somalian govt leaves Kenya in May

The Somali government is to move to Mogadishu in May, Cabinet minister John Koech said Wednesday.

The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union (AU), in charge of the relocation, will have completed preparatory work for the government to go to Somalia.

Next month, said Mr Koech, the Igad council of ministers will meet to "operationalise" the relocation.

On its part, the transitional government, led by President Abdullahi Yusuf, would have completed its duty of "mechanisms of the physical" movement.

"The exercise (preparatory work for relocation) will be completed before end of April. The earliest they can relocate could be in May. It is possible and the AU's programme is ready," said the Regional Cooperation and East African Affairs minister, speaking in his office.

Already, Igad Defence Ministers have completed plans of deploying troops to Somalia which sources said was estimated at 10,000. However, due to financial constraints, a 6,000 force could be sent in the beginning.

Mr Koech declined to state the exact number of troops only remarking: "Defence ministers have assessed the situation and agreed on the strength of the force. We know the number required."

During the press conference on the Somalia and Sudan peace processes, the minister was accompanied by assistant minister Joseph Nyagah and Permanent Secretary Peter Ole Nkuraiyia.

But as the minister expressed optimism of the relocation, a group of warlords were meeting at the Inter-Continental Hotel to plot ways of passing a vote of no confidence in President Yusuf's government.

Led by Mr Osman Ali Atto and Mr Musa Sudi Yallahow, they said they disapproved of the transitional government which has been based in Kenya since, it was established late last year.

France pushes for Sudan war trials

France has presented a draft resolution at the UN which would refer war crimes suspects in Sudan to the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

The US, which opposes the court, is working on a different resolution looking into other options.

France's draft resolution is likely to be adopted unless the US vetoes it.

The pro-government Janjaweed militia in Sudan's Darfur region are accused of killing thousands of villagers and forcing two millions from their homes.

Diplomats say a vote is expected to take place as early as Thursday - possibly ending a Security Council deadlock over how to punish the perpetrators.

Nigeria had previously proposed setting up a special Africa-run tribunal in order to break the deadlock.

A UN commission earlier this year found the atrocities committed in Darfur could be crimes against humanity, and said the culprits should be tried at the Hague court - created to deal with cases of war crimes and genocide.

Even though nine Security Council members are expected to support the resolution, the outcome is still uncertain.

Nigeria, APRM sign MOU

By Jibril Abubakar,
Reporter, Foreign Desk

Nigeria and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) support mission to Nigeria have signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the technical assessment mission.

The Secretary to the Government of the Federation, chief U. J Ekaette signed on behalf of he federal government, while the head of Country Support Mission and an eminent member of the APR panel, Ambassador Buthuel Kiplagat signed on behalf of the APR.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) spells out step to be taken, to "restructure" Nigeria as it is being done in other countries.

The primary aim of the APRM is to encourage participating states to adopt national policies and practices which promote good governance.

According to the Secretary to the Government of Nigeria, U.J Ekaette, the objective is to attain standard practices by participating states.

"This objective is to be attained through self-assessment using the APRM questionnaires and by developing and implementing a national programme of action", he said.

The Country Support Mission of the APRM were in Nigeria between March 21 to March 24, 2005, during which they held various fora with government and the civil society groups.

A communiqué issued at the end of its assignment yesterday said that "Nigeria understood the principles of the APRM, including leadership and commitment at highest levels, inclusi-vity and broad based partici-pation".

It said that in the past ten months, at least six African countries held successful elections, adding that elections are also forth coming in Togo, Cote d'Iviore and Liberia in which there was need for democratic successes.

On the whole, the communiqué maintained that there was consensus between the stakeholders and the government of Nigeria on the need for information dissemination and educating the public on NEPAD and APRM.

It said that there was the necessity for funding the APRM by African countries to reinforce the concepts of ownership.

At a press conference to mark the end of its assignment yesterday in Abuja, Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat said although Nigeria was on track but there was need for it to fight the menace of corruption to logical conclusion.

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Middle East

Bomb blast rocks Lebanon

At least three people have been killed in an explosion in a shopping centre near the Lebanese port city of Junia, north of Beirut.

The victims included security guards working the night shift. Rescuers found a third body in the rubble 12 hours after the early morning explosion on Wednesday.

Lebanese police sources told *Aljazeera* a bomb weighing about 70kg placed inside a bag near a nightclub caused the blast.

Aljazeera's bureau chief in Beirut said the nightclub was closed at the time the bomb went off.

Police said the explosion occurred shortly after midnight in the area of al-Kaslik near Junia, 15km from Beirut.

Lebanese television said the blast also injured eight people.

Bin Jiddu cited security officials as saying the casualties were Indian nationals. There were two diplomats from Italy in the building adjacent to the commercial centre where the blast occurred.

There were no Lebanese nationals among the victims, but one Lebanese and two Sri Lankans were among the injured, *Aljazeera* reported.

Television footage showed extensive damage to the Alta Vista commercial centre, with shards of glass and debris blown across the street.

Al-Kaslik residents, some dazed, others crying, ventured out after sunrise to sweep up glass from shattered shop fronts.

Christian opposition figures who rushed to the scene said the bombing sought to undermine Lebanon's stability and urged supporters to foil any attempts to sow sectarian rifts.

"It is clear that those who carried out this attack are targeting the security and stability of the country," opposition member of parliament Faris Buaz said.

"It is a political message to the (anti-Syrian) independence uprising."

The Christian leaders blamed Lebanon's Syrian-backed security agencies for the blasts, underlining opposition demands for the dismissal of security chiefs and an international investigation into former prime minister Rafiq al-Hariri's 14 February assassination.

Jordan accepts disability award

King Abdullah II of Jordan accepted a global disability award Wednesday for his country's promotion of equal rights for the handicapped, saying free and successful societies must open doors and give hope to all people.

The Franklin Delano Roosevelt International Disability Award, named for the late US president disabled by polio, was presented to Abdullah by the president's granddaughter, Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, who praised Jordan for putting the disabled "in the forefront of its national agenda."

Jordan is the first Arab nation to win the award, joining Italy, Ecuador, Thailand, Hungary, Ireland, Canada and South Korea.

Roosevelt said her grandfather "well understood the many obstacles that all too often prevent those with disabilities from joining the mainstream of civil society."

"Jordan's successful efforts to eliminate these obstacles stand as an inspiration to all of us," she said.

Iraqi forces kill 80 insurgents

At least 80 insurgents have been killed by Iraqi Special Forces backed by US troops in a raid on a training camp near the city of Tikrit, officials said.

An Iraqi commando unit engaged in heavy fighting before seizing control of the camp, 160km north-west of Baghdad, on Tuesday.

Iraqi officials confirmed that at least seven Iraqi commandos died, alongside insurgents from a number of countries.

Correspondents said it is the heaviest blow to the insurgency in months.

Iraqi Special Forces attacked the training camp, at Lake Tharthar, on the border between the troubled mainly Sunni provinces of Anbar and Salaheddin.

After encountering heavy fire, they called in US ground and air reinforcements.

Iraqi officials said the insurgents included recruits from across the Arab world, including Moroccans, Algerians, Sudanese, Saudis, Syrians and an Egyptian.

"Special forces in the Interior Ministry attacked a training centre and had a fierce battle with the terrorists," Sabhah Kadim, a ministry spokesman, told the Reuters news agency.

The US military confirmed the operation, but was unable to say how many insurgents were killed.

Spokesman Maj Richard Goldenberg said Iraqi forces now had complete control of the site.

"An early assessment of the site indicates a facility for training anti-Iraqi forces," he said.

In a separate operation on Tuesday in the northern city of Mosul, the US military said, 70 suspected insurgents were arrested by Iraqi forces.

Iraqi special police units have been stepping up operations against insurgents in recent weeks.

The *BBC* correspondent in Baghdad said the units are made up of experienced military men who served under the previous regime.

Though they are regarded with suspicion in some circles, he said, they are considered to be more reliable than conventional troops.

Earlier this week, US troops killed up to 26 insurgents after an ambush south of Baghdad.

In Baghdad on Wednesday, a rocket or mortar hit a school and exploded, killing an 11-year-old girl and injuring at least one other child.

A teacher was seen weeping as parents came to pick up their children from al-Junainah school in the Amariyah district, while dust and glass fragments covered the classroom.

US, Israel criticise Arab Summit

In some of the first reaction to the recently adjourned Arab League Summit in Algiers, both the US and Israel expressed disappointment that some Middle East issues were not discussed.

The United States criticised the summit for failing to reaffirm support for the democratic movement taking place in the Middle East.

Asked about the end of the two-day summit, US State Department spokesman Adam Ereli said there was "not really much to say, frankly".

"The final communiqué does not appear to reaffirm support for the trend towards greater democratization and freedom in the Middle East," Ereli said. "We think that was a missed opportunity."

Pushing for democratic reforms in the Middle East has become a top priority for US President George Bush, who has praised elections in Iraq and the Occupied Palestinian territories that took place earlier this year.

Meanwhile, Israeli Foreign Minister Sylvan Shalom has accused the Arab League Secretary-General Amr Musa of leading what he called hardliners in dealing with Israel, thus preventing a number of Arab countries from proceeding along the normalisation process with Israel.

Commenting at the Israeli Knesset on the Arab Peace Initiative, Shalom called on the Arab countries to "adapt" to what he described as "new realities" before demanding that Israel withdrew to 1967 borders.

Walid Faris, professor of Middle East studies and comparative politics at Florida Atlantic University and an analyst of Arab affairs told *Aljazeera* the Israeli government had been expecting an acceptance by the Arabs of Israel given new realities – new borders, and annexed Palestinian land.

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ROUNDTABLE ON
DEBT, DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY: CHALLENGES FOR NIGERIA

COMMUNIQUÉ

The President of the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Rt. Honourable Adolphus Wabara, hosted a Roundtable with the theme: ***Debt, Development and Democracy: Challenges for Nigeria***, on **Tuesday, March 22, 2005** at the NICON Hilton Hotel, Abuja. Participants at the Roundtable included Senators, Members of the House of Representatives, Ministers, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Senior Civil Servants, Representatives of the Civil Society, the Media and other Stakeholders. The Debt Management Office coordinated the event.

2. The Senate President gave the welcome address, while the President and Commander-in-chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, GCFR, represented by the Vice President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, GCON, gave the key-note address to formally declare the forum open. The main points of Mr. President's address were:

- The unsustainability of Nigeria's debt burden and its adverse impact on the country's development and democracy;
- The persistence of the debt crisis, despite years of effort to address it;
- Acknowledgement and commendation of the unique cooperation that exists between the Executive and Legislative arms of government on efforts towards issues of economic development, including those of public debt management, as exemplified by this Roundtable;
- The propitious timing of the Roundtable in view of developments at both the domestic and international level. On the domestic front, the remarkable progress made on economic reforms and the fight against corruption has accorded greater merit to Nigeria's case for debt relief. At the international level, there is a renewed global commitment towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. Furthermore, the focus on Africa and especially debt cancellation arising from the UK's leadership of the G8 and the EU provides a window of opportunity.

3. The dialogue commenced with a Roundtable Session chaired by Senator Ibrahim N. Mantu, Deputy Senate President with the theme: *Debt Development And Democracy*. The Roundtable Session was followed by a Technical Session, with the theme: ***Debt Management Challenges in a Federal Context.***

4. The various discussants and presenters at the Roundtable and Technical Session arrived at the following resolutions:

a) Nigeria's present debt burden is unsustainable and is having a severe impact on national development.

b) Nigeria should continue with the present efforts to dialogue with creditors on debt relief as a way of exiting the unsustainable debt situation that Nigeria is in, rather than taking a unilateral stance. Various creative approaches could be explored in this regard.

C) There are strong moral, economic and social arguments in support of Nigeria's case for debt relief, which should be deployed in our dialogue with creditors. Nigeria's geopolitical and strategic importance in Africa should also factor in.

d) It is crucial to mobilize a coalition of stakeholders to devise an action plan on the prudent utilization of resources from debt relief. The Roundtable noted with satisfaction that the Federal Government is setting up a mechanism from both domestic and external resources, aimed at poverty reduction.

e) There is a need to continue with the reform efforts irrespective of whether debt relief is achieved.

f) The current drive towards enshrining good governance, accountability and transparency, should be backed by appropriate legislation to lock in the changes. In particular, the Fiscal Responsibility Bill should be put in place.

g) There is a need for continuing the existing collaboration amongst all tiers of government, particularly between the executive and the legislature.

h) While progress has been made in establishing the evolution and status of Nigeria's debt, but much more needs to be done to better communicate this to all stakeholders at the Federal and State level.

CONCLUSION

5. The Nigerian Debt burden poses a serious challenge not only to Nigeria as the debtor nation but also to the creditors. It is therefore imperative that the current series of dialogue between Nigeria and its creditors must not only continue, but must be sustained. Nigeria should consistently pursue the reforms in the economic and socio-political sectors, it must irrevocably commit to good governance, responsibility, transparency, accountability, prudent resource management, in all its organs.

6. The creditors, on the other hand, must show good partnership with the Nigerian vision, by passionately considering the country's quest for debt relief among others. Doing otherwise will not only continue to put unbearable pressure on the country's scarce resources and make all current reform efforts futile, but it will also deny Nigeria of a prosperous future and may derail the country's democracy.

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Website: www.dmo.gov.ng

Business Trust

Today's flight schedule

Albarka Air

Lagos - Abuja	07:20
	15:15
	13:00
Abuja - Lagos	8:45a.m.
	11:00
	13:15
	17:00
Maiduguri - Abuja	06:50
Abuja - Maid	17:00
Lagos - Yola	1:00 p.m
Abuja - Yola	14:30
Yola - Abuja	15.30
Yola - Lagos	4:00 p.m

Chanchangi Airlines

Lagos - Abuj	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 - CB	5:15p.m.
Kano - Abuja	1:15p.m.
Abuja - Kano	2:30p.m.
Kano - Lagos	3:45p.m.
Lagos - Kano	6:00p.m.

EAS Airlines

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

Dasab Airlines

Auja - Lagos	8:30 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	6:30pm.

ADC Airline

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

Most airlines operate the same flight schedule on week days.

M-tel to launch GPRS next week

From Zakariyya Adaramola, *Correspondent (Lagos)*

Nigerian Mobile Telecommunications Limited (M-tel) has concluded plans to launch GPRS for its subscribers next week. Disclosing this in Lagos, the CEO of M-tel, Mr Edwin Moore Momife, said that the company would use the GPRS service as a strategy to retain its old subscribers and attract new ones to its network.

The M-tel CEO explained that in the evolving virtual office, phone owners want to be able to use their phones to play games, transfer files, surf the net, or check their bank balances. 'These days,' he said, 'most people use their phones for more than voice. In the new environment the struggle for the market niche among the operator's is not just about the quality of the talk or price, but value added services. The impending competition is about who offers the best value added services. This is why M-tel will launch its GPRS by the end of the month. We have the technology to do it. The hype in the mobile marketing mix is the availability of value-added services on the oper-ating network. In the evolving virtual office, phone owners want to be able to use their phones to play games, tran-sfer files, surf the net or check their bank balance.' He reve-aled that M-tel has the bur-ning desire to increasingly offer its subscribers the incredible possibilities on the network.

Mr Momife, who demonstrated to journalists how subscribers can use the new GPRS facility, said that the opportunity to explore cyberspace was limitless with a laptop, PCMIA card, and Mtel- SIM. 'The product offers the user the freedom to go to anywhere as long as M-tel ESM coverage extends to the location,' he added.



Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer, Afribank Nigeria Plc, Alhaji Kashim M. Njidda (right) receives gifts from the president of the Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN), Mr Samuel Kolawole, when CIBN officials paid a courtesy visit to the Afribank headquarters in Lagos ...recently.

Invest in Intercity, Falalu urges northerners

From Aliyu Haruna, *Correspondent (Kaduna)*

The chairman of Intercity Bank plc, Alhaji Falalu Bello, has urged Northerners to cultivate the habit of investing in shares for the economic development of the region.

Speaking penultimate Monday in the bank investors' forum at the Crystal Garden Hotel in Kaduna, Alhaji Falalu enjoined Northerners to seize the opportunity of the public offers of the bank to buy shares. He pointed out that that would enable the North to accommodate the financial intermediation needs of the population at the end of the ongoing consolidation exercise.

According to Alhaji Bello, to fold arms and assume a lackadaisical attitude towards the current development in the industry would spell doom to the region and its people, who would be further consigned to the periphery of the nation's economic activities: He declared that the acquisition of shares is not an activity preserved for only the rich, pointing out that people could invest in the shares of the bank with as little as N1,900.00 and 'sow into the future.'

Alhaji Falalu also said that new policy of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), especially as related to the N25 billion capital base, has thrown a series of challenges to financial institutions in general and banks in particular. He added that changes in the banking sector of the economy were occasionally needed to bring about a sound and progressive atmosphere congenial to the business of financial intermediation.

The chairman of the occasion, Alhaji Aliyu Alkali, expressed confidence in the board of directors and management of the bank, pointing out that those men and women were capable of making the region proud. Alhaji Alkali, who is also the managing director and chief executive of Northern Nigerian Development Company (NNDC), added that the financial circle has followed the progress of the bank with keen interest.

In his remarks, the special guest of honour, Alhaji Ahmed Mohammed Makarfi, Governor of Kaduna, disclosed the intension of the state government to invest in the bank.

SON, PMAN collaborate on standards

The Standards Organisation of Nigeria and the Performing Musicians Association of Nigeria (PMAN) have resolved to collaborate in ensuring that the standard and quality of creative works, particularly Nigerian music, meet the stakeholders' requirements. According to a statement made available to *Business Trust*, Dr John Akanya, Director General of SON, and Mr. Charles Oputa, President of PMAN, disclosed this last week during a courtesy visit of the PMAN executives to SON Operational Headquarters in Lekki.

Addressing the PMAN delegation, Dr. Akanya expressed the preparedness of his organisation to collaborate with stakeholders in the various sectors with a view to ensuring that Nigerians get the best of products and services. He charged PMAN to employ the creative talents of its members to propagate the quality culture as well as the message to buy made-in-Nigeria products. He stressed that the vibrancy of the country's economy would earn her respect in the comity of nations.

Earlier in his address, PMAN President, Charles Oputa, commended SON for its achievement in improving the standards and quality of Nigerian products. He stressed that his previous interaction with the officials had encouraged the courtesy visit.

Mr. Oputa pleaded for SON's support and collaboration in checking the quality of musical products and materials in circulation in Nigeria, particularly those imported from other countries.

Minister optimistic on telecoms investments

The Minister of Communications, Chief Cornelius Adebayo, has said that investment in the telecom and technology sectors in the country is increasing by the day as more and more foreign investors express confidence in the sectors. Speaking in Lagos on Monday at e-NNOVATE 2005, an ICT seminar organised by XLR8, Chief Adebayo said that 'the policy stability and consistency sustained by the Obasanjo administration have combined with a focused and transparent regulatory regime to inspire the confidence of investors in the telecoms industry in Nigeria. It is no wonder, therefore, that our country continues to witness increased investment in the telecom and technology sectors, which has well exceeded USD 4 billion in the last four years.

In his address at the occasion, the CEO of XLR8, Mr Calistus Okoruwa, said that e-NNOVATE 'is Africa's first ever exposition on innovation and value-added services in the technology sector.' By popularising technology and providing a platform for organisations to engage one-on-one with customers and potential customers on the use and applications of technologies, Mr Okoruwa said, e-NNOVATE aims to demystify technology and encourage Nigerians to adopt technology in their every day lives.

Industry Minister commends ARSO re-engineering

Standards bodies in Africa have been challenged to be more responsive to the material and human needs of the African Organisation for Standardisation (ARSO), the umbrella body for standards institutes in the continent, in order to empower it to meet the aspirations of its stakeholders.

In a statement made available to *Business Trust*, the Minister of Industry, Ambassador Magaji Mohammed, who gave this charge recently in a goodwill message presented at the opening of the 13th. General Assembly of ARSO held in Accra, Ghana, stated that the body should be dynamic and proactive in order to play an effective role in the coordination and facilitation of standardisation activities in the continent.



NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE CORPS

National Directorate Headquarters

J.S. Tarka Street, Area 3, Garki
P.M.B. 138, Abuja
Tel: 09-2341465, 2341438

REPORT ON CASES OF OMISSIONS OF NAMES IN THE 2005 BATCH 'A' MOBILIZATION EXERCISE

The attention of the management of the National Youth Service Corps has been drawn to the incessant criticism by some Universities/Polytechnics over the purported omission of students' names for National Service by the NYSC. We hereby state for the avoidance of doubt, the following facts;

The mobilization process for the 2005 Batch 'A' service year started with the Pre-mobilization workshop held in Katsina on 24th October, 2004, where detailed outlines on requirements for data presentation and mobilization calendar was adopted. The workshop equally presented opportunity for the representation of the corps producing institutions to clear areas of ambiguities. In the adopted calendar, collation and submission of masterlist was scheduled to end or 8th December, 2004. This was however graciously extended and concluded on 22nd December, 2004.

The returned documents were vetted alongside the Senate Approved results with the Student Affairs Officers in attendance, after which, they were forwarded to the computer for entry and processing.

The print-outs of these entries were sent back to the respective institutions for further vetting and corrections on 12th January, 2005. They were given two weeks within which to complete corrections and return them.

On their return, such corrections were investigated and appropriate action taken. This was followed by the posting exercise and printing of call≤-up letters.

To ensure that there were no mix-ups, a careful and painstaking sorting exercise was conducted, and the call-up letters hand-delivered to corps producing institutions for issuance to the prospective corps members.

CASES OF OMMISSION

Shortly before the commencement of 2005 Batch 'A' Orientation exercise, a number of the institutions besieged the Mobilization Department with reports of omission of name of some of their students on the computer print-out with all shades of excuses. Such institutions include:

i. Benue State University
ii. University of Ado-Ekiti
iii. Bayero University Kano
iv. University of Jos
vi. University of Maiduguri
vii. Federal Polytechnic Bida
viii. Lagos State University
ix. Federal Polytechnic Nasarawa
x. UNN, Enugu Campus:
xi. Kogi State University

In line with due process, the department carried out investigations and made the following discoveries:

i. Most of the names purportedly omitted were either not on the original masterlist or Senate/Academic Board Approved results.
ii. A good number of the so-called omissions had not graduated as at the closing date for the submission of masterlists by the institutions, even with the two weeks extension granted
iii. Some were not mobilized because records showed they were over-aged.
iv. NYSC mobilizes students based on information received from corps producing institutions.
v. Only an insignificant number of omissions could be traced to the NYSC, and this is not without the confusion in dissimilar contents of diskettes and hard bound copies submitted by the institutions.
vi. Even where such mistakes were corrected, the candidates have to wait for the next batch to be mobilized for service.

Let it be stated for the avoidance of doubt that NYSC mobilizes students based on an information received from corps producing institutions. That is why for example, some students were not mobilized because records indicate they are over-aged and therefore not qualified for call-up.

In case of omissions arising from mistakes from the institution, it should be noted that when such mistakes are corrected, the candidate will have to wait for the next batch to be mobilized for service.

CONCLUSION

It is pertinent to note that our investigations and examination of the submissions and records reveal that these reports are frivolous and are far from the truth. We hope the foregoing clarification has put to rest the misconception on the reason behind the omission of names of qualified persons from call-up to national service.

While reassuring Nigerians of the determination of the NYSC to ensure a hitch-free mobilization and deployment of corps members, we hereby solicit the continued support and cooperation of all corps producing institutions in the discharge of this important function of the scheme.

SIGNED
MANAGEMENT

Business Trust

Finance

Union Bank set for N100bn share offer

Union Bank of Nigeria (UBN) Plc is set to consolidate its position in the banking industry with a share offer to increase its shareholders fund to N100 billion.

Its Group Managing Director, Mr Godwin Oboh, announced this on Wednesday while opening a branch of the bank at Abak, Akwa Ibom.

"With our current shareholders fund of N40 billion, the offer will certainly make the bank retain its status as the biggest, strongest and most reliable bank in the country," he said.

"UBN has created a financial supermarket with customer-friendly services, and has strategised to assist customers in the areas of agriculture and small-scale businesses," Oboh said.

The managing director asked Akwa Ibom people "to take full advantage of the various subsidiaries and services of the bank".

He said the bank would build "a befitting branch office"in Uyo, while more branches would soon spring up in other parts of the state.

The opening of the Abak branch raised UBN's network to 303 branches nationwide.

Prudential Insurance sacks CEO

Insurance company Prudential PLC said yesterday it is removing Jonathan Bloomer as chief executive, following months of criticism from shareholders about his performance.

Prudential said Bloomer, who will leave the company May 5, will be replaced by Mark Tucker, finance director of banking group HBOS PLC. It said the move reflected "long-term succession" issues and was not a change in strategy for the insurer.

Bloomer came under attack from investors last year after he surprised the market with a 1 billion pound rights issue to fund the insurer's expansion. His failure to find a buyer for Prudential's majority stake in online bank Egg and his doomed bid for American General in 2002 were also criticized.

Bloomer, who served as chief executive for five years of his 10-year career at Prudential, said he was "extremely disappointed with the board's decision."

"We have to manage the company through difficult times and not everything has made us popular," he said. "But my job has been to lead a transformation and Prudential is now set fair to deliver further substantial growth and returns."

Prudential shares jumped 4.8 percent to $5.01 pounds ($9.35) on the London Stock Exchange.

Chairman David Clementi said the change of chief executive has nothing to do with the past and instead is about bringing on the best person to lead the group over the "next few years."

"Today's decision is essentially about looking forward rather than looking back, the board feels Mark Tucker is the best person to lead the group forward," said Clementi. "This is a change in individuals, not a change in strategy."

Clementi said that shareholder calls for a change of leader had recently died down. "There was no clamor for it and shareholders said they would leave it to the board to decide," he said.

Tucker, 47, worked for Prudential for 17 years until he took up his post at HBOS in 2003. During his time at Prudential, he led the insurer's expansion in Asia.

Prudential PLC, one of Britain's largest insurers, is not affiliated with Newark, N. J. based Prudential Finan-cial, Inc., one of the world's largest insurers.

ECB voices concerns over EU fiscal reform

European Central Bank head Jean-Claude Trichet has voiced concern about reforms to the European Union fiscal rules agreed by EU leaders this week.

"I cannot disguise our concerns," he said Thursday, speaking one day after an EU summit in Brussels at which EU leaders rubber-stamped a reform of the Stability and Growth Pact making budget rules in the bloc more relaxed.

The EU budget pact had been in tatters since November 2003 when France and Germany were let off the hook despite repeatedly breaching its public deficit limit of three percent of output.

The two EU heavyweights had lobbied hard for the changes to make the 1997 pact more flexible, much to the horror of the ECB, which wanted the principle of budgetary rigour to be upheld.

"Now that we are going to have a new framework, it's imperative that member states, the European Commission and the (European) Council (of EU leaders) apply the stability pact in a rigourous and coherent way," said Trichet, who was receiving an honorary degree at Liege University in eastern Belgium.

EU finance ministers struck a deal Sunday to revise the pact, leaving countries exempt from disciplinary action in a large number of "relevant" circumstances, including costs related to Germany's reunification in 1990.

However, they left intact key criteria in the pact saying that EU countries must keep their deficits to less than three percent of gross domestic product and debt to less than 60 percent of GDP.

The deal was approved without amendment by EU leaders meeting at their summit Tuesday and Wednesday.

Trichet's comments echoed a statement made by the ECB after the finance ministers reached their deal.

"The Governing Council of the ECB is seriously concerned about the proposed changes to the Stability and Growth Pact," the institution said in a statement Monday.

"It must be avoided that changes in the corrective arm undermine confidence in the fiscal framework of the European Union and the sustainability of public finances in the euro area member states," it said.

Some private economists have also voiced concern about the reform of the pact, with International credit rating agency Fitch warning on Wednesday that the reforms focused to much on the wrong rules.

"The resurrected pact still encourages a short-term perspective. It runs the danger of neglecting the bigger picture by continuing to emphasise the three percent deficit limit while giving governments more scope to exceed it," Fitch chief economist Lionel Price said.

The new pact makes it easier for governments to be temporarily exempted from the three percent limit.

Ex-gov tasks banks on SMEs growth

A former military Governor of Benue state, Col. Aminu Isa Kontagora rtd, has urged financial institutions to design special services that will ensure rapid growth of small-scale businesses.

Kontagora told newsmen shortly after paying a courtesy visit on the Speaker of the Benue state Assembly, Mr Mzenda Iho, on Wednesday in Makurdi, that lack of support for budding businessmen was largely responsible for the surge in unemployment as well as the slow economic recovery.

The former military governor, who is now a director of the Inter-City Bank with headquarters in Minna, urged Benue indigenes to invest in the bank's N14 billion public offer.

According to him, there are immense benefits to be derived from investing in banks that are in the capital market to recapitalise.

