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STAR FEATURE
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 Pages 24 & 25

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Attack on Agip was robbery - FG

American security operatives arrive

President Olusegun Obasanjo has directed the Inspector General of Police, Sunday Ehindero, to track down the perpetrators of Tuesday's robbery at Agip Oil Company, Port Harcourt, where seven mobile policemen were killed.

The Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mr. Frank Nweke Jnr, announced this to newsmen at the weekly briefing on the outcome of the federal executive council (FEC) meeting held at the presidential villa yesterday.

According to the minister, President Obasanjo was deeply saddened by the incident and expressed his condolence to the families of those who lost their lives as the heightened insecurity in the Niger Delta came up for mention at the FEC meeting.

Mr. Nweke explained that the federal government is committed to the security of all who carry out their legitimate business in the country and assured that the government will take steps to check such incidents from recurring.

The information minister said Mr. President was deeply saddened by the developments in Port Harcourt and extends his condolence to the families of those who lost their lives while he is in contact with the Rivers state governor and has also been briefed by the Inspector General of Police.

"The federal government is committed to the security of everyone in the country and to ensure that people do their business unmolested. The government will take appropriate steps to arrest the incident while those people will be tracked down."

From Ikenna Emeka Okpani, Bureau Chief, Port Harcourt & Joe Oroye, in Abuja

Many people were killed during robbery incidents in Port Harcourt last Tuesday where two banks were attacked and robbed.

Meanwhile, the police command in Rivers state has ruled out militia attack on Tuesday's invasion of the Nigerian Agip Oil Company in Port Harcourt, saying it was a case of pure armed robbery.

The commissioner of police, Mr. Samuel Adetuyi, said in Port Harcourt yesterday that the attack was an armed robbery incident and was so carried out. He regretted that the police could not arrest the suspected armed robbers as they had escaped before re-

Cont. on Pg. 2



L-R: Governor Ahmed Sani of Zamfara, Rt. Rev. (Dr.) Ali Buba Lamido, the Anglican Bishop of Wusasa Diocese and representative of Governor of Plateau State, Chief James Barry, at a seminar titled: "Citizens Religious Freedom in Democratic Governance" organised by Christian Youth Association of Nigeria in Kaduna... recently. Pic: Shehu K. Goro.

THIRD TERM

Don't cave in - Northern Reps tell govs

By Emmanuel Bello & Mustafa Abubakar

At the head of their meeting in Kaduna tomorrow, Northern governors have been urged not to succumb to blackmail or intimidation in an attempt to get their endorsement of the third term plot.

The call was made by the Northern Members Forum who reiterated their earlier stance on the issue during the Forum's inauguration last year.

In a press statement made available to *Daily Trust*, the Forum enjoined the governors to remain steadfast in the face of mounting pressure. "... We urge them to persevere particularly in the face of threats of intimidation and blackmail from some quarters.

"That while we appreciate the position of our governors as responsive and responsible leaders who are not only conscious of their individual integrity but also the legacy that they will bequeath to their children and generations yet unborn; we encourage them to remain steadfast and committed to the path of honour they charted for us in the Kaduna declaration. Be rest assured your excellencies,

that we are together in this struggle. We remain committed till the end."

On the ongoing attempts to amend the 1999 constitution, the Forum reiterated its position that the exercise must be discontinued. It also commended the Northern senators and pledged their support. "That we commend the Northern senators for following suit at their retreat in Kaduna.

"We remain committed to working in harmony with our colleagues in the National Assembly from other parts of

the country, many of whom are against the third term agenda."

According to the statement, the constitutional amendment, though a legal

activity of the legislature, should be suspended for the greater good of the country.

Meanwhile, the erstwhile Minister, Federal Capital Territory, who is also the Special

Adviser to the president on relations with civil society, Engr. Muhammad Abba-Gana, says that opposition to the constitutional amendment

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... No funds for public hearings - Mantu

By Habeeb I. Pindiga, Assistant Political Editor

Plans to produce a new time table for public hearings by the National Assembly Joint Constitution Review Committee ran into a hitch yesterday when majority of the members

stayed away from the committee's meeting.

Besides the poor attendance, chairman of the panel, Senator Ibrahim Mantu, told the stunned lawmakers that there were no funds to continue with the exercise as only N100 million was in the committee's account when the proposed public hearings alone is expected to gulp N456 million.

The constitution review committee held its first meeting in the year yesterday to discuss a timetable for the exercise, following last week's directive by the Senate for a comprehensive schedule of

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Investors sack NICON Insurance mgt

By Anas A. Galadima, Business Reporter

Following the acquisition of 70 percent government's equity in NICON Insurance Plc, the new core investor, Assurance Acquisition Limited (AAL), has sacked the management of the insurance firm and reconstituted a new one.

The new management team is to be headed by Barrister Jimoh Ibrahim as Chief Executive Officer and Dr. A.A

Iadowu, as board chairman. Speaking at a press briefing in Abuja yesterday, Ibrahim announced that "just this morning, the new board of directors of NICON Insurance Plc at her first sitting, has

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News

Third term *Cont. from pg. 1*

ment by some people in the country is mischievous and has misrepresented the entire process to Nigerians. He stated this in his *Bullet* office, secretariat block "B", during a courtesy call on him by members of the Nationwide Coalition on Constitutional Amendments (NCCA).

Engr. Abba-Gana said it is very important to make Nigerians recognize the difference between the electoral process and the on-going constitutional amendment which is a normal and purely legislative process, an exclusive function of the National Assembly but unfortunately, some are using it to create ill feelings and disaffection within the country and therefore appealed to the civil liberty organizations within the country to leave those "sensitive political matters" to the politicians who are members of the political parties.

He added that the civil liberty organisations should not venture into political matters which will make them lose their identities and become another political party and urged others to participate as it is not only NCCA's efforts alone is needed. "It is a once in a lifetime opportunity for all Nigerians to responsibly and democratically participate in this exercise which may not properly come again until another, fifty years. So, the coalitions involvement and partnership with the National Assembly in the on going constitution amendment is in order while the civil liberty organizations in capacity building of other organs of the government is in order".

Engr. Abba said the civil liberty organizations can make an impact on the democratic order, rule of law, human rights, press freedom, anti corruption crusade and generally contribute to the development and progress of the society without being involved in partisan politics.

He appealed to the civil liberty society coalitions that as we the country enters the second civilian transition, Nigerians should act patriotically so that we can consolidate the democratic power.

He advised the civil liberty organisations should exercise discretion in all they do and what they say. He called on members of the civil society organizations throughout the country should join the Nationwide Coalition on Constitutional Amendments (NCCA), as the coalition is the vanguard in this all important task on constitutional amendment.

Presenting his address the national coordinator, Nationwide Coalition on Constitutional Amendments (NCCA), Barrister Mike Nkwocha, said that the essence of NCCA's visit was to intimate the existence of the organization, its mission, vision and planned activities to the Presidential Adviser and to provide a veritable platform through which Nigerians can engage the constitutional amendment process being undertaken by the National Assembly.



Minister of State for Internal Affairs, Dr. Joseph Odidi Itotoh (left) and his counterpart in the Ministry of Transport, Alhaji Mohammed Habibu Aliyu, during a function at the State House, Abuja... recently. Pic: Joe Oroye.

inforcement from the state command could get to the scene.

He said a full-fledged investigation has commenced and called on the general public to come forward with information that can lead to the arrest of the culprits.

The commissioner assured the general public that the police would keep secret the identity of informants saying that the attack should be viewed as a rape on the society and not the problem of the police and those affected.

He confirmed the death of seven people whom he said

Agip *Cont. from pg. 1*

were mobile policemen and another one whom he referred to as 'spy' special constabulary police officer.

Daily Trust investigations revealed that no arrests have so far been made even as the army have been deployed to some major junctions in the city and the Agip junction, a popular junction leading to the Agip office that was attacked. Efforts to get the names of the affected police officers failed as the command said it needed to inform their respective families before releasing their names.

The robbers, the police said, also killed civilian, a worker of the company who was hijacked and forced to disclose the four cash centres in the company premises. The robbers were said to have made away through the water front bordering the premises with about four million naira before a combined police and Navy team could get to them.

Meanwhile, the Nigerian Agip Oil Company has described the attack as unexpected against insinuations that a group had warned the workers not to come to work that day as the company was going to be attacked. There are insinuations that the company had taken threats of attacks for granted.

But the company's General Manager, Public Affairs, Mr. Akin Aruwajoye, said no such warnings were received as the attack came suddenly. The attack occurred in broad daylight and sent residents of the area scampering.

Our reporter gathered that security at the offices of other oil companies and banks have been beefed up to forestall further attacks and robbery.

There were also indications that the American government has deployed some of its security operatives from the FBI and CIA to the Niger Delta. Our investigations revealed that the securitymen were to resume with some oil companies in the region and from that point, carry out their job of getting to the militia men who are suspected to be linked with some terrorist organisations. A source that would not want his name in print, said the Americans are worried by the techniques employed by the kidnapers and the militia men who are said to be sending mails to people warning them of their activities and threatening to carry out more attacks.

In some of their messages, the militia asked for greater regional autonomy and resource control, saying that they wanted to be part of Nigeria under a new arrangement. There are fears that the attacks on the oil industry will continue and might even get worse if the federal government employs force to secure the release of hostages.

Meanwhile, the Bayelsa state governor who heads the federal governments special committee on the Niger Delta problems, is said to be worried by the increasing recalcitrance of the militia groups whom he said have stuck to their guns despite efforts to get them to release the hostages in the past two weeks. He has however, assured the people that the state is doing everything possible to secure the release of the hostages and also end the series of attacks on the oil industry in the region. The militia, we gathered, have warned that any attempt to use force to secure the release of the hostages would be disastrous.

Investors *Cont. from pg. 1*

relieved the entire management of their appointments and directed that the handing over process be completed within 24 hours"

He said: "The board had no option than to inject new blood into the management of NICON, particularly at a time when insurance is expected to be fully capitalized as a matter of fact."

The change in leadership, he said, was the first step towards to resuscitate the forty year old company, pointing out that the books of the company would be audited to ensure that the former management did not mismanage funds.

Assurance Acquisition Limited (AAL), a firm floated by Jimoh Ibrahim and other corporate investors, emerged as core investor in the insurance company by paying \$46million (about N6billion) at the opening of financial bids in Abuja in October 2005, beating other bidders namely Zenith insurance and IGI.

Barrister Ibrahim announced that the company would be recapitalised to the tune of N20billion in the next six months as the first phase

of the company's recapitalisation programme.

He said that the company would do an initial public offer (IPO), in the second phase of its recapitalisation programme which would commence towards the end of the year.

He noted that, "a capital base of N50 billion would be expected at the end of our recapitalisation. The reason we are moving towards strengthening of capacity is due to the fact that we are all going to insure banks and they have N25billion capitalisation so we need to have a higher capital base than them".

The company would also consider acquiring smaller insurance companies in the country, but such firms must have clean books, he pointed out.

The new CEO said that the company would resume payment of claims within the next seven days. The new board of the company last month stopped all payment of claims to clients while expenditure was pegged to a certain limit for each management staff.

When asked about the reasons for the suspension of payments, he said "when you take over a new company, you have to know what is going on. But we did not entirely stop payments, we just said the management should let us know when they want to make expenditure"

The new organogram of the company as revealed by Ibrahim, allows for a chief executive officer as against a managing director which was the case before now. Also, executive directors would be appointed together with about ten chief operating officers.



Irene Chigbue, BPE DG.

Funds *Cont. from pg. 1*

the review process.

Daily Trust gathered that out of the 80 members, only about 30 attended yesterday's meeting.

Addressing the lawmakers, Mantu, who a source said insisted that there was no third term agenda before the panel, regretted the poor attendance, which he said was threatening the exercise.

A reliable source said Mantu informed the committee that out of the N200 million budgeted for it in 2005 only N100 million was released so far.

He wondered how the exercise would continue without additional funds.

Daily Trust learnt that among the options Mantu canvassed at the meeting was to ask the presidency to release the remaining funds that the National Political Reform Conference did not exhaust.

But because of the poor attendance, deliberation on this was postponed till next week.

Based on an earlier schedule, the public hearing is to hold in six centres from Janu-

ary 8 to 20.

The venues were Bauchi, Lafia, Port Harcourt, Enugu, Ibadan and Kaduna.

Daily Trust learnt that poor attendance had been a recurring feature in the committee's meetings.

The last meeting held November 16, last year had 33 members in attendance while the one before it also had less than half of the membership.

Last week, the Senate emerged from an executive session demanding for a comprehensive time table from the Mantu committee following misgivings by senators regarding the third term agenda allegedly being pushed through the constitution review panel.

Minutes of the November 16 meeting obtained exclusively by Daily Trust in Abuja yesterday recorded Mantu as saying that the committee "would require massive publicity in order to sufficiently sensitize all stakeholders in all parts of the country to enable them prepare their statements and representations."

NEWS

Ajaokuta: Solgas threatens to reopen case against FG

Solgas Energy Incorporated (USA), has threatened to reopen a petition it filed at an international arbitration panel in London against the federal government over alleged breach of concession contract signed in 2003 on the rehabilitation, operation and maintenance of Ajaokuta Steel Company Limited (ASCL).

Also, the company is threatening to expose in the international media, the alleged fraud perpetrated by certain top officials of the federal government in the process of

By Ahmed I. Shekarau, Deputy Editor & Joe Oroye, State House Reporter

cobbling the concession agreement.

The US based energy firm has also initiated litigation in Texas against the current managers of Ajaokuta Steel, Global Steel Holdings Limited, a subsidiary of Ispat, over alleged "breach of confidentiality" in a deal struck between the two companies prior to the take over of the ASCL by the latter.

Solgas was contracted by the government in June 2003,

to revive the Ajaokuta Steel Company, recoup its investments and return same to the government within 10 years. But the firm reportedly requested for the termination of the contract in August 2004, based on certain conditions, including a refund on investments in the 14 months it ran the steel plant.

In a two-page letter to the government counsel, Kendall Freeman, a copy of which was obtained by *Daily Trust*, the Solgas' Attorneys (Buck, Keenan, Gage, Little & Lindley, L.L.P) accused the Nige-

rian government of breaching the conditions for an out-of-court settlement earlier reached between the two parties.

The letter dated January 5, 2006, titled Re: No. 13620/MS; Solgas Energy Limited v. The Federal Government of Nigeria and Ajaokuta Steel Company Limited, advised the government to respond accordingly in line with their earlier agreement.

Solgas, through its attorneys, said it is giving the FGN up to the 31st of this month to take the necessary action, failing which "we

intend to file the amended petition detailing by both name and deed what we believe to be a sordid tale of greed, bribery and breach of fiduciary duty".

The amended petition, according to the letter, "will contain what we believe to be good faith allegations concerning gross misconduct and unethical behaviour by both elected officials and appointed officials of the highest levels of the Nigerian government".

It further warned in the letter that failure to keep to this deadline by the FGN will compel it to expose, as nothing but a sham, the Nigerian government's stated policy of transparency and crack down on corruption.

When contacted yesterday for the federal government's reaction to the issues raised in the letter and other matters, Minister of Power and Steel, Senator Liyel Imoke, said he will not make any detailed comments on it because it will be prejudicial to the matter pending in court.

The minister who demanded a photocopy of the letter from the Solgas attorneys, said: "The matter is in court; so we're not allowed to comment on that".

However, when asked

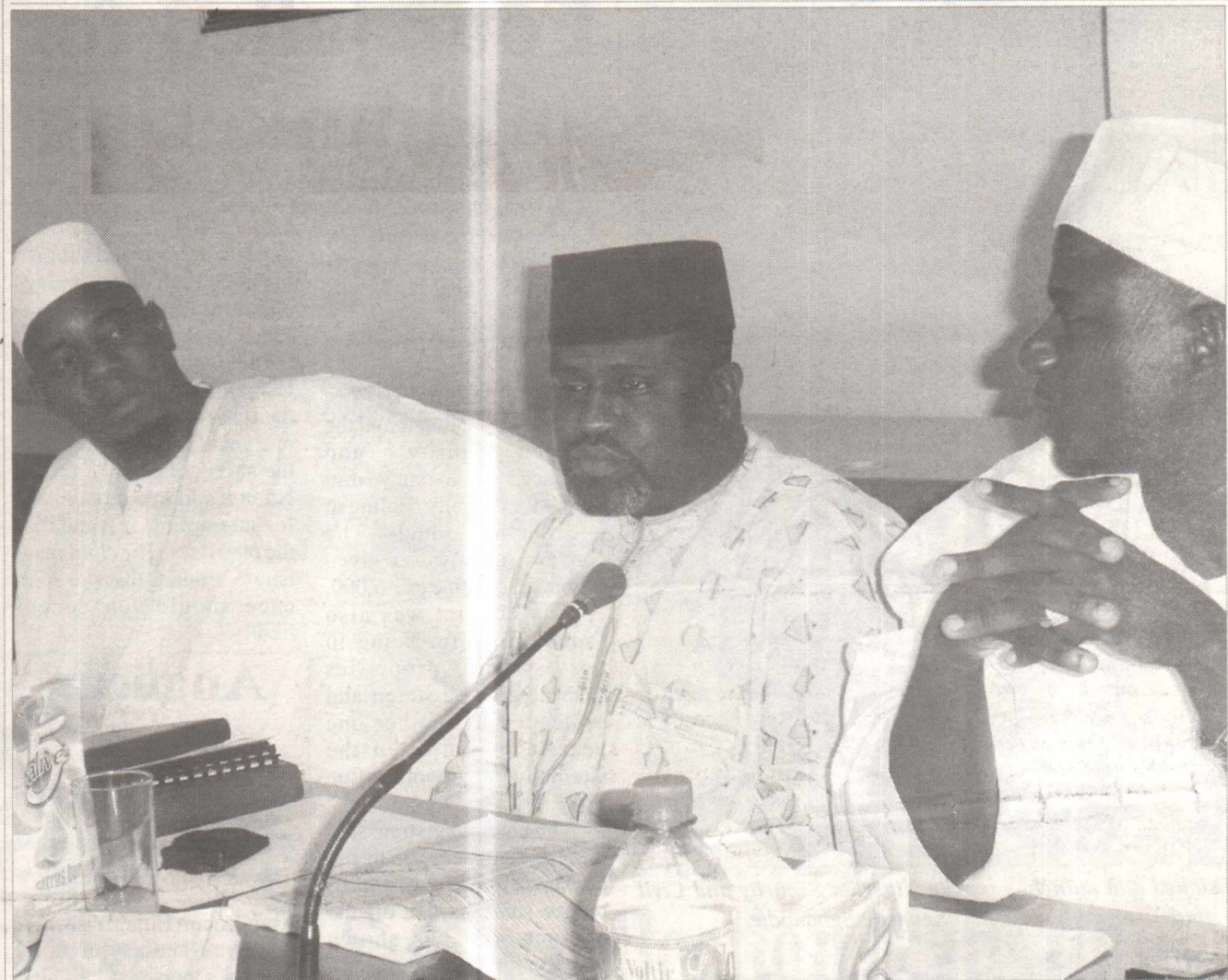
whether the government did reach an agreement with Solgas which was said to have been breached, he said, "Yes; the agreement was terminated now! (The deal terminating the contract was signed by Solgas and signed by the federal government.

"But you people know that Solgas ran down Ajaokuta. So, what are you people talking about? Or don't you remember that part? And because there's probably going to be action against them, they too want to cover themselves".

He denied any out-of-court settlement agreement between the government and Solgas, saying "there was no agreement (with Solgas) to settle out of court. Everybody has a right to go to court. They're just exercising their right; but they're wasting their time".

Also, when contacted on Monday in Abuja on the lawsuit filed against his company in Texas by Solgas, the Head of Legal Department of Global Holdings, Mr. L.K. Sharma, stated that "we are contesting that company's claims over breach of confidentiality".

He, however, declined further comments on the matter because it is still pending before the court in Texas.



L-R: Hon. Kajiji, Hon. Dahiru Bornoma and another member during the budget defence by Chancellors of Universities at National Assembly, Abuja ...yesterday. Pix: Felix Onigbinde.

ACF meets with Northern politicians

The Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), will on Monday meet in Kaduna with northern leaders, elders and politicians to discuss current national socio-economic and political issues of critical importance to the north and the nation. The meeting, which will

From AbdulRaheem Aodu, Correspondent, Kaduna

hold at the conference hall of the International Trade Fair Complex, is scheduled for 9.30 a.m., according to the ACF secretary general, Col. Hamid Ali (rtd).

Former Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon (rtd), is expected to be the chairman of the gathering.

Former heads of state and presidents from the north, northern governors, members of the Northern Senators Forum and elder statesmen from the north are to participate in the deliberations.

"Members of the Northern Members Forum, members of the Northern Speakers Forum, northern delegates to the National Political Reforms Conference, members of the House of Representatives and members of the ACF General Assembly are also expected to attend the crucial meeting".

Col. Hamid added that a special paper will be delivered at the meeting by Dr. A. Siddique Mohammed of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, to be followed by brief presentations by Chief Sunday Awoniyi, the ACF chairman, General Victor Malu (rtd) and Hajia Bilkiu Yusuf.

FG yet to sign Crown Agents contract

Nearly six months after the federal government revealed plans to contract Britain's Crown Agents to reform the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), the deal is still yet to be signed.

While the ministry of finance has not given clear reasons for the delay, speculations are rife that the United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD), may have kicked against the federal government's move to contract the firm on the grounds that the contract would amount to a duplication of service and a waste of public resources.

A maritime sector publication, *Maritime Voice*, reported in its December edition that the international body has advised the federal government through the ministry of finance to shelve the idea of contracting the Agents, stressing that since the government has already invested lots of money in the ASSYCUDA project, it would

By Anas A Galadima, Business Reporter

not be wise to, contract the British firm again.

UNCTAD, according to the magazine, had explained to the federal government that since the agents' service is based on risk analysis and management, it would be unwise to engage it to do the job since the ASSYCUDA software is also designed to employ the same technique.

UNCTAD was said to have called for a speedy completion of the ASSYCUDA project so as to ensure a timely take-off of the scheme rather than duplicating the functions through the contract when the government has already spent much money on ASSYCUDA.

The publication further reported that the World Bank which had earlier advised the government to go for the Crown Agents service, has started having a second thought about the idea based

on the advise given by UNCTAD.

It said that efforts made to sign the contract in Washington proved abortive and that while the minister of finance, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, was present at the occasion, World Bank officials and those of customs and the presidency were said to have deliberately boycotted the meeting.

When contacted, Victoria Kwakwa, Lead Economist of the World Bank in Nigeria who spoke through the bank's spokesman, Tohomdet Obadiah, said "Its not true. The bank is committed to work with the government to effect the reforms and to check corruption at the ports".

Also contacted, Special Assistant to the Minister of Finance, Paul Nwabuikwu, said he too was not aware that UNCTAD had kicked against the contract.

He said "I am not aware that any such organisation

has gone against the contract. In any case, the situation is that the Crown Agents' proposal is on the table of government and the issue of whether it is supported by an international organisation or not is not very pertinent at this point".

"What is important is that in taking a final decision, I believe that government will consider all aspects including the strengths and weaknesses of ASSYCUDA," he said.

Asked whether corruption and inefficient service delivery by customs officials was responsible for the government's desire to engage the agents, he said "I will not like to generalise and in the process, impugn the integrity of many hard working officers of the customs. The bottomline is that within the customs, there are bad eggs just like in other agencies and other aspects of life and there is need to do something about the situation so that

the nation's interest can be served".

It was gathered that the federal government has so far spent about \$2.95 million on the ASSYCUDA software besides other equipment and machineries that have been bought for the installation of the project which is a major aspect of the on-going Customs reforms.

Meanwhile, top officials of the NCS have reportedly kicked against the contract because it would limit its control in excise duties collection and serve as an indictment on the institution as a whole.

Minister of finance, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, said at the Customs Annual Conference in Jos last month that, "the reforms are aimed at strengthening the Nigeria Customs Service. It is about making Customs stronger and better. They are not a threat to anyone. The Customs have been underfunded in the past. We know it. But the high level of corruption in the service is not helping matters."

CRIME & PUNISHMENT

Three CPs urged to stop extortion

Three Commissioners of Police have been warned to ensure that they stop their men from extorting money on the highways or face disciplinary action.

Handing down the warning recently at the force headquarters, the Inspector General of Police, Mr. Sunday Ehindero, cautioned the commissioners of police of Osun, Delta and Anambra state to ensure that policemen posted on patrol and

By Shehu Abubakar,
Reporter

stop-and-search duty do not take bribes from motorists.

Mr. Ehindero who was particularly angry with the situation in Osun state, said he was told by some reputable Nigerians including a university lecturer that policemen on patrol along the highways in the state extort money from motorists.

He warned that any

commissioner of police who allows policemen in his state to extort money will be sent on compulsory leave, deployed from the state for lack of proper supervision of his men and may be stagnated on that rank until he retires.

In the case of Delta and Anambra states, the police boss said he has intelligence report that police from the two states have formed the habit of extorting money from drivers and passengers

travelling between Asaba in Delta state and Onitsha in Anambra state.

Mr. Ehindero told the commissioners of police who assembled for a conference that he had never asked any commissioner to send money to him and asked them to ensure that they stop all forms of corruption in the force if they were sure they do not benefit from it.

He called on all commissioners of police in the 36

states and the FCT to set up monitoring teams to ensure that all corrupt policemen are arrested and sacked from the force.

He warned that he will not tolerate a situation where policemen posted to the highways to curtail criminal activities will turn themselves to extortioners thereby taxing people to pay them money and urged all Nigerians to resist demands for money by his men and ensure that they bring all such requests to the notice of senior police

officers who he said have been briefed on what to do.

Reacting to the remarks by the Inspector General on his state command, the commissioner of police of Osun state said he has already arrested and dismissed six policemen over extortion and other related offences adding that other policemen have also been arrested for various crimes and are being tried and assured the Inspector General that he is doing everything possible to address the situation.

Four jailed for oil bunkering

By Ruby Rabi,
Senior Reporter

An Abuja chief magistrate court has sentenced one Mr. Soyia West to two years in prison for illegal bunkering and for being in possession of 165 drums of petroleum products.

The chief magistrate, Usman A. Shuaibu, found the accused guilty and sentenced him to one year in prison for illegally dealing in petroleum products. The convict was however given the option of a fine of N5,000.

The convict was also found guilty for being in possession of properties suspected to be stolen and sentenced to another one year in prison or in the alternative pay another fine of N5,000.

The chief magistrate said that the sentences are to run concurrently in order to reduce some burden off the convict who has shown remorse for his action.

The accused person, had earlier pleaded guilty to all the charges.

Although the accused was not represented by a counsel, he told the court that he was forced into trading in petroleum products because of the economic situation in the country.

The prosecuting police officer, Joseph Onu, asked the court to try the accused summarily in view of his plea of guilt.

The petroleum task force arrested the accused person at midnight at Abonema Wharf with 165 drums of petroleum products.

The police alleged that the products were illegally siphoned from the Pipeline and Product Marketing Company (PPMC), pipeline in Port Harcourt or Abuja.

They arrested the suspect when they accosted him with the product as he could not establish ownership.

In another development, three accused persons, Tambrapa Joe, Kingsley Okoro and Gregory Donokonomo, all residents of Abaji area council, have been sent-

need to one year and a month in prison each for conspiracy and attempt to vandalise PPMC pipelines.

The chief magistrate, Usman Shuaibu, sentenced the three accused persons to one year for conspiracy or in the alternative, pay a fine of N5,000 and one month each for attempting to vandalise the pipe lines. The chief magistrate ordered that the sentence should run concurrently.

Anglican cleric murdered

The Assistant Bishop of the Anglican Church in Bida, Niger State, Archdeacon Elijah Yisa, was murdered Tuesday night by unknown persons.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), reports that Yisa, who was shot in the head by two people in his residence in the church premises at about 10:20 p.m., died on the spot.

A close relation of the deceased who pleaded anonymity, said the assailants had asked the cleric's house-girl about his whereabouts.

The relation said the assailants told the assistant bishop they were after him.

The Bishop of the Bida Diocese of the church, the Rt. Rev. Jonah Kol, who declined to comment on the incident, said: "We are holding a meeting now."

Yisa's body has been deposited at the General Hospital, Minna.

The Area Commander of the police force in Bida, Mr. Stephen Audu, confirmed the incident, saying two security men at the church premises have been arrested for interrogation.

Audu said the case has been transferred to the state police command for further investigation.



A cross section of motorcycles as parts of equipments commissioned and launched for the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), to help check oil pipeline vandals in Abuja ...recently. Pix: Kennedy Egbonodje.

ICPC docks LG chairman, wife for alleged corruption

The ICPC has dragged the chairman of Afikpo North local government council of Ebonyi state, Chief Iduma Igariwey and his wife, Florence, to court for alleged corrupt practices.

The commission in a 10-count charge, claimed that Igariwey used his position to confer corrupt advantage on his wife.

Florence was accused of abetting the use of her hus-

band's office for corruption.

In the first five counts, the council chairman was alleged to have used his position to approve N2.348 million for his wife's expenses during the Ebonyi Women's Day

celebrations in 2000.

The other five counts claimed that Florence in December 2000, at Afikpo North council area, used her husband's office to apply for the money.

When the matter was mentioned on Tuesday before the chief judge of the state, Igariwey denied using his position to perpetrate corruption.

Led in evidence by his counsel, Chief Sunday Okoronkwo, the accused said activities carried out by his wife's office were approved by the state's Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Matters.

Under cross-examination by Mr Bayo Taiwo, a legal officer in the Federal Ministry of Justice, Igariwey stated that all the money spent by his wife was approved by the finance department of his local council.

The Chief Judge, Chief Aloy Nwankwo, adjourned the matter to February 15.

Rimi's Wife: We are making progress — Ehindero

Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Sunday Ehindero, says the force is recording success in its investigations into the killing of Sa'adatu Rimi, wife of Abubakar Rimi.

Ehindero who declined to give details of the outcome of the investigations, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), yesterday in Abuja, that investigations was still on to fish out Sa'adatu's killers.

He said that the force would soon name the suspects

behind the killing due to the success recorded in the investigations headed by the Deputy Inspector-General of Police (DIG Force CID), Mr Ogonna Onovo.

"We will brief you on the case at the appropriate time. Investigations into the case is still on," Ehindero promised.

Meanwhile, a source close to Ehindero told NAN that the suspects would soon be transferred to the Force Headquarters, Abuja, for further investigation and

possible prosecution.

He however did not disclose the number of suspects billed to be transferred.

"You can see that the DIG who was directed to relocate to Kano to speed up investigations has returned to Abuja. The police high command will soon transfer the suspects here," the source said.

Hajia Sa'adatu was killed in her husband's residence along Durbin Katsina road, Kano, in the early hours of January 14.

CRIME & PUNISHMENT



Suspected robbers arrested by the police in Kaduna paraded at the Force Headquarters, Abuja ...recently.

Robbers go wild, use welding machines to rob banks

The Inspector General of Police, Mr. Sunday Ehindero, has expressed concern over the increase in sophisticated bank robberies in the country despite continued efforts by his men to tackle the problem.

Mr. Ehindero said recent reports from Edo and Abia state reveal that armed robbers use gas welding machines to force open the doors of bank's strong room to have access to money, a disturbing development, he stressed.

Though he was happy that his men have succeeded in foiling the two robberies by dislodging the robbers and killing one in the Abia incident, he however warned that unless the police are further equipped with more arms, ammunition and logistics, armed robbers would create a serious challenge.

In Benin city, the capital of Edo state, robbers were said to have stormed a bank, held the security men at gun point and made attempts with gas welding machines to remove the iron gates leading to the bank's strong room. But the early arrival of police teams foiled the robbery.

The Inspector General

By Shehu Abubakar, Reporter

who made the disclosure at the recent conference of commissioners of police held at the force headquarters, Abuja, approved an automatic promotion to the next rank for all the policemen who foiled the robbery attempt on a bank in Abia state.

Briefing the conference earlier, the immediate past commissioner of police in the state, Mr. Adanaya Gaya, said the armed robbers stormed the bank in a jeep, bus and a Mercedes Benz car.

He said the robbers shot sporadically throughout the period of the attempted robbery while several gas welding machines were used to break into the bank's strong room.

He said that the policemen mobilised to the scene of the robbery and engaged the robbers in a fierce gun battle forcing them to withdraw without achieving their objective.

He said that the police recorded no casualty but that one of the armed robbers was shot and killed.

Mr. Gaya said that the police recovered two vehicles and 6,000 rounds of ammunition from the gang.

Apo Six: Danjuma killed traders with AK 47 rifle—Witness

Mr. Haruna Mahmoud, a police constable, yesterday narrated to an Abuja high court how Deputy Commissioner of Police, Mr. Danjuma, killed the six Apo traders inside a Peugeot 406 car on June 7, 2005 after they had the rear bumper of his BMW saloon car.

The police constable who was led in evidence yesterday by Chief Chris Uche (SAN), for the prosecution, said "On June 7, 2005, I was on a stop and search patrol duty at Gimbiya street, Area 11, Garki with Inspector Suleiman Audu, Yakubu Filibus and Ibrahim Garba. The team was headed by Insp. Audu. I reported at the duty post at about 18.30hrs. But at about 21.00hrs, my inspector who was with a police handset, said he had a call from the control room that armed robbers were operating at Crown Guest House. Two of us in the patrol team went to the venue but were told by the occupants that the armed robbers had escaped. The Alpha Series patrol team also came there with the DPO who told us to go back to our duty post and we complied.

"At 23.00hrs, we sighted Danjuma Ibrahim and alerted others on our team that "Oga" was around.

"At about 1.30hrs, Ibrahim Garba sighted a car coming out from Gimbiya street. The car was flashed down but it was the DCP Danjuma that was inside.

"DCP Danjuma was inside his private car, a BMW with registration number DR 05 RBC. He was driving the car himself. He was not dressed in his uniform. He parked at the side of the road allowed his engine to run.

"When he came out, he instructed us that any car coming from Gimbiya with three and above occupants should be stopped and thoroughly searched.

"Not quite long after the instruction was given, we sighted a car coming out from the same Gimbiya street which we stopped but one of the occupants of the car said "officer, na we o" and immediately after, attempted to move away.

"DCP Danjuma, watching from his car whose engine was still running moved his car to the road to block them. In the process, the driver of the car

By Ruby Rabi, Senior Reporter

swerved from the left side of the road to the right side of the road and DCP Danjuma swerved with them to block the car from going.

This he said continued until the driver of the car slightly hit the rear bumper of DCP Danjuma's car.

"When they hit his car from the rear, DCP Danjuma ordered Inspector Suleiman leading us to open fire on them. He simply told him: 'Inspector, fire.' That was when DCP Danjuma opened his car and came out.

"Immediately, the driver of the car, a 406 saloon, reversed.

DCP Danjuma instructed Inspector Suleiman again to open fire on them but he refused.

"DCP Danjuma then snatched his rifle and opened fire on the 406 car on a single target of 'tau', 'tau', 'tau'. He was shooting from the centre pavement of the road. He later moved closer to the 406 car again, raining bullets on it at a very close range.

"While the bullets were being rained on the vehicle, the 406 car which was already on reverse, was moving back, uncontrolled, until it hit a flower stand and stopped.

"The DCP stopped firing when the ammunition in the AK 47 rifle he was using finished.

"All the while, the remaining three of us on the patrol team had taken cover behind the fence of the Prudent Bank watching the scene from afar.

"From where we were, DCP Danjuma called us to come and search the car. We moved to the car and I opened the driver's side while Ibrahim Garba opened the other side.

"Inside the car, at the front seat, was a lady. She opened the door and came out. The driver also came out. Then the DCP asked others who did not come out to lie down.

"But while searching, we discovered that one of them had been seriously hit by bullets in the head. His brain was already shattered. They were just lying on each other like this (demonstrating it).

"These injured people were four in number. They were at the back seat of the car. They

were covered with their own blood.

"Although we didn't bring out the four occupants of the car at the back seat, we still used our torchlight to search the car, the seat, under the seat, the boot and the motionless bodies of the occupants to see if we could feel any object on them but nothing incriminating was found.

"We also searched the driver who was lying down and the only lady among them. No incriminating object was found on any of them.

"Then DCP Danjuma asked the only girl among them to sit down on the pavement of the road, close to the driver. He dipped his hand into his pocket, brought out his handset and communicated with someone.

"Almost immediately, about five minutes later, I saw Alpha 2 Patrol team. Three police officers were on the team. They came in a police ALGON jeep. Danjuma spoke in Hausa to them that "these are those who terrorise the town. The bad boys, men of the underworld."

"Bakoji drove the ALGON jeep to the scene. He opened the back door of the jeep for the girl and the driver of the 406 saloon car to enter. The said driver was assisted to enter the jeep because of a serious injury on his left chest.

"Glaysius, another member of the Alpha 2 Patrol team started the engine of the 406 car, after tying the vehicle to the ALGON jeep and towed it to the station.

"My boss on our patrol team, Inspector Suleiman, later went with DCP Danjuma in his private BMW car to the Garki Police station to report the incident.

"At about 2.30hrs, Insp Suleiman came back to the duty post. At about 06.00hrs, we closed duty and went to Garki police station on instruction. There, I saw four men and the only girl among them lying down at the police station motionless. Their vehicle was also parked inside the police station.

"Inside their car, there was no soul there. I saw only five of the six persons that were previously in the car.

"We went into the DPO's office where Othman (the DPO now at large), told us to sit down. DPO Othman went out

and later came back. He said we should be served with the statement sheet to write our statements. I wrote what I witnessed including others and gave the statement back to the DPO.

"But when he went through the statements we wrote, he tore them out of anger. He said that was not how we should write it, saying this is a matter of life and death. He said we should not expose a senior police officer. He also said that if we try to say the truth, by the time we may need them later in future, we may not get their assistance.

"DCP Danjuma was not in his office when he was advising us. He now started to tutor us on how we should write the statement. He said we should say that it was the occupants of the car that opened fire on him before he also opened fire on them.

"Before we wrote the statement, he said we should not sign it. After writing the statement, he was not satisfied and told us another way of writing it. I wrote four different statements at the police station before the last one was retained. The other three were destroyed by the DPO.

"The DPO warned us never to tell anybody about the exact thing that happened on that day.

"After about two days, the DPO said we would go to the command headquarters to write another statement. He said we should write it the way he instructed. He took us to the command headquarters.

"At the command headquarters, himself and Danjuma tutored us. And we wrote the statement as instructed. They said we should not sign.

"They gave us another sheet of paper at the office of the CID that we should write that we recovered, during search, two locally made guns—a single and double barrel guns; one cutlass and two knives.

"They said we would soon appear before a police panel, that we should say the same thing. We wrote it as instructed.

"We were tutored on what to say before DIG Mike Okiro's panel and we did as instructed. All of us that gave evidence before Okiro panel were tutored on what to say except only one person, Anthony Edam, in

POLICE EMERGENCY PHONE LINES

| Route/coverage area | Telephone numbers |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Apo (Gudu) Legislative | 0806 580 3210 |
| Mechanic Village | 0804 231 5582 |
| Asokoro/Maitama District | 0806 580 3206 0804 490 7942 |
| Central Business District (Construction and Independence Avenues)/City Gate Giri Junction | 0806 580 3203 0804 490 7939 |
| Garki I & II | 0806 580 3205 0804 490 7941 |
| Jabi/Utako/Gwarimpa I & II/ Karmo/Gwagwa | 0806 580 3207 0804 490 7943 |
| Karu/Nyanya | 0806 580 3208 0804 491 1520 |
| Kubwa/Bwari/Zuba/ Dei-Dei Route | 0806 580 3209 0804 491 1496 |
| Roving Unit | 0806 580 3211 0804 491 1526 |
| Wuse I & II | 0806 580 3204 0804 490 7940 |
| Zuba/Giri/Kwali/Abaji Highway (1) | 0806 580 3201 0804 491 1523 |
| Zuba/Giri/Kwali/Abaji Highway (2) | 0806 580 3202 0804 491 1524 |
| Other Hot Lines | |
| Compol/DC OPS Numbers | |
| FCT Police Commissioner's Director Line | 09-2341470 |
| Office of FCT Police Commissioner | 09-2341800 |
| FCT Deputy Police Commissioner (operation) | 09-2341811 |
| Co-ordinator MOPOL Visiting Units | 0802 301 9123 0805 591 7706 |
| Others | |
| 0803 200 3913, 09 - 2341199, 09 - 2341198, 09 - 5238711 | |

Daily Trust Hotlines

08039686854 and 08056418945

NEWS

ANPP postpones NEC meeting

Succumbing to the internal crisis within the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), the planned national executive committee (NEC) meeting of the party scheduled for January 20, has been postponed indefinitely.

Giving reasons for the postponement, national chairman of the party, Chief Don Etiebet, told newsmen in Abuja yesterday that the series of internal wranglings within the Jigawa and Sokoto state chapters of the party has caused the cancellation of the event.

He explained that preparations for the meeting were in top gear. "But two things happened which cut short our preparations. One is that we received the news of the suspension of the Jigawa state governor from the ANPP which is a very very important announcement. We immediately reacted to verify what happened by sending a fact-finding body of three senior members of our party to go there and verify the accusation," he said, adding that a final report on the issue has been hampered by the Jigawa state governor's trip on hajj pilgrimage.

The second cause of the postponement, according to the national chairman, is the crisis in the Sokoto state branch of the party, where a petition against the governor, Alhaji Attahiru Bafarawa, by his deputy, was received accusing the governor of anti-party activities and an attempt to hijack the party machinery in favour of a few persons.

He said that a fact-finding team was also dispatched to Sokoto state to ascertain the veracity of the petition.

His words: "On the day the fact finding team arrived Sokoto, the governor welcomed them on the phone but gave the excuse that he was already leaving the state for a pressing assignment and that he would not be back for a while."

He said that these developments hindered the party from issuing the constitutionally required seven-days notice, thus making it impossible to convene the meeting as planned, even as he hopes that a new date will soon be announced.

On the position of the ANPP members of the House of Representatives who had reportedly complained that they were excluded from the planned NEC meeting, Chief Etiebet said it was unconstitutional to contemplate such an action, stressing that the members could not have been stopped from attending the meeting as duly recognised

By Emmanuel Bello,
Political Editor

members of the NEC.

Commenting also on an interview with Governor Attahiru Bafarawa in the *Daily Trust* of Tuesday, January 24, 2006, with the caption, "Etiebet is leading the ANPP into extinction," Chief Etiebet said that the governor lied when he declared that no NEC meeting has been convened in the last three years. He said it was not time and that there has been NEC meetings in the past during his tenure as national chairman, even as he accused Governor Bafarawa of manifesting what he termed "spasm of political trauma."

Meanwhile, spokesperson of The Buhari Organisation (TBO), Malam Yau Darazo, has expressed opposition to the postponement. "It is like postponing the evil day." Rather, the party's national leadership should have gone ahead to hold the NEC meeting than use the "alleged crisis in some states as an excuse. In fact, the meeting should have held to deal with these problems rather than run from it," he said.

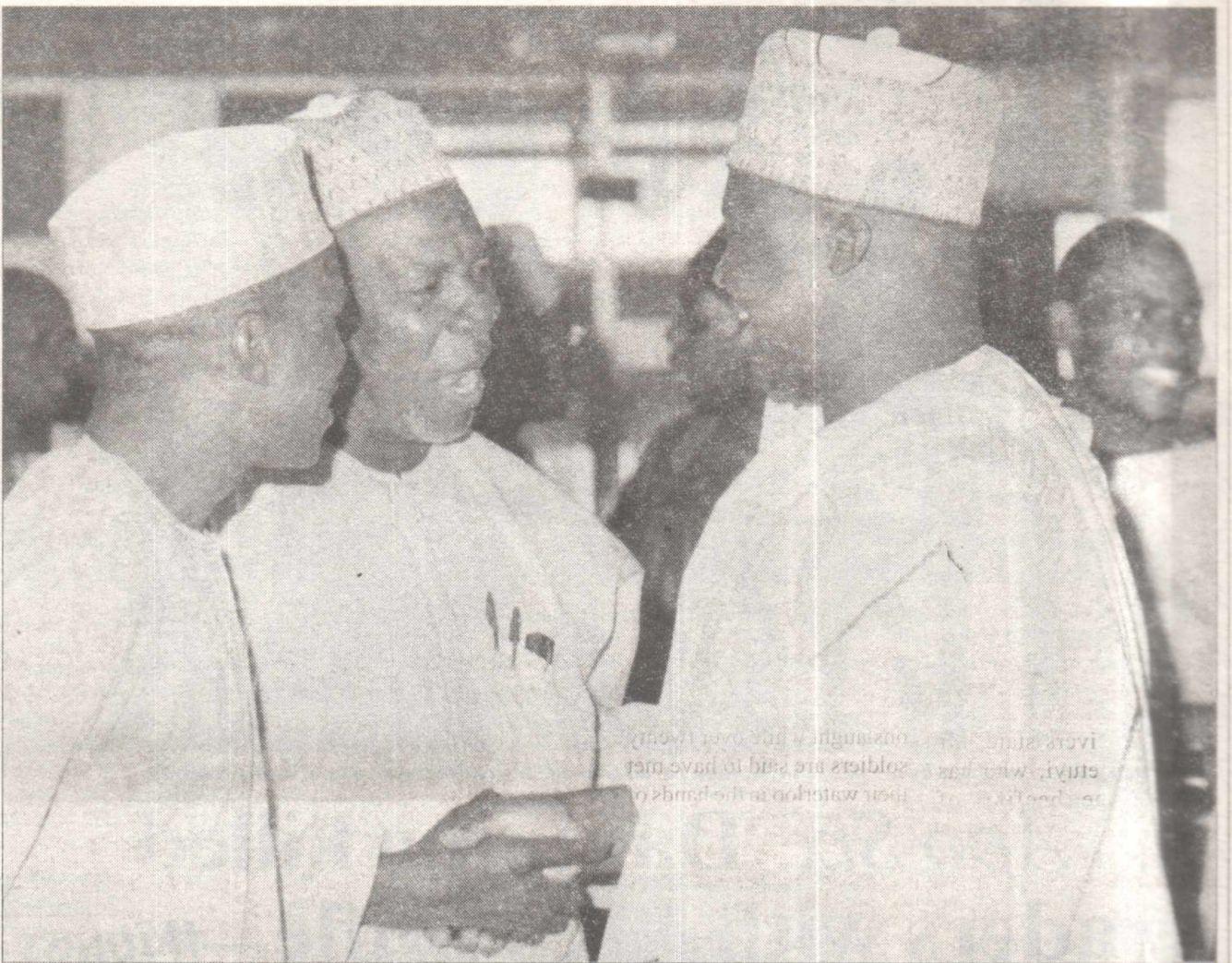
According to him, by the postponement, the party's top echelon has behaved "as if it has something to hide. I hope we are not pandering after some people's wish because there are rumours that certain people believe that the NEC meeting will raise some crucial issues within our party," he said.

Goje disowns 'Yankalare'

Apparently disturbed by the negative image his administration is receiving as a result of the activities of political thugs known as 'Yankalare', the Gombe state governor has in a state broadcast, disassociated his government from the activities of the hoodlums.

Speaking in an emotion laden voice in a broadcast soon after arriving from Abuja on Tuesday evening, Governor Muhammadu Danjuma Goje went to the extent of swearing that he does not sponsor the activities of the group and neither does his government.

"This broadcast which is the first of its kind in my three years in office, became necessary to dispel rumours that I support the 'Yankalare' or that my government supports them. My administration will never condone Kalare and even if it is my son, Ahmed, who is involved in Kalare, he



L-R: Munnir Dan Ali and Ado Sale Kankia, both BBC correspondents (Hausa service) discussing with another guest at the 3rd Annual Trust Dialogue held in Abuja ...recently.
Pix: Kennedy Egbonodje

Nigeria's polio case worsen

Nigeria is said to be the only African country that provides 100 percent vaccines from its own resources but remains the largest reservoir of the wild polio virus out of the four endemic countries, the Interim Coordinator and Chief Executive (ICCE), of the National Programme on Immunization (NPI), Dr. Edugie Abebe, has disclosed. Speaking yesterday at an interactive forum with newsmen in Abuja, the interim

By Sunday Ejike Benjamin,
Senior Reporter

NPI boss said Nigeria is the only country in Africa transmitting not only the wild polio virus (WPV), but also the only country in the world circulating types 1 and 3 of the wild polio virus covering a large geographical area.

"As at January 20, 2006, Nigeria had 751 cases of OPV in 22 states, with five states (Kano, Kebbi, Jigawa, Bauchi and Zamfara), accounting for

63 percent of the total case," Dr. Abebe declared and lamented the low immunization coverage in the country.

Meanwhile, President Olusegun Obasanjo has given a nine month marching orders to the new leadership of NPI to develop and implement a plan that would propel the transfer of the strategic functions of the programme to the Federal Ministry of Health, while mainstreaming immunization into other health services and the three tiers of government.

Other mandates to be carried out by Dr. Abebe within the nine months include, the acceleration of the achievement of polio eradication initiative this year as well as attaining a higher level of routine immunization coverage within the shortest possible time.

Commenting on the possibility of achieving the mandate within the time frame, the interim NPI boss said what makes the task more challenging within the time frame is that the provision of immunization services is the responsibility of the local government areas (LGA). According to her, the law establishing NPI provides that the federal government provides the vaccines and give technical support in capacity building, monitoring and supervision of the activities in conjunction with the state governments. She said the movement of vaccines from state cold stores to LGA cold stores and then to health facilities where they are utilised poses a great challenge to the NPI, pointing

out that such movements have not been consistent in Nigeria.

She opined that the NPI has developed a 5-year strategic plan (2006-2010) which has been reviewed by states and partners and will be presented to the next National Council on Health meeting by next month. This, she noted, will strengthen routine immunization efforts in the country.

The ICCE of NPI said four rounds of supplemental immunization activities will be carried out in the first half of this year, declaring also that, "we shall be working hard to interrupt wild polio virus transmission in Nigeria within the strategic plan of a routine immunization service also within the framework of a basic primary health care service provision in an integrated approach of delivering a holistic child survival service to the children of Nigeria."



Prof. Eyiayo Lambo, Health Minister

From Mohammed Abubakar,
Gombe

should be arrested," stated the governor whose broadcast was in Hausa.

The governor assured the police that the government would not interfere in their responsibility to arrest anybody who acts contrary to the peace and development of the state and called on them to fish out those behind the recent house burning and killing of a two year-old child in Dawaki quarters of the state capital.

Governor Goje who blamed the opposition and his detractors for sponsoring the activities of these thugs to dent the image of his government, warned that he will not condone lawlessness and would deal with the 'Yankalare' and their sponsors.

Meanwhile, police are yet to make any arrest in connection with the Dawaki inci-

dent but the state commissioner of police, Alhaji Yusuf Atiku Kafur, told newsmen that his command is getting useful information as investigations into the matter continues.

At the moment, community leaders in Dawaki quarters where the Kalare appears to be more concentrated, have mobilised against the activities of these thugs, calling for quick intervention of the authorities.

Daily Trust gathered that the recent attack by the Kalare in Dawaki has already galvanised parents, community and religious leaders to seek ways out of the predicament through prayers.

Donations are also being made to the victims of the fire incident who are now receiving medical attention at the Gombe specialist hospital by sympathisers including government functionaries and philanthropists.

News Focus

The increasing level of insecurity in the Niger Delta

Last Tuesday, tension heightened in the Niger Delta following a fresh attack on the Agip Oil Company in Rumueme, Port Harcourt where about eight people were shot dead including seven mobile policemen. The attackers who came in Motor boats were said to have carted away about N4 million in cash from the cash centres in the company's premises, a situation which has made the development look more like an armed robbery attack than the usual Niger Delta attacks on Oil companies.

The Commissioner of police in Rivers state, Mr Samuel Adetuyi, who has ordered the beefing of security in various parts of the city said the armed robbers escaped before the police could reinforce. According to him the attackers escaped through the waterfront from where they had come in the first place. Efforts by members of the Nigerian navy to give the men a chase was to no avail as they were not able to get to them. The robbers who are in some quarters suspected to be militiamen were dressed in army uniforms and were about twenty in number all armed with sophisticated weapons.

The General Manager, public affairs of the Agip oil company, Mr Akin Aruwajoye described the incident as the worst since the inception of the company in the area adding that the company was taken unawares. The company's flow station in Okoroma in Bayelsa state was also said to have been involved in a brawl with local youths who were protesting the non payment of compensation to the villagers. During the fracas the security men who did not want to be taken unawares by the youth shot and killed one of the protesters even before they got the scene.

Reports say the youth are planning to retaliate while security is being beefed up in various parts of the state especially around oil installations.

The faith of four adopted or kidnapped oil worker who are all foreigners is still hanging in the balance. The Movement for the emancipation of the Niger Delta who kidnapped the men are asking for the release of Alhaji Asari Dokubor and The former Governor of Bayelsa state, Chief Diepreye Alamieyeseigha and a ransom for the release of the foreigners. One of them,

From Ikenna Emeka Okpani, Bureau Chief, Port Harcourt

an American is said to be very sick and the boys have threatened that they will have no choice but to kill all of them if the American gives up the ghost.

The foreigners were adopted from a Shell offshore facility on the 11th of January and thought to have been attacked by pirates before the kidnappers came out with a statement claiming responsibility. The militants have closed down subsequently over three other flow stations since the beginning of the new onslaught while over twenty soldiers are said to have met their waterloo in the hands of the militants. Most oil companies have begun a phased withdrawal of their workers from affected areas even as security is being beefed by the Joint security taskforce in the Niger Delta.

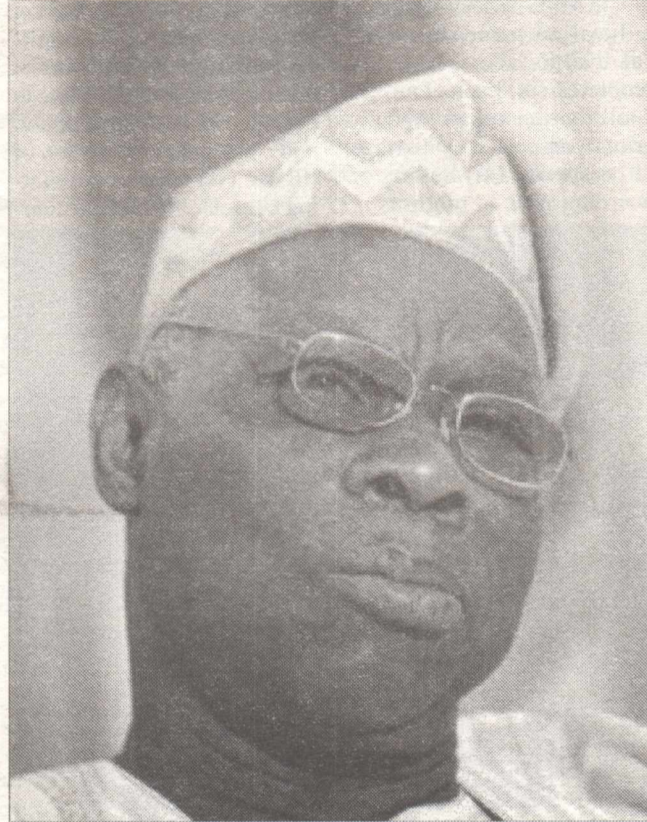
The Shell oil development company is the most hit so far in the current attacks even though it has vowed that it would not leave the Niger Delta. Shell is the biggest oil company in the country and accounts for the largest chunk of oil export in the country.

But it has had a history of disagreements with oil producing communities in various parts of the Niger delta the biggest being the disagreement between it and the Ogoni people that culminated in the execution of Ken Saro Wiwa and others by the then government of General Sani Abacha. Since then the company is yet to reconcile with the community even as the federal government has set up a Mathew Kuka led reconciliation committee. Recently the people of Ogoni held a stakeholders forum to take a decision on how to approach the issues involved before the reconciliation committee.

In the third week of December last year, militia men attacked a major oil pipeline belonging to Shell at the Okwan Asan community in the Andoni local government area of Rivers state. An eyewitness account said the suspected militiamen arrived the area mostly inhabited by fishermen and chased them away before proceeding to blow up the pipeline with a dynamite. The witness said no fewer than eight people lost their lives in the attack even as the inhabitants lost all their property to the fire and that followed during the night. The witness said that the militants had to

close down supply to the pipeline to reduce the spillage.

The problems of Shell and oil producing communities have been a



President Olusegun Obasanjo

lingering one in the Niger delta. A long list of civil society groups has had cause to fight the company at various times. These include Agape is a Birth Right, Port Harcourt, Rivers State; Center for Participatory Rural & Urban Development (CEPRUD), Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Chikoko Movement, Ye'na'goa, Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), South Zone, Benin City, Concerned Youths of Ogbogolo, Egboama-Ogbogolo, Rivers State, Eket Rights Initiative (ERI), Akwa Ibom State and Elimotu Movement, Otusega, Bayelsa State.

Others are: jaw Council for Human Rights (ICHR), Port Harcourt

Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), Port Harcourt, ILARPE - Erema Town, Ahoada Rivers State, International Center for Development & Environmental Planning (ICDEP), Port Harcourt, Institute of Labor and Labor & People Empowerment, Port Harcourt, MAAP/MOPEP, Ahoada, Rivers State, Movement for Reparation to Ogbia, Bayelsa State, Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Port Harcourt, Niger Delta Project for Environment, Human Rights and Development, Nchia-Elleme Rivers State, and Niger Delta Women for Justice (NDWJ), Port Harcourt.

Others include, Nigerian Institute of Human Rights (NIHR), Port Harcourt, Okpofon and Efigboin Rivers State, Olu Niger Delta

Port Harcourt, Pan African Youth Movement (PAYM), Port Harcourt, Persons with Disability Network, Benin City' Public Interest Lawyers League (PILL), Port Harcourt,

impooverished as a result of the devastation of their natural environment and the destruction of community sources of livelihood by Shell and other transnational oil companies operating in the Niger Delta area. ERA stated that "We understand that Shell has, in recent years, invested heavily in an image laundering campaign in Europe and North America. However, the media campaigns have not resulted in improvement in practice of the company in the Niger Delta of Nigeria".

"Shell and her contractors continue to disregard even basic environmental precautions in the forests, wetlands and community farmlands as oil spills are burnt openly and waste products are disposed of indiscriminately."

"Shell is very tardy in investing in the elimination of the destructive flaring of associated gas. And the company continues to be protected by soldiers in some" The group said.

They further urged the finance cooperation not to relate with the company in any way as far as the Niger delta was concerned.

Shell in its reaction to the development had called for caution and stated that it would continue to operate in the Niger delta even as it had shut four of its flow stations. Oil exports from Nigeria has since fallen due to the development. A statement from Shell on the hostages read as follows "We remain deeply concerned about the hostage situation that resulted from the abduction of four Shell contractors from SPDC's EA field operations.

"We recognize the immense strains placed upon the hostages, their families and contractor companies under the present circumstances. We continue to cooperate with the Nigerian authorities and the hostages' employers and offer every assistance to secure the safe release of the hostages.

"The health and safety of hostages remains our top priority. We are taking all necessary measures to ensure the safety and security of staff, contractors and the people in the communities where we operate. We continue to keep the deployment of staff in the affected areas in the western Niger Delta under review. We will return to areas evacuated when normality is restored.

"Regrettably we can now confirm that the body of another civilian victim,

missing since the attack on the Benisede flowstation, has been found. He was a Shell catering contractor. Our deepest sympathies go his family and friends.

"Ten of the injured people who are receiving medical treatment in Warri are in improved condition. The production status remains unchanged. The four flowstations and EA production remain shut, with a total production loss of some 221,000 barrels per day. The force majeure declared for Forcados and EA offtakes is still in place."

The federal government has on its part set up a committee made up of governors in the region to resolve the crisis. Dr Jonathan Goodluck is the chairman of that committee and is said to be making frantic efforts to secure the release of the hostages. The Governor of Rivers sate on his part has assured the British government that his government would help in the release of the hostages.

A powerful delegation from the federal government led by the Minister of State for Petroleum, Dr Edmund Daukoro at the weekend visited various parts of the Niger delta and held discussions with stakeholders on the way forward to curb the activities of youths. Dr Daukoro who said the mission of the group was to deepen the peace process in the Niger Delta added that the group was also presenting a blue print it had developed on what the federal government intended to do in the Niger Delta.

He said although the group was made up of representative of the security agencies, its strategy was to approach the issue of security indirectly by getting the youths productively engaged in activities that have direct multiplier effects on the people thereby bringing peace and security in an indirect sort of way.

He disclosed that the stakeholders in the Niger delta peace process that included NDDC, Agip, Shell, Chevron and the major Niger Delta states of Akwa Ibom, Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta and Edo have been meeting regularly on the issue, saying that the meetings have been very successful and rewarding.

How far these moves can go stands to be seen in the emerging scenario more so against the rising political heat in the country and demands for a south south president come next year.

News

'2005 Hajj operations shoddy'

Excerpts of House C'ttee on Foreign Affairs report on the 2005 Hajj exercise...

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The House of Representatives at its plenary session of Tuesday 25th January 2005 resolved that the standing Committee on Foreign Affairs should investigate the 2005, Hajj operations as a result of unprecedented problems that were encountered in the course of the entire operations, which among other things, resulted in the failure to airlift a contingent of pilgrims from Borno State and Rivers State.

1.2 Pursuant to the resolution, the Committee mandated the sub-committee on Muslim Pilgrimage to undertake public hearings in all the Zonal Offices of the Directorate of Pilgrims Affairs. This was advertised in national newspapers inviting the public and stakeholders to appear and make submissions on the problems encountered in the Hajj 2005 operations. In addition, the Committee engaged the services of Legal and Financial Consultants to assist the sub-committee in carrying out the investigations.

1.3 The sub-committee on Muslim pilgrimage held hearings at (1) Sokoto, (2) Katsina, (3) Kano, (4) Maiduguri, (5) Minna, (6) Ilorin, (7) Port Harcourt, (8) Yola, (9) Kaduna, (10) Lagos, and (ii) Gwagwalada. There was a public sitting at the FCT Pilgrims Welfare Board to receive the submissions from the stakeholders' resident in the Federal Capital Territory. The sub-committee further traveled to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and undertook enquiries at the Nigerian Hajj mission and Nigerian Consulate in Jeddah on the aspects of the operations that were carried out in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. After this field exercise, the sub-committee had special sittings in which it engaged the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Directorate of Pilgrims Affairs (Muslims) on the conduct of the 2005 Hajj operations. The investigatory processes were capped by a public hearing involving the officials and stakeholders that considered the preliminary findings of the investigations.

2.0 Submission to the hearing in the zonal offices.

2.1 At the Zonal Offices, the sub-committee on Muslim pilgrimage received oral and written submissions from officials of pilgrims' welfare boards, officials of government from Ministries and parastatals as well as bankers, stakeholders and individuals who have varying experiences on Hajj operations in Nigeria.

2.2 The submissions to the Zonal hearings were as follows:

1. Lagos: (i) Politicisation of the system of management of the Hajj operations, (ii) Ad-hoc nature of the institutional organ for carrying the man-

agement of the Hajj operations, (iii) The personnel appointed to carry out the management were inexperienced, (iv) There was lack of proper screening of officials and pilgrims, (v) Ignorance and lack of understanding the processes of performing the Hajj on the part of intending pilgrims, (vi) Overall lack of planning, research and development, and performance review of the entire Hajj operations, (vii) Illegal immigrants who use Nigerian passports as well as forging of Nigerian passports.

(viii) Lack of credible airlines that will airlift pilgrims, (iv) Non-compliance by airlines to pay landing and other service charges, (x) Pilgrims overstay in Hajj camps leading to overstaying of airport facilities, (xi) Lack of adequate funding of the Zonal office.

II. Port Harcourt: (i) Late commencement of preparations for the Hajj operations. (ii) Lack of a permanent body for Hajj operations. (iii) Lack of continuity in the management of Hajj operations as obtains in Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia. (iv) Late commencement of airlifting of pilgrims. (v) Delay of acquisition of accommodation in Saudi Arabia. (vi) Ignorance of the tenets of Hajj on the part of pilgrims. (vii) Late application for international passport. (viii) Late release of Basic Travelling Allowance. (ix) Airlines engaged to airlift pilgrims are mostly unreliable and inexperienced. (x) Late submissions of visa application to Saudi Embassy. (xi) Insufficient flights to airlift intending pilgrims. (xii) Lack of proper arrangements for departure. (xiii) Lack of proper arrangements for return of pilgrims. (xiv) Inadequate arrangement for transportation of pilgrims' luggage. (xv) Lack of implementation of recommendations of Amirul Hajj Committee. (xvi) Inadequate funding of the Zonal Office.

III. Kano: (i) Late commencement of preparations. (ii) Lack of permanent structure. (iii) Lack of continuity in the management of Hajj operations. (iv) Appointment of Hajj officials who are mostly inexperienced. (v) Late commencement of airlift of pilgrims. (vi) Lack of proper screening of pilgrims. (vii) Airlines engaged to airlift pilgrims are mostly unreliable and inexperienced. (viii) Late submission of passports to Saudi Embassy for visa. (ix) Insufficiency of flights for airlifting pilgrims. (x) Lack of arrangements for conveying pilgrims' luggage. (xi) Lack of adequate flow of information between the DPA, Zonal Offices and State Pilgrims Welfare Offices. (xii) Lack of proper security to curtail the menace of international pilgrims.

IV. Yola: Late preparations, (ii) Late release of visa and travelling allowance, (iii) Late announcement of Hajj fares.

(iv) Lack of continuity in the membership of the National Committee on Hajj. (v) Lack of proper arrangements and preparations. (vi) Insufficient flights to airlift pilgrims. (vii) Problem of tent accommodation in Mina and Arafat. (viii) Official seats given by political leaders also constitute problems. (ix) Lack of proper coordination regarding pilgrims' passports. (x) Shortage of passports. (xi) Selling of boarding pass to pilgrims at



2005 Amirul Hajj, Ibrahim Mantu

N2,000 each. (xii) Pilgrims were asked to report at airports or camps when flights have not been scheduled and therefore making pilgrims to overstay at airport/camps. (xiii) Hajj officials do not have the fear of Allah and some of them are very selfish. (xiv) Indiscipline of especially government sponsored members. (xv) Increase in the Hajj fares every year.

V. Maiduguri: (i) Instead of a 747 aircraft as Saudi Arabian regulation demands, the carriers provided smaller aircrafts that airlifted few pilgrims and left 450 intending pilgrims behind. (ii) Delay by pilgrims in coming to the airport in good time. (iii) lack of permanent body to coordinate Hajj matters. (iv) Late announcement of Hajj fares. Time was not enough to allow intending pilgrims source money to pay the fare. (v) Late arrangements for producing pilgrims bags. (vi) Late commencement of airlifting of pilgrims. (vii) Ignorance on the part of intending pilgrims as to what Hajj entails and the processes of travelling to the holy land to perform the Hajj. (viii) Lack of continuity or consistency of Hajj fares. (ix) Lack of selecting reliable and efficient air carriers. (x) Lack of honest and competent staff to manage Hajj operations. (xi) Late airlifting of pilgrims. (xii) Improper handling of pilgrims' luggage. (xiii) Poor logistics on accommodation and transportation.

VI. Sokoto: (i) Selfish considerations in the appointment of air carriers. Competence was done away with

that was why some pilgrims were not able to perform Hajj 2005. (ii) Late release of basic travel allowance (BTA). (iii) High fares stopped many intending pilgrims from performing the Hajj. (iv) Deregulation, pegging of the Naira to the Dollar through market forces should not be applicable to Hajj. (v) Delay in airlift commencement. Failure to consider the harmattan period and consequent disruption of flights. (vi) Lack of appointing competent and God-fear-

ments/preparations. (iv) Lack of a permanent body for coordinating Hajj matters. (v) Lack of continuity of Hajj structures as obtains in Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia. (vi) Appointment of Hajj Officials (mostly inexperienced officials were appointed to handle Hajj affairs); (vii) Late commencement of air lifting of pilgrims. (viii) Ignorance of the exercise by most of the intending pilgrims. (ix) Delay in the acquisition of accommodation in Saudi Arabia. (x) Lack of proper screening of intending pilgrims. (xi) Late application for passports. (xii) Late release of basic travelling allowance. (xiii) The nature of the airlines contracted to airlift pilgrims, which are mostly unreliable and inexperienced. (xiv) Late submission of passports to Saudi Embassy for visa preparation. (xv) Insufficient flights to airlift intending pilgrims to the Holy land. (xvi) Lack of proper arrangements for departure. (xvii) Lack of proper arrangements for return of pilgrims. (xviii) Inadequate arrangements for conveying pilgrims' luggage. (xix) Refusal of government to consider and implement recommendations of the Amirul Hajj committee. (xx) Sanitation of the camp could not be said to be impressive with the un-cleared dry weeds all over. (xxi) There is no good human relations between SPWB officials and Pilgrims hence there is always a problem.

VIII Ilorin: (i) Failure to announce Hajj fares on time. (ii) Errors in selection of welfare officers. (iii) Lack of involvement of State Pilgrims Welfare Boards in the appointment/selection of air carriers. (iv) Late issuance of pilgrims passports. (v) Devolution of Hajj responsibilities to the States on maintaining Hajj camp, recruitment of medical coordinating team as well as casual workers places a heavy financial burden on the States. (vi) Luggage weighing centres are always congested. (vii) Purchase of foreign exchange by State Pilgrims Welfare Boards is always a tedious exercise. (viii) Menace of international pilgrims; those who go on pilgrimage through tour operators (Agents). (ix) Lack of a permanent body to handle Hajj operations. (x) Appointment of Agents in Saudi Arabia is not made in conjunction with the State Pilgrims Welfare Board. (xi) Delay in the release of grant for Hajj operations. (xii) inadequate transport facilities at pilgrims boards. (xiii) Lack of adequate medical facilities. (xiv) Lack of adequate orientation for intending pilgrims. (xv) Inadequate provision of air carriers. (xvi) Delay in issuing visa. (xvii) Lack of planning. (xviii) Lack permanent registration of pilgrims priority given to first timers in comparison to those that have already performed the pilgrimage.

IX. Kaduna: (i) Lack of clear and appropriate criteria

for the selection of air carriers. (ii) Lack of policy of monitoring and enforcement by NCH. (iii) Selection of air carriers by State Pilgrims Welfare Boards has opened up the process to other considerations other than professional competence. Most especially as state governments, use Hajj patronage to play to the political gallery. (iv) Lack of provision of back up arrangement by air carriers to cater for unforeseen eventualities.

X. Minna: (i) Lack of orientation for intending pilgrims. (ii) Stop the monopoly of a few airlines and allow proper competition in the bidding processes. (iii) Lack of planning in good time. (iv) Undue interference by some religious voluntary organisations. (v) Late issuance of visa on time. (vi) Lack of adequate and competent air carriers. (vii) Lack of enlightenment awareness in pilgrims. (viii) Lack of discipline in intending pilgrims.

Federal capital territory, Gwagwalada:

(i) Lack of screening of intending pilgrims which leads to issuance of passports to non-Nigerians.

(ii) Lack of submission of request for issuance of BTA on time to the CBN and the commercial banks.

(iii) Lack of enlightenment and awareness of the official processes of preparations to go on Hajj.

(iv) Lack of planning on the part of intending pilgrims and officials.

Visit to Hajj mission and Nigerian consulate in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

(i) Disengagement of the Hajj Mission, Consulate and Nigerian Embassy from the arrangements for accommodation in Makkah for Nigerian pilgrims. State Pilgrims Welfare Boards have taken over and assumed full responsibility for accommodation. This has resulted in obtaining sub-standard accommodation.

(ii) In Medina, a committee was appointed by the Nigerian Ambassador to handle accommodation arrangements.

(iii) There was a failure to provide feeding at Muna and Arafat. A committee was appointed to investigate and accordingly the contractors were asked to refund monies released for the feeding. This has been done.

(iv) Some aircrafts used for the 2005 pilgrimage had either technical or financial problems. Safety requirements were substandard as well as difficulties in making payments for fuelling, handling and other aircraft landing charges.

(v) Lack of continuity in planning, coordination and overall management of Hajj operations.

(vi) Perennial problem of excess luggage.

(vii) Lack of continuity in the payment of royalty in respect of Nigerian officials, which has created a backlog of debts payable to the Saudi authorities.

Idang Alibi on Thursday

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Opinion

Ambassador Obi Odu vs IBB Golf Club

Some three weeks ago, this paper reported a very minor incident which nevertheless has great significance. The story emanated from an incident which took place at the IBB Golf Club, Abuja. It involved six key characters: Mallam Nasir el-Rufai, the FCT Minister; Agnes Obi Odu, the

rebuke, seeing that their attempt to weep louder than the bereaved had failed miserably and rather than profusely apologise to Ambassador Odu for the unjustified injury done to his name, the management brought a new charge against him by accusing him of using abusive language in his letter protest-

agement of the IBB Golf Club.

First of all, the constitution of the club states unambiguously thus:

"The executive Committee shall suspend any member found guilty of misconduct." From information available to us, the executive committee did not meet before the indefinite suspension order was imposed on Odu. This is a clear violation of the club's constitution.

Thirdly, before the suspension, Odu was not even given a chance to say whether or not he supported his wife's opinion. Have the captain and secretary ever heard of the doctrine of "fair-hearing" in law? The little administrative law I read years ago tells me that before you can take any disciplinary step against anyone, you must give that person a chance to defend himself.

In fact, the most surprising thing about this whole unwholesome incident is that the principal actors involved in the suspension saga - the captain and secretary - are said to be lawyers; one of them a Senior Advocate of Nigeria to boot. What has that one been advocating all along that someone has seen it fit to crown him "senior advocate?" I guess he has been advocating nothing but injustice.

It is however not entirely surprising that the leading characters in this shameful incident are lawyers. For when the Book of Infamy is on Nigeria's bad governance these past forty years, the tribe of lawyers is going to feature prominently in it. For if you cast your mind back to the days of military dictatorship, lawyers were the ones who drafted all those draconian laws with ouster clauses to deny the citizens the right to seek redress in a court of law. They were also the people who enthusiastically went to court to defend patently unjust laws.

Until this incident, I used to think that a golf club is made up of largely honourable men and women. I used to think that it is a place where the rich and the idle congregate to take life easy, relax very well and fix deals. If, as I have sadly seen, it is a place where unreasonable lawyers who cannot even obey the rule which even they have made to guide their conduct reign supreme, then it is not a place I will not go to when I grow up soon and become an idle rich.

I commend Mallam Nasir el-Rufai for his very principled stance on this issue. I condemn the egoistic spirit in the heart of some members of the management committee of the IBB Golf Club which has made it impossible for them to quietly apologise for an error they have made.

"In fact, the most surprising thing about this whole unwholesome incident is that the principal actors involved in the suspension saga - the captain and secretary - are said to be lawyers; one of them a Senior Advocate of Nigeria to boot. What has that one been advocating all along that someone has seen it fit to crown him "senior advocate?" I guess he has been advocating nothing but injustice."

wife of Ambassador Obi Odu, Nigeria's former envoy to South Korea and Obi Odu himself on the one hand, and the Captain and Secretary of the IBB Golf Club on the other.

According to the story, after a round of games, Agnes Obi Odu and other members were engaged in some chit-chat with the minister. When someone in the group commended el-Rufai's efforts in making Abuja a more livable place, Mrs Odu chipped in that the minister should allow the milk of human kindness to bear on the demolition of illegal structures.

el-Rufai, who obviously has heard this kind of plea over a thousand and one times, accepted the comment in good faith. But the management of the club saw the comment in a different light. They felt it constituted some form of harassment of the minister. In the usual Nigerian eye-service mentality, the captain and secretary saw that innocent enough comment as an affront.

They immediately slammed an indefinite suspension on Obi Odu for the comments made by his wife. When el-Rufai heard of the action taken against the ambassador, he wrote to the management to revoke the suspension or else he would withdraw further patronage of the club.

Rather than feel embarrassed by the minister's loud

ing his unjust suspension. This smells like a plot to damn the former diplomat at all cost using all sorts of excuses. If one fails, invent another.

This is quite typical of our leaders. They are never ever humble enough to admit that they have erred and take appropriate action towards restitution. They often carry on arrogantly by saying that they are not only in authority, but that they also wield power. They must win every case against reason, against commonsense and against fairness and equity. What sort of justice is it that punishes a man for the alleged sin of his wife?

This rather ridiculous incident which ordinarily should not merit the attention of a serious-minded columnist is significant, because it is a perfect illustration of the culture of arbitrariness that has taken root in the governance of our affairs.

There is a tendency among those who are either appointed or elected to hold power in trust for us at whatever level to see that power is theirs to wield anyhow they want to. They proceed from this arrogant mindset to act with total disregard to the feelings of others and they do not bother about the status or image of anyone else.

It is this culture that explains the unjust deserts that Odu is getting from the man-

Gbenga Obasanjo vs Atiku: The salient questions

By Rabi'u Bako

It was "cow boy" Ronald Reagan, the late President of the United States of America who through exceptional witicism characterised the youth, (misguided youth?) more as a burden than just a positive bundle of energy and promise.

During the president's debate marking the peak of America's election campaigns, the then President Jimmy Carter wanted to play the "age" game to the disadvantage of his much older challenger, Reagan. A question was therefore specifically directed at Reagan to tell the electorate if the age gap would not jeopardise his electoral fortunes, since the workload of the office of the President of America is so demanding, thus making people less able to effectively deliver.

To the surprise of the audience, Reagan feigned anger and then mockingly retorted "Please, do not bring into this serious debate the question of youth inexperience." Indeed, the thunderous mocking laughter from the audience that followed was evidence enough that the wisdom of age had conquered the inexperience of youth. Jimmy Carter's main weapon of attack, young age, became his albatross. He lost the presidential debate and indeed lost the presidency to Reagan. Dr Olugbenga Olufemi Obasanjo, President Obasanjo's son, was recently in the eye of the storm when in an interview credited to him in the January 9, 2006, edition of *The News* magazine; he made unsavoury attacks on the nation's number two citizen, Vice President Atiku Abubakar and some other prominent Nigerians. Was it a question of youth and inexperience?

Firstly, Gbenga accused Atiku of regarding "the Presidency as his birthright" of which by implication he meant that the vice president regards himself as more qualified to occupy the Presidency than any other Nigerian. Secondly, he accused Atiku of being possessed by an "unquenchable greed" of which if he's allowed to become the next president, there would be no stopping Nigerian resources from becoming his. To further anchor his truth of the "greed" allegation, Dr Gbenga Obasanjo told Nigerians through the same interview that Atiku and his allies used the privatisation process to buy off Nigeria. He gave the example of the "Pentacope deal" and the "sale of AP" through which Atiku and company allegedly sold Nigeria to themselves. He then challenged Nigerians to check the Corporate Affairs Commission for the "true" owners of Pentacope.

Gbenga Obasanjo also insinuated that the vice president used his "boys," notably Nasir el-Rufai, the erstwhile Director General of the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) and now FCT minister to milk the nation dry through the privatisation body and el-Rufai's shadow men like Mr Jimi Lawal.

But the most telling declaration of this son of the president's was on the controversial third term bid of his father, General (Chief) Olusegun Obasanjo. He was emphatic that his father is not interested in any third term, but that prominent Nigerians, and in fact, Americans are the ones pushing him to it so as to stop Atiku Abubakar from his succession bid; which if achieved, would spell economic doom for the nation.

Malam Garba Shehu, a media assistant and spokesman to

Atiku Abubakar had in a press statement told the nation that the vice president will not dignify the ranting of a boy the age of his son with a response. More so that the "the young man" does not have a platform other than being the president's son. He indirectly labelled Gbenga as "rude" and "uncultured" to attack a functionary old enough to be his father. It is for the vice president's lack of response that we the political observers found it expedient to raise some fundamental questions on this unusual happening in the political terrain.

The Sun newspaper of January 12, 2006 reported on its page 4 that President Obasanjo was livid with anger against Gbenga on this interview, to the point of driving him out of his Otta farm house. It also confirmed that Gbenga sought refuge with the *obas* of his land, notably the *Awujale* of Ijebuland, Oba Sikiru Adetona, who advised the young man to go and refute the allegations as contained in the interview, which would be a prelude to reconciliation with his father.

The nation now knows that Gbenga through his lawyer, S.O. Ajayi and co., has refuted the contents of the interview, insisting that it was not a "formal interview" conducted but a "private discussion" that was embellished by the reporter Omoyele Sowore and published.

If indeed Gbenga knew that *The News* did not do justice to this "private discussion," why did he wait till the Oba urge him to refute the story; an action that came rather late? Why must he have waited for his father's anger before rushing to the lawyers to seek the magazine's apology through them when the damaging aspersions were directed at no less a person than a whole vice president?

Another curious thing is that in the interview, he lambasted the Nigerian press as being greedy, corrupt, "a hungry bunch" and without any honour. Yet he gave this reporter a lift in his car from Seme border to Lagos, and allowed himself to be involved in sensitive discussions of this magnitude with the same pressman. What good judgements do we then ascribe to Gbenga for him to have expected honour and fairness from a representative of a lot he himself condemned as dishonourable and unprofessional?

More importantly, however, Gbenga in his rebuttal has not challenged the substance of the interview but only the so-called "embellishments." Since it is a truism that there is no smoke without fire, Sowore could not have manufactured those words from a vacuum and then made an imaginary interview, and then perhaps mischievously ascribed it to Gbenga.

And if Gbenga said these damaging words, presumably in private, does it make it right for a young man of his age, occupying a sensitive position of being a president's son, to utter those words to a journalist? As Oscar Wilde, the famous British writer would say, "By their words you shall know them." And like the African writer, Ayi Kwei Armah would write, "Guarded words only come from a guided soul." If uttered words are reflections of bottled-up feelings, do we then conclude that what Gbenga said, though as a "private discussion," is a true reflection of

the beliefs of his inner mind on Atiku, el-Rufai, Jimi Lawal, the Nigerian press, etc? More worrying however is the assertion of Malam Garba Shehu when in the press statement he threw a challenge that "let the mask come off the face of the masquerade and we shall face each other." Who then is the "masquerade" using Gbenga as the "mask?" If President Obasanjo, Gbenga's father, is known to have open rift with Atiku, is Gbenga not unwittingly giving the nation a reason to suspect that the president is indeed the "masquerade" urging his son on?

In fairness to the president, he has responded through his spokeswoman, Mrs Remi Oyo, by dismissing his son's diatribe as "embarrassing, unfortunate, and regrettable" and "which do not reflect the views of Mr President and his government." But Atiku's spokesman is emphatic that the young man's only platform is being the president's son. And if as Oyo said, "the president does not bring any member of his family directly or indirectly into his political relationships," how did Gbenga get to know of all these restricted information?