Kontagora said that because of the general poor savings habit of Nigerians, especially those from northern part of the country, InterCity Bank, which has a strong presence in northern Nigeria, would provide customised service to help the people to imbibe good savings habit.

He said there were some categories of businessmen who would not have to produce requirements such as audited statements of account before they were granted any facility by the bank.

"This is because they do not even know what audited account means," he stated, adding that such people, who were usually owners of small businesses would be actively supported by the bank.

The director announced that the bank would establish four new branches in Lagos this year as part of its network expansion programme.

Kontagora also said that he did not believe there were too many banks in the country and that a country with a vast economy like Nigeria should have more banks.



Mr Victor Odubela, one of the winners of the Oceanic Bank Executive Savings Account in the individual category receives his prize from the bank's Managing Director, Dr Cecilia Ibru.

CENTRAL BANK OF NIGERIA

TENDER NOTICE

NIGERIAN TREASURY BILLS

Notice is hereby given by the Central Bank of Nigeria that 91-day Federal Government of Nigeria Treasury Bills amounting to N40,712,069, 000 will be issued by an auction-based system on Thursday, 31/03/2005.

Interested Authorized Dealers (Banks, Discount Houses and Brokers) are invited to submit tenders to reach the Issues Office, Central Bank of Nigeria, Lagos, not later than 1.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 29/03/2005.

Each tender must be in multiple of N1,000 subject to a minimum of N10,000 per tender. Authorized Dealers are allowed to submit multiple bids and quote multiple rates. A tender may be for own account of Authorized Dealers or made on behalf of interested members of the public, who are advised to apply through any of the authorized dealers.

Tenders for the Bills should be submitted on the prescribed printed forms in duplicate and in sealed envelopes clearly marked "TENDER FOR BILLS". The result of the tender will the announced before the close of business on Wednesday, 30/03/2005. The Bank reserves the right to reject any tender in part or in full.

Allotment letters will be issued for successful bid on Thursday, 31/03/2005.
Payment in full for the amount of the accepted tenders must be made to the Central Bank of Nigeria not later than 1.30 p.m. on the issue date 31/03/2005. This will normally be effected by direct debit to the accounts of the affected Authorized Dealers which should ensure that their accounts with the Bank are adequately funded for this purpose.

ISSUES OFFICE
CENTRAL BANK OF NIGERIA
TINUBU SQUARE
LAGOS

FEDERAL INLAND REVENUE SERVICE

Request for a Training Proposal - Information & Communications Technology (ICT)

The FIRS requires the services of competent, professional and reputable trainers in the area of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to raise the levels of computer appreciation and literacy for the general staff, and some specialized training for the ICT staff.

We are therefore requesting you to submit a Training Proposal to cover the following:

(1) General Users Appreciation Training, covering

(a) Contents:

(i). Introduction to Computers and Computing Concepts;
(ii). Basic Computing Skills, covering:
Word Processing (Ms-Word;)
Spreadsheet Modeling (MS-Excel)
Presentation Tools (Ms PowerPoint)
(iii). Introduction to Internet Services; and
(ii). Extensive Practical Sessions in a syndicated Lab. Form.

(b). Duration: Five (Days)

(c). Participants: In batches of not less than Fifteen (15) each for a total of about 5000 staff (including both Inspectorate and Executive Levels.

(d). Venues: To hold in four (4) centers across the Service, namely: Abuja, Kano, Lagos and Port Hard-court.

(2) Specialised ICT Training, covering

(a) Course Contents:

SN	TYPE OF TRAINING	WHO TO ATTEND	DURATION	COURSE SUMMARY
1.	Into to web Application, Development & Mtce	ICT Dept (15)	3	Understanding upload/download of static and dynamic pages
2.	Introduction to Unix	ICT Dept (15)	5	Understanding basic Unix commands & Administration
3	Intro to Data Communications	ICT Dept (15)	5	Understanding various networking segments and data Packaging
4	Introduction to InterNetworking	ICT Dept (15)	5	InterNetworking, active devices and topologies
5	Administering RDBMS	ICT Dept (15)	5	General RDBMS understanding
6	Evolving a help-Desk	ICT Dept (15)	5	Setting up a help desk, marketing ICT internally and service level agreement with users
7	Network planning, support & mgt	ICT Dept (15)	5	LAN and WAN designs and mtce
8	Object-oriented analyses &design	ICT Dept (15)	5	User requirements, functional and design specs and frameworks
9	Project Mgt	(30) ICT Dept/ Designated Officers	5	Methodologies, risk mgt, estimates & resources
10	Business Process Reengineering	(30) ICT Dept/ designated officers	5	Work flow redesign, process flows & designs
11	Oracle administration	ICT Dept (15)	5	Create, modify and delete tables, maintain users profiles, disk usage, performance and monitoring
12	Crystal report writer	ICT Dept (15)	3	Queries, reports, import & export
13	MS-SQL Administration	ICT Dept (15)	5	Create, modify, delete tables, maintain users profiles, disk usage, performance monitoring
14	Computer Systems Security	(15) ICT Dept/ Designated officers	5	Appreciate Basic Computer Auditing Concepts and Systems Review and systems security and development

Practices, Assurance audit, policy

(b) Duration: As indicated for each course above
(c) Participants: As indicated for each course above
(d) Venue: FIRS Training School, Abuja for accommodation only, but each Vendor/Consultant shall make arrangement for the systems and other facilities required.
(e) Delivery: To commence as from 1st April 2005

Technical and Financial Proposals are required, and should provide the following information:

TECHNICAL PROPOSAL
Corporate Profile, covering

I. Your training Course/Programmes;
II. Profile of your in-house Facilities in the desired locations as we have specified
III. Your Age and Experience in the business of computer Training
IV. The Clients and Specific Training Programmes delivered with dates;
V. Profiles of the support staff you will assign on the proposed training
VI. Evidence of Registration with FIRS as a Contractor; and
VII. Your tax clearance certificate for the last three (3) years, up to December 31st 2004.

FINANCIAL PROPOSAL
I. Details of your rate and expenses for the specific programmes under consideration;
II. Payment terms, specifying
- Amount of payment on order
- Period balance payment required;
- Quote validity period

You are therefore kindly requested to submit one copy each of your technical and financial training proposals covering the above requirements.

Your sealed bids, which should be submitted before 12.00 noon, Wednesday 30th March 2005, by dropping same in the bid box provided for the purpose, at Room 117, should be addressed to the office of the:

Director, Process Operations,-
Federal Inland Revenue Service,
Revenue House,
Plot 522, Sokode Crescent,
Wuse, Zone 5, Abuja.

All bids submitted shall opened by 12.00 Noon on the same day Wednesday, March 30th, 2005).

Osy Chuke,
Director, Process Operations
For: Chairman

21st March 2005

Business Trust

International

Oil prices up after US refinery blast

Oil prices rose yesterday as a deadly explosion at a Texas refinery stemmed a sell off triggered by a firmer dollar and rising US crude stocks.

US light crude rose 32 cents to $54.13 a barrel, after falling more than $3.50, or 6 percent, in the previous two sessions. Brent crude oil futures were up 31 cents to $53.35 a barrel.

Oil markets will be shut today for Good Friday.

Prices rose following Wednesday's blast at a gasoline unit in BP's Texas City refinery the third-largest in the United States in which 14 people were killed.

The explosion damaged an isomerization unit, which upgrades the quality of gasoline, but did not affect other operations at the 470,000 barrel per day (bpd) refinery, BP said.

The blast has spurred fears about whether refiners already running near full throttle will meet growing gasoline demand this summer, when summer vacation driving demand peaks.

New York gasoline futures surged to a record high of $1.6080 a gallon in early electronic trade, and later traded at $1.5961 a gallon, up 2.12 cents.

"The United States has been running refineries at record rates and we've been very lucky we haven't had a major problem like this earlier," said Phil Flynn, an analyst at Alaron Trading in Chicago. "It's a reminder how vulnerable we are."

A deep draw in US gasoline stocks reported by the US government last Wednesday indicates that demand has not been deterred by record prices at the pump, analysts say.

Gasoline inventories fell 4.1 million barrels last week and are down 3 percent over two weeks, although still 7.5 percent above last year's levels.

By contrast US crude oil stocks rose 4.1 million barrels to 309.3 million barrels last week, their highest level since July 2002.

Oil prices have fallen from last week's record peak of $57.60 a barrel, pressured by a rebound in the dollar following the Federal Reserve's move to increase interest rates this week.

Oil has risen around 25 percent this year as dollar weakness encouraged funds to switch money out of treasury markets and into commodities.

Worries over inflation have also emerged as the government said on Wednesday that a big jump in energy costs pushed US consumer prices up 0.4 percent in February.

Treasury Secretary John Snow said on Wednesday he was unhappy with current oil prices but they would not derail the US economy.

"They're not of the sort that are going to knock us out of the recovery we are in now, but they are certainly unwelcome," Snow said.

Oil has soared more than $10 since the start of the year and is up over 45 percent from a year ago, with galloping demand from China and the United States stretching global output and refining capacity.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) looked likely to put a decision on a second 500,000-bpd supply increase on the backburner after prices fell below the group's $55 threshold.

US SEC fines Citigroup, others $81.25m

US regulators on Wednesday fined Citigroup Incorporated, American Express Incorporated, J.P. Morgan Chase & Co. and Putnam Investments a combined $81.25 million for failing to provide customers with necessary information about mutual funds.

The US Securities and Exchange Commission imposed fines of $40 million on Putnam, a unit of Marsh & McLennan Cos., and $20 million on Citigroup Global Markets Inc. for not disclosing payments to promote certain funds, resulting in conflicts of interest. Citigroup also improperly steered investors to higher-cost fund shares, the SEC said.

Meanwhile, the NASD said it fined American Express Financial Advisors $13 million, Citigroup Global Markets $6.25 million and Chase Investment Services $2 million for steering investors to costlier funds. They also agreed to plans to reimburse more than 50,000 households.

The firms neither admitted nor denied wrongdoing. Putnam had agreed in principle to settle with the SEC in November.

Putnam spokeswoman Sinead Martin said her firm in January 2004 had discontinued the practice faulted by the SEC.

Citigroup spokeswoman Kim Atwater and American Express spokesman David Kanahan said their companies were pleased to resolve their respective regulatory matters, and had taken steps to improve their fund practices. J.P. Morgan spokeswoman Kristen Batteria declined to comment.

The SEC faulted a program in which a Putnam affiliate arranged with more than 80 broker-dealers to promote the sale of its funds. It said more than 60 broker-dealers received commissions. The $40 million penalty will be distributed to Putnam funds.

Citigroup, meanwhile, received payments from 75 fund families in exchange for "shelf space" within the company's retail brokerage network, the SEC said. Citigroup sold only funds from those families, the agency said.

"We hope securities industry professionals have by now received the message that they must fully inform their customers of the nature and extent of any conflicts of interest that may affect their recommendations," SEC Enforcement Director Stephen Cutler said in a statement.

China backs Brazilian as WTO chief

China threw its support behind Brazilian, Luiz Felipe Seixas Correa to become the next head of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), saying he would fight for the interests of developing countries.

"I think that Mr. Correa is capable of making contributions to the common interests of all WTO members while safeguarding the interests of the developing members for the realization of the goals set in the Doha Development Agenda," Commerce Minister Bo Xilai said.

Bo informed Brazilian Vice Foreign Minister, Clodovaldo Hugueney of Beijing's decision on Monday, a statement on the commerce ministry's website said.

Correa, currently Brazil's ambassador to the trade body, is one of four candidates competing to succeed current Director-General Supachai Panitchpakdi, whose term ends on August 31.

The other three are former European Union (EU) trade chief Pascal Lamy, Mauritian Foreign Minister Jaya Krishna Cuttaree and Uruguayan former chairman of the WTO's Executive General Council, Carlos Perez del Castillo.

The race to succeed Supachai coincides with ongoing talks on a new round of trade liberalisation negotiations launched in Doha, Qatar three years ago.

The 148 member states have agreed to make their choice by consensus by May 30 in an attempt to avoid the split that opened up during the last leadership race in 1999 when they were unable to choose between Supachai, a former Thai minister, or former New Zealand prime minister Mike Moore.

The WTO's leadership was eventually granted to both officials for successive, but shortened, three-year terms.



Luiz Felipe Seixas Correa

Nigerian Exportable Goods Exhibition and Investment Summit (NEXPORTEX)

The Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the International Diplomat Limited (IDL) wish to inform the general public and in particular confirmed participants that the Nigerian Exportable Goods Exhibition and Investment Summit is now scheduled to hold from **April 18th – 22nd, 2005 in Brussels, Belgium.**

The theme of the event is: **"Nigeria: Strengthening Trade and Investment Relationship with Europe."**

The Objectives of the event is to provide platform to promote Investment and Nigerian products in the European market and for interaction and matchmaking between the Nigerian participants and their European Union counterparts.

Event features:

1. City-to-city and Department/Agency – to Ministry cooperation between States, Federal Ministries and their counterparts in Europe.
2. Exhibition of Nigerian products and services
3. Business meeting and sector forums between Nigerian business people and their counterparts in Europe.

Registration: €2,800 – total package (inclusive of flight ticket (economy), hotel and registration) per participant.

Sponsorship of specific Business/Investment forum is also available.

For Further information please contact:

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Business Trust

NITEL mgt sets new revenue target

The new management of NITEL has set a revenue target for all its zones as part of efforts to halt the downward drift of the company.

The revenue target for each zone, which was not disclosed, would to be collected in June. Its Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Albert Mashi said that the action became necessary as the management was finding it difficult to cope with the salary and pensions bills.

A statement made available to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Abuja said that the company had more than 11, 000 workers and 4,000 pensioners who depended on revenue from its less than 400,000 working lines.

The statement which was signed by the spokesman of the organisation, Mr Tayo Ekundayo stated that the CEO appealed to all staff to evolve new attitudes to work in order to meet the growing competition from Private Telecommunication Operators (PTO).

Mashi made the appeal at the Lagos zone of the company while on a one day working visit.

"If we can put back 100, 000 lines into the network by June coupled with the 250,000 lines under the Lagos expansion project and the CDMA fixed wireless lines, the fortunes of the company would turn around for good," Mashi said.

On the recent promotion of 900 people in the company which drew criticisms and petitions, Mashi said all the staff who deserved promotion were not considered because of the financial situation, promising to meet the target as soon as its finances improved.

Mashi was received at the Lagos zone by the General Manager, Mr Young Eyo.

Rural telephony technology better than GSM –*Expert*

The telecom technology to be deployed by one of the Chinese companies, ZTE, handling the rural telephony project, will provide better voice quality than GSM, says an expert.

The expert, who works with one of the parastatals organisations in the Ministry of Communication, said that the Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) was the most recent discovery in the telecom industry.

The expert, who preferred anonymity, noted that the system could provide advanced fixed wireless telecommunications services with a capacity for toll-quality voice, fax and Internet.

He said that the CDMA provides flexible adjustments for upgrading to the 3G technology, which allows video and other broad band services like watching TV programmes on handsets.

The expert told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) that a team from the ministry had returned last week from China where they went to inspect some of the equipment to be brought into the country and how they were applied in some Chinese provinces.

Taiwanese investors explore business opportunities

A Taiwanese business delegation has been assured of adequate cooperation in their quest to invest in Nigeria.

The Permanent Secretary in the ministry of commerce, Ms Ama Pepple, gave the assurance today in Abuja, when she received the four-man delegation, on behalf of the minister, Amb. Idris Waziri.

According to a statement signed by the Chief Press Secretary, Mr Marshal Gundu, Waziri is already in Japan for the opening ceremony of the World Expo 2005, holding in Aichi.

Pepple informed the visitors that the federal government was urgently diversifying the economy towards the development of the non-oil sector, with a view to creating wealth and job opportunities, as well as poverty reduction.

Earlier, the leader of the delegation, Mr Eugene Chen, who is chairman of the Senior Expert Development Association (SEDA) of Taiwan, said they were in Nigeria to explore investment potentials and opportunities in the country.

Chen said the delegation had visited some states including Ogun, Lagos, Edo, Cross River and Ogun, where they visited cassava processing sites.

He said that the delegation also intends to visit investment-related organisations such as NEXIM and NIPC, adding that they were also interested in setting up joint venture projects in Nigeria.

The chairman said that Taiwan has great potentials in food processing, ceramics, tiles industries and invited the permanent secretary to visit Taiwan to see things for herself.

The delegation which included captains of industry and oil/petroleum experts was accompanied to Abuja by Mr T. T. Hsiao, the Director, Taiwan Trade Centre, Lagos.



R–L: Yomi Akapo, Regional Manager, Access Bank and Chief N. O. Alowonle, the Ajiroba of Ikorodu, at a forum organised by the bank for independent oil marketers, to promote inter sectorial business relationship between the oil and banking sectors, recently in Lagos.

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Business Trust

BPE's new bid to sell NITEL

By Sayo Akintola

Sequel to the default of the preferred bidder, Investors International London Limited (IILL), to pay the balance of the purchase price amounting to $1.08 billion; and the refusal of the reserve bidder, Telnet, to enter into negotiations with the National Council on Privatization (NCP), the Nigerian Telecommunications Limited (NITEL) core sale process was stalled in 2002.

The NCP subsequently approved the engagement of a management contractor to manage NITEL for a period of between two to three years and oversee the company's expansion and service improvements, pending when the core investor sale could be revisited.

A management contract was signed in March 2003 between Pentascope, NITEL, and the BPE under Mallam Nasir el'Rufai, on behalf of the federal government of Nigeria. The management contractors assumed management of NITEL in April 2003.

The engagement of Pentascope was intended as a stop-gap measure to provide the required management and technical expertise for the smooth operation of NITEL, pending the identification of a competent core investor.

Before its sack in February, 2005 by the federal government, Nigerians led by the House of Representatives Committee on Communcations were unanimous in their submission that the Pentascope contract was a rape of the nation's lean treasury.

All it could show for the huge contract fee it collected was an operating loss of N16 billion for the 2003/2004 financial year, the lawmakers have alleged. As it becomes increasingly imperative to revisit the core investor sale, the BPE was able to harvest no fewer than 21 prospective core investors at the expiration of the January 28, 2005 deadline for its invitation for Expression of Interests (EOIs) in the 51 per cent government shares in NITEL.

Precautionary measures are however being taken by the BPE to ensure that it does not fall prey to the pit-falls of the last exercise. In fact, if the quality of prospective investors who have expressed interest in NITEL is anything to go by, then, the government may be in for another landmark achievement in its economic reform efforts at the end of NITEL's privatization exercise in June.

On assumption of office in May 1999, the Obasanjo administration embarked upon the complete deregulation of the telecom sector by granting licenses to GSM service providers, auctioning of the second national carrier license, and setting in motion the privatization of NITEL.

This proactive approach by the government has made the rapid growth and development witnessed in the telecom sector possible in the last six years.

Prior to the successful auction of GSM licenses in 2001, NITEL had capacity of 700,000 fixed lines with about 420,000 subscribers connected. There were just about 22,000 lines developed by private telephone operators (PTOs) then. But, today the GSM operators are estimated to have a combined total of over 8 million subscribers spread all over the major cities and villages of the country.



Chief Cornelius Adebayo, Communications Minister

Other PTOs have almost 500,000 subscribers among them. With a population of over 120 million, there is no gain saying the fact that this is merely scratching the surface.

NITEL/MTEL has already rolled out about 800,000 GSM lines and has infrastructure and coverage in most states in the country. Currently, MTEL has about 500,000 subscribers, with the potential to expand rapidly. A core investor's immediate concern will be to maximize the efficient use of the facilities already in place, which also include Internet Service Pops and VSAT Services.

There is no doubt that great opportunities exist for private foreign investment in the Nigeria's telecom sector with an estimated subscribers base of 30 million over the next three years alone. The Intel's strategic sale however presents a very unique opportunity in this regard.

Nigeria ranks as the fastest growing mobile market in Africa and one of the fastest globally. With total teledensity estimated at a mere 2.6 lines per 100 people, entry into the market will no doubt prove very rewarding for a core investor in NITEL.

Let's just take the MTN's experience in Nigeria as a case study. The story of MTN in Nigeria is one of profitability and this has further reconfirmed the depth of Nigeria's telecom market.

The operating results of MTN in the last three years or thereabout have once again confirmed how lucrative the Nigerian market is. In its latest financial statement released recently, the MTN Group announced that it has recorded 13,380,000 subscribers on its networks across Africa as at 31st December, 2004. This is a growth of 21.1 per cent since September 30, 2004 and an increase of 40.2 per cent from an opening base of 9,543,000 subscribers recorded at April I, 2004.

The Group's International operations now account for 42 per cent, or 5,661,000 of the total subscriber base. Says MTN Group CEO, Phuthuma Nhteko. "We are pleased with our subscriber growth during this period. Our International operations recorded a total of 5,661,000 subscribers, an increase of 35.7 per cent since 30th September, 2004, with our Nigerian operation contributing an impressive 69 per cent to record nearly four million subscribers".

The Executive Vice Chairman of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) Engineer Ernest Ndukwe, said recently that the country now has up to ten million GSM subscribers. Amazed at the astronomical growth rate, Ndukwe said; 'No one was able to predict at those early days the potential of the market and the speed at which the Nigerian network would grow.

Though growth in the fixed line subscription has not been at the same rate as the mobile lines, we have seen the number of fixed lines double between 2001 and today and is hovering around one million lines."

So, what else does one need to say? All I know is that NITEL remains a good buy any time any day and the Nigerian economy will be the better for it. Little wonder the astonishing profile of strategic investors like Vodafone, British Telecom, MTN among others that have lined up to take up the 51 per cent federal government equity in the first national carrier.

And it's instructive to add that the BPE has not narrowed down the 21 prospective investors that have expressed interest in NITEL from across the globe to five. Moreover, the value of a product is the price a willing buyer agrees to pay for it at the time it's taken to the market. Therefore, it will be wrong for any financial speculator to put the value of NITEL at $2 billion when the financial bids already harvested for its core investor sale are yet to be opened.

Sayo Akintola is media officer, BPE

The role of weather in air navigation

By Shakirat Abdulmajeed, *Correspondent (Lagos)*

The Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NIMA) is no doubt one of the important agencies that ensure safe navigation of aircraft, right from the take off point through in flight to the point of landing.

NIMA is responsible for making weather forecasts available at every stage of aircraft navigation, before take of in flight and after flight.

Forecasted weather situation will determine whether a flight can take off or not, and other maters such as the route, the flight level and the choice of alternate aerodrome in the event of a flight diversion.

A pilot while in flight can also obtain meteorological information by intercepting radio broadcasts of weather reports and forecast which is done at regular intervals.

By interception of weather warning from Air Traffic Control Centre. These warnings relate to the occurrence or expected occurrence of conditions hazardous to aircraft.

Also, by the receipt of a message special directed to the aircraft by the appropriate authority, as well as requesting information from the aerodrome with which aircraft is in radio contact.

After flight, any comments or observation on the flight forecast obtained at departure experienced by the aircrew is discussed and disseminated to other meteorological offices.

There are many aviation weather hazards associated with changes in atmospheric condition which can make or mar the safety of aircraft on air some of which includes precipitation such as showers, rain drizzle, snow, sleet or hail which can reduce visibility at different range.

Also, low level wind shear which is a sudden charge in wind direction or speed, can occur both in horizontal and vertical direction. Its occurrence can cause an aircraft to be displaced abruptly from the intended flight plan.

Other hazardous weather conditions include: Fog, haze and smoke, thunder storm, line squalls, icing and volcanic ash which can lead to danger of fuel freezing in the wing tanks and the control surfaces. It can also cause jet engine flame out.

The authority responsible or making available meteorological reports, charts, forecast and any other statement relating to existing or expected meteorological conditions in Nigeria, is the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NIMA).

NIMA was transformed from a department in the ministry of aviation to a semi-autonomous parastatals in June 2003.

How prepared or ready is NIMA in the discharge of these responsibilities? Its responsibilities apart from making weather forecast available to aircraft pilots also include environmental conditions.

The Director-General of NIMA; Mr Liwhu Engene Akeh recently disclosed that the agency can now predict weather with over 80 percent accuracy, saying: "our overall objective is to observe Nig-erian weather and climate and provide meteorological, hy-drological and oceanog-raphic services in support of national needs and intern-ational obligation."

He added that the agency will be able to predict weather accurately by the end of the year.

How does he intend to achieve this? Akeh who is an atmospheric physicist with experience gained over the years in meteorology both locally and internationally, explained that NIMA is working in partnership with the Nigerian College of Aviation Technology (NCAT), Zaria on the training of meteorological personnel.

He stated further that the agency and the United Kingdom Meteorological Office is working together in the production of marketing skills for meteorological series and products. While NIMA and South African weather services are also in collaboration for meteorological services and products.

According to Akeh, NIMA in line with internationals standards has developed changes in the meteorological manual, saying that the previous manuals were about 70 percent absolute. Adding that valuable documents to set the new ones were obtained from the United Kingdom and South Africa.

The agency recently disclosed that it was on the verge of sitting a Weather Early Warning System (WEWS) to enable it prepare adequately in cases of dangerous disasters similar to the Tsunami that occurred in Southern Asia late last year.

It was gathered that NIMA has commenced the acquisition of Advanced Dobbler Weather Radars to Monitor National Disasters and Storms before they occur. The equipment can also assist with relevant information for farmers in rural areas.

Sources hinted that the equipment when acquired can help in offering relevant information relating to weather, environment and water resource from all centres of the world for aviation, marine activities, tourism and education.

Commenting on the dobbler radar, Akeh stre-ssed that NIMA does not want to be caught unaware as such it is doing its best to avoid disaster by ens-uring that appropriate wea-ther forecast was given at all times.

He hinted further that the dobbler weather radar system can help in getting adequate warning in cases of storms, natural disaster caused by weather as well as warning on drought, famine, floods, landslides, erosion and desert encroa-chment.

He however hope that the dobbler radar should be included in the 2005 budget.

Highlighting some of the achievements recorded by NIMA in the last two years, the director general explained that his agency has made internet facility available at the headquarters while 20 Automatic Weather observations stations have been acquired by (NIMA) to automate some of the observations, adding that 10 out of the equipment have been installed by the agency.

He noted that the agency has also purchased and installed 10 Z-Way Radio Communication System to replace the unserviceable Single Side Band (SSB) radios that have been in operation for over 50 years.

A powerful workstation (RETIM) receiving products from the satellite has been installed by the agency at the Nnamdi Azikwe International Airport, Abuja for aviation forecasting in aid of flight safety. It was gathered that arrangements are being made to install one each in Port Harcourt, Lagos and Kano airports.

However, NIMA is planning to popularize and propagate the farming technique thought raining to assist in food production, contribute substantially to poverty reduction as well as act as a model of technology transfer.

The agency has also resuscitated and expand the meteorology internet facilities through World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) assistance worth $600.00.

WMO has also donated the sum of $1 million in form of assistance to NIMA for Regional Satellite Data and Information (RETIM) for weather forecast for aviation at different airports.

However, inspite the above giant strides of NIMET, the agency needs to undertake some critical projects to enable it attain World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) mandatory standards.

The projects include Numerical Weather Prediction (NWP) and public weather services. For this the agency needs to acquire five workstations, one RETIM for television editing suite weather reporting in major developed countries.

It needs to upgrade its aeronautical meteorological and air safety, including runway visual range (RUR) services.

The agency also needs to embark on instrument calibration design, by purchasing and installing calibration equipment and conventional instruments development of technology know-how and refurbishing of existing calibration chambers.

Aviation analysts have posited that NIMA cannot perform optimally without adequate funding as most equipment used by the agency are obsolete, faulty and unserviceable. NIMA, therefore, needs adequate funding there added that many of the communication system of NIMA are outdated, making sourcing of spares for repairs more difficult.

They believed that if NIMA is adequately funded, it may be able to predict and forecast weather adequately to pilots especially during harmattan dust haze.

This may reduce the incident of flight cancellation and delay mostly experienced during bad weather.

There is joy in retire

Mallam Adamu Chiroma, former Minister of Finance is undoubtedly one of the most notable architects of the Obasanjo administration's economic policies. Now in retirement after serving in various governments in the country from 1961, the new Madaki of Fika says 'there is joy in retirement' and that he would recommend it to anyone who has reached his age in public service. In this interview with *Daily Trust's* Regional Editor (North East), Abdullahi Bego, ***the former Finance Minister speaks about his new role as the Madaki of Fika, life in retirement as well as socio-economic issues under the present administration as they affect the common man, among others. Excerpts***

How would your new position as the Madaki of Fika help the people of Fika Emirate?

The traditional institution has a role in our society. That role is that of leadership, that of finding solutions to problems and eliminating disputes. These are issues which, happily, I can claim I have been involved in for a long time. So I expect that, in the sense that I did have some success in the past, I can hope to have more success from now on, with the assistance of the Almighty God.