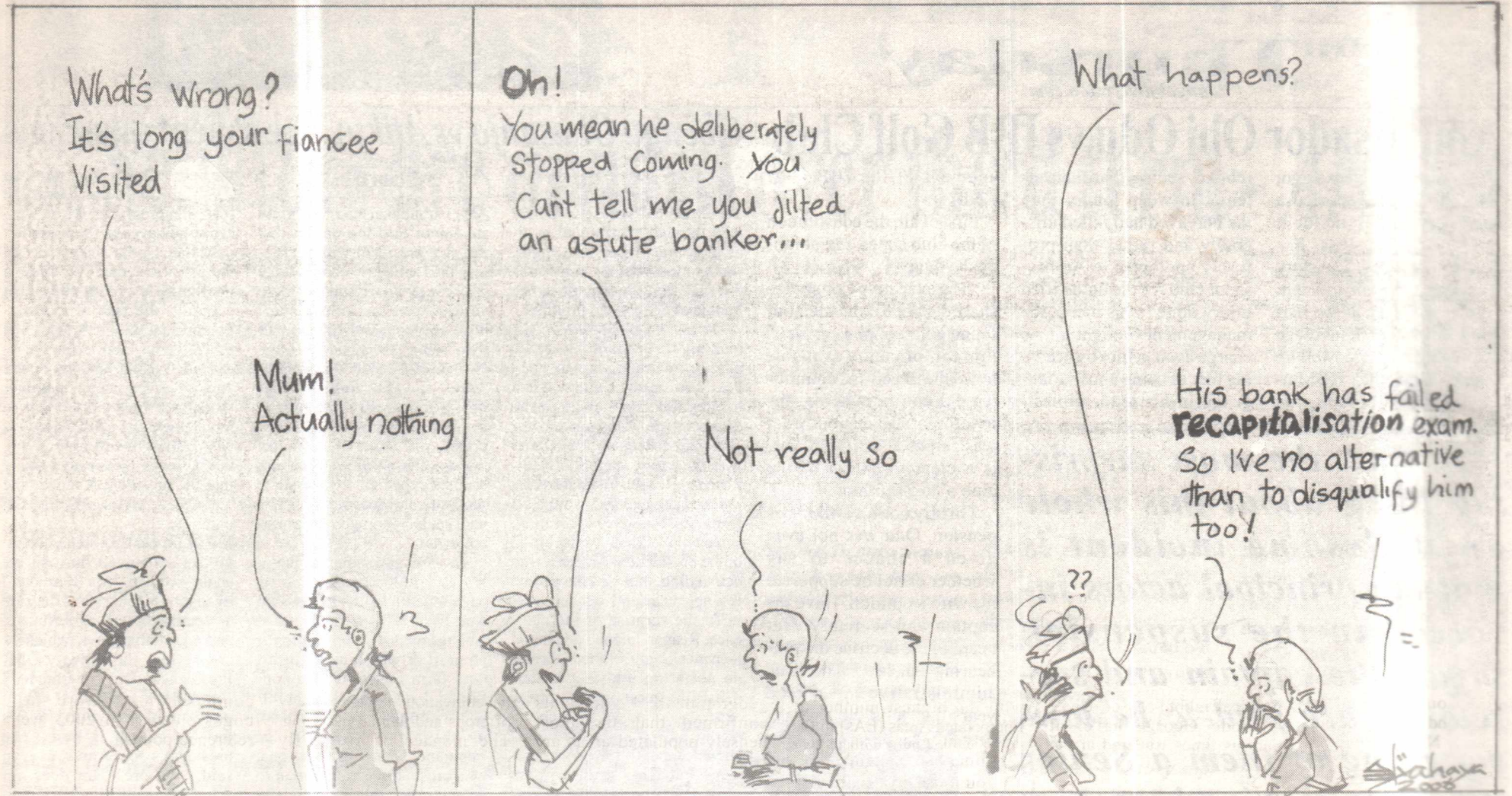
Ordinarily, one would welcome the terse statement from Mrs Oyo as a reflection of the president's bitter heart on this interview; but bitter on what? Gbenga was definite that his father "is a man of integrity" who "has no intention to remain in office beyond 2007." When the third term issue gathered momentum, America, at least through what Gbenga called "scripted public statements," denounced it. The response was open, timely, and clear.

In Oyo's entire statement, however, there is nowhere that the Presidency even mentioned the third term issue, which to us is central to the whole debate. Is the president's anger against his son then not to do with Gbenga's repeated assertions in the interview that Obasanjo will not be back for a third term? Is the anger really against the "damaging" allegations on the vice president? If Oyo really wanted to douse the fire, why did she not zero her presidential response to specifics, rather than a generalisation that sympathised with no one in particular but only condemned the interviewee? It is of course highly unlikely that there will be any connivance of sorts between a distinguished father of the president's credentials and a "belligent" son of Gbenga's academic stature; for the son to speak the mind of the father and the father to hide behind public rebuttal.

Whatever is the true position of things, Gbenga's youthful exuberance in stirring the hornet's nest may not abet in so short a time, if the Presidency does not clear the third term controversy on time.

If Gbenga's intention was to use the media to enhance somebody's political chances or jeopardise another's, he should have saved himself the discomfort of a bitter controversy of elevating trivial issues to dramatic heights. God is the only Giver of power. After all, the examples of Chief Ernest Shonekan and that of the late Chief Moshood K. O. Abiola in getting or not getting power should suffice for any sober mind.

Alhaji Rabi'u Bako wrote in *From Now: A. Ahmadu Bello Way Kaduna*.



YOUR LETTERS

Politics of Iran's nuclear programme

George W. Bush, the president of the United States of America described Iran as one of the axis of evils along with six other countries in 2001 when it was discovered that Iran was undertaking a nuclear programme. But Iran is not the only developing country that is constructing nuclear programme; North Korea, India, Pakistan, among others, are undertaking similar nuclear programmes.

However, what makes Iran a special case is because of her non-submissive posture towards the USA. In the analysis of the USA, Iran is an Islamic Republic and therefore Iran could use nuclear weapons to promote terrorism. On January 17, 2006, the United Nations Security Council met and decided to sanction Iran over its nuclear programme. This is an "animal farm" syndrome in international politics. Although the court has the right to maintain internal peace, Iran equally has the right to develop any weapon for defence as a sovereign state.

Meanwhile, as Iran becomes the focus of international community on nuclear programme, Israel is secretly developing her own nuclear programme but it is a taboo to discuss Israel's nuclear weapon. This reminds us of George Orwell's phrase that "all animals are equal but some are more equal than others." Furthermore, the USA has been spending billions of dollars on research to build bombs that would penetrate underground bunkers. No country is given the monopoly to construct deadly weapons and thus every country has the right to protect itself by manufacturing any weapon.

The bias against Iran is too glaring. Pakistan before the September 11, 2001 terrorist

attack on the USA was under various sanctions by the Western world on the pretence of military take-over by General Musharaff and the nuclear programme. However, as Pakistan became supportive of USA's attack on Afghanistan on the excuse of looking for Osama bin Laden whom they suspected of being behind the attack of September 11, 2001, General Musharaff was forgiven and asked to organise referendum to give legitimacy to his regime. Since then, Pakistan has

benefited significantly from financial and other kinds of aids as compensation for her support in spite of its well-known nuclear programme.

On the contrary, Iran refused to support USA to remove Saddam Hussein from power despite the fact that Saddam Hussein fought war with Iran for eight years (1980-1988) and USA strongly supported Saddam throughout the war. Iran therefore has the right to undertake nuclear programme with uranium enrichment be-

cause the agreement on arms control is being breached constantly by the principal signatories.

The dynamics of international politics does not allow any superpower to reign externally and USA will not be an exception. Peripheries maltreated may have opportunities to retaliate when a superpower country becomes weak. The USA and her allies should apply the principles of fair play, justice and equity in international politics. The policy of "iron bending"

could not work in the long run.

The lesson is that if there should be peace in the world, the Western world must show fairness in the treatment of friends and foes. The so-called terrorism by Islamic fundamentalists is as a result of injustice. No human being derives pleasure in killing others without any justifiable reason, rightly or wrongly.

Finally, with her nuclear programme, whether it is for electricity, nuclear weapons

or water supply, the Iran issue should be equally treated gradually like that of North Korea's unless there is hidden hatred or motive.

If Iran must give up her nuclear programme, similar pressure must be mounted on Israel to abandon her secret nuclear weapons. There should be no discrimination, but balanced equation in international politics.

Abdullahi Mohammed Yamma, Editorial Board member, Media Trust Limited, Abuja.

Councillor Bala deserves commendation

Please, permit me a space in your widely read newspaper to express my view on the achievements so far made by Honourable Bala Faruk, Councillor for the Umaru Majigi 'B' ward in Bida, Niger State.

This is to let Nupe-speaking people know that the legacy left by Alhaji Faruk, the then Tafidan Nupe was picked up by his son, Bala. He lives an exemplary life which the rest of the elected members should emulate.

Indeed, he has honesty, fairness, equity, justice, peace, accountability and good governance as his watchwords.

Every indigene of Umaru Majigi 'B' ward now has a sense of belonging as the councillor embarked on the promotion of ethno-religious tolerance, socio-economic development and people's empowerment in the following areas:

On education - he provides free educational materials in his ward for school children. He also donated furniture to some schools in addition to extra-mural lessons which he initiated for students. This is aimed at boosting their morale educationally.

On healthcare delivery system, Honourable Bala Faruk has always been assisting his people by paying the hospital bills of many of them.

Similarly, in the area of economic development, he has set up an economic think-tank for rapid economic development and wealth generation drive. He also formed women cooperative societies for the complete poverty eradication in his ward.

Indeed, the councillor has been mobilising the people to embark on self-help, especially

the reconstruction of some classrooms in Abubakar Anike Model Primary School and the effort is still on.

From his intimidating records, it is obvious that he needs to be elected for the second term as councillor or chairman to represent Bida town, so that his dream of giving soft loans to mass transit opera-

Chris Ngige and Anambra 2007 election

This presentation is not intended to be a marketing strategy to sell Chief (Dr) Chris Nwabueze Ngige to the good people of Anambra State as he has not declared his intention to run in 2007. But the reality on ground indicates that while others, both pretenders and contenders, may be trying to build bridges of understanding and association among the people of the state, Dr Chris Ngige stands out as the bridge itself, having cemented and networked a strong and purposeful relationship among the people of the state through his large-heartedness.

His vision for the state is driven by the motto - 'one state, one people, and one destiny.' And this underscores his age-long held prin-

ciple that guides his relationship with the low and mighty in the state. Dr Chris Ngige is a very successful man whose success flows not from his material possession, but from the many lives he has touched with his love and kindness and his invaluable contributions to the development of Nigeria in general and Anambra State in particular.

It is the expectation of this writer that this write-up will be a useful resource material to aid the reader in making positive and informed choice when the chips are down in 2007.

Dr Ngige is a honest, simple and a distinguished administrator. Four golden virtues capture his rise in service. These include hard work, commitment, humility, and abiding faith in God.

tions and commercial transportation for people will be realised. It is on record that Honourable Bala Faruk is a highly accomplished politician and a great philanthropist.

I therefore strongly advise youths and masses to stand firmly by this gentleman and bring him back to serve through their votes in 2007

These virtues were recognised early in his career and harnessed to enhance his best potentials, which were deeply appreciated everywhere he had worked. His services were at times needed by different ministries at the same time when he was with the Federal Ministry of Health.

Despite the high position Chris Ngige has attained in life, he remains a man of unbelievable simplicity, humility and civility. Whoever comes close to him is in for a shock from receiving huge doses of these rare qualities from a man of such high social standing.

He's a man of principle who takes every word he says seriously - humble, accessible and a person ready to listen to all. His ability to imitate,

election in Niger State.

This is hugely because Honourable Bala Faruk's love for his people transcends every other consideration. He is the hope for the people of Umaru Majigi 'B' and the entire people of Bida town.

Mohammed Ibn Wachiko (Nmayete), SW 324, Bida, Niger State.

plan and execute projects that will better the lot of the people is not in contention.

Dr Ngige came to appreciate early in life what it means to lack the basic necessities of life, an experience that underpins his cardinal principle in reaching out to people and bringing succour and comfort to the doorsteps of as many communities as possible. Countless number of individuals, communities, organisations and churches have benefited from his generosity.

Finally, I am advising the good people of Anambra State to persuade this gentleman to run for second term in 2007 so that he can continue to deliver democratic dividends to the state.

Tochukwu Okeke, No. 7, Oranye Street, Onitsha.

Opinion

Census 2006: Has North been rigged out already?

By Ali M. Ali

They say democracy is a game of numbers; the bigger the number, the brighter the chances of the gladiators at the polls. Since representative democracy is actually the tyranny of numbers, the man with numerical superiority is the one who carries the day. Someone actually defined democracy as the tyranny of the majority. Numbers and democracy are inextricably tied together. This is also true of demography and revenue allocation. The region or state with greater numerical figure and demographic details is the one that gets the bigger pie from the federation account.

In developed democracies and advanced economies, demographic figures are not just for winning elections; they are also for strategic social and economic plans. But in the Third World and especially post-colonial Africa, population figures have remained contentious and deeply political.

In Nigeria, the politics of an acceptable census figure has seen the South, limited by geography and culture, kicking against the North's superior numerical strength.

By accident of geography and deliberate cultural acts, the North's superior numerical strength has remained unassailable. Since 1911 when census was first conducted to 1991 when census was last conducted, the North has suffered reversal for the crudest political reasons. Northern 'bloated' population is about to receive the unkindest cut from those currently working to defile the constitution. The campaign to depopulate the North began a long time ago when it became apparent that power would have to return to the North by 2007. In the build-up to the 2003 presidential election, a jittery South, fearful of political defeat by the North,

began to fiddle with census figures.

Gradually, the campaign to 'kill' Northerners in the impending census assumed arrant visibility. It is doubtful if the North will have a fair deal in the forthcoming national headcount. It is now certain that Census 2006 has already been rigged in favour of the South. Southern elite kick-started the campaign to 'depopulate' the North. They are likely to be assisted by the agencies of the state including the National Population Commission (NPC), the statutory body saddled with the task of counting all Nigerians.

Critics of higher population in the North have advanced various reasons for that. The reasons range from the sublime to the ridiculous and the outright bizarre. The likes of Yoruba irredentist, Abraham Adesanya, Igbo intellectual, Chief Emeke Anyaoku and political rabble-rouser, Chief Olabode George have, at various times, sneered at the idea of more people resident in the North than in the South.

No Nigerian leader has demonstrated a healthy disregard for the constitution and a healthier contempt for the citizens than Obasanjo. We thought that the ballot box would ease him out and replace him with a competent leader. We, the ordinary Nigerians, thought wrongly. Kano whose population is less than half the population of Lagos has 44 local governments, while Lagos has 20. If you base revenue allocation on local government, Kano will get more than Lagos...

For the record, Kano has a bigger landmass. In fact, she is almost three times the size of Lagos. It is, therefore, not

surprising if Kano had twice the number of local governments. Kano has a sheer landmass of 20,760 square kilometres to Lagos' slightly above 8,000 square kilometres.

At the December 19, 2005 Southern governors summit in Enugu, Cmdr Olabode George who doubles as the deputy chair of the PDP, South-West more or less thundered that "all over the world, more people populate the South, but in Nigeria it is not so. The coming census will address that..."

Add all these to the National Population Commission's recently released number of teams to the states for the impending census exercise.

The temptation to conclude that the North has been rigged out before the Census 2006 was even conducted is very strong.

The NPC is sending 22,000 teams to Kano, the largest state with the highest number of Enumerated Areas (EAs) in the polity, while Lagos with a lower figure is hosting over 25,000 teams for the same exercise. It is instructive to note that Kano has 36,000 EAs while Lagos has 26,000. In the wisdom of the NPC, Kano is better served by over 3,000 less number of teams than Lagos!!

Olabode George and company cite geography as the reason why the North should be sparsely populated. According to the ex-Naval chief, the 'arid' and, therefore, barren North makes it highly improbable, impossible actually, for the region to harbour more people than the South. Nothing can be further from the truth.

I don't know where George received his knowledge of geography; it certainly can't be from regular books on

geography authored by dispassionate minds like Clark (1975) who profoundly debunked the unscientific theories propounded by George *et al.* But then, the PDP leader has a rancid reputation for cooking up figures. Remember how he, along with his band of foot soldiers, routed the AD in the South-West in the 2003 election by means that were hardly straight.

George's brief was to deliver the zone at all costs to the rampaging PDP. Until then, the South-West had been a recurring source of political embarrassment to the Commander-in-Chief. No elected president in the past had worn Obasanjo's badge of total rejection by his own people. George delivered the South-West with clinical precision. He combined his PDP leadership with the chairmanship of the Board of NPA.

All historical and geographical accounts confirmed that the most densely-populated areas are the savannah zones, which in Nigeria, is the North.

The renowned geographer Clark (1975:230) debunks George's argument that 'the forest, industrial and urban South' should be more populous than "desert, agricultural rural North."

According to Clark, "the most densely-populated climate zones tend to be those of the savannah (as found in Northern Nigeria) and the Mediterranean climates where there is a marked division into rainy and dry seasons. Except in certain areas where powerful cultures have evolved, most forests have been associated with low population density, not only because of the thickness of vegetation and the difficulties

of clearing, but also of diminution of soil fertility after clearance and high incidence of diseases, as well as limitations of human technology to tackle such environment."

It is discernible, therefore, that tropical rain forest regions are hostile to human growth and habitation.

Indeed, Beaujeu-Garnier (1978), another population geographer, corroborated this assertion. He describes the tropical rain forest as "impenetrable, indestructible and hostile in every way to human life. The soil can only support mere and infrequent harvests. Man is a marginal being, menaced and infested."

Going by these incontrovertible facts, therefore, it is understandable why the South is sparsely populated. First, its difficult terrain makes human habitation a difficult experience. Secondly, it has not been conducive for the cultivation of a wide variety of crops and animal pasturing. The menace of Tsetse fly prevalent in the South makes animal farming an impossible task. The economic life of the people is centred on the cultivation of root and tree crops such as palm products, yams, cassava, kola nuts, cocoa, etc.

The North on the other hand is conducive for large-scale agriculture. Its vast plain land makes the cultivation of food and cash crops such as maize, beans and cotton possible. Animal husbandry is done with relative ease compared to the tropical rain forest in the South.

The notably varied geography between Northern and Southern Nigeria has encouraged economic specialisation among the

people. This specialisation has led to interaction and inter-dependencies through trade and commerce between the regions.

Ultimately, this has led to different patterns of population growth. The North, naturally, proved irresistible and friendlier to human existence.

Politically ancient empires and kingdoms had existed where population was dense. This explains why larger and centralised political systems had existed in the North as opposed to smaller and decentralised systems common in the South.

In contemporary Nigeria, two relatively recent nationwide exercises involving numbers, for example, had affirmed and confirmed the unassailable lead of the North in terms of population. The voter registration and National Identity card projects conducted just before the bogus election of 2003 are reference points.

But those intent on distorting history and geography don't care about these historical and geographical facts. Unless those trying to defile the constitution have a sudden change of heart, population, the main 'resource' of the North, will cease to be so. They are set to doctor the figures.

Unless something really dramatic happens, the March 2006 National Census and headcount has already been rigged in favour of the South. Olabode George and the NPC have begun the process of doing just that.

Ali M. Ali wrote in from No. 248, 'Yar Akwa, Naihabwa Quarters, Kano, Nigeria.

The North and presidency in 2007

By Abdullahi Mohammed Yamma

Politics is about achieving interests and how the interests are achieved depend on many factors such as opportunity, negotiation, bargain power, population, and in the African context, survival of the fittest. Dialogue is very fundamental. The ability to convince others to one's side is a skill often applied in politics.

The North in the current political realities in Nigeria needs to dialogue. The dialogue is not to compromise the fundamental issue which is the presidency returning to the North in 2007. The dialogue is to attain political stability in the polity.

Nigeria is a plural society and it is difficult to achieve and maintain stable democratic government in plural societies. Although this is not an academic discourse, it is relevant here to refer to Aristotle's adage that a state aims at being as far as it can be, a society is composed of equals and peers." He says that social homogeneity and political consensus are regarded as prerequisites for or factors strongly conducive for stable democracy. The deep social divisions and political differences within plural societies are held responsible for instability and breakdown in democracies.

For the North to secure the presidency in 2007, it needs to unite. So far, so good.

People with different political orientations have been coming together to achieve this set goal. The most appreciable efforts in this direction are those of Generals Muhammadu Buhari and Ibrahim Babangida, two former heads of state. The meeting of the two past leaders recently with Governor Orji Uzor Kalu of Abia State with Chief Odumegwu Ojukwu in Umuahia is very commendable. Their genuineness in coming together was not only for the North but for the unity of Nigeria is worthy of emulation. If they continue to work together like this, history will judge them as good and many will regard them as heroes.

The political heavyweights of the South and North should parley more for lasting political understanding in order to have peace. Peace is instrumental for development and progress. The complaint of marginalisation by almost all parts of the country is because of lack of development. Otherwise, people would not bother much where the president comes from provided he can perform and deliver.

The era of sentimental politics is gradually phasing out. Poverty knows no boundary and since the essence of life is to live good and be happy, the emphasis

is moving to what we can get rather than who rules." The reason why all these agitations for rotation and zoning are prominent in the present situation of Nigerian politics is because we are still evolving politically, currently at the lower ladder. The reason is obvious - the long military rule. Politicians have just regained their political freedom, which they had not got for a long time now to express themselves. However, with time, all the emotional outbursts will give way to rationalism.

Young Nigerians seem to understand one another better than the old generation since they have better opportunity of interaction either by schooling or working together. For example, in those days, civil servants preferred state government jobs to those at the federal level because of fear of intimidation from the unknown, but the reverse is now the case. I am not saying that the older generations are Nigeria's political problems, but their early exposure at formative stage was largely limited to their local environments, which narrowed some of their perceptions. Hence, many of them, age still, sectional

champions. The only profession that has promoted nationalism right from the colonial era is the military. Even when the military was highly politicised because of their involvement in the governance of the country, they still maintained respect for seniority and love for their subordinates irrespective of where any of them came from.

This is one of the reasons that the retired military officers have now become formidable forces in Nigeria's political process. It is an extension of *esprit de corps* to political circle. While the civilian politicians will be calling even their seniors names anyhow in public, the military person (retired or serving) would keep mute.

The point being emphasised is that the present political realities should not be antagonistic struggle between the North and South; rather the leaders from the two parts of the country, whatever their party affiliations, should consider political stability and peace as paramount in Nigeria. Therefore, there must be political tolerance, which in this case is the power shift to the North. Military rule is an aberration and those who constantly argue that the North had ruled longer through military regimes is to regard illegality as constitutionalism. It is true that Nigeria's political history

will not be complete without mentioning them; the fact however remains that they came in through gambling and which is *coup d'etat*. That was why they were not accountable to anybody. The process of planning and execution of coups is to organise a few trusted military colleagues and launch an attack by surprise. Success depends on luck. In democracy, wide consultation is compulsory. The playing of "martial music" to usher in a new administration is not possible in democracy. One must campaign, bargain and perform. The retired military officers in politics should have now known that it is not business as usual.

Coming to the issue of third term syndrome; those proposing it are working on the theory that there will be political crisis in 2007 because the North and South may not agree to concede presidency to each other, hence there will be an opportunity to maintain the status quo. They are, therefore, at this preliminary stage gauging the public opinion on its acceptability or otherwise to enable them give it constitutional backing or back-out. The idea of continuity of reforms is secondary since nobody is indispensable. Leadership styles differ; but for any person to prove his leadership qualities, depend

on opportunity. Without having an opportunity, even the best leaders in history would not have been known; therefore, people should be given opportunities to serve through constant turnover of leaders by elections.

The task of maintaining democracy in Nigeria is the responsibility of all Nigerians. Democracy in Nigeria has not come cheap because of military rules. The current democracy should be sustained and promoted by all means by working out pragmatic political modalities that would solve lingering political problems for the benefit of all Nigerians.

The recommendation here is that the presidency should come to the North in 2007 and stay for eight years and then return to the South for another eight years and North again for another eight years. Thereafter, contest for the presidency should be open to all candidates from any part of the country since politicians should have become more mature politically by then. The current efforts should be maintained to stabilise this hard-earned political dispensation. With time and patience, most Nigeria's political problems will be solved. Let us endure and tolerate one another by making necessary sacrifices as circumstances may demand for the sake of Nigeria.

Abdullahi Mohammed Yamma wrote in from Abuja.

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Trust International

World Report

Iran welcomes Russian enrichment offer

Iran's top nuclear negotiator said Wednesday that Tehran views Moscow's offer to have Iran's uranium enriched in Russia as a positive development but no agreement has been reached between the countries.

Chief negotiator Ali Larijani also reiterated Iran's threat to renew enrichment activities if it is referred to the UN Security Council.

Moscow has proposed having Iran's uranium enriched in Russia, then returned to Iran for use in the country's reactors a compromise that could provide more oversight and ease tensions with the United States and European Union over Iran's nuclear program.

Haggling has continued over the specifics of the proposal, including Tehran's proposal to have China involved in the Russian enrichment process.

After talks with Russian Security Council chief Igor Ivanov, which included discussion of the plan, Larijani told a news conference: "Our view of this offer is positive, and we are trying to bring the positions of the sides closer."

"This plan can be perfected in the future, during further talks that will be held in February," he said.

Larijani suggested it would take some time to work out details of Russia's proposal. Some critics allege the Iranians are using the proposal to

stall for time as Western diplomatic pressure on Tehran mounts over its alleged nuclear weapons program.

On Tuesday, Larijani and Ivanov said in a joint statement that Tehran's nuclear standoff must be resolved by diplomatic efforts in the U.N. atomic watchdog agency.

The statement reflected Russia's efforts to delay Iran's referral to the U.N. Security Council and Moscow's opposition to international sanctions against Tehran.

"Both sides expressed their desire to solve the issue in a diplomatic way within the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency," Russia's Security Council said after the two met.

Iran has warned that IAEA referral to the UN Security Council over its nuclear ambitions would lead it to move forward with a full-scale uranium enrichment program, a possible precursor to making atomic weapons.

High-level diplomacy has intensified with little more than a week to go until the Feb. 2 meeting of the IAEA's 35-nation board.

Prior to that session, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will attend an international conference in London on Jan. 31 focusing on Afghanistan, but department spokesman Sean McCormack said Rice is expected to use the meeting to have discussions with key nations on Iran's

nuclear program.

The New York Times reported that the foreign ministers of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council Britain, France, Russia and China, in addition to the United States as well as Germany would attend the meeting.

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw urged Tehran on Tuesday to seriously consider Russia's offer to enrich its uranium in an effort to end the standoff.

Straw also said in an interview with The Associated Press that he hoped the IAEA would refer the matter to the Security Council.

The West fears Iran wants to develop a nuclear bomb but

Tehran says its intentions are peaceful and that it wants only civilian nuclear energy.

Iran removed IAEA seals from equipment Jan. 10, ending a 15-month moratorium, and announced it would restart experiments including what it described as small-scale enrichment. The move led negotiators Germany, Britain and France to call for the Feb. 2 emergency board session.

European countries believe they have enough votes to haul Iran before the Security Council but they want broad support including Russia, China and key developing nations.

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Trust International

Odd World

Alleged motel burglar leaves room number

A man on a weekend getaway was arrested after allegedly burglarizing the Fort Bragg motel where he was staying, then

leaving a note indicating where to find him.

Enrique Rodriguez Vasquez, 37, was arrested on suspicion of burglary and possession of methamphetamine after police confronted him at the Best Western motel room he'd described in the note.

Police found a computer hard drive, television satellite device and \$200 reported missing from the motel, said Fort Bragg Police Lt. Floyd Higdon. The stolen equipment was valued at \$1,500.

Vasquez's poorly spelled note berated the motel manager for being absent from the office.

"There was no one here to attend us guest in rm427. You even left the office unattended. You could have been burglarized ... Your lucky I didn't steal," the note said in part.

Vasquez said his companion, Dana Lynn Jensen, 41, was unaware of the theft until afterward. She did however, admit owning half the methamphetamine and the stolen cash was in her suitcase, authorities said.

She was arrested on suspicion of possession of stolen property and possession of a controlled substance.



A Malaysian woman surfing the Internet.

Tokyo man says 'spell' won him harem of 10 wives

A middle-aged Tokyo man found to be living with 10 younger women said he attracted them by reciting an incantation that came to him in a dream.

The 57-year-old man's unusual living arrangements came to light when another woman complained to police that he had threatened her after she refused to join his harem, Kyodo news agency said on Wednesday.

"I had a dream that told me I would become attractive to women if I recited a particular incantation," it quoted the man as saying.

A rapid series of weddings and divorces left the man with a large group of ex-wives, mostly in their 20s and 30s, who shared his surname and continued to live with him.

Frenchman fined for attacking urinal artwork

A Frenchman who attacked and damaged "Fountain," a urinal declared a work of art by Dada pioneer Marcel Duchamp, was ordered Tuesday to pay a fine of 214,000 euros (\$262,700).

A Paris court also gave Pierre Pinoncelli, 77, a three-month suspended sentence for taking a hammer to the absurdist artwork, the second time he has attacked it since 1993. The attack last month left the ceramic urinal slightly cracked.

Duchamp was a leader of the Dada movement, an avant garde "anti-art" school of the early 20th century that mocked conventional standards, and "Fountain," made in 1917 — is considered one of the most influential artworks of its kind.

"This was a wink at Dadaism," Pinoncelli told the court in his defense. "I wanted to pay homage to the Dada spirit."

Ohio man floored by gas bill for \$8,095

Lewis Miller joked with his son as he opened his gas bill that the amount likely would give him a heart attack. Then, he saw that The Energy Cooperative of Newark had billed him \$8,095 for the first nine days of service on his new account for his apartment.

"I thought I was just going to lay down and die," Miller said. He then had an anxious weekend because he received the bill Friday and couldn't get a hold of the gas company until Monday.

When Miller reached the Energy Cooperative, the error



Thousands of Chinese passengers wait to board a train in Nanjing January 23, 2006. Migrant workers in south China are wearing adult diapers on packed trains heading home for the Lunar New Year holiday because they have no access to a toilet, state media said Tuesday.

A really, really no-frills ride...

Migrant workers in south China are wearing adult diapers on packed trains heading home for the Lunar New Year holiday because they have no access to a toilet, state media said Tuesday.

About 120 million peasants from China's vast rural areas swarm the cities for work and all try to make it home for the holiday, filling all standing room on trains and making access to the toilet impossible during trips often lasting 24 hours or more.

"During the peak travel period last year, some passengers even became deranged on their journeys because of the conditions and jumped out of the carriages," the

China Daily said.

The Lunar New Year, which this year starts on January 29, is the biggest holiday in the Chinese-speaking world and family reunions prompt arguably the big-

gest movement of humanity on Earth.

Many supermarkets in southern Foshan had reported a 50 percent increase in sales of adult diapers for the train trips, the China Daily said in what some local comm-

entators called the "shame of the nation." It did not mention other cities.

Domestic media said railways in China had transported 3.8 million people alone Monday, an all-time high.

Left without a leg to stand on...

An Oregon man hurled both of his prosthetic legs at a state trooper, striking him with one, after his son was arrested on suspi-

cion of drunken driving, police said on Monday.

The incident on Friday began when the trooper stopped a sport utility vehicle

going the wrong way on a highway in southern Oregon.

The trooper at first detained only the driver, Adam Kackstetter, 26, after he became aggressive. But then his father, Joel Kackstetter, 53, a passenger in the vehicle, grew hostile, a police spokesman said.

The senior Kackstetter charged at the arresting officer several times before the trooper knocked him to the ground, according to the police report.

"Passenger removed a prosthetic leg and threw it at trooper, hitting trooper in chest. Passenger removed second leg, threw it at trooper but missed," the report said.

The father and son face multiple charges including assault on a public safety officer.

"It got to be quite a dangerous situation. I think the officer used a lot of discretion and restraint in the amount of force that he used in this situation," said Ed Caleb, Klamath County district attorney.

A lawyer for the Kackstetters could not be immediately reached for comment.



Prosthetic legs are seen on the sidelines of a gymnasium in an undated file photo....

Trust International

Middle East & Asia



Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen, shows his voting papers before casting his ballot for the Palestinian Parliamentary elections at a polling station at his headquarters in the West Bank town of Ramallah Wednesday Jan. 25, 2006.

Impressive turn out at Palestinian parliamentary poll

Amid tight security and a sea of green and yellow flags, Palestinians turned out in large numbers Wednesday for their first parliamentary election in a decade — a historic vote integrating Islamic militants into politics and determining the future of peacemaking with Israel.

Both the ruling Fatah Party and its challenger, the Islamic militant group Hamas, said they were confident of victory, while pollsters said the race was too close to call. Both parties said they would consider a coalition if no clear victor emerges.

Long lines formed across the West Bank and Gaza as Palestinians — given a real choice for the first time — were eager to cast their ballots

for the 132 parliament seats up for grabs. With three hours of voting left, 57.6 percent of 1.3 million eligible voters had cast ballots.

Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas said he is ready to resume peace talks with Israel, even if Hamas joins his government after the vote.

"We are ready to negotiate," Abbas told Israeli reporters in the West Bank city of Ramallah. "We are partners with the Israelis. They don't have the right to choose their partner. But if they are seeking a Palestinian partner, this partner exists."

Even it doesn't win outright, Hamas is widely expected to make a strong showing that would place the Islamists — responsible for dozens of suicide bombings against

Israel — squarely inside the Palestinian political system for the first time.

Hamas' success has alarmed Israel and the West, although Abbas has argued that bringing them into the system will tame them, enabling peace moves to go forward. In an apparent sign of pragmatism, Hamas has not carried out a suicide attacks since a ceasefire was declared a year ago.

But its top parliamentary candidate, Ismail Haniyeh, said Hamas had no intention of laying down its arms after the elections as Abbas has said he expects. And another prominent candidate, Mahmoud Zahar, said his group is "not going to change a single word" in its covenant calling for Israel's destruction.

The Bush administration lists Hamas as a terrorist organization and also refuses to deal directly with it. But State Department spokesman Sean McCormack on Tuesday refused to rule out negotiations with a Palestinian government that includes Hamas ministers.

Abbas, elected a year ago, will still head the Palestinian Authority regardless of Wednesday's results, but the voting will usher in a new Cabinet that could include Hamas members. Israel says it will not deal with Hamas until it disarms.

White House spokesman Scott McClellan called it "a historic and significant day for the Palestinian people."

The day had a festive feel — some party activists decorated their cars with red carnations, as if for a wedding — and few disruptions were reported, despite initial concern about possible violence. In the West Bank refugee camp of Balata, gunmen who had threatened to derail voting checked their automatic rifles at the door before casting their votes.

Emotions ran high in the disputed city of Jerusalem,

where right-wing Israeli lawmakers and extremists tried to force their way into a Palestinian polling station, with 75 policemen blocking their way. And in the southern Gaza town of Khan Younis, police fired into the air to push back a crowd of impatient voters jostling their way into a polling station.

Fatah, tainted by corruption after 12 years in power, was asking voters for another chance to pursue an elusive peace deal with Israel. Hamas has focused on clean government, and criticized Fatah's attempt at compromise with Israel as a sign of weakness.

Iran defends planned holocaust conference

Associated Iran on Tuesday defended its plan to organize a conference to examine what it terms the scientific evidence for the Holocaust.

At the United Nations, the Israeli ambassador said the conference plans were proof that Iran was run by an "extreme, fundamentalist, lunatic regime."

The planned conference, which has drawn condemnation from Western leaders, is yet another step in hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's public campaign against Israel.

"For over half a century, those who seek to prove the Holocaust have used every podium to defend their position. Now they should listen to others," Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman, Hamid Reza Asefi, was quoted as saying Tuesday by the official Islamic Republic News Agency.

Ahmadinejad already had called the Nazis' World War II slaughter of 6 million European Jews a "myth" and said the Jewish state should be "wiped off the map."

Dan Gillerman, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, said the planned conference was "proof of what a global threat Iran really is."

"I fear that the only reason Iran is showing so much interest in the Holocaust is because they may be preparing another Holocaust and it is up to the world and the United Nations to prevent that from happening," Gillerman told The Associated Press on

the sidelines of the opening of the "No Child's Play" exhibit at the UN commemorative Holocaust remembrance week.

IRNA quoted Asefi as saying: that "blind prejudice, either with political interest and aims have closed eyes of the Holocaust deniers to the realities of world, and they reject with any logic a scientific conference."

Iran's Foreign Ministry, which was expected to sponsor the conference, has yet to fix a date or place. It was clear who might attend.

"Iran is proving yet again what an extreme, fundamentalist, lunatic regime it is," Gillerman said. Ahmadinejad has been issuing the highly inflammatory comments about Israel and the Holocaust in connection with the country's dening confrontation with the West over its nuclear activities. The United States and its allies accuse Iran of king nuclear weapons. Tehran says the program is its right under the Nonproliferation Treaty and is designed electricity generation.

Russia's national security chief and Iran's top nuclear negotiator said Tuesday the nuclear standoff must be resolved by diplomatic effort in the UN atomic watchdog agency.

The Kremlin statement reflected Russia's effort to delay Iran's referral to the UN Security Council and Moscow's opposition to international sanctions against Tehran.

King Abdullah of Saudi visits India

Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah is holding talks with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as part of a landmark visit to India by the monarch.

King Abdullah is the first Saudi king to visit India in 51 years and will be the guest of

honour at the country's Republic Day celebrations on Thursday.

His visit is seen as very significant with both countries keen to build ties.

India's growing economy is fuelling greater energy needs and Saudi Arabia supplies a quarter of its oil.

"We would like to promote India's requirement of energy in the future," King Abdullah told Indian television ahead of the visit.

The king arrived in Indian capital, Delhi, late Tuesday and was personally received at the airport by Indian prime minister, a honour.

Correspondents say relations between Saudi Arabia and India have been tense in recent times with Delhi perceiving the kingdom as being close to long-time rival Pakistan.

Ahead of the visit, Saudi Arabia granted clemency to an Indian man who was convicted for attacking a Saudi diplomat in 2003.

Puthan Vettil Abdul Naushad was convicted for damaging the eye of a Saudi man during a scuffle.

The case received wide attention in the Indian media and the Indian government believed to have taken up the case with the Saudi government.

The Saudi king has offered to pay for the repair of one of the country's largest mosques, the Jama Masjid (Grand Mosque) in De



King Abdullah

Iran accuses UK of bombing link

Iran has accused the UK of co-operating with bombers who killed eight people in attacks in the restive south-western city of Ahwaz on Tuesday.

"Britain must respond to the doubts of Iranians concerning the events," said Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki.

Mr Mottaki said the masterminds of the bombing "or people of their mind" had been photographed with UK officials.

A UK Foreign Office spokesman in London has denied the accusation, saying Britain condemned terrorism.

"Any linkage between HMG (Her Majesty's Government) and these terrorist attacks is completely without foundation," said the official.

A little-known ethnic Arab separatist group has said it was behind the blasts inside a private bank and state env-

ironmental agency on Tuesday.

"Our heroes... in the military wing of The Arab Struggle Movement for the Liberation of Ahwaz attacked and destroyed the dens of the occupying enemy," a statement posted on a website said.

Speaking at a press conference in Tehran, Mr Mottaki claimed Britain supported such groups.

"It is clear for our officials and intelligence centres that the United Kingdom co-operated and had a hand in these bombings either in London or Basra," Mr Mottaki told a news conference in Tehran.

"We hope that British officials would have a clear response in that regard."

Mr Mottaki said the attackers had been helped by British army commanders in southern Iraq.

Trust International

Analysis

Berlin, Monrovia and Santiago: Challenge of states

'woman'ship

Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and Michelle Bachelet executive presidents of Liberia and Chile respectively are by far, not the first women to occupy the highest political offices across the world. Before them, the legendry Indra Ghandi, hard to crack Golda Meir, tough and hard Margret Thatcher, amiable and charming Megawatti Sourkunopoutri and the strong willed Chandrika Kumaratunga (still in the saddle) of India, Israel, Britain, Indonesia and Sri Lanka in that order have held sway in their respective countries and even did what their male predecessors did not dare. The British famed iron lady and "grocer's daughter" Margret Thatcher broke the backbone of century old trade union domination of British politics, Golda Meir started her tenure with the six day war in 1967 and ended it with the Yom Kuppur war in 1973, Megawatti ended decades-old corrupt dictatorship of General Surhato in Indonesia and Madam Kumaratunga is sorting out the war of attrition with Tamil Tigers guerrillas battling for a separate homeland in the North of Sri Lanka.

Even before them, have been that imposing figure of the international communist movement, a consummate intellectual and combustible political agitator, the irreprisable Roza Luxemburg (1871-1919) whose thoughts and activism straddled her native Russia, Poland and Germany, where she was gruesomely murdered after being held in a long incarceration. A passionate internationalist, she once wrote that, "the lofty silence of the eternal in which so many cries have echoed away unheard resounds so stron-

By Charles Onunaiju,
Senior Reporter (Foreign Desk)

gly within me that I cannot find a special corner in my heart for the ghetto. I feel at home in the entire world wherever there are clouds and birds and human tears."

Mrs Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf who was sworn in recently in the battered Liberia's capital, Monrovia is an established political figure in her country with fluctuating political fortunes that have seen her as finance minister, prisoner and an exile, until recently when she returned from an international lucrative job to plunge into politics. Earlier before her recent victory, she has squared up with former president and war lord, Mr. Charles Taylor in election contest and came a distant second. Not dismayed at been trounced by Mr Taylor, she kept hope alive, bidding her time. And it came, when Mr. Taylor was forced to stand down from the presidency and into exile paving way for an international backed interim administration. The 67 year-old grandmother hit the road again in a contest that saw her trailing behind the youthful soccer star, Mr. George Weah in the first round of election which did not produce a clear winner. In the second and final round, Madam Sirleaf who have earlier promised "to bring motherly sensitivity and emotion to the presidency" swooped on the boisterous football star, unexpectedly beating him to the second place to make history as the first elected woman leader in any African country.

George Weah's youthful supporters threatened fire and brimstones, though backing down at the right time to let



Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf

good reason prevail. On Tuesday last week, the grandee had her day, looking splendid on her inauguration with a galaxy of African and world leaders present. As expected, she defined her presidency as an unusual challenge, promising to exert herself to the optimum to lift up her despondent people and burnt out country. The consensus about Mrs. Sirleaf presidency is that, it would be hard to see which of the former Liberian warlords ever happy at the pull of the trigger, would be the first to take a aim at the widowed grandmother seating harmlessly at the battered presidential mansion. Therefore, if the most megalomaniac of the Liberian warlords would be hard to open fire at the grandee, President Sirleaf's tenure is expected to usher in real

peace, stability and order in a country that the gun literally ruled for more than a decade. Already her broad smiles are beginning to open wallets. The ever thrifty Chinese, represented at the President Sirleaf inauguration by the foreign minister, Mr. Li Zhaoxing donated instantly two million US dollars. And against the background that Liberia government have operated with a miserable annual budget of 80 million US dollars only, the Chinese cash gift is a bounty. At the international scene, where Liberia would beg, persuade and even cajole to get the badly needed development assistance, President Sirleaf would not be a new comer. She is expected to utilize her contact very productively in that regards. As African first elected women leader, she might be the region's diplomatic fire fighter, extending "the motherly sensitivities and emotions" to other African capitals where politics is turning ugly.

Angela Merkel, the chancellor of Germany, who heads a grand coalition of the two main parties did just that at last December, European Union summit, when she coaxed French President, Jacques Chirac and British Prime Minister Tony Blair to agree on the Union budget deal.

The 50 year-old childless first female chancellor of Germany, who is also a professor of physics entered politics only fifteen years ago. Born in the former communist Eastern Germany, she joined the

Centre-Right Christian Democratic Union (CDU) rising steadily through its ranks and gaining the favour of former chancellor Helmut Koh. When corruption scandals decimated a generation of party leadership, including her political godfather, Mr. Kohl, she jumped in to the fray, winning leadership of a party of mostly former West German Catholic family men. This protestant woman from the East had her time when the former chancellor, Gerhard Schroder buffeted by Internal rebellion in his centre-left Social Democratic Party (SPD) decided to call snap election last September. In a remarkable indecision, Germans failed to give outright mandate to any of the two major parties and their respective allies. A grand coalition of the two main parties became the only way to form a government. The initial bargain is saw the former SPD chancellor laying claim to the top job, but a victory of a few by elections effectively shifted the balance in favour of Angela Merkel. Since inauguration, she has been effective chancellor and recent polls suggested that 60% of Germans thumbs her up as an effective leader. Painted largely in the media as a Washington willy nilly to the dictates of President George Bush, she shocked observers when in a news conference she lashed out at Washington's cruelty to the alleged detained terrorist. Chancellor Merkel declared flatly that "an institution like Guantanamo-Bay in its present form cannot and must not exist in the long run," referring to the America torture chamber in the Cuban Island, where Washington is holding alleged al-Qaeda terrorist in the most deplorable conditions. Mrs. Merkel has earlier make clear to the visiting US secretary of state, Condelleza Rice that Washington's ferrying of alleged terrorists through Europe to third countries where they would be tortured breaches established protocols on human rights. Arguably, chancellor Merkel has actively engaged both on the international scene and at home where she is struggling to shake up the economy to overcome its structural weakness. And those who thought that she would unravel the country's social market economy that has enabled a reasonable social consensus in the post war Germany are in for a huge disappointment. She is not about to let the invincible market forces determine everything. If chancellor Merkel stays on course in her govern-

ment might unburden her with a constraining grand coalition and give a clear mandate in the next election to both lead and govern, unlike the present situation where she leads but co-governs with her arch-rivals. But if the sisters at the helm in Monrovia and Berlin are less hazy about ideological labeling, their triumphant counter part in Chile is proclaiming to the world that "I am socialist, but would be president of all Chileans and not the socialists only." Michelle Bachelet, the daughter of former airforce general, Alberto Bachelet, who was tortured to death for opposing the 1973 coup, was herself along with the mother arrested, blindfolded and starved for five days. Later she fled her homeland and went into exile, returning later to work underground along with other leftist exiles who opposed the General Pinochet's regime. She gained distinction in the socialist party for her remarkable energy and when democracy was restored in 1990, she grew phenomenally in left coalition that took power. Appointed first as health minister and later defence minister, Ms Bachelet, a single mother of three children, who has been divorced twice became the unlikely presidential candidate of the centre left coalition, in a largely socially conservative catholic country. Failing to win outright in the first round, Ms Bachelet trounced her right wing rival Mr. Sebastine Pinera in the second round to become the first woman to be elected to the highest office in Chile and the third in the whole of Latin America. As a victim of hate, she has promised to heal the division brought out by the brutal and corrupt dictatorship of General Pinochet. A medical doctor and a pediatric specialist, Ms Bachelet who will be inaugurated on the 11th of March will over see the massive social renewal of her country. In the region, where other leftists are already at the helm, Chavez in Venezuela, Morales in Bolivia, Lula in Brazil, Nestor Kirchner in Argentina and the grand old revolutionary in Havana, Ms Bachelet perfectly fits into the regional trend and is expected to forge the kind of cooperation that would benefit her country.

The women in Berlin, Santiago and Monrovia are consummate successful professionals in their respective fields and appear well suited to give good accounts of themselves. Their early start has been impressive but the subsequent tenor and tempo will put the states 'woman'ship

"The women in Berlin, Santiago and Monrovia are consummate successful professionals in their respective fields and appear well suited to give good accounts of themselves. Their early start has been impressive but the subsequent tenor and tempo will put the states 'woman'ship on its severest trial as a new paradigm of global leadership."

Business Trust

International Zimbabwe under fresh

IMF scrutiny

Zimbabwe is under fresh scrutiny by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which will consider expelling it from the body unless it repays its debts. IMF officials are in Zimbabwe assessing the country's economic situation ahead of a key meeting in March to decide on Zimbabwe's continued membership.

Zimbabwe repaid a large chunk of its outstanding debt last year, but still owes the IMF more than \$1 billion (£760 million). Zimbabwe's economy has been beset by rampant inflation and chronic unemployment since the late 1990s. Zimbabwe's president Robert Mugabe has urged the Harare government to reduce its debts by 2006.

IMF officials in Harare said she could not predict the outcome of the visit. Harare is issuing new bank notes worth about 50,000 dollars (\$15 billion) to help cut the number of notes needed for standard transactions.

China's economy records growth

China's economy maintained its stellar growth last year, official figures have confirmed, expanding 9.9% in 2005. Growth has now been about 10% for three consecutive years and the economy shows no signs of slowing despite government efforts to restrain it.

Total economic output rose to 18.2 trillion yuan (\$2.25 trillion) as soaring exports fuelled the country's growing trade surplus.

Experts said China may now be the world's fourth largest economy. China's economy recently overtook Italy, in terms of size, and may also have leapfrogged the United Kingdom and France, analysts said. The latest growth figures were stronger than were initially expected.

The Chinese authorities have sought to control growth in state-run industries, such as construction, which have largely driven China's economic boom.

Agip evacuates workers from P.Harcourt

Italian oil firm Agip, whose offices were attacked in Port Harcourt on Tuesday says it is pulling its workers out of the area. At least nine people were killed in the assault on the riverside offices, reportedly including eight policemen.

The gunmen attacked on speedboats and stole a large amount of money, witnesses said. It is the latest in a string of attacks on companies in the Niger Delta, home to most of Nigeria's oil wealth.

Agip workers were killed in the area by an armed group demanding a 10% increase in oil prices.

The company evacuated staff from the area and the situation is currently under control. According to a government official who spoke to the Reuters news agency on condition of anonymity, a group of about 20 men, with AK-47 rifles, attacked the facility.

A crowd of about 800 people had gathered at the scene. Many of them were crying, she said.

The oil company's headquarters in Port Harcourt are in a complex of buildings called the Agip Industrial Area, in the Mgboshimini area of the city.

Duke assures on TINAPA

Governor Donald Duke of Cross River State has assured that the Tinapa Port Project currently under construction in Calabar is a viable project that would yield results.

The governor gave the assurance while speaking with newsmen during a media party in his office that construction work was not halted at the site as recently reported by some media outfits, (not Daily Trust) following a protest by the local community.

According to him every formality on the project has been put in place, adding that

production in Nigeria. Government said yesterday the attack was a robbery. It came just days after militants, who have kidnapped four foreign oil workers and attacked a Shell oil platform, said they were preparing to carry out more raids.

The foreign hostages have been captive for more than two weeks.

Eni, the Italian energy giant which owns Agip, has been operating in Nigeria since 1962. In 2004, Eni accounted for approximately 10% of oil and gas

production in Nigeria. Government said yesterday the attack was a robbery. It came just days after militants, who have kidnapped four foreign oil workers and attacked a Shell oil platform, said they were preparing to carry out more raids.

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The kidnapers had said the American hostage was unwell but in an e-mail to the AP news agency, now say all four are in "good health".

They "have adapted fairly well to the conditions under which the people of the Niger Delta have been kept for the last 48 years," the group said.

Oil workers' unions in Nigeria have threatened to withdraw members from the main oil-producing region unless the government moves to improve security.

The instability has led to a 10% fall in Nigeria's oil production.

The country is Africa's leading oil exporter and the fifth-biggest source of US oil imports, but despite its wealth, many Nigerians live in subject poverty.

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From left: Executive Director, First Inland Bank Plc, Dayo Faboroti, former chairman, Comet Merchant Bank, Dr. Ezekiel Anaba during the unveiling of First Inland Bank's new brand image in Lagos...recently.

Manufacturers alert on fake Chinese products

The Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) has alerted the federal government on the influx of fake made in China products in the country.

According to MAN director-general, Jide A. Mike, the influx of the smuggled products negates national

economic interest and therefore... should be investigated.

He called on the EFCC to bring to book those identified as being behind the unpatriotic business in order to deter others.

MAN said its statement followed recent discovery of the fact that there is heavy smuggling of textile products from China.

According to MAN, "the fake smuggled fabrics have "made in Nigeria" printed on the products with the obvious intent to confuse

unsuspecting consumers. "No Nigerian textile company has authorized any company outside Nigeria to produce its products and/or use its logo and bring name(s) or registered trade mark's," it stated.

It called on the federal government to set up a special intelligence squad to monitor illegal importation of textiles and other contrabands.

Also, the association recommended that all imports from China should be subjected to 100 percent inspection with the Destination Inspection scheme.

Among other suggestions, MAN urged that "our Embassy in China should be empowered through bi-lateral agreement to identify Chinese companies exporting contrabands into Nigeria.

"The Nigerian partners should also be identified and investigated, and if found guilty should face the wrath of the law.

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According to him every formality on the project has been put in place, adding that

with contracting norms that such menial jobs should be given to the indigenes to compensate them for their involvement in the project as land lords.

Last year, he continued brought hope, a sense of pride and show to the state adding those were the legible achievements that the state recorded following the good number of developmental programmes and project such as the xmas festival among others that were embarked.

He assured that all the road projects abandoned last year will be completed this

was also perfecting a solution to the problem of poor standard of education which he said is a terrible problem.



Governor Donald Duke

Business Trust

Privatisation Update

Ajaokuta power plant begins production

The Thermal Power Plant/Turbo Blower Station (TPP/TBS) of the Ajaokuta Steel Company Limited has commenced production and distribution of electrical power.

Managing Director of Global Infrastructure, managers of Ajaokuta Steel Company, Lalit Sehgal made this known to newsmen in Abuja where he said that the facility has turbines producing 55 megawatts.

The Ajaokuta steel currently consumes about 20 mw while 30 mw is being

Stories by Anas A. Galadima,
Business Reporter

added to the national grid. The facility which was grounded in 1994 following an overhauling problem, began operations again in the later part of 2005 after it was rehabilitated.

According to Mr. Sehgal, some of the current consumers of power produced from the plant are units of the Ajaokuta Steel plant, neighbouring towns including Niger bridge estates, Ajaokuta village and the Power Holding Company

of Nigeria (PHCN).

The commencement of power production in the plant, Sehgal revealed, would enhance the productive capacity of the steel company, making it better positioned to produce at optimal capacity.

The decision to quickly put the power plant back on track, he said, was borne out of the fact that a steel plant can not function without steady supply of electricity, noting that epileptic supply of power would damage equipments in the plant.

National Transport Commission underway - BPE

The federal government has begun moves to establish a National Transport Commission, a multisectoral regulatory agency that would be charged with the responsibility of regulating activities in road, Inland water ways, aviation and rail transport sectors of the economy.

Director General of the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE), Mrs Irene Chigbue made this known during a pres conference on Monday in Abuja where she said that the commission would help ensure that operators in the transport sector would play according to the laid down

rules.

Already, the BPE has slated the Nigerian Railway Corporation for concession in 2006. The railway lines have been divided into the eastern rail, western rail and the central rail.

A federal government delegation led by the minister of finance Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala led a team of government officials to China two weeks ago with the aim of sourcing for a loan facility of over \$2 billion for the rehabilitation of the country's railways.

The rehabilitation and concessioning of the country's rail lines is expected to boost transpor-

tation in the system by reducing the current pressure on the country's roads. On the other hand, the aviation sector reform is currently underway as a way of enhancing operations and minimizing the risk of having air mishaps in the country.

The reforms in the road transport sector, it was gathered, would allow construction companies to remain concessionaires of the roads they construct so that they would be prompted to construct the roads properly knowing fully well that they would be required to maintain the roads over a period of time ranging from between 10 to 15 years.

BPE shortlists six advisers for NIPOST

The Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) has short-listed six of the 24 firms that applied for the provision of advisory services for the reform and restructuring of Nigerian Postal Service (NIPOST) for the next round of the selection process.

A statement from the BPE said the firms are: Gide Logrette Nouel Consortium (France); SofrePost (France); Nethpost Consultancy (Netherlands); PriceWaterHouseCoopers Consortium (UK); IOS Partners Inc. / Enterprise Capital Management (USA); and Phillip Consulting & McKinsey & Company (Nigeria/USA).

The Bureau had advertised in September 2005 in local and foreign media requesting for Expressions of

Interest (EOIs) from qualified consultants. By the submission deadline of November 11, 2005, twenty-four EOIs were said to be received.

The objective of the consultancy assignment, according to the statement, "is to assist the Federal Government formulate a new Postal Sector Policy/Strategy, draft a new Postal Sector Bill and restructure NIPOST into a financially viable organization, offering efficient services to its customers and capable of attracting private sector investment and management".

The reform process actually commenced with the engagement of Nethpost Consultancy in 2004 to conduct feasibility analysis and provide restructuring options for NIPOST.

postal sector.

Based on their recommendations, the postal reform will involve, in the first instance, the development of a Postal Sector Strategy/Policy.

This will be accompanied by the establishment of the institutional, legal and regulatory framework for the postal sector, through a revision of existing postal legislations in line with imperatives of the Postal Policy, and setting-up of an independent postal regulator. There will also be a simultaneous restructuring of NIPOST and unbundling into a public postal operator and new business units (NBUs).

Privatisation of restructured NIPOST and emergent NBUs will be the next stage

IN THE FEDERAL HIGH COURT OF NIGERIA

HOLDEN AT LAGOS
SUIT NO. FHC/L/CS/FHC/1/CS/54/06

IN THE MATTER OF
THE INVESTMENTS AND SECURITIES ACT NO. 45,1999
AND
IN THE MATTER OF AN APPLICATION UNDER SECTION 100
THEREOF IN RE:

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| 1. UNITY BANK PLC (RC. 94524) | -1ST APPLICANT |
| 2. BANK OF THE NORTH LIMITED (RC: 2000) | -2ND APPLICANT |
| 3. NNB INTERNATIONAL BANK LIMITED (RC. 7554) | -3RD APPLICANT |
| 4. NEW AFRICA BANK PLC (RC. 84254) | -4TH APPLICANT |

MEETING OF THE HOLDERS OF THE FULLY PAID ORDINARY SHARES OF BANK OF THE NORTH LIMITED

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that by an Order of the Federal High Court (hereinafter referred to as "the Court") dated the 25th of JANUARY, 2006, made in the above mentioned matter, the Court has directed that a meeting of the holders of the fully paid Ordinary shares of Bank of the North Limited be convened for the purpose of considering and, if thought fit, approving (with or without modification), a Scheme of Merger between Unity Bank Plc, Bank of the North Limited, NNB International Bank Plc and New Africa Bank Plc. The Scheme is explained in detail in the Explanatory Statement on pages 18 to 27 of the Scheme Document.

The meeting will be held at Kano Hall of the Nicon Hilton, Abuja on Friday the 27th day of January, 2006 at 10a.m, at which place and time all the aforesaid shareholders are requested to attend. At the meeting, the following sub-joined resolution will be proposed and if thought fit passed as a Special Resolution at the meeting:

"That :-

- 1 a. This Meeting approves the Scheme of Merger dated 27th January 2006, a print of which has been submitted to the meeting and for the purpose of identification subscribed by the Chairman, and that the Directors be and are hereby authorized to consent to any modifications of the Scheme for the proposed merger that the Central Bank of Nigeria, the Securities and Exchange Commission or the Federal High Court may think fit to impose and approve;
- b. All the assets, liabilities and undertakings of the Bank, including all its real properties and intellectual property rights, be transferred to Unity Bank Plc without further act or deed in consideration for the issue and allotment of shares in Unity Bank to the shareholders of the Bank as provided in the Scheme;
- c. The entire share capital of the Bank be cancelled and the Bank be dissolved without being wound up;
- d. Aminu Ibrahim & Co and Muhtari Dangana & Co be appointed to represent, monitor and enforce the rights of the shareholders of the Bank in respect of any post-merger share adjustments and other post-merger issues to be made pursuant to the Scheme and the Merger Agreement; and
- e. The Board of Directors of Bank of the North Limited be and is hereby authorized to take all actions as may be necessary to give full effect to the Scheme."

By the said Order, the Court has appointed the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Bank of the North Alhaji Abubakar I. Sadauki or failing him, Engr Ahmed Ibrahim, Acting Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer or failing them both, any other director so appointed in their stead by the shareholders present at the meeting, to act as Chairman of the said meeting and has directed the Chairman to report the results thereof to the Court.

The said Scheme of Merger will be subject to the sanction of the Court.

Shareholders may vote in person or they may appoint any other person, whether a shareholder or not, to attend and vote in their stead. In the case of joint holders, the vote of the senior holder who tenders a vote, whether in person or by proxy, will be accepted to the exclusion of the votes of the other joint holders, and for this purpose seniority will be determined by the order in which the names stand in the Register of members of the Bank.

A Proxy Form is being sent to each shareholder, it is requested that the executed Proxy Form be lodged at the office of the Company Secretary, as shown on the Form of Proxy, not less than 24 hours before the time appointed for the Meeting. Please note that the lodging of a Proxy Form does not prevent you from attending the meeting and voting in person should you so wish. However, if you attend the meeting in person, your proxy will not be permitted to attend or vote.

DATED THIS 25th DAY OF JANUARY, 2006

WALI-UWAIS & CO
RIGHT WING, 1st FLOOR,
AFRI-INVESTMENT HOUSE
PLOT 2669, AGUIYI IRONSISTREET
CADASTRAL ZONE A6, ABUJA

(SOLICITORS TO BANK OF THE NORTH LIMITED)

Business Trust

Niger Delta, oil crisis and 2006 budget

With the latest threat by militant youths in the Niger Delta to fire rockets into oil terminals, the crisis in the oil rich region may have been set for worse and sent global oil prices higher.

According to analysts, the prices may surge to \$70 a barrel this week if the crisis persists.

Last December when militant youths attacked Shell Petroleum Development Company installation in the Niger Delta, little did the nation realise that the incident was a prelude to serial attacks and terrorism that would be unleashed on the company.

The Anglo Dutch Company which traditionally supplies 380,000 barrels a day from the Niger Delta region suspended export of large quantum of crude oil from its Bonny oil terminal for two weeks just as it lost 160,000 barrels per day due to that attack.

And while Shell was still counting the losses of the previous attack and strategizing on how to re-launch itself, the militant youths on January 11 struck again and kidnapped four expatriates comprising a Briton, an American, a Bulgarian and a Honduran, workers of Tidex Drilling Company, a corporate contractor to Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC).

The current action of the militant youths, some analysts have pointed out, is a replay of the 1960's when Isaac Boro, the uncompromising Ijaw resource control advocate captured the Niger Delta until he was sub-dued by the the federal government.

Four days later, the militant youths swooped on Shell's Benisele, Opekushi, Obojobo and Tule flow stations in Ekeremor local government area of Bayelsa state killing more than 10 people including eight soldiers.

The company soon shut down the four flow stations as a result of the damage done to the Trans Romos pipeline.

At the epicentre of this crisis is the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) which claimed responsibility for the continual spate of attacks.

The group according to reports gave the federal government till February 1 this year for certain demands to be met.

The conditions are: Control of oil wealth by the Niger Delta, the payment of \$1.5 billion by the Shell Petroleum Development Company to the Bayelsa State government to compensate for environmental pollution in the area, and the release of the leader of the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force, Alhaji Mujahideen Asari Dokubo.

The others include the release of the former Bayelsa State governor, Chief Diepreye Alamieyeseigba and another unnamed militant.

Analysts who decline to name their sources, indicated that the reason for the crisis is the greed of the Niger Delta youths who are tired of the federal government's treatment of the region.

From Mohammed Shosanya, Correspondent (Lagos)

"It must be clear that the Nigerian government cannot protect your workers or assets. Leave our land while you can or die in it. Our aim is to totally destroy the capacity of the Nigerian government to export oil," the group added.

That MEND has matched their threat with action following their continual

Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) and the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association (PENGASSAN) last week threatened to withdraw their members from the Niger Delta if their safety and security cannot be granted.

The two bodies told newsmen that the recent crisis in the Niger Delta is a reflection that life in the region is not safe while also appealing to the federal

governments embrace of dialogue and diplomacy to facilitate the release of the hostages.

The militant group has however said that they are yet to be involved in any talks with the federal government just as the commander of the joint task force in the Niger Delta, Brigadier General Eliana Zamani last Thursday was quoted as saying that no contact has been established with the abducted workers.

And so the rebels are matching on. They have seized two vessels. One of the hostages, a Briton, Nigel Walsen was said to have been promised the much needed freedom only if the managing director of his company accepts to replace him. They have threatened to kill the hostages in their custody.

The youths have promised to fire rockets into the sky in order to drive home their demand.

But Shell Petroleum Development Company on whose bulk the crisis falls has evacuated more than 1000 of its workers and has also directed its contract staff to follow suit, while other oil companies base in the Niger Delta have declared the region unsafe and unpalatable and have also gone ahead to evacuate their personnel.

Bilfinger + Berger Oil and Gas Company, a subsidiary of Julius Berger Plc was reported to have pulled out 346 workers from its operation areas in the Niger Delta.

Worried by this development, especially as it relates to the security of their members, the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) and the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association (PENGASSAN) last week threatened to withdraw their members from the Niger Delta if their safety and security cannot be granted.

The lawyer further

themed this argument on the premise that last years budget implementation was blamed on similar conditions.

While it is certain that no one could predict what the direction of the current crisis will be any moment from now, experts and commendations have spared neither SPDC nor the federal government for the crisis.

Cairo Ojugbo, a member of the House of Representatives, blamed Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) for the crisis.

According to him, it was glaring that the killings and abductions by the militant youths are not directed at the federal government but a reaction and resistance against the company for being uncaring its host communities.

A Lagos based legal practitioner, Niran Falade who also spoke with *Business Trust* though stated condemned the spate of killings, threats and kidnaps in the area.

He stated that the presence of the company in the Niger Delta, instead of changing the futures of the people for the better, is rather a stay of wittiness, dehumanisation and environmental degradation to which Shell arrogantly look the other way pretending to be ignorance of this development.

Such make shift solution to the Niger Delta crisis following the brutal execution of Keri Saro Wiwa and the creation of high brow offices like OMPADEC and NDDC, they urged would only bring still born solution to the crises ravaging the 25 million populated Niger Delta.

Writing under the caption: Fresh Winds in the Niger Delta, on Friday, January 20, 2006 of *The Guardian*, Dr. Reuben Abati, the chairman of *The Guardian* board posited that the international crises in the Niger Delta is a reflex of lack of will power of the Nigerian state and

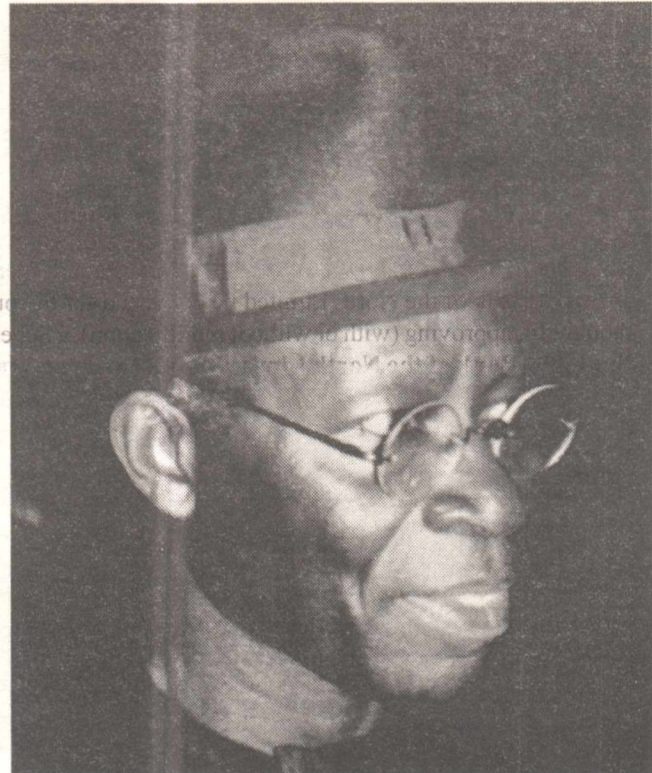
professional class to squarely address the politics of oil in Nigeria.

"The current crisis in the Niger Delta in for transformation of that region into a mini - Iraq with aggrieved citizens taking oil workers hostage and demanding ransom as if they were disciplines of Osama Bin Laden is the inevitable outcome of the Nigerian state and the political class to address the politics of oil. It can only get worse and it will. It would appear that the youths of the Niger Delta have finally discovered how best to treat and beat the Nigerian state."

Glimpses from the crisis in the Niger Delta pictured that the solution is a long pronged one. The resort to terrorism and brigandage by the armed youths and the federal government's deployment of security operatives to the volatile region to seemingly march the restive youths teeth for teeth is far from the issue at hand.

Some have even predicted that the federal government may be replaying the November 4, 1999 Odi massacre, in the now troubled zone if its claimed current peace talks hit the rocks.

Again, this is a narrowest path to ending the crisis and will rather aggravate the situation in the Niger Delta and jeopardise the budget estimate for 2006.



Daukoru, Minister of State, Petroleum & Energy.

attacks on the region does not surprise anyone but what is baffling is the federal governments embrace of dialogue and diplomacy to facilitate the release of the hostages.

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The youths have promised to fire rockets into the sky in order to drive home their demand.

But Shell Petroleum Development Company on whose bulk the crisis falls has evacuated more than 1000 of its workers and has also directed its contract staff to follow suit, while other oil companies base in the Niger Delta have declared the region unsafe and unpalatable and have also gone ahead to evacuate their personnel.

Bilfinger + Berger Oil and Gas Company, a subsidiary of Julius Berger Plc was reported to have pulled out 346 workers from its operation areas in the Niger Delta.

Worried by this development, especially as it relates to the security of their members, the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) and the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association (PENGASSAN) last week threatened to withdraw their members from the Niger Delta if their safety and security cannot be granted.

government to use dialogue to effect the release of the abducted oil workers.

Peter Akpatason, NUPENG president further condemned vehemently "the acts of violence against oil and gas workers, which have continued to persist in our country as unsafe for business activities by foreign investors."

Already, the Anglo Dutch Company has started taking stock of the losses in the continual crises. It said it has lost 21,000 barrels of oil per day.

It said also in a statement made available to *Business Trust* in Lagos, Thursday that it has recovered the body of another of its catering contractor. The statement further read in part "Regrettably, we can confirm that the body of another civilian victim missing since the attack on the Benisele flow station has been found."


Besides, since SPDC announced suspension of production last Monday, prices of oil in the international market has triggered as Brent Crude oil crept to \$62.93.

The following day, crude futures for February delivery at the New York Merchantile Exchange rose to \$65.40 per barrel by the mid day only to further surge to \$67 at the close of business for that day.

Analysts have therefore predicted astronomical oil prices in the international market this year if the crisis in the Niger Delta persists and Iran further cuts its daily production.

Some also argued that the nation's 2006 budget will be affected since Nigeria's revenue is majority depended on sales of crude.

They further streng-



CENTRAL BANK OF NIGERIA

TENDER NOTICE

NIGERIAN TREASURY BILLS

Notice is hereby given by the Central Bank of Nigeria that 1 year Federal Government of Nigeria Treasury Bills amounting to N25,000,000,000 will be issued by an auction-based system on Friday, 03/02/2006.

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 1.30pm. on Wednesday, 01/02/2006.

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 be announced before the close of business on Thursday, 02/03/2006. The Bank reserves the right to reject any tender in part or in full.

Allotment letters will be issued for successful bid on Friday 03/03/2006. Payment in full for the amount of the accepted tenders must be made to the Central Bank of Nigeria not later than 1.30pm on the issue date 03/03/2006. 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.

Business Trust

Why public sector services fail the poor

Too often, services fail poor people - in accessibility, in quality and in affordability. The World Bank's world development Report in this piece created from the 2004 edition describes why the poor are always at the receiving end of failed services.

I go to collect water from a well every day, in a 20-litre clay jar. It's hard work... I've never been to school as I have to help my mother with her washing work, so we can earn enough money. I also have to help with the cooking, and the mother has to buy food, and collect water and rubbish for the cooking fire. Our house doesn't have a bathroom. I wash myself in the lake, once a week, on Saturdays. I wash and change my clothes and brush my teeth. When I see the school, I go to school to get my books.

of youths in the population. In both countries, the population of primary school-age children is projected to double by the year 2000. In Malawi, almost 1 million children die before their fifth birthday. Most countries have large differentials in educational outcomes. This is a clear evidence of service quality differences between rich and poor people. In many countries, the poor are at the receiving end of failed services.

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Primary schools are not more than 100 metres from a health centre. In Malawi, almost 1 million children die before their fifth birthday. Most countries have large differentials in educational outcomes. This is a clear evidence of service quality differences between rich and poor people. In many countries, the poor are at the receiving end of failed services.

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Services are often of poor quality. In many countries, the poor are at the receiving end of failed services. In many countries, the poor are at the receiving end of failed services.

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Commissioner of Police, Mr. Emmanuel Adebayo, to draft a panel to look into the matter of collapsed buildings.

The panel will be headed by Mr. Adebayo. It will be responsible for investigating the causes of the collapse and recommending measures to prevent such incidents in the future. The panel will also be responsible for ensuring that the necessary standards are met for the construction of buildings.

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30 days to submit a report to the government to work on the matter. The panel will be headed by Mr. Adebayo. It will be responsible for investigating the causes of the collapse and recommending measures to prevent such incidents in the future. The panel will also be responsible for ensuring that the necessary standards are met for the construction of buildings.

Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited

An ExxonMobil Subsidiary

Operator of the NNPC/MPN Joint Venture



Challenging Engineering Career Opportunities in the Oil & Gas Industry

To sustain and enhance our strategic position in a competitive Oil & Gas (O&G) environment as part of our growing vision, we are looking for trainable and tested Engineers and Specialists of Nigerian nationality who can make a difference in the following positions.

1. Graduate Engineers
2. Experienced Engineers
 - Reservoir Engineers
 - Subsurface Engineers
 - Project Engineers
3. Environmental Specialist
4. Drilling Engineers
5. Drilling Supervisors

General Requirements Engineering positions: All candidates MUST meet the following specifications:

- **Educational Qualification:** Minimum of a B. Sc. B. Eng or B. Tech. degree with at least Second Class Upper Division (2.1) or Second Class Lower Division (2.2) with Masters Degree in any of the following engineering disciplines: Mechanical, Chemical, Civil, Petroleum, Electrical/Electronics, Industrial & Production, and Materials & Metallurgical.
- Must possess NYSC discharge or exemption certificate. Serving qualified NYSC members whose service terminates about August 2006 are also eligible to apply.
- **Other requirements include:**
 - Excellent computer skills
 - High level of integrity, tact and reliability
 - Readiness to work in our various work locations
 - Industry experience where applicable.

1. GRADUATE ENGINEERS REF - ENGRG/001/06

Job Description: The selected candidates will be placed in various departments within MPN i.e. Drilling, Sub-surface Engineering, Reservoir Engineering, Projects/Construction, and Surface Facilities Engineering. The candidates will be trained through assignments in teams responsible for:

Drilling support, Reservoir assessments and economic evaluations, Well completion, design and implementation, Project engineering, design, construction & management, and Operations support / surface facilities engineering. In addition to general requirements above, successful candidates must be self-motivated with ability to make effective individual contributions within a functional team. No previous experience required, but ability to learn and integrate quickly is an advantage.

2. EXPERIENCED POSITIONS

The engineering candidates seeking to fill these positions must in addition to the general requirements listed above possess 5-10 years of relevant experience in these fields and must be ready to defend their claims with concrete evidence.

● RESERVOIR ENGINEERS - ENGRG/002a/06

Successful candidates will among others:

- prepare Asset Depletion and Development plans and provide support in daily surveillance and monitoring of MPN oil and gas fields;
- provide Reservoir engineering input into MPN's active drill well and work over program, project development and evaluation
- The candidates must be able to work with a multi-disciplinary team to ensure effective Reservoir management of MPN resource base and Reservoir simulation.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Candidates with stipulated concrete experience in oil production, preferably in Petroleum, subsurface or Reservoir Engineering, including experience in Reservoir surveillance, modelling and simulation are the appropriate target of this search.

● PROJECTS ENGINEERS - ENGRG/002C/06

Job Description: The primary responsibility of the Sub Surface Engineer position is workover and new well design, preparation of workover packages, nodal analysis and wellbore/field surveillance through active participation on Asset Level Teams. Other responsibilities include cost estimates, preparation of government reports, well testing, gas lift optimization, and support and supervision of rigless wellwork operations. From time to time, provides rig site technical assistance to Rig Supervisors during workover operations will be required.

Other specific duties include:

- Monitors workover operations according to safety and quality control standards, environmental regulations, corporate policy, and contract terms.
- Devises cost-effective techniques to drill, complete, and rework company-operated wells.
- Interfaces closely with drill teams, completions/subsea teams, and 3rd party suppliers to ensure that the wellwork is on time and within budget.
- Prepares final well reports with strong emphasis on lessons learned and wellbore integrity.

Education, Experience & Skills

- Candidates should possess a Bachelor's degree (B. Sc./B. Eng.) with a minimum of second class upper (2.1) division in either - Mechanical or Petroleum Engineering. Must possess NYSC discharge or exemption certificate.
- The ideal experience range for this position is 7 to 10 years of well workover and related operations experience with at least two (2) years working in offshore rig base wellwork activities as an advantage. In addition to the wellwork experience, the position requires an individual who brings a well-rounded knowledge and exposure to completion and drilling activities. Qualified candidates must be able to develop all phases of well worker projects: from well design and engineering, to workover execution plans. Successful candidates must demonstrate good written and verbal communications skills, perform effectively in a team environment, have uncompromising integrity, and be zealous and quick to learn new skills. Such candidates must be willing to spend a large part of their career offshore on the rigs and work extended hours when required.

● PROJECTS ENGINEERS - REF. ENGRG002c/06

Successful candidates will among others:

- Contribute to the planning, design and execution of MPN's projects. This projects range from refurbishing of existing facilities to execution of world-class development project. Project Engineering support duties involves

process simulation, development of equipment specification, major equipment sizing, cost estimates and project schedules, construction planning & management. Key responsibilities include:

- Involve in design, fabrication and installation or start-up of oil and gas production facilities/pipelines.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Successful candidates must have sufficient working experience in oil production, management of engineering and construction contracts, preferably in facilities or project/petroleum engineering.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL SPECIALISTS - REF. SHE/001/06

Job responsibilities: Successful candidates will be responsible for the following:

- Coordinates environmental studies information and inform MPN on the latest environmental requirements.
- Conducts scientific studies of significant environmental incidents.
- Review new projects designs for environmental compliance
- Keeps Management advised and recommends corrective actions when required
- Performs special duties on environmental matters as directed
- Assumes key contact on joint industry studies and development
- Communicates Environmental standards to MPN

Educational Qualification: Minimum a B. Sc., B. Eng or B. Tech. degree with at least Second Class Upper Division (2.1) in any of the following engineering disciplines or Second Class Lower Division (2.2) with Masters Degree in Applied Sciences, Environmental Sciences/studies and Engineering field

WORK EXPERIENCE:

Sufficient working experience of 5 - 10 years in oil production/operation with a minimum 2 years experience in Safety, Health and Environment will meet our requirements.

4. DRILLING ENGINEERS: REF. DRLG/001/06

Job Description: The primary role and responsibility of the Drilling/Completions Engineer is to ensure the application of the best available economical technology in drilling and completions operations. Other responsibilities include well-cost estimates, surveillance and improvement of daily progress, follow up assessments and equipment selection and application. From time to time, provides rig site technical assistance to Drilling Supervisors during critical well operations.

Other specific duties include:

- Monitors drilling operations according to safety and quality control standards, environmental regulations, corporate policy, and contract terms.
- Devises cost-effective techniques to drill, complete, and rework company-operated wells.
- Interfaces closely with subsurface teams, completions/subsea teams, and 3rd party suppliers to ensure that the well is drilled on time and within budget.
- Prepares final well reports with strong emphasis on lessons learned.
- The ideal experience range for this position is 5 to 10 years of drilling and related operations experience with at least two (2) years working in offshore drilling activities. In addition to the drilling experience, the position requires an individual who brings a well-rounded knowledge and exposure to completion and workover activities. Qualified candidates must be able to work in, and develop all phases of drilling: from well design and engineering, to drilling and completion activities. Successful candidates must possess good written and verbal communications skills, uncompromising integrity, be zealous and quick to learn new expertise through training

Education, Experience & Skills

- Candidates should possess a Bachelor's degree (B. Sc./B. Tech./B. Eng.) with a minimum of second class upper (2.1) division in any of the following disciplines - Mechanical, Chemical or Petroleum Engineering. Must possess NYSC discharge or exemption certificate.

5. DRILLING SUPERVISORS - REF. DRLG/002/06

Job Description: This position reports to Drilling Operations Superintendent and its primary role and responsibility is to provide day to day on-site supervision of drilling operations. He will be the primary contact with the rig and third party personnel at the rig site to ensure operations are performed in accordance with the drilling program and in a safe and cost-effective manner.

Basic function shall include the following:

- Ensure drilling procedures are followed as planned and conducted in an optimum manner
- Organises and orders the necessary services and equipment to conduct drilling and testing operations.
- Will be responsible for Safety and Health procedures being continuously enforced and in making capable decisions in emergency situation to prevent well catastrophes as well as significant additional cost.
- Ensures that the rig and third party equipment is adequately and properly maintained. Maintains inventory of all equipment/materials/supplies to ensure a smooth ongoing operations.
- Is responsible for complying with all government and other appropriate regulations; including of education of all personnel on rigs on safety and related issues.
- Ensures accurate and adequate reports and records are kept regarding operations, equipment and evaluation.
- Such candidates must be willing to work on rotational basis and spend a large part of their career offshore on the rigs.

Education, Experience & Skills

- Candidates should possess a Bachelor's degree (B. Sc./B. Tech./B. Eng.) with a minimum of second class upper division in any of the following disciplines - Mechanical, Chemical or Petroleum Engineering. Must possess NYSC discharge or exemption certificate. Experience range for this position is 5 - 10 years' cognate operational experience in the field.
- They must have functioned as tool pushers with a Drilling Contractor and or other drilling service provider
- Good leadership skill is a must for this position.

REMUNERATION & CAREER

Compensation and benefits package for these positions is very competitive in Oil & Gas industry and career is very rewarding.

METHOD OF APPLICATION

If you meet the requirements listed for any of these positions and are interested in making a career with our company, please attach your resume and personal & job data in excel spreadsheet in the format shown below on email and send them to this email address upstreamnigeria@exxonmobil.com. Please indicate position sought and reference Number.

All applications MUST reach the email address indicated within two weeks of this publication. Any applications received after two weeks from the date of publication will not be entertained.

| Surname | First Name | Middle Initial | Sex | Date Of Birth [Mm/Dd/Yyyy] | State Of Origin | Institution Attended | Discipline | Qualification, Grade & Year | NYSC Status | Professional Qualification | Current Employer(s) | Work Years | GSM Number | Email Address | Address 1 (Street Address) | Address 2 (State) | Test Center |
|---------|------------|----------------|--------|----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|-------------|---------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Ekane | Lucy | M | Female | 06/12/1992 | Cross Rivers | UNICAL | Chem. Engineering | B.Sc. 2.1 2001, M.Sc. 2004 | Discharged Aug., 2006 | CIPM, NIM, COREN, | Daily Public & Consultants. | 2 | 08000000000 | applicant@yahoo.com | 12, Osodi St. Kaduna, | Kaduna | Lagos/Upo |

Please Note: The following applications will not be entertained:

- (1) Applications that do not conform to the above format.
- (2) Applications not received through the e-mail address provided above
- (3) Applications that do not meet specific requirements for each position. Only successful candidates will be contacted and candidates are advised to check their email from the 3rd week of this publication.