The Madaki of Fika is the most senior traditional title holder in Fika Emirate after the emir. How do you feel being turbaned with this important position?

I feel grateful to the Almighty that the effort which one has made in various ways to assist the community and the nation has been appreciated in a place and at a time.

You have been one of the key figures of the Obasanjo administration during its first tenure. How is life with you now as a private citizen after retirement?

I have been involved in government since 1961 and, by now, I am really feeling that I have done my best, I have contributed, and it is time to give chance to others. I can tell you that there is joy in retirement and I would recommend it to anyone who has reached my age and may be has contributed somewhat but I feel very happy with myself as a fulfilled person, with great satisfaction.

You are one of the architects of the Obasanjo administration's economic policy. How would you assess the interventions of the government on economic front so far?

Well, it's a mixed bag. There are areas and problems which we found in 1999 and we decided to attack these problems. Specifically, we targeted the issue of power supply, the issue of fuel supply and the issue of security.

Up to now, I think, the most spectacular success is in the area of fuel supply. In the field of power supply, we have still got problems, not as bad as in 1999, but certainly not as good as I would have expected. In the field of security, there are still lots of complaints from the citizens as to the security situation of citizens and individuals on the streets. These are issues which I know that the government has been trying to deal with. The number of police personnel has more than doubled I think. There has been a lot of investment in the power sector. But still many people are complaining. And I think one must recognise problems where they exist. If you don't recognise the problems, you can never solve them.

So, my view is that still the government has got a lot to do in the field of power generation, distribution and also in the area of security.

But no government can solve the problem of security alone unless it has the cooperation and support of the citizens. I believe that so far, the support has not been very great because of the armed robberies on the roads and all that. I believe that people who live in communities along the highways and roads should be able to deal with some of these things. Where the robbers live among them or where they do robbery and come and get accommodation among them, they should be able to deal with them and report to the authorities. Citizens must note that security is a mater that belongs to all, and affect all and can only be solved by all.

Nigeria has been trying to get debt relief from Western creditors. Recently, however, President Obasanjo has expressed disappointment



Malam Adamu Ciroma, the recently

that his effort at getting debt relief has not been as successful as he wanted. The



"The traditional institution has the role of finding solutions to problems and eliminating disputes."

ement – Adamu Ciroma



turbaned Madaki of Fika.

Western governments, on the other hand, have their own concerns. Do you think Nigeria deserves debt relief?

I have advocated the issue of debt relief for a long time and by the time I left office (in 2003), I have also lost confidence that Western powers, the Paris Club etc, would entertain our request for debt relief. In fact in 2002, there was an international meeting in Montreal where all the industrialized countries promised to give support to the developing countries. By the time I left office in 203, I was able to discover that that promise has started ebbing away and turning into normal promise which remains unfulfilled.

Now the British government is talking about gathering momentum to help developing countries. I have very little confidence that anything tangible would result from this. I know that in the past, the Japanese were frankly against it. The European politicians would talk about debt relief; European officials would work against debt relief. So, that atmosphere has not changed much. The argument against



"You cannot revive the economy with this colossal level of corruption."

Nigeria is that we do not manage our affairs properly. I cannot disagree with this proposition that that we need to manage our affairs much better than we are doing now. I believe that the level of corruption in the country is so colossal. You cannot revive the economy with this level of corruption. It is all-pervasive. In fact, I believe when they said that Nigeria is number tow or number three in corruption; I think they are being very lenient and kind to us. We must be number one.



"Citizens must know that security is a matter that belongs to all and affect all and can only be solved by all."

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA
NATIONAL COUNCIL ON PRIVATISATION
Secretariat: Bureau of Public Enterprises

Privatisation Support Project
IDA Credit No. 3520-UNI

SELECTION OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ADVISER
FOR
THE OPERATION OF THE PROPOSED NIGERIAN ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

This request for Expression of Interest (EOI) follows the general procurement notice for this project that appeared in Development Business No 578 of March 2002.

The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) has received a credit from the International Development Association [IDA] and intends to apply part of the proceeds of this credit to payments under various contracts for advisory services on the reform of the Nigerian power sector.

To ensure that the regulatory framework for the industry is transparent, independent of Government and coordinated within a single regulatory body, responsibility for the regulation of the electricity sector will be transferred from the Federal Ministry of Power and Steel to a Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) that will be established pursuant to Electric Power Sector Reform (EPSR) Act 2005.

THE NIGERIAN ELECTRICITY SUPPLY INDUSTRY

The National Electric Power Policy, 2001 (NEPP), envisages the unbundling of NEPA into a number of sector-specific private companies, initially owned by the Federal Government but later to be privatized. NEPP also envisages the establishment of an appropriately empowered and independent regulatory agency for the National Electric Supply Industry (NESI), i.e., NERC, and the establishment of both a Power Consumer Assistance Fund and a Rural Energy Fund (with an agency to administer this latter Fund). These policy initiatives have full legal backing in the EPSR Act 2005. In addition, a blueprint for the unbundling of NEPA has been prepared and is currently in the early stages of being implemented.

The BPE has engaged a consortium (of international and Nigerian firms) to physically set-up the NERC and identify potential staff of the agency, in accordance with an organisational and physical/logistical requirement blue print designed by another consortium of international and Nigerian experts in 2000/2001.

SCOPE OF WORK

BPE would like to engage the services of consultants to provide capacity building support for NERC. Broadly speaking, the consultants will:
Assess the adequacy of the organisational and institutional arrangement for effective regulation of the power sector;

Assist with instituting a transitional arrangement and implementing the plan to make the commission fully operational;

Provide assistance in developing the expertise of NERC staff in the areas of licensing, tariff regulation, economic and business analysis, market surveillance, advisory and mediation panels, and standards monitoring;

Assist NERC staff with the development and usage of concepts, techniques and procedures required for effective regulation of the Electricity Supply Industry in Nigeria

The consultants should be specialists in legal, economic and technical regulatory aspects of network industries, especially the electricity supply industry, and in the management of regulatory agencies and their physical and human resources. It should also have extensive experience in organizational design and management with previous practical experience in establishing and developing regulatory agencies and regulatory strategy in developing countries. The consultants will be engaged for a term of not less than twelve months.

The various work streams entailed in this consultancy will be elaborated in the Request for Proposal (RFP) that will contain the Terms of Reference for this assignment.

SUBMISSION OF EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Expressions of Interest [EOIs] from prospective NERC Technical Advisers should specify the following information as a basis for pre-qualification:

- Profile of the Firm including ownership structure;
- Curriculum Vitae of individual consultants/staff who will be assigned to the required service(s), including qualification and individual experience in handling assignments.
- Capability profile
- Summary of similar transactions executed or under execution in the electric power industry by the firm. This should include brief descriptions of the role played by them in reviewing and executing options with respect to the work done.

It is important to the BPE that interested firms present staff who have educational qualifications in the key disciplines mentioned below and practical experience of establishing, and providing technical assistance to, network utility regulatory agencies (especially in electricity) in sub-Saharan Africa and in other newly unbundled and restructured electricity markets around the world.

Consultants will be selected in accordance with the procedures set out in the World Bank Guidelines: Selection and Employment of Consultants by World Bank Borrowers, January 1997 (Revised 1999 and May 2002)

Expressions of interest must be submitted in six printed (6) copies and 1 Soft copy in a sealed envelope clearly marked "Expression of Interest for NERC Technical Assistance Services". If the EOIs are too large to go into one envelope, they should each be separately wrapped and all placed into a single large sealed container. Each separately wrapped EOI should be marked as required.

EOIs should be addressed and delivered not later than 5.00pNigerian time on Friday,April 22, 2005 at the address shown below:

Mrs Irene N. Chigbue
Bureau of Public Enterprises,
Hamzayyad House
1, Osun Crescent
Off Ibrahim Babangida Way, Maitama,
P.M.B. 442, Garki,
Abuja
Tel: 234-9-4134636-46
Fax: 234-9-4134671, 4134672 and 4134674
E-mail: ichigbue@bpeng.org
Web Site: http://www.bpeng.org

Attention: Mr. Dele E. Bagaiya
Director, Power & Communication

BPE Annex
Block 2 Imani Estate ,
Off Shehu Shagari Way,
Maitama, Abuja
Web site: http://www.bpeng.org

Electronic copies of EOIs submitted in any format at any time after this deadline will not be accepted.

Interested consultant may obtain further information at the address above from 8.00 am to 5.00 pm, Monday through Friday (except public holidays)

Only short listed consortia will be contacted

THE HOME FRONT

Fragments

By Safiya I. Dantiye, *Woman Editor*
safiyadantiye@yahoo.com

The bid for paternity leave

Over the years women have clamored for their rights, and men have not made similar demands because, obviously their rights have not being denied. After all it is a man's world, they say.

Then last weekend I heard on TV that one state had passed a bill for paternity leave, and naturally this had triggered a chain of reactions. In any case, do our men need paternity leave?

Things should be examined to fit our customs and traditions before adopting them, even though they may be seen as the pinnacle of development, but in a different context and setting.

In Europe and America, the common family type is the nuclear family. It is not even unusual to see a person who has nobody in the world; any parents, sisters, brothers, grandparents, uncles, nieces and cousins. But you can hardly find such a person in Africa, and due to our extended family system there are always a lot of relatives to help one in terms of need.

Besides, only very few people can afford domestic help in Europe and the US, as such, people do all their domestic chores irrespective of their positions. Those Africans that live in these foreign countries find it very trying, because in their countries they can afford many house helps to do almost everything for them.

Another aspect is that here if you go to the hospital or elsewhere, you can tell your children to go and stay with your neighbours until you come back.

But living in western countries, you may spend months without having a glimpse of your neighbour, much less exchange pleasantries.

"If men are indulged to have paternity leave, it is everyone's guess that they will not stay at home to help the wives for reasons I mentioned earlier and more. Since it is not in our character the men will still go out to see their friends and pursue their business while on their 'leave.'"

One English lecturer cautioned that because of the disparity of cultures, if people go abroad they shouldn't go about greeting people 'good morning' as is the norm here. And I dare add asking about children, work and the condition of living for that matter!

In other words while we have a sort of communal living here or being your neighbour's keeper, if you like (if not necessarily your brother's), it is simply not so in the west that we so much want to emulate.

Thereafter since people living in the west do all their domestic chores themselves, the men have no choice but to help their wives in taking care of babies and older children alike. Many Nigerians have attested to the fact that since it was unlike home, they had no choice but to help their wives in taking care of babies and also do other household chores, which they wouldn't have done if they were in Nigeria.

If a woman gives birth here she will be besieged, so to say with visitors, from parents, in-laws, neighbours and friends. These people will pamper her, wanting to do everything for her. So pray, where does a husband on a paternity leave fit in the above setting?

Many men are reluctant to go to their houses for several days after their wives have given birth, this is because the house is usually full of women well wishers.

So will a man on paternity leave stay among these women in his wife's bedroom and insist to take care of the baby or cook?

A woman respondent about the issue under discussion on TV believed that paternity leave would just create room for laziness. She said: "The men will just sleep and eat unnecessarily"

If men are indulged to have paternity leave, it is everyone's guess that they will not stay at home to help the wives for reasons I mentioned earlier and more. Since it is not in our character the men will still go out to see their friends and pursue their business while on their 'leave.'

A male respondent objected to it, instead he said the man could bring his mother to help his wife, as according to him, he couldn't imagine a man staying at home taking care of a baby.

At any rate, the advocates of such a 'holiday' should consider everything lest it will be seen as if men are demanding 'equal' right with women, by begrudging them maternity leave to have their own too ...

Minister inaugurates committee on orphans

By Abubakar Haruna,
Reporter (Women Desk)

The minister of women affairs, Obong Rita Akpan, has inaugurated a national steering committee on orphans and vulnerable children (OVC).

Speaking during the inauguration ceremony, at the ministry's conference room within the week, the minister said that the gesture was to ensure effective support for orphans and vulnerable children in the country.

She said "you will agree that the need to have a national steering committee is very crucial. This is because these unfortunate children need to have formidable advocates at the appropriate level, both in government and civil society for their cause to be effectively supported."

She added, "the national steering committee is expected to ensure the development and review of policies, legislations and guidelines for OVC intervention at the national level and use its good offices to attract international support for them."

She noted that the challenges before the committee was enormous and therefore, demand prompt response through policy and programme intervention to mitigate the suffering, anxiety and vulnerability of OVCs across the country.

According to her, OVCs, have been more prone to abuse and trafficking as most of them were bereft of protection of parents or families.

Rita further highlighted that was because urbanisation and the level of poverty in the rural areas have weakened the strong safety nets, which traditionally would have been provided for by the extended family system.

The minister stressed that in Nigeria until the dividends of the poverty alleviation programmes of the present administration started to be fully realised, the visible hand of government must be extended to bring succour to these children.

While appreciating the calibre of people in the committee, the minister said that each member has been nominated because his organisations have been an active member of the stakeholder's forum.

She further urged the committee members to keep their doors opened and also encourage the state commissioners of women affairs to replicate the national effort at their levels and ensure the creation of OVC units in their ministries.

The committee include the minister of women affairs Obong Rita Akpan as the chairperson, while members among others include, Saudatu Sani, chairperson, House committee on women affair and youth development, the country representative of the UNICEF, the country representative of the World Bank.

Mrs Kure commissions' youth centre in Minna

By Abdul-Azeez Suleiman,
News Editor (Weekly Trust)

Penultimate week, Hajiya Zainab Kure, wife of the Niger state governor and initiator of the Youths Empowerment Scheme (YES) in the state, inaugurated a committee to organise the commissioning of 'Gidan Matasa,' in Minna.

Addressing the large gathering of youths at the Abdussalami Abubakar Youth Centre, Hajiya Zainab, the Saqi Raba of Nupe, disclosed that over 5,512 young men and women have benefited from the youth empowerment scheme, she initiated five years ago.

She said that under the scheme, youth were trained, equipped and provided with grants to start off businesses.

"At present, there are 250 beneficiaries registered in the 10th batch training that is taking place at the Abdussalami Abubakar Youth centre," she said.

The Saqi Raba recounted that in 2002 the scheme had solicited for public assistance and lamented that to date most of the pledges made by people have not been honoured.

"With the amounts redeemed, we put up a special project committee for the construction of a permanent youth centre called 'Gidan Matasa' in honour of our youth," she said.

Hajiya Zainab said that the centre contained a 700-scatur auditorium, a conference hall, a library and 30 corner shops.

Commending the effort, chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party in Minna, Alhaji Nma Kolo said that the effect of the scheme could be seen with shops springing up all over the state capital.

Alhaji Kolo said that the initiator, Hajiya Zainab Kure has foresight beyond 2007 so that the project would outlive the present administration in the state.



Behold the Sagi Rapa Nupe: Hajiya Zainab Kure, wife of the governor of Niger state, holding her staff of office after being 'turbarned' the Sagi Rapa Nupe by His Royal Highness, the Etsu Nupe, Alhaji Yahaya Abubakar ...recently.

Ebonyi, UNFPA to assist VVF patients

Some 200 vesico vaginal fistula (VVF) patients in Ebonyi are to be treated under a joint effort of the state government and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA).

UNPFA Country Representative Essan Niagoran said the fund was prepared to treat patients in Ebonyi and added that residents would be enlightened on the causes of the ailment.

Niagoran, who announced the package when he visited the wife of the Ebonyi governor, Mrs Eunice Egwu, on Tuesday in Abakaliki, said the UNFPA would contribute 50 per cent of the treatment cost.

Niagoran, who was represented by Dr Ahamefula Isika, said the assistance was granted after receiving reports of VVF in the state.

Dr Sunday Adeoye, the surgeon in charge of VVF in Ebonyi, told Egwu that more than 200 VVF victims had been identified.

He called for government's support to a planned campaign on the education of young girls on the dangers of VVF.

Responding, the governor's wife thanked the team for its concern about VVF victims in the state.

She explained that she had always felt that the VVF problem was not in Ebonyi, saying: "Now that it is established that the patients are in Ebonyi, we will assist them."

Human traffickers will not escape law –*Mrs Atiku*

Wife of the vice president, Mrs Amina Atiku Abubakar, has vowed that those who engage in Human Trafficking would not escape the long arm of the law.

This was stated in a press statement signed by her chief pres secretary, Sayo Fabiyi, and made available to *The Home Front*, in Abuja, within the week.

According to the statement, Mrs. Abubakar made the assertion at the National Agency for Prohibition of trafficking in Person (NAPTIP), Lagos shelter to visit the 64 children rescued in Lagos while being transported in a refrigerated container from Mokwa by a suspected Human Trafficker, Alhaji Fatimah Baba.

The founder of Women trafficking and Children Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF) said everything possible would be done to stop human trafficking in Nigeria.

Mrs. Abubakar who moved from one room to another where the children were being sheltered at the NAPTIP house in Awolowo road, Ikoyi was visibly shocked by the startling revelation of how the children were trapped by their trafficker.

While assuring trafficked victims of adequate care and maximum protection at the NAPTIP shelter, she cautioned them to be wary of the antics of human traffickers who lure them with promises of a better prospect in the foreign land only to end up as house boys, street hawkers, nannies and sex slaves.

The wife of the vice president enjoined the children to speak out on their plights and travails, as this is the only way they could be assisted.

Mrs. Abubakar commended the National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Person (NAPTIP) for doing a good job in an effort to rid Nigerian society of human traffickers. She also lauded the Nigerian police for apprehending the suspected trafficker.

Responding, the executive secretary of NAPTIP, Mrs. Caro Ndaguba thanked Mrs. Abubakar for the visit. She also expressed appreciation to her for being the brain behind the establishment of the "National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Person (NAPTIP)."

THE HOME FRONT

Amazons of the National Conference

By Emmanuel Bello,
Reporter

Call them women of substance if you wish. But even for a male chauvinist, the role played by women delegates is commendable. Their input is not only incisive, but also relevant, dynamic, courageous and often times, humorous. Take Dr. Enyantu Ifenne, leader of the women group. She took the men folk to task the day she made her submission. So potent was her presentation that, in the end, no man was able to sit as a standing ovation greeted her cerebral address. While she spoke, every muscle in her body quaked with the fury of an amazon. She decried the lopsided composition of women who make up 65% of the Nigerian population. She asked the men to search their conscience and find out if they really cared.

Cutting to the soul of the men also was Hajiya Bilkisu Yusuf, ace journalist and delegate representing women in the North West. Dressed in a simple attire with the symbolic hijab, she addressed the conferences in clear tones and measured ideas. She spoke of the feminisation of power, stressing that women are the "poor of the poor" and thus worse off than Frankz Fanon "wretched of the earth." She also called for a more gender sensitive constitution which will not limit its provision to only the menfolk.

She did not just dwell on women issue. Speaking on security she noted that delegates should be given the national security panel report where issues of safeguarding the lives and properties of Nigerians was discussed extensively. She noted that most members of the security forces are not trained to cope with peace time pursuit like agriculture or industry. She observed that bored soldiers in barracks will constitute a menace than anything else.

Still on the military and para-military forces, Hajiya Bilkisu said that there was a need for further professional training of the sector.

Earlier, in another forum, Bilkisu Yusuf, had urged members of the press and those of civil society to work assiduously to ensure that reactionary forces do not hijack the conference and "run it aground."

For Mrs Esther Audu, a delegate on the federal government ticket as an elder statesman, (she insist on this usage, as opposed to "elder stateswoman") she would like to see a more energetic administrators for Nigeria. She observed (quite rightly) that most of the delegates suffer one health debilitation or the other considering the obese and pot-bellied frame of most of them. She urged her colleagues to take physical exercise more seriously, stressing that training was the only way to a healthy body.

Although most people laughed while she made her observation, Mrs. Esther Audu, a former chairperson (chairman, please!) of the Abuja municipal council, insisted that a living and active mind needed a sound and healthy body. Some delegates agreed with her. According to Alhaji Ja'afaru Makarfi, a delegate from Kaduna state, the pot belly of most of his colleagues was caused by billion of petrol dollar stashed away in the stomach. Was he saying that a majority of the distinguished delegates were corrupt?

Mrs. Audu has since been "confronted" by delegates with pot belly who kept telling her that inspite of their corpulence, they were still "active and functioning," we hope so.

Another tigress in the house is Taraba state's Mrs. Salome Jakanda. She was the one who clearly accused her colleagues of being part of the nation's problem. She observed that if, as most delegates kept repeating, the problem was not with the system, but the actors, then "everyone seated here has a part in the blame," she said.



Women delegates at the National Conference

Dr. Joy Ngozi Ezeillo a women group delegate proposed a radical solution to the Nigerian problem. According to the University don, the year 2007 and beyond should be handed over to women. She announced that having failed this country in its over forty years of history, men should give it up for women. She said that four years was all the women were asking for to change the fortunes of Nigeria. As she made her presentation some of the male delegate characteristically booed and jeered. But an undeterred Dr. Ezeillo barked back "I am dead serious." Her point was well made.

But it was Chief Mrs Bisi Ogunleye, OFR, who often turned the hall on its head with her humorous interventions. Calling herself the "original rural woman," Mrs. Ogunleye who is a delegate on the civil society list has not stopped castigating most Nigerians for neglecting agriculture and copying western values. She said she wondered why Nigerians could remain original, but always "copying *oyinbos* even in the way they speak."

Women geared toward leadership positions

Women are endowed with much potentials to play leadership roles,, stressing that it was a known phenomenon that women do even better than men when given such opportunities. This was disclosed in a welcome address by Mrs Esther Manghza, the Director General of National Centre for Women Development (NCWD) at a workshop on women's leadership development.

Mrs. Manghza further stated that women's potentials were developed or exploited, because most

By Kanu Ndidiamaka,
(Intern)

women did not really know what they had inside them.

"They tend to be satisfied with their traditional roles, which includes bearing and rearing of children, cooking, fetching firewood and a host of other domestic chores," she added.

Women's maginalisation is deeply noted in Nigerian culture, according to the Director General, which considers them as second-class citizens whose emancipation is at the mercy, pleasure, whim and caprices of their male counterparts.

She further explained that this tradition had dictated men-women relationship for centuries and entrenched male domination of a structure of social organisation and institution at all levels of leadership.

"This workshop is therefore to bring about awareness in women by developing their leadership potentials and improving their skills in leadership dynamics for those who are already in leadership positions and those determined to make a difference in their communities and places of work," she emphasised.

Also speaking at the occasion, the special guest of honour, Mrs Hadiza Isma el-Rufa'i urged the delegates to the workshop to make use of the appropriate skills and methods that would enable them seek leadership positions and participate more meaningfully in the ongoing efforts aimed at reforming the economy of the nation.

Meanwhile, Angela Abah Odah from Transition Monitoring Group, Abuja in a paper she presented entitled: "The role of Nigerian women in the electoral process challenges and prospects," traced women's role from the first republic to the present.



Minister for Women Affairs, Mrs. Rita-Akpan

She noted that in the first republic, the period 1960 to 1966 there were still domination, adding that this was more in the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) which did not allow women to participate in politics.

However she maintained that Nigeria's history revealed that Nigerian women were never at all a weak, submissive, totally dependent group but played only a passive and at best supportive role in their societies. Rather, they individually and severally played constructive roles and thus contributed tremendously to societal development, she added.

Angela Aboh gave examples of such women as Bakwa Turunku, first Sarauniya of Zaria, Amina the warrior queen of Zaria, Magira Aisa Kuli, whose major achievement was in the field of Agriculture.

The military regime led by General Aguiyi Ironsi continued with the exclusion of women in politics and governance explained Angela Aboh, but that the Murtala/Obasanjo regime offered women the appointment of the first female federal permanent secretary, the establishment of unity schools for girls in each state and approved Decree No 169 of 1976 that stipulated the universal franchise for women in Nigeria.

Dr. Habiba Muda Lawal who also presented a paper at the occasion entitled "Managing Stress" stated that women were especially prone to stress-related conditions.

She said: "It is not uncommon to find women looking after their home and children doing overtime at work, looking after the family finances, volunteering in the community or at school, helping friends and keeping their husbands happy."

"She further explained that this tradition had dictated men-women relationship for centuries and entrenched male domination of a structure of social organisation and institution at all levels of leadership."

THE HOME FRONT

Fibroid: Women's Barrier to pregnancy

*How it develops, causes, prevention

Fibroid is an abnormal growth of the muscular tissue of the uterus. It is a benign tumour of the uterus and the cervix which may become cancerous with time. Fibroid is called with different names in the medical practice depending on the tissue involved in the growth or formation. It is called as fibroma when the growth or tumour is composed chiefly of connective tissue, while it is called myoma when the growth is composed of muscle element. Its other names are fibromyoma, Leiomyofibroma.

Fibroids are the commonest abnormal growths of the uterus and is one of the most common tumour of the women. The disease is more common in black women. In fact it occurs three times more frequent in black women than white women, and occur at an earlier age. The reason for this is not known. Present hospital statistic shows that over 400,000 Nigerian women are affected and fibroid has been a major cause of infertility and the various pregnancy related deaths in Nigerian women.

Fibroids usually arise in the muscular wall of the uterus and vary in size from minute seedling growths to large masses which occupy nearly the whole abdomen. They are often multiple. At the onset, they lie in the substance of the uterine wall. They arise far more often in the body of the uterus (the womb) than in the cervix, and can remain exclusively within the muscle (the myometrium) of the womb for as long as 5 to 10 years growing silently and progressively and can project to other parts of the uterus (womb) more especially to the mucos membrance (the endometrium) which lines the uterus where it distorts the normal shape of the inner cavity of the womb and disturbs pregnancy. However, it may project to the outside lining of the uterus and become stalked (pedunculated) in the abdomen. Such growth (fibroid) into the abdomen may be so big in the abdomen that it may be mistaken for normal pregnancy. Many Nigeria women have carried such fibroid for many years regarding it as pregnancy and seeking for help in spiritual homes and native doctors.

Few cases (two per cent) of fibroid arise in the cervix. These are called cervical fibroids. They are usually single, although there may be other tumour growth in the body of the uterus. They cause distortion and elongation of the cervical canal and displace the body of the uterus (womb) upwards. A large cervical fibroid may cause elongation and distortion of the uretha. If large or big, cervical fibroid may cause complete obstruction and blockage of the cervix.

Fibroids are composed of smooth muscle and fibrous tissue. They grow slowly; in some cases there may be no evident change in size for many years. In a few cases growth is more rapid and secondary changes may also cause swelling of the tumour.

Causes factors causing fibroid

Actions of Oestrogen: Clinical evidence suggests that the development of fibroid is related to the action of oestrogen, hormone produced by the ovary. Fibroids arise during the period of menstrual activity. They do not originate as a new formation once menstruation has ceased.

Non-Utilised and Under Utilised Uterus: The disease fibroid is commonest in women that have never given birth to any child (nulliparous women) and in women who have not been pregnant for some time (under-utilised uterus) as in sexually active women who are barren, infertile or not getting pregnant easily i.e. women who have not been pregnant for some time and are in the productive age.

Effect of contraceptive pills: Contraceptive pills are oestrogenic and fibroid occurs more in women that are on oestrogenic pills.

Signs and symptoms

*Increase abdomen (Abdominal tumour): This is sometimes the first thing that the victims of fibroid noticed. The increased abdomen is so hard that it often attracts attention. The tumour is not tender (unless complicated) and rarely gives rise to pain, but occasionally causes local discomfort and a feeling of weight.

*Excessive menstrual flow (menorrhagia): This occurs as a result of the distortion and elongation of the uterine cavity. A woman with fibroid can bleed heavily during her menstruation for days. Some women become anaemic and faint as a result of heavy bleeding. Excessive menstrual flow is a common sign that makes victims to seek advice or help. The menstrual periods increase in amount and duration, they may be accompanied by the passage of clots.

*Multiple menstruations in one month: This can occur and is common with fibroid.

*Frequent urinating: The pressure exerted by fibroid may affect bladder function. If the uterus is enlarged by fibroid and lies on the fundus of the bladder there may be frequent micturition particularly on standing.

*Retention of urine and Difficulty in micturition: when the pressure exerted by fibroid, especially cervical fibroid displaces the neck of the bladder upwards and elongate the urethra or when pressure exerted by fibroids on the posterior wall of the uterus push the cervix and body of the uterus upward and forwards, difficulty in micturition and retention of urine result. This may be of gradual onset or sudden onset. Retention may occur at the onset of a menstrual period, caused by slight engorgement of the pelvic structures; after establishment of the menstrual flow the retention may disappear, to return again with the succeeding period.

*Constipation, haemorrhoids and varicose veins (swollen and knotted veins) may occasionally occur, especially if the tumour (fibroid) remain confined to the pelvis, and with very large tumours, gastrointestinal symptoms such as abdominal discomfort, etc. can arise.

*Pain: this is not a common symptom of fibroid. But it occurs when the tumour is infected and when there is pelvic inflammatory disease or some complications of the tumour.

*Fibroid enlargement of the uterus is harder and generally more irregular than the pregnant uterus, which is soft and elastic and contracts from time to time.

*There will be no stoppage of the menstrual discharge/flow.

*No sign of baby kick that occurs in normal pregnancy.

Fibroid and pregnancy, childbearing

*Miscarriage.

*Increased risk of abortion. Large and multiple fibroids tend to cause abortion.

*Bleeding from threatened abortion.

This may be mistakenly attributed to the menstrual bleeding if the signs of pregnancy are obscured or masked.

Many women nearly bleed to death every month from threatening abortion caused by fibroid.

*The signs of pregnancy are sometimes masked.

*Confusion may also arise about the expected date of delivery because the uterus is larger than expected for the period of stoppage of the menstrual discharge.

*Pain during pregnancy.

*Pre-mature labour: A pregnant fibroid woman may go into labour before her term because of over distension of the uterus by the tumour.

*Malposition and malpresentation of the child to be delivered: Cervical fibroid prevents the head of the baby from engaging and may equally cause abnormal presentation of the baby.

*Obstruction and complication of labour: Labour may be obstructed in pregnant fibroid women either by cervical fibroid or due to poor contraction of the interus caused by the presence of fibroid in the uterus. This complicates labour.

*Excessive bleeding after childbirth (postpartum haemorrhage). These have killed many Nigerian women in the past as is still killing some. This case occurs particularly if the placental attachment is over the tumour.

*Pain after delivery: fibroid may cause pain after child delivery..

*Sterility: Fibroids commonly causes sterility in women and it is the major cause of sterility in black women. Over 400,000 Nigerian women are currently affected. Many Nigerian women with fibroid have been looking for child for many years without result because of the fibroid in their womb (but they do not know). However, some women with fibroid still get pregnant and some even deliver successfully with the fibroid.

*Pregnancy may result in increased growth of an existing fibroid. After the menopause the tumour cease to grow, and many of the fibroids atrophy, sometimes becoming calcified.

Prevention

*Avoid the abuse of contraceptives. Contraceptive pills should be chosen on your doctor's advice or on the advise of family planning experts. Contraceptive gives addition oestrogen to your system which apart from the possibility of causing fibroid also put the women at a higher risk of getting breast cancer.

*Avoid delay of pregnancy for too long a period during the reproductive age.

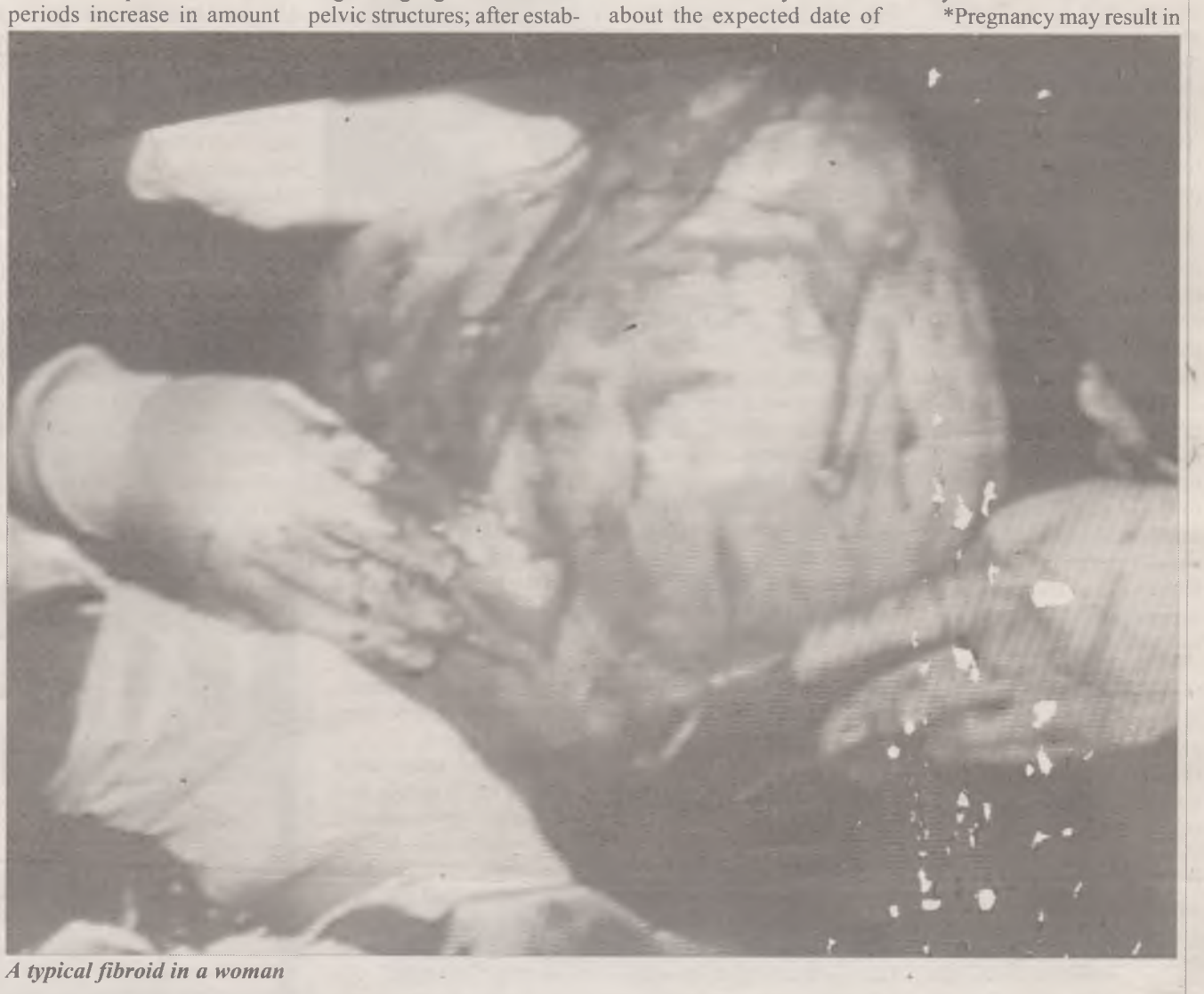
*Stay clear of venereal diseases.

*Avoid frequent and excessive D&C.

*Prevent menstrual abnormalities.

*Treat your menstrual abnormalities if any.

Culled from Global Healthlink Magazine



A typical fibroid in a woman

"Such growth (fibroid) into the abdomen may be so big in the abdomen that it may be mistaken for normal pregnancy. Many Nigeria women have carried such fibroid for many years regarding it as pregnancy and seeking for help in spiritual homes and native doctors."

ABUJA TRUST

As night falls in Chika/Aleiyita

By Chinedu Aro, *who lives in Chika*

Although yet to be officially assigned the status of a satellite village by the authorities of the Federal Capital Territory, Chika Village situated along airport road is one of the most organised and busiest suburbs of Abuja.

With a beautiful topography that is a glory to the natural splendour that Abuja is known for, Chika's is purely a creation of the inhabitants who seemed to have resolved to stick to a certain building pattern. It is as if residents predicted and quite rightly so that adopting a peculiar orderly pattern might dissuade el-Rufai's bulldozers to 'passover' them in the master plan restoration campaign.

Most of Chika's streets, though not paved, have that deliberate orderliness that is the signature of town planners, yet there abound those elementary symptoms that a great slum is being born.

There is a local public primary school and several mushroom private schools all of which are filled. Compared to other cub slums, Chika stands tall, especially when squalid, unkempt and riotous Karmo, Idu, Gwagwa and Mpape are brought into the picture.

Like all candidates with latent ghetto genes running in their blood, Chika's most enchanting periods are between 7 pm and mid-night when its suburb literally comes alive with a variety of exciting treats and pageantry. It is a period that 'everything' happens; depending on the area one is inclined. It is indeed what makes Chika 'complete'.

It is a period that residents return from their respective work places, for those not practising their trade at the village. It is always a moment *Okada* riders will never like to miss as they convey residents to their respective homes.

A moment later, most of them, more especially bachelors and spinsters, the married though not left out, stray out to ease tension accumulated throughout the day.

Each street has at least a pub, where inhabitants relax to discuss contemporary issues: they sit around tables, smoke, drink and talk about political and economic issues most of which are based on rumours.

Isa Ibrahim, a resident of Chika, told *Abuja Trust* that missing a night out in Chika makes him feel he has lost a great moment in his life. 'I always interact with my colleagues at night after a hectic period of work. It is in such gatherings that those of us nication get to hear the goings-on in the country.'

But for another resident, who simply calls himself Charles, 'I go out to catch fun at night on a daily basis because it is only then that professional liars gather to tell us what they have seen in the town (Abuja). I believe that more lies are discussed because the analysts usually talk well and more vocal when they are drunk, more especially when they are given free drinks." Charles says that a greater number of the 'entertainers' are civil servants who usually have many tales to tell but with lean pockets.

For those who can afford sumptuous outings, Chika has fantastic inns where 'complete satisfaction' is always available for harnessing. Condiments and delicacies like *isi-ewu*, (goat head), *ngwo-ngwo,* (assorted cow parts), drinks, mention them...

For the sensual aspect, City Guest Hotel has the credentials. There, young women - attractive indeed - jostle to be seen as teenagers, wearing skimpy tight fitting body hugs, such that they could pass as stark naked, are in abundance to defuse accumulated tension and stress provided the requirements are met.

About ten minutes walk from City Guest Hotel is Bajji Guest Inn, another place that makes Chika's nightlife most exciting and unique. It is a very conducive, convenient venue to 'destroy' money. It has chalets for fun seekers. That could be why plenty men and young women gather there at night. Side attractions here are the continual blaring of *Makosa* music with *Awilo* dancers displaying to the glee of their many adherents.

Another very interesting scenario in Chika as from 7pm is the drove of young ladies, mostly in their nobility and dressed in clothes that flaunt their 'appropriate parts.' While you may think that they are travelling since some of them carry bags, you may be wrong –they simply migrate out of Chika for the night for greener pastures by walking the streets of Wuse (you may have heard of Zone 4), Maitama, Garki and the premises of hotels that abound in the city centre. Some of them stand along airport road and hope to share the loot of some rich men on the lookout for fun. According to a wine dealer, one Odugwu, 'that is how they make their living because *country hard*. And they return early in the morning to relax through the day. That is

and bubble of Chika begins to decline. It is a period policemen mount their surveillance across every nook and cranny of the settlement. This is however preceded by police routine drives across streets to sweep people who cannot give accounts of their whereabouts. That is before



Nasir el-Rufai, FCT Minister

9 pm. The victims are often made to pay heavily, most times N2,000 to be released instantly while those who failed to pay may be forced to part with much more if they 'sleep' at the police station.

After the sweep, lower ranked policemen, mostly recruits armed with batons, are drafted to guide every corner of the streets, while their *ogas* return to their base to wait for signals. The night guards hold late returnees hostage until the *ogas* return to know whether their traps have caught preys.

"They can only catch you if you fail to decode that as little as N20 professionally given is enough to set '*wakaabouts'* free. But failure to understand the language, with integrity too, the victims could find themselves in police cells," observes Emeka Ugwu, a mechanic in Chika.

'What pains me,' says a resident who simply identified himself as Okechukwu, "is that when armed robbers strike, the police disappear. I remember when police confronted robbers after a tip-off; indeed we had all hoped that luck had ran out on the men of the underworld, but at the end of the duel, which was a face-to-face affair, none of them was even wounded. Eyewitnesses confirmed that both parties shot to the sky. So, after that, every street got the services of private security guards, and that is why cases of robbery incidents have dropped."

A major set back to Chika is water. Unlike its fairly stable power supply, residents rely solely on private and untreated boreholes for water. At times, water tankers do supply.

Aleiyita is a suburb next to Chika. In fact many visitors to the area find it difficult unlike Chika in the area of organisation. In fact, it has no planning authorities, but the irony is that it has constant power supply. There are also a lot of relaxation centres in Aleiyita, but not as magnificent as those found in Chika. Nonetheless, relaxation centres of Aleiyita are mostly located under the trees, possibly naturally depicting the vision of the FCT's green zone architecture, and tourist centres. Many tourists enjoy Aleiyita's relaxation centres more so because they always have bush meat, courtesy of Gbagyi hunters who ransack the abundant bushes in the area. This gifted village also has enough unadulterated palm wine joints capable of spoiling unsuspecting fun lovers.

"We come here because it is a village outside our villages. I come from Tiv land where bush meat and palm wine are available and go hand in hand. It is only in Aleiyita that my nostalgia is assuaged," said Chief Gugu, a man who claims to be a resident of Gwarinpa estate.

Aleiyita is a settlement for all categories of people of a variety of callings and of all ethnic groups. Although it was said to be originally inhabited by Gbagyi, it is now home to water truck pushers, roadside mechanics, commercial motorcyclists, bus drivers, artisans and traders.

One distinctive feature of Aleiyita is the dog meat delicacy. Omaski Joint and another one beside ECWA Church are two very popular joints hawking dog meat. With as little as N30, one can become dazed with *ogogoro*, a locally brewed gin; and with as little as N100, one is sure to eat spicy and garnished dog meat.

There is a glaring disparity in the prices of accommodation in the contiguous suburbs. A self-contained room in Chika costs as much as N70,000 but in Aleiyita it costs only N25,000.00 or less.

Probably, one major role that Aleiyita performs to mankind in general is on the aspect of sorcery. If any superstitious homes exist in the FCT, I may not know, but the truth is that in Aleiyita, there exists a place that whoever wants to foresee their destinies can consult specialists. In fact, this 'only one place' is as busy as an anthill, as people come *en masse* in search of their talents after repeated failures in businesses.

"Some come here to check whether a certain business they want to embark on will favour them or not. Others, mostly women, come here to read their palms and also to ascertain their marriage stars. Funny indeed!' disclosed Ignatius, one of the customers.

'My mission here,' began one man, who pleaded anonymity, 'is to know whether Aleiyita will be demolished because I want to buy a piece of land here.'

Whether the home's predictions are realistic remains enigmatic. At any rate, *Abuja Trust's* investigations show that many people used to return with complains of having been cheated by the home's predictions.

Chika/Aleyita are both places fun-seekers may love to explore. This they are sure to do not just in one night – it may take many nights to understand!

Chinedu is of the proof-reading desk, Daily Trust

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Abuja Trust



Borehole owners now get huge returns from the sale of water due to the acute scarcity of water in Abuja.
Pix: Felix Onigbinde

FG to relocate 49 FCT villages, says minister

At least 49 villages consisting of 41,270 households are to give way to the federal government's plan to revert to the original resettlement scheme for indigenes of the FCT.

Briefing newsmen at the end of yesterday's meeting of the Federal Executive Council (FEC), the FCT minister, Malam Nasir el-Rufai, said that government had "accepted in principle to revert to the 1978 plan for resettlement of original Abuja indigenes"

el-Rufai said that under the new plan, the villages still within the FCT would be resettled in three neighbouring local councils and that only original Abuja indigenes would be catered for.

"There are additional 253,000 household squatters that would also be affected by the new plan," but stressed that only the indigenes would enjoy the resettlement package.

The minister named some of the villages to be affected to include most of those along the airport road such as Aleta, Chika, Durumi, Gaduwa, Gishiri, Gwagwa, Idu, Jiwa and Kado life camp.

Others are Kuchingoro, Lugbe, Mabushi, Pyakassa and Garki village over, which, he said, a consultancy firm on urban renewal would soon be appointed to advice on how to handle the villages.

He said that the compensation package include a farmland and house and another plot within the FCT, adding that government was only interested in sustaining the original plan for developing the new capital.

The minister said that he would return to council with a detailed plan of action on the implementation of the resettlement plan, which, he said, would be completed within the next three years.

He stressed that "extensive discussions" were held with the community leaders of all the 49 affected villages and that they had accepted the government plan.

El-Rufai said that he also got government approval to upgrade some major roads within the city and some feeders to reduce the high traffic on those roads, he said.

FEC approved the purchase of two roll-in, roll-on gabbage trucks from Anamco for the FCT and gave the go ahead for the roofing of the national theatre at the cost of more than N323.4 million.

The council also approved a new import restriction list allowing industrialists to import raw materials for the use of their factories to accelerate exports.

Consultant in court for cheating

A consultant, Dr Chukwuemeka Anyanwu, 42, yesterday appeared before a Chief Magistrate's Court sitting in Jabi, Abuja, for alleged cheating.

Anyanwu was said to have stayed in two different hotels in Abuja and deceitfully incurred bills of N2.1 million and deliberately refused to pay.

Police prosecutor Insp. Francis Irabor, told the Court that the hotels are Penuel Apartment, Wuse 2, Abuja, and Karibu Hotel, Garki, Abuja.

He added that the matter was reported by Mr Yemi Ajijohenya and Mr Francis Ibe, both staffers of the hotels respectively.

Irabor said that the accused claimed to be the Chairman Nigerian Abroad Development Foundation.

When the charge was read, the accused pleaded not guilty, while his lawyer Mr Afam Osigwe, applied for his bail.

In his plea, Osigwe argued that the accused was to be presumed innocent until contrary was proved and assured the court that his client would neither impede investigation nor abscond.

He added that the accused would provide reasonable surety to guarantee his presence throughout the trial and urged the court to exercise its discretion in favour of the accused.

However, the prosecution opposed the bail application on the ground that the offence was not ordinarily bailable and the accused was granted police bail.

Prosecutor Irabor said if the accused granted bail might be difficult for the police to rearrested him because no definite address was given during police investigation.

In his ruling, the trial Magistrate Mr Othman Musa, granted the accused bail in the sum of N1 million, with a surety in like sum and adjourned the case May 11, for hearing.

Prices of essential commodities remain stable in Abuja

In spite of the recent ban by the federal government on the importation of rice into the country, price of the commodity remained stable in Abuja markets.

A trader at Garki Monday Market Abuja, Mr Fidelis Okezie told the *News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)* yesterday that the traders did not have enough stock at the market like their counterparts in other markets.

"We don't have enough rice in stock, but the price has remained stable since the celebration of Eid-el Kabir in January, because of the level of demand," he said.

"A 50kg bag of Caprice still goes for N5,600, we have that of N4,300 and 25kg for N3,000, as it was since the beginning of the year," he said.

However, some customers noticed that even with the stability of the price, the 50kg and 25kg bags of rice were not as full as they used to be.

NAN observed that the bags of rice on sale in most of the markets in Abuja were re-packaged and the quantity reduced.

One of the customers, Mrs Folukemi Akerele said that the available imported rice were being hoarded by the traders as they envisaged scarcity because of the recent seizures by the customs.

Some of the traders told *NAN* that the hoarding was due to the recent pronouncement by the customs to raid shops for banned products.

The traders at the Wuse old market, Utako District and Garki Monday markets blamed the development on the recent ban by the federal government, without making adequate provision for local supply.

Vegetable oil all suffered the same fate as the recent ban without proper monitoring created room for flooding the market with verities of brands.

NAN gathered that in spite all odds the price of essential commodities had remained stable even with few days to the Easter celebration.

A cross section of the traders at the Wuse market noted that in spite of the stability and availability of some goods sales were still low.

Mr Obinna Chukwubuikem, noted that they were still hopeful of the last minute rush by parents to shop for children's wears.

FCT commences recruitment exercise into Navy, school of nursing

By Nasir Imam *(Assist News Editor)*

The Federal Capital Territory (FCT) administration is inviting interested indigenes of the FCT that recruitment exercise into the Nigerian Navy will take place between 21st to 26th March, 2005 at Tradoc, Minna, in Niger State.

A circular from the FCT authorities said that interested candidates should contact the Nigerian Naval Headquarters in the ministry of Defence, Plot 10992, Mohammed Buhari way, Area 7, Garki for further information.

Similarly, candidates wishing to seek admission into the FCT School of Nursing for basic nursing programme (Sept 2005) are to purchase admission forms at Room 306, FCT Health and Human Services, Nursing Division, Area 11, Garki, Abuja.

Candidates wishing to obtain the form should show evidence of payment of N1000 non-refundable fee from First City Monument Bank, located on plot 252, Herbert Macualey Way, Central Area, Abuja.

The statement said completed forms are to be returned to the School of Nursing, Gwagwalada, Abuja on or before 19, March, 2005.

It said eligible candidates should possess WASC, GCE, SSCE, NECO or TC II with at least 5 credits in English language, physics, chemistry Biology or Health science at not more than two sittings.

LOSS OF LAND DOCUMENTS

This is to notify the general public that Offer of Terms of Grant/Conveyance of Approval of a Grant of Right of Occupancy in respect of a Plot of about 5 Hectres with No. WN5K and a File **No. MFCT/LA/MISC 21602** within Wunba District Phase III belonging to **A.G. LEVENTIES NIGERIA PLC.** has been declared missing.

Any information about its whereabout should be sent to A.G. LEVENTIES NIGERIA PLC., Abuja Geographical Information System (AGIS).

KANO TRUST

Govt tackles flooding at roundabouts

By Ahmed Abubakar,
Reporter (Kano)

During every rainy season in Kano, drainages and sewages get filled up to their brims as a result of either blockages caused by sand and refuse or inadequate sewage networking that usually caused untold hardship to many residents in the metropolis. Motorists in similar fashion have to device means to manoeuvre their ways out of the inevitable flood.

In no measure were place being most affected than location around roundabouts were the flood is always so enormous after every down pour such that vehicles had to either boycott the roads for as long as the flood lasts or risk a plunge into the roundabout 'river'.

However, the Shekarau administration has decided to take the bull by the horns in what seems decades of total neglect of sewage and drainage systems by previous administrations by committing about N250 million to the state ministry of land and physical planning in order to rehabilitate the Kano township roundabouts.

Dantata and Sawoe Construction Company that was contracted with the sole responsibility of reshaping 10 roundabouts situated at strategic places within the metropolis is expected to beat the time of finishing before rains commence in June.

The 10 roundabouts expected to be rehabilitated are Government House roundabout, Gidan Murtala roundabout, Fagge roundabout, Yankura roundabout, Kano Club roundabout, Airport roundabout, and Triumph roundabout. Others include, Silver Jubilee roundabout, Zoo Road roundabout and Kundila roundabout.

This gesture was received with applause from most Kano residents some of who however remain apprehensive with the thought that this may yet be a legitimate reason for government to squander public funds and resources under the pretext of providing projecting that have direct bearing on the people.

This has generated some mixed fillings of debate amongst Kano residents to the extent that some question the relevance of roundabouts to the people. Some are agitated and asks whether the rehabilitation of roundabouts would bring an end to the persistent flooding of the metropolis while some others are asking if it is another abuse of public fund that they say is characteristic of past administrations?

When the Kano State government announced the commencement of construction work at the site of the ten roundabouts in January this year people were skeptical of government's seriousness in executing the projects but under a short period of time two of the roundabouts at Government House and Zoo Road were already in their last phases of completion.

Works were also be seen in earnest on Fagge, Triumph and Kundila roundabouts and soon after work commenced on the other roundabouts of Silver Jubilee, Gidan Murtala, 'Yankura, Kano Club, Airport Road.

Kano Trust seeks the opinion of Kano residents on the relevance of the rehabilitation of the roundabouts on the lives of residents and the justification of cost incurred in the reconstruction exercise

Mallam Tajudeen Abubakar who is a banker with Intercontinental Bank applauds the Shekarau government for embarking on the rehabilitation of roundabouts. "Drainages are such essential ingredients in enabling free flow of water that no amount of money spent should be criticised," said the banker. He also observed that, "the present Kano State government is in such hot position since it decided to embark upon a most difficult project which is the human developmental project.".

He said it is difficult in the sense that people may not really appreciate its immediate impact unlike visible projects like construction of houses."

A police ASP who wants to remain anonymous told *Kano Trust* that, in the 20 years he has been in Kano State with his family there had never been a reconstruction commitment of roundabouts in the state.

He said "past administrations always issue out contracts of construction of roundabouts without paying adequate attention to drainages in and around these roundabouts and that is why year in yet out the roundabouts are flooded. But now this administration is not only reconstructing the roundabouts it is also carefully linking the drainage in the roundabouts with outer drainages, like the one in Zoo Road and Government House.

While Isyaku Lado, a motorcycle mechanic explained to *Kano Trust* that in as much the reconstruction of roundabouts is done in good faith for the people of the state he will always welcome it. But if the project is one of those to deceive the people he will not have anything to do with it.

Kano Trust findings revealed that for several years Kano residents do not really find value in roundabouts since constant abuse through defecating and dumping of refuse is the order of the day. Our correspondent therefore asked the authority on how the roundabouts would be protected from abuse and vandalism.

The managing director Kano State Environmental Protection Agency, Alhaji Al-Mustapha D. Inuwa all local government where the projects were sited, the Ministry for Environment, KASEPA, and other government agencies will be saddled with the responsibility of maintenance as well as provision of security of the roundabouts."

Al-Mustapha however said people abuse roundabouts due to lack of serious commitment on the part of previous administrations. He assured that the Shekarau administration will intensify all efforts in protecting them against abuse.

He also said that, "in as much as the government has commissioned so much fund for the rehabilitation of the roundabouts it will do all it could to avoid its abuse in the future."

Mallama Rahimatu Abdullahi, a resident of Kurna quarters, told *Kano Trust* that she doesn't know why the roundabouts are being constructed. "All I know is that they are causing so much traffic hold up in the city," she added.

For Mallam Bashir Abubakar, an Internet Cafe operator, "Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau always has a scientific approach to problems," adding that the governor will surely deliver.

"This has generated some mixed fillings of debate amongst Kano residents to the extent that some question the relevance of roundabouts to the people. Some are agitated and asks whether the rehabilitation of roundabouts would bring an end to the persistent flooding of the metropolis while some others are asking if it is another abuse of public fund that they say is characteristic of past administrations?"



Dangi roundabout wearing a new look



Government House roundabout, about to be completed



Kundila/AKTH roundabout, also almost completed

EKO TRUST

Tinubu promises machine for cancer treatment

By Olumide Bajulaiye,
Reporter (Lagos)

The Lagos State governor, Alh. Bola Ahmed Tinubu, has promised to install a state-of-art mammogram machine for breast cancer treatment at the Agege General Hospital in the next six weeks. He made this known at Orile Agege while flagging off the council's version of the *Blindness Prevention Programme* (BPP).

Similarly, the governor has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to uplift the plight of the less privileged in the state. Tinubu, who decried the activities of some people who are bent on thwarting his administration's good plans for the people, said his resolve to better the lot of the Lagosians was irrevocable. According to him, the plot by the PDP-led government to frustrate his people-oriented policies would come to naught as he was determined to ensure a new dawn.

He said that withholding the local governments' funds by the federal government, rather than becoming an obstacle to his regime, was a blessing in disguise, as it has brought a challenge which had been met headlong.

In his words, "So long as the policy continues, the PDP has shown that it is against the development of the state. It is not Bola Tinubu they are fighting; it is the children, aged and poor people who benefit from the government's laudable programmes."

While urging AD faithful to close ranks and revive the spirit of brotherhood that has kept the party alive, Tinubu said it was the only way ruthless politicians could be put to shame.

In his opening remarks, Health Commissioner Dr. Leek Pitan said the administration had become a leading light in the Nigerian nation in terms of healthcare services, having been rated the best in several national and international assessments. He attributed the success to the determination of the government to impart democracy dividends to the people.

University don decries government's neglect of youth

A university lecturer, Dr. Momoh Abubakar, on Wednesday said government's programmes on the youth in the country was dehumanising. He declared this while delivering a lecture on "Youth Empowerment and Stable Democracy" organised by the Lagos State Ministry of Youth, Sports and Social Development.

He described the social miscreants popularly called *Area Boys* in Lagos as victims of social inequalities and injustices. According to him, the *area-boys'* phenomenon was a dialectical 'necessity rather than a chance situation', and regretted that the concept has been misunderstood.

He said, "It is true that government has several rehabilitation centres for the youth, but many of those centres dehumanise them because such youth are treated as criminals and sub-humans."

According to him, the high illiteracy level among youth makes them 'idle, unproductive, restive and easy to be used and manipulated', and called on the privileged youth, such as ministers and commissioners, to empower their endangered colleagues.

In his speech, the Lagos State commissioner for Youth, Sports and Social Development, Mr. Opeyemi Bamidele, noted that time had come when more recognition should be accorded the youth to reduce anti-social activities; and called on the authorities concerned to carry the youth along in their programmes to give them a sense of belonging.

He said the task of empowering the youth was an onerous one, and should exclusively be shouldered by governments at all levels.



Traders mourning after the demolition of their shops at Constain roundabout, Iganmu by the Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency...recently.



Friends of major Al-Mustapha trooped to the Federal High Court, Ikoyi, during one of his appearances in court.



Chief (Mrs) Ibironke Osiyemi (R), ICAN president, presenting an award to (Dr) (Mrs) Ndi-Okereke Onyiuke, D.G, N.S.E. at the 2005 ICAN Merit Award in Lagos...recently.