Have you visited our website recently: www.exxonmobil.com/career. (Check jobs & careers, Nigeria) It provides an opportunity for you to learn more about ExxonMobil plus job opportunities.

Business Trust

ST-TIER SECURITIES

THE NIGERIAN STOCK EXCHANGE

REPORT AS AT WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2006

| Company Name | No of Deals | Quotation(N) | Quantity Traded | Value of Shares |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| STOCK FEEDS PLC. | 1 | 2.00 | 15,000 | 30,000.00 |
| OKOMU OIL PALM COMPANY PLC | 2 | 18.00 | 1,100 | 19,800.00 |
| SCO PLC | 6 | 11.50 | 105,100 | 1,208,650.00 |
| Totals | 9 | | 121,200 | 1,258,450.00 |
| OMOBILE & TYRE | | | | |
| LOP NIGERIA PLC. | 12 | 2.79 | 145,923 | 408,066.11 |
| BRISCOAE PLC. | 7 | 6.00 | 6,324 | 37,972.00 |
| Totals | 19 | | 152,247 | 446,038.11 |
| ESS BANK PLC | 96 | 2.63 | 2,421,901 | 6,442,516.45 |
| BANK NIGERIA PLC. | 12 | 9.10 | 134,579 | 1,224,668.90 |
| INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC. | 2 | 2.26 | 15,004 | 33,909.04 |
| T BANK OF NIGERIA PLC. | 380 | 33.65 | 3,258,437 | 109,938,044.19 |
| INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC. | 4 | 1.14 | 3,269,526 | 3,727,259.64 |
| BANK PLC. | 239 | 13.11 | 4,746,888 | 62,616,125.09 |
| STMENT BANKING | 6 | 4.57 | 6,836,000 | 31,240,520.00 |
| INTERNATIONAL MERCHANT BANK PLC. | 2 | 0.84 | 30,665 | 25,758.60 |
| CONTINENTAL BANK PLC. | 87 | 8.90 | 1,544,067 | 13,816,324.83 |
| BANK OF NIGERIA PLC. | 1 | 1.40 | 1,000 | 1,400.00 |
| BANK PLC. | 6 | 2.80 | 106,764 | 298,939.20 |
| ANIC BANK PLC | 33 | 5.97 | 358,967 | 2,145,362.40 |
| TINUM BANK PLC | 3 | 2.60 | 128,692 | 334,599.20 |
| ED BANK FOR AFRICA PLC. | 116 | 12.90 | 986,957 | 12,714,136.83 |
| ON BANK NIGERIA PLC. | 39 | 25.48 | 62,769 | 1,599,354.12 |
| IA BANK PLC. | 4 | 3.4 | 19,843 | 74,212.82 |
| TH BANK PLC | 15 | 19.64 | 164,941 | 3,239,441.24 |
| Totals | 1,045 | | 24,087,000 | 249,472,572.55 |
| WERIES | | | | |
| NESS NIGERIA PLC. | 46 | 100.51 | 49,603 | 5,000,959.58 |
| RIAN BREWERIES PLC. | 254 | 6.49 | 984,740 | 35,968,367.48 |
| Totals | 300 | | 1,034,343 | 40,969,327.06 |
| ODING MATERIALS | | | | |
| KA CEMENT PLC. | 30 | 3.11 | 71,859 | 2,438,327.53 |
| E CEMENT COMPANY PLC. | 3 | 8.30 | 12,367 | 80,385.50 |
| ENT COMPANY OF NORTHERN NIG. PLC. | 3 | 7.70 | 2,650 | 19,345.00 |
| AFRICAN PORTLAND CEMENT CO. PLC. | 66 | 16.49 | 219,369 | 3,617,712.10 |
| Totals | 102 | | 306,245 | 6,155,770.13 |
| ICAL & PAINTS | | | | |
| ER PAINTS PLC. | 5 | 3.82 | 12,909 | 49,043.63 |
| PLC. | 9 | 8.87 | 32,249 | 287,361.63 |
| MEYER PLC. | 2 | 3.80 | 4,316 | 16,400.80 |
| PLC. | 3 | 0.36 | 5,000 | 1,800.00 |
| RIA-GERMAN CHEMICALS PLC. | 2 | 4.10 | 3,000 | 12,300.00 |
| Totals | 21 | | 57,474 | 366,906.06 |
| LOMERATES | | | | |
| LEVENTIS NIGERIA PLC. | 4 | 1.24 | 28,716 | 35,607.84 |
| O NIGERIA PLC. | 3 | 3.40 | 6,551 | 22,273.40 |
| LARAMS PLC. | 1 | 0.83 | 1,206 | 1,000.98 |
| S HOLT PLC. | 2 | 1.56 | 2,340 | 3,650.40 |
| NDUSTRIES PLC. | 28 | 16.20 | 54,422 | 881,636.40 |
| L NIGERIA PLC. | 77 | 16.21 | 211,353 | 3,425,018.96 |
| EVER NIGERIA PLC | 94 | 20.82 | 286,341 | 5,981,610.83 |
| L NIGERIA PLC. | 2 | 0.82 | 17,728 | 14,536.96 |
| Totals | 211 | | 608,657 | 10,365,335.77 |
| STRUCTION | | | | |
| AIN (W.A.) PLC. | 2 | 1.09 | 2,500 | 2,725.00 |
| US BERGER NIGERIA PLC. | 7 | 21.50 | 7,880 | 169,420.00 |
| Totals | 9 | | 10,380 | 172,145.00 |
| D/BEVERAGES & TOBACCO | | | | |
| BOTTLING COMPANY PLC | 24 | 26.18 | 224,229 | 5,891,693.20 |
| BURY NIGERIA PLC. | 91 | 66.00 | 174,857 | 11,518,748.81 |
| UR MILLS NIGERIA PLC. | 57 | 25.51 | 200,623 | 5,190,848.50 |
| RIA BOTTLING COMPANY PLC. | 29 | 60.16 | 27,707 | 1,679,526.13 |
| LE FOODS NIGERIA PLC. | 22 | 190.00 | 38,387 | 7,293,556.51 |
| HERN NIGERIA FLOUR MILLS PLC. | 7 | 16.25 | 25,065 | 425,955.00 |
| Totals | 230 | | 690,868 | 32,000,328.15 |
| THCARE | | | | |
| S MEDICAL PLC. | 6 | 2.63 | 66,200 | 174,308.00 |
| KOSMITHKLINE CONSUMER NIGERIA PLC | 15 | 10.41 | 33,452 | 343,555.20 |
| & BAKER NIGERIA PLC | 6 | 5.36 | 9,575 | 51,322.00 |
| METH INTERNATIONAL PHARM. PLC. | 2 | 3.23 | 9,850 | 31,815.50 |
| Totals | 29 | | 119,077 | 601,000.70 |
| TRIAL/DOMESTIC PRODUCTS | | | | |
| GASES PLC | 12 | 2.85 | 67,777 | 191,242.93 |
| T ALUMINIUM NIGERIA PLC. | 2 | 0.70 | 7,709 | 5,423.39 |
| FOAM NIGERIA PLC. | 34 | 4.90 | 138,378 | 662,365.78 |
| D PRODUCTS PLC. | 3 | 1.22 | 104,535 | 127,759.45 |
| Totals | 51 | | 318,399 | 986,791.55 |
| RANCE | | | | |
| INSURANCE COMPANY PLC | 1 | 0.56 | 15,000 | 8,400.00 |
| D INSURANCE PLC. | 15 | 2.29 | 353,333 | 802,179.24 |
| NERSTONE INSURANCE CO. PLC. | 12 | 1.48 | 340,686 | 510,307.28 |
| SADER INSURANCE PLC. | 2 | 1.70 | 100,000 | 170,000.00 |
| CO ASSURANCE PLC. | 1 | 0.67 | 10,000 | 6,700.00 |
| UNION AND ROCK INSURANCE PLC. | 3 | 1.07 | 50,000 | 53,300.00 |
| JAL BENEFITS ASSURANCE PLC | 1 | 0.79 | 1,000 | 790.00 |
| R INSURANCE CO. PLC. | 5 | 2.90 | 42,950 | 124,555.00 |
| AL EXCHANGE ASSURANCE PLC. | 5 | 2.87 | 35,012 | 100,574.44 |
| INSURANCE PLC. | 11 | 1.30 | 536,000 | 701,720.00 |
| AFRICAN PROV. INS. COY. PLC. | 6 | 3.07 | 66,130 | 203,019.10 |
| Totals | 62 | | 1,550,111 | 2,681,545.06 |
| AGED FUNDS | | | | |
| LEASING PLC | 3 | 1.18 | 48,666 | 57,425.88 |
| Totals | 3 | | 48,666 | 57,425.88 |
| IL OIL & MARITIME SERVICES PLC | 5 | 1.85 | 36,000 | 66,600.00 |
| Totals | 5 | | 36,000 | 66,600.00 |
| AGING | | | | |
| CROWNCAPS & CONTAINERS PLC. | 3 | 1.11 | 14,285 | 15,899.20 |
| PAK NIGERIA PLC | 2 | 1.45 | 14,540 | 21,083.00 |
| Totals | 5 | | 28,825 | 36,982.20 |
| OLEUM(MARKETING) | | | | |
| IL PLC. | 4 | 0.53 | 325,500 | 172,570.00 |
| CAN PETROLEUM PLC. | 39 | 44.00 | 187,212 | 8,348,548.45 |
| OII PLC | 48 | 90.00 | 40,173 | 3,657,203.49 |
| NA OIL & GAS PLC. | 7 | 2.77 | 9,640 | 27,100.80 |
| L OIL NIGERIA PLC. | 29 | 155.15 | 45,090 | 7,027,281.20 |
| DO PLC | 74 | 90.20 | 330,799 | 30,424,636.95 |
| CO (NIGERIA) PLC. | 16 | 115.50 | 10,506 | 1,210,924.83 |
| L NIGERIA PLC | 10 | 185.00 | 14,604 | 2,684,370.00 |
| Totals | 227 | | 963,524 | 53,552,635.72 |
| TING & PUBLISHING | | | | |
| MAN NIGERIA PLC. | 1 | 3.19 | 15,000 | 47,850.00 |
| Totals | 1 | | 15,000 | 47,850.00 |
| ESTATE | | | | |
| PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT PLC. | 25 | 9.46 | 213,494 | 2,030,866.04 |
| Totals | 25 | | 213,494 | 2,030,866.04 |
| ILES | | | | |
| D NIGERIA TEXTILES PLC. | 3 | 2.06 | 5,425 | 11,181.90 |
| Totals | 3 | | 5,425 | 11,181.90 |
| All Totals | | | 2,357 | 30,366,935 |

| TOP 10 TRADES YESTERDAY | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------|------------------|--------|
| SYMBOL | VOLUME | VALUE | TRADES |
| UNIC | 1,471,200.00 | 1,917,480.00 | 18 |
| UBA | 1,524,124.00 | 19,589,563.66 | 160 |
| NB | 1,608,577.00 | 58,651,566.73 | 364 |
| INTERCONT | 1,846,735.00 | 16,518,922.95 | 111 |
| UAC-PROP | 2,089,030.00 | 20,736,926.04 | 53 |
| FSB | 3,270,608.00 | 3,728,493.12 | 5 |
| ACCESS | 3,782,129.00 | 9,989,298.25 | 136 |
| FIRSTBANK | 5,030,620.00 | 168,787,718.75 | 591 |
| GUARANTY | 7,321,776.00 | 96,616,552.87 | 358 |
| IBTC | 8,529,498.00 | 38,979,805.86 | 31 |
| TOP 10 GAINERS | | | |
| SYMBOL | LASTCLOSE | YESTERDAY'SCLOSE | CHANGE |
| NBC | 61.00 | 64.05 | +3.05 |
| AP | 42.95 | 44.40 | +1.45 |
| ASHAKACEM | 33.70 | 34.78 | +1.08 |
| MOBIL | 155.06 | 156.02 | +0.96 |
| UAC-PROP | 9.58 | 10.04 | +0.46 |
| GLAXOSMITH | 10.10 | 10.40 | +0.30 |
| VITAFOAM | 4.70 | 4.90 | +0.20 |
| GUARANTY | 13.00 | 13.20 | +0.20 |
| CADBURY | 65.81 | 66.00 | +0.19 |
| LONGMAN | 3.04 | 3.19 | +0.15 |
| TOP 10 LOSERS | | | |
| SYMBOL | LASTCLOSE | YESTERDAY'SCLOSE | CHANGE |
| TEXACO | 114.70 | 112.00 | -2.70 |
| OANDO | 94.10 | 92.00 | -2.10 |
| CONOIL | 91.00 | 89.00 | -2.00 |
| FIRSTBANK | 34.19 | 33.00 | -1.19 |
| OKOMUOIL | 18.00 | 17.50 | -0.50 |
| UNILEVER | 21.00 | 20.52 | -0.48 |
| FLOURMILL | 26.15 | 25.87 | -0.28 |
| NIG-GERMAN | 4.31 | 4.10 | -0.21 |
| UACN | 16.20 | 16.00 | -0.20 |
| CFAO | 3.57 | 3.41 | -0.16 |

Survey identifies lull in cassava export

By Hamisu Muhammad, Business Reporter

A report on the non-oil export performance for January to December, 2005 carried out by Coastal International Limited, shows that no significant progress has been recorded in cassava export despite government's efforts to promote the sector.

According to data released by the survey, cost of transportation, labour tax and exchange rate are some of the obstacles that hindered the progress of export of the product.

The report also said the fact that cassava has not yet met the international standard has made export less favourable. "Other factor that could be responsible for the low export of cassava is that most processing factories in Nigeria are unwilling to pay at the market price, which invariably discourages farmers from having to produce more."

This according to the survey, does not encourage exporters, who buying directly from farmers get it at high price at the same rate it is purchased in the local market.

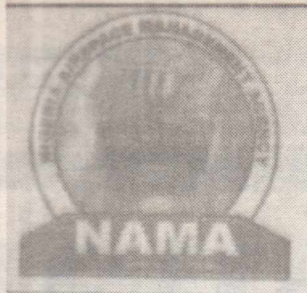
The prices at which companies placed on 1 metric ton is N8,000 flat rate while if sold at the local market processors it is between N13,000 to N14,000 depending on the variety, the report said.

On the performance of the non-oil sector in the country, a total amount of \$889,649,474.70 (about N115,107,822,048) of non-oil products have been exported based on analysis of the raw data provided by the survey.

The survey also reported that the month of December 2005 has the highest value of N15,329,725,979, while the month of July is the lowest with an amount of N6,814,318,885.

The data shows that in comparison, the quarterly distribution of Oct-Dec, 2004 and 2005 indicated that export for 2005 is higher.

The trend in export performance this year has not been stable as it has risen and fallen due to global economic changes that have prevailed all over, the report concluded.



NIGERIAN AIRSPACE MANAGEMENT AGENCY

MURTALA MUHAMMED AIRPORT
P.M.B. 21084, IKEJA-LAGOS, NIGERIA

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PROVISION OF INSURANCE COVER

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian Airspace Management Agency (NAMA), was established by an Act of Parliament NO.48 of May 1999 to provide Safe, Efficient and Economic air navigation services in Nigeria.

The Agency has huge investment in form of:

- ✍ Navigational Aids
- ✍ Radio/STCOM Communication Facilities
- ✍ Surveillance Equipment
- ✍ Other Ancillary Equipment in all the Airports and Enroute Stations in Nigeria.

In our bid to have adequate insurance cover for our facilities and Equipment as outlined above, the Agency is inviting applications from interested and reputable insurance companies to provide insurance cover for year 2006/2007.

SCOPE OF INSURANCE COVER

Insurance coverage is required in the following areas:

- ✍ Fire and Special Perils
- ✍ Motor Insurance (Comprehensive)
- ✍ Money-in-Transit
- ✍ Workmen's Compensation
- ✍ Burglary & Theft
- ✍ Public Liability.

Interested insurance companies should submit the following documents along with their application.

- ✍ Company profile/proposal (including assets base).
- ✍ Evidence of performance in similar areas or field experience.
- ✍ Evidence of payment of Income Tax.
- ✍ Evidence of Registration with NAMA

The application and relevant documents should be forwarded not later than two (2) weeks from the date of this publication to:

The Managing Director/Chief Executive
Nigerian Airspace Management Agency
P. M. B. 21084
Ikeja-Lagos

When Zaria main mar

The boys sing as they work and beads of sweat roll down their bodies. The fine song tends to rise as soon as they make a find, or when they are just a few minutes away from some big discovery. Of course, there was the hope that something valuable, or even a memento, would have survived the big fire of January 16th which had engulfed the very heart of the Sabongari market, destroying some 176 shops in the process. Soon the boys come upon layer upon layer of what looks like black smooth sand, but which was in reality, sugar, as someone swiftly points out, and the boys could not help laughing at this realisation. Now, work stops for a while as they enjoy the moment. Not too far away a group of six school girls are busy rummaging within the debris. Soon Lami gasps and presents a half-

By Tadaferua Ujorha,
Assistant Editor, Features
who was in Zaria

burnt bangle which she promptly puts on her wrist, and begins to pose like a mature lady, to the admiration of her peers. After a while Rabi also finds a necklace, which had been gravely worsted by the fire, and like Lami she puts it on, and the fashion conscious young lady in her, begins to unfold to the delight of her friends.

There is big fun this afternoon among children in the market, and for a while everyone forgets about the recent big fire and its destructive effect.

Thus the Sabongari market fire has given children in the immediate neighbourhood of the market, a chance to make some money by assisting in clearing rubble, and also the space to engage in the 'hunt' for burnt items which can no longer be sold

in the market, but which the children would certainly delight in. This afternoon there is a permanent hammering going on in the market, as traders make efforts to rebuild their burnt shops. The mason is busy, and not a few traders sit by quietly, sometimes consoling themselves, as they try to rise above the major losses they incurred in the recent fire. Alhaji Salisu Bogobiri has always traded in sugar, rice and salt at the market. He tells *Daily Trust* that he needs at least N70,000 to rebuild just one of the two shops of his, which got burnt in the fire. This afternoon, he courageously lends a hand in the reconstruction effort. His younger brothers have also travelled down from the village to assist him in the effort, and as they work, he points at the remains of his salt, sugar, and rice stock, which have all adopted an unhealthy black colour just now.

This seems to be the season of fires in markets around the country. Recently there was a fire at the Falluja market in Yola in which over 300 shops with property worth over hundreds of millions of naira, were burnt to ashes. This fire seemed to have been caused by a generator which was put on as a result of a power outage. Then there was the fire at the Sokoto Central market where all the stalls were razed down during the inferno, in addition to some 200 makeshift stores. Officials have conservatively estimated the loss at about 2.5 billion naira. In both the Falluja and Sokoto fire incidents, the men of the fire service either turned up late, or even when they turned up, they had very little water to assist in dous-



Scene of great destruction in the market

ing the massive flames, which were no doubt fuelled by the harmattan wind.

Alhaji Abas Abdullahi is the Chairman of the Sabongari Main Market Traders Association. According to him there are three types of shops at the Zaria market, which include the permanent shops, temporary shops, and the open space shops. In his view the fire would seem to have begun from the shops located within the open space area, and these are actually illegal makeshift shops which are not even numbered. He said that the fire at the market was not helped by the fact that the open space shops completely blocked the road, which men of the fire service could have used to access the market. In his words: "The fire started

from the shops in the open space and then spread to other areas. We are not comfortable with shops in the open space. This is why we have been arguing for them to move out of the market. They have since occupied the main road which leads into the market. These shops are illegal, we have written to the local government on this matter, but hitherto had not done anything about it.

Now they have realised their mistake, and they are trying to see that the road is cleared of the shops and also tarred as well. Hitherto, it has not been easy for people to drive into the market because of the situation." According to Alhaji Abas Abdullahi, the Kaduna state government, as well as the authorities of the

local government, are coming together to render assistance to the market, and some of this assistance has just started arriving, he indicated to this reporter.

Soon the boys come like black smooth sand as someone swiftly laughing at this realization as they laugh. Now they are busy rummaging and presents a half bangle on her wrist, and admiration of her necklace, which like Lami she puts lady in her, begins



Mrs. Idowu standing in front of her shop.



Market burned



in the event of a fire. Also Governor Ahmed Mohammed Makarfi, who visited the scene of the fire incident, said the market would shortly undergo a facelift that will make all parts of it accessible in case of an emergency. Also it has become very clear that the Sabongari market is congested, and the absence of an access road into the market was what directly led to the consumption of countless shops in the market during the inferno. According to Alhaji Abas Abdullahi, losses arising from the burnt shops amount to 193,393,000 naira, and this figure does not include shops in the open space. He also said that shops in the open space are regarded as illegal structures, and therefore will not be entitled to any form of compensation. On the other hand there traders who had shops which had been officially allocated to them, such as the occupants of permanent and temporary shops, would be entitled to compensation.

The fire incident at the Sabongari market has also drawn attention to the traders

who hail from Ogbomoso which constitute a significant proportion of traders in the market. Mrs Idowu, for instance, arrived the Sabongari market in 1976, and has remained there trading in baby items ever since. Her shop was completely burnt down in the fire incident, and she is a bit hesitant in terms of continuing with the reconstruction of her shop. She would like to receive a clear signal from government in this regard. She also told *Daily Trust* that Yoruba from Ogbomoso have an adventurous trading spirit, and this is why they are found in communities spread across Nigeria, and even in other West African nations, such as Ghana.

Shola Idowu, Mrs. Idowu's daughter, sits quietly nearby, and she tells *Daily Trust* that if someone goes to a town, and not a single person from Ogbomoso can be found there, either living or trading there, then such a place may not be good for business, and such a visitor, based on this observation, should instantly leave. Both mother and daughter sit just outside their shop which had been razed down. Mrs Idowu is stoic, her daughter, a modern picture of her mother when she would have been in her late 20's or thereabouts, is equally stoic. Mrs. Ndokuba, also lost two shops in the fire, and she joins the Idowu's for a photograph.

Hajiya Fati Abdulganiyu also hails from Ogbomoso. She lost two shops in the fire, and she tells *Daily Trust* that her losses amount to 150,000 naira. Like the Idowu's above, Zaria has become home to her, and she is interested in reconstructing her shop, and continuing to trade in Zaria.

He also said that there is a new plan to fix a number of water hydrants and fire extinguishers at strategic spots around the market, which would be of great assistance

ne upon layer upon layer of what looks like sand, but which was in reality, sugar, she points out, and the boys could not help their realisation. Now, work stops for a while as they go too far away a group of six school girls are sitting within the debris. Soon Lami gasps as she finds a burnt bangle which she promptly puts on and begins to pose like a fashion lady to the delight of her peers. After a while she also finds a pair of shoes that had been gravely burnt, she picks it up and puts it on, and the fashion-conscious young girls begin to unfold to the delight of her friends.



More signs of the devastation caused by the fire.

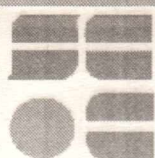


Alhaji Abas Abdullahi, Chairman, Sabongari Market Traders Association pointing towards the spot where the fire started



A typical makeshift stall made of wood. They are speedily consumed in the event of a fire.





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SCC NIGERIA LIMITED expresses its appreciation and gratitude to His Excellency Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, GCFR, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for your continued support for the Pipe Manufacturing Industry and achievement of receiving the American Petroleum Institute (API) certification, International Standards Organization (ISO) 9001 - 2000 which you graciously unveiled the monograms.

These monograms are symbols of international quality and achievement which represent the vision of the President and the desire of all Nigerians. Without your vision and support this dream of an international standard Nigerian Pipe Manufacturing Industry will not be realized. **THANK YOU.**

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- Thank You, Mr. President**
- Thank You, Honourable Minister of Water Resources**
- Thank You, Members of the National Assembly**
- Thank You, Members of the Federal Executive Council**
- Thank you, our Distinguished Invited Guests**



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KANO TRUST

Dantata advises govt on investment

Kano State government has been advised to shed policy considerations in its investment policies in order to encourage people to invest and enhance economic growth of the state.

A businessman in Kano State, Alhaji Dr. Aminu Dantata, gave the advice at a forum in Kano State.

Alhaji Aminu Dantata said that political considerations had reduced the investment of the public in industrial activities.

He also enjoined the government to step up efforts to improve social services so that the public can be comfortable in investing their money in various projects.

The businessman expressed regret that the state has been able to deal with industrial challenges, while the North is lagging behind.

He pointed out that it is part of Sardauna's legacy for the North to attain high economic growth, but unfortunately the reverse is the case as a result of our industrial and commercial activities have tended to decline.

Alhaji Aminu Dantata was commissioner for commerce, industry and cooperatives in 1967 to 1970 in Kano State, and observed that the problem of consistency which led to revoking and re-awarding of contracts had also tended against viable projects.

He pointed out that there were "viable plans for our time which were not executed."

A participant at the Forum who was former commissioner for commerce in Kano State, Alhaji Zubairu

Abdulhameed Danbatta, called on the state government to site factories in villages where raw materials are in abundant and also advised government to improve funding of cooperatives to enhance grassroots development.

Earlier, the current Commissioner for Commerce and Industry, Alhaji Ahmed Ibrahim Yakasai, disclosed that the forum was initiated for the former commissioners of commerce to look into the problems militating against Industrial Development in the state.

He pointed out that the present administration is committed to Industrial and commercial development of the state and have stepped up efforts to enhance the Dry Port and Free Trade Zone Projects in the state.



Some hernia patients waiting to be operated on under the Kano State hernia campaign at Bichi General Hospital...recently

Shekarau inaugurates Kano economic summit

Kano State government has inaugurated a 40-man committee to conduct Kano State Economic Summit in March, 2006 even as 1.5m naira has been released as take-off grant of the project.

The Kano state summit is meant, to reposition the industrial and commercial status of the state.

The Acting Secretary to the State Government (SSG) and Head of Service, Malam Rabi'u Zakari Yau, who represented the governor at the occasion, said that the economic summit would go along way in rejuvenating the commercial status of the state and called on the members of the committee to justify the confidence reposed on them by working assiduously to achieve the set objectives.

Speaking earlier, the Commissioner for Commerce, industry and Cooperatives who is also Chairman Steering Committee of the summit, Alhaji Ahmad Ibrahim Yakasai, noted that the economic status of the once buoyant commercial city has declined tremendously.

He noted that high rate of unemployment, displacement of petty traders, lack of electricity supply, inconsistent economic

By Jamilah Nuhu Musa, Correspondent, (Kano)

policies by the federal government, problem of transportation and lack of peace and stability which has resulted from ethnic and religious crisis in the past has drastically reduced economic development.

...urges accelerated immunisation

Kano State government has reaffirmed the need for new innovations aimed at accelerating immunization in the country to curb the menace of polio virus and other related diseases affecting humanity, especially children.

Disclosing this during an opening ceremony of a two day retreat on Innovative Ways of Accelerating Immunization Activities, organized by the National Programme on Immunization, the state governor, Malam Ibrahim Shekarau, observed that reports indicate that poliomyelitis and a host of other child killer diseases are yet to be eradicated.

Shekarau also stated that government has contributed immensely in bringing to an end the controversy on oral polio vaccine and in mobilizing the public for intensive National Immunization

Alhaji Ahmad Ibrahim Yakasai said that the present administration could not continue to allow this to happen. It had therefore accepted the proposal of the Economic Summit which was the initiative of the Kano Peace and Development Initiative (KAPEDI).

In his own comments,

By Aliyu S. Machika, Correspondent, (Kano)

Days (NIDs) in 2005 through series of programmes and hosting of synchronized cross border workshop for religious leaders and traditional rulers to ensure success of the programme.

Represented by the acting secretary to the state government and head of service, Malam Rabi'u Zakariyya'u, the governor explained that six out of the Millennium Development Goals are health related activities and four of these goals can be achieved through effective immunization.

He called on the new leadership of the NPI to ensure that vaccines and other logistics are made available to all health centers and sensitize the populace for service acceptability as well as involve all stakeholders and grassroots communi-

ties in carrying out their programmes and activities. The governor however charged the NPI to come up with innovative strategy with a view to achieving polio eradication this year and to raise routine immunization to sustainable levels across the state and in the country as a whole.

He noted that KAPEDI saw the need to redeploy the resources to the devel-

...urges accelerated immunisation

opment of the state.

Dr. Shamsudeen Usman who is also chairman of KAPEDI said that the challenge before the committee members would be how to transform the lives of the people in line with the recognition of the present governments' achievements with a view to solidifying its success.

Earlier in her response, the Coordinator/ Chief executive, National programme on Immunization, Dr. Edugie A. Abebe, stated that she assumed office over two weeks ago with a mandate to achieve accelerated polio eradication, higher level of routine immunization coverage within the shortest time.

According to her, Nigeria remains the major source of wild polio (WPV) globally with almost 700 in circulation, adding that retreat is to provide opportunity for stakeholders and re-

opment of the state.

Dr. Shamsudeen Usman who is also chairman of KAPEDI said that the challenge before the committee members would be how to transform the lives of the people in line with the recognition of the present governments' achievements with a view to solidifying its success.

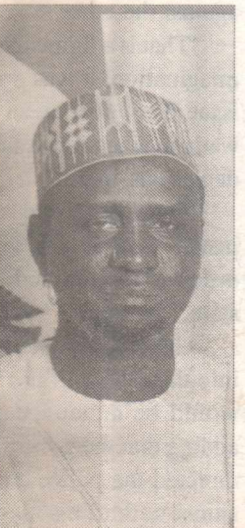
...urges accelerated immunisation

spected opinion leaders to rub minds on ways of reaching children with polio vaccines.

The Nigeria Muslim Forum United Kingdom (UMFUK) is an umbrella of Nigerian Muslims in the United Kingdom for Mutual Discourse based on Islamic injunction.



Prof. Eytayo Lambo, Minister of Health



Shekarau

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EKO TRUST

Collapsed Building: LSHA summons landlord, govt official

Lagos State House of Assembly has summoned the owner of the building which collapsed last week at Amukoko in Ajeromi/Ifelodun area of the state.

It also summoned officials of the Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development to appear before it next week.

The four-storey building, housing a clinic, had on Jan. 20 collapsed, killing all the occupants, including a day-old baby. Moving a motion under matters of urgent public importance, Assembly

Stories by Olumide Bajulaiye, Correspondent, Lagos

man, Kolawole Taiwo (Ajeromi-Ifelodun 1), blamed the use of sub-standard materials and unqualified contractors for the spate of collapsed buildings in the state.

"We are all aware of the incessant collapse of buildings in the state; and we have to find a lasting solution to it," he said.

Contributing, Assemblyman, Abdulateef Shitta-Bey, expressed worry over the rising cases of collapsed build-

ings in the Lagos metropolis in the last four years. He urged the state government to enforce quality control in

the building of structures.

Shitta-Bey also called on government at all levels to procure necessary equipment

for effective disaster management.

Julius Berger Nigeria Plc, a multi-national construction

company, had on several occasions used its equipment during disasters in the

Ajah crisis: LASG sets up 5-man judicial panel

Lagos State government, on Monday, set-up a five man judicial panel of inquiry into the Ajah land dispute in which many lives were lost, even as the state House of Assembly commiserates with the families of last Friday's collapsed building at Amukoko area of the state in which all the occupants

lost their lives.

It also set up another panel of enquiry to look into the Kosoko Chieftaincy crisis on the Island with a view to resolving the dispute amicably.

The State Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Mr. Dele Alake, who announced the setting-up of the panels said the measure

became necessary following the intractable land dispute that had degenerated into break down of law and order.

He said Governor Bola Tinubu of Lagos State who approved the establishment of the panel at the Executive Council meeting on Monday has also directed the state Commissioner of Police, Mr. Emmanuel Adebayo, to draft police officers to the area in order to restore permanent peace and order.

Members of the panel on Ajah, according to Mr. Alake include Justice Morenikeji Onolaja, Chairman, Professor I. O. Smith, Mr. E. I. Alaba, Mr. Debo Adeshina, Editor, *Guardian* Newspapers and Mrs. Nike Nedumnee Ransome-Kuti.

The panel is expected to submit its reports within 30 days starting from yesterday to the state government for further action.

According to Mr. Alake,

...appeals for calm

Lagos State government has charged the feuding parties in the Ajah land dispute and the Kosoko chieftaincy title to sheathe their swords and allow peace to reign.

"This is the resolution of the State Executive Council (SEC) at its weekly meeting," the Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Mr. Dele Alake, told newsmen on Monday at the Bagauda Kaltho Press Centre.

He explained that contrary to insinuations in some quarters, the state government has no interest in any of the party. "The matters are family affairs. It is when they tended to develop into a dangerous trend that may affect the peace of the state that government decided to wade in. "It is the duty of the government to maintain law and order in the state," he said.

On the Ajah land dispute, Alake announced that a judicial panel of inquiry, headed by Justice Morenikeji Onolaja of the Ikeja High Court, had been constituted by the SEC.

"The panel, whose work is with immediate effect, has 30 days to submit its report to

the reports of the panel would be considered at an executive meeting before government would come out with a white paper which would be binding on all the warring parties.

On the Kosoko chieftaincy crisis the commissioner stated that Governor Tinubu has also approved the setting up of a panel to look into the dispute with a view to resolving the crisis.

His words: "Lagos State government hereby appeals to all parties regarding the Kosoko chieftaincy title in Lagos to cease fire, sheathe their swords, and cause Governor Tinubu to set up a panel of enquiry to resolve the knotty issue."

"In the interim, Governor Tinubu has also directed the state Commissioner of Police, Mr. Emmanuel Adebayo, to draft his men to the Island to maintain law and order.

the state government, said.

He explained that at the end of its terms of reference the panel would look into the scope and content of the pending Supreme Court judgment delivered on the dispute as well as inter-

Alake added that the state government had also issued a letter to the feuding parties in the Ajah land dispute to maintain peace and await the findings of the panel.

On the Kosoko chieftaincy matter, he explained that the state government was alarmed by rumours that it was portending a particular campaign against the other.

"That is a figment of imagination; it was a dangerous issue. The government decided to wade in when it was a dangerous trend.

"Ours is to ensure that justice is done and law and order is maintained in the state," he said.

Alake said a panel of inquiry into the causes of the collapse would be announced, adding that the government directed the police commissioner to draft his men to maintain peace and



A payloader clearing the debris of the collapsed building at Amukoko Area of Lagos...recently

Pix: Oladipupo Odunewu

Tinubu unveils plans to tackle environmental problems

Governor Bola Tinubu of Lagos State Tuesday disclosed that the state has mapped out plans to evolve a lasting solution to environmental problems in the state.

The governor stated this while flagging off a two day stakeholders seminar on Review and Harmonisation of Environmental Laws held at the state auditorium, Alausa Ikeja.

Tinubu therefore, urged Lagos residents to imbibe the culture of cleanliness to complement government's efforts.

Making the remarks at the conference jointly organized by the Legal Research and Resource Devel-

opment Centre, Tinubu stated that his administration, through the Ministry of Environment had been paying serious attention to the environmental problems.

The governor, who was represented by his deputy, Mr. Olufemi Pedro, said the stakeholders' conference was put together to harmonise the environmental laws of Lagos so as to fashion out a better method that would help in transforming the state into a cleaner Lagos State.

He lamented that the state is confronted with poor waste management system, destitution, among others, saying there was the need to address these issues.

Tinubu however, said he was happy that the imple-

mentation of the reviewed Private Sector Participation (PSP) programme in the state is yielding positive results, adding that the habit of dumping refuse in drainages, channels was fast given way to the culture of bagging.

His words: "We have begun to realise our dream of a clean Lagos State. We have taken the right steps and are moving forward", he said, adding that the state had begun to receive commitment from the federal government towards the development of the Lagos Mega city.

Governor Tinubu stated that he was optimistic that the conference would fashion out workable blueprint for the government to work

with as well as set a platform for Lagos residents.

Speaking earlier at the event, the Commissioner for Environment, Mr. Tunji Bello, said the purpose of the conference was to facilitate the input of all stakeholders in the process to ensure a thoroughness of the process of reform and foster a sense of ownership of law to be effective.

Mr. Bello decried that over the years, various legal interventions had been adopted to address some of these challenges, noting that the environment in the state was inadequate.

He urged the participants to use the opportunity maximally and participate fully in the deliberations for sustainable development in the state.

Our Government is not Violent

BEING A SPECIAL BROADCAST BY HIS EXCELLENCY ALH MUHAMMAD DANJUMA GOJE, EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR OF GOMBE STATE, ON TUESDAY 24TH JANUARY, 2006.

Assalamu Alaikum,

Fellow Citizens of Gombe State,

I wish to extend our sincere thanks to Almighty Allah (SWT) for seeing us through the last three years of our stewardship.

During this period, we have witnessed the prevailing economic recession in the world, which has led to a sharp decline in the price of oil, a major source of revenue for our state.

Despite these challenges, we have managed to maintain a steady pace of development, particularly in the areas of infrastructure, health, and education.

One of our major achievements has been the construction of a road network, which has improved access to basic necessities of life for our citizens.

This has always been the focus of our administration and that also forms the basis of our development strategy.

We have also been successful in addressing the security challenges that have plagued our state, particularly the activities of some individuals who go about terrorizing people in the name of *Kalare*.

These individuals, who are often sponsored by some groups, have been a major threat to the peace and stability of our state.

As you are all aware, the Government of Gombe State, under the leadership of His Excellency Alh Muhammad Danjuma Goje, has taken a firm stand against these activities.

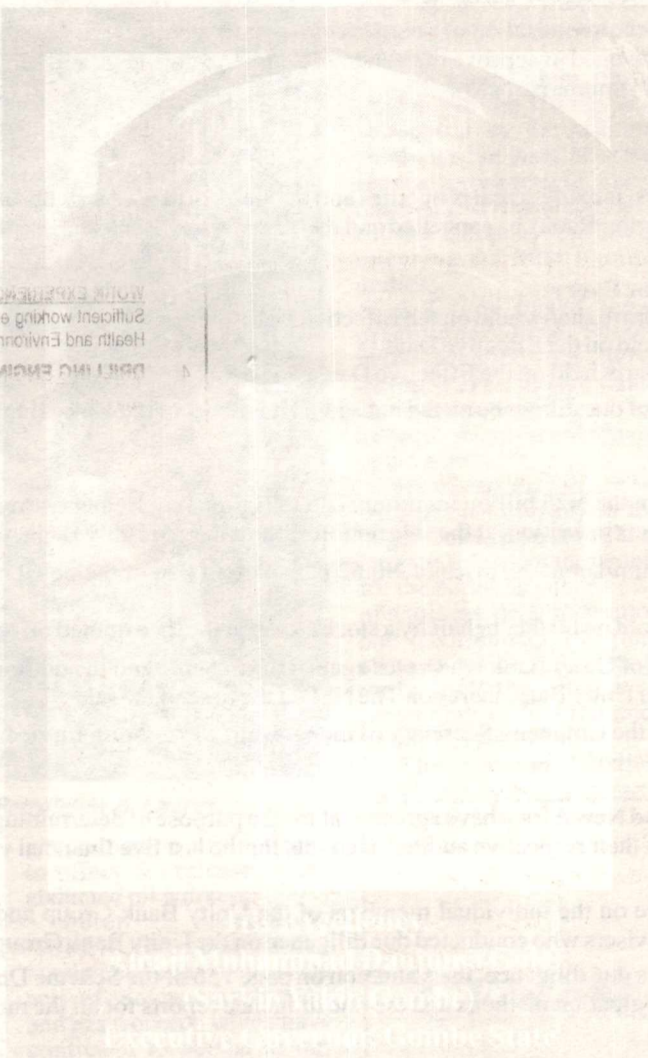
We have established a special group called *Kalare* to deal with these individuals and their sponsors. We have also strengthened our security agencies to ensure that they are fully equipped to handle such situations.

We have also been successful in addressing the economic challenges that have plagued our state. We have managed to maintain a steady pace of development, particularly in the areas of infrastructure, health, and education.

One of our major achievements has been the construction of a road network, which has improved access to basic necessities of life for our citizens. This has always been the focus of our administration and that also forms the basis of our development strategy.

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These individuals, who are often sponsored by some groups, have been a major threat to the peace and stability of our state. We have established a special group called *Kalare* to deal with these individuals and their sponsors.



have earlier on sworn that we will not deter the law enforcement agencies from discharging their lawful duties. Government has been living up to expectations in terms of assisting the security agents, especially on cases that border on the issue of *Kalare* and we shall continue to do that.

I wish to reiterate my earlier directive to the Police and other security agents to, without any further delay, ensure that all the perpetrators of these acts are apprehended.

We shall not tolerate any form of terrorism and we shall not allow our citizens to be terrorized by these individuals.

We shall also ensure that our citizens are fully equipped to handle such situations. We have established a special group called *Kalare* to deal with these individuals and their sponsors.

We have also been successful in addressing the economic challenges that have plagued our state. We have managed to maintain a steady pace of development, particularly in the areas of infrastructure, health, and education.

One of our major achievements has been the construction of a road network, which has improved access to basic necessities of life for our citizens.

construction of road network, agriculture and other basic necessities of life.

This has always been the focus of our administration and that also forms the basis of our development strategy.

We have also been successful in addressing the security challenges that have plagued our state, particularly the activities of some individuals who go about terrorizing people in the name of *Kalare*.

These individuals, who are often sponsored by some groups, have been a major threat to the peace and stability of our state.

We have established a special group called *Kalare* to deal with these individuals and their sponsors. We have also strengthened our security agencies to ensure that they are fully equipped to handle such situations.

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One of our major achievements has been the construction of a road network, which has improved access to basic necessities of life for our citizens.

Wassalam.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT FROM THE FINANCIAL ADVISERS TO THE SHAREHOLDERS OF UNITY BANK, BANK OF THE NORTH, NNB AND NEW AFRICA

05 January 2006

To the Shareholders of:
 Unity Bank Plc
 Bank of The North Limited
 NNB International Bank Plc and
 New Africa Bank Plc

Dear Sir/Madam

PROPOSED MERGER OF UNITY BANK, BANK OF THE NORTH, NNB AND NEW AFRICA

The Directors of Unity Bank, Bank of The North, NNB and New Africa have been holding discussions on a proposal to merge all the assets, liabilities and undertakings of the four banks. The banks signed Merger Agreements on 08 and 14 December 2005 to merge the four banks. The merger will be effected through a Scheme of Merger under Section 100 of the Investments and Securities Act No 45 of 1999.

As stated in the joint letter from the Chairmen of your banks on Pages 14 to 17 of the Scheme document, Intercity Bank recently concluded a merger with CentrePoint Bank Plc, First Interstate Bank Plc, Pacific Bank Limited, Societe Bancaire Nigeria Limited and Tropical Commercial Bank Plc pursuant to a Scheme of Merger dated 16 November 2005. That Scheme which was approved by the shareholders of the Unity Bank Group at their respective Court-Ordered meetings on 05 December 2005 has received the requisite approvals of SEC and CBN. It became effective and binding on the shareholders of the Unity Bank Group on 22 December 2005, when it was sanctioned by the Court. As part of that merger process, the shareholders of Intercity Bank also approved the bank's adoption of its current name.

The joint letter from the Chairmen of your banks conveys the recommendation of your Directors that you vote in favour of the Scheme at the separate Court-Ordered Meetings of Unity Bank, Bank of The North, NNB and New Africa that will be convened to approve the Scheme. Your Directors have authorised us as Financial Advisers to write to you to explain, on their behalf, the provisions and effects of the Scheme, which we now summarise below:

1. THE PROPOSAL

(a) Consideration

It is proposed that all the assets, liabilities and undertakings, including real properties and intellectual property rights of the Transferring Banks be transferred to Unity Bank without further act or deed, the entire share capitals of the Transferring Banks be cancelled and the Transferring Banks be dissolved without winding up. In consideration for these transfers, the holders of the Transferring Shares shall initially:

| Receive | In Exchange For Every: |
|---------------------|---|
| 5 Unity Bank shares | 2 Bank of The North shares held on the Effective Date |
| 4 Unity Bank shares | 5 NNB shares held on the Effective Date |
| 1 Unity Bank share | 5 New Africa shares held on the Effective Date |

This initial allotment may be adjusted at the conclusion of due diligence on the individual members of the Unity Bank Group and the Transferring Banks as at 21 December 2005, as provided in the Scheme.

(b) Provision for Dissenting Shareholders

As the object of this Scheme is to enable the banks attain the ₦25 billion minimum capitalisation requirement, arrangements have been made for any holder of the Transferring Shares who votes against the Scheme and in addition elects in writing, at the sole option of the enlarged Unity Bank, to:

- be paid cash for all of the Transferring Shares held by him/her at the price of ₦0.62 per share in lieu of the new Unity Bank shares that would otherwise have been allotted to him/her pursuant to the Scheme; or
- be allotted Unity Bank shares which shares will then be sold on his/her behalf by a stockbroker at the then quoted price of Unity Bank shares on The NSE at the time of such sale.

Arrangements have also been made for any shareholder of Unity Bank who votes against the Scheme and in addition elects in writing, to have his/her Unity Bank shares sold on his/her behalf by a stockbroker, at the then quoted price of Unity Bank shares on The NSE at the time of the sale.

The written notice of such election must be received by the Company Secretary of the relevant bank within fourteen (14) days of the relevant Court-Ordered Meeting or within such time as the Court may direct.

(c) Post-Merger Due Diligence Share Adjustments

The Directors of Unity Bank, Bank of The North, NNB and New Africa have agreed that for the purpose of determining an interim share exchange ratio for the Scheme, Unity Bank and the Transferring Banks shall be valued on the basis of their respective audited accounts for the last five financial years and Intercity Bank's due diligence report as at 31 March 2005.

The Directors have also agreed to conduct due diligence on the individual members of the Unity Bank Group and the Transferring Banks as at 21 December 2005. The due diligence shall be performed by the same due diligence advisers who conducted due diligence on the Unity Bank Group.

It is intended that, within a month of the conclusion of this due diligence, the Valuation on page 156 of the Scheme Document will be recomputed for all the members of the Unity Bank Group and the Transferring Banks, using the same valuation methods and the due diligence reports for all the members of the Unity Bank Group and the Transferring Banks, which shall be the final valuation for the Scheme.

The applicable share adjustments for members of the Transferring Banks are expected to be effected before share certificates for new Unity Bank shares are despatched to the Existing Shareholders of the Transferring Banks on the Effective Date of the Scheme.

The Directors have agreed that any share adjustments to be made to CentrePoint, First Interstate, Pacific Bank, Societe Bancaire and TCB as a result of the recomputation of the valuation of the Unity Bank Group will be effected to the Existing Shareholders of the CentrePoint, First Interstate, Pacific Bank, Societe Bancaire and TCB on the Effective Date of the merger of the Unity Bank Group.

(d) Post-Merger Compensation

Under the terms of the Merger Agreements, the Banks have made several representations and warranties to one another, in reliance on which the Banks have entered into the Merger. The Directors of the banks have agreed that if within two years of the Effective Date of the merger of the Unity Bank Group, any of the representations made by any of the pre-merger banks is found to be untrue or there is a breach of any of the warranties, and such misrepresentation or breach of warranty has resulted in a loss of a value exceeding ₦10 million, the Directors of the post-merger Unity Bank shall effect further share adjustments to compensate the pre-merger shareholders of the bank(s) (not in breach).

The Directors have also agreed that all the new performing loans of all the banks for which full provisions had already been made by the relevant bank will be transferred to the management companies for the benefit of the Existing Shareholders of such banks.

In the event that it becomes necessary to effect post-merger share adjustments, the number of shares to be issued to the Existing Shareholders of the Transferring Banks will be determined by reference to the Scheme net asset valuation.

(e) Dividend and Other Rights

The new ordinary shares of Unity Bank, which will be issued to the holders of the Transferring Shares, shall form a single class with the existing issued ordinary shares of Unity Bank. Any dividend, bonus issue and other distributions paid and made on the new shares.

(f) Conditions Precedent

The Scheme will become effective and binding on all shareholders of Unity Bank, Bank of The North, NNB and New Africa:

- it is ratified by a majority representing three-fourths in value of the holders of the shares of Unity Bank, Bank of The North, NNB and New Africa present and voting at a meeting or by proxy at the separate meetings of the shareholders of the respective banks to be convened by the Order of the Court;
- SEC approves the terms and conditions of the Scheme as agreed to by the required majority of the shareholders of the banks;
- The Court sanctions the Scheme with orders to the effect that:
 - All the assets, liabilities and undertakings, including real properties and intellectual property rights of the Transferring Banks be transferred to Unity Bank without further act or deed as provided in the Scheme;
 - new Unity Bank shares shall initially be issued, allotted and credited as fully paid to the holders of the Transferring Shares on the basis of:
 - 5 new Unity Bank shares for every 2 Bank of The North shares held by them on the Effective Date;
 - 4 new Unity Bank shares for every 5 NNB shares held by them on the Effective Date;
 - 1 new Unity Bank share for every 5 New Africa shares held by them on the Effective Date;
 - The entire share capitals of the Transferring Banks be cancelled;
 - The contracts of employment of all employees of the Transferring Banks be transferred to Unity Bank;
 - All legal proceedings, claims and litigation, instituted by or against the Transferring Banks be continued by or against Unity Bank;
 - The Transferring Banks be dissolved without winding up.

2. SHAREHOLDERS' REPRESENTATIVES

The post-merger share adjustments referred to in Clauses 1(c) and (d) above are expected to occur after the Effective Date of the Scheme when the banks have been dissolved.

ceased to exist. Therefore, the Directors and your Financial Advisers considered it necessary to appoint separate shareholders' representatives to protect the interests of the pre-merger shareholders of each of the banks.

The following appointed shareholders' representatives would represent, monitor and enforce the rights of the shareholders of the respective banks in respect of any post-merger share adjustments and other post-merger issues to be made pursuant to the Scheme and the Merger Agreements:

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Unity Bank* | Pannell Kerr Forster, Olaniwun Ajayi, Cashcraft Trust Company Limited, Crown Flour Mills Limited, Amek Holdings Limited and Kabo Holdings Limited |
| Bank of The North | Aminu Ibrahim & Co and Muhtari Dangana & Co |
| NNB | Frontier Capital Limited |
| New Africa | HDA Audit |

* Pannell Kerr Forster, Olaniwun Ajayi, Cashcraft Trust Company Limited, Crown Flour Mills Limited, Amek Holdings Limited and Kabo Holdings Limited are representatives to the former shareholders of Intercity, Centre Point, First Interstate, Pacific Bank, Societe Bancaire and TCB respectively.

3. FINANCIAL EFFECTS OF THE SCHEME

As provided in the Scheme, holders of the Transferring Shares shall initially

| Receive | In Exchange For Every: |
|--------------------|---|
| 5 Unity Bank share | 2 Bank of The North shares held on the Effective Date |
| 4 Unity Bank share | 5 NNB shares held on the Effective Date |
| 1 Unity Bank share | 5 New Africa shares held on the Effective Date |

Based on the valuation methods approved by the Directors of the banks to determine the share exchange ratio for the banks and explained in detail in the Basis of Valuation on Page 156 of the Scheme Document the merger is expected to ensure that the earnings and dividend prospects of the shareholders of Unity Bank, Bank of The North, NNB and New Africa are improved as a result of the Scheme, especially given the expected synergies from the combination of the operations of the banks.

4. BENEFITS OF THE SCHEME

The enlarged Bank will combine the inherent strengths of the Unity Bank Group, Bank of The North, NNB and New Africa and should be well positioned to compete effectively in the banking industry, increasing value for the shareholders of the four banks. The merger is expected to confer the enlarged Bank with the following benefits:

- (i) A strong strategic presence in the South South region, Western Union Direct Agency and a clearing bank for The Central Securities Clearing System Limited of The NSE.
- (ii) The rescue and revitalization of a national banking franchise that is of special significance to Northern Nigeria and can continue to serve as a major catalyst for development in Northern states.
- (iii) The enlarged Bank's geographical reach will truly extend across the length and breadth of Nigeria.

5. PLANS FOR EMPLOYEES AND DIRECTORS

As from the Effective Date, all the existing contracts of employments of all employees of Bank of The North, NNB and New Africa shall be transferred to Unity Bank and such employees shall become employees of Unity Bank.

The banks have confirmed that save for requirement of applicable law, gross incompetence and dismissal arising from the normal course of employee-employer relationship, the officers and employees of the banks shall not be retrenched or laid off for a period of 12 months from the Effective Date of the merger of the Unity Bank Group.

However, where any employee does not wish to continue in the employment of Unity Bank after the merger, such employee will be entitled to obtain the full terminal benefits due under his/her existing contract of service. It is intended that the interest of the banks' employees, which include their retirement benefits, will not be prejudiced by the Merger.

Upon the Merger becoming effective all the directors of Bank of The North, NNB and New Africa shall cease to hold office in their respective banks. The directors of Bank of The North, NNB and New Africa are aware that only those of them that are already on the Board of Unity Bank or are subsequently elected to the Board of post-merger Unity Bank shall be on Board of the post-merger Unity Bank.

6. CAPITAL GAINS TAX

No capital gains tax is payable on disposal of shares by virtue of section 31(1) of the Capital Gains Tax Act Cap. 42 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 1990 as amended. However, the shareholders have been advised that, Section 32 of the CGT Act specifically exempts from capital gains tax any gains made as a result of a merger in which one of the merging entities loses its identity.

If you are in doubt about your tax position, we advise that you consult your professional adviser.

7. MEETINGS TO APPROVE THE SCHEME AND VOTING RIGHTS

Separate meetings of the shareholders of Unity Bank, Bank of The North, NNB and New Africa will be convened by the Order of the Court for the purpose of considering, and if thought fit, approving the Scheme. At the Court-Ordered Meetings, voting will be by poll so each shareholder present in person or by proxy will be entitled to one vote for every share held. The statutory majority required at each Court-Ordered Meeting is a majority representing three-fourths in value of the shares of members present and voting in person or by proxy.

Notices of the Court Ordered Meetings are set out on Pages 168 to 175 of the Scheme document.

8. ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

You will find enclosed with the Scheme document, the appropriate Proxy Form for your bank's Court-Ordered Meeting. It is particularly important that as many votes as possible are cast at the Court-Ordered Meetings so that the Court may be satisfied that the result of the meeting is a fair representation of shareholders' opinion. Whether or not you intend to attend the Court-Ordered Meeting, you are urged to complete and sign the Proxy Form and return it in accordance with the instructions thereon, as soon as possible and in any event not later than 24 hours before the time fixed for the relevant meeting.

Please note that if you do not give a specific voting instruction on the resolution to be considered at the Court-Ordered Meeting by placing a mark in the appropriate box, your proxy will be free to vote or abstain as he or she thinks fit on any modifications to the Scheme or any other business that may properly come before the Court-Ordered Meeting.

Please note also that the lodging of a Proxy Form will not prevent you from attending the relevant meeting, or any adjournment thereof, and voting in person should you subsequently decide to do so. However, in such circumstances, your proxy may not be entitled to attend or vote.

9. SETTLEMENT

Upon the Scheme becoming effective, which is expected to occur on 07 February 2006, certificates covering the Transferring Shares will cease to be of value. Share certificates for new Unity Bank shares will be dispatched, not later than 21 days after the registration of the new Unity Bank shares with SEC, to the holders of the Transferring Shares (except those who have elected to receive a monetary consideration) whose names appear on the Register of Shareholders of Bank of The North, NNB and New Africa at the close of business on the Terminal Date.

10. FURTHER INFORMATION

We urge all shareholders to read the whole of the Scheme document and not just rely on the key and summarised information included in this Explanatory Statement or in other parts of the Scheme document. Your attention is drawn to the information contained in the following appendices to the Scheme document:

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Appendix I: | Further information regarding Unity Bank and reports relating to its profit forecasts on Pages 28 to 54. |
| Appendix II: | Further information regarding Bank of The North and reports relating to its profit forecasts on Pages 55 to 83. |
| Appendix III: | Further information regarding NNB and reports relating to its profit forecasts on Pages 84 to 119. |
| Appendix IV: | Further information regarding New Africa and reports relating to its profit forecasts on Pages 120 to 146. |
| Appendix V: | Pro-forma statement of shareholding, Profit and Loss Accounts and Balance Sheet of the enlarged Unity Bank on Pages 147 to 149. |
| Appendix VI: | Statutory and General Information on Pages 150 to 155. |

Basis of Valuation: Page 156.

11. RECOMMENDATION

Your Directors and we, the Financial Advisers to your banks, have considered the terms and conditions of the Scheme as well as the benefits thereof. We believe that the terms of the Scheme are fair and that the merger should result in enhanced value to shareholders of all the Banks. We therefore recommend that you vote in favour of the resolutions that will be proposed at your respective Court-Ordered Meetings.

Yours faithfully

Anthony Eze
DEAP Capital Management & Trust Limited

Atedo NA Peterside OON
Investment Banking & Trust Company Plc

Victor Ojienwa
Partnership In

Akeem Oyewale
IBTC Asset Management Limited

IN THE FEDERAL HIGH COURT OF NIGERIA

HOLDEN AT LAGOS

SUIT NO. FHC/L/CS/54/2006

IN THE MATTER OF THE INVESTMENTS AND SECURITIES ACT NO 35 OF 1999

AND

IN THE MATTER OF AN APPLICATION UNDER SECTION 100 THERE OF

AND

IN RE:

1. UNITY BANK PLC (RC 94524) and
2. BANK OF THE NORTH LIMITED (RC 2000) and
3. NNB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC (RC 7554) and
4. NEWAFRICA BANK PLC (RC 84254)

MEETING OF THE HOLDERS OF THE FULLY PAID ORDINARY SHARES OF UNITY BANK PLC

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that by an Order of the Federal High Court, Lagos (hereinafter called "the Court") dated the 25th day of January 2006 made in the above matter, the Court has directed that a Meeting of the holders of the fully paid ordinary shares of Unity Bank PLC be called.

The Meeting will be held at NICO Hotel, Lagos, on the 27th day of January 2006 at 11:00 AM which place and time all the aforesaid resolutions have been passed as a resolution at the meeting.

- That:
1. this Meeting approves the purposes of identified modifications of the Scheme of Merger that the Court may think fit to impose;
 2. notwithstanding the provisions of the Scheme, in consideration of the rights of the Transferring Banks;
 3. Pannell Kerr Forster, Olaniwun Ajayi, Cashcraft Trust Company Limited, Crown Flour Mills Limited, Amek Holdings Limited and Kabir Holdings Limited be appointed to represent, monitor and enforce the rights of the shareholders of the Bank in respect of any post-merger share adjustments and other post-merger issues to be made pursuant to the Scheme and the Merger Agreements; and
 4. the Board of Directors of Unity Bank be and is hereby authorised to take the actions required to put the Scheme into effect.

By the order of the Court has appointed Alhaji Falalu Belle OFR (Sanni Bai Zazzu), or failing him, Alhaji Latif Shuhu Dikko, or failing them both, a Director of the Bank appointed by the Directors at the Meeting to act as Chairman of the said Meeting and has directed the Chairman to report the results thereof to the Court.

The said Scheme of Merger will be subject to the sanction of the Court.

Shareholders may vote in person or they may appoint another person, whether a shareholder or not, to attend and vote in their stead. In the case of joint holders, the vote of the senior holder who tenders a vote, whether in person or by proxy, will be accepted to the exclusion of the votes of the other joint holders, and for this purpose seniority will be determined by the order in which the names stand in the Register of Members of the Bank.

A Proxy Form is being sent to each shareholder. It is requested that the executed Proxy Form be lodged at the office of the Company Secretary as shown on the Proxy Form, not less than 24 hours before the time appointed for the Meeting. Please note that the lodging of a Proxy Form does not prevent you from attending the meeting and voting in person should you so wish. However, if you attend the meeting in person, your proxy will not be permitted to attend or vote.

Dated this 25th day of January 2006

OLANIWUN AJAYI
4th Floor
UBA House
57 Marina
Lagos

...ent...
...the...
...on...
...ship...

SOLICITORS TO UNITY BANK PLC

"...global leadership..."

**IN THE FEDERAL HIGH COURT OF NIGERIA
HOLDEN AT LAGOS**

SUIT NO. FHC/L/CS/54/2006

IN THE MATTER OF THE INVESTMENTS AND SECURITIES ACT NO 45 OF 1999

AND

IN THE MATTER OF AN APPLICATION UNDER SECTION 100 THEREOF

AND

IN RE:

1. UNITY BANK PLC (RC 94524) and
2. BANK OF THE NORTH LIMITED (RC 2000) and
3. NNB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC (RC 7554) and
4. NEWAFRICA BANK PLC (RC 84254)

**MEETING OF THE HOLDERS OF THE FULLY PAID ORDINARY SHARES OF
BANK OF THE NORTH LIMITED**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that by an Order of the Federal High Court, Lagos (hereinafter called "the Court") dated the 25th day of January 2006 made in the above matter, the Court has directed that a Meeting of the holders of the fully paid ordinary shares of Bank of The North Limited (hereinafter called "Bank of The North" or "the Bank") be convened for the purpose of considering and if thought fit, approving (with or without modification) a Scheme of Merger between Unity Bank Plc, Bank of The North Limited, NNB International Bank Plc and New Africa Bank Plc. The Scheme is explained in detail in the Explanatory Statement on Pages 18 to 27 of the Scheme Document.

The Meeting will be held at Kano Hall, NICON Hilton Hotel, 1 Aguiyi Ironsi Street, Maitama, Abuja on Friday, the 27th day of January 2006 at 11.00 a.m. at which place and time all the aforesaid shareholders are requested to attend. The following sub-joined resolution will be proposed and if thought fit passed as a resolution at the meeting:

That:

1. this Meeting approves the Scheme of Merger dated the 5th day of January 2006, a print of which has been submitted to the Meeting and for the purposes of identification subscribed by the Chairman, and that the Directors be and are hereby authorised to consent to any modifications of the Scheme of Merger that the Central Bank of Nigeria, the Securities & Exchange Commission or the Federal High Court, may think fit to impose and approve;
2. all the assets, liabilities and undertakings of the Bank, including all its real properties and intellectual property rights, be transferred to Unity Bank Plc without further act or deed in consideration for the issue and allotment of shares in Unity Bank Plc to the shareholders of the Bank as provided in the Scheme;
3. the entire share capital of the Bank be cancelled and the Bank be dissolved without being wound up;
4. Aminu Ibrahim & Co and Muhtari Dangana & Co be appointed to represent, monitor and enforce the rights of the shareholders of the Bank in respect of any post-merger share adjustments and other post-merger issues to be made pursuant to the Scheme and the Merger Agreements; and
5. the Board of Directors of the Bank be and is hereby authorised to take the actions required to put the Scheme into effect."

By the said Order, the Court has appointed Alhaji Abubakar I. Sadauki, or failing him, Engineer Ahmed Ibrahim, or failing them both, a Director of the Bank appointed by the Directors at the Meeting to act as Chairman of the said Meeting and has directed the Chairman to report the results thereof to the Court.

The said Scheme of Merger will be subject to the sanction of the Court.

Shareholders may vote in person or they may appoint another person, whether a shareholder or not, to attend and vote in their stead. In the case of joint holders, the vote of the senior holder who tenders a vote, whether in person or by proxy, will be accepted to the exclusion of the votes of the other joint holders, and for this purpose seniority will be determined by the order in which the names stand in the Register of Members of the Bank.

A Proxy Form is being sent to each shareholder. It is requested that the executed Proxy Form be lodged at the office of the Company Secretary, as shown on the Proxy Form, not less than 24 hours before the time appointed for the Meeting. Please note that the lodging of a Proxy Form does not prevent you from attending the meeting and voting in person should you so wish. However, if you attend the meeting in person, your proxy will not be permitted to attend or vote.

Dated this 25th day of January 2006

WALI-UWAIS & CO
Afri-Investment House
Right Wing, 1st Floor
Plot 2669 Aguiyi Ironsi Street
Cadastral Zone A6
Abuja

(SOLICITORS TO BANK OF THE NORTH LIMITED)

IN THE FEDERAL HIGH COURT OF NIGERIA HOLDEN AT LAGOS

SUIT NO. FHC/L/CS/54/2006

IN THE MATTER OF THE INVESTMENTS AND SECURITIES ACT NO 45 OF 1999

AND

IN THE MATTER OF AN APPLICATION UNDER SECTION 100 THEREOF

AND

IN RE:

1. UNITY BANK PLC (RC 94524) and
2. BANK OF THE NORTH LIMITED (RC 2000) and
3. NNB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC (RC 7554) and
4. NEWAFRICA BANK PLC (RC 84254)

MEETING OF THE HOLDERS OF THE FULLY PAID ORDINARY SHARES OF NNB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that by an Order of the Federal High Court, Lagos (hereinafter called "the Court") dated the 25th day of January 2006 made in the above matter, the Court has directed that a Meeting of the holders of the fully paid ordinary shares of NNB International Bank Plc (hereinafter called "the Bank") be convened for the purpose of considering and if thought fit, approving (with or without modification) a Scheme of Merger between Unity Bank Plc, Bank of The North Limited, NNB International Bank Plc and New Africa Bank Plc. The Scheme is explained in detail in the Explanatory Statement on Pages 18 to 27 of the Scheme Document.

The Meeting will be held at Ladi Kwali Hall, Abuja Sheraton Hotel & Towers, Ladi Kwali Way, Maitama, Abuja on Friday, the 27th day of January 2006 at 11.00 a.m. at which place and time all the aforesaid shareholders are requested to attend. The following sub-joined resolution will be proposed and if thought fit passed as a resolution at the meeting:

"That:

1. this Meeting approves the Scheme of Merger dated the 5th day of January 2006, a print of which has been submitted to the Meeting and for the purposes of identification subscribed by the Chairman, and that the Directors be and are hereby authorised to consent to any modifications to the Scheme of Merger that the Central Bank of Nigeria, the Securities & Exchange Commission or the Federal High Court, may think fit to impose and approve;
2. all the assets, liabilities and undertakings of the Bank, including all its real properties and intellectual property rights, be transferred to Unity Bank Plc without further act or deed in consideration for the issue and allotment of shares in Unity Bank Plc to the shareholders of the Bank as provided in the Scheme;
3. the entire share capital of the Bank be cancelled and the Bank be dissolved without being wound up;
4. Frontier Capital Limited be appointed to represent, monitor and enforce the rights of the shareholders of the Bank in respect of any post-merger share adjustments and other post-merger issues to be made pursuant to the Scheme and the Merger Agreements; and
5. the Board of Directors of the Bank be and is hereby authorised to take the actions required to put the Scheme into effect."

By the said Order, the Court has appointed Mr Felix Ohiwerei or failing him, Mr Alex Okoh, or failing them both, a Director of the Bank appointed by the Directors at the Meeting to act as Chairman of the said Meeting and has directed the Chairman to report the results thereof to the Court.

The said Scheme of Merger will be subject to the sanction of the Court.

Shareholders may vote in person or they may appoint another person, whether a shareholder or not, to attend and vote in their stead. In the case of joint holders, the vote of the senior holder who tenders a vote, whether in person or by proxy, will be accepted to the exclusion of the votes of the other joint holders, and for this purpose seniority will be determined by the order in which the names stand in the Register of Members of the Bank.

A Proxy Form is being sent to each shareholder. It is requested that the executed Proxy Form be lodged at the office of the Company Secretary, shown on the Proxy Form, not less than 24 hours before the time appointed for the Meeting. Please note that the lodging of a Proxy Form does not prevent you from attending the meeting and voting in person should you so wish. However, if you attend the meeting in person, your proxy will not be permitted to attend or vote.

Dated this 25th day of January 2006

AINA BLANKSON & CO
133 Igboere Road
Lagos

(SOLICITORS TO NNB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC)

IN THE FEDERAL HIGH COURT OF NIGERIA HOLDEN AT LAGOS

SUIT NO. FHC/L/CS/54/2006

IN THE MATTER OF THE INVESTMENTS AND SECURITIES ACT NO 45 OF 1999

AND

IN THE MATTER OF AN APPLICATION UNDER SECTION 100 THEREOF

AND

IN RE:

1. UNITY BANK PLC (RC 94524) and
2. BANK OF THE NORTH LIMITED (RC 2000) and
3. NNB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC (RC 7554) and
4. NEW AFRICA BANK PLC (RC 84254)

MEETING OF THE HOLDERS OF THE FULLY PAID ORDINARY SHARES OF NEW AFRICA BANK PLC

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that by an Order of the Federal High Court, Lagos (hereinafter called "the Court") dated the 25th day of January 2006 made in the above matter, the Court has directed that a Meeting of the holders of the fully paid ordinary shares of New Africa Bank Plc (hereinafter called "the Bank") be convened for the purpose of considering and if thought fit, approving (with or without modification) a Scheme of Merger between Unity Bank Plc, Bank of The North Limited, NNB International Bank Plc and New Africa Bank Plc. The Scheme is explained in detail in the Explanatory Statement on Pages 18 to 27 of the Scheme Document.

The Meeting will be held at Meeting Hall, Le Meridien Hotel, Plot 903, Tafawa Balewa Way, Garki, Abuja on Friday, the 27th day of January 2006 at 11.00 a.m. at which place and time all the aforesaid shareholders are requested to attend. The following sub-joined resolution will be proposed and if thought fit passed as a resolution at the meeting:

"That:

1. **this Meeting approves the Scheme of Merger dated the 5th day of January 2006, a print of which has been submitted to the Meeting and for the purposes of identification subscribed by the Chairman, and that the Directors be and are hereby authorised to consent to any modifications of the Scheme of Merger that the Central Bank of Nigeria, the Securities & Exchange Commission or the Federal High Court, may think fit to impose and approve;**
2. **all the assets, liabilities and undertakings of the Bank, including all its real properties and intellectual property rights, be transferred to Unity Bank Plc without further act or deed in consideration for the issue and allotment of shares in Unity Bank Plc to the shareholders of the Bank as provided in the Scheme;**
3. **the entire share capital of the Bank be cancelled and the Bank be dissolved without being wound up;**
4. **HDA Audit be appointed to represent, monitor and enforce the rights of the shareholders of the Bank in respect of any post-merger share adjustments and other post-merger issues to be made pursuant to the Scheme and the Merger Agreements; and**
5. **the Board of Directors of the Bank be and is hereby authorised to take the actions required to put the Scheme into effect."**

By the said Order, the Court has appointed Alhaji Bashir Bugaje or failing him, Alhaji Usman Babura, or failing them both, a Director of the Bank appointed by the Directors at the Meeting to act as Chairman of the said Meeting and has directed the Chairman to report the results thereof to the Court.

The said Scheme of Merger will be subject to the sanction of the Court.

Shareholders may vote in person or they may appoint another person, whether a shareholder or not, to attend and vote in their stead. In the case of joint holders, the vote of the senior holder who tenders a vote, whether in person or by proxy, will be accepted to the exclusion of the votes of the other joint holders, and for this purpose seniority will be determined by the order in which the names stand in the Register of Members of the Bank.

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Dated this 25th day of January 2006

ABDULLAHI YAHYA & CO
Investment House
2nd Floor
27 Ali Akilu Road
Kaduna

(SOLICITORS TO NEW AFRICA BANK PLC)



Who is there at the **beginning**?
Stays close throughout the **journey**.
And is waiting when you reach
your **destination**?



It's a friend you can
Trust



NEWS

TMG wants Nigerians to boycott constitution review

The Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), yesterday appealed to all Nigerians to boycott the present constitutional review process in the country, saying that the procedure has been undermined by the planned extension of the tenure of President Olusegun Obasanjo and governors of the 36 states.

National Coordinator of TMG, Angela Odah, who made the call in Abuja, said that the third term agenda allegedly being canvassed by some top government officials would inevitably plunge the country into chaos and political instability.

She stressed the need for all well meaning Nigerians to shun the constitutional review process of the President Olusegun

By Abdullahi M. Gulloma,
Reporter

Obasanjo-led government, saying that the administration lacks the integrity to carry out a credible view of the nation's constitutions.

"Since 1999, the present civilian government and the National Assembly have been engaged in an ambush process of constitutional made electoral reform. However, it is disappointing to note that about a year to the conduct of the 2007 elections the process of review of the 1999 Constitution and enactment of the 2004 Electoral Bill are yet to be concluded, thus setting the stage for repeat of the experience of 2002.

"In 2003, elections were conducted with or without rules and regulations. Political players kick-started their

campaigns without seeing or knowing the rules and regulations that will guide their conduct and their operations. Thus this ad-hoc and selective approach to constitutional and electoral reforms led to ad-hoc and incompetent preparations during elections.

"It has become apparent in the last few months that the renewed vigour with which the federal government is now pursuing the purported review of the

1999 Constitution is motivated by sheer opportunism and a desire to hang on to power. Having ignored calls for many years, the PDP government and its agents have suddenly woken up to the realisation that it is only under the guide of reviewing the constitution that their third term agenda for President Olusegun Obasanjo could be realised.

"In the absence of a clear and unqualified public statement from President

Olusegun Obasanjo denying any interest in third term under any guise, despite widespread public anxiety over the issue, we can only conclude that the President plans to perpetuate himself in office beyond the present constitutionally stipulated tenure. Indeed, the clearest statement from him was to the effect that he is under pressure to run for a third term. In the light of the President's track record of bowing to these kind of contrived pressure, the signs

are ominous," she said.

Meanwhile, the TMG national coordinator also condemned the arrest of Comrade Moshood Erubami by the police in Ibadan, the Oyo State capital, and called on the federal government to ensure his immediate release.

Comrade Erubami was arrested by police when he protested against what they referred to as an "illegal removal of Rashid Ladoja of Oyo State."

...Mantu c'tee is unconstitutional — lawyer

A constitutional lawyer and former Minister of Mines and Power, Alhaji Mohammed Ibrahim Hassan, has called for the dissolution of the National Assembly Joint Constitution Review Committee.

Hassan, a frontline member of the Movement for the Restoration and Defence of Democracy (MRDD), told *Daily Trust* in Abuja yesterday that the Ibrahim Mantu-led committee is unconstitutional and must be disbanded.

"The Mantu committee is unconstitutional, created with a motive to ensure third term. You cannot have a joint committee of the two chambers just like that.

"The constitution says each of the House and the Senate can create committees. It is only after each House committee submits its report that a joint committee is set up to harmonise positions of the two separate committees."

"But for you to now set up a joint committee to review the constitution, it is unconstitutional," he said.

Hassan was responding to a *Daily Trust* exclusive report Tuesday on attempts by the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) caucus to challenge the constitutionality of the Mantu panel.

The second republic min-

By Habeeb I. Pindiga
Assistant Political Editor

ister, advised the House of Representatives and the Senate to dissolve the Mantu committee and set up separate panels on constitution review.

"They should dissolve the committee, otherwise whatever it does can be challenged in court. Any member of the National Assembly can go to court to quash the outcome of Mantu committee because the committee itself is unconstitutional," he added. Taking a swipe at the proponents of third term, Hassan described it as a "satanic agenda that must be rejected."

Kebbi contractors threaten showdown with govt

Aggrieved contractors who executed various projects in Kebbi State have planned for a showdown against the officials of the State Ministry of Finance if their monies are not paid this month.

The contractors numbering about 200 executed projects awarded to them for quite some time, but were not paid, a situation that forced them to react on the



ANPP National Chairman, Chief Don Etiebet, General Muhammadu Buhari (rtd) and Alhaji Mamman Daura, at the General's residence to condole him on the death of his wife in Kaduna...recently

Pix: Shehu K. Goro

PDP members decamp to ANPP in Jigawa

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), in Jigawa State have suffered a major set back as hundreds of its members decamped to the ruling All Nigeria Peoples Party in the

From Ahmed Abubakar,
Correspondent (Dutse)

Birnin Kudu local government area of the state.

The former PDP members announced their depar-

ture from the party at a mammoth gathering in the ANPP secretariat in Birnin Kudu local government.

Over 200 people from the PDP had held a rally signifying their final quit in the state saying that it is the beginning of a new dawn to a more focused political endeavour that will carry along everyone in the state.

Among the PDP members who announced their decamping to ANPP were prominent party stalwarts in the state who said they "have come to the end of the road to injustice, and favouritism which has crumbled the PDP in the state."

The former Birnin Kudu PDP Chairman, Alhaji Muhammadu Danlarai, declared that, "it has become imminent for them to disassociate themselves from

gross misconduct that has bedevilled the party which also dwindled the performance of the party in the state.

Alhaji Danlarai, who hails from the same federal constituency with former foreign Affairs Minister, Alhaji Sule Lamido, also said their decision was reached after exhausting all avenues to ensure equity, justice and transparency within the party.

He said, the decamping has no bearing with any quest for political office in the ANPP, instead "we feel it is about time we come into the ruling party enmass to rally round the governor, Alhaji Ibrahim Sanusi Turaki, towards actualising the good works he has been doing for the people of the state."

From Kabir Dogon Daji,
(Birnin-Kebbi)

eve of Sallah where they demanded for the head of the Finance Commission, Alhaji Samaila Salihu Bui and some top ministry officials.

The feud which lasted several hours stopped when some eminent elders intervened.

However, *Daily Trust* gathered that a similar and

more dangerous attack may be launched this month if their payments are not effected by the ministry.

It was also gathered that at the end of a meeting of the un-paid contractors over the weekend held at an undisclosed guest house at Badariya area in Birnin-Kebbi, they agreed to breach the peace if their dues are not paid this month.

News

Councillors deny protest over allowances

Local Government councillors in Borno State have said that a mild drama at the entrance of the Maiduguri Government House, where over 300 of them gathered to see the state governor, Alhaji Ali Modu Sherrif, last Tuesday, was not an attempt at staging a protest against the government over allowances.

The councillors, drawn from the 27 local government areas of the state, gathered in Maiduguri on Tuesday to pay a courtesy visit on the governor and seek for his intervention in addressing some of their concerns; including requests for vehicle loans and furniture allowance as well as the payment of their severance allowance, in preparation for leaving office at the expiration of their tenure next month.

Daily Trust reliably learnt that the councillors had also gathered to jointly appeal to the state governor to use his influence in the state Assembly to cause an amendment in the Local Government Law which stipulates only two years in office for them, on the grounds that except

From Abdullahi Bego,
Assistant Editor
(Maiduguri)

Borno State, all other states in the federation had prescribed a three-year tenure for councillors and chairmen.

As they converged on Ramat Square, Maiduguri before proceeding to the Government House to see the governor, word came from the Government House requesting the chairman of the Councillors' Forum to see the governor before hand.

The governor was said to have expressed to the councillors his appreciation and understanding over their demands, but suggested that meeting all of them formally should be deferred to next week, by which time the local government commissioner and other relevant government functionaries would have been present.

However, while the governor was seeing the Councillors Forum chairman, the over 300 councillors gathered at the Ramat Square decided to move on to the Government House themselves, drawing enormous public attention

and sparking speculations that the councillors were marching to the seat of government to stage a protest over their allowances.

A councillor representing Shehuri South in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC), who was one of the key organizers of the event, Mallam Kyari Ajid, told Daily

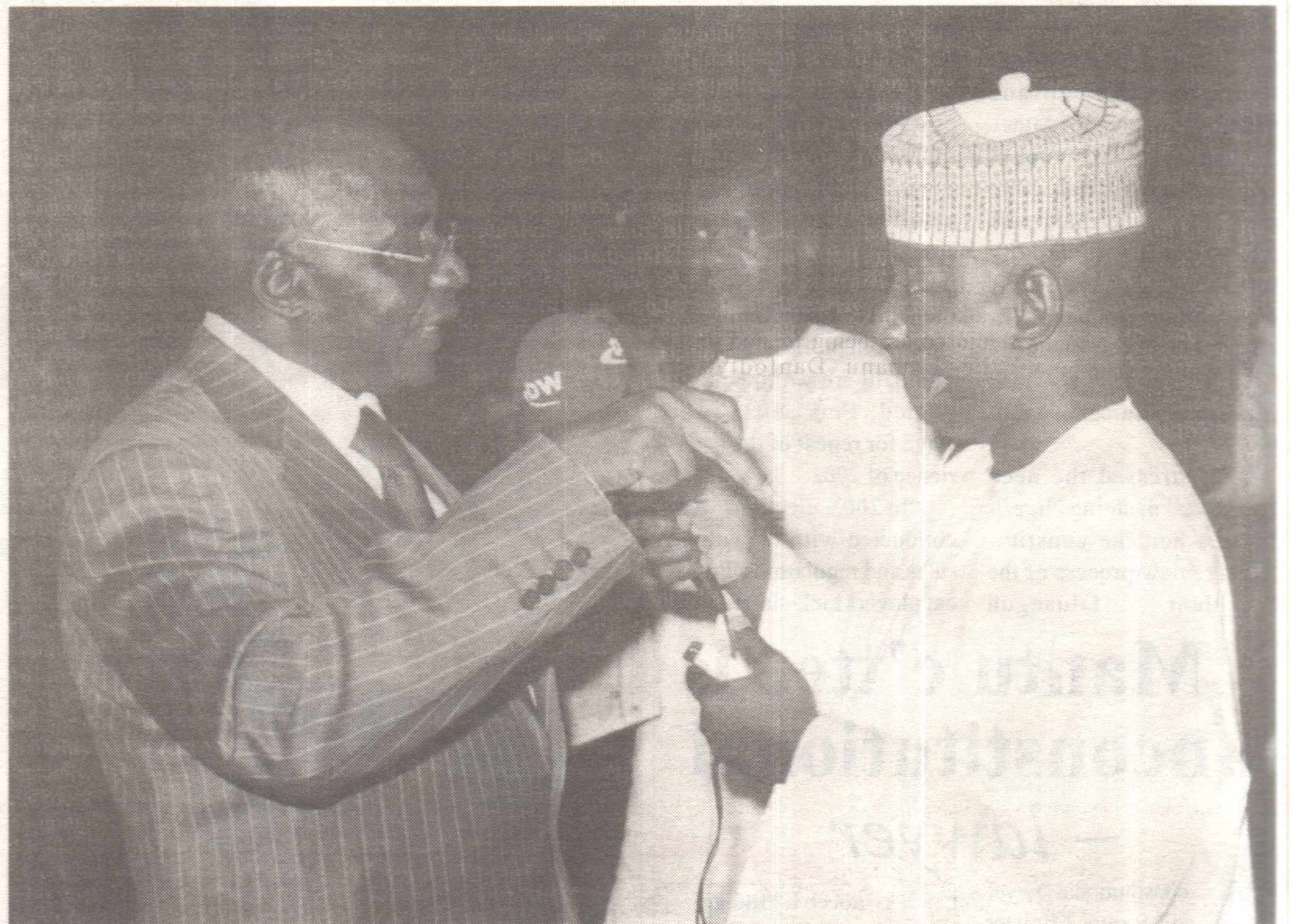
Trust that it was not true that they wanted to protest against the governor.

"There was no protest. People were commenting because they saw us move en masse to the Government House. But we only wanted to show solidarity with the governor and table our requests for his consideration", Mallam Ajid said.

The councillor added that he and his colleagues were denied entry to the Government House, because security guards at the gates were not previously informed to expect such a large number of people.

"They stopped us at the gate, but the Chairman of the SAS Campaign Organization, Alhaji Mala Atuman, who is

a close confidant of the governor, came out to explain that to us, given that our earlier request letter to see the governor was not delivered to him by some of his aides. However, when we waited and the governor did not come out, we resolve to disperse and seek for another appointment to see him," he added.