Pix: Oladipupo Odunewu

THE ARTS

Short Story Special

So you want to be a short story writer?

By Crispin Oduobuk,
Group Literary Editor

Well, obviously then the first thing is you must write. For what writer, or aspiring writer for that matter, does not write? Certainly not the one who seeks to add anything to the short story genre.

Our call for submissions in this field brought some sad revelations. The short of it is something seems to be wrong with our short story writing culture. We really don't want to go into the poor mechanics. But depth is sorely lacking. There are more attempts at impressing rather than expressing to the reader. The worst culprit isn't the distressing spellings and incomprehensible structure; it's the sheer lack of understanding of basic story-telling elements.

Now let's see: what can we do so we all learn and grow together? Long ago your correspondent learned from a source not readily recalled now something called the three Os: Objective, Obstacle and Outcome. It's a good starting point but please never get formulaic about it—art has no recipe as such (see Chekhov on this page). But where is the story going? What's stopping it from getting there? Well, how does it all end?

Similarly, a focal character and maybe a foil character that show some growth at the end never hurts. Characters with life. Show, don't tell. Let the reader feel. Don't 'puppetise' the reader's emotions. Set the tone. Set the scene. Show the story. The rest is up to the reader.

It's all cryptic like Russian, one realises, but it's 2005 and "I love you," supposedly, is 143. You is simply 'u' in text and email language. And a short story writer has a lot to compete with when it comes to grabbing the attention of a potential reader.

So keep it tight. You're not writing that great novel. Yet. "Write to express rather than impress." That's actually my editor-in-chief's line and even he told us he first heard it from another senior editor now retired. Cut out EVERYTHING that has nothing to do with either plot, character development or setting and situation. Lay the clues for the resolution within the body of the story and keep things believable though a twist never hurts (see Kate Chopin on this page).

Humour rarely fails but you may go darkly and still score. The essence is to communicate something to the reader. Literary? Wacky? Incongruous? Stone-cold serious? Beyond description? It's your story—be original; work with your unique story-telling voice. Whatever style you're flaunting, well, flaunt so long as the writing is dynamic and intelligible.

A Living Chronology

By Anton Chekhov

Councillor-of-State Sharamykin's living room is bathed in pleasant semi-darkness. A large bronze lamp with a green shade casts a green light a la "Ukrainian Nights" on the walls, furniture, and faces. Now and then a smouldering log bursts into flame in the fireplace and for a moment sheds the colour of a conflagration on the faces, but that does not spoil the general harmony of the illumination. The general tone, as artists say, is sustained.

Sharamykin himself, an elderly man with the grey side-whiskers of a bureaucrat and gentle light-blue eyes sits, in an armchair in front of the fireplace, in the pose of someone who has just dined. Tenderness spreads over his face, his lips are composed into a sorrowful smile. At his feet Vice-Governor Lopnev; a dashing man of forty, sits on a footstool, lazily stretching out and sticking his feet toward the fireplace. Sharamykin's children, Nina, Kolya, Nadya, and Vanya, are playing near the piano. A light timidly darts through the slightly open door leading to Mrs. Sharamykin's study. There, behind the door, Sharamykin's wife, Anna Pavlovna, the president of the local ladies' committee, a lively and piquant little lady, aged thirty and a touch, sits at her desk. Her dark alert eyes run over the pages of a French novel through a pince-nez. Under the novel lies the disarranged annual report of the committee.

"Our town used to be more fortunate in that respect in previous years," says Sharamykin, blinking his gentle eyes at the smouldering fire. "Not a single winter passed without the visit of some star. There used to be famous actors and singers, while today, God only knows! Nobody visits except magicians and organ-grinders. No aesthetic satisfaction whatsoever. We live in a wilderness. Yes, sir. . . But do you remember that Italian tragedian, Your Excellency. . . what was his name? That dark-haired, tall. . . if I can just. . . Ah, yes! Luigi Ernesto de Ruggiero. . . . A remarkable talent. . . powerful! Sometimes he would utter a single word, and the whole theatre would shake. .My Anyutochka took great interest in his talent. She went to a lot of trouble to get him a theatre, and sold enough tickets for ten performances. In return he taught her declamation and mime. A splendid man! He came here. . . if I'm not mistaken. . . about twelve years ago. . . . No, I'm off. . . . Less, maybe ten years ago. . . . Anyutochka, how old is our Nina?"

"She was nine on her last birthday!" Anna Pavlovna shouts from her study. "Why?"

"Nothing, dearest, I just asked. . . .—And good singers used to come. . . . Do you remember the *tenore di grazia* Prilipchin? What a splendid man! What a figure! Blonde. . . such an expressive face, Parisian manners. . . . And what a voice, Your Excellency! He only had one shortcoming: he forced some notes and sang high B falsetto, but all the rest was fine. He said that he had studied with Tamberlick. . . . Anyutochka and I managed to get him a hall in the Assembly and out of gratitude he used to sing entire days and nights for us in return. . .. He taught Anyutochka to sing. . .. He came here, I remember it distinctly, during Lent in . . . in . . . twelve years ago. No, more... Oh, God! There's memory for you! Anyutochka, how old is our Nadechka?"

"Twelve!"

"Twelve. . . if you add ten months. . . . Well, there you have it. . . thirteen! . . . There used to be more life in town formerly, too, somehow. . . . Take the benefit nights for example. What marvellous evenings we used to have. What a delight! There was singing, and acting, and recitations. . . . I remember after the war, when the Turkish prisoners were kept here. Anyutochka organized an evening for the benefit of the wounded. They collected eleven hundred rubles. . . . The Turkish officers were crazy about Anyutochka's voice, I remember, and kept kissing her hand. Hee, hee, hee. . . . They're a grateful nation, even if they are Asiatics. The evening was so successful that I put it down in the journal, would you believe it. That was, I remember it distinctly, in seventy-six. . . no! in seventy seven. . . . No! Excuse me, when were the Turks here? Anyutochka, how old is our Kolechka?"

"I'm seven years old, Papa!" says Kolya, a swarthy kid with a dark complexion and hair black as coal.

"Yes, we've gotten old, and no longer have the energy we used to have! . . ." Lopnev agrees, heaving a sigh. "That's the reason. . . . Old age, my friend! There are no new people to take the initiative, and the old have gotten old. . . . They no longer have the old fire. When I was younger I didn't want anyone to have a tedious time. . . : I was your Anna Pavlovna's right-hand man. . . . Whether it was arranging a benefit night, or a lottery, or to entertain a visiting celebrity—I'd give up everything and start busying myself about arrangements. One winter, I remember, I fussed and rushed around so much that I even fell ill. . . . I'll never forget that winter! Do you remember what a show your Anna Pavlovna and I put on for the benefit of those who got burned out?"

"What year did that take place?"

"Not long ago. . . . In seventy-nine. . . . No, I think in eighty. Excuse me, how old is your Vanya?"

"Five!" Anna Pavlovna shouts from the study.

"Well, that was six years ago then. . . . Yes, sir, my friend, there were lots of things afoot then! It's not the same anymore! The old spark is missing!"

Lopnev and Sharamykin become pensive. The smouldering log bursts into flame for the last time and becomes coated with ashes.

Widely acknowledged as a master of the short story form, Chekhov was born in Russia in 1860 and died in Germany in 1904. 'A Living Chronlogy', first published in1885, reveals his concern for technique and length. This translation by Ralph E. Matlaw is taken from Anton Chekhov Short Stories *selected and edited by Ralph E. Matlaw(W.W. Norton & Company, Inc 1979).*

The Classics

The Story of an Hour

By Kate Chopin

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the colour that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will—as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been.

When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: "free, free, free!" The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial.

She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and grey and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

There would be no one to live for during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him—sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

"Free! Body and soul free!" she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. "Louise, open the door! I beg, open the door—you will make yourself ill. What are you doing Louise? For heaven's sake open the door."

"Go away. I am not making myself ill." No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister's importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister's waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

Some one was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine's piercing cry; at Richards' quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

But Richards was too late.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease—of joy that kills.

Kate Chopin was born Catherine O'Flaherty in 1850 in the USA. In 1870, she married Oscar Chopin. She became a widow in 1882. In 1889 she wrote her first short story. She died in 1904. It is noteworthy that she began writing at the age of 39 when she would have already experienced many maturing life situations. She was also influenced by such classic masters as Maupassant who awakened her, the artist, to ideas such as personal liberty and freedom. Her stories are often entertaining and questioning of the social mores and standards of her time. 'The Story of an Hour', first published in 1894, appears at www.eastoftheweb.com.

Short Story Special

Freedom Square

By Deji Toye

Now, talk is cheap. After all, a donkey once talked.'

Silence rolled over the riot of a crowd like a receding wave, hitting last the rear where the babble always started from anyway.

'A donkey talked! Where?' a wag managed to throw back at the podium, from the rear of course.

'In the scriptures,' came the reply, quick as a snap. 'But we never learnt that on account of that, the donkey rode Balaam home. Balaam still cruised home on his beast. Leadership belongs to the thinker, not the talker.'

Now the reverse wave. Tumult unfurled over the crowd again, washing us clearly ashore who had jostled to the front to muster pockets of cheers for our candidate.

'How did Jolomi come about that?' Kamoru sought to know, tugging at my sleeve, the furtiveness with which he did it belying the abandon of the din around.

'You mean the allusion? Well, search me,' I hollered above the noise, my hands up in the air as though I expected him to take that literally.

'No, I mean the confidence.'

'Search me still.'

Kamoru's feeling of wonderment, though getting a little exaggerated with his tug now hardening into a clamp on my shoulder, was understandable. The small fry we had brought to the Freedom Square show has suddenly transformed into a leviathan, and Kamoru, like a confounded impresario needed to redouble his anchor. Freedom Square, a little exaggerated name for the front yard of the longest row of halls on campus. Here many a battle cry had been raised in the many demonstrations that had dotted our student union history. And while these had yielded trickles of free this and that, here and there, they could not be said to have pooled to that mighty sea of free-*dom* as would seem to be suggested by that immoderate-sounding name. So *Aluta Continua!* That continued to be the slogan both in campus *politese* and the spray-painted graffiti on the raised dais at Freedom Square.

It was the eve of another election into the student union government offices, and the Freedom Square was hosting its grandest annual show, the Manifesto Night. G Caucus, lately the GQ crew, was fielding Jolomi for the position of president. Ours was a strange candidate, but then, so was this newfound vocation of our merry mix of dandies, wannabe hip-hop artistes and party crawlers!

"It was the eve of another election into the student union government offices, and the Freedom Square was hosting its grandest annual show, the Manifesto Night. G Caucus, lately the GQ crew, was fielding Jolomi for the position of president. Ours was a strange candidate, but then, so was this newfound vocation of our merry mix of dandies, wannabe hip-hop artistes and party crawlers!"

Since campus politicians started to get a clean shave and *Gentlemen's Quarterly* poses began to replace liners from primers on Marx and Nkrumah as the highlight of campaign posters, we thought we had better meet change at the gate than let it swarm over us, tuff, tent and all, like a thief in the night.

We were soon to learn that it was not completely our tuff, with new credentials being called for that hadn't been part of our regimen. Like the grade bit. This was how Jolomi, from the fringe of the gang came to beat Karimu to it in the shadow elections. 'But he's a dark horse,' Kamoru had fumed. 'Well, better that than a blighted mare,' I had replied. Kamoru kicked up dust at that. Kamoru's idea of his own popularity on campus was a little inside-out. Couldn't he see there was more of jeer than cheer in all that noise about him? Yes, not many girls ever got Jolomi to take his nose out of the comics for a chat. Yes, he wore his branded T-shirts tucked in his pants. But at 3.2, he was the academic powerhouse in-house from which the grade grid linked all the way round the web. 'And Jolomi has read some poetry,' I said, supposing that even Kamoru knew the use in that.

'Like who?' he asked, to everybody's surprise.

'Like e.e. cummings,' shot back Jolomi, now getting into the role.

'Soyinka?'

'Little'

'Neruda?'

'None.'

'Gawd,' came Kamoru, amid an odd guffaw. 'You don't want to go to the Manifesto Night on some half digested cummings, do you?'

Now, that was something. Whole months of campaigning with glossy posters and brass bands had been known to collapse, brick by brick, in the ground of the Freedom Square. And it was no help when the election committee later placed our candidate last on the manifesto programme, directly behind Asabi Ronaldo. Asabi was bringing into the elections his reputation as the official commentator of the football team, plus an undoubted experience in the ways of the mob. 'Jolomi, you need all the cummings you can muster,' I advised. 'Including the Neruda, if Kamoru would help out with that,' Jolomi replied, with a casual waive of the hand. 'Now guys, if we are already planning, can we be serious about it?' Kamoru cautioned, all too ready to let Jolomi march into the arena now.

But the erosive appearance we were witnessing now was more in spite of any serious plans of ours than due to it. 'Rule one: keep your eyes on your hail corner,' was my order. 'Don't be moved by the crowd.' Now, here was he moving the crowd instead. 'Rule two: don't try to dodge the used condoms and tomatoes, pretend they are not aimed at you.' But obviously, the crowd haven't been using any condoms lately, or have forgotten to throw them. 'Rule three: you may perspire, but don't wipe it.' It was Asabi I saw perspiring, and dabbing it, the ironed out lines of his starched Lu'omo shirt now crest-fallen. 'Rule four: when you have to leave the podium, you have my shoulder to lean on, and though I hope it won't come to that, you may also cry on it.' Well, he didn't have to cry, or lean on my shoulder. We lost him to the crowd who ferried him head-high above their billowy mass into the night.

'Not since Chima Guevera has a Manifesto Night ended this way,' Kamoru commented, turning away from the platform, as the chairman of the election committee hollered the customary vote of thanks above the megaphone, before the last of the crowd got the chance to follow the trail. 'Certainly, not since politicians started taking names from the Premier League.' 'And I think Jolomi is riding home to victory tomorrow,' I noted too, 'upon donkeys of his own.'

Toye is a Lagos-based lawyer and arts practitioner.

Contemporary

We don't drink life from calabashes...

By Ogbu Samson Ode

Symphonies of urban and almost rustic noises in the middle of the 21st century, twenty naira away were the lights, streets, concrete and smell of comfort. Instead a compound of mud shops, the smell of urine and shit just beneath that of the 'brew', trays of assorted flesh and the also important presence of customers. Sitting across the table was a man in a tie coloured like a dye pit over a white shirt. He looked like a messenger dressed in his Sunday best,

'Oh ... it is a Sunday' he thought.

From his comic relief his thoughts rushed back to why he was sitting in this crowd with a calabash half empty in his hand. Tomorrow he would need at least sixty naira for the fare to the office, half of that was what his calabash of the brew cost and it made sense to imbibe rather than plan for tomorrow, besides Dannu was tired of slaving for bus drivers, landlords, and water sellers. His quiet partner across the table stood up and for a minute he thought he saw himself. Dannu was also a messenger but with class. His appointment letter read 'office executive' and his 'Oga' sometimes allowed him to ride in the official car with him. On her last visit, his younger sister made a copy of his appointment letter which he had left rather carelessly. Since then, he had been summoned home twice to discuss marriage as he was making money as an 'Executive'.

If only they knew, he thought. If they knew it took him three months to save the money he sent them the last time. If they knew he lived in a mud house with no ceiling, electricity, concrete floor and drank water from a well. If only they knew the photographs they so often see were all taken at the official guest house. Maybe it was better they did not know.

Feeling the damp of the 'brew' on his freshly ironed trousers once again brought him back to Manage Life Joint where his silent partner was again seated; though in less thought than he was. Diesel driven generators wailed in toil providing electricity to those who could pay leaving Manage Life Joint a little darker in fumes. Women with tired frames and cooked faces from the 'brew's' flames scurried around to satisfy customers. Outside through the main entrance to the street, music from a rival joint pained the ears of the clearheaded but the brew kept heads nodding inside Manage Life Joint.

Like Dannu many came for a few calabashes and a lot of noise which was good distraction from the worries of another inevitable Monday and the dusty road out of the village that kept some 'charcoal iron' cleaners in business. Dannu's silent partner was again struggling to stand up with his tie in his calabash. Dannu smiled and thought the man lucky since he seemed not bothered either by his wet tie or the half smiling man across the table from him. His partner staggered towards the well worn doorpost of Manage Life Joint, changed his mind half way and sat on the floor of the very narrow passage with his legs stretched out full length oblivious to the obstruction he caused. In response to a nudge from one of the 'service providers' he burst into a song.

Dannu's admiration for his silent partner grew and he was tempted to applaud him.

'I wish I could damn the world too and sit out my poverty' Dannu thought.

'Why not damn the responsibilities of a grown man and the expectations of society, live the irresponsible life of a loaf and layabout? As tempting as the thought was, seeing his silent partner ease himself where he sat woke Dannu. The steach of the offending fluid from the man's bladder quickly announced its presence and noses other than Dannu's recognised.

The man was aided to his feet by two of his 'suppliers' before he found his way out of the joint. Suddenly he looked spent and tired. Dannu felt a sense of loss for a brief moment, the man he had admired a few minutes ago was suddenly being helped, no carried by 'women'. This made him order a fresh calabash of the brew to drown his loss. The calabash arrived with inspiration for thought and the liquid tasted stronger than its predecessor. 'It had a sour sting like life' Dannu thought.

'Life could be sour, elating, sweet, free, slavish sometimes, dirty, smelly, burnt, tiring, defiant and more but once born one must live it'.

Swallowing the content of the calabash with an ugly frown, he jumped up, paid and made for the door of Manage Life Joint for there was more to live and work for...

Ode is an Abuja-based writer.

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News

Northern Assemblies unite on natural resources

From Tashikalmah Hallah, *Correspondent, (Bauchi)*

The nineteen Northern state Houses of Assembly have adopted a common front in tackling the non-harnessed of natural resources which abound in the region by the Federal government, with each state House of Assembly to pass a resolution asking the Federal government to do so with immediate effect.

Alhaji Tanko Ibrahim Jalam, Speaker Bauchi state House of Assembly in an interview with *Daily Trust* explained that the decision to pass the resolution by each state House of Assembly was part of the understanding reached at the recent meetings of all the nineteen

Northern Speakers of Houses of Assembly in Maiduguri, the Borno state capital.

According to him, the idea of compelling the Federal government to commence the exploration of the untapped natural resources in the Northern region was premised on the clamour for resource control, which he said if the agitators succeed, it will continuously worsen the deplorable economic situation of the people in the region.

Alhaji Jalam explained that even with the 13 percent derivation formula, the North is being cheated, and that the high point of the conspiracy, was the withdrawal of oil exploration team in the Lake Chad, Gongola basins and the Benue trough.

"It was more of politics than economics. And since it is the era of politics, we have to use all political means to get what we want.

Although, I can't blame the present administration for the withdrawal of these oil exploration companies, because when Northerners were at the helm of the affairs of this country, they couldn't influence it, but it is time to tap the untapped natural resources found in the region.

"Tell me if it is not political, Chad Republic has been in oil exploration in the Chad basin for more than a decade, and you want to tell me that on the Nigerian side there was no oil of commercial quantity? No. I don't agree with any one who said so.

The fact is this, that some people are out to cheat the North, or else what would you say the clamour for resource control?

"Once, there is oil rig, erected in any part of the North and the Federal government started exporting oil from the region all these resource control, Youth restiveness in the Niger-Delta, targeted killings and kidnappings would stop albeit naturally"

Although, he said that the speakers are aware that the issue of mineral exploration in the country is the exclusive right of the Federal government, however, stated that "once each

state House of Assembly has passed its resolution to that effect, we will give to our governors, and it would be a challenge to them and those in authority at the Federal level".

Alhaji Jalam stressed that, "assuming that they are not going to act on it, then posterity would judge us, that we have tried our best for the region, but our brothers from the region have betrayed us.

Iron-ore discovered in Yobe

From Isa Umar Guhsau, *Correspondent (Damaturu)*

The drive by the Northern part of Nigeria towards increased contribution to National revenue generation with a view to tackling issues of resources, recorded a boost, following the discovery of Iron Ore in Yobe state, located in the North Eastern part of Nigeria.

Governor Bukar Abba Ibrahim, Wednesday displayed Iron Ore to pressmen in Damaturu, revealing that the discovery of such mineral deposit was the first of its kind in Machina local government area of Yobe state by some experts recently.

He said the state government would employ the services of exploration experts to assess the quality and quantity of the iron deposit conducting.

Governor Ibrahim also announced that with the discovery of Gypsum in yobe state, which let to the contacting of experts to make clear assessment, the federal government is set to construct a gypsum collection market in Fika local government area of the state, with a view to boosting the production of cement.

While presenting the precious stones, he added that experts will be called upon ascertain their usefulness.

He noted that with the discovery of iron ore used for steel manufacturing in addition to gypsum for coment, governor Ibrahim said, had only confirmed "the claim that Yobe has so many natural resources, yet to be tapped".

Governor Bukar Abba Ibrahim had before the discovery of the iron ore, announced that the state government would soon embark upon the establishment of a cement factory to make proper use of its mineral deposits as a boost to the Nigerian economy.

2005 budget realistic - Shekarau

From Yushau Adamu Ibrahim, *Correspondent (Kano)*

Kano state governor Mallam Ibrahim Shakarau has assured that based an the realistic and acceptable estimate of the 2005 budget, the state will successfully implement all expenditure recorded in the budget.

Speaking before signing into law the 2005 budget, Shekarau also said that the 2005 budget is free of any deficits as according to him, the budget is well balanced based on what government expressed as revenue generation.

Governor Shakarau who signed into law the sum of N46, 654, 997.20 drew the attention of both ministries and government agencies that his administration would no longer tolerate any outrageous estimation.

Shekarau explained that the present administration had made it clear that it would not subscribe to budget deficit stressing that it is determined and committed to always having a balanced budget.



Governor Ibrahim Shekarau

He pointed out that the 2004 budget which was also balanced with no deficit enabled government to preparing a supplementary budget to execute various projects in the 2004 fiscal year.

Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau then reiterated government's determination to improve the internally generated revenue of the state noting that proper measures have been put in place to rejuvinate the state revenue of their taxes, while also warning that accounting officers in the ministries and agencies in the state should ensure remittance in time and regularly, of all taxe deduction adding that government would not condone any officer who directs any deductions or collection of taxes for his or her personal use.

The budget was appropriated with N22, 423, 529.494 and N24, 231, 467.70 as recurrent and capital expenditure.

Earlier, the state commissioner for budget and economic plannings Alhaji Nour Sani Hamza had briefed the governor that his ministry has already been working to ensure proper implementation of the 2005 budget.



Kogi State Governor, Alhaji Ibrahim Idris, right, chatting with his Kwara State counterpart, Dr. Bukola Saraki, centre is Kogi State Deputy Governor, Mr. Philip Salau, in Abuja recently.

Gov Idris appeals for completion of federal housing projects

From Ahmed Tahir Ajobe, *Correspondent, (Lokoja)*

Kogi state governor, Alhaji Ibrahim Idris has appealed to the federal government to complete the abandoned federal housing project in the state.

Governor Idris, who made the appeal while declaring open the first Kogi state summit on housing, Wednesday, Lokoja said there is urgent need for the completion of the abandoned project of the huge resources expended on the project by the federal government.

He suggested that in case the federal government is finding it difficult to continue with the project, it should negotiate with private developers for its acquisition and completion.

Governor Idris also urged private estate development and well to do individuals to complement government by investing in the housing sector for the benefit of the people.

The chairman Kogi state House of Assembly committee on works and housing, Hon. Sulaiman Usman Adawari said Kogi state ranked third behind Abuja and Port Harcourt in terms of cost of accommodation as landlords take advantage of limited housing especially in Lokoja being the state capital to charge and arbitrarily increase rents.

Adawari whose committee organised the summit in collaboration with some stakeholders in the sector, said "the acute shortage of accommodation, especially of urban centres, the high cost of building economic realities are posing great concern to the people of this country", noting that Kogi, being the civil servants' state is ironically the worst hit as residence have to pay more for accommodation.

Nigeria, he reiterated, needs a definite and alistic housing policy that will be in tune with the global trends noting that such policy should be able to create enabling environment for private sector participation and initiative.

Gov Saraki charges rulers on dev

From Abdulrazaq Adebayo, *Correspondent, (Ilorin)*

Kwara State Governor. Dr Abubakar Bukola Saraki, has charged traditional rulers in the state to give support to government programmes to ensure overall development.

Dr Saraki gave the charge Wednesday, at Government House, Ilorin during a meeting with the State Council of Chiefs, led by its Chairman and the Emir of Ilorin, Alhaji Ibrahim Sulu Gambari.

The governor, who thanked the royal fathers for their solidarity and support appealed for their co-operation to ensure the success of the forthcoming population census exercise in view of its importance to the state government.

As royal fathers, Dr Saraki said that they all have a lot to offer on how best to move the state forward and promised not to betray the trust reposed in his government.

On security arrangement in the state, Dr Saraki said the state police command would be equipped with more-patrol vans to strengthen its patrol unit in order to stem crime across the state.

On the complaint by the council that the free eye screening exercise of the state government does not get to the grassroots, the governor assured that the exercise would soon be brought to their doorsteps.

He also assured the monarchs that the state government's priority would be on development of infrastructural facilities with a promise to further strengthen agriculture as a potent key to sustainable development.

The Emir) Alhaji Ibrahim Sulu-Gambari, had earlier pledged the support of the council to Dr Saraki in his quest to transform the state.

12 prisoners granted state amnesty

From Lawal Ibrahim, *Correspondent (Katsina)*

Twelve prisoners serving various jails terms in Katsina state have been granted Amnesty by the state governor, Alhaji Umaru Musa Yaradua.

A statement issued by the state ministry of justice disclosed that the governor has, in exercise of the powers conferred on him by section 212 of the 1999 constitution, approved the immediate release of the twelve prisoners serving various jail terms in Jibya, Funtua, Kankiya as well as Daura prisons.

The statement further disclosed that the released inmates were also granted state pardon due to old age, ill heat, good conduct or being under-aged.

The five inmates who were granted Amnesty from Funtua medium security prison on good conduct include; Abdullahi Sale, Sani Zaure, Ibrahim Rogo, Lawal Musa and Abdullahi Ibrahim serving jail terms on various crimes ranging from homicide to other minor offences.

Other are Abubakar Usman and Nasir Abdulrahman both of Daura prison discharged on account of old and under aged respectively, while Salisu Ibrahim from Dutsinma prison, Nasir Umar from Kankiya prison Bello Musa and Musa Adamu from Jibya prison and Isyaku Mamman were pardoned on grounds of ill-health respectively.

FEDERAL MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

AREA II, GARKI-ABUJA

34TH REGULAR MEETING OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (NCARD) HELD IN ASABA, DELTA STATE ON TUESDAY, 15TH MARCH, 2005.

COMMUNIQUE

The 34th Regular Meeting of the National Council on Agriculture and Rural Development (NCARD) was held in Asaba, Delta State, on Tuesday, 15th March, 2005 under the Chairmanship of the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mallam Adamu Bello, FCIB, *Dan Iyan Adamawa*. The meeting was declared open by the Deputy Governor of Delta State, Sir Benjamin Elue, on behalf of the Executive Governor, Chief James Onanefe Ibori.

The Honourable Minister of State for Agriculture and Rural Development, Chief Bamidele Dada, 50 Commissioners from the 36 States of the Federation and the representative of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) participated.