The Director General NEMA, Alhaji Salihu Shuaibu Makarfi (left), briefing journalists on the two-day National Summit on Disaster Management organised by the Presidency in conjunction with House of Representatives Committee on Disaster Management, held at the State House Abuja ...yesterday.
Pix: Joe Oroye.

"Buhari did not aid Turaki's victory in 2003"

General Muhammadu Buhari's influence in the 2003 gubernatorial election has not impacted in any way towards Governor Ibrahim Saminu Turaki's election in Jigawa State.

The chairman of Birnin Kudu local government, Alhaji Sa'adu Ayuba, disclosed this to newsmen in Dutse.

"General Buhari should rather count himself lucky to have gained the support of over one million people in Jigawa who were mobilized by Turaki to vote for the presidential candidate in the 2003 election."

"His Excellency, the Governor, had single handedly won the 1999 election in the state when Buhari was not even a member of the ANPP, so the issue that Buhari's factor was behind Turaki's success was a hoax," he said.

He said Buhari has twice flouted protocol by coming into Jigawa State to attend functions organised by a Federal House of Representatives member representing Birnin Kudu/Buji Federal Constituency, Alhaji Farouk Adamu Aliyu, to open a com-

From Ahmed Abubakar,
Correspondent (Dutse)

pany and a business centre in Birnin Kudu.

"Buhari has never bothered to pay homage as a mark of respect for the governor whenever he comes to Jigawa State despite that the Farouk Adamu he patronized is no longer with ANPP of the state."

The state government therefore has taken measures to stop such actions by both the presidential aspirant and the House member in the state.

"The state government has already alerted members of state security and police to as a matter of ensuring peace and stability in the state to henceforth stop any function being carried out by Farouk Adamu under the auspices of ANPP of which he does not belong."

Adding that, "despite being the chairman of Birnin Kudu local government area, Farouk Adamu Aliyu has never cared to inform me, as the number one security man in the area of any event or function that he intends to perform instead he goes about his things.

Army detonates American explosives in Kebbi

Following the death of two people and amputation of many as a result of explosives left behind by the American troops who were in Kebbi State to train their Nigerian counterparts at the one Battalion Birnin-

From Kabir Dogon-Daji,
Correspondent (Birnin-Kebbi)

Kebbi, the Nigerian Military Authorities has commenced the detonation of the dynamites.

The training site which was barely 20 metres away

from the Kola Village has for the last two years posed danger to the residents, as several incidences of explosions by canisters and other land mines were recorded in the area.

A visit to the site by our

correspondent showed that military personnel have early last week take over the site with a detachment to defuse the explosives.

However some of the soldiers contacted at the site, said they are not competent to speak to the press.

Daily Trust observed that the road leading to the village has been blocked with a "No Road" sign while an alternative has been provided for the motorist plying the route.

The spokesman of the villagers, Alhaji Aliyu Kola, a staff of the Government House, Birnin-Kebbi, said the action taken by the military authorities is worthy of commendation as they have rekindled hope in the villagers who have resolved to flee to safety.

"You are quite aware that last year we experienced well over three cases of such explosives which resulted into killing two and injuring many, while some are still jittery."

Alhaji Aliyu Kola, further said the explosions usually occurred during the rainy season when rain water erodes sand and bares the canisters enroute the village. Children picked it up for play which usually resulted in explosion, while live bullets were scattered everywhere within the site.

Yobe: PDP vice chairman expelled as crises deepens

The Intra party crises that had long bedeviled the Yobe State Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) appeared to have deepened, as the party on Tuesday held an emergency meeting, during which the party's vice chairman, Yobe North senatorial district, was expelled from the PDP, for alleged anti-party activities among others.

In a statement signed by the state's chairman of the PDP, Alhaji Abba Gana Tata, entitled: "Expulsion of PDP Zonal Vice Chairman Zone 'C,' Alhaji Modu Dambuwa," which was copied to Daily Trust, the party said the expulsion of the vice chairman was done with due consideration to the party's constitution, based on some discoveries.

An emergency state working committee meeting held at Damaturu on 24th January 2006, found Dambuwa guilty of engaging in dishonest prac-

From Isa Umar Gusau,
Correspondent (Damaturu)

tices, defrauding the party, its members or officials and persistent absenteeism from meeting and duties and anti-party activities, the statement said.

"In view of this, the state working committee has therefore resolved to expel Alhaji Modu Dambuwa from the party as stipulated in Article 14(A) sub-section (iv) and (vi) of the party's constitution."

Although the Yobe PDP claimed that the vice-chairman was expelled for "dishonest practices," fraud and absenteeism, some analyst uphold, that Dambuwa may have been expelled over perceived loyalty to some aggrieved leaders of the Yobe PDP, some of whom have been at logger heads with the state's executive structure.

It would be recalled that during the last state's con-

gresses held nationwide, where new PDP executives were elected across the 36 states and the FCT, the Yobe PDP, witnessed parallel conventions, where two sets of executives were elected.

However, several meetings were later held to unite the party, but the effort seemed unsuccessful with some key members of the PDP, still aggrieved, and were absent at the last PDP stakeholders meeting, held on 25th December 2005, chaired by Senator Girgir Lawan.

Meanwhile, contrary to reports that the Minister for Cooperation and Integration in Africa, Lawan Gana Guba, had deliberately shunned the last stakeholders meeting, a close associate of the minister, told Daily Trust, that the minister, a key figure in the Yobe PDP, had written to Senator Girgir Lawan, seeking to be absent from the meeting, due to a national engagement outside the country.

NEWS

Rimi's wife: We are making progress — IGP

The Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Sunday Ehindero, has said that the force was recording success in the investigation into the killing of Sa'adatu Rimi wife of Abubakar Rimi.

Ehindero, who declined to give details of the outcome of the investigations, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) yesterday in Abuja, that investigation was still on to fish out Sa'adatu's killers.

He said that the force would soon name the suspects behind the killing due to success recorded in the investigations headed by the Deputy Inspector-General of Police (DIG Force CID), Mr. Ogbonna Onovo.

"We will brief you on the case at the appropriate time. Investigation into the case is still on," Ehindero told NAN.

Meanwhile, a source close to Ehindero told NAN that suspects would soon be transferred to Force Headquarters, Abuja, for further investigation and prosecution. He however did not disclose the number of suspects billed to be transferred.

"You can see that the DIG, who was directed to relocate to Kano to speed up investigation has returned to

Abuja, the police high command will soon transfer the suspects here," the source said.

Sa'adatu was killed at her husband's residence

along Durbin Katsina road, Kano, in the early hours of Jan. 14. Rimi, a frontline politician, was Kano State governor in the second republic.

The National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN), Katsina State chapter, has in a joint collaboration with the state Department of Local Governments Inspectorate and Chieftaincy Affairs has constructed four hundred blocks of classroom in all the local government areas of the state at a cost of three hundred million naira.

The projects awarded at half the contractual sum was according to the state

Youths construct 400 classrooms

From Lawal Ibrahim, Correspondent, Katsina

chapter chairman of the council, Alhaji Garba Abdullahi Garus Kurfi, meant to minimize cost and enable youth participate in the projects directly in order to enable them contribute in

decongesting the schools particularly within the primary school level.

Alhaji Garus said, the initiative was consequent to a meeting held with the permanent secretary for local government in the state, Alhaji Abu Dan Mallam Karofi who directed the local government councils to finance the building of 12 blocks of two classroom each, while the youth provided labour in an effort to enable the community participate in complementing government's effort.

So far he disclosed that all the councils have already expended the sum of nine million naira each for the projects that about 95% completion in the state.

The chairman thanked the permanent secretary, Alhaji Abu Danmallam, for his initiation of youth oriented and development programmes particularly his three programmes of irrigation, bee keeping and fish farming across all the 34 local government areas of Katsina State.

Remarking to newsmen also the permanent secretary Alhaji Abu Danmallam Karofi, reiterated his determination to the programmes with all sincerity of purpose and intention, saying that, nothing is impossible if one gets committed to it.

Five die in auto accident in Sokoto

Five persons died on Tuesday and several others injured when a Jos-bound truck from Illela in Sokoto State had an accident.

The truck was carrying 80 bags of beans and assorted grains as well as 79 passengers when the accident happened on the Sokoto-Tureta road. Those injured are being treated at the Usmanu Danfodiyo University Teaching Hospital, Sokoto, while the corpses were deposited at its morgue. The Secretary to the State Government, Alhaji Maigari Dingyadi, visited the injured passengers on Tuesday to sympathise with them.

Dingyadi announced that the government would pay the medical expenses of the injured passengers, but decried the rampant road carnage in the state. The Sokoto Sector Commander of

the FRSC, Mr Luka Ikpi, said the commission was doing its best to keep the roads safe.

"We have regrettably witnessed about five fatal road accidents recently in the

state with the resultant loss of lives and property," Ikpi said.



Governor Joshua Dariye of Plateau State (L) congratulates Justice Constance Momoh, Chairman, Commission of Inquiry into the NAMU Disturbances during the inaugural Ceremony at Government House, Jos.

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- Identify market potentials for new products and ideas

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- National Youth Service Corps members.
- Entrepreneurs who want to strengthen their entrepreneurial capacities.

- Anybody who wants to start a new venture

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Inside Politics

Yes, Senators are divided over third term - Aruwa

All Nigeria Peoples Party senator from Kaduna state, Alhaji Muktar Aruwa made the headlines recently when he was expelled from the Mantu's committee on the review of the constitution. In this interview, he maintains that the Deputy Senate President has something fishy up his sleeves on the issue of third term and describes him (Mantu) as an embodiment of President Obasanjo's alleged extension plot. He also explained why the National Assembly is divided over the third term issue, even as he hopes that the anti-third term forces will overcome the other camp. He spoke with Political Editor, Emmanuel Bello. Excerpt:-

With the reconvening of the National Assembly, the third term issue took the front burner and we receive report that even the Senate President was queried in a closed door meeting. As a Senator who is openly against the third term plot, how do you view the development?

Well, a lot has been happening since the issue reared its head. As for Mantu having a close door meeting, I don't know about that. But I know he is an embodiment of third term. And, to me, he has made it very very clear, judging from his utterances with colleagues and the zeal and speed he wanted us to review the constitution with particular emphasis on the third term clause.

For Senator Ken Nnamani, initially he was a bit cool and calm about issues not only third term but other issues as well. But I believe it is like other professions. Once you are new, you first learn the ropes and when you get to understand the business proper, you then apply your own knowledge of that very job and your God-given intelligence to guide you. So I'm not surprised that the Senate President is making such a statement. I heard of the statement as I wasn't there. But I'm not surprised because I expect the Senate president to be senate president at least for the short time that is left before we all vacate. So he has to be who he is in direct relationship to the office he is now occupying. Because like I said he was looking towards to master the ropes. If you look at all the past senate presidents, it is almost the same trend. When Chuba Okadigbo was there, it took him time to settle down before he was forced out. But a good case in point is Pius Anyim who everybody know, when he started, he was very passive and was suspected of conniving with the executive. In the end what

happened? Right through to the closure of the last Senate, he was locked in a battle with the executive. So, I believe this is the case with Ken Nnamani.

There seems to be a situation where the National Assembly is divided over this issue of third term. How deep is this rift and how will it play out this year?

Naturally, the senate should be divided. It can not be hand in glove 100%. So those for and against should not be seen as new. It is very traditional of legislative houses. We are not like the executive. We are elected and represent constituency with diverse interest. So this must rear its head in the National Assembly. At the end of the day, winners must carry the day. It is normal. I do expect that some of us will be against third term, and certainly some of us will be for it. My prayer is that those of us who said "No" should weigh more and have more numbers than those who have given in.

How will you rate the percentage of those for or against?

I won't tell unless the votes are taken.

What is your opinion on the public hearings?, should it hold or not?

My opinion is that the senate should abandoned the exercise completely for now. The constitution of the federal republic 1999 has guided the country and democracy from 1999 to date. Despite its ambiguity, despite the little changes or amendment required it is not as if amending the constitution is the most important thing to start doing now. There are more national issues of national concern, than amending the constitution. My view is that the senate should suspend any activities tied with the constitution. Those who want amendment should go back to their constituencies, get a new mandate and return

to the National Assembly. When they reconvene, they will have ample time to look at the areas they want to change.

Right now the entire nation has lost faith in the

But the Deputy Senate President has said there are a hundred section not sound enough and needs to be amended. He has often said that he can not understand why people like yourself are opposed to amendments. He



Senator Muktar Aruwa

exercise. The entire nation is no longer connecting with the National Assembly on this matter. The constitution is not something you rush in a nation. If you can amend one thing in twenty years, it is allowed.

A constitution is not a secondary school text book or curriculum that could be revised at the slightest provocation.

But the Southern leaders are insisting on an amendment. And they said this in various fora that the exercise must go ahead before 2007.

It is a matter of votes. The South can not force matters down our throat just like that. We too can not force anything down on them. But you know that they are only playing the president's card. All of them who say third term or constitutional amendment are not sincere to themselves or their constituencies. I don't care where they met whether in Abuja or Enugu, Warri or Lagos, those Southern leaders are a bunch of dishonest people.

So what about the threats they have issued that if you insist on not amending the constitution, they would boycott elections or go confederal.

Look, I don't give a damn if the country splits. Who is afraid of it? Who? I don't care if we split. The North is the North. If a country like Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger will survive as nations, I don't see one Northern state not surviving. Name the state in the North that can not survive on its own. So who is fooling who? Enough of these unintelligent threats. Let me tell you, as we speak, if you tell the Yoruba people in Kaduna to go back, they

won't find accommodation in the South-West. Just Kaduna only and they will not have landing space. How many Northerners are in Oyo state? Just a bunch of kolanut sellers and cattle rearer. They could bloody well come back.

How many of the Oyo indigines can go back and find a home? the same for the Ibos. Infact, it is worse for the Ibos. So, I don't care if the nation is divided, if we have to do so. Lets divide it not by threat. And I don't think there is a Northerner who is afraid of separation, unless if his brain is not correct.

Talking about boycott of election, was elections held in the south in 1999? So if they boycott, it is their business, and not mine. I'll not boycott because I must discharge it as a responsibility. If they want to boycott it is not new. It happened in the south-West before. So enough of threats.

But what about the other threat that every region will hold on to its resources in the belief that the North probably has no resources to survive on.

Like I heard Emmanuel Iwanyawu claim he is a scientist. Where did he learn his science from? Oil is been discovered everyday and technology is such a wonderful thing. Oil is being discovered everyday in the North. So if our Southern brothers don't know that, let them think again. Someday, every country will have oil. There are satelite device to locate oil. There is oil in Bauchi, Gombe, Sokoto, and other places. Why did Obasanjo ask Shell to pack up? The records are there. Benue Trough? What is it? Go to NNPC and find out. NNPC started exploration in Baga and it was stopped. Those expatriates told me about it. In fact, I blame these Northern governors, otherwise, nobody would have been using oil against the North today. If only the governors could take just 5% of their reserves and engage experts from Texas, Germany or Russia, nobody would have been talking to us about oil only being in the South. It is just not true. I challenged anyone of them to say there is no oil in Baga, Gombe and Sokoto. So, oil is no longer gold or in fashion. See our investment in Sao Tome. is it in the south-South? Or do they own the one in Chad?

"For Senator Ken Nnamani, initially he was a bit cool and calm about issues not only third term but other issues as well. But I believe it is like other professions. Once you are new, you first learn the ropes and when you get to understand the business proper, you then apply your own knowledge of that very job and your God-given intelligence to guide you."

Inside Politics

PUBLIC HEARING ON CONSTITUTION REVIEW

Good precedence or grand deception?

The Joint National Assembly Constitution Review Committee (CRC) under the chairmanship of the Deputy Senate President, Senator Ibrahim Mantu, is planning a series of public hearing on the constitution in order to ensure input by Nigerians into the ongoing constitution amendment process. The CRC has come up with over 100 items for review, including the issue of tenure. Expectedly, serious concerns have been raised as to the propriety of these mega constitutional changes. The view in some quarters is that mega constitutional changes are capable of creating mega reverberations and instability in the polity. Thus, they have canvassed for a piecemeal approach to the amendments being proposed.

Some even argue that the process should be postponed till after the expiry of President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration on May 29, 2007 so that a new administration will carry out the process. This argumentation flourishes in the circles of Nigerians whose phobia for possible manipulation of the process in favour of some interests is now further accentuated by the growing plot for third term in office by President Obasanjo and the clan of condescending State Governors, who for political survival, is lending itself to the bolstering of the plot. The signals from the Presidency and other ancillary segments as well as the body language of President Obasanjo paint a composite picture of a carefully scripted plot that is now assuming the garb of officialdom.

In fact, the issue of tenure has, significantly, heated up the polity. The only way the tension created can be defused is for the issue of tenure to be struck out of the list of over 100 items for review or amendment. National Chairman of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), Chief Chekwas Okorie said "An extensive amendment of the 1999 constitution is desirable, but the item on the tenure of president and governors is in bad taste and unpatriotic. The obnoxious item must not be allowed to remain as it is in the extant constitution, failing which the National Assembly should be held responsible for any calamity that befalls Nigeria. The proposed nationwide debate will fail if this note of caution is ignored".

The general consensus is that there is nothing wrong with two terms of eight years as provided for in the constitution for president and governor. The mere listing of tenure and the three recommendations by a sub-committee of the CRC, which included

By Sufuyan Ojeifo,
(Special Correspondent)

among others, three terms of twelve years, has heightened fears that the incumbent president might throw his weight behind it, push it through and go the whole hog to be a beneficiary. This is the crux of the matter: Nigerians want Obasanjo to go in 2007. It does not matter the part of the country that produces the president in 2007. Whether north or south, it does not matter as much as tenure extension for Obasanjo.

Once Obasanjo's incumbency is neutralized on this issue of tenure extension, that is if the third term agenda falls through, it is not likely that he will be irrevocably committed to a process that will produce somebody else as his successor. The nation would then be saved the prospects of logjam that has mostly developed around the issue of succession and exit by incumbent presidents in the recent past. As at the present time, nothing from the Presidency has suggested that Obasanjo is not interested in third term. He could have dispelled the speculation or insinuation by making a categorical pronouncement on it so that Nigerians and the international community would know what he wants to do. What is his strategic dissembling on the matter meant to achieve? Whatever it is, Nigerians are seeing through the plot to railroad selfish political agenda on them.

The grandstanding by Presidency's officials and cronies and their claim that more time is needed to consolidate on the reform programme have conduced to impact on Nigerians, the growing possibility of an Obasanjo's third term. This is why Nigerians lack confidence in the Mantu's Committee (Mantu is said to be an Obasanjo's man) to lead a genuine and untainted amendment process. Sadly for Mantu, the review process, in the estimation of avid watchers of the political development, would serve the political interest of the incumbent president. But from all indications, the presidency is not discouraged from the enterprise of amending the constitution. The process is going on and the nation is put on edge.

It was thought that government might have beaten a quiet retreat on it, following the indefinite postponement of the public hearing on the constitution review initially scheduled to begin January 3, *Inside Politics* has confirmed that the committee would soon get back to work and will go round the six geopolitical zones to get input

from people. But will the people from whom the committee will get input be true representations of all shades of opinions? Senator Mantu told *Inside Politics* that the process is genuine and would be pursued to its logical conclusion as, according to him, "The process must continue and there are basic things that needed to be put in place.



Senator Ibrahim Mantu, Deputy Senate President.

First and foremost, we are trying as much as possible in view of the heat this exercise has generated in the polity, to do everything possibly as transparent as transparency can be and that is to say that everything must be done in the open.

"We must put our cards face up on the table so that everybody can read exactly what is there because mischief makers have gone to town before us and they have succeeded in molding negative opinion about an exercise which Nigerians should really be on their knees, begging National Assembly members to carry out. Everybody knows that we have a document that is now being used to govern us, which was hurriedly put together by the military. The provisions of the 1999 constitution are not better than military decrees. They are like decrees with a little bit of panel beating here and there to give it some democratic semblance.

"But we have come a long way now after six and a half years of practising democracy that Nigerians must have a constitution that they can call their own; Nigerians must have a constitution that they

have participated 100 per cent in its writing; Nigerians must have a constitution that is in tandem with democratic practices and norms all over the world. These are necessary changes that must be effected in the constitution. Like I said, initially, when this exercise commenced in 2001, everybody was asking National Assembly members to hurry

ing some of your colleagues, what they mean by third term and they now say it is the constitution review that is now called third term. That is unfortunate. Third term as I understand has to do with tenure and tenure is just one clause out of about 103 proposed amendments that we believe are good for the nation".

Mantu said that the committee was considering effective publicity for the process to get Nigerians to be immersed in what it (committee) is doing. According to him, "What is happening right now is to make sure that we sufficiently carry the people, mobilize people, sensitise people. I believe that all the proposed amendments must be published in all the major newspapers as a pull-out so that people can buy your paper-Daily Trust or Weekly Trust- take out the pull-out containing all the amendments, sit down at their convenience in a relaxed atmosphere to go through the proposed amendments so that whatever contribution anybody would wish to make, he or she would be making the contributions from an informed position. All these things call for money. We also intend, apart from putting these in the newspapers as adverts, to ensure that for a whole week or so, it is being serialized on radio and on television so that people who watch television would also come to terms with what is there".

But to the opposition, the whole process is aimed at deceiving the Nigerian people. It is believed that the tenure extension is the main objective of the government in pursuing what is seen as a hurried constitution amendment. Groups in the north and south of the country have kicked against amendment to achieve tenure extension for Obasanjo and other incumbent executives. The other items listed for amendments are said to be a façade to hide the major objective of the process. There are claims in circles that plans are afoot to manipulate the public hearing precedent to the amendment in order to make it look like a national consensus has been achieved on the amendments proposed, particularly the tenure extension (three terms of twelve years). *Inside Politics* learned that the opposition is taking either of this two-pronged approach to the process: either to attend and frustrate the review process or to boycott the exercise altogether as it is patently fraudulent.

Conference of Nigerian Political Parties (CNPP), speaking through its National Publicity Secretary, Mr. Osita Okechukwu on the public

hearing declared, "Yes, we are saying it is going to be worse deception than the 2002 Electoral Act. Why we are saying so is that we challenge anybody that if they go through the due process stated in the constitution of 1999 for amendment of that constitution, it then means you are going to do voting in the 36 State Houses of Assembly and in the National Assembly. And we are saying it that if you follow due process, you cannot finish it in the next six months. But our fear is that one day they will tell us that all the Houses of Assembly in the States have sat and have approved the amendments and the next day, they might come to the National Assembly here and say there is quorum and they will now say the thing has been approved.

"The Chief Justice of Nigeria had alerted us that since these people do not obey court orders, do not depend on them. So, we are seeing fraud, big political fraud. But in the past three months, the CNPP has been talking to our membership and other compatriots to say, please, like Professor Wole Soyinka said: get back to the trenches, because the way they are going, if you read the statements coming out from those who are close to the Presidency, they are nauseating. General Gowon, Archbishop Onyeikan and other compatriots made innocent appeal. Gowon said myself, General Babangida, General Abacha, using himself as an example, please do not make the mistake I made and the Presidency is saying that he had no *locus standi* to talk of himself. The Archbishop said, we thank you Mr. President; we thank God; we congratulate you for resisting the deadly disease and suddenly the spokesman for the Presidency had to attack the Archbishop. They are attacking everybody. The PDP National Chairman gave an interview, saying if Nigerians want it, These are the people telling us that they want to amend the constitution..."

Meanwhile, the Mantu committee is maintaining that the process will be transparent while the opposition elements are saying that the minimum requirement for them to believe the committee and the Presidency have good intention is to delete the proposed amendment on tenure and leave the two terms of eight year as provided for in the 1999 constitution intact. Otherwise, the process, no matter how those running the engine dress it elegantly, it will not jell as the opposition has irreversibly christened it as the greatest official inanity of Obasanjo's presidential politics.

News

Foreign Scholarship: Commissioner lambasts aggrieved students

Following the controversy that surrounded the award of foreign scholarships to students, during which some students alleged preferential and unfair deal, the Yobe Commissioner for Higher Education, Ali Gadaka, said the aggrieved students should go to hell, stating that he does not care about anything.

Gadaka stated this while responding to questions from *Daily Trust*, yesterday in Damaturu, as the controversy that affected the foreign scholarship, were 18 out of 50 students were awarded scholarships to study medical courses, with some children of commissioners, prominent among beneficiaries.

In reaction, Gadaka said "if my son is qualified for the scholarship, I have a right to award him the scholarship. Yes, the daughter of commissioner for agric, was awarded the scholarship. What is wrong if children of permanent secretaries or commissioner secured the Egyptian foreign scholarship, after all they deserve it," Gadaka said.

He recalled that, he (the commissioner) was behind the scholarship, during which "Egypt advertised their intension to award the foreign scholarship, through their consulate in Kano. I ap-

From Isa Umar Gusau, Damaturu

plied for it, and 12 places were meant for Nigeria. Through Yobe effort, the slots were increased to 18, and Yobe awarded 12. So there was a selection process by Egypt, and some 18 people out of the 50 that applied, were successful. Then Yobe decided that, we sponsor six, while Egypt sponsor the other 12," the commissioner narrated.

Following the development, some 32 students had their documents returned, while others were awarded the scholarship.

The development, *Daily Trust*, had earlier reported on January 6th, 2006, threw the students into agony with many of them crying foul, saying that officials of the state's Ministry for Higher Education, "manipulated the foreign scholarship" to have "children of top government officials, including those of the ministry's commissioner and permanent secretary, among beneficiaries."

But, the commissioner, Ali Gadaka, maintained that a test examination was conducted, and those awarded the scholarships, scored points related to sciences, as certain criteria were used for medical courses.

The aggrieved students, however suspected foul play,

asking how the coincidence came about, during which the commissioner's son and that of his permanent secretary among others, became successful.

Gadaka stated, that a daughter to the state's Commissioner for Budget and Economic Planning, Hadiza Lawan Goroma, along with a Child of an influential man, were not successful, as they had their documents returned.

Meanwhile, many of the students who were turned down, recalled that, they had earlier been assured of a foreign scholarship as they were short-listed, and asked to secure passports and other travelling documents, saying that some of them had spent too much.

Asked if the ministry is working out any way of assisting the students to ease their expenditures regarding the scholarship, the Commissioner for Higher Education, Ali Gadaka, said, "We are not giving a kobo to any student. Let them go and keep the passports as their personal properties. We are not giving them anything. Those given scholarships for United Kingdom were not given passports by government, let the students say anything, I don't care. I know my conscience is clear, and I am serving Yobe State."

"Not all those that got the scholarship are children of commissioner, infact there is an orphan, who is a son to the late former permanent secretary, ministry of finance, and lots of others who are from poor backgrounds," Gadaka upheld.



Director General of NAFDAC, Prof. Dora Akunyili presenting the Agency enlightenment materials to the General Overseer of Deeper Life Bible Church, Pastor Williams Kumuyi, when he paid a courtesy visit on her in Abuja...recently.

Gombe Dep. Gov's press secretary is dead

The chief press secretary to the Gombe State deputy governor, Mr. Joseph Dangabar Choge, is dead.

Aged, 46 years, Mr. Choge died at the federal medical centre, Gombe on Monday after a protracted illness.

According to family sources, the one time state chairman of Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN), left behind a wife, two children and aged parents.

The deputy governor, Dr. John Lazarus Yoriyo, de-

From Muhammad Abubakar, Gombe

scribed the death of Mr. Choge as a great loss not only to the family, but the state as a whole.

Dr. Yoriyo, who described the decease as very dedicated to duty, prayed that his family will have the fortitude to bear the irreparable loss.

In its own condolence message, the state chapter of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) described late Choge as an erudite journalist whose contributions to the media industry in the state will be missed.

Duke denies Obasanjo's third term bid

Against widespread speculations that the Peoples Democratic Party leaders in the country were mystifying the third term ambition of President Olusegun Obasanjo as well as other top officials in government, Governor Donald Duke of Cross River

From Bassey Ita, Correspondent Calabar

State has remarked that such matters do not occupy the agenda of the party nor that of the governors and was therefore a non-issue.

Duke, who was speaking at a parley with newsmen in

his office recently, said the 30 state governors nor the President do not even contemplate that as widely speculated.

According to him, the President has no such ambition for a third-term, but would rather retire to his farm for large scale agricultural production, adding that he has always been making a mockery of the issue.

The governor denied that the 30 state governors have ever sat to endorse Obasanjo's third term, adding that nobody contemplates that at all.

They did not carry any weapon at reported in the media neither did they destroy properties at the site but registered their protest peacefully just as the matter had been resolved long ago in their favour.

He appealed to the press to exercise restraint in reporting such matters, but rather partner with the state government over the initiative for the good of the state.

HIV/AIDS: US spends \$3.2m on military antiretroviral treatment

The US government will contribute \$3.2 million dollars to combat HIV/AIDS in Nigeria Armed

From AbdulRaheem Aodu, Correspondent, Kaduna

Forces through antiretroviral therapy.

The funding, which is part of bilateral partnership between the US Department of Defence (DoD) and Nigeria Ministry of Defence (MOD), will enable Nigeria military men and their family members to be tested, screened and treated of HIV/AIDS using the antiretroviral therapy free.

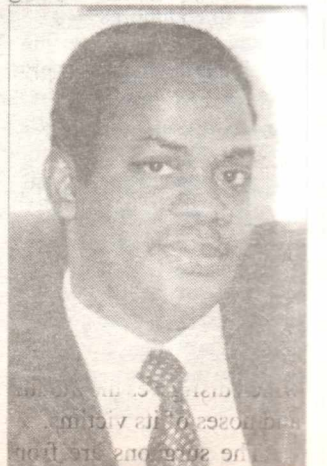
The US co-ordinator of the programme, Major Darrel Singer, said yesterday at the 44 Nigeria Army Reference Hospitals in Kaduna that the equipments for the therapy will be supplied by the US DoD.

"This is an important programme for Nigerian military. The US DoD is in partnership with Nigeria Ministry of Defence to provide antiretroviral facilities for the Nigerian military as part of the

Emergency Plan Implementation Committee (EPIC). The US government will provide approximately \$3.2 million dollars for the Nigerian military programme for this fiscal year.

"Some of the equipments are already on ground, we have more equipment in transit and as the programme goes more, the equipments will continue to grow up as well in response to the number of people who come for treatment," Major Singer said.

Speaking at the occasion the commandant of the Nigerian Army Medical Corps and Schools (NAMCS) Major General B. Abang, who was represented by Brigadier Harris Agbi said the Armed Forced Programme on AIDS control (AFPAC) which was established in 1993 is responsible for the coordination of HIV programme among the Army, Navy and Air Force

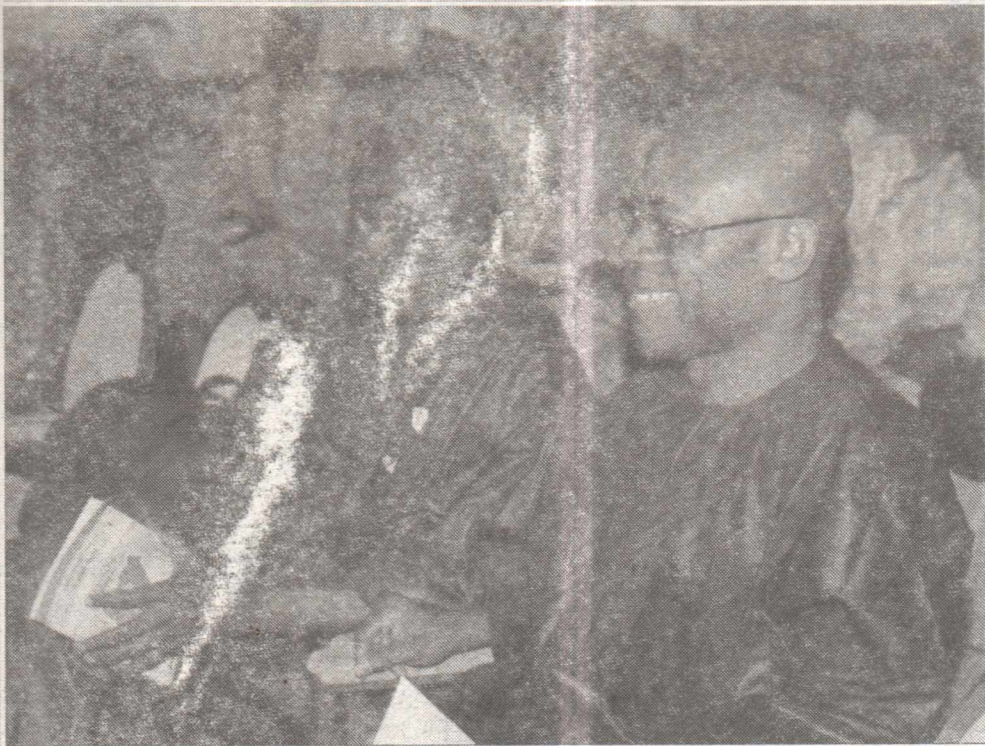


Gov. Donald Duke



Governor Adamu Abdullahi of Nasarawa State addressing journalists on the presidential stakeholders forum held at the State House...recently.

News



The acting secretary, textile workers union, Comrade Isa Aremu (L) and Mr. Adagbo Onoja, Media Trust member of Editorial Board (R) at the 3rd Annual Trust Dialogue held in Abuja...recently. Pix: Kennedy Egbonodje.

FG inaugurates IT advisory C'ttee

A National Information Technology Advisory Committee (NITAC) aimed at transforming Nigeria into an information society has been inaugurated.

The committee is to fast track Nigeria's participation in the 1.2 trillion dollars global information and communication technology business opportunities.

Inaugurating the committee in Abuja on Tuesday, the Minister of Science and Technology, Prof. Turner Isoun, said that the committee would prepare the necessary roadmap for the actualisation of the nation's ICT dreams.

He charged the committee to create the platform for ICT professionals and stakeholders to make direct input to policies and technical issues in ICT development in the country.

He said that the committee would champion the articulation of plans and strategies that would position Nigeria as a knowledge society.

He challenged the committee to provide a solid foundation for the implementation of the desirable ICT human

resource needed for the economic growth of the country. He urged the committee to seek alternative and complementary sources of funding for ICT development projects as government would concentrate on regulatory issues. Speaking on behalf of the committee, the Chairman, Mr Jim Ovia, commended government for setting it up, stressing that ICTs have become a subject of great concern to mankind.

Ovia said that the sustainability of all forms of

development was hinged on the utilisation of ICT, adding that the technology has become an integral part of the society.

The terms of reference of the committee include the development of a blue print on software development, hardware, infrastructure, network security, policy and legislation, regulation and standards.

Others are the articulation of action plan for the youth software proficiency empowerment programme and ICT incubation and parks.

FRSC command records 311 deaths

No fewer than 311 people died in road accidents in Kwara, Kogi and Ekiti States in 2005, the Ilorin Zonal Commander of the FRSC, Mr. Olu Fadogba, has said.

Decorating 18 promoted officers in Ilorin on Tuesday, Fadogba said 264 deaths were recorded in the preceding year.

Although there was an in-

crease in deaths, the number of accidents dropped from 286 in 2004 to 271 in 2005, he said.

"In the same vein, 1,183 persons were injured in 2005 in contrast to 653 in year 2004."

The commander said N1.1 million was recovered at the various scenes of accident in 2005, while the money was returned to the families of the victims.

Fadogba appealed to the federal government to make the Lokoja-Okene road a dual carriageway and accelerate the completion of the Ibadan-Oyo-Ogbomosho-Mokwa road.

The completion of the projects would further reduce accidents, he said, calling on the promoted officers to uphold "the highest and unparalleled integrity."

The commander was assisted in decorating the officers by the controller of Prisons in Kwara, Alhaji Abdullahi Sani

Children hospital engages German surgeons

A team of plastic surgeons from Germany is expected at NOMA Children Hospital, Sokoto, next month to conduct free surgeries on patients with NOMA disease.

NOMA is a disease which disfigures the mouths and noses of its victims.

The surgeons are from the German-based AWD foundation.

the bill for the operations, treatment, feeding and accommodation of the patients.

The Chief Medical Director of the hospital, Prof. Ralph Sauter, told newsmen on Tuesday in Sokoto that screening of the patients would start soon.

He called on state and local governments to sponsor patients in their areas for the

FEDERAL MORTGAGE FINANCE LIMITED

FMFL

SALE OF LANDED PROPERTIES

INVITATION TO BID

Pursuant to the decision of the Federal Government to dispose of all the landed properties of FMFL, the Board of Directors hereby invites interested members of the public (individuals and corporate organizations) to bid for the purchase of underlisted landed properties:

| S/NO. | LOCATION ADDRESS OF PROPERTY | DESCRIPTION | STAGE/STATE OF PROPERTY |
|-------|---|--|-------------------------|
| 1. | KANO New Court Road, Gyadi-Gyadi Road, Kano | 3-storey Office Building | Completed |
| 2. | KANO 450 Kargo Avenue, Off Maiduguri Road, Hotoro, Kano | Detached 4 bedroom bungalow with B/Q. | Completed |
| 3. | KANO 444 Kargo Avenue | Detached 4 bedroom bungalow with B/Q. | Completed |
| 4. | ABUJA No. 41, 12 th Crescent Kado Estate, Abuja | 3 bedroom Duplex | Completed |
| 5. | MAKURDI 29, Uniagrie Guest House Road, HUDCO Quarters, N/Bank, Makurdi | Detached 3 bedroom bungalow with B/Q | Completed |
| 6. | MAKURDI 30, Uniagrie Guest House Road, HUDCO Quarters, N/Bank, Makurdi | Detached 3 bedroom bungalow with B/Q | Completed |
| 7. | MAKURDI Ishaya Bukut Road, Makurdi, Benue State | 3-storey office building | Completed |
| 8. | MAKURDI Gboko Road, Plot 2396 on Makurdi TPS | Bare site | Undeveloped |
| 9. | ENUGU 32, Okpara Avenue, Enugu | Office Block/residential | Completed |
| 10. | UYO Plot 114, Unit F, Itiam Eweteniong Housing Estate, Uyo | Detached 3 bedroom bungalow | Completed |
| 11. | ABEOKUTA Ogun State House No. 9 Road, B1 Olomore FGLCHE, Abeokuta | Semi-detached 3 bedroom bungalow (one wing) | Completed |
| 12. | ABEOKUTA House 39, A2 Ita Elegu FGLCHE, Abeokuta | Semi-detached 3 bedroom bungalow (one wing) | Completed |
| 13. | ABEOKUTA Ibrahim Babangida Boulevard | 3-storey office building | Uncompleted |
| 14. | ABEOKUTA Ajedo Road, Residential Layout | 4 Nos. Residential Plots | Undeveloped |
| 15. | AKURE No. 12 Ikale Street, Ijapo Housing Estate | 2-storey Duplex | Completed |
| 16. | YOLA No. 1 Bishop St., Jimeta, Yola | 3-storey office building | Completed |
| 17. | YOLA Bo. 1 Bishop St., Jimeta, Yola | Detached 3 bedroom bungalow | Completed |
| 18. | YOLA 18, Lamido Crescent, Yola Town | Bare Site | Undeveloped |
| 19. | YOLA Jambutu Ward, Yola | Bare Site | Undeveloped |
| 20. | LAGOS 10A Azarre Crescent, Apapa GRA | 4 bedroom semi-detached duplex | Completed |
| 21. | LAGOS Festac Town Block 3 rd Avenue, 32 Road, Lagos | 12 No. of 2 bedroom flats and 4 Nos. 3 bedroom flats | Completed |
| 22. | ILORIN Asa Dam Road, Ilorin | 2-storey office building | Completed |
| 23. | MAIDUGURI Off Gajiram Road, Off Damboa Road, GRA, Maiduguri | Identical 2 Nos. detached 4 bedroom Bungalows with B/Q | Completed |
| 24. | MAIDUGURI 176 Pompomari North-West Layout | Bare site | Undeveloped |
| 25. | MINNA G2 C26 Adamawa Road, Minna | 4 bedroom bungalow | Completed |
| 26. | MINNA G2 C36 Adamawa Road, Minna | 4 bedroom bungalow | Completed |
| 27. | SOKOTO Old Airport Road, Sokoto | 3-storey office building | Uncompleted |
| 28. | KATSINA 24, Yahaya Madaki Road, Katsina | Bare Site | Undeveloped |
| 29. | IBADAN Owode Estate, Off Abeokuta Road, Ibadan | Bare Site | Undeveloped |

CONDITIONS OF BIDDING

- Prospective buyers should collect bidding forms free of charge at:
 - Office of the Ag. MD/CE FMFL, C/o FMBN Corporate Head office, 4th Floor Plot 266 Cadastral AO, Central Business District, Abuja.
 - FMBN Offices in states of the federation where the properties are located.
- Payment of a non-refundable bidding fee of N10,000.00 (Ten Thousand Naira Only) in certified bank draft payable to FMFL.
- Prospective buyers are advised to inspect the properties before bidding. To facilitate inspection, contact can be made with the offices in 1 (a) and (b) above.
- Each bidder should indicate on the left hand corner of the envelope, the property bid for.
- All legal tenants must bid in order to qualify to be given the first offer to buy.
- Completed bidding forms should be submitted in sealed envelopes along with:
 - Copy of Tax clearance certificate for the past 3 taxable years.
 - Copy of certificate of incorporation (for companies).
 - Certified bank draft for non-refundable bidding fee in favour of Federal Mortgage Finance Limited.

Addressed to:
The Ag. Managing Director/CE,
C/o FMBN Corporate Head Office,
4th Floor,
Plot 266 Cadastral AO,
Central Business District,
P.M.B. 2273, Abuja.