Below are the highlights of the major decisions and recommendations of the Council. The Council:

i. appreciated the commitment of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria In his various efforts and initiatives to move the agricultural sector forward which has resulted in the progress achieved in the different programmes In Nigerian Agriculture;

ii. expressed satisfaction with the progress made by the National Special Programme on Food Security (NSPFS) towards the improvement of food production in the country. States were enjoined to support and take advantage of the Second Phase, which is to increase the NSPFS sites from the present 109 to 327 sites by March, 2007. In this respect a donors' meeting to sensitize international agencies to support and fund the initiative is scheduled for 19th March, 2005 at Argungu under the chairmanship of His Excellency, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, GCFR, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria with five other Heads of Government in attendance;

iii. noted the need for effective storage system In the country to complement the concerted efforts to boost food production. In that direction, States were urged to give priority to the establishment of buffer stock storage programme by maintaining a minimum of 10,000 metric tonnes of food items. The Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development was mandated to present a Memorandum to the National Economic Council in that regard. There is also the need for all the States and lGA5 to popularize the usage and adoption of the improved one tonne metal bin on-farm storage structure;

iv. noted that aquaculture (fish farming) in Nigeria can be increased substantially through homestead fish farming using fibre glass tanks and the Water Re≤circulatory System. The new technology was recommended and accepted by Council for adoption;

v. on the preparation of the National Medium-Term Investment Programme (NMTIP) under the NEPAD-CAADP framework, Council recommended that livestock should be added to the already five selected projects in the first phase;

vi. noted the forthcoming African Regional Summit on "Fish for All" to be hosted by Nigeria from 22nd - 26th August, 2005 in Abuja and requested the full participation of the States;

vii. approved the need for an Interactive Stakeholders Meeting in the second quarter of year 2005 to examine the issue of fish seeds and fish feeds in the country;

viii. noted that the progress made so far in containing the scourge of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the country and urged the strengthening of the critical mass on HIV/AIDS in the Federal and States Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development to execute the activities and programmes on HIV/AIDS Prevention, Care and Control. This became necessary to ensure the effective delivery of the Nation's Food Security Programme. It was suggested that the survey on the prevalence level of HIV/AIDS conducted in Benue state should be used nationwide as an indicative measure for advocacy, care and control, while urging NACA or other relevant stakeholders to conduct such survey nationwide, if it has not been done;

ix. noted with concern the heavy indebtedness of the States to the Fertilizer Stabillsation Fund which is now about N6 billion and resolved that payment by States for fertilizer allocated, as from 2005, will be by deduction from source with the issuance of irrevocable letter of authority to guarantee the sustenance of the Fertilizer Stabilization Programme;

x. noted the efforts of the States and other local producers in making fertilizer available in the country. However, agreed that the quantity of fertilizer under the Federal Government programme is inadequate and should be increased and efforts should be made to ensure that adulterated fertilizers are not brought into the country;

xi. noted the progress achieved so far in the Agricultural component of NEEDS and urged States that have not articulated the Agricultural component of SEEDS to do so Immediately as it has become a condition for States to receive assistance from donor/ international agencies;

xii. endorsed the need for all Nigerians, including public servants, to be involved in homestead farming, and that the Secondary Schools throughout the country should resuscitate school farms programme and that States should encourage the revival and formation of Young Farmers Club. In that connection, the President has directed all members of the Federal Executive Council to take a lead in this initiative;

xiii. Identified the environmental problems facing Agriculture arising from land degradation and therefore, agreed that Land Management Service Units should be established in all the States Ministries of Agriculture all over the Federation;

v. noted the need for better utilization of agricultural resources through integrated management of avanable son, water and other resources and therefore agreed that States and local Governments should adopt 'conservation agriculture as one of the strategic options for land cultivation; .

vi. noted and identified cotton as one of Nigeria's main cash crops that needs to be revitalized on the model of the success story of the Cocoa Rehabilitation Initiative of Federal Government;

vii. noted the need to review the existing Agricultural Seed Act 72 of 1992 and approved the review/amendments to be forwarded to the Federal Executive Council and the National Assembly for subsequent enactment into law. This will enable the Nigerian Seed Industry move forward as a veritable component in the development of the Agricultural sector;

viii. noted that lack of improved rice variety is a limiting factor to successful Implementation of the Presidential initiative on rice production and export and therefore approved the initiative for massive production of NERICA seed production and other recommended rice varieties;

ix. noted the problems militating against the Implementation of the Animal Traction and Hand Tools Technology Programme and called for a re-organization and re≤invigoration of the scheme In line with the decision reached by the council;

x. noted with satisfaction the take-off of the three Commodity Development and Marketing Companies and urged an stakeholders to give the companies the necessary support, especlany payment of 60% equity shares by the farmers, farmers association and cooperatives;

xi. approved the introduction of fees on import/export permits on Animal/Animal products and biologics and further approved the review/amendment of the Animal Disease Control (1988) Act to bring it in line with international standards and good management practices;

xii. noted with delight the declaration of Nigeria as "Rinderpest Disease Free" by the OlE (World Organization for Animal Health) and urged all stakeholders to work with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to attain the Final Stage of the OlE pathway of "Rinderpest Infection Free Status";

xiii. took due cognizance of the mergers of the various farmers bodies over the years Into one umbrella body, the ALL FARMERS ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (AFAN) and urges the Federal, State and local Governments in the country to duly recognize the body and support its programmes in their bid to improve the lot of the Nigerian farmers;

xxiii. agreed that the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development should in conjunction with the Federal Ministry of Works articulate proposals for the establishment of the National Centre for Training in the Maintenance of Roads with a strong component on Maintenance of Rural Roads;

xxiv. recognized the problems associated with efficient agricultural input delivery system in the country and therefore approved the convening of stakeholders workshop to work out an efficient model for the country's input delivery system.

xxv. expressed concern on the increasing wave of cattle armed robbery/theft, traceable to the neighbouring countries and Chad and therefore directed a meeting of stakeholders which should include border security agents of Nigeria and the countries involved to address the problem;

xxvi. on the issue of locust, quelea birds and other pest invasion, states were enjoined to make timely report to the Federal Livestock Department to ensure timely intervention. In that respect, the Chairman of Council informed that two new aircrafts is being procured for the Agro-aviation Unit of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development;

xxvii. noted the sad event that took place involving the death of the officials of CBN, First Bank Plc., the staff of Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Kwara State and that of the Chairman of AFCOTT in ghastly motor accidents while on official duty related to the agricultural projects and commiserated with their families and agreed that letters of condolence should be sent to them;

xxviii. agreed that the next meeting of the Council (35th Session) should be held in Abeokuta, Ogun State before the end of. the first quarter of 2006.

Signed
Mallam Adamu Bello, FCIB
(Dan Iyan Adamawa)
Honourable Minster of Agriculture and Rural Development

News



Chief of Kagoro,Mr. Gwamna Awan left with Chief of Maruwa, Mr. Tagwai Sambo at the one day awareness seminar on the 2005 census, organised by Kaduna state census publicity committee in Kaduna...recently

NBA demands removal of Kogi police boss

From Ahmed Tahir Ajobe, *Correspondent Lokoja*

The inspector-general of police Mr. Sunday Ehindero has been urged to immediately remove the commissioner of police in Kogi state, Mr. Bamidele Thomas.

Chairman of the Nigeria Bar Association, Kogi state branch, Barrister Salisu Umar, who made the call on behalf of members at a press conference in Lokoja said the removal of the state commissioner of police has become necessary in view of offences of incessant human right abuses, violation and disregard to court orders among others.

The NBA said the state commissioner of police has turned the police headquarters into what he called, the concentration or "gulag" where scores of indigenes are been terrorised and detained unlawfully on his orders.

The body alleged that granting of bail to suspects is impossible, without a "collateral" as it has now been made an exception rather than the release to realised suspects on bail.

They also complained that investigation of some very serious crimes were often frustrated by the police because of "sheer interests" in such cases.

They lamented that the style of police of the state, portrays agonising picture of the most blantant human rights violators that Kogi state has ever experienced.

The lawyers also said that the commissioner of police is above the law as he often disregard court orders on release of suspects in police sustody.

They therefore called on the inspector-general of police to effect the removal of the commissioner of police within two weeks of the petition, failure of which the association would seek an option to deal with the matter.

Fayose inaugurates council of Obas

From Femi Oladipo, *Correspondent Ado-Ekiti*

Ekiti state governor, Mr. Ayo Fayose, has inaugurated the new council of Obas in the state with the Oore of Ojun Ekiti, Oba Adebayo Popoola as the 4th chairman of the council since the creation of the state.

At the ceremony where the Awujale of Ise-Ekiti, Oba Adetunji Ajayi, was also sworn in as deputy chairman of the council, Mr. Fayose denied a recent newspaper report that he was planning to remove Oba Rufus Adejugbe as the Ewi of Ado-Ekiti as a result of opposition mounted by Ado-Ekiti on the plan to relocate part of the state's ministry of Agriculture to his home town, Afaro-Ekiti.

Mr. Fayose described the report as cheap blackmail and propaganda and the imagination of detractors of his government.

He also expressed shock at the leaflets being distributed by some people attempting to discourage president Obasanjo from visiting Ekiti state, describing those behind such as enemies of the state.

The governor said the visit would be the first by any president or head of state since the state was created nine years ago and appealed to traditional rulers to mobile their people to give the president a befitting welcome.

Responding, the new chairman of the council, Oba Popoola who took over from the Elekole of Zkole-Ekiti, the immediate past chairman, promised that traditional rulers in the state would continue to support the administration of Mr. Ayo Fayose.

Meanwhile, the committee in charge of the presidential visit has inspected some of the projects expected to be commissioned by the president during the visit.

Police nab four for robbing archbishop

By Ruby Rabiu, *Defence Reporter*

The police have arrested four suspects for allegedly robbing the Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, Reverend John Onaiyekan, in his residence on Monday.

Reverend John Onaiyekan disclosed this during his homily at the cathedraticum ceremony held in his honour by the Wuse Deanery at Holy Rosary Zone 2.

Bishop Onaiyakan said the police were able to arrest the suspects, three boys and a girl because of the swift response to his distress call.

Recalling his experience, Onaiyekan said, the robbers had forcefully entered his residence at about 2:30pm and starting banging on his door that he should open the door.

He continued, called out who are those and they replied, armed robbers, open the door, I quickly starting praying to God and called the police who swiftly responded 30 minutes later".

"although there was exchange of fire between the police and the armed robbers, no one was killed and out of fear, the robbers took to their heels but the police caught up with four of them".

He denied reports that the robbers had pinned him to the ground and maltreated him before the police arrived.

Kaduna Assembly passes 2005 budget

From Aliyu Haruna, *Correspondent* **and Maryam Musa Umar,** *Intern Kaduna*

The Kaduna state House of Assembly passed into law the sum of N19, 837, 128, 043 appropiation of 22 local government councils in the state for the year 2005.

The speaker of the state house of Assembly, Alhaji Bashir Zubairu stated that the budget includes 12 billion naira recurrent expenditure and 7billion naira for capital projects.

However, the objective of this law is to provide for fund for the services of the 22 LG councils in Kaduna state for the year ending December 2005 which has been duly signed by the state governor, Alhaji Ahmed Makarfi, the speaker said.

Giwa local government area was excluded from the bills of the councils because of its inability to harmonise the budget on time, thus, the house had issued two week ultimatum to the council to submit its budget proposal so that it shall be passed for legal backing of he house.

The Assembly speaker at the sitting on Tuesday had also announced the appointment of Polycarp Agunbi, as the chairman of he Assembly committee on Ethics and privileges which has been inactive since the speaker dissolved all standing committee early this year.

Alhaji Bashir also disclosed that members of the committee will soon be constituted in the house at a later time.

Similarly, the vice chairman of the house committee on water resources, Alhaji Bala Ija and that of the judiciary, Alhaji Salisu Auwal, have swapped positions.

Court grants fedpoly students bail

From Abdulrazaq Adebayo, *Correspondent Ilorin*

An Ilorin High Court Tuesday, granted bail to eight students of the federal polytechnic in Kwara state who are standing for cultism.

Trail judge, Justice Raliat Elel, granted the students bail due to what he described as the unseriousness of the prosecutor to produce witnesses.

Setting the students free, Justice Elelu declared that they could not be kept in custody perpetually as "Justice delayed is justice denied".

Consequently, the judge granted the students bail in the sum of N50, 000 each, with those boiling them to have one landed property in Ilorin, while they are to report to the police daily.

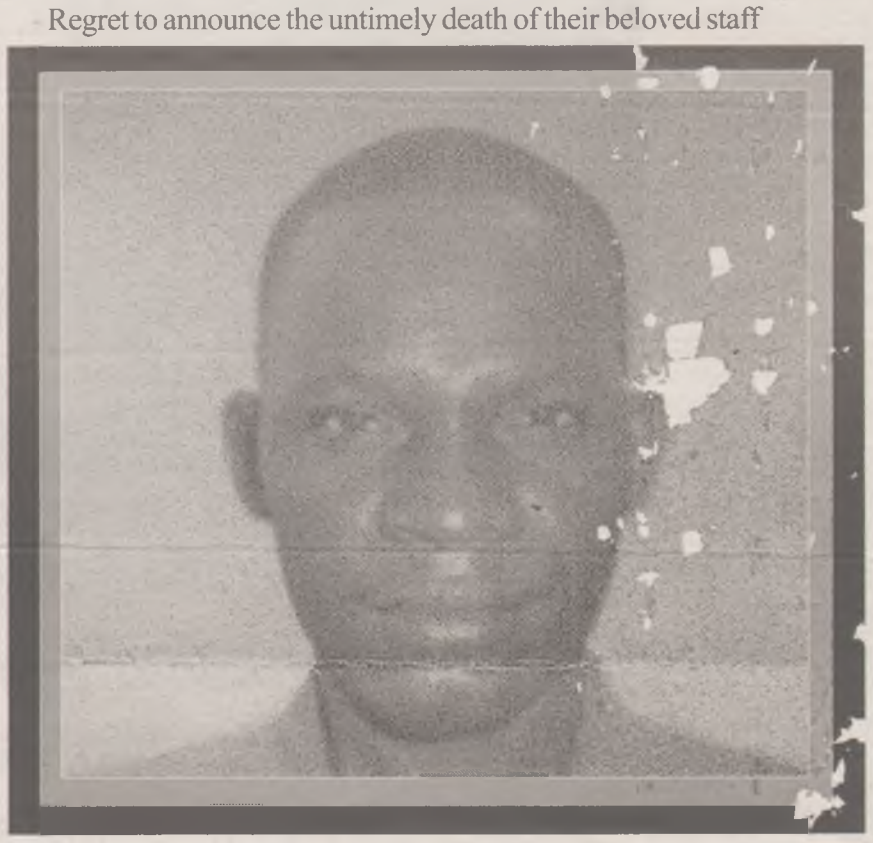
She also adjourned the case to May 9, 2005 for hearing. The eight suspects have been in detention for six months.

Obituary

Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Ilaihir Raji'un

THE MANAGEMENT & ENTIRE STAFF OF PHARMACISTS COUNCIL OF NIGERIA (PCN)

Regret to announce the untimely death of their beloved staff



HABU DAN'AZUMI

Which sad event occurred on:
Thursday 17th March, 2005 after a fatal accident.
He has since been buried according to Islamic rites
May his gentle soul rest in perfect peace.

Signed
Management

Felicitations

To a

HONOURABLE PERFECT GENTLEMAN

At

55



HON. JUSTICE LAWAL H. GUMMI
Chief Judge, High Court of Justice (FCT)

We, rejoice with our admirable grandfather, a loving husband and caring father on his 55th Birthday and pray for long life and Allah's (SWT) continues guidance, (Ameen).

We your Grand Children
1) Lawal (Abba)
2) Ahmed
3) Aliyu (Amir)

News

FRSC goes tough on traffic offenders

From Abdulrazaq Adebayo, *Correspondent Ilorin*

Ilorin zonal command of the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) has commenced seizure of vehicles with plastic number plates, tinted glasses and multiple head lights.

The zonal commander, Alhaji Baba Goni, disclosed this in an interview with newsmen in Ilorin yesterday.

He said the action was designed to ensure that motorists complied with traffic regulations, adding that fines on offences had also been reviewed upward in the new drive to enforce the rules.

Alhaji Goni, who emphasised the need for safety on Nigerian roads lamented that road users were reckless on Nigerian highways, hence the need to put measures in place to save innocent lives.

The zonal commander who disclosed that officials of the commission would be out for action during the Easter break, warned that anybody caught bribing marshals would be prosecuted and fined N10,000.00.

He said drivers caught using phone sets while driving would henceforth be penalised, even as non usage of safety belt and driving under alcohol would attract fines ranging from N3,000 to N5,000.00.



From left are: Prof. Eyitayo Lambo, minister of health, Ambassador Magaji Muhammad, minister of industry and the minister of state for works, Alhaji Saleh Shehu during the FEC meeting held at the State House Abuja...recently. Pix: Joe Oroye.

Kogi to pay WAEC, NECO fees for students

From Ahmed Tahir Ajobe, *Correspondent Lokoja*

Kogi State government has pledged to shoulder the payment of WAEC/GCE and NECO fees of final year students across all the secondary schools in the state next examination session.

The state governor, Alhaji Ibrahim Idris, who made the pledge on the occasion of the conference of principals and school administrators yesterday in Lokoja, said, the gesture is meant to relieve parents of the enormous burden in view of the prevailing harsh economic realities.

Governor Idris noted that parents especially in the rural areas with no defined means of livelihood and who have more than one siblings in schools are finding it increasingly difficult to pay the school fees and needed to be assisted to fulfil this obligation.

The governor who recently won the UBE award for best performing governor reiterated his administration's commitment to providing the needed infrastructure for learning at all tiers of education in the state.

The state government, according to him, has made necessary preparations to implement the second phase of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, adding that the bill to give legal backing to the programme has already been drafted.

The nine-year free compulsory basic education programme of the federal government, he pledged, would take-off in the state as from next academic session.

Governor Idris noted that despite the administration's commitment to the smooth development of education in the state, some recent happenings in the sector have tended to portray it as a drain pool where value is taken at a discount.

"The recent discovery of alleged fraud involving some officials of the ministry of education and state scholarship board coupled with the ever irresponsible examination malpractice which is steering the state to national record of infamy speaks volumes of the decay in the state's educational system," he noted.

He urged the principals and school administrators to use the conference to address these issues.

Shendam community against Speaker's recall

From Rakiya A. Muhammad, *Correspondent Jos*

Against alleged moves by certain groups to recall the Speaker, Plateau State House of Assembly, Hon. Simon Lalong, leaders from the Speaker's constituency have dissociated themselves from such moves which they noted were aimed at disrupting the peace in the area.

Addressing a press conference in Jos, the Shendam community asserted "we want to state here in very unequivocal terms that this group does not respect the view and interest of the people of Shendam."

Special adviser to the local government chairman, on media and publicity, Mr. Gregory Yenlong, who spoke on behalf of the community said there has been no petition against the Speaker stating his sins and wondered why anybody would want him recalled.

He added if the faceless group purportedly working for the recall of Hon. Lalong, meant well, it would have made public the reasons for which they want him recalled.

The Shendam community passed a vote of confidence on the Speaker noting his contributions not only on the political party in the locality but to the entire Shendam local government area and the state at large.

They recalled that Hon. Lalong with others lobbied the governor for the construction of the Menkaat-Mato road, the construction of Shena township roads, creation of wards, chiefdoms and also facilitated appointment and employment to various offices of sons and daughters of the area.

They called on the law enforcement agents to rise the occasion by ensuring that all those threatening the peace in the area are dealt with.

Members of Shendam community who were present at the conference include deputy chairman of the local government, members of the legislative arm of the council, PDP Shendam chairman as well as ward leaders.

NEPA blackout cripples business in Gusau

From Salisu Zakari Maradun, *Correspondent Gusau*

Business activities in Gusau town, took a downward slide following a three-day power outage.

Checks by *Daily Trust* in the state capital showed that as a result of the blackout, even the number of motorcycles and cars plying the roads have reduced due to their inability to get fuel from the filling stations.

Fuel is available but prices have gone up, thereby forcing the motorists to increase their fares.

Investigation showed that the blackout has also touched the lives of computer operators, photocopying machines operators and other people who rely on power supply for their businesses.

The investigation also revealed that following the development, food stuff and other items have become very scarce particularly items that have direct connection with the power supply.

A businessman in Gusau who spoke with our correspondent explained that, relying on the power supply henceforth is meaningless "because these people are not ready to help the situation they are only good at giving bills to their c stomers."

"We were ruined in the last three days because all my businesses have come to a stand-still. I have two grinding machines b t they are useless since the beginning of the blackout," said Alhaji Yakubu Maina.

However, the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA), Gusau business unit, had announced the cause of power failure in a state-owned Radio, that a team of experts from Kaduna zone were currently on a high-watch-over to ensure that things were in place.

Vegetable farmers protest destruction of farms

From Hir Joseph, *Correspondent Makurdi*

Growers of various vegetable groups along the River Benue in Makurdi, Tuesday, staged a protest against a construction firm while destroying their farms worth millions of naira.

The farmers, mostly women who thronged Government House in the old GRA, to register their protest said their vegetable farms, adjoining the state golf course under construction were destroyed in February 2005 by the firm in charge of its (golf course) construction.

The protesters' spokesperson, Mrs. Patricia Gwevih, who disclosed that the area in question was leased to them legally by the Makurdi area office of the National Inland Water Ways Authority (NIWA), said the construction firm went far beyond its bounds by destroy their farms.

The protesting farmers who displayed receipts of the farm land allocated to them said the affected farms do not belong to the area marked and allocated for the golf course and therefore described the act of the construction firm as "wickedness."

The farmers said the act of the firm has subjected them to pitch tent with poverty since their mainstay was their vegetable farms adding that the seedlings of the destroyed farms were gotten on loan.

NIWA area manager, Alhaji Rabiu Abubakar Abba, said that the construction of the golf course along River Benue was illegal because according to him discussion on the land was yet to be concluded.

He confirmed that the authority actually permitted the farmers the use of the land and that the area was not part of the demand for a golf course.

Officials of the construction firm could not be reached for comments.

Doctor advocates laboratories for water testing

From Muhammad Ajah, *Correspondent Port Harcurt*

As Nigeria joined the rest of the world to observe Water Day recently, a medical practitioner has called for the establishment of public laboratories to test the sources of water consumed by the people of the country.

Dr. Tekena Ibanibo, who made the call while speaking to newsmen in Port Harcourt on the occasion of the UN Water Day, noted that the rate untested water for public consumption was being sold to the people needed urgent control.

'Water is regarded as the second most important need of living things.

It is also a free gift of nature abundantly given the fact that at least 80 per cent of the surface of the earth is covered by water. These are the more reasons water must be made available and pure for people living in any place," he said.

He said that NAFDAC needed to do more to prevent the sales of unprotected water to Nigerians by pure water producers, some of whose sources is from wells, untreated boreholes, and springs among others.

Dr. Ibanibo said that despite the abundance of water, it is a very scarce commodity in many towns and cities in terms of securing safe drinking water in developing countries like Nigeria.

"This is exactly the case in Rivers State where by its name, it is easily assumed that water would not be a problem," he said.

One of the residents of Prot Harcourt, Mr. Mike Ikiriko, told *Daily Trust* that the problem of water in the state was an old one and despite attempts by governments and individuals, the situation has not changed.

Inside Politics

2007: Sports minister has eyes on Gombe governorship, says Yobe Governor

From Isa Umar Gusau, *Correspondent Maiduguri*

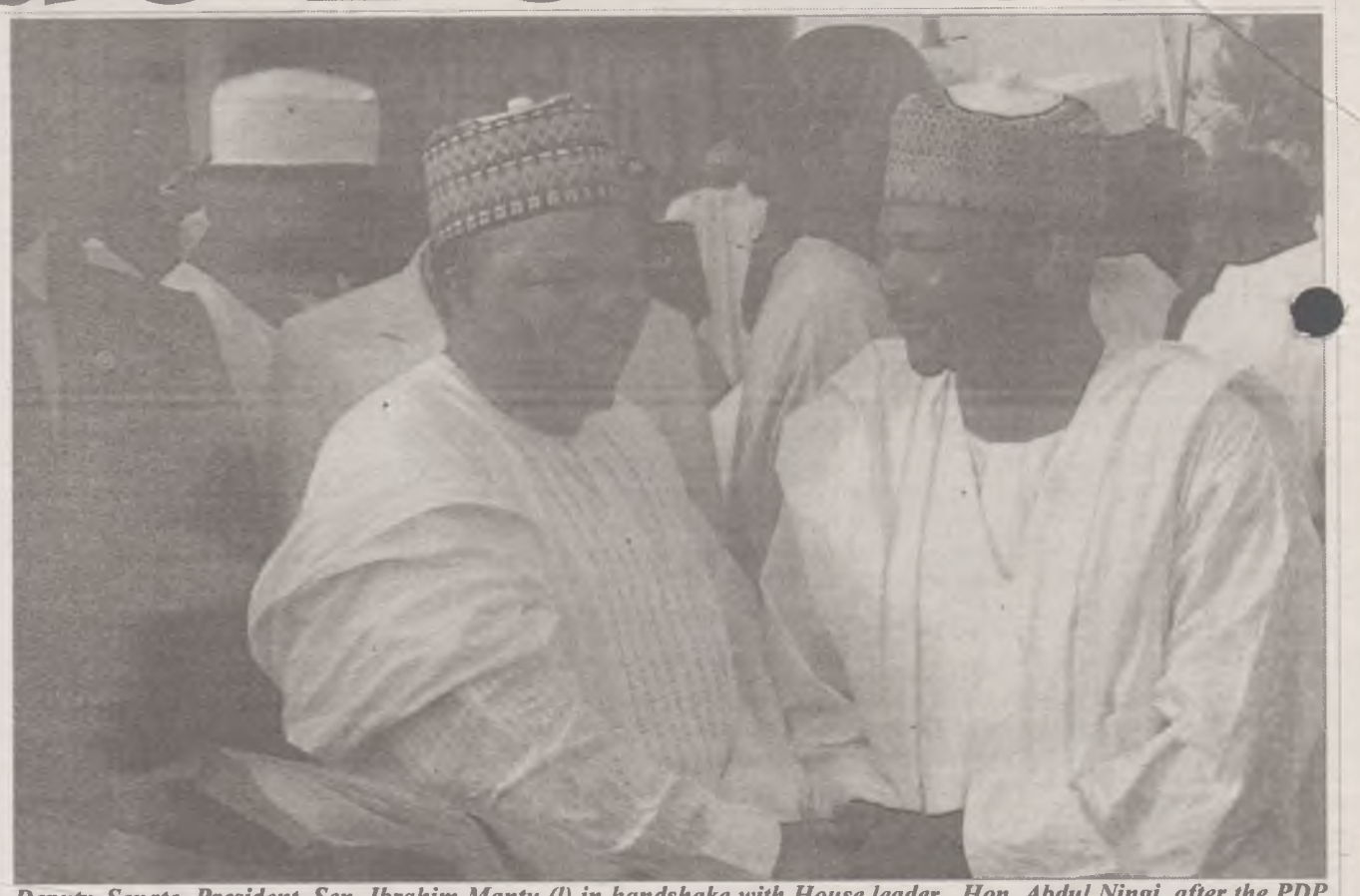
Governor Bukar Abba Ibrahim of Yobe state has said that the minister of sports, Col Musa Muhammed (Rtd) had a keen desire to become the next executive governor of Gombe come 2007. .

The governor dropped the hint when the federal Ministry of sports presented him with a plague in appreciation of his contribution to the development of hockey game in Nigeria, especially in his position as the president, Nigeria Hockey Federation , from 2001 to date.

Extolling the virtues of Col. Musa Muhammed, governor Ibrahim said "Col. Musa Muhammed is eyeing Gombe governorship. I really think he is eyeing that seat and I wish him all the best of luck."

Governor Ibrahim described the sports minister as a good friend of Yobe state, recalling that he (gov. Ibrahim) received the mantle of leadership as governor in 1999 from the sports minister.

He expressed satisfaction with the honour done him by the sports ministry promising to continue to contribute to the development of hockey game, more so as the game falls within his interest among sporting activities.



Deputy, Senate President, Sen. Ibrahim Mantu (l) in handshake with House leader , Hon. Abdul Ningi, after the PDP National Executive Council Meeting, held in Abuja ...recently

AD leadership disagrees with caucus on Tinubu

By Isa Sanusi, *Senior Political Reporter*

The national leadership of the Alliance for Democracy (AD) has disowned recent statements credited to Northern caucus of the party which accused Governor of Lagos state, Bola Tinubu of manipulating the party.

A statement issued by the National Organising Secretary of the party, Comrade Umar Farouk said the leadership of the party had absolute confidence in the ability of Asiweju Bola Tinubu together with Chief Bisi Akande to move the party to greater heights.

Comrade Umar Faruk called on members of the party to disregard the body that called itself Northern Caucus of the party.

"The party is a disciplined body and is always interested in channelling internal grieveness through the normal process. Any faceless individual or caucus trying to distract attention will not be tolerated."



Gov. Tinubu

APGA Northern caucus rejects Gov. Ngige

From Rakiya A. Mohammed *Correspondent Jos*

The Northern Caucus of the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) has rejected the invitation of Gov. Chris Ngige of Anambra state to join the party by its embattled National Chairman, Chief Chekwas Okorie.

This was contained in a communique issued at the end of the Northern Caucus meeting in Jos in which the caucus alleged that Gov. Ngige, who was recently expelled from his party, PDP stole the mandate of APGA candidate in the gubernatorial election in Anambra state, Mr. Peter Obi who the caucus claimed won the majority lawful votes in the election.

The APGA Northern Caucus, which also asserted that Mr. Chekwas Okorie had been constitutional and lawfully expelled as the National Chairman and member of the party, stressed that he no longer had the right to represent the party in any capacity even a s it added that Mr. Okorie has no position in the law to withdraw the Governorship election petition filed by Mr. Peter Obi, against Gov. Ngige.

The caucus appealed to the Economic and Finance Crime Commission (EFCC) to speed up the investigation of petition of crimes levelled against the former APGA National Chairman, "to prevent miscarriage of Justice and transparency in the country."

It urged the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to publish details of APGA audited financial statement for the years 2002 to 2004 in the National dailies for members of the public to justify their claims.

Noting that the Manny Bank, Wuse Zone 5 branch had rebuffed all efforts by EFCC and INEC to obtain the details of the operation s of APGA Account, the caucus called on Central Bank Governor to blacklist the bank.

It re-affirmed support for Chief Victor Umah as APGA National Chairman and Dim Odumegwu Ojukwu as the chairman board of trustees and National leader of the party.

Plateau Speaker lauds Obasanjo on corruption

From Rakiya A. Mohammed, *correspondent Jos*

Following recent steps taken by President Olusegun Obasanjo in the fight against competition, Speaker of the Plateau state House of Assembly, Hon. Simon Lalang has commended the president, stressing the need for the anti-campaign crusade to be holistic rather than being used for political vendetta.

"The only danger is selective justice or using it to settle personal score, the fight against corruption should not be used for political vendetta, if the government want to succeed, but it appears Mr. President in now adopting a holistic approach" the Speaker asserted.

Barrister Laling, who was speaking with journalists in Jos on Wednesday, said the letter from the Attorney-General of the Federation to the Plateau House of Assembly urging it to investigate the state executive shortly after the emergency rule was thrown out because of the selective approach.

He called on President Obasanjo to go beyond the present level in his anti-corruption efforts and re-open previous cases of alleged corruption so that Nigerians can have more confidence in him and believe that he was not out to witch-hunt for selective justice.

On the moves by some members his constituency to recall him, the Speaker, who is from Shendam Local Government area in Plateau state, challenged those behind such move to provide sufficient proofs to justify the need for his recall, calling

The alleged moves to recall him as an exercise in futility that it lacks merit.

Bauchi ANPP wants chairman removed

Nasiru L. Abubakar, *Reporter*

Officials and members of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) in Bauchi state have called for the immediate removal of the state party chairman, Alhaji Danladi Audu Mai Auduga, over what they referred to as poor leadership qualities.

The Party members who made the call during a visit to the ANPP Headquarters in Abuja led by the duo of Honourable Adamu Bulkachuwa and Honourable Matori, said the party's problems in the state were all due to the greed and selfishness of the party chairman.

Honourable Bulkachuwa alleged that in the entire period of his leadership, Alhaji Mai Auduga never called any executive meeting with the party officials but always takes decisions unilaterally without counsulting anybody.

He alleged further that the embattled party chairman visited all ANPP-led states where donations were sought and given to the party but yet no one knows the fate of the money.

"It is very disheartening that during the last local government elections in Bauchi state, many of our members could not pursue their electoral mandates despites our belief that they have won the electrons . Our lawyer had to withdraw because he was not paid a single kobo," Bulachuwa lamented.

He therefore called on the party's National leadership to act fast or be ready to face whatever consequences their delay over the matter will cause and stop dealing with Danladi Mai Auduga as the state ANPP chairman

Earlier, Honourable Matori had told the National leadership of the party that the ANPP had been loosing members due to the selfish and incompetent tendencies of the state party chairman.

In his response, the National secretary of the party, Alhaji Sani El-Katuzu urged the members to remain calm and patient assuring them all their complains will be looked into dispassionately.

2007: Yarima supporters to organise 2 million Man march

From Aliyu Haruna , *Correspondent, Kaduna*

The National Executive Council of the Yarim,a Solidarity Association (YSA), has organised "two million man grand rally" in a bid to persuade Governor Ahmad Sani of Zamfara state (Yariman Bakura) to contest the 2007 presidential election.

According to a statement made available to Daily Trust in Kaduna signed by Alhaji Ashiru Muhammad Usman, National President of the association, the two million man match will be organised at the state and zonal levels before a barger one is organised at the national level.

Alhaji Bashir disclosed that the association has mapped out all strategies to embark on house to house town to town campaign with a view to winning battle.

He declared that the association would in cooperate all youth organisations that share similar ideas with YSA, adding that the association will also reach out to community and religious leaders, club, associations and women organisations.

Inside Politics



Speaker of the House of Representatives, Alh. Aminu Bello Masari commissioning a block of primary school classrooms donated by Hon. Shuaibu Abdullahi (L) in Awe, Nasarawa State. In the middle is the chief whip, Hon. Bawa Bwari ... recently

ANPP yet to receive Presidential request - el-Katuzu

The All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP-Sokoto) has named Chief Tamasi Maccido (ANPP-Sokoto) as one of the recipients of a N55 million bribe offered by the sacked Minister of Education, Prof. Fabian Osuji, to the National Assembly to inflate the ministry's 2005 budgetary allocation.

But ANPP's national secretary, Malam Sani el-Katuzu, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) that the party was yet to receive the formal report.

"We (ANPP) are yet to receive the President's request formally. But be assured that as soon as we do so, a meeting will be summoned to decide his fate," el-Katuzu said.

He said that not until the party received the presidential report containing the EFCC submission incriminating the lawmaker, ANPP was constrained to act.

The scribe explained that the party would not compromise its leadership principles of transparency, discipl ine and accountability.

Abia speaker charges women on national development

The Speaker of Abia House of Assembly, Chief Stanley Ohajuruka, has called on Nigerian women to contribute to the development of the country.

Ohajuruka, who made the call today in Umuahia when the Abia Association of women civil servants visited him, said the Beijing conference had made women a driving force for develop-ment.

He expressed happiness about the formation of the association in the state, stressing that "it is a turning point not only in Abia but indeed Nigeria."

While reassuring them that the assembly would do everything possible for the protection of the women in the state, he urged them to reduce the extent of abuses on men.

"Extinguish some of the unethical standard that have failed to promote our socio-cultural ideals, particularly indecent dressing," Ohajuruka charged them, adding that indecent dressing had abused the psyche of men and led them to temptation.



Chairman House Committee on appropriation, Hon. Gabriel Suswan (L) and Chairman House Committee on Housing and Urban development, Hon. Osita Izunaso addressing a press conference, to deny the allegation levelledd against them by Mr. President in his broadcast to the nation on the issue of bribery and corruption at the National Assembly in Abuja ... recently *Pix: Felix Onigbinde*

AD tasks FG on corruption

The Alliance for Democracy (AD) has tasked the federal government to extend its crusade against corruption to other ministries, parastatal and agencies.

The National Secretary of the party, Sen. Joshua Yohanna, made the call in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN).

"Corruption is not only happening at the ministry of education. Other organisations and ministries are equally guilty of bribing the National Assembly to inflate and approve their budget estimates.

"Others have corrupted the legislators during oversight functions," he alleged.

He said that the recent case was just a tip of the iceberg in the national war against corruption.

According to him, there is an urgent need for the government to completely sanitise and immune the polity from sharp practices so as to redeem the country's international image.

Yohanna advised the federal government to ensure the prosecution of all those indicted.

"It is enough to arrest or sack those involved in bribery and corruption cases. The culprits must be prosecuted and the looted public funds and property recovered from them to serve as a deterrent to others," he said.

Ebonyi Assembly passes 2005 budget

The Ebonyi State House of Assembly has passed the state 2005 Appropriation bill of N21.174 billion.

A breakdown of the budget showed that N10.837 billion was set aside as recurrent expenditure while N10.337 billion was for capital expenditure.

The budget tagged "budget of reform and consolidation" was presented to the house by Gov. Sam Egwu on Dec. 22.

The ministry of education and its agencies got highest vote of N5.218 billion, representing 25 per cent of the entire budget.

Presenting the report of the Assembly's appropriation committee on the bill, the deputy majority leader, Mr Obinna Nwachukwu, stressed the need to expedite action its passage.

Seconding the motion Mr Ugoji Ama Oti, urged his colleagues to support its passage to enable government execute development projects

KADUNA POLYTECHNIC

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

RESUMPTION DATE FOR 2004/2005 ACADEMIC SESSION

This is to inform all Kaduna Polytechnic returning students that the Institution would be opened for the 2004/2005 Academic session on the 29th of March 2005.

Registration for the 2004/2005 Session begins on 29th March, 2005 and ends on 12th April, 2005. A fee of N500 per week would be charged for late registration thereafter.

All successful Pre-ND students would be required to pay additional N2,000 JAMB Regularisation fee before they could be registered into NDI. The money is to be remitted to JAMB to regularise their admissions. This follows a directive that all NDI students who graduated from Pre-ND must regularise their admission with JAMB.

Abdulkadir B. Abba
Deputy Registrar (Academic Affairs)
For: Registrar.

SPORTS

WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

Brazil keen to avoid more trauma

Brazil will attempt to take a decisive step towards the 2006 World Cup in the next five days while Argentina face the dreaded trip to face Bolivia at 3,600 metres above sea level in the weekend's qualifiers.

Brazil, the only country to have played at every World Cup, are determined to avoid the trauma of their 2002 qualifying campaign when they booked their place in Japan/South Korea only in the last of their 18 matches.

They are hoping that three points against Peru in Goiania on Sunday, followed by another win in Uruguay three days later, will help their quest *to qualify for Germany with* games to spare and no last-minute scares.

"We've got to win the games and open up an advantage," said midfielder Kaka. "I think we can win the six points."

Brazil, who were held to a goalless home draw by Colombia and lost 1-0 in Ecuador in their last two qualifiers, are second in the 10-nation group with 20 points from their 11 games. Argentina, who play at the Hernando Siles stadium in La Paz on Saturday, lead the way with 22 points from 11.

Argentina, who drew 3-3 on their last visit to Bolivia, are likely to be happy with a draw in the thin air and are sending a youthful 19-man squad for the match.

The more experienced players will stay in Buenos Aires to concentrate on Wednesday's match with Colombia.

Bolivia, bottom with 11 points and in danger of losing touch with the other teams, will be playing their first match under Ovidio Messa, their third coach of the competition.

The two traditional powers in South America still look set to qualify comfortably for Germany.

Behind them, an intense dogfight has developed as Ecuador (16 points), Paraguay (16), Uruguay (14), Colombia, Peru, Chile and Venezuela (all 13) remain in contention.

The top four qualify automatically with the fifth-placed finisher playing off against the winner of Oceania.

Ecuador and Paraguay meet in Quito on Sunday while Uruguay travel to Santiago to play Chile. Venezuela host neighbours Colombia in Maracaibo on Saturday.

Paraguay, attempting to qualify for their third consecutive World Cup, will be missing their Germany-based attacking duo of Nelson Haedo Valdez and Roque Santa Cruz, both through injury.

Uruguay have effectively been two teams in the competition. Under the eccentric Juan Ramon Carrasco, sacked after a 3-0 home defeat by Venezuela in March, they had the best attack and worst defence in the group.

Former goalkeeper Jorge Fossati has taken them back to their more traditional style and in their last three games, they have scored two goals and conceded none.

Diego Forlan, who briefly quit the team last year in frustration at being relegated to the substitutes' bench, is back in the squad led by uncompromising Juventus defender Paolo Montero.

Venezuela, seeking their first finals appearance, will be without their inspirational midfielder Juan Arango, has was knocked out in a collision with an opponent during a match for Real Mallorca in Spain last Sunday.



Brazilian soccer star, Ronaldinho, left and teammate Alex during training session at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil...yesterday

Shevchenko ruled out of Denmark game

Ukraine captain Andriy Shevchenko, still recovering after fracturing a cheekbone last month, has been ruled out of next week's World Cup qualifier at home to Denmark.

"Andriy will not be able to help us out against the Danes," spokesman for the Ukrainian Football Federation (UFF) Valery Nikonenko told Reuters on Thursday.

"But he will fly to Kiev on the eve of the game and will give us moral support."

The AC Milan striker and European Player of the Year suffered fractures to his cheekbone and eye socket in a Serie A match against Cagliari on February 19.

Shevchenko's injury is the latest blow to Ukraine's hopes of qualifying for their first major international finals.

Coach Oleg Blokhin, who has put Ukraine on the verge of reaching the 2006 World Cup in Germany, resigned last week to keep his other job as member of Ukrainian parliament.

Ukraine top European Group Two with 14 points from six matches, six ahead of European champions Greece.

Ukraine host Denmark, in third place with six points from five matches, next Wednesday at Kiev's Olympic stadium.



Shevchenko

Some European powers need to make move

With World Cup qualifying reaching the halfway stage Saturday, some European powers need to make a move.

France, Italy, Spain, England, Portugal, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic all are in good position to make the 2006 tournament in Germany.

None of the traditional contenders is in danger of elimination. Even Greece, the surprising Euro 2004 champion, has recovered from a poor start.

The only team making a strong charge so far is Group 2 leader Ukraine, which has never reached a major championship but leads by six points thanks to AC Milan star Andriy Shevchenko.

For the rest, a busy schedule of two games in four days could go a long way toward deciding who advances. Only the group winners are sure to advance; the runners-up enter playoffs in November.

England last won a World Cup in 1966, but coach Sven-Goran Eriksson likes his team's chances.

"We should have a chance but, first of all, we have to qualify for it and we are not there yet," Eriksson said before home games against Northern Ireland and Azerbaijan in Group 6.

Eriksson's team is a point ahead of Poland at the top of the standings. The Poles also face Azerbaijan and Northern Ireland at home.

France is in a three-way tie with Ireland and Israel in Group 4. Raymond Domenech's team has a home game against fourth-place Switzerland on Saturday and then a tough visit to Israel on March 30. Ireland plays at Israel on Saturday.

Italy hosts struggling Scotland in Milan and should stay two points ahead in Group 5. The Italians will be without two injured stars — defender Alessandro Nesta and Italian league scoring leader Vincenzo Montella.

The Scots are coached by Walter Smith following the departure of Berti Vogts on Nov. 1. Under Vogts, the Scots managed just two points from three qualifying games.

Group 3 appears building to a Portugal-Slovakia showdown. The Slovaks can tie the Portuguese with 13 points by winning at Estonia on Saturday.

Spain has an exhibition against China on Saturday as a warmup to the big game March 30 at Group 7 leader Serbia-Montenegro. Lithuania is also in contention and can join them both at the top by winning at Bosnia.

The Dutch and the Czechs are in one of tightest groups, with Romania and Finland also in contention. One point separates all four teams'. Romania and the Netherlands have 10 points and meet in Bucharest on Saturday, while the Czechs are home against Finland. Ukraine doesn't play Saturday but hopes to maintain its run by beating Denmark at home March 30.

Greece aims to keep climbing by beating Georgia and Albania. Denmark is one of three teams tied with six points and should strengthen its chances by defeating last-place Kazakhstan on Saturday before its visit to Ukraine.

Sweden, the Group 8 leader, is at second-place Bulgaria. Third-place Croatia, which has reached both World Cups since breaking away from Yugoslavia, has a great chance to go to the top of the group with home games against Iceland and Malta. Fourth-place Hungary hosts Bulgaria next week.

Wrath of Azadi awaits Japan

Japan can expect a torrid reception when they face Iran in the boiling-hot atmosphere of Tehran's Azadi Stadium in an Asian World Cup qualifier on Friday.

Iran have been punished for crowd trouble before and Japan players, who were pelted with anything from rotten fruit to dead pigeons, called the experience "terrifying."

In Friday's other Group B match, North Korea host Bahrain in Pyongyang hoping to boost their qualifying campaign following a 2-1 defeat in Japan last month.

In Group A, 2002 World Cup semi-finalists South Korea travel to Saudi Arabia in an intriguing clash of styles and Kuwait host Uzbekistan.

Japan's visit to Tehran should provide the fireworks with Iran chasing their first win after drawing 0-0 in Bahrain in their opening final round qualifier.

Japan won last year's Asian Cup amid a hostile atmosphere in China but the cauldron-like Azadi Stadium packed with 100,000 Iran fans will be new to many players.

For those in the squad who played for J-League side Jubilo Iwata in the 1999 Asian club championship it will bring back uncomfortable memories.

"It was weird," midfielder Toshiya Fujita said. "They were throwing stones and tomatoes...all sorts of things. At one point a dead pigeon just missed me."

Japan coach Zico came under fire after his team's somewhat fortunate victory over North Korea in their Group B opener but he insists his players will not be intimidated.

"Playing at home or away is just the same," said the Brazilian. "As a player, I loved playing in that kind of intense atmosphere in front of 100,000 people. I expect the players to rise to it."

Playmaker Hidetoshi Nakata will return to Japan's side for the first time in a year, along with fellow Europe-based midfielders Shinji Ono and Junichi Inamoto.

Iran's Croatian coach Branko Ivankovic is confident a full-strength Japan squad will hold no fears for his side.

"We don't care about the opposition...if they are Germany, North Korea or Japan," he shrugged. "The crowd will give us an advantage. They will be like a 12th man for us."

South Korea coach Jo Bonfrere also welcomes back his Europe-based contingent for Friday's visit to Dammam following a 1-0 warm-up victory over Burkina Faso.

"It's a must-win game but we have the ability to win it," said PSV Eindhoven's Park Ji-sung. "If we play like we did in the first match we should be alright."

Sports

WORLD YOUTH CHAPIONSHIP

Late preparation may derail our programme – *Siasia*

By AbdulRaheem Aodu,
Sports Reporter

Lack of fund may hamper the preparation of the Flying Eagles for the World Youth Championship s[illegible] for the Netherlands in J[illegible].

The chief coach of the U-20 national team, Samson Siasia, who disclosed this to *Trustsports* in Abuja yesterday, said barely two months to the World Youth fiesta he is not sure of where his boys will be camp in Nigeria.

"I don't know what is happening. I am saddened by the current state of our preparation. While other world cup teams are in the last stages of their preparation, we are yet to commence.

"Barely two months to the World Youth Championship we are yet to call camp and we will play Brazil in our opening match on June 11. I don't know what magic I am expected to conjure, for the team to do well in the championship, when we are not prepared for the championship.

"I have been to the NFA but they seemed to have nothing for me to start preparation. I am not even sure of where to camp the boys in Nigeria, for a camp that should have kicked off in the first week of March.

"I have secured training and camping facilities, as well as opponents for friendly matches oversea but lack of fund could derail the whole programme. The team was supposed to camp at the Obudu Ranch where we were invited to train but even that deal is being scuppered. I am tired of the whole thing."

The former junior and full international however promised to take his case to the sports ministry to see how the team can be assisted to kick start its preparation for the world junior mundial.

"I intend to take our case to the sport ministry, I know the minister will give me a listening ear. Because this is not Benin republic or African Youth Championship, this is the world stage. I don't want Nigeria to be disgraced in Holland, so we have to begin preparation soonest," he said.

WAUG: Minister assures ABU of support

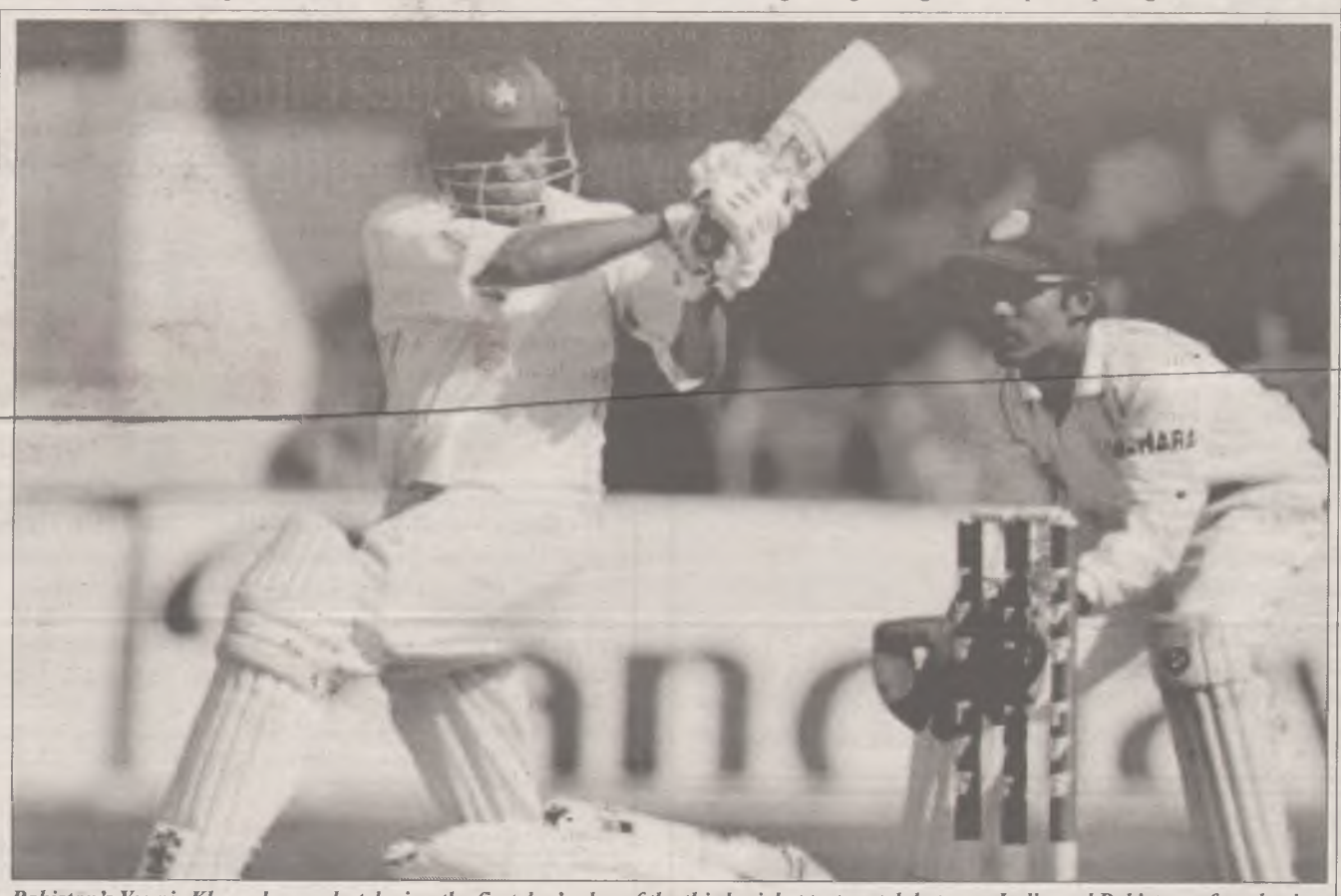
Sports Minister, Col. Musa Mohammed (rtd) has assured that his ministry will continue to encourage groups and organizations who seek to promote and develop sports in Nigeria.

Speaking during a courtesy call on him by the management of the Ahmadu Bello University, organizers of this year's West African Universities Games Basketball Championship, the minister promised that the Federal Ministry of Sports will avail the university all the necessary machinery and facilities that will assist in organizing a hitch free camps.

Earlier the leader of the ABU delegation and deputy Vice Chancellor of ABU, Prof. Yakubu Nasidi briefed the minister on the state of preparedness of the university to host the games scheduled for 14th – 24th April, 2005. He solicited the ministry's financial and material support to enable the university achieve a successful hosting of the event.

Prof. Nasidi who was accompanied by Dr. Haruna Faruq, Director of Sports, ABU, Prof. (Mrs.) Bola Adeyanju, Chairperson, Ceremonial and Sub-committee and Mallam Waziri Isa Gwantu, Member, Publicity committee, recalled that the ABU has the best facilities in the West African sub-region to host the games while regretting though that most of the facilities now require refurbishing.

Concluding, Prof. Nasidi said universities from seven (7) West African countries and Nigeria have registered for the games with about 30 Nigerian universities participating.



Pakistan's Younis Khan plays a shot during the first day's play of the third cricket test match between India and Pakistan, after electing to bat, were 323 for two wickets at the close of play on the opening day of the third test.

Rangers scale NPA hurdle

Fresh from their 3-1 trouncing of Equatorial Guinea's Sony Ela Nguema in a Confederation Cup match last weekend, Enugu Rangers on Wednesday consolidated on their Premier League standing with a lone goal defeat of NPA at the Nnamdi Azikiwe Stadium.

But they kept the sizeable crowd waiting for up to 80 long minutes before scrapping through the hard fighting visitors in the rescheduled Week Six match.

The match began on a fast note with the visitors taking the initiative from the blast of the whistle and could have shot into the lead in the 10th minute when Godem Steven's pile driver was scrambled over the bar by Segun Oluwaniyi in goal for the homers.

As the match progressed, the visitors became more daring as they completely took over the control of the midfield tossing and turning the inexperienced players fielded by Rangers' coach Lawrence Akpokona to the delight of the spectators who applauded the good soccer artistry put on display by the visitors.

Although Rangers lost the midfield to NPA, their attack still struggled to create some anxious moments for the visiting NPA especially in the 20th, 25th and 32nd minutes when Junior Osagie and Edward Ofere saw their efforts thwarted by Chigozie Agbim in goal for NPA.

With the first half ending on a scoreless situation, Coach Akpokona, brought in Sam Ledor and Okey Enyiaku for Tar Akombo and Osagie Junior respectively, and Rangers' forward line was the better for it as Ledor brought stability to the game and won many balls for the home side.

Insurance pip Shooting

Four days after crushing Kamsar FC of Guinea to qualify for the third round of the CAF Confederation Cup, Insurance climbed to seventh place on the Premier League table courtesy of a 1-0 victory over Shooting Stars at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, Benin on Wednesday.

Shooting Stars played the match of their lives but lost to a late goal against their traditional rivals. Substitute Hussaini Nasiru struck in the 82nd minute to send the restless home fans into raptures.

The visitors started well in the early minutes with on form Wilson Oboh dictating proceedings from the midfield while Chidi Oji, Oluwole Johnson and Ebenezer Ojo playing from the right wing were making vital passes to Ladi Gasper upfront, but Gasper's shot narrowly missed the target.

The Ibadan teams were awarded a free-kick by referee Nndeneka Bebeto in the third minute after the impressive Chidi Oji was fouled, but Johnson's effort was not utilized.

Insurance also had their own share of opportunities in the 10th minute when Jimoh Kamaru went close to goal, but 3SC defender Johnson cleared the ball to safety.

3SC keeper Kola Ige sustained an injury in the 20th minute after saving a goal bound shot and never returned to the pitch. He was replaced by Dimeji Fabunmi who had his baptism of fire in the Premier League.

Fabunmi proved himself, and enjoyed adequate protection from the Seyi Ogunsanya-led defence. Ogunsanya took the captainship band from Ige following the latter's substitution.

Gangling Insurance striker, Sunday Okoh could have scored the opener in the 26th minute, but the visitors' defence proved equal to the task.

Imadu Dooyum also came close to scoring for Insurance seven minutes later, while Gasper, Oboh and Oji also missed glaring chances for 3SC late in the barren first half.

On resumption, changes effected by coach Godwin Uwua brought more firepower to the Insurance attack, but Femi Emmanuel, Jude Okoye and Sunday Okoh failed to bury begging chances. On the hour, a flick by Sylvanus Ebiaku missed target narrowly.

Hussaini Nasiru's introduction in the 72nd minute proved to be coach Uwua's ultimate joker, as the dazzling lad struck following an impressive build up between him and co substitute, John Owoeri.

In a last ditch effort to equalize, 3SC coach Godfrey Esu brought in David Abidoye for hard fighting winger, Ebenezer Ojo in the 89th minute, but it was a little too late.

Shortly after the match, a furious 3SC Chairman, Bode Oyewole *told KICK OFF*: "The centre referee spoilt the game for us, though Insurance goal was a neat one. I have decided to tender a report on how the referee marred this game today to appropriate quarters.

"My boys played very well in this match, but it is unfortunate that the boys played against the referee, that is the truth. The referee was most unfair. I will do a report to the NFA about him. I am so disappointed in the match officials", the 3SC boss fumed.

The visitors' coach, Godfrey Esu told *KICK OFF* he was satisfied with the outcome of the match. "This was a good game, but the luckier side won. That is just the way I see it. We could have won the game in the first half, but my boys threw away many scoring chances they created.

Enyimba wallop Pillars

Enyimba International FC of Aba continued their unbeaten streak in the Globacom Premier League with a 3 - 0 win over visiting Kano Pillars in a rescheduled match played at the Enyimba International Stadium, Aba on Wednesday.

The match which recorded a barren first half with Mohammed Yusuf missing a 26th minute penalty saw the Peoples Elephant coming back in the second half to score three goals.

Eric Fascindo score a brace in the 56 and 71 minutes of the game while Justin Chiedozie made it three in the 82nd minute.

Coach Okey Emordi of Enyimba International FC has advised players complaining of not being featured in the team to exercise patience or better still wait for their time.

Speaking to *nigeria-sports.com*, the coach said the team is not in a hurry to change a winning team as the team is currently doing well both in the local league and at the International scene.

"It is natural for them to complain but you cannot change a winning team. The only thing you can do is to infuse one or two from the bench but you cannot do that without a carefull look or check at the whole system"

"Even in your family people complain. You cannot please everybody. Those who are not doing very well always complain and that is very natural. They have to wait and in the process of waiting work very hard as competition in the club now is very high with young talents all over the place",

"One thing I know is that if you don't stand, you cannot be counted and if you stand without being counted, you can still wait for your turn".