To reach him on or before 23rd February, 2006 by 12 noon

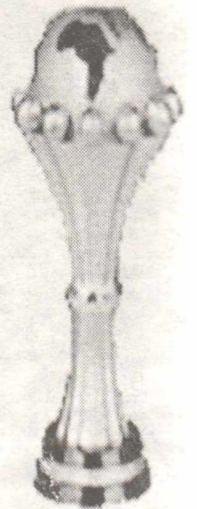
- The Bids will be opened publicly at the FMBN Board Room on 23rd February 2006 at 12.05pm. Bidders are free to attend or be represented at the opening.
- Successful bidders will be required to pay 50% of the full price plus 10% of the full price as transaction cost immediately, while the balance of 50% shall be paid not later than 60 days thereafter.

Signed:
LA. ASOGWA
Ag. Managing Director/CE

Sports

EGYPT 2006 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP

Fans, administrators praise Eagles



Soccer fans and administrators in Abuja have commended Super Eagles' technical crew for its "strategic planning" by parading young players in the ongoing African Nations Cup in Egypt.

A cross section of them told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Abuja

that the Austin Eguavoen led crew displayed good technical knowledge of Ghana's players in Monday's 1-0 victory by the Eagles.

Former NFA board member Chive Ka'ave said in his reaction that the crew's technical master piece was glaring by fielding only strong players that withstood the Black Stars' mobile

team. Also speaking, chairman of the Nigeria Football League Oyuki Obaseki said the group D opening match was "wonderful and a good start for Nigeria".

"The Eagles will beat Zimbabwe hands down and hopefully go ahead to clinch the cup at the

final," Obaseki who was heading for Egypt, said.

He, however cautioned goalkeeper Vincent Enyeama against "silly mistakes", adding that the last minute actions by the keeper almost caused problems for the Eagles.

The Special Assistant to the Sports Minister

Alhasan Yakmut, commended the Eagles' line-up, but criticised Yakubu Ayegbeni's refusal to come to the Eagles' camp.

The Eagles, after pipping the Stars, are expected to face out against Zimbabwe on Friday in their second match of the group. Senegal, Zimbabwe and Ghana are playing alongside Nigeria in Group D.

Galadima hails Eagles

Chairman of the Nigeria Football Association (NFA), Ibrahim Galadima has described the victory of the Super Eagles over the Black Stars of Ghana yesterday as a good opener that will motivate the team in their quest to win the Nations Cup.

Galadima told hotspots-live.com that "I was really impressed with the performance of the boys, and believe it was a good omen playing against Ghana in the opening match."

"The boys came out strong, especially in the second half, and had better control of the match, despite the low score line, but in all, it was a good match, and we expect them to do better in subsequent matches."

The Kano-born football administrator further charged the Eagles to "concentrate on the challenge of winning the Nations Cup, despite the distractions to undermine the team's preparation for the Championship."

He noted that "winning the Nations Cup could help in resolving the problem at home."

Okocha wants to end career on a high

Super Eagles captain Austin Jay-Jay Okocha wants to end his Nigeria career on a high by steering the team to the African Nations Cup title.

The 32-year-old midfielder said he considered quitting the national side after their surprise failure to qualify for the World Cup

but opted to stay on for a few more months.

"I thought about it but then I realised the only thing we've got left is this Nations Cup and I might as well come and help and see if we can win it," he told reporters at the team hotel.

"This will be my last tournament," said the Bolton Wan-

derers play-maker, who won the Nations Cup in 1994.

"I want to enjoy my last years in club football and I'd like to stay up there and keep competing."

"I don't want to be suffering because of the international matches I would be playing."

Okocha, voted best player of the last Nations Cup in Tunisia, missed

out on Nigeria's winning start to Group D against Ghana due to a high injury picked up in a pre-tournament training camp.

Though he believes Friday's game with Zimbabwe will be too early for a return, Okocha gave himself a "slight chance" of making their final group game against Senegal on Jan. 31.

The Super Eagles may already have qualified for the quarter-finals by then.

"I don't want to aggravate it again," he said. "But it would be good maybe to have some minutes to get match practice...especially if there's no pressure."

Nigeria were under pressure to win on Monday and only made the breakthrough when left back Taye Taiwo slammed home an 85th-minute free kick in a laboured performance at Port Said.

"I think we did okay considering we haven't played together for a while and that for some of the players it was their first Nations Cup game," Okocha said.

"The second half showed that things will get better, we are getting to know each other more and are playing better as a team."

He also defended a subdued performance by 21-year-old Inter Milan striker Obafemi Martins, who has a near goal-a-game average with nine strikes for his country and made his Nations Cup debut here.

"I think he's a big asset for us even though he didn't have his best game against Ghana," Okocha said.

"We know he can do better than that. The way we rate him, we expect him to carry the team and I think he will be able to do it."

Okocha also has confidence in a number of promising Nigerian players, singling out Taiwo, defensive midfielder Yusuf Ayila and fellow midfielder John Obi Mikel, sought by Chelsea and Manchester United.

"I think he might be even better than people think," Okocha said of teenager Obi Mikel. "His kind of player is very rare to find now, a natural talent."



Eagles captain Austin Jay-Jay Okocha, right, with coaches Samson Siasia and Daniel Amokachi at the Faro training camp in Portugal

Guinea on a roll after South Africa win

Guinea will be looking for an unexpected place in the African Nations Cup quarter-finals when they face Zambia in Group C in Alexandria on Thursday. Guinea, who reached the last

eight in Tunisia two year ago, were surprise 2-0 winners over South Africa in their opener on Sunday, while the Zambians took a 4-1 hiding from holders Tunisia.

Though it needed some

shrewd substitutions by Guinea's French coach Patrice Neveu to break the deadlock, with Sambegou Bangoura and Ousmane Bangoura coming off the bench to score, they were on top for most of the game.

Neveu will expect his side to try and dictate play again in their second match, where the main attacking threat should again be carried by St Etienne striker Pascal Feindouno.

Sambegou Bangoura will be hoping for a start alongside Feindouno, having also come close to scoring with a sharp header before finding the net in the closing stages on Sunday.

However, they can expect a tougher time going forward against the hard-tackling Zambians than from a young and inexperienced South Africa side.

Sunday's scoreline against Tunisia was harsh on the Zambians, who were caught on the break by Tunisia's Brazilian-born hat-trick scorer Francileudo Dos Santos in the latter stages as they pushed forward.

"Both teams showed they

have got stuck into this competition straight away," was the verdict of Tunisia coach Roger Lemerre after a tough physical battle in Cairo.

If Lemerre's men beat South Africa as expected in Thursday's other game, a win for Guinea would book them straight into the quarter-finals.

Ghana beg Eagles to beat Senegal

Days after losing 1-0 to Nigeria in the opening match of group D, Ghana Football Association (GFA) boss Kwesi Nyantekyie has implored Nigeria to get a win in their next two games against Zimbabwe and Senegal.

According to Nyantekyie, the Black Stars will do their part against Senegal and Zimbabwe in their next group games.

He told KICK OFF "Nigeria has a good squad and it will be

nice to see both Nigeria and Ghana in the quarter-final."

"They can do us a whole lot of good, if they keep up their performance and get maximum points in the coming games."

"As for the Black Stars, they lost to a great side and now understand what it means to be fighting for a place in the next round," says Nyantekyie, who holds the highest office in Ghana football.

"I believe in Nigeria when they win and we achieve our

it will be good tale to tell."

Only on Monday, a fiercely struck shot from Marseille left back Taye Taiwo five minutes from time settled a keenly contested affair between Nigeria and Ghana at a packed El Masry Stadium in Port Said.

With that loss, Ghana became the third of Africa's World Cup qualifiers to lose their opening match at the Nations Cup following Angola and Togo's defeats to Cameroon and the DR Congo respectively.

RESULTS

DR Congo 0, Angola 0
Cameroun 2, Togo 0

Today's Fixtures

Guinea vs Zambia 4.15 pm
South Africa vs Tunisia 7.00 pm

Sports

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Sharapova will need full focus to see off Henin

...in a potential classic

Yuri Sharapov, Maria Sharapova's father and coach, placed his hands at the side of his eyes like a horse's blinkers as he willed his 18-year-old daughter to maintain her focus during yesterday's quarter-final against her fellow Russian Nadia Petrova. No

woman concentrates as implacably as Sharapova but in cool and windy conditions that favoured the return of server, she struggled hard to maintain her

composure before winning 7-6, 6-4.

"It was a miracle when someone held serve," Sharapova said before moving her thoughts to tomorrow's semi-final against

Justine Henin-Hardenne, who, in another match of multiple service breaks and numerous unforced errors, beat the world No1 Lindsay Davenport 2-6, 6-2, 6-3.

For both winners it was very much a means to an end. The women's event has not been brimming with compelling encounters.

The demise of the Williams sisters in the first week was compulsive watching in a macabre sort of way - Serena,

2005 champion here and seven times a grand slam winner, will drop out of the top 30 next week - and the comeback of Martina Hingis has been warmly greeted. But the big set pieces have been lacking, with neither of yesterday's quarter-finals living up to their billing.

But the Henin-Sharapova match-up promises much and may echo the intensity of last year's semi-final between Sharapova and Serena Williams, when the Russian failed to convert three match points. That clash of personalities produced hitting of stupendous velocity. Henin, the French Open champion, cannot quite match that power but she has an acute tennis brain and a connoisseur's dream of a single-handed backhand.

"I'll have to step it up against Justine, that's for sure," said Sharapova. "I'm moving a lot better while my biggest weapon is my toughness. I give it all out there and have won a lot of matches that way. The other girls know that, so even if I'm not playing my best tennis I can still win."

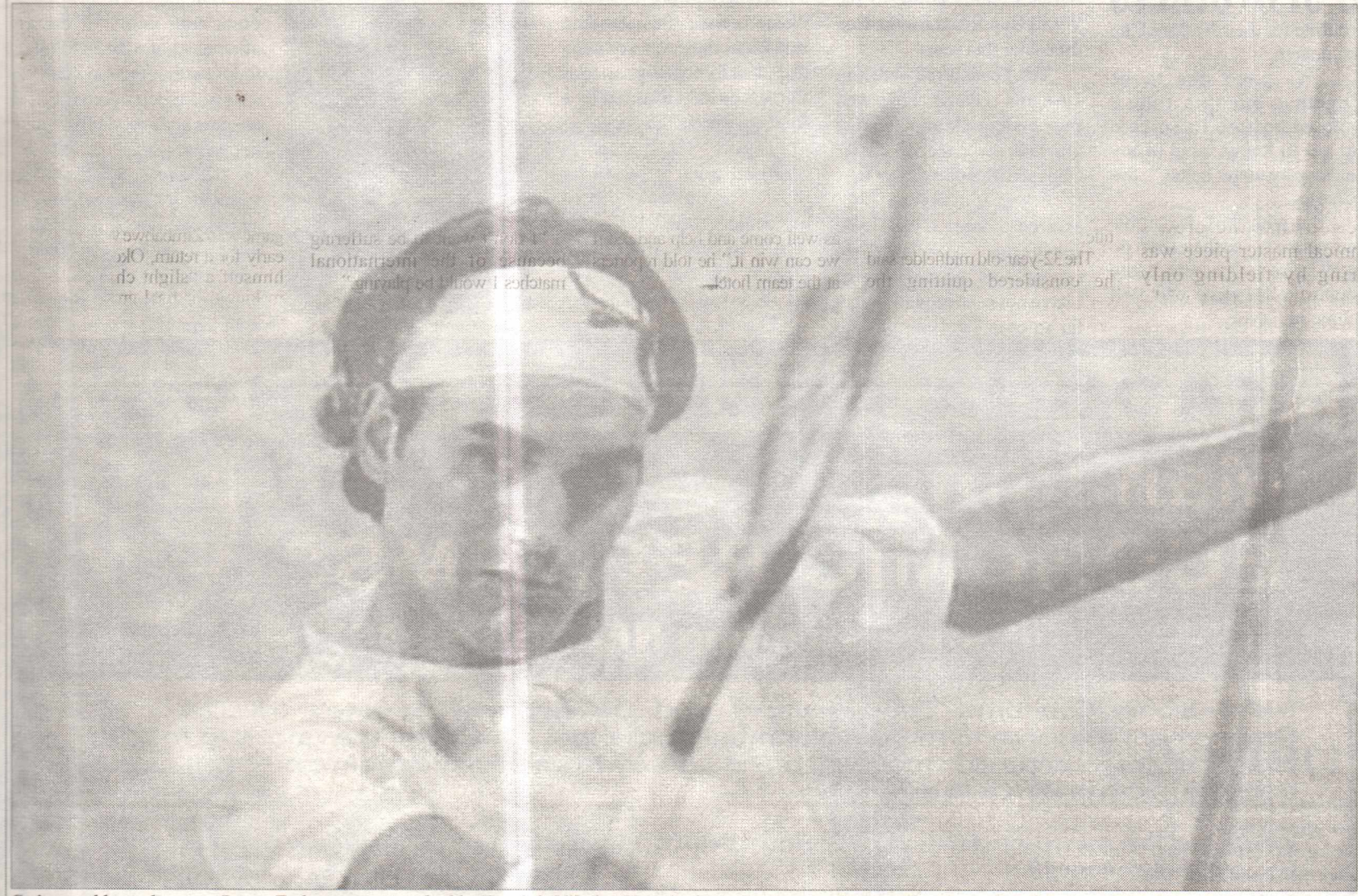
You have only to look into the face of her father to realise from where she gets this toughness. It was Yuri who took her to Nick Bollettieri's Florida academy when she was nine, which meant she was estranged from her mother for two years. But her father is not universally admired for his raw, sometimes overbearing ambition for his daughter, and Maria's own lack of obvious warmth grates with opponents and observers alike.

But champions do not have to be liked, although as yet, for all her singleminded pursuit of success, Sharapova has only one grand slam title, Wimbledon 2004. The expectations had been set higher, and some wonder whether her progress will not be as startling as was forecast. In this respect the next few days may be critical.

Sharapova and Henin have met only three times, all of them last year, all in quarter-finals. On the hard courts in Florida Sharapova had the edge although twice on clay, where technique is of the essence, the Belgian, winner of four slam titles, was vastly superior, handing the Russian a particularly severe lesson at Roland Garros where Sharapova looked out of her depth in the slower conditions.

Both began the year under an injury cloud. Sharapova had what she believed to be shoulder problems, which only recently were re-diagnosed as a rib injury. Henin played little in the latter part of last year because of a hamstring strain. Her confidence was restored when she won the pre-Austr. Open tournament in Sydney. Sharapova has rediscovered form over the past year.

"It's going to be a mission against Maria. But it is amazing to be in the semi-final at all, and I believe I can do it," said Hingis.



Swiss world number one, Roger Federer was stretched by Russia's Nikolay Davydenko in the quartre-finals of the Australian Open yesterday.

Basketball: Sober reflection trails unlucky draw

How tough can it get? Nigeria's D'Tigers got off on a wrong foot as the International Basketball Federation conducted draw for the Japan 2006 FIBA World Championship penultimate Sunday in Tokyo.

As is now apparent, Nigeria, making their second trip to the worlds next August in Japan, will face two champions in a group of six teams.

Apart from France, the third best team from Europe, Nigeria will tackle current Olympic champions Argentina and current world champions (from the 2002 FIBA World Championship) Serbia & Montenegro, while Venezuela and Lebanon offer scant hopes

By Ismaila Umaru Lere, Assistant Editor, with Agency Reports

of escape from the group (A).

With four teams to make it to the round of 16 from each of the four groups, Nigeria have only the realistic chance of pitching for the last spot from Group A as Argentina, Serbia and France seem to be the strongest teams here.

This means that Nigeria will have to do their best to get victories over Lebanon and Venezuela in the hope of making it to the second round.

All week, the Nigerian basketball community has reflected on the draw, with the consensus being that only early

preparations will see Nigeria through.

Here is a cross section of views on the draw.

Ahmed Adamu, NBBF technical director, says: "It's a tough group, but on the whole it is good for Nigeria. Argentina and Serbia are very tough. Lebanon we should be able to handle, but we have hope in Venezuela."

"Though we have not played Venezuela before at the senior level, we have seen them several times at the junior world championships. They don't have big players so we can be hopeful against them."

"The NBBF realises the importance of this event and we are going to release the programme of preparations for

the team next week.

"We know we are weak at point guard but we are making moves to correct this. Churchill Odia will be recalled, and also Ibrahim Badmus and Benjamin, a former point guard of Yelwa Hawks."

Sam Ahmedu, NBBF official, intones: "It's bad, very bad. If we do not prepare well, we don't stand any chance. Our attitude to preparation will determine how far the Tigers will go. But if we can have good preparation, we can make something out of the group."

Adewumi Aderemi, assistant coach, the Tigress, declares: "I see this as a good draw. We should be able to handle France though Argentina

and Serbia are tough. But to qualify, the coaches must not just bring anybody (players) from anywhere.

"All the players going to Japan must be tested very well. More than that, we should have two months of serious camping before the finals. Anything less and we will not be able to qualify for the second round."

"We have more than enough players around the world but everything is down to organisation."

Scott Nnaji, head coach, the Tigress, admits: "We have a good draw, but we have to prepare very well to make an impact. We have a good team, but we will need support. This is because preparations cost money."

Segun Erinle, first VP, NBBF - "Argentina and Serbia are formidable. We stand a chance with France, Venezuela and Lebanon. "Our advantage with Lebanon is that our players who had been in Lebanon before will give us all the low down we'll need on them."

"France will play a set pattern, but we can beat them with good defence. When you play good defence, you prevent your opponents from scoring, and then the offence will follow. With this, we stand a chance of going to the second round."

"This time, the NBBF is more particular about making an

Kiefer survives five-hour battle

Nicolas Kiefer battled for five hours before putting Sebastian Grosjean out of the running in Melbourne

Nicolas Kiefer made the semi-finals after a brutal 6-4, 0-6, 6-4, 6-7 (1-7), 8-6 marathon victory over Sebastian Grosjean.

Grosjean started favourite, having beaten his opponent three out of the five times they had met, but it was Kiefer who managed to overcome some strong resistance from Grosjean as the 24th seed turned in a mixed

Russian fifth seed Nikolay Davydenko for a place in the year's first grand slam final.

Kiefer started well, breaking Grosjean's serve in the sixth game. But the Frenchman bounced back in the second set and Kiefer could do little as Grosjean levelled the match.

The momentum switched again in the third set when Kiefer took an early lead with a break of Grosjean's opening service game and held out for the set.

Leading two sets to one,

Grosjean quickly bounced back to break Kiefer's next two service games and take a 4-1 lead.

The match was looked to be heading towards a deciding fifth set until the German broke back in the seventh game. Grosjean responded with another break and looked to have the set wrapped up while serving for it, before Kiefer again broke him.

With the score locked on 6-6, it was the Frenchman whose performance lifted as he won it 7-1 to give him confidence for the fifth and final set.

consolidate the lead and Kiefer managed a crucial break straight back.

In a sometimes tense struggle, both players lost their composure late in the match.

Kiefer was upset by a line call, while Grosjean was livid that the German had carelessly thrown his racquet onto his side of the court during the 12th game, but was credited with the point.

In the end it was Kiefer, who managed to crank his

Sports

EGYPT 2006 AFRICA CUP OF NATIONS

New pretenders falling flat

The standard response from some people when I tell them that Ghana, Angola and Togo have no realistic chance of winning the African Cup of Nations is shock, followed

swiftly by incredulity.

"How dare you dismiss my team's chances just like that?" enquired one Angolan who flew in from Portugal to watch his beloved Palancas

Negras.

He was no doubt flustered by the suggestion that Angola are one of several teams simply making up the numbers at Egypt 2006.

The offended fan's gripe was that I was writing off the chances of three of the five African teams going to the World Cup finals for the first time later this year.

Yes, I concurred with him - Angola, Ghana, Togo and the Ivory Coast finally cracked the code of World Cup qualification last year.

I know it is a topic assured of provoking fierce debate, but with the probable exception of the Ivory Coast, I have not seen anything thus far to convince me that the

rest are credible contenders here in Egypt.

These three sides may have come to Egypt hoping to make the most of their new-found status, but I venture to reiterate that they will find no pot of gold at the end of this Nations Cup.

If Angola were under any illusions about their standing in Africa, they were crudely dispelled by a vastly superior Cameroon side inspired by a fired-up Samuel Eto'o.

Togo's Hawks were brought down to earth by middle-of-the-road opponents in the DR Congo, while Ghana impressed against Nigeria but showed no title-winning credentials.

The pre-tournament hype

focused mostly on the World Cup virgins, perhaps rightly so, but I believe the jibe that they simply rode their luck in qualifying might actually



Keshi, Togo's coach

prove prophetic.

In my view, the truth is that all the talk of a changing of the guard in African football being confirmed in Egypt is completely offside.

"I've always said that we would come to this African Cup and not necessarily do well, but we can still go to the World Cup and surprise the world," Angolan striker Fabrice Akwa told BBC Sport.

That may be true, but one does not need to be an aficionado of African football to know that the old guard is determined to upstage the upstarts and re-establish their authority.

Like a heavyweight boxer regaining strength after successive knockdowns, the likes of Cameroon and Nigeria appear to have been galvanised by predictions of their demise.

Zambia's band of brothers

Having played together for Zambian club Green Buffaloes and South Africa's Jomo Cosmos, it's no surprise that Charles and Felix Katongo continue the Chipolopolo tradition of siblings playing together in the national side.

Following in the footsteps of Kalusha and Joe Mafema, Kenneth and Moden Malitoli and the Lota brothers, Chris and Denis, the Katongos, who featured for Zambia's u23 side, have become regulars in the senior team over the past year.

"It's good to have my brother playing alongside me because it makes me feel at home. I look after him and try to direct him with regard to what to do and what not to," says elder brother Charles.

Twenty-one-year-old Felix, who is two years younger than Charles, agrees that it helps having an older brother in the national team.

"I know his style of play and our communication is good. It's comforting knowing that he's around to guide me," he says.

It's that telepathic communication that the Katongos, both short in stature, hope will supply their team with a few goals.

"We've provided quite a few goals for each other in other teams, so we hope to do the same in the Zambian senior team.

"I think it could happen at the African Cup of Nations - you never know!" says Charles.

Although their father didn't play competitively, he's always been around to advise his sons.

"He always encourages us to play to the best of our ability and to reach our aims in the game," says Charles.

Seeing the other being injured on the field normally concerns the brothers but not to the extent that they would confront the perpetrator.

"Getting injured is part of football - after all it's a contact game. Sometimes I feel Charles' pain when I know he injury has been deliberately inflicted," says Felix.

"You can't do anything because it's football - you have to remain cool. I can also feel something when my brother has been deliberately hurt," Charles adds.

When they usually share a room when they are on national team duty, Charles

routine for their Nations Cup campaign.

"We were due to be together but this time I refused because I also need to get to know some of my other team mates better," says Charles.

But with fans of Zambia desperate to see their team do well at the tournament, many hope the Katongo pair will shine in Egypt.

KADUNA BUSINESS SCHOOL

Managing ECONOMIC REFORMS:

"Understanding NEEDS/SEEDS"



KADUNA BUSINESS SCHOOL

The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) is the Government response to the development challenges of Nigeria. The goal is to mobilize the resources (human and material) of the country to achieve economic breakthrough at both the micro and macro levels.

What are the micro and macro economic challenges facing the Federation, your State or Local Government?

NEEDS/SEEDS, as a strategic instrument cannot be divorced from macroeconomic issues. If NEEDS/SEEDS would be properly implemented therefore, the macroeconomic position of Nigeria should be properly understood. "Managing Economic Reforms: Understanding NEEDS/SEEDS" is a programme designed by Kaduna Business School (KBS) to sensitize people, in economic strategic positions (private and public), to the country's macroeconomic concerns as related to the NEEDS/SEEDS programme.

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

- To enable participants understand how to read Global Economic Dynamics.
- To help participants appreciate the potential economic, social, and environmental gains in the NEEDS/SEEDS programme.
- To discuss practical approaches to the implementation of the NEEDS/SEEDS programme.
- To help participants appreciate the macroeconomic challenges facing the country.
- To discuss how to develop the national micro economic base to meet the macro and global economic needs of the country.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

Chief Executives, Economic Advisers, Directors, Corporate Planning Executives, CBOs, Top Management Staff, Heads of Government Parastatals, Commissioners, LG Chairmen, etc.

Date: 6th - 9th February, 2006
Venue: Kaduna Business School, 13B Ohikere Street, Off Inuwa Wada Road, U/Rimi, Kaduna.
Course Fee: N40,000.00. This covers tuition, course materials, tea and lunch during the programme hours.

For further information please call:

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Thomas - 0802 819 3157
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 e-mail: kbs@kaduna.gov.ng

Sports

EGYPT 2006 AFRICAN CUP OF NATIONS

On form Eto'o leads the net-shakers

The signs are looking good for an exciting African Cup of Nations in Egypt.

African footballers who play in the major European leagues have set the Nations Cup alight, recording more than a dozen of the twenty three goals scored so far.

Cameroon's Barcelona striker

By Ismaila Umaru Lere, Assistant Editor

Samuel Eto'o, who scored a hat-trick in the opening game against Angola, was unsung once again yesterday night as he spearheaded the Indomitable Lions to a 2-0 victory over hapless Togo in their second group game in

Cairo.

The Barcelona striker notched another goal - a belter from outside the 18-yard box to beat the Togolese keeper Agassa - to take his goal tally to four in the tournament.

Interestingly, Eto'o's strike in the 78th minute marked the first goal scored in the Nations Cup after 257 minutes of goalless action in the championship.

Eto'o has already scored 15 league goals with Spanish champions Barca and he finished third in the 2005 FIFA Player of the Year Awards.

Tunisian Francileudo dos Santos, who like Eto'o also recorded a hat-trick in his team's first group game, would be looking forward to increasing his goal haul when Tunisia face South Africa.

At Toulouse in France, Brazilian-born Santos has three goals to his name so far this season.

Many other goals have come from players in the English Premiership, with Chelsea star Didier Drogba on the scoresheet twice for the Ivory Coast and Ahmed "Mido" Hossam scoring the first goal of the competition for Egypt.

DR Congo striker Lomana LuaLua of Portsmouth, who failed to find the target in his country's goalless draw against Angola yesterday, sealed victory for the Simba Lions in their opening game - a 2-0 win over World Cup-bound Togo.

Henri Camara of Wigan put Senegal ahead after beating the Zimbabwean keeper in his side's 2-0 victory in Group D, while Stoke City striker Sembegou Bangoura broke the deadlock for Guinea as they beat South Africa 2-0.

And Super Eagles full back Ismaila Taye Taiwo, who scored the only goal in the win over Ghana, has already been

on target once for French side Marseille this season.

With over 90% of the players at the Nations Cup playing their football out of Africa it is no major surprise that most of the goals have been scored by foreign-based stars.

But the increase in the number of goals scored suggests that the quality and excitement of the play witnessed so far has increased from previous tournaments.

After the first round of games in Egypt, 20 goals have been scored, two more than the finals in Tunisia in 2004.

And with the likes of Eto'o and Drogba around, as well as the ever-dangerous Obafemi Martins of Nigeria, who is yet to open his account, Egypt 2006 seems to have a real chance of registering a record number of goals in Nations Cup history.



'Watch out for a better Eagles'

Super Eagles team coordinator Bello Sumonu-Osagie believes Nigeria will put up a better performance in their next match against Zimbabwe on Friday.

He told Nigeriansportsonline.com: "We must first thank God for the victory on Monday.

"We didn't play too well, but we must credit to the boys for beating Ghana.

"Winning such a difficult match without having played a Grade A friendly match during preparation is most commendable.

"The boys were determined and that showed on the pitch. In spite of our lack of rhythm, even the Ghanaians agreed

we deserved to win.

"Now we're fully focused on the next game. I believe the world will start to see the good rhythm they know the Super Eagles for from the match against Zimbabwe.

"The first match is always difficult and playing against Ghana made things even more difficult because of the rivalry between the two teams. We shouldn't also forget that most of the boys who played against Ghana were playing in the Nations Cup for the first time.

"But having crossed the Ghana hurdle, we're fully focused on Zimbabwe. And the good thing is nobody is underrating anybody

here.

"As we saw on Monday, the Zimbabwe that played Senegal almost to a standstill was different and far better than the one we beat 5-1 in Abuja last year.

"But I'm confident our boys will play with rhythm and verve when we meet Zimbabwe on Friday."

Utaka: I'm ready for Zimbabwe

After missing out of the Super Eagles opening game of the competition because of suspension, attacking wizard, John Utaka has told Nigeriansportsonline.com that he is ready to face Zimbabwe on Friday.

Below is the full text of Utaka's interview with Nigeriansportsonline.com.

Q: What was going on in your mind as your team-mates were slugging it out with Ghana on Monday?

A: It was unbearable. There was tension. But I want to thank God that we won. The boys did well.

We had more scoring

chances and at a time it was like we camped in Ghana's half. We deserved to win and I'm happy. It was a good result that will help our morale in the next game.

Q: Was there a point in the game when you thought the match might end in a draw?

A: Yeah, of course. I felt we could win it the way we were going, but when it got to 84 minutes and we hadn't scored I began having doubts. But you know this is football where anything can happen.

Q: Now that you're going to be available for the next game, what should Nigerians expect from John Utaka?

A: It's nice to be back. But it's not only me that Nigerians should expect something from. It's a team game and Nigerians should expect victory from us all. Hopefully, that will be enough to take us to the next round. We'll see what happens on Friday.

Q: Did you watch Senegal's match against Zimbabwe?

A: Yes, I did and I think both teams are good. Of course, there are no small teams in football again, not in this type of competition.

We have to play every team with equal serious-ness.

Q: Nigerians want to hear from you. How ready is John Utaka for Zimbabwe?

A: Of course, I'm very ready for the challenge. I'm always ready to give my best to help the team achieve success.

Q: How do you rate the teams you have seen so far in this tournament?

A: I pick Senegal, Tunisia, Cameroon and us as the teams that can go very far in the tournament.

Q: Senegal are topping the

group on goals difference.

That leaves a possibility of a quarter final clash with Tunisia, who halted Nigeria's run two years ago. Are you desperate to avoid this clash or you don't care who you meet in the quarter-finals?

A: Well, it's too early to be talking about the quarter-finals when we've not even qualified for that stage. But like I told you before, our aim is to win all our matches. We want to top our group, not because we want to avoid Tunisia or anybody. I mean, if you aspire to win this cup, you must be ready to meet and beat everybody vying for it. For me, the most important thing is to first qualify for the next round. Then whoever comes around, we're ready to face them. It will even be just fine by me if it is Tunisia we meet in the quarter-finals because that will afford us the opportunity of avenging our loss to them in the semi-finals two years ago.

Q: Thanks for your time, John.

A: Thank you

Okocha turns referee

Super Eagles captain, Austin Okocha is now a referee in far away Egypt and not the midfield maestro he is better known for.

The Bolton wanderers of England star who was not even dressed for the game against Ghana due to a nagging groin injury, was the man at the centre of a half field 2-aside game at the Super Eagles practice session Tuesday evening.

The Tunisia 1994 gold medalist is once again a serious doubt for the second game against Zimbabwe Friday as his inability to train could also rub off on his fitness due to lack of match practice.

Jay Jay's situation is further compounded by the man of the match performance of Wilson Oruma who anchored the midfield for the Nigerian side in the 1-0 victory over Ghana in the team's opening match.

Wilson Oruma while answering questions from the press, said that he is ready for Nigeria's next game as his performance against Ghana must have proved to many that he is not under pressure from Okocha and that his participation at the championship was as a result of family persuasion.

Eagles bar press

The media will be prevented from attending the Super Eagles training Wednesday.

This, it was gathered, is to keep secret the team's tactical plans for Friday's match against Zimbabwe.

Eagles team coordinator Bello Sunmonu-Osagie explained: "This is necessary because the team would engage in tactical drills ahead of the

big clash. "However, there will be room for journalists to watch our training tomorrow (Thursday) which is the eve of the match.

"This, we believe, will allow them to send latest reports on the team to their respective media.

"Any inconvenience this may cause is regretted but necessary," he concluded.



Eagles midfielder, Osaze Odenwungie, left, challenged by Zimbabwe's Peter Ndlovu during the World Cup qualifier in Abuja. Both teams will meet again tomorrow

Oliha tips Eagles for S/Final

Former Super Eagles midfielder, Thompson Oliha, has said that the national team are good enough to make the semi final grade in the 25th edition of the Africa Cup of Nations, tagged Egypt 2006.

Oliha was part of coach Clemense Westerhof's Super Eagles squad that conquered the continent in Tunisia in 1994, going ahead to reach the second round at the World Cup in the USA on Eagles debut.

The former Iwuanyanwu Nationale dazzler told Nigeriansportsonline.com Tuesday that the Super Eagles were very impressive, cohesive,

determined and committed in their 1-0 defeat of Ghana Black Stars in Port Said in the opening Group D fixture.

"These are rare qualities that stand this team out among the pack," Oliha opined.

"It is always difficult to beat a side with such qualities. I am not praising them as such, rather, this is my observation from the way they played against Ghana yesterday (Monday).

"I may be right or wrong but I tell you, if they continue this way... if they bring their heads down and not allow the win get into their heads, certainly they will reach the semi-finals," Oliha predicted.

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Thursday, January 26, 2006

Tenure Extension: The predictable end

By Yakubu Sani Stores

Scholars and intellectuals have posited differently on the question of self-perpetuation or rather self-preservation by political leaders, especially in Africa. Some have argued that the organic composition as well as the physical build-up of an African suggests cannibalistic tendencies, hence the desire to oppress and dominate. Social Darwinism is what this group postulates that the leader should take all if he has the power or keep all if he can.

The second group maintained that in Africa, the capture of state power and its employment in the selfish amassing of resources are considered the ultimate goals; the winner simply privatises the political system and considers the perpetuation of themselves in power as their birthright.

The last group dwelt on the machinations of the so-called "reformists" who claimed to have initiated socio-economic and political reforms which could not be executed in the lifespan or tenure of office as stipulated in the constitution. So they have to cling to power till death.

In all the three cases, the mechanism used for this perpetuation are the same but may vary only in tactics and circumstances of the time; suppression of criticism, incarceration of well-intended critics, prosecution, conviction, detention and torture, political assassination, press censorship and constitutional amendments.

Post-colonial Africa has had dictators who have employed the above mechanisms and more to perpetuate themselves in power. The early-day despots like Haile Selassie of Ethiopia was toppled in a military *coup d'etat*; Idi Amin ruled Uganda with high-handedness, violation of human rights and all sorts of torture was the order of the day over the most purposeful criticisms. At the end, he was overthrown in a military expedition lead by Tanzanian Armed Forces. Arap Moi of Kenya also had to give up due to mounting opposition aided by high-level political consciousness of the Kenyans. The opposition in Kenya was serious and challenging. In Liberia, Samuel Doe seized power and the political elite were assassinated. He came on board and organised a mock election and was declared winner. In a counter-coup, Doe was toppled and the same means that he employed to deal with ousted politicians were meted on him. He was brutally assassinated by fellow military colleagues.

Emperor Bukassa of Central African Republic was richer than his own country. He was a life president, but had to give up when death came calling. Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire was a despot who had amassed all the resources his country was blessed with as his private fortune. When his time was up, a rebel group under Laurent Kabila overran the country so he had to flee in a private jet to Morocco where he lived and died.

In very recent times, Gnassingbe Eyadema was the life president of Togo. He gave up the ghost at a point. The military seized the opportunity to partially take over power. The constitution which provided for his deputy to take over was suspended. Eyadema's blood son was nominated by the military to succeed his father, but for the intervention of other ECOWAS states. The election was stage-managed and Ferry Eyadema was returned as president. The same scenario was earlier repeated in the Democratic Republic of Congo (former Zaire). Laurent Kabila was assassinated and replaced with his blood son, Joseph Kabila. DRC is witnessing a civil war up till today. Cote d'Ivoire was plunged into a civil war by the Robert Guay political initiations for banning credible candidates like Alhassan Watara as part of his scheming to perpetuate himself in power. In Egypt, Uganda and Zimbabwe, series of constitutional amendments have been in effect to pave way for the incumbents to remain in power. Recently in Uganda, the ruling party had declared an extension of Museveni's eligibility; the act that guaranteed constitutional amendment. The opposition in Uganda is weakened through all reprisal means and the general populace is declared impotent by gradual tactics of impoverishment. Blaise Campaore of Burkina Faso has been in power for about twenty years; he was able to get hold of power through all dubious means. What is certain is that the doomsday will surely creep in and the consequences may be catastrophic. Kenyans have

decided in a referendum engineered by the incumbent President Moi Kibaki on the extension of his tenure. The highly politically volatile Kenyans have rejected the game plan as totally unwarranted. In Gabon, Omar Bongo remains in power since 1967 by employing all legal and illegal means. Recently, he won another round of elections that guaranteed another term in office; however, Gabon is not as complex as Nigeria.

A chronological analysis of self-succession attempts is pertinent here. In Nigeria, there have been attempts at self-succession since the Gowon days. After nine years in power, Gen. Gowon had no plan to tread the path of democratisation; that act generated a palace coup. Most of the officers that executed the coup were top members of



President Olusegun Obasanjo

the regime, but had to remove the head for its ill-conceived ideas. Today, the reverse is the case. We have sycophants, bootlickers and soothsayers as cabinet members and advisers. Gen Murtala Muhammed became the new head. Six months later, he was assassinated in cold blood on his way to the office. Olusegun Obasanjo had to assume leadership being the number two man. The Murtala/Obasanjo regime from inception drew a timetable on transition to civil rule. The latter executed the plan of action; hence, in the 1979 general elections, Alhaji Shehu Shagari became the new civilian president.

General Babangida on assumption of power declared his as a transitional regime. He maintained that as soon as the scenario became clear, he would hand over to democratically-elected officials. Gen Babangida kept shifting the goal post. At some instance, the stage became clear and the rules were clearly stated, but in the middle of the game, entirely new set of rules would be announced. IBB succeeded in dribbling the politicians and the entire nation. The transition programme gulped N40 billion and then finally crash-landed. At the end of the game, Babangida (a.k.a Maradona) could no longer dribble Nigerians; he ended up dribbling himself by stepping aside.

Gen. Abacha took full advantage of the comatose Chief Shonekan-led Transitional Government. Abacha also manipulated the political process to accommodate his self-succession or rather self-perpetuation bid. All the five political parties adopted Gen. Abacha as their presidential

flag-bearer. Repressive means were employed to deal with any dissenting voice; regime violence was the order of the day, and politically-motivated assassinations were on rampage. Propaganda machineries were set in motion. Abacha was purported to be the only person that could rule Nigeria. What is interesting is that the same people that championed 'the cause of Abacha's *tzarce* are the ones now clamouring for Obasanjo to continue in office - Tony Anenih, Jerry Gana, Ibrahim Mantu and Ojo Madueke. History is replete with a certain correlation between the intensity of domination and level of cruelty.

God the Almighty has a way of catering for creatures by eliminating any inhibition to general good. Any obstacle that defies human forces will ultimately meet the superior force of the Almighty: The sudden death of Gen. Sani Abacha can be likened to that.

From grass to grace, so did Obasanjo emerge from prison awaiting death to ascend to the most prestigious office in the land. President Obasanjo has exhibited all the traits of perpetuating himself in office, soon after the 2003 general elections. All the methods outlined earlier to self-perpetuation have been grossly manifested. Obasanjo is so dogmatic about his reform programme that he contemplates leaving office as and when due. He has employed divide and rule tactic thereby putting more pressure on an already overheated state - the North against South; Middle Belt against the core North; South-South against the South-East. The Presidency is solidly behind the coalition of the entire Southern leaders of thought meeting in Enugu; the motive of which was to counter the position of the North regarding power shift. Power must remain in the South. The calculation is to bring the nation under tension and crises so that the tenure of the incumbent regime can be extended. Another strategy is to take control of the PDP machinery, which can be manipulated at the appropriate time; the Presidency is intolerant of dissenting voices and pieces of advice. Whoever dares to offer advice against tenure extension would be met with the wrath of the president's publicity Man Friday (Fani-Kayode), including prominent elder statesman like Gen. Gowon, a former head of state. Official deceit is the norm in this regime; breach of agreements; contempt for the constitution; selective justice; double standard; incarceration of well-intended criticism; political assassination; and finally, constitutional amendments; insatiable lust for power and greed, as well as the fear of the EFCC have mortgaged the conscience of state governors. Thirty of the governors have also consented to tenure extension. Since they control their state's Assemblies, they can always get their way. The federal legislature, both the Upper and especially the Lower Houses are the last hopes of the common man. So far, the National Assembly has exhibited decorum and statesmanship by ganging up against third term agenda.

Other stakeholders in the political process have also manifested some measure of resentment against the tenure extension agenda of the present regime. The CNPP has issued a public statement, so have the MDD and MRD. Victor Lar's Northern Members Forum had made a public pronouncement against third term, so did Northern Senators forum. Gen. Muhammadu Buhari has been consistent in throwing his weight behind the generality of Nigerians who are against tenure extension. Actions and activities of other progressive forces in the South will never go in vain. Gani Fawehinmi and co. have exhibited their commitment to defending the constitution and democracy of Nigeria. So are editorial comments in our national dailies and other columnists too numerous to mention.

The international community is also not favourably disposed to the third term plan as evident in the statements issued by officials of US Department on African affairs. President John Kuffour of Ghana had equally advised against constitutional amendment to warrant third term.

The incumbent regime no doubt has the custody of national resources; they control the means of violence and they have the media. They can use all to suppress patriotic democratic forces and impose Obasanjo on Nigerians after May 29, 2007, but history will surely repeat itself. Obasanjo may at the end succeed in plunging the country into another civil war, anarchy and disorder, military *coup d'etat*. Or what happened to Abacha may await him.

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