Trust Classified

LOSS OF VITAL LAND DOCUMENT

This is to inform the general public of the loss of the ORIGINAL CONVEYANCE OF PROVISIONAL APPROVAL in respect of PLOT No. D84 of about 560m2, Apo lyaout, dated 15th July, 1993, granted to JIBRIN YUSUF. The public, F.C.D.A. and particularly the Abuja Municipal Area Council (A.M.A.C.) should please take note.

Signed
Charles Okoye
Suite A6, Zuma Mall,
Zone 5, Wuse Abuja

LOSS OF DOCUMENT

The general public is hereby notified that:
1.) The original copy of Certificate of Occupancy dated 5th day of July 1995 with Reference No. FCT/ABU/MISC.12346 with respect to plot No. 132 Cadastral Zone B1 Gudu District in the Federal Capital Territory, issued in the name of STELLA NURSERY AND PRIMARY SCHOOL LTD. with resgistered office at 10 Kajola Street Off Olarenwaju P.O. Box 177 Modakeke, Nigeria; AND
2. The original copy of a Power of Attorney dated 6th day of July 1996 donated by STELLA NURSERY AND PRIMARY SCHOOL LTD. with registered address at 7 Silver Smith Street, Ogbete Coal Camp, Enugu State, Nigeria with respect to above mentioned property and registered as No. FCT 44 at Page 44 Volume 7PA at Lands Registry Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, are missing.
Anyone who deals, purchase, acquires, or in anyway or manner transacts business on the above mentioned property does so at his/her own risk.
The Honourable Minister, Ministry of the Federal Capital Territory, to please take note.

Signed
Y. C. MAIKYAU |& CO.
Plot 2048, Akintola Williams House,
Michael Okpara Street
Zone 7, Wuse, Abuja

LOSS OF DOCUMENT

This is to inform the general public of the loss of the original land document of Plot 2415 of about 1000m2 in Kuruduma District, allocated to **Grace P. Chuku** is missing. All efforts to trace the missing land paper proved abortive. If found, please return to the nearest Police station or the owner at **No. 13 Oke Agbe Close Garki II, Abuja.**

LOSS OF DOCUMENT

This is to inform the general public of the loss of the land document of offer of terms of grant/conveyance of approval in respect of Plot No. 633 in kubwa Extension III District, belonging to Mr. John Maichibi of the Nigeria Police Force, Wuse, Abuja. All efforts to trace the said document proved abortive. If found [illegible] 0803 5910113 or 0803-3164285

Signed
Haladu Usman

LOSS OF ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

The following or original allocation papers:
a. Plot 1150 FHA Karu-Layout-Ijoma Gabriel
b. Plot 1206 FHA Karu-Layout-Aminu Yahaya
c. Plot 1142 Jikwoyi-Layout-Baba Chicha
Belonging to Messrs OKON-EYO and IDAHOSA R. U. were made away with by one Kehinde Bello to an unknown place. FCDA, AMAC and general public please take note.

LOSS OF DOCUMENT

This is to inform the general public that the Original Offer of Grant/Conveyance of approval bearing the name of **ALHAJI ABUBAKAR KOKO,** covering Plot No. 64 Asokoro New Extension Abuja, is declared missing. All efforts to trace the missing document proved abortive. If found please contact **ALHAJI BASHEER A. KOKO** of Block A Flat 4 Stallion Court, Balatyre Street, Wuse II Abuja or call **08033346779, 08033568299, 08022903838 and 0602-23401,** or the nearest police station.

Signed
Alhaji Basheer A. Koko
For the family

CHANGE OF NAMES

I, formerly **ALIYU YAHAYA MOHAMMED,** now wish to be known and addressed as **ALIYU ADAMU MOHAMMED.** All former documents remain valid. Nigeria Immigration Service and the public to note.

I, formerly **MISS MISTURAH MOROMOKE ALABI,** now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS. MISTURA MOHAMMAD (NEE ALABI),** Lagos State Hospital Management Board and general public take note. All former document remain valid.

I, formerly known as **ADERONKE ELIZABETH ADEYEMO,** now wish to be called **LTCDR (MRS) ADERONKE ELIZABETH BELLO.** All former documents remain valid. The Nigerian Navy and general public to note.

I, formerly **HAJIA MEDINA SULEIMAN,** now wish to be known as **HAJIA MEDINA ABEDO OMEIZA.**All former documents remain valid. Public to take note.

I, formerly **MISS UQUOAMADI ROSELYNE C.,** now wish to be known as **MRS. ONYENWEZI ROSELYNE C.** Former documents remain valid. Public to note.

I, formerly called **MISS APPOLONIA LEBECHI UGWUOKE,** now wish to be called **MRS ODENYI APPOLONIA LEBECHI.** All former documents remain valid. Public to note.

ALFURQAN CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC PROPAGATION

ADDRESS: No. 45, BARUP STREET, GEMBU, SARDAUNA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, TARABA STATE.

This is to inform the general public that the above named Centre has applied for registration to the Corporate Affairs commission under part 'C' of the companies and allied matters
Decree of 1990.
The Trustees are:
1. Abubakar Muhammad Kabri
2. Mallam Idris Baba Adamu
Any objection to this registration should be forwarded to the Registrar General, Corporate Affairs Commission, Wuse zone 5, Abuja. Within 28 days of this publication.

Signed
Ahmed Tijjani Esq.
POLYGON CHAMBERS
Suite BS 42, BANNEX PLAZA,
WUSE II, ABUJA
08037009661

HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION FOR INDIGENT WOMEN

This is to inform the general public that the above named Organisation has applied for registration to the Corporate Affairs commission under part 'C' of the companies and allied matters Decree of 1990.

The Trustees are:
1. Aisha Naidi
2. Dr. (Mrs.) Fatima Yusuf
3. Mrs. Bridget E. Oru
4. Mrs. Irene Oforah
5. Mal. Ahmad Sani
6. Barrister Bernard O. Nnandi
7. Mr. Zack A. Kekong

Any objection to this registration should be forwarded to the Registrar General, Corporate Affairs Commission, Wuse zone 5, Abuja. Within 28 days of this publication.

EZI NWANNE DI NMA N' OBODO SOCIAL CLUB

This is to inform the general public that the above named Club has applied for registration to the Corporate Affairs commission under part 'C' of the companies and allied matters Decree of 1990.
The Trustees are:
1. Mrs. Victoria Ugboajah - Chairlady
2. Mrs. Fidelia Mgbaramoku - Vice-Chairlady
3. Mrs. Juliana A. Ukauwa - Treasurer
4. Mrs. Scholar C. Obaji - Secretary
Any objection to this registration should be forwarded to the Registrar General, Corporate Affairs Commission, Wuse zone 5, Abuja. Within 28 days of this publication.

Signed:
Barrister Chidiebere Ibe
Solicitor

THE LORDS ELECT CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

This is to inform the general public that the above named Ministry has applied for registration to the Corporate Affairs commission under part 'C' of the companies and allied matters Decree of 1990.
The Trustees are:
1. Pastor Chinedu Anthony Paul Obi
2. Mr. Frank Ndubuisi Chukwuma
3. Pastor Hycent Obiajulu Anikpe
4. Mr. Fabian Alaneme
5. Miss. Ebere Anigbogu
6. Mr. Chekwube Elobuisi

Any objection to this registration should be forwarded to the Registrar General, Corporate Affairs Commission, [illegible] Within 28 days of this publication.

Signed:
Secretary

SAVANNAH ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION CENTRE, BAUCHI

This is to inform the general public that the above named Orgnisation has applied for registration to the Corporate Affairs commission under part 'C' of the companies and allied matters Decree of 1990.
The Trustees are:
1. Muhammad Habibu Aliyu
2. Adamu Useni
3. Absalom Mugana Kushi

Any objection to this registration should be forwarded to the Registrar General, Corporate Affairs Commission, Wuse zone 5, Abuja. Within 28 days of this publication.

Signed:
Secretary

ALL YOUTH ALLIANCE OF NIGERIA

This is to inform the general public that the above named Orgnisation has applied for registration to the Corporate Affairs commission under part 'C' of the companies and allied matters Decree of 1990.
The Trustees are:
1. USMAN IBRAHIM
2. MR. OFANA PAUL STANTOS
3. MUHAMMED DIWAR
4. SAUL ALEYANDAR KANTIOK
5. UKOT UKOT
6. YUSUF MUHAMMED
7. MR. AL-DANNIELS GOZIE CHUKWU J. J.
8. AREMU ABIODUN LYTULS
9. MOHAMMED BALA
10. ABDULLAHI BELLO

Any objection to this registration should be forwarded to the Registrar General, Corporate Affairs Commission, Wuse zone 5, Abuja. Within 28 days of this publication.

Signed:
Secretary

NOBLE HOMES MINISTRY

This is to inform the general public that the above named BODY has applied for registration to the Corporate Affairs commission under part 'C' of the companies and allied matters Decree of 1990.

The Trustees are:	**Board members**
1. MRS. ESTHER CHUKWURAH	1. MRS. MURNA BIVAN
2. MRS. MARY MABUR	2. MRS. NKECHI ONYEZILI
3. MR. JONAH ABASHE	3. MR. ANDREW PHILLIP
4. DR. JUMMAI ALHAMDU	4. MR. IBRAHIM DANG
5. MR. MOSES MABUR	5. MRS. JULIE AMPE

Any objection to this registration should be forwarded to the Registrar General, Corporate Affairs Commission, Wuse zone 5, Abuja. Within 28 days of this publication.

Signed:
Secretary

LOSS OF LETTER OF OFFER OF TERMS OF GRANT/CONVEYANCE OF APPROVAL

This is to notify the general public that the letter of Offer of Terms of Grant/Conveyance of approval No. MFCT/LA/94/ED 2699 Plot No. 102 and of land size 1798m² within Katampe extension belonging to Rt. Rv. (Dr.) Gordon Osagiede has been reported missing. If found, please return to Mrs. Evelyn Elkama of Area 2, Section 2, Block 2, Flat 1, Gusan Street, Garki-Abuja.

attendance. of the Baker bye-pass at the

Sports

WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

Eagles eye top spot, Senegal host Liberia

Nigeria have a chance to claim top spot in their World Cup qualifying group as Africa's struggle for five places at next year's finals in Germany resumes at weekend.

Nigeria's Super Eagles boost a virtually full-strength squad for Saturday's game in Port Harcourt against Gabon and victory would give them a chance to take over at the head of Group Four.

That depends, however, on leaders Angola failing to beat Zimbabwe in Harare on Sunday.

The unbeaten Angolans lead Nigeria by a point but travel to Harare without captain and leading goal scorer Akwa, who is suspended.

The leadership of the four other qualifying groups is not expected to change after the 15 matches scheduled for the weekend.

Group One leaders Senegal, boosted by the form of striker El-Hadji Diouf and the return to the squad of his Bolton Wanderers team mate Khalilou Fadiga, host Liberia in Dakar on Saturday.

Senegal won 3-0 in Liberia last October and their opponents are weakened further by their failure to find funds to fly home their foreign-based contingent.

Zambia, who trail Senegal on goal difference, should also win on Saturday at home to Congo in Chililalombwe. Zambia beat Congo 3-2 away in October with a hat-trick from striker Collins Mbesuma, who has been in a rich vein of scoring form recently.

Chelsea striker Didier Drogba returns for the Ivory Coast against modest Benin in Abidjan on Sunday.

The Ivorians have a two-point lead over Libya in Group Three and an even bigger advantage over Cameroon and Egypt.

Struggling Cameroon host Sudan in the first competitive match in charge for their new Portuguese coach Artur Jorge.

Egypt, who host Libya in Cairo on Sunday, have recalled Tottenham Hotspur striker Mido after his fall-out with previous coach Marco Tardelli.

South Africa will deploy a three-man attack against Uganda in Johannesburg on Saturday as they seek to retain top spot in Group Two.

Their closest rivals, Democratic Republic of Congo and Ghana, are one point behind going into their meeting in Kinshasa on Sunday.

Morocco and Guinea, the top two teams in Group Five, clash in Rabat on Saturday while African champions Tunisia, back in fifth place, should climb the standings after playing Malawi in Tunis.

Only the group winners qualify for the 2006 World Cup finals in Germany. The top three sides in each group will go to the 2006 African Nations Cup finals in Egypt.



The Super Eagles boost a full-strength squad including Nwankwo Kanu.

Panthers arrives today

The Panthers of Gabon will arrive Nigeria today ahead of tomorrow's World Cup qualifier against the Super Eagles.

The Gabonese, who sent in advance party on Wednesday to Nigeria, will make the 45 minute flight between Libreville and Port Harcourt aboard a chatered flight this morning.

The team have been booked into the Beverly Hills Hotels Port Harcourt, where they will stay for the encounter.

NFA chairman Alhaji Ibrahim Galadima told *Trustsports* yesterday that match officials are also expected in today ahead of the cracker billed for Port Harcourt's Liberation Stadium.

Meanwhile, the Eagles camp continue to bubble, as preparation for the match remains in top gear. The Eagles, who constituted a full house Wednesday morning. When strikers Julius Aghahowa and Yakubu Aiyegbemi joined camp had its first training on Wednesday at the Shell camp, under guidance of chief coach Christian Chukwu.

The Eagles will have feel of the match revenue, when they train today at Liberation Stadium.

Sports Ministry releases N23.5 m

By Abdulraheem Aodu,
Sports Reporter

The Sports Ministry has released the sum of $174,000 (about N23.5m) to the NFA for the successful prosecution of the Nigeria-Gabon World Cup qualifying match holding in Port Harcourt tomorrow.

Speaking to newsmen yesterday, Sports Minister Col. Musa Mohammed (rtd) said the provision is made to pay players' match bonuses, ticket refund and other approved allowances promptly as well as to generally make the players comfortable ahead of the crucial encounter.

The measure, he added, will avoid unnecessary rancour, discord and other ugly incidents that may results from unpaid allowances in the past, particularly before his administration.

"The ministry has made available to the NFA, the sum of 174,000 dollars for the successful organisation of the Nigeria Gabon match. This provision is made to reiterate my commitment in ensuring that ticket refunds, the $5,000 match bonus and other approved allowances are paid to the players without delay.

"This will also ensure that the rancour and discord which used to happen in the past due to non payment or late payment of this monies remains a thing of the past?

Col. Mohammed also urged the Super Eagles players to go all out to win the crucial match in order to move the team closer to the qualification for the World Cup finals in Germany next year.

The minister commended the River State government for assisting the NFA with accommodation and feeding for the teams. He thus requested other well-meaning Nigerians and state governments to emulate River State Government and extend their goodwill to the NFA.

Yobo targets early goal

Everton defender Joseph Yobo has said that an early goal against Gabon is important for confidence.

"It is very important for us to get an early goal. That way, we can settle and play our game," Yobo told KICK OFF.

But he insisted that while it was important to get that, the players also realise that patience would be a very important virtue on the day.

"Of course it would be good if we get an early goal, but even if we don't, we have to be patient, stay focussed and play our best and hopefully the result will come."

Yobo admitted that the game would be difficult. "It is going to be a tough game.

But we all want to go to the World Cup and we know the situation we are in. We also want to make the fans happy so a win is very important for us and for the fans."

He also advised the fans to stay behind the team throughout the game. "We need the fans to support us no matter what happens. Even if the goals dont come early, it is important that the fans stay behind us."

No slip-ups against Gabon - *Okocha*

Skipper Austin Okocha has warned that the Super Eagles cannot afford any slip-ups against Gabon on Saturday if Nigeria hope to be at the World Cup.

"We cannot afford to slip and all the players know that," Okocha said after training on Wednesday in Port Harcourt.

But the inspirational skipper expressed confidence that the Super Eagles would do the business. "We have a very good home record and we expect to carry on with that.

"Its not going to be an easy game, but there is no easy way to qualify for the World Cup and we have players who know what it is about."

"We all want to be at the World Cup and we know we have to work hard to get there."

Eighteen players trained at the lush Shell Club pitch on Wednesday, and Jay Jay told KICK OFF he is impressed by the turn-out.

"I am impressed. It shows that the players realise the importance of the assignment and are willing to work for it. That is why we are here on time to prepare well and beat Gabon."

Only Wilson Oruma, Julius Aghahowa, Yakubu Aiyegbeni and Joseph Enakarirhe were yet to report as at Wednesday night.



Okocha

Obodo: Martins is driven

Obafemi Martins might arguably be the smallest man in the pitch for the 90 odd minutes he would play, but compatriot and Fiorentina midfielder Christian Obodo is quick to point out that he takes no prisoners.

"Martins is scary in the field. He is like a driven person, especially when he has not scored," Obodo told Kick Off. "He looks but doesn't see anybody. He only sees the goal."

Obodo should know as he is speaking from experience.

"When we met Inter at the San Siro (In March), he came in as sub and just walked past me without seeing me even though he was looking in my direction. He was so focused it was scary."

Martins agrees: "I didn't see him. I was just trying to get on the field as quickly as possible and help my team."

One such help was a crunchy, but fair tackle on Obodo.

"It was a very strong tackle," the Fiorentina man told KICK OFF with a wry smile. "He had a job to do and so did I. I know he meant no harm and he apologised after the game and we went home together."

Mischievous Martins explained further. "The ball bounced awkwardly and it looked like he would steal it and head for goal. My only thought was to stop him. However, I apologised after and he told

me to "gerrout" and then we both went out and had dinner and laughed over it."

I am fit - *Martins*

Obafemi Martins has said that he is out of the woods as far as the back problem he has had in the last week is concerned and is fully fit to take on Gabon.

"I had a session with my physiotherapist in Italy before I came down," he told KICK OFF. "I am fully fit now and ready to face Gabon."

The Inter striker is expected to shoulder most of the goal scoring hopes of the side but he tells KICK OFF that he is more interested in winning.

"I don't have to score as long as we win. If a goal comes for me, I will take it. But if I see someone in a better position to score, then I'll pass the ball."



Martins

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DAILY TRUST

FRIDAY COLUMN

Friday, March 25, 2005

EDITORIAL

Pensions and salaries: Rights or privileges?

The spectacle of a thousand wives of railwaymen (with starving children strapped to their backs) on a peaceful march to Government House, Bauchi to enlist support for recovering their husbands' unpaid pensions and salaries was heart wrenching. The comportment of those dignified if near-destitute, caring, and otherwise busy mothers hardly betrayed the dreadful plight that drove them to such desperate action. Governor Mu'azu's response to their appeal has been well reported; and we thank him in particular for offering them material relief and political backing.

Time was when Nigerian employees demanded their due remuneration without scruple and without diffidence. Without scruple, knowing that they were justly entitled to them; and without diffidence, from the great reliance they placed in the integrity of their employers. Despite the low remuneration of employees in those bygone days, the cushion of the extended family provided a psychologically satisfactory equilibrium that allowed the ruling elite to retain power, the poor to feed, and all to go to heaven. Today however there is widespread feeling of insecurity in Nigeria; and the people are so demoralised by the pervasive lack of probity and ineptitude in managing our self-consecrated 'economic transformation' that, with few exceptions, they have lost all faith in the prospects of the country's direction. What alarms us is the subtle message that derives from the mere thought that Nigerian employees might after all not be worthy of their salt. For if indeed they should no longer expect a certain economic independence in their old age, the cut-throat struggle of Nigerian workers to put something aside by all means foul or fair might well be justified. Why else has corruption become part of our national ethos?

Another question we must face before cynicism finally destroys the collective will of our w(e)ary compatriots is whether pensions and salaries are rights or privileges. Organised labour certainly considers that Nigerian employees have earned the right to remuneration as and when due by long years of struggle and sacrifice. The ruling elites do not yet assert otherwise, but increasingly point to socioeconomic variables that undermine even the most realistic of prognoses in the speculative modern economy. Our concern is hardly about arguments however, for the consequences of not remunerating retired and active Nigerian employees when due seriously threaten to visit penury and discontent upon countless numbers of Nigerians in view of the employees' responsibilities to their extended families. That should alarm our rulers; for peace and stability hardly thrive in any society where breadwinners are unable to discharge their obligation to dependents.

The current focus of Mr. President's anti-corruption campaign on high profile offenders might improve the country's image, which is good. What is more important however, in our opinion, is that the campaign rekindles the zeal of Nigerians to serve their fatherland with love and strength and faith. That could be attained by a strategy that would moreover demonstrate the government's determination to the eliminate kleptomania and misappropriation as possible causes of the epileptic remuneration of retired and active Nigerian employees. If perceived as sufficiently stringent and even-handed, the strategy will win the approbation of all Nigerians.

The auditor-general could constitute roving committees of auditors from the private and public sectors, including representatives of the Presidential Adviser on Ethics and Good Governance, and charge them with the examination of the accounts of federal and state ministries, local governments, and other public agencies at short notice. The committees should be empowered to impose sanctions without fear or favour in proven cases of embezzlement, misappropriation, and other violations of the financial regulations. For example, the monthly allocation of agencies that fail to keep up to date accounts records, or to remunerate their employees regularly and on time, or to have otherwise violated the financial regulations should remain suspended until audit queries are satisfied. The installation of such committees would send a strong signal to accounting officers to strictly adhere to the financial regulations in spirit and letter or risk severe sanctions on their violation, including dismissal and the forfeiture of entitlements. It might even embolden subordinates to reveal all they know, on assurance of due protection of course, to escape the collective sanction of their agencies. It certainly would arouse greater interest in the hearts of Nigerians than the less transparent if more complex recovery of larger loot from the bank accounts of the 'big fish.'

It is difficult to fault the existing public service financial regulations in principle, save to suggest that their teeth be appropriately sharpened to boost the efficacy of the anti-corruption campaign. The devil, as usual in Nigeria, lies in their stringent enforcement; and that is where the resoluteness of the President's campaign could depart from the slothful Nigerian syndrome. Fortunately, and beyond all cynicism, most Nigerians still hope for and even anticipate the long-promised new dawn.

Corruption: No inflation in the Senate

By Adamu Adamu

Throughout the current Senate corruption saga, if there is any useful observation to make about the upper chamber of the National Assembly, it is that the manager of its internal economy deserves our congratulations for managing it so well. So well indeed that in more than two years of working and transacting business, there has virtually been no inflation in Senatorial prices. When Mallam Nasir el-Rufa'i was being confirmed as minister of the Federal Capital Territory in 2003, for instance, the Senators demanded N54 million from him. If today they demanded N55 million from former education minister, Professor Fabian Osuji, they were only being magnanimous on two counts—charging negligible inflation and not taking into account the net present value of a ministerial appointment. Which is just as well.

Certainly, if the Senate will apply this type of economic wizardry to the management of Nigeria's economy, the country will soon become a land of zero inflation. Unfortunately, however, it appears that not sufficient attention has been given to the commendable efforts by the Senate to keep the prices of services, including bribery and corruption, down and constant, with the result that many otherwise intelligent people missed this golden chance to congratulate the Upper House.

Instead, many people and organisations in the amen corner were commending Chief Olusegun Obasanjo for stepping in to stop what they say is commerce in the legislature. By way of example, a statement by the Nigerian Labour Congress, NLC, commended Obasanjo for so valiantly saving the Nigerian nation-state from the menace of the pervasive misuse of the institutions responsible for budgetary process by legislators and public officials for corrupt self-enrichment. The NLC celebrates Obasanjo's leadership style thus:

"The handling of this incident represents the quality of decisiveness that Congress and other Nigerians have always expected and demanded from this government, rather than the widely-criticised executive aloofness in the face of allegations and stories of corrupt practices, some of which had involved the same figures in the past," the NLC statement said.

I wish I could join those commending Obasanjo for rising up to the occasion. But I was unable to do so because this decisiveness and the palpability of pain was exactly what I expected him to show at the first post-election convention of the People's Democratic Party, PDP, at Eagle Square in Abuja in November 1999. Right there in front of newly-inaugurated President Obasanjo GMG's were changing hands and ballot boxes were being stuffed during the election of Chief Barnabas Gemade. For many people that was the moment when they lost all hope and faith in the new attempt and democratizing. All talk about intent to fight corruption by the government lost all meaning to the people of Nigeria.

And the effect was immediate, because for many corrupt officers of government who had been forced to temporarily abandon the practice and adopt a "wait-and-see" attitude, that was the signal they were waiting for; and, on seeing it, they returned to graft with a vengeance. And it appeared everyone else decided to join them—including those who are supposed to be in the business of stopping them. And officialdom began to adopt the methods of the corruption gurus.

When Dr. Chuba Okadigbo was to replace Chief Evans Enwerem as Senate President in November 1999, there was probably no strategy under the sun that the Executive arm did not employ to stop him. It failed and Okadigbo eventually became Senate President without Executive blessing or even pleasure. And when the Executive set its sight on seeing Okadigbo out, it was all too easy; because Okadigbo, already indicted by a Senate committee that probed contracts awarded by him, got a full dose of the Obasanjo treatment. He himself likened it to a banana peel. Step on it and you fall; if not, you will still be felled by the GMG.

And if you escape the GMG, you may still need to report to his ecclesiastical majesty. Obasanjo has been known to turn a meeting with his ministers into a confessional. *The Guardian* quoted a livid Obasanjo hectoring the Federal Executive Council. "I have been reliably informed that you have been engaged in bribing the National Assembly to pass your budgets," he said. "If you have been involved, you had better come to me privately and confess. But if you do not confess and my investigation implicates you, it will then be terrible for you." Amen!

No doubt, in his so-called fight against corruption and in how he handles governance in general, Obasanjo is under the spell of some mystical folly de grandeur. Behaving like an executive priest listening to confessions, he appears undisturbed that some of his ministers are corrupt, some others corrupting the environment, and the two in default of the supreme law of the land. And he thought he could forgive them because it was a power he had. His only worry seems to be that his instructions are not instantly obeyed by his ministers, as it all came out in his address to the nation on the issue of transparency, accountability and eradication of corruption on March 22, 2005.

"Sometime in the month of February 2005, intelligence report came to me that contrary to my firm instructions to ministers and departments and parastatals under them that nobody should bribe or give inducement to any individual or group in the National Assembly for approval or enhancement of the budget proposed by me, some ministers have disregarded my instructions," he intoned.

But it is common knowledge that these instructions have been disregarded all the time; and so, why was he only now turning against the Senate that he himself knew had been doing all these practices all along? Was he finally settling scores with them for their decision to withhold funds for the National Political Reform Conference? Or, indeed, was he settling scores with Chief Adolphus Wabara?

How could a man be so ungrateful? Was it not yesterday that Obasanjo picked him up, cleaned him up, dressed him up and made him a whole Senate President without the benefit of a victory in any election? Yes, it was. Then how could he have allowed the Senate to withhold funds from him? Didn't he know how to use GMG's with effectiveness? Couldn't he have punished recalcitrant Senators by dissolving their committees? One good turn should always deserve another. Now, see where it has landed him.

But to be fair to Wabara, couldn't Obasanjo have picked on other findings in which the Senate President was not involved? Why specifically target the Education committees? Wasn't it indeed clear that most ministries were also doing the same thing?

But perhaps it is hasty to have accused Obasanjo of isolating the Education Committee. Others are also under the hammer. There are unconfirmed reports that more than 20 Senators and 100 members of the House of Representatives are being investigated and a total of 14 committees of the National Assembly are right now under probe.

When he came into office in 1999, Obasanjo staked his reputation on three principle issues—the immediate resuscitation of the National Electric Power Authority, NEPA, the rehabilitation of the nation's road network and the fight against corruption. And, unfortunately, for him all three have proved to be bottomless pits. Several billions have gone into the NEPA corruption drain; several yet more billions have gone into road maintenance and roads have not been maintained in any manner commensurate to what has been sunk. And even several more billions have been gobbled up by corruption.

What legislators have been taking as committee members is a actually chicken-feed; and it is what has been disappearing in other areas that is the real thing. Finally, the truth will out. Angered by the humiliation Obasanjo visited them with, members of the House of Representatives have begun compiling all the impeachable offences committed by him since he came to office in 1999. In other words, when it comes to committing suicide, you may as well take as many as you can along with you. That, in fact, is what the lawmakers are telling Obasanjo now. In this fight-to-finish that promises to entertain the nation no end, who goes first is anybody's guess. As they saying goes, "Greed, like the love of comfort, is a form of fear". And having to choose between disgrace and fear is not much of a choice, or is it?

Sometime ago, Wabara rhetorically asked his colleagues from where they though money deposited into their accounts had come. This was in the aftermaths of the Port Harcourt Retreat for Senators for which the Senate voted N240 million; but the entire bill was footed by a public and a private company. The Senators were said to have thereafter decided to share the vote; and as the Senate President among the Senators being equivalent of a lion among beasts, Wabara took the lion-share. And all hell was let loose. Which goes to prove that Wabara was not a very good student of Mae West, otherwise he wouldn't have done that. He would have taken her words of counsel. She had said, "When choosing between two evils, I always like to pick the one I never tried before." A familiar evil is the bane of many a career and Wabara should have known better.

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